

## Immortal 1541

### Chapter 1541: Against Someone Like You?

Yi Zhibing was furious. He had been so close to his wonderful plan working, and yet Zu An just had to meddle at the last second! He could tell that Zu An's relationship with Zheng Dan was special. Even the way the Sang clan's young miss looked at him was full of tender feelings.

How dare you?!

This was clearly his own blessing, and yet someone else had come swooping in first. How could he stand it?

You have successfully trolled Yi Zhibing for +366 +366 +366...

Zheng Dan and Sang Qien were both so angry their entire bodies were shaking. Whether it was their clan's reputation or their own integrity as women, those words went too far!

Yi Zhibing gave the other bailiffs, who were standing off to the side in a daze, a look and said, "What are you staring blankly for? All of you, charge! Don't let this traitor get away, or else all of us are screwed!"

He assumed that, even though Zu An's attack was pretty good, he had the numbers advantage. Furthermore, he was carrying out a mission as an official. If they started fighting, the more ruthless Zu An was, the worse his crimes would become.

Either way, he was the glorious Capital Magistrate's son. He didn't think Zu An would actually dare to kill him. As for those bailiffs, if they died, then so be it. That would be enough to leave Zu An doomed.

"Noisy!" Zu An snapped, his expression darkening. He waved his hand, sending a wave of sword ki at Yi Zhibing.

Yi Zhibing, who had begun to have an expression of immense pleasure, quickly narrowed his eyes. He could feel that a terrifying aura had locked onto him, and that he wouldn't get away no matter how he dodged.

"Young master, be careful!" Bailiff Wang exclaimed in horror. He quickly moved to protect Yi Zhibing. Magistrate Yi had sent him mainly to ensure his son's safety. If something happened to Yi Zhibing, there would definitely be severe consequences once he returned.

However, he had just witnessed the power of Zu An's sword. He didn't dare to show the slightest bit of carelessness, so he instantly raised the Iron Hand. The Iron Hand elongated, turning into a shield that blocked the attack for Yi Zhibing.

The very reason he had become so famous as a bailiff was because the Iron Hand could attack and defend at the same time. Before this Iron Hand of his, the varied and strange weapons in the world of warriors were mere child's play. However, he had no confidence in his ability to block Zu An's sword.

Soon after, he saw the result. He looked at the shattered Iron Hand in his hands, and looked down to see a bloody gash across his chest. In an instant, the sword ki had ripped directly through his body.

Bailiff Wang collapsed to the ground like a broken sack, his life flashing before his eyes. He had once believed he was someone who had conscience and resolve. Even though he had been born to a humble background, he made up for it with effort.

The teachings he had received weren't that amazing, but through work and talent, he managed to acquire a certain set of skills. That had allowed him to stand out in his local county government office. He had even managed to stumble upon the earth-grade weapon, the Iron Hand. Back then, he felt as if he had been chosen by the heavens, thinking he had been assigned to uphold virtue and condemn evil.

As his official rank climbed higher and higher, he had eventually reached the capital and became a bailiff there. However, what he saw left him bewildered. He had discovered that almost every single official committed crimes, and that his immediate superior and the colleagues around him were all just as filthy. He wanted to change all that, and yet he discovered that he was powerless.

Eventually, as his status and position climbed even higher, he had stopped being as hot-blooded as before. He had begun to consider his own interests too, as well as the interests of his family and loved ones. As such, he had become more and more taciturn. The bit of conscience he had left prevented him from participating in some vile and filthy acts, but that was all.

Only now did he realize that sometimes, when the difference in power was too great, not doing anything was the same as helping a villain do evil. He suddenly felt regret. If he had kept to his morals, and always fought against evil... Even if he died somehow through unexpected circumstances, he would have died as an honorable man. And yet, right now, he was about to die protecting shameless scum...

I regret this so much!

That was the last thought in his mind as the light faded from his eyes.

Even though all those thoughts flashed through Bailiff Wang's mind, it all took place in the time it took for sparks to fly off flint. The streak of sword light passed through his body and continued toward Yi Zhibing.

Yi Zhibing tried to move out of the way, but he discovered that he couldn't at all. Fortunately, blue light flickered around him as the pendant around his waist shone again. His entire body was blown back several steps by the tremendous force. His insides were stirred wildly, but he wasn't too affected otherwise.

When he saw the result, Yi Zhibing smiled arrogantly again, saying, "Hahaha, this pendant of mine can even block the full-power attack of a master rank cultivator. Who do you think you are? Do you want to do something to me? Why don't you draw your sword and give it a try?"

Judging from what he had seen, even though Zu An's cultivation wasn't low, he definitely wasn't at the master rank. Furthermore, Zu An looked just like a normal person, so who knew what power he had borrowed to produce that sword ki? Meanwhile, Yi Zhibing had an artifact that could block a full-power strike from a master rank cultivator, so what did he have to fear?

"Draw my sword? Against someone like you?" Zu An remarked indifferently, sending out another strand of sword ki.

Previously, he had seen that Yi Zhibing's cultivation wasn't that high, which was why he hadn't used that much strength. Furthermore, the bailiff had absorbed a portion of the strike, which was why the sword ki hadn't hurt Yi Zhibing. However, this time would be different.

Even as the terrifying aura locked onto him again, after his previous experience, Yi Zhibing wasn't scared. He laughed mockingly and began, "Don't even bother wasting your..."

Before he could even finish his sentence, he heard a crack noise. When he looked down, he saw that the pendant that had protected him through countless situations was beginning to be covered in fine cracks. A moment later, it exploded into pieces!

Pu!

Yi Zhibing's body erupted into a bloody mist. Following a burst of intense pain, he felt his entire body becoming as light as a feather, as if his soul were about to leave. He gasped, "You... actually dare to kill me? My dad is Magistrate Yi Chun... Ah..."

When they saw Yi Zhibing lying in a puddle of blood, twitching and clearly dying, a commotion broke out among the bailiffs. The group who hadn't attacked the two women ran for their lives. However, Zu An didn't trouble them. He wasn't someone who enjoyed killing. According to the two women's descriptions, those people's crimes weren't enough for them to deserve death.

Actually, the bailiff with the Iron Hand hadn't needed to die either. But seeing as he had rushed forward to take the attack, throwing his life away, what could Zu An have done?

"Big brother Zu, things are going to be troublesome now..." Sang Qien said worriedly when she saw Yi Zhibing take his last breath. "Even though Yi Zhibing is hateful, he's the Capital Magistrate's beloved son. Now that he's died, there's no way Yi Chun will leave this matter alone."

Regardless of which era it was, someone in such a position would definitely be an important minister of the court.

"It's nothing to be concerned about," Zu An said casually. Then, he looked at the two women and asked, "Are you two alright?"

"We're... fine," Sang Qien replied, blushing. His voice is so gentle... Still, it was hard for her to hide her concern. This time, they had publicly killed people in the manor, so it would probably be unlikely for things to end peacefully now.

Why is big brother Zu not worried at all? she thought. She didn't know that after all of the things Zu An had experienced on the fiend side, a trifling Capital Magistrate really wasn't someone he would worry too much about.

"I'm fine. Little Qien, was the child affected?" Zheng Dan asked as she supported Sang Qien with great concern. The two of them had been mutually dependent on each other for survival, so they had grown very close. Furthermore, after finding out about the Sang clan's plans, she had realized that Sang Qien was already on Zu An's side. That had naturally made her feel even more reassured.

"The child?" Zu An asked, stunned. Only then did he notice Sang Qien's overly spacious dress, as well as the way she gently tapped her own back to alleviate soreness. "You're pregnant?"

Zheng Dan rolled her eyes and retorted, “You even have the nerve to ask about what you did yourself?”

Zu An was stunned. Only then did he remember what had happened that night. He was shocked but happy, murmuring, “This... is my child?” He had suddenly become a father. He really was at a loss for what to do.

Sang Qien lowered her head in embarrassment. She said in a very soft voice, “Yeah...”

Zu An was so excited he wanted to pick Sang Qien up and spin twice in the air, but he quickly realized that she was pregnant and that wouldn’t be appropriate. As such, he simply squatted down in front of her and pressed his ear against her belly to hear his child.

Sang Qien’s face turned red. As the young miss of a noble clan, how could she possibly let a man get that close to her own body? Still, she didn’t resist this ‘unfamiliar’ man at all. Instead, she gently placed her hand on his head, suddenly feeling very close to him. She murmured, “How can it be that easy to hear the child...”

Zheng Dan was a bit jealous when she saw how happy Zu An was. If she had known that it would be like this, she wouldn’t have been greedy, forcing that stuff out of her body because she thought it wouldn’t be a good idea to get pregnant so early.

Sang Qien had been sensitive to begin with. She quickly sensed something and promptly supported Zu An to his feet, saying, “Big brother Zu, I heard that the court is discussing my father’s disappearance. Judging from what I know, things seem to be really unfavorable for you and my father. Now, you’ve even killed Yi Zhibing and these people... Should we leave the capital first?”

Zu An shook his head and replied, “It’s fine. You two should just stay here. I’m going to pay the Imperial Palace a visit first.”

He prepared to leave, but Sang Qien grabbed his sleeves. She was clearly worried that he wouldn’t come back if he went into the Imperial Palace. After all, that was a place full of powerful experts, and it even had the emperor overseeing it. It was on an entirely different scale compared to Yi Zhibing.

Zheng Dan said with a chuckle, “Little Qien, don’t worry. If he says it’s fine, he definitely has a way.”

“Dandan really does understand me,” Zu An said, showing Zheng Dan a smile. Then, he said a few more words of consolation to Sang Qien before leaving.

Sang Qien was stunned. She suddenly felt a bit jealous. It was clear that her sister-in-law had spent more time with big brother Zu and they understood each other better.

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Meanwhile, in the court, the arguments were already growing more and more out of hand.

“Sang Hong has colluded with the Fiend races; his entire family ought to be executed down to the third generation!”

Chapter 1542: Counterattack

The entire court was a huge mess. As they argued about Sang Hong's case, they were divided into two factions.

King Qi, who was standing in front of the ministers, secretly gave Zhao Han a look. He wasn't able to pick up much from the emperor's expression. He sighed and thought, This older brother of mine really is hard to predict. I can't tell what kind of attitude he has at all.

He looked at the civil and military officials around him, only to discover that many of the people he was used to seeing had gone missing as of late.

The two brothers Vanguard General Qin Zheng and Defense General Qin Se had led their armies to battle due to the Fiend races slaughtering an entire city. The Fiend races had sent one of the four great generals, the Flying Leopard King, to lead the other side; that had left them evenly matched. It would take some time before the battle ended and they could return.

Secretariat Assistant Director Yu Nan had shamed the royal family, as he had married a princess but been implicated in a love rivalry with Zu An in a brothel. As such, he had admitted responsibility and resigned. His father, Imperial Secretariat's Left Confidential Assistant Yu Xuanchong, had also been affected by that affair. Even though his proposal for resignation had been rejected by the emperor, his prestige had still suffered a lot of damage.

Then, a huge fiasco had occurred surrounding Cloudcenter Commandery's Yu clan. Yu Xuanchong hadn't had the face to continue serving as the Imperial Secretariat's Left Confidential Assistant. In that case, the emperor had approved his resignation.

Those people all formed part of the backbone of King Qi's forces! Now, his allies in the upper echelons of the court only consisted of Waterfront Duke Chief Attendant Pei Zheng, King Fufeng, and Great Western General Zhao Cang. Compared to the great influence he had wielded in the past, he really did seem much lonelier now. Still, his many years of influence weren't for nothing. There were still many middle-rank officials who supported him.

This time, he was borrowing the Sang Hong incident to launch a fierce counterattack and seize a bit of initiative back after the past few months' decline. The line 'Sang Hong has colluded with the Fiend races and ought to have his whole family executed down to the third generation' had been spoken by one of his men.

Hmph, the emperor has repeatedly attacked my forces. How can I appease my anger unless I get revenge?

Just then, Bi Ziang gestured with his eyes, and an official on his side stepped forward and retorted, "Those words are incorrect. Sir Sang was the Imperial Envoy who was attacked on the way back. He is a victim. Why are you now accusing him of colluding with the Fiend races?"

