

Nightwatcher 81

Chapter 81. What Does the Green Light Represent

The three days of daily patrols passed by in a similar manner. That night, Xu Qi'an, Song Tingfeng, and Zhu Guangxiao formed a team, wearing black uniforms, a short cape hanging over their shoulders with bronze gongs hanging on their chests and sabres by their waists. Attired like this, they leisurely walked the streets of the inner city.

The night was cooler, and flowers began falling to the ground and turning to frost.

The capital city was silent at night. As it was winter, even insects and birds weren't giving off sounds. It was so quiet that Xu Qi'an felt as if he was in the leisurely countryside.

Occasionally, sounds of uniform footsteps and the clattering of armour plates could be heard.

That was the sound of the Imperial Guards patrolling the city.

After patrolling the streets for half an hour, Song Tingfeng led his two colleagues to the top of a small building that overlooked the crisscrossing streets.

"Inspection of the streets is the job of the Imperial Guards. We are mainly responsible for the guys who fly over the roofs and walls." Standing on the roof and facing the night wind, Song Tingfeng narrowed his eyes in concentration, "Only go up to the roof when looking for clues. Unless you encounter a serious case, don't jump over eaves and walls. The capital is deep and there are countless masters here, both in the open and in the dark. If you walk around the roof, you may be killed by a sword coming from any corner."

After pausing for a while, he added, "Of course, the Nightwatchers will surely avenge you, collect your body and give a pension to your family."

"How much is the pension?" Xu Qi'an asked.

"For bronze gongs, It's three hundred taels of silver." Song Tingfeng said, "It's quite conscientious too, three hundred taels of silver are enough for your wife and children to live a prosperous life."

However, With three hundred taels of silver, you can only sleep with Fuxiang, whose rates are skyrocketing, five times... Xu Qi'an joked, "Of course, then your wife will remarry, and other men will spend your money, sleep with your wife, and beat your children."

"..." Song Tingfeng stared at him, dumbfounded, and choked out a sentence after a moment had passed, "I'm suddenly glad that I haven't started a family yet."

Zhu Guangxiao nodded in a muffled tone.

...

At noon the next day, Xu Qi'an got up energetically after sleeping for just five hours.

He dipped some tooth powder into his bristle toothbrush and squatted under the eaves to brush his teeth.

Tooth powder was an ancient version of toothpaste, which contained nine traditional Chinese medicines: Ginger, Chinese Honey Locust, Cohosh, Chinese Foxglove, False Daisy, Chinese Scholar Tree, Manchurian Ginger, Sacred Lotus, and Lake Salt.

In addition, another ingredient was used that Xu Qi'an had never touched in his previous life; an "Impurity Cleansing Pill".

It directly improved the cleaning, whitening, and bad breath removal effects of the tooth powder by several levels.

The toothpaste in his previous life was far inferior to the tooth powder of this era.

It was undoubtedly the work of the alchemists in the Sitianjian.

The existence of Masters of Alchemy helped to make the lives of the common people at the bottom more convenient and healthy.

They were actually very formidable, but the Arcanist system had a relatively short history and still hadn't formed a comprehensive theoretical foundation yet.

And Xu Qi'an's chemistry just happened to make up for the shortcomings of the alchemists.

After he went over the wall to the main house, His aunt and sisters had already had lunch by this time.

In the afternoon, he went to circulate and refine Qi and tried to comprehend One Blade of Heaven and Earth. So, he didn't have time to go to the Goulan to listen to music and have dinner. Xu Qi'an asked to have the leftovers heated up in the kitchen, and devoured them sloppily.

He didn't immerse himself in cultivation right away, but went to the inner courtyard to tease Xu Lingyin for a while, then went to the seventeen-year sister with delicate facial features to discuss Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai with her.^[^1]

"I'll write something for my sister later, as reading material within the boudoir." Xu Qi'an laughed.

"Will it be a love story similar to the one between Zhu Yingtai and Liang Shanbo?" Xu Lingyue's blushing face looked like a flower.

"No, It's even more exciting than those two."

"What is it?" Xu Lingyue's face blushed even more upon hearing the word "Exciting".

"Yosuga no Sora"^[^2]

It's a pity that my writing isn't so good, and I can't remember many things I read in my previous life... Otherwise, I would have made a lot of money by relying on Little Yellow Books^[^3]... Xu Qi'an sighed helplessly.

Upon passing by Xu Cijiu's room, he heard the sound of reading from the inside.

"Cijiu, Weren't you in the academy?"

"I was looking for you, elder brother." Xu Cijiu took a booklet out of the desk, walked to the window, and handed it over to Xu Qi'an.

"This is from my teacher, Mr. Mubai and Mr. Youping. They asked me to hand it over to my elder brother. You were still sleeping when I had come back."

Xu Qi'an curiously opened the booklet, flipped through a few pages at random, and found that the contents in the booklet were very strange.

There was text, as well as pictures. It seemed like all sorts of things were put together haphazardly in the booklet.

Xu Xinnian explained, "This book records the unique skills of the major cultivation systems. The three great scholars put these together and asked me to give them to you."

I seem to smell something souring... Xu Qi'an's eyes shone brightly.

He continued to say, "The sixth-ranked Confucians were called Confucian Scholars. The core of the realm is 'Learning'. They can attach the spells they have seen to their brush and record them on paper. Elder Brother can ignite the paper with your qi and use the spells recorded in the paper."

Confucianists are simply invincible supports. Xu Qi'an controlled the corners of his mouth to hold back his joy, and nodded, "Thank you. You can pass on to the three Great Scholars, I'll come to pay respects and discuss poetry with them someday."

It is said that man should reciprocate politeness. The three Great Scholars gave gifts without reason, the action naturally had some meaning.

Xu Xinnian said "Yes" and waved his hand, "Brother, you go. Don't disturb my study. I'll go back to the academy tomorrow."

Don't be so jealous, Cijiu. Big Brother still loves you.

Xu Qi'an left happy.

...

At dusk, Xu Qi'an changed into a Nightwatcher uniform and rushed to the constabulary without stopping at all.

He arrived just before the inner city gate was closed, met with the two colleagues, and started the evening shift as a social animal.

The night in the inner city was quite peaceful. Until late at night, Xu Qi'an and the others only caught two thieves who had managed to escape the patrol of the Imperial Guards by chance.

According to Song Tingfeng, this sort of achievement was only worth five cash of silver at most.

Xu Qi'an stood on the roof of a restaurant, overlooking the night view of the capital.

Song Tingfeng asked while chewing on fried beans, "Ningyan, What is your unique skill, and what are its characteristics?"

Xu Qi'an told the truth, "It's very practical and explosive, but It's not very durable... Well, After slashing once, I'll enter a short period of weakness."

There is nothing in the world that requires multiple slashes, If it does, run away... At first, Xu Qi'an thought that it was the author acting strange.

He didn't expect that these words were really expensive words of gold and jade. The essence of this unique skill was that of a one-second real man, slash once and collapse.

The advantage was that it had strong explosive power. Xu Qi'an suspected that he could cross ranks to fight others if he cultivated it to a very high level.

Song Tingfeng and Zhu Guangxiao looked to the side at the same time. The former smilingly asked, "Does Miss Fuxiang know that your endurance is low?"

Xu Qi'an was a lowly person, raised his fingers, and said emotionally, "They've been calloused recently.[^4]"

Zhu Guangxiao didn't understand what he was talking about. Song Tingfeng was stunned for a few seconds before cursing, "Fucking, you really are a fucking one-second wonder."

After chatting for a few hours, When Song Tingfeng and Zhu Guangxiao weren't paying attention, he took out the booklet given by the Great Scholars from the small jade mirror, and tore off a page.

A pair of clear eyes were drawn on the page, and the corresponding spell was Sitianjian's "Qi Watching Technique".

There were many such low-level spells in the booklet, and it was an auxiliary spell, which was relatively less precious.

Xu Qi'an intended to have fun and familiarize himself with the booklet.

"Tzshh!"

As the qi ignited the paper, a flame lit up instantly, which attracted the attention of Zhu Guangxing and Song Tingfeng.

Xu Qi'an felt his eyes hurt, as various colours appeared in his sight, and the whole world seemed to have turned into a richly coloured oil painting.

White was the most common and also the densest, and it was scattered in strands. It was followed by red: light red, crimson, and was followed by purple.

Red with a tinge of purple, light purple, thick purple... The last one came from the direction of the imperial city.

This is qi... The Qi that exists in everything in the world... An understanding emerged in Xu Qi'an's mind.

At the same time, he saw a strange colour located in the direction of the imperial city. It looked magnificent, like a rainbow.

Colorful... It's very different from the purple qi that represents the royal family but lives in the imperial city... Daoist Jinlian said that I have a relationship with the woman who rode in that royal carriage. The Daoist's evaluation of that woman was that her qi was magnificent and rare in the world...

Clear Qi... Is also in the direction of the imperial city. I remember Caiwei saying that Clear Qi represented Confucianism or Daoism... Um, Could it be the Human Sect?

Hey, why is the color of the Jiaofangsi dark green... Many of the women in the Jiaofangsi are the family members of criminal officials... I should have thought too much. I should ask Caiwei what this green qi represents... Ehh, It's gone?

He saw the little dark green qi above the Jiaofangsi flicker for a while before disappearing.

Finally, he turned his gaze to the Sitianjian, to the Star Observatory overlooking the mountains.

"Ahhh!" Xu Qi'an suddenly screamed and fell off the roof of the restaurant.

He rolled all over the ground in pain, covered his eyes, and continued to scream.

Zhu Guangxiao and Song Tingfeng were terrified. They jumped off the roof. The former drew his knife to guard while the other stepped forward to check.

"What's the matter with you?" Song Tingfeng said anxiously.

Chapter 82. A Sudden Incident

My damn eyes are going blind, my damn titanium alloy eyes are going blind... both of Xu Qi'an's eyes were in searing pain, hot tears flowing down.

In that one moment where he looked at the Sitianjian, it felt as if two needles had been shoved into his eyes. His consciousness wavered for a moment, before that searing pain struck him.

Song Tingfeng put a knee on Xu Qi'an's chest, stopping him from rolling around, and then pulled up his eyelids. He saw that Xu Qi'an's eyes were bloodshot red, but he did not seem to be hurt or blind.

Song Tingfeng let out a sigh of relief, and stopped caring about this stupid colleague.

After about fifteen minutes, the pain in Xu Qi'an's eyes faded, as he sat on the ground red-eyed, his vision still blurry, only being able to see his colleagues clearly.

"What did you just do?" Song Tingfeng's voice floated over to him.

"I looked at the Stargazing tower..." Xu Qi'an closed his eyes, saying hesitantly, "My younger cousin is a student at the Cloud Deer Academy, and today he gave me a piece of paper with the qi-watching technique recorded on it."

Song Tingfeng and Zhu Guangxiao both knew about the Xu Family, and nodded upon hearing this.

Xu Qi'an continued, "And then with the qi-watching technique, I glanced over at the Sitianjian."

Afterwards, he found that Song Tingfeng and Zhu Guangxiao stayed silent for ages.

Song Tingfeng sighed, "Do you know that Sir Jianzheng likes to stand on the Bagua platform, on top of the tower?"

"No."

"Then do you know, that the top of the top of the Arcanist path, is our Sir Jianzheng?"

"I do know this point."

"Mhm, and you used qi-watching to look at the Jianzheng, are you trying to kill yourself?"

"I- I didn't know about this..."

Zhu Guangxiao sighed, "The Nightwatchers frequently have exchanges with the Sitianjian Arcanists. As you gain experience, you'll know about these things more and more."

Apart from the Arcanists themselves, and of course the Confucianists, normal people would not be able to watch qi.

Xu Qi'an's case was purely an exception.

The three of them did not continue their patrol, rather resting by the side of the street, waiting quietly for Xu Qi'an's damned eyes to regain their vision.

After a long time, a red glow suddenly appeared in the east, and stayed for a few seconds, before disappearing.

"Sching!"

Song Tingfeng and Zhu Guangxiao in unison drew their sabres.

Xu Qi'an, having just recovered his vision, asked "What's the matter?"

Song Tingfeng replied solemnly, "A red light is a warning for us, usually used in situations of an arrest warrant. Perhaps some squad of Nightwatchers have discovered a suspicious person, but they escaped... looking at the distance, it is very close to us.

"Ningyan, your eyes haven't recovered, you'll be responsible for patrolling on the streets. Guangxiao, we'll look out from the rooftops."

