

Read Keyboard Immortal - Chapter 1951: Life and Death

Chapter 1951: Life and Death

King Dai had been intimidated by Meng Chan for so long that he dared not utter a single word under her glare.

Meng Chan glared at him frostily, saying, "Keep whatever happened today to yourself if you wish to live. You should know what will happen if others learn about it."

King Dai shuddered, especially when he remembered how Zu An had floated above the Meng manor like a demonic god releasing a slaughter. If anyone tried to sully Zu An's reputation, there were countless people who would be more than willing to step in and end them. In any event, if he had been in the same position as Zu An, he wouldn't have let the other side go either. Having thought things through, his anger dissipated without a trace, and he murmured, "I understand."

Meng Chan sighed, but she chose not to say a word. She slowly staggered out of the prison while holding onto the railings for support. She hadn't intended to let her husband know about what happened, but who could have thought that dumb fellow would be so sensitive about such a thing? Had she known, she would have rested a few more days before heading over. In the end, she'd only come over today because she was worried he would do something silly out of despair.

She bit her lips as she recalled the events that had transpired the previous night. Despite that fellow's refined appearance, as soon as he took off his clothes, he was no different from an ox. Even now, she shuddered whenever she remembered the feeling of being rammed all the way down to her soul.

That night was more fun than anything I've enjoyed over the last decade... Argh! Meng Chan, what in the world are you thinking? Where's your sense of shame?

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As he watched her totter out of the prison, King Dai was conflicted. Now that he thought about it, when he saw her earlier, her face had been particularly red. She looked more seductive than usual.

She couldn't even close her legs. Is that Zu guy that formidable? Not only is he ridiculously strong as a cultivator, he even induces despair even in that aspect.

King Dai sighed in resignation. He should have felt angered and humiliated, but Zu An was so strong that he couldn't muster the courage to exact vengeance. On the contrary, he felt liberated, as he had still been conflicted as to how he could convince Chan'er to offer herself. Now that Meng Chan had done so on her own accord, he could put his worries aside. At the very least, he would be able to survive this ordeal.

There are plenty of trees in the forest anyway; I'll just find another wife. In the future, I must make sure not to find such an ambitious wife. It'll be best to have a gentle and virtuous one...

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Meanwhile, at a courtyard at the top of Mount Yuquan, Zu An held onto a half-burned candle with a bizarre expression on his face. After falling for the Worries Be Gone, the first thing he had done after waking up in the morning was to take the candle away. He hadn't been disadvantaged in any way the previous night, but he wouldn't have gone along with it under normal circumstances. It was just that his little brother went amok as soon as it came under the influence of Worries Be Gone.

He had dealt with similar medicine in the past, but none had ever been as potent as Worries Be Gone. His fighting prowess was on par with that of an earth immortal even though he had yet to reach that rank, so ordinary poison shouldn't have affected him, not to mention the fact that his Primordial Origin Sutra granted him poison immunity. That made him curious about the Worries Be Gone Rosemary, which continued to affect him even now.

It was a pity King Dai Manor didn't have any Worries Be Gone left. He had asked Meng Chan about it the previous night. She had replied that she was worried a normal dosage wouldn't work due to his high cultivation level, so she'd put everything they had left in King Dai Manor into this candle.

"I wonder if the Gourmet System can analyze the components of the medicine..." Zu An muttered, although he wasn't planning to use the medicine to take advantage of women; there was no need to, anyway, since women were more than happy to throw themselves at him given his current standing. He was just curious about the principles behind the medicine, thinking it could be useful to his future pill refinement.

Zu An stared at the candle hesitantly, and in the end, he took a bite of it. Fortunately, the Gourmet System recognized Worries Be Gone as food, and it quickly broke down the ingredients for him. "Northern Sea Fiend's kraken fluid, Whitemoon Worries Be Gone Grass, Flying Snow Rosemary..."

"Northern Sea Fiend?" Zu An murmured, astonished.

It really is fate. The main ingredients might be rare to others, but they're well within my reach.

During his time in the Fiend races' Imperial Tomb with Yan Xuehen and Yun Jianyue, he had encountered a massive octopus monster in the deep sea and collected quite a bit of its tentacles and fluid.

It's no wonder this medicine went out of circulation. The Northern Sea Fiends are too powerful for ordinary people to deal with, not to mention that they're practically extinct. Just this is enough to pose trouble.

Zu An vaguely recalled reading about the Whitemoon Worries Be Gone Grass and Flying Snow Rosemary from the Baopu Sutra. Those herbs could indeed dispel one's woes and knock one out, but they shouldn't have been so potent as to make one forget about activities that had transpired the previous night. Those herbs had to have some kind of chemical reaction with the Northern Sea Fiend's tentacle fluid.

"Brother-in-law, why are you eating a candle?" a voice suddenly called out while Zu An was in a daze.

Zu An looked up and saw Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe standing by the doorway, staring at him in surprise. His face turned red as he replied, "I'm testing out a medicine."

"Medicine?" The two young women stared at him in bewilderment. They couldn't imagine how a candle could possibly be a medicine.

Zu An stowed away the candle and asked, "What are you doing here?"

"Little sister Qinghe was embarrassed, but I told her there was no need to hold back since you aren't an outsider, so I brought her here to expand her meridians," Chu Youzhao said.

"I'll be counting on you, big brother Zu," Murong Qinghe said. She was embarrassed, but she knew the benefits of expanding her meridians for her cultivation, not to mention that big brother Chu had been persuading her into it.

Zu An had initially wanted to say that he could already refine Marrow Cleansing Pills, so there was no need to do such a thing anymore. However, he was worried Murong Qinghe would misunderstand and assume he was reluctant to help her. Thinking that it was just a small favor, he accepted her request.

"You get busy first. I'll go argue with Second... Cough cough, I mean, I'll have a chat with her," Chu Youzhao said; she waved her hand before running out excitedly.

Murong Qinghe was startled. She had wanted Chu Youzhao to stay with her, but she was worried that big brother Zu would be offended if she made such a request, so she kept her mouth shut.

Noticing her nervousness, Zu An said with a smile, "Don't worry, I won't touch your body."

That made Murong Qinghe feel bad. She said, "Big brother Zu, you don't have to worry about me." She knew expanding one's meridians was extremely dangerous. It would be even riskier if Zu An had to refrain from touching her body.

Zu An first had her sit cross-legged on the bed before settling behind her. He raised his finger and sent whiffs of invisible ki into her body. Now that he could refine Marrow Cleansing Pills, he figured he could just help her expand her meridians a little. As Murong Qinghe was blessed with much wider meridians than Chu Youzhao, there was no need for him to proceed as carefully as he had done before.

Murong Qinghe let out a harrumph. A numbing sensation filled her body, followed by a sharp aching pain from the expansion. She finally understood

why Youzhao and big brother Chu had squealed so loudly back then. She thought that it would be embarrassing to squeal in front of big brother Zu, so she clenched her jaws and held on.

“Don’t hold it in. That causes your meridians to further contract, and that may lead to problems,” Zu An said.

Murong Qinghe was alarmed. Not daring to hold it in anymore, she started out with soft groans, but as the pain worsened, she began squealing uncontrollably. Her face soon turned bright red.

It’s so embarrassing! It feels as if I’m screaming because of something else instead. The sweat is also making my clothes a little translucent...

She had grown up in the military, and she usually hung out with soldiers who had no filter in their speech. Naturally, she had heard about the sorts of depraved acts that happened in alleys and brothels. She glanced at Zu An and was impressed to see that his expression was unchanging like an unwavering mountain. She thought, Big brother Zu is a true gentleman. I was still worried about it earlier, but it seems I was being too judgmental.

She couldn’t have known that after having expelled his lust the previous night, Zu An was currently in his ‘sage mode’.

Two hours later, Zu An called Youzhao over to support Murong Qinghe on the way back. Chu Youzhao was startled when she saw how drenched Murong Qinghe was, as if she had just been fished out of the water. She asked, “What happened?”

“She’s fine. She has outstanding talent, and she’s good at withstanding pain too. Thus, I expanded her meridians more than usual. Bring her to one of the rooms off to the side to rest,” Zu An said.

“All right,” Chu Youzhao said as she carefully supported Murong Qinghe out of the room.

Murong Qinghe slumped onto Chu Youzhao as if she had no bones. She kept exhaling warm air, which made Youzhao's heart skip a beat as she wondered if Zu An had done something odd to Qinghe.

After sending the two of them off, Zu An began refining pills. It was a pity that the Nine Cauldron he had previously obtained had been confiscated in a

secret dungeon, but fortunately, there was no lack of pill refinement spots in the mountain behind the academy. In the earlier years of the academy, the libationer had drawn forth earth flames from within the mountain to construct a pill refinement spot. Anyone looking to refine pills could use the facility, but they had to have made prior contributions to the academy.

Zu An was now the libationer, so he was entitled to use the facility. He spent the subsequent time refining pills while chatting with the disciples of the old libationer. There were many commonalities between what they had learned and the Baopu Sutra's seven skills of cultivation. Over the next half a month, he gradually became more well-versed in the Baopu Sutra.

At the same time, he also refined a batch of Marrow Cleansing Pills and Ki Condensation Pills, only to swiftly encounter a major problem: He had run out of money! He finally understood why Shen Xuze was so poor.

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Meanwhile, in the Bi Manor, the clan leader Bi Qi was livid. He stared at his son and snapped, "I told you to bring your little sister back. Where is she?"

Bi Ziang replied, "She appears to be out of the palace. She probably went to the mountain behind the academy. It doesn't seem as if she's bothered about it at all."

Bi Qi was stunned. He said, "Wait for her outside the academy and drag her back the moment she comes out. This matter concerns the survival of our Bi clan."

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Chapter 1952: Mooching Is the Best

Bi Ziang was still smiling without a care in the world when he suddenly heard those words, making him jump. He replied, "Father, surely things aren't that serious? No other prince dares to covet the crown anymore. That Zu fellow might be formidable, but he's my little sister's aide. This is good news!"

"You don't know shit!" Bi Qi exclaimed, flustered. He had been escorting prisoners from Violet Mountain to the capital when he learned about

everything that had transpired in his absence. He was initially astounded, as he hadn't expected Zu An to be that powerful. Nevertheless, he'd believed that was good news... or at least that was what he thought, until he caught wind of another piece of news.

"Go there and wait. Bring Linglong back as soon as you can," Bi Qi said with utmost annoyance.

"Linglong is the crown princess now. It'd be wrong for us, as her subjects, to demand her to come here and meet us. We should be the ones entering the palace to pay respects to her," Bi Ziang carefully reminded his father.

"We can't enter the palace. There are too many ears. It's safer at home. Cut the crap and do what I tell you to do," Bi Qi snapped. He was so infuriated that he kicked Bi Ziang's bottom, prompting his son to run out in a fluster.

Bi Qi walked to the window and looked in the direction of the Royal Academy. His hands clearly trembled as he tightly gripped the sides of the window, showing how perturbed he was.

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Meanwhile, Zu An was counting his money in his little mountaintop courtyard.

In the past, he had accrued 470,000 silver taels in Brightmoon City. Later, he had received all kinds of promotions and rewards in the capital. When he became the regent of the Fiend races, and then the regent of the human race, he had received many gifts from countless people. All in all, his fortune after that easily totaled tens of millions of silver taels, and that was excluding the ki stones and other precious treasures he had.

At first, he'd thought that he had finally achieved financial freedom, and there was no need for him to worry about money anymore. Who could have thought he would squander his ten million silver taels within merely half a month?

Most ingredients for the Marrow Cleansing Pills could be obtained through trade, but the Ki Condensation Pills required Sky Crane Roots, Red Star Jade, and Purple Firmament Flowers. These ingredients weren't as rare as the Southern Sea Fiend's tentacle fluids, but they were still extremely rare and expensive herbs. Besides that, Daji and Mo Xi were on the verge of a breakthrough, so they needed a lot of Ki Condensation Pills. Due to that, Zu An had to purchase a huge amount of those three ingredients.

Tang Hui, who was in charge of the logistics warehouse, was extremely competent; it hadn't taken him long to secure a batch of goods. Initially, he hadn't asked for payment as he wanted to fawn on Zu An, but Zu An had still paid him in accordance with the market price and ordered him to pay the sum to the supplier. He knew that Tang Hui couldn't possibly pay for it on his behalf and would find other ways to make up for the deficit. Ultimately, the ones who would suffer were ordinary merchants and the populace. He didn't want to cause undue suffering for his own needs.

Other than the ingredients for pill refinement, the materials Daji and Mo Xi needed for their breakthroughs were exorbitant too. Daji needed Wuyang Jade, Gray Wolf King Fangs, Blue Earthflowers, and Nine-headed Pheasant Feathers, whereas Mo Xi needed Rainbow Cloudstones, Thunderjade Raccoon Cores, Chinese Bellflowers, and Gemflame Stamens. Among those, Chinese Bellflowers weren't the common herb Zu An was familiar with from his previous life, but rather a special herb in this world. Ordinary cultivators would struggle to obtain even a single one of these materials, as they were not only expensive but rare as well. Only someone with a high standing among the humans and the fiends like Zu An could have a chance of obtaining such invaluable materials. Still, he had to pay for those ingredients, the prices of which were exorbitant even if he was given a preferential rate.

On top of that, Daji and Mo Xi needed valuable materials to raise their skills too, with each level easily costing hundreds of thousands of silver taels. Pill refinement also consumed a lot of silver taels, as silver was a much better medium for channeling ki and elemental ki compared to other materials.

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Due to that, Zu An had ended up spending more than ten million silver taels in half a month. He had consumed a lot of ki stones too. Pill refinement and cultivation required a huge amount of ki, and high-tier ki stones were the best way to provide it.

"Ah Zu, is there still anything in the world that can trouble you?" a voice called out with a chuckle. Bi Linglong was standing by the doorway in a plain-colored dress, looking at him with a smile.

Zu An revealed a gentle smile as he asked, "What brings you here? Aren't you worried about gossip?"

Bi Linglong hopped into the room and leaped into his arms, saying, "Things are different now. I'd have been worried about that in the past, but the officials have been advising me to spend more time with you lest the empress poach you away. Of course, I have to pretend to be in a dilemma, as how can I, the crown princess, fawn over a subject? Those officials think I'm too proud and are doing everything they can to persuade me. Little do they know that I've been laughing my head off. You don't know how happy they were when I finally reluctantly caved in!"

Bi Linglong looked at Zu An with a mischievous grin as she continued, "Rather than gossiping about us, they're more worried that I might keep my distance from you."

She had entered the courtyard alone; her followers were waiting for her at the mountain's midpoint. Such had been the case when she paid respects to the old libationer too, and Zu An's current influence and authority were no less than that of the previous libationer. She usually put on a dignified front that distanced herself from others; it was rare for her to show her coy self.

Zu An couldn't resist pinching her cheeks as he said, "I would have revealed my true strength much earlier if I had known."

Bi Linglong shook her head and said, "I still prefer how things were before; there was no stress hanging out with you. It feels weird being with you now. You're so strong that you feel foreign to me."

Zu An wrapped his hand around her waist and kissed her, replying, "What are you afraid of? I won't use it to bully you."

Bi Linglong's face reddened. She said, "Lies. That day, you showed no mercy when you bullied me."

Her shyness drew Zu An in for another kiss.

"Don't smear my rouge... Wuuu..."

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Some time later, Bi Linglong lay on the bed with a dazed expression. Her mouth was slightly open, and her chest heaved. Zu An gently traced her body with his finger as if scouting his own territory.

"It's itchy~" Bi Linglong grumbled coyly while cozying herself in his arms. "You said you wouldn't bully me."

Her tone quickly stoked Zu An's lust. Alarmed, Bi Linglong quickly pushed him away and said, "My people are still waiting at the midpoint of the mountain. I can't stay here for too long."

Zu An didn't want to make things difficult for her, so he relished in the sight of her cascading long hair and slender waist as she got up instead. As Bi Linglong put on her robes, she said, "Princess Xiaodie of King Qi Manor and those from the dao sects have been escorted to the capital. I was going to discuss how to deal with the Violet Mountain incident with you, but you distracted me."

"But you enjoyed it too," Zu An said as he grabbed the little hands hitting his chest, before deciding not to tease her anymore. "It's not that hard. We can't possibly say that King Qi staged a rebellion and joined hands with the libationer to get rid of Zhao Han. Let's just claim a secret dungeon suddenly appeared atop Violet Mountain, and Zhao Han, King Qi, and the others lost their lives in there."

"It feels as if King Qi and the others are getting off lightly," Bi Linglong said in displeasure. They had been enemies for many years, but she would be deprived of a clean victory. That being said, she knew that the country would descend into chaos if she revealed the truth.

King Qi had carried great influence, with many powerful officials under his faction. If Bi Linglong's faction cornered those people too much, they could well take extreme measures. The situation was exceptionally volatile as King Qi's son had returned to his lands to prepare for war. The moment an opportunity arose, he would raise his flag and stage a rebellion.

It didn't help that the crown prince was incompetent and dumb, so many people refused to accept him as their liege. If a coup d'état really happened, it was uncertain whether Bi Linglong and the crown prince would be able to hold onto their position or not.

"We can't let them off that easily. Why don't we pretend that the court is going to punish them? You can swoop in at the last moment and pretend to be a good person in front of them so as to earn their gratitude," Bi Linglong suggested.

Zu An was taken aback. He said, "It would be better for you to do that. You need support more than I do." He wasn't too bothered about the power balance in the imperial court, so it didn't matter whether he had the gratitude of King Qi's faction or not.

"I'd love to do it, but the Eastern Palace has been rivals with King Qi Manor for so long that many of them hate me down to my bones. They wouldn't trust me that easily. On the contrary, they would suspect that I'm up to something. You're more suited to do that than me" Bi Linglong said as she finally finished putting on her robe; she settled in front of the mirror to comb her hair.

Zu An walked up to her and took over the job of combing her hair, saying, "Linglong, you're doing me a favor here by leaving all the good stuff to me."

The stark naked man reflected in the mirror reminded Bi Linglong of the steamy action they'd just shared, and her face reddened. She said, "You might be the regent, but you don't have any supporters in the imperial court other than the Sang clan. King Qi's death has left a power vacuum; his faction is currently without a head. His subordinates will be a good base of support for you. I'd rather they come under you than have them swear fealty to King Qi's son or some other ambitious fool."

Zu An relented after hearing those words. It would be best to let things settle down, after all.

I should find some time to look for Zhao Xiaodie.

Bi Linglong took out a rouge paper from her storage pouch and pressed her lips against it.

Zu An looked at the cosmetics on the table and chuckled, saying, "It looks like you're prepared."

He had noticed earlier that she was wearing a plain dress instead of her usual extravagant clothes as the crown princess. That had practically become a hidden signal between the two of them.

"It's all your fault!" Bi Linglong cried. To assuage her embarrassment and awkwardness, she quickly changed the topic and said, "I heard you sighing earlier when I arrived. Are you facing any difficulties?"

"It's nothing much. I've just been burning too much money from pill refinement recently..." Zu An roughly explained the situation to her.

Bi Linglong reached into her storage pouch, pulled out a stack of banknotes, and passed it to him with a smile, saying, "Here's two million silver taels. It's my secret stash. You can use it."

Zu An was speechless. There was no way he would accept her money!

However, Bi Linglong looked at him with a melancholic expression and said, "It's rare that I can offer you any help, but you refuse to accept my aid. I heard that you accepted a batch of top-grade ki stones from Yu Yanluo back then..."

Goosebumps rose all over Zu An's body as he thought, Why is she getting jealous over this? He quickly accepted the banknotes and said, "All right, I'll accept this for now. I'll return it to you when I have money."

"Say any more than that, and I'll really get angry. What's mine is yours too," Bi Linglong said, putting on a stern face. "You should know that I've investigated you. Back in Brightmoon City, you famously declared that it was a skill to arrogantly mooch off others. Why are you so wishy-washy now?"

"Hahaha, you're right. It's great to mooch off others," Zu An said as he grabbed Bi Linglong's head and gave her one big smooch.

"You're terrible! You messed up my rouge. I'll have to put it on again."

"Why don't we do something else, since it's already smeared?"

"No... Let me go... You're so bad~"

Meanwhile, outside the academy, Bi Ziang was getting impatient.

My subordinates told me she's been in there for some time now, so why isn't she out yet? Is there so much between them to talk about? Surely not... He's now the libationer and the regent, whereas Linglong is the crown princess. They need to take heed of their respective positions.

Linglong has always been sharp-witted, so I doubt she'd be taken advantage of.

Just then, Bi Ziang noticed a huge procession making its way over, and he jolted in shock. He wondered, "What's the empress doing here?"

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Chapter 1953: Rivalry

Bi Ziang's first thought was to send his subordinates over to inform his little sister, lest she bump into the empress. However, he quickly abandoned that thought. After all, Zu An was Linglong's aide. Even though he'd made it big now, there was still a bond between the two of them. The empress had been wanting to poach Zu An, so perhaps it would be good for her to see which side Zu An would take. The empress had indeed done Zu An a huge favor by conferring him the title of regent, but how could that amount to the favor Linglong had shown Zu An while he was still weak and poor?

Not long ago, Bi Ziang had been filled with envy; Zu An had merely been an ordinary civilian, and yet was conferred the title of marquis at a young age, even surpassing an up and rising scion of the capital like him. And yet, after seeing how fast Zu An's cultivation rose, and especially how cool he had looked that night at the Meng clan, Bi Ziang had eventually given up on competing with him and dropped his envy.

This was how humans were. They were inclined to compete and grow envious of those around them, but when the gap grew too big, they would give up on competing altogether.

Now, Bi Ziang was just glad Linglong had shown great favor to Zu An back then. He finally understood why his father often lamented that Linglong was a woman, otherwise she would have achieved much more. Her foresight was incredible. While most people were only starting to fawn on Zu An now, Linglong had already sown her seeds two years prior.

The empress' procession finally arrived at the foot of the rear mountain. The empress stepped out of her carriage, surveyed the surroundings, and remarked, "Mount Yuquan certainly is serene. My Eunuch Lu, pick a few men and come with me. The rest should stay here lest you disturb these sirs' study."

The imperial family had been close to the old libationer. As a symbol of respect, most people maintained the silence of the mountain. Even members of the imperial family traveled light when scaling the mountain. Most people

had wondered whether that tradition would persist now that someone else was the libationer, though.

The nearby students heaved a sigh of relief upon hearing the empress' words, as it showed that the new libationer was more well respected than they had expected. The higher the standing of the new libationer, the more respected the academy was.

"What's happening today? First the crown princess, and now the empress," someone whispered.

"Our new libationer is a person with great means. Many respected personnel have visited him in recent days."

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Liu Ning's eyebrows shot up. She had regained her cultivation as a grandmaster, which allowed her to pick up on the students' conversations despite their attempts to be discreet. She asked, "You said that the crown princess is here too?"

The approach of the lofty empress prompted the two students to quickly bow down and reply, "Yes, your majesty."

"When did she arrive and leave?" Liu Ning asked.

"She arrived around two hours ago. She hasn't left yet," one of the students replied.

"Two hours? I think it should be closer to four hours now," the other student said.

"Four hours?" Liu Ning's pitch rose as she thought, What could the two of them be discussing for four hours? She immediately put away her dignified image and raised her dress to rush up the mountain. Somehow, she had an ominous feeling about the situation.

Bi Linglong usually maintains a dignified and stern front, so I doubt she'd be like me... Wait, why am I even running? I've already regained my cultivation!

It belatedly struck her that she could fly, so she flew straight to the mountaintop. Her flight alarmed the guards patrolling the rear mountain, and

some of them immediately rose into the sky to stop her, only to jolt in shock upon realizing it was the empress.

“I have urgent matters for the regent. Scram!” Liu Ning coldly ordered.

The guards glanced at one another. In the end, none of them dared to block the path of the empress. She was simply much too esteemed compared to them. They thought, The libationer is a powerful cultivator anyway. It’s unlikely any danger will befall him.

Liu Ning’s anger was alleviated upon being granted passage. On her way up, however, she encountered Bi Linglong’s followers.

She’s really still here! Hmph!

At the top of the mountain, Rong Mo teased the fishes in the lotus pond out of boredom while occasionally glancing at the courtyard not too far away.

They still aren’t done yet? Zu An has far too much stamina. Can the young miss’ small body really take it?

Just thinking about that made her face redden.

She and Bi Linglong had gotten closer after the two of them talked things out. Bi Linglong had even brought her here to keep a lookout on her behalf, showing how much trust the crown princess placed in her. She was glad that this was where the libationer went into seclusion, so others rarely approached the place.

Still, the Crown Princess is being too fearless. At this rate, the others will get suspicious.

While Rong Mo was worrying about Bi Linglong, she noticed the empress flying over from afar, and her soul nearly escaped from her body. She quickly rushed up to the empress and shouted, “This humble servant pays respect to your majesty.”

After regaining her cultivation, the empress’ aura was much more dignified and imposing. Rong Mo knew there was no way she could stop the empress, so she could only pray that the young miss would hear her tip-off and prepare herself.

Liu Nings said with a frown, “You wench. Why are you shouting so loudly? Is your master doing something unseemly inside the courtyard?”

Rong Mo felt a pang of guilt as she replied, “Your Majesty, please don’t speak nonsense!”

Liu Ning couldn’t be bothered to waste her time on Rong Mo. She flitted toward the courtyard and barged in without announcing herself. What she saw startled her, however. Nothing unseemly was happening inside, contrary to what she had imagined. The house was filled with the calming smell of incense. Bi Linglong and Zu An were seated opposite each other, engaged in a conversation. Her abrupt entry drew both their gazes, however.

“What’s wrong, your majesty?” Zu An asked with a smile.

“Nothing much. I was just anxious to discuss some business with the regent,” Liu Ning said as she scrunched up her nose in an attempt to find a familiar scent in the air. However, the incense used in the room had a special scent that made it hard to smell anything else. She turned her attention to Bi Linglong and saw that the crown princess’ cheeks were exceptionally red today.

Could it really be...

“Your majesty, this is a rare faux pas from you,” Bi Linglong said. She knew that Liu Ning was suspicious, so she decided to go on the offense.

Zu An was impressed by how Bi Linglong could maintain an impassive appearance despite the empress’ verbal assault. He thought, Women sure are born actors. I wouldn’t have suspected anything at all had I not been involved in it myself.

Bi Linglong was relieved that Zu An’s senses were sharp enough to spot the empress the moment she arrived at the academy. Zu An had wanted to continue fooling around, but she knew the empress too well to continue. Thus, she had hurriedly dressed herself up. It was a huge relief that she had already combed her hair by now. Even so, she nearly hadn’t made it in time. She was still tidying up into; the moment right before the Empress barged in!

But speaking of which, what’s that incense? It has a deep and lasting fragrance that conceals all other scents... Hmph, it looks as if Ah Zu is very experienced in such matters!

"I heard Linglong has been here for a few hours now, so I was worried the regent might have taken advantage of you," Liu Ning said in a half-joking tone.

Bi Linglong's heart skipped a beat, though she maintained her composure and replied, "Are you insulting me or the libationer? He's a highly-respected figure now..."

"Calm down, Linglong. I'm just cracking a joke," Liu Ning said. She turned to Zu An and added, "I'm on close terms with the regent, so I doubt he'd mind a joke. Isn't that so, regent?"

"It isn't a funny joke." Bi Linglong harrumphed. She glanced at Zu An and asked, "Your majesty, how are you on close terms with the libationer?"

"Cough cough!" Seeing that he was about to be dragged into the conflict, Zu An quickly interjected, "We got delayed as the crown princess was consulting me about her cultivation. Your majesty, please don't joke about such matters. It'd be terrible if such rumors went around."

"I see," Liu Ning said as she directed a smile at Bi Linglong. "I didn't expect you to be so devoted to your cultivation. It just so happens that I recently regained my cultivation. Linglong, please don't hesitate to visit me at the Palace of Peace, where I'll answer any question you have; after all, something like this could ruin rumors."

"I doubt anyone aside from your majesty would suspect anything between us," Bi Linglong coldly uttered. "When it comes to cultivation, I believe in consulting the strongest." She thought, Know your place! Don't you know the gap between you and Zu An? Why in the world would I consult you?

Liu Ning glared at Bi Linglong and harrumphed. "Linglong, you are still some distance away from reaching grandmaster level. I am more than enough to offer pointers to you. The regent is far stronger than you. I suggest that you not get ahead of yourself."

Their glares were so intense that it felt as if sparks would fly. Zu An quickly interjected, "Crown princess, it wouldn't do for you to get too greedy. You should first digest what I imparted to you earlier."

Bi Linglong's face reddened. She naturally understood what he was getting at, so she directed a sharp glare at him before taking her leave.

Liu Ning wasn't on close terms with Bi Linglong, and naturally wouldn't stop her from leaving. As she saw Bi Linglong off, she couldn't help mumbling under her breath, "Linglong's gait looks much more feminine than before."

Fearing Liu Ning would really notice something, Zu An quickly interjected, "Your majesty, you came in such a hurry. May I ask what business you have with me?"

Liu Ning smiled coyly before sitting on his lap and asking, "Can't I look for you out of boredom?"

"You said you had business with me," Zu An said. He was initially stifled, but the soft sensation in his arms swiftly dispelled whatever dissatisfaction he felt. He couldn't help but notice how different Bi Linglong and Liu Ning felt in his arms. Bi Linglong had a slender physique, whereas Liu Ning was curvaceous... Cough cough, what in the world am I thinking?

"It was mostly just a front to deceive Linglong, though I do have business with you," Liu Ning said as she retrieved a delicate box from her robe and passed it over. "Here's two million silver taels in banknotes. You should take it first."

Zu An was speechless.

"I heard from my subordinates that you've recently spent a huge sum on purchasing herbs, and you insisted on paying them market price. You must have been refining pills, and I figured you must be short on money after spending so much. This is my secret fund I've saved up over the years. You should take it for now."

Zu An sat in stunned silence.

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Read Keyboard Immortal - Chapter 1954: Falling From the Clouds

Chapter 1954: Falling From the Clouds

Zu An was at a loss for words. He had never expected the two women to arrive one after another and offer him their secret stashes. He thought, Have I

accomplished my dream of having a pride of lionesses providing for me? He felt uncomfortable even though this was something he had been looking forward to, so he reflexively turned down the money.

“You need not be embarrassed. There’s no need for such courtesy between us. It’s a pity I’ve been uninterested in the outside world for many years due to my injury, or else I would have more than this,” Liu Ning said as she stuffed the banknotes into his clothes before looking at him with a gentle smile.

She felt as if her life had become much more colorful after meeting Zu An, like welcoming a second spring. Seeing that Zu An still wanted to turn her down, she put on a stern expression and said, “Based on my understanding of the crown princess, she must have sensed you were lacking money and offered you some. Are you rejecting me because I’m old?”

“Of course not!” Zu An replied. How could he reject her after she had said such words? Somehow, he could hear a tiny voice in his head murmuring “Auntie, I don’t want to work anymore.” and “I was born with a weak constitution. The doctor said I was cursed to a life of mooching.”

“That’s more like it,” Liu Ning said. Her frown slowly smoothed upon seeing him accept her money. “Speaking of which, Ah Zu, you really don’t have to pay those people.”

“I don’t think it would be good to accept things from them for nothing. Besides, I reckon they’d just pass the burden down to those beneath them,” Zu An replied.

“Who says you’re accepting things from them for nothing? Your association with them already grants them power and authority; it’s just that you yourself are unaware of it,” Liu Ning said in a low voice. “It might be hard for you to see things from our perspective, as you grew up in a very different environment. Do you think they’d be grateful to you for paying them? Not at all. On the contrary, they would be horrified. They’d wonder if they had done something to displease you. They’d be on tenterhooks, worried that you’d find an excuse to replace them. Such fear could prompt them to take actions that harm you. Only if you accepted their favor would they think you were on their side and work hard for you.”

“...” Zu An sighed, saying, “How complicated. I should just focus on my cultivation.”

Liu Ning chuckled and replied, "You can leave such things for me to worry about. Speaking of which, there's a matter I'd like to discuss with you. Those who went to Violet Mountain are back. For the time being, we've incarcerated Princess Xiaodie and the others, but we aren't sure how we should deal with the situation."

"What are your thoughts?" Zu An asked. What a coincidence. Didn't Bi Linglong come here for the same thing oo?

Liu Ning got straight to the point. "If we had captured King Qi's son instead, we could have dealt with them for good, but we only have Zhao Xiaodie, who's inconsequential in the bigger picture. Zhao Zhi is busy preparing for war in his territory, ready to strike as soon as an opportunity arises. Things have only just settled down in the imperial court, so it'd be best not to incite him. Besides, Guan Chouhai and a few other sect leaders are implicated in this situation. If we pursue the matter, it might lead to severe backlash from the dao sects."

"Should we just let things drop? I'm fine with that," Zu An replied. Liu Ning and Bi Linglong might be arch-enemies, but they're extremely similar in their thinking.

"I can spare them from death, but that doesn't mean I'll let them off the hook. If we don't punish them, they'll think that the imperial court is weak and can be trampled on. I'll have to slowly work out the details though." Liu Ning harrumphed. She looked at Zu An and asked, "Aren't you tight on money? We can use this opportunity to squeeze them dry. They should be overjoyed that we're allowing them to buy their way out of this at all. I'm such a genius! I'm the only one in the world who would think of this."

Zu An didn't want to burst her bubble by saying that Bi Linglong had had a similar idea.

"I'll need to liaise with the crown princess about this," Liu Ning said. "She fought King Qi's faction for many years and there's a deep grudge between them. I don't think she'll let them off the hook that easily. You know my relationship with her, though. It'll only backfire if I talk to her."

"..." Once again, Zu An was rendered speechless. Eventually, he said, "I'll try. I think she should listen to me." It was just a moment ago that Bi Linglong advised me to talk to the empress. Will they kill me if they learn the truth?

“She treats you so well that I’m a little jealous of you,” Liu Ning sharply remarked. “Linglong is young and beautiful, whereas I’m already old and ugly.”

Zu An burst into laughter and replied, “If you were considered old and ugly, there would be no beauties in this world.”

Liu Ning suddenly leaned in, licked her lips, and said, “I delivered such a huge gift into your hands. How do you intend to repay me?” Her eyes were almost overflowing with desire.

This is the difference between mature women and young women, Zu An thought. Bi Linglong is much shyer. I have to make the move every time. She only sends out vague signals through her clothes and makeup. I would struggle if not for my meticulousness. In contrast, Liu Ning has no problem expressing her desires.

Liu Ning nuzzled against him like a little feral cat. Zu An thought that it would be a bad idea to turn her down, lest she suspect something between him and Bi Linglong. He also hadn’t fully vented his lust earlier, so it was hard for him to resist Liu Ning’s seduction.

Liu Ning sent him a seductive smile as she slowly slid down his body and opened her mouth. That horrified Zu An, and he quickly pulled her up. It’ll be terrible if she senses Linglong’s aura.

“Are you already so desperate?” Liu Ning asked, bursting into laughter as she lay on the table and lowered her waist, while silently inviting him in with her seductive gaze.

There was no way Zu An could hold himself back. He immediately pounced on her...

Meanwhile, Bi Linglong had left the courtyard together with Rong Mo, but moments later, she suddenly frowned and settled down on a nearby stone to rest.

“What’s wrong, young miss?” Rong Mo asked as she anxiously examined Bi Linglong from head to toe.

“I’m fine. I just need some rest. My legs are numb from sitting down too long earlier,” Bi Linglong explained with a furious blush.

“Did you do it for that long?” Rong Mo asked, her eyes widening in shock. “Is Sir Zu really that strong?”

Bi Linglong was embarrassed. She grabbed Rong Mo by the ear and exclaimed, “What nonsense are you spouting? We were just sitting around! What goes through that little head of yours all day?”

“You’re the one doing it. Can’t I at least think about it?” Rong Mo blurted out, but she quickly begged for mercy upon seeing Bi Linglong’s frown. It took a long time before she finally placated her master, saying, “Young miss, you don’t know how worried I was. I thought the empress would bump into the two of you...”

Bi Linglong’s face heated up. She replied, “What’s there to be worried about? Sir Zu and I are open and...”

“Of course, of course,” Rong Mo placidly replied, thinking. I’d be a fool to believe you. “Young miss, your legs were fine when you walked out of the courtyard earlier. Why did they suddenly go numb?”

“The empress was looking earlier. I had to hold it in no matter how numb they were...” Bi Linglong trailed off, but belatedly realized that Rong Mo was messing with her. She pulled Rong Mo’s cheeks and harrumphed. “Really! Momo, when did you become so bad?”

“Young miss, I’m concerned about you!” Rong Mo replied as she begged for mercy with a mischievous grin, though she also felt heartened. The two of them had been as close as sisters back when they were younger, but ever since Bi Linglong became the princess consort and had been forced to maintain a dignified front so as to earn the respect of others, the two of them had ended up drifting apart. She felt that the two of them had regained that closeness through their shared secret, though.

After messing around a bit, Bi Linglong intentionally put on a stern face and said, “Let’s continue heading down.”

“Young miss, are you sure you’ve rested enough? You don’t need to sit a little longer to recover?”

“ ... ”

“Young miss, you were in there for two whole hours. Sir Zu sure is impressive! I thought men tended to be quite fast.”

“Who did you hear that from... Pui! No one will take you for a mute if you stay quiet.”

“Young miss, are you sure your weak body can...”

“I’ll sever your tongue if you continue harping on like that!”

...

Bi Ziang had waited for a long time before he finally spotted his little sister. He immediately rushed up to her and exclaimed, “Linglong!”

“Big brother? Why are you here?” Bi Linglong asked.

“Our father wishes to meet you. He demanded I fetch you,” Bi Ziang said as he closely examined her. He remarked in surprise, “Linglong, your complexion has looked a lot better recently. Somehow, you look more beautiful too.”

She was pumped with love for two whole hours. How could her complexion not be good? Rong Mo thought to herself.

Bi Linglong must have guessed Rong Mo’s thoughts, as she directed a warning glare at her maid to not give her away. She turned to Bi Ziang and replied, “Father could have just sent someone else to call me...”

Halfway through her words, it belatedly struck her that her father should have visited her in the Eastern Palace instead. It was unseemly of a crown princess to pay respects to her subject. She thought, Father has been involved in politics for many years. It’s impossible for him to have made such a slip-up. Is there something he can’t tell me in the Eastern Palace?

Thus, she turned to Bi Ziang and said, “Let’s return to the Bi Manor first.” After getting onto the carriage, she asked with a grim expression, “What happened?”

“I’m not sure either. Our father said it concerns our clan’s life and death, though I think he might be exaggerating,” Bi Ziang replied nonchalantly. The Meng clan was done for, whereas their Bi clan had a rosy future ahead. He couldn’t imagine how things could unravel for them.

However, Bi Linglong's expression remained grim, as she knew her father wasn't the kind to crack a joke.

It didn't take them long to return to the Bi manor. Bi Qi dragged the two of them into a secret chamber, where not even personal maids like Rong Mo were allowed to approach.

Bi Ziang was flustered by the elaborate measures his father had taken. He asked, "Father, what happened?"

Bi Linglong also looked at her father grimly.

Bi Qi sighed and said, "We might be the next Meng clan tomorrow. No, it might even be worse for us."

"Father, what happened? Stop beating around the bush," Bi Linglong anxiously said.

"Have you heard the rumors on the street that Zu An might be the imperial grandson of the previous dynasty?" Bi Qi asked.

Bi Linglong nodded and said, "I have heard them, and dispatched men to deal with it. I reckon it's just a couple of troublemakers running their mouths."

"What if it's true?" Bi Qi asked with an intense gaze.

"So what if it's true? The previous dynasty has been gone for many years. No one cares about it anymore, especially now that his majesty has passed away," Bi Linglong said, unfazed. It didn't matter to her whether Zu An was a civilian or the imperial grandson of the previous dynasty; she liked him no matter who he was. She also believed that he wouldn't care about something like that given their relationship.

"You don't understand," Bi Qi said. He hesitated for a long while before finally revealing the truth. "I was the one the Zhao clan tasked to assassinate the previous dynasty's imperial offspring."

"What?!" Bi Ziang exclaimed in horror. Zu An was their greatest base of support. The worst thing that could happen at this juncture was for a rift to appear between them. Just thinking about the Meng clan's plight was enough to send shudders down his spine. It was no wonder his father said that the Bi clan could fare worse.

Bi Linglong had still been floating in the clouds a moment before after enjoying such great bliss, but the revelation dragged her down to the ground. She stood in a daze, as countless memories arose in her mind.

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Chapter 1955: Worry

No wonder Ah Zu has been asking me weird things recently—“Who would you save if your father and I fell into danger at the same time?”, “Will you put down everything to elope with me?”, and other such things, Bi Linglong thought. I thought he was being childish, and I had my hands full over my conflict with the Meng clan and the empress, so I didn’t take it to heart. Now that I think about it, this must have been what he meant.

“It’s over. The Meng clan has so many experts, including earth immortals, but he eradicated them so easily. We’ll be doomed if he wants vengeance on us!” Bi Ziang exclaimed, feeling more panicked the more he thought about it. “Father, why did you do that? Why did you mess with such a strong enemy for no reason?”

Bi Qi was already feeling frustrated about the situation, and Bi Ziang’s words only further annoyed him. “Idiot, do you think I could have predicted this? How was I to know there would be such a monstrous talent among those imperial heirs?”

Bi Ziang dared not to harp on the matter. He knew his father was right. It would have been a blessing if any of the imperial heirs survived at all, and they would have changed their names and lived humbly, so as to not get hunted down.

Who could have thought a monster like Zu An would sprout up? He didn’t have the protection of a powerful clan. He hadn’t been nurtured by a competent teacher from a young age. He didn’t have an abundance of resources to fall back on. And yet, he had still grown to become a powerful cultivator at such a young age. Was the legendary Phoenix Nirvana Sutra really that formidable?

Bi Linglong took a deep breath to compose herself before asking, "Father, what exactly did you do back then? If you only followed orders, it might still be possible to resolve this grudge."

Bi Qi's cheeks twitched. He shook his head and replied, "None of the imperial heirs of the previous dynasty lived to adulthood. I also secretly eliminated quite a few of the concubines and consorts. Do you think it's possible to come to a peaceful resolution?"

Bi Linglong felt as if her heart had been plunged into cold water. This was a huge blood debt. There was no way they could talk things out.

Bi Qi sighed and said, "We can only pray the rumors are false, and Zu An isn't an imperial heir of the previous dynasty. Linglong, it's more convenient for you to contact the Embroidered Envoy in the palace. Have them investigate the matter and report it to you. You have to deny it even if the report shows that Zu An is an imperial heir of the previous dynasty. This is also aligned with the interest of the current imperial family."

The sudden emergence of such an imperial heir was a huge threat to the Zhao clan too, after all.

Bi Linglong smiled bitterly upon hearing those words. Her father's solution would have worked had it been anyone else, but how could she hide her investigation from Zu An when he was the current commander of the Embroidered Envoy? She hesitantly flapped her mouth wordlessly, but she eventually decided to conceal his identity.

Bi Ziang's eyes lit up. He said, "You're right! The imperial court has the final say on whether he's an imperial heir or not. We can just say whatever we want!" His tense body finally relaxed, and he burst into laughter.

...

Meanwhile, Rong Mo was bored out of her mind outside the residence. Just then, she saw Bi Linglong walking out and quickly rushed up with a smile, calling out, "Young... miss?"

Bi Linglong's face was ghastly pale, and her eyes looked as if they had lost all spirit. It was a stark contrast to how she had been just before she entered; she was filled with despair. Her father and older brother had been praying that Zu An was oblivious to the secrets of the past, but based on Zu An's previous

behavior, there was a good chance he already knew the truth. She'd withheld that information from her father and older brother, as it was already meaningless at this point. There was nothing they could do other than to live out the rest of their lives in fear.

I'll just shoulder the burden instead.

"Young miss! Young miss, don't scare me! What happened?" Rong Mo asked, flustered.

"Let's head to Mount Yuquan," Bi Linglong said. She thought that it would be a good idea to talk things out with Zu An.

"Ah? Are we heading there again? Young miss, you were there for nearly four hours, and it nearly caused a scandal. To head there now would be..." Rong Mo trailed off. She wondered what was so good about Zu An that eroded Bi Linglong's self-control, but halfway through her sentence, Bi Linglong's frosty glare chilled her heart. She dared not run her mouth anymore and replied, "Yes, young miss!"

Soon, the carriage was on its way to Mount Yuquan once more. Halfway through the journey, however, Bi Linglong suddenly shouted, "Let's not head there anymore. Let's return to the palace instead."

Rong Mo was perplexed, but she could tell that Bi Linglong had a lot on her mind. Not wanting to disturb her at this sensitive juncture, she quietly instructed the carriage to turn around.

Meanwhile, in the Bi manor, Bi Qi's complexion remained dark even after Bi Linglong's departure. Bi Ziang, on the other hand, wanted to head out to find some friends to unwind after the huge scare he had just suffered.

"Stop! You're leaving just like that?" Bi Qi snapped as he furiously glared at his son.

He had previously been satisfied with his son, who was outstanding among his peers in terms of intellect and cultivation level. But ever since Zu An's appearance, he couldn't help but find his son lacking in all aspects. Zu An was younger than Bi Ziang, but he had already reached a height that Bi Ziang could never reach in his entire lifetime. Compared to Zu An, Bi Qi thought his son was nothing at all.

"Isn't the problem resolved?" Bi Ziang asked, unable to understand why his father was so angry.

"It's not that simple," Bi Qi said with a sneer. "Didn't you see your little sister's expression?"

"What's wrong?" Bi Ziang asked, taken aback. He had been so preoccupied with his emotions earlier that he hadn't had any attention to spare on Bi Linglong.

Bi Qi felt a surge of anger upon seeing Bi Ziang's reaction. He had to muster all his self-control to suppress his rage as he said, "Linglong's reaction was a little strange. At some points, she even held herself back from speaking. She's clearly hiding something from us."

Bi Ziang was perplexed, saying, "That doesn't make sense. Linglong is in the same boat as us; we'll either float or sink together, and she understands that. There's no reason for her to hide things from us."

Besides, Bi Linglong was on close terms with them. It wasn't as if they had mistreated her, so there was no reason for her to hold a grudge against them.

"I spent some time working with Zu An back on Violet Mountain. He's good with women," Bi Qi said with a gleam in his eyes. "Chu Chuyan is one thing, since they were a couple, but there's also Xie Daoyun and the dao sects' Pei Mianman. They're on close terms with him too. Even the White Jade Sect's Yan Xuehen, who showed no deference even to Zhao Han, seemed to harbor special feelings for him."

Bi Ziang was speechless. He could understand the regret and envy behind his father's words. Chu Chuyan had mesmerized many young nobles and young masters when she came to the capital in the past, and he was no exception. Many had thought she would reenact Yu Yanluo's miracle too. It was just a pity she hadn't wanted to be embroiled in a family conflict, and had ended up marrying a hoodlum. Many people had felt great pity upon hearing that.

Meanwhile, Yan Xuehen was practically the Chu Chuyan of Bi Qi's generation.

"That gigolo is good at winning women's favor. I wonder how he does it. It's not as if he's particularly handsome or anything," Bi Ziang grumbled.

“Handsome? Is that what you’re focused on?” Bi Qi retorted, kicking his son. “What’s important about a man is his capability. Looks are nothing! If you could easily slay an earth immortal too, you’d have countless beautiful women by your side.”

“I have many beautiful women by my side too...” Bi Ziang mumbled.

“Are any of them a match for the women he has by his side?” Bi Qi shot back, glaring at his son.

Bi Ziang was rendered speechless. He had many beauties by his side, but they were merely toys to him. None of them had the background and capability of the women Zu An had. It was then that he finally grasped what his father was getting at. He began, “Father, do you think that Linglong...”

“Looks like there’s still hope for you!” Bi Qi remarked, feeling a little heartened. “You know the situation with the crown prince. Linglong is a proud woman, so they’re likely just a couple in name, and it’ll stay that way for the rest of their life. Zu An is an extraordinary man. He is young, suave, and powerful, and he has the means to win women’s favor. The two of them have spent plenty of time together in the Eastern Palace. If I were a woman, I might have fallen for his charms.”

The thought of his father cosplaying as a woman left Bi Ziang utterly disgusted. He quickly shook off that thought and asked, “Father, do you think Linglong will side with Zu An over us? But given Linglong’s personality, I don’t think she’d do anything to harm our Bi clan...”

“I hope not too, but we can’t pin all our hopes on her,” Bi Qi said as his eyes glimmered in contemplation.

“What other choice do we have? Zu An can slay even an earth immortal; we don’t stand a chance against him,” Bi Ziang said, dismayed. “In my opinion, we should just get Linglong and Zu An together and pray that he’ll let us off on her account.”

“You fool! He wouldn’t give up on such a huge blood debt over a woman,” Bi Qi lectured him. “Have you forgotten my teachings? Only a weakling would entrust their hope to someone else’s pity. Zu An might be powerful, but who says we have to go head-on against him?”

“Don’t be reckless, father. The Meng clan’s downfall is a warning,” Bi Ziang worriedly advised.

“Don’t worry. Meng Yi made missteps one after another because he didn’t understand the extent of Zu An’s strength. I have enough intelligence in my hand to make my move. I won’t walk down the same path as the Meng clan,” Bi Qi said; he slowly calmed down as his lips curled up.

Bi Ziang’s heart skipped a beat. He could tell his father had made up his mind. I can only pray he knows what he’s doing, so he doesn’t ruin our Bi clan.

...

Meanwhile, an unkempt middle-aged man was drinking in a brothel. A woman approached him, only for him to impatiently chase her away.

“Tsk! Who in the world comes here only for the alcohol and not for the women?” the woman snapped as she walked away.

Ji Dengtu couldn’t be bothered to argue with her, thinking A real woman will never be as interesting as those in Zu An’s book. He reflectively reached for the booklet in his clothes, but he didn’t take it out in the end. Instead, he glanced in the direction of the city gate and murmured, “It’s been a few days since our agreed-on date. Why isn’t Xiaoxi here yet? Did something happen?”

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Chapter 1956: A Walkthrough

“I gave Xiaoxi a lot of life-preserving medicine, and she’s a smart child too. She should be fine,” Ji Dengtu murmured under his breath, but the alcohol he was drinking suddenly didn’t taste as fragrant anymore. In the end, he caved in and rushed out of the city.

A short while later, a flamboyant madam walked over, shook her slightly plump waist, and said, “Big brother, I heard you don’t like young women, so I personally came down...” Her words trailed off into silence as she realized no one was at the table. She screeched in anger, “That bastard! How dare he take advantage of us?”

A servant meekly pointed out, "He didn't pick a lady yet, so technically... he hasn't taken advantage of us yet, right?"

"Do you think I don't know that? How dare he drink and dash at our Red Sleeve Brothel?" the madam cried.

...

Meanwhile, Zu An had just sent the empress off from the academy's rear mountain. He thought about how he had envied protagonists with a harem in the past, but it was dawning on him that it wasn't easy for them either.

When women visit one after another in succession, it really takes a toll on my waist... Luckily, I've cultivated the Primordial Origin Sutra, so my body is tough enough. I wonder how ordinary people do it.

Zu An shook those miscellaneous thoughts out of his mind as he decided to take a trip to the imperial prison. Bi Linglong and Liu Ning had raised the same subject with him, so he figured it'd be best to settle it quickly, especially since Zhao Xiaodie knew about his relationship with Yun Jianyue and Yan Xuehen. It didn't take him long to arrive in the vicinity of the imperial prison.

Zhao Xiaodie was the princess of King Qi Manor, so it would look bad if she were thrown into the imperial prison without any charges. For now, she was incarcerated in a residence near the imperial prison instead. This residence was specially reserved for women of esteemed standing. After all, the imperial prison was a messy place. If the warden tried something, it wouldn't reflect well on anyone.

Sensing Zu An's approach, a guard quickly stepped forward to block his path, saying, "Unauthorized personnel are not..." Halfway through those words, he caught sight of Zu An's appearance and jolted in shock. He stuttered, "P-P-Paying respects to the regent. I was blind..."

Zu An was taken aback, asking, "You know me?" He had rushed here, so he didn't have his followers or official garment with him. He had still been worried about bumping into trouble due to that.

"My king, you're pulling my leg. There's no one in the imperial court who doesn't recognize you," the guard replied with a fawning smile. "Your portrait is the hottest painting on the streets right now."

In the past, most officials in the capital hadn't recognized Zu An despite his identity as a marquis and an individual favored by the Eastern Palace. There were lots of people with powerful backgrounds in the capital; there had been no reason for them to pay particular attention to a mere upstart. However, the battle with the Meng clan had shot him to fame.

"My portrait?" Zu An replied. He had asked that question in passing, but the guard's response prompted him to stop in place.

The guard squeezed on a smile that was as obsequious as possible, explaining "Common folk buy it to ward evil, lest nobles and officials bully them. As for nobles and officials, they buy it to..."

"To?" Zu An asked curiously.

"To educate their offspring and relatives about our regent's appearance, so they know not to cross you no matter how arrogant they usually are," the guard finished.

Zu An was speechless.

How can they sell my portrait without paying me money as the model? If everyone recognizes me, I won't be able to pretend to be a pig to devour a tiger.

Zu An couldn't help but think that something was amiss about this, so he made a mental note to have the Embroidered Envoy investigate the sale of his portraits later on. With a dark expression, he entered Zhao Xiaodie's room.

Zhao Xiaodie had been sitting dazedly by the windows, but Zu An's entrance startled her. Only upon seeing who it was did she pat her chest in relief and say, "Ah, it's big brother Zu. That scared me." She squeezed out a smile, but she couldn't conceal her frailty and exhaustion.

Zu An gestured for her to sit down, saying, "I'm here to see you. Did anyone bully you along the way?"

"Who would dare bully me? I'm the daughter of King Qi, not to mention that big brother Zu is protecting me," Zhao Xiaodie replied with a smile. "Big brother Zu, has the court decided on how it intends to deal with King Qi Manor?"

Zu An nodded and replied, "Yes. What you're worried about won't come to pass. The court has decided to deal with this matter privately. There's a good chance your father's honor will be restored, under the pretext that the two of them met with danger inside the secret dungeon." He had decided against claiming credit for the outcome despite Bi Linglong and Liu Ning's advice, as he thought it would be too despicable to do so.

Zhao Xiaodie had been feeling nervous about precisely that, and the verdict made her cry tears of joy. She asked, "Big brother Zu, am I dreaming?"

"You're not dreaming," Zu An replied with a smile. "That being said, your King Qi Manor won't be as influential as it used to be."

Zhao Xiaodie celebrated this good news with a dance of joy before she turned to Zu An and formally bowed to him, saying, "Big brother Zu, I'm grateful to you. It must be to your credit that our King Qi Manor is fine despite my father's grievous sin. I don't have the means to repay this debt, but if you don't mind, I'm willing to offer myself..."

Cough cough. "You don't need to do that," Zu An said, quickly stopping her.

"Big brother Zu, I mean it," Zhao Xiaodie said with a pout.

She was truly thankful to Zu An, as she'd thought that everyone in King Qi Manor would either be executed or imprisoned for life after the events at Violet Mountain. It was awfully lenient of the court to merely take away their fortune and influence. She knew there were plenty of people at the court who would exploit this opportunity to put down King Qi Manor.

The crown princess has fought with our King Qi Manor for many years now, so there's no doubt she'd have taken this chance to attack us. I heard the empress, who used to be a formidable figure in her earlier years, wasn't on good terms with father either. I wonder what kind of price big brother Zu had to pay to help me.

Zhao Xiaodie's eyes glittered with tears.

"You can repay me by not threatening me over untrue matters," Zu An replied with a smile.

Zhao Xiaodie knew he was referring to her threatening him over Yan Xuehen and Yun Jianyue, and her cheeks reddened. She said, "Big brother Zu, I was

in a desperate situation and had no choice but to do something foolish. I won't do that again. I've thought things through in recent days. Had I been unlucky enough to encounter someone vicious, they would have long since silenced me. It's only because of big brother Zu's kindness that I'm still alive. You're truly good to me. I have no way of repaying you, so I can only..."

"Stop, stop, stop!" Zu An cried, sweating buckets.

What's wrong with this woman? Why does she keep offering herself to me? She's a princess, for god's sake!

"I have other matters to attend to. You'll still have to stay here for a couple more days, but you should regain your freedom soon," he said as he frantically fled the scene.

The besotted Zhao Xiaodie caressed her cheeks and murmured, "He looks charming even when he's escaping. Ahh, how I wish to be whipped by him once more..." She squirmed in excitement as she recalled his whipping.

...

In the imperial prison, Guan Chouhai saw Zu An and let out a sigh. He asked, "Sir Zu, are you here to claim my life?"

Zu An sat down before him and replied, "Sect leader Guan, there's no need to be so down."

"I was haughty on Violet Mountain, but far too many things have happened since," Guan Chouhai lamented.

Back then, they had gathered many experts to encircle Zhao Han, but the emperor had easily crushed all of them. They had later entered that secret dungeon and encountered even more formidable beings. Sect leaders on par with him, such as Xuan Bajing, had been killed as easily as chickens or dogs. And now, he was stuck in the imperial prison, with his eventual fate unknown. It was inevitable that he would feel down.

"Sir Zu, I did what I did as an individual; my sect has nothing to do with it. I hope you can look after my sect in view of our past ties," he continued.

"You speak as if you're writing your will," Zu An said with a chuckle. "You may rest assured. It's over now. You'll be fine. That being said, you'll still have to

be punished for your deeds. The imperial court will be handing out punishments in due time, though it'll be something you can take."

"Really?" Guan Chouhai exclaimed; he was dumbstruck, as assassinating the emperor was a grievous crime regardless of the dynasty. He couldn't believe they weren't about to be executed for it. Even if they were still going to be punished for it, that was practically nothing at all.

"Of course," Zu An replied.

Guan Chouhai kneeled to Zu An and declared, "I, Guan Chouhai, and everyone at the Heavenly Sorrow Sect will never forget Sir Zu's magnanimity!"

Zu An supported him to his feet as he replied, "Sect leader Guan, there's no need for that. What's more important to the imperial court right now is maintaining stability. It's lost too many top-notch experts in recent days, to the point that it needs some time to recover."

"Sir Zu is truly noble. You don't ask for anything in return despite having done us such a huge favor. I am truly impressed by your magnanimity," Guan Chouhai said.

Zu An was baffled, thinking, I feel as if all of them have vivid imaginations.

"I heard the wardens' gossip. They thought I couldn't hear them, but I am still a grandmaster, after all. Even with restrictions placed on me, my hearing surpasses that of any mortal. They said the crown princess was angered by our audacity for assassinating the emperor, and she intended to kill me as a warning to the others. At the same time, she'd reorganize the daoist sects. I reckoned our Heavenly Sorrow Sect would be wiped from the face of the world by the time she was done.

"Later, a bunch of people came and talked about how much the emperor and empress loved each other. They said she was infuriated when she learned about the death of her husband, and that she made a declaration in the imperial court that she'd hunt down every last one of us."

Guan Chouhai looked at Zu An with a fearful expression and said, "Currently, the empress and the crown princess are the most powerful individuals in the capital. Only Sir Zu could persuade them otherwise. How can I not be grateful to you for your help?"

