

# I Am Supreme

## #Chapter 41 - Read I Am Supreme Chapter 41 Chapter 41: Outcome of a Wager, Traces of an Assassin

While Yun Yang was training the Double-headed Elysian Lion for Dong Tianleng, merry shenanigans were taking place elsewhere.

Ji Ling crossed her arms as she looked at her six sisters triumphantly. “Quickly, call me big sister!”

Six girls laid scattered all around the large bed, not unlike roosters that had lost a fight, their gazes soulless and dull. It was a collective look of the disappointment that one experiences when hit hard by reality.

The Silvermoon Celestial Wolf walked around the floor arrogantly.

On one side of the room were six different mystical beast babies that looked listless and crestfallen.

“Little sister Ling, how did you train it?” An older girl among the girls asked with a long face, “How did you get it to be so obedient?”

“Did you just call me little sister?” Ji Ling huffed, “That would be big sister, to you! Are you girls trying to avoid acknowledging your defeat? Unlike you, I’ve always been gracious enough to admit that I’ve lost.”

All six girls sighed, feeling inwardly discontented while looking at the triumphant Ji Ling. “You’re the youngest anyway. We should call you big sisters when we lose, but we’re all older than you! How are we supposed to do that?”

“That’s not my problem, is it? Quickly, call me big sister!” Ji Ling said, practically glowing with glee.

“Alright, but first, you’ll have to tell us what you did with your Silvermoon Celestial Wolf.” The older girl bit her lips and said, “We have three Silvermoon Celestial Wolves here as well, but none of them could compare to yours, in any aspect...”

“Yes, what did you do to it?”

“I bought mine from the same shop as yours, just a little earlier than you did. I didn’t choose yours because I saw the black spot on its ear. Yours was nothing like the others

when you bought it but in just these few days, it has surpassed all the others. Little sister Ling, you must be holding onto a secret!”

“Yeah, tell us quick.”

“Tell us and we will call you big sister.”

“We won’t call you that if you don’t tell us.”

“That’s right!”

Ji Ling raised her chin indignation. “According to the terms of our wager, you girls have lost. Secret? Of course, I have secrets but I can’t tell all of you. I want to keep on being the big sister next year. What would happen then if I were to tell you girls?”

“Sisters, tickle her!”

All six girls charged her at once.

“Eek! Have mercy! You girls – don’t want to call me big sister but... Eek! Have mercy!”

The girls tormented Ji Ling for a while but it was apparent that she was not about to relent. With no other choice left available, they could only let this young girl sit at the main seat in triumph as they unwillingly went forward to bow and greet her, “Big sister!”

“Good! My little sisters are excused.”

Ji Ling’s eyes had already turned into thin crescents from the joy she was experiencing.

All the other girls had their lips pursed in disgruntlement.

“We went to see Young Master Yun yesterday. We had already sent our calling cards to have him wait at home but he was actually missing when we went over!” A girl in blue pouted prettily and complained, “What’s so good about him?”

“Right, right. Isn’t he just a young master of Marquis of Heavenly Clouds? Such arrogance!”

“No wonder big sister Ling is angry. Such a boorish man is totally insensible and knows nothing about manners or respecting others.”

“Yeah, even the residence’s butler is so dull and lifeless! My blood boils just by looking at him.”

“Nonetheless, that Young Master Yun has a commendable quality. The fact that he doesn’t have any servants or maids at home would indicate that he is an independent man.”

“Please, that just means he’s poor!”

All the girls heatedly complained about Yun Yang. These girls were all apples of their great families’ eyes; they had never come across anyone who would dare to avoid meeting them. Although Yun Yang had done nothing this time around, he was at the center of a whole torrent of rage and dissatisfaction.

Hearing Yun Yang’s name, Ji Ling kept silent. He had really done it; he had promised success and indeed, she had won a landslide victory.

Moreover, her Silvermoon Celestial Wolf was extraordinary. She could tell as much from her sisters’ conversation. It had only been in his care for just over a day and it had already had a complete transformation.

Remembering her promise to Yun Yang, Ji Ling was troubled once more.

The promise was to give him half of the wager she won, with the right of the first pick. Furthermore, she had to give him a nugget of information... She wondered what sort of information he would ask for.

Recalling how Yun Yang had callously chased her out the other day, Ji Ling gritted her teeth in resentment. How she had hoped that she would not need to see this lout, who cared nothing about chivalry, again in her life! However, she had no choice but to send the wager to him, and she had to do it in person because she had a question to answer. That question would be none other than the information she had promised.

Ji Ling was very upset by this. As she her face kept on getting longer and her frowns kept her preoccupied, she did not notice that her sisters had stopped their clamor and were quietly studying her change of expressions while exchanging looks with each other. All of them covered their mouths to prevent overly loud chuckles from escaping.

By the looks of it, this little girl had thoughts weighing her down. Could it be... matters of the heart?

“Sigh...” Ji Ling heaved a long sigh.

She immediately heard six echoing sighs as the girls beside her mimicked her troubled vexations. It was a long and heavy sigh, one filled with the resentment of a young girl.

Then laughter that ensued was deafening.

“You... you girls...”

Ji Ling pointed at them as she stuttered in dismay.

“Oh my, what’s our new big sister thinking about that’s got her so preoccupied?”

“Yeah, our new big sister’s expression looks like she’s longing for something.”

“What longing? She’s obviously thinking of men, yearning to be wedded!”

“Maybe it’s a woman that’s on her mind.”

“\*ss! She must be thinking of men.”

“Maybe it’s that Young Master Yun...”

“It could be... As the old saying goes, the person whom a woman could really remember is never the one that could make her smile but one that could anger her and make her cry... so it must be true!”

“Yeah. Looks like our new big sister has found someone to give her affection to already!”

“Who is it? Tell us big sister, we can help you assess this person!”

“Yes! Let us examine him for you!”

The girls were abuzz with excitement again.

Ji Ling’s eyebrows went flat as she chided, “What nonsense are you girls talking? I was just thinking about other things, mainly about my brother who has left home for so many years without a single bit of news. I wonder what has happened to him. I’ve heard a year ago that he was sighted in Tiantang City but there’s been no news even when my family had sent so many people over to search for him... Sigh...”

She heaved another long sigh at the end of her words to drive her point home.

“I wonder where big brother Ji has gone to. It’s very worrisome.”

The girl in black who had been the big sister sighed sadly too, her gaze tinged with a sense of longing.

This time, no one cracked any jokes. They all knew how fond the eldest sister was of big brother Ji. A few years ago, when big brother Ji had first disappeared, they could still tease her about it. Now that it had been so many years without news, no one dared to make light about this longing of hers. They had all thought that it was a match made in heaven but who would have known that things would turn out this way?

“Sigh...” The exhalations this time around were sincere.

“Isn’t it our duty to search for big brother Ji since the tournament has been organized here in Tiantang City?”

“Let’s separate and move around these next few days.”

“Yes, we can go looking in places like the prison or the criminal jail.”

“Right, we can check up on the military too.”