Sang Hong was a part of the emperor's faction, but it didn't really matter whether he was involved or not. What mattered was that Zu An was also involved. Zu An was now an important minister in the Eastern Palace, and a useful servant of Bi Ziang's younger sister. If Zu An were to be convicted of a crime, it would easily end up involving Bi Ziang and his sister.

“Based on the time frame, the Imperial Envoy should have returned to the capital a long time ago, but they continued to stall for time using all manner of excuses. They only picked up their pace when his majesty personally issued a decree. Then, however, something happened as soon as they arrived at Silkworm City. How could there be such a coincidence in this world?” someone from King Qi’s side replied.

“That means nothing. There were constant reports from the Imperial Envoy along the way. They encountered all kinds of unexpected events, and every single one is backed with proof that can be looked into,” said War Chariot General Liu Guang and a subordinate of General Liu Yao. They were the older brothers of the empress, so they naturally stood at the emperor’s side. Otherwise, if King Qi rose to the throne, they would be cast away.

“During the fire that night, why was it that all the other members of the Imperial Envoy died, and yet Sang Hong was the only one to disappear mysteriously?” another official harrumphed.

“You said it yourself; he disappeared mysteriously. Why do you insist that Sir Sang colluded with the Fiend races to harm the Imperial Envoy fleet?” said a subordinate of Central Secretarial Supervisor Meng Yi. The Meng clan was also a core pillar of the emperor’s faction.

“We found proof left behind at the scene of the crime. Sang Hong’s personal keepsake and a letter of communication with the Fiend races,” Chief Attendant Pei Zheng reported after giving a subordinate of his a look.

“Something like that happened?!” The entire King Court erupted into commotion. Many of them had never heard that claim before.

Crown Princess Bi Linglong, who was sitting in a side room, frowned. The crown prince was really too stupid, so he couldn’t appear in such a grand ceremony. If he said some kind of terrible joke out loud, that really would give King Qi’s faction a free blade. As such, as a compromise, they had allowed Bi Linglong to remain in a side room with pearl curtains blocking her view.

At that moment, she reflexively looked toward the emperor. From what she heard, the Embroidered Envoy had immediately arrived at Silkworm City, bringing all of their witnesses and evidence back to the capital under a seal. Why did King Qi’s faction know about that?

A hint of anger flashed through the emperor’s eyes. He was clearly unhappy with the way King Qi was exploiting every weakness. Faced with his subjects’ unspoken conclusions, however, he said indifferently, “This emperor has already sent the Embroidered Envoy to investigate this affair. The case is still ongoing.”

He didn’t confirm or deny anything, but those present were smart. They quickly realized that there was indeed evidence of that sort.

With that, the momentum of King Qi’s faction immediately surged. Just then, Capital Magistrate Yi Chun added, “This subject has already sent my men to investigate the Sang clan. I believe there will be a result soon.”

When they heard that, the representatives of the Liu, Bi, Meng, and several other clans all felt a grim premonition. They were all old foxes. They knew that, as King Qi had sent his people, that meant his side would most likely find the evidence they needed.

Another member of King Qi's faction pressed the matter and said, "This subject has received intelligence that the reason Sang Hong le[t stalling for time is to wait for Zu An to return. Zu An was not actually with the rest of the fleet at the time; rather, he went with the Medusa Queen to the fiend side."

Suddenly, another huge bomb had been dropped, causing a commotion to break out. It seemed that King Qi's side wasn't satisfied with just dealing with Sang Hong. They wanted to wipe out the Eastern Palace's great minister too.

There was no happiness or joy to be seen on King Qi's face, however. Inwardly, his thoughts were ice-cold. That brat Zu An is just too cunning. He said he was going to ally with me to deal with the emperor, but he kept ruining my great plans.

It would have been one thing if it were just some normal affair, as that would just be the price of obtaining the emperor's trust. However, the situation in Cloudcenter Commandery was definitely intolerable. He had painstakingly invested in his plans there for over ten years, and yet it had all been ruined because of Zu An.

Either way, Jiang Luofu had already obtained the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra from Zu An, so King Qi no longer felt that the brat had any value left. He had to take the chance to eliminate Zu An. At the same time, that would also eliminate a powerful minister from the Eastern Palace.

Bi Linglong's expression turned completely cold. With her understanding of Zu An, what the official had said was most likely true. When she thought about how worried she had been about him while he hadn't even sent her a single letter, but as it turned out, he had eloped with another woman, she was furious.

Still, anger was anger, but she had to save him regardless. She gestured, and one of the Eastern Palace's officials quickly retorted, "That is slander! Sir Zu has always been loyal. How could he possibly do something like that?"

King Qi's official replied, "Our spy from the Fiend races has brought us intelligence that Zu An has appeared on the fiend side. You can have the Embroidered Envoy verify the source."

He took out some proof and had a nearby eunuch present it. Just like that, the Eastern Palace's power waned.

Just then, however, Commandant of Justice Jiang Boyang said, "I believe there must be some kind of misunderstanding here. We need to investigate this matter more closely first." Because of his daughter Jiang Luofu, he actually had a good impression of Zu An.

The officials who were friendly with Zu An, but had previously maintained neutrality, began to speak up one by one. For example, the officials under the Minister of Ceremonies all more or less had some relationship with people from the Royal Academy. On top of that, Zu An's relationship with the teachers in the Royal Academy was quite close.

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When he saw that the situation was showing signs of turning the other way, Magistrate Yi Chun said, "If it really were as you say, and Zu An were still with the Imperial Envoy, he and Sang Hong definitely wouldn't have let the evildoers achieve what they wanted with their cultivation. However, the entire fleet was murdered in Silkworm City, and yet the two of them are nowhere to be seen.

"Once is a coincidence; twice can still be a coincidence. But if it happens that many times, how can it still be a coincidence?"

"The document we delivered to his majesty records Zu An's appearances on the fiend side. It is irrefutable evidence.

"This subject asks your highness to convict Zu An of treason!"

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He had always been good at judging cases. His powerful and resonant arguments left the other side speechless. After all, the proof they had was far too unfavorable for Zu An.

Bi Linglong couldn't sit still anymore. She said, "The crime of treason is no small matter. Sir Zu is missing right now, so we cannot hear a one-sided story. It will not be too late to question him in detail once he returns." She could only try to stall for time now. She had to drag out the case as much as she could.

However, no one could have expected King Qi's side to be so prepared. They had already had information on Zu An being on the fiend side before, and yet they had kept it to themselves. This time, they had used the Imperial Envoy case as the nail in the coffin.

"The Crown Princess' words are incorrect. As Zu An has already committed treason, why would he come all the way back here just to be punished?" Yi Chun sneered.

Bi Linglong was very worried. She looked toward her father and older brother with a pleading expression. However, considering how bad things looked, they both chose to remain silent.

Suddenly, as Bi Linglong began to feel despair, a loud and clear voice suddenly called out, "It sounds like someone was looking for me!"

When she heard that familiar voice, Bi Linglong's eyes immediately widened. However, she was worried that the emperor would notice something, so she immediately looked down and tried to remain calm.

Chapter 1543: Goddess and Moonlight

Suddenly, however, the emperor gave Bi Linglong a look. Bi Linglong had thought she'd hidden it quite well, but for an earth immortal, not a single detail in this place could escape detection. For example, when King Qi's faction had been exchanging looks with each other, and even the emperor's own officials who were loyal to him, he knew exactly which camp they really belonged to.

Previously, when Bi Linglong heard that Zu An had returned, her heart rate had accelerated a bit. Even though she quickly hid it, there was no way it could escape his detection. Zu An had been an important official of the Eastern Palace to begin with; he was a capable general under Bi Linglong. It was normal for her to be happy when she saw his return. However, the fact that she was hiding it was problematic.



The emperor frowned, his complexion turning a bit ugly. Even though Bi Linglong was his daughter-in-law, because he had previously sent his own soul fragment into the Crown Prince's body, he actually considered her equivalent to a child bride. He wouldn't allow any other man to corrupt her.

Of course, he didn't think too deeply about what he had sensed. He didn't think that the two of them would ever brazenly do something that crossed the line that way. Still, that didn't mean he wouldn't punish them later.

A tall and slender figure slowly walked into the main hall. Discussions immediately broke out amid the court. There were some who were shocked, some who were happy, and some whose mood turned grim... There were all kinds of reactions.

Zu An bowed toward the emperor and said, "I greet your majesty!"

The officials of King Qi's faction finally reacted to the situation. One exclaimed, "Who let this traitor in? Guards, arrest him!"

Zu An gave him a cold look and retorted, "Who did you say was a traitor?"

For some reason, when the official was caught in Zu An's gaze, he immediately felt a chill run through his entire body. He shrank back in fear, briefly unable to respond.

How could he know that recently, Zu An had killed the Fiend Emperor in an Unknown Region? Even though many special conditions had lined up, Zu An had still killed one of the most powerful beings in the world. Later, he had killed many famous grandmasters during the Fiend King Court's upheaval. An unrivaled killing intent had already naturally gathered around him, sufficient to easily intimidate any normal cultivator

The emperor and King Qi both gave Zu An a look of surprise. They clearly noticed how strange Zu An's body was.

Bi Linglong was a bit confused. Why couldn't she sense any ki aura from Zu An's body? Could it be that they were too far away? He looked just like a normal person right now! A look of deep concern appeared between her brows when she realized that. Could it be that something had happened to him on the trip that made him lose all of his cultivation?

Many officials in the court had similar thoughts. They were caught off guard by Zu An's return at first, but they now realized that he was practically a cripple. What did they have to fear? As such, they immediately thought of using violence.

Magistrate Yi Chun took the lead and said, "Zu An, I have conclusive proof that you and the Medusa Queen were on the fiend side this whole time..."

"That's right, I did send her to the Fiend races' territory before," Zu An said, directly confirming the claim.

The court erupted into a commotion. Many people who had spoken up for him before had expressions of pity and regret. He's still too young; he doesn't use his head before he speaks.

Bi Linglong was also upset, panicking. We all know that you definitely sent the Medusa Queen to the Fiend Races, but you can't admit to it out in the open like this! If you refute it, we can still try to help you find a way out, but we can't do anything to save you if you admit to it.

King Qi's faction was overjoyed by the unexpected turn of events. They all began to denounce and condemn Zu An for colluding with the Fiend races and committing treason.

Zu An calmly replied, "I admit that I sent the Medusa Queen to the Fiend Races, but when did I admit to treason?"

Yi Chun asked with a sneer, "Is there a difference?"

"Of course," Zu An said, sweeping his gaze across the ministers. He noticed that compared to last time, there were already many people missing. He continued, "Even though Madam Yu has the Medusa bloodline within her, that's something from the previous generation. That's not something she can control. Furthermore, half of her blood is human too. Why must you insist on treating her as a fiend?"

"Madam Yu's reputation over the years is something I believe everyone knows about. She's always been kind and charitable. In terms of public achievements, the mine industry she commands has also made tremendous contributions to the court. Privately, she's always done all kinds of kind things, helping many people in need. Has anyone ever heard of her harming anyone in all of these years?"

"Hah! Even if she hasn't yet, that doesn't mean she won't in the future. Those who aren't human all have wicked hearts!" Yi Chun exclaimed in a loud and powerful voice. "What she did was merely to bribe the hearts of the people. That way, it would be much more convenient for the Fiend races to do whatever they wanted."

"Everything you've just done is what we call groundless, convicting one of a crime that has never happened. Commandant of Justice Jiang, can our court's laws be carried out like this?" Zu An called out, looking toward Jiang Boyang to solicit his opinion. Jiang Boyang was the Commandant of Justice, which was the highest position in the judicial system.

Jiang Boyang stroked his beard and replied, "This dynasty's laws indeed lack any such rule."

Yi Chun looked at Zu An and sneered. "Yu Yanluo secretly sent supplies to the Fiend races; you can't deny that proof, can you? There have already been reports from Cloudcenter Commandery's officials. If you haven't looked at them yet, I advise you to look through them first before speaking to me."

"I'm aware of that as well," Zu An explained. "Those were merely the most basic goods for survival. She does have half Snake race blood. There isn't anything too wrong with taking care of her people a bit, no? After all, she didn't send any strategic supplies, unlike a certain someone..."

