

Read Keyboard Immortal - Chapter 2101: Search

Chapter 2101: Search

"What do we do about Elder Qi?" Yan Xuehen asked worriedly as she suddenly looked at the unconscious middle-aged daoist nun.

Even though she hadn't seen what had happened, Elder Qi had been knocked unconscious by Zu An right from the start. Once she woke up, she would definitely suspect that the two of them had done something.

"I'll leave that up to you. This is your territory, after all," Zu An replied with a smile.

"You'll leave it to me?" Yan Xuehen repeated, almost fainting. "Why aren't you taking any responsibility at all?"

"I can take care of it if you want. I'll just destroy the corpse so there's no evidence," Zu An said, his tone suddenly becoming grave.

"Don't!" Yan Xuehen quickly said; her expression changed as she stopped him. "Just let me take care of it!" How could she let her fellow sect member be harmed because of her own selfish interests?

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Elder Qi gradually woke up, a look of confusion appearing on her face. Soon, however, she took out her weapons to prepare for battle.

"Elder Qi, please do not feel nervous," a clear and cold voice said from off to the side.

When Elder Qi followed the source of the voice, she saw that Yan Xuehen was sitting there and looking at her. She was surprised and overjoyed, asking, "Sect master, are you alright?"

"Yes, it was thanks to the regent's all-out... healing," Yan Xuehen said. When she recalled the earlier events, she couldn't help but clench her toes. Fortunately, she was quite good at controlling herself and didn't show any suspicious behavior.

Elder Qi gave the nearby Zu An a look, then quickly grabbed Yan Xuehen. She secretly asked, "Sect master, he didn't do anything disrespectful to you just now, did he?"

Countless memories appeared in Yan Xuehen's mind.

Are you kidding me? It wasn't just disrespect, he already went all the way!

Still, she replied, "Of course not." Afterward, her cheeks heated up a bit. She had never told lies in the past, but ever since she met that little demon, she'd begun to lie more and more.

"But he knocked me out as soon as we entered..." Elder Qi reflexively lowered her head to examine her own clothes while speaking.

Zu An's eyelids twitched as he watched her.

You're actually worried that I'd do something to you? Keep dreaming!

Yan Xuehen quietly explained, "The regent already explained it to me before, telling me that his method is extremely special and cannot be seen by anyone else. The reason he agreed to you entering is because he did not wish to delay my healing process, so please do not take offense, Elder Qi."

"But..." Elder Qi said, still a bit suspicious. Sect Master Yan was just too beautiful, and the regent seemed to be a famous playboy. Would he really be completely untempted?

Yan Xuehen guessed what she was thinking from her expression and said, "What are you thinking? He is Chuyan's husband! To a certain degree, I am also his master. How could he possibly do what you are thinking of?"

The moment those words left her mouth, she felt mysteriously guilty. The people of this world were indeed like this, attaching a lot of importance to respecting their masters, but this guy really was daring. He only knew how to disrespect his seniors!

Elder Qi chuckled in relief.

That's right! Even though Sect Master Yan is beautiful, with her and Chuyan's master-disciple relationship, how could the regent dare to do anything?

Even taking a thousand steps back, assuming the regent did something unforgivable and immoral, is Sect Master Yan's untarnished character something I should doubt?

Her cold and indifferent personality means she didn't even give Zhao Han the time of day. If there really were something, would she be able to keep on such a natural expression?

Sigh, it seems we were thinking like petty-minded people about a gentleman.

She bowed respectfully to Zu An. "Thank you so much for saving our sect master, regent."

Zu An sighed and said, "It's alright as long as I'm not mistaken for a demon of lust."

Elder Qi felt more and more guilty as she said, "It was us who were too inflexible."

Yan Xuehen glared at Zu An.

I don't think it's too far off, though!

This guy really doesn't bat a single eyelid while telling lies.

"Elder Ming and the others were really worried and anxious while waiting outside, so I'll go out to talk to them first," Elder Qi suggested.

"Let's go together. We've worried everyone," Yan Xuehen said, but as soon as she took a step, her expression changed a bit. She quickly used ki to hold something in.

Elder Qi's nose suddenly twitched. Yan Xuehen was alarmed and asked, "What is it?"

"I can't help but feel as if there was some strange smell, but now I can't smell it anymore. It might have just been my imagination," Elder Qi said apologetically.

Yan Xuehen's face was heating up to the point that she really wanted to crawl into a hole and hide forever. Fortunately, Zu An had already used a certain skill to get rid of those ambiguous smells before Elder Qi woke up, but she hadn't expected there to still be a bit left.

The door to the dwelling quickly opened. When they heard the news, the mass of people outside rushed over. When they saw that Yan Xuehen was still as pure and transcendent as she usually looked, they were overjoyed and exclaimed, "Sect master, have you recovered?"

A look of amazement appeared in many people's eyes. Even though they had already seen her countless times, it was always a different experience whenever they saw the sect master again. She even seemed to be a bit rosier than usual. The distant and remote goddess in the clouds now seemed to carry a bit more worldly beauty.

Yan Xuehen voiced her confirmation. "It was thanks to a secret method only the regent knows."

Everyone from the White Jade Sect bowed to Zu An. "Thank you so much, regent!"

Elder Ming used the chance to secretly ask, "Elder Qi, was there anything strange that happened inside?"

"No... there wasn't." Elder Qi hesitantly wondered whether to speak the truth, but after thinking about it, even though everyone in the sect trusted the sect master's judgment, if news of such a thing went out, who knew what the others would think? Then, not only would their sect master's reputation be harmed, even the White Jade Sect itself would be implicated. As such, she decided it was better to just not say anything.

When he heard her reply, Elder Ming sighed inwardly in relief.

"Everyone is too polite. Sect Master Yan is Chuyan's master and my good friend. Whether for personal or public reasons, it was only right for me to to save her," Zu An said as he stood behind Yan Xuehen and secretly held her hand.

Yan Xuehen wanted to pull her hand back, but she couldn't. She couldn't exert too much strength in front of so many people either, and could only let him do what he wanted. Even so, her face was really heating up.

This guy really isn't scared of anything at all!

...

Afterward, the White Jade Sect wanted to hold a feast to thank Zu An, but Zu An wasn't in the mood. Yan Xuehen wasn't the type to enjoy too much activity either, so they decided not to hold such an event in the end.

A separate courtyard was prepared near the main peak. It wasn't too far from where Yan Xuehen resided. Yan Xuehen was already completely awake and fine, so they naturally didn't need to worry about anything.

Zu An summoned Yan Xuehen and the other elders from the White Jade Sect to ask them about their secret dungeon. He wanted to get to the bottom of Chuyan's disappearance.

"This is a secret dungeon that we inherited and have passed down for thousands of years. It seems to have existed even before the White Jade Sect was founded. Natural ki is rich and abundant inside, and there are all kinds of rarely seen flowers and herbs within. Calling it a paradise wouldn't be too great of an exaggeration," Elder Ming said. However, he frowned and continued, "Furthermore, after thousands of years of exploration, we did not find it to contain any dangers at all, and yet this kind of thing happened. It really is strange."

"Most of the secret dungeons of the world are ancient remains. While these remains contain opportunities, they also hold danger. Could it be that this secret dungeon of yours is one of those ancient remains?" Zu An asked in confusion.

Yan Xuehen shook her head and said, "Our secret dungeon is not one of those historical remains, and is instead more like a world of its own. It is like a mythical fairyland."

"What exactly is inside the secret dungeon? Can you describe it in more detail?" Zu An continued. He wanted to see if he could find any clues.

Elder Ming and the others were hesitating, so Yan Xuehen decided to take the lead. "This secret dungeon was originally our White Jade Sect's secret, but since the secret dungeon has already been ruined, there is no harm in telling the regent.

"Actually, our White Jade Sect was modeled after the secret dungeon. The entire secret dungeon is located in the skies, and many peaks tower into the clouds. Every single peak is linked by clouds between them that serve as stairs. Every peak has a different elemental property. The cultivators who

enter frequently cultivate on the peak with the element that resonates with their own the best. By doing so, they can achieve twice the results with half the effort.

“And the peak Chuyan chose was the ice element peak. I cultivated there in the past, so I don’t know why this happened now.”

Zu An asked seriously, “Did you already search the entire secret dungeon? What about the world underneath the clouds?”

“There does not seem to be anything beneath the clouds; instead, there is only an endless abyss. There was once a senior who went down to investigate, but he was sent back by force not long after he went down. It seems to be a safety mechanism the secret dungeon has to protect cultivators,” Yan Xuehen replied. “Besides, with Chuyan’s cultivation, she would never just fall down accidentally.”

Zu An began to think to himself. Chuyan had always been fine when she entered before, so why was it different this time? The first thing he considered was the alien monster invasion. Could it be that some kind of restriction had been activated?

However, the sealed land was so far from the White Jade Sect, and judging from how these people were describing the situation, it didn’t seem as if anything strange had happened. Would the monster invasion really affect this place?

Could this be the result of some transformations that took place within Chuyan herself? She had learned some things from the daoist secret dungeon. It probably didn’t have anything to do with Kiss of the Goddess, though. Could it be the Pure World Icelotus?

He asked, “Could it be that there really aren’t any buildings or stone carving-like things in the secret dungeon? Everything is natural? Or are there any things that stand out?”

Yan Xuehen hesitated before saying, “Now that you mention it, there is something. I wonder if it has any relevance.”

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Chapter 2102: Nature Jade Plate

“Sect master!” the elders said nervously, as if they were trying to hint at something to her.

Yan Xuehen shook her head slightly and said, “It’s fine. With the regent’s current cultivation, he wouldn’t desire our sect’s treasures.” Then, she looked at Zu An and continued, “However, this matter is related to the prosperity and decline of the White Jade Sect, so I hope that the regent will not speak about it with others.”

When he saw how serious she was, Zu An became serious as well as he said, “I understand.”

Yan Xuehen now began to explain, “If we were to talk about anything in the White Jade Sect’s secret dungeon that fit the description you just spoke of, the only thing that could fit that would be a certain jadestone.”

“Jadestone?” Zu An repeated, stunned.

“Strictly speaking, rather than being a jadestone, it is actually a giant stone at the highest peak of the secret dungeon. However, the material is special and looks as if it is entirely made from jade. The surface is so glossy that you can see your reflection in it,” Yan Xuehen explained.

“Something that can exist at the highest peak of the White Jade Sect’s secret dungeon is definitely no ordinary jadestone,” Zu An said with a sigh.

“That’s right, the jadestone is indeed special.” A rare look of passion appeared on Yan Xuehen’s face as she explained, “Certain special images often appear on that jadestone, but they are not the reflection of any place in the secret dungeon, nor are they places we have ever seen in the outside world either. It is rumored that the jadestone reflects the scenery of the immortal realm.”

“Immortal realm?” Zu An repeated as he sat up. He suddenly became more interested.

“That’s right,” Yan Xuehen said with a nod. “It is rumored that many, many years ago, the seniors in the sect saw an immortal perform a sword dance inside. The White Jade Sect’s sword technique was inherited from precisely that scene.”

“Immortal’s sword dance?” Zu An asked, stunned. Why did that sound so familiar? “Have you all personally seen it?”

The White Jade Sect’s people all shook their heads. Yan Xuehen replied, “We have only seen some records from the ancient texts left behind by the sect’s seniors. We have never personally seen it, but there is no way to fake the sword skills that were passed down. For example, my Snowflake Sword came precisely from that jadestone’s immortal sword dance.”

Zu An asked seriously, “Could it be that a senior from White Jade Sect borrowed the name of an immortal for his technique?”

When they heard that, many elders showed dissatisfaction. Yan Xuehen explained, “There is no reason for the White Jade Sect’s seniors to do such a thing. Furthermore, even though no one has seen the immortal’s sword dance in the jadestone, there have been some other scenes. Throughout history, there have been talented individuals who obtained enlightenment through the jadestone and created their own techniques as a result.

“For example, the senior brother Li you met? His Immortal Sword came from some scenes he observed from the jadestone that gave him sudden enlightenment.”

The sword technique Li Changsheng had used in the past appeared in Zu An’s mind. Whenever the sword appeared, an illusory palace manifested in the sky. The style of that palace carried a divine air that seemed detached from the secular world. It was indeed quite different. It seemed this jadestone was special after all.

“Could that jadestone possibly be a passage that links up to another secret dungeon?” Zu An asked.

Yan Xuehen shook her head and said, “Countless seniors of the White Jade Sect have studied that jadestone to unravel its mysteries for thousands of years, but they never found anything. There were no spatial element waves detected. Apart from some mysterious scenes appearing every year on certain days, there was nothing else special about it.”

Zu An thought to himself that nothing seemed to stand out in particular in the period when Chu Chuyan had gone missing. He asked, “Then where is that jadestone right now?”

Yan Xuehen reflexively glanced at Elder Ming. He replied, "The sect master was busy searching for Chuyan's whereabouts and didn't notice, but the jadestone has actually already gone missing."

"What?!" Even Yan Xuehen was shocked now.

"When the secret dungeon changed, I was more worried about that immortal jadestone. After all, our White Jade Sect's prosperity has largely depended on it. I wanted to see if I could arrange a protective formation around it, but when I arrived at the mountaintop, I was shocked to discover that the jadestone had already disappeared without a trace," Elder Ming said.

"Why didn't you tell me about something so important ahead of time?" Yan Xuehen said, feeling a bit anxious.

"At the time, the sect master was frantically looking for Chuyan and was not in the mood to pay attention to these things at all," Elder Ming said with a sigh.

"At the time, I contacted the other elders to search for the immortal jadestone, but we didn't find anything. We even suspected that the jadestone might have fallen out of the clouds when the entire secret dungeon changed.

"This matter is too important, so we've since been investigating. We were worried that information could leak out and cause alarm among the disciples. But now that we've begun to discuss things, it seems that the jadestone's disappearance is related to Chuyan's disappearance."

"Even so, in all these years, there have never been issues with that jadestone..." Yan Xuehen said a bit absentmindedly. The jadestone was too important and too mysterious. Even though they now knew that it could be related to Chuyan's disappearance, she didn't know what to do about it.

...

The group discussed things with each other for a while longer, but they couldn't come to any useful conclusions. Furthermore, it was already dark, so they decided to separate for the time being.

When he saw the daze Yan Xuehen was in, Zu An tried to comfort her by saying, "At the very least, we now know the reason for Chuyan's disappearance, so we aren't entirely without any clues anymore. Your serious injuries have only begun to heal, so you should go back and get some rest first."

Yan Xuehen did feel quite tired. When she heard that, she voiced her agreement. "You've also worked hard, so try to get some good rest as well."

After she said that, her cheeks heated up and she hurriedly added, "That's not what I meant. I was saying that you must be tired from your journey here."

Zu An couldn't help but smile, replying, "I didn't say anything, though! What are you thinking about?"

Yan Xuehen didn't even dare to look straight at him. She guiltily raised her dress and ran away.

When she left, Zu An put away his smile. After putting up several formations that isolated him from the outside world, he took out the Tai'e Sword and asked, "Big sis empress, are you there? I have something I want to ask."

"I told you to call me master," Mi Li said as a trace of red appeared. Her dignified and beautiful eyes were extremely enchanting.

As he watched Mi Li lie down, Zu An couldn't help but ask with a sigh of amazement, "Why do you always like this kind of sleeping posture?"

"It can't be helped. Whose fault is it that I'm in this soul form? I can only save as much energy as possible," Mi Li said as she lay down on the bed while supporting her head with one hand. The part of her wrist that was exposed gave off a gentle radiance.

Zu An said seriously, "We still need one final material to reconstruct a body for you. I'll definitely do my best to find it for you."

"I guess you have some conscience after all. But you should focus on saving those two little lovers first. In my situation, it won't really make too much of a difference if it happens a day earlier or a day later," Mi Li said, although a hint of a warm smile appeared on her face.

"Big sis heard our earlier conversation, right? Do you think Chuyan was brought away by that jadestone? Do you know the origins of that jadestone?" Zu An asked nervously. Among all the people he knew, the one with the most profound and deep knowledge was none other than Mi Li. For some reason, he subconsciously felt he could learn something from her.

When she heard what he said, Mi Li's expression grew serious. There was a bit of hesitation on her face, but in the end, she said, "I know that those two young women are very important to you... Whatever. I have some guesses regarding that jadestone, but many of my memories are in a sealed state. I need you to give me enough Rage points that I can unlock a portion and take a look."

Zu An had thought that she would talk in riddles again and hadn't expected her to say that, so he was really happy and surprised. He asked, "Rage points can undo the seal on your memories? How many do you need?"

Too many things had happened as of late, so he hadn't had time to pull the lottery. He had already collected 511,340 Rage points.

"Rage points are a form of soul power that is produced when the emotions of living creatures are most intense. They're a kind of power that's of an even higher order than the world's natural ki. Once you reach a higher level, you'll understand their true use," Mi Li replied. "I'm currently in soul form, so the accumulated Rage points are perfect for replenishing my power."

"Sure, but how do I give them to you?" Zu An asked in confusion.

"You just need to agree," Mi Li said, then suddenly closed her eyes.

Zu An immediately sensed his Rage points go to zero. He couldn't help but feel incredibly shocked. Even though the two of them had signed a soul contract and were already like one family after spending so much time together, he was still shocked when he saw that she could directly take the Rage points from his Keyboard System.

This woman is becoming more and more mysterious. She can actually even link up with the Keyboard System?

Just how does she do that?

"There's no need for you to feel shocked. You'll know in the future. All you need to know is that I won't harm you," Mi Li said; she clearly didn't seem as if she wanted to explain any further. "By the way, this amount of Rage points is far from enough. Remember that you still owe me a lot and that you need to pay it all back."

"Just how much do I owe you exactly?"

"I'll let you know once you've paid in full."

"..."

Still, since the information was related to saving Chuyan, Zu An didn't worry about that and said, "Hurry and tell me what's going on already."

Mi Li closed her eyes, seemingly thinking about something. A while later, she slowly opened her eyes and said, "Judging from the description of the jadestone from the White Jade Sect's people, if we connect that with the matter of Chu Chuyan's disappearance, that jadestone might be the legendary Nature Jade Plate."

"Nature Jade Plate?" Zu An repeated. He couldn't help but feel as if the name was a bit familiar, as if he had heard it before from his previous world's myths.

"The Nature Jade Plate is a treasure that has existed since the formation of primal chaos. It records the three thousand great dao and is rumored to have the mighty power to travel through time and change everything. There are many worlds that have legends surrounding its existence," Mi Li slowly said.

Zu An was stunned. So those things from legends were actually real!

"Of course, the Nature Jade Plate in the White Jade Sect's secret dungeon was definitely not a complete one. This world couldn't possibly bear the power of the Nature Jade Plate, let alone one trifling secret dungeon," Mi Li explained. "I believe that this should just be a small fragment of the real Nature Jade Plate."

"Since the Nature Jade Plate is so formidable, how could it have been destroyed?" Zu An asked with a frown. He just felt that such a thing was unimaginable.

"As for who destroyed such a primal chaos treasure, that's unknown. There's probably no one left in the universe who knows," Mi Li said, shaking her head.

"But that jadestone was fine for thousands of years. Chuyan was fine when she cultivated there in the past. Why did something happen this time?" Zu An couldn't help but ask.

"Did you forget that Chuyan obtained the Pure World Icelotus' intent from the daoist secret dungeon?" Mi Li replied, staring at him.

"Is there a problem?" Zu An asked. He'd had his suspicions that it was related to that, but there wasn't enough information to reach a conclusion.

"The Pure World Icelotus is an even higher-grade item than you think," Mi Li said. After some hesitation, she continued, "I'll explain it this way. Among the countless heavens and realms, countless beings have searched for the very root of the cosmos. There is one saying that when the primal chaos was formed, the entire universe was formed from a single lotus."