“We’ll inspect the martial artists within three thousand miles radius of Tiantang City too.”

“This is the main purpose of our trip here this time!”

“It is compulsory for us to hunt for Sister Lan’s sweetheart for them to get married!”

“You little rascals!”

Sister Lan put on a mock show of anger, fists cocked and ready to deliver a round of pummeling, but the merry mood didn’t last long as she sighed sorrowfully and murmured, “I only hope that he’s safe and sound.” Her eyes were rimmed red as she spoke.

The girls quieted down, their hearts heavy as they felt the eldest sister’s deep sense of longing and sadness.

...

Dong Tianleng’s expression covered a range of emotions as he left..

Doubts about his lord whom he had just acknowledged began to creep up like troublesome vines. He looked at Yun Yang dubiously as his lips moved, feeling an inexplicable urge to lash out at him. Yet he dared not do so. In his eyes, this forefather of popinjays could accomplish anything. Besides, it was such a rare occasion to meet someone who could see eye to eye with him.

“If you lose, I’ll fork out ten times of your wager!” Yun Yang frowned. “How can you hope to be popinjay with your lack of spirit for adventure? How can you be so unambitious!”

“You will compensate ten times of the wager if I lose?” Dong Tianleng repeated dully.

“Yes, yes, not only ten times but I’ll go along and accept whatever beatings you have coming your way.” Yun Yang said disdainfully, “Nonetheless, based on the martial form that I’ve taught the little lion, there’s no possible way that you can lose!”

The corners of Dong Tianleng's lips twitched in amusement.

You are particularly proud of the fact that you taught my little lion martial art forms!

However, Dong Tianleng was secretly relieved. He wasn't particularly taken by Yun Yang's offer of reimbursement but by his confidence! If his Lord Yun was already this certain of success, how could he not go out and make the wager? He could not be so cowardly even in the face of death.

"One cannot be a popinjay if he behaves like you do." Yun Yang tapped Dong Tianleng's shoulder in earnest approval. "Popinjays should possess the indomitable spirit of fearlessness."

The Dong family guards beside him were troubled.

Our young master is already as much popinjay as he could possibly be and you still want him to be a little more 'fearless'? Any more 'fearlessness' and he would probably burn the entire family tree down to the ground.

"Alright! Consider it done!"

Dong Tianleng's crushed nose bled again as he became increasingly agitated. "If I win, I'll turn the three of them into pig heads tonight! No, something even worse than pig heads!"

"If you lose?"

"If I lose? Well, at most, I'll just get beaten up again. I can't look any worse than I do now, what's what's the big deal about being beaten up again?" Dong Tianleng shrugged, looking like he was going to risk it all. "I can't be any uglier anyway."

"The last time I lost, they made me wear green for an entire year... F\*ck it! It's finally time for your father to avenge himself!"

Yun Yang suddenly came to realize that Young Master Dong was actually not in green anymore.

Without warning, warmth began to emanate from Yun Yang's palm.

A piece of jade materialized in his hand as he surreptitiously pushed it back to merge with his flesh and blood again.. The jade vanished at once, the entire process happening entirely in his sleeve.

Finally, Dong Tianleng took his leave.

"If I win, I'll come celebrate with my lord!"

“If I lose, I’ll come back and beat you up!”

Dong Tianleng left these two lines hanging in the air as he departed, laughing all the way out.

“Beat me up?” Yun Yang snorted in derision, “Your Double-headed Elysian Lion alone is enough to bite you to death.”

He slowly went back to his room and hurriedly extricated the jade out to see the message and information that pulsed on it’s surface.

“Discovered traces of black masked man from the Residence of Marshal’s incident. Currently at Cirrus House.”

The message flashed continuously, its urgency plain for all to see.

Cirrus House.

Yun Yang’s expression turned bleak.

It was another place that he did not wish to visit, but this time round, he had no choice but to do so..

## **Chapter 42: The Fire in the Heart Has Long Scorched the Prairie**

The Cirrus House was a long renowned establishment in Tiantang City.

The place was a pit where fortunes were burnt in a roaring furnace, yet it was also a man’s paradise.

It was, of course, a brothel.

However, what made it different from other brothels was that all the women here were virgins as clear as ice and as pure as jade; they made their living as performers and not with their bodies.

Once a girl was found to have given herself to her client, there would be only two outcomes for her; be redeemed by that client and go home with him, or be expelled from the Cirrus House.

The present madam of Cirrus House, Yun Zuiyue, was an extraordinary woman. Legend has it that eight years ago, Unrivaled Expert Ling Xiaozui had passed by and lingered at this establishment, meeting Yun Zuiyue in the process. They both discovered themselves to be kindred spirits and had an enlightening conversation. Ling

Xiaozui had even promised, "inebriated to the clouds, heart-to-heart under the moon; whoever offends shall take this blow of my sword!".

Whosoever dared to offend Yun Zuiyue would have to face Ling Xiaozui!

Nobody in his right mind would be willing to endure a blow from Ling Xiaozui's sword, and it was said that even His Majesty the Emperor would probably not dare to do as well. It was now a known fact that there was an immensely terrifying force behind Yun Zuiyue. Every time an incident occurred in the Cirrus House, the house was not hesitant to employ that force in a brutally shocking manner.

No one dared to stir up trouble here, making the Cirrus House the safest place in Tiantang City!

...

Even as events were unfolding, Yun Zuiyue was sending a dozen military undercover guards out, all dressed in red and armed with a pretty smile.

"Take care, militant sirs. We don't harbor criminals here, so please don't come again; we can't afford to anger the military now, can we?"

The undercover guards looked sheepishly helpless.

What other choice did they have?

Who would dare to search the Cirrus House by force? Perhaps the Old Marshal could if he came personally; as for the others, they would probably be sent out courteously one after one.

However, the Old Marshal was already enraged with their failure to capture the assassin. Now that they could not find the criminal after searching the entire Tiantang City, they wondered what sort of storm awaited them when they got back home.

Yun Zuiyue looked like a vision dressed in red as she leaned leisurely against the pillar of a door in front of the Cirrus House, naturally exuding a sultry charm.

Her face, one of unparalleled beauty, seemed to always be wearing a light smile, just a flitting look which conveyed layers of sensuality almost effortlessly..

Those who passed by could not help but stare, goggle-eyed at her seductive elegance.

Deep in Yun Zuiyue's eyes though, lay an indescribable grudge; she sighed softly, that faux foe of hers had not been here for more than a year already.

Where has he gone to?



Could it be that he has really forgotten?

...

Yun Yang stood at the opposite the corner of the street. He was decked in purple as he stood with arms behind his back. He had been standing here for a while now, a witness to two teams of undercover guards being quietly sent out by Yun Zuiyue to avoid undue attention.

Yun Yang's gaze was complicated, a little guilty even.

He did not wish to go over, nor did he want to face Yun Zuiyue. However, the undercover guards had all returned, the efforts of their search an exercise in futility.

Lao Mei was standing right beside him, not knowing why his young master waited here.

