

Translator: Nyoi-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoi-Bo Studio

Ye Jiuge opened her eyes in a dark, damp corner.

A gush of intense hatred surged up violently from her memory: She was in the WanZhang Depths of the Lei Kingdom. Her younger sister Ye Shanshan had backstabbed her and pushed her into the abyss as an offering for a bloodthirsty python!

Ye Shanshan thought that she had killed Ye Jiuge, her spineless older sister. But she never could have guessed that a ruthless top-secret agent from the twenty-first century, well-versed in both healing and poison, had restored her sister to life. The original owner of Ye Jiuge's new body was Ye Clan's eldest legitimate daughter, who bore the same name as her.

When Ye Jiuge's soul had melded completely with the original owner's, briefly, a golden light had shone from her temples. Now, only animosity glinted in her dark eyes. The corners of her lips, wet with fresh blood, hinted at an extremely cold smile.

Since that cruel, heartless family of hers wants her to die, she is going to live and crawl out of this place to exact her revenge!

Ye Jiuge examined her body. Both of her legs were completely broken and two of her left ribs were shattered. Fortunately, nothing had penetrated her lungs, and her arms and hands were unscathed.

She laid on her stomach on the ground, digging her fingernails deep into the putrid sludge to drag her broken body forward. She left a twisted streak of blood behind her as she forced herself to crawl out of the pool of her own blood.

As she was crawling along with difficulty enduring stabbing chest pains, a deep, hypnotizing voice suddenly rang out from the dark caves.

"Do you wish to live?"

Ye Jiuge snapped up her head and saw a massive, black snake coiled in a dark corner.

It looked as if its scales were forged from obsidian. Even from its gloomy corner, it exuded the aura of a vanquisher of the dark.

A pair of purple pupils that looked like amethysts were watching her closely with an omniscient assertiveness.

Is this the bloodthirsty python?

No, this is not right; the bloodthirsty python does not have horns on its head!

The massive black snake in front of her had a purple horn on its head seven-inches long that gleamed like it was the world's finest gem. A mysterious image had been carved into it, like it was some totem from the ancient tribes. It possessed the power to instill terror in any person who gazed upon it.

The purple-horned black python circled Ye Jiuge with a swish of its long tail.

Its red, forked tongue licked slowly along her neck, where she was soaked with blood, as if sampling a delicacy.

When the python reached her lips, its tongue slipped into her mouth, exploring and smearing her with bright red blood.

When Ye Jiuge felt that cool, soft sensation on her tongue, it immediately gave her goosebumps.

“Although you are an ugly human, your taste is decent.”

After it finished tasting Ye Jiuge's fresh blood, the snake-like face flashed her a human smile.

The Lady of Holy Blood is truly delicious!

His many years of waiting have not been a waste. It is such a pity that she is so thin; there is not enough of her for him to swallow whole!

“Save me!”

An extremely strong will to live shone through Ye Jiuge's black eyes, which were as eye-catching as poppies in full bloom amidst all that blood.

Since the black snake with the purple horn was capable of living among humans at the WanZhang Depths, it could not be a common demon.

It must know of a way to save her!

“I can save you—so long as you can pay my price!”

The black python's deep voice drew Ye Jiuge in. Its graceful snake body coiled around her while the tip of its cold tail teased between her thighs, unexpectedly...

It shocked Ye Jiuge to the point that her body stiffened. The fury of being humiliated rose in her heart. How dare that despicable, perverted snake lust after her body!

“You are not even aware of your predicament and you still want me to save you?”

Though the black python with the purple horn sneered, the tip of its tail was drawing circles around the lower half of her stomach flirtatiously.

Determination flashed in Ye Jiuge’s eyes. She gritted her teeth and said, “Alright! As long as you save me, I will give you anything you want!”

She had nothing to lose, anyway.

So long as it would keep her alive, she would not only sell the snake her body, but her soul, too.

“The deal is complete!”

After biding its time at the WanZhang Depths for one hundred years, at last, the python could finally bind itself to the Lady of Holy Blood; through their contract, it could leave this place.

The snake’s bone white teeth pierced Ye Jiuge’s slender wrist. Their blood fused together and sealed the contract!

Ye Jiuge felt an extreme pain in her wrist that penetrated her soul.

Before she fainted, an exceptionally handsome face appeared to her. Its purple eyes were an abyss, and it had a high-bridged nose, wet, red lips, and a demonic, charming smile that captivated.

“Remember, my name is Zi Shang!”

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

When Ye Jiuge next woke, she was no longer in the WanZhang Depths, but lying in a secluded and deserted alley in the capital.

She propped herself up against a wall, stunned to discover that the wounds on her body had not only healed completely, but that she was filled with energy.

What did the demon snake Zhi Shang do to her?

Suddenly, she heard the approach of a horse-drawn carriage from afar accompanied by the loud reprimanding of guards.

“The Crown Prince is traveling. Bystanders should step aside.”

The citizens who were milling about retreated to the side of the road and whispered to one another.

“I heard that the Crown Prince is soon going to be betrothed to Miss Ye Shanshan!”

“Miss Ye Shanshan is the most talented spiritual elixir alchemist. She is a match made in heaven for the Crown Prince!”

“But wasn’t the Crown Prince engaged to Miss Ye Jiuge? How can he also be betrothed to Miss Ye Shanshan?”

“Bah! Ye Jiuge is naturally inept and has a hideous appearance. She is also slow-witted. How could the Crown Prince possibly marry her?”