Zu An was shocked, asking, "Don't tell me it was none other than the so-called Pure World Icelotus?"

"It's not that exaggerated," Mi Li said with a smile. "But the Pure World Icelotus and the very first lotus from the formation of primal chaos have some connection. Additionally, the Nature Jade Plate is also an innate treasure of primal chaos, so the two could mutually resonate."

"That explains why the jadestone was fine for thousands of years, but once Chuyan obtained the Pure World Icelotus' intent, something ended up happening. It should be the case that the two treasures sensed each other's existence, which activated the Nature Jade Plate's functions. Even though it's just a fragment, it's not something that a secret dungeon can handle."

Zu An was worried, saying, "Even that secret dungeon was destroyed, so doesn't that mean that Chuyan is..."

"Right now, you aren't thinking straight because of your worry. Didn't you see the Snow Lady?" Mi Li replied, rolling her eyes. "It's clear that she activated the Nature Jade Plate to travel through spacetime and entered another timeline."

Zu An was now even more confused, asking, "There really is time travel in this world?"

All of the science education he received from his previous world had taught him that time was irreversible. Even in the world of cultivation where there were many miraculous things, he had never heard of anyone traveling through time.

"Even though the conditions are extremely strict, it is possible in a select few situations!" Mi Li replied, then seemed to have thought of something. Her eyes blossomed with a brilliant expression.

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Chapter 2103: Laws of Time and Space

Zu An was still really confused, asking, “Even so, if you traveled through spacetime, wouldn’t that mean that you could change history? There could be even more theoretical paradoxes. Wouldn’t this world collapse?”

“How can changing history be that easy? The natural laws within the river of time might be the ones that are the most mysterious and hardest to come into contact with. There are countless taboos associated with them. For example, if you even attempted to change the pieces of history that everyone is familiar with, no matter how powerful you were, you would still be erased by the laws of time,” Mi Li replied, seemingly enjoying his dumbfounded student-like appearance as she explained patiently. She continued, “Apart from the famous pieces of history, you can't change anything related to yourself either. If you create some chaos in time, you'll be eliminated by its laws.”

“You can’t even change things that happen to yourself?” Zu An asked with a frown.

“That’s right. The only reason you still exist is because of the things that happened to you in the past. If those things disappeared, the basis for your existence would be flawed. The laws of time would be in disorder, and it would attempt to erase you, the anomaly,” Mi Li explained. “Additionally, there's another ironclad rule in the laws of time. Two instances of you at the same point in time can't meet each other. Otherwise, the laws of time will erase the time traveler, and they might even erase both individuals.”

Zu An nodded. That wasn’t too hard to understand. If several versions of you appeared at the same time... Just the thought alone was scary. He remembered how even though Chuyan and the Snow Lady existed in the same timeline, they had been in different conditions, and had never met each other. That was how they had been able to avoid being eliminated by the laws of time.

“As for the world collapse you spoke of, there's no need for you to worry about that. Even though there are some unimaginable beings in the universe, almost none of them have the ability to travel through time, so they practically all rely on some special treasures to do so. Meanwhile, these treasures are all things

that have existed from before the formation of primal chaos, so they're all rare and precious," Mi Li added.

Zu An asked seriously, "But the stronger the being, the easier it is for them to collect those treasures, right? For example, the one that appeared after Dance Offering to the Universe. I refuse to believe anyone could seize those things before him."

Mi Li shook her head and said, "Treasures on that level aren't things that you can seize just by relying on power. What becomes most important is luck. Not only do people choose the treasure, the treasure chooses the person too. Only if you shared destiny with it would you have a chance to obtain it. If there was no karma between you, no matter how strong you are, that treasure wouldn't even appear, and you wouldn't be able to obtain it.

"For example, the White Jade Sect's Nature Jade Plate Fragment. There were so many seniors much more powerful than Chuyan who had examined it, and yet they'd gained nothing. But when Chuyan came into contact with it, it was activated, showing that she shared affinity with that treasure."

Zu An sighed and said, "I would much rather that she didn't have such an affinity."

"You can't think like that. This might seem like a disaster for her in your eyes, but if you look at it in terms of the future, it might be a tremendous opportunity for her. She might actually be thankful for this chance," Mi Li said with a gentle voice when she sensed his sullen mood.

Zu An couldn't help but give her a look, saying, "I didn't expect you to be someone who could comfort others." Still, her words did indeed improve his mood quite a bit.

When she saw his expression change, Mi Li grinned and replied, "I'm merely speaking the truth."

Zu An then asked, "But after the passage of countless years, there's no way those most powerful beings wouldn't have found even a single treasure of this type, right? As long as one of them found one, wouldn't it easily cause the collapse of a timeline?"

“There aren’t many treasures capable of crossing time to begin with, so it is normal for them to not find one. Also, even if they did find one, they wouldn’t be able to use it,” Mi Li replied.

“Why?” Zu An replied, stunned. He had never expected to hear that reply.

“That’s because they’re powerful, far too powerful.” Mi Li’s expression became grave as she continued, “They’re strong to the point where everything they say and do becomes history. They involve too many people and things, and the karma they bear is too great. If they crossed through time, they wouldn’t even be able to move quietly and would definitely cause the timeline to become largely chaotic, which would kill them as a result.”

Zu An nodded as if he finally understood a bit. He began to think to himself. A while later, he suddenly said, “If history is destined to be unchangeable, what meaning is there left in traveling through time?”

With a wave of Mi Li’s hand, a book-like object appeared in her hand. She asked, “What does this look like to you?”

Zu An gave it a look and said, “Those are the Meng Dynasty’s historical records.”

Mi Li flipped through the book while replying, “The Meng Dynasty didn’t exist for that long, but it did exist for over a century. Countless people and events emerged during that period, and there were millions upon millions of people under their rule, and yet all of it only resulted in this single history book of just a couple hundred thousand words. It records the lives of a few hundred people and various major events. Do you think this book can encompass everything that happened in the Meng Dynasty?”

“Of course not!” Zu An replied, stunned. He slowly added, “You’re saying that...”

“That’s right,” Mi Li said with a nod. “The so-called history books are only able to record some major events. Furthermore, even these major events often only record some karma. There are many parts of the process that are unclear. Just like the boundless cosmos, the things that are recorded are like the shining stars in the sky. The things that aren’t recorded are like the remaining dark void. Do you think there are more shining stars, or more dark void?”

“Dark void, of course.” A smile appeared on Zu An’s face. He now more or less understood what Mi Li was saying.

Mi Li nodded in gratification, saying, “The reason why those beings that are too powerful can’t travel through spacetime is because they are those stars themselves. They can’t hide themselves even if they want to, but you’re different. As long as you’re careful not to touch those stars, the dark void has many areas where you can do what you wish.”

“Got it,” Zu An said as he gave her a grateful look. “Why do you know so much? Have you traveled through time before too?”

A hint of a reminiscent expression appeared on Mi Li’s face. She said, “These aren’t things that I experienced myself, but rather things that someone told me before.”

“Who told you? Qin Shihuang?” Zu An reflexively asked.

“Him?” Mi Li shook her head. A hint of contempt appeared in her eyes.

Zu An began to doubt more and more whether she really was the empress of Qin Shihuang. Or perhaps that empress role was nothing more than one of the positions she had occupied in the past?

He suddenly thought of something and asked somewhat nervously, “Are you not scared that you might be discovered by someone by leaking these secrets?”

She was always talking to him in riddles as if she was scared of something in the void finding out, and yet she’d ended up saying so much in order to help him save Chuyan.

Mi Li smiled and said, “I guess you at least have a bit of a conscience, but that’s not something you need to worry about. What else do you think I wanted so much Rage points from you for? It was naturally to conceal some mysteries of fate.”

“Then in the future, I’ll earn more Rage points for you. You can tell me more secrets then,” Zu An immediately said.

Mi Li rolled her eyes. “How can it be that simple? Some of the things I told you about just now are also secrets, but once you reach a certain level in the

cosmos, you'd find out anyway. They don't involve any specific powerful being either, so they aren't too taboo. But if I spoke about some of the things you wish to know, certain powerful beings would sense it. Then, that would bring about complete destruction."

If it were in the past, Zu An would still be a bit suspicious, but he had just seen Shop 58 and the even more powerful being summoned by Dance Offering to the Universe, so he believed her. There were indeed some beings that, as long as you mention them, they would immediately sense it and appear.

"Then what do I need to do to save Chuyan from now on?" Zu An couldn't help but ask. Even though Qiu Honglei was in danger as well, he could still sort of understand her current condition and could find some way to heal her. But Chuyan's situation really was too tricky.

"There are two methods. The first is to wait for what Chuyan said before. As long as the Great Snowy Mountain doesn't disappear, she'll always exist. After thousands or perhaps tens of thousands of years, the Great Snowy Mountain will recreate her body," Mi Li replied.

"What about the other way?" Zu An asked, furrowing his brows. That method was impossible. Forget about the question of whether he would even be able to live that long, even if he could, how could he let her spend all that time all by herself?

"The other method," Mi Li paused for a moment, but still continued in the end, "is that whoever starts the trouble should end it. Since she was transported away by the Nature Jade Plate through spacetime, you need to find a Nature Jade Plate and follow her path, to see if there's any way to reverse this process."

"But the Nature Jade Plate has already been brought away by Chuyan!" Zu An replied, starting to panic. He had learned from the elders that their jadestone had already disappeared without a trace.

"Didn't I tell you before that their piece is only a very small and insignificant fragment of the Nature Jade Plate? When the Nature Jade Plate shattered in the past, countless fragments were scattered across the universe. It's entirely possible for you to find another fragment."

Mi Li was a bit worried. There were some things that she didn't say directly. Even though there were many Nature Jade Plate Fragments, how vast was

the universe? If one wanted to find a piece... Even fishing a needle from the ocean was child's play compared to that.

However, Zu An's eyes lit up and he said, "At least there is a direction to work toward!"

After all, he had been at his wit's end regarding how to save Chuyan, but now, even though it was hard, he knew where to put his efforts. That made it go from impossible to possible!

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Chapter 2104: Immortal Medicine

"By the way, what exactly is that 'realms across the universe, worlds within the heavens' thing you always talk about? Are there still many other worlds?" Zu An suddenly asked.

"The universe is extremely vast with countless civilizations. Those civilizations often attempt to surmise what the universe is really like, but they haven't been able to reach an answer even now," Mi Li explained with a respectful expression. "Even so, there are some common beliefs that have received the recognition of many people. Some believe that there is only one universe, but there are many parallel universes. There is a version of you in every single one of them, but because of various factors and events, your fate also becomes different in each one.

"Another viewpoint suggests that the universes are all different, and every single one is like a bubble. There is an immeasurable distance between each bubble, and a vast amount of void matter in between. Indescribably powerful void monsters divide these universes, making it impossible for them to converse with each other. These barriers are really difficult to break down."

Zu An nodded to himself. The science of his previous world also had a lot of theories regarding this topic.

Mi Li continued, "But the more mainstream viewpoint is that there is a world tree in the void, and this tree is large beyond imagination. It is limitless in size, with every main branch representing time, and every other branch

representing different directions of the world. Every leaf represents a world or universe.”

“A tree?” Zu An repeated, now completely shocked. He had never expected the universe to be patterned after a tree! If every single universe was on top of that tree, just how big would it be?

“That’s right. Almost all of the universe’s civilizations have records of an ancient tree. People of later worlds eventually discovered these records and wondered if the entire universe was on this giant tree. That was how this explanation recieved more and more acknowledgment,” Mi Li replied.

Zu An was really moved. There seemed to be many civilizations in the past that had never communicated with each other, and yet they all had a great tree in their legends. For example, there was the Yggdrasil of Scandinavia, the World Tree of Persian mythology, and Rabbinical Judaism’s Kabbalah tree of life; even Chinese culture’s ancient mythology had the Jianmu, a tree that served as a stairway connecting the mortal world to the heavens above, the mythological Fusang tree, and others. But it really was still a bit hard to imagine for the entire universe to be on a single tree.

“Didn’t I mention to you previously that the first appearance of primal chaos in the universe might have been from a lotus? To a certain extent, that’s similar to a tree as well,” Mi Li continued. “But in the past, there was someone who told me that the so-called World Tree wasn’t actually a single one, but rather two.”

“Two?” Zu An’s eyes widened. Just one tree like that was already unimaginable.

“That’s right. That person deduced this from some phenomena. For example, the silicon-based binary digits 0 and 1, carbon-based DNA’s double stranded helix, the yin and yang of cultivation... Almost all civilizations and universes are connected to the number two. That was why he suspected that the world tree might actually be two trees.”

“It is a logical deduction,” Zu An said with a nod. He was now really amazed by Mi Li’s knowledge. At first, as a transmigrator, he’d felt a sense of superiority in terms of knowledge, but now, he learned that there were many beings across the cosmos who knew about the existence of science. He didn’t dare to look down on them anymore.

Blindly believing in science was also a kind of superstitious belief in itself. After all, the world was too large, and the understanding of science was actually just a drop in the ocean. The different civilizations all used their own ways to understand and research the principles of the universe. All that meant was that the appearance of the method was different, but in reality, they were all different routes to the same destination.

“It seems you respect that person a lot, right?” Zu An couldn't help but ask when he noticed Mi Li's expression each time he saw her mention this person.

Mi Li gave him a deep look and said, “He is indeed worthy of my respect, as well as the most important person in my life.”

Zu An asked to test the waters, “Then how should I address him? Martial father or martial ancestor?”

“You can give up on trying to find out my relationship with him. Once you reach that level, you'll naturally understand.” Mi Li immediately saw through his tricks.

Zu An chuckled in embarrassment. He could only change the topic and asked, “Apart from the science and technology-biased, silicon-based life-biased, and cultivation path-biased, are there any other similar civilizations?”

“Of course. There are magic-biased, mystery-biased, supernatural-biased, card-biased, beast taming-biased... There are countless types of civilizations,” Mi Li replied.

“Which type is stronger?” Zu An quickly asked.

A smile flashed across Mi Li's face. She said, “I asked this question in the past too. Who would have thought that you would ask the same thing? Let me explain it like this. The way each civilization uses its power has its own respective advantages and disadvantages. There is no strongest civilization, only the strongest individuals.”

Zu An had a pensive expression.

That's true. It's just like the various factions in the world of cultivation. Who can say for certain that their cultivation is really the strongest? In the end, it's dependent on the cultivator.

For example, Zhao Han had been faster than his peers using the same cultivation techniques, and he had been stronger than others as well.

"Then how do I go to these different worlds?" Zu An asked.

Mi Li nodded slightly in approval. Zu An hadn't lost himself in this overwhelming amount of information, and instead quickly focused on the most important point. She said, "There are several ways, but the simplest one is for you to become strong enough yourself, and shatter the void to open up a spatial path into another world. Or, you can travel through the void using your physical body."

"The simplest method? I feel as if you're mocking me," Zu An replied. He naturally couldn't open up a spatial path. Even so, with his current strength, his flesh could just barely enter the void. But without knowing the position of the other worlds and with how far they were, he definitely wouldn't be able to last for very long in outer space.

"I'm not mocking you. That's just how things are," Mi Li said, chuckling. "Another way is to borrow space shuttles, spaceships, and other transportation devices, but this world is a bit special. There are no space travel routes here, so there's no way of finding such means of transportation."

"What do you mean, special?" Zu An asked, keenly identifying the main point she was talking about.

"It's special in every way," Mi Li said seriously. "Ever since I awakened some of my memories, I've been secretly observing this world. Normally, with the degree of advancement of this world, it should have already made contact with other civilizations a long time ago. But judging from their history, it seems the only instance of contact was several thousand years ago when those monsters invaded, and recently. Apart from those instances, this world hasn't interacted with other civilizations at all. It's almost as if this world was blocked off by some being."

"Apart from that, there's a problem with the upper limits of power of this world. I've seen many extraordinary geniuses whose strength shouldn't only have been at the level they are at, and yet their cultivation ranks were much lower than equivalent geniuses in other worlds."

Zu An was startled. Even the incredible Zhao Han had been stuck at the peak of earth immortal for many years, unable to make any progress at all. He was

now the same as well. He was supposed to have already made a breakthrough through the power he absorbed from several powerful beings. He asked, "That seems to be because the source of this world isn't strong enough, right?"

"But that's where the issue lies. Normally, the source of a world like this shouldn't be weak at all," Mi Li said with a frown. "Your world seems to have secret dungeons all over the place, and those secret dungeons are all connected to some special places. That shouldn't be something a weak world should contain at all."

Zu An also couldn't help but smile, saying, "Now that we're on the topic, I met you in one of those secret dungeons too."

When she remembered how they first met, Mi Li's face suddenly became a bit red for some reason. She quickly changed the topic. "So, this world is definitely hiding some secret. Right, I recall you mentioning that you were searching for the secret manuals of the twelve Unknown Regions?"

Zu An nodded and said, "That's right, and I barely survived every experience. But I don't have any information on the remaining Unknown Regions, and don't know where to look for them at all."

"As the regent of both the humans and fiends, the resources at your disposal have actually already exceeded those of the late Zhao Han or Fiend Emperor. You can use these resources to carefully search for clues," Mi Li said. "If you can gather all twelve Unknown Regions' skills, you'll probably be able to unlock the secrets of this world. The benefits you will receive will definitely be great."

Zu An shook his head and said, "Compared to those unknown regions that are so mysterious, I'm currently more interested in saving Chuyan and Honglei's lives."

When she saw the firmness of his expression, Mi Li was a bit hesitant. In the end, she could only say, "Chuyan's current state might only be reversible if we find another piece of the Nature Jade Plate. As for Honglei, I did think of some ways to save her."

"What ways?" Zu An asked as he grabbed her hand excitedly.

Mi Li glanced at his hand, and then continued, "There are a handful of immortal medicines across the realms, and every single one can bring one back from the brink of death. However, every single one is protected by an extremely powerful individual. Obtaining one is extremely difficult."

"Immortal medicines?" Zu An asked with a frown. "I recall that there were rumors regarding immortal medicines in the secret dungeons I went to in the past. Back then, an honest and sincere deity was almost killed by a deity named Wei. Then, in order to save him, the Celestial Emperor had him eat an immortal medicine, but even though he was revived, he became the Yayu monster."

He definitely didn't want Honglei to become something like that!

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Chapter 2105: Ocean Races

"I don't know what went wrong with that immortal medicine. Maybe someone did something to the immortal medicine the Yayu ate, or maybe the immortal medicine they spoke of isn't the same immortal medicine I was talking about," Mi Li said; she naturally knew about Zu An's experiences in the secret dungeon. It had been different when her memories were sealed, but now that a portion was unlocked, she immediately realized that something wasn't right.

"But would the immortal medicine given by the Celestial Emperor really have problems?" Zu An asked in surprise.

"I don't know about that, but I actually don't have any memories of that Celestial Emperor either," Mi Li replied. "The immortal medicines I'm talking about are the ultimate treasures countless powerful beings in the universe are searching for, with every single piece being completely unique. Every single one can bring one back from the brink of death. However, their most famous use isn't that effect, but rather to grant the most powerful experts a secret chance to redo things again."

"Redo things?"

"That's right. Even though those powerful beings throughout the universe are really strong and can live for a really long time, their lives are limited, just like

Zhao Han in this world. They also experience conditions similar to heaven and man deterioration, but of course, other civilizations have different ways of referring to that process,” Mi Li patiently explained. “Those powerful beings all have endless karma associated with them, and almost all of them have seized the natural luck and blessings of heaven and earth around themselves. Every single individual who has become this powerful has gone against the heavens, so they naturally receive the backlash of the will of the world as a result. As their age increases, there are more and more karmic consequences. The will of the world rejects them more and more, until they finally hit a critical point at which they head toward complete destruction.

