

## T. Times 76

### Chapter 76: Cui Clan Controversy

Zhao Changhe happily chowed down on his food, having broken through to the fourth layer of the Profound Gate earlier than expected. He could not be bothered with whether Cui Wenjing was just faking it, or if the ninth man on the Ranking of Heaven really was such a child prodigy. For all I know, he could have reached the eighth layer in five months. Who freakin' cares?

The saber he remembered from his dreams was much too heavy, and Zhao Changhe did not have enough strength to wield it. However, having broken through to the fourth layer of the Profound Gate for external arts, his physical power was nothing like before. If he could smoothly wield a steel saber weighing ten jin, then it would not be impossible for him to use one weighing twenty or even thirty jin. The only difference should be how long I can use it.

Zhao Changhe wondered if he should return and test out that broad saber that was four or five chi long...but after seeing the young lady beside him rubbing her eyes, he thought, Forget it, she's already chosen this saber for me. It won't look good if I say I don't want it. We'll leave things as they are for now.

How could he know that she had actually long since planned on giving him the Great Xia Dragon Bird? With that thought occupying her mind, she had not even introduced the name of the random saber she had given him.

They were being considerate to each other, so much so that their gazes when they looked at each other both had an indescribable sourness.

Even Cui Yuanyong could feel the acidity the moment he entered the room and felt that he had arrived at the wrong time. Although, now that he thought of it, it actually was just about the right time for his sister to find a man.

With that in mind, he, as her elder brother, was not even engaged... Before he left Qinghe last year, the clan was preparing to discuss a marriage arrangement with the Wang clan. Having to go back and forth was extremely troublesome. Even now, the matter was still being discussed, and before it was settled, his sister had found a man...

"Second brother!" Cui Yuanyang realized he had arrived and happily waved at him.

“Eh? Brother Cui, you’re here?” Zhao Changhe wiped his mouth before asking curiously, “Where were you all this time? For a matter this serious, I’m quite surprised we never bumped into each other at all.”

Cui Yuanyong laughed, casually sat where his father had sat and poured wine for his guest on behalf of his father. “When I brought my sister to tail you and let her see firsthand the dangers of the jianghu

, I could tell that, sooner or later, there would be some change in how she saw you.”

Cui Yuanyang blushed, “Second brother!”

Cui Yuanyong did not concern himself with her and smiled at Zhao Changhe. “Brother Zhao, there is no need to question me like that. Do you really think I’m the traitor?”

Zhao Changhe smiled. “So perceptive. I was only asking. I thought we were friends, you know.”

“I knew that there would be people who think I’m the culprit. After all, my sister ran away under my supervision. If her running off to your mountain stronghold was also considered running away, then that means I let her run off twice. For an idiot to be so able to slip away—wouldn’t it seem like I was letting her do it intentionally?” Cui Yuanyong sipped his wine and sighed. “Even if I wasn’t the traitor, someone would use this against me. They’d say that I wasn’t prudent enough and my future looked bleak.”

Cui Yuanyang felt a little sorry. She was the one who put her brother in such a tough situation.

From her perspective, the two times she ran away had nothing to do with her second brother. If she ran to the mountain stronghold in the middle of the night, what was her brother supposed to do? Was he supposed to monitor her in his sleep? If he could, then this would really be a problem.

Her running off to find Zhao Changhe had even less to do with Cui Yuanyong—she was being escorted by a subordinate and found an excuse to sneak off. How was her second brother supposed to know she would do that?

Even though it seemed like Cui Yuanyong was wrongly accused, he could not wash away his “mistake” of not being meticulous enough. In fact, these could not be considered unjust accusations. He himself did not have much experience in the jianghu, so it was actually true that he had not thought things through thoroughly.

It was precisely this reason that made it even more unlikely that Cui Yuanyong intentionally let her run off. He held a stable position in the clan and had no reason to do such a thing; his reputation would plummet.

Cui Yuanyong sighed and said, "As for these past few days, I retraced our original path to try and find you two. I even found the city you guys stayed in. I never guessed that you'd travel through the mountains, so I had no way of bumping into you. I don't mean to be petty, but if you two slipped back into the city, hid for a while, and waited for me to find you, maybe things wouldn't have gotten so out of hand..."

At this moment, Zhao Changhe's face twitched.

He thought carefully for a moment and came to the conclusion that his interlocutor was actually right. What the hell, who said that there were only two options back then? This was obviously a third option, and it might have been the easy way out. I actually didn't think of it...

Cui Yuanyang sneered and pulled Zhao Changhe's hand, gently telling him, "Don't mind him."

Zhao Changhe finally nodded. "Fine. Why defend yourself like this? I was only joking."

"Because all this is really disgusting! So many people wish to force the blame on me. It feels like I've swallowed a fly. Now that the main people affected by this incident are before me, how could I not say a few things!?" Cui Yuanyong could only ask his sister, "In just a bit, there will be another trial. I'll have to plead my case. Will you be there to listen?"

Cui Yuanyang thought for a moment and nodded. "I'll go with Big Brother Zhao. He can come, can't he?"

Cui Yuanyong said, "He's one of the involved parties. We would obviously require him to provide some explanations, but his situation is special. Father hasn't said anything about this, and the rest of us can't just summon him in front of the clan to be put on trial like a criminal. If you guys are willing to participate in the hearing, that would be for the best."

Zhao Changhe indeed wanted to go. He felt that there was something fishy about this and was interested in getting to the bottom of all this. What's more, the culprit wanted to kill Yangyang. He

shivered thinking about how someone who wanted her life would hang around her on the daily if they were not caught. It was paramount that the culprit be sniffed out and cut down.

Cui Yuanyang, on her part, really did not wish to know who the culprit was. Whoever it was, it would be hard for her to accept. However, she knew that this matter needed to be settled sooner or later.

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Evening. At Cui Clan Ancestral Hall.

Zhao Changhe and Cui Yuanyang stood behind Cui Wenjing and stuck out their heads to look at the situation here.

At the center of the room, Cui Yuanyong stood shoulder to shoulder with another youth that looked incredibly similar to him. Both of them had exasperated expressions, but the other young man looked a little more terrible; his complexion was horrible. Zhao Changhe thought that he must have been a child that has never had to endure hardship before. He had become wretched and dispirited just from having been locked in the dungeon for two days.

He was Cui Yuanyang's third brother, Cui Yuancheng—the one under the most suspicion.

The elders of the Cui Clan were all gathered here. Even the Commandery Administrator of Qinghe, Cui Wenjue, had hurried here. It was not about a youngster pestering some random girl on the street; a member of the clan had attempted to assassinate another member. This was an exceedingly grave issue. All the clan members felt it difficult to face.