Zu An was speechless.

Clearly, Bi Linglong and Liu Ning had sent their people down to relay false information to Guan Chouhai and the others, so as to create the impression that Zu An was the one who had saved them. Those two women are doing me a huge favor, though the way they slander each other is truly...

Guan Chouhai took off the ring on his finger and said, "In this storage ring are the treasures I have stockpiled over many years. Sir Zu, please accept my token of goodwill, or else my heart will never feel at ease. There'll be more once I return to the Heavenly Sorrow Sect."

With all that had happened, if he still refused to accept Guan Chouhai's gift, Zu An would be letting down both Bi Linglong and Liu Ning.

...

After leaving the imperial prison, Zu An returned to the academy and made his way to Jiang Luofu's residence. He'd put aside some of the Marrow Cleansing Pills he refined for her and Ji Xiaoxi.

Since I happen to be free, I'll pass the pills to them today.

Speaking of which, Ji Dengtu mentioned Xiaoxi went out to pick some herbs. Is she not back yet? I should ask Jiang Luofu about it later.

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Chapter 1957: Shadowmoon Lake

Zu An reached into his robe, where he had stowed the gifts he had received from the sects.

After meeting Guan Chouhai, he had visited the chief disciples of the other sects. Following the battle at Violet Mountain, most of the sects had some people arrested and imprisoned, except for the White Jade Sect and Jadedfall Palace, which Zu An was close to.

Zu An had thus calmed them down and explained that the matter had been resolved. Those people looked up at him, their eyes filled with gratitude.

As the prodigies of their respective sects, they had acted incredibly haughtily on Violet Mountain. They had even looked down on Zu An, who was the same age as them, thinking he had only climbed to his position through bootlicking. However, the events that transpired afterward had made them realize that they weren't on the same level. Recently, there had even begun to be rumors that their respective sect leaders weren't a match for Zu An.

Despite their having treated him with disdain, Zu An was still willing to put aside their differences and save them while they were being beaten down! They felt both grateful and apologetic toward him, especially when some had even thought about fighting with him over Fairy Chu.

It helped that the empress and the crown princess had each been spreading word about how the other intended to cruelly deal with the sects, which made the prisoners even more thankful to Zu An. They were more than happy to use their own savings to thank him.

Zu An thought about how he had squandered most of his wealth on pill refinement as of late, so he didn't hesitate to accept their gifts.

"I should be able to refine a few more pills with this much money," he muttered to himself, lamenting Youzhao's lacking aptitude. She had to consume quite a few Marrow Cleansing Pills to raise her talent.

It's fortunate that the others are quite talented, so a single pill is enough for them. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to provide for them even if I bankrupt myself.

Before Zu An knew it, he had already arrived outside Jiang Luofu's residence. He was just about to knock on the door when it opened from the inside. His eyes lit up. Jiang Luofu had a disposition reminiscent of a career woman climbing the corporate ladder, or the teachers in a certain genre of movies, which made him feel as if he had transmigrated back to his previous world. Her well-proportioned legs look perfect in black stockings, like ham and cup noodles, cumin and lamb, or Angelina Jolie and me.

"Big sister Jiang, are you heading out?" Zu An asked.

"Mm," Jiang Luofu said with a nod. There was a hint of worry on her face as she asked, "Were you looking for me?"

Zu An took out a small box and handed it to her, saying, "I have a Marrow Cleansing Pill in here. It can raise a person's cultivation talent."

Jiang Luofu was startled. She asked, "Is this what you've been doing in the pill refinement room? Is this pill that amazing?"

"Haven't you been curious as to why I'm so talented? You can credit the pills," Zu An explained with a chuckle.

Jiang Luofu was both moved and embarrassed, as she hadn't expected him to reveal such an important secret. She said, "This is too valuable. I don't know how you refined it, but I'm guessing the ingredients include rare treasures. You should keep it for Chuyan and the others."

"I'll refine more for them. This is for you," Zu An said as she stuffed the container into her hand.

Jiang Luofu blushed and replied, "I can't accept such an invaluable gift when I haven't done anything. I'm not your... It doesn't feel right to accept this from you."

"Who says you haven't done anything? I'd have never achieved what I did if not for big sister Jiang taking care of me in Brightmoon City," Zu An said.

Jiang Luofu bit her lips and said, "I'll accept it then, but I ought to remind you that this pill is incredibly valuable. Others will covet it if they learn about it."

Cultivation was tough, and most people had to cultivate from a young age to temper their bodies. If it became known that a pill could rewrite their fate, especially with Zu An as a success story to prove its effectiveness, the world of cultivation would go into a frenzy over that pill. After all, anyone in possession of it could nurture an army of top-notch experts. No matter how powerful Zu An was, it wouldn't be a wise decision for him to become the enemy of all cultivators in the world.

"Don't worry, I know what I'm doing. It's not an easy feat to refine the pill, and its ingredients are incredibly rare too. It's impossible to produce it in large quantities," Zu An replied with a chuckle.

Jiang Luofu was touched. He actually prepared such a valuable pill for me...

“Hurry up and eat it. It could lose its potency if left for too long,” Zu An reminded her. He had only begun refining these pills recently, so he wasn’t sure about the finer details regarding their expiry and so on; thus, it was best to consume them right away.

Jiang Luofu nodded. She opened the box, revealing a glistening pill inside. Even at a glance, the pill looked anything but ordinary. As soon as she popped it into her mouth, it dissolved into a stream of energy that flowed down her throat. At that instant, she felt an intricate connection with the world, as the ki from the world washed through her limbs and organs.

Seeing how she unhesitatingly consumed it, Zu An said teasingly, “You didn’t even test it. Aren’t you afraid of me spiking it?”

Jiang Luofu’s cold face turned slightly red as she glared at him, saying, “I wouldn’t just eat any pill from anyone. You’re different.”

Zu An’s heart skipped a beat. He wanted to ask her how he was different, but it would seem as if he were flirting with her.

Just then, Jiang Luofu’s eyebrows shot up. She began squirming in discomfort, as she felt something sticky clinging onto her. Did this fellow really spike the pill?

It was then that Zu An remembered the pill’s side effects. He said, “I forgot to tell you. The pill cleanses your meridians and marrow and expels the impurities within, so you’ll get dirty.”

He recalled the situation when he had first eaten the pill. His talent had been severely lacking, and he’d had many impurities in his body, so he had ended up expelling a lot of filth. Jiang Luofu’s cultivation and talent were much higher than his own had been back then, so the amount of impurities she expelled would be much lower.

“You should have said so earlier!” Jiang Luofu exclaimed, feeling embarrassed. As she rushed into her room, her usual coldness vanished. Given her standing, it was no surprise she had a pool in her residence.

Zu An coughed awkwardly and said, “Big sister Jiang, you can take your time to wash up. I’ll take my leave first.” It wouldn’t be good for him to linger around when she was going to wash up.

“Don’t go. Come in,” Jiang Luofu said.

“???” Zu An was perplexed. He instinctively imagined the sight of Jiang Luofu taking off her black stockings by the pool, which sent a shudder through his body. He quickly composed himself and asked, “Is that a good idea?”

“What are you thinking? I need your help!” Jiang Luofu replied, although her voice carried a hint of coyness.

As he stepped into her residence, Zu An heaved a sigh of relief.

“Come closer. Over here,” Jiang Luofu said over the sound of splashing water.

Zu An made his way to the back of her residence, where he could vaguely see a steaming pool in the middle of a lush forest. Jiang Luofu was bathing in it with her fair shoulders exposed. A layer of white fog drifted above the pool, concealing the wonders hidden beneath the water. Even so, it was still possible to see the outline of her silhouette, which arguably looked even more tempting.

Zu An was taken aback. She sure strips quickly!

“Don’t look into the water. I know that given your current cultivation level, you can see right through the pool’s concealment formation,” Jiang Luofu crossed her arms in front of her breasts as she said those embarrassing words with an incredibly natural expression.

“You were the one who told me to enter,” Zu An replied in annoyance as he turned around.

This would be considered a badger game[1] in my previous life, right?

Jiang Luofu pursed her lips and said, “I was about to head out to deal with urgent business, but after taking your pill, I now have to bathe. On top of that, I’m feeling a bit weak and fatigued, so I doubt I’ll be able to cross blows with others. I have no choice but to ask for your help, but I think you’ll be happy to help me with this.”

“What is it?” Zu An asked, perplexed.

Jiang Luofu’s expression turned severe as she said, “Xiaoxi might have met with trouble.”

“What?!” Zu An exclaimed in alarm

“My senior brother recently brought Xiaoxi to Copper Gong Mountain, as she needed some ingredients there for her pill refinement. As Copper Gong Mountain is located near the capital, the army regularly cleanses the area, so there aren’t any dangerous beasts there. My senior brother thought it wouldn’t be too risky, so he gave her permission to head there herself while he visited the academy first,” Jiang Luofu said, her eyes brimming with worry as she continued, “It’s already been three days since their agreed meeting date, and Xiaoxi still isn’t here yet.”

“Why didn’t anyone tell me earlier?!” Zu An exclaimed anxiously.

“My senior brother might be a loafer, but he cares deeply about Xiaoxi. He’s always on the lookout for young men eyeing Xiaoxi. You have a reputation out there, so it isn’t surprising he’s guarded against you,” Jiang Luofu said. “He often says that the ones he needs to be careful of are ‘Teacher Bai’, ‘Principal Gao’[2], and you. Is that some kind of code between the two of you?”

Zu An was speechless.

Damned Ji Dengtu. I was kind enough to show you the wisdom of our predecessors, but you turned it against me!

Jiang Luofu continued, “It’s normal to get delayed for a day or two while gathering herbs, so my senior brother didn’t think much of it at the start. That being said, he’s been camping at the city entrance for the past few days. In the end, he succumbed to his anxiety and headed to Copper Gong Mountain to look for Xiaoxi. He asked me to wait at the city entrance in his stead lest Xiaoxi returned and he missed her.

“I’ve been waiting for a few days now, and yet not only has Xiaoxi not appeared, I’ve even lost contact with my senior brother. I gave of the academy’s messenger pigeons to keep in touch. These messenger pigeons have been through strict training, and my great senior brother went a step further to place a formation on them to guard against predators and arrows. It should have been unlikely for anything to happen to these messenger pigeons, but I haven’t heard from him for days now. I’m worried something might have gone awry, so I decided to take a look.”

Zu An spent a moment in contemplation before replying, “You’ll experience a period of weakness after consuming the Marrow Cleansing Pill, so you should

focus on integrating its medicinal energy instead. Leave this matter to me. Do you know the rough area they're in?"

Copper Gong Mountain was not small. Blindly searching for someone there was no different from finding a needle in a haystack.

"I only know that Xiaoxi was looking for Shadowmoon Grass. I asked my fourth senior brother, and he said it grows near Shadowmoon Lake," Jiang Luofu explained, drawing a simple map in midair with her finger.

"Leave it to me," Zu An replied with a nod. He rushed into the sky and soon vanished over the horizon.

Jiang Luofu stared at his swiftly disappearing silhouette.

There should be no problem since he's making a move, right?

However, she couldn't shake off the ominous feeling looming in her heart, so she decided to look for her little senior sister to make a divination about the matter.

1. Badger game is an extortion scheme where you put the victim in compromising positions so that you can blackmail them. 📖

2. Teacher Bai and Principal Gao is a meme in China, referring to likable teachers that students tend to have crushes on. 📖

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Chapter 1958: Unknown Danger

Worried that something could have happened to Ji Xiaoxi, Zu An flew straight toward Copper Gong Mountain. His movements caught the attention of many in the capital.

"As expected of the regent. He disappears in the blink of an eye."

"Isn't there a formation forbidding flight in the capital? Why does it not work on him?"

“Don’t you know that officials are exempted from the laws? Such restrictions only apply to peasants like us.”

...

Those from the major clans in the capital stared at the sky in confusion.

“He appears to be in a hurry. Did something happen in the imperial court?”

“I hope that star of misfortune never returns.”

...

In the Palace of Peace, Eunuch Lu greeted the empress behind a curtain and reported, “Your Majesty, the regent has just left the capital in a hurry.”

“Got it,” the empress said, waving her hand lazily.

Given Zu An’s cultivation level, there’s no need to worry about him.

Eunuch Lu backed out of the room in surprise.

Her majesty usually keeps a close eye on the happenings in the capital, but she doesn’t seem bothered by Zu An’s movements. Indeed, women are more tolerant of powerful men.

Thinking about how relaxed and lazy the empress had looked earlier filled Eunuch Lu with jealousy and agitation.

Her majesty must have had a good time at the academy’s rear mountain.

In the Eastern Palace, Rong Mo had been chatting by the windowsill when she suddenly rushed to the crown princess and reported, “Young miss! I heard the regent has just left the capital in a hurry!”

“Got it,” Bi Linglong replied weakly. Her mind was too occupied with the grudge between Zu An and the Bi clan to bother with any other matters.

Rong Mo was stunned. The young miss has always prioritized news about Sir Zu above all things else, but she looks so disinterested now. What in the world happened today?

Meanwhile, Zu An finally arrived at Copper Gong Mountain.

It was said that the mountain got its name from the copper gong sounds caused by the raging Pillchasing River ramming against the mountain at its winding curves, though the imperial court's official documents attributed it to the mountain's rich copper mines. However, the copper mines had already been emptied out after a thousand years of mining, so the imperial court had abandoned them. Over time, many of the old mines had accumulated rainwater, forming small lakes. Due to the rich minerals in the mountain, those lakes were extremely clear, looking like sapphire gemstones from afar. Among the lakes, Shadowmoon Lake was the largest and most beautiful one of all, but it was rarely visited as it was located in the depths of the Copper Gong Mountain.

There was a small town at the foot of Copper Gong Mountain, but there was hardly anyone walking on the streets even though it wasn't nighttime yet. Zu An didn't think much of it, as the population density in this world was much lower than that of the modern world. He was about to pass through the town when he noticed a few Embroidered Envoys heading toward the mountain.

"Oh?" Zu An muttered, then flitted forward and landed before the Embroidered Envoys.

"Who is it?" The Embroidered Envoys had been chatting merrily when Zu An's arrival alarmed them, and they quickly drew their weapons.

"Not bad. You're vigilant," Zu An said, nodding in satisfaction. These people wore embroidered clothes and metal masks, signifying their identities. He didn't bother changing into his Chief Commander's robes since he could mobilize them in his official capacity too.

"R-Regent?" One of the Embroidered Envoys recognized him and hurriedly bowed. The others jolted in shock before anxiously bowing as well. There was no way they wouldn't know the most famous person in the capital at the moment.

Zu An was about to reach for his waist token to reveal his identity, but he was startled by their response. He asked, "You know me?"

"We have seen your portrait," the Embroidered Envoys replied with fawning smiles.

Zu An was speechless. Those damn merchants have been spreading my portraits around the capital. I'll conduct a thorough investigation to see who's behind it.

He had initially thought those selling his portraits were after profits, but he quickly realized that couldn't be the case.

Hardly any merchants in the capital have seen me before, and even if they saw me by coincidence, it would be hard for them to capture my appearance accurately through their memories. The portraits must have been highly accurate for these Embroidered Envoys to recognize me right away... It must have been the doing of someone who's familiar with my appearance.

Could it be someone from the imperial court?

However, Zu An was too worried about Xiaoxi to dwell on it. He asked, "What are you doing here? Did something happen in the vicinity?"

Any incident involving the mobilization of the Embroidered Envoy was anything but trifling. Could their appearance in Copper Gong Mountain be related to Xiaoxi?

The Embroidered Envoys quickly put on a serious expression and replied, "Regent, something bizarre is indeed going on at Copper Gong Mountain. The locals here make a living from chopping wood in the mountains and selling it in the capital in the morning. However, all the woodcutters who recently entered the mountain have vanished.

"The woodcutters are veterans who often navigate the mountain. They know which places are dangerous, and they usually limit themselves to the outer perimeter of the mountain. Far too many people have disappeared to shrug it off as an accident, and the terrified locals claim that there are monsters living on the mountain."

"Which household was the first one to talk about the monsters?" Zu An asked.

The Embroidered Envoys were startled. They hadn't expected the regent to be so professional; that was also the angle they were approaching from.

"The rumors originate from an old woodcutter who goes by the surname of Zhang, living on the west side of town. He claims to have encountered monsters in the mountain, and that he only survived by hiding inside a tree

hole,” the leader of the Embroidered Envoys replied. “The local magistrate did dispatch a team of constables to look into the matter. They paid a visit to Woodcutter Zhang and had him lead them to the monsters. As elite soldiers from the capital purge Copper Gong Mountain of powerful monsters now and then, the constables should have been enough to deal with this matter. And yet, the constables disappeared after entering the mountain too.”

The Embroidered Envoy usually dealt with the most severe cases, but they still felt chills running down their backs as they recounted the story.

Zu An nodded in realization. He had been perplexed by the presence of the Embroidered Envoys, as the disappearances of woodcutters shouldn’t have warranted their mobilization. However, it made sense if an entire team of constables had disappeared too.

“Do you know where the monsters are usually located?” he asked, deducing that this matter was related to Xiaoxi’s disappearance too.

“It frequents this area,” one of the Embroidered Envoys replied as he took out a map and drew a circle on it. “Woodcutter Zhang is one of the bolder ones, and he inherited a map from his father too. Every now and then, he ventured deep into the mountain to harvest fresh mushrooms or rare herbs to sell. He encountered one of the monsters while he was harvesting mushrooms.”

Zu An glanced at the map and noticed that the demarcated area wasn’t too far away from Shadowmoon Lake. He asked, “Did he describe the monster’s appearance?”

Could some of the fiends be dwelling on this mountain?

The Embroidered Envoys shook their heads and said, “We don’t have any information about that. Woodcutter Zhang should have told the constables, but the constables have all gone missing.”

Zu An nodded, advising them, “Proceed carefully and prioritize your safety above anything else. Should you meet with danger, don’t hesitate to request help from the capital’s Embroidery House.”

He had no plans to work with the Embroidered Envoys. He urgently needed to look for Xiaoxi, and these Embroidered Envoys wouldn’t be able to catch up with him.

“Thank you, my liege!” the Embroidered Envoys replied. The Envoys were known for their strict discipline. Even in the face of danger, they were expected to charge in and acquire useful intelligence. Zu An’s edict gave them the option to retreat without being punished by the Embroidery House, and that greatly increased their chances of survival. Naturally, they were grateful to him for that.

Zu An nodded. He soared into the air and headed deeper into Copper Gong Mountain. He noticed the forest beneath him growing so lush that the top canopy completely covered the ground. It was no doubt hard for humans to venture into such grounds. A white fog soon appeared, and it grew thicker the deeper Zu An ventured into the forest.

“Hm?” Zu An couldn’t help but notice that the white fog had gotten unnaturally thick. He had never seen a mountain forest with such thick fog before. Furthermore, the fog obscured his divine sense, forcing him to lower his altitude to better perceive the situation below.

He landed on the canopy of a tree and scanned the area. Then, he took out the jade badge to communicate with nearby animals. Now that his divine sense had gotten much sharper, he was less reliant on the jade badge, but there were still specific situations in which it proved to be more useful.

It didn’t take him long to form a connection with the small animals dwelling in the forest, be they canaries, boars, or rabbits. Their thoughts flowed into his mind, and he sieved through them for useful information. He sensed that the animals were fearful of something, though they were somehow unable to process what the source of that fear was. He could only sense that it was something purple.

His eyes suddenly narrowed as he picked up on something useful. He immediately flitted into the distance, and the tree he had been standing on swayed in his wake. He soon arrived within the vicinity of a lake. It wasn’t Shadowmoon Lake, but one of the other nameless mine lakes. There was an abandoned campsite next to it, suggesting that someone had been here not too long ago.

He squatted down and inspected the faint yellow powder scattered around the campsite. It was the feces of a dragon. Back in Brightmoon City, Ji Xiaoxi had used it to deter ferocious beasts from approaching her.

She was here!

Zu An carefully examined the campsite, and his heart sank. There were many footprints around it, indicating she wasn't the only one here. That girl is too kind and trusts others too easily. Humans are sometimes scarier than beasts.

He inspected the scene. He was a veteran in this field due to his experience as an Embroidered Envoy, and it didn't take him long to come up with a conjecture.

There are no signs of battle here, so it's unlikely Xiaoxi was harmed by the other humans residing in this campsite. They didn't manage to keep the tent, and the pot beside the campfire was overturned. They must have left in a hurry. Were they escaping from something terrifying?

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Chapter 1959: Unkillable Monster

Zu An found some traces of darkened blood on a nearby severed tree branch. Someone had gotten injured. There were no corpses at the scene, so there were no confirmed casualties for the time being.

Even human-eating ferocious beasts would at least leave behind bones, but there are no such traces to be found in the vicinity. What could they be hiding from? Is it the same purple thing the little animals are frightened of?

Zu An tried to control the little animals again, but there weren't many in the vicinity, and all of them were agitated, making them hard to control. He looked at the thick white fog around him and harrumphed. He flew into the air, took out a formation disc, and swiftly fiddled with it. Then, he took out dozens of formation flags and scattered them in the surroundings amid flashes of golden light. Soon, he finished constructing a Wind Convergence Formation.

The air in the forest began to flow, thinning the white fog. Zu An unleashed his divine sense once more. It was still hindered by the fog, but he was able to spread it across a wider area now.

His recent bankruptcy wasn't just due to him squandering money on pill refinement, but formation discs and formation flags too.

The seven cultivation skills in the Baopu Sutra are extremely money-consuming. I wonder how Immortal Ruler Baopu amassed so much money.

He combed his surroundings with his divine sense as if he were using a powerful radar. It was a dumb method, but it worked due to his powerful cultivation. Any other grandmaster would have been blinded by the white fog.

Suddenly, he sensed a slight ki ripple coming from the northeast. Someone was fighting there. He quickly flew over and soon arrived at the scene.

To his delight, he spotted a delicate lady standing under a tree. She wore a green dress that could calm anyone down, and the exquisite medicine pouch on her waist only added to her cuteness.

It was Ji Xiaoxi!

She was the same as Zu An remembered her. She had an adorable appearance, and her chubby cheeks evoked a desire to pinch them. She was surrounded by a group of injured young men and women, who appeared to be protecting her. All of them were looking at the enemy with frightened eyes.

It was a ghostly apparition cloaked in purple flames, that laughed chillingly while drifting around them. From time to time, it attempted to breach their defense line. The group tried to fight back, but their attacks didn't work on the ghostly apparition. Its purple flames simply flickered, showing no signs of injury at all.

"Our attacks don't work on him!" they screamed in despair.

The only thing stopping the purple flame ghost was the golden light barrier maintained by the middle-aged man standing at the forefront. However, the barrier was dimming so swiftly that it wouldn't last for more than a few seconds.

Zu An narrowed his eyes, thinking, The ki ripple I felt earlier was from the middle-aged man unleashing that barrier. It's probably his trump card. However, the purple flame ghost is too powerful. At this rate, they won't last long.

Could this purple flame ghost be the entity the little animals were afraid of?

"I can't hold on anymore! You have to run, Miss Ji! I'll stall this monster. Run in different directions, so the monster can't capture us all in a single swoop!" the middle-aged man bellowed.

"I still have some recovery medicine here! Take it!" Ji Xiaoxi cried, refusing to run. Instead, she took out a couple of pills and handed them over.

"I won't make it in time..." the middle-aged man murmured as the golden light finally shattered, despair flashing through his eyes. He spewed blood before collapsing to the ground.

He mustered his last shreds of strength and lunged forward to stop the purple flame ghost, but it was too fast and instantly sidestepped him to attack the others. They were filled with despair. Their attacks were ineffective against the purple flame ghost, and there was no time for them to escape. The only fate awaiting them was to be slaughtered.

Just then, a white surge of light descended from the sky. The purple flame ghost's fire was quickly extinguished, and it froze into an ice sculpture.

The group rubbed their eyes. The powerful monster who plunged us into despair is gone, just like that? What happened?

"Xiaoxi, are you alright?" a voice called out. It was only then that the crowd noticed another person standing among them. Startled, they quickly pointed their weapons at him. They only heaved a sigh of relief when they saw that it was a suave young man.

Ji Xiaoxi's eyes widened in surprise and delight at the sight of the man. She cried, "Big brother Zu?!"

Zu An patted her head and said, "I'm late. You must have been frightened."

The others were taken aback. They knew Ji Xiaoxi was covered in poison from head to toe. There had been a rascal who wanted to take advantage of her, but as soon as his hand nicked her body, he screamed bloody murder. And yet, this man dared to directly touch her with his bare hand...

To their surprise, nothing happened. Ji Xiaoxi made no attempt to stop him either; if anything, she seemed comfortable with it. A few of the men present felt their hearts shattering. It was hard not to fall in love with Ji Xiaoxi when she was so adorable, kind, and gentle.

Ji Xiaoxi suddenly remembered the middle-aged man. She quickly lifted her skirt to rush over to his side. She took out a couple of pills and anxiously urged him, “Big brother Sun, eat this!”

The middle-aged man was bleeding from his eyes and nose, and his breathing had turned faint. However, he shook his head and said, “Miss Ji, don’t waste your medicine on me. I’m already on my last breath after using my ultimate move.”

Ji Xiaoxi quickly inspected his condition. Moments later, she said through tears, “Big brother Sun, you wouldn’t have ended up in such a state if not to save me...”

The middle-aged man chuckled and said, “I, Sun Hai, would have been long dead if you hadn’t saved me back then. I’d say it has been worthwhile. I was able to live so many more years and even repay my debt to you.”

His hearty attitude further saddened Ji Xiaoxi. The other young men and women felt downcast too. They had fought together for so long that a bond had been forged among them.

Just then, Zu An said, “Calm down. You aren’t going to die.” He walked up to the middle-aged man to feel his pulse.

“Big brother Zu...” Ji Xiaoxi murmured, perplexed. With her skills, she could tell that Sun Hai was too severely injured to be saved.

Zu An didn’t reply. He placed his hand on Sun Hai’s back and infused a surge of pure ki into the man. Sun Hai’s previously pale complexion swiftly regained a healthy glow. His eyes widened in shock, as he could sense vitality returning to his body.

Moments later, Zu An retracted his palm. He turned to Ji Xiaoxi and said, “I’ve stabilized his condition. The rest is up to you.”

Ji Xiaoxi checked Sun Hai’s pulse, and her face lit up in delight. She cried out, “Big brother Sun, there’s hope for you!”

She took out a couple of pills and fed them to Sun Hai. Following that, she took out a silver needle to direct the medicinal energy via acupuncture. Soon, Sun Hai’s face turned red, and he spat out a mouthful of fresh blood.

The others exclaimed in shock, “Big brother Sun?!”

Ji Xiaoxi wiped away her perspiration and explained with a sweet smile, “Don’t worry, he’s just spitting out the clotted blood in his body. He should be able to recover with some rest.”

Sun Hai clasped his fist and said, “Miss Ji, I never thought you’d save my life once more.”

Ji Xiaoxi pursed her lips, replying, “I wasn’t the one who saved you this time. It was big brother Zu.”

Sun Hai slapped his forehead and said, “Look at how forgetful I am. Young master, thank you for saving my life. I’m impressed by your ability.” He was shocked by Zu An’s immense ki that felt as vast as the sea. In comparison, his was nothing more than a droplet of water. He couldn’t imagine how someone as young as Zu An could have reached such a high cultivation level.

Just then, one of the young women asked, “Could you be... Sir Libationer?”

Zu An was stunned. Most people in the capital would address me as 'regent'. The only ones who would address me as the libationer are...

He looked at their clothes and asked, “You’re students of the academy?”

“It really is Sir Libationer!” the students exclaimed, feeling as excited as fans meeting their idol. They quickly explained the situation, saying, “We received a mission from the academy to eradicate monsters here.”

While the imperial court dispatched soldiers to eliminate powerful beasts residing on the mountain every year, they were bound to miss some. Thus, the academy occasionally dispatched students to clear the beasts on the mountain too. The beasts remaining on the mountain tended not to be too strong, which made them good for training the students. Who could have thought they would bump into this kind of monster?

Ji Xiaoxi blinked in surprise. She knew these young men and women were proud people, so it was unlikely for them to lie about such a thing. Big brother Zu is incredible. He actually became the libationer! Right! Wasn’t my father going to pay respects to the new libationer? I wonder how he’ll react upon meeting big brother Zu.

“Ah, so it’s Sir Libationer!” Sun Hai remarked, nodding in realization.

There was no internet in this world, so news didn’t spread fast. Other than the major powers, who had eyes around to keep abreast of the latest happenings, most civilians were unaware of the events that had transpired in recent days.

Zu An nodded in acknowledgment before turning his attention to the ice sculpture. The others did the same too.

“What’s this monster? I don’t think it’s recorded in the academy’s ‘Encyclopedia of Monsters’. Have you seen it before?”

“I haven’t seen it before. None of our attacks worked on it. Could it be a fiend?”

Zu An shook his head and answered, “That’s because it’s impervious to physical attacks. It isn’t a fiend.”

He had been the regent of the Fiends for a while, but he had never met such a being before. In particular, its purple flame felt disconcerting, as if it were an anomaly of the world.

Just then, the ice sculpture cracked. A purple light whizzed out and charged toward Zu An. It was the purple flame ghost! The others didn’t have time to react at all. They could only scream out of sheer instinct.

However, the purple light quickly dimmed. A hand firmly held the purple flame ghost by its neck, not loosening despite its thrashing.

Still, Zu An was startled, remarking, “Hm? Is it capable of reviving?”

He was certain that the purple flame ghost had already died, but it suddenly came back to life. What in the world is this monster?

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Chapter 1960: The Missing Corpses

“Speak! What’s your background?” Zu An bellowed.

Entities this powerful usually had sentience. However, the ghost didn't answer. Instead, it let out a piercing screech that made the others frown in discomfort.

You have successfully trolled the Purple Flame Ghost for +404 +404 +404...

Zu An was stunned by the notifications from the Rage System. So, this monster is known as the Purple Flame Ghost. The Rage System is truly amazing at times. I've never heard of it before though. I don't think there are any records of it. I should have the Embroidery House look into it when I return.

Just then, the Purple Flame Ghost released a burst of purple light toward Zu An's forehead. The others were startled. The light was so fast that they couldn't even see what it was. Even a powerful cultivator could succumb to an assault from so close up.

Zu An raised his hand. His movement looked incredibly slow to others, reminiscent of an ordinary mortal. It shouldn't have been fast enough to stop the purple light in time...

And yet, it did.

Zu An took a closer look at the item he had caught. It was a crystalline object shaped like a rhombus. It was as thin as a cicada's wing, but it was extremely hard. It harnessed a force greater than an arrow despite being shot from such a short distance. The crystal emanated a dense purple aura, and Zu An immediately realized that it was the core of the Purple Flame Ghost.

The Purple Flame Ghost flickered intensely at that sight. Its empty eye sockets reflected fear, as its purple flame visibly weakened.

"So, this is the reason behind your revival." Zu An harrumphed. He unleashed a force comparable to the weight of a mountain, and the Purple Flame Ghost disintegrated with a screech. Only the faintly glowing purple flame crystal remained.

Zu An frowned. It looks like it isn't a living being. It isn't a real ghost either; I've seen my fair share of ghosts in secret dungeons. It's an entity beyond my comprehension. I can't even tell if it's a living thing or not.

"All hail the libationer!"

“That monster was terrifying! It’s fortunate the libationer arrived on time, or else we’d have died.”

...

The academy’s students chatted among themselves.

Zu An stowed away the purple flame crystal. He intended to ask the people in the academy whether they knew about the item.

He then chatted with the students and learned that the two men were Lu Bei and Chang Tian, whereas the two women were Yao Fang and Mei Rou. They were talented students who had hopes of entering the rear mountain. This trial was one of their exams. They hadn’t expected to meet with trouble; the other students who came along with them had died to the purple flame monster.

“We’re lucky to have bumped into Miss Xiaoxi. We would have never lasted this long without her pills,” Yao Fang said gratefully. “Her pills are much better than those given by the academy.”

How was she to know Xiaoxi’s father was the rear mountain’s second disciple?

Ji Xiaoxi’s face reddened. She said, “I would have died if not for your protection. For some reason, the monster wasn’t afraid of my poison at all.”

Her heart thumped in fear when she thought about that. Her cultivation was so-so, but she could still often head deep into the mountains to gather herbs thanks to her poison. Be it humans, fiends, or beasts, no one had been impervious to her poison before.

“That monster is a special one,” Zu An said; he had an ominous feeling about this. He turned to the students and asked, “Where are your comrades’ bodies? We’ll bring them home.”

As the libationer, he could be said to be like the students’ parent. He had to take care of them.

“Thank you, libationer!” the students exclaimed, overjoyed. The two male students quickly made a simple stretcher to carry Sun Hai, and the group traveled through the forest. Even though they were shaken up by the purple flame monster, they felt absolutely safe now that the libationer was here.

The recent incident involving the Meng clan had become the hottest topic in the academy. Everyone had been speculating as to how powerful the libationer was. Some guessed he had surpassed the previous emperor, though that conjecture was met with frowns. Even so, most agreed he was at least an earth immortal. What was there to fear when they had an earth immortal with them?

Along the way, Zu An remembered something and said, "I passed by a campsite on my way here. Did the students meet with trouble there?" He proceeded to describe the rough location of the campsite.

"Yes, that's the place!" the students exclaimed.

Zu An's heart sank. He said, "I didn't see any bodies when I passed by there earlier."

The students were taken aback. They replied, "That can't be. The monster killed our comrades there. If not for the urgent warnings they sent us before their death, we would never have been able to make our escape here." Their eyes reddened as they recalled the situation then.

Zu An's expression darkened as he said, "Let's take another look."

The group soon arrived at the campsite. Mei Rou pointed at the fallen tent and exclaimed, "Wang Zhao was lying there earlier! Where did she go?"

"He Lu was lying here too!" Chang Tian added as he pointed at a spot with a confused expression.

Yao Fang's face reddened. She wondered, "Could the monster have eaten them?"

The students shuddered at that brutal thought.

Zu An shook his head and said, "That's unlikely. There would be hints of their bodies or bits of their clothes lying around if the monster ate them, but I don't see anything like that in the vicinity."

"Where could they be then?" Ji Xiaoxi asked, blinking as she leaned closer to Zu An. The situation was creeping her out, and only Zu An's warmth could reassure her.

"I'll take you out of this place first. The imperial court will dispatch some soldiers to investigate the situation," Zu An said. His priority was to first ensure their safety before thoroughly looking into the matter. He could tell that the situation here was severe.

The students were excited to hear they could leave. They didn't want to stay in this damned place for even a second longer.

Only Lu Bei hesitated a little, asking, "Should we search a bit more in the vicinity? Sister Wang and Brother He came here with us, and their warning saved us. I'd feel bad leaving their bodies lying around in the wilderness."

Yao Fang and the others felt embarrassed upon hearing those words.

"Don't bother. I've already searched the vicinity with my divine sense. If I can't find them, I doubt you'd be able to do it. The most important thing right now is to send you back safely and inform the others about the situation here. You should leave the rest to the others," Zu An said.

I should discuss this matter with Yan Xiang and the others. I should also check if there are any elders in the imperial court who know about the background of this purple flame monster.

Lu Bei couldn't say anything when Zu An had already said as much.

While the group was making their way down the mountain, the fog in the forest began thickening. This time around, it carried a purple tinge.

"Big brother Zu, it's getting dark," Ji Xiaoxi said fearfully.

Zu An nodded. He asked, "Speaking of which, did you meet your father?"

"My father is here?" Ji Xiaoxi asked, taken aback.

"Of course. Your father was bound to be worried, seeing as you hadn't returned for so many days. Your little aunt told me he came to Copper Gong Mountain to look for you," Zu An replied.

"I haven't seen him. This isn't good. It's dangerous on this mountain. My father..." Ji Xiaoxi trailed off, her eyes glistening with tears. "It's all my fault. This wouldn't have happened if I hadn't stubbornly insisted on coming here to pick herbs."

“Don’t worry. Your father is stronger than you think. He can protect himself,” Zu An said. However, Ji Xiaoxi’s words piqued his curiosity and he said, “You aren’t the type to insist strongly on anything. What herb did you come here for?”

While there were good herbs growing on Copper Gong Mountain, it was close to the capital, and people often visited it. It was unlikely for there to be anything too precious here. Zu An couldn’t imagine there were any herbs here that could catch Ji Xiaoxi’s eye.

Ji Xiaoxi whispered with a reddened face, “I’m here to harvest Chief Yang Grass.”

“Chief Yang Grass?” Zu An repeated, startled. “That’s a herb to reinforce a man’s foundation. Why are you interested in it?”

“Oh? Big brother Zu, you have heard about it?” Ji Xiaoxi asked, excited to see how knowledgeable Zu An was about herbs.

This wasn’t a good place for Zu An to tell her about the Baopu Sutra, though he immediately connected the dots and exclaimed, “That old rascal Ji Dengtu is too much! Did he make you refine medicine for him because he went overboard?”

Ji Xiaoxi quickly waved her hand to deny it, saying, “It has nothing to do with father! It’s for you, big brother Zu...”

Zu An was speechless. What does this have to do with me?

Ji Xiaoxi lowered her head and murmured, “My father said that you were lustful and had many women with the temptress physiology by your side. He told me those people tend to deplete a man’s essence, so your body had to be drained by now. My father is an excellent physician, so he must have his reason for saying so. Thus...”

The other students looked at Zu An with strange expressions as they attempted to hold back their laughter. Who could have thought there was such a side to the libationer?

Zu An exclaimed indignantly “Your father is sullyng my reputation! My body is doing fine. I don’t need such things at all!” That old rascal was defaming me in

front of Xiaoxi for fear that I would 'dupe' her! That bastard! To think I wrote so much interesting content for him!

Ji Xiaoxi thoughtfully reassured him and said, "I know it might be embarrassing, big brother Zu. Most patients with similar symptoms are reluctant to admit to it too. However, you don't have to worry. You're still young. If I help you condition your body, it shouldn't take long for you to make a full recovery."

Zu An was speechless. It was obvious Ji Xiaoxi had gotten immersed into her role as a physician. Ji Dengtu, you bastard! How am I to explain this to Xiaoxi?

Just then, he turned his gaze toward the northwest.

"What's wrong, libationer?" the others asked. After what they had been through, the group was vigilant of their surroundings. Upon noticing his movement, they tightened their grips on their weapons.

"I sense a disturbance in the ki over there. Someone is fighting there," Zu An said.

"Could it be my father?" Ji Xiaoxi asked as she tightened her hand around Zu An's arm.

Zu An thought it was possible. Ji Dengtu might have sullied my reputation, but I can't turn a blind eye to him on account of Xiaoxi. It's just that the battle is a bit far away, so we won't make it in time if we head over as a group.

Thus, he took out a formation disc and planted a few formation flags in the eight directions. Soon, a translucent barrier shrouded the group. He passed the formation compass to Ji Xiaoxi and said, "Wait here. You should be safe as long as you don't step out of the formation. I'll take a look first."

The Eight Gates Golden Sealing Formation was pretty resilient. It would buy enough time for him to rush back even if a stronger monster than before attacked it. Even so, Zu An passed a yellow talisman to Ji Xiaoxi and whispered into her ears. He instructed the other students to cooperate with Ji Xiaoxi before rushing toward the northwest.

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Read Keyboard Immortal - Chapter 1961: Assault

Chapter 1961: Assault

Zu An spent a while heading northwest until he suddenly sensed something. He looked at the ground and saw two figures dressed in the outfit of the academy's students. Thus, he landed in front of them and asked, "Who are you?"

The two figures had ordinary appearances that wouldn't stand out on a bustling street. Their clothes were tattered, and there were traces of blood on them. It looked as if they had just been through a battle. Their faces were pale, and their breathing was erratic. That suggested they had sustained considerable injuries.

"We're students from the academy. Who are you?" the two asked, staring at him vigilantly while clutching their weapons tightly.

Zu An's eyebrows shot up. He replied, "I'm the libationer. I'm here to investigate the bizarre happenings on Copper Gong Mountain."

"You're sir libationer?" the two of them asked, heaving a sigh of relief. They quickly greeted him with a bow before exclaiming, "Sir libationer, please save us!"

"How did you get injured?" Zu An asked. The situation here was so bizarre that every piece of information was vital.

The two of them exchanged gazes and replied, "We encountered a purple monster. The monster was formidable, and we weren't a match for it. We only got away thanks to our defensive artifacts."

"What did the monster look like?" Zu An asked.

"It's purple from head to toe, resembling a ghost from the picture books."

"It's cloaked in a purple flame. We couldn't hurt it no matter how we attacked it."

...

The two of them took turns describing the monster they had encountered.

Zu An concluded they had bumped into a Purple Flame Ghost too. It looks like there's more than one Purple Flame Ghost on this mountain. It must have been difficult for them to escape from the monster. As expected of students from the academy, though.

He initially wanted them to seek refuge with Ji Xiaoxi and the others, but he had already flown a considerable distance away, so it could be hard for them to find Ji Xiaoxi and the others in this fog. His conscience would be pricked if they bumped into another Purple Flame Ghost along the way and lost their lives. Thus, he said, "I'm going to investigate the situation. Come with me. I'll escort you out of the mountain once I'm done."

The two students exchanged gazes before bowing to Zu An and exclaiming, "Thank you, sir libationer!"

Zu An nodded, thinking, I should inform the academy to stop sending students here. He asked, "What are your names?"

"I'm Wang Zhao."

"I'm He Lu."

The two replied with a bow.

"What?" Zu An exclaimed, feeling goosebumps. Those were the names of the students' comrades! Weren't they supposed to be dead?

"What's wrong, sir libationer?" the two students asked, sounding perplexed by Zu An's reaction.

"It's nothing," Zu An replied.

Is it possible that the situation was so precarious that Yao Fang and the others didn't have time to check on them, and the two had some artifact that allowed them to fake their death? They might have waited for the Purple Flame Ghost to leave before sneaking away.

Otherwise, it would mean Yao Fang and the others were lying.

Zu An was filled with doubt, but he didn't express that aloud. He made his way northwest with the two students. Neither of them was strong enough to fly, so he brought them along by grabbing their shoulders.

Soon, he heard noises ahead. Taking a closer look, he spotted human silhouettes wandering the area just ahead, as if searching for something. Zu An headed straight toward them.

"Who is it?" the people ahead called out, noticing them and drawing their weapons.

He Lu and Wang Zhao heaved a sigh of relief and exclaimed, "It isn't the monsters!"

Zu An assessed the group before him. Most of them were dressed in constable uniforms, and they stood in a formation around an old woodcutter. Their bodies were trembling, and their faces looked exceptionally pale. Zu An recalled his conversation with the Embroidered Envoys in the nearby town. They must be Woodcutter Zhang and the constables investigating the case.

"Who are you?" the head constable asked, warily eyeing Zu An and the two students.

"We're students from the academy. This is our libationer. He's formidable!" Wang Zhao said.

"Paying respects to sir libationer!" the head constable greeted Zu An along with his subordinates.

Zu An eyed their tattered uniforms and asked, "Were you in a battle earlier?"

The head constable nodded, replying, "We were. Powerful monsters have appeared here recently, and my brothers and I thought we were dead meat. Thank god you're here, sir libationer. It looks like we're saved."

Zu An was perplexed. He said, "I bumped into one of the monsters too, and it was powerful. You got away with just mild injuries?"

While the academy's students were respectful to him, they were top prodigies coming from all over the country. They wouldn't pale much in comparison to the past Chu Chuyan and Pei Mianman.

Six students from the academy encountered the monster together, and they suffered huge losses in the fight. These constables are much weaker than them, but they got away with mild injuries?

The head constable was stunned. He replied, "It could be because the monster was injured. It also helped that Woodcutter Zhang is familiar with the area, so we were lucky to survive the ordeal."

"What were you looking for?" Zu An asked as he scanned the surroundings, but he couldn't find anything noteworthy.

"We noticed there was a severely injured monster that was isolated from the rest. We intended to bring it back in hopes of being rewarded for it, but we couldn't find it despite spending half a day searching for it. We figured the monster had escaped, so we decided to head back first," the head constable replied.

Zu An nodded, saying, "It's dangerous here. You shouldn't linger around." How was the monster injured? Did it bump into Ji Dengtu? That old rascal sure is a sneaky one. I didn't expect him to be able to severely injure that monster.

"What else did you find on the mountain?" he asked. He noticed that the fog was getting thicker, and it carried a tinge of purple. It felt awfully oppressive. We should be in the depths of Copper Gong Mountain now. I wonder how far away from Shadowmoon Lake we are.

"We didn't find anything else. Just one monster was enough to nearly wipe us out," one of the constables replied fearfully.

Zu An nodded and asked, "Where did that monster escape to?"

"That side," the constable said as he pointed in a direction. "Sir libationer, are you going to capture that monster?"

Zu An nodded. Since I'm already here, I should get to the bottom of the matter, or else my heart won't be able to rest at ease. This is simply too bizarre.

"We'll show you the way," the head constable said. "We've been here for several days now, so we're familiar with the area. It'll also be safer for us to stick with you."

"All right," Zu An replied. They probably won't be able to leave the mountain alive like that. It'll be safer to keep them with me. We can head down the mountain with Xiaoxi and the others afterward.

Zu An took the lead, and Wang Zhao and He Lu stood beside him. The constables spread themselves thin, with Woodcutter Zhang at the center. The fog got increasingly thicker, to the point it became impossible to see more than a few meters away. Even Zu An could only extend his divine sense to around a hundred meters away. He couldn't help but lament about how his unique cultivation method lacked the capabilities of true earth immortals like Zhao Han and the others.

If he were here, Zhao Han would have been able to extend his senses farther away.

That being said, he had received many unique abilities from his keyboard too. Even if he wanted to nitpick, he had to admit that he had received the better deal.

All of a sudden, he heard a rustling noise. He immediately flashed a hundred meters ahead. There was no monster there, however, only a single page hanging on a tree branch. It appeared to have been torn from a book, and there was blood on it. Zu An picked up the page to take a look. It detailed a steamy scene from an erotic story.

"Sir libationer, did you find anything?" the others rushed over and anxiously asked.

"It's nothing. It was just the wind rustling," Zu An said as he quietly stowed the page into his clothes with his back turned to the others.

"Sir libationer, why don't we leave this mountain first? We're getting creeped out," He Lu and Wang Zhao said, gulping down their saliva.

"All right." Zu An nodded.

Just then, a scream of agony echoed from behind.

"Woodcutter Zhang!" the head constable exclaimed in horror. They had been too anxious to catch up with Zu An, so they'd left Woodcutter Zhang behind.

Zu An went back to where they were, faster than the others. There, he found Woodcutter Zhang lying in a puddle of blood. He scanned the surroundings, but there was no one else in the vicinity. The culprit had already gotten away. He then walked up to Woodcutter Zhang and flipped his body over, hoping to check on his injuries and see whether it was possible to save him.

A sinister smile suddenly appeared on the face of Woodcutter Zhang. He opened his mouth, and a shadow shot toward Zu An's face. It was even faster than the blades of the Shadow Group's assassins. However, a golden flash of light sliced the shadow in two. Only then did Zu An see that it was something similar to a face-hugging insect. Its tentacles squirmed continuously on the ground.

"What are you doing, Woodcutter Zhang?!" the head constable roared in anger as he rushed over and swung his blade down on Woodcutter Zhang.

However, the blade suddenly changed its trajectory toward Zu An's neck, and rapidly accelerated until it was many times faster.

Bam!

The head constable was sent flying like a sandbag. He crashed onto the ground so heavily that his bones fractured. The other constables quickly drew their blades and charged at Zu An too.

However, Zu An rolled up his sleeves and unleashed his ki. The blades of the constables immediately twisted like fried dough sticks, but the attack didn't just stop there. The arms they held their blades with began twisting as if they were toys, and the sheer momentum sent their bodies spinning many times in midair before they collapsed on the ground. That single attack had incapacitated all of the constables.

"There's something wrong with those constables!" He Lu and Wang Zhao exclaimed as they rushed over to Zu An's side with looks of horror.

Zu An glanced at the 'face-hugging insect' on the ground, muttering, "I wonder what this is..."

Just then, Wang Zhao and He Lu each drew out a dagger and plunged them into Zu An's back. A vicious glint flashed through their eyes.

Zu An sighed, remarking, "You finally couldn't hold it in anymore?"

The two of them were taken aback. Why is he fine despite having been stabbed?

They quickly pulled out their blades, only for their eyes to nearly pop out of their sockets. To their horror, they realized their blades had shattered into fragments. Only the handles remained intact.

“How is his body so tough?”

The two of them were suddenly sent flying by an immense force that completely shook their bodies up, rendering them incapable of mustering any strength.

“W-When did you notice it?” the two of them asked as they stared at Zu An in disbelief.

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Chapter 1962: Heart-Devouring Demon Spider

“Do you know Yao Fang, Mei Rou, and the others?” Zu An asked.

That’s weird. Why can’t I remember the names of the other two male students?

He Lu and Wang Zhao were stunned. They asked, “You bumped into them?”

“That’s right. They told me you were dead. How could two dead people suddenly appear out of nowhere?” Zu An replied with a nod while assessing their reactions.

“What if those two women were the ones lying to you?” He Lu and Wang Zhao growled.

“I wasn’t sure at the start too, which was why I brought you with me. I took the chance to inspect your bodies,” Zu An explained. “You hid it well, but I noticed a peculiar aura near your hearts.”

Any other cultivator would have struggled to see through their anomaly, but with his current cultivation level and proficiency in the Baopu Sutra, it would be hard to deceive Zu An.

“Why were you guarded against us then?” the head constable asked, shaking his body as he struggled to his feet.

Zu An was taken aback. Any cultivator who had received such severe injuries shouldn't have been able to move. However, he replied, “Do you remember what happened when we first met? Before I could even utter a word, these two rushed to inform you of my identity and emphasized that I was strong. Since there was something wrong with them, it wasn't hard to figure out that you were in cahoots.”

There were other reasons too. For instance, his portrait had already spread far and wide, such that it was impossible for any constables residing near the capital to not know about him.

“Why didn't you expose us then?” The other constables also stood up, though their injured bodies made their postures incredibly awkward, looking as if they were wooden dolls.

“I wanted to see what you were up to,” Zu An replied.

Those fellows are able to disguise themselves as our academy's students and constables. Either they're skilled in transfiguration, or they are using some sort of special means to control their bodies. It should be the latter, since these people do exist and are already dead.

Even so, what kind of means could allow one to control the dead and make them behave as if they were alive?

“Too bad. You won't live to spread the word,” the head constable sneered.

His body exploded, and a purple monster crawled out from within. This monster was initially very small, but it feasted on the head constable's blood essence with its four limbs. The brawny head constable swiftly withered, while the monster bulked up. Then, it morphed into a purple humanoid monster with many red dots reminiscent of eyes on its face. It looked extremely sinister.

The others exploded as well, and similar monsters climbed out of their bodies. They feasted on their hosts' blood essence and quickly bulked up. However, they maintained their monster forms instead of morphing into humanoids. These monsters had eight horns, similar to the facehugger in the 'Aliens' movie Zu An had seen in his previous life. On top of that, they had two rows of red eyes that resembled those of a spider.

"You bastards!" Zu An cried. Even though these constables and students were long dead, he was still enraged to see these monsters feasting on their blood and flesh.

He was just about to charge at them when he sensed danger and hurriedly leaped to one side. Despite his fast reaction, he still felt pain in his arm. He quickly checked his arm and saw many sharp cuts on his robe and skin. His body was incomparably tough, such that ordinary blades would struggle to cut him. And yet, he was nearly sliced apart just then. He narrowed his eyes and finally noticed threads reminiscent of a spider's web all around him.

"Heart-Devouring Demon Spider!" Zu An exclaimed, his expression turning cold. He recognized the monster before him.

The Fiend races had dispatched the Second Prince together with their main army to suppress the Netherworld Seal, but the front lines had later reported that they'd encountered a fearsome enemy with the ability to devour a person's heart and take over their body. The Heart-Devouring Demon Spiders could access the memories of the deceased, making their disguises nearly impeccable. They were a major reason behind the huge casualties suffered by the Second Prince's army.

Zu An hadn't connected the dots earlier, as the Heart-Devouring Demon Spiders were among the monsters invading through the Netherworld Seal. And yet, even while the Fiend races were having a tough time there, they had still managed to slaughter all of the monsters there. Given how far away the Netherworld Seal was from the capital, most people wouldn't have drawn a connection between them. Now that he was witnessing the Heart-Devouring Demon Spiders and their abilities to control the deceased in person, he finally remembered the monster he had seen in the Fiend races' scroll.

"You know us? All the more reason not to spare you. I'm satisfied with your body's resilience, and you appear to be an important figure among the humans too. It'd be much more convenient if we could take over your body," the largest Heart-Devouring Demon Spider said. "Little ones, get him!"

The smaller Heart-Devouring Demon Spiders let out screeches reminiscent of cicada cries, as they spewed white threads toward Zu An. Each of the threads gleamed with a cold light, and they easily sliced through the trees in their path.

Zu An harrumphed. He simultaneously unleashed his phoenix fire and White Lotus Flame, instantaneously setting the incomparably sharp threads ablaze.

The Heart-Devouring Demon Spiders shrieked in horror as they frantically backed away. However, the phoenix fire and the White Lotus Flame were not to be underestimated. They blazed through the threads so quickly that the Heart-Devouring Demon Spiders didn't have time to react before they were consumed by the flames. It only took an instant for them to be burned to ashes.

The largest Heart-Devouring Demon Spider was horrified. It immediately leaped onto the trees and warily eyed Zu An, asking, "How are you this powerful?"

Zu An didn't reply. He looked back at the Heart-Devouring Demon Spider and asked, "How did you get here? Did you escape from the Fiends' Netherworld Seal?"

"I'm surprised. You know about the Netherworld Seal?" the Heart-Devouring Demon Spider asked, then chuckled. "Don't worry, you'll know once our bodies are fused."

It raised its hand, which had nearly indiscernible threads wrapped around it, and gently tugged on them. Four silhouettes emerged from the mountain forest and surrounded Zu An.

Zu An could sense that these people were long dead. Judging from their clothes, they were likely unaffiliated cultivators residing on Copper Gong Mountain. It was common for criminals and unaffiliated cultivators to seek refuge and cultivate here. The mountain was large enough for them to conceal themselves, and they could conveniently stock up on herbs, hunt beasts, and obtain resources here. These cultivators weren't weak, but it was a pity they had been killed by this monster and turned into its puppets.

Zu An heaved a sigh of relief. Thank god Ji Dengtu isn't among them, or Ji Xiaoxi would die of sorrow.

"Die!" the Heart-Devouring Demon Spider sneered.

With a tug of its finger, the puppets brandished their weapons at Zu An. The strength and speed of these puppets exceeded what they were capable of when they were alive, and their bodies could move at awkward angles that defied human physiology. That made it difficult to guard against them.

Most cultivators would likely have found themselves cornered by the puppets, but it was unfortunate that their opponent was Zu An. He didn't bother dodging the puppets' attacks, instead choosing to deal with them through brute force. He swept the field with a sword of fire spanning over a hundred meters. It was the Flame Blade he had acquired in his earlier years. It wasn't a particularly strong fighting skill, but now that he was executing it with his current cultivation level, its prowess was vastly different. Raging flames burned down all of the nearby webs.

Zu An knew that the Heart-Devouring Demon Spider was a sly one. While stalling him with its puppets, it had secretly woven webs around the forest that were sharp and venomous. Even Zu An would have a tough time if he got caught in them. However, its effort was doomed to be futile.

Without the webs to manipulate them, the puppets fell completely still. Flames engulfed them, and they were reduced to ashes.

"Rest in peace," Zu An said with a sigh. This was the best end for them, rather than having their flesh devoured by monsters or returning to their family members with the Heart-Devouring Demon Spiders' parasites in them.

The Heart-Devouring Demon Spider was dumbstruck. Without any hesitation, it turned tail and scrambled off. It fled so quickly that anyone else would have been stumped. However, the one it was dealing with here was Zu An. It couldn't shake him off no matter how it maneuvered in the forest.

Zu An frowned as well. This Heart-Devouring Demon Spider is too fast. It spews webs ahead and tugs on them to propel itself forward, achieving an effect similar to teleportation. It's not easy to catch up with.

Just then, a person leaped from a tree ahead and smashed their fist down on the Heart-Devouring Demon Spider. The Heart-Devouring Demon Spider was too focused on escaping from Zu An, so it was caught off guard by the ambush. It staggered due to the punch, and Zu An took the opportunity to fly over, grab it, and activate the Heaven Devouring Sutra.

As if struck by lightning, the Heart-Devouring Demon Spider immediately lost its strength, rendering it unable to escape. Stunned, it exclaimed, "You are Taotie..."

Zu An was startled. It sounded as if the Heart-Devouring Demon Spider knew of Taotie. Could this skill be from the legendary Taotie?

However, this monster was a cunning one, so he dared not let down his guard. He channeled the skill to its fullest, making sure to suck the spider's cultivation dry. It didn't take long before the monster was reduced to a withered spider lying unmoving on the ground.

"You sh*tty spider! You never thought this would happen to you when you chased me as if there was no tomorrow, right? This is karma, b*tch!" the person who ambushed the Heart-Devouring Spider earlier cursed as he spat and gave it a few good kicks.

"It's you!" Zu An exclaimed, overjoyed.

The person was none other than Ji Dengtu. Zu An had thought he had met with trouble.

"We need to return to Xiaoxi's side right now. I've heard that a Heart-Devouring Demon Spider has slipped into their group," Ji Dengtu anxiously said.

Zu An's expression darkened.

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Chapter 1963: Blood Sacrifice

The thought of the Heart-Devouring Demon Spiders being involved in this incident hadn't even crossed Zu An's mind back then, so he hadn't suspected the survivors he had met then. The formation he had left behind was a powerful means against outside enemies, but it wouldn't protect them from an internal threat.

Zu An immediately grabbed Ji Dengtu and rushed back to where Ji Xiaoxi and the others were. He asked, "Who's the one possessed by a Heart-Devouring Demon Spider? Or are all of them possessed?"

"I don't know who either. I only overheard their conversation while they were chasing after me," Ji Dengtu replied grimly.

"They were chasing you?" Zu An asked. He suddenly recalled how the constables appeared to be combing the area when he first met them.

“That’s right. I was worried about Xiaoxi when she didn’t show up on our agreed date, so I came to Copper Gong Mountain to look for her. However, I bumped into these monsters instead. I was planning to save those constables, but I was no match for those monsters,” Ji Dengtu said. His heart swelled with fear when he recalled his encounter with the monsters.

“It’s incredible you survived an encounter with those monsters,” Zu An remarked.

Those Heart-Devouring Demon Spiders were by no means weak. Their strength was at least on par with a human grandmaster, and their unorthodox means made them particularly difficult to deal with. Even a grandmaster could easily get killed by them in a moment of carelessness.

Ji Dengtu raised his head proudly and said, “I was the second senior of the academy, after all.”

“I wouldn’t have known from your usual lustful demeanor.” Zu An scoffed.

Ji Dengtu scowled and said, “Return my Teacher Bai page. My heart was bleeding when I tore away the page, but I did it anyway to warn you.”

