

Longevity 701

Chapter 701 - The Devil Concubine's Tactics, Tao Qian Borrows a Treasure_2

"Sister-in-law, do not trust these bald frauds; they are merely trying to deceive you to take the Spring and Autumn Chariot from your hands."

"Let me, Zhu Xun, handle this. Although I am only at the Cavernous Mystery level, I have a mentor in the Ultimate Happiness Realm behind me, possessing the strength to protect you as we make our way back to the Southern lands."

"The Fumin Province might be small, yet it also provides a foothold."

"Do not worry, sister-in-law. Zhu Xun inherits my elder brother's last wishes, and I would give up my life if necessary to ensure your safety."

As these words spilled from Zhu Xun's mouth,

the Little Leiyin Temple fell instantly silent.

Could such brazen and shameless people truly exist in this world?

This was the thought at the bottom of everyone's heart, including Tao Qian's.

Of course, in terms of relationships, Zhu Xun wasn't lying.

In terms of age, Yuan Mingzhen was only in her twenties, and Zhu Xun was old enough to be her great-grandfather.

However, in terms of seniority, Yuan Mingzhen was the Primordial Consort accepted by the "Emperor" just before his demise. All eyes watched as she entered the palace in the Phoenix Chariot. Even though the Emperor passed away before laying a finger on Yuan Mingzhen, she was nominally the heir to the Zhu Dynasty.

Zhu Xun was a prince from the previous generation, the Emperor's own brother, so calling her 'Imperial Sister-in-law' was not wrong.

But nobody was a fool, nor a naive child.

Who would not discern the subtext in Zhu Xun's words: follow me, sister-in-law, and I will take care of you in place of my brother.

Everyone could hear it, and so did Yuan Mingzhen.

Zhu Xun thought that the Devil Concubine, in a matter of life and death, would most likely capitulate to him.

To demonstrate his own strength and to some extent show off to the many warlords present... more precisely, to show his abilities to the hosts, the Three Arhats of the Demon Buddha Temple.

After Zhu Xun finished speaking, he suddenly began casting Sublime Dharma.

Behind him erupted mighty Source Qi, revealing a shattered Secret Realm resembling a "dark Demon Cave," and within it, six massive, Heavenly Pillar-like pillars of red Divine Qi Origin Light soared into the sky.

Merely glancing at the origins of that Divine Qi, the bystanders felt numerous mutations arising within their bodies.

Cries of alarm and lamentation were incessant.

Even the Three Arhats could not help but turn to look.

Kongchan Arhat narrowed his eyes as if he recognized the roots of those six pillars of Divine Qi, and spoke with some surprise,

"Six Yang Daoist?"

"I had not expected you to still be alive."

The terrifying Non-human Clan shadow, wriggling in the depths of the Demon Cave Secret Realm, did not respond to Kongchan.

He merely snorted, and the phantom image of the Secret Realm shattered and dissipated.

Nevertheless, everyone realized that Zhu Xun indeed had a formidable backing.

In an instant, the various warlords and strong people began searching their memories for elderly strong people connected to the words "Six Yang."

Among the guests, there were disciples from the Ting Di Sect and the Ten Thousand Miles Sect.

Not long after, a disciple from one of the sects mentioned, "Hundreds of years ago, the Lou Guandao produced a Talent named [Six Yang True Monarch], who disappeared while transcending the Daoist Transformation Tribulation. Could this be him...?"

Almost simultaneously, a voice transmission from Master Yuan reached Tao Qian's mind.

"It's that old scoundrel Six Yang!"

"In his early years, he was sent by the Taishang Demon Sect as an undercover Demon Child to steal teachings from Lou Guandao, only to betray them later, believing the Taishang Demon Sect had no future, and truly joined Lou Guandao."

"His talent was incredibly high, practicing Dual Cultivation of Dao and Demon, entering the Perfect Realm of Ultimate Happiness at an astonishingly fast rate."

"Nevertheless, we all agreed that with his nature, he would definitely not overcome the Daoist Transformation Tribulation, and indeed, during his tribulation, he was covertly attacked by an Elder of the Taishang Demon Sect and utterly failed."

"Looking at him now, it seems he's had the fortune to stumble upon a Secret Realm to cling to life desperately, choosing that Heavenly Eunuch boy, probably hoping to absorb some of the Dynasty's Fortune to heal his injuries."

Master Yuan explained up to this point.

Then, as if remembering something, he scoffed, "If it were in the past, this approach might have worked, but this old thing didn't foresee that times have changed. The Longevity Heavenly Dynasty has been so fractured by your actions that the Imperial regime has been completely abolished. There's no Dynasty's Fortune to speak of; he can't even find a warm pile of excrement to consume."

Hearing this, Tao Qian's mind responded, "... Master Yuan, although your praise is welcome, it should not be worded like that."

No matter who explained it,

Tao Qian and the warlords now understood why Zhu Xun, the Zhu Dynasty's prince and true inheritor of Lou Guandao, chose to betray Lou Guandao.

It turned out to be a lingering connection: treasonous on the surface, yet he found a Lou Guandao senior who had Mutated and Fallen into practice Dual Cultivation of Dao and Demon.

Having shown his hand and strength, Zhu Xun believed the timing was perfect.

"Yuan Mingzhen had been trapped in the Han Mountain Temple, and now there was an addition of a group of dead baldies from the Free Temple. If she spends more time with them, whether by deceit or coercion, they might convert Yuan Mingzhen."

"Today is the first day she has appeared in public. As long as she agrees verbally, those hypocritical baldies have no reason to stop her, and Six Yang True Monarch would certainly make the Three Arhats of the Demon Buddha Temple give some face and not interfere."

"Going with the flow, to gather her into my fold, how wonderful that would be."

As Zhu Xun was thinking this way,

a scoff suddenly resounded through the area.

Everyone turned to Yuan Mingzhen, only to see the Devil Concubine not even glancing at Zhu Xun, taking the reins to return to the Han Mountain Temple. Before leaving, she let out a statement that shocked the entire Little Leiyin Temple.

"Zhu Xun?"

"Hmph, I've heard you're a Heavenly Eunuch who, to compensate for an Innate defect, sought out a technique called [Nine Yang Replenishing Body Technique], and in the span of nine hours voraciously consumed nine thousand phalluses from various Life beings, including members of the Human Clan... Were it only that, it would be one thing, but due to your Innate deficiency causing a broken Mental State, you grew twisted and cruel, with a penchant for tormenting women."

"Even if I, Yuan Mingzhen, were to perish, I would not wish to have any entanglement with someone like you."

"Also, allow me to tell you another thing: your name is not on the Zhu family's bloodline register."

Chapter 702 Devil Concubine's Tactics, Tao Qian Borrows a Treasure_3

"You should change your surname, you can't use Zhu."

When these words fell,

Many warlords were first stunned, then they all couldn't hold back their laughter, and the scene immediately became agitated.

And Zhu Xun, who had thought the good times were about to come, now had his complexion turn from pale to crimson, then to purple, and with a "puff," he even spat out a mouthful of pus and blood.

He was finished!

One careless move and the entire game was lost.

According to reason, it shouldn't have been this way, after all, Zhu Xun was a man with strong cultivation and unparalleled Divine Skills, commanding a large army and with an old monster backing him.

Although it was very likely that he couldn't compete for supremacy, he was still qualified to vie for the Devil Concubine in distress.

Many of the warlords present had previously regarded Zhu Xun as a formidable rival.

But who could have expected?

Such a ferocious warlord, a remnant of the Zhu's, was ruined by Yuan Mingzhen in just a few words.

The most fatal wound was Yuan Mingzhen's last sentence.

After all, she was the heir to the Zhu's Dharma lineage, Mouth Containing the Heavenly Constitution, incapable of lying. Her words were equivalent to expelling Zhu Xun from the Zhu Family.

Once the news spread, all the Zhu family members coming to his side would disperse, and his army would be dismantled.

As for keeping it secret?

Inside the Little Leiyin Temple, not a single person would keep this Heavenly Eunuch's secret.

Accompanying the roaring laughter, the humiliated Zhu Xun had no choice but to temporarily escape.

Then the warlords all set their sights on You Changqing and Shi Zhongsheng.

Gao Tianci, who had initially been regarded as an enemy by everyone, was instead ignored, which made him even more unhappy.

The next focal point: the overt and covert struggles among the warlords.

All the demon monks were quick to understand and yielded the stage.

Allowing these powerfully strong demon figures and provincial representatives to begin fighting, the situation immediately became explosive.

Tao Qian, both listening and watching contentedly, was unraveling the situation like unwinding threads.

At the same time, he also quickly sorted out the situation of the Northern Land Provinces, analyzing in his mind,

"It seems that it won't be long before the Northern Land Provinces ignite a large-scale war amongst the warlords."

"The source of it all lies in the Alchemists' 'Hidden Dragon Feeding the True Dragon' plan."

"There's only one Ancestor Dragon Bloodline!"

"The Alchemist's full support can only happen once!"

"These warlords, as well as the many forces behind them, will do everything to seize the maturing fruit."

"The loser dies, and the winner takes all."

