

Medical 701

Chapter 701: Great Marshall_2

In the group, there was still one person left, and that was Sha Yun. Typically, half-beast creatures were underestimated and enslaved, but because of her silver eyes, everyone knew she was under the beast contract. No one dared to touch her, especially since she had the backing of both the Rong Family and the cavalry. Attempting to subdue a woman like her would bring bad blood to some of the strongest families in the Sun Kingdom. She was a witch, and though she grew older and stronger, she could enhance her power by exploiting the young. Absorbing their innocence was not only a way to keep her energetic but also a method to gain strength, a tactic she avoided to ensure she wouldn't leave a negative impression on Yan Xiaobao. She still cared deeply about how he perceived her.

Everyone in the house was busy training. Xu Biao hadn't trained much before, but after hearing Yan Xiaobao say he could reunite people with the dead, everything changed. Now, the house was filled with experts training, each motivated by different reasons.

Finally, after refining the Heaven and Earth Essence for several hours, Yan Xiaobao opened his eyes. With an excited expression and a slight smile on his face, he grabbed the Memory Stone and rushed down the stairs. He was eager to showcase what he had obtained. As he dashed down the stairs, Yan Xiaobao finally saw her. Wang Julong had returned, and he hurried to show her the new home they would share. "Julong!" Yan Xiaobao exclaimed the moment he saw the beautiful woman. She stopped in her tracks, raising her head to look at the electrified young man rushing down the stairs. She had just arrived home and hadn't had the time to retreat to her room. When she first saw him, her cheeks turned rosy due to his eagerness on their initial meeting. But seeing the brilliant smile and passion glowing in his eyes, Wang Julong decided not to try to escape and instead waited for the young man to approach her.

"What is it?" she asked, slightly curious. She couldn't help but feel moved by the young man's excitement. When she noticed the Memory Stone in Yan Xiaobao's hands, her impatience suddenly spiked as she wanted to uncover what mysteries were hidden within it.

Yan Xiaobao wasted no time, gently placing the Memory Stone in Wang Julong's hands. She moved it to her forehead, and the room shimmered with a silver-blue light. It took less than a minute for all the information to pour into Wang Julong's heart. Once all the knowledge settled, she returned the Memory Stone, her lips curled into a small smile. "The garden in the park is quite tiny. Do you think I'll have enough space to grow a small medicinal herb garden here?" she asked. Saying such a thing made her feel slightly greedy, her cheeks tinged with blush; however, herbal medicine was essential to her—not just for healing but for crafting poisons too.

Yan Xiaobao was taken aback by her question but felt a warm and fuzzy sensation in his chest because it marked the first time Wang Julong asked him anything. He knew it would cost a lot, but he didn't want to scare her away, so he replied with a gentle smile.

"The park is spacious; there will certainly be enough room for your medicinal herb garden," he promised her. At the same time, he resisted the urge to envelop the blushing woman in a warm hug. He knew that if he acted impulsively, Wang Julong might never want to see him again. Understanding this, Yan Xiaobao restrained himself and simply smiled at the beautiful woman. While he had mastered hiding his emotions, he had also learned to be honest with himself. Looking at Wang Julong, Yan Xiaobao silently vowed not to just remain her friend anymore. Without a shred of doubt, he would confide his feelings to Wang Julong and make her his. All he needed was for her to be ready for his confession. Until then, he would hint at his thoughts subtly so she could sense his intentions.

"I pity Sha Yun," he muttered to himself. A pained expression flickered in his eyes, but he couldn't allow himself to love her as he did Wang Julong. He couldn't control his emotions.

"What did you say?" Wang Julong asked, having heard him muttering but unable to catch his words. Yan Xiaobao merely shook his head. Raising his hand, he gently brushed it against her lips, a melancholic smile hovering there. "You shouldn't worry that pretty little head of yours," he told her as he withdrew his hand. "I need to go talk to Cai Jie." He excused himself and left Wang Julong in the front hall. Walking away, he wrestled with his impulses, but before heading to Cai Jie's room, he turned back to glance at her once again.

Back in the entrance hall, Wang Julong's cheeks burned in embarrassment—for asking her question and for everything that had just transpired. She slowly raised her hand, touching her lips where Yan Xiaobao had brushed his fingers. A soft smile appeared on her face, but it quickly wilted when she shook her head. Her warm and gentle expression was replaced by one that was somber and anguished. "I can't let myself grow complacent," she murmured to herself. "Not when my entire family was massacred. I can't play girlfriend with Yan Xiaobao. I can't focus on anything beyond revenge." Despite her words, deep in her eyes stirred a yearning. She shook her head again and slowly walked to her room, preparing to cultivate and increase her strength. Even though Yan Xiaobao would help her avenge her family,

Yan Xiaobao realized it was already late and stopped Cai Jie from further cultivation. "Gao Yan will be back soon. We should ask him if he has heard anything about An Hee or the Crusaders," he said. Although Cai Jie looked slightly annoyed, his expression quickly turned into one of excitement. He jumped up, almost pushing Yan Xiaobao out the door as he bolted downstairs. Yan Xiaobao once again found himself in the entrance hall where he had spoken to Wang Julong earlier. But now, the beautiful woman was gone; instead, Cai Jie and Yan Xiaobao were left awaiting Gao Yan's return.

Deng Wu arrived and noticed three chairs arranged in the foyer. All three sat together, with Deng Wu clearly fixated on Cai Jie, staring at him and trying to decipher his secrets. Cai Jie, rather uncomfortable with Deng Wu's intensity, initially pretended not to notice but gradually grew uneasy. Eventually, he couldn't stay silent anymore. "Why are you staring at me so much? I know I'm attractive, but I'm not a woman!" he exclaimed. However, Deng Wu was unfazed, not even insulted if he indeed preferred men. Instead, he simply looked back and, before replying, said, "Do you share your soul with something? Maybe a tiger? Or a turtle?" Hearing this, Yan Xiaobao was curious to see what Cai Jie's response would be.

Yan Xiaobao and Cai Jie were good friends, but they had never revealed their secrets to one another. Just as Yan Xiaobao wasn't aware of how Cai Jie executed the Crusaders, Cai Jie had no idea about Yan Xiaobao's battles with the Divine Beasts. Of course, neither realized Deng Wu might have shared something similar.

"Why would I share my body with a tiger?" Cai Jie was utterly perplexed. When he noticed the smirk on Yan Xiaobao's face, his confusion deepened. "I'm serious, sharing your body is not something reasonable. How can you share your body with another being?" he asked. His previous irritation had shifted to curiosity and bewilderment. Realizing Deng Wu expected him to share his body seemed to be the reason for the old man's intense stare. Cai Jie started to wonder what sharing one's body with a tiger truly meant.

