

Read Keyboard Immortal - Chapter 1851: Reunion

Chapter 1851: Reunion

Yan Xuehen and Yun Jianyue's thoughts were both running wild. They felt more and more admiration for Zu An and no longer looked at him like a junior. Instead, he was a real, mighty man whom even they admired. They looked at his side profile and thought, He really is handsome.

As they continued to stare at him, each of them suddenly noticed that the other woman was looking at him the same way.

Why is the stone cold woman (witch) looking at him like that? Don't tell me she likes him? How is that possible?!

The two women quickly rejected that suspicion. They had been enemies for so many years and understood each other's personalities best. They really couldn't imagine how someone like that would like this guy.

Fortunately, the voices in the distance got rid of their embarrassment. Judging from their tone, it seemed they hadn't dared to approach earlier when they saw the tribulation lightning, but now that the lightning had dispersed, they had decided to come and see what was going on.

Yun Jianyue and Yan Xuehen both panicked. They knew that there would definitely be a mix of good and bad people in this kind of situation. Many of them no doubt had some intention of picking up the spoils. For example, if the tribulation was a failure, they would try to see if they could pick up some of the cultivator's magic artifacts, weapons, and other things.

Furthermore, the women both understood what kinds of appearances they had. There had never been a lack of rash individuals when they wandered the world. They had previously not needed to fear any others due to their cultivation. However, both of them had practically been completely sucked dry by Zu An and couldn't recover in time at all. Forget about fighting, they couldn't even move. If some bad people saw them, it wasn't too hard to imagine what would happen.

They were busy panicking when they saw Zu An suddenly sit up. He wrapped his hands around their waists, picked them up, then flew into the distant forest.

Yan Xuehen and Yun Jianyue were stunned, exclaiming, "You were pretending before?!"

The two women had displeased expressions. Zu An was clearly vigorous and healthy, and yet he had taken advantage of the two of them by lying in place.

Zu An said awkwardly, "It's a misunderstanding, a misunderstanding. I was worried that the two of you would be in danger, so I barely managed to recover a bit of strength in a moment of desperation!"

"Hah!"

"Hmph!"

Yan Xuehen and Yun Jianyue stood on the same front for the first time ever.

Fortunately, both of them didn't really care too much about that. Yan Xuehen quickly said, "Hurry and find Zhao Han's Human Emperor Seal. It would be bad if those people picked it up."

"That's right. It's your spoil of war that you earned with such difficulty, so how can you let others get their hands on it?!" Yun Jianyue added, her eyes widening.

Zhao Han had been blasted into ashes by that lightning whip, and many of his treasures were also destroyed. However, that Human Emperor Seal was a deity-grade weapon, so there was no way it would be destroyed by tribulation lightning.

Zu An felt warm inside. These two really did think for his sake. He didn't waste any more time and silently sensed the surrounding auras.

"I found it!"

He reached out in a certain direction, and a strand of clear light flew back. It was the Sun Slaying Arrow, which wasn't a single-use item. The battlefield was under his control, so he could naturally take it back. Then, he reached out in another direction, and a golden light flew toward him. It was quite large, but when it reached his hand, it gradually shrank, becoming a rather exquisite jade seal. As it floated in his palm, the ruler's seal flowed with brilliant color. It was very clearly an extraordinary item.

Yan Xuehen said with a frown, "This Human Emperor Seal is a hot potato. If you take it out, everyone will know you killed Zhao Han. Cleaning up after this will be pretty troublesome."

Zhao Han was the Great Zhou Dynasty's emperor, after all. He was already like a guardian deity in their eyes. If they found out that Zu An had killed him, the court definitely wouldn't leave the matter be. The people would likely also holler for his head. At that point, there would be nowhere left for him to remain in the world.

"Why are you stressing out over things like that? At worst, he'll just join our Holy Sect. If our people found out you killed the emperor, not only would they not hate you, they'd even see you as a great hero. I could even step aside and give you the position of sect leader if you want, and I'm sure all of them would be fine with that," Yun Jianyue said with a big smile. Now that Zhao Han was dead, her mood had become much better.

Yan Xuehen was alarmed. She quickly said to Zu An, "You're not allowed to go to the Devil Sect!"

If that happened, they really would become sworn enemies.

Before Zu An even got a chance to reply, Yun Jianyue retorted, "Stone cold woman, does he need your thoughtless remarks when making his decision? Who even are you to him?"

"I am his..." Yan Xuehen almost blurted out something, but when she looked into Yun Jianyue's eyes, she felt a bit of guilt. She quickly changed what she was going to say. "I am his wife's master. Don't tell me that I cannot lecture him at all?"

"Tsk, you were acting so self-confident and righteous that I almost thought you were his wife." Yun Jianyue harrumphed. "Besides, what wife? They already divorced. My disciple has affinity with him, so I think she would be the best candidate for the main wife."

"Shameless!" Yan Xuehen snapped, curling her lips.

"Who are you calling shameless?" Yun Jianyue retorted in annoyance.

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As he watched the two fight, Zu An felt as if his head would explode. He quickly shushed them. "Be quiet, someone is coming." He put the Human Emperor's Seal away to prevent its aura from leaking out. Even though it was a hot potato, it was formidable. He naturally couldn't let anyone else have it.

Figures rushed over one after another. There were elders and youngsters, and they all had different outfits. They were clearly not of the same faction.

"A terrifying lightning tribulation took place here after all," an elder remarked as he looked at the mountains that had been scorched black; he clearly looked like someone who occupied a high position. His voice trembled a bit.

Tribulation was something that had only existed in legends. They had never expected to come into contact with something like that so closely.

"I never could have expected that someone could really face tribulation. I wonder which senior it was," another middle-aged man in blue added. Judging from his bearing, he was clearly a sect master.

"Recently, we first experienced the opening of a great tomb, and then someone faced tribulation. More and more abnormalities are taking place. This world might not be peaceful anymore," another middle-aged man with a jade-like countenance said with a sigh. According to his tone, it seemed as if they all knew each other.

Just then, another, more sinister voice added, "Judging from the looks of things, he must have failed the tribulation. Apart from Immortal Ruler Baopu in the past, when have we ever seen someone succeed in the past few millennia?" He was a shriveled and ugly elder. There was a sinister energy emanating from his entire body. It was clear that he didn't cultivate any orthodox method from a single glance.

"Sir Blood Spirit, please watch your words. Every single being who can bring down tribulation is a pioneer among our seniors. They have proven that there is still a path ahead. Even if they have failed, they have shown the way, so they are worthy of our respect," the blue-clad middle-aged man said seriously.

"Tsk, you speak in such a high-sounding way, but don't you still covet the treasures they left behind? You all can sigh and lament all you want, but I'm going to search for them first. The spoils belong to those destined for them!" The shriveled ugly elder harrumphed, and his figure flickered. He began to

search the area. This lightning tribulation covered a range of dozens of li, so finding a magic artifact in the area wasn't that easy.

The blue-clad middle-aged man's expression changed a bit. He cupped his hands toward the others and began searching in a different direction.

With these two taking the lead, for fear of others finding the treasure before them, the others moved out as well.

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Zu An's group of three actually saw some familiar faces among the group. One was a tall and handsome young man, and another was a sweet looking young lady. When the two stood together, they drew the attention of everyone around them. The pair was none other than Heavenly Sorrow Sect's representative disciple Zhi Yin and his junior sister Zhao Xiaodie.

There was another man next to them. He could be considered handsome by normal standards, but he had the spotlight stolen from him when he stood next to them. He was Mount Luofu's representative disciple, Luo Dongjiang.

As luck would have it, their group headed in the direction of Zu An's group. They chatted with each other as they looked for magic artifacts.

"I wonder where the other martial brothers and sisters are. We were mysteriously trapped in this secret dungeon and have no idea when we'll be able to leave," Zhao Xiaodie grumbled. It was clear that she still hadn't heard news of her father King Qi. Even though she was worried, there was no grief visible on her face.

"Exactly. We were looking for the others, but we only managed to find each other. I wonder where the rest of them went," Zhi Yin said, looking vexed.

Luo Dongjiang remarked with a mocking tone, "Brother Zhi Yin probably wishes to find Goddess Chu the most, right?"

Zhi Yin's face turned red. He said, "Brother Luo, please do not joke around. I was only wondering whether the entrance of the secret dungeon would only appear after we gathered everyone. I am not searching for anyone in particular."

He reflexively gave Zhao Xiaodie a look. He knew she liked him and was worried that she would get upset because of this. However, to his surprise, her expression was completely calm.

“But senior sister Peng was trapped in that great tomb. Doesn’t that mean we’ll never be able to leave?” Zhao Xiaodie asked worriedly.

Zhi Yin was stunned, but he quickly replied, “That was just my suspicion. It might not be true.”

“That great tomb was so scary. Not even Miss Peng with her cultivation was able to escape,” Luo Dongjiang said, still feeling lingering fear.

Their party once again sighed, remembering how dangerous that great tomb had been.

Zu An’s group exchanged a look. Emptiness Isle’s Peng Wuyan actually hadn’t managed to get out? That woman really was unlucky. Previously, she had been replaced by Qiu Honglei in the competition; later, she had finally managed to enter this secret dungeon, and yet ended up losing her life for it.

The group members were chatting with each other when they heard someone muttering, “Hm? That’s strange. There was clearly a streak of golden light that flew in this direction. Why can’t I find it?”

The shriveled, ugly Elder Blood Spirit flew over. He gave their party a displeased look and asked, “Did you get to it before me?”

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Chapter 1852: No Way!

Zhi Yin’s group replied with an unhappy tone, “What do you mean, got to it first? We haven’t even found a thing yet.”

These individuals were all among the best of the disciples from the different sects. Normally, they were constantly surrounded by attention. If not for the fact that they were in a different world, they would already have flipped out if someone interrogated them like this.

“Hmph, do you think I’ll believe you just because you said you don’t have anything? This old one won’t trouble you. Let me search your storage pouches, and then I’ll let you go.” Elder Blood Spirit harrumphed.

When they heard his domineering tone, the three’s expressions changed. They replied, “Why should we let you search us?”

“Why?” Elder Blood Spirit repeated, his expression turning cold. “Little infants, could it be that your elders never told you that once you leave home, strength is above all?”

Luo Dongjiang was so angry he actually laughed, saying, “This sir is acting so egotistical. Do you really think we’re that easy to bully?”

With the strength of their group of representative disciples, if they worked together, they could even fight against their sects’ veteran elders. An ordinary master wasn’t even worthy of them fighting together.

Their party hadn’t wanted to cause trouble in an unfamiliar environment and had always backed down, and yet now, the other side was going way too far. How could their arrogant and haughty selves endure that? They all began to berate him.

Elder Blood Spirit laughed sinisterly and said, “You’re already so arrogant while still so young. If I don’t properly discipline you, what kind of a senior would I be?”

He raised his hand, and a white bone palm fanned open, flying at Luo Dongjiang.

Luo Dongjiang had actually already been prepared for an attack, but he had never expected the opponent to be that fast. With a loud and clear smack, his face was struck. Even though the palm’s power wasn’t that great, it made his face red and swollen because it was extremely fast. The humiliation factor was definitely high.

He was the glorious representative disciple of Mount Luofu. When had he ever experienced such a thing before? He roared with anger, drawing his weapon and charging forward.

On the other hand, Zhi Yin and Zhao Xiaodie weren’t just enjoying the drama. They knew that they had to fight together, so they tacitly agreed to assist Luo

Dongjiang. The unified strength of the three daoist sects' next generation heroes was definitely remarkable.

"Hm? No wonder you were so full of youthful vigor. You do have some skills," Elder Blood Spirit said, raising his brows. Unfortunately, his eyebrows had already fallen off, so it was quite the strange sight.

He moved strangely as he jumped straight into the fray, leaping from side to side. The three youngsters weren't able to coordinate their attacks at all, and all of them felt as if they were fighting against him one on one. They were all alarmed.

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On a distant treetop, Yun Jianyue yawned as she watched the scene. She said, "How senseless. Let's hurry and go find Honglei's group. They must be worried to death right now."

She was the Devil Sect Master, so she wasn't too fond of these daoist sect disciples to begin with. She wouldn't even mind at all if they ended up dying here, as that would be beneficial for the Devil Sect.

Yan Xuehen frowned and said, "No, as a fellow daoist, I cannot just watch without doing anything."

Yun Jianyue sneered, retorting, "What else can you do but watch? Do you even have an ounce of strength left? If you go up there, you'll only be donating yourself. You're so pretty I reckon that Elder Blood Spirit wouldn't mind having some fun with you."

Yan Xuehen's expression changed a bit. She knew that what Yun Jianyue said was true. Zu An's suction had just been too strong before, leaving her completely numb and limp. She couldn't muster even an ounce of strength. There was no way for her to do anything, so she could only look pitifully at Zu An. She was usually cold in nature, so she wasn't too good at asking for help. She couldn't find the right words and could only gesture with her eyes.

Zu An was about to say something when Yun Jianyue said first, "You're not allowed to save them. That Zhi Yin fought against your Manman, while Zhao Xiaodie is King Qi's daughter, someone who bears hostility against you. Also, that Luo Dongjiang also provoked Honglei before. If you save them, won't you just be striking our faces?"

Zu An was speechless. He felt a huge headache. Having two beauties who were on opposite camps made it so that regardless of which choice he made, he would offend one side.

Suddenly, there was a change in the battle. Zhao Xiaodie was the first to be blasted flying with a groan. Then, Luo Dongjiang followed, and after that, it was Zhi Yin. They were all covered in injuries. Judging from the sequence, it was easy to tell the order of their strength.

Zhao Xiaodie gritted her teeth. Her entire body turned into an expanse of butterflies and swept toward Elder Blood Spirit.

“Hm? There’s actually poison. Unfortunately for you, this old one fears poison least of all,” Elder Blood Spirit remarked. Green light flashed across his body, as if he had sucked away that poison. Then, he released a shriveled hand, grabbing at the endless butterflies. With a cry of alarm, the butterflies scattered and Zhao Xiaodie appeared, her neck clasped in his hand.

“Little miss, you’re actually quite pretty,” Elder Blood Spirit remarked. His long and thin tongue reached out and gave her tender white cheek a lick.

Suddenly, a terrifying wind swept over. Elder Blood Spirit shuddered. He quickly raised his head and moved out of the way.

Zhao Xiaodie seized the chance to break free from his control and escaped a hundred meters away. Her small, beautiful face was full of fear. She had almost been caught just now. Judging from how perverted the opponent looked, it wasn’t hard to imagine her fate if that happened.

Elder Blood Spirit voiced his surprise. Then, a hint of rapt joy appeared on his face. He exclaimed, “It was actually an immortal-grade weapon! Haha, even if I couldn’t find the one who faced tribulation, this is enough compensation.”

Zhi Yin held the Shadowless Ball in his hand. He had a really frustrated expression. He couldn’t win against the opponent if he didn’t bring out this weapon, but now that he had, the opponent clearly desired it. They really were unlucky today.

Elder Blood Spirit didn’t give them any time for regrets. He moved as fast as lightning. He changed his initial plans from dealing with Zhao Xiaodie first; instead, he focused all of his strength on Zhi Yin to steal his Shadowless Ball.

Zhi Yin was quickly put in a desperate situation. Zhao Xiaodie quickly rushed forward to help him. After some hesitation, Luo Dongjiang also used his forbidden skill and charged forward.

On the tree, Yan Xuehen frowned, remarking, "Even though their cultivations aren't bad, that Elder Blood Spirit has already stepped into the grandmaster rank. He isn't someone they can defeat at all."

Sure enough, in the blink of an eye, many more shocking injuries appeared on their bodies.

Bang!

There was a loud snap. Luo Dongjiang had been smashed flying by a palm, knocking him straight into a tree. The tree was so thick it would take three people's arms to wrap around it, and yet the impact had snapped it instantly.

Luo Dongjiang coughed out a mouthful of blood, his face deathly pale. It was clear that he was seriously injured. He instinctively wanted to charge again, but his body quickly stopped. As he watched the opponent's ghost-like figure dart around, he knew that even if they fought to the death, they still wouldn't be his match.

Since his attention is completely on those two right now...

Some hesitation appeared on his face, but in the end, he clenched his teeth. He turned around and ran.

With him out of the fight, the pressure on Zhao Xiaodie increased considerably. When she saw him run away, she was shocked and alarmed, exclaiming, "Senior brother Luo, where are you going?!"

Luo Dongjiang quickly called out, "Junior sister Zhao, I'm going to look for help. Hang in there!" His figure disappeared into the distance as he spoke.

Elder Blood Spirit's attention was completely on the Shadowless Ball, so he didn't even feel like chasing after Luo Dongjiang.

Zhao Xiaodie felt her heart sink. Who else did they know in this world? Who could Luo Dongjiang ask for help? He was clearly using this chance to run away, and he even wanted the two of them to hold the enemy back.

Elder Blood Spirit also roared with laughter, saying, "Even a married couple would abandon each other in the face of disaster, while you three were just traveling companions. Why would he risk his life for you?"

Zhi Yin was shocked and furious as well. He released a great roar. While the opponent was avoiding the Shadowless Ball, he rammed into him with Push of the Iron Mountain to try to seriously injure him.

"This move of yours is a bit interesting. It actually contains the power of a mountain collision," Elder Blood Spirit said. Despite that, he easily dodged to the side. Then, his leg extended outward, borrowing Zhi Yin's momentum to throw him.

Zhi Yin slammed into the ground. Now, he was the one who had to suffer the recoil of Push of the Iron Mountain. Loud cracks came from his body as his bones shattered. He no longer had the strength to keep fighting.

Zhao Xiaodie rushed over frantically to try to save him, but the opponent's shriveled arm passed through her complicated attacks and grabbed her neck.

When they saw that, a hint of despair flashed across Zhi Yin and Zhao Xiaodie's faces.

Killing for another's treasure, dying a humiliating death...

All kinds of verses appeared in their minds.

"Haha, my luck really is pretty good today. Not only did I obtain an immortal-grade weapon, there's even a dainty beauty for me to enjoy," Elder Blood Spirit said. He sealed Zhao Xiaodie's acupoints before tossing her to the side.

Suddenly, he looked in a certain direction and called out, "You people over there, you've already watched this drama for so long. I reckon that you've watched enough by now, right?"

Zu An was speechless. Even though Yun Jianyue and Yan Xuehen's voices were quiet, he hadn't expected Elder Blood Spirit to pick up on them. This person's cultivation really couldn't be underestimated.

He could only carry Yun Jianyue and Yan Xuehen with him as he jumped off the tree, calling out, "If I said that we were just passing by, would you let us go?"

He didn't want any more trouble, so he took out a mask to cover his face.

Meanwhile, Yan Xuehen and Yun Jianyue acted as if they had found the most precious treasure. They frantically grabbed at the masks to hide their faces. They even buried their heads into his shoulder without any shame, for fear of any of these juniors recognizing them.

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Chapter 1853: An Incredible Secret

When he saw the three of them, Elder Blood Spirit's eyes widened. Even though Yan Xuehen and Yun Jianyue's appearances were ordinary, just their bodies and bearing made them top-notch goods.

He gave their faces another look. They were still ordinary. No matter how he looked at it, those things didn't match at all! He was full of experience in the world of warriors and immediately suspected that they were wearing masks to hide their astonishing beauty. That made it even harder for him to hold in that itch inside. He really wanted to undo their masks to see their beautiful faces.

His luck with the ladies really was incredible today! There had been a gorgeous little beauty just now, and two more incredible beauties had just appeared. He was no doubt going to really wear himself out tonight.

Zhi Yin and Zhao Xiaodie looked at the three who appeared. The light in their eyes gradually dimmed. They were trying to flee a disaster and saw someone passing by. Even if it wasn't someone who was a match for Elder Blood Spirit, adding a few more variables would still be good.

And yet, who could have thought that it would be three people like this? The man in the middle looked completely ordinary, and there wasn't even a single ki fluctuation coming out of him. He was clearly just an ordinary person. The two women did have extraordinary bearing and figures, but they were lying on the body of the man in the middle as if they didn't have a single bone in their bodies.

Who else could it be but some young master who had come out to play with his concubines, but was accidentally discovered here? Unfortunately, they had ended up running into the vicious Elder Blood Spirit. Everything most

likely boded ill for them. It really was a pity for those two outstanding ladies. They likely wouldn't be able to escape humiliation.

"Passing by? Why would you hide in a tree if you were passing by?" Elder Blood Spirit asked with a sneer.

"We were hiding in a tree to avoid wild beasts. How could we have known that we would just happen to pass by you?" Zu An replied. He was starting to get a headache. He really didn't want to get involved in this matter. The main reason was that Zhao Han had died nearby, so he didn't want others to know that he had appeared nearby to avoid others coming up with unnecessary ideas. He had previously met Zhi Yin and Zhao Xiaodie, so he couldn't just kill them to silence them, right?

He had never expected that even though his group had clearly been far away from the conflict, they would still end up being caught up.

When he heard that, Elder Blood Spirit's eyes immediately lit up. He asked, "You were here the entire time? Then doesn't that mean you know who was facing tribulation here?"

That was also what most of the experts of this world were curious about. They had wanted to come and take a look to see which one of their old friends had such qualifications.

Zu An acted stunned, replying, "That was tribulation? I thought it was just some lightning. I was wondering why the lightning sounded so scary."

Elder Blood Spirit frowned, asking, "Don't tell me you didn't see anything here?"

"I didn't. The thunder was too loud. I was sleeping here with my two wives," Zu An said. As soon as he spoke, there was a burst of intense pain from his waist. The two women were both upset and secretly pinched him.

Yan Xuehen wore a mask, so she didn't have to worry about the redness on her face being seen by others.

This kid is going more and more overboard! If they really found out my identity, how would I face others in the future?

Yun Jianyue was similarly depressed.

Does an honorable Devil Sect Master not need any face? If those of my sect found out that I had a man, wouldn't they die from laughing? I probably wouldn't even be able to hold my position as sect master anymore...

At the same time, she was a bit surprised that this brat actually even dared to tease that stone cold woman. He really was getting bolder and bolder.

The other three were looking at him with even weirder expressions. Why did this ordinary looking fellow have two such extraordinary beauties? They had even been keeping him company on that tree... Just the thought alone was a bit stimulating.

Just then, Elder Blood Spirit said, "It's fine. Take out your storage pouches and let me examine them. If you're not hiding my item, I'll let you two go."

"But we don't have a storage pouch..." Zu An replied. He was thinking about how to deal with Zhi Yin and Zhao Xiaodie.

"Then take off your clothes and let me examine your body," Elder Blood Spirit said. His eyes couldn't help but dart toward the two women.

They really were getting him more and more excited. Both of them had their own unique beauty and characteristics. Even if their faces really looked like that, judging from their figures and temperament alone, they were already rare goods.

I am still willing to fight bravely through a difficult night!

When they sensed the wretched look in his eyes, both Yan Xuehen and Yun Jianyue's expressions darkened. What kind of status did they have? When had they ever been provoked like this before?

Zu An asked seriously, "Is it enough if I leave behind all of my belongings here?"

"Of course not. I want your life. What right does a brat like you to have to enjoy these two great beauties?" Elder Blood Spirit snapped. He got more and more angry the more he thought about it. These two extraordinary beauties really were wasted on this damn rich young master!

You have successfully trolled Elder Blood Spirit for +444 +444 +444...

He quickly leaped toward Zu An. His shriveled hand grabbed at Zu An's head like a falcon's claw. Even a giant bear's skull would be crushed like a squash under his grip. As the other person had already seen what happened just now, he naturally wanted to silence him. As for the two extraordinary beauties, he would leave them behind to slowly enjoy them.

Suddenly, a blinding burst of sword radiance appeared before his eyes. He was sure that it was the most dazzling sword he had ever seen in his life. It was as if a blazing sun had risen in front of his eyes. He was horrified and quickly changed his claw to a defensive stance. All kinds of techniques appeared from his body.

He was one of the strongest in this world. Apart from the Ghost King, Divine Firmament Sect's Sun En, the Adventurer's Guild president Zang Ao, and a few others, he didn't have to fear anyone with his sinister skills. That was partly why, even though he was clearly alone, he dared to speak rudely to others. At his level, ordinary cultivators didn't pose any threat to them anymore. The sword energy looked a bit terrifying and exaggerated, but there was no way it was stronger than Sun En's techniques, right? He had even survived a few moves from Sun En.

However, his expression quickly changed. Those techniques he was normally immensely proud of, as well as his countless body-protecting treasures, all burned away like the first snow before a blazing sun. They all melted away instantly.

What followed them was his hand, his body, his head...

Is there really someone this strong in the world? Who is this dog spawn who's so damn strong already, and yet is pretending to be some pig?!

That was the final thought he had in his life.

You have successfully trolled Elder Blood Spirit for +888 +888 +888...

Meanwhile, Zhi Yin and Zhao Xiaodie were stupefied. Their jaws practically fell to the ground. That incomparably powerful demonic god-level existence in front of them had actually been wiped out in an instant by a single sword strike?

They looked down at the ground, moving stiffly. Before them was a deep crack along the ground that extended all the way into the distance. The two

looked in that direction, and both of their bodies trembled all over. There had originally been a mountain there, but now, it had actually been directly cleaved in half down the middle, leaving a giant canyon.

The power of a single sword was actually so terrifying?!

Forget about them, even Yun Jianyue and Yan Xuehen stared blankly into the distance. The power of Zu An's sword even exceeded their imagination. It didn't even seem to be that far off from Zhao Han at his strongest.

When he saw the two women's confused looks, Zu An said, "My strength increased just earlier. I can't really control it yet."

Elder Blood Spirit was around the grandmaster rank, and yet the soul power he offered had only made Zu An's experience bar increase a tiny bit. It was easy to see just how difficult it was to get stronger at his current level.

He hadn't expected the sword strike to create the commotion it did, though. He could vaguely make out quite a few powerful cultivators rushing in the group's direction. Fortunately, because they felt some restraining fear, they didn't dare to rush over at full speed. Otherwise, they could end up provoking unwanted trouble.

Zu An didn't want trouble either, so he took the two women and turned around to leave. However, as soon as he moved a few hundred meters, he suddenly stopped and asked, "What are you following us for?"

As it turned out, Zhao Xiaodie tried to follow them while staggering along.

"Big brother Zu, is that you?" Zhao Xiaodie called out with misty eyes, her expression full of expectation.

Zu An was stunned.

I'm even wearing a mask, yet you still recognize me?

Yun Jianyue and Yan Xuehen narrowed their eyes.

Don't tell us this guy even has an affair with King Qi Manor's princess?

"I don't know what you're saying," Zu An said coldly.

“If you aren’t big brother Zu, we have nothing to do with each other. Why did you save me?” Zhao Xiaodie asked excitedly.

Zu An immediately felt an intense pain at his waist and he almost grimaced. He finally controlled his voice and said, “I was just dealing with some passing flies. I didn’t intend to save you.”

After saying that, he didn’t continue talking, and instead quickly took the two women into the distance. With just a few steps, he disappeared without a trace. The flesh around his waist could well be pinched apart if he stayed behind and spoke any more, after all.

When she saw them disappear, Zhao Xiaodie knew that she couldn't catch up to them. However, there was an excited smile on her face. She muttered to herself, “Big brother Zu, I know it’s you. Back then, you did... that to me. I remember your body’s smell.”

She had always had a sharp sense of smell. As long as she got close enough to someone, she could remember their smell.

The smell of the two women at his side was also a bit familiar. Could it be those two? However, how could those two unapproachable beings permit the same man to hold them at the waist? Furthermore, how could they allow themselves to fall into his arms completely limp?

Wait, big brother Zu said he was sleeping with the two of them on a tree?

Zhao Xiaodie’s eyes immediately widened. She felt as if she had discovered an incredible secret.

No wonder he isn’t willing to admit his identity! No wonder they had to wear masks!

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Chapter 1854: Return

Now, Yun Jianyue also doubted Zu An. She asked, “Little An, what kind of relationship do you and that princess really have? Back then, on Golden Peak, King Qi also said he wanted to give her to you.”

Yan Xuehen, who had been jerking from side to side from the discomfort of being carried, also quieted down. She perked up her ears to listen to his reply.

“We don’t have much of a relationship. We just met once before in King Yan Manor. Big sis Yan was there at that time too,” Zu An said, feeling a headache coming on. “At the time, King Qi was desperate for any help he could get, so it was just an empty promise he made to rope me in.”

Yun Jianyue gave Yan Xuehen a curious look. Yan Xuehen said calmly, “She clearly didn’t like you very much the last time we met. Why does it seem as if her attitude toward you is now entirely different? She even recognized you with your mask on.”

Yun Jianyue raised her brows, saying, “Stone cold woman, I’ve never seen you speak so much at once. I didn’t expect you to be so interested in these love affairs of his.”

Yun Jianyue harrumphed. “Can’t I just ask a bit for Chu Chuyan’s sake?”

“Right, I’m also asking for Honglei’s sake,” Yun Jianyue said as she pinched Zu An again. “Hurry up and tell us honestly. Just what kind of relationship do the two of you really have?”

When she saw Yun Jianyue’s movement, Yan Xuehen couldn’t help but also reach out her hand.

I didn’t expect pinching to be such a good source of stress relief. My mood seems to be better already.

Zu An was speechless. He could only reply, “I really don’t know how she recognized me... I’m just as confused as the two of you!”

“She was still able to recognize you even after you completely changed your face! Unless something really intimate happened between the two of you and she was really familiar with your body, how could she immediately recognize you from a single glance at your build?!” Yun Jianyue exclaimed, analyzing the situation as she spoke. Her expression also changed a bit.

Even Yan Xuehen looked at him with a cold expression. Wasn’t this guy a bit too ridiculous?

You have successfully trolled Yun Jianyue for +233 +233 +233...

You have successfully trolled Yan Xuehen for +233 +233 +233...

When he saw that these two really were getting angry, Zu An also became really depressed. He replied, "I vow that I really have nothing to do with her! If the kind of relationship you two are talking about happened before between us, then let me be struck by heavenly lightning!"

When she saw how serious he was, Yun Jianyue finally started to be convinced.

Just then, Yan Xuehen said with a harrumph, "You have that Faraday Cage anyway. It's not as if you're scared of any heavenly lightning."

Yun Jianyue was stunned.

That's right, this brat is actually playing word games with us!

You have successfully trolled Yun Jianyue for +300 +300 +300...

Zu An was speechless. He gave Yan Xuehen a look and said, "I didn't think you were someone like this, big sis Yan."

Yan Xuehen looked away. Her face heated up a bit.

...

In the end, after Zu An's explanations, the two still trusted him. Yan Xuehen couldn't help but say with a sigh, "She probably still doesn't know about what happened to King Qi."

Zu An became a bit quiet. Zhao Xiaodie had been a woman blessed by the heavens, the daughter of King Qi; and yet, once she left this secret dungeon, her status would likely no longer be so glorious. It could instead become a burden.

Yun Jianyue waved her hand, remarking, "What are you worrying about all of that for? It has nothing to do with us either way. Right, we can't go back yet."

Zu An was stunned, asking, "Why?"

He had wanted to reunite with Chu Chuyan's group sooner so that they wouldn't get worried. After all, in the eyes of the others, being chased by Zhao Han only signified inevitable death.

“How can we go back in our current state? Do you want them to see you carry us in your arms?” Yun Jianyue replied, shooting him a glare.

Yan Xuehen nodded in agreement. Even though the witch was shameless, she definitely didn’t want to be looked at strangely by those people.

“So that was it,” Zu An said, feeling a bit happy. Yun Jianyue wanted to hide their relationship from other people, and so did Yan Xuehen.

Watching them put on this performance really is interesting. I definitely can’t let them find out the truth.

As such, he agreed. Then, the two ladies both took out pills from their sects before sitting down to adjust their breathing. Meanwhile, Zu An provided them with ki to help them digest the medicinal strength.

“Don’t use that... shameless skill of yours,” the two women said, shooting him a look. As soon as they recovered a bit of cultivation, they immediately gave him that warning through ki transmission. It was clear that they both knew what kinds of strange effects being affected by his ki brought.

Zu An naturally wouldn’t use that technique in such a situation. He helped them recover properly.

...

Soon after, the two women recovered the ability to move. They didn’t dare to stay for much longer; they were in a different world, after all. Who knew whether the others would encounter danger, or if they would do some foolish things because they hadn’t received any news from Zu An yet? The three sped along and finally returned to where they had been before.

Chu Chuyan’s group was pacing back and forth anxiously. There had been several times when they almost couldn’t hold themselves back from running off to check on the situation, and yet they had been worried that they would only be a burden on Zu An if they did. They had felt extremely conflicted.

When they suddenly heard the sound of air moving, they turned around and saw Zu An descending on the Wind Fire Wheels. They were all shocked and happy, immediately rushing over to him.

“Ah Zu!”

This time, none of them backed off for each other. Chu Chuyan, Pei Mianman, and Qiu Honglei all ran straight into his arms. They were all crying tears of joy and couldn't be bothered with jealousy at all.

At first, Xie Daoyun wanted to run over too, but when she thought about how she was different from the others, she could only stand off to the side while looking at the others with a pitiful expression.

In the distance, Yan Xuehen and Yun Jianyue's eyelids both twitched when they saw the scene.

"Absolute trash!"

That guy might just have hugged them all if his arms were long enough, right?

How did Chuyan find such a fickle man? If this were before, I definitely wouldn't have agreed to the two of them being together. Unfortunately, I don't have the right to say anything anymore...

Honglei will really have to face a lot of pressure in the future... The stone cold woman's disciple used to be his proper wife, and that big-boobed woman's relationship with Zu An seems to be special too. Sigh, I'm getting more and more worried for Honglei. However, I can't do anything to help her out myself!

On the other hand, Zu An continued to console the sobbing women.

"I'm fine, aren't I?"

"I'm not missing an arm or a leg, nor am I missing any other parts."

"I'm really not lying to you! If you don't believe me, you can ask big sis Yun and Yan."

...

The young women all looked at Yan Xuehen and Yun Jianyue. The two's faces heated up.

Why are you asking us about something like that? How could I know?!

"Master, is the emperor truly dead?"

“Yes!” the two replied, finally realizing that their thoughts had gone in the wrong direction.

It turned out that Zu An had told the others the emperor had been defeated, and just found it unbelievable that the three were all fine. When they received the two women’s confirmation, they all sighed in relief. The pressure Zhao Han had given them was just too great. They had never expected him to be dealt with just like that!

Their group continued to ask what exactly happened. Zu An wanted to explain it to them, but they didn’t listen to him at all, and instead surrounded Yan Xuehen and Yun Jianyue. Zu An was normally too frivolous, so they still found Sect Master Yan and Yun a bit more reliable. Furthermore, their cultivations were higher, so the three assumed they had contributed more.

Yun Jianyue and Yan Xuehen both couldn't help but feel a bit embarrassed when they saw the admiration in the young women’s eyes. They could only talk about what had happened in a roundabout way.

At first, they were a bit embarrassed since they hadn’t really done much, but they got more and more excited as they continued to tell the story. After all, even now, they were still amazed by what had happened. They glanced at Zu An from time to time, their expressions full of admiration.

Of course, they tacitly decided to omit the fact that all three of them had been crammed into a tiny cage, and that he had been hugging them with both arms.

The others were amazed as they listened. Even though Ah Zu was already extremely capable in their eyes, killing Zhao Han all by himself was still beyond their wildest imaginations.

“Ah Zu is so amazing!” the young women exclaimed. They couldn't help but go round and round around Zu An. Even the usually cold Chu Chuyan was really lively. As they looked at Zu An, their eyes all sparkled.

Everyone admired the strong. Zhao Han had already been acknowledged to be the strongest, and yet he had been defeated by their lover. If not for the other women here, they would already have thrown themselves into his arms.

Xie Daoyun silently touched her storage pouch, saying, “Libationer, big brother Zu has helped you get revenge.”

Even though strictly speaking, the Xie clan belonged to the emperor's faction, after she became an academy disciple, she had naturally grown closer to the libationer. That was especially true after witnessing Zhao Han's heartlessness and brutality, and more importantly, her big brother Zu becoming an enemy of his majesty.

She suddenly asked worriedly, "Big brother Zu, what do we do if others ask us about this once we leave this place? There are still many forces in the imperial court who are loyal to his majesty!"

If others found out that he had committed regicide, the entire empire could come after him. The other women immediately realized that problem too. All of them became worried.

"What are you scared of? If push comes to shove, you can just... come to our Holy Sect?" Yun Jianyue began speaking quite proudly, but she quickly sensed the killing intent coming from the other women. She suddenly felt a bit guilty too.

It's one thing if the others look at me like that, but Honglei, what is with that look of yours? Don't tell me our Holy Sect is really that unsightly?

Do you really think your lover will be wronged by going there?

Zu An said with a carefree expression, "Don't worry. Zhao Han died in that great tomb. It wasn't me who killed him, so what do I have to fear?"

The others' eyes lit up. The great tomb was mysterious and terrifying, and there were probably others who entered this secret dungeon who could serve as witnesses. The emperor had gone missing inside; that was a perfectly reasonable explanation.

As they looked at Zu An, they all had strange expressions.

This guy really is good at lying. Not only is he good at lying to women, he's good at lying to men too.

Suddenly, a bright gate of light appeared not too far from them. They were all overjoyed, because that familiar aura was clearly the exit out of the secret dungeon.

“Why did the gate suddenly appear in front of us?” Yan Xuehen wondered. After all, in the past, the exits of the secret dungeons had almost always been located where they entered. “I wonder if those of the other sects will be able to rush here in time.”

They were all from the daoist sects, so she was naturally a bit worried for them. There were quite a few who had entered the secret dungeon this time.

“I think the gate appeared in front of everyone who’s still in this secret dungeon. This place is rather special. It was strange when we entered, so it shouldn’t be too hard for it to make something like that happen on the way out,” Yun Jianyue said pensively. While traveling with Zu An, she had previously experienced leaving through a secret dungeon exit that appeared right before them.

Yan Xuehen nodded. This world was so large that there was no way she could find all of the others. If they stalled for too long, the gate could just disappear, which would be really bad. Then, they would all be trapped here forever.

Hm? But being trapped in this world doesn’t seem to be that bad either. That way, apart from a few people, no one else in this world would know who Zu An and I are...

However, she was quickly alarmed and shook away this thought. Even though others wouldn’t know, the witch and Chuyan knew! She didn’t have the shamelessness to face them if they found out the truth.

They were about to enter through the gate when Xie Daoyun suddenly called out to Qiu Honglei, asking, “Big sis Qiu, it won’t be too good to just leave like this, right?”

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Chapter 1855: A Grounded Phoenix

Qiu Honglei and Yun Jianyue were stunned at first, but then they quickly realized that they would probably still be on Violet Mountain once they left. Now that this kind of thing had happened to the emperor, the entire court would probably be in an uproar. There were likely going to be troops all

around the vicinity of the mountain, so if Devil Sect people showed up there, they would immediately be targeted on all sides.

“It is still little sister Xie who thinks things out the most thoroughly. Thank you!” Qiu Honglei replied, holding her hand enthusiastically in gratitude.

Chu Chuyan and Pei Mianman were on the same side, and everyone was close to that Chu woman anyway. That Jing Teng whom she had painstakingly recruited was also nowhere to be seen, so she could only try to find some way to rope in some people who were worth getting on her side.

Xie Daoyun now became a bit shy. She had just wanted to get closer to everyone so that they wouldn’t hate her in the future. Qiu Honglei’s enthusiasm was beyond her expectations.

Qiu Honglei and Yun Jianyue quickly changed their appearances. They were both from the Devil Sect and normally wandered the world of warriors freely, so they were quite skilled in disguise. For example, hadn’t the two of them impersonated Peng Wuyan’s sect representatives without anyone knowing a thing?

Then, their group held hands and walked through the gate of light together.

...

Soon after, a familiar sense of spatial distortion spread through the area. They all felt as if the air around them had become extremely viscous. However, after walking forward a certain distance, their bodies finally felt lighter, and a large expanse of light appeared before their eyes.

They were all happy to see those familiar mountains swirling with dense purple mist. At last, they had returned. Even though the secret dungeon’s ki was rich, in the end, it still wasn’t their home.

They were on Violet Mountain’s Golden Peak, but after the great battle, the glorious structures on Golden Peak had already completely disappeared.

Yan Xuehen sensed her surroundings a bit. She couldn’t help but say, “That world’s natural ki was a bit richer, as expected. Any random place there was actually a bit better than even right here on Golden Peak.”

The Righteous Sun Sect's Golden Peak already had denser ki than other places. Only someone like Sect Master Wang Wuxie and a few other geniuses had the qualifications to cultivate there. And yet, in that other world, the same level of ki was everywhere.

She couldn't help but sigh when she recalled Wang Wuxie. Even though she hadn't felt anything toward him, they had known each other for so many years. Seeing him end up in that kind of situation was still a bit pitiable.

"If I had known it would be like this, I would have spent a bit more time cultivating on that side. I might have even been able to make a breakthrough," Yun Jianyue said regretfully.

Yan Xuehen rolled her eyes, replying, "Are you not scared of being trapped there forever?"

"Wouldn't you be the happiest of all if I didn't make it back?"

...

While the two were squabbling, a commotion came from around them. They all followed the source of the sound. They saw many other gates opening and people walking out from them.

When those people saw that this was Violet Mountain, most of them couldn't help but cheer. That other world was clearly way too dangerous, and all of them still felt lingering fear.

The first to come out were the Righteous Sun Sect's Wu Xiaofan and Zhang Xi. They were cheerful and lively as they celebrated successfully leaving the secret dungeon. However, when they saw how barren the surroundings were, they looked completely stunned.

Was this Golden Peak? Where had the Fengshan Ceremonial Altar gone? And where was their symbol, the Pure Yang Palace?

They frantically searched the area. It was clear that they had entered the secret dungeon before the great battle of Violet Mountain, so they didn't know what had happened.

Then, Jadedfall Palace's Wan Guiyi appeared. He had his hands in his pockets and a sulky look on his face. However, when he saw the surroundings, he was completely petrified.

Next was the White Jade Sect's Lou Wucheng. He was also stunned when he saw the surroundings. Even so, he quickly noticed Zu An's group and hurried over, asking, "Sect Leader Yan, junior sister Chu, what exactly happened here? Why did Golden Peak become like this? Where is my master?"

Zu An thought to himself, Your master had his soul sucked out by Dark Jing Teng. He wondered if Lou Wucheng would collapse on the spot if he heard that.

Yan Xuehen sighed and said, "It's a long story..."

Lou Wucheng waited for her to continue, but she didn't say anything else. He was completely stunned. He could only look at Chu Chuyan and asked, "Junior sister Chu?"

No matter what situation they were in, his junior sister Chu was always as beautiful as a goddess. She was just that stunning. But unfortunately, she had actually already gotten married! Her relationship with Zu An was still unclear.

That bastard's ancestral altar must be spouting smoke right now! Just how did he get this kind of luck?!

His eyes shifted to the other women. They really were all dazzling and gorgeous. They weren't even inferior to junior sister Chu at all. Furthermore, they all had clear affection for Zu An when they looked at him.

No, I was wrong. How is this still smoke? It's already on fire!

Chu Chuyan frowned slightly and said, "That matter is complicated. You should wait. We'll explain things once we all return."

....

Just then, Kunlun Void's Liang Ling, Mount Luofu's Luo Dongfeng, Great Emptiness' Shi Dingtian, and Tranquility Temple's Qiu Chanzi emerged one after another from the gates. They were about to exchange some conventional greetings, but when they saw the surrounding scenery, they were instantly shocked.

Just what had happened to Golden Peak? How had it ended up like this?

Zu An carefully observed them. Apart from these people, there was actually no one else who emerged from the secret dungeon. The second strongest representatives of the group stage had thought that they were getting a huge opportunity, but they had all lost their lives in the secret dungeon.

However, that made sense in the end. That world was far too strange, and its cultivators were strong as well. Even Li Changsheng and Xuan Bajing had ended up losing their lives there, let alone these juniors.

Even so, where were Zhao Xiaodie and Zhi Yin? Could it be that they had ended up facing other dangers after Zu An's group left, due to being seriously injured?

Suddenly, a streak of light flashed past. A young woman shouted, "Luo Dongjiang, you despicable and vile bastard who runs away during battle!"

A whip lashed out directly at Luo Dongjiang afterward. As it turned out, Zhao Xiaodie and Zhi Yin both emerged from the secret dungeon at the same time.

When he saw the two of them, Luo Dongjiang's expression changed. He dodged the attacks while shouting, "Princess, there is a misunderstanding here!"

"What misunderstanding? You became a coward after seeing how strong Elder Blood Spirit was, so you abandoned me and my senior brother for your own survival!" Zhao Xiaodie cried, her voice full of hatred. Her whip lashed down relentlessly on Luo Dongjiang.

The other representative disciples wanted to mediate the quarrel at first, but when they heard what she said, they immediately stopped. They all looked at Luo Dongjiang with strange expressions. Anyone who could become the representative disciple of one of these great clans was top-notch in both cultivation and temperament. They were all talented people with their own pride. They naturally looked down on those who abandoned their own comrades.

Luo Dongjiang immediately shouted, "Miss Zhao, what kind of nonsense are you saying? I was clearly looking for reinforcements, but this transport gate appeared shortly after. I accidentally went through because of that. If you two were really in danger, how could you have possibly come out?"

The disciples of the different sects nodded inwardly. What he said made some sense.

Zhao Xiaodie panicked and said, "It was because someone saved us, of course."

"Who would just happen to save you?" Luo Dongjiang retorted with a sneer.

"It was..." Zhao Xiaodie reflexively glanced in Zu An's direction, but she didn't sell him out in the end. She said, "I don't know. It was a mysterious person. We didn't know many people inside that secret dungeon."

Luo Dongjiang retorted with a laugh, "A passerby who you didn't know saved you? We're from the daoist sects; would we abandon you if we were together? I really was looking for reinforcements, and I even had thoughts of trying to lead that Elder Blood Spirit away and sacrificing myself!"

Zhao Xiaodie was absolutely furious. Just then, however, a white light flickered and Guan Chouhai appeared on Golden Peak.

Zu An thought to himself, This guy really is an unkillable cockroach! Guan Chouhai hadn't been killed by Zhao Han on Golden Peak, and then he had managed to survive even after being pulled into the secret dungeon. Li Changsheng and Xuan Bajing, who had gone in with him, were already dead.

When she saw her master, Zhao Xiaodie finally found her backing. She had been full of anxiety during her time in the secret dungeon, and she had almost been humiliated by that Elder Blood Spirit, with her life soon to follow. How could she stand that grievance? She cried out, "Master, you have to uphold justice for your disciple! Luo..."

Before she could say anything, Guan Chouhai raised his hand to stop her. He swept his gaze around him in alarm and said gravely, "We're leaving immediately!"

A sinister voice called out just then, "No one is allowed to leave!"

A huge group of soldiers rushed over from the steps halfway up the mountain and quickly surrounded the group. All of them wore shining armor, emanating a vicious aura.

The one in the lead was none other than the Guerrilla Warfare General, King Guangling, Zhao Yuan. His Guerrilla Warfare Army was one of the Imperial Palace's most elite troops. He had only ever followed the commands of the emperor.

He led his subordinates up to Guan Chouhai and said, "Sect Master Guan, you are not permitted to leave!"

Guan Chouhai glowered and said, "The world is so large; I can come and go as I please. What right do you have to stop me?"

Zhao Han wasn't here right now, so he believed that his cultivation was enough for him to do as he pleased.

"Sect Master Guan, could it be that you are trying to start a rebellion?" a cold voice called out. An elder dressed in official robes slowly walked over.

"King Yan!" Guan Chouhai exclaimed, his expression changing. King Yan was also a veteran grandmaster. With that guy here, on top of the Guerilla Warfare Army, he really couldn't escape anymore.

"Ninth Grandpa, your respected self came at the perfect time! Help me capture that despicable Luo Dongjiang!" Zhao Xiaodie exclaimed, rushing over happily and pointing at Luo Dongjiang.

King Yan was the ninth uncle of his majesty and King Qi, so he was naturally a grandpa to her.

Luo Dongjiang's expression changed. In terms of cultivation and sect background, he had no reason to fear her. However, she had another identity. Her father was the renowned King Qi! He was among the top three in the empire!

King Yan harrumphed, and with a wave of his hand said, "Arrest her."

At first, Zhao Xiaodie had a big smile on her face. She had already started imagining how that brat was going to die. He dared to betray this princess...

Her expression suddenly froze, because those soldiers didn't go after Luo Dongjiang, and instead locked her up. She exclaimed in shock and alarm, "Ninth Grandpa, what is going on here? Is there a mistake here?"

“There is no mistake. The one we are arresting is you. Your father has conspired to assassinate his majesty, so we need to bring you back to aid in our investigation,” King Yan said coldly.

“What?!” Zhao Xiaodie exclaimed, her mind going blank. She didn’t even fully process what those words meant for some time.

All of Golden Peak erupted into a commotion when those words were spoken. They had all been wondering why it looked as if a great battle had taken place on Golden Peak. If it had involved King Qi and his majesty, everything made sense.

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Chapter 1856: Fortunes Rise and Fall

When she sensed the bone-piercing chill of the Soul Reaping Chains and all of her cultivation being sealed, Zhao Xiaodie finally reacted. She struggled frantically and said, “No, there has to be some kind of misunderstanding here! How could father possibly do something like that? Ninth Grandpa, there must be a mistake somewhere!”

After all, her father was practically number two in the entire empire, as well as the one who had the highest chance of succeeding the imperial throne. The emperor was already close to heaven and man deterioration, so why would he take such a risk and do something like that?

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Furthermore, even if he really would do such a thing, he would definitely only carry out such a plan when it was absolutely safe. How could this kind of situation possibly appear?

King Yan scowled and said, “This is how things are. Xiaodie, you just need to cooperate with the investigation.”

“No, I want to see my father!” Zhao Xiaodie exclaimed in shock.

King Yan didn't reply. He waved his hand, gesturing for his subordinates to bring her away. He didn't give her a chance to say anything else.

Zhao Xiaodie was left in complete despair. Something had definitely happened to her father, or else there was no way this would happen. She couldn't help but give the distant Zu An a look.

I actually let him see such a sorry side of myself.

Her status as a princess was probably the only thing she could be proud of in front of that man, but now, she didn't even have that anymore. Her usually spirited eyes immediately lost their luster.

"Master!" Zhi Yin exclaimed in alarm when he saw that.

Even though he liked his goddess Chu, who wouldn't like a cute and pretty junior sister like Zhao Xiaodie? Besides, they had fought together through life and death in the secret dungeon, so his impression of her had become better and better. He naturally didn't want to see her be taken away. Unfortunately, he was seriously injured, so he could only ask for his master's help. However, Guan Chouhai's expression was grim, as if he didn't notice at all.

King Yan said to Guan Chouhai, "Brother Guan, I must ask you to comply with the investigation as well."

Guan Chouhai's eyes moved slightly. He gave King Yan a look, then glanced at Guerilla Warfare General Zhao Yuan with his intimidating elite troops. In the end, he sighed and didn't go against it. After all, perhaps there would still be a way to turn things around if he complied. If he acted up here, his identity as a traitor would be set in stone. At that point, forget about him, all of the Heavenly Sorrow Sect would be involved.

The soldiers quickly rushed forward to lock up Guan Chouhai and Zhi Yin. The others' eyes all widened when they saw that. They never could have expected even someone of Guan Chouhai's status to be locked up. He was a glorious grandmaster, someone these disciples all normally looked up to!

Wu Xiaofan walked over and said, "I pay my respects to the king. May I ask what happened here and why Golden Peak became like this? Do you perhaps know where my master is?" He was the representative disciple of the Righteous Sun Sect, and pretty much another master of this place. He naturally had the right to speak up.

“Your master?” King Yan sneered and immediately waved his hands, commanding, “Arrest him!”

The surrounding soldiers immediately rushed over.

Wu Xiaofan’s expression changed. He reflexively wanted to resist, but he didn’t dare. He could only urgently ask, “May I ask what crimes I have committed for the king to arrest me?”

King Yan didn’t respond, as if there was no need to because Wu Xiaofan’s status was too low.

Zhao Yuan replied, “What crimes? Wang Wuxie is suspected of colluding with outsiders to turn Violet Mountain into an assassination location for his majesty! Forget about you second generation disciples, even the peak masters have already been locked up and are currently being investigated.”

Wu Xiaofan and Zhang Xi immediately felt a chill run down their spines. They knew what kinds of consequences there would be if they were really convicted of such a crime. Forget about them, even the Righteous Sun Sect could be reduced to ash.

Wu Xiaofan protested, “There is no way that could be true! Master has always been loyal to his majesty. How could he possibly do something like this?!”

Zhao Yuan remained expressionless and said, “That is why we need to investigate all of you. What, are you going to resist and start a rebellion? According to the law, we can kill you on the spot!”

Wu Xiaofan and Zhang Xi’s expressions changed. They thought about drawing their weapons several times, but in the end, they didn’t do so. Afterward, Soul Reaping Chains quickly wrapped around their bodies. Their cultivations were immediately sealed.

The remaining daoist disciples all gathered and looked at them vigilantly. Even though the daoist sects were normally unhappy with how close the Righteous Sun Sect was to the court, and they even mocked Wang Wuxie for being the court’s dog in private, they still felt sympathy when they saw Guan Chouhai being taken away, followed by Wu Xiaofan and the others. They didn’t know what was happening at all, and just assumed the court was using the situation as a pretext to get rid of the daoist sects. As such, they banded together against a common enemy.

When he saw them reflexively shift their hands to their weapons, Zhao Yuan remarked with a scowl, "What, are you all going to rebel too?"

A fight was on the verge of breaking out when two figures suddenly flew over and said, "General, please be lenient!"

When those present turned to look at the source of the voices, they saw that the ones in the lead were none other than Jedefall Palace's Wan Tongtian and Elder Huo Ling.

The two both bowed toward King Yan and Zhao Yuan before saying, "King, general, our Jedefall Palace has already been investigated, and both Wan Guiyi and Pei Mianman entered the secret dungeon before the events happened. They do not know anything about what happened, so we hope that the two sirs can be generous."

The daoist disciples were shocked. Even Jedefall Palace had been investigated? Just what had happened?

King Yan and Zhao Yuan were both suspicious, but Wan Tongtian bowed and said, "We will take them back and examine them carefully. If there is anything else you need, we can bring them over for questioning at any time."

When he saw these glorious grandmasters, individuals with extraordinary status in the daoist sects, bowing down and speaking so courteously to him, King Yan felt amazing. He quickly supported Wan Tongtian up and said, "Sect Master Wan speaks too seriously. I trust your character, so you can bring your people away. However, do not leave the range of Violet Mountain for now."

Wan Tongtian's strength couldn't be overlooked. He didn't want to give up on this opportunity to earn some favor.

"Thank you, respected king!" Wan Tongtian replied, overjoyed. He quickly waved to Wan Guiyi and Pei Mianman, saying, "Guiyi, Manman, hurry and come over!"

Wan Guiyi naturally didn't hesitate and immediately ran over. On the other hand, Pei Mianman was a bit hesitant. She didn't want to leave Zu An's side. She reflexively glanced at him.

Zu An secretly sent a voice transmission, saying, "Since you have a chance to get out of this, follow them for now."

“What about you guys?” Pei Mianman asked, feeling extremely worried.

“Don’t worry, I have a way to get out of this too,” Zu An replied. He sounded completely calm, as if this absolute calamity for the daoist sects didn’t exist for him at all.

Pei Mianman figured that was true as well. He was a man who could even win against Zhao Han, so how could he be troubled by such a small matter? She said before reluctantly approaching Elder Huo Ling, “Alright, then I’ll look for you later.”

Elder Huo Ling’s eye twitched. She thought, The heart of this disciple of mine has long since flown away. This lass really doesn’t know what’s good for her. What’s so good about men? Isn’t cultivation more interesting?

Several other sect representatives also greeted King Yan respectfully and said, “Respected king, we have also been investigated, and our disciples do not know anything. Can we bring them away?” They were Supreme Mystery Cave Master Mu, Purity Temple’s Vice Lord He Yuan, and Mount Luofu’s elder.

King Yan felt incredible right now. These guys normally had their noses upturned arrogantly at the sky, and yet now, they had to bow their heads to him. Of course, he didn’t let his true feelings show, and instead took the chance to obtain favors from them. He allowed them to bring Shi Dingtian, Qiu Chanzi, and Luo Dongjiang away.

Emptiness Isle’s Elder Peng looked around. She wanted to take her disciple with her, but she didn’t see Peng Wuyan at all. She immediately panicked and asked the other sects’ disciples, “Where is my Wuyan? Did you see her along the way?”

“Peng Wuyan unfortunately passed away in the secret dungeon,” Qiu Chanzi said with a sigh. “The secret dungeon was extremely dangerous, and I almost perished myself.”

Those present had already realized that it wasn’t just these individuals who had gone in; there were quite a few second place group stage winners as well. And yet, apart from Zhao Xiaodie and Zhang Xi, not a single other person had come out. Furthermore, they all had injuries, so it was easy to see just how dangerous the secret dungeon was.

“My Wuyan!” Elder Peng immediately howled in grief.

The other sect leaders offered some condolences, but none of them wanted to stay in this unlucky place for fear of being involved. They left one after another.

Liang Ling and Lou Wucheng’s expressions changed, because the others were brought away by their elders, but their sect leader was nowhere to be seen.

Liang Ling couldn’t help but ask, “May I ask the respected king and general if you know where my master is?”

“I was about to ask you that,” King Yan replied. He wasn’t so polite to these young juniors. He waved his hand and commanded, “Bring them away!”

“Respected king and general, what exactly happened?” Liang Ling asked. He was shocked and angry, but he didn’t dare to resist in such a situation. Unfortunately, no one replied to him.

Zu An silently watched the situation. He had witnessed Liang Ling’s performance on the stage. He was actually a youngster with quite excellent temperament. He wondered how that Xuan Bajing had ended up producing a decent disciple. However, there would be no danger to Liang Ling’s life in the short term, so Zu An merely planned to break him out later.

Now, Lou Wucheng was the only representative disciple left. He looked at Yan Xuehen and cried, “Sect master, save me!”

King Yan also walked over. He had an ambiguous smile on his face as he looked at Zu An. He thought, Fortunes really do rise and fall quickly! This brat ended up in my hands so quickly!

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Chapter 1857: Swords Drawn, Bows Bent

King Yan didn’t act against Zu An immediately. Instead, he turned to Yan Xuehen and said, “Fairy Yan, your honored sect’s Li Changsheng was not

with the rest of your people when the chaos took place on Violet Mountain. I have not yet seen him. I wonder if the fairy has an explanation?"

Yan Xuehen said calmly, "My senior brother has always liked to act alone. I do not know where he is."

"Is that so? Then where has the fairy goddess been all this time? Why did you come out of the secret dungeon?" King Yan asked with a smile. It wasn't often that he got to talk to Yan Xuehen. Now that he had a proper reason to do so and she couldn't refuse, the feeling really was great.

Yan Xuehen frowned slightly and replied, "I merely came to check on Violet Mountain's situation when I sensed something was off. Then, a powerful suction force suddenly appeared in the air and I was taken in. I naturally ended up in the secret dungeon too, that's all."

Zhao Yuan, who was standing off to the side, then said, "Golden Peak was sealed by the Righteous Sun Sect's mountain protecting formation at the time. None of us officials were able to enter, so how were you able to?"

"How would I know? Either way, it must have just been a coincidence," Yan Xuehen said calmly.

"Fairy Yan, if you continue to refuse to cooperate with us, do not blame us for adopting more forceful methods," King Yan said seriously.

Yan Xuehen was too beautiful, and she had enjoyed great prestige for many years. He naturally had to treat her with a different attitude than how he treated Guan Chouhai. However, since this matter was related to an ambush on the emperor, he didn't dare to act too carelessly.

"Who among the daoist sects doesn't know that the Righteous Sun Sect's Wang Wuxie was one of her bootlickers? It wouldn't be all too surprising for him to have told her some secrets," a voice suddenly said, seemingly wanting to cause chaos.

Yan Xuehen shot that person a glare, and yet couldn't really do anything to her.

King Yan and Zhao Yuan followed the source of the sound. They saw that an ordinary-looking woman was the one who had spoken. They asked, "Who are you?"

However, that woman looked away, clearly not wanting to respond.

Yun Jianyue didn't care about offending the other side. She had Ah Zu at her side, and King Yan was secretly colluding with the Devil Sect to begin with, anyway. She didn't even have to change her outfit in front of him.

King Yan scowled. He was about to act when Zu An suddenly said, "King Yan, General Zhao, long time no see."

King Yan and Zhao Yuan both narrowed their eyes. They sized him up with ambiguous smiles. The reason they had been ignoring him all this time was because they knew this brat was the trickiest of all to deal with. Who would have thought that he would take the initiative instead?

