

T. Times 81

Chapter 81: The Era Starts Anew

Cui Wenjing could not help but laugh. “Powerful families may have been around for a long time, but not that long. We weren’t there for the transition to the current era, and we are not the descendants of clans from the previous era. As for matters regarding the previous era, everyone, including His Majesty, is in the midst of exploring them. So far, we’ve only been able to gather information from remnants of records and ruins from antiquity. We only know more than other people in the sense that we have a better grasp of the available information.”

Zhao Changhe listened attentively.

“The previous era should have been one where demons and gods inhabited the world. They could move mountains, fill seas, and split the world—or so it’s said. Now, descriptions like that are nothing but descriptions, but they should have really been capable of all that in the past. There are theories saying that they were too strong and their battles caused the world to collapse. Or maybe it happened for some other reason. In any case, heaven and earth were shattered in the span of a single night and the myriad gods perished.”

Zhao Changhe expected as much. The methods of the blind woman were clearly on another level from the people of this world. Cui Wenjing was the number nine man under heaven and could even manipulate the profound workings of the weather, but there was still a sizable gap between him and the blind woman. If people today were not capable of replicating the blind woman’s feats, then her powers had to be of the previous era. She was clearly a survivor of that time. Zhao Changhe was only unsure of why she had decided to act from the shadows.

The dao of heaven has died... At this moment, the thing that resounded the most within his heart were these six words.

The beliefs of cults like the Blood God Cult and the Four Idols Cult may not be superstition after all. What if they actually point to powerful beings that once existed?

“Heaven and earth were shattered and born again. For whatever reason, even though the gods and Buddhas all disappeared, ordinary lifeforms did not completely die out. There were still tenacious humans who walked out of those ruins and rebuilt the world. It’s just that most inheritances from the previous era died along with it. Humanity rediscovered how to cultivate from scouring these ruins and places of antiquity, and also compiled a bit of its history. We know some of the stories from that time, but as to how we can reach the level of those deities...that is unknown.”

This was the crucial reason why Zhao Changhe felt that the level of martial arts of this world was low compared to the fantasy novels he knew. He even found Cui Wenjing's level to be somewhat lacking. I wonder what level Xia Longyuan has reached.

At this point, Cui Wenjing sipped some tea to wet his throat, then suddenly laughed. He seemed to be laughing at himself. "The people of the world believe the Cui of Qinghe to originate from the previous era and revere us more for this; they believe us to possess some kind of awesome, mysterious inheritance. In reality, that's not the case. Take this Biluochun for example.... Whether this tea is supposed to be called Biluochun, nobody knows. However, we know that there was once a type of tea with this name, and borrowed it to label this new type of tea. That's all."

Zhao Changhe said, "So it's not that all the powerful families and sects preserved human heritage after the collapse of the previous era. Rather, they were the first to discover inheritances from ancient ruins and they stashed them away for themselves. Is this the case?"

"There are some relics that have been passed down from the previous era, and some people used those to set up their sects. This is the case for a considerable number of cults. However, most sects simply appropriated their names from the previous era. Our ancestors chose to name our clan Cui and, without a doubt, chose to settle down in Qinghe because it was recorded that there was a Qinghe Cui Clan from the previous era that flourished here. If we were to really look at what's recorded, the Cui Clan of Qinghe and Wang Clan of Langya did not exist at the same time. However, we're both around today because...well, because we all just appropriated these names."

So that's how it is.

The previous era might have some strong relation to the real world. That would explain why the blind woman appeared in the real world. Once the era collapsed, regardless of geography or culture, some things would undergo changes while others would be passed down. Thus, Beimang is still in the north, Qinghe is still in the south, and it's also why the emperors Yao, Shun, and Yu[1], the Cui Clan of Qinghe, and Biluochun all seem so uncanny. The whole thing is actually very simple, but it's clear that more in-depth research is required to find out why things are the way they are.

Zhao Changhe's mouth twitched as he thought about the Cui Clan of Qinghe. Even though he was a humanities student, he was a jock that dominated the court. In the classroom, he would be as slothful as a cat and could not for the life of him remember the powerful families of each time period. Initially, he thought the Cui Clan of Qinghe had a legendary quality to them, like a tall mountain. But now that his father-in-law had revealed this, their lofty standing in his eyes dropped to the mud.

Cui Wenjing said leisurely, “Whether a clan flourishes depends not on what identity they wish to appropriate, but rather on the clan members themselves. I have never once covered any of this up. Yangyang.”

Cui Yuanyang straightened herself in her seat. “Father.”

“There were simply too many things to take care of and so I wasn’t in the mood to rebuke you, but I must make it clear now. You left the house to travel with a bandit. Not only did you ruin your spotless reputation, you even damaged the name of the clan and incited all sorts of disaster. You should be heavily punished. For the next few days, we have to take good care of our guest, so I will let you be for the next two days until he leaves. After that, you will be confined to the back of the mountain and cultivate for half a year.”

Cui Yuanyang had been joyous all this while, but her smile suddenly stiffened and she looked defeated. The father she felt was pleasant to look at a moment ago now seemed revolting.

“Can we talk this over? W—what about three months?”

“I will not accept anything less than half a year.” Cui Wenjing had a blank expression on his face. “Another thing. According to the clan rules. Ten strokes.”

Cui Yuanyang covered her butt and jumped up. “No! That won’t do!”

Cui Wenjing was unmoved and quietly drank his tea.

“Eh...” Zhao Changhe finally said something. “Those ten strokes. Do you mean she’ll be hit on the butt?”

“Yes.” Tears welled up in Cui Yuanyang’s eyes and suddenly, there was a little charm in her voice as she said, “But once it’s hit, it won’t be tender anymore. It won’t be nice to touch...”

“Pffft!” Cui Wenjing spat out all the tea in his mouth. The grand ninth ranked man on the Ranking of Heaven nearly choked himself to death listening to her. His trembling hand pointed at Cui Yuanyang as he coughed for a while, not saying anything.

Zhao Changhe smiled apologetically. “About that. Give me the ten strokes. I’ll take it on her behalf.”

Cui Wenjing slammed the table and stood up. “What do you want to protect her ass for?! I’m warning the two of you. If you dare to do anything to ruin the name of the clan within these three years, I don’t care who you are, I’ll cut you down with my sword!”

After he said this, he flicked his sleeve and left. “Because of what you just said, three more strokes!”

“Hey hey, senior—no, Father, we’re not done discussing the history of the eras...”