"The many big and small warlords will join forces first to deal with the triad of Zhang Jinluan, Si Xixin, and Hong Fu..."

Tao Qian thought to himself while also feeling a sense of powerlessness.

Although Master Tao had stirred up many things, he was also self-aware.

Once the chaos in the Northern Land broke out, there was no place for him to intervene.

Not to mention him, even if the entire Spirit Treasure Sect was dragged into it, it would hardly be helpful unless he could invite Lingbao Tianzun to descend from the heavens.

Such wishful thinking was needless to say.

"When will those blood-sucking old rats of the Alchemists die out?" Tao Qian cursed in his heart, a rare occurrence.

Just then, the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva, who had recovered at some unknown time, approached Tao Qian and his wife with the appearance of the young Guanyin,

Standing at a deliberate distance, she first beamed a charming smile at Yunrong, indicating she had no covetous intentions at present.

Then she turned to Tao Qian, pretending to be naive and coyly said,

"Wu Gou, brother!"

"My master and the two senior masters want you to come over for a moment, presumably regarding your magical duel with that ugly monk tomorrow."

"Shan'er surreptitiously tells you, it's a good thing, they have powerful treasures and Divine Skills to lend you."

"Hurry and come with Shan'er, do not delay."

While speaking words that made Tao Qian terribly uncomfortable, the Beautiful Corpse actually seemed like a charming and adorable young girl, coming up to pull and tug Tao Qian to see the three Arhats.

At that moment, Tao Qian's mind suddenly flashed with the many scenes from his time in Southern Yue, especially the terrifying Heavenly Demon Buddha Mother Dharma Image of the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva, the image of her pulling apart the Dharma Image, the scene of her swallowing a Buddha's son without hesitation...

Had it not been for the persistence of his Mind, Master Tao would probably have taken out the Toad God Wa Dang and smashed it down at her already.

Chapter 703 Buddha Treasure Golden Cymbal, Cutting Flesh to Seek Life

Despite Tao Qian, once a nameless Loose Cultivator, having grown into a world-famous Spirit Treasure Daoist, the transformation could be said to be enormous.

But for himself, he didn't have a strong sense of it.

After all, he was someone contented, with no pursuit of fame and fortune and other such pleasures, at most desiring only Longevity.

However, now, he clearly felt the "change" in himself.

Originally, in Tao Qian's impression, the Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva was ranked as one of the most revolting demonesses under the heavens, leaving a deep impression on him, Tao Qian, and was noted on the first page of his little notebook.

And now, such a formidable being was playing nice in front of him.

To snatch his body, she actually lowered herself to use roundabout tactics.

In the workshops back then, she had outright snatched them.

And with one snatch, it was a whole bunch of beautiful or burly men.

Her special hobby: to turn those handsome men and good Buddha sons into Meat Amber, hiding them in her Dharma Image Nether Bud.

"The Beautiful Corpse is still the Beautiful Corpse, it's just that I've changed, I've grown stronger."

"Damn it, my rivals have also grown stronger, each one abnormally so, and I still cannot fight freely, resorting to deceptive schemes."

"Fortunately... my skills in this aspect are also somewhat noteworthy."

Idly moving his thoughts, Tao Qian lightly brushed away the Beautiful Corpse.

Bringing Yunrong with him, the couple went to meet the Three Arhats, as well as Cheng Arhat, the Lord of the Earthly Buddha Country.

I do not know whether it's overconfidence or something else.

Inside the hall, not even shifting from their spot.

Only the Shipi Arhat in the center waved his sleeve, releasing a dark Demon Buddha light, which obscured the area.

Four people gazed at Tao Qian and his companion, praising them one after another.

"Indeed, a rare pair of Buddhist Sect lovebirds, extremely rare, strange that Qingjing Daoist previously hid you from the spotlight, probably fearing someone would snatch you away."

"As long as your Merit is Perfected this time, both of you can set foot in Ultimate Happiness in the future. Qingjing Daoist and Bao Xian have really made good calculations."

"Wu Gou, having previously dealt with the little monk Shenxiu, do you have confidence in winning tomorrow?"

"We lost the initiative, the second match must be won, not lost. Wu Gou Buddha Son, if you do not have full confidence, you should speak up instead of being ambiguous."

The scene before their eyes, if seen by the warring warlords within the hall, would surely astonish them and make them more convinced the South Sea Pure Lineage would join the Demon Buddha Temple.

After all, there was no second person here who could make Shipi, Kongchan, and Liansha, three powerful individuals, be so courteous.

Tao Qian had long since entered into character, being watched by the three Arhats of the Ultimate Happiness Realm without giving anything away.

Although he knew, if he revealed the slightest flaw, it was very likely he would be killed or slaughtered immediately.

He bowed solemnly and then responded:

"Three seniors, Lord Cheng."

"If I were to fight with that monk Shenxiu, the outcome would likely be fifty-fifty."

"I am in truth not adept in killing, and most of my combat strength relies on this Buddha Treasure 'People Species Bag' given to me by my Master. If I can enclose Shenxiu Monk into the bag from the beginning, then I should be able to win, but if I can't, naturally it would be Shenxiu Monk who wins."

Tao Qian made himself seem like an honest person, revealing his own weaknesses and dependences.

These, the four individuals already knew well.

They called for Tao Qian precisely to resolve this issue.

It was supposed to be a fight between the Demon Buddha Temple and the Free Temple. The one to go on stage should have been a Demon Buddha Son.

Unfortunately, there was not a single formidable Demon Buddha Son in Qiantang Province City.

They were all of the likes of Zhen Buchi and Beautiful Corpse Bodhisattva.

The former was a Love Monk, and the latter was reincarnated and re-cultivated, not even reaching the Cavernous Mystery Realm, with a Dharma Body that was rushed into maturity, and not suitable for combat.

The Demon Buddha Temple was able to stand against the formidable Buddhist Temples without falling short, naturally it also had powerful Demon Buddha Sons.

Equal to Shenxiu, or even stronger.

But none of them were present here, not under the Three Arhats.

Kongchan and Liansha, these two Arhats, were planning on how to overcome their Daoist Transformation Tribulations, and naturally had no intention of nurturing any disciples.

Shipi Arhat was not worried about the tribulation, but due to his eccentric nature, he had no suitable disciple either.

Upon closer thought, only Wu Gou Buddha Son, who happened to come knocking, was appropriate.

Especially earlier today, outside the city, this Buddha Son had managed to suppress two Cavernous Mystery Profound warlords with a flip of his hand, more than proving his statement of not being adept at killing to be modest at best.

Looking at it, this child and the monk Shenxiu seemed to be on equal footing.

After listening to Tao Qian's words, the four exchanged a glance, and then Shipi's face betrayed a hint of pain.

One hand was still slicing meat, and the speed of the slicing noticeably increased.

The other hand reached into his chest and took out an item.

As soon as the item appeared, a blinding Golden Light was revealed, stunning and deadly.

Upon closer inspection, it turned out to be a Golden Cymbal.

Almost immediately, a strange expression emerged in Tao Qian's eyes, at the same time he heard Shipi Arhat speak:

"This treasure, only crudely refined to the first level and thus still unnamed, was obtained by my Master Namo Nirvana Demon Buddha from the Outer Realm Abyss after he picked up the corpse of a female Evil God; he took a piece of flesh that had not yet rotted from her body and haphazardly turned it into this treasure, which he bestowed upon me."

"This treasure has infinite uses. All living things, Daoists and Buddha sons, devils and evil spirits, once enclosed within it, have no chance of escape and can instantly turn into a puddle of pus and blood."

"I will lend it to you temporarily. With your Mana, you won't be able to use it to trap people and turn them into blood, but making it ring should not be difficult."

"The sound of the Golden Cymbal has a soul-bewildering effect."

"Especially those who have not yet experienced the Yin Yang Joyful Path and whose Heart and Soul Dharma Body are pure Buddhist Practitioners, they simply cannot resist the enticement of this treasure."

"Monk Shenxiu possesses considerable Mana and Divine Skills, and with the Free Temple's nature, he will inevitably cheat and play dirty tomorrow. Just like today's shameless tactics, if we don't prepare something, you will surely lose tomorrow."

Chapter 704 - Buddha Treasure Golden Cymbal, Cutting Flesh to Seek Life_2

"With this treasure, everything changes. Once the Golden Cymbal sounds, no matter what preparations Shenxiu, the little monk, has made, his Heart Soul will be thrown into daze for a moment. By then, you can take him away with your People Species Bag."

As the words fell, the Golden Cymbal was tossed out by Shipi and landed straight into Tao Qian's hands.

At that moment, however, nobody noticed the strange light deep within Master Tao's eyes, his thoughts churning rapidly.

"Golden Cymbal, People Species Bag..."

For some reason, Tao Qian felt an incredibly strong sense of déjà vu.

This odd sensation even led him to momentarily overlook the origin of the Golden Cymbal.

Female Evil God, a piece of undecayed flesh, the shape of the Golden Cymbal... The answer was on the verge of revelation.

At the same time, Kongchan suddenly offered a bait, saying,

"Elder Brother, your Golden Cymbal seems to match well with Wu Gou's People Species Bag. Perhaps it's the calling of his Karma."