Among them were a few who fixed their gazes on Zhao Changhe with a fierce might that made him go numb from head to toe.

Obviously, he was far from being able to tell their cultivation levels, but when people at the eighth or ninth layer of the Profound Gate or even the Profound Mysteries looked at him, he could naturally feel an indescribable oppression.

However, Zhao Changhe did not care and just grinned. Cui Wenjing didn't even show off like this to me, so what're you people doing this for?

An elder spoke slowly, "I'm sure everyone here is clear about this matter. I shall emphasize, for the last time, why we have shifted the focus onto Yuancheng. There are only so many ways to distribute bounties to criminals. We've already flipped Qinghe on its back searching all over the place and have determined that the culprit has spread their bounty with the help of merchants from the merchant hall belonging to salt smugglers operating in this area. We caught their hallmaster who confessed that it was Yuancheng who issued the bounty. There is a clear trail."

Everyone nodded. This was easy to investigate. One needed a channel to disseminate the bounty; they also needed a way to hand down the reward for it. It was too easy for the Cui Clan to find out all this information. There was basically no way to cover this up.

But the problem was...

"After he confessed, he bit on some poison he hid in the gaps of his teeth beforehand and committed suicide. This means that there is still the possibility that Yuancheng has been framed. Thus, people have begun suspecting that Yuanyong was the one that did it. There are many who hold this view, including Wenjue."

Cui Wenjue nodded and bowed. "Correct. Yuanyong, do not blame your uncle for being suspicious. Anyone in my position would be."

Cui Yuanyong replied calmly, "As for my suspicion, I can clear it with but a single point: everyone knows that I was still on the way home when my sister ran off. I couldn't have had time to set everything up, unless I did it beforehand. But her decision to run off was an impulsive one. Not even she knew she would run off on her own. How could I have set up the bounty before all this transpired? Uncle, do you really take me for an idiot?"

Many people nodded, including Zhao Changhe and Cui Yuanyang. Cui Yuanyang was even clearer about the fact that her decision to run off at the time was made on impulse. How could he have predicted it, and set up everything beforehand?

However, if this was the case, then there was trouble. Because the one who confessed killed himself, there were doubts about Cui Yuancheng being the killer; it was also not very possible for Cui Yuanyong to set up everything beforehand. Had the trail gone cold?

The Cui Clan proclaimed themselves hegemony of Qinghe, and yet, they could not find out who was the culprit behind Cui Yuanyang's attempted assassination!

Countless gazes landed on Cui Wenjing, who had not uttered a word. They told him with their eyes, Let's use the Qinghe Sword.

Zhao Changhe furrowed his brow.

He did not know anything about the characteristics of the Qinghe Sword, but this current turn of events made him feel that something was terribly off. Is the culprit's real goal the Qinghe Sword?

## Chapter 77: Dragon Bird of Great Xia

The supposed information they required from Zhao Changhe and Cui Yuanyang seemed like it would indeed be of no use here. It was no wonder no one had come to ask the two of them for the details of their journey. The crux of the case no longer had anything to do with them. Nothing would come out of more detailed questioning.

Now the most simple method for solving the case was to bring out the Qinghe Sword. Whoever's heart was most fiendish, the Qinghe Sword would desire to cut down. Would not the matter be settled?

Cui Wenjing, who had not said anything so far, slowly said, "I agree that we should use the Qinghe Sword. However, I must first point out a problem."

Everyone bowed. "Please enlighten us, master."

Cui Wenjing looked around and said coldly, "All of the suspicion has now been placed on Yuanyong and Yuancheng, as if this absolves the other brothers and elders of the clan of their suspicion. I don't see why that would be the case. Just who planted this notion in your heads and misled you idiots?"

Everyone was taken aback. There were quite a few people flushed with anger.

Of course, there were many people who had done this intentionally, both publicly and privately. If the two eldest sons of the main family were suspects, did this not mean that other people had a chance?

With so many of these voices controlling the rhythm of the discussion, a lot of people had been misled into thinking that no one else could be suspicious.

Cui Wenjing said coldly, “This was a good plan. Just how many people in the world dare to claim that they’ve never done anything wrong? That their hearts have never harbored treachery? If only Yuanyong and Yuancheng undergo the divine sword’s test, the sword will not say anything; it will only choose to kill one of them. As for why the sword actually killed him, who will ever know? My son would die in vain, and even in death, he’d still be wrongly accused!”

The elder who explained the current situation just now nodded. “Wenjing is right. Not even I thought of that.”

Cui Wenjing said, “That’s why we can take out the Qinghe Sword. But everyone must undergo the test. Whoever’s heart is most treacherous will be the culprit!”

Cui Wenjue could not help but say, “Brother, is this really appropriate... As you’ve said just now, the Qinghe Sword may not judge one’s benevolence or treachery based on this incident...”

Cui Wenjing cast him a sidelong glance. Seeing that he looked like he was sitting on pins and needles, Cui Wenjing laughed. “Right now, the greatest treachery in the culprit’s heart is with regard to this incident; it’ll be most apparent to the divine sword. If it can only pick between Yuanyong and Yuancheng, the blade will kill the one it considers more evil even if both of them are innocent—it’d be pointless. Only if everyone is tested will everything be uncovered. You govern the commandery. Can you not even recognize this?”

Cui Wenjue could only reply, “You’re right, brother. But the copper pavilion is too small. We can only conduct the tests in batches. How are we supposed to find out who’s the culprit like this?”

“I can control the sword myself. I’ll unleash it after everyone has touched it.” Cui Wenjing could not be bothered saying anything else. He looked around and said indifferently, “Is everyone willing to be tested?”

Cui Yuanyong and Cui Yuancheng both shouted, “Yes!”

The others present could only agree. Right now, who could say they were unwilling? Would this not make it evident that they had ulterior motives to hide?

“Alright.” Cui Wenjing grinned and stood up. “Right now, most of the nephews aren’t present. All of you can return and bring them here. Gather outside the copper pavilion. Yuanyang, Changhe, you

two follow me. You are the victims here and you must be able to see how things happen from the inside.”

After saying this, Cui Wenjing left the Cui Clan Ancestral Hall without a word. Cui Yuanyang and Zhao Changhe looked at each other and followed along.

The copper pavilion was indeed small, about the size of a regular room. It would be crowded with only a few dozen people. After all, it was made of pure copper. For a building this size to be made out of pure copper, the Cui Clan had to fork out who knew how much money, and not even a behemoth like them could treat their gold like it was mud.

