

## Immortal 1561

### Chapter 1561: Torturing of the Soul

“What’s wrong?” Chu Chuyan asked, startled by her reaction.

Zheng Dan wiped the corners of her mouth with her handkerchief in embarrassment. She gave Sang Qien a look, but she really didn’t notice anything strange. She replied, “Why would you ask something like that?”

Chu Chuyan hesitated for a moment before saying, “Earlier, when she first saw Ah Zu again, her eyes were filled with pleasant surprise and friendly affection. Later, when she noticed me, her expression clearly changed. It was because of that drastic change that I noticed something.”

Zheng Dan suddenly empathized with Zu An. This woman was just too sharp... Still, she didn’t immediately refute the statement, instead replying with a smile, “Which young lady wouldn’t like such a dashing man like Ah Zu? It’s nothing unusual.”

She had to take the chance to send some wind Sang Qien’s way. Otherwise, if Chu Chuyan didn’t have any mental preparation and suddenly learned that Sang Qien was carrying her husband’s child, the shock would be too great.

Sigh, I really am going way too far for this family... Ah Zu better thank me properly later.

Chu Chuyan was briefly stunned, clearly not expecting that kind of answer. However, after thinking about it for a moment, what Zheng Dan said seemed to make sense to her. After all, Zu An was no longer the notorious good-for-nothing from Brightmoon City.

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After some time passed, Zu An got up to leave. Now that Sang Hong was back and Chu Chuyan was also present, he couldn't just stay the night at the Sang manor, right? He told the Armed Escort Guards to protect the Sang manor well, then left with Chu Chuyan.

On the way back, Chu Chuyan wanted to say something several times, but then stopped. Zu An found it rather amusing. He grabbed her hand and said, “If you have something to say, you should just say it. Is there anything you can’t say just between the two of us?”

When she sensed the heat of his palm, Chu Chuyan felt warm inside. She shook her head slightly and replied, “It’s nothing.”

“Is it really nothing?” Zu An asked curiously.

“It really is nothing,” Chu Chuyan said with a smile. No matter how he asked, that was her reply.

Zu An was completely confused. He even began to wonder if Chuyan had found out that Sang Qien was pregnant with his child. He thought about telling her the truth, but it was a matter that would affect the Sang clan’s reputation. Furthermore, Sang Qien hadn’t gotten married yet. It wouldn’t be too good if he talked about it without discussing things with them first.

But Chuyan isn’t an outsider...

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While Zu An was lost in conflicted feelings, they arrived back at his manor. Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe rushed out when they heard the news of their return.

“Big sis, brother-in-law!” Chu Youzhao exclaimed, running around the two of them a few times. She finally calmed down a bit when she saw that they weren’t hurt.

Chu Chuyan pinched her little sister’s cheeks dotingly. Then, she gave them a rough summary of what had happened. The two girls’ eyes widened as they listened; they were clearly surprised to hear about an attack in the middle of the capital’s streets.

Then, Chu Chuyan told the two of them, “It’s already late, so I’ll send you two back first.”

Chu Youzhao protested with a pout, “But I want to stay with big sis...”

Chu Chuyan said with a smile, “I have to pay the Qin clan’s seniors a visit anyway.” Even though the Qin clan’s two leaders had gone off to war, there were still many other elders at the manor.

Then, she looked at Zu An and added, “You should come with me to the Qin clan too.”

Zu An was a bit embarrassed, replying, “It would be strange if I went, right?”

His relationship with the Qin clan couldn't be considered bad, but it wasn't good. It would be fine if he went alone, but if he went with Chu Chuyan, he could end up being the target of some people's ridicule and mockery.

Chu Chuyan raised a brow and replied, “Sigh, it seems you really do think we’re divorced, so you have nothing to do with the Qin clan anymore.”

Zu An revealed a forced smile and replied, “I’ll go! I’ll go, okay?”

Even someone with Chu Chuyan’s ice-cold nature could actually play such tricks too?!

When she heard that Zu An was also going to go and that they wouldn’t be separated just yet, Chu Youzhao didn’t protest anymore.

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The group sent Murong Qinghe back first, then went to the Qin clan together.

When they heard about Chu Chuyan’s arrival, the thick-browed Qin Guangyuan and his handsome brother Qin Yongde personally emerged to receive her. Many of the Qin clan’s women emerged as well; they all surrounded Chuyan and praised her beauty.

Off to the side, Zu An was a bit embarrassed. Technically, he was the Chu clan’s young master, so he was related to the Qin clan as well. However, in order to protect the Chu clan, he and Chuyan had decided to get a divorce in name.

Fortunately, Qin Guangyuan found an opening to chat with him, asking, “I heard that you were attacked in the capital while escorting Sang Hong?”

“That’s right. They seemed to be Shadow Group’s assassins, but they used military crossbows and a city defense crossbow,” Zu An said, observing his reaction while speaking. The Qin clan was the number one military clan in the army, so that could have something to do with them.

Sure enough, Qin Guangyuan’s expression changed when he heard that. However, it was hard to say what he was thinking. His expression was somewhat gloomy. Sensing that he seemed to have realized something, Zu An chuckled and didn’t say anything else. Qin Guangyuan was a smart person too; he had definitely immediately thought of King Qi, and he naturally understood what kinds of consequences that event had brought.

Just like that, Zu An spent a few awkward hours with the Qin clan. Chu Chuyan then got up and said she was going home.

Qin Yongde couldn't help but say, “The Qin clan is your home in the capital! It’s already so late; where are you going now?”

Chu Chuyan gave Zu An, who had been sitting awkwardly the entire time but never left, a look. A hint of gentleness appeared on her face as she replied, “I’m going back to Ah Zu’s place.”

Many people from the Qin clan frowned. They all spoke up and said, “The two of you have already gotten a divorce. It’s not proper for the two of you to stay together, is it?”

Even though not even the pickiest member of the Qin clan would dare state that Zu An wasn’t outstanding, they weren’t in the same faction. The more outstanding he was, the worse it would be for the Qin clan, so they naturally couldn’t bring themselves to have any good impression of him.

Meanwhile, Chu Chuyan was just too charming. Even if she had already gotten married before, she still had no lack of outstanding pursuers. It wouldn’t be difficult to select a great clan for her to be married to one day. That would be much more beneficial for both the Qin and Chu clan. However, if Chu Chuyan lived with Zu An and news of that got out, which clan would dare to take her in, no matter how pretty and outstanding she was?

Chu Chuyan said with a smile, “In the past, because of the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra, Ah Zu agreed to a divorce in name in order to not drag down the Chu clan. But in my heart, he has always been my husband.”

Zu An felt warm inside when he heard that. He couldn't help but hold her soft and smooth hand. Chu Chuyan, who was usually shy and bashful in that regard, actually acted out of character and gripped his hand, clearly as an expression of her firm resolve to the Qin clan.

When she saw that, Chu Youzhao thought that the scene really was wonderful, as it matched the romance she had dreamed about ever since she was little. On the other hand, however, she felt strangely lonely. Still, she was a young girl and didn’t think too much about it. She quickly leaped forward to give the two of them her support.

The Qin clan wanted to protest further, but Qin Guangyuan reached out his hand to stop them. Then, he looked at Chu Chuyan and said, “Cousin, you’ve always been smart. As you’ve already made your decision, as an older brother, I can only wish you happiness.”

Then, he turned around to look at Zu An, saying, "Brother Zu, I hope you can treat Chuyan well and not fail to live up to her sincerity."

Zu An was rather surprised by Qin Guangyuan's change in attitude. He said with a smile, "But of course."

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The two of them left the Qin clan and walked along the main street. The capital, which was usually bustling with activity, now seemed a bit somber and desolate. There were troops patrolling everywhere.

Chu Chuyan couldn't help but say, "I wonder just how many plots and schemes are happening behind the scenes today."

"That's something for the Emperor and King Qi to think about. It has nothing to do with us," Zu An replied, holding her small, ice-cold hand. As he smelled her delicate and graceful fragrance, he only felt extremely comfortable and peaceful. He didn't even want to think about the two brothers' fight at all.

"Then why don't you take me around the capital? It's been a long time since I was here," Chu Chuyan replied with a big smile, hooking her arm around his. She leaned against his shoulder.

When he saw Chu Chuyan act like a little girl, Zu An's affection surged. At the same time, he felt guilty, because he was a total playboy. He gave up on the thought of giving her the cosmetics he had bought from Cloudcenter Commandery, instead taking her around the streets. As long as she gave something a second look, he bought it for her.

The whole trip filled Chu Chuyan with happiness and laughter. She suddenly asked, "Why are you acting like my master when she came back, giving me all of these good things?"

As she said that, she suddenly paused. Her eyes were completely clear as she continued, "There's definitely something that happened between the two of you that you're hiding from me."

### **Chapter 1562 – Battle Within the Harem**

Zu An felt as if his entire body were soaked in sweat. He asked, "Why would you think something like that?"

It was one thing if it involved other women, but Yan Xuehen was Chu Chuyan's master! If Chuyan learned the truth now, there really could be chaos. The only thing he could do was to gradually make the two of them accept such a relationship...

As soon as that thought appeared in his mind, Zu An couldn't help but laugh to himself bitterly. To be honest, he didn't have any hope in that regard at all.

"It's because the two of you are both just way too good to me," Chu Chuyan said with a confused expression. "My master especially. She always used to be ice-cold and really strict with me. I was even a bit scared of her. But when she came back this time, she was suddenly much warmer, and she also looked at me with a lot of care."

Zu An was speechless. Big sis Yan, you really aren't trying your best here! Weren't you known for cultivating some kind of emotionless state?

Fortunately, he reacted quickly and said, "We're the people closest to you, so what's so strange about being good to you? Wouldn't it be stranger if we treated you badly?"

"But my master's transformation is just too..." Chu Chuyan muttered skeptically.

Zu An explained, "It's probably because she met too many powerful beings in the Unknown Region. We almost died many times. That experience definitely left her with a huge impression, so that's probably why her mental state has changed a bit."

Chu Chuyan nodded slightly, replying, "I think that's the case too. I could clearly feel that my master's strength has increased a bit. Furthermore, she quickly entered seclusion. According to what the others at the sect are saying, she should be able to reach a new level in her cultivation this time."

Zu An sighed in relief when he saw that Chu Chuyan was convinced.

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Just like that, the two of them wandered around the capital. The capital was the most bustling city in the world; apart from a few areas, most city districts didn't have a night curfew. That was partly why people from other places all had a yearning for the capital. The two ate while strolling through the streets; Zu An felt as if he had returned to the night markets of his previous world.

Chu Chuyan had always been raised carefully and not allowed to indulge in many different things. Furthermore, she had always carried the entire Chu clan's safety on her back. She had never felt so relaxed before. Her ice-cold expression was gradually replaced with laughter and smiles. As she hugged Zu An's arm, a blissful glow radiated from her face.