"Don't tell me you share your body with a tiger?" he asked, intrigued. He knew both Yan Xiaobao and Deng Wu had qualities beyond those of ordinary men. "Now that you mention it, I suppose neither of you is merely mixed-blood. Do you actually have something alive within you?" he speculated. Yan Xiaobao simply shrugged, neither confirming nor denying the claim. Seeing this reaction, Cai Jie felt he was right, yet the young man didn't say a word. "Why does he seem so familiar?" Cai Jie questioned himself for the hundredth time, unsure whether his senses were deceiving him or if Yan Xiaobao was truly hiding more than him.

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Just as Cai Jie was about to open his mouth to ask more questions, he was interrupted by the front door swinging open. Gao Yan and the Rong twins had arrived. Seeing the three of them sitting in the entry hall not only surprised Gao Yan but also caught the Rong twins off guard. It wasn't often that Yan

Xiaobao appeared so impatient, and seeing their puzzled expressions, Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but offer them an awkward, sheepish smile.

"Gao Yan." He called out, "We need some information. Do you have time to talk with us before dinner?" he asked. Gao Yan nodded, excused himself briefly, and led the three young people into Xu Biao's former office. However, the older man no longer used the room as he was now deeply focused on cultivation. He spent every waking moment of the day training, which Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but find concerning. The way Xu Biao was overloading his Yang Energy without balancing it with enough Yin made it impossible for him to perfectly harmonize them. This imbalance meant he was unable to progress to the next level. Xu had made a mental note to warn his old friend to be careful—such obsessive focus on training might ruin his long-term prospects.

"What's so important that you waited for me to return instead of meeting me at the Black Lion Society?" Gao Yan asked curiously, his gaze resting on Yan Xiaobao. He had already guessed that his white-haired friend would be the one to lead the conversation.

"The Crusaders," Yan Xiaobao said directly. "I need every piece of information you have on them. I want to know who they've visited, where they're staying, what they've been doing in the city, and everything you know about how they were formed."

Hearing this, Gao Yan frowned. "You want information on the Crusaders?" he asked, clearly perplexed. "Why would you want to know about the Crusaders? What do you mean by 'how they were formed'?" At his question, Yan Xiaobao and Cai Jie exchanged glances before Yan Xiaobao cleared his throat. "Could you share everything you know about the Crusaders with us? I mean every last detail. How long have they been visiting the capital, how many of them currently reside here—everything," he asked earnestly. Gao Yan rubbed his chin in thought. "I should be able to find it for you," he said slowly. "But it'll take some time. We don't have detailed information on the Crusaders. This is like asking for information on every mercenary in the city." He continued, "What we do know right now is that the Crusaders are tied to the Royal Family, and at least one trusted person in the Royal Family household is a Crusader." The more Gao Yan spoke, the wider the eyes of Cai Jie and Yan Xiaobao became. No wonder Cai Jie had seen Crusaders in the city—there must be quite a few of them.

"I need all the information on the Crusaders, every single piece of it," Yan Xiaobao said insistently. Even after hearing what Gao Yan had just told him, he was still taken aback. Would he need to have a Crusader in his household as well in the future? He couldn't let go of that thought, especially since he knew they weren't just connected to the Royal Family but in some cases seemed to be directly involved with him.

"There's also another question," Yan Xiaobao asked somewhat out of breath. "Have you heard of the name An Hee?" Gao Yan frowned slowly as he turned his gaze toward Yan Xiaobao. It was clear he was scouring his memory for anything that might surface. But the longer he searched, the more frustrated he became. Finally, after about ten minutes of contemplation, he opened his mouth. "An Hee?" he asked. "Are you certain that's his name? Does he reside in the capital? I find that highly doubtful. If he did, I would know of him," he continued. From his tone, it was obvious he had never heard this name before. Even the twins exchanged puzzled looks, unable to recall anyone named An Hee either.

Seeing that they knew nothing, Yan Xiaobao felt a twinge of disappointment that quickly faded as he reframed his thoughts. After all, An Hee was hardly an ordinary figure. He was a peak-level expert in this world, far above the average cultivator. If his name were widely known, that would indeed be strange. Without missing a beat, Yan Xiaobao swiftly shifted the topic. "What about the Frozen General?" he asked, deliberately using his title rather than his given name, Zhong Hui.

The mention of the Frozen General's name made the Rong twins and Gao Yan suck in a sharp breath. They all looked shocked and guarded. "What do you need to know about him?" Gao Yan asked cautiously, seeming uncertain how to respond. "The Frozen General...he's someone commoners invoke to scare others," Rong Xing muttered softly. "If a child doesn't do what their parents tell them, they'll say the Frozen General will come to take them away—and make them part of his Frozen Brigade."

Hearing this, Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but chuckle—a reaction that felt strangely out of place in the otherwise serious atmosphere. Even Cai Jie seemed taken aback; only Deng Wu let a faint smile escape onto his face. The two of them, Deng Wu and Yan Xiaobao, had met Zhong Hui in Shen Yun, and the man they encountered seemed nothing like the one portrayed by these folk tales. The Frozen General wasn't some boogeyman kidnapping disobedient children in the night. Yan Xiaobao's impression of the Frozen General was that of a terrifyingly powerful cultivator, far beyond the level of ordinary citizens.

"I'll need a few days to gather all the information on the Crusaders and to better understand what people think about the 'Frozen General,'" Gao Yan promised. After a brief pause, the older man added, "As for the name An Hee, though I've never heard of it before, I'll ask around to see if I can uncover anything."

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"Thank you for your help," Yan Xiaobao said to Gao Yan with a bright smile. His heart swelled once again, deeply grateful for all the assistance his friends had given him. Living in the city was undoubtedly the best idea to see if he could obtain some information about An Hee. However, if such information came from either commoners or nobles, the chances were slim. Nonetheless, he hoped the Royal Family might know of An Hee, perhaps mentioning him occasionally in front of their servants. Yan Xiaobao wished they could at least find some trace of information about him.

"I won't take up any more of your time," Yan Xiaobao said with a polite smile. He and Cai Jie headed up the stairs toward the room they had borrowed. Both of them understood that rushing Gao Yan was impossible. They had to wait for his return. In the meantime, they decided to focus on training. Training was the only thing that could keep them occupied, allowing them to concentrate on something other than the anticipation of news.

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"This is very strange," Gao Yan murmured for the seventh time in the last hour. His desk was piled high with papers, his face contorted in a deep frown. "Zhang Chentian," he called, summoning his friend. Anyone who knew them during their days at the Royal Academy in Liluo City would recognize Zhang Chentian as Gao Yan's trusted aide. At the moment, he was holding a stack of Memory Stones and placing them onto Gao Yan's desk. With a sigh, he shook his head.

"There's nothing about An Hee," Zhang Chentian said. "No one by the name An Hee—not among nobles, not even among commoners. It's as if the name has been completely erased from the world. The idea of a name simply not existing is absurd. What's strange is, I feel there's a reason behind this."