“But if they can obtain an immortal medicine, everything changes. Such immortal medicines can allow these heaven-defying beings to ‘fool’ the will of the world. The will of the world can be convinced that they have already been eliminated and will stop targeting them. Thus, they can start a new life.”

Mi Li paused for a moment, then continued, “These beings retain their intelligence, wisdom, battle experiences, techniques, and other such things. It’s easy to see how much more terrifying they can become if they start over again.”

“These immortal medicines really do seem incredible,” Zu An said. He thought to himself that the reason traveling to a different world was such an absurd concept was because one would have an additional world’s worth of life experiences, so one would have all sorts of advantages against the natives of that world. If those powerful beings across the cosmos were allowed to redo their lives, they would definitely have an even greater advantage than transmigrators.

“That’s indeed the case. That’s why every single immortal medicine is something that the various factions fight over. Whenever one appears, it results in great carnage across many universes.” Mi Li sighed, as if she had recalled some unhappy memories. “Of course, these immortal medicines often have their own sentience. Just like some of those treasures from the very beginning of primal chaos, they also choose their owners.”

“What kind of standard do they use to choose their owners?” Zu An immediately asked.

“If we look throughout history, every owner of these immortal medicines has been the strongest across the universe’s worlds, the type that dominated an entire era,” Mi Li replied.

Zu An was speechless. He exclaimed, "Then like hell I'll still try to compete against them!"

Even though he was already unrivaled in this world, after fighting against the monsters, he'd realized that there were still many beings stronger than him across the universe. He now knew that this world was one of the weaker ones to begin with. Compared to the other worlds across the universe, their bit of cultivation wasn't much at all.

"What those immortal medicines care about isn't only absolute strength, but also potential," Mi Li said, giving him a deep look. "From the first moment I saw you, when you were beaten like a dog and yet wouldn't submit, and then you eventually... eventually even defeated me, I knew that you had the heart of the strong, that you would definitely become someone extremely powerful in the future. Now, I've stayed at your side over the years. I've seen you defeat enemies far stronger than you, which only further proved my initial prediction."

"I really love listening to big sis talk; please don't stop." Zu An moved closer to her with a mischievous expression.

She smells really good! I wonder just how her body can still give off such a good smell despite being in a soul form?

"Get lost!" Mi Li rolled her eyes. She moved backward a bit before continuing, "That's why you still have a chance of being chosen by a piece of immortal medicine."

Zu An put away his smile and asked seriously, "Just how many pieces of immortal medicine are there in the world?"

"Roughly a few dozen. As for how many there are exactly, it's hard to say," Mi Li replied.

"That many?" Zu An asked in surprise. He'd thought that since these medicines were all unique, there would only be a few of them.

"Many?" Mi Li sneered while pointing at the night sky. "Do you know how many worlds there are across the cosmos? More than the grains of sand in the ocean! Even if we grouped many worlds that are closer to each other as one world layer, there would be millions and millions of world layers. With so

many worlds, do you still feel as if a few dozen immortal medicines are 'many'?"

Now, Zu An was really stunned. He asked, "There are that many worlds?" This was the first time he had realized the scope of the outside world.

Mi Li suddenly sighed. A hint of loneliness appeared in her eyes as she said, "Unfortunately, most worlds have already been destroyed. Even so, the remaining worlds still make up an astronomical number."

"Who destroyed them?" Zu An asked, stunned. There were so many worlds, and yet more than half of them had already been destroyed?

Mi Li shook her head and said, "I can't tell you that, or else it will bring a disaster unto this world. It would be a calamity far greater than the monsters you just faced."

After hearing her speak in such a serious manner, Zu An couldn't continue to press the issue. He didn't think that she would joke around on this topic. There were many beings that were indeed powerful enough to the point that, if they were mentioned even in the most remote of corners, they could still sense it, and unleash their power in retaliation.

"As for the immortal medicines we were talking about, just what kind should I look for? There has to be some direction to work toward, right?" Zu An asked, knowing that Mi Li wouldn't speak thoughtlessly. Since she had mentioned them, there was definitely a purpose for that.

Sure enough, a bit of praise appeared in Mi Li's expression. She said, "The immortal medicines across the worlds are too mysterious, and I myself only know around ten or so. If I think about it, the Divine Dragon Immortal Medicine might be something you have a chance to obtain."

"Divine Dragon Immortal Medicine?" Zu An repeated, making sure to remember the name well. "Why is that? This is the first time I've heard of this name."

"The Divine Dragon Immortal Medicine, as the name implies, is related to the Dragon race. It would definitely be born in a world with the Dragon race, and this world just happens to have a Dragon race," Mi Li replied.

Zu An was a bit stunned. The Dragon race? This world's Dragon race ruled the Ocean races. He had even killed a giant Gold Dragon, which summoned the Dragon King himself as a result. It seemed as if the Dragon King had withdrawn because of Shang Liuyu, and the matter was left at that.

"Then I need to pay the Ocean races a trip," Zu An said as he stood up, his eyes full of excitement. With his friendship with Shang Liuyu, as well as his status among the humans and fiends, it was now much easier for him to do anything compared to others.

However, Mi Li dumped cold water straight on his enthusiasm and said, "It's still too early for you to feel happy. Even though the Divine Dragon Immortal Medicine must be born in worlds with a Dragon race, not every world with a Dragon race will have a Divine Dragon Immortal Medicine. Who knows how many Dragon races there are across the worlds? And the one here is just one of many, and one of the weaker ones at that."

Zu An replied seriously, "But didn't you say that our world is really special? It might just have a chance of producing an immortal medicine. Even if there isn't one, there's a chance of them having some clues regarding immortal medicines too."

Mi Li was a bit surprised. She nodded in praise, saying, "You shift gears quickly. That was exactly what I planned to tell you to make you feel better. That's right, this world is indeed special, and not even I can figure it out. You might really be able to gain things that you never expected to find."

"In that case, let's leave right now," Zu An said as he got up and walked out of the room. Now that he had some clues in saving Honglei, he didn't want to waste any time.

Mi Li had a grateful expression.

Even though he is a skirt-chaser, he does treat every woman around him with all of his sincerity.

...

Meanwhile, in the human capital, inside the empress dowager's personal palace, the two brothers Imperial Uncle Liu Guang and Liu Yao were looking at the beautiful woman in the seat of honor with a confused expression. They

asked, “What is the reason for the empress dowager calling us into the palace so urgently?”

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Chapter 2106: Ominous Developments

The stench of alcohol coming from the two’s bodies could be smelled from far away. It was obvious that they had just arrived from a feast. It now made sense why it had taken them so long to arrive even though they were summoned a while back.

The empress Liu Ning tried to suppress her rage as she asked, “Could it be that you two still have no idea what happened today?”

Even though these two were her seniors, she had been the empress, and was now empress dowager. Rulers and ministers were separated, so she didn’t need to show too much politeness in her speech.

“Wasn’t it just some blind ministers who wrote a letter criticizing the empress dowager? Don’t worry, we’ll find some subordinates to impeach those ministers for offending their superiors,” Liu Yao said with an unperturbed smile.

“Wake up already!” Liu Ning finally couldn’t suppress her rage and stood up, saying, “This entire time, there have been rumors going around the capital, saying that the volunteer army we sent to assist the Fiend races was completely wiped out by the Fiend races. More importantly, we indeed can’t contact the troops on the front lines. They’re using this pretext to attack me, and yet you two are treating it as just a small matter?”

Just then, Liu Guang also spoke up. “Ning’er, now that we’re talking about this matter, I didn’t agree to it when it was first brought up either, remember? You really dote on that Zu guy too much. You’re a glorious empress dowager, and yet you listen to him on everything. At this point, just who is the one ruling over this Great Zhou Dynasty?”

When she heard what he said, Liu Ning’s face darkened. She retorted, “Would you dare speak those words in front of his face?”

Liu Guang choked. He remembered what had happened to the Meng clan and definitely didn't want to repeat that disaster.

Liu Yao tried to smooth things over and asked, "Ning'er, why are you siding with outsiders? Sure, that Zu guy is strong, but he isn't one of us. There are many matters in which we can't completely trust him. Sigh, I even said earlier that we should have found a young lady of appropriate age for him to marry, but you just didn't agree to it."

Liu Guang gave him an annoyed look and said, "You make it sound so easy. His previous wife Chu Chuyan was famous for her beauty far and wide, rivaling even that of Yu Yanluo in the past. Does our Liu clan have any women like that available for marriage? Better to not fail a marriage and end up offending him anyway."

Liu Yao chuckled in embarrassment, saying, "It's a pity that Ning'er has already married and her status is now special. Otherwise, she'd be more than enough for that guy."

"Shut up!" Liu Guang glared at his younger brother. Was that something one could just say so carelessly?

Ning'er is now the empress dowager, so how could we have her be with that Zu bastard?

"Enough! We'll leave this matter be for now," Liu Ning said, her face red.

There's no need for you two to worry about that. I've already completed that mission.

Just then, Liu Guang said, "Actually, it's not so bad that we didn't have him marry into our family earlier. Look, the Fiend races ambushed our reinforcement army in public! This is a disaster that will definitely create an unsolvable grudge between our two sides. That Zu guy is the Fiend races' regent, and he was the one who strongly advocated for the reinforcement army, so there's no way for him to escape responsibility in this matter. He'll likely become the human race's greatest traitor in history. Then, once his reputation is swept away, it'll be a good chance for us to cut off our ties with him."

Liu Ning's phoenix-decorated eyes swept over them as she retorted, "Could it be that you all don't fully understand the situation? This is something I also

agreed to in the past. In the eyes of others, it was something that both the regent and I put into effect. Otherwise, why would the ministers publicly accuse me of misconduct?!"

"That's why we need to cut our ties with that Zu guy using this opportunity!" Liu Yao replied. "Then, I'll instruct our people to speak up against him and push all of the responsibility onto him and say that empress dowager was deceived. Then, no one will put any of the responsibility onto our Liu clan."

Liu Ning was shocked. She said, "Who says we have to cut ties with the regent? Did you two already forget just how terrifying the regent's cultivation is? What matter can't he take care of?"

She couldn't really talk about her real relationship with Zu An and could only bring out these more 'reasonable' excuses.

"No matter how high his cultivation is, he can't take the entire human race as his enemy, right?" Liu Guang said skeptically. "Besides, according to the recent intelligence, he seems to have ran into the Fiend races' sealed land. The sealed land is a place anyone would most likely die in. He still hasn't returned despite entering for so long, so I reckon he's probably already kicked the bucket."

"That's impossible! He's definitely safe and sound!" Liu Ning immediately stood up and shouted.

Liu Guang and Liu Yao were both shocked. They looked at her in confusion.

Liu Ning knew that she had forgotten her manners and quickly said, "With the strength the regent displayed previously, even if he were to experience anything dangerous, he would still be able to handle it. I think it's best if you two don't place your bets too early, or else you might end up offending him and lose any chances of redeeming yourselves."

"What else can we do then? Don't tell me we should just let those people denounce our Liu clan for our decision-making?" Liu Yao asked, starting to become a bit dissatisfied. Ever since they first met in Brightmoon City, he had never liked that Zu An brat. That kid had ended up climbing above him in just a few short years, which was something he found ridiculous.

"We'll just deal with things as they arise. Don't tell me that you two think we have something to fear in our current situation?" Liu Ning replied seriously.

"The situation on the front lines is unclear, so we shouldn't make any rash decisions."

When they saw how firm she was with her decision, Liu Guang and Liu Yao exchanged a look. They couldn't continue to press the issue. "Then we'll do things as you say for now."

Liu Ning continued, "Things seem to be heading in an ominous direction. For some reason, I just feel as if something is about to happen, so you all need to be more vigilant. Father, get in touch with the Liu clan's trusted aides to investigate the court's movements. Uncle, you need to assign more patrols around the capital. As soon as there's any sign of military movements, you need to contact me immediately."

"Alright," the two agreed. After discussing some other matters, they then left the Imperial Palace.

...

When they left, Eunuch Lu walked in and said, "The two elders seem to be unhappy with the regent. Should we give them some hints regarding your highness and the regent's relationship?"

"There's no need for that." A hint of fatigue appeared on Liu Ning's face. She said, "They can be unhappy if they want to be, but it won't affect the regent in the slightest. "By the way, is there any progress on the things I had you investigate earlier?"

"This servant already had our spies among the Fiend races look into information on the regent, but currently, we've only learned that he entered the sealed land. There's no information on him coming out yet," Eunuch Lu replied with a bow.

Liu Ning was really worried, asking, "Do you think that something might have really happened to the regent?"

Eunuch Lu bowed, saying, "Your highness is currently not in the right state of mind from excessive worry. The regent's skills are unparalleled. Even if all of the Fiend races' soldiers have perished, the regent will definitely return safely."

Liu Ning clearly sighed in relief when she heard his reply, saying, "I hope that's the case."

...

Meanwhile, when the two Liu clan elders left the palace, Liu Yao couldn't help but say to Liu Guang, "Big bro, Ning'er seems to really trust that Zu guy. Don't tell me she ended up falling for him or something?"

Liu Guang harrumphed. "That Zu guy is pretty handsome, and he's young. Ning'er was neglected in the palace alone for so long, so it wouldn't be too surprising for her to like him. But as the empress dowager, she should understand what she should and shouldn't do."

Liu Guang's unhappiness was understandable, as ever since Zu An had risen up to authority, he had never paid the Liu clan a respectful visit, which clearly meant that he was looking down on them.

We're not even that close to each other, so why do we have to be blamed together with him?

"You have a point. Ever since she was little, Ning'er was quite sensible. She'd definitely be able to prioritize what's more important," Liu Yao said with a smile.

"By the way, what Ning'er was worried about just now doesn't make sense. Make sure to pay more attention to this matter. To my understanding, neither the Bi clan nor that brat King Wu are the sort to be content with doing nothing," Liu Guang reminded before they separated.

"I got it, big bro," Liu Yao replied immediately, but in his head, he thought he would just assign some of his people to pay attention to the matter and it would be enough. As for himself, there was no way he would actually look into it personally. The capital was a place full of sensual pleasures to enjoy. He hadn't managed to get to his current position easily, so if he still had to do everything himself, wouldn't that mean he had worked so hard in the past for nothing?

...

Meanwhile, in the White Jade Sect...

Yan Xuehen sat in her room in meditation. Even though she had been saved by Zu An earlier today, she still needed to patiently adjust her body's condition. She digested the treatment she'd received today while secretly thinking to herself that Zu An's way of saving her really was a bit too embarrassing. All kinds of memories from back then appeared in her mind. The aura inside her body immediately became chaotic, giving her a fright. She immediately focused her attention again.

Just then, someone outside knocked on her door. Zu An called out, "Xuehen..."

Yan Xuehen's cheeks immediately burned bright red. She quickly said, "I'll do what I promised you, but not today! I... I already can't take any more."

Zu An was speechless. He eventually said, "I actually came just to say goodbye."

"Huh?" Yan Xuehen was so embarrassed she almost slammed her head into the floorboards beneath her.

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Chapter 2107: Bitterness of Yearning

"Where are you going?" Yan Xuehen asked, quickly opening the door. Even though they had already been apart for some time, she still felt her cheeks heat up.

What in the world am I thinking?!

When he saw Yan Xuehen's embarrassed behavior, Zu An felt a bit of appreciation. The feeling of making a frozen goddess fall down into the world of mortals really was enchanting. He said, "I'm making a trip to the Ocean races' territory to see if there's any information on the Divine Dragon Immortal Medicine there..." He then explained what the immortal medicine was.

Yan Xuehen clicked her tongue in wonder, asking, "There's actually a medicine that miraculous in this world? Then wouldn't that mean there's a chance to save Chuyan?"

Zu An's face darkened as he said, "Chuyan's situation is a bit special. I might need to find something called a Nature Jade Plate in order to help her."

"Nature Jade Plate?" Yan Xuehen repeated, stunned. She'd thought that she was someone with a lot of knowledge and experience, but whether it was the immortal medicine or the Nature Jade Plate, they were both things she had never heard of before.

Zu An was worried that he would end up attracting the attention of some mysterious beings, so he didn't dare to talk about it in too much detail. He roughly explained that the Nature Jade Plate was an incredible treasure that would allow one to travel through spacetime.

Yan Xuehen's expression became serious. She said, "I won't tell anyone else about this, and you need to be more careful as well. If news about this kind of treasure leaked out, it would easily cause a murderous calamity throughout the world. It could even be a threat to you."

Zu An held her hands, saying, "You're different from other people. What do I need to hide from you?"

At first, Yan Xuehen reflexively wanted to pull her hands back, but when she heard his gentle words, she immediately felt warm inside. She was full of gratitude and couldn't bear to pull back. Instead, she said, "Then you need to be careful. The Ocean races' territory has always been a mysterious place, and there are legends of many powerful creatures coming from that place. My injuries still need some time to heal, but once I fully recover, I'll wander the world to help you in the search for the Nature Jade Plate."

When she found out that Zu An was going to save Qiu Honglei first, she didn't have a strong negative reaction. After all, Chuyan's condition was too unique, and the Nature Jade Plate seemed nearly impossible to find. It was something that would completely depend on luck. Zu An could very well just happen to find out more information about the Nature Jade Plate from the Ocean races.

Zu An nodded and said, "I'm leaving."

When she saw the reluctance in his expression, Yan Xuehen felt really bad. The two had just reunited after so long and hadn't even spent a whole day together before they had to separate again. Filled with all kinds of emotions, she took the initiative to jump into his arms and hug him tightly.

Zu An was a bit surprised. Yan Xuehen had always had a cold personality. Aside from when they were in bed, where she would passionately hold onto his waist, she rarely initiated anything.

The two hugged each other tightly. All words seemed lackluster in comparison to the emotions they were feeling. The two of them enjoyed this final bit of shared time before the unavoidable, overwhelming sadness of parting.

In the end, Zu An still left. As she watched his figure disappear into the night sky, Yan Xuehen's eyes unwittingly became a bit wet. She touched the tears on her cheeks and was a bit absent-minded. She was now feeling such strong emotions, but why didn't she experience cultivation deviation again?

...

Zu An flew into the night sky. His natural flight speed was now a bit faster than when he used the Wind Fire Wheels. But as he flew east toward the great sea, he still rode on the Wind Fire Wheels for the sake of preserving his stamina. This world was far larger than his previous one, and the ocean was also larger. There were many areas that the human race still hadn't explored. Meanwhile, the eastern ocean was where the Ocean races were located.

Along the way, he took out the Recording Mirror and tried to call Shang Liuyu. She was the mermaid princess, someone with great status in the Ocean races. With her serving as an intermediary, many things would become much easier to deal with. Unfortunately, the screen's ripples scattered and didn't show her face. It only continued to swirl in circles.

Zu An was now good at artifact refinement and immediately realized that it wasn't because he couldn't contact her, but rather because the signal between the recording mirrors had a problem.

It seemed that, due to the continuous invasion of the alien monsters, as well as the attempts to destroy this world's natural barrier, and then the summoning of that powerful being from Dance Offering to the Universe, it had ended up affecting some of this world's natural laws. That was why some issues occurred between the recording mirror transmissions. It was like his previous world's solar windstorms, earthquakes, and tsunamis that affected the earth's magnetic fields, which could also affect communication across the world. Similar things probably happened in this world. The question was how long it would take before things completely recovered. It could take a week to a month at minimum, or even dozens of years in the worst case.

