

Nightwatcher 91

Chapter 91. Splits in the Middle of the Room

Master Xu...

Faced with this unfamiliar title, Wei Yuan and the rest instinctively searched through the Sitianjian member list, looking through the existing five direct disciples of the Jianzheng.

Wait, the white-robed man said "Master Xu" rather than "Senior Brother Xu". This means that the lecturer isn't a disciple of the Sitianjian, but is rather an outsider.

The eldest princess boldly guessed the identity of this "Master Xu", and she couldn't wait to verify if it was correct.

At the same time, Wei Yuan's eyes showed a look, as he came to a certain guess.

Song Qing had once told him that Xu Qi'an was a prodigy in alchemy. Wei Yuan hadn't paid too much attention at that time. After all, Song Qing was the number one alchemist in the Sitianjian.

Even if he was a prodigy with outstanding talent in alchemy, he surely couldn't stand shoulder to shoulder with the first alchemist in Sitianjian, and even be honoured as "Master".

Wei Yuan glanced at his two adoptive sons, whose faces showed the same look of confusion and bewilderment. They didn't link Xu Qi'an and that Master Xu, and forgot what Song Qing had said that day.

"Father, Since when did Sitianjian have someone surnamed Xu?" Nangong Qianrou was in charge of intelligence and torture, so he was extremely suspicious of this new character.

Yang Yan, who didn't like talking, turned his head slightly toward Wei Yuan as if asking him to confirm his guess.

Wei Yuan smiled, "Let's go upstairs and take a look."

The eldest princess had already lifted her skirt and was climbing the stairs gracefully, with elegance. She was tall and slender, and had an excellent figure, Her back view alone was stunning.

You didn't need to look at her face to know that she was a magnificent beauty.

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"The essence of alchemy is *Equivalent Exchange*"

Some clever white cloak answered Xu Qi'an's questions with his own words.

"It is extracting the essence of things to transform waste to treasure." Some alchemists gave an answer based on their own experiences.

Arcanists below the sixth rank didn't answer and just listened intently, while the sixth-rank Masters of Alchemy spoke one after another, speaking of their understanding.

Most of their answers were narrow and were given based on their own experience. As for the guy who copied my words, he is only aware of one aspect while being unaware of the others. The theoretical knowledge in Sitianjian is truly lacking.

Xu Qi'an listened to them patiently, without agreement or objection.

After saying their own words, the white cloaks all looked toward Song Qing in unison.

Song Qing was the Jianzheng's direct disciple and was also recognized as the number one master of alchemy in the Sitianjian. He was so immersed in alchemy that he refused to be promoted. He was only fascinated by alchemy and was quite dismissive of higher ranks.

The other fourth-rank and fifth-rank senior brothers weren't his match when it came to the topic of alchemy.

Song Qing shook his head, letting out a sigh.

What does Senior Brother Song mean by this? As the white-cloaked arcanists were puzzled by his action, Xu Qi'an clapped his hands.

Everyone's eyes immediately turned to the Alchemy Prodigy.

Xu Qi'an met everyone's gaze and sighed, "In the entire Sitianjian, only Senior Brother Song can make me admire him in the field of alchemy."

Sitianjian's White cloaks stood in respect of Song Qing.

Song Qing smiled slightly, and quietly straightened his waist.

Xu Qi'an continued speaking, "Senior Brother Song meant that everyone here was correct, but they weren't comprehensive enough, so they were incorrect."

Everyone showed a thoughtful expression.

Xu Qi'an talked eloquently, "Alchemy is a very broad field. You may have some understanding of it in your mind, but I'm sure it's rather vague or general. Originally, I only promised Senior Brother Song Qing to impart a lesson to you. However, Brother Song Qing insisted that I pay back the principal with interest, so I will talk a little bit more, expand on the topic, and explain it in full."

As soon as he finished these words, the eyes of the arcanists in white started to become hot.

"Thank You, Senior Brother Song. Thank You, Young Master Xu."

"Master Xu, start quickly. I'm becoming impatient by the minute."

The sounds suddenly loudened, and they happened to reach the ears of the eldest princess, who was on the seventh floor. She stopped in her tracks. However, she didn't enter immediately, instead hiding to take a look at the young man who had made the arcanists so worked up.

Xu Qi'an! It was him.

Wei Yuan paused at the same time, and he stalled upon seeing Xu Qi'an, soon returning to a normal pace.

At the same time, when Wei Yuan stalled, the feminine Nangong Qianrou and the paralyzed Yang Yan also looked over the shoulders of the eldest princess and Wei Yuan to vaguely see Xu Qi'an.

It turned out that Jiang Lyuzhong was speaking the truth. Yang Yan stared at Xu Qi'an for a moment, before making a small nod.

This bronze gong can only be under his command, no one else can snatch him.

Nangong Qianrou originally wanted to go in and listen, to see what kind of lecture the young man could speak about. However, upon realizing that neither the eldest princess nor his adoptive father wanted to disturb Xu Qi'an, he endured his urge and stood in place.

Xu Qi'an said, "The essence of alchemy is *Equivalent Exchange*. This is an outline of the principal, but it isn't so vivid. Only a master alchemist like Senior Brother Song Qing could get the meaning of this sentence. Today, everyone can listen to me elaborate on it slowly.

"Upon hearing of alchemy, Usually, what comes to mind of laymen are elixir and potions. For those who know a little bit about the topic, This must be what they have in mind." Xu Qi'an said this while pointing to the simple jewellery in Chu Caiwei's black hair, "Metal!"

The white-cloaked arcanists made slight nods.

"What I want to tell you is that there are just two fields of alchemy. I classify them as Medicine and Minerals. Most alchemists only study these two fields, and occasionally jump to other fields. But I've only seen Senior Brother Song Qing have his eyes on another field."

The white-cloaked arcanists immediately looked at Song Qing. Song Qing also became startled, as if he had found a fellow daoist, and his eyes became hot.

He knew that Xu Qi'an was going to speak of his field of grafting creatures.

Perhaps, this lecture will allow him to step into new levels of alchemy.

Thinking of this, Song Qing started breathing heavily.

Outside, the eldest princess and Wei Yuan couldn't help taking a look at Song Qing, the wonder disciple of the Jianzheng. They weren't strangers to each other.

They knew that he had fiddled with some horrific kind of alchemy, and was even imprisoned for it.

Was Xu Qi'an's alchemy really that advanced? Could he give Song Qing some advice?

"Senior Brother Song Qing's research direction is the field of Living creatures." Xu Qi'an said, "That's correct. Alchemy is not only for dead things, living things are also in the scope of alchemy."

A white-cloaked arcanist got up and said deeply, "Master Xu, Teacher Jianzheng had said that life is not within the scope of alchemy."

Although he admired Xu Qi'an's accomplishments in alchemy, his words violated the admonitions of Teacher Jianzheng, and also went against his thoughts.

The other white-cloaked arcanists present also looked suspicious and dissatisfied.

The eldest princess turned her head to Wei Yuan as if she wanted to consult something. the latter smiled and said softly, "I agree with the Jianzheng."

The eldest princess nodded and continued to look at Xu Qi'an.

Let's see what he says.

"That's because Song Qing's earlier methods were wrong. So, Master Jianzheng criticized him. But the research direction itself isn't wrong." Xu Qi'an said.

Of course, he wouldn't argue with the Jianzheng's words. Even if he won the debate, what if the old Jianzheng became angry and couldn't be pacified? He could slap him to death and he couldn't find someone to cry about his grievances.

Song Qing was unconvinced by his words, but he didn't refute and listened patiently to what he said next.

"Everyone may recall that we can extract metals from ores, harder metals from metals, and elixirs from medicinal materials. But, we can't extract elixirs from ores, and we can't refine metals from medicinal materials." Xu Qi'an asked, "Why?"

"Medicinal Materials are Medicinal Materials, and Ores are Ores. Master Xu's question is quite strange."

"Haha, If metals can be extracted from medicinal materials, can't we extract gold and silver from white rice?"

In the eyes of the white-cloaked arcanists, Xu Qi'an's question was the same as asking: *Why does the sun rise from the east? Why do people starve to death if they don't eat? Why are there twelve hours in a day?...*

The white-cloaked arcanists whispered to each other, but Song Qing vaguely felt something. The white-cloaked juniors' talks made his mind muddled, so he couldn't calm down to think about it.

"Bang!"

Song Qing slapped the table and stood up, "Shut up!"

After yelling, his face was red and his breaths became short. Then, He stared at Xu Qi'an inquiringly, "Say it, Say it fast!"

The white-cloaked arcanists stopped talking, they rarely saw Senior Brother Song Qing like this, and also realized that Xu Qi'an was talking about advanced alchemy knowledge.

Looking past the white-cloaked ones, Xu Qi'an saw Wei Yuan far away, and his heart sank.

WTF, Xu Qi'an was instinctively scared when he realized that his boss was watching while he postured and acted cool in front of an audience.

The arcanists of the Sitianjian were like a group of science nerds. They only paid attention to alchemy and didn't care much about its source.

Even if they had some suspicions, they automatically ignored them. As long as they could learn profound alchemy, they didn't care about other matters.

Wei Yuan was different. He was a statesman, strategist, and general, He was a smart person with a lot of knowledge under his belt.

Smart people tended to think too much.

Xu Qi'an's strategy for the white-cloaked arcanists was to show off and posture in front of them, the more exaggerated, the better. As for his strategy toward Wei Yuan, it was to show loyalty and pretend to be a harmless rabbit within a reasonable range.

The current situation didn't have just a little posturing, It stuck out like someone doing splits in the middle of a room.

At the same time, Wei Yuan slightly nodded toward Xu Qi'an.

If I think about it from another angle, Showing your value in front of your boss is an effective way to gain attention and to increase your chips.

Taking a deep breath, Xu Qi'an got rid of his distracting thoughts and returned focus to the class.

Chapter 92. The Jianzheng's Gift

"These are the main points I wanted to tell everyone in this lecture." Xu Qi'an was well versed in the art of ending chapters in a cliff-hanger, so he paused upon saying this much, and smiled as he turned to face the eager eyes of the white-cloaked arcanists.

He glanced outside the door from the corner of his eyes, to see Wei Yuan staring at him. He also saw a beautiful woman beside him who was also staring at him.

Who is she? She's so beautiful... Xu Qi'an coughed and said, "In everything, we can find minute particles, and these particles constitute the myriad things that come before our eyes. There are also connections and laws between these substances. Using the simplest example, An elixir requires dozens of medicinal materials to be used to refine, but these medicinal materials surely differ in efficacy from the elixir.

"Why is this so? It is because the properties of the minute particles in these medicinal materials are similar, so they can react and fuse. The situation is similar for refining metals from ores."

Xu Qi'an tried his best to express his knowledge in simple terms and didn't use chemical terminology like "atom", Which would only increase the difficulty for alchemists to understand him.

All the arcanists present were excited, as they were all aware of the value of this knowledge.

Not just them, The eldest princess and Wei Yuan were also both highly talented knowledgeable people. So, they were more interested when the knowledge was profound and obscure. They also realized that Xu Qi'an was elaborating on a very high-end art in the field of alchemy.

The crown princess and the eunuch continued standing like this, listening patiently.

Xu Qi'an continued, "In that incomplete alchemy manual, There was also a formula for the similar properties of these minute particles. I call this formula: The periodic table of elements."

Instantly, the sound of rapid breathing echoed throughout the hall, and the white-robed Arcanists clenched their fists in excitement.

"I know, I know!" Song Qing suddenly realized something, so he stood up excitedly and stared at Xu Qi'an as if he was looking for validation.

"The reason why my biological experiments failed is that they didn't have similar properties. Yes, Yes, How can cats and trees have any similar properties? They are completely different."

...Your understanding is somewhat right! Xu Qi'an smilingly said, "Senior Brother Song is indeed a genius in alchemy, and he has outstanding comprehension."

This was the truth.

Song Qing frowned, "Although I can understand your reasoning, How can we verify if living creatures have similar characteristics? What is the correct direction forward for the alchemy of living organisms?"

Great Question! I was waiting for this moment to correct your thoughts.

Xu Qi'an stood with his hands behind his back, standing straight like a pine tree, as a Great Scholar who founded his sect, and said leisurely, "The future direction for the alchemy of living organisms is in the cells."

"Cell!?" Song Qing was stunned, as it was an unfamiliar word he had never heard before in his life.

Yes, Cells. But before doing that, you have to make microscopes or something. I don't know much about it at all. Anyway, This is none of my business... If you succeed, It will be because of my teaching you. If you don't, It's going to be because you are stupid.

