

T. Times 171

Chapter 171: Sword Emperor's Seal

The night was quiet.

Zhao Changhe lay on his bed in a daze as he watched the battle with the sword guardian, which was being displayed on the golden foil.

However, it did not seem like the scenes of the battle were truly reaching him.

His mind right now was occupied by the scenes from when he returned Sisi to Tang Wanzhuang and explained his thoughts to her. At that time, Tang Wanzhuang, who almost always wore a serene expression, revealed some surprise for the first time. Those moments continued to linger in his mind until now.

From the perspective of diplomatic and strategic thinking, his actions did not resemble the mindset typical of ordinary martial artists at all. It was something a prince would do, and one with great aspirations for his nation at that.

However, Zhao Changhe knew that he merely wanted to ease Tang Wanzhuang's burden, which had become too heavy for her frail shoulders.

People were very strange creatures. The more someone demanded something from him, the more he wanted to act like a contrarian and do the exact opposite. Yet, when the other party was accommodating toward him, such as when Tang Wanzhuang said nothing and left things up to him, he felt a sense of obligation, feeling that he should do something.

He sighed.

And then there was the other matter... Although he despised Sisi's actions and had no intention of involving himself with her any further, his anger was truly much lighter than Sisi was thinking. He had not felt any of the furious rage that he would have felt in the past during those moments.

However, that did not have much to do with Sisi. Rather, it was mostly because of Tang Wanzhuang.

He had to admit that practicing the Vicious Blood Art had somewhat influenced his temperament. Reflecting on his past behavior, Zhao Changhe realized that he had indeed been somewhat irritable and quick to anger.

The tranquility brought to him by the music she played back then was still taking effect to this point. He felt that his heart was as calm as a lake, with no ripples disturbing his emotions, whether it be anger or desire.

Throughout the process of exploring the tomb, and even now, Zhao Changhe felt a sense of detachment. He felt as if he were merely observing himself doing something. In this state, he observed everything more attentively, scrutinizing every detail. He felt less involved in all of the drama, causing him to be less affected emotionally by anything that happened.

This was peace of mind.

His anger was light, and his desires had vanished. He neither felt regret nor the sense of camaraderie brought by fighting side by side. Zhao Changhe felt as if he were merely looking at a stranger when he was looking at Sisi tonight. He could approach the situation with the calmest mind, making decisions from the perspective of the empire's interests.

Although it might be a bit exaggerated to say this, it was not entirely far-fetched. There was undoubtedly a hint of truth to it.

I wonder if Sisi would have preferred me to be angry and scold her or if she prefers the way I am right now.

Maybe this is how Tang Wanzhuang achieved her calm demeanor. Has she always viewed everything around her with such detachment? Is that why there's such a strong sense of professionalism in our interactions?

It would probably be quite difficult for a woman like her to feel any impulses of love and romance. That probably explains why she doesn't care in the slightest about men or marriage, even though she's already twenty-eight. So far, the only person who draws any kind of emotion from her seems to be that dumbass Tang Buqi...

Well, anyway, it seems studying music, calligraphy, and painting is indeed as meaningful as she said. I should continue with that. But for now, this is enough thinking. I can just talk to her tomorrow.

There was not much value in studying the battle with the sword guardian that was being displayed on the golden foil, as it was essentially a mindless corpse. Analyzing such battles where the characters had little rationality also had little benefit to his improvement. While studying it for the sake of learning sword arts might be worthwhile, he now had the sword seal.

Zhao Changhe took out the sword seal. It was a small sword that looked like it was carved from jade, but at a closer look, it was clear that it was not actually jade but some other unknown material. It exuded an extremely strong sword intent. By merely extending his mind toward it, he could sense the extremely rich sword intent contained within it. It was vast and deep like the ocean.

This was a typical inheritance seal.

It could be discerned that based on different levels of cultivation, different understandings of swordsmanship, and different temperaments, each person who came upon this sword seal would likely gain different insights, grasping different sword arts and sword intents.

Sisi said that it could be considered the essence of all sword arts in the world. While that was probably a bit exaggerated, it was indeed a description that fit it quite well. If she were to bring it back to her tribe and let every person in the tribe comprehend their own sword arts, their tribe's strength would definitely soar. Similarly, giving it to the Demon Suppression Bureau would allow Tang Wanzhuang to cultivate more talented swordsmen, which would be great assets for the nation. However, Zhao Changhe really did not have much interest in it. He did not need to comprehend any compatible sword arts. In fact, he did not even really want to learn sword arts at all.

He took out the golden foil and placed it together with the sword seal.

Gradually, the golden foil emitted a soft light, encompassing both the sword seal and Zhao Changhe.

Zhao Changhe suddenly felt like he was entering a dream again.

The scene before him completely changed. Suddenly, it was as if he were standing on the peak of a steep cliff, facing a seated old man in white robes.

With a sudden gesture, the old man pointed at the distance, and the phantom of an ancient sword pierced through the sky, heading straight for a mountain peak thousands of li away.

Boom!

The distant mountain peak was flattened, mountains and rivers collapsed, and ocean waves surged into the sky.

Another sword phantom was shot out and it separated the raging sea, leaving behind a deep ravine. The wild waves that were on both sides could not break through the barrier of sword qi, leaving the ocean split into two.

One sword to cleave a mountain, one sword to divide the sea.

This was all the result of a mere gesture from a finger. He had not even moved his body!

This was the Sword Emperor!

In a world and a time where gods and demons were rampant, there existed only a single being who could be crowned with the title of Sword Emperor!

This was the legacy imprint he left within the sword seal, and it was materialized by the Heavenly Tome. There was no need for comprehension nor analysis. The Sword Emperor himself demonstrated before his very eyes!

The sword phantom flew back, and the old man stood up. He held a longsword in his hand and slowly began to demonstrate the simple sword art that the vicious sword had displayed back then.

Zhao Changhe had only skimmed through this sword art before going to bed, and he had even tried using it to deceive the sword guardian in the tomb. However, he had only grasped its form, mainly because the straightforwardness of the vicious sword made it simple to imitate, making it seem as if there was no value in practicing it earnestly.

But now, when it was demonstrated by the Sword Emperor himself, Zhao Changhe felt his heart pounding.

What simple sword art? What straightforwardness...

That horizontal stroke was like the line where the ocean met the sky, cutting through the boundary between heaven and man.

That vertical stroke was like the gap between continents.

Infinite mysteries were contained within, all transformations ultimately merging into the most fundamental horizontal and vertical slashes of the sword.

Was this merely for the sword?

No, it applied to the saber as well!

The path to simplicity, returning to nature, this was how it was supposed to be.

Zhao Changhe suddenly recalled his early days of learning back in the mountain stronghold. The countless times he turned and slashed, the countless times he struck the wooden stakes, again and again. Different every time, yet unchanged.