It was completely dark inside, but everyone had the ability to see in the dark to some extent and could clearly see that there were two pedestals, one on the left and one on the right, holding a saber and a sword respectively.

Before they could even register what they were looking at, both Zhao Changhe and Cui Yuanyang felt a shiver at the same time. They felt an extremely fierce killing intent envelop them. It was grand and imposing—immeasurable.

The divine sword of Qinghe was indeed not any regular sword. It was no wonder it had to be kept guarded in a copper pavilion. Anywhere else and that ever-present killing intent would seep out.

Who’d be able to live near this thing? Fuck... I always thought this was a world with low-level martial arts. These high-fantasy elements are really annoying, Zhao Changhe muttered to himself in his heart. The next moment, he stopped looking at the divine sword. Instead, his eyes, burning with incomparable passion, were fixed onto the saber.

He did not even need to pull out the saber from its scabbard and test it. If the treasured saber Xia Longyuan conferred upon the Cui Clan is around the same level as this divine sword, even if it’s a bit lower, it’ll still be top-grade stuff among top-grade stuff. Who knows what kind of amazing abilities it has.

What’s more, its form and weight both appealed to him. For the first time, Zhao Changhe felt what it was like to yearn for something even in his dreams. It was a pity. The rumors had many people believe he was a lecher. In reality, however, his desire for any and all the women he had met could not compare to how much he desired this saber!



Cui Wenjing stood in front of the sword's pedestal, with his hands clasped with his back, and looked at the sword, lost in thought. Cui Yuanyang looked at her father, then at Zhao Changhe. She suddenly understood something.

What father told me before this... He wants me to take this chance to let Zhao Changhe secretly test out the saber. She did not have to wrack her brains thinking about how to lie to the guards and steal the saber. That was a grand feat she could not accomplish.

No wonder Big Brother Zhao called him an old fox. She had never seen this crafty side of her father before... Eh, he's this impressive...

She tugged at Zhao Changhe's clothes as he looked on excitedly and tiptoed to his ear. She whispered, "Touch the saber. You might be rejected. If that happens, we'll forget about it. If it accepts you, we'll talk about it again."

Zhao Changhe was dumbstruck and looked at Cui Wenjing. "Your father..."

"Don't worry. He doesn't know."

"..." Zhao Changhe looked at Cui Wenjing. Indeed, he was completely preoccupied looking at the sword and paid no attention to them. Zhao Changhe knew this and carefully approached the saber, reaching his hand out to lightly hold its hilt.

Cui Yuanyang carefully watched him. The moment Zhao Changhe held the hilt, a shock went through his entire person. Her heart felt like it was stuck in her throat. She was afraid he was going to be flung back at any moment.

However, after that initial shock, there was no more sound. Zhao Changhe shut his eyes and seemed to be comprehending something.

There was an ecstatic expression on Cui Yuanyang's face as she looked at her father. Cui Wenjing was still immersed with the sword, but the corners of his mouth curved up and he slowly said, "It's fine. Let him comprehend it. You go outside and see if they've arrived. Let your granduncles come inside and stand as witnesses. The youths will come in one by one to be tested."

Cui Yuanyang ran outside to excitedly pass on her father's instructions. Soon, a few elders of high standing and prestige entered to stand as witnesses. They were all taken aback when they saw Zhao

Changhe quietly standing inside with his hands holding the saber. They looked at Cui Wenjing, who calmly grasped the sword and stood up. “Our guest is simply taking a look at the saber. Don’t be stingy. Bring them in.”

The elders were all concerned with other things and did not say anything. The test to sniff out the traitor had begun.

The first to enter and be tested was Cui Yuancheng, the most suspicious person at present. Without a word, he walked up to his father. “How does this work? Do I just touch it or must I let it cut me?”

He was eager to undergo the test and urgently wanted to wipe away his suspicion.

Cui Wenjing extended the sword to him. “Just touch it however you wish and wherever you want. The divine blade has a spirit. It’ll remember your qi and compare it with the rest.”

Cui Yuancheng touched the blade again and again as if he wanted to tell the divine sword “remember me!” The elders standing by the side all could not help but chuckle. With this display, the suspicion against him had decreased significantly.

Cui Yuanyong was the same. He was more steady than his younger brother. He entered the room, cupped his fists, and bowed to everyone present before touching the sword. He also looked like he was reluctant to let go of it.

Cui Yuanyang let out a sigh of relief. She knew it could not have been her two older brothers!

It was fine as long as neither of them were the culprit. She did not feel it was alarming if it was anybody else and stopped thinking about it before surreptitiously looking at her boyfriend. He’s been like that for a while. What’s happening?

Zhao Changhe did not get drawn into a mysterious illusion like he expected. He merely experienced the saber’s intent.

Initially, he had been rejected, and he felt the saber transmitting him a kind of shock. The next moment, he found himself holding the saber with his internal force. As it came into contact with the hilt, the saber suddenly cheered up, as if it was an ecstatic bird in flight.

This was not some saber spirit at work, but the intent of a divine weapon that had its own intelligence, a thirst for blood, and desire to go to the battlefield. It was not willing to remain enshrined within this small pavilion where no light reached and where weapons were not needed.

That being the case, not just anyone was qualified to wield it.

Ordinary mortals dare to touch Us?! [1]

The brilliant one is the emperor. The vast mountain and rivers are his to command; where his saber points, thousands charge to battle.

The dragon is the Azure Dragon. As it rises in the east, its heart shines like the sun; the trees and grasses grow in spring, and midsummer arrives.

The bird is the Vermillion Bird. It suppresses the far south as raging flames consume the sky; the nine heavens are incinerated and life conceals itself within the destruction.

The Azure Dragon is the master of life; the Vermillion Bird watches over death. Life and death secretly take each others' place like the sun and moon.

Thus, yin and yang converge, forging the great Xia.

This was the Dragon Bird of the Great Xia!

Zhao Changhe suddenly felt that the killing intent they had experienced just now was not from the Qinghe Sword, but from Dragon Bird... Could it be that there's actually nothing special about the Qinghe Sword?

If there was absolutely nothing special about the Qinghe Sword, then was his father-in-law's test actually a bluff? Was he trying to hide the fact that there was a problem with the Qinghe Sword from clever people?

As he thought this, he felt a hint of killing intent directed his way. Consequently, the Azure Dragon reared its head, and the Vermillion Bird focused its gaze.

Scoundrel, from whence do you come... You dare confront the might of heaven?

Zhao Changhe opened his eyes and cast a sidelong glance. There was a youth from the Cui Clan he did not recognize. He was currently being tested by the Qinghe Sword. However, his eyes gazed in Zhao Changhe's direction. There was killing intent hidden within them that quickly vanished.