The two of them used their qinggong, and jumped onto the nearest roof, splitting up and going different ways.

The area that the three of them had to patrol was very large, and so in these cases, they could only split up and search.

Seeing his two colleagues leaving, Xu Qi'an drew his sabre in one hand, his crossbow in the other, and then tightened the bronze gong on his chest, as well as adjusting the heart-protection mirror within his robes.

Bone-corroding poison, he usually did not use. He didn't smear it on his blade, for fear that one day his brain might have an off day, and he'd go and take a lick.

Xu Qi'an started searching around on high alert. After a while, he saw a bronze gong flying over the rooftops, coming to a stop on the roof in front of him, asking: "Where are the other two?"

Xu Qi'an said, "We've split up. What's happened?"

The bronze gong replied "The Earl Pingyuan has been killed. The two people responsible for that area have been hurt, and the perpetrator has escaped using some unknown techniques. We currently don't know where he is."

The Earl Pingyuan... an earl has been killed!?!

Xu Qi'an was shocked; to someone who dared to kill an earl in the inner city, his first reaction should not have been anger, but rather scalp-tingling unease.

Even though day by day the power and influence of the Great Feng was waning, but an earl was still an earl, they must have had high-skilled masters living in the manor.

And that perpetrator could still kill an earl, and hurt Nightwatchers, and just waltz on out of there. They were no ordinary character.

Without a doubt, if he were to meet him, Xu Qi'an would be at far more risk.

After that bronze gong finished speaking, he darted away, probably to notify the guards at the city gate.

Shit... my eyes haven't recovered fully, anything I look at is blurry... but with my European Emperor body, I probably won't encounter him... Xu Qi'an quietly prayed to not run into this killer.

At this time, he felt that a message had just come in from the Earth Book fragment. After dripping blood and becoming its owner, between him and this Earth Book formed a mysterious connection.

Which one is not asleep at this hour and browsing the group chat?

Confused, he pulled out the jade mirror, and saw written on it a line of characters:

【SIX: Everyone, I've encountered trouble in the capital, can I get some help?】

After a few minutes, Jinlian came online: 【NINE: what trouble did you encounter?】

【SIX: I'm trapped in the inner city, facing the Nightwatchers' pursuit. At most after two hours, the Arcanists of the Sitianjian will come, and then I will be hard-pressed to escape this calamity.】

Xu Qi'an: ???

No, it can't be...

He immediately thought to the death of the Earl Pingyuan; *SIX was that killer?*

For a time, no one spoke. Jinlian Daozhang seemed to also find it a troubling problem, and for a time couldn't give a suggestion.

【TWO: You could try use force to escape the encirclement?】

【SIX: No, I'm too far away from the city gate, and on the path are Nightwatcher patrols. Furthermore, outside of the inner city was still the outer city.】

【TWO: Do you have any magic items that could hide your qi?】

【SIX: No.】

【NINE: This poor Daoist has some, but I cannot bring them to you.】

【SIX: Daozhang relax. If I cannot escape this calamity, I will leave the Earth Book where it is, you can simply find it by its qi aura.】

In the capital, especially the inner city, trying to escape when one was being actively hunted down was a nigh on impossible task.

【TWO: You damn bald ass,[^1] don't say defeatist words.】

At this time, a new person came onto the stage.

【FOUR: I have some relation with the Human Sect's leader... problem is Lingbao Temple is in the inner city.】

【TWO: Is this any better than not saying anything at all?】

FOUR has relations with the female national teacher... Jinlian Daozhang didn't lie; the ones who carry the Earth Book are not ordinary people.

TWO called SIX a bald-ass, is SIX a Buddhist then?

Xu Qi'an lurked silently.

At the same time, he saw the Heaven and Earth Society's cohesion. Even though the holders of the Earth Book all had their guards up, not revealing their identities, but they still had that support between the members.

【TWO: Bald-ass, go ask ONE, he's in the capital.】

One was probably also lurking, but after Two dragged him in, he no longer stayed silent: 【ONE: What did you do?】

【SIX: I killed Earl Pingyuan.】

Of course it was him, the killer tonight was him!

SIX admitted so quickly, he's too honest and frank... when I asked him that day if he was a member of the Heaven and Earth Society or not, he also did not hesitate to admit so... a monk does not lie?

But he's committed murder, where the hell did you get the idea to go to the Earl Pingyuan's house in the middle of the night to kill the man?

Xu Qi'an complained.

The Earth Book group chat fell silent, and for a long while no one spoke.

Probably because they were all shocked by what Six had done.

After a long while, One replied: 【ONE: Sorry, I cannot help you.】

【NINE: One, you are also in the Heaven and Earth Society, if you can help then help. This poor Daoist believes that SIX would not kill with no reason.】

What Jinlian Daozhang meant by this, was that he thought that ONE could help SIX? Even with the pursuit by the Nightwatchers and the city guard, with the imminent arrival of the Sitianjian Arcanists, he still thought that ONE could help SIX?

Mm, Jinlian Daozhang is the only one who knows everyone's identities... ONE's background and status might be higher than I thought.

Xu Qi'an adjusted his impressions slightly.

What responded to Jinlian was silence. One's expression seemed to be very stubborn; they would not help.

Xu Qi'an started thinking, *SIX killed Earl Pingyuan, so ONE doesn't want to help SIX.*

TWO is a hot-blooded character, at least on the surface. SIX is a Buddhist, very honest, never lying. FOUR has some relations with the Human Sect's leader, his background is not clear yet. NINE is Jinlian Daozhang, and ONE is someone within the court, who likes to lurk, and with a very high status... this Mafia game is quite interesting.

Let me also boast- no, display my talents. Xu Qi'an used his finger as a pen, and wrote:

【THREE: Six, I can consider helping you, but I must first know why you killed Earl Pingyuan. Hehe, you can of course not answer, and refuse my offer, but do not lie.

Chapter 83. Lifesaving Plan

Regardless if I could help or not, I should draw a big cake to gain some information. If Number Six was a villain, Xu Qi'an would expose him in order to reduce the number of wolves in the Heaven and Earth Society.

Of course, he had to cheat out Number Six's hiding place first, to avoid future troubles, since SIX was quite powerful.

He broke into the Earl Pingyuan's mansion at night, beheaded him, severely injured the guards, and hid calmly. He should be a master of the middle ranks, or even stronger.

If he had his reasons for the incident, he will help a group member within his abilities to create a stalwart image for Chen Jinnan, the branch leader of Heaven and Earth Society.

Wei Yuan had asked him to go undercover, but he didn't want to lurk all the time. He needed to make some achievements.

Can Number Three provide help?

Can he take Number Six away from the hunt of the Nightwatchers and the Imperial Guards with ease?

Was he just a Confucian Disciple?

At this time, if you didn't have a reasonable identity, you would be arrested on the spot for just taking a walk in the inner city.

In other words, could he command the Imperial Guards or the Nightwatchers?

Xu Qi'an's words made the holders of the Earth Book fragments think wildly, secretly guessing his identity and speculating on his next actions.

【NINE: Hehe, If THREE is willing to help, there isn't a problem. SIX, you don't have to hide.】

Daoist Jinlian is sure that THREE can help SIX resolve the crisis... THREE is by no means an ordinary Confucian disciple, he must have a more secretive and higher-level identity... The newcomer recruited by Daoist Jinlian this time is no small person.

The members of the Heaven and Earth Society were inspired and silently watched how the incident developed.

【SIX: One of my juniors had disappeared for a year. I suspect that he was trafficked and sent to the capital through secret channels.

【After investigating and inspecting for a long time, I tracked down a trafficking organization. They swindled and abducted women and children, and sold them to brothels, beggar gangs, and other places that may find a need for them.

【Not only women and children, but they also abduct cultivators. I still haven't found their real purpose yet.

【Finally, I found out that the person behind the Broker Organization was Earl Pingyuan.】

【THREE: So, You killed him in anger, didn't you?】

【SIX: I sneaked into Earl Pingyuan's mansion to ask of my younger brother's whereabouts, but was fruitless. Then, I killed him to absolve him from his sins.】

【ONE: Why didn't you report to the officials instead of violating the law with strength?】

Number One disagreed with Number Six's way of doing things.

【TWO: You're saying nonsense. If the law was useful, the Earl Pingyuan would have already been sanctioned, but the officials like to protect each other's skins. If there's no god raising one's head three feet, one could only put one's hope for justice on one's knife.】

... Hot-blooded youth! SIX should have reported Earl Pingyuan. It was unwise to kill someone.
Xu Qi'an thought.

However, It could be inferred from this that Number Six was an upright character, almost recklessly impulsive, who liked to convince others with laws (of Physics). This was quite similar to the behaviour of the Confucianists.

Number One seemed disdainful of Number Two and didn't respond.

【SIX: I have a reason to do so. I rescued many children throughout this year. Some of them had their hands and feet cut off and crawled on the side of the street to beg. The clever ones were trained to be thieves. And the most outrageous one was...

【I had rescued a child once. His palms and feet were cut off, and his skin was removed in boiling water, and then he was wrapped in black dog skin. After the injury healed, The dog's skin bonded to the child.

【The brokers disguised him as a black dog and taught him to speak some auspicious words to please unsuspecting people to get money from them.】

【ONE: Is this true?】

【SIX: Certainly!】

Number One didn't reply for a long time.

【THREE: You have successfully convinced me. Although I hate martial artists who break the laws with their strength and perform actions without thought, I'm still willing to help you.】

Holding back the anger in his heart, Xu Qi'an imitated Xu Erlang's character and spoke in the tone of a Confucian.

【TWO: I approve a little of THREE now.】

【FOUR: A good temperament, Let's get a drink together when we have time.】

【SIX: Thank You!】

They didn't call Number Three by name; they probably knew in their hearts that Chen Jinnan wasn't Number Three's real name at all.

【THREE: Where are you hiding?】

【SIX: In the canal outside Earl Pingyuan's mansion.】

A canal meant a sewer, a dirty and smelly place. In this era, sewer workers didn't exist, and idlers wouldn't enter them. So, they were blind spots for investigation.

But it was only for a while. After the Nightwatchers gather, they would never let this place go.

【THREE: I understand, You can wait for my news.】

Xu Qi'an took back the small jade mirror, held his sabre in one hand, and rubbed his chin with the other, thinking of how he could deal with the matter.

He couldn't lead someone to leave the inner city, as there were Imperial Guards and Nightwatchers in the way.

Xu Qi'an could, however, turn a blind eye in the area he was patrolling, and he had to do it as soon as possible, otherwise, he would be unable to save Number Six after the Imperial Guards and the Nightwatchers seal off the surrounding area and investigate layer by layer.

"Time is about to run out. I have to think of a perfect plan soon..."

If he wants to save Number Six, he had to hide him from both the Nightwatchers and the Arcanists from Sitianjian. So, Xu Qi'an had to do two things. First: He had to help Number Six find a hiding place. Second: He had to help him cover up his aura.

The former wasn't that difficult. As long as he got through the night, He could pretend to be an ordinary person tomorrow morning and leave the city by himself.

Earl Pingyuan's status wasn't high enough to cause the inner city gates to be closed, so they would open at dawn.

The difficult thing was to cover up the aura of Number Six.

It's inevitable to be contaminated with hostility after killing people. This can't be hidden from the Sitianjian Arcanist's Qi Watching Technique. Should I do another PY transaction with Song Qing?

No, I still haven't paid for the last PY transaction yet. I still haven't sent the periodic table of elements to Sitianjian yet. Besides, Song Qing is as stubborn as me. It's a bit difficult to convince him to help me with this. Unless I get into a relationship with little beauty Chu Caiwei..."

How could the qi of Number Six be covered?

Xu Qi'an had a method, and that was why he dared to openly posture in the "Earth Book Chat Group"

He took out the booklet, flicked through its pages, and found one page, which read: *Obscured by a single leaf*.

In the afternoon, Xu Qi'an had memorized all the spells recorded in the booklet, so he knew them well.

Obscured by a single leaf can allow the caster to hide his figure and aura, achieving the effect of "Erasing" their existence.

Its essence was the distortion of the corresponding rules based on the ability of a fifth-rank Virtuous Confucian. Then, the "Learning" Ability of a Sixth Rank Confucian was used to record this rule on paper.

Xu Qi'an looked left and right and locked on to an inn across the street. He quietly jumped onto its roof eaves, listening for heartbeats and breathing to locate an empty room.

He hung on the wall like a gecko and used a sabre to open the latch of the window little by little.

