

## Nightwatcher 131

Chapter 131. Rich Overnight

Jingxiu Palace!

Stepping on the soft grass with her exquisitely embroidered shoes, Princess Lin'an entered the Jingxiu Palace holding her brother, the crown prince's arm.

The room was as warm as spring, the floor heating dispelling the frigidity of December. The luxuriously dressed Noble Consort was sitting at the table, waiting for her son and daughter with a sumptuous meal, a smile covering her face.

Noble Consort Chen was in her early forties. Although she had already passed a woman's prime years, She was at the most full and plump age as a woman.

Her skin was still delicate, and her eyes still rippled with watery light. Her well-maintained figure hadn't gone out of shape. The years seemed to have precipitated a mature charm on her body.

Leaving aside the devastatingly beautiful empress, Noble Consort Chen was the most beautiful among the numerous beauties in the harem.

Therefore, Among the four princesses, only Lin'an could be compared with the eldest princess... no, contend with her.

"It's too hot. Have the servants outside burn less charcoal." The energetic princess Lin'an frowned.

She usually only needed a small charcoal fire. She found the floor heating too hot, as if she was in a steamer.

Noble Consort Chen, wearing a gentle smile, immediately ordered, "As Princess Lin'an said. Lower the Charcoal fire."

Lin'an happily threw herself into her mother's arms. Smiling like a little girl, she said, "Mother, I'll be sleeping here tonight. Can I sleep with you?"

Noble Consort Chen nodded with a gentle smile.

Although this was against the rules, as any concubine may serve the emperor at night, but because Emperor Yuanjing had been practicing Dao throughout the years, he had always abstained from females, causing many rules in the harem to become mere decorations.

If the Emperor cared about women, the rules would be strict. But, the emperor didn't care for the beauties in his harem anymore. So, as long as they didn't break any basic principles, they could do as they pleased.

If the basic principles were broken... hehehe.

Whatever state Emperor Yuanjing's harem was in, It was at the very least harmonious, since the concubines couldn't fight even if they wanted to.

The crown prince accompanied his mother in her daily chores, while Princess Lin'an chirped in from the sidelines.

"Today, the spirit dragon suddenly went berserk and almost hurt Lin'an. Father Emperor and his guards were almost unable to rescue her in time." The crown prince mentioned what had happened in the afternoon.

The typically calm Noble Consort turned pale with fright, hurriedly took Princess Lin'an's hand, and looked at it with fear "Are you injured anywhere? Let Mother take a look."

The second princess was a girl who liked to be spoiled, so she took advantage of the situation to make a pitiful expression "Daughter could almost not see mother today."

The Noble Consort was scared, and said in anger, "What are those guards doing? They couldn't even tame a beast. My child nearly got injured."

After she lost her temper, she held Princess Lin'an's hands, "What happened later? Did the crown prince save you?"

The status of the crown prince was completely different from that of the other princes. Except for the queen, the other concubines in the harem must call him "crown prince", and couldn't refer to him as "son" or "Emperor's child".

Lin'an scrunched up her nose, and complained, "Big brother Crown Prince doesn't have such ability. Every time Huaiqing bullies me, he just speaks but doesn't help me defeat Huaiqing."

The crown prince smiled wryly and shook his head.

As the noble consort got more curious, she glanced at the crown prince, then held her daughter's hands, saying, "Can you tell me about it?"

Lin'an's charming eyes that looked like a peach blossom suddenly bloomed, "I had taken in a small bronze gong today... Well, the day before yesterday. I had brought him along today, and he was the one who saved me during the accident."

"Bronze Gong..." Noble Consort Chen frowned, "From the Nightwatchers?"

"Yeah." Lin'an said, "I know mother concubine doesn't like Nightwatchers, as they are Wei Yuan's people. But he's mine."

Noble Consort Chen smiled, and nodded, "Did His Majesty give any rewards?"

"Of course he did." the crown prince replied.

"I also have to send some rewards, then." Noble Consort Chen solemnly said, "I will have someone pick up some jewellery and send them over later."

The recipient of the Noble Consort's reward, of course, couldn't be the courtier, but would be the female relatives in the courtier's family.

Hearing it all, the crown prince suddenly frowned, "When did Xu Qi'an become yours, then?"

Princess Lin'an immediately raised her chin as white as snow, and said proudly, "I snatched him over from Huaiqing."

"Does Huaiqing know?"

"She knows."

"And she didn't teach you a lesson."

"If she dares to teach me a lesson... I'll take Xu Qi'an to see her, so I can be protected from her and annoy her at the same time." Speaking this, Princess Lin'an praised her wit.

...

In December, the sky turned dark at the drop of a hat.

When setting off from the Constabulary, The sun was still hanging in the western sky, stubbornly dyeing the clouds in its colours.

When he arrived at the Xu Mansion, the sky was completely dark, and lanterns were lit up, reflecting the pedestrians running late, garrets, and tiled houses in the vicinity.

The dark sky, the bamboo lanterns, and the antique buildings... Every time he saw this scene, Xu Qi'an chided himself for not learning to draw.

At that time, the gate of the Xu Mansion had been closed as the gatekeeper, Old Zhang, knew that Dalang never went in through the gate.

So, When Xu Qi'an knocked on the door, Old Zhang was surprised.

"Call out the servants in the mansion. We have to move some things." Xu Qi'an ordered.

*\*Move Things?\**

Old Zhang glanced over Xu Dalang's shoulder, and found the three carriages with him, along with the Nightwatchers traveling with him.

...

In the front hall, the family of four was having their dinner. Xu Lingyue hadn't waited for her elder brother to have dinner today. Thinking of him, she lowered her head and said, "Big brother hasn't been home for dinner for many days by now."

As the candle flickered, Her long eyelashes caught their light, making her sharp oval face glow with a lustre like warm jade.

Considering her fair and beautiful oval face and her fresh and pure style, she would become a school belle conforming to the public aesthetics by simply wearing a sailor suit.

Um, An mixed-race school belle at that. Xu Lingyue's face was more three-dimensional and deeper than other girls.

"I'll leave some food for big brother to eat." Xu Lingyin and her sisters were on opposite sides of the spectrum in terms of their thoughts about Xu Qi'an. She believed that no one at home would compete with her for food if her big brother was away.

As she held chopsticks in her stubby little hands, they flew all over the table, as if she was gifted by heaven.

"Is it time for you to receive your salary in a few days?" Auntie looked over to Second Uncle, in a questioning tone.

Second Uncle Xu bowed his head to continue eating, "En."

In fact, he had already overdrawn his salary for the month. As the end of the year approached, Entertainment with colleagues and gifting colleagues all consumed silver.

\*... Anyway, Ningyan hasn't married a wife yet. Let's borrow his salary to deal with this first.\*  
Second Uncle Xu silently said to himself.

"We don't have enough money to make clothes for Lingyue, Lingyin, Dalang, and Erlang at the end of the year." Auntie sighed.

The family still had some savings of dozens of taels of silver last month, before they went to Cloud Deer Academy. But, when they had come back, the savings were empty...

Auntie wished to tear Second Uncle a new one on the spot, asking if he had been fooling around.

But, Xu Dalang and Xu Erlang guaranteed personally that the money was used to form relationships and do business, and was definitely not used for fooling around.

Auntie believed them.

\*Although Xu Dalang was annoying, he had a stubborn personality and never lied. Xu Erlang was a scholar, living a strict life since childhood, and was quite sensible.\*

"It's just a matter of a few taels of silver." Second Uncle Xu didn't care about it.

Auntie glanced at him, "I want to purchase a bolt of brocade."

Second Uncle Xu raised his head, surprised. He didn't think that the family's current financial situation could afford one or two bolts of brocade.

Auntie counted the state for him, saying that Erlang would be taking the Spring Examination soon, if he wins, his status would be different, making it inappropriate for him to wear his previous robes.

Lingyue had reached marriageable age. So, the dresses in her closet should be refurbished.

Second Uncle Xu listened to her absent-mindedly, humming perfunctory yeses from time to time.

Bang!

Auntie hit the table with chopsticks, drawing everyone's attention.

Auntie picked up the chopsticks again, holding a stiff expression, "Eat."

Second Uncle Xu helplessly said, "During the Silver Tax case, Our home was emptied. I had to borrow from my colleagues for the rice and noodles in the first month. Let's wait until next year. I'll buy them next year."

Auntie bowed her head, not showing her reddened eye sockets.

"Careful, Careful... Don't touch the wall. If anything gets dirty, don't believe this old man won't hit you."

The gatekeeper Old Zhang's scolding sound sounded in the front hall.

Second Uncle frowned and looked in a bad mood, The servants of the mansion were coming in cautiously under the command of gatekeeper Old Zhang, carrying bundles of silk.

Auntie opened her orchid-like big eyes, watching the bright and beautiful silk bolts moving in disbelief.

"So beautiful..." Xu Lingyue exclaimed.

Lyu'e also widened her eyes as she drooled with desire.

Only Xu Lingyin still remained faithful to her food, her cheeks bulging as her face remained buried in the bowl.

"Where did you get these?" Second Uncle Xu asked blankly.

The gatekeeper Old Zhang unfolded a piece of coarse cloth, spread it on the ground, and directed the servants to put down the silk. While doing so, he replied, "Dalang brought this back. He says these were given to him by His Majesty."

\*Given by His Majesty?\* Second Uncle Xu's first reaction was to believe that the Sangpo case had been solved.

As an Imperial Guard, he was on duty in the outer city on weekdays, and he didn't know what happened in the inner city. The Sangpo case caused a lot of trouble in the inner city, but people with insufficient status couldn't get access to relevant information.

Thinking of his stagnancy in the Refining Qi realm for nearly twenty years, Second Uncle felt gloomy. But soon, his gloominess was washed away by joy, "Where's Ningyan?"

"He's outside the door. His Majesty had rewarded a total of 500 bolts of silk." The gatekeeper Old Zhang happily replied.

"Pata!"

The chopsticks in Auntie's hands fell to the table.

## Chapter 132. Night Meeting

\*Five hundred bolts...\* Auntie's fragrant heart leapt. These silks were varied in style: damask, satin, chiffon, brocade, and many numerous others, woven meticulously, embroidered beautifully. Auntie wasn't lacking in experience at the fabric market, and her eyes were sharp. She recognised that any one bolt of fabric here was worth far more than any of the luxury products she could buy.

\*Five hundred bolts of such beautiful fabric...\* Auntie felt that she had been knocked into a daze by fortune coming out of the blue.

Xu Lingyue was not any better than her mother; from ancient times, women had a special place in their heart for clothing.

Xu Lingyin, taking advantage of mum and dad not paying attention to scarf up as much as she could naturally was not in this category. She was still a child.

"I'll help!" Uncle Xu couldn't sit steady any longer, suddenly rising and walking briskly outside.

Xu Qi'an stood by the horse cart, and was just talking to Song Tingfeng about going to the Jiaofangsi after the Sangpo case was done.

"About that, of the 24 oirans of the Jiaofangsi I've only slept with Fuxiang. Some day I need to visit every one in turn." Xu Qi'an said with an expectant tone.

"You..." Song Tingfeng stared at him with a strange expression, "Aren't you lovers with Fuxiang? What you should be doing is buying her freedom."

“You...” Xu Qi’an stared at him with a strange expression, not being able to figure out why ancient people always wanted to privately use public vehicles.

\*Mn, the status of concubines are only a bit higher than maidservants. Perhaps in their eyes, redeeming the freedom of a brothel girl is like buying their sons a girlfriend that doesn’t speak nor eat.\*

\*And an oiran stays youthful for long.\*

\*A wife and a concubine cannot be compared... but in my eyes, redeeming the freedom of a brothel girl, compared to meeting a rich beauty on a blind date, and saying I’m just out buying clothes is the same... I guess our viewpoints are still different.\*<sup>[1]</sup>

Xu Qi’an shook his head, not wanting to continue this topic.

“Uncle, don’t carry these.” Seeing Second Uncle Xu coming out to help, Xu Qi’an called towards him.

When Uncle Xu looked over, Xu Qi’an picked up the 60 jin heavy wooden chest, and chucked it over: “Help carry this.”

Uncle Xu reached over to catch it, and felt it’s rather dense weight. As he opened to look... \*What flashing has blinded my damn eyes!\*

Auntie was in the front hall, going into a daze looking at the pretty silks, stroking here, stroking there, her beautiful face uncontrollably showing a wide smile.

Xu Lingyue placed a small hand on a bolt of silk, feeling its smooth texture, her young girl’s heart beating vigorously.

\*Smack!\*

As the mother, Auntie smacked her hand, saying unhappily, “Don’t get them dirty.”

Xu Lingyue said deeply, “Is mum happy? These things were given to big brother by His Majesty, they’re not yours.”

A fatal blow!

Auntie’s smile slowly faded, as after a while, her beautiful and dignified face stiffly stretched into an awkward smile, “That... I’ve been quite good to Dalang, right...”

For these words, even she did not have any confidence.

Xu Lingyue nodded, “Mn, you’ve been very good. Big brother is your loss-leader.”

“Damned brat!” Auntie poked Xu Lingyue with one finger, sending the latter staggering.

At this time, mother and daughter saw Uncle Xu walk in carrying a chest, his senses in a daze.

Auntie picked up her skirt hems, and came over, “Husband dear, what’s this?”

Clack... clack... Uncle Xu opened the case, and then closed it again, then looking at his wife, “You blind?”

“I’m blind...”

Auntie, from when she was an unmarried girl in the boudoir to now having given birth to three children, in her thirty-six years of life she had never seen so much silver — no — gold.

Uncle had never owned so much gold.

...

“My throat’s so dry, I’ve been tired all day, I haven’t even had a chance to drink some good tea.”

“Ningyan, sit. Auntie will make you some.”

...

“I want steamed eggs.”

“Auntie will tell the chefs to make you some.”

...

“Have we got any milk?”

“Of course of course, Auntie here has the freshest milk.”

At the dinner table, Xu Qi’an sat at the pride of place, as the normally arrogant and proud Auntie earnestly cared for him. If Xu Qi’an wanted steamed eggs, Auntie would arrange the kitchen to make it. If Xu Qi’an wanted to drink tea, Auntie would make it for him. If Xu Qi’an wanted to drink milk, Auntie would give him some... trying her best to mend the tattered and torn relationship between aunt and nephew.

“Auntie, c’mon, that’s not sincere, I want to eat steamed eggs that Auntie made.” Xu Qi’an pouted.

... Auntie bit her lip, and forced out a smile, “Auntie will go and make you some.”

