

Genius 1061

Chapter 1061: Blood Sacrifice

"Um..."

Tang Xin didn't shirk the question and nodded softly in response.

She could no longer return to the Tang Sect, so leaving was her only choice. Not to mention she had already removed her face mask, leaving her with no retreat.

"Can I come find you in the outside world later?"

The little girl's face instantly turned melancholic and, after a long silence, she asked in a quiet voice.

They had been close sisters for over a decade and now they were about to part, perhaps never to meet again. Her heart was filled with sorrow and reluctance.

"Of course, you can..."

Tang Xin hurriedly assured her. Though she had left the mountains with Qin Fang, the outside world was far too unfamiliar. Even she wasn't sure if she could adapt. If Zhuoma could come to see her, of course, she would be delighted.

"Or... perhaps you could come with me!"

A bold thought suddenly flashed through Tang Xin's mind, nearly slipping out of her mouth without thinking.

"Eh..."

Zhuoma was taken aback, obviously having never contemplated such an idea. Now that Tang Xin had brought it up so suddenly, she was completely unprepared and didn't know how to respond.

Although she did not want to be separated from her good sister Tang Xin, the idea of leaving the mountain had never crossed her mind.

More importantly, if she left the mountain, where could she go?

She was a complete stranger to the outside world, not knowing a single person... Even Spicy Pepper Zhuoma felt lost at the prospect of venturing beyond the mountain.

"Qin Fang, shall we take Zhuoma with us?"

Tang Xin knew her suggestion was abrupt, but she had her sister's interests at heart.

Zhuoma had learned the martial arts Tang Xin taught her and was known as the top expert in the Gelan Tribe, which saved her from the fate of marrying off early like other girls her age in the tribe.

But once the Tang Sect started investigating Tang Nan's matter, Zhuoma might get entangled due to her connection with Tang Xin, and staying could mean trouble.

Even if the Tang Sect didn't go after Zhuoma, she would likely need to marry someone from the mountain soon... As her close sister, Tang Xin naturally didn't want Zhuoma's life to be ruined like that.

Since Qin Fang could take her out of the mountains, adding Zhuoma shouldn't be too much trouble. If the two sisters could stay together, it would be ideal.

"Well... it really depends on what she wants!"

Qin Fang was surprised too, but since Tang Xin had brought it up, he had no objections. To him, taking an additional person meant just another mouth to feed, and he could afford that.

Hearing Qin Fang's response, Tang Xin was very satisfied and immediately discussed it with Zhuoma.

"Let me think about it..."

Zhuoma didn't agree right away, indicating she needed to think it over. Like Tang Xin initially, her mind was filled with confusion and concerns, but from her eyes, it was clear she was tempted.

Others might deceive her, but Tang Xin wouldn't. Zhuoma truly trusted Tang Xin, but this was something she had not considered at all before. Her mind was in turmoil, unsure of what choice to make.

The matter was left at that, with Qin Fang not pressing further. Whether Zhuoma decided to leave would ultimately be up to her, and Qin Fang had no issues with it.

Soon, the group descended the mountain and returned to the Nayi Tribe.

Wen Yan's family had been waiting here early on. Seeing Qin Fang return safely, they all breathed a sigh of relief. However, Uncle Wen and the Wen Family Couple became vigilant when they noticed the beautiful and peerless woman Tang Xin next to Qin Fang...

But upon seeing Tang Xin's attire, they recalled her identity as the woman who had accompanied Zhuoma before.

The only difference now was that Tang Xin had removed her mask, revealing her stunningly beautiful face.

Regardless, Tang Xin indeed seemed more beautiful than Wen Yan by a measure, which definitely made them feel great pressure on behalf of their daughter.

However, Wen Yan didn't seem to notice anything and quickly mingled with Zhuoma and Tang Xin. The three young women of similar age, even with their diverse backgrounds as mountain people, outsiders, or from the Tang Sect, always found common topics quickly...

For instance, Tang Xin started inquiring about the outside world from Wen Yan, and upon learning that Tang Xin would be leaving the mountains with them, Wen Yan quickly shared many interesting stories about the outside world. Listening along, Zhuoma also couldn't help but feel a longing, her heart even more stirred.

"Uncle Wen, Auntie Song, something has happened, and I'm afraid we need to leave here as soon as possible. If we stay too long, it might be dangerous..."

Qin Fang didn't hide the truth from the Wen Family Couple. The Tang Sect might not know yet, but with Tang Zhan having escaped, time was of the essence. Better to explain directly than wait for potential dangers.

"Alright, no problem..."

Uncle Wen and Auntie Song were not old-fashioned people. They had long realized that Qin Fang was no ordinary individual, and having him stay with them in the mountains for such a long time, they were already very content.

Chapter 1062: Blood Sacrifice_2

Moreover, the strength Qin Fang displayed along the way had already been astonishing. Yet even with such strength, he found this instance somewhat challenging, indicating the magnitude of the trouble.

"In fact, even if you hadn't mentioned it, we were planning to tell you that we would be leaving the mountains tomorrow. Now we're just moving up the schedule slightly..."

Actually, they had already packed up everything. Having stayed in the mountains for such a long time, the elderly man's health had improved a lot, and it was estimated that he could live another half to a full year.

This was the greatest effort Qin Fang could make, and Luo Sang's family was quite thankful, treating Qin Fang as if he were their life-saving benefactor.

They wished the old man could live a long and healthy life, but the conditions in the mountains were too rudimentary, and the old man was unwilling to leave the mountains and live in the city with Auntie Song; he just wanted to quietly spend his last days...

Auntie Song couldn't persuade her elderly mother, who had lived here for decades. It was obviously impossible for the elder to agree to leave her hometown in the last stage of her life.

Moreover, they had been in the mountains for a significant amount of time already, and Auntie Song and Uncle Wen had their own jobs outside and couldn't stay indefinitely. It was time for them to leave.

Coincidentally, when Qin Fang brought it up, there was naturally no reason for them not to agree...

What was originally thought to be a troublesome matter was easily resolved. Qin Fang and Song Qingshan didn't have much luggage, so the group directly bid farewell to Luo Sang's family and set off on the trail down the mountain.

People often say it's easy to ascend but hard to descend a mountain, yet sometimes going downhill may not be so difficult... At least for Qin Fang and the others, their pace was relatively fast.

After days of mountain life, Wen Yan was no longer the delicate lady who had never ventured into the mountains, moving nimbly along the mountain paths. With some accommodation from Qin Fang, she could keep up with their pace...

Tang Xin also followed calmly, chatting occasionally with Wen Yan, and their relationship had become much more harmonious. At the same time, she learned quite a bit about Qin Fang from Wen Yan.

Knowing that Qin Fang had several girlfriends did not provoke much reaction from Tang Xin, for she came from Tang Sect, which is similar to ancient times where men having multiple wives and concubines was commonplace, and she was not particularly bothered.

If it were otherwise, she could not have gotten along so well with Wen Yan, given that Qin Fang had previously stated that Wen Yan was his girlfriend. If she were the jealous type, she would have attacked Wen Yan first.

Moreover, she had not directly expressed her feelings for Qin Fang, so he was still in the dark.

Zhuoma did not travel with Qin Fang and the others. Although she was considering leaving the mountains, she had not yet fully decided, and she at least needed to inform her family, so she rode back to Gelan Tribe alone...

Although the descent was relatively quick, it was still impossible to exit the mountains in one day, especially since they had started in the afternoon. They had to stay overnight in a village and could only continue their journey out of the mountains the next day.

Coincidentally, the tribe where Qin Fang and his companions stayed was hosting a grand sacrificial event, presided over by a highly respected Sacrificial Priest. It was a lively event in the mountains that attracted people from several neighboring villages to watch.

Woo Woo Woo Woo~~~

With the deep sound of horns, the sacrificial ceremony officially began, and just as Qin Fang and his group arrived, it was already progressing to the most critical part—the blood sacrifice!

Sacrifice, in fact, has existed in human society for a very long time, such as offering sacrifices to heaven... Although modern people have gradually abandoned such activities, they still exist in some ancient tribes.

Just like these mountain villages, where the environment is very primitive and ancient, sacrifices still hold a significant place.

This can be seen from Song Qingshan being established as a divine messenger, whose status is said to be comparable to that of the High Priest, the highest position in sacrificial rites...

There are many ways of performing sacrifices, and in Miao Village, offerings usually include fruits and livestock. However, during more significant occasions, a blood sacrifice is held.

Ordinary sacrifices are nothing extraordinary, akin to how outsiders visit temples to burn incense and worship Buddha, without any anomalies.

But the blood sacrifice is different—

A blood sacrifice is not merely about offering some fresh blood; it requires not animals, but living humans...