Xu Qi'an took out a booklet from his breast pocket, "This is the second blue book I give to the Sitianjian. It contains the formulas for the periodic table of elements and my notes on them. The correct direction for the alchemy of living organisms sought after by Senior Brother Song Qing is also inside."

Song Qing rushed over impatiently and grabbed it, and flipped through it hungrily.

The first sentence was: Cells are the beginning of life.

"Ha, ha ha, ha ha ha..."

Upon looking at it, Song Qing held the booklet tightly and looked up to the sky before laughing.

What is written in this booklet... I really want to know it, I really really want to know, I really really really want to know... More than forty white-cloaked arcanists looked at the booklet in Song Qing's eyes hungrily, feeling as if a cat was scratching their hearts.

Song Qing restrained his smile, and said calmly, " Xu Ningyan just said that the domain of living beings is too profound, and your realm hasn't reached that level yet. After your senior brother understands it thoroughly, He'll naturally teach it to you all on behalf of the teacher."

This "teacher" didn't refer to Xu Qi'an, but the Jianzheng.

Everyone noticed that Song Qing was clenching the booklet tightly, which caused his knuckles to turn white.

He was far more excited than what he had shown outside.

Chemistry includes many fields, for example, electrochemistry, nuclear chemistry, and quantum chemistry...

Xu Qi'an himself only knew a little about them, so he didn't plan to continue talking, as he didn't want to eat up his food ticket for the rest of his life in a go. They weren't Fuxiang, so they weren't worthy of his wholehearted support.

Equivalent Exchanges should be continued for the long term, after all.

Swish~

The white-cloaked Arcanists got up and moved in unison before bowing to Xu Qi'an. "Thank you, Master Xu, for instructing us."

The eldest princess witness the events inside from outside the door, donning a dazed expression.

This was probably the first time since the establishment of the Sitianjian that an arcanist of the Sitianjian behaved as a disciple would to a martial artist.[^1]

Based on this alone, Xu Qi'an was able to leave a small mark in the history books.

Song Qing let out a breath, and patted Chu Caiwei with his arm, "Junior Sister, the eldest princess is looking for you."

Song Qing had already noticed the arrival of Wei Yuan and co., since he had the highest cultivation level among those present.

But, even if they had come, Song Qing wouldn't disrupt the rhythm of the class just due to the princess's noble background or Wei Yuan's authority.

It was because the nobility and beauty of the princess, along with the authority of Wei Yuan were all mundane things.

Upon hearing this, Chu Caiwei turned her head in surprise, and she saw the enormously talented eldest princess.

Xu Qi'an stepped forward quickly, clasped his fists, and said, "Duke Wei!"

Wei Yuan smiled and motioned to the woman in the gorgeous dress beside him, "This is the eldest princess."

After observing her from a close distance, Xu Qi'an was astonished by the eldest princess's appearance. Then, he clasped his fists and said, "Thanks to the princess for your recommendation."

Li Yuchun had told him that he had entered the Nightwatchers due to the eldest princess's recommendation.

Xu Qi'an didn't need to mention the matter, but mentioning it would give the eldest princess the impression that he was a person who didn't forget his benefactors and that he was a grateful person.

The eldest Princess smiled and nodded, and a sound came out in her charming voice, "Alchemy Manual?"

"When I was a child, I met an expert who taught me a secret Alchemy Manual." Xu Qi'an replied. Next, if the eldest princess or Wei Yuan asked to read it, he would say that he lost it accidentally, but the content had already been recorded in his head.

Then, he could use the same knowledge to get something from Sitianjian's arcanists and continue to use it to get something for free from the eldest princess and Wei Yuan later.

Unexpectedly, The eldest princess just smiled and stopped asking any more questions.

Cijiu was correct, This woman has something in her. At the very least, she's a smart woman... She's also beautiful... and she has a good figure... Xu Qi'an didn't need to look sideways near her.

*There was a woman once with perfumed steps, gracefully walking to the eastern room; her slender brow parted like kingfisher wings, her eyes an brilliant glow danced... a silken voice that echoed

above the clouds, its melody spreading all around.[^2] This heroic and picturesque beauty is just what, I, Xu Qi'an, deserve as a partner.*

After the previous lecture, Wei Yuan admired this bronze gong even more, and he said, "You can come with me to meet the Jianzheng."

Meet the Jianzheng... The Jianzheng, who's a peak arcanist... Xu Qi'an started to breathe heavily.

...

The top floor of the Star Observatory was an octagonal terrace with a wide platform, paved with thick bluestone.

Xu Qi'an followed Wei Yuan to the Octagonal Terrace, where he saw the Jianzheng in white sitting at the table with his back towards them.

He had hair white like frost and clothes whiter than snow. The old man's back looked quite ordinary at the first glance, but looking closely, one would find that he was like the horizon, observable, but never reachable.

"You've come." An old voice sounded.

He didn't know if he was feeling an illusion, but Xu Qi'an had a feeling that "He is talking to me."

"I have come."

Wei Yuan, with frosty temples, walked to the edge of the octagonal terrace, where he stood shoulder to shoulder-with the Jianzheng.

As he wasn't a rookie in the officialdom, he was quite surprised upon seeing this scene.

Wei Yuan grandiosely stood shoulder to shoulder with the Jianzheng.

"It's been a long time since I played Go. Master Jianzheng, would you play a game with me?"

The Jianzheng didn't speak, but he waved his hand.

A Go board and two boxes of go pieces materialized from thin air.

Wei Yuan laughed and threw off the hem of his azure robe before sitting opposite the Jianzheng.

"Master Jianzheng, have you been watching the world these days?" Wei Yuan took the opportunity to open up a topic.

"I'm old and dim-sighted. I can't see so clearly." Jianzheng said, also placing a piece on the board.

The two didn't speak for a long time, concentrating on playing Go.

"The Earth Sect has fallen into devilishness." Wei Yuan said.

"All phenomena reverse at the extremes. Is it so simple to become an immortal with meritorious virtue?" Jianzheng said.

"This Wei has received news of Wanyao Kingdom remnants lurking in the capital."

"They're just some small characters."

Hearing this, Wei Yuan nodded reassuringly.

After some time, Wei Yuan casually said, "If I remember correctly, the Human Sect moved to the Imperial Capital 19 years ago. Before that, Even if his Majesty begged for the way of immortality, the three sects of heaven, earth, and human ignored him."

The Jianzheng went silent.

"Just recently, the remnants of the Wanyao Kingdom have taken action near the capital. The day when His Majesty worships his ancestors is also nearing. It's in three days from now. It'll be good for Master Jianzheng to take a good look at the capital."

...

"The banditry in Yunzhou has become more and more serious. But his majesty has no intention of suppressing the bandits, which is making the people anxious."

...

"Does the supervisor have any guesses on the alchemist behind the Silver Tax case?"

The two moved faster and faster, even faster, until they moved without leaving time in thinking, doing so until black and white pieces filled up the entire board.

Tie!

Jianzheng waved his hand to make the go board disappear and raised his old, line-filled face to take a look at Wei Yuan.

"Back when you practiced Martial Arts, I predicted back then that the Great Feng would produce a Second Rank, but you abolished your cultivation."

"Not interested." Wei Yuan shook his head.

"Why don't you follow Confucianism?"

"I can't get along with the scholars in Cloud Deer Academy, Not interested."

"Twenty-five years ago, I had asked if you would be my disciple."

"Wei doesn't have any intention of being an arcanist."

The Jianzheng went silent for a moment, and said, "Excellent. My Little Friend taught my students for me, and so I should also give you a gift in return."

Chapter 93. Number Three is Worthy of Being a Scholar

I get such a thing... Xu Qi'an was stunned, and thought *Master Jianzheng, you won't also take out a mirror, and then say to me "We're brothers now, so I've joined the Heaven and Earth Society!"*

While he was in a daze, he suddenly heard a whoosh sound in the air, drawing his sight to the direction of the stairs.

Two iron lumps, one black, and one gold shot quickly, passing the two gold gongs and Xu Qi'an before flying toward the Jianzheng.

The two iron lumps melted during the flight, turning to bright iron slurries, which splashed towards the Jianzheng like water.

Then, the two streams joined together to form an outline of a long knife.

"Hsss!"

Misty vapour appeared in the air, quenching the blade's body. When it had fallen into the Jianzheng's hands, It was already the unfinished body of a long sabre sword.

Jianzheng grasped the unfinished blade with a hand, and used the other to wipe it, as a long dark-gold sabre formed, just like that. The blade's lustre was subtle, its edge sharp.

Jianzheng flicked his fingers, and this sword swirled and landed in front of Xu Qi'an, cutting into the bluestone as if it was cutting tofu.

The two gold gongs, who didn't use sabres, stared at the dark gold sabre fervently.

Is this freaking Alchemy?!

This is magic. Shouldn't alchemy be extracting and separating substances in bottles and jars?

Xu Qi'an felt his three views were severely impacted by this scene.

Shocked, Xu Qi'an realized the Jianzheng's motive *Was this a gift? No, He was hitting me in the face.*

He's telling me: Boy, You don't know anything about Alchemy.

The blade looked like a mixture of a Tang Dao and a Tachi from his previous life.[^1]

The blade was slender, and about 4 feet long. It looked subtle, its grandeur hidden, but also shined with immense brilliance.

"Why haven't you thanked the Jianzheng yet?" Azure Robe Wei said.

"Thank you, Master Jianzheng."

Suppressing the joy in his heart, Xi Qi'an took off his robe and wrapped it around the blade before holding it in his hand.

This sabre is quite sharp, and it is easy to hurt others or wound myself with it.

Wei Yuan bowed to the Jianzheng and led his three subordinates away from the Sitianjian.

When he was moving downstairs, Xu Qi'an met Chu Caiwei and the eldest princess, who were ascending the stairs, seemingly moving to the Bagua Platform.

Under the watchful eyes of Wei Yuan and the eldest princess, he took Chu Caiwei's hand and walked to the side with her.

"Are you free tonight? I invite you to Guiyuelou for dinner." Xu Qi'an proposed an invitation for a date.

Who would expect that the foodie Chu Caiwei refused him straight away, "I'll enter the inner city later today, and will be resting at the eldest princess's mansion tonight."

There were endless pastries and delicacies in the Princess's mansion. Although the food in the Guiyuelou was quite delicious, it couldn't compare to the food made by the cooks in the princess's mansion.

That's so... I'll be on night duty for the next two days. and the day after tomorrow is the emperor's ancestor worship day, where the nightwatchers are responsible for security... "Then, after His Majesty worships his ancestors, come to my house for dinner."

Why don't I make a crude version of chicken bouillon by myself? The prices in Guiyuelou are quite high as well.

"Are you going to make noodles for me?" Chu Caiwei recalled his words.

"Yes."

"Yes." She also nodded.

Xu Qi'an smiled, "I'll await your presence."

Soon after they separated, Chu Caiwei led the eldest princess upstairs while Xu Qi'an followed Wei Yuan downstairs. While moving down the stairs, Xu Qi'an looked up and happened to see the eldest princess looking down at him.

The two's eyes met. Xu Qi'an grinned. But, the eldest princess was expressionless. When Xu Qi'an's figure was not visible anymore, she curled her lips slightly.

Along the way, after meeting a white-cloaked man, Xu Qi'an handed over the black gold sabre to him, asking him to give it to Senior Brother Song for casting a handle, and said that he'd come to pick it up tomorrow.

After leaving the Star Observatory, Wei Yuan entered his carriage. Yang Yan glanced at Xu Qi'an, and beckoned,

"Can you steer a carriage?"

Xu Qi'an shook his head. Which well-to-do gentleman steers a carriage by himself?

Yang Yan nodded and handed over the reins to him before getting on the carriage by himself.

"???" Xu Qi'an was stunned for a while before realizing the matter.

His stoic-faced leader wanted to cultivate him.

...

Bagua Platform:

Chu Caiwei sat on the edge of the Bagua Platform, her feet in small leather boots dangling in the air.

She held a pack of candied fruit in her arms, which she ate with relish.

The eldest princess stood beside her, her skirt fluttering in the wind, making her look like a female immortal.

"Jianzheng, I have always had a question." The eldest princess's voice was cold but sweet.

"Princess, pray tell." The old Jianzheng held his wine glass while his eyes looked into the distance.

"The Human sect moved into the Imperial City, bewitched my imperial father to practice Dao, and ignore the government for nineteen years. The banditry at Yunzhou has become serious, and disasters have occurred frequently in various places. The court's control over the south has also started to slip." The eldest princess sighed, "What else are you waiting for?"

No answer came, even after a long time. The eldest princess looked back to see that the Jianzheng had fallen asleep with closed eyes.

Chu Caiwei unhappily said, "Princess doesn't need to bother about this nasty old man. He is already so old, and I don't think he can live for more than a few years."

