

Insanity 171

Chapter 171: Inbred demonic nature

"What, father, you want me to solve the case?" The girl pointed to herself, her face in utter shock.

"Why, are you unwilling?" Tie Xue Leng smiled gently.

"No, no, of course I'm willing!" Tie Ruo Nan finally reacted, jumping in joy.

Tie Xue Leng nodded, sighing in a complex tone, "You aspire to walk the same path as me. These few years where you were by my side, you have been greatly influenced by me and learnt much. An eagle can only learn to fly by itself, only then can it truly grow up. Your father is old already, my injuries cannot be cured. I cannot continue being with you as you live your life, and as the newer generations replace the old, what happens next is up to you."

"Father... don't give up yet, isn't there still hope for treatment?" The young girl's voice trembled as she choked back tears.

"You and I both know that the chances are infinitely slim. People have to learn to face facts, Ruo Nan," Tie Xue Leng laughed, then turned towards Gu Yue Bo, "Don't worry Gu Yue clan leader, this daughter of mine has learnt at least 80% of my abilities. With my guidance along the way, she will not let your clan suffer any injustice."

"Of course, of course." Gu Yue Bo quickly cupped his fist, "Young heroines are on par with males; such an elegant disposition and the child of a hero, there is no reason for me to worry. Please come to the village and let us feast upon your arrival."

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The dishes filled the entire table, with the fragrance overwhelming the surroundings. Clear wine was poured out from the wine jar in a straight line into Tie Xue Leng's cup.

The wolf tide was just over, and Gu Yue village was in its toughest period. Large amounts of resources had been expended, causing a food shortage and lack of commodities. Many mortals would starve to death.

But even so, to welcome Tie Xue Leng, Gu Yue clan still assembled this banquet.

As the clan leader, Gu Yue Bo sat at the clan head's seat, while Tie Xue Leng and Tie Ruo Nan were beside him.

Other than that, Gu Yue Chi Zhong, Gu Yue Ge Yan, Gu Yue Mo Chen, Gu Yue Yao Ji, as well as Fang Yuan and the others, all being elders, were present.

Before the wolf tide, Gu Yue clan had over a dozen clan elders. But now, only one table remained, and there were less than ten elders.

Moreover, the clan elders present were all injured to varying degrees.

Especially in the case of Gu Yue Mo Chen — two weeks ago when he resisted the wolf tide, he was heavily injured and had been hiding in his private room to recuperate. He was resting in bed, but when he heard about the arrival of Tie Xue Leng, he forced his body up and attended this banquet.

But this also let him escape the crisis, while his old rival Gu Yue Chi Lian had followed the clan leader in assaulting the thunder crown wolf and was killed by the lightning lycan.

"If not for Brother Tie's help today, I might've become the lightning lycan's lunch already. For saving my life, I toast Brother Tie this cup!" Gu Yue Bo stood up, holding the cup with both hands and bending his back, sincerely offering his gratitude.

"I was only doing what I could." Tie Xue Leng raised his cup, drinking the wine in one go.

He had a vigilant and strict lifestyle, refusing to gamble or find prostitutes, standing by his morals and never went greedy on drinking. He had thus, never been drunk.

After drinking this cup, Gu Yue Bo looked at the people in the banquet, his eyes turning red, sighing and sitting down.

Tie Xue Leng had seen such situations many times, and he consoled, "Gu Yue clan leader, my condolences. As long as your clansmen still exist, the village will definitely thrive again one day. That lightning lycan was heavily injured as well, and the lightning wolves have greatly been damaged, they will not attack for the next few years. This wolf tide has been safely endured."

The wolf tide's harshest period is indeed over. For the next few months, although lightning wolves will still appear, their quantity will continue to decrease, and no large groups will be formed. The wolf packs no longer have the ability to directly charge at the village.

The lightning lycan will return to the wolf den and recuperate there, while slowly organising the remaining wolves. Many wolves will be recalled, and many lightning wolves would die, causing the wolf pack's need for food to decrease drastically.

The wolf packs would become self-sufficient, and in the next few years, they would gradually get stronger, during which new hundred beast kings - bold lightning wolves, thousand beast kings - frenzy lightning wolves, and myriad beast kings - thunder crown wolves would appear.

At its peak, it begins to weaken, and at its weakest, it begins to prosper.

Regardless of humans or wolves, they follow such a law.

But although Tie Xue Leng's words were right, humans are not grass or trees, they have feelings. The Gu Yue clan leader understood this fact much better than Tie Xue Leng, but the misery and pain in his heart was unavoidable.

The sacrifice was too big.....

Just the higher-up clan elders were already gone by at least half. As for the Rank two and Rank one Gu Yue Masters, they had an even larger amount of casualties. The entire Gu Yue village's strength had fallen to rock bottom, and could no longer endure any more disasters.

"Why is it that you guys do not counter attack, and go wreck their den?" On one side, Tie Ruo Nan could not understand and asked in confusion.

"That is because inside the wolf den, there are over dozens of groups of thunder gas worms, amounting to over a million of them in total. There are also large numbers of wild Gu mixed in. It is hard to cause any damage to them, unless all three clans work together," Gu Yue Yao Ji explained.

Saying so, she suddenly snorted, staring at Fang Yuan, "But this possibility is too small. Even within our clan, there are clan elders shrinking in fear, and during the wolf tide's attack, god knows where they were hiding!"

Saying so, all the other clan elders turned their vision towards Fang Yuan.

Previously, Fang Yuan was inside the rock crack secret cave exploring the Flower Wine Monk's inheritance, causing him to miss the huge battle in resisting the wolf tide. In everyone's eyes, this was being crafty and evasive, as well as being timid and fearing death.

Thus, the clan elders' expression towards Fang Yuan were all full of unhappiness, disdain, and some hidden anger.

Even Gu Yue Bo's expression was looking ugly.

As the clan leader, he was most revolted by people like Fang Yuan, doing things according to their own will, mysterious and having their own little schemes. He could not feel safe with such a person around.

The atmosphere at the banquet immediately transformed.

The Tie father and daughter also felt this change, following everyone's gaze and looking towards Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan's young appearance had attracted the attention of Tie Ruo Nan who was the same age as him.

Fang Yuan drank his wine calmly. Even though everyone's gaze was on him, he acted as if he felt nothing.

His expression was calm, as he already had anticipated such a situation of people finding problems with him.

"Things are getting troublesome," he sighed in his heart. Although worried, he was not frightened.

Tie Xue Leng's appearance had heavily destroyed his plans to leave. If he took the Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus and destroyed the foundation of the Gu Yue village, this would cause the Tie father and daughter to arrest him.

The name of divine investigator is not just a myth. With his abilities and strength, as long as Tie Xue Leng commences his chase, there is no possibility of failing.

Even if he does not take the Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus, his mysterious disappearance would cause the clan to investigate. As it involves Jia Jin Sheng's death, even the Tie father and daughter would get involved.

If he left without notice, in their eyes it would be a thief trying to escape, running from his crimes.

With no choice, Fang Yuan could only choose to stay and observe the situation.

Although everyone reprimanded him, the situation now was still not at its worst. If he left right now, that would be a panicky move, and it would cause the entire situation to worsen.

"Is the wine nice?" Gu Yue Yao Ji laughed sinisterly, staring at Fang Yuan, "Aren't you going to explain?"

Fang Yuan slowly put down his cup, raising his head and looking at Gu Yue Yao Ji's broken arm.

The old are the most cunning, this is extremely true.

To preserve her life, Gu Yue Yao Ji broke her own arm, and under the name of being injured, she avoided the clan mission of entering the battlefield.

This happened in Fang Yuan's previous life as well, but to think she did the same thing once again.

Her act of sacrificing one limb to save her life, was indeed effective. It prevented her from getting killed by the thunder crown wolf and not participating in the chase, thus keeping herself alive. However, right now she was finding problems with Fang Yuan — one aspect was due to old grudges, but mostly was because she wanted to bring the attention to Fang Yuan and reduce people's attention on herself.

"What do you want me to explain? Explain how you broke your own limb just to preserve your miserable life?" Fang Yuan sneered.

"WHAT?!" Gu Yue Yao Ji was shocked and enraged, standing up from her seat.

She stared with both eyes wide open, pointing at Fang Yuan's nose, shrilling, "You little rascal! How dare you accuse me like this, this is blatant defamation, slander!! How can you be so shameless? How can our Gu Yue clan have such a joke like you?"

"Gu Yue Yao Ji!" Gu Yue Bo's expression changed, shouting, "Sit down at once, we have an important guest here, how can you scream and shout freely like this?"

Gu Yue Yao Ji wanted to continue scolding, but on seeing Gu Yue Bo's dim expression, she could only swallow the words she was about to spit out.

She stared angrily at Fang Yuan, sitting down reluctantly.

Gu Yue Bo settled Yao Ji's problem, then turned to look at Fang Yuan, "Elder Fang Yuan, I need an explanation. During the attack of the wolf tide, where were you?"

"Fang Yuan... he's Fang Yuan?" Tie Xue Leng's eyes shone with surprise. In Jia Jin Sheng's mysterious disappearance, Fang Yuan had played an important role. Before coming here, Tie Xue Leng had already gotten much intel from Jia Fu. But to think that this young elder was Fang Yuan himself. At once, Tie Xue Leng's heart became interested.

He had solved numerous cases and could see the peculiarity from all the traces of evidence, to guess the actual fact. From everyone's expression, he could tell the truth behind Fang Yuan's sudden evasion from battle.

But the truth that everyone knew was only scratching the surface, what is the utter reality?

Regardless of what the truth is, Fang Yuan's answer would reveal a fragment of his inner thought. That would be very helpful in solving the case later.

Sensing Tie Xue Leng's attention on him, Fang Yuan's heart tightened, but his expression remained the same.

He looked at everyone plainly, and a mocking smile appeared on his face, "There's not much to explain. Since clan elder asked, I'll just say it out. I was extremely frightened back then. The stressed accumulated during this extensive period, as well as my fear of death that had reached its limits. I could not endure it, I was cowardly and weak, I hid in a corner and no longer dared to enter the frontlines."

Once he said so, everyone was dumbfounded.

They had expected Fang Yuan to use all sorts of excuses and reasons, and were prepared to expose his lies and criticize Fang Yuan. But to think he admitted it directly!

"Any kind of lie, as long as it is not true, will have loopholes. Furthermore, Tie Xue Leng is here..." Fang Yuan's expression was calm, looking down and staring at the wine in his cup.

Tie Xue Leng's expression turned weird. He subconsciously frowned, and a sense of loathing and antipathy rose in his heart.

"This young man, he has an inbred demonic nature!"

Chapter 172: No one more suited than Fang Yuan!

At the banquet, it was utter silence.

Everyone was stunned, staring at Fang Yuan blankly.

They had not expected him to reply like this, directly admitting it so honestly.

"He's too young after all, actually saying such words."

"Hmph, once he said that, it means his entire political career is ruined."

"From now on, this Fang Yuan is no threat anymore..."

The clan elders furiously assessed.

At this point into the wolf tide, the outcome had already been decided. In the next few months, there will only be small wolf packs moving about. As the lightning lycan continues to call them back, as well as the Gu Masters killing them, the lightning wolves would basically vanish completely by the end of the year.

But conflicts never end.

At places with people, there are interests. And where there are interests involved, there are conflicts.

During the wolf tide, it is the struggle between man and wolf. But now that the toughest part of the wolf tide is over, the clan's internal struggles surface above the water, turning into internal strifes.

The wolf tide assaulting the village caused many Gu Masters to die. Some factions were destroyed, and the interests they once held, naturally has to be distributed.

Among the Gu Yue clan higher-ups, there were originally many clan elders to divide the interest cake of the entire village. But now that only Fang Yuan and the other elders amounting to less than ten remained, that cake was still whole and intact.

To split this large cake among themselves, they would have to compete against one another. Political battles, although not as flashy or bloody as the wolf tide, was full of schemes, plotting and setting traps; it was difficult and harsh.

At first, Fang Yuan as the only newly advanced elder, had a strong momentum and attracted great attention. But now that he admitted his mistake, it completely ruined his political career; it was tantamount to giving up the chance to compete for this interest cake with the other clan elders.

At once, Fang Yuan's threat level towards the other clan elders became much lower.

Their gaze towards Fang Yuan showed that the pressure they felt towards him had reduced.

At this time, clan leader Gu Yue Bo sighed, "Since Fang Yuan himself admitted to it, as clan leader, I have to punish you for the act of running away from battle. According to the clan ancestor's rules, runaways will be stripped of their clan elder status, but the final result shall be decided by me and the other clan elders. We'll decide on your punishment after a discussion. But regardless of the result, I hope you can accept it."

The others showed a weird expression.

Fang Yuan nodded, not speaking, as if he had submitted to fate.

Gu Yue Yao Ji broke her own arm to save her life, this was decisive and ruthless. Fang Yuan was the same, except he lost even more, giving up his clan elder status.