“Didn’t I give you the summary? If you want more details, then have that well-behaved daughter of mine dig up some ancient records for you. You’re in a study, have you not thought of reading the books here!? What the hell do you expect me to tell you!?”

Cui Wenjing’s voice was exasperated. Even until he walked far away, he had not spared them an eye, afraid that he’d want to beat them up if he looked at them for too long.

The couple looked at each other and felt that Old Cui had been holding back his rage for quite some time now. It definitely wasn’t easy to force yourself to look so calm and indifferent the past two days. You must be at your limit, right?

“Whatever. Don’t mind him.” Cui Wenjing’s bad daughter was fuming. “I won’t follow the clan rules. If he dares to hit me, I’ll make a fuss over it in front of my mother! His plan seems ironclad this time but mother has been crying for two days. Once I make a scene, she’ll have no small amount of things to say to him. Let’s see how he’s going to hit me then!”

Zhao Changhe tilted his head and looked at her. This girl only wanted to escape her beating and had few qualms about being locked up. She knew herself that what she had done was stupid and she also knew that she needed to receive punishment for it. Even Zhao Changhe thought in his heart that what she had done was incredibly stupid. It would not do if she was not punished.

After experiencing all this, she had grown up and knew what to do and what not to do. At the very least, after leaving her home this once, she would not make a fuss over wanting to leave and find her boyfriend.

To put it another way, everyone knew that it was about time for Zhao Changhe to leave.

There was no way he could remain here forever and be oblivious to the changes of the world.

There were still the misty rains of the jianghu waiting for him, and a vast painting scroll that needed to be unfurled.

There was still the arrangement with Han Wubing at the Ancient Sword Lake. A man was only as good as his word, so Zhao Changhe knew that he had to keep to his appointment. He counted how many days had passed and knew it was about time.

Cui Yuanyang bit her lower lip, shuffled up to Zhao Changhe's side, and pressed her hand against his chest. "Big Brother Zhao..."

"Ah... Ah?" Zhao Changhe felt the atmosphere in the room was not quite right... This is your father's study. What do you think you're doing?

Cui Yuanyang said in a soft, intimate voice, "Are you leaving soon..."

"Yeah... It's about time..."

"Then... I think I still have something to give you before you leave."

The little girl's tone became gentler and gentler. Together with what she said about her butt not being nice to touch after being hit, any man would think she wanted to do that...

Zhao Changhe retreated. "Umm... That. Wait. Your father—No. You're still young. In three years...Don't..."

"Hmm?" Cui Yuanyang raised her head and looked at him. There was a hint of slyness in her gaze. "What I meant was that I should give you a horse. Since Father says you're meant to march through the jianghu full of spirit and all that, how can you do it without a horse?"

Zhao Changhe was dumbstruck. "Huh?"

“So...” Charm flashed through her gaze as she lowered her head and said in a low voice, “Big Brother Zhao, this reaction of yours...what do you want me to give you?”

Chapter 82: Snow-Treading Crow

Zhao Changhe felt a strange indignation after having been so stupidly baited. Right now, he only wanted to gather everyone in front of the Cui Clan’s ancestral temple and publicly announce “I’m an idiot.”

And people really think Yangyang is dumb!

Thankfully, the dumb rabbit did not continue her questioning because her face was boiling hot. Even if she wanted to continue teasing him, she would not be able to. She was also too bashful to dig herself deeper into his embrace.

At the end of the day, she was still a young girl. Even if she unlocked some abilities, she had no idea how to use them.

For a while, there was only the haggard breathing of the two in the room. Their gazes hopped around as they looked at each other.

What do you want me to give you?

As a man, Zhao Changhe had to admit that he really had that desire. Looking at her little rosy cheeks, he really wanted to nibble and kiss them, especially when he knew that she would not refuse him.

But...well.

Zhao Changhe grit his teeth and restrained himself.

He finally stop avoided Yangyang’s gaze, slightly bent down and clasped her flushed cheeks with both his hands. “Yangyang.”

“Yeah...” Cui Yuanyang was both bashful and happy. Her heart felt like it was going to hop out of her throat...

Has Big Brother Zhao ever done something this intimate to me before? He always treated her like a little sister. It was hard for her to avoid thinking that her Big Brother Zhao had never had that kind of desire. She thought that it was just difficult for him to pull out now that things had gotten this far. Three years later, perhaps he would pretend like nothing ever happened.

But this... With the differences in their height, Zhao Changhe had to actually bow down to clasp her cheeks. It gave the whole scene a comical quality. Even though this made it look like he still treated her as a little sister, it was not as his own blood-related sister, but more like a lover—there were some things he would not have done to her if he saw her purely as a little sister.

Zhao Changhe rubbed her little cheeks and gently said, “Yangyang, I know what you’re worried about, but your Big Brother Zhao really likes you.”

Cui Yuanyang’s bashfulness quickly disappeared. Her eyes were glistening.

“But, Yanyang, you’re too young.” Zhao Changhe continued rubbing her cheeks like he was kneading dough. “We agreed on three years, so let’s stick to three years. What’s so amazing about the Ranking of Man? You’ll get the news when I climb up to that. After that, I’ll return to the Cui Clan in glory and meet a beautiful, grown-up Yangyang. Alright?”

Zhao Changhe’s words clearly made Cui Yuanyang happy in her heart, but she murmured, “Liar. You said you liked the Yangyang of today and you didn’t want her to grow up.”

Zhao Changhe smiled. “Your mind doesn’t need to grow up, but your other parts can.”

“Pfft! Scoundrel!” The little rabbit stamped her feet and broke away from him, then darted out of the study, covering her face. “The books about the history of the eras are on the top shelf. Flip through them yourself.”

Zhao Changhe stood up straight and heaved a long sigh.

Everything’s actually this simple, why make it so complicated?

He looked at the flustered young lady fleeing away as if her life depended on it and felt she was smiling. Isn’t this good?

Zhao Changhe, unworried, poured himself a cup of tea and leisurely picked out some books from Cui Wenjing's bookshelf.

Cui Wenjing had indeed only given him a broad outline. If Zhao Changhe did not take the chance now to obtain a more detailed understanding of the history of this world, when was he going to do it? He was now in the library of the head of the Cui Clan; the research and findings of a first-rate clan had been made available to him just like that. In some sense, this was of even more significance than being handed the Dragon Bird of the Great Xia.

Zhao Changhe drank his tea as he read. Teasing a blushing young lady—was there a more delightful way to live?

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“Big Brother Zhao! Big Brother Zhao!”

The following morning, Zhao Changhe got out of his bed in the guest room. As usual, he drove away the maids who wanted to serve and wash him and then went to train with his saber.