Unfortunately, this was no basic saber art, but a highly concentrated form of the endless sword dao. Zhao Changhe knew that he could not learn it, understand it thoroughly, or use it.

He lacked too much experience. This was something that first required the honing of thousands of sword skills and defeating countless adversaries.

The figure of the Sword Emperor shifted. Beginning with simple sword moves, he gradually began to demonstrate countless different sword arts, from beginner to intermediate to advanced. He displayed a myriad of styles, numbering in the thousands.

Zhao Changhe silently memorized them. He felt that the process of sorting out these sword arts was in itself a significant learning process for learning the principles of martial arts. He also felt that it would allow him to make progress in his own saber art.

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Early the next morning.

When Tang Wanzhuang arrived at the guesthouse, Zhao Changhe had already gotten up early as usual to practice the saber.

Tang Wanzhuang watched him quietly for a while before suddenly asking, "Have you ever thought about practicing the sword at the same time?"

Zhao Changhe did not stop his practice, answering as he continued, "Is it because swords are more prestigious in the jianghu? Those who can instruct me, such as Yue Hongling and you, are all experts of the sword. On the other hand, my saber arts have always been self-taught. Even this time...although the inheritance in the sword seal is truly remarkable, unfortunately, I can't make much use of it."

"From what you're saying, it seems like you don't seem too interested in learning the sword."

"Yeah, I don't want to bite off more than I can chew. I've already started late. I've already fallen behind others by far too much. I can't afford to waste any more time learning other weapons."

Tang Wanzhuang nodded, continuing to watch him for a while before saying, "Sisi is currently in the tomb, providing assistance to the Demon Suppression Bureau for the exploration of various areas. She has provided very valuable insights on how to reseal the tomb. She honestly seems a bit too familiar with things from the previous era."

"Has she caused any trouble?"

"No, she's been very obedient."

"Don't be too trusting of her, she's quite the actress."

Tang Wanzhuang tilted her head and looked at Zhao Changhe's expression, but he remained focused on his practice and showed no emotion.

Tang Wanzhuang chuckled and said, "Are you really going to end your relationship with her?"

"Of course, I'm not someone who itches for betrayal. Since she's deceived me, then why bother still considering her a friend? Our relationship will be all business now. Her knowledge and the special products of the Ancient Spirit Tribe should be useful to you."

"Just to me?" Tang Wanzhuang's expression practically said "This is your empire."

Zhao Changhe did not answer that. Instead, he asked, "What restrictions did you impose on her?"

Tang Wanzhuang smiled and said, "My spring water restriction. Do you want to learn it? You can use it on other girls in the future."

Zhao Changhe felt that Tang Wanzhuang's attitude today was a bit strange. He finally put his saber away and approached her before scrutinizing her carefully.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm checking if you're Sisi in disguise."

"I'm just in a good mood." Tang Wanzhuang smiled faintly. "I really want to reward you with something, but I don't know what you want."

Zhao Changhe squinted at her for a moment, then suddenly said, "Do you know what annoys me the most about you?"

"Hm?"

"It's this attitude and mindset of yours toward me that makes it seem like you're a senior looking down on a junior, or a superior looking at a subordinate. It makes me want to break this image and see how you look when you're embarrassed."

Tang Wanzhuang felt somewhat helpless. “That’s not chivalrous at all. In fact, it’s even quite malicious.”

“Who told you that I’m a chivalrous hero? I’m a bandit,” Zhao Changhe said. “If you want to give me a reward, then I’ll suggest a reward.”

Tang Wanzhuang had a bad feeling and involuntarily took a step back. “What?”

“Continue teaching me how to play the guqin, but use your hands to guide mine,” Zhao Changhe said. He even added, “Well, I’m not sure if I can touch them.”

Tang Wanzhuang stood there with a strange look on her face.

Are you... teasing me?

Chapter 172: Calligraphy

Zhao Changhe did not directly start heading over to her pavilion to learn the guqin. Instead, he went into his room and grabbed a towel to wipe off the sweat from his body. He acted as if those teasing words had never left his mouth.

This conveniently spared Tang Wanzhuang from having to give an awkward response. She suddenly felt that this guy had studied under some master of quips. These sudden jabs of his were incredibly clever...

He just stood there with his sleeves rolled up, wiping himself down and completely disregarding her while she was standing at the door watching him. She was not sure whether he just had exhibitionist tendencies or if this was another form of teasing.

In fact, the explanation was much simpler—it was just too damn hot. Zhao Changhe could not be bothered to act all prim and proper. Besides, he had never invited her into his room, so whether or not she wanted to watch him was her business.

Tang Wanzhuang stood there expressionless, neither advancing nor retreating. Her earlier jovial mood had nearly completely gone away.

Zhao Changhe casually asked, “Is it because my cultivation isn’t high enough? Theoretically speaking, after reaching the fourth layer of the Profound Gate, I should be impervious to cold and heat, right? During the winter, I had just started cultivating yet I didn’t really worry too much about the cold. By the time spring came, I was no longer afraid of the cold. But now that it’s summer, I seem to have become even more sensitive to heat. I break out into a sweat at the slightest exertion. It feels incredibly unpleasant.”

Tang Wanzhuang said, “It’s related to the nature of your cultivation. The Vicious Blood Art would naturally make you feel hot, which is why it needs to be neutralized or balanced. Originally, the Six Harmonies Art would have been sufficient, but since the amount of time you spend practicing it is now lacking compared to your practice of the Vicious Blood Art, its effects are being suppressed.”

“Is that why you say I need to slow down and calm down? I felt really good yesterday.”

“Yes.”

“The thing is, I feel that after calming down, I became a bit too much like a sage. It was as if I aged several decades, and nothing belonging to the mortal dust could trouble me. Of course, I understand the benefits of such a state, but it felt really uncomfortable. After all, I’m only twenty.”

Tang Wanzhuang finally laughed. “Do you really think that my music has such a strong effect? What you’re talking about is some immortal magic, and I don’t have such skills. It was just that you usually kept yourself too tense, so coming across a song that allowed you to relax made the effects seem particularly noticeable. It won’t be as miraculous if you continue listening to such music, but it can still help you focus your mind. If nothing else, at least it’ll help you with the overheating problem.”

Zhao Changhe glanced at her. “You don’t practice martial arts, are you not afraid of the heat?”

Tang Wanzhuang said, “Other than during intense battles, I have never broken a sweat in my daily life for many years. As they say, a calm heart...”

Before she could finish speaking, Zhao Changhe interrupted her, “Hmm, flesh of ice and bones of jade, naturally cool without sweating. I’m a rough man, so forgive me if I am unable to attain that level.”

Tang Wanzhuang’s words got stuck in her throat, her eyes widening.