Zu An returned the page to him with a snort. “I knew you were nearby when I saw that piece of paper, but you could have done so in a more direct manner. What if I didn’t catch your signal?”

“Those monsters have enigmatic means, and you were hanging out with them. How was I to know whether you’d become one of their lackeys? You should be glad I was smart enough to bring out something only the two of us know about to discern your true identity!” Ji Dengtu retorted. He gently blew on the page before carefully taking out a book and putting it back in its place.

“The Heart-Devouring Demon Spiders are indeed tricky to deal with. They can control corpses and make it look as if they were alive,” Zu An replied grimly.

“That should be impossible from a medical standpoint. Even with the help of their abilities, it should be impossible for them to access their host’s full memories. At most, they should only be able to tap into the more recent or vivid memories, such as their name and identity,” Ji Dengtu said.

Zu An nodded. As a divine physician, Ji Dengtu’s words were credible. That was good news, or else the Heart-Devouring Demon Spiders could hide in a

person's body forever without anyone noticing. That would have made them terrifying enemies, as no one would know who to trust.

It was then that the two of them arrived at where Zu An had left Ji Xiaoxi and the others. Zu An's eyes narrowed, as he noticed his formation had been destroyed. Judging from the snapped branches in the vicinity, the rising smoke, and the collapsed pile of firewood, it was evident that there had been a fight here not too long ago.

"Where's Xiaoxi?" Ji Dengtu anxiously asked.

Instead of answering that question, Zu An rushed elsewhere, where a person was lying amid a puddle of blood. His expression darkened when he saw that person's appearance.

"Hm? Why does this person look so familiar?" Ji Dengtu asked with a frown.

"His name is Sun Hai. I reached Xiaoxi in time thanks to him risking his life to protect her," Zu An replied.

"I remember him now. He's a wandering cultivator. He was fatally wounded when he visited me many years ago, but I was going through a tough time and couldn't be bothered to treat him. Xiaoxi secretly snuck him some medicine to treat his injuries, and that saved his life," Ji Dengtu said with a deep sigh. He felt bad that someone who had saved his daughter had landed in such a plight.

Zu An squatted down and inspected Sun Hai's body, saying, "Someone pierced his heart from behind. It's as you said. There's a Heart-Devouring Demon Spider host in the group." He also took the chance to infuse his ki into Sun Hai's body to confirm that he wasn't possessed by a Heart-Devouring Demon Spider.

Ji Dengtu panicked. He wondered, "Even he's dead, so where in the world is Xiaoxi?"

Zu An closed his eyes and spread his divine sense around. He soon noticed something and traveled three hundred meters southward. Without any hesitation, he reached out and grabbed something from the trees.

Just then, two swords lunged out. A frightened female voice cried, "Monster, I'll bring you down with me!"

Zu An sent the two swords flying with a flick of his finger.

Only then did the other person get a proper look at him and cry in relief, “Sir libationer!”

Zu An had refrained from harming them because he knew they were the academy’s students, Chang Tian and Mei Rou. He asked, “Why are there only the two of you here? Where are the others?”

Ji Dengtu belatedly arrived at the scene, crying out, “Xiaoxi! Where’s Xiaoxi?”

The eyes of the two students reddened. They said, “A spider monster was impersonating Lu Bei all along. Big brother Sun is dead, Yao Fang is severely injured, and the monster took Miss Ji with it.”

“What?!” Ji Dengtu nearly fainted. He couldn’t believe his precious daughter had been kidnapped by the monster.

“Lu Bei?” Zu An repeated. He suddenly remembered how that man had tried to dissuade him when he proposed bringing them out of the mountain. However, he wasn’t going to blindly trust the two students’ words on the matter. He said, “Let me check your injuries. Meanwhile, I want you to fill me in on the situation.” He casually placed his hands on their shoulders and channeled his ki into them to check their bodies. He didn’t find any traces of the Heart-Devouring Demon Spider in them.

“We felt safe in sir libationer’s formation, and we hardly got the chance to rest for the last few days out of fear of the monsters, so fatigue swiftly struck,” Chang Tian explained. “We didn’t dare to go to sleep at once, as we knew that danger was lurking in the vicinity, so we let the ladies sleep first while the rest of us guarded an area each.”

Zu An nodded. It’s good to hear they aren’t flowers in a greenhouse. They know how to keep their guard up.

“Lu Bei suggested being placed in the same team as Sun Hai so he could take care of him. We figured that was the best arrangement too, as Lu Bei was the strongest one among us. Meanwhile, I took the rear,” Chang Tian said, roughly describing their positions.

Mei Rou added, “I was together with Yao Fang and Miss Ji. Despite her young age, Miss Ji is a strong woman. I noticed her keeping her eyes open even

though we agreed to sleep together. In the end, I succumbed to my drowsiness and fell asleep.

“Not too long after, I awoke to a scream. By then, big brother Sun had already collapsed in a puddle of blood, and Chang Tian was severely injured. Miss Ji was protecting him from Lu Bei.” Mei Rou trembled as she recalled the situation, continuing, “We had no idea what was going on. Yao Fang was the closest to Lu Bei, so she stepped forward to question him. However, he incapacitated her with a single blow.”

Chang Tian nodded and said, “While I was on sentry duty, I heard a weird noise, so I headed over to check on it. By the time I arrived, Sun Hai had already been backstabbed by Lu Bei. I was trying to figure out what was going on when Lu Bei ambushed me too.”

Zu An nodded. That Lu Bei is a sly one. He was smart to have first subdued the veteran Sun Hai. The students might be outstanding cultivators, but they're lacking real-world experience. Chang Tian noticed that something was up, but he neglected to keep his guard up. That allowed Lu Bei to subdue so many people in a single move.

“How did you survive then?” Ji Dengtu coldly questioned them. Everyone was a suspect when his daughter’s survival was at stake. There was no way the two of them could have been a match for the monster.

“It was thanks to Miss Ji. She suddenly emanated a golden glow, which clashed with Lu Bei as if it were a flying sword. It was also then that she explained to us that Lu Bei was being controlled by a monster,” Mei Rou replied.

“A flying sword?” Ji Dengtu asked. He didn’t remember his daughter carrying anything of that sort.

“I gave it to her,” Zu An replied. It’s lucky I gave her the Flying Sword Talisman out of worry.

Ji Dengtu was conflicted. He had always wanted to keep his daughter away from Zu An, thinking that he harbored bad intentions, but right now, he found himself fervently praying that Zu An had given her more defensive tools.

“However, Lu... I mean, the monster was simply too powerful. Miss Ji’s flying sword couldn’t fend him off.” Fear flashed through Chang Tian’s eyes as he

said, "Fortunately, the monster suddenly stiffened up, as if it was listening to some distant sound. Then, it spewed a huge pile of spiderwebs and took Yao Fang and Miss Ji away with it."

The Heart-Devouring Demon Spider must have sensed the death of its comrades. That explains how the two of them survived, Zu An thought.

"Where did it escape to?" Ji Dengtu anxiously asked.

The two students shook their heads and said, "Its movements were too unpredictable. We only saw it leaping among a couple of trees before suddenly disappearing in the white fog."

"You couldn't even catch the direction of its escape? You must have been busy escaping then!" Ji Dengtu roared.

The eyes of the two students reddened in indignation, but they didn't retort.

Zu An stepped in and said, "Earlier, you also saw how fast the Heart-Devouring Demon Spider moved. It's to be expected for the students to be unable to track its movements. Don't worry, I have a grasp of where Xiaoxi is."

"How do you know?" Ji Dengtu asked; he was both alarmed and overjoyed to hear that.

"I placed a tracking talisman on Xiaoxi," Zu An said.

He had learned from his earlier struggle in finding Ji Xiaoxi in this huge mountain, so he'd left a tracking talisman on her. There was a section about them in the Baopu Sutra, and he had made a couple of them over the last few days. While questioning Chang Hai and Mei Rou, he had also been trying to sense the tracking talisman. He left the two students with a formation each and told them to wait in place before making his way to Shadowmoon Lake with Ji Dengtu. Shadowmoon Lake had been his initial destination, and he hadn't expected that he would still have to head there in the end.

"Those monsters are cruel. I fear that Xiaoxi..." Ji Dengtu trailed off as his eyes turned red. The lustful old man, despite his usual nonchalance, was so afraid that his voice was quivering.

Zu An consoled him, saying, "Don't worry. I gave Xiaoxi a few protection talismans. She should be safe for the time being."

Ji Dengtu was relieved to hear that. He remarked, "You actually had such foresight. If we do save Xiaoxi this time around, I'll allow you to..." His voice suddenly trailed off.

"You'll allow me to what?" Zu An asked.

"I'll allow you to become friends, but you mustn't go any further than that!" Ji Dengtu warned.

Zu An was speechless.

Meanwhile, there was a huge crack reminiscent of an eye in the sky above Shadowmoon Lake. A purple fog flowed out from the crack.

Lu Bei prostrated humbly on the ground and said, "This lowly one has prepared the tributes for the blood sacrifice. Milord, I beseech you to descend and deal with the terrifying human!"

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Chapter 1964: Descent

Meanwhile, Ji Xiaoxi looked at the lake with her tear-stained face.

The lake had turned purple, and its water rose up to form the shape of an altar. Yao Fang lay on the altar with bulging eyes and a gaping wound on her neck. She was dead.

Her blood filled the altar, and it dripped into the lake. With each drip, the lake grew even more purple. Shadowmoon Lake felt like a gigantic purple eye; its color was so penetratingly deep that it evoked fear. In contrast, the eye in the sky was just a reflection of the lake.

Upon hearing Lu Bei's prayer, the lake began to bubble. A terrifying will was attempting to descend upon the land.

Even a whiff of its aura made Ji Xiaoxi's body turn cold, making her feel frightened and enraged. She wanted to avenge Yao Fang, but her poison didn't work on these monsters. She was tightly wrapped in a spiderweb cocoon, unable to invoke the flying sword Zu An had given her. Thanks to Zu

An's defensive talismans, the cocoon couldn't harm her, but those wouldn't last.

Lu Bei was extremely excited when he sensed the aura from the lake. He prostrated on the ground once more and exclaimed, "Lord War Priest, please descend upon this world. There's a brand new world here for you to feast on!"

"Not enough blood..." said a hoarse voice that sounded like fingernails scratching glass. It was jarring and fear-inducing.

Lu Bei hesitantly looked at the cocooned Ji Xiaoxi and said, "Milord, that young miss is on close terms with the human powerhouse. Keeping her alive might be beneficial to our future plans..."

The hoarse voice interjected before he could finish his sentence, "Fresh blood. I want more fresh blood..."

Lu Bei clenched his jaws. A Heart-Devouring Demon Spider burst out from his chest and dragged Lu Bei's corpse up onto the altar. Soon, fresh blood seeped from his wounded chest. The ritual should be almost completed. We have already offered the War Priest plenty of fresh blood from different living beings.

Upon receiving another offering of fresh blood, the lake began to bubble.

Ji Xiaoxi's face turned pale. In the giant eye projected in the sky, she saw a colossal being attempting to cross through space to descend upon the world.

The Heart-Devouring Demon Spider was overjoyed, saying, "This lowly one respectfully welcomes the descent of Lord War Priest!"

Some time passed, but there was no response from above. The Heart-Devouring Demon Spider looked up and saw that the War Priest was unable to breach the space between them.

"Are there still not enough sacrifices?" the Heart-Devouring Demon Spider wondered as it turned its gaze to Ji Xiaoxi. It figured that the descent of the War Priest had to take precedence above all things else. As long as the War Priest successfully descended, this new world would be theirs.

Lord War Priest will reward me for being the meritorious subject who aided him in his descent. Now that our chief is dead, with Lord War Priest's help, I might be able to grow into the new chief.

Hardening its determination with that thought, it maneuvered its threads with its limbs to toss Ji Xiaoxi's cocoon into the lake. It wasn't strong enough to breach Ji Xiaoxi's defensive talismans, but once she was inside the lake, those wouldn't be enough to stop their War Priest.

As Ji Xiaoxi came closer to the purple lake, she could feel an overwhelming demonic aura seeping out from within. It gripped her with absolute fear, freezing every thought in her mind. "Big brother Zu..." she murmured as tears streamed down her eyes.

"I'm here, Xiaoxi. Don't be afraid," a gentle voice echoed.

Shortly after, Ji Xiaoxi felt herself falling into a warm embrace. She opened her eyes and saw a familiar face. For a moment, she fell into a daze, murmuring, "Is my life flashing across my eyes right now?"

As a physician, she had witnessed patients who saw their lives flash across their eyes before taking their last breath. They would see those whom they had wanted to see and achieve what they had wanted to do. It was as if they were in a sweet dream.

Is this my final wish while my real body is melting down in that purple lake?

"I arrived late, Xiaoxi. You must have been scared," Zu An apologized.

Another familiar voice harrumphed in dissatisfaction. "Preposterous! How can the last thing on your mind in the face of danger not be me, your father, but that stinky brat?"

Ji Dengtu's eyes were wide with anger. It's no wonder they say daughters are betrothal gifts to others. My daughter hasn't even fully grown yet, and she's already siding with another man!

"Ah!" Ji Xiaoxi snapped out of it as soon as she saw her seething father, and her face turned bright red. I'm really in big brother Zu's arms, and he and father heard me calling out his name! How embarrassing! Wuuu...

She would have dug a hole and dove right in if she hadn't been cocooned.

Zu An glanced at the cocoon. A flicker of flame sparked on his finger, and in a flash, it reduced the cocoon to ashes.

Ji Dengtu was initially worried that the flame would hurt Xiaoxi, having personally witnessed what it was capable of earlier. If he burns Xiaoxi's skin, I won't let that brat off!

However, he was impressed when he saw Ji Xiaoxi emerging unscathed. That brat's ability to control the elements has reached an amazing level. Probably only my master was capable of doing something similar.

Ji Xiaoxi had been trapped in the cocoon for so long that her legs had become numb. Unable to maintain her balance, she fell into Zu An's arms.

Seeing Zu An embrace his precious daughter and stroke her back with his pig trotters, Ji Dengtu felt incredibly displeased. He had a feeling that the precious cabbage he had nurtured with great hardship for many years had just been gobbled up by a pig.

You have successfully trolled Ji Dengtu for +555 +555 +555...

"How did you find this place?!" the Heart-Devouring Demon Spider cried with a quivering voice. It wasn't too long since it sensed their powerful spider chief dying at the hands of this man.

Zu An looked at the bubbling purple lake, paying it no heed, and asked, "Where did you monsters come from?"

The Heart-Devouring Demon Spider took one last glance at the purple lake. Upon confirming that the War Priest wouldn't be able to descend, it turned tail and fled, knowing it was no match for Zu An.

The humans we previously encountered were nothing but fodder for us. Why is this fellow so ridiculously powerful? If there are many humans on the same level as him, our mission will be no different from committing suicide.

As soon as the Heart-Devouring Demon Spider began to move, a flying sword suddenly swooped in and sliced its neck. The monster's body stiffened up before its head and body dropped into the lake.

The flying sword returned to Zu An's side and reverted into a yellow talisman. Zu An passed the yellow talisman to Xiaoxi and said, "Keep it well, Xiaoxi. Use it to protect yourself in times of danger."

Ji Xiaoxi was dumbstruck. I used this talisman earlier, but I was still defeated by that monster. And yet, big brother Zu easily killed that monster with it.

Ji Dengtu coldly muttered from the side, "Xiaoxi, don't forget what I've taught you. You mustn't think that a man is good just because he gives you gifts. In truth, he's coveting something even more precious from you."

"Father~" Ji Xiaoxi coyly glared at her father. "You're misunderstanding big brother Zu. He isn't such a person."

Ji Dengtu was speechless. He felt like he had suffered a critical blow.

Just then, a vortex started forming at the center of Shadowmoon Lake. It was initially small, but it swiftly expanded until it encompassed the entire lake. The silhouette in the sky grew clearer, as if something was about to cross over to this world.

Ji Dengtu's eyes widened in horror as he said, "This isn't good. That demon spider falling into the lake must have completed the blood sacrifice. The powerful being from the other world is going to cross over!"

Zu An was surprisingly calm as he replied, "It's fine. I was waiting for it to come over so that I could have a good chat with it."

Ji Dengtu was speechless. Damn it. I became a foil for that brat to brag before my precious daughter. It's an unknown otherworldly entity we're up against here. Isn't he afraid of screwing it up?

You have successfully trolled Ji Dengtu for +66 +66 +66...

All of the water inside Shadowmoon Lake converged into a hurricane that rose into the sky, as the colossal silhouette inside the water became clearer and clearer.

"That monster appears to have three heads," Ji Xiaoxi murmured. Frightened, she cowered into Zu An's arms.

Ji Dengtu was too focused on the incoming enemy to be jealous of Zu An. While Ji Xiaoxi wasn't be strong enough to perceive it, he could sense a powerful pressure that didn't pale in comparison to his master and Zhao Han... and that wasn't the full extent of the other side's strength yet. He couldn't help but look at Zu An. Acting tough, huh? Look at the trouble you've caused!

The hurricane slowly dispersed, and a massive monster appeared. Its dark purple body was over ten meters tall, and it had three demon heads and three thick arms that brandished some kind of tools.

"Ah, I've finally arrived in a new world. What a delicious scent!" the middle head said.

"Those fools insisted on fighting over the northern seal when it's easier to open a new route." The right head cackled.

"How is it easier to open a new route? We were lucky to have found a crack in an ancient realm, or else we would never have been able to open a new route." The left head harrumphed.

"It's a pity the ki here is too thin to bear more of our power. Still, it sure is wonderful to have descended upon a world devoid of other fiends," the middle head remarked with an intoxicated expression as it closed its eyes.

Zu An wasn't in a rush to disturb them, as he knew he could pick up useful information from their conversation. If anything, he hoped they would speak more.

Unfortunately, the monster didn't act as he wished. It said, "Those three measly ants there, this great one has just arrived in this world and requires some intelligence from the indigenous population. I'll grant you the honor of serving me."

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Chapter 1965: Naihe Oblivion River

Ji Xiaoxi nearly fainted from the immense pressure of being eyed by those three heads, but she was able to slowly calm down thanks to Zu An holding her hand and sending a surge of warm ki over.

Ji Dengtu turned pale too. He struggled to stand his ground with his cultivation, but it was lucky Zu An was attracting the bulk of the monster's attention.

Meanwhile, Zu An calmly assessed the monster and asked, "What's your name?"

"I am the War Priest. My name echoes in the Myriad Worlds," the monster said as it proudly lifted its three heads up.

Zu An scanned it from head to toe before telling Ji Dengtu, "It's smaller than I thought."

Ji Dengtu rolled his eyes. Small?

The three-headed monster was outraged. It cried, "How dare you, a measly ant, insult me?!"

You have successfully trolled War Priest for +444 +444 +444...

Zu An shrugged, replying, "You caused such a huge commotion that I thought you would be some kind of apocalyptic being. I would have expected someone at least the size of a mountain. And yet, you're barely more than ten meters tall. You tiny little thing."

Ji Dengtu was speechless. Is this brat out of his mind? Why is he provoking that terrifying monster?

Ji Xiaoxi stared at Zu An with large blinking eyes. Big brother Zu sure is brave! He's able to stay composed even when faced with such a powerful being. I feel cowardly and useless.

"Ant, what do you know? We only appear small because your world is too weak to withstand our full power..." the War Priest's left head sneered.

"Shut up! That ant is taunting us, but you're still explaining things to him. Are you dumb?" the right head snapped.

The left head was taken aback, but it quickly retorted, "You think I wouldn't know that? I just felt like answering!"

"Idiot!" The right head sneered.

The middle head couldn't take it anymore and roared, "Stop arguing!"

The left and right heads harrumphed before turning away from each other. The middle head glared at Zu An and said, "Ant, you've succeeded in provoking me. I'll retract my decision to allow you to serve me."

You have successfully trolled the War Priest for +500 +500 +500...

The right head harrumphed. "How dare you make fun of me? I'll siphon your soul and make you suffer a fate worse than death!"

The left head took out what appeared to be a Soul Summoning Banner and waved it at Zu An. Black apparitions appeared around Zu An, and merry laughter echoed in the surroundings.

"Come, let's have some fun together." Not a person spoke a word, but the voice reverberated inside one's head as if it were directed at the very soul.

Ji Dengtu felt dazed for a brief moment. His body suddenly felt much lighter, as if something was about to escape from his body. This isn't good! As the old libationer's disciple, he quickly deduced this was a soul attack, and it would be terrible if he succumbed to it.

Unfortunately, it was one thing to know about it and another thing to guard against. Before he could warn Zu An about it, he could already feel himself rising into the air. In a matter of moments, those black silhouettes had already beckoned half of his soul out of his body.

Damn it. Why did that brat have to insist on showing off? Now we're all going to die.

Ji Xiaoxi had also already half-fainted. If not for Zu An protecting her, her soul would have flown out as soon as those black apparitions appeared.

Just then, there was a crisp wooden tapping sound, followed by dharmic chanting. Silhouettes of chanting Buddhas appeared above Zu An amid rays of golden light.

The black apparitions screeched in agony as they fled back into the banner faster than they had appeared. The Soul Summoning Banner that had been swaying imposingly a moment prior fell limp.

“My treasure! You dare hurt my treasure!” the left head exclaimed.

“Your treasure was hurt by my treasure. That shows yours can’t handle it,” Zu An said as he stowed away the Violet-Gold Alms he had duped from the monk in the tomb. He hadn’t expected it to be so formidable as to overwhelm the War Priest’s treasure so quickly.

Ji Dengtu and Ji Xiaoxi regained their clarity.

Ji Dengtu looked at the alms bowl in Zu An’s hands. How did that brat get so many treasures? Well, it’s not as if any of those treasures can compete with Teacher Bai’s book, though.

Ji Xiaoxi, on the other hand, was worried. Why does big brother Zu have a monk’s alms bowl? Does he intend to renounce his secularism and become a monk?

The three heads of the War Priest stared at Zu An’s Violet-Gold Alms with a mixture of greed and resentment, as they spoke in unison, “You actually have such a treasure in your possession.”

“Your Soul Summoning Banner isn’t too bad either,” Zu An replied with a grim expression as he eyed the War Priest’s Soul Summoning Banner. He had seen the effect it had on Ji Dengtu and Ji Xiaoxi. The two of them would have lost their souls if not for the Violet-Gold Alms.

It can disregard a person’s defenses and remotely claim their souls; it’s not a treasure to be underestimated.

The right head turned to the left head and cackled. It said, “You were so proud of your Soul Summoning Banner, but that’s all it’s capable of. Let me show you what a true treasure is.”

It carefully took out a jade bottle and prepared to pour out its contents.

Zu An’s heart skipped a beat. He sensed extreme danger from the jade bottle, thinking, These fellows aren’t as powerful as those beings inside the tomb, but

the treasures they have are formidable. It's unlikely this jade bottle will be any weaker than the Soul Summoning Banner.

Thus, Zu An pushed Ji Dengtu and Ji Xiaoxi over a kilometer away, saying, "Old man, protect Xiaoxi." As much as he didn't fear the monster, it would be terrible if Ji Xiaoxi was caught in their clash. For their safety, it would be best not to keep them by his side.

"You skank! Of course I'll protect my daughter. You don't even have to say that!" Ji Dengtu harrumphed as he retreated farther away with his daughter.

Ji Xiaoxi was worried. She said, "Father, go and help big brother Zu. I am fine alone."

Ji Dengtu was speechless Xiaoxi, you have a high opinion of me. The likes of me can't hope to get involved with a battle of that caliber. Even a mere shockwave from their clash could jolt me to death.

Of course, he wouldn't say those words aloud before his daughter. He feigned a cough and said, "We'll let that brat accumulate some combat experience. I can always step in when he's in danger..." Inwardly, he thought, I'll flee with my daughter right away as soon as it looks like things are going awry.

Ji Xiaoxi looked at her father in admiration, saying, "Father, you're amazing!"

It had been several years since she parted ways with Zu An, and she still thought of him as the same youth from Brightmoon City. Even though she had been awed by his means several times now, she still instinctively worried about him.

"Cough cough..." Even with Ji Dengtu's thick skin, his face still turned red.

The War Priest finally uncorked the jade bottle, and a droplet of turbid yellow liquid dripped out. One could see vague traces of blood in the liquid.

Zu An narrowed his eyes. A chilling wind blew, carrying the howls of countless vengeful spirits. It was as if these vengeful spirits were trapped inside that droplet. However, unlike the Soul Summoning Banner, this droplet didn't feel eerie. If anything, it felt holy, which was bizarre to Zu An. He couldn't understand how that droplet could impeccably embody two vastly different traits.

The War Priest carefully retreated, fearful that it would come into contact with that droplet.

“Go!” It raised its finger, and the droplet of turbid yellow liquid slowly floated toward Zu An.

In the distance, Ji Dengtu felt that perhaps he had overestimated the War Priest. Even I can dodge the droplet with how slow it is, let alone that brat...

However, he was soon forced to abandon that thought. Before his eyes, he saw the droplet slowly expanding into a small stream, followed by a raging river that charged straight at Zu An.

Zu An thought that given his high water affinity through the Blue Luan’s ability, he wouldn’t face a threat from the river water, but he started sweating profusely as the river approached him. His instincts told him it wasn’t a good idea to come into contact with it. Thus, he activated Grandgale and fled in another direction.

The bloody yellow river missed him, but it swiftly changed its direction and charged at him once more. Zu An unleashed the power of the snow phoenix and executed the Snowflake Sword, causing countless ice crystals to form in the surroundings. A white light glowed on the raging river, and its surface began to crystallize. Ice is the go-to element to curb water, after all.

The War Priest’s left head was startled. It wondered, “How does he have such powerful ice ki?”

The right head wasn’t worried in the least, saying, “No matter how powerful his ice ki is, it’s futile before that droplet.”

Right after it said those words, cracks appeared on the surface of the frozen river, and all of the ice abruptly vanished into thin air. It didn’t even go through the usual melting process!

Zu An was alarmed. In the instant his ice vanished, he felt his connection with his ice ki abruptly severing, as if it had just simply disappeared.

The right head laughed gleefully and said, “It took me a lot of trouble to obtain this droplet of Naihe Oblivion Water. There’s no way it would be frozen by mere ice ki.”

“Naihe Oblivion?” Ji Dengtu repeated, his expression darkening. He anxiously shouted, “Brat, you mustn’t let that water touch you. The River of Oblivion under the Naihe Bridge is a famous legend. It’s said that any being who comes into contact with this water will lose all their memories and abilities.”

It was said that the deceased would first pass through the Gate of Hell and walk down the Yellow Springs Road, before eventually arriving before the River of Oblivion. On the other side of the River of Oblivion was the Underworld. The River of Oblivion was also known as Naihe, and in its bloody yellow water floated wandering spirits who had been locked out of reincarnation, insects, and snakes. It was a gruesome place. Above the River of Oblivion was the Naihe Bridge, and Granny Meng sat on the bridge. Those who sought to cross the River of Oblivion had to drink Granny Meng’s Soup to let go of their past memories, or else they wouldn’t be able to cross the Naihe Bridge and be reincarnated...

Zu An was taken aback. He had seen the River of Oblivion before, but it hadn’t harnessed the same power as the droplet before him.

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Chapter 1966: The Greatest Power

This droplet of Oblivion River Water was much stronger than the river Zu An had previously seen, almost like the difference between a pirated copy and an official copy. Could this be the real river leading to the Netherworld?

Upon hearing Ji Dengtu’s words, the War Priest’s right head burst into laughter, exclaiming, “Indeed! I didn’t expect the ants here to be so knowledgeable. Yes, this is the Oblivion River Water I obtained by a stroke of coincidence. It’s invulnerable to all attacks, and if you get the slightest bit of it on you, you’ll immediately have your memories and abilities washed away just like the wandering ghosts in it. I’ll consider sparing your life if you kowtow a hundred times to me right now.”

Zu An’s expression turned grim. There was no way he would kneel down and beg for mercy. He flashed through the air to avoid the Oblivion River Water while trying different means to suppress it. His many years of life-and-death battles had taught him not to easily believe his opponent’s words.

And yet, no matter what he tried, the skills he unleashed on the Oblivion River Water vanished as soon they came into contact with it. He immediately lost his connection to the surges of ki he used. He even brought out the heaven-grade weapon he had acquired from Chi Wen to see if it could suppress the Oblivion River Water; the moment he tossed out the golden brick, it expanded to the size of a mountain.

However, as soon as the brick came into contact with the Oblivion River Water, the golden light shrouding it immediately darkened, and it swiftly contracted in size until it was merely a dead brick. No matter how Zu An tried to call it, he was unable to summon it back to his side. The golden brick was no longer a heaven-grade weapon, but an ordinary brick.

Zu An had already been prepared for this outcome when he tossed the golden brick out, so he wasn't too surprised. When the raging river charged at him again, he performed another instantaneous movement to dodge it.

Watching the events unfold, Ji Xiaoxi got nervous. She anxiously tugged Ji Dengtu's arm and pleaded, "Father, we need to help big brother Zu! Do you have any ideas in mind?"

Ji Dengtu gulped down his saliva. Should I escape with Xiaoxi now? It might be too late if we continue dawdling. But how should I explain it to Xiaoxi?

Meanwhile, the War Priest's heads began discussing among themselves.

"The ant moves rather fast."

"It seems to be an instantaneous movement law. I didn't think someone from this puny world could grasp such a law."

"Hmph! An ant is still an ant no matter how quickly it moves."

The right head waved its hand, and the raging river suddenly morphed into a towering tsunami that enveloped a radius of three kilometers around them. There was no way for Zu An to dodge the Oblivion River Water no matter where he teleported to. Even if he did find a way to evade the tsunami, it was only a matter of time before he came into contact with the Oblivion River Water, since the surroundings would be soaked in it. Furthermore, Zu An's companions were in the attack radius too. Even if he could escape, his companions were unlikely to be able to do the same.

Zu An saw through the War Priest's malicious intentions, and he felt a sharp squeeze in his heart. If a heaven-grade weapon doesn't work, maybe it's time for me to bring out the Human Emperor Seal. The Sun Slaying Bow wasn't suitable for the current situation, and he didn't dare to risk the Tai'e Sword since Mi Li's soul was resting there. His only choice was the Human Emperor Seal.

Just then, he heard Mi Li's voice say, "Use your Brilliant Glass Bead."

Zu An jolted in shock. He had already treated Mi Li's soul with all kinds of treasures, but she still spent most of her time sleeping. He had asked her why that was the case, but she'd refused to give a proper reply. As a result, he was always startled by her random appearances.

"The Brilliant Glass Bead? I don't think it can deal with the Oblivion River Water," he said, hesitant to follow through with Mi Li's instruction. He had never found anything special about the Brilliant Glass Bead other than its massive storage space, though that was enough. So far, he hadn't found anything else with such a huge storage space, and it had made things very convenient for him over the years. The Brilliant Glass Bead was much more important to him than the golden brick. He would be heartbroken if the Oblivion River Water erased its ability.

"Trust me," Mi Li urged. The tsunami was about to crash down on Zu An.

Ji Dengtu watched in despair as the Oblivion River Water fell upon them. He had tried escaping with his daughter, but no matter where he fled, he couldn't escape the tsunami's encirclement. He muttered, "It's over. I knew I should have fled with Xiaoxi right away."

Zu An was nervous too, but he decided to trust Mi Li and bring out the Brilliant Glass Bead. The artifact immediately emanated a primordial light, as if it had sensed something. Zu An was taken aback, as such a situation had never happened in the past.

Before he could figure out what was going on, the Brilliant Glass Bead flew into the air on its own accord. With a loud whirl, it began revolving as its light intensified. The surrounding Oblivion River Water began flowing toward it. In the blink of an eye, the Brilliant Glass Bead completely sucked up the towering tsunami spanning over three kilometers.

Zu An, Ji Dengtu, and the War Priest were speechless.

Only Ji Xiaoxi yelped in delight and clapped her hands, crying out, “Big brother Zu is amazing!”

Ji Dengtu stared at Zu An with a conflicted look.

How did that brat obtain so many formidable artifacts? Not to mention that his cultivation level is ridiculously high despite his young age; his suaveness is almost catching up with me too. Now that I think about it, Xiaoxi has nothing to lose being with him. The only problem is that he has too many women by his side, and someone capable of writing a book like Teacher Bai has to be depraved down to his core. How can I allow my innocent Xiaoxi to be defiled by him?

The War Priest’s right head bellowed in anger, “Return my Oblivion River Water to me!”

You have successfully trolled the War Priest for +877 +877 +877...

“You mocked my Soul Summoning Banner, but look at what happened. My Soul Summoning Banner might be injured, but at least it wasn’t taken away by the enemy. What about you? You donated your artifact to the enemy! I’m going to laugh my head off!” the left head gloated.

“Shut up!” the right head roared in anger. It looked as if it wanted to bite off the left head.

You have successfully trolled the War Priest for +888 +888 +888...

Zu An chuckled, retorting, “Do you think I’d return it to you?”

He took back the Brilliant Glass Bead before inspecting it with his divine sense. He noticed that a unique space had been carved out inside it, and the Oblivion River Water quietly rested there. Its content was still a bloody yellow, but it emanated a hint of holiness... He was no less shocked than the War Priest, as he hadn’t expected the Brilliant Glass Bead to have such a function. He quickly asked Mi Li what was going on, but she didn’t answer.

Just then, the War Priest’s middle head stared intently at the Brilliant Glass Bead and murmured uncertainly, “Sea Pacifying Divine Pearl?”

Zu An turned to Mi Li once more to ask about the Sea Pacifying Divine Pearl. He had heard about a similar artifact from a novel in his previous life,

Investiture of the Gods. There, Zhao Gongming had defeated the twelve Golden Immortals of the Kunlun Sect with twelve Sea Pacifying Pearls. However, the Burning Lamp Daoist had stolen the Sea Pacifying Pearls and used them to ascend as the Burning Lamp Ancient Buddha of the Western Sect. However, that was the setting of a fictional novel. He dared not take it seriously.

Mi Li couldn't stand his pestering anymore and replied, "It's just a different name. It might have other names in other worlds too. I just sensed something from the pearl earlier, as if something was summoning it, so I advised you to give it a try. I don't know the details either."

Zu An was speechless. Like hell I'd believe that. He was certain that Mi Li was hiding many secrets from him, but she refused to answer no matter how he probed.

"Who could have thought there was such a formidable artifact in a lower world? It was worth the effort descending upon this world," the War Priest's middle head said.

Zu An smiled and said, "You talk big, but you've been relying on artifacts all this time. If you're truly as strong as you claim, why don't we have a proper battle?"

His mindset had changed after meeting those terrifying beings in the tomb. As intimidating as the War Priest was, perhaps due to the restrictions of this world's laws, the aura it emanated was at most on par with Zhao Han's. He wasn't the same man as he used to be, so he didn't fear it. However, there was no denying the War Priest's artifacts were a threat to him. He could be disadvantaged if one of them happened to curb him. He didn't think he would be so lucky as to find something to curb their artifact every single time. In particular, the middle head appeared to be the strongest of the three, so its artifact was likely to be more formidable than the two before it.

"You want to have a proper fight with me?" the middle head exclaimed, laughing deafeningly. "Do you know why I'm known as the War Priest?"

"Because you're a con artist?" Zu An asked. That was his impression of priests.

The War Priest spluttered, "...War! The focus here is war!"

You have successfully trolled the War Priest for +999 +999 +999...

The world turned dark.

Tok tok tok!

War drums echoed as an air of desolation seeped into the surroundings. The scenery changed. The purple fog, Copper Gong Mountain, and Shadowmoon Lake vanished into thin air, replaced by an ancient battlefield. The earth began trembling as a black wave appeared in the distance.

Ji Dengtu had to rub his eyes before he could make out what the black wave was. It was a massive army of soldiers standing in a neat formation. Those at the forefront carried tower shields, and directly behind them were spear bearers. At the back of the formation were archers riding on war chariots, and heavy weapons such as cannons. Charging cavalymen were positioned at the flanks, giving off an air of unstoppable momentum.

They were far off in the distance when Zu An and the others first saw them, but in the blink of an eye, they were already standing beneath the War Priest. Their presence felt suffocating despite not making a single sound.

The War Priest looked proudly at the army beneath it and said, "This is my greatest power. No matter how powerful an expert is, they're bound to be helpless before the might of an entire army!"

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Chapter 1967: The Era Has Changed

"We're doomed!" Ji Dengtu yelled, turning ghastly pale.

"What's wrong? Big brother Zu still held the upper hand earlier, right?" Ji Xiaoxi asked, confused.

Ji Dengtu replied with a bitter smile, "It's hard for an individual to go against an army. Their offensive and defensive capabilities are reinforced to terrifying levels through formations, which is why it's often said that cultivators can't triumph over an army. Those as powerful as Zhao Han can subdue armies through sheer power, but the War Priest's forces can't be ordinary."

Even from a distance away, he could feel the suffocating pressure coming from the army. Every soldier was emanating an aura comparable to an eighth rank cultivator, and some of the generals were even grandmasters. How could there be such a powerful force in the world? In contrast, most soldiers in this world weren't cultivators at all. Even the most elite army only had their foot soldiers at the fourth rank. After all, those who had reached the fifth rank could become minor officials. No one in their right mind would continue being a foot soldier. And yet, every single soldier before them was at least at the eighth rank. How could they fight against such troops?

"Ah! Doesn't that mean big brother Zu is in trouble?" Ji Xiaoxi asked worriedly. "Father, why don't we help him with our poison?"

Poison didn't work well on top-tier experts, but it was a potent weapon when used on a crowd.

Ji Dengtu shook his head and said, "It'll be hard for us to poison the army under such circumstances. Besides, the army before us doesn't seem to be alive. Poison might not work on them."

"What should we do?" Ji Xiaoxi asked anxiously.

Ji Dengtu stared at Zu An's back and said, "We can only pray that brat has the means to deal with this." That brat has been a bag of surprise thus far. I wonder if he still has other means in store here.

Zu An eyed the huge black army, asking, "Is this your domain?"

He was trying to determine the nature of the army. Unfortunately, they weren't undead, or else it would have been much more convenient for him to deal with them. How did it develop such a powerful domain? Any enemy of the same strength would have been decimated by such a huge army!

"Is that what your world calls it? That's not important. I am the War Priest. Countless worlds embroiled in war pray to me, and I bless them with victory. In return, I take a portion of their souls as compensation. Over countless years, this has given rise to my invincible army."

The War Priest was in no rush to attack. He took his time to flaunt his powerful army, as this was the creation he was proudest of in his lifetime. It was uncommon for him to have a chance to brag about it to others.

“Ah, so you're an evil god,” Zu An murmured. In his previous life, the eastern world of the past had prayed to heaven before engaging in battle, whereas the western world of that time had worshiped war gods. I've never heard of a War Priest. It's probably the faith of some unknown world. Does that make it a god?

“How dare you insult me. You shall experience the agony of being trampled by countless soldiers and cavalymen!” With a harrumph, the War Priest picked a flag with its middle hand and waved it toward Zu An.

The silent army roared into action. The knights on the flanks began their charge, and trailing right behind them were the foot soldiers in the center. Their advance shook the ground so much that any enemy before them would have been driven into despair.

As he stood protectively in front of his daughter, Ji Dengtu's face paled. He said, “Xiaoxi, I'll find a way to bring you out of this place. You have to make sure to run as fast as you can. Don't turn back. Look for your little aunt. She'll take care of you.” As the academy's second brother, he naturally had trump cards, but he had to sacrifice his life to use them.

Ji Xiaoxi sensed his intention and anxiously said, “Father, let's leave together!”

Ji Dengtu felt heartened looking at his daughter's worried expression. At least you still care about your father as well. He said, “Be good, Xiaoxi. It would be a blessing if any of us could escape from here. You mustn't waste the opportunity the two of us are creating for you. Deliver this intelligence back to our people, so they can prepare themselves.” Worried his daughter would hesitate to escape later, Ji Dengtu went to the extent of framing it as doing it for humankind.

Ji Xiaoxi felt the burden on her shoulders and wiped her tears. She clenched her jaw and nodded, saying, “I'll definitely send this piece of intelligence out!”

The War Priest in the sky burst into laughter. “You're thinking of leaving? No one escapes from my invincible army!” This space was his domain. Nothing here could escape his notice.

“Let's see then,” Ji Dengtu said. He took a deep breath as a determined glint flashed through his eyes. He began emanating a stronger aura.

Just then, Zu An interjected, "Let me go first."

He sensed something wrong with Ji Dengtu's condition. It was similar to Chu Chuyan back then, when she had unleashed a forbidden move to bring her enemy down with her.

Why is it that the cultivators in this world all have some kind of mutually assured destruction move? It's as if they don't cherish their lives at all! I could still save Chu Chuyan with that method, but how can I do the same for Ji Dengtu?

Ji Dengtu was stunned, but he could sense the self-assurance behind Zu An's words. Thus, he nodded and said, "All right, you go first."

The massive army had already covered half the distance to them, and it wouldn't be long before it overran them.

Zu An stared at the incoming army and shook his head, saying, "It's arrogant of you to call yourself the War Priest when you're still resorting to such a primitive form of warfare. The era has changed, sir!"

Golden ripples manifested in the area behind Zu An, and weapons of peculiar design emerged from them.

Ji Dengtu and Ji Xiaoxi were confused. What weapons are those? Why do they look so weird? Why do those chariot-like vehicles have so many cylinders reminiscent of firework tubes behind them?

The Rune Weapon Chart and the Forging Diagram allowed Zu An to recreate weapons he had seen before, and it just so happened he had previously lived in the Digital Age and had seen plenty of modern-day weapons. Rows of Katyusha rocket launchers fired in unison, and countless rockets whizzed into the sky, lighting up the dim surroundings.

The War Priest was startled. He waved his flag, and the army immediately began erecting a formation. Soon, a light blue barrier formed above the army. Countless rockets crashed into the barrier, producing brilliant fireworks; it shook a little, but it remained as sturdy as a mountain.

The War Priest burst into laughter. "I didn't expect this world to possess the means of a technological civilization, but such primitive technology can't possibly defeat the invincible army under my command!"

Zu An was stunned. It would appear the War Priest had seen other technological civilizations before. All along, he had thought that he'd transmigrated to this world, but could it be that Earth was just one of the countless worlds in this galaxy, and he was just transported over to this world for some reason?

Does that mean I can return to Earth?

...

Zu An was filled with excitement. He didn't panic in the face of the War Priest's taunting.

"Father, what are those weird birds in the clouds?" Ji Xiaoxi asked.

Ji Dengtu looked at the sky and saw silhouettes of massive pitch-black birds appear in the clouds. The birds had peculiar shapes, and they looked as if they were made of metal. He muttered, "Are those the subordinates of the War Priest? No, they're currently headed toward its army!"

The 'birds', a fleet of Northrop Grumman B-2 Spirits, released a barrage of bunker busters. Bunker busters were intended to deal with enemy targets hidden in underground fortresses bolstered by many meters of reinforced steel. They were the best option to deal with such massive barriers.

The War Priest sensed danger from the bunker busters, so he waved his flag and commanded his army to attack them before they could pierce through the barrier. Countless ki skills surged into the sky to destroy the bunker busters above. Some of them even struck the Northrop Grumman B-2 Spirits, knocking them out of the sky.

However, there were simply far too many of the aircraft and too many, so it was impossible to stop all of them. A bunker buster finally slipped through the army's defense and struck the barrier. It spun rapidly, making the barrier tremble.

The barrier was truly formidable, though. Even when the bunker buster finally ran out of energy and eventually exploded, the barrier merely shook, showing no hint of damage at all. The War Priest was just about to mock Zu An for his futile attempt when his eyes widened in shock. Many more bunker busters were being dropped from the sky as if they were free!

The bunker busters crashed into the barrier, making it shake violently. When they exploded, cracks appeared on the barrier. It didn't take long before the barrier shattered into countless fragments.

Zu An heaved a sigh of relief. It was a pity he wasn't a military buff in his previous life, so he wasn't familiar with modern-day weapons. Otherwise, he wouldn't have brought out antiques like the Katyusha rocket launchers.

To be fair, those should have been enough against an average army, but the War Priest's army was simply too strong. Even its defensive measures were on par with modern-day armies. It took mere moments for the other party to destroy a huge number of his Katyusha rocket launchers and Northrop Grumman B-2 Spirits.

It was lucky that the Rune Weapon Chart allowed Zu An to produce countless weapons at an extremely low cost. On top of that, he could control the weapons at will, so he didn't have to worry about casualties either. As soon as the barrier shattered, he rained aerosol bombs and munition bombs on the army before the formation experts could erect a new barrier. The scene of the meme explosion gif was thus reenacted.

Blinding light and searing heat erupted outward. It was as if hell had broken loose on the army's formation. Despite being protected at the heart of the army, many formation experts immediately disintegrated into bits.

The army hadn't expected Zu An to unleash an aerial bombardment targeting the formation experts; without their protection, the army faced a one-sided slaughter. Countless rockets bombarded the army formation, and military helicopters were dispatched to gun down the soldiers.

May the Gatling guns bring mercy upon this world! Let the Maxim guns save lives![1]

Just like that, the incomparably powerful army was reduced to cinders.

The War Priest was speechless.

1. This is a Chinese meme mocking Gatling, the creator of the Gatling gun, who claims that he created the gun to reduce the size of armies and reduce the number of deaths by combat and disease. 📺

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Chapter 1968: The End of the World

Ji Xiaoxi was still worrying about Zu An when she saw the situation and clapped in excitement, exclaiming, “Big brother Zu is incredible!”

Ji Dengtu’s lower jaw nearly fell to the ground. He was so overwhelmed by what he had witnessed that he didn’t have the spare attention to care about his daughter idolizing Zu An. Just what is that ability? Why have I never seen those weapons before?

The War Priest trembled in disbelief too. The invincible army it had built up over a long time was destroyed just like that. This was a huge blow to it not just psychologically, but physically too, as it had to expend a huge amount of energy to summon the army. Its forces' swift destruction resulted in its body becoming incomparably weak.

Zu An naturally wouldn’t miss such a good opportunity. There was no way he would hold back against such a strong enemy. He charged toward the War Priest, drew the Tai’e Sword, and unleashed a brilliant burst of sword ki.

The War Priest hurriedly retreated while casting all kinds of protective measures, but due to its weakened condition, its reaction was delayed. All of its defenses were swiftly breached by the sword ki like the spring snow before the majestic sun. Two ugly heads were lopped off, and the War Priest screeched in pain. Only its middle head was left. However, it could only endure the pain, not daring to move in the slightest, as the Tai’e Sword was pressed against its only remaining head.

The sword looked ordinary and antiquated, seemingly devoid of the slightest sharpness, but for some reason, it filled the War Priest with fear. Its body was exceptionally tough, such that normal weapons couldn’t hope to leave a mark on it. And yet, the sword had severed its other two heads as easily as chopping tofu.

“Where are you from?” Zu An asked. He had intentionally spared the War Priest to get answers to his questions.

“I’m from another world, of course. There are many powerful beings like us in the galaxy. We would look for new worlds, invade them, and turn them into our own. This is the norm,” the War Priest answered. At that point, it gritted its teeth. “If not for your world restricting me from descending with my full prowess, the one to die today would have been you.”

You have successfully trolled the War Priest for +990 +990 +990...

Zu An’s eyebrows shot up. He asked, “Your powers are limited by the world you descend into?”

The War Priest harrumphed as it turned its head away.

Zu An didn’t hesitate to lop off one of its ears, saying, “You better obediently answer my question, or else the next thing to be cut off won’t just be an ear.”

The War Priest yelped in pain. It glared at Zu An in resentment, saying, “Kill me if you want to. I have dominated countless worlds. I don’t fear death.”

Zu An said with a scowl, “You should know that living is sometimes more frightening than dying.”

The War Priest sneered, “I have seen more worlds than you; I know that better than you. Even so, I’ll never lower my head to someone from a lower world.”

Zu An was put in a tough spot. It’ll be troublesome if this fellow refuses to talk. He turned to Ji Dengtu and asked, “Old man, do you have medicine to make someone talk?”

Ji Dengtu was put on the spot. He replied, “There are such medicines in the world, but they usually only work on humans. On such a monster...”

Ji Xiaoxi also weighed in on the topic, saying, “Big brother Zu, I tried it earlier, and our poisons don’t work well on these monsters. Even if our poisons did work, we’d need a massive amount for it to work on a body of that size. It’ll be hard to gather that many herbs within a short time.”

Zu An thought that made sense, so he gave up on that thought.

Just then, Ji Dengtu asked, "Why don't you capture it first? We can find some cultivators skilled in mind control to access its mind and see if we can gather more intelligence from it."

That spurred a thought in Zu An's mind. He thought, Mind control?

The War Priest burst into laughter. "Mind control? You measly ants dream of controlling me?"

"That sounds plausible," Zu An said as he summoned Daji.

A beautiful woman dressed in a white robe appeared. She showed no emotions on her face, but she exuded a natural seductive charm that drew one's eyes.

Ji Dengtu widened his eyes. He didn't think that it was possible for a person to seem so innocent, yet devilish at the same time. Even the number one beauty of the capital, Yu Yanluo, is nothing more than this, right?

Ji Xiaoxi looked at the ravishing big sister before her and felt a little insecure. Compared to this big sister, I'm no different from an unripe fruit.

"What a beautiful woman, but you're dreaming if you think I'd succumb to lust," the War Priest said. It maintained a calm expression, but it was panicking on the inside.

Why does this woman's aura resemble that of the legendary Heavenly Devil race? Heavenly Devils are known for feasting on human souls. It is said that even the Buddha nearly succumbed to one back then.

No, that should be impossible. How could there be a Heavenly Devil in such a weak world? Even if she is a Heavenly Devil, she'll be too weak to control me.

That put his mind at ease.

"Is that so?" Zu An replied with a chuckle. He placed his hand on the War Priest's body.

The War Priest was initially confused, but its face soon warped in shock. It sensed that Zu An's hand was like a black hole, siphoning away all of its energy.

“Taotie... You possess Taotie’s bloodline!” the War Priest cried with a quivering voice.

“What Taotie?” Zu An asked. This was the second time he'd heard that name from the monsters.

“The Taotie is one of the most terrifying entities in the galaxy. It devours everything, from powerful planets to even entire planetary systems, but nothing can satiate it...” the War Priest replied with a shaky voice. Just the mention of Taotie filled its eyes with fear.

Zu An was perplexed. He had obtained this skill from the Yinshang secret dungeon. It was a cultivation skill passed down by the imperial family of the Shang Dynasty, so it should have had no ties with the real Taotie.

Zu An quickly absorbed every last bit of the War Priest’s cultivation, and he felt refreshed afterward. To his surprise, he reached Level 75 in a single shot. In his current state, he felt as if he could defeat Zhao Han fair and square even if the latter was at his peak.

Having been sucked dry, the War Priest couldn’t remain afloat in the air and plummeted to the ground. Its body swiftly contracted till it was only around the size of a cow. It crashed heavily onto the ground with a moan, and its breathing became faint.

Zu An had crippled it. On top of that, he crushed its mental defenses via the Hundredwarble’s mental attack and the Tai’e Sword’s Domain of Power. After making thorough preparations, he finally ordered Daji to cast her Voice of the Devil.

He had raised Daji’s cultivation significantly via pills as of late, but there was still a huge gap between her and the War Priest. There was no guarantee this would work in spite of the preparations he had done. He was simply trying whatever means he had at his disposal.

Perhaps due to the War Priest being shaken up by the power of Taotie, it really fell to Daji’s Voice of the Devil. Sensing its dazed consciousness, Zu An took the chance to say, “You mentioned earlier that you couldn’t descend upon this world with your full strength. Explain it.”

The War Priest frowned as it resisted the mind control, but Daji’s eyes lit up as she stroked her pipa and played an enchanting melody. The War Priest’s eyes

quickly turned turbid once more. It said, "Every world has its own will, and they resist foreign intervention. Weaker beings are less susceptible to being resisted, as they are unlikely to shake the world's balance, but stronger beings are unable to descend into such a world with their real body. They can only find a representative in their world or project an avatar in..."

Zu An nodded upon hearing its explanation. Most secret dungeons had restrictions on the strength of the cultivators entering their premises too. That was why sects and academies usually sent their juniors to secret dungeons. Stronger cultivators were rejected by secret dungeons and were refused entry. Its mention of projections made Zu An recall some legends regarding such things, and he wondered if it was similar to that.

"Why did you descend with your real body then?" Zu An asked.

"That's because there's a problem with this world," the War Priest replied.

Zu An, Ji Dengtu, and Ji Xiaoxi were stunned. They asked, "A problem? What is it?"

"Many years ago, a powerful being discovered this new world and even successfully breached its barrier, but for some reason, it sustained severe injuries and was sealed away. However, it managed to send out the coordinates of this world. Not too long ago, we obtained the coordinates too, and thought about coming over to try our luck," the War Priest said.

Zu An thought about the Fiend races' Netherworld Seal. I wonder which ancestor of this world sealed it away.

"Are you in cahoots with those attempting to breach the Netherworld Seal?" Zu An asked.

"We are from the same world, but we are from different powers and have different goals. Some tried to enter the world via the spatial crack left behind by that powerful being, only to be met with fierce resistance from the indigenous people. Due to the world's barrier, we are unable to exert our true strength. Furthermore, the indigenous people have the upper hand in terms of numbers, so we are struggling to make progress."

Zu An figured that it was talking about the Netherworld Seal.

“Some of us have resorted to finding alternative ways to invade this world. We discovered that this world has spatial pockets known as secret dungeons that are capable of creating small spatial cracks. We suspect they were left behind from the battle with that powerful being,” the War Priest said. “As more of us invade this world, your world barrier will be pushed to its limit and eventually shatter for good. By then, we will be able to freely descend upon this world. It’s a pity I met you as soon as I descended here...”

Zu An’s heart became heavy. He asked, “Are there other spatial cracks? How many of you have slipped in here?” There are so many secret dungeons in this world! It’ll be hard to guard against them like that. If we allow such monsters to invade us, it’ll spell the end of the world.

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Chapter 1969: Myriad Worlds

The War Priest shook its head and said, “The other spatial cracks aren’t as big as the one at the Fiend races’ Netherworld Seal, so it’ll be hard to descend via those cracks. It took a great deal of time and preparation before I could just barely descend via this spatial crack.”

“Which secret dungeons can be used to create spatial cracks?” Zu An asked.

“Each of us has our own unique ability. I don’t know the method the others use, so I can’t be certain about it, but those who descend will have to face the wrath of this world’s will, so there will be certain phenomena in the vicinity,” the War Priest replied.

Zu An fell into deep thought. Now that I think about it, there have been unnatural phenomena shrouding Copper Gong Mountain in recent days, such as the thick white fog and the purple fog nearing the center region. It might be impossible to take preemptive measures, but we can still achieve timely intervention.

“What’s the world you’re from called?” Zu An asked. It’s best to gather as much information about the enemies as possible.

“Branda N151 Barren Star...” the War Priest replied.

Zu An was surprised. These monsters have quite a technological name for their planet!

“Are there other worlds?” Zu An asked as he took note of the name.

“Countless more. A single layer of the galaxy can have over a hundred million civilizations, and we don’t know how many layers of galaxies there are in the universe,” the War Priest replied.

Zu An was speechless.

Ji Dengtu and Ji Xiaoxi's jaws nearly dropped open. They had never heard anything like this before. There are over a hundred million civilizations in a galaxy, but there are other layers of galaxies on top of that? Why does this sound like a myth to me?

“How strong is your world in the galaxy?” Zu An asked.

“The farther away a world is from the center of the galaxy, the scarcer its resources are, and the weaker the indigenous population. My world is around the middle, whereas your world is at the outermost region,” the War Priest replied.

Ji Dengtu and Ji Xiaoxi exchanged gazes. They understood those words. So our world is the weakest one in the galaxy.

Zu An frowned and asked, “Why did you come to our outermost world if your world is far richer in terms of resources?”

The War Priest suddenly revealed a look of terror, saying, “It’s because our world is dying...”

Zu An’s heart sank. He could tell that the War Priest was indeed not in its strongest condition, and there were probably more beings of its level in this world. That showed just how strong its world was. Just what kind of thing could drive them to the brink of destruction?

Upon hearing Zu An asked that question, the War Priest opened its mouth and began, “I-It’s Spec...”

Its body suddenly shook halfway through those words, and its eyes regained their clarity. It was no longer under the control of Daji’s Voice of the Devil.

However, its eyes filled with absolute horror as it exclaimed, “No, I haven’t said it yet. I haven’t said it yet...”

Bam!

Its entire head exploded, and purple fluid splattered everywhere. It was fortunate Zu An had protected the others in time, so they didn’t get defiled by it.

“W-What happened to it?” Ji Xiaoxi asked, her face turning pale. She was startled by the abrupt explosion.

“That could have been its punishment for uttering a forbidden name. There are incredibly powerful beings in this world who can bring about death just by having someone else utter their name,” Zu An replied.

Ji Dengtu’s face paled. He asked, “There are really such beings in the world?” He was so frightened that even Teacher Bai in his robes couldn’t console him.

“There are. You must be careful if you ever meet them. Some, you mustn’t look at directly. Some, you mustn’t utter the name of. Others, you can’t even think about,” Zu An said with a bitter smile. He wouldn’t have known these things if not for the beings he had met in the tomb.

“What do we do now?” Ji Xiaoxi asked as she gulped down her saliva. Everything that had happened today was a shock to her.

“Fortunately, it gave us useful information we can work with,” Zu An replied with a vexed sigh. There were many more questions he had wanted to ask, and yet such a situation occurred. “Keep what you saw and heard today a secret. Don’t divulge a single word about it, or else it would plunge the world into chaos.”

A pandemonium would break out if the populace learned that such terrifying beings were trying to invade their world. Stronger cultivators could even take the opportunity to undermine the current order. That could weaken humankind, making it easier for those monsters to invade.

“We know. This matter is of grave importance.” Even Ji Dengtu stowed away his usual lackadaisical attitude.

Just then, a few figures flew over and landed near them. They were the academy's Yan Xiang, followed by Empress Liu Ning and Eunuch Lu, Chief Attendant Pei Zheng, Director of the Imperial Secretariat Pei Ming, Imperial Secretariat's Right Confidential Assistant Bi Qi, and King Guangling Zhao Yuan. They were stunned to witness the War Priest's massive body, as well as the devastation around Shadowmoon Lake.

The empress was worried. She wanted to rush to Zu An's side, but she had to hold herself back as the others were present. She asked, "Regent, were you the one fighting? Did you sustain any injuries?"

The earlier battle had caused such a huge commotion that it caught the attention of the experts in the capital, so they had rushed over to check the situation. With Liu Ning's standing, there was no need for her to personally head over, but she figured that no one else in the world other than Zu An could have been involved in such a devastating battle. Out of worry, she had rushed over as well.

"Your Majesty, I'm fine," Zu An said. He knew she was worried, so he assured her with a gentle smile.

Liu Ning blushed, but her heart was put at ease.

Yan Xiang anxiously asked, "Libationer, what happened here?"

"There was a spatial crack earlier. A monster from another world tried to descend..." Zu An roughly explained the situation to them. Those present here were the top leaders of the empire, and he would require their cooperation for his future plans. Thus, there was no need to hide the truth from them.