Before he had even trained for an hour, Cui Yuanyang, who had scurried away flustered the day before, excitedly rushed over to him. “Training with your saber again?”

“Yes. Your father mentioned that he got some people to make adjustments to Dragon Bird. It's been an entire night and the saber is still nowhere to be seen... Eh?” Zhao Changhe replied casually. As he turned to look at Cui Yuanyang, he almost twisted his neck. “Why are you back to being a rabbit?”

Cui Yuanyang had changed back from her light green dress into her fluffy fur coat and rabbit-ear hat. That noble bearing of a maiden from a rich family she had previously was now completely gone; overnight, she had reverted to being an idiot.

Yesterday, she still put on the image of a wise and virtuous lady who refrained from speaking in the presence of her elders, but now, she had done away with the act and skipped over, smiling. “Big Brother Zhao, you obviously like this Yangyang. Whenever you see me like this, your eyes squinch from smiling.”

Zhao Changhe coughed dryly. "I like you regardless of what you wear, but spring is almost over. Won't you die from the heat if you wear such thick clothes?"

"The Qingming festival isn't even here yet! There's cold snaps in spring, don't you know!?" Cui Yuanyang groaned as she pulled Zhao Changhe along by the hand. "Let's go to the horse pasture. I heard they have some good new horses. I haven't seen them before. I'll bring you to take a look with me."

Zhao Changhe sheathed his saber and let himself be pulled along by the little rabbit as she skipped away. Without realizing it, he also began skipping. It's too contagious...

The horse pasture was far away. They had to leave the city and travel a long distance. Zhao Changhe saw a large river on which boats drifted about. By the side of the river was grassland as far as the eye could see; numerous riders were riding horses there and as the wind pushed down the grasses, he could faintly see no small number of horses grazing in the fields.

"This is my family's horse pasture!" Cui Yuanyang led Zhao Changhe and ran toward the fields. "It's rather quiet today because of last night's events... Otherwise, there'd be a whole group of people racing here livening up the place!"

Zhao Changhe's nose twitched as he suddenly recalled something Cui Yuanyang had told him a while back. "There's a river near my home."

What she meant was not that there was a river in the vicinity, but that there was a river running across their territory, a river belonging to her clan.

No wonder Cui Yuanyang was quite adept at horse riding. Her days basically consisted of watching chickens fight and riding horses. How could she possibly be bad at riding horses...

"Senior Wang! Senior Wang!" Cui Yuanyang went up to an elderly man and tugged on him. "Where's Black Peony? I miss her."

Senior Wang smiled. "We bought some good horses from the western regions a few days ago. Right now, we're mulling over which one to mate with Black Peony."

Cui Yuanyang's eyes went wide. "Mate??? Black Peony is still too young!"

Senior Wang glanced at Zhao Changhe and did not say anything.

Young lady, do you finally know how your father feels?

The couple both understood Senior Wang's gaze. A flustered Cui Yuanyang, with a bashful expression on her face, stamped her feet. "Let me take a look. What kind of repulsive beast dares to mate with my Black Peony? I won't allow it!"

Yes. This is what your father thinks as well.

The old man did not say too much, however, and brought both of them to see the horses. Zhao Changhe thought that a little white rabbit like Cui Yuanyang would like white horses. He did not know why her horse was named Black Peony, but when they arrived, he was dumbstruck.

It was a beautiful, snow-white horse that reminded him of a unicorn. Upon seeing Cui Yuanyang approach, it enthusiastically galloped over to meet her. Cui Yuanyang hugged its neck cheerfully. "Black Peony, I missed you so much!"

Zhao Changhe: "...???"

Why the fuck did you name this horse Black Peony!? Why not Ebony Ink Raven? Even I can tell it's an amazing horse!

Cui Yuanyang looked at Zhao Changhe and giggled. "Why are you twitching like that, Big Brother Zhao?"

"Why did you give a white horse such a name?"

"So that I can see other people react like how you just did. Hahaha..."

Zhao Changhe: "Fuck."

As Cui Yuanyang was about to say something, the chaotic sound of clopping hooves came from behind. Someone shouted. “Young lady, be careful! This horse is still unruly. We haven’t let it out to graze yet. Be careful not to get hit, young lady!”

When Cui Yuanyang turned to look at the horse, her eyes instantly lit up.

A shining black steed was speeding toward them. It was black throughout, except for its hooves—they were snow-white, as if it was treading through snow. It looked beautiful. Behind it, a few stable hands were chasing it. They made a big fuss as they brandished a few ropes and attempted to capture it.

Cui Yuanyang tugged on Zhao Changhe. “Hey, Big Brother Zhao, do you like that horse?”

Zhao Changhe said, “I don’t know how to appraise horses... But from its appearance, is its name Snow-Treading Crow[1]?”

“Snow-Treading Crow—that’s a good name.” Senior Wang smiled. “This horse hasn’t been given a name yet.”

“Then he’ll be called Snow-Treading Crow!” Cui Yuanyang tugged on Zhao Changhe. “I’ll break in the horse with Big Brother Zhao!”

“Hey! Break in a horse? I don’t even know how to ride one!”

“It’s really simple!” Cui Yuanyang leaped in the air, and with an extremely nimble somersault, landed steadily on the galloping steed’s back.

The riders at the back all loudly cheered, “Amazing! Young lady, you’re even more agile than before!”

In the midst of their applauding, the horse swept past Zhao Changhe. Cui Yuanyang reached her hand toward Zhao Changhe and pulled him up. He used the force of her hand to flip into the air and land behind her.

This horse was speeding away, out of control. The riders behind them all looked at each other and their horses all slowed down; none of them dared to pursue them.

In such an open space in front of numerous people, Zhao Changhe hugged Cui Yuanyang's hips as they rode the horse together... She was even blushing and looked incredibly happy.

They had enough tact to refrain from going over to them. There should be no problem if the young lady is the one breaking the horse in...right?

“How do we tame it?” Zhao Changhe felt all this to be a big pain in the ass as he grabbed onto the young lady's waist. He really did not want to embrace her like this in front of so many eyes, but this horse was different from the one they rode before. It swerved left and right and shook all around. If he was not at his current cultivation, his two legs would not have been able to hold onto the horse. Someone who had never ridden a horse would have been thrown off in the first second.

Cui Yuanyang, who was supposed to be responsible for breaking in the horse, suddenly had no idea how to do it. Her entire body was limp, as if she was paralyzed in Zhao Changhe's embrace. “Big—Big Brother Zhao... I—If you hug me like that, I can't muster my strength...”