"..." The eldest princess glanced at her. She was the only female disciple in the Sitianjian, and everyone doted on her a lot. So, she was the only one who dared to say this about the Jianzheng.

"Are you familiar with that Bronze Gong?" The eldest princess shifted the subject.

"Yeah", Chu Caiwei smiled while squinting, her eyes forming crescents, "Xu Ningyan is a talent, and he speaks well. I think he's quite interesting."

...

The Welfare Home:

Master Hengyuan, who had been waiting on a house near its premises for two days, finally found something unusual.

A ninth-rank official in a green robe embroidered with quails led a group of craftsmen to the Welfare Home. Not long after, sounds of ping-pong-ping appeared outside which lasted until the dusk.

Master Hengyuan waited until the night before he confirmed that there weren't any ambushes and Sitianjian White-Cloaks nearby. Then, he left the private house and went to the Welfare Home to check.

He was quite surprised to find out that the gate of the Welfare Home had been replaced with a new one, the uneven ground paved with bluestone slabs, and the weathered stone tables and benches replaced with new ones.

Doors, windows, eaves, and various utensils that had been damaged had been repaired, or simply replaced.

The burly "Lu Zhishen" stood in the courtyard, silent for a long time.[^2]

The old official in charge of the Welfare Home was a light sleeper. He woke up to the sound and came out with a lantern to check.

"Master Hengyuan, You're back?" Pleasantly surprised, the old official said.

"You don't need to ask for alms again. The court has just allocated our funds to make up for the silver owed in previous years. They also sent craftsmen to repair the yard in the afternoon."

"Allocation?" Master Hengyuan whispered.

"Yes. Two hundred taels of silver." the old official happily shared. "The children and old people in the yard all have expenses for the coming year. I plan to give each of them a set of winter wear

tomorrow. It was timely as well. Otherwise, any old friends wouldn't have been able to survive this winter."

...

Xu Qi'an was awoken in the middle of the night, feeling annoyed. *Who the fuck was crazy enough to spam the chat in the middle of the night.*

He pulled out the mirror under his pillow and went to the table to light up a candle, under which he looked at the message.

【Six: One and Three, have you found my hiding place?】

【Two: Bald donkey, Why are you not sleeping by this hour of the night? Don't disturb others.】

Number Two, who seemed to have a bad temper, was woken up too.

【Nine: What happened?】

Daoist Jinlian answered, reminding the members of the Heaven and Earth Society that something must have happened to Number Six.

Number One still didn't speak. They seemed to be watching the screen again.

Xu Qi'an had also not figured out the situation and continued watching without adding anything.

【Six: Huh, I didn't expect my hiding place to be exposed so quickly. It doesn't matter if I say it here now. I have sent all the rescued children to the Welfare Home in the eastern city.

【The place had barely been managing for quite some time. There are a few old officials with nowhere to go and a group of homeless children and lone old people there.

【But today, The imperial court suddenly remembered this place and sent people over to repair the yard and make up for the silver not sent in the previous years. The old officials had been to the Ministry of Revenue several times for this, but were kicked out.

【So, I know that silver can't be transferred there without any special reason.】

Number Six wouldn't have been surprised if a Nightwatcher came to find him. But Number One and Number Three were able to find him so quickly, which was what astonished "Lu Zhishen".^[^3]

【One: It wasn't me.】

Number One immediately denied their involvement.

Then, It must be Number Three. Number Three is worthily a scholar from Cloud Deer Academy. He found out about Number Six due to Earl Pingyuan's case, but he didn't try to harm Number Six at all. Instead, he sent help from behind the scenes.

Number Three is worthy of being a scholar.

The members of the Heaven and Earth Society felt a little admiration in their hearts, and they recognized Number Three's character more deeply.

【Two: Three, Did you do it?】

... It wasn't me. I didn't do anything. No need to flatter me so much. Xu Qi'an remained silent.

If I don't explain it, It will be explained as me acquiescing to this. Even if everyone knows about the truth later, I can say that I hadn't admitted it either.

In addition, Xu Qi'an thought of something. He had sold Number Six to Wei Yuan the day before yesterday. With Wei Yuan's methods along with the clues he had provided, It wouldn't be that difficult to discover Number Six's location.

Number Six has saved so many children, What arrangements could be made for them?

If it were Xu Qi'an, his first choice would be to check the various Welfare Homes around the capital.

According to what Number Six said, Who else apart from Wei Yuan could control the court to do that?

Of course, Number One also comes into mind, but they denied it just now.

The murderer of Earl Pingyuan was found, but he wasn't arrested. Instead, the money for the Welfare Home was made up for and people were sent to repair the yard.

"Wei Yuan..." Xu Qi'an whispered in the dim candlelight.

Chapter 94. Homicide Case

Waking up early, Xu Qi'an had just reached the back hall, when he heard Xu Lingyin's racket.

On her shiny tender face, was a bright red pimple, that hurt when she touched it.

Auntie lied to her, saying that a bug grew on her face, and the bug was eating her flesh. Tomorrow, her whole appearance would be ruined, and she wouldn't be able to be married.

Xu Lingyin did not care if she was marriable or not, but she had always thought that she was a cute little girl, who in the future would be as beautiful as her mother and sister, being a talented troublemaker.

So listening to her mother's words, she was distraught to the verge of tears.

And so they say that Auntie is a rotten person, who would even deceive her own young daughter, and feel very satisfied with it, mocking her from the sidelines.

"Big Brother..." Xu Lingyin, her waist swaying as she ran towards her big brother, a face full of desperation. She tilted her face, using her stubby little finger to point to her own cheek, and said with a pouted mouth, "My appearance will be ruined."

“You won’t be ruined,” Xu Qi’an patted her head, “These are beauty spots.”

“What are beauty spots?”

“They mean that in the future you’ll definitely be more beautiful than your sister and mum.”

Xu Lingyin believed him, and happily ate three bowls of porridge for breakfast.

...

Reaching the Nightwatchers Constabulary, Xu Qi’an, Song Tingfeng, and Zhu Guangxiao, who were responsible for day patrol, wandered through the streets together.

“Your sabre ain’t bad.” Song Tingfeng noticed that the style of blade Xu Qi’an had hanging at his waist had changed.

Xu Qi’an put one hand on his sabre, and flicked with his thumb, making the black-gold blade come out of this scabbard a few inches, before quickly falling back into place. He laughed proudly,

“The Sitianjian gifted this to me.”

He didn’t say it was the Jianzheng who gave it to him, as after all, no one would believe him. And in the off chance that they did, showing off such a thing would only bring jealous gazes.

“A magic weapon?” Song Tingfeng and Zhu Guangxiao’s eyes suddenly glowed.

Xu Lingyue shook his head; it wasn’t a magic item, it didn’t have any magical formation carved into it. The only advantage it had, was that it was hard.

This was a good match for Xu Qi’an.

The streets of the inner city were wide and expansive. Xu Qi’an bought a lot of snacks, and shared them out amongst his colleagues, eating and walking at the same time.

A day patrol had the benefits of day patrol. Apart from the Nightwatchers, there were also the city guards, and the bailiffs from the local council.

This significantly reduced the stress of the Nightwatchers’ jobs; they had time to “touch fish”^[^1]. When they were tired, they could go to a tea house and drink some tea, listening to stories, or go to the Goulán and listen to music.

As he walked and walked, Xu Qi’an suddenly felt something hard under his feet. He maintained a level gaze, and without as much as a hesitation picked the thing up.

His action was far too fluid, his expression was far too normal, making Song Tingfeng and Zhu Guangxiao think he was just “pulling up his trousers”, “patting his boots”, or any other sort of very natural activity.

They did not discover that this colleague of theirs just picked up three cash of silver.

Xu Qi’an rolled the piece of silver round in his hand, and suggested “How about going to the Goulán?”

Song Tingfeng and Zhu Guangxiao hesitated, “Alright.”

The three of them made their way to the Goulán, tracing a path they had walked many times before, and came to a booth on the second floor. The table was put beside the railings, allowing the guests to both drink and look down on the performance on the stage.

On the stage was currently a *zaju* opera.^[^2]

“The day after tomorrow is the day of ancestor worship. You guys should have had some experience with it by now, right?” Xu Qi’an opened up conversation, asking his two colleagues for their advice.

“All we need to do is guard the boundaries of Sangpo.^[^3] The ancestor celebration is happening at Sangpo, but you should know this already.” Song Tingfeng chewed on salted peanuts, and took a sip of alcohol.

Xu Qi’an nodded; Sangpo was a small lake outside the royal quarters, located precisely where the barracks of the capital’s five guard brigades are.

The job of the Nightwatchers was very simple; keep the peace, and protect the royal family.

The proceedings of the ceremony were coordinated by the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, and the Ministry of Rites. The outer patrols were made up of the Yudao and Jinwu royal guards.

After watching one opera, Song Tingfeng felt somewhat bored, and so called over the procuress^[^4]. Not long after, a group of flowery dressed young women came into the booth.

Laughing, they stood in a row, batting their eyes towards the three guests.

The three of them were dressed in the Nightwatchers uniform, and so were very intimidating.

Because just yesterday, Xu Qi’an’s treasury was just sucked dry by Fuxiang, he did not plan to touch any women. Even though martial artists in Refining Qi did not have to remain celibate, they still had to be conservative and not let themselves go.

“Later when you’re doing your thing, you can get the girls to call you ‘daddy’.” Xu Qi’an said in a low voice.

Song Tingfeng and Zhu Guangxiao stared at him in disbelief, as if saying: *Are you an animal?*

After they picked two rather good looking girls, the two of them did not leave the booth, rather entering a private room. In places like the Goulán, naturally “listening to music” was not the only activity. More often than not, along with listening to music, guests would also perform one of the most fundamental acts of nature.

Thus, normally any booth would also have a private room.

The procuress left along with the women who weren’t picked. Xu Qi’an both watched the performance, and listened to the quiet sounds coming from behind the door.

Not long after, Song Tingfeng said in a small voice, “Call me daddy.”

As he heard this, Xu Qi’an smiled in gratification. He knew that he had just opened a whole new world for his colleagues.

There's no conversating coming from the opposite room, Guangxiao really is the type to silently get his job done huh...

...

Nearing noon, the three of them left the Goulán. Because their stomachs were full of deserts, snacks and wine, they did not plan to eat lunch.

"Today was fun." Song Tingfeng squinted his eyes, heart content.

"This is nothing, next time I'll teach you to play Russian Roulette.[^5]" Xu Qi'an said dismissively.

"Russian Roulette?" Song Tingfeng had a face full of question marks, but that didn't stop his curiosity, "Is it fun?"

"I've also never tried." Xu Qi'an shrugged. After all, this game was only played by people with money.

"You're messing with me" was written on Song Tingfeng's face, "Then what are you telling me for?"

As they walked and talked, they suddenly saw a group of council bailiffs, rushing over on horseback.

At their head was a woman, with a tall stature, graceful features, thick eyebrows, and an aura of bravery.

Lyu Qing immediately saw the three of them, as after all the Nightwatchers' uniforms were both smart and eye-catching. She immediately reined in her horse, and spoke over the horse's whinny, "Master Xu, we meet again... and I hope you two have been well also."

You give him a "Master Xu", but for us it's "you two", as if you're saying me and Guangxiao are just nameless background cast... Song Tingfeng put a smile on his face, his eyes squinting into slits, and waved,

"Long time no see, Constable Lyu looks even more valiant and heroic."

Lyu Qing smiled back, before remembering the actual task at hand, immediately jumping into the main topic, "In Sanshui street there has been a homicide case. It's in your area of patrol, so as we've met, you might as well come along."

A homicide... Song Tingfeng face became stern. "Naturally. Constable Lyu, you go ahead, we'll follow."

...

Xu Qi'an and his colleagues rushed to Sanshui street, and saw the bailiffs' horses tied in front of one house.

Entering the front door, crossing the courtyard, they saw a few bailiffs asking questions, as the women of the family, with red eyes, were replying with choked sobs.

Lyu Qing was in the room, not outside.

Xu Qi'an examined the relatively good looking matron, asking, "Is the victim your husband?"

The matron glanced at the Nightwatcher's uniform, and nodded gently, using a handkerchief to dab at her tears.

Xu Qi'an looking down her graceful and curvy body, and said solemnly, "Call your son out."

The matron did not know what this bronze gong was thinking, and sent a servant. After a few minutes, the servant brought out a young boy, roughly ten years old.

"Any one else?" Xu Qi'an asked.

"... he's an only son." the matriarch clutched the boy close.

I've thought too much then! Xu Qi'an nodded back, relieved, and skirted past everyone to enter the room with his two colleagues.