The requirements for this offering are also stringent; it must be a virgin who has just turned sixteen. Those who have lost their virginity, are married, or even betrothed are unacceptable. Only the purest of bodies are needed because it is believed to be a Holy Woman offered to the divine, requiring an immaculately holy body to meet the standards.

Otherwise, if the divine is angered, not only will the prayers be unsuccessful, but it could also bring boundless calamities to the tribe...

The mountain people live off the land and water, barely scraping by on ordinary days. If natural disasters strike, it becomes incredibly tough to survive, and deaths from starvation are not uncommon. Therefore, everyone hopes for the divine's blessing, ushering in a prosperous year.

To gain the divine's protection, naturally, the best and most perfect offerings must be presented...

Unfortunately, this tribe has had a tough year recently. First, many skilled hunters mysteriously disappeared in the mountains without a trace of their bodies. Then, a torrential downpour caused a severe landslide, burying dozens of people and destroying many fields and food supplies...

A series of cruel blows has made survival for this tribe extremely difficult, forcing them to urgently conduct an elaborate blood sacrifice, hoping the divine ruling the heavens would show mercy and bless them, making their tribe's days smoother and happier.

For this blood sacrifice, the tribe had been preparing for quite some days, specially selecting the most fitting offering before commencing, and Qin Fang and his group happened to encounter it.

"Blood sacrifice..."

When Qin Fang heard this news, his first reaction was—absurd.

The lives of the people in Miao Jiang are backward, and many of their practices are superstitions. Although Qin Fang had some understanding and acceptance of witch doctors, it did not mean he approved of such sacrificial practices.

It's known that outside, such activities are considered feudal superstitions, prohibited by the government and definitely subject to crackdowns.

Not to mention, this sacrificial activity outrageously involves using living humans for blood sacrifice—utterly inhumane.

Even Song Qingshan had a very displeased look upon hearing this news. Although the human rights awareness in Dragon Country cannot compare with that of foreign countries, it is far from condoning such disregard for human life, especially for such an ignorant and superstitious activity.

"Xiao Qin, just observe this and don't meddle too much..."

Seeing that Qin Fang seemed resentful towards this sacrificial activity, Uncle Wen and Auntie Song couldn't help but advise him. They naturally disapproved of such activities too, but the mentality of the mountain people was closed and somewhat ignorant, still believing in the effectiveness of these sacrifices.

Even the girl chosen as the offering volunteered herself; when selecting the offering initially, nearly every unmarried girl in the tribe was eagerly vying for this slot... It seemed like an exceptional honor, an immediate elevation in status once achieved.

Chapter 1063: High Priest Darren

Qin Fang had been in these mountains for some time now and had gradually adapted to some of the customs of the mountain people, also coming to understand what kind of taboos they have.

Such sacrificial ceremonies are the mountain's most solemn events, requiring lengthy preparations. Every offering had to be selected again and again, only to be finally confirmed.

Especially since this tribe's sacrificial ceremony is for the future of the tribe, it is given utmost importance. Everything must ensure the smooth completion of the sacrificial activities; nothing else should interfere.

In other words, anyone who dares to disrupt the sacrificial activities will become the enemy of the entire tribe and will undoubtedly be attacked by all.

"Rest assured, Auntie Song, I understand..."

Qin Fang nodded. Although this kind of thing was very bloody, it's the hope of the entire tribe, and as an outsider, he couldn't stop it.

He could only be a bystander and witness the process of the sacrificial activities...

Qin Fang and his group were merely passing through this tribe, planning to stay overnight and then leave the mountains, stepping into the outside world in the morning. So when they arrived, it was already getting late, and the entire sacrificial activity was coming to an end, with only the final blood sacrifice remaining.

In the center of the tribe, a tall platform was built, covered with fresh flowers and green grass, which looked quite beautifully decorated.

A very young girl sat there, without a thread on her body, under the setting sun's assistance, a gentle breeze fluttered, immediately bringing a boundless chill, making her very uncomfortable. She couldn't help but tightly cover her body with her hands, shielding a few important parts.

However, her face was very calm, even with a certain joy, as if she was very happy and looking forward to what was going to happen next.

"Qin Fang, why does she seem so happy?"

Qin Fang and others all came over to watch the sacrificial ceremony. Wen Yan and Tang Xin were also beside them, but when they learned what the blood sacrifice entailed, Wen Yan still didn't understand and asked.

The blood sacrifice meant offering up one's young life, and this girl was especially beautiful and only sixteen years old. While in the mountains, that was already the age of marriage and childbearing, outside the mountains, she was just a middle school student.

Yet now, this young life had to be sacrificed for so-called offerings, which was really a pity...

"Is there something wrong with that?"

Qin Fang was really at a loss for words, but Tang Xin muttered curiously, "For a thousand years in the Tang Sect, many ancestors sacrificed their lives forging stronger Hidden Weapons..."

This is well documented in the history of the Tang Sect, and as a disciple of the Tang Sect, Tang Xin certainly knew a lot about these things.

Of course, only if the Hidden Weapons were successfully forged would the sacrificer... generally speaking, the forger himself, have his name entered into the history of Tang Sect.

As for those who failed, since they have already failed, the Hidden Weapons naturally weren't successfully forged, and they naturally do not qualify, only to be slowly submerged in the long river of history.

Perhaps only when later generations prepare to forge a similar or the same Hidden Weapon, their names might be brought up again...

This is like the legend of Gan Jiang and Mo Ye; almost every forging of the Ten Great Hidden Weapons of Tang Sect involved the blood of the forgers...

"But it's just feudal superstition..."

Wen Yan got along quite well with Tang Xin, and at this moment, she looked at Tang Xin with some perplexity and indignation, saying.

The thought of feudal superstition harming people was one thing, but now it is harming lives. As a civilized person who came into the mountains from a civilized society, Wen Yan couldn't accept the scene before her.

"Just watch quietly, don't say more..."

Qin Fang also felt pity for the girl on the high platform who was just in the bloom of youth. She had just arrived in this world for a little over a decade and was now about to lose her life in such a way; it was truly too regrettable.

But she herself felt it was extremely worthwhile, as if it were the sole reason for her existence, causing Qin Fang and the others to sigh in frustration.

This was a custom of the mountain people, deeply rooted in the hearts of everyone there. Even Auntie Song, who had left the mountains and lived outside for decades, showed considerable awe and fear when she returned.

It wasn't that she revered ghosts or gods, but rather she held a fearful respect for the mountain people's ignorance. Ignorant people are the most terrifying; there is nothing they wouldn't dare to do. Angering these people would spell disaster for anyone who came, regardless of who they were.

Qin Fang was no exception. Although he felt sorry for the girl about to be sacrificed, there was nothing he could do... If he really tried to save her, they wouldn't even need to wait for the Tang Sect's men to come after them. The onlooking mountain people alone would be enough to doom them all.

Wuu wuu wuu wuu~~~

The sun began to set behind the mountains, leaving only the fading light of the sunset to adorn the village in a dim yellow hue.

Loud and deep horn sounds arose from outside the village, and soon enough, it appeared as though a group of people were approaching surrounded by a crowd.

First came two rows, each with a dozen or so people dressed in strangely bizarre outfits that looked somewhat like lamas but not quite. Carrying huge horns made from bull's horns, they blew them with a deep wuuu wuuu sound... Behind them, others beat drums and gongs, creating quite the lively scene.

In the midst of these dozens of people was a palanquin that seemed extremely luxurious, carried by sixteen people and looking particularly solemn.

The palanquin was mostly covered by curtains, and one could only vaguely make out a person seated cross-legged inside, seemingly of high status.

"It's High Priest Darren! High Priest Darren himself has come..."

People inside the village quickly recognized the identity of the visitor. It was indeed the ride of the highest-status High Priest in the vast mountain region, the acclaimed messenger of the gods, High Priest Darren, whose prestige even surpassed that of revered elders like Witch Doctor Geda.

As the most powerful man in the mountains, even the chiefs of the various tribes treated him with the utmost respect, daring not to show the slightest disobedience because he represented the supreme deity.

It was precisely because of this supreme authority that High Priest Darren virtually had whatever he desired in the mountains. It was considered an honor for any tribe to have him preside over their ceremonies.

Qin Fang had assumed that such an illustrious figure would be as old as Witch Doctor Geda, but when High Priest Darren stepped down from the palanquin, he appeared to be only in his forties, lean and wearing a pair of slender mustaches. Dressed in white ceremonial robes, he certainly had an air of an otherworldly sage...

However, Qin Fang felt that this High Priest Darren was probably not as selfless, sacred, and upright as his reputation suggested...

Especially those slightly narrow eyes that flickered, giving off an evil aura that made one feel extremely uncomfortable.