Zhao Changhe: “?”

The steed neighed as it raised its forelegs and reared. It wanted to shake off the two humans on its back. They were just feeding assistants, what business did they have riding it?

Zhao Changhe lost his temper and struck the horse's head with his fist. “Other people ride on horses with girls to catch the wind together. I'm also riding on a horse to catch the wind with a girl. What's with this irreverence? What're you prancing like that for? Behave yourself!”

Cui Yuanyang: “...”

The steed got dizzy from being hammered by Zhao Changhe and began jumping all over the place. Zhao Changhe tightly locked his legs around the horse's stomach and immediately wrapped Cui Yuanyang in a tight embrace as he rigidly clutched the reins.

Ordinary horsemen, though skilled and athletic, could not compare to someone at the fourth layer of the Profound Gate. No matter how majestic this horse was, it had no way of defying Zhao Changhe's immense strength.

“Still want to resist!?” Zhao Changhe struck the horse again with his fist. “Jump around again and I’ll smack you!”

The horse was about to cry as it flopped around for a short moment. Then, it seemed like it had decided to behave itself. It slowed down to a relaxed walk as it brought the two of them to wander by the river bank.

It looks like... it’s calmed down?

Zhao Changhe lowered his head to look at the young lady in his embrace, panting. “Hey. Is this enough?”

Cui Yuanyang raised her head to look at him. Her eyes were sparkling. “Big Brother Zhao, you say you don’t know how to ride, but it turns out you’re a natural at taming... Just look at how docile it is.”

Zhao Changhe: “...”

Are you talking about the horse or...

Cui Yuanyang looked around. In just that short period, the steed had galloped far away, to where there were no people around. A cool breeze brushed across the riverside; the waves resounded in the background; faraway, they could faintly see the sails of ships.

The danger they had felt crossing the river back then was now replaced by the refreshing clamor of the stream and the warm spring winds; the danger of fleeing on horseback had morphed into the relaxation of an unhurried stroll.

Cui Yuanyang continued looking around. Her beautiful eyes seemed downcast as she passionately nestled in Zhao Changhe’s embrace and asked, “Big Brother Zhao, before you leave...can—can you...kiss me?”

Zhao Changhe was neither too modest nor did he go overboard.

He lowered his head and kissed the small rabbit on her boiling cheeks, saying in a low voice, “I should have marked you like this from the start.... Wait for me.”

Chapter 83: The Wind Blows by the Lake

Zhao Changhe spent the next three days in leisure.

At night he read under lantern light and immersed himself in history, while in the day he practiced horse riding. Whenever he got tired, he would embrace that small white rabbit under the willow trees by the riverbank and surreptitiously kiss her behind the trees, far away from the eyes of the riders.

Snow-Treading Crow and Black Peony grazed around the trees. Looking at those two, Zhao Changhe had no idea if anything had sparked between them, and whether they were going to secretly mate. Anyway, the couple were lost in their intimacy and could not be bothered concerning themselves with what their horses were doing.

The little white rabbit was initially dissatisfied with letting her horse find a mate, but this was her Big Brother Zhao's horse, so it seemed like she was fine with it.

Everyone has to find a mate eventually, both men and horses.

Snow-Treading Crow was now very well-behaved. If he jumped about, he would get beaten. But if he was well-behaved, he would have a nice mare to accompany him. Even horses knew what they had to do.

What's more, his master was outstanding. In just a measly three days, he had already turned from a greenhorn that had never ridden a horse into an expert able to perform difficult riding techniques like dropping to the side of the horse or standing on the stirrups. It was as if he was a person that had spent years of his life on a horse—nothing like a newbie.

Cui Yuanyang realized that as long as it was related to exercise, Zhao Changhe could pick up skills very quickly. On the other hand, every time he went to read in Cui Wenjing's study, his eyes would get drowsy.

Zhao Changhe seemed to be quite interested in the history of the eras, but whenever he sat down to read, his eyes would get tired. Cui Yuanyang had no idea how much he had read or how many words had gone into that skull of his in the past three days.

Yes. He's so similar to how I was like when I was forced to memorize internal arts mnemonics. We really are like a couple.

What he said was right. Someone like him shouldn't concern himself with the matters of the imperial court. He's naturally suited to the jianghu and that's where he belongs, wandering around and braving dangers.

However, Yangyang was getting more and more reluctant to part with him.

The modifications to Dragon Bird had been completed a few days ago, so Zhao Changhe could have actually left then. Learning horse riding and researching the history of this world were just very good reasons to stay for another two days. However, while there was no end to studying, there were standards for horse riding, and once he reached them, it meant that it was time to go.

Cui Yuanyang even felt that Zhao Changhe's kisses were not as passionate as the one he gave two days ago. She did not know if she was mistaken...

But of course she was. Zhao Changhe could not, in good faith, kiss this small girl on her little lips. What passion is there to speak of when kissing someone on the cheek... Zhao Changhe's affection for Yangyang far exceeded his desire for her, and he did not know if this would change in the future.

The winds caressed the willow trees as the young lady nuzzled up against her boyfriend's embrace. Her expression seemed out of sorts as she muttered, "Big Brother Zhao..."

"Yeah?" Zhao Changhe reached out his hand and played with her chin. "What's wrong?"

"The Qingming Festival is tomorrow. All the clan members need to give offerings to our ancestors. The incident regarding second uncle will be recounted to our ancestors and he will be executed before them."

"I haven't seen your father the past two days. This matter will probably be very troublesome to settle afterward. Your second uncle has a lot of power. There will be thousands of loose ends to tie up after he's taken care of. It definitely wasn't easy for him to take time out to talk to me that night.

"In front of other people, he must always be calm and collected," Cui Yuanyang said softly. "In the past, I thought that it must have been very exhausting for him to live like that. Who doesn't want to

be from a powerful clan or be the ninth ranked man on the Ranking of Heaven? But I feel like it's not as good as traveling in the jianghu free and unrestrained, like you, Big Brother Zhao."

"That's why a little idiot like you would admire the trials and hardships of the jianghu, and then be deceived by a bandit."

"Hmph..."

It was good that Cui Yuanyang did not follow up with the line "It's a good thing that bandit happened to be you, Big Brother Zhao." Both of them had already heard and uttered too many corny lines these past two days. What she wanted to say was "It's precisely because of this that I don't want to be a burdensome brat. I don't want to drag you down." She was so concerned over this she almost became like a second Cui Wenjing.