No men with impure motives hit on her along the way. The first reason was that the capital was different from other places, with much better public security. After what had happened today in particular, there were patrolling guards everywhere. The second reason was that by now, almost any sensible person recognized Zu An. They knew he was a rising star. Who would stick their head out and willingly get in trouble?

As such, the two of them were able to stroll around until late into the night before they returned home reluctantly, still wishing for more.

When they returned to the manor, the two of them sat side by side on a windowsill. Chu Chuyan leaned against Zu An's chest, and they both just admired the moon in the sky. They shared everything that had been on their minds while they were separated, including their thoughts about each other.

There were endless things to talk about between lovers. Soon, it was already late at night. The two of them both unwittingly fell asleep by the windowsill, leaning against each other side by side.

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This continued until the next morning, when the servants were shocked to find the two of them sleeping like that. Thankfully, the two of them had high cultivations; otherwise, sleeping like that in the middle of winter would have easily made them extremely sick.

A clear and melodious bell rang through the air, notifying all the palace officials to report to the morning court session.

Zu An wasn't surprised at all. After what had happened the previous day, it would be strange if there were no morning court session today. With his current identity, he needed to attend the morning court session too. Thus, he let Chuyan sleep for a while longer, because it was still too early.

Chu Chuyan nodded slightly. After cleaning up a bit, she returned to the room to cultivate in meditation. Zu An was full of admiration. People all said that Chu Chuyan had exceptional talent, but her level of diligence in cultivation was far above most cultivators of the world.

"I'll try to come back as soon as the court session is over. I'll take you around the Royal Academy," Zu An said.

The previous night, during their conversation, he had learned that Chu Chuyan was given some tasks to complete by her teacher and had to pay the libationer a visit, while bringing over some gifts. He realized he still hadn't met his friends at the academy after returning to the capital.

"I'll wait for you," Chu Chuyan said, sounding gentler than her usual ice-cold nature.

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When Zu An arrived at the Imperial Palace, sure enough, many officials recommended vigorously investigating the attack that had happened the previous night. Others said to investigate what had happened at Cloudcenter Commandery because Sang Hong had brought back new proof. Of course, the attack on Sang Hong's Imperial Envoy fleet also had to be investigated.

Even though no one said King Qi's name, they all knew that the target was King Qi. He was in the wrong to begin with, so even if King Qi's faction wanted to retort, now wasn't the time at all.

A while later, other officials suddenly pointed out each dynasty and generation's rules. Kings had to return to their fiefdoms after they matured, and there was no reason for them to remain at the capital. At the same time, they mentioned how only a few kings in history had remained in the capital, and how that hadn't been a blessing for the world. In the end, they suggested for King Qi to return to his fiefdom.

The entire court instantly broke out into a commotion. Every single person present knew what King Qi had been fighting for all these years. If he returned to his fiefdom, wasn't that the same as demanding his life?

Some of the middle and lower-class officials from King Qi's faction who weren't privy to insider details protested, but after arguing for a while, they suddenly realized something. Why weren't the heavy hitters of their faction saying a thing?

Every person who had the right to be in the court was smart. They had only come to their misunderstanding due to a lack of information. When they saw how the other members of their faction were acting and associated it with what had happened the previous day, all of them woke up to the truth.

The morale of King Qi's faction instantly plummeted. Thus, they were pushed back bit by bit. Eventually, the matter was practically set in stone.

Zu An didn't find it too surprising, because he realized that King Qi seemed to be too calm. He didn't see King Qi's forces back at all from start to finish. Could it be that King Qi had really just acknowledged his fate here?

Of course, Zhao Han's strategy was excellent. Not a single one of those disgraceful things had been pointed at King Qi. It seemed almost like a silent offer: 'I won't pursue this matter, so you should obediently crawl back to your fiefdom.'

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When the court session ended, Zu An reported to the Eastern Palace's morning roll call as usual. He found a chance to ask Bi Linglong, "Is King Qi really just going to accept his fate and return to the fiefdom?"

"How can it be that easy?" Bi Linglong replied. She looked beautiful today, because she had put special care into her makeup. "But the current situation isn't in his favor, so he is lying low for now. I believe that he will start his counterattack soon."

Zu An asked her about what King Qi's counterattack could potentially look like. Bi Linglong shook her head and replied, "King Qi is someone with deep plans and distant thoughts; how can they be things that a junior like me can presumptuously try to guess at? Does Sir Zu have anything else to report? If not, then you can withdraw."

Zu An was surprised by her cold tone. He wondered if she had eaten something wrong this morning. What happened with the empress doesn't seem to have been exposed, though? He could only continue, "There have been some important events at home recently, so I want to ask for a few days of vacation..."

"No." Bi Linglong cut him off before he could finish.

Zu An was a bit annoyed now. He suddenly got up and asked, "Why?"

Bi Linglong looked up at him. There was no emotion visible on her face as she replied, "The Eastern Palace has too many things to take care of, and you are the crown prince's chamberlain. You were out for a long time and were away from the Eastern Palace. Too many documents have already accumulated here. You've finally returned, and yet you want to ask for a vacation?"

"I really am a bit busy these days. I promise I'll work overtime to deal with it all," Zu An replied, feeling puzzled. Even though his position as crown prince's chamberlain had a high status, the work was almost all taken care of by the people under him. The one who made the decisions was the crown princess. When did they ever need him to deal with documents?

"What can you even be busy with? Isn't it just keeping that Chu clan woman company?" Bi Linglong retorted coldly. "From what I know, the two of you have already been divorced. She is no longer your spouse, so why do you have to stay with her?"

Zu An suddenly realized what was happening. He couldn't help but look at her with a smile, saying, "So you were jealous."

“You rascal, I am the crown princess; why would I be... jealous of you?” Bi Linglong replied, her expression stiffening. “Servants, bring all of the documents that have accumulated in this time to Sir Zu.”

She got up to leave afterward, not even giving him a chance to retort. Soon after, Rong Mo quickly delivered a huge pile of documents to Zu An. She had a huge smile on her face as she enjoyed his misery.

Zu An was also stunned. With the amount there was, forget about a single day, he wouldn't even be able to finish it all if he worked three days and three nights in a row!

Chuyan is still waiting for me at home...

### **Chapter 1563 – Unjustly Attacked**

While Zu An was wondering what to do, suddenly, a chubby lesser eunuch approached bearing a message. Surprisingly, it was one of the empress' eunuchs, Little Zhuo. He said that the empress needed to talk to Sir Zu about something.

Normally, Zu An was a bit apprehensive of the empress, but he was actually quite happy about the summons. He quickly agreed and followed Little Zhuo. He was scared of giving Bi Linglong a reason to keep him, so he urged Little Zhuo to start moving.

Bi Linglong rushed over when she heard the news, but Zu An was already long gone. She was so upset she swept all of the documents to the ground.

Rong Mo added fuel to the fire, remarking, “That Zu guy is so ungrateful! Did he forget who raised him up? He only knows how to betray those who treat him well.”

“Shut up!” Bi Linglong snapped, suddenly turning around and glaring at her. “Strike your own mouth to show your repentance!”

“Huh?” Rong Mo was stunned. What is up with the crown princess? I was cursing to make her feel better, so why am I now in trouble?

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Meanwhile, Little Zhuo rushed straight to the empress' palace before he realized what had happened. When had he ever moved so quickly before in his life?

“Brother Little Zhuo, thanks a bunch!” Zu An cupped his hands toward him, then went straight into the palace.

Little Zhuo was really moved. As a lesser eunuch, he had been bullied quite badly ever since he first arrived at the palace. Sir Zu was now a marquis, and yet he hadn't changed at all. Sir Zu didn't treat him as a servant, but as a normal person.

Someone as kind as him will definitely have good things happen to him.

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Inside, Zu An saw that the empress was dressed in ordinary clothes, but it didn't hide her mature figure at all as it rocked back and forth beautifully. The rhythm her waist swayed with was something that was difficult for younger ladies to compare to.

The empress was a bit surprised to see Zu An arrive, exclaiming, "Huh? You actually came so quickly."

Zu An had just escaped from a 'sea of bitterness', so his mood was quite good as he replied, "What is your highness saying? How could I dare to ignore your imperial decrees?"

"Tsk." The empress didn't fall for his smooth talking at all; she replied, "I sought you out several times before, and yet you used all sorts of excuses and didn't even come in the end." She was clearly still bitter about that.

Zu An chuckled in embarrassment. He didn't argue with her; instead, he asked, "Right, why did your highness suddenly summon me? The rumors haven't settled yet, so it's not suitable for me to come too often."

The empress stretched out her body, putting her incredible figure on full display. She said, "Don't worry. I've looked around over the past few days. Zhao Han's attention should be completely focused on dealing with King Qi right now, so he doesn't have time to be distracted by anything else."

"How does her highness think things will play out from here on out?" Zu An took the chance to ask. The empress was the mother of the empire, and her clan was extremely powerful as well. She viewed things from a different perspective compared to ordinary people.

The empress gestured for him to sit down, and as he did, she even poured him a cup of tea. Then, she said, "How else can it play out? There's no way King Qi will just sit still. He'll probably find some reason to cling to the capital for now, such as an illness. Then, he'll start to think up some schemes."

"You don't seem to be worried," Zu An remarked, surprised by how calm she was.

"What is there to be worried about?" the empress asked, pointing toward the Imperial Study. Her expression was difficult to read as she continued, "Even though I do have some grievances toward that man for certain reasons, I can't help but admit that he is the strongest in the entire world. He has never been defeated."

Zu An's expression was strange as he thought, He already lost once before in the Westhound Tomb secret dungeon. Of course, he didn't say that out loud.

"No," the empress suddenly began, a lovable smile on her face. "There is one area he has lost to you in."

Zu An felt his body heat up. A mature woman was proactive and enthusiastic after all, completely missing the bashfulness of a young girl. In his previous world, the gossip and teasing of the office's older ladies really had been enough to make any man's face red with embarrassment.

When she saw his strange expression, the empress glanced at him and said, "Don't worry, I didn't come here to devour you today. I haven't completely absorbed what you left inside my body last time yet."

Zu An was speechless. He asked, "Then what did your highness need me for?"

“I heard that young wife of yours came to the capital. Should we bring her into the palace, and then let this empress look after her?” the empress offered. “I’ve already heard quite a few rumors in the past few days, rumors that praised her as some goddess. I want to see just how she’s grown up.”

Zu An broke out into a cold sweat, replying, “No, that’s alright... It’s not too convenient.”

What kind of a joke is this? No one wants a fire to start in their harem; I’d be insane to agree to something like this!