Dragon Bird suddenly shook violently. Who dares show Us irreverence? Not even nine deaths shall be enough to atone for this crime!

Everyone present looked over in shock. The youth, overwhelmed with horror, also retreated half a step.

The saber in Zhao Changhe's hand kept trembling as he fixed his gaze upon the young man and sneered. "Are you mad that I stopped your plans to harm Yangyang? Is that why you have killing intent toward me?"

The young man continued retreating. "What are you blathering on about?!"

A dragon roared and a vermillion bird shrieked as the saber clamored.

Zhao Changhe did not answer him. With the broad saber in hand, he had already burst forth. He crossed the small space between them and slashed at his head!

Zhao Changhe did not care if the Qinghe Blade was of any use. In any case, Dragon Bird had judged the man's killing intent. Did a man like Zhao Changhe need any more evidence? Since you want to kill me, I'll kill you first! Am I supposed to wait for your father to swoop in and protect you!?

## Chapter 78: Scattering the Gods and Buddhas

Zhao Changhe's attack could really be said to be as fast as lightning, as mighty as the claw of a dragon or tiger. Unfortunately, even this incredible attack was not enough to take the young man's life.

The Cui Clan elders standing as witnesses were not incompetent. Every one of them had at least reached the ninth layer of the Profound Gate. How could they let a youth murder one of their clan members before them?

Ping!

Countless fists hit the side of the saber at the same time.

Even with so many people striking the blade simultaneously, they were actually the ones to be flung back. None of them expected the force of the attack to be this ridiculous; it was more absurd than an adult hitting a child.

It was the rejection of the Dragon Bird of the Great Xia!

You mortals dare to touch Us!?

The elders, overwhelmed with shock, stumbled backward. There was even someone who was sent crashing into one of the walls of the copper pavilion by the force of the backlash.

However, the collective force of the backlash was still able to alter the trajectory of the attack. The saber just barely streaked across the lower hem of the young man's clothes. He instinctively retreated, his body was drenched in cold sweat, having just avoided having his head lopped off.

“Zhao Changhe!” The young man, flustered and exasperated, leaped outside the pavilion and pointed his halberd at Zhao Changhe, sharply rebuking him. “Could it be that you were conspiring with my uncle!? To casually frame and murder someone and upheave the entirety of Qinghe!?”

“What happened?” Countless people outside rushed forth and surrounded him. “Why has a fight suddenly broken out?”

Cui Wenjue waded through the crowd and helped up the youth. He faced the pavilion and said coldly, “What is the meaning of this, brother? Are we letting the Qinghe sword weed out traitors, or are we watching this Dragon Bird flaunt its might?”

The young man was Cui Wenjue's son, Cui Yuansheng.

Cui Wenjing stopped the elders that were hit back in the temple from surrounding Zhao Changhe and looked at him with a strange expression before shifting his gaze to his daughter, who looked like she was at a loss as to what to do.

He had not expected things to go in this direction. Though he had really intended to let Zhao Changhe secretly test his compatibility with the Dragon Bird of the Great Xia, he had not intended for him to participate in this matter of the Cui Clan. He also could not predict that Dragon Bird would show off its power. Oh well, not that it's a problem. The outcome of this little accident is actually better than the original plan I had.

Cui Wenjing calmly brought out the sword and indifferently said, "I must apologize to everyone here. I have deceived you all."

The witnesses' voices rose up in a clamor.

No small number of elders frowned at his statement. "Wenjing, there is no harm in explaining to us what you mean."

Cui Wenjing replied, "In the end, the sword is not a living thing. If we rely on it to judge our treachery, there will always be the possibility that it decides to kill someone because of something unrelated. We are all family here. How can I bear to part with any of you?"

An elder clicked his tongue in annoyance. "Then what is the point of having everyone tested, Wenjing? For your amusement?"

"It's dark in the pavilion; the scabbard of the sword is also black. The younger generation's cultivations are still low, so none of them can tell that I actually smeared a little something on the scabbard. If they had nothing to hide, they would naturally touch it and stain their hands. If they had something to hide, then perhaps they would have used their internal force to guard their hands. It would look like they touched the sword, but in reality, they would not have come into contact with it at all." Cui Wenjing grinned. "This is my actual method for revealing the culprit. Well, maybe I should say this is 'the' method. I didn't come up with it, I just read about it in a historical record."

Fuck... Zhao Changhe was shocked. Many people knew the story, even him. But he had never thought of going about things this way.

Now, Zhao Changhe had a hunch as to why Cui Wenjing had gone about the test in such a tedious way. It was because he knew that the other party's goal was to reveal whatever problem there was

with the Qinghe Sword. From the start, Cui Wenjing had never intended to rely on the fantasy-like method he had initially explained to figure out who the traitor was. And with the actual method he had used, even if there was a problem with the sword, he would be able to cover it up without much trouble. Nobody would suspect anything.

In reality, Cui Wenjing wanted to bring out the Qinghe Sword to judge everyone so that he could create the scene that was playing out before them and openly prove to those that harbored doubts that the Qinghe Sword worked just fine. I'm not afraid of bringing it out before all of you and have everyone touch it. Everyone can stop questioning if there is a problem with the Qinghe Sword.

This was the main motive driving this series of actions. Revealing the culprit was only a nice bonus.

He's so impressive, so how can his daughter be so dumb...and cute?

The whispers among the clan members slowly settled down. Everyone knew what Cui Wenjing meant. His plan was indeed a very good one.

Cui Wenjing chuckled and looked around. "I'm sure all of you understand, so this should go smoothly. Everyone, reveal your hand and show us your palms."

Cui Yuanyong and Cui Yuancheng immediately raised their hands. Everyone looked over; indeed, their palms were a little black. No one knew what they were stained with.

The other youths that had also been tested looked at each other and showed their hands in succession. All of them were similarly stained. Some were of a darker shade, while others were lighter, but all in all, it was clear they had touched the sword.

Cui Wenjing's gaze finally landed on Cui Yuansheng who stood behind Cui Wenjue and smiled. "Nephew, it's your turn."

Cui Yuansheng's face went pale and hid his hands behind his back. He even pulled back to his father.

The expression in everyone's eyes changed. With this alone, they could tell that there were a lot of problems.

Cui Yuansheng stuttered as he shouted, “I—I didn’t manage to touch the sword before Zhao Changhe came at me with his saber. They did this on purpose. On purpose! They didn’t let me touch the sword!”