After finishing all this, he rushed to Earl Pingyuan's mansion not far from him, stood on the ridge across the street, and looked around for a while before finding the canal.

Xu Qi'an took out an arrow from the cowhide bag in his waist, tied the torn paper to the arrow, and threw it with great force.

"Whoosh"

The arrow was nailed to the dirt wall beside the canal.

He crouched on the ridge of the roof, took out the small jade mirror, and conveyed the message.

【THREE: SIX, by the side of the ditch where you are hiding, there is an arrow on the dirt wall. The thing you need is also in there. I have prepared you a room in the Qingshu Inn on the adjacent street. The sixth window of the second floor is open. Go!】

He didn't look in the mirror but looked in the direction of the canal. Ten seconds later, a big bald head appeared there, with a square face, thick eyebrows, and big eyes, sporting a face deep in hatred and bitterness.

The big bald head scanned the surroundings vigilantly, and then his gaze fell on the arrow nailed into the wall.

He pulled out the arrow and unfolded the paper on it to glance at it.

Obscured by a single leaf?

The big bald head seemed to have figured out something, and a sense of relief appeared on his face.

Number Three is indeed a Confucian Student.

He immediately ignited the paper with his qi, and an inexplicable force enveloped him, restraining his aura.

... The ability to restrain one's aura!

The pupils of the big bald head shrunk slightly, revealing a shocked look.

This isn't something that can be achieved by a common fifth-rank Virtuous. At least a fourth-rank Junzi was needed to do this.

Number Three's status couldn't be ordinary; he's not just a Confucian Disciple, but also a student valued by a certain Great Scholar.

Daoist Jinlian didn't deceive me when he said that every holder of the Earth Book was an outstanding genius.

He didn't leave immediately, but unhurriedly took out clean and tidy monk clothes from a small jade mirror and put them on, then threw the foul-smelling shoes and clothes into the small jade mirror.

I have to leave quickly. If I delay more, It'll be dangerous once the Experts from the Nightwatchers gather...

The big bald head didn't dare to fly over the roof and walked on the street.

At the time, he saw an upright young man standing on a ridge of the adjacent street, wearing a Nightwatcher uniform, holding a knife in one hand, and facing the night wind while looking ahead. His eyes looked empty and lonely.

His posture looked as calm as water and as lofty as a mountain.

He was like a firefly in the night, shining brightly.

This bronze gong's grandeur is reserved, and he looks very handsome... The Nightwatchers are indeed filled with talents...

The bald head took a few glances and secretly appreciated his appearance mentally.

Following Three's words, he found the Qingshu Inn, and the sixth window was indeed open.

The big bald head jumped up lightly and entered the room without making a sound. Within a few seconds, the window and door were closed.

"Whew..." Xu Qi'an relaxed his shoulders and stopped posing.

Although he knew that Number Six was probably a Buddhist disciple, and presumably not a woman, he was still a little disappointed.

"Number Nine is the LYB Jinlian, Number Six is the crass monk, who has suffered a lot and has a deep hatred. The other netizens should be beautiful girls." Xu Qi'an was about to take out the mirror to take a look at the chat history when his ears moved upon hearing heavy footsteps.

He could see dozens of black shadows rising and falling on the roof, rushing towards this side.

Next, Number Six can be considered safe after passing this test. Xu Qi'an narrowed his eyes and thought.

The murder of Earl Pingyuan alarmed the Gold Gong, six Silver Gongs, and dozens of Bronze Gongs who were on duty tonight.

Almost all of the Nightwatchers on duty tonight were dispatched, and they also brought several white-cloaked Sitianjian disciples with them.

The imperial guards also cooperated with the Nightwatchers and sealed the area several li around Earl Pingyuan's mansion.

The Gold Gong who was the team leader was called Jiang Lyuzhong. He was in his forties, with jet-black hair, and the corners of his eyes had wrinkles, but his eyes looked as sharp as a hawk, and his pupils were shining with sharpness.

His eyes were very famous in the Nightwatcher Office. Except for Golden Gongs at his level, no one else could look at him for more than three seconds.

He led the team, constantly moving through the ridges, scanning the dark urban area with his sharp eyes.

The white cloaks were carried by the Bronze Gongs, and they swept across the street inch by inch using their qi-watching eyes.

Jiang Lyuzhong said in a deep voice, "After a murderer kills, his aura should be stained with blood. Have you noticed such abnormalities?"

The Arcanists were only eighth-rank Qi Watchers, and their combat power was mediocre. They still didn't know how to fly over walls and needed the gongs to carry them over their backs, but this didn't prevent them from showing their sense of superiority in front of the martial artists.

"No!" Sitianjian's White Cloaks replied indifferently.

Jiang Lyuzhong's expression paused, but he resisted.

After walking for a while, A certain Sitianjian White Cloak saw Xu Qi'an standing proudly on the ridge. He was stunned for a moment, before he exulted, "Get down, Get down quickly."

Chapter 84. Finally, the Heaven and Earth Society has a Confucian Disciple

They found something this quick?

Including gold gong Jiang Lyuzhong, all the Nightwatchers were roused, and following the direction the white-cloaks were pointing to, looked over, whilst also soaring over the rooftops in that direction.

They saw that on a room stood a bronze gong, a single hand on his sabre hilt, looking over at their contingent.

The enemy may be hidden close by, waiting for an opportunity to ambush, and this bronze gong hasn't even pulled out his sword, hardly professional at all...

 The few silver gongs there frowned.

Pa-ta!

Under a series of footstep sounds, Jiang Lyuzhong waved his hand, making to summon the young bronze gong, to ask about the situation.

The white cloaks however took the initiative to jump from the Nightwatchers' backs, hardly being able to wait, sprinting over to Xu Qi'an, bowing and cupping their hands.

"Master Xu."

The Nightwatchers looked at the respect the Sitianjian white cloaks were paying to this small bronze gong, faces full of blankness.

So, they didn't find anything, rather specifically came to say hi to this bronze gong?

Jiang Lyuzhong narrowed his eyes, examining Xu Qi'an.

Xu Qi'an looked at the white cloaks a while, confirming that he did not know any of them. After all, the ones he knew best were the Alchemists, the Arcanist sixth ranks. Above or below sixth rank, he did not know particularly well.

He didn't know them, but they knew him.

All of the Sitianjian Arcanists knew of Xu Qi'an, he was a prodigy of prodigies in the realm of alchemy.

He wrote the blue-cover book, which was made a first rank secret by Song Qing. Ordinary disciples couldn't look at it even if they wanted to.

Even though these people were merely eighth rank qi-watchers, but, one day they will become Alchemists. If they were to gain a good relationship with this alchemical prodigy early, their future progression would be bright.

In their eyes, this was far more important than finding a murderer.

"Master Xu, you haven't come to the Sitianjian in a long while. Brother Song Qing goes on about you all the time."

Goes on about me? Does he want repayment?

 Xu Qi'an smiled reservedly.

"Master Xu, some day you must come have tea at the Sitianjian, we also want to ask for your expertise in alchemy."

To ask for him to teach alchemy?

Gold gong Jiang Lyuzhong's eyebrow raised.

The other Nightwatchers were in disbelief; the always aloof, always looking down on martial artists Sitianjian Arcanists, were so respectful and courteous to a bronze gong.

And judging from what they were saying, this colleague is also experienced in alchemy?

Thinking this much, many of the bronze gong's eyes were unconsciously drawn to the tag bound at Xu Qi'an's waist.

On there was carved his name.

"Another day." Xu Qi'an waved, "The case is urgent, you have my thanks and appreciation."

"No no, this is our duty," the white-cloaks turned around, and were much more polite to the Nightwatchers, "This cannot be delayed, let's continue."

The white-cloak Arcanists' attitudes did a 180 turn.

Jiang Lyuzhong nodded slightly, "Leave a few here to search this street."

The others left along with the white cloaks, and after a few leaps, vanished into the distance.

A silver gong, looking back, and seeing Xu Qi'an's shadow, could not resist saying "You guys, that colleague of ours, you know him?"

A white cloak sighed, "We know him, but he probably doesn't know us."

The other white cloaks all sighed in unison.

When did the Sitianjian Arcanists become so humble and self-deprecating? The silver gong was very curious, and continued "What does this mean?"

The white cloaks said proudly "You've heard of Brother Song Qing right? Teacher Jianzheng has said, he's a once-in-a-century alchemical prodigy.

"However, do you know what the most common thing Song Qing has been saying recently?"

Another white cloak butted in: "Xu Ningyan is indeed my teacher!"

This can't be true!

 The entire group of Nightwatchers made the same movement — turning their heads, looking back at Xu Qi'an's figure.

He stood proud on the roof ridge, figure tall and straight.

Gold gong Jiang Lyuzhong did not look back, ordering, "Tomorrow you can ask who he is. For now, get on with your jobs."

...

Xu Qi'an searched the streets with his newly arrived colleagues. They did not walk far, before Zhu Guangxiao and Song Tingfeng returned.

"The city guard have locked down the area, we need to search street by street." after greeting all the bronze gongs, Song Tingfeng said.

At this time, they had just reached the Qingshu Inn. Xu Qi'an's eyes flashed slightly, as he said, "Tingfeng, Guangxiao, and I will start from searching this inn, you guys go elsewhere, split up and search."

The other Nightwatchers did not have any other opinions, thinking this was the right thing to do.

Watching them leave, Xu Qi'an went up, and *thud thud thud* knocked on the inn door, startling awake the employee there, as he came over to open the door bleary eyed.

"O- Officers..." The employee stuttered, scared.

"House search!" Xu Qi'an shouted, very naturally.

The employee was stunned. Song Tingfeng looked at Xu Qi'an, and picked up from where he left off: "We are searching for a criminal."

Suddenly turning up to a hotel for a search, Xu Qi'an had done plenty off in his past life. Normally, they would go after receiving a report over the phone.

And the reason for the reports, often were that the misses were performing too energetically; clearly they were facing a toothpick that they could hardly feel, but still screamed like it was a thick truncheon.

Making the neighbouring guests unable to sleep, and so in anger reporting them to the police.

The three of them searched room by room. When they reached the second floor, sixth room, the employee said: "No one lives here"

Song Tingfeng replied heavily, "I don't care if no one lives here, we need to search it anyway."

The employee took out his keys, and opened the door.

Xu Qi'an entered the room and scanned around, seeing the duvets on the bed folded neatly, the room empty, and silently let out a sigh of relief.

He's not stupid... Even though he had the *Obscured by a single leaf*, if he were to have slept in the bed, then the employee would have found it strange, and that would not have escaped Song Tingfeng with his thorough mind, nor Zhu Guangxiao who liked to observe from a distance.

Leaving the hotel, Xu Qi'an took the excuse of needing to go to the toilet, and did not leave the inn. Song Tingfeng and Zhu Guangxiao continued to search house by house.

Squatting in the outhouse with its stink rising to high heaven, Xu Qi'an put the candle by his feet, and pulled out the jade mirror.

【THREE: The Nightwatchers have searched the inn, have you been found?】

After a few seconds, Six replied 【SIX: I'm hiding in the rafters, and haven't touched anything in the room.】

An experienced criminal... Xu Qi'an mouthed off.

【TWO: What's the situation now. SIX, are you safe? Earlier you hadn't sent anything in ages, I didn't dare to ask.】

Two is still not asleep?

Is he (or she) really that enthusiastic?

【SIX: I'm safe for now.】

【TWO: How did you get saved?】

【SIX: THREE, can I say?】

【A Junzi is satisfied and composed, why would I refuse? However, TWO, if you want to know, you'll need to reply with information of equal value. Mm, I'm very interested in the history of the Wanyao Country, as well as any news on their remnant parts.】

There was suspicion that the remaining evil of the Wanyao Country were behind the saltpetre mine case, and so he ought to help Brother Chun and look into this somewhat.

【TWO: I'm not too familiar with the history of the Wanyao Country.】

At this time, a new person popped out into the group: 【FIVE: I know about the history of the Wanyao Country — I know far too much.】

Nice nice, finally the group is getting lively. Only then can we share information... the corners of Xu Qi'an's mouth rose.

Currently, the ones that have appeared were: One, Two, Four, Five, Six, and that LYB Daozhang Nine, as well as himself as Three.

Only Seven and Eight were missing.

Seeing no one else talking, Six began to recount: 【THREE gave me a piece of paper, that recorded a Confucian Magic which could obscure my aura. Only then could I escape from the ditch.】

【You've successfully left the inner city?】

TWO, FIVE, FOUR and the lurking ONE, all expressed their surprise in unison.