Zu An helplessly put the recording mirror away, then took out the communication jade strip he made himself. Sure enough, it didn't work either. However, after thinking for a bit, he still selected Yun Jianyue's portrait. Once he did so, he saw a large mass of information arrive.

It turned out that because so many things had happened, he hadn't even gotten a chance to check his messages. Of course, that was also related to the jade strip being a bit unreliable. Many messages didn't arrive promptly, so their arrival time was always unpredictable.

"Ah Zu, I've already used every method the Holy Sect has to gather intelligence, but I still didn't find any trace of Qiu Honglei."

"Do you think that she might have been unable to get over what happened and already... It's all my fault. I shouldn't have done that with you behind her back!"

Zu An could sense her sorrow and grief even through the jade strip. The following message was clearly sent a few days later.

"No, Honglei was someone I personally raised; I know what kind of personality she has. There's no way she would do something so weak-willed."

"Haha, I just received an update from the northwest! It seems someone saw an individual resembling Honglei pass by their territory. I was just about to say! There's no way Honglei would be so weak."

"Hmph, I was wrong in my word choice last time. It wasn't just my fault last time; you have even more responsibility! It's all your fault for seducing me!"

"Tell me honestly, are you actually a male fox spirit from the Fiend races?"

"I'm not at the Lake of Hatred anymore. I went to... Forget it, I won't tell you. We might just end up meeting each other."

"Playboy, I sent you so many messages but you never responded to me! Are you fooling around with some other woman right now?!"

Zu An couldn't help but smile when he read these messages. Yun Jianyue was definitely really happy after receiving news about Honglei. Even her tone had become much more relaxed. But shortly after, his expression darkened.

He wondered just how broken-hearted Yun Jianyue would become once she found out what kind of condition Qiu Honglei was currently in.

After some hesitation, he recorded some messages into the jade strip, telling her that he had already met Honglei, so she didn't need to look for her anymore. As for the exact details, he would tell her in person. He was worried that Yun Jianyue would do something stupid if she found out the truth, so he decided to wait to tell her in person. Still, he wondered if these messages would even reach her.

Once he exited Yun Jianyue's chatbox, he suddenly discovered that his other sweethearts had also left a large number of notifications. There were many more unread messages.

Bi Linglong had sent him a lot of messages. At first, she had only shared some official matters and various news from the capital. Zu An could imagine how serious and careful she was when she wrote all of that. It seemed she had been worried that someone else would see what she wrote and find out their relationship, so everything was written in an overly cautious way. But by the time he read up to the middle of the messages, he could tell that she was starting to loosen up.

"Did you see my messages or not? Why haven't you replied to me all this time?"

Looking at the date the messages were received, she hadn't sent any more messages for many days. She was clearly angry. The next message came only five days later.

"Sorry, I was wrong for blaming you. I visited Mount Yuquan and heard Shen Xuizi say that the messages from the jade strips aren't reliable. You might not have seen the messages yet."

Zu An couldn't help but smile.

She really is a little witch. She was worried that I tricked her, and she even went all the way to the academy's rear mountain to seek confirmation.

But after that brief episode of hers, her tone was no longer as estranged as before. Instead, she began to show more of her true emotions.

“The peach blossoms in the palace have all blossomed; when are you coming back? We should go and admire them together.”

“This stupid jade strip! Why have I still not received your messages?”

“It’s so boring being in the palace all alone... Not only do I have to fight all day against that old granny empress dowager, the people back home aren’t helping either. They seem to have secretly... Forget it. I’ll tell you about it when you’re back.”

“You probably reunited with Madam Yu in the Fiend races’ territory, right? Did you forget about home while enjoying her tender hospitality? Hmph, but I guess big sister Yu is pretty. If I were a man, perhaps i would just fall in love with her too.”

“I heard that the Second Empress was really beautiful. How pretty is she compared to me?”

“Hmph, the Second Empress is known for being flirtatious. You’d better not fall for her beauty traps.”

“I’m feeling really uneasy after not receiving any messages from you, you know? A few days ago, I even spent a lot of ki stones to activate the recording mirror, but I still couldn’t contact you. I don’t even know if you’re in danger. You have to take care of yourself. Forget ‘everything under the heavens’ or ‘the changes of time’, none of it is as important to me as you.”

“Your cultivation is so high and you’re such a naughty person, I’m sure you’ll be able to return safely.”

“Do you and Madam Wu know each other? She tried to secretly get information about you several times, and seems to care about you a lot. She thought that she was being sneaky about it, but how could she escape the detection of this empress’ discerning eye?!”

Zu An felt his scalp go numb. The sixth sense of women really was too strong. She was even able to sense something like that?

However, that couldn’t be blamed on Yun Yuqing. No matter how careful she was, there was no way she could have known that he and Bi Linglong had a special relationship. That was why it was hard for her not to give away her real intentions.

"I've recently sensed that some undercurrents are brewing in the capital. I wonder if it's coming from the empress dowager's side or... I hope I'm overthinking things."

...

Zu An frowned as he read the later parts. At first, she was talking more about how she missed him, but later, something different had clearly happened. The conversation even became serious. Could it be that something had ended up happening in the capital? Now that communications were cut off, though, there was no way for him to contact her immediately.

He quickly replied on the jade strip and shared the recent events with her, telling her not to worry. Of course, he also typed a lot of words of affection. Otherwise, if he only replied with a few words when she had typed so much, that really would be a bit too trashy. He hoped that his message would be delivered immediately, or else if something else happened in the Ocean races' territory, he wouldn't be able to re-check and send the messages again.

Huanzhao and Youzhao also sent him a lot of messages.

"Brother-in-law, I really want to go to the battlefield too... Even Qinghe can go, and yet I can't. I feel so ashamed."

"Second sis really is annoying. She just keeps mocking me about this. But later on, I gave her a good beating and she didn't dare to shoot her mouth off anymore."

Zu An's expression became really strange when he saw this message, because he had just seen Huanzhao tell him a different story. He changed to Huanzhao's chat box and sure enough, she'd talked about the same thing too.

"That kid Youzhao keeps taking advantage of my weaknesses. Eventually, though, I finally taught her a good lesson and let her know a big sister's terror! Now that we're talking about it, brother-in-law, I need your help. Unless you help me change my aptitude, winning against her might not be so easy."

Zu An was speechless. He really wondered who was beating up whom here. The two sisters were pretty similar. Apart from expressing that they missed him, it was about their fights. As he read their messages, he had a knowing smile, and his mood also unknowingly improved.

However, he suddenly noticed another message from Huanzhao.

“Brother-in-law, my mom used to be really mean to you in the past. Will you end up hating her for it?”

Zu An was stunned and didn’t know why she would ask about that. After all, Huanzhao was always the carefree sort and wouldn’t be so considerate as to try to mediate his relationship with her mother. However, he quickly remembered that Huanzhao seemed to have mentioned that Qin Wanru really wanted a communication jade strip. She had asked for it several times and was always refused.

Could this be...

When he thought about how Qin Wanru had used the jade strip to write ‘brother-in-law’, Zu An shivered and didn’t dare to think any more about it.

She definitely thought I wouldn’t know, or else she wouldn’t have done this.

Unfortunately, he had messed around with all types of chatting apps in his previous world, where there were many grown men pretending to be cute girls, girls making new accounts to pretend to be fans of themselves... He was just naturally more sensitive about these types of things.

He decisively chose to pretend not to know when he thought about such things. He continued to chat with her as if she was his sister-in-law. Of course, the way he typed was a bit more careful.

Sigh, isn’t this just a shoddy version of QQ messenger? I wonder why they’re having so much fun with it.

Then, there were messages from Sang Qien and Zheng Dan.

“Sisi seems to have called me mama today. Even though Dandan said that she only said it accidentally, I’m still really happy.”

“Big brother Zu, I went to the temple to ask for a peace charm for you. Dandan said that she was just keeping me company, but she secretly asked for one for you too, and yet she was too embarrassed to admit it.”

“Big brother Zu, I miss you so much.”

“The capital looks calm and peaceful recently, but something seems off. King Wu entered the capital, and Madam Wu was trying to get closer to all kinds of influential clans. When I discussed this with my father, we just felt that King Wu is scheming something big. I really wonder where he gets his courage from after King Dai and King Jin’s examples.”

“I found out that his entrance into the capital seems to have been the work of the Bi clan. What is the empress thinking? Could it be that she's trying to defeat the empress dowager?”

...

When he saw these messages, Zu An’s brows furrowed.

Bi Linglong is bringing King Wu into the capital?

I don’t think she would do something like that. It seems completely pointless. Could it be to go against the empress dowager?

But I’m clearly close to her. There’s no reason for her to do all of this. Don’t tell me that she's already guessed my relationship with the Empress Dowager?

She is a really smart woman, after all. She might have really managed to guess the truth from the clues.

When he thought about that, Zu An started to get a headache. He didn’t know how to face these two women later.

“Ah Zu, Qienqien keeps trying to teach Sisi to say 'daddy', but Sisi couldn't say it. In the end, Qienqien ended up saying 'daddy' all day for nothing. I’m about to die from laughter!”

“Before we knew it, you were already gone for so long. I even dreamed about you, and yet when I woke up in the middle of the night to change clothes, Qienqien asked me what was happening. I was too embarrassed to tell her what happened. It really is embarrassing...”

“Are things going well for you in the Fiend races' territory? I asked around and it seems the sealed land is really dangerous. But with your skill, you should be fine, right?”

“Why haven’t you responded to my messages all this time? Don’t tell me that something really did happen to you in the sealed land, right? If something happens to you, I’m going to find a man tomorrow and remarry immediately!”

“Hey... I was joking, so please don’t get mad. Qienqien was really worried about you, but I always believed that you would be safe. After all, I watched how you defeated those big shots while you were still so weak, and even I lost to you. Hmph, how could a bad guy like you ever really get done in?”

“Sigh, I really miss those days back in Brightmoon City. Even though you weren’t as strong as you are now, you were always with me... That was the happiest period of my life.”

...

As he read Zheng Dan’s messages, Zu An remembered that stunning young woman who’d spoken those embarrassing yet brazen words from back then, ‘the place where not even the sun can shine into, big brother, you can enter’. He felt endless emotions fill him. He began to reply to those messages one by one, while simultaneously expressing his own love.

Compared to Zheng Dan’s fiery and daring personality, Xie Daoyun’s messages were much more reserved and proper. She mainly asked if he was safe, or asked him about some things regarding formations and runes. He could sense her sweet-tempered personality between the lines. When he thought about how they hadn’t been able to talk that much the last time they met, Zu An sighed. He replied to those questions seriously, and he also gave them a lot of concrete advice on their paths of cultivation.

It hadn’t been so long since the time he wished for all of the beauties of the world to be his, and yet he now discovered that a single sentiment weighed more than a thousand catties. It wasn’t something so easily done.

Just like that, he hurried along while replying to his sweethearts one by one. He traveled day and night for several days in a row, and then he finally arrived at the shore of the eastern sea.

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Chapter 2108: Conspiracy in Motion

Meanwhile, in the human capital, the sun had just set and the city gates were tightly shut. However, the entire city was still bright from all the lanterns that were lit. The reputation of the world's most prosperous city was well-earned.

Unlike the bustling city, the Imperial Palace was much more peaceful. After all, an important location like the Imperial Palace had a lot of established rules that needed to be followed after nightfall, and it was heavily guarded.

However, the emperor's personal palace was brightly lit. Inside, Fatty Zhao Ruizhi yawned lazily, his leg casually propped up on the imperial throne. He shoved some pastries next to him into his mouth, then held up a bowl of tea, draining it in one gulp before asking, "Imperial uncles, why are you looking for this emperor? Please tell me quickly if there's something you have to say. I still want to play."

Two middle-aged men were standing opposite from him. They were both dressed in palace commander uniforms. One was Zhao Si, and the other was Zhao Tai. Their father was King Yi, Zhao Huang. Zhao Huang was the East Defense General, so the prestige of his position was equivalent to that of the three ministers, making him an extremely respected individual from the royal family.

For the sake of loyalty, the Palace Guards often awarded medals and achievements to the children of the royal family. That was how these two brothers had become commanders. Additionally, because Zhao Huang was Zhao Han's uncle, these two were now also considered Zhao Ruizhi's uncles.

They watched as Zhao Ruizhi sat in a slovenly manner, his messy eating sending quite a bit of food everywhere. He really didn't resemble a ruler at all. Even so, the two definitely didn't come to advise the emperor on his etiquette. They quickly said, "We have confidential intelligence to inform your highness about. We must trouble your majesty to dismiss all other personnel." Afterward, they looked at the eunuchs and maids around them with troubled expressions.

"How brazen! You are already visiting his majesty so late in the evening! How could we let his majesty stay with you two alone?!" the eunuch behind Zhao Ruizhi exclaimed. He had followed Zhao Ruizhi ever since he was the crown prince all the way until now. His status had now climbed greatly as a result. Everyone had called him Little Xu, but now, who wouldn't dare to call him

Eunuch Xu? He knew clearly where all of this honor came from, so he naturally cared about Zhao Ruizhi's safety. After all, he wasn't... a normal person and didn't have much ability to protect himself.

A guard leader by the entrance said, "I'll stay behind to protect his majesty. No one will be able to injure him."

The emperor's personal bodyguards were called the Tiger Guardians, while the leader of the Tiger Guardians was King Guangling, Zhao Yuan. Beneath him were the palace commanders and officials. This person was the palace official Li Guanshi. With Zhao Yuan's status, there was naturally no way he could stay beside the emperor every waking second, which was why it was almost always Li Guanshi who led the Imperial Guards in watching over Zhao Ruizhi's safety. His cultivation was high, and he was extremely reliable in his work.

When he heard that, Eunuch Xu didn't say anything else and left with the others.

After the eunuchs and the maids left, Zhao Ruizhi asked in annoyance, "Just what is it? Hurry up and spit it out already."

Zhao Si and Zhao Tai both kneeled down on the ground and said, "Your majesty, the Imperial Tutor and War Chariot General from the Liu clan have colluded with the regent, allying with the Fiend races. They are plotting treason!"

"Huh?" Zhao Ruizhi had just picked up another pastry and was going to bite down, but when he heard that, he was completely stunned. No matter how stupid he was, this information was just too explosive, right? He said, "That's impossible! The imperial tutor is the empress dowager's senior and is extremely loyal to this emperor. Also, the regent is this emperor's master, so why would he ever rebel?"

"This matter is absolutely true! News arrived from the Fiend races that something happened in the sealed land and they needed our reinforcements. The regent and Liu brothers supported the deployment of reinforcements for the Fiend races, and yet shortly after, our reinforcement army was ambushed in the Fiend races' territory. That great army of elite soldiers was completely wiped out!" Zhao Si hurriedly said.

Zhao Tai also echoed what his brother said. "That's right! Right now, all of the information from the Fiend races' sealed land comes from Zu An alone, and he is the Fiend races' regent as well. By colluding with the Fiend races' Second Empress, he clearly wishes to use this chance to eliminate the remaining forces of our human race so there will be no more hindrances to the Fiend races' future invasion."

"And the Liu clan brothers are taking care of this matter all on their own. They are clearly conspiring with Zu An," Zhao Si added.

...

As they spoke, even their saliva flew everywhere. Zhao Ruizhi looked at the two in confusion, and after a while, he asked, "Didn't we already talk about this in the court session? Linglong and the empress dowager both said that we don't have enough intelligence from the front lines and that it's too early to make a decision. Do you have anything else to report on? If not, I'm going to play grasshopper."

Zhao Si and Zhao Tai were both stunned. They hadn't expected that their vigorous voices and expressions wouldn't bring about the slightest bit of interest from him. They knew that if they couldn't get the results they wanted today, then the next day, many heads would tumble, including their own.

The two of them gritted their teeth and said, "The empress dowager is from the Liu clan, so of course she would speak up for them."

"The empress, the empress is..."

"What about Linglong?" Zhao Ruizhi suddenly raised his head and stared right at the two. Other people were one thing, but Bi Linglong was his Achilles heel. After all these years, he already thought of her as his most important person.

When they saw his reaction, the two were frightened. They couldn't find any suitable excuses either and became silent as a result.

"If there's nothing else, then beat it!" Zhao Ruizhi exclaimed, now in a bad mood. As if he cared that they were his uncles! Either way, there were so many members of the royal family. These two weren't important people either. Linglong would tell him about everything important anyway.

Just then, Li Guanshi spoke up from the doorway. "The empress might be speaking that way on purpose to help absolve the regent."

Zhao Si and Zhao Tai immediately widened their eyes.

This guy really said it out loud!

Sure enough, Zhao Ruizhi was furious. He stared at Li Guanshi and asked, "What did you say?" Even though he normally acted like an idiot, there seemed to be killing intent in his eyes now.

Li Guanshi said hesitantly, "The empress seems to be too close to the regent. Furthermore, her highness clearly treats the regent differently from other men."

"You're speaking nonsense!" Zhao Ruizhi immediately panicked, making his fat jiggle.

Li Guanshi sighed and said, "Your highness, think about it carefully. Her highness never allows any man into her chambers, including your distinguished self. However, the regent can enter directly without any obstruction."

Now, even Zhao Si and Zhao Tai's breathing quickened. They seemed to have heard some explosive gossip today! Even though the two of them were both palace guard commanders and had heard some rumors here and there, they'd never treated them as a big deal. But now that such a thing was confirmed by someone at the emperor's side, it carried an entirely different meaning.

"That's because Linglong and the regent have important military secrets to discuss. Linglong told me about that before!" Zhao Ruizhi hurriedly explained.

"But why doesn't her highness let your majesty into her personal chambers?" Li Guanshi looked at him sympathetically.

"That's because... because..." Zhao Ruizhi's face turned entirely red, and he started murmuring inaudible things. He couldn't come up with a good reason even after a long time.

Zhao Si and Zhao Tai were sharp and quickly spoke up.

"That's right! I seem to recall that when her highness was still the crown princess, there was a scandal with the regent."

"That's right. Back then, the late emperor had people examine the crown princess' purity."

Zhao Ruizhi seemed to have found his saving grace and quickly said, "That's right, in the past, the nanny verified Linglong's purity. Besides, even the late libationer examined Zu An and said that he didn't lie."

Zhao Si had a strange smile on his face as he said, "Your highness, nannies can be bribed. Besides, though the late libationer wasn't someone who would take bribes, what if he intentionally wanted to cover for someone? After all, he had always favored Zu An, and he even gave the position of libationer to him. That proves their relationship was special!"

"Shut up, shut up!" Zhao Ruizhi threw the teacup in his hands at the two of them. "You're just guessing and coming up with nonsense. Linglong is so good to me, and the regent has even saved me several times. There's no reason for the two of them to do anything to let me down!"

"Who says they didn't?" Zhao Si quickly added, "That Zu An might very well be the grandson of the previous dynasty. Even though it's just a rumor, there's no smoke without fire. He might harbor a deeply rooted grudge and wants to overthrow our Great Zhou Dynasty!"

Zhao Ruizhi's face turned completely dark. He wasn't a complete idiot and could still discern between simple good and bad. If the regent really had such an identity, that would indeed be a good enough motive for a rebellion.

Just then, Li Guanshi also spoke up. "As for her highness the empress dowager, she naturally carries deep loyalty for his majesty, but the regent is just too strong. Even his majesty's brothers were killed on a whim, and King Dai was crippled just like that. Her highness might have done this to protect you, making her cater to the regent despite her best wishes."

"What?!" Zhao Ruizhi suddenly got up and pointed at him. His entire body started shaking because of his extreme anger.

Li Guanshi added more fuel to the fire, asking, "Your majesty, do you still remember that one time, the regent entered the empress's personal

chambers, and yet your majesty was stopped outside and couldn't go in? In the end, the regent stayed for many hours before coming back out again.”