Cui Wenjing laughed. The elders standing behind him all shook their heads. When they went to deflect Zhao Changhe’s attack and save Cui Yuansheng, they were only doing it to save one of their nephews; it did not mean they were blindly helping him. Another elder sighed. “All of us elders saw it clearly. Yuansheng, you definitely touched the blade. In fact, you even touched it a good few times. But it turns out you covered your hands in your internal force and never actually came into contact with the sword.”

The truth had come to light.

Cui Wenjue had an ugly look on his face as he slowly said, “Brother, though your plan seems reasonable, there are still some problems with it. Yuansheng has always been rather mischievous from a young age. He’s oppressed the common people before. Perhaps he felt guilty and did not dare receive the judgment of the divine sword. There’s nothing strange about this. How can you arbitrarily judge that he is the one who tried to kill Yuanyang from this?”

Cui Wenjing smiled. “You’re right. But Yuansheng has no relation to Zhao Changhe, nor any grudges or grievances, so why did he direct his killing intent at him and provoke Dragon Bird to attack him?”

Cui Yuansheng straightened his back and said, “I cannot accept that a man like him is the 88th Hidden Dragon. And even if we put that aside, I cannot accept that a bandit is delusional enough to want to marry into our illustrious family. Is that not okay!? There are so many other people that see him unfavorably, so what does it matter if I despise him?”

Everyone was clear about this situation, and the young man’s words made sense. If Cui Yuansheng wanted to defend himself, it would be hard to refute him. After all, there was no solid evidence to be had unless they launched a rigorous investigation. Moreover, Cui Wenjue was no ordinary person. He was the number two man in the Cui Clan, the Commandery Administrator of Qinghe; had connections everywhere. There was no telling how many people in the clan were on his side. His connections with those on the outside and even the imperial court were troublesome. If he really wanted to defend his son, how could this matter be resolved cleanly?

Everyone looked at Cui Wenjing and waited for him to speak, wondering if he was about to decisively start a civil war within the clan.



Cui Wenjing grinned and, to their surprise, returned with a question. “Changhe, you are one of the victims here. What do you think?”

“Hmph. The shitty affairs of powerful families are really troublesome.” A sarcastic voice echoed from within the copper pavilion. Zhao Changhe strode outside with the broad saber on his shoulder. “If you ask me, I don’t care why this person has a problem with me. He directed his killing intent at me. Am I supposed to just let it go?”

Cui Yuansheng smiled grimly. “So what?”

“As for who the traitor in the Cui Clan is, I’m not the one investigating so I cannot answer. However, now that you wish to kill me, this has become a personal matter between us! If you’re a man, then stop hiding behind your father’s ass and face me in a duel! The Cui Clan is an old martial arts family. Don’t tell me you don’t even have the courage to fight me?”

Cui Yuansheng’s eyes were filled with hatred as he grinned coldly. “How can you be considered a great man if you face me with the divine strength of Dragon Bird? What are you without that saber? Am I supposed to face you as a trivial bandit? The 88th Hidden Dragon? What a joke!”

“Hahaha, is that so?” Zhao Changhe laughed heartily. With a clang, he thrust Dragon Bird into the ground and took out the saber at his waist, the one that Cui Yuanyang had picked out for him. “If I use Dragon Bird to slay you, I’ll only defile such a treasured saber! Come! Let me see how the son of a powerful clan compares to a bandit!”

The situation looked like it was about to turn into a farce. The Cui Clan wanted to capture a traitor. How did it end up with two youths wanting to battle it out? Everyone looked at Cui Wenjing. He laughed. “Changhe is one of the people implicated. It’s not like he’s unrelated to the matter at hand. Anyway, this won’t take long. Everyone can think of this as a break and watch. What do you think, Wenjue?”

Cui Wenjue had a blank expression. “Since this is what you want, brother, don’t blame my son for making Yangyang cry if, by chance, he kills her little boyfriend.”

Cui Yuanyang looked at her uncle, then tilted her head to look at Cui Yuansheng. She did not say anything.

Cui Yuansheng was already at the fourth layer of the Profound Gate, while Zhao Changhe had only broken through to the fourth layer two hours ago. The martial arts that Cui Yuansheng learned were

all top-notch martial arts from the Cui Clan. In theory, Zhao Changhe had no way of beating him without using Dragon Bird. However, Cui Yuanyang looked at Cui Yuansheng as if he was already a dead man.

She had seen everyone's strength in battle. They were absolutely not on the same level. Before Big Brother Zhao broke through, he could have killed Cui Yuansheng in a one-on-one with a bit of effort. Now that he had broken through, it would be like slaughtering a chicken.

The crowd made a space in the center by themselves. Zhao Changhe calmly stood by Dragon Bird as Cui Yuansheng pulled out his sword—his expression was incomparably fierce.

If this bandit wasn't here, how could things have come to this!

The more he thought about it, the angrier he got, until he roared and attacked first.

Light shone off his sword, like moonlight reflecting off the Qing river, as his blade slithered about and pierced toward Zhao Changhe as if it was threading through mountains.

“How can the mountains block the stream? In the end, the river still flows eastward[1],” an elder said in a low voice. “Yuansheng's sword is like the clouds and mists—undergoing myriad changes. He's already obtained a deep...”

Before he could say “understanding,” his expression suddenly changed.

Clang!

Zhao Changhe unsheathed his saber.

The moment he drew it, it was already by Cui Yuansheng's forehead. It was as if Cui Yuansheng, with his sword that seemed to coil through mountains, had presented his head to be lopped off.

“What a fast saber!”

I don't give a damn about your myriad changes or whatever mountains blocking streams. If there's a mountain in the path of my saber, then the mountain will make way for it!

Clang!

Cui Yuansheng quickly switched to a hard block, but the impact sent him reeling back in a pitiful state, and his sword was almost hacked into twain.

The sound of the wind rose before him. From all sides, people shouted, “Yuansheng, careful!”

As they began shouting, Cui Wenjue’s had already rushed forward to try and save him.

Cui Wenjing had prepared for this and smiled as he blocked the other man with his sword. “Wenjue, why are you so startled by the quibbling of the youngsters?”

Cui Yuansheng looked up as he staggered back.

It was as if the imposing form of a great demon was descending from up high; in its hands was a sanguine moon, and its eyes glowed blood-red.

Scattering the Gods and Buddhas!

Cui Yuansheng would have been fine had he not looked at his opponent, but after seeing this, immense dread gripped his heart. His feet turned to jelly, and he felt that even if he were an actual god or a buddha, he would not be able to block this demonic saber capable of deicide!

He heard someone bellow into his ear, “When you tried to kill Yuanyang, did you think this day would come!?”

Cui Yuansheng, terror-stricken, shouted, “But she didn’t die! Spare me!”