“What, are you scared that I’ll reveal our relationship to her? Don’t worry. I’m not that stupid. If you don’t want to, then forget it,” the empress said, not forcing the matter. Instead, she continued, “Then tell me about the two of you; when did your relationship improve? When was the first time you slept together? Could her frail body really handle a beast like you? I almost couldn’t take it myself...”

Zu An was speechless. What kinds of words are you using?

...

When he finally escaped from the empress, Zu An wasn’t so foolish as to rush back to the Eastern Palace. He quickly left the palace, thinking that he’d wait until Bi Linglong’s anger subsided for the time being.

He was about to rush back to his place, but he noticed that quite a few people’s eyes were drawn in a certain direction. He thought of something, then followed their gazes. He saw a beautiful figure in an icy blue dress. Who else could it be but Chu Chuyan? He ran over with a pleasant surprise, asking, “Chuyan, weren’t you cultivating at home?”

A faint smile appeared on Chu Chuyan’s face when she saw him. She replied, “For some reason, it was really easy for me to enter meditation at the sect, but I just can’t seem to calm down as easily here. That’s why I came over to the palace to wait for you, as I’d be able to see you sooner then.”

When he heard his usually reserved wife speak such warm words, Zu An laughed heartily. He grabbed her arm and began to walk in large strides. Everyone else stared enviously at them.

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Inside the Eastern Palace, the crown princess sat in a room by herself. There was a mirror on the table. Surprisingly, the image it reflected was of Zu An holding hands!

There were special formations all around the Imperial Palace, and they could be used for monitoring purposes. With Bi Linglong’s status, it wasn’t too difficult for her to gain access. When she saw how pure and aloof Chu Chuyan looked, Bi Linglong felt a bit absentminded. No wonder that guy ran away so quickly.

However, what made her unhappy was how lovey-dovey the two of them were. That was what she yearned for even in her dreams, and yet because she knew what kind of identity she had, she could never openly be with Zu An on the streets like true sweethearts.

Pa!

She slammed the face of the mirror against the table. There was no expression visible on her face.

...

Meanwhile, Zu An and Chu Chuyan headed toward the Royal Academy as planned. Chu Chuyan thought they had to announce their arrival and wait for a while, but Zu An took her straight in. The guards along the way didn't stop them, and instead, quite a few people nodded toward him in greeting.

Chu Chuyan exclaimed in surprise, "Huh? You seem to be quite well received here."

The first time she visited the capital, she had learned just how proud Royal Academy's people were. The rear mountain area in particular was like a forbidden zone. It wasn't completely impossible to enter, but the difficulty was very high.

"But of course. Your husband is just that charming," Zu An said with a laugh.

Chu Chuyan was about to scold him, but when she remembered how many sweethearts he had, she couldn't help but frown.

Suddenly, they heard the sound of weapons clashing. Both of them were surprised. The academy's rear mountain was an extremely peaceful place; why were there people fighting there?

When they went in, they saw that two rather pretty young ladies were fighting. They didn't seem to be exchanging pointers, and instead looked more as if they were fighting to the death. They even cursed each other from time to time.

Judging from the conversation, it seemed they liked the same man, saying that he was handsome and strong, that he was the most perfect man in the world. They cursed each other as whores with no sense of shame, each saying that the other woman was the reason why they couldn't meet their lover for a long time...

Chu Chuyan glanced at Zu An with a pensive expression. Judging from how familiar he was with the academy, he clearly came here frequently.

Zu An began sweating profusely, exclaiming, "This wasn't my fault!"

Just then, the two young ladies really did start fighting for real. They both used their ultimate moves against each other. Their skills were almost on par with each other, and it seemed as if they were about to take each other down.

Chu Chuyan kicked off the ground and with a wave of her hand, their swords were knocked away. She remarked, "It is just a man; must the two ladies go this far?"

The two women were shocked by her cultivation. But when they heard that, they couldn't help but point at the distant Zu An, retorting, "Sure, you can sound righteous right now, but what if we were fighting over your man? Would you just bow and give way?"

Chu Chuyan was stunned. Many names appeared in her mind. Qiu Honglei, Zheng Dan, Qiao Xueying... In that instant, she experienced all kinds of feelings. Sweet, sour, bitter...

Zu An knew that things were going in a bad direction. He quickly rushed forward and said, "Ladies, please don't get angry. According to what you're saying, it sounds as if it's been a long time since you've seen your lover. Rather than fighting against each other like this, how about we calm down and chat a

bit first? Just who was it that disappointed the two of you? How about I find that heartless rat to settle things?”

“Hmph, you’re the heartless rat. You dare speak ill of our big brother Xiu?!” the two girls exclaimed in unison, pointing their swords at him.

Zu An was speechless.

#### **Chapter 1564: Message**

Zu An looked rather sullen as he thought, What does that have to do with me?

Wait, why does this ‘big brother Xiu’ sound familiar? Don’t tell me...

Just as the two swords were about to make contact with his body, a hoe suddenly appeared beside him. With just a casual touch, it sent both women flying. A simple-looking old farmer stood in front of the two women, snapping, “Do not make trouble!”

“Sir... Sir Seventh,” both women said in unison. When they saw who it was, they kept quiet out of fear.

Chu Chuyan’s eyes lit up. Sir Seventh? This is most likely the Libationer’s seventh disciple Wang Shuyang! In the past, dad had nothing but praise for this man, because he was someone who truly worried for the common people.

Chu Chuyan had heard the legends surrounding Sir Seventh in the past. She carried the utmost admiration toward such a noble and clean-living man. However, she hadn’t expected Sir Seventh to actually look like an old farmer. She couldn’t see any trace of a capable individual’s bearing from him. Still, she quickly realized his appearance made perfect sense.

Wang Shuyang lectured the two women for a while, but he didn’t make things too hard for them. He let them go afterward. In response, Zu An cupped his hands and expressed his thanks, then introduced Chu Chuyan.

Wang Shuyang revealed a simple and sincere smile, remarking, “Miss Chu is elegant in appearance, as expected.”

Of course, despite what he said, his eyes remained pure. It was as if the most beautiful women in this world couldn’t compare the rice paddy in his hands.

“Sir Seventh, what were they fighting over exactly?” Chu Chuyan couldn’t help but ask after returning the greeting. When she thought of her previous suspicions that the women had been fighting over Zu An, she couldn’t help but smile.

“It seems to be about a popular student in the academy. I do not know the details, as I do not usually pay much attention to these things,” Wang Shuyang replied. He then enthusiastically told Zu An, “Sir Zu, that hybridized rice paddy idea you suggested really provided me with great benefits! I found that infertile male variant you spoke of and succeeded in creating a crossbred paddy, but that crossbred paddy’s later generations quickly returned to being normal paddies. I had no solutions for that...”

When she saw him consult Zu An respectfully, Chu Chuyan's eyes widened. She assumed that Wang Shuyang was already at the peak of agricultural knowledge, to the extent that even the libationer shouldn't have known more than him in that field. And yet, someone like that was consulting Zu An?

Wait, Zu An knows about this stuff?

She had thought she already understood Zu An quite well, but she had never heard of him having knowledge of such a field. She was worried that with his nature, he might have just shot his mouth off and fooled Wang Shuyang.

She wondered whether to have a good talk in private with Ah Zu about the subject later. After all, Wang Shuyang was someone who really did care about the well-being of the world's common people; he was lofty and unsullied. It wasn't right for Ah Zu to deceive him. At the same time, she was worried that Ah Zu could be exposed by the question from Wang Shuyang. If that happened, it would really be bad for his reputation.

However, Zu An seemed to take the matter very seriously as he said, "This isn't too difficult of a problem. There's something called the 'Three Type Form'. The infertile male variant you found can be the source plant. Find two partners for it. Call one the preserved type, and the other the restored type.

"The first partner should look very similar to the mother variant. It should have a robust amount of pollen and a developed stigma. If you use its pollen for the source plant, you should collect daughters. They will look exactly the same as the source plant. They also have small stamens and shriveled anthers, original forms that are infertile.

"The other partner should be entirely different from the source plant, usually larger. It should have have a robust amount of pollen and a developed stigma. If you use its pollen on the source plant, you should collect sons. They will be stronger than both of their parents.

"Then, plant in separate locations a breeding farm and a control farm to produce the infertile type and the preserved type..."

Chu Chuyan was stunned when she heard Zu An explain the details. She thought she was pretty smart herself, but even though she knew what the individual words Zu An said meant, when they were strung together, she had no idea at all.

Is he trying to deceive Wang Shuyang right now? she thought. However, when she saw the shock and admiration on Wang Shuyang's face, she suddenly felt that something was wrong with the world. Why does Ah Zu know about these things?! He even made the number one farmer Wang Shuyang feel sincere respect!

Wang Shuyang tugged on Zu An's hand and said enthusiastically, "Sir Zu really is a great genius! Even after this humble one's decades of study, my knowledge cannot compare to these few pieces of advice at all!"

Zu An replied in embarrassment, "Sir Wang is the true expert. I'm nothing more than an armchair strategist."

What he said was true. All he provided was some bits and pieces he remembered from watching documentaries. He could give a rough summary, but if he were to really carry it out, he would definitely be fumbling around in the dark.

Wang Shuyang naturally didn't know that. He said, "Sir is humble, as expected. If the students at the academy could have just one percent, no, one ten-thousandth of sir's scholarly knowledge and character, that would be the academy's blessing."

When she heard Wang Shuyang's praise, even the usually composed Chu Chuyan's mouth hung wide open. Even after Wang Shuyang ran off excitedly to test out what Zu An said, Chu Chuyan still couldn't recover from her shock. She glanced at Zu An from time to time.

Zu An couldn't help but touch his face, asking, "What, is there something on my face?"

Chu Chuyan sighed and said, "I've suddenly discovered that I actually don't understand you."

"Haha, there's a lot of things you don't know. Your man is a thick book you need to flip through slowly," Zu An said proudly.

When she saw that familiar nature of his, a smile appeared on Chu Chuyan's face. She shot back, "Hmph, you really have no sense of shame."

...

Just like that, the two of them continued up the mountain. Zu An explained which teacher's territory each area was. He had already visited a few times before, so he was already familiar with the area. However, he actually felt a bit disappointed, because it didn't seem as if Jiang Luofu was at the academy.

"Up ahead is Hei Baizi's place. Xie Xiu took him as his master," Zu An said, although as soon as he finished speaking, he was stunned to see a group of female students surrounding the courtyard. He wondered out loud in confusion, "What's going on? Is Hei Baizi taking female disciples now?"

The two of them walked over, and only then did they see what was happening. It turned out that Hei Baizi was lecturing Xie Xiu. Meanwhile, the female students were all noisily discussing something. The topic seemed to be the target of the criticism, Xie Xiu. Some of them said Xie Xiu deserved it, but they were immediately attacked by all their fellow students.