Are you teasing me again?

Zhao Changhe laughed. Yes, that's the expression I wanted to see. How refreshing. It's like a fairy stepping out of a painting, everything becomes more vibrant. Why be so serious all the time?

Tang Wanzhuang took a deep breath. "Why were you so different toward me before? I bet it's because you held yourself back last night, so now you want to release the discomfort."

Zhao Changhe said honestly, "That's not true. The poison she used last night really wasn't all that. Also, I already told you, I was in a sage-like state yesterday."

He thought for a moment and sighed. "It might just be because I've gotten used to teasing Sisi these past few days. Now that she's suddenly not around, I've turned the target of my teasing to you. It's not a big deal, really. I talk so much nonsense to you outside, but when I actually face you, I turn so serious and it feels wrong."

Tang Wanzhuang said, "So this is how you originally regarded me? You were just holding yourself back before?"

"Maybe. I don't really quite understand it myself. Anyway, this feels much more natural. When I talked to you before, I always felt like I had to be especially careful about what I said, and I always had to think twice or thrice before voicing something out. It felt very unnatural."

Tang Wanzhuang suddenly laughed. "If you had this attitude before, Sisi might not have resorted to drugging you in the end."

Zhao Changhe paused and fell into thought.

Perhaps that was in fact the case. Sisi had always been unconvinced by his two different attitudes. She felt underestimated, feeling that he respected Tang Wanzhuang too much compared to her. Those last scenes at the tomb may have indeed been a rebellious act stemming from that resentment, like it was her way of saying, "You think she's so high and mighty? Let's see what happens when I stir things up!"

“She’s actually only sixteen and a half years old. She isn’t even seventeen yet. She’s just in her rebellious phase, and she was raised differently from those in the Central Plains,” Tang Wanzhuang said. “I think she might be somewhat interested in you, so you don’t need to worry too much.”

Damn, she’s already got such a great figure, but she’s not even seventeen yet?

Zhao Changhe really had not expected this. He was slightly surprised. “You’re actually speaking up for her?”

“Because she really didn’t mean to harm you. Even that last move of hers, at least in her eyes, was just to give you an advantage... I can be mad with her, but you don’t really need to be,” Tang Wanzhuang said leisurely. “Of course, if you are aggrieved for me, that makes me happy.”

This time, it was Zhao Changhe’s turn to have his eyes widen. “Are you teasing me?”

Tang Wanzhuang said leisurely, “Since you’ve been teasing me, why can’t I do the same? You said that you used to have to think carefully before speaking to me before, do you think that I wasn’t the same? You’re just a big kid, but you always gave me a headache with how serious you were. Sometimes, I wonder if I should just treat you like Buqi, and if I’m unhappy with you, I’ll just knock you down and give you a beating...”

Zhao Changhe stared at her for a while, then suddenly burst into laughter.

Tang Wanzhuang laughed too. Her smile was truly enchanting.

Zhao Changhe suddenly felt that if this had been the atmosphere they shared yesterday, he would not have hesitated to call her big sister at that time.

It was as if some intangible barrier between them had suddenly broken, and their relationship had gone from being strictly business and even cautiously distant, to beginning to take on a hint of friendship.

How had this change started... Was it from discussing Sisi? Or from when he mentioned wanting to see her embarrassed?

He couldn’t really tell, and so he just scratched his head.

Seeing him look like a silly bear scratching his head, Tang Wanzhuang felt even more amused. “Stop acting stupid. Anyway, you don’t have the time to play the guqin and touch my hands today—you promised to organize the sword arts for Sisi. Sort that out first. She’ll be leaving in a few days.”

“Oh, right...” Zhao Changhe knew that this was serious business. Since he had nothing else to do at the moment, he sat directly by the window, spread out his brushes and ink, and began to write down the key points of sword arts.

Tang Wanzhuang stood by the side, watching with great surprise. She believed that one could comprehend many insights from the sword seal, but they would not be transmitted through words. Instead, she believed that they were likely transmitted through some sort of will or intent that was felt rather than discussed.

Certainly, an experienced grandmaster would be able to convey these teachings using words. However, Zhao Changhe had only had the sword seal for a single night, yet he was actually already able to write down the key points of a sword art. It was as if the Sword Emperor had explained it to him verbally.

Little did she know that, in fact, the Sword Emperor had explained things to him verbally. The Sword Emperor that the Heavenly Tome manifested discussed the sword arts for him, and Zhao Changhe had to listen and repeat his words many times before he could remember everything.

Tang Wanzhuang was also a master of sword arts. With just a glance, she could tell that what he was writing was genuine. Even if some masters tried to comprehend the intent within the sword seal, their expression of it might not be as good as his.

How on earth is he managing to do this...

But as a master of sword arts, after looking at the skills of the Sword Emperor, she soon became unable to think of anything else. She quickly became immersed in the sword intent, becoming completely lost in thought.

This sword manual was only entry-level, but the principles of the sword contained within were quite profound.

From just this perspective, the basic principles remained consistent throughout history, and today's practitioners were indeed on the right path. But why was it that the higher one looked, the more despairing the gap appeared to be?

Zhao Changhe had been writing for a while, and he eventually ran out of ink, so he went to grind some ink, feeling slightly annoyed. But when Tang Wanzhuang saw him stop writing, she quickly realized why and instinctively reached out to grind the ink first. Her eyes still focused on the manual he was writing as she pondered.

Her appearance seemed to say, "Keep writing, I want to keep reading. I can handle this little task."

Zhao Changhe glanced at her, said nothing, and simply dipped his brush into the ink before continuing to write. He felt extremely strange.

This was just like the ancient version of having a beautiful girl beside you in the library, accompanying you as you studied.

It's really fragrant...the scent of ink. She also smells quite nice.

He felt strange, but also embarrassed, because his calligraphy was so ugly that he could not help but blush as he continued writing. He simply did not deserve to have such a stunning beauty by his side.

Zhao Changhe had only been forced to attend a calligraphy class by his parents when he was very young. He knew how to hold and use a brush, but after crying and refusing to continue learning for two months, he basically learned nothing and just wasted the money his parents paid.

Since transmigrating to this world, he had only picked up a brush once, which was when he wrote down the Vicious Blood Art for the Heavenly Tome. After writing several thousand characters back then, he could only be said to have barely familiarized himself with calligraphy again. He was slightly better than his peers in controlling his strength now, so his writing would at least not be filled with crooked lines, but that was about it.

As he wrote, he could not help but mutter, "Isn't it ugly?"

Tang Wanzhuang snapped out of her thoughts of the sword art. In fact, she had not been paying attention to his calligraphy at all. Now that she was reminded of it, she found it rather interesting, "It's not bad. I can see that you've learned the basics. It's just that you're a bit rusty... Hm, it seems

you did actually study calligraphy in the past. It looks like Zhao Family Village was quite a decent place.”