No one made a sound.

Cui Wenjue’s face was ashen.

The sanguine moon dissipated and the glare of Zhao Changhe’s saber faded.

The cold point of his blade stopped right at Cui Yuansheng's neck. Zhao Changhe smile was very much unlike a smile as he jeered, "So the son of a powerful family is nothing more than this. The Tome of Troubled Times doesn't even care that I beat you."

## Chapter 79: The Dust Has Settled

Many from the Cui Clan thought that Zhao Changhe was simply acting impulsively. He was nothing more than a stupid, boorish bandit, and he was stirring up this whole farce without giving a damn about where he was.

It was only now that they realized the truth: from the moment Zhao Changhe challenged Cui Yuansheng, he had already intended to use the intimidating effect of his saber art to scare this spineless, pampered youngster of the Cui Clan into confessing.

Of course, Cui Wenjing, who loved his daughter, had already accustomed himself to this farce.

Since you people lack solid evidence, here you go!

Zhao Changhe was not a stupid bandit at all. It was just that his crude and boorish appearance was too deceptive, especially that scar on his face. If someone said that he gave himself that scar, everyone here would believe them.

Everyone sized up Cui Wenjing and Zhao Changhe as they looked at each other with gleeful expressions. In their hearts, they thought, Fuck, both of you are foxes, it's just that one's old and the other young. Forget about becoming in-laws, you guys should just get married.

They then looked at Cui Yuanyang who stood by the side, dumbstruck with her mouth agape. She had no idea what just happened. It was like she was an outsider.

But why did Cui Wenjue do this? For the position of family head?

If that was his objective, then he had no need to kill a baby like Cui Yuanyang. Even if he succeeded and managed to smear shit all over Cui Yuanyong and Cui Yuancheng's names, it wouldn't do anything to shake Cui Wenjing! What's more, with the Qinghe Sword, it's much easier for the Cui Clan to solve this case compared to other families. What were you thinking?

Cui Wenjing asked unhurriedly, “Second brother, what were you thinking? No matter how you look at it, this is a stupid thing to do.”

“Heh.” Since Cui Wenjing did not give him face, Cui Wenjue simply said frankly, “If you lost the Qinghe Sword, could you really have the gall to remain as family head?”

Zhao Changhe thought to himself, So this guy really was aiming for the Qinghe Sword from the start... He intentionally set up this practically unsolvable sororicide case so that the clan members’ first reaction would be to bring out the Qinghe Sword. Then, he could use this pretext to see through the truth of the Qinghe Sword.

He should have been able to see that there were some problems with the Qinghe Sword. Once he revealed that it was not working before everyone, Cui Wenjing would be forced to take responsibility and step down. It didn’t matter if he was number nine under heaven—powerful families have their succession rules.

For this, he made no small amount of preparation. First, he took hold of the discourse and had all the suspicion pinned on Cui Yuanyong and Cui Yuancheng. If Cui Wenjing rigidly defended both of them and prolonged the case, even if this couldn’t shake his position, during following discussions on succession, Cui Wenjue would have something to use against them...

If Cui Wenjing saw through this and brought to light the fact that everyone was actually under suspicion, then it was inevitable that he had to bring out the Qinghe Sword; it would be the only way to investigate everyone. And if he did that, the problems with the Qinghe Sword would be exposed.

In the end, Cui Wenjing played it by the book. From the start, he did not protect his own son and sent him to the dungeons. During this period, he observed everything with a cool eye. Whoever made the most noise was the one who wanted to control the flow of things. Of course Cui Wenjing was aware of that. As for employing the method used in the classic tale of touching the sword, Cui Wenjing could nearly be certain that even if his son had really touched the sword, Cui Wenjing had a way of removing the stain on his hand! How could it be difficult for the ninth man on the Ranking of Heaven to cheat a boy?

Even if Zhao Changhe was not present, Cui Wenjing would have been able to settle the matter. The only difference was that he would not have any solid evidence against Cui Wenjue and his son. It was possible that the clan would be split into two factions and argue to no end.

Now, however, there was nothing to argue about.

Cui Wenjing chuckled. "I've lost the Qinghe Sword? What nonsense are you spouting?"

As he said this, he waved his hand.

The Qinghe Sword left his grip and flew back to the copper pavilion. It was like it was held by an invisible hand that steadily returned it to its pedestal in the pavilion. What was especially wondrous was that as it returned, it seemed to affect the weather. The clouds looked like they were pulled apart by the sword, as if they were curtains, and revealed the lucent moon hanging amidst the sea of silver in the vast firmament.

Many of the elders said with trembling voices, "How is that sword not divine? Wenjue, you were blinded by greed and slandered your brother; you made up lies about the divine sword. Truly, you deserve ten thousand deaths for your crime!"

Cui Wenjue sneered and did not dispute them.

Cui Wenjing was merely performing tricks; that was all a display of his strength as the number nine man under heaven rather than the splendor of the divine sword. However, with this "definite evidence," he could no longer ask Cui Wenjing to show everyone the mysterious power of the blade. Cui Wenjing had every right to refuse him because, after all, the divine sword was not meant to entertain others with parlor tricks. Who would be worthy of that?

The matter was settled.

He only looked at Cui Wenjing calmly and said, "Brother, you know why things ended up like this."

Cui Wenjing replied indifferently, "Well, one thing I do know is that it doesn't matter whether you believe something has happened to the divine blade. If you were really acting in the interests of the clan, you wouldn't have carried out any of this. Why do you feel the need to keep flapping your mouth?"

Cui Wenjue nodded. "Whatever you say, brother."

Cui Wenjing said slowly, "Cui Wenjue and Cui Yuansheng, you have harmed the family by framing one of its sons and conspiring against the clan head. According to the clan rules, I hereby deprive

you of all official positions. You two shall be held in the sky prison to await your punishment. Cui Wenjue, you and everyone in your family shall be exiled from the clan and banished to the north. As for the position of administrator of Qinghe commandery, I shall choose someone worthy and recommend him to His Majesty.”

Cui Wenjue’s face was ashen as he sighed. He did not say a word.

Zhao Changhe: “...”

He’s the administrator of an entire commandery, a powerful official in the border regions. Are you allowed to just swap him out for someone else like this? Can you act first and then report later without the emperor’s approval?

Is Qinghe your own home?

“Our clan isn’t really that afraid of that ruler.”

Zhao Changhe came to know, for the first time, how terrifying powerful families were. He was not sure what it was like during times of prosperity, but during troubled times, a powerful clan like this was the hegemon of their own territory. At any time, they could participate in the struggle for the empire. Why would they need to care about the emperor’s face?

