

I Just Won't Play By The Book

Chapter 21: I Won't Hear of It! I Won't Hear of It! I Won't Hear of It!

[Chosen quest completed. Reward: Mind +1]

“Excuse me, Sir! (Excuse me, Sir!) (Excuse me, Sir!)”

Just as the tone from the system prompt ended, the voices of the three Sisters of the Yu family addressing him in unison immediately rang out in Jiang Beiran's ears.

“You may speak first,” Jiang Beiran said as he once again pointed to Sister Yu standing in the middle.

Yu Guizhui pointed toward the room, then spread her arms wide and asked, “Aren't inn rooms supposed to be this big? I've never seen a room like this one before.”

Jiang Beiran sighed inwardly after hearing this, then looked at the other two Yu Sisters and asked, “What about you two, do you two have the same question in mind?”

The two Yu Sisters immediately shook their heads.

So, Jiang Beiran pointed to Sister Yu on the left again and said, “Then you may ask first.”

“Is this your method of punishing us? But we didn't do anything wrong, did we?” she asked.

“What about you?” Jiang Beiran looked at the last Sister Yu.

“What are we supposed to do without a dressing table in the room? Can we ask the attendant serving us just now to bring us one?”

Having understood the three Sisters' concerns, Jiang Beiran nodded and said, “Let's enter the room first. I'll give you a good crash course after we go inside.”

The group walked into the room. Jiang Beiran closed the door then looked at the five junior Sisters and said, "From now on you can all speak freely. There's no need to shout 'excuse me' in advance. However, before that, I would like to take the liberty to ask a question. Have you all ever traveled alone?"

After hearing his question, Liu Zijin answered first, saying, "Father doesn't let me go out alone. Usually, he would have my eldest brother accompany me when I go out, and he has Mr. Lu accompany me when my eldest brother is not around."

"And Mr. Lu is?" Jiang Beiran asked curiously.

"He's Father's disciple, and he's very competent," she replied.

"Alright, I see." Then he looked at the three Sisters of the Yu family and asked, "What about you all?"

"We usually travel in the carriage prepared by Housekeeper Zhou, and are accompanied by... about thirty to fifty people, I think, all of whom are hired by Father."

3

Jiang Beiran really wanted to slap himself on the face after listening to their answers. The reason why he had not asked any of this back in the sect before they left was because too much casual conversation would affect his efforts to establish authority.

At the moment, after having traveled together all this way, the junior Sisters, not counting Fang Qiuyao, had gotten used to obeying orders. So now, Jiang Beiran needed to properly acquire an understanding of how spoiled the rich young ladies in the team he was leading were.

1

'No wonder Law Protector Yu had to personally pay me a visit to ask me to serve as the Iron Seal for these junior Sisters. The difficulty level of this task is really too outrageous,' he thought to himself.

1

They were a group of rich, spoiled young ladies who had never experienced the cruelty of society. Furthermore, each of them was beautiful. Had it been another Iron Seal here, they would probably have been chewed down to the bone by those 'starving wolves' down the mountain very soon after leaving the sect.

When the three Yu Sisters had finished answering, Jiang Beiran looked at Fang Qiuyao again. However, she immediately snorted coldly and turned her head, acting like she had nothing to say to him.

Jiang Beiran paid her no mind. He then looked at Liu Zijin again and asked, "Then is it possible that your father would send some skilled warriors to go undercover and protect you from nearby?"

"Probably not." Liu Zijin shook her head. "I didn't tell my father that I would be descending the mountain for my trial today."

"It's the same for us. Father doesn't know that we have descended the mountain for our trial today," Yu Guishui jumped in to answer from beside him.

"Mhmm..." Jiang Beiran nodded. "So, it means that, other than the time you have spent in the Sect of Returning Hearts, people accompany you whenever you go out, right?"

"Yes." The four junior Sisters nodded their heads at the same time.

'Goodness gracious! This Law Protector Yu really trusts me too much, doesn't she!?'

1

Jiang Beiran thought to himself that no matter which one of the five rich young ladies landed in trouble, the Sect of Returning Hearts would probably inevitably be held accountable. To be fair, the Sect of Returning Hearts was not very afraid of such incidents as it had plenty of assets and human capital. After all, when taking disciples in, it had all been laid out in black and white that if one was worried that one's child might be endangered, one should not send them to the Sect.

However, having said that, if the family really was to kick up a fuss, it would certainly still stir up a considerable storm. As their mentor, Yu Manwen would also naturally be blamed, and she would inevitably be punished by the Sect.

However, he had already accepted the task, so thinking about all of this wouldn't help anything. After getting the answers he needed, Jiang Beiran took out the lotus leaf packet from the storage ring. He put it on the table and said, "Let's eat the buns first."

The three Sisters of the Yu family, who had been anticipating this moment for a long time, cheered simultaneously. As soon as Jiang Beiran unwrapped the lotus leaf, they all walked up to the table and picked out the pea buns they each liked.

Meanwhile, Liu Zijin pulled out a pink purse and asked, "Brother, how much was the bun? I'll pay you."

Jiang Beiran was a little surprised to hear that, as he hadn't expected this spoiled young lady to still have such social awareness. Then, he waved his hand and said, "It's just a few buns. I'll treat you all."

"In that case, thank you very much, Brother." Only then did Liu Zijin walk forward and take a pea bun.

The three Sisters of the Yu family also shouted in unison after coming to a slow realization, "Many thanks, Brother."

"No problem." Jiang Beiran picked up a pea bun as well and took a bite after he finished speaking.

'Mhm! It's pleasantly soft and sweet. The taste is sweeter and more unique than bean paste. It seems that osmanthus has been added as well? Nice seasoning. I'll try it next time, too.'

The three Sisters of the Yu family, who were standing next to him, didn't think about it much. They just kept saying that it was delicious.

Liu Zijin opened her mouth slightly and took a small bite. Her face immediately showed an expression of pleasant surprise, then she looked at Fang Qiuyao and said, "Qiuyao, this is really delicious. Quick, have a bite."

But Fang Qiuyao stubbornly shifted her gaze away and muttered, "I'm not going to eat any buns purchased by this wimpy senior Brother."

"Qiuyao!" Liu Zijin yelled and tugged at Fang Qiuyao's sleeves.

At this time, Jiang Beiran, who had already consumed the whole pea bun, said, "Sister Fang, it's true that we should be chivalrous and uphold righteousness. However, doing so is not as simple as you pulling out your sword and chasing those scoundrels away."

"Hmph! Isn't upholding righteousness and being chivalrous just unsheathing your weapon to help defend the abused when you see injustice?" Fang Qiuyao said in defiance.

2

"Then let me ask you; do you know why the incident happened and who the three scoundrels were operating under? And then there's the question of how you could leave unscathed after injuring or killing them on someone else's turf? Furthermore, there is..."

"You are just talking nonsense! Actually, you are just afraid of trouble, are you not!? If I had killed them, I would naturally have been the one to bear the consequences. So, if others were to seek retribution, they are free to come at me, Fang Qiuyao!"

Jiang Beiran smiled faintly after hearing this and continued, saying, "Among the practitioners of cultivation, there are chivalrous people with benevolent hearts like you, Sister Fang. However, there has also never been a shortage of evil individuals who oppress the people and act as accomplices to the bigger powers behind the scene. If the scoundrels go back and seek out a Mystic or even a Mystic Master to exact revenge, what would you do then?"

"I... At worst, I will fight with them with my life!" As she said this, Fang Qiuyao was obviously already somewhat sheepish.

"Then have you ever thought about properly investigating who the boss behind those three scoundrels is before you act, or taking this town's..."

"I won't hear of it! I won't hear of it! I won't hear of it!" Fang Qiuyao covered her ears and shook her head vehemently.

6

Seeing her reaction, all Jiang Beiran could do was shrug. He knew that Fang Qiuyao had actually begun to somewhat understand the issue already, but

she couldn't bring herself to admit her mistake.. So, at the moment, it was best to give her some time to slowly digest it.

Chapter 22: The Largest Ticking Time Bomb

After explaining to the three Yu Sisters that this was the size for Mortal Grade rooms and that the inn did not provide services such as sending dressing tables to one's doorstep, as well as other common-sense issues, Jiang Beiran finally got the five Sisters settled in their rooms. Although this time around, all five of them were 100 percent reluctant.

“Bang.”

Closing the door of his room, Jiang Beiran felt slightly relieved. These five rich young ladies had even less common sense than he had when he had just crossed over to this world. In their world, inns provided silk quilts, Purple Forest Grass incense, and baths filled with flower petals, as well as other services.

This made Jiang Beiran very curious about what kind of inns they used to stay in because as far as he knew, even the Heaven Grade rooms of some county inns wouldn't offer these luxuries.

'Is it indeed true that you can do whatever you want if you have the money?' he thought to himself.

3

After resting for a while, Jiang Beiran took off the Suit of Blending In and changed into a set of inconspicuous coarse clothing. He then left the inn. It was rare for him to descend the mountain, so of course he had to go out to trigger a few more options.

...

“Eh! Master Wu, you're here. What do you want today?” a voice called.

“Get me two pieces of fatty meat, finely chopped. The finer the better,” someone answered.

“Okay! Just watch.”

Passing by a meat stall, Jiang Beiran, who heard the conversation, watched as the butcher finely chopped two pieces of good foreleg meat. The butcher then carefully pulled out two sheets of bamboo and linen paper and wrapped them up separately, then tied them up with string.

“Master Wu, your meat is ready. It’s 20 pence in total,” the butcher said.

The burly man whom the meat stall owner called Master Wu took the meat and casually said, “As usual, put it down on my account first. At the end of the month, I’ll pay everything together.”

After hearing this, the meat stall owner’s face fell and he said in a nervous, flattering tone, “Master Wu... Since last month, you...”

“Eh!?”

The meat stall boss had only finished half of his sentence when the burly man referred to as Master Wu glared at him fiercely.

“What, you don’t trust me, Wu Kui?” Master Wu asked.

The courage that the meat stall owner had finally managed to muster up had now instantly disappeared, and he repeatedly attempted to pacify the man with a smile. “How dare I, how dare I. I just asked casually, only casually. Have a good day,” he said.

At the same time, three options popped up in front of Jiang Beiran’s eyes.

[Option One: Approach and help the meat stall owner by administering justice. Completion Reward: Sword of Sirius (Yellow Grade High Tier)]

[Option Two: Take action in secret and teach Wu Kui a lesson. Completion Reward: Helmet of Vishnu (Yellow Grade Middle Tier)]

[Option Three: Stay where you are. Completion reward: Random basic attribute point +1]

After choosing Option Three, Jiang Beiran watched as Wu Kui said, “That’s sensible,” before leaving without a worry, disappearing around the corner of the street.

“Alas... How am I to survive such circumstances?” The meat stall owner sighed and wore a melancholic look. Finally, he could not help but pick up the rag on the counter, draping it in front of his eyes and wiping hard.

“Boss, give me two pounds of pork,” someone said.

The meat stall owner, who was upset, hurriedly put down the rag, gave a big smile, and asked, “Okay. Which part do you want?”

“Neck and some pig ears would be good.”

“You sound like a connoisseur. Do you need help cutting it up?” the butcher asked.

“No need. Just wrap it up for me.”