"What?" Yan Xiang and Liu Ning fell silent, but the others broke out into a commotion. They doubted the credibility of Zu An's words, as it was inconceivable to them how their peaceful world would suddenly be invaded by monsters.

Ji Dengtu interjected, "Zu An's words are true. My daughter and I witnessed it as well..."

They shared how they were chased by monsters on the mountain over the last few days, as well as what they had just witnessed a moment ago.

Yan Xiang walked up to the War Priest's carcass and inspected it, saying, "This monster isn't from our world. There are no records about it."

The crowd was forced to accept Zu An's words as the truth.

"We should first deal with that spatial crack," Zu An said as he flew above Shadowmoon Lake. The lake had calmed down, but a pitch-black crack with a hint of purple aura could be found in its depths, reminiscent of an open eye.

Without waiting for the others to respond, he drew the Tai'e Sword and unleashed a brilliant streak of sword ki into the lake. The lake parted into two, revealing the spatial crack. The sword ki gushed into the spatial crack, making it distort.

Those present here were top-notch experts. They sensed the spatial crack becoming increasingly unstable before eventually collapsing on itself and disappearing into thin air. Even Zu An's political rivals cheered at the sight.

Only Bi Qi stared at him with fearful eyes. This brat is stronger than I expected. I really mustn't underestimate him.

Zu An heaved a sigh of relief. He still couldn't shatter the fabric of stable space with his current strength, but the spatial crack had only just formed and was still in an unstable state, so it wasn't as difficult for him to deal with it. He couldn't have done the same for the Netherworld Seal, which had existed for many years.

"You mentioned that the War Priest had fighting prowess comparable to you, and that it wasn't in its strongest state yet. How strong do you think it is among the monsters?" Liu Ning asked with a worried frown.

"It should at least be at the level of a warlord, though it's definitely not the strongest in its world," Zu An replied. While the War Priest hadn't shared its background, it wasn't difficult to deduce the details from its tone and way of doing things.

"It wasn't the strongest one?" Pei Zheng asked worriedly. That devastating aura I sensed earlier was already on par with the strongest earth immortals in our world. This will be tricky to deal with.

"You don't have to be so worried. They still can't breach our world's barrier yet. For the time being, we should be fine as long as we find the spatial cracks

in time and destroy them,” Zu An said as she shared his earlier analysis with the others.

The crowd’s grim expressions finally alleviated. Pei Ming chuckled, saying, “It’s lucky that the regent uncovered the monsters’ ploy in advance, so we can make preparations for the future. Otherwise, the consequences could have been dire.”

“I was lucky. The world must have been looking after us,” Zu An said. He wondered if the world’s will was really secretly helping them.

The crowd chuckled. They were living in an era of superstition, after all, so they believed that heaven’s will was behind everything.

Liu Ning cleared her throat and said, “Keep this matter confidential. Chaos will ensue if it’s leaked, and we could end up collapsing to internal strife before the monsters invade. General Zhao, mobilize your soldiers to seal off Copper Gong Mountain. No one is allowed to approach this area until we clean it up.”

“Lord Bi, you’ll stop the people from major clans who have rushed here after receiving the news.”

“Lords Pei, you’ll investigate potential appearances of similar spatial cracks elsewhere.”

“Master Yan, we’ll need your help with rune formations and the mobilization of the academy’s students all over the world.”

The crowd was impressed listening to the empress’ orderly arrangements.

Finally, Liu Ning turned to Zu An and said, “Regent, based on what I’ve heard, the Fiend races are also resisting the monsters in a sealed land. You have close ties with them, so is it possible for you to be a bridge between us to negotiate an alliance to deal with the common enemy here?”

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Chapter 1970: The Fiend Races’ Plan

The crowd was startled. They looked at Zu An as they belatedly remembered that he was the regent for the Fiend races too. Previously, they had thought that he was simply a figurehead, figuring, Who knows what kind of madness that little Fiend Empress was up to? Or maybe she was just feeling lustful?

But after witnessing Zu An's strength as of late, they'd started to think that it was right for Zu An to be humankind's regent. Consequently, when they thought about his position in the Fiend races, it didn't seem as if he was just a figurehead either.

Zu An nodded, saying, "With a stronger enemy before us, it'd be wise for humans and fiends to put aside our differences and deal with the otherworldly monsters. I'll find a chance to liaise with the fiends. From an objective standpoint, they suffered many casualties and shed much blood suppressing the monsters emerging from the Netherworld Seal, and their sacrifices are a huge reason why we're still able to spend our days peacefully."

Had anyone else said those words in the past, they would have been suspected of colluding with the fiends. However, with Zu An's current standing and the current circumstances, there was no need for him to worry about such trivialities.

The others smiled awkwardly. They had fought with the fiends for so many years that it was hard for them to agree to such a thing.

However, Liu Ning nodded, saying, "The regent is right. I have looked up to the little Fiend Empress for some time now, and we are in a similar plight too. We should find an opportunity to meet up and discuss the possibility of a partnership between our races."

Bi Qi's eyebrows shot up. Liu Ning is taking on the airs of the empire's ruler, but Linglong is the true empress here! However, the little Fiend Empress had also recently lost her husband, which meant that she was indeed in a similar position as Liu Ning, so he decided not to say anything.

Zu An felt goosebumps. What are those two women going to talk about? I can't imagine the hell that will be unleashed if they learn about their relationships with me. Even so, Liu Ning's request was reasonable, so he had no choice but to agree, saying, "I'll relay your stance to the other side."

"I nearly forgot. The Heart-Devouring Demon Spiders can control corpses as their puppets. I don't know how many of them have slipped into our ranks, so

we'll have to tighten our checks," Zu An added as he eyed those present. "I suggest we start from the empire's upper echelons, since they can cause more destruction if they fall under the monsters' control."

Pei Zheng, Bi Qi, and the others were startled. "There's no way we could have been taken over by those parasites!"

Ji Dengtu chuckled from the side, remarking, "Why not? The Heart-Devouring Demon Spiders have unconventional means. You might be powerful cultivators, but you were previously unaware of their existence, so it wouldn't be surprising if you fell to their ambush."

Liu Ning nodded in agreement. She asked, "Your words made sense, but how can you tell whether a person has been parasitized?"

"You'll have to ask him. He's the only one who has discovered whether a person has been parasitized by a Heart-Devouring Demon Spider or not," Ji Dengtu said as he pointed to Zu An.

"It's easy. You just have to infuse your ki into an individual's body, and you'll be able to tell if they're alive, or if their heart has been taken over by a demon spider," Zu An replied.

Pei Zheng frowned, saying, "That won't be easy to pull off. The person accepting their ki will have their cultivation and hidden aces exposed. On top of that, they'll be vulnerable in the process, and they won't be able to protect themselves if the other side attempts to harm them."

Zu An frowned. This was a problem. While he could discreetly check a person's body, it would be ridiculous if he had to manually do so for everyone. There had to be a proper procedure for it. It would be hard to conduct checks if others had such reservations.

Just then, Yan Xiang spoke up, saying, "It's not that hard to resolve this issue. We can have the academy's physicians perform the check. If we just check the heart and minimize the ki infused to the lowest degree, we can minimize the harm to the individual."

Liu Ning turned to Ji Dengtu and asked, "Physician Ji, what's your take?"

The others turned their attention to Ji Dengtu too. Clearly, these powerful nobles of the capital knew about Ji Dengtu's relationship with the old libationer.

"He's right, but I don't have that much time..." Ji Dengtu replied with a troubled voice.

Liu Ning interjected, "That's good enough. The academy has a good reputation, so the cultivators of the world will be more inclined to trust you. I'll leave this matter to Master Yan and Physician Ji then. Come up with a plan as soon as possible." The academy was technically under Zu An's jurisdiction, but given their relationship, she didn't think he would be displeased by her overstepping her boundaries here.

"All right," Yan Xiangtu said with a nod.

Ji Dengtu panicked. "But I..."

Yan Xiangtu looked at Ji Dengtu, saying, "Second brother, our master has passed away, and the world is now facing a threat from the monsters. It's time for you to shoulder your responsibilities."

The only person in this world who could curb Ji Dengtu was his first brother. He hung his head in resignation and sighed, saying, "Alright."

Liu Ning smiled in satisfaction, then said, "Physician Ji, I'll be troubling you to check those present here."

Ji Dengtu rubbed his hands together as a smile suddenly emerged on his lips. He said, "Let's begin with Your Majesty then."

Eunuch Lu immediately stepped forward and glared at him with hostile eyes. There's no way I'd allow another man's dirty hands to sully my goddess!

Ji Dengtu was startled.

Liu Ning smiled and said, "I believe the regent won't hurt me, so I'll have the regent check me instead." She generously raised her hand toward Zu An.

Meanwhile, Pei Zheng's mind began whirring into action. The empress is leading by example so we'll allow Zu An to check us too, but Zu An is too strong. He'll see through our cultivation and our secrets. That won't do.

Pei Ming had a similar thought in mind. It's still better to let Ji Dengtu check us. We know that old man isn't interested in power.

Bi Qi pondered the matter as well. The empress is trying to win Zu An's favor. Haa, it's a pity Linglong's cultivation is too weak, so she's unable to rush here right away. Otherwise, we could have stopped her.

Zhao Yuan thought, I can't allow Zu An to check my body, though Ji Dengtu is fine. But why does the empress trust Zu An so much? Is she not worried about exposing the secrets of her cultivation?

These wily old foxes were trying to read too deeply into the situation, so they couldn't have imagined that the empress had no such intentions in mind—she simply wanted Zu An to touch her body. The others didn't think the empress and Zu An could have a romantic relationship, since they were from different generations.

The only one who hit the nail on the head was Zu An himself. She's wild. Trying to flirt with me in front of so many people? Interesting.

Zu An walked over and pretended to check her condition. The truth was that he had even explored her most confidential secrets, so there was no reason for him to probe the secrets behind her cultivation. Unlike before, Eunuch Lu didn't step forward to stop Zu An, instead choosing to step aside.

Ji Dengtu was startled. Why? Is it because he's better-looking? He had no choice but to check on the other old men. In the end, it was proven that they were all clean.

Liu Ning heaved a sigh of relief, saying, "It'd appear the monsters haven't breached deep into our ranks yet. It's not too late to guard against them. All of us will undergo regular checks from now on."

The crowd nodded. Ji Dengtu had held himself back from inspecting their cultivation earlier, so the group of them thought that this course of action was still acceptable. They understood that their current standing was built on the foundation of human supremacy; their wealth and power would mean nothing if the monsters took over their world. After a rough talk, they rushed back to the capital. There were many finer details that required discussion with those from the other departments of the imperial court before coming up with a proper plan. It was likely they would be busy from this day onward.

It was then that Ji Xiaoxi shyly spoke up, saying, "Big brother Zu, I need to stay here a little longer."

"Why?" Zu An asked, startled. He'd thought Ji Xiaoxi would be eager to leave this place after the horrors she had just witnessed.

Ji Xiaoxi pursed her lips as she glanced at Yao Fang and the others' bodies. She said, "I want to bring them back and give them a proper burial. They saved me."

If not for the academy's students protecting her, she would have already died to the Purple Flame Ghost. She hadn't thought they would end up meeting their eternal rest here.

Zu An sighed, saying, "It's my responsibility. I am the academy's libationer. I should have been the one to bring them back."

The problem was that he couldn't bury them here. It would be tragic if other Heart-Devouring Demon Spiders roaming in the area took over their corpses and exploited their bodies.

Zu An turned to Yan Xiang and said, "I intend to erect a monument in the academy. Students will no doubt lose their lives fighting against the monsters. We'll inscribe their names on the monument to ensure that they're remembered, as well as to encourage the living. Yao Fang and the others were the first to discover the monsters, so their names ought to be inscribed on the monument too."

"Thank you, big brother Zu!" Ji Xiaoxi cried.

Yan Xiang narrowed his eyes. Ji Xiaoxi was young and didn't know better, but as a veteran in the capital, he knew that erecting a monument was no small matter. It was unlikely that the imperial family and the imperial court would agree to it, as this had always been one of the imperial family's special privileges. Zu An was the only one with the standing and influence to push such a thing through.

Thus, Yan Xiang bowed to Zu An and said, "I'd like to thank the libationer on behalf of tens of thousands of students."

Even Ji Dengtu dropped his usual hostile attitude and respectfully bowed toward him.

Zu An was taken aback. He hadn't expected them to have such a huge reaction. He quickly supported them and said, "I'm only doing what I should."

Ji Dengtu and Yan Xiang exchanged gazes. They had previously thought it was ridiculous to allow a youth to become the academy's libationer, but from the looks of it now, Zu An was a good libationer.

Zu An and the others found the two surviving students and brought them back to the academy, together with the corpses of those who had died in the tragedy.

Shortly after they left, a few faint silhouettes appeared in the sky, as if unfathomable beings were peeking into this world.

"Who could have thought the arrogant War Priest would die in this world?"

"No one could have known there would be such a powerful being in this world. It's unlikely we would have fared better than the War Priest with our powers restricted by the world. Damn it. It's unlikely that this world's barrier will unravel anytime soon."

"We have to change our plans. A direct invasion will be tough. We should find a way to weaken this world's barrier first."

"Indeed. The best way to weaken a world's barrier is to induce a war, stoke a pandemonium, or cause calamities. We can send some of the weaker but smarter ones in to incite chaos."

"That'll still take decades at least."

"That's no more than the snap of a finger to us."

"It's decided then."

...

Those silhouettes then vanished as if they had never appeared.

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Read Keyboard Immortal - Chapter 1971: Resolute

Chapter 1971: Resolute

On the way back, Zu An checked the contents of the Brilliant Glass Bead. That drop of turbid yellow Naihe Oblivion Water was still floating calmly in that space. Unfortunately, no matter how he sounded it out, he still couldn't control it like the War Priest had. Now that he was proficient in the Baopu Sutra, though, he could more or less guess what was going on. Even though that War Priest had already died, the imprint he'd left on the drop of Naihe Oblivion Water still existed. Only by erasing the imprint and fully refining this drop for himself would he be able to use this treasure.

Apart from that, Zu An had also taken the Soul Summoning Banner, but after suffering the retaliation of the Violet-Gold Alms, it seemed to be damaged. He had to carefully nurture it to restore it and use it again. Even though it was a bit treacherous, weapons were never inherently evil. In the end, it depended on the user.

That War Priest's War Formation Disk had been completely destroyed, however. Zu An's Rune Weapon Chart had been unleashed at full power, so it was unavoidable.

As for the War Priest's corpse, that was Zu An's spoils of war to begin with, so no one dared to say anything about it. Besides, right now, the entire world was in a crisis, so he naturally wouldn't have any ridiculous attachment to it; he instead handed it straight over to the academy. That way, if the court and the academy's elites studied it together, they could figure out more secrets of the monsters' world.

At first, he was worried whether or not the Brilliant Glass Bead's space could store the War Priest's corpse, but Yan Xiang took out several Wind Manipulation Talismans and placed them around the War Priest. Then, the entire corpse seemed as if it had been swept up by a gust of wind, ready to be delivered to the academy just like that.

Zu An sighed in amazement at the power of talismans once again. They were part of a wide-ranging and profound field, as expected.

Even though they had obtained quite the spoils from this battle against the War Priest, when Zu An looked at all of the academy disciples who had been sacrificed, he couldn't bring himself to feel happy at all. It felt as if just a moment ago, those people had been full of life, all greeting him respectfully as the libationer.

He had only seen similar situations in books before and always found it a bit hard to relate to. Only now did he fully understand what kind of feeling it was. He was sure that soon after, even more academy disciples would perish. Then, who knew if close friends of his own would follow...

When he thought about such things, he felt a deep sense of powerlessness. These damned monsters... He had been enjoying a wonderful time with his women and the world's authority at his fingertips, and yet they just had to come and ruin everything!

Meanwhile, Xiaoxi also felt extremely broken-hearted along the way. No matter how her father tried to make her feel better, her head remained lowered in a quiet sob.

Helpless to do anything else, Ji Dengtu could only seek out Zu An, saying, "Go and say something to her. She's been filled with constant alarm and anxiety these past few days and hasn't gotten much rest. If she continues to remain in this kind of mood, she'll definitely end up really sick." When it was related to his precious daughter's health, he couldn't be bothered to remain on guard against Zu An anymore.

Zu An trusted Ji Dengtu's judgment as a divine physician, so he went over to Ji Xiaoxi's side and gently patted her shoulder, saying, "Xiaoxi, don't feel too bad. The dead have already departed. If their spirits are watching from heaven, I believe they wouldn't wish for the little angel they protected to be so broken-hearted either."

"I'm no angel," Ji Xiaoxi mumbled. However, her tears seemed to have stopped.

Zu An chuckled and said, "You're beautiful and you're kind. Usually, you focus on helping the dying and healing the injured, so in the eyes of the sick, you are an angel. Otherwise, why would they still risk their lives to protect you in that kind of situation?"

Ji Xiaoxi's head turned. How could she still remember to cry? She was filled with shyness and embarrassment now.

Ji Dengtu rolled his eyes as he listened in. This kid really is a smooth talker. Xiaoxi is as pure as a clean white sheet of paper. How could she possibly stand a chance against that? This is not good! I really have to keep Xiaoxi away from him.

“Big brother Zu, do you think there really are spirits in heaven?” Ji Xiaoxi suddenly asked.

Zu An was briefly stunned. He then immediately replied, “If this were before, I really wouldn’t be sure. But now, I think there likely are. The Naihe Oblivion Water that War Priest used was from none other than the legendary Yellow Springs...”

“Yellow springs?” Ji Xiaoxi asked, blinking in confusion. Her expression was really adorable.

“Legend has it that once one dies, they go to the netherworld. The king of hell then judges whether they lived a virtuous and merciful life. Those who do are reincarnated into good families, while evildoers are thrown into hells of different levels depending on their crimes. Only after suffering boundless torments and punishments are they given the right to be reincarnated once more. Meanwhile, prior to reincarnation, they need to drink a bowl of Granny Meng's Soup, which can make one forget all memories of one's former life. It's said that Granny Meng's Soup has Naihe Oblivion Water as a base, mixed with tears and all kinds of medicinal ingredients...” Zu An recalled the various legends of his past world and explained them to her.

Ji Xiaoxi was completely immersed in his story, her small mouth opened slightly as she listened with all of her attention.

The other two academy disciples listened with even more devotion. They took it as a rare chance to receive a lesson from the libationer himself!

Even Yan Xiang and Ji Dengtu couldn't help but perk up their ears. Even though they had seen some records related to the Naihe Oblivion Water, they were some isolated phrases at best and weren't as detailed as what Zu An was saying. They wondered just where he had learned these things from.

When he saw how serious everyone else was, Zu An was a bit embarrassed. He couldn't just tell them that these were actually some legendary stories and that they couldn't take them too seriously, right?

However, after thinking about it, since even the Naihe Oblivion Water had appeared, maybe those legends were real after all...

...

The party continued to walk together for some time when suddenly, rushed hoofbeats filled the air. Then, they were soon followed by several pleasant sounds. When Zu An's group looked up to see what was happening, they saw that two young ladies were urging their horses in this direction.

Even though the young lady in the back was pretty too, their attention was drawn to the one in front. Her skin was flawless and smooth, and her facial features were picturesque. There was a red beauty spot between her brows, and her hair was combed in a refined and graceful manner, decorated with all kinds of grand and intricate ornaments. Just a single glance at the quality and style of her clothes would make it clear that she was from the palace. Every single expression she displayed was noble and moving. Besides that, she had all kinds of exquisite ornaments at her waist; the pleasant sounds came precisely from those ornaments colliding as she rode astride the horse.

The academy disciple Chang Tian felt as if his chest had been struck by a hammer from a single glance. His heart started pounding. Ji Xiaoxi was also extremely beautiful, but she was more of the adorable little sister next door type. She was really gentle, so her beauty wasn't all that lethal. Someone like him who was also from a poor and humble family had a certain degree of resistance against such types. However, the distinguished and noble temperament of the woman across from him, and her kind of gorgeous beauty, was much deadlier against him and even harder to resist.

Mei Rou actually felt a bit ashamed of her inferiority. This woman was like a swan in the clouds, while she was like the most ordinary ugly duckling on the ground. She was normally quite popular among her circles, with quite a few people praising her for being pretty. Even though she had admired Ji Xiaoxi's beauty before, Xiaoxi was still too young, so she reflexively treated her as a little sister. It was hard for her to feel any competition. Only now that she compared herself with this woman in front of her did she understand what true beauty was.

"I greet the crown princess," Yan Xianggu said as he bowed slightly.

"Greetings, Master Yan." Bi Linglong quickly got off the horse and returned the greeting. With Yan Xianggu's status, she didn't need to do that, but there was no way she wouldn't recognize his good intentions.

Her maid Rong Mo, who had been gasping for breath as she tried to follow along, also quickly got off her horse. When her gaze shifted to the massive War Priest corpse off to the side, her expression couldn't help but change.

“Is she the crown princess? No wonder she's so beautiful and distinguished...”
The younger generation members were all a bit absent-minded.

Ji Dengtu wasn't all that affected because he liked those who were a bit more mature. Furthermore, recently, he had become fonder of the fictional characters of his books. Maybe it was because that Zu brat was too good with his descriptions, but he often dreamed of Teacher Bai.

“Crown princess, you seemed to be in quite the rush. Is there some pressing matter?” Yan Xiangtu asked with a worried expression. “Copper Gong Mountain up ahead might still be a bit dangerous, so I think it would be best for you to not continue ahead.”

“Thank you, Master Yan, but the reason I was in a rush was because I sensed some terrifying battle was taking place. That's why I came to see what was happening,” Bi Linglong said as she snuck Zu An a look. Only when she saw that he didn't seem to be injured did she sigh in relief.

Yan Xiangtu pointed at the War Priest corpse next to him and said, “This monster invaded earlier. The libationer fought a great battle against it, so I believe it's best if the libationer explains the details to the crown princess himself. Libationer, we'll go on ahead and wait for you.”

“Alright,” Zu An said. He naturally couldn't be more pleased.

Bi Linglong couldn't help but grin. Why had she only realized now how good at understanding others this Master Yan was?

Soon after, Yan Xiangtu brought the others away. As she left, Ji Xiaoxi gave Zu An a reluctant look. They had finally reunited after being apart for so long, so she didn't actually want to separate from big brother Zu so quickly. However, Zu An had official matters to talk about, so she couldn't really say much.

At the same time, she sighed deeply.

The crown princess really is beautiful...

...

When the others were far away, Bi Linglong groaned and jumped straight into Zu An's arms, hugging him tightly.

Rong Mo couldn't help but hold her forehead when she saw this. The miss isn't even trying to hold herself back anymore!

And yet, even if she didn't have any misgivings herself, she wouldn't dare to forget about her responsibilities. She quickly urged her horse away to vigilantly watch the surroundings, so as to prevent others from getting closer and seeing this scene.

As he held the slender and soft body in his arms, Zu An couldn't help but chuckle. He said, "I'm fine. With my current cultivation, it would be difficult for me to become injured even if I wanted to."

"I just want to hold you like this," Bi Linglong mumbled as she buried her face in his chest.

"What's wrong?" Zu An asked. Even as he sensed the pair of wonderful arms wrapped around him, it felt as if she was scared that he would suddenly run away.

"Nothing. Just let me hold you for a bit," Bi Linglong said. Her voice shook a bit, and she didn't say anything else.

Zu An was a bit stunned, but he just held her firmly too.

...

After some time passed, Bi Linglong then loosened her grip a bit. She looked a bit embarrassed, as if she was hiding something. She tried to change the topic and asked, "Where did that monster come from? Why was it so strong? Everyone in the capital was saying that it was a battle between earth immortals."

"Sigh, they're creatures from a different world..." Zu An replied. He gave her a rough account of what had happened. With her status, there would soon be people who informed her of what happened here too.

"What?!" Bi Linglong's beautiful expression changed slightly. She never could have imagined that something like this would happen! Their long period of peace could be about to change.

"There's no need to be too scared. As long as we prepare well on our side, those monsters won't be able to cross over so easily," Zu An said in consolation.

"I'm really useless... I can never come immediately whenever something does happen. It's always the empress who appears at your side first," Bi Linglong said dejectedly, biting her lip. She had actually been known for being talented ever since she was young; among her peers, her cultivation was rather outstanding. And yet, now that a freak like Zu An had appeared, as well as those powerful cultivators from the previous generation, she really felt as if she paled in comparison.

Zu An chuckled. He had never expected her to care more about something like that. He took out an embroidered case and placed it into her hands, saying, "For you."

"What is this?" Bi Linglong asked, stunned.

"This is a Marrow Cleansing Pill. It can improve your innate cultivation aptitude by a grade. That way, your cultivation will improve faster," Zu An explained. When they met in the academy's mountaintop lodge, the two of them had been preoccupied with burning passion, and then they were interrupted by the empress midway, so he'd had no time to give the pill to her at all.

Bi Linglong said hesitantly, "Ah Zu, you might know about this, but according to the academy's tests, my aptitude was already the very best. I was raised on all kinds of miraculous medicine ever since I was little, so this Marrow Cleansing Pill might not be too useful for me."

Zu An shook his head and replied, "No, this Marrow Cleansing Pill will work. Even if your aptitude is top-tier, the pill can still raise it to the next level."

"Huh? There's something that incredible in this world?" Bi Linglong was a bit shocked.

"But of course. Otherwise, why do you think I was able to cultivate so quickly at such a young age?" Zu An replied with a smile.

In that instant, Bi Linglong finally understood just what kind of secret Zu An had just shared with her. Her eyes became a bit teary. She was so moved that she rushed into his arms again. She got on her toes and gave him a kiss.

Zu An was stunned. However, he quickly held her soft waist and reciprocated passionately.

Some distance away, Rong Mo could only turn around when she saw that. She harrumphed and said, "Hmph, stupid romance."

Bi Linglong finally separated reluctantly from Zu An after the two of them kissed for a long time. Her eyes were full of affection, and she seemed to have come to some kind of decision. She said, "Ah Zu, in the future, no matter what happens, I will always stand at your side!"

Zu An couldn't help but smile. He pinched her perfect cheeks and replied, "Silly girl, you were already standing at my side before."

Bi Linglong pursed her lips and shook her head, but she didn't explain any further.

Silly big brother, you don't know what I'm saying at all...

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Chapter 1972: Questioning

Even though Bi Linglong had endless things she wanted to say to him right now, she didn't say anything in the end. After all, this affair didn't only involve her; it also involved her father, as well as the entire Bi clan. It was just too important, so she didn't dare to spill everything right now. She was worried that it could result in terrible, unpredictable consequences. Instead, she was focused on doing her best to apologize for her father's mistake in the past, to do everything she could to make up for the harm the Bi clan caused Ah Zu. She would do everything she could to ease the tensions and repair the two sides' relationship.

...

When Zu An sensed that her body was shaking slightly, he thought that it was because she was feeling scared of those monsters' invasion. He patted her back gently and said, "Linglong, don't be scared. I'm here."

Bi Linglong voiced her confirmation softly. She was about to say something when Rong Mo rushed over in a hurry and said, "Miss, there are many soldiers heading this way. We should hurry and leave!"

"It's King Guangling's people, coming to seal off Shadowmoon Lake," Zu An explained. Zhao Yuan was from the same generation as Zhao Han, and he was in charge of the Guerilla Warfare Army. That was why many of the defenses around the capital were under his command.

Bi Linglong nodded. She didn't want the soldiers to see them together either, so she said while giving him a reluctant look, "Then I'll be leaving first."

Zu An said with a smile, "Let's leave together."

"But there might be rumors and gossip flying around if we're seen together..." Bi Linglong murmured with a frown. Even though she didn't really have to fear these things with Zu An's current cultivation and status, those kinds of rumors were never a good thing.

"Then we won't let them see us together," Zu An said with a chuckle.

Bi Linglong squealed in alarm, as he picked her right up and rushed into the clouds. Once they were that high up in the air, the soldiers on the ground naturally weren't able to see them anymore.

As the two rushed into the skies in a passionate embrace, Rong Mo watched them leave with her neck extended. She was dumbfounded, murmuring, "What about me? I didn't get on the train yet..." At that moment, she was a bit vexed. If she had known things would be like this, she wouldn't have come with the young miss this time! Now, she had to take the walk of shame back all alone.

Suddenly, a force descended from above, and she flew into the air. Only when she snapped out of her daze did she notice that there was a rope tied around her. It turned out that Zu An had fished her off the ground and brought her with him. Bi Linglong gave her an apologetic look, then returned to flirting with Zu An.

Rong Mo was speechless. She had dreamed of being whisked away by a handsome and outstanding hero countless times, thinking about how they would fly through the skies in each other's arms. Whenever she thought of that, she had tossed and turned while wrapped in her blankets, unable to fall

asleep from the excitement. She had never expected that the first time she would fly into the sky would be like this.

I should be inside the carriage, not under it...

...

While Rong Mo was complaining inwardly, Bi Linglong was looking around vigilantly. After all, there was nothing to cover their figures in the air. She asked, "What if we're seen by some passing expert? Our relationship would be..."

"Don't worry, with my divine sense, I would already have detected them by the time they came close," Zu An said to comfort her.

When she heard what he said, Bi Linglong felt a bit more at ease. Only then was she in the mood to appreciate how beautiful it was up in the skies.

"Does it feel good to come all the way up[1] to the skies?" Zu An suddenly asked.

"Yeah, it does..." Bi Linglong replied absent-mindedly, but as soon as she did, she noticed a mischievous grin on Zu An's face. She finally understood what he meant, and she immediately hit him coyly, saying, "You're so annoying..."

When he saw her act playfully, Zu An felt something stir within him. He couldn't help but lower his head for a kiss. Bi Linglong groaned. She couldn't hold herself back and wrapped her arms around his neck to reciprocate.

In the back, Rong Mo covered her eyes with her hands. She sighed, muttering, "Here we go again."

Even so, the two lovers who were immersed in their own world paid no attention to what anyone around them thought. They were completely preoccupied with their love and affection.

A while later, Bi Linglong suddenly felt a chill in front of her chest. She could even feel Zu An's hand moving a bit closer. The two were tightly wrapped around each other, so she could fully feel the changes that were happening to his body. She jumped in alarm and pleaded, "Not here..."

When he heard her weak pleas, Zu An remembered that she was usually quite reserved and shy. Doing it all the way up here was still a bit too much for her, so he didn't want to force her. He replied, "Okay."

He spoke some gentle words to reassure her, but then thought about Tushan Yu of the Fiend races. He had to admit that the Fox race was more adept in this field.

"Ah Zu, you're so great," Bi Linglong said, biting her lip. She had actually felt the urge to agree to him several times, but this place was too close to the capital. If someone really saw them, that would be awful. Besides, Rong Mo was still here too, so she really couldn't bring herself to do it.

However, when she recalled how she had set her resolve to be good to him, and yet already refused him so quickly...

After some hesitation, she moved closer to Zu An with a reddened face. She nibbled on his ear and said quietly, "In the future, when Momo isn't here..."

Zu An was surprised. He hadn't expected her to actually agree to such a ridiculous request. It almost seemed as if it didn't fit her personality. Even so, he naturally wouldn't reject her good intentions and said, "Okay, let's do it tonight then."

As she voiced her agreement, Bi Linglong's voice was extremely soft. The redness of her face reached all the way to her neck as she murmured, "But we really can't be seen by others, or else I won't be able to keep living..."

"Don't worry, I'll take care of that," Zu An replied.

Now that they had confirmed their plans, Zu An became much faster. He found a place outside of the city gates to land with the two women, then watched them return to the palaces. It was still broad daylight outside, and so many people were coming and going around the capital. Flying straight inside while carrying the two of them would be inappropriate.

...

When they entered the city, Rong Mo couldn't help but complain, "Young miss, I feel as if you're becoming bad from playing around with him."

Bi Linglong was really embarrassed. She immediately chased her all around the room, crying out, "Momo, I'm going to cut out your tongue, do you believe me or not?!"

"Aiya, I was wrong, miss..."

...

Meanwhile, Zu An returned to reunite with Yan Xiang and the others. Ji Xiaoxi couldn't help but ask, "Big brother Zu, the crown princess seems to be really close to you, doesn't she?"

Zu An nodded and replied, "That's right. I used to serve as a minister of the Eastern Palace, so she's my direct superior. There's no avoiding her in that kind of place, so of course we're familiar with each other."

When she heard him call Bi Linglong his superior, Ji Xiaoxi released a clear sigh of relief. She said in admiration, "The crown princess really is pretty."

Zu An said with a smile, "She might be pretty, but our Xiaoxi here isn't bad either. You're pretty and adorable."

Ji Dengtu immediately shot him a sidelong glance. What a slick talker! Good thing I already taught Xiaoxi how to guard against trash guys like this. After all that practice over the years, she's now full of experience against them.

Ji Xiaoxi always treated the injuries of others all year long, so of course there wouldn't be good people around her. From time to time, there had been some troublemakers who tried to fool her with flowery speech. However, she had dealt with all of them easily.

This Zu bastard isn't even as good at this as the other trash men; Xiaoxi will definitely see through it.

...

Ji Xiaoxi lowered her head, looking a bit bashful and embarrassed as she replied, "Not at all; big brother Zu is just saying that to make me happy."

Ji Dengtu, who had been ready to see his daughter completely reject the advances of trash men, was filled with confusion!

Zu An cried out, "What do you mean, I'm just saying that? If you don't believe me, you can ask any of them. Chang Tian, Mei Rou, do you two think Xiaoxi is pretty?"

The two of them had strange expressions.

Why is the libationer asking us something like this?

Even so, they were still overwhelmed by his favor and said, "Lady Ji is indeed very pretty. Even in a place like our academy, she would still be at the top."

Their reply wasn't just out of flattery for the libationer; it was what they really thought. Besides, Ji Xiaoxi was an adorable and kind little doctor, so they naturally had a very favorable impression of her.

Ji Xiaoxi's cheeks became even redder. She fiddled with the corners of her clothes and didn't know what to say.

The others all had knowing smiles. This kind of gentle and shy appearance really did make all of them feel as if she were their little sister. They all wanted to cherish her.

...

The group returned to the capital just like that. The War Priest's corpse was covered up with cloth to prevent alarming the common people. Then, it was delivered back to the academy's rear mountain.

When Jiang Luofu received news of their return, she came out to welcome them. When she saw that Ji Xiaoxi was safe and sound, she couldn't help but release a sigh of relief. She quickly took her into her arms and exclaimed, "Do you know how worried your auntie here was? In the future, you can't go out all by yourself to pick medicines, do you understand?"

"Auntie, I can't breathe..." Ji Xiaoxi protested, her face completely red. She quickly struggled free and gave her chest a fearful look.

When can I become as... developed as my auntie?

Ji Dengtu asked in dissatisfaction, "If you really were worried about her, why didn't I see you look for her yourself?"

This sister-in-law was the one he had actually been scared of the most in the past. And yet this time, his daughter had almost lost her life, and because it was that brat Zu An who had arrived, his daughter was now constantly clinging to him. If it had been Jiang Luofu who arrived, Xiaoxi wouldn't be like this, so that was why he felt a bit upset.

Jiang Luofu gave Zu An a guilt-riddled look and said, "When I left, something happened to my ki circulation, so I troubled the libationer to save all of you."

Zu An and Jiang Luofu exchanged a look. He chuckled and said, "I'm glad that I didn't let everyone down."

Jiang Luofu's expression was a bit unnatural as she avoided his gaze.

Yan Xiang was a bit worried. He asked, "Junior sister, did something bad happen to your cultivation?"

After all, they were all orthodox cultivators who had sturdy cultivation foundations, so such problems wouldn't happen too often. If they appeared, they became a huge issue. Sure enough, even Ji Dengtu was worried now.

"It's fine, it's just a small problem. The libationer already helped me take a look at it," Jiang Luofu said, unable to explain further.

Zu An rubbed his neck and said, "Yeah, I did take a look."

Her skin is quite white.

Everyone else sighed in relief.

...

A while later, Shen Xuzi, Qi Yaoguang and the other teachers also heard the news and emerged. They all looked curiously at the covered figure that resembled a small mountain.

Zu An removed the cloth covering the War Priest, triggering cries of surprise. He said seriously, "Since everyone is here, I'll now explain the situation. This world has already begun to transform..."

Then, he explained the events of Shadowmoon Lake to the others. Even Qi Yaoguang, who had been sitting on a tree branch and happily rocking her

feet, became serious. She stopped giggling and playing around the way she usually did.

“From here on out, the grave responsibility of saving the world will now fall on everyone here. As for exactly what we'll do, Master Yan will make careful arrangements with everyone when the time comes,” Zu An concluded.

“We will not shirk from the duty of saving the world!”

“Haha, this makes things much more interesting! How boring would it be if we just continued reading books in the rear mountains forever?”

“I really want to fight a proper battle with those monsters!”

...

When he saw how these people weren't scared and instead became stirred with fighting spirit, Zu An sighed in relief.

The late libationer raised a group of excellent disciples.

The group then began to discuss concrete countermeasures. Ji Dengtu took Xiaoxi, Mei Rou, and the others away for treatment and rest.

Zu An returned to his room. When he closed the doors and windows, he summoned Mi Li and asked, “Are you not going to tell me anything?”

1. The raw uses a pun on 'climax'... 📖

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Chapter 1973:An Absolute Mess

Mi Li had been planning to play dead and not say a thing, but in the end, she couldn't handle Zu An's threat of stabbing the Tai'e Sword into a pile of sh*t and came out.

“This is your sword too, for better or for worse, you know? Are there any swordsmen who would do that to their own swords?” a voice protested as a strand of smoke came out. Mi Li appeared and gave Zu An an angry look.

Then, she moved over to the bed on her own to lie down, as if she could never get enough sleep.

You have successfully trolled Mi Li for +11 +11 +11...

She was dressed in black palace wear. One hand rested under her chin, while the other hand rested naturally on her thigh. She was alluring, yet elegant. Her lips were a captivating red, striking and beautiful. Her eyes gave off a slightly dangerous glint.

Even though this wasn't the first time he had seen her, Zu An still couldn't help but sigh at her flawless beauty.

Mi Li's exquisite nose bridge drew a perfect arc, and she had a delicate and smooth jaw. Her neck was long and snow-white, adding an irresistible temptation to her already stunning features. Even though she was upset, her anger didn't tarnish her beauty at all and instead added a special sort of feeling to her appearance, a kind of dangerous allure.

Zu An realized that Mi Li was dressed in the same thing she was wearing when he'd first met her in the first emperor's underground palace. The black palace wear contrasted her skin that was fairer than milk. He wasn't sure, but perhaps the time she had recently spent nurturing her body allowed her soul to become further condensed, making her skin seem to give off a white jade-like luster.

"Master empress, you're becoming prettier and prettier," Zu An couldn't help but say with a sigh of praise.

Mi Li harrumphed. "Hmph, do you think I'm as easy to fool as the little ladies you keep around you?!"

Even though that was what she said, she still couldn't hold back the signs of happiness between her brows. She was truly a woman whose mouth said one thing, but her heart thought another.

"I believe master empress knows about what I want to ask," Zu An said with a sigh.

Mi Li put away her smile and said with a grave expression, "It's still not the time to tell you about many things."

“There are already monsters from another world invading, and this world is about to meet its end. What is there left that you still can't tell me about?” Zu An asked, feeling quite wronged.

“What significance does this bit of danger carry among the millions and millions of worlds in the universe? I believe that with your current abilities, you can handle it,” Mi Li said calmly. She clearly didn't treat this monster invasion as a big deal.

Zu An frowned. “Is there really nothing that you can tell me? I feel as if you're hiding a lot from me. You clearly weren't like this before.”

“I've awakened a portion of my memories...” Mi Li closed her mouth midway through her sentence. When she realized that she had misspoken, she quickly changed the topic. “After going through what you went through in that terrifying great tomb, you should know that there are many beings that can't be mentioned. Even if I tried to describe them using some ambiguous methods, it would still draw the attention of some beings you could never hope to face right now. You would be finished as soon as they knew about your existence.”

Zu An was speechless. Listening to how serious she was only made him even more curious. Still, he said, “Alright, I also trust that you wouldn't harm me.”

Mi Li was really happy to hear him say that. She replied, “That's more like it; good boy.”

“Can you answer one last question from me?” Zu An said with a darkened expression.

Mi Li harrumphed. “I just knew you wouldn't be satisfied just like that. Just ask away then. If I can't answer you, I won't no matter how much you ask me.”

“Was my transmigration not just some coincidence, but rather arranged by something or someone?” Zu An asked as he stared into Mi Li's eyes.

In the past, he had never been too bothered by things like that, because transmigrations were a common occurrence in the novels he'd read and he just didn't think too much of it. However, as his cultivation grew higher and higher, and he came to know of all sorts of terrifying beings, he had begun to doubt more and more whether his transmigration really was just a coincidence.

A hint of surprise flickered through Mi Li's eyes. She replied, "That is something I can talk to you about. Indeed, it wasn't a coincidence, but rather due to the arrangements of forces unseen."

"Who arranged for it?" Zu An immediately asked.

Mi Li looked at him. She shook her head slightly.

"You can't talk about it?"

"That's right, I can't."

Zu An was speechless.

...

After that, no matter what Zu An asked, Mi Li simply didn't answer. He knew he wouldn't be able to get anything else and could only abandon the thought.

"I clearly already helped you treat the injuries to your soul, so why are you still always sleeping? Are you trying to accumulate power against certain dangers?" Zu An suddenly asked.

Mi Li thought for a bit to herself, then replied, "You can think of it that way."

Zu An took a deep breath and said, "I'll do my best to gather the other materials to help you reconstruct your body."

"Okay," Mi Li said with a smile. "You should do your best too. You absolutely cannot restrict your view to this world alone. Don't become overconfident just because you're close to approaching an unrivaled position in this world. There are too many things that you still need to face in the future."

"I wouldn't go so far as to become a frog in a well like that," Zu An said impatiently. "But what can I do right now?"

Whether it was the monsters' invasion or future dangers, he could only passively guard against them all. Such a situation really didn't feel good.

"Focus on getting stronger. That's the only foundational principle that holds consistent across the millions and millions of worlds," Mi Li said, giving him a deep look.

"Fine!" Zu An's expression became serious. If someone else had said that to him, he would only get irritated. He had finally managed to reach his current level, so shouldn't he have been able to take some time to enjoy it? Otherwise, what meaning would there be left in becoming stronger?

However, now that there were all kinds of unknown dangers near, he couldn't help but feel a shadow over his heart. Whether it was for himself or to protect the people he cared about, he had to become stronger.

Mi Li yawned and said, "Then I'll be returning to my beauty sleep. Please don't call me out for no good reason in the future." Her lazy figure quickly disappeared.

...

Just then, there was suddenly a knock on Zu An's door. A voice called, "Big brother Zu, are you inside?"

Zu An could tell that it was Xie Daoyun's voice. With a wave of his hand, the door opened on its own as he said, "Come in, little sister Ling'er."

A gentle and refined figure quickly walked in, saying, "Big brother Zu, I heard that you were fighting on Copper Gong Mountain. Were you hurt?"

"I wasn't. Aren't I still fine and dandy here?" Zu An replied as he spread his arms with a smile to show that he was fine.

Xie Daoyun sighed in relief, saying, "That makes sense. With big brother Zu's cultivation, how could you possibly be easily hurt?" And yet, her beautiful brows quickly furrowed. She continued, "Still, judging from how serious teacher looked when he returned, and how all the martial uncles and aunts are busying about, could it be that something major happened?"

Zu An had initially wanted her to not worry, but after thinking about it, those Heart-Devouring Demon Spiders were really hard to defend against. If she didn't know the truth at all, it would be really bad if she ended up encountering them. He was about to say something when he was startled. He looked in the direction of the entrance.

Xie Daoyun also followed his gaze and saw a beautiful young lady with a perfect oval face, who was looking at her with an ambiguous smile. She exclaimed in alarm, "Junior sister!"

The one who had appeared was none other than Zheng Dan. She was also studying under Yan Xiang, so they were martial sisters.

"I was wondering what important event it was that made senior sister leave so secretly. So it turns out it was to meet the libationer," Zheng Dan said with a big smile.

Xie Daoyun's face heated up. She said, "I saw that you were focused on completing the homework teacher assigned you, so I was too embarrassed to disturb you."

Even though the two hadn't publicly announced their relationship, since they both came from Brightmoon City and they met day after day, she naturally knew that Zheng Dan and her big brother Zu had a special relationship. In that instant, she felt as if she had been caught in an affair.

"Senior sister really is considerate. I just happened to finish my work, so I brought my sister-in-law out with me to get some fresh air," Zheng Dan said as she turned around and tugged a figure behind her. "Qienqien, don't be scared. The libationer is actually really kind."

Sang Qien staggered inward, appearing by the entrance somewhat awkwardly. She and Zheng Dan had been planning to meet Zu An here together, but now that there was an outsider inside, she could only pretend to not be close to Zu An.

Zu An was speechless.

"So it was junior sister Little Qien," Xie Daoyun said. She looked at these pretty young ladies who stood side by side like twin lotus flowers and sighed at their beauty. For some reason, they were clearly two young ladies, and yet they both gave off a mature charm.

They're nothing like my underripe self. Maybe I should consult them about this in the future...

Suddenly, there was a burst of noisy chatter. It turned out out Huanzhao and Youzhao were bickering with each other again, but their noisy argument quickly stopped; it was because they saw Zheng Dan and Sang Qien by the entrance.

“Hm? Brother-in-law’s place is so lively,” Chu Huanzhao said with a mischievous grin.

Even back in Brightmoon City, she knew about the vixen Zheng Dan who had come to seduce her brother-in-law. She hadn’t expected that Zheng Dan wouldn’t come by herself, even bringing her own sister-in-law with her. When she saw Sang Qien’s small, beautiful face, as well as her long and charming eyes, she immediately thought that the woman looked just like a fox spirit of legend. She was even more convinced when she looked at Sang Qien’s waist that was bound incredibly tightly, which further offset her graceful waist and bottom.

If this woman claimed not to have done this for brother-in-law to see, I’d never believe it!

Chu Youzhao and Chu Huanzhao were blood sisters, after all, so the former immediately understood what the latter was thinking. She immediately felt a powerful sense of danger too. At that moment, she had never found her second sister to be so agreeable!

When she sensed their hostility, Sang Qien felt extremely embarrassed. Her relationship with Zu An wasn’t public, and the other two were Chu First Miss’ siblings. She felt as if the main wife had caught her in an affair. She really felt a bit sullen...

Zheng Dan stood protectively in front of Sang Qien and shot Chu Huanzhao a look, remarking, “Oh? Isn’t it little Huanzhao? You’re just as small and adorable as before.”

Chu Huanzhao was speechless.

Lethal attack!

This woman is terrible! She’s clearly praising me on the surface, but she’s actually calling me flat.

Do you really think you’re that great just because you’re big?!

Fine, being big is amazing... Ah, I want to cry out of envy...

When she saw how dispirited her second sister became, Chu Youzhao immediately felt anger against a common enemy. She harrumphed and said,

"I heard that the Zheng clan in Brightmoon City has long been wealthy in business. Rumor has it that you developed your family fortune from raising dairy cows..."

"When did our clan raise dairy cows?" Zheng Dan replied, stunned, but she noticed how the other woman was looking at her and immediately understood. She immediately became embarrassed and angry.

Sang Qien also snapped out of her daze. She had been mysteriously attacked out of nowhere, and now, Zheng Dan's reputation was also being tarnished, so she was getting a bit upset too. She remarked, "I heard that the Chu clan has a literary reputation, so they should attach importance to etiquette. A few years ago, the Chu clan feared being implicated with big brother Zu and seemed to have divorced him from the clan. Why are the two of you still enthusiastically calling him brother-in-law and running over to his room all the time? If news of that got out, wouldn't it be quite the scandal?"

"You...!" Chu Huanzhao and Chu Youzhao's faces both became red. "You... Aren't you the same?"

Xie Daoyun and Murong Qinghe watched this with stupefied expressions. Why had the gunpowder suddenly become so vicious?

Zu An was also getting a huge headache. He immediately coughed and said, "Ahem, stop fighting, everyone, and come in. I have something important to tell all of you!"

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Chapter 1974: Appointment

When they saw how serious Zu An was and how he even seemed a bit angry, the Chu sisters stuck out their tongues, but didn't dare to cause more trouble. Sang Qien and Zheng Dan didn't want to look like shrews in front of Zu An either, so they naturally gave in as well.

It was Xie Daoyun who was left in a bit of a daze. She had been so focused on big brother Zu that she forgot that he had so many sweethearts around him. Last time in the dungeon, she had been with Chu Chuyan, Pei Mianman,

and Qiu Honglei, and now there were more! She was really feeling the pressure.

...

Zu An closed the door, then slowly explained everything that had happened in Shadowmoon Lake to all of them.

“Huh?” As they listened, the young ladies were all greatly alarmed. How could they still focus on their jealousy?

“The Heart-Devouring Demon Spider can parasitize a host body, so all of you must absolutely be careful and not become infected carelessly,” Zu An said gravely. “Besides that, we can't go off on our own like before, because we simply don't know if we'll be unlucky and end up encountering one of those monsters' spatial rifts.”

The others were still brooding, but Chu Huanzhao was still the most simple-minded of them all. She exclaimed, “Huh?! That means we can't go anywhere, so life will be so boring...”

Sang Qien said impatiently, “Right now, we're facing a crisis that might result in the destruction of the entire world, and yet you're still thinking about playing?”

“You...!” Chu Huanzhao was furious, but she didn't know how to argue against that.

Chu Youzhao couldn't watch this continue and spoke up for her, saying, “What she's saying is the truth! There are many people whose cultivations aren't even as high as second sister's, so there's no way they'd think in such a long-term way.”

Zheng Dan frowned. She felt that she had to say something too.

When he saw that the two sides were about to start arguing again, Zu An started getting another headache. He suddenly said, “Enough! The reactions of ordinary people are a problem, but we have more important things to deal with right now. We can only find those spatial rifts first and eliminate the monsters that have crossed over. As for everything else, we'll deal with those issues as they arise.

“Right, keep what you’ve learned today to yourselves. We have to keep it a secret and can’t willfully speak about it. Otherwise, it will cause mass panic.”

Zu An knew that warning wasn’t all that useful. After all, even he himself had come back to tell the people close to him, so they would definitely warn their own families as well. Those who had been at Shadowmoon Lake would also warn their clan members, so it was impossible to keep this matter a secret.

Even so, it was rather harmless to have it circulated on a smaller scale. After all, it was all within the capital’s upper levels. Some time would probably have passed by the time those outside the capital heard of it. That would become a great buffer period in which they could slowly ‘immunize’ the masses. It would be much better than to immediately drop apocalyptic news on them, which would be too shocking to handle.

The young ladies agreed. Then, Zu An told them to work hard to cultivate. Only by increasing their strength would they have a greater chance of surviving during future unpredictable situations.

Now, even the most unreliable Chu Huanzhao nodded her head seriously. Of course, in the past, she would have lost interest as soon as she heard about cultivation. After being known as a cultivation idiot for so many years, she really didn’t want to keep suffering. But this time, her brother-in-law had worked so hard to expand her meridians. Together with the Marrow Cleansing Pills, she’d immediately felt that she could do it again.

That was especially the case when she discovered that as she cultivated, many things she hadn’t understood before now actually made sense without a teacher. Furthermore, she had experienced a great boost in her cultivation speed, with just a single hour making a significant difference in her ki growth. Previously, there wouldn’t necessarily have been any changes in her ki even after cultivating for an entire month! With her frivolous nature, how could she have the patience to cultivate then? And yet now, everything was different, and it was all due to the help of her brother-in-law.

Brother-in-law helped me improve my ki flow; he’s so awesome!

...

Then, the young ladies reluctantly left. Zheng Dan and Sang Qien had previously only wanted to exchange some intimate words, but there was no

way they could swallow the embarrassment and do that in front of everyone else. They could only leave for now to keep Sisi company.

The others stared at each other as if they were guarding against thieves too. Only Murong Qinghe's mindset was a bit more pure. Only when they were sure that all of the others had left did they release a sigh of relief one after another. Even though they couldn't stay behind, the other vixens couldn't either. That was a conclusion they could accept.

In the end, Zu An was left all by himself.

Sigh... This really is another instance of three monks having no water to drink... Things really might become troublesome if this continues. My greatest mistake might be having them live together. I really have to learn from this lesson in the future.

He left the residence and walked over to the lotus lake, planning to spend some time cultivating there. After absorbing the War Priest's cultivation, he just felt a bit uneasy. He needed some time to properly digest it and integrate it into his own power.

He had to admit that the late libationer really had chosen a place rich with ki. Cultivating here garnered twice the result with half the effort. Unfortunately, this once-peaceful place was now full of young women, which was a serious threat. Going forward, he definitely had to work on purifying his desires a bit.

In any event, today was a great chance for him to sit down on the boulder next to the lotus lake. The rest of the disciples on the mountain could admire the dignified appearance of their new libationer.

I'm even cultivating seriously in the middle of the night, so would any of you dare to slack off?

As soon as he sat down, he suddenly looked at the brightly lit Imperial Palace in the distance. He was alarmed, because he remembered his prior agreement with Bi Linglong.

Hmm... It's not too late to motivate the disciples tomorrow.

With that thought, he instantly vanished.

...

Meanwhile, in the Eastern Palace, Bi Linglong was doing her makeup in front of the mirror.

Rong Mo helped her comb her hair while asking curiously, “Miss, you’ve already finished your bath, so shouldn’t you be returning to your bed to rest? Why are you suddenly dolling yourself up? Are you still going out again even though it’s so late already?”

She had to admit that her master was absolutely gorgeous. After her bath, Bi Linglong's tender skin was giving off a bit of steam, which created an enchanting glow around her. Rong Mo really envied the beauty of her skin.

“I’m just getting carried away by a sudden impulse and want to become prettier. Is there anything wrong with that?” Bi Linglong wrinkled her brows and harrumphed.

“Okay, sure, of course,” Rong Mo said with a smile. “But I figure you’re probably going to meet the regent, right?”

“Wow, Momo, you’re getting braver and braver, aren’t you? You dare to even tease me now,” Bi Linglong remarked, placing her hands on her waist as if to express that she was a bit angry.

“Hehe, I guessed right, didn’t I?” Rong Mo replied. She had grown up with Linglong and knew that she wasn't really mad.

“Do you want to die? Watch me rip that mouth right off your face!”

“Ah, spare me, miss!”

The two began to chase each other around the room again.

...

The maids outside all had envious expressions when they heard the cheers and laughter inside.

Sister Momo and the crown princess really have a great relationship. We wouldn’t dare to do something like that...

A breeze blew past just then. One of the maids rubbed her eyes.

The maid next to her looked at her in confusion. “What’s wrong?”

"I thought I saw someone, but it also felt as if I didn't."

"You're definitely seeing things. The security here in the Imperial Palace is so tight, with formations everywhere. The Eastern Palace is even more heavily guarded, and there are so many guards watching outside. How could there be anyone here? Also, you can't speak recklessly like that! What if someone else in the palace hears you? It might really come back to bite you!"

"I guess big sister is right. Thanks for the warning."

...

They had no idea that there really was another person inside the crown princess' personal chambers now.

Bi Linglong had initially been planning to chase after Rong Mo when she suddenly rushed into a warm embrace. She was startled at first, but when she sensed that familiar aura, she immediately felt at ease. She asked, "You... Why are you here?"

Rong Mo rolled her eyes. Just who was it that had washed herself spotless and done her makeup? And yet now, she was acting as if she had no idea he was coming!

Hmph, women!

"Because I miss you, of course," Zu An replied. He naturally wouldn't ruin the mood and say that they had already agreed on doing this when they were at Copper Gong Mountain.

Rong Mo felt goosebumps all over. She hugged her shoulders and continued to rub herself back and forth from the cringe. She muttered to herself, "Tsk tsksk, we should just fire all of those imperial guards. Their defenses is paper-thin! But then again, who could have imagined that the unrivaled regent would sneak in at this time of night to satisfy his desires?"

Perhaps it was because the two of them had always argued with each other when Zu An first entered the Eastern Palace, but even though he was now the glorious regent, she still wasn't all that scared.

Bi Linglong was really embarrassed, but Zu An instead said with a smile, "Momo, I've been refining pills and inadvertently made some Youth Beauty Pills. Do you want to give them a try?"

"Huh? You're being so nice to me?" Rong Mo replied, giving him a skeptical look, but she was clearly a bit tempted.

"But this medicine does have a minor side effect."

"What's the side effect?"

"Once you eat it, you'll never be able to speak for the rest of your life."

"..."

"I knew it!" Rong Mo grumbled. "Fine, I'm just an eyesore here anyway. I'll leave, okay?"

Bi Linglong also realized that Zu An was just saying that to scare her and couldn't help but smile. She tapped his chest lightly.

Zu An said to Rong Mo with a smile, "There's no need to go that far. You can just stand guard here."

Then, he carried Bi Linglong and rushed out of the window into the clouds.

Rong Mo watched the two figures disappear with her mouth wide open. She muttered, "These two really know how to play!" In the end, she turned around and looked at the empty chambers, then sighed. She muttered to herself quietly, "Do you really want to make me mute that badly? I just wanted to chat with you a bit longer..."

Meanwhile, Bi Linglong's entire body trembled from nervousness. She hugged her lover tightly and asked, "Why... Why are we flying up here?"

She had only planned to properly entertain him in the palace. Now that she had Rong Mo to help her, the palace had become the safest place for this kind of thing. However, the wind in the sky was quite cold, and most importantly, there was nothing hiding them at all. Far beneath them was the Imperial Palace. She didn't have any sense of security right now.

Zu An gave her ear a kiss and said something quietly by her ear.

Bi Linglong's neck immediately became red as she said, "I... I was joking back then."

"But I was serious," Zu An replied as he held her in his arms, his finger gently caressing her swan-like neck.

"We'll be seen though..." Bi Linglong said; she was really panicking now. The Imperial Palace was full of powerful cultivators, and there were people specially placed in charge of aerial defense. If they ended up seeing the two in the act, she would be too humiliated to keep living.

"Don't worry, they can't see a thing," Zu An said. With a wave of his hand, several banners revolved around them. Soon after, a faint formation radiance wrapped around the two of them. "This formation can cut off the view of the outside world. Only you can see the Imperial Palace right now, while the people over there can't see what's happening here at all."

Bi Linglong's face became even redder. She remembered how she had just resolved to make things up to him, so her tone was no longer as firm as before as she said, "But how can we... in the air..."

"It's fine, I'll teach you," Zu An said, then had her turn her back to him. He held her slender and soft arm and had her stoop down toward the brightly lit Imperial Palace. "You can use this chance to properly admire the Imperial Palace from this angle."

"You villain~"

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Chapter 1975: Broken Piece

In the Eastern Palace, after who knew how much time had passed, Rong Mo yawned. She suddenly sensed something, and a breeze brushed past. When she turned around, she saw that Zu An had already returned into the room with the crown princess in his arms.

When Rong Mo saw that, she was dumbstruck. She asked, "She fainted again?"

Zu An was also a bit embarrassed. He gently placed Bi Linglong on the bed and covered her up before saying, "Help me take care of her."