“That’s right. So what if she was due to marry him? If I were him, I would not marry such a useless, incompetent woman.”

Ye Jiuge’s face went cold. It had never occurred to her that the very moment she crawled out from the WanZhang Depths, she would bump into her fiancé and younger sister displaying their love in public. What a coincidence!

Just when all the citizens had backed away to both sides of the streets, Ye Jiuge emerged from the alley into the center of the road.

“How bold of you, unruly citizen! Why haven’t you gotten out of the way yet?” The guard who had cleared the road lashed his whip at Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge threw him a stern gaze. She gripped his whip forcefully and flung him to the back of the horse carriage.

Bang!

Both the guard and the coachman fell to the ground. The situation was a mess.

“Who is causing a ruckus?”

A man's authoritative voice rang out from the horse carriage.

At the same time, a burst of force from an intermediate spiritual practitioner attempted to suppress Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge gently lifted her bare hands and disintegrated the coercive force into nothing.

This action prompted the person who had initially directed the force to respond, “Eh?”

Then, a man wearing a purple brocade robe alighted from the carriage.

He was an attractive man with a pair of long, narrow eyes and thin lips. As the Crown Prince of Lei Kingdom, Dongfang JianMing carried himself with an incomparably haughty air.

When he saw Ye Jiuge, he immediately asked with loathing, “Ye Jiuge, have you lost your mind?”

“Who?”

A young, pretty lady with delicate facial features and snow-white skin heard the Crown Prince and poked her head out of the carriage. When she saw Ye Jiuge, she could not help but exclaim, “How have you not died yet?!”

She had pushed Ye Jiuge into the WanZhang Depths with her own hands. How could she have climbed out of there?

“I also believed that I was certainly going to die when you pushed me into the WanZhang Depths. I never thought that Yama, the King of Hell, would not accept me and insist that I return to ask how a hypocritical and malicious woman like you, Ye Shanshan, can exist in this realm?”

Ye Jiuge laughed coldly at Ye Shanshan as she looked at her.

Although veiled, her scarred face was still unsightly, but her spine was as straight as the majestic mountains, and her lone figure exuded an air of self-confidence.

The surrounding citizens began chattering as soon as they heard what Ye Jiuge had said.

“Is it true that Ye Shanshan pushed her own sister into the WanZhang Depths?”

“I can’t imagine that such a beautiful person could have such a cruel heart...”

Ye Shanshan seethed. Ye Jiuge, that b*tch, should die. She really dares to speak the truth in public. So what if she does? No one will believe her.

“Elder sister, even though you did not want the Crown Prince to have a relationship with your younger sister, you should not fabricate such lies to frame her!” Ye Shanshan made a face as if she had been wronged and wept. “You have landed yourself in such a difficult situation. I feel sorry for you. Crown Prince, you should not meet with Shanshan from now on. Shanshan did not have the heart to see her elder sister hurt herself.”

As Ye Shanshan spoke, her tears rolled down her dainty face like pearls falling from a broken necklace. Her makeup did not smear as she cried. That face could tug at the heartstrings and awaken a man’s desire to protect her. Clearly, Ye Shanshan understood her advantage well: one sister was a pretty and talented spiritual elixir alchemist who was forlorn, while the other was an ugly, useless woman with a scarred face who sounded overbearing. There was no point in arguing about whose side the public would take.

Immediately, the surrounding citizens turned on Ye Jiuge with condescending looks.

“I have heard before that it is Ye Jiuge’s nature to be envious of other people’s achievements. I can’t believe that she would incriminate her own sister in public.”

“That’s right. Look at her bloodied clothes. After losing so much blood, it would be impossible for a normal person to stand here and appear perfectly fine. She must be pretending.”

Ye Jiuge smiled coldly and asked Ye Shanshan, “If you did not harm me, why, as soon as you saw me, did you ask why I have not yet died?”

Ye Shanshan’s face froze. She did not know how to explain her earlier slip of tongue, so she quickly turned to Dongfang Jianming with a miserable face.

“Don’t cry, Shanshan, this is not your fault.”

Dongfang Jianming immediately wrapped his arms tenderly around Ye Shanshan and turned to stare at Ye Jiuge as if he was looking at trash.

“Ye Jiuge, regardless of what you have done, it is useless. I will never marry you. If you have any self-respect, you should scram. Otherwise, do not blame me for not being considerate towards

you.”

Ha-ha! Dongfang Jianming is such a jerk. In order to break his engagement with her, he actually takes Ye Shanshan’s side in public. He is truly despicable!

“Ye Jiuge, are you deaf? Didn’t you hear me?”

Dongfang Jianming jeered at Ye Jiuge for quite a while and became even angrier when he realized that she was not responding. Instead, Ye Jiuge merely gave him a puzzled look. She scrutinized Dongfang Jianming up and down, then asked him, “Sir, who do you think you are? I am teaching my younger sister a lesson right now. What does that have to do with you? Are we close?”

Pfft! Bursts of laughter broke out around them. However, they disappeared quickly.

Dongfang Jianming’s face reddened completely. He pointed at Ye Jiuge and chastised her, “Stop trying to feign madness and pretending to be ignorant in front of me. Your attitude is only disgusting me more and more!”

“Elder sister, I know that you bear a grudge against the Crown Prince, so you are pretending not to know him on purpose. But regardless, he is your fiancé. Your actions have hurt his feelings.”