“Stop talking!” Zhao Ruizhi covered his ears with his hands. His chubby face was in extreme pain. These things were definitely weird; now that they were speaking about it, he was gradually starting to pick up on the strangeness.

“Take care of yourself and endure, your majesty. A small mistake can lead to a great disaster! You could be letting down her highness despite the sacrifice she made for you,” Li Guanshi said in consolation.

“You son of a bitch!” Zhao Ruizhi smashed the chair next to him to pieces with a stomp. “Endure, endure, endure your mom! Guards, chop those rebels and traitors into ten thousand pieces for me!”

“The traitors are extremely ferocious. How can your majesty’s important self personally do these things? Just leave it to your subjects; only, we’ll need your majesty to write an imperial order for us,” Zhao Si and Zhao Tai hurriedly said.

When he recalled Zu An’s violent side, Zhao Ruizhi couldn't help but swallow with difficulty. He said, “I agree with what you said, but I need to gather my ministers to write an imperial order...”

Before he even finished, Zhao Si already took out an imperial edict from his inner pocket and said, “Don’t worry, your majesty! The imperial order has already been prepared by this loyal subject of yours. We just need your majesty to apply the official seal.”

“Perfect!” Zhao Ruizhi was overjoyed. He didn’t think about why an imperial order had already been prepared at all. He took the imperial order, and applied the official seal without even giving it a single look. The only thing in his head right now was the desire to kill that despicable Zu An. How could he still bother with anything else?

Normally, it was always Linglong who took care of various government affairs in the Imperial Palace. But out of respect for his title as the emperor, she normally returned the jade ruler’s seal to Zhao Ruizhi at night and asked for it back the next morning. She had never expected others to seize this opportunity at night to do something crazy like this!

...

When they left the emperor's personal chambers, Zhao Si and Zhao Tai were incredibly happy. "Thank goodness we have Official Li's help. Otherwise, our plan might have failed at the last moment."

"I wonder who that Official Li is working under. Why would he help us? There's no way that he really is loyal to the emperor and is only doing this out of righteous indignation, right?"

"Of course not. He's a palace official, so he might be a subordinate of King Guangling, Zhao Yuan. But that's hard to say too. He might be a spy planted by some other bigwig who was of decisive use today."

"Do you think that what he said about Zu An and the empress is true?"

"The stupid emperor believed it, but even you're believing it? Do you know what kind of a person the empress is? She's always been a well-bred young lady, someone who was meant to be the mother of this world. How could she possibly do something like that?"

"I guess you're right. That Official Li really is vicious. He actually thought up such a terrible scheme."

"Thank goodness he's on our side."

...

In another small courtyard, there was a room with no lights. However, there was a group of people sitting inside, waiting without speaking a single word. The atmosphere was extremely suffocating and quiet. Many of them had fine sweat on their foreheads. After all, their plot was incredibly huge. If they failed, the punishment would be the eradication of their entire clan! Even though everyone here had braved their fair share of major events, they were still extremely nervous.

Just then, the door was pushed open, and someone sent in a rolled object. The yellow luster made the eyes of everyone inside light up.

The one in the lead was none other than the father of the current empress, the Bi clan's lord, Bi Qi. He received the imperial order and gave it a look. Then, he roared with laughter, exclaiming, "We've already half succeeded! From here on out, everyone just needs to act according to the plan!"

“Understood!” Everyone got up and left. If anyone else were present to see this scene, they would definitely be really shocked, because every single member was an influential figure of the capital.

...

In the capital’s Pei manor, there was a lively feast being carried out in a side courtyard. Two young men were drinking and chatting merrily with their arms around each other.

“Brother Pei, which one of your Pei clan’s ladies is rather outstanding? Can you introduce some to your brothers here?”

“Brother Gao, you really forget loyalty when it comes to women! We invited you so many times before, and yet you’ve always avoided us! But this time, when the Pei clan said that they wished to be connected to you through marriage, you immediately showed up!”

These two were, surprisingly, Gao Ying and Pei You. After Cloudcenter Commandery’s affairs stabilized, they had been summoned back to the capital by their respective clans. It was a pity that they’d ended up missing a chance to reunite with Zu An.

“It’s not as if you don’t know. I’m currently in charge of the Imperial Palace’s safety and have heavy responsibilities. It wasn’t easy to ask for a day off,” Gao Ying said with a bitter smile.

“Tsk tsk tsk, I guess we ended up giving you an opportunity to show off. I almost forgot to congratulate you for being promoted to Right Guard General!” Pei You said with a laugh.

“It’s not as if you didn’t know that I was only able to reach this level through connections. How could I possibly convince everyone while still being so young? That’s why I always find myself skating on thin ice and couldn’t find time to meet with the brothers here all this time. I’ll drink three cups as a punishment,” Gao Ying said, feeling quite hard-pressed. He took the initiative to drink three cups.

The Liu clan’s authority was flourishing, and Gao Ying was the son of a daughter of the Liu clan, so that was why he had been placed in a position with authority.

Pei You couldn't help but sigh. He drank with Gao Ying and said, "Only we know that this is really what you think. If it were anyone else, we would've thought that they were using this chance to show off even more. Still, don't undervalue yourself. Your cultivation has advanced really quickly recently, and you already reached the ninth rank. Apart from your young age, that's already enough to hold your current position."

Gao Ying said in annoyance, "It's not as if you don't know where my ninth rank cultivation comes from. It's all through the Liu clan's endless funneling of resources. To be honest, I feel as if I've advanced too quickly and my foundation might not be stable enough, which might cause trouble down the line."

"Tsk tsk tsk, look at you boasting again. Here I am wishing that the Pei clan would give me that many resources to make me outstanding too." Pei You was a bit upset. His status in the Pei clan was clearly not as high as Gao Ying's in the Liu clan.

Gao Ying realized that he had crossed the line a bit too. He put his arm around Pei You's shoulder and said, "Let's not talk about these things anymore. Help a brother out a bit here, won't ya? Just which young miss is it that wishes to marry me?"

The beauty of the Pei clan's women was well known. For example, Pei Mianman had left him speechless from the first moment he saw her. Of course, she was brother Zu's woman, so he wouldn't dare to have any other thoughts. He only wished for this Pei clan girl to have sixty to seventy percent of Pei Mianman's looks and that would be enough.

Pei You said awkwardly, "Actually, I don't really know either. It was my father who told me. I don't know which daughter the older generation has decided on. But today, there's no need for you to agree at all. Let's just take a look first. Your brother here will secretly ask around for you before you make a decision."

Gao Ying was really happy, saying, "A true brother!"

The two of them drank merrily. Additionally, the others from the Pei clan urged them to drink from time to time, so the drinking was really lively.

Suddenly, a woman on the woven mats spoke up. "Huh? Why has the sky become a bit red?"

Gao Ying glanced over and reflexively replied, "Maybe some unlucky clan caught fire? Let me think, which clan is in that direction..."

Suddenly, his eyes opened wide. He broke out into cold sweat, because that was the Imperial Palace's direction. There were no other residences nearby. He exclaimed, "Cloud Dragon Gate!"

As the Right Guard General, he was now really familiar with the Imperial Palace's layout and topography. He immediately realized where the fires were coming from. Cloud Dragon Gate was one of the Imperial Palace's two most important palace gates!

He could no longer sit still. He got up and was about to leave, but as soon as he stood up, he felt a wave of dizziness and almost fell. He cried out, "Something's wrong. The alcohol is poisoned!"

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Chapter 2109: Gamble of Life and Death

Even though Gao Ying had drunk a lot today, he now had nine ranks of cultivation. If he activated it and circulated his internal energy, he could easily force out the alcohol. When he realized that something had happened at the capital, he'd wanted to force out the alcohol's effects, but as soon as he used his cultivation, he immediately realized that something was wrong inside his body. He felt really dizzy, and even his inner ki was chaotic. With all of those signs, it was easy to see that something wasn't right.

Gao Ying suddenly looked at Pei You, his expression carrying both disappointment and fury. He cried, "I thought of you as my brother, yet you actually schemed and plotted against me!"

Pei You had told him that the Pei clan was interested in becoming related to him through marriage, and had thus invited him over to the Pei manor to take a look at the ladies here. Now, it seemed the entire affair was a conspiracy!

Pei You's expression changed greatly as he exclaimed, "It wasn't me! I didn't do it!" Then, he quickly got up and looked in the direction of his father.

There were many people on the woven mats that were completely oblivious to what was going on. They had all still been so happy a moment ago, so why had they suddenly fallen out?

Just then, Pei Yi quickly stood up from his seat. With a clap of his hands, a large group of guards appeared and moved to surround Gao Ying. In response, Gao Ying's guards all drew their weapons and protected him. The women all ran away toward the inner residence in panic.

"Father, just what is going on?" Pei You exclaimed, alarmed and angry. He really never could have imagined that any of this would ever happen.

Pei Yi said with a sigh, "You've probably already guessed it. Why bother asking so many questions?"

Pei You replied with a scowl, "You used me to fool him?"

Gao Ying said with a sneer, "Keep acting, why don't you!"

He quickly took out a porcelain bottle and shoved several pills into his mouth. At the same time, he gave them to his subordinates. He was now the Right Guard General, after all, and the Liu clan was now incredibly powerful, so he had all kinds of amazing medicines. There was naturally no lack of antidotes among them. Sure enough, after ingesting these pills, he immediately felt his condition improve considerably.

When he saw that, Pei Yi's expression changed. He yelled, "Capture him!"

With a shout, the subordinates all rushed straight at Gao Ying.

"General Gao, hurry and escape!" the guards at Gao Ying's side quickly shouted.

Every clan had their own deathsworn soldiers. Now that it was clearly proven that this was a trap, it would definitely be impossible for all of them to get away. They could only try their best to help Gao Ying leave, upon which their mission would be complete. As for their families, they would naturally be taken care of by the Liu clan.

The two sides clashed, and blood was instantly drawn. In this kind of irreconcilable battle, they instantly abandoned all flowery tricks and techniques. They only used the attacks that would take lives the quickest.

The guards that protected Gao Ying's side were naturally all carefully selected elites; every single one's cultivation was higher than these Pei clan subordinates. However, the difference in numbers meant that all they had awaiting them was an inevitable defeat.

Even Gao Ying's eyes became completely red. He gritted his teeth and cut down two Pei clan guards around him, then rushed out. His thoughts moved quickly. There was no way that this ploy would be solely directed against him. They had definitely lured him away from his post to do something else there. After seeing the huge fire by Cloud Dragon Gate, he realized that their main objective was the Imperial Palace. However, as long as he returned to the Imperial Palace, he would be able to gather his Right Guard Army. Then, there would be a chance to overturn the situation.

The Pei clan clearly understood that well. They continued to rush at him in endless waves. As they fought around him, Gao Ying's subordinates prioritized his safety above all. Even if they were injured or lost their lives, all they sought was just to buy one more minute, one more second of time.

It was just a few courtyards' worth of distance, and yet one after another, the guards all fell around Gao Ying. Eventually, not a single person survived. Even so, the results they obtained were also clear. Gao Ying finally reached the Pei clan courtyard's walls. He was about to leap out when he suddenly heard a fierce shout.

"Where do you think you're going?!" With a flash, Pei Yi stood in Gao Ying's way.

Gao Ying gritted his teeth. He prepared to fight when Pei You appeared between the two of them, saying, "Brother Gao, hurry and leave! Leave this place to me!"

Gao Ying was stunned. Meanwhile, Pei Yi erupted with fury, roaring, "Have you gone mad? Do you know that what we're doing today is enough to have our entire clan executed? If he leaves, our entire clan might face annihilation!"

Pei You smiled in distress, saying, "You didn't tell me a single thing, so how could I have known what you all were scheming? The only thing I know is that I can't sell out my friend for the sake of my own clan's glory!" Afterward, he immediately shouted, "Gao Ying, why aren't you leaving yet?!"

Gao Ying gritted his teeth. He cupped his hand toward Pei You's back, then jumped over the fence and ran toward the court.

The other soldiers wanted to chase after him, but they were stopped by a slash from Pei You.

"You unfilial son!" Pei Yi roared furiously. He could no longer hold himself back and charged forward.

...

Once Gao Ying left the Pei manor, roughly a dozen soldiers rushed over and asked, "General Gao, what is happening?"

Gao Ying had always been a careful person. These were people he'd left outside the Pei manor. Who would have thought that they would actually prove to be of vital use?

"The Pei clan has committed treason. The Imperial Palace is in danger. Hurry and send some people to contact the Liu clan's elders. The rest of you are to follow me back to the Imperial Palace!" Gao Yi quickly issued the appropriate commands. Soon after, the soldiers formed several groups and ran in different directions.

Gao Ying took the remaining seven or eight soldiers toward Cloud Dragon Gate. Surprisingly, however, there was no battle there. Instead, soldiers were patrolling the city gate tower in a clear and orderly manner. Others were putting out some of the leftover fires.

"Name yourselves!" the soldiers by the palace gate barked vigilantly when they saw people approach. However, when they saw Gao Ying, they clearly sighed in relief and said, "So it was General Gao."

"What happened?" Gao Ying asked. Why were things different from what he imagined?

"Devil Sect traitors appeared, trying to infiltrate the Imperial Palace in the night. We discovered them and already eliminated them," a general on the gate tower replied.

"Devil Sect?" Gao Ying's brows furrowed.

When had the Pei clan allied with the Devil Sect? Besides, even if there really was a conspiracy, they would either choose to wait or launch a thunderous, all-out offensive. How could they be so easily defeated? Wouldn't such actions from the Pei clan only be courting disaster? He couldn't shake off the feeling that something was wrong. He was about to walk toward the palace gates when he noticed that these soldiers were a bit unfamiliar.

He quickly reined in his horse and asked, "By the way, why don't I see General Li?"

Li Mian was also a nephew of the Liu clan. The Liu clan had sent him to guard the strategic location of Cloud Dragon Gate, and also had him manage a portion of the Imperial Palace's soldiers.

"General Li was seriously injured from fighting against the Devil Sect renegades. The imperial physician is currently treating him. General Gao should come in and take a look," the military officer on the city walls said with a wave.

When he heard that, Gao Ying's expression changed. He turned around and ran, shouting to his men, "Hurry and leave!"

The moment they saw that, the Imperial Palace guards' expression changed. They all drew their weapons to attack him.

Unfortunately, the mounts Gao Ying and his men rode were all special beasts that had been carefully raised by the court since they were young. They also had wind element runes applied to their bodies; such runes came from the academy and made them even faster. The guards were worried that they would be exposed and didn't dare to show any hostility, so there was no way they could catch up in such a situation.

When he saw that the soldiers had been left behind, Gao Ying sighed in relief. He wondered whether to return to the Liu clan and look for Liu Guang and Liu Yao, or leave the city to find Third Elder Liu's camp outside the city.

Just then, a group of men appeared right in front of him, blocking his way forward. His expression changed, but he calmly said, "So it was General Zhao. Something has happened at Cloud Dragon Gate. Please go there and provide reinforcements."

The middle-aged man at the head of the group was East Central General Zhao Quan. His seniority in the royal family was high, and he was even one generation above Zhao Han. Zhao Quan's father was one of the eight dukes, Imperial Tutor Zhao Chen. His son was Hexi King, Zhao Zai, who frequently collaborated with King Yan. They had been one of the most influential clans in the entire capital. Unfortunately, some tragedies had befallen them. Because they'd gotten involved in the conflict between the Meng clan and King Dai against Zu An, Zhao Chen was killed on the spot by Zu An, which made their clan's power fall considerably.

When he thought about his own relationship with Zu An, Gao Ying immediately sensed that Zhao Quan's arrival was nothing good.

Zhao Quan replied with a fake smile, "Isn't General Gao the Right Guard General who is in charge of the protection of the Imperial Palace? Why are you running in the opposite direction instead of going there?"

Gao Ying secretly gestured to his subordinates while replying, "Traitors have instigated a great scheme today. I still need to go to other areas to investigate the situation."

"But I fear you won't be able to go anywhere anymore," a voice called out. The men from Cloud Dragon Gate had already caught up.

Gao Ying recognized the one in the lead as Changshui Officer Zhao Shun. His heart couldn't help but sink.

Zhao Shun's father was King Yi, the East Defense Chief General Zhao Huang; someone of virtue and prestige in the royal family. When Gao Ying connected that information with Zhao Quan's presence on the other side, didn't that mean the royal family was collectively revolting?

What was an even bigger headache was that Changshui Officer Zhao Shun was in charge of one of the six field armies near the capital. Now, he had actually led these troops into the city, and yet the Liu clan had no idea about it at all. Just how many of the six field armies had already turned traitor?

Just then, Zhao Quan said coldly, "If I hadn't promptly arrived, they would have almost gotten away."

Zhao Shun said in annoyance, "This kid looks honest, but he's as slick as a ghost. I didn't expect him to have seen through our plan."

"It seems Li Mian has already fallen for your plot," Gao Ying said with a sigh. He tried to stall for time while thinking of a way to get out of this situation. However, he just couldn't think of anything. This was nothing but a situation of inevitable death.

"If that Li Mian had been as careful as you, I wouldn't have succeeded so easily. The Liu clan's people are useless after all," Zhao Shun said disdainfully.

"As members of the royal family, you already have enough riches and honor, and yet you're colluding with traitors. What is this all for, really?" Gao Ying asked, although he knew that he was dead for certain. He took a deep breath. All he sought now was to die with understanding.

"Traitors?" Zhao Quan roared with laughter. "You really overestimate yourself! The ones who have committed treason are clearly your group. We are acting in accordance with his majesty's orders to completely capture all of the Liu clan traitors!"

Gao Ying's expression immediately changed. He exclaimed, "That's impossible! The empress would never issue that kind of order!" In the past, he had even fought side by side with the empress. Besides, Zu An had an extremely close relationship with the empress, so there was no way she would agree to such orders.

"Is there something wrong with your ears? We are following his majesty's orders and not the empress' orders," Zhao Quan said with a sneer.

Gao Ying said with a sigh, "So you've fooled his majesty. Once her highness reacts tomorrow morning, all of you will get what you deserve."

"Just who is it that's fooled his majesty?" Zhao Shun retorted angrily. "Just who do your Liu clan people think you are? You merely rely on your relationship with the empress. Your clan is clearly filled with useless trash, and yet you occupy all kinds of important positions!"

"Forget about the idiot duo Liu Guang and Liu Yao, even a brat like you was able to easily rise up to the position of Right Guard General. Do you know how many people strive their entire lives, and yet will never be able to sit in your position? That bastard Liu Guang would even put a dog from the clan into the court if he could. Does this world actually belong to our Zhao clan or your Liu clan?"

Gao Ying said with a cold laugh, "So all of you did this out of jealousy."

He inwardly sighed with relief. He'd actually predicted that this kind of thing would happen. He'd tried to advise his maternal uncles many times, but they refused to listen. The only thing they knew how to do was continue to put the Liu clan's people in vital positions. Now, the consequences had finally arrived, and they were far more intense than the clan elders had imagined.

"Jealous of those Liu clan trash?" Zhao Shun retorted with a scowl. "We're just getting rid of the rubbish and replacing them with the competent."

Gao Ying smiled calmly and said, "Even though the Liu clan doesn't have any ability, treacherous sorts like you aren't much better than us."

"You're courting death!" Zhao Shun roared furiously, charging straight at him.

Gao Ying's eyes lit up. The reason why he had taunted his opponent was precisely for this moment. He abandoned all defenses and allowed the opponent's weapon to enter his own chest. Meanwhile, his own blade sliced at the enemy's neck. He knew that there was no chance of him surviving today, so he decisively chose to swap life for life.