King Qi raised his brows slightly. Fortunately, Yi Chun reacted quickly and replied, "Stop trying to change the topic and talk about unrelated things. Who knows if she sent any strategic resources or not? Furthermore, even if it was normal goods, that's still prohibited by the court. Aren't you rambling on and on like this because you want to say you haven't colluded with the Fiend races?"

Zu An smiled and replied, "So I've colluded with the Fiend races if my relationship with Madam Yu is on the good side? From what I know, in the past, Madam Yu's unmatched beauty was famous in the capital. There are still many in the court who have good relationships with her, and even his majesty and King Qi

were previously her good friends. Could it be that you want to say that they've colluded with the Fiend races too?"

The emperor and King Qi's faces both twitched. This guy really did know how to poke at their sore spots! In the past, they had indeed pursued Yu Yanluo, asking for her hand in marriage. However, back then, because of the fierce competition over the throne, both of them had cared a lot about their reputation. They hadn't wanted to ruin their prestige over a woman.

The other nobles had all been aware of the emperor and King Qi's competition, so even though they had been completely smitten by Madam Yu's beauty and fawned over her, none of them had dared to do anything else to her.

In spite of that, while Yu Yanluo had remained in the capital for many years, she had never favored any particular individual. Then, she had left the capital suddenly, taking the hearts of countless nobles with her.

Later, when they learned that she had married Cloudcenter Duke, the hearts of the capital's men shattered. There was even a rumor that on that day, the emperor had flown into a terrible rage, smashing many teacups. King Qi had also shut his door and refused guests for three days before returning to normal.

Many people in the court knew about that. They were all interested in seeing how this would play out.

Yi Chun coughed before saying, "Ahem, who are his majesty and King Qi? How can you be compared to them? In the past, no one knew about Yu Yanluo's Medusa bloodline..."

"I didn't know about her Medusa bloodline when I first met her either," Zu An immediately replied before continuing, "Furthermore, Madam Yu showed me great favor in the past. This is something that his majesty can attest to. When it comes to someone who showed me great favor, and never committed evil in the past, how could I leave her alone when something happened to her? Doesn't that go against the system of values the court has proclaimed over the years?"

The court had always regarded 'loyalty' as its foremost value. However, because the emperor who founded the dynasty had been a minister of the Meng Dynasty, and the method he had used to seize the throne wasn't all that honorable, they couldn't use the word 'loyalty' and had instead replaced it with 'piety' and 'justice'. Meanwhile, if Zu An didn't return kindness, he would be considered an unjust sort.

With that opening, the Eastern Palace's people immediately regained their resolve and once again spoke up for him. The way they quoted the classics left even Zu An blushing with shame.

Yi Chun frowned, thinking, This kid is crafty as expected, and difficult to deal with. He could only reply, "Justice is still relative. If you're discussing justice in relation to the Fiend races, aren't you just colluding with the Fiend races?"

"Sir Yi, please don't be so narrow-minded," Zu An said calmly. "Madam Yu was being attacked, but while I was escorting her out, I stumbled upon a spatial rift. Terrifying monsters from another world, called Scaled Deathworms, invaded through it. It was precisely because of Madam Yu's help that I was able to kill those invading monsters and also close up the rift, thus saving the lives of countless people living in Cloudcenter Commandery."

He concluded, "In my opinion, Madam Yu shouldn't be punished, but should instead be rewarded!"

One thing Zu An had really wanted to do on this trip was to restore Yu Yanluo's identity so she could properly return. Whenever he had seen her stare blankly towards the south, even though she always said she was fine when he asked her, anyone with eyes could see the loneliness in her gaze.

Yi Chun sneered. "Who knows if you're telling the truth or not? You might have been trying to destroy the Yu clan's mines on purpose so the court couldn't make use of the ki stones inside for some time. That way, if the court's resources were delayed, wouldn't that further strengthen the case for your act of treason?"

Zu An seemed to have already anticipated that response. He quickly retorted, "If Sir Yi doesn't believe me, you can ask White Jade Sect Master Yan. She was also there at the time."

He felt amazing when he said that. Having more wives really is awesome; they're so great.

However, Yun Jianyue was the Devil Sect Master, someone viewed as a villain by the court. He couldn't bring out her name.

When they heard him say Yan Xuehen's name, the court became lively once more. If Yu Yanluo was a goddess they pursued but couldn't obtain, Yan Xuehen was like a ray of moonlight cast across their hearts. Almost all of them had at one point been enamored by her purity and elegance.

Unlike Yu Yanluo, Yan Xuehen was too powerful, and she was also a daoist with a special identity. That had made it hard for them to even try to pursue her. Even so, that white-clad goddess often appeared in their dreams. The court's officials all began to recall her figure fondly, as if they were remembering their own youth.

When he heard the name Yan Xuehen, Yi Chun was also a bit at a loss for words. If she really was willing to testify to such a thing, no one would doubt her words. Furthermore, Yan Xuehen had always been cold in nature, while utterly detesting evil. Zu An wouldn't talk recklessly about someone like her.

Suddenly, a messenger quickly entered to report, "Most of the bailiffs who were sent to the Sang clan were killed! The casualties are severe."

Yi Chun was horrified. He immediately rushed forward and exclaimed, "What about my son?!"

Chapter 1544: Too Naive

Yi Chun had always loved his son dearly. How could he not be nervous when he learned that most of the men he had sent were dead?

The messenger was frightened by Yi Chun's sudden movements and looked toward the emperor. When he saw the emperor nod, he said, "According to what those who escaped said, the lead Bailiff Wang and young master Yi were..."

"Were what?" Yi Chun asked, panicking when he saw the messenger hesitate. "Was he injured? Was it serious? Where is he? Hurry and take me there!"

He had heard a bit about his son's unsavory record over the past few years, but he had assumed it wasn't too big a deal. Ordinary people couldn't really do much about it, and Yi Zhibing had always been

quite sharp. He knew who to provoke and who to stay away from. Even if he accidentally offended some people, they would still be lenient out of respect for him. After some proper punishment, he would then be let off. As such, Yi Chun wondered who had punished Yi Zhibing this time.

The messenger was a bit troubled. He secretly broke free from Yi Chun's grasp, took a step back, and said, "Young master Yi... has been killed."

"He's been killed, that's not too bad, I'll find some medicine..." Yi Chun muttered absent-mindedly before suddenly realizing what had happened. "What?!"

The entire place immediately became as noisy as a marketplace. Yi Chun's official rank wasn't the highest, but it definitely wasn't low. People normally turned a blind eye to Yi Zhibing's actions out of respect for Yi Chun, and yet now, Yi Zhibing had been killed by an unknown person.

Even the emperor was a bit surprised. There was actually someone who dared to kill publicly in the capital, and to kill an official, no less! Could it be that the Devil Sect's people were here to cause trouble again?

Yi Chun felt as if he had been struck by thunder. His entire body fell limp to the ground. The officials next to him quickly rushed over to support him, and only after a while did he recover again. However, he pushed those officials away, looking at the messenger with a murderous gaze and asking, "Who was the killer? Who dares do something so demented?!"

The messenger hesitated for a moment. He looked at the emperor again.

The emperor was stunned, thinking, Don't tell me it was someone you can't name? However, out of consideration for Yi Chun's anger, he couldn't let his ministers feel abandoned. As such, he waved his hand and said, "Say what you think."

The messenger then said hesitantly, "From what we know... the killer seems... to be Sir Zu An."

"Zu An?" several people exclaimed, simultaneously looking at Zu An. None of them had expected it to be him!

"This old one is going to kill you!" Yi Chun roared like a furious lion, pouncing directly at Zu An.

You have successfully trolled Yi Chun for +999 +999 +999...

This youngster's glib tongue had already left Yi Chun really annoyed, and now, it turned out Zu An had killed his son! How could he still tolerate it?

No longer concerned with the court, charged straight at Zu An, locking onto him with a powerful aura. In his anger, he didn't hold back at all. He wanted to kill Zu An without giving him any chance to speak.

"Ah!" Bi Linglong cried out as she stood up nervously.

She wanted to save Zu An, but he was unfortunately too far away. Furthermore, even if she had been at his side, there was just too big of a difference in cultivation between her and Yi Chun. She couldn't save Zu An even if she wanted to. She could only watch as Zu An was caught up in such a terrifying situation, as if he would be blown to pieces at a moment's notice.

Unexpectedly, however, Zu An didn't run at all. He stood in place with a calm expression. Soon after, two figures suddenly rushed forth, unleashing palm strikes to intercept Yi Chun.

Yi Chun staggered briefly. When he stabilized himself again, he looked at the two people in front of him and asked, "Sir Jiang, Sir Murong, what is the meaning of this?"

Jiang Boyang also looked at the glaring elder next to him with a bit of surprise. He hadn't expected Murong Tong to actually step forward to help Zu An too. After all, it was actually Zu An who had caused the string of events that caused Murong Tong to be demoted from the crucial position of Security Officer to his current 'half-retired' position of Supervisor of Attendants. The two sides had even erupted into conflicts several times. Out of all the people who wanted Zu An dead, he should have been near the top of the list. Now, however, he had saved Zu An!

Murong Tong said with a sour expression, "There are too many points of suspicion in this case. It will not be too late after we investigate things clearly."

He naturally didn't like Zu An, but his good granddaughter Murong Qinghe always talked about Zu An whenever she visited. The fact that Murong Qinghe liked the Chu clan's youngest Chu Youzhaohao was no secret. Meanwhile, Zu An was the Chu clan's son-in-law, so they could end up becoming family in the future. As such, no matter how much Murong Tong disliked Zu An, he couldn't just watch as Zu An died right before his eyes.

Jiang Boyang said in agreement, "Indeed. If selfish actions were allowed in the court, we would quickly become a laughingstock." After all, as the Commandant of Justice, maintaining the dignity of the law was his responsibility to begin with.

Flames practically began to appear in Yi Chun's eyes. He wasn't in the mood to listen to others' advice at all. He charged after yelling, "That little bastard killed my beloved son. Today, I won't be satisfied unless he dies!"

Just then, Eunuch Wen called out in his shrill voice, "Silence!"

Yi Chun finally stopped. Everyone in the capital knew Eunuch Wen was the emperor's trusted aide. His words usually represented the emperor's attitude.

Sure enough, Emperor Zhao Han glowered, saying, "The entire court has become like the markets. This is unacceptable!"

All the subjects present all bowed apologetically and exclaimed. "We fear the emperor!" At the same time, they all looked at Yi Chun with disdain. Didn't you say you weren't going to stop no matter who stood in your way? Keep going then, if you have the ability!

Yi Chun didn't dare to do anything else. He simply kneeled low to the ground and complained tearfully, "Your highness, my son was carrying out official business while under orders this time, and yet he was cruelly killed by this evildoer Zu An! I ask that your highness upholds justice!"

The emperor frowned, but he couldn't ignore the death of the son of one of his ministers. As such, he looked at the other person involved and asked, "Zu An, did you go to the Sang manor, and were you the one who killed Yi Chun's son?"

King Qi frowned. Zu An should have been part of the emperor's faction, so for him to receive protection was to be expected. However, after facing him for so many years, King Qi understood his older brother's naturally cold demeanor better than anyone else. He knew the emperor already greatly disliked Zu An, and letting his subjects attack Zu An as they wanted had been a reflection of that. But now, he seemed to have changed his mind.

The emperor's question was full of implied meanings. As long as Zu An denied it flatly, Yi Chun's revenge would be out of the question. Eventually, if they stalled long enough, the issue would pass.

Bi Linglong looked expectantly at Zu An, thinking, This guy has always been intelligent, so he should be able to pick up on this.

Unexpectedly, however, Zu An nodded and said, "Before I entered the palace, I indeed visited the Sang manor first. I did kill Yi Zhibing."

The entire court erupted noisily once again. Jiang Boyang and Murong Tong both shook their heads as they returned to their positions. Now, not even the Eastern Palace's people would be able to do anything.

Yi Chun's entire body shook as he berated Zu An with curses. If he hadn't been afraid of the emperor, he would have already attacked Zu An.

You have successfully trolled Yi Chun for +444 +444 +444...

The emperor was speechless. So was Bi Linglong.

King Qi gave Zu An a look of surprise. Why is this kid still so calm?

Killing an official was no different from treason, let alone in the present situation where the victim's family was still present.