Zhao Changhe: “...”

Tang Wanzhuang smiled as she admired his writing, even praising him, “It’s actually not bad at all. Have you noticed? While your writing does start off a bit rough, the more you write, the more bold and powerful it becomes, and it even reveals somewhat of a sharp edge. You’re actually already developing your own style... Although it’s structurally imbalanced, has a clumsy layout, and looks a bit weird... Should we call it Zhao Village Style?”

“...Can you stop mentioning Zhao Village? By the way, are you praising me or mocking me?”

“Of course, it’s praise,” Tang Wanzhuang said with a smile. “Do you think I expect you to write like a calligraphy master?” Zhao Changhe was speechless for a moment. “I guess you’d be happy as long as it looks like actual writing, right?”

“It’s because you still care about whether it looks good or not, which shows that you still have the desire to learn and do better.”

“I feel like you’re playing some sort of character development game with me, including tricking me into playing the guqin for meditation.”

“It’s a win-win situation. Playing the guqin is indeed conducive to meditation and is beneficial for your current state. But what do you mean by character development game?” Tang Wanzhuang asked. “Actually, since it’s just the two of us here, there’s no harm in me being direct. I do hope to guide you toward the path of a prince, but how does that qualify as a game? Using that term here is rather frivolous. This is a serious matter.”

“The main difference between a character development game and regular guidance lies in guiding a child to become the partner one desires...oh shi—”

Crack!

The solid ink stick suddenly turned into powder on the inkstone, splashing ink all over Zhao Changhe’s face. Tang Wanzhuang huffed and left.

Chapter 173: Restrictions and Shackles

Zhao Changhe bitterly went to wash his face, cursing himself for being too brainless and going too far with his teasing. Now, the perfect scene of having a beauty by his side as he did some work was just a pipe dream.

He had touched upon a topic that should have been avoided between the two of them. This was not something that could just be cooled off by meditation or cultivation.

It could be said that one of the major reasons that Tang Wanzhuang hoped Zhao Changhe would take on the identity of a prince was because he had clearly expressed his refusal to the marriage alliance, which aligned with what she wanted. A few flirtatious and teasing remarks could be brushed off, and a twenty-eight-year-old lady like her was not someone who could not handle some teasing; after all, she had even retorted with a few remarks of her own. However, that topic was off-limits.

After mulling it over, Zhao Changhe regretted it deeply. Not only had he lost an enjoyable moment, but he also feared that their future interactions would turn strictly serious again.

He finished washing his face, and he sighed as he went back to writing. Just as he sat down at the table, however, a fragrant breeze swept by as Tang Wanzhuang came in again.

Zhao Changhe: “?”

“Do you know how to paint?” Tang Wanzhuang asked with a straight face.

“...No.”

“The sword manual will surely need illustrations and examples, not just textual explanations. Since you can’t paint, how do you plan to handle that?”

“I’ve painted examples of the Vicious Blood Saber before. Although it looked quite rough, there should not have been any major deviations.”

“A small deviation can lead to a huge error. What do you mean by ‘should not?’ This is going to be exchanged with the Ancient Spirit Tribe for their gu arts, if there are any mistakes, it will be a huge deal. Are you confident that your painting won’t have any flaws?”

“Um...” In fact, Zhao Changhe felt that the Heavenly Tome would be able to detect any major flaws, but he was not entirely sure. Also, since he could not really just talk about the Heavenly Tome, he could only remain silent.

Tang Wanzhuang tossed him a sword and said, “Alright, you demonstrate it, I’ll paint it.”

Zhao Changhe sniffled and obediently got up to demonstrate.

If he had not gone too far just now, he might have been able to get her to teach him how to paint hand in hand, but now, that was out of the question.

Tang Wanzhuang sat at the table, and turned her head to watch Zhao Changhe demonstrate. At first, she tried to hide her surprise behind a casual expression, but gradually, her eyes could no longer conceal her admiration.

Since he was like a big bear when he tried playing the guqin, she had thought that he would do horribly demonstrating the sword poses and moves as well. She really had not expected him to move with such elegance. Aside from the fact that he seemed a bit unfamiliar with the sword, he appeared to have truly mastered the basic movements of the Sword Emperor’s beginner-level sword art.

It had to be said that even if this was just a beginner-level sword art, and even if someone had spoon-fed him every detail, to learn the sword to this extent in just a single night, for someone who had only practiced the saber beforehand, showcased truly remarkable talent.

Given enough resources and a proper stage, he could truly become the next Xia Longyuan, both in terms of martial prowess and position.

The beginner-level sword art did not have many techniques, and Zhao Changhe soon finished his demonstration. Tang Wanzhuang snapped out of her reverie, only to realize that she had not even done a single stroke.

Zhao Changhe glanced over.

Tang Wanzhuang casually covered it up and said calmly, "I can't paint that fast. Why don't you go through it again... Hmm, I think I need to see it another two times. I'll paint in the meantime."

Zhao Changhe looked at her suspiciously, and her face felt a little hot. She knew that this stinky bear was not easy to deceive—he had

solved those cases, after all. Just because he wasn't saying anything didn't mean that he was clueless...

Fortunately, Zhao Changhe did not tease her this time. He obediently went back to demonstrating the movements.

Tang Wanzhuang breathed a sigh of relief and quickly started painting.

By the time Zhao Changhe finished his demonstration for the second time, Tang Wanzhuang just so happened to finish her work. The timing was as precise as a well-designed program.

Zhao Changhe tried to look over again, but Tang Wanzhuang refused to let him see it. She simply tidied up the manuscript and compiled it into a booklet before saying expressionlessly, "I need to bring this over to calm Sisi's worries for the time being."

Zhao Changhe was silent for a moment and murmured softly, "Yes, otherwise, she might become anxious."

Tang Wanzhuang suddenly stopped in her tracks and turned back with a slight smile. "Is that why you stayed up all night studying the sword seal?"

Zhao Changhe sighed. "Why be so petty? Since I promised her that I'd give her the sword arts in exchange for her knowledge of gu arts, I have to follow through."

"I couldn't tell just now. Every time I mentioned Sisi, you changed the subject."

"I've done what needs to be done. What's the point of dwelling on it? The things you spoke of made it seem as if you were trying to evoke sympathy from me. Even when a child says they're breaking off a friendship, it's not something so easy to reconcile. What is even going through your mind? Are

you really trying to push a wife onto me so that there's no chance you'll get caught up with me? I do have a girlfriend, you know? There's no need for that."

Tang Wanzhuang couldn't say anything in response.

Actually, even if she did want to push a wife onto Zhao Changhe, the best choice would be Cui Yuanyang, not some foreigner.