"Rather than having me take care of her after the matter, can't you just go a bit easier on her?" Rong Mo retorted, giving him a resentful look. She moved over to the bed and helped her master wipe the fine sweat off her forehead and the kiss marks around her neck. "The miss' body is delicate and noble. Everyone else is scared to hurt her even in the slightest; only someone like you wouldn't hold back at all."

Zu An was a bit apologetic, but it was precisely because of her special status and the scene of them looking down on the Imperial Palace that he had gotten so worked up in the first place. He awkwardly responded with a few words.

When the maid outside heard the activity, she knocked on the door and asked, "Big sister Momo, is there anything the crown princess needs our help with?"

Zu An couldn't stay here any longer. He looked at Rong Mo with an apologetic expression, then hurriedly disappeared into the night sky.

"Just help us prepare some hot water," Rong Mo said as she sent off the maid that was asking outside.

Eventually, Bi Linglong gradually woke up. When she saw that she was lying in her own chambers, her pretty face couldn't help but turn red.

"Young miss, it's not that I really want to say malicious things, but that guy really doesn't know how to cherish women! I really wonder just how he tormented you earlier," Rong Mo muttered to herself as she gently helped Bi Linglong wipe her body with a handkerchief.

"It has nothing to do with him. It's something I wanted to do," Bi Linglong replied. As she recalled what they had been doing not too long ago, her heart started pounding.

Ever since she was little, she had already begun to learn the customs and practices of the royal family. She'd known she had to become the future crown princess ever since she was little, so that was why her natural disposition was to be cautious. Normally, she didn't dare to make a single mistake. And yet, after she met Zu An, the things she had done became riskier and riskier. She

was already no longer that distinguished daughter who behaved with inflexible etiquette.

And yet, she felt as if an entirely new world had opened up before her. Even though she was a bit scared sometimes and got anxious, she felt a deep sense of allure toward those strange forms of stimulation.

“Miss, you really are...” Rong Mo was a bit stunned. “If he really cared about you, how could he possibly humiliate you like this?”

“Huh? I wasn’t humiliated. I feel pretty happy,” Bi Linglong reflexively replied.

Rong Mo was speechless. The first miss is beyond saving.

Bi Linglong looked at the red marks on her body and felt a bit embarrassed. She reflexively pulled up her covers, saying, “Ah Zu is actually quite gentle normally. Maybe it’s because he fought a huge battle against a great monster, but his movements today were... a bit rougher.”

Rong Mo was a bit curious, asking, “Then how does he treat you normally?”

“Normally...” Bi Linglong was about to reflexively reply when she suddenly reacted and slammed the pillow next to her at Rong Mo. “What are you thinking, you silly girl! If you want to know that badly, you can experience it for yourself next time!”

“No way!” Rong Mo cried as she got up in alarm. Her face was also becoming red.

...

Zu An returned to Mount Yuquan. After he'd worked hard all night, the sky was already starting to show the first glimmer of light. When he passed by the lotus lake and saw his reflection, he cried out in alarm, “I’ve been ruined by wine and women! I’ve actually become so wan and sallow!”

Apart from refining pills as of late, because he had become the Regent, he'd had to attend some feasts as well. Large drinking gatherings had happened continuously, so he had naturally drunk his fair share. On top of that, after fighting those ‘evening battles’ for days on end, he'd almost had no time to rest, which was how he had ended up in his current haggard state.

“From today on, I’m giving up drinking!”

Zu An decided to just sit down by the boulder next to the fish pond to circulate his ki. This time, when the sun and moon exchanged places, was when the world’s ki was the richest, so cultivating now was extremely efficient.

The elite disciples at the foot of the mountain were waking up as well. They were about to start their morning exercises. When they lifted their heads, they saw the libationer meditating on the boulder with hazy mist surrounding him. As the morning sun cast its first rays of sunlight on his body, it made him look just like an immortal from the heavens.

The disciples were completely won over. They had thought that they were already hard workers by waking up so early, yet now, compared to the libationer, they realized that they were really far off. The libationer’s cultivation was already so ridiculously high, and yet he was still so diligent, so what reason did they have to slack off?

The female disciples’ eyes were all sparkling.

“Ahhh! The libationer is so handsome!”

“I heard that he was still single. I wonder if I have a chance...”

“Wake up already; he’s already gotten married. His wife is Brightmoon City’s number one beauty, Chu First Miss.”

“But I heard that they already divorced each other... And isn’t she just pretty in her own city?”

...

On the mountaintop, Zu An didn’t pay attention to the disciples’ discussions. Roughly two hours later, he opened his eyes. He felt incredibly refreshed, with his mind fully recovered. The world of cultivation really was incredible. Compared to Earth’s ordinary people, the bodies of cultivators were on an entirely different level.

However, he quickly sensed something off. The energy within his body wasn’t all that calm, likely because he had absorbed the War Priest’s cultivation. Its cultivation was so great that there was no way for him to completely dissolve it in a short amount of time.

When he returned to his room, Zu An took out the golden brick he had used in the battle against the War Priest. During the fight, he had thrown it at the Naihe Oblivion Water, resulting in all of its magical properties being erased. It was now dull and lightless, inferior to even ordinary gold. Even so, it was still a heaven-grade weapon in the end. Losing it just like that would be a bit of a waste.

He quickly summoned the Forging System. In the past, he had awakened this new system along with the 'Rune Weapon Chart'; not only could it forge all kinds of weapons, it could also repair damaged weapons. A platform similar to a blacksmith's forge appeared in the room. Whenever he saw the Keyboard System's abilities, Zu An always felt amazed. He really wondered just where something so huge normally hid.

He placed the dull brick at the very center of the table that was embedded with all manner of runes. Soon after, the system produced a reaction.

Damaged Golden Brick detected. The required materials for repair include Soaring Flames Glass, heaven-grade crystal ore...

When he saw the materials that were listed, Zu An was stunned. He just happened to have Soaring Flames Glass. He had won it from his gamble in the Fiend races' territory in the past. What a coincidence!

However, after thinking about it, with his current authority on both the human side and Fiend races' territory, it wasn't all that strange for him to have rare materials. Not even Zhao Han himself probably had as many channels to acquire resources as he had now. After all, there had been no way for Zhao Han to get things from the Fiend races' side. If it were anyone else, any material they needed of this sort could take decades to find.

"Repair!"

As soon as Zu An said that, the strangely-shaped furnace erupted into flames. He then summoned and moved the White Lotus Flame in. The entire furnace became spotlessly white, and white lotuses continuously appeared inside. They gradually withered before being born once more, repeating the cycle.

The Forging System's flames alone were already enough to smelt all kind of weapons, but if he added in special flames, it would lend a helping hand and accelerate the repair or forging process. Sometimes, it could even grant the weapons some additional properties.

Zu An placed the Golden Brick, Soaring Flames Glass, and heaven-grade crystal ore into the furnace. At the same time, he used his ki to spur on the bellows to the side. Soon after, the Forging System began to move. The Golden Brick in the flames gradually recovered its usual color.

For the final step, he picked up the hammer to the side. He began to transfer the power of his soul to repeatedly strike the Golden Brick, thus establishing a soul link between himself and the magic weapon, allowing him to use it like an extension of his body.

After many hours of work, the Golden Brick suddenly erupted with golden brilliance. Then, it flew out from the furnace and continuously rocked back and forth, as if it were cheering toward Zu An.

When he sensed the strange connection, Zu An reached out and summoned it to his hand. He gently stroked it. Even though it hadn't produced a weapon spirit, because he had reforged it himself, he felt a strange sense of intimacy with it.

Suddenly, he was startled. He discovered that the Golden Brick now seemed to have become a bit more spiritual than before. Previously, he had only been able to enlarge it into the size of a small mountain to crush his enemies, but now, there was a slight fire attribute to it. When he brought it down on an enemy, it would no longer be an ordinary mountain, but rather a mountain covered in flames!

He put the Golden Brick away and took out the Soul Summoning Banner. After examining it carefully, he discovered that because it was damaged by the Violet-Gold Alms, even the imprint left by the War Priest on it had become considerably weaker. With his current strength, he was able to directly refine away the leftover spiritual imprint. Thus, he placed it on the Forging System. Previously, he hadn't been too confident that he could repair the Golden Brick, but this Soul Summoning Banner was something he was more certain of repairing.

Sure enough, the Forging System told him that it needed 'True Corpse Bamboo'. That was also something he had obtained from the Fiend races' territory in the past, and he had heard that it was the main ingredient for making things like Soul Summoning Banners. Naturally, it could be used here.

He quickly tossed the various materials into the furnace. This time, he didn't dare to add the White Lotus Flame, because it just happened to be the exact

opposite of something treacherous like the Soul Summoning Banner. It would be bad if he accidentally destroyed it.

He continued to carefully repair it just like before. He was much slower than before, but after many hours, he finally repaired the Soul Summoning Banner. He removed it from the forging table. This entire room immediately became filled with an eerie and sinister feeling. It was as if transparent skulls were scurrying around the room.

Just then, the formations around the room began to faintly shine. Zu An quickly put the item away. The late libationer had previously resided here, so this place was full of righteous energy. Furthermore, if the various defensive formations activated, it would be bad regardless of which side was damaged.

He now knew that this thing wasn't actually called the Soul Summoning Banner, but rather the Fallen Soul Banner. As long as it was swayed in front of the enemy, if they didn't have any soul-protecting skills, their soul would immediately leave their body. If it was shaken a few more times, their soul could even completely scatter.

Even if one had a certain degree of soul defense, they still had to face off against the power of the Fallen Soul Banner and see if they were strong enough. Even if they were successful in keeping their souls, they would still be affected. Their bodies would temporarily be a bit sluggish, and even that difference could often be fatal.

Zu An couldn't help but gasp at these abilities. Fortunately, he'd had the Violet-Gold Alms to protect him; otherwise, if this thing had been effective against him, he wasn't sure whether he would even have had a chance to use his Hundredwarble ability.

The Fallen Soul Banner was currently an immortal-grade weapon, but he felt that it could perhaps become stronger than that. It even seemed to be a broken piece of a certain other weapon. If just a broken piece was already so powerful, what more of the original weapon?

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Chapter 1976: Lake of Hatred

Unfortunately, Zu An didn't have enough information to investigate the weapon further. He could only put the Fallen Soul Banner away for now.

In the end, he took out the Naihe Oblivion Water. A single drop of turbid yellow liquid floated in midair. The other two weapons were easier to deal with, but this substance was a bit tricky.

The War Priest seemed to understand how precious the Naihe Oblivion Water was, so it had placed its spirit origin imprint on it. Furthermore, the imprint hadn't been weakened by the Violet-Gold Alms like the Fallen Soul Banner. Zu An's current strength was still insufficient to erase the War Priest's imprint.

Ultimately, it was because he didn't excel in the domain of the soul and spirit. It wasn't that he didn't try using Hundredwarble or other similar attacks against the imprint; it was just that none of it worked.

Gradually, he realized that what was left on the Naihe Oblivion Water wasn't just a spiritual imprint, but rather a mysterious contract he couldn't fully comprehend yet at the moment. This Naihe Oblivion Water's power was too great, so he didn't really want to just stow it away and forget about it. The monsters were invading now, so he couldn't ignore any bit of possibility of increasing his current strength.

He suddenly thought of something and summoned Mo Xi.

Mo Xi's 'Farewell Nanchao' skill had the ability to sever contracts, but for it to work, several conditions had to be met. If the removal of the contract was voluntary, her own cultivation had to at least be equal to that of the weaker party. If it wasn't, then her cultivation rank had to be higher.

Now that Zu An thought about it, he really wondered how she had been able to sever the connection between the Violet-Gold Alms and that monk. It seemed that the Violet-Gold Alms had coordinated with her.

The Violet-Gold Alms really was a bit mysterious; it was even able to wound the Fallen Soul Banner of the War Priest. While repairing the weapon, Zu An had begun to fully understand just how incredible the Fallen Soul Banner was.

Zu An put aside his random thoughts and continued to think about the Farewell Nanchao ability. Unfortunately, the Naihe Oblivion Water clearly didn't have any intelligence of its own, so it couldn't coordinate with Mo Xi like the Violet-Gold Alms.

He really wondered just how the origin spirit imprint on the Naihe Oblivion Water could be categorized. Was it a voluntary contract or was it forced? He assumed that it was most likely involuntary, but the War Priest was now dead and couldn't express anything now. The spiritual imprint would definitely be affected by that too. However, even if it was voluntary, the difference in cultivation between Mo Xi and the War Priest was far more than a single cultivation rank.

Wait, if I increased the grade of the skill, it could also affect the process. With each increase in its grade, Mo Xi can overlook two entire cultivation ranks. If I upgraded it, the two cultivation ranks would be extremely helpful.

Furthermore, even though he had practically used up all of his money and resources recently, it wasn't for nothing. He was able to upgrade both Daji and Mo Xi to the peak of the ninth rank. If he could give Mo Xi three more cultivation ranks, Farewell Nanchao could really work on the drop of Naihe Oblivion Water.

He closed his eyes and examined the Keyboard System. He quickly learned about the materials needed for Mo Xi's skill upgrade. Just as with Daji, the foundation of Ki Condensation Pills and silvers as an intermediary were needed. Additionally, Translucent Rain dew and Bronze Jiu jue Fragments were the two special ingredients needed.[1]

Zu An was actually pretty happy when he saw the names. What rain dew and jiu jue? Weren't these just ordinary things?

However, when he saw the ingredient descriptions, he knew he had been mistaken. Translucent Rain dew was an extremely rare treasure even in the Xia Dynasty, so where would he look for it now? Additionally, the Bronze Jiu jue Fragments came from the special wine vessel that Xia Jie and Mo Xi had used to entertain their ministers during important occasions. Only that item could properly store the special fine wine of their time.

Zu An couldn't help but curse to himself. These two materials were both related to wine. This woman really is an alcoholic! He soon felt a headache coming on. Even if he returned to the Xia Dynasty secret dungeon, he still wouldn't necessarily be able to find these two items.

He suddenly thought of something, however. He opened a subsystem of the Keyboard System that had been collecting dust all this time: The Shop System. He'd always thought that the items inside were too expensive and

that it was way cheaper for him to find them through other means. On top of that, there were a lot of strange items he didn't know the use of, so he basically hadn't used the feature.

He flipped through the different goods, and then sure enough, he found the images of Translucent Rain dew and Bronze Jiu jue Fragments. The Bronze Jiu jue Fragments were comparatively cheaper, only requiring 1,000 Rage points per item. Of course, the amount needed for the actual skill upgrade was larger too. Meanwhile, the Translucent Rain dew was expensive, needing 50,000 Rage points for a single drop. Fortunately, the amount needed was comparatively lower.

Zu An took inventory of his current Rage points. He had 201,360 in total, so he bought 62 Bronze Jiu jue Fragments. After all, Translucent Rain dew was only necessary after Mo Xi reached the sixth rank.

Zu An was a bit absent-minded when he felt the special texture of the Bronze Jiu jue Fragments. Just who had made this Keyboard System? It could actually carry such objects within it! When he then thought about how secretive Mi Li was, he realized that it likely wasn't a coincidence for the Keyboard System to have awakened inside of him.

I wonder just who it was that wanted to manipulate my fate... but the only thing I can do for now is to become stronger!

Soon after, he invested the resources into Mo Xi to upgrade her Farewell Nanchao skill. Fortunately, he had the money he'd gotten from Bi Linglong and Liu Ning. Otherwise, he wouldn't even have enough silvers to upgrade her ability.

Soon after, Mo Xi's Farewell Nanchao skill reached the sixth rank. He used up 48 Ki Condensation Pills, 62 Bronze Jiu jue Fragments, and 107,500 silvers in total. The reason why he stopped there was that he'd discovered that the only way to increase the skill further was for Mo Xi's own cultivation to reach the master rank.

He had Mo Xi try to erase the imprint on the Naihe Oblivion Water out of wishful thinking, but as expected, it didn't work. It seemed he had to first raise Mo Xi to the master rank.

The reason they were stuck at that stage, apart from just not having enough resources, was that he was missing another special ingredient: The Shining Blackmetal Silkworm!

Ordinary cultivators of varying elements needed entirely different materials to break through into the master rank. For example, fire element cultivators needed Soaring Flames Glass, metal element cultivators needed Cateye Pearls...

Daji was of the fire element, while Mo Xi was of the metal element. However, the breakthrough materials they needed for the master rank was entirely different. For Mo Xi, apart from the previous Rainbow Cloudstone, Thunderjade Raccoon Core, and other items, the other special material she needed was the Shining Blackmetal Silkworm.

The silk such silkworms produced was like metal threads. When it was woven together, it shone with a gorgeous dark radiance. On top of that, when it was broken apart, the material made metallic sounds. What Mo Xi had liked doing the most when Zu An first encountered her was ripping apart silk fabric, so the sound of tearing that kind of silk was even more pleasurable.

She really is a good-for-nothing!

Zu An did receive some information after entrusting the Embroidered Envoy to look into the subject, at least.

It was rumored that decades prior, someone had found a golden silkworm near the Lake of Hatred. Its description was quite similar to the Shining Blackmetal Silkworm. As for any more details, there were none. That was because the Lake of Hatred was a place that couldn't be explored with the court's power. It was where the Devil Sect's main headquarters was located!

1. A jiujué is an ancient bronze wine holder. 🍷

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Chapter 1977: The Moth Flies Into the Flame

Zu An had actually already obtained that intelligence a long time ago, but things had constantly been happening in the capital recently. He'd been forced

to run around because of the Meng clan and King Dai, and because he had been strong enough already at the time, he hadn't been in too much of a rush to look for it.

But now, things were different. There were monsters invading from a different world, so he felt as if there were a sword of Damocles constantly suspended over his head. He had to grasp every chance he had to become stronger; otherwise, if he really encountered an enemy that he couldn't face, the consequences would be too horrible to imagine.

Previously, Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei had left in a hurry. He hadn't received any news from them even now, which was a bit strange. This was a good opportunity for him to head over and check up on them.

Of course, he had to make many arrangements before he left. He put away the Forging System and left his small residence. He looked at the distant setting sun and sighed. Time really passed quickly; just repairing these two weapons had taken up an entire day.

His divine sense covered all of Mount Yuquan, allowing him to 'see' how the young ladies were all cultivating earnestly. They were all under a lot of pressure at the moment, it seemed. Even Huanzhao was surprisingly serious. Of course, perhaps it was because Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe were with her, so she had rivals that gave her more motivation to cultivate. In contrast, Sang Qien, Zheng Dan, and Xie Daoyun were already quite mature, and worked hard even without anyone keeping any eye on them.

Zu An nodded in appreciation. Then, his divine senses moved across other places.

Jiang Luofu was also pretty... Umm, pretty fair...

Why is this woman taking another bath?

Jiang Luofu seemed to have sensed something. She crossed her arms in front of her and turned toward the summit with an indignant expression. Zu An was clearly the only one in the entire academy who had the ability to send his divine sense through her various defensive formations.

Zu An quickly pulled back his divine sense. He couldn't help but feel a bit embarrassed. He had just been looking around, so how could he know that she was taking a bath in the middle of the day?

Soon after, he saw Jiang Luofu rush up the mountain angrily while hastily dressed in a spacious gown. Zu An felt a bit guilty and quickly flew up toward the capital from another direction.

...

Zu An landed in one of Scarlet Invitation's courtyards and didn't hide himself.

"Who dares?!" Nan Xun cried as she quickly rushed out with a sword. She seemed to have just woken up from her dreams and was still in her nightwear. Her clothes hadn't been completely buttoned up, so her beautiful shoulders and collarbone were in full view.

When she saw that it was Zu An, she sighed in relief and asked, "Can't the young master enter properly from the front? You're always giving this lady a fright."

"Are you sure you want me to come in from the front entrance?" Zu An replied calmly. "Who knows how many pairs of eyes are watching my every move right now. If they knew I'd come here looking for you, your identity would quickly become exposed. At that point, many self-righteous warriors could come here to execute fiends."

"Forget it, forget it..." Nan Xun said as she waved her hands awkwardly. She was nothing but a ghost now. If her identity were exposed, she would be killed immediately!

When he saw that her clothes weren't tidy, Zu An frowned slightly. He asked, "Why are you still sleeping at this kind of hour?"

"Unfortunately, this one still needs to receive guests in the evening," Nan Xun said. She paused for a moment before explaining, "Young master, don't worry, I only sell art, and don't sell my body."

Zu An couldn't help but asked, "Do you really enjoy being a courtesan? For better or for worse, you used to be King Qi's concubine. Do you really have an interest in these kinds of things?"

Nan Xun pouted and replied, "Do you think I want to either? I'm merely a ghost and can only sustain myself through the yang energy of men. Young master isn't willing to give it to me, so I can only get it from other people."

Zu An was speechless.

Nan Xun moved closer and placed her chin on his shoulder, saying, "Don't worry, young master, I only sell art and not my body. I only exchange poetry and songs with others and use those chances to absorb a bit of their yang energy. I wouldn't let those stinky men take advantage of me."

Zu An didn't doubt her either. With her ability, it naturally wasn't too hard for her to accomplish something like that. No wonder she always played the role of a courtesan and entertained guests. So that was the reason! He couldn't help but feel a sense of pity, asking, "Aren't you working too hard then? I'll help you make some pills that can replenish yang energy somehow another day. You won't need to work so hard then."

Nan Xun's eyes immediately lit up when she heard that. She replied, "Thank you, young master!" She got on her tiptoes and gave his cheeks a peck before saying, "The young master actually doesn't need to go that far. Just let this humble one serve you for an evening. With how powerful the young master is, I won't need to bother with yang energy for a long time. This one actually secretly learned a lot of things from Scarlet Invitation, and I feel I can satisfy the young master."

Zu An was speechless. Men really need to take good care of themselves when they leave their house. There are vixens who lust after our bodies everywhere.

"There's proper business I need your help with," Zu An said as he made her sit down off to the side. "I need you to send a message to the Fiend races' side."

Then, he told her about Shadowmoon Lake's events in detail. When she heard about what had happened, Nan Xun was horrified and no longer continued her playacting. She said, "I never expected the sealed land's monsters to have already appeared in the human side as well! The ones that appeared were even more powerful, no less."

Zu An said seriously, "The sealed land still has the past seal, so that's why those especially powerful creatures cannot cross over. On the other hand, it's more suitable for ordinary monsters to cross over. That's why even though the main army was situated there, the Second Prince still suffered heavy casualties."

"This is indeed extremely important information that I'll quickly send back. We'll be more mindful of any hidden spatial rifts that have appeared as well," Nan Xun replied in a serious tone.

"There is another matter. The human empress wishes to meet with the Second Empress to discuss the matter of forming an alliance," Zu An added.

"Alright," Nan Xun voiced her understanding. "But even though the Second Empress can make decisions for that side, the human empress doesn't have such status, right? From what I know, the crown princess' influence isn't beneath that of the empress."

"You don't need to worry about those things. You only need to focus on sending the message," Zu An replied.

"Okay," Nan Xun said. Now that they had finished talking about important matters, she moved over and asked, "Young master, do you really not need me to service you?"

...

After finally managing to struggle free from Scarlet Invitation, Zu An wiped off the lipstick on his face. He couldn't help but laugh to himself.

Why did I never put my hands on Nan Xun? Is it really because she's a ghost?

But in that secret dungeon, the Ghost King and I even... Ahem, it didn't seem to be all that bad either.

Am I just overthinking it? I've sucked away the War Priest's cultivation and feel quite restless to begin with, and I do need some proper adjusting anyway. I didn't want to torment Bi Linglong too much, but if it's Nan Xun...

He shook his head and tossed those thoughts out of his mind.

He couldn't really just publicly fly into the air after leaving Scarlet Invitation, so he went for a stroll on the main street. He sighed deeply as he admired the lively night atmosphere of the capital. He wondered just how much longer these peaceful days could continue for. Once the monsters invaded, these ordinary civilians likely wouldn't be able to experience such joyful livelihoods anymore.

He unknowingly ended up walking by King Dai Manor. After some hesitation, he decided not to make the stop. Since the other side had used Worries Be Gone Rosemary back then, it was best to let bygones be bygones.

...

Meanwhile, Meng Chan was in a daze inside the attic. Even though she had already been released from prison, King Dai Manor was already completely different from before. Only a few servants were left, and the manor that had once been brightly lit and full of activity was now cold and cheerless. She couldn't help but sigh deeply, feeling as if life was drab and that living itself lacked meaning.

She was about to turn around and return to her room when her eyes narrowed. She saw a familiar figure on the street. She suddenly trembled, and her dispirited heart began to pound fiercely. She only felt a moment of hesitation before raising her dress and running out.

She just happened to bump into the drunken King Dai in the courtyard. When he saw her run out, he couldn't help but ask, "Where are you going so late at night?"

After learning that he could keep his life and having that falling-out in the prison, he naturally guessed what was happening. Both of them had tacitly agreed to not mention the matter again, but afterward, she no longer showed him much respect. The two lived in their respective sides of the king manor and rarely met each other. They were like the most familiar strangers.

"I'm going to have a chat with a good friend," Meng Chan said distractedly. She ran over to the entrance and suddenly stopped, adding, "I'm going to stay over at my friend's place and won't be coming back tonight." Then, she opened the door and left.

King Dai drained his alcohol in one gulp. A hint of self-mockery hung on the corners of his lips. "Close friend? Who would even want to be your close friend after both King Dai Manor and the Meng clan have fallen so far?"

Even though he wasn't smart, he wasn't stupid either. Especially after what happened, he seemed to have suddenly understood many things. Normally, with her personality, why would Chan'er bother explaining so much to him? The fact that she was acting like this proved her guilt. The veins on his hand that held the wine cup popped a bit, but in the end, he could only release a

sigh of ruin. He knew that the fact that he could even keep his life was all because of Chan'er, so what right did he have to say anything?

"Be gentle with her, Chan'er is scared of being hurt more than anything..." he muttered to himself. He'd already had a lot to drink to begin with, and now, he quickly fainted. The wine cup in his hand slid down to the ground, and all that remained in his courtyard were the sounds of snoring.

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Chapter 1978: Ascension of the New Emperor

Meanwhile, Zu An walked into a secluded alley before he suddenly turned around, calling out, "You should come out. You've already followed me for a long time."

Soon after, Meng Chan appeared from around the corner. Her beautiful face was full of awkwardness and nervousness.

"Why is the madam following me?" Zu An asked seriously. Even though the two of them had experienced a wild night, Meng Chan had taken the initiative to use Worries Be Gone on him back then, and should've forgotten about what happened.

Will he think I'm a scheming woman and feel disgusted if I tell him the truth? Meng Chan thought.

When he saw that she didn't say anything, Zu An turned around. Their relationship was quite... unique, so it was better if they interacted as little as possible.

Suddenly, someone threw out a catcall. "What do we have here? Which family's hot chick is this? Why did you run all the way here in the middle of the night?"

It turned out out there were a few drunk unaffiliated cultivators who were passing by. When they saw Meng Chan around the corner, their eyes immediately lit up. When had they ever seen someone so beautiful before? Moreover, there was a kind of inherent beauty to her appearance that was

entirely different from the girls of this district. For people like them who hung around those of lower status, that posed an irresistible temptation.

Zu An, who had been about to leave, frowned. He had made sure to take unnecessary turns to try and shake her off, but that had only ended up bringing her to the city's north side. The law and order here was far from that of the king manors' streets, a place where people could drink together and claim to be brothers one moment, only to slam their beer bottles on the heads of those same 'brothers' a moment later. The darker alleys were even more so places for murder and business that didn't want any unwanted attention.

Even so, Zu An still didn't want to get involved. Meng Chan was a princess and a well-known talented cultivator. Dealing with these ruffians wasn't difficult at all.

For some reason, though, Meng Chan only shrunk further into the corner and didn't do anything. She didn't even say a word and only had a look of fear on her face. And yet the more she acted like that, the more it brought out the beast inside those people.

To them, it looked as if the madam of some great clan had accidentally gotten lost and ended up in the wrong place. She seemed to be a young lady who rarely left home and didn't have any common knowledge or ability to protect herself. The prostitutes they met normally couldn't compare to even a single finger of this woman. Normally, this was a woman who, forget about their current lifetime, even if they were given another lifetime, they still couldn't touch. And yet the heavens had dropped this delicious pancake right out of the sky for them!

The woman's clothes were exquisite and made of good material, so she was clearly from a wealthy clan, and yet they weren't worried at all. This kind of woman cared the most about their reputation. For the sake of protecting their own name, they wouldn't dare to talk about what happened.

Who knew, the men could even have a chance of forcing her to speak her identity. That way, they could use what happened today to continue to blackmail her. Then, they would have both this beautiful woman and endless resources. None of them would have to live their damned bloody lifestyle anymore.

They were getting more and more excited. One of them couldn't hold himself back and reached out to stroke Meng Chan's face, saying, "Babe, don't be scared. Big brother here will make you feel amazing!"

Meng Chan turned her face and did her best to shrink backward and avoid his hand. Unfortunately, there was a wall behind her and she couldn't avoid it any longer.

When they saw her act so weak and delicate, the others also couldn't take it anymore. They grabbed straight at her chest to tear away her clothes.

Meng Chan closed her eyes in 'fear', but no one touched her body. Instead, several groans quickly filled the air. She was overjoyed. When she opened her eyes, sure enough, Zu An was standing in front of her, and the ruffians were already lying motionless on the ground.

Zu An asked, "Was your cultivation harmed?"

Meng Chan bit her lip and shook her head, but her face was radiant with happiness. The dusky alley suddenly seemed as if it were blossoming with flowers and full of light.

"Then why didn't you fight back?" Zu An asked impatiently.

"I wanted to see if you would save me," Meng Chan finally said. Her eyes were full of smiles.

Zu An was speechless. Is there something wrong with this woman?

"We're enemies, so why would I save you?" Zu An replied with a stiff expression.

Meng Chan didn't say anything and just continued to look at him with a beaming smile.

"Then what if I didn't come back? Would you have let them do all that to you?" Zu An couldn't help but ask.

"No, I would have killed them," Meng Chan said matter-of-factly. "But if I had to do that, I would really have been broken-hearted."

Zu An was speechless again. He turned around to leave.

Meng Chan suddenly hugged him from behind, crying out, "Don't go!"

Zu An was stunned. Then, he reacted and asked, "You remember what happened that night?"

Meng Chan had a bashful expression as she replied, "How could I possibly forget such an unforgettable experience?"

Zu An felt a bit wronged. He said, "It seemed the Worries Be Gone doesn't live up to its reputation."

"That's not true. I actually forgot about what happened that night, but I wrote a letter for myself ahead of time. Once I read the letter, I gradually recovered my memories," Meng Chan said. She hadn't dared to speak about it before, but she'd already sensed his tender feelings toward her from what had just happened, so she decided to talk about it now.

Zu An now understood what had happened. It seemed that Worries Be Gone Rosemary didn't make one completely lose a memory, but rather buried it. If there were other triggers, one would still be able to remember what happened.

"Even so, we're still enemies," Zu An said seriously.

"No, you are our benefactor. It's because you were generous that more people were able to survive from the Meng clan and King Dai Manor," Meng Chan said, holding his hands even tighter.

In that instant, Zu An didn't even know if she was telling the truth or not anymore. When he smelled her body's scent and felt the graceful yet delicate sensation on his back, he felt as if the ki he had finally suppressed with great difficulty was starting to stir again.

"Do you know what your actions are implying right now?" Zu An turned around and asked in a somewhat hoarse voice.

"I do," Meng Chan said, her voice starting to shake a bit when she saw his intense gaze.

Zu An didn't say anything else and turned her around before pressing her against the wall.

Meng Chan's heart was now beating fiercely. Even though she had already made her mental preparations when she sought him out, she really was a bit unprepared if they were really going to do it right here!

However, this novel experience brought her a bit of expectation despite the fear. Her body was shockingly flexible, as her upper body was pressed up against the wall, but her waist was almost parallel with the floor.

...

The next day, Zu An returned to Dong'e Peak. He felt completely refreshed, with all of the malicious feelings from the bloody battle with the monsters completely vented out. The cultivation he had obtained from the War Priest was also fully digested.

He had felt that Bi Linglong was just too precious before, causing him to be unable to achieve such a result.

Meanwhile, in King Dai Manor, Meng Chan had just dragged her exhausted body back to the manor. King Dai was already waiting for her in his wheelchair.

"Didn't you say you were going to talk to your close friend? Why did you come back so late?" King Dai asked as he gave the distant setting sun a look. His tone seemed a bit cold.

"I chatted too late last night and was a bit tired. I slept in a bit today too," Meng Chan said, her expression a bit unnatural.

King Dai's hands gripped the wheels tighter, but then he let go in resignation. He replied, "Just which close friend was it that they would still be willing to interact with you in this kind of time? A friend in need truly is a friend indeed."

"It was the Wang clan's madam; we were friends since we were young. Sigh, you wouldn't even know if I told you," Meng Chan said as she hurriedly moved to leave.

King Dai suddenly called out after her, "What's wrong with your neck? Why is it covered by your shirt collar? Were you hurt?"

"It's cold out there and this helps me keep warm." Meng Chan left those words behind before hurriedly leaving so he couldn't ask anything else.

“You have to take care of your body no matter what!” King Dai shouted after her.

Meng Chan staggered and almost fell, perhaps because her legs were weak, or because she was scared badly by his words.

...

In the next few days, crown prince Zhao Ruizhi officially became the new emperor. The name of this era was Peace Eternal, implying peace and prosperity for the entire world. Crown princess Bi Linglong thus became the new empress, and the former empress Liu Ning became empress dowager.

Normally, Bi Linglong should have moved into the empress' Palace of Peace, and Liu Ning would be bestowed the Palace of Compassion after becoming empress dowager. But Liu Ning was used to living in the Palace of Peace and didn't want to move. Bi Linglong didn't want to stay in the palace Liu Ning had stayed for so long in either, and she had too many beautiful memories in the Eastern Palace. This place also symbolized the love she shared with her sweetheart, making her want to move away even less.

The situation made all of the officials in the palace lose their minds. In the end, however, Zu An thought of a win-win solution.

The two of them would reside in their palaces, but then the Palace of Compassion placard would be given to Liu Ning, and the Palace of Peace placard would be given to the Eastern Palace. The Eastern Palace would thus be remodeled into the new Palace of Peace. Either way, Zhao Ruizhi didn't have a crown prince and didn't need to use the place. The two women thus reluctantly accepted this solution.

Then, with Zu An taking the lead, the subjects carried out a grand ascension ceremony. At the same time, they granted the world a great amnesty. They hoped it would help quell the unease of the common people brought about by Zhao Han's death, while also bringing the entire court together. That way, they could face the following dangers better.

However, an issue appeared in the ceremony. All officials were supposed to kneel to the new emperor, and yet Zu An alone remained standing and didn't kneel. The gazes of those present shifted to him, and a strange silence fell.

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Chapter 1979: Adoptive Father and Cellphone

All officials, civil and martial, were already half-kneeling in respect. Only Zu An was still standing all by himself, which drew the attention of everyone present.

Many people understood why he was doing so. He was currently the strongest person in the entire court, and he could well be the strongest being of the human race. There was naturally no reason for him to kneel to an idiot. However, that idiot was the emperor! The emperor had previously always been the most powerful individual, and yet now, the ruler was weak and the subject strong. Didn't that mean there was a chance for an entirely new dynasty to arise?

Many subjects were feeling nervous and couldn't quite understand what Zu An's intentions were. If news of this matter got out, his lack of loyalty would be abundantly clear. It'd be hard for him to avoid criticism from the masses. Even so, it wasn't realistic to make someone as powerful as him kneel...

Many people were already secretly picking sides, wondering whether to remain loyal to the imperial clan or start to express their loyalty to the regent. Meanwhile, there were some other righteous subjects who were full of worry. After this matter, the court that had finally been stabilized with such great difficulty could become restless again.

Bi Linglong was about to speak when Empress Liu Ning said first, "There is something this empress dowager wishes to declare. Zhi'er, the reason you were able to become the emperor was because of the regent's support all this time. He has earned tremendous contributions for himself, and he is also the academy's libationer now. He is a person of virtue and prestige, so from today forth, you should just treat him as an adoptive father."

This so-called 'adoptive father' was like a little brother to one's own father. To a certain degree, Zu An could carry out the responsibilities of a father in his place too. As he was now the new emperor's adoptive father, there was naturally no need for him to kneel. On the contrary, the emperor had to bow to him.

“We must not let something like that happen!” Some subjects who were more old-fashioned immediately voiced their disapproval. “The title of adoptive father is no trifling matter! How can we let her majesty randomly allow someone to become his adoptive father?”

Bi Linglong also had a strange expression. She didn’t actually approve of this either. If Zhao Ruizhi really did accept him as his adoptive father, that would put an entire generation between her and Zu An! Wouldn’t her lover become her father?

The empress’ faction immediately voiced their disagreement. “Why not? His majesty is still young and needs someone strong to assist him. The regent used to be the crown prince’s teacher, so he was his senior to begin with. Now, his cultivation is so extraordinary, so why isn’t he suitable to become the emperor’s adoptive father?”

When they recalled that shocking battle at the Meng clan, the retorting subjects couldn’t help but feel a bit guilty. They asked, “But the regent is a bit too... young, right?”

Strictly speaking, it was hard to even say who between Zu An and the new emperor was older or younger. Asking the new emperor to accept him as his adoptive father was a bit absurd no matter how one looked at it, right?

The Liu clan’s subjects didn’t agree. “When has age been a determining factor for heroes? Those with achievements in cultivation have always come first. You cannot view the regent as a young man; you should rather see him as the greatest mountain in the path of cultivation. He is sure to become the longest river as well.”

Zu An’s face heated up. All of this flattery was making even him a bit embarrassed.

“That’s true, but...” The subjects from before were feeling a bit frustrated. In the past, it had indeed always been cultivation that came first, but those people had also been older, so this wasn’t a problem.

Liu Ning spoke up again. “According to what I know, the Fiend races’ child emperor has also paid respects to the regent as his adoptive father.”

Those words were like a hammer that struck down on their hearts. The subjects who were still arguing for what they believed in immediately shut their

mouths. Whether they liked or hated Zu An, they had to admit that the human race needed someone strong like him to protect it. However, Zu An had a similarly respected status on the Fiend races' side. If they weren't careful and he ended up being partial to the Fiend races, that would really be a huge disaster.

Zu An was now already so powerful that the 'restraints' of race didn't have much meaning for him. Regardless of which side he stood with, they would welcome him with open arms. Of course, he was a human himself and came from this side, so he'd naturally carry more feelings for this side. And yet, if his treatment was worse here than among the Fiend races, things would become troublesome if they pushed him away.

Besides, there was already a new Fiend Emperor who was calling him adoptive father. In that case, it wasn't all that hard for them to accept Zhao Ruizhi calling him his adoptive father as well.

Seeing that there were no more objections, Liu Ning considered the matter decided. "Ruizhi, Linglong, hurry and pay your respects to your adoptive father."

Zhao Ruizhi didn't really have his own opinion on the matter. He had already been panicking during the whole situation, and he had always feared Zu An a bit to begin with. When he heard his strict 'mother empress' say that, he replied with an 'oh' and instinctively agreed.

However, Bi Linglong didn't get up. How could she call Zu An that in front of everyone?

When he saw that she didn't get up, Zhao Ruizhi stood there alone in a daze. He didn't know whether to continue to pay his respects to Zu An or to sit back down.

The others' attention gathered on Bi Linglong. Her face flickered between conflicted expressions. In the end, she gritted her teeth and stood back up, saying, "Linglong pays her respects to adoptive father!" Even though she wasn't willing, with the mood as it was, if she didn't do so, that meant she was insisting on Zu An bowing to Zhao Ruizhi. With his personality, there was no way he would be willing to do that. How could she place him in such a dilemma?

With her taking the lead, Zhao Ruizhi had no misgivings left. He copied her and bowed slightly to Zu An, saying, "I pay my respects to adoptive father."

Zu An also felt a bit strange to see Bi Linglong call him that, but he couldn't really say much in front of so many people. He quickly returned the greeting.

The originally nervous atmosphere soon calmed down. All of the subjects present sighed in relief.

Then came all kinds of complicated ceremonies. After being busy for an entire day, everyone involved felt quite exhausted.

Zu An found a chance to talk to Bi Linglong. When he saw the frown on her face, he couldn't help but asked with a chuckle, "What's wrong? Are you upset?"

"How could I dare to be upset at adoptive father?" Bi Linglong replied. Even though that was what she said, her pouted lips gave away her real feelings.

"What did you just call me?"

"Adoptive father."

"I didn't hear you."

"Adoptive..."

Bi Linglong finally reacted. She shot him a glare, then turned around while fuming.

You have successfully trolled Bi Linglong for +55 +55 +55...

It seems as if she really is upset, Zu An thought. He took out a jade strip from his inner pocket and handed it to her, saying, "Take this first."

"What is it?" Bi Linglong asked. Even though she didn't want to talk to him right now, when she saw the glimmering light around that jade strip and all sorts of runes carved on it, she couldn't help but become a bit curious.

"A simplified cellphone," Zu An casually replied.

"Cell... What?" Bi Linglong asked, a bit confused.

Zu An coughed lightly. "Ahem... Actually, it's a simplified communication talisman. Previously, the primary tool for communication in this world was a recording mirror, but recording mirrors have a heavy price in ki stones, so they're mainly used for crucial military intelligence. That's why I researched this new tool. The costs aren't as great, and it can be used for normal communication."

The Baopu Sutra's artifact refining methods included the sound transmission talismans of the cultivation world, but he still lacked many essential materials for that. After discussing the matter with Shen Xuzi and researching it, they had used some of this world's materials as a substitute to finally create an experimental prototype.

"Really?" Bi Linglong asked, feeling shocked and happy. She naturally understood just how great of a transformation something like this would bring!

Zu An didn't say anything and entered a line of characters into his own jade strip.

Bi Linglong sensed the jade strip in her hands gradually light up. She immediately picked it up. She gave it a look. She saw the spotlessly white jade tile suddenly produce Zu An's appearance. Then, a line of text appeared: "Call me daddy."

"Go to hell!" Bi Linglong cried; her face immediately became red with embarrassment.

Zu An taught her with a smile, "You can write characters straight onto the jade tile and they'll be quickly transmitted to where I am."

Bi Linglong gave it a try. She was surprised again, exclaiming, "They really did!"

"Isn't daddy amazing?"

"Yeah... Wait, you're taking advantage of me again!"

"Then call me your husband."

"No way."

"It seems I once again need to teach you what your husband is capable of."

“My good husband...”

...

The two of them were clearly right in front of each other, and yet Bi Linglong didn't say anything. She just fiddled with the jade tile with never-ending delight. This item clearly brought her a feeling of novelty.

“How many resources does this communication talisman consume?” Bi Linglong asked the more important question.

“Roughly one heaven-grade ki stone per day,” Zu An replied.

“It's still a bit expensive, but it's much better than the recording mirror. It's something that the great clans in the capital can afford,” Bi Linglong remarked.

“If only it were that simple! The costs to make even one of these communication talismans are ridiculously high. There's no way they can be distributed on a large scale! It's just for you to use for now,” Zu An said.

“That's more like it,” Bi Linglong said. She then suddenly wrote on the jade slip, “Did you give one to your other women too?”

Zu An was speechless.

“Forget it, you'll definitely give that Miss Chu one. You have so many women, so asking this kind of question is just being tactless.” Bi Linglong tapped lightly with her fingers. Zu An really wondered just how she could write so quickly.

When he read her envious words, Zu An could only reply, “You're the first one I gave one to.”

Bi Linglong finally felt happier. “Then you have to chat with me every night before you go to sleep. You have to tell me good night.”

Zu An was speechless. He suddenly felt as if coming up with this kind of invention was crushing his own foot...

He quickly added, “We only managed to come up with this tool recently, so it still has many flaws. The greatest problem is the distance of transmission. We can communicate normally within a hundred miles, but outside of that, it will frequently not receive messages, or the message received will be scrambled.”

"You didn't do that on purpose, did you?" Bi Linglong asked, giving him a suspicious look.

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Chapter 1980: Impersonation

Zu An immediately began to sweat buckets. He replied, "No way! It's only because we can't find the appropriate materials, and I don't have much experience since we just started, so that's why there are so many flaws. It'll get better and better in the future."

Bi Linglong thus nodded in satisfaction, saying, "I guess it's fine. You have to give it to me first whenever you have a new model."

"Alright, sure, no problem," Zu An replied. He wiped at his sweat and quickly reminded her, "By the way, using this kind of thing to communicate must be kept a secret. You absolutely can't let anyone else see you using it."

He was even starting to feel a bit of regret. In his previous world, the reason why the trash men of his past world were frequently found out by their women was because they had their phones checked. He had to make sure to prepare against that and emphasize the privacy of their use to discourage these women from having similar thoughts.

"Don't worry, I understand that much at least. How could I possibly let someone else see the contents?" Bi Linglong replied. She was an exceptionally intelligent woman; midway through her sentence, she realized something and gave him a doubtful look. "Are you scared of me looking at your communication talisman?"

Zu An immediately handed her his jade slip and replied, "What is there to be scared of? It's just that I don't want others to know about our relationship, so I'm just giving you a warning."

Bi Linglong didn't take it from him, and instead secretly glanced at it from the corners of her eyes. She saw that only their conversation was recorded on it and was a bit embarrassed. She said, "Sorry, my good big brother. I was wrong."

“What good big brother? Call me daddy.”

“ ... ”

Soon after, Rong Mo came inside with a message that the empress dowager had arrived, so the two of them naturally couldn't continue their conversation. Bi Linglong sorted out her clothes before turning around to leave. She recovered her usual high and mighty temperament, even her gait resembling a proud swan.

Zu An thought to himself that with Rong Mo covering them, things indeed became much easier. This woman is surprisingly quick-witted.

...

Liu Ning quickly arrived at his side, with Eunuch Lu standing some distance away to block anyone who tried to get closer.

“What were you chatting with Linglong about that made you so enthralled?” Liu Ning asked, giving him an ambiguous smile.

Zu An said with a smile, “She didn’t seem too used to calling me adoptive father and was throwing a bit of a tantrum.”

“That’s understandable.” A mischievous smile appeared on Liu Ning’s beautiful face as she continued, “So? The mother of an empire is now your daughter. That must feel amazing, no?”

Zu An was speechless. He asked, “Are you doing this on purpose?”

“Of course,” Liu Ning replied, raising her chin. “The way she struts around all proud like a rooster has always been an eyesore; what right does she have to have you treat her with respect all the time? The other way around seems more reasonable.”

Of course, her other intention was that this way, she now had a proper reason to treat Zu An as someone from the same generation as herself. One was the emperor’s empress dowager, and the other the adoptive father. Weren’t they a perfect match?

Zu An’s expression became strange. Even though the battles between women were done in secret, they were still incredibly fierce.

He used the chance to hand her a jade strip, saying. "Your highness, this is for you..." She had also supported him just like Bi Linglong, so he couldn't skip out on her share.

When she heard what he said, Liu Ning was happy and surprised. She remarked, "There's actually a communication tool this simple and convenient? So the reason why you spent so much money before was to research this thing." Her fine and slender fingers had already begun to tap on its surface to test out its different functions.

"The good part of this device is that its consumption is much lower than a recording mirror, but if the distance is too far, you won't be able to immediately receive the message, and it might even just vanish. That's why this item can't be used for major military intelligence yet," Zu An explained.

"It's already quite amazing in itself. At the very least, whenever I'm feeling lonely all on my own, I can use it to chat with you," Liu Ning said, holding it close to her as if she couldn't bear to part with it. Even though with her status, she could use a recording mirror whenever she wanted, the exaggerated consumption of ki stones made even her grimace a bit. How could she dare to use something like that just to chat with her sweetheart?

Liu Ning suddenly thought of something and asked, "You seemed to have given Linglong something similar. Was it this thing?"

Zu An was starting to get a headache, but he knew that he couldn't hide something like that and could only nod. He said, "I started in the Eastern Palace after all, and I recently became closer to you. Together with the adoptive father matter, I had to ease my relationship with her a bit somehow."

"What is there to ease? Isn't it easy enough if she wants to become as close to you as me? She just needs to sleep with you, but can she do it?" Liu Ning remarked disapprovingly, and this affair clearly made her feel a bit unhappy.

Zu An chuckled awkwardly and didn't know how to reply. If she knew that he and Linglong had already been together for a long time, that every part of her had already become his, he wondered just what kind of expression she would have now.

"Should I ask around for you? That woman does seem to have a favorable impression of you. I refuse to believe she would really be satisfied with

keeping that idiot kid company for the rest of his life,” Liu Ning asked, as if she were wishing for the whole world to be in chaos.

Zu An almost choked. “Don’t do that!”

If those two really ended up discussing this affair together, he could very well end up dying several times over...

“Hmph!” Liu Ning didn’t really mean what she said either. She couldn’t be more familiar with Bi Linglong’s proud and aloof nature, so how could she possibly do something like that?

She suddenly thought of something. Her voice became a bit sweeter too as she asked, “Regent, how about you enter the palace tonight? This one has some new tricks, you know?”

Zu An was stunned, replying, “What new tricks could there be?”

Liu Ning was quite passionate in nature, so she was also more open-minded in playing around with him. She wasn’t excessively reserved like Linglong sometimes was, so the two of them had already tried basically everything once.

“You’re used to playing with the empress, but you haven’t tried the empress dowager yet,” Liu Ning said with a giggle.

Zu An was speechless. He felt a wave of heat erupt from his lower body.

This woman really is a seductress down to her very bones.

Not too far away, Eunuch Lu secretly glanced in their direction. When he saw that Liu Ning was full of smiles, her face full of excitement, he thought back to how she had been like the white moon in the sky, aloof and remote. Now, sure enough, she had already been fully subdued by this man.

He felt both jealous, and yet also gratified. After all, he had seen how pitiful she’d been back then. She had been full of bitterness and hatred, and yet he couldn’t help her in the slightest. Only now that she had received the nourishment of love could she display the beauty she possessed.

...

On the way back from the throne ascension ceremony, Zu An found the Qin clan's carriage. He exchanged a few words with the Qin clan's dukes, then went to the carriage in the back to find Huanzhao and Youzhao.

There were cheers and laughter coming from the carriage. The Chu clan's three women were happily chatting about something that seemed to be related to Zu An.

Zu An went straight inside. The young women cried out in alarm, but they all relaxed when they saw that it was him. As it turned out, Murong Qinghe was also there. The carriage smelled really good to begin with, and now that the three young ladies' distinct smells were inside too, Zu An felt as if he had entered a garden of flowers.

Qin Wanru had been lying casually in the carriage and rocking back and forth from laughter, but when she saw him, she immediately sat up to preserve her appearance as the mother-in-law.

Chu Huanzhao was the most naive and without restraint. She was the first one to speak up. "Brother-in-law, you're so awesome! You actually became the emperor's adoptive father! Even the new emperor has to bow to you!"

"It was merely to make it easier to meet with the emperor in the future," Zu An said with a chuckle, then quickly took out a jade strip. He expressed the reason for his visit this time.

When she learned that she could communicate with Zu An at any time through the talisman, Chu Huanzhao immediately loved it too much to part with. She turned around so that Chu Youzhao couldn't touch it.

Chu Youzhao tried several times but couldn't grab it. She felt angry and panicked; tears began to swirl in her eyes.

When he saw the sisters fight each other over it, Zu An couldn't help but smile. He took out another piece and gave it to Chu Youzhao, saying, "Don't worry, there's one for all of you." A big smile finally returned to Chu Youzhao's face. She continuously touched the jade strip she got as if it were the greatest treasure in the world.

Zu An was about to bid them goodbye when he saw Murong Qinghe's sad appearance. He suddenly felt a headache, because he hadn't expected her to be here too. If he didn't give her one, perhaps she would feel really terrible.

As such, he took out one and said, "Little sister Qinghe, you should take one too."

Murong Qinghe was shocked and happy, saying, "Ah, I... I can have one too?" She was going to refuse, but she actually really wanted one. Her tanned skin turned a bit pink.

Zu An chuckled, saying, "You, Youzhao, and other friends can chat with each other more easily now."

The noble circles of the capital practically already considered her the daughter-in-law of the Chu clan, so they were pretty much one family. Thankfully, he had a few extra for these kinds of situations.

"There can even be other friends?" Chu Huanzhao exclaimed. Her eyes lit up as if she had discovered a whole new world.

Zu An immediately felt a hiccup inside. Oh no, if they all become good friends and chat with each other, wouldn't that mean a lot of things will become exposed?

As such, he absolutely couldn't let her know that those other people also had jade slips. He quickly said, "It's just you three who can become good friends in private. This thing is extremely precious, so you absolutely can't let other people know about it. Otherwise, they might try to steal it." At the same time, he introduced the concept of privacy to them, telling them that they couldn't let other people read the conversations on the jade strips.

"We understand!" the young ladies replied, all staring blankly after his warning. They nodded like little chicks.

"Big brother Zu, can I add you as a friend too?" Murong Qinghe asked with a reddened face, leaving Zu An stunned. However, she quickly added, "I have a lot of cultivation questions that I want to ask big brother Zu."

"No problem," Zu An said, then took out his jade strip and touched it to hers. He then taught them how to add friends.

The young women were immediately awfully happy from playing with their new toy. Zu An thus said his goodbyes and left.

“Cough cough!” Qin Wanru suddenly straightened her back, as if to remind him that he forgot something.

“Did mother-in-law catch a cold?” Zu An asked, looking at her strangely. From the very start, she seemed to have already coughed several times. But judging from her rosy complexion, it didn’t look as if she was sick...

“It’s nothing. You can leave then,” Qin Wanru said, immediately becoming completely cold. Her back wasn’t even as straight anymore.

You have successfully trolled Qin Wanru for +55 +55 +55...

Zu An found it really strange when he sensed her Rage points, but he had too many things to deal with and couldn’t be bothered to figure out why she was upset. He quickly left.

Soon after, the Murong clan called Murong Qinghe back for something too.

Qin Wanru finally exploded. “He has no conscience at all! How could he not give me one too?!”

Chu Youzhao didn’t agree with her reaction, saying, “Mom, you’re his mother-in-law, so it’s not appropriate for him to give you one of these.”

Chu Huanzhao said with a simple-minded smile, “Exactly! What kind of secret messages do you even have to exchange with him? Don’t tell me you want to make dad wear a green hat?”

She got along with Zu An and understood his personality. She had seen him gift Sang Qian with a green hat for his wedding and guessed its meaning. The term had already begun to circulate among their small circle, but of course, others had no idea what it meant.

Qin Wanru’s face immediately became red with embarrassment. She cried, “Do you want to get beaten, you lass? I’m going to rip off your mouth right now!”

The carriage soon became noisy with activity. Only after quite some time did it calm down again.

Qin Wanru sorted out her messy hair and eventually answered, "Can't I chat with him about normal family matters? Even the Murong clan's miss got one; don't tell me they could be talking about romantic stuff?"

Chu Youzhao grumbled, "If they really talk about romantic stuff, I'll actually feel relieved."

Qin Wanru's brows shot up. She exclaimed, "Are you stupid? Qinghe is your future wife!"

Chu Youzhao sighed, saying, "Mom, you know my current situation too..."

Qin Wanru was speechless. Did I owe that idiot Zu in my past life or something? Not only are my daughters being served in one pot, even my daughter-in-law is going to be thrown in?

When she felt the heavy mood in the carriage, Chu Huanzhao immediately said, "Mom, don't be mad. I'll just lend you my jade strip from time to time in the future, okay?"

"Hmph, why would I want something like that?" Qin Wanru retorted as she turned around.

"Your loss," Chu Huanzhao said, but she immediately regretted saying these words.

"Hmph, if you don't want it, then I want it!" Qin Wanru immediately panicked and reached out her hand.

Chu Huanzhao immediately panicked and said, "You can use it, but you aren't allowed to read the messages between me and brother-in-law!"

Zu An had explained a certain hidden function. At the time, she was confused as to why he had even included it, but now, she realized that brother-in-law had acute foresight as expected.

"Fine."

"Also, you have to say who you are every time. You can't pretend to be me."

"But of course. Why would I pretend to be you?"

Even though that was what Qin Wanru said, she was suddenly tempted.

That's not a bad idea...

If that kid knew it was me, what would there be to even talk about between us? It would be more interesting to pretend to be Huanzhao and chat with him that way. Let's see just what kind of flowery speech that brat will use to trick my daughters, hmph!

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Read Keyboard Immortal - Chapter 1981: Young Men Don't Understand the Benefits of a Wealthy Woman

Chapter 1981: Young Men Don't Understand the Benefits of a Wealthy Woman

Meanwhile, Zu An returned to Mount Yuquan. He first found Zheng Dan and saw that she was describing something at a table with Xie Daoyun. Zu An wasn't in a rush to disturb them; instead, he leaned against the door and watched on quietly.

He had to admit that watching these two beautiful young ladies focused on research and learning was a delightful sight. Xie Daoyun had a scholarly air about her to begin with, while Zheng Dan normally had more of a warrior's aura. But after studying here for some time, the latter also became more like a gentle and refined lady.

The two women finally noticed that something was off. When they saw that he was there, they asked reproachfully, "Why didn't you say anything if you were here?"

"I was too embarrassed to disturb the two of you when I saw that you were so focused," Zu An said, feeling a bit moved. Just then, when he had seen the two discuss things with each other like top students, he felt as if he had returned to the libraries of his previous world. Only, these two were far, far more beautiful than the bookworms from that world.

"I was asking big sister about something I didn't understand regarding runes," Zheng Dan said with a smile. "Senior sister really is beautiful and kind. After she explained it to me, a lot of things that I was confused about before were easily solved."

“Junior sister is smart and talented. She'd learning about runes even more quickly than I did in the past,” Xie Daoyun said bashfully.

“Senior sister had to figure it out all by herself, but I can consult you for help. I'm merely standing on the shoulders of a giant,” Zheng Dan held her hand and said with sincere gratitude.

“The problems junior sister mentioned are things I've never thought about before either. Discussing them with you has also brought me a lot of benefits,” Xie Daoyun replied.

Zu An couldn't help but laugh when he saw these two thank each other back and forth. He said, “Alright, the two of you can stop flattering each other now. You're both geniuses at runes, and you can help each other. You're model students of the academy. We'll publish your achievements in the academy's journal in the future so that everyone can learn from you two.”

“No way!” the women blurted out at the same time. If that happened, they'd really die of embarrassment.

Zu An roared with laughter. He had been messing with these two to begin with. He took out the two communication jade strips and said, “These are for you two...”

When they heard his explanation and how to use it, the two women immediately fell in love with the item. They both wanted to say something to him, but they were worried about what the other would think.

“So it turns out big brother Zu was busy making this with martial uncle,” Xie Daoyun suddenly realized. She had tried to find him several times before, but she had never been able to meet him, making her a bit upset. Now that she found out that he was doing something so important, she immediately realized that she was the one who had behaved poorly.

Zheng Dan had actually focused on cultivation and couldn't be distracted by anything else. When she saw the jade strip however, she was suddenly really moved. She asked, “I can use this jade strip to chat with senior sister?”

Zu An was speechless. He replied, “You two cultivate here all day. Why do you need to use this to chat with each other?”