【SIX: Not yet. THREE prepared an inn room for me, and only with the magic to hide my aura could I slip by under the Nightwatchers' gaze, hiding in the inn.】

【THREE: Wait, you've told everyone about the inn, are you not afraid ONE will report you?】

【SIX: ONE won't. If he were to report me, he would say so immediately. THREE, I owe you my life, I will repay this debt in the future.】

So the bald-head is subtly revealing to me how ONE does things... Xu Qi'an thought.

One did not pay mind to that message, rather like every other member of the Earth Book, they were thinking through what Six had told them.

They could be certain now, that Three was indeed a Confucian disciple, and one that was very much a favourite of their teachers.

Given that that's the case, the possible candidates he could be have been reduced significantly. After all, there were quite a few prestigious students at the Cloud Deer Academy, but still not that many.

Being in the capital, One immediately discovered something not quite right; given that the Nightwatchers have already started moving, and searching and locking down the surrounding area, how did Three manage to help Six?

Unless he's also in the inner city, and happened to be in the same area... were there any outstanding students of the Cloud Deer Academy that lived in the inner city?

I'll go investigate afterwards.

Finally, Our Heaven and Earth society has a Confucian disciple... the other Earth Book holders thought.

Even though the Confucianists had fallen from grace, in their height of power they suppressed all other cultivation powers, and so in the eyes of all cultivators, Confucianists had extraordinary status.

【THREE: Only a small matter. FIVE, your turn to say.】

Chapter 85. Your Humble Subordinate has an Important Matter to Report

【FIVE: The Wanyao Kingdom was exterminated five hundred years ago. The Buddhist sects led the many countries of the west to flatten the country. It's said that in that final battle at Burning Mountain, the Buddha himself took action.】

【THREE: Wait a minute, You just said that the Buddha took action, didn't you?】

Xu Qi'an originally wanted to say, *Are you sure that the Buddha exists? The only ones who are beyond the ranking are Immortals and Buddhas, but did such characters exist?*

However, Xu Qi'an didn't ask "Does the Buddha exist?", but instead questioned the truth of "Did the Buddha take action".

In this way, His actual status as a noob wouldn't be exposed.

【FIVE: Anyway, that's what my elders said, and it would be extremely reliable; all you need to know is the rank of the Wanyao Kingdom's leader.】

Number Four, who had a relationship with the female National Teacher, sent: **【FOUR: First Rank?】**

【FIVE: First Rank... Humph. My old man told me that they were a half-step Martial God.】

Half-Step Martial God? Does that imply that they had almost surpassed the First Rank to become the "Deity" of the Martial Art System?

Xu Qi'an was taken aback by this information and planned to go back to the Archive to check. Also, even if Number Five knew this much about the history of the Wanyao Kingdom, she didn't appear to be one of its remnants.

At the time Daoist Jinlian, who had been lurking for a while, appeared: 【NINE: The Yao Empress was a half-step Martial God? This Daoist remembers that the documents in the Earth Sect recorded that she was a Rank One.】

The Yao monster races and the Martial Artists followed the same system.

【FIVE: I don't know the complete details, since it happened about five hundred years ago. After the fall of the Yao Empress, the monsters of the Wanyao Kingdom continued to fight for an entire sixty years, before escaping to the southern border.

【However, the remnants of the Wanyao Kingdom have yet to be exterminated in these five hundred years. They are pretty cohesive, and all of them dream of restoring their country. The principal reason is that their princess is still there.

【She is the orphaned child of the Wanyao Empress and the leader of the remnants of the Wanyao Kingdom】

【THREE: What is her rank?】

【FIVE: I don't know this information.】

【THREE: What kind of powerful monsters does the Wanyao Kingdom have?】

【FIVE: I only know of the history of the Wanyao Kingdom, but I'm not too clear about the current situation of the Wanyao Kingdom. After all, the remnants of the Wanyao Kingdom are in hiding, secretly accumulating strength.】

The details you gave me were about history, not helpful to the case at all... Xu Qi'an thought, exasperated.

At the time, Number Two asked probingly: 【TWO: THREE, Why are you inquiring about information related to the Wanyao Kingdom?】

Confucianists and the Wanyao Kingdom didn't have any correlation.

Xu Qi'an didn't answer him, and wrote another message:

【THREE: Daoist Jinlian, A friend of mine has been involved in a weird situation recently.

【He doesn't know why, but he has been picking up money whenever he goes out of his house. The frequency is also too high to be attributed to him having good luck. Let me put it in another way, even if he doesn't work and just picks up the money, he could live a rich and prosperous life. Since Earth Sect cultivates Meritorious Virtue, has something similar happened before?】

Pick up money when going out!?!

And according to Number Three, It isn't just some lucky days, he's been picking up money quite frequently.

Some people could live prosperous lives just by picking up money... The Earth Book Chat Group fell silent for a while.

【FIVE: THREE, Don't make fun of us.】

【NINE: Having Meritorious Virtue in one's body means that one's lucky star would shine bright, and the feedback is that their life would be very smooth sailing, without disease or disaster. Any misfortune in their life would be transformed into good luck. But not specifically "picking up money". Um, You understand what I mean.】

That's to say, people with Meritorious Virtue will live their lives smoothly, but that is due to general large-scale passive buff, not by picking up money... Xu Qi'an's tooth started to hurt.

That means, his dog-shit luck isn't in the same category as Earth Sect's Meritorious Virtue.

He had always thought that his ability to pick up money frequently was the same as the Meritorious virtue of the Earth Sect. As Meritorious Virtue accumulates in the body, Heaven will reward with a good life.

No one sent any messages for a long time. Xu Qi'an squatted in the hut for a long time before confirming that these people had gone offline again.

Can't you inform before going offline, you unqualified netizens... He lampooned and left the hut while holding his candlestick.

He returned the candlestick to the waiter and walked out of the inn when he happened to see a team of a dozen Nightwatchers passing by.

Xu Qi'an took initiative to greet them, "Have you noticed anything?"

A few Nightwatchers shook their heads before pointing at the inn.

Xu Qi'an said, "I've already checked the inn. There's no suspicious person there."

Upon hearing this, his colleagues gave up the idea of searching the inn and left hurriedly.

...

Early morning the next day, Number Six changed into another ordinary looking robe. The spacious robe covered his burly body, as he bound his big bald head with a sweat towel, and left the inn silently, mixing in with the guests who woke up early.

He ate at a roadside breakfast stall and walked towards the gate of the inner city.

While he approached the city gate, he looked at it calmly and found that there were twice as many guards in the gate than before, along with a white-cloaked Arcanist, who was examining everyone going out of the inner city with their Qi Watching Eyes.

Number Six mixed with the crowd and moved out of the inner city.

The white cloak from Sitianjian also examined him, but let him go after little scrutiny.

As a Buddhist disciple, he naturally had a way to dispel the aura brought about by killing. Number Three had bought him precious time to use the method.

Without the One Leaf Concealment and the inn room, he would never have been able to escape the detection of the Arcanists from Sitianjian last night.

Number Six headed east all the way, returning to his dwelling by noon. The houses in the area were mostly built using yellow soil, and the roofs were covered with broken black tiles.

This was the poor district.

Number Six came to a simple compound through a familiar road. The plaque at its gate read: Welfare Home.

The Welfare Home was a welfare institution of the imperial court, specializing in giving shelter to those without anyone else to rely on.

Although it was run by the government, only a few old officials were working in the yard, who could barely look after the orphans and the elderly there.

Number Six stayed in the home as a monk, helping a few old officials take care of the orphans and elderly.

He didn't ask for a penny and frequently used his own money to subsidize the expenses of the welfare home.

Over the past decade, the imperial court had started to be more indifferent to welfare institutions like this one, and often didn't allocate money to them for several years.

Now, it could be said to be a government office only in name.

As soon as Number Six stepped into the courtyard, an old official came up to greet him, and said earnestly, "Master Hengyuan, Please don't bring in more children. There's not enough room to swing a cat around here."

Number Six clasped his hands together, "This poor monk will solve the money problem."

Speaking of this, Number Six thought of Number Three's friend.

This poor monk also wants to pick up money outside daily.

After helping the poor officials cook porridge and distributing it to the elderly and the children, the burly and muscular monk came to the courtyard.

There was a black dog in the firewood house in the backyard. It walked quite clumsily, but its eyes shined from time to time.

The black dog clumsily walked to the monk's feet, raised its black and white eyes, and then spoke ramblingly, " May your fortune... Be like the East Sea, Good Luck... Great Fortune."

Master Hengyuan looked at him with pity, clasped his hands together, and recited the scriptures in a low voice.

...

The case of Earl Pingyuan's murder swept up the court the next day, as the Aristocrat bloc was outraged. The civil officials, who had always been at odds with the Aristocrats, also attached great importance to the case, and the Censors also sued a letter of impeachment to Wei Yuan.

Emperor Yuanjing severely reprimanded the commander of the five guards in the capital and Wei Yuan, the commander of the Nightwatchers.

Xu Qi'an also discovered that the Nightwatcher Office had a negative attitude towards the case.

In the side hall, Xu Qi'an was drinking tea and chatting with Song Tingfeng and Zhu Guangxiao.

"Don't be surprised. Earl Pingyuan isn't a good person. I've heard some things from other colleagues. Earl Pingyuan has a secret business, and he specialized in the immoral industry of human trafficking." Song Tingfeng whispered.

"Duke Wei is eager for these moths in the empire to die cleanly. And you're counting on the Nightwatchers to avenge him? Bah."

Zhu Guangxiao said in a muffled voice, "But after all, The court lost some face in this matter, and the gentlemen in the court will surely not stop at this."

"Hey, the Official Evaluation is nearing. No one will care about the death of Earl Pingyuan that much. The case will stop after a while. It's just increasing our workload. The office ordered to strengthen the patrol in the inner city."

"I don't know how the gentlemen at the court will deal with Duke Wei. They have been waiting for this opportunity for a long time."

"Let's go to the martial arts field to practice and strengthen our tacit understanding." Xu Qi'an suggested.

The three of them returned later to the side hall covered in sweat. After sitting down and pouring water for the two, Xu Qi'an said, "I'll go to the archives."

He went to the Archive, and said to the petty official behind the reception, "Help me find the documents about the Wanyao Kingdom."

The official went to the warehouse and found a copy of *Jiuzhou Geography: The Southern Marches*.

Xu Qi'an quickly browsed through the book. The book contained quite a lot of information about the Wanyao Kingdom, but it was all history. The only valuable information he found was the description of that Empress of the Yao:

A nine-tailed Heavenly Fox.

The Nightwatchers' files have no record of the Buddha taking action... How did Number Five know this and what power are they from? Xu Qi'an thought while returning the book to the official.

"Are there any other files on Wanyao Kingdom?"

"Yes, there are. But they aren't in Archive Ding." The petty official replied.

In other words, Your permissions aren't enough.

Xu Qi'an nodded and left the document library, before making a beeline to the Tower of Noble Spirit.

He wanted to perform a bold operation to win the trust and appreciation of Wei Yuan, and he already had a detailed draft prepared.

The guards announced that he was allowed to pass.

After climbing up to the familiar Seventh Floor, Xu Qi'an saw the big eunuch with frosty temples and handsome features again.

Along with Nangong Qianrou, whose appearance was comparable to Second Brother Xu, and Yang Yan, his Boss's Boss, who had a stoic face all year round.

Xu Qi'an said loudly, "I ask Duke Wei to dismiss your attendants. Your humble subordinate has an important matter to report."

Chapter 86. A Mature Double-Agent

Dismiss your attendants... Upon hearing this, Nangong Qianrou's eyebrows shot up his forehead, and that gaze he had upon Xu Qi'an was instantly filled with enmity.

He was a gold gong, how dare a mere bronze gong order him to be dismissed?

Wei Yuan's expression froze for a short while, before nodding gently, "You two leave for now. Yang Yan, you two supervise each other, make sure no one eavesdrops."

Nangong Qianrou's gazed deeply at Xu Qi'an.

This small insignificant bronze gong had only been a Nightwatcher for a few days, and yet he commonly get's Father's reception, and for the purpose of talking with him, Father would even now send away himself and Yang Yan.

This made Nangong Qianrou very unhappy.

Clearly I came first.

The two gold gongs left the Tower of Noble Spirit. Nangong Qianrou, with a face on par with Xu Xinnian laughed coldly, "A great gold gong, to be surpassed by a mere bronze gong under your command. Clearly he has no consideration for you."

Yang Yan remained silent.