“One part neck, one part pig’s ears! Come, keep it well. The pig ears are cheaper, so that’ll just be 18 pence,” the butcher told the man.

“I’ll leave the money here.”

“Okay, hang on, let me count... Hey, sir, where are you going!? Hey! Come back! I haven’t counted it yet! Come back! You godd*mn piece of sh*t!!!”

The meat stall owner had exited the stall and chased after the man with his knife when he realized that the young customer had disappeared into the crowd. He couldn’t find the young man no matter how hard he looked.

“Son of a b*tch! Don’t let me catch you! If I catch you, I’ll skin you!” he yelled.

1

Right after he finished yelling, the meat stall owner saw a crowd of townspeople surrounding him. He waved his kitchen knife around in anger and shouted, “What are you looking at? Go your own way!”

Seeing that the meat stall owner was behaving like a madman, the townspeople who were yelled at scattered without daring to respond.

“Alas...”

When all the onlookers had left, the meat stall boss finally sighed long and hard, and his body seemed to have lost all its strength.

His gaze was listless as he returned to the front of the meat stall. The owner looked at the small cloth bag that the godd*mn piece of sh*t had left in the corner of the stall.

“Motherf*cker!”

The meat stall owner roared and took the cloth bag, about to throw it to the ground, but found that there seemed to be some weight inside. Although he thought it was unlikely to be money, the meat stall owner still held a sliver of hope as he pulled the cloth bag open.

“This!?”

The meat stall owner’s eyes shot wide open because what was inside the bag was actually three pieces of silver.

“Three... three silver coins!?”

1

The meat stall owner whispered loudly in a state of disbelief.

Jerking his head up again in the direction the young man just disappeared in, the meat stall owner’s mouth hung open.

Finally, he came back to his senses. “Bang! Bang! Bang!” He kowtowed loudly three times and fiercely slapped himself in the mouth.

“You godd*mn piece of sh*t, kicking up a fuss for no good reason! You didn’t even utter a word of thanks to your benefactor!” he said.

After scolding himself, the meat stall owner swore in his heart that if he saw his benefactor the next time, he would thank him properly. However, in his heart, he could not recall the young man’s appearance.

‘Strange... usually I can remember the face of every customer. How could I forget the benefactor’s appearance!? Alas! Wang Fugui, Wang Fugui! You piece of sh*t. You’re really incredibly dumb! You’re f*cking useless in important situations!’ he thought to himself.

2

After thinking that, he gave himself another fierce slap.

At this time, Jiang Beiran, carrying two bags of meat, had reached the end of the street. He was thinking about what the owner's expression would be when he went back and saw that the cloth bag had three pieces of silver inside.

1

'Alas, in this chaotic world, no one has an easy time surviving. That is all I can help.'

Although the various miserable encounters he had just after crossing over to this world made Jiang Beiran determined to be a sophisticated egoist, after seeing the people's misery countless times, in the end, he still could not maintain a heart of stone.

For this reason, after carefully studying the various meanings of the options offered by the system, he developed a complete set of rules for helping people.

Simply put, provided that his own safety could be ensured, there were certain situations in which he could help in a roundabout way.

Firstly, he couldn't help the people that he would often have the opportunity to be in touch with, such as the Brothers in the Sect of Returning Hearts. Regardless of whether he knew them or not, Jiang Beiran would not bypass the options of the system to help, because it was easy to trigger subsequent events.

For example, the way Liu Zijin found him this time was most probably a result of Jiang Beiran's constant inability to harden his heart when serving as an Iron Seal.

Most of the time, Jiang Beiran would do his best to make himself look very ordinary in everything that he was doing, as he knew that he must keep a low profile. So, he had thought about deliberately doing nothing several times when he was serving as an Iron Seal, which would cause the new disciples to fail the trial quest. That way he would lower the 100% success rate he had as an Iron Seal so that it would not be so eye-catching.

But whenever those young junior Brothers looked at him helplessly and asked, "Brother, what should I do?" Jiang Beiran could never bear to harden his heart. In the end, he could only think, 'After all, the system did not pop up

with any options to tell me that keeping this success rate would be dangerous,' in order to comfort himself.

This was what led to his much higher than average reputation as an Iron Seal. Although Jiang Beiran told them not to promote him, inevitably there would be a few accidents such as with Liu Zijin.

Secondly, when phrases like [Stay away from here] [Pass by] [Do nothing] appeared in the options the system offered, Jiang Beiran would not help either. He would promptly leave as he should, without the slightest bit of hesitation.

If it followed these two rules that he absolutely had to uphold, sometimes Jiang Beiran would also help the people who were oppressed. It was as if it was a bit of payment for an attribute or skill point.

...

Two hours later, Jiang Beiran, who had triggered nearly a dozen options, was satisfied and did not intend to continue his walk around the streets of the town.

It was not that he felt that he had too many points, but once he had triggered the options more than 30 times in a row in a single day, he felt like he had made a fortune. When he went out the next day, he found that there suddenly weren't that many options being triggered anymore.

1

It made Jiang Beiran, who had gotten used to relying on the options to avoid disaster, feel very insecure. He stayed in the room and did not go out the whole day. The options only returned to their normal state on the third day. On top of making him feel uneasy, this also made Jiang Beiran understand that he must not trigger the options of the system excessively, or the latter would go on strike.

3

In addition, not only had he gained a large number of points from his night walk, but he had also gained a preliminary understanding of the dark and evil forces in Luoxia Town.

Before crossing over, when Jiang Beiran read wuxia novels, he had always admired the great heroes who upheld righteousness and punished evil. However, after crossing over to this world, he suddenly found that these heroes were sometimes no different from the triads.

Were there really heroes who served the country and the people without expecting anything in return? Of course there were, but they were very, very few.

Many rogue heroes naturally grouped into various gangs, often also becoming sworn brothers, forming forces one after another. These forces had no regard for the country's laws, only the rules of the triad. If someone dared to violate these rules, then some other person would act as a judge and attempt to resolve matters the triad way.

And when such forces expanded until they were large enough, they would become an extremely powerful force.

Some of them developed into cults in the eyes of the government and the righteous, while others had formed large warrior clans with strong tribal and familial flavors.

In such a clan, the patriarch would be the boss, and the family rules would be the rules of the gang. All the gang members were like a family, sharing honor and shame together.

Be it a cult or a warrior clan, there was never a lack of talent. After all, not every cultivator only had swords and music in their mind, nor were they all practicing their skills just to give back to society for the benefit of mankind.

Most of them were only in this for their personal desires.

So even if it seemed as if someone was only a small-town gangster with a small amount of strength, it was common for someone to find out after beating that gangster up in an attempt at upholding justice that he was actually a minor member of a specific religion or gang.

These kinds of people would, out of nowhere, take out a firecracker and shout at you, "As this arrow is fired and passes through the clouds, a thousand troops will gather!"

These gangs valued their prestige the most. So, even if the minor member you hit had almost zero connection with them, they would still swarm out for no reason other than you not respecting a member of their gang.

1

So, every new place Jiang Beiran visited, he would check whose territory it was while triggering the options to take precautions.

The investigation process was also very simple. He only had to go to some random restaurants or small shops. It would not take long to hear a few gangsters shouting, "Today we, XX Gang, are booking this whole place!" or, "In this region, who would dare to disrespect our XX Association?"

For example, when Jiang Beiran passed a tavern just now, he heard a drunken man shout, "Brother, don't worry. In Luoxia Town, you just need to tell them my name, Bigfoot Ma of the Yellow Gang, and everyone will have to show you some respect."

Jiang Beiran had heard the name Yellow Gang mentioned many times when he descended the mountain. It was a gang that had emerged in recent years. He heard that this gang had a skilled warrior of the rank of Great Mystic Practitioner, so they had developed and grown rather quickly.

After earning enough points and learning the information he needed to know, Jiang Beiran walked back to the inn and went into his room.

He closed the door, lit the oil lamp on the square table, sat down, and drew out a few strands of sedge from the storage ring.

Throughout the day, the Suits of Blending In had performed very well, causing the five Sisters to not attract any attention at all. So, Jiang Beiran decided to continue to improve the suits and further strengthen their hidden features.

This research went late into the night. Jiang Beiran was deep in thought as he looked at the dozens of straw hats with different shapes sitting on the table. He sat thinking about what other features could be added to it.

"Ah!"

Jiang Beiran yawned, feeling a wave of drowsiness hit him. He put all the straw hats into the storage ring, deciding to think about it tomorrow.

3

Chewing one of the breath-freshening pills that he made himself with the Heart-Clearing Grass, Jiang Beiran, who had completed his oral hygiene routine, was just about to fall into bed when he saw three options pop up.

[Option One: Go straight to sleep. Completion reward: Moving Stars (Earth Grade Middle Tier)]

1

[Option Two: Go and instruct the Sisters not to run around again. Completion reward: Golden Snake Crane-Catching Fist (Black Grade Middle Tier)]

[Option Three: Go to the entrance of the inn and observe secretly. Completion reward: Random basic skill point +1]

The reward of the Earth Grade Middle Tier scared Jiang Beiran wide awake. How could he still sleep? After quickly choosing Option Three, Jiang Beiran took out a set of his specially-made clothes for night travel from the storage ring and put them on. He jumped out of the window and came to the inn door.

Then, in less than ten minutes, Jiang Beiran saw a figure leave the inn. It was none other than Fang Qiuyao, who should have been staying in her room at the moment. But, fortunately, she was still wearing the Suit of Blending In.

'Ugh... This girl is really the biggest ticking time bomb,' Jiang Beiran thought to himself.

4

He had originally thought that his words in the afternoon could help wake her up, so he had still wanted to let her digest them slowly by herself. However, now it seemed as though she had digested nothing...

After poking her head out and looking around a few times, finding that no one was paying attention to her, Fang Qiuyao boldly walked out of the inn. She went toward the place where the bean curd stall had been overturned when they first arrived.

At the same time, three more options appeared in front of Jiang Beiran's eyes.

[Option One: Capture Fang Qiuyao and take her back into the inn. Completion reward: Dance of the Clouds (Black Grade High Tier)]

[Option Two: Make Fang Qiuyao aware of your presence and go back to her room out of self-awareness. Completion reward: Swallowtail Divine Spear (Black Grade Low Tier)]

[Option Three: Follow her quietly. Completion reward: Random basic skill point +1]

Seeing these three options, Jiang Beiran understood the system's intention after giving it a little thought.

"The intention is to let this girl face the cruelty of society once?" he said to himself.

Jiang Beiran thought it was a good idea so, shrugging his shoulders, he chose Option Three and jumped onto the roof, quietly following Fang Qiuyao.

Chapter 23: Upholding Justice for the Gods

"Mister, don't be like this! If you keep doing this, I'm going to scream," a woman's voice said.

"Hehe, scream all you like. No one would bother paying attention to you even if you scream so hard you tear your throat apart," a man responded.

"Oops! You are so annoying. Help!"

In the dark alley, a rather plump middle-aged man was pressing a young girl against the wall. His mouth was all over the girl, and she kept shouting words of resistance as well. However, as a result, the man got more and more excited.

"Pervert! Let go of that girl!" someone called.

Just as the man got into the mood and was ready to take off his pants, a sudden feminine shout scared him so much that his legs almost went weak and his member went flaccid.

