

Tome of Troubled Times

Chapter 5: Murderer, Zhao Changhe!

If Yue Hongling could hear the words “Leave none of these dogs alive!” she would have probably regretted bringing the youth she had just saved here. It was akin to sending him into a tiger’s den.

Yue Hongling had too little information. She only knew that a raid was coming. What motives and goals the Blood God Cult had in conducting this attack was a mystery to her.

For one, the Luo Family Village was a great regional power with alleged ties to the Imperial Clan. In addition, besides the village lord, the village also had other masters. Meanwhile, the Blood God Cult was not particularly powerful—their leader was rumored to be at the ninth layer of the Profound Gate. As a whole, though they were stronger than the Luo Family Village, if they truly wanted to wipe out the village, they had to come out in full force.

The Blood God Cult was not active in this area. It was as Village Lord Luo said, they had nothing to do with each other at all. Common sense also told Zhao Changhe that the great Xia Dynasty could not possibly remain idle while the cult made such big moves, moving their entire force across thousands of li. The only other possibility was that they only sent a few masters to assassinate a certain enemy, or to snatch away some weapon or secret tomes. Such activities were common in the *jianghu*.

Under such a situation, Yue Hongling believed that she could be of use to the Luo family. And even if she was absent, the village was probably going to be fine as long as they were informed, so she left.

It had never occurred to her that the Luo Family Village would be wiped out.

Indeed, the Blood God Cult had not come out in full force. They had only sent a few masters. However, their strength was frankly terrifying.

Zhao Changhe stood outside the entrance to the storeroom and looked at the blazing village from afar. He could vaguely make out frightful screams and furious shouts in the distance. “Venerable Vermillion Bird? It’s the Four Idols Cult, not the Blood God Cult!”

“Huh? How do you know about the Blood God Cult?” A female voice, both seductive and languid, could faintly be heard. “Cult Leader Xue... Care to explain?”

No explanation came. Zhao Changhe had no idea if he was too far away and could not listen to what was said, or if there really was no explanation. From this simple

conversation, he could infer that some of the invaders were indeed from the Blood God Cult. Even their cult leader had come. However, they were only the vanguard. The *real* boss was this so-called Four Idols Cult. *A venerable from the Four Idols Cult? What's that?*

He did not know how strong they were, but listening to Village Lord Luo's voice tremble with fear, he could just about guess.

"The—The Luo Family has done nothing to offend the Four Idols Cult. Yet, Venerable Vermillion Bird...you are one of the few masters in this world...why...?"

"Do you really think we'd stir up such tumult because of some transgression? Village Lord Luo, you are surprisingly naive" The woman seemed to yawn as the sounds of forceful attacks became more and more intense. Village Lord Luo suddenly let out a pained wail.

Cries came from all directions. "You witch! You dare!"

Following this, there was a series of explosions. The woman's laughter traveled far into the distance. A group of masters from the Luo family surrounded her, but she was still able to injure the Luo Village Lord with ease.

"What are you people still standing around for?" the woman asked lazily as sounds of killing began to spread out together with the fires.

Zhao Changhe ran away. This was not the time to enjoy a good show—these people really were here to wipe everyone out. *It's not gonna matter to them that I just arrived here today!*

He swiftly vacated the premises, not forgetting to grab a saber from the courtyard before heading straight for the exit. On the way, he saw Luo Qi run over with unmatched vigor and open the door before him. Both knew what the other was thinking as their eyes met, and they rushed out together.

The next moment, they both stopped.

From the fires ahead, the young master of the Luo family, Luo Zhenwu, stepped back in a panic with his bodyguards, under the threat of a few black-clothed men drenched in blood. Luo Zhenwu grinned sinisterly.

"Dog of the Luo family, where're you going?"

Venerable Vermillion Bird handled the masters of the Luo family, while the Blood God Cult was responsible for purging the rest of the village. Luo Zhenwu was obviously their target...

As a result, Luo Zhenwu came running over here, bringing along the rest of them. The road ahead was blocked.

How the fuck did the card I drew represent a safe location? From the Zhao House to the Luo Family Village, nowhere was safe! Fuck you! I want a refund!

One of the black-clothed men leapt toward Luo Zhenwu like an eagle in flight. Under the light of the fires, Zhao Changhe could see his blood-red palms strike at Luo Zhenwu's heart from behind. He could clearly tell that this was some kind of vicious demonic art, the sort that would instantly kill a person if they were hit.

Luo Zhenwu quickly grabbed one of his bodyguards and pushed him forward. A blood-curdling scream echoed, and the bodyguard went limp. He died a violent death.

The disciple of the Blood God Cult stared incredulously and chuckled. "How virtuous."

Luo Zhenwu could not afford to spare a thought for this comment and took the chance to continue running in the direction of Zhao Changhe and Luo Qi. With a flick of the disciple's hand, however, a cold flash swept through the air. Luo Zhenwu hurriedly tried to dodge but was unsuccessful. He screamed as he fell to the ground clutching his thigh.

"Did you really break through to the third layer of the Profound Gate?" The disciple was unable to contain his laughter as he raised his saber.

At the same time, there came the gentle sound of a sword. It was initially so slight as to be unheard, like a flowing creek. But somehow, it suddenly became like a rushing wave, loud enough to shake the nine heavens and cause the listener's eardrums to almost burst.

The startled disciple raised his head and saw the blurry image of a sword descend from the heavens like falling moonlight. It was like a flowing river in spring. The raging fires appeared to grow gentler with its appearance.

The disciple was unmoved by this romantic sword intent and hurriedly retreated a few meters. His underlings were not as lucky and they were all slain in an instant, dying with tender smiles on their faces.

