

A Snake 671

Chapter 671: Moonlit Medicinal Pool

My heart warmed as I remembered when Yu Longting was away; Ginseng had given my chaotic inner world a touch of warmth. "Shenshen, don't turn back into a bracelet, join me in the Medicinal Pool."

"Okay." Shenshen happily snuggled into my arms.

I ordered the zombies to enforce martial law nearby and entered the Medicinal Pool with Shenshen.

Perhaps I was used to it by now; I hadn't initially accepted the foul smell of the Medicinal Pool.

Leaning against a piece of Quartz Rock, my fingers caressed my abdomen, "Little Dumpling, where exactly has half of your soul gone?"

Yu Longting, where did you go again?

There is such a weak Life Lamp within my body, is it in great pain and discomfort?

Fortunately, my Spiritual Power had not only recovered, but it seemed like my realm had also increased several times over, and my Qi Sea could accommodate several times the Spiritual Power than before.

From today, I need to start taking care of that cheongsam again.

Although this bit of Spiritual Power might be just a drop in the bucket for him, whose Life Lamp was weak, I will definitely take care of him with everything I have.

Little Dumpling furrowed his brows in his sleep, as if he heard my voice, he muttered, "Mommy, save me... Mommy..."

"Mommy is here. Is someone hurting you? Dumpling... Dumpling..." Following the contour of my abdomen, I found Little Dumpling's little face and gently touched it.

His brow gradually relaxed, but then he fell into a deep sleep and stopped talking.

A tear slid down from my eye socket; my tears had now become clear and were no longer bloody. Raising my hand, I wiped the tears from my cheek, "I will definitely find you... find your other half of the soul, and Mommy will never lose you again."

"I will help you find back the other half of Dumpling's soul." Xiao Honghong's murmur came from above my head, the little guy quietly laying on my hair.

The moon rose in the east, bathing the earth in moonlight.

The green pool full of disgusting slime was illuminated like a piece of Emperor green jade.

It was crystal clear and full of vitality.

Not a speck of cotton fluff, not a single natural crack on the rock.

Perfection without a single flaw.

Located in the Medicinal Pool, I closed my eyes, deeply feeling my meridians widening.

Like a two-lane road at the urban-rural interface, it expanded into a six-lane road in a big city, feeling the power of the surging Spiritual Power.

Suddenly inspired, I felt that this was the time to further my relationship with Xiao Honghong. "Xiao Honghong, shall we bond now?"

"Yes!" The little guy blurted out this firm word.

I still kept my eyes closed, but my senses became extraordinarily sharp.

The breeze swept over the mountains, and the spring water flowed slowly from the mountain streams.

Everything was incredibly clear in the darkness, perceived under the moonlight.

The hairpin in my hand, moved by my heartfelt longing, cut open a slit in my fingertip.

I dropped a drop of blood, Xiao Honghong actively flew down to catch the drop of blood. "Woman, where on your body shall I reside?"

"Anywhere is fine," I replied.

Xiao Honghong said, "I'm too fat to fit in a nostril or an ear canal without stretching it, which would make it look ugly!"

The little creature was usually so proud, but it turned out to be considerate of its little warm nest.

"I am already ugly enough, a little more won't matter." I smiled with pursed lips.

Xiao Honghong crawled into my hair. "Let's reside in your hair for now. Once I absorb the entire Wind-Setting Pearl into my body, I can shrink a little, then I can reside in your ear, you..."

"What's wrong?" I asked softly.

Xiao Honghong: "Will it hurt you? I heard that when Gu insects bond, the host's internal organs... all hurt a lot."

Chapter 672: The Emperor is Not in a Hurry, Eunuchs are Anxious to Death!

"There's a slight sensation, as if a mosquito had bitten me," I whispered softly.

Xiao Honghong's voice grew softer and fainter, "Madam, I really did try my best."

"Yes," I responded gently, placing my hand on my abdomen and fell into a deep sleep.

I hadn't slept for over twenty hours, either fleeing or immersed in crippling fear and sorrow.

My spiritual power had been overdrawn, and now I could finally rest for a moment.

When I woke up again, there was a slight burning sensation on my body.

Opening my eyes, I saw the pre-dawn light and realized I was holding Xiao Shenshen in the Medicinal Pool, where we had soaked for an entire day and night.

Fortunately, this Medicinal Pool was rather special; otherwise, we would have certainly peeled our skin.

The cuts on my palm had healed completely, though I wasn't sure whether it was Xiao Shenshen's breath-healing or the peculiar effects of the Medicinal Pool.

I first carried the sleeping Xiao Shenshen to the shore and leaned her against a fairly round and protruding rock.

I clumsily put on the cheongsam and then dressed the bare-bodied Xiao Shenshen in a white garment; this little girl was quite interesting.

The clothes could transform into different styles based on one's thoughts.