“Who... Who are you!?” the middle-aged man asked while retying the waistband of his pants in panic.

“I am upholding justice for the Gods!”

2

“D*mn! Where are you from, stinking b*tch? How dare you spoil your master’s good fortune?” he called back.

Then, with a clang, Fang Qiuyao pulled out her Sword of White Rainbow.

When the middle-aged man saw that she was armed, he shouted quickly, “Good! Wait for me here if you have the guts to. I’ll call someone over!”

After saying that, he turned around and ran.

Seeing the middle-aged man flee, Fang Qiuyao, who was very satisfied with herself, put away her sword. She was just about to go up and comfort the girl when Fang Qiuyao saw her shouting at the middle-aged man while chasing after him.

“Hey! Mister, don’t go! You haven’t paid yet!” the girl called after him.

2

This made Fang Qiuyao freeze for a moment. She failed to understand what the girl’s words had meant.

Seeing the middle-aged man’s figure completely disappear in the alley, the girl, who had not managed to catch up with him, stomped her feet and walked back toward Fang Qiuyao.

Although Fang Qiuyao hadn’t figured out what the girl’s words meant, she had long since prepared her own lines. She took the Sword of White Rainbow, held it in front of her body in a parrying stance, and said, “No need to thank me, lady. Upholding righteousness is my...”

1

“What the heck would I be thanking you for!? Are you crazy!?” the girl responded.

After suddenly being scolded, Fang Qiuyao was once again frozen. She completely did not understand what she had done wrong.

“I——!” The girl wanted to scold Fang Qiuyao again, but after looking at the Sword of White Rainbow in Fang Qiuyao’s hand, she was worried that she had really met a madwoman. So instead, she spat on the ground and said, “D*mn! Count me unlucky!”

After the girl had slowly left the alley, Fang Qiuyao still remained standing in place, stunned. She did not understand what she had done wrong.

“Pfft!”

At the moment, Jiang Beiran, who witnessed the whole event while watching from the roof, was holding his laughter so hard that he almost fainted. If he had a cell phone, he would have taken it out and recorded what just happened. It would definitely achieve fame overnight after being uploaded onto the Internet.

After a while, Fang Qiuyao, still standing in the alley, finally came back to her senses and muttered, “What even! I kindly saved her, but she turned around to scold me. That’s really...really...really even more annoying than that wimpy Brother!”

Not expecting to get insults hurled at him for no reason in such an unrelated situation, Jiang Beiran wore a resigned expression. At the same time, he lamented that this rich young lady was really lacking in cursing vocabulary.

With a forceful “hmmph,” Fang Qiuyao turned around and left the alley, continuing to walk toward her original target destination.

Since there was no curfew in the Land of the Black Dragon, the nightlife of the residents was quite rich. Even though Luoxia Town was not a large place, there were several spots to seek entertainment because the Rivernorth region was relatively affluent.

In addition to the usual spots such as teahouses, storytellers, taverns, and wh*rehouses, Luoxia Town also had venues that offered theatrical art performances. One could order takeout to eat during the performances there. It could be said to be quite high-end.

It was also the first time Fang Qiuyao saw such a sight. In the past, her father had strictly forbidden her from going out as long as it was past 5:00 pm, so this was the first time she was able to experience a town at night.

“Eh? What is this smell? Why does it smell so good?”

As Fang Qiuyao passed by a store, she was attracted to the fragrant scent coming from inside and turned her head to look. On the signboard were six big words that read, “Zangsan’s Baked Cakes with Pig Liver.”

“Gulp.”

Fang Qiuyao softly swallowed a mouthful of saliva. Earlier that evening when she hadn’t eaten that pea bun that everyone said was delicious, she was actually already very hungry. So now she was even more tempted by the fragrance of this cake to the extent that she couldn’t walk away.

“No! I am out to investigate serious business. How can I have time for this!?”

Reaffirming her belief once again, Fang Qiuyao forcibly turned her head and continued to walk forward.

“Ouch! Ouch!”

Just as Fang Qiuyao was recalling the route and thinking about who to ask, a painful groan came from the roadside.

When Fang Qiuyao heard it, she immediately looked for the sound and saw an old woman sitting on the ground not far away.

“Ma’am, are you all right?” Fang Qiuyao hurriedly ran to the old woman’s side and squatted down.

Seeing Fang Qiuyao suddenly appear beside her, the old woman was startled for a moment before she cried out, “My life is miserable! Aaaaa! Why is my life so miserable!?”

Looking at the old woman wailing hard, Fang Qiuyao said comfortingly, “It’s okay. It’s okay, ma’am. If you have any difficulties, just tell me. I will help you.”

Only then did the old woman look at Fang Qiuyao and ask with some caution, “Who are you, girl? I am not related to you, so why do you want to help me? Do you want to cheat me of my money? Let me tell you, I...”

“Eh! Ma’am, what are you talking about? Helping an old person like you is something that people of my generation should do. Come, let me help you up first,” Fang Qiuyao responded.

Having said this, Fang Qiuyao grabbed the old lady’s arm and led her over to some steps to sit there.

“You are so kindhearted, girl,” the old woman said after sitting upright and taking Fang Qiuyao’s hand.

Fang Qiuyao, who had just been praised, smiled happily and asked again, “Are you feeling pain somewhere, ma’am?”

“Ugh!” The old woman sighed deeply after hearing this and said, “It’s my murderous daughter-in-law. She knows that I have trouble with my legs and still left me here alone. I think she just wants me to die here.”

“How can that be? Surely a daughter-in-law wouldn’t want her mother-in-law to die,” Fang Qiuyao said.

1

“Eh, girl, you are kindhearted and naturally do not understand it. But some women are really evil with a poisonous heart.” The old woman looked around as she finished her words, saw that no one was there, and continued, saying, “Although dirty laundry should not be aired in public, I really have no one to talk to. If you do not mind me doing so, I will share a bit with you.”

“Eh, go ahead, ma’am. I’m listening.”

“My daughter-in-law! Every day she gives me leftover food like slop, and at night, she drives me out to sleep in the woodshed. It’s still bearable in summer, but in the winter, my old bones really...” the old woman said and then started wailing again.

“This is too much!” Fang Qiuyao slapped her thighs hard after hearing this and said, “How can there be such a vicious person in this world!? Ma’am, let’s go! I’ll lead you home to find your daughter-in-law and ask for an explanation.”

3

The old woman waved her hand after hearing Fang Qiuyao's words. "No, no. My daughter-in-law is famous in town for being a tough woman. She is very formidable. If a little girl like you goes there, she will eat you alive."

"Don't worry, ma'am. With this sword in my hand, your daughter-in-law can't do anything to me. Besides, I'm just going to seek justice for you. I won't fight her."

"No, no. I'm old. It's okay for me to die. How can I drag a young girl like you into this?" the old woman said.

"Don't worry, ma'am. I'll be fine. Let's go. I'll take you home," Fang Qiuyao reassured the woman.

"This... All right. It must be that the Gods have finally opened their eyes and have seen that my life is really miserable, so they sent such a kind and good girl like you."

After hearing her words, Fang Qiuyao revealed a smile and said, "It's what I should do, ma'am. Can you still walk?"

"Yes... yes."

"Good, then I'll hold your arm.. You take your time."

Chapter 24: Senior Brother's Nagging

'There's really people who fall for this...' Jiang Beiran thought to himself.

8

On the roof, Jiang Beiran held his hand to his forehead and wore a resigned expression.

The incident Fang Qiuyao encountered was a relatively common scam in this world, and people knew it as the "crying woman of the night" scheme.

Those in the industry of scamming could be said to best understand the principle of treating each person differently according to their social status and background. They had ways to scam little girls and ways to scam old ladies.

And in the Land of the Black Dragon with many sects and heroes, the scammers had another target group that Jiang Beiran had never heard of before he crossed over.

It was the heroines.

Passionate girls like Fang Qiuyao who had just entered society and wanted to uphold justice were never in the minority. And to deal with this target group, a variety of scams naturally came into being.

For example, the “crying woman of the night” was one such scam. To put it simply, it involved getting an old woman to lie on the ground, then cry hard until a newbie heroine like Fang Qiuyao came to the rescue.

In Jiang Beiran’s eyes, the level of idiocy involved in such a scam was on par with the modern-day scam where one claimed, “I am Qin Shi Huang, pay me money.” However, from time to time some young heroines fell for the scam.

Now Jiang Beiran had even witnessed it personally. He really didn’t know whether to say that Fang Qiuyao was naive or really dumb.

4

But still, as previously mentioned, Jiang Beiran did not dislike girls like Fang Qiuyao because actually, she wasn’t really at fault. It was society as a whole that was at fault.

4

Tightening his mask, Jiang Beiran leaped nimbly across the roofs, following Fang Qiuyao across them all.

After making a few turns into some alleys, the old woman, supported by Fang Qiuyao, came to a compound with cabbages planted within. She went to a hut and rapped on the door hard, saying, “Open the door! You, evil daughter-in-law, come out!”

“Why are you knocking? You want to kill someone in the middle of the night, is that it?” a voice replied.

Shortly after, the door was opened with a bang and a fierce woman rushed out and shouted.

As soon as she saw the woman's repulsive face, Fang Qiuyao was in high spirits and decided that the woman was definitely a bad person!

1

"Evil woman! Don't you dare act wildly! I am here today to seek justice for the old lady!" she said.

When the woman heard Fang Qiuyao's voice, she was obviously surprised and looked towards her carefully. Only then did she realize that a lady was standing behind the old woman.

'Strange... I didn't even notice her when I first came out. I was wondering why the old woman was blindly shouting the secret code for no reason,' the woman thought to herself.

But although she felt that it was strange, the women still managed to quickly react and said to Fang Qiuyao, "Who are you!? How dare you stick your nose in my business!"

Seeing that the woman was very fierce, Fang Qiuyao's rather violent temper immediately flared, and she pulled her Sword of White Rainbow out with a clang.

"Ah! How dare you draw your sword? Come on, stab me here," the woman said as she approached Fang Qiuyao without fear.

Fang Qiuyao, who had always been able to intimidate people by drawing her sword, had never seen such a situation before. She didn't know what to do for a moment and took two steps backward instead.

Seeing that the situation had come to a standstill, a man quickly approached, acting as a peacemaker, and said, "Eh, let's talk in a civilized manner, let's talk in a civilized manner. Heroine, quick, withdraw your sword." He then said to the old woman, "Mother, what's wrong with you this time around?"

"What's wrong with me? You can't protect me, so can't I find someone to do me justice?" she replied.

At that moment, a voice suddenly rang out from the hut next to hers, "What's with all the noise?! Can't you let people sleep!?"

The man quickly said, "Sorry, sorry. We will go back to the house immediately."

Having said this, he put his palms together and kept pleading to the three women beside him, "Ladies, let's go inside to talk, okay? Let's not make fools of ourselves outside in front of other people."

The old woman first snorted after hearing this, then looked at Fang Qiuyao and said, "Miss Fang, why don't we go inside and talk about it? After all, dirty laundry should not be aired in public."

Fang Qiuyao, who didn't know what to do with the fierce woman, took this opportunity to put away her sword and nodded. "Okay. Initially, I only wanted to reason politely anyway. I don't want to hurt anyone."