Yet, the people in the mountains seemed to notice nothing amiss, or perhaps they were all bowing their heads, not even daring to look up.

A thought struck Qin Fang, and he promptly cast his Scouting Skill on High Priest Darren, eager to size up the man's background.

The recon results quickly came back, surprising Qin Fang.

"Darren, LV1, half-baked charlatan, Evil Camp, Specialty: Deception LV3..."

Such a result, while Qin Fang always suspected High Priest Darren of being a charlatan, he never thought him to be worse than he imagined—a complete fraud.

Many charlatans are frauds, and this did not surprise Qin Fang, but while ordinary frauds trick people out of money or seduction, they rarely lead to death. However, the High Priest Darren in front of him was outrightly from the Evil Camp. Qin Fang paid particular attention to his Sin Points and couldn't help but take a sharp breath—"Sin Points: 3240."

Over three thousand Sin Points made him the second most evil person Qin Fang had seen, only next to the Black Witch Doctor Mulun who had murdered many mountain people for Gu practices.

So many Sin Points meant at least thirty people had died at his hands, making him akin to a brutal executioner.

However, while Qin Fang was shocked, he was also puzzled. He looked at the girl on the high platform, thought of the upcoming blood sacrifice, and somehow understood where High Priest Darren's excessive Sin Points originated from.

These girls were pure and naive, and even if they didn't belong to the Good Camp, they were at least Neutral Camp. Killing such a girl would inevitably increase one's Sin Points by a hundred.

Having operated in the mountains for so many years, High Priest Darren had personally overseen many blood sacrifices. That he had blood on his hands and such high Sin Points were thus understandable.

Although this explanation seemed reasonable, it gave Qin Fang a plausible explanation, but for some reason, Qin Fang still felt there were significant issues with this High Priest Darren...

At least this High Priest was actually a half-baked charlatan and a fraudster with a Deception specialization of LV3. There must be some trickery involved.

Chapter 1064: The Charlatan's Performance

However, High Priest Darren doesn't have any direct relationship with Qin Fang. Even if Qin Fang felt something was wrong with this person, he had no evidence to prove it at all.

Moreover, even if Qin Fang had evidence to show problems with High Priest Darren, considering Darren's absolute authority among the mountain tribes, it would still require others willing to believe it!

A single misstep and High Priest Darren, pointing at Qin Fang, could shout, "This man is a blasphemer..." - it would be enough trouble for Qin Fang to deal with, unless he chose to escape in disgrace. There would be no other way.

Even though Qin Fang possesses group attack skills and fears not even a group of a hundred and eighty, facing thousands in a huge assembly, where a single spit from each could drown him, let alone considering that the mountain-dwellers number at least eighty-thousand...

Seeing those around him bowing low to welcome his arrival, High Priest Darren appeared quite pleased as he stepped towards the platform.

His gaze did, however, fall upon Qin Fang and his few companions; while everyone else bowed their heads, only these few remained upright, seemingly unmoved.

Normally, Darren would erupt in rage at such disobedience, but seeing the attire of Qin Fang and his companions, he had to suppress that impulse.

Qin Fang and Wen Yan were dressed as outsiders from beyond the mountains, clearly indicating they were not locals, while Tang Xin was clad in ancient attire, as if she had traversed time from an ancient era. Having mingled in the mountains for so long, Darren was naturally aware of the... Tang Sect deep within the mountains. He even had one or two encounters with members of the Tang Sect.

Someone like him, a half-baked charlatan, feared no one in the mountains, but was wary of these two types of people: outsiders might expose his tricks, while those from the Tang Sect could effortlessly exterminate his entire lineage.

Since neither of these individuals was someone he could afford to offend, and since they hadn't troubled him, he naturally dared not provoke them actively, as there would be no benefit to him in doing so.

High Priest Darren ascended the constructed platform, eyes straight ahead, walking directly to the prop that looked like an altar, with his assistants immediately bringing over a pile of things, quickly filling up the altar.

There were talisman papers, incense candles, wooden swords, bowls, and many other items, making the altar look quite packed and authentic.

"The blood sacrifice begins..."

Once everything was ready, someone from the mountains let out a loud call, and immediately the sound of horns wailed.

High Priest Darren arrived in front of the altar, picked up a piece of talisman paper, bit hard into his finger after placing it in his mouth, and blood began flowing profusely from his fingertip.

Now, Darren used the blood to swiftly draw indecipherable patterns on that yellow talisman paper, with an appearance of seriousness.

In just a few seconds, this blood-written talisman was formed, but before it could even dry, Darren suddenly opened his mouth, and an intense flame burst forth, directly onto the paper.

Boom! The talisman paper couldn't withstand such a fiery bake and immediately burned up, reducing to a pile of ashes, all falling into the bowl on the altar...

Darren didn't pause, raising the peach wood sword in one hand, brandishing it with a few gestures that looked authentic, but were actually just random chopping and slashing.

Meanwhile, the other hand quickly picked up the bowl with the talisman ash, tilted his head back, and gulped it all down.

Then—

Puff~~~

Darren's mouth became like a high-pressure water nozzle, fiercely spraying the liquid onto the peach wood sword in his hand, thoroughly dousing the not-so-long sword with the talisman water.

"Look! Blood... that's blood... the demon is slain, the demon is slain..."

In the crowd, someone suddenly cried out, immediately catching the attention of many shocked villagers, who were too astonished to speak.

Everyone's eyes focused on the peach wood sword in Darren's hand, and they could see faint traces of scarlet blood upon it...

And this ritual was actually an act of demon-slaying, and now Darren's performance had undoubtedly achieved this.

"Truly there's blood, it really is blood!"

The bloodstains on the Peach Wood Sword were so glaring, especially under the slightly dimming light of the setting sun, adding an extra layer of mystery and unpredictability.

"Supreme deity! Supreme deity..."

Suddenly, someone shouted loudly, and immediately, masses of mountain villagers dropped to their knees, worshipping High Priest Darren on the high platform.

The High Priest represents the deity, the spokesperson for the deity on Earth, the messenger of the deity. The villagers' thoughts were simple: they couldn't see the so-called deity, so they worshipped its messenger on Earth—High Priest Darren.

Darren naturally relished this, feeling an intense sense of satisfaction each time such a scene unfolded.

Although everyone had kneeled, the three individuals on the side remained still, causing him a trace of dissatisfaction, but he could only helplessly accept this reality.

Everyone around had fallen to their knees, yet Qin Fang, Wen Yan, and Tang Xin stood upright and motionless, seemingly oblivious to what was happening.

Watching this series of dizzying performances, Qin Fang almost wanted to applaud, recognizing how familiar these routines were.

It seemed that in the rural areas outside the mountains, such charlatans and witches performed similar acts. Qin Fang dared not say all of it was nonsense, but at least the vast majority was mere babble.

But why did the performance of High Priest Darren before him resemble those? Although not identical, they were quite similar.

"There's something off about this guy..."

Although Qin Fang didn't comment, it didn't mean others wouldn't, like Tang Xin who murmured softly beside him.

She was raised in the Tang Sect, and aside from Hidden Weapons and poisons, their Martial Arts were formidable, and their Mechanical Techniques were also impressive.

Charlatanism is, frankly, a branch of Thousand Skills, and Mechanical Techniques are also a branch of Thousand Gate. There are many similarities and connections between them, and as Tang Xin practiced her Martial Arts, she had also briefly skimmed relevant literature, so she had a superficial knowledge of these arts.

However, this High Priest Darren was merely a half-baked charlatan, probably having learned just a smattering or not even the basics, enough to fool these simple-minded villagers.

But fooling Qin Fang and the others wouldn't be so easy. At least, Qin Fang wasn't impressed by Darren's series of fancy performances at all.

"There's indeed a problem, let's keep watching..."

Qin Fang nodded, acknowledging that Darren certainly had issues, being nothing more than a half-baked charlatan.

Though Qin Fang had never conjured spirits himself, a simple analysis was enough to know how each seemingly incredible performance was executed.

Fire breathing is a trick many street performers know, and it's not uncommon in acrobatics, requiring some skill.

Darren must have had some kerosene or another flammable substance in his mouth, which he then ignited with the flames from the nearby Incense Candles.

The main reason Qin Fang and the others hadn't detected it was their distance; if they were closer, they might have even smelled the kerosene. Since he entered, no outsider had approached Darren except his own people, so naturally, no one discovered the trick.

Moreover, the villagers' daily lives were primitive; they probably had never even used coal oil... Even if they smelt it, they wouldn't know what it was.

Explaining the fire-breathing clears up a lot; other tricks become much easier. Paper is susceptible to flames, and if smeared with a little kerosene, it ignites even more readily.

The final act of vanquishing demons was utter nonsense. Any child who has studied chemistry could explain the principles behind it...