She probably liked the white dress for herself, so she wore a dress, but on me, it was an ancient-style sheer garment.

"Young Madam, are you helping Shenshen get dressed?" Shenshen woke up bleary-eyed, looking bewilderingly adorable.

I wrapped a long, thin sash around her slender waist and tied a cute bow, "Yes."

"Why are you wearing so little? You'll freeze the Life Lamp of our young master," Shenshen said anxiously.

I calmed her down, "My body is healed already; I don't need to wear clothes to protect the Life Lamp inside my Soul anymore."

"That's great," Shenshen leaned in and kissed my cheek.

Her little face turned red again as she pointed to her fingers, "Shenshen, hungry."

"I'll take you down for some delicious food," I pinched her chubby cheek and slung the shoulder bag on.

The rest of the clothes had acquired a strange smell and had turned a mold-like color from the green medicinal juice of the Medicinal Pool.

I thought it over, packed them up, and threw them down.

Then, climbing down the green vines with Shenshen, I carried the cumbersome bag on my back.

I was planning to find a household to knock on and ask where my master, Zhang Zidao, was, before considering where to eat.

Just then, I saw an old man with white hair under an ancient banyan, pacing back and forth irritably with a cigarette in his mouth, "Elder, you are too composed! Your top disciple has soaked in the Medicinal Pool for a day and night! That pool becomes corrosive after midnight. Falling in could turn one into a skeleton!"

"You're so noisy that the Old Taoist Priest can't even enter meditation," Zhang Zidao said, picking at the large holes in his old cloth shoes.

He touched his toes a few times then sniffed his fingers.

Although the white-haired and black-clothed elder showed great respect to Zhang Zidao, seeing the Old Taoist Priest's sloppy speech and behavior, he could hardly stand it and shifted to the side, "It's like the emperor isn't in a hurry while the eunuch is dying of anxiety! We've stayed up all night just because we were worried about her..."

Turning around, the elder saw me walking with Xiao Shenshen holding my hand.

"Little girl, it's good you're alright. What does it feel like after soaking all night?" The elder breathed a sigh of relief and quickly asked about my condition.

I politely greeted Zhang Zidao and the elder, "Master, elder, hello. I feel alright, just... a bit hungry. I wonder if it's convenient to have breakfast inside the stronghold? To be honest, I haven't eaten anything for a day and a night... Also, here is the Yin Bell back to you."

Chapter 673 The Girl from Red Gate

"The breakfast thing is a trifle, I had someone prepare it a long time ago," said the elder, tall and lean as he stood beside me, like a towering pine reaching into the clouds, receiving the Yin Bell with a smile.

When he took the Yin Bell into his hands, his smile suddenly froze as if he remembered something.

"Roar~"

At the same time, the dispersed Walking Corpses guarding the surroundings suddenly went out of control and approached the elder with a hiss.

In the strong Corpse Qi, there was an aura of wild beastliness.

The elder was forced to step back twice and shook the "Yin Bell".

He discovered it was actually a Copper Block, incapable of ringing, and his lips twitched in an instant.

"Hey, you as the Stronghold Master really are a dud, can't even command your own Walking Corpses," Zhang Zidao casually threw out a stack of yellow paper talismans, each seemingly in disarray but landing precisely on the foreheads of the Walking Corpses.

The elder said with a flushed face, "This isn't a bell at all, and it doesn't ring, how could the Walking Corpses possibly listen to me?"

"Then how come my disciple used it just fine? You're clearly making excuses," Zhang Zidao picked his nose, flicked the booger away with his hand, exceptionally...

Unmindful of formalities.

After some thought, the elder handed the Yin Bell to me, "Miss, could you please take care of this Yin Bell for now?"

"Take... it?" I held the chill-inducing Yin Bell in my hand again, "Do you want me to control the Walking Corpses temporarily?"

The elder nodded noncommittally, "If so many Walking Corpses lose control, it will bring quite a bit of trouble to the village."

At that moment, the Binding Curse made of yellow paper on the Walking Corpses' heads became ineffective.

As they fell from their foreheads, they combusted spontaneously mid-air, destroying themselves.

But the Walking Corpses didn't become restless; instead, they knelt down towards me.

"You few, follow behind us, no causing trouble," I tried giving a command.

Through their masks, the Walking Corpses spoke in muffled tones, spouting a barrage of words I couldn't understand at all.

Then they lined up in two neat rows.

Like a military parade...

Who could imagine they were Zombies?

The elder probably felt helpless because he couldn't control the Walking Corpses, and an outsider like me had taken over the job, he couldn't help but gave a wry smile, "These Walking Corpses are speaking Ancient Dian Language, it roughly means, 'As you command, my lord'."

"Oh... so that's what it means, I wouldn't have known if you hadn't told me." Thoughts of Xiao Honghong feeling jealous, accusing me of flirting with Zombies flashed through my mind.