"It's been very challenging to gather information about him because we're essentially buying rumors. We only have a few specialized members actively searching for specific details. I think we should try employing one of them to see what we can uncover within the Royal Family. Focus on families with ties to the Crusaders. If I've read Yan Xiaobao's reactions correctly, then the Crusaders and An Hee may have some sort of connection." Gao Yan continued. Zhang Chentian set aside the many Memory Stones he had brought, placing them to the side. Scrolls upon scrolls of paper were tossed into the growing pile, and Memory Stones were continually added—yet none of these stones contained any information about An Hee.

The more the silver-blue light flickered, the deeper Gao Yan's frown grew. Finally, he stood up and walked toward another table, where a friend sat across from him amidst an array of Memory Stones. "Send the Tang twins into the Royal Castle and have them see if they can obtain any information about someone named An Hee. I cannot stress enough that this isn't about the usual rumors we deal with. They need to exercise extreme caution," Gao Yan said to the man at the table. The man nodded, his face serious.

Seeing the gravity of the situation, Gao Yan moved toward their large bookshelf, which housed a considerable number of Memory Stones. He grabbed a handful and brought them to his desk. He

pushed the old Memory Stones aside to make room for the new ones, then sat down and sighed. He placed a Memory Stone against his forehead, sorting them into two piles: one containing information about the Frozen General and the Crusaders, and the other devoid of such information. As he gazed at the numerous stones, he couldn't help but sigh, knowing the immense effort this task required. Looking at the Memory Stones he had set aside, his frown deepened. "Who is this? Who is he?" he muttered to himself, his entire expression clouded with confusion. Once he was finished with the last Memory Stone, he swiftly concealed three stones in his robes and dashed out of the black lion toward the Rong Twin Towers.

Gao Yan was a familiar guest and could easily bypass the guards. Nearly skipping with excitement, he hurried into the grand building, ascending the staircase toward Yan Xiaobao's room. Once inside, he was thrilled, having managed to quickly find as much information as he did. Knocking on Yan Xiaobao's door, he saw Cai Jie open his own door, evidently waiting for Gao Yan. "Do you mind if I join you? I'm quite curious about the Crusaders," Cai Jie asked. This was the first time Cai Jie had taken the initiative to speak with Yan Xiaobao's friend.

Hearing the polite inquiry, Gao Yan couldn't help but smile faintly. He nodded and turned to look at the door being opened. Yan Xiaobao stood inside, wearing the same clothes as the previous days. Anyone could see that he had been thoroughly engrossed in his training over the past three days. Yan Xiaobao stepped aside from the door and walked into the room, stretching his neck slightly. "Excuse me for a moment," Yan Xiaobao said as he headed toward the bathroom. "I need to freshen up for a moment, and I'll return shortly. You can share the Crusader information with Cai Jie. I'm sure that's why he's still here." He chuckled faintly, while Cai Jie smiled and extended a hand, offering two Memory Stones.

Without waiting, Cai Jie settled into a small chair in the room and quickly pressed one of the Memory Stones to his forehead. Silver-blue light illuminated the room. Cai Jie muttered a few indistinct phrases, and as the light faded, his hand slowly lowered. He placed the used Memory Stone on the table and picked up the next one.

As he delved into the second Memory Stone, he once again muttered incomprehensible words. Like before, he removed the stone and set it on the table. This time, however, he did not immediately open his eyes. Instead, he continued murmuring indistinct phrases, leaving Gao Yan feeling somewhat uneasy as he waited for Yan Xiaobao to finish bathing.

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Yan Xiaobao was exceedingly quick. Ten minutes later, a fresh-looking young man stepped out of the bathroom. Glancing at Cai Jie, who had his eyes closed, he chuckled softly, then turned his attention to Gao Yan. "I'm sorry to trouble you to find all of this for me," he said, looking at the older man with gratitude. "I truly appreciate it. Without your help, I wouldn't know where to begin searching for this information."

Hearing this, Gao Yan couldn't help but laugh. He had been working tirelessly to meet the deadline he set for himself, and he felt a sense of satisfaction that Yan Xiaobao recognized the effort he'd put in. However, he still felt the information he had was inadequate, as he knew absolutely nothing about An Hee, a name that seemed to be nonexistent.

"To be honest, the black lion is usually a place where an ordinary person can obtain gossip or information when working for merchants, nobles, or even the Royal Family. We rarely send people to actively gather information for us, but this time, I've dispatched someone I trust to investigate the matter. I trust they'll return with some details about this An Hee. If they fail to uncover anything, then it truly means there's nothing about him to be found in this city at all," Gao Yan said deeply, frowning as though admitting this felt like acknowledging defeat. The thought of not being able to find information in the city he resided in was something Gao Yan could not reconcile with. Clearing his throat, Gao Yan reached out and handed the last Memory Stone to Yan Xiaobao.

"This contains what we know about the Frozen General. The information is very vague since he's never personally appeared in this city, but we've heard tales of his actions across various cities. Additionally, it also contains why the tales of the 'Frozen Corps' have instilled fear for hundreds of years. As for how old the Frozen General might be, no one truly knows." "I understand," Yan Xiaobao replied, slipping the Memory Stone into his hand and gently rubbing its surface with his thumb. The Frozen General was indeed a figure who filled Yan Xiaobao with dread. Zhong Hui appeared to act like a friend in moments of divine splendor, but Xie Lan's death was undoubtedly Zhong Hui's doing. Yan Xiaobao found Zhong Hui to be an overwhelming presence, and all he truly knew about him was his outward appearance. The time he and his friends spent with Zhong Hui in the underground city had been brief, and sadly, aside from his name, they had gleaned almost no other information about him. Despite his seemingly easygoing demeanor, Yan Xiaobao knew Zhong Hui was someone of immense influence.

"Thank you for going to such trouble," Yan Xiaobao said gratefully as he sat in another chair, holding the Memory Stone. Looking at Cai Jie, it was easy to see he was still completely engrossed in the information he'd obtained regarding the Crusaders. Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but smile goofily as he watched the focused young man.

"I'll be fine in time," Gao Yan said. "I'm still looking for information on An Hee. It's proving to be much harder than I imagined." His brows furrowed again momentarily, but the expression quickly vanished. "Can you tell me anything about him?" Gao Yan asked. Yan Xiaobao pondered for a while. What did he truly know about An Hee? "He's at least as powerful as the Frozen General. Zhong Hui has the Frozen Corps, and An Hee has the Crusaders," he answered. Gao Yan's eyes widened, his mouth agape. "I suspected he was connected to the Crusaders, but to be their leader? And no one knew this? That's astonishing," he murmured quietly. Upon hearing this revelation, Gao Yan was clearly swept up in a

flood of thoughts, murmuring to himself as he bit his lip. A few minutes later, after deep contemplation, Gao Yan broke into a slight smile. He turned to Yan Xiaobao once more, saying, "I'll do everything I can to find information about An Hee." He smiled and nodded in reassurance before excusing himself. The two cultivators parted ways. Gao Yan then hurried off to the black lion, convinced he could obtain more information about An Hee from the Tang twins.