“There’ll be times when we aren’t together, right? I can’t bother senior sister every time I have a question either. With this jade strip, I can send her a question and she can help me whenever she has time. That way, it won’t disturb her cultivation as much,” Zheng Dan said. “Also, girls have a lot to talk about, you know?”

Xie Daoyun said with a smile, “That’s right. It seems we can chat back and forth using these jade strips, right?”

Zu An was really helpless now and could only teach them how to add friends. At the same time, he warned them to not randomly add friends.

“Don’t worry, we definitely won’t add guys. We’ll just add some sisters to chat between us at most,” Zheng Dan said with a big smile. “Besides, other people don’t even have jade strips to add us, so what are you so worried about?”

Zu An thought to himself, That’s exactly what I’m worried about! If you all add each other as friends and talk about all sorts of things, I’ll be done for!

Unfortunately, he couldn't say such things to them and could only warn them, “This jade strip is extremely precious and there aren’t too many of them. You two absolutely can’t show off with them. Otherwise, I’ll be in a tough spot if they find out...”

“They’re that precious? Then I don’t want it anymore. You can give it to someone who needs it more,” Xie Daoyun said, startled; she quickly returned the jade strip.

Zu An was speechless.

Zheng Dan giggled and said, “My silly senior sister, you’re one of the people who need it. Of course he needs to give you one.”

Xie Daoyun’s face heated up, her heart beating quickly. She thought to herself, What is the meaning of this? Could it be that...

Zu An shoved the jade strip into her hand and said, “Little sister Ling’er, you should put it away. I might have to leave for a while. I’ll see if I can improve these jade strips to make them capable of long-distance communication in the future.”

Judging from the current situation, it seemed there would definitely be no way of chatting once he got too far away. However, as long as the messages weren't lost, it would still be good to read the messages when he could.

"Where are you going?" Zheng Dan asked. Now, even she was becoming nervous.

"There's an important material that I need to personally collect, but I'm not sure of the exact process yet. I'll tell you guys when the time comes," Zu An replied.

When they saw that he was talking about a serious matter, the women naturally couldn't say much else. Even though they wanted to go together with him, how could they say such thoughts out loud?

...

After chatting for a while longer, Zu An bade them goodbye and left. Soon after, there was some activity from his jade strip. When he took it out and gave it a look, he saw that it was from Zheng Dan.

"Should I help you get together with senior sister? From what I can tell, she seems to have quite the good impression toward you, you know?"

"Don't mess with red strings of fate randomly and focus on your studies," Zu An replied.

He wondered what kind of reaction she would have if she found out about their relationship. But compared to all of the major events that were happening one after another, he wasn't in the mood to murmur endearments at all, and hadn't struck while the iron was hot. Xie Daoyun even seemed to have a bit of a hidden grudge when she looked at him.

"You really don't want her?"

"I don't."

"Hm? You're actually not interested in such a pretty girl? When did you change your personality so much? No wait, did you already get her in the bag a long time ago?"

Zu An was speechless.

“Stop saying random things, or else it might affect your relationship as fellow disciples under the same master. It’ll affect your cultivation.”

When Zheng Dan saw the last message, she swallowed the words she had been about to send to tease Zu An about Xie Daoyun. She quickly changed the topic.

...

Then, Zu An paid Sang Qien’s courtyard a visit. He kissed the baby in his arms until her face was covered in saliva and she cried out loudly. He himself couldn’t help but laugh heartily at all of this.

Sang Qien shot him a reproachful look as she picked up Sisi and tried to calm her down again.

Zu An walked over and hugged both mother and daughter; before leaving, he gave her one of the jade strips. Not long after he left, Sang Qien’s messages quickly appeared on the jade strip. They were basically all about their daughter Sisi.

When he saw how careful she was being, Zu An felt a bit heartbroken. He hurriedly replied, “Little Qien, don’t just talk about Sisi. You can talk about some other things you want to talk about too.”

“What do I have to talk about?”

“You have a lot to talk about. For example, how are your studies in puppetry skills going? Also, are your breasts swollen again...”

“You’re so annoying!”

Back in that room, Sang Qien was looking at the jade strip with a completely reddened face. She carried her adorable daughter in her hands while saying softly, “Sisi, your father is a really gentle and considerate person...”

...

Meanwhile, Zu An was going to keep giving out the jade strips when he suddenly noticed activity from his recording mirror. He quickly returned to his own room. He took out a dozen or so heaven grade ki stones and placed them around the recording mirror, then connected the call.

Soon after, a charming and beautiful young madam appeared in the mirror. She was none other than the Second Empress, whom he had been separated from for a long time. She seemed to be in her own chambers. Even though she held the mirror so close to her face, her skin that was as beautiful as snow was still perfect without the slightest flaw. Rather, she only looked even more moving and stunning. She clearly dressed in a dignified and prestigious style, but her eyes still looked incredibly gentle and charming, her pink lips flickering with a captivating luster that made it difficult for others to fear her.

Zu An couldn't help but say with a sigh of amazement, "You really are beautiful!"

The Second Empress clearly grinned, but she said, "Tsk, you only know how to be a smooth talker. You never took the initiative to contact me all this time, and it was only after I received Nan Xun's message that I contacted you."

"It really isn't that I don't miss you, but rather that recently, too many things have happened one after another. Besides that, I used up too much time refining pills and artifacts, so I didn't have any time to use the recording mirror..." Zu An explained with a sullen expression.

The Second Empress immediately sat up straight when she heard that. "I've heard that you're now a regent of the human race too. The human race actually put you in such dire straits? How ridiculous. Stop helping them and come over to the Fiend races already. I'll help you take care of all of the artifact refining!"

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Chapter 1982: Marriage

"You misunderstand. It's not that they've treated me poorly, but rather that I don't wish to affect the livelihoods of the common people through the abuse of my authority," Zu An explained.

The Second Empress didn't seem to understand. She said, "I've never met someone who thought the way you did. If everyone thought the same way, it's likely that no one would want to become an official. You're a regent now, and yet you're still living such a narrow-minded and cramped life."

“There normally aren't any issues at all, though. It's just that I ended up needing a lot of resources for my recent weapon refinement,” Zu An said, then told her about the things he'd done recently.

The Second Empress immediately became interested and asked him many questions. In the end, she said with a sigh, “It doesn't matter, because you are our Fiend races' regent too. The things you research can't be used by the human race alone.”

When he saw that she was feeling a bit nervous, Zu An said with a chuckle, “Don't worry, the Fiend races' side is also my home. Furthermore, don't I still have you?” He told himself that he also had Yu Yanluo, but of course, he couldn't say that to the Second Empress.

The Second Empress was actually becoming quite anxious, but she immediately beamed when she heard that. “Your little mouth really is sweet. I almost want a taste of it now.”

Zu An was speechless.

Women from the Fiend races really are bolder, as expected...

Zu An coughed lightly and said, “By the way, the human side's empress dowager wishes to meet with you to discuss how we can work together to face monsters from other worlds.”

The Second Empress didn't reply to what he said, and instead asked a question in return. “I heard that empress dowager was a beauty who has infatuated countless men, and I believe she wouldn't have been chosen by Zhao Han as the empress otherwise. Now, she seems to have become even more beautiful, with her complexion improving by the day. She doesn't seem like a woman who has just lost her husband at all, no?”

Zu An was alarmed and could only say, “The two of them appeared to be together, but they were divided at heart. Without the mountainous pressure of Zhao Han's existence looming over her, it makes sense that her mood has improved.”

“It looks like you understand her pretty well,” the Second Empress said as she smiled ambiguously. “Do the two of you have a thing going on?”

Zu An was speechless.

Why can't any of these women talk normally?

"We're talking about proper affairs here, so please be a bit more serious," Zu An said impatiently.

"Sure, sure." The Second Empress didn't pry further. "The monsters are invading, so our countries should ally together. However, there is a bigger problem, which is to say, just who will preside over all of this?"

Zu An frowned and replied, "The human race is a bit stronger right now, so it won't be all that easy for them to coordinate with the Fiend races. Of course, I'll do my best to ensure equal power dynamics in this collaboration."

"How can it be as easy as you make it out to be? Just my meeting with your empress dowager poses a problem. Who should be the one to meet whom?" the Second Empress said. "If either one of us goes to the other side's region, it will be seen as a submissive action. If I make the empress dowager come and meet me, she'll likely refuse. I absolutely won't go all the way to meet with her either."

Zu An was stunned, asking, "Something this small was actually that important?"

"Of course!" the Second Empress replied, raising her voice. "When we stopped our war with the human race not too long ago, many extremists in the Fiend races felt that the King Court was acting too weak against outsiders. I finally managed to get that under control back then, but now that Zhao Han is already dead, there are quite a few people on this side who are starting to stir up trouble. Most importantly, the invasion of the monsters from other worlds hasn't become public information yet. That's why, if we collaborate with the human race and show weakness again, I might just end up with a huge mess on my side." As she spoke, her brows were deeply furrowed; she was clearly feeling extremely vexed.

Zu An thought back to how the Fiend races were. That side had a loose tribal structure, and the various races only submitted to the King Court as their main leader in name. The King Court doesn't actually have that much control over the respective races. Furthermore, many people from the different tribes were the valiant and dauntless sort who had one-track minds. Trying to reason with them and tell them to endure for the sake of the future was like playing the lute to a cow.

"Then what do we do?" Zu An asked. He couldn't help but feel a bit frustrated. If he didn't deal with this matter properly and ended up worsening the relations between the two sides, collaboration between them could be impossible.

"I have an idea. Why doesn't that emperor take one of our Fiend races' king race women as a wife? That way, it would look better for both sides. We can then use that pretext to meet more easily," the Second Empress suddenly said with a smile.

"That's not a bad idea. Which king race woman? Do you have any suggestions?" Zu An asked with a nod.

"Of course. The Peacock King race's Princess Nanwu is beautiful and capable. I believe she can make great contributions to the peaceful relations between our countries," the Second Empress said casually.

"Kong Nanwu?" Zu An repeated, stunned. He never expected it to be her. That beautiful woman appeared in his mind. She had actually treated him quite well in the past. Did she really have to marry that idiot emperor?

"What, you can't bear to see that happen?" The Second Empress laughed when she saw his reaction.

"What is there to be reluctant about?" Zu An replied with a light cough. "I just feel that Princess Nanwu is proud and might not be willing to serve another. The new emperor is also a proud person and might not tolerate her. If the two end up fighting, that might actually affect relations."

The Second Empress smiled ambiguously and replied, "Though in the end, isn't it just because you're worried about Princess Nanwu?"

Zu An was speechless.

"Enough, enough, I was just joking around. Forget about the fact that Princess Nanwu's status is prestigious, I can't ignore her opinions and just decide this marriage for her. Even if she agrees, there's no way I can let a Fiend race woman marry into the human side. No matter how you look at it, that would be a kind of humiliation," the Second Empress said with a teasing smile.

"If it's impossible, why did you bring it up?" Zu An asked, feeling a bit baffled.

"There's no way for the Fiend race's women to marry into the human side, but we can have a human princess marry into our side, or something similar." The Second Empress finally expressed her true intent.

Zu An said impatiently, "The Fiend races will also feel that marrying a human woman into that side is a form of humiliation. Wouldn't it be the same the other way around? The humans have the advantage right now, so there's even less of a chance of them agreeing."

"Under normal circumstances, they indeed wouldn't agree, but there is a human who would agree," the Second Empress said in a deliberately mysterious manner.

"Who would that be?" Zu An asked curiously. "The Fiend Emperor is still young, so I don't think it's time to discuss marriage yet, right?"

"Who said anything about him? It's clearly you that I'm talking about," the Second Empress said with a big smile.

"Me?" Zu An's head started rattling. "No way, no way."

Are you freaking kidding me right now? The sweethearts around me are already a complete mess from fighting each other, so how could I get myself involved in something like that?

"Who says there's no way? Your status is special, and with your strength and status, I believe there are countless women who wish to marry you. Furthermore, you're the regent of the Fiend races as well, so it would also represent a member of the Fiend races marrying a human woman, so it's honorable enough for our side too. Isn't this a win-win situation?" the Second Empress said with a smile. "As for why you wouldn't be marrying a Fiend woman, you are a human after all, so if a Fiend woman married you, they would feel as if they were lowering their status." When she saw that he still wasn't convinced, she could only say, "If the collaboration between the humans and Fiends fails because of your refusal, the responsibility of the monsters' invasion will fall onto you."

"Don't try to pressure me with something like that. I refuse to use marriage as a bargaining chip," Zu An said coldly.

“Fine, but I don’t have any other solutions. That empress dowager can rack her brains over this matter, and I won’t worry about it anymore,” the Second Empress said with a fatigued expression.

Zu An knew that she was saying these things out of good intentions, and he felt his tone had been too harsh earlier. That was why he tried to explain himself and said, “Your suggestion isn’t really possible in the first place. Zhao Han has a few daughters, but they’ve already gotten married. The new emperor doesn’t have any daughters, and the imperial clan doesn’t have any outstanding princesses.”

“It’s fine even if there aren’t any princesses. For example, King Qi’s princess is probably an eyesore on the human side anyway, right? Won’t it be fine to just marry her into the Fiend side?” The Second Empress said with a smile, “I’ll keep an eye on her when the time comes, so there’s no way she can intervene with your womanizing.”

When he saw that her suggestions were getting more and more out of hand, Zu An immediately changed the topic. He asked the Second Empress about how the war around the sealed land had been going.

The Second Empress became more serious when it came to that topic. She shared all kinds of intelligence with him in a grave tone.

...

Just like that, the two chatted for an hour, and by then, even the Second Empress was starting to feel a bit of a burden from the recording mirror's costs. She could only hurriedly end the call.

Even so, after chatting with the Second Empress, Zu An also realized that the situation was grim. He decided to contact the people around him first so they wouldn’t be caught off guard and end up falling prey to the monsters’ schemes.

He headed over to the court’s official-use recording mirror. It was something that was normally only used for major events in the military. He thus stated that he wanted to inform all the major forces of the world, and no one really stopped him.

The first one he dialed was Yun Jianyue’s recording mirror. He hadn’t received any information from her, so he had always been feeling a bit

uneasy. The recording mirror continued to ring, sending special waves into the distance, but the other side never picked up.

Zu An couldn't help but feel a bit grim.

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Chapter 1983: Information

Zu An called her several times, but the other side never picked up.

A recording mirror was often connected to one's soul. Even if it was placed in a storage pouch, they would still immediately sense it. There were several possible explanations for the situation. It could be that Yun Jianyue didn't have enough ki stones to operate the recording mirror, or it could be that she wasn't in a situation where she could pick up the call. It could even be that she was seriously injured and unconscious, so she couldn't sense the call.

Yun Jianyue was a sect master,, so how could she not have enough ki stones to connect the call? That meant it had to be one of the latter two.

Zu An immediately felt nervous when he realized that. He sent some people to call over the Embroidered Envoy to check if they had any intelligence regarding the Devil Sect.

While waiting, he thought a bit to himself, then contacted Yan Xuehen's recording mirror. He first had to contact the White Jade Sect and let them know about the monsters' invasion.

This time, the call connected quickly. The mirror rippled, and a cold-looking woman appeared in the mirror. She was also stunned when she saw him, saying, "I thought that the court needed me for something."

This was the court's public account, and Yan Xuehen was the sect master of the White Jade Sect, so she naturally had some connections with the officials.

"Would you not have answered if you knew it was me?" Zu An replied with a sigh.

Yan Xuehen didn't reply. Instead, her eyes sparkled and she seemed to be looking behind him.

Zu An continued, "Don't worry, I'm the only one in the room right now. No one else can listen in on our conversation."

With his current identity, no one would dare to stay behind if he said he was going to discuss some secret matters.

Yan Xuehen's face turned a bit red, saying, "The two of us are completely innocent. What would we talk about that others could not listen in on?"

Zu An was speechless. This woman clearly cared a lot, and yet she just refused to admit it. If it were any other time, he would at least use the chance to tease her a bit, but he wasn't in the mood today. He decided to just tell her about the spatial rift and the monsters' invasion.

Yan Xuehen's expression changed. She asked, "Does this mean that the end of the world is coming?"

"The situation isn't that bad..." Zu An said, then gave her a rough summary of what had happened on the court's side. "We've discovered a few more spatial rifts, but the court's experts swiftly put an end to them. The only strange part is that none of those rifts produced anything as strong as the War Priest again."

Yan Xuehen asked gravely, "Could it be that they're trying to lower our guard, but then if everyone relaxes a bit, those powerful beings will invade again?"

"That's not entirely impossible," Zu An said; he was quite troubled as well. "But it's also unlikely. It's not too realistic to try and make everyone nervous."

Yan Xuehen thought for a bit, then said, "Exorcising evil is a duty of the daoists, so the daoists will contribute our part. We'll assign our disciples to patrol the secret dungeons of the world."

Zu An was stunned. He previously hadn't thought of that. After all, over the past few decades, the court's policies regarding the daoists had always been more restrictive for fear that they would become giants again the way they had in the past. After decades of that, the daoists were now much weaker than when they were at their strongest.

Even so, a weakened camel was still bigger than a horse. The daoists still had many experts and talents.

Zhao Han had been on guard against the daoist sects, but Zu An didn't share those motives. Putting aside his own personal friendships with them, for the sake of fighting against the monster invasion, there was no reason to restrict the daoists at all.

After thinking through all of those things, Zu An nodded and said, "Good. With the daoists moving out as well, I'll send some of the academy's people to get in touch with you all. We'll say that this is all in the name of collaboration with the Royal Academy."

The court had been on guard against the daoists for too long, after all. If they were too extreme here, it would easily incur the retaliation of some stubborn factions in the court.

Yan Xuehen was stunned. She asked, "You don't need to discuss this matter with the empress dowager and empress first?" She naturally knew just how large of a matter this was. At that moment, she was feeling a bit of disbelief.

"There's no need," Zu An said, waving his hand. That kind of decision was still something he could take care of.

"I almost forgot that you were now the court's regent," Yan Xuehen said with a smile. She was quite pure in thought and didn't suspect him of having anything with the empress dowager.

Immediately after, she got up and showed Zu An a serious bow, saying, "Ah Zu, I will thank you in the place of all of the daoist disciples. If not for your support, the daoists might have been doomed to vanish in the great river of history."

Zu An was startled and quickly tried to get her to stand back up, but he then realized that there was a recording mirror between them. He replied, "There's no need for that. I was only doing what I should."

"I need to thank you properly. What you did has brought about the rebirth of the daoists," Yan Xuehen said seriously.

Zu An couldn't help but chuckle and reply, "If you really are that thankful, isn't it a bit too sloppy if you only talk about it?"

"Then how do you want me to thank you?" Yan Xuehen asked with a blush; it was unclear what she was thinking.

"You know," Zu An said. He couldn't help but sigh. Even through the recording mirror, he could still sense just how stunning the woman on the other side was. There was also that unique aloof and magical feeling about her.

"Then I'll have Chuyan thank you properly," Yan Xuehen said; she didn't dare to continue off of what he was implying.

A shocked voice emerged from the recording mirror. "Master, what did you say? That I was going to thank someone?" Immediately after, a door opened, and a young woman in a blue dress entered.

"Chuyan!" Zu An exclaimed happily. It had already been a long time since he last saw her.

"Ah Zu?" Chu Chuyan exclaimed, feeling shocked and happy. "So you were chatting with Ah Zu, master!"

"He had important matters to tell the daoists. It's related to the invasion of monsters," Yan Xuehen said in alarm. She was scared that Chu Chuyan's thoughts would go in the wrong direction and quickly explained thing. At the same time, she glared at Zu An, warning him not to say anything stupid.

"What?!" When she heard what happened, Chu Chuyan was incredibly shocked, but she also felt as if it was to be expected. After all, they had seen too many mysterious and bizarre beings in the secret dungeon with Zu An. Then, after listening to the explanations from both sides, she also understood that the situation hadn't reached its worst point yet.

Yan Xuehen used the chance to say, "Since Ah Zu helped the daoists lower the restrictions that were placed on us, as a member of the daoists, shouldn't you thank him properly?"

Chu Chuyan smiled and replied, "Master, you are the leader of the daoists, right? I think that it is more important that you thank him, right?"

"I've already even given you, my good disciple, to him. How else would I thank him?" Yan Xuehen said as she tried to put on a frown, but her heart was pounding inside. Pretending to be ordinary friends in this kind of situation

really put quite the strain on her. After all, before she met Zu An, she had never told a lie. And yet now, she had to lie again and again.

“How is that equivalent to gratitude from the master? Master, you definitely have your way of thanking him too,” Chu Chuyan said, although she had no idea just how badly her words were scaring Yan Xuehen.

Yan Xuehen was really alarmed and didn’t dare to continue on the subject. She quickly said to Zu An, “Ah Zu, judging from our earlier conversation, I sensed that you have been a bit preoccupied. Just what happened?”

“It’s related to Sect Master Yun and Honglei. Back then, Lu Sanyuan’s army appeared near Violet Mountain, but even as the sect master, she had no idea about that. After the matter, she returned to their main headquarters to check on the situation, but I’ve never received any information about her since. I tried to contact her through the recording mirror, but the call never connected,” Zu An said with a frown.

Yan Xuehen and Chu Chuyan were shocked. At any other time, perhaps they would even have said some words of mockery. After all, Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei were their greatest adversaries. And yet, now that it was related to their safety, how could they still have such thoughts?

“Ah Zu, don’t worry too much. I’ve fought against that witch for most of my life and understand her abilities best. She’s always been the one to harm others; when has she ever been harmed by others? Even if she is in some danger, she likely has a way of dealing with it. Besides, Honglei isn’t weak either. If the two work together, they should be able to protect themselves.”

As long as she wasn’t talking about Zu An, Yan Xuehen was still a famous grandmaster in the end. Even though she wasn’t as full of trickery as Yun Jianyue, the fact that they could face each other on relatively even footing meant that she was incredibly smart. She quickly offered her analysis to console him.

Zu An felt that what she said was reasonable and sighed a bit in relief. It seemed he had let worry get to him after all.

Chu Chuyan suggested, “How about I make a trip to the Devil Sect?”

Yan Xuehen was startled and quickly said, "If it's a situation that not even Yun Jianyue can deal with, there's no need for you to cause more trouble and make Ah Zu worried. I think I should make this trip."

Zu An shook his head and replied, "You still need to contact the other sects and organize the defenses against the monsters. I'll personally make a trip to the Lake of Hatred." Even though he wanted to meet the two of them, how could he let his selfish interests get in the way of what was more important?

Yan Xuehen understood her own responsibility too and didn't persist with it. She asked, "Do you have any intelligence on the Devil Set? Or do you know where the Lake of Hatred is?"

"I have a rough idea of which mountains it's located in, but I don't know the exact location," Zu An said, shaking his head. In the end, the Devil Sect had opposed the court for so many years. If their home base was exposed, they would already have been dealt a ferocious blow. However, because they had always been very careful, the court had never found out their real location.

"I actually know a bit..." Yan Xuehen slowly said, explaining everything she knew to him.

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Chapter 1984: Origins of the Devil Sect

"Do you know just what the main philosophy of the Devil Sect is?" Yan Xuehen suddenly asked.

Zu An was a bit stunned and couldn't really understand why she would suddenly ask this question, but he still replied, "I think they seek for everyone to live like dragons, with equality for all under the heavens?" He had heard them talk about their beliefs when he was together with Qiu Honglei and Yun Jianyue. At the time, he'd been quite amazed.

"That was what that witch told you?" Yan Xuehen asked coldly.

Zu An was confused and speechless. After fighting against each other for so many years, sure enough, they still had some grievances against each other....

When she saw his expression, Yan Xuehen knew she had guessed correctly. She continued, "Think about it yourself for a moment. If that were really their belief, why would they be called the Devil Sect?"

Zu An was stunned. Actually, that was something he had been confused about at the time. They clearly had just and honorable convictions that seemed to benefit the country and the people, so why were they referred to as the Devil Sect? At the time, the two women had given him a reasonable explanation.

Yan Xuehen continued, "This ideology was merely something the Devil Sect uses to romanticize their own faction, and eventually, some people in the sect really ended up believing it."

Zu An was speechless. If Yun Jianyue were here, wouldn't she start another battle immediately?

"Do you think I am only speaking this way because we are enemies?" Yan Xuehen asked coldly.

Zu An chuckled. That wasn't a question he could really answer.

Chu Chuyan couldn't help but say, "Ah Zu, master has always clearly separated private and public interests. Even though she is the sworn enemy of Sect Master Yun, she wouldn't slander her for no reason."

Zu An understood Yan Xuehen's nature as well, and knew she wasn't the type to talk badly about another behind their back. He quickly said with a straight face, "I hope that big sis Yan can clear up my doubts."

"Hmph, who is your big sis Yan? Even if you don't call me master like Chuyan in the future, you have to call me Sect Master Yan," Yan Xuehen said as she shot him a glare. She was almost scared half to death by the 'big sis Yan' title!

Fortunately, Chu Chuyan only smiled and just thought of it as her sweetheart being a rascal as usual.

"Sure, sure, master," Zu An replied as he looked at her with a big smile.

When she heard him call her master, Yan Xuehen's face turned red. She now felt even weirder; that feeling only intensified when she recalled how this man had ravaged her in the past. Was that how a disciple treated his master? Even

so, Chuyan was still here, so she quickly collected her thoughts and explained, "The Devil Sect's people do not seek for everyone to become dragons, but rather for themselves to become dragons, to be equals among themselves."

"The people of the world only know the 'Devil Sect', but do not know that the Devil Sect is the collective term for the three schools and six paths. The so-called three schools and six paths aren't the lowest professions per se, but they have always been looked down on by orthodox society and are those with the lowest statuses. That is why they carry resentment and bias, and the way they do things has become more and more extreme. However, that only leads orthodox society to look down on them more and more, leading to a vicious cycle."

"What exactly are these three schools and six paths?" Zu An asked, stunned. The Embroidered Envoy's information on the Devil Sect didn't seem to be as detailed as what he was hearing right now, but it made sense too. The Embroidered Envoy was established by this dynasty and had only existed for around a hundred years. Even though it was widespread and powerful, it still didn't have enough history backing it.

The Devil Sect was a massive organization that had existed for thousands of years. Only the daoists that had existed for a similarly long time would understand them better. In the end, the Devil Sect and the daoists really were fated enemies. Even the way they arranged different schools and paths were so similar.

Yan Xuehen replied, "The so-called three schools are the Heavenly Devil School, Skysplitting School, and World School. The six paths are the Treasure Hunter Path, Yin Yang Path, Unfeeling Path, Secret Path, Freedom Path, and Pear Path."

"The leader of the Heavenly Devil School is none other than that witch Yun Jianyue. If I am not mistaken, then Qiu Honglei is the next sect leader to serve. The Heavenly Devil School has always been led by women. It was rumored that their founding master was a devastatingly beautiful woman, and the whole country rose up in rebellion because of her. Her people enjoyed charming men, and their objective is to painstakingly subdue the world through that craft, to conquer all of the world's men. This is a belief that is very popular among the brothels, which is why a large portion of their disciples throughout history have come from brothels."

Zu An had a strange expression. When he first met her, Qiu Honglei was Brightmoon City's most popular courtesan, so it seemed that could all be traced back to the same source.

Chu Chuyan quietly added, "Ah Zu, don't worry. Even though most of the Heavenly Devil School's disciples are from brothels, they are actually divided into two groups. One uses their bodies to seduce others, but the other only uses arts to charm the world. When it comes to subduing men, both Sect Master Yun and Miss Qiu both belong to the latter category. Their beliefs are clearly more brilliant."

Zu An could tell from how careful she was being that she was worried that they could be slandering the master and disciple behind their backs in front of Zu An. He chuckled and said, "Chuyan, you're overthinking. Of course I know that."

Chu Chuyan was stunned at first, wondering how he knew about that. Don't tell me you and Miss Qiu have already slept together?

You have successfully trolled Chu Chuyan for +99 +99 +99...

When she saw these two looking at each other and exchanging signals, Yan Xuehen suddenly felt a bit unhappy for some reason.

You have successfully trolled Yan Xuehen for +99 +99 +99...

Zu An was stupefied. Why are these two suddenly angry? He sensed that something was off and quickly changed the topic. "By the way, what was the name of that Heavenly Devil School's founding master?"

A devastatingly charming beauty? Why did she sound a bit like Daji?

Yan Xuehen shook her head and said, "It has already been far too long. Forget about me, it doesn't seem as if even the Heavenly Devil School's people know. Even the techniques that were passed down since ancient times seem to be damaged."

Zu An entered his own thoughts for a moment. Daji's skill and the technique used by Yun Jianyue's group seemed a bit similar. He wondered if it really was just a coincidence...

Yan Xuehen continued, "The Skysplitting School seeks to bring a major disaster upon the world, and the greatest disaster that could befall this world is the assassination of an emperor."

Zu An was stunned, replying, "They're assassins?"

"That's right." Yan Xuehen nodded slightly. "The Skysplitting School's founding belief is 'the anger of the ignorant sends blood flying three feet, the anger of the emperor results in millions of corpses'. The purpose of their existence is to keep the rulers and bigwigs in check, to prevent them from running amok, as there will always be people in the Skysplitting School who can take their heads. There was once a certain figure in history who focused solely on assassination and passed down his skills. Those famous assassins largely all come from the Skysplitting School."

Zu An's expression grew serious as he said, "That means the Skysplitting School is one worthy of respect."

"Even though the founding creed is admirable, human nature will forever exist. I reckon that only a small number of those utterly fearless assassins throughout history followed that principle," Yan Xuehen said with a sigh. "The people of the world seek glory, splendor, wealth, and rank, or live among wine, sex, avarice, and temper. Even though those assassins have left behind their names in history, most of them died with all of their relatives executed as well. Many of them even abandoned their beliefs and chose to kill for money. Henceforth, the Skysplitting School gradually fell, ultimately becoming an assassin organization that seeks nothing but profit. They have long forgotten their former faith."

Zu An sighed deeply. However, he knew there was no way everyone would be a saint. This was probably an inevitable result. He suddenly thought of something and said, "The most famous assassin organization in the present world seems to be the Shadow Group. Their range of influence seems to be similar, so wouldn't they be in conflict?"

"Of course there's no conflict," Yan Xuehen said with a strange expression. "Because the Shadow Group is the Skysplitting School."

Zu An was speechless.

In the end, the Shadow Group was also part of the Devil Sect?

Yan Xuehen explained, "Strictly speaking, the Shadow Group is a branch of Skysplitting School. Around a hundred years ago, chaos broke out in the Devil Sect, with the major factions suddenly fighting against each other for some reason. Some were unwilling to participate in such a thing and broke away, and among them was an ordinary youngster who was pushed aside in the Skysplitting School. In the end, he amazed the world with his talent and established the Shadow Group."

"Do you have any information about that youngster?" Zu An quickly asked.

Yan Xuehen shook her head slightly and said, "The Skysplitting School, due to the nature of its profession, cares about secrecy above all else. Even brothers in the same sect would often only know each other's nicknames, knowing nothing about the other party's identity in society. That youngster endured for many years, but then he ended up establishing Shadow Group, so he is definitely someone capable of hiding his schemes. Thus, it was even less likely for him to have exposed his identity."

"The Skysplitting School just agreed to the establishment of the Shadow Group?" Zu An asked curiously.

Yan Xuehen's red lips gently opened and she said, "It is not that simple, of course. After the Shadow Group was founded, many elders from the Skysplitting School and even some of that youngster's own brothers tried to dominate him and steal his work, but in the end, they were all killed. As time went on, many outstanding disciples of the Skysplitting School were drawn to the Shadow Group instead. Now, the Skysplitting School is already weak and has declined, and it is instead the Shadow Group that has been tacitly acknowledged as the true master of the Skysplitting School of this generation."

Zu An frowned. This Shadow Group seemed to have some connections to the Imperial Palace. It felt like a guillotine that constantly loomed over his head, giving him an uneasy feeling.

"Among the three schools, there is still the World School. Can you guess what they care about in this world the most?" Yan Xuehen asked.

"Money?" Zu An answered, feeling a bit shaken.

"That's right. The World School's founding master was a great merchant who was exceedingly wealthy. Their group reveres trade and commerce, but their

status and wealth have never quite endured in history, so many of them were a bit dissatisfied with the court and tried to change everything. When the court tried to suppress them, they ended up becoming part of the Devil Sect too," Yan Xuehen said. She then suddenly recalled the affairs in Cloudcenter Commandery and added, "Right, you actually have some connections to the World School."

"When did that happen?" Zu An asked, stunned. Why do I have no recollection of something like this?

"Aren't you close to the Hub of Freedom? Just as the Shadow Group is Skysplitting School's greatest force, Hub of Freedom is the most powerful organization of the World School," Yan Xuehen replied.

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Chapter 1985: Warning

"Hub of Freedom?" Zu An repeated. He had really never expected the Hub of Freedom to be a branch of the Devil Sect. He couldn't help but become a bit confused. "Huh? But in Cloudcenter Commandery, the Pegasus and Zhenyuan Merchant Groups seemed to be fighting quite intensely."

One had the Hub of Freedom backing them, while the other had the Devil Sect behind them. At the time, the two had been tearing at each other's throats and wanted the other to disappear from this world, but after all of that, they were actually both from the same place?

Yan Xuehen didn't seem too bothered. She replied, "I told you that the Devil Sect was no longer the Devil Sect of the past. After the divide more than a hundred years ago, the three schools and six paths have practically already all split apart. Furthermore, because of the Devil Sect's savage nature, their relationships with each other might even be worse off than those between ordinary sects."

Zu An nodded to himself. Even one's own family would become practically strangers once they were two or three generations away, let alone these clans that had been apart for more than a hundred years.

"The current Devil Sect mainly sees the Heavenly Devil School as their leader. Beyond that, places like the Shadow Group and Hub of Freedom have already become formidable forces of their own and will not listen to the ideas of any Devil Sect Master," Yan Xuehen said.

She didn't feel happy about the situation at all. It was something even she sympathized with Yun Jianyue about. The Devil Sect was divided, but weren't the daoists the same? However, the daoists did walk the orthodox path, so they were still reasonable to some extent, unlike the Devil Sects' factions that were just too inflexible against each other.

"What's the situation with the other factions?" Zu An asked.

Chu Chuyan brought over a cup of tea and said, "Master, have some tea to moisten your throat." At the same time, she told Zu An with a smile, "I've never seen master speak so much to a man before."

Yan Xuehen immediately felt guilty. She tried to cover the truth up while drinking tea and replied, "In the end, am I not helping your man?"

"Yes, of course; this disciple will thank master in Ah Zu's place," Chu Chuyan said, helping Yan Xuehen massage her shoulders with a big smile and an obedient attitude.

When she saw Zu An look at the two of them with an ambiguous smile, Yan Xuehen just felt a bit strange. After all, she knew about their relationship. She pushed her disciple away and said, "Enough already; stop getting in the way of proper business. The recording mirror costs a lot to use."

Then, she recovered her usual cold demeanor and continued to explain, "The Treasure Hunter Path, as the name implies, had a founder who was a master of Feng Shui. Of course, that is their romanticized way of explaining things. In reality, they are tomb raiders. Almost all of their members engage in tomb raiding, and they are especially passionate about robbing the tombs of the ancient past, or the present world's nobles. They look for all kinds of treasures and secret technique inheritances."

When Zu An heard that, he couldn't but sigh. No wonder the Devil Sect's reputation was so bad. There was no way the people in such of work wouldn't be hated!

"The Treasure Hunter Path seems to be divided into several factions, and even I do not know them too well. However, because they have offended too many powerful individuals and their descendents, they were targeted severely and have declined the most out of all of the Devil Sect's factions. It is now hard to find even a few of their inheritors," Yan Xuehen said. She then added, "By the way, I heard that they have a branch on the Fiend side. I wonder how that side is doing now."

Zu An had a weird expression. That fatty Wu Liang he had met in the Fiend races' territory seemed to be from a tomb raiding clan. Could they be a branch of the Treasure Hunter Path? Their clan's treatment wasn't much different from that of the Treasure Hunter Path on the human side. As expected, tomb raiders really didn't have much popularity no matter where one went...

"There is also the Yin Yang Path," Yan Xuehen said. Her face suddenly turned a bit red, and her expression was full of disdain as she continued, "Their path talks about yin and yang harmony between men and women. That is fine and all as an objective, but eventually, they went the wrong way and most of them began to research... techniques of the bedroom."

Zu An thought to himself, So what if they study those techniques? Isn't passionate love an important part of the world? If he were alone with Chu Chuyan, or even with Yan Xuehen, he would argue a bit for them on the spot. However, when both of them were together, he sensibly chose to give up on that thought.

When she saw Yan Xuehen become silent, Chu Chuyan just thought of it as her master being too embarrassed to continue, so she explained for her, "The Yin Yang Path's people say that it is for the sake of yin and yang harmony, but many of them have long since lost themselves in indulgence of superficial carnal desires. Many of them have started... cultivating together with Heavenly Devil School members.

"Even so, those female disciples from the Heavenly Devil School are all extremely formidable and their 'standards' high ; they aren't women that those from the Yin Yang Sect can mess around with however they want to. That's why they often kidnap women from respectable families to use as their personal tools. A large portion of the Devil Sect's bad reputation comes from them."

Zu An said with a scowl, "Those people truly deserve to die ten thousand times over."

If both sides were willing in the first place, that was understandable. But that kind of behavior really was intolerable. He thought, To be honest, why is Yun Jianyue even letting scum like this stay in the sect?

As if guessing his thoughts, Yan Xuehen said, "This is not actually something that can be blamed on Yun Jianyue. Even though she is a woman, first and foremost, she is a sect master. After the divide of the Devil Sect, there are still some from the Yin Yang Path who support the Heavenly Devil School faction. If they brought the hammer down on the entire sect, not only would the Heavenly Devil School lose their leadership position, the entire Devil Sect would become even more divided."

Chu Chuyan gave her master a look of surprise. She hadn't expected her to speak up so much for her enemy's sake.

"What are you looking at me for?" Yan Xuehen snapped impatiently, "I am merely speaking of things as they are. Even though Yun Jianyue and I are enemies, I still acknowledge her in certain areas."

Chu Chuyan smiled and replied, "No one asked you anything, so what are you feeling so guilty for, master?"

"You're getting cheekier and cheekier, aren't you?" Yan Xuehen retorted, feeling a bit helpless. She wanted to act with the dignity of a master, but whenever she thought about the two's special relationship, she felt so guilty that she wasn't able to really get that angry.

"What about the other few paths?" Zu An asked as he coughed lightly and helped Yan Xuehen out of her difficult position.

"The Unfeeling Path, as the name implies, cares about being emotionless..." Yan Xuehen began.

Before Yan Xuehen finished her sentence, Zu An voiced his surprise. "Why does it sound a bit similar to your White Jade Sect's technique?"

"Of course it's different," Yan Xuehen snapped in annoyance. "We care about being unshakable, while they seek heartlessness without righteousness. Even family, friends, master, and disciples can be abandoned at a moment's whim. Furthermore, people from their sect are often eccentrics whose behavior is grotesque and extreme. They cannot be viewed as normal people."

Zu An recalled the origins of the other factions and couldn't help but ask, "What kind of livelihoods do those people typically engage in?"

"That I am not sure of, but they all seem to have some... hobbies that are not as accepted by normal conventions. Niche, neglected branches seem to receive the most respect among them. They seem to take pride in and enjoy the fact that they do not engage in mainstream activities," Yan Xuehen replied.

"Not mainstream?" Zu An repeated, a bit startled when he heard that somewhat familiar wording. He was curious as to whether the founding master of the Unfeeling Path was another transmigrator from his past world.

Yan Xuehen didn't notice that the wording ended up bringing him such surprise and continued, "The Secret Path practices secrecy through code words. They originated from the study of ancient divination. There were some who created some bizarre prophetic words, all of which were accurate; that was viewed by the people of the world as a miracle. Of course, more of those words of prophecy ended up vanishing in history."

Zu An wondered if those prophetic words had anything to do with his Baopu Sutra's divination and Qi Yaoguang's astrological divinations.

"This faction is viewed by normal society as a group of religious idiots. Their first generation leader was a religious idiot, but this generation's Secret Path leader is quite capable. Apart from the prophetic speech from the group, he is also good at formations. The reason why the Devil Sect has been able to exist all this time, apart from the Lake of Hatred being hidden well within the mountain depths, is also because he created an enormous formation near the Lake of Hatred that hides the Devil Sect's main headquarters. There are even rumors that his achievements in formations are on par with those of Yan Xiang," Yan Xuehen said, her voice full of admiration.

"So it was like that!" Zu An remarked as he finally realized what was going on. He had always been confused before. No matter how well hidden the Devil Sect was, how could it have been hidden from the court all this time? So it turned out they actually had such an outstanding formation master.

"Maybe it is because their requirements for their members are quite high, so the Secret Path does not have many members. Even though their status in the Devil Sect is high, they are not particularly influential," Yan Xuehen continued. "There is also the Freedom and the Pear Path. Those of the

Freedom Path are either artists or musicians. They care the most about elegance and beauty. Comparatively speaking, they are the members of the Devil Sect that have the best reputation.”

“Artists?” Zu An repeated. He thought that these people probably would have had quite a few common topics to talk about with Yu Yanluo and the late libationer.

“As for the Pear Path, their founding master was a world-renowned opera singer, so that is why they tend to have more performing artists among their group. Their status in society is rather low, so many of them were dissatisfied and wanted to change that,” Yan Xuehen suddenly said with a serious expression. “They do not stand as aloof from worldly affairs as the Freedom Path. Their faction seems to be becoming stranger and stranger now. Regardless of whether it is their way of thinking or their cultivation, they are strange and difficult to defend against. You need to be careful. You cannot let yourself be caught off guard.”

When he saw how serious she was being, Zu An didn’t dare to act carelessly. He asked, “Where does the strangeness of their methods lie?”

“I do not know exactly, as I have not faced them directly. However, there are some from the sect who have fought them. I heard that they did not even know how the enemy attacked before they perished. That is why all those who met them all stated that they did not wish to meet those people ever again for the rest of their lives,” Yan Xuehen said. Her tone even made the room itself seem to become a bit colder.

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Chapter 1986: Unease

Zu An thought back to how he had been trapped in a strange ‘theater world’ in the secret dungeon. The other side clearly hadn’t been that strong, and yet it had made his entire party feel completely powerless. They had almost been completely wiped out. On the other hand, that had ended up inadvertently pulling his relationship with Jing Teng closer.

If those from the Devil Sect’s Pear Path had similar skills, they would indeed be a bit tricky to deal with.

Just then, Yan Xuehen said, "Of course, with your current cultivation, as long as you are on guard, no matter how dangerous the Devil Sect general headquarters are, it should pose no threat to you."

"Master, he'll get too arrogant if you talk like that!" Chu Chuyan protested while clinging to Yan Xuehen's arm. She was normally also just as cold in terms of personality; only when she was around her master did she act a bit spoiled.

Yan Xuehen looked at Zu An with a complicated expression and said, "This guy is a monster of his own, and his cultivation speed is completely unprecedented in history. I am just telling the truth too. As long as he is careful of schemes, he can go wherever he wishes in this world."

Zu An looked at her and said, "That may not be true. For one, I wouldn't dare to go to the White Jade Sect to propose marriage."

"Ah Zu~" Chu Chuyan said reproachfully, thinking, Why is he talking about that in front of master? Even though the two had been married before, they didn't have anything like that binding them together now. She wondered whether to properly establish their relationship again.

Meanwhile, Yan Xuehen's heart began to beat furiously.

This kid is way too daring! He actually dares to say something like that in front of Chuyan? Just thinking about him running all the way to the White Jade Sect to propose marriage to me is utterly embarrassing! How would the people of the world view me then? How would Chuyan see me?

She quickly shot Zu An a look and said, "Alright, I already told you everything you need to know, so I'm turning off the recording mirror. Our White Jade Sect isn't as extravagant as your side to the point that we can randomly squander ki stones."

"Wait, no!" Zu An quickly shouted, "You still haven't told me where the Lake of Hatred is!"

Yan Xuehen could only stop her hand and say, "I can only tell you an approximate location. Those from the Secret Path have set up a special formation there, so no one can find the real location. However, I believe that with your abilities, you will definitely have a way of finding it."

Then, she let her disciple say some things to Zu An while she drew up a map off to the side.

Chu Chuyan's face reddened. With her master next to her, there were many things that she was too embarrassed to say.

When he looked at her beautiful face, Zu An couldn't help but say with a sigh, "Chuyan, you've lost weight."

"Did I?" Chu Chuyan replied as she reflexively touched her cheeks. "I thought I gained weight."

Zu An sighed, saying, "I thought that you would say it was because you missed me so much you lost your appetite, and thus lost weight."

"You're so annoying~" Chu Chuyan replied with a blush. She was frightened and snuck a look at her master. When she saw that she seemed to be focused on her drawing and didn't hear anything, she sighed in relief.

However, who would have thought that Yan Xuehen, who had her ears perked up the entire time, was actually cursing Zu An for being shameless?

This must be how this kid always fools those young ladies. Those women really are fools too; they just like this style of his.

Yet when she thought about it deeper, she was suddenly stunned. Even a grown woman like her seemed to have fallen for these tricks of his...

The two sweethearts continued to go back and forth. Yan Xuehen felt stranger and stranger as she continued to draw on the side. Soon after, the map was finished and she brought it up to the mirror, saying, "Take a quick look. I really can't handle the ki stone consumption on my side otherwise."

Zu An put away his teasing mood and looked carefully at the map. From time to time, he asked about the meanings of the markings, and Yan Xuehen actually explained them all to him in detail. Zu An made sure to remember everything.

When it was time to say goodbye, he saw the bit of reluctance on Chu Chuyan's face and saw that she still wanted to continue talking. He said gently, "I've recently been researching a kind of communication jade strip that

consumes far fewer ki stones than the recording mirror. We can chat for much longer that way.”

“Really?” Chu Chuyan exclaimed in surprise and happiness.

“There is actually something that incredible?” Yan Xuehen remarked, more concerned with the huge changes this would bring to the world of cultivation.

This guy should give me one of them too, right? Hmph, if he only gives Chuyan one, I won’t ever pay him any more attention again.

Even so, how should I explain things to Chuyan if he really gives me one? After all, in the eyes of other people, there’s not much for me and him to talk about.

Ahhh! This is so annoying!

“Of course it’s real. The Baopu Sutra described a similar device, but some of the materials are now missing, which is why the device we’ve made still carries all sorts of flaws. Once I’ve dealt with the issue of distance, I’ll give them to you guys,” Zu An said.

Yan Xuehen’s heart beat frantically.

Are you kidding me? You're saying that you'll give it to us out loud?

Fortunately, Chu Chuyan didn’t notice anything strange. Instead, her eyes were glistening brightly as she said, “I’m really looking forward to that day!”

...

In the end, they had to end the call. Zu An was using the court’s resources, but the White Jade Sect couldn't tolerate this level of expenditure.

When the call finished, after thinking to himself for a bit, Zu An dialed Jedefall Palace’s recording mirror. After all, Pei Mianman was cultivating at Jedefall Palace and didn't have her own recording mirror. He could only reach her that way.

The surface of the recording mirror rippled. Soon after, Wan Tongtian and Elder Huo Ling appeared with serious expressions.

Zu An was stunned. When these two were sitting upright together, they did look like a couple. Wan Tongtian's wife really has green all above her head...

When they saw that it was him, Elder Huo Ling's expression changed. She exclaimed, "It's you? What do you need from us?" She just felt that this guy had ulterior motives with her precious disciple, which was why she was really guarded against Zu An.

"Help me call for Manman. I have something to tell her," Zu An replied.

"Hmph, what are you treating this palace as? The recording mirror cannot be used except for absolutely urgent matters, and yet you're using it to privately contact a young lady you're chasing?" Elder Huo Ling exclaimed furiously.

Zu An frowned and said coldly, "Of course I have something of utmost importance to talk about, and it is related to the very survival of your Jade Fall Palace. I wanted to tell all of you together, but seeing as you have this attitude, I've decided to just tell Manman alone. You can ask her after."

"Kid, are you messing with us?" Elder Huo Ling erupted like a firecracker, springing up from her chair.

Zu An retorted with a scowl, "Could it be that you do not understand just who you are talking to right now?"

Elder Huo Ling was about to say something else when Wan Tongtian immediately grabbed her. He cupped his hands toward Zu An and said, "Regent, please forgive our error. My junior sister has always had this temper; she didn't intentionally try to offend you."

Elder Huo Ling's expression changed a bit. It was only now that she remembered the information she had recently obtained. In the end, the fact that Zu An had become a regent at such a young age and even killed an earth immortal in the capital really was absolutely ridiculous, so she subconsciously still treated him as part of the younger generation. She was worried that he would treat Manman badly, which was why her reaction was a bit intense.

"Out of favor for Manman, of course I won't make a big deal out of this," Zu An said calmly. "Can you call her over now?"

"Okay, we will contact her now," Wan Tongtian said as he quickly brought Elder Huo Ling away.

When they left the room, Elder Huo Ling remarked unhappily, "Senior brother, aren't you lowering yourself a bit too much?"

"That guy can even kill an earth immortal, so shouldn't we treat him with at least a bit of respect?" Wan Tongtian replied, worried that she would start something else; he immediately tried to calm her down.

"The whole thing just feels a bit ridiculous somehow. It might just be that because Zhao Han died, in order to appease the masses, the court wanted to create the image of a strong figure again." Elder Huo Ling harrumphed. "It's not as if you didn't see him fight on Violet Mountain."

Wan Tongtian thought to himself for a bit. At the time, the strength Zu An had displayed was great, but he was still too far off from being able to instantly kill an earth immortal. Still, he said, "Well, either way, the fact that he is the regent cannot be faked. His use of the court's recording mirror is proof itself. Let's not offend him for now and see what he'll say to Manman first."

"What else could he say to her? Isn't it just a young man trying to show off in front of a pretty young lady after suddenly rising in status?" Elder Huo Ling grumbled. "It really is ridiculous; he's actually using the court's public device to chase after women, and yet our Jadedfall Palace can only play along."

Wan Tongtian couldn't help but say with a sigh, "Which man wouldn't want to be able to do something like that? Unfortunately, many of those who have the ability to do that are already too old. They no longer have the hot-bloodedness of youth."

"You better not copy him. I don't like this kind of stuff." As she spoke, Elder Huo Ling thought back to their youth. Her expression eased up a bit.

Soon after, Pei Mianman rushed over after hearing the news, saying, "I pay my respects to the palace lord and master!"

Elder Huo Ling nodded. "That Zu kid is calling you from the recording mirror, so go and talk to him. Then, tell me everything he tells you word for word. You cannot let that brat's flowery speech fool you!"

"Huh?" When she heard that it was Zu An calling her, Pei Mianman became incredibly happy, but when she thought about how they were going to use the sect's recording mirror to chat, she couldn't help but blush. Also, how could she tell them about her private conversation with Zu An?

When he saw her expression, Wan Tongtian knew that she was overthinking things. He quickly explained, "Zu An said that there are some important matters that are related to the very existence of our sect but didn't permit us to listen. It's enough as long as you share what you heard about on this matter with us."

He couldn't help but glare at Elder Huo Ling as he spoke. Judging from Manman's expression, it seems her relationship with Zu An is quite special, and yet junior sister just keeps playing the villain.

"Understood!" Pei Mianman replied; she was also shocked. She quickly entered the room.

When he saw the door close, Wan Tongtian said, "I really would prefer it if he were lying to us."

Elder Huo Ling was about to retort, but she suddenly realized that if this matter was related to the existence of Jadedfall Palace, it wouldn't be a good thing at all.

The two of them looked at the closed entrance. A bit of unease immediately filled the room.

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Chapter 1987: You Will Go

Pei Mianman ran into the room with a reddened face. When she saw the face she yearned for day and night in the floating recording mirror, the corners of her lips moved and she pouted coquettishly, saying, "Ah Zu, this is Jadedfall Palace's recording mirror! It'll alert the entire sect whenever you use it, so how can you use something like this just to talk to me?" Even though she was always more enthusiastic and took the initiative, when it came to talking to her sweetheart in front of her elders and letting everyone in the sect know, she wanted to crawl into a hole and hide out of embarrassment.

When he saw this rare instance of bashfulness from Pei Mianman, Zu An found it quite adorable. His mood improved considerably as he replied, "I missed you. How can I worry about anything else?"

“You’re so annoying~” Pei Mianman exclaimed. Even though she was a bit embarrassed, she still found her sweetheart’s words sweet. A bit of charm returned to her eyes.

“Hm? Your cultivation seems to have increased quite a bit,” Zu An said with a bit of shock. He could sense a tangible intent from the other party’s body. This seemed to be a unique threshold that was only possible after reaching a certain point in one’s cultivation.

Sure enough, Pei Mianman raised her chin proudly and replied, “That’s right! I’ve already broken into the master rank, you know? And I’ve even reached the essence mortal soul stage!”

“That quickly?” Zu An exclaimed. Even he was a bit surprised. Previously, when he had seen her at Violet Mountain, she was only around the middle of the ninth rank. Now, she had immediately risen by two major cultivation ranks!

“But of course. I was able to absorb so much natural ki in the Yinxu secret dungeon back then, which helped my cultivation a lot. Then, I obtained the Paramita Flower in the daoists’ secret dungeon, which also helped very much. Once I came back and focused on my cultivation, I felt myself progressing much faster,” Pei Mianman said as she looked deeply at the man in the mirror.

You’re so amazing already. If I don’t work hard too, won’t we just end up growing further and further apart from each other?

Zu An thought for a bit, then warned her, “The essence mortal soul stage stresses refining the essence and transforming the ki, so as to prevent a cultivator from being consumed by various desires. However, during the process, all sorts of heart demons might form, so it is extremely dangerous. You absolutely must be careful.”

Pei Mianman replied with a smile, “What’s wrong, are you scared that I might go looking for other men?”

Zu An’s expression darkened. This woman really was a bit too forward. These weren’t words other young ladies would dare to say.

Pei Mianman burst out into laughter and said, “Don’t worry, I have my master watching over me. Do you know how strict she’s been all this time? That’s why she reacted so strongly when you came looking for me.”

"It looks like I've misunderstood your master," Zu An said, stunned. He had thought that the other woman was trying to break them up, and that was why she was being so aggressive.

"Hmph, besides, even if master weren't watching over me, what would even happen to me? After having a man like you, I don't think there's another who would ever catch my eye," Pei Mianman said with a charming smile.

Zu An nodded and said, "You can send more praises like that my way."

"Hmph, shameless~" Pei Mianman protested playfully. "Right, between me and Chuyan, whose cultivation is higher now?"

"She's around the same level too," Zu An replied. When he chatted with her through the recording mirror earlier, he had also found out Chu Chuyan's cultivation rank. The techniques she cultivated, whether they were the Unshakable Daoist Manual or the Snowflake Sword, were both extremely cold techniques that were good at restricting the negative aspects of this cultivation rank. That was why he didn't feel a need to worry about her too much.

"You called Chuyan first after all before you came looking for me." Pei Mianman harrumphed. She didn't look happy.

Zu An was speechless. How could he have predicted that she was setting up a trap for him to jump into?! It turned out this young lady didn't care about Chu Chuyan's cultivation rank at all, and just wanted to know if he had already contacted her.

Zu An was sweating buckets. He could only chuckle awkwardly and change the topic. "Ahem, I'm actually contacting you through the court's recording mirror this time. Apart from checking on how you're doing, I need to tell you about some important matters that concern the safety of the entire world..."

Then, he gave her a rough summary of the monsters' invasion. He also warned her about how to deal with several kinds of monsters.

As she listened, Pei Mianman's expression changed greatly. She couldn't be bothered with jealousy at all anymore.

"I also already talked to Guan Chouhai. I'm sure he'll come to Jedefall Palace to discuss this with you soon. However, before then, you need to be careful.

You absolutely can't let those monsters take advantage of you," Zu An warned.

"Fine." Pei Mianman gradually calmed down. After all, she had already experienced several secret dungeons with Zu An and seen all kinds of things, so it was easier for her to accept different things. She said, "Ah Zu, you have to be careful too. You're definitely the most important target those monsters are eyeing right now."

"Don't worry, I'm actually hoping for them to come for revenge as early as possible. That way, I can start getting rid of them one by one," Zu An replied.

Despite what he said, though, he was a bit worried. If they came right now, with this very world's natural barrier weakening their strength, he likely wouldn't be scared. However, if they went into hiding and waited until the world's barrier completely dissolved, then arrived in their strongest state, would he really be able to defeat them? More importantly, the intelligence the patrols had brought back showed that there were no other powerful monsters invading. It seemed that the second possibility was most likely.

"Ah Zu is so amazing!" Pei Mianman exclaimed. She showed a big smile, then said, "I'll cultivate well too. That way, I'll be able to fight side by side with you!"

Her first impulse was to run over to his side. They didn't even know how much time they all had left. Spending that time with her lover was better than anything else. However, she quickly abandoned that thought. Only by becoming stronger herself would she be helpful to Ah Zu.

The two of them exchanged some more words of love before reluctantly turning off the recording mirror.

...

When they saw Pei Mianman come back out, Wan Tongtian immediately asked, "Just what kind of existential affair did he talk about?"

Elder Huo Ling said with a sneer, "Isn't it all just to fool a young lady? What kind of huge affair could there be?"

Pei Mianman sighed and said, "Master, there really was something..."

As the two listened to her talk about the things she had heard from Zu An one by one, both of them almost jumped in alarm.

...

Meanwhile, Zu An dialed Yu Yanluo's recording mirror. Soon, a devastatingly beautiful face appeared in the mirror.

"It's been so long. Did you finally remember to talk to me?" Yu Yanluo remarked. She had been sitting upright and still, thinking that the court was contacting her, but when she saw her lover, a big smile filled her face.

Zu An could only tell her about how impoverished he had become from his pill refinement.

"Impoverished?" Yu Yanluo repeated, raising a brow. "It seems my suspicions weren't off after all. Judging from the time, it should almost be there."

"What's almost here?" Zu An asked, stunned.

"I suspected that your expenses on that side could be strained, so I had someone deliver a few ki stones to the capital. I reckon they'll arrive in a few days," Yu Yanluo said with a warm smile.

Zu An was speechless. Yu Yanluo was from one of the wealthiest clans in the world. Even if she said it was just a little bit, how could it really be a little bit? He looked at her with a complicated expression and said, "It looks like I'm really a moocher through and through." Just how many times now had women taken the initiative to give him stuff?

Yu Yanluo's beautiful brows rose slightly. She asked, "What did your other women give you?"

"It's not like that! Who in this world can compare to a sugar momma like you?" Zu An replied. He didn't dare to speak the truth and changed the topic out of guilt. "By the way, are you able to mobilize your resources on the human side now?"

Yu Yanluo replied, with a smile, "Did you forget? After your status climbed higher and higher in the court, you sent people over a few times. The Yu clan's frozen industries were gradually restored. Even though we haven't reached our peak, we've more or less recovered."

Zu An sighed in relief and said, "I was worried that those people would covet the Yu clan's mines and that they wouldn't be willing to let go."