"Heh, you are bold indeed," the fierce woman said as she rolled her eyes at Fang Qiuyao.

But the male host pulled the fierce woman back towards their room in a timely manner, speaking as he did so. "Go in and talk, go in and talk," he said.

Seeing the fierce woman getting pulled back into the room, Fang Qiuyao stepped forward to support the old woman by the arm and said, "Come, Ma'am. I'll help you inside."

"Alright." The old woman nodded with a relieved look.

After Fang Qiuyao helped the old woman into the room, the male host poked his head out from inside and observed the surroundings for a while before finally closing the door.

'It seems like this stronghold is not small...'

Jiang Beiran lamented in his heart as he looked over the large courtyard from the roof.

The "crying woman of the night" scam was usually run in a group. Since there was a group of them, the other residents of the courtyard naturally wouldn't be good people.

'Eh? There's even a Mystic? This Luoxia Town really has hidden talents. How is there actually such a capable person among a gang of crooks?' he thought to himself.

At the start, Jiang Beiran knew what pretty much all the functions were of very straightforward attributes like Strength, Physique, and Agility. However, the attribute of Mind really puzzled him, and after performing many experiments, he still didn't know what it was for.

But later on, after the attribute points of Mind became higher and higher, Jiang Beiran finally gradually came to learn its function.

First, Jiang Beiran could exert mental pressure towards a target, so that the target would fear him.

Second, he could use his mental power to search up all cultivators within a certain area and know what level they were.

It could be said that both functions were very useful.

Inside the hut at that moment, Fang Qiuyao had righteously reasoned with the fierce woman for a while. However, the fierce woman continued to speak aggressively and use very vulgar words, causing Fang Qiuyao's face to redden.

"You..!"

Fang Qiuyao, who was once again rendered speechless, was about to stand up when she found that her legs felt a bit weak.

'What's going on!?' Fang Qiuyao frowned and suddenly remembered something that the wimpy Brother had reminded them of in a nagging manner while they were descending the mountain.

"If you feel a sudden weakness in your legs, don't think too much. Hurry up and use your remaining strength to run hard, because there's a 99 percent chance of you having been drugged. If you don't run, prepare to die," he had told them.

1

'But I didn't smell anything strange, eh?' she thought to herself.

The more Fang Qiuyao thought about it, the dizzier her head felt. Gradually she felt as though she was losing sensation in her upper body.

'This is bad!'

Knowing that she had encountered a situation that the wimpy Brother had mentioned, Fang Qiuyao suddenly stood up!

Chapter 25: It Is Much Easier to Save Someone Than to Kill Someone

2

Seeing that Fang Qiuyao actually still had the strength to stand up, the male host and the fierce woman were both very surprised. Ten minutes had passed, and the fact that the girl still hadn't passed out already made them feel very strange. They had not expected her to still have the strength to stand up.

"Miss Fang, what's wrong?" the old woman asked with feigned concern upon seeing Fang Qiuyao's painful expression.

But Fang Qiuyao, who had already realized the danger, ignored her and instead quickly pulled out her Sword of White Rainbow and struck at the door.

"Bang."

The wooden door shattered with a bang and Fang Qiuyao rushed out.

The three people in the house were all stunned, not expecting this silly girl to become smart all of a sudden. However, they were not worried at all. Since she had entered the courtyard, there was no way for her to run out of it again.

As expected, Fang Qiuyao had just rushed out of the hut when she saw more than ten strong men looking at her, laughing menacingly. They held various blunt weapons and nets in their hands, obviously intending to capture her alive.

"Get out of my way, all of you!" Fang Qiuyao shouted loudly.

The Sword of White Rainbow in her hands forcefully stabbed towards the burly man at the very front.

“Argh!”

The burly man in the lead let out a painful scream, covering the stab wound on his chest and backing away.

“Motherf*cker, she has been breathing in the smoke for so long. Why does this girl still have so much strength?” he asked.

Next to him, a bearded man heard him and laughed, saying, “Hahaha. Old Third, I think it’s just that you are too weak. Get out of the way, let me subdue this chick.”

After saying that, he swung a copper hammer towards Fang Qiuyao, smashing it down.

“Clang!”

The Sword of White Rainbow was as fast as lightning, sending the copper hammer flying with a single move. At the same time, Fang Qiuyao flicked her wrist, and the White Rainbow Sword stabbed towards the bearded man’s neck at a strange angle.

Fortunately for him, a young man behind the bearded man was quick to see and moved, hastily pulling the bearded man backward. Only then did he narrowly avoid Fang Qiuyao’s killing move. However, it still left a bloody trail on his neck.

“This sword is quite sharp, eh...”

The bearded man touched the blood seeping out of the wound on his neck and could not help but feel his heart beating from the residual fear.

“Ha... ha...”

Seeing that her move, known as “Surprising Glimpse,” had not killed the bearded man, Fang Qiuyao, whose breathing was already uneven, hurriedly used the Rhymed Formula of Returning Hearts technique to adjust it.

Like most of the disciples born to warrior families in the Sect of Returning Hearts, Fang Qiuyao had already practiced her family’s martial art technique Sword of the Plain Heart until she had mastered it before she even joined the sect. Furthermore, she had practiced breathing techniques for several years

under her father's guidance from a young age, so she had a good physical foundation.

This, coupled with the fact that the Rhymed Formula of Returning Hearts had the effect of expelling poison and protecting the heart, allowed her to still have the strength to use her sword in this state.

"A bunch of trash! I told you all to practice well in peacetime, but all you guys know how to do is go out to drink and wh*re. And now you can't even handle a little girl. Get out of my way!"

Just as all the burly men hesitated, a scholar-like young man had come out of a hut to the north and roared, "Boss Gu, these losers under me have made a fool of themselves before you." He then made a gesture of invitation to someone within the room.

As the scholar spoke with a flattering voice, a knife-wielding warrior with a face full of pockmarks walked out and laughed loudly. "That doll of a girl does indeed have some skills. It's normal that these mediocre people under you can't beat her."

"Yes, yes, yes. It is fortunate that Boss Gu has come to my place for liquor today, otherwise, I would really have had to watch the cooked duck fly away. May I trouble you to restrain that little girl, so that these losers under me can see what it means to be a powerful warrior?" the man asked.

"Okay, okay. Then I will help you, as a repayment for the drinks," Boss Gu responded.

"Boss Gu, the liquor is my treat. Naturally, I will repay you in other ways to thank you for helping out."

"Haha, Brother Zhang, you are a good man. Then, just watch."

After saying that, Boss Gu walked towards Fang Qiuyao as if he was taking a leisurely stroll.

At that moment, Fang Qiuyao had already started to feel as if she was in a trance, but her strong desire to survive made her know that she had to keep going.

"As long as I kill him... I still have a chance to run away."

Recognizing this, Fang Qiuyao no longer hesitated and stabbed towards Boss Gu with all the strength she had left.

“White Rainbow and Purple Lightning!” she called.

This was the fastest of all of Fang Qiuyao’s sword moves. As a circle of white light emerged around the sword, the Sword of White Rainbow stabbed towards Boss Gu’s neck like a bolt of lightning.

Faced with such an aggressive sword move, Boss Gu did not panic and easily dodged it with a mere side-step. At the same time, he smoothly drew out the purple copper knife at his waist and struck Fang Qiuyao in the stomach with the hilt.

“Ooh!”

Fang Qiuyao cried out in pain, covering her stomach, and partially knelt on the ground. Her body was already on the verge of not being able to make it, and now the jab had made her feel like her internal organs were twisting together.

At the same time, Jiang Beiran, who had been watching from the roof, had three options pop up in front of him.

[Option One: Go down and kill all the villains surrounding Fang Qiuyao. Completion reward: Ear-Penetrating Double Booms (Black Grade Middle Tier)]

[Option Two: Shout loudly to attract the night watchmen. Completion reward: Spear of Iron and Steel (Yellow Grade Middle Tier)]

[Option Three: Save Fang Qiuyao without hurting any villains. Completion reward: Random basic attribute point +1]

2

‘Although it is true that option three is always the best, I keep feeling like it sounds like an option with high difficulty,’ Jiang Beiran thought to himself.

After complaining in his heart, Jiang Beiran fished out two small black balls from his storage ring.

2

Below, Fang Qiuyao, who was already in a desperate situation, regretted her actions a lot. She couldn't figure out why things had turned out this way. She had obviously just wanted to help that old woman, but why would she end up in this situation?

The villains, who had the opposite emotion from her, laughed loudly and sucked up to Boss Gu.

“Boss Gu is indeed powerful! He has subdued this little b*tch with a single move, what amazing skills! You can't find another man comparable to him in the whole Luoxia Town!”

“Not only in Luoxia Town! Even in the whole Luonan Province! With his skills, Boss Gu could walk around with no fear doing whatever he pleases.”

“Alas, if I can ever have even 10% of Boss Gu's skills I would be satisfied.”

...

Listening to the various compliments, Boss Gu laughed heartily, clearly buying into it.

Only after the minions had finished their a**-kissing did the scholar-like young man come over to Boss Gu, put his hands together in a salute, and say, “Boss Gu is really a master of martial arts. I admire you greatly.”

“Alright, alright. All I did was deal with a little girl, nothing worth praising,” Boss Gu replied.

Seeing that Boss Gu was already satisfied, the scholar stopped flattering him. He turned around and kicked Fang Qiuyao in the shoulder.

“F*cking b*tch! How dare you hurt my brothers. Today I'll make sure you know your place.”

“Hahahahaha!” The villains who watched this happen let out a loud laugh.

At the moment, Fang Qiuyao, who had been kicked to the ground, was already completely stunned from the fear and, although she desperately wanted to back away, her body was unable to exert any strength at all.

‘Save me... Someone save me...’ she thought.

Seeing the scholar walking towards her again with a vicious look, Fang Qiuyao desperately cried out in her heart.

“Bang!”

Just as the scholar was about to raise his foot to kick Fang Qiuyao again, a cloud of black smoke exploded.

“What’s going on!?” the scholar shouted in shock.

Although it was a dark night, the scholar could still see the things in front of him in the moonlight. However, as the black smoke filled the area, not only did he become unable to see anything, but he couldn’t even hear his own voice.

Next to him, Boss Gu frowned. He was about to pull out his purple copper knife and swipe away the black smoke but felt a great might forcefully pressing it back into his hilt. He had only managed to pull it out halfway.

“So powerful!”

The frightened Boss Gu backed away. Although this exchange was not considered hand-to-hand combat, he already knew that he was in no way a match for the visitor.

“May I know which senior is paying us a visit? I am Gu Louqing, the Order Master of the Yellow Gang. If I have offended you, I would like to ask for your forgiveness,” he said.

Although Gu Louqing could not hear his own voice, he knew that the skilled warrior could certainly hear it. So, in order to save his life, he immediately announced his background, hoping to somewhat intimidate the other party.

Silence——

There was no reply, but Gu Louqing did not dare to make a move. He just stood there like a fool.

It wasn’t until the black smoke gradually dissipated that Gu Louqing’s vision finally recovered somewhat. At the same time, he also heard Zhang Jijin’s voice in his ears.

“Boss Gu, are you alright!?”

Gu Louqing, who felt that he had survived a disaster, collected himself and replied, "I'm fine. How about you guys?"