Ye Shanshan spoke with a pained face, as if she felt terrible for the Crown Prince.

“Do you mean that he is my fiancé?”

Ye Jiuge’s expression made it appear that she found this unbelievable. She pointed at Dongfang Jianming and said, “That is impossible. My fiancé would never be so despicable, shameless, and vulgar. Before calling off our marriage, he seduced other women. Not only that, he did not even spare my younger sister. He is truly worse than an animal!”

Pfft! Everyone gasped in disbelief at her words.

“Ye Jiuge, how dare you call the Crown Prince despicable, shameless, and vulgar?!”

While Ye Shanshan’s face appeared shocked and furious, she was snickering in her heart. Ye Jiuge is truly an idiot!

When she returned, she would say that Ye Jiuge had committed the crime of insulting royalty, then someone would drag her sister through the streets to let everyone know how uncouth she was.

“I see that you can speak these words without stuttering. Perhaps, in your heart, you are thinking

the same thing!”

Ye Jiuge nodded agreeably.

Ye Shanshan’s face froze. She had never thought that Ye Jiuge could speak so eloquently that she would not be able to utter anything in return.

“Ye Jiuge, I command you to shut up!” Dongfang Jianming had never been berated by someone with such an accusing tone before.

“The person that should shut his mouth is you!”

If he wanted to compete to see who could shout louder, Ye Jiuge was not afraid at all.

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Ye Jiuge retrieved a common-looking fire jade from an embroidered pouch and tossed it towards Dongfang Jianming. She smiled coldly and said, “This is the engagement gift that your father so eagerly sent me that year. Now, I return it to you. In the future, stay as far away from me as you can!”

Ye Jiuge’s words made the crowd gasp again in disbelief.

My god! The Ye clan’s useless, ugly daughter must have lost her mind. Not only did she insult the Crown Prince in public, but she wanted to cancel her betrothal with him as well?!

“Ye. Jiu. Ge!” It was as if these three words sprang out from between Dongfang

Jianming's gritted teeth.

"Even if you were to bring your mother into this, it would be useless. You should return the Purple Lightning Wood that my grandfather gave you immediately. Don't be so shameless as to hold onto it!"

Ye Jiuge's grandfather, Yun Tianwei, was the best Spiritual Elixir Alchemist in the Lei Kingdom. This Purple Lightning Wood was a treasure he had brought home from the Hongyue Secret Realm. When it was used with the Dongfang clan's secret technique, it had the most extraordinary effect.

In order to gain Yun Tianwei's favor, the royal family had badgered Ye Jiuge with a proposal and exchanged the Purple Lightning Wood for an ordinary fire jade. In the nearby spiritual cities, the news of this betrothal was very well-known.

"Great! This is really great!" Dongfang Jianming shouted, his anger descending into madness. He tugged free the Purple Lightning Wood, which he always carried with him, and flung it at Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge held out her hands to receive it; the Purple Lightning Wood was as big as her palm. The barbs on its surface scraped her skin. A stream of special, spiritual energy silently seeped into her hand through the small wound.

Without batting an eyelid, she stashed the Purple Lightning Wood away.

"Crown Prince, this Ye Jiuge is full of bad intentions. She has provoked your anger on purpose. Do not be fooled by her deception!"

Ye Shanshan felt anxious. Purple Lightning Wood was extremely rare and invaluable.

Not only that, it was extremely useful for those cultivating lightning-type techniques.

Dongfang Jianming had depended on it to enter the Intermediate Spiritual Practitioner stage at the mere age of twenty. Without that Purple Lightning Wood, he would no longer be considered a prodigy. If she married him now, wouldn't it be her loss?

"Shanshan, don't interfere when it comes to this matter!" snapped Dongfang Jianming, giving Ye Shanshan a look. It was as if flames were shooting out of his eyes.

Ye Shanshan knew that Dongfang Jianming was genuinely furious. She did not dare to make any more noise. In her heart, however, she loathed Ye Jiuge and wished she would die! Useless trash didn't deserve to live. Shanshan had been so surprised when her sister had climbed out of the Wanzhang Depths after she had stabbed her and pushed her down there. If she had known earlier that this could have happened, she would have dismembered her and made minced meat of her for the dogs!

"Ye Jiuge, I have returned the object to you. However, the humiliation that you have caused my family should be repaid in blood!"

With a hostile gaze, Dongfang Jianming used his Intermediate Spiritual Practitioner powers to subdue Ye Jiuge. As this useless woman had dared to call off their betrothal, he suspected that she must now be relying on someone else.

He had heard that, beneath the Wanzhang Depths, there were treasures. If Ye Jiuge had climbed up from below, a miracle must have occurred. Whatever treasure she had obtained, he wanted her to reveal it all.

"Heh, the top spiritual practitioner of the Great Yuan Dynasty is truly adept. How

unexpected that he wants to challenge me, a useless cultivator?!”

Ye Jiuge snickered, her face full of scorn.

“Ye Jiuge, you have dared to humiliate me, so you must now pay the price. However, in consideration of our past relationship, I am willing to compromise by allowing you a few moves.”

Dongfang Jianming pretended to be generous as he spoke. As long as Ye Jiuge dared to exchange blows with him, he could sound out what kind of treasure she possessed.

Ye Jiuge acted as if she was deep in thought, musing, “How does the Crown Prince plan to give me an advantage?”