Nangong Qianrou said unhappily, "I'm trying to provoke you, you gotta give me some face here."

Yang Yan's statue like face maintained its stoic expression, saying lightly, "You know clearly what his aptitude is like. Duke Wei wants to raise him, you also know that."

"But the fact that he doesn't look up to you is true."

"Do you think I care?" Yang Yan asked back.

Nangong Qianrou rolled his eyes, in a feminine and graceful manner, saying in annoyance, "Yes yes, after all he's your soldier, there's still a relationship there."

Yang Yan nodded.

Nangong Qianrou immediately turned and left, laughing maliciously, "You're boring. I'm going to find my toys to play with."

He was headed towards the prison.

...

The tea room, the seventh floor of the Tower of Noble Spirit.

Xu Qi'an said, "Your subordinate has information about the Pingyuan Earl's case to report."

Wei Yuan replied solemnly, "The Heaven and Earth Society?"

This was very easy to deduce; if Xu Qi'an merely had a lead on the Earl Pingyuan's case, then he would report to his silver gong, or even gold gong, but not directly to him.

Pertaining to the Heaven and Earth Society however, the two of them had an unspoken agreement.

Xu Qi'an said, "The one who killed the Earl Pingyuan was Number Six."

Wei Yuan was silent for a moment, asking "For what motive?"

"Six's sect brother was kidnapped by a trafficker, his status unknown. Six followed the vine, and managed to lock onto the Earl Pingyuan..." Xu Qi'an told Wei Yuan everything, including how he helped Six escape, and hide under the gazes of the Sitianjian.

The only thing he hid was about the Confucianist book, changing it to a gift from his brother.

Smack!

Wei Yuan swept his sleeve across the tea table, as porcelain crashed to the ground. His expression was no longer kindly, his gaze was sharp as a knife.

"Xu Qi'an, to aid a perpetrator, is to bear the same crime." Wei Yuan barked.

A strong pressure came down on him, as Xu Qi'an for a moment felt as if he was facing a hurricane.

"Your subordinate knows his crime!" Xu Qi'an immediately admitted guilt, saying loudly, "Your subordinate knows his crime is heavy, and worried for a night and day, but finally unable to overcome the condemnation of his good heart, your subordinate decided to come to Duke Wei to admit everything. Whether to kill or exile me, is your choice to make. However, your subordinate's good heart, was not there for that damned Earl Pingyuan, but rather for my own shame in betraying your trust..."

Wei Yuan was expressionless, his face frozen in frost.

"Your subordinate was talking to his colleagues today, and knew that His Majesty is putting blame upon Duke Wei, the many officials at court are trying to use this to push you from your position..." Xu Qi'an's expression was sincere, "Your subordinate thought again of how Duke Wei's kindness to me was like a mountain..."

Wei Yuan's expression melted slightly, as he lightly interrupted, "'Kindness like a mountain' is going a bit far... just say your reason directly."

*... No, c'mon Boss, why aren't you following on with the routine, are you still mingling in Court?

* Xu Qi'an's face stiffened.

He paused, forming his words again, "The Earl Pingyuan secretly ran a broker organisation, that trafficked people in the capital, gaining massive profits. The traffickers deceived and kidnapped boys and girls, to sell them to the brothels, to the black market factories, to raise into thieves, even to cut off their hands and feet, and stick on a black dog's skin..."

He repeated Six's explanation. In his words, he did not hide his hatred towards the Earl Pingyuan.

Wei Yuan's gaze fell slightly, as he listened patiently, thinking deeply.

After Xu Qi'an had finished, with a calm tone he said "Pour some tea."

This little detail showed that Wei Yuan had "forgiven" him.

Xu Qi'an immediately started pouring tea, just like in his past life when he was sent to serve the captain.

Wei Yuan drank a mouthful, and after a few seconds of silence, said with shaking head, "How much do you know of the Heaven and Earth Society? How much do you understand the Earth Sect's Jinlian?"

"From the investigations by the constabulary, the Earl Pingyuan was indeed behind a human trafficking organisation, but did that Six really just do this for his sect brother, or did he have some other motive?"

"Perhaps the Earl Pingyuan had intruded on other matters, perhaps the organisation did something, and because of it brought death upon themselves, did you think of this?"

"In the time of the official evaluation, the many demons dance without order. After another four days is the day His Majesty pays respects to his ancestors, so we cannot treat anything lightly."

He's teaching me how to do things, giving me deductions, he really seems to want to develop me... Xu Qi'an was somewhat moved, and some good feelings rose in his heart towards this great eunuch.

He's treating me as his subordinate, whereas I want to call him daddy, I'm far too lowly...

"Duke Wei is right." Xu Qi'an lowered his head.

Wei Yuan grunted, and praised him, "No matter what, you did well. You're dismissed for now, I will send people to investigate this. You continue to lurk in the Heaven and Earth Society; your short-term objective will be to find out who One is."

"Your subordinate will try his utmost." Xu Qi'an said loudly.

Leaving the Tower of Noble Spirit, Xu Qi'an let out a breath, knowing that he gambled right this time, and gained Wei Yuan's trust.

If he wanted his status to be secure, if he wanted to continue climbing upwards, then he must learn how to fall in line, to hug important legs.

No matter what era, including Xu Qi'an's past life, this never changed.

For a long time afterwards, he had to constantly gain Wei Yuan's appreciation, and his trust.

Xu Qi'an had prepared and revised for this meeting with Wei Yuan; he would not rashly do such a thing.

Firstly, the Nightwatcher Constabulary had a shameless distaste for Earl Pingyuan. Their investigation was half-hearted, and they did not have any immediate desire for "revenge".

Furthermore, he had gained some influence in the Heaven and Earth Society; Two and Four both accepted him somewhat.

Wei Yuan was unlikely to give up on watching the Heaven and Earth Society because of this small matter, and also was unlikely to give up on his intelligent little subordinate.

Finally, what Wei Yuan said was exactly what Xu Qi'an had thought.

He did not trust 100% Number Six, or the Heaven and Earth Society as a whole. The only person who could deal with a LYB, was a LYB.

So if he were to ever come across any confusion, asking after Wei Yuan was a good move.

Of course, a mature mole must have other schemes.

Xu Qi'an came to a corner without anyone, pulling out his jade mirror, and writing in:

【THREE: SIX, I've received a message that the Nightwatchers have gotten grasp of a lead from unknown origins, which may be problematic for you. You should make preparations to leave before they catch up to you.】

There was no delay in the message sending of the Earth Book. It and its owners had a mysterious connection, such that as soon as a message was entered, all the holders would notice.

The Earth Book was a whole, and being unable to private message was one of its biggest downsides. Xu Qi'an had sighed over this more than once.

In the back courtyard of the welfare home, Six had finished helping treat the "black dog's" wounds, and was sitting cross-legged and meditating, when his heart suddenly fluttered, and he took out the Earth Book.

Three's message was displayed on the mirror surface, making Six's square 国-shaped face change colour slightly.[^1]

The Nightwatchers moved that quick?

It had only been a day, and they had already gotten a lead, and could threaten myself, forcing THREE to remind me?

Wait, how did THREE know about this?

The question had just started sprouting in his mind, when he saw the lurking One suddenly break all rules and sent a message without being prompted.

【ONE: THREE, how do you know what's going on inside the Nightwatchers?】

ONE really cares about this. As expected, anything that intrudes on high levels within the capital, he (or she) would pay exceptional attention.

Xu Qi'an did not immediately respond, rather gathering his words, thinking for a moment, and then writing with his finger:

【THREE: How do you think?】

He knew that the other holders of the Earth Book fragments were also lurking in the chat, silently reading their conversation. Xu Qi'an had to give a reasonable, but also explosive reason, to further fulfil his persona.

To prop up his persona.

【THREE: The fight for Confucian orthodoxy has gone on for over two centuries, our Academy cannot just sit and wait to be executed.】

What did this mean... the Cloud Deer Academy had put their own spies inside the Nightwatchers? This is what THREE means, this is a more than clear hint.

In that moment, all the Earth Book fragment holders became excited.

What a large melon.

One did not respond, falling into a strange silence, such that no one could get any inkling into his (or her) thoughts.

Xu Qi'an decided to test them a bit, 【ONE, you can try to find them.】

This was both a provocation, and also a test.

If One replied, or really did as he said covertly, then Xu Qi'an could use this to lock down his (or her) identity.

The Nightwatchers were an office that answered only to the crown, and was also the place Wei Yuan had absolute authority.

Any average power bloc couldn't stick their noses in here. Even if there existed spies from other powers, they would only be at a low level.

And as for those at the low levels, they had no power nor influence to be able to search for other agents.

One was a clever person, and did not care for Xu Qi'an's provocation.

Seeing that no one had spoke after a long while, Six finally entered: 【SIX: I will pay extra mind these few days. THREE, I owe you again.】

【THREE: My dear sir does good deeds and upholds justice, and like the bright moon, is an idol that our generation must strive to follow.】

【SIX: My Benefactor is too kind.】

Six replied with the tone of a monk, implying that he his acceptance of Xu Qi'an had grown far more.

Xu Qi'an put back his mirror, satisfied, thinking, *Don't be glad too early, this debt will be repaid sooner or later.*

I've both gained more trust from Wei Yuan, and also done Six a huge favour, as well as leaving a helpful image within the other members of the Heaven and Earth Society, I've made it big today.

Mm, ONE is getting more and more interested about me. If they really are one of the higher ups at court, they would definitely start investigating the Cloud Deer Academy... But he (or she) won't find anything, hehe, if I were to be more generous, even if he was to find out that "Number Three may be Xu Qi'an", then I could always push Erlang out to carry the pot.

Erlang and I are different; I'm a person in the civil service, if ONE found out who I am, I'd be very passive and timid. Erlang is a teacher's pet at the Cloud Deer academy, he has way more confidence than me. Furthermore, I don't have any enmity with ONE, so there's not really an issue.

Oh Cijiu, your brother really loves you. Returning some of that is only polite.

Returning to the front hall of Spring Breeze Hall, the squinty-eyed Song Tingfeng, laughing, poked fun at Xu Qi'an being a freeloading bastard.

Zhu Guangxiao nodded with earnest agreement.

Xu Qi'an thought for a moment, saying seriously, "Today, when I went to the case archives, I found a great secret, that makes me tremble even now."

Song Tingfeng and Zhu Guangxiao both were surprised, "What secret?"

Xu Qi'an said, "Call me dad, and I'll tell you."

Song Tingfeng hesitated, "Dad."

Xu Qi'an stared at him, a face full of sincerity, "This secret is: Son, you're adopted."

"Your nan- beat him up!"

As the three were fighting, a silver gong and two bronze gongs crossed the doorway. They were unfamiliar.

"Xu Qi'an, come out with me for a moment." That silver gong waved, smiling.

Xu Qi'an and his two colleagues exchanged looks, going outside with confusion.

That unfamiliar silver gong took him into Spring Breeze Hall, and cleared his throat towards Li Yuchun, who was just reading a dossier,

"Mr Li, I'm taking this bronze gong you have. From today, he'll work under me, I'll make a transaction with you."

Hearing this, Li Yuchun exploded.

Chapter 87. I Just Want to be a Quiet Pretty Boy

The Silver Gong who had inexplicably come forward to take Xu Qi'an was named Tao Man. He didn't have much of a relationship with Li Yuchun. However, since they both worked in the same office, they crossed paths regularly and could be said to be familiar with each other.

Of course Li Yuchun refused him, *Are you joking, Do you think I'll agree to you robbing me of a talent?*

But Tao Man didn't think much of Li Yuchun's attitude. He simply called someone in to inform them, turning around to take Xu Qi'an away.

Bang!

Li Yuchun waved his sleeves, causing the door of the Spring Breeze Hall to close.

"What is your intention, Master Li?" Silver Gong Tao asked, surprised by his reaction.

"What is your intention then, Master Tao?" Li Yuchun got up expressionlessly, and pointed to a corner of the wall, where he signalled Xu Qi'an to move.

After waiting for his subordinate to comply with him, he looked at Silver Gong Tao, and continued, "We are not under the same Gold Gong, there is no such rule for transfers."

For those under the same Gold Gong, the transfer of personnel didn't even need to be filed at the Archives, and it could be done with a simple question.

However, to transfer personnel between two Gold Gongs, required a lot of procedures.

Li Yuchun and Tao Man's bosses weren't the same gold gong. So, the Bronze Gongs under them couldn't be transferred casually.

"It's like this," Tao Man tapped his forehead, and pointed at Xu Qi'an at the corner.