Phenolphthalein was smeared on the Peach Wood Sword, and the so-called Talisman Water that Darren drank was actually a solution with an alkaline substance. When mixed together, it immediately turned red.

Due to the naturally darker hue of the moist Peach Wood Sword combined with the red color, it could easily be mistaken for blood, especially in this failing light, and some people intentionally acted as shills. It would be hard for these simple-minded villagers not to be taken in...

Darren had obviously prepared these arrangements for a long time and performed them quite skillfully, implying that the art of deceiving isn't new to him; he has made a habit of it.

Qin Fang could see through these performances, but the villagers didn't know, and for now, he had no way to prove Darren's deception to them.

Besides, it's unlikely that the villagers would listen to any criticism of their revered messenger, High Priest Darren, from him. So, Qin Fang just pretended to be ignorant and kept watching.

This was merely the beginning of the Blood Sacrifice; Darren probably had more dazzling performances in store. Tang Xin also nodded slightly; she wasn't particularly interested in these performances—if not for Qin Fang's presence, she probably wouldn't have bothered coming.

Chapter 1065: Cruel Blood Sacrifice

As for the life and death of these mountain people...

As a Tang Sect Disciple, Tang Xin had never cared.

Back in the day, Tang Sect took revenge for its disciples by bloodbathing several tribes, massacring hundreds and thousands of mountain people...

Although she had never personally participated, she had heard of it and looked down on these savage, backward Miao Jiang people.

Moreover, she did not share the same instinctive disgust for blood sacrifices as Wen Yan did; on the contrary, she seemed quite interested and even a little anticipatory about whether this blood sacrifice could indeed bring a blessed future to the tribe.

It wasn't anyone's fault but the environment she grew up in that shaped such thoughts; had she lived outside the mountains, she probably would have thought much like Qin Fang and the rest.

This performance by High Priest Darren shocked all the tribespeople present, their eyes filled with boundless awe, respect, and longing, making Darren feel elated.

Perhaps she was reminded of the candid interaction with Qin Fang in that cave, and the intimate contact they shared, but sadly since then, there had been no more closeness between her and Qin Fang.

In recent days, she had wanted to get closer to Qin Fang, but although he embraced her to sleep every night, he refused to claim her body.

As for the reason, Qin Fang simply did not want Wen Yan to lose her cherished virginity under such circumstances.

Tang Xin's facial expression remained calm, and her eyes did not show much unusualness, yet Qin Fang could feel that Tang Xin's glances floated across his face several times, pretending as though she saw nothing.

Several people exhibited different demeanors, but overall, their attention was still focused on the stage above, watching High Priest Darren's next act.

This girl was very sacred, so flawless, as if she was now going to face the blood sacrifice; she was completely willing to dedicate herself to the supreme deity to exchange for blessings upon the entire tribe.

For her, it was not a catastrophe, on the contrary, it was a liberation, a gift...

In her heart, she held immense admiration and joy for High Priest Darren, who seemed equally "divinely impeccable"; she watched every single one of Darren's performances very seriously, even believing High Priest Darren to be the most formidable person next to the supreme deity.

As Darren took steps closer, she was not at all panicked; instead, she became more excited, even when High Priest Darren held a shimmering dagger, it had no effect on her.

The blood sacrifice officially began.

High Priest Darren gently waved the large sleeves of his sacrificial robes, like a gentle breeze passing by; the girl felt her head heavy, her eyelids increasingly so, and finally, she closed her eyes and fell asleep...

"Great power of the High Priest!"

"The deity is supreme!"

Although it was a very simple action, to the mountain people, it seemed as if High Priest Darren had merely waved his hand and completely summoned away the girl's soul, causing a clamor to rise again. Soon after, hordes of tribespeople kneeled to the ground and started to worship reverently.

"Shameless..."

It was still just the three of them, Qin Fang and the others, who remained motionless, or perhaps it was the usually calm Tang Xin, who rarely expressed such low-voiced anger.

These mountain people might not understand how Darren summoned away the girl's soul, but Tang Xin knew clearly that it had nothing to do with summoning any soul; the girl had simply been drugged with a stupefying agent.

Although Tang Xin, as a disciple of Tang Sect, might not have had access to the core secrets of the Sect's Hidden Weapons and poison techniques, she naturally had studied drugs quite a bit. Being one of the most despicable intoxicants in the Martial World, the stupefying agent was easy to recognize, and of course, Tang Xin knew it well.

High Priest Darren was truly shameless, having drugged the girl with the stupefying agent, and then pretending that the deity took away the girl's soul, even Tang Xin was somewhat angered.

"Keep calm!"

However, Qin Fang gently pulled her aside, preventing her from rushing up and splitting Darren in two with a sword; she calmed down and continued to watch Darren's performance.

The girl had been drugged into a deep sleep and naturally was unaware of what would happen next.

And at last, the climax of the blood sacrifice arrived.

The blade fell, and blood gleamed.

A deep red appeared on the young girl's wrist, as blood slowly began to flow from the cut.

There, High Priest Darren positioned the girl's arm over the groove, allowing the blood to trickle into the indentation...

Then, he moved to the other side, grabbed the girl's other arm, and with the same motion, cut her other wrist, placing the limb over the groove to continue the bloodletting...

But even this was not enough. After severing both wrists, High Priest Darren moved to the girl's legs, seemingly intending to sever them as well to let the blood drain.

Witnessing this, even Tang Xin involuntarily furrowed her brows. While aware that the blood sacrifice might not be straightforward, she hadn't expected such a method.

Tang Xin was not particularly concerned about the girl's fate, but watching her die in such a way was too cruel. Even a swift death by the blade would have been more acceptable to Tang Xin.

Tang Xin moved, wanting to rush forward to save the girl, but Qin Fang stretched out an arm to hold her back, gently shaking his head to dissuade her from intervening.

Had anyone else attempted to stop her, Tang Xin would have ignored them. But since it was Qin Fang who stopped her, and his eyes seemed to convey a deeper meaning, Tang Xin forcefully suppressed the urge to act.

High Priest Darren continued busily with his bloodletting. By now, he had severed the artery in one leg, and seemed intent on sparing none of the limbs.

"Qin Fang, they're so cruel..." Wen Yan couldn't bear to watch any longer, burying her head completely into Qin Fang's chest while speaking with unbearable distress.

She was just an ordinary girl, unaccustomed to the sight of blood, let alone such a gruesome scene. It was fortunate enough that she wasn't frightened out of her wits; expecting her to keep watching was clearly impossible.

The ritual of severing limbs to draw blood could no longer be described as merely barbaric—the bloodshed was extreme, even inhumane.

To kill is to simply end a life, but this method of execution was akin to the cruelty of dismemberment, letting life ebb away with the draining blood.

And so, the girl vaguely lost her vibrant life, which was truly regrettable.

"It's alright, it's all fake, don't take it seriously..."

Qin Fang held Wen Yan by the waist, whispering softly into her ear.

"Really?" Wen Yan was stunned, then glanced again at the bloody scene on the altar, unable to believe what she was hearing. How could the blood, which seemed so real, be fake?

"Trust me, I wouldn't lie to you..." Qin Fang patted her back, saying so. There were things that Wen Yan couldn't understand. If not for Qin Fang's knowledge, even he would have been deceived.

"I didn't expect this guy to have learned so much... even if it's only superficial!"

Watching High Priest Darren, who was busy with the bloodletting, Qin Fang muttered to himself, his mind rapidly piecing things together.

Qianmen Illusion Technique—Darren had actually learned the Qianmen Illusion Technique, which was quite surprising to Qin Fang.

It wasn't that Darren couldn't learn it, but Qin Fang found it odd that Darren's mastery implied an authentic lineage, somewhat purer than what Ye Ming and Ye Huan, the siblings Qin Fang knew, had learned.

Yet it was peculiar that Darren had learned only the superficial aspects and had not grasped the true essence of the Qianmen Illusion Technique, making him seem a novice.

Before, Qin Fang thought of Darren as an imposter mainly because the tricks he used seemed hand-me-downs from other shamans and witch doctors. But now, he believed Darren was a novice because, despite learning such an authentic Qianmen Illusion Technique, he failed to capture even a trace of its essence...

Despite Darren appearing powerful on the altar, with the girl's limbs bleeding profusely—a sight clear to the hundreds or thousands present, leaving no one to doubt its veracity—

In Qin Fang's eyes, it wasn't so. The girl had merely fainted, and Darren's dagger hadn't cut even a single hair on her head; the so-called blood was nothing more than an illusion created by the Qianmen Illusion Technique...

Clearly, from the start, Darren had no intention of truly killing the girl in such a brutal manner—it was all a deception.

"Then how did he accumulate so many Sin Points?"