“I allow you three...”

“Three slaps.”

Ye Jiuge interrupted Dongfang Jianming.

In a flash, her form was no longer where it had previously stood. Ye Jiuge had vanished.

Pa, pa, pa!

Three heavy, resounding slaps landed on Dongfang Jianming’s face.

Everyone was stunned, including Dongfang Jianming.

The effect of his stupefied expression together with the fresh marks in the shape of a palm on his cheeks was humorous.

Looking at Dongfang Jianming’s red and swollen face, Ye Jiuge sighed, shook her head, and said, “The left and right sides are not symmetrical; you should have allowed

me four slaps!"

"Ye. Jiu. Ge. I want to kill you!"

Dongfang Jianming went mad with anger. Since the moment he was born, he had never experienced so much humiliation.

"Dongfang Jianming, before you murder me, you should return home and ask your father, the Emperor, if he remembers the promise that he once made to my grandfather."

Ye Jiuge's gaze became heavy, emitting rays of cold lightning. No one dared to look at her directly.

Long ago, her grandfather had used a resurrection elixir brewed from a secret recipe to save the Emperor's life. Thereafter, the Emperor had given his word that Yun Tianwei's family would be protected. If he had forgotten, Ye Jiuge would not mind jogging the Emperor's memory.

"Crown Prince, you should never offend my elder sister. It's just three slaps, after all.

You should just endure them and move on. Otherwise, when her grandfather returns, he will blame you, and I fear that you will not be able to hold on to your position as Crown Prince!"

On the surface, it seemed as if Ye Shanshan was mollifying him, but in reality, she wanted to provoke him further.

As expected, Dongfang Jianming's eyes were red with fury. His chest heaved intensely, as he itched to tear Ye Jiuge into a thousand pieces.

However, Ye Jiuge's grandfather, Yun Tianwei, was not only the best Spiritual Elixir Alchemist in the Lei Kingdom, he was also a hero who had resisted the demon invasion several hundred years ago. He was one of the most celebrated and famous men in all of vast China.

Although he had disappeared for a couple of decades, his prestige endured. If Dongfang Jianming killed Ye Jiuge in front of everyone, the Crown Prince would certainly be admonished by his father, the Emperor, when he returned home.

Finally, Dongfang Jianming suppressed his anger. "Ye Jiuge, taking Great Master Yun into account, I will spare your life—this time. But in the future, you must behave," he said. Then, he turned around and boarded the horse carriage.

Ye Shanshan followed hurriedly after. Before she left, she threw Ye Jiuge a gaze with unspeakable malice in her eyes.

Ye Jiuge returned it with a cold smile. She could barely tolerate this treatment, and the interesting part of the show had just begun!

...

Ye Jiuge ambled through alleyways, following her memory. At last, she reached a familiar place: the large, main entrance of the Ye clan residence.

A pretty maid was standing at the door. It was Hong Liu, who worked inside.

As soon as Hong Liu saw Ye Jiuge, she shouted to her sharply, "Eldest Miss, where did you go last night? Why have you only returned now? Oh my god! How did your clothes end up torn like this? Why is there blood everywhere? My goodness! I can't believe that

those bandits, who have killed so many people, would dare to humiliate the Ye clan's eldest daughter. I must tell the Lord immediately so he can deliver justice for you."

The maid's shrill and exaggerating voice attracted attention. Several people had gathered and were now pointing at Ye Jiuge and maligning her.

"I heard earlier that Ye Jiuge did not hesitate to harm herself as a way of threatening the Crown Prince and preventing his betrothal to Ye Shanshan.

"Tsk, tsk."

"Did you hear what the maid said? Do you think that Ye Jiuge has really lost her innocence to a bad man so that she could purposely concoct this trick of injuring herself and hang on to the crown prince?"

"That must be it! She really is a poisonous woman. After she lost her innocence, she still wanted to cuckold the Crown Prince..."

Hearing these scoundrels speaking while Hong Liu was bawling uncontrollably in front of the crowd, Ye Jiuge understood immediately: This was the method that Ye Shanshan, who had returned to the residence first, had cooked up to deal with her. It was actually quite a cruel move! After all, Ye Jiuge's clothing was completely covered in blood, and it was true that she had not returned to the residence the previous night...

Now, the commotion that Hong Liu had caused and her sullied reputation, which included losing her innocence and harming others, would spread throughout the entire Lei Kingdom. Even her grandfather's reputation would be tarnished by this.

It was only this, Yun Tianwei's reputation, that mattered to her; against Ye Jiuge alone,

Ye Shanshan's move was otherwise rather useless.

Ye Jiuge raised her hand and struck Hong Liu's face with a tight slap. A crisp sound rang out. Pa!

Hong Liu cradled her red and swollen cheek in her hands, staring at Ye Jiuge in disbelief.

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"Kneel down!"

Ye Jiuge's gaze was cold, as if a chilly breeze blew past.

Pang! Hong Liu kneeled immediately.

Ye Jiuge was preparing to interrogate the maid, when she overheard a few scoundrels hiding in the crowd trying to add fuel to the fire.

"Rumors have mentioned that Ye Jiuge is arrogant and tyrannical. I can't believe that it is really true. If she dares to abuse her maid in public, we can never imagine how cruel she must be in private."

"That's right. I think..."

Before the scoundrel could finish speaking, he felt a pain in his waist as he collided with

the Ye residence's main door with a bang.