"I'm just a simple passerby, but I feel that it isn't right for such a bright young man to be slandered like this."

"I wasn't paying attention before, but when I saw that so many people in the academy were slandering him, I wanted to know more. Then, I ended up becoming a fan of this guy."

"Even if you don't love him, don't hurt him. Also, if you like big brother Xiu, don't fight against other people. We should all remain in our own groups."

"The one we love has sparkling eyes; his smile is like the cheerful sunlight..."

"That old man is going way too far! What did big brother Xiu do wrong for him to be punished like this?!"

“Are you tired of living? Do you not know how high Hei Baizi’s status is in the academy? He can stop you from graduating with a mere word.”

“What, then do I have to just watch as he bullies big brother Xiu? No way! I have to report him to the superiors!”

“Exactly! We’ll report him to the academy! We’ll even find the libationer if we have to!”

The students were getting more and more excited. Zu An and Chu Chuyan looked at each other in dismay. Just what in the world was going on?

While Xie Xiu was being punished, he suddenly noticed Zu An. It was as if he had suddenly found his savior. He cried, “Please save me!”

Hei Baizi also saw Zu An, and couldn't help but feel happy. He rushed out and said, “Brother Zu came at a great time. I’ve finally developed a solution to win at the five-in-a-row game you developed last time. Come in, come in, let’s play a round.”

Chu Chuyan was now even more shocked. Hei Baizi was known to be unrivaled in chess. Judging from his tone, it seemed he had lost to Zu An and wasn’t satisfied yet!

Zu An had a bitter smile as he replied, “That five-in-a-row of mine was nothing more than a cheap trick; there’s no way it wouldn’t escape the eyes of a true expert like you. If you’re saying you’ve seen through it, you’ve naturally done so. There’s no need for further competition.”

“Winning is winning; losing is losing. How can it be as simple as my having solved it just by saying so? Quick, let’s give it a try. Xiu’er, go and set up the board,” Hei Baizi said, not letting go of him. He had an impatient expression.

When Xie Xiu saw that his master didn’t have any intentions of criticizing him, he was overjoyed. He quickly rushed in to grab a chessboard for them.

“But I still have to accompany my lady to see the libationer,” Zu An said, feeling a huge headache.

“How can meeting the libationer be as interesting as a game of chess? I’ll just call someone to bring her there,” Hei Baizi said, waving his hand and calling someone over.

Chu Chuyan couldn't help but chuckle. She said to Zu An, “You should just play some games with him. The sect told me to pass on the message to the libationer alone too.”

Zu An was stunned. He was curious about what the White Jade Sect wanted to say to the libationer.

### **Chapter 1565: Don’t Be Led Astray By Big Brother Zu**

As it was a confidential task assigned by the White Jade Sect, however, Zu An couldn't really ask anything else about it. He nodded, indicating that he hoped everything would go smoothly. Then, he was forced to play five-in-a-row with Hei Baizi. Xie Xiu brought them tea as if he had just received a great amnesty.

The students outside all began to discuss with each other.

“Who is that person? Even Hei Baizi is treating him with such respect.”

“Is he another chess saint?”

“No way! There’s no one better at chess than Hei Baizi. Even the libationer said that in terms of chess, he wouldn’t necessarily be a match.”

“Sigh, I suddenly think that this man is really handsome. He doesn’t seem to be worse than big brother Xiu at all!”

“Wow, what a traitor. Big brother Xiu is the most handsome man in the world.”

“But this man is also pretty handsome! Besides, he’s not the same type of handsome as big brother Xiu. He seems a bit more masculine...”

Before the student could even finish, she was immediately assaulted with a barrage of words from the others.

“What? Are you saying that big brother Xiu isn’t manly?”

“That... That’s not what I meant...”

“Have you all really not heard of him? That’s Zu An, who just achieved a great contribution to our country. He’s so young, and yet he’s already a marquis! Furthermore, he’s the most popular subject from the Eastern Palace. His future prospects are limitless.”

“So that’s who he was!”

...

Chu Chuyan couldn't help but smile when she heard their conversations. It was as if she had returned to her life back at Brightmoon Academy. Even though she hadn't participated in such things at all back then, her little sister Huanzhao was quite interested in such affairs and would often talk about them next to her, just like the students right now.

Hmph, it's fine as long as they don't go after Ah Zu, she thought. What did the number of girls who liked Xie Xiu have to do with her, anyway?

Just then, a figure hurriedly rushed down from the mountains, moving very quickly. If Chu Chuyan hadn't quickly moved to the side, they would have bumped into each other.

“Sorry, sorry,” said the other figure, bowing hastily. She was a woman with delicate and refined features. Even though she was rushing, there was still an indescribable scholarly air to her.

“Huh? Miss Xie?” Chu Chuyan voiced her surprise when she saw who it was.

The other woman was stunned. When she raised her head and saw that it was Chu Chuyan, she was also surprised, replying, “Miss Chu?”

The one who had appeared was none other than Xie Daoyun. She had heard about Zu An's arrival at the academy, and was so happy that she sprinted out of her training study, but she hadn't expected to run into Chu Chuyan's arms.



"It's been a while; Miss Xie is still as elegant as ever," Chu Chuyan said, feeling happy to meet an old friend in a foreign place.

Previously, in Brightmoon City's social circles, the two couldn't really be considered confidantes, but they had been friends who admired each other's talents.

"Miss Chu's gracefulness is truly stunning," Xie Daoyun said with a sigh. Chu Chuyan had already been called a fairy by everyone in Brightmoon City. Now, that immortal demeanor was even more evident; she had an enviably aloof air.

The two of them exchanged conventional greetings, but then Chu Chuyan recalled how Xie Daoyun seemed to be in a hurry. That didn't seem to match her usual gentle and quiet nature, so Chu Chuyan couldn't help but ask with a smile, "What made Miss Xie run so quickly? Don't tell me you're rushing to see a lover?" She rarely made such jokes; it was just because she was in a good mood that she decided to say that.

Xie Daoyun's entire body trembled. Her face turned red at a visible rate. She replied, "What... What lover? Miss Chu has misunderstood."

Chu Chuyan smiled but didn't say anything. As someone who had experienced that herself, how could she not understand Xie Daoyun's reaction? Of course she didn't believe the response.

Xie Daoyun snapped out of her daze and explained, "I heard that my little brother got into trouble, so I rushed over to see what happened."

"So that was it. That Xie Xiu is the same as he was back in Brightmoon Academy," Chu Chuyan remarked. She couldn't help but smile. "There are quite a few women outside Hei Baizi's courtyard. All of them seem to be here for him. Some were even fighting against each other."

Xie Daoyun stomped her feet and said, "That brat has always caused those around him to worry. I'll go and take a look first. The two of us should meet up again if we have a chance in the future." Then, she lifted her dress and swiftly ran over.

As Chu Chuyan watched her break out into a small run, while still looking so graceful and refined, she wondered just who it was that had the good fortune of catching her eye.

Suddenly, her smile froze. She turned around and looked in Zu An's direction, but she quickly shook her head. Those two hadn't interacted much, so how could that be possible? She thought to herself, I shouldn't be overly suspicious like this over nothing.

...

Meanwhile, Zu An admitted defeat, saying, "Your respected self really is a saint in chess. You were able to come up with a solution so quickly."

On the other side, Hei Baizi stroked his beard proudly, but he still said humbly, "Sir Zu overpraises me. Compared to you, who invented this out of nothing, my skills aren't that special."

The two of them praised each other for a bit, then Hei Baizi gave the two youngsters some time. It was obvious that he was about to head out to boast for a while. Before he left, he even helped them chase away the female disciples huddled around the courtyard.

Xie Xiu took out all sorts of things to entertain Zu An, saying, "Brother Zu, if you hadn't come today, I might have really had a layer of skin shaved off!"

Zu An chuckled and asked, "What kind of heaven-angering thing did you do now?"

Xie Xiu became a bit gloomy as soon as he began explaining, "Ultimately, it's all because master had a distant relative, a niece. He insisted on sending me to meet her at night, and said she'd jump into a lake and drown herself if I didn't. I thought she was just saying that to scare me, but she really did it! Fortunately, there are many capable people in the academy, and they managed to save her life in the end. After the fact, master was naturally furious."

Zu An said seriously "Brother Xie, this is where I have to criticize you a bit. It's only natural for an outstanding man to have many pursuers, but you can't cause trouble only to abandon them in the end."

He thought back to Brightmoon Academy, where a female student had likewise attempted suicide when Xie Xiu left her; he also recalled the two women who had been fighting over Xie Xiu outside. He already saw Xie Xiu as the standard of an irresponsible playboy.

Xie Xiu immediately protested, "I've never caused trouble, and why would I abandon them?"

"Heh..." Zu An muttered. He knew Xie Xiu's ins and outs. This kid was nothing more than a playboy with affairs everywhere. Compared to him, Zu An was like a pure little virgin.

When he saw Zu An's expression, Xie Xiu knew the other man didn't believe him. He explained in a pained manner, "Brother Zu, even though I'm fickle in love, my eyes are still quite proud. My master's niece is really... Well, it's not easy to put into a few words. Either way, she isn't my type. I already refused her several times, but what could I do if she didn't listen? She just insisted on doing that kind of thing. It's only because of my reputation in the academy that everyone thought I abandoned her." He felt so wronged he seemed about to break out into tears.

Zu An recalled Hei Baizi's appearance. He couldn't help but smile.

"If you weren't always seducing women in the academy day after day, why would you have a bad reputation?" Xie Daoyun suddenly chimed in. Even though she was upset, her voice was still extremely delicate and gentle. It was easy to picture a refined and scholarly woman just from her voice alone.

"Miss Xie," Zu An said, nodding toward Xie Daoyun.

Xie Daoyun blushed a bit. She sweetly replied, "Big brother Zu."

Xie Xiu couldn't help but become depressed. He replied, "Isn't Zu An the same? He has so many women, so why aren't you scolding him?"

"He's the same as you?" Xie Daoyun harrumphed. "He treats others sincerely and has never played with their feelings. There's even less of a chance of him doing something like easily abandoning them."

Xie Xiu was stunned, saying, "I properly end each of my relationships before starting another one, and yet I'm worse than him who has his feet on several different boats at the same time?"

Zu An almost choked on his tea. He retorted, "Xiu'er, this is where you're not being sincere. I was consoling you just a moment ago."

Xie Daoyun ground her knuckles against her little brother's head, saying, "Don't try and make your stunts seem so great. Also, have you not seen how outstanding the women at big brother Zu's side are? Do you think they're all so stupid that they would be deceived so easily? You'd better not be led astray by big brother Zu."

Xie Xiu felt really attacked. He protested, "Sis, whose big sister are you really?"