His greatest problem now, is the sudden appearance of the Tie family father and daughter. If he got involved in the political turmoil now, facing suppression from other elders, his situation would get even more dangerous.

"Letting go, willingness to let go, among taking and letting go, that is life. The identity of clan elder was to cultivate better, that is its only purpose to me. To pursue eternal life I walked on the demonic path, I am willing to discard my own life. What else can I not discard? Clan elder status, hmph..."

Fang Yuan did not feel a shred of regret or annoyance.

This was the wisest decision.

Moreover, although there's a punishment, it would definitely be minimized.

After all, there were little clan elders left, and as a Rank three Gu Master, his strength was greatly valued. The clan leader has to punish him on one end, but also needs to borrow his strength to stabilize the entire village's circumstance, thus he also needed to give in to Fang Yuan.

As for the other clan elders, Fang Yuan had stepped out of this political contest and no longer held any threat. They would not offend Fang Yuan anymore. After all, if they force Fang Yuan to retaliate, isn't it finding trouble for themselves?

"Although there is the clan system, but what is a system? Hehe, a system is just a tool to maintain the interests of those in power. On one hand it governs and divides the interest of the lower levels, but it is also the rules that contain the higher-ups as they compete against each other." Fang Yuan laughed coldly. These matters, he was clear as day, the truth was transparent to him.

"The most crucial point now, is the Tie family father and daughter. Fuck, they came much earlier than I had anticipated, even before the wolf tide is completely gone. Hmph! But such a behavior perfectly fits Tie Xue Leng's hatred towards evil, and his selflessness in fighting crime."

Thinking of this, Fang Yuan felt a strong pressure.

Even though Tie Xue Leng is injured now, his battle strength was not something Fang Yuan could compete against. A starving dying camel is larger than a horse, it is this logic.

"I need to leave the village, but I also need to avoid the pursuit of the Tie father and daughter pair, how can I get out of this predicament?"

Fang Yuan was vexed.

This Tie family father and daughter was not as easy to confuse as Jia Fu. Moreover, Fang Yuan's cultivation was too low. Even if he had a thousand and one plans, what could he do without actual strength?

Rank three and five, it was a world of difference.

"Everyone, I have something to say." At this point, the silent Gu Yue Mo Chen suddenly said. His expression was pale as he had dragged his injured body to the banquet, and he did not drink wine, only sipping tea.

But what he said next, shocked people to death, "There's something I have to be honest about. Elder Fang Yuan did not manage to enter the battlefield, and that was due to me."

"What?"

At once, the other clan elders were shocked.

"Oh, what do you mean?" Gu Yue Bo asked.

Fang Yuan sent a glance over, hiding his shock.

Why would this Gu Yue Mo Chen stand up for himself?

During this wolf tide, the Mo faction inheritor Gu Yue Mo Bei had already died unfortunately.

Even though the Mo faction had to the greatest of their ability, protected Mo Bei. On the battlefield, surprises were aplenty. Moreover, during the wolf tide, everyone was in danger, sometimes they can't even take care of themselves, what more towards others?

Gu Yue Mo Chen sighed, "To speak the truth, my granddaughter Gu Yue Mo Yan had fallen deep in love with elder Fang Yuan. Before this, she had come to beg me, kneeling on the ground and crying, not willing to see Fang Yuan die on the battlefield. I only have one granddaughter, thus out of selfishness, I kept Fang Yuan in my estate and knocked him out. It was only until we chased the lightning crown wolf that I let him out. Thus, everything was due to me, it is my fault. It has nothing to do with Fang Yuan."

"What?"

"Oh, is that really it?"

The clan elders were suspicious.

Gu Yue Mo Chen's words were quite a stretch; it was rather unbelievable.

"Love and relationship among youngsters is common," Gu Yue Bo nodded, staring at Fang Yuan with deep meaning, wanting to find out some clues from his expression.

But Fang Yuan looked down with a calm expression. There was nothing to see.

Clan leader was disappointed.

The other clan elders exchanged glances, not understanding why Gu Yue Mo Chen was so defensive of Fang Yuan.

Him saying this in order to aid Fang Yuan, it meant that he had sacrificed his own reputation and ruined his own political prospect!!

Gu Yue Mo Chen continued, "In order to protect my reputation, elder Fang Yuan willingly let himself suffer the injustice. But I have already erred once, how can I make a mistake once more? This is the truth. As for the punishment, I implore lord clan leader to consider. I admit my mistake and as with the rules, if my clan elder status is to be stripped, I have no objections."

Clan leader quickly waved his hand, saying, "Elder Mo Chen has worked hard all these years. What you did was understandable, humans are not grass or wood, how can we not have feelings? Now that our clan is greatly weakened, we need loyal and strong elders like you. But this is still your own selfishness, thus the punishment still needs to be decided. We have an important guest today, let's not talk about this now. Come, brother Tie, I and the clan elders shall offer you a toast!"

Saying so, Gu Yue Bo stood up.

The other clan elders stood up as well, raising their cups.

"Everyone is too kind. I still have to trouble you all later, I hope I can seek your understanding." Tie Xue Leng did not put on airs, standing up and drinking his wine.

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In the courtyard of the Mo faction, flora and fauna were abundant. The artificial mountain had a spring flowing with crystal clear water.

In the night sky, the moon hung high in the sky like a plate.

The banquet had long ended.

Fang Yuan sat in the cooling pavilion as he listened to the sound of the flowing water, and he placed down his tea cup with a plain expression.

Sitting opposite him was Gu Yue Mo Chen. After the banquet was over, he had invited Fang Yuan over for a discussion.

"Come, have another cup of tea, this bamboo leaf clear water tea is good in eliminating hangovers." Gu Yue Mo Chen laughed, pouring personally into Fang Yuan's cup.

Fang Yuan's expression was calm, and on seeing the cup being filled again, he said, "Indeed a good cure for hangovers."

Saying so, he looked outside the pavilion, only to see that the pale white moon had radiated the grounds with its moonlight. Under the moon, the pavilion was quiet and graceful, but in the wind there were lurking shadows, showing how the Mo faction courtyard was turning from a prosperous state, to a declining one.

During the banquet, Fang Yuan had already understood Gu Yue Mo Chen's intention. Seeing this scene, he was even more sure of himself.

The Mo faction had no inheritor left!

Once Gu Yue Mo Bei died, the entire Mo faction would lose its inheritor.

Although Mo Bei still had his sister Mo Yan, the clan rules was that, since ancient times, it favored males over females, and the assets can only be inherited by a male and not female.

Even if Gu Yue Mo Yan gets to Rank three next time and advances to clan elder, her assets do not represent the Mo faction, but only her own. If she married anyone, this asset will be transferred to under her husband's name.

If they lost their inheritor, a clan's political influence would have no prospects, and no one would join them.

The Mo faction had already fallen into difficult circumstances, on the verge of breaking down.

But heaven always left a way, and the Mo faction was not truly at its wits end; there was still a sliver of hope.

This hope lies in Gu Yue Mo Yan's hands.

Although she is a female, she can marry someone.

If the son-in-law marries into the Mo faction, he would have an acceptable status, and can inherit the Mo faction!

Seeing that Fang Yuan had no inclination to mention it, Gu Yue Mo Chen scolded this crafty lad internally, but had to speak, "I wonder what elder Fang Yuan thinks of my Mo faction?"

He had an unspeakable grief.

Ever since his injury, his cultivation had fallen to Rank two, without any chance of ever regaining Rank three.

He could only rely on his Gu worm to conceal his true aura. But paper cannot cover fire; he would be exposed one day.

His only inheritor had died, while he himself was Rank two and would lose his clan elder identity. Gu Yue Mo Chen needed someone who could hold the fort to sustain their faction.

Back then, he had both authority and status, thus the Mo faction controlled a large amount of the interest cake. But now that the clan's factions were reorganising themselves, he did not want any more interests. As long as he can defend what he already has, that would be the biggest victory.

He pondered left and right, and the most suitable person was Fang Yuan without doubt!

Chapter 173: White form immortal snake

Sunset clouds are blown away as cool wind fills the air, and the jade disc spins silently in the milky way.

Bai Ning Bing looked out from the window and gazed at the night sky.

A bright and sparkling moon was shining in the sky. Occasionally, wolf howls could be heard in the distance, adding some bleakness to the peaceful moonlight.

In the study room, the Bai clan leader was sitting at a side with a dazed expression.

Just a moment ago, Bai Ning Bing told him about the Northern Dark Ice Soul physique.

"Northern Dark Ice Soul....ten absolute aptitudes...." The Bai clan leader mumbled constantly.

"I have already sensed that my end is nearing, my aperture is gradually unable to endure the burden. These past few years, I've truly caused you much problems!" Bai Ning Bing softly sighed.

His expression was calm. No longer was there the abnormal reckless and crazed state as before. What replaced them was tranquility and peace.

This tranquility and peace came from his heart.

He had found his path and was no longer perplexed by life and death.

People mature over time, and the stimulation from life and death could further speed up this process.

Moonlight fell down like flowing water, illuminating Bai Ning Bing's fair skin. Under the flowing radiance, his two blue eyes shone with depth.

He was like a beautiful young man from a painting, with white hair and white clothes like the immortals in the clouds, causing people to look intently.

"How could this happen? You were clearly A grade with 99% primeval essence when your aptitude was tested. It absolutely wasn't the Northern Dark Ice Soul." The Bai clan leader was still refusing to accept it.

"It was indeed so. But one day when I was cultivating, my aptitude suddenly advanced. I checked the ancient scrolls and records in the clan and found some information on this; every 99% A grade aptitude has the possibility of advancing to ten absolute aptitudes while cultivating," Bai Ning Bing said.

"All ten defy the heavens, and the heavens can't tolerate them. Even Ren Zu's ten children didn't have a good end. Sigh, is there really no way to salvage it?" Bai clan leader felt pity and regret when he looked at the beautiful boy in front of him.

He was the clan's pride and their hope to rise up in power. However, his life was already nearing its end. Despite glowing brightly, he was like a firework which could only shine splendidly for one single moment.

"There are no ways to evade my impending doom, but there are some ways to delay it. However, all these methods need many years to prepare, which I don't have."

Bai Ning Bing said all this and gave a light laugh, as if the one being discussed about was not him, but some irrelevant outsider.

"Don't worry. Who doesn't die? True immortality doesn't exist! As long as we live our life interestingly, it is enough." He was instead consoling the clan leader.

"I cannot accept this! I absolutely cannot! Damn it, my Bai clan has been suppressed by the Gu Yue clan for centuries, we finally found hope but it ends up like this! No, there is still hope!"

Bai clan leader's voice got louder and louder till suddenly, his expression turned firm as if he had decided on something.

"Follow me, I will bring you to a place...." He stood up and said.

After a while.

The bright moonlight shone upon a deep pool.

"This is the spirit spring?" Bai Ning Bing asked. He had been led by the Bai clan leader as they went through a long secret pathway, and finally arrived here.

"Indeed. This is our clan's restricted area, the location of the spirit spring. You also know this — every clan's foundation is established upon a natural spirit spring, where the primeval stones produced by it will be used to provide for their cultivation. Our Bai clan can only be considered a small-medium scale clan, and only by annexing Gu Yue and Xiong clan as well as possessing at least three springs can we become a large scale clan," Bai clan leader sighed.

"Then clan leader, what did you bring me here for?"

Bai clan leader's face revealed a complex expression, and as he turned around to look at Bai Ning Bing, his expression contained some hesitation, "I had originally never thought of bringing you here. However,

the affairs of the world are hard to anticipate. To think, you would end up possessing Northern Dark Ice Soul! Your only chance at living lies within this spring."

"What is in this spring?" Bai Ning Bing asked.

"A great Immortal!" Bai clan leader said with a deep voice.

"Great Immortal?" Bai Ning Bing was flabbergasted.

"Great Immortal is its title. It is a snake Gu left by our Bai clan's first generation ancestor. It likes cleanliness, and its food is the water of spirit spring. It has always been secretly living in the spirit spring," Bai clan leader introduced.

"Before the first generation ancestor passed away, he set up a secret inheritance and left behind this snake Gu as a clue. If you can get the approval of the Great Immortal, it will open the secret inheritance for you. But if you can't receive its approval...." The Bai clan leader stopped his sentence in the middle.

"What happens then?" Bai Ning Bing asked.

Bai clan leader's expression turned grave and he said, "It will kill you!"

At the same time, Gu Yue village.

Inside the room, Tie Ruo Nan kept her recon Gu and nodded with satisfaction, "The environment here is pretty good, it's rather clean."

The 'clean' she referred to wasn't talking about the cleanliness of the room, but was pointing at the lack of surveillance.

It was impossible to say that there absolutely wasn't any surveillance.

After all, Tie Xue Leng was rank five, so he possessed too great of a threat. Hence, there was a necessity for some precautions.