Could it be jealous that the Zombies are calling me master?

On the way to breakfast, I occasionally glanced at the white-haired elder who was the Stronghold Master.

His height and long legs made him appear like an imposing peak beside me, a mere four-foot-something dwarf.

Looking up, I could barely make out his face.

He is the Tianying Village Stronghold Master, also Yan Hua's brother, my Maternal Granduncle by blood.

I guessed that I can control the Walking Corpses because I have some Yan family blood?

As for acknowledging my relation to the elder, I wasn't too hung up on it in my heart.

My maternal grandmother favored sons over daughters and never cared much for me; her family might not look favorably upon me either.

Reaching the entrance of a courtyard, I instructed the Zombies to stay back so they wouldn't affect anyone's appetite, "You all guard outside this courtyard, behave yourselves."

"Wulu Wulu~" The Zombies obediently said in unison, proceeding to take up positions nearby.

The black-clothed, white-haired elder watched and sighed even more despondently.

The breakfast was prepared by several elder venerables.

They made fragrant glutinous rice, a plate of stir-fried mushrooms, sour soup fish, and stir-fried meat slices.

The breakfast so rich it made one's mouth water, but I was wary of hallucinations from eating mushrooms, so I resisted the urge and didn't eat that plate of mushrooms.

Xiao Shenshen, wielding her chopsticks, seemed to quite enjoy them.

"Eh? How did the girl from Red Gate come to our Tianying Village?" At that moment an octogenarian with a dragon-headed cane walked slowly into our breakfast courtyard.

My Maternal Granduncle, the Stronghold Master himself, got up to greet him, "Master Gu, what brings you here? Don't tell me you've become senile with age! This young lady, she's Senior Zhang's disciple."

Chapter 674: Otherwise, Master Hong Will Bite You to Death

"You're confused; I won't be, kneel down."

The elder, at least thirty years my maternal granduncle's elder, gave a low shout, "The Life-bound Gu is a Red Centipede, isn't it a girl from Red Gate?? A good-for-nothing without eyes."

My maternal granduncle's face turned awkward as he knelt, looking at me, "Girl... are you really a person from Red Gate?"

"No, no, the gu was given to me by a young lady." I waved my hands frantically, "Last night at Cold Moon Spring, I just formed a bond with it!"

"What!!"

That exclamation came simultaneously from both Master Gu and my maternal granduncle.

Seeing their shock-stricken faces, I touched my nose in bewilderment, "What's wrong?"

"You little girl, so young and yet lying, trying to deceive me!" Master Gu's face lengthened in an instant, especially angry, he banged his cane several times on the ground and coughed several times, "Cough cough cough, for a gu insect to recognize its master and become a Life-bound Gu, it takes at least a month. During this month, the five viscera and six entrails will be tortured and pained from the resisting gu, there will be diarrhea, vomiting... you? Yet you act as if nothing has happened."

After all, he was of considerable age and seniority.

When Master Gu coughed, it was as if it was an earth-shattering matter.

Everyone in the yard and the houses, having heard it, all rushed over to offer sympathies, pouring water for Master Gu to drink.

As they took care of Master Gu, they looked at me with animosity, "What's a woman from Red Gate doing sneaking into our Tianying Village, even angering Master Gu like this."

"Indeed, as the face shows the heart, uglier than a wild pig outside, and just as vile inside!! Our Tianying Village is beset with troubles within and threats without, and now you come here causing trouble."

"Get out of Tianying Village, we do not welcome you here!"

...

Facing these baseless verbal abuses, I felt somewhat innocent.

All I did was mention that Xiao Honghong had just bonded with me, and I've incurred their wrath?

Indeed, in unfamiliar places, one should not speak recklessly, lest they inadvertently offend the local customs.

After breakfast, I'll quickly leave this place.

Crack—

Zhang Zidao, although appearing silent, had intentionally put down his red chopsticks.

The chopsticks...

were directly embedded into... the wooden... table...

My maternal granduncle glanced at Zhang Zidao's dark and terrifying expression and panicked, his face becoming flushed as he chased the others away, "Are you few that idle? Go busy yourselves with your own matters, my honored guest isn't someone you can just insult at will!"

Out of respect for the Stronghold Master, those people did not continue their verbal attack on me.

Giving me a fierce glare, they continued with their tasks.

"Master Gu, just use your Vajra Eye to look at this girl, and then you'll know how long the gu on her has recognized her as its master," my maternal granduncle suggested quietly, narrowing his eyes.

Master Gu frowned, a sharp light flashing in the depths of his eyes.

With his lax, aged eyelids lifting, that captivating light swept over me like an X-ray, "Ah?... Huh? Indeed... it just recognized her... Life-bound Gu... still sleeping in her hair."

"It... thinks it's too fat to enter my body," I said, wanting to avoid unnecessary disputes, frankly.