If Darren knew the Qianmen Illusion Technique, and considering his high status in the mountains, it was evident that such sacrificial rituals had been conducted more than once or twice, and each time, these ignorant mountaineers were deceived by the Qianmen Illusion Technique without actual killings taking place.

If he hadn't killed anyone, then from where did Darren's three thousand Sin Points come from? This inevitably raised doubts in Qin Fang's mind.

Chapter 1066 Shock

With doubts in his mind and unable to think of a reasonable explanation, Qin Fang simply continued reading with patience.

Upon the high platform, the limbs of the young girl were all cut, and bright red blood was gushing out, a scene that truly tugged at one's heartstrings.

Those villagers watching below had already prostrated themselves on the ground, worshipping in fear and with expressions of utmost reverence and piety, as if they dared not show any disrespect.

As the sky gradually darkened, it became even harder for the people below to see clearly what was happening above. Perhaps this made it even easier for High Priest Darren to cover up the true facts.

The blood continued to flow, and the blood sacrifice ceremony was still ongoing. It appeared so harmonious, and the girl remained extremely serene as if she really had lost her soul and was about to journey to the abode of the gods in such a dreamlike state...

No one questioned the authenticity of this blood sacrifice; it was the hope of the mountain people, their hope for a bright future, for which they were willing to sacrifice anything, such as the life of this young, tender girl... Anyone who dared to shatter such a beautiful dream would inevitably be attacked by the crowd.

Initially, Wen Yan could not bear to watch such a scene, appearing extremely scared and terrified. However, ever since Qin Fang told her it was all fake, she started observing very carefully.

The half-baked charlatan High Priest Darren's achievements in Qianmen Illusion Technique were not very high. With careful observation, one could still discern the truth from the falsehood.

For example, the scene of bleeding looked somewhat discordant upon close inspection, as the location of the bleeding did not quite match the wounds...

That was why Wen Yan believed Qin Fang's words were true and that he hadn't deceived her, and also that the girl on the platform had not truly been bled to death. This made her feel much better.

Tang Xin's eyesight was naturally much better than Wen Yan's. After Qin Fang stopped her from intervening, she had already guessed that there was something wrong with the ritual above, and upon a careful look, she discerned the truth even earlier than Wen Yan.

She was originally not very concerned about the survival of these people. Now that the girl had no risk to her life, she naturally cared even less...

Although Qin Fang saw the truth very clearly and knew that High Priest Darren was a complete fraud and charlatan, it was still not appropriate to expose him directly.

Exposing a scammer wasn't a big deal and could even be considered heroic, but that also depended on the scenario. The mountain people didn't care whether you were being heroic; they were filled with fantasies about the future. Darren made good use of this, and although he deceived them, he also brought them boundless hope.

In this sense, Darren was not particularly vile, certainly much better than those unscrupulous businessmen outside the mountains... Of course, if Darren had committed other utterly heinous acts, then Qin Fang couldn't be polite to him.

The girl's blood continued to flow, but with the passage of time, the flow gradually slowed as if it was drying up...

However, the girl never moved an inch throughout, and the mountain people below respectfully awaited the conclusion of the ritual.

This bleeding process lasted for more than ten minutes, during which High Priest Darren acted as if he were performing a shamanic dance, gesticulating wildly, appearing to truly engage in sacrificial activities; enduring these actions for such time, he looked as if he had been fished out of water, soaked in sweat...

"The ceremony is complete! Offer sacrifice to the divine..."

Following High Priest Darren's roar, the ritual finally ended completely, and the young girl's blood had also stopped flowing. Darren gently wiped the wound, and suddenly, that spot appeared completely uninjured, as if it had never been wounded at all...

Using the same technique, he smoothed out all the wounds on the limbs, leaving the mountain people utterly dumbfounded, almost at a loss for words.

Qin Fang and the others had no change in expression; since the previous bleeding was an illusion, there naturally were never any real wounds. After dispelling these illusions from the Qianmen Illusion Technique, those so-called wounds couldn't possibly have any cuts...

Unfortunately, only perceptive people like Qin Fang and his companions understood this. These ignorant mountain people couldn't spot the slightest trick...

However, there was one thing that was real; the grooves surrounding the platform where the girl lay were filled with brimming bright red blood, creating a profoundly eerie sight...

As it turned out, High Priest Darren, in his efforts to perfect this scam, spared no detail. Had Qin Fang not seen through the Qianmen Illusion Technique, he might have been deceived as well.

The blood sacrifice ceremony was thus completed, but it didn't mark the end of the entire ritual. The most crucial process of offering was yet to be conducted...

High Priest Darren had already descended from the high platform and settled back into his palanquin, while several extra sedan chair bearers of his climbed onto the platform. Together, they lifted the platform, on which the young girl lay, upwards...

These bearers were evidently experienced, lifting the platform steadily without the slightest jolt. The blood placed in the groove remained intact, flowing slowly within...

Carefully descending from the high platform, the mountain villagers voluntarily cleared a path, allowing the men carrying the platform to walk out slowly and head towards the exit of the village.

High Priest Darren, sitting in his palanquin, was quickly lifted by people and slowly followed behind the group heading out of the village.

It was then followed by the villagers in the village and those from the surrounding tribes, keeping a distance of at least twenty to thirty meters behind High Priest Darren, hesitant to get closer and potentially disrupt the "exhausted" High Priest Darren's brief respite...

Qin Fang and the others naturally followed within the crowd, also refraining from moving closer to the front, lest the villagers think they were causing trouble.

Carrying Wen Yan on his back, Qin Fang and Tang Xin walked slowly among the crowd; though they didn't seem fast, the villagers in front continuously moved aside subconsciously, soon placing them at the very front, over twenty meters away where Qin Fang could clearly see what was ahead...

However, obscured by Darren's expansive palanquin, Qin Fang couldn't see the platform clearly, which felt quite frustrating to him.

The final part of the ritual was the offering to the mountain deity of this massive mountain range, and the nearest place for offering was selected by High Priest Darren, a very steep cliff, seemingly bottomless, where the offering was to be cast down...

This also puzzled Qin Fang. If High Priest Darren's more than 3000 Sin Points accrued by such means, why didn't he just kill the girl of the blood sacrifice first? Instead, why put in much effort to throw her off the cliff?

Despite his doubts, Qin Fang continued to follow and watch from behind, waiting for the outcome...

The cliff was not too far from the village, located behind the mountain of the village, taking only about an hour's time. As night fell, it became almost impossible to discern the situation ahead, with only the lit torches vaguely illuminating the immediate surroundings.

The platform with the girl stopped at the forefront of the cliff, followed closely by the large palanquin of High Priest Darren, which blocked most of the view combined with the dim light. The villagers following from a distance also didn't dare get too close and naturally couldn't see clearly what was happening ahead.

"It's too far away; I can't see anything clearly..."

Being so distant and the light fading, Wen Yan, a mere mortal, didn't have the keen vision of Qin Fang or Tang Xin and couldn't help but murmur softly.

Qin Fang thought for a moment, then, without showing how he concealed them, he pulled out two binoculars from his body, tossing one to Wen Yan and the other to Tang Xin.

"Go ahead and use these..."

For Qin Fang, this wasn't challenging as his Props Box contained numerous items, including the spoils of war he had gathered from defeating the Remnant Wolf Mercenary Corps. These were not merely binoculars but advanced ones with night vision capabilities...

Wen Yan didn't hesitate; although she had never used such sophisticated devices, she knew these were binoculars. She promptly placed them in front of her eyes and started looking into the distance.

Tang Xin also felt they were quite novel, mimicking Wen Yan, placed the binoculars before her eyes, and peered inside...

"Oh..."

However, she was truly shocked by what she saw. The initially blurry scene suddenly became much clearer, almost as if it was right before her eyes—even the expressions on High Priest Darren's face were distinctly visible...

Tang Sect in the Martial World was known for their hidden weapons and poisons, along with their Mechanism Techniques and other exotic skills, hence they were not averse to such devices.

Yet, this little gadget was quite impressive; Tang Xin was clearly aware that even the top craftspeople of Tang Sect couldn't produce such miraculous devices...

Indeed, the Tang Sect experts could only scale heights to look afar, but not like she was now—able to see distant scenes clearly from where she stood.

Of course, compared to the smartphone-like device Qin Fang had let her play with before, this seemed much simpler...

Chapter 1067: Shameless Truth

Qin Fang and his group had such advanced tools prepared, naturally they could clearly see what was happening ahead, but the mountain people nearby could only rely on their own eyes to see all this.

"Ah..."

Indeed, what they didn't know before, once they saw it, it shocked them. Wen Yan saw clearly what was happening ahead and couldn't help but let out such an exclamation.

However, her exclamation had only come out halfway, and even before she could tell Qin Fang what exactly was happening, she heard High Priest Darren ahead loudly proclaiming, "A sacrifice to the gods..."