However, Gu Yue clan's defensive and surveillance measures were just at the right amount and the level was quite low too, not creating any feelings of provocation and aversion. It could even be taken as excessively earnest and passionate reception, which was why Tie Ruo Nan gave the assessment of 'rather clean'.

Tie Xue Leng slightly nodded, "Ruo Nan, you have followed me for so long and have learned many things. However, some things can only be learned by taking actions and not just by spectating from the sides. Hence, I handed this case to you."

"Father, I will definitely work hard and give my best!"

"Good. Then, let me ask you, what should your next step be?" Tie Xue Leng was deliberately testing her.

Tie Ruo Nan smiled. She turned around and gazed at the moon through the window, "The moon is beautiful tonight. Dad, can I have the pleasure to take you around this Gu Yue village?"

Upon hearing this, Tie Xue Leng revealed a gratifying smile.

When starting out on a case, it was not urgent to understand the details of the case. The first step to solve a case was to survey the surroundings.

The father and daughter pair slowly walked through the streets. After resisting the most terrifying attacks of the wolf tide, Gu Yue clan was now in a wretched state.

There were collapsed bamboo buildings and bloodstains all around. Junks were piled up all over the place and feeble moaning sounds of crippled people could be heard from time to time.

The Tie father and daughter pair walked around the village without saying any words.

"Fang Yuan, you bastard, fuck off!" Suddenly, a loud roar came from within a courtyard.

The Tie father and daughter stopped walking.

After a long while, the courtyard gate opened and Fang Yuan walked out while rubbing his nose with a vague smile on his face.

"Hello, little brother Fang Yuan." Tie Xue Leng took the initiative to send his greetings.

"Junior pays his respects to lord divine investigator." Fang Yuan constrained his smile and cupped his hands.

"Little brother, we are new here and don't know the place well. Is it possible for little brother to tell us a thing or two?" Tie Xue Leng suddenly asked.

Tie Ruo Nan glanced at her father, but she didn't make any comments.

Fang Yuan's gaze hardened, he was just about to go meet them but this opportunity was delivered right up to him.

"Both of you have travelled a great distance and suffered hardships to come and solve the case, the whole village ought to help you. Please follow me." Fang Yuan spoke directly without showing the slightest evil intention, and walked in front.

...

The spirit spring was raging like the boiling water.

All of a sudden, the springwater rose up like a tidal wave.

After it reached a certain height, the spirit spring scattered and splashed in all directions. A slender white snake, its whole body covered with snow white scales, tread on the waves and revealed its elegant appearance.

Its eyes were like jade, cold and indifferent. On the two sides of its head were a pair of long whiskers, floating like celestial ribbons.

Rank five white form immortal snake Gu!

"I pay respects to Great Immortal!" Bai clan leader emotionally kneeled on the ground, and at the same time anxiously urged, "Bai Ning Bing, why are you not kneeling down?"

"I will never kneel before a Gu!" Bai Ning Bing coldly snorted, his body standing upright and tall.

Although the white form immortal snake Gu released an ethereal cold grandeur with heavy killing intent concealed within, Bai Ning Bing was not the least bit afraid. His two blue pupils directly stared at its snake eyes.

Time seemed to have stopped at this moment.

The spirit spring and the Bai clan leader had become insignificant background objects.

Under the bright moonlight, the picturesque youngster with blue pupils and the silver whiskered white snake gazed at each other.

After a good while, the white snake suddenly gave a long cry and turned into a white rainbow, slamming into Bai Ning Bing.

Bai Ning Bing's body jolted. The white light entered his aperture and turned into a white snake.

The white snake occupied the central area of his primeval essence, and with its tyrannical attitude, all the surrounding Gu were immediately forced to the side.

"This situation..." Bai clan leader stood up with a puzzled expression, "It doesn't match what the clan's secret records say."

According to the clan's secret records, once a Gu Master obtained approval, the white form immortal snake Gu would fly with the inheritor and open the inheritance in the sky.

However, the current situation was somewhat weird.

The white form immortal snake Gu took the initiative to enter Bai Ning Bing's aperture and didn't kill him, which should mean that it had approved of him. But why didn't it carry Bai Ning Bing and fly to the sky?

Could it be that the secret records were wrong?

Bai clan leader couldn't make sense of it.

.....

Time quietly flew by.

"That more or less sums up everything about Gu Yue village. There is the underground cave, but that is a restricted area of the clan and outsiders aren't allowed entry." Fang Yuan said.

He looked at the bright moon in the sky and continued, "It is getting late, please go and rest, you need to have the energy to investigate tomorrow, right?"

"Hahaha, Elder Fang Yuan is correct. We are really thankful for Elder Fang Yuan's directions, please go and take a rest," Tie Xue Leng said.

"In that case, I will take my leave." Fang Yuan cupped his hands before directly leaving.

Tie Xue Leng looked at Fang Yuan's figure with interest, and only after Fang Yuan turned into a corner, did he take back his gaze.

"Ruo Nan, what do you think of this Fang Yuan?" He suddenly asked.

"I don't like him, my intuition tells me he is covered in shadows." The young girl frowned.

Tie Xue Leng nodded his head, "I know you have the Intuition Gu which strengthens your intuition, but we need definite evidence to solve a case. Just relying on intuition alone won't be convincing. Don't always depend on your intuition, I do not want you to use the intuition Gu to solve this case."

"Yes, father."

Chapter 174: Junior divine investigator

Tie Xue Leng said again, "Now, analyze this person Fang Yuan."

"Father, you suspect it is Fang Yuan?" Tie Ruo Nan was stunned, but continued, "He is a very logical and intelligent person, and when he introduced the village to us, every word he said was appropriate and well organised. Gasp!..."

Tie Ruo Nan suddenly drew in a mouthful of cold air.

She frowned, "I didn't notice this earlier, but after you just reminded me, I realised it! This Fang Yuan is too good at speaking. Everything he said is objectively the truth, abandoning his personal feelings. Standing at a bystander's perspective, and describing calmly. Not allowing others to find flaws in his words, thus not able to get additional clues. His words were very.... very.... very clean."

The young girl hesitated, before using the word 'clean'.

Tie Xue Leng nodded, but then shook his head, "He did not abandon his feelings. Everyone has feelings, and even a cold blooded murderer has feelings. He only concealed his personal feelings very well, and was in full control of his emotions. This lad has a demonic nature."

"Demonic nature?" "That's right, think about it. He spoke the truth during the banquet, saying he was frightened and did not dare to enter the battlefield. Tell me, if it was a normal person, would they do that?" Tie Xue Leng asked.

Tie Ruo Nan shook her head, "No, Gu Masters put the clan's honor and their own reputation higher than their own lives. But, that might not be certain, for in history there have also been many people who sacrificed their own reputation, right?"

"That's right, but who were those people?" Tie Xue Leng's gaze was deep.

Tie Ruo Nan considered, before her expression changed, "They were all outstanding individuals!"

"That's correct. Throughout history, those who sacrificed their own reputations only had two aims. One was that they had a greater aim in mind, and compared to their aim, reputation is worth nothing. The other is to preserve themselves, defaming themselves to prevent suspicion."

Tie Ruo Nan's eyes shone, "Father, you are saying?"

"You are thinking too much. I just feel that this young man is very interesting, but too bad he is only a C grade..." Tie Xue Leng said.

The moonlight was like water on this night.

Fang Yuan walked on the empty street, his footsteps slightly heavy but filled with determination.

After interacting with Tie Xue Leng earlier, he was indeed what the rumors said. This Tie Xue Leng had a gaze that could see through the world, and his intelligence and wits were deep like a chasm. He swept through the Southern Border for tens of years, establishing his famed name; he really was an outstanding talent.

Wanting to remove his suspicions in front of such a person was extremely difficult. As long as they had enough time, they would definitely discover the truth!

"Now is a race against time. But, Mo faction's recruitment, I can make good use of it."

Not long ago in the Mo faction pavilion, Fang Yuan had given absurd demands. In return for marrying Mo Yan, he wanted a hundred thousand primeval stones, ten rare Gu worms and each at least Rank three.

This made Gu Yue Mo Chen furious.

He was marrying away his precious granddaughter, but Fang Yuan still had more demands?!

Such a shameless way to ask for gifts, and so greedy, it was really the last straw!

Thus, the discussion faltered, and he chased Fang Yuan out.

Fang Yuan left immediately without any inclination to stay.

He knew Mo Chen's intention, thus he would definitely compromise. His absurd demands were just a way of bargaining, paying the lowest price when buying, and asking for the highest price when selling.

"But this matter has equal benefits and demerits. Although with more primeval stones I can feed the Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus, my original plan to get out of the political spiral would be ruined. In tonight's banquet, Gu Yue Mo Chen sacrificed himself to salvage my political career. From then on, he might face all sorts of elder's suppression."

Gu Yue village's political situation now was: Clan leader was healthy, while for the two important elders, Gu Yue Chi Lian was dead but the Chi faction was not finished yet, as inheritor Chi Cheng was still alive. At the same time there was still Gu Yue Chi Zhong, an elder from the same faction. But Mo faction lost its inheritor and Mo Chen was heavily injured, falling to Rank two, unable to even keep his clan elder status.

The two formerly large factions had already gone downhill. The medicine faction in contrast were mostly healing Gu Masters. As supports they had little sacrifice while still keeping most of their strength, and were on the verge of rising up.

Medicine faction was originally the clan leader's faction, but now it had the ability to be independent. Regardless of whether Gu Yue Yao Ji chooses to be independent or rely on the clan elder, in order to strengthen themselves, they would need to snatch and merge. And the weakened Chi and Mo faction were the best targets.

If they did not strike now, later on when the two factions stabilize internally it would be much more difficult.

"Being in the human world, many things are not up to me, why not just let down my hair and sail away to the seas? Sailing with the winds and breaking waves as I travel thirty thousand Li, that is the true demonic path I take!" Fang Yuan raised his head, looking at the moon as he sighed.

He wanted to get away from the political spiral, but Gu Yue Mo Chen dragged him back by force. He faced pressure from all the factions, and Tie Xue Leng was already starting to solve the case. On the other hand, Bai Ning Bing had already regained his new arm.

Like a boat travelling in the darkness with danger lurking everywhere, how was he to open up a path for himself?

.....

The next day.

"What? You said that the person who murdered Jia Jin Sheng had already been found and was killed already?" Tie Ruo Nan felt extremely perturbed.

This morning, she had woken up early and officially started to solve the case.

But to think that the first information she got, was that the killer had already been sentenced.

"That's right, the killer is a demonic Gu Master. He once assassinated our clan's rising star and tried to kill the genius, thus he was killed on the spot." A clan elder provided the information.

"Is that really so? Did he admit personally that he was Jia Jing Sheng's killer?" Tie Ruo Nan frowned deeply. Beside her, Tie Xue Leng wore a copper mask as he stood like a statue.

"He didn't. But, if it's not him, who else could it be?" The clan elder shrugged.

Tie Ruo Nan thought internally, "This is all an assumption, there is no real proof. But whether it is the truth or not, this demonic Gu Master has to be investigated clearly. Most likely, this is a lead that will bring us to the truth!"

Thinking of this, Tie Ruo Nan raised her head abruptly, "Where is he buried? I want to inspect the corpse!"

In a simple and torn coffin, there was a corpse within.

The rotting smell assaulted noses, and clan servants and Gu Masters were so disgusted that they ran far away to hide.

Tie family father and daughter acted as if they were unaffected, and Tie Ruo Nan's eyes glowed brightly, excitedly stretching her hand and inspecting.

A person's corpse has lots of traces. At times, one or two small injuries would be the evidence needed to point out the murderer!

On this corpse, there were many injuries, but the person's appearance was still clear, and he was still wearing his original clothes.

Tie Ruo Nan checked for ages, and only then did she get up with a lingering interest.

"Anything?" Tie Xue Leng asked lightly, testing her secretly.

"Gu Yue clan thinks this person is Jia Jin Sheng's killer, thus they kept the corpse well. There's a huge problem in this corpse," Tie Ruo Nan answered.

"He's a middle-aged man, right arm thicker than the left; both his hands have a thick callus. Seeing how his callus is distributed, they are uneven. There are many injuries on his body, numerous fatal wounds, showing the intense battle he had before death. But on his body there are also a lot of hidden injuries, especially his left foot having three less toes, this is left behind from many years ago."

Saying so, she continued deducing, "He was most likely a hunter. There are many evidences - his disproportional left and right side and the callus on his hands shows that he's an experienced bowman. There are many injuries made by wild beasts on his body, like claw marks and bites, showing he often fought against beasts. His clothes are not the traditional Gu Master clothes, and his shoes are even more interesting, weaved from bamboo hemp grass. This kind of grass only grows near Qing Mao bamboo, and Qing Mao mountain only produces Qing Mao bamboo; other than that, in the surrounding mountains, there is no bamboo hemp grass.

"So what are you getting at?" Tie Xue Leng pursued.