Since this was the case, for the Dragon Bird of the Great Xia to be placed here...

Cui Wenjing glanced at Zhao Changhe and smiled. “I’ve let our guest here see something embarrassing, Yangyang.”

Cui Yuanyang had been lost in thought. At this moment, it was like she woke up from a dream and grunted in response.

“Bring our guest to my study. I still have some loose ends to tie up here. I’ll be over shortly. I have some things to tell him.”

Cui Yuanyang’s heart was pounding.

This attitude was not something that her father would show if he was unsure whether Zhao Changhe could become his son-in-law. Cui Wenjing's study was not a place that anyone could enter willy-nilly.

Who was the previous guest that entered it?

Wang Daoning from the Wang Clan of Langya!

She really wanted to run back and drag those big-mouthed maids here to look with their very own eyes. You people think this bandit can't enter my room. Now look whose room he's entering!

\*

Cui Wenjing's study looked about the same as a regular scholar's. Of course, that was just because Zhao Changhe did not know how expensive all the tools and equipment in this room were. Whatever. As long as it makes him look refined.

The biggest difference was that, over here, Cui Yuanyang appeared to have some manners. Her cute and dumb appearance was nowhere to be found and she was actually quietly making some tea. Zhao Changhe found her unusually solemn and graceful bearing quite interesting.

"What're you looking at?" Cui Yuanyang did not even dare to speak too loudly and said in a soft, annoyed voice, "This is the etiquette one shows to a guest. Do you really believe I'm not the least bit educated in etiquette? I've learned all of this before!"

"Yes yes yes, you've learned it before." Zhao Changhe almost broke out in laughter. "What tea is this?"

"Biluochun."[1]

"..."

Whenever he heard something in this world having the same name as something in the real world, Zhao Changhe felt like his immersion was broken.



Moreover, this was actually a tea ceremony. Modern people had no way of making money through roasting tea leaves or performing tea ceremonies anymore.

However, Zhao Changhe knew that everything would be uncovered shortly. Had he not entered the study precisely to talk about these things?

“I really never thought that it would be my second uncle.” Cui Yuanyang sighed. “He’s a very important person in the clan. With his position alone, he’s not someone that can just be replaced. He also wields a lot of power. Father will really have a huge headache this time.”

Zhao Changhe said, “He’s probably prepared to deal with all this. If your uncle wasn’t at that rank, he wouldn’t have been qualified to vie for the position of clan head. Your father must have known from the start that the one behind all this couldn’t be some bastard from a branch family. Otherwise, why do you think everyone was so easily misled to suspect only your brother? If one’s rank is too low, they wouldn’t be able to gain anything even if they stir things up.”

Cui Yuanyang said softly, “But I still don’t understand what exactly is their reason for doing all of this...”

Zhao Changhe replied, “If my guess is correct, your father is really a true royalist. He’s on His Majesty’s side. Your second uncle might have been enticed by some traitor and led astray. His goal may not be the Cui Clan but the Great Xia itself.”

Laughter came from outside the room. “I have some reservations now. I thought you were a natural-born man of the jianghu and should march through the jianghu full of spirit. Now that I hear these words, I feel that you have a lot of potential to enter politics and mix around with the imperial court.”

Zhao Changhe did not turn his head. “Stop it. With how insignificant I am, if I really involved myself with the imperial court, I’d be devoured by one of you sly foxes sooner or later.”

Cui Wenjing sat opposite him and happily drank the tea his daughter served. He said unhurriedly, “So you intend to remain in the jianghu and avoid touching anything related to the suspicions over your identity? But you should at least confront it.”

Zhao Changhe asked curiously, “Confront what?”

Cui Wenjing leisurely sipped his tea. “Do you want the Dragon Bird of the Great Xia?”

A sparkle instantly appeared in Zhao Changhe’s eyes.

Can I really take it?

Chapter 80: Sabers and Swords with Spirits

“If my guess is correct...” Zhao Changhe asked, “Then the saber is used to replace the effects of the Qinghe Sword. You can’t let someone just take it away. Correct?”

Cui Yuanyang’s hands trembled as she made more tea. She looked at her father with an astonished expression. Could it be that second uncle’s accusations were true?

Has the Qinghe Sword really stopped working, and all along, we’ve been relying on the Dragon Bird of the Great Xia to scare people?

Cui Wenjing did not appear to care too much and casually revealed, “You’re correct. But my brother got some things wrong. The Qinghe Sword hasn’t been lost. It’s still the same blade. However, its mysterious powers have faded away. Today, it’s just a perfectly-crafted blade that can cut through metal like dirt. It’s a great sword nonetheless, but you can’t really call it a divine sword. If someone said that it was a fake, it would be hard to refute them.”

Zhao Changhe said, “Since the Qinghe Sword has not been lost, its symbolic meaning still remains. It may no longer possess its mysterious powers, but this was, from the beginning, secondary. On the contrary, this allows you to use the sword whenever and...however you wish.”

Cui Wenjing clapped and smiled. “Its symbolic meaning has always been more important. However, not everyone thinks like you. If it really turned out that the Qinghe Sword was powerless, the members of the Cui Clan would not be able to accept it.”

Other people aside, even Cui Yuanyang found it hard to accept this. She asked incredulously, “When did this...all start...?”

“This was inevitable. In fact, a few decades ago, when I marched through the jianghu with the Qinghe Sword in hand, there were already signs that it was losing its power. In the past few years, it has completely faded away.” Cui Wenjing said indifferently, “The divine sword had its own spirit,

but...for what purpose did it exist? To bring peace to Qinghe and purge the land of scoundrels. In the hands of people like us, how could such a spirit be preserved? It's good enough that the sword didn't kill us in the first place. Why would it submit to us? As things were...its power just faded away."

Cui Yuanyang was dumbstruck, but she soon calmed down and said in a low voice, "I guess that should be the case."

"If I, Cui Wenjing, admit that I'm not worthy of wielding the Qinghe Sword, how many in the clan can really proclaim themselves to be worthy? None of them have ever thought about why the spirit of the divine sword has faded away. Instead, they wish to use the sword for the very evil purposes it so despised: a bargaining chip to vie for political power. If the sword's spirit was still here, it'd be weeping!"

Cui Yuanyang felt a little sad. She pursed her lips and said nothing.

Cui Wenjing did not bring up the Qinghe Sword again and changed the topic to the Dragon Bird of the Great Xia. "Dragon Bird was the saber His Majesty used when he was conquering the world. It's exceedingly fierce and overbearing. It cannot bear to be disobeyed. Some people have even likened its temper to that of an impudent child. Once it's provoked, it's like it stomps around angrily. This is just a characteristic of the saber itself. If it wasn't like this, it'd have no way of maintaining such an overbearing battle intent."