Upon hearing this, Shipi glared sharply at Kongchan, his face reluctant but still pretended generosity, saying,

"It's not that it can't be done. Once Qingjing opens his Magic Veins and joins our Demon Buddha, we will all be one family after all. If your nephew covets my Golden Cymbal treasure, simply ask your Master to exchange it for other fine items, or if your nephew is willing to run errands for me for a few years, I would also be willing to gift it to you for your use."

"The Senior's kindness is too much for Wu Gou to bear."

Despite feeling that it was very strange, Tao Qian still subconsciously showed the manner of the Duobao Lineage.

While swiftly tucking the Golden Cymbal into his treasure bag, he responded courteously.

At that instant, the vast and complicated Record that burst in his mind made Tao Qian even happier.

"Treasure! Such a fine treasure!"

"I must find a way to keep this object for myself."

"Now that it has entered my treasure bag, how could I possibly give it back and tarnish the reputation of the Duobao Lineage's leading disciple?"

In the field, Shipi Arhat was intent on enticing a future powerful Magic Vein with the treasure.

How could he have imagined?

The seemingly honest Buddha's son before him had already begun to contemplate how to keep his prized Buddha Treasure for himself.

Tao Qian hadn't yet figured out how to embezzle, but the plan he had earlier contrived was now conveniently executable.

He stood in his place, pretending to ponder.

Eventually, as if having made a decision, he suddenly bowed again and asked the four before him,

"Three Seniors and Lord Cheng,"

"With all due respect, I wish to inquire about a secret matter. Do you intend to collaborate with the Gao Family of Tiannan Province to facilitate their acquisition of the Devil Concubine and plunder Treasures and provisions?"

"It is indeed so. How did you nephew come to know of this?" Kongchan Arhat replied, revealing a look of surprise.

Tao Qian entered his role and spoke truthfully once more,

"My spouse and I had traveled to Tiannan Province not long ago and happened to meet a female cultivator from the South Sea. By happy coincidence, she became betrothed to a son of the Gao Family. Afterwards, because of that person from the Gao Family, I also met three Elder Ancestors from the Gao Family in Tiannan, where some incidents occurred and I, too, nearly got killed by [Jade Demon True Monarch Gao Zhan]."

"Fortunately, my Master's avatar arrived and after a battle, the Gao family sought to allure my Master and disciple, offering me many benefits. The treasures I previously offered to the Buddha on behalf of others were actually gifts from two Elder Ancestors of the Gao Family."

"The Gao Family Elders knew my spouse and I were heading to Qiantang, so they asked us to casually inquire about the movements of Demon Buddha Temple. Desperate to escape, we made perfunctory promises."

"Such minor troubles are nothing; my spouse and I have no desire to get involved with the conflicts in the Northern Land."

"However, my Master instructed me the day before yesterday that the Qingjing lineage would be joining the Demon Buddha."

"As such, I suppose I will be a monk of the Demon Buddha, and should address the three Seniors as 'Uncle Master.'"

"Given the circumstances, I must reveal the truth: that Gao Family from Tiannan has experienced a great upheaval in their bloodline, resulting in madness engulfing each and every one of them. They not only wish to snatch away the Devil Concubine but also covet the Uncle Masters' Qiantang foundations, planning to invade with a large force on the third day of the decisive battle, inviting their Ancestor God's Divine Skills or Exotic Treasures to arrive and swallow Qiantang whole."

After these words were released,

The Three Arhats sitting at the top showed no surprise on their faces, evidently expecting this.

And Lord Cheng Arhat, who was also the King, showed contempt and was about to respond when Tao Qian abruptly disclosed a secret that brought joy to all four of them.

"I am aware, Uncle Masters, that all three of you are enlightened Arhats; deceit and trickery are useless against you. The Gao Family's delusions will not come to fruition."

"On the contrary, this time the Gao Family is likely to lose both the wife and the soldiers."

"To let the three senior monks know, the young female cultivator that this little monk encountered has completely subdued that Gao family kid due to a sinful fate. She managed to glimpse the greatest secret of the Gao family from the depths of his soul."

Tao Qian said this while waving his hand, displaying the images of Duan Yuhong and Gao Buxi.

At the same time, he revealed:

"The forbear of the Gao family was none other than the alchemist Gao Huan."

"This man was an old monster who underwent a Daoist Transformation, his life's fortune connected to many large provinces; however, due to an accident, his ties were severed with many provinces, leaving only Tiannan Province."

"The scattered bloodline of the Gao family, once spread across seventy-two provinces, gradually converged in Tiannan, around their ancestral land [Gao Ling], using their own blood to strengthen the Big Array therein, sustaining their ancestor Gao Huan from mutating and collapsing... This is also why the Gao family people must seize Qiantang; any further delay, and I fear Gao Huan would be carved up and devoured by other old monsters among the alchemists."

"If the senior monks could employ their schemes and lure both the Gao family's Ultimate Happiness and their army into Qiantang, then divide your forces to invade the Gao family's ancestral land in Tiannan — exterminating their bloodline and destroying the Big Array — it is possible that this clan could be utterly decimated. The treasures and provisions plundered by the Gao family over the years could also be shared amongst yourselves."

"This one, named Gao Buxi, could serve as a guide."

No sooner had Tao Qian finished,

Kongchan, Shipi, and Lian Sha all underwent a change of expression, and Cheng Arhat, even while straining to sit up with his greasy, corpulent body, involuntarily beating his hands down, crushed into mincemeat the Heavenly Girls licking oil off him, exclaimed excitedly:

"Good!"

"This is truly great, a delightful surprise, indeed the biggest of surprises."

"Before, we only thought of keeping the Gao family's armies at bay, or at most adding one of Gao Zhan and Gao Wei. Yet, it seems our vision was too small."

"And those Great Transcendence Bodhisattvas, to refine all eighteen, the Wisdom Mother is indispensable. If we used only the mortals from Qiantang Province, yes, we could refine them, but afterwards, this Earthly Buddha Country would be greatly weakened, which would be rather unsightly."

"This information from Nephew Wu Gou is simply too timely."

"If we could swallow the entire Gao family and Tiannan Province, not only could all eighteen Bodhisattvas be perfectly refined, but our Earthly Buddha Country could rapidly expand, directly swallowing nearby large provinces like New Moon, Wu Yue, and Anqing as well."

"By that time, I, Cheng Arhat, might command immense fortune, and I might just be able to compete with Zhang Jinluan, Hong Fu, and Si Xixin for the position of Human Emperor."

"The three senior brothers can naturally look for more provisions from our temple."

"Such an opportunity must not be missed, senior brothers. Once the great plan succeeds, for the three of you to step into Daoist Transformation will be a breeze."

...

After Cheng Arhat finished speaking, not only were the Three Arhats surprised,

but even Tao Qian glanced over, thinking to himself:

"What a wily double-dealer that fatso is, indeed worthy of being a king. His skill in spinning tall tales is slightly more refined than mine at bamboozling people."

"It's just as well, the bait I laid was appetizing enough, and with Cheng Arhat's meddling, it immediately became even more enticing."

"Anyone with even the slightest bit of ambition would find it hard to resist."

Sure enough, as soon as Tao Qian's thoughts ended,

Kongchan and Lian Sha, the two Demon Buddha Arhats who desperately craved to pass the Daoist Transformation Tribulation, displayed a clear sense of eagerness on their faces.

Contrarily, Shipi was noncommittal, yet he showed signs of activity.

One could see him repeatedly slicing down, over and over, fresh chunks of flesh falling with a plop.

In just a moment or two, the area around his half-reclining Lotus Platform was already a river of blood with a mountain of flesh piled up.

What an Arhat!

He was actually inflicting the torment of a lingering death upon himself, slicing his own body down to a skeleton frame.

This strange behavior caused everyone to look over.

Cheng Arhat, Kongchan, and Lian Sha were all quietly waiting for something.

In Tao Qian's mind, the voice of Yuan Gong said:

"No need for alarm!"

"This commotion, though it looks severe, is but a regular use of the Sacrificial Flesh Skill by the old thief Shipi. This skill can predict fortune and destiny, and diagnose the prospects of success or failure, life or death in advance."

"If someone else were trying to scheme against him, it would be difficult to fool him."

"However, it's Duobao — just watch, he won't be able to predict a thing."

Chapter 705 - Peach Blossom Evil Affinity, Secret Meeting with the Devil Concubine

Master Yuan's predictions were seldom erroneous, and this time was no exception.

Upon reducing himself to a skeletal frame, the Shipi Arhat flashed with Buddha Light, and his flesh was fully restored. Then, he laughed heartily at Tao Qian,

"Good disciple, you truly are one of our own."

"The timing of this information is impeccable. We originally planned to take a big bite out of the Gao Family of Tiannan and call it quits, since Gao Huan is indeed a tough old monster to provoke."

"However, now that you've discovered the Gao Family's weakness, this is fate. How can we pass up such an opportunity?"

"In two days, when the ritual gathering concludes, I will join the Nine Venerable Transcendent Bodhisattvas in overseeing the provincial city. I believe we will be more than capable of tying up or killing the Gao Family's three ancestors, along with some other old rats hiding in the dark."