Seeing that Yun Zuiyue was about to turn and head back in, Yun Yang heaved a long sigh and walked over in large strides.

That was how Yun Yang was; he would ponder for ages before deciding on a course of action; he would also be able to withdraw himself from facing something that he would rather avoid.

However, once his mind was set, it was a point of no return! There was nothing else on his mind except the vision of success.

Yun Zuiyue sighed softly. Just as she was about to turn and head in, she suddenly saw the youth in the purple robe on the opposite side of the street striding towards her.

Even Yun Zuiyue, who had seen the most exquisite faces in her industry, was impressed with what she saw here, an extremely handsome young man.

Just as she was thinking about it, Yun Yang was already standing in front of her and spoke with a smile, "Do I have the pleasure of addressing Lady Zuiyue?"

Yun Zuiyue flashed a lovely smile guaranteed to send men's hearts racing and said, "And who might you be, young stranger? You don't look familiar."

Yun Yang smiled. "Unfamiliar is guaranteed but I know you're Yun Zuiyue and I would let you know now too that my family name is also Yun. We are but family. So we're not strangers now anymore, are we?" Yun Yang asked contritely.

Yun Zuiyue lightly laughed with her mouth covered, a picture of innocence. "Young master is really witty. You are absolutely right, we are no longer strangers."

“Seeing as how we are no longer strangers, may I then buy Lady Zuiyue a meal?” Yun Yang continued, “Right here at the Cirrus House?”

Yun Zuiyue’s tone was gentle even as her gaze was sharp as she said, “Young master, the courses at the Cirrus House aren’t cheap.”

Yun Yang smiled lightly, “No matter how expensive they are, they would be worth it, if it grants me the pleasure of Lady Zuiyue’s company.”

“Young master has a way with words indeed.” Yun Zuiyue’s laugh was soft and artfully charming. “Yet somehow, I don’t believe that young master is here at Cirrus House just to buy Zuiyue a meal.”

She looked at Yun Yang pointedly, her gaze conveying volumes. “Perhaps the young master has a lady that he fancies in this Cirrus House of mine?”

Yun Yang replied, “Ladies in the Cirrus House are too dear, and I find myself rather penniless. Therefore, this time I really do intend to buy Lady Zuiyue a meal and also... I have a few questions that I would wish to discuss with Lady Zuiyue, if you would do me this honor.”

Yun Zuiyue chuckled and said, “I knew young master must have a purpose. Since young master is so handsome, I find myself conveniently free as well.”

“Young master, after you.”

“After you, Lady Zuiyue.”

Yun Yang entered the Cirrus House in an assured manner, trailing confidently behind Yun Zuiyue.

Having heard the whole exchange from behind him, Lao Mei was about to experience apoplexy resulting from shock.

Our young master can actually flirt with beautiful ladies! Such sweet words, with impeccable skills in wooing the fairer sex, such natural confidence!

An experienced expert indeed!

It was all the more obvious to Lao Mei that he did not fully understand his young master.

He could pay court to an inappropriate person so easily with mere words and without any awkwardness; yet in front of whom he should be wooing, he had only spewed harsh words coldly with no attempt at romance.

Lao Mei followed them into the house in a daze, thinking, “What is going on here?”

The top floor of the Cirrus House was a pavilion; the walls around were only five feet tall with pillars reaching the roof and layers of light chiffon surrounding the structure fluttered along with the breeze.

Lao Mei did not follow them up, it was only Yun Yang and Yun Zuiyue. When Yun Yang had ordered him to stay behind, Lao Mei's face was full of tacit understanding, "Understood, understood."

Yun Yang looked at the salacious expression on Lao Mei's face – his "I understand everything" look and suggestive winks, and was sorely tempted to deliver a swift kick, "You understood my \*ss!"

"Lady Zuiyue sure knows how to take delight in life." Yun Yang looked around as he walked with his arms on his back. "Overlooking Tiantang City from several hundred feet above gives one a different perspective."

In his heart though, he was coldly indifferent. "How many times have I been here at this breezy pavilion?"

Yun Zuiyue smiled, "Isn't everything we work hard for in life just to allow ourselves a more comfortable living? Don't you think so, Young Master Yun?"

Yun Yang replied, "Lady Zuiyue is right but this is the majority's thoughts. There are still some of those who don't care for this."

Yun Zuiyue answered nonchalantly, "The thoughts of the majority are good enough for me. Zuiyue does not wish to be part of the minority."

Yun Yang then spoke softly, "Lady Zuiyue is, in fact, the minority already."

A flash of pleasure could be seen in Yun Zuiyue's eyes as she said, "Young master has flattered me too much." As she spoke, she slowly poured the tea she had brewed earlier into the teacup. "Please have some tea, young master. We shall talk after we finish this pot of tea, yes?"

Her words seemed to never be rushed or impatient, each enunciation was soft and gentle to the core but it was never forced.

"Lady Zuiyue is absolutely right." Yun Yang raised the teacup and stared at the amber-like tea in it, speaking relaxedly, "All the troubles of the world are contained in three goblets of wine, the greatest ambitions held in a pot of tea. Whatever it is, mentioning it after drinking a pot of tea in serenity would allow one to be more composed and poised."

Yun Zuiyue chuckled. "Could it be that young master has something that is too gauche to speak with Zuiyue?"

Yun Yang replied, "That is correct."

Yun Zuiyue's expression slipped for the briefest of pauses but she concealed it right away with a charming smile and said, "Have tea, young master."

"Lady Zuiyue, please drink as well."

Yun Yang drank the tea slowly, feeling a flow of warmth going down his throat smoothly as his internal organs seemed to have acquired warm as well. He complimented lightly, "Lady Zuiyue's tea-making skills is getting increasingly refined."

Yun Zuiyue took a glance at Yun Yang as she smiled saying, "Young master, though this is the first time we have met, why do I have such a sense of familiarity towards young master? This is strange."

A twinge found its way in the deepest part of Yun Yang's eyes as he smiled without letting anything show. "This is the fate of Lady Zuiyue and I."

Yun Zuiyue smiled, covering her mouth. "Young master is full of mischief."

As she lowered her head to make tea, her tone had turned cold and distant as she asked almost nonchalantly, "Young master can now speak of what it is that is gauche in meeting Zuiyue this time."

Yun Yang nodded and said, "It is something that is hard to speak of. I seek a fugitive that has sought refuge here. The apprehension of this fugitive is of utmost importance. If he escapes, there will be hell to pay."

Yun Zuiyue's manner became completely aloof. She straightened up and spoke frostily "Young master should have understood the rules of Cirrus House before he came."

Yun Yang smiled bitterly, "It's exactly because I understood that I find it gauche to speak of."

Yun Zuiyue spoke dispassionately, "Be my guest, young master. Zuiyue has suddenly felt unwell and can no longer keep young master company."

As she spoke, she stood up and turned to leave without a second glance.

Yun Yang remained seated. Watching Yun Zuiyue make her way to the door, complex emotions ran through his eyes as he finally said gently, "Lady Zuiyue, it's the fire in your heart."