Ye Jiuge kicked each of them, one by one heaping the scoundrels into a pile.

Hong Liu widened her eyes and looked fearfully at Ye Jiuge, whose entire body was radiating murderous energy.

Is this still the cowardly and extremely spineless Eldest Miss?

After Ye Jiuge finished dealing with the scoundrels, she turned her head to look at Hong Liu and yelled, "Speak! Who was it that actually directed you to ruin my reputation?"

Her gaze blazed with the sharpness of a lightning bolt, and her aura, similarly, was like a blade. She radiated with imposing terror, as if she were Princess Iron Fan, descended to the mortal realms.

Hong Liu trembled all over with fear. She almost spat out the truth. However, she thought about Second Miss's way of handling things and snapped out of it immediately.

Stubbornly, she wanted to lie and falsely incriminate Ye Jiuge.

At that moment, a pair of strange purple irises suddenly appeared inside Ye Jiuge's pitch black eyes. They emanated a faint glow, similar to that of a demon hiding in the dark of night.

Hong Liu looked at these irises, and her soul was immediately pulled in. She stared blankly and opened her small lips. She couldn't help but speak the truth: "It was Second Miss who commanded me to bring some people along to accuse you falsely. She was the one who hired these scoundrels. She said that she wanted to completely sully your reputation and spread your tainted name far and wide!"

There was an uproar in the crowd. The mastermind who had orchestrated all of this was, unexpectedly, the Second Miss of the Ye clan. The truth was too scandalous!

As the public was sharing their opinions on the matter, the main door of the Ye residence abruptly opened. A team of guards dragged the scoundrels and the kneeling Hong Liu away from the entrance.

Then, a middle-aged man wearing a blue brocade robe emerged.

He had a handsome appearance—a high-bridged nose and an imposing look. This man was Ye Jiuge's father, Ye Yuxuan.

He looked at his daughter, who had not returned home last night. He did not feel any tenderness or relief; instead, he exploded loudly at Ye Jiuge, pointing his fingers at her and shouting, "You—an evil, good-for-nothing daughter—have the gall to return!"

Ye Jiuge smiled coldly in her heart. In a situation where his daughter had not returned for a night and then reappeared in such a miserable state, he had nothing to say other than this?

Not only that, Ye Yuxuan had not appeared sooner, but at the exact moment when Hong Liu was confessing the truth about Ye Shanshan having harmed her. Wasn't that such a coincidence!

"Why haven't you come inside yet? Stop being a disgrace out here!"

Ye Yuxuan pointed to a small side entrance. It was the passageway used by the servants when they needed to exit and enter the Ye residence.

"Your daughter does not know how she is supposed to enter the residence. Father, why

don't you show me, since you once foisted yourself upon the Yun clan?" sneered Ye Jiuge.

The penniless Ye Yuxuan had married into the Yun clan. His cultivated elixir knowledge and skills had been entirely funded by the Ye clan's wealth—when she was born, Ye Jiuge's surname had been Yun. Then, her grandfather had disappeared, and Ye Yuxuan had used the opportunity to cajole Ye Jiuge's mother into changing the Yun residence to the Ye residence and even asked her to change her surname.

But these name changes did not change the fact that everything that Ye Yuxuan possessed belonged to the Yun clan! And Ye Jiuge was the only direct descendant of the Ye clan.

"You are so shameless. You went out and fooled around the whole night. I do not know what kind of improper man you have hooked up with that you now dare to return and scheme after my assets!"

Ye Yuxuan's face was ashen, and his gaze was fierce, like he wanted to swallow Ye Jiuge whole.

The thing that he detested most in life was when someone mentioned how he had married into the Ye clan. Every time, he was forced to recall how inferior he had been back when Ye Tianwei was able to step all over him.

"Ye Yuxuan, even if you are my father, not even you can slander me in such a malicious manner. You keep mentioning that I have hooked up with an improper man. Shouldn't you bring him forward?"

Ye Jiuge's beautiful gaze emanated a coercive light.

Her clothes were covered in blood, similar to a phoenix bathed in fire. The aura that was bursting from her body was making the people around her palpitate uncontrollably.

Ye Yuxuan was completely silenced by Ye Jiuge's questions. He was simply defaming her, so where was he going to find this improper man? At the same time, he was also not going to allow this unfilial daughter to defy him!

Ye Yuxuan pointed his finger at Ye Jiuge and wanted to continue to insult her, but she cut him off. "I, Ye Jiuge, have acted honorably. I am not like your 'good' daughter, Ye Shanshan. Because she wanted to marry Dongfang Jianming, she stabbed me in the back and pushed me down into the Wanzhang Depths!"

"What are you blathering on about? The Wanzhang Depths are bottomless. Even if a Northern Goshawk fell in, it wouldn't be able to fly out of there. How is it possible that you could climb out? You, unfilial daughter, have a mouth full of nonsense. You accuse your younger sister falsely and defy your elders. You are truly disloyal, unfilial, and immoral. Someone, bring out the punishment tools of our clan!"

Ye Yuxuan did not believe Ye Jiuge's lies at all. In that moment, he only had one thought: to punish this unfilial daughter harshly in a cruel manner. He wanted to see whether she would dare be so impudent again after this!

Ye Shanshan had predicted earlier that her father would punish Ye Jiuge. As she heard his words, she immediately handed him the horse whip that they used for punishment in the clan. This horse whip was woven from fine cowhide with tiny barbs on its surface.