Bi Linglong was very worried. She let go of her reservations and asked, "Sir Zu, what happened at the Sang manor exactly that made you decide to do such a thing?"

Many of those present felt admiration for her. The Crown Princess really is sharp, obtaining a chance for him to defend himself so easily.

Sure enough, Zu An took the opportunity and said, "When I found out that something happened to Sir Sang, I was incredibly worried. When I returned to the capital, I wanted to see how the Sang clan was doing first. However, in the midst of their difficult situation, I encountered Yi Zhibing brazenly attacking young miss Sang and the Sang clan's daughter-in-law. As such, I took action out of righteous indignation."

The expressions of the ministers present changed a bit. As fellow members of the court, they had actually heard things about Yi Zhibing's nature here and there. As such, few of them doubted his story. Still, all of them were old foxes, so they wouldn't rush in to 'uphold justice' or anything in the current situation. That was especially true where doing so could offend another member of the court.

King Qi sneered. He had thought Zu An had some other trump card. Was that it? The young are too naive after all. Too simple.

## Chapter 1545: Feng Shan Ceremony

The court wasn't a place to discuss right or wrong. After all, there weren't many things in the world that were absolutely right or wrong to begin with. King Qi knew it would simply be wishful thinking if Zu An wanted to get away scot-free with just that explanation.

Sure enough, Yi Chun immediately protested, "Nonsense! I understand my son's character better than anyone! How could he possibly do something like that?!"

You have successfully trolled Yi Chun for +258 +258 +258...

The low amount of Rage points, however, showed that he was lacking a bit of confidence.

Zu An sneered and said, "You're his father, so of course you feel that your son is good in every way. However, as for what kind of character Yi Zhibing had, that's something the officials and common people of the capital couldn't be more aware of. Sir Sang was acting as the Imperial Envoy and his crimes haven't yet been confirmed, but Yi Zhibing already went knocking on their door to frame them, forging evidence to frame a court official. That isn't all; he was even more brazen and wanted to do disgraceful things to the Sang clan's daughter and daughter-in-law. His majesty, I wish to invite the Sang clan's staff in. We can immediately uncover Yi Zhibing's crimes with just some simple questions."

Yi Chun spat furiously, "What you are saying is simply venomous slander! My son is dead, so of course you can misrepresent the truth however you want. The dead can't testify, after all!"

You have successfully trolled Yi Chun for +400 +400 +400...

"What do you mean, the dead can't testify?" Zu An replied calmly. "There were so many bailiffs there too. Just bring them over and question them."

"Fine, then let's ask them to see what happened," Yi Chun said with a sneer. Those were all his subordinates, whom he had carefully trained and selected. How could they possibly say things that were unfavorable to him?

Zu An wasn't stupid. He replied, "I propose that we have the libationer or the Royal Academy's people interrogate them to make sure that they're telling the truth."

"What kind of status does the libationer have? Why would we disturb him for something like this?" Yi Chun quickly refused, adding, "What, don't tell me you suspect that even the bailiffs who carry out the laws of the court would lie?"

Many of the officials of the court had their own thoughts. There had been rumors that Zu An's relationship with the Royal Academy was good. Now, it seemed that was indeed the case.

"Even your son died, and yet you're treating it like a trifling matter. In that case, I have nothing else to say," Zu An said with a shrug, as if to imply 'It's not as if he's my son.' Yi Chun was so angry he almost vomited blood on the spot.

Waterfront Duke's Chief Attendant Pei Zheng spoke up, saying, "Let's not talk about other things for now. The court has laws; how can we allow someone to act willfully on their own? Whether or not Yi Zhibing did anything to the Sang clan's women can be slowly investigated later. Right now, there's no way around the fact that Zu An has killed a court official."



King Qi nodded inwardly. The death of his son had made Yi Chun's anger rush to his head. He had almost been misled by Zu An. Meanwhile, King Qi couldn't personally step forward and speak, but what Pei Zheng had just said was precisely the argument he would have made: No matter how well Zu An defended himself, everyone else could just ignore all of it. All they had to do was to focus on the single issue of him killing court officials.

Sure enough, when they heard the argument, many people who had been on Zu An's side changed their expressions. They knew that even if what Zu An said was true, it still wasn't enough justification for killing court officials.

Compared to the injustice suffered by one or two people, what the emperor cared more about was the law of the entire country. If he tacitly allowed such a thing to happen, wouldn't that encourage the common people to challenge the authorities?

Sure enough, the emperor's expression darkened as he said, "Zu An, do you have anything else to say for yourself?"

"I do," Zu An replied with a calm expression.

However, his attitude made King Qi and the others sneer inwardly. The way things are, it's already meaningless no matter what you say.

Bi Linglong worriedly tried to think of a way to save Zu An.

"Speak!" the emperor continued, now feeling a bit upset as well. Why is this kid so calm? Could it be that this emperor's presence isn't intimidating enough?

Zu An swept his gaze across the entire place, making sure to not leave out anything. Then, he slowly said, "The Fiend Emperor has died."

The fiend side and human side were too far apart for information to travel back and forth quickly. Zu An had rushed straight back on the Wind Fire Wheels, which far exceeded the speed at which human spies could move between the two places.

"What?!"

Now, the entire King Court really became chaotic. The noise far exceeded the previous few times.

After all, even though Yi Chun's son had died, that was that. In the end, he was still just a nobody who wouldn't really change much of anything. However, the Fiend Emperor's death could affect the entire world.

"Is what you say really true?" the emperor asked, leaning forward. The Fiend Emperor was the only one comparable to him in the entire world. The two of them had been rivals for so long, and yet now, the other had suddenly died? Even someone as shrewd as him was incredibly shocked.

"I saw it personally..." Zu An began, then explained the entire story of the Fiend Emperor being killed in the secret dungeon. Of course, he hid the fact that he had been the one responsible. After all, he had made use of a favorable situation; his real cultivation was still far from the Fiend Emperor's. It would only be more troublesome for him in the future if others became more guarded against him.

Even so, the entire court's officials clicked their tongues in wonder when they listened to the story. They hadn't expected the legendary Unknown Regions to actually exist.

Only Bi Linglong's eyes shone brilliantly. She had fought together with Zu An in a secret dungeon before... even though she had spent most of that time with her legs behind his back. She was likely the only one in the entire court who suspected that Zu An wasn't telling the truth. After all, she had personally witnessed just what kind of power he had revealed in the other secret dungeon.

"I never expected the Fiend Emperor to actually die like this..." the emperor muttered to himself in a daze.

Suddenly, Zu An spoke up again. "I wish to report to your majesty that I even have information on the new Fiend Emperor. The Fiend races wish for a ceasefire with us. Furthermore, the new Fiend Emperor is willing to call himself your majesty's nephew, and at the same time, to present a monetary tribute to the emperor every year."

That wasn't his own idea, but something that the entire upper echelon of the Fiend races had agreed to. The late Fiend Emperor was now dead, so the Fiend races no longer had the power to resist Zhao Han. If they didn't hold negotiations and Zhao Han went personally, they could all end up being doomed.

Even though the Fiend races were more aggressive than humans, they weren't stupid. They were at a disadvantage right now. Lowering their heads and paying some tribute for a few years was still something they could accept. Once the new Fiend Emperor grew up and the Fiend races gathered enough strength again, they could think about changing things.

"How is that possible?!" King Qi exclaimed. Even though he had sat still indifferently the entire time, even he couldn't hold himself back from shouting.

The humans and fiends had fought for so many years. Even though the humans had forced the fiends all the way north into horrible conditions, the fiends had never yielded in the slightest. If this were real, the consequences would be too hard for even King Qi to endure.

Forget about him, not even the emperor believed it. Fortunately, there was no need for him to speak, as countless subjects began to criticize Zu An for uttering nonsense without thinking.

In response, Zu An calmly took out an elaborately packaged book, saying, "These are the credentials of the new Fiend Emperor. I invite your majesty to look it over."

Those present were stupefied. Many of them even began to grit their teeth. Why didn't you take that out sooner? Do you really need us to jump up and down like that before you took it out to slap us in the faces?

The emperor couldn't even wait for the eunuchs to take it. He reached out his hand and pulled it through the air to him, then quickly flipped through the contents. There was no way to falsify such a thing, especially when the seal of the state and the Fiend Emperor's personal seal were both there. As he quickly skimmed the contents, he couldn't help but roar with laughter. His laugh reverberated through the capital city's skies, leaving countless common people confused.

How could his subjects still not know what was going on? They all bowed toward him and cheered, "Long live the emperor! Long live!"

Bi Qi, who had been so quiet the entire time he had practically seemed asleep, said to the emperor, "Your majesty has conquered the lands, and now, you have fully subdued the Fiend races. This glorious achievement is something completely unprecedented; it is heaven's mandate that your highness became our ruler. You have brought order to the masses, and peace to all under the sky. This is simply a divine achievement!"

The other ministers smacked their thighs, all thinking, Why didn't I think of these words and say them sooner? They then petitioned the emperor to hold a Feng Shan ceremony.

That ceremony had always been extremely sacred, from the dawn of human civilization. Since ancient times, there had been countless emperors, but only a small fraction had dared to hold the Feng Shan ceremony, with every single one achieving shocking contributions. The emperors of later generations had known they couldn't compare, so they hadn't dared to defy worldly opinion and recklessly carry out such a ceremony.

Even Zhao Han, who had already become undefeated in the world, still hadn't dared to do such a thing. Now, however, it seemed to have become a possibility.

Inwardly Zhao Han was ecstatic, but he pretended to refuse on the surface. His ministers were all sharp-witted, and began to advise him to hold the ceremony. Even though the emperor hadn't agreed, they all knew he was already tempted.

When he saw the entire court's excitement, Yi Chun was completely stupefied. Everyone is so happy; who will still remember my dead son?

#### Chapter 1546: Marquis Shen

It was likely that the only one who felt even colder than Yi Chun was King Qi. In order to face the emperor over the years, he had painstakingly created the reputation of a wise and virtuous king. He had always lived as if he were walking on thin ice. Together with the support of the late emperor's trusted aides, he had just barely been able to match the emperor in terms of power and prestige.

However, the past two years seemed to have been extremely unlucky for him. Bad things had happened to the officials on his side again and again. He had begun to panic a bit as he watched his forces being whittled down bit by bit, and thus launched a fierce counterattack. He had thought he had a chance to salvage the situation at first; and yet now, something like this had happened?

For the Fiend Emperor to refer to himself as a nephew before the emperor, just what kind of incredible contribution was that? Countless generations of human emperors had failed to do that, and yet now, Zhao Han had actually accomplished it.

If King Qi allowed Zhao Han to hold the Feng Shan ceremony and the entire world heard of it, no one could ever compare to his prestige again in the future! King Qi's lifetime of hard work facing Zhao Han would end up as nothing more than a joke.

Meanwhile, all of this had been caused by Zu An! King Qi seethed with rage, thinking, Did I owe him something in my last life or something? The losses to my forces began right when he arrived at the capital. If I had known things would turn out like this, I should have just crushed this ant to death back then!

You have successfully trolled Zhao Jing for +444 +444 +444...

King Qi could no longer hold back anymore. He couldn't be bothered to signal his subordinates first before asking, "For something so important, why didn't the Fiend Emperor send an emissary, instead allowing you, a human, to pass it on?"

His voice made the entire court immediately calm down. It wasn't just King Qi's faction; even those from the Eastern Palace and emperor's factions were confused. Indeed, that didn't make sense.

Zu An slowly said, "All of this happened by chance. I witnessed the late Fiend Emperor's death in the secret dungeon, then obtained an important message he entrusted to the Fiend King Court. As soon as I came out of the dungeon, I encountered the crown prince using the army to ruthlessly slaughter his own brothers. No one expected that the Second Prince had also been actively plotting at the time, and he rebelled... In the midst of that, I contributed a bit to help the youngest emperor ascend to the throne. Afterward, I returned to the human side. That was why they entrusted me to deliver this message. As long as his majesty agrees, official diplomats will soon be sent to settle the details of this affair."

Even though Zu An had downplayed the situation, the people present were all shocked. It was easy to imagine just how bloody and cruel the struggle for the imperial throne was. However, it was hard to imagine how someone like Zu An had been able to join in on the struggle, let alone help the youngest prince seize the throne.