Yun Zuiyue's foot that was about to make her final step out of the door halted in midair. Her slim figure seemed to have frozen completely; her voice quavered as she asked, "What... what are you talking about?"

She turned with the speed of a hurricane, staring at Yun Yang with a burning gaze.

Yun Yang closed his eyes, swallowing the pain that had risen in his heart. Recovering his calm voice, he replied, "Lady Zuiyue, fire is an amazing thing. Fire... gives warmth to people and allows them to live above savages; it can burn away all the wickedness in this world as well... But if this flame stays in your hearts, I'm afraid it will destroy you."

Yun Zuiyue trembled, her face had turned pale; all of a sudden, she charged over and grabbed onto the front of Yun Yang's robe. Her eyes stared unblinkingly right at Yun Yang's as she tried unsuccessfully to lower her voice and asked, "Who... who are you really?"

Yun Yang remained unmoved as he spoke softly, "Water and fire have no mercy; fire can destroy everything. Nothing in this world can be completely unafraid of fire. The supremacy of an empire, endless acres of forest, borderless grasslands... they could all perish under wildfire. But once the fire in the heart scorches like a prairie fire...it is beyond control."

"Countless heroes and warriors in this world, they don't turn my head nor do I see them; no dreams were made in the maiden's room, the fire in the heart has long scorched the prairie." Yun Yang suppressed his voice that was tinged with unspeakable anguish.

Yun Zuiyue's right hand gripped Yun Yang's robe so tightly that her veins stood out clearly on her skin. Her face was ashen gray, but her eyes were rimmed red; she attempted her best to remain calm but her legs were shaking uncontrollably. She uttered each word slowly, "Speak, who are you?"

"How could you possibly know this poem that I have written?"

### **Chapter 43: A Devoted Woman, Poison and Smoke**

Countless heroes in this world, yet they are nothing in my eyes. I dream of nothing and nobody else in the bedchamber, for my love belongs to a single person. All the other spaces my heart has been scorched by this devastating flame!

This was an excerpt from a poem Yun Zuaiyue had written but never in her wildest dreams could she have imagined it coming from Yun Yang's mouth. This was impossible!

Shaking his head at Yun Zuiyue's question, Yun Yang sighed slowly and said, "I'm sorry, but I simply can't tell you who I am."

Yun Zuiyue's soul seemed to depart her body as she slowly let go of Yun Yang's robe and took a few steps back before she collapsed onto the floor despondently, her beautiful eyes losing their luster.

"You can't tell me who you are." Yun Zuiyue said through gritted teeth, one hand gripping the table tightly, trying her hardest to stop her body from trembling. "In that case, are you able to tell me... the person who sent you... the person who shared this poem with... Where is he?"

"If I knew that, it's all the more reason that I can't share that with you." Yun Yang closed his eyes as he spoke, his heart aching with a sharp pain, like a knife had sliced right through it. If I tell you, your life is forfeit.

"You should at least know what his name is then!" Yun Zuiyue looked at him fiercely, eyes staring daggers at the recalcitrant man.

"I'm sorry, I do not know."

"Is he at Tiantang City?"

"... I don't know."

Yun Zuiyue finally exploded. "Then you should at least tell me, is he dead or alive?"

Yun Yang forced his roiling emotions down. After a brief interval, he finally answered with great difficulty, "He wishes me to tell you to forget him."

"Forget him?" Yun Zuiyue gave an anguished laugh. "He's a jerk! Worthless! Heartless! Irresponsible! He is practically the scum of society!"

Yun Yang closed his eyes and took in a long breath to steady himself while Yun Zuiyue continued to curse spitefully.

Slam!

Yun Yang's palm landed hard on the table as he barked harshly, "Enough!"

His intimidating aura immediately filled the room as the loud crack cut through the woman's rantings.

Yun Zuiyue's voice dropped away. She began to laugh hysterically. "You men are all alike! You only dare to bully your own women; when it comes to anything else, you're practically gutless cowards!"

Yun Yang's chest rose and fell rapidly as he sought to maintain his own sense of calm, various reasons and explanations flowing through his mind. Finally he said, "You already know where he is."

Yun Zuiyue stared at Yun Yang with horrified eyes as she vehemently denied the accusation. "No... I don't believe it..."

As Yun Yang started to speak, Yun Zuiyue began to shout hysterically, "I don't believe it, I don't believe it, I don't believe it!"

Her red-fnotrimmed eyes pierced Yun Yang's soul, "I won't believe anything you say."

She seemed to be trying to convince herself, but it had also looked like she was praying to the heaven and earth. Although she spoke in a murmur, each word was clearly enunciated, "He cannot be dead!"

Yun Yang kept silent and still. He did not have the heart to say anything to the woman who was already distraught and saddened by his appearance.

Suddenly, Yun Zuiyue lifted her head and asked pleadingly, "He's not dead, is he? Tell me it isn't true!"

Yun Yang looked at her heartbroken gaze, his heart clenched with pain. He turned his head away and said softly, "Yes, to me, he is not dead."

He will stay alive in my heart forever.

Yun Zuiyue's slender figure stilled; she was as motionless as a statue when she heard his words. After a long moment, she began to sob and wail. It was as if all the worries and sadness she carried in her heart were finally unburdened upon listening to Yun Yang's declaration. Oh, how she cried, her tears flowing with utter anguish!

Yun Yang sat unmovingly; he knew of no words that could comfort her. He could only feel the wrenching agony in his chest.

"He... how is he now?" Yun Zuiyue's sobs began to subside. "Is he... well?"

"It's hard to tell." Since the first lie had passed his lips, he had no choice but to continue piling it on. "His injuries are far too...severe. Those were critical wounds, and right now, it would be impossible for him to return."

"I understand!" Yun Zuiyue nodded feverishly. "I will wait for him! I'll wait, no matter how long it takes! Please, please send this message back to him."

"It's impossible!" Yun Yang shook his head, feeling wretched. "I won't be able to convey your words to him..."

“Oh no, I understand, I absolutely understand.” Yun Zuiyue said hurriedly, “Since you have ventured out, it would be impossible for you to return; there are frightening enemies all around. Yes, it would be safer not to attempt it.”

Yun Yang watched the selfless woman and could only feel his heart grow colder with despair and guilt.

“There was something you mentioned earlier... a fugitive?” Taking a few moments to compose herself, Yun Zuiyue had finally wiped away her tears. Though her eyes were red and swollen, she had recovered some of her usual flair. “What fugitive do you speak of?”

“This fugitive... could possibly be...” Yun Yang left his sentence hanging, allowing his meaningful gaze to complete it..

Yun Zuiyue’s face instantly took on a dangerous expression. “...could possibly be related to him?”

Yun Yang nodded silently.

“I’ll help you!” Yun Zuiyue’s hissed menacingly, like a cold ferocious beast thirsting for blood in the night.

Yun Yang exhaled deeply, amazed by the fiery vengeance he saw in this woman.

“Can we speak further? On another day, at another time?” Yun Zuiyue looked at Yun Yang with anticipation, eager to gather as much information as she could on this topic.