The steamed eggs came, and Xu Qi’an simultaneously ate and said, “Ai, in the neighbouring yard there’s so many dirty clothes. An unfortunate brat like me with no mother or father, can only wash them myself.”

... Auntie clenched her teeth, “Ningyan, that’s a bit much to say, Auntie has always seen you as if you were my son, Auntie will wash them for you.”

Proud and elated! Xu Qi’an felt his thoughts finally connect, and that obsession that had been suppressed in his heart, finally dissipated.

“Uncle, how about we sell this house, and buy a large courtyard in the inner city.” Xu Qi’an suggested.

Auntie’s beautiful eyes lit up, flashing with light.

\*Sell this house...\* Uncle Xu looked across the furniture in the hall, and suddenly felt a pang of sadness, “This is our family home, are we going to sell it just like that? Your father and I both grew up here.”

“If you don’t sell it no matter. Eight thousand taels of silver is enough to buy a huge place in the inner city.” Xu Qi’an raised his wine cup, and drank, smiling, “Uncle, am I a bastard son of yours that you had with a woman outside?”

“Pfft...” Uncle Xu desperately turned his head downwards, and a mouthful of alcohol sprayed over Xu Lingyin’s face.

He originally wanted to spit towards the floor, it was just unfortunate that his young daughter was too small, and he just managed to catch her face.

Little Pea was stunned, not knowing what she did wrong. She resolutely tried not to cry, licked some of the alcohol off her face, and finding that it did not taste good, then started crying.

Uncle Xu stared at his nephew with no filter, “What are you blathering on about.”

\*Uncle didn’t show shock or guilt... Auntie’s face is also not shocked or suspicious,...\* Xu Qi’an, experienced in the psychology of facial expressions, made his deduction.

When a person has their guard lowered, their unconscious actions would most align with their state of mind.

Xu Qi’an first dismissed the idea that he was Uncle’s bastard son, though that he would think like this was not without reason. When he was young, and Uncle’s colleagues had come around to visit, they would point at Xu Qi’an saying “This your son?”

Or point at Xu Xinnian and say “Your young daughter is really beautiful.”

What did this mean? It meant that Xu Qi’an looked like his uncle.

From the point of view of genetics, these two were blood relatives.

“Just a joke. I’ve never seen my birth mother, and I look so similar to Uncle.” Xu Qi’an shrugged,

“Oh right, Auntie’s seen my mother, right?”

Auntie replied “Naturally. When your mother was carrying you, I had to look after her for a while. Your mother was very kind, unlike you...”

She quickly stopped, nearly snapping at her nephew in habit.

“Then your old brother?” Xu Qi’an ate his steamed egg, observing Second Uncle out of the corner of his eye.

Uncle Xu paused for a moment, before reacting, grunting “That’s your father.”

He recollected his memories for a moment, “Your grandparents died early, and so us brothers relied on each other to live. Your father was more talented than me, a shame that he died in the Campaign of Mountains and Seas.”



Xu Qi'an did not ask any further, quickly eating his fill. Leaving the five hundred bolts of silk in the main manor, he carried the chest off to his small courtyard.

Putting the gold in the home was not safe. So many of his colleagues at the Nightwatchers Constabulary saw him that afternoon, that on the off chance one had any ideas, and broke in, that would cause Auntie and his younger sisters to be involved.

"Wei Yuan said, that for an extended period of time he would send Nightwatchers to secretly guard our manor, and surveil the Xu Manor's surroundings, protecting against the Earth Sect Daoists seeking revenge. This also can serve as deterrent for any Nightwatchers plotting anything..." Xu Qi'an vaunted over the high wall, and put the chest in his Earth Book fragment.

...

After bathing, the fragrant Auntie sat at the bedside, head tilted, drying her black silken hair with a towel.

Uncle Xu sat cross legged on a couch some way away, refining his qi.

"You practice day after day, and yet you still haven't gotten anywhere." Auntie rolled her charming eyes.

Whew....

Uncle Xu let out a long breath, and opened his eyes. Even if after reverse breathing his spirit was roused, deep in his eyes still lingered some darkness.

He had long reached the peak of Refining Qi, and no matter how much further he practiced, his qi would not increase. Yet the door towards Refining Spirit was still locked tight.

"Dear, say if you break through to... the next rank, will you get promoted?" Auntie pushed up her full breasts, and stretched her back.

Xu Pingzhi grunted "Mhm, naturally."

Auntie finished drying her hair, took off her silk shoes, and lay sideways on the bed, her two long legs folded across each other. She hugged the pillow in her bosom, and scolded into the air, "Xu Ningyan that little brat, he must be so proud of himself. If not for the silk, and the house in the inner city, I wouldn't tolerate him, he makes me want to spit blood."

As she spoke, she let out a long sigh, "Without any of us knowing he's made a future for himself."

When she first received him from her husband, he was only as big as a kitten.

Thud thud thud...

The sound of knocking on the door came through, and from outside came Xu Qi'an's voice, "Uncle, there's something I forgot to tell you."

Auntie took a shock, and quickly let down the bed drapes, curling under her duvet.

Xu Pingzhi rose, saying "Let's go to the study."

“There’s no need. Uncle you can come out here, I only have a couple things to say.”  
Xu Qi’an replied.

Auntie hugged the covers, and eavesdropped from behind the bedcurtains. Uncle and nephew spoke for a minute or two, before her husband returned, and closed the door.

“What did you say, did he secretly give you private spending money?” Auntie poked her head through the bedcurtains, staring at Xu Pingzhi.

Suddenly, she was stunned. She saw her husband’s eyes were red and watery.

“Husband?” Auntie felt at a loss, saying in confusion.

“I’ve finally gotten hope...” Xu Pingzhi closed his eyes, saying softly, “Hope for Refining Spirit.”

Auntie pursed her lips tight.

\*... is it Ningyan?\*

...

Xu Qi’an returned to his small courtyard, as he suddenly felt something with his spirit. Pausing in front of the door, he lightly pushed it open.

He walked to the table as usual, and lit a candle, its thin flame giving off a dim murky light, pushing away the darkness, painting a layer of orange in the room.

On the bed was sat an old Daoist with salt and pepper white hair. Even though it was held up by a hairpin, messy strands still hung down.

His features were deep cut, his expression peaceful.

“You’ve come.” Xu Qi’an greeted him with a light smile.

“I’ve come.” Jinlian Daozhang nodded, and returned his smile.

“You shouldn’t have come.” Xu Qi’an said solemnly,

Jinlian Daozhang asked in surprise “What does that mean? Did we not arrange a meeting tonight.”

\*... no, I’m just memeing, you need to understand Gu Long’s novels better!\* Xu Qi’an shrugged, “I’m just joking with Daozhang.”

“How is the Sangpo case going?” Jinlian didn’t mind, after all everyone had their little problems, and the Heaven and Earth Society’s members all had strong personalities.

Xu Qi’an hesitated for a moment, before saying “This case is very complicated, and involves too many powers. At this current point, I have many leads, and they are all messy. On this matter, I’ve been a pol... a bailiff for so many years, and have never encountered such a difficult case.”

\*Usually we rely on surveillance!\* His mind added.

Immediately, he told Jinlian Daozhang of all of his findings, his deductions, and his reasonings.

Having been in the Heaven and Earth Society until now, he had come to trust Jinlian Daozhang to some capacity, feeling that the latter was a good ally to have. Furthermore, there was no conflict of interest for him in the Sangpo case.

\*Mn, if escaping to the capital to hide from danger was just a surface excuse, and really he was making foundations for the Sangpo Case, then the one who silenced Magistrate Zhao was also him, then he really would be a master of lies!\*

Xu Qi'an joked sarcastically to himself, \*currently anyone I look at is bad, anyone I look at is a LYB.\*

"You suspect that the Zhenbei King is behind this case, that he and the northern Yao and the northeast Church of the Warlock God are plotting to usurp the throne?"

"Thus the case of the Sangpo Lake Explosion, releasing the first generation Jianzheng." Jinlian Daozhang said with a frown.

"What does Daozhang think?" Xu Qi'an asked back.

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### Chapter 133. The Shaman Clans

"All these do sound reasonable at first glance. But, you don't have any conclusive evidence, whether on King Zhenbei or the first Jianzheng."

"King Zhenbei guards the border all year long. This Daoist doesn't know him well, and neither do you. You were a bit too rash in determining him as evil."

"Furthermore, King Zhenbei is a third rank Martial Artist, and he still has a chance some day to break through to the second rank. You still have to consider if he even wants to become emperor. Hehe, of course, power has moved many hearts since ancient times, so this poor Daoist's analysis may also be too rash." Daoist Jinlian gave his analysis.

"Breaking through to the second rank and being emperor aren't mutually exclusive." Xu Qi'an had his thoughts on this, "This is just a hypothesis, and I haven't verified it yet. After I collect the evidence, We can be sure whether or not King Zhenbei is the mastermind."

"But, Daozhang, I can't continue on that front." Xu Qi'an sighed, "Emperor Yuanjing ordered me to investigate the case. But, as King Zhenbei is a King from the royal family, with an army under his banner, I can't investigate his House openly."

"The Jianzheng of the Sitianjian is pretending to be sick, and I can't go to the Star Observatory to question him. It's indeed a difficult matter."

"Emperor Yuanjing?" Daoist Jinlian narrowed his eyes to examine Xu Qi'an, an inexplicable colour flashing in his eyes.

"It's been many years since I've heard an Imperial dog refer to him that way." The Daoist Priest clicked his tongue in surprise.

"I seem to have overlooked something."

"What did you overlook?" Xu Qi'an subconsciously asked.

"Your brain is naturally rebellious." The old Daoist commented.

\*I'm not... You are speaking nonsense... Don't pin a crime on me like that...\* Putting on a serious face and an equally serious tone, Xu Qi'an said, "I am very loyal and devoted to His Majesty."

Daoist Jinlian did not tear through this rebuttal.

"The water in this case looks incredibly deep. Does Daozhang have any suggestions for me?" Xu Qi'an asked.

"You were clever in pretending to be a Confucian disciple in the Heaven and Earth Society."

\*I knew that you must have been watching us perform palace fights in the group while smiling like an aunt watching her nephews...\* Xu Qi'an lampooned about this LYB.

"This Daoist will analyse it with you. There were a few things in your description that didn't quite add up."

"Daozhang, pray tell." Xu Qi'an's eyes immediately lit up.

He chose to communicate frankly and openly with this old Daoist, seeing his wisdom and rich experience.

LYBs were indeed disgusting. But they surely did generate a sense of security when they were your allies.

After pondering for a while, Daoist Jinlian said, "The first weird thing is the Jianzheng standing by. If the first Jianzheng was indeed the one sealed under Sangpo, he would have been the most anxious one. But, he is very quiet... Well, the old guy could not be in the Star Observatory, and doing things in secret."

Xu Qi'an nodded, silently.

The original Jianzheng and the current Jianzheng should be irreconcilable with each other, like fire and water. The reason was quite simple; if the master had been sealed by the apprentice, and the apprentice then happily took his place running the Sitianjian, clearly the relationship between master and apprentice had been completely broken. Otherwise, with the first rank strength of the Jianzheng, even the Sect leader from the Human Sect couldn't stop him.

"The second wrong thing is Emperor Yuanjing. He lifted the ban on the city the second day the Sangpo case happened. Hehe... Don't you find it strange? There's no reason for him to leave trouble for the future."

Xu Qi'an immediately said, "I have also thought about these two issues, and I guessed that the city gate was opened to lure the snakes out of the hole... well, I have no way to know what is going on inside the Jianzheng and Emperor Yuanjing's heads, they're too high a level for me."

"True." Daoist Jinlian said, "You have another reason to talk with me, right? Is Number Six related to the Sangpo case?"

"To be precise, Monk Hengyuan's junior brother is involved in this case. I have become more sure of this after he lost contact for no reason."

"As I expected. You have been to Qinglong Temple and found out Hengyuan's identity." Not surprised at all, Daoist Jinlian then asked, "His junior brother?"

"There was a monk in the Qinglong Temple named Henghui. Henghui eloped with King Yu's daughter Princess Pingyang more than a year ago, causing King Yu to be shocked and bedridden. This incident is connected to the struggle between the aristocrat bloc and the civil official bloc for power." Xu Qi'an grabbed the water jug, poured a glass of water, moistened his throat, and continued,

"Monk Henghui stole a qi-shielding Magic Artefact from Qinglong Temple to avoid him and Princess Pingyang being caught. I suspect that this Magic Artefact got into the possession of Baihu Zhou Chixiong of the Jinwu Guards."

Daoist Jinlian listened to him patiently, frowning and showing a thoughtful expression from time to time. After Xu Qi'an finished, he spoke, "So, You want to know about Henghui from Hengyuan to confirm your guess, don't you?"

"Um... This is the only lead I currently have. Daozhang, You should remember that Hengyuan had said that his junior brother had been abducted. But, the abbot of the Qinglong Temple said that Henghui had eloped. Maybe Hengyuan had found some clues after leaving Qinglong Temple for investigation..."

"You want me to lead you to find him."

"I implore Daozhang to do so."

...

Thousands of miles in the south, the moon was bright and the stars sparse.

Different from the cold and dry winter in the capital, the climate was humid in the south, where the Shaman Clans resided. Even in the coldest season of the year, the Shamans wore thin clothes.

Lina was wearing thin cloth boots, and her skirt only reached her knees, revealing her slender and straight legs.

Her face was exquisite. Her eyebrows were slightly thick and her pupils were light blue, rippling with an innocent and lively glint.

Her wheat-coloured skin gave her a healthy and wild look, as if she were a vigorous female leopard.

A large group with hundreds of people travelled in the wilderness. They were holding torches and moving forward silently.

Lina, with her agile steps and energetic demeanour, seemed a little incompatible with the group.

This time, she was following the elders of her tribe to gain experience, their destination being the Abyss, the place where the Gu God was sleeping. The Shaman Clans had seven tribes, who were the beneficiaries and the guardians of the Gu God.

\*When I figure out the reason for the revival of the Gu God, I can announce the information in the Heaven and Earth Society so that everyone can owe me a debt. Of course, I'll do it only if revealing the reason won't cause any problems for the Shaman Clans.\* Thinking of this, a bright smile covered Lina's beautiful face.

"Lina, Be serious." Her elder brother Mosang turned around and reprimanded her in a quiet tone.

He had thick eyebrows and big eyes, and his appearance was quite similar to Lina's. But, a deep scar marred the left side of his handsome face. That, along with his fierce eyes made him give off an unruly temperament.

Lina wasn't afraid of her elder brother at all, and rebutted playfully, "Other elder brothers have sisters-in-law to scold. But, You don't have a wife and only know to scold me all day long."