Many people began to secretly size up Zu An. There wasn't even the slightest ki aura coming from his body. Had he really been able to do something like that? Could he have been seriously injured during that battle, making him lose all his cultivation?

More importantly, however, the Fiend Emperor's letter was present, so they had no choice but to believe it! Even King Qi had nothing else to say. His expression was completely dark, and his thoughts impenetrable.

Central Secretariat Assistant Director Pei Lian said, "Sir Zu is a human, and yet he helped the Fiend Emperor. Isn't that a bit inappropriate?"

He was Pei Zheng's son, another person from King Qi's faction. He had always been rather quick-witted and keenly seized an angle of attack. With him taking the lead, the officials of King Qi's factions all voiced their opinions. They also brought up the accusation of collusion with the Fiend races from earlier.

Zu An remained calm as he looked at them, replying, "If I hadn't joined in, then the Fiend races' new emperor would either be the exceptionally talented leader of the Fiend races' Five Young Extremes, the Golden Crow Crown Prince; or otherwise, the powerful and scheming Second Prince. Let me ask everyone, would it have been more beneficial for us if one of them became the Fiend Emperor, or if a child became the Fiend Emperor?"

The others were left at a loss for words. They were naturally able to distinguish which one on the throne would be more beneficial! If it had been anyone other than the youngest prince on the throne, they would never be willing to be the nephew of the Human Emperor and show such weakness. However, the youngest prince's actions were so natural that not even the elders of the Fiend races had any objections.

Zhao Han spoke up just then, saying, "Alright, as the Fiend Emperor wishes to pay tribute to us as a nephew, that is something worth celebrating. Pass down the order that the entire country's borders are to have three days of amnesty!"

"Long live the emperor! Long live, long live!"

...

After another round of flattery from the ministers, the members of the Eastern Palace said, "Sir Zu has brought back such a great achievement; he ought to be rewarded! That way, the people will be encouraged to work harder..."

Zhao Han nodded. His mood was quite good, so he found even Zu An a bit more pleasing than before. He asked, "What do our ministers feel is a suitable reward to give?"

Those present looked at each other in dismay. It was quite a difficult question to answer. If their armies had invaded the Fiend races' territory and forced the Fiend races into submission, this would only be the contribution of an ordinary diplomatic emissary. Just some simple rewards from the Department of Ceremonies would already be enough.

Right now however, the Fiend races' strength still existed, and their armies were at an impasse. The humans had never expected the Fiend races to just admit defeat. And yet, Zu An had relied on his strength alone to achieve such a result. It really was a groundbreaking achievement.

Another official spoke up to curry favor with the Eastern Palace, saying, "This kind of achievement is unprecedented. Considering that Sir Zu is now already a count, these contributions are already enough to make him a special king!"

"A king?" The emperor's eyelids couldn't help but twitch when he heard that suggestion.

King Qi's expression was also completely cold. How can a loach like this be comparable to me?

Many people in the court quickly reacted and criticized the official. One replied, "Sir Zu's contributions are not small, but making him a king is going too far. The reason why the Fiend races were willing to surrender is because of his majesty's prestige; their apprehension is the main reason. In the end, most of the contributions belong to his majesty."

With that person taking the lead, the others immediately praised Zhao Han for how heroic and powerful he was. Even King Qi had no choice but to go against his true thoughts and offer praise.

Zhao Han was very happy as he said, "All of you speak too formally. Zu An's contributions in this matter cannot be overlooked either."

The court's members were all sharp. They quickly realized that the thought of making Zu An a king had already been dismissed. As such, they began to discuss what other reward would be suitable.

When he saw the changes in the court, Zu An wasn't all that affected. He thought to himself that, if these people knew he was the Regent of the Fiend races, what kind of reaction would they have?

Another official proposed, "Then, should we just give him the title of duke?"

At first, people felt that it was a bit absurd, but after thinking about it, Zu An really had brought back many contributions. He was already a count. If he were only raised a single rank as a reward, that would be a bit too cold. It would be embarrassing to the royal family.

However, Zu An was just too young! In just a few years, he had gone from being a nobody to becoming a count. Now, he could even become a duke. The court had so many important ministers, and yet how many were dukes? Every duke was at the peak of officialdom. Now, a youngster could be added to their ranks... Just the thought of it was a bit strange.

Even Bi Ziang was full of jealousy. He felt that his talent was exceptional and that he was also among the best of his peers. He had always merely treated Zu An as his little sister's dog, which if one thought about it, would at least make him a Bi clan servant.

And yet, Zu An was now a duke! His position was the same as Bi Ziang's own father's! Meanwhile, as the young master, he himself was still far off; how could his normally arrogant self tolerate this?

In contrast, Bi Linglong's eyes shone. Unlike her big brother, she only hoped for Zu An to reach higher and higher positions.

The court discussed the situation; in the end, they gradually came to the consensus that they would grant Zu An the lowest grade of the duke rank. Dukes were separated into three types; from high to low, there were State Dukes, Commandery Dukes, and County Dukes.

Previously, Jian Yanyou had been Cloudcenter Commandery's Duke. The commandery had been his fiefdom. Meanwhile, County Dukes had cities as their feudal fiefdoms. Brightmoon Duke Chu Zhongtian was that kind.

Meanwhile, Zu An didn't have any foundation, so there was no way he would be given such a large fiefdom as Brightmoon City. Whether it was King Qi's faction or the emperor's faction, both of them had reached the consensus that Zu An had been promoted too quickly and needed some appropriate suppression. As such, they all began to discuss which remote and impoverished small city to grant him.

Suddenly, Yi Chun stood up, crying in grief and indignation, "This person conspired to murder my son and ruthlessly killed the bailiffs. Are we going to let this matter pass like this?"

You have successfully trolled Yi Chun for +996 +996 +996...

The entire court immediately calmed down; they were all embarrassed. They seemed to have really forgotten about that. Subsequently, they began to noisily debate what to do.

King Qi's faction seized the opportunity and tried to convict Zu An of a crime. Many people from the emperor's faction were jealous that Zu An had risen in rank too quickly, so they didn't speak up too much for him either. Meanwhile, the Eastern Palace was naturally acting under the Crown Princess' wishes, but they found themselves to be a bit too weak alone. They were heavily pressured by King Qi's people.

The emperor frowned. He naturally understood King Qi's intentions. There was no way he could let his glorious contribution become muddled; otherwise, what dignity would he have left during the Feng Shan ceremony?

As such, he immediately settled things and said, "This emperor will send the Embroidered Envoy to investigate the Sang clan situation. However, regardless, Zu An's act was wrong. Out of consideration for his contributions to the human race... Hmm, in that case, the title of duke that he ought to have will be reduced to that of marquis. Recently, Shen Land just happens to have had a vacancy open up, so we can grant that as Zu An's fiefdom and grant him the title of Marquis Shen."

Zu An was stunned. Deep throat?[1]

Just what the heck did I do to deserve this? I've never gotten a single normal title!

### **Chapter 1547: Dancing on the Tightrope of Life and Death**

Zu An didn't really care whether he was a duke or a marquis. After all, he was someone who had even been an emperor before in Yinxu. The difference between those two ranks was negligible to him.

The human side was much more convoluted and elaborate, and promotions all had strict regulations and restrictions. One's family status and background would also be taken into consideration. Giving him the title of king was definitely impractical, but he had thought that with such a huge contribution, he would at least be a duke, even if it was the lowest level county duke.

In the end, however, he was still reduced to a marquis. Even though the superficial reason was that he killed Yi Zhibing, as long as the emperor wanted to, he could have just investigated the Sang clan first. Considering Yi Zhibing's actions, not even death would have wiped out his crimes.

And yet, the emperor hadn't looked into it and had chosen to punish him first. Yi Chun and the others probably felt that the emperor was protecting him, but Zu An understood very clearly that the reason was that the emperor didn't want to make him a duke.

Previously, when he drank with Sang Hong, they had talked about the emperor. Even though Zhao Han was talented and courageous, he was too ambitious, and he treated his subjects rather coldly. Zhao Han clearly wanted to take the contributions of the Fiend Races' submission all for himself. If Zu An's reward was too great, everyone else would think that the contribution belonged to him. That was something Zhao Han absolutely couldn't tolerate.

But can't you give me a better title? Phoenix Man, Green Hat, Great Lady Count, and now you're calling me Deep Throat? What's next for duke?

When he saw how Zu An's expression darkened, Zhao Han merely thought that Zu An was unhappy. It actually made him feel a bit proud of himself. No matter how much trouble this brat causes, aren't his future prospects still completely within my grasp?

King Qi wore a pensive expression. He naturally saw through the emperor's thoughts. Zu An is definitely unsatisfied with this... It's not as if I've never thought about roping him in. But there's never been anything good anytime I've involved him. He's the main cause behind the deterioration of my forces. This sort of hateful person deserves this kind of result.

Even Bi Ziang, who was on the same side as Zu An to a certain degree, sighed in relief; so did many others. If Zu An had become a duke, they would suddenly feel really ashamed.

Everyone in the court was satisfied, except Yi Chun. Was his son's death going to be settled just like that? He tried to say something else, but the emperor frowned. Now, even those who were previously on his side admonished him.

In the eyes of others, a whole duke title had been used as compensation for his son's life. It seemed to be a bit too much for him to be unsatisfied with that. That was just how the world worked; everything depended on a balance. The idea of lives being priceless was just something people talked about; in reality, they all had their own estimates.

Yi Zhibing's character was something people all knew about clearly. As such, most people believed what Zu An said, and concluded that Yi Zhibing's death was fully deserved.

When he sensed the emperor's dissatisfaction, Yi Chun's heart felt ice-cold. He knew that the emperor's mood was currently good and that if he continued to disrupt the emperor's Feng Shan plans, he could be in danger. Helpless to do anything else, he could only accept his fate. He stared hatefully at Zu An.

You have successfully trolled Yi Chun for +555 +555 +555...

Zu An's expression remained calm the entire time, as if he had already expected this.

Then, the court began to enthusiastically discuss the Fiend races' situation. Many people began to ask Zu An about any related information. They were all very excited, because this was the human race's greatest victory in over a thousand years.

...

When the morning court session was dismissed, several groups of subjects flocked over to congratulate Zu An. Whether they liked or hated him, they had to admit that he now played a critical role in the court. Zu An responded to all of them politely.

Soon afterward, a lesser eunuch reported that the emperor had summoned Zu An to his study. Zu An shivered, but he followed the eunuch to the Imperial Study. It was called a study, but it had already been modified into a secluded cultivation chamber by Zhao Han. Only a few trusted aides had the qualification to be summoned to it.

Greeting the emperor respectfully, Zu An quickly said, "Your majesty, Sir Sang is innocent. The criticism about colluding with the Fiend races is complete nonsense."

"I naturally have my own thoughts. I've already sent people to look into it," Zhao Han said casually in passing, then looked at him and asked, "How did the Fiend Emperor really die? Tell me the details."

The Fiend Emperor had been the only person in this world who was a match for him. If even he had died, didn't that mean Zhao Han could die from a similar cause?

Zu An was already prepared for this situation. As such, he filled in the various details, things he hadn't shared openly in the court session. Of course, he removed many details of his participation in the story, instead emphasizing the roles of various powerful immortals in the secret dungeon.

Zhao Han's eyes shone when he heard what had happened. He couldn't even sit still anymore and began to pace back and forth across the study. His heaving chest gave away just how stirred up he was as he exclaimed, "I hadn't expected there to really be immortals in this world!"



Just like the Fiend Emperor, he had been stuck at his current cultivation rank for a long time. Even though he had seen some historical records, as time went on, he had begun to feel that they were just made-up rumors. He had even begun to suspect that there was no path ahead for him. Now that he had learned that there were immortals after all, how could he not be moved?

Zu An quickly said, "At the time, the Fiend Emperor was also really excited, but it was because of his curiosity that he was done in... At some point, the road between heaven and man was severed. That Unknown Region also completely closed. It might not open up again for thousands of years."

He was worried that Zhao Han would get so worked up that he would insist on visiting personally. The late Fiend Emperor was now dead, so how could the Fiend races stop him?