Just as I finished, I wanted to slap myself.

What kind of answer was that? Gu insects can reside anywhere in the body.

Even if swallowed through the mouth, they can eventually come flying out along the esophagus.

There are also those that make a slit in the skin and live inside.

Xiao Honghong is concerned about her appearance; she probably didn't travel through my mouth because she was worried about disgusting me.

And those that live in cracked skin probably didn't want to frighten me.

But to others, my explanation must have sounded bizarre.

Sure enough, I was surrounded by sounds of disdain.

But Master Gu did not grow angry, "Come here, girl."

"Oh," I moved over and, seeing his gesture, lowered my head.

Master Gu reached into my hair to touch Xiao Honghong.

But the awakened Xiao Honghong bit him fiercely, swearing, "You old coot, don't touch me, only my master can touch me!! Stay away from me, or Master Hong will bite you to death."

Chapter 675: He's One of Our Own

Master Gu's face was a blank canvas, likely stunned into disbelief.

"I believe Xiao Honghong's ranting would sound like nonsensical Insect Language to others," I translated appropriately, "Elder Master Gu, this... Xiao Honghong doesn't like to be touched; please don't be offended."

Master Gu still didn't respond. A purple spider with a bloated belly crawled out of his ear, "You wretched centipede, how dare you bite my master—I'll kill you."

"Let's not kill each other, we're all Life-bound Gu. Isn't it better to live in harmony?" Knowing Xiao Honghong's combative nature, I scooped it into my palm first, my fingers enclosing it!

If they started to fight, it would surely spell trouble.

I dared not engage in Gu Fighting with the most revered elder on his own turf!

The purple spider hesitated, "Are you trying to protect this centipede?"

"No, no, no, I wouldn't dare. It did wrong by biting Master Gu, so bite me too, and we'll call it even," I tried my best to defuse the situation, hoping to turn conflict into peace.

It was then that Master Gu slowly started speaking, "Girl, you... you're speaking to my Life-bound Gu."

"Yes... yes, I was just trying to mediate, nothing more," I said, scared by now, fearing that my good intentions would once again lead to bad outcomes.

Please, Master Gu, don't take offense at my actions.

Even if you are offended, please don't hold it against me, a mere child.

To my astonishment, Master Gu spat out a mouthful of blood in anger, "What...? A Gu Speaker... has emerged from the Red Gate?"

"Master Gu!! Are you alright!!"

"Demoness, get out of our Tianying Village."

The workers immediately rushed up again, gathering around Master Gu, healing him with their Life-bound Gu.

"What the heck?" I was completely speechless. Old man, through which eye did you see me as someone from the Red Gate?

I already explained—I'm not from the Red Gate.

This... this is a huge misunderstanding...

And it made him spit blood...

However, my Maternal Granduncle seemed to realize something, asking Zhang Zidao, "Old senior, why did your distinguished disciple come to soak in the Cold Moon Spring here?"

At this moment, hearing Maternal Granduncle's question, it was evident he was very respectful.

He didn't know why I came to Tianying Village at all, nor did he inquire why I used their forbidden Medicinal Pool; he simply let me soak without question.

There's no denying the great prestige of my master...

Truly the foremost Grandmaster of the Mystic Sect!

"Hmph, the Old Taoist Priest won't tell you," grumbled Zhang Zidao stubbornly, "Good disciple, nor will you say anything. You're my disciple, and mine alone."

Uh... but the latter part of your statement... isn't that basically confessing without being asked?

Even if I don't say anything, my Maternal Granduncle, if he's not a fool, must be able to guess my identity.

After all, Granny Long, Long Xiangkui's visit to Tianying Village was precisely to tell my Granduncle about my identity as a Gu Speaker.

Suddenly, with tears brimming in his eyes, Maternal Granduncle looked at me, "Wan... Wanwan... Su Wan! You are... our Old Yan Family's Wanwan..."

"She is not; she won't inherit Tianying Village from you," Zhang Zidao stated emphatically, stamping his foot.

Maternal Granduncle no longer cared about the Old Taoist Priest's child-like tantrum, asking me, "Wanwan, did you come here to treat Blood-weeping Syndrome? Has your face changed because of a Blood-weeping Syndrome attack, is that right? I knew it... such a nice young lady, how could you be naturally so unattractive, in this world... only the Lin Family suffers from the damned curse of Blood-weeping Syndrome, which could cause this."

My eyes moistened as I gazed at the elderly figure before me.

The tearful eyes of Maternal Granduncle, looking at his younger relative, were filled with deep affection.

What I had always lacked since childhood was the indulgent love of elders, and my heart resonated with his emotions.

I didn't acknowledge it verbally, but my facial expression completely betrayed the surging feelings in my heart.

"Master Gu, she is Su Wan! Not someone from the Red Gate, but someone from our family," Maternal Granduncle asserted excitedly to Master Gu.