However, her behavior indeed made it easy for people to think in that direction, and she could not be bothered to argue.

"You can go for now. I'll see if I can write down the two sets of higher-level sword techniques," Zhao Changhe said. He paused for a moment and then slowly said, "I feel like writing them down shouldn't be a problem, but I'm afraid that I won't be able to demonstrate them."

Tang Wanzhuang stared at him with her beautiful eyes for a while before replying, "You can...as long as you don't treat this as a task but as your own learning process. Don't rush to say that you don't want to learn the sword. You once integrated my Spring Water Sword Intent into your saber arts. Why can't you do the same for the sword arts of the Sword Emperor? You have too few finishing moves. If you can transform the Sword Emperor's techniques into your own saber techniques, no one in the world will be able to recognize them, and that can compensate for your shortcomings."

Tang Wanzhuang left, leaving Zhao Changhe with a slight headache.

It was not that he had not thought about that before, but the difficulty really was just too great. Integrating a smidge of sword intent into his style and transforming an ultimate sword move into a saber move were on two completely different levels of difficulty.

But what Tang Wanzhuang said did have some merit to it, and no matter how difficult it was, he had to try.

Even though the Scattering the Gods and Buddhas had been modified by the Heavenly Tome, an ultimate move designed for the third layer of the Profound Gate had long since ceased to be considered an ultimate move for him. At the moment, apart from the berserk buff, he currently had no technique that enabled him to finish off an enemy in one strike. Once he had a genuine ultimate move again, in particular one that his enemies didn't know, his combat power would effectively double.

He decided to act on it immediately. He locked the doors and windows and brought out the golden foil once again.

Instead of immediately delving into the higher-level sword arts, he started from the beginner level before slowly going on to watch the more advanced levels.

This kind of thing could not be rushed. Without mastering the lower levels, one could not even understand the higher ones.

As he studied, Zhao Changhe thought that what he was doing was trying to turn sword arts into saber arts. What didn't cross his mind was that he was actually systematically learning sword arts at the same time. He was essentially going through a proper sword art curriculum from start to finish, directly learning the complete system of the Sword Emperor. By the time he could turn the sword arts into saber arts, he would have mastered all the sword moves, sword intent, and the principles of the sword.

At that time, he would essentially be the true successor of the Sword Emperor.

Tang Wanzhuang, who was obviously a swordsman herself, had never even thought of touching the sword seal. It was not because she didn't care for it; rather, it was all for the sake of preserving the legacy of the Sword Emperor and allowing it to be concentrated on Zhao Changhe.

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In the Sword Emperor's tomb, Sisi sat by the edge of the hole in the gate of the main tomb, hugging her knees. She was lost in thought as she watched the members of the Demon Suppression Bureau carefully survey the surroundings. Her mind was elsewhere.

The hole was no longer just a dog-sized hole. It had expanded to allow for normal movement. It was no longer dark either, as some of the restrictions had been lifted and there was no longer a major issue with using luminous pearls to illuminate the area. With all of that going on, the place no longer seemed as eerie as it originally had.

Also, Tang Wanzhuang had not imposed any restrictions on her. The door was right behind her and she could leave at any time.

But she was waiting for the sword arts.

She had gone through so much hardship over the past year during her journey through the divine land alone all for this moment, so how could she leave now?

Zhao Changhe had promised her, and she trusted that he would not deceive her. The sound of footsteps came from behind her, and Tang Wanzhuang sat directly beside her and handed her a booklet. “He’s quite efficient. He has already completed the first volume for the beginner-level sword arts. I’m giving it to you first so that you can take a look at it. He should be working on the more advanced sword arts at the moment. Within three days, I believe that we’ll have one complete system. Will that be enough?”

“I don’t know. I’ll have to see it for myself first...” Sisi took the booklet, opened it, and quickly scanned through it. Her expression soon turned strange.

Why does the illustration look exactly like Zhao Changhe?!

“What are you trying to do?” Sisi said expressionlessly. “Are you trying to humiliate me? We just broke off our friendship, and now you bring me this so that I get reminded of it again and again?”

Tang Wanzhuang smiled. “The one demonstrating the moves looks like him because it is him. When I was illustrating it, I ended up subconsciously drawing his likeness. If it makes you uncomfortable, then just erase his face.”

“...” Sisi fell silent for a moment, then directly put the booklet away before continuing to hug her knees and turning silent.

Tang Wanzhuang also remained silent, as if she had nothing else to do but sit with her.

Sisi looked at her strangely, then another, and after a while, she could not resist asking, “Why... Why didn’t you impose any restrictions on me?”

Tang Wanzhuang said, “Because we’re actually the same kind of people. I’m all good anyway. When I get angry, I calm down soon enough. What’s the point of staying angry?”

Huh? That doesn't explain why she didn't impose any restrictions on me? Isn't she afraid that I'll really cause some trouble? Sisi kept looking at her interlocutor strangely, but aside from finding her beautiful, she could not discern anything else.

"Why do you say that we're similar types of people? What makes us similar?"

"For the goal of the Great Xia, I won't care about the life or death of foreigners. To you, aren't we foreigners as well? What fundamental difference is there between you and me? It's just that I've had a few more years of experience and I wouldn't act as recklessly as you did," Tang Wanzhuang said softly. "From this perspective, even if you really tried to seduce and deceive Changhe, it would actually be quite normal. But you didn't, so it's hard for me to dislike you."

Sisi pursed her lips.

She knew that they weren't quite the same. Their perspectives on life were, in fact, fundamentally different... But Tang Wanzhuang's willingness to see things that way still made her feel better. Only a fool would argue against it.

"I asked about your past actions. You're clearly an extremely shrewd person. But this time, you acted recklessly, without considering the consequences, from beginning to end. You even missed something as obvious as people being stationed outside and you thought that mere terracotta warriors could isolate us. Well, I get that it was because you felt guilty about betraying Changhe's trust. Your mind was in turmoil, and you were just eager to explain." Tang Wanzhuang gently patted her shoulder. "In the end, you're just a young girl."

Sisi pursed her lips in dissatisfaction, but she knew very well that Tang Wanzhuang was right this time. Her mind had really been in turmoil back then, and that had caused her to act recklessly. Looking back, she felt like a complete fool.

Why had Tang Wanzhuang not imposed any restrictions on her? It seemed that there was no need to dwell on it any further.

Such actions would only arouse someone's resentment and rebellion, which would make them try everything to break free. Even if they couldn't break free, they would want to bite back, making it especially easy for them to go astray.

Why bother imposing a restriction when there already was a much stronger one in place?

Love was a restriction, and the heart was a shackle.

Sisi was smart. She understood very well what Tang Wanzhuang was doing, but she felt speechless to find that although she thought Tang Wanzhuang was overthinking things, she still could not muster any resistance.