This was a study, the victim was slumped over the table, the congealed, dried blood covering half the table surface. He had lost a lot.

After only a glance, Xu Qi'an could ascertain that his throat had been slashed.

Lyu Qing brought in two of her bailiffs, and searched every corner of the study.

Xu Qi'an asked, "Have you found anything?"

Lyu Qing shook her head, "Everything is where it should be, no sign of anything being displaced, no footprints beside windows, nor anything on the rafters."

Xu Qi'an said, "The perpetrator knew the victim."

A conclusion that fast?

Knowing that Xu Qi'an was an expert, no one objected, looking at him, waiting for an explanation.

"The doors and windows are intact, and there are no footprints on the rafters. We can basically rule out breaking and entering." Xu Qi'an walked around the victim's body, "The victim was sat in an upright position. From the angle he is slumped, he was dead in an instant; there was no struggle. This suggests that the perpetrator and victim knew each other — not only did they know each other, but the victim was very respectful and fearful of the perpetrator."

"How do you get this?" Lyu Qing asked with open mind.

"The victim isn't a scholar, right?" Xu Qi'an asked.

Lyu Qing did not understand what he meant by asking that question, "A small lieutenant in the Jinwu royal guard."

Xu Qi'an nodded, "Any normal person, sitting in their study, would be relaxed and content. He should not be sitting so upright and stiff. Unless, the person he was facing was someone that he had to treat with utmost respect.

“Furthermore, on the surface it looks like the victim died due to a slashed throat, but I make the hypothesis that the real cause of death is here...” Xu Qi'an pulled up the victim's hair, and raised that deathly-white face for all to see.

Everyone in the room saw that on the victim's forehead was a light depression.

Chapter 95. Sangpo Lake

A slashed throat doesn't kill instantly. The murderer acted very cleanly. They hadn't slashed the throat, instead opting to cut the carotid artery.

The murderer should have been an experienced expert.

In Xu Qi'an's previous life, a cut to the carotid artery was a fatal wound that even the gods couldn't cure, definitely leading to death.

However, it didn't lead to instant death.

But the small lieutenant had died instantly on the desk, without any struggle, without splattering any blood. Due to this, It could be inferred that the cause of the death wasn't the slash to the throat.

The real cause of his death was a fatal injury to his brain, which led to him not having any chance to struggle, instead dying on the spot.

The murderer had smashed his frontal bone, then slashed his throat with a single cut. This image appeared on everyone's minds upon observing the forehead of the deceased.

Xu Qi'an touched the body of the deceased, observing carefully, before he said, “The deceased's body shows rigor mortis, but the liver mortis had stopped occurring. The cornea is also quite cloudy. This indicates that the death time was more than 17 hours ago. The murder happened last night.

"I suggest the investigation begin from the following directions: First, the night travel certificates recently issued should be investigated. Second, ask the Imperial Guard if they had encountered any suspicious persons nearby. Third, consult the Nightwatchers in charge of night patrol in this area. Fourth, ask the family members about the deceased's recent interpersonal relationships."

No one talked for a long time, as Lyu Qing and the others stared at him in a daze.

This, this was all?

He's found the direction?

This was hardly any time at all, and yet he's given such a clear and definite reasoning, and pointed out the direction for further investigation.

Even if Xu Qi'an's status as a master in crime-solving was known by everyone, everyone still felt that he was "Too quick".

Lyu Qing thought for a while before saying, "Let the coroner check out the body first."

Generally, upon encountering a homicide case, the officers would bring their assistants and conduct a preliminary inspection first, so they can reason better based on the clues on the scene.

The result given by the coroner was similar to Xu Qi'an's judgment, although it was much less detailed than his judgment.

Song Tingfeng and Zhu Guangxiao felt that it was normal, but Lyu Qing and the other officials nearby spontaneously burst into admiration towards Xu Qi'an.

"A pity, A real pity. He's already a Nightwatcher, and he can't transfer to the Constabulary..." Lyu Qing mentally let out a regretful sigh.

If she had such an excellent and outstanding colleague, it would be joyful to arrest criminals and solve cases together with him.

Lyu Qing called the Bailiffs sent to ask questions, and asked about their results.

It was concluded that the deceased didn't make any enemies recently. Also, no guests were visiting last night as well. The deceased had been in a good state of mind recently.

Lyu Qing, who couldn't think of anything for some time, frowned.

"The deceased was just a small lieutenant. So, We can deduce that it couldn't have been a vendetta. What could be the reason for letting the murderer enter the house late at night and commit murder?"

Lyu Qing had a rich experience in criminal investigation. Hearing his words, her eyes lit up, and she immediately called the deceased's spouse to ask, "Did your family come to the possession of a large amount of silver lately? Maybe, Liu Han had mentioned something to you."

The pretty woman tried her best to think for a long time, before she said sadly, "A few days ago, my husband said that he would take us out of the capital to live a chic life."

Lyu Qing and Xu Qi'an looked at each other, confirming something, "How many days ago?"

"About ten days." The woman couldn't remember the time clearly.

...

On the way out of the courtyard, Lyu Qing, in a deep voice, said, "He accepted a bribe and was silenced."

Xu Qi'an nodded. The guess was very reasonable, and he thought so too.

Song Tingfeng frowned and said, "However, What can a small lieutenant be silenced for?"

Xu Qi'an thought for a while. After catching hold of a vague something, he said, "If I remember correctly, the Jinwu Guard is in charge of the east gate of the inner city and the east gate of the imperial quarters."

As soon as he said this, everyone's face changed color.

Xu Qi'an said, "Perhaps we should go to see Liu Han's immediate supervisor. We should go back to the office to report this matter, and come back to question him after receiving a warrant."

Liu Han's Boss was a Jinwu Guard *Baihu* Captain. Although both were Baihu, Jinwu Guards had a higher status than the regular Yudao Imperial Guards. The latter was the security guard of the unit, while the former was the bodyguard of the leader.

If Xu Qi'an and the others wanted to go questioning, they needed to have a warrant issued by the office as proof. It was similar to the search warrants in his previous life.

After returning to the Nightwatchers office, He reported the matter to Li Yuchun. Brother Chun took the matter very seriously and said after thinking deeply, "This matter is very strange. But, the imperial city is quite heavily guarded. A small lieutenant can't make a fuss. The Jinwu Guards will investigate this matter by themselves. However, since His Majesty's Ancestor Worship Day is nearing, we should focus on this matter."

He immediately gave a warrant.

After waiting for a while in the Nightwatchers office, Lyu Qing and others from the Constabulary also came, and the group moved to the east gate of the Imperial City.

Baihu Zhou was currently out on patrol with his squad, only coming back after two hours. After receiving notice that the Nightwatchers and the constabulary had come knocking, he immediately went to receive them.

Baihu Zhou had a bushy beard, and triangular eyes, and he looked quite ferocious. He wasn't easy to get along with at first sight.

Song Tingfeng said, "Baihu Zhou, Do you have a lieutenant named Liu Han under your command?"

Baihu Zhou, with a look of annoyance on his face, was just about to reply when he suddenly saw one of the bronze gongs pull out a piece of paper from his robes, and ignite it with his qi.

The next moment, his pupils were covered by a layer of clear light.

Qi Watching Technique? Zhou Baihu restrained the irritability between his brows, "Yes."

"He's dead." Song Tingfeng said.

"What!" Baihu Zhou couldn't hide his surprise.

Lyu Qing asked, "Was there anything unusual about Liu Han recently?"

"No."

"While he guarded the east gate, did any suspicious people or objects enter or leave the imperial city?"

"No." Zhou Baihu shook his head, "Many soldiers are guarding the imperial city. So, it's useless to bribe only a single person. You could bribe all of them, but it's impossible."

Zhu Guangxiao said, "What if they bribed you?"

Baihu Zhou's complexion changed, as his suppressed irritability surged up, "What do you mean?"

Song Tingfeng smiled and said, "It's just a normal question. Why should Baihu Zhou be angry? His Majesty is about to worship his ancestors. We don't want to make any mistakes in this critical time."

After being asked a few more times, Baihu Zhou held back his temper as there was a bronze gong with Qi Watching Technique observing him from the side.

After Xu Qi'an's Qi Watching Technique's time ran out, Song Tingfeng smiled and said, "Thanks for your cooperation. We'll take our leave."

On the way back with Liu Qing and the others, Xu Qi'an said, "He didn't lie."

Song Tingfeng narrowed his eyes, "Perhaps Liu Han was silenced because of other unknown reasons."

Zhu Guangxiao said in a deep voice, "Let's put this case on hold for now. Currently, The ancestor worship ceremony is the most important matter."

The day after tomorrow was the day when the emperor worships his ancestors, and everything else should take a back seat to it.

After saying his goodbyes to Lyu Qing and the others, Xu Qi'an deliberated on the case in the side hall, but to no avail. So, He put Liu Han's affairs aside.

...

Gengzi Year, October 15, Jiazi.

The time to pray for blessings, fast, and offer sacrifices to ancestors.

Soon, the day when the royal family worships their ancestors arrived. Xu Qi'an wasn't a stranger to it. At this time of the year, the gates of the inner city would be closed. Second Uncle, who was a Baihu in the Imperial Guard, would be transferred to the inner city to maintain martial law since the people in the inner city were required to stay at home and not go outside.

A similar sacrifice also happened at the beginning of spring. That is, Offering sacrifices to the heavens, praying for good weather this year, and peace to the country and its citizens.

Beginning yesterday, the inns in the inner city were checked one by one, and all the jianghu people were driven out to the outer city. The restaurants were closed, and people weren't allowed to stay at inns overnight.

As a Nightwatcher, Xu Qi'an was assigned to stand guard in Sangpo Lake.

Sangpo Lake was a small lake, next to the imperial city. Willow trees were planted by the lake, but the willow leaves hadn't sprouted yet.

A winding corridor was built on the surface of the water, connecting to the white marble platform in the centre of the lake. There was a temple in the platform, where a plaque was hung, with four characters written on it:

永鎮山河

Yong Zhen Shan He

Eternally Suppressing Mountains and Rivers!

Sangpo wasn't an ordinary lake; it had an associated legend, relating to the founding emperor of Great Feng.

According to legend, "Sangpo" was called "Xuanwu Lake" in ancient times, due to the mythical Xuanwu black turtle beast living in it.

Once, that founding emperor of Feng had failed in an attack, and fled with his remaining army to Sangpo lake, his food and ammunition spent.

At the moment of despair, the lake bubbled, and a Black Tortoise came cutting the waves, with a divine sword sticking out of its back.

The Black Tortoise said that it had been waiting there for hundred years, waiting for a destined person to arrive.

After finishing speaking, it presented the Divine Sword and drifted away with the waves.

After obtaining the Divine Sword, the founding emperor pondered on the dao in the lake for three years before he broke through and regrouped his troops. After that, he won every battle and overthrew the decadent former dynasty.

After unifying the Central Plains, the Great Feng established its capital on Sangpo Lake.

Sangpo Lake was the place where the founding emperor enlightened on his dao and had extraordinary symbolic meaning. Therefore, The royal family of the Great Feng held an ancestor worship ceremony there every year.

The temple in the lake enshrined a portrait of the founding emperor.

Liu Bang also killed the White Snake before revolting. I don't know how much water this legend is holding... Xu Qi'an looked at the high platform in the lake and lampooned.

Chapter 96. The Ancestor Worship Ceremony

At the time, dawn was still enveloping the skies, and it was not yet daybreak.

The cold wind of the early morning cut his face like a knife. Xu Qi'an inhaled the icy morning air, rousing his spirit.

Separated by ten or so meters, Song Tingfeng said, "After the ancestor worship is over, let's go to Jiaofang Si to play that Russian Roulette."

Upon hearing this, Zhu Guangxiao on the other side showed a sign of movement.

Xu Qi'an had already taught his two colleagues the basic rules of Russian Roulette. These ancients hadn't ever heard of such a fancy game, which went against public decency.

The taciturn Zhu Guangxiao couldn't take it at first and angrily reprimanded Xu Qi'an for his immorality.

But in hindsight, The more he thought about the game, the more exciting it felt, and the more he thought of it, the more excited he became.

"Let's talk about this later." Xu Qi'an said.

Since silky and thin jimmy hats didn't exist in this era, He was a little resistant to the matter.

"You're acting boring now." Song Tingfeng said, disgruntled. *Why would you provoke someone's interest but not satisfy it?*

"I can be a coach and teach you how to play the game." Xu Qi'an said.

"No way. We have to play together to prove our deep relationship." Song Tingfeng refused.

"He wants you to call Miss Fuxiang." Zhu Guangxiao said, exposing the dirty thoughts of his long-time friend.