"Before this person became a demonic Gu Master, he was a hunter. From his clothes, he was most likely a resident hunter on Qing Mao mountain," Tie Ruo Nan's eyes shone brightly.

"Why do you think he is a resident here? If it is the grass shoes, he could've killed the villagers here and worn them," Tie Xue Leng rebuked.

"That's not it. The most special part of his clothes is the shoes, because if they were taken by force, most would not fit his size perfectly. But look at this, two disproportionate legs and yet the shoes fit nicely, this is made just for him. He has three less toes on his leg feet, thus the left grass shoe is shorter. His stump is very cleanly cut and sharp. I assume it is most likely due to stepping on a trap by mistake," Tie Ruo Nan said.

Tie Xue Leng did not deny it nor confirm it, and did not even give any criticism.

Like what he said earlier, he left it to Tie Ruo Nan to solve the case.

Tie Ruo Nan continued saying, "With this conjecture, we can go to the surrounding hamlets and investigate. We might find more clues... wait!"

Just when she was about to speak, the young girl's expression stiffened.

She suddenly remembered, this Qing Mao mountain had just undergone a wolf tide calamity. Even the villages were heavily damaged, not to mention those hamlets?

She knew that using this method to find out the person's identity and information bore little hope.

"But even if the chances are slim, as long as there is a possibility for success, I must try!" It was the young girl's first individual case, and she was full of drive.

But half a day passed, and she returned empty-handed. This wolf tide was the largest and most horrifying one yet. So many hamlets had zero survivors, and this brought great trouble to her investigations.

"This lead is gone. What are you going to do next?" Tie Xue Leng asked at an appropriate time.

The young girl gritted her teeth, and in her tone there was stubbornness and tenacity, "No, it is not over yet. Father you said it yourself, the true lead is often hidden more deeply, and as long as we continue to excavate, it will appear."

"This demonic Gu Master's death is strange. Firstly, why did he assault Fang Zheng? What did Fang Zheng do to offend him, causing him to assassinate him with his life, under the situation which was basically an assured death? Moreover, he is a local, but after his death, why did no one recognise him?"

Hearing her words, Tie Xue Leng was a little surprised.

"Child, you have truly grown up," the divine investigator sighed, and in his tone there was contentment and gratification.

Chapter 175: Increasing pressure

"You're asking me why that Gu Master came to kill me? How would I know!" Facing Tie Ruo Nan's questioning, Fang Zheng blinked innocently.

"If you have done something, I hope you won't conceal the truth. Because your words, even though they might seem insignificant, can have great help towards solving the case," the young girl said sincerely.

Fang Zheng shook his head. "I'm very perplexed too. During that period, I was cultivating non-stop, so how could I attract any assassinations? But afterwards, the people around me realized that this demonic Gu Master could have been hired by the other two clans, to kill a rising star like myself. You also know the rivalry between us and the Bai clan and Xiong clan. Especially the Xiong clan, they are the greatest suspects as they had once recruited demonic Gu Masters into their clan."

"Xiong clan huh..." Tie Ruo Nan became a little discouraged after hearing this, since the Xiong clan had already been eliminated by the wolf tide. It seems that this lead is lost as well.

Suddenly, murmurs came from outside the room.

"Quick, look there, isn't that people from the Xiong clan?"

"I thought the Xiong clan was exterminated, how can there be any envoys coming here?!"

Xiong clan envoy's appearance caused a vivid discussion among the village, as people talked with one another.

Soon, news came from the clan leader pavilion.

"Xiong clan still has a large number of survivors."

"They retreated on their own, using a Gu that their ancestor left behind, concealing many people at the same time, cheating death!"

"These scumbags, retreating and avoiding battle, causing the wolf tide to come to us."

"Hmph, these Xiong clan people may look rough and large, but their hearts are devious on the inside. Wanting to borrow the power of the wolf tide to weaken us, they are too despicable!"

Gu Yue clansmen were furious.

The appearance of the Xiong clan envoy had caused the Qing Mao mountain's political distribution to undergo a complete shift.

What was thought to be a two-sided competition between Bai clan and Gu Yue clan in the end remained a three-way competition.

But one would understand once they thought about it. The Xiong clan had survived for hundreds of years without falling, they had their own foundations too. Which clan did not have an ancestor, and a trump card?

After the Xiong clan envoy left, Gu Yue Bo immediately called for a clan elder meeting.

"These Xiong clan bastards, they really are nothing good. To think they retreated immediately!"

"Can't look down on anyone indeed. Xiong clan had always ranked behind our clan and Bai clan, and was the weakest among the forces on Qing Mao mountain. But to think they had such a scheme, we have to be more careful from now on."

"They wanted to borrow the strength of the wolf tide to eliminate us. They nearly got us this time, if not for that lightning lycan, we might not have lost so many elders. These people deserve to die!"

"If it wasn't for the Tie divine investigator appearing, two clan leaders might've died. We cannot let them off simply."

"Asking for compensation is a must. It was us and Bai clan working together to settle the problem of the lightning lycan. But to ask for compensation, we need to first discuss and formulate a sum."

The clan elders spoke one after another, discussing until they had a conclusion.

Gu Yue clan would dispatch an envoy towards the Xiong clan. They have to observe Xiong clan's remaining strength.

If Xiong clan was strong, they would join forces with the Bai clan. If the Xiong clan was weak, they might send people to eliminate them and steal the spirit spring.

"So then, who would be suitable enough to be dispatched to Xiong clan?" Gu Yue Bo looked around, asking, "Which clan elder would shoulder this responsibility!"

The hall immediately became silent.

The clan elders look around at each other. No one was willing to go.

The internal conflict was at its peak now, and it was the most crucial moment for the factions to divide the interest cake. If they went to the Xiong clan, their faction would be without a leader and others would make use of the opportunity. When they return, all would've been decided, so by then who would they complain to?

"This old one feels that, to go to the Xiong clan, someone of seniority and experience must go, it has to be someone who can hold his own. Among all of us here, only elder Mo Chen can take on this role!" Gu Yue Yao Ji suddenly said.

Gu Yue Mo Chen snorted, rebuking, "Speaking of qualification, lord Yao Ji has much more experience than me. Especially in terms of fame, I cannot compete at all, I admit complete defeat. Going to the Xiong clan, it seems we will have to trouble lord Yao Ji after all."

"Elder Mo Chen is extremely right, I recommend lord Yao Ji." A clan elder stood up.

"I feel that lord Mo Chen is a more suitable candidate." Another elder immediately rebuked.

The scene was chaotic.

Gu Yue Bo stood at the leader's seat, staring coldly without making a sound.

The medicine faction already had intentions of detaching into its own force, no longer under his control. Thus he did not want to help either, and merely observed the scene.

This was the first contest between the medicine faction and the Mo faction.

The two had their respective political allies, but the current situation was that both leaders made much compromises as well as exchange of benefits. But on a whole, the medicine faction was stronger.

Gu Yue Yao Ji's reputation as well as the Chi faction's inclination, caused this situation.

Gu Yue Bo stared coldly, noting in his heart the factions that each individual belonged to.

As the clan leader, he did not want to see his authority being reduced, and these elders were his competitors. But now he had decided to merely observe, and not strike yet.

"Mo faction controls too much power and resources, and now that they have lost their inheritor, the medicine faction jumped out hurriedly and tried to attack them. Thus, the most crucial aspect of this contest is all on one person."

Gu Yue Bo thought silently, turning his gaze towards Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan had been sitting in his seat, not saying a word.

"It seems this Fang Yuan isn't very close with the Mo faction, and has not gotten a mutual agreement on interest distribution. Otherwise, he'd have helped out already. Is this my chance?" Gu Yue Bo thought.

But at this moment, Fang Yuan suddenly stood up from his seat.

This action, attracted everyone's attention.

What he said next was a shocker. "Going as an envoy, this is an important matter involving the survival of our clan. I am willing to step up, bearing the responsibility of an envoy, and investigate the Xiong clan's current state for our clan!"

"What?"

"Fang Yuan is asking to go?"

"What is the meaning of this? Is he really stupid or acting stupid? Isn't he afraid that when he comes back, all the interests would've been distributed away already!"

The clan elders all showed expressions of shock.

Fang Yuan had his own plans. If he went to the Xiong clan, he might be able to find a chance and instigate a conflict among the three clans. Even if he can't, this is a chance to leave.

"Wait! Anyone here can be the envoy but Fang Yuan alone!" The door suddenly opened and Tie Ruo Nan walked in, barging her way in.

Fang Yuan turned his body to look, and his irises shrunk a little. He saw the Tie family father and daughter walk in, as well as two other people behind them. One looked just like Fang Yuan — it is indeed his brother Gu Yue Fang Zheng, while the other was Gu Yue Jiang He.

"What does Tie divine investigator have to enlighten us on today?" Gu Yue Bo stood up to greet him, his tone slightly unhappy. This was a Gu Yue internal discussion, how could they just barge in like that?

"Gu Yue clan leader, as well as the other elders. My daughter has already investigated the identity of the demonic Gu Master that once assaulted Gu Yue Fang Zheng," Tie Xue Leng spoke.

"Oh? Is that so..."

"That demonic Gu Master, wasn't he instigated by the Xiong clan?"

"Is there a hidden story behind this?"

"Indeed, this demonic Gu Master's true identity is a hunter from a hamlet at the base of the mountain. Only by chance did he manage to become a demonic Gu Master, his name is Wang Er. The reason why he assaulted Gu Yue Fang Zheng, is because of his brother Fang Yuan!" Saying so, Tie Ruo Nan stared intently at Fang Yuan.

"Brother, to think you are such a person!" Fang Zheng standing at one side clenched his fist, showing rage in his eyes.

"What do you mean by this, young lady?" Gu Yue Mo Chen said in a solemn voice.

"Don't tell me, Fang Yuan is the one that hired this demonic Gu Master to assassinate his own brother Fang Zheng?" Gu Yue Yao Ji showed an excited expression.

Even Gu Yue Bo was taken aback, as he adjusted his posture on his seat.

"You're all mistaken." Tie Ruo Nan shook her head. "The truth is, Fang Yuan killed innocent people, murdering old man Wang's entire family, causing Wang Er to take revenge. But Wang Er did not know

that Fang Yuan had a twin brother, thus he mistook Fang Zheng for Fang Yuan, and assaulted him for revenge."

"Young lady, everything needs proof," a clan elder spoke.

"Of course I have evidence. Gu Yue Jiang He, tell us everything that you know." Tie Ruo Nan was prepared for this, not panicking.

Gu Yue Jiang He sighed. He looked at the Tie family father and daughter in fear, slowly walking forward and kneeling on the ground, crying, "It is this subordinate's dereliction of duty, I seek clan leader's punishment!"

Gu Yue Bo's face was grim as water, "Say everything clearly first, do not hide anything from us!"

Back then, when Fang Yuan killed old man Wang's family, it was under Gu Yue Jiang He's area of jurisdiction, and only when he got to the spot did he discover it. Because of the clan evaluation, he suppressed this matter and did not report it. Never would he have thought that today, the matter would be exposed, dug up by Tie Ruo Nan.

"The truth is like this..." Jiang He stammered as he spoke, not adding any details into his descriptions, very simple and truthful.

At this time and place, he did not dare to lie. Fang Yuan was also a clan elder, so he did not dare to exaggerate facts.

"I never would've thought that the truth would be like this!"

"Fang Yuan killed Wang Er's father, and Wang Er came to take revenge, but found Fang Zheng instead. So that's it...."

"Fang Zheng was innocently involved, and blocked the crisis for Fang Yuan."

The clan elders whispered among themselves.

Fang Zheng's clenched fist was even tighter as rage grew in his heart. He could not help but growl at Fang Yuan, "Brother, how can you take people's lives away so easily. That old man and girl, they were innocent mortals. How could you cut them down?!"

Facing his brother's accusations, Fang Yuan was indifferent, as if he did not hear it.

Gu Yue Fang Zheng was not the main point.

Fang Yuan looked at the Tie family father and daughter. Being able to discover the truth in such a short time, they were indeed divine investigators.

Regardless of what Gu worms they used, whatever method to make Jiang He submit and reveal his own secret, they had their ways.

This ability made Fang Yuan even more certain that the matter of him killing Jia Jin Sheng, would definitely be found out by the Tie father and daughter duo. It was only a matter of time. After all this is the Gu world, where Gu can be used to commit crime, and also used to solve crime.

Pressure was intensifying...

Chapter 176: The resolve to sacrifice

"Elder Fang Yuan, is it true that you massacred the whole family of old Wang?" Gu Yue Bo asked with a heavy voice from the main seat.

All the gazes were on Fang Yuan; the young elder coldly smiled, "It is indeed true."

Gu Yue Fang Zheng closed his eyes in grief.

He may have killed many lightning wolves, but he had never taken any human lives. And now that he heard Fang Yuan admitting it himself, he suddenly felt that his own big brother had become so unfamiliar and estranged.