"Master Jiang asked me to come over and take him. He's taken a fancy to the kid. Huh, I don't know why he became so lucky... Why are you standing there, gawking and poking at the corners? Come over here, you'll be my subordinate from now on.

"Its your blessing for Gold Gong Jiang to take fancy of you."

Why does this sound so weird... Is Master Jiang going to carry me over the door in a eight man sedan chair? I don't even know him... Xu Qi'an lampooned in his heart, and inquiringly gazed at Li Yuchun.

Li Yuchun said, "Then you could go to Master Jiang and say that I didn't agree."

"What?" Tao Man suspected that his ears weren't working. How dare this Li Yuchun refuse Master Jiang? Did he drink fake wine today, so his brain wasn't performing well?

"I'm not so free to talk nonsense with you. Master Jiang is still waiting. I have to bring him with me now. If you have any opinion on this, you can find Master Jiang by yourself."

"The one surnamed Tao, you try to take one of my people, if I let you over this threshold today, I'll not be called Li Yuchun."

"Li, you're really crazy today, do you know what you said just now?"

The quarrel between the two silver gongs alarmed the bronze gongs and petty officials in the side halls. Song Tingfeng, Zhu Guangxiao, and the bronze gongs brought by Tao Man were squatting in the yard cracking beans and listening to the swearing inside.

"Hey, What's the background of that colleague of yours?" A bronze gong patted Song Tingfeng's thigh with a scabbard.

Song Tingfeng said, "He doesn't have any background."

"Why would Gold Gong Jiang ask for him by name otherwise?" The bronze gongs didn't believe that such a person had an extraordinary talent.

Song Tingfeng thought for a while, and gave a reasonable explanation, "He doesn't need money to sleep with girls in Jiaofang Si."

Nobody believed it at first, so they turned their heads towards Zhu Guangxiao, who nodded.

They believed it now.

"Why doesn't he need money?" The bronze gongs were taken aback, and humbly asked for advice. Getting things for free had been a constant source of happiness for humanity since ancient times.

"I can't say it, I promised to keep it secret for him." Song Tingfeng shook his head, paused, and added, "He gave us a tael of silver as hush money."

"One tael of silver, right. Take it."

Song Tingfeng took it, received it into his arms, and shook his head again, "One tael is not enough. You have to add some more."

He was given another tael.

"Say it." The bronze Gongs looked at him expectantly.

"Because we invited him." Song Tingfeng laughed.

"Beat him up."

Song Tingfeng was beaten to the ground by several bronze gongs, and the silver was also snatched back.

Regarding his Yang Ling persona, Xu Qi'an had invited his two colleagues to a meal at Guiyuelou as a hush fee.

In fact, for Song Tingfeng and Zhu Guangxiao, him sleeping with Fuxiang was an enviable matter that made their eyes go red. As for his talent in poetry, what kind of shit is poetry?

A vulgar martial artist doesn't care of the quality of your poems.

...

Sitting in the hall, Jiang Lyuzhong checked Xu Qi'an's file, and found that he turned out to be the small bailiff from the Changle county office who performed outstandingly in the Tax Silver Case.

I am responsible for investigating Earl Pingyuan's murder. Although Duke Wei resisted the pressure from the court for me, I can't slack off because of this. That would just make Duke Wei look down on me and cause him to question my ability. Jiang Lyuzhong subconsciously tapped his fingers on the table while contemplating.

This person is good at handling and analysing cases, Exactly the type of talent I need. Moreover, he has a close relationship with the arcanists in Sitianjian. I may be able to buy magical weapons to arm my subordinates through him.

Earl Pingyuan's death was fully deserved, but the case still needed to be handled, and would grant credit if handled well. Xu Qi'an was able to solve the Tax Silver case using only the dossier, implying that his ability in this front was outstanding. That was Xu Qi'an's first advantage.

The second advantage was that Sitianjian's White cloaks looked down on martial artists. Except for supplying bronze gongs on a regular basis, they refused to sell any other magic weapons. On that day, when he saw the white cloaked Arcanist being so courteous to Xu Qi'an, and he learned that Xu Qi'an had deep friendship with sixth rank Masters of Alchemy, he had made up his mind to bring him under his command.

For an excellent magic weapon to be made, In addition to the finishing touch of a Master of Formations, an Master of Alchemy's forging was also indispensable.

At the same time, Silver Gong Tao walked in with large strides. He cupped his hands together, and with a face full of anger, said, "Boss, LI Yuchun drove me out."

"Drove you out?" Jiang Lyuzhong's eagle eyes became sharp instantly, and Tao Man lowered his head slightly, not daring to look at his aura.

"What happened?" Gold Gong Jiang said in a deep tone.

"He just didn't give people and said that you can meet him in person yourself if you want him that much." Tao Man recounted the situation.

He was pissed off by Li Yuchun. If it weren't for the office having rules disallowing private fights except in the arena, Tao Man would have let Li Yuchun meet his fists right there and then.

"Alright, I'll go there in person." Gold Gong Jiang said emotionlessly.

On the other side, Li Yuchun went to Yan Yan's Divine Spear Hall^[^1] but couldn't find anyone. So, he went to the side hall and asked a petty official, who said that Gold Gong Yang was having tea with Duke Wei in the Tower of Noble Spirit.

Wei Yuan had two adoptive sons, one was Nangong Qianrou, who was known in the office for looking more moist than a lady. The other was Yang "Doesn't take oil or salt" Yan.

Li Yuchun went to the Tower of Noble Spirit and said that he had something important to report. The guards on duty went upstairs to report as usual. After being summoned, Brother Chun went up to the seventh floor in a single breath.

Upon seeing Yang Yan, who had a posture that seemed to have not changed for millennia, like a man made of stone, Brother Chun sighed with relief, and loudly said, "Gold Gong Yang, Your humble subordinate has something to report."

Yang Yan nodded calmly, and looked over calmly, "Say it."

Brother Chun said emotionally Gold Gong Jiang wants to poach someone."

Wei Yuan and Nangong Qianrou looked over.

Yang Yan said, "Poach someone?"

"Yes" Li Yuchun said, "The bronze Gong Xu Qi'an."

Yang Yan raised his thick eyebrows and looked at Wei Yuan, "Father."

Wei Yuan laughed and said, "That's your business."

Yang Yan got up immediately and quickly left the Tower of Noble Spirit.

After cupping his fists towards Wei Yuan and Nangong Qianrou, Li Yuchun turned around to follow him.

"I don't know what got into the one surnamed Jiang's head. He suddenly ordered someone to come to my Spring Breezed Hall to snatch him over today. He was very domineering." Li Yuchun briefly explained what happened.

He added, "Xu Qi'an has Upper Jia qualifications, he can't be given up to others."

Yang Yan still remained silent.

However, he quickened his pace a little. His attitude on the matter was very firm. He had to hold the bronze gong with Upper Jia qualifications in his hands.

Those who dared to rob him would have their heads bashed out.

The two gold gongs bumped to each other in the entrance of Spring breeze hall. Jiang Lyuzhong was taken aback for a moment and squinted his eyes, making the wrinkles in the corner of his eyes even more distinct.

"Gold gong Yang, can you transfer Xu Qi'an over to my command?"

Yang Yan didn't speak, but he shook his head, indicating he didn't want to.

He disagreed... a bronze Gong... Jiang Lyuzhong's eyes flickered slightly, and he expelled his breath while smiling, "If I want him?"

Yang Yang said in a deep voice, "We'll follow the rules."

"OK!"

What rules? Of course it was fighting.

This rule was set by Wei Yuan. Regardless of Gold, Silver or bronze Gong, conflicts should be resolved by fights. But the fights must be done in the martial arts field of the office, and private fights were prohibited.

Rather than scheming in private, it was better for them to put all their cards in the table and fight like real men.

A martial artist should be pure and unrestrained.

Two Gold Gongs are having a battle in the arena for the possession of a copper gong. This news spread like wildfire.

Hai, What a nuisance. I just wanted to be quiet pretty boy... Xu Qi'an, upon hearing the news, followed his colleagues to the Martial Arts Arena to watch the fun together.

Chapter 88. Presumptuous

While the two were moving towards the arena, the news about the fight between the two Gold Gongs rapidly spread throughout the Nightwatcher's Office.

Silver gongs and bronze Gongs, all brought their friends with them to watch the action, and flocked toward the arena.

"Have you Heard, It seems that the battle was caused due to a bronze gong."

"?? How could it be possible that a mere bronze gong can cause two gold gongs to battle each other?"

"Don't believe me? It's true. Many people have seen it. This morning, old Tao went to Li Yuchun to ask to borrow someone. He didn't allow it, and they had a big quarrel. Later, each found their gold gong."

The Nightwatchers gathered together, those unfamiliar with the situation asking those who knew, discussing amongst each other. After all knowing that it was over a bronze gong, no one was unsurprised.

Bronze Gongs were equivalent to beat police, while gold gongs had a pretty high status; the difference was worlds apart.

The reason was unbelievable. Many curious people attempted to inquire about the internal details, but nobody knew of the inside story of the matter.

Why do I feel like I've become a femme fatale... Xu Qi'an kept the thought in his mind, without a place to express it.

Upon seeing Jiang Lyuzhong, Xu Qi'an roughly figured out what had happened.

On the day Earl Pingyuan was killed, This gold gong had met him. Upon seeing his friendship with the arcanists from Sitianjian, he valued him and wanted to take him under his command.

But Yang Yan disagreed, probably because of his upper Jia aptitude. This mentality was similar to that of schools competing for top students in his previous life.

Li Yuchun had told him that he was given a Upper Jia evaluation by Duke Wei.

Daddy Wei is too generous, Was it only due to my poem... due to empathic feelings... I am distressed that I received an evaluation not applicable to me... Xu Qi'an's face was excited like a "green-tea bitch"^[^1], hoping that the two would start fighting quickly.

A fight between high-ranking martial artists was quite rare.

He didn't care much about who he'd be with in the end. Although he was reluctant to part with Song Tingfeng and Zhu Guangxiao, He was merely a humble bronze gong. Personnel transfers were decided by the organization, and he didn't have much say in it.

In the loft in the building neighbouring the martial arts arena, several gold gongs were watching this all through the window.

"What happened to Yang Yan and Jiang Lyuzhong?"

"Jiang Lyuzhong wanted a bronze gong under Yang Yan to transfer under him, but Yang Yan disagreed with him. So, this fight happened."

"Yang Yan and Jiang Lyuzhong don't really have any feuds, so this shouldn't be an excuse to settle old scores. That means, there's something up with that bronze gong?"

"He seems to be called Xu Qi'an."

"This name sounds familiar... The one from the tax silver case? If it's just that, that's not enough to fight."

"I don't know. Let's watch the fun first and go back to ask Duke Wei later."

After the two gold gongs entered the arena, they took off their cloaks and moved straight ahead, without hesitation.

Xu Qi'an only heard a boom, as the ground collapsed several inches and Jiang Lyuzhong disappeared from his eyesight.

The next moment, Yang Yan raised his elbow, hitting the empty air to his left.

Bang!

A pair of fists collided.

Bang bang Bang... The two's hands and feet turned into afterimages, as the sound of physical collisions rang in a constant stream.

Too fast, too fast... They can't be observed by the naked eye at all. Xu Qi'an widened his eyes to observe, but the fight between the two high-level martial artists was far beyond the limits of his vision.

They exchanged more than a dozen blows in the blink of an eye, the sound of the collisions only reaching Xu Qi'an's ears a few seconds later.

Dozens of times per second. Dozens of times! Xu Qi'an was stunned.

If the human eye could be compared to a camera, their fight was surely faster than the shutter speed.

Xu Qi'an, who was somewhat learned in physics, immediately discovered a problem.

How did the two release their techniques without any recoil?

Their movement is too smooth... But forces have equal and opposite reactions. Why hasn't there been any sort of reaction force when they were colliding violently?

They didn't stop, even if for a second... Is this due to me not catching it with my naked eye, or is it due to the unique ability of high-level Martial Artists?"*

If it is due to the latter, What is the rank of martial artists that gain this ability? It should be after the seventh rank, since the seventh rank is Refining Spirit, and is for tempering the spirit.

In addition, When the two gold gongs were fighting, their qi was restrained and kept within their bodies. This was easy to understand. If they let go of their restraints and fight, the entire office would be razed to the ground.

"Just watch the fun. You don't need to be so serious." Song Tingfeng patted Xu Qi'an on the shoulder.

"There are not many such battles between gold gongs in a year."