Of course, if the Committee of Elders worked together with the Fiend King Court's defensive formations, they would still have a fighting chance. However, after that battle, the casualties would definitely be severe. Zu An had finally established himself a bit over there; he didn't want all of it to be destroyed just like that.

"Road between heaven and man severed..." Zhao Han muttered, thinking about the Celestial Emperors severing heaven and earth. He continued to himself, "No wonder I wasn't able to make any progress after so many years... but just how can I repair it and break through?"

As he talked to himself, his expression changed several times; sometimes he was overtaken by happiness, and sometimes he had a worried frown.

Zu An thought, Don't tell me this guy really thought of a way to break through while the road between heaven and man is severed...

I'll have really bitten off more than I can chew then.

Fortunately, Zhao Han wasn't able to come up with any ideas for a long time, so he set aside the thought for now. He asked Zu An, "Right, what happened with the immortal medicine you mentioned?"

"That was just some trick. The only case of immortal medicine I know involved a person who ended up becoming a monster from head to toe. Calling that immortality would really be a bit forced," Zu An said, thinking inwardly, Sure enough, this guy with one foot in the grave is also interested in this. He told the story of Yayu again. He had already practiced this story with the Fiend races' Committee of Elders; there were no holes in his delivery.

Sure enough, Zhao Han revealed a look of disappointment and said, "So that was it."

Then, Zhao Han asked Zu An for some more details about the secret dungeon, especially the parts related to the Fiend Emperor. Fortunately, Zu An was already prepared for all of them.

After a while, Zhao Han suddenly asked, "What happened to your cultivation? Are you really a cripple now?"

"I was injured in the secret dungeon and the Fiend King Court. I should be able to recover if I rest for a period of time," Zu An replied ambiguously.

Zhao Han nodded. He didn't care whether or not Zu An's cultivation returned. In fact, if Zu An really had become a cripple, that would only leave him even more assured. He thus waved his hand, gesturing for

Zu An to leave. He was very satisfied with this conversation. Even though he hadn't really obtained anything, he had found out that there was still a path ahead. For someone like him, that was more important than anything else.

...

Zu An was suddenly stopped by someone not long after he left the Imperial Study. That person said, "Congratulations, Sir Zu, for being promoted to marquis."

"So it was Eunuch Lu..." Zu An replied, recognizing the eunuch who was always at the empress' side. The two exchanged some conventional greetings before he asked, "Huh? Why don't I see her highness?" This guy always stuck around the empress like the most loyal bootlicker, after all. Zu An almost always saw the empress near him.

"I did not expect Sir Zu to still remember her highness," Eunuch Lu replied, an expression of suffering mixed with expectation flashing through his eyes. "Her highness has been cultivating in a hot spring by the city outskirts for the past few days. She is waiting for Sir Zu to wish her good health."

Zu An felt a bit of a headache when he thought of that. Empress Liu Ning was an outstanding beauty, but Zhao Han was still alive! The previous time had only been out of anger and for revenge. Only after he cooled his head had he realized that it was nothing short of dancing on the tightrope of death. One's shoes couldn't help but get wet if one walked by the river. Furthermore, the empress was using him for her recovery, so he couldn't help but feel that he was losing out somehow.

He looked for a chance to refuse, but Eunuch Lu didn't give him that opportunity, saying, "Her highness has already reminisced about Sir Zu so many times. Her patience is already at its limit. Sir Zu, please do not disappoint her highness. An angry woman is willing to do anything."

The threat was clear.

Zu An felt as if he were like a fresh and plump Chinese cabbage that a succubus desired. He was about to say something, but Eunuch Lu seemed to have noticed something and quickly flew into the distance.

...

The clear and melodious sound of rings and ornaments touching each other filled the air. An elegant and refined fragrance wafted through the air, but its owner's usually sweet-sounding voice seemed a bit cold. "There were no messages at all from Sir Zu all this time, and I thought something happened. So it was because you found something better."

### **Chapter 1548: Danger Approaches**

When he turned around, Zu An saw a beautifully dressed woman slowly walking over. There was a red beauty decoration in the center of her forehead, and she wore her hair in an exquisite flower braid with all sorts of delicate ornaments. The tassels on her clothes slowly shook as she walked, practically tugging on the hearts of those nearby. Despite her extravagant outfit, however, she still looked incredibly elegant and refined. Only Bi Linglong could combine both of those looks together so perfectly.

"I greet the Crown Princess!" Zu An greeted her, bowing. They were in front of many eunuchs and maids, so he had to show her the proper etiquette she was due.

"I don't deserve such respect." Bi Linglong replied, looking away. "Right, you're not Sir Zu anymore. I should call you Marquis Shen now, right?"

You have successfully trolled Bi Linglong for +55 +55 +55...

Zu An was a bit confused. Just how did I end up offending her?

If you keep causing me trouble, I'm going to teach you what 'Deep Throat' really means!

"The Crown Princess must be joking around. Forget about 'Marquis Shen', even if I became a duke or king, I would still belong to the Crown Princess... and Crown Prince," Zu An said with a smile.

"Hmph, Sir Zu is quite ambitious," Bi Linglong said. Even though her tone was harsh, her anger still subsided quite a bit. Her face also turned a bit red. He says he belongs to me, but why does he keep staring at my dress?

She was a bit unsatisfied, continuing, "You still haven't paid the Eastern Palace a visit so long after the morning court session finished. Could it be that you don't view me... and the Crown Prince as important anymore?"

"His majesty wanted me to go to the Imperial Study after the court session ended, and I just got out. That was why I didn't have time yet. I hope the Crown Princess can forgive me," Zu An replied. He didn't get upset when he saw that Bi Linglong was acting like a pampered little girl. He actually found her quite adorable. Sigh... Damn this world that treats beauties better.

Bi Linglong also knew the reason for that, which was why she was so close.

"So his majesty invited you..." Bi Linglong casually talked to Zu An about official matters while gesturing for her subordinates to not follow them. Soon after, the two arrived at a distant pavilion. It was a place where others could still see her so there wouldn't be any suspicions, but they wouldn't have to worry about other people eavesdropping on them.

"What did his majesty ask you about just now?" Bi Linglong asked through ki while keeping up the superficial conversation.

"How the Fiend Emperor died, and also some other details about the Unknown Region," Zu An replied. There was no need for him to hide any of that.

"He didn't make things difficult for you at all, did he?" Bi Linglong asked nervously. After all, the two of them had faced Zhao Han's split soul in Westhound Tomb in the past, which was why she instinctively felt worried for Zu An.

When he saw the look of worry in her eyes, Zu An felt warm inside. He replied, "Don't worry. Am I not still fine right now?"

Bi Linglong sighed in relief. Then, she asked doubtfully, "Does the Fiend Emperor's death have something to do with you?"

"Do you think I have that kind of skill?" Zu An replied. He didn't plan to let anyone else know about what happened in the secret dungeon. There was no way of recreating the conditions in the dungeon, so there was almost no chance of him killing an earth immortal again. As such, saying it out loud was

meaningless and would only make his companions overly optimistic. Furthermore, if he wasn't careful and Zhao Han found out, he would really have shot himself in the foot then.

"It's naturally impossible for other people, but that's hard to say for you," Bi Linglong said, an almost reverent look in her eyes as she looked at Zu An. After all, she had personally witnessed him defeating Zhao Han's split soul. Before that, she had thought that Zhao Han was invincible, to the point that she couldn't even muster the slightest thought of going against him. However, after the secret dungeon, she had discovered that Zhao Han was also just a person, and he could be defeated.

"Once we have a chance, tell me about everything that happened in the dungeon in detail," Bi Linglong continued excitedly. Such a secret was something only Zhao Han normally had the right to ask, but because of her relationship with Zu An, she could naturally ask about it too.

"Sure," Zu An said with a nod. When will there be a chance for us to be alone in the future?

The secret tunnel that led to her chambers could definitely be used, but Zhao Han was no longer in seclusion. Trying to steal his daughter-in-law right under his nose... if Zu An did that, wouldn't he be treating an earth immortal as a joke?

"Right, why did Eunuch Lu look for you?" Bi Linglong asked, looking in the direction Eunuch Lu had left in. She clearly saw them together.

"It's nothing. He just told me to pay the empress a visit if I have the time. She probably wants to know about what happened in the Unknown Region too," Zu An said. He naturally couldn't tell her the real reason.

Bi Linglong nodded and replied, "She is the empress, so you have no choice but to go if she summons you. Still, I think it's best if you stay a bit further away from that woman."

"That woman?" Zu An repeated, keenly noticing how she addressed the empress. "Why is that?"

"No particular reason. She doesn't like me, so I don't like her either. I don't want you to associate with her. Can I not feel that way?" Bi Linglong replied with a pout.

"Of course, of course you can!" Zu An replied hurriedly. He hadn't expected the battles between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law to exist even in this world of cultivation. After all, the empress wasn't the crown prince's birth mother; she was only his aunt.

"You'd better not be lying to me. That woman always acts flirtatiously, so you have to be careful not to become infatuated with her," Bi Linglong said, staring at him.

Zu An laughed in embarrassment, replying, "Come on, there's no way I'd do that. Do I seem as if I'm tired of living?"

Help me, someone! How am I supposed to reply to something like that? Should I just confess that I already slept with the empress?

"You even dared to touch me, so who knows whether you will or not..." Bi Linglong muttered to herself. Her face heated up a bit. But when she heard him agree, she was still delighted. "If I find out that you lied to me, you'll definitely regret it."

When Zu An saw her dangerous smile, the faces of several famous actresses from his previous world appeared in his mind. He shivered. Still, he had no choice but to get through this situation somehow.

Sigh, when I was a shut-in keyboard warrior on the forums in the past, all I dreamed about was having girls in both arms. But now that I have that, I've realized that the life of a playboy isn't so easily enjoyed...

Fortunately, Bi Linglong couldn't stay together with him for too long, as they were still in the palace. After exchanging a few more words, she left, escorted by several eunuchs and maids.

Zu An found a hidden place to change his outfit. Then, he headed to the Embroidery House.

...

Previously, Zu An had asked the emperor about Sang Hong's situation. Unfortunately, the emperor had been more interested in the Fiend Emperor's death and only gave a vague reply. Thus, Zu An had to look into it alone.

When he arrived at the Embroidery House, he headed to his own workspace. Every Golden Token Envoy had their own specialized 'office'. If he just barged into another Golden Token Envoy's office, their subordinates likely wouldn't show him the same amount of respect.

He saw two men, one balding on top and one in front, playing cards as soon as he entered. Zu An glowered. Even though he wasn't here that often, weren't these guys slacking off a bit too much?

"Boss!" Dai Seventh and Chen Eighth exclaimed, quickly throwing the cards aside when they saw him. They had obsequious smiles on their faces as they brought him some tea. "You're finally back!"

Even Xiao Jianren rushed over when he heard the news. He only saw that it was Zu An when he moved closer. Comparatively, he was much more reserved than the other two as he called out, "Sir Eleven!"

Their department had clearly become an idle branch without their leader.

Zu An didn't waste any time and cut straight to the chase. "Why didn't you follow Sir Sang?"

Xiao Jianren said with a bitter expression, "We wanted to be at Sir Sang's side too, but Sir Sang kept stalling for time. The court sent people to ask about that several times, and we received reports from the Embroidery House to come back and explain the situation. We couldn't contact Sir Eleventh and had no choice but to return to the capital."

"What exactly happened at Silkworm City?" Zu An asked. He knew that they couldn't really act independently in that kind of situation. He didn't have any intention of blaming them. However, all of the information regarding Silkworm City had been sealed off, and the evidence had been brought to the capital by the Embroidered Envoy. He hadn't been able to find out anything.

Dai Seventh and Chen Eighth looked at each other in dismay. They were too low in rank and didn't know anything.

Fortunately, Xiao Jianren was always reliable and said, "I suspected that sir would be concerned about this, which is why I've been secretly paying attention and investigating. According to what I know, that night when Sir Sang encountered that huge fire in the relay station, many assassins suddenly rushed

forth and slaughtered everyone else in the Imperial Envoy fleet. Of course, currently, Silkworm City has only informed the public about the casualties caused by the fire..."

After Zu An listened to the explanation, he said seriously, "Apart from the one in charge of the relay station, there is likely something wrong with Silkworm City's Defense Captain too. It was he who separated Sir Sang from the Armed Escort Division."