Immediately after that, she saw several strong men carrying a platform, suddenly throwing that platform down the sheer cliff...

In the wind, one could vaguely see that platform, and also see a human-shaped object, along with a rain of blood, quickly plummeting down the cliff.

"The gods are supreme!"

"The gods are supreme..."

High Priest Darren was the first to prostrate on the ground, shouting loudly, and those around him also all fell to the ground, then the mountain people nearby, also instinctively followed suit, all prostrated on the ground, shouting loudly, like the followers of some cult.

The blood sacrifice was completed, and now the offering was also completed, which meant this sacrificial event had also succeeded. The mountain people issued such prayers, also hoping for a prosperous future for their entire tribe, appearing exceedingly sincere and reverent, daring not to show any disrespect...

Seeing such a scene, although Wen Yan really wanted to say something, in the end, she did not speak, mainly because she did not want to shatter these mountain people's dreams.

This process lasted for about ten or more minutes, and with a command from High Priest Darren, the ceremony was officially declared finished.

The Tribe Chief requested High Priest Darren to stay and enjoy the most lavish meal of the tribe, which could be said to be the most luxurious meal of the entire tribe.

However, High Priest Darren seemed quite principled and sternly refused the Tribe Chief's invitation, symbolically leaving behind one or two subordinates, and the rest, carrying his large sedan chair, quickly left the tribe and returned to his residence.

"Qin Fang, that man is a fraud..."

The people in the tribe all joyfully returned to their village, but at this moment, Wen Yan caught up with Qin Fang, really wanting to tell him this news.

"Shh~~"

However, Qin Fang shushed her, gesturing towards the passing mountain people nearby, perhaps very few of them understood Mandarin, but it was also not guaranteed that there were none who did understand.

Only after the nearby mountain people had mostly passed by, as they were standing at the very front, and there weren't many people around to begin with...

Only then did he speak very quietly, "I already know, you and Tang Xin go back, I'll go and take a look at the situation..."

From the first glance he saw High Priest Darren, Qin Fang knew this guy was a fraud, the reason he hadn't exposed him was firstly, he didn't want to shatter these mountain people's dreams, and secondly, he wanted to see what exactly this guy was up to...

During that offering process just now, Qin Fang had seen everything, although he hadn't used a telescope to carefully observe the details, but when that platform along with the sacrificial girl were thrown down the cliff, Qin Fang specifically used a Scouting Skill on that body.

The feedback also confirmed Qin Fang's previous guess, that girl hadn't died, nor had she been thrown down the cliff, she should still be in the hands of High Priest Darren.

Looking at how High Priest Darren hurriedly left after the sacrifice was completed, appearing to be in a hurry, there definitely seemed to be an issue, which Qin Fang couldn't believe there wasn't.

Not to mention, although High Priest Darren's position required such a large sedan chair, and all covered with curtain, which in itself wasn't a problem, but all the people around were his own subordinates...

Including the important steps in the ritual, either completed by High Priest Darren himself or completed with the assistance of his subordinates, the tribe didn't participate at all.

Indeed, the people of High Priest Darren were deemed as holy messengers, the sacredness of the ceremony, not letting the mountain people get involved could also be explained, but not even allowing them close, that's a bit problematic...

Although Qin Fang didn't see the exact situation, he could guess it, that girl wasn't actually thrown down the cliff, but was inside High Priest Darren's large sedan chair.

"Hmm, you must rescue her..."

Wen Yan, looking through the telescope, saw the true situation, High Priest Darren had replaced the supposed corpse, the real girl was still alive...

Not knowing the truth might not be worrisome, but knowing it, as a girl, Wen Yan also couldn't help but feel worried, especially since High Priest Darren didn't seem like a good person, the fate of a pure and naked young girl in his hands... just thinking about it felt terrifying.

"I will try my best..."

Qin Fang nodded, but he didn't make any promises.

At this time, his steps had already slowed down a bit, who knows if the impatient High Priest Darren couldn't wait and might make his move on the way back.

Moreover, in the hearts of the mountain people, this girl was already thrown off a cliff, sacrificed to the supreme deity. If she were to suddenly return alive, it undoubtedly signified that the sacrifice had failed, shattering their beautiful dream in an instant...

Perhaps they could realize that High Priest Darren was actually a fraud, but compared to this harsh fact and their beautiful dream, these mountain people would obviously prefer the latter... As for the life of a young girl, they would not particularly care.

For the future of the tribe, sacrificing a few people was very worthwhile, otherwise, that girl would not have voluntarily gone for the blood sacrifice, filled with excitement and thrill throughout.

Tang Xin took Wen Yan back to the tribe, while Qin Fang, aided by the dim surroundings and the cover of the forest, easily concealed himself and quickly chased after High Priest Darren.

Qin Fang was fast, but the mountain roads were rugged and High Priest Darren had left a bit earlier, Qin Fang had to track him all the way, and it indeed took some time before he caught up.

However, before Qin Fang could make a move, High Priest Darren had already reached his residence.

The place where High Priest Darren lived was a special location in the mountains, resembling a small fortress, though slightly smaller in scale, its defensive measures were much stronger than those of the other fortresses.

It looked very well-defended, with sturdy fences built all around and even a specially established gateway, resembling the military camps of ancient soldiers. People were patrolling around, although they were just ordinary mountain folk, they seemed much stronger than the motley crowds of the mountain tribe.

By now, it was already very late, and like the other fortresses out there, they would have been ready to rest early if there weren't any activities.

But here, the place was brightly lit and lively...

High Priest Darren's sedan chair stopped inside the gateway. He stepped down, not alone, but holding a young girl who was completely undressed.

Clearly, this girl was the one sacrificed by the tribe.

Sadly, the tribe believed she had already been sacrificed to death, but in reality, she was still alive and had been brought to High Priest Darren.

Moreover, High Priest Darren was hastening as if he could hardly wait, holding the girl and quickly entered the largest stone house in the middle of the fortress.

People constantly passed by, all of them looking enviously at High Priest Darren, their eyes gliding over the girl's perfect body, filled with desire.

Although the defenses here were stringent, stronger than the outer fortresses, they could not stop Qin Fang, who easily infiltrated the fortress and headed directly to the most important stone house.

When he arrived at the entrance of the stone house, it was evident that the defenses here were even stricter, with people constantly patrolling around.

"Tsk ts, another new chick... she's really pretty! If I could get a round, that would be bliss..."

One of the guards spoke while eagerly trying to peek into the stone house.

Slap~~

But his companion immediately slapped him, scolding, "What are you looking at? Do you want to die? Don't you know that this beauty is for the High Priest's personal enjoyment..."

"I'm just having a look. After all, once the High Priest is tired of her, won't she be given to us to play with?"

The guard said nonchalantly, obviously, this wasn't the first or second time something like this happened.

"But that's after the High Priest is tired of her. Right now, she's still fresh..."

His companion smacked his lips, obviously very envious of the pleasure-seeking High Priest.

"That's true... Ah, I can't take it anymore, I'm going to find a woman to relieve this..." The last woman the High Priest got tired of wasn't bad, I'm going to look for her today..."

It seemed the guard felt unbearable 'hardness' down there and couldn't bother guarding anymore, quickly slipping away.

"Idiot, dare to mess with her even though she's become a fool..."

His companion smacked his lips in disdain, obviously looking down on him...

"But then again, that chick is pretty hot indeed, though she's turned into a fool, her screams are indeed very pleasurable! Tsk tsk, I can't let him enjoy alone, I'll also have a go..."

Chapter 1068: Darren's Secret

Both guards had run away, but little did they expect that while they were talking, Qin Fang was hiding in the shadows of a nearby corner, listening intently to their conversation.

Qin Fang had already sensed something problematic about High Priest Darren, and the information he had just overheard only reinforced his belief that this man was no good.

It really is true that like leaders, like followers...

These people, who followed High Priest Darren, all seemed to have similar vile behavior, as if they were all lecherous souls reincarnated...

At the same time, it also revealed the true nature of the sacrificial activities, which are extremely sacred and significant to the mountain people; it turned out to be High Priest Darren's perfect scheme for amassing wealth and deceiving women.

As for the young girls who were deceived, it was High Priest Darren who enjoyed them first; when he tired of them, he handed them over to his followers to play with...

And from what the guard suggested, the fate of these women was incredibly tragic; even those driven insane were not spared from their play, it was utterly inhumane.

The mountain was vast, with numerous tribes—though not a hundred, certainly at least eighty. Although sacrificial activities were not held frequently, with so many tribes, such events occurred intermittently.

High Priest Darren held a very high status in the mountains; each year he could bring back more than a dozen girls, perhaps even more.