In some sense, letting the people of the jianghu believe that Zhao Changhe had been driven away by the Cui Clan was a good thing. It meant that he would not be tied down by anything and could remain carefree as he strode forward.

However, this little girl never said any of this in the end. What she meant when she told him that all the clan members were going to present offerings to their ancestors tomorrow was very clear.

She did not want to confront their farewell. It would probably have taken more than a month for her to stop crying from being overwhelmed by the sorrow of parting; Zhao Changhe also disliked getting tangled up in something until he was sick of it. He thought that it would be ideal if he could take the chance while they were all presenting offerings to leave.

Thus, she told him the time. Both of them tacitly understood each other.

Yangyang had always known what she had to do.

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Fifth day of the fourth month. The Qingming Festival.

It drizzled through the night and only stopped in the morning. There was a thick fog now and the moon at daybreak still hung slanted in the dark sky, faintly discernible.

In the guest room, Zhao Changhe lightly caressed the Dragon Bird of the Great Xia, which now had some rust smeared on it. "Eighth-grader saber, don't worry, alright? Your big brother here will bring you to kill people."

The saber buzzed. Its response seemed to tell Zhao Changhe that it was not only satisfied, but even delighted.

Zhao Changhe slowly slung it over his back and looked at himself in the copper mirror.

He was a well-built man more than eight chi tall; the broad saber on his back was four chi long, and its long hilt jutted up from his shoulders at an angle. From afar, anyone would be able to feel his oppressive bearing. The more Zhao Changhe looked at the saber, the more awake he felt looking at his own handsome reflection.

His scholar robes had been swapped out for a warrior jinzhuang, no longer a red-violet color, but now a low-profile ashen brown; a worn out wine gourd hung slanted by his waist; and together with his beard, which he had intentionally grown out the past two days, that frivolous and proud wildness of his was once again visible in the mirror.

Ding!

From a hill far away, bells could be heard and told everyone in the Cui Clan that it was time to gather and present offerings to their ancestors.

Zhao Changhe turned around and gazed into the distance. Amidst the thick fog, it was difficult to make out the mountain.

However, he knew that there was a small girl looking in the direction of the guest house with each step she took on the mountain road.

He stared fixedly for a while. After arranging his traveling bag, he strode out and mounted Snow-Treading Crow.

Within the morning fog, the steed neighed as it made its way through the quiet streets of Qinghe Commandery, straight towards the long river outside the commandery.

Cui Yuanyang had just reached the summit of the hill. As if feeling something, she turned her head and looked far into the distance.

The mists were gradually receding, but still, she could not see anybody. However, she could faintly make out the willow trees by the river bank; she could feel the morning wind and see the waning moon.

This little girl, who had never bothered with obtaining a deeper understanding of things when she was studying, suddenly thought of a phrase passed down from the previous era.

In the years following our farewell, beautiful sceneries I may see.

But who shall I confide in when my heart is full of love and longing?[1]

This was a line that had been preserved through the eras. It was only after reciting it once more in her heart that she realized she was in that poem.

“Father.” She suddenly tugged on the hem of Cui Wenjing’s robe. “After the ceremony, I’ll go into secluded meditation myself. Can you teach me the Qinghe Purple Qi Art?”

Cui Wenjing stroked his beard, filled with consolation. “Very well.”

Cui Yuanyang once more looked in the direction of the river outside the commandery, muttering to herself, “You must wait for me... In three years, don’t forget Yangyang.”

*

A thousand li away, Ancient Sword Lake.

Beside the lake there was a bamboo forest, within which was a straw hut. Beside it was a grave.

Han Wubing quietly sat down with his legs crossed beside the grave, laying his sword before the tombstone. He opened a jug of warm wine and began slowly pouring it on the sword. From time to

time, he took a few sips, as if taking turns drinking with the blade. At the same time, it looked like some kind of sacrificial ceremony.

After a while, there was some movement in the mists.

The wine gourd ran out of wine.

Han Wubing placed the empty gourd upright in front of the tombstone and picked up his sword, now drenched in wine.

“Han Wubing, I knew you would come here.”

All around, shadows of people flickered about. He had no idea when they had surrounded him.

Han Wubing did not turn to glance at them and continued looking at the grave. “I also knew that you people would come.”

“And you still came to meet your death? You came to pay respects at the cost of your life. Why do this?”

“Because I feel like something is lacking in the ceremony. There is not enough wine.”

“Hmm? Lacking the bounty on your head? Haha... Hahaha...”

“There’s wine, but no blood. What I lack are the severed heads of my enemies. You’ve all come at a good time.”

Clang!

A dragon-like screech resounded as killing intent from bright and cold sword qi dispersed the mist enveloping the bamboo forest.

Zhao Changhe, on the road, suddenly reined in his horse and raised his head to look at the sky.

Fourth Month. Qingming. Han Wubing, at the fifth layer of the Profound Gate was comprehending the sword in front of a grave. Within the span of time it takes for an incense stick to burn, he beheaded thirty-two of his enemies from the Sword Hut, and their blood was offered as a sacrifice to his late friend. Among them was one enemy at the same level; with his killing intent piercing through the nine heavens, he was not a trivial foe.

The Ranking of Hidden Dragons has changed.

Rank 66: Han Wubing!

His health is his enemies' demise.

Zhao Changhe looked on for a moment and suddenly smiled. "This month, those profiteers sorting the rankings into books must have their jaws on the ground. I heard that the Tome of Troubled Times has never appeared this frequently in the past. Is this a sign that chaos is upon us? Are heroes about to rise in droves?"

He stroked the head of his horse and smiled. "Little crow, are you itching to get on with it?"

Snow-Treading Crow: "..."

I'm a horse. What are you saying...

"Let's go." Zhao Changhe urged his horse forward and sped away. "My opponent is waiting for me. How can I fall behind!"

Chapter 84 Zhao Changhe, Idol of the Masses

It was drizzling in another small village. All around, willow seeds were carried by the wind.

Zhao Changhe, who was always confident in his body and thought nothing of getting wet in the rain, finally started to agree with Cui Yuanyang when she cursed this awful weather.

Poets could leisurely write about the frequent rains during Qingming, but if you were a traveler, you would naturally be cursing it. What's more, this was a long journey; he was not simply returning to a nearby village to visit his family. Zhao Changhe had to brave the rain for long periods at a time.

In ancient times, traveling was just this difficult. Whenever poets bade farewell to someone and traveled ten thousand li across the empire, they did not know if they would see them ever again. Thus, countless timeless pieces of writing would follow every farewell.