"Who would dare to offend you right now, my regent?" Yu Yanluo replied, a hint of astonishment appearing on her face. "I really didn't expect you to concurrently become the regent of both the Fiend and human sides. Furthermore, you were able to even kill an earth immortal in the capital. Everything is going well for you right now; who would dare to be such a fool in this situation?"

Zu An was stunned, asking, "You've even received news of it on your side already?"

Yu Yanluo shook her head slightly, saying, "Others might not have received news so quickly, but I've always collected information about you, you know?"

Zu An felt warm inside, saying, "Yanluo..."

Yu Yanluo opened her mouth, but in the end, she only quietly said, "I miss you..."

Zu An felt something stir within him. He really wanted to rush over to her side. However, he quickly calmed down and said, "If it were any other time, I would definitely go over to look for you, but something major happened. I called you to let you know..." He then told her about the monsters' invasion.

Yu Yanluo's expression changed. She asked, "Is this world going to be destroyed?"

Zu An replied with a smile, "Don't worry, I'll take care of it!"

Yu Yanluo's eyes were filled with worry. She said, "Then you have to be careful! I'll find a place to settle all of my clansmen here, and then I'll come back to look for you."

"It isn't too easy for those monsters to injure me, so I'm actually more worried about you. Also, please warn those around you," Zu An said.

"Don't worry. For better or for worse, I am the Medusa Queen and the late libationer's personal disciple. How could I be so easily dealt with?" Yu Yanluo replied; she gradually calmed down. "By the way, Qing'er and Bai'er seem to

miss you quite a bit and are always asking about you. Did you do something to the two of them?"

"What could I have done to them?" Zu An replied, feeling a bit stirred. He recalled the unique warmth of the Snake race.

...

Meanwhile, at the same time, inside an Embroidered Envoy secret courtyard, a black-clad figure was sizing up the tall and slender woman in front of him. He clicked his tongue and said, "What long legs. Even I'm starting to feel envious."

Zhang Zitong didn't reply. She looked at the guards collapsed around her, then stared at the black-clad figure in front of her vigilantly again.

"Don't worry, they're only unconscious. I didn't take their lives. I didn't expect you to have actually considered them your colleagues," the figure said.

Zhang Zitong finally released a slight sigh of relief. After Yi Commandery's events were exposed, Sir Eleven had locked her up here alone. He hadn't killed her, but he hadn't let her go either. She had been in this courtyard ever since. She had never tried to escape either. That was, until this fellow barged in.

She asked with a cold snort, "Why are you here?"

"I need your help with something," the black-clad figure said quietly.

"Why should I help you? Everything between us has already been settled." Zhang Zitong harrumphed.

"No, you will go, because that person will also go..." the black-clad figure said, then slowly explained the situation. Sure enough, Zhang Zitong's expression changed.

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Chapter 1988: Concealed Town

In the end, Zhang Zitong nodded and said, "Alright, we'll be even once I finish this task."

"Let's talk after you finish it. It isn't that easy to handle," the black-clad figure said with a chuckle. With a wave of his hand, he disappeared outside the wall.

Zhang Zitong inspected the guards around her. When she was certain that they were only unconscious, she hurriedly followed.

...

Meanwhile, Zu An finished talking to Yu Yanluo. He then dialed Shang Liuyu's recording mirror without stopping to rest.

When the surface of the recording mirror rippled, he muttered to himself, "Doing this does seem a bit trashy..."

"What is trashy?" Shang Liuyu asked with a laugh. Her voice was as beautiful as that of a yellow oriole. At the same time, there was a special relaxing quality to it.

Zu An's face heated up as he said, "It's nothing. It's been a long time, big sis Shang. You've become more and more beautiful."

Shang Liuyu was hugging her knees and sitting on a giant pearl shell. He really wondered if that was a bed or a seat. Her feet, which were always bare, were always the focal point that drew everyone's attention.

Shang Liuyu said with a gentle smile, "You immediately start with smooth-talking a lady; now I think I have a good idea of what you meant by trashy."

Zu An's face heated up, but he quickly complained, "I'm being wronged here! Those were my sincere thoughts..."

"It's because they are sincere and you blurted them out that it's trashy," Shang Liuyu said, looking at him calmly. Her eyes that sparkled like starlight were covered in a layer of ocean blue. It seemed she had returned to her usual self now that she was no longer on the human side.

Zu An couldn't handle her pure gaze that seemed to be able to see right through him. He quickly asked, "Big sis Shang, are you still on the Ocean races' side?"

"Yup. Now that I think about it, you actually gave me quite the headache recently." Shang Liuyu suddenly clutched her forehead and spoke in a slightly vexed manner.

"What is it?" Zu An asked, stunned. He thought to himself, *Is there something else that involves the Ocean races?*

"What else could it be but the golden dragon you killed last time?" Shang Liuyu replied in annoyance. "That matter caused quite the disturbance in the Dragon race, and many people were clamoring to get revenge on you. After all, how could we just ignore it when a member of the Dragon race's noble bloodline was killed?"

Zu An was startled. He said, "Back then, the Dragon King appeared over the capital by casting his projection, but he didn't attack. Looking back, it was probably because of big sis Shang that he did that, right?"

"And you still have the nerve to talk about it," Shang Liuyu said in annoyance. "The Dragon King asked me if you were my good friend, so of course I had to say yes."

Zu An said with a smile, "We are good friends though."

"If only it was as simple as you're making it out to be! If we were just friends, the Dragon Race's stubborn old freaks wouldn't just let it go..." Shang Liuyu trailed off as her face reddened. "Forget it, this matter is all because of that damn Chi Wen shooting his mouth off randomly."

"What did he say?" Zu An asked. He thought to himself that Shang Liuyu had helped him give that brat a proper beating. Many of his heaven-grade weapons were actually from Chi Wen.

Right, I wonder if he really soaked that 'blue ice' he got from me in water to drink yet. Should I tell him that it's used by aircraft to process shit...

"It's nothing. I'll take care of it," Shang Liuyu said; her expression became a bit unnatural.

Zu An felt a bit strange, but he didn't think too much of it. Then, he told her about the invasion of the monsters from the other world. He also warned her, "You have to be careful. You cannot be careless and let those monsters scheme against you."

"No wonder a huge spatial rift appeared here on our side side. Fortunately, we've already sealed it up. It seems I still have to warn them and make some proper arrangements, or else some monsters might still manage to sneak their way in," Shang Liuyu said, startled. She stood up, no longer as calm as she initially looked.

"I'll have to trouble big sis Shang," Zu An said, although he didn't take up more of her time.

The reason he had told her, apart from the fact that she was an old acquaintance, was because he hoped she could contact the Ocean races for him. Otherwise, no matter how well he defended the land, it would all be over if the monsters successfully infiltrated through the sea.

...

After calling everyone important to him, Zu An came out from the room. When he saw the pained and somewhat warped expression of the official guarding the room, he couldn't help but say with a chuckle, "I'll replenish the resources after. I won't trouble you too much."

The official hurriedly bowed in respect, saying, "Thank you, regent!"

After how long Zu An had spent using the recording mirror, the ki stones in storage were about to be completely used up. If he just walked away like this, that would create a huge amount of trouble.

When he saw the situation, Zu An's resolve to research a recording mirror replacement became even stronger. If even the country itself couldn't bear this expenditure, it was clear just how inconvenient it was.

Then, he said his goodbyes to the women around him. Not being able to contact Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei was making him really worried.

The empress dowager Liu Ning and the current empress Bi Linglong were both reluctant to see him go, but Zu An had already told them that he had to leave the capital, so they were already prepared for his decision. They knew

he had something important to take care of. They even asked him if he needed any help.

Zu An refused their good intentions. It could be bad if too many people got involved in this affair.

...

He arrived at the Embroidery House to look into some information regarding the Devil Sect, but it wasn't as detailed as the information Yan Xuehen had given him. He realized that it was because Yan Xuehen was a sect master who had inherited the knowledge of the entire ancient White Jade Sect, which was why she knew so much.

Even though their relationship with the court wasn't bad, both sides were still somewhat on guard against each other. The sect hadn't offered up that intelligence to the court. Only someone like him could make her do so. He couldn't help but feel warm inside when he thought of that.

...

After leaving the palace, Zu An returned to Mount Yuquan. He tasked Yan Xiangtu to help him lead the academy while he was away, along with all the other teachers.

Only then did he reluctantly say goodbye to all of the young ladies, who were also really reluctant. They actually wanted to be with him, but they all had some misgivings as they looked at each other.

It was Ji Xiaoxi whose thoughts were the purest. She asked, "Big brother Zu, can I go with you? The Lake of Hatred has many rare medicines that I've never picked before."

When he saw her large and adorable eyes, Zu An was moved, but before he could even say anything, Ji Dengtu jumped out and said, "No way! There might be monsters everywhere right now. Did you already forget about what happened all because you went out to pick medicine earlier? Did you already forget that lesson?"

Ji Xiaoxi grumbled softly, "But I'd have big brother Zu this time..."

Ji Dengtu immediately retorted, "It's precisely because he's there that it would be even more dangerous!"

Ji Xiaoxi was stunned.

Zu An was speechless. He cleared his throat and said, "Uh... Xiaoxi, the matter I need to take care of this time is a bit dangerous, so I might not be able to take care of you. I'll bring you out to pick medicine when there's a chance in the future."

"Oh, okay then," Ji Xiaoxi said, and the light in her eyes dimmed.

Zu An trembled when he saw her disappointed expression, thinking, *Just how is this girl so adorable?*

He quickly took out a communication jade strip and gave it to her, saying, "This thing is like a simplified recording mirror. You can use it to chat with me."

When he visited Shen Xuzi, he had discovered that the previous model was already modified a bit, and it now ensured that messages could be received regardless of the distance. The only issue was that the farther away one was, the slower it would take for the message to arrive, possibly taking a week to even half a month, making it unsuitable for transmitting important information. When used for normal conversation, it was barely passable.

"Really?!" Ji Xiaoxi cried; her eyes immediately lit up again. She instantly fell in love with it.

Ji Dengtu, standing off to the side, was experiencing all sorts of emotions.

I can't let Xiaoxi have this thing, or else wouldn't this brat be able to seduce my precious daughter any time he wants?

...

After teaching her how to use it, Zu An rushed straight into the air, heading in the Lake of Hatred's direction.

Many people from various clans sighed in relief when they saw him leave. Ever since the Meng clan affair, Zu An alone had become like a boulder that weighed on their minds. Now that he had left the capital, they would at least

be able to return to their usual life. At the same time, they all sent people to look into why Zu An had left and when he would return.

Meanwhile, immediately after he rose into the air, Zu An took out the Wind Fire Wheels. Even though he didn't know where exactly the Lake of Hatred was located, he knew that it was hidden within the Mountain of Hatred's mountain range.

He was worried about Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei's safety, so he didn't even dare to stop for a bit of rest. Fortunately, with his current cultivation, it wasn't too big of a deal. Furthermore, the Wind Fire Wheels were extremely efficient at long journeys.

After several days of hurrying along, he finally arrived at a vast and lush mountain range. He saw towering mountains with clouds that lingered around their peaks. There were trees that reached into the skies everywhere, as well as a vast swath of thorny undergrowth. Vines practically covered the earth, and from time to time, some terrifying beasts hidden within them made their move. Forget about ordinary people, even cultivators couldn't do much here.

Zu An sighed in amazement. Trying to find the Devil Sect's headquarters in this huge mountain range really was like finding a needle in a haystack. Fortunately, he had Yan Xuehen's intelligence. Even though she didn't know the exact location, she had drawn out several possible locations. That already greatly reduced his workload.

Zu An moved through the mountain on the Wind Fire Wheels. He quickly found several hidden regions on the map and eliminated the possibilities one by one. When he arrived at the last place, he suddenly stopped, exclaiming, "Something isn't right with these mountains!"

As he scanned his surroundings, his eyes shone brightly. Not even Zhao Han would likely have been able to tell that something was off, but he was proficient in 'One Drop of Heaven's Essence', a manual that explained the study of geomancy. Together with his formation knowledge from the Baopu Sutra, he keenly sensed that this mountain's appearance was a bit unnatural. Even though someone had deliberately tried to conceal it, he had come prepared, so he naturally wouldn't let these suspicions go.

He quietly landed in the distance. Then, he took out a formation disc and fiddled with it. Several small flags flew around in all directions, and after that, the formation disc in his hands surged with light.

Then, he took out a talisman and brought it over his eyes. Two streaks of golden light erupted, and the forest before him instantly vanished. In its place was a bustling and lively market!

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Chapter 1989: Luck With Women

The place was even livelier than the proper towns Zu An had flew past on the way here. The streets were lined with bluestone, and there were all kinds of shops on either side, including a blacksmith and an alchemy shop, as well as tea and wine stores. There were even more stores that were tightly shut with people doing who knew what inside.

In the distance were some dazzling and splendid buildings. Compared to the simple and crude buildings nearby, they were clearly of an entirely different style. Zu An was startled. Could that be the Devil Sect's general headquarters? But if that was the case, why was this place called the Lake of Hatred?

He examined his surroundings. There were people dressed in bizarre outfits everywhere in the small town, and each individual had a trace of toughness in their eyes. These were clearly people who normally lived bloody lives. There were also many people who wore cloaks or face covers, which was definitely to hide their identities.

Apart from that, rather than calling the place a small town, it was more like a market. There were stalls set up all over, and many passersby often squatted down to haggle with the sellers.

A black market? That term suddenly appeared in Zu An's mind. He was a bit confused. This place didn't seem like the glorious Devil Sect's general headquarters. If he had known things would be like this, he would have asked for a bit more info from Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei.

After thinking about it, he took out a mask and put it on. His appearance quickly became that of an ordinary person on the street. When he thought of the paintings circulating throughout the capital, he was worried that he would be recognized instantly. Even though quite a few people in this town were

masked and cloaked, there could be certain places where they'd be asked to remove those coverings. This way was still safer.

At any other time, with his current cultivation, there would be no need for him to hide himself. However, even someone like Yun Jianyue could be in danger, so if he strutted right in, it could make things worse. After all, he had come here to save people and not to show off.

After he changed his outfit, he quickly entered the marketplace. When he passed through the entrance, he clearly sensed that he had gone through a thin barrier. It was as if something had scanned his body. However, the formation disc in his pockets moved slightly to completely neutralize the scanning waves.

There were several individuals who seemed to be guards at the entrance. They gave him a glance, then returned to chewing on their roasted seeds and their conversations. Zu An sighed in relief. It seemed that everyone who could come here had a token-like object to pass the formation, so these guards weren't so vigilant. After some hesitation, he decided against capturing them for interrogation. This was a town entrance, after all, so doing something here would immediately draw unwanted attention. He decided to scout out the situation a bit first.

He continued along the bluestone path and noticed that people maintained a set distance from each other. There was no chance of them brushing shoulders or anything like that. It seemed the Devil Sect was still the Devil Sect in the end. They were quite guarded against each other.

Along the way, he noticed that many booths were selling rare ores or other medicinal herbs. Many of them were things that were normally quite hard to find. At a glance, he noticed several impressive medicinal ingredients. If it weren't because he was more concerned with Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei, he would likely spend some more time here fishing for treasure.

As he continued inside, Zu An noticed that many of the stalls even sold magic weapons. There were assorted treasures used for attack, defense, and support. His sharp eyes even noticed quite a few weapons had some black marks on them.

They were dried blood! It seemed the origins of these items weren't that glorious.

He looked at the large and tall buildings, thinking, *Those are the only places that look like they could be the Devil Sect's general headquarters.*

However, he didn't seem to have noticed many guards. Was the Devil Sect really just that careless? Combined with this place that was as noisy as a marketplace, it really didn't seem to resemble the Devil Sect general headquarters he imagined.

Should I find someone to ask about things?

He looked around. Everyone present maintained a safe distance from each other. Even so, with his cultivation, it wasn't a problem.

He was about to find some unlucky guy when he suddenly noticed something. He saw two people quickly approach him from either side.

"This is quite surprising. Everyone else seems to be avoiding each other, and yet the two of you seem to be enthusiastically coming to me," Zu An remarked. His first reaction was to think he had been exposed, but he quickly realized that these two were likely just thieves. It seemed that one of them had been about to pretend to bump into him, while the other would rob him of his possessions.

In any event, he had just been looking for someone to question, so he'd start with these two.

Suddenly, a woman called out, "Be more careful! You almost bumped into someone!"

Zu An frowned. *Why is she here?* Even though he didn't turn around, with his divine sense, he obviously immediately recognized her.

The two thieves who had already reached out their hands were frightened and quickly retracted their hands. They were furious and were just about to turn around to see who it was to teach them a lesson, but when they saw who it was, they both blew out a catcall.

"Who do we have here? You're quite pretty, little lady."

Not only was she pretty, her fair and long legs were incredibly alluring. The two wondered just how amazing it would feel if they could get between them.

Zu An turned around, pretending to be surprised as he looked at them. The two thieves had quite the forgettable faces, so he naturally overlooked them.

As the woman stood between them, she really resembled a crane among a flock of chickens. It was Zhang Zitong!

She was a silver token envoy who had previously been detained under house arrest. Why was she here? Could it be that the one backing her was none other than the Devil Sect? However, that couldn't be! If that were the case, how could Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei not have told him about it?

Bang!

Just like that, the two thieves were instantly kicked flying. Zhang Zitong's mood was definitely not good, and she had no patience for the two's wretched expressions.

The noisy street immediately became quiet, but a moment later, it returned to its usual liveliness. This kind of thing seemed to happen quite often in these parts, and it was something they were used to seeing. Many eyes did dart toward Zhang Zitong's legs, however.

Just where did this long-legged beauty come from?

They really are freaking hot!

Even so, judging from how she fought, her cultivation seemed quite high. In the end, none of them dared to act rashly.

"You... Do you know who you've offended?" the two thieves called out as they climbed to their feet with reddened faces. They were shocked and furious as they pointed at Zhang Zitong.

"Was that not enough of a beating for you?" Zhang Zitong retorted. She was in a really bad mood. She had been under house arrest to begin with, waiting for Sir Eleven to eventually let her out, and yet she was broken out by that person and forced to make a trip here.

She just happened to have seen these two trying to commit robbery, and her occupational disease made her unable to help but instinctively act out. To be honest, she was feeling a bit of regret now. She was a newcomer to this place and shouldn't have offended people just like that. Even so, with how things

were, as well as her personality, she naturally couldn't just loosen up. After all, she had once been quite famous as a slayer of evildoers.

After experiencing her cultivation firsthand, the two thieves knew that they weren't a match. They cried out before turning tail and running, "Just you wait!"

Zhang Zitong frowned. She was about to give chase when she suddenly noticed Zu An staring at her. She harrumphed and remarked, "Is that head on your shoulders good for nothing? Those things were about to steal from you, and yet you had no idea?"

"They didn't steal anything in the end, right?" Zu An replied. He was actually a bit upset that she had ruined his plans.

Zhang Zitong was now getting even more upset. She was about to erupt when she suddenly remembered the current situation she was in and said, "Forget it, you're in too much danger on your own. Are you interested in traveling with me as your companion?"

She needed a local to guide her, but the others here all gave off a feeling that made her uncomfortable. As someone who went after these kinds of criminals for a living, she was especially sensitive to their auras. Only this dumb-looking guy seemed a bit different, so staying with him was comparatively safer.

The surrounding people perked up their ears.

This stupid brat has quite the luck with women, doesn't he? A long-legged beauty actually took the initiative to form a group with him.

However, that beauty probably doesn't have pure motives either. Who knows what she's after...

They lived in this kind of environment, so they subconsciously thought along their usual lines to guess her motives.

Zu An raised his brows and replied, "I'm not interested." After saying that, he turned around to leave.

Zhang Zitong was stunned.

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Chapter 1990: Recruiting Disciples

“Hey! This place is really dangerous, you know? If not for me coming at the perfect time, you would’ve had everything stolen by those two. Teaming up with me has only benefits and no consequences for you!” Zhang Zitong protested as she quickly chased after him. She even wanted to grab his sleeve to ask him again if he was sure, but she missed. She couldn't help but stare blankly in place.

Zu An thought to himself that she did have good intentions after all, so he stopped and warned her, “You’re really proud of those legs of yours, aren’t you?”

Zhang Zitong’s face heated up and she reflexively drew her legs closer together. One of her legs bent slightly, her toes gently tapping on the ground behind her. She said, “I thought that you were different from other people, but you were actually that kind of person.”

Zu An was speechless. He replied, “Do you really have no idea what kind of place this is? Everyone here is ruthless and vicious, and yet you’re strutting around in short-shorts all because you want to show off your legs? Your looks are passable too. Are you really not scared of drawing their attention?” She had been his subordinate, after all, and she had ‘saved’ him, so he felt he had to give her that warning.

Zhang Zitong also felt that it wasn’t too appropriate, but she wasn’t willing to admit it either. Her knuckles cracked from how tightly she was clenching her fist. She retorted, “Even so, who would bother me based on what I wear normally? If they did, I’d teach them why roses are so red.”

“Heh.” Zu An sneered, then turned around to leave. He had to act with a low profile this time. If he had a pretty lady who was so good at drawing enmity, he'd probably be forced to give up on trying anything.

He had wanted to ask around about why she was here, but when he saw that she actually wanted to form a team with him, he immediately realized that she knew nothing about this place and that she was looking for a local guide. In

that case, he naturally wouldn't team up with her. They would only hold each other back.

Zhang Zitong was stunned. She had never expected him to refuse so directly! She immediately chased after him and asked, "Are you really not going to even consider it? My cultivation is really high, you know?!"

"In my opinion, it's nothing special, probably not even enough to protect yourself. I have no intention of protecting you."

"Hey, why can't you just act like a normal person?"

...

However, in the end, the other person didn't pay her any attention. He didn't even turn around, and left as if he were trying to avoid a demonic pestilence.

"Hey, what's wrong with you?!" Zhang Zitong protested, but in the end, her pride didn't allow her to chase after him. She could only stomp her feet in anger as she watched him leave, feeling a bit angry.

You have successfully trolled Zhang Zitong for +37 +37 +37...

Because of her beauty and her pretty legs, she had been treated really well even inside the Embroidered Envoy. When had she ever been overlooked like this?

Hm? Something's not right. Sir Eleven seemed to have acted this way too.

Hmph, how can this guy compare to Sir Eleven?!

When she thought of that person, Zhang Zitong released a deep sigh. A disappointed and frustrated look appeared on her face.

...

After Zu An left, he went straight toward the splendid and dazzling buildings. When he saw them from a distance, he had thought that they were a building complex, but only now did he see that it was just a single building. It was extremely strange in design and a bit similar to the gymnasiums of his past world. He could hear some sounds coming from inside, so there actually seemed to be quite a few people there. However, the building seemed to have

a formation set up around it that made the sounds unclear. He couldn't tell what was happening at all.

He suddenly stopped, because he noticed that there were some guards at the building entrance who were checking for a small metal token.

“Are those invitations?” Zu An muttered with a frown. He had entered this place by decoding the defensive formation, so of course he didn't have any invitation. He looked all around him and saw that the building seemed to be completely sealed from the outside. It wasn't too difficult for him to break through the formation, but it wasn't too realistic for him to sneak inside under so many people's prying eyes.

“Don't block the way!” someone called out, coming from behind and pushing him heavily to one side.

Zu An naturally could have dodged, but there were too many people watching and he was worried that they would find out his real cultivation. That was why he let himself be pushed. He pretended to turn around to take a look.

In front of him was an impatient-looking young master with a cold and gloomy expression. Next to him was a girl who was similar in age. Judging from their outfits, it seemed like they were clearly together. The girl did have a bit of looks, but her expression was too cold. She had clearly seen this kind of situation before. When the young master saw Zu An move out of the way, he sneered in contempt as if looking down on him for not even having the bravery to fight back, and didn't even feel like giving him another glance. He headed straight inside with his female companion.

“Big brother, do you think we'll be able to pass the Holy Sect's test this time?”

“Don't worry, with your cousin here, we'll definitely be able to pass. Also, we'll definitely be able to become the personal disciples of some incredible figure.”

“Big brother, as your little sister, I don't think I'll ever be able to become as confident as you are. If we really succeed, the Wu clan and Zhu clan will definitely rise to a new level!”

...

Even though their voices were quiet, how could their conversation escape Zu An's ears? He was surprised. So it turned out this building was used by the

Devil Sect to accept new disciples! No wonder its vicinity was so strict. However, where was their general headquarters then?

The boy and girl arrived at the main entrance. They were quickly stopped by a guard who called out, "Show your token!"

The young lady quickly took out a token and gave it to him. After the guard examined it, he nodded and gestured for her to enter. Then, he looked at the young man and asked, "What about you?"

The young master was icily arrogant as he reached into his robes. Suddenly, his expression froze and he was no longer as calm as before. His other hand began to flip all around his body.

"Big brother, what's wrong?" the young lady asked when she saw that.

"For some reason, I can't seem to find my token," the young man said, starting to get nervous. His previous confidence was nowhere to be seen.

"Could it be that you forgot to bring it?" the young lady asked urgently.

"There's no way! I remember touching it not long ago!" the young man replied, starting to sweat. His family had used up all of their resources; if all of their preparations resulted in failure at this juncture, how was he going to face them once he returned?

"Don't block the way!" an ice-cold voice called out behind him, and he was roughly pushed aside. His brows immediately shot up. When he turned around, he saw that it was actually that passer-by from earlier.

"If you don't have a token, move aside and get lost. Don't get in the way of others," Zu An said as he handed the token in his hand to the guard. His words immediately received the sympathy of the others in line. They all began to curse and berate the young master.

"You..." The young master's face swelled and became a bit purple in color. He was about to say something when his eyes landed on the token. He quickly said, "That token you're using is mine!"

You have successfully trolled Wu Bi for +499 +499 +499...

Zu An smiled and replied, "Is it yours just because you say it is? Why don't you call out to it and see if it responds?" Then, he walked straight in.

"You damn kid, stop right there!" Wu Bi exclaimed, feeling shocked and furious. He reflexively tried to grab the other person, but was stopped by the guard.

You have successfully trolled Wu Bi for +666 +666 +666...

"Those without tokens are not allowed to enter!"

Wu Bi was speechless.

...

Zu An naturally wouldn't pay any more attention to someone like that. When he entered, he saw that the place was divided into many display counters, with each one seemingly belonging to a branch of the Devil Sect's three schools and six paths. It seemed that each branch was carrying out their own separate recruiting of new disciples.

Zu An's gaze shifted to the Heavenly Devil School's display counter. That was the most lively area, because the ones who were in charge of the exams were all beautiful women, so they of course drew the most attention.

Zu An sighed in relief. They were still recruiting disciples as usual. It didn't seem as if anything was wrong there.

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Read Keyboard Immortal - Chapter 1991: Is Being a Foot Soldier Really This Hard?

Chapter 1991: Is Being a Foot Soldier Really This Hard?

There were all kinds of flags inserted into the counter, bearing the images of especially bold women posing in the clouds. Many people blushed just from looking at those pictures. At the very center hung a pitch-black flag with 'Heavenly Devil School' written on it. Only that flag had less of an erotic air, feeling more representative of the Devil Sect. Zu An couldn't help but sigh

deeply. It seemed that the degree of open-mindedness in this world was still quite frightening.

He noticed that the female disciples in charge of the exams were all dressed in translucent silk, and their figures were all extremely voluptuous. No wonder this area was the most popular! The one at the very front was a garish and beautiful woman, and he could tell that she was the one in charge. The piece she wore in front of her chest made him remember a certain movie called Curse of the Golden Flower.

Since he was close to Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei, he immediately noticed that there were traces of her cultivating the Devil Sect's charm technique. It was just that it was clearly different from what Qiu Honglei cultivated. Strictly speaking, they were both charm techniques, but Qiu Honglei's was more restrained and silent, the sort that made one's soul unknowingly feel more intimate with her. But this woman gave off the feeling that she just wanted to go to bed with someone. In the end, it was still lower-grade.

Judging from the noisy clamor, Zu An could more or less tell that many people were praising her. It seemed she was the personal disciple of one of the Heavenly Devil School's elders, so all of them called her senior sister Pan.

Even though he felt that Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei was most likely fine, the current situation was still unclear, so Zu An didn't take the risk to greet his 'in-laws'. After thinking about it, he decided to infiltrate the sect through the recruiting process first, then find a chance to obtain more information from the two of them.

He finally squeezed his way in and said to those Heavenly Devil School disciples, "I wish to join the Heavenly Devil School."

Everyone around him roared with laughter, saying, "Everyone here wants to join the Heavenly Devil School!"

The activity drew the attention of senior sister Pan. She gave him a look and said with a lovable smile, "We won't accept you."

Zu An was stunned. He replied, "We haven't even done an exam, so why am I already being refused?" He had initially thought that with his skills, passing this type of test should be easy enough.

“Can’t you see that our Heavenly Devil School disciples are all women?” senior sister Pan replied as she pointed around her. Even though she was smiling, Zu An could clearly sense that her smile was just a lethal occupational weapon.

“Even so, I recall that the Heavenly Devil School also has men,” Zu An said with a frown. He pointed to the side and asked, “They’re all men, so why can they join the Heavenly Devil School?”

Senior sister Pan made a few circles around him. The bamboo flute in her hands gently moved across his cheeks as she said, “Our Heavenly Devil School does need men, but the men need to be handsome and confident, or heroic and strong. We don’t accept fellas like you who are nothing special.”

Zu An was speechless. He couldn't help but feel a bit depressed. He had changed his appearance to resemble a forgettable passer-by to not draw attention, and yet that had become the very reason why he couldn't join the Devil Sect. When he heard the roaring laughter around him, he didn't get upset, and instead withdrew to think about what to do now.

He could naturally just secretly kidnap a few core disciples who were accepted and find out about Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei's whereabouts that way, but he was worried that it could end up alerting the entire sect. When it came to those two ladies' safety, he didn't dare to act carelessly. He decided to become a Devil Sect disciple first, as it would become easier to enter the general headquarters then.

He looked around and saw the 'Freedom Path' signboard nearby. Several handsome men were playing the zither and painting art. There were others who were reciting poetry as well. Some Heavenly Devil School disciples even took the initiative to talk to them, but those handsome men didn't even seem to have seen them and only focused on what they were doing.

Zu An thought to himself that the Freedom Path was probably the more easygoing path of the Devil Sect. He figured he would be able to save himself quite a bit of trouble if he joined them. He wasn't worried about whether or not he could pass at all, because in order for him to learn his appearance-changing technique, his skills in drawing had even received Yu Yanluo's direct teaching. He had also received a lot of pointers in music from Shang Liuyu, so he figured passing some small tasks was easy enough.

He arrived at the table and saw the test in front, and filled out a form that roughly tested the four arts. After passing it, he handed it to the examiner to review. He didn't even dare to show all of his drawing skills to avoid attracting suspicion. Even so, the others exclaimed in admiration. They hadn't expected such a talented newcomer to join them! They all felt that his acceptance was already clinched.

Zu An handed the scroll over. Even so, the examiner said without even thinking further, "Fail. Next!"

Zu An couldn't help but become a bit upset now. He asked, "You didn't even look at it, so why did you fail me?" His skills in drawing surpassed even those of the young examiners. There should have been no reason for him to fail.

"If I say you failed, then you failed," the examiner said. His expression was cold as he spoke with his nose pointing at the sky.

Zu An thought of something and remarked, "Could it be that you're jealous of my skills, that I'll surpass you after I join?" In order to get into the Devil Sect, he readily used psychological attacks.

"I'm scared of you beating me?" Hah!" The examiner sneered. He clearly wasn't even in the mood to argue back.

Their argument drew the attention of several Freedom Path disciples. They decided to stop playing the zither and reciting poetry and came over to see what was going on.

One of them saw Zu An's painting and his eyes couldn't help but light up. He exclaimed, "These strokes, this composition, this artistic mood... Incredible, what talent!"

Zu An sighed in relief. There was finally someone here who knew what's what.

And yet, who would have thought that the disciple would change his tune? He continued, "What a pity, truly, that you have no hope of joining our Freedom Path."

Zu An was stunned. He asked, "Since there's nothing wrong with my art, why can't I join?"

"There's nothing wrong with your art, but there's something wrong with you," the cold, handsome guy finally said. "Those who join our Freedom Path need to be handsome and free. At the very least, they need to have decent features, or else they'll end up embarrassing the entire Freedom Path if they go out! Especially someone like you whose art is so good. If you join our sect, you'll definitely rise up quickly. That means you might just end up representing our sect for competitions. But if others took a look and saw that the Freedom Path's outstanding disciple is so ugly, wouldn't our Freedom Path's beautiful reputation be ruined at your hands alone?"

Zu An was speechless. He felt as if a stampede were trampling over his heart.

Did I forget to look at the calendar after waking up today? Why am I getting refused again and again for this kind of reason?

However, this appearance was something he had chosen, so he couldn't even get mad about it.

There were many others who became upset now too, because not everyone here was handsome and beautiful. Many of them argued noisily, "If that's something you require, why didn't you say so earlier?!"

"You're wasting our goddamn time!"

"Give me a refund!"

...

As they dealt with the crowd's anger, the Freedom Path's people were burned badly. Zu An withdrew with a gloomy face.

A giggle came from off to the side, and a voice remarked, "I asked you to join me, but you didn't want to. Look at you suffering now."

A beauty with long legs and a tall ponytail was standing nearby. Who else could it be but Zhang Zitong?

With Zu An's divine sense, he had actually already noticed her a while ago. She seemed to have gone to the World School to receive their task. Judging from the items in her hands, it seemed that whomever could come up with the way to make the most money within two hours through the items given would pass.

“Best of luck,” Zu An said indifferently before continuing to other places. He refused to believe that becoming a footsoldier of the Devil Sect was that hard!

When she saw him turn his back on her yet again, Zhang Zitong gritted her teeth.

What is that guy acting so high and mighty for? Didn't he keep running into walls earlier?

Suddenly, she was a bit confused. Why was she paying this stranger so much attention?

He seems to have a temperament I'm close to...

She immediately stopped herself as soon as that thought appeared. “Pah pah pah! What am I thinking right now?!” She shook her head and left the hall.

Over at the Yin Yang Path's counter, a handsome young man with long and narrow eyes was fanning himself. A look of greed appeared in his eyes as he watched her, remarking, “That's her?”

“Yes, it is her. This damn woman ruined our plans; she clearly doesn't respect the young boss at all.” The two wretched looking individuals next to him nodded and bowed with fawning smiles. If Zhang Zitong were here, she would recognize these two as the two pickpockets she had kicked flying.

The two were secretly delighted. After all, the young boss was the third disciple of Sir Yin Yang. With him backing them, their grudge now became much more interesting.

“What right do you two have to represent me?” the young boss retorted; when he heard what they said, his expression darkened. He immediately sent a smack at the two of them that left them disoriented.

The two's legs buckled and they immediately kneeled down, pleading, “Spare us, young boss! Spare us!”

The young master with long and narrow eyes stood up, saying, “Using my name to swindle others is a crime, but since the girl you've discovered ended up being quite excellent, this young master will forgive you for now. Go and talk to her.”

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Chapter 1992: Those Destined

Zu An arrived in front of the Yin Yang Path counter to take a glance at the questions of their recruiting exam.

Judging from the expressions of respect the surrounding people showed the young master and their private conversations, Zu An quickly figured out who he was. This was a direct disciple of Master Yin Yang, ranked number three, and his name was Fang Biao. His status among the younger generation was definitely special.

The two pickpockets saw him as well. They immediately said to their boss, "Young master, that's the fat sheep from earlier!"

However, who would have thought that after just giving Zu An a single look, Fang Biao immediately shifted his gaze away and said, "I have no interest in men." Immediately after, he looked at the direction had Zhang Zitong left in with a fiery gaze.

When he saw them leave, Zu An frowned. According to Yan Xuehen's description, this Yin Yang Path was a strong ally of the Heavenly Devil School, but looking from the way they behaved, it really did seem a bit despicable. Even though he understood that as the Heavenly Devil School, Yun Jianyue had no choice but to ally with the Yin Yang Path to fend off the other forces, he didn't approve of it.

Even so, in the end, he didn't decide to help. For better or for worse, Zhang Zitong was a silver token envoy. If she couldn't even deal with this bit of trouble, she would really be sullying the name of the Embroidered Envoy.

He finally read through the contents of the Yin Yang Path exam. It was actually talking about sensual pills that worked on both men and women. The better the effects were, the more points they gave. Zu An was speechless. They put it nicely, but in the end, weren't these just aphrodisiacs?

He was actually quite the expert in this field. He had things like 'Bull Cream' and 'Eighteen Spring Winds', and most recently, there was even the 'Worries Be Gone Rosemary'. Which one of them wasn't the best drug of their

respective domains? He didn't understand why he had encountered so many situations like this either, but he always kept a share of the drug. After studying the Baopu Sutra, he could even make every single one of them. It wasn't that he was particularly fond of these drugs; he just felt that he would have better defenses against them once he figured out how they worked.

With his current understanding in the field, even the leader of the Yin Yang Path was probably just a little brother in terms of knowledge. He could just make any random drug to pass the test. And yet, in the end, he couldn't do it because of his pride. He didn't want to stay in this kind of filthy place any longer than he had to.

After thinking to himself for a bit, he went to another side. This counter was much quieter compared to the others, without many people. There was only a small fatty sitting in the examiner seat, rocking back and forth while sipping on some tea. Zu An looked up and saw the banner: Treasure Hunter Path. A curious expression appeared on his face. Why were there always fatties like this among tomb raiders? Wu Liang from the Fiend races was like that too. Wouldn't someone get stuck in a tunnel with that kind of build?

When he saw Zu An stop at his stall, the fatty was immediately in high spirits. He called out, "Hi there! Are you interested in our Treasure Hunter Path? Even if you don't end up joining, how about you stick around for a chat?" He enthusiastically led Zu An to a seat while speaking.

Zu An thought to himself that he was proficient in One Drop of Heaven's Essence, and he had already visited so many ancient tombs. He had a lot of experience in this field, so he would likely be able to pass the test. And so, he sat down.

Those at the other counters sneered and said, "Another idiot is being fooled by that fatty Hu."

"Who's even joined the Treasure Hunter Path in these past few years? There's barely anyone left, and they don't even have any powerful cultivators covering for them either. Forget about a path master, they don't even have an elder."

"Exactly. Do they even know what kind of world we live in now? Without anyone watching out for your back, you'll have to be extra careful when doing everything! You won't even have the most basic cultivation resources, so how can you compare to the other places?"

“That’s not all. Their path is chased down wherever they go, and no matter what they do, they can’t even wash away the smell of dirt from their bodies. As long as anyone finds out you’re from the Treasure Hunter Path, they’ll chase you to the ends of the seven hells, and your life will practically be forfeit too.”

...

Even though their voices were soft, how could their conversation escape Zu An’s ears? No wonder this place was so quiet. Still, he didn’t mind. Either way, he didn’t really plan to join the Treasure Hunter Path.

“How do I address this brother over here?” the little fatty asked, pouring him a cup of tea with a big smile.

Zu An was actually a bit overwhelmed by the sudden favor. After all, he had already experienced sheer disdain and contempt from the other counters. He replied, “I’m Lu Ren; may I ask how I should call your respected self?”[ref]Lu = shore, land, continent. Sounds like the word road. Ren = humane, kernel. Sounds like the word for person.[ref]

“Lu Ren?” The little fatty sized him up and said, “A good surname, and the given name is also good.”

Zu An was speechless.

What’s good about a name like that? This guy really is blindly offering praises.

“My surname is Hu, and my given name is Fatty, so you can just call me Fatty Hu,” the little fatty said, acting really friendly from the get-go.

Zu An thought to himself, *Your parents really were lazy with the naming. They actually gave you the given name Fatty?*

“Looking at how this brother was wandering about, you are clearly interested in our Holy Sect. How about giving our Treasure Hunter Path a chance?” Fatty Hu asked with a huge smile, “Do you like ancient secrets and inheritances of ancient deities? Do you like houses of wealth and all kinds of divine weapons... These are things only our Treasure Hunter Path can experience!”

When he saw the fatty’s spittle fly everywhere, Zu An could only reply, “And what have you experienced yourself?”

Fatty Hu choked. He gave him a look and replied, "You won't have any friends if you talk like that, you know?" Even so, he quickly gathered his thoughts and said, "The greatest treasures go to those they are destined for, after all. In my opinion, brother Lu is blessed by the heavens and has an outstanding presence, so you definitely have a great destiny awaiting you. Who knows, you might even obtain an ancient inheritance before me! So how about you join our Treasure Hunter Path?"

Zu An knew the fatty was trying to coax him into joining, but he just happened to want to join the Devil Sect, so he nodded and said, "It sounds pretty interesting. Is there a test for joining?"

"Seeing as we seem to share some karma, I actually wanted to just accept you, but I can't go against the will of my ancestors and can only test your treasure hunting knowledge. I hope brother Lu doesn't mind," Fatty Hu said. He then muttered to himself, "The Treasure Hunter Path is already in such a difficult situation, and yet there are still so many rules. There's already barely any members left..."

Zu An pretended to have not heard him and said, "Then I'll have to ask brother Hu to continue with the process."

Fatty Hu thought about it and said, "The two of us share some affinity, so I'll make it a bit simpler. Tell me a bit about your understanding of treasure hunting. Do you know how many styles there are in the world?"

Zu An was stunned. He actually didn't know that. He thought for a bit, then began to cook something up with his knowledge from his previous world's dramas. "Tomb raiders specialize in different things to deal with different situations. Since ancient times, there have been Raised Tomb, Treasure Hunt, Shifting Mountain, and Excavated Mound. Raised Tomb is similar to Treasure Hunt and both excel in seeking heaven's guidance through divination, seeking dragons through feng shui, locating burial spots through gold dividing..."

The fatty had just been asking randomly at first, but how could he have expected that Zu An would talk about so many things that he had never heard of before? He immediately moved closer and asked, "Can you be a bit more detailed?"

Zu An could only pull randomly from Ghost Blows Out the Light, Grave Robbers' Chronicles, and other sources. He was also proficient in feng shui

techniques to begin with and had experiences in several tombs. When he combined it all together, Fatty Hu was completely left stupefied.

Fatty Hu was so excited his entire body was shaking. He grabbed his hands and said, "Brother Lu, you were sent by the heavens to save our Treasure Hunter Path!"

"So I passed?" Zu An replied, sighing in relief.

"How can that be all? From today forth, I'll give my position as senior disciple of the Treasure Hunter Path to you!" Fatty Hu said while patting his chest.

"Then what about your master?" Zu An took the chance to ask.

"My master already passed away a long time ago. I am now the one in charge of the Holy Sect's Treasure Hunter Path," Fatty Hu said with a big smile.

"Then how many brothers do we have?"

"In the past, the Treasure Hunter Path had quite a few in our glory days..."

"I'm talking about now."

"If I include you, there's two."

Zu An was speechless.

Then what meaning is there in your damn senior disciple title? No wonder you let me in so easily!

When he saw Zu An's expression, Fatty Hu seemed to be embarrassed too. He was worried that Zu An would leave and quickly said, "Our Treasure Hunter Path indeed doesn't have many people right now, but if there are fewer people, that means there are more opportunities! Look, if you join through the other sects, you'll have to work your way up through odd jobs and go through a year or two of tests before you can even become an outer disciple. Outer disciples then have to go through a cruel process of competition to have a chance of becoming inner disciples. The very few most outstanding inner disciples will then be taken as direct disciples of their group's path master or elder.

"The entire process is like raising poisonous gu bugs. Who knows how many people might die in the process? They might not even be able to become an

inner disciple. In contrast, it's different on our side. You immediately became an inner... No, with the fate we share, I'll let you become a direct disciple and accept you in my master's place!"

...

Zu An was actually surprised. Even though this Treasure Hunter Path had fallen, it seemed to suit his current situation. He took the chance to ask, "By the way, what is the deal with the path master or elder you mentioned? Why do some people become disciples of path masters and some of elders? Is there a difference?"

"Of course there is!" Fatty Hu was scared that he would leave, so when he saw Zu An's interest, he immediately explained, "Apart from the sect master and vice sect master, in the Holy Sect, the most respected people are the path masters, and then elders are slightly beneath them. After that are the hall masters and incense masters in charge of various regions.

"The Holy Sect's three schools and six paths' factions should in theory all have overlords similar in status, but because the situations in the different factions are different, many factions no longer have the strength to take on that position of overlord. That's why there are now only four great overlords left." Fatty Lu sighed as he spoke, as if he were talking about something extremely tragic.

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Chapter 1993: Marriage

"The four overlords are currently the Secret Path Master Chi Fuzi, Yin Yang Path Master Fang Zhonghe, Freedom Path Master Hua Feihua, and World School Master Chen Taogong. Comparatively, these forces are a bit stronger in the Holy Sect," Fatty Hu explained.

Zu An asked in puzzlement, "Wasn't the World Sect severely hurt? And there's also the Secret and Freedom Paths, but don't they avoid involvement in worldly matters? Why are they still so strong?" He didn't believe that what Yan Xuehen told him was wrong.

Fatty Hu was stunned. He couldn't help but give Zu An a look, saying, "You actually know quite a bit about our Holy Sect."

"Of course. I had to ask around if I wanted to join the Holy Sect. But what I know was pieced together, so I reckon that quite a bit of it is wrong," Zu An hurriedly said.

Fatty Hu was relieved to hear that. He said, "It's not that you're wrong. The great disaster we had a hundred years ago did indeed greatly damage the World School. They're far from as strong as they were at their peak, but they're still one of the three schools and have always been strong in the Holy Sect. A starving camel is still bigger than a horse.

"As for the Secret Path and Freedom Path, they've indeed never been that strong, but they weren't involved in the great disaster and managed to preserve some of their strength. The reason why the Holy Sect has been able to escape the court's tracking all this time is because of the great concealment formation the Secret Path's Chi Fuzi created."

"Furthermore, you're already one of us, so I'll let you in on a secret," Fatty Hu said, then moved closer to him and whispered, "This small town is a small world created by the Freedom Path's Hua Feihua. There's a layer of disconnection from the world that prevents them from finding out where our Holy Sect's general headquarters are."

"Incredible!" Zu An replied with a nod. He had actually already noticed the peculiarities with this world earlier, and that was part of the reason why he had decided to be extra careful.

Hua Feihua's skill seemed a bit similar to Yu Yanluo's World Painting. The entire town was like a drawing. However, his cultivation was much higher than Yu Yanluo's had been. This small town was clearly being used as a firewall, too. If something strange happened, there would be enough time to deal with it. At worst, they'd just destroy this entire world and it wouldn't be too hard to draw an entirely new small town.

Fatty Hu gave Zu An a glance. He had been waiting for this newcomer to cry out in astonishment, but he hadn't expected this. Even though Zu An had expressed his amazement, why did it feel a bit half-hearted? He could only continue, "The Secret Path and Freedom Path aren't especially strong, but with these two great masters overseeing them, they naturally have a spot among the leaders."

Zu An took the chance to ask, "Then what about the Heavenly Devil School? Why don't they have a position among the overlords?"

"The Heavenly Devil School already has Sect Master Yun, so of course she doesn't have to fight over these overlord positions. Furthermore, even though Sect Master Yun has several martial peers who have decent cultivations, they're still weaker than the other overlords," Fatty Hu replied.

When he heard him call Yun Jianyue the sect master, Zu An sighed in relief. He said, "I heard that Sect Master Yun has a disciple named Qiu Honglei, and that she was the sect's saintess..."

Fatty Hu patted his shoulder and said, "I was just wondering why a kid like you was so interested in our Holy Sect! So it turns out you came for the saintess."

Zu An pretended to be embarrassed and said, "I caught a glance of the saintess in the past, and it was hard for me to forget her ever since."

"You and everyone else," Fatty Hu said with a chuckle. "Just how many men in our Holy Sect don't like the saintess?"

"I advise you to give up. You have too many strong competitors in the sect whom you can't win against. Rather, it might just bring you big trouble." He secretly pointed at another counter and said, "Look, after their first meeting, Freedom Path's Li Feiqing over there vowed he wouldn't marry anyone but the saintess."

Zu An had a weird expression. The man Fatty Hu was pointing at was precisely the one who had just rejected him at the Freedom Path's counter.

"Don't look down on Li Feiqing just because he looks lazy; he's a direct disciple of the Freedom Path Master. He's one of the best among the Holy Sect's younger generation," Fatty Hu explained. "After he met the saintess, he yearned for her day and night. He even drew the saintess' appearance on his own clothes so he could be with her day and night."

"Damn pervert!" Zu An exclaimed. His mood was now a bit ruined. Even though it was a drawing, he just felt a bit strange thinking of that guy wearing it.

"Yeah, I feel that he's a bit of a weirdo too. He really was driven mad back then and chased the saintess crazily, but the saintess didn't seem to care

about him at all. She does greet him with a smile, but in reality, there's something like a thousand mile chasm between them. That idiot playboy has no idea though," Fatty Hu said, actually sounding quite happy about the situation.

Zu An thought back to when he first met Honglei and couldn't help but sneer inwardly. *She's already so skilled with the Heavenly Devil Technique, and her ability to raise boys as pets is top-notch too. That Li kid probably has no idea that he's already become a simp at her beck and call.*

"But later, he then encountered White Jade Sect's Fairy Chu. When he returned, he completely changed, frequently sitting alone at the mountaintop while muttering to himself 'I want fish, but bear paw tastes great too; just which one should I choose' and things like that," Fatty Hu said while snickering.

"He's dreaming of peaches!"

"Peaches?"

"He's damned delusional!"

"Haha, that's true," Fatty Hu said, patting his shoulder. "Brother Lu, we really are becoming more and more agreeable the more we chat. I didn't like that Li guy much to begin with; he always looks down on others just because he's a little handsome. Does he really think that both Saintess Qiu and Fairy Chu would like him?"

"There was a time when he drew both the saintess, as well as Fairy Chu on his clothes; one in front, and one in back. Now that was quite the sight in the Holy Sect! Many people went to the Freedom Path to see it for themselves, but the Freedom Path Master couldn't take it anymore and forced him to change clothes. That matter concluded just like that.

"But after that, the guy never seemed to have fully recovered. He always seemed to be in low spirits."

"Silly people get their panties in a bunch," Zu An commented with a sneer.

"You're not wrong." Fatty Hu felt quite a bit of sympathy and said, "By the way, apart from Li Feiqing, the Yin Yang Path's Fang Long has also longed for the

saintess for a long time. There have even been rumors that the Yin Yang Path and Sect Master Yun have arranged a marriage between the two of them.”

“Marriage?” Zu An’s brows shot up. He asked, “And where is this Fang Long from?”

“He’s the senior disciple of the Yin Yang Path Master himself, the senior brother of that Fang Biao from earlier. Hm? Fang Biao was there just a moment ago, so where did he go?” Fatty Hu stuck out his neck to look at the Yin Yang Path’s counter.

Zu An naturally knew that Fang Biao had gone after Zhang Zitong. He asked, “Why is it that the other factions’ disciples don’t share a surname with their master, but the Yin Yang Path does just that?”

Fatty Hu replied with a laugh, “Did you forget what the Yin Yang Path does all day? Don’t they research bedroom arts? The Yin Yang Path Master has countless women, so he naturally has many heirs. His three direct disciples Fang Long, Fang Hu, and Fang Biao are all sons he’s recognized. Who knows how many illegitimate children there are in the Yin Yang Path who haven’t received his recognition!”[1]

Zu An was speechless. He had thought that he was a bit of a playboy, but compared to many people in this world, he was as pure as a little white flower!

“But of course, what I said earlier might just be a guess that many people made after seeing how close the Yin Yang Path and Heavenly Devil School are. It’s really hard to imagine someone like the saintess liking Fang Long. To be honest, the saintess would more likely favor that brat Li Feiqing over a bastard like Fang Long who toys with women with drugs,” Fatty Hu said in indignation.

“There’s no way she’d like either one of them,” Zu An said indifferently.

Fatty Hu nodded and remarked, “There’s a rumor that when the saintess wandered around the world, she seemed to have fallen in love with a man outside the sect, but I have no idea if it’s true. I really wonder just what kind of man it was for the saintess to admire him wholeheartedly...”

Zu An straightened up when he heard that, saying, “I feel like the saintess might just like someone like me.”

Fatty Hu rolled his eyes and almost laughed out loud. He replied, "Bro, you're pretty good at telling jokes, aren't you?" But he didn't really treat it as a big deal.

Zu An took the chance to ask, "I wonder, is there a way to meet the saintess?"

"That might be a bit hard. Ever since the saintess returned, she seems to have been cultivating in seclusion the entire time. It's even been a long time since I last saw her," Fatty Hu said, shaking his head.

"Seclusion?" Zu An asked with a frown. "Then what about Sect Master Yun? When was the last time you saw her?"

Fatty Hu was stunned. He said, "Now that you mention it, it's been a long time since I last saw her too."

1. Long = dragon, Hu = tiger, Biao = tiger stripes, tiger cub ?

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Chapter 1994: Like a Sudden Spring Wind

Zu An immediately felt a weight drop in his stomach. It looked as if something had happened to the two of them after all. However, judging from the information he currently had, this matter seemed to be small-scale. Not too many people in the sect knew about it. That meant it could be more of a disturbance among the upper levels of the sect.

Zu An wanted to ask him for some more information, but Fatty Hu didn't know that much. Zu An was also worried about drawing suspicion, so he couldn't just continue to chase the matter.

Fatty Hu gave him a jade token and said, "Brother Lu, you should hold onto this. Wait by the town dock at nightfall."

"What is this?" Zu An asked as he looked at the jade token in his hands. He could sense some runes swirling around on the surface, but they were the simpler type.

“This is a jade token that symbolizes that you’ve successfully joined the Holy Sect. Only by having this can you get on the boat. We haven’t finished the recruitment process yet, so you can look around for now. I’ll see if I can swindle... Ahem, recruit a few more disciples.” Fatty Hu immediately changed his wording.

Zu An was speechless. He wanted to ask around in other places too, so he cupped his hands and bade Fatty Hu goodbye.

...

Zu An wandered around the hall and took mental note of the various factions’ disciples. He thus saw that the Unfeeling Path and Yin Yang Path had the most disciples, and their cultivations were also a bit higher. The other factions, both in terms of cultivation or numbers, were fewer.

Apart from the most miserable Treasure Hunter Path, there was also the Skysplitting School, which also only had a single disciple in charge of recruitment, and his cultivation was much worse than even Fatty Hu’s. There was almost no one who went to his counter. It seemed that after Shadow Group left, the Skysplitting School really had been greatly weakened.

When Zu An saw a black-clad youth walk toward the Skysplitting School’s banner, his eyes narrowed. The youth seemed to be interested in joining the Skysplitting School. His skin was abnormally pale, as if it had never seen the sun, and their entire figure felt like an unsheathed sword, incredibly sharp.

Even though that person had some treasure that concealed his cultivation and aura, how could these things deceive Zu An? This black-clad youth was strong! He was even stronger than the other direct disciples in this hall, like the Yin Yang Path’s Fang Biao, Heavenly Devil School’s big sister Pan, and Treasure Hunter Path’s Fatty Hu. Only Freedom Path’s Li Feiqing could have a chance in a fight. Someone with that level of cultivation was willing to apply to become a Devil Sect disciple?

Even though he was a bit puzzled, Zu An didn’t give it too much attention. Even though this young man was strong, that was just among others in his age group. Compared to the other powerful individuals across various ages, he was still lacking a bit of maturity.

...

Zu An left the hall and went to the dock next to this small town. Normally, these kinds of mountains had small streams and rivers, and the water in them flowed rather quickly. And yet, what was in front of him was a large river, and it looked quite extensive to boot.

Zu An carefully examined it for a while. This wasn't something drawn by the Freedom Path Master, and it actually existed. Could it be that the legendary Lake of Hatred was located by a riverbank? Or could it be within this great river?

He was thinking it over deeply when he suddenly heard sounds of fighting from nearby. He turned around.

It turned out the Yin Yang Path's Fang Biao and his subordinates were surrounding Zhang Zitong!

When he saw Zhang Zitong's red-faced, sorry figure, Zu An frowned. Just how had this woman ended up muddling her way into the silver token envoy ranks?

The thugs rushed forward in the blink of an eye. Even though this place was remote, there were some people there, who all looked in the direction of the fight out of curiosity.

A disciple from Yin Yang Path glowered at the surrounding people, saying, "the Yin Yang Path's third young master is involved in this matter. If you don't want to die, then get lost!"

Those people who just wanted to join the liveliness were alarmed. They all knew of the Yin Yang Path's bad reputation, especially when it came to the third young master. He was known for his arrogant and tyrannical behavior. He never had many misgivings when doing things. They didn't dare to loiter anymore and quickly vanished.

Zu An was suddenly left here all alone, feeling rather out of place.

Fang Biao was already calmly walking in that direction. He sized up Zhang Zitong with a malicious expression, saying, "As expected of such long legs, you were actually able to run so fast. If you weren't stopped by this river, we wouldn't have been able to catch you so quickly."

"I am from the World School! Aren't you afraid of offending the World School? If you all leave right now, I can pretend that today's events never happened," Zhang Zitong exclaimed. Her chest rose and fell rapidly as she continued to gasp for air. Her forehead was covered in a layer of fine sweat, as if she was feeling really hot.

Fang Biao roared with laughter and said, "You didn't even seem to have completed the World School's exam, so you're not a real World School disciple. Furthermore, even if you were a World School disciple, this young master would still obtain you today. Could it be that the World School would want to be on bad terms with my father over a trifling female disciple like you?"

Zhang Zitong immediately became crestfallen. It seemed there was no way to resolve this matter peacefully anymore.

The two subordinates saw Zu An and said, "Boss Biao, it's that brat again. Those two might actually have a thing going on between them."

Fang Biao now had a bit of killing intent in his eyes as he looked at Zu An. He said, "You bastard, I already let you go in the main hall, and yet you just insist on being an eyesore around her."

You have successfully trolled Fang Biao for +44 +44 +44...

Just then, Zhang Zitong also noticed Zu An. She couldn't help but become a bit apologetic, saying, "You should get away as quickly as possible. I'll help you stop them!"

Zu An sighed and replied, "I already told you I wouldn't join your group because it'd definitely cause trouble, and look where we are now."

Zhang Zitong's face heated up, but she quickly said, "It's pointless to talk about those things now. We'll each take care of our own business and I won't implicate you. Hurry and leave!"

"It seems they really have something between them," Fang Biao said with a sneer. "Then that means we definitely can't let this kid go."

With a wave of his hand, and because Zu An didn't move, more than a dozen subordinates quickly surrounded the two of them.

When she saw that, Zhang Zitong shot Zu An a glare.

Why is this guy so dumb? He can't even run anymore now.

Fang Biao suggested, "Pretty lady, how about you drop your resistance and properly service this young master? Then, I'll let him go. What do you say?"

Zhang Zitong harrumphed. "Keep dreaming! What does this guy not choosing to run away have to do with me? If you want to kill him, then kill him. You can forget about using him to threaten me."

Zu An nodded inwardly. This woman wasn't as rigid as some holy mother. Her previous choice to stand up bravely and 'save' him was already extremely unwise. Otherwise, there wouldn't have been so much trouble here.

"Is that so? Well, neither of you will be able to run away anyway." A sinister smile flickered across Fang Biao's face as he said, "I'll do you right in front of him. Then I'll know whether the two of you have a special relationship from your reaction."