“No!” Yun Yang was resolutely adamant. “It’s simply too dangerous.”

“I understand...” Yun Zuiyue lowered her head sorrowfully but she spoke with sympathy, “I’ve known all this ever since he was selected because I was with him when he went to the trials. I have kept this secret embedded in my heart, all these long years. Young master, you need not worry.”

Another pang shot through Yun Yang’s soul.

Fifth brother.

You’ve left this world, and no longer have any worries, but what should I do with this woman who is so devoted to you? I have the means to heal the world but how do I make up for this woman’s wounds of the heart?

...



Li Changqiu sat comfortably in a spacious room of the Cirrus House; this was the chamber of Qing Shanxue, Cirrus House's most popular courtesan.

Li Changqiu, who was a regular at the establishment, looked ruddy as he sat in repose; the sandalwood in front of him kindling with a rising fragrance as a pot of green tea exuded its mild aroma. A platform thirty feet away was covered with chiffon as a harmonious string melody wafted from behind the opaque material.

Through the chiffon, a slim figured girl with long hair, lustrous like a waterfall with equally refreshing purity could be seen playing the string instrument with delicate hands. It was a picture of artistic elegance.

The sound of footsteps floated over from the door as a vision in red entered gracefully. Even before the person came into view, her laughter had already resounded in the hallway. "Sir Li, are you pleased with my little sister's performance?"

Li Changqiu smiled and said, "Her music sounds like it came straight from heaven."

Yun Zuiyue chuckled, her waist thin to the point that it might break at any time. She smiled and said, "Sir Li has been given a great honor. People are normally not allowed into this room of Xue'er. Even as her older sister, I am occasionally forbidden to enter as well."

"Is that so?" Li Changqiu chortled humorously.

"Sister Yue, since when have I forbidden you entry?" An embarrassed voice hurriedly defended herself from behind the chiffon curtain.

"Now I've gone and embarrassed Yue'er." Yun Zuiyue continued, "Sir Li, the kitchen has just made a few appetizers. I've brought some over for you."

"I am indeed a lucky man then." Li Changqiu smiled but was taken aback when he caught sight of Zuiyue's eyes. "Pardon me, but are Lady Zuiyue's eyes a little swollen? Has something happened?"

Yun Zuiyue kept her smile even as she sighed, "There is. A sister received a letter from home saying that her mother has suddenly passed away from sickness. I cried with her for some time. All the while I was thinking, at least she had a mother. I, Yun Zuiyue, don't even know who my parents are..."

As she spoke about it, her tears came streaming down again.

Li Changqiu sighed and said, "Life and death, separations and reunions; we're more often than not helpless in the vicissitudes of life. My condolences, Lady Zuiyue."

Yun Zuiyue forced a smile and said, "It is hard to ease the heart's sorrow. Look at me, what am I doing speaking of these things. Come, Sir Li, have a taste of Cirrus House's culinary skills."

With a wave of her hand, a maid came in with an intricate platter; four small and exquisite appetizers were on it along with a beautiful wine pot.

These were undoubtedly appetizers. The contents in each dish would, at most, serve two bites. The wine pot would only be able to fill up a single goblet.

Xue'er who was behind the curtain smiled while covering her mouth. "Sister Yue is generous today. Even I haven't eaten these sort of appetizers for a few months now."

Yun Zuiyue chided, "You little minx. Didn't you eat the most the last time? You're not even afraid of getting fat!" Xue'er began to protest from behind the curtain as Li Changqiu laughed good-naturedly. "You sisters certainly have a really good relationship."

Yun Zuiyue sighed, "We're but lonely people with no one to depend on. We can only seek comfort amongst ourselves."

Li Changqiu chuckled and picked up his chopsticks saying, "These appetizers are simply superb. Just looking at them stirs my appetite already. Such a pity that they're in such small portions!"

Yun Zuiyue laughed. "If their portions were to be larger, they wouldn't be appetizers anymore would they, Sir Li?"

"Truely said!" Li Changqiu chuckled and took a bite. Even as his teeth met the appetizer, he cultivated to send a probing tendril into the food and found nothing unusual or dangerous about it. He replied jovially, "Lady Yue is always right."

His chopsticks moved like a quick breeze as he took a bite from each appetizer. Checking with his cultivation and realizing that they were all safe to consume, his initial worries immediately fell away. With sips of wine accompanying each bite of the appetizer, the food was cleaned off instantly. He said smiling, "This culinary skill would be good enough to serve at the palace! Lady Yue, just this bit can't even come close to quelling my hunger; it just makes me even more ravenous! The portions are just too cruel, a bait to reel people in!"

Yun Zuiyue smiled sensuously. "Exactly, Sir Li! It is to hook people and reel them in; people such as yourself, so that you may come more often."

"Fantastic, absolutely fantastic!" Li Changqiu guffawed, completely relaxed and at ease.

“Enjoy yourself, Sir Li. Zuiyue will step out first.” Yun Zuiyue laughed, “I would only disrupt Sir Li’s mood by being here.”

Li Changqiu chortled and endeavored to make her stay but Yun Zuiyue was already walking out with a smile on her lips.

The string melody resonated in the room as the fragrance of sandalwood permeated the air. Li Changqiu gradually let his guard down. It was indeed true that the Cirrus House was the safest place of all to be in!

Pondering upon this strange irony, he grabbed the wine pot and took another swig as he exclaimed, “Gratifying.”

“Gratifying?”

A voice spoke out mockingly, “I would like to know if Sir Li would like to feel a little bit more... gratified?”

“Who is that?” Li Changqiu jumped up and spun around, trying to find the source of the disembodied voice.

A faint, purple silhouette appeared outside the door; a pair of icy eyes sent chills down Li Changqiu’s spine.

Li Changqiu snorted coldly and said, “Are you attempting to scare me with your mystical parlor tricks? You don’t have the skill for that yet!” He maneuvered himself into a position to strike out even as he completed his challenge.

The silhouette in purple stood unmoving as he spoke lightly, “Li Changqiu... Just a mere blacksmith and already able to afford visits to the Cirrus House three to four times a month... Is it so lucrative to be a blacksmith these days?”

Li Changqiu huffed and secretly gathered his cultivation base as he replied, “You need not be concerned about its profitability. What you should be worried about most now is... your little...”

Before he could finish his words, his face twisted into a paroxysm of agony. The overwhelming surge of mystical Qi that he had just gathered had dissipated without a trace!

Li Changqiu hurriedly cultivated again and although he could still cultivate his dantian, it melted away faster than he could gather it in.

The purple silhouette outside the door spoke indifferently, “Li Changqiu, don’t waste your energy. You wouldn’t be able to expel the poison from your body if you weren’t given at least an hour to do so. Even if it was an expert with mystical Qi of the seventh

heaven and above, they would still need at least three breaths. You, unfortunately, have not reached the seventh heaven!”

Seventh heaven?

Li Changqiu was inwardly delighted at his deception.

The world has only seen me at the sixth heaven; appearing to be weak has its advantages after all.

