

## **A Father 26**

Chapter 26: The Eerie Angry Cry, Here Comes the Bull Demon King!

The cold wind rustled fiercely, swirling with the madness of winter as the snow drifted aimlessly.

Snowflakes landing on the dark tiles atop the long corridor emitted a gentle scraping noise.

The lifted winter breeze, ceaselessly fluttered the white curtains that hung as if suspended in mid-air above the pavilions.

Li Che stopped in his tracks, his facial expression as if frozen by the bitter winter in a flash, eyes locked straight ahead like two unsheathed swords, piercing through the harsh cold and settling on the old woman who was bowing beside the man in white.

"Lei Chunlan!"

A deep voice emanated from Li Che's throat.

Xu Beihu was clearly aware of Li Che's movements and the shift in his emotions, briefly taken aback.

"What's wrong?" Xu Beihu frowned and asked.

Li Che's thoughts surged and fluctuated; he would not forget that face.

Lei Chunlan, the midwife who had delivered Xi Xi, was also a wicked woman who had caused the death of many children she had personally helped to birth.

Now, she appeared here, a place Li Che had never imagined she would be.

In that moment, Li Che's heart turned exceedingly grim.

In his mind, a myriad of thoughts circulated.

Lei Chunlan... What was her relationship with Young Master Si?

It was said that Lei Chunlan was entangled with the Spirit Infant Sect; could it be that there was also a connection to the Si Family?

The background of Lei Chunlan appeared to be stronger than he had imagined, which explained why the Outer City's bounty notice for her was taken down after a few days, whereas his "Bull Demon" warrant was still prominently displayed on the notice board.

"Encountered an acquaintance," Li Che suppressed his emotions, speaking calmly.

Though Xu Beihu was burly, his sensitivity to emotions was sharp, and he noticed that Li Che's gaze toward the old woman was unusual.

"Understand the grudges first and then make plans," Xu Beihu said.

Li Che nodded, and the two of them stepped into the pavilion box.

The servant of the Golden Splendor Pavilion delicately placed the wood carving, covered with black cloth, onto the table that had been prepared in advance within the pavilion.

"Brother Mubai, the genius wood carving master from my Xu Family has arrived. Let's see his craftsmanship," Xu Beihu declared with a hearty laugh as he stepped into the pavilion.

The man in white clothes, sitting on a rosewood Taishi Chair, suddenly cast his gaze over, and Li Che got a clear view of the man's face.

There was a sort of eerie beauty to the handsome features, his eyes carried a melancholic hue, and a tear mole at the corner of an eye; his charm held an immensely infectious sorrow, teetering on the edge of breaking into tears, with a single strand of hair falling across his cheek, gently swaying in the breeze.

"North Tiger, you've truly done me a great favor," Si Mubai rose to his feet, his voice almost sounding tearful.

He fist-bumped Xu Beihu, then his gaze fell on Li Che.

"This must be Master Li? Though you have not entered the Inner City, your wood carvings have indeed caused a sensation there; such profound meaning in your works, it's precious to find below a Woodcarving Master..." ¶

Si Mubai smiled, but his attempt at smiling was more pained than crying.

Li Che nodded slightly, however, his eyes still lingered on Lei Chunlan.

At this moment, Lei Chunlan recognized Li Che as well, and her wrinkled, ravine-deep face blossomed into a kind smile, gently looking at Li Che, neither hiding nor evading.

Si Mubai noticed Li Che's gaze and continued with his unsightly smile, "She's just a servant in the mansion helping with some chores. If she has offended Master Li in any way, please be forgiving."

Xu Beihu narrowed his eyes, and Li Che understood the subtext in Si Mubai's words.

Lei Chunlan was his person; if there was any conflict, bear with it...

The implication between the lines suggested that Si Mubai clearly knew what Lei Chunlan was involved in, but his attitude was very insistent on protecting her.

Or perhaps... it was that Li Che's status was simply not significant enough for Si Mubai to take seriously.

Lei Chunlan's smile became increasingly radiant, as if a withered old chrysanthemum was forcefully blooming.

The atmosphere in the pavilion seemed to grow a few degrees colder in an instant, as the howling wind swept in.

After a short pause, a smirk surfaced on Li Che's chilly face, "Perhaps I mistook her for someone else, I thought she was the midwife who delivered my beloved daughter, involved with the Spirit Infant Sect."

"That midwife has harmed the lives of many newborns, a truly malevolent person, wanted by the government office; how could she possibly appear in Young Master Si's Mansion. It seems I was mistaken," Li Che said.

Li Che's words, despite their sarcastic undertone, were taken by Si Mubai as a sign of Li Che's softening stance. Si Mubai's lips curled into an even more unpleasant smile, and with a wave of his hand, Lei Chunlan bowed her head and left.