Frustrated, Mosang walked away with a sullen expression.

Lina followed her brother, putting her arms around his shoulders, and she smiled, "I heard that the women in Great Feng are juicy and plump, and their faces are whiter than steamed buns. I'll grab a wife for you, Mosang."

Mosang coldly snorted, "What's the use of beauty? I want a woman that can tear up a leopard with her bare hands."

"According to my friend, Great Feng's Princess Consort Zhenbei is astonishingly beautiful. Their Eldest Princess is also charming. Similarly, the Dao Master of the Human sect is also a beauty. All of them are said to be nation-toppling beauties."

Mosang immediately looked over and swallowed, "You help me ask your friend how beautiful they actually are... Wait, where did you get such a friend?"

Ignoring him, Lina paced ahead.

"Heaven Gu grandma, wait for me..." Lina left her tribe's group and went to the leader of the Heaven Gu Tribe, a hunchbacked old woman.

The Heaven Gu Grandma raised her wrinkle-covered face. Her eyes clear, she looked at Lina, "What do you need from this old grandma, little girl?"

"Grandma, I have a friend... Well, a friend of a friend. He has encountered some strange incidents lately." Rolling her eyes, Lina said, "He's lucky, Outrageously lucky."

There was a reason for Lina to ask Heaven Gu Grandma this question.

According to legend, After the Gu God fell to deep sleep, its spirit transformed into Heart Gu, its blood and essence transformed into Strength Gu, its venom transformed to Poison Gu, its appetite transformed to Desire Gu, its eyes transformed to Heaven Gu and its bodily fluids transformed to Corpse Gu.

That was the origin of the seven tribes of the Shaman Clans. There was also a second legend in the Shaman Clans, that the Gu God would withdraw its powers once it recovers.

No one in the Shaman Clan hoped for this ancient beast on par with Gods and Buddhas to revive.

Heaven Gu represented the eyes of the Gu God, which could observe the laws of nature and all phenomena. Therefore, the Heaven Gu Clan was responsible for formulating the calendar. The entire Shaman Clan worked and farmed according to the instructions from the Heaven Gu Clan.

Additionally, The Heaven Gu Clan was also proficient in the secret arts of divination, and omen reading.

Heaven Gu Grandma said, "That person should be one with a bright natal star, a good person who has done countless good deeds and accumulated a lot of meritorious virtue."

\*Is Number Three a good person? Probably...\* Lina said, "But, His luck is to pick up silver. He picks up silver every day."

\*But, Daoist Jinlian had said that his situation wasn't due to meritorious virtue.\*

"Picking up money? What luck is this? You are speaking nonsense, little girl." A middle-aged man in the Heaven Gu Clan loudly laughed.

Laughter came from all sides, breaking the dignified and serious atmosphere in the team.

\*This little girl from the Strength Gu Clan is quite interesting.\*

"Shut up!" Grandma Heavenly Gu suddenly yelled. Serious, She grabbed Lina's wrist with such force that it caused Lina to frown slightly.

"Little girl, where is your friend? Tell me, tell me quickly..." Heaven Gu Grandma looked eager.

\*What...\* The people from the Heaven Gu Clan looked at each other in dismay, unable to understand how a little girl's joke made Heaven Gu Grandma so excited.

Mosang stood on his feet and looked around when he discovered the abnormality. He saw Heaven Gu Grandma grabbing his sister's wrist, and said in a loud voice, "Dad, something's happened."

The chief of the Strength Gu Clan nodded calmly, his voice magnetic, "I'll go and have a look."

#### Chapter 134. Plastic Father-Son Relationship

"What's wrong, Heaven Gu Grandma?"

Lina turned her head upon hearing her father's voice and saw a tall, burly middle-aged man with muscles as hard as a rock and a rigid countenance walking over to her.

He was nine feet tall, making him stand out from the crowd, being two heads taller than the surrounding Shamans, and his arms were thicker than Lina's waist.<sup>[^1]</sup>

As he walked, the surrounding people felt as if they were being stared at by an eagle or a wolf, feeling a stifling, oppressive aura.

The hunchbacked Heaven Gu Grandma looked like a child compared to this one.

Heaven Gu Grandma raised her head, nodded slightly, and turned her gaze back to Lina, as she said in a trembling voice, "Tell me, little girl. Granny is waiting for your answer."

\*Grandma's a little too anxious... What's the matter with her? Does she want to pick up money daily like Number Three's friend, too?\* Lina felt uncomfortable due to the fierce reaction of Heaven Gu Grandma.

Heaven Gu Grandma refused to move, which caused the group to stop as well. The elites from the Heaven Gu Clan set their sights on Lina. People from the other tribes also exchanged whispers, without knowing what had happened.

Heaven Gu Grandma turned her head and told a young man behind her, "Inform the chiefs of the other tribes to take a break. Come on, little girl. Let's talk over there... Don't follow me, Longtu."

The leader of the Strength Gu Clan, Longtu stopped in his tracks, silently watching his daughter being taken by Heaven Gu Grandma.

The chiefs of the other five departments came together, walked to Longtu's side, and stood by him, watching the old and young leaving.

"What's going on, Longtu?"

The chief of the Strength Gu Clan shook his head, "Perhaps you should ask the people from the Heaven Gu Clan."

The chiefs looked behind them.

"Lina was just joking with Grandma. I don't know why Grandma got so excited."

"What did you say?"

"Lina has a friend who picks up money every day."

"..."

...

Heaven Gu Grandma held a torch, and walked under a tree. The place was already very far from the main group, and only a tiny flame could be seen from there.

A crescent moon was hanging in the sky, casting a pure white radiance. The torch also shone on the wrinkled old face of Heaven Gu Grandma. At that time, she had already calmed down and didn't carry her previous anxiety and excitement.

"Little girl, tell grandma what's going on."

Lina pursed her lips and said, "I recently met a friend. He said that a friend of his has been picking up money for no reason. He was distressed about it because he didn't know the reason."

Heaven Gu Grandma squinted her eyes and asked for more details, "How does he pick up money? How much money does he pick up? Is there anything special about him besides picking up money? Tell me all the details."

Lina naively scratched her head, and said apologetically, "I don't know about this. After all, It's about a friend of a friend. But, According to Three- My Friend, it seems that person can live a prosperous life simply on the money they picked up."

Lina thought that the Heaven Gu Clan could observe anything and knew many secrets, so she asked due to her curiosity.

Who won't be curious about someone picking up money daily?

"Where is that person?"

\*Number Three is in the Capital of the Great Feng, and his friend should also be there...\* Lina said uncertainly,

"He should be in the capital of the Great Feng."

"Capital of the Great Feng?" Heaven Gu Grandma was taken aback, as she shook her head again and again, "Impossible. It shouldn't be. It's impossible to be in Great Feng Capital... It doesn't make sense..."



Heaven Gu Grandma frowned. Her expression fluctuated frequently, sometimes surprised and sometimes thoughtful.

"What's going on, Grandma?" Lina felt that she was a very smart woman, as she had already noticed the situation. Heavenly Gu grandma wouldn't drag her to a secluded place to chat if it was just a trivial matter like picking up money.

It's not that she was concerned about this.

But she found it absurd that an interesting incident that happened in the capital of the great Feng would make Heaven Gu Grandma care so much.

It was as if she had accidentally made a good friend, only for them to turn out to be the long-lost child of Heaven Gu Grandma.

"That friend of yours should be the one who picks up money every day. Not a friend of that friend." Heaven Gu Grandma glanced at the simple and silly girl.

Lina gaped with her ruddy mouth as her light blue eyes froze up.

Number Three lied to her. She hadn't expected him to be a villain who deceived others. She had even thought of him as a chivalrous scholar.

Hadn't the elders of the tribe said that scholars were all upright and outspoken?

Heaven Gu Grandma sighed softly, looked up at the moon, and said in a deep voice, "Many years ago, two thieves sneaked into a rich family's house and stole a very important item for some reason. The whereabouts of the item is unknown, and the thief who stole the item has never appeared again.

"In the big family, some people knew that something has been stolen, and some people still don't know about it."

Lina blinked, "What was stolen?"

Heaven Gu Grandma didn't explain and just repeated that it was a very important thing.

...

Soon after, the elite team of the Shamans reached the Abyss, a bottomless great rift.

Poisonous miasma pervaded the rift valley, causing the growth of vegetation rich in toxicity, along with various poisonous insects and beasts. This could be said to be a natural Gu insect breeding farm, one that provided an endless supply of "raw materials" for the Shamans.

Lina had been here many times, but she had always caught Gu worms on the outside and never went in deep.

The team walked in silence, the insect repellent powder on their bodies and the anti-poison medicine making them immune to the dangers of the miasma, and the harassment by the insects.

The clan members from the Poison Gu Clan were like fish in water in the abyss, their radiance showing.

Following the path opened by their predecessors, they went deep into the great rift. Gradually, as they moved deeper, the scenery started to change. The dark brown land begun to be covered in deformed and grotesque plants.

A continuous "swish swish" sound could be heard among the dense branches, leaves, and grass, as the poisonous insects there were disturbed by this group of uninvited guests.

"Ah...", Suddenly, someone screamed. The person screaming was a man in coarse clothes. His skin was red all over, as the crotch of his trousers started being pushed up, the bulge getting bigger and bigger.

"Woman, I want a woman..." He yelled at the male companion who threw himself at him, hugged him tightly, and performed piston movements frantically.

But, his posture was wrong due to his clothes and he couldn't find a path. It made him anxious enough that he almost lost his mind.

Strange cries rang out everywhere, as more and more people began to display strange behaviour. Both men and women. Some men were hugging a tree, there were also some women hugging a tree...

Lina knew that these people had been poisoned by Desire Gu.

The Shamans didn't panic at all, as they moved ahead with determination, with some even pointing at the poisoned while laughing.

Clan members from the Desire Gu Clan dispersed to treat the poisoned clan members. They took out black leech-like invertebrates from cloth bags and sprinkled them on the chest, neck, and crotch of the poisoned people.

The "leeches" stuck to the surface of the skin, and their mouthparts pierced the blood vessels as they devoured blood frantically.

After a while, the "leeches" swelled one by one and fell off the skin with content, and the symptoms of the poisoned clan members also improved immediately after.

Except for those who were particularly fast, who would be completely drained, the ones with better stamina were hardly affected.

The deeper one went in the Rift, the more Gu one will encounter, and the richer they are in variety. Such as a big bug as strong as a cow, a colourful butterfly, a snake with twelve eyes, a group of zombie animals, a wild male dog with three genitals, and so on.

Finally, the team stopped at a section of flat ground, where there weren't any plants, only jagged stones.

In the midst of the poison, Lina saw a tall stone statue. It vaguely looked like a man, wearing a loose robe and a tall Confucian crown. One of his hands was behind his back while the other was on his abdomen. His head was slightly lowered, looking at the gap in the abyss.

The seven chieftains came forward tacitly and walked towards the stone statue.

"Mosang, Who is that man?" Lina tugged at her brother's sleeve.

Mosang, with a scar on his left cheek and an unruly temperament, said in a deep voice, "I don't know his name. But, You should have heard of his title..."

He paused, as his tone became respectful, "The Confucian Sage."

...

In a small courtyard, the candlelight was like a small bean.

"I have been searching for Hengyuan's whereabouts. But, I only know that he is still in the city, and I don't know his exact location." Daoist Jinlian sat cross-legged on the bed, as he shook his head.

"Can't you locate him through the Earth Book?" Xu Qi'an remembered that "Number Nine" was able to locate himself through the Earth Book, and it didn't even take long.

It had been nearly ten days since Number Six had disappeared, so Daoist Jinlian should have found him by now.

"I guess Number Six, or his Earth Book fragment has been sealed."

\*..Ah? What should I do for a seal? You are embarrassing this Fat Tiger.[^2]\* Xu Qi'an felt a little lost.

"Unless I can get close to him. But, I have walked through half the outer city on foot these ten days, using the stupidest and safest method to search. I can sense an Earth Book fragment less than 30 meters away from me, even if it's sealed." Daoist Jinlian said, showing a confident smile.

"You don't need to doubt me. This is normal for a Supreme Heavenly Treasure."

\*Yeah, Pretentious...\* Xu Qi'an silently said and breathed a sigh of relief at the same time.

\*Although the method is a little stupid, It's good that it works. I feared that there was nothing we could do.\*

"I will notify you immediately if I get any news about Number Six. Hehe, you acting is better than me acting. I also require the help of the Nightwatchers. After all, This is the capital, the territory of the Nightwatchers." Speaking of this, Daoist Jinlian seemed to have remembered something.

"By the way, What is Wei Yuan's opinion on this case?"

"He doesn't have any opinion. He just wants me to work on it." Xu Qi'an shook his head and sighed.

At that time, he found that Daoist Jinlian's expression was very strange, as it was like ( $\neg \neg$ )

The corners of Xu Qi'an's mouth twitched, and he gloomily said, "Why does Daozhang look at me like this?"

Daoist Jinlian said, "I'm afraid Wei Yuan wants to turn you into a shadow member of the Nightwatchers or drive you out of the capital."

...Xu Qi'an's eyes widened in surprise.

Very satisfied with Xu Qi'an's reaction, Daoist Jinlian explained, "Handing you the fragment of the Earth Book indicates that he values you. But, he hasn't given you any advice on the case.

"This proves that he wants you to offend Emperor Yuanjing and make it difficult for you to continue to stay in the capital."

Xu Qi'an was still not convinced and wanted to defend Wei Yuan. But, he couldn't get any words out of his mouth, as Wei Yuan had indeed revealed such an attitude.

"Wait, no, Wei Yuan is on the sidelines. But he is letting me do my own thing, neither caring nor interfering."

"You underestimate Wei Yuan too much. This man holds great power as a eunuch and led hundreds of thousands of troops to win in the Campaign of Mountains and Seas. I'm sure he knows more about the Sangpo case than you."

"..." Xu Qi'an sat there for a long time, not speaking.

Was it such a plastic father-son relationship?

Daoist Jinlian looked at him, "But I still can't figure this out: why would Wei Yuan want you to leave the capital? He doesn't lack shadow subordinates."

Silence reigned in the room a while. Jinlian Daozhang, having finished inserting the knife, wanted to leave, "Do you have anything else?"

"Yes!" Xu Qi'an didn't let go of the chance to shear some wool, "I want to go to Earl Pingyuan's mansion, but it is heavily guarded. Even if I have the means to get in, I don't have the means to subdue people silently. So, I want to ask Daozhang for help in this matter."

"You want to find Earl Pingyuan's son." Daoist Jinlian understood.