"So it was Sir Zu! Oh, right, should I now call you the Fiend races' Regent?" King Yan replied with a sneer.

"While I'm on this side, of course the human race comes first," Zu An said. He remained calm as if he didn't notice the ridicule in King Yan's voice at all.

"The human race comes first?" Zhao Yuan remarked with a cold snort. "I recall that your distinguished self suddenly escaped our monitoring and went missing on the day of the ceremony. Eventually, you seemed to have run all the way to Golden Peak. I am actually quite suspicious as to whether you joined in on the ambush; perhaps you were even one of the main conspirators."

The women frowned slightly, thinking, This guy seems to have some hostility against Ah Zu... things will be more difficult now.

Zu An replied nonchalantly, "An ambush? Don't tell me General Zhao believes that anyone in this world is capable of killing his majesty?"

Zhao Yuan choked before replying, "Of course not. His majesty's might is unparalleled. Who could possibly be his match in this world?"

"Then what are you all so worried about, that you're investigating this so severely?" Zu An asked with a shrug.

"There are always some people who are not scared of death and dare to oppose his majesty's glory," Zhao Yuan said with a sneer. "King Qi took the lead in colluding with the daoists and Buddhists to conduct an ambush against

his majesty. From the looks of things, it seems that ?even the Fiend races joined in on the plot.”

Xie Daoyun’s heart was beating nervously. That ?was clearly alluding to her big brother Zu’s identity as a Regent of the Fiend races. If he was involved too, things boded ill.

“Big brother Zu has nothing to do with the ambush! I can attest to that!” Xie Daoyun exclaimed, her little face turning red.

Her education had taught her to always behave as a wise and virtuous lady, so she rarely spoke lies. And yet after she met big brother Zu, she seemed to have started lying all the time, and it was always for his sake... When she thought about how big brother Zu always bet it all with his lies, she wondered whether she was being influenced too.

“The academy’s Miss Xie?” Zhao Yuan responded, stunned. “According to what we know, you were in charge of examining the safety of the formations around Violet Mountain, and yet such huge negligence occurred. Even your own name has not been cleared, and yet you are still in the mood to testify for others?”

Xie Daoyun’s face paled when she heard that. She was more worried about bringing disaster upon everyone in her clan.

Zu An stood in front of her and said, “General Zhao, there’s no need to scare the young lady. How could a formation on that scale be something she could have foreseen beforehand?”

Zhao Yuan knew that he was speaking the truth, but there had to be someone to take responsibility for what happened.

“That is why I am inviting everyone back for an investigation. I hope you will not make things too hard on me,” Zhao Yuan said. He harrumphed, and the Guerilla Warfare Army all placed their hands on the handles of their weapons as if they were ready to attack at any time. The others in the area immediately became nervous.

Zu An didn’t even give those people a look; instead, he stared at King Yan and Zhao Yuan, saying, “It’s already been some time since you two have come up here, and yet all I’ve seen is that you two care a lot about finding

some scapegoats to get yourselves out of trouble. I haven't seen a single sign of concern for his majesty's safety."

King Yan was alarmed. He cupped his hands to the heavens and said, "We are naturally worried about his majesty's safety, and we even pray for his wives and children to live in blessing day and night. However, we need to investigate right now..."

However, halfway through his sentence, he realized how calm Zu An had been all this time. He asked, "Don't tell me you know where his majesty is?"

"Of course I do," Zu An replied.

Now, King Yan, Zhao Yuan, and some others' expressions changed. They asked, "Where exactly is his majesty?"

Zu An pointed behind him and said, "That secret dungeon we just came out from."

"Where is he? Why hasn't he appeared yet?" King Yan and Zhao Yuan hurriedly asked.

"Of course he die... ahem, he passed away inside," Zu An said, almost messing up his wording.

"What?!" the others exclaimed.

The expressions of those on Golden Peak turned pale when they heard that. In all these years, Zhao Han had been a deity-like being in their eyes. Even though there had been an ambush on Golden Peak and he was missing, no one had doubted that he would soon return. Now that they learned of Zhao Han's death, many of them even felt as if the heavens were collapsing.

Zhao Han stared at Zu An and asked with a trembling voice, "Was it you who harmed his majesty?"

Chu Chuyan and the other women had strange expressions. They thought, This guy really guessed spot on.

"Are you mad? How would I possibly have that ability?" Zu An retorted impatiently.

Zhao Yuan laughed in embarrassment. He felt that what he said was a bit ridiculous too. No one would believe him if he said it anywhere else.

Zu An continued, "Right, his majesty entrusted me with the task of assisting the government and taking charge of assisting the crown prince in becoming the new emperor."

Chu Chuyan and the others' eyes widened. This guy really doesn't hold back with his lies! He was clearly the one... If the emperor's spirit were in the heavens right now, and he was watching this, he might just come back to life out of anger!

King Yan and Zhao Yuan had strange expressions. Giving the throne to the crown prince was expected. But for Zu An to assist in ruling...

"Does Sir Zu have any proof of what he says?" King Yan asked gravely. However, his tone still became more polite.

"The situation was dire and there was no time to create a written pledge." Zu An harrumphed. "Is the king implying that I am falsifying an imperial decree?"

Yun Jianyue rolled her eyes, thinking, Are you not?

Zu An thought to himself that he could take out the Human Emperor's Seal, as that would be more convincing than anything else. However, that item was a treasure. If it was exposed, it would most likely have to be handed over. As such, it was better to keep it on him for now and see how the situation developed.

King Yan's expression changed. Even though that was what he was thinking, he didn't dare to admit it on the surface. He said, "Sir Zu has misunderstood. This matter is so unimaginable that it would be better to investigate the entire process first before we could dare to come to any conclusions."

Zu An replied with a scowl, "What, are you going to lock me up and interrogate me too?"

"Um..." King Yan and Zhao Yuan exchanged a look. They could both see the misgivings in each other's eyes.

No one could say for certain whether Zu An was telling the truth. Even though there was no way his majesty would let someone with a Fiend race

background aid in the rule of the empire, what if he really had been the only one left at his majesty's side back then? There would have been no one else Zhao Han could find to entrust anything to.

Furthermore, this brat had the identity of Regent of the Fiend races, so they couldn't really kill him here. His majesty was now gone too, so wouldn't the Fiend races have a perfect reason to start a war?

Just then, several tightly grouped footsteps resounded. A group of soldiers ran over, and the two generals at the front shouted, "So it was Sir Zu!"

They were none other than the Armed Escort Army's Deputy Generals, Zhang Zijiang and Wang Bolin.

"Brother Zhang, Brother Wang!" Zu An replied with a smile.

He hadn't expected these two to still dare to greet him in such a situation. After all, he was caught up in a huge whirlpool of public opinion right now. Whether it was his status as the Fiend races' Regent or the suspicion that he had a role in the ambush, they weren't burdens an ordinary person would dare to get caught up in.

Zhao Yuan asked with a serious expression, "What are you coming up here for? We are still handing out rewards and punishments right now!"

Zhang Zijiang said with a smile, "We heard that our Sir Zu came back and wanted to have a look. Do not worry, General Zhao; we will quickly return to our patrol." Even though that was what he said, he and his subordinates didn't budge an inch.

The two of them had encountered a lot of bad luck too. Now that something had happened to his majesty, the Armed Escort Division who was in charge of his safety immediately fell into an unfortunate situation. If not because their strength was still needed to subdue the daoist sects, their group would likely have already been locked up.

Even if they had earned some achievements, they would be investigated and handled like criminals. All of their hard work throughout their lives had put them in their positions, so who would be willing to give up just like that? In that case, they had to seize the moment and find some chance to turn the situation around.

They had all despaired at first, but when they heard that Zu An had come back, they immediately sought out their pillar. After all, their Armed Escort Army troops were grasshoppers on the same line as Zu An.

When he saw that these Armed Escort Guards seemed to be standing against the Guerilla Warfare Army to an extent, Zhao Yuan's expression darkened. If they really fought, the situation could be hard to clean up.

Even though this brat Zu An looked as if he didn't have much cultivation, who knew what kinds of abilities he was hiding? Furthermore, Yan Xuehen was clearly standing on his side. A grandmaster's strength couldn't be underestimated. On top of that, there were still Chu Chuyan, Lou Wucheng, and the other daoist experts. Xie Daoyun also represented the academy's strength. There were also those two ordinary-looking women who had clearly changed their appearance. The auras coming from their bodies weren't weak.

If they really fought...

Suddenly, another group arrived on Golden Peak. Zhao Yuan and King Yan were startled. Regardless of who it was, it would be enough to tip the scales.

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Read Keyboard Immortal - Chapter 1858: All Lies

Chapter 1858: All Lies

A burst of laughter filled the air, and a voice said, "Fairy Yan, Sir Zu came back at the perfect time. We are still confused right now about what is happening, so why not tell us a bit about what really happened?"

Zu An glanced toward the voice and saw a familiar face. This was the crown princess' father, the Imperial Secretariat's Right Confidential Assistant, Bi Qi. He was actually quite handsome in appearance, but the glint flickering in his eyes always made him seem like a wily old fox.

"Sir Bi!" Zu An called out, cupping his hands. He figured he couldn't be too rude out of respect for Bi Linglong.

Yan Xuehen only nodded slightly in greeting, just as cold as ever.

Bi Qi walked over happily and remarked, "Hm? King Yan and General Zhao are both here as well? It seems we're having quite the lively and happy conversation here."

King Yan and the others couldn't help but roll their eyes. *Which eye of yours saw a happy conversation? We were clearly about to attack each other already.*

"The wind here on this mountaintop is a bit too strong. How about we head on to the garden below to talk things out slowly? We can also use the chance to let everyone wash up a bit," Bi Qi said to those present enthusiastically, as if he were welcoming a group of esteemed guests.

Zu An frowned slightly and asked, "You're not going to lock me up in the prisons below, are you?"

Bi Qi gave him a look, replying, "What are you saying? You are an important minister of the court, someone who has his majesty and the crown prince's trust. Furthermore, you are also the Fiend Races' Regent. From both a personal and logical perspective, who would dare to lock you up?"

King Yan and Zhao Yuan's eyelids twitched when they heard that. However, Zu An really was a bit tricky to deal with, given his current status. Bi Qi was also too partial to him, so if they continued to insist on locking him up, they would be embarrassing themselves.

Bi Qi tugged on Zu An's hand and was about to leave, but Zu An didn't move. Instead, he looked at King Yan and Zhao Yuan and asked, "The two of you aren't opposed to this, right?"

King Yan was a bit unhappy about the result, but he reacted quickly and immediately showed a smile, saying, "Sir Zu speaks too seriously. We were merely acting according to the rules earlier and inadvertently troubled you."

Zhao Yuan forced a smile and didn't say anything else.

Zu An gave them a look and said, "These are all my friends. Are you going to lock them up?"

"Since they are Sir Zu's friends, there is naturally no need," Zhao Yuan said, his expression stiff.

Yan Xuehen's status was extraordinary, while Chu Chuyan had been Zu An's wife. The other two women seemed to have close relationships with him too. The academy's Miss Xie had been sneaking glances earlier too...

...

The whole group of people started heading down the mountain shortly after. Only Lou Wucheng was left standing there alone awkwardly. It would be a bit weird for him to follow them, and yet he couldn't just stay here either.

If I follow them, the problem is that I can't really be considered Zu An's friend. Not only are we not friends, we're even kind of rivals in love... I was never satisfied that my goddess used to be his wife.

However, if I don't follow them, I might just be immediately locked up by these vicious-looking guards. At that point, even if I don't die, I'll probably at least have a layer of skin shaved off.

While he was at a loss for what to do, Zu An suddenly turned around and called out, "Brother Lou, what are you still standing there for? Let's go together."

"Huh? Oh, alright!" Lou Wucheng replied. In that instant, he felt almost overwhelmed by favor.

Before today, he had actually looked down on Zu An a bit. Even if Zu An had displayed the power of his sword on that judge's seat before, Lou Wucheng had still believed that he was no weaker. However, in that instant, he finally discovered in frustration that they hadn't even been running on the same race course to begin with. Zu An was someone who talked and joked together with King Yan, Sir Bi, and even his own master's generation.

Previously, he had thought of himself as someone important, as he had the honorable title of the White Jade Sect's representative disciple. People had always treated him with respect and courtesy wherever he went. However, whether it was King Yan or Sir Bi, or even General Zhao, they hadn't even given him a single look.

He finally understood the difference between himself and Zu An. At the same time, he also began to admire Zu An's temperament a bit. In that instant, he felt as if he were facing a great mountain.

Next, he suddenly saw the look of admiration and gentleness in Chu Chuyan's eyes when she looked at Zu An, and he was completely stunned. When had this junior sister who was as cold as ice ever shown anyone else such an expression?

He released a long sigh and reflexively clenched the sword in his hands.

Lou Wucheng, Lou Wucheng.... Your sword was originally meant for cultivating immortality, and yet you've been so obsessed with romance for all these years. Do you know no shame?

In that instant, he seemed to have gained some enlightenment. He felt as if his spirit and temperament had become a bit different.

Just then, Yan Xuehen seemed to have sensed something. She gave him a look, then said to Zu An through ki transmission, "Thank you!"

Zu An replied with a smile, "What is there to thank me for? I'm not so petty as to leave him behind."

"That's not all. It's also because your generosity seems to have granted him some insight. That child actually has talent, but unfortunately, because of his infatuation with Chuyan, it seemed as if he was going the wrong way in life. Now that senior brother is no longer in this world, you've just saved the White Jade Sect's future," Yan Xuehen said gratefully.

Zu An couldn't help but reply, "The White Jade Sect has you for its previous generation and Chuyan for the next, right? She isn't any weaker than him."

Yan Xuehen harrumphed. "Chuyan will follow you sooner or later, so how could the White Jade Sect's future depend on her? At that time, the entire sect would just end up as your dowry."

When he sensed the annoyance in her tone, Zu An chuckled in embarrassment. He sensibly chose not to argue with her.

Chuyan suddenly said from his other side, "Ah Zu, thank you."

"Because of Lou Wucheng as well?" Zu An asked, stunned.

"As well?" Chu Chuyan repeated, keenly noticing the wording.

Zu An was alarmed, but he didn't hide it and said, "Your master also thanked me just now."

Chu Chuyan was relieved and said, "Martial uncle died in the great tomb, and he participated in the ambush, so the White Jade Sect's future is in imminent danger. Senior brother Lou is martial uncle's inheritor, so if something happened to him, it wouldn't just be the White Jade Sect's future; even martial uncle's inheritance would be cut short."

"You guys are surprisingly worried about your sect. How will you thank me? You aren't just going to offer me some lip service, are you?" Zu An replied, dealing with the conventional greetings of the people around him while giving her a teasing look.

A faint blush flashed across Chu Chuyan's face. She suddenly asked, "How did you make master thank you?"

Zu An was startled. He felt a shiver run throughout his entire body. He replied, "How could I dare offend her? You can't joke around like that with me!"

Chu Chuyan smiled when she heard that, saying with a proud expression, "You probably wouldn't dare either."

...

Their group arrived at Guidance Temple, which was located midway up the mountain. It had been an important place for the Righteous Sun Sect, but now, it was completely controlled by soldiers.

Zu An's group was quickly brought into the main hall. After some tea was served, Bi Qi led the conversation, saying, "Oh, Ah Zu, none of us are outsiders here, so why don't you tell us about what exactly happened?" Because of his daughter, he naturally acted a bit closer to Zu An.

Zu An had also been looking for a chance to talk about it, so he took the chance to say, "Back then, I sensed that there was something strange happening on the mountaintop, so I went up to take a look out of curiosity."

King Yan and Zhao Yuan's eyes twitched. Back then, he had actually been kept in custody because of the risk posed by him being the Regent of the Fiend races. Even so, they wouldn't be so foolish as to mention that at present.

Bi Qi didn't have such misgivings and asked, "None of the officials could go up, so why were you able to enter Golden Peak?"

Zu An said, "It was all thanks to Sect Master Yan. Her knowledge of formations is extremely profound, so back then, we all found a way to pass through the Righteous Sun Sect's Mountain Protecting Formation together." However, he didn't mention Xie Daoyun to protect her.

"Sect Master Yan's skills are truly incredible!" the others exclaimed, praising Yan Xuehen together, but they weren't so convinced deep down. After all, there had been too many formation experts from the court present back then. There was no way all of their brains added together couldn't compare to a single person. They all assumed that Wang Wuxie had probably given her some special privileges in the past to curry favor with her.

"And then? What happened on Golden Peak? Just who participated in the ambush on his majesty?" Zhao Yuan quickly asked.

However, Zu An sipped on some tea and didn't reply.

King Yan was alarmed when he saw that. He had all of the people idling around the area leave. The only ones left on his side were himself, Bi Qi, and Zhao Yuan. Even Lou Wucheng was politely asked to leave. Of course, he was promised that he would be taken care of well. However, on Zu An's side, he didn't ask any of those women to leave.

When they saw that, the others had their own thoughts. Zu An seemed to really care about these women! The others were one thing, but wasn't Sect Master Yan acting a bit too close to him? She was a glorious grandmaster, someone who couldn't be looked down on no matter where she went. Could it be that she was acting for her disciple's sake? It was rumored that her disciple had been married to Zu An before.

King Yan set up a sound-blocking barrier before saying, "Sir Zu can speak now."

Zu An then replied, "By the time I went up, I saw that King Qi had already died."

"King Qi died? Was he killed by his majesty?" the others immediately asked.

.

King Qi's prestige had been incredible in recent years, to the point that the other factions couldn't even breathe. Even though people had all suspected that it was King Qi who had acted this time, they had no proof. There had been almost nothing left behind on Golden Peak. Furthermore, King Qi had chosen to self-detonate himself, so there was naturally no way they could find any clues about him that way.

"I don't know. He was already dead when I arrived," Zu An said calmly.

"What?" King Yan exclaimed. His people all stood up as he asked, "Then who else could have viewed his majesty unfavorably?"

"I don't know. When we went up there, we just happened to see a huge vortex appear in the skies above. All of us were sucked in," Zu An said with a frightened expression.

King Yan's group was speechless.

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Chapter 1859: Clans In Danger

This was the explanation Zu An and the women had agreed on before they left, to avoid trouble. After all, that ambush not only involved King Qi, but also the daoists, Buddhists, and even the libationer. If all of them were accused, the aftermath would be really difficult to clean up.

King Yan and the others were clearly dissatisfied with this reply. King Yan asked, "Don't tell me that you didn't see a thing on Golden Peak?"

"Right, I saw something else," Zu An suddenly said.

"What did you see?" King Yan, Bi Qi, and Zhao Yuan replied, all rising from their seats.

"I believe i saw the Heavenly Sorrow Sect's Guan Chouhai, the White Jade Sect's Li Changsheng, and Kunlun Void's Xuan Bajing. They all seemed to have rushed over when they heard the news. Then, all of them were sucked into that mysterious black hole," Zu An replied.

Li Changsheng and Xuan Bajing should have been resting in their respective courtyards, but they had died in the secret dungeon and could no longer come back out. There was naturally no way of hiding that. As for Guan Chouhai, he had received a voice transmission from that guy telling him about what to say. After all, Guan Chouhai was a sect master and a grandmaster. The court didn't have any conclusive proof and couldn't really do too much to him.

"They were all there, as expected," Zhao Yuan said with a sneer, as if it wasn't that surprising at all. After all, as something so major had happened, they had already investigated many things.

"They might have just arrived just like us, or perhaps they were there for other purposes. I didn't see anything, so it's hard to say," Zu An replied ambiguously. Guaranteeing that they had nothing to do with the ambush would just be inviting trouble upon himself.

"Did Sir Zu see whether Tranquility Temple's Master Jian Huang was there?" Zhao Yuan then asked.

It was actually quite easy to check whether something had happened to specific people. They just needed to check to see who was still present after the chaos that had taken place on Golden Peak.

Zu An shook his head and replied, "Everything happened too quickly back then. I didn't see Master Jian Huang."

He thought to himself, No matter how they rack their brains, none of these people could predict that the one who actually got involved was that little monk Jie Se, right?

Zhao Yuan and King Yan clearly didn't completely believe him, so they gave Yan Xuehen a look for confirmation. Yan Xuehen nodded slightly and said, "The same thing happened to me. I was sucked away after seeing these things."

Zhao Yuan and King Yan were both speechless. They knew that there was definitely something wrong with the story. They figured they would be able to find out some information as long as they interrogated the other two women separately. However, Zu An's status was different now, and together with the support of the Armed Escort Army and Bi Qi standing off to the side, no one could use torture on these people.

Bi Qi quickly helped change the topic, asking, “Ah Zu, tell us, what happened in that secret dungeon?”

Zu An replied, “After we entered that secret dungeon, we discovered that it was a strange world. On top of that, it merged with the secret dungeon the daoists entered...”

Afterward, he told them what had happened in great detail, only sparing them the details of his conflict with Zhao Han.

The others were dazzled as they listened. They muttered to themselves.

“There was actually another world of such great size!”

“There were actually several people with cultivations no weaker than his majesty’s. That Ghost King was even stronger than his majesty.”

“That great tomb is even more mysterious. I wonder just what kind of being built it...”

...

As the others sighed in amazement, Bi Qi said with a complicated expression, “Ah Zu, tell us about his majesty’s demise in more detail. Even if we don’t ask about that, when we return, the others in the court definitely will.”

Zu An knew Bi Qi had good intentions, so he slowly explained, “Back then, his majesty was fighting over the Baopu Sutra with the Adventurer’s Guild Leader Zang Ao and the Divine Firmament Sect’s Sun En... In the end, the great tomb collapsed and closed itself. His majesty wanted to escape, but he was held up by the others. They kept each other in check, and none of them were able to escape in the end. His majesty realized that he couldn’t escape, so he could only order me to assist in the crown prince’s succession to the throne.”

When they heard that Zhao Han had gone to the great tomb to fight over the immortal opportunity, the others were now eighty percent convinced. They all knew that the emperor’s desire for immortal ascension had already reached the level of madness. There had always been a saying that birds die for food, but they had never expected his majesty to suffer the same fate! As for the other details, they were even more full and detailed. There was no way one could come up with these things without seeing them in person.

“Then does that mean his majesty might still be alive?” King Yan asked with a strange expression. After all, judging from what Zu An said, Zhao Han had only been locked in the great tomb.

Zu An gave him a look, saying, “I don’t believe that anyone would be able to survive that kind of situation.”

The others felt a weight drop in their minds when they heard him say that with such confidence. They all kneeled down and cried ‘your majesty’ in grief, as if it were their own fathers who had died.

Zu An calmly watched their expressions. Sure enough, after these people expressed their grief as loyal ministers, they became more concerned with more practical issues.

“Your majesty sent you alone to assist the crown prince? What about the others?” they asked, their eyes shining brightly.

Zu An replied, “The situation was dire, so his majesty didn’t say anything. However, judging from his expression, he should have already made preparations in advance.”

He didn’t really think he could occupy the position of the crown prince’s aide all by himself. As for who else would be involved, the great clans could then discuss it among themselves once all of them return to the capital.

The three nodded their heads with ‘as expected’ looks on their faces. They then asked him a bit more about what had happened in the secret dungeon.

Zu An, Yan Xuehen, and even Chuyan and the others answered some of the questions. However, all of their stories interlocked and mutually corroborated each other.

When they saw that they couldn’t really get much else out of Zu An’s group, the others decided to get up and leave. They clearly planned to pass on the newest information to their own forces first. Only Bi Qi quickly returned to meet with Zu An one on one.

Zu An didn’t want to let down Bi Qi for his previous help, so he had Yan Xuehen and the women return to the nearby residence for some rest and to stay close to him. Otherwise, it would become a tricky situation if they were captured by the soldiers in such a situation.

“Ah Zu, what do you think about Linglong?” Bi Qi asked, startling Zu An.

Zu An’s first reaction was, Could it be that Bi Linglong told her father about our relationship? Why did it sound just like King Qi when he was looking for a son-in-law?

“The crown princess is very good. She’s pretty... ahem, and she has respect for the wise. She has always treated me with kindness and protection,” Zu An said. Midway through his sentence, he realized that with her personality, there was no way Bi Linglong would talk about such a shocking thing, even if it was her father.

Bi Qi was very satisfied with his reply. He patted Zu An’s shoulder and said, “Very good. You are from the Eastern Palace, and Linglong has always trusted you. In the end, we are all our own people, so I’ll get to the point and move on to more important matters.”

Zu An shuddered and said, “Sir Bi, please speak.”

“Do you know why there were so many important ministers before, and yet now, I am the only one standing here?” Bi Qi asked, his expression grim. He was clearly unhappy.

“Why?” Zu An asked.

He had already noticed that even though there were many civil and military officials who had followed Zhao Han to the Fengshan Ceremony, many of those familiar faces were gone. The ones in the lead had only consisted of Bi Qi, King Yan, and Zhao Yuan. Zhao Yuan was a military general, while King Yan was the king who presided over the nearby region. Strictly speaking, they weren’t the core forces of the court. Only Bi Qi was left from among them. The other officials seemed to have all left.

“Hmph, when something happened to his majesty, the Liu clan’s brothers used that as a pretext to start a purge of the court’s officials, removing them one after another.

“Because I followed his majesty to Violet Mountain, I also received part of the blame for the crime of failing to protect his majesty. That is why I am staying here to make up for my mistakes through contributions,” Bi Qi said, feeling frustrated and angry.

Zu An recalled that because there were signs of the rebel army gathering around the nearby Zhou Commandery, the court had sent troops ahead to suppress them. Liu Guang and Liu Yao, relatives of the empress, had wanted to rack up some military achievements and thus avoided Violet Mountain. That was how they had managed to hide from all the chaos.

The emperor had been ambushed and his whereabouts were unknown. How great of a matter was that? Many people were going to lose their heads and their official ranks. Bi Qi's group had high statuses, but they were also involved. Liu Guang and Liu Yao had the empress backing them, so they naturally had the authority to speak. They had continued to press the issue, so that was why Bi Qi had been left here.

"Hmph, Meng Yi is most likely collaborating with the Liu clan and has already returned to the capital," Bi Qi said, feeling more and more depressed the more he spoke. He couldn't help but drain the teacup next to him before rolling up his sleeves to pour himself another cup.

He was part of the Imperial Secretariat, while Meng Yi was the leader of the Central Secretariat. The two were usually on equal footing, and yet Meng Yi was able to return to the core of his authority, while he was left here. He was naturally furious at the result.

Zu An couldn't help but ask, "Why haven't I seen the Qin brothers?"

Chu Chuyan had been quite worried about that, so she had asked him to help her find out the answer.

Bi Qi knew that he had a connection to the Qin clan and replied, "The Qin clan and King Qi are too deeply involved. The two brothers were immediately locked up after the chaos. Furthermore, the court has demanded that the armies of the Qin clan's old dukes be seized. They are currently standing trial. The Qin clan is doomed to be finished." He paused for a moment before adding, "Ah Zu, you have such great prospects. I can promise to find a prestigious and noble woman for you in the capital. Is there a need for you to tie yourself down by Miss Chu?"

Zu An thought to himself, Giving me your daughter would be more like it,?but he knew that was completely impossible.

At the same time, he was full of worry for the Qin clan. He replied, "The Qin clan's state dukes have always had military power. Could it be that there was no resistance at all when they were being imprisoned?"

"Qin Zheng, that old codger, thinks of himself as high and pure. He believes that, as he worked for the sake of the people and had no selfish motives, he has no reason to fear an investigation. Who could be easier to deal with than those kinds of people?" Bi Qi replied. A mocking expression appeared on the corners of his lips, as if to deride Qin Zheng's naivety in politics. "However, their prestige has always been high, so the court doesn't know how to deal with them either. I reckon they might be quietly killed after the chaos blows over."

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Chapter 1860: Grind the Ink

"Kill them?" Zu An exclaimed, his expression changing. He was left in a bit of disbelief as he said, "The State Duke of Triumph and State Duke of Prestige have always been individuals of good moral standing and reputation. Why would they need to be killed?"

After some hesitation, Bi Qi explained, "Ah Zu, because of your relationship with Linglong, you are not an outsider. This is a good chance for me to teach you a few things.

"They chose to do what they did precisely because of their reputation. Previously, there was still his majesty pressuring them. Now that the crown prince is about to succeed to the throne, whether it is his strength or his prestige, the masses will never really be convinced. Who would be able to stop these two if they acted up?"

Zu An explained, "Even though these two coordinated closely with King Qi, they aren't the type who would go against the court for King Qi's sake. They still place the court and the empire above all else. Once the crown prince takes the throne, I believe the two state dukes will still remain loyal to him."

Bi Qi continuously shook his head as he listened, saying, "That is precisely why the Qin clan is naive. They should have either wholeheartedly devoted themselves to King Qi's camp and aggressively helped him take the throne, or

severed their relationship with King Qi and taken the lead in siding with his majesty. By not standing on either side, supporting King Qi while being unable to abandon their doctrine as faithful patriots, they are simply beggars trying to be choosers.”

Zu An nodded as he listened. Things really were as Bi Qi said. In the end, Qin Zheng was still too much of a square. He supported King Qi, and yet had been unwilling to put his troops on the line. Now, both sides were ruined, so what could he do now?

“Besides, you said that the Qin clan would continue to remain loyal to the empire,” Bi Qi continued with a sneer, “However, who could say for sure now that this kind of thing has happened? Who would dare to believe it?”

“The State Duke of Triumph’s integrity over the years is still something anyone can see, right?” Zu An said. Even though he understood that, he still couldn’t help but try to defend Qin Zheng.

Bi Qi shook his head and said, “In the court, no one would trust integrity and other such imaginary promises. The Qin clan are people from King Qi’s faction, which is doomed to be purged. Furthermore, their prestige is too high and would be a threat to the new ruler. This is the perfect chance to seize their military authority, which is what else everyone in the court is thinking.”

Zu An remained silent. He began to think, trying to find a way to save the Qin clan’s people. He wondered how Chu Youzhao, who was residing in the Qin clan, was doing.

Bi Qi said with a hint of mockery, “If the Qin clan really has thoughts of rebelling, then they might just end up like King Qi’s heir. People still have some reservations about killing him, but he’s nothing more than livestock awaiting slaughter.”

Zu An could only sigh inwardly. Qin Zheng was upright in character, and yet his dedication to the empire only made him a fool in the eyes of the political circles’ old foxes. It really was ironic.

He asked, “What happened to King Qi’s heir?”

King Qi replied, “I reckon King Qi made some arrangements before committing the act. He had his trusted aides take his heir back to their fiefdom. When they received news of defeat, King Qi’s heir gathered his

troops to defend himself. For fear of starting a huge rebellion, the court cannot capture him for now either.”

The emperor’s survival was uncertain and a new emperor hadn’t risen to the throne yet. None of them dared to jump the gun and attack him. The only saving grace was that the Qin clan was still considered cooperative and hadn’t stood with King Qi’s heir.

“Right, apart from the Qin clan, the Murong clan is also finished,” Bi Qi said, sounding quite happy.

Zu An was shocked. He quickly asked why that was. Murong Tong’s dark face and his expression that always looked as if people owed him money, as well as Murong Qinghe’s lively and slender figure, both appeared in his mind.

“Why else? The Murong clan has been very close to King Qi in recent years, and Murong Tong is the Supervisor of Attendants in charge of his majesty’s safety. Now that something so big has happened to his majesty, he naturally cannot escape blame,” Bi Qi said with a laugh. In the past, Murong Tong’s temper had been hard and smelly like the stones in the latrine pits. That guy had angered him many times, and now, he was receiving what was due. Bi Qi continued, “Murong Tong was thrown into the Imperial Prison, and I reckon he’s not having that great of a time.”

Zu An could tell that even though Bi Qi spoke casually, he was talking about the destruction of several top-level clans. He couldn’t help but become alarmed. Compared to those old foxes who didn’t have a shred of humanity left in them, he felt that he was still a bit too sentimental.

“What about the Waterfront Duke?” Zu An quickly asked.

That was Pei Mianman’s grandfather, Waterfront Duke Pei Zheng. He was the Chief Attendant, a lifetime position, as well as one of the core forces of King Qi’s faction. It didn’t seem as if this event would be too kind to him.

“Of course Pei Zheng has to be removed too. It’s just that they haven’t decided on how to deal with him yet,” Bi Qi said with a sneer. They were all old opponents. After fighting for so many years, they had already come to hate each other’s guts for a long time.

Zu An was speechless. In that instant, he had a ridiculous thought. Why was it that all of those being removed were the clansmen of his female friends? Just how had he even ended up becoming enemies with King Qi?

“What about the Yu clan and Jiang clan?” Zu An then asked.

“The Yu clan was already dealt with by his majesty, so even though Yu Xuanchong was forced out of his position, the Yu clan avoided this tragedy,” Bi Qi replied. “As for the Jiang clan, they are related to the Pei clan in marriage, so they will probably be dragged in as well. But that old fox Jiang Boyang is related to all of the big clans in marriage. In the end, someone will probably protect them, so they aren’t in too much trouble.”

Zu An sighed in relief. He finally received some good news.

Bi Qi patted Zu An’s shoulder and said, “Ah Zu, the reason why I told you so much is because I want the two of us to join forces. The Liu clan and Meng clan are allied, and are fighting over the court’s authority. They are planting their own people into the spots King Qi’s people have now left vacant. Even though I sent Ziang back to the capital to help his little sister, they are quite isolated and without help. I reckon that it will still be the Liu clan who has the final say in the capital.”

The empress’ seductive appearance appeared in Zu An’s mind. He felt a huge headache. They really were equally important! He thought to himself, Look at how fickle you always are; you’ve finally tasted pain, haven’t you?

Even so, on the surface, he still agreed and said, “Sir Bi, don’t worry. The crown princess has treated me so well and given all of the most precious things in the Eastern Palace to me. I have naturally engraved all of those things deeply in my memory.”

Bi Qi felt that his words were a bit strange, but he just assumed that Bi Linglong saw Zu An as important and raised him into becoming the most favored man in the Eastern Palace. As such, he laughed heartily and said, “Ah Zu, I’m glad you think that way. As long as you support Linglong later and this old one supports you from the court, even if the Liu clan’s hands try to cover the sky, we won’t need to fear them!”

Zu An was a bit hesitant as he said, “According to what I’ve heard, Liu Guang and Liu Yao are a bit... mediocre. Could people like them really take hold of this entire situation?”

“Liu Guang and Liu Yao are not much of a concern, but the Liu clan is the clan of the empress. Their forces cannot be underestimated,” Bi Qi said, his expression turning grave. “The Liu clan’s most formidable individual is actually the empress. She was quite stunning and exceptional when she was younger, with some even saying that her talent was no worse than his majesty’s. Unfortunately, she was unexpectedly injured while she was at her peak in the past, causing her to become like an ordinary person.

“However, recently, for some reason, her cultivation suddenly recovered. Not long ago, she directly broke through to the grandmaster rank. Furthermore, the Liu clan has an old ancestor who also has grandmaster rank cultivation. They also have an alliance with the Meng clan, which includes Meng Yi’s father, who is one of the court’s eight dukes and also a grandmaster; that way, they already have an incredible force. On top of that, they have a pretext to seize power; with the Liu clan’s army, as well as the Meng clan’s resources, it would be enough for them to seize control of the court.”

As he spoke, he was even starting to get frustrated himself. He continued, “I always thought that the empress was a cripple, so I never really guarded against the Liu clan. I really wonder just how she recovered... I heard that she ate some miraculous medicine. I really wonder just what kind of medicine is that useful; I’ll have to get Linglong to have some too, to see if it can make her stronger.”

Zu An had a strange expression as he thought, The Empress ate quite a bit of it back then with her mouth, and the crown princess has also eaten it...

He quickly dispelled that thought, as he was quite shocked to hear about the empress’ previous cultivation. She had been a grandmaster?! He hadn’t been able to tell at all.

Bi Qi got up and sorted out his clothes, saying, “Alright, I told you those things so you would have an idea of the current situation, and so it would be easier for us to work together in the future. As for King Yan and Zhao Yuan’s side, you have no need to worry too much. With me here, they wouldn’t dare to touch you.”

“Thank you, Sir Bi,” Zu An said, seeing him off with a friendly countenance. Then, he sat back down by his desk and started to think to himself.

He actually didn’t have that much interest in the political seizure of power. They were already in a freaking world of cultivation, and yet they were still

playing these games... They really were getting too distracted. However, he definitely had to go back and pay the capital a visit. There were too many people he needed to save. He unfolded a white sheet of paper and wrote down a few crucial names.

As he was deep in thought, the curtains suddenly shook. A beautiful figure dressed in a red top and black dress leaped in through the window. His eyes shook alongside the curtains as he watched her.

“Manman!”

“Ah Zu!”

A sweet scent swept over, and a fiery and alluring body fell straight into his arms.

“What is it?” Zu An asked, a bit shocked when he saw Pei Mianman hug him with so much strength.

“I have to go soon,” Pei Mianman said, feeling somewhat bad. “The sect leader and master want to bring me back. The things that happened on Violet Mountain are too great and our Jadedfall Palace doesn’t wish to be involved. We intend to return to the sect and close the mountain gate for a while. I heard that the reason we were able to go back was only out of respect for you. That’s the reason why they don’t dare to trouble us.”

Zu An was speechless, thinking, Does this count as crushing my own foot while trying to climb a rock? He eventually asked, “Is it possible for you to stay?”

“I can’t. The sect leader and master’s attitudes are really firm on this. Besides, after experiencing what happened here, they plan to return and pass the sect’s more profound skills onto me. I also need to spend some time to properly digest and comprehend the Paramita Butterfly I obtained from the secret dungeon,” Pei Mianman replied.

Her gaze was full of reluctance, but she quickly warned herself that there were now more and more beauties at Zu An’s side. If she didn’t make progress in her cultivation, she would only be bullied and have no way of fighting back. Furthermore, Ah Zu could now win against even the emperor! The difference in their strength was just too great.

Ah Zu might not feel anything, but as he gets stronger and stronger, the distance between us grows further and further...

When he sensed her resolve, Zu An realized that he couldn't hold up her cultivation either. He asked, "Then when are you leaving?"

"Tonight!"

"That soon?"

"Master and the sect leader feel that this place is inauspicious and don't wish to stay here even a moment longer than they have to."

Zu An was speechless.

"That's why I came all the way here to say goodbye, and also to give you a gift," Pei Mianman continued.

Zu An was stunned when he heard that. "What kind of gift?"

Pei Mianman suddenly smiled widely. She moved closer to his ear and whispered, "Are you writing something? I'll help you grind the ink."

Then, she slowly lowered her body. Her cheeks were bright red as she helped him in the most gentle and careful way.

Hmph, I'm going to leave soon anyway, so I can't let those other vixens get any advantages over me.

Zu An raised his brows and replied, "Oh?"

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Read Keyboard Immortal - Chapter 1861: Ingenious Use

Chapter 1861: Ingenious Use

Meanwhile, in another courtyard, Chu Chuyan looked at Yan Xuehen with a worried expression. She asked, "Master, do you think Ah Zu will be able to fool those old foxes?"

"That guy is even more cunning than an old fox. How could he possibly fail?" Yan Xuehen replied, rolling her eyes.

My disciple is normally pretty smart, so why is it that she suddenly becomes the biggest worrywart when it comes to Zu An? Is she really blinded by love?

"Still, so many of us came out from the secret dungeon, and both King Yan and that Guerilla Warfare General only refrained from interrogating us immediately out of respect for Ah Zu. If they get a chance, they might still be tempted to do so. After all, that day, Ah Zu's choice of words wasn't the most tactful," Chu Chuyan said worriedly.

"Don't worry. Often, people do not always need the truth. As long as there is an explanation and everyone is okay with it, that should be enough. After all, Zhao Han has already died," Yan Xuehen said in consolation.

Chu Chuyan looked at her in shock, replying, "Master, since when did you understand the court's matters that well?" She just couldn't help but feel as if her master had changed a bit. However, as for how Yan Xuehen had changed, she couldn't really say.

"For better or for worse, over the years, I have frequently visited the capital as the guest of many influential clans. After seeing their way of thinking enough, do I really have to see the pig run to eat the pork?" Yan Xuehen replied in annoyance. "What, was your master really such an idiot in that aspect?"

"Of course not," Chu Chuyan said, holding her hand with a big smile. She leaned against Yan Xuehen's shoulder like a spoiled child and asked in a slightly gossipy mood, "This disciple almost forgot that master was a goddess whom every man in the world admired. There are still rumors of master's charm circling the world even now. However, after all these years, could it be that master really doesn't have a single one you favor? Could it be that Yan'er is doomed to never have a martial father in this life?"

She was the one who had managed the entire clan back in the Chu clan. She'd had to deal with many business and familial matters alone. As such, she'd had no choice but to put on a tough appearance, using an ice-cold and emotionless exterior to make others fear and respect her. She was even like that in front of her own mother Qin Wanru. In order to not worry her parents, she had almost never shown them her little girl side, and had always presented her tough exterior. Only in the White Jade Sect, in front of her master, could she let go of some responsibilities and acting and remember

that she was but a young woman who hadn't even reached twenty years of age yet.

Yan Xuehen was alarmed and quickly pushed her away. She replied with a harrumph, "Just what kind of nonsense is in that head of yours? Don't tell me you've already forgotten what your cultivation is for?"

Chu Chuyan grumbled, "I am cultivating, and I don't think gossiping about love could really get in the way..."

"Is that the same thing? That guy you like is..." Yan Xuehen trailed off. Her cheeks even heated up a bit.

"Is what?" Chu Chuyan repeated, feeling a bit confused.

"Nothing," Yan Xuehen said in annoyance.

Am I supposed to tell you that I've had a taste of your man's transcendent aptitude blood essence? That not only does it not hinder our cultivation, it can even nourish our bodies?

She always felt guilty when she discussed Zu An with her. She quickly said with a stiff expression, "Hmph, look at you slacking off and always talking about love. You're not focusing on cultivation at all anymore."

Chu Chuyan's expression turned serious. She said, "Master's discipline is correct. I just happen to have some questions related to cultivation to ask master."

She had been a bit upset when she saw so many beauties appear at Zu An's side in the great tomb, and she even regretted the fact that she'd only had cultivation on her mind for years and neglected her relationship with Zu An. That was why so many vixens had ended up getting mixed in!

However, when they faced Zhao Han, she had discovered that she couldn't offer any help at all and had only become Zu An's burden. He had even been held back because he had to protect her. After Ah Zu drew Zhao Han away, she had been so worried that he could die, and yet she couldn't chase after him for fear of being a burden.

Those feelings of despair, alarm, and helplessness weren't something she wanted to experience again. As such, her desire to become stronger had grown once again.

"Speak!" Yan Xuehen replied. When she saw that Chu Chuyan was talking about cultivation, her expression became serious again too. She regained the image of a teacher.

"How can I become as strong as master in the shortest amount of time?" Chu Chuyan asked, looking at Yan Xuehen expectantly. She recalled her master and Sect Master Yun's figures as they rushed away. She figured that she had to at least reach their level in order to fight at Ah Zu's side.

Yan Xuehen was speechless. She said, "If you were able to catch up to me in a short amount of time, I would have cultivated this entire lifetime for nothing."

These youngsters really are biting off more than they can chew. Just how many years did I spend to reach the grandmaster rank? Just how much effort and dedication did I put in?

Chu Chuyan said sulkily, "But Ah Zu clearly caught up to you..."

Even though she couldn't sense Zu An's exact cultivation, anyone who could defeat Zhao Han, even if it was a seriously injured and tribulation lightning-blasted Zhao Han, definitely wouldn't be weaker than her own master.

Yan Xuehen choked.

Does this girl know how to have a proper conversation?

What do you mean, just catch up? That little demon already surpassed me! At this point, all I can do is act like a cute and helpless cheerleader...

A blush flashed across her face, but she quickly put those random thoughts away and said with a cough, "That brat is a monster, and his path cannot be replicated. However, you have a way to quickly become stronger."

"What is it?" Chu Chuyan asked, her eyes lighting up.

"The Pure World Icelotus that you received from Immortal Ruler Baopu in the great tomb," Yan Xuehen said. Her expression became serious again as she continued, "Even though I have never seen it before, your joint attack with Pei

Mianman on Zhao Han actually successfully destroyed one of his protective treasures. That is already enough to prove its strength. So, what you need to do right now is to properly understand the Pure World Icelotus intent. You cultivate the ice element, after all. If you can integrate those two things, your cultivation will definitely advance rapidly.”

“How can I do that? Even though I can vaguely sense the existence of that intent, I’ve found that I can only use it occasionally and inadvertently,” Chu Chuyan said in confusion.

“Calm your mind, and cross your arms in front of your chest,” Yan Xuehen guided her.

Chu Chuyan copied her. Her talent had always been first-rate, so she quickly became as still as ice and snow.

When she looked at her disciple’s stunning features, Yan Xuehen suddenly felt a bit upset.

Just what kind of superpower does that brat Zu An have?

She took a deep breath and calmed herself. Her fingers interlaced with Chu Chuyan’s. She poured her own inner ki into Chu Chuyan’s body to protect her meridians while slowly saying, “Chuyan, imagine that you have two mountains of ice inside of you right now. Then, guide that Pure World Icelotus to the two peaks.”

Chu Chuyan asked in confusion, “Shouldn’t the lotus be at the summit of the mountain?”

Yan Xuehen harrumphed. “You are still unfamiliar with the Pure World Icelotus right now. ?Immediately placing it at the peak would be aiming far too high. Have it sit between the two mountains right now, and surround it with your own ice mountain intent. Slowly polish it and refine it, then fully integrate it with the two peaks.”

Chu Chuyan, whose eyes were tightly shut, suddenly frowned. She said, “Master, this Pure World Icelotus intent doesn’t seem all that obedient and wants to struggle free.”

“Do not be alarmed. You cannot use brute force and must instead reform it gently, guide it, and make it feel the warmth of returning home,” Yan Xuehen

said. As a sect master, she had quickly gotten a rough idea of how to help her disciple cultivate from a few glances in the past.

“Master, it’s working!” Chu Chuyan said happily. “It seems to have become much more obedient than before.”

Yan Xuehen nodded in appreciation and said, “That’s right. Continue to polish it just like that. Make it completely familiar with your aura.”

“Okay,” Chu Chuyan replied. She began to focus on doing what Yan Xuehen said.

A while later, her expression suddenly changed and she exclaimed, “Oh no, master! It seems to have become impatient and wants to break free from the peaks’ restriction. It wants to fly away and completely break free from my control!”

“Don’t you have a mouth? Swallow that ice lotus and absorb it, then consolidate it at the base of the mountains again. Continue this process, and you should be able to fully subdue it in the end,” Yan Xuehen explained as she saw her disciple’s brows furrow tightly; Chu Chuyan seemed to have reached a critical juncture. She quickly said, “That Pure World Ice lotus doesn’t truly exist. I speculate that it was an innately spiritual treasure from ancient times, but for various reasons, it is now but a strand of lingering will. Since that strand has already acknowledged you as its owner, you do not need to cling to conventional ways. Whether it is the ice mountains your master spoke of or that lotus, they do not actually exist. They all exist within your mind.

“Use your own cold intent to nurture this strand of will. I believe that one day, you can once again recreate a true Pure World Ice lotus. Only then can you truly gain control over it and release even greater power.”

Chu Chuyan trembled and replied, “Master, I think I understand!”

“That’s my disciple!” Yan Xuehen remarked, nodding in appreciation. She taught her disciple while protecting her meridians through ki. She was also exhausted and breathing heavily now, her cheeks flushed with color.

...

Meanwhile, Zu An’s body also stopped briefly. Pei Mianman coughed a few times, seemingly choking.

A moment later, after she composed herself a bit, she showed him an ambiguous smile. She didn't say anything, but her expression seemed to be saying 'it has been a while since we met, but that's all you have'?

Zu An's face turned red. He asked, "Did you use Kiss of the Goddess just now?"

Pei Mianman nodded. There was a mischievous look in her beautiful eyes.

Zu An looked amazed, thinking, That skill can even be used like that? No wonder I couldn't even hold on.

Pei Mianman blinked charmingly, her eyes silently asking 'do you want more'?

Zu An nodded. He breathed in deeply.

I am a real man with bones of iron, someone who has suffered endless difficulties on the path of cultivation, someone who has faced difficulties head on! The more obstacles there are, the more courageous I become; how can I just give in so easily?

...

Meanwhile, Yan Xuehen instructed Chu Chuyan, "It is normal to fail when you are not proficient at first. Do it again using the previous method. Imagine that there are two ice mountains, and the Pure World Ice Lotus' intent is trapped within. You cannot use force, so you have to cleverly guide it and polish it...

"In the past, your master obtained a heart sutra from those old monks of Tranquility Temple. It just happens to be beneficial for your current situation. Listen carefully.

"Without the clear guidance of broad daylight, the impoverished have no way of finding the path home. Those who wish to achieve greatness must first let go of what they see and hear. When all these have been exhausted, obscurity and confusion will cease to arise. Great wisdom is unveiled, while all else dissipates. A state of ultimate oneness, boundaries and distinctions blurred and nonexistent..."

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Chapter 1862: Fear and Trepidation Before Disaster

Meanwhile, Xie Daoyun was rolling back and forth in bed, unable to sleep. After she saw Bi Qi leave Zu An's room, she hesitated for a bit, but decided to go to Zu An's room eventually.

"I am doing this for the sake of the academy and not because I wanted to see big brother Zu in particular! Even if I run into those other big sisters, it doesn't matter." She consoled herself while walking. While her face was turning as red as a ripe apple, she finally arrived outside Zu An's door.

Knock knock knock!

She knocked while asking in a low voice, "Big brother Zu, can I come in?" As soon as she spoke, however, she heard a strange noise and a suppressed groan of pain.

Could it be that I distracted big brother Zu while he was cultivating and he fell over?

"Big brother Zu, did something happen to you? I'm coming in, alright?" she called out, full of worry. She gave the door a heavy push as she spoke, opening it wide.

However, what she saw was not an injured Zu An as she had imagined; rather, he was sitting upright in front of his table. He was gripping both sides of the desk firmly as if he was doing his best to resist something.

"Big brother Zu, what's wrong?" Xie Daoyun asked. She was about to run over when Zu An stopped her.

"It's nothing. Did you need something?" Zu An replied, doing his best to keep his expression calm. He was really glad that there was a board blocking the front of his desk, so she didn't see anything she wasn't supposed to see.

A pair of beautiful eyes looked up at him from below with an ambiguous smile, as if she found the current situation extremely amusing.

"Oh, it wasn't anything much. It's mainly related to the libationer's affairs," Xie Daoyun said, letting out a sigh of relief. She sat down on a small stool.

Zu An's face twitched, but he couldn't really just chase her away.

Xie Daoyun's beautiful brows continued to furrow as she hesitated. She eventually said, "It's just that now that the libationer has passed on, I still have to bring him back to have a proper burial. His status is extraordinary, so they will definitely ask about how he passed away. The academy's side is fine, but the court's side... The libationer also appeared in the secret dungeon, so they might suspect his majesty's death has something to do with him."

Zu An released a long sigh of apparent satisfaction, or something else... He said, "Little sister Ling'er is still... Sss..."

When she saw Zu An shiver, Xie Daoyun was startled, asking, "Big brother Zu, what's wrong?"

"It's nothing, I was bitten by a little kitty just now," Zu An explained in embarrassment. He hadn't expected Manman to get jealous when he called her little sister Ling'er.

"Little kitty?" Xie Daoyun repeated, stunned. However, even after looking around, she didn't see any cats...

She reflexively leaned over to look over the table. Zu An was so frightened he quickly reached out and pressed his hand against her shoulder, saying, "Where were we just now? Oh, right. I think you're overthinking things. Actually, there's no need to be too earnest."

"There might be suspicious people at the court, but the libationer's status is special. Countless people respect him, and there are many students in the academy and military, let alone the fact that the entire empire still needs the pills, formations, and weapons from the academy."

"The emperor is already gone and the crown prince is quite weak. No one will really look into this matter. Everyone will tacitly trust anything you say."

"Really?" Xie Daoyun asked skeptically.

"Of course," Zu An said with a chuckle. Suddenly, he grimaced. However, he continued, "Did you forget that I'm still here? Don't worry, no one will make things difficult for you."

"Big brother Zu, you're hurting me," Xie Daoyun suddenly said timidly.

Zu An was speechless. Pei Mianman was stunned.

Xie Daoyun's gaze shifted to her shoulder, which Zu An was gripping tightly. She couldn't help but become a bit worried when she saw his veins popping. She asked, "Big brother Zu, are you really okay? Ah, your body is burning up!"

She reflexively reached out to touch his forehead. She was immediately frightened by the scalding temperature. Her beautiful and refined face filled with alarm and worry as she asked, "Big brother Zu, are you sick?"

"I'm... okay," Zu An said, although his voice seemed to be trembling a bit.

"What do you mean, you're okay? You're already this hot," Xie Daoyun said. "How about I take your pulse?"

She didn't give him a chance to say anything and put her hand on his wrist. She exclaimed, "Hm? Big brother Zu, why is your heart rate so quick? Could it be that there's an injury leftover from your great battle against his majesty that's acting up now?"

"The injuries I received before have already healed. There's no need to worry," Zu An replied. Inwardly, he was crying 'save me!'. If this continued, he wouldn't be able to hold on anymore.

"Your injuries have already healed?" Xie Daoyun asked, stunned. If he wasn't injured, why was his heartbeat so quick?

Could it be... because of me?

She hadn't noticed earlier because she was worried about him, but now, she realized that they were really close. She was supporting her upper body on the table, while he had his hands pressed against her shoulders. Their faces were almost within reach. She could clearly see herself reflected in his eyes.

Xie Daoyun's heart began to pound fiercely as they looked into each other's eyes. A strange romantic mood suddenly seemed to fill the air.

As she looked at Zu An's handsome face, Xie Daoyun felt an inexplicable surge of confidence. She suddenly got on her toes and moved closer, then gave Zu An a light kiss on his lips.

Zu An's eyes widened, and his grip tightened even further. He had never expected things to develop like this!

Xie Daoyun was startled. She thought to herself, *How could I act so unreserved?* She reflexively wanted to run away, but her shoulders were being held tightly in place. She couldn't budge an inch.

She thought, *Since we're already like this, I'll just be a bit bolder so I won't have any more regrets.* She recalled a forbidden book she had secretly read about a lady's chambers and became a bit restless.

Zu An instinctively responded to her. Suddenly, however, he was stunned. He thought, *This is not the time for this!*

However, how could Xie Daoyun resist his teasing? She immediately felt as light as a feather, as if her soul were about to leave her body. She thought to herself, *Is this the sensation of kissing that the book described?*

Just then, however, Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei's voices came from outside the door. "Hm? The door seems to be open. It doesn't seem like he's fallen asleep yet."

The people inside the room were scared quite badly. Zu An in particular couldn't hold it in anymore. His hands almost crushed Xie Daoyun from the force he was using.

When she felt him gasping for air and his entire body shaking uncontrollably, Xie Daoyun became more and more shy. She thought, *Isn't big brother Zu's reaction a bit too much? Could it be that he likes me that much?*

Even so, her thoughts quickly turned to other things. She summoned the courage to push Zu An away, and then she quickly ran away. She definitely didn't want to bump into Qiu Honglei and Yun Jianyue, letting them catch her in the act of kissing big brother Zu. That would be way too embarrassing. More importantly, Qiu Honglei was big brother Zu's lover, so her actions were a bit too despicable, right?

"Hm? Miss Xie? Why are you here?" Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei both exclaimed in surprise. After being caught by Sun En, Yun Jianyue and Xie Daoyun's relationship had become quite good.

"I didn't do anything!" Xie Daoyun suddenly cried, waving her hands guiltily. She quickly added, "I wanted to ask big brother Zu about some things related to the academy and the libationer!"

“Is that so?” Qiu Honglei and Yun Jianyue replied, looking at her with a bit of doubt. Her face was just too red, and it looked like tears were about to come out of her eyes. Her delicate lips in particular looked even more glossy than usual.

The two others in the room were really alarmed. Pei Mianman sorted out her clothes, and dashed out of the window while covering her mouth. She glared at Zu An in embarrassment and annoyance. Xie Daoyun was one thing, but Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei’s cultivations were higher. She would definitely be discovered if she continued to hide in the room.

Either way, she had already said goodbye to Zu An this time. She turned around and smiled sweetly at him one more time before disappearing into the night sky. With Fu Hao’s Owl Statue, she was already a queen of the night, so she didn’t have to worry about being discovered by the guards outside.

Right as she left, Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei entered the room. They saw that Zu An was continuously waving his hands, as if he were fanning something.

“What are you doing?” Yun Jianyue asked in puzzlement.

“There seem to be quite a few mosquitoes today, haha. Violet Mountain is a great place, but this problem is a bit annoying,” Zu An said with a yawn.

“Mosquitoes?” the women repeated; they both found that strange. With their cultivation, mosquitoes would die instantly upon reaching their protective ki armor. Why would there be a need to chase mosquitoes away?

They said, “Ah Zu, we’re here to say goodbye.”

Zu An was stunned, asking, “You guys are also leaving?” He thought, *What is going on? They’re all leaving one after another!*

“Also?” Yun Jianyue repeated, her expression turning a bit dangerous.

Zu An ignored her and hurriedly held Qiu Honglei’s hands, asking, “Why do you have to leave so soon?”

Qiu Honglei’s lips curled. She shot an aggrieved look in her master’s direction, clearly reluctant to leave.

Yun Jianyue said impatiently to her, "Our identities are sensitive. If we're exposed, it'll bring him a load of problems. We should take this chance to lie low and let the fuss die down. You can just find a chance to meet up with him later; it's not as if he'll run away."

Qiu Honglei thought to herself, *He won't run away, but those vixens around him will only grow greater in number! The pressure I'll face then will be even greater!*

Yun Jianyue said seriously, "I previously heard that Lu Sanyuan was drawing near with his great rebel army. I didn't have enough time to react to that information before being pulled into the secret dungeon with you guys. Now that we're finally back, I naturally need to take a look to see if there are any issues on that side."

Zu An shuddered. He knew why she was treating that matter so seriously; it was because Lu Sanyuan's troops were, strictly speaking, a volunteer army under the Devil Sect. And yet, even though they were launching such a large-scale operation, Yun Jianyue, the sect leader, knew nothing of it. That was a dangerous sign. Either Lu Sanyuan had thoughts of defecting, or there were individuals inside the Devil Sect who wished to erode Yun Jianyue's authority.

Qiu Honglei understood the severity of the situation as well, saying, "Master, I'll go with you to help."

Yun Jianyue nodded in appreciation.

I didn't raise this disciple for nothing. She's not the type to forget her family for men.

Zu An couldn't help but ask, "Do you need my help?"

"Not for now. I can still take care of this much, at least," Yun Jianyue said, proudly refusing.

...

The group chatted for a while longer before Qiu Honglei reluctantly said her goodbyes.

Zu An saw them out of the courtyard. Yun Jianyue suddenly turned around and gave him a cold look before leaving, saying, "Your waist strap isn't tied properly."

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Chapter 1863: I Already Drank Too Much Earlier

You have successfully trolled Yun Jianyue for +666 +666 +666...

Zu An immediately began to sweat like crazy. Previously, he had been so nervous and alarmed that he just tied it carelessly. He hadn't expected it to be wrong! More importantly, Yun Jianyue had noticed! This really was social suicide...

...

Meanwhile, when Qiu Honglei and Yun Jianyue were already far away from the courtyard, Qiu Honglei couldn't help but ask, "Master, what did you mean just now? You sounded really angry."

"It's nothing. I was just warning him, that's all," Yun Jianyue said with a sneer.

No wonder they had bumped into a flustered and guilty Xie Daoyun on the way out! On top of that, her lips had seemed a bit more moist than usual.

So they were doing that kind of thing!

How ridiculous! The two of them clearly only had a brother and sister relationship. What kind of sister does that with their brother?

More importantly, when did these two suddenly get that far? Xie Daoyun was clearly just a reserved and virtuous young lady the last time they interacted! And yet she actually agreed to create trouble with him!

"Master, did you smell anything strange in that room earlier? It was almost like..." Qiu Honglei trailed off, her face reddening. She was too embarrassed to continue.

Yun Jianyue immediately became vigilant. She exclaimed, "You did that kind of stuff for him before too?!"

"What do you mean?" Qiu Honglei replied, feeling a bit at a loss. naturally didn't want to discuss that kind of thing with her master, so her first inclination was to think of something else.

"It's nothing. I didn't smell anything earlier." Yun Jianyue harrumphed. She also felt that talking about that kind of thing with her disciple was a bit ridiculous, so she decided to just say that she hadn't smelled anything.

Qiu Honglei sighed in relief and said, "I suppose I was overthinking things just now."

Yun Jianyue was about to say something when she saw her disciple's happy appearance and decided not to. Inwardly, she thought, You actually weren't wrong...