I have not reached the seventh heaven, have I? Let me show you what I have reached, right after these three breaths!

Li Changqiu suddenly raised both of his hands and lashed out wildly.

Boom!

The concussive thunderclap sent thick fog exploding across the room, filling it instantly. The smoke was thick enough that one would not be able to see beyond their own raised fingers. It hung heavily in the air, refusing to be dissipated by the wind and obscured everything in its shadowy depths...

## **Chapter 44: A Formidable Foe Easily Captured!**

Li Changqiu’s voice resounded with sinister gentleness from within the depths of the fog.

“If you wish to kill me, you’ll have to step in here as well.”

Yun Yang smiled and retorted mockingly, “Oh no, I wouldn’t dare step into this Soul Reaping Smoke of course... but you, do you dare to come out instead?” There was a hint of triumph in his voice.

Li Changqiu began to feel a sense of discomfort as his voice turned harsh. “What do you mean?”

Yun Yang continued to stand by the door and answered nonchalantly, “Sir Li’s battle with the Residence of Marshal’s undercover guards was a brave one indeed; one man going up against so many! However, Sir Li would have ultimately lost as the experts from the marshal’s residence are far more skilled than any ordinary person. When Sir Li attempted to escape, you used the Soul Reaping Smoke exactly the same way you are now. You managed to wipe out every expert whom you had ambushed at the Residence of Marshal. It was only after that episode that we understood Sir Li’s vile

tactics. We learned that once the Soul Reaping Smoke is summoned, it will remain in place and will not dissipate for a period of approximately fifteen minutes”

“Within this quarter hour, anyone who steps into the insidious smoke would lose consciousness and have their soul absorbed by Sir Li. Not only does it protect you, the energy derived from the absorption of souls could even help to replenish your cultivation base.”

Yun Yang, who was dressed in resplendent purple, exuded an undeniably terrifying aura. “The Soul Reaping Smoke is a long lost tool of the School of Dastardly Poison, it’s vile properties vague and mysterious. However, I do know that once the smoke is released, one of the two opposing parties must die. Even as I am unable to enter, you too are trapped within the Soul Reaping Smoke.

“Your only possible escape route is when you bolt out after devouring your enemy’s soul as they charge into their deaths unknowingly! This is your last resort.” Yun Yang spoke coldly, “Perhaps you were unaware but you have played right into my hands. All I had to do was to wait for you to summon the Soul Reaping Smoke.”

Li Changqiu asked hoarsely, “Who are you?”

Yun Yang did not deign to answer but continued lightly, “After your fight that night, I’ve already established that your cultivation base is at the seventh heaven. In terms of individual combat, there truly aren’t many individuals that could threaten you in Tiantang City now.”

“My method of blending poisons could only disrupt most of your combat power but it would not leach away all of your strength, and I would still be at risk. Your mystical Qi would still need at least three to five breaths to be completely depleted.”

“If we fought amidst the duration taken for these three to five breaths, even though you would be unable to cultivate mystical Qi, you could still inflict a great deal of damage if you unleashed the Force of the Soul in a retaliatory strike! Unfortunately, I am still not competent enough to capture you without taking harm upon myself.”

“Now that you stand within Soul Reaping Smoke, you are unable to leave.” Yun Yang said, “Therefore, I’m standing here talking to you because with each sentence you I speak, the poison within you will consume another flow of your mystical Qi. Since I am in no particular rush, this would be my best chance to have a pleasant conversation with you.”

Yun Yang continued, “You can’t come out and I have nothing pressing to attend to. It’s not often that I get to speak to my enemy, so I could just do this all day!”

A hacking cough emanated from within the thick mists of the Soul Reaping Smoke. Li Changqiu had obviously been agitated by Yun Yang’s words and had spat out a

mouthful of blood. He could also distinctly feel his cultivation base degenerating, even his dantian and meridians were all slowly reducing.

“What poison is this?” Li Changqiu hissed in anger, “Tell me!”

Yun Yang answered, “Why, since you wish for me to talk more, I’d love to explain it as well. There are many things in this world that are harmless, even beneficial, to the body when consumed on its own.”

“Two items combined may be even better for the body. Three is fine too, four is also alright. But when these four medicines are consumed and combined with the fifth medicine that was soaked in alcohol, it can achieve an incredibly desired effect.”

Yun Yang smiled, “It’s enough that you only know that there are five medicines, you need not know any more of their details. Sir Li, your quarter hour is up.”

Indeed, the fringes of the Soul Reaping Smoke had already faded out.

“Who are you?” Li Changqiu sighed hopelessly. He already held a sharp dagger placed against his chest.

“If I were from the Residence of Marshal, I wouldn’t have come alone..” Yun Yang laughed softly, “I have heard that Sir Li possesses a portion of the School of Dastardly Poison’s legacy, so I wished to learn from Sir Li.”

Li Changqiu snorted, “You wish!”

Yun Yang replied lightly, “Sir Li, you need not worry. Only my people stand in this room now and there are only two of them. The information you divulge would go no further than this chamber. As long as Sir Li is willing to cooperate, I will have no reason to take your life as well.” Yun Yang smiled amicably, “It is only reasonable for me to leverage on favorable conditions to achieve my objective. Of course, Sir Li’s cultivation experience sharing is something I’d definitely want as well.”

Li Changqiu laughed, “You actually believe I would share my cultivation experience when you’re treating me this way? You are an optimist indeed!”

Inwardly, he heaved a sigh of relieve.

So that is his objective. I may yet have a chance to stay alive.

Contemplating the change in his situation, his resolve to take his own life began to falter.

Young fool, do you not know? Experts of the seventh heaven would always have a chance at indestructibility. As long as there's still a breath of life, even if their dantian and mystical Qi were completely destroyed, a sliver of energy will still remain!

As long as one stays alive, regardless of the severity of injuries, one could recover their entire cultivation base within a year. Once your father recovers his cultivation base... I could annihilate all of you tiny ants in just a single breath!

Yun Yang could sense the man's will to live gradually increasing. He was inwardly relieved as well. It would have been a waste if he had expended so much energy and almost exposed his identity only to capture a dead man!

"Young fool, you can only hope to succeed! I would rather die than see your wish fulfilled." Li Changqiu hollered arrogantly.

"Oh, I don't know about that. We still have lots of time." Yun Yang chuckled lightly.

The Soul Reaping Smoke had dissipated entirely as the room regained its clarity. Li Changqiu's body formed a heap on the floor as his pair of eyes glared at Yun Yang; looking to swallow him whole.

Yet he could not even move his finger.

"Butler!"

Yun Yang shouted with his arms still folded behind his back.

"Here!"

A silhouette appeared like a spirit and went over to Li Changqiu; a finger was pressed precisely on his chest as a palm struck his dantian. With a loud crash, the dust on the floor rose up in the air, swirling about in the room.

Li Changqiu gritted his teeth but did not retaliate. He continued to smirk as he lay on the floor.

"His mystical Qi is no longer existent," Lao Mei turned around to inform his master.