Xu Qi'an asked, "Who do you think will win?"

Song Tingfeng smiled, "When fighting with their physical bodies and strength, the gold gongs don't have much difference between each other, so there is no winner every time the gold gongs fight."

As for only allowing the usage of strength and physical body, it was to reduce the chances of death.

The fight continued for over an hour, where batches of Nightwatchers passed by the office. Some went to lunch and stopped coming, while some came to look at it after having lunch, then went to work. They would come over and have a look for a while after completing the matter at hand.

In the martial art system, the ninth rank, Refining Body, was characterized by Physical strength. They could be said to have an inexhaustible supply of physical force. Although it was somewhat exaggerated, it could be said that a martial artist's physical strength is terrifying.

For this point, the famous oiran also agreed.

Xu Qi'an didn't come to watch the battle after having lunch. As a young policeman, he had to patrol the streets with his colleagues.

...

After fighting, the two gold gongs went to the Tower of Noble Spirit in silence.

Wei Yuan, who was standing in the observation hall and watching the whole process patiently, waited for the two to climb the building. He commented, "Yang Yan has to work on refining his body. Otherwise, after ten years, your vitality will decline and you will have no hope for the third rank in your life. Don't just think of tempering the spear."

Yang Yan nodded silently.

"Lyuzhong cares too much about his vitality and wants to maintain a peak physique at all times. But, what you actually have to do is to integrate your sword intent into your fists and feet. This will cause your combat power to greatly increase."

Jiang Lyuzhong sighed, "According to Duke Wei, I'm hopeless to reach the third rank, aren't I?"

Wei Yuan smiled and said, "Third Rank is already in the realm of the extra-ordinary, and it depends on luck, not hard work. Our Zhenbei King has fought on the battlefield for ten years, wandering on the edge of life and death dozens of times, and lived in deathly situations. You are far behind him in terms of being in critical situations.

The great eunuch, with no power to even restrain a chicken, but able to convince the gold gongs under his command, continued, "Since there wasn't a winner and loser, this matter of personnel transfer won't be mentioned anymore."

Jiang Lyuzhong nodded regretfully, and said, "But, your humble subordinate has something to ask about."

Wei Yuan nodded.

Jiang Lyuzhong said, "What's so special about Bronze Gong Xu Qi'an? For Gold Gong Yang to value him so much and not want to give him up."

Yang Yan's attitude was quite abnormal. If it was just an ordinary bronze gong, He would not refuse just due to the face and friendship among the gold gongs.

I liked Xu Qi'an's ability to solve cases and his connection to the Sitianjian. But Martial Idiot Yang Yan never cared about such matters.

After speaking, Jiang Lyuzhong saw Nangong Qianrou pouting, a little disdainful, and even more unconvinced of his words.

Surely, that bronze gong, Xu Qi'an had a bigger secret. Wei Yuan, Yang Yan, and Nangong Qianrou knew about the secret.

"It's not a big deal." Wei Yuan took a sip of tea, and pushed a copy of a personal file to the side of the table, "I knew that you would ask this, So I prepared this specifically. Look at it yourself."

Jiang Lyuzhong cupped his fists and reached out to open the household registration, and saw the rating written in red cinnabar.

****Upper Jia****

He looked at the two bright red words/characters and remained silent for a long time. After some time, he pointed a scorching gaze toward Yang Yan, "Let's fight again. I want this person."

What does an upper Jia Qualification mean? With Duke Wei's knowledge and vision, he would certainly not give such a rating without reason.

It meant that Xu Qi'an would become a great person in the future, at least a gold gong like him.

Such talents must be taken into my hands.

Yang Yan ignored him.

"Duke Wei!" Jiang Lyuzhong rubbed the wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, unconvinced, "You can't be partial just because Yang Yan is your adopted son."

Wei Yuan still didn't answer.

Jiang Lyuzhong loudly said, "If you don't allow it, I'll spread the news and we'll see if Yang Yan can resist all the other gold gongs."

Wei Yuan frowned, "Presumptuous!"

Chapter 89. More Poignant in Silence than Any Sound

Jiang Lyuzhong still wasn't convinced, but he didn't dare to say anything more.

Wei Yuan leisurely continued, "The reason why he's under Yang Yan's command isn't due to Yang Yan, It's due to Li Yuchun."

Li Yuchun?

The three gold gongs couldn't figure this out. Li Yuchun was only a small silver gong. He could be considered to have some talent, but he had an inflexible nature, not knowing how to accommodate, and was very stubborn.

Could it be that Li Yuchun had some sort of relationship with Xu Qi'an? Jiang Lyuzhong guessed.

Wei Yuan continued explaining, "Li Yuchun can examine Xu Qi'an's character well, and Xu Qi'an also needs to be under the command of a leader with a rigid personality. If he was swapped with any other Silver Gong, they would have some sort of conflict with him."

Li Yuchun couldn't handle specks of sand in his eyes, and his personality could be used to give proper guidance to Xu Qi'an. According to Xu Qi'an's deposition and ideals demonstrated in the Conscience Test, he couldn't thrive better in any other Silver Gong's command.

It could even lead to problems.

Upon seeing the thoughtful expressions of the three, Wei Yuan said gently, "What about you? What made you pick this talent?"

Jiang Lyuzhong didn't hide anything, "Earl Pingyuan's case is quite tricky. According to the present clues, It's very likely that some person from the Jianghu was seeking revenge on him. But the culprit has already fled, and it is extremely difficult to track him down. It just happened that Xu Qi'an is talented at solving cases. I wanted to transfer him to my command for him to solve this case."

This reason was quite reasonable. So, Wei Yuan and his sons nodded.

Jiang Lyuzhong continued, "But he caught my eye for another reason, mainly."

Yang Yan looked over immediately.

"On the night Earl Pingyuan was killed, I took several Qi Watchers from the Sitianjian to track down the murderer. After seeing Xu Qi'an, the white cloaks were very excited and insisted on talking with him.

"As soon as they met him, they respectfully bowed and saluted him. Whenever had Sitianjian White Cloaks been polite to martial artists?"

Jiang Lyuzhong shook his head, and continued, "When I asked the silver gongs under my command, I found that this person had a close relationship with the arcanists from Sitianjian."

"Close friendship with Sitianjian Arcanists?" Nangong Qianrou, who had a soft temperament, seemed to have thought of something, and chuckled,

"Hey, I remember. He was the one who used alchemy to make fake silver and solve the mystery in the tax silver case. It was certainly smart for him to use alchemy to please the white cloaks from the Sitianjian. Although the Sitianjian Arcanists look down on martial artists, the boy managed to act flexibly and form bonds with them."

A frown appeared on Yang Yan's face.

He was one of those arrogant and conceited martial artists that treated practitioners from the other systems as ants, and he believed that this quality was something a high-ranking martial artist should possess.

To be fearless, One must despise everything.

If Xu Qi'an had flattered and pleased the arcanists from Sitianjian, Yang Yan would lower his impression of the bronze gong.

"No, that's not the case, either." Jiang Lyuzhong sighed and rejected the previous answer. "Those Qi Watchers respected him quite a lot, and couldn't wait to flatter him more. It's even said that Song Qing from the Sitianjian addressed Xu Qi'an as *Teacher*."

"You're speaking nonsense!" Nangong Qianrou couldn't believe it.

Song Qing is the direct disciple of the Jianzheng, how could he say such words, which undermine the Jianzheng so?

Yang Yan didn't speak either, but he also didn't believe it.

Wei Yuan started to think.

...

Xu Qi'an finished patrolling the streets and returned to the Nightwatchers office, where he wrote reports as usual, before leaving.

Today was his rest day, so he went to the Jiaofangsi.

A man of his age, filled with vigour, was at the age with the strongest desires, and he couldn't contain the turmoil within his body every day.

Using a more vivid metaphor: Thinking about Shen Gong Bao every day.^[1]

There weren't any drinking games in the Reflecting Plum Pavilion that day. The drinkers in the pavilion listened to the music and observed the dances. Fuxiang came out once during the banquet, which already satisfied the drinkers.

The official evaluation is good, real bosses don't come to the Jiaofang Si anymore... Xu Qi'an was invited to have tea as usual.

In the bedroom heated by a charcoal fire, Fuxiang was wearing a gorgeous long dress. She bowed her head and played the qin, with a gentle feminine aura in her eyes.

She's acting quite reserved today. She didn't help me take a bath while exposing her breasts today... Xu Qi'an sat in the tub while enjoying the maid's service.

Xu Qi'an looked at the beauty through the screen.

She also raised her head at that time, and smiled sweetly, filled with amorous feelings.

Her invisible and intangible charm made elder brother Xu feel hot and flushed.

Only for that moment, before that inexplicable feeling disappeared. Xu Qi'an thought that he had seen it wrong through the screen.

The next morning, After waking up, Xu Qi'an glanced at the water clock beside the bed, only to discover that the time had already reached 8 AM, and he had overslept, a rare occurrence.

Fuxiang was sleeping lazily in the bed, with black hair covering her beautiful and delicate face. She was like a plum peony flower but one that was devastated by a storm last night.

She appeared quite sluggish this morning. She looked like she needed to catch up on some sleep to restore some energy.

After washing up and eating the breakfast served by the maids, The head maid by Fuxiang shyly said, "Young Master is quite strong, but the miss is a delicate girl after all. I hope that young master will pity our miss a bit."

Without waiting for an answer from Xu Qi'an, she blushed and shyly continued, "Ping'er is willing to share the burden for miss."

Is this a matter of you wanting to do so? It's whether I *want to do so.*

Xu Qi'an took a closer look at the maid. She looked quite delicate but different from Fuxiang.

...

He took the horse from the "Service Personnel" of the Jiaofang Si. However, when stepping in its back, he suddenly heard some people laughing and chatting heartily.

Following the sound, several men in the uniform of the Imperial Guard walked to the stable together.

One of them had a square 国 face and a tall figure, He was Uncle Xu.

Having spent a night in the Jiaofang Si, Xu Pingzhi and his colleagues were happily chatting. When they came to the stable, they saw a handsome young man on horseback, wearing a Nightwatcher uniform with a gong tied to his chest and a sabre hanging from his waist.

"..." The second uncle's laughter suddenly stuck in his throat.

Uncle and Nephew looked at each silently. More poignant in silence than any sound; than a silver bottle is smashed, out gushes water.[^2]

After pausing for a few seconds, the uncle and nephew both turned their heads at the same time, pretending that they didn't know each other.

The group leaders in the Imperial Guard didn't notice it and still chatted while revelling in the aftertaste.

"I don't know how many family members of large officials will enter the Jiaofang Si after this year's Official Evaluation."

"We are indeed blessed, Hahaha."

"Speaking of that, it's hard to meet Miss Fuxiang even once."

"Fuxiang is now well known throughout the capital. Her fame will only grow in the future and her status will also rise accordingly."

"However, Miss Fuxiang served a guest last night. I just passed by Reflecting Plum Pavilion, where I saw the gatekeeper change the sign of the courtyard."

"What great fortune."

Second Uncle subconsciously looked at Xu Qi'an and thought *The object of all your envy is my nephew.*

Uncle and nephew, who pretended not to know each other, left the Jiaofang Si. Xu Pingzhi bade farewell to his colleagues outside the alley, and then pat his horse to catch up with Xu Qi'an quickly, before saying in a deep voice, "Ningyan..."

"Uncle, You're too contemptible!" Xu Qi'an spoke righteously and with indignation, "Auntie is such a beautiful person yet she married you, and you still don't cherish her, going to the Jiaofang Si to fool around. Aren't you contemptible?"

Auntie was so beautiful that uncle would always remark that he had to have been blessed by the heavens to have married such a beautiful wife.

It was mainly because marriage in this era dictated life based on parents' and matchmakers' words. In Xu Qi'an's previous life, the best quality seafood could only be enjoyed by the upper class.

Xu Pingzhi opened his mouth to refute, saying helplessly, "In three days, His Majesty will hold a ceremony to worship his ancestors. There will be no opportunity for entertainment during that time. Don't tell your aunt of this matter."

"So, Second Uncle was deceiving us all when he said he didn't go to Jiaofang Si." Xu Qi'an struck another knife, before finally saying, "What did Second Uncle want to tell me?"

"No, I don't have anything to say." Uncle Xu dismissed his idea of giving a lesson to his nephew.

Xu Qi'an, who struck the first blow, nodded slightly.

While approaching the Xu Mansion, Second Uncle Xu was probably feeling quite reproachful of himself. Upon seeing a seller of green oranges^[^3] not too far, he turned his head to say, "I'm going to buy some oranges. You wait for me here."