"You two proceed to Tiannan Province and exterminate the Gao family members, then refine a few more Bodhisattvas... Once Tiannan falls under our control and Gao Huan is dead, we can urge Lord Cheng to attain the Realm of Ultimate Happiness. Then, we will have the confidence to return to our temple and ask for more support."

"Excellent!"

"Fate has arrived, it should be so."

In just a few words, the Shipi Arhat had settled on a plan to obliterate the Gao Family and annex Tiannan Province, as well as to refine a group of warlord demons.

It seemed to be an easy task.

In reality, if this situation had not been covertly guided by "Duo Bao Master and Disciples," it would likely have succeeded.

However, the path ahead was now shrouded in chaos and uncertainty. Even Tao Qian could not predict it and had to plot as he went along.

The Three Arhats, upon receiving the leak from Tao Qian, greatly appreciated the previous courtesy and benefits as they had not been wasted, and the rewards were substantial.

Now, they had fully accepted Wu Gou Buddha Son as one of their own.

Borrowing the "Golden Cymbal" was not enough; the Three Arhats couldn't resist and made three more grand promises to Tao Qian.

"Good disciple, if this plan succeeds, you shall be the main contributor. When the time comes, I will vouch for you and grant you access to our Demon Buddha Temple's Hidden Scripture Pavilion. There, you will find all kinds of scriptures and Heavenly Book Immortal Records, numbering in the thousands, at your discretion to choose from. I see you lack some Slaughter Divine Power, so you could choose from the Buddha Scriptures of the 'Vajra Department,' which are suitable for your practice."

"You are the only True Inheritor of Qingjing, and your status will be exceedingly high in the future. It is proper for you to have several attendants. After this matter, I can arrange for some Heavenly Girls and Buddha Birds from our temple to serve at your behest."

"Esteemed disciple, you are not far from the Realm of Ultimate Happiness. Certainly, this realm will not impede you. However, there are bound to be some twists and turns, with the risk of Mutated transformations. Once Tiannan Province is integrated into the Buddha Country and the number of believers suddenly increases by tens of millions, the Buddha Treasure I am currently refining, the 'Merit Blood Lotus Pond,' will have the chance to be perfected. Then, I can lend it to you once to suppress any Mutations and step into Ultimate Happiness."

...

Three grand promises were successively made around Tao Qian's neck.

He, as the disguised Wu Gou Buddha Son, gladly accepted them all.

Smiling amiably and maintaining his dignified demeanor, he chatted merrily with the Three Arhats, Lord Cheng, and even the Beautiful Corpse.

Afterward, he almost threw up.

But there was no choice; although Duo Bao was concealing him from behind and the Haotian Divine Mirror was aiding him, it was still not simple to successfully deceive the three powerful Arhats. Tao Qian racked his brains hard to avoid giving himself away.

Because of a private agreement, Tao Qian didn't stay at the grand banquet at Little Leiyin Temple for too long.

After fooling the Three Arhats, he returned to the quiet room in the monastery. As soon as he sat down, the Golden Radiance Token in his arms trembled slightly, and Duo Bao's voice entered his mind.

"Good disciple, your skills at deceiving are indeed quite good, almost as if you have sixty percent of your master's skill."

"Your part is done, and I have also handled things on my side."

"Those three Gao fools were truly gullible. Once they learned of the existence of the 'Great Compassionate and Merciful Transcendent Bodhisattva,' they immediately felt they had perceived the Heavenly Mechanism and could plot to destroy the Qiantang Demon Buddha's sub-temple."

"Now they must be pestering Gao Huan, that old monster who lacks much Mind, begging him to bring out his treasures, such as the 'Ten Thousand Marvels Sky-reaching Treasure Banner'... Tsk, that treasure is quite something. If there's a chance the day after tomorrow, your master might just make a move to grab it."

After listening, Tao Qian's face lit up with joy.

He considered a few thoughts before immediately replying, "It's not impossible; once my identity is exposed, I will have to flee anyway. Lord, if you are confident, send an avatar or something to lie in wait. At the crucial moment, use your 'Ten Thousand Treasure Secret' to lure the treasures. There's no treasure that can't be taken."

"Hah, do you think I'm a junk dealer, as if some mere mortal provincial city could have any treasures worth mentioning?"

"Let me count, the three Gao heirs will probably be able to borrow the Ten Thousand Marvels Sky-reaching Treasure Banner and the Nine Nether Binding God Rope from Gao Huan. The Jie Robes in Shipi's hand is a good treasure, the Bodhi Branch in Kongchan's hand, his newly refined White Bone Glaze Tower, the Merit Blood Lotus in Lian Sha's possession, plus the Eighteen Great Transcendent Bodhisattvas... Hmm? Actually, they do have some appeal; I'll take this deal."

Duobao True Monarch said.

In the quiet room, the three were silent.

What a character!

While most people think of snatching treasures as an opportunistic looting,

That's not Duobao True Monarch's style at all. His first thought was to capture everything in one swoop. It must be noted that the owners of those treasures he muttered about were on the same level of cultivation as he was.

Tao Qian, Master Yuan, and Yunrong all kept their silence.

Especially the latter, who seemed to witness for the first time that Duobao was such an expert Master, couldn't help but to muse,

"No wonder my grandmother told me that my husband's master, the future Sect Master of Spirit Treasure Sect, is the most covetous of treasures in the world."

"She warned me a thousand times to refuse lending the entire Haotian Divine Mirror, only to permit borrowing some of its Divine Light Power."

"If I agreed to loan the whole thing, I'm afraid the treasure might be conned away."

"I thought it was just my grandmother's bias, but now it seems it might be true."

Yunrong thought this to herself.

Whether Duobao predicted these thoughts or he was extremely self-aware and guessed it in an instant remains unknown.

Chapter 706 - Peach Blossom Evil Affinity, Secret Meeting with the Devil Concubine_2

The Golden Radiance Token trembled again, and suddenly addressed Yunrong, saying,

"You girl, when you are with that inferior disciple of mine, why is it that you don't learn anything good but specialize in secretly criticizing your master? That's a bad habit."

"Truly, 'when there's a new bride, the matchmaker is thrown over the wall.'"

"Without Master arranging it, with Tao Qian's slow-warming nature, you think you can dream about having Kitten's cubs? Heh, you'd have to wait a long time."

"Don't look at that boy and say his peach blossom luck is very good, from his days as a Loose Cultivator, he had entanglements with quite a few women, and after joining Penglai Sea, he gathered a big lot of aunts and sisters. That Aunt Bai Yin even pressed him against a tree, he was clearly laughing in his heart, yet he still pretended not to act, just like a gentleman. Master helped you to enlighten this kind of blockhead, what's wrong with giving some benefits?"

"Daoist Taizhen once had some misunderstandings with me in our early years. As her disciple and my disciple-in-law, it is just right for you to resolve them. I've always been curious about the Haotian Divine Mirror. Next time you borrow it for me to take a look, and I will tell you all about that boy's troublesome peach blossom relationships..."

Tao Qian never imagined that while he was talking, his own cheap Master would start to speak ill of him.

His expression changed slightly, and he was about to interrupt and change the subject.

But he quickly saw Yunrong's face showing no signs of annoyance; on the contrary, she seemed extremely interested, listening with relish. Moreover, at this moment, she went along with Duobao's words and casually said,

"My lord's temperament, Yunrong already understands well; it suits my taste exactly."

"I've also seen his aunts and sisters in his heart mirror. Among them, I like Master Xiao the most, and also Senior Sister Lingji. In the future, I plan to approach them by borrowing my husband's name to get close to them, to get along well with them."

Having heard this,

Now it was Tao Qian, Yuan Gong, and Duobao's turn to be speechless.

After a while, Duobao's voice, full of dissatisfaction, came through,

"Lucky dog, you've picked up another treasure."

"I'll tell you one more thing, regarding Qiantang, as long as you follow the plan, there should be a good outcome."

"Just remember, do not linger afterward. Once your identity is exposed, return to the mountain immediately."

"Remember, remember!"

After those words, the Golden Radiance Token made no more sound.

Tao Qian, quick-witted, immediately put the Yuan Gong statue into the People Species Bag, narrowly escaping another round of teasing from a Master.

Then, he looked at his wife with eyes filled with a faint grievance.

He could sense that Yunrong wasn't lying with that one sentence.

"Good heavens, help! My wife could very well be a double...?"

In Tao Qian's heart, a myriad of strange thoughts churned.

He actually forgot that the two were soul-bonded.

As he brought out his past life's concepts and ideas, Yunrong caught on to them immediately, and the various bizarre and lewd terms first caused her face to blush, then turn to intense curiosity.

She studied them carefully for a few breaths and then asked sincerely,

"Husband, why worry about these things?"

"My fondness for Master Xiao and Sister Lingji is all because I borrowed the sight of your Heart Soul."

"That is to say, it's not me who is most fond of the two of them but you, husband."

"Aunt Bai Yin you also like, but since I am a cat, and Aunt is a snake, you said in your heart that Aunt's body is chill and probably uncomfortable to sleep with..."