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Meanwhile, at the peak of the rear mountain, Chu Chuyan looked at the painting on the wall curiously. However, she quickly withdrew her gaze as she said, "Libationer senior, my sect told me to bring you a message saying that they agree to what was discussed back then. They will appear at the designated place at the designated time."

### **Chapter 1566: News of Death**

Xie Daoyun quickly began grumbling to Zu An about her little brother's womanizing. She pointed at the assortment of gifts on the table, saying, "Look, all of these are from the academy's female disciples. That's not all; there are also things to wear and use, which come from those women."

Zu An couldn't help but chuckle, replying, "What's so bad about that? Getting gifts is better than not having anyone who would give you gifts." He thought, These gifts are all pretty precious. Those female students really are liberal with money...

"Yeah, this just shows how awesome your little brother is!" Xie Xiu exclaimed, feeling proud when he heard someone supporting him.

"Do you think they're treating you well for nothing? They all desire your body," Xie Daoyun said in an intimidating tone.

Xie Xiu grumbled, "It's hard to say who wants whom. Either way, it's not as if I'm losing out on anything."

Xie Daoyun felt so annoyed she grabbed his ears, retorting, "My Xie clan has always been strict with our education and never permitted our people to take advantage of others. How did we end up producing someone like you?"

"I treat every single relationship seriously; we mutually consent. What do you mean by taking advantage of others?" Xie Xiu protested, sounding a bit upset, as if his romantic affairs were being slandered.

"Then why did you abandon them?" Xie Daoyun retorted, seemingly taking it to heart.

"I'm someone who's very dedicated to love. If I don't love them, I won't waste time deceiving them. Is there something wrong with that?" Xie Xiu replied with an innocent expression

Zu An could tell that Xie Xiu wasn't just messing around, but rather that he actually believed it. Still, such behavior really was rather irresponsible. He wanted to say something, but when he thought about how he was also a playboy, he really felt a bit guilty...

“Won’t waste time? What you’re doing is just getting bored with old things!” Xie Daoyun exclaimed. As a woman, Xie Daoyun was quite sensitive toward the topic. She was so upset she started lecturing her little brother again.

Zu An finally stopped the siblings from arguing. Xie Daoyun was a bit embarrassed, saying, “I’ve made a fool of myself in front of big brother Zu.”

“There’s nothing like that. On the contrary, I feel as if I’ve returned to Brightmoon City. It’s a sense of reuniting with friends from my hometown,” Zu An said with a smile.

Xie Xiu immediately felt much better when he heard that. As expected, it’s still men who understand other men best!

After they chatted for a while longer, Xie Xiu felt a bit curious about what was happening on the Fiend races’ side. He asked, “Big brother Zu, I heard that you made a huge contribution on the Fiend races’ side. Can you tell us more about that side? Do they really eat people?”

Xie Daoyun was full of curiosity too. She had only learned about that side from books ever since she was little. Neither of the siblings had ever been to the Fiend races’ territory themselves.

Zu An couldn’t help but chuckle, saying, “They’re not that scary...” Then, he began to tell them about the Fiend races’ local customs and living conditions. The two siblings clicked their tongues in wonder.

“Right, I came back with a special gift this time. It should suit you quite well,” Zu An said, taking out the Exotic Witchsand from his Brilliant Glass Bead. He had obtained it from the Fiend King Court’s Jade Garden.

“Exotic Witchsand?” Xie Daoyun remarked, recognizing what it was before Zu An even introduced it. She was so excited her entire body was shaking. “This item can be used to create the legendary forbidden rune formations! Even master only used it in the past, but doesn’t have any left. He’s been searching all this time, and yet never found any!”

Such a thing would be precious for other cultivators, but it didn’t have much use for Zu An. However, for rune cultivators, it was equivalent to a divine item. That was why Xie Daoyun couldn’t believe it was real.

After her initial shock, Xie Daoyun quickly refused, saying, “Big brother Zu, this item is too precious! I can’t take it.”

Zu An pulled her hand over and placed it into her hands, replying, “If not for the protection talisman you gave me, I would already have lost my life. Compared to saving my life, this Exotic Witchsand is nothing.”

Xie Daoyun instinctively pulled back her hand when they made contact. However, after she pulled her hand back, she couldn’t really continue her protests. Her elegant face immediately turned red as she said, “My protection talisman wasn’t that amazing at all... But thank you, big brother Zu.”

Zu An let go, feeling satisfied when he saw her take it.

Xie Daoyun pursed her lips. At that moment, she looked very conflicted. She seemed happy, but also worried.

Xie Xiu suddenly remarked in a strange tone, "Who said just a moment ago that gifts were only given because someone wanted your body?"

"Do you want to die?!" Xie Daoyun cried out, feeling ashamed. She ran over to beat him up.

Xie Xiu dodged while reaching his hand out to Zu An, asking, "Brother Zu, what about my gift?"

Zu An glanced at the mountain of gifts on the side. He smiled and replied, "You already have so many women to give you gifts, so there's no need for me to go through the trouble."

Xie Xiu quickly cried out, "Brother Zu, you really are the type to neglect friends for love!"

Zu An quietly stuck out his foot, and Xie Xiu lost his center of balance, falling into Xie Daoyun's clutches. He was disciplined on the spot. The entire room was filled with cheerful laughter and chatter.

"What are you all chatting so happily about?" someone asked curiously just then. It turned out that Chu Chuyan had returned.

Xie Daoyun stopped beating up her little brother, recovering her usual wise, virtuous, and ladylike demeanor. She replied, "It's just a fight between siblings. We've made a joke out of ourselves in front of Miss Chu."

Xie Xiu couldn't help but ask with a sigh, "Miss Chu, just what did you eat to grow that big? Why do you seem more and more like an immortal now?"

Xie Daoyun shot her little brother a glare, snapping, "Watch your mouth." She knew about her little brother's playboy nature and was scared that he would go after Chu Chuyan.

Xie Xiu wrinkled his nose. He wasn't crazy enough to do something like that. Even though Chu Chuyan was pretty, she was a bit too outstanding. If someone so outstanding played his temperamental game of love, he would already be dead without knowing how he died. A woman at that level was someone he wouldn't even touch. Staying away would save him endless trouble.

Everyone else in the world was jealous of the beauties at Zu An's side, but only he sympathized with Zu An. Zu An didn't have much chance to play at all! Women of that caliber would definitely be far fewer in number than what he had.

Zu An was confused. Why do I sense pity in Xie Xiu's eyes when he looks at me? However, he didn't have the time to think about that, as his attention quickly returned to Chu Chuyan. He asked, "Did you finish what you have to do?"

Chu Chuyan voiced her confirmation. Thus, Zu An got up and said, "I need to see the libationer for something, so you should wait here for me."

Chu Chuyan replied in surprise, "But the libationer has already left."

"Huh?" Zu An exclaimed, stunned.

Chu Chuyan said, "I passed on what my sect entrusted to me. When he looked through it, he flew into the sky. I don't know where he went after that."

Zu An was immediately dejected. Once the libationer disappeared, who knew when he could be found again?

Chu Chuyan continued, "Right, I've always thought that little sister Zheng Dan was quite good, but because of her family, she's never had much room to do much. So, I asked the libationer to take her on as his disciple, but he said that he wouldn't receive any more disciples. Later, however, when he heard of Zheng Dan's past, he decided to place her under his first disciple." She paused for a moment, then looked at Xie Daoyun, saying, "At that time, Zheng Dan will be sisters under the same master as Miss Xie. I hope Miss Xie can look out for her."

"Huh?" Xie Daoyun replied, briefly distracted. Then, she eventually reacted, saying, "We used to be fellow students, and we came from the same place. Of course we need to watch out for each other."

She was a bit curious why Chu Chuyan would do so much for Zheng Dan. She had heard the rumors about Zheng Dan and big brother Zu before, though. Could it be that Zheng Dan had already received Miss Chu's recognition?

Sigh, Chu Chuyan's nature really is something else. I can't even muster any feeling of going against her.

Zu An was overjoyed by the unexpected good news, because he had wanted to seek out the libationer precisely to solve Zheng Dan's issue. With her aptitude and temperament, being neglected in the Sang clan was just too much of a waste. He hadn't expected Chu Chuyan to be on the same wavelength, thinking the same thing.

More importantly, that act meant she already accepted Zheng Dan's presence. He didn't have to worry as much about their relationship anymore.

"Right, what did you need to see the libationer for?" Chu Chuyan suddenly asked, curious.

"It's nothing, not important at all," Zu An replied with a big smile on his face.

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Meanwhile, in the Imperial Palace, the emperor received top-secret information from the Embroidery House. He replied with a grim expression, "Golden Token Seven [\[1\]](#) died?"

### **Chapter 1567: New Mission**

However, Zu An didn't know what was happening in the palace. He was really happy; after all, he had met his old friends, and Zheng Dan's cultivation issue was also solved. Chu Chuyan had even taken the initiative to solve it herself. Because his mood was good, he felt even happier chatting with the Xie duo.

They all began to recall various things that had happened in Brightmoon City, and also talked about the various things they ran into during their cultivation. The atmosphere became more and more enthusiastic.

Only Xie Daoyun seemed to have something on her mind. Even though she had a happy smile, no one noticed the lonely expression that appeared on her face from time to time.

When Zu An and the others left, the usually frivolous Xie Xiu suddenly became serious when he saw Xie Daoyun lost in thought. He said, "Big sis, stop staring already. Brother Zu is a good person, but he's

definitely not the best partner for a woman. You should just stop thinking about it, as it'll just make you feel worse."

His big sister was so outstanding, and her family background was so good too. With such a strong relationship with the academy, normally, she would have the qualifications to be the main wife of a great clan. However, she continued to stick around Zu An, even though all of the women around him were ridiculously outstanding. Was his sister really going to become a concubine?

Xie Daoyun immediately jumped like a startled rabbit. Her face turned entirely red with embarrassment as she shot back, "Who said I like him? Damn kid, look at all of the things you're doing! And yet you still have the nerve to lecture someone else?"

She grabbed his ears and twisted them, making Xie Xiu cry out in pain. He really wondered where his big sister had practiced the move; it was so fast and accurate that he couldn't even avoid it at all.

...

Meanwhile, after Zu An left, he visited Shen Xuzi and several other people he knew. Then, he left the academy.

On the way back, Chu Chuyan said with a sigh of admiration, "Sigh, I've discovered that I really don't understand you at all. I didn't expect you to actually have so much knowledge. Even those sirs from the academy have to consult you."

Zu An replied with a smile, "Do you feel as if you've picked up treasure?"

"Exactly, I've picked up a treasure. It seems my luck is pretty good," Chu Chuyan said, feeling really happy knowing that he had received the respect of the Royal Academy's people. Her usually ice-cold face now had a smile.