While talking, Song Tingfeng frowned, and asked, "Why do you keep looking at the lake?"

Xu Qi'an replied, truthfully, "I always feel that Sangpo Lake looks gloomy, and this makes me uncomfortable."

"Shut up!" Song Tingfeng said in a low voice, "You must have been standing in the cold too long. Sangpo is a holy place for worship, the place where the founding emperor proved his way. Don't talk nonsense here."

Zhu Guangxiao then warned, "A high-grade martial artist has improved senses. You'd be punished if your words were heard by them."

Xu Qi'an fell silent after that.

At the same time, The heavy resonant sound of bells and drums sounded, echoing in everyone's ears as solemnity burst through them.

The Nightwatchers, who were chatting freely before immediately became silent and showed serious expressions.

While the sacrificial music played, a majestic procession left the imperial city for Sangpo Lake.

They didn't use any horses or even carriages, all traveling on foot instead.

The team consisted of hundreds of people, consisting of members of the royal family, the imperial clan, and major civil and military officials.

This team had almost assembled the entirety of the heads of power of the Great Feng.

The leader, Emperor Yuanjing was dressed in a simple Daoist Robe, his black hair tied with a wooden hairpin. He looked over fifty, with a long beard and a handsome appearance.

Behind him, on the side were the graceful Empress and the plump Imperial Concubine.

Following them were the imperial princes and the imperial princesses.

Emperor Yuanjing had many heirs; he had 12 sons, but only had four daughters, and the eldest princess was only 25 this year, nearly 10 years younger than the eldest son of the emperor.

The eldest princess, who was famous in the capital for her talent and beauty, had eyes as clear as a pool, and her face was as white as silk. She appeared cold. Silently, she followed the procession.

Amidst the sacrificial music, the Ancestor Worship Procession came to a bright yellow tent, where Emperor Yuanjing, with a daoist aura, led two eunuchs inside.

The rest waited outside.

The ministers in charge of offering sacrifices got busy with inviting god after god and arranging formation after formation to prepare for the Emperor's subsequent ancestor worship.

Xu Qi'an didn't move, but he turned his head as far as he could, peeping at the scene of the sacrifice from the corner of his eye.

He saw a squadron holding spirit tablets covered with yellow silk moving along the winding corridor to board the high platform, after which they placed the spirit tablets on the large table in front of the temple.

After this squadron returned, another squadron, under the guidance of the Minister of Imperial Ceremony, brought offering vessels and sacrificial vessels of various types, there were at least 200-300 pieces there.

When everything was ready, the Minister of Imperial Sacrifice loudly spoke outside the imperial tent, while bowing, "The time for resting has ended, I respectfully invite your Majesty to come out."

The Imperial Princes, the Imperial Princesses, along with the civil and military officials, bowed down at the same time.

The eunuch lifted the curtain, after which Emperor Yuanjing, who had already changed to a bright yellow uniform, appeared in front of everyone with a solemn expression.

At that time, he had lost the faint aura of a Daoist, and only showed a majestic aura that could only be linked to an Emperor.

This posture feels even more solemn than the Central Committee meetings in my previous life... This trip was worthwhile... This trip was worthwhile. Xu Qi'an enjoyed watching the fun before he suddenly felt a palpitation in his heart, and he knew that someone in the Dishu Chat Group was talking.

He waited for the patrol team to pass by, and put his hand on his bosom. He didn't take out the entirety of the Jade Mirror, only exposing it halfway, and took a look.

【TWO: I remember that today is the day the royal family offers sacrifices to its ancestors. ONE, THREE, Am I right?】

【FOUR: Calculating the time, today is indeed the Ancestor Worship Ceremony. Back then, I had also participated in the royal ancestor worship ceremony.】

【TWO: Back then? Huh, FOUR, were you an official back then, and with quite a high status at that?】

【FOUR: Yes.】

Number Four had been an official before... Xu Qi'an was taken aback, *Didn't Number Four have some friendship with the Human Sect's female National Teacher...*

Um, This makes some sense. They could have met the National Teacher due to being an official.

It seems that Number Four is a person with a story.

Xu Qi'an found it very interesting. The holders of the fragments of the Earth Book weren't ordinary people. They all had mysterious identities and strong cultivation bases.

Interacting with them was like playing a game, uncovering their mysteries layer by layer.

【TWO: Interesting! ONE didn't reply. and neither did THREE.】

Fuck, This L(ittle)YB... The corners of Xu Qi'an twitched as he was caught off guard.

It's obvious that Number Two didn't send a message because he was concerned about the Royal Family's Ancestor Worship, but he did it as a probe.

A probe to test the identities of Number Three and Number One.

With the connection between the Earth Book fragments and their holders, you'd be awoken even if you were asleep. So, there was no chance of missing the chat due to rest.

People would be unable to reply only if they were in a real emergency.

However, Number One and Number Three couldn't have an emergency simultaneously. So, It meant that both of them were participating in the sacrificial ceremony and both couldn't take out the Earth Book fragment in full view to reply.

At the same time, Song Tingfeng became aware of Xu Qi'an's actions.

He let go of his hand calmly, causing the halfway exposed jade mirror to slide back into his pocket.

"Act seriously, Don't perform unnecessary actions." Song Tingfeng warned him while frowning.

"I know this." Xu Qi'an perfunctorily responded.

Shit, I'm supposed to be a student of Cloud Deer Academy. I don't have any reason to get qualifications to participate in the Royal Family's Ancestor Worship... My identity has some flaws now... Damn it, These guys in the Heaven and Earth Society are all profound schemers.

However, Number One also didn't reply... Heh, If they are also present here, Who could they be?

While Xu Qi'an's thoughts fluctuated, the members of the Heaven and Earth Society and the holders of the Earth Book fragments were also thinking about the same problem.

Wasn't Number Three a student of the Cloud Deer Academy? And it's well known that Cloud Deer Academy students had almost cut off their chances for an official career.

Moreover, Number Three has given me the impression of a student of Cloud Deer Academy all this time. So, It's even more impossible for him to participate in the Ancestor Worship Ceremony.

Was Number Three, not a Cloud Deer Academy student?

No, it couldn't be. If it were, the events before couldn't be explained.

Maybe he is participating in the Royal family's Ancestor Worship in another capacity. Yeah, Does the Cloud Deer Academy have members in the various ministries in the court?

What office could he be in? What status does he have?

On the contrary, they weren't surprised by Number One's identity since they knew that Number one was a member of the Court had had quite a high status.

【TWO: FOUR, You have been an official before. You come over and analyse THREE's situation.】

【FOUR: I do have a guess in mind. But, why should I tell you about it?】

【SIX: TWO, you aren't even in the capital. What good does it for you to know the identities of ONE and THREE?】

Number Four and Number Six were speaking for Number Three.

Xu Qi'an endured the connection and didn't check the information.

After watching the Ancestor Worship for a while, Xu Qi'an felt a strange feeling in his heart again. He had always believed that Sangpo Lake was gloomy, and felt an inexplicable danger from the lake.

Suddenly, Xu Qi'an heard a strange voice along the Sacrificial Music.

The voice was saying:

"Save me, save me..."

Xu Qi'an stiffened up and listened for the voice carefully, but it had disappeared.

"Tingfeng, Guangxiao, did you hear any strange voices?" Xu Qi'an asked his colleagues who were not far from him.

"Do you mean the Sacrificial Music? It's indeed a bit... a bit loud." Song Tingfeng's desire to live changed his words midway through. He originally wanted to say that it was unpleasant.

Zhu Guangxiao shook his head.

Xu Qi'an was about to speak when that weird voice came again. This time, He heard it. The voice was coming from Sangpo Lake.

"Save me, save me..."

The voice was shrill and depressing, and also incomparably penetrating. It sounded like a ghost whispering in his ear.

Chapter 97. The Clouds Change

The voice was terrifying enough to make Xu Qi'an's hairs stand on end, causing his head to turn toward Sangpo Lake.

The Nightwatchers in charge of guarding the surrounding area weren't allowed to turn around to observe the ceremony. Xu Qi'an had already overstepped the rules.

He saw Emperor Yuanjing, wearing a bright yellow uniform, kowtow every three steps to slowly reach the platform. He also saw the officials, imperial princes, and imperial princesses who were watching the ceremony from the shore. He also saw Wei Yuan and his two adopted sons who were watching the ceremony.

He saw the magnificent temple, saw the imperial army, and saw the eunuchs too.

The moment he turned his head, the voice disappeared.

Am I hallucinating?

I just haven't seen Fuxiang for three days, my eyes haven't got hazy?

Xu Qi'an, after taking a deep breath, didn't dare to look further, turned his head before asking, "What do you know about Sangpo?"

Zhu Guangxiao and Song Tingfeng replied to him but didn't have any valuable information to give him. They didn't say anything beyond, "The place where the founding emperor attained his dao", "Divine sword presented by the Black Tortoise", "The place where the royal family worships their ancestors" and other things Xu Qi'an already knew.

"Save me, save me..."

The voice sounded again, like a ghost lying on his back, whispering to his ears.

Xu Qi'an stiffened his neck and turned his neck inch by inch until he came to observe the scene of the sacrifice again. The voice had, yet again, disappeared after he turned his head.

Fear of the invisible filled up his mind, and goosebumps appeared all over his body.

In Sangpo Lake, the place where the founding emperor attained his dao, the place where the royal family worships their ancestors, a cry for help appeared... Xu Qi'an shivered slowly in the cold.

"Save me, save me..."

"Save me, save me..."

Xu Qi'an became even more terrified and thought of running away and staying away from this. He forcibly calmed himself down, and took out the jade mirror, without paying any attention to his colleagues nearby.

【THREE: What do you know about Sangpo? Tell me quickly. It's very important.】

【TWO: Oh, You actually replied, THREE. Are you actually in the Sacrifice Site in Sangpo?】

Xu Qi'an ignored Number Two and waited a few minutes when he saw Number Four's message.

【FOUR: Sangpo is the place where the founding Emperor of the Great Feng attained his dao. After Great Feng was established, he chose Sangpo as his capital. However, there is no evidence of the legend about the Xuanwu black turtle, so it isn't very credible.

【But, the divine sword really exists. The sword of the founding emperor is enshrined in the temple in the middle of the high platform in the lake.】

After Number Four had finished speaking, Daoist Jinlinan added

【NINE: It is a Divine Weapon that symbolizes Great Feng's National Destiny.[^1]】

【FOUR: Indeed. In the Mountain and Sea Campaign, Emperor Yuanjing went to the capital to get the divine weapon and present it to the Zhenbei King. Among the reasons for the victory at the Mountain and Sea Campaign, Wei Yuan's military might is regarded as a major reason. However, the Zhenbei King's combat prowess couldn't be ignored as another reason.】

The divine Sword is enshrined in the temple.

Was the sword the one calling for help?

Let's not mention the possibility of the sword developing self-awareness. Why would it seek my help?

"Save me, save me...!" the voice suddenly became shrill, as if it was dissatisfied at Xu Qi'an's indifference.

The cry for help echoed in his ears, and shook Xu Qi'an's spirit, making him feel dizzy, and his consciousness confused.

He took a deep breath, after which he inquired for more information:

【THREE: Is there any more information? I want more information about it. As long as they are in the historical records, regardless of their authenticity, I want to know them all.】

After passing a message to the Earth Book, he took a glance back, trying to calm the whispers in his ears.

But he wasn't successful this time. Even if he turned his head, the cry for help still echoed in his ears.

"Save me, save me!"

Veins bulged in Xu Qi'an's forehead, as the voice pierced his mind as a steel needle would.

【FOUR: You reminded me of something, A record I had read back then when I was revising the history books.

【Sangpo is now guarded by the troops from the five armies in the capital. The defences are tight. No one is allowed to approach without permission. I do mean anyone.

【This is because, five hundred years ago, when the crown prince of that time was playing in Sangpo by boat, he accidentally fell into the lake. After being rescued by the guards, he fell into serious illness and suffered from Hysteria. Half a year later, his drowned body washed up the shores of Sangpo Lake】

【The royal family believed that the crown prince had offended the heroic souls of his ancestors and provoked such punishment. To prevent such incidents from happening again, they sealed Sangpo's doors and only allowed them to be opened for the reason of Ancestor Worship.】

*The prince fell into the lake and fell into hysteria... Was he the same as me and heard a cry for help... Will I also make the same mistake and my drowned body be found on the shores of Sangpo?
*

There should be some secret in Sangpo. So, the crown prince didn't die due to offending the heroic souls of his ancestors. The out-of-luck crown prince didn't know the secret, otherwise, he wouldn't have gone boating to the Sangpo.

It may be theorized that only the Emperor and past Emperors know of this secret.