Zhao Shun was horrified. He reflexively wanted to pull his sword back to defend himself, but Gao Ying grabbed his sword with his hand and held it in place. He couldn't pull it out at all. He had expected Gao Ying to fight back while cornered, but he hadn't expected to injure a ninth rank cultivator that easily. However, his first attack had ended up seriously injuring his opponent, so all of his following strategies were useless. In a battle between strong individuals, life and death was often decided by a sliver of an opportunity. This slight mishap made it so that he could only watch as the grim reaper approached. His eyes were full of regret and despair.

Suddenly, Gao Ying's head flew into the air. It turned out that Zhao Quan had arrived promptly. How could Gao Ying still have the leftover strength to guard against the surprise attack of an older generation expert?

A burst of hot blood flew through the air. Gao Ying's eyes were wide as he reflexively looked in the Imperial Palace's direction. His last thought was that the empress dowager was a grandmaster, so she'd definitely be able to subdue this conspiracy.

...

Meanwhile, in the empress' personal palace, Liu Ning had been resting in her chambers. Suddenly, she sensed weapons clashing in Cloud Dragon Gate's direction. She flew out from her room and looked at the flames from afar. Her restless mind made her just about to rush over and examine the situation when she suddenly stopped. She looked to her left with a grave expression.

Under the moonlight, a long-haired, black-clad beauty stood atop a roof ridge. The moonlight seemed to serve as her backdrop, making her figure look even more enchanting and moving.

However, while the empress was looking at her, she was also sizing the empress up. When her eyes landed on the empress' /bottom, a look of surprise appeared in her eyes.

Your ass is huge!

When she looked at that beautiful and dignified face, Liu Ning called out with a grave expression, "Devil Sect Master Yun Jianyue!"

The woman, whose long hair reached all the way to her bottom, nodded. "I'm surprised that your highness still remembers me." It was when she first invaded the palace that she'd first met that little devil Zu An.

"Sect Master Yun's stunning figure is something no one would forget after a single glance," Liu Ning said; she also remembered that assassination. In the past, her cultivation still hadn't recovered. In the end, it was also Zu An who had saved her. At that time, how could she have known that she would be fiercely subdued by that guy?

The two women couldn't help but blush at the same time, but then they each gave the other a strange look. They didn't know why the other's reaction was so strange. How could they possibly know that they had actually thought of the same man at the same time?

"The Devil Sect's evil intentions have not ceased, and you wish to invade once more?" Liu Ning replied with a sneer. After she received the help of Zu An's essence, her cultivation had not only recovered, but even grown a level stronger. She didn't fear Yun Jianyue. Besides, this was the Imperial Palace, her own home field.

"I'm here with a single mission, which is to borrow your highness' decapitated head." Yun Jianyue's voice was calm, but she spoke words filled with killing intent.

Liu Ning narrowed her eyes. "I fear that the sect master doesn't have the ability to do so."

Yun Jianyue chuckled. She didn't say anything more; rather, she rushed forth like lightning and attacked. At the same time, a crescent moon suddenly appeared in the sky behind Liu Ning and rushed at her neck.

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Chapter 2110: Fleeing

Liu Ning harrumphed. Suddenly, several streaks of white silk appeared from behind her. Half of them rushed at Yun Jianyue, while the other half swept toward the Crescent Ring behind her.

The Crescent Ring was incredibly sharp and almost instantly sliced the silk to pieces. However, a remaining strand slipped through the opening and struck the weapon right at its center, knocking it flying.

The strands of silk moved just like Liu Ning's own fingers, containing a strange, gentle force. When she saw that, Yun Jianyue couldn't help but say with a sigh of praise, "Your eyes are quite good. You were able to instantly find the Crescent Ring's weakness."

Even though that was what she said, with a wave of her hand, the Crescent Ring instantly returned to her side. It continued to vibrate in place, seemingly ready to deliver a lethal blow at any time.

Liu Ning's expression also grew grave. She was no longer as confident as earlier. She had already concentrated her full attention on facing this opponent, and yet Yun Jianyue was still able to chat so casually. It didn't even seem as if she'd used all of her strength.

It seems her cultivation is even a bit higher than mine.

Fortunately, she had been able to receive the help of Ah Zu's nourishment to bring her to a higher level. Otherwise, with her previous cultivation, she would likely have already been completely defeated. Now, she at least had a bit of a chance.

But what is going on with this Devil Sect Master? Her cultivation clearly wasn't this high the last time she attacked the Imperial Palace!

I had the help of Ah Zu's nourishment, but what did she rely on to grow so quickly?

After all, the higher one's cultivation reached, the slower one's growth would become. Frequently, one could go decades without any advancement at all. Yun Jianyue's growth since that time was absolutely ridiculous! How could the empress not be shocked?

"Help, there's an assassin!" Liu Ning dealt with Yun Jianyue's violent barrage of attacks while shouting loudly.

She didn't fear the attacker because this was the Imperial Palace, her own territory. She was the glorious empress dowager. Why would she have to fight to the death against a Devil Sect renegade? She could, but there was no need. She had countless subordinates under her control. Using them to defeat and capture her attacker was what someone of a higher position was supposed to do.

But this Devil Sect Master really is beautiful. Ah Zu might like her if he sees her.

Hmph, I definitely can't let the two of them meet, or else it'll be bad if he ends up being infatuated by this witch.

When he heard her shout, Eunuch Lu quickly rushed over with a large group of guards. When they saw the demonic deity-like Yun Jianyue with her long, fluttering hair, their expressions changed.

"Hurry and protect her highness!" Eunuch Lu loudly shouted.

The guards didn't recognize the Devil Sect Master. Even though they could sense that she was extremely powerful, they had all undergone strict training before. They got into formation while charging at the enemy.

"You're courting death!" Yun Jianyue's expression turned cold. The Crescent Ring flickered in and out of view in the air, taking the life of a guard practically every time it disappeared.

Meanwhile, Eunuch Lu arrived at Liu Ning's side and said, "Never fear, your highness. This servant has come to protect you."

When she saw Eunuch Lu, Liu Ning felt a mysterious sense of relief. Perhaps it was because they had been around each other for so many years, but this guy had always known how to make her feel at ease.

Liu Ning looked at the murderous Yun Jianyue in the distance, saying, "Be careful, this woman seems to have encountered a miraculous opportunity. Her cultivation is much stronger than last time. I'll hold her up for now. Go and gather the experts of the palace to get rid of this... What are you doing?!"

Her voice was full of bitterness as she sent Eunuch Lu flying with a single palm, but she herself coughed out a mouthful of blood. There was a palm imprint left on her dress at her waist, and a layer of white frost had formed on the surface. She stared at Eunuch Lu. Her eyes were full of confusion, but even more so anger. She exclaimed, "Why?!"

Eunuch Lu had always served at her side loyally all these years and was faithful and true to her. There was also the love they had shared in their youth. Even though she called him a dog servant, she already viewed him as a member of her own family. She'd even felt that even if everyone in the entire world left her, Eunuch Lu wouldn't. As for Zu An, he had too many sweethearts; for example, that Bi Linglong was someone he couldn't even part with. He'd just refused to fully come to her side all this time.

Even so, it was precisely this person, whom she completely trusted, who had attacked her at the most crucial moment and made her fall into an endless abyss. Eunuch Lu knew where her weakness was, and he seemed to have been hiding his cultivation this entire time. The attack had really almost taken half her life right there and then. She couldn't use her cultivation properly anymore.

When he saw her cough out blood, a bit of pity appeared in Eunuch Lu's eyes. He sighed and said, "Does your highness still remember those guys who told me that they could help me recover my cultivation and become a normal man again?"

Liu Ning was stunned, replying, "Didn't you kill them on the spot?" Midway through her sentence, she realized something and said, "You did that deliberately for me to see and trust you!"

Eunuch Lu's expression was complicated as he said, "Actually, it wasn't just once or twice that they sought me out. At first, I didn't regard them with much importance, but eventually, I was still tempted. They're monsters, after all, and they're the best at making a man fall into depravity.

"Your highness should understand my feelings for you. I really want to truly become your man, for you to feel my love."

"Screw you!" Liu Ning spat. The only thing she felt when she saw the passion in his eyes was disgust. She suddenly thought of something and said, "No, something's not right. Don't you have that freakish fetish? Why did you suddenly change?"

The two of them had spent so many years together, and each knew the other better than anyone else. She really understood what he was like. Thus, she naturally knew about Eunuch Lu's weird fetish. Every time she did it with Zu An, Eunuch Lu had felt crazy excitement. He really liked to watch his beloved woman be violated by another man, especially an especially strong one. That feeling brought him unprecedented satisfaction. He could fool her through other ways, but that kind of thing definitely wouldn't change.

A blush appeared on Eunuch Lu's face as he said, "That's right, I do have that fetish. But one day, I suddenly wondered... If I became a true man, would I still feel the same sense of joy when I saw someone else take advantage of you? I really want to experience that special kind of feeling."

"You're disgusting!" Liu Ning exclaimed furiously. This man's psyche was way too twisted, twisted to the point that she almost didn't recognize him.

Eunuch Lu walked toward her with a smile, saying, "Your highness doesn't need to worry. I won't harm you. It's just that your cultivation is too high, so I needed to restrain you a bit. Now I can bring you to a faraway place, away from this land of quarrels."

"Don't come any closer!" Liu Ning cried, her expression changing greatly. The 'family' she had been so familiar with now made her feel a strange sense of estrangement. She reflexively wanted him to disappear. Unfortunately, the

sinister power of the enemy's palm had invaded her body. It was hard for her to muster any strength right now.

Could it be that I really have to be brought away by this man, and then be turned into his slave in a remote and desolate place? Then, for the sake of satisfying his fetishes, he'd find some unknown men to take advantage of me...

When she thought of that terrifying scenario, Liu Ning's entire body shook. She instinctively backed up, but she tripped over the corpse of a guard behind her. She lost her center of gravity and fell to the ground. She watched as Eunuch Lu walked closer and closer to her. She only felt as if his face was becoming more and more twisted and disgusting. At that moment, she sank into absolute despair.

Eunuch Lu was about to get his hands on her when a beautiful figure blocked his path. When she saw the long hair that reached all the way down that person's back, Liu Ning was stunned. The guards had already been completely killed, and yet Yun Jianyue was now standing at her side?

"What is the meaning of this, Sect Master Yun?" Eunuch Lu asked, looking at Yun Jianyue with a bit of apprehension.

"I've always hated traitors the most, and as a woman as well, your actions leave me disgusted." Yun Jianyue's face was ice-cold. She looked at him with eyes full of killing intent.

Eunuch Lu's expression changed as he said, "Sect Master Yun, we are allies. This is different from what we agreed on."

"It's only because we're allies that I didn't take your life," Yun Jianyue said coldly. "The empress dowager and I were fighting an honorable battle, and yet you ambushed her from behind. Is that something I would do? Just that alone is already enough for me to take your life."

Then, she turned around to look at Liu Ning, saying, "You should leave first. Whether or not you can escape will depend on your own luck."

Liu Ning gave her a look of shock. She firmly engraved this favor deep in her heart as she said, "Thank you!" As the empress dowager, she wasn't the type to waste time. She immediately leaped out of the empress palace.

Eunuch Lu reflexively wanted to chase after her, but Yun Jianyue took a step to the side to stand in his way.

“Sect Master Yun, the only reason I joined you was because of her highness, the empress dowager. Now that you’ve let her go, where does that leave me?!” Eunuch Lu exclaimed, his eyes full of anger.

Yun Jianyue said with a sneer, “I don’t know who you made that agreement with, but I was only in charge of dealing with her highness. Nothing else is my business. Whether or not those people can capture the empress dowager will depend on heaven’s will, but you can’t go.”

Eunuch Lu’s entire body shook. His emotions were clearly on the verge of exploding. In the end, he took a deep breath and calmed down before turning around and leaving. He had just watched the battle between the empress dowager and Yun Jianyue. This witch seemed to only be a step away from the earth immortal rank now. He wouldn’t be able to win against her. Furthermore, when he thought about the uncontrollable disgust in her eyes and the murderous reputation she had, he didn’t doubt for a moment that she would just kill him despite being allies, just because she wanted to.

When she looked at his stooped figure and thought about their conversation, Yun Jianyue couldn’t help but scoff, her expression full of disdain. “Disgusting!”

...

Meanwhile, when Liu Ning left her palace, she wanted to call the Imperial Palace Guards, but she saw that the empress’ chambers were brightly lit, with two armies fighting. Even the Embroidery House had troops there. When she recalled the fire at Cloud Dragon Gate, her heart sank to rock bottom. Since even Eunuch Lu had betrayed her, there was definitely something wrong with his brother Lu He. After all, Lu He was the Left Guard General, someone who was in charge of half of the Imperial Palace’s security.

No wonder even though she had fought for so long on her side, no guards had arrived to provide reinforcements. So there were already problems within the entire Imperial Palace. However, she had no idea who was rebelling. They had actually colluded with the Devil Sect and converted Eunuch Lu! Perhaps there weren’t any safe places left in the entire Imperial Palace.

She gritted her teeth and ran out of the palace. At the same time, her thoughts moved quickly. The only one with the power and motive to do all of this was the Bi clan. But what was going on with the fight over by Bi Linglong's side?

She recalled the accusations of misconduct a few days prior. Back then, she had already sensed that something was brewing in the capital. She'd told the Liu clan's people to be on high alert. And yet today, something so major had happened, but she hadn't received a single bit of intelligence on it. Just what were they doing while they were supposed to be on high alert?!

When she recalled her father and uncle's usual unreliable appearances, Liu Ning nearly erupted into curses. "They're useless idiots, as expected!"

Even so, there was nothing she could do. The Liu clan was her true backing. She could only reunite with them first, then take their time in discussing what to do after. However, she didn't act rashly; instead, she entered a private house and looked in the Liu manor's direction. She saw flames rush into the skies, and she could hear sounds of fighting even from all the way where she was. Her hands and feet turned ice-cold.

Right, since they attacked me, that means it's a huge plot. How could they possibly leave the Liu clan alone?

If she ran over to the Liu manor too, she would just be walking right into their trap.

Suddenly, a shout came from nearby. "The traitor ran that way!"

Liu Ning turned around and saw a group of soldiers aiming arrows at her. Her expression changed. She quickly kicked off the ground and continued to run. Arrows fell behind her again and again.

However, she suddenly groaned. There was no way she could completely avoid such a concentrated barrage of arrows while being seriously injured; an arrow had landed in her lower back.

Even though she could still kill that small troop of soldiers, she didn't dare to stop. She knew that if they surrounded her, an unending stream of soldiers would rush over. She would have no chance to escape again. She recognized that these soldiers had been stationed outside the capital. She wondered just how many of the capital's military officers were a part of this rebellion.

She continued to move through the streets and alleys. Many times, she just barely managed to shake off some pursuing troops, only for another group to rush at her. It was to the extent that her entire body was filled with a sense of loss. The capital was normally so large, and yet right now, she had no idea where she could hide herself.

She thought about running to the academy. Zu An was the libationer, and the academy's teachers had always remained neutral. They definitely wouldn't join this rebellion. But she quickly realized that if she could think of that, why wouldn't the enemy? There would definitely be soldiers hiding around the path to the academy, waiting for her to walk right in.

As for the regent manor, Zu An wasn't there right now, so there was nothing she could rely on there. It would also be carefully watched by the enemy.

One after another, different places popped up in her mind, but she rejected them one after another. When she was near the point of absolute despair, however, she suddenly thought of something.

That place should be safe.

She gritted her teeth, then ran in a certain direction.

...

Meanwhile, in the Sang manor, Sang Qien was trying to appease the crying daughter in her arms as she stared gravely at the capital's surging flames. She asked, "Father, just what is happening?"

Sang Hong's expression was also grave as he said, "If it's something this big, that means the capital will likely change greatly soon. Close the windows and don't go anywhere tonight, to avoid being caught up in it."

The maids were all trembling as they hurriedly checked the doors and windows.

Sang Qien said worriedly, "No wonder there were so many unfamiliar faces around the capital recently. I wonder which side is causing all this chaos? But the court should be under Ah Zu's control right now. Don't tell me he's the one they are going against?"

“We’ll know tomorrow morning. None of us are going to sleep tonight. We’ll remain vigilant through the night,” Sang Hong said seriously. The women all nodded. How could they still sleep in this kind of situation?

When she saw Sang Qien’s anxious expression, Zheng Dan took Sisi from her arms, saying, “Don’t worry, Qienqien. Even if these people came for Ah Zu, it wouldn’t be a big deal even if they succeeded. Ah Zu is so strong that as long as he returns, they’ll all be one-sidedly defeated. All of these treacherous people will naturally disappear too.”

“But Ah Zu went to the Fiend races’ sealed land and we haven’t heard anything from him after all this time. I’m worried that something might have happened to him.” After saying that, Sang Qien felt more and more worried.

A gentle smile appeared on Zheng Dan’s face as she said, “That guy is so mischievous and cunning, and he now has his ridiculous cultivation level. It has only ever been his enemies who were in danger. When has anything ever happened to him? He’ll definitely return safely.”

Sang Qien wanted to say something else when a noise came from the back courtyard. It was as if something heavy had fallen.

Their expressions changed and they quickly ran over. When they arrived, they saw a stunning woman collapsed in a puddle of blood under the moonlight’s illumination.

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Read Keyboard Immortal - Chapter 211: Indecent Swords

Chapter 211: Indecent Swords

“Be careful!” Sang Hong said, his expression grave. He quickly activated his ki and slowly approached. When he finally saw the person’s appearance, his expression changed as he called out, “Empress dowager?”

Sang Qien and Zheng Dan were both shocked. They had never expected this beautiful woman with so many wounds on her body to actually be the empress dowager! In that instant, countless thoughts appeared in their minds. If even

the empress dowager had suffered such serious injuries, it seemed the Imperial Palace had already reached a certain degree of chaos.

Also, why had the empress dowager run all the way here? They didn't seem to have any form of relationship.

Just then, Liu Ning's lips twitched, as if she wanted to say something. Since men and women needed to watch their interactions with each other, Sang Hong couldn't really touch her. Zheng Dan handed Sisi to Sang Qien and squatted down to support Liu Ning, asking, "What happened, your highness?"

Liu Ning looked at Zheng Dan's beautiful oval face.

As expected, that guy Zu An's beauty standard is always first-rate.

However, she was incredibly weak and could only say, "I am Zu... Zu An's woman..."

Afterward, she could no longer endure her injuries and fainted. Everyone else was left baffled just like that.

When Zheng Dan had somewhat recovered from her shock, she asked in a trembling voice, "I... didn't hear wrongly just now, did I?"

Sang Qien's expression also changed continuously between shock and embarrassment. She said, "I think... I also... heard wrongly."

Even so, they knew fully well that they were all cultivators. Even though the empress dowager's voice was soft, how could they not have heard it well?

Sang Hong's old face was now full of amazement.

That kid Zu An really is fickle in love! My own daughter and daughter-in-law have already been stolen... ahem, I seem to have given out my daughter on my own. But I never expected him to be so daring that he would even dare to try to steal the empress dowager!

If news of this got out, that would be enough for the entire clan to be executed!

That kid might be the only one in this entire world who would dare to do such a thing!

In her annoyance, Zheng Dan tossed away the woman in her arms, letting her fall heavily to the ground. She grumbled, "What is wrong with this woman? She ran all the way to our place just to say such weird things. Is there something wrong with her head?!"

Sang Qien sighed and said, "She is the empress dowager, and yet her injuries are so severe. It's obvious that the rebellion was directed at the Liu clan. Judging from how injured she is, she clearly had to fight her way out of an encirclement and had nowhere else to go, so that's why she came to us."