Having just received such a good horse, he cared deeply for his Snow-Treading Crow and was afraid he might get sick from the rain, even though he had no clue if horses could catch a cold.

Zhao Changhe left feeling free and unrestrained. In the rain, though, his mood soured and he began missing Yangyang. He did not know if she was weeping at home.

From all of this, he understood the line “If one were to ask how deep my sorrow is? It is like the vast plains, the willow seeds drifting through the city, and the plum blossoms in the evening rain. [1]”

When he thought of Yangyang leaning against the banister on a tower, looking into the distance, this line appeared in his heart.

It’s over. I’m beginning to sound like a scholar again. How strange. I was a humanities student, but I’ve never been able to remember much poetry. Everything my teacher taught me, I returned to her. It’s been half a year since I’ve left the classroom and entered the jianghu, but more and more poetry keeps appearing in my head.

He did not know if it was because cultivating helped to improve his memory, or if it was because the rains of the jianghu were especially poetic. It was like he met Yue Hongling—he was most like a scholar then.

“Brother, help me look after my horse. Give him the best hay,” called Zhao Changhe to the worker as he led his horse to the front of the inn. Then, he stuck his head inside to see if there were any patrons calling him an idiot.

The worker walked up to meet him. “Sir, you can be assured that we are the most professional when it comes to taking care of—whoa! That’s a beautiful horse!”

“He sure is.” There was a vigilance in Zhao Changhe’s gaze. He felt this to be a pain in the ass. My horse shouldn’t get stolen, right?

The worker caressed Snow-Treading Crow admiringly and smiled. “Sir, please go in and take a seat. Tell us what you wish to eat.”

“Eh, I’ll just have a bowl of noodles. In any case, I can starve to death, but don’t let my horse starve.”

The worker understood perfectly. If he was Zhao Changhe, he would also have felt that way.

It’s really a beautiful horse!

Zhao Changhe suddenly thought, in the real world, this’d be like parking a limited edition Rolls-Royce... And the Cui Clan just gave it to me without question.

“Have you guys heard? There’s a new cutthroat that’s popped up in the jianghu

.”

Such familiar lines... Tears were about to stream down Zhao Changhe’s face as he sat in a corner and listened to what the people here had to say.

“Yeah. Han Wubing is really ruthless. He also had his start in the Sword Hut, but he cut down thirty-two of his brothers in a couple minutes.”

Zhao Changhe: “...”

No problems here.

“What’s up with all these traitors popping up these days? This time it’s Han Wubing; last time, it was Zhao Changhe.”

Zhao Changhe: “...”

Looks like I still have a part to play.

“Haha. Han Wubing is pretty brutal, but he’s not as interesting as Zhao Changhe. He escorted the young lady of the Cui Clan over a thousand li home. All of us thought that he was about to become a son-in-law, but in the end, the Cui Clan is still the Cui Clan. They couldn’t accept a bandit and they actually drove him away. Really, he fought tooth and nail for nothing. I have no idea if he’s hiding in some corner and sobbing right now. Hahaha...”

“Man, he’s got a really tragic life. He keeps getting close to those unobtainable women. First Yue Hongling, then Cui Yuanyang? Why bother? What’s wrong with being a little more realistic...”

“Like us?”

“Ahahaha. You got that right! I want to give Zhao Changhe the title of the first Hidden Dragon! Are there any objections?”

“I object.” Zhao Changhe could not take it any longer. “Why don’t you guys talk about Han Wubing. I’ll get sick of it if you people keep talking about Zhao Changhe all day. What’s so interesting about him?”

“Who’re you? If we talk about Zhao Changhe, can you stop us? You think you’re hot shit just because you have a good horse? Do you think Cui Yuanyang should belong to a prince like you? Is that why you feel attacked when you hear Zhao Changhe’s name? We support Zhao Changhe claiming Cui Yuanyang. Fucking bite me.”

Zhao Changhe could only eat his noodles. “Alright, alright. If Zhao Changhe was here, he’d thank you for your support. You guys continue.”

Someone else said, “Actually, Zhao Changhe and Cui Yuanyang were alone together on the road for so many days, did they really not do that at all? The Cui Clan sure wants to cover things up, but with things being as they are, can they even marry Cui Yuanyang off?”

“Well, who knows? With enemies popping up every minute, do you think they had the time to do it? I sure don’t think so. If the Cui Clan dares to do something like this, I guess they’re really confident that the little chick is still untouched.”

“Yeah, who knows? Maybe Zhao Changhe’s a minute man. Looks rough but isn’t. Maybe he finished in a few seconds?”

“Hahaha! Well said, brother. Maybe he really is that kinda guy!”

Veins popped out of Zhao Changhe’s forehead.

I thought you guys were my fans. Turns out you’re just a bunch of haters.

“Let’s wait three years. For all I know, he might actually enter the Ranking of Man. I’ve never heard of someone cultivating as fast as him.”

“So the Cui Clan isn’t actually kicking him out? Well, in any case, they’re pushing him aside right now.”

“Yeah. It may be difficult, but for Zhao Changhe, it might just be possible.”

“If that day really comes, I’ll treat everyone to a round of drinks!”

There’s actually a fan willing to buy drinks for everyone in my place for my wedding... You guys are even more confident than myself.

Zhao Changhe ate his noodles, lost in thought.

The agreement he had reached with the Cui Clan had indeed achieved its intended effect: Yangyang’s name was not tarnished, and in fact, the majority of people felt that nothing happened between them; “finishing within a few seconds” was simply said as a joke. Furthermore, the Cui Clan was not too harshly criticized for showing ingratitude. In any case, that was just how powerful families were. Most people actually thought that it was good enough that the Cui Clan actually left the possibility open for Zhao Changhe.

The Cui Clan did not act in good faith, but it also showed that I acted with restraint. People won’t rebuke either of us for this—is this the case?

More importantly, during his travels, Zhao Changhe realized his arrest order had been withdrawn. He was no longer a criminal who could not travel in broad daylight.

His earlier efforts were all finally beginning to bear fruit.

Fortunately, Zhao Changhe managed to endure the slander uttered before him. The people finally got sick about talking about him and continued discussing Han Wubing. “I never heard about Han Wubing being part of the Sword Hut. I thought he was an independent martial artist. Who was it that said he had his start with the Sword Hut just now?”

A man sighed. “How could people make a name for themselves in the jianghu without ever accepting a master? Even Yue Hongling came from a third-rate sect, and Zhao Changhe also uses the Blood God Cult’s martial arts. Lone warriors? Pft. Even those so-called independent martial artists clearly had some instruction from a master or another, it’s just that they won’t admit to it. How can there be any truly independent martial artists?”