However, Why didn't the Emperor who knew about the secrets of this place, wait for someone to die before taking action?

Xu Qi'an, who was good at reasoning, had doubts flashing in his mind.

【SIX: Why are you asking this, THREE?】

At the moment, Xu Qi'an didn't have any energy left over for answering questions. He tremblingly stuffed the fragment of the Earth Book back into his pocket, then knelt down powerlessly on the ground holding his head, with a painful expression on his face.

“Save me, save me...”

The cries for help still reached his ears, echoing time and time again, grinding his head to paste. He was feeling as if a steel needle was being pierced into his cranial cavity.

He felt as if his head was about to crack open.

Song Tingfeng and Zhu Guangxiao noticed the abnormality of their colleague, and were taken aback by Xu Qi'an's pale face.

"What's the matter with you? Can you still hold on? You can't mess up at this time. If you interrupt or disturb his Majesty in his Ancestor Worship, You would have committed a capital offense." Song Tingfeng became anxious.

Zhu Guangxiao moved a little bit, trying to get closer to check the situation.

...

At the time, Emperor Yuanjing had already climbed onto the high platform. The drums and music had already stopped. The Minister of Rites knelt to read the offering prayer, after which the music rose again.

Emperor Yuanjing personally burnt the prayer, and then performed the three kneels and nine prayers.

The ancestor worship was only halfway done right now.

Wei Yuan withdrew his gaze to take a look at the Empress, who wasn't too far away. She was graceful and elegant, her elegance feeling as if it was granted by the heavens.

Even if she was the biological mother of the Eldest Princess, the Empress's appearance wasn't that similar to the Eldest Princess. However, she had beauty capable of felling nations, as back then, and her grace and elegance hadn't diminished a bit from her youth.

One can only imagine how beautiful she was back in the old days.

It's just that the years have passed, and she was no longer the young and innocent girl with delicately carved eyebrows and bright eyes.

But he was still the same as before, still dressed in Bright Azure Clothes.

Wei Yuan became dazed.

Feeling something, the Empress, the mother of the nation, took a light look at him, and the two looked at each other across the air.

The empress's eyes softened for a while.

Wei Yuan looked away as if he had got an electric shock, and hastily bowed. All the emotions in his eyes precipitated, only leaving some abstruse vicissitudes on the outside.

"Father, the situation over there isn't right." Yang Yan said, in a deep voice.

Wei Yuan followed his gaze and saw a Bronze Gong kneeling on the ground, and the two Bronze Gongs beside him talking to him with their heads turned.

Many Higher ups had noticed the situation over on Xu Qi'an's side.

It's just that there wasn't any crisis for the time being, so they endured this. As long as no assassins appeared, they could wait for his majesty's ancestor worship to finish to complete other affairs.

Including settling accounts with this small bronze gong.

Wei Yuan noticed that he was the young man he appreciated, and raised his chin, "Go and check the situation, then take him outside."

This was done to protect Xu Qi'an.

...

"Save me, save me..."

Hearing this ghostly sound, Xu Qi'an's spirit was being torn apart. Sometimes, he felt like he was a criminal policeman of the modern era, and at others, he felt that he was a native of the capital.

The throbbing pain in his head had begun to increase in severity, pushing him to the edge of collapse.

My head hurts, Don't shout, Don't Shout, Please Don't shout... Xu Qi'an covered his head, as sweat flowed down.

He had been sweating profusely already.

The strange cry for help was aimed at his soul, not his body, but the pain it brought was no less than physical torture.

Amidst the strange cries for help, Xu Qi'an finally collapsed. He didn't care about the emperor's ancestor worship, the strict rules, or anything else for that matter.

On the verge of death, nothing else mattered.

He clenched both his hands into fists, and pounded the ground heavily before he roared hoarsely,

"SHUT UP!"

Suddenly, the clouds changed.

On the high platform in the lake, the temple suddenly shook, immediately after which, a golden sword qi shattered through the eaves, and rushed into the expansive sky.

With the ray of sword qi, the lake suddenly burst into waves, surging layer by layer, causing Sangpo Lake to come alive.

Chapter 98. A Secret That Cannot be Known

The Yuanjing Emperor was the first to bear this tide of qi, kneeling down in the midst of its ferocious storm. The tall platform shook heavily, and the spirit tablets of his ancestors trembled and fell.

Sacrificial items and ceremonial vessels shattered onto the ground, flying shards of porcelain streaming outwards in all directions, some hitting Yuanjing.

The scene immediately became chaotic. The surrounding soldiers quickly left their posts, rushing towards Sangpo Lake.

The Nightwatchers on guard by the lake sprinted towards the crowd, to protect the royal family, and all the military and civil officials at the scene.

“An assassin, protect His Majesty!”

“Protect the empress, protect the princesses...”

“Protect the Prime Minister...”

People’s shadows flashed around, as in that instant ten Nightwatcher gold gongs, masters in the King’s guard, and others around took flight, as at least several dozen high-ranked martial artists flew through the sky towards the high platform, surrounding the Yuanjing Emperor in an impenetrable defence.

The uproar only continued for a dozen or so breaths, because that sword qi that pierced the clouds only stayed for that long, before dissipating. The waters of the lake returned to their tranquil state.

There were no assassins, and as the winds calmed, everywhere was very stable and under control, and there was no sign of injury, death, or suspicious persons.

Wei Yuan, the man in charge of security at the ceremony, walked up to the platform with wide steps, bowing deeply:

“Your lowly servant has failed at his job, your lowly servant deserves death.”

At this time, the Yuanjing Emperor had calmed down, but through this event, that faint daoist immortal aura on his face had completely disappeared.

He was no longer the Daoist who had cultivated for over twenty years, but rather the controller of absolute power, the stern and mighty emperor.

The Yuanjing Emperor said solemnly, “Everyone shall leave the sacrificial altar. No one shall approach.”

Everyone, including Wei Yuan, including all the high-rank martial artists, obeyed his command.

The Yuanjing Emperor adjusted his clothes and crown, brushing off the dust that had fallen on it, and entered the temple with a serious and stern face.

...

By the willow tree, Xu Qi'an had bellowed out his lungs, and after that had not heard again that mysterious and unsettling voice again. As time passed, his mind and spirit became steady again. His head still twitched with pain, but no longer as hard to bear as before.

Only now did he have the energy to look at his surroundings.

The colleagues beside him had left long ago, to protect the numerous officials and the royal family at the shore,

The platform was empty, but the twisted long corridor was full of high-ranked martial artists, with Wei Yuan at their head.

The Yuanjing Emperor was nowhere to be found.

The thing that made Xu Qi'an most surprised was, that the temple that was said to house that divine sword, had its roof split along the rafters, leaving a gaping hole.

There was a problem with the ceremony? Did the secret in Sangpo lake appear again in front of everyone?

Thoughts quickly flew by in Xu Qi'an's mind. He simultaneously put a hand to his throbbing head, and headed towards the crowd.

Because he was a Nightwatcher, no one stopped him.

"What happened to you?" Song Tingfeng looked at his new colleague, "How're you doing?"

Song Tingfeng did not connect Sangpo Lake's sudden change to Xu Qi'an's unusual behaviour.

Just like how you wouldn't link together a weak chicken's call and a Richter scale 10 earthquake.

"I've been too overzealous in my training these past few days, and suffered a backlash." Xu Qi'an found a reasonable excuse, "At least I've gotten over it. Oh right, what happened just then?"

"I don't know." Song Tingfeng shook his head, looking around with a cautious attitude, before saying in a low voice,

"Yongzhen Shanhe Temple suddenly exploded. From the temple came out a sword qi, that made the whole lake stir up like it was boiling, like an earthquake. But looking at the current situation, it doesn't seem to be an assassin."

Xu Qi'an's gaze drifted towards the tall platform. *The temple's roof was pierced by a sword qi? If the divine sword has that power, then the person that was just calling to me for help would definitely not be the sword-spirit, or similar.*

He dropped his gaze a while, gathering in his emotions, and calming all his thoughts. He then hurriedly made his way to beside the eldest princess, cupping his hands,

"Is the eldest princess unharmed?"

The scene had returned to order, and even though there were whispers and conversation, everyone had largely become very quiet, waiting for the Yuanjing Emperor to come out.

So Xu Qi'an's voice drew the heads of many nearby. Some were his fellow Nightwatchers, some were the Royal Guard, some were eunuchs, and of course the eldest princes, and her relatives.

The eldest princess's face was very beautiful, but her expression was as clear and cold as the morning frost. She tilted her head, her eyes like autumn pools reflecting Xu Qi'an's form. With a clear, crisp voice like jade rocks colliding, she said,

"Yes!"

Xu Qi'an felt a great weight lifted off him, "Then your lowly servant can stop worrying."

Seeing that all was good, he immediately retreated, keeping watch all around with impeccable precision.

"Huaqing, this small bronze gong seems to really look up to you." A soft voice came from behind her, belong to the second princess.

Huaqing^[^1] was the eldest princess's noble title, but she preferred others to call her as eldest princess.

The Yuanjing Emperor had once commented that this eldest daughter of his, has an ambition no less than any man, and was no less domineering than he himself.

The second princess's appearance was exceptional, a pair of pear-blossom eyes on her round and smooth face, her red lips were vibrant, and with every twinkle and smile she gave off an incredibly charming aura.

She was a beauty polar opposite to the eldest princess. From a young time, the relationship between the two sisters was never good.

The eldest princess said lightly, "Admiration, perhaps not so much. He knows how to repay kindness, is all."

Xu Qi'an's behaviour in the Sitianjian, along with his earlier expression, successfully gave that impression to the eldest princess.

The second princess covered her mouth, laughing lightly, "Everyone in the capital knows of Sister Huaqing's attractiveness; the students at the Cloud Deer Academy are enthralled by you, other scholars no less so, how could the Nightwatcher not?"

The other princes and princesses onlooked the scene with great excitement, not commenting on the sharp needles hidden within their soft words.

"Lin'an!"

The crown prince of the eastern palace frowned, and scolded, "Quiet."

Lin'an^[^2] was the noble title of the second princess. Facing her elder brother's scolding, she pouted her lips, and gracefully lowered her head, standing in a refined and elegant pose.

All of the royal family knew that the two princesses were like fire and water.

The eldest princess was born to the Empress, the second princess however was born to Concubine Chen; their positions had some difference. However, Concubine Chen was doted on much more than the Empress.

When she was young, the second princess liked to provoke the eldest princess, constantly trying to find ways to get at her.

This was no more than the average teasing between two members of a family, but the eldest princess just so happened to be the domineering, independent type. She ordered her attendants to hold the second princess, and when the attendants did not dare to, she took initiative herself, grabbing a bamboo scroll, and chased her around, beating her with it.

From south to north, from north back down south again.

The maids and attendants in the palace did not dare stop her, and eventually the commotion disturbed the Yuanjing Emperor in his cultivation.

Concubine Chen, along with her face-swollen, beaten black and blue young daughter, complained about the eldest princess. The Yuanjing Emperor planned to heavily punish the eldest princess, and summoned her to his imperial study.

The eldest princess was long prepared, bringing along over a dozen books, including *The Book of Rites, The Great Encyclopaedia, The Book of Music*. She spread them out one by one in the study, and quoting from the sages in the book, made a resounding rebuttal.

Eventually she won the appeal, and the Yuanjing Emperor could not but gloomily rule that the eldest princess had no fault, before returning to cultivation.

When she became of age, the eldest princess became a lot more reserved.

...

Yongzhen Shanhe Temple.

A stern, crown wearing man in gold stood, holding a brass sword. The temple door was shut tight. Yuanjing stood in front of the statue of the founding emperor, silently examining the dusty brass sword.

“What is a first rank really? You were meant to have a long, boundless life, yet you still were burdened by the fate of the people, and barely lived longer than an average person.” Yuanjing seemed to be talking to himself, but simultaneously seemed to be talking to his ancestor six hundred years ago.

“I came to the throne at the age of twenty, after defeating all my enemies. When I sat on this seat, none could stand shoulder-to-shoulder with me. But eventually I found, that the biggest enemy of all is time.”

The Yuanjing Emperor slowly shifted his gaze, staring at the floor by his feet, staring for a long time. Afterwards, he started inspecting the various furnishings in the temple, even stepping onto the altar, very disrespectfully touching his ancestor’s statue, touching that brass sword.

This process was long and meticulous, as finally, the Yuanjing Emperor let out a sigh of relief.

His expression became calm, and he knelt on the *putuan* cushion^[3], kowtowing towards that founding emperor, before leaving the temple.

The Yuanjing Emperor stood on the high platform, overlooking the many martial and civil officials, overlooking the royal family, his voice emanating like a clear bell, "The ancestor worship ceremony shall continue."