Zhang Jijin immediately looked around the circle and found that, although the group of minions was full of panic, nothing much had happened to them. He said in relief, "My brothers are all fine."

"Boss! That little b*tch is gone!" the bearded man who had been stabbed by Fang Qiuyao shouted at that time.

Gu Louqing heard him and quickly said, "Shut your mouth. Can't you even see it now? You have touched someone you shouldn't have touched."

The bearded man covered his mouth quickly after hearing his words and looked around in a panic.

After a while, seeing that nothing had happened, Gu Louqing breathed a sigh of relief and said, "It seems that the skilled warrior is still willing to give our Yellow Gang some face and let us off the hook."

Only then did the crowd come to their senses and thank Gu Louqing, saying, "Fortunately, you are here today, Boss Gu, otherwise we would all be finished."

Even Gu Louqing had to admit that the other person was a skilled warrior, so these villains definitely knew what kind of powerful being they had just met.

Waving his hand at the crowd, Gu Louqing breathed out deeply and said, "In the future, when you kidnap people, open your eyes. Don't just scam anyone, or sooner or later you will run into bad luck."

"Boss Gu is right; we will definitely learn from this lesson. We will definitely learn from this lesson."

At that moment, the old woman who had tricked Fang Qiuyao was even more frightened, and she couldn't even stand up straight. This time, to give Boss Gu and the Yellow Gang face, the other party had not killed them. But what about tomorrow...? One must keep in mind that she was the one most involved in the matter. If the skilled warrior really came to the doorstep to confront them, which of the people present would dare to protect her?

"It would take my life!"

Not bothering to care about the old woman who was on the verge of p*ssing her pants, Gu Louqing looked at Zhang Jijin and said, "Don't go out for the next two days. Stay at home. I'll go back to the gang to investigate and see which sect has sent their skilled warriors to Luoxia Town."

1

Gu Louqing was cautious by nature. Although the skilled warrior had spared them today, the seed of conflict had been planted. Who could guarantee that person would not find trouble with them afterward? So, he must prepare accordingly, and even find an opportunity to make the first move!

"Yes, yes, yes. We will all listen to you. We will not wander around. This time we are all relying upon you, Boss Gu." Zhang Jijin, who was already feeling lost, nodded his head repeatedly.

"Alright, you should go back." With a wave of his hand towards Zhang Jijin, Gu Louqing turned and left the compound.

...

On the other side, the rescued Fang Qiuyao was still in a state of disbelief.

'I was saved? Saved by the wimpy... Brother Jiang no less!?' she thought to herself.

Lost in her various thoughts, Fang Qiuyao, who was curled up in Jiang Beiran's arms, lifted her eyes and looked at Jiang Beiran's face under the scorched cloth, a little dazed for a moment.

"Brother, I..."

"Shh. Don't speak. You have been drugged by the smoke and the toxicity has spread throughout your body. Why don't you sleep for a while first? I will treat your injury when we reach a safe place," Jiang Beiran said.

Hearing Jiang Beiran's gentle voice, Fang Qiuyao, who had been in a tense state, instantly felt a sense of security. At the same time, she thought in her heart, 'Alas, if I had listened to Brother earlier, surely I wouldn't have to endure such suffering.'

"Brother... I'm sorry," she said.

After saying these words, Fang Qiuyao, who had completely relaxed, fell into a deep sleep.

...

“No... No... No!”

Inside the inn, in Mortal Grade room number three, Fang Qiuyao, whose face was full of sweat, violently sat up in the bed. She looked at her surroundings in a state of shock.

Beside her, Liu Zijin quickly came up, hugged Fang Qiuyao, and said, “It’s okay, it’s okay. Sister is here, don’t be afraid.”

“Sister Zijin!” Fang Qiuyao cried out as she hugged Liu Zijin.

At this moment, she was finally sure that she had not been dreaming last night, and that the Brother really had saved her.

“It’s alright now, it’s alright now.” Liu Zijin stroked Fang Qiuyao’s back and softly comforted her.

After venting for a while, Fang Qiuyao took the handkerchief handed over by Liu Zijin to dry her tears.

“Wait a moment, I’ll go call Brother Jiang over.” Seeing that Fang Qiuyao had calmed down, Liu Zijin went to the next room and knocked on the door.

With a creak, Jiang Beiran opened the door and asked, “Is she awake?”

“Yes. She just woke up.” Liu Zijin nodded.

“Good. I’ll go take a look.” Jiang Beiran closed the door after he said that and followed Liu Zijin back to their room.

Seeing Jiang Beiran come in, Fang Qiuyao, who was on the bed, hurriedly tried to stand up, but she still felt no strength in her body.

“Just lie down. Don’t move around,” Jiang Beiran said.

Fang Qiuyao nodded after hearing this and laid down again.

“Give me your hand,” Jiang Beiran said as he sat in front of the bed and extended his hand.

When Fang Qiuyao stretched her hand out from the blanket, Jiang Beiran pressed on her wrist and started to take her pulse.

While Jiang Beiran carefully felt Fang Qiuyao’s pulse, Fang Qiuyao peeked out from under the blanket at Jiang Beiran.

‘Strange... Why didn’t I find Brother so... good looking before?’ she thought.

4

At this moment, in Fang Qiuyao’s eyes, Jiang Beiran’s face was like jade. His sideburns were sharp as if they were trimmed with a knife, his eyebrows were like ink paintings, and his eyes were like two pills of black mercury within white mercury, like cold stars hanging above that knife-carved nose bridge.

3

“Hmm, it seems to be just ordinary poison. Indeed, there seem to be no effects other than it having caused you to pass out.” Putting down Fang Qiuyao’s hand, Jiang Beiran took out three Heart-clearing Pills from the storage ring and handed them to her, saying, “Take one every two hours, and you will fully recover after eating all three.”

“Thank you, Brother.” After receiving the Heart-clearing Pills, Fang Qiuyao clenched her other fist and said to Jiang Beiran, “Brother, I was wrong. I shouldn’t have turned a deaf ear to your words, and... also, I shouldn’t have talked about you that way.”

When Fang Qiuyao finished speaking, three options appeared in front of Jiang Beiran’s eyes at the same time.

[Option One: “It’s okay, it’s all in the past. I didn’t take it to heart.” Completion reward: Ten Absolute Divine Flashes (Earth Grade Low Tier)]

2

[Option Two: “It’s good to know that you’re wrong now. Now you know that I am wise, right?” Completion reward: Records of the Six Ren (Black Grade High Tier)]

[Option Three: “No need to admit your mistake to me. Why do you think I appeared in time? It’s because I’ve been following you for quite a while already.. The reason I didn’t stop you was because I wanted to make you suffer.” Completion reward: Random basic skill point +1]

7

Chapter 26: The Brother Really Seemed Capable of Everything

Choosing Option Three, Jiang Beiran shook his head and said, “No need to apologize to me. Why do you think I appeared so timely? Actually, I had already been following you when you walked out of the inn. The reason why I didn’t stop you was because I wanted to make you suffer.”

Fang Qiuyao was stunned after hearing this. She had thought that since she was still injured, even if it meant lying to her, the senior Brother would first comfort her with a couple of sentences. She hadn’t expected him to make such a harsh statement.

“I...” Fang Qiuyao was momentarily speechless, not knowing how to reply.

“Quickly take your medicine. We will depart in two hours.” Jiang Beiran finished speaking, pushed open the door, and left the room.

Listening to the sound of the door being closed, Fang Qiuyao’s expression instantly crumbled. She turned her head to look at Liu Zijin and asked, “Sister Zijin... am I really annoying?”

8

Sitting beside Fang Qiuyao, Liu Zijin had also not expected the senior Brother to teach Qiuyao a lesson when she was so weak. She sat stunned for a long time before saying, “How could it be? I can’t even treasure you enough. Come, take the medicine first.”

“But the senior Brother, he...”

“No buts. Brother Jiang is also in a fit of anger. You see, he has said so much to us all along the way, but you didn’t listen to a word. You’ve also opposed

him at every turn. He can..." Halfway through the sentence, Liu Zijin suddenly noticed Fang Qiuyao's eyes filling up with tears.

"Eh, don't cry, don't cry. I've been too heavy with my words. Actually, you just need to realize what you did wrong and slowly change in the future. Brother Jiang will definitely not be so mean to you again," Liu Zijin said.

Fang Qiuyao listened and wiped her tears with her hand, nodding. "Okay... I am now really regretful. Brother is right, it's really dangerous down the mountain. I obviously just wanted to help them, but they scolded me, harmed me. I..."

Seeing Fang Qiuyao so aggrieved that she wanted to cry, Liu Zijin quickly poured her a cup of tea, sat on the bedside, and said to Fang Qiuyao, "Alright, don't think about this. First, take the medicine. Don't cause us to delay our departure or Brother Jiang would nag you again."

Hearing the last sentence, Fang Qiuyao hurriedly swallowed the Heart-clearing Pill in her hand.

"Here. Drink some water." Liu Zijin handed the teacup to Fang Qiuyao.

Fang Qiuyao was surprised for a moment before saying, "The pill that Brother gave me has a refreshing fragrance. It smells good."

"A refreshing fragrance?" Liu Zijin asked.

"Yep! If you don't believe me, Sister Zijin, you can smell it for yourself," Fang Qiuyao said, and then breathed out towards Liu Zijin.

Liu Zijin caught a whiff and exclaimed, "Really, it seems like the smell of the Frost Leaf Flowers."

1

"And... my stomach seems to feel much better, too." Fang Qiuyao rubbed her stomach with a surprised expression.

Before swallowing the Heart-clearing Pill, she had been feeling nauseous but didn't have the strength to throw up. However, now she was completely well.

"So, you aren't drinking the tea anymore?"

Fang Qiuyao nodded. “Yep. The pill smells good. I want it to stay in my mouth for a little longer,” she replied.

Liu Zijin smiled after hearing that, put the teacup aside, and pulled the blanket over Fang Qiuyao again. “Then rest for a little longer.”

Just as Liu Zijin was about to get up and leave, Fang Qiuyao suddenly reached out with her hand and tugged at the hem of her clothes.

“Hmm? What’s wrong?” Liu Zijin asked as she turned back.

“Sister Zijin... can you just sit next to me and stay with me for a while? I... I’m a little scared,” Fang Qiuyao said.

Looking at Fang Qiuyao’s nervous expression, Liu Zijin sat back down again at the side of the bed and took her hand to comfort her. “Don’t be afraid. You are back and everything is fine.”

Feeling that Fang Qiuyao’s hand was a bit cold, Liu Zijin massaged them for her while changing the topic. “But Brother Jiang is really capable. It’s like there’s nothing he can’t do.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Fang Qiuyao nodded her head like a chicken pecking rice, then whispered, “Have you noticed, Sister Zijin, that ever since we put on the straw hat and scorched cloth that senior Brother gave us, that people don’t seem to see us?”

“Of course I noticed it, but Brother Jiang doesn’t seem to like people prying into his privacy, so it’s better if you don’t go chasing after him to ask about it,” she replied.

“Yep, I understand.” Fang Qiuyao nodded. She wanted to say something again but swallowed back the words at the tip of her tongue.

‘How powerful are senior Brother’s abilities...?’ she wondered.