Chapter 676: Kneel Down Quickly and Pay Your Respects to Master Gu

Master Gu, being of advanced age, was thrown into confusion and bewilderment by such a shocking matter, "Our... family's people..."

"Yes, she's from Tianying Village, she's one of the Yan family," Maternal Granduncle wiped away a tear that had unwittingly escaped, "Think about it: only members of the Yan family can become Gu Speakers, how could there be any elsewhere?"

"Oh, she is... the one Xiang Kui mentioned... Yan Hua's granddaughter? The girl named... Su Wan?" Master Gu came to realize, his turbid gaze gradually warming up, staring intently at me.

Maternal Granduncle grabbed my arm, "Wanwan, kneel quickly and pay respects to Master Gu. He is one hundred and three years old, the eldest elder in our Tianying Village."

So there I was, following suit and kneeling down, all bewildered.

Wasn't this too sudden? A second ago they regarded me as an enemy shouting to strike me down.

And now, pulling me in so closely to kneel, by the look of it... was it the rhythm of acknowledging ancestors and returning to the family?

Acknowledging ancestors and... returning to the family...

That term, for me, was so out of reach.

No, to be precise, it was tantalizingly out of reach.

Even with the Lin Family, I had not been formally inducted into the family, nor had my name been entered into the ancestral hall.

"Repeat after Maternal Granduncle," Maternal Granduncle's heavy voice broke through my muddled thoughts, "As the thirty-sixth generation descendant, Su Wan, pays respects to Master Gu, wishing Master Gu boundless blessings and longevity."

"As the thirty-sixth generation descendant, Su Wan, pays respects to Master Gu, wishing Master Gu boundless blessings and longevity," I said, following Maternal Granduncle's words with my head bowed, tears flooding down uncontrollably.

I, a person completely disdained by my maternal grandmother Yan Hua, was in front of Maternal Granduncle, whom I was meeting for the first time, directly acknowledged as a descendant of the Yan family.

They truly saw me as family, truly cared about me.

Even if it might be related to my identity as a Gu Speaker, this sense of recognition was enough to churn my emotions over and over.

Zhang Zidao was already fuming and stamping his feet, "I forbid it! Ah Shui! You rascal, my good disciple is already part of the Lin family, and still has to inherit the Life and Death Embroidery from the Su family, and to become my direct disciple; she's really quite busy, with no time to spare to inherit anything from the Yan family!"

"Master..." I slowly lifted my head, with tears streaking all over my face.

So many tears pooled at my chin, dropping one by one to the ground, wetting a large area on the tile floor.

Seeing my face marred by tears, Zhang Zidao was completely stunned.

His expression became very complex.

My Maternal Granduncle said, "Old Senior, one can never have too many skills, and we Tianying villagers are not trying to steal her from you, we just want to acknowledge our own bloodline."

"Forget it... blood is thicker than water... Old Taoist Priest... can't go against the natural order of ethics and morality." Eventually, Zhang Zidao gave up and plunked down onto a chair.

He looked somewhat disconsolate, like an old playful child who had his favorite toy taken away.

Master Gu recovered his spirit, bent down, and personally helped me to my feet, "I'm sorry, Wanwan, Master Gu misunderstood you. You are a good child, Master Gu shouldn't have been so impulsive, blaming you without getting things clear."

The group surrounding Master Gu all exchanged glances, their gazes turning awkward, almost as if they could dig out countless basements with their toes.

I knew that they had attacked me only out of respect for Master Gu, so I didn't take it to heart, "It's alright, it's most important for you to not be angry and to live a long and happy life."

Chapter 677: My Wanwan Really Has Exceptional Talent!

Master Gu nodded repeatedly, too excited for words.

"Master Gu, sit down, let's all have breakfast together," Maternal Granduncle arranged the breakfast for everyone with great joy.

Master Gu, although he had just vomited blood, now sat next to me affectionately as if nothing had happened. Maternal Granduncle wanted me to sit on the other side of him, but Zhang Zidao took the seat first.

It really seems the older one gets, the more childish one becomes...

Zhang Zidao sulkily drank his fish soup. After he finished, I diligently served him another bowl, which seemed to improve his mood a bit.

I thought to myself that when fewer people were around, I would definitely find an opportunity to appease Master properly.

After all, he had indeed sacrificed a lot to be my master.

This trip to Tianying Village to cure the illness had turned into my family reunion, and he had wholeheartedly wanted me to become his direct disciple, no wonder he felt jealous...

At the dinner table, due to the change in my status, I discussed the internal discord with Maternal Granduncle.

After all, I was no longer an outsider, so I could no longer remain indifferent to such serious matters.

Maternal Granduncle briefly explained that they had actually noticed the internal discord long ago, which is why Long Xiangkui had been so clear when he left.