...Suddenly taken advantage of, yet unable to refute, Xu Qi'an nodded helplessly.

On the way home, Xu Pingzhi peeled an orange and deliberately applied the juice of the orange peel to his body.

An experienced Brothel-goer... Xu Qi'an secretly admired his skills, and said, "Second Uncle, Don't throw the peel away. Give it to me as well."

Uncle Xu curiously asked while he handed the orange over to Xu Qi'an, "Why do you need them?"

You're hiding from your wife. I'm hiding from your daughter.

After smearing the orange peel, the two entered the mansion.

Auntie was disgusted by the smell emanating from the two, and her delicate eyebrows frowned.

"These oranges I've brought are both fresh and sweet." Uncle Xu handed over the uneaten orange.

Auntie nodded and peeled off a petal with her slim jade finger before putting it in her mouth. She then handed it back over to Uncle Xu with a wooden expression.

Upon seeing his wife share it, Uncle Xu also peeled a petal off and ate it, then handed it over to Xu Qi'an with a wooden expression.

It's very warm for everyone to share an orange... Xu Qi'an took it with a smile, ate a piece, and handed it to Xu Lingyue.

Xu Lingyue also ate a piece, before beckoning Xu Lingyin who was running around the hall looking for a fun thing to do.

Xu Lingyin took the orange, and broke off two petals with her short fingers, before stuffing them in her mouth to eat them. In an instant, her small face wrinkled into a ball, and she shivered aggrievedly.

Little Pea ate the oranges with an ugly face.

The whole family was relieved and handed over the whole bag of oranges to Xu Lingyin for disposal.

Chapter 90. Master Xu Gives a Lecture

Returning to his small courtyard, Xu Qi'an took off his uniform, bathed, and had just put on his day-to-day clothes when he saw the gatekeeper Zhang push open the door.

"Dalang, there's a guest, the master's calling you over." Old Zhang, with his long goat's beard, called out loudly.

"I know. Close the gate, come in." Xu Qi'an replied.

Old Zhang hesitated, before a cautious expression formed on his face.

Aren't we going to the main yard? Yet you're not leaving, and even asked me to close the door and go inside.

What did you want to do?

Old Zhang did not pay any mind, calmly leaving the small courtyard.

Last time, when a servant had been called into the bathroom, he had mysteriously been found unconscious. Old Zhang still remembered this.

Xu Qi'an walked outside, seeing that Old Zhang had disappeared.

He had wanted to carry old Zhang and vault the wall, saving him walking the scenic route. Gathering himself, he leapt over the high wall, and headed towards the front hall. If Uncle Xu called him, it meant that that guest most likely had some kind of relation to him.

Coming to the front hall, a yellow skirt appeared in his vision, being Chu Caiwei, whom he had not seen in a long time.

A light yellow dress, loose voluminous hair, and clear, limpid almond eyes.

On her waist was hung a deerskin pouch, a bagua feng-shui plate.

"What brings you to my home?" Xu Qi'an asked, somewhat surprised.

Chu Caiwei sat in the main seat, Second Uncle by her side. She was in the middle of eating a large bag of the highest quality snacks from the Guiyuelou. Leisurely taking a sip of water, swallowing her food, she replied:

“If you don’t go to the Sitianjian, next it will be Brother Song who visits.”

Xu Qi’an had a revelation, remembering his as yet unfulfilled promise.

The matter with Zhou Li had been solved, and that periodic table that he said he would provide had not yet been handed over.

It was mostly because initially he had his mind on whether or not Deputy Minister Zhou would fall, to be swiftly followed by being dragged off by the Nightwatchers for accusations.

He then became an honoured bronze gong, and started the grey and murky life of a wage slave.

He had completely forgotten about the Sitianjian. Xu Qi’an swore to heaven, that it was definitely not because he had gotten used to freeloading.

“Some other day, I’ll go some other day.” Xu Qi’an said.

“You can’t have prepared nothing?” Chu Caiwei asked with suspicion.

“Of course I’m prepared.”

Chu Caiwei’s carslan-blue eyes flashed, “You’re lying.”

“...”

“Brother Song said, you’ve delayed for so long, you need to return what you promised with interest. The knowledge you wrote in that blue cover book is somewhat abstruse, the Sitianjian’s alchemists can’t make head nor tail.” Chu Caiwei ate another small cake, “It’s near the end of the year, and Brother Song hopes that you can go to the Sitianjian, and give a lecture.”

“Sure!” Xu Qi’an nodded; repaying one’s debts is but natural order. “However, I need to prepare for an hour.”

Chu Caiwei laughed like a blossom, “I’ll supervise you.”

With a much improved mood, she looked over to her side, to Xu Lingyin, whose eyes were shining with longing, saying “Young sister, do you want to eat some of these treats?”

Xu Lingyin bobbed her head.

“Then I’ll give you some.” Hopping and skipping, Chu Caiwei followed Xu Qi’an with her dress rippling through the air.

This small child had hungered after her treats for ages, like a wolf. Chu Caiwei initially didn’t want to give her any, but owing to Xu Qi’an’s such ready agreement, she cheered up significantly. After all, she was just a small child, how much could she eat really?

The two of them came to Xu Qi’an’s small yard. Chu Caiwei leant on the door, putting one leg up, her head looking towards the kitchen.

“That day you said that you’ll cook for me.”

“... next time.” Xu Qi’an’s heart said, *How the fuck do you still remember?*

Chu Caiwei was no longer happy. puffing out her cheeks. Her already sweet and cute round face became like a little bao bun, even cuter than before.

No matter if she is a disciple of the Sitianjian... this chick I can do with... Xu Qi’an was somewhat stunned.

Of all the beautiful women he had seen, each had their own special traits; the full and well-rounded auntie; the extraordinarily charming and graceful sister; like a daughter of an important family, but inside the still soft and romantic orian, and this cute, adorable Miss Chu Caiwei.

“When I make a basic form of chicken bouillon^[^1], I’ll make noodles for you.” Xu Qi’an said.

An hour later, Xu Qi’an had written his draft, and returned side by side with the big-eyed beauty to the main hall.

Xu Lingyin was sat where Chu Caiwei had sat a moment ago, her two little legs kicking the air with vigour, her little stomach round and bulging.

“...” Chu Caiwei’s mouth opened slightly, as she looked at the empty table.

Where are my snacks? Where are my two taels silver of snacks?

What happened to the huge bag of snacks!?!

A hint of tears sparkled in Chu Caiwei’s eyes.

“Thank you sister, the desserts were really nice.” Xu Lingyin let out a satisfied burp, and thanked Chu Caiwei with very good manners.

It was as if a pumpkin had been stuffed into the big-eyed beauty mouth,^[^2] as she could only hatefully stare at that small bulging stomach, before leaving with Xu Qi’an, face full of chagrin.

“Have you no shame, my sister only ate a little bit of your snacks, and you’re as angry as this.” Xu Qi’an mocked.

Chu Caiwei twisted her waist, “I wanted to leave them to eat when you’re giving your lecture.”

Xu Qi’an thought for a moment, “They’re just snacks. I’ll buy you some, how many cash?”

Chu Caiwei smiled, “Two taels.”

“Let’s not keep Brother Song waiting, giddy-up, giddy-up...”

Horse, why don’t you hurry up a tad?

Chu Caiwei rolled her eyes, and urged her horse to catch up.

...

The Sitianjian.

Xu Qi'an had just crossed the threshold of the Stargazing Tower, when he received the exuberant welcome of the white cloaks. In one breath he came to the seventh floor, and met with Song Qing and his Masters of Alchemy.

"Finally, you've come. If you still hadn't come I'd've visited you personally." Song Qing, with his two dark baggy eyes, stared at Xu Qi'an with an expression like he had resisted temptation for too long.

He was not satisfied at all at Xu Qi'an's delaying.

He had gone against his own "open and aboveboard" philosophy, and helped him to do bad things, yet he had waited and waited and waited and still Xu Qi'an had not come.

"I've had a lot on recently." Xu Qi'an pulled out the draft from his robes, "But hey, I've come now, how's Brother Song's grafting experiments going?"

"The plant grafting needs to wait until spring next year. The main direction of research I'm going down are animals. Wait here..." Song Qing was instantly full of energy, as he hurriedly ran off. After a moment, he came back with a stack of notes.

"These are some of my recent hypotheses for grafting. I've heard you've joined the Nightwatchers, could you get a death row prisoner to me sometime."

Xu Qi'an glanced at it; a half-man half-horse, drawn fairly competently.

He cupped his hands towards Song Qing, "We'll talk about this later. Today, I've come to fulfil my side of the promise."

Xu Qi'an did not want to be smacked to death by the Jianzheng.

Brother Song Qing's alchemy has clearly gone awry... I need to use my extensive chemistry knowledge to set him straight.

The location of the class was the main hall of the seventh floor.

The white cloaked arcanists set out tables, and sat up straight like students. From ninth to sixth rank, there were forty-six of them in total, not including the white-cloaks who were elsewhere.

Xu Qi'an knew that what they really salivated after was his theoretical chemistry knowledge. In terms of practical ability, any sixth rank could beat him with both hands tied behind their back.

I have a feeling, that after this lecture, my status in the Sitianjian will grow again. When I've copied more poems to make the great scholars content, and adding on being able to hug Daddy Wei's leg, will I be unbeatable within the capital?

Xu Qi'an's mind flared up.

With the support of these three great powers, as long as he did not try reverse the tide too much, he would be as steady as an old dog.

Oh Erlang, big brother loves you, I've already started laying the path for your premiership as prime minister.

Yet you are so stingy as to not give big brother a small promise

Xu Qi'an's gaze swept over the white cloaked arcanists, "Everyone, what are your understandings of alchemy? Before the lesson starts, let's first discuss some alchemical principles."

...

Two opulent carriages drove over, stopping beside the Stargazing Tower.

Yang Yan hopped down from the driver's seat, pulling out a small wooden stool, welcoming out Wei Yuan, who was in the carriage.

The effeminate Nangong Qianrou followed, stepping out of the carriage.

The other carriage was made of Nanmu wood, with gold leaf, and from it stepped a woman with a spectacular dress. She was tall and slender, with an appearance matched by few. Her eyes were cold and clear, her thin face was pale, like a beauty from another long-gone world.

A gentle zephyr swirled by, and when she walked her posture could only be seen to appreciate it to its fullest.

"Princess," Wei Yuan respectfully made a greeting.

His two adoptive sons also greeted her.

"Has Wei Yuan also come to find the Jianzheng?" The eldest princess smiled lightly, that refined and noble aura difficult to suppress.

"Indeed," Wei Yuan sighed, "In Taikang County, we discovered a saltpetre mine, however it has already been depleted. We suspect that it was the doing of the remnants of the Wanyao country. Your servant suspects that there are still Yao hidden within and around the city, and so I wanted to ask for the Jianzheng's great eyes to unearth any beasts and demons."

As for the Earth Sect and the Earth Book Fragment, Wei Yuan did not plan to tell the eldest princess.

Those skilled in the art of strategy know discreteness, and would not proclaim publicly any foreshadowings ahead of time.

But merely the information about the Wanyao kingdom, made the eldest princess's expression serious. In her cold beauty rose a hint of stateliness.

"And your Highness?" Wei Yuan asked.

"I've come to find Caiwei." the eldest princess replied. She continued, as if asking off the cuff, "Does Duke Wei think, that the Pingyuan Earl case has something to do with the Yao?"

Wei Yuan shook his head, "The Yao have no relation to the Earl Pingyuan. The latter isn't worth that much."

The two sides entered the Stargazing Tower together, and were shocked to find that the floor was empty. No one even came to receive them.

The second and third floor were the same.

The eldest princess frowned, "What happened in the Sitianjian?"

Wei Yuan, deep in thought, did not reply.

They continued to climb, and when they reached the fifth floor, they finally saw a white-cloak busy in his work.

Seeing Wei Yuan and the eldest princess, that white cloak came over and greeted them.

The eldest princess asked, "From when I entered this tower, until now, we have only seen one of you. What has happened in the Sitianjian?"

The white cloak replied angrily, "I don't want to see your Highness either... ah, no, I also want to go to the seventh floor, but I still have an assignment yet to finish, and so my brothers wouldn't let me go. I'm honestly so pissed, this is inhuman."

After venting all his steam, he explained, "Master Xu has opened a class on the seventh floor, and is lecturing on alchemy. My brothers have all gone to listen."