"The capital has so many places. What do you mean she has nowhere else to go? Doesn't the Liu clan normally always strut around? Why is she running over to us? Are we even that close to her?" Zheng Dan replied as she continued to pace back and forth in the courtyard, clearly in a terrible mood. At the same time, she was actually starting to respect this sister-in-law of hers. Sang Qien had actually managed to piece together the truth with just a few words.

Sang Qien gave her a look and said, "Why do you think the empress dowager would say those strange words before going unconscious? It's probably because there's already no place left in the entire capital that she trusts. Only our place is left, and the only reason that she trusts us should be because she knows that we..." She gave her father an embarrassed look before continuing, "Because she knows about our relationship with Ah Zu and that we won't harm her."

Zheng Dan exclaimed angrily, "What right does she have to do that? Does she really think that we won't harm her just because of that? Even if we don't harm her, that doesn't mean we should take the risk to save her!"

"That guy Ah Zu really is something. Does he not have any back at home? He just had to go around and fondle other flowers."

Sang Qien gave her an upset look.

Did she forget that we aren't Ah Zu's own proper wives either? We were also the result of his 'flower fondling'.

"Also, Ah Zu really isn't picky. He even wants a woman this old!" Zheng Dan got angrier the more she spoke. But in the end, she gave the empress dowager on the ground another look and had to admit that she was indeed beautiful.

Her ass is so big and perky...

Ahhh, I'm getting more and more upset!

Sang Hong finally said, "Regardless of what reason she has to come here, I don't think we should keep her here. She is someone from the palace, and furthermore the respected empress dowager. The fact that she is injured to this extent means that the Liu clan is completely done for. Those rebels will definitely search everywhere for her whereabouts. We'll only be bringing trouble onto ourselves if we keep her here."

Sang Qien shook her head, saying, "We can't do that. Since she came all the way here, she has a close relationship with Ah Zu. How can we just watch without doing anything? Otherwise, if Ah Zu returns and finds out what happened, he'll definitely blame us."

A hint of viciousness flickered across Sang Hong's face as he replied, "Won't it be fine as long as he doesn't know? We can just silence her, or throw her out on the street. There'll definitely be rebels who will help us take care of things."

Now, Zheng Dan also spoke up. "Ah Zu might not know, but we'd never have a clear conscience. We wouldn't be able to face Ah Zu anymore. Besides, if it were me in her situation and I looked for other sisters while on the verge of death, I definitely wouldn't want that to happen to me."

Sang Hong's expression changed. He asked, "But do you know the price that has to be paid for letting her stay? If the rebel army found out... We still have Sisi to think of. Not a single one of us would survive! You have to take responsibility for everyone's safety!"

Sang Qien took a deep breath before saying, "Father, I understand your misgivings, but this is something I can't watch as a bystander. We must save her."

Sang Hong's expression changed several times. In the end, he said with a sigh, "Love truly is irrational."

Afterward, his figure flickered and he disappeared outside the courtyard wall.

Zheng Dan exclaimed in surprise, "What is he doing?"

Sang Qien stopped her, saying, "Don't worry, father left to clean up after the traces that the empress dowager left behind. Otherwise, the rebel army soldiers would easily track her to us."

When she looked at the scars on the empress dowager's body, Zheng Dan was starting to feel a bit of admiration. She said, "Sir Sang really is tough on the outside, but soft on the inside. He is the most meticulous after all."

Sang Qien said with a bitter smile, "Father's personality is exceedingly rational. It was only because he couldn't persuade us that he ended up playing along with our nonsense."

They gave the empress dowager on the ground another look. Both girls harrumphed at the same time.

"It's all that playboy Ah Zu's fault!"

Then, Zheng Dan picked up Liu Ning and hid her in a secret room. This whole affair was too important, so they couldn't even let the manor's servants and maids see. They could only take care of things between the two sisters themselves.

The two women undid Liu Ning's clothes and treated her injuries. When they did so, the entire room seemed to brighten a bit. Zheng Dan couldn't help but say with a snort, "Her skin really is good. She's already so old, just how does she do it? No wonder that guy Zu An couldn't hold himself back."

When Sang Qien heard that Zheng Dan wasn't even calling him Ah Zu anymore, she couldn't help but smile with amusement. She said, "The empress dowager was incredibly famous in the capital in the past. Now that she's a grandmaster, her body doesn't age like a normal madam's would."

"Is this the massive butt rumored to easily bear sons? And yet even after all these years, we've never heard of her giving birth to anyone, neither male nor female," Zheng Dan said; she took out some medicine and pressed it against Liu Ning's body while giving the empress dowager's butt a slap. That shocking elasticity made even her tremble.

"Hey, don't treat the empress dowager with disrespect!" Sang Qien reflexively said, startled.

Zheng Dan smiled ambiguously and replied, "What empress dowager? She's nothing more than a boorish woman who's trying to steal our man."

"Maybe you have a point..." Sang Qien said, blushing. Then, she also gave Liu Ning's bottom a slap, producing a white wave. She clicked her tongue in amazement. "It really is big!"

As someone from a distinguished clan, she had been taught to follow the rules inflexibly and remain absolutely loyal to the royal family. Who would have thought that she would actually do something so unfilial to the empress dowager?!

"I really wonder just what this woman eats to get that big." Zheng Dan harrumphed. However, her hands didn't stop continuing to apply medicine on Liu Ning's body. "Hmph, these were medicines that Ah Zu prepared for us in the past, and yet we're actually using it all on this woman."

"Exactly!" Sang Qien felt as if she had just opened the door to a brand new world. She gave that perky bottom another strike.

Zheng Dan couldn't hold herself back and gave Liu Ning's breast a squeeze.

Wow! Mine aren't that small either, but this woman is actually so impressive. Maybe only Manman can win against her.

The unconscious Liu Ning seemed to have sensed something. Maybe it was because of the pain of her injuries, or because of their movements, but she couldn't help but groan.

The two women shivered, their faces turning red.

"Look at this woman moan. No wonder Ah Zu was bewitched by her." Zheng Dan scowled. She took a dab of ointment and threw it right onto the empress dowager's body.

Sang Qien was a bit dejected too. She was now wondering if maybe she was a bit too bashful when she was with Ah Zu, as she didn't even dare to loudly speak her real feelings. And yet each time, the more she acted like that, the more Ah Zu seemed to go on the offensive, forcing her to speak up.

Maybe that's what he likes?

...

The mood in the room was a bit heavy. The two of them silently applied the medicine and patched up her wounds. But as they saw just how many injuries Liu Ning had suffered, the two women's hostility also gradually lessened.

"Just how many battles did she have to fight in order to receive so many injuries?" Sang Qien wondered worriedly.

"Exactly! She's a grandmaster, you know? And yet she was still injured this badly. If it were the two of us, we might've already died eight hundred times over," Zheng Dan said, starting to feel a bit of admiration.

If the rebel army dared to go against the empress dowager, they had definitely prepared a powerful cultivator of the same level, and they would even have needed a numbers advantage. Even after all of that, this woman had still been able to escape from a situation of inevitable death like that. As expected of one of Ah Zu's women!

Hm? What is this mysterious sense of pride I'm suddenly feeling?

The two of them had already finished patching up her injuries, but they knew that the most important wound was still the one around her waist. Half of Liu Ning's body was already covered in a layer of ice, and that was most likely due to the effects of some sinister palm force.

The two women both used their ki. One of them took Liu Ning's hand, while the other sent ki into Liu Ning's body. The two women's aptitudes were genius-class among their peers to begin with. Furthermore, Zu An had used a secret method to clear up their meridians and even used spiritual medicines to improve their aptitude. The two of them had even secretly competed against each other, so their cultivation speeds had improved tremendously.

Roughly two hours later, they both broke out into a shiver. They let go of Liu Ning's hand.

"I can't do this anymore! It's way too cold," Zheng Dan hugged her arms and said in a shaking voice. The cold poison in Liu Ning's body was too strong, and the cultivation of the one who had used it was extremely high. Even though their own cultivation ranks weren't low, they were still too young and had only had their aptitudes raised not too long ago. The difference was still too great.

"I can't take it anymore either." Sang Qien's teeth were chattering. "But we've already helped her remove some of the cold poison, and we'll help her dispel a bit each day. The rest will be up to her."

"I guess you're right. Hmph, how could a glorious grandmaster be so useless?" Zheng Dan muttered as she felt a cold wave surge through her body. She quickly spread her arms and hugged Sang Qien. "Qienqien, please stay with me. I feel so cold."

"Me too," Sang Qien said. She and Zheng Dan usually hugged each other when they slept together. They had still been pretty embarrassed at first, but now, they instinctively held each other tightly, borrowing each other for warmth.

The two of them thought of something. They took out the Yin Yang Swords Zu An had given them and pressed them together. They borrowed the yin and yang force to remove the cold from their bodies. An hour later, the two of them opened their eyes. They felt that a lot of the coldness had disappeared, and they no longer felt as if they were in a frozen cellar like before.

Just then, their internal energies flowed naturally between each other. On top of that, with the harmonizing of yin and yang energy, the way they looked at each other now was much more intimate. For some reason, a trace of redness appeared on their faces. They looked into each other's eyes, and they unknowingly moved their faces closer and closer.

Right when their lips were about to touch, Sang Hong suddenly knocked on the door and called out, "Qienqien, how are things looking down there?"

The two women felt as if they had been pricked by a needle. They instantly separated in alarm. Sang Qien replied in a bit of panic, "Noth... Nothing happened. We were helping the empress dowager with her injuries. Her other injuries are fine, but the cold poison inside her body is really strong."

"You have to be careful too. Don't force it!" Sang Hong hurriedly warned her.

"Okay," Sang Qien replied quietly.

"I'll wait for you guys outside," Sang Hong said, his footsteps receding into the distance.

Only now did the two women look at each other again. They saw each other's necks become red. When they thought of what had just happened, they both looked at the Yin Yang Swords in their hands, then threw them away.

"What kind of stupid swords are these? They actually have such an effect," Zheng Dan said angrily.

"Yeah, these swords are really weird." Sang Qien's face also reddened.

"That guy Ah Zu, really! Even the weapons he gave us are indecent just like him!" The two women quickly began to denounce Zu An.

...

Meanwhile, Bi Linglong was reading through the memorial to the emperor when she suddenly heard the activity in the palace. She couldn't help but frown, asking, "Momo, what happened outside?"

Rong Mo quickly ran in, saying, "There seems to be a fire by Cloud Dragon Gate. I wonder if there are assassins."

"Assassins? What assassins would be that audacious?" Bi Linglong's beautiful brows furrowed as she instructed, "Continue to look into it."

"Understood!" Rong Mo quickly ran out.

Normally, even if there were assassins, Bi Linglong didn't need to worry too much because of the strict security around her. But for some reason, she just felt a bit uneasy and could no longer continue her work. She got up and walked outside. As soon as she walked through the entrance and looked toward Cloud Dragon Palace, she felt some terrifying blast waves coming from another direction.

Bi Linglong looked in that direction and was horrified, murmuring, "That's the direction of the empress dowager's palace!"

Shockwaves that intense could only be from a battle at the grandmaster level. Sure enough, under the moonlight, she saw a dancing figure with long hair. She immediately realized who it was.

"Devil Sect Master Yun Jianyue!"

The impression Yun Jianyue had left her with back when she invaded the palace was too deep. Unfortunately, Zhao Han was no longer in the palace to stop her. Furthermore, Zu An wasn't in the palace either.

Even though Bi Linglong normally always argued with the empress dowager, if the honorable empress dowager was assassinated by the Devil Sect Master, the entire empire would lose too much dignity. She picked up her weapon and said, "Men, send messages to the palace armies to strictly defend their stations. Furthermore, send some people to assist the empress dowager's palace!"

"Understood!" Her subordinates quickly ran out to pass on the message. However, as soon as they reached the exit, they quickly backed up step by step.

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Chapter 2112: A Dilemma

Bi Linglong narrowed her eyes as she noticed a group of palace guards moving in their direction. She called out, "General Zhao, what is the meaning of this?"

The leader of the group was Zhao Si. He was actually a senior of the royal family, but suddenly leading troops over to the empress palace really was a bit strange.

Zhao Si bowed and said, "I greet the empress. There is someone invading the palace, so this general brought my troops to protect your highness!"

Bi Linglong's brows furrowed as she replied, "No need. This empress is extremely safe here and doesn't need your help. It is the empress dowager's palace that seems to be the main target of the assassins' attacks. Hurry and provide her with reinforcements instead."

Zhao Si didn't move at all, saying, "This general's duty is to protect your highness. As for the empress dowager, there are others who will save her."

Bi Linglong remained silent for a few seconds. Suddenly, she asked, "In that case, why are you stopping this empress' messenger guards?"

“Please forgive me, your highness, but the palace is currently in chaos and the situation is unclear. There might be people colluding with the enemy from within. In order to minimize the chaos, the generals are all guarding their respective positions and carrying out a strict lockdown everywhere. That way, there will be nowhere for the traitors to go!” Zhao Si replied.

“Are you saying that this empress’ subordinate guards might have also colluded with the enemy?” Bi Linglong retorted with a sneer.

“This general wouldn’t dare,” Zhao Si said. Despite that, he didn’t show any intention of moving aside.

“In that case, then, this empress will personally go out on a visit. You can’t possibly claim that I am colluding with the enemy, right?” Bi Linglong got up and walked out.

However, Zhao Si raised his hand to stop her. “Your highness, please do not make things difficult for us!”

“How audacious! You dare block the empress’ path?!” The fiery-tempered Rong Mo could no longer take it. She planted her arms on her waist and berated Zhao Si.

The guard captains Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun also voiced their agreement. The other guards drew their weapons and faced the other side with unhappy expressions. Even though Zhao Si was part of the royal family, Bi Linglong was the empress. Zhao Si was a nobody in comparison!

Zhao Si’s expression changed slightly as he said, “We are also acting on orders. If your highness insists on causing trouble, you will force us to act rudely.”

With a wave of his hand, his subordinates aimed their weapons at the empress palace’s people as well, creating an atmosphere of mutual hostility.

Bi Linglong gave the soldiers a look and sneered. She walked forward as she remarked, “I wonder whose orders you are acting on? Are you thinking of rebelling?!”

Ever since she became the crown princess, practically everything in the Eastern Palace had fallen under her management. Now that she was the empress, her authority was even greater than before. She already carried the

dignity of a ruler. Her usual decisions were swift and decisive, with clear separation of punishment and rewards, to the extent that many of the imperial guards respected her greatly. Now that they were watching her walk toward them, Zhao Si's palace guard subordinates swallowed with difficulty and continued to back up for fear of hurting her.

Suddenly, a cold and indifferent voice barked, "We are, of course, acting on his majesty's orders!"

Li Guanshi led a large group of Tiger Guardian soldiers their way. With them joining the fray, Zhao Si's subordinates immediately regained confidence. They no longer cowered, and pressed forward a few steps instead.

The empress palace's guards had initially held a numbers advantage, but now that more forces had joined the other side, the advantage immediately shifted to the opposition.

"His majesty?" Bi Linglong's expression changed as she recognized Li Guanshi. She naturally knew that Zhao Ruizhi wouldn't give such an order, but he was too stupid. He'd inevitably be fooled by others. Thus, she asked, "Then I wonder what orders they are?"

Li Guanshi cupped his hands and said, "The Liu clan has colluded with the Fiend races and attempted to bring upon the downfall of our empire. Our loyal subjects are currently capturing those traitors."

They had deliberately used Zu An to incite and anger the emperor in order to get the emperor's seal, but they all knew that Zu An had killed an earth immortal and eradicated the Meng clan. His undefeated image was too cemented in the hearts of the people. Furthermore, there were too many forces that were on friendly terms with Zu An. Rashly claiming his rebellion would easily incur harsh retaliation. As such, they'd planned to get rid of the Liu clan first. Once they established a foothold, they would then slowly whittle away Zu An's power.

As soon as those words were spoken, everyone in the empress palace broke out into a commotion. They had never expected to hear such news!

Bi Linglong's expression changed several times. With her ability and wisdom, she instantly thought of many possibilities. No wonder she'd felt that something wasn't quite right in the capital. So it turns out people had been plotting this affair.

My father and older brother are probably a part of this plot too.

There's also King Wu's side. He's full of ambition and is clearly contributing to the chaos.

Even though she normally didn't get along with Liu Ning, she couldn't bring herself to feel happy about this at all.

Father probably knew that I most likely wouldn't agree, so he deliberately kept it from me.

Are they insane? Did they forget about what happened to the Meng clan?

She suddenly remembered something. Her father seemed to have killed the previous dynasty's princes and concubines. Could it be because he felt that he was already too deeply involved, and that Zu An would one day get revenge if he found out the truth, so he struck first to gain the upper hand?

But where does that leave me?!

On one side were her father and brothers, and on the other was the one she loved. Bi Linglong suddenly felt a deep sense of powerlessness.

"General Li, you really did hide your true colors well," Bi Linglong said through gritted teeth. This Li Guanshi was usually a quiet person who put on quite the loyal and devoted act. She'd never expected that he had already become the chess piece of some power a long time ago! She wondered if he worked for the Bi clan, or if he had been bought out by King Wu.

"Your highness overpraises me," Li Guanshi said calmly. He didn't even try to argue.

Just then, another group of men hurried over. The eyes of those on the empress' side immediately lit up, because they recognized those men to be the Armed Escort Army - the regent Zu An's personal forces! The two generals in the lead were none other than the Armed Escort Army Deputy Generals Wang Bolin and Zhang Zijiang.

"Wang Bolin and Zhang Zijiang greet your highness the empress!" The two bowed to Bi Linglong to directly express their stance. They began to spread out around Li Guanshi's Tiger Guardian Army.

As it turned out, they had immediately gone on the alert as soon as something happened in the Imperial Palace, and had quickly gathered their subordinates to assemble. After the two of them privately discussed everything that was happening, they'd quickly realized what was going on. Cloud Dragon Gate seemed to have encountered some sudden developments, and there were assassins by the empress dowager palace. At the same time, the palace's military also seemed to be moving really strangely.

Wang Bolin had wanted to bring their people to save the empress dowager. After all, Zu An's relationship with the empress dowager was normally really good.

However, Zhang Zijiang had stopped him, saying, "Brother Wang, you need to take a moment to consider just who could even touch the empress dowager in the first place."

"Are you talking about the empress?" Wang Bolin's expression changed.

"Apart from the empress and the Bi clan, who else would have such guts?" Zhang Zijiang replied with a bitter smile.

Wang Bolin had felt as if he was about to go mad. Zu An and the empress dowager were political allies, but he was similarly close to the empress. Furthermore, he had even come from the Eastern Palace in the first place, so he was supposed to be a bit closer to that side than even the empress dowager. Who were they supposed to help then?

It was Zhang Zijiang who had come up with a plan, saying, "The situation in the palace is currently unclear. How about we head over to the empress' palace to ask her for advice? We'll make a decision after seeing the situation over there."

Wang Bolin had agreed to that plan, and the two of them quickly brought the Armed Escort Army over. Then, even from afar, they had seen that there was an army that was surrounding the empress' palace! As such, they decided to surround those forces with their own men.

"Please hurry and rise!" Bi Linglong said, overjoyed to see these two. With their help, the situation in the palace could have a chance to stabilize.

Li Guanshi exclaimed loudly, “Wang Bolin, Zhang Zijiang, are the two of you planning to revolt?!”

Wang Bolin and Zhang Zijiang said with a sneer, “Li Guanshi, you’ve brought so many people to surround the empress’ personal palace. That’s closer to what a rebellion looks like, right?”

Li Guanshi raised a golden medal, saying, “I am acting on his majesty’s orders to protect her highness with my troops. What crimes have I committed?”