In this estrangement, he also felt fear towards his brother's cruel methods and anger at the loss of innocent lives.

"Fang Yuan, do you not feel any guilt at slaughtering innocents? If you have any difficulties, you can say them out," Tie Ruo Nan spoke as she frowned. She was someone with extremely righteous character, and hated people like Fang Yuan the most.

"So what if I killed them, I don't find it necessary to tell you my story. However, at that time, I didn't know that the missing Wang Er was a demonic Gu Master. It could be said that Fang Zheng was unexpectedly implicated," Fang Yuan spoke honestly.

"Big brother, aren't you going to say something to me?" Fang Zheng opened his eyes; the corners of his eyes had become red.

"What do you want me to say? Comfort you or to apologize?Hmph, little brother, you are too soft," Fang Yuan sneered.

"Damn it, big brother...don't think you are extraordinary just by becoming an elder. I will tell you that I already have the qualifications to breakthrough to Rank three...." Fang Zheng gritted his teeth, veins popping up in his clenched fists.

"Enough!" Gu Yue Bo couldn't continue looking at this anymore and shouted, "Fang Zheng, go back, what decorum are you showing by making a fuss here?"

His words had other meaning and expressed dissatisfaction. Tie Ruo Nan couldn't sense it, but Divine Investigator Tie Xue Leng reacted immediately; he stepped forward and cupped his hands. "Gu Yue clan leader and all elders, it is indeed improper for my daughter to charge in and rush into the lords' discussion hall. This one apologizes for offending everyone!"

The elders promptly stood up and kept on saying Tie Xue Leng was too kind.

Gu Yue Bo's expression also relaxed.

Tie Xue Leng continued, "Since little brother Fang Yuan is involved in Jia Jin Sheng's case and is also a suspect, I hope he remains at the village and will not leave to the other village."

Gu Yue Bo massaged his temples and sighed, "Our Gu Yue clan really hopes we can provide a suitable explanation to lord Jia Fu. Since Divine Investigator is also requesting, I will have to request Elder Fang Yuan to not leave before you are free of suspicions. I hope you can understand."

Gu Yue Bo looked at Fang Yuan, his expression sincere. But his gaze, however, held deep meanings.

Fang Yuan might have killed the whole of old Wang's family, but they were only mortals. How could it be a crime for a Gu Master to kill these mortals? Especially if this Gu Master was an elder of the clan. Thus, there was no punishment.

"Yes." Fang Yuan glanced at Gu Yue Bo and replied expressionlessly.

...

"Damn it, it's like this again!" Tie Ruo Nan punched a tree, causing the leaves to scatter.

She was very indignant as she said with clenched teeth, "It is clearly a murder, but they are turning a blind eye to it and not giving a damn. Father, are the mortals not humans? Why do Gu Masters feel that they have the rights to kill the mortals?"

Tie Xue Leng was silent like a sculpture.

The weather was somewhat gloomy, and the wind blew and tree leaves rustled.

Tie Ruo Nan suddenly lowered her head, her expression was down. "I am sorry, father."

She apologized, "I didn't listen to your advice, and used the Intuition Gu."

"Sigh....." Divine Investigator let out a long sigh and looked at his daughter with a profound gaze, "Child, you have such hatred for evil and is full of righteousness, just like me when I was young. I am happy but also worried."

"Why are you worried?"

"Your ideals are much bigger than mine was at that time. When I was young, my ambition was to capture all the criminals and cram up the Demon Suppression Tower. But as for you, you want to make everyone equal, treating both Gu Masters and the mortals equally, causing law and order to be established in the whole world. Such ambitions and ideals are too big and also very heavy," Tie Xue Leng's words were filled with experience.

"But father, this so-called law, fairness and justice. If we don't treat everyone equally, what meaning do they have? If the young don't have ambitious dreams, then how could they be considered young? I believe it's all a matter of our own efforts. As long as I give my best, it might not necessarily be impossible to achieve!" Tie Ruo Nan spoke excitedly, her two eyes filled with hopes for the future.

Tie Xue Leng was silent for a good while, "There will be a day when you will understand. But, this is good too, young people should walk their paths by themselves. Setbacks will make you mature. Father won't interfere anymore. I only hope you can live the life you want!"

He then took out a letter and gave it to Tie Ruo Nan.

"This is....?!" Tie Ruo Nan tore open the letter and was immediately overjoyed.

This letter was from Jia Fu and it recorded every information regarding Jia Jin Sheng's case, including how Fang Yuan obtained the Liquor worm by rock gambling, how the bamboo gentleman was used to interrogate Fang Yuan, and even Fang Yuan's bidding prices at the second caravan visit where he showed business talent and received Jia Fu's recruitment offer.

Tie Ruo Nan reread the contents of 'Fang Yuan's bidding prices' multiple times; her gaze turned brighter and brighter.

"This Fang Yuan is not only fierce in his methods, but also has cruel nature and is even able to scheme deeply. My intuition tells me he is very suspicious. If he is really the killer, then he should be somewhat afraid. But the bamboo gentleman showed no changes to his lies, how did he do it?" Tie Ruo Nan muttered to herself.

"What are you preparing to do next?" Tie Xue Leng asked.

"It has been a long time since Jia Jin Sheng's death. Everything is fishy and filled with mysteries. Till now, his corpse has not been found and even the place of his death hasn't been deduced. This case is too clean, giving me no clues, except that Fang Yuan is the biggest suspect. Although the clues from Wang Er has been broken, there are no evidences to prove he is the killer. However, because there are no other clues, I can only rely on my intuition to investigate this Fang Yuan!" Tie Ruo Nan enthusiastically replied.

"You feel that Fang Yuan is suspicious?" Tie Xue Leng asked.

"Extremely suspicious!" Tie Ruo Nan immediately said, "This Fang Yuan is clearly only a C grade aptitude, but why is his cultivation speed faster than Fang Zheng's? One could say he had the help from the Liquor worm and the Relic Gu, but this speed is still very fast. Gu Yue clan might not have sensed anything wrong, but this is a case of 'those closely involved can't see as clearly as those outside'. This is the first suspicious point."

"Besides this, there is another suspicious point; his luck. He rock gambled for the first time in his life and bought six purple gold stones, but was able to get two live Gu; a mudskin toad and a Liquor worm. Isn't this luck way too much?"

Tie Xue Leng nodded, "Yes, continue."

"This Fang Yuan looks ordinary, but if we look into him, we will find that the mysteries surrounding him are like the thick fog covering the mountain. Many things that were inadvertently revealed makes one ponder. For instance, his rock dissecting technique; he actually used the Moonlight Gu to dissect rocks and did it without damaging the core. Such delicate control is really unimaginable for a student....wait!"

Tie Ruo Nan paused. She had discovered something as her eyes let out bright and sharp light!

Her gaze landed on a line of words in the letter, and the more she looked at, the more her gaze brightened.

"I found it. This Fang Yuan has a huge problem!" After a long while, she suddenly raised her head and excitedly spoke.

...

The fragrance of the tea in the cup rose with the steam and spread in the study room.

Fang Yuan held the tea cup, then blew the floating tea leaves and drank the hot tea. After that, he leisurely let out some turbid air.

Upon seeing the leisurely attitude of Fang Yuan, Gu Yue Mo Chen did his best to endure and felt the veins in his forehead bulging.

Previously, Fang Yuan had asked for a huge price and he had angrily chased the latter out of his house.

But today, he had no choice but to re-invite Fang Yuan.

All this was simply because circumstances are more powerful than men. Yao faction had been pressuring him from everywhere and the matter regarding his drop to Rank two was going to be revealed sooner or later. Mo faction was in imminent danger; it urgently needed an elder to serve as son-in-law and stabilize the situation.

"This bastard is too vile, making such sky-high demands. Does he really think my Mo faction is bathing in gold?" Gu Yue Mo Chen cursed inwardly, while outwardly putting on a warm smile and speaking in a negotiating voice, "Elder Fang Yuan, your price is too much, it greatly exceeds what my Mo faction can support. Can you decrease it?"

Fang Yuan glanced at Gu Yue Mo Chen. This old man who knew when to give and take was worthy of respect.

In fact, his current situation was also becoming messed up.

The Tie father and daughter were forcing him into a corner. Once it was found out that he killed Jia Jin Sheng, Gu Yue Clan would definitely hand him over to appease the Jia family's anger and simultaneously be able to continue trading with the Jia family caravan every year.

It was almost the crucial moment now, so Fang Yuan softened his tone, "Then we will decrease it by thirty percent. But there is a condition, you need to show me your sincerity by paying forty thousand primeval stones in advance. Also you must hand over a Pig Iron Gu and an Afterlife Grass Gu."

Gu Yue Mo Chen couldn't help but massage his brows when he heard this. He replied in a sunken voice, "Pig Iron Gu will be handed to you, but my Mo faction's warehouse doesn't have any Afterlife Grass Gu. We can't also give the forty thousand primeval stones at once, they will be given to you in installments."

Fang Yuan knew this old fox wasn't speaking the truth, but he was very clear that being too overbearing could instead produce the opposite result.

"That's okay. I will wait for you to send them first, then we can talk about marriage. Before that, I can't guarantee my allegiance." Fang Yuan left these words before walking away.

The study room was silent once more.

A long while later, Gu Yue Mo Chen suddenly said, "You can come out."

A hidden door was pushed open and a young girl walked out. There were tear stains on her face and her eyes were red from the crying.

"Grandpa." She paid her respects; she was Gu Yue Mo Yan.

Gu Yue Mo Chen sighed, "You are also clear on the family's situation. Mo Yan, our family needs your sacrifice, can you understand?"

"Yes." The young girl sobbed and lowered her head.

No matter which world, there is no such thing as a free lunch. Even Fang Yuan contributed a lot of strength to the clan as a clan elder. The only difference is that the amount one pays or obtains, differs from person to person.

Even those kids with golden spoons also cannot freely enjoy the privileges. By receiving the family's nurturing, they needed to have the resolve to sacrifice.

And this resolve was already present in Gu Yue Mo Yan.

She didn't have the least bit of feelings for Fang Yuan, even feeling hatred and disgust towards the latter. But she knew, she had to marry him for the sake of her family, becoming his wife!

Chapter 177: Big brother, how can you do this to me?!

Living Steel Gu is a Rank two Gu, looking like a charcoal briquette, fist-sized and black all over. On the surface, there were numerous holes.

Fang Yuan injected his primeval essence and this Living Steel Gu started floating, rotating on its own, black smoke pouring out from the holes on it.

Chainsaw Golden Centipede coiled around Fang Yuan's leg, its dark-gold colored armor full of injuries, the two rows of razors on its sides tattered and damaged.

But when the steel smoke came over and covered these wounds, they gradually healed.

The black smokey steel essence continued to be used, as the two rows of razors on the Chainsaw Golden Centipede could be seen growing at an observable rate.

Healing Gu varied in a few types. There were some that healed Gu Masters, some that specialised in certain injuries, and those that healed Gu worms.

To the Chainsaw Golden Centipede, the Living Steel Gu is its healing Gu worm.

An hour later, the Living Steel Gu became smaller and smaller. It went from a fist-sized charcoal to a pearl size, eventually vanishing.

It was an expenditure-type Gu.

But its sacrifice brought about the recovery of the Chainsaw Golden Centipede.

At this point, the Chainsaw Golden Centipede was good as new. Its two rows of razors were shiny as new, glowing with a sharp and cold flash. On its dark gold exoskeleton, the injuries were mostly healed, and only five to six light scars remained.

But this was nothing to worry about. In about a few weeks, these scars would vanish through the natural recovery of the centipede.

However, if not for the Living Steel Gu and just relying solely on the Chainsaw Golden Centipede, it would take at least half a year for the razors to fully grow back.

The Chainsaw Golden Centipede was more strong than it was flexible. Although it used little primeval essence and had great attacking power, its weakness was a lack in the healing aspect.

All living beings are equal, in this world there is no all-rounded Gu, there has to be weakness and advantages. Even Rank six or seven Gu and above followed this natural law.

"This way, the Chainsaw Golden Centipede's battle strength is completely recovered..." Fang Yuan stretched out his hand, touching the cold exoskeleton of the Chainsaw Golden Centipede, his face slightly pale.

On his pale face, cold sweat was forming.

"Damn it, it had to come at this time..." Fang Yuan gritted his teeth, his left hand subconsciously pressing his stomach.

His mind entered his aperture, only to see that the white silver primeval sea was still, the entire aperture filled with an oppressed feeling.

All the other Gu had been suppressed to one side. Only above the sea, within the aperture, the Spring Autumn Cicada was glowing with a yellow and green lustre.

At this time, the Spring Autumn Cicada not only had both wings recovered, but its main body also recovered much of its energy.

Just like an object falling from the sky, the closer it gets to the ground the faster it falls, and the Spring Autumn Cicada's recovery rate was the same. After the initial difficult period, as time passed, its recovery speed accelerated.