Sigh, this disciple of mine is usually pretty sharp. She has who knows how many men in the Holy Sect in the palm of her hand. Why did she suddenly become dumb? Should I give her some reminders?

However, a master teaching her disciple how to flirt with a man really is a bit embarrassing...

...

Meanwhile, Pei Mianman hurriedly returned to Jadenfall Palace's residence. Elder Huo Ling, Wan Tongtian, Wan Guiyi, and the others were eating in front of a desk.

"Did you say your goodbyes to him?" Elder Huo Ling asked, her expression unhappy. The disciple she had carefully raised actually only had another man in her head all day long! If news of that got out, it really would be shameful for her as the master.

"Yes," Pei Mianman said, reflexively wiping the corners of her lips. She felt relief when she noticed that there was nothing left behind.

"Hm? Why did you change into a different set of clothes?" Elder Huo Ling asked, looking at her with suspicion.

Pei Mianman replied in alarm, "We're about to head out on a long journey, so I felt that my other clothes weren't suitable." The front of her other clothes was dirty, and there was a strong smell on them. How could she dare to wear them here?

"That brat didn't do something to you, did he?" Elder Huo Ling asked with a frown. She felt as if the lovely, graceful, and obedient daughter she had raised was constantly running off to troublesome places.

"No... Nothing," Pei Mianman said, her face heating up. Strictly speaking, it was she who had done something to him....

Wan Tongtian smiled and tried to smooth things over, saying, "When a woman is pretty, it isn't too strange for her to change clothes often."

Elder Huo Ling's eyes narrowed. She said, "I usually wear just this set of clothes, and even if I change, it looks similar. Judging from what the sect leader is saying, it seems to imply I do not care much about my appearance?"

Wan Tongtian was just about to continue when he froze up. He really was getting kicked while he was down here! Fortunately, he reacted quickly and glossed over it with a chuckle. Then, he beckoned to Pei Mianman and said, "Manman, come and eat. The journey will be more comfortable after a good meal. We won't be stopping once we set off, so try to replenish as much strength as possible."

"Understood, martial uncle sect leader," Pei Mianman replied.

Elder Huo Ling got a bowl of soy milk ready for her as soon as she sat down. She said in an endearing manner, "This is made with the finest spirit soybean extract from the Righteous Sun Sect's medicinal fields. Every single soybean is full of natural ki. If not for what happened to the Righteous Sun Sect, we would likely not have the blessing to drink this. Have some more of it."

Pei Mianman's eyes widened when she saw the white and creamy soy milk. In the end, she couldn't help but run off to the side and retch. "Ugh..."

When she saw her disciple vomit, Elder Huo Ling's face was full of question marks.

What's with the huge reaction? Don't tell me you're pregnant or something?

The Wan father and son also looked at her in confusion. Why was she having such a strong reaction?

Do you not like soy milk?

However, they had never seen her avoid soy milk before. Additionally, the soy milk from Violet Mountain was fragrant and sweet.

They were just about to ask her when Pei Mianman hurriedly waved her hand and said, "I'm good. It's just that I already drank enough earlier. I'm going back for some rest first." She broke off into a small run after saying that, still feeling lingering fear.

The others looked at each other in dismay. They didn't understand what was happening. When had she drunk soy milk?

...

Meanwhile, Zu An was cleaning up the mess back in his room; he was in a sorry state. He definitely didn't want anyone else to bump into this disaster. He really felt as if he had been on an emotional rollercoaster all night. After cleaning everything up, he sat in front of his desk in a daze.

What was I thinking about earlier again?

Oh, I didn't expect Kiss of the Goddess to have that incredible use. It really is something... Should I get Chuyan to try it sometime too? Still, she's usually colder in nature. She won't just beat me to death out of humiliation, will she?

I can also never let big sis Yan find out, or else I'll be skinned eight times over!

He was letting his imagination run wild when a guard suddenly called out to him respectfully from the entrance, saying, "Sir Zu, this subordinate has something to report."

"Come in," Zu An replied absentmindedly.

A guard dressed in an Armed Escort Army uniform walked in. He kneeled down on the ground respectfully.

"Is there something you need?" Zu An asked.

"It is related to King Yan. He seems to..." the guard began.

When he saw how the subordinate was hesitating, Zu An became a bit curious. He walked over to support the guard to his feet while saying, "Don't be scared. You can just tell me."

The guard suddenly raised his head and blew a puff of black smoke in his face. At the same time, a dagger appeared in his hand, moving toward Zu An's body. However, as soon as he raised his hand, he felt a stinging pain. Zu An had gripped his wrist and aimed it at his own neck instead!

The move should have dislocated his joint at the very least, but the guard's hand suddenly became as limp as a loach, breaking free from his restriction at a strange angle. Then, he dashed to one side.

He was about to say something when Zu An suddenly appeared in front of him like a relentless shadow, a hand clamping down on his shoulder. He immediately felt a wave of pressure that prevented him from mustering even the slightest bit of strength again.

"It hurts, it hurts! It's me! I was just playing a joke on you!" a melodious voice cried out, clearly that of a woman.

Zu An reached out to touch her face, then tore off the mask covering it, revealing a lovable and annoyed face. She was clearly an extremely mysterious person, someone with many sides, and yet she had a dignified and elegant face. However, she was tearing up a bit, clearly from pain.

"Tang Tian'er?" Zu An exclaimed. He frowned when he saw her face, but he still didn't let her go.

"Young master, it's been a long time, so I just wanted to play a prank. Is there a need for you to be this mean?" Tang Tian'er replied playfully.

"Hah," Zu An sneered. "Is an assassination attempt a joke?"

When she saw that he was still displeased, Tang Tian'er started to panic. She cried out, "That smoke didn't have any poison, and that dagger was actually made of paper. You can go and check if you don't believe me!"

Zu An flung her away and sat back down. He said indifferently, "If that hadn't been the case, you would already be dead."

He had already felt that something was off from the very beginning, which was why he held back. Otherwise, even though he wouldn't have killed the 'assassin' on the spot, he would definitely have broken their arms and legs before slowly carrying out an interrogation.

"It's just because I haven't seen you in too long! I wanted to raise your vigilance a bit..." Tang Tian'er said as she ran over in a familiar manner to help him massage his arms and legs.

"It's easy for you to take your games too far that way," Zu An said seriously, "Not everyone can immediately tell the difference like me, and other people might not show mercy."

"Come on, I would only do that kind of thing with you, okay? There's no way I'd do that with other people." Tang Tian'er harrumphed.

"How did you get in?" Zu An asked curiously. The security in the area was extremely tight, after all.

After such a major event had happened on Violet Mountain, and especially after factoring in the presence of King Yan and the Guerilla Warfare and Armed Escort Armies, there were layers upon layers of guards in the area.

"For someone like me who's good at disguising myself, the more people there are, the more openings I have to exploit!" Tang Tian'er said, feeling quite pleased with herself. "I took such a huge risk to find you precisely because I heard that you'd returned. I couldn't hold back my yearning, you know?"

Zu An calmly said, "Tell me what you really want from me."

"I really did miss you..." Tang Tian'er said with a wronged expression.

"I'm leaving if you don't speak," Zu An said, unmoved. He got up and prepared to leave as he spoke.

"Wait, wait, wait!" Tang Tian'er quickly protested, then asked, "Is that blasted emperor dead?"

"That's a court secret. No comment," Zu An replied. He knew that the Hub of Freedom had an inextricable relationship with the people of the previous dynasty. Tang Tian'er had likely come to find him precisely because of that.

Tang Tian'er grumbled, "I helped you so much and even risked my purity to save you, but you're abandoning me amid the chaos... You're not even willing to tell me such a small thing..."

Zu An thought back to how she had hidden him in her bathtub to avoid soldiers before. He reflexively looked at her underbelly. He seemed to recall in that location a certain...

Tang Tian'er's face turned red when she saw his gaze and protested, "Scoundrel."

Zu An immediately felt a headache coming on. He said, "Alright, the emperor is already dead. He died in the secret dungeon and even his corpse is gone."

Either way, the news would be widespread sooner or later. It would be better to get a favor from her with it.

"Young master is the best! I knew you wouldn't be so heartless!" Tang Tian'er exclaimed. She enthusiastically hugged him and gave him a kiss. Her eyes were beaming.

"How does the young master want me to thank you?" she asked while lightly pecking his earlobe. She even mischievously blew some hot air. Her voice was as sweet as honey. Together with that smile that was even sweeter than her voice, it really was enough to make any man rock-hard.

However, Zu An remained extremely calm as he said, "Miss Tang, there's no need for you to do that. Friends should help each other out, so there's no need for you to use your usual tricks."

Big Manman's Kiss of the Goddess had just been way too formidable, making him humiliate himself countless times. There was no way he could have any untoward thoughts right now.

Tang Tian'er was stunned. A hint of admiration appeared in her eyes. She got up and bowed respectfully, saying, "The young master really is a gentleman and leaves Tang'er full of admiration. Actually, the young master has misunderstood. I only do this to the young master; no one else can even touch a single finger of mine. But since the young master doesn't seem to like it, I'll be more mindful in the future."

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Chapter 1864: Tremendous Secret

Zu An knew she wasn't lying. He had witnessed her skills back at the Hub of Freedom. Even though the Hub looked like a place of entertainment, full of singing and dancing, the poison mist in her mouth could make her target fall into an illusion and think they had succeeded. In reality, they would only be playing with themselves in the illusion while she watched them in amusement.

"The lady speaks too seriously. There are so many guards outside; do you need me to help you leave?" Zu An asked.

"Why does the young master want to chase me away so quickly?" Tang Tian'er replied, her voice carrying a hint of a grudge.

Zu An was speechless. *Didn't I just tell you not to speak to me in that tone just a second ago? Why is it back already?*

"I still have something to ask the young master..." Tang Tian'er said, lying on the table and looking at him with a smile. That sweet and pitiable smile made it difficult for anyone to feel any ill will toward her.

"Alright, tell me. What is it?" Zu An asked.

"Is the libationer still alive?" Tang Tian'er asked in response.

Zu An's eyes narrowed when he heard what she said. He asked, "What kind of relationship does your Hub of Freedom have with the libationer? Could it be that it was set up through his influence?"

Tang Tian'er replied with a sweet smile, "How could a petty nobody like me know what the higher-ups are doing? I won't hide it from young master. The Hub of Freedom does have some connection to the previous dynasty, but I don't know exactly how deep it runs. Even if I did know, I couldn't talk about it. Anyway, the libationer was part of the previous dynasty's royal family, so it's normal for us to care about his safety, right?"

Zu An thought to himself, *Like hell I'll believe that you're a petty nobody in the Hub of Freedom!*

However, since she didn't want to talk about it, he didn't want to pry too much either. He said, "The libationer has already passed on." He watched her reaction as he spoke.

Tang Tian'er was stunned. She asked, "Was it also in that secret dungeon?"

"Yeah," Zu An replied.

Tang Tian'er remained silent for a while. The sweet smile on her face was now gone. She asked, "Did he take that other guy down with him?"

Zu An smiled and didn't say anything. He just continued to stare at her calmly, just like that.

Tang Tian'er knew that the subject was a matter of utter secrecy, so she was too embarrassed to keep asking. She said, "Thank you, young master. You've helped me settle many of my doubts today."

"What is the Hub of Freedom planning to do now?" Zu An asked curiously.

"I don't know the exact details of what they're going to do, but they'll probably continue to gather money. There's nothing more important than that in the world," Tang Tian'er said, as if that was proper and to be expected.

Zu An was speechless. *You make so much sense right now that I can't even argue.*

Tang Tian'er chatted with him for a little while longer. They didn't talk about anything important and just made casual conversation. The mood was quite good, but Zu An was in a 'transcendent' state and didn't have any other thoughts. Tang Tian'er teased him again and again, but when she saw that he didn't have the slightest reaction, she couldn't help but start to question life.

Could it be that he really doesn't have the slightest feeling for me?

Was I really just acting like a little clown with all this?

No way, he definitely has a favorable impression of me. Otherwise, he wouldn't have told me such important things!

Could it be that he's just too much of a gentleman...

She became more excited when she thought of that. Then, she got up to say goodbye to him.

Men can't be pushed too much. It's like fishing; you have to tug at the right time to succeed.

Zu An brought up seeing her out again, but she refused him.

"Don't worry. Since I managed to get in, of course I can get out," Tang Tian'er said. She left behind her trademark smile before quickly disappearing into the night.

After being repeatedly tormented by so many women, Zu An was getting a bit tired. He expected that Yan Xuehen and Chu Chuyan would come in. but he didn't hear anything from them. As he waited and waited, he unwittingly fell asleep.

...

The next morning, Zu An went to look for Yan Xuehen and Chu Chuyan, but he saw that they weren't actually in their rooms. According to what the maids said, they seemed to have gone to a certain place in the mountains to cultivate.

He went to look for Pei Mianman, Yun Jianyue, and Qiu Honglei, but he discovered that all of them had already left. He couldn't help but release a deep sigh. They all had their own matters to take care of, and their own pursuits and goals. That was why they spent more time apart than together.

As he let out a sigh full of deep emotion, King Yan, Bi Qi, and Zhao Yuan's people invited him over to discuss official matters.

...

When he arrived at Guidance Temple, they began discussing what to do in the future.

Bi Qi had already been excluded from the most important decision-making back at the capital for too long, so he was naturally in a rush to return. He didn't even want to stay a single day longer. Of course, the excuse he used was justifiable and proper. As so many people had come out from the secret dungeon, he needed to bring them back to the capital for interrogation.

As for King Yan, he was normally situated in a different territory anyway, so he naturally couldn't follow them to the capital. He stayed behind to continue watching over Yi Commandery and check for any more activity by Violet Mountain.

The different parties' attitudes were surprisingly similar, so they quickly reached a consensus. Orders went out one after another, and the Guerilla Warfare Army and Armed Escort Army all began to prepare for departure.

Zu An recalled what Yun Jianyue had been worried about and asked King Yan and Zhao Yuan about news related to Lu Sanyuan. Previously, Zhao Han had assigned some troops to subdue rebel troops, and those rebels were none other than the volunteer army Lu Sanyuan was leading from several different areas.

However, they eventually learned that Lu Sanyuan hadn't engaged in a frontal clash with the army. They had always somehow slipped past the official army, stalling for several months.

As the news of what happened to Zhao Han on Violet Mountain had already spread, the armies that set out to suppress the rebel army didn't dare to continue their pursuit and both sides tacitly gave up on the matter.

It looks like their objective was just to lure the tiger away from the mountain, Zu An thought to himself. He wondered just who had the ability to amass so many resources and create such a deathtrap for Zhao Han.

As everyone on the mountain was starting to move, Yan Xuehen and Chu Chuyan also returned and found Zu An.

When he heard that they were also going to leave, Zu An became a bit depressed. He asked, "Can you stay for a few more days before leaving?"

Chu Chuyan was a bit hesitant, but Yan Xuehen said, "As something this major happened on Violet Mountain, I reckon that news has already traveled back to the White Jade Sect. Because of martial uncle's actions, the entire sect must be alarmed and desperate. I need to return to control the situation.

"Furthermore, Chu Chuyan obtained some benefits from studying the Pure World Icelotus. This is a good chance for her to go into secluded cultivation to consolidate what she comprehended. I can also stay at her side and guide her. If she follows you, she will be delayed by all sorts of court matters. After

all, we also entered the secret dungeon. If we go to the capital, there will be many uncontrollable factors.”

Chu Chuyan blinked. Her master was always very brief with others and incredibly cold, and yet she actually said so much to Ah Zu!

It looks as if master really does dote on me and is more patient because of me.

Zu An knew that what she said was the truth. He nodded and said, “That’s also good. Once I settle everything in the capital, I’ll come to pick you two up.”

Yan Xuehen was alarmed.

Are you crazy? Why did you say 'you two'?

She secretly gave Chu Chuyan a look. When she saw that she didn’t seem to have noticed, she sighed in relief.

No, I have to stay further away from this guy. If I stay at his side, the Unshakable Daoist Manual I cultivated so bitterly will be ruined by him sooner or later!

She felt more and more uncomfortable, so she decided to just leave to give these two lovebirds some space alone.

Chu Chuyan was actually a bit unhappy that Zu An would always end up having more women who had ambiguous relationships with him whenever she left for a bit. She wanted him to live clean and honest from now on. However, with her personality, she couldn't bring herself to say those words.

In the end, all of those unspoken words changed into something else. She said, “Ah Zu, the Qin clan will likely be involved in these events on Violet Mountain. I’ll have to entrust it all to you. Youzhao in particular... Who knows what kind of suffering she’s gone through because of this. You have to help me take care of her.”

Zu An said with a chuckle, “Don’t worry. Youzhao is your little sister, so she’s my little sister too. I’ll definitely take good care of her. I’ll also help the Qin clan.”

She probably didn't know how severe the situation with the Qin clan was, but there was no need to tell her. What she needed right now was to focus on her newly acquired opportunity. All of those things would only distract her.

Chu Chuyan nodded. Just as she was about to leave, she gave him a look. Suddenly, she turned around and jumped into his arms to hug him tightly.

"Chuyan, what's wrong?" Zu An asked. He hadn't expected Chuyan to take the initiative like this with her normally ice-cold personality.

After responding to her hug, he reflexively glanced at Yan Xuehen off to the side. Her face was completely cold. He couldn't sense any changes in emotion at all.

He felt a shiver. Double the joy also meant double the worries.

Chu Chuyan didn't reply to his question, and bit down fiercely on his shoulder instead. Then, she broke out into a small jog under his shocked gaze.

Yan Xuehen walked over casually, so Zu An took the chance to ask, "Big sis Yan, what is going on with her?"

"You're always fondling the flowers and trampling the grass out there, so of course she felt wronged. It's good that she's venting a bit," Yan Xuehen said coldly.

Forget about Chuyan, even she wanted to give that brat a vicious bite.

All of the women he had at his side were goddess-like beings. Anyone who could obtain even a single one of them would be extremely careful not to hurt them in any way. Which one of them would dare to go after other women too? And yet, this guy kept doing exactly that!

If he had been despicable and shameless, using any means fair or foul, and was purely infatuated by their beauty, that wouldn't be so hard to deal with. She would have just cut that thing off, or perhaps even killed him to settle things.

However, according to her understanding of Zu An, many things had happened between him and every one of those women. After all of the difficulties they experienced, he had even been willing to give up his life for

them. Their relationships had then happened naturally, so she couldn't even find any reason to blame him.

He and Chuyan probably share similar circumstances...

Pah pah pah! What am I thinking about right now?!

"Until we meet again," Yan Xuehen said, feeling her cheeks heat up. She would end up making a fool of herself if she stayed here any longer. She left behind those words coldly before quickly flying off into the distance.

Zu An was about to chase after her when Zhang Zijiang ran over, saying, "Sir Zu, the princess is shouting that she wants to meet you."

"I won't," Zu An refused in annoyance.

After some hesitation, Zhang Zijiang continued, "She says she has a huge secret to tell you. If you don't go, you will definitely regret it."

Zu An frowned. Just what kind of huge secret was it that made Zhao Xiaodie so confident? Could it be that there were still other secrets on King Qi's side?

When he saw that Yan Xuehen had already left, out of helplessness, he could only move over to the courtyard that was holding Zhao Xiaodie.

The usually high-spirited princess was now like a butterfly with her wings clipped; she was dejected, and the expression in her eyes was vacant. She was lying on the table and staring out of the window in a daze.

"Princess, what did you need to see me for?" Zu An asked, coughing lightly. He didn't enter, however, and remained standing outside the entrance.

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Chapter 1865: You Don't Want Others to Know, Right?

Zhao Xiaodie suddenly got up and looked in the direction of the entrance. When she saw Zu An, a beautiful luster ignited in her previously dim eyes. Seemingly recovering a bit of vitality, she exclaimed, "Big brother Zu!"

"I don't believe that the princess and I are that close to each other," Zu An said, his face twitching.

Zhao Xiaodie was about to say something when she suddenly closed her mouth and gave the servants and guards outside a look. Zu An frowned and had them withdraw.

Those people looked at each other in dismay, asking, "Sir Zu, isn't this a bit unsuitable?"

Zu An replied coldly, "Are you worried that I would do something to the princess in broad daylight? Or are you worried that we might fabricate a story together?"

"We wouldn't dare!" they replied. They didn't dare to say too much due to the pressure his voice gave them, all got up to leave.

"Princess, can you speak now?" Zu An asked as he looked at Zhao Xiaodie. Even though her face was a bit wan and sallow, she was still beautiful. Without her usual bossy and domineering nature, she now had a pitiful air instead.

"Big brother Zu treated me like that back then, and yet you're still saying we're not close..." Zhao Xiaodie said, her pale face turning a bit red. It was unclear what she was thinking. Her expression was rather strange.

Zu An knew that she was talking about her assassination attempt on him, which had gotten her a spanking in return. He remembered that she seemed to be an M. When he saw that, he turned to leave, saying, "If you won't speak, then I'm leaving."

"No!" Zhao Xiaodie exclaimed as she quickly grabbed him. A wave of fragrance spread toward Zu An from her body. When she saw him frown, she quickly said, "This fragrance doesn't have poison."

Zu An moved her hand away in a tactful manner. He found a chair to sit down on and waited for her following words.

When she saw that he didn't have any intention of leaving anymore, Zhao Xiaodie sighed in relief. Her voice trembled a bit as she asked, "Big brother Zu, did something happen to my dad?"

"This matter is..." Zu An began. Midway through his sentence, he saw her pleading look and felt his heart soften. He said, "King Qi has indeed already passed."

"Ahhh!" Zhao Xiaodie cried. Even though she'd already had her suspicions, when she received confirmation, her face turned completely pale, and she staggered. If not because there was a table supporting her, she would likely have already collapsed to the ground.

"How did he die?" Zhao Xiaodie asked, suddenly looking up at Zu An. There was a faint flame burning in her eyes.

"It has nothing to do with me. I believe you can guess what happened too," Zu An said coldly.

When she heard that it had nothing to do with him, Zhao Xiaodie's nervous heart suddenly calmed down. She said with a sigh, "I actually already expected this day would come eventually. It's just that I didn't expect it to be so soon. His majesty is unrivaled and his schemes run deep. No matter how formidable my father is, how could he possibly win against him?"

Zu An only replied with silence.

Zhao Xiaodie suddenly asked, "Big brother Zu, can you help save our King Qi Manor? After what happened at Violet Mountain, our King Qi Manor will definitely be finished. My mother, my older brother, and countless clans related to us will all meet tragic ends."

When she thought about the executions that would follow, she couldn't help but shiver all over. Even if they didn't die by a thousand cuts, they would be thrown into places such as the government brothel. When she thought about how revered queens and princesses would fall to such a state, being humiliated and defiled by lowly men, she felt her entire body become a bit cold.

"Could it be that the princess has made some kind of mistake here? Everyone knows that your esteemed father and I were sworn enemies. He was itching to get rid of me, and yet you want me to save his people now?" Zu An replied coldly.

"My father had some misunderstandings with you in the past, but strictly speaking, you haven't lost anything, and the one who lost more was my

father. I know this request might be a bit excessive, but can I ask you to help me as a personal favor?" Zhao Xiaodie asked, kneeling down in front of him. She grabbed his clothes and looked at him with a pleading expression, saying, "I will devote my entire self to you in this life."

Zu An quickly supported her to her feet and said, "There's no need for the princess to go that far. This matter is an extremely grave affair and it isn't something I can make a decision on. I apologize."

He was about to leave when Zhao Xiaodie suddenly cried out, "Stop! You don't want others to know about your involvement with Yan Xuehen and Yun Jianyue, right?"

Zu An paused for a moment. He snapped with a frown, "I don't know what you are talking about!"

How does this woman know?!

Zhao Xiaodie laughed and said, "Big brother Zu, actually, I really didn't expect you to have such ability. Perhaps no man in this world could have imagined that you had this amount of skill, that you were actually able to carry those sworn enemies on either side. If news of this got out, who knows how many of their pursuers would want you dead?!"

Zu An turned around to look at her. He retorted, "Isn't your imagination a bit too rich? I'm sure that Sect Master Yun and Yan would immediately take your life if they heard your slander."

"Big brother Zu, stop pretending," Zhao Xiaodie said. She walked up to him and gave him a sniff before continuing, "I forgot to tell you, but because of my familiarity with poison, I'm extremely familiar with all kinds of medicinal ingredients. That means my nose is especially sharp. I can remember the smell of every single person I come into contact with."

"You saved me in the secret dungeon. Even though you were wearing masks at the time, I could still smell your scent... cough!"

Zu An scowled and grabbed her by the neck, saying, "I should have just let Elder Blood Spirit kill you back then."

When she felt the pressure on her neck becoming stronger and stronger, realizing that she would lose her life if he just used a bit more force, Zhao

Xiaodie didn't feel any fear. Instead, an unnatural blush appeared on her face as she said, "My life was saved by big brother Zu, so if you want to kill me, just do so. Either way, my father is already dead, so even if I continue living, it'll be a life better off dead."

Zu An frowned. He tossed her to the ground and said with a sneer, "If you want to talk about it, do what you want. Let's see if they believe you or not."

Whether it was Yan Xuehen or Yun Jianyue's fans, he doubted many of them would believe her. After all, she had no proof backing her words.

Suddenly, Zhao Xiaodie laughed and said, "Big brother Zu, I was wrong. I shouldn't have used them to threaten you. However, have you thought about the possibility of having both of them properly and righteously?"

Zu An already had half a foot out of the doorway, but he stopped when he heard that.

Zhao Xiaodie's smile became even more dazzling. It seemed she had gambled correctly. Then, she said, "According to my understanding of you, Sect Master Yan seems to be the master of your previous wife, Chu Chuyan, right? Sect Master Yun's disciple Qiu Honglei seems to have a special relationship with you too. Big brother Zu, you really are something. You even got both of their disciples."

Zu An's eye twitched. He said, "I'm leaving if you continue to speak rubbish."

Zhao Xiaodie quickly dragged him back to the room. She personally poured a cup of tea for him and said, "Big brother Zu, don't get angry. If my suspicions aren't mistaken, whether it's Yun Jianyue or Yan Xuehen, neither one of them wants to publicly announce their real relationship with you. Yan Xuehen in particular is known for being a leader of righteousness. She's known to be an ice goddess who never feels anything for any man. If your relationship is exposed, she might not have the face to meet anyone again. That's why she would never agree to revealing your relationship to the public. There's even a chance that she might deliberately keep some distance from you. In the end, she might even just sever her feelings and never contact you again."

Zu An became silent. Yun Jianyue was a bit more enthusiastic in nature, and she came from the Devil Sect too, so she didn't have as much of a mental barrier. However, big sis Yan was a difficult matter. Her skin was a bit too thin

and sensitive, and she had the entire White Jade Sect behind her. She did have too much to worry about.

“I can help you chase after both of them and let you have what you want,” Zhao Xiaodie said excitedly. Previously, her entire clan had been on the brink of destruction, and she had felt like she was already at the end of her rope, but she had suddenly found this information. Who wouldn’t like something so challenging and interesting?

“What kind of solution do you have?” Zu An reflexively asked.

Zhao Xiaodie shook her head and said, “Big brother Zu has to help us first.”

Zu An said seriously, “Fine!”

He had never planned to completely eradicate King Qi’s faction to begin with. After all, too many people he knew were on King Qi’s side. If King Qi’s rebellion were confirmed, the clans of those friends would be dragged in as well and things would become troublesome. That was why he had spoken the way he did to Bi Qi, King Yan and the others. It was just that he hadn’t told Zhao Xiaodie just now.

“Thank you, big brother Zu!” Zhao Xiaodie exclaimed, her eyes lighting up. She hugged him tightly.

Zu An pushed her away impatiently, saying, “Men and women should keep their distance.”

“Even I don’t mind, so what is big brother Zu making a big fuss for?” Zhao Xiaodie said; she seemed unfazed as she continued, “Either way, big brother Zu is helping me, so I’ll work like a horse or ox for you in this life.”

“I’m not a farmer; what would I need a horse or an ox for?” Zu An replied with a stiff expression.

“You can ride on them too, and all you need to do is feed them some grass,” Zhao Xiaodie said, licking her lips. There was actually a bit of an alluring look in her eyes.

Zu An was stunned.

This woman doesn't seem like someone from the righteous faction at all! This is completely the Devil Sect witch's style...

He chatted a bit more with Zhao Xiaodie and taught her how to deal with the following interrogations. Time passed quickly, and soon after, someone came to escort Zhao Xiaodie away.

Zu An frowned. He used the pretext of preserving the dignity of the royal family to have her ride in a carriage alone. Then, he assigned a maid to take care of her.

...

Just like that, their group left Violet Mountain in a majestic manner.

Not long after they left, however, a flash of light suddenly appeared on Golden Peak. Another rift opened, spitting a person out.

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Chapter 1866: Real Mastermind

"Show yourself!"

Even though Bi Qi, Zhao Yuan, and the others had left, King Yan's men were still present. As Golden Peak was a place of utmost importance, soldiers soon rushed over.

That figure's expression changed when he saw the soldiers. He immediately turned tail and ran. When the soldiers saw that, they all drew their weapons and surrounded him. Both sides clashed, and soon, quite a few soldiers were injured.

That person's cultivation was high, and his movement technique was extremely slippery. After several clashes, he finally found a chance to break out of the encirclement. He showed a nasty grin, revealing his especially striking buck teeth as he exclaimed, "Heh, this young master can go wherever he wishes!"

Suddenly, there was a cold snort, and a palm appeared in front of him. That person wanted to evade, but he discovered that he couldn't move no matter what he did. He exclaimed in horror, "Grandmaster!"

The palm struck him with a loud noise, knocking him onto his back and causing blood to spurt out of his mouth. He was so shaken up that he couldn't muster up any strength at all. Countless blades immediately aimed at his neck shortly after.

An elder dressed in official robes slowly walked over and asked, "Who are you?"

"King?" the person on the ground exclaimed in shock as he recognized the elder's attire. He didn't know which king could be so formidable. He replied, "Respected king, please spare my life! This humble one is Wei Suo. May I know what wrongs I have committed?"

"Why did you come out from this secret dungeon? Which sect are you from?" King Yan asked in puzzlement as he looked at the spatial gate that was slowly closing in midair. Was there such a person among the daoist sects?

"This humble one is without a sect, and I don't know what haoeebed either. I was fine and dandy exploring a different secret dungeon when I was suddenly sucked into this secret dungeon," Wei Suo replied.

After waking up in the tomb, Wei Suo had seen that there was no one else around him, only some corpses. He still vaguely remembered that the Ghost King had possessed him and he was scared that he was going to die, so he had immediately scampered out of the great tomb on all fours. Soon after, an aura of devastation had emerged from the tomb. The entire place had sucked in all the living things around it, then disappeared into the void itself.

He had secretly rejoiced, while at the same time observing a moment of silence for Zu An and the others.

You guys didn't listen to my advice back then and just had to go into the great tomb!

Sigh, living a cowardly life is the best way to survive in this world.

Afterward, he had wandered around for a while, then accidentally bumped into a large group of people. They'd said that someone seemed to have failed

tribulation, so they were looking for treasure. He had wanted to try his luck too, but he ended up being captured by someone from a sect and was turned into a medicine slave. At first, he had resigned himself to death, but then a spatial gate appeared. He had quickly made his way through and managed to escape.

However, he was once again captured the moment he returned! What was this blasted luck?

King Yan's eyes narrowed. He said, "So he went to that secret dungeon too! Bring him down and interrogate him with torture!"

Wei Suo immediately pissed his pants when he heard that. as the surrounding soldiers were dragging him away, he struggled frantically while screaming, "You guys can't treat me like this! My brother is an important figure in the imperial court! It's Sir Zu An! Have you all heard his name before?!"

King Yan had just been about to leave. When he heard that, his eyes lit up. He turned around and stared at Wei Suo, replying, "Oh? Zu An is your brother?"

"That's right! We are brothers in life and death!" Wei Suo exclaimed, immediately sticking out his chest when he felt that there was some hope.

King Yan chuckled and said, "In that case, this king will personally interrogate you!"

Wei Suo was stunned.

...

Meanwhile, Zu An's group had already left Violet Mountain. They advanced to the capital in a dignified manner.

Apart from Zhao Xiaodie, Guan Chouhai was also in a carriage of his own. After all, he was not only the sect master of Heavenly Sorrow Sect, but also a grandmaster. Even though he was a prisoner at the moment, he still had to be treated with the proper courtesy.

As for Zhi Yin, Wu Xiaofan and the others, they didn't have such fortune. They were all locked up in the prisoner carriage, covered in shackles. Their arms

and legs were bound to the carriage itself. There wasn't any trace left of the dignity a representative disciple normally enjoyed.

When he saw that, Zu An had his subordinates give them some water and food. He also found some conical bamboo hats with black veils to put over their heads. They were immediately moved to tears. After all, they all had their own pride. Being paraded through the streets like criminals felt worse than killing them. Now that they had the hats, even though they could be seen, at least their faces would be covered. Zu An even said that outstanding heroes like them should not have had to experience such humiliation.

Hear, hear! This is more like what a human should say!

Compared to King Yan and Zhao Yuan's ruthless subordinates, Zu An was like a saint. Regardless of what their impressions of Zu An had been like before, now, they all felt extremely grateful.

Zu An made sure to give Zhi Yin a few treatment pills. After facing Elder Blood Spirit, his injuries were the worst, and then he had been immediately locked up without even being given a chance to recover.

Zhi Yin swallowed the pills with difficulty and looked at Zu An in confusion, asking, "Why are you treating me so well?"

"Your junior sister is worried about your injuries," Zu An replied.

Zhi Yin was stunned. His expression suddenly changed and she exclaimed, "What did you do to her?!"

After the previous interrogation, he already roughly knew what had happened on Violet Mountain. His junior sister's life would probably be over soon, so how could she possibly be able to convince Zu An? When he recalled how his junior sister always had a good opinion of him, and thought about how she could have even sacrificed her own purity to save him this time...

"Just what kind of nonsense are you thinking right now? I didn't do a thing. Just focus on recovering for now," Zu An replied, stunned. He then turned around to leave.

When he saw that Zu An's tone and expression were completely normal, Zhi Yin knew that he was overthinking things. He said in shame and embarrassment, "Thank you!" He'd had a degree of natural hostility against

this guy because of his goddess Chu, but who would have thought that Zu An would let that enmity go and save him, only to be met with suspicion?

Zu An merely waved his hand and didn't say anything.

In the distance, Zhao Yuan and Bi Qi both saw his actions.

This guy really knows how to bribe the hearts of others.

However, they didn't care. Bi Qi was an ally of Zu An to begin with, and as for Zhao Yuan, he didn't care enough about the opinions of these juniors.

Then, Zu An ran over to Guan Chouhai's carriage. Zhao Yuan was about to take a look when Bi Qi, inadvertently or otherwise, held him up, not giving him the chance to move over. Zhao Yuan was speechless.

Why does this brat always have so many people helping him?

When he sensed Zu An's arrival, Guan Chouhai, who had been resting, opened his eyes. He asked, "Why are you helping me?" He knew what had happened on Golden Peak the best out of anyone here. He had been part of the main force against Zhao Han, and Zu An had probably seen it too, and yet here Zu An was helping him hide it.

"Since I saved you, I'll naturally save the entire Heavenly Sorrow Sect. Shouldn't you scratch my back too and help me understand some things?" Zu An asked with a smile.

Guan Chouhai frowned. He had looked down on this brat with seemingly no cultivation before, but after Violet Mountain's events, he already treated Zu An as someone at the same level. He asked, "What do you want to know?"

Zu An sensed his surroundings and didn't detect anyone approaching. He then asked, "Passerby, salted fish, servant, tomato, stone, old lady-killer, malva nut, chick, landowner... Who exactly do these names refer to?" He carefully observed Guan Chouhai's reactions as he recited the names. It was precisely because Golden Token Seven had found that list of names that he was killed.

Sure enough, Guan Chouhai's expression changed greatly. He asked, "Where did you get that list of names from?"

“You don’t need to worry about that. I naturally have my ways,” Zu An calmly replied.

Guan Chouhai looked at him vigilantly, asking, “Are you pretending to save me, only to scoop us all up in one go once you obtain information from these people?”

Zu An replied with a sneer, “If I’m not mistaken, if your group members didn’t die on Golden Peak, they perished in the secret dungeon. Is there a need to catch them all in one go? I only intended to confirm some things.”

Guan Chouhai fell silent. He knew that what Zu An said was the truth. A while later, he said, “How can I know for sure that you won’t abandon me after I speak?”

“Don’t worry, I have an agreement with Xiaodie. I’ll help her save her people,” Zu An said calmly.

“Xiaodie?” Guan Chouhai repeated, raising his brows. He recalled how Zu An had helped Zhi Yin and the others a bit and couldn’t help but laugh. He said, “It seems my luck isn’t that bad and I took in a cute disciple. The others weren’t so lucky.”

Zu An continued to watch him calmly. Guan Chouhai thought he lusted after Zhao Xiaodie’s beauty, but he didn’t really want to explain it either.

Guan Chouhai then said, “Old lady-killer is none other than me.” However, when he saw Zu An’s strange expression, his face heated up. “These nicknames are all more or less a bit related to our real identities. Do you think that nickname doesn’t suit me?”

When he saw Guan Chouhai’s humiliated expression, Zu An endured the urge to laugh. He replied, “It does.”

Guan Chouhai then continued, “Since the assassination of the emperor was a serious matter, all of us would be done for if news got out. We were scared of someone discovering our identities, so we used code names.”

“Just who was it that organized all of you?” Zu An asked curiously.

“Landowner,” Guan Chouhai replied.

“Was Landowner King Qi or the libationer?” Zu An asked curiously. After all, only those two had enough prestige and resources to organize such a huge event.

“Neither,” Guan Chouhai said, shaking his head.

Zu An asked in shock, “Then he is...?”

Guan Chouhai slowly exhaled and said, “I don't know either.”

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Chapter 1867: Aunt And Sister-In-Law

“You don’t know?” Zu An asked with wide eyes.

When Guan Chouhai saw his doubtful expression, he said, “This was actually something I inadvertently learned. It was Landowner’s plot at first, but then King Qi took over... Right, King Qi’s code name was Salted Fish.”

Zu An was stunned. He hadn’t expect King Qi to actually have that kind of code name! Could it be implying that he had become a piece of salted fish because he had been unable to become the emperor all this time?

“What was the libationer’s code name?” Zu An then asked.

Guan Chouhai had fainted on Golden Peak. He had been wondering if Zu An was messing with him at first, but when he heard the other explain everything in detail, he finally set his resolve and said, “The libationer’s code name was Passerby.”

“Passerby?” Zu An repeated as he thought to himself, The libationer always watched everything with the cool eye of a bystander, so he did match that description.

Sigh, if not for the fact that the libationer had already seriously injured Zhao Han, I might not have been able to kill him so easily.

He had witnessed some of Zhao Han’s incredible skills before on Golden Peak. However, when they fought, the emperor hadn’t used many of them.

“Then who do the nicknames Servant, Tomato, Stone, Malva Nut, and Chick correspond to?” he asked.

Guan Chouhai slowly said, “Servant is Wu Wuyan, Tomato is Master Jian Huang, Stone is Li Changsheng, Malva Nut is Xuan Bajing, and Chick might be Lu Sanyuan.”

Zu An nodded. Wu Wuyan was the great elder of the shamans and believed in their shaman deities. The codename made sense, as she was a servant of the shaman deities.

Master Jian Huang was codenamed Tomato? Is it because he likes tomatoes or because his ‘yellow’ and the tomato’s ‘red’ match each other?[1]

Li Changsheng, that old man, looked elegant and graceful on the outside, but his nature was actually as cold and hard as a stone.

Xuan Bajing wasn’t that fat. Did he frequently do it with ‘malva nuts’?[2]

As for Lu Sanyuan, what the heck is with his code name?

“Why did you say ‘might be’ with Lu Sanyuan?” Zu An couldn’t help but ask.

Guan Chouhai replied, “That’s because I met the others before on Violet Mountain, so I’m more certain about the previous few. I’ve never met Lu Sanyuan myself and only heard that he was going to bring the great army to surround Violet Mountain and draw away Zhao Han’s army. That was why I suspected that he was with our group.”

Zu An nodded and asked, “Did that Landowner ever make an appearance then?”

“No. The only one in this world who might have known his identity was King Qi,” Guan Chouhai said nonchalantly. He didn’t really care too much about that. What he cared about much more was the safety of his own sect.

In contrast, that was what Zu An was more interested in. Even though it didn’t seem to affect him too much currently, having someone like that always hiding in the dark gave him an uneasy feeling.

“Has Zhao Han truly perished?” Guan Chouhai couldn’t help but ask.

Zu An nodded. There was no need to hide that from him.

Guan Chouhai laughed loudly and exclaimed, "Good, good!"

Without the mountain that was Zhao Han pressing down on them like a huge weight, all of the sects could finally let out a breath of relief. Furthermore, Wang Wuxie, Xuan Bajing, and Li Changsheng had all already died.

Doesn't this make me practically the king among the daoists? Yan Xuehen is a woman, after all, and my relationship with her isn't bad at all. She'll likely even support me later on. The only one I have to be mindful of is Jadedfall Palace's Wan Tongtian. That guy is a formidable opponent...

When Zu An saw Guan Chouhai's infatuated appearance, he didn't disturb him and left his carriage. Then, he arrived at Zhao Xiaodie's side.

When she saw him, Zhao Xiaodie seemed especially happy and chased the two maids out. Then, she grabbed onto his arm and said, "Big brother Zu really is so good to me."

"Why do I not feel that way?" Zu An remarked, stunned. He pulled his arm back rather awkwardly after feeling an astonishing sense of elasticity on his arm.

"Of course you're good to me. You even made sure to take care of my senior brother and chatted with my master for a while. Who else would you have done this for but me?" Zhao Xiaodie replied confidently.

Zu An was speechless. He thought, I guess it's good as long as you're happy.

He quickly asked, "Do you know a person referred to as 'Landowner'?"

"Landowner?" Zhao Xiaodie repeated, staring blankly for a moment. "Are you talking about those people in the world with a lot of land?"

Only then did Zu An give her a rough explanation of the entire course of events.

Zhao Xiaodie shook her head and said, "I never heard my father mention it before."

Zu An thought, As expected. The trail ends here.

When Zhao Xiaodie saw that, she immediately said, "Don't worry, big brother Zu. My father might not have told me as many things because I spent most of

my time cultivating in the Heavenly Sorrow Sect, but my big brother always stayed at his side and acted as his right hand man. He might know, so I'll help you ask him later."

"It's best if you don't tell him that you're asking for me," Zu An said, coughing lightly. He had quite the grudge with Zhao Zhi.

After all, I was the one who broke his legs back then, so he probably loathes me.

"Don't worry, I'm not stupid," Zhao Xiaodie continued. "And I'll do my best to repair your relationship. After all, you are my..."

"Your what?" Zu An replied with a frown. He already had enough women around him. He didn't even want to mess around with anyone else.

Huh? Manman's Kiss of the Goddess actually lasted that long?

Zhao Xiaodie changed the topic and said with a smile, "My benefactor, of course."

Now, Zu An couldn't really say much either. However, he suddenly sensed something and took out a recording mirror. The screen moved slightly.

Zhao Xiaodie stretched out her neck and looked over his shoulder. When she saw the name on the mirror, she cried out in alarm, "Crown princess?"

Zu An wanted to find a quieter place to connect the call, but if he left now, he could end up drawing Zhao Xiaodie's suspicion instead. As such, he just connected the call. A ripple appeared on the mirror's surface, and then a cool and elegant face appeared. The red beauty mark between her brows made her face look even more stunning.

Zhao Xiaodie had already pulled her head back, but her ears were perked up to hear what the two of them were going to talk about.

"Sir Zu, where are you right now?" Bi Linglong asked, her voice carrying its usual dignity.

When he heard her official tone, Zu An immediately knew that there were other people at her side. He replied, "I am with the personnel from Violet

Mountain together with Sir Bi and General Zhao; we are currently on our way back. We are still in Yi Commandery's vicinity."

Bi Linglong gave him a look. A hint of joy flickered in the depths of her eyes, but she quickly hid it. She said, "I heard that you ended up being trapped in that secret dungeon. Why didn't you immediately report to me as soon as you came out?"

"I've had a few things to take care of these days..." Zu An replied. He naturally heard the unhappiness in her voice and couldn't help but feel a bit apologetic. He had spent all his time with Chuyan, Manman, and Honglei and forgot to contact her.

"Oh, was it because you were with that Miss Chu? Do a quick spin with your mirror and let me see your surroundings," Bi Linglong suddenly said.

Zu An could only turn the mirror around helplessly and let her see Zhao Xiaodie. Otherwise, Bi Linglong could suspect him of being secretive.

When she saw Zhao Xiaodie, Bi Linglong was stunned. She exclaimed, "It's you?"

"Greetings, crown princess," Zhao Xiaodie said, cupping her hands. The crown princess' Eastern Palace and King Qi had fought rather intensely over the years, so their relationship wasn't good at all.

Bi Linglong's smile was also a bit cold as she replied, "Xiaodie, why don't you come and meet this little aunt once you arrive at the capital so we can bond a bit?"

"It's sister-in-law!" Zhao Xiaodie harrumphed.

Her mother, Queen Qi, was Bi Linglong's step-sibling's older sister. From that perspective, Bi Linglong was Xiaodie's aunt. However, her father and the emperor were brothers, and the crown prince was her cousin. As such, she was also a sister-in-law. The two weren't too different in age, so they naturally didn't want an entire generation between them.

Just then, Zu An said, "I was asking the princess about some things regarding the secret dungeon." He wanted to make things clear ahead of time so Bi Linglong wouldn't misunderstand anything.

“Did you learn of anything?” Bi Linglong asked, although her expression was no longer as gentle as before. Instead, it was faintly cold.

“I did find out some things,” Zu An replied.

Bi Linglong said, “It’s difficult to properly talk through a recording mirror. Report to me personally as soon as possible once you arrive at the capital. Oh, and you don’t need to move with the main procession. It’s too slow.”

Zu An was briefly stunned, but he nodded and said, “Alright.”

He had already gathered about as much information as he could on this side. On the capital’s side, the Liu clan and Meng clan had allied and were scheming all sorts of things. Bi Linglong was no doubt alarmed and frightened, as she was all alone and really needed someone to rely on.

When she saw him agree without any hesitation, Bi Linglong’s expression finally eased up a bit. She said, “I will be waiting for Sir Zu’s early return.”

The call quickly ended, and the recording mirror became quiet again.

Zhao Xiaodie shifted her head closer and asked, “Big brother Zu, why do I feel like the crown princess seems to treat you a bit differently? The two of you don’t have a thing going on, do you?”

Zu An looked at her coldly and replied, “Princess, your imagination is a bit too wild, isn’t it? Let me give you a friendly warning. You should guard your tongue on matters like this, or else you might be the source of your family’s destruction.”

Zhao Xiaodie wrinkled her nose and said, “No one would even believe it if I said this out loud. However, ever since I learned about your relationship with both Yan Xuehen and Yun Jianyue, I don’t think there’s any woman you couldn’t win over. Forget about the crown princess; even with the empress or my own mom, I wouldn’t be that surprised if you had an affair with them.”

Zu An was speechless.

1. Huang is yellow in Chinese 📖

2. Malva nuts translated literally character by character is ‘fat big ocean’ 📖

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Chapter 1868: Strange Midnight Sounds

"Alright, alright, don't get so angry. I was just joking around. I actually don't believe you could even win over someone like the crown princess anyway," Zhao Xiaodie said, apologizing with a big smile. "Big brother Zu, you're not really going to leave, are you? Our group will definitely be bullied a lot without your protection..." As she spoke, she looked as if she were about to cry.0

Zu An said impatiently, "You're the glorious daughter of King Qi Manor, so who would dare bully you?"1

"That was before," Zhao Xiaodie said, suddenly looking dejected. "As they say, a fallen phoenix might be less than a chicken..."0

Zu An was used to seeing her masochistic tendencies and her teasing shenanigans. Now that he saw this side of her, he did feel a bit of pity.0

"Don't worry. King Qi hasn't been convicted of any crimes yet, and he is still a part of the royal family. No one wants the crime of committing blasphemy against the royal family on their name. Additionally, I'll assign someone to protect you," Zu An said seriously. "I need to return to the capital to arrange some things first, though. Otherwise, by the time I trudge along with this group and arrive at the capital, the dust will have already settled and it won't be easy to change many things anymore."0

Zhao Xiaodie was smart as well and understood what he was saying. Her clan's situation was only going to get worse back in the capital. If they couldn't join in the official discussions early on, it would be too late. She said, "Then I'll have to trouble big brother Zu to set out first. I'll look for you after I arrive at the capital."0

Zu An nodded, then left to call over Zhang Zijiang and Wang Bolin. He said, "Make sure to protect the princess for the rest of the trip. Don't allow anyone to trouble her."0

"Understood!" Zhang Zijiang and Wang Bolin responded. They asked, "Sir is leaving?"0

Zu An said with a nod, "The crown princess has summoned me urgently back to the capital."0

Zhang Zijiang and Wang Bolin sighed in relief and remarked, "The crown princess truly regards sir highly."0

They still had accusations of negligence against them. What they were scared of the most was their unknown prospects. Now, however, the ascent of the crown prince was the most likely result. At that point, the crown princess would become the empress. The crown prince was slow-witted, so most things would be taken care of by the princess. As her trusted aide, Zu An would naturally achieve meteoric success in his career. That way, perhaps they wouldn't even be blamed as much for what happened and could even ride that wave of success.0

After clearing up some details with the two of them, Zu An looked for Bi Qi and saw that he was standing right in front of Zhao Yuan, not letting him leave that spot at all. He couldn't help but chuckle inwardly. Then, he said to the two of them, "Gentlemen, the crown princess has summoned me to return to the capital and told me that she has something urgent to discuss. I fear I must depart ahead of everyone."0

Zhao Yuan frowned, while Bi Qi's eyes lit up and he said, "That's good too. Hurry along then; let's not dilly-dally."0

The Liu clan brothers and Meng Yi had deliberately kept Bi Qi back at Violet Mountain through a court order, so he'd been forced to stay behind and investigate, unable to abandon this duty. However, Zu An hadn't been factored into those people's plans. Now, he was the perfect variable to stir up the capital.0

Zhao Yuan could only harrumph when he heard Bi Qi's agreement. "Since the crown princess has something she wants to talk to you about, I wouldn't dare to stop that."0

Zu An chuckled. He bid them farewell, then looked for Xie Daoyun. At first, she was really happy to see him, but when she heard that he was going to leave, she immediately became sad.0

Zu An actually found that quite cute. He asked, "What are you still staring blankly for? Pack up your stuff and come with me."0

“Together?” Xie Daoyun asked, feeling shocked and happy.0

“You don’t want to? Then you can just follow this main procession,” Zu An said, although he definitely wouldn’t feel at ease leaving her here.0

Zhao Xiaodie’s identity was special. Before King Qi was convicted, no one would dare to touch her. However, Xie Daoyun was different. She didn’t have the protection of the royal family, and she had also been a participant in the secret dungeon this time. If Zhao Yuan or anyone else had seized her for interrogation, that would be really bad.0

“I do, I definitely do!” Xie Daoyun quickly said. Her usually quiet and gentle face had turned red, and her words almost sounded like a response to a marriage proposal.1

When she saw his surprised expression, she quickly calmed down and said, “I don’t have any luggage to pack, so let’s go already.”0

Zu An nodded. Then, the two of them quickly left together on horseback.0

As he watched them leave, Bi Qi remarked with a pensive expression “This brat seems to be a bit perverted. There always seem to be different women at his side. Then again, that kind of person is the easiest to control. I can just tell Linglong to find some more beautiful women to win him over so he completely becomes a part of our Bi clan.”10

...0

Meanwhile, after Zu An and Xie Daoyun sprinted a certain distance, he tugged on the reins and said, “Little sister Ling’er, traveling by horse is too slow. Let’s fly back instead.”0

“I don’t know how to fly,” Xie Daoyun said, although she looked expectantly at him, her face red.0

Zu An smiled and said, “No problem, I’ll carry you.”0

After saying that, he took out the Wind Fire Wheels. Even though with his current cultivation, he could fly on his own, it would still exhaust a lot of energy and wouldn’t be as efficient. As he stepped on the Wind Fire Wheels, he naturally reached out his hand to Xie Daoyun.0

A flicker of hidden bitterness flashed across Xie Daoyun's face. 0

Is big brother Zu pretending or does he really not know? How can a proper lady let a man touch her so willfully, let alone be carried like this?0

However, that thought only remained in her head for an instant before disappearing. She quickly jumped toward him in high spirits. When his hand smoothly wrapped around her waist and she felt the heat from his hand, her heart began to pound.0

She was quickly taken up into the clouds, where cold winds roared past them. Even so, for two cultivators, that bit of cold was nothing. Furthermore, endless warmth entered her body from big brother Zu, so she felt nice and warm. It was as if there were electricity running through her. As she looked at the tranquil sea of clouds around her and the endless golden sunlight cast over her body, in that instant, Xie Daoyun felt more blessed than ever before. She reflexively put her arms around his waist and gently leaned her head against his shoulder. She wished the moment would last forever.2

Sigh, if I had known it would be like this, I would have been a bit more proactive back at Bightmoon City. Now, there are so many women at big brother Zu's side, so how am I going to insert myself now?1

Still, he was previously the Chu clan's drafted son-in-law, while I couldn't do things like this with my status back then either...0

"Right, little sister Ling'er, I'm really sorry about that night," Zu An suddenly said. Actually, a kiss wasn't that big of a deal, but Big Manman had been hiding under the table and helping him... If she found out, she would definitely be upset, so it was best to say that now.0

"I'm the one who should be apologizing..." Xie Daoyun began as she lowered her head, her face even redder than an evening sunset. "What happened that night? I already forgot."0

She really didn't know what she had been thinking back then. She had actually taken the initiative to kiss him, as if she were possessed!0

Ah... There are already so many women at his side, and yet I still did something so embarrassing. I wonder how big brother Zu sees me now...1

The two both tried to avoid talking more about that topic, so the matter was soon dropped. Zu An then tried to change the topic to cultivation and other interests. With that, the tedious trip became a bit more exciting.0

...0

After a few more days, the two of them finally arrived at a small town on the capital's outskirts. The sky was already getting dark, and the city gates were already closed.0

Zu An decided to stay the night outside and enter the next morning. The first reason was that they were travel-worn, as the two of them had only found a few caves and treetops to get a bit of rest in. They hadn't even gotten a single complete night of sleep. Zu An was fine, but it was a bit hard for Xie Daoyun's body to handle. The second reason was that the city gate was closed. Perhaps because of the major events that had taken place recently, Zu An could sense that there were many more defensive formations activated than usual. Triggering one of those formations while trying to fly in at night would bring a lot of unnecessary trouble.0

When she saw the distant capital city outskirts, Xie Daoyun said with a sigh, "We're finally home."0

After staying in the academy for a long time and being doted on by her master and the other teachers, she already viewed the academy as a home. There had been danger around every turn in the secret dungeon, followed by the danger of interrogation when they returned to Violet Mountain. Neither of those places made her feel as safe and comfortable as the capital.0

Zu An smiled. The proverbs really had hit the nail on the head. 'Neither a gold house nor a silver house are better than my own doghouse.' But where was his own home? Perhaps because he was a transmigrator and he had quite a few lovers, it was hard for him to pick one area as his home. Not even his marquis manor in the capital brought him any such feeling. If he really did have to pick one, only the Sang manor felt a bit warmer.0

He wondered how Zheng Dan was doing. There was also Sang Qien. A few months had already passed. Considering the time, the child in her belly... It would already be about time, right?1

They arrived at the best tavern in town. As soon as they entered through the door, Xie Daoyun's eyes immediately lit up. She exclaimed, "What pretty flowers!"⁰

Zu An followed her voice when he heard that and saw a large amount of brilliant flowers blooming along the courtyard wall. They looked like Japanese roses, but also like firecrackers. They gave off a lively and festive feeling. The air also had a faint flower fragrance that was neither too gaudy or glamorous; rather, it was quite refreshing.⁰

He remained on guard for a while, but after secretly using some ki, he didn't discover any signs of poison. He sighed in relief, thinking, *I really am overthinking things.*¹

No one had known he would arrive today, so how could they have prepared anything in advance?⁰

They quickly found a small, secluded courtyard. After having a meal, the two of them returned to their respective rooms to take a bath. The bathing area was a bit more unique than those of ordinary taverns, as expected of a town close to the capital.⁰

Zu An was lying in the bath and enjoying the hot water when he suddenly opened his eyes. He could hear sweet and tempting breaths from next door that sounded as if they were suppressing some kind of emotion. He was startled and called out, "Little sister Ling'er, did something happen?"¹

Strange... My divine sense has always been watching the surroundings. She's clearly alone in that room...

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Chapter 1869: Ninth Lady Lust

Zu An called out a few times, but there was no response from next door. He couldn't help but become worried. He immediately put on his clothes and headed to the entrance next door. He knocked and asked, "Little sister Ling'er, did something happen to you?"⁰

He had made sure to order the best room in the tavern. It was a secluded courtyard that guided in a hot spring. There were all sorts of bamboo, flowers, and trees within, creating a peaceful environment. He had wanted the room precisely because it was somewhere no outsiders would wander into aimlessly. He had even made sure to keep his divine sense around the entire courtyard to make sure no one came in. With his current cultivation, only someone on Zhao Han's level could escape his notice. How could such a person be present?0

Even so, he asked several times by the entrance, but there was still no response at all from Xie Daoyun inside. There were only sounds of breathing.0

"Little sister Ling'er, I'm coming in," Zu An said, feeling worried for her safety. After reminding himself it was just that, he broke through the door's lock and went inside. This was the best room in this town's best tavern, so it was a lock that was supported by some formations. However, in front of Zu An, they fell apart like paper.0

When he opened the door, he saw that the bath area was full of hot smoke. A beautiful figure was soaking inside with her hair tied up above her head, exposing her fine neck. Who else could it be but Xie Daoyun?0

Zu An walked over and called out, "Little sister Ling'er?" He saw that she was in a half-unconscious state. Her usually fair and exquisite skin was now an unnatural pink, looking like a cooked prawn.0

"Big brother Zu?" Xie Daoyun replied, opening her eyes in a daze. She almost looked as if she would cry. She reflexively reached out her arms toward him after saying that.0

The hot springs water smooth as oil, skin cleansed to a tender glow. With the help of her attendants, the beauty rises, feeble and helpless...0

Xie Daoyun had been soaking in the hot spring, so of course there wasn't a shred of clothing on her body. Even though most of her body was in the water, when she leaped into Zu An's arms, he could feel every inch of her skin. On top of that, the water in a hot spring was clear and transparent to begin with. Even though there were some flower petals, how could it hide the wonderful sight?0

Zu An shivered. In that instant, he realized why Xie Daoyun had fallen into such a state. The only thing he was confused about was how he had been poisoned too. With his current cultivation, there was no way someone could poison him without his awareness.0

Was it their meal? No, that was impossible too. He had already been extremely careful. If there had been poison, he would have immediately sensed it.0

Then was it this hot spring water? No, that wasn't possible either. The hot spring water came from a moving source. If someone wanted to poison it, just how much would they have to use?0

As for the articles in the room, that was even less likely. He had already made sure to look through everything in the room. After he cultivated the Primordial Origin Sutra, he had become especially sensitive to poison.0

Suddenly, he realized something. It was the flowers on the tavern courtyard wall! He had stayed in this tavern before, but those flowers hadn't been there before. He'd just thought that they were newly planted by the boss, as it had been almost a year since he last stayed here. Now, though, he found their presence suspicious. He had examined them earlier, though, and he hadn't detected any poison...0

Hold on, if it isn't poison by itself, is it a combination poison?0

I seem to have experienced something similar in the past....0

He looked up at the candles around them and vaguely detected their scent. Just that smell alone wasn't poisonous, but when it was mixed together with the fragrance of the flowers outside...0

His thoughts moved quickly, as did his hands. He found the new set of clothes Xie Daoyun had prepared behind the screen and tried to help her change. However, she continued to twist and turn, not cooperating at all. Not only was Zu An not able to put her clothes on, he even accidentally touched some places he wasn't supposed to. Helpless to do anything else, he could only wrap her up carelessly in her clothes. Then, with a wave of his hand, he brought over the blankets on the bed and wrapped them around her.0

Only then did he quickly exit toward the vacant courtyard outside so she could breathe some fresh air. He also took out a Heart Calming Pill and fed it to her.