He did not explain the reason behind the earlier disturbance.

The five armies and the Nightwatchers scattered out again, returning back to their posts in an orderly way, patrolling the perimeter.

Lines of eunuchs walked quickly with lowered heads, clearing the platform from pottery shards, sorting out the ceremonial vessels, and the ancestral spirit tablets.

Xu Qi'an returned back to his earlier post, muttering in his heart, *that's strange. Logically, if a ceremony would encounter something like this, it would be a sign of big breasts- pff, sign of big calamity.[^4] The Yuanjing Emperor should really be angry.*

But he seemed to have anticipated this, not berating Duke Wei or the royal guard captain... mm, he may not necessarily have anticipated it, rather knew the real reason behind the disturbance.

Furthermore, this reason is something that cannot be announced publicly.

So Sangpo Lake really has a secret that cannot be known.

Chapter 99. Sharing Information

And, the secret should have something to do with the cry for help I heard. Maybe, this disturbance happened due to me... Xu Qi'an was taken aback by his guess.

As an experienced criminal policeman with rigorous logical abilities, he didn't immediately identify himself as the "True culprit". He was strictly still a suspect until now.

There could be other possibilities. But, according to Zhu Guangxiao and Song Tingfeng, he was the only one who heard the call for help.

But, he couldn't have been the cause of the problem.

Sangpo hides a secret within it. Maybe this secret is only known by Emperor Yuanjing. This uproar could have been inevitable, and merely because of something special with myself, did I hear that voice.

What could be so special about me? It should probably be my unexplainable money-picking buff. Xu Qi'an had a complicated mood at the time. He had a strong desire to know more, but he also had some concerns about pursuing the truth, fearing that it was something he couldn't bear at this stage.

After another hour, the ancestor worship finally ended.

Then, the imperial guards and the high-ranking Nightwatchers guarded the royal family and the officials to leave, only after which Xu Qi'an and the others were free to scatter.

"Strange. What came out of the Yongzhen Shanhe Temple?"

On the way back, Song Tingfeng relaxedly began to spill out gossip.

"Walk with your eyes open, Li Ronghao." Xu Qi'an joked smilingly, trying to distract himself and calm down.

"Who is Li Ronghao?" Song Tingfeng asked blankly.[^1]

Xu Qi'an didn't answer.

The other bronze gongs were also discussing the abnormal situation.

"That was sword qi, right? I have never seen such strong sword qi. Even Gold Gong Zhang, with his strong sword intent, can't produce such sword qi." A bronze gong said.

"I was terrified. I thought that an assassin had entered just now. Then, I thought, How could such a powerful assassin enter the capital? The capital has the Jianzheng and the national teacher."

"What do you think was in the temple?"

The bronze gongs looked at each other blankly, unable to answer the question.

"It's the sword used by the founding emperor on the battlefield." Xu Qi'an said.

It could be observed that the bronze gongs in the Nightwatchers had polarized attitudes towards Xu Qi'an.

Some of them wanted to befriend him, while others were jealous of him.

After all, He could cause two gold gongs to fight for him. This kid will have a bright future, at least becoming a silver gong.

"How would you know this?" Someone sneered at him.

"You can ask an older senior by yourself." Xu Qi'an also sneered at him.

They were all young bronze gongs, who didn't know much about the "Mountain and Sea Campaign". But, the older bronze gongs and silver gongs should all know that Emperor Yuanjing brought out the divine sword and gave it to King Zhenbei.

It's worth mentioning that King Zhenbei was a prince and the younger brother of Emperor Yuanjing.

His actual title was the King Huai.

"Zhenbei" was a title of respect for King Huai since he guarded the north and deterred all the parties from the prairies.[^2]

There were many Imperial Uncles, but only a single Zhenbei King.

Smelling the gunpowder between Xu Qi'an and that bronze gong, the others lightly changed the topic to discuss other matters.

The ancestor worship was shocking, but nothing dangerous happened. Their tasks being completed, the bronze gongs talked about going to the Jiaofang Si or another familiar Goulán to have fun.

This era was very boring. For socialization and entertainment, men didn't have any other options besides going to the Goulán to listen to music other than going to brothels to sleep with women.

So boring!

...

After he returned to the Nightwatcher's Office, Xu Qi'an felt something and knew that something had happened in the "Earth Book Group Chat"

He made up an excuse to go to the latrine and took out the jade mirror, where he saw Dao Master Jinlian consulting him and Number One.

【NINE: ONE and THREE, the Ancestor Worship should have ended, What caused that big commotion?】

Number One didn't reply, but the others were cracking melon seeds with great interest.[^3]

【TWO: Daozhang, what do you mean? Did Emperor Yuanjing meet an assassin when he worshipped his ancestors? Is he dead lmao】

Xu Qi'an was sure that Number Two was not a member of the Imperial Court. Unless he (or she) didn't plan to meet him or Number One in this life.

If the vigorous youth Number Two lived in my time, they would be traced through their internet connection by the People's Police in the minute, and invited to the police station for dinner.

【NINE: This daoist was meditating when he suddenly saw a sword qi breaking through the sky from the direction of Sangpo, just like the clear qi that soared from Cloud Deer Academy that day.】

【TWO: Which expert tried to perform an assassination?】

【NINE: The National Guardian Sword is the sword of the founding emperor of the Great Feng. Ever since Great Feng was established, It had been baptized by the national destiny of the entire country daily. Causing it to become a treasure closely related to the national destiny of Great Feng. It stands to reason that such an important weapon shouldn't show any abnormality.】

Just after Number Two replied, Number Nine Daoist Jinlian's reply followed closely.

Two realised that he had jumped the gun, and so kept silent. After a few seconds, seeing that Daoist Jinlian had said all he wanted to, he (she) continued to send:

【TWO: So, What happened?】

【FOUR: What? The Guardian Divine Sword has awoken? Could it be that a powerhouse of the first rank went to the capital, attracting the divine weapon? I can't think of any other reason for it to come out】

Number Four seemed to be quite shocked. He had served as an official in the Great Feng before, and his understanding of Great Feng should not be less than Number One or Number Three. It could even surpass their knowledge.

【FIVE: I only care if the Emperor of Great Feng is dead or not. If he's dead, your grand-auntie[^4] will have to tell dad.】

Grand-aunt... Number Five should be a girl. Xu Qi'an's eyes lit up.

【FOUR: Tell your father? What will you tell him?】

【FIVE: Of course, to send troops to attack the border and grab Great Feng's food and women, mu ha ha ha ha ha】

As I expected, Number FIVE is indeed a foreigner. Otherwise, she wouldn't be so clear about the history of the Wanyao Kingdom. Um, The Wanyao kingdom is in the southern Marches, so Number Five shouldn't be from a northern tribe.

Is she a Southern Barbarian or an Eastern Barbarian?

At the time, Number One also went online.

【ONE: The ancestor worship has ended. There, the divine sword at Yongzhen Shanhe Temple went out, causing a commotion. After silence resumed, Emperor Yuanjing entered the temple for a quarter of an hour, his intentions unknown.】

【NINE: As expected, Sangpo hides a secret. The secret only being known to members of the royal family.】

【ONE: What does the Daozhang know?】

Xu Qi'an's spirit roused.

【NINE: This daoist is just a little daoist, and he doesn't know any secrets. It's just that this daoist saw a demonic energy condensing in the direction of the imperial city before the sword qi soared into the skies.】

【SIX: This monk also noticed it, but it passed by in a flash.】

Buddhist disciple Number Six interrupted.

The Earth Sect should have a method of observing qi similar to the Qi Watching Technique... I don't know much about Buddhism, but according to common sense, They should be sensitive to demonic or evil qi.

Xu Qi'an continued watching the mirror in silence.

【TWO: That means that when ancestor worship was happening, a great demon or a person practicing demonic cultivation approached the capital. So, the Nation's Guardian Divine Sword went out. This frightened the mysterious master away.】

Number Two made a judgment.

【FOUR: Although Jianzheng is located in the capital, If the other party is also a top expert, they could indeed approach the capital instantly.】

【SIX: But there are only a handful of first-rank masters. Who would invade the capital at this time?】

No one spoke for a while. Everyone was probably analysing and making guesses in their minds.

But, Xu Qi'an knew that it wasn't some first-rank master who came to commit a crime. The problem was from Sangpo itself.

【FOUR: Jinlian Daozhang, when did the sword qi soar to the sky?】

【NINE: An hour ago. Why are you asking me this?】

It happened an hour ago... And Number Three asked about Sangpo's information right about that time, exactly an hour ago. It was almost at the same time...

According to Number Three's attitude at that time, he was very eager to know everything about Sangpo.

Number Four recalled Number Three's earlier inquiry, and connected it with the situation of the Ancestor Worship Ceremony just moments later. It was obvious that Number Three didn't ask the question without rhyme or reason.

Number Three is a disciple of Confucianism. He is quite familiar with history books. It is impossible for him to not know the history of Sangpo.

Number Four also knew the history of Sangpo, so he couldn't help but put himself in the shoes of Number Three.

If it were me, and I was participating in the royal family's ancestor worship ceremony. This incident happened suddenly, I would explain the situation as soon as possible, and discuss the abnormality with the members of the Heaven and Earth Society, finally concluding it to be the result of a first-rank master.

But, Number Three didn't do so. He instead chose to ask about Sangpo's history with a purpose. Number Three isn't an idiot. On the contrary, He's a very smart person.

Number Four reasoned, *He's a student of the Cloud Deer Academy. So, he wouldn't ask these questions without reason, unless he had discovered something out there, causing him to doubt the history he read before, putting his understanding of Sangpo into doubt.*

Thinking of this. Number Four was taken aback since he came to a surprising conclusion based on these guidelines.

The problem originated from Sangpo. Number Three spied on a smidgen of truth, which made him doubt his previous understanding.

【FOUR: THREE, You know something, Don't you? You were also there at the time. After you inquired about the Sangpo, the Guardian Sword reacted immediately and made a big commotion. This couldn't be a coincidence.】

Number Four's message caused all the members of the Heaven and Earth Society to react.

So this was the reason that Four asked Jinlian Daozhang about when the sword qi rushed into the sky.

While the Earth Book fragment holders were running their thoughts, Number Four continued,

【FOUR: THREE, You are a student of the Cloud Deer Academy. So, you must know the history of Sangpo. Although Cloud Deer Academy has withdrawn from officialdom for over two hundred years, it has a profound foundation. The history of Sangpo recorded in the Academy library could only be more detailed than what I just said.

【I had found it strange at that time and wondered why you would ask such a question.】

No, I don't know anything... Xu Qi'an didn't know how to explain it. The terrible cries for help had nearly made him collapse mentally. He couldn't maintain his character design under that trauma.

【FOUR: Due to you doubting yourself, you also felt that the history of Sangpo you had learned before was likely to be wrong.】

Everyone realized, *The situation should have been like this.*

Xu Qi'an was enlightened, *Yes, I originally had this thought.*

Number Four is a master of reasoning... Well, although the guess was wrong, he is very smart and reacted the fastest among them all.

He's worthy of being a scholar who once served in the imperial court.

【TWO: Wait, So, The problem comes from Sangpo itself, not due to the invasion of a master?】

【FOUR: I was about to ask THREE this.】

【FIVE: THREE, Why aren't you replying? Tell us quickly.】

Seeing this, Xu Qi'an decided not to remain silent any longer and moved his brush.

【THREE: Heh, I do know some secret insider information.】

Chapter 100. I Want to Book Out the Pavilion

He had just sent that phrase, and was just about to continue, as a whole stream of text flashed across the jade mirror:

【ONE: What insider information?】

【TWO: What secret do you know?】

【FOUR: THREE, does Sangpo Lake really have a secret?】

【FIVE: Can you tell us?】

【SIX: Amituofo.】

【NINE: Little friend, please continue.】

“...” Xu Qi'an squatted in the stinking latrine room, in a daze.

Everyone seems to care a lot about this situation. Fair enough, considering that it involves the National Guardian Sword of the Great Feng. This type of secret, no one would not be curious.

Especially, no one in the Heaven and Earth Society are ordinary characters; they all have great powers behind their backs, or have enough power themselves.

These type of people would care for such a high level secret even more. Even if it had nothing to do with them personally, who knows, maybe at some time in the future it will actually have a use.

【THREE: It wasn't a first rank's attack, I can pretty much be sure of this.】

Xu Qi'an did not block the conversation.

After a pause, he continued writing: 【THREE: However, why should I tell you.】

No one spoke for an age.

Heh, not bad, no one's naive enough to stand up and say: “aren't we meant to share information and help each other?”

This was good; if in the group chat there was a killjoy, or a freeloader party member, then his plan would not be feasible.