After Yunrong's questions, Tao Qian's face stiffened.

Fortunately, salvation arrived at this moment.

There was an earlier agreement for Zheng Yin to summon him to meet with Devil Concubine Yuan Mingzhen using the Heavenly Track Secret Technique.

Now, the time had come.

This time the method used was more secretive, namely an encounter within a dream.

Accordingly, Tao Qian simply took Yunrong along.

The two's bodies were seated in the quiet room, apparently cultivating a secret technique.

Yet their Heart Souls borrowed the Heavenly Track and silently entered Yuan Mingzhen's dream.

...

Within a magnificent, grandiose Imperial Palace, breathtaking in every way,

One could see everywhere, a great number of eunuchs and palace maids, each unable to hide signs of mutation, their bodies covered in lumps and pus-filled boils.

On the deepest dragon bed lay an old man, ancient to the extreme, filled with decay that seemed to permeate every corner.

Despite this, the elder still exuded a heart-stopping True Dragon aura. His eyes were turbid, his exposed skin was covered with rotten spots, and when he opened his mouth, sharp, dense teeth were revealed, along with sticky strands of saliva.

At this moment, the old man was breathing rapidly, his face filled with a strong desire to survive.

He completely ignored all the civil and military officials in the palace and representatives of various forces; his greedy gaze was fixed on a woman who was slowly approaching, stunningly beautiful and unparalleled in the world.

Hoarsely, as if shouting from the depths of his decaying spiritual resonance, he said,

"Quick... come here."

"Let me eat... eat you."

"As long as I eat you, our Zhu Dynasty can continue to live..."

It wasn't just the elder shouting and urging.

All around, others were urging as well.

Even the family members who had escorted the woman, each of them eager, were pushing her to go forward.

As she slowly approached, everyone saw the elder on the dragon bed suddenly mutate. Amidst a spray of pus and blood, a decrepit, obese monster appeared, shaking with fatty tumors all over its body, wearing monk's robes, holding a Buddha's bowl, and with a dragon's body and a human head. Its long and bony dragon claws reached out, and filthy obscenities spilled from its mouth continuously.

Looking at this situation, he seemed to want to strip the magnificent phoenix crown and cloud robe from the female protagonist's body publicly, with rough hurry.

One would expect that such a terrifying spectacle would have scared the woman into fainting.

However, that did not happen. It seemed as if a blaze of golden light burst forth from her, and she took step after step forward, her body growing incredibly tall. The originally faint cries of the Heavenly Phoenix suddenly intensified.

When she arrived in front of the elder, accompanied by a piercing screech, nine Heavenly Phoenix phantasms emerged and dove directly behind the elder in the void, beginning to devour a certain aura.

The elder's body suddenly stiffened, and those meat pillar tentacles disintegrated into flying ashes as if burned by flames.

"No...!"

"You are not the Primordial Consort... you are the Devil Concubine... the one who steals the fortune of our Zhu family."

The elder screamed, his eyes filled with fury and despair.

The woman, whose face covering had been lifted at some unknown time, simply looked at the completely mutated and fallen civil and military officials, eunuchs, palace maids, and the Forbidden Army guards, and so on.

Her eyes were full of disappointment as she shook her head and said,

"The Zhu family's fortune? In such a state, what fortune is there to speak of?"

"But indeed, it was I, Yuan Mingzhen, who filled the last shovel of earth for your Zhu Dynasty."

Having said this, with the screech of the Heavenly Phoenix and the burst of golden light, she blew the decaying, pus-filled Imperial Palace to smithereens.

However, after the Imperial Palace was destroyed, Yuan Mingzhen did not sit upon the imperial throne.

The new scene that emerged: Yuan Mingzhen stood before an incredibly tempting throne, with many figures of power appearing around her, including the Xie Family, Guanyin Temple, Free Temple, and the aristocratic families of the Imperial City that had been around for a thousand years... Everyone's faces were twisted with urgency, all urging her to sit on the throne.

But she didn't even glance at the position, her face showing a stubborn expression. Instead, she turned her gaze elsewhere.

As she watched, a glimmer flickered.

A young Daoist, holding a plum blossom Kitten in his arms, slowly appeared before her.

If not Tao Qian, then who else could it be.

Yuan Mingzhen, who had been solemn, upon seeing Tao Qian's face, suddenly said,

"Tao Master, if Mingzhen remembers correctly, this should be our second meeting."

"Actually, Mingzhen has always had a question to ask Tao Master, and wonders if today, you might resolve my doubts."

Normally, Tao Qian would think that the "second time" Yuan Mingzhen was referring to was the debate earlier that evening and this present moment.

But strangely, Tao Qian understood that Yuan Mingzhen was referring to the first time they met, when Tao Qian was fleeing for his life and encountered her in the Phoenix Chariot.

He had thought Yuan Mingzhen hadn't noticed him at that time, but now it seems he was mistaken.

"Yuann Daoist, please ask."

"The first time Mingzhen saw the Tao Master, I mistook you for someone who had come to rescue me from the sea of suffering, yet you only slipped into the Phoenix Chariot, gave Mingzhen a glance, and then left."

"Later, when Mingzhen obtained the Imperial City and the Spring and Autumn Chariot, I learned of the causes and consequences from this Ancestor God Treasure."

"It never occurred to me that Tao Master would have such courage, willing to destroy the Mountain and River Map, such a treasure, for the sake of all living beings in the world, nor did I expect that Mingzhen was once one of Tao Master's choices for saving the world."

"It's just unfortunate that, in the end, you didn't choose me."

"What Mingzhen wants to know is, if it had been Senior Sister Lingji in the Phoenix Chariot at that time, would Tao Master have chosen her, taking another path, instead of the Yang Sui Uprising."

Chapter 707 Double Personality, The Secret of the Devil Concubine

Yuan Mingzhen's direct question left Tao Qian in a state of confusion.

He knew that the connection between Ancestral Divine Treasures and Human Dao Fortune was close, each resonating with the other.

However, the guidance was often vague, consisting of methods to obtain treasures and certain requirements. Only someone at Tao Qian's level could learn more.

But after another thought, considering the relationship between Yuan Mingzhen and Senior Sister Lingji, although not a split manifestation, she should possess some special talents that allowed her to perceive messages related to her, which wasn't particularly strange.

While pondering, Tao Qian shook his head and responded to Yuan Mingzhen,

"How can there be so many 'what ifs' in such matters?"

"Moreover, based on my limited understanding of Senior Sister Lingji, even if it were her sitting in the Phoenix Chariot that day, it wouldn't be my place to choose; she has her own methods to deal with such difficulties."

"What I do know is that Yuann Daoist also has ways, that day I saw your Heavenly Phoenix Destiny stirring without danger, your fortune soaring to the heavens. And I was being pursued by the Alchemist old monster Li Wanshou at the time; this is why I did not reveal myself to meet with you, I hope Daoist doesn't take it to heart."

"I've also heard some news about you since then, especially your meritorious work in managing the disaster in the Imperial City, which I deeply admire."

"Not long ago, my Divine Soul traveled and sensed some connection with the Spring and Autumn Chariot and learned that you were trapped at the old site of Han Mountain Temple, so I came to your aid."

Tao Qian's explanation was thorough.

He didn't usually like to be so verbose, but noticing that something was off with Yuan Mingzhen before him, he said a few extra words.

His kindness was apparent to Yunrong, as it was to Yuan Mingzhen.

The latter, snuggled in Tao Qian's embrace, curled her lips slightly, her plump plum-blossom-like paws gently nudging her husband as she muttered to herself, "My good little brother seems honest and simple, but his words are so sweet, no wonder he can attract so many aunts and sisters."

The latter, upon hearing these words, indeed showed a slight relaxation in his peculiar expression.

But he did not engage in further conversation with Tao Qian, instead he candidly said,

"Mingzhen recently met Yunhua Immortal from the Spirit Treasure Sect, the immortal treated me very well and even gifted me a set of Array Flags to protect my life before leaving."

"Sadly, I disappointed the immortal by revealing that I am not a remnant manifestation of the Lingji Fairy, but merely a few strands of her hair combined with some strange and rare methods, resulting in this monster that was forcefully conceived."

"True Master, you've been seeking the Lingji Fairy's whereabouts as well, but this time, I'm afraid you will be disappointed as well."

Upon hearing these words from Yuan Mingzhen, Tao Qian recalled the disgusting scenes he had seen in his dream, as well as the sight of Yuan Mingzhen standing in front of the throne, adamantly refusing to sit.

Suddenly, he had some guesses in his heart.

He couldn't help but sigh inwardly, "Who would have thought that I, Tao Da, would also have a day to be a compassionate big brother."

Settling his thoughts, Tao Qian then continued,

"I've long been aware of this matter; my mentor has already made it clear to me."

"Yuann Daoist need not belittle yourself. I am determined to lend a hand, and not one of the reasons is because of Senior Sister Lingji."

"In fact, when I became aware of Yuann Daoist's plight and thus stepped into Qiantang, I wasn't yet aware of the connection between you and my Senior Sister Lingji."