"Master Li has given me face, which is truly wonderful. Now let's take a look at Master Li's skill," Si Mubai spoke lightly, effortlessly moving past the topic.

Xu Beihu remained silent, his expression slightly gloomy, but he felt somewhat disappointed with Li Che.

Even though Li Che, despite taking action, would not have been able to touch Lei Chunlan, with him there, he could still have supported Li Che to regain some face. But Li Che opted for a more submissive approach.

Although prudent, lacking a bit of reckless abandon, Xu Beihu wasn't entirely pleased.

But he could understand, after all... he was dealing with the Si Family.

However, Li Che's personality was similar to that of his younger brother Xu You—too gloomy, too capable of enduring in silence, which made him uneasy.

Since Li Che had taken the initiative to yield, Xu Beihu couldn't be bothered to say more.

Si Mubai, on the other hand, walked up to the wood carving, pulled away the black veil, and suddenly the "Nine-headed Guanyin Angry Cry Town Ghost Statue" came into Si Mubai's view.

Si Mubai's breathing suddenly stalled.

A look of joy appeared in his eyes as he stared in a daze, and gradually, two lines of tears slid down his cheeks.

"Wuu wuu wuu... so good, so good... though lacking divinity, the meaning is profound. The nine heads of Guanyin, each with a different expression, all embody compassion for the suffering. A single furrowing of the brow is a gesture of pity for all beings, rich in meaning amidst the angry cry..."

"Good, really good."

Si Mubai was crying and laughing at the same time, clapping his hands in approval.

The next moment, Si Mubai's palms forcefully pressed against the wood carving, he opened his mouth and began to sob uncontrollably. Vague streams of white vapor began to rise from atop the wood carving.

Li Che's eyes narrowed, such eerie circumstances tensed up his mind fiercely.

The whole pavilion was enveloped in a unique and strange atmosphere in an instant—as if ghosts were crying, as if women were wailing, as if old men were crying their hearts out...

Li Che even felt a lump in his throat and could not help but feel like crying.

Xu Beihu stepped in front of Li Che and gently patted his shoulder, instantly dispersing the crying emotions within Li Che.

Taking a step back, Li Che's gaze flickered with astonishment.

"Si Mubai is cultivating divinity. You were affected by the spilled divinity. I've suppressed it for you, so it's fine now," Xu Beihu said with a smile.

Though he wasn't completely satisfied with Li Che's disposition, Xu Beihu recognized that Li Che's talent was evident to all and still worth drawing in and befriending.

Li Che thanked him with a fist salute.

"Your cultivation has only just reached Skin Refinement Completion. If you were affected by the 'Angry Cry' divinity for too long, I'm afraid it would damage your spirit..."

"Take the Gold Leaf and leave. The carriage is outside, you can go back by yourself. If you want to stroll around the Inner City, that's fine too. Just make sure you leave the city before it gets dark," Xu Beihu said, chuckling lightly.

Li Che received five Gold Leaves, tucked them away carefully, and took his leave with a fist salute.

He cast a deep glance at Si Mubai, who was still holding the wood carving and voraciously absorbing from it—as the wood carving seemed to wither like a frostbitten eggplant, no longer resembling the image of Guanyin...

Li Che licked his lips.

His hand... seemed a bit itchy.

He resisted the urge to use his prototypical divine power, "Thousand Analyzing Hands," to siphon the divinity from Si Mubai.

Li Che exited the Golden Splendor Pavilion.

Back on the carriage, Li Che sat upright in the luxurious carriage, his fingers gently, rhythmically tapping on the tea table inside, his gaze slightly focused.

"Old man, stop the carriage for a moment. It's rare for me to come to the Inner City, and I plan to buy some osmanthus cakes for my wife. I'll bring back some good food too, just wait for me," Li Che said with a smile.

Although the charioteer was from the Xu Family in the Inner City, he was quite courteous to Li Che, responding with a smile.

"Master Li, go ahead, and I'll wait for you here. As long as you leave the Inner City before dark, there will be no issue," the charioteer said.

Li Che thanked him warmly with a fist salute.

The Inner City was bustling, with no fewer people or less activity than the Outer City.

Once he was out of the charioteer's line of sight, Li Che's face instantly turned ice-cold.

He first went to a silk shop and bought some black cloth, turned it into a loose black robe, bought a bamboo hat, then took out a carving knife and thin wood from his bosom, and with his current skills, he made a Cute Bull Mask in just a few breaths time.

He found an empty alley.

Putting on the bamboo hat, he first hid his clothing, then donned the black robe, the bamboo hat, and covered his face with the Cute Bull Mask.

In an instant!

The shadows cast on the alley walls by the light began to twist violently, wriggle, and elongate!

It was as if divine dragons were murmuring and demonic elephants were bellowing!

Endurance? Stability? Yielding?

I'm just going to switch posture... to kill you!

"Lei Chunlan..."

"Your Bull Demon master has arrived!"