"Sir Eleven is wise and all-seeing after all." Xiao Jianren discreetly praised him before saying, "Silkworm City's Defense Captain has been captured, but he died before he could be questioned."

Zu An remarked with a frown, "A bizarre death is a trail in itself."

"Indeed," Xiao Jianren said with a nod. "Our Embroidery House followed the trail. There is a very high chance of Shadow Group's participation."

"Shadow Group?" Zu An asked with a frown. He had interacted with Shadow Group's assassins before. There were quite a few Dark Elves among them. He had thought it was a structure established by the Fiend races, but after his dealings with the Fiend races, it didn't seem to have anything to do with them.

"My colleagues have already looked at the evidence, and they did find some unfavorable evidence in Sir Sang's room. However, there is a high chance that it was planted by a villain. They already reported this to their superiors, but there were no other instructions," Xiao Jianren said in confusion.

Zu An figured that the emperor definitely knew that Sang Hong had been wrongly blamed, but why hadn't he spoken up and instead let King Qi slander Sang Hong? Even the Sang clan's women had ended up being humiliated.

"Is Sir Sang dead or not?" Zu An asked.

"I don't know," Xiao Jianren said, shaking his head. "From what I know, Sir Sang likely escaped from the relay station. However, the situation at the time was too dangerous. Even though we didn't find a corpse, things don't look very good for him."

Zu An's expression darkened when he heard that. Even though he and Sang Hong had been enemies in the beginning, eventually, for various reasons, they had ended up on the same side. Sang Hong was one of the few allies he could rely on. Sang Hong was like a senior, but also a friend. Whether it was for public or private reasons, Zu An didn't want anything to happen to him.

However, Shadow Group assassins had been everywhere that night, and even Silkworm City's people had been bribed. The situation really didn't look too good.

Just then, however, Xiao Jianren said, "But personally, I feel that Sir Sang had a high chance of surviving."

"Oh? Why do you say that?" Zu An quickly asked.

Xiao Jianren then said, "Our Embroidered Envoy mobilized all of our men to investigate this affair, but even after we searched as much as we could, we didn't find Sir Sang's whereabouts at all. If he really had died, we would have found his corpse. There's a high chance that he was captured by Shadow Group's people. Of course, there's also a chance that he was rescued by someone else." However, his voice became much softer when he voiced the second possibility, because the odds were just too low.

Zu An was actually overjoyed at the potential turn of events. As long as Sang Hong wasn't dead, there was still a chance!

...

Meanwhile, on the emperor's side, Eunuch Wen bowed respectfully and asked, "What orders does your majesty have for this servant?"

"Go and investigate Zu An and the Crown Princess' relationship," Zhao Han said. The expression of concern Bi Linglong had shown when she heard that Zu An was in trouble appeared in his mind. He felt an inexplicable sense of annoyance.

#### **Chapter 1549: Alarmed**

"Ah?" Eunuch Wen exclaimed in surprise, thinking he had heard incorrectly.

"Furthermore, let no one else know about this," Zhao Han continued, glowering. "I just feel that their interaction does not fit that of a ruler and her minister. I hope I am overthinking. If there is something, you are to immediately notify this emperor."

"Understood!" Eunuch Wen replied, feeling quite shocked. Even though the emperor downplayed the situation, there was no way he would make Eunuch Wen investigate such a thing if he didn't already have a certain level of suspicion!

The crown princess was noble and refined; she was practically the standard of an elegant and noble court lady. Not even the slightest flaw could be picked out from her etiquette after she had married the crown prince. Many people secretly thought that her beauty was wasted on someone like the crown prince, but that was something they only dared to think in private. The crown prince was the future successor to the throne. Who dared to criticize him?

Someone like the crown princess who came from a great clan was supposed to know the severity of such an action. There was no way she would do anything that crossed the line. That meant the issue had to lie with Zu An.

Even though many people said that Zu An was a bit wild, Eunuch Wen actually thought he was quite an excellent youngster. He even secretly slips me some silvers from time to time.

Zu An was bold, but it wasn't to the point that he would dare to actually touch the Crown Princess, right? That was a crime punishable by the execution of nine generations!

Even though he felt that it was impossible, Eunuch Wen didn't show his true thoughts at all. He bowed respectfully to Zhao Han and replied, "Understood~"

Zhao Han nodded and waved his hand, gesturing for Eunuch Wen to withdraw. In truth, with his cultivation, it wouldn't be hard for him to monitor Bi Linglong and Zu An at all. But he was the emperor with endless things to tend to, so how could he be so leisurely?

Furthermore, after learning the details regarding the Fiend Emperor's death, especially the existence of the Unknown Region's immortals, he had actually gained many insights. He needed time to think properly in seclusion. For all he knew, he could even have a chance of making a breakthrough. The end of his lifespan was approaching; he needed to seize every last second.

...

Meanwhile, Zu An still didn't know that danger was approaching. He had, however, found many materials in the Embroidery House. His Golden Token Envoy identity held more authority than Xiao Jianren, granting him access to some information Xiao Jianren didn't.

Zu An found it a bit strange that Zhuxie Chixin wasn't in the Embroidery House. He wondered where that man had gone. According to Xiao Jianren, Zhuxie Chixin had been gone for quite some time. He was probably carrying out some kind of top-secret mission. Zu An didn't think too much of it, however. The Embroidered Envoys had countless secret missions. It wasn't something to make a huge fuss over.

Zu An's attention quickly returned to Sang Hong's case. He and Xiao Jianren analyzed the situation for a long time. They found a file within a scroll that claimed to have found some Shadow Group assassins' corpses within a small alley in the city.

After the matter, Embroidered Envoys had interrogated the nearby residents, but they still didn't know what had happened that night. Because the alley was some distance away from the relay station and the surroundings were quiet, people hadn't heard any noises. They had just felt that the night was a bit cold, causing them to pull their covers tighter around them when they slept.

Xiao Jianren picked up a magnifying glass and looked through the file. He soon voiced his surprise. "This shouldn't be! All of the local officials were bribed, so they transferred away the city's guards ahead of time. Shadow Group's assassins had the overwhelming majority, so how could so many assassins have died?"

Zu An pointed at the latter parts of the file and said, "That's why the Embroidery House's people believe that they weren't actually assassins from Shadow Group. After all, the alley was too far from the relay station. The local people didn't hear any sounds of killing either."

Xiao Jianren suddenly thought of something and asked, "Sir Eleven, if those black-clad individuals faced someone whose cultivation was much higher than them, is there a chance that they were killed without producing any activity?"

"That's not entirely out of the question," Zu An replied. He thought to himself and said, "Furthermore, if they had a special cultivation method or certain special skills, they would be able to silently dispatch those assassins. After all, the people living in that alley were just ordinary people. Even if there was a bit of sound, they probably wouldn't have heard it."

"Then is there a chance that these were Shadow Group assassins, and they were chasing after Sir Sang, but in the end, a powerful individual suddenly saved Sir Sang?" Xiao Jianren asked contemplatively.

Zu An's eyes lit up and he replied, "That is indeed a possibility."

When he saw Zu An's excitement, Xiao Jianren quickly reminded him, "Sir, please don't feel too happy yet. Currently, it seems that Sir Sang falling into Shadow Group's hands is the most likely possibility. There's only a very small chance of him being rescued by a passing expert."

He found it a bit strange. Wasn't Sir Eleven a bit too concerned with the safety of Sir Sang? Could it be that they had developed a friendship after the trip? But he had never seen them interact before on the way to Cloudcenter Commandery...



“What you say is reasonable...” Zu An said, calming down. Then, he assigned Xiao Jianren to start an investigation from several angles, hoping to find Sang Hong’s whereabouts as soon as possible. Then, he hurriedly changed and left the palace.

The Sang clan’s ladies were probably frightened at the moment. After all, Sang Hong was in danger, and Zu An had just publicly killed Yi Zhibing. Both of those could be considered a huge disaster.

Sure enough, when Zu An rushed back to the Sang manor, he discovered that it was cold and cheerless. Even most of the servants were gone. The entire place seemed deserted. Those people had clearly gotten worried that they would be involved and had run away. Zu An quickly entered and saw that the aged Mu Yi was criticizing those servants who had fled; after all, the Sang clan normally treated their staff extremely well.

Meanwhile, Sang Qien was trying to comfort Mu Yi, saying, “The Sang clan is currently facing a big disaster. They have families as well, so it is merely human nature to not want to be involved.”

Even though that was what she said, she still couldn’t help but sigh. In the past, she had always been direct and efficient in her speech. Now, she sounded a bit gloomier.

Mu Yi muttered in annoyance, “It’s all my fault for being out before, almost allowing the two of you to be bullied by that Yi bastard. If something had really happened, how would I face your father?”

Zheng Dan said, “Mu Yi, you were also looking for... information surrounding father-in-law. How could you have known that something like this would happen?”

Mu Yi said gratefully, “Thank goodness Sir Zu arrived in such a timely manner. But he is still too young and reckless. Yi Zhibing is Magistrate Yi’s beloved son; how could he just let things end like this? Furthermore, many bailiffs were killed too... Should I just escort the two of you out of the capital until things quiet down a bit?”

Sang Qien and Zheng Dan both shook their heads and replied, “He told us to wait for him.”

Mu Yi thought, These two haven’t even gotten married, and yet they’re so obedient to him already. Still, she knew that their relationship really was a bit melodramatic. Furthermore, she and Sang Hong had played a part in it too, so that was a joke she had to keep to herself.

Someone said with a laugh, “Don’t worry, I’ve already taken care of things. There’s no need to be scared anymore.”

“Big brother Zu!” Sang Qien and Zheng Dan exclaimed, standing up in excitement and happiness when they saw his familiar figure.

“Be careful,” Zu An said, walking over to support Sang Qien back to her seat.

Mu Yi took the sight in with a grateful expression. She nodded toward Zu An, then left to give the three young people some space. Sang Qien blushed when she noticed Mu Yi’s actions, but when she felt Zu An’s care, she also felt warm inside.

Meanwhile, Zheng Dan was a bit jealous. Even though she didn’t know what had happened between the two of them at first, after being around Sang Qien all this time, she couldn’t help but notice the changes

to Sang Qien's belly. When she asked about it, she had then learned about the Sang clan's plans, which made her feel both angry and embarrassed.

However, after thinking about it some more, she knew this was the only way she could properly be with Zu An. The fact that she didn't have to hide things anymore from the Sang clan was also a good thing. Still, thinking through it rationally was one thing; she still felt as if she had stolen someone's man.

Fortunately, she wasn't a simple-minded person. She quickly scolded herself; the Sang clan was experiencing great difficulties at the moment, and yet she was actually in the mood to be jealous!

"Sir Zu, just how did you deal with this situation?" Sang Qien asked, blinking. She was really curious. After all, it was something she couldn't understand at all.

Zu An thus gave them a rough account of what happened. Whether it was Sang Qien or Zheng Dan, both of them were incredibly shocked. What Zu An had gone through as of late was just too unbelievable!

"The court is going too far! How can they only give you the rank of marquis after this many contributions?!" Sang Qien cursed for a while. However, she soon said in amazement, "I really want to go with big brother Zu to experience the beauty of the Fiend races' territory."

Zheng Dan was also in a daze. In the past, they had experienced all kinds of amazing things when she and Zu An braved several risks together. Otherwise, there was no way she would have fallen in love with him. However, after marrying into the Sang clan, she couldn't be with him anymore. Her life had become many times more boring compared to before.

At the same time, she sighed inwardly. Back then, her cultivation had clearly been a bit higher than Zu An's back in Brightmoon City, and yet now, his cultivation had already shot into the sky. She could now only admire him from a distance. When she thought about how even if she went with him to the Fiend races' territory, she would only drag him down, she felt even more bleak and dejected.

However, seemingly sensing her downcast mood, Zu An held Zheng Dan's hand tightly in consolation.

Sang Qien was a bit distracted when she saw Zu An's actions. Normally, she should have been upset when an outsider man was so close to her sister-in-law, but she didn't feel angry at all. Instead, she felt warm, as if they were one family.