"I wanted to set Yuann Daoist free because of the virtue you showed in the Imperial City."

"In the Northern Land Provinces, everywhere are Evil Demons and Heretics, warlord beasts. Beings like Yuann Daoist are sadly few, so if there's even a sliver of possibility, I would not stand idly by and watch you be harmed by that group of demons monks and warlords."

"Having the Spring and Autumn Chariot, you should know whether what Tao says is true or false."

"Mingzhen knows."

Unexpectedly, Yuan Mingzhen did not dwell on the matter.

She simply nodded and then began stepping down from the high platform.

This place was actually Yuan Mingzhen's dreamscape, naturally, everything was subject to her thoughts.

As she walked away, the shapes of the civilian and military officials, the Xie Family, Guanyin Temple, and the large family clans, along with the Imperial Palace and throne, all vanished without a trace, including the lavish robes of the Empress that adorned Yuan Mingzhen's body.

What replaced them were the many scenes brimming with the atmosphere of city life – streets, shops, morning markets, stalls, townspeople, city walls, rivers, willows – as if a slow-scrolling ink painting was unfolding, encompassing the entire bustling Imperial City.

As Tao Qian, Yunrong, and Yuan Mingzhen found themselves in it, the painting immediately became colored, remarkably vivid.

It was as if it were not a dream, but reality.

Tao Qian could hear the calls of street vendors, the dust flying, the aroma of snacks, the rich scent of human life.

"This Heavenly Track Secret Skill of Zheng Yin Daoist is extraordinary."

"Mingzhen had originally thought I would never return to the Imperial City, never taste these delicious foods again."

While speaking, Tao Qian, holding Yunrong, unconsciously followed Yuan Mingzhen and sat down in a small eatery at the corner of the street.

Quirky aromas wafted over, and as he turned his head, he saw the last Empress of the Longevity Heavenly Dynasty, who, unknown to him, had changed her attire.

Coarse clothes, big braids, rosy cheeks on her face.

Despite still possessing extraordinary beauty, who could see in this one image the decisive and wise Empress?

Most would likely assume she was just a pretty village maiden.

Dual personalities!

The origin of the Heart Soul?

Only at this moment did Tao Qian remember: Yuan Mingzhen was, in fact, not as old as his original self.

A girl who was supposed to be naive!

How many complex reasons must have precipitated to place her on that throne, to become an Empress who could intimidate the world?

But now, this earthy and pretty maiden, with no trace of stern coldness on her face, brought bowls of food with a bright smile.

One bowl contained mushy pig offal, and the other a slightly murky drink that seemed like swill. Both were steamy, emitting a fragrant stench that, like some sort of magic, burrowed into Tao Qian's nose and pulled him, in a flicker, from his exile as an immortal, down into the mortal realm.

Chapter 708 Dual Personalities, The Secret of the Devil Concubine_2

"Brother Tao, hurry and try some. When you hadn't started cultivating, you were a southerner; I think you've never had this kind of street food."

"Don't be put off by the smell; it actually tastes amazing."

Having said that, the sprightly girl turned around to serve herself two bowls as well, and on top of that, she added several more steamed buns.

Without minding Tao Qian, she busied herself with eating heartily.

Around them, the street food stall owner, the passerby commoners, other street vendors, and many artisans all seemed very familiar with this lively girl, greeting her one after another.

Such an overwhelmingly strong mundane atmosphere instantly dispersed much of the "Immortal Qi" around Tao Qian.

Tao Qian was at first startled, then seemed to understand.

He smiled, and swiftly, the demeanor and poise that belonged to the Spirit Treasure True Inheritor, the First Heavenly Pride of the Daoist sect, also dissipated.

In its place was the ordinary Tao Qian, who followed Yuan Mingzhen in eagerly devouring his food.

When this transformation occurred in him, both Yunrong in his arms and Yuan Mingzhen opposite him revealed surprised expressions in their eyes.

It was as if they were seeing Tao Qian for the first time.

Yunrong was more curious, her interest piqued.

But for Yuan Mingzhen, it was as if she'd found a kindred spirit, and her face suddenly brightened.

Afterward, the surroundings of the snack stall began to change.

What followed was the reflection of the life of the Devil Concubine Yuan Mingzhen before him – brief, yet exceedingly complicated.

The first scene almost made Tao Qian choke on a mouthful of pig offal and fermented soybean drink.

It was the scene of Yuan Mingzhen's conception and birth:

A group of somber-faced Xie Family members had searched thoroughly through the clan and finally found three strands of hair in the young bedroom of Senior Sister Lingji. They then wrapped the hair around a genderless clay doll and doused it with True Dragon Blood obtained from an unknown source, before heading to the Outer Realm where they captured a Taiyin Heavenly Phoenix in a gloomy, desolate mountain cave.

They inserted the clay doll into the Phoenix's belly, and nuns from Guanyin Temple were casting spells night and day.

Ten months later, they cut open the belly of the Phoenix to retrieve a plump flesh cocoon.

One could tell at a glance that the strong cultivator who was the Xie Family Master took a Magic Sword and split it open, and upon seeing it was a girl child, his face immediately filled with wild joy.

But that quickly turned to displeasure, and he started shouting something.

The pretty girl who was eating stewed snacks and fermented soybean drink suddenly looked up, teasing with a gleeful tone:

"Old Man Xie was wholeheartedly convinced that with this method, they could cultivate a girl possessing both the supreme inspiration of the Lingji Fairy and the True Dragon Heavenly Phoenix Destiny to help their Xie Family skyrocket to the heavens, to stand on equal footing with the Xiu Family and the Si Family."

"The Xie Family was convinced that as there is Reincarnation in yin and yang, it was the Ancestor Dragon who obtained the Dao and established the Forbidden Techniques and set up the Barriers two thousand years ago."

"Now that the era of great strife has come again, the one who could achieve the same great feats ought to be an Empress."

"Especially with the birth of the Lingji Fairy who possessed supreme inspiration, it only proved this point further. Who would have thought that the Lingji Fairy would be taken away by Yunhua Immortal, who didn't hesitate to start a war just to have her, causing the Xie Family's plans of hundreds of years to be in vain."

"Until I, Yuan Mingzhen, was cultivated as a 'substitute' for the Lingji Fairy."

"Regrettably, with only three strands of hair and without the original heart's blood and Soul's True Spirit, I could not inherit the unfathomable inspiration of the Lingji Fairy. I was merely lucky to have the Taiyin Heavenly Phoenix Body. Ironically, when it was discovered that I lacked the Innate inspiration, Old Man Xie was so enraged that he wanted to chop me with a sword."

"Fortunately, at that time, a Xie Family Guest Elder named 'Yuan Tiangang' suggested that even though I lacked inspiration, I possessed another form of Karma. Given the Heavenly Phoenix Destiny, as long as I could be catalyzed by the True Dragon Fortune of the dynasty's last stages, I would immediately undergo a Transformation... That's how my life was saved."

...

Tao Qian had already known about Yuan Mingzhen's complex origin.

Yet witnessing the details firsthand, he was still shocked.

The actions of the Xie Family people were utterly ruthless.

Not to mention everything else, just to allow the offspring in the Phoenix's womb a potential to inherit the legal tradition.

Over the course of the ten-month pregnancy, the Xie Family had been quietly capturing bloodlines from imperial families of all dynasties within the Seventy-two provinces of the Longevity Heavenly Dynasty. Starting with the ancient families like the Si, Jiang, and Ying Families, all the way to the subsequent Liu, Li, Yang, Zhu Families... almost razing more than two thousand years worth of imperial families.

Without distinguishing between age or gender, they silently captured them, ground them into minced meat, and fed it to the enslaved Phoenix.

Then with Secret Techniques, the flesh returned to the Phoenix, but the bloodline was gradually transferred to Yuan Mingzhen, who was then still a fetus.

It was fortunate that the Xie Family's strength was not weak, and their actions were secret, so the alchemists remained unaware.

Otherwise, such an attempt to dig under the wall and follow would have been exposed, and a group of old monsters among the alchemists would probably have gone mad.

"At first, I thought that Aunt Yunhua's action of going to the Xie Family to set up an array and snatch people was somewhat overbearing."

"Now it seems that Aunt Yunhua had long seen through the crazed nature of the Xie Family and therefore intervened to rescue Senior Sister Lingji."

"No wonder Senior Sister Lingji's clone inside the Warm Jade warned me not to get close to the Xie Family members."

"With Sister's innate inspiration, those crazy and dirty thoughts of the Xie Family probably couldn't be hidden from her at all, it's hard to imagine what Sister endured as a child."

As Tao Qian was thinking this, he saw the pretty young girl in front of him forcibly trying to stay calm, hiding the sense of injustice in her eyes.

This appearance of hers must be her deeply hidden true personality.

Therefore, there was no Empress's majesty, and she wasn't particularly good at hiding it either.

She seemed to completely guess Tao Qian's thoughts and pursed her lips, saying:

"Lingji Fairy's blessing is extraordinary, she was snatched away by Yunhua Immortal to the Penglai Sea early on, and didn't suffer any hardships. I even heard that the Immortal dotes on her greatly, giving her whatever she wants, not only giving her an Immortal Island but also warned the Xie Family, and even the entire Cultivation World."