Thus, the problem came.

The Spring Autumn Cicada was Rank six, while Fang Yuan was only a Rank three Gu Master. His aperture was gradually unable to hold the Spring Autumn Cicada.

Back then, when the Spring Autumn Cicada was weak, the burden on the aperture was not as huge. But now that the Spring Autumn Cicada gradually recovered, regaining its Rank six ability, it caused this tiny temple of Fang Yuan's to be unable to hold this high god.

"If this goes on, I might even die from the Spring Autumn Cicada before the Tie family father and daughter find out the truth! Truly, when your roof has a hole it just has to rain non-stop for days....."

The best solution was to raise his own cultivation level. When he gets to Rank six, the aperture will have the capacity to store the Spring Autumn Cicada again.

But this method takes too long. In his previous five hundred years of life, he also used more than four hundred years to attain Rank six.

He was now a C grade talent with Rank three cultivation. To cultivate to Rank six, he had a severe lack of time.

Other than that, there was another way to solve the problem.

It was to take the Spring Autumn Cicada out of his aperture and raise it outside his body.

But that act had great disadvantages.

Firstly, the Spring Autumn Cicada was not a battle-type Gu, so it could not protect itself. Keeping it in the aperture was safer. Secondly, when a Rank six Gu appears, it would interfere with natural laws and cause a mirage at the location it is at.

Fang Yuan was now at the village where there were many people, and the Tie family father and daughter was on to him as well. Once this Spring Autumn Cicada leaves his body, everyone would find out.

Therefore, he could only feel troubled. "The Spring Autumn Cicada's recovery is getting faster. At this rate, I don't have much time. Once I get the forty thousand primeval stones from Gu Yue Mo Chen, I'll take the Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus and leave this place. As for the Tie family father and daughter, I can resolve it at a later time."

Fang Yuan sighed.

Tie family father and daughter's matter was something that he could only put off and delay. But now, the Spring Autumn Cicada was not giving him time to stall.

He was at his wits end. As time urged him, wasting every minute and second is reducing his lifespan.

A Gu Master being killed by their own Gu worm was not uncommon. Many Gu Masters who forcefully activate their Gu get a backlash from their Gu worm's power and lose their life. Such incidents were everywhere. Gu Yue Qing Shu was the prime example, buried not far away.

...

"Six purple gold stones, each fist-sized. With Fang Yuan's cultivation, he actually opened five on the spot. How could he have so much primeval essence at that time?" Tie Ruo Nan stared at the information on the letter, laughing smugly.

Tie Xue Leng nodded, "You finally found this suspicious point. Indeed, only when you are meticulous can you discover what normal people cannot see. But what can you derive from this suspicious point?"

Tie Ruo Nan closed her eyes, activating the Intuition Gu secretly.

In the darkness, she felt an enlightenment in her mind, and she opened her eyes abruptly. "Instinct tells me, Fang Yuan must have had the Liquor worm from long ago!"

"But instincts are sometimes wrong, they cannot represent truth," Tie Xue Leng reminded.

"Isn't it easy to get evidence? Hehe, as long as he has the Liquor worm, he has to feed it. If he feeds it, there has to be evidence." Tie Ruo Nan's mouth curled into an arc, "Let's go! We'll find Gu Yue Fang Zheng, Fang Yuan's brother once again. As the little brother, he has to be the most familiar with Fang Yuan."

.....

"You're asking about big brother's actions back then?" Fang Zheng showed a complicated expression.

He sighed, recalling, "Back then, big brother was a very outstanding individual. Since young he constantly displayed his talent, making many poems, causing the entire village to put their attention on him. Back then, I admired him and held him in awe. In my heart, he was like a tall mountain that I couldn't climb. Maybe because he was at such a high point, when he tumbled down, the despair was greater. Afterwards during the awakening ceremony, he was tested to have only C grade talent, thus he became discouraged for a long time, sleeping in class and not returning to the hostel at night, buying wine and getting drunk all the time. From that moment on, I realized, big brother was also human..."

"Wait you said, buy wine?" Tie Ruo Nan heard this crucial phrase and caught on to it, squinting.

"Yes, for a period of time, he was dead drunk. Sigh, maybe reality was too harsh. He only had C grade talent, but his brother turned out to be A grade, and he could not accept the truth. Actually, if I was in his shoes, I would understand his feelings and emotions as well," Fang Zheng said.

"Wait let me ask you, from that moment on, Fang Yuan would buy wine to drink every few days?" Tie Ruo Nan asked again.

"Yes, from that moment on, brother fell in love with alcohol, spending a lot of money for wine. For a time, he was in love with the bamboo wine, which is our clan's speciality, a very expensive wine. He snatched primeval stones from his classmates in order to buy wine to drink. This is an overbearing act, thus not a single student liked him. Why, is there a problem?" Finally, Fang Zheng asked in confusion.

"There's a huge problem. I suspect that your brother's Liquor worm wasn't obtained from the gambling rocks, but he had it long ago. Your brother's drunkard act was merely a performance. His real motive was to conceal the fact that he had the Liquor worm, and was feeding it," Tie Ruo Nan replied solemnly.

"WHAT?!" Fang Zheng hearing so, jumped from his seat in shock.

This was shocking information!

"What you just said made me even more suspicious. Where did your brother buy wine normally? I need to investigate." Tie Ruo Nan stood up as well. she was racing against time, moving quickly to solve the case.

"In our entire village, there is only one place selling Bamboo wine, it is that sole inn."

"Then I'll take my leave." Tie Ruo Nan turned around and left.

"Wait, I... I'll go with your guys!" Fang Zheng hesitated, chasing after them.

An hour later.

Tie Ruo Nan walked on the stone pavement, concluding, "Earlier the innkeeper already told me everything, and the situation is clear as day. Fang Yuan buying so much wine, his true motive is to feed the Liquor worm. After that, he purposely went to gamble rocks, and that is to expose the Liquor worm logically in front of everyone. All this, is according to his plans."

On one side, Fang Zheng appeared a little distraught, his face looking a little lifeless.

He did not expect that the truth was really like this!

Long ago, he had once looked down on Fang Yuan, thinking he was a loser, giving up on himself. From that moment on, he felt that the tall mountain was no longer so hard to scale.

But the truth was, everything was Fang Yuan's disguise, his performance, his scheme!

The surrounding people were played by him like fools, believing his lies.

Even he Gu Yue Fang Zheng was no exception!

Looking at it now, his disdain and despise towards his big brother back then, was like a giant mockery of a joke.

"Big brother... in your heart, what place do I hold? In those eyes of yours that pretended to be drunk, was I a huge joke? Big brother! You are such a scheming fox, in your heart, was I childish enough for you to sneer at?!" Fang Zheng screamed in his heart.

He was humiliated, he was furious.

He felt that he was played by Fang Yuan. From the start, he was a clown putting on a childish and laughable act.

He felt the disdain Fang Yuan felt towards him.

"Big brother, how can you treat me like this?!"

"If not for lady Tie, I would still be in the dark. How long do you intend to lie to me, and to the clan? You killed the innocent, taking lives as you wish. Deception and lies, indifferent and inhumane, is that the real you?"

Chapter 178: Black White Grey

Long ago, in Fang Zheng's heart, Fang Yuan was like a tall mountain, so tall he could never scale.

Long ago, Fang Zheng thought that the shadow of this tall mountain would enshroud him his entire life.

But life gave him an unexpected twist.

Fang Yuan being dispirited, let Fang Zheng see his weakness. The tall mountain that he resembled, instantly collapsed.

And yet—

This was actually all big brother's performance, an act?

The collapsed mountain in his heart became enshrouded in a layer of mystery.

"Big brother, exactly what kind of person are you?"

Fang Zheng realized at this moment that he knew nothing about this blood related brother of his.

Fang Yuan's heart was full of scheming, he had too deep of a shrewdness. With his acting skills and the indifference towards taking human lives, Fang Zheng felt infinitely distant towards him.

Along with this distant feeling, there was also a feeling of fear that Fang Zheng did not want to recognise.

This goddamn feeling was back, creeping into his heart.

He tried his best to shrug off this feeling of fear, causing him to subconsciously follow after Tie Ruo Nan's footsteps.

"Lady Tie, thanks for letting me find out the truth and seeing my brother's true side. Helping you is akin to helping myself, so just ask away, I will tell you everything I know," Fang Zheng said earnestly.

Tie Ruo Nan nodded, but then shook her head quickly, "What I need to know, I already understand now. The problem now is, where did Fang Yuan get that Liquor worm from?"

"You are right, this matter is suspicious. During big brother's situation back then, he had not inherited our parent's assets, and at the same time was only a C grade, beginning his cultivation. Where did he get the Liquor worm from?" Fang Zheng frowned.

"In this situation, there's only two causes. One is outside help, and the other is an inheritance legacy. But who would invest in a C grade talent? If it is an inheritance, which is it?" Thinking of this, Tie Ruo Nan stopped in her footsteps.

Inheritance legacy... inheritance legacy...

In her mind, this phrase kept appearing.

She fell into deep thought.

"If it was an inheritance legacy, everything would fall into place. Firstly, the Liquor worm's origin can be explained. Secondly, the reason for killing Jia Jin Sheng is also established!" Tie Ruo Nan thought excitedly.

What perplexed her the entire time, was the killer's motive.

There has to be a reason to kill.

Fang Yuan showed the Liquor worm, and Jia Jin Sheng wanted to buy it. But the value of the Liquor worm is too low to establish a motive to kill.

But what if, Jia Jin Sheng who refused to give up, adamantly wants to buy the Liquor worm from Fang Yuan, thus following him all the way and discovering an inheritance legacy ground.....

What would Fang Yuan do?

"Hehehehehe." Tie Ruo Nan laughed.

Fang Zheng showed a perplexed gaze.

Tie Ruo Nan looked back, "I want to inspect the Gu Yue clan's history records!"

Fang Zheng shook his head, waving his hand, "The history is kept in the clan's forbidden grounds, how can an outsider inspect it?"

"Then can you get in?"

Fang Zheng shook his head, "Only clan elders."

"Is that so... then what can we do now?" Tie Ruo Nan frowned.

"Lady Tie, maybe I can help." From the shadows, a crippled old woman walked out.

It was none other than Gu Yue Yao Ji.

She was still the medicine faction family head, but when she stepped down from the medicine hall elder's position and was replaced by Gu Yue Chi Zhong, also losing an arm, her former authority had almost fully vanished.

But the pursuit of authority was already ingrained in her soul. She understood deeply that collaborating with Gu Yue Chi Zhong was only a temporary solution. The only way was to devour the Mo faction. Only then would she have the ability to take back her medicine hall elder's position.

To absorb the Mo faction, all she had to do was to eliminate their hope.

And this hope was naturally Fang Yuan.

"Divine investigator Tie, to speak the truth, I've been observing both of you for some time. Come with me, I'll bring you into the clan's forbidden area. Hehehe, normally that place would be heavily guarded. But coincidentally, right now I am in charge of protecting the forbidden grounds," Gu Yue Yao Ji laughed sinisterly.

She obviously hoped to harm Fang Yuan indirectly, but if he was innocent, she could definitely slander him using her wicked methods.

In the underground tunnel inside a hidden room, Tie Ruo Nan looked at the Gu Yue clan's historical records.

From the first generation onwards, after Gu Yue clan was built until its golden age, and then its decline, the records contained the information for the last few hundred years. All events, big and small, were recorded in detail.

"This first generation clan leader has a mysterious origin, creating the Gu Yue village singlehandedly. He's most likely a demonic cultivator!" Tie Ruo Nan flipped the first few pages, saying something shocking.

"That's nothing much. Many demonic cultivators, after getting sick of roaming, would choose to spread their bloodline, and establish a clan. A few hundred years later, they would be wiped off their demonic origins, and the descendants would become righteous cultivators. Such situations are actually very common, it is nothing strange." Beside her, Tie Xue Leng said.

"Then all his previous wrongdoings, will it all be spared like that?" Tie Ruo Nan had an indignant expression. "These demonic cultivators caused all those crimes, but when the time is ripe and they feel tired, they would settle down and enjoy their old age. Isn't this too good for them?"

Tie Xue Leng sighed deeply, "Ruo Nan. When I was young, I felt like you too, thinking that this world is in black and white. But after you see more of the world, you will find out that this world is actually grey. Many times can black turn to white, and white can turn to black. Some white can also be more devious than black, and even bear greater sins."

"And demonic cultivators also have their own grievances. Righteous Gu Masters control the cultivating resources, while demonic Gu Masters are all alone, only able to rely on their extreme methods. Those like the first generation clan leader who are able to change their ways, that is the best solution. At least he will no longer cause harm to others. Turning from black to white, he can contribute his strength towards the righteous path."

Tie Xue Leng explained and consoled, but the young girl Tie Ruo Nan did not seem to be convinced.