Fang Qiuyao knew clearly how big the difference in capabilities between the two of them was when she fought for her life against that knife-wielding warrior yesterday. His capabilities had probably already gone beyond the Qi Refining Period and reached the Mystic level.

But senior Brother was able to save her easily right before the man's eyes. It was definitely not just because of that black smoke.

But senior Brother obviously found it taboo, so Fang Qiuyao still decided not to say anything about it.

Seeing Fang Qiuyao suddenly descending into silence, Liu Zijin smiled and held her hand gently, saying, "Why don't you sleep for a while? We still have to get going later."

"Okay... Thank you, Sister Zijin." Fang Qiuyao slowly closed her eyes after she finished speaking.

Two hours passed quickly, and Jiang Beiran knocked on the door of Liu Zijin's room on time.

With a creak, Liu Zijin pushed the door open and bowed to Jiang Beiran. "Brother, we are all ready," she said.

Jiang Beiran glanced into the room and found that Fang Qiuyao had already changed her clothes and put on her straw hat.

"Are you feeling any more discomfort?" Jiang Beiran asked, expressionless, as he looked at Fang Qiuyao.

Fang Qiuyao shook her head. "No. The medicine you gave me is very useful, Brother."

"Alright. Then let's get ready to leave," he said.

At this time the three Sisters of the Yu family had come out of the room next door, saw Jiang Beiran, then bowed neatly in unison and said, "Good day, Brother."

Jiang Beiran nodded calmly towards them, but in his heart, he was very curious.

Yesterday, after looking at the size of the Mortal Grade room, the Yu Sisters did not indicate that they wanted an additional room, so the three of them slept in the same one for one night.

'Could it be that they have a bed stuffed in their storage ring?' he wondered.

But Jiang Beiran was not overly curious. He looked around at the five Sisters and said, "Since you're all ready, let's go."

"Yes!" five voices answered at the same time.

'Eh?'

The three Sisters of the Yu family looked at Fang Qiuyao, who had just walked out of the room, somewhat wondering why she wasn't acting up today. Clearly, she had simply ignored the senior Brother yesterday.

After being puzzled, the three Sisters looked at each other for a while, then together they looked at Jiang Beiran and Fang Qiuyao, showing identical expressions.

'I'm curious!'

5

...

3

After going downstairs and settling the bill for the rooms, Jiang Beiran left Luoxia Town with the five Sisters and continued to walk in the direction of Jifu Village.

At noon, the Xiafei Inn welcomed visitors from all directions as usual. Several servers were busy running here and there, delivering plates of delicious food to the tables of the guests.

In front of the counter, the manager of Xiafei Inn was pouring wine when he turned his head and saw a familiar figure coming in the doorway.. Scared, he hurriedly put down the wine, ran to the man, bowed, and shouted, "Master Chen, it's a great honor to have you visit our inn."

Chapter 27: I Really Cannot Remember What They Looked Like

Taking the broom to sweep the dust on the floor, the manager made an inviting gesture to Master Chen. "Master Chen, please come inside. What do you want today? Our boss just opened a pot of osmanthus liquor..."

1

The manager was about to continue the introduction but saw Master Chen wave his hand at him and say, "Let's not drink today. I came to ask you about something."

2

"Eh! Master Chen, pray tell. I will definitely tell you everything I know," the manager replied.

"Find me an unoccupied booth first."

"Okay, please follow me."

Taking Master Chen to the best Heaven Grade booth in the inn, the manager wiped the table with his hand and said, "Master Chen, do you think this is alright?"

The manager had just spoken when he saw Master Chen pull out the knife on his waist and put it to his neck.

This frightened the manager, and he shouted repeatedly, "Master Chen, spare my life, Master Chen, spare my life. I have elderly..."

"Shut up!" Master Chen roared impatiently.

The manager heard him and hurriedly shut his mouth, but his legs were unable to stop trembling.

"What I'm going to ask you next, do not spread a word about it. If a third person knows... You understand the consequences, right?"

"I understand, I understand!" The manager nodded his head repeatedly.

"Good. Let me ask you, did any sect personnel with a distinguished aura stay in your inn recently?" Master Chen asked.

The manager listened and thought for a while before shaking his head and saying, "There haven't been many guests staying in the inn recently. As for sect personnel... There should be none."

"What do you mean by there should be none!? Are you joking around with me?" Master Chen glared at the manager, the knife in his hand pressing closer to the manager's neck.

This scared the manager so badly that he was on the verge of wetting his pants, and he said repeatedly, "Indeed none! Indeed none! In the past two days, other than a few young gentlemen from the Dongshao Province, all the guests were commoners in coarse clothing and hemp garments."

"Good. Now, go and call all the staff under you. I have something to ask them," Master Chen said.

"Yes, yes, yes, I'll go immediately."

After the manager finished speaking, he ran out of the booth, went to the lobby, and yelled, "Mazi, Xiaoliu, Shitou, come here. All of you, come here quickly."

The staff who were serving the customers in the lobby heard him and first apologized to the customers, then ran to the manager and asked, "What's wrong, Big Brother Liu?"

"Put down the work in your hands and come over with me."

"Huh? We're all going, eh? What about the store's business?"

"Eh, I can take care of that for now, just hurry over."

The three servers were confused, but they followed the manager.

When they arrived at the Heaven Grade booth and saw Master Chen inside, they instantly understood what was going on. They immediately bowed and shouted, "Good day, Master Chen."

"All of you, stand over here," Master Chen said, glaring at them.

Looking at the long knife in Master Chen's hand, the three servers were terrified and felt as if they were no longer in control of their feet.

“What? Do I have to say it again?” Master Chen asked, glaring at them.

At this time, the manager hurriedly kicked each of the three servers and said, “Hurry up and go!”

Only then did the three servers stagger over to Master Chen. Before he could say anything, the three servers knelt down and kowtowed in unison, saying, “Master Chen, spare us. Master Chen, spare us. We really didn’t do anything...”

“All of you shut up! Stand up!” Master Chen shouted.

The three servers stood up in a hurry after hearing this.

After threatening the three junior officers in the same way again, Master Chen said, “Describe to me the appearance of the customers you have received in the past few days one by one.”

The three servers listened and began to describe the guests they had received, and whenever he heard that the customer was a woman with a straw hat, Master Chen would ask in detail.

After Mazi answered, Shitou immediately picked up from where he left off and said, “I... I only received six guests yesterday, and they all wore straw hats.”

Master Chen immediately said, “Tell me all about their physical characteristics.”

“Yes... Yes,” Shitou finished saying. He tried to remember but found that the six guests had only left an extremely vague impression in his mind. He could not remember what they were wearing no matter how hard he thought about it.

“What are you thinking about? Speak!” Master Chen ordered.

Hearing Master Chen’s roar, Shitou hurriedly kneeled on the ground and said, “I... I really can’t remember what they looked like.:

After saying that, Shitou tensed up, deeply afraid that he was soon to receive a severe beating.

But Master Chen did not kick him as he had expected. Instead, Master Chen frowned and said, “The guests came yesterday, but you cannot remember what they looked like today?”

Shitou hastily slapped himself and said, “It’s my fault. I’m useless, but I really can’t remember what those guests looked like.”

Feeling that he had found his target, Master Chen suddenly kicked Shitou in the stomach and shouted violently, “Think properly! Tell me whatever you can think of, or I’ll kick you to death!”

At that moment, Shitou was in pain and anxious. Sweating, he desperately tried to remember, and finally, his eyes opened wide and he shouted, “The... the mister rewarded me five coins.”

Upon hearing that, Master Chen reached out and asked, “Where is the money?”

“Here it is, here it is.” Shitou endured the pain and fished out five coins from his lap and handed them to Master Chen.

“Are you sure it’s these five?” Master Chen asked, looking at the coppers in Shitou’s hand.

“I am sure because it is rare to receive a tip from a customer. I intended to hide it and use it for protection, and I hid it in the innermost layer.”

Nodding, Master Chen took the five coppers from Shitou’s hand and studied them carefully for a while.

‘Upright, peaceful, prosperous, and auspicious...’ he read.

Looking at the four words engraved on the copper coins, then feeling the weight of the coins, Master Chen stroked his chin and thought. “The three treasure coins of the Huainan region is it...”

The main value of money lied in its credit standing. For example, a modern hundred-yuan bill might only cost a few dozen cents, but because of the credibility of the yuan, paper bills that cost only a few dozen cents could be used to store the value of a hundred yuan.

But there was no unified formal currency exchange system in the Land of the Black Dragon, so the purchasing power of the currency was difficult to guarantee. That was, the credit value of the currency was almost equal to zero, which caused the face value of a copper coin to almost be equal to the value of its material.

Because of the lack of precious metals in the Land of Black Dragon, even copper was scarce, so money made of pure copper was almost non-existent. Most of them were mixed with lead, which was of low value and heavy weight, and would make the produced copper coins turn gray and dull.

Also, not only were coins produced officially, but there were also a lot of private coins. So, depending on the texture of the coins, you could find out in which area it was circulating, and even where it came from.

Pinching the five copper coins over and over, Master Chen thought back to whether he had heard of any skilled warriors from sects in the Huainan region being sent there recently.

Eventually, he stopped reminiscing and asked Shitou, "Are these six guests still staying in the inn?"

"They already checked out and left this morning," he replied.

"Is there anything else that didn't come to mind?" Master Chen once again shouted sternly.

"No, Master Chen. I really can't remember what those guests looked like, and I don't dare to deceive Master Chen with falsehoods. I really can't remember," Shitou replied.

"I bet you don't dare to deceive me either!" Master Chen said as he threw the five copper coins in front of Shitou. He then turned around and walked to the door of the booth.

Before going out he looked back at the servers and said, "If I learn that any of you dare to spread a word about what happened today..."

"We dare not, we dare not, we dare not..." the three said repeatedly.

"You better not!" After saying that, Master Chen pulled open the door of the booth and left.

When the sound of Master Chen's footsteps gradually disappeared in the distance, the four staff finally took a long breath and thought with a resigned look, 'What bad luck!'

Chapter 28: It's Very Important to Be Able to Read a Map

As currents surged beneath the entire town of Luoxia, Jiang Beiran and his party had already traveled a long way. They were currently standing on a plain and looking around.

"Huh... I'm clearly following the map. How come we're going along the wrong route again?" Liu Zijin held a map and looked left and right, but somehow, she just could not find the correct route.

"Let me try," Fang Qiuyao said and took the map, looking at it upright for a while. She then looked at it upside down. She even looked at it from an angle when she began to grow anxious, but she just couldn't make sense of it, and her pretty face reddened.

"Don't look at us... We don't know how to read this either."

Seeing Fang Qiuyao look toward them, the three sisters of the Yu family waved their hands in unison.

Sighing helplessly, Fang Qiuyao looked at Brother Jiang, who was sitting on a boulder drinking water not far from them.

Soon after leaving Luoxia Town that morning, the senior Brother told them that they must rely upon themselves to find the way for the rest of the journey. After all, reading the map and finding the way was a necessary skill. Otherwise, you would get lost in the deep mountains and forests once you left your place. What could you be expected to accomplish then?

In the beginning, Liu Zijin could still somewhat manage to recognize the map route, but after two hours of walking, she was increasingly unsure of where she actually was on the map.