However, who would have thought that she would continue to suck on his finger without letting go? When he saw her acting like that, Zu An immediately felt a huge headache. This woman was normally so refined and elegant, and yet she was actually so bad at charming others.0

“Are you even a man? She already wants it so badly, and yet you still aren’t giving it to her,” a woman called out as she appeared atop the nearby wall, looking all dolled up.0

Zu An glowered as he asked, “Was all of this your doing?”0

That alluring woman rocked back and forth from laughter, clearly quite proud of her own work.0

Zu An thought to himself, *The poisons in this world of cultivation really are quite strange. They really are difficult to defend effectively against!*0

Even so, this really was strange. After he cultivated the Primordial Origin Sutra, his body was already practically immune to poison. On the other hand, things like aphrodisiacs weren’t really poisons, and merely magnified the natural desires of the body.0

“If I’m not mistaken, we don’t know each other and share no grudge,” Zu An said gravely.0

“How can those in our trade kill based on hatred or desire for revenge? We’d even point our blades at our own fathers’ throats as long as there was enough money. Otherwise, we wouldn’t even touch our own personal enemies,” the seductive woman said with a big smile.0

Zu An thought to himself, *As expected, someone was sent after me.* Judging from the looks of things, she wasn’t a deathsworn soldier but rather a professional assassin. He asked, “Are you from the Shadow Group?”1

The seductive woman didn’t answer that question. Instead, she said, “Stop wasting your time. I know you’re deliberately stalling for time, but what makes you think I’m not doing the same? Unfortunately, this poison of mine can’t be removed. The longer you’re affected by it, the stronger it gets into your system. Eventually, you’ll be so overwhelmed by desire that you’ll be entirely powerless. Your body’s ki will be frozen stiff. You’re quite the pretty boy, so this cougar wouldn’t mind playing around for a bit. As for that dainty little

beauty in your arms, you didn't want to touch her before, so I guess I'll have to let these brothers of mine take advantage of that."0

Just then, several black-clad individuals appeared all along the walls. There was a glint in their eyes; they were clearly all experts as well.0

"Ninth Lady Lust, don't hold up the mission needlessly," one of them shouted.1

Ninth Lady Lust fiddled with the flower in her hands and said, "Don't worry. I know what I'm doing. We'll strike that woman's ki core first, and you can have some fun while the body's still warm. However, this pretty boy can't be killed immediately. After all, a man isn't like a woman; he'll be useless once he's dead. How about this? We'll chop off his arms and legs first. It should be enough as long as we leave his fifth limb intact."0

Zu An's expression was cold. Judging from this woman's tone, it seemed she had taken countless lives over the years. He remarked, "Your cultivations don't seem to be that high. Is that all your organization sent for me?"0

When they heard what he said, the assassins roared with laughter. They replied, "Our cultivations aren't high? We have at least seven or eight ranks of cultivation, while you're too weak to even truss a chicken! And yet you still dare to spew such nonsense?"1

Ninth Lady Lust said with a chuckle, "Young master might have misunderstood somehow. Assassination isn't a proper fight on an official stage. You don't necessarily need high cultivation to complete most missions. As long as your designs are intricate enough, even grandmaster-rank figures can be killed."0

"Ninth Lady Lust, could it be that you actually like this pretty boy? Is that why you're explaining so much?" one of the black-clad assassins asked.0

Zu An did have some misgivings. Even though what this Ninth Lady Lust said did make some sense, it was still a bit absurd to him.0

Suddenly, one of the assassins tugged on his collar and said, "That chick really is hot. Since you guys don't want to, I'll enjoy myself and use her first."0

Then, he threw himself at the two of them. However, he didn't let lust take over his mind; he aimed at Zu An's four limbs and Xie Daoyun's ki core. An

assassin never lowered their guard, after all. When he saw that Zu An was still carrying that woman, he sneered inwardly. 0

*As expected of a pretty boy, he's still trying to act cool even now.*0

Suddenly, a streak of sword ki appeared in front of him. He could swear that he had never seen such dazzling sword ki in his life!0

The assassin was quite well-known for the quickness of his sword. He could slice off the heads of dozens of mosquitoes with a single slash. He loved to use his speed to seize the advantage. Even when he encountered enemies stronger than himself, once they fell into his tempo, they could only repeatedly get hit. Their injuries only grew worse and worse until they waited for their own death in despair. Furthermore, he never underestimated his opponents and always went all out right from the start. He wouldn't lower his guard just because his opponent looked weak.0

He had absolute confidence in the five slashes he unleashed. They should have been enough to slice off that man's arms and legs, and destroy that woman's ki core. 0

In the end, arms and legs were indeed sliced off, and a ki core was destroyed. Only, it was his arms and legs, as well as his ki core.

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Chapter 1870: Method of Detoxification

That sword strike was just way too dazzling and beautiful. But of course, if the assassin were given some 'regret medicine' and could go back in time, he wouldn't have been infatuated with the beauty of the sword, and would instead have turned tail to run.

No, I wouldn't even have taken this mission and would have rather stayed far away from this monster!

He lied on the ground while squirming continuously. Miserable screams tore through this entire courtyard.

Unfortunately, they had already set up a formation in the vicinity, so no sounds would extend beyond its range.

He could only give his companions a pleading look. Of course, he wouldn't be so naive as to think that the others would save him. All he was hoping for now was that they could kill this pretty boy and complete their mission. Then, he could offer up all of the wealth he had accumulated over the years and use it to ask for their help, to find some divine physician to stitch up his arms and legs again. With his current cultivation, he already had powerful regenerative ability. Once his arms and legs were healed, even though his cultivation would still be greatly affected, it would still be enough for him to somehow make a living.

However, what left him in despair was that those companions didn't fly over as he had anticipated. Instead, they turned to run without even giving him a second look, including that Ninth Lady Lust who had looked the most relaxed earlier.

Are you joking?

After witnessing that dazzling sword, they all instantly recognized the chasm between them and their target. Even if they all went after Zu An, they would just be throwing their lives away. Even though they didn't fear death and were willing to gamble with their lives to complete missions, not even the most cold-blooded killer would die for nothing in a situation of inevitable death.

They were very experienced and all ran in different directions. Even if Zu An decided to chase after them, he could only catch a few. At least some would be able to get away. Now, it would all depend on who had the best luck.

Ninth Lady Lust was full of regret. Why had she acted so arrogant earlier and said so much? That pretty boy definitely had the strongest impression of her and would probably go after her.

Sure enough, she felt a powerful suction force from behind her. She couldn't even control her body and lost control, flying backward. She was in utter despair, but she still instinctively tossed a clump of poison powder behind her.

However, when she turned around, she was stupefied. Her opponent hadn't pulled her back from right behind her, but rather from a hundred feet away! She was a formidable individual herself, and yet she was being pulled back from so far away. Just what kind of terrifying power was this?!

What left her even more speechless was that all of the other assassins who had tried to run were also pulled back by an invisible force! Was he pulling back all of these people at the same time? Not even the guardians and elders of the organization would be able to accomplish that, right?

The other assassins also came to the same realization with horror. That pretty boy was casually standing at the center of the courtyard. and his palm was like a black hole that pulled all of them toward it.

They exchanged a look. They were all seasoned assassins and immediately gave up on thoughts of leaving. Since they couldn't escape anyway, they decided to just stake it all instead. If he was going to pull them back, they would just use their most powerful attacks and unleash them the instant they were pulled close to him. They would teach him that victory and defeat only mattered in a competition, but in a battle with assassins, there was only life or death.

However, right at that moment, they were suddenly horrified to discover that they couldn't activate the ki within their bodies at all. Instead, it was all being endlessly sucked out toward the pretty boy.

“Mosquito... Mosquito Daoist?!”

“No, Mosquito Daoist is human. Could this be the even more formidable Sir Bat?”

They were overwhelmed with horror. Only legendary evil monsters could have such a technique that could steal the cultivation of another! Among them, Mosquito Daoist and Sir Bat were the most famous, but it was rumored that both of them had already died. Now, they really wanted to smack the faces of those who had been spreading those rumors. By the time they reached that pretty boy, they didn't even have a shred of strength in their entire bodies left. They couldn't even stand up anymore, let alone attack him.

Zu An was a bit surprised too. After his strength increased, the Heaven Devouring Sutra seemed to have become even more ridiculous. He quickly sorted out his thoughts and looked at them coldly, asking, “Who sent you all here?”

The assassins' expressions remained unchanged. None of them opened their mouths.

Zu An didn't stop, and stared at them just like that.

The assassins' expressions changed slightly. One individual's mouth moved.

Zu An still didn't stop them, and just watched.

However, that person's expression changed greatly. He discovered that he didn't even have the strength to bite through the poison capsule hidden in his teeth!

Zu An sneered. He had already encountered many assassins and knew that all of them underwent strict training. If they knew they would be tortured, they would decisively end their own lives. That was why he had made sure to suck away their cultivation, to the point that they wouldn't even have the strength to end their own lives. Next, he casually sent out several waves of strength to knock them all out. He only left Ninth Lady Lust conscious.

When she saw that, Ninth Lady Lust's eyes couldn't help but light up. Even though she didn't have any strength left, she still did her best to put on an alluring pose. She said, "This young master has managed to cultivate such remarkable skills at such a young age, and you're striking to boot. This humble one has never seen a man like this and has already completely fallen for you. I will definitely work like a horse or an ox to serve you in the future."

Zu An's eye twitched. *Just what is wrong with the women of this world? Why are they ready to become horses or oxen so quickly?*

He said with a snort, "You can stop those cheap tricks of yours. Do you think I'd even want someone like you?" He had already seen just how vicious she was normally, so he naturally wouldn't show her any respect.

Ninth Lady Lust's expression changed. She gave Xie Daoyun in Zu An's arms a look, and a hint of jealousy appeared in her eyes. She said, "My figure naturally can't compare to the lady in the young master's arms, but she's already been affected by my poison. Without the antidote, she'll forever be overwhelmed by lust even after she wakes up. She'll need a large amount of 'care' to bring any relief. She won't have any restraint left, and at that point, she won't even be as good as me."

Xie Daoyun still had a bit of mental clarity. When she heard that, her expression immediately turned pale. She actually wouldn't mind that much if it

was big brother Zu... However, if she became the kind of woman Ninth Lady Lust was describing, that would be a fate worse than death!

Zu An retorted with a sneer, "Do you take me for a fool? You're still trying to fool me with these kinds of words. How can there be any drugs that incredible in this world? She'll recover with just a cold bath."

He could actually be considered quite the expert in this field now. He had already encountered similar things many times and was full of experience. If the poison wasn't immediately neutralized, what she said could happen. Even so, curing this kind of condition didn't really need any special antidotes.

He took Xie Daoyun back inside. With a wave of his hand, the candles in the room were immediately extinguished. Then, with another wave of his sleeves, he tossed all of the candles out. He said to Xie Daoyun, "Little sister Ling'er, it might hurt a bit later, so hold on."

Xie Daoyun sensed the pitch darkness in the room. When she heard him say that, her heart couldn't help but start to beat quickly. She said, "Okay... big brother Zu, you can do it. I'm... I'm willing."

Zu An nodded. Then, he summoned the power of the ice phoenix over the hot spring. A layer of ice instantly formed over the steaming water, emanating wisps of cold air. Just like that, he threw Xie Daoyun inside.

"Ahhh!" Xie Daoyun screamed. She shivered all over.

Ninth Lady Lust heard the cry of alarm and thought, *And here I was wondering what kind of cure he had. He was just using this chance to do her?*

Hmph, look at how alarmed that woman sounds. I didn't expect that pretty boy to be such an unromantic brute.

...

While Ninth Lady Lust was mocking him, Zu An observed Xie Daoyun's condition. When he saw her gradually calm down, he nodded in satisfaction. Even the most lustful thoughts would be mostly dispersed by such ice-cold water.

When she felt the stinging pain from the icy water, Xie Daoyun's face couldn't help but redden.

So big brother Zu was talking about this kind of pain... What was I thinking before!

When she recalled what she had said to big brother Zu, she immediately became so embarrassed she wanted to crawl into a hole and hide forever. Her eyes rolled back and she fainted on the spot.

Zu An was alarmed and immediately checked her pulse. He only sighed in relief when he saw that she was fine. He put her hand on a pillow by the edge of the pool so the water wouldn't reach her mouth and nose. He had to let her soak for a bit longer to get rid of the heat inside her body, so he decided to interrogate Ninth Lady Lust first.

When she saw him come out, Ninth Lady Lust blurted out, "That quick?"

This pretty boy's cultivation is so high, but isn't he a bit disappointing in this aspect?

Zu An didn't want to waste words with her. He said, "Speak. Who sent you here? There's no point in lying, because I'll just interrogate all of you one by one for verification."

Ninth Lady Lust's eyes flickered. The organization did have contingency plans for these kinds of things. When the time came...

Zu An continued, "I have my ways of finding out some things. I'll only spare the one who tells me the truth and kill everyone else. Then, I'll release the news that the others betrayed the organization and gave out intelligence, and I killed them because that's what they wanted. Which one of them do you think will tell me the truth first?"

When she saw his smile, Ninth Lady Lust felt a shiver.

This man is too treacherous...

Actually, as assassins, they had already been mentally prepared to die at any time. However, they all believed that they were completing their missions for honor and glory. If this person messed with them that way, not only would they die, they would even bear the title of traitors. It was clear that the true traitor would be living a free and leisurely life, enjoying the splendors of the world. That contrast was just a bit too despairing, right?

With Ninth Lady Lust's understanding of her companions, even if not every single one of them would make that choice, at least half of them would. In that case, it was still better to be the first. As such, she quickly gave Zu An an obsequious look and said, "Young master is too formidable, so this Ninth Lady Lust will admit defeat this time. I am willing to tell the young master everything I know. Can the young master agree to let me go?"

"I can. I can even return a portion of your cultivation, so you can't harm others but can protect yourself. I'll also give you some riches for you to enjoy into your later years," Zu An calmly said. As he was trying to buy them out, he had to be willing to give enough of a reward.

Ninth Lady Lust was overjoyed. She exclaimed, "The young master is righteous and great! I'll tell you everything I know. The one who sent us was..."

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Read Keyboard Immortal - Chapter 1871: Can You Sleep With Me?

Chapter 1871: Can You Sleep With Me?

"The one who sent us was... was..." Ninth Lady Lust opened her mouth, but she couldn't say anything. She suddenly seemed to have realized something. She grabbed her head and shook it back and forth frantically, her expression full of alarm.

"What's wrong?" Zu An asked, feeling a bit dejected.

Right at that moment, Ninth Lady Lust's head exploded like a watermelon.

Zu An was speechless. Even though he had already spent enough time in this world and had witnessed his fair share of slaughter, he still felt a bit out of sorts when he saw that. However, he endured the feeling to examine Ninth Lady Lust's remains. It wasn't poison, nor was it some kind of bug. Could it be a kind of imprint on her soul or something?

These top-tier assassins had actually been given such a soul imprint without any knowledge of it. If they gave out any extreme secrets, it would trigger and

they would die. The one who had used this skill really was ruthless! To be able to accomplish something like that... Could it be the Shadow Group again?

With a wave of Zu An's hand, a flame enveloped Ninth Lady Lust's remains, quickly burning her away into nothing before waking up another assassin. He didn't want them to see Ninth Lady Lust's gruesome fate and decide to hide information. Then, he used the same words he had used on Ninth Lady Lust again.

Sure enough, the assassin's will quickly broke down and he was willing to confess. But when he was about to say something, Zu An stopped him and said, "I'll ask the questions; you only need to answer."

The assassin was stunned, but he still nodded in the end.

"I won't ask about your association, and will only ask about the employer this time. Do you know who that is?" Zu An asked, staring carefully at him. He wanted to see if he could avoid triggering that soul imprint.

"I do. They are..." the assassin began, sighing in relief. As long as he didn't have to sell out the association, he wouldn't have that much of a mental burden.

And yet, once again, his head still exploded like a watermelon!

Zu An was stunned.

You can't even talk about this?

He burned up the corpse and woke up the next one.

"Don't take the initiative to speak. You can only answer my questions."

"Okay."

"Is the employer male or female?"

"They're..."

Boom!

Zu An was speechless. He continued on to the next one with a numb expression.

"You don't need to speak. You only need to nod or shake your head."

"Is the employer male?"

The assassin's head twitched.

Boom!

Zu An was dumbfounded.

What the hell is this? You can't even answer such basic information?

He woke up the next person.

"The employer should be female, right? Did she come from..."

The assassin's head twitched.

Boom!

Zu An was speechless once again.

Why did his head move before I even finished my sentence? And it even exploded, at that...

From the start until now, he hadn't even gotten to ask anything, and yet most of the assassins had already died. He thought over the questions he had asked, and suddenly thought of something.

Then, he woke up the last assassin.

"Is the employer... a eunuch?"

The assassin was stunned. He reflexively nodded... and then, his head exploded!

Zu An burned away the remains until there wasn't even a drop of blood left. Then, he returned to the room.

Xie Daoyun had already calmed down considerably. Zu An wanted to support her, but Xie Daoyun said in embarrassment as soon as he touched her ice-cold skin, "Big brother Zu, I'm already awake. I think I should get up on my own."

"Okay," Zu An said as he walked outside. With a wave of his hand, he moved the screen between the two of them to cover her. He began to think over the intelligence he had received. *Don't tell me that...*

Xie Daoyun gave the figure outside a look with a strange expression.

Why is big brother Zu staying in the room when I'm changing?

But when she recalled how he had already seen everything he wasn't supposed to see, and they had even touched, she felt that it was meaningless anyway. She could only swiftly wipe down her body with a towel before hastily putting on her clothes.

Achoo!

When he heard the sneeze, Zu An asked, "Little sister Ling'er, it was a bit cold just now, wasn't it?"

"It was a bit cold," Xie Daoyun said, feeling a bit embarrassed. She'd pretended to faint, and could thus only soak inside the whole time. She was actually feeling unbearably cold.

"You've gone between both extreme heat and cold today, so you might be a bit weak and sick for the next few days. Make sure to take care of your health," Zu An said. He took out several nourishing pills after thinking things over. With his current status, he obtained some designated pills every month from both his official post and noble title. Even though they weren't especially precious, they were still good medicine.

"Okay. Thank you, big brother Zu," Xie Daoyun said, moving over to his side. Her lowered head was still flushed red. What had happened earlier was way too embarrassing... Just the thought alone made her want to faint again. She quickly changed the topic and said, "By the way, I seem to have heard you interrogating those assassins outside earlier. Did you learn anything?"

"Didn't you faint earlier?" Zu An said with an ambiguous smile.

Xie Daoyun was speechless.

Just let me die, ahhhh!

She could only brace herself as she said, “I woke up and heard a bit toward the end.”

Zu An didn’t expose her and gave her an explanation of what happened.

“It was actually a eunuch?” Xie Daoyun exclaimed in shock. That alone already explained many things. When she saw Zu An’s grave expression, she asked, “What does big brother Zu think?”

When he saw that she was still a bit wet, making her clothes a bit transparent, Zu An felt something stir a bit inside. He didn’t reply and soaked himself directly in the ice-cold pool. He sighed in relief.

“Big brother Zu, what’s wrong?” Xie Daoyun jumped in fright. At the same time, her heart began to pound.

I already soaked in that pool earlier, and big brother Zu is actually soaking in there now...

All sorts of wayward thoughts appeared in her head, making her flush red from ear to ear. She even wondered if that poison was flaring up again.

“I was also affected by that poison,” Zu An said with a sigh. It was only because of his higher cultivation that his resistance was a bit stronger.

“Ah!” Xie Daoyun covered her face and didn’t know what to say. She just felt that her face was scalding hot. Some scenes began to appear in her mind.

Big brother Zu should have just helped me detoxify right there, then both of us would have been fine...

Still, she quickly gathered her thoughts.

Why am I thinking such things! Big brother Zu is a true gentleman!

She took a deep breath and continued the earlier topic. “Could it be someone the crown princess sent? After all, she’s the only one who knows about your return.”

Zu An shook his head and said, "It's not her."

"Why is big brother Zu so certain?" Xie Daoyun asked, sounding a bit surprised.

Zu An couldn't tell her that he and Bi Linglong had that kind of intimate relationship, right? He could only explain, "The crown princess doesn't have a motive. Everyone knows that I'm someone from the Eastern Palace, her most capable subordinate. She's currently at a disadvantage in the capital and needs people to use, so why would she possibly act against me?"

"If it isn't the crown princess, it has to be the empress' faction. From what big brother Zu is saying, the empress' faction is at odds with the crown princess' faction. The emperor has already died, and the crown prince is weak intellectually. The one who seizes the advantage here will be able to seize the greatest authority. Meanwhile, the empress and crown princess all have proper reasons to aim for that authority, so of course they're bound to fight," Xie Daoyun said. "Since you're a capable subordinate of the crown princess, as long as the empress eliminated you, the crown princess' side would be greatly weakened. She wouldn't have much strength to fight back."

Zu An shook his head and said, "It can't be the empress either."

"Why?" Xie Daoyun replied, now feeling really confused. Zu An was so certain when he said that it wasn't the crown princess, and he was just as certain in his rejection of the empress being the culprit.

Just where does big brother get his confidence from?

Zu An was starting to get a headache. He couldn't just say he had an affair with the empress, right? He replied, "The empress and I actually share a personal friendship. Our relationship isn't bad, so I believe that she wouldn't harm me."

Xie Daoyun was quite surprised to hear that. The empress usually stayed inside and rarely left, so her presence was already so low that not even the court's officials had seen her. Xie Daoyun hadn't expected her to actually have a good relationship with Zu An! It seemed that the empress had already been plotting for a long time. Still, she didn't suspect Zu An's relationship with the empress. After all, with the empress' status, that was too inconceivable. An ordinary person wouldn't think of something like that.

Even though Zu An said those words to the emperor in the secret dungeon, that was likely just to provoke him in order to save us.

“Big brother Zu, even though I don't understand politics too well, I still grew up in an official's family and know that personal relationships are never reliable. You absolutely can't act on impulse,” Xie Daoyun couldn't help but warn him.

Zu An now began to think to himself.

Don't tell me it really is the empress?

He really couldn't imagine that fiery and passionate woman would set her hand against him. Still, his thoughts moved quickly. Their relationship was still just an exchange of interests in the end. She'd needed his transcendent aptitude blood to treat her injuries, and now that she had recovered, she naturally didn't need him anymore.

She also lied to me back then. She said she needed many sessions to recover, and yet she's already recovered ahead of time, becoming a grandmaster at that. Who could have expected that, really...

If the empress is willing to make that kind of choice, why wouldn't the crown princess be willing either?

The royal family was entirely different from others. The imperial clan was the most ruthless of all.

Ling'er is right. The one who understands my itinerary best is the crown princess.

Still, he didn't let that problem bother him for too long. He didn't care what kinds of schemes they had; he'd just end it all with a single sword slash.

“There are still a few hours before daybreak. You should get some rest first,” Zu An said to Xie Daoyun.

Xie Daoyun bit her lip. After some hesitation, she asked, “Big brother Zu, can you sleep with me?”

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Chapter 1872: Expelled from the Eastern Palace

“Huh?” Zu An asked. He had never expected the noble and conservative Xie Daoyun to propose such a thing.

Xie Daoyun flinched when she saw his reaction. Her face immediately turned red. She said, “No, um... What I meant was whether you could stay at my side tonight.”

“You mean sleeping together in the same room?” Zu An asked.

“Ah! No, that’s not what I meant. Please don’t misunderstand...” Xie Daoyun trailed off.

When he saw how she was on the verge of tears, Zu An couldn't help but chuckle. He asked, “You’re scared to be all alone?”

“Yes, exactly!” Xie Daoyun hurriedly replied, nodding quickly. She was incredibly moved.

There was almost a misunderstanding, as if I wanted to do that with him! Thank goodness big brother Zu understands me. He really is a kind and warm person who's good at understanding others.

Xie Daoyun secretly gave Zu An a look, then quickly shifted her gaze.

Zu An nodded and said, “I don’t know if other assassins will be sent after us, so let’s stay in the same room. That way, we can watch out for each other.” If something similar happened again, he would end up really regretting it if Xie Daoyun ended up in danger.

Xie Daoyun quietly voiced her agreement.

It’s clearly him who’s taking care of me, and yet he's making it sound as if we're taking care of each other. Big brother Zu is so considerate.

“Hurry and get some sleep. It would be best if you could force out the cold energy inside you sooner so you don’t catch a cold,” Zu An said. At first, he'd wanted to help her, but they'd already had too much physical contact with each other, so he really didn’t want to cross the line.

“Okay. Thank you, big brother Zu,” Xie Daoyun said with a nod. Then, she sat on the bed and began to circulate her energy. Her cultivation wasn’t low. If not

for the fact that she had been poisoned, those assassins likely wouldn't have been able to win against her.

Zu An watched her finish that process, then pulled the screen over to separate them somewhat. He then sat down on a chair to meditate.

Xie Daoyun tossed and turned in bed, finding it hard to sleep. When she thought about everything that had happened, her face immediately turned red. When she flipped over again and saw the handsome and carefree figure on the other side, she suddenly felt a bit guilty.

What kind of status does big brother Zu have now? And yet, he doesn't even have a place to sleep. He has to work so hard to keep watch for me.

She felt pity and blurted out, "Big brother Zu, you can come into this bed to sleep too."

After saying that, her heartbeat immediately accelerated countless times. She had never expected to speak such shameless words!

Just what will big brother Zu think of me? Will he think I'm an easy woman?

It's fine if he agrees, but if he refuses, what will I do in the future...

After all, she seemed to have already 'offered to sleep together' several times. If her offers were all refused in the end...

When she thought of that, her face immediately became deathly white, and she wanted to fan herself in the face a few times. Just what was she thinking today?

She had all kinds of thoughts, but they actually all took place in an instant. She quickly added, "We'll each sleep on one side. This bed is pretty big."

Ahhh! This is still so embarrassing! What wise and virtuous lady invites a man into her bed?

Zu An was also quite conflicted. He knew that Xie Daoyun didn't actually have any dirty thoughts as she invited him, but rather, she was just too embarrassed to watch him sit there in meditation alone. He was about to refuse, but when he saw her nervous and scared expression, he suddenly

became speechless. He seemed to have already refused her several times. If he continued to refuse her, what dignity would she have left?

He said, "That's fine too. Then I'll be disturbing little sister Ling'er."

"You're not disturbing me, not at all!" Xie Daoyun almost cried out loud when she heard him agree. She knew just how many stunning beauties her big brother Zu had. The reason he agreed couldn't possibly be because she was alluring in any way; it had to be because he was worried about making her lose face.

Big brother Zu is so great...

When she saw him walk over, Xie Daoyun gave him half the bed. Then, she wrapped herself tightly in her covers. The room was so quiet that she could even hear her own heartbeat.

Zu An couldn't help but chuckle. He lay down and said, "Good night, little sister Ling'er."

Xie Daoyun felt as if her entire body were burning up. She continued to wonder, *What if big brother Zu hugs me? What will I do then?*

Should I pretend to be asleep and tacitly allow it, or should I take the initiative to respond to him?!

If it's the former, what if big brother Zu thinks I don't want to? But if it's the latter, big brother Zu will misunderstand and take me for that kind of woman...

Aiya! Xie Daoyun, Xie Daoyun, what are you thinking? Big brother Zu is a real man with an indomitable spirit, an incomparable gentleman! Why would he do such a thing?

Even so, while tossing and turning at night, there's a chance that he might accidentally put his arms and legs on my body. I... I'll just pretend not to notice.

She secretly moved aside the covers to look at him several times, but she saw that Zu An was lying there properly at the very edge of the bed. His eyes were closed and his breathing was even; he seemed to already be sleeping.

Big brother Zu really is handsome. Those women from Brightmoon City all say my little brother is handsome, but I don't feel that at all. Compare to big brother Zu, he's just too far...

After going through so much all night, she was actually already exhausted. As all kinds of nonsensical thoughts passed through her head, she unknowingly fell asleep.

...

The next morning, a trace of golden sunlight broke through the clouds and cast itself upon the two of them. The sky in the distance gradually brightened, and the sound of roosters crowing filled the air from time to time.

Xie Daoyun slowly opened her eyes. Nothing seemed to have happened the previous night.

However, she'd dreamed that she accidentally entered a world of ice and snow. She had wondered if it was Great Snowy Mountain. However, when she felt unbearably cold, she encountered a big brown bear. That big brown bear was really warm. She had been able to make it through that frigid cold night by huddling in its arms. Then, she seemed to have become a female bear... That big bear was really great, but there was something next to his abdomen that was really big.

When she recalled that ridiculous dream, Xie Daoyun couldn't help but smile. Just then, though, her eyes opened. When she saw the scene in front of her, her smile instantly froze on her face.

.

What big brown bear? That was clearly big brother Zu!

She had been worried that he would do naughty things at night, but he was still sleeping at the side of the bed properly. There was no change from his posture the previous night at all. Instead, she was wrapped all around him like an octopus! Her arms being hooked around his neck was one thing, but even her legs were clamped around his waist!

Ahhhhhhhh!

So embarrassing!

She quietly raised her legs for fear that she would startle Zu An. She slowly moved them while secretly looking up at him.

Please don't be awake, please don't be awake, please...

She completely froze up, because when she raised her head, she just happened to meet a pair of bright eyes.

Zu An smiled and remarked, "You're awake?"

"I'm not!" Xie Daoyun cried, shooting back into her covers off to the side like a streak of electricity. She really wanted to smack herself repeatedly with a huge club and knock herself unconscious.

Zu An got up and sorted out his clothes. He said with a warm voice, "Little sister Ling'er, you don't need to be so bothered. You were cold last night, so you would naturally move toward any heat source; it's natural. I'm sure that little sister's usual sleeping posture is still very graceful."

Xie Daoyun was extremely moved.

Big brother Zu was so considerate that he found me such a good excuse!

How could she continue to hide in her covers? She stuck her head out and gently said, "Thank you, big brother Zu, for easing my anxiety."

Then, her gaze froze.

Zu An also felt a bit awkward. He got up and walked out, saying, "I'm going to sort out my luggage first. Little sister can wash up first." Then, he bent over and ran.

Xie Daoyun's face was bright red.

What luggage?!

She also finally knew what that thing between her and that big brown bear had been.

Just how does Miss Chu's petite body take that kind of thing...

...

Soon after, the two of them arrived at the entrance to the capital. The city gates had already opened, bustling with activity from the commoners. There were all sorts of shoppers, traders, and transporters. As he looked at the majestic city, Zu An thought to himself, *I guess I'm back again.*

He first saw Xie Daoyun off to the academy. That was the only place where she would be safe from the threats of various forces. Then, he headed straight into the palace.

At first, he was worried that Bi Linglong would be holding the morning court session. After all, the emperor had left the capital and left her behind to assist the crown prince in ruling the empire. She was the one who had to deal with the official matters of the imperial court. And yet, as soon as he entered the palace, he bumped into the imperial guards Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun. The two of them seemed to have been waiting there the entire time.

“Sir Zu!” Both of them greeted him excitedly when they saw him.

Zu An couldn't help but smirk as well when he saw the pair of oddballs.

They exchanged some conventional greetings. Jiao Sigun said, “The crown princess knew that Sir Zu would return within a few days, so she sent us brothers here to wait here every day. She even specially withdrew from the court sessions to wait for you at the Eastern Palace.”

Piao Duandiao also said with a sigh, “I've already been stationed at the palace for so many years, but I've never seen the crown princess attach so much importance to a single individual.”

Zu An was stunned for a moment, but then he felt warm inside. Even a successful career woman like the crown princess, who devoted herself to her work, had gone so far for him! He could sense how much she cared about him.

As they chatted, the group quickly arrived at the Eastern Palace. They could hear the crown prince shouting loudly and knew that he was playing games with the eunuchs and maids. Zu An paid the crown prince a visit. Even though the prince was stupid, there were so many eyes watching right now. Zu An had to show proper etiquette where it was due.

Zhao Ruizhi's eyes also lit up when he saw Zu An. He waved his chubby hands and said, "You've been out for so long. Did you bring this crown prince any fun gifts?"

Zu An was speechless. He said, "I apologize, crown prince. I was in a rush and had my duties to carry out. and forgot to prepare a gift for the crown prince. I'll definitely make it up the next time I enter the palace."

He had almost died during this trip; like hell he'd have time to think about something like that!

"What could be more important than my gift? Why did you even come back if you didn't bring a gift? Men, make sure to give him thirty vicious strikes so he can have some brains next time. Then, expel him from the Eastern Palace!" The crown prince pointed at Zu An while causing a fuss.

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Chapter 1873: If You Don't Want Face, I'll Help You Out With That

All the people in the surroundings jumped in fright. They looked at Zu An and the crown prince nervously. Many of them wanted to say something, but hesitated. No one dared to try to advise the crown prince otherwise.

After all, even though the crown prince was slow, he was extremely good at being rude and unreasonable. The lesser eunuchs and maids in the Eastern Palace frequently ended up offending him during their games and were given public strikes. How could those lesser eunuchs and maids' bodies be able to withstand those strikes? If they weren't beaten into cripples, they were killed.

Sometimes, the crown princess stopped him when she saw it, but the crown prince was still the crown prince in the end. The crown princess had to care about his dignity and pride and wouldn't stop him every time. Thus, over the years, he had already made several dozen eunuchs and maids suffer.

However, none of them had expected the crown prince to actually get upset at Zu An this time. With his status, he wasn't like those ordinary palace staff.

“What are you all standing around for? Beat him up already!” Zhao Ruizhi exclaimed with an excited gaze. He really wanted to see the scene of someone being beaten until they were badly mangled.

When Maid Rong Mo emerged to receive Zu An and saw what was happening, she quickly turned around to look for the crown princess. She had always found Zu An unsightly, feeling as if he had taken her spot as the crown princess' closest aide. However, as the crown princess' personal maid, she still knew what was most important. How could she let the crown prince hit Zu An?

The maids and eunuchs had awkward expressions. Because of the crown prince, they had no choice but to move closer to Zu An while asking quietly, “Sir Zu, should we just put on an act so the crown prince feels better?”

Zu An didn't pay the maids and eunuchs any attention; instead, he took a step forward up to the crown prince's face, saying, “Crown prince, the court is currently experiencing great changes. You should be focusing on your studies. Do you only know how to play day after day?!”

He didn't even fear this brat's father, so why would he be scared of the son? He had been planning to play along to give everyone some face, but since the other side didn't want it, he'd help the prince play the part.

He had already lingered at the border of life and death several times, and the opponents he'd fought were all at the very peak of this world. He naturally carried an intimidating aura wherever he went. How could it be something this fool Zhao Ruizhi could withstand?

The crown prince was scared so badly from Zu An's glare that he took a few steps back. He stuttered, “I... I...”

He didn't have his previous arrogant expression anymore. At that moment, even his soul was trembling. Even though he was stupid, he still had his instincts. He naturally felt fear when facing a powerful enemy.

When the maids and eunuchs saw that the crown prince was so frightened that he didn't even dare to raise his head, they were all incredibly shocked. They hadn't expected there to be someone apart from the crown princess who could also keep the crown prince in check now.

Suddenly, a lesser eunuch jumped out from the crown prince's side and cried, "How audacious! Zu An, you are nothing more than a subject, and yet you dare to treat the crown prince with such disrespect? Are you still not going to kneel and kowtow? Guards, are you blind? Arrest him already!"

He gave the surrounding people a few looks of disdain.

You guys aren't even seizing such a good chance? All of you really are too stupid.

I'm helping the crown prince when he needs help the most, so he'll definitely have a good impression of me. It'll definitely be smooth sailing for me in the future. I'll become the superstar at the crown prince's side, and then apart from Eunuch Wen and Eunuch Lu, the others will all have to look at me with respect! Once the crown prince takes the throne, what Eunuch Wen or Lu? They won't even be worth mentioning!

Zu An gave him a look. It was a new face he hadn't seen before. It was probably someone who had been recently transferred over to the crown prince's side, and thus wanted to show off in front of him. He naturally wouldn't let the eunuch get away with such a thing, and said, "This official is the chamberlain of the crown prince, personally appointed by his majesty. I manage everything in the Eastern Palace, and I also hold the responsibility of instructing the crown prince. I naturally have the duty of correcting him when he takes a wrong path.

"You are someone who serves the crown prince, and yet, not only did you not know to advise him properly when you played with him, you are instead encouraging poor behavior and spoiling him. This is nothing more than corrupting and misguiding the crown prince. Men, drag this obsequious fool out and have him beaten to death by the rod!"

"Understood!" Piao Duandian and Jiao Sigun replied. They had already been furious. When they heard that, they immediately dragged the lesser eunuch out.

The lesser eunuch immediately panicked. He struggled frantically and cried, "Crown prince, save me, crown prince! Please say something, crown prince!" His voice soon became softer and softer. It was clear that he was being brought farther and farther away.

The other maids and eunuchs of the Eastern Palace swallowed with difficulty. They had previously felt that Sir Zu was quite amiable, but this time, why had he become so imposing? As for that lesser eunuch, none of them sympathized with him. In this palace, none of those who stepped out of line with flattery met good ends.

Zhao Ruizhi was now shaking all over. The only thought in his head was that those eyes were too scary, as if he were looking at a man-eating beast. He asked while shaking in fear. "Would it be okay if I didn't want the gift anymore?"

Zu An walked up to the desk on the side and removed the 'Ruler of Discipline' from the shelves. He said, "The crown prince should be thinking about how to handle governmental affairs, and yet you only know how to frolic and cause trouble. In order to help the crown prince avoid being too naughty and mischievous in the future, as the chamberlain, I naturally have to discipline you in his majesty's place." He walked toward the crown prince as he spoke.

"Noooo!" Zhao Ruizhi cried out. He was so scared that he felt as if his soul were leaving his body. He wanted to run, but for some reason, it was as if his body were being controlled and he couldn't muster any strength. He could only barely turn around and try to run, crying out, "Linglong, save me... Ah!"

Zu An brought the ruler straight down on his bottom. A loud and clear *pah* noise filled the air. Everyone present could imagine the crown prince's fat bottom being smacked viciously just from the sound.

The eunuchs and maids looked at each other in dismay. Sir Zu actually dared to strike the crown prince?! Not even King Qi could do such a thing before! Even so, none of them dared to say anything. That lesser eunuch from before had served as a lesson for them. None of them wanted to step forward and be that unfortunate soul.

Meanwhile, Zu An, strictly speaking, was the crown prince's teacher and had a proper reason to discipline him. There were even some people who secretly thought he deserved it. These maids and eunuchs were always being bullied by the tyrannical crown prince. All of them had been furious, but they hadn't dared to say a thing.

However, that was it. They were still alarmed. They didn't dare to save him, but if they didn't, they could end up implicated in the blame after. They could

only give the crown princess' direction a pleading look. She was probably the only one who could settle the situation.

Someone was about to send a report, but then saw that the crown princess was already slowly walking out. She wore a golden phoenix hair clip in her hair. As she walked slowly, it released sharp and melodious sounds. The red beauty mark between her brows made her fair skin seem even more snow-white. When she saw the scene playing out before her eyes, her stunning features couldn't help but twitch.

Rong Mo had reported that the crown prince was troubling Zu An, so she had come quickly to save the situation. And yet, how had it become Zu An one-sidedly beating up the crown prince?

"Linglong, hurry and save me already..." Zhao Ruizhi pleaded. His bottom was already starting to be lacerated from being struck dozens of times, making him scream 'mommy' and 'daddy'. When he saw Bi Linglong, he immediately saw his savior.

The others' gazes shifted to the crown princess, wondering what kind of reaction she would have. She would probably be angry, right? The crown prince was her husband, and he was being lectured by another man. Even though the crown prince was being hit, what was actually being struck was her own dignity, right?

Of course, Sir Zu was the most important official of the Eastern Palace. The crown princess probably wouldn't rebuke him too harshly. With the crown princess' wisdom, she would naturally find a way that satisfied both sides.

Just then, the crown princess spoke up. Her voice was crisp and clear, and yet carried a natural coldness and estrangement. She replied, "Why is the crown prince calling for me? Sir Zu is the crown prince's teacher, so of course he needs to correct you where you are wrong. In the end, this is actually due to my own negligence. You refuse to listen when I advise you, and you should have changed your ways a long time ago. Now, Sir Zu is doing what I wanted to do all this time."

When he heard what she said, Zhao Ruizhi immediately lost his final hope. He immediately pleaded to Zu An, "Sir Zu, I was wrong! Stop hitting me, please..."

Zu An naturally had to give her some face now that the crown princess was here. He returned the ruler and said, "Good medicine tastes bitter; loyal advice jars the ears. I hope that the crown prince has learned from this lesson and that you will return to the right path after this."

"Yes, yes, yes!" Zhao Ruizhi replied, hurriedly nodding.

Everyone in the Eastern Palace was dumbstruck. They had suspected that the crown princess probably wouldn't really punish Sir Zu that much, but they hadn't expected her to not even speak a single word of criticism! On the contrary, they had berated the crown prince together! None of them had expected such a thing at all. This scene... How could they put it? It was almost like a husband and wife lecturing a son. It was strange, and yet it sort of made sense when they thought about it.

They even felt a bit of admiration for the crown princess. As expected of someone who upheld justice and didn't let her personal feelings get in the way! The revered and honored officials of history were probably no better than this, right?

Sigh, being married to the crown prince... It's like having a bunch of flowers poked into a pile of manure...

"Sir Zu, follow me back inside the palace. I have things to ask you regarding what happened on Violet Mountain," Bi Linglong said, turning around to walk toward her room after speaking. She didn't give Zu An a chance to reply.

Zu An quickly followed along. As he watched her graceful and slender figure and listened to the clinking of the jade and tassels she wore, his heart also gradually calmed down.

As if sensing his fiery gaze, Bi Linglong's face that normally maintained the dignity of the crown princess suddenly acquired a trace of redness.

...

They quickly arrived at her personal palace. Bi Linglong dismissed all of the surrounding maids and said, "I have some confidential matters to discuss with Sir Zu. Rong Mo, guard the entrance and do not allow anyone near!"

“Understood!” Rong Mo replied. She was the crown princess' personal maid and naturally knew that this matter was of utmost importance, so she didn't overthink things either. She took the other maids and withdrew outside.

It was rumored that the emperor had already passed on. There was no one left who would bother with whether something was proper or not.

...

The door closed. Zu An was about to open his mouth when a beautiful fragrance wafted over. Bi Linglong quickly threw herself into Zu An's arms with a groan. A pair of replete and moist lips pressed up against him, and he couldn't help but hold her slender waist tightly.

Two lovers had finally met again after a long period of separation. There was no need for extra words; they expressed their love with passion. It was as if they really wanted to fully merge with each other.

“Don't kiss my neck; it might leave a mark...”

...

Meanwhile, Zhao Ruizhi was getting more and more upset after that beating. However, when he recalled Zu An's terrifying gaze, he naturally wouldn't dare to find him.

I should just ask Linglong to help me. She previously helped me most of the time.

And yet, when he arrived at her palace, he was stopped by Rong Mo.

Zhao Ruizhi immediately became annoyed. He exclaimed, “I want to meet Linglong!”

Rong Mo said with a troubled voice, “The crown princess is currently discussing important matters inside. She won't be meeting anyone else.”

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Chapter 1874: Disgraceful Crime

When he heard the name Zu An, Zhao Ruizhi's body couldn't help but tremble. When he recalled how Zu An had beaten him down viciously, he cowered. Still, he was used to throwing his weight around. Leaving just like that was a bit too humiliating. He craned his neck and asked, "Can I not even return to my own wife's palace?"

Rong Mo was stunned. The current situation did seem to be a bit strange...

The crown princess and another man are staying in a room alone, while the husband is being stopped outside...

Still, she immediately gathered her thoughts and said, "Forgive me, crown prince. The crown princess really is discussing extremely important matters with Sir Zu. Once they are finished, this servant will definitely notify the crown prince immediately."

The crown princess really did have vital information to receive from Zu An. That was related to the crown prince's ascension to the throne, so nothing could be more important. But how could she possibly know that they weren't discussing those things at all, but rather exchanging their passion?

Zhao Ruizhi was only saying those words out of pride, anyway. There was no way he would dare to really go inside to confront Bi Linglong about being upset with Zu An. Just then, however, a maid passed by with a cage. When he saw it, he was immediately distracted. He quickly ran over and said, "These two little rabbits are so cute. Hurry and take them out so this crown prince can play with them!"

The lesser maid immediately looked troubled. She said, "Crown prince, these are the crown princess' most beloved bunnies. No one else is allowed to touch them!"

Zhao Ruizhi replied unhappily "Not even this crown prince can play with them? I clearly saw Sir Zu touching them before, but you guys never said anything back then!"

"Sir Zu is more gentle..." the lesser maid said resentfully. "The crown princess said before that no little creature would live for longer than a day in the crown prince's hands, so the crown prince could not be allowed to touch them."

“Nonsense! That katydid only died after two days!” Zhao Ruizhi immediately retorted.

He reached out his hand to try and take it, but the lesser maid protected the cage tightly. She knew that she could end up in danger herself if she allowed the crown princess’ precious pets to be harmed. She said, “Crown prince, please don’t trouble this humble servant anymore. How about you ask the crown princess first and see if she lets you touch them?”

When he recalled Bi Linglong’s dignified appearance, Zhao Ruizhi shivered. He knew she hated him holding up her time for trivial matters the most and naturally didn’t dare.

“Forget it, forget it, I won’t touch them anymore, okay?” Zhao Ruizhi replied reluctantly. “I can just watch you play with them and not touch them, right?” Even if he couldn’t touch them, just watching was still pretty good.

“Huh?” the lesser maid exclaimed, stunned. She had never expected him to come up with that kind of proposal. Just how did his brain work?

Just then, Rong Mo said helplessly, “Just take them out for him to take a look. Let him be happy for a bit.”

The crown prince had just gotten the cold shoulder a moment before. If he was refused again, he would likely just throw a huge tantrum.

A tantrum from this devil incarnate really would be a huge headache.

When the maid heard that, she carefully undid the lock on the cage and brought out the two snow-white rabbits. She gently carried the rabbits while asking, “Crown prince, how do you want this servant to play with them?”

“The bunnies are so cute!” Zhao Ruizhi exclaimed. He had already coveted these pets of Bi Linglong for a very long time. She was chatting with Zu An right now, so how could he not have some proper fun? He suggested, “How about you rub and knead them for me?”

The maid was confused, but she still did it. She asked, “Like this?”

Zhao Ruizhi was a bit dissatisfied. He replied, “Did you not eat today? Use some strength; knead them with a bit more strength.”

The maid was a bit troubled. She said, "They'll be injured if I use any more strength."

Zhao Ruizhi harrumphed. "How could they be hurt that easily? If you don't dare, let me do it."

The maid exclaimed in horror "This servant will do it!"

The people in the Eastern Palace all knew that the crown prince loved toying with such little creatures the most. If he didn't use knives to cut off their legs one by one, he used candles to roast them. The little creatures ended up in more pain and suffering the more they struggled, while he only got more and more excited. He had even found a new way to play not too long ago, which was to crush frogs. He would crush the slimy frogs in his hands until they exploded. He liked the feeling of guts everywhere, so he told his subordinates to catch frogs for him from the garden. As a result, there were almost no frog croaks left in the Imperial Palace.

The staff had all been alarmed, but there was no way they could report such a trivial matter to the crown princess. After all, the crown prince was the future emperor, while they were husband and wife. If they reported such small matters, not only would they not receive any benefits, they would easily incur the crown prince's resentment. Anyone who survived more than three months in the palace had already learned how to put their own safety before matters of principle.

Don't tell me the crown prince wants to play with these rabbits the way he crushes those frogs?

How could the maid possibly dare to let him touch them? If he accidentally crushed them out of excitement, her own head would follow. She could only do as he said while doing her best to control her strength.

"You're being too boring. Don't just knead and rub them, use your strength to knead them," Zhao Ruizhi said. He was getting more and more worked up from watching, itching to do it himself.

The maid wouldn't dare to give him the chance. She blocked him with her body while doing as he said, asking, "Crown prince, like this?"

“Yeah, that’s more like it! Use more strength,” Zhao Ruizhi said. When he saw these bunnies that Bi Linglong normally treasured kneaded into all kinds of shapes in the hands of another, he felt a sort of forbidden joy.

You guys are normally so treasured by her that I can’t even touch you. Now’s a good time to properly torment you guys a bit.

After watching for a while, however, he was a bit dissatisfied. He said, “Just this alone isn’t enough. Lick them as hard as you can.”

The lesser maid was stunned.

What kind of weird request is this?

When he saw the maid and Rong Mo’s strange expressions, Zhao Ruizhi said proudly, “The books I read said that rabbits bite when they’re scared. This crown prince wants to test to see if that’s true or not! After kneading them like this, you’ll lick them until their bodies are covered in saliva. Try to provoke them as much as possible and see if they’ll bite you.”

The lesser maid was about to cry. She said, “Crown prince, if I cover the crown princess’ pet all over in saliva, the crown princess will have me flogged to death!”

Just what kind of freakish request was this? She finally knew why the lesser maids and eunuchs in the Eastern Palace were always being changed. The crown prince always came up with increasingly unreasonable demands. How could they endure his craziness?

Zhao Ruizhi scowled and said, “You’re scared of the crown princess, but are you not scared that I’ll have you beaten to death instead right now?”

“This servant wouldn’t dare! This servant will do just as you instructed,” the maid sobbed, teary-eyed. She could only helplessly lower her head.

Zhao Ruizhi released a long sigh of satisfaction as he watched the lesser maid kiss the two bunnies all over.

After a long time passed, the palace maid cried out in alarm. Zhao Ruizhi roared with laughter and exclaimed, “Hahaha, the rabbits really do bite when they’re panicking!”

...

The sounds outside reached the interior of the palace from time to time. Bi Linglong got up with a reddened face, saying, "That rascal is getting more and more out of hand. I'm going to teach him a lesson!"

She had felt a weight drop in her stomach when she first heard the crown prince arrive. She couldn't help but feel a bit guilty. Even though the two of them had never really acted like spouses, in the eyes of everyone else, he was her husband. And yet, Zhao Ruizhi's series of behaviors really frustrated her to no end, so all of her guilt was quickly swept away. In contrast, when she thought about how she was actually married to such a fool, she couldn't help but cry tears of bitterness.

Zu An pulled her back and said, "He was just given a beating, so he probably doesn't feel great. Just let him vent a bit. He'll play his way, and we'll play our way."

Bi Linglong leaned into his chest. She looked at him in annoyance with her watery eyes. She replied, "You still have the nerve to say that? You actually dared to beat him publicly; just how are you so brave? He's the crown prince, and there are so many people here. If news of this reaches the court, many people will file accusations of misconduct against you."

"I was speaking properly to him, but he went way too far. In that case, he can't blame me for reasoning with him through other means," Zu An said with a smile. "Besides, not only do I dare to pound the crown prince, I dare to pound the crown princess too!"

Bi Linglong felt something huge stirring next to her. She almost melted on the spot. However, her reason still won out and she pressed down on her dress, saying, "My outfit is too complicated right now; there won't be any way to fix it if it's undone. Then, the maids will notice that something is off."

The crown princess' official dress was detailed and complicated, often needing the aid of several palace maids to wear. It would take an hour just to put on. She also felt a bit of regret as she spoke. If she had known this was going to happen, she would have dressed a bit more casually. However, she had also wanted to greet her lover with her most beautiful side. How could she have expected him to be so brazen, to do this when they were still in the Eastern Palace...?

Zu An was also a bit dejected. He didn't know just which idiot had come up with such impractical clothing.

When she thought about how this guy normally at least some misgivings before her, but was now so bold, Bi Linglong finally couldn't take it and asked, "Did his majesty really die?"

"That's right. He died in the secret dungeon," Zu An replied.

Bi Linglong sighed in relief. Then, she looked at him with a complicated expression, asking, "Did you kill him?"

Zu An gently hooked her chin with his finger and admired her stunning face. He replied, "Hm? Could it be that the crown princess wishes to accuse me of the most disgraceful crime?"

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Chapter 1875: Different Paths

Bi Linglong's eyelashes gently flickered. She replied, "Have you not been disgraceful enough?"

The things this guy had done to her body alone were enough to have his clan executed many times over!

When he saw her pout playfully, Zu An couldn't help but lower his head to kiss her again. Their lips only separated after a long time.

"Ah, my lip gloss was all messed up! I have to fix it first, or else others might see it!" Bi Linglong exclaimed. She took out a red rouge sheet and put it in her mouth. She faced the mirror and gently pursed her lips.

Zu An stood behind her and helped her sort out her messy hair. Then, he began to tell her what had happened at Violet Mountain and in the secret dungeon. The two faced had Zhao Han's split soul together back in the crown prince's trial, so there was no need to hide such things from her.

"Uncle King Qi really did invest heavily into this," Bi Linglong said. She released a deep sigh when she learned that King Qi had set up such a huge

trap. The crown prince and King Qi's faction had fought viciously for many years already, but even though they were enemies, they respected each other.

"It was still Zhao Han who was the most treacherous. Who would have thought that he had already taken care of everything a long time ago, so all of King Qi's cultivation was only to benefit him?" Zu An remarked with a sigh. If not because everything had lined up perfectly, he likely wouldn't have been able to win against Zhao Han's scheming.

"That's right. According to what I know, that concubine of King Qi's seemed to be Zhao Han's spy," Bi Linglong said with lingering fear. Zhao Han's schemes ran so deep that just thinking about it made her shiver in fear. Fortunately, that terrifying individual was already dead.

Zu An's expression was a bit strange. Wasn't King Qi's concubine none other than Lady Nan Xun? Not only was she Zhao Han's spy, she was also the Fiend races' spy. She had even ended up running over to the brothels to play around as a courtesan. That woman's relationship with him was even quite good to boot.

...

Bi Linglong didn't know what he was thinking and said happily, "If not for the fact that the libationer planned far ahead to seal and banish Zhao Han, everything would have been over." From what Zu An said, the emperor had already suspected the death of his split soul. If he had defeated all of his other enemies, she and Zu An would definitely have suffered the consequences. She continued, "There were also the daoists, buddhists, and shamans. They actually bore so much resentment toward the court. Fortunately, they suffered severe casualties this time."

Zu An sighed inwardly when he heard her joy. She had always been in charge of the Eastern Palace's political affairs, and she was also the future empress, so of course she looked at things from the court's perspective. The daoists' actions were nothing more than disgraceful and rebellious to the court, making them a party that needed to be forcefully suppressed. Who would he help if she and Yan Xuehen got into a conflict one day?

Bi Linglong suddenly said with a sigh, "The emperor, libationer, and King Qi have all already died. Things are a bit dangerous now for the human race."

The three of them had always been the human race's most powerful beings. Now that they had been wiped out in one go, if another enemy appeared, there was no way that side would let go of such a good opportunity.

"The Royal Academy's people might have their own plans. Without their research and support, the civil officials and the military will have problems," Bi Linglong continued.

"Don't worry. You still have me," Zu An said as he reached out his hand and stroked her soft hair. "The libationer appointed me as his successor before he passed on."

"You're the new libationer?" Bi Linglong asked, now truly stunned. In the eyes of most people, the libationer was supposed to be a bearded grandpa with prestige and virtue. Why did it seem so weird for a handsome youngster like him to become the next libationer?

"Can I not be the next libationer?" Zu An replied, waving the ring that represented the status of libationer in front of her eyes.

Bi Linglong now believed him. She couldn't help but say with a sigh, "I guess it makes sense. You can even become the Fiend Races' regent, so what's the big deal with becoming a libationer?"

After so much time had passed, news of him being the Regent had already spread throughout the capital. That really had thrown the entire capital into an uproar.

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Zu An gently held her cheek and said, "I wasn't trying to hide this from you; it was just that the matter was too important. I didn't know how to explain it either."

"Don't worry, you being the Regent of the Fiend races will only be beneficial for me. There's nothing bad about it," Bi Linglong said. She held his hand and pressed her face against it. "But I am really curious... What kind of relationship do you have with the Fiend races' Second Empress?"

"What kind of a relationship could it be? We're just collaborators who had mutual interests," Zu An said. He naturally wouldn't be so stupid as to tell a woman about his intimate relations with another woman.

"Is that really all? I almost thought that you'd obtained the title of Regent by sleeping with that Second Empress," Bi Linglong said, looking up with a teasing smile on her face.

Zu An's expression darkened and he replied, "Am I that kind of person?"

Save me! How are these women's sixth senses so accurate?

"Of course! On this side, didn't you do that to me..." Bi Linglong trailed off, her face turning red midway through her sentence. She was too embarrassed to continue.

"Do what to you?" Zu An asked, leaning his head on her shoulder. The two's cheeks pressed up against each other just like that. He really felt refreshed and comfortable as he breathed in her sweet fragrance.

"Nothing." Bi Linglong harrumphed and changed the topic. "Since you're the Fiend races' Regent and also the libationer, those two statuses are like timely rain for the Eastern Palace's desert."

"Is the situation already that bad?" Zu An asked gravely.

"That's right. The Liu clan and Meng clan were related by marriage to begin with. They used this chance to work together, and pushed my father and others aside. Over the past few months, they've already gotten the capital under control. My government decrees can't even leave the Eastern Palace anymore," Bi Linglong said. A hint of puzzlement flashed through her eyes as she said, "I just can't figure out how the empress was able to silently recover despite being so wounded that she lived as a cripple for so many years. Her cultivation even made further progress..."

Zu An was a bit guilty. He couldn't tell her that it was all the fruit of his efforts, right?

Sigh, this really is a huge headache. Bi Linglong's conflict with Yan Xuehen and the others hasn't even started, and yet her conflict with Liu Ning is already happening.

He changed the topic and asked, "Is it possible that my status as the Fiend races' Regent might be used as leverage for the Liu clan to target the Eastern Palace?"

Bi Linglong shook her head. She said, "There's no need to worry about that. If this were before his majesty had died, that status would be a huge issue. But now that he's passed on, all the different powers are starting to stir. Who would dare to offend a powerful enemy like the Fiend races? Besides, you now have the status of the libationer, so you have the academy backing you. There's practically no one who would dare to touch you now."

Zu An sighed in relief. Even though he wasn't scared, the fewer issues he had, the better.

"Once we've officially confirmed the news of Zhao Han's death, the crown prince will ascend to the throne. At that time, you'll become the new empress and have natural ruling rights. No matter how powerful the Liu clan is, they can only do so much," Zu An said. He really didn't want the two sides to become completely hostile.

"Things aren't that simple," Bi Linglong said, her expression grave. "The crown prince's slowness is something everyone knows. Recently, there have been suggestions of switching the crown prince. Even though they were quickly suppressed, that seed has already been planted. Someone is clearly inciting this behind the scenes."

"Do you think it was the Liu clan that incited them?" Zu An asked in shock. Liu Ning's side really was vicious! They were completely intent on driving the Bi clan to despair!

"Of course," Bi Linglong said with a sneer. "Apart from the empress' instigation, the other princes also have their own thoughts. After all, who doesn't want to become the emperor?"

"The crown prince is clearly slow-witted, so why didn't the emperor ever change the crown prince? Apart from the fact that he concealed part of his soul inside the crown prince, he also needed the status of his direct descendant to convince those who supported King Qi. After all, Zhao Han relied on the status of eldest son to wrest the imperial throne from King Qi to begin with. That was why, even though the other princes have always been smarter than Zhao Ruizhi, they've never even been considered. But now that King Qi, the greatest threat, is gone, the biggest reason not to change the crown prince is also gone. Those princes have naturally started to covet the throne."

“For the empress, whether it's the crown prince or the other princesses, neither of them are her own children. That's why it won't have much effect on her regardless of who rises. Except, if Zhao Ruizhi takes the throne, with the prestige the Eastern Palace has accumulated over the years and my Bi clan's assistance, it will be very hard for the Liu clan to dominate the capital. But if they could successfully change the crown prince, the Liu clan would have tremendous contributions to the new regime. The new crown prince would be full of gratitude toward her, so they'd happily become her puppet.”

Zu An hadn't expected the threat of switching the crown prince. He asked, “Then who are they supporting exactly?”

Bi Linglong reached out her slender fingers and counted, “Zhao Han actually fathered many princes. But if we look at their background and influence, there are only five who have a chance of becoming the crown prince. King Wu, Zhao Yan; King Ying, Zhao Ming; King Shu, Zhao Hui; King Dai, Zhao Ping; and King Chang, Zhao Feng.”

Zu An's heart rate sped up a bit when he heard 'King Wu'. He recalled the charming Madam Wu, Yun Yuqing. He had to admit that she really was a woman among women... He coughed lightly and collected his thoughts. He said, “From what I know, Madam Dai seems to be Central Secretariat Supervisor Meng Yi's daughter. Since the Meng clan and Yang clan are in an alliance, doesn't that mean King Dai is the most likely candidate?” He'd had some contact with those princes earlier. He had to admit that in terms of both their appearance and intelligence, they easily beat Zhao Ruizhi.

Bi Linglong shook her head and said, “That might not be the case. That's precisely why the Liu clan might not want to side with him. After all, if he became the emperor, King Dai would definitely support the Meng clan more, while the Liu clan would have done all that heavy lifting for someone else.”