The rebellious son of Maternal Granduncle had already been captured, and the people in the stronghold had gone into hiding.

All because the Yin Bell had been stolen by my cousin and given to the Ten Thousand Poison Hall.

The walking corpses in the stronghold were controlled by Ten Thousand Poison Hall, patrolling and surveilling the people inside, but little did they know that I had retrieved the Yin Bell.

If I hadn't retrieved the Yin Bell and driven away the Three-Headed Snake,

all the people in the stronghold would probably have been devoured by the Three-Headed Snake.

And then the people from Ten Thousand Poison Hall would have entered the stronghold and taken away the Immortal Gu.

"Not to mention this, I didn't even know that Wanwan had earned great merit by fending off the crafty snake demon for the stronghold," Yan Bashui said with a face full of joy and pride, but soon thought about the crucial point, "That said, the Yin Bell was still in good condition in the hands of the Three-Headed Snake, why has it now become... a copper block?"

Yes!! That's a very good question!!

I didn't have the guts to lie, so I could only sheepishly admit, "I hit too hard during the fight and accidentally burned it out."

I really didn't do it on purpose!

Sure enough, every wrongdoing comes with its consequences.

There's no such thing as a fluke...

"How did you burn it out?" Yan Bashui stammered as he asked.

I chuckled awkwardly, "I burned it with a fire charm."

"Can a fire charm burn meteorite iron from beyond the sky? My Wanwan is truly a gifted child! It's okay, if it's burned out, it's burned out. Blame the Yin Bell for not being sturdy," Yan Bashui comforted me, not blaming me at all for damaging a treasure of the stronghold.

I'm not someone who eats sparingly, I wolfed down my food, and in no time, I was nearly full.

Maternal Granduncle, fearing I'd be left hungry, personally served me fish soup several times, encouraging me sweetly to eat more.

Under his earnest gaze, I silently endured all the love and care.

Since it's hard to decline such warm hospitality, I might as well eat more!

I made up for a whole day of hunger from yesterday in one go.

Zhang Zidao complained with a darkened face, "Ah Shui, your integrity has dropped!! Pick it up quickly, isn't the Yin Bell the ultimate treasure of your Tianying Village? 'It's burned out, so it's burned out!!' Even an old Taoist priest has more integrity than you."

"Old senior, this thing called integrity, can you eat it? If it's lost, it's lost, no need for it," Yan Bashui let down the Stronghold Master's dignity and also acted shameless just like Zhang Zidao.

Zhang Zidao was completely speechless, rolling his eyes in frustration.

Seeing the older generation bicker and get jealous over me, I felt an inexplicable warmth in my heart.

Maybe Heaven felt that my childhood had been too miserable, so now it was compensating me all at once?

Just as I was sipping my fish soup, Yan Bashui suddenly leaned in and asked softly, "Then... the child in Wanwan's stomach, is it my obedient disciple Zhang Shuying's?"

Chapter 678: Seeing the Illusion of a Blue Hand

"Pfft..." I sprayed the fish soup out of my mouth without any warning.

I almost forgot, Zhang Shuying was apprenticed to Tianying Village and had raised a Golden Silkworm Gu.

In a hurry, I pulled out a handkerchief and wiped frantically, "No, no!! You're mistaken, Maternal Granduncle, the child in my belly isn't Zhang Shuying's."

"Not his? But you and Shuying are engaged..." Yan Bashui pondered and then realized, "It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter. It's quite normal for a woman to have multiple husbands and concubines. Don't worry, Wanwan, most of our Miao Village follows a matrilineal system, we don't practice the patriarchal customs of the Central Plains people. When the time comes... you can still marry Shuying..."

"Uh... I got it." I bowed my head and silently drank the fish soup, thinking that under the current circumstances, I had given up on the idea of correcting Maternal Granduncle right away. I'd wait for another time to slowly tell him that I had absolutely no engagement with Zhang Shuying.

With so many outsiders around, it wasn't good to confront Maternal Granduncle and cause him to lose face.

By the end of the meal, my energetic and enthusiastic Maternal Granduncle had fed me until I was nearly bursting.

Master Gu laughed heartily, asking me all sorts of questions about my life before, giving off the vibe of doting on a grandchild.

"Why are there so many little people in front of me?" Xiao Shenshen had a small appetite and after finishing a plate of mushrooms, hadn't eaten much else.

At this moment, she was floating, reaching out to grab at the air everywhere.

I was taken aback and grabbed Shenshen's hand, "Are you hallucinating from mushroom poisoning?"

I had thought that eating these plants wouldn't cause poisoning, hence I let her nibble away ceaselessly, never expecting... that she'd start having hallucinations...

"Maybe the mushrooms weren't cooked well, but no worries, I have a remedy." Maternal Granduncle fumbled and pulled out a small medicine pouch, instructing me to hang it around Shenshen's neck.