And High Priest Darren had been mingling in these mountains for quite a long time, over a dozen years, so the number of women he had brought back amounted at least to several hundred.

But what was the fate of these women? They all became the playthings of these men and inevitably met with dreary ends...

The more spirited ones, their ends were likely even more tragic, with many dying unnaturally.

If previously Qin Fang was not quite clear how Darren amassed over three thousand Sin Points, equal to over thirty human lives—these being directly killed by Darren—now he somewhat understood; perhaps these girls had discovered the truth and tried to expose the real face of High Priest Darren, thereby meeting their grim fate.

It's not strange to drive someone to death, nor to madness...

"Scum!"

Although Qin Fang had seen many scum and dregs of society, he had never encountered anyone as vile as High Priest Darren.

Over thirty living lives, directly perished at his hands, and many more in the fortress, likely those driven to death, just like the two guards Qin Fang noticed, who both had two or three hundred Sin Points...clearly, these two had also killed people.

And in this fortress, there were nearly a hundred men; each with two or three lives on their hands, aggregated into a truly terrifying number.

Over the past dozen years, not one of the sacrificial girls had ever been seen by their families again, evidently none had managed to escape, their ultimate fates were only two—either confined within the fortress as tools for these men's venting, or killed and their bodies buried in some unknown corner.

With things that had already transpired, Qin Fang was unable to help much, but now that a poor girl was about to enter a tragic fate, if Qin Fang didn't try to save her, it would truly be inhumane.

His figure flickered slightly, and he immediately entered the stone house through the narrow window; the patrolling guards didn't notice even a shadow.

The fortress had existed for so long, and with High Priest Darren's lofty status, nobody dared to intrude, so these guards were actually quite lax, skiving off from time to time was common.

Moreover, every time High Priest Darren brought a woman back for his pleasure, none of these men wanted to stay and eavesdrop, they all went to play with women.

Inside the stone house...

As the foremost figure in the mountains, High Priest Darren naturally loved luxury; the interior was incredibly lavish, everything gleaming with gold, and many decorations made directly of gold.

The room contained a very large stone bed, covered with various animal furs, especially tiger, leopard, and mink furs, all very precious, which could fetch a high price outside.

But here, they were merely used by High Priest Darren for bedding... truly a waste of resources.

The girl Darren had brought back was now silently lying on the bed, still completely naked, her smooth skin fully exposed, yet she seemed completely unaware, evidently not yet fully awake.

No, she woke up!

At that moment, Qin Fang noticed her eyebrows twitch slightly, followed by her eyes slowly opening, blankly staring at the ceiling, obviously very confused about her current situation.

It seemed that High Priest Darren had a good handle on the timing of the knockout drug; he didn't linger in the tribe but rushed back, timing it just right so the girl would be waking up now.

If he had stayed in the tribe, his scheme would've been exposed.

High Priest Darren wasn't in the room, but Qin Fang heard the sound of water splashing from within; that guy was probably taking a bath.

Chapter 1069 Darren's Secret_2

After all, his performance just now was quite strenuous, and he had worked up a considerable sweat. It was truly uncomfortable not to take a wash...

"Hehe, my beauty, here I come..."

No sooner had he thought of waking up the girl than he heard High Priest Darren's voice, and immediately he saw a flash in the corner of the stone house. Darren's gaunt figure appeared before Qin Fang, his skeletal body looking very aged, his entire form dry and wrinkled.

Yet, that particular symbol of manhood was now standing erect, looking rather fierce; it did not seem to befit his age.

"Dar... Darren... High Priest Darren, what... what are you doing? Where is this place? Why am I here?"

Seeing the High Priest, a man even older than her father – the most venerable man in the mountains – standing naked before her, that part proudly raised, the girl was completely stunned.

In her memory, she was supposed to have come to the side of the deity, to offer her purest self entirely to him, so that the deity would bless her tribe with boundless happiness.

But reality —

Seemed nothing like her fantasy!

"Why here? Hahaha... Of course, I brought you back! Aren't you the sacrifice for the deity? I am the messenger of the deity; you naturally have to offer yourself to me first, then you can have the chance to meet the supreme deity..."

High Priest Darren, truly the most cunning charlatan in the mountains, did not forget his old trade and continued to deceive the girl.

But the urgent expression on his face, combined with the physiological reaction below, made it seem more like a strange uncle with candy luring a naive little girl.

"You... you..."

Although the girl still hadn't figured out what was happening, as she saw the lecherous High Priest Darren advancing towards her, she knew she'd been tricked. Almost instinctively, she wanted to resist, but the effects of the sweat-producing drug just wore off, and she was too weak to exert any strength.

Slap~~

Yet, just as High Priest Darren was about to violate her, a sound abruptly rang out beside him, interrupting his action, and he turned his head to look in its direction.

"Eh, who are you?"

Then, he saw Qin Fang standing at the corner of the stone house, who had changed his appearance and donned the attire of a local villager. Darren did not recognize that Qin Fang was indeed the outsider he had been wary of...

However, the villagers here were all his people; the number was not too large, and he knew them all. It seemed that there was no one who looked like Qin Fang's current face.

"The one who's after your life..."

Qin Fang's expression turned cold as he spoke with a chilling tone. At the same time, a sharp, gleaming dagger appeared in his hand, by no means inferior to the one Darren had previously used for bloodletting.

"You... come..."

High Priest Darren was startled at the words, his complexion changing as he almost instinctively thought to call out for help.

But how could Qin Fang allow him to do as he wished? With a slight movement, his figure turned into a gust of wind, and in an instant, he was right in front of Darren, two meters away. Then, with a flash of silver light from his hand, Darren's words that reached his mouth turned into nothing but muffled sounds.

"I've heard you're quite fond of bloodletting people; as luck would have it, I share the same hobby. I've never had the opportunity before, but now I can test it out on you..."

At this moment, Qin Fang turned into a demon, slashing with a knife and severing High Priest Darren's wrist with ease. Fresh blood instantly splurged out.

High Priest Darren desperately wanted to scream, but his body was immobilized. He could feel the agony in his body but couldn't make a single sound, only shaking violently.

A small cut might not seem much, but the sensation of slowly losing blood was terribly uncomfortable. High Priest Darren had always been the one to cut others' veins, never truly severing them, but he definitely did not enjoy this feeling.

Now, he was truly bleeding. Although it was just a wrist and not a limb, too much blood loss could certainly be fatal for him.

Qin Fang simply slit his wrist and then ignored him. From the Props Box, he took out a set of clothes and threw it to the girl, who was still in shock and horror, signaling her to put on the clothes to avoid the embarrassment of being completely naked...

The girl was still in shock, beginning to guess that the entire sacrificial ceremony had been a sham, and she was the sacrifice, almost ending up in the hands of the lascivious old High Priest Darren.

And this man, who seemed quite unfamiliar, had saved her. He had appeared just in time to rescue her, otherwise, she would have lost her innocence.

While mountain women didn't regard their chastity as very important compared to married women—who didn't mind marrying several men—unmarried young girls did value their purity highly. There were even some who had committed suicide after losing their virginity.

In particular, there were quite a few who had vied for the position of Holy Woman in such sacrificial ceremonies and committed suicide over this very issue... Although this girl's situation was somewhat different, it was roughly similar.

Offering her pure body to that supreme deity was vastly different from offering it to the disgusting elderly man before her eyes.

If she had known the truth earlier, she would never have gone through enormous efforts to secure a position as a sacrifice.

At this moment, Qin Fang's arrival undeniably revived the girl's heart, which had fallen into despair, and her gaze towards him changed significantly.

Whether the supreme deity existed or not, the girl no longer cared. But the young man who had rescued her in her time of danger now held a place in her heart that was no less esteemed than that of the supreme deity.

Just when she was nearly in despair, she had prayed for the supreme deity to rescue her from danger—and then this young man appeared...

What was going through the girl's mind, Qin Fang wasn't entirely sure, as he had no intention of paying attention to her thoughts.

What truly mattered to him was what High Priest Darren was thinking at this very moment.

With his wrist bleeding, High Priest Darren had lost his former dignity and dominance, left only with the common fear and horror. It was at this moment that Qin Fang's Mind Reading Technique had the highest success rate, allowing him to easily probe all the secrets hidden deep within High Priest Darren's heart.

High Priest Darren was but a mediocre charlatan, with some deceitful tricks that were somewhat interesting. However, Qin Fang knew that if that was all he had, it would be impossible for him to have such sway over the mountains.

Witch Doctor Geda relied on the truly magical Miaojiang Medical Arts to gain his high status and reputation. Yet High Priest Darren, merely with his deception, had hoodwinked countless mountain villagers and held a status even more esteemed than Witch Doctor Geda's.