Zhao Changhe was stunned.

A woman had arrived under the moonlight, her clothes fluttering in the wind. It was as if a fairy had descended from a palace on the moon.

Her back was facing the light. Zhao Changhe could not make out her face, but he could tell that she was not Yue Hongling.

Are all the women in this world this strong?

“Though the name of the Spring Water Sword Art is a little crude, it’s still rather beautiful.” Venerable Vermillion Bird had just made her way over. From far away, numerous black projectiles descended upon the woman as the reverend waved her hand.

The woman managed to avoid them, but then, a shocking sight unfolded in front of her beautiful eyes. *Wait...those aren't rocks.... That's the head of Village Lord Luo and...*

Luo Zhenwu dragged his injured leg along as he crawled behind the woman in terror.

Venerable Vermillion Bird laughed lazily as she landed. “First Seat Tang, to think that you actually came tonight! It looks like the Luo Family Village really has.... Hehe. It’s a pity you arrived too late. The old dog of the Luo family is dead. First Seat Tang, we both know that you’re not in the best condition, so why are you even here? No one will think ill of you if you just turn back now.”

Zhao Changhe discreetly sized up Venerable Vermillion Bird. She was also clothed in red, but her attire looked more like ceremonial robes than Yue Hongling’s warrior *jinzhuang*, and it was embroidered with strange patterns.

She wore a mask that obscured half of her face, so Zhao Changhe could not tell how old she was. The mask had the form of a phoenix. Its beak covered her nose and exposed her incredibly attractive bright-red lips. Under the night sky, her eyes, unblocked by the mask, were full of contempt.

The woman called First Seat Tang had her back to Zhao Changhe and wore a thick sable fur coat. She covered her mouth as she lightly coughed. Indeed, she seemed a bit sickly. After coughing for a while, she said slowly, “This is the great Xia.”

As the two women faced each other, Zhao Changhe could hear footsteps approaching. The rest of the disciples of the Blood God Cult had arrived and surrounded them. One of them, a large man in bloody clothes, reported, “The entirety of the Luo family, except for Luo Zhenwu, has been executed.”

“Good work, Cult Leader Xue” Venerable Vermillion Bird laughed. “First Seat Tang, I don’t know why you rushed over all alone, but you haven’t recovered. You won’t be able to protect that cripple by yourself. How truly unfortunate that you came to this place.”

First Seat Tang did not respond, merely raising her sword to her opponent. In an instant, they locked blades.

Zhao Changhe guessed that First Seat Tang held some government position, given her title. He did not know why she had come alone, but it was possible that a large contingent of troops was about to arrive. Also, Venerable Vermillion Bird seemed quite

apprehensive of her. As long as she could stall for time, perhaps it would be enough for the people sent by the authorities to save Luo Zhenwu.

Looking at Luo Zhenwu limp on the ground with his injured leg, Zhao Changhe felt a little sorry for him.

Suddenly, a head stuck out from behind the courtyard entrance and shouted, "Who says she's alone? As long as First Seat Tang can keep them at bay, we can carry the young master away!"

Luo Qi stood by the side dumbstruck.

Everyone was taken aback. Venerable Vermillion Bird and the Blood God Cult disciples glared coldly at the person who spoke. Even First Seat Tang took a glance at him.

Zhao Changhe had no time to waste looking at First Seat Tang's beautiful eyes. He strode forward and supported Luo Zhenwu. "Young master, I'll carry you!"

"Leave him there." A red flash shot out from Venerable Vermillion Bird's hand.

Cling!

First Seat Tang blocked the attack without a word.

Luo Zhenwu felt that under the current circumstances, there was the possibility of escape, and so happily leaned against Zhao Changhe and stood up. "Good, good. I knew you were an honest man from the sta— *Argh...!*"

Before he had finished speaking, a saber stabbed through his heart.

Luo Zhenwu's eyes widened as he looked at the saber. His gaze followed the saber's blade toward the hand which held it, finally landing on the wielder.

Under the flames, Zhao Changhe's eyes had none of the innocence from before. On the contrary, they were filled with absolute resentment.

What's so amazing about the third layer of the Profound Gate? It's not like it gives you steel skin!

Zhao Changhe knew that Luo Zhenwu had received some training. Had he simply walked up to him, blade in hand, killing him would have just been a pipe dream. Only when his guard was lowered could Zhao Changhe succeed.

Both Venerable Vermillion Bird and First Seat Tang stopped in place, utterly dumbfounded.

Zhao Changhe sighed. "This is my show of dedication to joining the cult... Reverend, you won't let me be taken away by these government officials, will you?"

"Correct." Venerable Vermillion Bird's gaze focused on Zhao Changhe as she dashed to protect him.

First Seat Tang said indifferently, "What use is there in taking in someone who betrays their own master?"

"Betraying my own master?" Zhao Changhe cackled. "He was a *real fucking master*, alright!"

As he spoke, Zhao Changhe drove the saber even deeper into Luo Zhenwu. "When you slaughtered the Zhao House, did you imagine that this day would come?"

Luo Zhenwu chuckled. There was understanding and regret in his eyes. He could not speak and soon drew his last breath.

First Seat Tang looked at Zhao Changhe quietly. As she thought of the village she had seen on the way here, she managed to piece together everything. She sighed and said softly, "You have no idea of the gravity of what just happened. You... You will regret this."

Zhao Changhe drew out the saber, shouting in response, "What's done is done. There is no use for regret!"

"Enough." First Seat Tang shook her head and asked, "Do you dare tell me your name?"

"Zhao Changhe, the Manslayer!"