"Actually...why don't we go and ask Brother?" Fang Qiuyao said as she put down the map and looked at the others.

The three sisters of the Yu family nodded their heads and all spoke separately.

“Agreed.”

“But who will go?”

“Brother will definitely still be mean to us.”

Actually, on the way, they had already asked Brother Jiang several times about the map. The first few times he would still patiently answer, but whenever they asked the same questions they had asked before, he would teach them a lesson. So they were a little afraid to speak up in the end.

Fang Qiuyao looked at Jiang Beiran and then at the map. She was just about to grit her teeth and say, “I’ll go.”

Then she saw Liu Zijin had taken the map from her hand and said, “Then I’ll go.”

“No, Sister Zijin. How can we let you go get scolded by senior Brother every time?”

Liu Zijin shook her head and smiled. “I’m all right with it. Isn’t the purpose of having a trial down the mountain to learn new things? What are a few scoldings?” she said.

“But...”

“Enough said. You guys just wait for me here,” Liu Zijin said. She then took the map and walked toward Jiang Beiran.

Looking at Liu Zijin’s retreating figure, the three sisters of the Yu family were touched and said in unison, “Sister Zijin is really a good person.”

With some anticipation...no, apprehension, Liu Zijin came up to Jiang Beiran and then bowed and shouted, “Brother Jiang.”

“Don’t know the way again?” Jiang Beiran asked after stuffing the water gourd into the storage ring and looking at Liu Zijin.

“Yes... It’s really hard to recognize where we are when there are no official roads around,” she replied.

“Didn’t I teach you before to keep an eye on the nearby beacons? Did you forget about that again?”

In the Land of the Black Dragon where there was no navigation system, the people naturally had their own way of getting around, such as setting up a mound of earth every five miles along the road, which is called a beacon.

Some main roads even had beacon maintenance officers, who were responsible for managing and maintaining them.

Hearing Jiang Beiran’s question, Liu Zijin lowered her head and said, “Zijin is foolish. Please punish me, Brother.”

“Here we go again…” he thought.

Jiang Beiran did not know if it was because Liu Zijin was too determined to excel, but whenever she could not answer the questions he asked during a conversation, she would ask to be punished.

“Am I that brutal in their hearts?”

Shaking his head, Jiang Beiran jumped off the boulder and took the map from Liu Zijin’s hand.

To be fair, the map issued by the sect was indeed poorly drawn. Under the premise of using the mountains and rivers as the benchmark, in the center of the map was Xihua City, which had the largest area within the jurisdiction. Around it was the approximate locations of the various mountains and rivers within the jurisdiction, and finally, the names of the villages and towns were filled in on the corresponding hills or riversides.

This mapping method might sound very clear, but the actual map looked just like mountains connected to mountains connected to mountains. It was just a mess.

Rolling up the map, Jiang Beiran said, “Actually, the fastest way to learn how to read a map is to learn how to draw a map.”

“Draw a map?” Liu Zijin was puzzled.

“That’s right. When you understand how this map was drawn, you will naturally understand how to follow what was drawn,” he said.

“I see. Brother, you do indeed have a solution.” Liu Zijin’s eyes shone after hearing this.

“Here. Take this book and take a good look at it. It should help you,” Jiang Beiran said as he took out a copy of the Drawing Records from the storage ring and handed it to Liu Zijin.

“Many thanks, Brother.” Bowing at Jiang Beiran, Liu Zijin took the Drawing Records with both hands and began to read it.

Looking at Liu Zijin’s serious expression as she read the book, Jiang Beiran also began to think about the coming arrangements.

The reason why he suddenly wanted to let Liu Zijin and the others fend for themselves was that as an Iron Seal, in addition to protecting the new disciples, teaching them some common sense was also within the scope of Jiang Beiran’s duties.

Especially given that Law Protector Yu had entrusted him with her most beloved disciples. If she found out that they hadn’t learned anything after returning to the sect, she would inevitably come after him and seek trouble again.

So Jiang Beiran decided to still train them a little in the most basic skills such as reading maps and wayfinding.

After an hour had passed, Liu Zijin closed the book and said to Jiang Beiran, “Brother, I seem to have somewhat understood.”

Jiang Beiran nodded after hearing that. “All right, then continue finding the way.”

It turned out that Liu Zijin was indeed very smart and soon found the official road after realizing the trick to wayfinding.

“Jifu Village should be right ahead,” Liu Zijin said, pointing ahead. Then she walked past a junction.

“Wow! Sister Zijin, you’re amazing!” Fang Qiuyao couldn’t help but clap her hands.

“It’s the book that Brother showed me that’s amazing. The things written in it are easy to understand. It’s very helpful for wayfinding.”

“Book? What book?” Fang Qiuyao asked.

“This one,” Liu Zijin said as she showed Fang Qiuyao the Drawing Records.

“Show it to us too.” The three sisters of the Yu family also came over out of curiosity after hearing what Liu Zijin had said.

“The... Drawing... Records...” Reading out the three big words on the cover softly, Yu Guizhui said, “I have noted it down. I’ll buy a copy to read when I get back.”

Liu Zijin smiled after hearing her words and did not say anything. Although she was not very sure, she felt like the book was probably written by the senior Brother himself. The words and the lines were really very different from those written by famous scholars who could publish books, giving off a very casual aura.

Putting the Drawing Records away once more, Liu Zijin led the other sisters to Jiang Beiran and asked, “Senior Brother, what should we do next?”

Jiang Beiran gave them a sweeping glance and said, “Tell me what you all think.”

After thinking for a while, Fang Qiuyao answered first.

“Should we go to the village to ask about how all those children disappeared and figure out the time and place first?” she asked.

The other sisters also agreed after hearing this.

But Jiang Beiran shook his head and said, “You will only alarm the perpetrators unnecessarily by doing so.”

Looking at the five bewildered faces, Jiang Beiran explained, saying, “We knew back when we received the quest that the children of Jifu Village went missing frequently, which means that the culprit may still be active or even lurking in the village. Once you go and ask around, you will certainly have to reveal your identity as a disciple of the Sect of Returning Hearts. If the culprit

hears about it, he will naturally be much more cautious and may even stop committing crimes.”

All the sisters nodded their heads after listening and Liu Zijin said, “Brother, what you said makes a lot of sense, but if we don’t ask around, then how should we investigate?”

Jiang Beiran smiled slightly and replied, “There’s no need to investigate. Just quietly wait for them to commit their next crime.”

Chapter 29: Do You Recognize This Formation?

As the night slowly descended, because of the lack of light, it was as if Jifu Village was entirely immersed in black ink. It could be said that one couldn’t even see one’s own hands stretched out right in front of their face. It formed a stark contrast against the bustling night market of Luoxia Town.

And in this pitch-black darkness, a figure jumped over the fence of a courtyard and went up to the back door of the house, seemingly familiar with the way.

Carefully poking a hole in a layer of window paper, the figure pulled out a bamboo pipe from his waist and inserted it through the hole.

“Phew!”

As he blew out a light breath, gray smoke gushed into the extreme darkness through the bamboo tube.

About five minutes later, the figure stood up and opened the window, then entered the room through it. His whole set of operations could be described as smooth and without delay. When he came out from the window again, there was a little boy about three years old in his arms.

Not far away on a roof, the expression of Fang Qiuyao, who had witnessed the whole process, was full of surprise. She had to bite her tongue to force herself to hold back from asking, “Brother, how do you know he will definitely come to steal this family’s children today!?”

Then, when the figure ran out of Jifu Village, Jiang Beiran gestured for the five junior Sisters to follow him, and together they quietly went after the figure.

This was Jiang Beiran's plan to capture the culprit. That was, they would follow the child thief straight to their headquarters the next time they committed a crime. It was much faster than setting up an investigation, and it could be said that such a method of solving the case was brought about by the low cost of crime.

When the child thief entered the village, Jiang Beiran had already found that he was just an ordinary person who had not practiced cultivation before. Because of this, as long as the six of them kept a slight distance and concealed their breathing, it was impossible for them to be discovered.

But although the thief was not a cultivator, he could run quite fast. In just ten minutes, he had covered five kilometers on foot and made his way into some woods.

Jiang Beiran and the others followed after him immediately. Although bushes and trees were blocking their line of sight in the woods, it was still easy for them to keep up with the thief because they had targeted his scent and the sound of his breathing.

'Eh? His scent and the sound of his breathing have disappeared?'

Just as Jiang Beiran made his way around a large tree and was about to continue the chase ahead, he suddenly found that the thief's scent and the sound of his breathing had disappeared before him.

Liu Zijin and the rest of the girls also discovered the same thing. They all stopped to look at Jiang Beiran with a baffled expression.

"It seems that we have entered a formation," Jiang Beiran replied after looking around.

"Entered a formation?" Fang Qiuyao was surprised. "Someone set up a formation in these woods?"

"Yep." Jiang Beiran nodded while picking up a stone and throwing it into the distance.

"Then, Brother, what should we do now?" Liu Zijin asked, having become somewhat accustomed to it.

“Having entered someone else’s formation, naturally, we must break it. Are any of you good at formations?” he asked.

The five junior Sisters shook their heads in unison.

The Order of Water Mirror specialized in music and did not teach about formations, so one could say that they knew nothing in this respect.

“Then we’re dead. I don’t know how to break formations either, so we’ll have to wait and starve to death here.”

“Eh!?” The five junior Sisters exclaimed in unison, “Brother, you actually don’t know formations?”

“What’s so strange about that? I’m a disciple of the Order of Blue Heart. We don’t learn about formations either,” he replied.

Fang Qiuyao couldn’t help but mutter in her heart after hearing this, ‘If you really want to put it that way, the Order of Blue Heart doesn’t teach about weaving or medicine either.’

“This formation... is probably set up by those children-stealing thieves, right?” Yu Guishui asked, hugging her two sisters. At the moment, she was really a bit scared.

“There is no need to doubt that. If it isn’t them, the thief just now would not have been able to escape the formation so easily,” Jiang Beiran said.

Actually, Jiang Beiran also did not expect a mere group of human traffickers to actually be capable of setting up a formation. The craft of formations was a rather sophisticated discipline that very few were good at, even among cultivators.

But Jiang Beiran was not worried about encountering any major challenges. After all, if there really was a highly skilled person here, then options would have popped up in the system to remind him about it. Since nothing had popped up at the moment, it meant that there was no major problem with the situation.

At the moment, Fang Qiuyao, who had been thinking for a while, said, “Since the thief can run out of here, we can run out as well as long as we find the right route. Correct?”

After hearing what she said, Jiang Beiran said with a grateful expression, “Smart. Then let’s split up to find the way. It’s better than just standing at the same spot and waiting for death anyway.”

‘So, the senior Brother is actually also capable of complimenting people.’ Fang Qiuyao thought. She felt a bit pleased in her heart.

After assigning the direction that each of the five would go in, Jiang Beiran also walked towards the area he had selected.

‘Door of Du (Prohibition)... Door of Sheng (Openness)... Jiachen (41st sexagenary cycle), in conjunction with Tianchong Star (third star of the big dipper), Tianfu Star (fourth star of the big dipper), Tianying Star (a star slightly above the tail of the big dipper)... How impressive, the 174th combination, corresponding to Jingzhe (Waking of Insects, the third solar term). These thieves have actually set up one of the nine combinations of the solar terms of Yang (from the 22nd solar term of the previous year until the end of the 9th solar term of the current year) [1]. This is a Mind-Controlling Formation of Small Multiples of Six,’ Jiang Beiran thought to himself.