Needless to say, not only women were unable to endure a flogging from that whip, but strong men too.

Ye Yuxuan was just scaring Ye Jiuge. He did not plan to use it.

Ye Shanshan saw that her father was frozen with the horse whip in his hands, so she tugged on his sleeve and begged pitifully, "Father, you should never ever hit elder sister. Otherwise, when grandfather returns, you will be the one who is beaten!"

Ye Shanshan's words only provoked Ye Yuxuan's anger even further. Both of his eyes were very red. To him, Ye Jiuge had become as repulsive as Yun Tianwei.

"Today, I want you, an evil spawn, to know of who it is that really has all the authority in the Ye clan!"

Ye Yuxuan did not hesitate as he raised the horse whip, ready to lash Ye Jiuge.

"Father, you should never be impulsive!"

Ye Shanshan's eyes were filled with tears as she pretended to stop him. On the surface, that impression of a deep and profound sisterly bond was emotionally moving. However, the private gaze she shot Ye Jiuge was full of glee.

Ye Jiuge, this is the consequence of defying me!

A glint of frostiness flitted past Ye Jiuge's eyes. With the speed of lightning, she yanked Ye Shanshan forward and kicked her, forcing her to kneel right in front of her.

Ye Yuxuan's whip happened to land at that exact moment.

Pa!

The horse whip hit Ye Shanshan's body without any mercy.

The barbs on its surface tore her clothes with a ripping sound. Her soft, white shoulder was exposed, and traces of blood, which gave the alluring impression of mistreatment, caused the spectators' eyes to widen.

Ye Jiuge clapped her hands as she praised, "Father, you are truly wise. A person like Ye Shanshan, who is disloyal, unfilial, and immoral, should be punished using the clan's methods in public."

Ye Shanshan had never thought that the whip would land on her body.

She looked at Ye Jiuge in disbelief. This b*tch should die, who dares treat her like this!

"Wow, it is so white!" Someone in the crowd watching the scene mentioned lewdly.

Ye Shanshan could no longer endure the crowd's gaze, so she gathered her clothes back together. Wa! She cried and ran inside covering her face.

Ye Yuxuan was not in any mood to care about Ye Shanshan's humiliation whatsoever.

He widened his eyes, looking at Ye Jiuge as if he had just spotted a ghost. "You—how is it possible that you are using spiritual force?"

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Ye Yuxuan was absolutely certain that his incompetent daughter had been poisoned with a rare toxin so that the nerves of her entire body were completely damaged. In this lifetime, it would be impossible for her to practice any cultivation.

However, the move she pulled earlier of pushing Ye Shanshan forward to take her place was so swift that not even he had been able to see it clearly. With such cultivation, was it really possible that she was incompetent?

“Father, didn’t I mention it earlier? After Ye Shanshan pushed me into the Wanzhang Depths, I did not die. Instead, I obtained a high-quality elixir that cleans the marrow and relocates the nerves. There ...” Ye Jiuge paused for a moment, and the corner of her lips curled into a devious smile. “Father, can you guess who left this elixir for me?”

Although Ye Jiuge did not state it clearly, it was obvious that the only person who could have placed such an elixir at the bottom of the Wanzhang Depths, foreseeing that Ye Jiuge would face such adversity, was her grandfather, Yun Tianwei. Yun Tianwei was a legendary figure. Therefore, it was not far-fetched to connect all of these impossible occurrences to him, which could explain Ye Jiuge’s change in personality and increase in cultivated power.

Again, the crowd was in an uproar. They never thought that the Great Master Yun, who was rumored to be dead in the wild, was still alive. It was explosive news.

Ye Tianwei’s eyes widened. He could not believe that Yun Tianwei was still alive, considering how, in the past...

But it was impossible that Yun Tianwei was still alive! Ye Jiuge, incorrigible girl, must be lying to him!

However, it was possible that the information about the elixir was true. Perhaps, she had also obtained other treasures from the Wanzhang Depths!

A hint of greed flashed in Ye Yuxuan’s eyes. Immediately, he changed his expression. “Jiuge, I never thought that you would have this kind of fateful encounter with good fortune. You have proved yourself to be my good daughter. Look at your clothes covered in blood. Your body must be in pain. Quickly, go into the house. I will find a female spiritual-medical practitioner to tend to you!”

His face showed a look of affection and love, as if he had not been the one wanting to lash her with a whip!

Ye Jiuge’s eyes became grave. From Ye Yuxuan’s expression, it was clear that he believed that her grandfather had passed away. Could it be possible that he knew something? But now was not the time to shed all pretense of cordiality with Ye Yuxuan.

Ye Jiuge conceded to Ye Yuxuan’s show of goodwill. As she walked into the Ye residence, she

said, "There is no need for a spiritual-medical practitioner, Father. All you need to do is bring Ye Shanshan to justice by punishing her."

Immediately, Ye Yuxuan's face froze.

The classes of spiritual power in all the vast lands and seas of Mainland China were ranked from lowest to highest as red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. Ye Shanshan had a rare aptitude belonging to the blue class. At a young age, she had already achieved the threshold required to become a spiritual elixir alchemist. She was also now in the Crown Prince's favor. How could he punish her? For the moment, he avoided the topic.

Ye Jiuge knew that Ye Yuxuan would not punish Ye Shanshan, so she did not feel the slightest bit disappointed! In any case, there would be time enough for that later. She would not let anyone who had harmed her get away with it!