Zu An was speechless.

This kid really is the definition of despicable...

Zhang Zitong's expression grew cold as well. She replied, "You probably think that the reason I've been running all this time is because I can't win against you, right?"

"If it isn't that, then what is it?" Fang Biao asked. He suddenly felt that the situation wasn't right.

Zhang Zitong suddenly flicked her wrist, and a long silver whip appeared from her sleeve. She said, "It was actually because I was worried that I would be seen by others from the Devil Sect, so I didn't want to expose my cultivation. What you absolutely shouldn't have done was chase all the people around us away."

As soon as she said that, the long whip lashed out like a venomous snake and instantly appeared in front of Fang Biao's throat.

Zu An's eyes narrowed slightly. He had previously already noticed that this woman's cultivation was much higher than that of an ordinary silver token

envoy, but he hadn't expected her to have still been holding back all this time. However, after thinking about it, she was a spy from who knew where, who had infiltrated the Embroidered Envoy. It would be stranger if she wasn't hiding her cultivation.

Fang Biao was horrified. However, in the end, he was still the Yin Yang Path's direct disciple, and managed to grab one of the pickpockets next to him to block the attack. The whip instantly thrust through his subordinate's throat, sending blood splashing everywhere.

Fang Biao used the chance to bring his fan down along the whip. He naturally knew that against a long range weapon like the whip, if the opponent managed to widen the gap, there was nothing you could do but get beaten.

Unfortunately, Zhang Zitong's wrist was extremely flexible. The long whip lashed out like a silver dragon and flickered all over the place. In the end, Fang Biao couldn't close the distance and got hit twice instead. He screamed miserably as two deep, bloody gashes appeared on his body.

The other subordinates also reacted and drew their weapons to attack Zhang Zitong. Fang Biao was a child the Yin Yang Path Master doted on a lot. If something happened to him, all of them could forget about living. With that, Fang Biao finally got a moment to breathe. However, their group of a dozen or so people was still beaten viciously by Zhang Zitong.

Zu An grinned slightly.

This woman is quite good at acting; even I was almost fooled by her, and I even felt that she was stupid.

He was about to turn around and leave when a burst of pink mist suddenly flew at them.

Zhang Zitong's expression changed. She quickly covered her mouth and nose, but the enemy seized a really good opportunity and tossed it right when she was in the middle of taking a breath. As such, she still breathed in a bit. She immediately felt the ki within her stir a bit and her body heat up. She was horrified and quickly pulled back the whip to protect herself.

Fang Biao roared with laughter and exclaimed, "Pretty lady, do you think that this glorious Yin Yang Path's third young master is really that useless? Martial arts might not be my strongest suit, but these drugs are what I'm best at!

“It’s useless even if you cover your mouth and nose. This ‘Eighteen Spring Winds’ has already been specially modified by this young master. It’ll enter your body as long as it touches your skin!” An uncontrollable grin appeared on the corners of Fang Biao’s lips.

Zu An had a strange expression.

Eighteen Spring Winds?

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Chapter 1995: Evidence Burned

Zu An couldn't help but reminisce when he heard that familiar name. That really was a sweet memory... The only flaw was that he felt his kidneys hurt a bit even now when he thought of it.

Back then, Zheng Dan had been an educated and well-rounded unmarried daughter, and yet she was actually the boss of Brightmoon City largest criminal syndicate. Even so, because of collusion of insiders with a powerful outside enemy, there was a revolt and she had been afflicted with this drug by someone who intended to violate her.

And yet, as a result, Zu An had ended up getting all of the benefits. That day really had been... exhausting. However, those charming and gentle memories really were things he would never forget.

Meanwhile, Fang Biao was bragging about his Eighteen Spring Winds, feeling awfully proud of himself. “...My pretty lady, once you’re drugged, you must have a man to send you to the heavens eighteen times to return to normal, and not even a single time can be missing! Otherwise, you’ll be controlled by this drug for the rest of your life and become a slave to your desires! It’s best if you obediently follow me, or else you’ll end up becoming a tool for everyone!”

“You...!” Zhang Zitong cried, feeling ashamed and angry. She quickly took out a pill and swallowed it. As a silver token envoy, she always carried detoxifying medicines. A refreshing feeling dissolved in her throat. However, when compared to the raging inferno inside of her, that bit of coolness was like a cup of water on a burning cart.

"It's useless. Eighteen Spring Winds is one of the world's most potent drugs, so how could it have an antidote? The only antidote is a strong man," Fang Biao said. He wasn't worried at all, and instead maintained a safe distance from her to guard himself against a final desperate act of retaliation. This woman's cultivation was a bit tricky, so it was best if he waited until the drug's effects fully kicked in first. Then, he could do whatever he wanted.

The subordinate next to him blew a whistle and said, "Boss Biao, your waist can't handle eighteen times either. How about you let us help you out a bit with that?"

"You idiots, this young master is known as the golden spear! Isn't it just eighteen times?" Fang Biao retorted with a glare, but then he immediately changed his mind. "Even so, out of consideration for how you all bravely came to this young master's aid, I will reward you all with a few times. Once I've had my fun, I'll leave the rest to you."

"Thank you so much for this generous gift, young master!" The other subordinates immediately became extremely excited. All of them actually knew very well that their boss Biao had already messed up his body from playing around with women for so many years. He'd probably throw in the towel after just three breaths. Still, he would probably use some drugs to spice things up, but that wouldn't help him last that long either. At that point, this beauty with those beautiful long legs would be practically new. Wouldn't she just be waiting for them to enjoy themselves?

When she heard their filthy speech, Zhang Zitong was angry and panicked. She wanted to use the chance to take their lives, but those people were extremely cunning and constantly ran around, not giving her any chance to kill them. She set her resolve, thinking that if she couldn't run away today, she would just jump into this river to end it all. She would rather do that than let such disgusting people humiliate her.

Just then, the other pickpocket who was still alive asked in confusion, "Wait, what happens if men get affected by this drug?"

"It'll be a bit worse than for women. They'll mate with any women they see until they run out of steam and die," Fang Biao reflexively replied.

"But... Why is that man perfectly fine?" The pickpocket's tone became a bit strange.

When he said that, the place immediately fell silent. Both Zhang Zitong and Fang Biao's group turned to look at Zu An. That guy was standing there quietly as if everything that had happened had nothing to do with him at all.

"Why aren't you producing even a bit of a reaction?" Fang Biao asked in disbelief.

Zu An said indifferently, "I wasn't poisoned."

"That's impossible! I clearly saw the mist reach you!" Fang Biao cried out in alarm. "And even if you stopped breathing, it would still affect you as long as it touched your skin!"

"You're overestimating the abilities of your drug too much," Zu An said with a sigh. After his body was tempered under the Primordial Origin Sutra, he had already become immune to poison, but it didn't stop aphrodisiacs. That had put him in an ugly spot time and time again. As such, he had already decided to prepare against these kinds of situations a while back. The instant the mist sprayed out, he had already put up an invisible ki barrier that separated all of it from him. With his current cultivation, Fang Biao's attack was like slow motion to him.

"Kill him!" Fang Biao yelled; he instinctively felt that something wasn't right. He quickly gave the orders for his subordinates to test Zu An out. He clearly sensed that Zu An's ki aura was really faint, so why did this bastard give him such pressure right now?

As they charged at Zu An, those subordinates all screamed with reddened eyes. This beautiful woman was already almost theirs, and yet this brat just had to ruin their happy time! In that case, they would make him meet his maker first!

When he saw the malicious looks in their eyes, Zu An sighed. He hadn't really wanted to join in on this kind of situation, but he really didn't want his beautiful memory of 'Eighteen Spring Winds' to be ruined by people like this. He randomly kicked a blade that had fallen to the ground from the chaotic fight earlier. It immediately turned into a streak of light and instantly killed those dozen or so ferocious and despicable subordinates.

The fact that they could become Fang Biao's subordinates meant that they were already quite strong in the Yin Yang Path. And yet, before that blade, they didn't have any way to defend themselves. They had clearly been

standing all over the place out of order, and yet it was as if they had delivered their necks up to the blade all at the same time.

As someone who engaged in evil practices, regardless of everything else, Fang Biao's ability to judge situations was top-notch. When he saw that his subordinates were killed instantly, he turned to run without a moment of hesitation. He knew he definitely wasn't a match for this person. Only by running to a place with more people could he call for help from others from the Holy Sect. Then, perhaps he would be able to live through their joint efforts. He really was filled with regret. Why had he insisted on chasing all of those people away? Otherwise, with witnesses around, that bastard would definitely be too scared to do anything to him out of fear of his father's reputation!

Just then, however, the streak of light didn't seem to have weakened at all and instantly arrived behind him. He felt as if he had been trampled underfoot, and he staggered and fell to the ground. As a cultivator, he immediately understood that his leg's tendons had already been cut.

While he was screaming miserably in pain, a woman in a white dress appeared in front of him. In that instant, he even forgot all of his pain. He felt as if he had never seen such a beautiful woman before. All of his concubines seemed tacky and vulgar in comparison. In all these years, perhaps only the saintess had the right to be compared to her, but the saintess was still too young and wasn't full of stories like this woman. Her eyes seemed to be as deep as the starry sky...

Zu An quickly walked up to Fang Biao, who was being mind-controlled by Daji, and asked, "Do you know what happened recently to Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei?"

Fang Biao opened his mouth and replied, "Sect... Sect Master Yun is like a divine dragon who goes where she pleases. How could I know where her respected self is? As for the saintess... The saintess is about to become my sister-in-law."

Zu An was stunned when he heard that. He immediately asked about what was going on.

"A few days ago, big brother told me excitedly that he was going to wed the saintess. At first, I thought he was dreaming, since we all know that the saintess doesn't like him. However, father confirmed that information. To be honest, I really am envious that he's actually able to marry her. I was drawn to

her from the first moment we met. Unfortunately, I knew my limits and understood that the difference between us was too great... However, she's about to become my sister-in-law, so we're keeping the good things within the family. None more tasty than dumplings, none more interesting than sisters..." Fang Biao replied.

Zu An smacked him in the face before he even finished. He cursed, "Your mouth is only full of common doggerel! Are you at an entrance exam for a graduate program right now?" Then, he asked where Qiu Honglei was right now.

"The saintess should be at the Heavenly Devil School," Fang Biao replied, sounding a bit confused at his question.

Zu An thought to himself for a bit and asked, "Has anything major happened in your sect recently? Or is there something that's a bit different from usual? Either is fine; I want to hear about it."

"I don't think there's anything major. No, wait. A few days ago, there were some human-shaped ghostly monsters that came looking for my dad. They chatted for a long time just between the two of them. I was curious about their origins, but I was beaten by my dad when I asked about it. Right, and not long after, my father seemed to have suffered a serious injury. Even though he did his best to hide it, as his son, there was no way I wouldn't be able to tell."

Zu An's brows furrowed. This Fang Biao didn't seem to know any concrete details about Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei, but these clues were starting to paint a certain possibility. Then, he interrogated Fang Biao about a few more things.

Suddenly, people seemed to be approaching from the distance. It seemed they were hurrying in this direction. Thus, Zu An couldn't tarry for any longer. With a wave of his hand, the White Lotus Flame cleaned the entire scene, including Fang Biao, instantly burning everything away without even any ashes left behind. Then, a second before they arrived, he grabbed the stunned Zhang Zitong and disappeared into the distance.

...

When they arrived in a quiet place, Zhang Zitong finally reacted and struggled, protesting, "Let me go!"

Zu An blocked her attacks with a casual raise of his hand. He couldn't help but chuckle. He replied, "Weren't you begging me to join your group a moment ago? Why are you now unwilling?"

"Don't... Don't touch me..." Zhang Zitong's cheeks were bright red. She was really alarmed.

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Chapter 1996: Recognition

Even when Zhang Zitong was a silver token envoy, she had already been quite experienced. But right now, she was still incredibly alarmed. She felt as if there were a tide surging within her. It was one thing while she still had a bit of rationality left, but once the drug completely spread, any man would be able to do what they wanted with her. How could she dare to stay by the side of any man?

Even so, she was shocked to discover that the other person's cultivation really was unfathomable. He had actually instantly killed Fang Biao's whole party! She actually hadn't even been able to damage his clothes from her struggle.

This guy really hid his strength well... And yet, the most frustrating thing is that a dummy like me actually tried to save him before!

Unfortunately, there was no medicine to cure regret in this world.

When he saw that her cheeks were red and her body was burning up like a cooked shrimp, Zu An asked, "Do you not need me to save you now that you're drugged?"

"I don't!" Zhang Zitong exclaimed, sounding like a frightened rabbit. She covered her chest with her arms. How else would a man save her in this kind of situation? If that really happened, she'd rather die!

For some reason, another figure appeared in her head, and that person seemed to become one with the man in front of her. She quickly shook her head to dispel this thought.

It's definitely the drug, definitely!

“But if I don’t save you, you’ll die,” Zu An said gravely.

“If you really want to save me, then just kill me!” Zhang Zitong yelled, biting her lip so hard that blood almost came out. She felt as if she almost couldn’t take it anymore, and had to make the decision while she was still clear-headed. Immediately after, she took out a dagger to thrust it into her chest.

However, a steady hand grabbed her wrist and disarmed her. When she felt the heat coming from that hand, Zhang Zitong groaned. She felt a kind of desire and jumped into the man’s arms, although she said, “Don’t... Don’t get too close to me.”

Zu An sighed, saying, “You don’t want me to save you, but I’ll still save you.” Immediately after, his palm pressed against her body.

“You’re despicable!” Zhang Zitong cursed. This tiger dressed up as a pig really was too hateful! If not for the fact that she wanted to save him, would she have even gotten into all of this trouble? Now, this guy was taking advantage of this situation, which made him even more hateful than Fang Biao...

You have successfully trolled Zhang Zitong for +444 +444 +444...

Sorry, Sir Eleven!

She felt a deep sense of grief. Two streaks of tears trickled down the corners of her eyes. Then, she fainted.

...

A while later, she slowly opened her eyes. Her first reaction was to instinctively lower her head to check her clothes. She was shocked to discover that she was actually still fully dressed, apart from sweat that made her clothes a bit transparent.

He already did what he wanted, then put my clothes on again...

Suddenly, a cold voice said from behind her, “Don’t move.”

She was alarmed and turned around. Only now did she notice that the man she detested bitterly was sitting right behind her with his palms on her back. Waves of heat were entering her body from the center of her back. Only now

did she realize that he hadn't used the method she imagined to treat her, but rather infused ki to help her force out the drug's effects.

"Sorry, I misunderstood you," Zhang Zitong said, blushing with shame.

I even cursed him out like that earlier, how embarrassing...

Zu An said indifferently, "Right now, not moving randomly is the best form of gratitude."

Zhang Zitong grunted in understanding. She lowered her head and didn't say anything else. She could feel the man's ki stir within her meridians, making her entire body feel numb. It was as if electricity were running through her body. She almost couldn't hold herself back and cried out several times, but she could only bite her lip and endure with difficulty. In order to hide her embarrassment, she could only ask with a trembling voice, "Why... Why did you save me?"

"No reason, I just felt like it," Zu An said. His recent research on aphrodisiacs hadn't been without results. He now understood their properties well enough to figure out some detoxifying methods.

As for Zhang Zitong, apart from his relationship with her in the Embroidered Envoy, he saw a resemblance to two celebrities from the world he transmigrated from in her. That mysterious feeling of intimacy made him want to take care of her a bit. Furthermore, she had 'saved' him twice today, so he naturally couldn't just watch her suffer.

Zhang Zitong replied with an 'oh'. A while later, she once again asked with a trembling voice, "What did your respected self really come here to do?"

Zu An was stunned. Why had her tone suddenly become respectful? Even so, he just treated it as her being grateful and didn't think much of it. He replied, "You didn't tell me about your purpose either, so why should I tell you mine?"

However, who would have thought that Zhang Zitong would immediately reply, "I'm here on behalf of another to monitor the Devil Sect's recent course of events. The Devil Sect suddenly carried out a Devil Sect General Assembly, which they haven't had in many decades, summoning all of their disciples back to their general headquarters. I came to see what was going on and investigate if the Shadow Group is involved in any way."

Zu An was a bit stunned.

Why is this woman suddenly being a yes-man and answering everything?

Many women in this world would become totally submissive to the first man who obtained their bodies, but he clearly hadn't done anything to her! Even so, he still asked, "Who sent you?"

Zhang Zitong replied, "A benefactor of mine."

Zu An thought to himself, *Is it the organization she's affiliated with?*

Then, he asked a bit more about that person's identity, but Zhang Zitong shook her head and said, "I can tell you about anything else, but I can't tell you about this."

When he heard her say that, Zu An didn't force the issue and continued to treat her.

Soon after, Zhang Zitong finally couldn't take it anymore and began to groan.

...

After some more time passed, Zu An stood up and said, "Alright, the drug is mostly out of your system. The rest you should be able to handle on your own. It should be gone if you rest for a day or two."

"Thank you!" Zhang Zitong replied as she got up and sorted out her clothes. She was a bit embarrassed because the way she had verbally abused him really was humiliating.

"This place is too dangerous and it doesn't suit you. You should leave now while no one has seen you yet," Zu An said, then turned around to leave. Meanwhile, he began to ponder just how he could find Yun Jianyue and her disciple.

According to what Fang Biao said, his older brother was going to marry Qiu Honglei? It seemed that going through the Yin Yang Path would give him a higher chance of getting in touch with the Heavenly Devil School. However, after Fang Biao's disappearance, the entire place would likely be on higher alert... He could pretend to be Fang Biao and infiltrate the place that way, but

if all of his subordinates went missing and he came back alone, that would definitely be suspicious.

He suddenly stopped and looked backward at Zhang Zitong, asking, "Why are you still following me?"

"Is there anything I can do to help your respected self?" Zhang Zitong asked. After some hesitation, she summoned her courage and looked at him directly, continuing, "Sir Eleven?"

Zu An's eyes narrowed as he looked at her coldly.

Zhang Zitong's expression was a bit complicated as she continued, "From the moment I first saw you when I entered this city, I felt a sense of familiarity from you. What happened earlier made me even more certain. In the past, Sir Eleven also helped me get rid of poison, and the feeling earlier was exactly the same. I believe that Sir Eleven deals with many people and other matters, so you overlooked that detail."

Zu An remained quiet for a moment. There were really too many things that had happened recently, so he had forgotten that. He hadn't expected her to still remember it so clearly. He had always felt a bit troubled, not knowing how to deal with this woman. He still wasn't sure what camp she belonged to, so it definitely wouldn't be too suitable to just let her go. Even so, silencing her here didn't match his way of doing things.

Zhang Zitong spoke up again. "There is no need for you to feel troubled, Sir Eleven. You have shown me such tremendous grace that I would never do anything that would be unfavorable for you."

Zu An's expression was cold as he replied, "You're the kind of person whose brain doesn't always seem useful, and yet you think you're clever. There are some things you shouldn't say out loud even if you have a good guess. What if I really wanted to silence you right here and now?"

"It doesn't matter, because I know Sir Eleven isn't that kind of person," Zhang Zitong said as she looked at him with a slightly bashful expression. "Also, if sir really wanted to take my life, I would be more than willing."

"There has to be something wrong with your head, right?" Zu An replied, feeling a bit speechless. Then, he turned around and started walking again.

Zhang Zitong had a smile as she caught up with a small sprint, asking, "Sir, is this your real appearance? As expected, it really is extremely heroic and extraordinary..."

"It's not," Zu An said as she turned around and gave her a cold look.

Zhang Zitong only had an even bigger smile on her face as she continued, "I was going to say, sir's real appearance is definitely like trees of jade towering in the wind; it wouldn't be so ordinary."

Zu An was speechless.

"Does sir plan to infiltrate the Devil Sect's general headquarters?" Zhang Zitong then asked.

"Do you have any suggestions?" Zu An replied while examining his surroundings to avoid others discovering them.

"Since this isn't sir's real appearance and no one here can tell the difference, sir no doubt excels at disguise skills. How about just taking on the appearance of Fang Biao? That way, it'd be easy to get closer to the Devil Sect's higher level figures," Zhang Zitong suggested.

Zu An couldn't help but give her a look.

As expected of someone who could become a silver token envoy, she is pretty sharp.

"Unfortunately, all of Fang Biao's subordinates were killed. I'll be easily discovered if I go back on my own," he said.

The people of this world weren't stupid. If one suddenly pretended to be someone others were familiar with, it would be too easy to be exposed.

"That's easy enough. Just use me as your female slave," Zhang Zitong said, sounding a bit eager to give it a try.

Zu An was speechless.

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Chapter 1997: New Identity

When she saw the strange look in Zu An's eyes, Zhang Zitong's face reddened. She said, "It's not what you're imagining! It's just that many people saw Fang Biao chase after me when we left town, so capturing me and making me his female slave matches his way of doing things. Also, sir can just tell everyone else that I killed all of your subordinates, which will make them direct all of the blame onto me. That way, the chances of sir's identity being exposed will be greatly decreased."

Zu An couldn't help but view her in a new light. He said, "It seems you're not just a pretty decoration."

Zhang Zitong pouted playfully, replying, "So that was what sir thought of me all this time."

Zu An was getting a headache. Why was it that no matter where he went, he always got involved with women? However, it did seem as if he needed her help in order to successfully infiltrate the Devil Sect's general headquarters.

Zhang Zitong knew that Sir Eleven was likely still hesitant, so she had to prove her worth. She said, "The only issue is whether sir is able to change your appearance to look like Fang Biao. If you cannot, this plan will be completely useless."

"That's not an issue," Zu An said. When he saw her stare straight at him, he could only add impatiently, "Turn around."

"Oh." Zhang Zitong turned around, but she was full of curiosity.

I wonder what Sir Eleven really looks like...

Either way, judging from their interactions, she keenly sensed that he wasn't that old. At the very least, he had to be younger than the other golden token envoys. She wondered if he was the manly type or the pretty boy type.

Ah! I really want to turn around and sneak a look.

Even so, in the end, she decided to give up on that idea. If he let others find out his real identity, wouldn't they be silenced immediately? Even though he didn't seem like the ruthless type, she couldn't continue to test him again and again.

...

A while later, Zu An told Zhang Zitong that it was okay. She immediately turned around, and what she saw left her completely stunned.

Zu An did a 'ta-da' pose and asked, "So?"

Zhang Zitong's expression changed. She quickly took two steps back and asked, "You... Who are you?"

Zu An replied with a sneer, "Who do you think I am?"

"Fang Biao, what did you do to Sir Eleven?" Zhang Zitong asked while looking all around her. In that instant, she even suspected that Fang Biao hadn't died, and used this chance while she couldn't see and Sir Eleven was distracted to ambush him.

Looking at how she was shaking all over, Zu An said in annoyance, "I'm right here. Didn't you tell me to turn into Fang Biao?"

When she heard his voice, Zhang Zitong was stunned. She asked uncertainly, "Are you really Sir Eleven?"

Zu An looked at her coldly, "I don't wish to have such a meaningless conversation."

Zhang Zitong finally sighed in relief and said, "Right, that's Sir Eleven's personality." She moved closer curiously and couldn't help but reach out her hand to touch his face, remarking, "Isn't this a bit too similar? It's almost as if an exact copy was made."

Zu An slapped her hand away and didn't let her touch him. If she found out that he wasn't wearing a mask, wouldn't she die from alarm? If she just assumed that he had changed his appearance through common disguise techniques, his Face of a Thousand Identities skill wouldn't be exposed.

"It's only your voice that doesn't quite sound right," Zhang Zitong said as she snapped out of her daze. She had been scared so badly by his appearance just now, but now that she thought about it, his voice really didn't match.

When he heard that, Zu An also felt a headache. If he wanted his voice to match too, he had to use the 'Kawaii Waifu Voice Changer', but that was

something he absolutely couldn't let her know about. He said, "Wait for me here for a bit."

Then, he vanished without a trace.

When she saw him disappear just like that, Zhang Zitong was once again amazed by Sir Eleven's unfathomable cultivation. It seemed to be even more amazing than that of the former Chief Commander Zhuxie Chixin.

Hold on, I seem to have heard that Sir Eleven became the new chief commander.

But I still like calling him Sir Eleven more.

While she was in a daze, a gust of wind blew past. By the time she turned around, Sir Eleven was already back.

"What about now?" Zu An asked with Fang Biao's voice. He had found an unfortunate soul to fool with the Kawaii Waifu Voice Changer, and now had an identical voice to Fang Biao. He had also changed into a set of Yin Yang Path clothes.

Zhang Zitong narrowed her eyes, asking, "Sir Eleven, what kind of injury did I have when you saved me last time?"

Zu An was speechless.

This woman is actually seriously worried that I'm Fang Biao and won't drop her guard even now...

He could only reply, "The poison you took yourself, on an impulse to end your own life."

Zhang Zitong sighed in relief, saying, "Sir Eleven, you are just too amazing. Just how did you do it?"

"A secret," Zu An said coldly.

Zhang Zitong said with a smile, "Even though your outer appearance and voice are the exact same, there is still one flaw."

Zu An was stunned. He asked, "What is it?"

"The wretched and lewd aura he has," Zhang Zitong said with a reddened face.

Zu An frowned. This was quite a tricky issue. He now had his status and cultivation to worry about. It did seem a bit unacceptable to pretend to have that kind of personality.

Zhang Zitong suddenly walked up to his side and put his arm around her waist. She could feel how tense he was and immediately said, "Sir, I am now Fang Biao's female slave. If you aren't even willing to touch me, everyone else will immediately find out that there's something wrong."

Oh my, why is Sir Eleven so tense? He isn't a virgin, is he?

Zu An took a deep breath, saying, "Fine."

"Sir..." Zhang Zitong was about to say something when she was interrupted.

Zu An replied, "What sir? From now on, you have to call me master."

"Yes, master, Zhang Zitong said. She initially pursed her lips, but she discovered that it wasn't hard for her to say that at all.

Zu An frowned, saying, "Your attitude is too agreeable. Since you were forcefully dominated by me, then you should hate me."

Zhang Zitong shook her head. "Sir... Ahem, master, you don't understand women. Even a woman who defends her chastity to the extreme, after being subdued eighteen times by a man, wouldn't be able to fully hate that man. Furthermore, Fang Biao is from the Yin Yang Path, so he definitely has his ways of subduing his women."

Zu An felt that what she said carried some sense. As such, his hand tightened and he pulled her into his arms to get into the act.

When she felt his warm embrace, Zhang Zitong's heart started pounding. Unfortunately, this man still had that hateful face. She really wondered what he really looked like.

...

Then, they began to discuss various things, including matching up their story to avoid being exposed.

The sky was already starting to darken when the two finally headed toward the docks. There was a large ship there. The various branches' people had already gotten on, along with quite a few new faces, most likely the newcomers who had just been recruited.

Only the Yin Yang Path's disciples were a bit restless, cursing the people around them. "You still haven't found Boss Biao?"

"No, we looked everywhere," the others said as they hung their heads dispiritedly.

The other factions noticed what was going on there too. Freedom Path's Li Feiqing sneered and didn't worry about it at all.

The Heavenly Devil School's senior sister Pan strutted over and asked, "What's wrong? That brat Fang Biao's gone?"

The Yin Yang Path's disciples hurriedly greeted her, saying, "Replying to senior sister Pan. Boss Biao brought some people with him to capture someone but hasn't returned until now, so we're worried that something might've happened to him. We'll have to trouble senior sister Pan to send some people to help us with our search."

The Heavenly Devil School and Yin Yang Path had always been on good terms, so he didn't feel as if there was anything wrong with this kind of request.

Senior sister Pan replied with a smile, "Capture someone? It's probably a woman, right? That Fang Biao is probably enjoying himself somewhere, so I definitely don't want to ruin his happiness."

The Yin Yang Path's people were getting a bit worried. He said, "Even so, it's already been so long that it's a bit worrisome. Boss Biao should know that it's almost time to leave..."

Li Feiqing was getting a bit annoyed now. He retorted, "Are we all going to wait for him alone? It's not as if it's the first time he's done something like this, so what's there to worry about?"

The entire ship became a bit noisy. There were some who supported the ship leaving, while others advised them to wait a bit longer. The two sides were actually equal in number.

In the end, their gazes landed on a certain fatty and they asked, “Fatty Hu, what do you think?”

“I say we wait a bit,” Fatty Hu said. He was smiling, but he was actually full of curses inside.

What the hell is up with Brother Lu? Why isn't he here yet?

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Chapter 1998: Suspicion

While Zhang Zitong followed Zu An to the docks, she suddenly asked, “Did sir come here this time as a scout for the regent?”

“Call me master!” Zu An replied. He remained calm and collected as he said, “Who said the regent was coming?”

Zhang Zitong smiled and replied, “I just guessed.”

Zu An harrumphed. “It was probably your backer who told you.”

Zhang Zitong didn't reply.

...

By then, the two of them had arrived at the docks.

The Yin Yang Path disciples who were looking for them were overjoyed. They cried, “Boss Biao, you're finally back!”

“What are you hollering for? Am I not right here?” Zu An snapped, recalling the way Fang Biao spoke from earlier.

“Yes, yes.” The disciples' eyes widened when they shifted to Zhang Zitong. They murmured, “This is...”

“A new servant this young master just took in,” Zu An said as he took Zhang Zitong into his arms.

This woman's waist is surprisingly supple.

Zhang Zitong blushed, but she didn't say anything.

Sir Eleven really is warm.

The disciples looked at her face, and then at her long legs; they were immediately overwhelmed with envy.

Boss Biao's luck with women is insane! He was even able to get his hands on these kinds of goods.

"Boss Biao, everyone has been waiting for you, so please hurry and get on the ship," the disciples hurriedly said.

"What are you all getting all alarmed for? This young master knows what's what," Zu An said as he walked toward the ship in an unhurried manner with Zhang Zitong in his arms.

Zhang Zitong was full of admiration.

A moment ago, sir still looked unripe in this field, but he's now playing Fang Biao perfectly.

Soon after, the group arrived at the side of the ship. When he saw Fang Biao's nonchalant behavior, the Freedom Path's Li Feiqing immediately became a bit unhappy. He remarked, "Can you move faster please? The whole ship is waiting for you."

You have successfully trolled Li Feiqing for +223 +223 +223...

"You've already waited for so long, so what's waiting a bit longer?" Zu An shot back.

"You...!" Li Feiqing's eyes narrowed. He spat, "Not even your big brother would dare to speak to me like this!"

You have successfully trolled Li Feiqing for +499 +499 +499...

It wasn't just him; many people from the other factions were also cursing him.

Isn't that kid a bit too arrogant?

When he saw the endless Rage points coming in, Zu An was pleasantly surprised.

“Stop pretending here. If you have the skills, go and bring it up to my big brother,” he said with a sneer, as if he didn’t care at all.

Now, even Zhang Zitong was becoming a bit worried. It wasn’t that she was worried that Sir Eleven couldn’t win against these people, but that would mean that their plans would all be for nothing.

Li Feiqing stood straight up. Rage flickered in his eyes, and his hand shifted to his weapon too.

You have successfully trolled Li Feiqing for +444 +444 +444...

Fatty Hu and the others had been thinking that Li Feiqing’s fondness of the saintess was no secret, and yet she’d ended up being betrothed to Fang Long! That was why Li Feiqing had already been full of resentment. And yet, Fang Biao was actually provoking him like this here.

Li Feiqing was about to attack when the Heavenly Devil School’s Pan Qiaoqiao stood in front of him. She said with a charming smile, “My dear Feiqing, you know what he’s like, so why stoop to his level? We have so many new people here with us, are you really going to let them watch us make a fool of ourselves?”

Li Feiqing knew that the Heavenly Devil School and Yin Yang Path had always had good relations. Even though his own cultivation was higher than both of theirs, the Freedom Path’s influence couldn’t compare to the other two branches. He could only sit back down with a harrumph. “Arguing with you would indeed lower my own character.”

...

With the potential conflict gone, quite a few people sighed in relief. Of course, there were some who were a bit disappointed too.

Those from the Unfeeling Path suddenly asked with a smile, “Fang Biao, where did your attendants go? Why is it just you left?”

The others from the Yin Yang Path also couldn’t help but ask, “Right, Boss Biao, what about Ah Ping and the others?”

The people’s gazes landed on Zu An. Many of them carried suspicion in their eyes.

Zu An's expression remained normal as he replied, "They're all dead."

"All dead?" the others exclaimed in shock.

The Heavenly Devil School's Pan Qiaoqiao said with a scowl, "Just who was so daring as to kill people from your Yin Yang Path? Could it be that there was an enemy attack?"

Those words set off a huge commotion among the people on the ship, and they all whispered among each other. They even began to start inspecting the new recruits, wondering if they'd colluded with some enemy who managed to sneak their way in.

"It's her," Zu An said as he pointed at Zhang Zitong in his arms with an indifferent expression.

Zhang Zitong jerked her head away, her pride and humiliation a perfect performance.

"A dainty beauty like that was actually that strong?" Pan Qiaoqiao remarked as she walked over and sized up Zhang Zitong, her waist swaying back and forth.

It wasn't just her; not even the others in the sect believed the story. After all, Zhang Zitong was too pretty. Those legs in particular were hard to take their eyes off of. A delicate chick like this was actually able to wipe out all of his subordinates?

After all, the Yin Yang Path Master really doted on this third son. He knew that Fang Biao had the lowest cultivation but loved to stir up trouble, so he had assigned many experts at his side.

Just then, the direct disciple who was in charge of the World School couldn't hold himself back and shouted, "That's nonsense! This woman previously wanted to join our World School, but her aptitude was completely ordinary. She could have passed, but she disappeared later on. I heard that she was being chased by your people bitterly not too long ago, so do you think we'll believe you if you try to cast all the blame on her?"

As they looked at Zu An, the people's gazes were full of disapproval. After all, the Yin Yang Path's way of doing things wasn't that good to begin with, and

this Fang Biao was the worst of them all. He oppressed others, and he was shameless and vulgar. He was trash among trash.

When he heard their criticisms, Zu An said with a sneer, "This woman was an Embroidered Envoy of the court, and even a silver token envoy. Were you about to bring this kind of person into your World School?"

They gasped when they heard what he said. Embroidered Envoy? The Holy Sect had definitely suffered their share of damage at the hands of the Embroidered Envoy over the years. That was the court's most secretive and notorious organization. Anyone targeted by the Embroidered Envoy would have nothing but death awaiting them.

Wang Cong's expression changed, but in the end, he was a direct disciple. He reacted quickly and retorted, "What, do we just take your word for something like that? Just how did you come to know about something like that?"

"She told me, of course," Zu An said as she gripped Zhang Zitong's neck from behind.

Zhang Zitong groaned, clearly in a bit of pain. When they saw that, many people even felt pity for her, thinking that this guy really was crude.

Wang Cong laughed and said, "Hah! Who doesn't know that Embroidered Envoys are unreasonably tough? Even if they weren't a match, they'd break the poison between their teeth and end their own lives. How could a silver token envoy really end up in your hands, let alone tell you her identity?"

"This is what you don't understand. When a woman has been sent into the clouds, everything naturally comes together," Zu An said with a smile.

Zhang Zitong's cheeks flushed. The others thought that she was ashamed and indignant, but in reality, she wasn't that angry; she was just a bit embarrassed.

Why is Sir Eleven so good at this? I was worried that he was inexperienced at this kind of stuff.

Sir Eleven really is too formidable. He can perfectly mimic anyone.

When they heard Zu An's reply, the crowd fell silent. They clearly didn't doubt his ability to accomplish that.

Many people even blew whistles and laughed while cursing, “Fang Biao, who here doesn’t know that your stamina isn’t up to par these days? You were able to subdue a silver token envoy?”

“That’s right! You’re actually coming up with such a bad lie after bullying a woman.”

...

When he heard all the suspicions thrown at him, Zu An merely tossed out a token.

The snickering instantly stopped. The people's gazes landed on the token. The distinct divine beast runes on it gave off an intimidating aura. Just looking at it gave them a sense of pressure - the very same kind the Embroidered Envoy had brought the Holy Sect disciples over the years.

“She really was a silver token envoy?”

Their expressions changed when they looked at Zhang Zitong. However, it was no longer a look of pity, but rather vigilance. If she really was a silver token envoy, she did indeed have the ability to kill all of Fang Biao’s subordinates. After all, silver token envoys were the best among Embroidered Envoys. Not only were their cultivation ranks high, they had excellent equipment on them too. That equipment consisted of all sorts of amazing magic weapons from the court that made them unrivaled in the same rank. They could even challenge those above their cultivation ranks.

Li Feiqing stood up again and said, “I apologize for speaking forthrightly, but since she could kill your subordinates, she could kill you instantly too. Why did she fall into your clutches? Was it you who captured her, or is she holding you hostage?”

Even Pan Qiaoqiao was starting to become suspicious now. The people began to surround Zu An.

Zu An frowned. This was indeed a troublesome issue.

Zhang Zitong secretly spoke to him through a voice transmission, saying, “Touch me...”

Zu An was stunned. Zhang Zitong had already silently guided his hand to her chest.

Zu An reacted quickly and crudely gave her a knead, remarking, "Hah, what's so hard about that? Even though this woman's cultivation is high, she's still just a woman. How could she be a match for this young master's modified Eighteen Spring Winds?"

Zhang Zitong moaned. She felt an arc of electricity run through her entire body, and she almost went limp. They were clearly acting, but now that Sir Eleven had done that to her, her heart was still pounding.

"So that was it," Pan Qiaoqiao said with a nod. She knew Fang Biao had that drug on him. She said, "This little sister seems to have already been completely subdued. Look at how she's behaving just from a grope."

The others all gave up on their suspicions. If this woman really had threatened Fang Biao, how could she allow him to grope her like that?

Zu An reached over to Pan Qiaoqiao and said with a proud smile, "But of course. Does big sister Pan want to have a taste too?"

"I fear that your kidneys wouldn't be able to handle it," Pan Qiaoqiao said as she jerked her body away and dodged his claw with a charming smile.

Zhang Zitong bit her lip.

Sir Eleven is actually getting more and more into the role!

When they saw that, the others gradually scattered. They really thought that this Fang Biao brat was lucky. He had obtained such an incredible beauty, and a silver token envoy at that. Just the thought of something like that got them excited. Many people even had dirtier thoughts; since Fang Biao was known for having no stamina now, would he really have been able to send this silver token envoy to the clouds eighteen times? He'd probably had his subordinates take his place. Then, he'd silenced them to preserve his own reputation.

Those from the Devil Sect were already used to that kind of thing.

Many disciples from the Yin Yang Path were even getting a bit excited. If those people died, that meant there were now some vacancies around young master Biao. They had chances of being promoted!

“Set sail!”

As soon as Pan Qiaoqiao gave the order, Fatty Hu shouted, “Wait!” He came up to Zu An and asked, “Boss Biao, have you seen anyone named Lu Ren who tried to help this lady at your side?”

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Chapter 1999: Lake of Hatred Revealed

Zu An was alarmed. He had never expected that Fatty Hu would come and ask him about something like that. Fatty Hu was actually concerned about his safety, but now, it actually put him in a difficult situation. He really didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

“I haven't seen him,” he said eventually.

When he heard the reply, Fatty Hu said with a frown, “That shouldn't be... When I heard that you were bringing people to chase after a young lady, I just happened to see Lu Ren there too. Furthermore, Lu Ren's relationship with this woman didn't seem that bad, and he was even indebted to this woman for saving him. In that kind of situation, he would most likely save her.”

“Oh, you were talking about that guy. He turned tail and ran as soon as he saw what happened,” Zu An replied.

“He ran?” Fatty Hu asked skeptically. “Like hell Brother Lu ran away. Rather than that, you probably killed him, am I wrong?” As he said that, his expression turned incredibly fierce.

You have successfully trolled Fatty Hu for +555 +555 +555...

The others tried to advise him, asking, “Fatty Hu, what kind of a relationship do you have with that Lu guy? Why do you care about him that much?”

Fatty Hu coldly replied, "That Lu Ren was the only person the Treasure Hunter Path recruited this year, as well as a disciple I accepted in my master's place!"

Everyone had expressions of sympathy. The Treasure Hunter Path's people had all already passed on, and the new member Fatty Hu had finally swindled was killed by Fang Biao, so it was no wonder he was so angry.

Zu An couldn't help but be a bit moved by this Fatty Hu's loyalty. They had only met once, and yet the other person was actually already speaking up for him. However, he could only try to escape blame by saying, "That person really did run away. If you don't believe me, you can ask her."

When he saw Zu An point at her, Fatty Hu stared at Zhang Zitong.

Zhang Zitong thought to herself, *Sir Eleven really doesn't care about his reputation...* Even so, she also nodded cooperatively and said, "That's right. When I saw that the situation wasn't favorable, I told him to run away so he wouldn't lose his life for nothing."

Even though that was what she said, Fatty Hu still didn't fully believe her. He said, "Even though brother Lu and I have just met, I don't feel that he's that kind of person. Could it be that she's just saying whatever you want her to say because she's already become your slave?!" He stared at Zu An with incredible hatred, as if he were about to attack at a moment's notice.

You have successfully trolled Fatty Hu for +444 +444 +444...

Zu An sighed and replied, "Fatty Hu, are you stupid? I didn't even know that Lu Ren was from your Treasure Hunter Path. If I really did kill him, why would I bother hiding it from you?"

Fatty Hu was briefly stunned.

I guess what he says makes sense.

The other factions also spoke up, and tensions finally eased up a bit.

Zu An chuckled. He went straight to the Yin Yang Path's area with Zhang Zitong in his arms. There was a banner hanging there, so there was no need for him to have known about it beforehand.

When he saw how arrogant he was being, Fatty Hu gritted his teeth. He had finally tricked someone into joining, and yet that person was chased away!

You have successfully trolled Fatty Hu for +388 +388 +388...

The only good thing he was grateful for was that the woman had let him run away and they hadn't really abandoned each other.

She might have even entrusted him with the task of contacting the Embroidered Envoy...

Of course, he didn't plan to voice that guess. Either way, even if the sky fell, there would be a tall person to hold it up. The Treasure Hunter Path had practically nothing right now, so what was he getting worried about stuff like that for?

Pan Qiaoqiao said with a smile, "Since everyone is already here, let's get ready to leave."

Zu An was a bit moved. *I'll finally be able to go to the Devil Sect's headquarters. Just where is the legendary Lake of Hatred?*

Some Devil Sect disciples quickly took out black cloths people's eyes.

Zu An watched with a detached expression. He soon discovered that the ones being veiled were all new disciples. The disciples with higher statuses didn't need to be blindfolded. He thought to himself, *No wonder the court has never been able to find out where the Devil Sect's headquarters is. They really do go the extra step in ensuring secrecy.*

Soon after, a disciple arrived in front of him. He stared at Zhang Zitong, but didn't dare to actually speak up.

"I'll do it myself," Zu An said as he took the black cloth from his hands and covered Zhang Zitong's eyes.

As he left, the disciple was full of resentment. He couldn't help but give Zhang Zitong a few more glances.

This woman really is beautiful! That bastard Fang Biao really is lucky with women.

“Sir, I’ll have to leave remembering the path to the Lake of Hatred to you,” Zhang Zitong said through ki transmission. If he didn’t remember it, perhaps the two of them wouldn’t even be able to get out.

Zu An voiced his understanding. He silently examined his surroundings. The ship was moving along with the current. Could it be that the Lake of Hatred was somewhere around the lower reaches of the river? However, according to the Embroidered Envoy’s information, there weren’t any places there that seemed as if they could hide the Lake of Hatred!

While he was lost in his thoughts, Zhang Zitong was really having a hard time. Her face was entirely red. Even though she knew he was playing the role of a ‘scoundrel’, being kneaded back and forth made her heart go up and down along with those hands. Her eyes were blindfolded too, so her sense of touch was also greatly magnified.

Zu An didn’t have the time to think about those things. His eyes suddenly narrowed, because he discovered that as the ship traveled along, the river’s current became faster and faster. With his spiritual awareness, he immediately sensed that there was a massive waterfall drop a mile or so up ahead. If this ship continued, it would fall right down the waterfall. With his cultivation, he’d naturally be fine, but more than half of the passengers on this ship would likely take their last breath.

He secretly examined his surroundings. The newcomers’ eyes being veiled was one thing, but those direct disciples were perfectly calm. There were even some who began idle conversation. He was puzzled, but he was quite good at remaining calm now. He also pretended everything was fine.

Soon after, their ship arrived near the waterfall. The blindfolded newcomers finally reacted.

“Why does the water sound so loud?”

“Do you all feel as if the ship’s speed is a bit abnormal?”

...

“All of you, shut your mouths!” the veteran disciples barked; they all laughed when they heard the panicked discussions. Back then, they had all experienced the very same thing.

A Secret Path disciple walked to the bow of the ship and took out a formation board. With a bit of fiddling, the entire ship shone with light. Runes became faintly visible on its surface. Just then, it was as if the area up ahead sensed something, and rings of ripples gradually appeared.

Zu An was stunned, thinking, *It's a secret dungeon?* With his current level of insight, even though only a bit had been revealed, he was already able to come to that conclusion.

This was a secret dungeon suspended right above the waterfall, parallel to the river surface. Furthermore, there were special formations arranged all around it. A special procedure had to be carried out before the secret dungeon would show itself. The large ship didn't fall down as expected; instead, it entered straight through the flickering light up ahead.

Zu An sized up the surroundings and discovered that this secret dungeon was different from others. While passing through, there was a clear feeling that the surrounding space was extremely stable. It was likely a crystallization of a thousand years of the Devil Sect's wisdom! They had actually built their general headquarters in a secret dungeon. Who could have imagined that?

His eyes quickly lit up. The entire ship had already reappeared on a river. The surrounding environment wasn't that different from earlier either. The only difference was that there was no more waterfall, and it was replaced with a towering mountain... No, it was more like a tall altar. Normal mountains were often wider on the bottom and narrower on the top, but the bottom and top of this mountain were about the same in width, making it look more like a trapezoid. The river the boat moved along was in front of the mountain, and it split into two paths left and right like a 人 character. It carved out two deep grooves in the valley, while the mountain towered over the middle.

Zu An looked up and saw all kinds of buildings above that 'altar' of a mountain. When he looked closely, he saw assorted towers, walls, and other defensive structures, too. From time to time, people in Devil Sect attire roamed around. This was clearly the legendary Devil Sect General Headquarters: The Lake of Hatred!

Sure enough, the large ship stopped at a dock in front of the mountain. The guards vigilantly pointed various weapons at it.

In response, the disciples onboard ran over to talk to them. They handed over a token, and the other side clearly relaxed. Even so, they still rigidly sent

people to investigate the ship. When they saw that nothing was wrong, they then permitted everyone to come ashore.

Zu An thought to himself that with the level of security they had here, it was indeed quite difficult for outsiders to infiltrate the Devil Sect.

Once they got off the boat, the disciples of the different sects led the newcomers to a spacious platform, then finally permitted them to remove their blindfolds. When they saw the world around them, all of the new recruits were amazed. At the same time, the excitement of reaching the general headquarters was clear on their faces.

Zu An followed the others along the road. He saw that the path was laid with bluestone, wide enough for three people to walk side by side. Both sides had steep inclines, with thistles and shrubbery growing everywhere. He keenly sensed that there were many dangers hidden in the trees. If one accidentally fell, it would surely bode ill.

There was a tall ballista tower every few hundred meters. The guards inside vigilantly monitored every single person who crossed. If even the slightest thing was off, they could immediately launch an attack. At the same time, they could ignite the beacon next to them or ring the gong to immediately activate all of this place's defenses.

They made their way up the winding path and crossed several city gate checkpoints. All the structures were built on the mountain's precipice through an ingenious use of topography. The headquarters really was an incredible undertaking to build!

Zhang Zitong couldn't help but say through ki, "With this level of defense, not even a court army of a hundred thousand would be able to take this city down!"

Zu An nodded. What she said was true. They had even gone through some small openings that only permitted a single person through at a time, and only by bending down a bit at that. There were ninety-degree cliffs all around them, too. If the main army came here, they wouldn't be able to display their power at all. On the other hand, they would be very susceptible to all kinds of defensive strategies.

...

Just like that, they continued for a mile or so before the terrain finally became more level. Most of the buildings were here.

The direct disciples took their new recruits to their own territories. Even though Zu An didn't know where to go, he didn't panic. With a small trick, he had the Yin Yang Path's disciples take the lead and managed to find 'his' place.

Once the door was closed, Zhang Zitong immediately jumped away from him and looked out the window. She was amazed and excited, exclaiming, "Sir, we actually succeeded!"

The court had long investigated the whereabouts of the Lake of Hatred, but they'd never managed to succeed.

Zu An's expression remained calm. He examined his surroundings to get used to Fang Biao's living arrangements. Then, he began to think about how to look for Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei. He had been looking around on the way up, and more or less deduced the Heavenly Devil School's location.

Suddenly, he thought of something. He took Zhang Zitong into his arms again. Zhang Zitong was stunned, but she didn't suspect that he was taking advantage of her. She immediately realized that someone was coming.

Sure enough, there was a teasing laugh from outside, and a voice remarked, "I heard that my trash little brother caught and brought back a silver token envoy?"

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Chapter 2000: Your Reply?

"Boss Hu, Boss Biao has just come back for some rest. He ordered that no one was allowed to disturb him..." said the guard outside in a troubled manner, but his voice grew softer and softer.

"Get lost!" An arrogant voice shouted, "Do brothers like us need you guys to get in our way if we want to talk to each other?"

Zhang Zitong immediately came to Zu An's side and said, "Sir, the one outside is probably Fang Biao's second brother Fang Hu. It seems the relationship between the brothers isn't actually that good."

Zu An nodded. He put his arm around her waist, and moved her slightly behind him.

Soon after, several noisy footsteps drew closer, and in the blink of an eye, the door was forced open. A large and tall young man appeared at the entrance. He was much bigger than Fang Biao, and the most noticeable trait was his big nose, as well as his expression that seemed as if he were looking at trash.

Zu An frowned and called out, "Has no one taught you to knock before entering?"

Fang Hu raised his brows and remarked, "Oh? It seems you've become a bit braver after going out on a field trip! You actually dare to speak to me now."

You have successfully trolled Fang Hu for +66 +66 +66...

Zu An was startled. It seemed that Fang Biao had been bullied quite a bit by his second brother.

Fang Hu pulled over a chair and sat down with a swagger, saying, "I heard that you even chased those concubines of yours away. Many of them ran over to me crying. Just what is going on?"

Zu An was speechless. A huge group of women had rushed at him right after he returned. They were all women whom Fang Biao had taken in over the past few years. Upon seeing those women pander to him, Zu An had no patience at all for them and had decided to just chase them all away. After all, he was always surrounded by the best. Why would he feel anything for these caked-up women?

However, these women had actually gone over to tell on him to Fang Biao's second brother?

Tsk tsk, just from this guy's tone... How many green hats was Fang Biao wearing?

"Nothing. Of course fresh women are more interesting," Zu An said as he played with Zhang Zitong in his arms.

Zhang Zitong was so embarrassed her face became completely red, and she playfully hit his chest.

Sir Eleven is getting more and more into it...

Fang Hu's eyes had remained on Zhang Zitong ever since he came in. As soon as he saw what she looked like, he was immediately stunned.

Those legs in particular... I feel like I could play with them for three years at least.

The moment he thought of that, he couldn't hide the desire in his eyes. He said, "Lend me this woman for a few days." As for when he would return her, or whether he would return her, that would come after.

Zhang Zitong was alarmed when she heard that. She was only acting as a female slave right now. If it was Sir Eleven, she didn't care much if he took some liberties with her, but she'd rather die than really end up in the hands of those Yin Yang Path people.

Zu An gently patted her to console her. He decisively refused, saying, "No."

Fang Hu didn't get upset; he said with a laugh, "Look at how stingy you're being. Which one of your other women have I not played with? I even gave you some of my concubines too, remember?" Of course, overall, he was the one who took advantage of Fang Biao more. The ones he gave Fang Biao were pretty much only those he got tired of and didn't want anymore.

Zhang Zitong harrumphed with a reddened face. These two brothers really were the worst scum in existence.

"This is different. If I say I won't lend her to you, then I won't," Zu An said coldly.

Fang Hu narrowed his eyes. He remarked, "Kid, it seems you've grown a bit bold recently, haven't you?" Then, he looked at Zhang Zitong and said, "Beauty, you'll have a better life if you follow me. With legs like yours, my third brother's poor health won't be able to satisfy you at all. Only someone like me can truly help you enjoy what mingling in the Yin Yang Path really tastes like."

Zhang Zitong jerked her head away. She clung tightly to Zu An.

Fang Hu was a bit shocked, exclaiming, "Hm? It seems like you've really won over this woman's body and heart. Could it be that you really did use the Eighteen Spring Winds they spoke of?"

"What do you think?" Zu An retorted. He was starting to feel admiration for Zhang Zitong's acting. Fang Hu couldn't see through her appearance at all.

"I don't think it's possible. Other people might not know about the condition of your body, but how could I not? We're actually kindred spirits, you know?" Fang Hu sneered. If Fang Biao really had been that tough, he wouldn't have been able to dominate his brother's women so easily.

Zu An was getting a bit annoyed. This guy really was annoying! He was even wondering whether to just silence him. Either way, he had already managed to sneak into the general headquarters, anyway.

However, this was related to Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei's safety, so he put aside his discomfort and tried to change the topic, asking, "Where is our big brother?" Said brother wanted to marry Qiu Honglei, so he had to ask around for related information.

"Big brother is busy trying to marry the saintess. He doesn't have the time to bother with this kind of stuff," Fang Hu said, walking over to him. "My dear little brother, if you give her to me on your own now, I'll still interpret it as a wonderful brotherhood. But if you make me use force, things will get ugly. Do you still remember how I beat you up back then?"

There was a smirk at the corners of his lips. The threat behind his words was clear. At the same time, he was a bit confused. Normally, this brat Fang Biao would already have pissed his pants out of fear and obediently handed over his women. Why was he so stubborn today? It almost didn't seem like him.

Even so, when he saw Zhang Zitong in his brother's arms, he immediately felt relieved. This woman was prettier than any of the women from before. Those beautiful legs in particular were top-quality. Together with the fact that she was a silver token envoy, the feeling of dominating her had to be much, much better than with an ordinary woman. No wonder his brother wasn't willing to give her up.

Unfortunately, it didn't make a difference whether he was willing or not. The fist was reason in this place, and it was no different for blood brothers.

When he saw the malicious expression in Fang Hu's eyes, Zu An's gaze turned a bit cold.

Zhang Zitong sneered inwardly. *This guy really is laughable. He has no idea just what kind of person he offended.*

Zu An was about to subdue him and use Daji to restrain him when he suddenly thought of something. He looked outside the door and gave up on any thoughts of attacking for now.

"Oh? So young master Hu was here!" a voice remarked with a lovable laugh.

Fang Hu turned around. An alluring woman was looking around at the entrance. There was a bit of surprise in his expression, but it soon turned to a smile as he said, "So it was big sister Pan! Did you come here for my big brother? Unfortunately, he's busy preparing for the wedding and isn't here."

Even though Pan Qiaoqiao was pretty, he knew she was a poisoned rose. Who knew how many men had fallen victim to her over the years? Furthermore, she had always had a good impression toward his older brother Fang Long. People all believed that if the saintess had been out of the picture, in the entire sect, she had the highest chance of ending up together with his big brother. He could mess with this brat Fang Biao's women as much as he wanted to, but he wasn't so brave as to do the same with his big brother's women.

"Sigh, what else could it be? Brother Wang is still angry and wanted an explanation from young master Biao, so Feiqing and I came with him to take a look so nothing bad would happen," Pan Qiaoqiao said with a sigh.

Two more people appeared at the entrance. The first one was the World School's direct disciple Wang Cong, who was absolutely furious. The second one was the Freedom Path's Li Feiqing, who leaned casually against the door with a gloomy and pessimistic expression ever-present on his face. Together with his physique, he did give off a kind of unique charm.

Fang Hu thought to himself, *This pretty boy is pretty handsome. What a pity that he couldn't win against my big brother for the saintess.* He'd also heard that Zhang Zitong was originally a new disciple the World School was going to take in, and yet she'd ended up being captured by his third brother. Fang Hu couldn't help but roar with laughter, remarking, "However, if we really think about it, didn't our third brother help your World School eliminate a

potential spy? You should be thanking him, so why did you come to criticize him?"

Wang Cong said coldly, "That's not what I'm talking about. Even though this woman is a silver token envoy, Fang Biao didn't know about that. On the other hand, he knew she was a World School disciple. Don't his actions show that he has no respect for our World School at all?"

Zu An and Zhang Zitong were both a bit speechless.

Do the members of the Devil Sect frequently start disputes over personal feelings?

"What Brother Wang says makes some sense, Fang Hu said as he walked up to Zu An's side. "Third brother, this is where you were wrong."

At the same time, he sent a voice transmission and said, "Third brother, lend me this woman for a few days and I can help you send them away. Otherwise, it's not my problem."

Zu An responded coldly, "No!"

If it weren't for these people's sudden arrival, he would have already had this guy kneeling and begging for mercy.

"Do as you please then!" Fang Hu said with a sneer and got up to leave. "Third brother was wrong in this matter, so you can deal with it on your own. I won't be getting involved."

He was already thinking that he would let these guys give Fang Biao a beating, and he'd be able to easily snatch that woman away after.

*But when did this little bastard Fang Biao get so bold? He's actually going against me? Even if the woman is pretty, there's no reason for him to be this brave, right?
Could it be...*

...

When Wang Cong saw Fang Hu leave, he said with a sneer, "We can properly settle our affairs now, right?" With a wave of his hand, the door closed behind him to cut off any potential paths of escape.

Li Feiqing leaned against the window in a sullen mood, while Pan Qiaoqiao walked over with a big smile, as if all of this was particularly amusing to her.

Zu An frowned, replying, "How do you want to settle it?"

Weren't the Heavenly Devil School and Yin Yang Path allies? Why are Pan Qiaoqiao and these two teaming up against me together?

Even so, forget about the three of them, he wouldn't feel scared even if their teachers came at him. The problem lay in the fact that, if he caused a disturbance and his cover was blown, that would become a huge problem.

"This is something between the two of us. Have the Embroidered Envoy leave," Wang Cong said as he looked at Zhang Zitong in Zu An's arms.

Zu An coldly said, "She is my slave now. If you have something to say, just spit it out." Fang Hu wanted Zhang Zitong, so how could he let her leave his line of sight?

"Look at how much you like her. You don't even want to leave her side for a second," Pan Qiaoqiao said as she walked over, then tapped Zhang Zitong's acupoint. Zhang Zitong immediately fainted.

Zu An naturally could have stopped her, but he could sense that she didn't intend to kill, so he wanted to see just what they were plotting. As for Zhang Zitong, for the sake of putting on a better performance, she had sealed up her own cultivation and only retained the ability to transmit ki. She naturally couldn't react in that situation. She had absolute trust in Sir Eleven and believed that he would definitely protect her.

When Zhang Zitong fainted, the other three sighed in relief.

Li Feiqing suddenly asked, "Have you thought about the thing we talked to you about last time? We came to hear your reply. I hope you won't disappoint us."

Zu An was stunned. *Didn't you come here to criticize me? Just what the hell are you talking about now?*

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