“So why did he have a falling out with the Sword Hut?”

“I have no clue. The master of the Sword Hut is ranked eighth on the Ranking of Earth. You think he’ll personally come and take care of that traitor?”

“Why would someone like him bother with small fry? Look at Xue Canghai. He’s not even on the Ranking of Man, and he can’t even be bothered to take care of Zhao Changhe—he’s busy with too many things.”

Zhao Changhe covered his head. If you guys want to talk about Han Wubing, then talk about him. I actually want to listen to his story. Why do you have to bring me up after every sentence? What does his story have to do with me...

In the end, after listening for a while, Zhao Changhe did not manage to pick up any useful information.

As it turns out, anyone could tune in to the rumors of the jianghu, but in reality, only a few people knew what was happening behind the scenes. One could be misled by other’s making wild guesses.

“You wish to know more about Han Wubing?” Suddenly, someone sat in front of Zhao Changhe and smiled. “I’ll be honest. I have a way to let you find out about almost all sorts of information in the jianghu with the greatest speed.”

Zhao Changhe raised his head and glanced at him. It was a middle-aged man of ordinary appearance; there did not seem to be anything special about him.

Zhao Changhe quickly slurped down his noodles and replied indifferently, “If I want to know more about Han Wubing, I can just ask him myself. I simply got curious about the conversation here, so I listened in a little. Don’t think that I’m the kind to drool over the gossip of others. Even for that first seat of yours—I can’t be bothered asking about whether she’s looking for a husband.”

The middle-aged man’s expression changed. “How did you know I’m with the Demon Suppression Bureau? Just from that one thing I said?”

Zhao Changhe laughed. “It’s nothing. It doesn’t really have anything to do with you.... I still wish to say a few things, though. Can I trouble you to pass it on to First Seat Tang?”

The middle-aged man cupped his fists. “Please speak.”

Zhao Changhe leisurely wiped his mouth. “Firstly, I have an appointment with someone and I must go to Ancient Sword Lake. I don’t have much time to bother with other shitty matters. I don’t have to go somewhere just because someone wants me to.”

The middle-aged man could only say, “First Seat Tang suggests that you don’t go. The situation at Ancient Sword Lake is unclear, so it’s best to avoid it.”

Zhao Changhe was not moved. “Since I’ve said I’ll be there, I’ll go even if the sky starts raining blades. Besides, Han Wubing is able to deal with this...situation, so why can’t I?”

The middle-aged man sighed. “You keep your promises—I respect that. However, the sky really might rain down blades... At the very least, the Blood God Cult’s upper echelons will come to deal with you. The more your fame grows, the more they lose face. They won’t be able to take it. If you’re willing to talk it over with us, we can help you take care of this matter. Otherwise, I’m afraid it might be difficult for you to even arrive at Ancient Sword Lake.”

“I don’t need you people to handle it for me. The matter with the Blood God Cult is a personal grudge, all things considered. I’ll take care of it myself. I don’t want to owe you guys favors.” Zhao Changhe suddenly laughed. “And isn’t the greatest source of shame for the Blood God Cult the fact that their Cult Leader Xue was defeated by someone of a lower cultivation? What do I count for?”

The middle-aged man: “...”

“With that said, even though I am declining your invitation, it doesn’t mean I hate you guys or anything like that. But if Tang Wanzhuang wishes to discuss something with me, I hope that she’ll kindly find the time to come talk to me in person. I dislike troublesome things, and there’s nothing more troublesome than beating around the bush like this.” Zhao Changhe stood up. “Shopkeeper, the bill!”

Chapter 85: Honing the Saber

The rain stopped as Zhao Changhe left the inn. Zhao Changhe’s mood improved slightly. Seeing that his beloved horse was not stolen and was comfortably eating hay, his mood improved even more.

After thinking about it in more detail, of course no one would dare to steal his horse. You guys can see how scary that saber on my back is, can’t you?

Zhao Changhe paid the stable hand a piece of silver, but as he was about to mount his horse, he suddenly thought of something and put his foot down. He leaned down and meticulously checked the stirrups and saddle for anything strange.

His days in the Cui estate had been comfortable—a bit too comfortable, it seemed. He had almost forgotten his previous caution.

Seeing that there was nothing wrong, Zhao Changhe heaved a sigh of release and finally mounted his horse.

The middle-aged man from the Demon Suppression Bureau watched him from the entrance of the inn. Seeing Zhao Changhe’s actions, his expression was full of admiration as he passed him a piece of paper. “These are Han Wubing’s details.”

Zhao Changhe bluntly accepted it. “Thanks.”

The middle-aged man said, “My name is Wu Weiyang. Perhaps we’ll meet again in the future. The Demon Suppression Bureau will not intervene in the storm you’re riding to. Be careful on the road.”

After he said this, his figure flickered and he disappeared without a trace.

Judging by that speed, he's at least at the eighth layer of the Profound Gate... The Demon Suppression Bureau sure has their means. Zhao Changhe was not too impressed. Well, whatever. I drank tea with the man ranked ninth on the Ranking of Heaven. Why would I care about something like this?

He felt that there was a hidden implication to Wu Weiyang's words. "The Demon Suppression Bureau will not intervene in the storm you're riding to. Be careful on the road." Huh. What about afterward? Does that mean if I need some help in the future, I can approach the Demon Suppression Bureau?

Zhao Changhe stopped thinking about this for the moment. As Snow-Treading Crow moved forward on the public road, he took a look at the information Wu Weiyang gave him.

-Han Wubing. 19 years old.

He's actually younger than me. Back at the ruined temple, I couldn't tell at all with that grim face of his.

-Originally a disciple of the Mount Ba Sword Hut. His aptitude is nothing exceptional, but he is a hard worker. He is solitary and only likes training in the sword. After putting in assiduous work into his swordsmanship, he rose to the middle echelons of the sect. He does not have any deep relationship with other people and his presence is unremarkable...

Three years ago, everyone from the Sword Hut came to Ancient Sword Lake to try their luck searching for the legendary ancient sword left behind from the previous era. Han Wubing was at the third layer of the Profound Gate at the time and followed a team to the lake.

The legend of the divine sword at Ancient Sword Lake was so attractive not only because it had been passed down by elders, but also due to the magic and mystery that surrounded it. Occasionally, terrifying sword qi rose from the lake, almost invariably causing explorers searching for the sword to die instant deaths. However, investigations after the fact had never revealed anything; this was a complete mystery. Nobody knew where the sword qi emanated from.