Zu An was stunned. He couldn't help but say with a sigh of admiration, "Your smile really is beautiful."

A blush appeared on Chu Chuyan's face as she replied, "Then you should make me smile more. You'd better not make me cry."

Zu An was stunned. He couldn't help but feel as if she were referring to something.

While he was trying to figure out what it was, Chu Chuyan quickly took the initiative to grab him with her small, ice-cold hand. She asked him some more about what he had experienced on the Fiend races' side.

The two of them unknowingly arrived at the Sang manor. They paid the wounded Sang Hong a visit, then told him that Zheng Dan was permitted to study under Great Disciple Yan Xiang by the libationer.

The news surprised everyone in the Sang manor. Although Sang Hong was the Imperial Envoy and he had previously worked in the Imperial Secretariat, both his prestige and cultivation were far beneath Yan Xiang's.

Yan Xiang was the libationer's first disciple. His cultivation was rumored to be number one among the libationer's disciples, and his achievements in rune formations were even more outstanding. Many of the rune formations in the empire's armies, official manors, and even the court itself came from him. If

one could become his disciple, then it was easy to imagine just how brilliant one's future prospects would be.

Zheng Dan couldn't help but give Chu Chuyan a hug. She was practically choking with emotion as she said, "Big sis, thank you."

When she heard that Xie Daoyun could study under Yan Xiang, she had felt incredibly jealous. She had never thought that her aptitude was at all inferior to anyone else's, but because she came from a merchant company, her background was far inferior to that of a great clan such as the Xie clan. Between that and the fact that she had married into the Sang clan, but then something had happened to the Sang clan and her husband had died before she even got married properly, she had been left incredibly discouraged. How could she have anticipated that she would get the chance to improve her cultivation again?

When she saw the two of them so close, Sang Qien couldn't help but feel a bit of envy. She thought that with Chu Chuyan's outstanding decisions, just that single act alone had already won over her sister-in-law's favor. On the other hand, she had worked so hard for so long to form an alliance with her sister-in-law, and yet the effects might not have been as good.

Still, Sang Qien quickly laughed to herself. It wasn't as if Chu Chuyan didn't know about her relationship with Zu An, so there was no way this was to ruin their relationship. She was really just complaining pettily.

Chu Chuyan couldn't handle Zheng Dan's enthusiasm. She struggled free from Zheng Dan's arms a bit before saying, "Actually, I'm not the only one who's happy. Ah Zu has always been concerned about your future too. If I hadn't said anything today, he would probably have found a way to visit the libationer. Right, Ah Zu?"

Zu An chuckled in embarrassment. He hadn't expected his thoughts to have been completely exposed. Still, while Chu Chuyan was just cold-natured, she definitely wasn't stupid. She knew many things very clearly.

Now, it was Zheng Dan who felt a bit embarrassed. She was still the Sang clan's daughter-in-law, after all. Even though Zu An had already been well integrated into the Sang clan, it still felt a bit strange doing this right in front of Sang Hong.

"We should find another day to bring you to the academy to formally carry out the procedure. Anyway, Xie Daoyun is your senior sister and we all know each other. She'll take care of you," Zu An said to Zheng Dan.

Zheng Dan voiced her agreement, then gave Sang Hong an inquiring look.

Sang Hong felt at ease inside. This daughter-in-law of his really was clever and loyal, still giving him face even in such a situation. As such, he chuckled and said, "This is an incredibly joyous matter, so why would I stop you? When the time comes, this old one will go with you to pay Sir Yan a visit. I've mingled in the capital for so many years. Even though I have many enemies, I've still left behind something of a just image. I've also exchanged some letters with Sir Yan in the past, so there is a bit of friendship there. Spending some time reminiscing with him about the past will be a good thing."



Zheng Dan sighed in relief. If it were just the libationer's words, she didn't know whether Yan Xiang would really treat a disciple who was suddenly forced into his hands with that much care. But with that level of relationship, he would definitely take better care of her.

Chu Chuyan initially wanted to leave with Zu An and spend time alone with him, but the Sang clan didn't let them go at all. They kept the two behind to hold an evening banquet as gratitude. The two of them couldn't refuse, so they stayed behind. By the time they returned, it was already dark.

"Ah Zu, is there something wrong with Miss Sang's body?" Chu Chuyan asked, recalling how Sang Qien had to get up several times, and seemed to have symptoms of nausea. She couldn't help but say, "If not for the fact that she hasn't gotten married yet, I would have thought that she was pregnant."

Zu An began sweating. How was he supposed to explain that? He couldn't just say 'yes, we have a child', right? If he did that, the sweet and warm atmosphere they had built over the past few days would instantly turn into hell on earth.

"Maybe it was because something happened to Sang Hong recently, causing her to get sick from fright," Zu An said ambiguously, then changed the topic.

Fortunately, Chu Chuyan didn't think too much about it. The two finished washing up, and quickly arrived at their own time of bliss.

Still, Chu Chuyan was a bit embarrassed. Even though the two of them had already experienced getting married, early on, they had only been husband and wife in name. Later, when their affection grew deeper, they had been apart longer than they were together. Whenever the two of them were passionate with each other, if they weren't treating injuries, they had been in the process of it. They had never spent their time as proper lovers like this before. Two days prior, they had unknowingly fallen asleep while admiring the moon, but today, there was no escaping it.

Chu Chuyan was like a young maiden, huddled under the covers against the corner of the wall. Her heart was pounding. When he saw her shy appearance, Zu An couldn't help but chuckle. He quickly and efficiently dove under the covers.

"Wait, behave yourself!" Chu Chuyan cried, although her voice was no longer as cold as before. There was now a hint of worldliness in it.

However, Zu An didn't reply. His mouth wasn't free enough to do anything else.

When the sun shone from high up, even icebergs would begin to melt. What followed was like immortal music from above the clouds. The two completely returned to the level of familiarity they had once had with each other.

"You're still so warm~" Zu An couldn't help but say with a sigh.

Chu Chuyan was already beside herself with embarrassment. She playfully hit the man on her body, which brought about another round of violent storms.

...

In the following few days, several changes took place in the capital. King Qi was issued a diplomatic note from the court to return to his fiefdom, but the day he was supposed to leave, he suddenly grew ill.

With his cultivation, no one believed he would catch a cold or something like that. However, soon afterward, news emerged that something had happened with his cultivation method, creating a risk of deviation. He had even fainted mysteriously several times.

Thus, it seemed he couldn't leave for the time being, although that could only be delayed temporarily. Of course, King Qi could no longer appear in the court session, and his faction was no longer the way it had been before. As such, people all thought his collapse was at hand.

That same day, Zu An was summoned into the Imperial Palace. Zhao Han went right to the point, saying, "This emperor needs you to leave the capital and take care of something."

### **Chapter 1568 – Violet Mountain**

Zu An became a bit dejected. He had constantly been on the brink of life and death for a long time, but now that he finally had some leisure time to spend with Chuyan, this guy was making him do something again! Not even donkeys on a production team would be used to that extent!

"Can I refuse?" Zu An asked, thinking to himself that not a single task the emperor had made him do had ever been easy; naturally, he wasn't all that willing.

Zhao Han was stunned. He had never expected Zu An to give such a reply. Normally, even the most important ministers wouldn't dare to show the slightest bit of arrogance around him. When had they ever negotiated with him before? He thought, This kid has gotten much braver recently!

"You cannot!" he replied.

You have successfully trolled Zhao Han for +244 +244 +244...

Still, the emperor did need Zu An to work for him, so he didn't act violently. Instead, he said directly, "Golden Token Seven, who was in charge of Yi Commandery's affairs, suddenly died. Recently, Zhuxie Chixin has not been around, and the other Golden Token Envoys have their own responsibilities to take care of. You are to go and investigate what happened."

Zu An immediately received several key pieces of information from the explanation. So Zhuxie Chixin wasn't in the capital, as expected! He wondered what Zhuxie Chixin had to do that prevented him from coming back for so long.

Apart from that, the other Golden Token Envoys were probably scattered throughout the world, managing their respective regions. They were all up to their necks in work and not as free as he was.

Huh? Wait, why does the name Golden Token Seven sound so familiar?

He finally remembered who it was. Previously, the Imperial Envoy fleet had passed by King Yan's fiefdom on their way to Cloudcenter Commandery. The Golden Token Envoy there had contacted him, and the two had even fought together. At the time, Golden Token Seven had been deeply worried. Didn't that mean what he found might very well have been real, and that a mistake had ended up getting him silenced?

In that instant, many thoughts passed through Zu An's mind, but he didn't report them to the emperor. Whether he was loyal to the emperor or not, it was best not to talk about such unconfirmed suspicions and give others false hope. Otherwise, if something happened later, it could easily create grievances.

“Alright,” Zu An agreed.

The first reason was that he had fought side by side with Golden Token Seven before and they could barely be considered friends, so he couldn't just watch without doing anything. The second reason was that he also wanted to see just what was going on in the dark behind the scenes. If he could find the many powers that resisted the emperor, it could be useful to get into contact with them.

The emperor then said, “Also, there is another thing. There is a Violet Mountain in Yi Commandery. The court will carry out a great Fengshan ceremony there soon. You should go there and root out any potential trouble ahead of time.”

Yi Commandery was where King Yan's fiefdom was. Meanwhile, Violet Mountain was the most famous mountain in Yi Commandery, perhaps even the entire empire. Whenever the sun rose from the east, a layer of violet covered the mountain peak, bringing to mind the common sayings about 'violet energy'. That was how it had received its name.

People all thought the mountain hid a great treasure. But even after tens of thousands of years, countless capable individuals hadn't found anything after searching the mountain. In the end, people all tacitly agreed that there was nothing special about the mountain and that it was just a vestige left behind by the heavens.

Still, successive generations of the royal family had continued to produce all manner of literature on it, making its status climb higher and higher. That was why there was no better choice for the Fengshan ceremony.

Zu An had heard of those things before, but as a transmigrator, he didn't have as much of the adoration that most natives of this world felt. What he was more concerned with right now was whether Zhao Han was being serious. During the morning court session, all of his subjects had proposed that he carry out the Fengshan ceremony. At the time, Zhao Han had humbly refused it, and yet he was already having people prepare for it immediately afterward.

“That might be beyond my individual capability,” Zu An said, feeling a bit reluctant. He was supposed to investigate Golden Token Seven's death, and he was also in charge of the Fengshan Ceremony's security? That was just a difficult and unrewarding situation.

Zhao Han tossed him a command token, saying, “All of King Yan's Embroidered Envoys will be at your command. Furthermore, you can use this token to order the local officials' cooperation. However, the local officials belong to King Yan, so you have to know where to draw the line. Do not order them around willfully.”