"Hengyuan said that his junior brother Henghui was abducted by the Broker Organization, and he shouldn't be saying it without reason. Since I can't find Hengyuan, I'll try to find a lead from Earl Pingyuan first." Xu Qi'an said.

"But he's dead."

"He still has a son."

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## Chapter 135. Dried Corpse

"With your current status, can't you just go and interrogate him?" Daoist Jinlian was puzzled.

"The Earl Pingyuan is a hereditary noble title, after all. I can't resort to violent means without any evidence. Besides, Normal investigations are easily stalled. So, Light and Dark methods should be used together for proper results." Xu Qi'an explained casually.

"Daozhang is undoubtedly a master in the realm of Primordial Spirit. You should be able to make him cooperate obediently and reveal all the information he could, right? It should be an easy task for you."

"... You are quite experienced. This doesn't match your previous life experiences at all." Daoist Jinlian nodded, giving the affirmative answer.

"Some cars may look new, but their mileage looks very scary." Xu Qi'an said, seriously.

"What do you mean by that?" Daoist Jinlian frowned.

"I mean that you can only see the surface. A person's life is always more exciting than the words in a file." Xu Qi'an shrugged.

"Makes sense" Not interested in continuing this topic, Daoist Jinlian said, "Relax yourself. I'll move to your sea of consciousness."

"Is your primordial body out of your body yet again?" Xu Qi'an was alert.

“Hehe, my body was injured and my strength was reduced. But, my Yin Spirit is intact, so it can better display my powers.

"There is a curfew in the inner city. I can't move in the open with you. I can hide from ordinary Bronze Gongs, but it's not good for either you or me if I am discovered. Moreover, the capital is filled to the brim with all sorts of crouching tigers and hidden dragons. There are other dangers besides the Nightwatchers."

\*That's true. But It's too much if you wish to penetrate my soul with your own... We aren't that familiar yet...\* Xu Qi'an frowned in embarrassment.

Although he trusted Daoist Jinlian, it wasn't to the extent of allowing the other party's primordial spirit to invade his sea of consciousness.

Furthermore, he couldn't guarantee that Daoist Jinlian wouldn't see some of his secret memories, like the memories of his previous life, or the plump white buttocks of the Famous Oiran Fuxiang. Shaking his head, Daoist Jinlian said, "What should I do, then?"

At the same time, the shrill meow of a cat came from the roof. Xu Qi'an smiled and pointed to the top of his head, "Sorry for the trouble, Daozhang."

"..."

...

After changing into his Nightwatcher uniform, Xu Qi'an openly left the courtyard. Even if he met someone from the Imperial Guard along the way, they didn't bother to accost him, after seeing the Nightwatcher Uniform on his body. But, they did wonder why a black cat was standing on the shoulder of the Nightwatcher.

Xu Qi'an was only stopped when he met his fellow Nightwatchers, but all such problems were solved after he took out his gold token and said that he had been ordered to investigate the case.

Xu Qi'an didn't rush and maintained his normal pace, arriving at the Mansion of Earl Pingyuan in about an hour.

After he looked around to make sure that no one else was around, he found a secluded corner and tore off a page from his "Spell Book", that recorded the technique of One Leaf Concealment.

"Hisss..."

Qi ignited the paper, after which an invisible force enveloped Xu Qi'an and the black cat.

\*The Confucian Laws following Commandments...\* The black cat's orange pupils stared at the scene, and Daoist Jinlian suddenly thought about many details.

\*It's no wonder Number Three portrayed himself as a student of the Cloud Deer Academy. Not only is his cousin a member of the Academy, but he himself also seems to have a great relationship with the academy.\*

\*Otherwise, he wouldn't have had another way to gain a book of recorded spells.\*

Daoist Jinlian ruled out the option of it being a gift from his cousin. Firstly, it was impossible for an ordinary student to receive such treatment from a Great Scholar.

Secondly, How could a student give away such a great gift so easily? They would want to use it by themselves.

\*... The scholars at Cloud Deer Academy have always looked down on Martial Artists. Why would they give him such a treasure...\* While Daoist Jinlian was thinking about this, he saw Xu Qi'an pull out a cloak from the Earth Book fragment and cover himself.

\*Why are you so proficient...\* The black cat shook his head.

"Before we act, I have two trivial things I want Daozhang's advice on." Xu Qi'an, face covered by a cloak, suddenly said.

"Speak!" The cat forced the air to vibrate, and produce human language.

"Are Spirit Dragons only close to the royal family?"

"Theoretically, It is so."

"Theoretically?"

"Spirit Dragons like Purple Qi, not members of the royal family." the black cat explained.

... Xu Qi'an nodded thoughtfully, "One more thing. I went to the imperial city to investigate the case today. I heard that the Spirit Dragon went berserk today without reason, and the guards couldn't stop it at all. It almost hurt Princess Lin'an."

The black cat didn't speak for a long time.

"Daozhang?"

The black cat looked around cautiously, as the dignified voice of Daoist Jinlian resounded, "The thing sealed under Sangpo lake, has entered the capital..."

"How did you know that?"

"Spirit Dragons are inborn masters of the Qi Watching art, and their level is beyond the reach of ordinary practitioners of Qi Watching. It can sense things ordinary people can't sense."

\*No wonder Chu Caiwei's Qi Watching technique couldn't discover any sort of abnormality. She's just not good at her discipline... So that is the reason why Spirit Dragon simps on me. It should be able to sense the weird luck in me... That means that the Jianzheng could also sense it, right?\*

Xu Qi'an was startled by his guess.

\*The thing from Sangpo has entered the city... The Spirit Dragon felt the threat. So, It went mad and tried to flee the Imperial city without hesitating... I should find a way to reveal this to Wei Yuan tomorrow.\*

After finishing the conversation, Xu Qi'an stuck to the courtyard walls and reached the backyard wall of the mansion, which he jumped over.

After landing, he cautiously looked left and right to make sure that the sounds of his clothes moving through the air didn't disturb the experts in the mansion.

Earl Pingyuan's mansion was vast. According to normal living habits, the head of the family usually lived in the largest courtyard on the east side.

Using the One Leaf Concealment spell, Xu Qi'an escaped several groups of patrolling guards and reached the largest courtyard that was in the east.

As he stepped into the yard, he heard a high-pitched groan, along with a man's heavy breathing.

\*...Oh what a great time to come.\* Xu Qi'an cursed and couldn't help but move faster.

Feeling under the window, he gathered a small needle of qi on his fingertip, and pierced through the highly flexible paper window. Then, he looked through the small hole he'd made.

The hole happened to be facing the master bedroom, so the movement of the two people in the bed fell straight into Xu Qi'an's eyes. But, as it was covered by the bed curtain, he only saw the embroidered quilt rising and falling and heard the woman's cries.

"Pop"

At the time, A slight sound came from above his head, the sound of a cat's sharp claws piercing the window paper.

Xu Qi'an raised his head and saw the black cat standing on its hind legs above his head. Its two front paws were resting against the window. Its face was pressed against the window as it watched intently.

\*Why are you so good, Daoist...\* Xu Qi'an's mouth twitched twice.

"He should be Earl Pingyuan's son. Let's rush in." Xu Qi'an suggested.

"Let's go in after this is over. Men are most relaxed at that time." Daoist Jinlian rejected Xu Qi'an's suggestion.

\*No, you will regret this. you don't know how terrible Martial Artists are. After all, we are the ones with a strong body...\* Xu Qi'an lampooned.

Two sticks of incense time later...

Daoist Jinlian looked at Xu Qi'an, "Well, I admit it. You were right."

The woman went from hoarseness to begging for mercy, and then finally fainted. It still took some time before the man let out a deep growl and was finished.

\*Tsk tsk. That's It? Thinking of the first time I slept with Fuxiang, I persisted until midnight...\* Xu Qi'an thought, as he was about to go around to the front door and thunderously sneak attack the other party.

At the time, Xu Qi'an suddenly felt goosebumps raise under his skin and his toes curl. It seemed as if bloody thorns were behind him, piercing his body.

Inexplicable fear filled his mind.

"Something is coming..." Daoist Jinlian's voice was heavier than ever before.

As soon as he finished speaking, Xu Qi'an heard the sounds of guards from a distance, "Who dares to trespass into Earl Pingyuan's mansion... Argh!"

Halfway through, the speech turned to a scream.

Immediately afterward, ripples due to colliding Qi resonated and screams resounded from all sides, before it all fell into silence.

Earl Pingyuan's son, who had already entered sage mode, heard the movement. Without even putting on clothes, he quickly jumped up from the bed, took off the sword hanging on the wall, and rushed out of the room, holding an ugly expression.

A man wrapped in a black robe appeared in the yard. His face was hidden inside the hood. His aura made Xu Qi'an's legs tremble and made him want to run away.

The black cat arched its back as its long hair all stood up and its vertical pupils shrank rapidly. Its abnormality represented Daoist Jinlian's mood to a certain extent.

"Who are you?" Earl Pingyuan's son trembled.

His legs, his arms, and his facial muscles, all trembled uncontrollably.

"Your debt collector." A hoarse voice came from the hood, and the man in black showed his head, revealing a pale face with rather handsome features.

He had a pair of dark eyes. His pupils seemed to occupy his entire eye socket, without any traces of white in his eyes.

Xu Qi'an didn't know him. But, he kept his appearance in mind as he tried to guess his identity.

"It's you, It's you...." Earl Pingyuan's son screamed, terrified. "You should already be dead. I watched you die with my own two eyes..."

"I was dead. But, I crawled out of hell again." The man in the black robe had a hoarse voice. He raised his right hand, that hand seeming as if had come from the devil. The fear in Xu Qi'an's mind blew up.

Whoosh... The blood-red hand raised a cyclone, sucking Earl Pingyuan's son into its palm.

"Save, save me...Someone, someone please come..."

Earl Pingyuan's son shook his legs wildly, before suddenly, his flesh and blood dried out, and he turned into a mummified corpse in an instant.

A person alive the previous moment lost his life the next.

Alive and well in the previous moment, dead in the next.

\*A Dried Corpse?!\* Lightning seemed to have struck Xu Qi'an's head.

The black-robed man let out a sinister laugh, moving his qi as if in anger. Bang... the dried corpse exploded into powder.

After completing the kill, the man in the black robe turned his head and turned his cold gaze toward Xu Qi'an's hiding place.

He pointed his palms towards the bottom of the window. Whoosh... the cyclone reappeared.

"Fuck..." Xu Qi'an's feet were stuck to the ground, leaning backwards, being pulled closer to the other side little by little, close to the abyss-like palm that devoured lives.



Xu Qi'an reached into his bosom, squeezed out the pills of might that Chu Caiwei had given him. He crushed the porcelain bottle with all his strength, and stuffed all the pills into his mouth.

Then, He held the hilt of the black gold long sabre as he calmed himself down.

Clang!

In the night, the dark gold sabre flashed, and dinged, as a string of dazzling sparks splashed from the bright red arm.

Xu Qi'an's right arm was ruptured, and the muscles of his right arm were convulsed.

\*This is an enemy I can't slash with a single attack... On facing such enemies, the Intent given by the book isn't to slash again, but to run away.\*

"Run!"

The black cat vibrated the air to make the sound and jumped up at the same time to pounce on the black-robed man.

Amidst the turmoil, the black cat's body disintegrated in mid-air, and Daoist Jinlian's primordial spirit came out to crash into the black-robed man.

\*Take Care, Daoist...\* Not looking any further, Xu Qi'an took the opportunity to break free from the pull of the cyclone and jumped up the ridge of the roof. In two or three steps, he fled over the wall.

## Chapter 136. The Truth

Repeatedly jumping from rooftops, Xu Qi'an fled without taking a look back. Fear was still lingering in his heart, this being the first time he had faced a high-ranking powerhouse.

If Daoist Jinlian hadn't sacrificed himself to buy him time, he would have died at that moment, without any opportunity to cast a single spell in his "Spell Book".

Even with Daoist Jinlian's help, most of the spells in the Spell Book would be ineffective to the black-robed man.

Xu Qi'an had never felt that kind of heart-piercing fear before.

"Who is it?"

Two Nightwatchers standing on the roof noticed Xu Qi'an, who was wearing a black uniform. One of them drew his standard issue sabre, while the other took off their bronze gong.

"It's me." Xu Qi'an took off his hood and took out the gold medal.

"Sir Xu..."

As of now Xu Qi'an a famous figure in the Nightwatcher Constabulary. In the beginning, two Gold Gongs had competed for him, and then the dispute with Silver Gong Zhu happened.

There wasn't a single person in the Constabulary who didn't know him.

Xu Qi'an took back the gold medal, and then coughed violently a few times, a metallic taste in his throat. He then said, "The mansion of Earl Pingyuan was attacked by an assassin. As I was investigating the case, I was attacked by that assassin.

"The assassin is very dangerous. Don't attack rashly and inform the headquarters first."

\*An assassin decided to grace Earl Pingyuan's mansion again..\* the two Bronze Gongs looked at each other before they noticed Xu Qi'an's bloody mouth and his trembling arms.

With a serious expression, they took out a brass tube, thick as a baby's forearm from the pouch at their waists, and lightly twisted the tube with their fingers while they ignited its interior with their qi.

Whoosh!

A dark red ray of fire shot out into the air, exploding at a high altitude.

After seeing this, Xu Qi'an was relieved, "I'll go back to recuperate first. You two wait for reinforcements here. If you meet someone wearing a black robe, and I don't mean me... remember to flee."

"Yes."

After that, Xu Qi'an saw an orange cat standing on a roof in the distance, pointing a gaze toward him using its dark pupils.

\*... The Daoist should have possessed this cat, I knew he would be fine.\* After he exhaled yet again, Xu Qi'an jumped to the roof and beyond, with the orange cat continued following behind him at a slow pace.

"Daozhang, I had completely lost my will to fight previously." After they stopped in a quiet alley, Xu Qi'an said, guilt covering his face.

He had believed that Daoist Jinlian, as a LYB, would slip away faster than he ever could in a dangerous situation.

The orange cat spoke, its voice appearing tired, "When an ordinary person encounters a violent beast, they have the instinctive reaction of running away. Also, The gap between you and him is even greater than that between a cat and a violent beast."

\*Is it really good for you to make such comparisons, Daozhang...\* Xu Qi'an looked at the orange cat.

"If my guess is correct, He should have the item that was sealed under Sangpo." Xu Qi'an said while he took out the Golden Sore Paste and gauze, and bandaged his hands.

As he had taken many pills of great might, the weakness that would occur after \*One Blade from Heaven and Earth\* had been mitigated, and he didn't have those strong feelings of exhaustion due to exerting his entire strength.