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Chapter 705 -: The Secret World Leader

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When Gao Yan returned to gather information, Yan Xiaobao began experiencing the Memory Stone. Silver-blue light shimmered, and he felt the information pressing heavily against his mind. Rumors about the Frozen General flooded in one after another. Some said he had been a monster since the world was frozen, a demon living on human flesh since the Frozen Era. Another rumor claimed that every night, the Frozen General would raid cities and abduct naughty boys and girls, taking them home to turn them into frozen soldiers. Yet another rumor suggested that the Frozen General was the secret World Leader, controlling every Royal Family without anyone knowing. Some said the Frozen General would hunt down all talented young men to abduct for his army. Contemplating the endless rumors, Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but find the last one the most plausible. Despite meeting Zhong Hui, he still didn't understand why he behaved the way he did. When thinking about the last rumor, a shiver ran down Yan Xiaobao's spine. He hoped that Zhong Hui wouldn't see him as a young genius in his eyes.

The rumors weren't limited to Zhong Hui; the Frozen Brigade was equally infamous. They were an army filled with ferocious beasts and humans who had transformed into monsters. When experts went missing, they would appear as part of the Frozen Brigade. If an expert died, they might be resurrected and turned into a Frozen Officer. Listening to all these rumors, Yan Xiaobao could only scoff. He had already seen the truth beneath the Crusader cloaks and was no longer shocked that Zhong Hui used necromancy. He knew he needed to learn more about necromancers in their true essence. As he finished absorbing the information from the Memory Stone, he thought about finding Deng Wu.

Reaching out, he picked up a Memory Stone containing information about the Crusaders. As soon as he placed it against his forehead, more information surged into his mind. This time, it was a long list of nobles and Royal Family members with Crusaders residing in their homes. It included the number of Crusaders each household had and the schedules they kept.

These Crusaders seldom did anything, merely protecting the premises to which they were assigned. But once a week, they would leave and head to the Royal Castle. They would stay inside for several hours before returning to their respective homes. The castle's servants all knew the Crusaders held meetings,

but no one knew what transpired during them. Servants were forbidden from entering, and no nobles or Royal Family members participated in these meetings. The weekly actions of the Crusaders went unquestioned. Yet Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but wonder what they were doing during those times.

Setting the stone on the table, Yan Xiaobao picked up another Memory Stone, and within seconds, more information about the Crusaders emerged. Historically, the Crusaders had been remembered throughout time, dating back to the Dark Era. Over the years, the Crusaders had various missions. Initially, they were tasked with maintaining peace in the major cities. They ensured the safety of citizens, but as cities grew increasingly secure and the Dark Era became legend, the Crusaders transformed from peacekeepers into guardians of prestigious households. Despite their shift in purpose, the Crusaders never lost the respect of the citizens. Over time, people regarded the Crusaders as the symbol of stability in the Kingdom. Their belief was that as long as the Crusaders stood by, nothing could shake the Kingdom. However, Crusaders now only resided in the capitals of the first three Kingdoms. Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but wonder what had happened to the Crusaders within the Spanish Empire, as those he faced were undoubtedly deployed for war rather than city guardianship.

Regarding the Crusaders' background, every commoner expected them to belong to the Royal Families across the world. They acted under the Royals' command.

Setting the Memory Stone aside, Yan Xiaobao reflected deeply. It was clear that An Hee had used his Crusaders to take control of the world. He had established order with them, but now, four thousand years later, it appeared that this exalted figure no longer cared for the world. Xu Yue feared that perhaps An Hee had already departed this world. He had been strong—exceptionally strong—and it was possible he had ascended to the status of God. If he had achieved this, perhaps he had left the world behind to explore realms accessible only to divine beings.

"Well, there's nothing I can do about that," Yan Xiaobao sighed, staring out the window. "No matter where he is, I won't give up until I find him—even if it means searching for an eternity." He made this vow and slowly stood up. Watching the intensely focused Cai Jie, Yan Xiaobao smiled and shook his head. Clearly, Cai Jie had thoroughly examined the information regarding the Crusaders, yet Yan Xiaobao was more curious about Cai Jie's enigmatic techniques, wondering how he achieved such remarkable results. Therefore, he did not sit down but instead resolved to actively search for the truth hidden within the Memory Stones.

There was a knock at the door, and he heard Deng Wu's familiar voice call out, "Come in!" Yan Xiaobao walked softly to him. He entered and sat facing the Dragon Man. "I need your help," Yan Xiaobao said to his long-time friend. The two had gone through Hell together and returned, forging Deng Wu into the person he was now. Deng Wu now shared his body with Little Dragon, but despite Lan Feng's efforts to force the two to merge, Deng Wu remained steadfastly loyal. Yan Xiaobao and Deng Wu were like

brothers, building trust over the course of their adventures. Their bond was mutual, and they knew this sentiment was shared. They were like family, especially now that Deng Wu had lost everyone else.

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"I'm not sure how much you know about the Crusaders," he began, shrugging his shoulders. Deng Wu shrugged as well. He only knew the general rumors— the Crusaders didn't speak, never revealed their skin, and were overwhelmingly powerful, yet an enigma. "We fought against them in the war. I saw what really lies beneath their cloaks," he continued. "The Crusaders are already dead." Hearing this, Deng Wu seemed puzzled. "They're dead," Yan Xiaobao repeated. "They are not your typical soul shadows. In fact, their bodies are merely their souls. Their physical forms exist in various stages of decay. Some are flesh-covered corpses, others are rotting, and some are mere bones— yet their bodies remain inexplicably bound together in some way. The only thing I'm certain of is that their individual will has utterly vanished."

"They know how to act. They understand what's expected of them and how to fight," he went on. "Although they lack personal will, they can still function. As a necromancer, how could such a thing be made possible?" Yan Xiaobao stared at Deng Wu with piercing eyes, scrutinizing the man before him. He saw the confusion on Deng Wu's face. After grumbling for a while, Deng Wu seemed to be pondering the matter. "Undead wizards generally deal with the soul of a person or a beast. We can store these souls within inscriptions and utilize their life force in combat. Dealing with physical remains is far more complex. We can't transform them into inscriptions because they are too large and tangible. I suspect I could control one or two bodies by infusing them with my Qi, but we're talking about countless Crusaders here. To control so many Crusaders, one would need an immense reserve of inner energy," Deng Wu explained. "But even if I could control two bodies, I would need to concentrate entirely on them to make them functional. Directing two bodies is difficult enough to start with, but it would be downright foolish during a battle. To control their inner energy, I'd have to focus on that body, leaving my own body vulnerable to attack. With my attention divided between the two, one of the bodies would revert to simply being a corpse. To control such a vast army while making them all move, you'd either need a group of necromancers or you'd need to fragment yourself into thousands of pieces. I can hardly imagine how such a thing is possible!" Deng Wu was visibly shocked. Although he believed it to be impossible, he knew his young friend wouldn't lie about something so crucial. He couldn't help but shudder at the notion. The technique to simultaneously control so many bodies— it was something he deeply desired to master. Seeing the gleam of interest in Deng Wu's eyes, Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but chuckle softly. He understood how tempting the idea must be— to discover a way to control multiple bodies at once without splitting one's attention. The concept of transforming those bodies into tools of war without having to micromanage them would be invaluable. For now, Deng Wu relied heavily on inscriptions, but skills derived from inscriptions were always weaker than the actual skills practiced by cultivators with corresponding elemental affinity. This handicap left spellcasters at a disadvantage in direct combat. While Deng Wu could record any skill, regardless of elemental affinity, these inscriptions always proved weaker than genuine attacks. For instance, metal affinity specialists almost always had inferior offensive capabilities, making them weaker than most cultivators.