Seeing that both Maternal Granduncle and Zhang Zidao had eaten the same and were unaffected, I breathed a sigh of relief.

One had eaten enough to have developed immunity, and the other, having achieved Physical Sanctification, was impervious to poison, of course, they were fine...

It was just my poor Shenshen, who herself served as an herbal remedy, now poisoned by mushrooms and seeing little creatures.

Luckily I hadn't eaten any, or I'd be in the same state as Shenshen.

I hung the medicine pouch around Shenshen's neck, and after babbling incoherently from the hallucinations for a while, she fell asleep in my arms.

As a result, I couldn't transform her into a bracelet to take with me.

Yan Bashui suggested letting Shenshen sleep for a while on a bed in the inner room.

I carried Shenshen inside, and when I came out,

those who had previously been upset and spoken up for Master Gu, all came to apologize to me in private.

Then, with glee and joy, they told me they would inform everyone in the entire village and even set off firecrackers along the way.

Set... off firecrackers...? And announce it to the entire village as if it were a joyous occasion...

This was a bit too much fanfare for my arrival!

I tried to stop them, but none would listen.

Every one of them ran off in a flash, leaving me with no choice but to let it be.

When I came out to the yard, Master Gu had already left, and Yan Bashui stood outside discussing something with a few others.

The yard was home to many chickens, ducks, and two rabbits.

I took two lettuce leaves to feed the rabbits as a way to aid digestion.

In my heart, I quietly contemplated the whereabouts of Dumpling's lost half-soul and Yu Longting's injuries.

Maybe...

I should try giving Yu Longting a call?

I pulled out my phone and dialed Yu Longting's number, which went straight to voicemail.

Then, I opened WeChat.

The chat history was full of messages I had sent him on the road these past few days.

Together with the one I had just sent, it had amassed to 99+.

[Yu Longting, where exactly are you? How is your health? Please respond as soon as you see this!!]

Still, he hadn't replied to a single message, including the one I had just sent, all sinking like stones into the sea.

That's when Zhang Zidao came over and informed me, "Good disciple, your master needs to find a room to retreat and cultivate."

Chapter 679: Throwing You Away, Feeding the Horseshoe Crabs

"Why are you suddenly entering seclusion for cultivation?" I immediately sensed something was amiss and became serious.

Entering seclusion meant a delay in Tianying Village, and this was truly unnecessary for both my master and me.

Unless there was some unforeseen event that made it necessary to enter seclusion.

Zhang Zidao's gaze became slightly withdrawn, "Good disciple, I won't hide it from you, I've encountered a bit of a problem with my cultivation."

"You... what kind of problem? Is it serious?" I felt a catch in my heart, worried.

Wasn't the master already sanctified in the flesh? How could he still experience problems with his body?

Zhang Zidao lifted his hand, and an early spring butterfly rose from the rape flowers and landed on his finger, "Remember, in the forest, when I intended to kill the people from the Ten Thousand Poison Hall but was stopped by you?"

There was a natural aura of the great Dao on Zhang Zidao, and the butterfly was attracted, treating his finger as a flower to rest upon.

"I remember, it just happened, how could I forget." I suddenly understood something, "You bring it up so suddenly, could it be... that you deliberately attempted murder and were backfired upon?"

I tend to think expansively; when he made the move to kill everyone, I only found it strange.

To kill was possible, but unnecessary.

Now that he brought it up again, I logically suspected that it was intentional.

Zhang Zidao pinched his beard, a look of satisfaction on his face, "I like this cleverness in you, my good disciple. Didn't I have an epiphany about familial affection from you recently?"

I nodded, there was such an incident.

At that time, Zhang Zidao had already been entering meditation, but had to give it up because I was afflicted with Blood-weeping Syndrome.

Was it that incident that caused him harm?

"Actually, my understanding was still lacking a final breath at that time."

Zhang Zidao mentioned this, his eyes flickered for a moment, "I thought... If I were severely injured and backfired upon, given your temperament, you would... save me at all costs."

"Master... You really are quite the trap, you've laid a trap into the sky! Are you not worried at all that I would turn callous and just abandon you, to feed horseshoe crabs?" Listening to my master's cunning plan, I clenched my molars tightly and criticized harshly.

Zhang Zidao showed not a hint of shame, and instead smiled brightly, "Of course... I'm not worried in the slightest. When you stopped me, I was a little disappointed, but now, this remaining regret has already been remedied."

"Is it because... Maternal Granduncle and Master Gu asked me to acknowledge my ancestors and return to my clan? You've had new insights?" I couldn't help but smile as well.

Zhang Zidao nodded, neither confirming nor denying, "Although I've seen much of the world's sentiments, I've merely been an indifferent observer, unfazed, but alone... your matters are different..."