It was precisely because of this that everyone believed there was something magical about the lake, but no one had the strength to willingly stay there long-term and search for the sword. Everyone was afraid that they would meet with a strange death. Thus, no one claimed Ancient Sword Lake for themselves. However, over the years, there were always people who traveled there on occasion to try their luck.

After so long, though, nobody discovered anything. Cui Yuanyang mentioned that the Cui clan had also organized people to search for the sword multiple times, but they had always returned empty. Cui Wenjing's strength, intelligence, and influence were first-rate in the empire. If even he could not find anything, what chance did other people have? Thus, the larger powers also gradually gave up searching for the sword, feeling it was a waste of time.

The big powers may have given up, but that did not stop people from the jianghu wanting to try their luck and coming to the lake in droves. No one dared to stay near the lakeside, but the appropriately-named Sword Lake City, located a few dozen li from it, was incredibly prosperous and lively. Nowhere in the empire were there as many inns, brothels, taverns, and casinos, not even in the capital. There were simply too many travelers.

With these things going on, it became a place where powers of all sizes and affiliations flourished, and fishes and dragons mixed around together. It was extremely complicated, and indeed, not somewhere a third-layer jianghu newbie could casually go to.

When Han Wubing followed the team to the lake, he was, of course, accompanied by elders and his fellow disciples as they went to gain more experience. This could also be considered a group expedition in the jianghu. However, Han Wubing did not have good relations with people and did not partner up with other disciples, deciding instead to search the lakeside by himself. However, he did get to know a good friend. They got along the moment they bumped into each other and began searching together.

How did it happen that someone who did not have good relations with anybody else became like an old friend with someone he had just met? The Demon Suppression Bureau's information had no way of knowing. After all, there was no way Han Wubing would accept any interviews about the incident. They could only give cursory information.

They did not find the ancient sword, but Han Wubing and his friend found the remains of a senior who had died there, by dumb luck, and gained a treasured sword along with a sword art. His friend got the sword and Han Wubing took the sword art manual. Everyone was happy.

But then, some other disciples of the Sword Hut bumped into them. They took advantage of their seniority and said that, whether it was the sword or the sword art, they both belonged to the Sword Hut.

In the end, Han Wubing's friend was killed and the sword was snatched away. Afterward, Han Wubing tore apart the sword art manual in rage and broke away from the Sword Hut. From then on,

he began wandering the world, turned even more unsociable, and began making a living off bounty hunting.

The matter was very simple. The Demon Suppression Bureau presented the facts as they were and did not embellish any of the details; it did not have much of an effect on Zhao Changhe's mood. He thought to himself, I was curious about Han Wubing's story for half the day, but it turns out his tale is one commonly found in the jianghu. A disciple left his sect in rage after being kicked around by those with more power, had his treasures stolen from him, and his friend was murdered. Ten years ago, this was a popular template for webnovels.

However, Han Wubing turned out to be a truly virtuous person. In the three years that followed, he tested his sword in the jianghu and reached the fifth layer of the Profound Gate; during the Qingming festival, he went to pay respects to his friend and slew all his enemies. How could one not find delight in such a story?

Zhao Changhe could not help but open his wine gourd and take a sip. "How delightful. Only an opponent like this will give me something to look forward to with our battle, unlike those other goblins littering the roads. They're nothing but annoying flies."

After saying this, he hung the gourd at his waist and suddenly shot out a copper coin from his hand.

It whizzed through the air toward the tip of a tree by the roadside. Suddenly, someone shrieked in pain and fell down.

"Do you really believe that just because I'm reading, I can't tell that people are around?" Zhao Changhe laughed and urged his horse forward. "A rain of blades? Pft. I am the blade, and you guys are nothing more than whetstones!"

Swoosh!

Numerous swords appeared before him; sharp, hissing sword qi pierced toward his face.

As Zhao Changhe darted forward on horseback, he reached behind and grabbed the hilt jutting out from behind his shoulder.

The swords and his horse met in the middle.

Clang!

Dragon Bird flew out of its scabbard, drawing a broad line across the air.

The assassins that came for him were all overwhelmed with shock. How were they supposed to dodge his saber in midair? The range of this single slash covered all of them.

The saber collided with many swords as it traveled forward. But rather than the shock of a metal striking metal, the sound was more reminiscent of vegetation being crumpled. All the swords snapped and blood rained down from the skies.

As Dragon Bird cut through flesh, Snow-Treading Crow galloped forward, leaving the blood rain in the dust. Dragon Bird screeched with excitement.

There were still some assassins ahead that wanted to strike, but after seeing the scene that had just played out before them, were all dumbstruck. How would they dare make a move after that?

Further ahead there was someone waiting in ambush, holding a rope and getting ready to pull it taut as Zhao Changhe approached. However, Zhao Changhe managed to spot it and directed his horse to rush to the side of the road.

Snow-Treading Crow's speed far exceeded the ambusher's expectations. Before he had enough time to pull up the tripwire or release it, the horse was already before him.

The saber and its attack range exceeded his expectations even more... The people behind looked on helplessly as a deep red arc streaked across the treeline. The man was split into two.

He stood there with a dumbstruck expression, tripwire still in hand. Before his half-split corpse fell to the ground, Snow-Treading had already rode out a few dozen zhang.

"I don't care if you people are from the Blood God Cult or the Snow-Listening Pavilion, or if you're just some thieves who want to steal my horse..." Zhao Changhe sheathed his saber and spurred on his horse, laughing. "I won't hide my tracks on this journey. Whoever wants to come at me is free to try!"

Wu Weiyang stood behind and watched from afar. He clicked his tongue. “He’s so brave, yet the first seat is still worried he’ll meet with danger on the road... When he said he didn’t need our help, he meant that his only worry is that the people he bumps into would be too weak, not too strong.”

One of his subordinates by the side sighed. “If someone like him doesn’t fall prematurely in the jianghu, he’ll definitely be able to march through the world unhindered.”

Wu Weiyang did not respond. He knew what his subordinate was implying.

For someone like him, the chance of falling prematurely is higher... But as he recalled the caution Zhao Changhe had shown during his inspection before he mounted his horse, Wu Weiyang felt that it was actually rather unlikely for him to die.

Don’t judge him by his bold appearance. He’s cautious. Anyone who takes him for a fool is already six feet under.

“Go back and report to the first seat. I don’t know if she’ll personally come to meet him, but we have to tell her anyway.” Wu Weiyang paused for a moment, then muttered in bewilderment, “It’s strange. The amount of attention she is giving him is out of the ordinary.”