As a result, many practitioners with metal affinities became craftsmen. They created inscriptions that enhanced a person's strength, martial arts skills, or other abilities, forging them into weapons, armor, and other items. Those rare metal affinity users who focused on cultivation after unlocking their middle dantian often specialized in necromancy or inscription-making. Engravers typically amassed a significant collection of inscriptions to compensate for their weaker attacks, using sheer volume to overwhelm and defeat their opponents. Deng Wu, however, was both a necromancer and a specialist in inscriptions. He spent considerable time perfecting his craft with both inscriptions and creating soul shadows.

Seeing Deng Wu's yearning, Yan Xiaobao snorted lightly. He knew the older man would do anything to gain power, so that he could become more reliable and get closer to avenging his family. Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but smile at the thought. If a necromancer could truly find a way to move bodies in the manner described, Deng Wu would eventually uncover how it was done. When he did, Deng Wu would undoubtedly inform Yan Xiaobao, especially if they discovered a method to track down the perpetrator of such techniques.

"Alright, if you uncover anything, make sure to let me know," Yan Xiaobao said with a smile, leaving Deng Wu to work out the problem on his own as he headed back to his room. He still had some time before moving into his new mansion, and until then, he was determined to keep training. He needed to gain as much strength as possible to face the Third Prince and An Hee.

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The days passed by swiftly. Yan Xiaobao spent all his time cultivating, while Cai Jie would disappear intermittently. Some days, he'd be gone for just an hour, and others, he'd be gone all day, returning at dusk. Deng Wu locked himself in his room, where the occasional sound of spells exploding could be heard— other days, there was complete silence. Every evening, he'd leave the mansion, returning with various dead fish and small animals, obviously meant for consumption but instead used for Deng Wu's experiments.

Gao Yan had not visited the Rong Family either, spending much of his time with the black lion while scouring a Memory Stone almost desperately for any information on someone named An Hee. Unfortunately, despite his heightened efforts, the results were the same. Gao Yan could only wait patiently for the Tang twins to return with news, knowing their mission was no easy task. As one day blended into another, Gao Yan still had nothing to report to Yan Xiaobao.

Meanwhile, Gao Yan wasn't the only one busy. Ma Kong, too, was occupied with his family and the Black Market Auction House. The family was abuzz with preparations as they planned to switch factions, something no one else yet knew of. Given the secrecy required, Ma Kong was left responsible for much

of the groundwork. Although it didn't sound like a lot of work on the surface, managing the practical aspects of their support transition was no small feat.

Unnoticed, two weeks had already passed. The time had come for Yan Xiaobao to end his secluded training and visit the Lord of the mansion. As he turned the doorknob and peered out, he didn't feel sentimental. Instead, he found himself overwhelmed. It had been just two weeks since his arrival and reunion with his friends. Reflecting on the current situation, Yan Xiaobao nodded resolutely. This was an experience he would never forget. Although fourteen days wasn't a long time, considering how he'd failed to do much for his friends in that span, it felt far too long. "I must not rush things," he gritted his teeth as he reminded himself. "I need to ensure victory. I can't let my friends suffer any longer! The only way to achieve my goals and protect those I care about is with strength! The heavens care nothing for weakness!"

Leaving his room, he waited for Cai Jie to exit his own. The golden-haired young man smiled as soon as he saw Yan Xiaobao, and the two descended the stairs together. In the hall, Ma Kong, Gao Yan, Deng Wu, the Rong twins, and Xu Biao were waiting. Sha Yun was nowhere to be found, but Yan Xiaobao had grown accustomed to his friends coming and going in the past few years. It didn't raise any alarm for him. Everyone seemed to have been awaiting Yan Xiaobao's arrival. In Ma Kong's hand was a bracelet embedded with a Memory Stone. Handing it to Yan Xiaobao, Ma Kong said, "This is your key. Today marks the official beginning of our new faction. We've invited every guest we could think of. The entire upper echelon of Muchuan City is waiting for you at the mansion to hear what you have to say." Ma Kong's words made Yan Xiaobao frown instinctively.

"Alright, let's not make them wait here any longer," he sighed, straightening his back. At his right stood Deng Wu, the young man who shared his body with Little Dragon, while on his left was Cai Jie, the enigmatic youth no one truly understood. With both friends flanking him, and Ma Kong and Gao Yan trailing behind, followed by Xu Biao, these were the companions who had sworn to aid Yan Xiaobao.

"Thank you so much for having us," Yan Xiaobao said, looking at the Rong twins with heartfelt gratitude. He gave them a light hug, feeling sorry that they'd had no choice in who to support. Wang Julong was nowhere to be seen, nor was Sha Yun. Ever since his return to the capital, both had gone to considerable lengths to avoid Yan Xiaobao at all costs.

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Chapter 707 Falling in Love Romantically

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It was not surprising that Wang Julong was avoiding him, considering how awkward she must have felt after the embrace and tears. Yan Xiaobao hoped that she just needed some time to move past the embarrassment and pretend it had never happened. However, what worried him profoundly was that Sha Yun had also vanished. She was a magical beast, and though she had a beast contract, she was still a beast. Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but be concerned about what she was doing, where she had gone, and why she seemed to distance herself from him. In the end, he understood—she had been hurt when he chose Wang Julong over her. Yet all he wanted was to maintain the friendship with Snake Woman, even if romance was not in the cards for them.

"I really should go back to my family and travel to the magical forest," he muttered, his voice so soft that no one could hear it, except for the low rumble of his thoughts. Perhaps Sha Yun wished to return to her roots. Perhaps she longed to reunite with her sisters and revisit the simpler world she once knew. While letting her return to the magical forest, Yan Xiaobao also felt an urge to visit his own family. He couldn't help but worry about them—what had they been doing all this time? It had been years since he last saw his younger brother or his parents.