Zu An frowned. Then that meant the other four were more likely. But it was hard to come to a conclusion without more information. He was too annoyed right now to think about such things, so he said, “Linglong, I feel like not becoming the crown princess might not be anything bad. You can just leave Zhao Ruizhi and we can stay together happily.”

“Stay together happily?” Bi Linglong replied gloomily. “Am I really the only one at your side?”

Zu An was immediately struck speechless.

Bi Linglong said coldly, "Besides, I've already fought for so many years. I've even sacrificed a lifetime of happiness to reach this stage. If you want me to just give up now, I'm not willing to do so! Furthermore, I'm not alone. I still have my entire clan, so there's no way I can let my entire clan fall to the brink of collapse because of my selfish interests."

Zu An was speechless. How could he be so heartless as to make her give up her lifetime's ambition? Whether it was Chuyan, Manman, or Honglei, they all had their own paths and pursuits. He had never stopped them before. So how could he stop Bi Linglong? Still, he didn't really want to wade in these muddy waters. Whoever wanted to become the emperor could become the emperor. As long as it didn't affect his own cultivation and freedom, that was enough.

As if sensing the awkwardness in the mood, Bi Linglong changed the topic. She asked, "Who were you with before you entered the palace? There's still the smell of other women on you."

Zu An was speechless. It really was awkward... He had actually forgotten about that.

What a piece of trash I am...

He could only tell her about his return with Xie Daoyun. At the same time, he mentioned the assassins he had encountered.

Bi Linglong's expression suddenly darkened. She asked, "Are you suspecting me to be the one who sent those assassins?"

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Chapter 1876: Awkward for Both Sides

Zu An was stunned. He replied, "I didn't say that!"

Bi Linglong gave him a deep look and sighed, saying, "Big brother Zu, the fact that you talked about those things but never discussed the mastermind behind the matter already implied that. After all, you came back on my orders to the capital, so I knew your itinerary best. Only that way could those assassins be planted so precisely. It's only natural for you to suspect as such. If you told me your suspicions directly, I might have felt a bit better, because I would have a

chance to explain it to you then and it would prove that you still trusted me deep down. But this time, you didn't say a thing and kept it to yourself." She felt more and more wronged as she spoke. Sparkling teardrops fell to the ground.

Zu An sighed and reached out his hand to gently help her wipe her tears. He said, "Linglong, you've misunderstood. The reason I didn't say anything wasn't because I don't trust you; it was because I know you have no motive. You're in a weak position in the capital and need help, so how could you possibly make things worse for yourself? More importantly, because of our relationship, there's even less of a reason for you to act against me."

Bi Linglong felt a bit better when she heard what he said. However, she still pursed her lips and said, "The imperial family is the most ruthless of all. Even if the two of us have... that kind of relationship, we wouldn't show weakness if we had to be ruthless. Even though that's what you say, you're definitely still suspicious."

Zu An couldn't help but chuckle when he saw her throw a little tantrum. He said, "Alright, alright. Actually, there is one thing I didn't tell you, which is that the one who sent these assassins was a eunuch."

"A eunuch?" Bi Linglong was shocked. She finally understood why Zu An was about to say something but stopped earlier. She quickly said, "It's definitely the empress. She knows I have you as a capable subordinate. As long as she killed you, I'd lose my most important minister. She would have nothing to worry about then."

"It's probably not her," Zu An said, reflexively shaking her head.

"Why isn't it her? Are you really that close to her?" Bi Linglong asked, looking at him skeptically.

"I saved her before during the assassination on the Imperial Palace. For better or for worse, I saved her life," Zu An said. He naturally couldn't say the real reason and could only explain it like that.

"That's the only reason you believe that she wouldn't do anything bad to you?" Bi Linglong replied with a frown. She found it a bit ridiculous.

Zu An chuckled awkwardly a few times. There really was no way for him to explain it properly...

Bi Linlong continued, "In the imperial family, whenever it involves authority, forget about life-saving gratitude, even husband and wife, father and son, will abandon each other. You absolutely can't act on emotions."

Previously, Zhao Han had even possessed his own son's body with a split soul for the sake of immortality!

Zu An nodded and said, "Linglong is right. I understand what you're saying."

If they were comparing the two sides, he was closer to Bi Linglong's. After all, the two of them had depended on each other for mutual survival before in the secret dungeon. Their relationship had gone through a test of blood and flames. In contrast, it was hard to really pinpoint what kind of relationship he had with Liu Ning. At first, Liu Ning had only treated him as treatment medicine, and their relationship had been built more on desire. But as time went on, they had more or less developed some feelings. That was why he didn't want to believe that it was Liu Ning who had sent the assassin either. Still, she was a mature woman. She was capable of logically deducing what she cared about. She wouldn't let emotions affect her decisions too much. As such, it was hard to say what she would do.

"Right, how is the Qin clan right now?" Zu An asked. He didn't want to continue with that headache-inducing topic.

"If I recall correctly, the Qin clan has always been unkind to you. Isn't it better for you if misery befalls them?" Bi Linglong asked, suddenly feeling a bit unhappy. "Is it because of Miss Chu that you're concerned with the Qin clan?"

Zu An sighed and said, "The Qin clan's state dukes are pillars of the empire. Linglong, from the court's perspective, you should be hoping for them to make it safely through this crisis, right?"

"If they aren't useful to me, even the sturdiest pillars are unnecessary," Bi Linglong said, her expression cold. "What this world lacks the least are geniuses. Without them, there will soon be others who will take their place. Even if I were in the Liu clan's position, I would have made a similar decision. All that matters is that they ended up on opposite sides, so they have no one to blame for this result but themselves."

Zu An fell silent. He actually didn't approve of that way of thinking. Whether it was the Chu clan or this Qin clan they were talking about, it was precisely because they were devoted to the country and hadn't wanted to become

blades for internal strife between the two factions. And yet, it was that very same naive way of thinking that landed them in their present tragedy.

Because the two dukes had previously been under King Qi's faction, the Liu clan and Bi clan naturally wanted to seize the chance to purge the Qin clan's influence and swap in their own personal aides. Those clans that remained from King Qi's camp were now powerless to defend themselves. Even if they still had some strength, they likely wouldn't try to help the Qin clan. There were also many who still held bottled-up resentment that the dukes hadn't helped King Qi with everything they had, thinking that was why King Qi had lost. As such, perhaps their resentment even ran a bit deeper.

Bi Linglong softened her voice as she said, "The court situation is already under the Liu clan's control. I can't decide whether the Qin clan lives or dies. I can't save them even if I wanted to."

Zu An expressed his understanding. She was in a weaker position right now and really was powerless to do such things. However, he said, "I'll likely be at the royal academy for a while. I probably can't participate in the court's struggle for some time."

He didn't want to get involved in these matters at all. After witnessing a world that was broader in perspective, how could his eyes be set on a trifling political conflict of the imperial court? To use a quote from his past world, his goal was a great sea of stars. That wasn't even factoring in that both sides that were fighting were of equal importance to him. Helping either side would be bad for him. Of course, he was still a bit closer to Bi Linglong's side, so he couldn't just watch as something happened to her.

Bi Linglong didn't fully understand his intentions and said with a nod, "That's right. What you should be doing first right now is taking control of the academy. That way, only then can your identity as the libationer become a real bargaining chip."

She understood best that the academy's teachers were all the old libationer's disciples. They only followed the libationer. They were all prideful and had never attached any importance to the academy's experts, let alone a youngster like Zu An.

"Then, our Eastern Palace's response will have to change because of your appearance. You're now the libationer and the Regent. Together with your

court status, you'll be of tremendous use. I'll properly think about how to maximize your use!" Bi Linglong got more and more excited as she spoke.

Zu An was about to say something,? but he stopped. He really didn't want to dump cold water on her excitement.

I guess it's fine. If I can help, I'll lend a hand.

Bi Linglong finished her makeup and got up. She said, "We should go out. After all, gossip is a fearsome thing. If we stay in this room for too long, the empress' side will easily find a reason to attack."

With the fairness of her skin and the natural blush on her face, there was no need for makeup at all.

Zu An understood well that the Eastern Palace had too many prying eyes. Furthermore, there were other things that he was worried about, so he didn't force her. Bi Linglong gave him a reluctant kiss before seeing him out.

...

When the door opened, Zhao Ruizhi was squatting by the courtyard, watching as the lesser maid toyed with the two rabbits. It seemed that he felt the maid wasn't rough enough, so he was shouting noisily to let him do it.

Bi Linglong's brows shot up when she saw the scene. She exclaimed, "Crown prince!"

Zhao Ruizhi turned around. Not only was Bi Linglong there; that demon Zu An was there too. He exclaimed in horror, "It wasn't me, it has nothing to do with me! I don't know anything!" He flailed all his limbs in a fluster, hurriedly making his getaway.

Bi Linglong was so angry that her chest rose and fell continuously. Her mood had just improved quite a bit, letting her avoid feeling as bothered by the crown prince's actions. Now, she really felt that her fate was lonely and depressing.

Zu An gave her some words of consolation, then left the Eastern Palace.

...

Not long after he left, a figure appeared from around the corner of a rock garden, saying, "Sir Zu, it has been a long time."

"We haven't seen each other for several months. Eunuch Lu's complexion seems to have improved considerably," Zu An said, recognizing the other person. Eunuch Lu had decent looks, but there was just too much of a gloomy air around him that made him look like a villain.

"I cannot compare to Sir Zu at all, of course. Whenever I see Sir Zu, you are always so impressive and outstanding. Your handsomeness dazzles the eyes," Eunuch Lu teased.

"Eunuch Lu's mood seems to be quite good," Zu An said with a smile.

"Her highness' mood has been quite good recently, so as her servant, of course my mood is good too," Eunuch Lu said with a bow. "Sir Zu, her highness sent me to invite you over for a chat after she learned of your respected self's return."

"I'll have to trouble sir eunuch to lead the way then," Zu An said with a smile. He just happened to have things to ask Liu Ning.

The two of them quickly arrived at the Palace of Peace. The entire place was more lively than usual, likely due to the authority the Liu clan had recently amassed. The empress had recovered her cultivation as well, so many parties had become interested in this side. Two lesser eunuchs, one chubby and one skinny, were receiving those people. Their expressions were prideful and cold, but the eunuchs and maids of the other palaces were still trying to curry favor with them. Zu An recognized the two. The skinny one was Little Gui, while the chubby one was Little Zhuo. He hadn't expected them to actually be living so pompously now.

The two of them saw Zu An just then. Their eyes immediately lit up and they left those people to greet him. "We greet Sir Zu!"

Their flattery was like night and day from how they had acted before, as if they were completely different people. They knew many secrets, and knew he was a popular individual that the empress favored. Furthermore, he had saved their lives before, so of course they treated him differently.

The surrounding people whispered among themselves and wondered who the new arrival was. After all, Zu An had been away from the palace for a long time, so there were many who had never met him.

“Who is he? Even Eunuch Gui and Zhuo are treating him with such respect.”

“Tsk, look at this idiot with no knowledge. That’s a marquis, the crown prince’s Chamberlain Sir Zu. Did you not notice that it was Great Eunuch Lu who was leading the way?”

“So it was him! I heard that he was also the Fiend races’ Regent. No wonder he is so young and handsome.”

“The Fiend races’ Regent? Give me the details!”

...

After exchanging conventional greetings with Little Gui and Little Zhuo, Zu An arrived in front of the empress’ personal chambers under Eunuch Lu’s lead.

Eunuch Lu stopped and said, “Sir Zu, her highness is waiting for you inside. I won’t be following you.”

“Isn’t it a bit inappropriate for me to be there alone? After all, so many people saw me come here,” Zu An said in surprise. Previously, this place had always been nearly empty when he came here. This was a bit too bold, right?

“Don’t worry, they cannot see what is happening on this side. Furthermore, no one would dare to say anything now,” Eunuch Lu said, his voice carrying a hint of pride.

Zu An thought to himself, *It seems as if the ambitious individuals of different factions are all dropping the act now that Zhao Han has died.*

“Is Sir Zu here? Hurry and come in already,” the empress called out from inside the palace. Her voice really was alluring.

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Chapter 1877: Multiple Choice Question

Eunuch Lu's eyes appeared to be shining as he said, "Please hurry on in, Sir Zu. Her highness is urgently waiting."

When he saw how anxious Eunuch Lu was, Zu An was speechless.

This guy really is something else. He's always more hurried than me! I wonder what his problem is...

He nodded and pushed open the door to go in.

The smell of incense wafted through the room, carrying a fragrance that refreshed the mind. There were no maids or eunuchs in sight. An alluring and wonderful figure was lying down on a seat behind pearl curtains. Unlike Bi Linglong's lavish palace wear, she was dressed in silk homewear that wrapped closely around her skin, making her curves even more seductive. She looked just like a ripe peach ready for picking, as if water would come out if one squeezed just the slightest bit.

"I greet your highness," Zu An said with a bow.

"Oh my, is there a need for such formalities when we're meeting in private? Hurry and come over here already," Liu Ning said as she waved her hand toward him from the seat. There was a strange radiance in her eyes.

Zu An couldn't help but feel a bit of a headache when he heard her coquettish tone; he had come for official matters today, after all. He made his way through the pearl curtains and stopped in front of her seat. He could sense the maturity of her body even more clearly. Every frown, every smile, and even the slightest movement of her fingers was alluring. That was something underripe young ladies could never imitate.

Liu Ning was also sizing him up. She shook her head back and forth and said, "Your temperament seems to have become even steadier since the last time we met. You've become even more handsome."

Zu An could almost see the flames in her eyes. He quickly said, "I just came from the crown princess' side."

Since Eunuch Lu had come looking for him there, that was something the empress would understand well too.

Sure enough, that caught Liu Ning's attention. She replied, "Hmph, I knew you would definitely have gone to her the moment you came back. Sigh, but I guess it makes sense. She's still young, and nothing like this old and faded woman."

Zu An couldn't help but say with a smile, "If your highness can be considered old and faded, who knows how many women in the world would be willing to become old and faded in the same way?"

"But you still went to see her first... What's so good about that lass anyway, to have made you so infatuated with her?" Liu Ning replied, clearly not fooled by his words.

Zu An was worried that she would suspect something and quickly explained, "I am the crown prince's chamberlain, after all. Visiting the Eastern Palace first is my duty."

"Hmph, what's so good about being the crown prince's chamberlain anyway? I should just transfer you over to the Palace of Peace and make you my Great Attendant," Liu Ning said as she waved her hand, gesturing for him to sit down.

Zu An was speechless. He eventually replied, "I wouldn't dare to steal Eunuch Lu's livelihood."

"I guess it's fine. If you had to become like Eunuch Lu, I wouldn't like you anymore either," Liu Ning said as she got up and leaned into his shoulder. Half of her body weighed down on his back. She didn't seem to mind at all that her chest was being pressed into a completely different shape.

As he sensed the suffocating pressure behind him, Zu An said with a sigh, "I hadn't expected your highness to have already reached grandmaster rank cultivation."

"That was, of course, all due to Sir Zu's painstaking efforts," Liu Ning said with a charming smile. Her finger brushed gently across his body. "On the other hand, I can't see through you at all even now."

"Not as deep as your highness," Zu An replied.

"You're so annoying~" Liu Ning replied.

Zu An said with a sigh, "If your highness has already recovered your cultivation so quickly, why did you fool me and say you needed it many, many times?"

"It's your fault for always hiding from me, so I had to ask for more to make you unwittingly complete the task, right?" Liu Ning replied. She couldn't help but gently breathe by his ear. "But all of those times I asked for can still be made up right now at any time, you know?"

"Your highness seems to have become much more open-minded than before," Zu An said in surprise.

"But of course. The giant boulder that was always weighing on my mind has been moved away..." Liu Ning said, her expression turning serious. Her flirtatious nature was gone as she asked, "Is he really dead?"

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Zu An said with a nod, "I saw it with my own eyes. It's the absolute truth."

Liu Ning suddenly had a bit of a strange expression. It seemed to contain happiness, but also a bit of sorrow. She seemed to have mixed emotions as she recalled the past. In the end, she released a long sigh and said, "Being dead is fine too; death ends all of one's troubles."

"Your highness seems to be a bit sad," Zu An remarked. He thought, *This woman won't get revenge on me if she finds out I killed him, will she?*

"Is this little man here jealous?" Liu Ning chuckled and shook her head, saying, "It's not at that level, but there are more or less some sentimental feelings. After all, we used to be husband and wife."

"This really is strange. I wished for him to die sooner day after day when he was alive, and yet now that he's really died, I only feel a bit empty."

Zu An replied, "It seems your highness is someone who has strong emotions."

"What strong emotions? It's just that after living through his era, the imprint he had on people's minds was too strong." Liu Ning suddenly said in self-mockery, "I really am an awful woman. My husband died, and yet I actually feel more happiness than anything else."

Zu An thought to himself, *I'm happy about that too.*

“Was it King Qi and the libationer together who killed him?” Liu Ning suddenly asked.

“Why is your highness asking me that?” Zu An replied in surprise.

“The emperor was already unmatched. Who could face him one on one? In the end, only King Qi and the libationer had the power to do so. There's no need to say more about King Qi, as he and the emperor already became like water and fire, unable to coexist. Meanwhile, the libationer was a king from the previous dynasty. Even though he always acted as if he didn't care over the years, I could sense that there was always something suppressed within him. Once it exploded, there would definitely be hell to pay,” Liu Ning said. Her tone suddenly became a bit softer as she continued, “But the emperor was never so easy to defeat. Even if the two of them joined up, they could only drag him down with him at most.”

When he saw the ‘I'm really smart, aren't I’ look on her face, as if she were waiting for him to praise her, Zu An replied expressionlessly, “The reality is entirely different from your highness' suspicions.”

Liu Ning's expression froze. She couldn't help but feel a bit awkward, asking, “What happened then?”

Zu An then gave her a rough account of what had happened on Golden Peak.

When she heard that Zhao Han had already plotted against King Qi decades prior with a secret technique, and that no matter how King Qi cultivated, his cultivation would only ultimately help another, Liu Ning instantly felt her entire body become ice cold. She said, “The emperor truly is too formidable, formidable to a horrifying degree.”

Zu An thought, *At least this is something you and Bi Linglong agree on.*

“Hurry and tell me then, how did he die?” Liu Ning asked, reflexively tightening her clothes. She was no longer as relaxed as before, for fear that Zhao Han was still alive.

Zu An told her about the sequence of events in the secret dungeon. This time, however, he didn't say that he was the one who killed Zhao Han, but rather

said that the libationer had used his own life as the price to send him into the great tomb. The great tomb had also disappeared without a trace.

Meanwhile, he and Bi Linglong had killed Zhao Han's split soul back in Westhound Tomb's secret dungeon, so it was fine if she knew, but it was still best if the truth were kept a secret from everyone else. After all, too many things would be affected otherwise.

"Then does that mean he might still be alive?" Liu Ning asked; her voice began to tremble. She no longer had her earlier frivolousness.

Zu An felt sorry for her when he saw her frightened expression and said in consolation, "Don't worry. The great tomb contains many extremely powerful monsters, and Zhao Han doesn't even rank highly among them. Even those creatures were all firmly trapped in place, so there's no way he could get out. Besides, he was seriously injured by the libationer. He's likely already been devoured by a stronger creature."

"I hope that's really the case," Liu Ning said, having just broken out into a cold sweat. If Zhao Han was still alive, the entire capital would have to be purged once more. After she experienced such a rollercoaster of emotions, the previously ambiguous atmosphere had already been largely scattered.

"I heard that the Qin clan's two state dukes have been locked up. How does your highness plan to deal with the Qin clan?" Zu An asked, finally speaking about his real reason for the visit.

"The Qin clan? You're asking this for Miss Chu's sake, aren't you?" Liu Ning replied with a sneer.

"My relationships with the Qin and Chu clan are rather close, after all, so it's hard for me to just stand aside and do nothing," Zu An admitted.

"The Qin clan did this to themselves. However, I'm not the one dealing with them; rather, the Meng clan and the others are," Liu Ning replied.

"Meng clan? Why is that?" Zu An asked.

"Qin Zheng has always been upright and outspoken, and we're all from different factions as well. There was quite a bit of conflict between them. Qin Se, on the other hand, has been frivolous and reckless. In the past, he was in a love rivalry with Meng Yi and people from the other clans. After decades of

fighting, there's no such thing as right and wrong. There's only a blood feud left," Liu Ning explained.

Zu An's heart sank. That kind of relationship was always the most troublesome. It was just like the grudge between the Five Sacred Mountain Sword Sect and Devil Sect in 'The Smiling, Proud Wanderer'. It wasn't something anyone could settle normally. Still, that was only if he played by the rules. He could just flip the tables and ignore reason. Thus, he said, "I only need your highness to promise to not get involved. You can leave this matter to me."

"I can't harm my allies because of you," Liu Ning said, shaking her head. "But if you agree to one thing from this empress, then I can help you."

"What is it?" Zu An asked worriedly.

"To leave the crown princess' side and come under this empress, of course," Liu Ning said, stroking his face with the long golden covering on her little finger.

Zu An said seriously, "The crown princess has shown me tremendous favor. Switching allegiance is something that would only make people hold me in contempt."

"That lass is completely enthralled in politics; you're nothing but a subject for her to use. How can she compare to this empress who doesn't hold anything back from you?" Liu Ning replied with a frown. Suddenly, a look of shock appeared on her face as if she had thought of something. She asked, "You're not lusting after that lass' body, are you?"

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Chapter 1878: Injuring Oneself to Gain the Enemy's Confidence

Zu An scowled. He had discovered that the women at his side all seemed to be good at making associative connections. More importantly, their guesses were often not too far from the truth. He replied, "Your highness speaks too severely. She is the crown princess, so how can that be?"

"And I am the empress. I never saw you shrink back during the deed," Liu Ning said, clicking her tongue. Perhaps because she thought of their past experiences, a faint red blush appeared on her fair cheeks. She continued, "There isn't anything impossible about that. If you come to my side, I'll help you get that lass."

"Huh?" Zu An asked; he was now completely stunned. He had never expected her to say that.

"Is it that shocking?" Liu Ning replied with a smile. "Eventually, the entire Imperial Palace, inside and out, will be in my grasp. I can just come up with some random pretext to call her over; will she be able to refuse if I tell her to do it then? Either way, the crown prince is an idiot and won't know what happened, let alone stand up for her. Of course, if another prince rose to the throne, it would become even easier. She'd be a ruined crown princess; no one would even care if she were dead or alive. Who knows, she could even need you to pamper her, as she would at least have someone protecting her then." The empress began to laugh, perhaps because she was imagining that interesting scenario.

Zu An thought to himself, *Why do these two women hate each other so much?* He thus asked, "Why does your highness dislike the crown princess so much?"

Liu Ning rolled her eyes and replied, "How many mothers-in-law get along with their daughters-in-law? Even though I'm not her mother-in-law, my big sister was.

"Bi Linglong looks delicate and weak on the outside, but she's extremely tough on the inside. She's been quite arrogant and despotic while relying on the emperor's support in the past few years, and I had to suffer quite a bit too as the empress. In the Imperial Palace, everyone knows she's the crown princess, and yet they've forgotten me, the empress. In the past, my injuries hadn't healed yet, so I was discouraged and didn't have the heart to compete with her. Now that fortunes are rising and falling, I have to find some way to avenge the wrongs I suffered in the past, right?"

"Of course, those are just personal grievances. As for public affairs, even though the Liu and Bi clan are supposedly in the same camp, privately, there are quite a few conflicts and grudges. If the Bi clan rises up, our Liu clan will definitely meet a tragic end. Furthermore, Bi Linglong leans on the Bi clan, and is the proper future empress. The crown prince is slow and stupid, so

she'll definitely be the one who makes the decisions. If we don't keep her in check, all the imperial authority might fall into the Bi clan's hands."

Zu An frowned. He replied, "Isn't this speaking a bit too severely? The Bi clan likely won't be that daring."

"The Bi clan naturally can't be so daring right now because they aren't strong enough. If she monopolized the power and the Bi clan's people were present in all levels of society, do you think they still wouldn't dare?" Liu Ning replied with a sneer. "Bi Qi is an old fox himself. Bi Linglong's older brother Bi Ziang is also an ambitious individual. Our Liu clan naturally needs to protect the Great Zhou Dynasty."

Zu An had a strange expression as he thought, *Then could it be that after all is said and done, the Liu clan are the faithful officials?*

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However, he knew that the Liu clan didn't have any outstanding posterity. They were merely desiring authority and riches; they definitely didn't have any thoughts of rebellion. As for the Bi clan, their next generation was much more outstanding, so their ambitions would also grow much greater...

Sigh, the same matter from different sides really brings entirely different opinions. It really is headache-inducing.

"So you plan to change the crown prince?" Zu An asked.

"I'm not the one who wants to do that; rather, it's an opinion everyone agrees on," Liu Ning replied. "The stupid crown prince wouldn't be able to convince the masses to begin with. The emperor's support made it so that no one dared to say anything, but now that the emperor has perished, no one would be willing to serve a fool. Otherwise, the entire country would be in disorder."

Zu An thought for a bit, then reminded her, "I've met the other princes as well, and all of them are shrewd and bold individuals. They might not be so easily controlled if they rise to the throne."

Liu Ning harrumphed, "A stupid crown prince is easy to control, but the one who controls him is Bi Linglong. What benefits would there be for me then? We might as well switch him out. For better or for worse, they'd at least owe me a favor."

"Which prince does your highness have your heart set on?" Zu An asked.

He actually understood her motives, so that made things difficult. Whether it was Bi Linglong or Liu Ning, neither one of them was wrong. They were merely going in the direction that had the greatest benefits for them. However, it just so happened that their interests lay in opposite directions. Being stuck in between them really was difficult. Most importantly, he couldn't let each of them know about his relationship with the other. That gave him even less room to convince them. Just how could he arrive at a win-win situation?

"We haven't decided yet. We all have our own considerations, so there are quite a few thoughts brewing behind the scenes," Liu Ning said. She suddenly realized something and added, "I've already talked so much with you, but you haven't even agreed to come over to my side yet. I already told you so many secrets, so what if you turn tail and tell all of this to Bi Linglong??"

Zu An said seriously, "Don't worry, your highness. Am I the sort who would easily sell you out?"

Anyway, even though these were secrets, with Bi Linglong's intelligence, she had likely already guessed seventy to eighty percent of them.

"That's more like it," Liu Ning said. She suddenly moved into his arms and hooked her arms around his neck before continuing, "However, you've been avoiding that question all this time. This empress even gave herself to you, so what else are you still worried about?"

Zu An was about to say something when two fingers pressed against his lips. Liu Ning said, "Bi Linglong's side definitely can't give you more than I can. The Fiend races' Second Empress made you a Regent, so can I not make you a Regent as the human empress all the same? Now that Zhao Han is dead, I'm the one who has the final say in the palace. The two of us can stay in the palace together and live life like immortals; wouldn't that be great?"

Zu An felt as if she were like a big ball of cotton. He thought, *No wonder she was the only one favored among the harem, rising straight up to becoming the new empress. There really were feminine charms coming from every single part of her body.* However, he said in a troubled manner, "Your highness, I'm but a marquis right now, and I don't have many contributions. How could I have the qualifications to become a king?"

"If I say you have the right, you have the right. Besides, what do you mean, you have no qualifications?" Liu Ning replied as her finger drew circles around his chest. "You supported everyone on Violet Mountain, and then you brought back news of the emperor, King Qi, and the libationer from the dangerous secret dungeon. Otherwise, people would have been at a loss for what to do. That's a tremendous contribution in itself."

"That's still not enough to become a king. The other great clans in the capital won't agree," Zu An said. His meteoric rise over the past few years had already incurred the envy of many people. If he were promoted straight from marquis to king, the entire capital could explode into a commotion.

If Zhao Han found out that Zu An had been rewarded as a loyal minister for his protection, and that his own empress was lying in his arms while scheming with him, perhaps he would come back to life out of anger...

Liu Ning smiled and said, "In a normal situation, these contributions would indeed be not enough, but don't forget that you have another identity, which is to say, the Fiend races' Regent. If we gave you a lower position, wouldn't that be a disgrace to you? We would be pushing you over to the Fiend races' side. Besides, this empress' word is what matters in the capital now. If I say that you can, you can. That way, you would be able to come in and out of the palace to keep me company everyday."

Zu An felt a huge headache. If he were entangled by her day after day, Linglong would naturally find out about their relationship. That was a hellish battlefield that was horrible to even think about... let alone the fact that he wouldn't have any time to cultivate! He had obtained a lot from the trip to the secret dungeon. He needed time in isolation to fully digest it all. Meanwhile, he didn't care about these kinds of noble titles at all.

As such, he could only say, "Thank you for your kindness, your highness, but I have a family, so I can't stay in the palace long term..."

"What family? Aren't you and that Chu person already divorced?" Liu Ning replied unhappily. In the end, she still sighed and said, "Fine. My identity in the future will be empress dowager, so there won't be any way for me to be with you properly. You can just have other women keep you company outside, but in the palace, you'll be mine. You can take on wives outside as you wish. Not only will I not stop you, I'll even give you all huge congratulatory gifts."

Zu An was speechless. He had thought that he would have to engage in a battle of words and try to sound her out, but there was none of that at all. Liu Ning had given him such a good offer that he now didn't really know what to do. He thought for a bit before suddenly saying, "I encountered assassins on the way back to the capital."

"Assassins?" Liu Ning repeated. She immediately sat up and asked, "Who would do that to you?"

"I don't know," Zu An said. After some hesitation, he even told her that it was a eunuch who had sent them.

"Then it must be that Bi Linglong woman," Liu Ning said coldly. Her eyes flickered; she was clearly upset that someone dared to touch her man.

Zu An shook his head and said, "The crown princess doesn't have the motive."

"What do you mean she has no motives?" Liu Ning sneered. "She's already pressured to the point where she can't even breathe. She's been looking for a way to strike back against me all this time. If something happened to you, a capable minister of the Eastern Palace, no one would suspect her, while she would have a reason to frame me. After all, battles in the court happen with a tacit understanding. Everyone acts according to certain rules; they absolutely avoid things such as assassinations. That's because, if they were exposed, it would be difficult to cover up and both sides would lose. People would be alarmed. So, if the officials were to believe that I had sent the assassins, many of them would question my integrity and turn to her side." As she spoke, her expression grew more and more grave. She said, "What an incredible ploy. This woman truly is formidable!"

Zu An was speechless.

What the hell is this? Why does it now seem as if everyone is suspicious?!

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Chapter 1879: Seizing One's Own Destiny

Zu An had to admit that what she said made some sense. That meant Bi Linglong could have a motive. Even though the two of them had an extremely close relationship, in the royal family, such relationships weren't even worth mentioning.

If his assassination came to light, not only would people be on guard against the empress and abandon her, it would also incur the anger of the Fiend races. After all, if their Regent ended up dying mysteriously on this side, they would definitely act to find the killer. Then, with both insiders and outsiders working together, they would be able to undermine the empress' influence.

Of course, she probably couldn't have known that he was the new libationer at the time. Now that she had enough power to affect the court's situation, she would definitely change her plans and no longer choose the same tactic to exploit him by sacrificing her own forces...

Those thoughts passed through Zu An's mind in an instant, but he quickly silenced them. He was still willing to trust Bi Linglong, feeling that she definitely wouldn't do such a thing to him. Of course, he still had to take basic precautions. He looked toward Liu Ning. If Bi Linglong was suspicious, wasn't she still more suspicious?

As if sensing his thoughts, Liu Ning coldly asked, "What, do you think I sent those assassins?"

Zu An gently held her hands and replied, "I was a bit worried at first, but after coming here, those misgivings disappeared."

"You actually still dared to suspect this empress!" Liu Ning exclaimed. She clenched her teeth so hard they ached a bit, and bit down on his chest. "Even Zhao Han never made me so willing to serve him, and yet a guy like you actually dares to suspect me!"

"I was wrong, okay? Also, I'm not suspecting you anymore, right?" Zu An replied, hugging her to appease her anger.

"How are you going to make it up to me?" Liu Ning asked with a grin, a complacent smile appearing on her face.

"How does your highness want me to compensate you?" Zu An asked in alarm.

Liu Ning moved over to his ear and asked quietly, "Didn't I tell you that I needed us to do it ten times before?"

"But your highness has already recovered your cultivation!" Zu An replied. He hadn't expected that this extremely seductive woman would be a grandmaster. She had just been too unbearably weak back then.

"The rest I owe you, so now I'll slowly return them to you," Liu Ning said as she smiled flirtatiously. She pushed him straight onto her seat, then lay down and said, "Sir Zu, I was always the one who ended up being pressed beneath you and bullied. This time, this empress wants to be the one dominating you."

Zu An was a bit troubled. He said, "Your highness, there are still others in the Palace of Peace, and I need to leave the palace for some things..."

"It doesn't matter. This empress just needs to be a bit faster this time," Liu Ning said. Her voice sounded as if it were slathered in honey, seemingly containing a sweetness that came from her very bones. She said, "Sir Zu doesn't need to move. Leave everything to this empress."

Zu An couldn't help but sigh. This kind of mature woman really was entirely different from a young lady. Bi Linglong was so much more bashful, scared that someone in the Eastern Palace would find out. She was like a guilty little rabbit. In contrast, the empress didn't care at all and was already dressed in her skintight sleepwear. She immediately got to the point.

...

Meanwhile, Eunuch Lu had always been standing guard outside, scanning the surroundings vigilantly and not allowing anyone near the empress' chambers. Suddenly, his ears moved slightly, and his fists clenched tightly in his sleeves. Then, his entire body began to shake slightly, as if he were experiencing something painful.

However, immediately after, an unnatural blush appeared on his face. His expression showed discomfort, and yet also, an unusual sense of satisfaction.

Sigh, Sir Zu truly is as fierce as a dragon. It truly is envious. Ning'er must be extremely happy right now...

But that's how it should be. Ever since she met Sir Zu, Ning'er has smiled far more than she's ever smiled in this lifetime. Her complexion isn't deathly pale, but now an enchanting peach color. She's as stunning as she was back in her youth.

I wonder just how much Sir Zu poured into her for her to have such astonishing changes...

He suddenly recalled that recently, the western regions seemed to have offered a new kind of pastry as a tribute. It seemed to be something called a cream puff, and it was quite nice to look at. He thought of having some lesser eunuchs bring some over from the imperial kitchen for everyone to try.

...

After a long time had passed, Liu Ning was left lying powerlessly on her couch. She didn't even have the strength to speak anymore, her body shaking from time to time. There was a bit of shock and bashfulness in her gaze as she looked at Zu An.

She had been seriously injured in the past, leaving her body as delicate as an ordinary woman's. That was why she had been a bit unhappy that she had to be so submissive under his bullying. Now that she had recovered her grandmaster rank strength, she'd figured that she had already become much tougher and could finally earn back some dignity, to teach this man the power of the empress.

However, she hadn't expected it to be no different from before at all! Of course, she had lasted a bit longer, but despite her strength as a grandmaster, she was still the first one to plead for mercy. Just what was going on with this kid?

Zu An helped her put on her covers and said, "Your highness should get some proper rest. I'll be leaving first." He was worried about the Qin clan's situation and wanted to take a look there first.

Liu Ning lay there for a moment, then finally caught her breath. When she heard that, she asked, "Are you really just leaving after you're done? Are you really that heartless?"

"Then I'll keep your highness company for a bit longer," Zu An said, figuring that she was right. It really would be a bit trashy if he just left now. As such, he sat down by her side again and gently helped her sort out her soaked hair.

"I know that you attach a lot of importance to feelings and righteousness, and you can't do something like switching your allegiance just like that. I won't force you either," Liu Ning said. She suddenly turned over and began to search for something in the small cabinet next to her. The light fabric fell from her shoulders, exposing her beautiful back and the traces of their previous battle on it. She quickly took out a special token and gave it to Zu An, saying, "I know that you still have misgivings about the assassination, and you won't believe me no matter what you say. In that case, you should just investigate it yourself. This is the token of the Embroidered Envoy's Chief Commander. Zhuxie Chixin is already dead, so from today on, you're the chief commander of the Embroidered Envoy. You can mobilize all of the Embroidered Envoy as you please."

Zu An was shocked. He had never expected her to give such a thing to him. He replied, "Your highness, this item is too precious! I can't accept it."

Liu Ning didn't allow his rejection and put it straight into his inner pockets. She said, "Don't worry, I won't force you to join my faction. However, the Embroidered Envoy has only ever listened to his majesty's orders, but there still has to be a new ruler. If one of the other princes took the throne and put in a trusted aid, that would be troublesome. After thinking about it, the one I can trust the most is you, and you share some karma with the Embroidered Envoy. There's no candidate more suitable than you."

Zu An said seriously, "Even so, I still have my duty as the Eastern Palace's..."

Liu Ning harrumphed. "I trust that you won't use what I give you to help that lowly person. Just take it."

Zu An thought to himself for a bit and figured that this item was very useful for him at the moment, so he didn't refuse again.

Liu Ning nodded in satisfaction and said, "Alright, I'm already exhausted from all of that. You should go and do what you need to do."

"Okay." Zu An got up and said his goodbyes.

When he reached the door, Liu Ning suddenly called out to him and asked, "Right, what cultivation rank are you now?"

Zu An shook his head and said, "I don't really know either. My cultivation is difficult to evaluate by the world's standards." He couldn't just tell her that he was level 74, right?

Liu Ning nodded and said with a smile, "Either way, you're not weak. There's no way a man whom this empress can't win over despite doing my utmost could be weak."

Zu An was a bit apologetic. He said, "That's because your highness' vital part was restrained, so you couldn't use your true grandmaster strength."

When she recalled the scorching heat of being penetrated, Liu Ning's body immediately weakened. She said, "Hmph, the toughness of your body is definitely no weaker than a grandmaster's. Also, I can't even see your true nature... If you don't want to talk about it, then forget it. There is still something I need to warn you about, though."

"Please speak, your highness," Zu An said in confusion. What matter could it be for her to be so serious?

"The capital isn't as simple as you think. The eight dukes are all beings at the peak of grandmaster rank. Every single one of them has endless methods and resources. In the past, they were only a step away from the earth immortal rank. Now that so many years have passed, there might already be some who took that step, but just didn't want to become Zhao Han's target, and so were all just hiding from the eyes of the people," Liu Ning began. "Apart from that, there are a few clans who also have ancestor-level figures, but Zhao Han was suppressing them before. He had a justifiable reason to do so with his status as the emperor, so all of those clans remained hidden and tacitly allowed that situation to continue."

"However, if it were anyone else, even if they had cultivation similar to Zhao Han's, the eight dukes' hidden old monsters would never submit to them if they didn't have the publicly acknowledged status of emperor. Furthermore, quite a bit of the army is in the hands of those clans. The power an army can achieve through formations isn't something a single person can face. So, even though it looks as if our Liu clan has grasped the capital's court, until now, we've merely been doing things by the rules. We didn't do a single thing that overstepped our boundaries."

Zu An couldn't help but chuckle. He asked, "Could it be that your highness fears that I'll willfully cause trouble?"

Liu Ning gave him a deep look and said, "You're still young, so you'll definitely have moments of hot-headedness. The capital has too many people you care about. Some clans might use some political methods that are commonly seen among great clans, but others might find it intolerable. I hope you won't act impulsively if you accidentally end up encountering such a situation. If anything happens, please talk to me first. I'll help you."

"Don't worry, your highness. I'll only use my hot-bloodedness on your highness' body. As for other people, I've always been someone who speaks reason," Zu An said with a smile. Then, he turned around to leave while waving his hand in goodbye.

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Chapter 1880: Embroidery House Developments

Liu Ning's face turned red after she heard those words. Multiple times, she wanted to ask him to stop, but she was also a bit reluctant. In the end, her entire body became incredibly numb. She looked at his departing figure with misty eyes.0

*This guy is just too amazing. My life was already dim and gloomy, and yet he came in like a dazzling rainbow.*0

*Hmph, I definitely have to steal him from that lowly bitch.*0

...0

Meanwhile, after Zu An left the room, he just happened to bump into a smiling Eunuch Lu, who said, "Sir Zu has worked hard."0

"Not at all," Zu An replied reflexively, but he felt strange somehow.0

"Is Sir Zu leaving so soon? Are you not going to stay for a while longer?" Eunuch Lu asked, sounding a bit regretful.0

"I still have some things I need to take care of outside the palace," Zu An said. He thought to himself, *What the heck is wrong with this guy's expression? It almost looks as if he's not satisfied or something.*

"Oh, then I won't keep Sir Zu. You can visit the Palace of Peace frequently in the future. Her highness likes you a lot," Eunuch Lu said as he bowed and made an inviting gesture.

Zu An nodded, but he felt a bit strange inside. *Why does it feel as if you want me here more than the empress does?*

Soon after, Eunuch Lu took him to the Palace of Peace's front palace. The eunuchs, maids, and neglected concubines couldn't help but whisper among themselves when they saw that.

"Sir Zu really is doted on by her highness. He was actually able to stay in the palace for so long."

"Are you blind? Look at Sir Zu's status now. The Fiend races' Regent needs to be treated with respect!"

"Right, I recall that he seems to be the most reliable minister of the Eastern Palace's crown princess. Now that he's here on the empress' side, does he represent the crown princess or himself?"

"Shush! Are these things you should be asking about?"

...

Even though these people had already lowered their voices a lot, how could it escape Zu An's eyes and ears? He couldn't help but frown. This matter would most likely reach the ears of Bi Linglong. What would she think of him?

More importantly, he didn't know what choice to make either. Previously, he had actually leaned more toward Bi Linglong's side. However, after what just happened, he had discovered that Liu Ning was just too good to him. He really couldn't find it within himself to help Bi Linglong deal with her.

This really is a dilemma...

There were also those hidden forces that Liu Ning talked about in the capital. It seemed that these capital 'waters' were deeper than he had ever imagined.

In the end, he had just spent too little time in the imperial court. That time was so short that he didn't fully understand the power of the major clans. It was no wonder that even though the daoists, Buddhists, and shamans had so many grandmasters, they had still been suppressed by the court so badly.0

Even though Liu Ning still underestimated his own strength greatly, and he didn't actually have to fear the eight dukes' hidden experts... If he offended them too badly and became the common enemy of those old monsters, having all of them team up against him would still be extremely annoying.0

After thinking for a bit, he decided to investigate the hidden powers in the capital first. That way, he wouldn't get targeted for no reason. Even though he had gotten much stronger, it was still better to be safe to succeed in the long run. The path of cultivation was fraught with dangers. Just the slightest bit of carelessness could result in losing one's life.0

Even someone as strong as Zhao Han hadn't been truly invincible. There had still been many beings stronger than him. On top of that, in the end, he had been done in by people far weaker than him. If Zu An ever got too arrogant, perhaps he would really just end up following that disastrous pattern.0

If Zu An wanted to investigate the hidden powers of the capital, what better channel was there than through the Embroidered Envoy?0

He looked up at the sky. He saw that half the day was already over. How could a grandmaster be that easily satisfied, after all? Liu Ning's endurance was far greater than that of an ordinary woman. Fortunately, he was pretty tough himself, and he had copied Zhao Zilong's sloped plank technique to seize victory.0

After some hesitation, he still decided to go in the Embroidery House's direction in the end. He planned to assign Xiao Jianren the responsibility of investigating any related information, and then he would head for the Qin clan. He changed into his Golden Token Eleven outfit, then entered the Embroidery House's vicinity.0

...0

As soon as he went in, some Embroidered Envoys immediately surrounded him. When they saw his outfit, however, they were stunned. They exclaimed, "Sir Eleven?"0

Zu An asked in surprise, "Why is the security so much stricter than usual?"0

"Such a huge affair took place over by Violet Mountain, and Chief Commander went missing as well. The entire Embroidery House is on category A alert," one of them replied.0

Zu An figured that wasn't all that surprising. They were a group of dragons without their leader, so the Embroidery House was probably a mess. He asked, "Who's in charge right now?"0

"Silver Token Envoy Bu Liangcai," the Envoy replied.0

Zu An nodded. The Embroidery House's other Golden Token Envoys were all in charge of major regions, and the capital's affairs were governed directly by Zhuxie Chixin. There had been no Golden Token Envoy assigned here until Zu An suddenly appeared. Even so, normally, he rarely managed the Embroidered Envoy's affairs. It was almost always Zhuxie Chixin who took care of things.0

Of course, Zhuxie Chixin had always been busy and couldn't possibly take care of all the different things that needed to be done. He had almost always relied on his four trusted Silver Token Envoys to handle things. This Bu Liangcai was none other than one of them. He was publicly known to be Zhuxie Chixin's right-hand man.0

"Where is Sir Xiao Jianren?" Zu An then asked. He wanted to start by meeting someone he was familiar with.0

The Envoys exchanged a few looks. Then, they stuttered, "Responding to Sir Eleven, Sir Xiao was locked up."0

"What is going on?" Zu An asked with a frown.0

Those people opened their mouths, but they didn't say anything.0

Zu An harrumphed. He didn't want to waste any time and headed straight for the Embroidery House.0

The guards at the entrance were also shocked when he saw him. One quickly stopped him and said, "Sir Eleven, your respected self cannot enter here."0

“I am a respected Golden Token Envoy; can I not even enter the Embroidery House’s prison?” Zu An replied with a scowl. An indescribable aura spread from his body.0

All the guards nearby felt as if they were suffocating. They didn’t dare to stop him anymore. Zu An pushed their arms aside and walked straight into the prison.0

The guards had bitter expressions. Those who were more quick-witted ran away, seemingly going to inform someone. Zu An noticed that, but didn’t stop them. Instead, he continued inside with an ashen expression. Xiao Jianren was his subordinate, and yet he had been locked up. That was no different from someone striking Zu An in the face.0

“Where is Sir Xiao?” Zu An pulled over the prison guard and asked.0

“Over... Over here,” the guard exclaimed in horror. People had always said that Sir Eleven got his position through connections and didn’t have much cultivation, and yet the guard couldn’t even avoid a random grab from him.0

They quickly walked through a long hallway and reached the prison at the very end.0

Zu An saw a shocking sight behind the bars. Inside was a gray-clad prisoner who was tied to a wooden cross-like frame. There were bloody scars all over his body, and his tattered clothes revealed several badly mangled wounds. Quite a few of the injuries were rotten, and there were even maggots squirming inside some places. Even though his head was lowered and his body disheveled, Zu An still immediately recognized that he was Xiao Jianren. Furious and alarmed, he took a step forward. The prison door fence immediately caved in.0

Xiao Jianren slowly raised his head, but he was short-sighted and his cultivation was sealed. His vision was a blur.0

Zu An immediately rushed forward. No one saw what he did, but the shackles were instantly shattered. He supported Xiao Jianren to his feet and said, “I’ve returned too late.”0

“Sir Eleven, Sir Eleven?” the somewhat perplexed Xiao Jianren murmured, having finally heard his voice. His turbid eyes immediately began to brim with tears of excitement.0

Zu An took out a treatment pill and fed it to him. At the same time, he continued to pour ki into Xiao Jianren and said, "Don't speak; just focus on adjusting your energies."0

Xiao Jianren felt rich and abundant ki flow into him. Wherever it went, all kinds of restrictions felt like leftover snow before a blistering sun, melting away instantly. Xiao Jianren's heart that had still been in suspense finally relaxed. However, his injuries were too severe and he was incomparably weak. He couldn't even transfer his inner ki himself and needed to rely on Zu An's help.0

When Zu An sensed Xiao Jianren's condition, he turned to the prison guard with an ice-cold expression and asked, "Since when has the Embroidered Envoy used our torture methods on our own people?"0

The guard immediately kneeled down and said, "Please forgive me, Sir Eleven! We were only acting on orders and cannot take responsibility!"0

"Whose orders were you acting under?" Zu An asked in a frigid tone.0

Those people all began to speak, but trailed off again, seemingly unable to speak the person's name.0

"They were acting under my orders!" a haughty voice called out just then.0

A burst of orderly footsteps resounded throughout the prison. Two troops of fully armed Embroidered Envoys rushed down the stairs and surrounded the area.0

"Enforcement Troop!" the prison guards exclaimed; their expressions changed.0

This was the most elite force in the Embroidered Envoy. They were normally under the Chief Commander's control. Every single one had close to a silver token envoy's strength. Oftentimes, after accumulating enough seniority and contributions, they were where silver token envoys came from. It was easy to see how strong the Enforcement Troop was from that.0

Then, a middle-aged man dressed in special silver embroidery slowly walked toward Zu An.0

"Bu Liangcai, exactly what crimes did Xiao Jianren commit?" Zu An asked, recognizing the man. This person had the greatest seniority in the Embroidery

House; between that and the fact that he was Zhuxie Chixin's right-hand man, that was why he didn't give Zu An any face.0

"What kind of crimes?" Bu Liangcai repeated; he only noticed the ruined prison walls then and couldn't help but frown. However, when he thought about his own cultivation and the Enforcement Troop at his side, he quickly calmed down and said, "Such major events took place on Violet Mountain. Who else would take responsibility if not for him, as he was in charge of removing the dangers over there?0

"If we were to put it lightly, that would be considered negligence. If we were to put it more severely, who can say if he colluded with those traitors against his majesty?" Bu Liangcai continued. He paused for a moment, then looked coldly at Zu An and said, "Forget about him, Sir Eleven also needs to be investigated. Men, arrest this suspect!"

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Read Keyboard Immortal - Chapter 1881: Submission

Chapter 1881: Submission

The remaining Embroidered Envoys looked at each other in dismay. They'd never expected to have to face a Golden Token Envoy! Such a thing had never happened before.0

Zu An didn't seem to notice them at all. He lowered his head and looked at Xiao Jianren, saying, "You've really had to suffer this whole time because of me."0

Xiao Jianren chuckled and replied, "Don't be like that, Sir Eleven. This isn't just because of you. He wanted this old one to admit to conspiring against his majesty, a crime punishable by nine generations of clan execution. How could I admit to something like that? Moreover, I have remained faithful and true to the court as an Embroidered Envoy all these years and have no guilt. Even if I die, I will not take on such an accusation. *Cough cough...*"0

When he saw Xiao Jianren cough out bloody foam, Zu An consoled him. "Don't talk for now, and just get some rest. Leave the rest to me." Then, he

looked at Bu Liangcai and asked, “Mister Bu, are you trying to obtain confessions under torture?”0

Bu Liangcai said with a sneer, “His majesty was attacked by assassins during the Violet Mountain campaign. After something so major has happened, all related personnel have to be investigated. Even the kings and state dukes are no exception. Everything I’ve done is merely handling matters according to the rules.”0

“Is this how an investigation is normally conducted? In that case, why don’t you need to be investigated?” Zu An replied with a sneer.0

Bu Liangcai’s expression remained calm as he retorted, “I didn’t even go to Violet Mountain; why would I need to be investigated?”0

“The other trusted aides of the chief commander have all died, leaving only you alive. You used that as a pretext to take control over the entire Embroidery House. According to the principle of 'whoever has the greatest to gain is the true mastermind', aren’t you suspicious as well?” Zu An shouted.0

Bu Liangcai’s expression finally changed. He said, “What endless pestering. I don’t feel like wasting time arguing with you. You headed out ahead of time to eliminate Violet Mountain’s dangers, and you clearly already learned that there were mysterious forces trying to act against his majesty from Golden Token Seven. Just that alone is enough to convict you of your crimes. Capture him!”0

“Who dares?!” Zu An exclaimed, taking a step forward. “I am a Golden Token Envoy, while you are just a trifling Silver Token. According to the emergency protocol of the Embroidered Envoy, all of you are supposed to listen to my commands right now. Are you all trying to start a rebellion?”0

The Embroidered Envoys who had come over were a bit dumbfounded. Normally, they were supposed to listen to the Golden Token Envoy, but this was the trusted aide of the chief commander. Normally, they were all under his management, so they were momentarily at a loss for what to do.0

The Enforcement Troop also looked at each other in dismay. This situation really was a bit tricky. After all, ever since the founding of the Embroidery House, there had never been any incidents of anyone going against a Golden Token Envoy.0

“The chief commander already expected this kind of situation. That was why he put me in charge of everything ahead of time,” Bu Liangcai said, taking out an intricate token and explaining, “This is the chief commander’s personal official seal. He gave me authority over the entire Embroidery House. Even if you are a Golden Token Envoy, you still have to listen to my orders!” He said coldly, “Cease your resistance and we might still show leniency. Otherwise, we will kill you on the spot!”⁰

The Enforcement Troop finally acted, quickly surrounding Zu An and Xiao Jianren. They all took out their weapons, the trademark Soul Reaping Chains. Anyone caught up in them would have most of the ki in their body greatly restrained. The formation master quickly began to operate the formation wheel, surrounding them in flickering blue light.⁰

The Embroidered Envoys were never known for their individual strength, but rather for how well they coordinated with each other. All kinds of infamous roaming warriors and influential clan guardians had often fallen prey to these tactics.⁰

“Sir Eleven, you should hurry and leave. Do not worry about me,” Xiao Jianren said, panicking.⁰

He knew Bu Liangcai had always disliked Sir Eleven. After all, with his seniority and cultivation, he should have been the newest Golden Token Envoy, and furthermore, he was even Zhuxie Chixin’s trusted aide. That was already practically guaranteed. However, who could have expected that the emperor would create a Golden Token Eleven out of thin air? As such, his chances of being promoted were blocked right there and then.⁰

Bu Liangcai wouldn’t dare to resent the emperor, so of course he directed all of his hatred onto Golden Token Eleven. He felt as if this person had stolen what should have been his, and frequently looked for ways to vent his resentment, it was just that he hadn’t said those things to Sir Eleven before. Now that he had the Violet Mountain incident, which was such a good excuse... If Sir Eleven fell into his hands, he could find some problems even if there were none. There was no need to guess the conclusion.⁰

Even so, Zu An didn’t budge an inch. Instead, he consoled Xiao Jianren and said, “There’s no need to worry.” Then, he immediately raised a golden token and continued, “The chief commander token is right here. All Embroidered Envoys, heed my orders!”⁰

When they saw the token in his hands, the others were shocked. They instinctively knelt down respectfully. Unlike Zhuxie Chixin's personal seal that Bu Liangcai held, the token in Zu An's hands represented the identity and authority of the chief commander. There was no way it could be given to anyone else.

Meanwhile, Bu Liangcai and his trusted aides stood in place. As they looked at the token, their faces were filled with shock and anger. Bu Liangcai exclaimed, "You scoundrel, where did you steal that token from?"

You have successfully trolled Bu Liangcai for +399 +399 +399...0

"Steal?" Zu An replied. "Seeing the token is the same as seeing the person. From today on, I am the new chief commander of the Embroidered Envoy."

Now, even Bu Liangcai's trusted aides found it a bit difficult to continue standing. They looked at each other in dismay, and their knees grew weak.

"The chief commander is still present, so where would we get a new chief commander from so suddenly? You probably stole that token from the chief commander when he was wounded on Violet Mountain! This is absolute proof that you have offended your superiors and colluded with outside enemies. Men, arrest this scoundrel. If he dares to resist, execute him on the spot!" Bu Liangcai exclaimed.

"Understood!" Bu Liangcai's trusted aides replied, finally snapping out of their daze. They had already followed Sir Bu for so many things. If he was overthrown, they would also be stripped from their positions. They could only follow this path to the end.

The others were also a bit moved. After all, what Bu Liangcai said made some sense. They thought, *Could it be that Sir Eleven really did steal this token from Golden Peak?*

Although he saw their flustered and exasperated appearance, Zu An seemed to have already expected such a thing. He said "Steal? This was a token that her highness just personally bestowed on me. Right now, I am the Embroidered Envoy's Chief Commander!"

The expressions of the Embroidered Envoys who were still in the neutral camp changed. They gave Bu Liangcai a sympathetic look.

Bu Liangcai was even more horrified. He really couldn't understand why the empress would give the token to Zu An. However, as someone who had worked in the Embroidery House this entire time, he immediately understood his current situation. He would be consigned to eternal damnation if he took even half a step back. As such, he roared, "You dare to falsify her highness' imperial decree? Arrest him, and hand him over to her highness to deal with!"0

That way, at the very least, the other neutral Embroidered Envoys wouldn't help Golden Token Eleven. As long as he first took down Golden Token Eleven and secretly killed him along the way, he would already be dead, so there wouldn't be much to say even if the empress found out after.0

I'm the real leader of the Embroidery House, so who else could this chief commander position go to but me?0

Even if the empress won't allow it, I can still side with other forces.0

In the time it took for sparks to fly off a flint, he had already finished assessing his priorities. He drew the blade at his waist and charged forth. He had cultivation at the peak of the ninth rank and was only a step away from master rank, having the highest cultivation among the Embroidery House's Silver Token Envoys. He was even on the same level as other Golden Token Envoys. His full-strength attacks were naturally not to be underestimated. At the same time, he wanted to end Golden Token Eleven in a single strike, ordering his trusted aides to act together. He didn't want to give Golden Token Eleven any chance to turn things around.0

He saw Zu An simply standing in place, and a hint of mockery appeared in his eyes. He wasn't upset, and actually felt happy. He remarked, "You're not even moving?"0

Even if this guy has some skill, he's overestimated himself way too much and will pay the price for it!0

His blade had already reached its most powerful state. He could sense that he had never released such a liberating sword slash in his life. Perhaps because the situation was related to his future prospects, his blade displayed 130% of his usual strength. Together with the support formation of his surrounding aides, not even Chief Commander Zhuxie Chixin would be able to immediately deal with his attack.0

Huh? Where did he go?

Suddenly, everything before Bu Liangcai's eyes blurred. Golden Token Eleven wasn't there anymore, giving him a great shock. He quickly tried to redirect his attack, but he noticed that a large pair of hands were already clamped around his neck. His eyes widened; he was horrified to discover that all of his ki seemed to be pouring uncontrollably into Golden Token Eleven's hands. In just a few moments, his cultivation was sucked practically dry.

What kind of demonic art is this?!

He was horrified, but at that point, he couldn't say a single word more. With a crisp crack, his neck snapped.

Zu An tossed the corpse in his hands away. At the same time, he let out a strand of flames to completely burn the corpse into nothing. He was worried that some people would try to get information out of his corpse, so he naturally had to erase the traces. Standing with his hands behind him, he coldly swept his gaze across the remaining Envoys and announced, "Bu Liangcai has rebelled against the emperor and has already been executed on the spot."

Bu Liangcai's subordinates felt as if they were dreaming. They had attacked Golden Token Eleven with a formation, so how was Bu Liangcai, the center of their formation, instantly defeated? All of them shivered all over. They didn't have any intent to rebel and knelt down to beg for mercy.

The other Embroidered Envoys seemed to have woken up from a daze. They all knelt down and called out, "We greet the Chief Commander!"

Zu An had been a Golden Token Envoy to begin with, after all. The strength he had just displayed was no less than Zhuxie Chixin's at all. In this division, they still believed in the strong.

Zu An nodded. He had some people bring Xiao Jianren away to get some proper rest. At the same time, he assigned some people to lock up Bu Liangcai's trusted aides. No one dared to resist after seeing Bu Liangcai, a cultivator at the peak of the ninth rank, instantly killed.

After dealing with all of those things, Zu An then arrived at Zhuxie Chixin's previous office. He summoned all of the Silver Token Envoys in the Embroidery House and said, "I want the most detailed information on all of the hidden elders and ancestors of the capital's great clans and the eight dukes."

Favorite

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Chapter 1882: Troubled Young Lady

The Silver Token Envoys looked at each other in dismay. In the end, one of them stepped forward and said, "Replying to the chief commander, those are the Embroidery House's most confidential secrets that only Sir Zhuxie has access to normally. He reports directly to the emperor. However, Sir Zhuxie has gone missing, so we do not know where he hid that intelligence. That is why we need to find him first."

Zu An frowned, thinking, *Zhuxie Chixin really didn't trust anyone. He ended up taking so many secrets with him to the grave.*

"Sir Zhuxie is already dead. There is no need to look for him," he said.

The other Envoys exclaimed in shock, "Sir Zhuxie is dead?"

Even though countless rumors had circulated, no one had any conclusive proof. Zhuxie Chixin had already managed the Embroidery House for several decades, leaving his mark all across the place. It was quite difficult for the Envoys to immediately accept that information.

"It is the truth. He fought to the death on Golden Peak. You will receive official information soon," Zu An continued.

Because there had been a formation standing in the way, only a select few of the higher-ups knew about what had really happened on Golden Peak at present, and everything they knew was also limited to what Zu An had told them.

"Use this time to search for where Sir Zhuxie hid that information. I'm sure that some clues were left behind. Furthermore, the Embroidered Envoys who helped him investigate all of that information should still be alive, so investigate all of them. Have them gather the intelligence again and summarize it for me," Zu An instructed.

"Understood!" The silver token envoys all saluted.

They had still been a bit reluctant at first, but when they heard that Zhuxie Chixin had already died, they knew that the Embroidery House had already completely changed. They didn't dare to try any clever tricks in front of their new boss and wanted to leave behind as good of an impression as possible. That way, their time here would be a bit easier.