"Very well. You can now bind him with sixth level mystical beast tendons." Yun Yang did not move forward but continued to issue orders from afar.

Hearing his words, Li Changqiu's last hope died away. He had held back his last bit of energy, thinking to use all his life force to take the foolish youth hostage if he wandered over carelessly himself. He would never have thought that the young man would still be so cautious after successfully extinguishing his cultivation base with blended poison and after his guard had locked his meridians and struck his dantian to naught!

Sixth level mystical beast tendons... Even if his cultivation base had been undamaged, it would still be impossible for him to break away!

Lao Mei quickly bound Li Changqiu up with two mystical beast tendons and stuffed him into a black gunny sack after carefully rendering him unconscious with well-placed slaps.

“Done.” Yun Yang clapped his hands.

Throughout the entire ordeal, he had stood still, his two feet never moving, yet he had managed to capture a seventh heaven expert alive!

Lao Mei picked up the black bag and spoke, “Young master, I shall head back first.”

Going back separately would be part of Yun Yang’s plan, of course.

“This must be absolutely infallible.”

“It shall be so.”

Lao Mei hoisted the bag onto his shoulder and flew out with a rush of wind swirling around the empty space where he had stood. Within the blink of an eye, there was no trace of him left to be seen.

...

Footsteps echoed from the steps as Yun Zuiyue gently descended the staircase. Her eyes shone with life as she clapped. “Young master is possessed of such amazing tactics! I am duly impressed.”

“It is all thanks to Lady Yue’s cooperation.” Yun Yang bowed politely and spoke with genuine warmth. “If it weren’t for Lady Yue, such a dangerous feat would not have been so easy.”

Yun Zuiyue blushed prettily and smiled, “Then, you folks will have to thank me profusely.”

Yun Yang chuckled in agreement “That would be an understatement! Lady Yue, Cirrus House now...”

“...Has no one else.” Yun Zuiyue laughed, covering her mouth as she said, “When I served the dishes, there were only a few of us left in the Cirrus House. I had my other sisters sent out to play for a bit.”



Yun Yang kept silent for a heartbeat and said, "Then among those who know about this now are you, Lady Xue'er, the maid who served the dishes earlier, me and my butler. A total of five people."

"The maid does not know, she left after serving the dishes. But you forget to include the one in the sack, so it's still five people." Yun Zuiyue smiled an impish smile, "Have I counted that correctly?"

Yun Yang spoke with utter seriousness, "My lady, this is of utmost importance; I have to remind you time and again that I seek Lady Yue's understanding."

Yun Zuiyue nodded in understanding and said, "Xue'er is my little sister."

Yun Yang was faintly surprised as he replied, "My apologies, I was not aware.."

Yun Zuiyue sighed and said, "It's... right for you to be more cautious." Her eyes were clear when she looked at Yun Yang and said, "Your methods frighten me. Could it be that your status is too low?"

Yun Yang smiled bitterly. "Compared to my brothers, I still have a long way to go. Thank you for your help, Lady Yue. Please take care. I shall take my leave now."

Yun Zuiyue spoke softly, "Must you call me Lady Yue?"

Yun Yang was stunned as Yun Zuiyue continued with to speak in a voice, gentle yet adamant, "Is it so hard to call me sister-in-law?"

Yun Yang's Adam's apple bobbed as he swallowed with difficulty. Finally, he gently replied, "Sister Yue, please don't put me in a tough spot."

Yun Zuiyue's expression visibly dimmed but she then forced a smile and said, "I would be greatly pleased to hear you call me Sister Yue."

Wretched misery rose in Yun Yang's heart.

"In the future... if there's anything else you need help with... or if there is any news..." Yun Zuiyue looked at Yun Yang pleadingly and said, "Please don't forget about Sister Yue..."

Yun Yang was silent for a while before he said, "I won't. You have my word on it."

Yun Yang left the Cirrus House quietly. Having walked a distance, he turned back to see the red robe still standing by the door of the Cirrus House in an anguished daze.

Yun Yang felt as if a huge rock was bearing down on his chest, the feeling heavy and miserable.

“This life has been devoted to the nation, how else could there be love for passion.”

Thinking of the two-lined poem his fifth brother, Supreme Flame, would always recite whenever he got drunk, and looking at the selflessly devoted woman in red who still stood waiting, Yun Yang could only feel his heart overflow with bitter grief.

## **Chapter 45: There Must Be a Pattern!**

In a secret chamber in the Residence of Yun, Yun Yang alone stood facing a bound Li Changqiu.

Lao Mei and Fang Mofei both remained outside.

“Lao Mei, the young master is really mysterious.” Fang Mofei spoke in puzzlement, “It’s extremely uncanny. I was under the impression that the Residence of Yun contained only a young master and his butler. However, ever since I’ve arrived here, why do I feel that there is a lot more to it than meets the eye? I just can’t put my finger on it!”

Lao Mei chuckled and gave him a sidelong glance as he said, “Can’t put a finger on it, can you? Join the club! I, Lao Mei, have been in this courtyard for over three years and I still can’t figure anything out up until now! You have just arrived, and you think you can make sense of it?”

He smirked in derision. Fang Mofei was genuinely shocked as he stared wide-eyed, “With your abilities and three whole years to work with, you can’t have it figured out?”

Lao Mei pursed his lips, feeling somewhat embarrassed and spoke harshly as that embarrassment turned into anger, “Why are you so curious? Let’s not talk about me. How about yourself? With your intelligence, forget three years, you won’t get to the bottom of our young master even if you stay here for three lifetimes!”

Fang Mofei glared at him. My injuries have yet to recover, your father is not talking to you!

He had an absolute firecracker in his hands!

...

“Young man, stop wasting your effort.” Li Changqiu’s eyes were glinting. “I know nothing about this inheritance that you speak of.”

“You will hand it over.” Yun Yang leaned forward with a smile. Without warning, he raised his fists and began to pummel the arrogant man. “Are you handing it over or not? Are you handing it over or not? Are you handing it over or not?”

Bam bam bam...

Li Changqiu gritted his teeth and took the beating without a sound, his heart more relieved than ever. You want the heritage? It would then be in your best interest to keep me alive!

It was only when a flow of refined force suddenly sealed his meridians and dantian off that he finally felt a glimmer of fear.

It was the first time in his life he had come across such pure and refined energy!

If he possessed such godly skills, why would he still want the heritage of the School of Dastardly Poison?

As his thoughts careened wildly, a lightning-quick punch came forth.

Ooo...

Ka-cha...

Four of his upper front teeth shattered as blood poured copiously out of his mouth.

"A warrior can be killed but never humiliated!" Li Changqiu looked at Yun Yang with resentment and said, "Humiliating the strong like this... Young man, do you still have the slightest dignity left in you?"

He was missing a few teeth, so his speech came out sounding rather strange.

"The strong?" Yun Yang stopped his blows and smiled lightly. Taking out a white towel to wipe away the traces of blood on his fist, he spoke slowly, "Li Changqiu, remember your status. You're a prisoner here."