Xu Qi'an continued, 【Jinlian Daozhang, I think that there is a corrupt practice in the Heaven and Earth Society. If this is not resolved, then the Heaven and Earth Society will forever be a loose scattered group, only in harmony on the surface, thus not being of much help to anyone.】

【NINE: Please continue.】

【THREE: Indeed, to help each other, to share information are the founding principles of the Heaven and Earth Society, but they're too idealistic. I can tell everyone about this secret, but what do I get? Absolutely nothing.

【I share this secret, yet ONE is someone who likes to lurk silently, they could enjoy their free handout with contentment.

【After once or twice, I'd become unwilling to share anything more.】

【ONE: Who're you saying is taking handouts?】

One seemed to be somewhat angry.

You, ONE, you. Because you *are the one that likes lurking...* Xu Qi'an ignored One, and continued to write: 【Daozhang, everyone in the Heaven and Earth Society is scattered all across the world, and we don't necessarily know each other.

Fundamentally, we are all strangers. Lacking any trust or basis, it may be asked, that who would be willing to give up all their personal information to strangers?】

What this Xu hates the most is freeloading, and I will resolutely put an end to such behaviour.

All that long rambling really all could be distilled down into one sentence: Why should I tell you?

【NINE: My little friend's words are very reasonable.】

Seeing this, Xu Qi'an laughed, 【It's good that Daozhang agrees. I hope everyone else can see the merit in this.】

All the other members of the Heaven and Earth Society kept their silence.

【THREE: Daozhang: I have a thought. When you gave the Number Three fragment to me, the fragment had been sealed, and was unable to connect with other fragments. Could we not take advantage of this?】

【NINE: What does my little friend have in mind?】

【THREE: Let me make an example: I sell the secret behind Sangpo Lake for five hundred taels of gold in the Heaven and Earth Society. If anyone wants to receive the information, then they could contact me through the earth book, and Daozhang you could help seal up any other member who is not willing to trade.

【Of course, I'm not the type of person who cares for worldly possessions like gold and silver, but if no one has information of an equivalent calibre, then I can accept using gold and silver to trade.】

Quick, use silver to buy my information, I need to buy a big house in the inner city... Xu Qi'an shifted his squatting position, staring at the mirror surface with some anticipation.

At this time, even the stink of the latrine became fragrant.

【NINE: To tell the truth, even though this poor Daoist knows the method to seal the earth book, this poor Daoist's injuries are not fully healed. When I infiltrated the Earth Sect that day, I awoke a fragment of the Sect Leader's soul, and so the earth book was sealed, and I suffered great injury. If not for this, this poor Daoist would not be so worse for wear.】

... the smile on Xu Qi'an's face slowly vanished.

His guess wasn't wrong; the fact that Jinlian Daozhang was willing to give the Earth Book fragments to everyone, meant that he definitely had a way to suppress them, and take them back.

Yet he only guessed at the head, and not the tail.

This is saying, there was no way to private message in the near future.

Seeing that no one was sending anything, One started writing with some anxiety.

He (she) didn't want to see this trade fall flat.

【ONE: How about this, you can publicly tell us this secret, and I will give you a promise, to exchange for information of equal value, or using silver or gold.】

【FOUR: But this still has some issues. For example, if I used a secret of equivalent value to exchange with THREE, then THREE is not losing out, but my secret would be known by everyone else for free.】

【TWO: Furthermore, we're spread all around the country, so even if we wanted to buy this secret, how would we get the silver over to you?】

Everyone started chatting livelily, expressing their own thoughts and doubts.

The corner of Xu Qi'an's mouth twitched; not only did the members of the Heaven and Earth Society place great importance on his secret, but they also saw a way to make profit.

If his thoughts were to come to fruition, then they could also use their own knowledge to exchange.

Nice, nice, with profit comes motivation, this is what a business gathering is all about.

【THREE: Before Jinlian Daozhang has recovered completely, how about this: I can tell you all the secret, and you can use something of equal value, or money, to exchange for it. But I can put it on credit; you don't have to immediately exchange now. Thus FOUR's worry wouldn't exist. As for TWO's point, I haven't thought of a good solution yet. Mm, you can also pay it off with some equivalent information later.】

Then there shouldn't be any problem... everyone thought.

【ONE: I have no issues.】

【TWO: Nor I.】

【FOUR: Mn, let's do as THREE says.】

【FIVE: No problems here.】

【SIX: Me too.】

【THREE: Why have SEVEN and EIGHT still not spoken? If you don't express your view, then we can't finish this deal.】

Jinlian stepped in to explain: 【From last year, SEVEN disappeared. EIGHT is facing a life or death challenge. Let's exclude them for now.】

【FOUR: But SEVEN is still alive, right?】

【TWO: SEVEN's earth book fragment is with me... mn, because of some incident, he had to fake his death to escape, and is hiding from danger.】

【THREE: Then I have no issues.】

Xu Qi'an paused for a few seconds, before writing: 【I heard a cry for help from Sangpo Lake!】

There was a cry for help from Sangpo!?!

Such a casual sentence from Three, was like a thunderclap ringing through all the Heaven and Earth Society members' heads.

The place where the founding emperor found his Dao, the lake where the National Guardian sword was housed and revered, had a call for help...

Who was calling for help?

To whom?

The earth book group chat fell into an uncanny silence. After a long time, ONE, who was always few for words, wrote: 【Impossible!】

Everyone quickly turned their attention back to their earth book fragments, waiting silently for a long time, but not receiving Three's reply.

Yes, Three was a student of the Cloud Deer Academy. He was proud and arrogant, and didn't deign to respond.

This also roundaboutly implied that what Three said was true; a proud and arrogant student like him would not stoop as low as lying.

One seemed to also know this principle, and apart from their immediate reaction, did not continue to question.

【FOUR: A piece of information that is hard to swallow.】

【NINE: The status of this secret is extremely high.】

【TWO: Is there something imprisoned at the bottom of Sangpo lake? What do you guys think?】

Two gave their guess.

Xu Qi'an started, *it wasn't just me that thought of that possibility.*

【FIVE: Woah, an unrivalled demon is imprisoned within Sangpo Lake in Feng? Hey, ONE, THREE, FOUR, you're all subjects of Feng, have you thought of anything?】

【SIX: Don't bother asking. ONE clearly doesn't know, and everyone knows that ONE is someone important in court. This implies, that perhaps only the royal family, or even the Yuanjing Emperor alone knows of the answer.】

【ONE: I will try to investigate this matter. THREE, if I make any progress, can I use it to pay off your information?】

【THREE: Heh, depends on what you discover.】

After five minutes, no one had sent anything, Xu Qi'an finally determined that these lacklustre netizens had gone offline.

Stowing away his jade mirror, leaving the latrine, he inhaled a deep breath of fresh air, feeling like he had gained new life.

If toilets were like this in my past life, then it would definitely fix procrastinating on the toilet overnight... because no one wants to play on their phone in this kind of environment. Xu Qi'an thought, adding to himself, *A stinky latrine pit is the best doctor for haemorrhoids.*

Returning to the side hall, Zhu Guangxiao was in the middle of meditation, Song Tingfeng was reading an erotic romance that could not see the light of day. Of course, it was not about Emperor Yuanjing and the unparalleled beauty of a National Teacher.

“Did you go to give birth?” Song Tingfeng squinted, poking fun at him.

“Yep,” Xu Qi'an nodded, sitting comfortably on the chair, saying seriously, “Piece of shit, it's your brat.”

Zhu Guangxiao, sitting beside them, suddenly breathed in too hard, and opened his eyes with a face full of being caught unawares, looking towards Xu Qi'an.

Song Tingfeng shuddered, cupping his hands, before returning to his book.

He thought of himself as the cynical type; his outward appearance was always smiling into a squint, a type of person that could perform proficiently in front of anyone.

But faced against Xu Qi'an, Song Tingfeng thought that he would be better off being more of a gentleman.

Oftentimes, he knew that the other was merely joking around, yet he did not have any good response to give, losing in tatters.

“Let's go to the Jiaofangsi tonight.” Song Tingfeng suggested, “I've invited a few colleagues, you can teach everyone how Russian Roulette is played.”

He paused, before saying with a serious face, “After the matter with gold gong Yang and gold gong Jiang, the number of people who are jealous of you is not little, privately they can't see eye-to-eye with you.

“You need to socialise more, and not just hang out with me and Zhu Guangxiao all day.”

Zhu Guangxiao opened his eyes, nodding in agreement, “Yes. I've often heard people talking shit about you behind your back.”

He was not a young simpleton, he knew deeply the principle of “the nail that sticks out must be hammered in”.

After joining the Nightwatchers, Xu Qi'an had indeed overlooked socialising with his colleagues. Mainly it was because all day he was meeting with Wei Yuan, or hanging around the Sitianjian. His standards had risen rather high.

Thus with Song Tingfeng leading he found a few familiar bronze gongs, also under Li Yuchun, and arranged with them to go to the Sitianjian to play.

Of course, there was no case of “inviting” another to dinner; everyone knew of the prices of the Jiaofangsi, no regular bronze gong could afford to invite everyone.[^1]

However, Xu Qi'an very lightly said, let's go book out the Reflecting Plum Pavillion, I'll arrange it.

The bronze gongs instantly were pumped.

Song Tingfeng pulled Xu Qi'an to a corner, rubbing his hands, “Ningyan, you really are a good brother... then, will Fuxiang join?”

Xu Qi'an gave him a side-eye, “Call me dad, and I'll tell you.”

Song Tingfeng was a good lad who knew when to bow his head, and immediately recognised his father.

Xu Qi'an thus replied, “Of course not.”

“...” Song Tingfeng said angrily, “You bloody call dad back, else I'll have no end with you!”

Xu Qi'an ignored him, and quietly escaped.

What kind of woman was Fuxiang? An oiran famed far and wide, the ultimate social flower, the fact that she was willing to sleep with Xu Qi'an was purely due to their good relationship.

In this era, having good relationships with prostitutes was very common.

Especially for scholars.

But Fuxiang wasn't Xu Qi'an's servant, nor was she a concubine that could be passed around like an object.

For someone of Fuxiang's value and stature, how could she agree? You'd be dreaming.

Xu Qi'an did not want to cause cracks in their relationship because of this, or even break it entirely.

...

The Archives, floor Jia.

Sandalwood incense burnt, its light grey smoke straight as a ruler. Sunlight filtered through the latticed windows, shining onto the floor in regular patterns

Wei Yuan closed the thick, hefty *Thirteen Books of Great Feng*, and hesitated for a moment, before rising and pulling out another book: *Records of Jiuzhou: the Western Regions.*

The incense had burnt through, its ash falling into the burner.

Wei Yuan closed all the books, and tiredly rubbed his temples. Unwittingly, the books that were stacked by him had risen to shoulder height.

“Father, what have you found?” Nangong Qianrou finally got his opportunity.

“I think I know what's going on.” Wei Yuan sighed.

“What’s the secret inside Sangpo Lake?” Nangong Qianrou asked.

“That is not something that you should know.” Wei Yuan shook his head, warning with a stern face, “Forget what happened today. You are not permitted to investigate further, nor to discuss this privately.”

Yang Yan and Nangong Qianrou simultaneously lowered their heads, “Yes.”

...

Dusk.

Ten Nightwatchers, including Xu Qi’an, walked into the alleys of the Jiaofangsi, chests raised.

In this time of the Official Evaluation, where the many officials were as timid as mice, the Nightwatchers dominated the Jiaofangsi.

“Hey Ningyan, will the oiran Fuxiang see us?”

“I’ve heard that the oiran hasn’t taken a customer in a long while.”

“Will the Reflecting Plum Pavillion really let us book it out?”

Some of the bronze gongs did not believe him, because a place like the Jiaofangsi welcomed scholars the most; all their entertainment and services were biased towards the educated.

This was just the attitude of society.

The Nightwatchers were responsible for supervising the many officials, but they and the officials had a delicate balance of power.

If the Jiaofangsi were to become chaotic, then the Ministry of Rites would be very happy to immediately send a cannonball the Nightwatchers’ way.

Thus, if Fuxiang did not want to meet them, then the bronze gongs could not but leave and lose the face.

However Xu Qi’an’s Russian Roulette game was too tempting; when the other Nightwatchers had heard, they first all scolded Xu Qi’an’s lack of culture, but when asked whether they would go, agreed very quickly indeed.

Coming to the Reflecting Plum Pavillion, the bronze gongs unconsciously slowed their footsteps, squeezing out from their party the very average looking Xu Qi’an.

Xu Qi’an took off his sabre, and with the scabbard spanked the small servant on the arse, laughing, “Tell the madam, I want to book out the pavilion.”