"Right, respected uncle's case is still being investigated, but they should be able to clear up the accusation of colluding with the Fiend races soon," Zu An said. "The Fiend races have already submitted to Zhao Han, so the relationship between the two sides will become much better. Who would try to cause trouble at such a time? Anyone who tried to ruin this kind of event would be in for a world of hurt."

"There's just no chance of my father colluding with the Fiend races to begin with. Someone clearly framed him," Sang Qien said angrily. "According to how you described the court's events, it's most likely King Qi's side that's making a fuss out of nothing and wants to launch a counterattack using my dad's situation. His majesty really is something too! He didn't try to protect my dad's reputation. If big brother Zu hadn't rushed back, the consequences really would be too horrible to imagine."

She really was a bit angry. Her dad had already been ignored once by the emperor over Brightmoon City's affairs, and now, it had happened again? No matter how loyal the Sang clan was, their hearts now felt cold.

Zu An quickly supported her and said, "Don't get too angry, or else it might end up harming the child."

Sang Qien blushed and mumbled, "I'm not that weak..." Still, she still couldn't help but rub her belly. Her expression was radiant with a mother's happiness.

"Right, I even found out another piece of information. Respected uncle is only missing right now; he might still be alive. However, we don't know whether he was captured by Shadow Group or if he was saved by someone else..." Zu An explained, sharing the information he had gotten from the Embroidery House with the two women.

"This is the best news we've heard in a while," Sang Qien said, her eyes filled with tears. "As long as my dad is still alive, there's still a chance."

...

The three of them talked for a long time, until the sky began darkening. However, Zu An still had to leave the Sang manor in the end. After all, in the eyes of others, he was still an outsider. Staying behind wouldn't be good for anyone's reputation.

He returned to his own count manor, which had now been turned into a marquis manor. After showing himself around the area for a bit, he then secretly slipped out. He was now a first-time father. How could he just stay at home alone?

He bought a large variety of goods for little children, then returned to the Sang manor again. He slipped in under cover of darkness. He had already learned all about the Sang manor's defense formation information a long time ago, so he wouldn't trip the alarms.

Still, when he entered Sang Qien's room, he hesitated, worrying that he would end up scaring her if he visited her so late at night. After all, they weren't that close, and yet they weren't strangers either.

After thinking about it, he decided to visit Zheng Dan first. The first reason was that he wanted to get closer to Sang Qien through her, and the second reason was that he had sensed she was a bit down during the day, so he wanted to have a proper talk with her.

Thus, he snuck into Zheng Dan's room. When he smelled her familiar scent and thought about the dark place they had been in before, he felt something burn within him. He took off his clothes and jumped into the covers. Zheng Dan was naturally frightened, but when she sensed that it was him, she completely relaxed.

"Ah Zu~" Zheng Dan tried to say something, but Zu An quickly kissed her, interrupting everything she had to say. "Mmm~"

A short period of separation would already feel long for newlyweds; and yet, the two had been apart for so long. Zheng Dan's body also quickly softened.

Even while sparks were flying, however, a quiet voice suddenly said. "Big brother Zu, I'm still here."

Zu An's entire body stiffened. He was dumbfounded.

### **Chapter 1550: Empress' Anger**

"Little Qien, why are you here?" Zu An asked in embarrassment. He hadn't expected the two women to be sleeping in the same bed. Things like tribadism began to appear in his mind. However, he quickly got rid of those thoughts. After all, whether it was Zheng Dan or Sang Qien, neither one of them seemed like someone who would do something like that.

"Because many people died in my room, I was too scared to stay there by myself, so I came to my sister-in-law's place," Sang Qien said weakly, looking very embarrassed.

Zheng Dan gave Zu An a pinch. This guy had immediately plugged up her mouth as soon as he appeared, not even letting her say anything.

Zu An felt a headache coming on. Even though the Sang clan already knew about his relationship with Zheng Dan, they had still pretended not to know on the surface. They had unknowingly reached a tacit understanding, as that would at least look better on the surface. And yet now, he had been doing all of that with Sang Qien's sister-in-law right in front of her face! That was a bit too much.

Sang Qien bit her lip and said, "I'm going back to my room then. I won't be disturbing you two."

Ah! This is so embarrassing! Zheng Dan thought, her cheeks turning red. She was way too ashamed to continue. She grabbed Sang Qien and said, "Don't go! So many people just died there; it's not a good place to stay in. Just stay here."

Sang Qien was stunned. Stay here? And watch you two?

Zu An also snapped out of his daze. He said apologetically, "It's all my fault. I was in so much of a rush during the day that I ended up dirtying your room."

"It's fine. That Yi bastard was really disgusting. Not even death would erase his crimes. Many of the servants left today and we don't have enough manpower. Tomorrow, we'll sort out the room again, and then I'll change to another room," Sang Qien said, feeling a bit strange as she said those words.

This guy had stolen her sister-in-law in her very own house, and yet she was moving aside to help him achieve his goals, implying that she wouldn't disturb them. Just what was going on here?! She also felt that the mood inside was too strange. She had to get out no matter what.

Zu An also grabbed her all of a sudden, saying, "I actually wanted to see you first, but I was scared that I would scare you in the middle of the night. That's why I came to Dandan to talk things over. Seeing as you're here too, that's even better."

Afterward, he took out all the infant goods from his Brilliant Glass Bead and said, "I didn't know what to buy and had no experience. Take a look and see if any of them are useful."

Sang Qien was a bit embarrassed, saying, "It's my first time too..."

Still, a woman's instinct made her pretty good at such tasks. Furthermore, she had still learned some things about being a mother. She pointed to some of the objects, leaving the other two enlightened.

Now that the topic had shifted to the child, she forgot about leaving. Her face began to light up as they chatted, and her mood brightened considerably.

Now, it was Zheng Dan's turn to feel a bit strange. Her lover was talking with another woman about their child in her bed. Why did such a strange thing actually seem so natural?

Zu An suddenly took out two swords and said, "These are the Yin Yang Swords, and they're a pair. They're most powerful when used together. The two of you don't have weapons you can use, so it should be perfect to give you one each."

The two swords' attributes were different. No one else was like him, capable of dual-wielding elements, which was why he couldn't give them to the same person. However, he could just give them one each. The swords became stronger when they were together, so he could also bring the two closer together that way.

"Heaven-grade weapons!" Zheng Dan and Sang Qien both cried out in alarm. They were knowledgeable and naturally recognized the weapons' aura.

They were both quite happy. After all, heaven-grade weapons were things that very few geniuses could use even among their great sects. Whether it was the Zheng or Sang clan, they had never owned weapons at that level before. Each one was completely capable of serving as their respective clans' inheritance treasure.

Zheng Dan's worry was quickly scattered by excitement. But then, she immediately composed herself and asked, "What will you do if you give us your heaven-grade weapons?" She knew Zu An used swords, so she felt worried for him.

"Don't worry. I have even stronger ones," Zu An said. However, he didn't tell them about the Tai'e Sword's divine grade, or else they would really be frightened.

"Ah Zu, you're so great~" Zheng Dan exclaimed. If Sang Qien weren't present, she would have already showered his neck with kisses like before.

"Thank you, big brother Zu!" Sang Qien replied, feeling a bit shyer. After all, the two of them weren't as close to each other as he was with Zheng Dan. Still, after several events, the distance between them was already unwittingly closing.

When he saw the women's happy appearance, Zu An recalled a proverb from the online forums of his previous world that was 'guaranteed to cure all diseases': "When your girlfriend is angry, there's nothing a bag can't solve." Bags had lost all meaning in this world, but heaven-grade weapons had similar effects.

Sigh, unfortunately, I really don't have many heaven-grade weapons... I already gave out most of them and I don't really have that many left. Should I go and see if Chi Wen has any more?

It had already been too long since Zheng Dan last saw Zu An. They had just too much to say. Meanwhile, Zu An and Sang Qien had felt a bit estranged at first, but now that they had the child and Sang Hong's safety as a shared topic, their conversation grew closer and closer.

Zheng Dan noticed that Zu An kept sitting on the edge of the bed to avoid suspicion. She pulled aside the covers and said, "You should get in. It's already the middle of winter. It'll be cold if you stay like that."

Sang Qien's face turned red. After all, she was sharing a bed with Zheng Dan right now! Still, she pursed her lips and didn't say anything in the end.

"I'm actually not cold," Zu An said. With his cultivation, he wasn't scared of the cold anymore. Of course, despite what he said, his body was quite honest, jumping straight in.

"Move over to the other side," Zheng Dan said, pushing Zu An into the center. Even though the two of them were really brave in private, Sang Qien was present, so she was still embarrassed. She naturally wanted Sang Qien to take on a share of the embarrassment too.

"Huh?" Sang Qien exclaimed, jumping in fright. She quickly moved over to the side.

When he saw her on guard against him as if he were some thief, Zu An almost laughed. He remarked, "You'll fall out if you move any farther away. You can't let yourself catch a cold."

Sang Qien's face heated up. Only after hearing him say that did she stop moving away in embarrassment. Zu An knew it was her naturally reserved instinct as a young lady, so he didn't try to tease her too much. Instead, he continued their earlier topic. Sure enough, as the conversation went on, Sang Qien calmed down.

Zheng Dan chatted with them, but sleepiness soon overtook her. She unknowingly fell asleep. The two women really had been scared badly. Now that Zu An had come back, with him to protect them, they immediately relaxed. Together with the fact that she knew that Sang Qien was there so they couldn't do anything, fatigue overtook her, and she naturally fell asleep.

Zheng Dan was very familiar with Zu An, so she was able to naturally fall asleep. However, Sang Qien wasn't so lucky. How could she possibly sleep in such a situation? Her heart pounded as she sensed the masculine aura of the man beside her. She didn't even know where to put her hands and feet.

"Let me listen to the child a bit," Zu An said.

When she heard him talk about the child, Sang Qien's gaze became much gentler as she responded, "Mm."

Zu An moved deeper into the covers and pressed his ear against her belly. Sang Qien's body trembled slightly when she felt his touch. However, she still stuck out her stomach so it was easier for him to hear it.

"I can hear the sound of his heartbeat!" Zu An whispered excitedly. He had tried during the day, but there had been too much clothing in the way. He hadn't been able to hear it too closely.

Sang Qien's face warmed up as she said, "I think the child knows that his dad is here."

Zu An was very excited. He pressed his head against different parts of her stomach to hear more sounds. Sang Qien was both uncomfortable and embarrassed, thinking, This man normally seems pretty bold and impressive; why is he as immature as a child right now?

Sang Qien's hand, which had nowhere to go, ended up caressing his hair. This is my man, my child's father...

...

With such physical contact, the two of them had become completely familiar with each other. Sang Qien unwittingly ended up in his arms. Because she was pregnant, she had her back to him; she cuddled up like a little cat in his embrace. However, her face quickly heated up. This guy isn't acting as decent as he was in the beginning. He said he was just listening to the child, but why is his hand moving higher and higher?

That especially became the case when his nose pressed up against her neck. The hot air practically felt as if it would make Sang Qien melt. She pursed her lips. In the end, however, she tacitly allowed him to do what he wanted.

And yet, Zu An clearly wasn't satisfied. When she sensed something pressing against her, Sang Qien began to panic, whispering, "No~"

This was Zheng Dan's room. She was still present!

...

Meanwhile, in a hot spring villa on the city outskirts, Empress Liu Ning had just completed her bath. She lay down on her bed, relaxing.

Eunuch Lu secretly sized up the woman on the bed. Her skin was radiant, and her close-fitting dress further accentuated the mature fullness of her body. It really was an alarming sight. Because the empress had just taken a bath, there was still a bit of steam coming from her body. Together with her skin being a bit pink from the heat, she really was beautiful and alluring.

Eunuch Lu naturally knew why she had dressed up so meticulously and why she had taken a bath. When he thought about 'that man', he really felt both love and hate. He hated that he didn't have anything down there, while Zu An could enjoy the goddess he yearned for day and night. However, whenever he thought about how Zu An had subdued the empress, his empty heart was filled with a strange feeling of satisfaction and stimulation.

"You dog of a servant, have you seen enough yet?" the empress remarked. Her eyes, which were decorated with phoenix-colored makeup, swept over him and gave him a look as if she knew his intentions. Her gaze was filled with contempt and loathing as she asked, "Did you send the message or not? Why isn't he here yet?"