Zu An then told them to bring him a list of names of the higher-ups and summon the representatives of each department for individual meetings. After he encouraged and appeased them a bit, the Embroidery House was temporarily stabilized.

Then, he visited Xiao Jianren's room to see how he was doing. Xiao Jianren was so moved that he wanted to get up when he heard about Zu An's arrival, but he couldn't help but start to cough intensely after his movements caused his injuries to flare up.

Zu An quickly supported him back into bed, saying, "You're seriously injured right now, so there's no need for excessive formalities."

"Thank you, Sir Eleven. No, I should call you chief commander now," Xiao Jianren said with a grin. Even though his body was aching all over, today had been truly refreshing. He really had been bullied by Bu Liangcai to the point of utter resentment. Now, Sir Eleven had become the chief commander, so his own backer was becoming more and more reliable.

Zu An took out the medicinal ointment he had just retrieved from the medicine building and personally applied it, saying, "You've suffered quite a lot. That Bu guy definitely wanted to take a bite out of me through you, and so he tormented you like this."

Xiao Jianren harrumphed. "Even though my personality is pretty moderate normally, how could I be someone who betrays my superiors? I was scared that I wouldn't be able to hold on, and only hoped for Sir Eleven to help me get revenge and maybe take care of my family, in which case I'd already be satisfied enough. I never expected such a great thing to happen!"

Zu An chuckled and said, "Good things happen to good people. Rest up well. Once you've recovered, I'll look for a chance to promote you to Golden Token Envoy." As this man had never turned his back on him, he couldn't let him down either. He lacked trusted aides in the Embroidery House to begin with, so Xiao Jianren was the perfect candidate for promotion.

Xiao Jianren exclaimed in shock, "You absolutely can't! My strength is too low for me to be a Golden Token Envoy!"

Zu An knew that what he said was the truth. Even though Xiao Jianren's cultivation was still passable, that was all. It wasn't that outstanding among the Silver Token Envoys, let alone a Golden Token Envoy. After thinking about it, he put a finger against Xiao Jianren's body. Then, the cultivation he had just sucked out of Bu Liangcai poured into Xiao Jianren. After all, Bu Liangcai's cultivation was pretty much useless to Zu An, but for Xiao Jianren, it was like a charcoal delivery in snowy weather.

Sure enough, Xiao Jianren was shocked and overjoyed when he sensed the abundant power that entered his body. He said, "Chief commander, this is..."

"Don't say too much. I'll seal this power within you for now, so use this time to properly digest it. Your cultivation should be able to make major breakthroughs. Then, even though there will still be some distance from the Golden Token Envoy standard, it should more or less be enough," Zu An replied seriously.

Such rough infusions of cultivation were convenient and fast, but they also carried a lot of potential risks. For example, the cultivator's foundation could become unsteady, and their upper limit could also be restricted. Furthermore, others didn't have the ability to absorb and pass on cultivation to someone else. As such, these situations were actually quite rare.

Of course, Xiao Jianren's aptitude had always been quite ordinary to begin with. Even if he cultivated properly, perhaps he would never even reach Bu Liangcai's cultivation naturally. As such, there was no real upper limit to speak of.

"Thank you, chief commander!" Xiao Jianren exclaimed; he was so excited that hot tears filled his eyes. The fact that he had been able to become a Silver Token Envoy was mainly due to seniority and relying on his head. He had always been quite poor in terms of combat strength among the Silver Token Envoys. He had never expected his cultivation to make such shocking progress!

"Don't think too much about it and cultivate properly. I'll still need your help in the future," Zu An said with a chuckle. At the same time, he mentioned his intent to investigate the eight dukes and the hidden elders and ancestors of the various great clans.

Xiao Jianren replied, "Even though I was frequently assigned to the Embroidery House's archive library, I still rarely came into contact with this type of information. But the archives themselves and the people who passed through are clues that can be traced. I have an idea. Once I finish thinking it through, I'll make a report to chief commander."

Zu An was overjoyed. The other Silver Token Envoys had all had troubled expressions when he first gave the order. After all, that information had been in the hands of Zhuxie Chixin alone. The others had practically never touched those files. But sure enough, librarians and administrators had always been formidable individuals since ancient times. Xiao Jianren had almost always been managing the archives, so he was the most suitable one to take care of this affair.

"Alright. There's no need to rush. Take care of your wounds first," he said.

...

After leaving Xiao Jianren's room, Zu An sought out the Bronze Token Envoys Dai Seventh and Chen Eighth. They were also his direct subordinates, and had been locked up for some time. But because their statuses weren't high enough, they hadn't suffered as much as Xiao Jianren did. After bringing them some medicine and giving them some encouragement, he also promised to promote them to Silver Token Envoys. The two brothers were moved to tears.

...

By the time Zu An left the Imperial Palace, it was already late. He removed his Embroidered Envoy outfit, feeling a bit anxious. He had wanted to leave after getting the intelligence he needed from the Embroidery House, but he hadn't expected to be held up for so long. He wondered what the situation was like at the Qin manor. That lass Youzhao in particular was a crossdresser, for one thing. If she got locked up, there would be a high chance of her identity being exposed. She was a woman all by herself, so she would definitely be in danger.

Thus, Zu An rushed straight to the Qin manor. The usually lively entrance now only had sparrows gathering at the gates. A cold wind brushed past, picking up the scattered leaves by the entrance. The whole place carried an indescribable sense of bleakness. Zu An frowned slightly. After all, this kind of great clan cared about their social status more than anything. Usually, the front entrance had to be brushed completely clean. Now, there were many

fallen leaves, and yet no one cared much for them, and there wasn't a single gatekeeper. Fortunately, the state duke manor's signboard hadn't been removed, and the entrance wasn't sealed off either. It seemed as if, at the very least, the worst case scenario of the manor being searched and people's possessions being confiscated hadn't happened.

Zu An was about to knock on the door when he saw that it wasn't completely closed. He couldn't help but be suspicious. The state dukes and the two princes had been captured, and there had been no verdict on the crimes they were charged with yet. This Qin manor had at least a hundred people inside, so how could they be so careless as to not even close the gates?

He entered and walked around for a while, but he didn't see servants walking about as usual. He didn't even see a single person. He figured that they had likely fled after hearing that the Qin clan was experiencing a great disaster. There was trash everywhere, as well as crooked and collapsed ornaments. He had never felt much whenever he saw a wealthy family come to ruin before, but at that moment, he seemed to feel something. He had personally witnessed the Qin manor's splendor in the past, and yet now, it was so bleak and lifeless. A top-tier clan being doomed to fall was quite moving.

Suddenly, Zu An thought of something. His divine sense picked up on some activity in Chu Youzhao's courtyard. He set aside his other thoughts and flew straight there.

Perhaps because all of the people in charge of the Qin clan had been captured, the formations that defended the Qin clan weren't operating as usual. They were probably only enough to stop some small bandits in their current state. Any cultivators with decent cultivation could easily make their way through.

...

When Zu An arrived at Youzhao's courtyard, he saw a group of soldiers surrounding the area. Sounds of intense arguments came from inside. Zu An's expression darkened. Why were there soldiers here? Could it be that they really were confiscating everything?

"What are you all trying to do? The Qin clan's crimes haven't been confirmed yet, and I'm not from the Qin clan. What do you all want to examine my room for?!" a voice exclaimed angrily. Even then, it was still melodious and pleasant. Who else could it be but Chu Youzhao?

“Young master Chu, we did not come to look for you, but rather the fugitive Murong Qinghe. I hope that the young master will not trouble us too much,” the leader of the soldiers said.

Zu An raised his brows. *Murong Qinghe? Didn't she follow the main procession to Violet Mountain? How did she become a fugitive?*

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Chapter 1883: Betrayal

Zu An silently walked into the courtyard and saw that it was surrounded by several dozen purple-armored soldiers. His brows furrowed deeply. He had initially thought that they were the capital magistrate's people, or perhaps even military officers. But these purple-armored guards made things a bit more interesting. After all, only a prince's imperial bodyguards could use such purple armor. He wondered which prince's subordinates these were. After all, when had capturing fugitives become the responsibility of a prince?

Meanwhile, Chu Youzhao was blocking the entrance with her arms spread. She cried, “You're not allowed to search inside! You don't have the Commandant of Justice's orders, so what right do you have to search the premises? Let alone the house of a state duke!”

At the head of the troops was a middle-aged general, clearly the leader of the group. He couldn't help but sneer, retorting, “State duke's home? Are the two state dukes still in good health?”

Chu Youzhao immediately became more anxious. She said, “The Qin clan's state dukes are imprisoned at the moment, but the court will definitely state that the Qin clan is innocent one day! This is no place for people like you to mess around!”

“Heh, a state duke manor? What frighteningly great prestige. Unfortunately, even though that could be enough to scare off others, we came on the orders of King Jin. We are here to catch the court's criminals. No matter how great your Qin clan's state dukes are, are they greater than our King Jin?” the middle-aged man replied, cupping his hands toward King Jin Manor with a proud expression.

Zu An was stunned. King Jin? He had spent a substantial amount of time in the capital and naturally knew who this King Jin was.

Zhao Han had many children, but the late empress had only birthed two children. One was the stupid Crown Prince Zhao Ruizhi, and the other was King Jin, Zhao Ruiyong.

Zhao Ruizhi's name meant 'wise and farsighted', but he was actually an idiot. Meanwhile, Zhao Ruiyong's name meant 'astute and brave', but he was sickly and weak. Quite a few famous doctors had already said that he didn't have much hope for a long life. It was only thanks to Zhao Han's influence reaching from sea to sea that he had accumulated enough precious medicine to preserve his life, preventing an untimely death. Still, even with all of those medicines and Zhao Han himself using his incredible cultivation to nurture him from time to time, the palace doctors had still privately reached the conclusion that King Jin was unlikely to live past the age of thirty-five. After all, this was a world of cultivation. Any given cultivator's lifespan was already far greater than that of anyone from Zu An's previous world. As such, thirty-five years was just way too short.

Zhao Han had also felt pity for his son's impending death, and thus gave him the best treatment out of all of the princes. It was even more preferential than that of the crown prince. Still, everyone knew he wouldn't be alive for long, so no one had felt much jealousy. It was to the extent that even the former empress and crown princess had never mentioned him when they were talking about the princes that would fight over the throne.

Zu An wondered if there was something wrong with the head of the one who had named these two brothers, as they had gotten it completely wrong. At the same time, he was curious as to why a prince who stood aloof from worldly affairs would suddenly come to catch a court criminal.

Chu Youzhao looked a bit nervous as she asked, "Not even King Jin can go against the law, right?"

"The law? The emperor has been attacked and we do not even know if he is alive or dead. King Jin is absolutely overcome with grief and wants to get revenge for his majesty. Is there anything wrong with that?" the middle-aged leader said with a sneer. "Meanwhile, young master Chu is sheltering a criminal, and yet you have the nerve to invoke the law?"

...

At the very edge of the courtyard, Zu An thought to himself, *As expected.*

King Jin had always been doted on by Zhao Han, so he naturally respected and loved his father a lot. Unlike that stupid big brother of a crown prince, he understood that everything boded ill for his father. As such, he evidently wanted his people to vent his frustrations.

“What connection does Murong Qinghe have to the ambush?!” Chu Youzhao exclaimed angrily. She was childhood friends with Murog Qinghe and they were really close, so of course she wanted to help her out of danger.

“Her father is the Supervisor of Attendants and should have been in charge of his majesty’s safety. Now that his majesty has been attacked, her father needs to shoulder responsibility. Furthermore, she was even a part of the army that escorted his majesty back then, and also bears the crime of negligence. Now, she actually dares to run, which only further proves her guilty conscience!” the middle-aged man replied, gradually growing louder and louder.

The other imperial guards of the king manor gradually pressed forward, all full of killing intent. Their unified steps carried the pressure of an execution order, leaving Chu Youzhao and the others alarmed and terrified. Because the Qin clan’s two clan masters and young masters had been captured, the entire clan had already dispersed. There weren’t many guards left in the Qin manor. There were only four trembling guards left at Chu Youzhao’s side. All of them swallowed with difficulty, their legs shaking as they watched the scene play out.

Among them, one said softly, “Young master Chu, it is difficult for even our Qin clan to take care of ourselves. We really cannot shelter Miss Murong...”

“Exactly, and they are only here to investigate Miss Murong. They might not really do anything to her. How about we...”

“Shut up!” Chu Youzhao glared angrily at them and immediately cut them off.

The middle-aged general from King Jin Manor roared with laughter, saying, “It looks like Murong Qinghe is here after all. Men, arrest her!”

“Who dares?!” Chu Youzhao retorted, drawing her sword as well. Even though she was a woman, she didn’t cower at all.

"Please do not overestimate yourself, young master Chu. With your cultivation, any random one of my subordinates can win against you. Even if you fight until you are drenched in blood, you might not be able to stop us from arresting Murong Qinghe. Instead, you will only guarantee your own crime of sheltering a criminal, so we will not just be arresting her alone at that point," the middle-aged general said, his tone harsh and threatening.

The Qin clan guards immediately threw their weapons away when they heard that, saying, "This matter has nothing to do with us!"

"You guys!" Chu Youzhao cried. Her eyes darted around quickly, but she knew that she couldn't really blame them. The fact that they had stayed this long with the Qin clan was already a sign of their loyalty. In the end, only a private friendship with Murong Qinghe had led to all of this. There was no reason to involve them. A trace of decisiveness flashed through her eyes when she realized that; she held her sword in front of her, saying, "If you want to take little sister Qinghe, you'll have to do so over my dead..."

"I'll follow you!" a lovable voice cried out from inside the room.

Then, a tall and slender figure slowly walked out, her long and strong legs immediately drawing the attention of all the men there. Her tan skin in particular gave her an unruly aesthetic. Her appearance was clearly that of a young and inexperienced woman, and yet those two entirely different aesthetics actually combined perfectly to form a unique kind of beauty. However, there was only weariness in her expression; there was no more of her usual high-spirited nature. Her clothes were damaged, and her face had dried bloodstains on it; it was unclear whether they belonged to her or her enemies. As she stood there alone, she looked especially haggard and bleak.

"Qinghe!" Chu Youzhao exclaimed, panicking.

Murong Qinghe gave her a look filled with gentleness. Her big brother Chu was normally so weak and elegant, and yet insisted on sheltering her like this. He was more brave and heroic than many soldiers in the army. She thought, *No wonder I liked him for so many years.*

But she didn't reply; instead, she looked at the people from King Jin Manor and said, "I came here secretly on my own and didn't alert anyone. The Qin clan's people didn't know that I was here, so it has nothing to do with them. I hope that General Liu won't trouble anyone else."

The middle-aged general nodded and said, "But of course."

Murong Qinghe nodded in response. She threw the spear in her hands to the ground, and soldiers quickly walked up to shackle her.

"Let's go," she said coldly. She was already worn out after running for so long. She was ready to accept her own fate.

Then, General Liu said with a smile, "Hold on. Chu Youzhao has harbored a criminal, so arrest her as well for interrogation."

Murong Qinghe was stunned when she heard that. Then, she erupted into rage, exclaiming, "Bastard, you lied to me!"

It was precisely because the other side hadn't continued to question Chu Youzhao's responsibility that she agreed to be captured. Otherwise, with her spear skills, if she really resisted, she wouldn't necessarily have been able to escape, but she could definitely have made these people pay a grave price. However, she was already completely restrained. She was already like a fish on a chopping board, without any strength to resist.

Chu Youzhao was shocked and furious. She exclaimed, "You're shameless and despicable! Qinghe, you shouldn't have trusted them!"

General Liu said coldly, "How can the law of a country be carried out based on personal transactions? The reason this general has acted like this is to lessen the casualties of my subordinates. What wrongs have I committed?"

As King Jin's trusted aide, he naturally knew just how furious King Jin was after hearing about what happened to his majesty. He was completely devoted to getting revenge for his father, and the King Qi faction's Murong clan and Qin clan were both thorns in his side. The Murong clan was one thing, but as for the Qin clan, that dead camel was still larger than a horse. There were a lot of their people in the army, so the two state dukes hadn't been convicted even after all this time. If they could completely bring down the Qin clan through the accusation of harboring a criminal, King Jin would definitely be happy.

Then I'll be able to obtain the appreciation of the various big shots in the capital...

The two women were so angry they were shaking as they listened to him speak so forcefully and self-righteously. Still, there really was nothing else that they could do right now.

With a wave of the general's hand, several purple-armored guards surrounded Chu Youzhao. As the guards of King Jin Manor, their cultivation was naturally much stronger than that of ordinary soldiers.

Meanwhile, Chu Youzhao didn't excel at cultivation. Even if they faced them one-on-one, she wouldn't necessarily be their match. When she thought about how her crossdressing would definitely be exposed if she was captured, her face paled. She immediately sank into despair.

Suddenly, a cold voice said, "I was wondering what kind of skills King Jin Manor's people had, but it turns out all you're good at is tricking some young juniors. These two are mine, so none of you can bring them away!"

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Chapter 1884: Also a Criminal

"Who dares?!" General Liu exclaimed, quickly turning around. He had actually never noticed the other person approaching them this entire time!0

"Brother-in-law!" Chu Youzhao exclaimed, feeling shocked and happy to hear the familiar voice.0

"Big brother Zu~" Murong Qinghe cried. Her eyes that had been full of despair now regained a bit of color.0

Zu An slowly walked forward. For some reason, wherever he went, the purple-armored soldiers moved aside on their own.0

"Youzhao, don't be scared. Your brother-in-law has returned," Zu An said with a voice full of pity. So many things had happened to the Qin clan as of late. Together with what happened to the Murong clan, this young lady had constantly lived in fear day after day.0

"Brother-in-law... Sniff..." Chu Youzhao sniffled, her eyes red. She immediately jumped into his arms.0

Murong Qinghe had a strange expression. Her big brother Chu was good in every way, but sometimes he was a bit too... soft. He always acted like a little girl in front of her brother-in-law. But when she recalled how big brother Chu had protected her earlier, how he was more of a man than anyone, she revealed a bashful smile.0

The fact that he did that for me already makes this life worth it...0

When he sensed the slight shaking in Chu Youzhao's delicate body, Zu An gently stroked her hair to console her.0

King Jin's people finally reacted too. General Liu harrumphed. "And I was wondering who it was. So it was Sir Zu."0

Zu An looked up at him and replied, "I'm sorry, but who are you?"0

The general's face froze. He recognized the other person, and yet the reverse wasn't true. It really made his face heat up. However, he also knew that he wasn't as famous as Zu An in the capital, so he could only introduce himself. "I am King Jin Manor's guard captain, Liu Jinxin."0

"Never heard of you before," Zu An said nonchalantly, then continued to console Chu Youzhao.0

"You...!" Liu Jinxin exclaimed with a scowl. "I hope that Sir Zu will not stop us from arresting a court criminal."0

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Zu An raised his head slightly and replied, "Arresting a criminal? Are there any here? Why do I not know about it?"0

Liu Jinxin's eyes were burning with rage. He said, "His majesty encountered an attack on Violet Mountain. Murong Tong is the Supervisor of Attendants and is in charge of his majesty's safety, but his negligence led to an accident happening to his majesty. This is, of course, a tremendous crime. The Murong clan had no choice but to cooperate with the investigation, but they secretly let Murong Qinghe escape. What else could this be but an act of guilt? The court has already issued an order of arrest, and as someone who has sheltered a criminal, Chu Youzhao is also guilty!"0

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Zu An replied, "Oh, I understand. You can leave now."0

Liu Jinxin choked. He asked, "Did you not hear me clearly? They are criminals, and I am here to arrest them!"0

Zu An moved Chu Youzhao behind him, then said slowly, "If I recall correctly, you're merely King Jin's personal guards and have no right to arrest anyone. This is Magistrate Yin, the Commandant of Justice, or the Security Officer's responsibility. May I ask which one of these roles your King Jin has recently assumed?"0

Liu Jinxin scowled and said, "Arresting court criminals is the responsibility of everyone in the court. Furthermore, King Jin is his majesty's precious family member, as well as one of the princes his majesty treasured the most. The king wishes to get revenge for his father, an action that comes from a place of filial piety. My Great Zhou Dynasty is built on filial piety. Even according to the court's judgment, this is worthy of praise."0

Zu An retorted coldly, "Can someone who has been doted on by his majesty disregard the law and selfishly carry out punishments against the people on their own?"0

Liu Jinxin finally couldn't suppress his rage anymore. He said, "Sir Zu, I respect you as an important minister of the crown prince's Eastern Palace. You are someone who belongs to the same camp as our King Jin, so that is why I have spoken properly to you all this time. Are your actions right now your own, or are you representing the crown... princess?"0

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Zu An said calmly, "There is no need to disturb the crown princess for such a small matter as this."0

"Then it seems to be Sir Zu who obstinately clings to a stubborn insistence on defending criminals yourself, no?" Liu Jinxin replied as he sighed in relief. As long as it wasn't the crown princess' intention, that was fine. He represented King Jin right now, so like hell he had to be scared of anything.0

"It's hard to say whether they're even criminals. How could you just willfully throw labels and accusations at them like that?" Zu An replied. He didn't feel like wasting more words on him. "If you want to bring these people away, have the Commandant of Justice personally find me."0

Liu Jinxin roared with laughter and replied, “Sir Zu, who do you think you are? Are King Jin’s orders beneath those of the Commandant of Justice? Could you stop so many guards all by yourself?”⁰

In the past, Zu An’s cultivation had seemed pretty good. But rumor had it that after he returned from the Fiend races’ territory, he seemed to have been seriously injured, leaving his cultivation crippled. Liu Jinxin had even checked for himself and hadn’t sensed the slightest bit of ki from Zu An’s body. He was like a completely normal person.⁰

*Hmph, I wonder just where he gets the courage to stop us from capturing these people. Does he really think he can do whatever he wants just because he has received the crown princess’ favor? Even the crown princess has to show our King Jin respect!*¹

Zu An walked over to Murong Qinghe and passed his hands gently over her body. The chains fell apart just like that, and she finally regained her freedom.⁰

“Qinghe, we’re okay now!” Chu Youzhao exclaimed, excitedly grabbing her hand. ⁰

*As long as brother-in-law is here, there’s nothing he can’t do!*⁰

Murong Qinghe blushed when her hand was taken, but she quickly snapped out of her daze and picked up the spear she had tossed aside. She intended to fight together with Zu An.⁰

Liu Jinxin didn’t get angry; instead, he laughed and remarked, “Good, good. Zu An is letting a criminal run free out of selfish interests; reprehensible! Men, arrest him! If he resists, then just kill him!”⁰

He had deliberately watched Zu An let Murong Qinghe go. That way, even if the matter reached the court, he would still be in the right. As for Murong Qinghe’s strength, even though her cultivation wasn’t bad, she was still young. He was an expert at the peak of the eighth rank and didn’t need to fear her at all.¹

Shouts resounded around him. The guards rushed forward.⁰

Murong Qinghe was about to move, but Zu An reached out his hand and stood in front of her. Then, he looked at the charging purple-armored guards and yelled, "F*ck off!"0

An invisible wave spread out, and the vicious guards screamed miserably. All of them clutched their heads in pain as they rolled on the ground, their weapons falling.0

It was the Fiend races' Lion's Roar, a skill that was most suited for facing numerous enemies!0

Chu Youzhao's eyes lit up. She smiled so widely that her eyes were almost closed, exclaiming, "Brother-in-law is so awesome!"0

Murong Qinghe's eyes were also dazzling. She had faced such king manor guards many times, and their cultivations weren't low at all. They were also good at coordinated attacks. She hadn't expected them to already be on their knees without big brother Zu even lifting a finger!0

Liu Jinxin also took the situation in with a stupefied expression. Then, he glowered at Zu An, saying, "So Sir Zu actually hid your strength so well. No wonder you had such confidence."0

Zu An likely had some kind of skill that could conceal his aura. However, even though that sound wave was a bit uncomfortable for Liu Jinxin, it didn't really injure him. As such, he determined that even though that bastard Zu's cultivation wasn't bad, there was still a limit to it. As soon as he spoke, he drew his blade and walked toward Zu An one step after another. Killing intent filled his eyes.0

There were all kinds of schemes brewing in the capital right now, and all of the princes had their own thoughts. King Jin had been destined to not have any future in all of that because of his body's condition. However, that person had hinted before that if they could...1

*Hmph, we'll first use this proper pretext to get rid of that bastard Zu so the crown prince loses an important general. This matter won't be traced back to me anyway.*0

As he made up his mind, his aura locked onto Zu An. As he walked forward step by step, his killing intent reached its most powerful state. He knew his blade was powerful enough to erase any enemy before him.0

But who would have thought that Zu An wouldn't even give him a second look? Instead, he looked at the bit of blood at the corners of Chu Youzhao's lips and asked, "Did he hit you earlier?"¹

Chu Youzhao reflexively nodded, but then repeatedly shook her head and said, "It's not that big of a deal, actually. He just struck me in an earlier conflict. I'm okay."⁰

She had actually blocked them outside the main gate with the servants at first, and it was only because she suffered from that confrontation that she had backed up all the way here. However, she noticed that there was something not quite right about Zu An's tone. She quickly shook her head for fear that he would end up getting hurt because of his rashness. Even though that Liu guy was hateful, he was King Jin Manor's imperial guard captain. If something happened to him, they would completely offend King Jin. She was worried that she would bring her brother-in-law a problem that couldn't be solved.⁰

Right at that moment, Liu Jinxin roared and said, "Just go to hell!"⁰

He was really angry that he was being underestimated. Did this Zu bastard think he was an earth immortal or something?⁴

A massive streak of blade radiance flew toward the other side. Forget about Zu An, even Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe would be slashed into a bloody mist by his blade.⁰

Murong Qinghe was horrified when she sensed the terrifying blade energy. She reflexively raised her spear, but this was an attack at the peak of the eighth rank, so how could it be something she could fend off?⁰

Suddenly, Zu An slowly raised two fingers. The terrifying blade energy suddenly disappeared without a trace. As it turned out, the blade was already clamped tightly within his two fair fingers.⁰

Liu Jinxin's face was entirely red. No matter how much strength he exerted, he couldn't make his blade budge in the slightest. In that moment, he finally understood just how terrifying the other side was. He quickly said, "Sir Zu, this is a misunderstanding..."¹

Before he even finished speaking, he watched as his own blade suddenly turned around. It was also blade energy, and it felt incredibly familiar; and yet, it made his entire body shake in fear.⁰

The next second, a head rushed into the air. Then, a headless corpse staggered a few steps forward before crashing down. The purple-armored guards could only watch in absolute horror.0

Zu An's body was protected by his natural ki armor, so the blood that sprayed out didn't stay on his body.0

However, Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe's faces were deathly pale. 0

Oh no, King Jin Manor's guard captain was killed! Big brother Zu is also going to become a criminal...

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Chapter 1885: Keep the Goodies Within the Family

The king manor guards opened their mouths as if they wanted to say something. But when they saw Liu Jinxin's miserable end, no one dared to say a thing. In the end, no one wanted to be like that unfortunate soul. All of them pushed and shoved each other as they tried to run away.

Zu An wasn't a fan of slaughter, so he didn't make things difficult for the lesser troops. When he looked at the mess and blood everywhere, he said with a frown, "Sorry, I've made a mess of your courtyard."

After saying that, with a flick of his finger, a wisp of White Lotus Flame flew over to the corpse, quickly burning it until there was nothing left.

Murong Qinghe's eye twitched when she saw that. She knew Zu An had to have burned away corpses many times before, considering how proficient he was at it.

Chu Youzhao couldn't help but say worriedly, "Brother-in-law, now that you've killed King Jin's guard captain, things will be really troublesome now."

Murong Qinghe added, "One should be responsible for one's actions. Just say I did it; we can't involve big brother Zu. I'll be leaving the city soon. At that time, they won't be able to catch me either."

Chu Youzhao couldn't help but hold her hands, saying, "You're all alone now, and it's really dangerous outside!"

"I actually shouldn't have come back, but I just couldn't bear to... bear to leave big brother Chu. I wanted to see you, but I only caused trouble for everyone," Murong Qinghe said; her expression was both annoyed and apologetic.

"Is there a need to talk about all of this between us?" Chu Youzhao replied as she held her hands tightly and wouldn't let go. She couldn't help but cry too when she thought about how they'd have to live apart from each other from now on.

Zu An found this emotional moment of holding hands and shedding tears a bit amusing. He asked, "What kind of tragic story are you making up in your heads? He's nothing more than a king manor guard. If he's been killed, then so be it. What's the big deal with that?"

"But he isn't an ordinary king manor's captain; he's the guard captain of King Jin Manor! Isn't this the same as publicly striking King Jin in the face?" Chu Youzhao exclaimed in a panic. "King Jin definitely won't let you go, and the court won't just let this matter end either."

Zu An thought to himself, *Is King Jin's face even worth as much as the crown prince's bottom?* He had even given the crown prince a vicious beating, so why would he fear some King Jin? He replied, "Don't worry, just leave the aftermath to me. If I say it's okay, then it's okay."

The two young women felt a bit more relieved when they heard him say that. However, there was still worry in their expressions.

Zu An looked around and said, "Still, staying here isn't too appropriate. Why don't the two of you follow me back to my place?"

The Qin manor was already in tatters. The safety of this place was hard to guarantee.

Chu Youzhao's eyes lit up. Didn't that mean she could live together with her brother-in-law now? She replied, "Okay!"

Murong Qinghe was also a bit moved. That way, she could live under the same roof as big brother Chu. Just the thought of a blissful life together filled

her eyes with expectation. However, she said, "But I'm currently a criminal. Wouldn't I be involving big brother Zu this way?"

"It's fine. It shouldn't be too big of an issue for me to shelter the two of you now," Zu An replied.

When she looked at his large and tall figure, Murong Qinghe's face turned a bit red.

Big brother Zu really gives off a mysterious sense of safety. He's so handsome too... If it weren't because I grew up with big brother Chu, I might even like...

Pah pah pah! Murong Qinghe, Murong Qinghe, when did you become someone so fickle? Big brother Chu is clearly the best in this entire world!

When they saw that Zu An was about to bring the two women away, the Qin clan's guards asked with sullen expressions, "What will we do if you leave, Sir Zu? What if King Jin Manor comes looking for us again..."

"Just tell them the truth of what happened. If they want to look for me, they can come straight for me," Zu An said. Afterward, he thought to himself for a bit and said, "Take good care of the Qin clan's people. I'll send some people over after a while to help you protect the Qin clan."

The current state of the Qin clan was definitely no good. If some bandits came to loot the Qin clan and harmed the women, that would be bad.

The Qin clan guards immediately became overjoyed. They exclaimed, "Sir Zu is righteous and great! Thank you, Sir Zu!"

The Qin clan's masters had been captured, and their young masters were as well. The entire clan's people had been alarmed, and many had already run. As for the massive Qin manor, they didn't have enough manpower and couldn't protect this place. Now that they had Sir Zu's help, they could at least stabilize the Qin manor again.

Zu An nodded. He took the two women and headed toward his own marquis manor.

...

“Brother-in-law, thank you so much, really,” Chu Youzhao said, rubbing her eyes. The Qin clan had suddenly experienced an unexpected calamity. She had racked her brains for anything and everything she could do day after day, but the Qin clan was still full of weaknesses. Now that big brother Zu had returned, everything would be easily solved.

“I’m only doing what I should,” Zu An said with a chuckle.

Chu Youzhao thought to herself, *What do you mean, doing what you should?*

Big sis already divorced him, and the Qin clan has nothing to do with him. Also, the Qin clan has never been that nice to him. Could it be that brother-in-law did all of this for me?

Her cheeks immediately began burning red when she thought of that.

Zu An looked at Murong Qinghe and asked, “Little sister Qinghe, weren’t you with the army back then? Why did you suddenly become a criminal?”

Murong Qinghe’s eyes immediately turned red when she heard that. She said while choking with emotion, “After what happened to his majesty on Golden Peak, eventually, the civil and military officials finally broke through the mountain protecting formation. However, all they saw was an expanse of ruins. A great battle had clearly taken place, and there was blood everywhere. His majesty was also nowhere to be seen. Later, the officials searched around Golden Peak for a whole month and saw that even Zhuxie Chixin’s jade identity token had fallen there. It was covered in blood, suggesting that the situation boded ill for him. Along the way, they found the broken weapons of the other guards. His majesty never appeared either. Even the ministers who had the most faith in his majesty’s unparalleled cultivation began to waver. After reviewing the situation, they suspected that it was a plan set up by King Qi, and that he had invited the other experts to kill his majesty there together. As for who those people were, they didn’t know, but they suspected that the daoists had joined in. Afterward, they began to investigate this. My father is the Supervisor of Attendants and bears responsibility for his majesty’s safety, so he was the first one to be blamed and thrown into prison.”

Even though she had spent a lot of her time in the army and thus had a bit of unruliness in her nature, she was still just a young lady in the end. After experiencing everything that had happened to the clan, how could she still hold on? She was already sobbing as she explained what happened.

Zu An's brows furrowed slightly. He said, "It really is ridiculous. Everyone knows that the position of Supervisor of Attendants is just an empty title, and only one of the nine ministers in name. What does it have to do with General Murong?!"

The Supervisor of Attendants had been in charge of the Imperial Palace's guards in the past, and had been responsible for the emperor's safety. It was an important position that the common people had admired and revered. But as the years went on, the position gradually became an empty one. Its authority was gradually dispersed among the left and right guard generals, as well as others. Transferring Murong Tong from the position of Security Officer to Supervisor of Attendants was a transfer to an equivalent position, or perhaps even a promotion, on paper; but in reality, he had been given a useless role.

Murong Qinghe rubbed her eyes and said, "Everyone knows that, but what can we do about the fact that grandfather was a part of King Qi's faction? This time, it was King Qi who arranged this assassination of his majesty. King Qi can't be found, so someone has to take responsibility. My grandfather just happened to be the Supervisor of Attendants, and because of his upright and outspoken nature, he offended a lot of people in the past. That was why he ended up becoming a scapegoat."

"Then why did you run and become a wanted criminal?" Zu An asked curiously.

Murong Qinghe pursed her lips and said, "When the soldiers came to arrest him, my grandfather already knew that the Murong clan was finished. He didn't want me to experience a tragic end, so he found a chance to send me away."

Zu An nodded. Murong Tong was a bit irritable, but he was smart. He knew that he had become a scapegoat and wouldn't have a good end. If Murong Qinghe were also imprisoned, she would likely also have to endure all sorts of inhuman tortures and interrogations. A pretty girl like that could even experience other dangers. In the end, she would probably have her cultivation crippled and be thrown into the government brothel, thus spending the rest of her life in suffering. Murong Tong had doted on his granddaughter a lot in the past, so how could he let her experience such a thing? As such, he had thought of a way to help her break out.

"You shouldn't have returned to the capital and failed to live up to your grandfather's hard work," Zu An said with a sigh.

Murong Qinghe wiped the tears from her face. She replied, "The entire Murong clan is suffering, so how can I drift and live without purpose, without a clear conscience? The reason I came back to the capital was to see if there was a way to save the Murong clan's people."

When he looked at Murong Qinghe's tattered clothes, as well as her haggard, dust and blood-covered face, Zu An knew that she had experienced a lot of hardship as of late. He sighed and said, "With your cultivation, you likely wouldn't be able to save them, and would only be throwing away your own life pointlessly."

"If I couldn't save them, then at worst I'd just die with them. The Murong clan's people, whether they're men or women, have never feared death," Murong Qinghe said. Even though she was young, there was a resolute expression on her face.

Zu An couldn't help but feel a bit of admiration. This young lady had a unique heroic spirit to her.

Chu Youzhao tugged his sleeves and asked, "Brother-in-law, can you help out Little Qinghe? She's just too pitiful."

Murong Qinghe's face blushed when she heard the nickname. She said, "Big brother Chu, the Murong clan's crisis is too great. I can't trouble big brother Zu."

She knew that after his majesty's assassination, there had to be some kind of explanation for it all. Meanwhile, their Murong clan was disliked by too many people, so they had clearly become the best choice. Whether it was the emperor's faction or King Qi's faction, both of them intended to use the Murong clan to appease the world. How could that be something a single person could change?

Zu An thought for a bit, then said seriously, "There's no need for little sister Qinghe to be too worried. The situation might not be as bad as you think. You can stay at my place in peace for now. I'll try to see if I can save the Murong clan."

“Is there really a way?” Murong Qinghe asked. She had already been completely discouraged, but when she heard that, her eyes immediately shone brilliantly. She kneeled down in front of him and said, “If Sir Zu can save the Murong clan, the Murong clan will definitely remember this favor. Murong Qinghe will also work like an ox or horse for you in this life to repay big brother’s grace.”

Zu An couldn't help but reply mockingly, “Shouldn’t you say that you’ll devote your life in this kind of situation? Is it because you can’t bear to leave our family’s Youzhao?”

Murong Qinghe’s face paled. She did have strong feelings for Chu Youzhao and had reflexively spoken that way to avoid mentioning that. But compared to the safety of her clan, what did her own happiness matter? As such, she immediately said, “If big brother Zu doesn’t mind this poor figure of mine, for you I will...” She suddenly felt sour inside, and teardrops filled her eyes in the middle of her sentence.

Zu An was startled and quickly stopped her, saying, “I was joking with you. Why are you treating it as if I was being serious? It’s my rotten mouth that’s to blame; you don’t have to take it to heart at all.”

Chu Youzhao said with a big smile, “Little Qinghe, don’t mind it too much. Brother-in-law and I are one family, and I don’t even mind. We can all just happily live together!”

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Chapter 1886: They Don’t Have That Kind of Relationship, Right?

Murong Qinghe was stunned.

What is big brother Chu trying to say here?

Other things might be fine, but even that kind of thing can be shared in the family?!

I can’t just invite big brother Zu into the bridal room after I marry big brother Chu, right?

When she thought about how big brother Chu acted especially intimate with big brother Zu, she wondered, *Could it be that he likes men?*

Homosexuality wasn't that uncommon among the aristocrats. She had grown up in the capital's circles and was naturally influenced quite a bit by that. Even in the Murong clan, there were some of her cousins who liked that kind of thing.

Could it be that big brother Chu is hinting something at me, that I'll be married to both of them in the future?

I definitely wouldn't do it if it were anyone else, but big brother Zu is pretty handsome...

Aiya! What am I thinking? Big brother Chu is handsome and refined, while big brother Zu is like an immortal. How could it possibly be something like that?

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"Don't scare little sister Qinghe too badly now," Zu An rubbed Chu Youzhao's head and said impatiently. Chu Youzhao stuck out her tongue and stopped joking around too.

The two of them had no idea just what kind of thing was going on in Murong Qinghe's head.

...

They chatted while hurrying back to Zu An's place. Soon, they arrived in front of the marquis manor without realizing it. The maids and servants inside were bored to death, so when they saw the group, they cheered, "Sir Zu has returned, Sir Zu has returned!"

"Hm? Isn't that the third young master?"

The entire manor quickly came back to life. Many of these people came from Brightmoon City's Chu clan, so of course they recognized Chu Youzhao.

"Brother-in-law, it seems all of them have been bored to death, since you're rarely home," Chu Youzhao teased.

Zu An had a bitter smile. He really didn't stay here for most of the year. It had been a viscount manor at first, but the signboard could end up being changed again soon too. Still, Zu An found it hard to see this place as home. Was it because there was no madam waiting warmly for his return?

Chu Youzhao didn't act like a stranger at all and helped him by lecturing the servants. She felt that all of them were getting lazy because their master wasn't there. Many of them came from the Chu clan, so it wasn't inappropriate for her to lecture them.

Murong Qinghe began to look around the place. She had followed her big brother Chu to the manor before, but it was a rare opportunity for her to observe it up close.

Big brother Zu's place does have quite the imposing manner and style, but it lacks a bit of liveliness. It needs some flowers, plants, and the like.

Ah! What am I thinking? That's not something I should be worried about. I'm an unmarried young woman living in the house of another man. If news of this gets out, my reputation will probably be done for... Who would even dare to propose marriage anymore?

But our Murong clan is still in such dire straits, so is that even important now?

Thank goodness I have big brother Chu with me. If I can live with him, I don't care what kind of rumors start flying around.

Her eyes quickly fell onto the worked-up Chu Youzhao.

I'm looking forward to living together so much!

Wait, will the Chu clan look down on me? The Murong clan has already fallen, and I'm a fugitive. Meanwhile, young master Chu is the heir of a duke...

No, big brother Chu isn't that kind of person. But...

She was normally a carefree person, but whenever it involved big brother Chu, she suddenly became flustered.

"Servants, prepare some hot water and bring Miss Murong to have a bath and a change of clothes," Zu An said, then took out a bottle of medicinal ointment and pills. These were some extras he had gotten from the Embroidery House

after treating Xiao Jianren. He said, "Little sister Qinghe, use this medicine for your wounds later."

He couldn't apply those things for her, right? Chu Youzhao wasn't suitable either, because she was still a man in the eyes of everyone else.

"Okay. Thank you, big brother Zu," Murong Qinghe said with a blush. She had constantly been pursued for some time and hadn't gotten any time to bathe or change clothes, so she felt really dirty. She was quickly led to a side room by a maid to take a bath.

Chu Youzhao took the chance to bother Zu An and ask about what he had been doing all this time.

Zu An told her some general things, mainly about what had happened on Violet Mountain. There were many parts he couldn't tell her, because with her current strength, knowing more would only put her in danger. However, he still mentioned his reunion with Chu Chuyan, and that she had entrusted him with the role of taking care of Youzhao and the Qin clan.

Even so, Chu Youzhao's eyes sparkled as she listened to it all. She exclaimed, "Brother-in-law, your life is so exciting! I really want to follow you and raise my sword throughout the world of warriors, to beat all those bandits and bad guys to death!"

Zu An replied with an annoyed laugh, "Who's the one who's always slacking off? With your current cultivation, it's more likely that those bad guys would be the ones beating you to death."

Chu Youzhao was a bit embarrassed. She replied, "I'm going with my brother-in-law, right? You can just beat them up however you please. I'll just be in charge of cheering you on!"

Zu An was speechless.

This little lady is quite full of vigor...

"Right, brother-in-law, did you sleep with big sister after you reunited with her?" Chu Youzhao moved closer to him and asked with a wink, clearly looking for some good gossip.

“Go on, get out of here. What is a young lady asking about these kinds of things for? Do you have no sense of shame?” Zu An replied as he pushed her away in annoyance, clearly too embarrassed to talk about his marriage life with this lass.

“Tsk, just who was it that was doing that kind of thing in someone else’s room? My immature heart was given such a huge shock back then! I never expected my usually ice-cold big sis would actually have that side to her,” Chu Youzhao said, wrinkling her nose.

Zu An’s face heated up. He knew she was talking about what had happened between him and Chuyan in the Qin manor. Just remembering it was embarrassing.

“Hmph, I already know even if you don’t tell me. Brother-in-law is so perverted, you definitely bullied big sis again when you reunited in Violet Mountain.” Chu Youzhao harrumphed. “Just what is the situation between you and big sis? You aren’t married anymore, and yet you’re living like husband and wife.”

“Get out of here already. Little brats shouldn’t ask about adult things. We all had so many things to take care of that we wouldn’t even be able to finish all of it; when would we have the time to think about things like that?” Zu An replied, unable to take the embarrassment anymore. He got up, not wanting to talk about such intimate things with her anymore.

“I know why!” Chu Youzhao exclaimed, her eyes lighting up.

“Why?” Zu An asked, stunned. He didn’t even know why they had that kind of relationship himself. He was constantly dancing on the brink of death, and Chuyan was extremely focused on her cultivation. They had always been caught up in their own pursuits and didn’t have the time to think about such a thing.

“That way, you can still be single in name, so it’s easier for you to fondle the flowers and trample the grass, of course!” Chu Youzhao said with an angry harrumph. “My big sis is normally pretty smart, so why is she so stupid in this situation?”

Zu An was speechless.

Suddenly, Murong Qinghe helped him out of his embarrassment by asking, "Hm? What are the two of you talking about so excitedly?"

She had just finished her shower and changed out of her army clothes. Now, she was wearing a soft white dress that was quite well-fitted to her body. There was still some steam coming from her skin, and she was drying her damp hair with a towel. Her clan had experienced a disaster, and she was quite frail mentally at the moment, feeling dejected whenever she couldn't see her big brother Chu anymore. That was why she had immediately looked for Chu Youzhao as soon as she finished washing up

Chu Youzhao's eyes lit up when she saw that, saying, "Little sister Qinghe, you really are pretty."

Zu An couldn't help but nod as well. Murong Qinghe was normally like a rose of the army; now, she even displayed a hint of a young lady's gentle beauty.

Murong Qinghe was stunned. Receiving praise from her sweetheart was naturally something to be happy about, but on the surface, she said humbly, "Big brother Chu must be joking. In terms of beauty, I can't compare to your big sister at all."

"It's different, okay? You're also beautiful," Chu Youzhao said as she moved over and had her sit down on a chair. "I'll help you dry your hair."

"Huh? Okay..." Murong Qinghe trailed off. Her heartbeat quickened when her sweetheart offered to help her dry her hair.

Why doesn't big brother Chu have any defenses against the opposite sex? Is a woman supposed to let a man do this kind of thing? But why don't I want to refuse him?

Chu Youzhao helped her wipe her hair while showing Zu An her face, asking, "Brother-in-law, do you think little sister Qinghe is pretty? How does she compare to big sis?"

Zu An was stunned, but he nodded and said, "Little sister Qinghe is pretty. You're right; everyone has their own unique beauty."

Chu Youzhao clicked her tongue, replying, "Brother-in-law really is a smooth talker. You're not offending big sis or Qinghe."

However, Murong Qinghe only turned bright red. She only wanted to show her intimate side to big brother Chu alone, but why was he now so impatient to enjoy it with big brother Zu?

Don't tell me they really do have that kind of relationship?

She was suddenly flustered due to those wayward thoughts. She didn't want to be the focus of their attention and quickly changed the topic, asking, "Big brother Chu, what were the two of you chatting about before?"

"Oh, I was talking about this fickle playboy brother-in-law. He doesn't look that special either, but he somehow managed to get all those beautiful women to like him. I'm even starting to sweat for my big sis' sake," Chu Youzhao said, sounding a bit gloomy.

Murong Qinghe thought that Zu An's handsome face looked as if it were sculpted out of marble and thought, *How can you call that ordinary?* She replied, "Big brother Zu is really handsome and his cultivation is great. He's also a good person, so it's normal for those women to like him."

"Huh?" Chu Youzhao exclaimed, giving her a suspicious look. "Do you think he's that great? Don't tell me that you like him too?"

Murong Qinghe's face paled. The redness completely faded from her face. She got up, pushed her away, and ran out. She cried, "Big brother Chu, I hate you!"

She had already suspected they had a relationship, but now that she heard her sweetheart say that, all of her feelings of being wronged bubbled up. Tears couldn't help but fill her eyes.

Chu Youzhao immediately panicked. She quickly followed Qinghe into the courtyard, saying, "Little sister Qinghe, I was joking. Please don't mind it too much..." She tried to hold Murong Qinghe's hands several times, but Qinghe always shook her away angrily.

Zu An was getting a huge headache from watching the scene. But he had way too many things to worry about and couldn't be bothered to deal with a small dispute between young lovers. Thus, he also left and coughed lightly. He took out a dozen small banners, saying, "Ahem, the two of you should stay here for now. I'm not scared of anyone coming here to look for me. Of course, just in case, I'll set up a formation so that, if someone tries to forcefully break in, it

should be able to hold them off for a short while. I'll be able to sense it and immediately return."

Then, he flew into the air, and the small golden flags inserted themselves all around the marquis manor. Afterward, ripples of runes appeared around the manor. Then, a transparent, golden barrier surrounded the entire manor like a chicken egg.

The hurt Murong Qinghe stared at the handsome and extraordinary figure floating in the air. She even forgot to continue crying.

Big brother Zu really is handsome and amazing...

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Chapter 1887: Our Child

Chu Youzhao also looked at the sky. She couldn't help but remark with a sigh, "Little sister Qinghe, isn't my brother-in-law handsome?" She suddenly realized that the subject was precisely the reason why they'd had their earlier fight, so she quickly explained in a panic, "Please don't misunderstand, that's not what I meant..."

However, she heard Murong Qinghe mutter to herself, "Big brother Zu is indeed handsome."

Chu Youzhao was stunned.

If you're going to be this way, why did you even get mad at me for what I said earlier...

Zu An suddenly descended again and handed a green compass-shaped object to the two of them, saying, "This is the formation wheel for controlling the formation. You can use it to control the activation of the formation. This is a bag of ki stones, so remember to replenish the formation's energy. If you open these areas of the formation wheel, you can put in the ki stones..."

Chu Youzhao's eyes were shining as she exclaimed, "Big brother Zu, you even understand formations? This thing is so interesting! Can you teach me?"

Murong Qinghe was still teary-eyed, but at that moment, there was more curiosity than sadness in her expression. Formations were usually the specialty of old researchers in academies, and every single one of them was an eccentric who devoted everything to their field. Where could you find someone like big brother Zu?

Zu An chuckled and said, "If you're interested, of course I can teach you. But I fear there won't be much time for that anytime soon."

This formation was something he had found in the Baopu Sutra, so he decided to just try it out. Even though it wasn't complete, there probably wouldn't be any issue protecting a home. If he had more time and some more precious materials, he could make a more formidable formation after some research.

The Baopu Sutra's vast and seemingly endless knowledge in the seven arts drew a great deal of his interest. In the past, cultivation had always just been fighting and killing to him, but now, he realized that there were actually many other interesting things about cultivation.

"Okay! Awesome!" Chu Youzhao replied; she was in high spirits when she heard him agree.

Zu An nodded toward Murong Qinghe and said, "If little sister Qinghe is interested too, I can teach the two of you together."

"Me too?" Murong Qinghe asked, stunned. After all, formations were often considered the most secret kind of knowledge. The academy's people always guarded such knowledge fiercely, and the court's formation skills were also national secrets that were prohibited from being leaked for fear that the Fiend races' side could steal them. After all, a formidable large-scale formation could often decide a battle's outcome.

"Of course you can. You're not an outsider," Zu An said with a chuckle, then patted Chu Youzhao's shoulder. "Youzhao, you have to take good care of little sister Qinghe."

Chu Youzhao was stunned. She could tell that he was going to leave. She asked, "Brother-in-law, you won't be staying here?"

Oh no, the dream of living together with my brother-in-law I imagined is getting ruined!

Zu An said with a nod, "Little sister Qinghe is living here too, so it wouldn't be too appropriate for me to stay here. My reputation in that respect has never been too good. If someone found out, there would be a lot of rumors."

Murong Qinghe quickly said, "Big brother Zu, it's not a problem. I've already fallen into this condition, after all. You already took on such a huge risk by taking me in, so how can I have you move out?" No matter how ignorant she was, she would still feel that occupying this place and kicking out the original host was way too far.

"It's alright. I have things to deal with that require me to travel to different places. For example, I need to mediate relationships to save the Qin clan, the Murong clan, and others," Zu An said with a smile. "It'll actually be more convenient for me if I stay elsewhere."

The two young women couldn't really persuade him otherwise when they heard his explanation. In the end, Chu Youzhao said reluctantly, "Then big brother Zu has to come back to visit us from time to time. This is your home, so you can come whenever you want. Little sister Qinghe and I will always welcome you, right, Qinghe?"

Murong Qinghe voiced her agreement. "Big brother Zu can come whenever he wants."

Zu An waved goodbye in a confident and easy way. He quickly disappeared into the dark of the night.

Murong Qinghe muttered to herself as she watched him, "Big brother Zu really is an upright gentleman."

"An upright gentleman? Maybe not..." Chu Youzhao said, her face heating up. The memory of her incredibly cold older sister being pressed against a table and ravaged couldn't help but appear in her mind. However, she eventually thought, *A husband and wife should play however they want to play, so why should I think my brother-in-law isn't a gentleman?*

...

Meanwhile, after Zu An left his own marquis manor, he moved quickly and arrived at the Sang manor. When he looked at the lights in the courtyard, he suddenly felt a sense of awkwardness, as if he were returning to his own

hometown. After being apart for so long, he wondered whether Zheng Dan was still alright. And Sang Qien... Was she well?

He found a hidden corner to jump in from. He didn't go through the main entrance because there were many eyes from the court watching, and he didn't want to expose his relationship with the Sang clan. That was especially important for his relationship with Sang Qien and Zheng Dan. He didn't really care about his own reputation, as that was already ruined. But if they were exposed, the Sang clan would be humiliated. He had to make considerations for their sake. Fortunately, Sang Qien and Zheng Dan had secretly given him the Sang manor's token. That way, he wouldn't trigger the protective formations when he snuck in.

In the past, he had felt that these clan manors' defensive formations were pretty intricate, but now that he had more knowledge in the field, he could tell that they were all merely mass-produced, standardized goods. Formations were supposed to be made with considerations for the setting. Every household's topography and layout was different, so some clan manors didn't really match the standardized formations. In the eyes of true formation experts, they were full of vulnerabilities. Still, he also knew that these were common formations released by the academy. The costs of having a formation tailor-made likely wouldn't be low. Certainly, the Sang clan wouldn't have such wealth.

"I'll modify the formation for you guys a bit when I get a chance," Zu An muttered to himself.

While he was thinking about those things, he arrived at the main lobby. He had finally made his way back, so he had to greet Sang Hong first. Otherwise, it would be a bit embarrassing for everyone involved if he was caught with Zheng Dan first.

He could see people's shadows flickering around inside. It seemed as if everyone was having dinner together, but there was no one at the head of the table. The group was huddled together and nervously discussing something.

"Could it be that the Sang clan also encountered something bad?" Zu An murmured to himself in worry, and he quickly rushed over. He didn't try to hide his footsteps.

Sang Hong quickly sensed something and turned around, calling out, "Who are you?"

The others were also alarmed and all turned around.

“Greetings, respected uncle!” Zu An called out with a smile. His eyes darted toward the two women off to the side from time to time.

Zheng Dan was a widow in name, so her clothes were simple yet elegant. However, she still liked to look attractive, so she had a small flower adorning her clothes that added a bit of liveliness to her appearance. She really matched the saying ‘neatly dressed in mourning clothes’. Her cheeks didn’t have the bleak pallor of a widow at all, however, and she looked charming and moving. Any man who passed by wouldn’t be able to help but turn around again.

Sang Qien had a different kind of distinguished beauty. Compared to her sister-in-law’s allure, she looked a bit more delicate and pretty. However, she seemed to have become a bit more voluptuous since she and Zu An last met. She had now lost a bit of her underripe look and had a bit more of a mature air.

“Big brother Zu!”

“Big brother Zu!”

Both girls cried out at the same time, then looked at each other with reddened faces.

Sang Hong seemed to be used to their response. He asked with pleasant surprise, “Ah Zu, when did you return?”

“I...” Zu An began, but the wailing of an infant suddenly filled the air behind the women, leaving him stunned.

Sang Qien and Zheng Dan turned around in alarm, and took out a delicate and pretty baby from a cradle.

Sang Hong was also really nervous. He couldn’t really head over, so he could only pace back and forth nervously. He asked, “Qien’er, is she hungry?”

Sang Qien rolled her eyes and replied, “I just fed her, so why would she get hungry so quickly?”

“Then why is she crying so much?” Sang Hong asked nervously.

"I don't know either. Aunt Mu, what do you think is going on with her?" Sang Qien asked, giving Aunt Mu a pleading look.

Aunt Mu's face reddened. She said, "I don't know either; I've never given birth before."

All of them were panicking so much that they actually ended up ignoring Zu An.

Zheng Dan continued to try to amuse the baby by making weird faces. Unfortunately, that only made her cry even harder, leaving Zheng Dan completely helpless. She asked, "Qienqien, should you feed her a bit more?" A young lady like her didn't know how to appease a child. She reflexively assumed that feeding the baby would solve most of the problems.

"This is..." Zu An trailed off. He finally couldn't hold himself back and looked at the child, his voice turning a bit hoarse.

Zheng Dan's eyes lit up. She said, "Right, let her daddy hug her. Maybe she misses her daddy." She took the baby from Sang Qien's hands and gave her to Zu An happily.

Zu An was immediately at a loss for what to do. He didn't even know what to do with his hands when he felt that little life. He was scared of hurting her by using too much strength, but he couldn't hold her properly if he didn't use any.

When she saw how clumsy he was, Sang Qien also broke out in a cold sweat and quickly rushed over to help him. She explained, "You have to hold her like this. Support her bottom and hold her body in the crook of your arm. Her neck needs to be supported too..."

Zu An finally learned how to do it after sweating all over. It really was strange, though, as the crying child suddenly quieted down and looked at him with large eyes and an expression full of curiosity.

"She... She's my child?" Zu An asked.

Sang Qien's face reddened. She replied, "Yeah, she's our child. She's a girl."

She sounded a bit sad. After all, according to their plan, they had wanted to produce a son to continue the Sang clan's legacy. Still, there was more joy than sorrow. After all, this was a new life born of her own flesh.

Zu An gently caressed the little life in his arms, making her giggle. The child's small hands reflexively waved in front of her face, and she couldn't help but reach out a finger. As her hand was too small, she could barely hold onto half of Zu An's finger with her whole hand.

Zu An suddenly felt a deep sense of intimacy. He couldn't help but smile awkwardly, saying, "She's so cute. I'm sure she'll grow up to become an incredible beauty in the future."

Sang Qien sighed inwardly when she saw how happy he was. A sweet smile also appeared on her face.

On the other hand, Zheng Dan was smiling too, but she suddenly felt a bit frustrated.

"When was she born?" Zu An asked curiously.

"About three months ago. You went missing at around that time, and I couldn't contact you either," Sang Hong said, clearing his throat. He had a complicated expression as well. His final scheme had turned out to be futile; in the end, he had only given away both his daughter and daughter-in-law. He really was about to lose his head here.

"Did you give her a name yet?" Zu An asked, completely immersed in his joy.

"We haven't yet. We were waiting for you to come back to name her," Sang Qien said shyly.

"Huh?" Zu An exclaimed, suddenly feeling a huge headache. "I'm the worst at naming things. You can tell just from the title of this shoddy light novel."

Zheng Dan suddenly laughed and said, "Qienqien actually already thought of a name before... Si An."^[1]

"Ah! Do you want me to die from embarrassment?" Sang Qien exclaimed. She felt really embarrassed and wanted to rip off her mouth.

"Si An?" Zu An repeated, stunned.

Was she thinking about me?

He couldn't help but feel warm inside. He immediately felt the comfort of home.

"Let's just call her Sisi," he eventually said.

1. Si - think, consider; An - calm, still, safe ➞

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Read Keyboard Immortal - Chapter 1888: The Young Really Know How to Play

Chapter 1888: The Young Really Know How to Play

Zu An still had to leave the Sang clan with a bit of face. The name Si An could be traced back to him too easily. If the truth were exposed, the Sang clan's reputation would be completely destroyed.

Sang Hong clearly sighed in relief when he heard him say that. His daughter had always been really smart, and yet she had made such a huge error in this case. If they gave this newborn child that name, wouldn't it just be advertising their relationship with Zu An to the entire world?

Zu An then said, "We should make her surname Sang. Everyone knows that the Sang clan's daughter-in-law gave birth to a posthumous child. If she has a different surname, there will be all sorts of rumors." He didn't want to put Zheng Dan in a bad position either, after all.

Sang Hong gave Zu An a grateful look and said, "Ah Zu, thank you. Let's make her surname Sang for now. After a few years, we'll look for a chance to change her surname back."

He had planned for his daughter to birth a son at first. That son would have the Sang clan's blood inside him and they could borrow Sang Qian's name. But now, the child turned out to be a daughter, which meant that all of his plans were for naught. After all, there was no way for Sang Qien to give birth to another child. This child could still be considered a posthumous one, but if they had another child and used the same explanation, there would definitely be rumors going around, saying that the Sang clan's daughter-in-law had an affair. He couldn't help but feel a bit downcast now that his grand gamble had ended up falling through.

Sang Qien was also a bit dejected. However, when she saw her cute daughter, her mood immediately improved considerably.

Zheng Dan said with a smile, "That's actually easy enough to resolve. Just have Qienqien and Ah?Zu ,slr a few more. When the time comes, we'll just find an adopted child for our Sang clan; wouldn't that do?"

Sang Qien's face immediately reddened. She exclaimed, "Dandan!" After all, her relationship with Zu An was still unclear. Originally, the plan had been for them to draw a clear boundary after the child was born. Now, it seemed as if they were trapped in an impossible situation.

Zu An chuckled and said, "If Miss Sang is willing, I won't mind." It was all the same to him whether the child had the father's or mother's surname. That wasn't even factoring in that the Sang clan had already helped him out so much.

Sang Hong's eyes lit up. That wasn't a bad idea. They had previously been at a dead end, and he'd wanted Sang Qian to have a son. But even without him, it would be the same if there was an heir from Sang Qien's side.