As he stepped into the grand entrance hall of Rong Twin Towers, a whirlwind of thoughts occupied his mind. However, as he entered the hall, the crisp air seemed to cleanse his mental fog. His swirling reflections on his friends, his family, and their circumstances coalesced into clarity, and his thoughts zeroed in on the task at hand. He had to make an impression on the city's elite and demonstrate that they should not overlook him lightly. Nobles, as a rule, never walked the streets but always traveled by carriage. Yet Yan Xiaobao didn't care about such conventions. Walking alongside him, Deng Wu's hair was as blue as the summer sky, partnered with a matching robe. His robe bore a splendid silver dragon curling up from the lower back to the top of one shoulder. On the other side was Cai Jie, whose hair gleamed like the purest gold and whose skin had the porcelain perfection of alabaster. He wore a gold robe adorned with pearls and intricate designs of suns and stars. Flanked by both sides walked Yan Xiaobao in robes white as the purest snow, adorned with gold and silver inlays and embroidered phoenixes.

Behind the trio of astonishingly handsome young men were Gao Yan and Ma Kong. Both were dressed in the finest black robes, emblazoned with family crests across their chests. A short distance away stood Xu Biao, a robust middle-aged man. Gazing at these striking individuals, everyone thought of them as celestial beings, descending angels. Even those who usually looked down on them for their mixed heritage now gazed in awe, as their radiance overwhelmed every prejudice. All eyes fixated on them, stunned and starstruck.

The two mansions were located in the same district of the city. Despite the notable differences between the two estates, Yan Xiaobao's residence catered to a small family or individual, while the Rong twins' mansion housed an entire clan. If the Rong Family decided to enter the city, their grand estate could comfortably accommodate them all.

Numerous homes and apartments had been designed to host over a thousand family members. Although the mansions of the Rong twins and Yan Xiaobao were both within the same district, the sheer scale of the estates meant that walking distances were longer than expected. The vastness of these properties was precisely why most people traveled by carriage. Even moving between locations within the same district covered considerable distances. Yan Xiaobao, lacking a carriage and with no intention of visiting his friends' homes at the moment, opted to walk instead. This gave him the time to focus on his thoughts while leaving the noble circle to sweat in anticipation. Once again, he felt like the Great Marshall of the Spanish Empire preparing to address the masses. Reflecting on the faces of the many magical beasts that followed him, he felt calm and composed.

As the group traversed the small town, excitement filled the air among them. They couldn't wait to reach the grand mansion and announce the formation of their new alliance. This revelation was certain to astonish all the nobles and merchants. How the new faction would reshape perceptions remained a matter for time to unveil.

After crossing the town, they finally arrived at the mansion. As Yan Xiaobao gazed upon it, a sense of familiarity washed over him. In front lay a magnificent staircase leading from the gilded gates to a pavilion-like mansion. Light streamed in through the open doors, pure radiant windows resonated with applause, and the clinking of glasses floated into the cool night. Clearly, the banquet had already begun, and the guests were enjoying their time immensely. Ma Kong had spent an entire day—with the help of his family—preparing the banquet. At present, his father stood at the castle's entrance, welcoming attendees. As their host, he ensured all glasses were filled, trays always abundant, and that numerous families were thoroughly enjoying themselves. As the mansion's owner appeared before the crowd, curiosity filled the air. Guests chatted amongst themselves, their spirits buoyant as they waited.

Arriving at the mansion gates, Yan Xiaobao nodded politely to the many guards outside. The guards, in return, bowed deeply to him with utmost respect. Though Yan Xiaobao had acquired the mansion only recently, he had become indelibly etched in the memories of every servant in the household. This was thanks to the Memory Stones they carried, detailing everything about their new master. Upon seeing this silver-haired young man in person, they immediately recognized him as their employer and accorded him the fitting respect.

As Yan Xiaobao advanced closer to his new mansion, the sounds grew louder—clinking glasses, murmurs, laughter—all intensifying with his approach. Alongside the rising cacophony, a tide of confidence surged within Yan Xiaobao. A subtle smile unfurled on his lips, untying a knot of tension in his stomach. "Just how many people were invited?" he wondered as he mentally counted the faint voices. As he neared the open doors, the din became unmistakably clear.

"I've invited everyone with even the slightest influence in Muchuan City," he said with a smile, "including the Third Prince, the City Lord, and Zhan Weisheng." Hearing the names of some key figures from the Sun Kingdom's capital, Hui Zuyue couldn't help but hope they had accepted his invitation. The City Lord and Zhan Weisheng were two individuals he wanted to approach, so they could eventually form an alliance. As for the Third Prince, it was because he wished to confront the man who had sworn to kill him. "Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer" was an old-world adage he was intimately familiar with. If he could find a way to persuade the Third Prince to offer him friendship, Yan Xiaobao would be delighted. The butterflies in his stomach intensified as he braced with anticipation for the evening ahead.

Soon, they arrived at the entrance, where a servant was waiting to greet the incoming guests, surrounded by guards. The servant was there to welcome the invited guests, while the guards ensured no uninvited individuals entered the banquet. Upon seeing Yan Xiaobao, the group of guards collectively bowed, and the servants rushed forward to lead them into the banquet hall. As they entered, the servant cleared his throat, his mere gesture drawing everyone's attention. Nobles and merchants inside the hall were all impatiently curious to see which celebrity had arrived at the castle next. However, this time, as they saw the crowd approaching the wide-open double doors leading to the spacious banquet, a hushed silence fell over the room. At the center of the group was Yan Xiaobao, a handsome young man with snow-white hair, porcelain-like skin, and deep, icy-blue eyes.

Behind him were two young men—Gao Yan and Ma Kong—both dressed in black attire. Many people scanned them briefly, noting the Ma Family crest prominently displayed on Ma Kong's attire. The symbol was enough to capture people's attention. Known in the capital for his diligence and ability to secure advantageous deals for his family, Ma Kong's standing had always drawn the focus of nobles. Gao Yan's outfit also displayed his family crest—though he wasn't of noble birth but a commoner, his emblem held no lesser significance. The crest, which symbolized the Black Market Auction House, was widely recognized; the black lion displayed on his chest left no room for ambiguity. Gao Yan was someone who knew everything—no matter what intelligence one sought, this man could provide the answers.

While these two figures were prominent personalities, on the other hand, Xu Biao was entirely unknown to the assembled guests. No one had encountered him before, the man who marked documents and categorized sensitive material in his office. Despite this, he was no less astonishing to behold. Walking behind the group of renowned experts, he exuded an aura that was impossible to ignore. His tall physique and commanding presence demanded respect from everyone around him. Since arriving in Divine City as the leader of the Merchant Guild, Xu Biao carried an air of authority and power that clung to him like an indelible mark.

The room's silence extended to the cultivators mingling within; nobody dared utter a word. The servant introducing the group cleared his throat repeatedly, feeling beads of sweat form on his forehead. His hands clenched tightly to keep them from trembling as he spoke. "Allow me to introduce the master of

this mansion and tonight's banquet host, Lord Yan Xiaobao, accompanied by Lord Deng Wu, Lord Cai Jie, Lord Ma Kong, Lord Gao Yan, and Lord Xu Biao."