After observing the surrounding arrangements for a while, Jiang Beiran quickly recognized the formation set up by the thieves. He could not help but be a little surprised in his heart, as he had initially thought that it was just an ordinary maze formation. However, he did not expect it to be a mind-controlling formation capable of depriving the target of sensory perception. It could be considered quite a high-end formation.

It was a pity that the person who set up the formation was too inexperienced. The Qimen Dunjia [1] techniques used were obviously not good enough, so it was just a defective product that only looked well done on the surface but lacked real substance.

Otherwise, if this Mind-Controlling Formation of Small Multiples of Six was completely set up well, Jiang Beiran believed that he would have been possessed as soon as he entered it.

Picking up a small stone on the ground, Jiang Beiran aimed it at a tree in the [Dui] position (eighth trigram of the eight trigrams) and threw it.

A bird’s nest shattered with a poof, frightening Yu Guizhui, who was searching the route below. It startled her so much that she wrapped her hands around

her head and squatted down on the ground, shouting, “Bro... Brother! There are traps! Just now there a trap tried to shoot me.”

After hearing this, Jiang Beiran replied, “It’s okay, just be careful. It won’t kill you.”

After hearing this, Yu Guizhui wanted to go up and punch Jiang Beiran twice with her fists. She didn’t even know where the attack had come from just now. It was obviously a very powerful concealed weapon. If it hit her, half of her body would probably have gone missing.

Hearing that her sister was attacked, Yu Guishui shouted, “Second sister, pay attention to every step you take. It’s definitely very dangerous here.”

“Got it!” Yu Guizhui answered, then continued to look for the way forward.

After knocking down the bird’s nest, based on the change in the field of the formation, Jiang Beiran could be considered as having obtained a preliminary understanding of how it was set up. Then, he took out a bronze toad from the storage ring, held it in his hand, and shook it twice.

“Clang! Clang!”

Hearing the sudden sounds of metals clashing from not far away, Fang Qiuyao pulled out the Sword of White Rainbow and said, “Who is the scum out there!? If you are capable, come out and fight!”

She held the sword for quite a while but did not see any figure come out. So, she asked in a low voice, “Brother, what was that sound just now?”

“I’m not sure. It’s probably a ghost demanding a life. Have you ever heard of a ghost ringing a bell? It’s that sound,” he replied.

Fang Qiuyao’s small face turned white with fear when she heard it. She quickly squatted down and begged for mercy in a whisper, saying, “The Omnipotent Heavenly Father protects everything, everything... waaaaaa.”

Listen to Fang Qiuyao cry out, Jiang Beiran almost laughed out loud. He really had not expected the righteous Fang Qiuyao to be so afraid of ghosts.

At the same time, three options popped up.

[Option One: Go up, hug Fang Qiuyao and comfort her, telling her not to be afraid. Completion reward: Star-Shattering Dragon Palm (Earth Grade Middle Tier)]

[Option Two: Tell Fang Qiuyao that there are no ghosts in the world. Completion reward: Shifting Steps and Form (Yellow Grade Middle Tier)]

[Option Three: Mock Fang Qiuyao for being so timid. Completion reward: Random basic skill point +1]

[1]: All the terms here are technical terms in Qimen Dunjia, an ancient form of divination from China.

Chapter 30: We Feel Like You Are Lying to Us, Brother, but We Have No Evidence

Choosing Option Three, Jiang Beiran laughed and said, “Sister Fang, being so timid, how do you even uphold righteousness? Hahaha.”

Fang Qiuyao puffed up her mouth in anger after hearing this. She wiped her tears hard and didn’t say anything, then continued to look for the way out.

However, each time she plucked a bit of grass, in her heart, she imagined that it was Jiang Beiran’s hair.

‘D*mn you for laughing at me! D*mn you for laughing at me!’ she thought to herself.

After Fang Qiuyao went away, Jiang Beiran squatted down and made a forceful pouring gesture, pointing the bronze toad’s head downward.

“Clang. Clang...”

Five copper coins poured out from the toad’s belly in turn.

Not far away, when Fang Qiuyao heard this sound, her body trembled again. However, she forcefully held back from shouting. She was reciting some incantations she learned from God knew where in her heart.

Meanwhile, Jiang Beiran put the bronze toad to the side, looked at the five copper coins, and silently read, “Xu (11th earthly branches), Geng (7th heavenly stem), Gui (10th heavenly stem), Du (Door of Prohibition), Si (Door

of Death)... Hah, this person is not very capable, but his heart is quite greedy.”

Laughing in his heart, Jiang Beiran took out a compass from the storage ring and began his deduction.

On the other side, Yu Guishui, who was trying to find a way out, chose to keep walking towards the front. However, as she walked, she found that her third sister had appeared in front of her.

“Eh? Miaomiao? Why are you here?” Yu Guishui asked, confused.

Yu Guimiao was also startled at the same time and said, “I just kept walking forward carefully and then...”

“Sis? Miaomiao!?” Just as Yu Guimiao was speaking, Yu Guizhui also showed up next to them, her face full of surprise. “I clearly chose to search in a different direction than you guys, how could...?”

Yu Guishui listened and got nervous. “What kind of formation is this? I...”

As she spoke, Yu Guishui suddenly felt a wave of dizziness and hurriedly rubbed her temples, saying, “I... suddenly feel very dizzy.”

Yu Guizhui also felt a sudden burst of dizziness after hearing that, and the elder sister in front of her seemed to have split into two.

“Sis... sis, I also seem to be a little dizzy. Help... help me...”

Feeling her eyelids become heavier and heavier, Yu Guizhui wanted to shout loudly in fear but found that she could not say anything. She could only watch as the boundless darkness surged towards her and engulfed her...

“Plop...”

Hearing the sound of someone falling to the ground, Jiang Beiran, who was shaking the compass, glanced in that direction.

‘Although this formation is set up sloppily, it seems that it is still too powerful for these junior Sisters whose cultivation level is not yet high enough,’ he thought to himself.

“Golden merits and virtues open the way slightly. The dark and grand pool is always flowing with fragrance. The boundless spiritual treasure shines light!”

As Jiang Beiran chanted in a soft voice, the compass in his hand trembled slightly. At the same time, three symbols lit up.

‘Tianchong Star (third star in the big dipper) of the Eight Palaces...’

At that moment, in Jiang Beiran’s eyes, the surrounding woods had disappeared, and in its place was a Mind-Controlling Formation of Small Multiples of Six, emitting a purple glow.

After observing carefully for a moment, Jiang Beiran first took three steps towards the position of the Door of Alarm and stomped down with force. He then took another step towards the position of the Door of Scenery and jabbed forward with his palm...

As Jiang Beiran made his moves one after another, the purple glow emitted by the Mind-Controlling Formation of Small Multiples of Six became fainter and fainter. Finally, it dissipated completely.

After breaking the formation, Jiang Beiran took another six steps backward, squatted down, and plunged his hand into the earth.

‘Oh? The thieves are rich enough,’ Jiang Beiran lamented as he pulled out a yellow Metal Spirit Stone from the earth.

‘Tsk, although it’s just a Low Tier Metal Spirit Stone, it’s by no means something that ordinary people can afford. Even if they sell their children, they can’t possibly sell them for this much money... The person who set up this formation is really quite interesting.’

While gold, silver, and copper coins were the main currencies in the world of ordinary people, for cultivators, the main currency was Spirit Stones.

And the reason why Spirit Stones could be the main currency was basically the same as copper coins. It was because it had equal value itself.

The so-called Spirit Stone was the crystallization of spiritual energy gathered from the essence of heaven and earth.

Mystic cultivators needed it for cultivation and operating formations, and it was even vital when operating certain high-level magical treasures.

It could be said that the spirit stone was closely related to everything in the Mystic Cultivation world, and naturally it was an extremely secure physical currency.

Throwing the Low Tier Metal Spirit Stone into the storage ring, Jiang Beiran slowly spread his mental power out and found that there was no one rushing in his direction. At the same time, he also found that the four junior Sisters had already fallen to the ground unconscious and only Liu Zijin was still struggling to stay awake.

'Oh? This Liu Zijin clearly has not learned any means to defend against the formation, yet she managed to hang on with sheer willpower until now? Could it be that she was born naturally with a body of Three Yangs? The Sect of Returning Hearts has gotten a treasure this time,' he thought to himself.

Putting the compass and the bronze toad back into the storage ring, Jiang Beiran went over to her and took out a Storax Pill. He handed it to Liu Zijin, who was drenched in sweat, and said, "Eat it."

For Liu Zijin, who was almost couldn't support herself anymore, Jiang Beiran's voice was like a thunderbolt. It called back her three souls and seven spirits as they were about to fly away.

"Brother!?" Liu Zijin turned back quickly, her face full of panic.

"It's alright now. Eat up," Jiang Beiran said.

Without asking why the formation had suddenly disappeared, Liu Zijin took the Storax Pill handed to her by Jiang Beiran and swallowed it in one gulp.

In a flash, her mental energy that had been on the verge of collapse instantly gathered, and her vision became clear again.

"You rest for a while. I'll go wake up the other Sisters." Jiang Beiran finished speaking and left in the direction of the three Sisters of the Yu family.

Looking at Jiang Beiran's retreating back, Liu Zijin wanted to say something. However, while her mouth opened and closed a few times, she still did not say

anything. She sat down cross-legged in place and began to practice the Rhymed Formula of Returning Hearts.

Walking to the place where the three Sisters of the Yu family had fallen, Jiang Beiran could not help but be stunned.

‘No way... So, triplets end up in the same posture when they fall?’

Looking at the three Sisters with identical postures, Jiang Beiran laughed softly. He then took out a jade vial from the storage ring and put it in front of the leftmost Sister Yu’s nose.

“Oh...”

As a floral fragrance entered her nose, Yu Guishui slowly awakened. She then suddenly sat up straight, looking around at her surroundings.

“Bro... Brother?”

“Yep, it’s me. Come, swallow this medicine,” Jiang Beiran said as he handed Yu Guishui the Storax Pill.

“Brother... What just happened?” she asked.

“Let’s talk about it later. Take the medicine first,” he said.

“Yes...” Yu Guishui nodded and swallowed the Storax Pill.

Then Jiang Beiran used the same method to wake up the other junior Sisters and got them all to gather in one place.

The Storax Pill refreshed the mind, and in less than ten minutes, the five Sisters had completely regained their energy.

“Excuse me, sir.”

Seeing one of Yu Sisters raise her hand, Jiang Beiran’s expression appeared very satisfied. Even in this situation, she did not forget to shout ‘excuse me.’ It seemed that his conditioning was very successful.

“Speak,” he said.

“Is it you who broke the formation, Brother?” she asked.

Jiang Beiran shook his head after listening to her question, then said, "I said I do not know about formations. My guess is that the formation probably cannot trap so many people, so it disintegrated on its own."

The five Sisters all had a questioning look on their faces as if they were wondering whether Jiang Beiran was looking down on their intelligence. However, no one asked further questions, because they knew that it would only make the senior Brother upset.