...

Ye Jiuge returned to her residence. It was vacant. Not even a servant in sight.

Her body felt disgusting. She was lethargic and sleepy, but she was too lazy to search for the servants, so she boiled her own water and filled the bathing pool to the brim. Afterwards, she shed her bloody clothes and began to bathe.

Eh?

As Ye Jiuge reclined in the bathing pool, she was astonished to discover the sudden appearance of a thumb-sized purple imprint on her pale wrist. When she touched the enigmatic mark, it became uneven, as if carved into her flesh.

Ye Jiuge furrowed her brows and clawed at it with her fingernails, intending to peel the imprint away. She never expected a purple light to shine out from the mark into the bathing pool.

Suddenly, a remarkably handsome man with the body of a human and a snake tail appeared in front of her. A purple horn, seven-inches long, on the top of his head emanated a mysterious glow. His incomparably handsome face had a pair of stoic purple eyes, and his silver hair gleamed like moonlight. His physique was rugged, with a lean waist, sexually-appealing Apollo's belt and strange, purplish-black demon lines traversing his jade-like skin. Below his waist dangled a slender snake tail that seemed to be made of obsidian.

Stunning, powerful, terrifying—that was Ye Jiuge's impression of the demon emperor's arrival!

"Little Jiuge, are there any matters for which you have summoned me?"

Zi Shang's purple eyes emanated a mesmerizing glow. A lazy smile hung on his lips.

"How are you here?" Ye Jiuge's entire body was tense as she looked warily at Zi Shang, who had suddenly materialized.

"Little Jiuge, is this how you treat the person who saved your life? This really hurts my feelings!"

With a sway, Zi Shang's tail coiled around Ye Jiuge. His skin was so fair it was slightly translucent, not to mention smooth as silk. With a warm hug, he locked her tightly in his embrace, which was sturdy as a cage: no one could escape from it.

"Let go of me!" Ye Jiuge struggled. She despised the feeling of being restrained.

"Be obedient and don't move." Zi Shang pressed himself close to Ye Jiuge's ear and asked in an intimate tone, "Do you like the power I gifted you?"

"As it turns out, it was just you playing tricks all along!" Ye Jiuge's body stilled.

She had felt that something was strange; it was obvious that her body's nerves were all dead, so how could it possess such a formidable power?

"I can help you become even stronger!"

Zi Shang's red, wet lips curved into a charming, wicked smile, and his red forked tongue was faintly discernible. It was as if he was a demon capable of ensnaring human hearts; he could coax a person into giving their soul away at any moment.

"There is no need. If you want my body, then take it now!"

Ye Jiuge was expressionless as she spoke, her gaze cold. She had not forgotten the words she had previously uttered. As long as he could save her, she would give him anything.

"Tsk, ts. Your little expression is really adorable. I love it!" Zi Shang stretched out his bright red forked tongue and licked the black scar on Ye Jiuge's face. He laughed deeply and said, "But you have misunderstood me. I do not plan to take your body!"

At least, not now.

"Then, what do you want?"

Ye Jiuge fixed her eyes on Zi Shang's handsome face, which was almost within her reach. Such a

good-looking and strong man could have anything he wanted, so why did he feel the need to get involved with an incompetent, ugly woman like her?

“I just require a little bit of your blood. To you, it is insignificant.”

Zi Shang drew up Ye Jiuge’s index finger and used the tip of his sharp teeth to gently bite into her skin. He licked the blood drops that oozed out and narrowed his purple eyes to show his enjoyment, as if he had just tasted the most delicious thing in the entire world.

“Just this?” Ye Jiuge furrowed her eyebrows. Did he think that she was a three-year-old child who would believe that a fierce beast could be satisfied by a drop of blood?

“Of course, it is your responsibility to make your blood taste even more delicious. Right now, there is still room for improvement!” Zi Shang shook his head, thinking that it was such a pity. He lowered his head, intending to lick Ye Jiuge’s tender and beautiful red lips when she pushed him away with her palm.

“Speak nicely and stop using your tongue.”

“Alright. Actually, the poison in your body is called the ‘Nine Stages of Fractured Bones.’

Every time the poison is in effect, the nerves in your entire body feel pain, as if they were severed. However, if you cleanse the poison completely, you will also clean your marrow, relocate your nerves, and restructure the constitution of your entire body!”

Zi Shang lifted his jade-like fingers, and a purple ball flew towards Ye Jiuge’s forehead.

Ye Jiuge felt a quake in her mind, and new cultivation techniques from the All-encompassing Scripture appeared in her brain. These cultivation techniques included elixir, magical instruments, and body and skill cultivation. They could restore her nerves and dispel the poison in her body.

Zi Shang drew close to Ye Jiuge’s ear and whispered, “How about that? I treat you so well!”

His deep, alluring voice was like that of a lover murmuring sweet nothings.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

Zi Shang's hot breath caressed Ye Jiuge's earlobe, delicate as jade. Immediately, it became as red as the red plum flowers that bloom in the snow. His eyes darkened; he could not help but lick it once.

Ye Jiuge felt her goosebumps rise. Without any reservations, she pushed Zi Shang's head away and said coldly, "Tell me, what do you really want? Otherwise, I will never cultivate these techniques!"

Although the techniques were excellent, she was afraid that she could not pay the price for them. Zi Shang did not seem like someone who was generous. Already, it was odd that he had saved her. Now, he wanted to help her become stronger. If he told her that he did not have any hidden intentions, she would not believe him.