The servant distinctly and carefully enunciated each name before bowing deeply to the room full of guests. Then, he retreated toward the front door, secretly hoping no more notable guests would arrive. He didn't want the anxiety and dread of encountering yet another striking figure that would unsettle him. The thought of what his new master might think of the agitation in a servant's heart crossed his mind momentarily, but he quickly shook his head and dismissed it.

As silence continued to blanket the banquet hall, Yan Xiaobao noticed the unspoken tension as everyone stared openly at him and his companions. Taking a step forward, he radiated a wide yet impeccably polite smile. "Dear guests! I'm pleased to see so many of you here tonight in my humble mansion," he began, taking another step forward before continuing. "I've invited everyone in Muchuan City for this delightful evening to get to know each of you. I've traveled far and wide, seen many sights, but I've never found a place to call home—a place where I truly belong."

"I hope tonight will allow me to grow closer to the beautiful city of Muchuan, and to better understand those who have contributed to making this city known across the world. Someday, I hope that I can become as respected and renowned as my esteemed guests and in turn earn your respect."

"Tonight, I must thank my dear friend and military brother, Ma Kong, along with his Ma family, for their tremendous assistance in organizing and hosting this event. Their support, not only for tonight's preparations but throughout my journey, has been immense," Yan Xiaobao said as he offered heartfelt praise for his lifelong friend. "I'll always remember and cherish these things." His words, coupled with their evident deeper meanings, caused the nobles in the hall to widen their eyes in astonishment. Some guests visibly loosened their posture, while others nearly gasped in surprise. For years, the Ma family had supported Zhan Weisheng; however, with their young master standing behind Yan Xiaobao, Hui Zuyue's declaration made it clear to everyone that the family had shifted its allegiance. The implications were far-reaching and monumental.

"Ma Kong isn't my only military brother," Yan Xiaobao continued. "Gao Yan has also been my childhood friend and has stood by me ever since I arrived in the capital. In the future, he'll serve as one of the pillars of support I rely upon." His words once again stirred confusion within the hearts of many nobles. Gao Yan had never backed anyone before—he had always opted to trade with anyone willing to pay, refusing to partake in or favor any particular faction. Yet here he was declaring his support for the newly-arrived Yan Xiaobao.

"My brothers-in-arms also include Deng Wu from the Deng family, Wang Jialong, and Xu Biao, an adventurer who has seen and experienced places you could hardly imagine," Yan Xiaobao concluded his speech. He said nothing further about Cai Jie, the young man quietly standing beside him, whose persistent cheerful demeanor left an air of mystique around him with the lack of introduction rendering him even more enigmatic.

Yan Xiaobao nodded to many of his guests, following closely behind his friends as he entered the room, moving past the crowd while offering genuine, warm smiles. As a gesture of courtesy, he inclined his head toward every person he passed. The young man approached the City Lord. Upon reaching the towering figure, he clasped his hands tightly and bent into a bow before straightening up. "It's an incredible honor to see you have accepted my invitation," he said cordially, exhaling a breath of relief as the large man laughed heartily. "I always attend banquet invitations. A free meal—especially one with endless refills of dishes such as yours—is a feast I rarely refuse. So thank you for inviting me." He smiled, his gaze shifting to the table filled with splendid delicacies, observing the many servants scurrying to offer refreshments to the guests.

"I'm grateful for your participation last time. I hope to be invited again to any upcoming banquets you plan to host," Yan Xiaobao said with a smile. Meanwhile, the other guests slowly resumed their conversations. Some whispered amongst themselves, but soon the murmurs grew louder until an animated chatter filled the hall once more.

Within the mansion, the discussions shifted from curiosity about the Beast Army's Great Marshal to shock and speculation regarding how the Ma family, Gao Yan, and the black lion network were supporting this young man who had emerged from the ruins of the Siban Empire. A man supported by the mystical creatures of the world, the Black Market Auction House, and backed by the Sun Kingdom's most extensive intelligence network—the black lion. From the beginning, people had underestimated him. What they were realizing now was far more perilous than they had anticipated.

It was evident that for this young man to live a peaceful life, he wasn't merely appearing in Muchuan City within the Sun Kingdom's capital. His debut into high society had brought forth a powerful new faction—one supported by two dominant forces from the city without even factoring in the Beast Army's might from the Divine Domain.

While nearly everyone searched for small groups of allies to discuss the evening's shifting dynamics, Yan Xiaobao maintained a cordial demeanor as he greeted each guest. Smiling as he moved across the room, he even introduced himself to people he had never met before. He expressed heartfelt thanks for their attendance, especially given the short notice he had provided for the gathering.

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Chapter 709 Great Fortune and Good Luck

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Yan Xiaobao memorized everyone's names, their families, and their factions as he moved through the room. He made every effort to learn about each individual and their allegiances. Recalling one person after another, Yan Xiaobao's thoughts explored the knowledge he had obtained from the Memory Stone. Greeting everyone served several purposes. First, he hoped to leave a favorable impression, as most people were highly wary of him, likely due to the rumors surrounding him. Second, he wanted to discern who had chosen to attend his banquet. Finally, he sought to see and interact with the Royal Family. Yan Xiaobao was searching for any Princes, Princesses, or their aristocratic supporters who might have already arrived.

So far, Yan Xiaobao was disappointed. Quite a number of nobles supporting the Royal Family had arrived, but everywhere he looked, he found only nobility and merchants—there was no sign of the Royal Family. This left Yan Xiaobao feeling somewhat disheartened. He wanted to meet the man he had sworn to kill for his friend; he hoped to see the one who had cold-bloodedly sentenced two families to death, sparing neither their young nor old, neither their women nor men.

Though Yan Xiaobao's dissatisfaction simmered internally, no one could perceive his true feelings, as he buried them deep within. The only visible emotions he displayed were gratitude and joy. Despite some disappointment, Yan Xiaobao reasoned that even if he longed to see the Prince, Deng Wu would prefer viewing his detestable foes rather than death itself.

After circling the banquet hall to greet and thank all attendees, Yan Xiaobao finally returned to his group of friends. The atmosphere among his friends contrasted starkly with the rest of the room. There was no relaxation, indulgence, or drunkenness; instead, they were sharp, focused, and vigilant, observing the crowd for any signs of sudden hostility or plotting against their friend Yan Xiaobao. While an attack at this time seemed highly unlikely, Yan Xiaobao and his friends were unwilling to take any risks. Though Yan Xiaobao outwardly appeared cheerful and carefree as he greeted nobles he had never met before, he was no less alert than his companions.

There was currently no animosity between Yan Xiaobao and the nobility, but relations with merchants were another matter. Zhan Weisheng did not attend his banquet, but many of his supporters did. Knowing that the Ma family had chosen to support Yan Xiaobao implied their withdrawal of support for Zhan Weisheng, which easily sowed discord between the two. Thus, Yan Xiaobao sought to improve his relationship with the City Lord, as that could indirectly smooth relations with the merchants. He had no

intention of crossing someone like Zhan Weisheng. If the two were to clash, Yan Xiaobao would be unable to focus entirely on the Third Prince.