After all, not imposing a restriction on her was ultimately an act of kindness. Being misunderstood as having a crush was much better than forcibly being placed under control.

Sisi could only angrily retort, "I don't like him! If I really liked him, I wouldn't have put him in danger! I just treated him as a friend. We, the Ancient Spirit Tribe, value loyalty, so I was in turmoil. We're not like you people of the divine land, heartless and without loyalty!"

Tang Wanzhuang chuckled wryly. "Oh, I see."

Sisi glanced at her, "Although you're twenty-eight, you've never even been with a man. Why pretend to be such an experienced older sister? I bet you don't even understand them as much as I do! I even dared to kiss him, would you do that?"

Tang Wanzhuang's smile froze on her face.

Chapter 174: Sisi Goes Back

During this period, Zhao Changhe felt like he had returned to the days back when he was in Beimang.

When no one was around, he would lock himself in his room and immerse himself in the Heavenly Tome, gradually learning the Sword Emperor's sword arts from the basics to the advanced.

When Tang Wanzhuang came, she would spread out paper, grind ink, and make the atmosphere more pleasant with her presence. She would write down the sword arts and paint diagrams.

Even without engaging in battles, he could still hone his saber.

He did not even need to listen to her guqin. His heart was already at peace.

It was very much like the days when he would go and learn the saber with Instructor Sun before returning home to eat dinner.

He had originally thought that being placed in a bandit camp as soon as he was transferred to this world would cause his mind and heart to be nervous and in a mess. But looking back at it now, he realized that it was during that time that he had been last at peace.

When one accumulates enough experience, one's life flows less like a creek and more like a wide river, and everything seems to fall into place.

“Your writing is getting better and better,” Tang Wanzhuang said as she ground the ink, watching the smooth strokes emerging under his brush. She found herself feeling quite happy seeing his progress.

She had not really taught Zhao Changhe much about calligraphy. She only gave him some brief pointers on calligraphy techniques and structural layout for aesthetic purposes, but she never really delved into the finer details.

Zhao Changhe's ambitions did not lay in this field, and his aptitude in this area was honestly pretty poor. Sometimes, he could not even understand a sentence after hearing it for half a day. He was even worse in this area than Tang Buqi when he was younger. If anyone tried to teach him while being particular with things, he would definitely drive them crazy. His aptitude in martial arts was simply worlds apart from his aptitude in the arts.

But once he learned something, he really did learn it. She could clearly see his writing becoming more skillful and rounded, and she could even sense his tranquility. The previous restless sharpness that he embodied had become more restrained.

In terms of aesthetics, Zhao Changhe had a much different view from hers. His style was bold and flamboyant, showing that he would never attain the elegant demeanor of a prince, and neither did he wish to. And beneath the calm surface that he was displaying lately, she could still perceive his boundless arrogance.

But it did not matter. That was simply who he was.

“Didn’t you say that she was going to leave in two days? It’s already been seven or eight days by now, is it really still fine?” Zhao Changhe asked casually. He had not even lifted his head, continuing to write down the sword manual.

“I just said that to urge you to hurry up. There isn’t actually a set date for when she’ll leave. It’s not like you’d be expected to learn the complete system of sword arts in a few days. No matter how talented or smart you are, you’re not a god.”

“What about you? The ten days you said to your nephew are almost up,” Zhao Changhe said. “You’ve been coming and going these past few days. You suddenly show up to accompany me, helping me draw the diagrams, and then disappear again. Is there really that much to explore in the tomb? Are there parts of it that even you don’t dare to enter?”

“It’s not the tomb... In fact, we’re already preparing to reseal the tomb, and our preparations are almost complete.” Tang Wanzhuang sighed. “What’s been occupying my mind is actually the Maitreya Cult in Gusu.”

The tip of Zhao Changhe’s brush stopped moving, and he turned to look at her.

Tang Wanzhuang said calmly, “We have pretty much completely wiped out the Maitreya Cult in Gusu these past few days, but trouble is brewing across the entirety of Jiangnan. I know that some things are inevitable.”

“So you’ve decided to stay in Gusu? Well, this place is more convenient than the capital in some ways.”

“It’s not as great as you think. The Demon Suppressing Bureau is only responsible for the affairs of the jianghu. We don’t have the power to mobilize the military to attack cities and seize territories. Besides gathering intelligence to report back to the capital, all I can really do is watch helplessly.”

There was no color in Tang Wanzhuang’s eyes as she stared blankly at the inkstone. Despite being able to see the storm brewing over Jiangnan and knowing where it was coming from, there was not really much that she could do about it.

Although the affairs of the jianghu represented the structure of power to a large extent, it was not entirely consistent. No matter how much the Demon Suppression Bureau did, it ultimately could not influence the overall situation.

Zhao Changhe suddenly asked, “Does the emperor really manage anything? Does he ever even show his face?”

“He does, in fact, but not often.”

“Is he mostly in seclusion?”

“Mm-hm...”

“He should still be aware of what’s been going on, right?”

“He is, and he’s issued some orders, but they have had minimal effect. You’ve seen the widespread laziness of the bureaucracy and the sloppiness of the military, and these are not problems that a few orders can easily rectify at this point. Moreover, there are many people paying lip service while secretly acting in opposition, all waiting for the right moment. When that time comes, it’s likely that they’ll just disregard imperial orders altogether.”

Zhao Changhe continued writing down the sword manual and said, “Since you know how much the nation has deteriorated and how ineffective the emperor’s orders have been... Then what’s the point of sticking around? You might as well take over Gusu and become a warlord.”

Tang Wanzhuang stared at his side face speechlessly, her expression showing that this was not the response she was looking for, “Do you know what I mean when I say ‘the right time’?”

“Well, Old Xia is still ranked first on the Ranking of Heaven, and his deterrent power still exists, but he’s getting old. Rumor has it that there may be something wrong with him, but even if others are eager to make a move, they can wait a few more years. The right time is the day he passes away without an heir, right? That will be when chaos ensues.”

“It seems you know quite a bit.”

“I also know that if we are to look at things with a bit more cold blood, the Maitreya Cult doesn’t actually need to wait for that exact moment. They could revolt right now. In fact, it might be better to completely wipe out the Maitreya Cult now, while the Great Xia has yet to die out.”

“Why do you say ‘cold blood’ rather than ‘objectively’?”

“Because it’s ultimately the masses that suffer the most.”

Tang Wanzhuang was silent for a moment and said softly, “So you understand why I’m sticking around, don’t you? Even if things are bad now, it’s still better than utter chaos.”

Zhao Changhe sighed. “I do, but it’s futile. The tide of chaos is unstoppable. How much can a single person really do? It’s like a mantis trying to stop a chariot. While it might look brave, we all know that it will ultimately just be crushed by the chariot’s wheels.”