The expressions of everyone in the Armed Escort Army changed when they saw that golden medal, because that was indeed the personal token that the emperor carried with him. As such, this order was equivalent to the emperor’s own words.

“Long live his majesty!” Everyone present could only bow down in greeting. Even though they all knew that the emperor was a stupid puppet, they didn’t dare to slack off on the proper etiquette.

Li Guanshi then said, “Wang Bolin, Zhang Zijiang, make sure to guard your positions with your own troops. No one is to move around without his majesty’s own orders, or else you will be punished for treason.”

Wang Bolin and Zhang Zijiang’s expressions changed. If they weren’t allowed to go anywhere, didn’t that mean the empress dowager’s side...

They quickly gave Bi Linglong a pleading look, hoping for some instructions from her.

Bi Linglong’s expression changed greatly. She knew that today’s affairs had to be her father’s plot. Could it be that she really did have to ruin his plans? Still, if they were really allowed to do as they wished and end up provoking Ah Zu, the consequences would be too horrible to imagine.

Why did father act without thinking properly like this? Did he really forget how the Meng clan and King Dai were finished?

But father has never been the exceedingly rash type. He definitely took Ah Zu’s strength into consideration.

Could it be that he still has something else to rely on? But there aren’t any opponents who could compare to Ah Zu!

Her expression changed greatly. But when she recalled what had happened between her and Zu An, and the vow she'd made in the past, she made up her mind. She took a deep breath before shouting coldly, "Armed Escort Army, heed my orders!"

Wang Bolin and Zhang Zijiang were alarmed. They both stood tall and replied loudly, "We will carefully obey your highness' orders!"

The situation in the Imperial Palace was too chaotic, and they couldn't figure out what was really going on. However, they still remembered one thing well, which was that they were the regent's troops. They would only listen to the orders of the regent's personal people. And as far as they knew, the one closest to the regent in the Imperial Palace was none other than the empress, and the second was the empress dowager. There was no way following the empress here would be wrong.

Li Guanshi's expression changed. He asked, "Your highness, what are you trying to do?"

Bi Linglong completely ignored him and said to Wang Bolin and Zhang Zijiang, "Escort me to meet his majesty. This empress suspects that his majesty has been deceived by a crafty scoundrel and is currently in danger."

From that act, one could see how talented and brilliant she was. She didn't say that she was going to save the empress dowager, but rather said that she was going to meet the emperor. Everyone in the capital knew that she and the emperor were united in honor and disgrace. Over the years, however, everything important had been achieved through her own efforts alone. That was why in their eyes, she was the spokesperson for Zhao Ruizhi.

Now that she was saying that she was visiting the emperor, such an action could only be interpreted as right and proper. There would definitely be no one who suspected her of carrying any ill will. Furthermore, once she met Zhao Ruizhi, she would be able to completely control him. If they acted with one will, unless these Palace Guards really had plotted a rebellion, who would still dare to go against her?

Sure enough, Li Guanshi's expression changed when he heard what she said. The Tiger Guardian Army under him also looked at each other in dismay. In truth, apart from his few trusted aides, most of the soldiers didn't know what was going on either. They only listened to their commander's orders.

Previously, they'd still had the emperor's orders to rely on, but now, how were they still going to stop the empress?

The Armed Escort Army's morale immediately shot up. They shouted loudly, "We will obey!"

Meanwhile, Li Guanshi could sense that his own subordinates' morale was dropping and immediately said, "Your highness, his majesty's orders are for your respected self to remain in your palace. We are in charge of your highness' safety, so I hope that your highness won't place yourself in danger."

Bi Linglong walked forward with a sneer, retorting, "What, do I need your approval to meet with his majesty too? You keep using all sorts of excuses to prevent me from meeting with his majesty. Could it be that you did something to him?"

She had already carried a lot of awe and prestige while she was the crown princess, let alone now that she was the mother of this empire! At this rate, even many of the people in the Tiger Guardian Army who were starting to have doubts. As such, no one stopped her when she walked straight forward.

Li Guanshi's expression changed several times. He pressed his hand against his blade several times, but in the end, he didn't dare draw it. He knew that the Armed Escort Army troops were glowering at his side, and that his own soldiers were shaken. Even if he compelled his subordinates to use force to stop them, if there was a battle, they would definitely lose.

However, if he really allowed the empress to meet the emperor, that stupid fatty didn't have an ounce of wits and would spill everything. At that point, he would be dead for sure. When he realized that, he no longer hesitated. He drew his blade with one hand and held the emperor's golden medal in the other, calling out, "Soldiers, obey my orders! I carry his majesty's orders, all who resist are to be regarded as traitors!"

There wasn't even the slightest trace of fear visible on Bi Linglong's face. She said, "The emperor's current condition is unknown. Li Guanshi is faking his majesty's orders. Soldiers, arrest him!"

When they heard those words, her subordinates Jiao Sigun and Piao Duandiao roared. The empress palace's soldiers all prepared for battle.

Wang Bolin and Zhang Zijiang had already been prepared. They shouted, "We will completely obey the empress' orders!"

The Armed Escort Army prepared to attack.

It was actually the Tiger Guardian Army that wasn't completely united. Apart from Li Guanshi's personal troops, who immediately drew their blades, close to half of the other soldiers stood in place, completely at their wits' end.

Just as a battle was about to erupt, a lazy voice called out, "What is going on here? What is everyone getting so worked up for?"

The soldiers turned around and saw a lavishly dressed prince arrive with a group of soldiers.

When she saw who it was, Bi Linglong's expression changed. It turned out this was her older brother Bi Ziang.

Piao Duandiao was really happy to see him, saying, "This is great! Now that the empress' older brother is here, victory is surely in our grasp!"

Jiao Sigun chuckled, replying, "It might not be. That's hard to say."

On the other side, Wang Bolin and Zhang Zijiang exchanged a look. They secretly said through voice transmission, "It seems that it was indeed the Bi clan who started this political struggle, targeting the empress dowager and the Liu clan.

"The only confusing part is why the empress doesn't seem to understand the details, and seems to be in a completely different camp from them."

The two of them were high-ranking military officers in the palace, so they still had some degree of sensitivity. Bi Ziang was a subject who served outside the palace, so the fact that he had entered with troops in the middle of the night already answered many questions.

Li Guanshi used the chance to say, "Young master Bi, you've come at the perfect time. We bear the emperor's orders to ensure her highness' safety, and yet she insists on leaving. The outside is still extremely dangerous!"

"Who knows what the emperor's current situation is like? It could very well be that you just falsely created an imperial decree!" Bi Linglong retorted, still

struggling with the last bit of effort. Even though she talked about Li Guanshi, she were staring straight at Bi Ziang, hoping to obtain some information from his attitude.

Bi Ziang roared with laughter and said, "Little sister, you're worried about too many things! I just came from his majesty's side. He did send Officer Li to protect you. Little sister, please empathize with his majesty's painstaking effort and don't put yourself in danger."

When she heard that, Bi Linglong's heart sank to rock bottom. It seemed this was indeed her father and brother's plot. What else could she do? Was she still going to use the same argument as before? But her older brother had just testified for Li Guanshi. If she continued with her story, wouldn't that be the same as saying that her own father and brother had rebelled? That way, even if this matter was resolved, the entire Bi clan would face eradication.

Her brother's words were more of a hint for her. He wasn't trying to tell her to empathize with the emperor at all, but rather reminding her to empathize with himself and their father.

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Chapter 2113: The Dust Has Settled Pt.1

The last sentence was even more of a direct threat. If she still decided to act brazenly, he wouldn't show any mercy either.

Bi Linglong gave the surroundings a look. She only had the empress palace troops and the Armed Escort Army on her side, while Li Guanshi's Tiger Guardian Army and the soldiers her big brother had brought had an absolute numbers advantage. If they fought, there would be no chance of victory. She couldn't just let her own and Ah Zu's soldiers die for nothing.

When she realized that, she said with a sneer, "In that case, I hope that Officer Li can send some people to properly ensure his majesty's safety."

After saying this, she turned around and walked into her own chambers. When they saw that, Li Guanshi and Bi Ziang sighed in relief.

Thank goodness the empress backed off, or else it could really have become tricky if we ended up fighting.

After Bi Linglong took a few steps, however, she suddenly stopped and said, "Right, since the palace is so chaotic, Officer Wang, Officer Zhang, you two should also bring some troops to guard the surroundings and protect this palace."

Wang Bolin and Zhang Zijiang had anxious expressions, but they couldn't help but feel happy to hear that. They replied, "Understood!"

As long-term soldiers of the palace, how could they not understand what was really going on? She said that she needed their protection, but the empress was actually protecting them. Otherwise, if they left, Li Guanshi and Bi Ziang could use the emperor's name to do whatever they wanted to them, while they would have no way of defending themselves. They could only wait like livestock waiting for slaughter. If they remained by the empress palace, no matter what happened, her highness would protect them.

Bi Ziang and Li Guanshi both frowned. They naturally saw through Bi Linglong's intentions. However, they were worried that if the Armed Escort Army was allowed to leave, that could create even more variables. Since they had finally settled the matter with great difficulty, they would just let her have her way here.

...

Meanwhile, the Embroidery House also responded to the irregular events that were taking place in the palace.

Xiao Jianren summoned all of the Embroidered Envoys in the palace to discuss what to do. After being promoted by Zu An, he was the one with the highest status here. He looked at the Envoys and said, "There seems to be turmoil unfolding in the palace. What does everyone think?"

"I am loyal to his majesty and the chief commander. We will follow Sir Xiao's orders!" the envoys replied uniformly. Xiao Jianren nodded.

Just then, a woman said, "I went out to investigate just now. It seems that a battle took place by Cloud Dragon Gate. Furthermore, there was intense activity in the empress dowager's personal palace. It seemed as if peak grandmasters were fighting. The strangest part of it all is the Palace Guards'

reactions. They didn't immediately provide reinforcements, and instead guarded their own locations."

As soon as she stood up, her tall and slender figure immediately drew the others' attention. This woman had been transferred from the capital to the regional areas. As soon as she arrived, she'd immediately sought out Xiao Jianren, who had given her the identity of a silver token envoy.

At the time, the others had criticized him for his decision, wondering if this woman was Xiao Jianren's 'close friend' or something. After all, even though she wore a mask, they could tell that she was definitely a beauty just from her figure.

One day, she had accidentally overheard those rumors. That day, she viciously beat up the guy who was gossiping. From then on, they all knew just how tough she was. Even though those long legs were beautiful, they really could kick someone to death.

Eventually, it was Xiao Jianren who stepped forward to mediate things. In order to prevent further misunderstandings, he privately let out some information. After that, the others understood that this beauty with the long legs was actually a subordinate of the chief commander. Who would dare to gossip anymore after that?

From then on, Zhang Zitong had often taken the lead, charging in even more fervently than the men. Their enemies had suffered bitterly because of her. With that, the others were gradually convinced of her strength. They knew that she definitely hadn't earned her rank through her looks.

When they heard what she said, many silver token envoys began to analyze things, thinking that if the palace's armies were acting so strangely, that meant that there was a huge conspiracy. However, there was no need for them to care about too many things, because they only needed to be responsible for the emperor.

Of course, the current emperor was a bit... simple, so they listened more to the empress. After arming themselves, the group decided to seek further instructions from the empress.

However, shortly after, a bronze token envoy reported, "Sirs, an army has suddenly appeared and completely surrounded the Embroidery House."

The Envoys exclaimed furiously, "Absolutely preposterous! Who dares to act impudently here?"

After all, the Embroidered Envoy always did their business as they wished. Whether it was the big shots of the world of warriors or the emperor's relatives, they wouldn't even dare to breathe too heavily around the Envoys. It was always they who troubled others; since when did anyone ever dare to show off in front of the Embroidery House like this?

...

The group quickly rushed out with weapons in hand.

Xiao Jianren touched the glasses on his nose bridge; they were something the chief commander had given him. He looked at the one in the lead and sneered. "Zhao Yuan, the palace is in chaos, and yet what are you doing? You didn't bring your people to pacify the rebellion, and came here instead?"

The one on the other side was none other than the leader of the Tiger Guardians, Zhao Yuan. He was in charge of the palace's most powerful guards, and he was also a member of the imperial clan. He held the title of King Guangling. Unfortunately, the Embroidered Envoy didn't care about any of that. The Embroidered Envoy had investigated individuals of far higher status in the past, so there was naturally no need for Xiao Jianren to show too much courtesy.

Zhao Yuan smiled and said, "This king came to pass on the order to the armies to not willfully leave your stations, so as to make it easier for us to capture the traitors and purge them one by one."

The Embroidered Envoys looked at each other in dismay. No wonder it had been so unnaturally quiet in the palace before. So it was all because of his orders.

"I wonder who these traitors are?" Xiao Jianren replied, feeling a mysterious sense of unease.

Zhao Yuan shook his head and said, "The greater situation is still undecided. Before we receive his majesty's imperial orders, I cannot share any of these details."

Xiao Jianren said with a sneer, "Even so, the Embroidered Envoy has always strictly followed his and her majesty; you do not have the authority to restrict us. Please move aside; we wish to meet his and her majesty."

Just then, Zhao Yuan raised his hand. A flag suddenly rose behind him, bearing the image of a beast that resembled a tiger. Its entire body was brilliantly colored, and a strand of cloth formed a long tail that seemed even longer than its body.

When they saw that flag, the Embroidered Envoys were all surprised. They reflexively lowered the weapons in their hands. This was the Zouyu flag that belonged exclusively to the emperor. Whenever there was danger, it was either used to issue a decree or control troops. Those who saw it had to immediately bow in respect and stop moving, or else they would be punished for crimes of disrespect.

When he saw the Embroidered Envoys' reaction, Zhao Yuan nodded in satisfaction. He said, "This king has received orders from his and her majesty to inform all troops to guard their respective positions. Without his majesty's golden medal, they are not to leave. Do you have any more objections?"

Xiao Jianren frowned. Even though he could sense that many of the Embroidered Envoys were dissatisfied, he could only say helplessly, "We do not."

"Alright. If you Embroidered Envoys do anything willfully, it will be Sir Xiao's responsibility," Zhao Yuan said, then left behind some men to monitor the Embroidery House's surroundings before taking the remaining troops to other areas.

Xiao Jianren could only issue the orders to lock down the Embroidery House, prohibiting anyone from leaving.

"Sir Xiao, are we really going to just wait here and do nothing?" Zhang Zitong couldn't help but ask once they returned to the main hall.

"Exactly! When has our Embroidered Envoy ever had to endure something like this?" The others spoke up as well.

"These are the orders of the emperor and empress, and the chief commander isn't here. What else can we do?" Xiao Jianren replied with a sigh.

"But I just feel that there's something fishy going on..." Zhang Zitong said with an expression full of worry.

Xiao Jianren nodded, saying, "The empress dowager has never received any help all this time. That really is fishy. We'll choose a few individuals to seek more information from his and her majesty."

Zhang Zitong immediately said, "I'll go!"

After some hesitation, Xiao Jianren shook his head. He chose a few others and said, "You haven't been in the palace for that long, and aren't as familiar with the situation here."

Since the chief commander left her to me, how can I let something happen to her?

When she heard his rational pretext, Zhang Zitong couldn't say much else. She could only watch from afar as flames surged in the palace, so she felt incredibly frustrated.

Why isn't the chief commander coming back? If he were here, there's probably nothing he couldn't handle, right?

Hm? Wait, the chief commander and the Devil Sect master seem to have something going on. It's hard to even say which side he'd end up helping out...

...

Meanwhile, inside the Liu manor, everything was a complete mess. Liu Guang and Liu Yao were sitting at the highest seats in disheveled clothes. Their clothes were covered in alcohol stains, and there were even some lipstick kiss marks on their faces. They had just been enjoying themselves with company left and right, and only rushed back now after learning of what happened in the city.

The Liu clan's trusted aides had all gathered, and many people were discussing the situation below. As the Liu clan's discussion hall became as noisy as a food market, their faces were flushed red with anger.

"Stop arguing already!" an older gentleman with the air of a teacher shouted. "Let's hear what our two elders have to say!"

"That's right, please give us instructions, elders." Many of the trusted aides finally calmed down.

"Huh? What we have to say?" Liu Guang and Liu Yao replied a bit absent-mindedly. They were caught off guard and didn't really know what to say.

The older gentleman coughed. He covered his mouth and passed on a ki transmission. "Have them come forward one by one and speak their suggestions."

Liu Guang seemed to have woken up from his dreams and said, "What Teacher Zhu says is right. Ahem, what does everyone think? Please share your thoughts one by one and not all at once. How does everyone think we should deal with the current situation?"

A military officer stood up and said, "I believe that we should immediately bring out troops to the Imperial Palace's Cloud Dragon Gate to provide reinforcements. Gao Ying and Li Mian are both managing the Palace Guards. If we coordinate both inside and outside, we should be able to quickly subdue the rebellion."

"Officer Xie's words are reasonable!" Liu Guang replied with a nod, feeling that that was indeed a sensible suggestion.

Just then, a civil official stood up and said, "I don't think that is a good idea. It has already been some time since the fire began in Cloud Dragon Gate. There do not seem to be any signs of battle anymore, which means the conflict is already over. If Li Mian and Gao Ying won, it wouldn't matter even if we didn't go. If they lost, that would be nothing more than walking into a trap.

"In my opinion, we should defend our position and wait for reinforcements. Once the sky brightens again, third elder will have received information and entered the city with his troops. We can then easily deal with any revolts."

The Liu clan had three brothers. Liu Guang and Liu Yao occupied high positions in the capital. After what happened to the Qin clan, the Liu clan had used the chance to seize the positions of Central Lead General and Central Protection General. The third brother Liu Ji had been promoted to Central Lead General and normally resided outside the city to keep the various factions in the capital in check. Furthermore, the Liu clan's trusted aide Yuan Zhou had taken on the position of Central Protection General and was usually stationed inside the city.

"What Sir Ming says is correct," Liu Guang said, nodding again. He felt that that analysis was a bit more rational.

Another person got up and said, "This plan seems to be reliable, but it is too passive. We do not know what the situation in the capital is like, and there is still a long time before daybreak. That is enough time for too many variables to take place. I think we should still have great general give the order for us to open up our arsenal and equip the people in their respective manors. We should contact General Yuan and try to control the city gates together so as to contain the rebel army inside the city. Once morning comes, Third Elder can enter the city. We can take our time dealing with those bastards and capture them all in one go!"

Liu Guang's eyes lit up as he said, "Sir Xuan's thoughts are quite meticulous. That will ensure that the city gates are in our hands. Then, no matter what variables take place, we can adapt to it."

Everyone present grumbled inwardly.

Why does the great general think every plan is good? This makes him seem as if he doesn't have his own opinions at all, right?

Just then, someone said, "I think you are all still thinking too optimistically. It has already been so long, and yet there has been no news from the palace at all. Gao Ying and Li Mian are both diligent and experienced individuals. If there were any opportunity to do so, they would have definitely sent news over. Furthermore, General Yuan's army still has not appeared despite so much time already passing. I already fired a messenger arrow toward Third Elder outside the city, but there was no activity outside at all. All of this seems really abnormal."

"What are you trying to say?" Liu Yao asked unhappily.

Why is what this guy is saying making it sound so scary?

That person's expression became grave as he continued, "I believe that the ones who are causing trouble might have already seized the absolute advantage, and we have little chance of victory. We should immediately rush out of the city gates before they completely surround us, and return to our own fiefdom. Then, we can gather all of our troops to fight back. We will also be able to stall for enough time for the regent to return. Then, with him here, no matter what kind of trouble takes place this evening, it'll be easily resolved."

A huge uproar broke out when the others heard those words. After all, the prospect was a bit too horrifying.

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