It was peculiar how he had deceived the mountains for so long without once being exposed. If someone said this young man didn't have some ace up his sleeve, Qin Fang wouldn't believe it.

This was bound to be High Priest Darren's greatest secret, and getting him to divulge it wouldn't be easy. Even if he did speak, Qin Fang might not believe him.

Discovering it through the Mind Reading Technique was the most precise method; High Priest Darren didn't even need to speak for Qin Fang to learn the original truth.

Indeed, Qin Fang's attention gradually focused on High Priest Darren's hands...

Chapter 1070: Rare Special Item: Thousand Mechanism

High Priest Darren had on his hand a very strange-looking ring which Qin Fang had not initially noticed. In these mountains, the people had various kinds of decorative items – rings, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and so on – nothing too special...

But now, Darren was completely bare, with everything removed except for the conspicuous ring on his hand, which became impossible for Qin Fang to ignore.

The design of the ring was bizarre, or rather, it should be said to be exquisitely crafted, clearly not something that these mountain folk could produce – definitely the work of a very skilled and talented craftsman.

The pattern on the ring seemed quite unique and peculiar, yet it held a kind of special beauty, certainly not comparable to ordinary objects.

Qin Fang immediately cast a Scouting Skill on this ring.

"Thousand Mechanism, a rare and special item, Qian Technique+1, one of the Thousand Gate treasures, possessing extremely powerful functions."

Looking at the result of the reconnaissance on this ring, Qin Fang's expression involuntarily changed, as its effects were too powerful and overbearing.

Previously, Qin Fang felt that High Priest Darren's Qianmen Illusion Technique was somewhat flawed, very authentic yet only superficial.

It might work against ordinary people, but confronted with a real connoisseur or someone serious, it would be easy to expose him – like today, with Wen Yan's careful observation after Qin Fang's reminder, she could spot the flaws in his Qianmen Illusion Technique...

Qin Fang now understood that High Priest Darren himself didn't know Qian Technique at all. The only reason he could perform the Qianmen Illusion Technique was mainly due to the meddling of this 'Thousand Mechanism' ring.

Cheating Skills+1 effectively turned High Priest Darren from an absolute novice into a beginner with Elementary Qian Technique.

However, he hadn't learned any Qian Skills and could only fumble around to acquire superficial knowledge. In the outside world, the chances of being exposed were high, but in these remote mountains, it wasn't so easy to be found out. He had specially designed the environment, the timing, and so on to keep up his charade until today.

This time, Qin Fang also came to understand that when he was scouting High Priest Darren, the skill of Qian Technique didn't appear among his specialties. That's because it wasn't something he had learned himself but was an addition from the ring, and naturally, it wasn't considered one of his innate skills...

Such a fine item would be a waste left in the hands of a half-baked charlatan like High Priest Darren, a case of 'casting pearls before swine', squandering such a treasure's effects.

Moreover, since High Priest Darren had done nothing but despicable deeds with this treasure, Qin Fang was even less likely to let him continue...

Walking up to High Priest Darren, Qin Fang couldn't be bothered with pleasantries, snatching the ring right off his hand and immediately wearing it on his own finger.

Thousand Mechanism, a rare and special item, had an entirely different appearance on Qin Fang's hand than on High Priest Darren's. With barely a thought from Qin Fang, the ring immediately dissolved into nothingness, disappearing without a trace... Just like the Ring of Justice on Qin Fang's hand and the Psychic Jade around his neck, which could directly conceal their presence.

High Priest Darren watched as the ring he treasured was blatantly snatched away by Qin Fang, unsure if Qin Fang was aware of the ring's magical properties. Even just from the design of the ring, it was clear it wasn't ordinary, and his heart was bleeding...

However, it wasn't just his heart that was bleeding now; blood was also continuously flowing from his wrist, his body growing weaker, and his head dizzy, as if he wouldn't be able to hold on for much longer.

He was scared, truly scared!

He wanted to beg Qin Fang for mercy, but other than the whimpering noise, he couldn't utter a single coherent word, unable to even plead for mercy...

As for Qin Fang, he couldn't care less about the life or death of High Priest Darren. Having understood the full truth, he had not intended to let such an evil person continue to live.

With over three thousand Sin Points, killing such a person would net Qin Fang at least several hundred Justice Points, and right now, he was in dire need of Justice Points...

"Miss, what are your plans for the future?"

High Priest Darren was undoubtedly doomed, but there remained the question of what to do with the young girl who had been deceived—it wasn't easy to find a place for her.

"I... I... I don't know!"

The girl's face was still very pale. Although Qin Fang had come to help her, watching High Priest Darren's wrists bleed out, her emotions were a mixture of agitation, excitement, and satisfaction, yet at the same time, she was utterly clueless and at a loss...

The sacrificial ceremony had ended, and she was deceived by High Priest Darren to come here, nearly losing her innocence. The beautiful dream that once was shattered, and all that remained was the realization that everything had been an elaborate ruse. Right now, she longed to return home, to have a good cry...

But she understood she couldn't go home...

From the moment she started the blood sacrifice, her life was no longer connected to her original home. Her family and tribe had witnessed her body being thrown off a cliff.

If she were to return to the tribe alive, the people there would undoubtedly have negative thoughts, viewing her as a sinner abandoned by the gods. Not only would they kill her, but her family would also be implicated...

The mountain folk were not big on ideas; their thinking was quite backward, and their customs were extremely barbaric. Despite her young age, the girl was well aware of all this...

Without a home to return to and no place to go, at this moment, she was utterly lost, almost completely devoid of any thoughts about the future...

"You rest here for a bit, take some time to think. I'll go out and have a look..."

Seeing the girl's reaction, Qin Fang couldn't help but heave a sigh. She had always lived in the mountains, and just like the other girls in the tribe, she was expected to marry at sixteen, bear children, and then quietly live out the rest of her life...

But now everything had completely changed. She had cheerfully become the sacrificial Holy Woman, only to discover it was a huge deception. She barely managed to preserve herself, only to find she had become a person who should not exist...

At sixteen, a girl is in the prime of her youth, with a long life ahead. At that age, no one wants to just die...especially after the realization that her dreams had been shattered left her even more helpless and lost.

Qin Fang did not stay any longer. Although he had saved this girl, her future path still needed to be chosen by herself, and he could not make decisions for her.

"But... but..."

Seeing Qin Fang about to leave, the girl became anxious and nervously looked at High Priest Darren who was still bleeding, the shadow in her heart still lingering.

It was Qin Fang who saved her in that critical moment, and now he was like a hero in her eyes, the only person she could rely on. It seemed that only with Qin Fang by her side could she feel somewhat safe; without him, she would be very worried, scared, even terrified...

"Don't worry, he can't move. He'll probably be dead very soon..."

Knowing what the girl was afraid of, Qin Fang smiled and then with a light flick of his finger, High Priest Darren's body immediately stiffened and fell forward, crashing onto the rocky ground with a heavy thud.

Gurgle~~

Such an impact, for High Priest Darren who had lost a lot of blood and was severely injured, was just adding insult to injury. Though his body couldn't move, he suddenly spat out a mouthful of blood; his face became even paler and more withered, looking incredibly ghastly and horrifying...

Indeed, seeing this, the girl's expression softened considerably.

The people of the mountains are all quite fierce, both the men and women. When trouble arises, the women are also daring enough to pick up a Miao Knife or a bow and arrow. Killing is not common, but seeing blood and death is not a rare sight...

Hunters from the tribes often encounter large wild beasts like tigers, leopards, blind bears, and wild boars while hunting, which easily leads to injuries. Those who are lucky enough to be rescued come back covered in blood and mangled, or even missing limbs with additional holes in their bodies - these sights are not uncommon.

Although the girl was young, she had seen plenty of such scenes. Moreover, the reason she was extremely fearful of High Priest Darren was because of what had just happened.

But now that High Priest Darren was on the brink of death, what more was there to fear?

"Here, take this. If you are scared, go ahead and use it on him..."

Qin Fang tossed the blood-dripping dagger to the girl, pointing at the dying High Priest Darren on the ground.

Although the girl tentatively took the dagger, struggling with the idea of finishing Darren off, in the end, she couldn't bring herself to do it, still shadowed by fear.

Qin Fang didn't insist on anything and simply stepped lightly on Darren's body, using True Qi to shatter his heart meridian. This evil charlatan was now thoroughly dead.

He didn't linger any longer. Outside, there were many more of High Priest Darren's accomplices — none of them good people — and inside the settlement, who knows how many other women were victims. Saving one, killing one, he could gain a good amount of Justice Points...

As for Experience Points, those were trivial; Qin Fang didn't care about that small amount, since his Experience Points had soared after taking down Grandmaster-level Expert Tang Nan, and he was now just a step away from Level 6 Grandmaster!