When she saw the others' gazes on her, Sang Qien's heart began to pound. She lowered her head and said quietly, "I'll follow what father says." She couldn't help but sneak a look at Zu An while saying that. He was her first man, and he was very outstanding in every way. After chatting with Zheng Dan all the time, the more she learned about him, the more she had grown to like him.

"Hahaha, good, good!" Sang Hong exclaimed in relief. His poor mood immediately improved considerably.

Zu An played with Sisi for a while longer. His adorable daughter made his heart melt. However, she was still young and quickly grew tired. Her eyes began to close, and she soon fell asleep. Zu An carefully returned her to the cradle, then found a chance to discuss the current situation with Sang Hong.

And yet, to his surprise, Sang Hong waved his hand and said, "It's all the same if you ask Qien'er about these things. She's already excellent in this aspect, and there are times when even I have to consult her opinion." In truth, he wanted to give his daughter more opportunities. After all, she and Zu An had ended up sleeping together carelessly before and didn't have a proper relationship. He had to spur on his daughter's relationship with Zu An.

Zu An was a bit surprised. He bowed to Sang Qien and said, "Then I'll have to trouble little sister Qien'er."

"Big brother Zu speaks too seriously," Sang Qien said, quickly returning the greeting.

Zheng Dan giggled, asking, "Are the two of you doing your wedding bows to each other right now?"

Sang Qien was so embarrassed she wanted to pinch her, but Sang Hong coughed lightly and said, "Ahem, I won't disturb you youngsters then. I've been a bit tired due to government affairs recently, so I'll be turning in for the night first." He gestured toward Aunt Mu with his eyes, and the two of them left.

Sang Qien's cheeks heated up. She said, "I'm going to put Sisi back in her room."

Zheng Dan grabbed her with one hand and Zu An with the other, saying, "Let's go together. None of us are outsiders anyway."

Sang Qien pursed her lips, but she didn't refuse. There was indeed no need to exclude big brother Zu from her chambers.

...

The group quickly returned to Sang Qien's room. There was a delicate fragrance in the air, as well as a faint smell of milk. Zu An reflexively looked at Sang Qien's chest. That area was now much fuller than before.

Sang Qien put her daughter into the cradle. Sisi twisted around a bit, as if she sensed that she was leaving her mother's arms. Her body moved around as if she could wake up at any time. Sang Qien immediately bent over to gently pat her, thus gradually appeasing her.

Just then, Zheng Dan grabbed Zu An's arm and asked, "Ah Zu, just what happened during those months? Hurry and tell me."

Zu An didn't hide anything from her, telling her about Violet Mountain's great competition and the secret dungeon. Of course, he excluded the details of the other women, and he didn't tell her that he had killed Zhao Han either. After

all, that affair was just too serious. It would cause a tremendous commotion if he spoke of it.

Zheng Dan said with a sigh, "Ah Zu, there's always so many interesting things that happen around you. I really want to stay with you and experience it all together." However, she also knew that wasn't very realistic. She had even pretended to be pregnant in the capital before.

Sang Qien was a bit apologetic. She said, "Dandan, it's all because of us that you can't do what you want."

Zheng Dan was surprisingly open-minded, responding, "Isn't saying something like that treating me as too much of an outsider? Either way, the child has already been born, so I'm free now. Now, you're the one who has to prepare for pregnancy."

"You're so annoying!" Sang Qien exclaimed, pouting playfully in response.

The two of them play-fought for a bit before the conversation returned to important matters. Sang Qien said with an upright expression, "Big brother Zu, you don't know whether you should be helping the crown princess or the empress right now, right?"

"Yeah," Zu An said with a nod. "They've both treated me really well, and I'll end up offending whichever side I help."

Zheng Dan had a weird expression as she asked, "Why would they treat you so well? They don't both have a thing with you, do they?" However, even she found it inconceivable when she said that, and couldn't help but laugh.

Zu An sensibly chose not to reply.

Sang Qien said gravely, "If both sides have treated you well, don't lay out your chips yet. Big brother Zu, you can use your status as the academy's libationer to hide over there first and not get involved in those two's affairs. That way, you can't possibly offend them."

Zheng Dan couldn't help but say, "Actually, with big brother Zu's current strength, there's no need to hold back so patiently. He could even subdue the entire King Court on the Fiend races' side, so he should be able to do the same here, right?"

Sang Qien shook her head and said, "It's different. The Fiend races' relationships between the major clans are more lax, so that's why they were so easily defeated. But in the capital, all of the clans are hiding a lot of strength. The Fiend races' resources can't compare to our side. Otherwise, they wouldn't have been exiled to such a barren location."

Zu An was a bit surprised. He said, "I didn't expect little sister Qien'er to understand these things so well."

Sang Qien's face was a bit red as she said, "There isn't much I can do normally to help big brother Zu, so I tried to understand the capital's situation a bit better."

"Big brother Zu, a tall tree that stands out in the forest will be destroyed by the wind. If you stand out now, you'll either become a public enemy of the major clans or be used as their blade without even knowing about it. We still don't have much intelligence, so I advise you to lay low for now and watch the situation play out first. There's no lack of ambitious folk among the great clans, and I'm sure that they can't hold themselves back much longer. Big brother Zu, what you need to do is be more patient than those people."

Zu An chuckled, saying, "I definitely don't want to become their blade. I still had some hesitation before, but now that I've heard little sister Qien'er's analysis, my thoughts have become clearer. You really are a Zhuge Liang among women."

"Big brother Zu overpraises me," Sang Qien said, feeling a bit embarrassed.

Zheng Dan rolled her eyes and said, "The two of you even have a child now, so what are you acting so polite with each other for? It only makes you two seem way too unfamiliar..."

"I've decided! In order to bring us all closer together, we'll sleep together tonight. Ah Zu can tell us about the things he experienced. I could tell that he didn't give us all the details surrounding many things," she continued. Then, she grabbed their hands without waiting for the two of them to argue, and sat straight down on the bed.

Sang Qien cried out in alarm. Her little face turned as red as a persimmon.

Zu An also found it a bit awkward. He asked, "That's... a bit inappropriate, right?"

This was the Sang manor, after all.

“What's inappropriate about that? I'm getting a headache from just watching you two act all proper and careful around each other,” Zheng Dan said with a smile. “Sang Qien, aren't there times when you have too much milk? Just have Ah Zu help you with that today. We can't have the father doing nothing!”

“Dandan!” Sang Qien exclaimed, feeling embarrassed and anxious. How could she let him help with that kind of thing? She really was going to die from embarrassment.

Zu An was stunned.

As expected of the daredevil Dandan...

...

Meanwhile, in Sang Hong's room, he could see the three figures' shadows flickering in his daughter's room.

Aunt Mu couldn't help but remark, “Aren't they going a bit too crazy? How can they all stay in the same room...”

Sang Hong waved his hand and said, “This might not necessarily be a bad thing. Qien'er and Zu An can properly get close now.”

“But aren't we letting that brat off with too much like this?” Aunt Mu asked, feeling a bit upset. She had watched Sang Qien grow up and had always seen her as her own daughter. She suddenly felt as if her finely grown cabbages were being fed to pigs.

“Zu An has helped us a lot, and he's someone who cares a lot about emotions and loyalty. Qien'er won't be losing out by following him.” Sang Hong said in a surprisingly open-minded way. Suddenly, he couldn't help but pick up Aunt Mu and carry her over to the bed.

Aunt Mu was a bit alarmed, asking, “Master, what are you doing?”

“The young really know how to play, so much so that even I'm getting a bit excited. Maybe I can father a son myself and won't even need Ah Zu's help anymore,” Sang Hong said with a smile.

“You’re so annoying~” Aunt Mu said as her eyes closed. In that instant, she was also a bit overwhelmed by emotions.

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Chapter 1889: Who Is the Imperial Grandson?

Meanwhile, in Sang Qien’s room, Zheng Dan became a bit impatient when she saw Sang Qien acting so bashful. She said, “Qienqien, you’re probably the first one to give birth to his child. What are you acting so shy over there for? Besides, your breasts are normally so engorged that I have to help you relieve them. My hands are all sore from doing it. Now, we have such a readily available helper. Ah Zu’s very good with his hands, so you can just relax.”

Sang Qien was normally clever and eloquent, but in these matters, she still wasn’t as open-minded as Zheng Dan. She protested, “How can we let him do this kind of thing...”

“Why not?” Zheng Dan replied before she could even finish her sentence. She then decided to just rip the clothes off Sang Qien’s chest. Because Sang Qien had to breastfeed, the front part of her clothes were easy to remove.

“Ah!” Sang Qien exclaimed, startled. She quickly covered her chest with her arms in alarm. She was so embarrassed she was about to cry.

Zheng Dan rolled her eyes. She bumped Zu An with her shoulder, saying, “Say something! You can’t just make me do everything, right?”

Zu An knew that she was trying to make him and Sang Qien grow closer. Their relationship was a bit strange; he had immediately gotten on the boat right off the bat, but he hadn’t even paid the fare yet. There would only be misunderstandings and estrangement if that continued. As such, he walked over and warmly hugged Sang Qien, saying, “Little sister Qien’er, don’t be scared. I’ll help you. I happen to have a skill called Shining Finger that’s suitable for this kind of situation.”

When she sensed the warmth in his voice, Sang Qien’s face turned red. She voiced her consent really quietly.

Zheng Dan rolled her eyes. This girl had said she didn't want it, and yet she was actually really looking forward to it.

Then, Zu An moved Sang Qien's hands away. Sang Qien lowered her red face. She had often slept together with Zheng Dan as of late, so she was already familiar with bodily contact. She always felt a bit engorged with milk, though. Even though she was larger now after giving birth, she was still a size smaller than Zheng Dan, so she couldn't help but feel a bit inferior.

Big brother Zu will probably think less of me because of that, right...

However, Zu An had a completely serious look on his face. His Shining Finger quickly tapped against her body, helping her ease up the congested vessels.

Sang Qien immediately felt warm all over. Furthermore, whenever he touched her, she felt as if a burst of electricity ran through her. It felt much better than when Zheng Dan helped her.

Zheng Dan moved over and asked teasingly, "Big brother Zu, is Qienqien... nice to look at?"

Sang Qien shot her an embarrassed look, exclaiming, "Are you making fun of me? I'm clearly still smaller than you."

"There aren't even any benefits to being so big. It's actually your delicate and exquisite air, like a young bamboo shoot, that's more enviable," Zheng Dan said with a big smile.

Sang Qien had already started getting a bit worked up as Zu An helped her with his Shining Finger. She panicked when she heard that. Suddenly, she felt her chest loosen up, as if something had suddenly erupted.

It got all over Zheng Dan's face as a result. She remarked resentfully, "Qienqien, are you trying to get revenge on me on purpose?"

Sang Qien immediately panicked, exclaiming, "I didn't do it on purpose! I don't know what's going on either!"

Suddenly, Zu An pressed down, and another burst shot out. Fortunately, Zheng Dan was prepared this time and evaded it. She wiped her face with a towel while saying with a sigh, "I was right, wasn't I? Big brother Zu's Shining Finger is really formidable."

Sang Qien nodded. The heavy and swollen feeling had disappeared, and she felt more relaxed than ever before.

Zu An retracted his finger and said, "This should be enough for today. I'll help you more frequently in the future. If you let this build up inside you, you'll easily get sick with fever."

"Okay," Sang Qien said. Her face was completely red, but she was actually secretly looking forward to it.

Zheng Dan looked at him with a bit of suspicion, asking, "Why do you know so much about women? Have you already fathered a child before?"

"Medical knowledge is interconnected to begin with..." Zu An muttered as he thought to himself, My previous world's medicine was so advanced that I can figure some things out myself even without having to experience it directly.

Zheng Dan had just been making a casual remark. After being around each other for so long, she naturally knew that he didn't have other children.

"Now that we've dealt with the main problem, let's continue our chat," Zheng Dan said, taking Zu An's hand and lying down on the bed. "It's been so long that you almost feel a bit unfamiliar."

Sang Qien was immediately a bit embarrassed. She whispered, "Dandan, this is my room."

"So what? Don't you have many things you want to say to him? We can just ask together," Zheng Dan said; she didn't seem to mind and dragged her over too.

Zu An was getting a bit of a headache. He said, "This won't be too good for the Sang clan's pride." The daughter and daughter-in-law had both been so quickly won over. For better or for worse, he had to at least put on a bit of an act on the surface.

"Why isn't it too good? Sir Sang is hoping for the two of you to get closer and have another child as soon as possible," Zheng Dan grumbled.

"Dandan~" Sang Qien protested. She was a young lady who was suddenly forced to become a mother. She hadn't had any time to mentally prepare herself, so her skin was a bit thinner than Zheng Dan's.

Zu An figured that made sense as well. His relationship with Sang Qien was a bit awkward right now, so they needed to get a bit closer to each other.

Thus, they all lay down on the bed. Sang Qien huddled in the corner, her heart pounding. Meanwhile, Zheng Dan didn't have many misgivings and naturally leaned against Zu An. These passionate lovers who had been separated for a long time naturally had endless things to say. At first, Sang Qien was still a bit ill at ease, but she quickly felt the comfortable atmosphere and gradually relaxed.

The three of them talked endlessly about anything and everything. They found happy and leisurely things to talk about, and gradually fell asleep just like that.

...

The next morning, Sang Qien was the first to wake up. She saw that she was curled up like a kitten in Zu An's arms and was immediately really embarrassed, but she also felt really comfortable. She'd thought that something else would happen the previous night, but big brother Zu was a real gentleman.

It's probably because he knows that I'm easily embarrassed that he was so respectful to me.

She couldn't help but become a bit stupefied as she looked at the man next to her.

This is the father of my daughter. He's so handsome...

As she watched him, she couldn't help but lower her head to kiss him.

Suddenly, Zu An seemed to have sensed something and opened his eyes. Two pairs of eyes stared into each other.

Sang Qien couldn't continue to lower her head, but she couldn't raise her head either. In that instant, her cheeks began to burn. She quickly got up and said, "I'm going out to take a look at Sisi first."

However, Zu An held her waist and took her closer. Then, he kissed her.

Sang Qien moaned, and her entire body weakened. Back then, because it was awkward and embarrassing, they had done it completely in the dark. This

was the first time they had kissed in broad daylight. When she felt his broad and strong shoulders, she felt a sense of bliss that she'd never felt before flood her chest.

However, she suddenly sensed something. She pushed Zu An away in alarm and turned around to sort out her clothes.

Zheng Dan was watching the two of them with widened eyes and an ambiguous smile. She remarked, "Who was it that was shouting she didn't want it? And yet she ended up secretly indulging while I was asleep!"

"Dandan~" Sang Qien protested, feeling her teeth ache a bit from how hard she clenched them. She pounced over and fought with her sister-in-law.

When he saw the beautiful scene playing out before his eyes, Zu An found it really hard to hold it in. He got up and excused himself first, or else he really wouldn't be able to hold back. He still had proper matters to take care of today. However, he played with his adorable daughter a bit first. When he saw her adorable smile, he immediately felt really comfortable and warm.

When he left the rear courtyard, he just happened to bump into Sang Hong, who was beating his own hip. He couldn't help but ask curiously, "Did respected uncle injure your waist? Should I help you?"

"No need," Sang Hong said, his face heating up. "It's just that I've gotten older, so my waist isn't as reliable." When he saw Zu An's refreshed and energetic appearance, he couldn't help but say enviously, "Youth is still best."

Sang Hong's strange reaction left Zu An puzzled. They exchanged a few more words, and then he headed for Mount Yuquan.

Sang Qien had mentioned the previous night that it would be good to lie low in the academy for the time being, so now was the best time to look for that person the libationer had mentioned in his last words. Once he found the imperial grandson from the previous generation and brought him the message, he would complete the libationer's task.

...

After arriving at the academy, he discovered that it was the same as always. It was bustling with activity and incredibly lively. Students constantly discussed academic matters, their faces flushed from their debates.

Zu An was full of admiration. The libationer had probably deliberately lessened his own influence, rarely showing himself. The academy's affairs both big and small were carried out through special rules and regulations, so there wouldn't be any problems just because a single person went missing. Comparatively, the disappearance of Zhao Han had already thrown the entire capital into a mess. Even though Zhao Han was stronger, it was clearly the libationer's selfless mindset that was more admirable.

He didn't stop along the way and set out directly for the mountaintop. He didn't want to run into the libationer's disciples, as that would cause a lot of delays. With the libationer's ornamental thumb ring, the defensive formations along the way directly let him pass. He quickly reached the mountaintop. As he looked at it, he felt that it seemed a bit more dreary than before. It seemed that with the departure of the libationer, these flowers he had raised so meticulously also sensed something.

He continued forward and pushed open the doors into the bamboo hut. He stared at the empty spot on the wall. There had been a painting of a woman hanging there in the past, who was most likely the sister-in-law the libationer cared so much about. That painting had been destroyed by Zhao Han on Golden Peak, though.

He felt a bit dejected, but he suddenly sensed something. He turned around and saw an old servant standing at the doorway with a broom.

When the servant saw the ring on Zu An's thumb, he couldn't help but say with a sigh, "The libationer still failed in the end, it seems."

Zu An said gravely, "I promised the libationer that I would help him find the imperial grandson of the previous dynasty. He said that you would know."

That old servant gave him a deep look, asking, "Do you know who that imperial grandson is?"

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Chapter 1890: Ill-Fated Relationship

"I hope to receive senior's guidance," Zu An said, although he cursed silently to himself.

Would I still ask you if I knew?

“Right, may I ask what senior’s respected surname is?” Zu An asked.

“What respected surname? I’ve already long forgotten my name. Now, I’m nothing more than a nameless old fart,” the old servant said, waving his hand.

Zu An was stunned.

Nameless? Could he be some hidden great elder?

“Young master, please have a seat,” the old servant said as he set the broom aside. Then, he found a kettle and prepared some tea. He said slowly, “Even though the Great Zhou Dynasty is powerful, its foundations were mostly established during the Meng Dynasty.

“The reason why the Meng Dynasty’s world was stolen by the Zhao clan mostly lies in the fact that the lives of the second and third generation were too short. Their children weren’t too healthy and could only assume the throne in childhood, drawing a lot of doubts and skepticism from their subjects. Gradually, the Zhao clan’s people took over and seized the world from them.

“Even though the libationer was from the imperial clan of the Meng Dynasty, he ended up falling for the empress of the second generation emperor, who was his sister-in-law. That was why he was always suppressed and guarded against by the Meng Dynasty’s imperial clan. Soured by the loss of his hopes, he could only let those feelings go.”

Zu An sighed deeply as he listened to the story. Loving someone one wasn’t supposed to love often ended in tragedy. When things touched upon the fundamental principles of ethics and morality, it wasn’t something the power of man could change, nor could people act like the leads of fictional novels who could follow their heart. Besides, even if they were the main character, they still had to face potential backlash from the web.

The old servant poured a cup of hot tea for Zu An, saying, “This is Sparrowtongue Silverhair, something that even the libationer was reluctant to drink. The young master is blessed with this fine drink today.”

Zu An accepted it and gave it a taste. The tea did have a simple and elegant fragrance. There was even a bit of natural ki within the drink. No wonder the libationer had treasured it so much. However, he really couldn’t figure out

what was that incredible about it. Even the best tea was just peony chewed in the mouth of a cow, after all.

Hm, it's still not better than my previous world's milk tea or fat shut-in happy water.[1]

The old servant continued, "The libationer wandered the world at the time. When he found out that the empire had been seized, even though he was unhappy, he knew that the imperial Chen clan being usurped was merely a matter of time. He thought it was the will of heaven, so he did in some way accept his fate. Together with the Zhao clan's beneficial treatment of the libationer surpassing that of the Meng Dynasty, he just tacitly allowed it to happen.

"However, as the years passed, the libationer unexpectedly discovered that there was actually a secret plot behind the early deaths of three successive generations of emperors. It would have been one thing if that had happened to others, but the emperor who was schemed against was the son of the woman he loved. The libationer couldn't just ignore it and secretly investigated the matter since then. Eventually, he discovered that those princes had all been secretly harmed by the Zhao clan, and that was why they died prematurely.

"Even so, there are no walls without any leaks in this world. Perhaps it was out of pity or worry that they would have revenge taken against them, but the two lesser eunuchs who took care of this matter secretly replaced one of the princes and sent him out of the palace. That way, they would have some security and wouldn't be silenced.

"All the sides lived together in harmony for many years, but because of the libationer's investigation, this matter also came to be known by the Zhao clan. Both sides began investigating what had happened. As it turned out, that prince took a wife among the commoners and gave birth to children. However, perhaps due to the fear of what he had suffered in his earlier years, he didn't live long either. After leaving behind a child, he died an untimely death."

Zu An asked, "So were your people able to save that imperial grandson in the end or not?" Even though the old man downplayed it, he could imagine just how intense the slaughter and battle of wits had been.

The old servant gave him a deep look, then said, "The libationer was a step too late. The Zhao clan's lackeys had already found that orphan and widow.

They killed that pitiful mother, but when they were about to kill the prince, in a moment of imminent peril, the libationer managed to save that imperial grandson in time. Unfortunately, the imperial grandson was already inflicted with an insidious restriction. Even if he was saved, he could no longer have any posterity, thus posing no further threat to the Zhao clan's dynasty." The old servant sighed.

Zu An's expression changed. He asked, "What kind of restriction is it?"

"The Great Yin-Yang Pulse-Severing Palm," the old servant slowly said.

Zu An was stupefied when he heard that. His expression even paled a bit.

The old servant continued, "Since the imperial grandson was still young and his body was too weak, the libationer couldn't undo this restriction. In order to deceive the Zhao clan's lackeys, he could only falsify evidence and make it look as if the imperial grandson had already died.

"Then, he brought the imperial grandson to Brightmoon City to a household surnamed Zu to place him in their care. At first, he decided that he wouldn't force the child to be involved in the struggles of the imperial family anymore and he would spend his life happily, but he never expected that in the end, the child would still end up coming to the capital. Not only had he undone his restriction, he even flipped the capital upside down."

Zu An was speechless. He felt as if a stampede was trampling over his heart right now. He had only intended to watch this drama play out with popcorn in hand, but he'd ended up becoming the popcorn... He had even repeatedly asked the libationer in the secret dungeon, and the libationer had said that he wasn't the imperial grandson!

That old fox actually schemed against me like this!

The old servant continued, "The libationer felt that all of this was fate. He felt that the Chen clan's fate still hadn't ended. He set his resolve regarding many things he had been hesitating over before."

Zu An remained silent. So it turned out that the attack on Violet Mountain was all because of him. That was why the libationer had made up his mind. He wondered if he was the cause of the libationer's death.

The old servant bowed respectfully to Zu An when he reached that point, saying, "The young master should know your identity now, right? This old one pays his respects to the imperial grandson."

Zu An's mind was in absolute disarray. He said, "Words alone don't mean much. The libationer clearly said that I wasn't the imperial grandson. Do you have any proof?"

"I reckon that the libationer was worried that you wouldn't be able to handle all of this in that moment, so that was why he set up this scenario," the old servant slowly replied. "As for proof, unless he was there, there was no way he would have known that you had the Great Yin-Yang Pulse-Severing Palm used against you before."

"Who knows how you guys found out about that? Is there any other proof?" Zu An asked, although he was actually fully convinced. He finally knew why even though he and the libationer had never met before, the other side had taken the initiative to help him with the crown princess scandal. Later, the libationer had been mysteriously kind to him as well.

"As for other proof," the old servant continued slowly, stunned. He hadn't expected to encounter someone who would refuse the identity of the imperial clan. "That... For the sake of preventing news from getting out and for your own safety, the libationer made sure to erase anything that could prove your identity."

Zu An harrumphed. "Then that's the same as there being no proof." He was a proper transmigrator who wanted to live a carefree life. He didn't want to get involved in such a complicated matter from the previous generation.

The old servant frowned. After thinking for a while, his eyes suddenly lit up. He said, "Right, the ones who schemed against the previous prince included Imperial Physician Ma An, as well as Lesser Eunuchs Little Wei and Little Mi. They should have some clues with them, but those people seem to have all gone missing."

Zu An was shocked. Little Wei and Little Mi likely referred to Wei Dan and Old Mi, right? When he compared their ages, it did seem to match up. He hadn't expected the two of them to have such a deep connection with him. They had left behind storage pouches back then, but he had never been able to undo their restrictions. He wondered if there were some clues inside.

That Ma An tried to harm me back then as well, and ended up getting killed instead. This really feels like something decreed by fate...

"If those people aren't missing, they've died. The dead can't testify, right?" Zu An replied, remaining unfazed as he implied that he didn't want to accept this share of karma.

What does the matter of the Chen clan's imperial grandson have to do with me, Zu An?

The old servant said seriously, "Those people can't be found, but there is one more person alive who schemed against the imperial grandson. You can obtain intelligence from him."

"Who?" Zu An reflexively replied.

"The Imperial Secretariat's Right Confidential Assistant, the current crown princess' father, Bi Qi," the old servant slowly said.

Zu An was speechless. It really was the case that what one was most afraid of always happened in the end! He had been pitying the libationer just a moment before, feeling that he liked someone he shouldn't have liked, thus ending up shackled by morals he couldn't surpass.

Why did the same thing suddenly happen to me?

Bi Linglong's father is actually an enemy who slaughtered my family!

Damn it all!

Zu An suddenly got up and said, "Alright, there's no need for you to tell me more about these things. I don't care if what you said about the imperial grandson is true or not. I have my own life, and I'm living a happy life. I don't want to shoulder the fate of another. If you want someone to become the imperial grandson, you can become him yourself."

It was quite funny now that he thought about it. A ruined dynasty's prince was worse off than a normal person. Not only would he be unable to enjoy the benefits held by any other prince, he would have to receive an indescribable duty and danger. Only an idiot would want to become one.

The old servant panicked when he saw that Zu An was about to leave. He asked, "Imperial grandson, do you know just how many ministers paid with their lives to ensure the safety of the Meng clan's bloodline? Furthermore, who knows how many people have used up their entire lives to defend this secret?"

Zu An remained completely calm as he retorted, "What does that have to do with me?"

The old servant choked briefly. Then, he continued, "Even if you don't care about those people, you can't disregard the grudges of your own parents, can you? It's because of the treachery he encountered in his youth that your father died an early death. Your mother was also killed by assassins for your sake. She still frantically protected you even in her last moments."

Zu An frowned when he heard that. In the end, he still didn't say anything and prepared to head down the mountain.

1. Fat shut-in happy water is soda ☹️

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Read Keyboard Immortal - Chapter 1891: Here to Slaughter

Chapter 1891: Here to Slaughter

That old servant looked at Zu An and said loudly, "Since the imperial grandson is unwilling to admit to his identity for now, this old one will not force you. I will just leave this place so my presence does not interfere with the imperial grandson's takeover of the academy. When the day comes that the imperial grandson has sorted out his thoughts, I will return to your side once more."

Zu An didn't stop him at all, saying, "Don't worry, that day won't come."

The old servant chuckled and didn't get too annoyed. He said, "It is hard to predict the world's affairs. No one can talk about what the future holds for certain."

Zu An was really annoyed. He stormed off with a snort.

No one else knew what the old servant was thinking as he watched Zu An slowly disappear into the distance. He released a deep sigh.

...

As he descended the mountain, Zu An didn't stop at all. The elegant scenery along the way couldn't dispel his frustrations. He wasn't even in the mood to meet with Xie Daoyun and the others anymore. He only wanted peace and quiet right now.

At first, he had been confused about who to help between the empress and the crown princess, since helping either side would bring him trouble. Now, however, it seemed simple enough. Bi Linglong's father had killed his parents...

Dammit, what even is all of this?!

Even though he had seen similar plotlines in the dramas of his previous world, he had always felt that grudges from the previous generation were just things of the past, and that they shouldn't affect those of the next generation. However, now that he was in the very same situation himself, he realized just how much of an armchair expert he had been.

Even though he continued to tell himself that he was just a transmigrator and had nothing to do with the imperial grandson, the old servant mentioned how his mother had protected him with her body... Even though it didn't amount to feeling a real parental bond, he still couldn't help but feel a bit sad.

If he hadn't known, that would be the end of that. However, now that he did know the truth, he couldn't just pretend nothing had happened. Was he supposed to just continue talking cheerfully with his enemy, and have a happy romance with the daughter of his enemy?

He couldn't help but mutter to himself, "Master empress, what do you think I should do now..."

A red figure appeared at the edge of his vision. Mi Li floated at his side, her bare feet untainted by even a speck of dust. It was as if she were drawn perfectly with a brush. Her figure looked as if it naturally harmonized with the natural laws of the world. Even Zu An couldn't help but give her a look.

Mi Li stretched out her body a bit, revealing her graceful and impressive curves that could compel anyone to take a second glance. She replied, "What's so hard about that? Just go and kill that old servant. Now that the libationer is already dead, if you silence the only one who knows, you can just keep living as Zu An. You won't have anything to do with the previous generation's imperial grandson, and you can also continue to have a romance with the crown princess if you want to. If you want to sleep with her, just do it. Anyway, when you were pounding the crown princess' body viciously back then, you actually already took revenge for those people. They killed your loved ones, so you screwed their daughter. Isn't it quite fair?"

Zu An replied with a grimace. "Master empress, when did you become so vicious?"

"I'm saying these things for your sake. I'm just saying it as it is," Mi Li said, seemingly concerned.

"Are there any other ways?" Zu An asked impatiently. This woman was becoming more and more unreliable.

"This is the simplest and most favorable method for you," Mi Li said as she gave him a look, then shook her head. "You know what? Sometimes, life becomes a bit easier if you live a bit like a bad person. Someone like you who always adds shackles of virtue to yourself will only experience more suffering."

Zu An was quiet. Even though he didn't want to become some imperial grandson, he still admired those who were willing to give up their own lives in a desperate situation in order to defend the bloodline of the previous dynasty's imperial family. How could he silence that old servant because of his own selfish desires?

Seeing that he didn't say anything, Mi Li harrumphed and said, "If you're not willing to kill the old servant, you might as well just become that imperial grandson and kill that Bi Qi guy. Then, with your identity as the previous dynasty's emperor, you can gather those who are still loyal to the Meng Dynasty and kill that stupid crown prince to become the emperor yourself."

Zu An shook his head and said, "Bi Qi is still Bi Linglong's father, and Linglong treats me well. If I did that, how could I face her in the future? Besides, I don't have any interest in becoming an emperor."

Wasn't being Regent a better life? He had tremendous authority, and yet he didn't have to deal with any governmental affairs. He could spend more time on cultivation and exploring the mysteries of life.

"You don't even want to become the emperor?" Mi Li exclaimed in shock. "You have so many sweethearts, and if you become the emperor, you can take them all into your harem with a righteous pretext. No one will be able to say a thing then. Otherwise, everyone will criticize you for having too many women no matter what kind of identity you have."

Zu An shook his head, saying, "I trust that my lovers wouldn't cherish some imperial concubine position."

He had seen so many powerful beings in the secret dungeon, and felt that the universe was truly vast with endless mysteries to explore. How could he still have the heart to become an emperor?

"You don't want this, you don't want that? Then there's nothing else you can do," Mi Li said, giving him an annoyed look. "You're the perfect example of a beggar who wants to be a chooser. Since you're so stubborn, I'm not going to bother anymore."

She turned into a wisp of smoke and disappeared, leaving Zu An speechless.

Suddenly, he noticed something and looked in the direction of the marquis manor. The formation there seemed to be under attack. He set aside his annoyances and flew in that direction.

Meanwhile, outside the marquis manor, the servants and guards brandished weapons in front of the entrance, calling out, "This is the marquis manor; who dares to cause trouble here?"

"Cough cough, it is just a trifling marquis manor, and yet you seem to have put on quite the big display here! You dare to put on airs in front of this king, cough cough..." a young man dressed in embroidered clothes scolded them. His face was incredibly pale, and he had to gasp several times in the middle of each sentence. He seemed to be a victim of some chronic illness.

"King Jin has personally arrived, and yet your marquis still isn't coming out to kneel and welcome him?!" an imperial bodyguard shouted.

"We greet his highness King Jin!" the staff of the marquis manor greeted him respectfully in shock. Then, one of them replied, "Responding to your highness, our lord is not in the manor."

"What, does he know that he has committed wrongs, leaving him scared of this king knocking on his door? Is that why he went into hiding?" King Jin sneered. "He seems to have at least some wit. Whatever, we'll get revenge on him later. Hand over Miss Murong first!"

"That..." The people at the gate looked at each other in dismay before replying, "Your highness, how could Miss Murong be in our marquis manor... Aaaaah!"

A miserable scream filled the air before King Jin retracted the whip in his hands.

"How audacious! You dare lie to this king? Do you think my intelligence gatherers are good-for-nothing? I advise you to hand over Murong Qinghe immediately, or else none of you will be able to handle the crime of harboring a criminal. If you continue to dally, this king will raze this entire marquis manor to the ground, cough cough..." King Jin said, looking agitated; he then began to cough fiercely. An unnatural flush covered his face.

An elder quickly supported him and placed his hand on his back to continuously infuse him with ki, saying, "Your highness, do not be too anxious. Be careful not to harm your own body."

"Thank you, Elder Chen," King Jin said. His coughing then eased up a bit and he respectfully bowed to the elder.

This elder was a powerful guard assigned to him by his father, someone who almost never left his side. Over the years, there had been countless attacks from assassins, but Elder Chen had always been the prince's most reliable wall of defense. As such, the prince respected him a lot.

The face of the guard who had spoken up was already covered in bloody scars. However, he was facing a prince, so even though he was angry, he didn't dare to say anything.

Inside the manor, Murong Qinghe was already incredibly nervous. She got up several times and said, "Maybe I should go out. I can't be a burden on big brother Zu."

Chu Youzhao pulled her back and replied, "Would you still have a chance of surviving if you went out there? Don't worry. Since big brother Zu dared to bring you into his place, that means he's confident he can protect you!"

Despite what she said, however, she didn't have much confidence either. She took out the formation wheel. It was a good thing that she had immediately activated the formation. She shoved the formation wheel into Murong Qinghe's hands and said, "Make sure you stay here. I'm going to take a look!"

Her brother-in-law rarely stayed at his home in the capital, and there weren't too many guards or servants in the manor. Most of them were familiar faces from back in Brightmoon City. How could those ordinary guards stand a chance against the pressure of King Jin?

Outside the gate, King Jin was getting a bit annoyed. They exclaimed, "Men, search this place!"

"Halt!" a voice cried out.

The staff finally sighed in relief when they saw Chu Youzhao appear, exclaiming, "Third young master!"

Chu Youzhao nodded, then said to King Jin, "Even though your highness' status is respected, you lack the authority to willfully search the residence of an important minister, right?"

King Jin gave her a surprised look.

I'm always sick, so my skin lacks color, but how is this pretty boy even whiter than me? Most importantly, it's a healthy-looking white... it makes me annoyed just looking at it!

"You were hiding a criminal yesterday, and this king sent people to capture her, but they were actually killed by Zu An. How absurd! However, what this king never expected was that he would actually leave you two in his own residence in such a grandiose way. Well, that's fine too, since that saves this king a lot of trouble. Men, arrest this Chu guy and that Murong clan girl. Anyone who resists is to be killed without exception!" King Jin ordered.

"Understood!" his subordinates replied. They had already been standing around restlessly for a long time. All of them drew their blades and charged at Chu Youzhao when they heard that.

King Jin sneered. As long as he could capture Murong Qinghe, he could confirm Zu An's crime of harboring a criminal. That way, even if he just killed him on the spot, none of the other ministers in the court could say anything.

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Chapter 1892: He Wouldn't Dare to Kill Me, Right?

Chu Youzhao drew her personal sword, saying, "Your highness is acting so rude and unreasonable. Do you think we have no one here?"

With her taking the lead, the other guards also drew their blades. In a sense, they were the Chu clan's personal army, so they cared more about their own clan's orders. Of course, the one on the other side was a king, so they still felt a bit guilty.

King Jin's guards charged forward viciously in the blink of an eye, but they were quickly stopped by a blue barrier of light. They bounced right off and fell to the ground in disarray.

Elder Chen was a bit surprised when he saw that, remarking, "A trifling marquis manor actually had a defensive formation of this scale."

King Jin said with a sneer, "That only shows his disloyalty. This is fine, as we can add one more thing to his list of crimes. Men, blast this formation open for me!"

"Understood!" Those who remained at his side gladly received the order. They all used what they were skilled at, sending all kinds of elements at the formation's barrier of light.

King Jin was Zhao Han's beloved prince, so he had no lack of powerful individuals at his side. He had all sorts of skilled geniuses of different elements. In that instant, attacks of many different colors rushed out in a grand display.

Ripples appeared on the formation. Chu Youzhao was getting nervous, but when she saw that the formation was actually fine under the concentrated barrage of attacks, she sighed in relief.

Brother-in-law really is amazing. His formation was actually this sturdy!

When he saw that his subordinates couldn't destroy the formation even after so much time, King Jin's expression became a bit ugly. He yelled, "What are all of you doing? Did you not eat or something?!"

The guards were embarrassed to disappoint the prince like this. They all got into a formation. Even though it was a simple array, it could still combine the power of their attacks, multiplying their strength several times over. Sure enough, the formation around the marquis manor began to form faint cracks, making a distinct noise.

Chu Youzhao's expression changed and she quickly commanded, "Everyone, follow me! Let's decrease the pressure on the formation!"

She was their young master, after all, someone who had received the best education in the capital ever since she was young. She understood the fundamental aspects of formations very clearly. She arranged the guards in a neat and orderly manner, and they quickly attacked together. Streaks of energy surged forth at the same time to help lessen the damage from their enemy.

When he saw that the situation seemed to have entered a deadlock, King Jin's expression became ice-cold. He said, "Elder Chen, I'll have to trouble you to help."

This was the capital, and it was full of bigwigs. Things would get annoying if they caused too big of a disturbance and others came to see what was happening. It wouldn't be as easy for him to capture Murong Qinghe then, nor would he be able to convict Zu An of any crimes.

The elder next to him nodded slightly, then flew into the air. His arms formed a circle, and a ball of fire suddenly manifested in the center. As his hands rubbed together, the fireball grew larger at a visible rate.

When she saw the dazzling light in the air, Chu Youzhao felt a weight drop in her stomach. She could sense the terrifying pressure even from far away.

The other side didn't give her any time to react, though. With a push of his hands, the giant ball of fire smashed down on the defense formation like a meteor.

Boom!

A dazzling burst of fiery light accompanied by a deafening noise filled the air, making the entire marquis manor rock back and forth. Many more cracks quickly appeared on the blue defensive barrier; moments later, it fell apart completely.

Chu Youzhao and the others who had been doing their best to maintain the formation felt as if they had been struck by lightning. They all coughed out blood and fell to the ground, dispirited and weak.

“We’ve broken through!” King Jin Manor’s soldiers cheered. They charged while brandishing their blades. They all wanted to immediately capture Murong Qinghe and Chu Youzhao to earn merits.

Many guards from the marquis manor wanted to stop them, but how could they withstand the force of those ferocious soldiers while they were injured? They were instantly cut down.

Chu Youzhao felt as if her eye sockets were splitting apart. She raised her sword to help, but her cultivation wasn’t that high to begin with. The earlier attack had left her quite heavily injured too, so how could she still have any fighting strength left? Soon after, the sword she held was knocked out of her hand, and someone aimed a blow at her knee to immediately remove her ability to rebel.

In the eyes of King Jin Manor’s soldiers, what was so special about the son of a duke from a different place? Besides, in the current situation, they merely considered him a criminal.

Chu Youzhao was horrified, but she couldn't avoid the attack.

Ding!

Suddenly, with a light noise, a spear appeared and blocked the blade. Then, the spear shone with a vicious glint, piercing straight through the throat of the soldier attacking Chu Youzhao.

“Big brother Chu, are you alright?” Murong Qinghe asked, standing in front of Chu Youzhao. She had always been a fierce young woman. After suffering so many injustices, she had long since been filled with rage. When she saw that

the other side had actually tried to harm her big brother Chu and the people of this manor, she could no longer hold herself back and ended his life.

"I'm fine!" Chu Youzhao replied as she looked at the severe casualties of the Chu clan all around her. Her eyes were actually a bit red.

On the other side, King Jin actually laughed and exclaimed, "Murong Qinghe, so you were here after all. Men, arrest her!"

King Jin's soldiers rushed at Murong Qinghe.

Murong Qinghe had a grave expression. She was already prepared for death. Her spear manifested the bleak killing intent of the battlefield, fending off the surrounding soldiers one by one.

As he watched her slender yet valiant figure, Elder Chen couldn't help but nod slightly. He remarked, "As expected of the fierce daughter of a distinguished clan. If not for what happened, she would have become a powerful general on the battlefield. What a pity."

When he saw that his subordinates actually couldn't handle one young lady, King Jin's expression turned extremely ugly. When he heard that, he said with a snort, "Elder Chen, I'll have to trouble you."

Elder Chen frowned slightly when he heard that. It really was a bit humiliating for him to act against a junior. Even so, he couldn't refuse the order of a king, and the activity here would likely startle the other clans in this street. He already sensed several auras creeping over from a distance. If this continued for a long time, there was some potential for unexpected things to happen. As such, he took a step forward and said, "Young lady, please don't treat this as the strong bullying the weak. If you can receive a single strike from me, we will turn away and leave today, and not disturb you anymore."

King Jin frowned. He was a bit dissatisfied with the elder acting on his own, but thinking back, Elder Chen was a master rank cultivator. There were so many ranks of difference between them, so it wouldn't be a problem.

How could Murong Qinghe not know that fact? However, with the way things were, she couldn't refuse either. She replied, "Fine!" She held the spear in one hand and pointed it diagonally at the elder. Her left hand formed a mysterious seal, and she stood there like a quietly flowing river.

Elder Chen nodded. This young woman was quite talented. If she had been allowed to grow up normally, she would probably have been able to reach the level of master rank. Unfortunately, she wouldn't have a chance anymore. With that thought flashing through his mind, his palm struck outward. A giant hand appeared out of thin air and struck straight at Murong Qinghe. Wherever the palm went, rocks and silt flew in all directions, blowing into the faces of anyone nearby as even the air distorted. Those present were horrified. The power of a master rank cultivator was terrifying, as expected!

Murong Qinghe felt as if breathing had become difficult, and was filled with despair. The difference was just too great. Not even everything she had could possibly stop the attack.

Suddenly, a steady voice said in her ear, "Don't be scared. Thrust your spear at him."

For some reason, when she heard that familiar voice, Murong Qinghe's panicked heart completely calmed down. She took a deep breath, then used her Murong clan's heart method. At the same time, she used the most powerful move she could unleash with her spear.

Just then, vast and overwhelming power flowed into her through her back. She felt the ki within her surging powerfully. In that instant, she felt as if she could have a showdown against even the most powerful beings of this world!

With a shout, she thrust her spear forward. When it first moved, it seemed ordinary, but suddenly, vicious radiance fired out from the tip of the spear. It was a spearhead condensed out of ki! The spearhead clashed with that giant palm, instantly piercing through the projection. The giant palm gradually dissipated as its energy leaked out.

However, the vicious radiance didn't stop at all. It continued to thrust forward like a shooting star.

"Ahhhh!!!"

A miserable scream tore through the air. Then, Elder Chen clutched his bleeding palm.

King Jin Manor's people were stupefied. They had thought that they would see Elder Chen easily subdue that young lady, and even wondered if she would be smashed into a bloody paste. After all, Murong Qinghe was quite

pretty. How could they have expected that the one dripping with blood would actually be Elder Chen?

Elder Chen's expression was full of shock and confusion. He looked at the figure behind Murong Qinghe.

Murong Qinghe turned around and saw Zu An. Even her tanned skin became a bit red as she exclaimed, "Big brother Zu!"

It was all thanks to him arriving at the perfect time and supporting her. In that instant, she seemed to have completely allowed him to merge with her. That kind of feeling really made her want to continue.

Chu Youzhao jumped into his arms with surprise and happiness, exclaiming, "Brother-in-law!"

When he saw the blood at the corner of her lips and the casualties around the courtyard, Zu An scowled.

King Jin recognized him and said, "You've come back at the perfect time. Men, arrest them all!"

He naturally didn't need to fear anything. There was no one he didn't dare to offend in the capital.

This bastard Zu wouldn't dare to kill this king, right?

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Chapter 1893: Why Does He Dare?

"Don't provoke me. I'm not in a good mood today," Zu An said as he swept his gaze over those present, before finally focusing on King Jin.

The soldiers who had been charging instantly shivered. They couldn't help but stop in their tracks.

When he saw that gaze, King Jin shuddered. He instinctively felt fear. However, he quickly snapped out of his daze. He was the glorious King Jin, and he had been doted on by his father, the emperor. The current crown prince shared the same mother as him, so who did he have to fear? He even

felt anger at his momentary cowardice. He exclaimed, "What a joke! Who do you think you are?! Not only is this king going to provoke you, I am going to arrest you and all these people at your side. What the hell can you even do about it?"

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"What are you all standing around stupidly for? Charge at him!" King Jin ordered.

"Yes!" the guards replied as they all snapped out of their daze.

With their king as a backer, what did they have to fear? As for Elder Chen's injuries, that was most likely because of a moment of carelessness.

Even if this Zu An really does have some skill, would he be able to win against so many people?

Besides, they represented King Jin, his majesty's most beloved prince. Meanwhile, Zu An was just a trifling marquis who probably couldn't even protect himself. Could it be that he really dared to hit them, to hit King Jin?

"Just give up already and accept your punishment!" they yelled as they charged.

"Get lost!" Zu An snapped, sending an invisible force rippling outward with a wave of his sleeve.

The soldiers screamed bitterly as they were blown back by that invisible force. Those who were weaker fainted on the spot, while the others all suffered injuries of varying degrees and couldn't get back to their feet no matter how they struggled. They had already lost their ability to fight.

Chu Youzhao clapped excitedly and exclaimed, "Brother-in-law is so awesome!"

Murong Qinghe's beautiful eyes sparkled. She had been about to die while fighting against all of these soldiers, but they were nothing against a single wave of big brother Zu's sleeve.

Just how high is his cultivation?

Zu An didn't even give the soldiers lying on the ground a look and walked directly toward King Jin. King Jin suddenly felt a lack of confidence and instinctively took a few steps back.

Elder Chen stood in front of Zu An and said, "Sir Zu, I must ask you to please stop." The bleeding on his hand had already stopped. When he saw Zu An closing in on King Jin, he could only move to block the way.

"Out of the way!" Zu An barked gravely.

When he saw Zu An's expression, Elder Chen trembled from an indescribable sensation. The feeling left him really puzzled. He was already a powerful master rank cultivator, so why did he feel this way in front of a junior? He clearly couldn't sense an ounce of ki from Zu An's body. The other side seemed more like an ordinary person. However, the spear that had hit him and the power that had blown back all of the other soldiers clearly showed that Zu An's cultivation wasn't trivial. It seemed as if Zu An was using some kind of secret method to hide his aura.

Even though he didn't know Zu An's exact cultivation, Elder Chen thought to himself that there was no way Zu An's cultivation could be higher than his own. There had to be a limit. According to the intelligence they had, this brat was only around twenty years old. Even if he cultivated from the moment he came out of his mother's womb, just how much could he have cultivated?

Besides, he had heard that Zu An only started cultivating recently. It was likely that he encountered some miraculous encounter that made his cultivation achieve new breakthroughs, but that would often leave one's foundation unstable. If they really fought against each other, he didn't believe that there was any way this youngster could compare to himself, a master who had properly cultivated one step after another until now!

"Young man, do not be too hot-blooded. You need to know that there are always people better than you, and there are heavens above heavens," Elder Chen said while producing a flying sword in midair above his head.

Zu An was a bit surprised. The elder was just a master, and yet he could actually control a flying sword? Usually, only grandmaster rank cultivators could attach a soul to an object, allowing them to behead an enemy thousands of miles away. On the master rank level, one would only be able to roughly approximate that result. However, judging from the appearance of Elder Chen's sword, that didn't seem to be the case.

“There's always someone better than you?” Zu An repeated with a mocking expression. He said, “There's some truth to what you said. And yet, coming out of your mouth, it's a bit laughable.”

“This junior dares?!” Elder Chen exclaimed. He had enjoyed respect from everyone around him for so long, and even King Jin treated him with respect. When had he ever been looked down on like this before?

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In his fury, the flying sword flew straight at Zu An. It was incredibly fast. Everyone around him could clearly see its trajectory; even Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe, who had tremendous confidence in Zu An, couldn't help but break out in cold sweat when they saw that.

Zu An leaned slightly to the side to avoid the flying sword. He muttered to himself, “So that was what it was. It's a flying sword talisman.” He had studied the Baopu Sutra, so he was already very proficient in the seven domains of cultivation. He immediately recognized the source of the flying sword.

Chen Xingchao's expression changed. This flying sword talisman's secrets had already been lost to history. It was something he'd happened to stumble upon through a miraculous opportunity in his earlier years. No one was supposed to recognize it, as it was a trump card he had hidden all this time. He had never expected the other side to immediately recognize its origins with a single glance!

His finger moved through the air. The flying sword turned into a trace of yellow light and stabbed toward the middle of Zu An's back. As long as the attack landed, even if that youngster didn't die, he would be crippled.

Suddenly, however, that yellow light congealed. The flying sword disappeared and was replaced with a yellow talisman. Furthermore, that talisman was gently trapped between Zu An's fingers. Chen Xingchao was horrified. He quickly tried to remove the talisman from Zu An's control, making it shake intensely.

However, Zu An harrumphed, and with a light brush of his hand, the divine sense attached to the talisman was directly erased. With his knowledge of talismans, he naturally knew how to control such talismans that weren't all that mysterious.

“Since you want it so much, you can have it back,” Zu An said. As soon as he spoke, the yellow talisman turned into a flying sword again. It instantly flew behind Chen Xingchao and pierced through the middle of his back.

“You... You...” Chen Xingchao gasped as he clutched the huge hole in his chest. His voice gurgled, and he couldn't even finish his sentence before passing away.

In that instant, he was full of regret. He regretted how highly he had thought of himself, and how he had considered himself unequaled by relying on King Jin's authority. Only now did he understand that in the end, this was a world that only cared about strength. And yet, how could he have known that this ordinary-looking pretty boy would have cultivation of such a terrifying level?

All of the intelligence the capital has on him is wrong... Who knows just how many people are going to suffer at his hands?

Even so, why did I have to be the one who was struck by lightning first?

I regret it all...

He collapsed heavily onto the ground. His eyes were wide open; he had clearly died with remaining grievances.

Those present were stupefied. They had all been praising Elder Chen's powerful-looking flying sword, wondering how it would destroy that pretty boy. However, the situation had been reversed in the blink of an eye! Just what happened? Why had Elder Chen been killed instead?

With a wave of Zu An's hand, the yellow talisman returned to him. There was a special rune drawn on the surface, with a small sword at the center. A trace of light flowed through it. He thought to himself, This thing is quite interesting. I can make a few more of them and gift them to my sweethearts to protect themselves.

His mood was awful today. Even though he'd said that he didn't want to become an imperial grandson, when he thought about how many of his family members had died because of the Zhao clan, and then about how arrogantly Zhao Ruiyong was acting in front of him, he had become angrier and angrier. That damned Chen bastard had even hurt Chu Youzhao and so many of the guards of the manor. The sword he'd attacked with was also too vicious. Thus, Elder Chen reaped what he'd sown.

When King Jin saw that Elder Chen, whom he relied on the most, had died so easily, he couldn't help but exclaim in shock and anger, "You actually dared to kill this king's Elder Chen? Where did you get the nerve to do that?!"

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Zu An said coldly, "We've already reached this situation, and yet you still dare to bark at me like a dog? I'm also curious. Just where did you get the nerve to do that?"

King Jin was stunned at first, but then he erupted with fury. "Dog barking? A dog slave like you actually dares to treat this king with disrespect! You are nothing more than a dog my brother raised! Even if you have become a marquis, you are nothing more than a dog of slightly higher status!"

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As King Jin cursed, his voice suddenly stopped. He felt an invisible hand clamping around his throat. Then, his body rose into the air. He finally panicked, exclaiming, "What are you doing? Stop immediately! I am the glorious King Jin! You dare touch me?!"

As he looked at the sickly pale youngster in front of him, Zu An's expression was exceptionally calm. Zhao Han himself had already died, so why would he fear this child?

No wonder Zhao Han disliked me from the very first glance, and I subconsciously loathed him too. So it turns out there was a grudge from the previous dynasty. He was my fated enemy from the very start.

When he saw that Zu An didn't say anything, King Jin sneered, remarking, "Now you know fear, don't you? Hurry and lower this king. There are so many people watching, and there are people from other clans out there. Don't tell me that you would dare kill me? If you tie up your hands and kowtow three times respectfully to this king, this king can consider not arguing over today's events."

The other clans were already secretly discussing things among themselves.

"This Zu An is now trapped in an impossible situation. Do you think he'll kneel and admit his wrongs?"

“No way! He's a popular person from the Eastern Palace and an honorable marquis. It's rumored that he's connected to the Fiend races too. How could he possibly kowtow here?”

“That makes sense. I think he'll probably let King Jin go, or at most kill his remaining guards to vent his anger. That way, both sides will still have some face.”

“However, that way, won't both sides be unable to coexist any longer? With King Jin's nature, there's no way that he would leave the matter be. He'd gather forces from even more clans, and then Zu An would be in trouble.”

“Zu An was harboring a criminal to begin with, and he even killed King Jin's subordinate Elder Chen. He was already in big trouble from the very start.”

...

Just then, Zu An turned slightly to look at King Jin. He said quietly to himself, “I thought that guy Zhao Ruizhi was already dumb enough. I didn't expect you to be even dumber than him. At least he knows to fear me.”

“Brazen! You actually dare to spout such disgraceful words?!” King Jin exclaimed, glowering at him.

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For some reason, he felt a bit of unease inside.

“Disgraceful?” Zu An replied. When he saw that King Jin was still acting arrogant and despotic even in such a situation, he recalled his family from the previous dynasty who had died tragically. He walked up to King Jin, then said quietly in his ear, “Didn't you want to get revenge for your father all this time? I'll at least tell you the truth so you can die with some understanding. I was the one who killed Zhao Han.”

Zhao Ruiyong's eyes instantly contracted when he heard that. He was about to shout when a powerful force entered his neck.

Crack!

His neck snapped, and his eyes almost popped out of his sockets. Even in death, he couldn't understand why the other side dared to kill him.

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Read Keyboard Immortal - Chapter 1894: I Treated You As a Little Brother, But You Want Me to Call You Dad?

Chapter 1894: I Treated You As a Little Brother, But You Want Me to Call You Dad?

The messy environment immediately fell silent. Those present were stupefied by the scene before them. The grand and important King Jin had actually been killed by Zu An before their very eyes!

The other soldiers from King Jin Manor were horrified. They were in charge of King Jin's safety. Now that King Jin had been killed, they wouldn't be able to escape punishment. However, they didn't dare to get revenge for King Jin either. After all, King Jin and Elder Chen had just died right before their eyes, and both of them had been slaughtered easily like chickens. What would lesser troops like them be able to do?

No one knew who took the lead, but the soldiers began to flee in alarm. They were scared that they would be silenced if they stayed behind. Zu An didn't stop them. After all, he wouldn't go so far as to trouble mere ordinary soldiers.

The reason his mood was really bad today was all because he had suddenly become the previous dynasty's imperial grandson. When he thought about how many of his loved ones had died at the Zhao clan's hands, and then saw how this King Jin brat was trying to walk over him, he couldn't hold himself back. Now, his head was much clearer.

As they watched King Jin Manor's soldiers flee for their lives, all those who were watching from a distance seemed to have woken up with a start. They immediately turned tail to run for fear of being killed too. Everything within a mile or so became exceptionally quiet.

Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe walked up to Zu An's side. They gave King Jin another look of disbelief. His corpse was right there, and he couldn't be any more dead. Both of their faces were pale. They clearly realized the severity of what had happened.

Murong Qinghe couldn't help but say, "Big brother Zu, it was all because you saved me that you made such a huge mistake. In my opinion, we should flee

the capital before the court reacts to this. In the future, we'll just roam the world together. The world is so large that the court might not be able to capture us."

Chu Youzhao's eyes lit up as she added, "Sure, yeah! We'll just go together and adventure chivalrously. We'll live such a carefree life!" Even though she was the Chu clan's young master and carried the responsibility of the clan, compared to her brother-in-law's safety, it didn't seem that important anymore.

Zu An was speechless. He eventually said in consolation, "I don't think this is a severe mistake. You two don't need to be so nervous. It isn't as grave as you think."

Murong Qinghe and Chu Youzhao widened their eyes.

You even killed King Jin in full view of so many people, and yet you still don't think that it's serious?

"Still, you're right in the sense that we can't stay here any longer," Zu An said. After thinking about it, he told the two, "I'll bring the two of you elsewhere."

Then, he ordered all of the manor's people to just tell the court's people the truth if anyone came to investigate. There was no need for them to hide things for his sake. After arranging all that, he took the two young women with him back to Mount Yuquan. Things were definitely going to become chaotic soon, and the academy was the only place no one dared to cause trouble in.

Not long after entering the academy, he just happened to run into Xie Daoyun while she was leaving. She was really happy to see him, saying, "Big brother Zu, I heard that you left right after coming to the academy. I was wondering why you didn't come to visit me, but you actually came back again!"

When she saw this person, who was usually a classy and elegant eldest daughter, jumping around in high spirits, Chu Youzhao immediately felt guarded.

This woman used to be well acquainted with big sister. Everyone says that a rabbit doesn't eat the grass by its own burrow, but she...

Midway through that thought, Chu Youzhao suddenly sighed.

Is this the time to be thinking about something like that? Right now, the most important thing is brother-in-law's safety!

"Little sister Ling'er," Zu An replied, his mood improving when he saw her. "Can you help me contact the other teachers and tell them to gather around the libationer's house?"

Xie Daoyun exclaimed happily, "Okay!" She thought that once her big brother Zu became the libationer, she would be able to spend more and more time with him.

Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe followed Zu An up to the mountaintop. As they looked at the scenery, both of them were really excited. After all, normally, such a place would be incredibly mysterious for them. Only the libationer and a few others could enter under ordinary circumstances.

When Zu An returned to the small house, he didn't see that old servant. He couldn't help but sigh in relief. He cleared out two rooms in this courtyard and said to the two young women, "The two of you will stay here for now."

The libationer's residence looked small, but inside, it felt like a completely different world. There was enough space for several people to live.

"We're going to live here? But this is the libationer's residence..." the two said in shock.

"From today on, I am the new libationer," Zu An said with a smile.

The two young women didn't realize that he was telling the truth. They both harrumphed. "Still as bold as always."

They looked up and saw a flashy and showy young lady sitting on the windowsill, her white legs swaying back and forth.

"Qi Yaoguang," Zu An said with a chuckle. This girl did have quite the unique personality.

"Even though our relationship isn't bad and we can be considered friends, I won't acknowledge you as the new libationer," Qi Yaoguang said as she fiddled with a divination dial in her hands that looked like an expanse of stars. "Do you understand this fortune-telling method? Do you understand

astrological patterns and divination? You don't know a thing, so how can you become a libationer who gives me advice?"

"Fortune-telling, divination..." Zu An muttered, raising his brows. He really didn't know a thing about those fields.

Before he could even say anything else, someone remarked with a chuckle, "That may not be, you know?"

A short and stout figure strutted in arrogantly. Despite his portly frame, he was dressed in scholarly clothes and a hat, and had a long mustache shaped like a 八. He was full of a lighthearted and cheerful mood. He was the libationer's eleventh disciple, Yin Shi, someone who was good at debates and arguing.

"I actually do feel that sir Zu has the qualifications to become the new libationer," Yin Shi said. It was clear that Zu An's first visit to the academy had left him with a deep impression.

"Tsk~" Qi Yaoguang crossed her arms in front of her. She understood his personality and immediately looked the other way. She didn't want to debate anything with him.

Yin Shi was a bit dissatisfied, asking, "Junior sister, do you want to hear my reasoning?"

"Nope," Qi Yaoguang replied, not falling for it.

"Then that means you acknowledge my decision. Sir Zu has the qualifications to become the new libationer!" Yin Shi said with a big smile.

"You...!" Qi Yaoguang panicked, as expected.

High-heeled shoes tapped against the limestone, letting out sharp and clear sounds. Just that sound alone could make one's imagination go crazy. The whole group reflexively glanced toward the source of the sound, and what first met their eyes was a pair of smooth and well-shaped, black silk-covered legs. There almost seemed to be a faint glow that was absolutely captivating surrounding those leggings.

Chu Youzhao was filled with envy. Other people could wear such pretty feminine clothes and black leggings, but she could only secretly play around with such clothes in private.