"How could it be possible?" Daoist Jinlian asked, shocked.

"On that day, the Yongzhen Shanhe Temple exploded, and the entirety of the 300 imperial guards patrolling the surrounding area were killed. Their death was the same, as they were also transformed into dried, mummified corpses." Xu Qi'an explained in a solemn voice.

Daoist Jinlian was stunned. After being silent for a moment, he said, "That means that your previous guess was wrong. The one sealed under Sangpo couldn't have been the first Jianzheng."

\*... If it was the first Jianzheng, it wouldn't have killed a minor aristocrat. Earl Pingyuan's son was extremely frightened before his death, and seemed to have recognized the black-robed man. It could

be that the one who killed the Imperial Army had sneaked into Sangpo and blew up the Yongzhen Shanhe Temple. But this possibility was denied long ago. An expert couldn't have sneaked into Sangpo...\* Xu Qi'an sighed.

"I know. I have another vague guess, but it needs to be verified."

The orange cat nodded, and said, "My Yin Spirit has suffered a serious injury, and I could likely fall in rank. So, I need you to do me a favour."

"Please tell me, Master." Xu Qi'an was worried about not being able to repay the grace of saving his life.

"Look for Luo Yuheng<sup>[^1]</sup> in place of this Daoist, and ask her for a Juyuan pill." the orange cat spoke.

"Luo Yuheng?" Xu Qi'an didn't know any such person.

"The Dao Master of the Human sect. She just about be regarded as this Daoist's junior sister."

\*Seems as if you have quite a high seniority in the Earth Sect, Daoist... The esteemed Dao master of the Human Sect is your junior sister... that beautiful mature Daoist Nun...\* Xu Qi'an felt a little awkward, "Do you have any token?"

"Just show her your Earth Book fragment." the orange cat showed a wry smile exclusive to humans, "As for getting the pill, that will depend on her mood."

\*Depends on her mood?\* Xu Qi'an turned lifeless.

"The Human and the Heaven Sect are irreconcilable, like fire and water. But, the relationship between the Earth Sect and the other two sects isn't that tense. But, it couldn't be said to be that good, either." The orange cat explained.

\*Your Dao Sects are too weird... You all are in such love-hate relationships...\* Xu Qi'an nodded, "I'll give it a try tomorrow."

The orange cat grunted, "I will come to meet you tomorrow."

...

Jiang Lyuzhong squatted in the yard, his face gloomy. He was holding a small piece of flesh in his hand. The flesh was very dry, like dried jerky that had been ground into powder.

There was also a layer of light brown powder in the ground.

Dozens of bronze gongs were surrounding Earl Pingyuan's mansion, along with seven or eight silver gongs, who were also cooperating in the investigation. When they arrived, Earl Pingyuan's Mansion had already been cleared, and none of the members of the mansion, including the servants, had survived.

Their corpses looked the same, just like jerky that had been dried for years.

Jiang Lyuzhong felt as if ten thousand alpacas were running wildly in his head upon hearing that Earl Pingyuan's son had been killed.

"Gold Gong Jiang, We found a survivor in the room." A silver gong came out of the room and loudly said.

His face still sullen, Jiang Lyuzhong crossed the threshold to enter the room. He swept his eyes and finally locked on to the woman holding a quilt that covered her white fragrant shoulders, a terrified expression on her face.

Her countenance looked quite beautiful, and her attitude seemed frivolous. She was looking at the Nightwatchers, her eyes filled with fear.

"Who are you?" Jiang Lyuzhong asked.

"I... I am Earl Pingyuan's concubine." The woman said, trembling.

"What did you hear and see?" Jiang Lyuzhong asked yet again.

The woman had already learned of the case from the silver gong who had woken her up. That was why she was so anxious. She was worrying about her fate while rejoicing at avoiding death.

The woman shook her head, and obediently said, "I was having fun with Dalang at that time, and fell asleep afterward..."

Jiang Lyuzhong took another look at her. It was a common practice to inherit one's father's concubines. In the current era, dignitaries often took young concubines, and they had a large age gap with them. Once the father died, these concubines had two choices. They could either work as maids or attach to the new heir.

Of course, this kind of action would be reprimanded if made public.

But, no one normally took these things seriously and didn't bother to take care of them.

"Let her put on her clothes and take her back to the Nightwatchers Constabulary." After he finished speaking, Jiang Lyuzhong walked out of the room.

"Gold Gong Jiang, the body of Earl Pingyuan's son couldn't be found.", A Silver Gong reported.

Taking another glance at the brown powder in the yard, a complex expression appeared in Jiang Lyuzhong's eyes, "You don't have to look for it."

"Sir, There's something wrong here on the window."

Hearing it, Jiang Lyuzhong went to the window facing the bedroom, where he saw two holes pierced in the window paper that allowed people to look into the bedroom.

Looking down, He saw two lines of shallow foot marks on the ground.

"Other people were present at that time besides the murderer..." Jiang Lyuzhong thought over it for some time before asking, "Who was the first one to discover the abnormality in Earl Pingyuan's residence?"

"The two bronze gongs on duty at that time."

"Call them over."

Soon after, two bronze gongs were brought over to him.

Jiang Lyuzhong asked, "Were there any suspicious people nearby when you found out about the situation?"

The two Bronze Gong looked at each other, answering, "We didn't discover any suspicious person. But, the abnormality wasn't discovered by us in the first place."

Jiang Lyuzhong was taken aback, and quickly asked "If you didn't discover it, Who did?"

"Bronze Gong Xu Qi'an."

\*Xu Qi'an...\* a spark flashed in Jiang Lyuzhong's eyes.

.....

After he returned to his small courtyard, Xu Qi'an fell asleep before he could take off his clothes, and woke up naturally after three hours. Then, he sat cross-legged in meditation as he breathed and circulated qi.

After finishing two microcosmic orbits, he opened his eyes, his spirit refreshed. Except for his face, which was slightly pale, he was in good condition in all other aspects.

Leaving the small courtyard, he rode straight ahead to the city gates.

Half an hour remained until the time the city gate opened. However, there wasn't a curfew in the outer city, and the restrictions at the gate were similarly loose. With his gold token, Xu Qi'an was able to order the soldiers guarding the city to open the gate.

In less than an hour, he reached Qinglong Temple. At the time, the monks were just getting up for morning classes, and the morning bell was echoing leisurely.

After tying up the horse and climbing the stone steps to Qinglong Temple, Xu Qi'an heard some unexpected news.

"Abbot Panshu went to the Western Regions?"

He was speaking with that mellow Courtyard Master Hengqing, who maintained a blank expression on his face, "After the benefactor left that day, the abbot left. This poor monk doesn't know of why he left."

\*How big a psychological shadow did I leave on you?\* Xu Qi'an grinned.

Abbot Panshu had said that the duty of Qinglong Temple was to keep an eye on the item sealed under Sangpo. Also, he had revealed his intentions to move west that day.

\*I don't know if the monk will receive a monkey as an apprentice on the way. It will be very interesting if he does. Hehe.\*[^2]

"I have something to trouble master with." Xu Qi'an said, his tone friendly.

Courtyard Master Hengqing drew a wary gaze toward him.

"I want to see a portrait of Henghui. If there are none in the temple, please find someone to draw it immediately." Xu Qi'an made his request.

Breathing a sigh of relief, Hengqing had him wait a moment.

After the time taken to drink a cup of tea, He came out, holding a scroll that was then handed over to Xu Qi'an.

The latter took the scroll and unfolded it slowly. The picture scroll depicted a monk wearing a blue robe. His facial features were handsome and he had an energetic countenance. A very handsome person.

\*It is him...\* Xu Qi'an confirmed that the black-robed man was Monk Henghui.

Although his temperament had encountered a drastic change, his facial features remained the same.

Henghui of the Qinglong Temple may be involved in the Sangpo case. However, Number Six, Hengyuan, had sworn that his junior brother had been abducted by the Trafficking Organization.

Thinking of the conversation between Earl Pingyuan's son and the black-robed man last night, Xu Qi'an thought of a guess, and he couldn't wait to verify it.

If not for his poor condition last night and his urgent need for rest, he would have left the city overnight.

"He's actually Henghui. If it's really Henghui... What connection does he have with the item sealed under Sangpo?"

"This way, It couldn't be the first Jianzheng. No wonder the Jianzheng wasn't in a hurry, and even pretended to be sick.

"But, What could it be if not the first Jianzheng? The only possibility I can see is that the sealed item is with Henghui.

"It is impossible for a mere monk to plan this kind of case. There should be someone masterminding the situation. Maybe King Zhenbei?"

Xu Qi'an left the Qinglong with a greater amount of doubts in his head.

He went back to the capital, back to the Nightwatcher Constabulary, to the Tower of Noble Spirit. He had a clear goal: he wanted to tell Wei Yuan the truth.

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## Chapter 137. The Female National Teacher

Xu Lingyin was an extraordinary child. In the morning, while her mind was still asleep, her body woke up by herself to wake up the maid in charge of taking care of her.

Under the service of the maid, she was dressed, had her face washed and her teeth brushed. After this, she was led to the front hall.

Smelling the smell of rice porridge and meat buns, Xu Lingyin suddenly opened her eyes. She was very happy to find herself waking up at the dining table.

At the time, Dawn had already arrived, and only Second Uncle Xu was sitting at the table in the front hall, having breakfast.

Auntie and Xu Lingyue were both putting seals on the quilts.

"Where's big brother?" Xu Lingyin asked. At this time, her greedy Big Brother should have arrived at the table long ago, coveting her beloved meat buns.

"Let him be." Second Uncle Xu said.

"I'll have brother's meat buns." Xu Lingyin's small face showed an innocent smile.

As soon as she said that, she sniffed, "It smells so good."

"Eat it soon if you find its fragrance appetizing." Second Uncle Xu urged.

"This isn't what smells so good..." Xu Lingyin raised her face and seriously said to her father.

Second Uncle Xu didn't understand it. But he soon saw a girl with an oval face in a yellow dress come in as her almond-like eyes scanned the hall, "Where's Xu Ningyan?"

"Sleeping." Second Uncle Xu thought, \*Why has this girl come uninvited.\*

"He's not there." Chu Caiwei said, "I just came from his yard."

After speaking, she found a chubby little girl deeply attracted by the breakfast food she was holding in her arms.

Chu Caiwei had bought braised donkey, fried fish balls, crystal cakes, and sauce pig trotters today, packing them in her arms, and was eating them while on the way.

She had an urgent matter to talk with Xu Qi'an about.

"Do you want to eat?" Looking at her watery innocent eyes, Chu Caiwei's heart softened.

Xu Lingyin vigorously nodded.

"Then, big sister will share with you." Chu Caiwei said.

"Ahem.." Second Uncle Xu glared at the gluttonous young girl, and earnestly said, "Lingyin, big sister is a guest. You have to wait until she finishes eating."

"Okay." Xu Lingyin was easily convinced with food at stake.

"Very sensible." Chu Caiwei patted her head. Then, she thought about what happened last night as she ate her breakfast.

A few minutes later... She was surprised to find that the three or four \*jin\* of breakfast she had bought had disappeared.

\*Did the little girl eat it when I wasn't paying attention?\* She suspiciously looked at Xu Lingyin, who was standing aside, her head not even as high as a table.

Tears were bubbling in Xu Lingyin's eyes, and she was about to cry, \*Were you joking with me, Elder Sister?\*

"..."

Uncle Xu felt as if he had seen the grown-up Xu Lingyin.

...

The Tower of Noble Spirit,

Wei Yuan nodded after listening to Jiang Lyuzhong's report, "I see. Have you made any progress in the Trafficking Organisation?"

"I am still investigating in secret, and have not raised the attention of any other constabulary or organisation's attention. After the death of Earl Pingyuan, they had

begun to hibernate. However, as they hadn't been suppressed, they haven't been paying much attention. So, the net could be closed anytime." Jiang Lyuzhong said.

"It seems that Earl Pingyuan's son inherited the Trafficking Organisation." Wei Yuan chuckled lightly and ordered: "Close the net before they know that Earl Pingyuan's son was killed."

Jiang Lyuzhong accepted the order with his hands clasped, hesitant to speak.

"Speak up if you have something to say."

"Xu Qi'an was also present when Earl Pingyuan's son was killed. Although I don't know why he sneaked to the mansion of Earl Pingyuan, he should have seen the murderer." Jiang Lyuzhong expressed his speculations.

At the time, footsteps came from the stairs, and a black-clothed petty official came up and whispered a few words to his colleagues guarding the stairs.

The petty officials guarding the staircase immediately entered the tea room, bowed, and said, "Duke Wei, Bronze Gong Xu Qi'an requests to see you."

Wei Yuan smiled, "How convenient. Let him up."

The petty official announced the order to go upstairs. And soon enough, Xu Qi'an, dressed in a Nightwatcher uniform went up to the seventh floor. After taking a glance at Jiang Lyuzhong, he clasped his fists and said, "Greetings, Duke Wei."

"Gold Gong Jiang says that you had been to Earl Pingyuan's mansion last night.", Wei Yuan smiled and spoke softly, without question.

"Your subordinate wanted to investigate the case, the Sangpo case."

Jiang Lyuzhong was stunned. Frowning, he suspected that Xu Qi'an was lying. Earl Pingyuan had died long before the Sangpo case. Except for the Trafficking Organisation, he couldn't think of any link between Earl Pingyuan and the Sangpo case.

"What did you find?" Wei Yuan narrowed his eyes.

Xu Qi'an didn't immediately answer, and his eyes slightly paused on Jiang Lyuzhong.

"Gold Gong Jiang, You should go down first." Wei Yuan was used to the bronze gong's request to dismiss his accompanying officers.

Jiang Lyuzhong took a look at Xu Qi'an, as he left with a gloomy face.

After the footsteps couldn't be heard at all, Xu Qi'an waited for some time, considering a fifth-rank martial artist's hearing ability. Finally, he said,

"Duke Wei, I did see the attacker last night and also confirmed his identity."

Wei Yuan raised his teacup and took a sip, then asked emotionlessly, "Who is it?"

"Monk Henghui of Qinglong Temple. That monk who stole the magical weapon of Qinglong Temple and eloped with Princess Pingyang." Xu Qi'an continued without hiding anything.

"I suspect the Sealed Item is with him."

Wei Yuan glanced at him, "Why do you say that?"



Xu Qi'an said, "Earl Pingyuan's son died the same way as those of the royal guard that died that day."

Smiling, Wei Yuan said, "You did a good job. This clue is very useful."

"Your subordinate will go back, then." As he knew that Father Wei wanted to "Hide him away", Xu Qi'an no longer force him to help.