“Understood,” Zu An replied, fiddling with the command tile in his hands. Things will be much easier with this.

When he saw Zhao Han fall silent, Zu An knew it was a sign to leave. He bowed, then asked to withdraw. However, just as he reached the door, he was suddenly stopped.

Zhao Han remarked, “I've heard that you've been visiting the Empress frequently recently?”

Zu An's heart immediately shot up to his throat. Why does it always have to be that one thing you're worried about that has to freaking happen?!

Still, he was someone who had gone through his fair share of dangerous experiences, so he quickly replied, "That's correct. Her highness summoned me to ask me about what happened in the Unknown Region."

Zhao Han frowned, but he couldn't find any problems with the response. Previously, he had just questioned Zu An about the latter's interaction with the crown princess. Any normal person would definitely feel guilt. If they had a guilty conscience, there was no way they would approach the Empress again. With that, he felt more reassured; he said, "Acknowledged. You can leave."

When Zu An emerged from the Imperial Palace, he secretly wiped his sweat. The Empress really is a dangerous person! Sure, it is fun, but it's really easy to lose your life in the process...

Not long after he left the Imperial Study, two imperial guards approached from a distance, calling out, "Sir Zu, Sir Zu~"

When he looked at them, he saw that it was Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun. Zu An laughed and exclaimed, "Wow, what a coincidence!"

The two of them replied with a scowl, "What do you mean, a coincidence? We came all the way here to wait for sir."

Zu An was stunned. He pointed at the Eastern Palace, asking, "You were looking for me over there?"

The two of them voiced their agreement. Then, Piao Duandiao moved over to Zu An's side and quietly said, "Recently, the crown princess' temper hasn't been too good. Sir Zu needs to be careful."

Jiao Sigun added quietly, "That maid Rong Mo said a lot of bad things about you. If you don't go back and apologize, there might be a lot of trouble."

Zu An felt warm inside. The two of them really treated him as their friend, which was why they spoke so honestly. After all, if their words were overheard by anyone else, both of them would be done for in the Eastern Palace.

Zu An said with a smile, "It's fine. They'll sort themselves out as long as I pay the Eastern Palace a visit."

Both of the guards expressed their suspicion about the matter. However, Zu An didn't bother explaining himself. He followed the two of them to the Eastern Palace.

...

Zu An first paid the master of the Eastern Palace, the crown prince, a visit. That fatty only knew how to play all day, so Zu An was chased away quickly, as if his presence would take away from playtime.

Zu An thought to himself that ever since he had gotten rid of the emperor's split soul inside of the crown prince, the latter seemed to have become even more stupid than before. Soon afterward, however, he entered Bi Linglong's office.

Bi Linglong was sitting in front of an office table, her back perfectly straight. Her posture was extremely proper, as if she were an imperial mother overseeing the world. But upon closer inspection, Zu An could sense that she was slacking off a bit too. It seemed as if she couldn't handle the weight of her chest and was secretly using the desk to support herself...

Bi Linglong seemed to not have seen Zu An at all as she focused on the documents in her hands. Zu An didn't mind, so he continued to quietly watch her just like that.

After a long time passed, a hint of redness appeared on Bi Linglong's neck. It was obvious that she couldn't stand his scorching gaze anymore.

"Sir Zu really is quite the busy official. It's been such a long time already. It seems we have to invite you before you show your face here," Bi Linglong said; she was clearly upset and still didn't look at him. The pen in her hand continued to sort out the paperwork in front of her.

Zu An sighed and said, "I came here to say goodbye to you."

Bi Linglong was startled. The pen in her hand trembled, splattering ink all over the document. She suddenly raised her head to look at him, no longer able to keep her composure.

### **Chapter 1569 – Slipped**

When she heard the seriousness in Zu An's voice, Bi Linglong couldn't be bothered to maintain her anger. She quickly asked nervously, "What happened?"

"I was ordered to go on a trip to Yi Commandery by his majesty..." Zu An explained the mission Zhao Han had just given him in detail.

This was the first time Bi Linglong had received news of the situation. Her expression changed slightly when she heard the explanation. Seeming extremely unhappy, she furrowed her brows and muttered, "You just came back, and yet you're already being sent to Yi Commandery?"

In that instant, Zu An felt warm inside. He could tell that she treated him as one of her own from her tone.

Bi Linglong's resentment also vanished into thin air. When she heard Zu An share everything about his mission without hiding anything, it indicated to her that they were truly close. She suddenly felt like she had no reason to get so angry at him.

"What can I do? It's my duty," Zu An said with a sigh.

Bi Linglong naturally knew that it wasn't really because of his duty, but because the emperor was so powerful they didn't have any way of going against him. When she thought of that, she said with a sigh, "It's really unfair for you. You have to be careful along the way. I'll wait for you to come back here."

When he heard her reveal her true feelings, Zu An couldn't help but walk over and wrap his arms around her thin waist. Then, under her shocked gaze, he kissed her. Bi Linglong's body trembled. She instinctively wanted to push him away, but he didn't move at all. Soon afterward, his familiar aura made her entire body gradually soften.

The two of them continued to kiss each other for a while just like that. Bi Linglong eventually got a chance to catch a breather, saying, "You really are daring. The crown prince is still outside..."

"So what?" Zu An replied, kissing her even more passionately when he heard her warning.

Bi Linglong's waist bent like a willow tree. Her body was pushed back until it pressed against her desk. When she felt a familiar pressure, her entire face grew red as she protested, "We'll be done for if his majesty finds out about what we're doing!"

She couldn't be bothered to deal with that stupid crown prince anymore, but she couldn't ignore the emperor. He had earth immortal rank cultivation. If his divine senses swept out, not a single area of the Imperial Palace could escape his detection.

"Don't worry. He doesn't have the energy to bother with these things right now," Zu An said, feeling confident in his claim. If Zhao Han were always monitoring the palace, he and the empress would already have been dead a long time ago.

Bi Linglong didn't know about that, and the emperor's power left an impression that was hard to erase within her. However, now that she was being embraced by her sweetheart, her entire body grew soft. She didn't have any strength to resist. As such, she yielded after making a show of resistance. The two returned to their most intimate moment in the secret dungeon.

Because she was worried that they would be found out by the emperor and the servants, or perhaps even the crown prince outside, Bi Linglong was more sensitive than usual. Zu An experienced it firsthand and felt as if he were constantly enveloped in trembling waves. The two of them soon reached a state where their bodies and souls connected. The two of them had never done it like this before, nor had it ever felt so wonderful.

After they hugged each other for a long time, Bi Linglong finally came to her senses. She pushed Zu An away and lowered her dress. She carefully sorted out the wrinkles on it and said with a trembling voice, "You annoying man, you only know how to bully others every time."

"Are you still upset?" Zu An replied. When he saw the beautiful complexion that remained on her face after the wonderful time they shared, he felt a sense of tenderness.

"Who would be upset at you?" Bi Linglong replied, feeling a bit guilty. When she looked at his ambiguous smile, she could only protest playfully, "Alright, alright. It's your fault for only keeping Chu Chuyan company and ignoring me this whole time."

Zu An was between laughter and tears as he said, "She is my wife. Who would I stay with, if not with her after being apart for so long?"

"She clearly divorced you already; what do you mean she's your wife?" Bi Linglong replied somewhat unhappily. "Then what am I to you?"

She regretted it as soon as those words left her mouth. Then, she felt a bit alone and dejected. She knew that their relationship could never be known to the world, which made her feel extremely frustrated.

Just then, Rong Mo called out from outside, "Crown princess, Sir Jiang is outside and requests an audience." It was clear that as Bi Linglong's personal maid, she knew that meeting with a man alone in private for so long wasn't reasonable. As such, she found a pretext to remind Bi Linglong.

Bi Linglong also realized that. She sorted out her clothing again, and after making sure that there was nothing out of place, she called out loudly, "Let Sir Jiang in."

Soon afterward, a handsome young man walked in and said, "I greet the crown princess." He quickly froze, because he discovered that the crown princess' complexion was much better than before. However, he quickly caught himself and said to Zu An, "Greetings, Sir Zu."

Zu An had seen this person before. He was the crown prince's aide-de-camp, Jiang Gui. Whenever the crown prince went on a trip, he would be at the very front of the fleet. He was one of the Eastern Palace's most important officials.

To some extent, he was an acquaintance. He was the son of Jiang Boyang's third son, Jiang San. His mother was a daughter of the Yu clan, so he was actually a relative of Yu Yanluo. Apart from that, Jiang Luofu was Jiang Boyang's daughter, so she was Jiang Gui's aunt.

In the Great Zhou Dynasty, apart from the Yu clan, the Jiang clan was probably the clan most known for its attractiveness. Every single son and daughter was beautiful and handsome.

On top of that, Jiang Gui had inherited both the strengths of the Jiang clan and the Yu clan. Ever since he was little, he had been known as the capital's most handsome man... until Zu An entered the capital. Only then was his title seized. He was really unhappy about that and felt that Zu An's appearance wasn't that much better than his own, and Zu An's cultivation didn't seem all that much stronger either. Jiang Gui's only weakness was that he came from a distinguished clan, which meant that everything had gone too smoothly for him and he had never experienced too many setbacks. As such, he'd never gotten many opportunities to show off.

Of course, as the son of a distinguished clan, he had his own pride and self-restraint. Even though he didn't feel great inside, it wasn't to the point that he would loathe Zu An. It was just that he felt a sense of competition.

However, from Zu An's perspective, between Jiang Gui's relationship to Yu Yanluo and Jiang Luofu, this guy was just like his own nephew, and not a competitor at all. He gave the other man a smile, then looked for an opportunity to say goodbye to Bi Linglong.

Bi Linglong felt a bit 'guilty', so she was more than happy for him to leave earlier. She naturally permitted it.

When he saw that, Jiang Gui was a bit surprised. People all said that Zu An was an important person to the crown princess, but from the looks of it, their relationship didn't seem to be that good. He suddenly felt more spirited when he thought of that. He immediately told Bi Linglong the reason for his meeting, and explained the solutions he proposed in a clear and logical manner. He just needed Bi Linglong to choose one of them.

Even though Bi Linglong was the crown princess, she was young and beautiful. Furthermore, her husband, the crown prince, was clearly an idiot. As such, many young and outstanding men felt an indescribable sense of favor and fantasy about her. Still, it wasn't to the point where they would have any bad thoughts.

However, it was normal for young men to feel admiration. If the crown princess merely showed them a smile, they would already feel happy for a long time. That was also why the crown princess' prestige was so high. With such a group of energetic young talents to support her, how could her reputation not be good?

Jiang Gui looked at the crown princess with great expectation. He figured that he had prepared really well, so this time, she would definitely have a whole new level of respect for him.

Look, there's a slight smile that she can't even hold back on the corner of her lips. She clearly feels admiration toward my competence!