Li Changqiu, too, spoke sternly, "I'll remember you!"

Yun Yang smiled softly. "Right now, your meridians are under my restraint, you won't be able to break your meridians, including your heart meridians. I've sealed off your dantian so it's also impossible to self-destruct your dantian; your movements are restrained as well so you can't injure or hang yourself. I've also knocked your teeth out so you can't bite your tongue to commit suicide."

He spoke slowly, Li Changqiu still felt chilled as he listened to him. "What... what do you mean?"

"Nothing, I just don't want you to die yet." Yun Yang then grinned, showing his teeth. "Because you will soon wish you were dead."

Li Changqiu smiled in a grimace as he spoke almost inaudibly, “Even if I die, don’t you dare think that you’ll get your hands on the inheritance of the School of Dastardly Poison!”

Yun Yang face held an odd expression. “You still think I’ve captured you for that so-called School of Dastardly Poison’s inheritance?”

Li Changqiu raised his head immediately, “Wasn’t that your reason for bringing me here?”

“No.”

Yun Yang’s expression turned icy, the corners of his lips forcefully pulled into a cold cruel smile. “I only wish to ask you a few questions.”

Li Changqiu instinctively felt something was amiss, “What do you wish to know?”

“Which month’s which day are you?” Yun Yang asked word by word.

Goosebumps erupted all over Li Changqiu.

...

“Which month’s which day are you?” They were just six ordinary words.

Yet the significance it brought when they were strung together, especially the significance it held upon landing on Li Changqiu’s ears was like a lightning striking from the highest sky right into the deepest corner of his heart.

Right at this moment, he even felt dizzy and faint.

How many years had it been since someone had dug his deepest pit right in front of himself – this was the most confidential of his secrets!

Li Changqiu regained his composure and said, “I don’t know what you mean.”

Yun Yang smiled coolly and began to recite, “Li Changqiu, nicknamed Blacksmith Li. Stayed as a recluse in Tiantang City for thirteen years. He has always been diligent; the weapons forged are all of the finest quality as well. People even claimed that as long as Blacksmith Li kept on working, he might break through one day and achieve a master’s standard in the field of weapon forging.”

“Blacksmith Li’s reputation has grown much greater in these recent years; people feel proud to own weapons personally forged by Blacksmith Li.”

“As a spy, or perhaps an informant, you’ve reached the peak of perfection at this stage.”

“However, Blacksmith Li is ill-tempered and is always in a bad mood. Once this occurs, he will close his business and disappear.”

“And when this honest, ill-tempered, rustic, and wrinkly Blacksmith Li disappears, a graceful and near perfect Li Changqiu, Great Sir Li, will appear at Cirrus House.”

“Great Sir Li is affluent, spending money like a flowing stream. Each time he visits the Cirrus House, he would expend at least several hundred silver taels.”

“This Great Sir Li will then vanish; no one knows where he comes from, nor where he’s going to. But at the same time, Blacksmith Li will reappear and regain his calm mood. He’ll carry on casting iron earnestly and forging swords while striving for perfection.:

“If Blacksmith Li hadn’t exposed himself, or perhaps if he could always control his discontentment and not allow anyone to catch him unawares, nobody would ever connect the graceful Great Sir Li with the honest good-natured Blacksmith Li. After all, from the surface, they look like they are both from different worlds.”

Yun Yang spoke slowly, his eyes staring icily at Li Changqiu’s.

Li Changqiu smiled. “I completely do not understand what you are saying.”

Yun Yang paid him no mind as he continued speaking slowly, “If you hadn’t taken the initiative to warn Marshal Qiu Jianhan, perhaps no one would have discovered you for the rest of your life. It is unfortunate that you still did so.”

“I believe your superior will be surprised if he knew of this. How could Blacksmith Li, who has always been reliable, do something so ridiculous on his own accord? After all, even though no one could catch you and you could break yourself free any time, it still didn’t make sense for you to do this.”

Li Changqiu smirked, “Neither does the fact that you’ve captured me.”

Yun Yang smiled lightly. “I was curious why would you do such a thing. It was just now that I’ve finally figured out the reason..”

Li Changqiu could not help but ask, “Why?”

“All these are only for... four words.” Yun Yang smiled. “These four words are, roaming martial arts world.”

“Roaming martial arts world...” Li Changqiu repeated the words slowly.

“You are an expert after all. Your skills have reached a height no ordinary person could. You must be a significant figure in the martial arts world before coming to Tiantang City as well..”

“You had your status, your reputation, your vanity, your pride. All these belonged to you alone. However, when you came to Tiantang City to be a blacksmith, you lost all these. You lost yourself.”

“You had nothing, from then on you were only a blacksmith; your hidden identity is only a single day.” Yun Yang continued, “But the martial arts world is everywhere.”

“While working at your forge, you would have come into contact with a lot of those in the martial arts world.”

“When you heard about the changes in the martial arts world, when you heard of countless names, both familiar and unfamiliar, you heard that they are all doing well now – even those you know are far more inferior compared to you, On the other hand, you have sufficient ability but you can’t display any of it. You couldn’t make a name for of yourself.”

“You look at these upcoming talents and potentials, you look at the newcomers surpassing the elders. Yet your name was being slowly forgotten by all.”

“Therefore, you have not resigned yourself to such a fate; you felt betrayed and you refused to accept this. What was it about these louts? If I were still there, would they still be as arrogant? So your temper rises, you get irritable, your mood sours.”

“You closed your doors; you were not willing to be this blacksmith anymore.”

Li Changqiu chuckled as he denied these observations in a low voice, “Ridiculous.”

Yun Yang was unaffected as he said, “Although you were unwilling to become a blacksmith and unwilling to be forgotten, you still understood that it was your main goal to lie low and be regarded as a real blacksmith.”

“So you didn’t go far, only as far as the Cirrus House; you didn’t fight and kill in the martial arts world. You temporarily numb yourself in the Cirrus House, calm yourself down and suppress this agitation; then you’ll go back and continue to be a blacksmith.”

“However, such habits form a very vicious cycle. Your temper will only get worse; the same goes for your mood.”

“This is especially when you’ve done something significant but are unable to say it out loud, your mood sours even more. So throughout this year, your blacksmith shop has its door opened lesser and lesser as the days of you visiting the Cirrus House increases.”

Li Changqiu’s face was pale. He did not say anything but stared right at Yun Yang.

“People like you have their hearts paralyzed with fear and anxiety. When something you cannot handle happens, you will do what you think should be done without a care for this world – like threatening Marshal Qiu.”

“Because you sympathize with your kind, the capture of Wu Wenyuan set your bells ringing; you were afraid that you will end up with the same fate because after all, you and Wu Wenyuan are cut from the same cloth. So you didn’t hold back.”

“But it’s exactly because you didn’t hold back that I have you here with me now!”

Yun Yang squinted his eyes as he looked at Li Changqiu who seemed to be in a trance and said lightly, “Whatever it is – be it good or bad, as long as it happens, as long as someone did it, then there must be a reason and a pattern behind it!”