I knew this kind of enlightenment was something that people of the Mystic Sect could not seek, and urged, "Master, please go into seclusion, you can take as long as you want, don't worry about me."

"Good disciple, I will make it quick, come out as soon as possible and help you find Dumpling's other half of the soul." Zhang Zidao had always remembered this matter, even when facing an extremely crucial moment that required seclusion.

He had never forgotten the slightest detail about my affairs.

I lowered my head, allowing Zhang Zidao's aged hand to pat the top of it as I said softly, "Thank you, Master, I will also find a way to locate Dumpling's soul. Please focus on your seclusion."

After Zhang Zidao left, I looked at my phone again, Yu Longting still hadn't replied to the message.

I quietly transferred most of my Spiritual Power into the lifeless Silver Python Cheongsam I wore, perhaps if I kept trying... kept accumulating Spiritual Power...

It would suddenly come to life, restoring that sense of being embraced by Yu Longting when worn.

"Wanwan, sorry to have neglected you." Maternal Granduncle Yan Bashui finished chatting at the doorway and came over to find me, "Where's Elder Zhang? Why don't I see him?"

Chapter 680: The Custom of Immortality

I asked, "My master has entered seclusion, did you need him for something?"

"Entered seclusion, huh? Actually, I don't have anything I need from him; I was just asking."

Yan Bashui was indifferent about Zhang Zidao entering seclusion and didn't pay much attention to it; he smiled lightly at me and said, "I'm actually here for you, Wanwan. I don't know... if it's convenient for you to help send those Walking Corpses back home?"

"Of course it's convenient, I'll go with you right now." I agreed without hesitation.

It wasn't until I was helping to send the Vine Armor Zombies back home that I came to understand they could be described as zombies raised by the village.

But they could also be regarded as private property owned by various families in the village, or more precisely, our own relatives.

In Tianying Village, there is a custom of turning the deceased family members into Walking Corpses, as for them, becoming a Walking Corpse means eternal life.

Relatives can then keep us company just as they did when they were alive.

This was a very unique cultural practice, something I had never seen before.

When I first heard it, I thought it was somewhat horrifying, but upon deeper reflection, I also felt an inexplicable sense of warmth.

Death is a complex issue for humans, not everyone can accept it calmly.

I couldn't help thinking of Bai Yinman's child, Congcong. For that child, reincarnation would be the best outcome.

After all, Tianying Village has such customs, and they have methods of preserving bodies handed down over thousands of years.

"Uncle... Maternal Granduncle, I destroyed so many Walking Corpses; didn't I commit... a grave error...?" I mumbled softly, looking down at the ground.

Yan Bashui patted my shoulder, "You didn't know the customs of the village. It is normal to protect oneself in dangerous situations. Besides... it's not a bad thing for the Walking Corpses to be cremated and return to the earth."

"You..." I looked up in astonishment.

Yan Bashui said earnestly, "Turning dead relatives into Walking Corpses is a longstanding custom in Tianying Village, but... they have stayed in this world long enough. Having the chance to enter the cycle of reincarnation is also quite good. Wanwan, don't worry; no one will blame you."

His words seemed simple, yet they seemed to hold profound truths.

The village is primarily made up of the She and Yan families, with other family names like Bai, Ruan, Tian, and the like.

However, the numbers of the other families are quite small, with only a few households each.

We arrived at the home of a family surnamed She, and Yan Bashui and I brought in a Walking Corpse.

A woman was weaving on an old-fashioned loom, with a small turnip-head diligently helping by her side.

When the woman saw Yan Bashui and me arrive, she quickly got up, "Stronghold Master, Miss... Miss, you have come."

"Wanwan has brought She Dali to you and your child," Yan Bashui spoke before finishing his sentence.

Little Turnip Head ran up and hugged the Walking Corpse's leg, "Daddy."

"Thank you, Miss Wan, you truly are kind-hearted and beautiful," the woman thanked me sincerely. "My child was so impulsive, and you didn't mind it at all; you even personally delivered his father."

I said, "It's what I should do."

I smirked bitterly to myself; 'kind-hearted and beautiful' sounded so ironic to me now.

My current appearance and bearing are almost as jarring as a vile demon from Hell with a blue face and ferocious fangs.

"Hey, although you're not pleasant to look at... you're actually not a bad person," Little Turnip Head popped his head out from his father's leg and said dryly.

The frail and haggard mother immediately became livid.

She picked up a bamboo stick, laid into Little Turnip Head's behind with a fierce energy, causing him to howl in pain.

Yan Bashui couldn't help but chuckle, almost applauding in delight, saying with satisfaction, "There, you got what you deserved for being so naughty."

"Auntie She, there's nothing else, Uncle and I will go to the other houses now." I signaled to the woman spanking Little Turnip Head's behind and then patted the tall figure's arm - my height only allowed me to reach She Dali's forearm - "Take good care of your wife and child."