Unfortunately, he had no idea that Bi Linglong was busy thinking about what had happened before he entered. It was as if she were in a dreamland. She wasn't paying him any attention.

...

After Zu An left the Eastern Palace, he found a place to change his outfit before heading to the Embroidery House. He had to investigate just what had happened to Golden Token Seven.

When they saw him enter, Xiao Jianren, Dai Seventh, and Chen Eighth all rushed out to welcome him. It was natural for them to feel excited, because their superior really was hard to get a hold of. Their colleagues were all dying from work, while they were dying from boredom.

It wasn't really that big of a deal to not have work, but the Embroidery House looked at how much one did to decide on rewards and promotions. As such, doing nothing carried its own problems.

Zu An gave them a rough explanation of his new task. He asked Xiao Jianren where he would have to go to get the corresponding information about Golden Token Seven.

Sure enough, as he knew all of the Embroidery House, Xiao Jianren quickly came up with an answer. He brought Zu An to the place where the Embroidery House's most confidential information was kept.

The guards there stopped Dai Seventh and Chen Eighth, making them feel a bit unhappy.

Xiao Jianren proudly said, "This is a place where senior officers have conversations. Lower-level soldiers like you two should just wait off to one side."

Dai Seventh and Chen Eighth had helpless expressions, but they knew that the Embroidery House cared a lot about hierarchy. They could only wait outside for the other two.

...

Soon afterward, under the guidance of Xiao Jianren, Zu An obtained the corresponding case file. When it came to information surrounding Golden Token Seven, there was only an asterisk that said that he was male.

Zu An thought, You don't say. After fighting side by side with Golden Token Seven, he naturally knew the other person was male.

As if seeing through his displeasure, Xiao Jianren said, "The eleven Golden Token Envoys are the best hidden individuals in the Embroidery House. It's rumored that apart from Zhuxie Chixin and his majesty himself, no third person knows about them."

Then, he added, "If one day an accident befalls Sir Eleven and you perish, the information the other Golden Token Envoys will have about you will only be about the same."



Zu An frowned. This guy really had a way with words... No wonder he hadn't gotten that far in the Embroidered Envoy despite being so talented.

Fortunately, Xiao Jianren lived up to expectations. With his help, Zu An was able to collect the corresponding file about Golden Token Seven's death. It recorded that one day, Golden Token Seven had passed by a pool, and then he slipped and fell in the water. He had died by drowning.

Zu An was completely stunned. A glorious Golden Token Envoy had fallen into water and drowned?

### **Chapter 1570 – Ulterior Motive**

"This cause does seem a bit ridiculous, but it's unlikely to be false," Xiao Jianren said, pointing at the scroll and continuing, "This is an independent investigation report issued by the Embroidered Envoy in Yan State. It matches what the local officials say as well."

"How could a Golden Token Envoy just drown?" Zu An wondered. He still didn't believe that result, let alone that it could happen to Golden Token Seven, whom he had met before.

"If it's false, that means either the Embroidered Envoy system has been compromised, or the local authorities have colluded..." Halfway through his sentence, Xiao Jianren's expression grew grave. He continued, "If that really is the truth, that is just too terrifying."

As someone from the Embroidered Envoy system, he understood the Embroidered Envoy very well. Those who worked in their field didn't need to have the greatest ability, but loyalty was number one. They were known to be the ones least likely to betray the empire. If all of the Embroidered Envoys in Yan State were colluding with the local authorities, it went without saying what that implied.

"It might not be that bad," Zu An said. When he saw how Xiao Jianren looked as if he were facing a great enemy, he laughed and continued, "I interacted with Golden Token Seven last time in Yi Commandery. If there had been something wrong with the local Embroidered Envoys, he would definitely have asked me for help."

Xiao Jianren sighed in relief and said, "That's good then."

If there really were something wrong with all of the Embroidered Envoys in Yan State, that would be world-shaking.

Zu An then said, "If most of the Embroidered Envoys in Yan State are still dependable, Golden Token Seven's death becomes quite interesting."

Xiao Jianren nodded. He was someone who had climbed up from the lowest level, and he had much more experience in dealing with cases than Zu An. He quickly analyzed the details and said, "There are several possibilities. The first is that Golden Token Seven didn't actually die from drowning, but he was just made to look as if he did. However, there were so many Embroidered Envoys there, so there's no way they couldn't detect his cause of death. So, that possibility isn't very likely."

Zu An rolled his eyes and replied, "Aren't you just stating the obvious there?"

Xiao Jianren then said, "Of course not. There's quite a bit of room for foul play here. For example, a Golden Token Envoy could be knocked unconscious first, or have his movement restricted, before being thrown into the water. If that were investigated, his cause of death would be drowning. As for the drug

that might have rendered him unconscious, it could have disappeared as time went on, or the individuals involved could have covered it up quite easily. That would be much easier than changing something like the cause of death.”

Zu An felt admiration as he listened. As expected, only a veteran like Xiao Jianren would know the reasoning behind the case. He asked, “So you’re implying that there are still some Embroidered Envoys who have betrayed us in Yan State?”

Xiao Jianren nodded and said, “If my suspicions are right, there should be. There shouldn’t be too many of them, but their statuses definitely can’t be low. Otherwise, it would have been hard to cover all of these things up.”

Just then, he suddenly cried out in surprise, exclaiming, “Wait! Why does this Blackwater Pool look a bit familiar?”

Xiao Jianren suddenly ran over to the archive room in a hurry. Then, he returned with a stack of files. After flipping through them, he said, “It is the one I remembered after all! Ningzhi County’s Three Rivers Village, located south of Yi Commandery, has a Blackwater Pool. Those who pass by occasionally go missing and drown, with quite a few cultivators among them. The local officials have never been able to find out the reason why, causing all kinds of strange legends to come from this place.”

“Even we couldn’t find out the reason?” Zu An asked, stunned. “Is there some kind of monster hiding there?”

Xiao Jianren shook his head and said, “Some Embroidered Envoys, as well as people from the academy, were invited to investigate the area. Their searches all resulted in the conclusion that it was just a normal pool, and that it was just a bit deeper than usual at most. They didn’t notice anything strange. Later, they found some local rogues who had committed bad deeds because of money, and those people seemed to have made up all sorts of strange rumors to escape from their crimes. From then on, that situation was just ignored.”

Zu An said seriously, “Either way, a normal cultivator could be done in by ordinary people, but that’s impossible for a Golden Token Envoy.”

“Unfortunately, there’s just not enough information. We have to investigate the scene of the crime to know more,” Xiao Jianren said. He flipped through the file, but couldn’t find any new information.

Zu An said, “Then you should spend a few days collecting the corresponding material. When the time comes, you’ll come with me on a trip to Yi Commandery.”

“Understood!” Xiao Jianren replied, his eyes lighting up. He finally had a mission! He was so bored that he had almost started growing mold.

When he left the Embroidery House, Zu An changed his clothes. He was just about to leave the Imperial Palace when Little Zhuo sought him out, saying, “Sir Zu, her highness is calling you over.”

Zu An was a bit shocked. This empress really was daring! The emperor was already investigating them, and yet she still kept inviting him. He wanted to refuse at first, but after thinking about it for a bit, he figured that seeing as he was about to leave the capital, this woman could start some trouble if he didn’t make things clear.

He realized that he couldn't really read the empress. She seemed to carry a strange madness deep within her, to the point that he wouldn't be surprised no matter what he ended up hearing about her.

...

Soon after, Little Zhuo arrived in front of the empress' chambers. He invited Zu An inside, but remained outside to guard the entrance.

Zu An nodded toward him with a smile. Along the way, he had discovered that this lesser eunuch seemed to be especially attentive toward him. Zu An came from a modern world, so he wouldn't look down on others the way the people of this world did. His attitude was naturally nicer than that of most others too.

When he entered the palace, he saw the empress dressed in white casual clothing, practicing her cultivation. Time hadn't left any traces on her body. Her abdomen was as smooth as a young lady's, and her body was soft and graceful. Rather than describing it as training, it looked more as if she were carrying out an elegant dance.

With Zu An's insight, he could tell that the empress was practicing a very profound martial skill. It was only because the empress' ki flow wasn't strong enough to support the complete display of this skill that she had to resort to a slower sequence of movements.

When she saw Zu An enter, the empress smiled. She gestured toward him and said, "Come over here and help me raise my leg."

Zu An had a strange expression. He walked next to her, and then under her guidance, he raised one of her calves until she was standing on a single leg. The other leg pointed straight toward the roof, her two legs forming a vertical line. Then, her arms slowly extended to either side, forming a cross. From the side, it suddenly became a bit hard to tell which limb was an arm and which one was a leg.

Zu An was quite shocked by her flexibility, but the empress suddenly sighed and said, "Sigh, I've still gotten old. I could do this without anyone's help in the past."

"Your highness is injured. Your meridians were damaged for so many years, so it's natural for you to experience some setbacks. However, it's clear that you're recovering quickly," Zu An said. He had only used a bit of strength to help her. It was still mainly because of her that she was able to achieve such a stance.

The empress turned to him and showed him a charming smile, saying, "This was largely thanks to your efforts."

Zu An felt himself tremble. This woman really is an alluring lady. Looking at the astonishing scene in front of him made it take quite a bit for him to calm down again. He asked, "Um... can your highness come down for now?"

The empress shook her head slightly and said, "My skill is a bit special and requires me to maintain this stance. I finally have some hope of recovering, so I can't be lazy."

There was nothing Zu An could do. He could only say, "Right, I came to tell your highness something. I'll need to leave the capital soon."

“Are you going to Violet Mountain?” the empress asked. However, she didn’t seem surprised at all.

Zu An asked in surprise, “Your highness already knew?”

After all, the emperor had just told him about that, and yet she already knew about it so quickly. He had still underestimated the power of the empress in this palace.

“It wasn’t too hard to guess. Zhao Han doesn’t have many people he can make use of at his side. There’s no one more suitable than you,” the empress said with a chuckle, but she turned serious again soon afterward. She said, “You need to be careful this time. This matter definitely isn’t as simple as you imagine it to be.”

Zu An was surprised, saying, “I hope your highness can give me some pointers.”

However, the empress simply smiled and didn’t reply to his request. She said, “You’ll leave soon, and we’ll be apart for a long time again. Why not use this chance to come and give me a bit more guidance? Lend my recovery a helping hand?”

Zu An had a strange expression. Why did he feel as if he had to sell his body to obtain intelligence. After a while, he asked, “How do I give you guidance?”

“Just like this. I’ve already prepared myself. This time, I want to see if I can use my old technique with your help,” the empress said. Her eyes had a soul-hooking allure to them.

When he saw the woman standing in a cross position, Zu An was briefly stunned.