Tang Wanzhuang gazed steadily at the ink on the inkstone, then spoke after a long pause, “There always have to be such people.”

With that, she stood up and began to tidy the manuscript that he had just finished writing. “Your set of sword arts is already at the level of the Profound Mysteries. Can you still demonstrate it?”

“I can barely demonstrate its form, but it will lack power. I can still be the one to illustrate it instead,” Zhao Changhe replied. “Organizing a complete set of sword arts with my current level of strength is a bit too much. It might be impossible for me to do at the moment. I can’t understand anything more advanced with my current level of skill. This might be as far as I can go for now... I wonder if it’s enough for Sisi.”

“Even if it’s not enough, it’s still better than her clandestine learning from before. Besides, there’s endless potential and stable support if we keep doing it this way. It’s just that compared to getting the sword seal herself, the difference is quite significant...”

“The sword seal wasn’t hers to begin with,” Zhao Changhe said. “According to the standard practice when it comes to the allocation of items during an exploration, it should have been yours. She knows that, otherwise why would she have resorted to tricks?”

“When you gain something, you lose something else. Not many people can understand this clearly... Aren’t you going to talk to her yourself? It’s already been so many days since you last saw each other. I honestly don’t think there’s a need to be so petty. She’s been quite well-behaved lately.”

Other than teasing me about daring to kiss you.

Tang Wanzhuang barely suppressed a smirk. She really did not dare to do it. Why would she dare? “I’m not being petty. I’m doing my best, aren’t I? I just really can’t handle the following parts of the sword arts. We can see her together today and see if there’s anything else that she needs.”

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“I don’t need anything else,” Sisi said calmly. “If I got the sword seal, with my current knowledge of martial arts, I would not have been able to decipher such a systematic sword art. And if I were to hand it over to the elders in the tribe to decipher, I would lose my right to lead the tribe. This outcome is actually in my best interest. I’ve obtained what I wanted, and I will remain in control going forward.”

Zhao Changhe looked into her eyes. Once as charming as peach blossoms and as bright as stars, their gaze was now indistinct and unclear.

Her face still bore a smile, but it was no longer the artificial grin of a maid trying to please her master, nor the bright and expectant smile when she was listening to him tell a story. Now, it seemed...very formal.

Once, it had been Tang Wanzhuang who had handled things in a very official manner with him, but now it was her.

“Now that I’ve got this, it’s time for me to leave,” Sisi sighed. “I’ve been away for a long time, and I actually miss home... The divine land is not a good place, and each man is more detestable than the last.”

Zhao Changhe could not be bothered to argue with her. He was not sure of his own feelings at the moment, and he simply asked, “What do I do if I manage to decipher the more advanced sword arts later on? How do I pass it on to you?”

“I will come find you.” Sisi smiled slightly. “The long river flows unstoppably. I believe that as long as I return to the divine land, I’ll be able to hear of your whereabouts at any time.”

Zhao Changhe said, “And what about you? Do you and your tribe intend to stay out of the Tome of Troubled Times?”

“For now, yes. Otherwise, the Rankings of Heaven, Earth, and Man might experience some changes... But now that I’ve entered the divine land, the Tome of Troubled Times already knows about me. Maybe next time I’ll have a place on the rankings,” Sisi’s smile became somewhat sharp. “Zhao Changhe, you better not let me catch up to you...”

Zhao Changhe did not quite understand the significance of her words at the moment. “If you catch up, then so be it. There are plenty of people ahead of me...”

“Hah... I played the role of a servant for so long. I was taken advantage of because of my lack of strength. But if I were to gain power...” Sisi paused, her face then showing a hint of her former charm. “I wouldn’t mind having one more slave to wash my feet for me.”

After saying that, she turned around and left the tomb, “Don’t you just love to do official business? Well, this is what you get.”

Zhao Changhe watched her alluring figure depart, feeling that she was acting quite spoiled and arrogant...

She was like a child who would say they’re breaking off relations with you before walking away with a stiff expression.

Tang Wanzhuang, who was observing from the side, felt that Zhao Changhe himself was the same.

She could not help but feel that the aftermath of this breakup between two outstanding individuals from different forces might stir up even more storms.

Chapter 175: Take Care of Yourself, Only Then Can You Take Care of the World

Now that Sisi had left, it was also time for the tomb of the Sword Emperor to be sealed once again.

This was actually proposed by Zhao Changhe from the beginning. The tomb of the Sword Emperor could not be left exposed indefinitely. If someone were to accidentally stumble inside and end up awakening the Sword Emperor, that could lead to a catastrophe. Moreover, with the possibility of Maitreya launching an uprising and Gusu being right on the front lines, if he were to ever occupy it one day, there was no doubt that he could cause a calamity.

Tang Wanzhuang fully agreed with him. Thankfully, Sisi gave the Demon Suppression Bureau tremendous assistance with this matter, helping them look for the various spatial nodes that they could use to re-conceal it into a dimensional fragment.

The Demon Suppression Bureau had done similar things in the past, so they had some experience in this regard. Thanks to Sisi's familiarity with the restrictions in place in the tomb, they eliminated the need to meticulously survey everything. Today was the day that they were going to implement the plan.

Sisi left without even saying goodbye to Tang Wanzhuang because everything had already been settled. It seemed as if she had only been staying here to wait for Zhao Changhe's latest sword manual.

Or perhaps it was just to see him once more and throw out a harsh line about wanting to enslave him before finally leaving?

No one knew.

After their falling out a few days ago, Zhao Changhe did not feel anything particularly special in his heart. He thought her antics were within his expectations, and breaking off their relationship was a natural outcome. What feelings could he have?

He just felt slightly regretful that there was no one he could tease and flirt with as openly anymore, but getting to experience having Tang Wanzhuang stay by his side for a while was not any less satisfying, and that greatly helped him alleviate that regret.

However, when Sisi really left, Zhao Changhe occasionally recalled those fleeting moments when her eyes spoke so loudly. As he watched her leave, he felt the urge to speak out with some anger and resentment.

Thus he realized that he ultimately still had some regrets toward her.

Because she was also involved in looking for treasure and conflicts, he had somewhat hoped to see another Xia Chichi, but she was not Chichi after all.

Boom!

The tremors ahead of him awoke him from his thoughts.

On the edge of the pit left over where the sword pond had been, the Demon Suppression Bureau had assembled a hundred people. They had gradually carved out array diagrams and placed various objects of unknown use around the area over the past few days to construct a huge array.

Tang Wanzhuang stood at the core of the array with a divine sword in hand. She was suspended low in the air, her clothes fluttering.

She can really float, I wonder if she can actually fly if she goes all out, thought Zhao Changhe.