Some bosses are like this. Upon seeing a beautiful girl in their company, they want to secretly hide her away and ask her to not come to work in the future.

That type of personal female secretary was an unsafe profession, as it led to many baseless rumours.

Xu Qi'an was quite resistant to this kind of behaviour and just wanted to quietly work in the Constabulary.

Going downstairs, Xu Qi'an saw a petty official rushing upstairs in a hurry.

After leaving the Tower of Noble Spirit, he saw Jiang Lyuzhong, who was standing downstairs. Old Jiang came up to meet him, as he frowned and asked, "What's going on?"

Xu Qi'an's brain moved. He cupped his fists and said, "Is Gold Gong Jiang handling Earl Pingyuan's case?"

Jiang Lyuzhong's face became gloomy, "Both his and his son's cases are handled by this official."

"Earl Pingyuan is involved in the Sangpo case..." Xu Qi'an immediately told Jiang Lyuzhong about Monk Henghui, and the Gold Gong's eyes lit up upon hearing about it.

"Gold Gong Jiang, We should work together to deal with this matter. In this way, you can solve Earl Pingyuan's case and also participate in the Sangpo case..." Xu Qi'an sincerely said.

"As for this case, I have almost completed the investigation. So, let's earn some credits together."

Jiang Lyuzhong nodded slightly, "That's very true."

Xu Qi'an laughed. \*A high-ranking martial artist had been fooled into the camp. Even if Wei Yuan doesn't help me, I can still find myself helpers.\*

The two were talking when they saw Wei Yuan, dressed in green, go downstairs. Seeing the two standing at the door, he said, "Lyuzhong, follow me to the palace."

"Yes!"

Looking at the two's backs disappear into the distance, Xu Qi'an touched his chin. \*The death of Earl Pingyuan's son should have infuriated Emperor Yuanjing.\*

...

After he left the office, Xu Qi'an rode in the direction of the imperial city. He wasn't going fast as he wanted some time to sort out his thoughts.

\*Maybe my previous assumption was wrong. The mastermind behind the scenes couldn't be the Zhenbei King. King Zhenbei could have tried to rebel. so, he teamed up with the Northern Yao and the Northeast Church of the Warlock Sect to blow up the seal of Sangpo and release the first Jianzheng, and make the capital chaotic...\*

\*But, I'm not even sure if the one sealed was the first Jianzheng. In addition, Henghui's matter wouldn't make much sense if King Zhenbei was behind the scenes.\*

\*Monk Henghui is involved in the dispute between the interests of the Civil Official Bloc and the Meritorious Aristocratic Bloc. It is a bit far-fetched to blame King Zhenbei for this...\*

\*The current plan is to find Henghui and catch him. Then, all these mysteries will be solved. But, finding Number Six is the key to catching Henghui. Number Six is Henghui's senior brother, and the latter shouldn't silence him.\*

The imperial city's outline appeared in his sight. Xu Qi'an's ears moved, as he heard someone behind him call out his name.

"Xu Ningyan..."

Looking back, he saw a beauty with an oval face in a goose-yellow long dress. Her eyes were big, bright, and energetic, giving a lively and lovely impression.

"I went to the Xu mansion this morning to look for you. But, you weren't there. I went to the Nightwatcher Office then, but you weren't there. Song Tingfeng said that you may be fooling around with Fuxiang in the Jiaofangsi." Chu Caiwei patted her horse to catch up with him, moving to his side, a fountain of complaint pouring from her.

"He's slandering my noble character." Xu Qi'an solemnly said, "I'd never go to a place like Jiaofangsi... ah-aah, hey, you don't need to watch my qi. Although I'm a gentleman, I don't want to be stared at by a person using the qi-watching technique."

Chu Caiwei tilted her head and said, "They said that Fuxiang is your lover."

"She's not."

"Really?"

"Um, Fuxiang is a friend I just made, not that far yet." Xu Qi'an sincerely replied, without any deceit.

Chu Caiwei "Oohh"ed, and returned to the topic, "The Sitianjian detected demonic energy similar to the day when Sangpo was bombed. I came here to inform you."

"I already knew this matter. I almost died in the hands of that guy." As Daoist Jinlian was involved, Xu Qi'an didn't want to continue and changed the subject, "Do you have more pills of great might?"

"Another day, I didn't bring it with me."

"I don't need it another day. I need it today."

"Okay, I'll go to your house before dusk."

Chu Caiwei had come to find the eldest princess. Although she was assigned to assist Xu Qi'an in solving the case, Xu Qi'an didn't want to bring her along.

It wasn't because Chu Caiwei was useless, but Monk Hengyuan had a magic weapon that shielded qi and that restrained Sitianjian's Qi Watching technique.

He didn't want to tie her to his side, so he let her go to the eldest princess's mansion and restaurants to have a good time.

The two parted at the gate of the imperial city. Xu Qi'an, with his gold medal, passed to the imperial city unimpeded. Soon, he arrived at the legendary Lingbao Temple.

The temple was a very grand Daoist Temple, with red walls and black tiles, and a high and wide gate.

There were two little Daoist Acolyte boys in the door. They were examining Xu Qi'an, who was approaching on horseback.

"I am Xu Qi'an from the Nightwatchers. I have been ordered by His Majesty to thoroughly investigate the Sangpo case. I want to see the National Teacher. I hope the two Daoists will pass this on." Xu Qi'an took the initiative to speak and showed the gold medal.

The two acolytes showed a solemn expression, bowed, and said, "Wait a minute, Sir."

The young boy on the left quickly stepped into the temple. After waiting for more than 10 minutes, he went and came back, shook his head, and said,

"The Sect Master is practicing her arts, and she is not seeing visitors. Please go back, sir."

\*No... It seems that the Emperor's gold medal doesn't work. It seems that I can only expose the Earth Book.\* Xu Qi'an continued, "Please may the two Daoists help me pass on a sentence."

The Daoist boy on the right interrupted, "If she doesn't want to meet you, it is so. Even if you say some nonsense, the Sect Master won't see you."

Xu Qi'an breathed out silently, got off the horse, looked around for a moment, and took out two pre-prepared ingots of gold from his bosom.

The silence was more powerful than words.

The acolyte went in again.

"Hey, come back. I haven't even said anything yet..." Xu Qi'an called him back and whispered something in his ear.

After the Daoist Boy entered, he returned after ten minutes, with a warm smile on his face, "Sir, the Sect Master invites you in."

## Chapter 138. King Yu

Xu Qi'an followed the Daoist Acolyte through the front palace, through open squares, through towers upon towers and gardens upon gardens, coming to the deepest part of Lingbao palace.

This was a quiet small garden. The flowers and grasses had long since withered, a pavilion rose upon a man-made hill, and an aquamarine pond sat by, idly rippling in the wind.

A Female Daoist Priest, with the appearance that could bring down countries, sat cross-legged on the pond, clad in a yin-yang robe, a lotus crown on her head, a spot of cinnabar red on her forehead. She was both graceful and lively, and also charming and enticing.

Her face was pale white like crystal, carved without any blemish. The ridge of her nose, the lines on her face were well-defined and beautiful, her lips were red and plump, and with her eyes closed, her intersecting eyelashes were long and thick.

As soon as Xu Qi'an entered the garden, he stared at her, walking and staring, yet what stunned him was that he could not tell her age.

It felt as if she was a woman just past thirty, yet it also felt as if she was a honey-sweet motherly woman, or if you look closely, you can still see the pure and kittenish aura around her body.

\*Why does she give me an "I have to find a way to marry this woman" type of feeling, is it that I've not slept with a woman in too long, or is this a special trait of the Human sect cultivation... enticement?\*

Thoughts flashed within him, though his face remained unchanged.

"Did Jinlian send you to find me?" Luo Yuheng opened her beautiful eyes. The ratio between iris and white was just perfect, and they seemed to be filled with energy.

"Yes. Jinlian Daozhang's Yin Spirit is gravely hurt, his body also hurt, and so he asked me to ask you for a single Juyuan pill."

At any other time, Xu Qi'an would say "ask you for two pills", and then embezzle one for himself.

But he was not familiar with this Human Sect master Luo Yuheng, and to repay Jinlian Daozhang saving his life, he would play by the rules.

In front of these elders, one must never presume that because one thinks it's good and act out, as that would only flip the boat.

"You are a member of the Heaven and Earth Society, and carry the Earth Book?" Luo Yuheng's voice was extremely pleasant to listen to; it had texture, it had magnetism, making Xu Qi'an think of the \*seiyu\* in his past life.[^1]

"Number Three." Xu Qi'an replied.

Luo Yuheng nodded, her beautiful pupils examining him, not speaking for a long time. Suddenly, she let out a "eh?" sound, as a confused expression flashed across her face.

"Your fortune is very strange... tell me your birthdate and eight-character horoscope." The beautiful Daoist Nun asked.

A cool wind brushed over, as the hems of the Daoist robe on the water waved slightly. With Xu Qi'an's angle, he could just about see the outline of a pair of plump and full buttocks.

\*She can see through my unusualness?\* Xu Qi'an immediately replied with his birthdate and horoscope.

Luo Yuheng's slender jade hands stretched out of their sleeves, her crystalline fingers making formations, divining for a while, her brows tightly furrowed, as if coming across a difficult to solve problem.

Xu Qi'an felt somewhat anxious, asking with some anticipation: "National Teacher, how is it?"

"The Monkey!" she said.

\*How do you know I like monkeys... pah! She just said what my birthday and horoscope represents, like the constellation horoscopes of my past life...\* Xu Qi'an discovered that a perverted intent deep in his heart was beginning to stir.

\*This woman keeps making me think of those 36D women; mum's friends, kind aunties... This can't be something wrong with me, but rather she is corrupting my emotions... is this a uniqueness of the Human Sect? Mn, later I'll ask Jinlian Daozhang.\*

Luo Yuheng shook her head, her magnetic voice resonating out, "Utterly ordinary."

She did not seem to want to continue, pulling a porcelain bottle out of her sleeve, and with a flick of her finger, the bottle floated towards Xu Qi'an.

"Thank you, National Teacher!" Xu Qi'an took the bottle, and clasped his hands.

\*She also can't see what's up with me, and is only like Jinlian Daozhang, able to vaguely feel something was off...\* Xu Qi'an did not continue to drool, and left promptly.

...

A carriage entered the Imperial City, stopping in front of the Palace complex gates. Jiang Lyuzhong, who was driving the carriage, jumped off, and took out a wooden step-stool to let Wei Yuan down.

Apart from the members of the royal family, officials and civil servants could not ride carriages or horses in the Palace city.

Wei Yuan lead Jiang Lyuzhong into the Palace City, and as they drew close to the imperial study, they met Eunuch Liu.

"Duke Wei, you've come." Eunuch Liu let out a torrent of complaint, "His Majesty ordered me to welcome you here, let's go, come on, His Majesty is still letting off thunder in the Study."

Wei Yuan solemnly nodded his head, his aura unshakable even if the heavens were falling naturally was not affected by Eunuch Liu's words.

"A few old things just asked for your impeachment again... aiya, you know what to do, but in short be careful."

Eunuch Liu and Wei Yuan were of the same camp; Wei Yuan was the spiritual leader of all the palace eunuchs. If any great official wanted to put insiders into the palace, they would face multitudes of hardships, yet Wei Yuan could do it with ease.

Wei Yuan came to the door of the Imperial Study, and heard the raging of Emperor Yuanjing coming from inside: "Useless, you're all useless! The Sangpo Case still hasn't been solved even now, and the leads you two have aren't even as many as a small Bronze Gong! What use does the court have in raising you two piles of junk? What use do we have in having you?"

In the Imperial Study, the Minister of the Ministry of Law, and the Censor of the High Court, as well as the City Prefecture Governor Chen Hanguang, all stood shoulder to shoulder in the middle of the room, heads lowered and listening to Emperor Yuanjing's scolding.

Apart from those three, the attending Prime Minister, the High Ministers of each of the Departments, a few nobles, stood to either side, eyes looking at their noses, noses looking at their hearts.

The case of the destruction of the Earl Pingyuan's family had by now spread all across court, and all the kings and aristocrats fell into a deep panic. They simultaneously sent in letters of impeachment for Wei Yuan, ordering him to investigate the killer, as well as secretly building up their own guards.

People were in disarray. Some said that it was a strong Yao monster that infiltrated the capital, wantonly killing important servants, causing chaos beyond any form of tolerance. Some others said that it was the Buddhists covertly causing strife, with the aim to spread their religion to the Central Plains, forcing the Great Feng's royal dynasty to submit.

"Your Majesty, why is the Jianzheng ill at his time?"

"Heh, ill? Clearly he doesn't want to get involved."

"Why did the attacker escape last night? The Nightwatchers have failed at their duty, Your Majesty must severely punish Wei Yuan."

The great servants sent accusations flying around the room.

Wei Yuan entered the Imperial study in a hubbub of argument.

"Wei Yuan!" seeing him come in, Emperor Yuanjing grabbed a stack of papers, and launched them at Wei Yuan. In the rustle of falling papers, he shouted angrily:

"Three days, in three days you will find the killer. Otherwise we will remove your position!"

Wei Yuan lightly dodged the storm of paper, unhurriedly picking up the fallen dossiers and files, sighing "Your Majesty does not need to be angry; to cultivate Dao is to cultivate one's heart, to perturb one's heart is not a good thing."

Emperor Yuanjing grunted coldly.

The Minister of Law said solemnly, "Your Majesty, the Nightwatchers have let attackers escape on two occasions, your servant suspects Wei Yuan is conspiring with outsiders, and wants to cause chaos. Please may Your Majesty investigate."

Emperor Yuanjing did not respond, looking at the head-lowered, unspeaking Chen Hanguang, "What does Governor Chen think?"

Even though Governor Chen was a fourth rank official, he oversaw the twenty-four counties around this capital city, and his political power was not less than that of any of the Ministers.

And Chen Hanguang was a wily old fox. With the intention of not offending either side, he said "The Sangpo Case has not yet finished, and now comes the murder of the Earl Pingyuan Family. Your Majesty, please do not be angered, keep a calm mind. Your servant thinks we should hear what Wei Yuan has to say."

He very calmly dodged the bullet.

Emperor Yuanjing looked coldly at Wei Yuan.

“Your Majesty, the Earl Pingyuan’s case and the Sangpo case are one and the same.” Wei Yuan said.

In the Imperial study, everyone’s faces, including Emperor Yuanjing’s, turned slightly.

Wei Yuan did not look at everyone’s expressions, his head lowered towards the ground, announcing loudly, “Your lowly servant has already found out who killed the Earl Pingyuan’s family.”