Murong Qinghe had a tall and slender build, and many people had praised her legs for being beautiful ever since she was little. However, right now, she had to admit that she still lacked a bit of maturity compared to the other woman. This woman was full of a refined, businesslike charm, and right now, there was nothing she could do to compare.

"I actually feel that great disciple is more suitable to become the new libationer," said the woman, who was none other than Jiang Luofu. Her hair was arranged above her head by a simple wood hairpin, which made her neck seem even longer and more slender. There was a noble and elegant air around her. She actually seemed even more alluring than when Zu An had first met her in Brightmoon City.

"Eighth martial sister's legs seem to have become longer again!" Yin Shi exclaimed, his eyes widening. "Let this junior brother measure them for you..."

"Hah, eleventh martial brother doesn't seem to have been beaten up enough yet over the years," said a distinguished scholar with an impressive bearing, who walked in while stroking his beard. He was dressed in a black and white checkered robe. His sleeves were wide and his robe dragged a bit on the ground. He was the late libationer's fifth disciple, Hei Baizi!

"That may not be; fifth martial brother is mistaken. How can being stepped on by eighth martial sister's wonderful feet be considered a beating? That's clearly a reward!" Yin Shi corrected him with a chuckle.

"Silence!" Jiang Luofu snapped as she took out a little bell and shook it. An invisible ripple spread out, and even though Yin Shi opened his mouth, he discovered that he couldn't utter a sound anymore.

Zu An was a bit surprised. This thing in the gorgeous principal's hands seemed to be a magic treasure!

A sweet fragrance brushed past, and Jiang Luofu instantly appeared in front of him. She looked at him with an ambiguous expression, saying, "I treated you as a little brother, but you want me to call you dad?"

Zu An was sweating buckets as he replied, "What do you mean?"

The others had strange expressions. Even Qi Yaoguang turned around. Jiang Luofu seemed to be teasing this pretty boy!

...

Meanwhile, in the Meng clan's main residence, when Meng Yi learned of what had happened by the marquis manor, he couldn't help but get up and roar with laughter. "Who would have thought, who would have thought! Everything is going even smoother than we planned. I thought that Zu guy would have a bit of skill, but I didn't expect him to be a rash and reckless fool!"

"Prepare some people to follow me into the palace!"

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Chapter 1895: Blood Disaster The Day After Tomorrow

At the top of Mount Yuquan, a group of people looked at the woman in black leggings. Jiang Luofu remained completely calm as she said, "The libationer is my master. In my heart, the word libationer is synonymous with master and father. If someone else wanted to become the libationer, wouldn't it be the same as trying to become my father?"

Zu An was really sweating now. He replied, "It's not that serious, right?"

The previously tense atmosphere became a bit lighter as a result.

Jiang Luofu said with a smile, "Ah Zu, even though we're familiar with each other, I'm someone who judges matters as they stand. I also feel that it's still senior brother who is more suited to everyone's expectations. You won't blame me for that, right?"

Zu An sighed and said, "That's why I don't understand why the late libationer gave me the ring. I'm still young, and I don't have much skill..."

"Sir Zu, please do not undervalue yourself," said an old farmer dressed in a vest as he walked over. His entire body was tanned from being in the sun, and there was a hoe hanging from his waist. However, no one would truly treat him as just another old farmer.

"Seventh brother!" The others greeted him respectfully. This person was the libationer's seventh disciple, Wang Shuyang.

Wang Shuyang nodded slightly. Then, his gaze landed on Zu An as he said, "Sir is young, but your knowledge is vast. In the field of agriculture in particular, your knowledge leaves this old Wang in amazement. The hybridized paddy concept has truly enlightened me. After two years of testing, there are already signs of progress. Judging from what we can see so far, it will definitely enable farm crops' yield to increase tremendously. When that happens, who knows how many more lives we will be able to provide for. Just that fact alone is already enough for sir to become the new libationer."

Hei Baizi said with a chuckle, "Sir Zu's achievements in chess aren't bad either."

Zu An's invention of five-in-a-row had already left him stunned. The barrier to entry for the game of Go was very high, so it had never become popular among the common people. Hei Baizi didn't want his beloved craft to be simplified down to a mere commoner's game, but he hadn't really found a solution to that. However, the five-in-a-row game Zu An had come up with quickly became the most precious treasure for him. Even though he discovered that the game was very simple after he thoroughly analyzed it, and that it couldn't compare to the game of Go at all, what it was good at was its simplicity. By spreading it among the common people, he could attract more people to learn about Go. As such, even though he'd realized that Zu An wasn't a chess saint the way he imagined, he was still very grateful.

"I didn't expect Sir Zu to be such an erudite man. His skills in alchemy and puppetry have also filled me with admiration," said a voice, accompanied by several cracking noises.

A massive puppet slowly appeared from the distant stairs. On the shoulder of the puppet sat a small and stooped person. He was the late libationer's fourth disciple, alchemy master Shen Xuzi. The mechanical puppet extended its hand and removed a wheelchair from behind it. Then, it gently lowered him into it.

Shen Xuzi rolled the wheelchair up to Zu An and held his hand tightly, saying, "Right, Sir Zu, the steam engine and that 'Gundam' you spoke of before, I still don't fully understand them. Can you give me a bit more pointers to alleviate my puzzlement?"

Zu An had a strange expression. He had just casually mentioned those things in the past without really knowing many of the details, so he would definitely be exposed if the other side continued to ask him about it. However, now that

he had learned the Baopu Sutra, there were details regarding artifact refinement, so he could now actually discuss some of the details.

Qi Yaoguang blinked. Her senior brothers were normally all eccentrics with strange tempers, so why were they all so close to Zu An now? It was almost as if he were their father.

“Big brother Zu!” Xie Daoyun exclaimed cheerfully just then. She pointed at a thin elder next to her, saying, “This is my teacher. Teacher, this is my big brother Zu, the one I mentioned many times.”

“I greet Great Disciple Yan,” Zu An said, not daring to show him any disrespect. The great formation on Violet Mountain was the work of this man, and even Zhao Han had been banished to another space because of it.

“The young master speaks with too much courtesy. Furthermore, you are the new libationer, so it should be me who greets you with respect,” Yan Xiang said with a chuckle. At the same time, he was examining Zu An. He was quite shocked, because he didn’t feel as if he could see through this youngster’s depths.

Qi Yaoguang grumbled, “Great brother, I actually feel that everyone would be more convinced if you became the new libationer. This kid is so much younger than you, so how can he assist me in my cultivation from here on out?”

Jiang Luofu didn’t speak up in agreement; instead, she observed quietly. At first, she had been worried that Zu An would be in a difficult situation, since these senior brothers were all incredibly proud. That was why she had taken on the responsibility of going against Zu An. After all, they were close to each other and she could control the level of embarrassment better. However, she’d never expected that apart from Qi Yaoguang, her senior brothers would all support Zu An!

Yan Xiang said with a chuckle “Even if I became the libationer, I still couldn’t give you pointers on your cultivation. I definitely don’t know as much about celestial divination and fortune-telling as you.”

Qi Yaoguang grumbled, “But even so, you could help me in other ways, right?”

Shen Xuzi spoke up just then and said, "Great brother is very formidable, but only in the way of talismans. He won't be of much help to our respective domains, but Sir Zu is different. He really can help us in our respective fields."

Wang Shuyang and the others all nodded.

"Maybe that's just a coincidence, right? Just how old is he? How could he possibly know that much?" Qi Yaoguang asked, feeling extremely confused. "If you have the skill, convince me using fortune-telling and divination!"

Before Zu An had a chance to reply, Xie Daoyun said, "Big brother Zu is actually really good at fortune-telling. Why don't you do it once for her?" Judging from her proud tone, it sounded almost as if she were promoting her own boyfriend.

Everyone else was shocked as well.

Qi Yaoguang asked suspiciously, "You know about that too?"

When he saw Xie Daoyun's expectant expression, Zu An was put on the spot. He replied, "I understand a bit."

"A bit? You're quite arrogant, aren't you?" Qi Yaoguang replied as she put her hands on her hips. "Why don't you try it out on me then? Tell me, what major things will happen to me soon?"

After some hesitation, Zu An said, "Do you have a tortoiseshell or some copper coins?"

Qi Yaoguang's lips curled as she replied, "Are you even going to borrow divination items from someone else?" Despite that, she still fished out a tortoiseshell and said, "This is a tortoiseshell I got a while back. I've never had much of a chance to use it, so I'll just lend it to you. As for copper coins, I don't have any."

What she was proficient in was celestial divination, which was different from what Zu An knew.

"I have some, I have some!" Xie Daoyun cried as she took out a few copper coins for Zu An. Her beautiful eyes were glistening.

Qi Yaoguang almost facepalmed. She was doing her best to help her great brother get the position of libationer, while great brother's very own disciple was on the side of the outsider!

In contrast, Yan Xiang had a benevolent smile on his face, as if he didn't mind at all. Rather, he was curious as to how Zu An was going to carry out his divination.

Zu An showed Xie Daoyun a smile. Then, he picked up the tortoiseshell and waved it toward her palm, collecting the coppers within it. Then, with a wave of his hand, the tortoiseshell began to rapidly spin in the air.

Qi Yaoguang harrumphed.

You're not even throwing dice, so what are you putting on such a huge display for?

However, her expression quickly became serious, because with just a light tap of Zu An's finger, streak after streak of ancient and profound lines appeared on the tortoiseshell. She could sense that they seemed to vaguely align with the natural laws of the world. After all, knowledge was interconnected, and this was her field of expertise to begin with. She quickly sensed the profundity of what he was doing. A bit of surprise appeared on her face.

Could it be that he really does understand this?

The tortoiseshell quickly trembled, and the copper coins flew out one after another. They floated in the air and seemed to connect in a certain strange pattern.

"Hm?" Zu An exclaimed, clearly a bit stunned.

Qi Yaoguang couldn't help but laugh, remarking, "You couldn't do the divination after all, right?" To think she was almost fooled by this guy!

Zu An seemed to be a bit puzzled. He trailed off as he said, "I did manage to do it, but it seems a bit contradictory..."

Xie Daoyun couldn't help but worry when she heard what he said. The other disciples of the libationer were even more curious now.

Jiang Luofu said with a smile, "Why don't you tell us about it?"

Zu An was a bit embarrassed, but he still replied, “I divined that Miss Yaoguang would experience a disaster of blood the day after tomorrow, which should be a sign of a great tragedy. And yet, when I examined it more closely, there wasn't the slightest sign of danger. It almost seems as if she can safely pass through this experience without even doing anything. I wonder just what is wrong here...”

This was, after all, the first time he had carried out a divination after learning the Baopu Sutra, so he was still a bit unfamiliar with divination. It wouldn't be too surprising if he had made a mistake somewhere.

Suddenly, Qi Yaoguang's face became entirely red. She cried out, “You scoundrel!” This guy had actually divined her first blood so accurately! She had never spoken about that with anyone before.

Everyone present was sharp and quickly realized what was going on. They all had knowing smiles.

Zu An was really embarrassed.

I didn't do this on purpose! Who knew this kind of thing would be the result?

Shen Xuze laughed the hardest of all, saying, “Junior sister, you don't have any objections now, right?”

“Even if I don't, so what? You're only four in total, and if you add me, that's five. There are twelve disciples in total, so we haven't even met half of the votes yet. How can we easily appoint him as the new libationer with that?” Qi Yaoguang muttered.

Surprisingly, Jiang Luofu was the one who spoke up. “That may not necessarily be the case. Second brother's relationship with him is quite close, and third brother met him previously in Cloudcenter Commandery and respects him greatly. Sixth sister and him are even more so one family, while ninth sister has a very good relationship with him too. Apart from tenth brother,[1] whom he hasn't met, almost all of the martial siblings have very good relationships with him.”

Zu An was stunned. He wondered who the second brother[2] and ninth sister[3] she was talking about were.

Why don't I have any impression of them? And they have such good relationships with me?

Yan Xiang said, "See? Teacher's arrangements weren't made blindly. He is the most suitable candidate to become the new libationer. Yan Xiang greets the libationer!" He took the lead to bow.

Xie Daoyun immediately had a huge smile. She also bowed respectfully, saying, "Xie Daoyun greets the libationer."

The others had strange expressions when they saw that.

Why do you look as if you're bowing to your husband?

Shen Xu, Hei Baizi, Wang Weiyang, and Yin Shi had supported Zu An to begin with. They also followed up with their greeting.

Jiang Luofu sized up this young man in front of her. She suddenly felt a bit moved by everything that had happened. After all, this man had to respectfully call her principal in the past, and yet now, she was the one who had to greet him respectfully. However, she'd already intended to help him from the very start, so she also followed suit, saying, "Jiang Luofu greets the new libationer."

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Qi Yaoguang was the last one left. When she recalled that 'brilliant' divination method Zu An had shown, in the end, she still bowed down and said, "Qi Yaoguang greets the new libationer!"

1. Tenth brother specializes in military strategy, and resides on the border. ➡
2. Second brother is a doctor whose whereabouts are unknown. ➡
3. Ninth sister is a singer. ➡

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Chapter 1896: Dilemma

When they saw the scene in front of them, both Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe's jaws dropped. After all, Yan Xiang and the other academy teachers were all very famous in the capital. Countless clans wanted to meet with them, and yet they rarely got the chance to do so. But now, they were actually all greeting big brother Zu so respectfully, and furthermore acknowledging him as the libationer.

Brother-in-law is so awesome!

The two young women had felt a bit down because of what was happening as of late, but now, they finally felt a bit better. They even started to think that perhaps they would be able to make it through these difficult times.

Zu An quickly supported them back up, saying, "There's no need for excessive formality. We can just keep each identity separate. The libationer is the libationer, but when we interact in private, let's still talk as equals."

Yu Yanluo was the late libationer's sixth disciple. As such, they were indeed equal. Even if it wasn't too long ago that many of the libationer's disciples had found out for the first time that Yu Yanluo was the sixth disciple, leaving them incredibly shocked, they also envied how blessed Zu An was. Yu Yanluo had been the capital's number one beauty, someone whose name all men had heard of.

When they heard Zu An's response, they felt more at ease.

Yan Xiang suddenly asked, "Has teacher already passed?"

They all had hopeful expressions as they looked into Zu An's eyes, seemingly trying to hold out for good news.

"That is indeed the case," Zu An said with a sigh.

With the death of the libationer confirmed, the mood in the place turned grim.

Qi Yaoguang rubbed the tears at the corners of her eyes, saying, "Teacher was so wise, studying everything from the heavens to man. Just how did he die?"

Zu An was a bit hesitant. However, Yan Xiang said, "There is no harm in saying what you think. All of us know about teacher's grudge against his majesty and wouldn't speak recklessly outside of this place."

When he heard that, Zu An said, "In a way, the libationer took down his majesty with him."

That wasn't a complete lie. If not because the libationer had paid with his life to seriously wound Zhao Han, there would be no way Zu An could have finished the job.

The libationer's disciples all had looks of grief when they heard that. In the end, they sighed and said, "We already knew that this day would come eventually, just not this quickly."

These direct disciples naturally knew who the libationer really was, and they also knew about the grudge shared between the former dynasty and the Zhao clan. They'd thought that the libationer had already acknowledged his fate, but they hadn't expected him to still go that far in the end.

Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe were completely stupefied as they listened. They had never expected to hear such shocking news! His majesty and the libationer both... At the same time, they were wondering why big brother Zu trusted them so much, realizing that they definitely had to guard this secret for him.

Zu An took the chance to introduce the two of them and asked for the libationer's disciples to help watch over them.

Shen Xuizi replied, "Libationer, don't worry! They will definitely be safe if they stay here. Even after all these years, no one has dared to cause trouble in the academy."

They had naturally already heard about the Murong clan's situation and more or less guessed Zu An's intentions. It was just a very small matter for them, though. The academy was powerful enough to shelter anyone.

Zu An was filled with gratitude. After settling that matter, he took the chance to ask Jiang Luofu, "Big sis principal, was your Jiang clan affected by the battle of Violet Mountain?"

A hint of gentleness appeared on Jiang Luofu's face when she heard the familiar way of address. She said, "Thank you for your care, libationer. The Jiang clan is currently still fine. Even though there has been a bit of disturbance, the Jiang clan and King Qi were not tied too closely.

Furthermore, we are all joined by marriage, and with my academy's level of relationship, no one dares to trouble us."

Zu An nodded inwardly. Jiang Boyang's eldest son had taken Pei Jienu, who was also Pei Mianman's paternal aunt, as his wife. His second son had married Zhao Han's daughter, Princess Changrong. The third prince had married the Yu clan's woman... The Jiang clan had always had handsome men and beautiful women, so they were related to all sorts of different clans by marriage. Furthermore, Jiang Luofu had the support of these martial brothers from the academy, so no one would dare to touch the Jiang clan.

It seems that having more sons and daughters in this kind of society is pretty useful, huh.

"It's good that the Jiang clan doesn't have any problems," Zu An said. He then asked,, "Who are the second brother and ninth sister you mentioned earlier?"

The third brother was Sword Saint Xiao Yao, someone he had met in Cloudcenter Commandery. The tenth brother was a military strategist who usually stayed at the border, so he had never met him. He knew about those two. But second brother, the doctor, and ninth sister, the singer... This was the first time he had heard them being mentioned.

Jiang Luofu shook her head slightly and said, "Their identities must be hidden. It's best if they tell you on their own in the future, because it isn't appropriate for me to tell you. Still, there's no need to worry. You share quite a deep relationship with them and will naturally know who they are eventually."

Zu An was a bit annoyed that she was deliberately mystifying things. He really wanted to pull those black leggings of hers all the way down, rip off the rubber bands on them, and flick her with them like a slingshot.

A disciple suddenly ran all the way up while gasping for breath, saying, "Teachers, there are people who want to meet Sir Zu and claim to be his friends."

"What Sir Zu? From today on, he is our new libationer," Yan Xianggu corrected him.

The disciple was shocked. He reflexively glanced at the other teachers, and when he saw that they didn't argue back, he knew that Yan Xianggu wasn't joking. He quickly said respectfully, "I greet the libationer!" At the same time,

he thought to himself that he definitely had to spread this huge piece of news to the other students, so he wouldn't be the only one to experience such shock.

"Please rise. Who was it that was calling me, and have you asked what their names are?" Zu An asked.

"They said they were Eastern Palace guards. One seems to be surnamed Piao, the other Jiao something."

Zu An stirred, saying, "Have them come up."

Soon after, Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun sprinted up the mountain with anxious looks. When they saw Zu An, they sighed in relief and said, "Sir Zu, the crown princess wishes for you to return to the palace."

Zu An was a bit surprised. He nodded and replied, "I understand." Then, he said to Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe, "The two of you will live here for a while. With the teachers protecting you, no one will dare to make things difficult for you."

"Brother-in-law (big brother Zu), don't return to the palace! It's too dangerous!" Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe both grabbed his sleeves and said out of concern.

"It's alright," Zu An said with a smile. "I know what I'm doing, so nothing bad will happen. Don't run all over the place; staying here properly is the best way to help me. If you need anything, ask your big sister Xie." Then, he said to Jiang Luofu, "I'll have to trouble you to look after the two of them a bit."

Jiang Luofu nodded. Then, she looked at the two Eastern Palace guards. She asked quietly, "Do you need help?"

"It's fine. I'll be able to handle it," Zu An said as he cupped his hands toward the teachers; he then followed Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun down Mount Yuquan.

"Sir Zu, you shouldn't go to the Imperial Palace, and you should just use this chance to run. We'll just go back on our own and say that it was because we were too weak. They won't trouble us too much for that," Piao Duandiao couldn't help but say along the way.

“What do you mean, we’re too weak? We should just say that we didn’t even find Sir Zu,” Jiao Sigun corrected him.

Zu An felt warm inside when he heard the worry in their voices. He patted their shoulders and said, “Don’t worry, I have a plan.”

...

Just like that, they went to the Imperial palace. Eunuch Lu was already waiting at the palace gate. When he saw Zu An, he immediately said, “Sir Zu, you should go to the Palace of Peace. Everyone is already there.”

Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun couldn’t help but say, “We received the crown princess’ orders to bring Sir Zu to the Eastern Palace.”

Eunuch Lu’s expression turned cold. He replied, “Are you using the crown princess’ name to push down the empress? Even the crown princess is at the Palace of Peace right now.”

Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun were intimidated by Eunuch Lu, so they could only give Zu An a look that seemed to say 'good luck'. Then, they quickly rushed to the Eastern Palace to issue a report.

Zu An followed Eunuch Lu to the Palace of Peace. Along the way, Eunuch Lu asked with a sigh, “Sir Zu, how could you be so impulsive?”

Zu An knew that the news regarding the murder of King Jin had already spread. He said calmly, “I merely sought clarity and understanding.”

Eunuch Lu gave him a look of surprise. As he watched Zu An enter, a moment later, he said enviously, “Being young truly is great. You can be hot-blooded and capable.”

When Zu An walked into the Palace of Peace, he discovered that it was full of people and that it was as noisy as a food market. The two sides were clearly arguing over something. When they saw Zu An, however, the entire room suddenly fell silent. They all turned around to look at him with strange expressions.

Zu An saw that Bi Linglong was also present, and that the Eastern Palace’s members were gathered around her. She almost seemed to rival the empress, who was in the seat of honor. The empress was dressed in a long black gown

with golden phoenixes embroidered upon it; she had a solemn and dignified aura. In contrast, Bi Linglong was dressed in a white palace outfit, and her perfect facial features formed an extremely grave expression. One was a mature and elegant madam, while the other was a young lady brimming with beauty and youthfulness. Even though their statuses were special, the other ministers present couldn't help but sneak looks at the two of them. They really did each have their own beauty.

Meng Yi was the first to snap out of his daze. He pointed at Zu An and hollered, "Zu An, you actually dared to come here? Men, arrest this brute immediately!"

Zu An looked at Bi Linglong to see how she would act. He had a bit of hope deep within him, because if she completely abandoned him, there was no need for him to feel bothered any longer.

Soldiers stormed in when they received the order. Just then, however, Bi Linglong spoke up with her beautiful brows furrowed. "Sir Meng, this is the Palace of Peace. Her highness hasn't even spoken yet, so aren't you overstepping your authority a bit?"

Meng Yi's expression changed slightly. He thus bowed respectfully to the empress. and said, "Your highness, please forgive me. This subject was too stirred up and acted out of line. However, this Zu An actually dared to murder a prince, a true crime that cannot be forgiven. I hope that your highness can uphold justice for King Jin!"

Many ministers kneeled down; several of them were other children from the royal family. They added, "Please uphold justice for all of us, your highness!"

When she saw the scene, Liu Ning felt a huge headache coming on and gave Zu An a resentful look.

Didn't I just warn this damn brat not to act recklessly? I told him to talk to me if he needed anything and that I'd help him. And yet he immediately killed King Jin?!

She was angry inside, but she didn't show anything on the surface. She said, "Linglong, King Jin was the crown prince's own brother. How do you think should this matter be handled?"

Bi Linglong secretly praised her cunning. The empress now put all the blame onto her. If she helped Zu An, it would disappoint everyone from the royal family and the ministers, because King Jin was the crown prince's younger brother. She would be cut off from everyone else. However, if she didn't help Zu An, the Eastern Palace's unity would be disturbed. If not even an important figure like Zu An could be protected, who would dare support her in the future?

Bi Linglong shot Zu An a fierce look. If it were something else, she would definitely protect him, but he had ended up causing such a huge commotion.

Just what do I do now?

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Chapter 1897: I Have to Investigate Myself?

When the empress saw that Bi Linglong didn't say anything even after some time passed, she spoke up again. "What does the crown princess think we should do about this matter?"

Bi Linglong cleared her throat and said, "I believe that there is most likely some kind of misunderstanding at play here. I believe that Sir Zu is not the type who would be so impetuous. How about we listen to what Sir Zu has to say first?"

When she first heard that Zu An had killed King Jin, her entire head began ringing. She really couldn't understand why he would do such a thing. She could only let him talk about the situation first to see if there was any way to salvage things.

The empress nodded and said, "What the crown princess says makes sense. Does Sir Zu have anything to say about this matter?"

Bi Linglong was a bit surprised. She had never expected the empress to approve of her opinion.

All those present were now looking at Zu An. However, he calmly replied, "What matter are you all talking about?"

“It is about your murder of King Jin, of course! What are you acting all dumb for?” a youngster dressed in official robes shouted.

Zu An gave him a look. This person’s face was a bit round, and coupled with his soft bangs, he looked a bit like a doll.

This person was King Dai, Zhao Ping. He was the son of Zhao Han’s concubine Madam Li, and his wife was Meng Ji’s daughter. She was beautiful, as well as wise and capable, often giving him advice. Together with the two families’ strong alliance, the two of them were often thought of as a perfect couple. It was rumored that the one the Meng clan was supporting to take the imperial throne was none other than him.

“When did I kill King Jin? It’s just that King Jin took his men all the way to my manor and his subordinates offended me. I merely disciplined his subordinates,” Zu An said with a calm expression.

At the seat of honor, the empress nodded inwardly.

The brat isn’t stupid. I was scared that he would ignore everything here and just directly admit to it boldly. Then, there really wouldn’t be any way to clean up the situation.

Bi Linglong frowned. How could the murder of King Jin be something so easily covered up?

Sure enough, as soon as Zu An said that, the entire place erupted into a commotion. King Dai rebuked him, saying, “A bunch of nonsense! So many people saw you kill my brother King Jin, and yet you still dare to quibble here?”

“Oh? Do tell me who saw it,” Zu An said, remaining calm.

“Did you really think that all your problems would be solved just because you killed my brother’s protector, Elder Chen?” King Dai replied with a sneer. “It doesn’t matter. Men, bring the witnesses into the palace! That way, you’ll finally be forced to confess your crimes.”

Many people exchanged looks. It seemed that King Dai had come prepared to completely eliminate Zu An, thus stripping the Eastern Palace of its right arm. That way, his own prestige would rise with the momentum.

Even though Bi Linglong knew that was what he was thinking, there was nothing she could do. After all, the fact that Zu An had killed King Jin was just too big of a deal. It put her in a state of absolute passivity. However, she still had to defend him no matter what. She couldn't help but look at Zu An; however, she saw him calmly finding a seat to sit down in. Then, he called out to the servants to bring him something to drink as if he owned the place. As he casually sipped on some tea, it was almost as if he wasn't a criminal about to be convicted, and was instead the judge of the trial.

Bi Linglong was surprised. She had already experienced many life and death moments together with Zu An and knew that he was definitely not the sort to act blindly without thinking. Since he was doing such a thing, that meant that he most likely had something he was relying on. After she thought about it, her anxious heart gradually calmed down.

Several soldiers were brought in. Those with good eyes immediately recognized that they were from King Jin Manor.

King Dai had a proud smile as he said, "Now, tell me everything that you saw and heard that day without missing any details."

The soldiers couldn't help but give Zu An a look. They broke out into a cold shiver. This deity of slaughter had left them with great trauma.

When he saw them cowering, King Dai was a bit dissatisfied. He barked, "What are you all standing around doing nothing for? Hurry up and talk!"

Meng Yi said seriously, "Her highness the empress, the crown princess, and many important ministers are here. Everyone here will assume responsibility for you. There is no need to be scared."

He had his status to rely on, and his tone had a mysterious soothing effect. Thus, the guards calmed down a bit. After looking around, they felt that no matter how strong Zu An was, there were so many big shots here. What could he even do? As such, they then all spoke up at once. "Our king brought us to the marquis manor to arrest a criminal..."

"Later, though, we didn't expect there to be a conflict... He killed Elder Chen..."

Even though many people here already knew what happened, there were still quite a few who were shocked by those words. King Jin's protector, Elder

Chen, was a famous master rank expert in the capital. Even they had to treat him with respect when they met him, and yet he had been killed so easily by Zu An. Just how strong was Zu An?

The guards continued to speak about what happened later. "...But we never expected the king and marquis to suddenly get into a conflict. Then, the king was gripped by the neck, and he was instantly strangled to death."

The entire place rose up into a commotion when those present heard what was said. Meng Yi cried loudly, "He is cruel and ruthless!"

King Dai also cursed, "He actually dared to kill the prince in such a sadistic manner! If we do not punish this vile man, we cannot bring justice to this empire. Our royal family's dignity will be completely destroyed. How will we face our ancestors in the future?!"

Bi Linglong frowned when she heard that. This King Dai had always been a bit soft in nature, and yet he was actually acting so tough. These were clearly things that either Meng Yi or the sharp Madam Dai had told him. She didn't like that Madam Dai. Even though she was pretty, her personality was too strong. She had always kept King Dai under her wing like a mother hen with her chicks, giving off a threatening air. Sure enough, this time, Madam Dai no longer held back her ambition and had developed a desire for the throne.

With King Dai and Meng Yi taking the lead, the entire court was now worked up. The Eastern Palace's side couldn't even find any words to help Zu An, and they were quickly left in an absolutely passive position.

Bi Linglong coughed lightly and turned to look at Zu An with a cold expression, saying, "How audacious! Do you have anything else to say for yourself?!" She thought to herself that he definitely had a reason for doing all of this, so she played along to give him a chance to speak.

Sure enough, once the others turned to look at Zu An, he then replied nonchalantly, "Who says I sadistically killed the prince? Did you all see me do it with your own eyes? When did my hand ever touch his body?"

Beneath Zu An's stare, the guards looked at each other in dismay. They said, "Even though you weren't next to King Jin, you raised him up from afar, then used a skill to crush the bones in his throat."

King Dai spoke up. "Could it be that you are still going to try to deny it? So many people saw that scene. If you still refuse to admit to it, I can bring even more witnesses."

Zu An smiled as he replied, "There's no need to go that far. I did raise King Jin into the air, but I didn't kill him. Rather, his body was too weak, and he was too cowardly. He got too worked up and scared himself to death."

"Scared himself to death?"

Those present were all stunned. They had never expected him to deflect the accusation in such an efficient manner.

King Jin had always been sickly, and everyone knew he hadn't had many years left to live. Indeed, he could have died at any time. However, so many people had seen that it was Zu An who killed him!

Even Bi Linglong couldn't help but give Zu An another look.

This guy really is shameless. He's lying through his teeth, and yet his face isn't even the slightest bit red.

Even so, with that pretext, she had an angle to assist him again.

Thus, King Dai and Meng Yi's side loudly criticized Zu An for being shameless, while the Eastern Palace's side spoke up for him under Bi Linglong's incitement. The two sides got awfully worked up from arguing.

Along the way, Bi Linglong pretended to have suddenly realized something, saying, "Right, Sir Zu, when my subordinates were looking for you, I heard that the academy's people seem to have called you the libationer."

The noisy room instantly fell silent. The officials looked at Zu An with incredible shock. They naturally knew the late libationer, but why had this brat become the academy's libationer?

Zu An raised the ring in his hand and said, "The libationer insisted on giving this position to me, and I just couldn't break away from the responsibility. I couldn't just let the libationer die with remaining grievances, so I could only reluctantly agree."

When they heard what he said, the officials all cursed him inwardly.

This guy really is taking a mile after being given an inch! What kind of a position did the libationer have? Countless people want to have that position, and yet can't; but this guy is acting all troubled!

When he saw the endless Rage points that came in the backend, Zu An felt quite helpless. He was clearly speaking the truth, so why didn't people believe him?

After the interruption, the sounds of arguing in the room clearly became less fierce. After all, Zu An was the Fiend Races' regent, and he was also the libationer. His status was too special.

King Dai saw that the situation was gradually becoming unfavorable for him and couldn't help but bow to the empress. He said, "Your highness, please share your opinion with us. You must uphold justice for King Jin! We cannot allow this murderer to run free just because his identity is special."

Liu Ning nodded when she heard that. She said, "Indeed, we cannot let murderers run free, but we cannot unjustly blame court ministers. How about this? We can leave the Embroidered Envoy to investigate this case, and have Golden Token Eleven look into the cause of King Jin's death. That way, everyone will have a satisfactory explanation."

King Dai was overjoyed, exclaiming, "Your highness is wise and brilliant!"

The Embroidered Envoy were known for their viciousness. They never needed to show anyone respect during their investigations. Zu An would be dead for sure.

Bi Linglong had a weird expression. Others didn't know about Golden Token Eleven's identity, but how could she not know?

He has to investigate himself?

The empress seems to be helping Zu An! Their relationship seems to be even closer than I imagined...

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Chapter 1898: A Choice

When King Dai heard that the empress wanted the Embroidered Envoy to investigate Zu An, he was delighted. He thought, Isn't this Zu bastard dead for sure now?

The Embroidered Envoy was a group of murderous brutes. Whenever they appeared, it signified misfortune for the target, no matter who it was. In the past, countless officials had been left destitute and homeless because of the Embroidered Envoy. Their womenfolk had all been sent to the government brothel.

King Dai had heard that Chu First Miss was Zu An's wife, and a stunning beauty at that. When the time came, he'd be the first to use her services!

My little brother King Jin, I treat you quite well, don't I?

Hm... Madam Jin must be quite lonely now all by herself. I'll have to pay a visit to console her too.

When he thought about how much King Jin had normally looked down on him, the older brother, by relying on the fact that he was the child of the late empress, he felt incredibly wronged. On the other hand, he had met Madam Jin a few times. She was sweet-tempered and enchanting, and had left him with a deep impression.

As Zhao Han had doted on King Jin a lot and pitied his weak constitution, he'd feared that King Jin wouldn't be able to keep a strong-willed woman under control. Furthermore, King Jin likely wouldn't even have a long life, so the great clans hadn't been willing to marry their daughters to him. In the end, Zhao Han had found a gentle, virtuous, and capable wife for him. That way, she could stay at his side to take good care of him.

In terms of appearance and figure, King Dai's own Madam Dai wasn't inferior to Madam Jin at all, but his own madam was too direct and too intense in personality. It was hard for him to act with much of the dignity of a man in front of her. In contrast, Madam Jin was truly a woman who was soft and gentle like water. Whenever he saw the tenderness with which she treated King Jin, as well as her sweet appearance, he had felt incredible envy. He'd always thought that was what a woman was supposed to be like!

Of course, because Madam Dai was the Meng clan's miss and had the massive Meng clan behind her, he didn't dare to rashly offend her. He didn't

even dare to mess around with others or visit places such as red light districts, either.

However, when he thought about how Madam Jin was now a widow, as the pillar of her family was now dead, he imagined that she would be full of despair and anxiety in the future. He couldn't help but feel a flame burn within him.

Just then, the empress called out to the crowd. "Does anyone have any objections to what this empress has said?"

"Your highness is brilliant!" those present replied with a bow. Having the Embroidered Envoy investigate the situation was the most suitable option, after all. The Embroidered Envoy had always been strict and fair, punishing vicious offenders severely.

King Dai gave the empress' exaggerated curves a glance. He quickly pulled back his gaze, however.

Just what did the empress eat to grow like that? Her waist is clearly so thin, and yet her butt is so big. It looks as if it would be really easy for her to bear children, and yet she didn't have a single child. It seems father emperor didn't work very hard in his later years.

His beautiful stepmother really was a source of fantasies. He had even dreamed about her before. That dream had been really amazing, but when he woke up from it, he was drenched in cold sweat. Whether it was his father's imperial power or the empress' prestige, they both prevented him from showing even the slightest bit of disrespect.

"Does Linglong have any objections to this?" the empress asked as her gaze fell onto the crown princess.

Bi Linglong nodded slightly and said, "We will do everything as your highness suggests."

Many subjects present had strange expressions. The empress and crown princess were the two people with the most authority in the capital at present. Normally, they always fought against each other and tried to undermine each other, so many things just couldn't be resolved. And yet today, they surprisingly agreed. If the two of them were so cooperative all the time, there would be far fewer internal disputes in the court.

The empress nodded and said, "Since the marquis is now a suspect, you cannot move around as you please either, so you will stay behind in the palace to be watched closely. Once the Embroidered Envoy has investigated the truth, we can then continue the discussions."

This is the perfect time to keep this brat here, to keep me company.

When she thought about the time they would spend together, she couldn't help but look forward to it. Even though she was the empress, she was definitely not as pure and bright as others thought. She was full of vexation and feelings of grievance. Only after he came had she realized that being a woman was actually such a blessing.

Bi Linglong's eyes lit up as well. If Zu An had to stay in the palace, they would have more opportunities to meet.

Even though the other subjects felt that it was a bit inappropriate for a subject to remain in the Imperial Palace through the night, they were also worried that he would run if he left. If he stayed here in the palace, the Embroidered Envoy would keep an eye on him, so there wouldn't be any problems. Thus, they didn't oppose the suggestion.

Zu An knew that the empress was doing this to shelter him, so he didn't refuse her good intentions.

Soon after, the empress had Eunuch Lu find a place for Zu An to settle down. At the same time, she sent out the order to the Embroidery House to investigate the case of King Jin's murder.

Eunuch Lu brought Zu An out of the Palace of Peace. They arrived at a secluded place, and he said with a smile, "Sir Zu can do as he pleases."

"Are you not going to lock me up?" Zu An replied with a smile.

"Sir Zu must be joking. The empress was merely saying that to appease the others; how could she lock you up? However, I must ask Sir Zu to not leave the Imperial Palace to not trouble the empress too much," Eunuch Lu reminded him.

"Alright," Zu An casually agreed. Meanwhile, in his mind, he was wondering how he would sneak out.

“Right, once those ministers leave, Sir Zu can go and look for the empress. Her highness is always thinking about Sir Zu,” Eunuch Lu said. His expression was calm at first, but the more he spoke, the more excited he became. A hint of redness even appeared in his eyes.

Zu An was speechless. In truth, he had already figured out what was happening after being around them for so long, realizing that Eunuch Lu was one of the empress’ pursuers. He had even been willing to be ‘purified’ in order to enter the capital with her. And yet now, he was the one egging him on to be with the empress, looking even more impatient than the main characters themselves. Just what kind of ‘great selflessness’ was that?

Hm... But I guess with these kinds of selfless friends, the more there are, the better.

...

After bidding Eunuch Lu goodbye, Zu An arrived at his own side courtyard and changed into his Golden Token Eleven outfit. He went to the Embroidery House and looked for the front balding Dai Seventh and Mediterranean sea balding Chen Eighth, in order to have them investigate the case of King Jin’s death. Xiao Jianren’s injuries were too severe, so Zu An didn’t want to trouble him over such a small matter.

However, Dai Seventh and Chen Eighth didn’t think of it the same way. Both of them replied while shaking in fear, “Boss, this touches upon the death of a king, and the other is a rising star under the Crown Princess! How can we investigate a case like this?”

Zu An said calmly, “All you need to do is judge that King Jin died from excessive fear.”

“Huh?” Dai Seventh and Chen Eighth exclaimed, stunned. In the past, even if they had instructions while investigating cases, it had always been rather tactful. Now, they were actually being told exactly how to conclude the case. Wasn’t this a bit too direct?

“Is there a problem?” Zu An asked.

“None at all, none at all. We will of course follow our boss; just say the word!” Dai Seventh and Chen Eighth replied with a chuckle.

Sir Eleventh was now the Chief Commander, so he had the final say in the Embroidery House. Of course they were going to listen to him. As for how King Jin had really died, that wasn't important.

Zu An patted their shoulders and said, "Do well, and with this achievement, it'll be enough to promote you to Silver Token Envoys."

"Thank you, Sir Eleven! No, thank you, Chief Commander!" the two exclaimed happily. After braving the threat of death for so many years, bigger and harder tasks had always found them, but promotions never had. And yet, when they clung to Sir Eleven's thick thighs, they were met with success after success!

"Apart from that, there's another matter I need the two of you to investigate closely, which is the reason why King Jin targeted the Murong clan and the marquis. I want to find out if anyone instigated them from behind the scenes," Zu An added. He'd always had a feeling that this situation wasn't that simple. King Jin had mysteriously targeted him fiercely, and seemed to have had no intention of ever backing down. As soon as Zu An dealt with him, he was immediately accused of misconduct, as if someone had been hiding in the shadows and waiting for him to fall into their trap.

"Understood. We've heard that Madam Jin is currently keeping watch by King Jin's coffin. While investigating King Jin's cause of death, we'll also investigate her and the people in the manor," Dai Seventh and Chen Eighth replied.

After arranging these things, Zu An then paid Xiao Jianren a visit and told him to rest well.

...

With that, he finally left the Embroidery House. He changed his outfit and decided to make a trip out of the palace.

Then, however, he saw Bi Linglong walking directly toward him, escorted by maids and eunuchs. Amid her attendants, she looked like a crane among a flock of chickens, elegant and noble. The red beauty mark between her brows made her perfect and exquisite face seem even more stunning. The golden ornament in her hair was like an invisible finger that constantly tugged at the heartstrings of any onlookers.

“Sir Zu, this crown princess has some things to ask you about,” Bi Linglong said in her clear and beautiful voice, a look of delight flashing through her eyes when she saw him.

The two of them quickly arrived at a lake gazebo. The servants were all ordered to guard them from afar. It was normal for there to be some private things to talk about after such a huge thing happened to Zu An; besides, the gazebo was quite open and the two could be seen from afar, so it wasn't inappropriate.

“Why did the empress help you?” Bi Linglong immediately asked the most pressing question as soon as they sat down. The other subjects hadn't sensed anything back then, but she knew the empress had acted to help Zu An.

“It might be because she's lusting after me,” Zu An replied in a bashful manner. A madam who had been neglected for a long time really had astonishing fighting strength! If not because his body was special, he probably wouldn't have been able to subdue that fierce steed.

“Be serious,” Bi Linglong said in annoyance.

“I am being serious...” Zu An said helplessly. Why did no one believe him when he was telling the truth, and yet they believed all of his lies?

He was worried that she would actually get to the heart of the matter, so he quickly changed the topic, saying, “By the way, I have something to ask the crown princess too. If there came a day when Sir Bi and I were both drowning, and you could only save one, who would you save?”

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Chapter 1899: Cross-Dressing Influencer and Shifting Shadows

When she heard the question, Bi Linglong's expression changed greatly. She asked, “Are you alright?” If it weren't because of where they were, and the fact that the maids and eunuchs could see all of their movements, she would have wanted to reach out to check his forehead for a fever.

“I want to know what you would choose,” Zu An said with a serious expression.

In that instant, Bi Linglong wondered whether there was something not quite right with how they had started the conversation today. She replied, "You and my father are both cultivators, so why would you need people to save you if you fell into water?"

"Imagine that we didn't have our cultivations, and we couldn't swim. If no one saved us, we could only drown," Zu An added.

"You're being serious?" Bi Linglong replied as she stared into his eyes.

Zu An nodded, saying, "I'm serious."

Bi Linglong fell silent. After a while, she said, "Even though I don't know why you would ask such a stupid question, I'll still answer it. In that situation, I would save my father, because if I saved you, you would still have all those sweethearts to go through before you got to me."

Zu An was speechless.

This woman really is formidable. Now I'm the one who feels guilty.

He could only change his question, asking, "If there came a day when I asked you to travel the world with me, would you be willing to elope with me?"

Bi Linglong was stunned. She replied, "Why do we need to elope? His majesty is already gone and no one else would care about us in the capital. Once I become the empress, the entire empire will be in our grasp. Who will be able to get in the way of us anymore? We can just stay together, and who can say a single word about that? Isn't it great to enjoy the best authority in the capital? Why do we need to roam the world?"

Zu An became silent when he heard her reply. It was as he expected.

Bi Linglong had been raised on the principles of making her clan stronger and wishing to achieve the pinnacle of authority. She was a capable career woman through and through and had a kind of indescribable infatuation toward authority. Now that she was only a single step away from achieving her dreams, how could she possibly give up?

"Just what is wrong with you today? Why are you asking all these nonsensical questions?" Bi Linglong asked, looking at him worriedly.

"It's nothing, I was just asking them in passing," Zu An said with a smile. He had already received his answers to some questions, so there was no need to continue asking.

"Right, we've already made it through King Jin's storm, but you can't be so reckless in the future as to kill a prince in public again. I really wonder just where you got that courage from," Bi Linglong said, shooting him an angry look. She had almost been scared to death by him this time.

Zu An gave her a look and said with a smile, "I have always been quite bold."

For some reason, Bi Linglong's face turned red as she remarked, "Hmph, scoundrel." She quickly collected her thoughts, however, and said, "Right, there was probably someone who incited King Jin behind the scenes. King Jin was used as someone else's blade without even realizing it. Now, Madam Jin is left all by herself. She really is pitiful, so don't trouble her anymore."

Zu An was speechless. He replied, "Am I that ruthless?"

"Of course I know you're not, but don't trouble her when the Embroidered Envoy investigates King Jin."

"Fine," Zu An said, although he was a bit curious. Just what was so special about Madam Jin that she could actually receive the help of Bi Linglong?

...

The two of them couldn't stay together for too long because of their identities. After they spoke for a bit, Bi Linglong could only get up to leave.

As he watched her beautiful figure recede, Zu An sighed. He took out two storage pouches, which were the belongings of Old Mi and Wei Dan that he obtained in the past. Judging from what the libationer's old servant said, these two had participated in the schemes against the royal family bloodline. However, he didn't trust what the servant said completely. Even though the explanation was perfectly reasonable, the topic was just too important. He still had to verify things.

These personal storage pouches likely stored the two's most important items. He wondered if there were any records of what had happened back then. If the information suggested that the events of the past had nothing to do with Bi Qi, that would be a win-win situation for everyone. If there really was a

connection, it wouldn't be too late to think about what to do at that time. Unfortunately, there were restrictions placed on the storage pouches. There was no way to open them through brute force.

Thankfully, he had Mo Xi's 'Farewell Nanchao' skill. However, the skill would only be effective once certain conditions were met. It seemed as if he had to raise Mo Xi's grade first.

He turned around and returned to Golden Token Eleven's residence. When he was certain that there was no one around, he took out the Keyboard System. After tallying up the Rage points he received, he found that they had actually reached 564,000!

He was about to start his pulls when he thought of something. He took out some copper coins and carried out a divination for himself. The results showed extreme luck. Zu An was overjoyed to see that. After learning about divination, he could even avoid bad luck when he did the lottery from now on!

He started the lottery system, and the lights rapidly moved around the keyboard. He had gotten used to seeing 'thank you for playing' from the start, but the indicator immediately stopped on the letter 'L'.

Zu An was startled. He was getting lucky right from the start!

He stared at the screen to see what he had ended up pulling this time. He saw a row of text on the holographic screen in front of him.

Congratulations on pulling the skill 'Cross-Dressing Influencer'!

Zu An was stunned. The name gave him a bad feeling.

Skill introduction: In the past, there was a handsome man who had a strange hobby, which was that he liked to wear dresses and appear like a woman. At first, his outfits were crude and he soon became the target of people's scorn and hatred. However, the heavens do not let down the diligent. One day, his cross-dressing skill reached great heights. When he turned into a woman, no one could see through his disguise anymore. Furthermore, he became the world's most beautiful woman, someone who received the fondness of countless men.

He had all of the men of the world within his grasp. This lasted until one day, he fell in love with a man. That was when the tragedy began...

Later, his identity was exposed. The men who found out the truth were furious. They tied him to a stake and burned him alive.

Warning: Cross-dressing has risks. Cross-dressing brings momentary pleasure, but also more and more pleasure continuously!

Zu An was completely speechless. Just what kind of a warning is this? Why did he feel as if not many of these skills were decent? As he continued to read the description, he prayed for it to please not make him cross-dress, please...

Skill Description: This skill can only be used on a man. After the skill is used, that man can become a woman. His beauty will be raised by a hundred times, and his charm a hundred times, but he will lose all of his other skills until this skill is removed.

Beauty is your weapon. As long as you aren't too ugly yourself, you can become the world's number one beauty. There will be no need for fighting, because countless men will be willing to throw themselves into the fire and flames for you.

Friendly reminder 1: Do not rashly look into a mirror after using the skill, because you will easily fall in love with yourself.

Friendly reminder 2: Do not be infatuated with becoming a woman. The more you use this skill, the more your own mind will be affected. You will be imperceptibly influenced and become used to being a woman, and no longer want to become a man.

Zu An felt his entire body go numb when he read all that. He almost threw the bronze coins in his hands away. This was the damn extreme luck that the divination had spoken of?

This damn skill actually made you a woman! More importantly, you'd lose all of your abilities. With such a huge detriment, who would be insane enough to use such a thing? Besides, what normal man wanted to cross-dress?

No, this isn't even cross-dressing, this is just completely transforming into a woman!

Even if your beauty and charm is raised a hundredfold, what the hell is the point of that?!

What kind of perverted skill is this?!

Zu An continued his pulls with a sulky expression. As he saw the 'Congratulations on pulling a Ki Fruit' and 'Thank you for playing' messages, he remained in shock. Only when the light indicator stopped on the keyboard's C key did his mood take a turn for the better.

Congratulations on pulling the skill 'Shifting Shadows'!

Skill Introduction: Within the range of your divine sense, you can swap positions with any living creatures or objects.

Zu An reflexively continued reading, but there was nothing else.

Huh?

He was used to all sorts of scam skills and was already used to their harsh activation conditions and weird side effects. He was caught off guard now that he had obtained a normal skill. More importantly, the skill didn't even have any negative effects! It was simple to use, and its effects were even more powerful. It was simply a divine skill!

Even though he had his instant movement skill, there was a cooldown period, but this Shifting Shadows didn't. Furthermore, in certain situations, it would be even more useful. When he thought of that, he couldn't help but smile.

It seems the Baopu Sutra's divination is accurate after all. My pulls really were extremely lucky.

After totaling it up, he had a sum of 610 Ki Fruits. It was also quite a bit higher than usual.

He summoned Mo Xi. Soon after, the fiery, tan-skinned Xia Dynasty beauty appeared in her miniskirt and strapless top. When she saw him, Mo Xi immediately reached out her little hand for Ki Fruits. She was clearly already addicted to the taste.

Zu An took out everything he had saved up and threw it all into her mouth at once. There was so much that Mo Xi even choked along the way. Zu An gently patted her back so that she could catch her breath and continue eating. Perhaps because of the fact that he fed her often, she now had a much better impression of him and wasn't opposed to that degree of bodily contact.

He'd had a total of 424 leftover from last time. Together with the 610, they took her from the peak of fifth rank all the way to seventh. However, the seventh rank needed 1200 Ki Fruits, and the eighth rank needed 1800. The higher they went, the more difficult it became. According to the speed at which the requirements built up, it didn't seem as if he would be able to undo the restrictions on the two storage pouches anytime soon.

He suddenly thought of something. The Baopu Sutra had pill refinement methods. He could try to refine some Ki Condensation Pills to raise Mo Xi's cultivation in place of the Ki Fruits.

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Chapter 1900: Terrible News

With Zu An's current status, the amount of resources at his disposal far exceeded that of an ordinary person. Rather than painstakingly trying to gather Ki Fruits through the Rage system, it was easier to collect medicinal ingredients to refine pills. The effects of pills and Ki Fruits were actually extremely similar, after all.

Apart from that, just like Daji, after the sixth rank, not only Ki Fruits were needed to raise Mo Xi's cultivation; some special breakthrough materials were necessary as well. Mo Xi needed Rainbow Cloudstones, Thunderjade Raccoon Cores, Chinese Bellflowers, and Gemflame Stamens. Fortunately, there weren't any ridiculously rare items. Previously, he had gathered some of them through the help of Hub of Freedom and the Fiend races, but he had already used them up for Mo Xi's promotion to seventh rank. He had to purchase the others separately.

He changed into his Golden Token Eleven outfit again and went to the Embroidery House. The Embroidery House was in charge of intelligence, so it was naturally much easier to gather things through them than to try to find items through his own strength.

Soon after, a chubby Silver Token Envoy reported to him. His name was Tang Hui, and he was in charge of managing the warehouse. Zu An couldn't help but give him a few looks. It seemed that in every world, the one in charge of the logistics warehouse always seemed to be robust and stout.

Tang Hui respectfully greeted Zu An.

“Reporting to Chief Commander. Chinese Bellflower and Gemflame Stamens are precious ingredients, but the Imperial Palace’s warehouse has an abundant amount of them. There is no lack of these ingredients.

“As for Rainbow Cloudstones and Thunderjade Raccoon Cores, we do not have any in the Imperial Palace. There should be a way to obtain Rainbow Cloudstones. The Yu clan enjoys market dominance over a third of the world’s gem and ki stone business. If they cannot find these kinds of special gems, it is even less likely for others to be able to do so.”

However, the Yu clan and the court had had a falling out, so it was difficult to ask them for assistance now.

“As for the Thunderjade Raccoon Cores, the original source comes from the Fiend races’ side. We would need to search for them through the Fiend races’ marketplace.”

Zu An had a strange expression. After all this trouble, it was all stuff within the family! Whether it was the Yu clan or the Fiend races, they both had deep ties with him. He said, “Help me collect the Chinese Bellflowers and Gemflame Stamens. I have my own ways of dealing with the Rainbow Cloudstones and Thunderjade Raccoon Cores, and will find my own way of getting them.”

“Understood!” Tang Hui replied, his expression full of admiration.

Chief Commander is so formidable! He has his own channels for getting these things.

“By the way, bring me some Sky Crane Root, Red Star Jade, and Purple Firmament Flower too,” Zu An added. These were the materials needed for the Ki Condensation Pill.

Tang Hui thought to himself that even though these items were precious, he would be able to find a way of getting them. He asked, “How much does Chief Commander want?”

“As much as you can get your hands on!” Zu An said seriously. He had to refine a large amount of Ki Condensation Pills, so he needed a ton of medicinal ingredients.

Tang Hui wiped away cold sweat and said, "Alright, this subordinate will make sure to complete this task well!"

A new boss came with new policies. Whether or not he would be able to keep the position of warehouse logistics manager would depend on whether he did his task well

No, I need to do it well no matter how hard it is!

There was naturally no need to worry about the matter of money. A lot of it could just be debt on the public purse. Which department dared to come up with excuses to withhold the things the Chief Commander wanted? He would teach them exactly how the characters 'Embroidered Envoy' were written!

...

When he left the Embroidery House, Zu An thought to himself that the feeling of being a leader really was great. All he needed to do was give an order, and then his subordinates would get it done properly. It was nothing like before, when he'd had to painstakingly look for everything himself.

Even so, he still had to look for the Rainbow Cloudstones and Thunderjade Raccoon Cores himself. Yu Yanluo was on the Fiend races' side, so it was the perfect time to contact the people there as well. His contact with the Fiend races over by the capital side had been Kong Nanwu, but after the major developments that took place, she had already gone back. Her maid Nan Xun had been left behind here as a mediator.

Nan Xun was referred to as a maid, but her status wasn't so simple at all. She had previously been King Qi's concubine on the surface, but she had also secretly collecting information as a courtesan queen in Scarlet Invitation. Furthermore, she seemed to have been Zhao Han's spy. She really was living a life of espionage.

Zu An quickly left the Imperial Palace in his Embroidered Envoy uniform, and no one tried to stop him. He went straight for King Qi Manor. After what happened at Violet Mountain, King Qi Manor's people had experienced a strict lockdown. Of course, people like Madam Qi had special identities, and King Qi's crimes hadn't been set in stone yet, so the court couldn't just throw them into prison. They were temporarily being kept under house arrest within the manor.

Zu An had thought Nan Xun would be mixed in among them, but he found out that she had actually gone missing. She seemed to have realized that the situation was unfavorable and fled ahead of time. He thought a bit to himself, and after changing clothes, he then went to Scarlet Invitation.

...

Lovable laughter came from beauties all around Zu An. No wonder so many men came here to throw away money extravagantly! Scarlet Invitation's women were really pretty, and the courtesans were even more beautiful. Who knew how many people were waiting for a chance to meet them?

However, that didn't stop Zu An. He took out the keepsake he had been given and was quickly led to a secluded courtyard by a maid.

As soon as he entered, a sweet fragrance rushed toward him and a voice exclaimed, "Young master finally came~"

Zu An leaned to the side to avoid that figure, and looked at her calmly. He had to admit that Nan Xun was indeed very beautiful. No wonder even King Qi had decided to make her one of his concubines after he saw her. She had even become the most mysterious and most charming courtesan queen in Scarlet Invitation.

"I thought that you were locked in King Qi Manor, but I didn't find you there, so I came here," Zu An said, sitting down casually.

Nan Xun broke out into a small run to pour tea for him at his side. She exclaimed with a cute and childish voice, "The young master cares so much about me! I'm so, so happy!"

"Enough. There's no need to use such tactics against me. I came because I have some business to discuss with you today," Zu An said, then told her about the Rainbow Cloudstones and Thunderjade Raccoon Cores.

When she heard that they were talking about proper business, Nan Xun's expression grew serious as well. She said, "Don't worry, Regent. I'll definitely contact the Fiend races to help you collect these materials."

"Much appreciated," Zu An said, nodding slightly.

Nan Xun said with a pursed smile, "Oh my, you're the Regent! Is there a reason to thank me? I've actually been longing for you to ask me to help you more."

"In the end, you are a madam as well, so is there a need for such courtesy?" Zu An couldn't help but reply with a smile.

"It's a pity that I'm not the Regent's madam," Nan Xun said softly. After giving Zu An a look, she quickly changed the topic. "Besides, I'm just one of King Qi's concubines, one of the lesser ones too. There's no status there to speak of anyway." After some hesitation, she asked, "Can the young master help out King Qi Manor's people if you can? After staying in the manor for so long, I've developed a bit of affection for many people there."

Zu An was a bit surprised, but he still nodded, saying, "Alright." He had to help people like Zhao Xiaodie, anyway.

"By the way, I've received news from the King Court, stating that the Second Prince's war in the front lines doesn't seem to be going well. He needs the King Court's assistance," Nan Xun said, suddenly remembering something.

Zu An was stunned. He asked, "Could it be that the Second Prince is stirring up trouble?"

After all, the Second Prince's attempt at a coup after the Fiend Emperor died had failed because of him. The King Court had punished him by sending him to the northern border to fight against the sinister beings there.

The Second Prince was one of the Fiend races' four great generals, someone who excelled at fighting wars. Furthermore, he had also brought his own elite troops with him. The seal had only been slightly damaged and hadn't fully collapsed yet. The evil monsters that escaped shouldn't have been something the Second Prince couldn't handle. With his strength, it should have been enough to keep those monsters in check.

"I don't think that's the case. The information I received suggests that the Second Empress immediately sent a general to lead the King Court's elites in delivering assistance," Nan Xun replied. "Young master can feel at ease. With the King Court's assistance, there should be no problems with the seal."

Zu An voiced his confirmation, but he still felt a strange premonition inside.

After thinking about it, he took out the recording mirror the Second Empress had given him and put in some immortal-grade ki stones. He felt a bit heartbroken. This world was good in many other ways, but there was no social media messaging or phones. Contact across greater distances was incredibly inconvenient. Even though this recording mirror could achieve effects similar to a video call, its resource consumption was too excessive. Not even the wealthiest people could use them frequently. He wondered if he had to come up with a conversation tool himself; there were several similar items in the Baopu Sutra's artifact refining section.

A ripple appeared on the mirror, and a wonderful figure appeared. She was a beautiful woman lying in bed, dressed in a silk nightgown that gently rested on her satiny skin. It made her waist look even finer and her chest more graceful.

"My Regent, I've tried to contact you several times before, but failed to reach you. I was getting a bit worried," she said. There was a natural sweetness to her voice that could drive people mad. Her perfect oval face was pure white like snow under the lantern's illumination. Her eyes were charming and alluring, her moist lips carrying an enticing luster. Her expression was full of joy from seeing her lover again, which made her look even more moving.

Nan Xun lowered her head and withdrew. She didn't dare to continue listening to their conversation, or else she could be silenced. At the same time, she thought to herself, The Second Empress really is a woman among women! Even I feel a bit of an urge to take her into my arms to play with her, let alone a man.

She was already an outstanding beauty herself on the human side, but she was still lacking compared to the Second Empress. More importantly, it was the Second Empress' respected status and special bearing that were hard for her to match.

Zu An's mood also couldn't help but improve when he saw that beautiful face. He said, "I was swept up into a secret dungeon before. That might be why the recording mirror couldn't connect." There was naturally no way for the recording mirror to work when he was in a different world entirely, after all.

Then, he quickly asked about the Second Prince's situation and voiced his suspicion that it could be a setup to empty out the King Court's defenses.

Second Empress shook her head slightly. Her expression became serious as she replied, "Don't worry. I'm not stupid. I have my own sources, and there

was indeed an issue with the sealed land. The Second Prince has suffered casualties of more than half his troops. I sent the Peacock King and other elite troops to offer assistance, and we'll also gather strong men from the different races to offer assistance."

Zu An was shocked. He asked, "The situation has already gotten that bad?"

The Second Empress voiced her confirmation. "The hole in the seal suddenly became much larger, allowing more and more monsters through. Fortunately, the seal still hasn't completely ruptured, so as long as we can defeat the monsters that are coming out, we can reinforce the seal again."

"Just what are those monsters? How strong are they?" Zu An asked, getting more and more worried.

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