She shook her head, saying adamantly, "Father, it is not right for you to sympathize with demonic Gu Masters. White is white, black is black. They should be punished for making a mistake. Breaking the law, they should face judgement. If not, where would justice lie, where would fairness lie, where would the law stand?"

"This is not sympathy. Anywhere where there's people, there are interests involved. Places that involves interests will have crime. As long as people exist, crime would never end. My child, you will find out eventually, a person's strength is too insignificant." Tie Xue Leng's voice was experienced and wise, but also sorrowful, "Nevermind. To the current you, it is still too early to say such things, you should concentrate on solving the case."

"Yes, father," Tie Ruo Nan pouted, not agreeing with Tie Xue Leng's pessimistic outlook.

When people are young, they tend to think they can change the world. But after they grow up, they will eventually find out that a person being able to retain their sense of self, and not being changed by the world is already a great success.

As the girl continued to flip, her hand suddenly stopped.

"Fourth generation clan leader... Flower Wine Monk? Li... Liquor worm?" Her eyes shone!

...

Electric currents flowed as the sharp teeth edges cut like blades, shining with a cold light.

A frenzy lightning wolf pounced towards Bai Ning Bing, its wolf claw drawing a shadow in the air.

Bai Ning Bing did not have any movements. As the frenzy lightning wolf's claw became larger in his eyes, he did not have any inclination to dodge.

Suddenly, a white rainbow shot out from his aperture.

The light rainbow burst, and white light shot down like rain. In the light rain, the elegant white snake appeared, its long whiskers bringing about a fairy-like atmosphere.

Towards this Rank five snake Gu, the arrogant frenzy lightning wolf immediately withered, wanting to retreat.

But the white form immortal snake opened its mouth and shot out a cloud smoke.

The white smoke looked slow, but quickly enveloped the lightning wolf.

The frenzy lightning wolf's vision was obscured by the smoke, and it quickly moved back. But no matter how it moved, the white smoke followed it like a shadow, always engulfing its surroundings and not giving it any chance to escape.

White form immortal snake's ability was this lump of smoke. After being enshrouded, one cannot tell their directions, as their vision is dyed in a white smoke.

Wild beasts like lightning wolves relied on their strong vision and had weak hearing. The frenzy lightning wolf was the same, thus its most useful sensory organ being blinded caused it to howl in panic. In its struggle, it broke many trees and mountain rocks as it became more agitated.

HOWL!

It suddenly opened its mouth and shot out a blue thunderbolt.

The thunderbolt shot towards Bai Ning Bing, but he had no plans to dodge.

Crack!

The thunderbolt hit Bai Ning Bing on the chest, penetrating it.

Bai Ning Bing lowered his head and saw the huge hole that the thunderbolt had made, allowing him to see through to the back.

But quickly, the huge hole began to freeze. Layers of white ice covered the injury and the ice slowly melted, turning into flesh.

"This is the Northern Dark Ice Soul physique's true strength. I am ice, and ice is me. Fatal injuries to ordinary Gu Masters can be recovered in just a few seconds for me," Bai Ning Bing thought, as he slowly raised his right arm.

His right arm was ordinary broken, but relying on the Northern Dark Ice Soul physique, it had already recovered fully.

"The white form immortal snake Gu also sensed the Northern Dark Ice Soul physique, thus it entered my aperture. The Northern Dark Ice Soul physique can attract water-type Gu worms to join me! Such great strength, yet so brittle!"

Bai Ning Bing sighed at the heavens.

These days, he did not suppress his cultivation. The Northern Dark Ice Soul physique was getting stronger, but he felt that death was approaching him even faster.

"Great immortal hasn't done anything?" At this time, Bai clan leader came over, asking in concern.

Bai Ning Bing shook his head, "This snake Gu does not recognise me, it is merely attracted by my Northern Dark Ice Soul physique and moved from the clan's spirit spring into my aperture. Only when I am in mortal danger and in a death situation would it come out and protect me."

But the white form immortal snake was not refined by Bai Ning Bing, thus this protection also had its limits.

Like earlier, the frenzy lightning wolf's thunderbolt was too fast, and the white form immortal snake could not react in time, thus Bai Ning Bing was hit head on.

After all, the white form immortal snake was not a defensive Gu.

In Fang Yuan's previous life, Jiang Fan and the River Swallowing Toad was the same. Although Jiang Fan had its assistance, he was still assassinated by a Gu Master.

Bai clan leader sighed. He felt intense regret and pity towards this, yet there was nothing he could do. He had already done what he could.

"Right, the three clan's negotiation results is out. Xiong clan preserved more than half of their strength, we cannot underestimate them. Eventually the three clans came to a decision that there shall be a three-clan tournament. And the compensation will be decided by the results of the competition. Only Gu Masters aged thirty and below can enter the tournament."

"I understand." Bai Ning Bing nodded, "I can already sense it, my life is coming to an end. Having a competition at the end, I am really happy. Thank you, lord clan elder."

"No no, this is also for the sake of the clan." Bai clan leader's expression was embarrassed. It was his suggestion in the first place, and the biggest reason for it was to squeeze out the last remaining value that Bai Ning Bing possessed.

But Bai Ning Bing's gratitude, came from the bottom of his heart.

The white form immortal snake was unmoved, meaning that he was not fated to receive the first generation ancestor's inheritance. But life and death are bound to occur, what fear could he have?

Bai Ning Bing had already found his path, he no longer feared. There was only one lingering battle that he could not let go of.

"Fang Yuan, the three-clan tournament, will you attend it? Don't disappoint me, because right now, I am really really strong..."

Chapter 179: History is written by men

"The Flower Wine Monk begged for mercy on his knees. The fourth clan head was merciful and kind, intending to spare his life. Yet the Flower Wink Monk suddenly launched a sneak attack, and the clan head flew into a rage, killing the Flower Wine Monk on the spot. However, due to the heavy injuries from the sneak attack, he passed away not long after. Alas, demonic path members were indeed treacherous and unworthy of kindness...."

However, as Tie Ruo Nan read through this content, her eyes gradually dimmed down.

"What a pity, this Flower Wine Monk died on the spot and couldn't leave behind an inheritance. If he could leave an inheritance, that would be perfect to explain everything," The young girl sighed inwardly.

Yet she didn't give up and continued to flip through the Gu Yue clan records, until the time was up and Gu Yue Yao Ji rushed them out.

Fang Zheng welcomed the Tie father and daughter outside of the clan pavillion, "Were there any discoveries?"

Tie Xue Leng was silent whereas Tie Ruo Nan gave a bitter smile and shook her head.

Fang Zheng continued, "I just thought of something which might be of help. Big brother and Chi faction worked quite closely, and the Chi faction's elder Gu Yue Chi Lian had once defended him in front of everyone. Lady Tie, do you think this Liquor worm could have been secretly handed over by elder Chi Lian to my big brother?"

"Chi faction?" Tie Ruo Nan frowned.

"Yes. Chi and Mo faction were the most influential factions of our Gu Yue clan before the wolf tide," Fang Zheng explained.

How was Fang Yuan involved with Chi faction? Tie Ruo Nan reflected on this.

She started feeling a headache; this was her first case and she had been full of confidence at first but when she actually started doing it, she felt that it was filled with difficulties.

When she had seen her father solving the cases, it was as if success was guaranteed; all the mysteries were solved with methodical and orderly arrangement. However, she realized how truly difficult it was to solve a case when it was her turn.

There seemed to be no trails sometimes whereas all kinds of weird clues seemed to emerge, causing Tie Ruo Nan to be at wit's end.

It was like she was covered in a dense fog and she didn't know how close or far she was from the truth.

Would this clue regarding Chi faction be of any use?

Tie Ruo Nan couldn't help but feel at a loss, and she subconsciously looked at her father.

"Father should have already discovered some clues, right?" At this moment, the admiration in the young girl towards her father deepened further.

"If it was my father, this case should have already been solved. I am still far away from father's level. But even if I fail, as long as father is here, the truth will come out and the killer will be punished." Tie Ruo Nan felt ashamed but also a sense of pride.

With Tie Xue Leng here, she had no worries that the criminal could get away.

But the young girl quickly shook her head, getting angry. The anger was towards herself.

"Ruo Nan, you are worthless. Didn't you think of surpassing father? How can you surpass him if you have the mentality of always relying on him!?"

"Ruo Nan, cheer up, you can do it!" The young girl pursed her lips, inwardly encouraging herself.

Her spirit boiled up again.

She decided to overthrow her previous conjectures and start over.

"If Fang Yuan didn't obtain the Liquor worm from an inheritance and got it from other people, then this Chi faction would be the biggest suspect. However, why would Chi faction take notice of a C grade aptitude ordinary student and secretly give him the Liquor worm?"

"What does Fang Yuan have that Chi faction felt it worthy to invest in him? Because he is Fang Zheng's brother? No, that is almost negligible. Wait a second, it might not be Chi faction taking the initiative to invest in him. There is another possibility, and that is because Fang Yuan blackmailed them!"

"If it is truly so, what did Fang Yuan have on them to make them hold their nose and obediently compromise with a student that had yet to be a Gu Master?"

Tie Ruo Nan racked her brains and an answer seemed to gradually emerge in her mind.

But this answer was blurry like the light behind a paper window. Tie Ruo Nan could feel its existence but she couldn't grasp and understand it.

"Father." The young girl suddenly raised her head and looked at Tie Xue Leng, "I would like to borrow the Cactus Pointer."

Tie Xue Leng replied in a relaxed voice, "The suggestion given by Cactus pointer is based upon the information the user has. It only speculates on behalf of you and might not be accurate. Are you sure you want to use it?"

The young girl nodded.

Cactus pointer was a seed.

Tie Ruo Nan buried it in the ground then used her palm to press on the soil, transferring her white silver primeval essence to it.

After several breaths, she withdrew her hand. Soon, they could see the soil loosening up, and a young sprout grew out of it.

The newborn sprout was a translucent green, and looked very fragile. It quickly grew, becoming bigger and bigger, and its color changed from fragile greenish yellow to verdant green, then finally to dark green.

Its appearance was similar to a cactus. It had thick flesh, the surface covered with sharp black thorns and was lush green all over.

Within moments, a flower bud appeared on its top part.

The white flower bud gradually grew, becoming charming and delicate. The main body of the cactus, however, was shrinking as if its moisture was being squeezed out.

Tie Ruo Nan stretched her fingers and gently plucked this flower bud. The moment the flower bud was taken out, the cactus started turning grey and completely died after a few seconds.

The cactus pointer was a Rank three consumable Gu.

Tie Ruo Nan carefully opened the flower bud.

The flower bud, however, was not wrapped up with layers of petals, instead appearing similar to a ball of paper.

When Tie Ruo Nan completely opened it, it formed into a neat and square white paper.

There were only one word written on the white paper — 'Aptitude'.

This word would mean nothing to others and might even sound ridiculous. But to Tie Ruo Nan, it was a very important tip.

The cactus pointer was used just like this; it gave insights to the Gu Masters who had racked their brains but couldn't advance forward. It pierced the paper window and let the Gu Masters see the light.

"Right, it is aptitude!" Tie Ruo Nan shouted.

She immediately took out the letter which recorded all the intels collected by Jia Fu.

There was something written in this intel which described the details on when and at what price Gu Yue Chi Lian had bought the Cleansing Water Gu.

"It's this! I only briefed through this earlier and neglected it, not considering the underlying meaning. But the cactus pointer speculated on my behalf and gave me the answer. This Cleansing Water Gu only has one use and that is to cleanse the foreign primeval essence auras from the aperture."

"Why did Gu Yue Chi Lian need it? Hehe, this situation is too common and happens a lot in many clans. He should have bought this for Chi faction's inheritor. Chi faction's inheritor should have a bad aptitude, so Gu Yue Chi Lian poured his primeval essence to raise the former's cultivation. The Cleansing Water Gu is necessary to remove any after-effects from this action. By some chance, Fang Yuan found this secret and used it to blackmail Chi faction, thus forcing them to compromise and give him the Liquor worm."

Tie Ruo Nan kept on mumbling out her conjecture.

"Lady Tie, you are amazing. You could deduce so many things with just this word! But Gu Yue Chi Cheng clearly has B grade aptitude," Fang Zheng said.

"B grade aptitude? Hehe, does that mean it can't be fake? It is very simple to prove this. We only need to examine Chi Cheng's aperture and the truth will be out." Tie Ruo Nan's gaze was burning as her mouth slightly curved upwards.

"That's inappropriate." Tie Xue Leng, however, shook his head disapprovingly.

If this truth was found out, it would be a great blow to Chi faction, leading to turmoil among the Gu Yue village's higher-ups and causing political conflicts.

Tie Xue Leng said, "We came here to solve a case and not to wreck havoc. In the end, we are outsiders and unless it is absolutely necessary, we can't meddle in other clan's politics."

Tie Ruo Nan nodded, "Father is right. Besides this, there are also other ways to prove it. I remember that clans use a Photo-audio Gu to record every important sacrificial ritual. This is a traditional practice and I believe Gu Yue clan isn't an exception. I want to refer to the Awakening Ceremony's image!"