“Who?” Someone unconsciously butted in, being Minister of War Zhang Feng.

Wei Yuan’s gaze scanned over him, and he did not reply, rather saying to Emperor Yuanjing, “Please may Your Majesty dismiss your attendants.”

As he said this, Wei Yuan could not help but think of Xu Qi’an.

Emperor Yuanjing looked deeply at Wei Yuan, before his sharp gaze scanned over the other servants, “My officials, please retreat for now.”

Everyone cupped their hands with strange expressions on their faces, and left the Imperial study.

Wei Yuan stayed in the Study for an hour, and no one knew what he said to Emperor Yuanjing.

...

“Duke Wei, Duke Wei...”

With the company of Eunuch Liu, as soon as Wei Yuan stepped out of the Imperial study, he heard someone call to him.

Looking over, he saw the crimson-robed thin-faced Minister of War Zhang Feng come over to meet him, his face full of smiles:

“Duke Wei, I wonder what sort of beast would exterminate the Earl Pingyuan’s family?”

Wei Yuan shook his head, “Minister Zhang, this case involves Sangpo, and I am not at leisure to disclose. When the truth has become clear, my Right Honourable Minister will naturally know.”

He cupped his hands, and left with wide strides.

Minster Sun’s conversation hit a wall. He was not angered, rather still with smiling face said “Take care, Duke Wei.”

After Wei Yuan left, he waited until the elders from the Imperial Study slowly came over, “Lord Liu, what did Wei Yuan say to His Majesty?”

“My Sirs, please, don’t make things hard for us.” Eunuch Liu waved his hands frantically.

“Lord Liu can just pick a few less sensitive things to say.” A confident voice floated over, belonging to the Prime Minister.

Eunuch Liu hesitated, before nodding, looking around at all the great servants, saying in a low voice “This case is being done by the Bronze Gong Xu Qi’an from the Nightwatchers. What Duke Wei said inside was heard entirely from him.”

\*Xu Qi'an!?!\*

All the servants exchanged looks.

...

As he left Lingbao palace, Xu Qi'an's mind would intermittently flash up with the National Teacher's country-toppling beauty, as his heart exclaimed about how different a Dao-cultivating woman was just different from others, about how she was like a jade-carved statue, with not a blemish on her face.

\*At the very least one or two spots.\*

\*The sect master of the Earth Sect is second rank, the human sect wouldn't be far off... for a second rank, to call her a celestial wouldn't be too far.\*

As his small mare clopped along, he passed an instrument warehouse, and Xu Qi'an asked the guards for directions to King Yu's manor.

\*The trail of thought for the Sangpo Case must be changed. Let's not investigate the Zhenbei King for now. I have a feeling, that if I were to figure out the events behind Henghui and Princess Pingyang, figure out what love and hatred these doomed lovers and Earl Pingyuan's house had with each other, perhaps I could solve the Sangpo Case.\*

\*I don't need half a month, I feel just a few days will do... perhaps even faster than that.\*

\*Tonight Jinlian Daozhang will come to find me, I must remember to ask him what's up with the Human Sect leader. Clearly she's a Nun, yet she has an enticing aura like a demoness.\*

Xu Qi'an squeezed on his horse's sides, urging his horse on.

King Yu's Manor.

Xu Qi'an reigned in his horse, and showed his golden token in front of the guards' wary expressions. "This official is specially appointed by His Majesty to lead the Sangpo Case investigation, I have a matter to speak with King Yu about, please pass this message on for me."

Seeing the token, the guards reigned in their derisive intent, and quickly entered the manor.

Not long later, he returned, announcing "Please may Sir come with me, our Master would like to see you."

King Yu's manor was expansive; just from the front door to the front hall, took five minutes of walking.

In the front hall, Xu Qi'an saw Emperor Yuanjing's younger brother, a King of the court.

This was not a old man, yet his white hairs were already numerous. His face was pale and sallow, his eyes showed illness and bad health, and the lines on his forehead were deep. Clearly a man of barely over forty, yet he looked even older than Emperor Yuanjing.

He wore a purple brocade robe, and his features were fairly well-placed.

"Bronze Gong?" King Yu held a teacup in his hand, and sipped it gently, his voice lacking in vigour.



Putting down his teacup, he said with astonishment, "Since when did brother Emperor make a Bronze Gong the lead investigator?"

"This lowly official is Xu Qi'an, has King Yu not heard of me before?" Xu Qi'an thought, that the Sangpo Case had become the biggest news story in the capital, from the highest of nobles to the lowest of civil servants, all should be watching it.

And as one of the lead investigators himself, perhaps those low down wouldn't recognise him, but as part of the royal family, King Yu should have heard of him before.

King Yu nodded in realisation, "Ah yes, I remember. I've heard of you, but this king has not cared for the affairs of court for a long while, and couldn't remember immediately."

\*It seems the disappearance of Princess Pingyang has hit him hard...\* Xu Qi'an sighed.

"What do you need from me?" King Yu waved his hand, ordering his servants to serve tea.

Chapter 139. The next target

"This servant was ordered to investigate the Sangpo case. After my investigation, I found out that the case was unexpectedly related to King Yu." Xu Qi'an emotionally said.

Taking a look at him, King Yu shook his head, "I'm almost retired. I don't think you want to criticize or slander me. Tell me, what has happened?"

Although he said that, disapproval and contempt still pooled in his eyes. Obviously, He didn't believe Xu Qi'an's words.

"More than a year ago, A monk named Henghui in Qinglong Temple had an affair with a female pilgrim, and the two decided to elope together, fleeing the capital with a magic weapon from Qinglong Temple that could disguise qi.

"They did it because the woman's identity was extraordinary. If they hadn't carried the magic weapon that could disguise qi, they couldn't have escaped the capital at all."

King Yu, who had been calmly drinking tea, suddenly raised his head and stared at Xu Qi'an, his eyes fixed on him.

Xu Qi'an said, "That monk is named Henghui. Maybe King Yu doesn't know him, but you should surely know the female pilgrim, as she is your daughter, Princess Pingyang."

Bang!

King Yu smashed the blue and white porcelain teacup. Then, with a ferocious expression mixed with agitation, he angrily said, "Nonsense, Nonsense. Pingyang was well behaved since her childhood. How could she elope with a wild monk... Come here, Drag this rascal out, and execute him!"

Guards rushed in from outside the hall and surrounded Xu Qi'an. But, he didn't panic, not even a little. He looked at the old father who had fallen to anger after hearing the news. It was normal for him to react like this. Any father would lose his mind after hearing such news.

But, this news was merely an appetizer for King Yu.

After the guards had rushed in, King Yu lost his previous attitude. He waved his hands and had the guards back out.

"Yes, I'm not surprised that this happened. Before Pingyang had disappeared, I had arranged a marriage for her. But, she had strongly opposed me, and said that she had a sweetheart of her own." A bitter laugh escaped King Yu's mouth.

"How ridiculous! Marriage is a major event made by parents' orders and matchmaker's words. How could she, a woman, decide on her own marriage? How could she know that the other party isn't cheating on her or has other plans for her?"

\*Although I don't agree with words like "Parents' orders and Matchmaker's words," free love is indeed deadly in this era. After all, common sense isn't so widespread in this era, unlike my past life.\*

Xu Qi'an nodded.

"After hearing that, I became furious and slapped her. She disappeared not long after. She must have been taken by that wild man... That's what I believed.

"In the beginning, I gritted my teeth due to hatred. I hated her for her shamelessness. I hated her for embarrassing the royal clan. But, as time passed, I began to miss her. I just wish for her to come back, to come back and see me and call me father. I don't care about anything else."

\*...It's likely you'll never see her again.\*

\*From the conversation between Henghui and Earl Pingyuan's son, it can be deduced that Henghui had died once. What else could have happened to Princess Pingyang, who had eloped with him?\*

\*The female could have faced nothing beyond three outcomes. First: Death, Second: Rape.\*

\*The third outcome, the combination of the first two.\*

"I'm not here to dig out King Yu's scar, nor to tell you the identity of the man who had eloped with Princess Pingyang." Xu Qi'an said.

After being stunned for a moment, King Yu became excited. He jumped to Xu Qi'an taking wide strides, grabbed his wrist with his hands, and grabbed his neckline with the other, "Do you have any news about her? Where is she? Where is she?!"

Xu Qi'an frowned.

"...I lost my composure previously." King Yu let go of his wrist, and took a step back. Then, he straightened his back and suddenly bowed, after which he said, his voice deep.

"If Sir Xu can help me find her I would owe you a huge favour. I will surely repay you in the future."

"I have come here for this matter... Have you heard of the murder of Earl Pingyuan's House?"

"Not yet." King Yu was a little surprised.

"How is the relationship between the king and Earl Pingyuan?" Xu Qi'an asked.

"We are both members of the Aristocrats, and we used to have frequent contact. However, Earl Pingyuan was ambitious and wished for greater power. So, he mingled with the Civil Officials and was ostracized by the aristocrats." King Yu said.

Xu Qi'an nodded, and then continued, "I had heard that the King had almost entered the Cabinet."

After being silent for a while, King Yu said, "His Majesty did have this idea last year. Currently, the Cabinet is dominated by Wang Zhenwen<sup>[^1]</sup>. Although other parties and Wei Yuan check and balance him, but the balance is very fragile.

"I am supported by the Aristocrats and am from the royal clan. So, His Majesty wants me to enter the cabinet and stir up the muddy water."

\*Emperor Yuanjing knows his business. Although he has been ignoring the government all year round and burning money for his cultivation, he has still maintained his control over the government in these nearly twenty years.

"When Sir is recuperating in your mansion, who would benefit the most from this?"

"Chief Secretary Wang Zhenwen, and the Minister of War, Zhang Feng... heh, that was originally my position." King Yu helplessly smiled.

King Yu was obviously fatigued after talking for such a long time. As Xu Qi'an got the information he wanted to know, he got up to leave.

The horse's hooves hit the ground at a brisk pace. This young filly had been ridden by second uncle for several years and then ridden by his nephew. Although its rider had changed, the horse wasn't bothered at all and was still docile and cheerful.

Xu Qi'an's mood, however, wasn't so brisk. According to the information he got from King Yu, Henghui and Princess Pingyang's elopement might have been some type of political move.

\*Even if we can't do anything for you. Can't we do something to your daughter?\*

What couldn't those playing politics do? This possibility was very high.

Henghui's revenge also supported the point.

\*Who could it be? Is it Chief Secretary Wang? Is it Minister Zhang? Could it be both... I still have a question, what relation could the struggle between the Aristocrat Bloc and the Civil Official Bloc have with the Sangpo case and the Yao race?\*

\*Who knows about something being sealed below Sangpo besides Emperor Yuanjing?\*

\*Oh no, Henghui's next target for revenge is either the Chief Secretary or the Minister of War.\*

As his heart sank, Xu Qi'an clamped his horse's belly and rode towards the forbidden city at the fastest he could go. But, he had to turn back at the entrance of the Forbidden City.

"Is Duke Wei still in the palace?"

"It's been half an hour since he left." The Yulin Guard that had been guarding the castle replied.

Xu Qi'an immediately turned his horse, left the imperial city, and galloped for a long time in the inner city before he met Wei Yuan's carriage.

Hearing the sounds of horseshoes approaching the Wei Yuan's guards turned their heads vigilantly, and grasped the handles of their sabres tightly.

They relaxed their vigilance after seeing that it was Xu Qi'an.

"Duke Wei, Duke Wei... Your subordinate has something to report." Xu Qi'an shouted.

Jiang Lyuzhong heard Wei Yuan's voice coming from inside the carriage, "Stop."

He immediately reined the horse and stopped the carriage.

Xu Qi'an rode his horse to the side of the carriage, where he said in a small voice, "Duke Wei, I have an important thing to report."

The curtain at the side opened and the handsome old man with a profound countenance frowned, "How did you encounter a matter that needs to be reported without delay?"

After he complained, he asked, "What's the matter?"

"Henghui's next target is likely to be the Minister of War or the Chief Secretary. You will be in deep water if one of those two gets into trouble, Duke Wei." Xu Qi'an said in a deep voice.

...

Zhang Mansion,

Zhang Feng, the Minister of War, returned to his mansion in a carriage, and asked the old housekeeper who came to meet him, "Where's Yi'er?"

The housekeeper replied, "He hasn't woken up yet."

Carrying a gloomy expression, the Minister of War said, "Have him get dressed and meet me in the study within a quarter hour."

After he cautiously looked at Minister Zhang's expression, the old housekeeper received his orders.

Zhang Feng returned to his study, took off his robe, and gave it to his attendant. He sat on the big chair and rested with his eyes closed.

Just as a quarter-hour was about to pass, Zhang Yi, Zhang Feng's eldest son arrived in time.[^2]

"What were you calling me for, Father?" Zhang Yi's face was slightly pale, his swollen eye bags and deep dark circles indicating his identity as a master of time management.

"Pack up and leave the capital immediately." Minister Zhang said these words after careful consideration.

"What?"

"Leave right now!" Zhang Feng gave him a stern look.

"... yes, okay." Zhang Feng had always feared his father, and he always did whatever he said.

With the help of the servants in the mansion, Zhang Yi packed his clothes, dry food, gold and silver, and other portable items. Then, he rushed towards the outer city with more than a dozen subordinates from the mansion.

But, Just as the carriage arrived at the inner city gate, the soldiers guarding the gate stopped him after inquiring about his identity.

"His Majesty has decreed that officials above rank six, even their family members, aren't allowed to leave the capital."

...

Evening,

After spending the day in the eldest princess's mansion, Chu Caiwei came to the Xu mansion on horseback and knocked on the door of the small courtyard.

"Caiwei." Xu Qi'an had already taken off his uniform and changed to his normal clothes, those that had been sewn up stitch by stitch by his sister Lingyue.

The younger sister's threads lined the elder brother's robes.

Chu Caiwei took out two porcelain vases from the deerskin pouch on her waist, "Sparingly eat them. Great might pills are quite expensive. One pill costs about two taels of silver."

\*One pill costs half my monthly salary... Chu Caiwei is indeed a rich woman, one who owns an airport at such a young age... It doesn't matter if she is a disciple of the Jianzheng. I just wish to be raised by her... Xu Qi'an envied this "Fuerdai". Although he did have more than 900 taels of gold, that was to be used to buy a house.

"Come in and have a cup of tea, Miss Caiwei." Xu Qi'an held a charming smile on his face.

Chu Caiwei blushed, and let out a "bah", saying angrily, "The sun is about to set. You have other motives in inviting me for tea at this time, don't you?"

After speaking, she glanced at him and held the reins of her horse as she rode away.