"Whoever dares to provoke Lingji Fairy, Yunhua will not stop until death. Brother Tao, as a disciple of the Spirit Treasure Sect, you must know how powerful this warning from Yunhua Immortal is. No one in this world dares to trouble the fairy, not even a Major Sect like the Demon Buddha Temple."

"Yet the hardships that the fairy should have experienced but did not, eventually all fell onto me."

As Yuan Mingzhen uttered these words,

The scenery around began to change again.

What reflected this time was everything Yuan Mingzhen went through from being an infant to growing up as a young girl.

Her Life Chart was set while she was still bundled up in swaddling clothes.

A tool!

A tool cultivated by the Xie Family to contend for supremacy over the world.

So-called fatherly love, motherly love, love of brothers and sisters, and even the love of relatives and friends were all non-existent.

From a young age, she was also fed various strange and unsightly foods to increase her bloodline concentration.

After that, she suffered through various brutal Cultivation practices, brainwashing, and other inhumane experiences, as well as some unspeakable, unbearable scenes.

Lingering death by a thousand cuts was but a swift ending.

Even if one was taken by an Evil Demon for Soul Refining, the pain could not begin to compare.

Even though they were only illusory scenes from the past, Tao Qian still felt a nameless rage welling up in his heart.

Yunrong, who originally had some hostility towards Yuan Mingzhen, at this moment couldn't help but soften and cast a sympathetic look at the pretty young girl.

This girl was indeed pitiable.

Ordinary people, even Tao Qian himself, if they had experienced this, would probably have gone mad.

Yet Yuan Mingzhen, although not mad, did have some sequela.

That cold and dignified, exceptionally intelligent Empress, was likely a persona she adopted to deal with the Xie Family and the outside world.

And this plain and pretty young girl was her true self that she struggled to maintain.

Tao Qian couldn't help wondering what kind of Blessing or Life Chart allowed her to retain her sanity under such torture.

As this thought arose, the girl in front of him immediately gave him the answer:

"Brother Tao, Mingzhen actually doesn't dislike Lingji Fairy."

"In fact, the reason I was able to maintain my sanity and not become Mutated or Fallen under such torture was because of the three strands of hair left by the fairy."

"Although I did not gain the fairy's innate inspiration, I also gained some benefits, which gave my Soul and True Spirit an extraordinary resistance to those disgusting deeds."

"Moreover, I have to thank the fairy, as the Xie Family unintentionally learned that the fairy was not completely dead and temporarily let me go, turning their attention to find the fairy instead."

Chapter 709 Tao Qian Suffers a Plot, Devil Concubine Aspires to be Human Emperor

The Hidden Dragon striving for power over the realm, abandoned by the great forces that had backed him.

Faced with such a situation, most would be consumed by sorrow and anger, not delight.

However, this made perfect sense for Yuann Mingzhen.

Although the Xie Family created her and were her biggest supporters, they had no emotional ties to her. They were interested only in profit and utility, viewing Yuann Mingzhen simply as a controllable tool. If the brainwashing of Yuann Mingzhen had been successful, it would have ended there, as she would have lost all sense of self, unable to perceive happiness and, hence, suffering.

Yet, Yuann Mingzhen had successfully resisted the brainwashing, which only added to her agony.

What surprised Tao Qian was what followed; the constantly changing scenes behind and beside Yuann Mingzhen.

This Devil Concubine, her sincerity was indeed excessive.

It seemed she truly wished to "open her heart" entirely to Tao Qian, revealing her life's first half without any reservation.

Even her private affairs were not concealed.

Of course, Tao Qian only glimpsed them before quickly averting his gaze, focusing instead on how Yuann Mingzhen resisted the brainwashing, how she engaged in cultivation, grew, and strove to conquer the realm.

The more he saw, the more astonished he became!

For the situation of this Devil Concubine was not as the people of the realm believed it to be; she was far from being at her wit's end.

In fact, even though the Xie Family had withdrawn all support, she still had the power to escape disaster.

Her command wasn't limited to just Xie Lingzhu and Li Ren; there were more hidden forces and subordinates under her.

Watching intently, Tao Qian expressed his surprise and exclaimed,

"Guanyin Temple, many remnants from previous dynasties, great sects like Ruyi Temple from Imperial City, Sun and Moon Sect, the Hidden Daoist Sect of the Nine Spirit Sect, several Cavernous Mystery Independent Practitioners, the Heavenly Phoenix Clan from the Outer Realm... Yuann Daoist, with these forces covertly supporting you, even if you couldn't reclaim the Imperial City, you shouldn't have fallen to such lows, nor should you be trapped in Han Mountain Temple."

"And hiding these forces so well, why reveal them to me?"

"If those warlord demons partying inside the Little Leiyin Temple were here, they'd surely think twice about coveting you, Daoist."

Tao Qian's sighs of realization came from deep within.

In this moment, he understood that, like everyone else, he had greatly underestimated Yuann Mingzhen, the Devil Concubine.

On reflection, it should have been obvious.

Could someone who authored the "Mingzhen Governance Scripture" and, having taken over the Imperial City, won the love of All People in such a short span amidst numerous warlord threats, and received recognition from the "Spring and Autumn Chariot," be just an ordinary frail woman?

To say she was deviously manipulative might be an overstatement, but she was undoubtedly a young Empress of exceptional wisdom and strategic brilliance.

As Tao Qian contemplated Yuann Mingzhen's tragic earlier life, his initial pity transformed into admiration and a trace of caution.

Yuann Mingzhen noticed this change.

Suddenly, the boiled meat before her seemed less appetizing; she pouted and weakly explained,

"The Bodhisattvas of Guanyin Temple support Mingzhen, seeing my plight as pitiful and feeling that my Buddhist fate is extraordinary, possibly helping them spread the 'Bodhisattva's Path' across the Seventy-two provinces and enlighten more suffering mortals."

"Those remnants from the previous dynasty are actually all pitiful too, marginalized by the Alchemists for various reasons, hiding everywhere like rats. They recognize me as their master due to my complex bloodline and the 'Holy Emperor Supreme Dao Scripture' I practice, kept hidden as a form of power, but Mingzhen won't deploy them until the time is right."

"As for Ruyi Temple and Sun and Moon Sect, both sects faced extinction, which Mingzhen resolved; hence they chose to follow me."

"Those Independent Practitioner Daoists don't share any past karmic ties, simply recognizing me due to shared interests."

"Dealing with the Heavenly Phoenix Clan was simplest. The Heavenly Phoenix used by the Xie Family to conceive me was actually royalty from the Heavenly Phoenix Clan... and I, barely qualified, am a princess abandoned in this world by that clan. I can use the Bloodline Summoning Technique to call some kin from the Heavenly Phoenix Clan to help, but they all pay a significant cost to enter this realm, so Mingzhen wouldn't call on them lightly."

"These forces were not deliberately gathered by Mingzhen but came through fate, and hence she had to accept them."

"Tao Brother, haven't you faced the same as you journeyed here?"

By the end of her speech, Yuann Mingzhen had lifted her head.

In her eyes shone an intense recognition, a resonance.

Without waiting for Tao Qian to respond, Yuann Mingzhen continued,

"Mingzhen can see that, Brother Tao, you are not a Hidden Dragon vying for power over the realm, but a Seeker."

"What you seek is perhaps to live carefree and observe Longevity."

"You could have returned to Penglai Sea and focused on your cultivation, yet here you are, tangled in the mortal world, pushed step-by-step to this point, having achieved great deeds, and then pursued by those formidable forces you couldn't directly confront. If nothing unexpected happens, you'll continue to be entwined in this until you reach Ultimate Happiness before meeting your demise..."

"You seek the Path but cannot find it, and Mingzhen desires to be a self-aware mortal, equally unachievable."

"We are the same."

"The difference is, Brother Tao, that you have many paths behind you, able to detach and return to Penglai Sea whenever you reconsider. But Mingzhen cannot, whether it be my bloodline, my Heart Soul, or my tragic earlier life, it's all irreversibly shaped me into someone who must conquer the realm, become a sovereign Human Emperor, ensuring billions live in peace and prosperity."

"When I achieve that day, Mingzhen can also be freed."

"Having lured you here, Mingzhen will not shy away from admitting that I need your assistance this time."

As Yuann Mingzhen finished speaking, Tao Qian's mind thundered.

Without focusing on the young lady's curse, a deeply certain speculation suddenly surged in his heart:

Chapter 710 Tao Qian Suffers a Scheme, Devil Concubine Aspires to be Human Emperor_2

This time, his entry into Qiantang Province was not of his own initiative.

Instead, Yuan Mingzhen wanted to see him first; the Devil Concubine thought of him, Tao Qian, as a "Tool Man" being pushed by the Human Dao Fortune.

Pitying their similar plights, whether to form an alliance or for other purposes, she used some methods to have Tao Qian come to meet her.

Even the distress signal from the Spring and Autumn Chariot that Tao Qian had received during his spiritual wandering might have been deliberately released by Yuan Mingzhen.