...

"Divine investigator Tie, you have constantly been on the move for so many days and have gone through a lot of trouble to solve the case, please come have tea. As for the image you want to look into, it is stored in the secret room inside the underground cave which is among the clan's restricted areas. It would be inconvenient to let you two enter, but I have already sent someone to get it. It will be here in a short while," Gu Yue Bo spoke with a smile.

"I have troubled the clan leader," Tie Xue Leng politely said.

Tie Ruo Nan and Gu Yue Fang Zheng were standing on the side.

"Divine investigator Tie, if I may be so bold to ask a favor...." Gu Yue Bo suddenly said.

Tie Xue Leng. "Oh? Please speak, clan leader."

"This is our Qing Mao Mountain's internal affair. My clan, Bai clan and Xiong clan have always been in a deadlock but that changed due to the wolf tide. Xiong village evaded the wolf tide with malicious intentions and tried to take advantage of the wolf tide to weaken the other two clans. The negotiation earlier for compensation with them ended up in nothing. Hence, our three clans decided to hold a three-clans tournament. Only Gu Masters at age thirty or below can participate in it, and it will decide the future strength of each clan."

Upon saying this, Gu Yue Bo sighed, "Actually I have already felt that something was strange with Fang Yuan long ago, but couldn't look into it properly because of the wolf tide. If he really is the killer, my clan absolutely won't shield him. But I hope Divine Investigator Tie can delay this for a few days, since the three-clans competition is hosted on the day after tomorrow."

Fang Yuan killed old Wang's whole family, but they were just mortals and it was not worth investigating. What if he killed them? It wasn't a big deal.

However, if he really killed Jia Jin Sheng, then that would change everything.

If Gu Yue clan still protected Fang Yuan, that would mean becoming enemies with Jia family and losing the chance to trade with Jia family caravan again; it would even result in Jia family's retaliation.

Organizations protected their inner members, but if benefits were endangered, the organization could easily give up one or two members for the greater good.

The organization's earliest form came from ancient times. Human clans assembled together for their survival, borrowing each other's strength to gather more food and dividing up their work to hunt more successfully.

Any organization's essence was obtaining maximum benefits.

If one or two members obstructed the organization's path to benefits, then sacrificing them was a natural thing.

Thus, even if there were very few elders in Gu Yue clan right now, if there came a time when they had to abandon Fang Yuan, the clan leader would have no hesitation.

However, the day after tomorrow was the three-clans competition. The results of this competition would decide their future for the next few years as well as the benefit allocation of Qing Mao mountain. As a Rank three Gu Master, Fang Yuan was a vital fighting force for the Gu Yue clan.

Just like Bai clan's clan leader, Gu Yue Bo also wanted to squeeze out Fang Yuan's maximum worth.

Chapter 180: Watching the Awakening Ceremony again

"It's about time, I can't wait any longer."

As the night fell, Fang Yuan opened his eyes in a dark room.

He already took off his Gu Master uniform and was now wearing a black gown which covered his legs. Matched with his long black hair, he would appear like a specter as he moved in the dark.

He was already used to having long hair in his previous life. Some Gu worms needed long hair to show their abilities, like the Black Hair Gu, Steel Hair Gu and so on.

Having long hair was quite convenient as well. You could just cut it short if there came a time where you had to alter your appearance. But for short hair, to grow it in a short period, one needed to rely on specific Gu worms.

Not long ago, he had made an agreement with Gu Yue Mo Chen. Right now, he had already received the Pig Iron Gu and all forty thousand primeval stones. The only thing remaining was that healing grass Gu.

"I can only forget about the healing Gu now. How can everything go as one wishes, reality is full of helpless choices...."

Fang Yuan sighed, then stood up and lightly opened the door before using the Stealth Scales Gu and disappearing into the night.

He was forced by the circumstances to make this move.

Tie father and daughter were drawing in closer, and his plan to be an envoy to Xiong village had been stopped too.

Xiong village was able to preserve most of their strength; Bai clan and Gu Yue clan didn't dare to be overly forceful, thus the compensation talk ended in failure. The three sides then decided on holding a three-clan competition.

Mo faction might have intentionally recruited Fang Yuan, but this move caused Fang Yuan to be in the middle of the political struggle and draw every elder's hostility.

Also adding in Bai Ning Bing who was growing stronger as he approached his death, the whole situation was becoming more unfavorable to Fang Yuan, forcing him into an impasse.

Even if Fang Yuan was an old fox, he still needed strength to support his schemes. Facing such a situation, despite him already using up all his efforts and strength, making much faster progress than he did in his previous life, his Rank three initial stage cultivation was still not enough to overturn the situation.

"The situation is dire, I can only take a risk and bet on this method!" Fang Yuan thought hard, placing his hopes on the Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus.

As long as he plucked the Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus, the spirit spring in the underground cave would be wasted. The clan was sure to madly investigate, but what else besides the investigation?

The spirit spring would already be disabled, and even if they got the Heavenly Essence Treasure Lotus and destroyed it or put it back into the spirit spring again, the spirit spring would not recover.

What could the clan do to survive then?

There was only one thing: that was to seize a new spirit spring!

However, there were only three spirit springs in Qing Mao mountain and each were occupied by one of the three clans. If one was destroyed by Fang Yuan, then Gu Yue clan had only one choice - to make a choice between the two.

This choice was war, a war with either Bai village or Xiong village.

Only by seizing one of the spirit springs could Gu Yue clan have the foundation to continue its existence. There was no need to talk of Gu Masters being able to support their cultivation without the support of spirit spring.

This move was too dangerous, though. But Fang Yuan had no other choice as the Spring Autumn Cicada was recovering so fast that his aperture was already starting to feel a burden. He didn't have much time, so he could only fight back for a sliver of chance at survival and seek life in death.

...

The hall was bright with all the lights.

A Gu Master had already delivered the Photo-audio Gu, but this Gu was currently in Gu Yue Bo's hand. "Divine Investigator Tie, what did you think about my request?" Gu Yue Bo asked smilingly.

Tie Ruo Nan lightly snorted.

Tie Xue Leng ruminated for a while before agreeing, "Alright, if Fang Yuan really turns out to be the killer, I will leave enough time for him to participate in the three-clans competition."

"Father...." Tie Ruo Nan's eyes flashed with a strange light; this was not her father's style.

"Hehe, Divine Investigator's words are worth a lot and he never breaks his promises. This humble one fully trusts you and also thanks you for understanding." Gu Yue Bo's smile became more gentle, however he coldly hummed inside.

Gu Yue Yao Ji had secretly brought the Tie father and daughter into the underground cave and let them look through the clan's official historical records. How could he as a clan leader not know of this?

But he had to restrain his anger because of the approaching tournament and also the complicated political struggles in the clan.

Tie Xue Leng might be a powerful Rank five expert, but he had no way to appease the dissatisfaction in Gu Yue Bo's heart.

"Fortunately, the genuine contents are all recorded in the clan's secret records and only the successive clan leaders can hold them. That official history is for the outsiders to look." Gu Yue Bo was secretly feeling smug.

Gu Yue clan's historical records were divided into official records and secret records.

Official records were hidden in the secret room in the underground cave and its contents were to brainwash the later generations and was a fake, in fact.

But the secret records recorded all the genuine details without any fake details. There were even records of some secrets that could never be divulged.

For instance, the ritual for summoning the Blood Guillotine Gu which could never be recorded in the official records, but was recorded in detail in the secret records.

"Gu Yue clan leader, my father has agreed to your request, now show us the image." Tie Ruo Nan's tone showed her bad mood.

"Even if Divine Investigator Tie hadn't agreed, I would have fully cooperated with your investigation," Gu Yue Bo gently clarified, then he lightly pinched his fingers, smashing the Photo-audio Gu.

Although the Gu broke into pieces, it instead formed into a ball of seven-colored smoke which contained all sorts of noise.

Gu Yue Bo lightly blew on it; this smoke floated into a wall, but didn't pass through.

Like an ink drop falling into water, a colorful imprint began to appear on the spotless wall.

The imprint grew larger until it formed into an image of the former Awakening Ceremony.

Within this image, Fang Zheng quickly found himself and also many other familiar faces.

All these faces held looks of excitement as they looked all around the cave, their faces full of the immaturity of young. They were like young chicks who had just learned to flap their wings and fly out of the nest.

"That is Fang Yuan....." Similarly, Tie Ruo Nan soon found Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan was walking within the group, and although he was looking all around like the rest, his gaze was tranquil and detached. In the group of similar ages, he was like a crane within a group of chicken. If one didn't specifically pay attention to him, normal people wouldn't find any differences between him and the rest.

However, the group in the hall right now were all concentrating on him, exposing this peculiarity.

"Eh? This Fang Yuan is really strange." Right now, even Gu Yue Bo couldn't help but reveal a slightly surprised expression.

The scene on the wall changed to when the group of youths reached the sea of flowers.

The Awakening Ceremony began, and each of the youngsters stepped in the underground river and walked towards the sea of flowers on the opposite bank.

The light of the Hope Gu rose and fell.

There were also the elders' voices which could be clearly heard.

The scenes appeared with such clarity that it felt like one was really there.

First, it was Gu Yue Mo Bei who was found to have B grade aptitude, causing an uproar, then Gu Yue Chi Cheng was also tested to have B grade aptitude.

"It really is strange, this Gu Yue Chi Cheng looks too nervous. His body movements are stiff and his skin color is also not normal, it is just that the light in the underground is dim. But if one carefully looks into it, they will find that something has been applied on his body and that is what is attracting the Hope Gu. Hehe, this is clearly a cheat." Tie Ruo Nan was confident as she observed this.

But in the next moment, she immediately frowned.

It was Fang Yuan's turn. He stepped into the river and started moving towards the opposite bank.

The light from the Hope Gu wasn't vigorous. The higher the hope, the greater the disappointment, and the sighs from the youths and the elders could be heard by everyone in the group.

Everything seemed normal, but Tie Ruo Nan's frowns got even deeper. Because Fang Yuan's expression was calm all along the way.

At that time, his back was facing the elders and the youths; they couldn't see his expression. However, as Tie Ruo Nan observed as a spectator, she saw that Fang Yuan's expression didn't change at all, indifferent and cold.

It was as if, as if.....he already knew this would happen!

"This is impossible! If it was me in his place, a fifteen year old with everyone's expectations on me, but was tested to only have C grade aptitude, how could I not feel the least bit of frustration, disappointment and discouragement? How can this be, how can this be!?" Tie Ruo Nan's frowns were almost forming a knot.

Huge doubts and suspicions covered her mind, even stifling her breaths.

Her heart was beating loudly at this moment as all her thoughts flashed through her mind.

What is going on?

How could this be?

"Wait a moment, aptitude.... Could it be?!" Tie Ruo Nan suddenly raised her head. Her intuition had activated and an extremely bold and crazy conjecture formed in her mind.

Light and shadow reflected upon Fang Zheng's face.

The Awakening Ceremony had been the most important turning point in his life.

Before the Awakening Ceremony, he was living a low and insignificant life; a nobody. After the Awakening Ceremony, however, his life was completely changed. He was basked in the lights and his confidence also burst out.

In his memories, the Awakening Ceremony was a picture of blurriness; he had passed through it without even realizing it.

Right now, as he observed this as a spectator, complicated emotions rose up in his heart which he couldn't explain with words.

Fang Zheng looked at himself when it was his turn. He remembered how inferior and weak he had felt at that time.

Soon, he saw how he had tumbled down into the river and struggled to get up, and was pulled up by his big brother Fang Yuan, how he had cut out a sorry figure.

A smile appeared on his face — this was the former him, the one who was ridiculed by many!

Then he saw himself walking absent-mindedly towards the opposite bank, and saw his body being enveloped by the lights of the Hope Gu along with the shocks and admiration of many.

That time was a moment of glory, a moment of miracle!

An A grade aptitude, his life would no longer be the same from that moment!

"Fang Zheng, I have a question." Tie Ruo Nan suddenly spoke, breaking Fang Zheng's recollection.

"What is it? Please ask. I will definitely answer everything I know," Fang Zheng turned around with a smile.

"It's about your big brother. When your big brother pulled you up, I saw his mouth moving, but there was too much noise in the surroundings. What did he say to you, could you tell me the exact words he told?" Tie Ruo Nan asked with a bright gaze.

"His words....." Fang Zheng tried to recall, "He seemed to have said...road?"

"Right. It was road." Fang Zheng's eyes brightened, "I remember it. He said to me, 'The road to the future will be interesting'. Huh? Strange, I didn't think anything of it at that time, but now that I recall it, I think big brother's words contained profound meaning... as if, as if he already knew I had A grade aptitude!"

"No, he didn't mean the A grade aptitude, but something else." Tie Ruo Nan's body trembled, her expression complicated as she let out a breath of turbid air.