\*The top isn't convex and the bottom isn't curved... This little flatty is ridiculous...\* Xu Qi'an also blankly looked at her and closed the yard.

\*When this Sangpo case is over, I'll make some chicken bullion and reward her.\*

After he had dinner in the main house, and chatted with his elegant younger sister for some time, Xu Qi'an returned to his small courtyard, sitting there for half an hour.

"Meow~"

Suddenly, he heard the clear and melodious cry of a cat.

"The door is unlocked." Xu Qi'an said.

The door was pushed open, and an orange cat walked in. Its steps were graceful, its tail raised high. It stared at him with its yellow-orange cat eyes, and a voice came out of its mouth,

"What did Luo Yuheng say?"

\*... Did Daoist Jinlian open the door to a new world? Is this a special hobby of his?\*

Xu Qi'an looked at the orange cat, and said, "I have obtained the Juyuan Pill."

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## Chapter 140. Enter Henghui

Hearing this, on the ginger cat's face appeared a very humanlike "sigh of relief".

"With this Juyuan pill, it won't take long for me to recover my cultivation." The ginger cat spoke in human tongue, his voice relaxed.

In a place like the capital, to not be able to protect oneself is very dangerous indeed. Who knows if or when you would be spotted by the Court's hunting dogs, or meet another predator lurking in the shadows.

\*Is the Juyuan pill's effect that good? Excellent, if Daozhang can recover quickly, the Earth Book Group Chat can enable private messaging...\* Xu Qi'an was very pleased, but also asked in confusion,

"You're all from the same Daoist family, why does Daozhang need to ask the Human Sect for medicine? Is the Earth Sect not also proficient at refining medicines?"

The ginger cat fell silent for a moment, before responding in an expressionless voice, "The cost of a Juyuan pill is around a hundred taels of pure gold. As for some ingredients, money can't buy them."

\*It's not that my Earth Sect is too low in ability, it's that her Human Sect has no humanity... this really is a tragic tale!\* Xu Qi'an wanted to laugh, but also felt bad about doing so.

"Do you have any new findings?" The ginger cat leapt onto the table, sitting by the oil lamp, its golden cat eyes seeming eerie and frightening in the darkness.

Xu Qi'an told him about what he learned at King Yu's Manor, as well as his own thoughts.

The cat listened with a serious face, instinctively raising a paw, about to lick it, but resisted the urge. Wordlessly putting down its paw, it replied

"Your analysis is correct. The elopement of Henghui and Princess Pingyang involves party politics at court... but what I don't understand, is that given that Henghui is still alive, why has he not appeared yet? Why did he appear only after the Sangpo case happened? Furthermore, with his power and abilities, he doesn't have the status to be involved in the Sangpo case."

Though his tone was questioning, there was no confusion in his eyes.

Xu Qi'an nodded in understanding, "There's another power behind his back. I originally thought that that power was the Zhenbei King... if it was not for rebellion, why did he let out the thing under Sangpo Lake? After so long, all it did was exterminate a Pingyuan Earl... Daozhang, say, could it be that King Yu is behind this? To release the sealed object and kill those he had a grudge on."

"Your idea is that because of Princess Pingyang's death, King Yu would take revenge for a woman... this is very unlikely. If King Yu knew about this matter, with his status as a blood relative King, he need not go to such lengths for revenge." The ginger cat shook its head, "Why are your thoughts always stopped on the royal family?"

Xu Qi'an said despairingly, "There's even less suspicion on the Zhenbei King, I'm really like a little boy's girlfriend shouting to break up."

"A little boy's girlfriend shouting to break up?" The cat tilted his head.

"All the work before has been for naught." Xu Qi'an replied.

The ginger cat's expression froze for a moment, "You have a way with words."

If not for the appearance of Henghui, not that the sealed item is still lurking, Xu Qi'an would still have kept his suspicions of the Zhenbei King high, feeling that he was hiding some big move.

But the actions of the Monk Henghui, really did not match well with the stature of a sealed item.

At least go kill some blood-royals eh?

However, Xu Qi'an did not completely put down his suspicion. The Sangpo Case was still shrouded in mist, and he could only barely see half of it. However Xu Qi'an strained his damned 24K Titanium Alloy eyes, he couldn't see any further.

The ginger cat's tail slowly swished from side to side, as it gave a suggestion: "This poor Daoist thinks that you may have latched onto a wrong idea."

Xu Qi'an frowned, "What does Daozhang mean?"

"The Zhenbei King, King Yu, they are all royals. Is the reason that you suspect them because only Emperor Yuanjing alone knows what's sealed under Sangpo lake?"

Xu Qi'an nodded.

The ginger cat continued, "Excluding the Jianzheng and Emperor Yuanjing, the Buddhists also know."

Xu Qi'an nodded, "The Buddhists were one of the main participants. After the sealed item broke free, the Abbot of Qinglong Temple, Panshu, left for the west. We can see the severity of the matter."

The ginger cat said, "The Yao."

Two simple words, resounded like a lightning strike in Xu Qi'an's head.

\*I've always locked onto the royal family as suspects behind this case. If what was sealed was the first generation Jianzheng, then this guess is perfectly reasonable... but, if it's not him, then Emperor Yuanjing, the Jianzheng, and the Buddhists wouldn't be the only ones to know about it, there's one more power I overlooked.\*

\*The original owners of the sealed item...\*

\*Sealed for five hundred years without being destroyed, it must be a terrifying, unfathomably strong someone, and this type of character could not be a human cultivator, but if they were Yao? Mn, this must be investigated further.\*

Xu Qi'an pulled out the porcelain bottle, and put it beside the cat, saying "I saw the National Teacher today. Hm, she's different from what I imagined."

The ginger cat lightly gave him a side-eye, "Not the immortal Daoist aura you expected?"

Xu Qi'an was about to nod, when he heard the cat continue, "Perhaps even more enticing than the Jiaofangsi's women, did she make you drool at the mouth?"

\*What, no! She only made me want to give her my sword handle...\* Xu Qi'an said with realisation: "So there is something wrong with her."

At home he had the beautiful motherly Auntie, the graceful young girl Lingyue, and he also had the lively and cute Chu Caiwei, as well as the charming and emotional king of the dance floor Princess Biaobiao, the proud and cold like an iceberg Princess Huaqing... Xu Qi'an had seen plenty of beauties.

But he never had encountered anyone that directly activated his lizard brain, filling his mind with the colour of banana peels.[^1]

This could only be explained by the fact that there was something wrong with the National Teacher.

The ginger cat did not respond directly, rather asking back, "Why do you think the Human Sect is called the Human Sect? Why is Luo Yuheng the National Teacher?"

Pausing, he continued, "Luo Yuheng is the previous Human Sect Leader's daughter."

\*Why are you telling me this? Are you insinuating that that woman can be banged?\* Xu Qi'an maintained a light smile, "From what I know, of the three Daoist sects, the Heaven Sect forgoes desire and pleasure, but the Earth and Human sect can marry as usual. Does Daozhang have any children?"

The ginger cat shook its head, "When I was younger, I did think of it, but as my years got older, my feelings faded. To the titterings between men and women, it's far, far too vulgar for me."

\*Is it really too vulgar, or is it "a man reaching middle-age, and could not but keep goji berries in his thermal flask?"[^2]\*

"Daozhang has already left base pleasures behind, very impressive indeed."

\*If every other man in the world is like you, then I'll be happy...\* He added silently in his heart.

...

Deep in the night, the streets of the inner city were empty. A cold wind swirled around the trees, making a mournful cry.

Synchronised, uniform footsteps resonated from afar, as a squadron of city guards patrolled over from the end of the street. Yesterday, after the Earl Pingyuan family murder, the security of the city was ratcheted up several times over.

A black shadow walked through the inner city. He walked across streets and alleys, seemingly not trying to avoid the patrolling Nightwatchers, the Yudao, and the Jinwu guards, yet whenever one of them would scan their gazes over where he was, there was always something blocking their sight, whether that be a wall, a tree, or roof eaves.

Just like this, he came safely to the Minister of Law's manor. As he raised his head to look at the sign, half a face showed from under the hood. A purple, unhallowed looking mouth curled up in a fierce smile.

"Who is it?"



Only then did the gate guards notice this black-robed figure, and at the same time as they shouted, they pulled out their service sabres.

The black-robed man raised his right arm from beneath the cloak, its blood-red skin bulging with hideous blue-black veins, like the arm of a demon.

He faced his palm towards the guard, towards the door, and suddenly grasped.

Boom!

The great door turned into powder, the guards turned into powder, as the qi energy sent shockwaves rippling out, turning everything surrounding him into powder.

Light after light lit up in the Minister of War's manor, as frightened shouting echoed from all around.

All the guards in the manor grabbed their sabres and rushed towards the front door.

The black robed man, no longer blocked by any obstacle, stepped into the Manor with wide steps. His dark black eyes under the hood looked around at the lantern lights with a cold, evil gaze.

Suddenly, in the instant that he stepped over the threshold, the surrounding scenery suddenly changed. The black cloaked man's eyes slowly moved, examining his new surroundings.

Around him was a desolate part of the city, with cracked streets, weeds growing by the walls, and crude houses vaguely visible in the distance.

This was a barren area that not even the poor people came to. There were many such places in the capital, but the capital was too large, and so these types of places were selectively forgotten about by the Crown.

"I set a transportation formation in the Minster of War's Mansion." someone said lightly.

The black-robed man turned, to see a dozen or so \*zhang\* away stood a figure with white cloak a-waving, facing away from him, his hands behind his back, his long hair billowing alongside his clothes.

His pose was striking, giving one the sense that this was not any ordinary man.

"Who are you?" The black robed man's hoarse voice sounded.

"Are you telling me, that in the Capital, there is someone who knows not I? You, you have successfully piqued my interest." The white-cloaked man said.

The black-cloaked man snorted coldly, raising his right hand, and lightly grasped in the direction of the white-cloak.

In the explosion of qi, the white-cloaked man's figure disappeared like a reflection on the water.

"You thought I was there, but really I am here." The white-cloak appeared in a different spot, still with his back towards the black-cloaked man.

"Fourth rank arcanist?" The black-cloaked man muttered, then laughed coldly, "A mere fourth rank arcanist dares to stop me?"

His tone was extremely arrogant, looking down on this high-ranked expert.

“A mere fourth rank arcanist dares to stop me...” the white cloak muttered, before praising him: “Well said, those words have a great sense of courage, they give me much inspiration.”

Pausing briefly, he laughed, “You mere fourth rank martial artists, dare be worthy of looking on from the sidelines?”

The black-cloaked figure stared blankly for a moment, not knowing what he was getting at, but quickly he found out. From north, south, east, west, all four sides appeared a Nightwatcher, wearing their black uniforms, their short cloaks, with gold gongs sewn to their chests.

The Gold Gong to the east had a cold, handsome, expressionless face; the Gold Gong to the west was as beautiful as a woman, a dark smile lingering around his mouth; the Gold Gong to the north carried a long sword, rather than a sabre; and the Gold Gong to the south had a gaze as sharp as a knife, with thin lines at the corner of his eyes.

“Ratatat...” the rattle of machinery sounded, as to the left of the white-cloaked man, where there was empty space just before was now filled with rows upon rows of repeating ballistae, loading their bolts automatically.

To his right were a battery of cannons.

Thunk! Thunk! Thunk! Roar! Roar! Roar!

Ballista bolts and cannonballs fired at the same time, bearing down on the black-cloaked figure.

The cannonballs hit an invisible wall of qi, and exploded in mid-air, sending waves of brilliant flame along the surface of the wall.

As the qi wall trembled under the fire of the cannons, the glyphs carved into the ballista bolts suddenly lit up, and easily penetrated through, whistling towards the black-cloaked man.

The bolts themselves were a small-scale formation.

The black cloaked figure did not panic, calmly raising his right hand, letting the bolts break themselves into pieces on it.

The cloak was ripped to shreds, revealing the figure's true form: a handsome and sinister looking young monk. His right arm was significantly thicker than that of an average man, and was ugly to the point of being frightening.

“...Bronze skin and iron bones?” The white-cloak, who had this whole time been facing away from the action, said with surprise.

At this time, the four Gold Gongs moved simultaneously. The fierce spear and sword intent burst forth, attacking the black-cloaked man first. Nangong Qianrou and Jiang Lyuzhong did not use weapons, choosing instead to fight in unarmed melee.

“Buddha said, be merciful and benevolent.” The black-cloaked man put his hands together, and slowly intoned a teaching.

The fierce spear and sword intent showed some hesitation, and became not so sharp. Yet, in a flash they returned to normal.

Taking advantage of this hair's breadth opportunity, the black cloaked man repeatedly struck with his right arm, dissipating the undodgeable spear intent, and that unstoppable sword intent.

Then, he twisted his waist and struck back, clashing with Jiang Lyuzhong's fists.

Jiang Lyuzhong grunted indistinctly, some blood seeping out between his lips, as he staggered backwards.

The black cloaked man then turned his head, and placed a fist right in Nangong Qianrou's chest. Thud... as the cloak on his back was blown to pieces.

Whoosh... under a frightening attractive force, Nangong Qianrou's face slowly became whiter and whiter.

Scarlet red light flashed in Nangong Qianrou's eyes, as his beautiful face twisted into a fierce expression. From his throat came an inhuman roar, as his fist crashed onto the black-cloaked man's face.

The two of them simultaneously retreated, and then not willing to back down, came together again.

Four martial artists, one strange creature of mysterious origin, fought in this desolate area of the city. Wherever they went, became rubble.

Explosion after explosion of qi sent a gale howling in an area several li around them.

The white-cloaked arcanist maintained a distance that was not far nor near; in close-quarters melee, martial artists were the undefeated champions in their rank.

Arcanist battles were naturally more refined and stylish... the white-cloaked arcanist stamped the ground, and announced "The ground's killing intent!"

Formation lines erupted from beneath his feet, encircling the fighting martial artists, as the broken and uneven ground suddenly trembled, congealing into a terrifying might.

He then pointed to the sky, "The heavens' killing intent!"

Dark clouds suddenly gathered in the night sky, as bolts of lightning snaked across it, thunder forming.

"Man's killing intent!"

As he said those words, the heavenly power, the earthly power, and the human power came together to form one, piercing towards the black-cloaked figure.

Placing him in a situation where the world was his enemy.

That fierce and terrifying right arm seemed to be excited, and awoke on its own, as an indescribable, frightening pressure exploded from it, and the bulging veins suddenly lit up.

The handsome, sinister monk laughed crazedly, and clenched his fist tight.

Roar! As the explosion of qi consumed all.