Not only was she floating in the air, but she was doing something that looked quite mystical to the viewers.

A soft light that resembled water spread around her, diffusing into the surroundings, linking up with the nodes of the array. Suddenly, massive energy erupted at the center, and amid the rumbling sound, light that resembled water filled the sky. The refracted light was in fact the effect of a distortion in space, and the passage suddenly seemed to twist and turn, its end no longer visible.

The pit was filled with this light that resembled water, to the extent that it became hard to tell whether it was just light or if it was actually water.

Tang Wanzhuang stood at the center, like Fairy Lingbo[1], or like a lotus that bloomed in the water and later transformed into a stunning nymph that left the mundane world.

Zhao Changhe believed that he would find it hard to forget this scene for many years to come. It was the most mystical and beautiful sight he had seen not only since he had transmigrated into this world, but in his entire life.

But when he looked around at the members of the Demon Suppression Bureau, he saw that none of them showed any looks of admiration. Instead, they all knelt down on one knee and solemnly said, "Bureau chief, please take care of your health."

Tang Wanzhuang had just stepped onto solid ground when she suddenly staggered, then clutched her chest and coughed violently. As she coughed, she clearly spat out some blood, staining her snow-white chin with droplets of crimson red.

Almost instinctively, Zhao Changhe rushed over to support her. “Are you alright? Did you overexert yourself?”

Tang Wanzhuang gasped for air and gently wiped the blood from her lips. She glanced down at where Zhao Changhe was supporting her arm, but decided not to bother about it. Instead, she just softly said, “Help me back.”

Her subordinates looked at each other in surprise, but none of them said anything. They quietly stood up and watched as Zhao Changhe helped Tang Wanzhuang slowly descend the hill.

The guqin-carrying maid was standing not too far away. She was still holding a pose as if she had wanted to go forward and assist as well, but at the moment, she could only stare blankly at Zhao Changhe as he helped the young miss back. She was unsure whether she should follow them or not.

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“Where’s your maid?” Only when he had already helped Tang Wanzhuang back to her waterside pavilion did Zhao Changhe realize that it might not be appropriate to enter a lady’s boudoir like this. He realized that it would be best to leave this to a maid. However, when he looked around, he did not see the guqin-carrying maid at all, nor did he even see any of the maids who usually worked in the pavilion.

“I don’t usually stay at home, and there are no maids specifically assigned to my pavilion. The ones you saw were all just temporarily assigned here. They don’t stay here,” Tang Wanzhuang said softly. “Just help me in, there’s no need to fuss. Why bother with appearances?”

Zhao Changhe thought about it and realized that there was indeed no need to be fussy, so he helped her into her bedroom.

...This was the first time in his life that he had entered a woman’s bedroom. Half an hour ago, he would never have imagined that the first boudoir he would enter would be Tang Wanzhuang’s...

As he smelled the fragrance in the room, he felt inexplicably nervous, and his face turned red unconsciously. He did not even dare to look around at the furnishings, and he just focused on quickly helping her sit on her bed. When he turned his head, he saw a teapot on the table right next to him and promptly poured a cup of tea, handing it to her. “Do you want some?”

Tang Wanzhuang shook her head slightly. “Drinking it will make me cough... Just resting is fine.”

“You really seem to be in horrible shape. Is there any medicine here that will help? I’ll go get it.”

“It’s no use...” Tang Wanzhuang said softly. “Don’t worry, it’s nothing grave... It’s just that I exerted myself a bit too much, causing disturbance to my lung meridian. I just need some rest.”

No wonder why even though she had been ranked higher than Maitreya before her breakthrough, she was still only evenly matched with Maitreya even after she had broken through. She simply could not afford to exert herself too much, or she might just end up coughing before the fight even started.

From what he had just witnessed, her full power was truly terrifying. His original idea for re-sealing the tomb had just been to plainly conceal it and place some illusions around it to make it harder to find. What she had actually done was on a completely different scale—she had folded and distorted space, truly isolating the tomb from the world once again.

Even though she did have the help of the array and the combined efforts of many people, her immense power could not be denied.

It was a pity that she could not act rashly, otherwise Zhao Changhe felt that she could have just gone and chopped off Maitreya’s head at her level. No wonder everyone is deterred by the person ranked first on the Ranking of Heaven. If Xia Longyuan were to go berserk, who could stop him? But then again, that wouldn’t solve anything. The nation is decaying. Relying on individual martial strength to kill the leaders of other forces would not address the root of the problem.

As these thoughts circulated in Zhao Changhe’s mind, he found himself not knowing what else to say for a moment, so he could only go for some platitudes. “Then you should rest more. I think that besides pushing yourself too far in your cultivation, you’ve also been overworked mentally. That must have also had an impact on your well-being.”

Tang Wanzhuang remained silent.

Of course it had an impact, and quite a significant one at that.

Zhao Changhe continued, “You told me to tone it down for a while and suggested I learn the four arts. Well, I think that you should take it easy yourself, too. You shouldn’t bother with the Maitreya Cult in Jiangnan for a while. Just listen to the guqin, read books, and have a good rest.”

Although Tang Wanzhuang knew that Zhao Changhe was accustomed to talking nonsense and flirting and that he wasn’t a child, she could not help but feel slightly amused by his words. She felt as if she was an adult looking at a child admonishing them. She chuckled and asked, “Listen to the guqin? Who’s going to be playing it? My maid or you? “

Zhao Changhe replied calmly, “If you want to hear me play the guqin, then I’ll play it for you. I hope you will be entertained.”

Tang Wanzhuang was taken aback for a moment and looked at him with a strange expression.

Zhao Changhe remained expressionless. “You always say that others are like children, but I think you’re the one acting like a child right now. You should take care of yourself first. Only then can you start paying attention to others, and then you can take care of the world. Just look at those in the Demon Suppression Bureau. I honestly think that if the Great Xia did not have you, barely any of them would still be willing to serve it.”

Tang Wanzhuang suddenly said, “And what about you?”

“I don’t plan to serve the Great Xia, but as long as you’re here, I at least won’t oppose it. So, live well, first seat.”

Tang Wanzhuang’s beautiful eyes lingered on his face for a while before she gently coughed and whispered, “Then... play the guqin for me.”

Zhao Changhe was stunned for a moment. At this moment, the guqin-carrying maid peeked in from the doorway.

Without even turning her head, as if having sensed her presence, Tang Wanzhuang asked, “Have you fixed the string?”

“...Yeah, but...” The guqin-carrying maid cautiously glanced at Zhao Changhe. “Won’t he just break it again if he were to play it... Maybe I should just play for you instead, young miss. I’ve gotten quite good at it!”

Tang Wanzhuang smiled slightly. “Even if the strings break, it’s still music. What’s the point of worrying about good or bad? Let him play it.”