Zhao Changhe nodded. From what he had experienced, this was indeed true. He felt that the sword's response was like that of an eighth grader. However, this was normal for saber intent. It was not some extremely intelligent thing that could calm down and consider things reasonably.

"His Majesty found out about the problem with the Qinghe Sword a few years back and conferred this saber upon me. On the surface, it looks like it suppresses treachery. At the very least, when put beside the Qinghe Sword, it's difficult to tell from which weapon this intent is emanating from, so it could act as a suitable substitute." Cui Wenjing smiled. "No one ever thought about why His Majesty chose to bestow us a saber when our Cui Clan uses swords. Of course, there was a very good reason."

From this, Zhao Changhe gathered that Cui Wenjing was a royalist. It was obvious Xia Longyuan had given him the saber to assist him. "But since this is the case, you still need the saber, senior. I can't take it away."

Cui Wenjing laughed. “Do you think that anyone will dare to have thoughts about the Qinghe sword in the short-term after today’s incident? There’s no harm in letting you have it for the time being. And that’s not even the most important point. More importantly, I feel that Dragon Bird longs for battle. If it remains in that small room to collect dust, sooner or later, it’ll lose its own spirit. Now that would be a waste.”

Zhao Changhe sighed. “Indeed. I feel that it’s impatient. It really can’t bear to remain here.”

“Since it has accepted you, it belongs to you by fate. Why do you need to be so polite?”

“Senior, it’s not that I’m being polite. I really like the saber, but I feel like I have no way of carrying it around...” Zhao Changhe felt that this was a pain in the ass. “Its killing intent is too fierceful. Anyone can feel it from a mile away and any person with half a brain will know that it’s a treasure. If I bring it around with my current strength, it’ll be like a child walking through the city center carrying gold. For me, it’ll be nothing more than a source of trouble. I won’t be able to move around freely. If I were to commission something like a copper scabbard, it’d be too heavy and inconvenient to bring around. And once I unsheathe it, it’ll rouse the greed of others all the same. It’s just too troublesome.”

“Your idea about the whole thing is incredibly skewed.” Cui Wenjing broke out into laughter. “If you want to conceal the saber’s killing intent, there are many ways to do it. You can simply smear something on it. Why would you need a copper pavilion for that? The copper pavilion is to nurture its spirit! A jade pavilion would be even more effective at that, but it’s too expensive and easily damaged. No one does it like that, but there are many people who use jade boxes.”

Zhao Changhe “I’m an ignorant bandit. There won’t be any issues, then.”

Cui Yuanyang, who had been well-behaved as she sat down quietly making tea for her father and boyfriend, finally could not help but giggle.

“It’ll be pretty easy for you to take it away. Even the sharpness and luster of the saber can be covered up by applying some simple rust marks. It’ll look like any other worn-out saber. This really isn’t anything difficult.” Cui Wenjing said leisurely, “However, you can’t just rely on it. Right now, its killing intent is flowing all over the place because it doesn’t obey you. Once you become its master, it’ll naturally be obedient. It can even warn you of others’ killing intent. That’s the goal you want to reach.”

Zhao Changhe was greatly interested. “How do I get it to accept me as its master?”

“As you are now, the problem is pretty simple. You’re weak. Even though you’re compatible with it, at most, it only sees you as a companion. There’s still a long way to go before it accepts you as its master.” Cui Wenjing raised his cup and blew on his tea. Unperturbed, he continued, “Keep working hard.”

So you have no idea how much I’ll have to train until I’m at the level where I can be its master. Why do you need to put on that shitty facade? Zhao Changhe did not know if he should laugh or cry. “Why do I have the feeling that you really want me to take the saber away? Is it really so that the saber stops collecting dust?”

Cui Wenjing replied, “I won’t lie to you, I also wish to use this opportunity to send a message to certain people, particularly Tang Wanzhuang and His Majesty. What His Majesty is thinking, I haven’t a clue. Not. One. Clue. Once he knows that you’re marching through the jianghu with Dragon Bird, though...he should have some reaction.”

Zhao Changhe suddenly thought of the blind woman’s words.

“Perhaps if you compared them with the Cui Clan, the latter would conform more to the thoughts of ordinary men.”

Indeed. Their thoughts remain with the imperial court, the jianghu, the inheritance of the clan. No matter how crafty they are, they’ll never be able to scheme themselves out of this limited scope.

“Since that’s the case, then I’ve been disrespectful.” Zhao Changhe finally stopped being modest. “I really like the saber.”

Cui Wenjing laughed. “I’ve already ordered people to work on it a little. For the time being, enjoy your tea.”

Cui Yuanyang’s joy was practically about to overflow as she kept up her well-behaved image. Finally, Zhao Changhe had gained something after walking through this thorny road. This is what he deserves after drenching himself in blood fighting bravely for his life. People shouldn’t be pointing out this and that to him, or telling him that he’s gunning for something beyond what he can get.

Furthermore, this is definitely a saber that he'll be able to use forever. It's a real treasured saber that's very hard to damage. At the very least, it's more durable than that wine gourd of his! When he uses that saber in the future, he'll think of me while that wine gourd might break at any time. Hehe.

She very happily sipped her tea and poured both her father and boyfriend another cup.

From the moment that Cui Yuanyang had her little heart struck by Zhao Changhe, she always thought that he would have a falling out with her father; she thought the latter would do all he could to separate them, like the plot of a folktale. In all fairness, her father had indeed thought of letting Zhao Changhe die to settle things at the start. She felt that was the direction in which things were going, tragedy was looming upon them...

...But as it turned out, Zhao Changhe and her father actually got along ridiculously well, to the point where people thought that they should just become a couple. Her father had never seemed so pleasant to the eye of this young lady in her rebellious phase. Perhaps I should give him a back massage later?

"Senior." Zhao Changhe drank some tea and raised another topic. "I've been meaning to find out more about a certain thing, but I never found an appropriate opportunity to do so. Can I ask you about it right now?"

Cui Wenjing answered indifferently, "If you call me senior, then no."

Zhao Changhe was dumbstruck for a moment. After a while, he scratched his head and asked, "Father?"

Cui Wenjing, to his surprise, actually blushed slightly.

Cui Yuanyang's small face was even redder. The moisture in her eyes was about to overflow.

Cui Wenjing pretended not to see it and leisurely sipped his tea. "Alright. Ask away."

"About this era...actually, more about the previous era. What did it look like and how did it collapse? Your family is powerful and it has a long history. I believe you should know a thing or two about it."