Just as Yan Xiaobao returned to his group, his servant appeared again and cleared his throat. Everyone in the banquet hall turned their curious gaze toward the man. The arrival of someone this late suggested a guest of considerable status. Only those with significance dared to arrive late, as the later their entry, the greater attention their presence commanded. Even Yan Xiaobao had arrived late; as the mansion's owner and a newcomer, he naturally wasn't the evening's host. The host was the Ma Family, who customarily became the final arrival.

Yan Xiaobao's face momentarily froze before becoming more authentic. His dark eyes flickered, and if observed carefully, one might notice his blue pupils dimmed. His expression was inscrutable, but it was evident the young man was contemplating something critical. The two individuals appeared to be around twenty to twenty-four years old, their features no longer carrying the youthful aura seen in Yan Xiaobao and Cai Jie. Their demeanor clearly exhibited the stature of nobility, commanding a certain level of respect. Watching these two brothers — despite being the elder ones — gave the impression of them being nearly the same age. This was unmistakably due to their arduous training to rapidly achieve the King-level, rendering age inconsequential. Observing Yan Xiaobao and Cai Jie's youthful appearances, it was clear to all that they had achieved the King-level even faster than the Third Prince, who was famously hailed as a royal prodigy.

"Well, there's still time to greet the Royal Family," Yan Xiaobao muttered to himself and began moving toward the two individuals of royal blood. Both were scanning the numerous guests present at the banquet, and nothing they saw seemed to impress them. "Your Highnesses, I can hardly believe that such esteemed figures would grace us with your presence!" Yan Xiaobao bowed deeply in salute to the two princes. As his gaze landed on Shiu Ye, his heart raced. Yan Xiaobao's suppressed anger roared inwardly, but with the aid of Blue Cloud, he smothered it and managed to keep it under control. He ensured that no matter how much he currently wished to kill the prince, he could restrain himself. He locked his inner fury away while maintaining a polite exterior. He was courteous, friendly, supportive. "Please enjoy your time in my mansion. I hope the cuisine we've prepared suits your tastes. Feel free to mingle with the crowd, and if you have any complaints, do not hesitate to voice your concerns. The Ma family will do everything possible to rectify any issues." Both princes offered their usual distracted nods of acknowledgment before moving toward two groups of nobles, each consisting of their own supporters. Though they had arrived late, they were highly curious about the events that had transpired prior to their arrival. Their trust extended solely to those who had sworn loyalty through a Blood Oath. Only their pillars of support were deemed sufficient.

Chapter 710 Great Fortune and Good Luck_2

Seeing their lofty emotions, Yan Xiaobao was quite pleased as he personally introduced himself to everyone who appeared at the banquet. Looking around, Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but feel puzzled by Zhan Weisheng's absence. He highly suspected the merchant might show up later, even though he was

honorable, he was far from noble, and his presence in the Royal Family's gathering might imply he considered himself more important than them.

"I'd better visit him tomorrow," Yan Xiaobao muttered to himself as he slowly approached the table, noticing the City Lord standing alone. He was evidently still lost deep in thought, and nobody dared speak to him, evidently unsure of his current mindset.

"Is this truly shocking?" Yan Xiaobao asked quietly as he stood behind the City Lord. His voice pulled the thoughtful man out of his stupor, and he seemed genuinely delighted to see Yan Xiaobao—his previously furrowed brow had entirely smoothed. "I don't know what you mean," he replied. Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but chuckle briefly. "You seem to be thinking deeply—something troubling you?" He continued as he and the City Lord slowly walked from the table toward the gates leading to the park behind the mansion. The area was lit with torches that illuminated the park, allowing the guests to refresh themselves before continuing the banquet. Yan Xiaobao headed outside, hoping to have a quiet conversation with the City Lord where others couldn't overhear his words. This conversation could result in Yan Xiaobao's imprisonment in countless ways, but the young man was willing to take the risk. He was confident that even if he ended up in jail, he would find a way out.

When they reached the park, Yan Xiaobao walked down a path away from the well-lit grounds. Curious about whether the City Lord would follow him, Yan couldn't help but smile. His doubts quickly dissipated as the imposing man indeed followed him without showing signs of hesitation in his decision. After a while, the two arrived at a secluded spot no one else would stumble upon, not even by accident. "We've come so far—I trust you have something important to say," the City Lord sighed as he glanced at Yan Xiaobao, his whitened teeth gleaming under the moonlight. Yan Xiaobao took a deep breath beneath the blue cloud of night to calm himself. His entire body remained vigilant, prepared to defend himself if the conversation deviated from his expectations. "I imagine you and Zhan Weisheng are displeased with me for pulling Gao Yan and the Ma family away from you," Yan Xiaobao began. The City Lord impatiently nodded. While the information held weight, it wasn't something that warranted his direct commentary. "I just need you to know that I have no intention of opposing you or Zhan Weisheng," Yan Xiaobao continued, his words drawing a raised brow from the City Lord, now intrigued by what this young man had to say.

"I trust you're aware that Deng Wu and Wang Julong are both my friends. They are not merely my support pillars; they are my brothers and sisters in arms. Now, you surely know what has happened to my dear friends and their families. So, tell me—what do you think I want?" He paused, then continued, "Fighting against either of you while dealing with someone who seems to trouble both of us makes no sense to me. Would you not agree?" Yan Xiaobao spoke with conviction, catching every subtle change in the City Lord's expression. Their relationship wasn't at its best at the moment—in fact, it had suffered severely, especially due to Ma family's departure from Zhan Weisheng's faction, the City Lord's

supporting side. Yet, even under such circumstances, Yan Xiaobao was prepared to gamble. He listened intently, his eyes glimmering in the dark night, growing increasingly tense as he awaited the reply.

Part of the reason Yan Xiaobao approached the City Lord with such words stemmed from what he had learned from the elder from Gao Yan, and also because opposing the City Lord was not an option. Becoming the City Lord's adversary simply wasn't conducive to him.

The City Lord shifted his weight from one foot to the other, an audible crunch echoing underfoot. "You might as well summon your guards—no need for them to remain hidden," the City Lord sighed as Cai Jie and Deng Wu emerged from the shadows. Neither bore expressions of animosity nor of amusement. The look on their faces was neutral, almost unreadable. Both men stepped closer to Yan Xiaobao, with Deng Wu standing slightly to his right and Cai Jie to his left.

The City Lord studied the three men before him, a wintry chill cascading down his spine. Despite being an Emperor, an exalted expert revered in Muchuan City, he felt his stature diminished in the presence of these three young men. For some unfathomable reason, he was certain he couldn't overpower them. The shadow of danger seemed to lurk beneath their youthful visages, an unsettling premonition tightening around him.

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