In an instant, Tao Qian's face showed a color of helplessness, and half in exclamation, half cursing in his heart, he said,

"What a Devil Concubine, what an Empress."

"Who would have thought that I, Tao Da the Great Master, who spends my days scheming and deceiving others, would be outwitted by a young girl without any reason."

"Huh? I didn't expect She has a justifiable reason, but what about my master...?"

Upon this thought, Tao Qian immediately realized something.

Seeing the change in his expression, Yuan Mingzhen immediately knew he had come around.

With a soft sigh, she abruptly stood up.

The surrounding scenery changed once again, and this time, the three of them stood together inside the Spring and Autumn Chariot that was now soaring across the sky.

Below them was clearly the vast expanse of Tiannan and Qiantang—the two provinces.

Around the two provinces was a fog so thick that it could not be clearly seen, but it emitted an ominous premonition of crisis.

Within the fog, various enormous and writhing terrifying shadows emerged.

And without exception, those shadows were staring intently at Tao Qian.

Tao Qian, not understanding why, turned to look at Yuan Mingzhen.

At some point, the earthy and charming stewed girl had disappeared.

In her place was the Empress version of Yuan Mingzhen, regal and majestic, cold and authoritative, with a tear mole beneath her eyes, and flowers on her forehead, truly captivating.

She turned her head to look at Tao Qian, as well as Yunrong in Tao Qian's arms, a hint of envy appearing on her face; she then candidly said,

"Tao Master, indeed it was Mingzhen, guided by Duobao True Monarch, who used some methods to draw you into Qiantang and meet with me."

Yuan Mingzhen had changed her appearance; although still lovely, her personality seemed to have changed as well.

No longer calling him Brother Tao again and again, she got straight to the point, candidly revealing everything.

Tao Qian looked at Yuan Mingzhen, guessing her thoughts and aims,

"You have concealed so many forces, and though you could have fled back to the Southern Land, you chose not to. Presumably, because the Southern Land has only a dozen or so provinces, all of which have their rulers, and behind them lies the huge entity that is the Primordial Sect, making it unsuitable for you to flex your muscle. Hence, you deliberately allowed yourself to be trapped in Qiantang, to lure me here."

"Do you wish for my help, while at the same time taking over the two large provinces of Tiannan and Qiantang, and perhaps even New Moon Province, to bring together the lands of three provinces, and along with those forces, you will leap to become the fourth Hidden Dragon Talent of the Northern Land, beyond Si Xixin, Hong Fu, and Zhang Jinluan, and compete for the Ancestor Dragon Bloodline?"

As his words fell, Yuan Mingzhen first nodded, then shook her head.

Without any concealment, she once again candidly said,

"After acquiring the Spring and Autumn Chariot, through the Secret Techniques in the 'Holy Emperor Supreme Dao Scripture,' Mingzhen has sensed the kind of person Tao Master is and what ambitions he has."

"It must be said, the Master's thoughts and aspirations are indeed somewhat mad."

"Mingzhen considers herself somewhat talented. Becoming the Human Emperor, a wise ruler seems possible, but I cannot guarantee that I could make the seventy-two provinces into the world you wish for. Who could have imagined that doing away with the imperial system, the national name and such matters would be considered trivial and a matter of course in the Master's heart, so much so that you had no regard for the existence of an Emperor even before you began cultivation."

"Besides the Emperor, you look down upon the Great Family Gates, Daoist, Buddhist, Demons, and Devils, and even the Divine Spirits and Demons, yet you think ordinary human beings should be the true masters of this realm; such rarity."

"However, Mingzhen also has the confidence that if anyone in this world could assist the Master, it must be I, Yuan Mingzhen."

"Therefore, my initial plan was to unveil my Heart Soul to the Master by using the Ancestor God Treasure and the Human Dao Fortune, inviting the Master to the Imperial City to assist me... With the Master's identity, Divine Power, and fortunate destiny, as long as you could assist me, we could step by step involve great powers like Spirit Treasure Sect, Secret Demon Sect, Jade Ring Mountain, Taishang Dao, Heavenly Talisman Sect, Fangcun Mountain, and so on, to bring peace to the world."

Yuan Mingzhen and Tao Qian were both chosen by the Human Dao Fortune.

A conversation between them instantly created a profound resonance.

At this moment, what faintly appeared in Tao Qian's mind was this possibility: He agreed with Yuan Mingzhen, went to the Imperial City to assist her, and then he began to exert his influence, inviting one after the other Divine Power from Spirit Treasure Ten Thousand Immortals, Secret Demons, and other Great Sects down the mountain...

Such an act would result in two possible outcomes:

One good, achieving unprecedented merits, bringing peace to all under heaven.

The second possibility was terrible, it would cause an ancient calamity, and the world would become even more chaotic.

Because of that strong sense of déjà vu, Tao Qian leaned towards the second possibility.

Luckily, at that moment, Yuann Mingzhen continued,

"Duobao True Monarch later figured out Mingzhen's plan."

"The True Monarch came to see me and said that it was not yet time to execute that strategy, and if you felt compelled to act, Master Tao, you would surely die."

"The True Monarch's intention is for you to help me take over three provinces, to truly establish a foothold in the Northern Land for the time being."

"Afterwards, you must return to the Sect!"

The last sentence, it seemed, was spoken with Duobao's tone, particularly stern.

Without waiting for Tao Qian's reply, Yuann Mingzhen suddenly pointed towards those misty shadows and solemnly said,

"The True Monarch instructed me to tell you not to take others for fools, not to underestimate those old monsters among the alchemists, let alone the Xiu Family, Taishang Demon Sect, Evil Sect, and the many enemies hidden in the dark. Any one of them, if they find you, it's almost certain to be a deadly end."

"Your smooth sailing after joining the Cultivation Tribulation is mostly due to Human Dao Fortune."

"The so-called 'when fortune arrives, the whole world conspires with you; when it departs, the hero is no longer free.'"

"The upheaval in Demon City, Yang Sui Uprising, New Moon Rebellion... have almost exhausted your luck and destiny, and the things you seek in your heart will not be achieved so easily. Do not be intoxicated with the poison of Human Dao Fortune, thinking you can keep dodging and be exempted from those many prices."

"If you do not return to the Sect, once the tribulation arrives, you will immediately face disaster."

"The True Monarch wants me to ask you: Do you still remember the incident with Uncle Qin Jiao?"

After Yuann Mingzhen finished, Tao Qian felt as if he had been backlashed by fortune itself.

His complexion turned red, and he stood there stunned.

In a trance, he seemed to see his own end, an extremely horrifying scene.

Although it flashed by in an instant, it still left Tao Qian's heart pounding.

Yunrong, who was held in his arms and shared a spiritual connection with Tao Qian, also sensed something and suddenly whispered to him,

"Dear brother, perhaps we should return to the Sect first."

"Once you have entered the Ultimate Happiness and Daoist Transformation Realm, you can come down the mountain again, and it will be more convenient to act then."

Yuann Mingzhen did not hear Yunrong's whisper, and the Devil Empress still looked at Tao Qian with eyes full of deep envy.

Then she spoke again,

"I originally thought that Master Tao and Mingzhen were the same kind of person, but now it seems they are different, at least Mingzhen does not have a Master who devises a foolproof plan for me."

"And then there's Yunhua Immortal, she adores Lingji Fairy, and she loves you too. Before she went to the Outer Realm, she also told me, if in the end you're in trouble with me and refuse to call her for help, I should shout for her, and neither mountains nor rivers could stop her from coming to save you."

"However, Mingzhen doesn't have the fortune to have Master Tao by his side; he just wishes to make a contract with Master Tao according to the True Monarch's instructions."

"What kind of contract?"

Tao Qian asked subconsciously.

Yuann Mingzhen pointed to the Spring and Autumn Chariot beneath him and said earnestly,

"I suppose Master Tao knows that the Ancestor God Treasures scattered across the seventy-two provinces, in choosing their masters, often look to Human Dao Fortune and public sentiment."

"However, this is only temporary. After the great battle in the Central Plains, once Si Xixin or Zhang Jinluan triumphs and receives the Ancestor Dragon Bloodline, they could immediately summon most of the world's ultimate treasures and reform the Longevity Barrier."

"Of course, if Master Tao is willing to let go of the desire for a carefree life, to be a Human Emperor, a wise ruler, a leader... whatever the title may be, then with Master Tao's merits, you might indeed contend with the so-called 'Reincarnated Ancestor Dragon.'

"If Master Tao doesn't wish to, then I, Yuann Mingzhen, will take the place."

"Master Tao helps me take over three provinces, gives me Yu Ding and Valley God Gui, the two treasures, and with the help of fortune and merit in calling treasures, I should be able to gather the complete Nine Provinces' Twelve Treasures, and with the Southern Primordial Sect, even if I temporarily can't annihilate the alchemists and various warlords, preventing the world from falling into their hands should be easy."

"As a price, as a reward."

"I, Yuann Mingzhen, can completely surrender my body and Heart Soul to Master Tao's disposal. If Mingzhen breaks his word, becomes a tyrant, devil, or evil, Master Tao can kill me from afar."