"If you don't cultivate using these techniques, you will die!"

Zi Shang smiled lazily. His expression implied that it was up to her. The slender tip of his tail was still coiled around her small waist.

"Alright, I will practice them!"

Ye Jiuge gritted her teeth as she slapped the flirtatious tip of his tail away.

She was well aware of her body's condition. On the surface, it appeared that she had completely healed from her wounds, but inside, her body was riddled with problems. She could die at any moment!

Her grandfather was the family member closest to her. She could not die before completing her investigation into his whereabouts.

"Good child. As a reward, I have decided to give you an excellent item!"

Zi Shang's gaze was gentle as the edges of his lips curved into a smile as beautiful as the Queen of the Night cactus.

"What is it?"

At first, Ye Jiuge felt a slight anticipation. Then, she saw Zi Shang's long finger make a curving motion, and the Purple Lightning Wood flew towards her.

"This was originally mine." Ye Jiuge snatched the Purple Lightning Wood and stared at Zi Shang. She said angrily, "Other than that, my name is Ye Jiuge. I am not called 'good child'!"

"Okay, good child."

Zi Shang smiled wickedly. Just before Ye Jiuge exploded, he pacified her by saying, "Don't you feel like you have a special relationship with this piece of Purple Lightning Wood?"

Yes, I really do!

Immediately, Ye Jiuge's attention was redirected. When she had first obtained the Purple Lightning Wood from Dongfang Jianming, she'd felt a mysterious spiritual force clearly seep into her palm.

"Those idiotic human beings really see the Godly Heartwood as common Purple Lightning Wood. They do not understand its real secret!"

Zi Shang moved his finger, and the purple wood morphed into an illusion of a black flame quietly burning on his jade-like hands.

Although this illusion did not have any warmth to it, it amassed a terrifying amount of energy, as if it could burn everything to nothing!

"The Godly Heartwood's fire came from the heart. This kind of Godly Heartwood can not only forecast what flame best suits you, but it can also induce the opportunity of a chance encounter within your body. In the future, when you meet this kind of flame, you will feel a connection with it."

The Godly Heartwood had returned to a purple-colored wood. Zi Shang passed it to Ye Jiuge. "Look what kind of flame is yours!"

Ye Jiuge accepted the purple wood. Pang! It transformed into a small red flame resembling a red lotus in full-bloom. Faint purple lightning enveloped every petal.

"The flame of a red lotus? That's not right. How can it involve lightning? Most unexpectedly, this is the Red Lotus Lightning Flame!" Zi Shang said.

He could not help but smile. The Holy Lady was truly the Holy Lady; even the flame that belonged to her was unusual. And yet, the Red Lotus Lightning Flame was a Holy Flame. He did not know when she would have the opportunity to discover it. Zi Shang pointed to the flame, and the Red Lightning Lotus Flame surrounded by lightning immediately contracted into a solid state in the shape of a flame. It bore the appearance of a seven-inch long red needle with lightning hidden

within.

Ye Jiuge was immediately attracted to the Lightning Fire Needle.

Her skill with needles had reached its peak. With her exceptional medical talent, it was even said that she was able to revive a dead person and regrow bones.

Now, this Lightning Fire Needle was linked to her heart and soul. It would enable her to develop her medical skills to their maximum potential.

Ye Jiuge pressed the Lightning Fire Needle into her body. Instantly, she was meditating at the bathing pool and cultivating the All-encompassing Scripture.

Zi Shang shook his head as he reflected on how this girl was born blessed!

To neutralize the first stage of the poison from the Nine Stages of Fractured Bones, she needed to gather seven kinds of spiritual medicine. However, Zi Shang had not expected Ye Jiuge to transmute the Godly Heartwood into the Lightning Fire Needle, which had the ability to repel evil and neutralize poison. Consequently, it led her to neutralize the first stage of poison immediately. She had proved herself worthy to be the Lady of Holy Blood—even fated for it. If that was so, then he should provide her with more aid.

Zi Shang's jade-like palms were laid flat on Ye Jiuge's thin bare back as he helped facilitate her technique cultivation. Black liquid dripped from her pores, drop by drop, dyeing the waters of the entire bathing pool black.

Spiritual practitioners from the vast lands and seas of Mainland China could only enter the state of a spiritual practitioner if they had experienced the most arduous nine stages of body cultivation.

After being spiritual practitioners, they became spiritual masters, great spiritual masters, and then spiritual kings. Every stage was split into three intermediary stages. Every time someone wanted to progress further, they faced an extremely difficult process.

However, with Zi Shang's help, Ye Jiuge unexpectedly cultivated from the first to the last stage in one rapid breakthrough. Directly, she entered the beginner stage of the spiritual practitioner. This speed was truly staggering.

When Zi Shang observed that Ye Jiuge was firmly established in her state and transformed into purple light, he returned into the contractual imprint on her wrist.

Ye Jiuge opened her eyes and noticed that Zi Shang was gone.

She lowered her eyes and stared at the purple spiritual core, which was as large as her thumb, in her elixir field. Near to the elixir core, she saw completely poisoned nerves in nine different and odd colors. These were the Nine Stages of Fractured Bones.

Ye Jiuge tried to use the Lightning Fire Needle to neutralize them, but she was forced to rebound outwards. Her cultivation was still insufficient, so she would only be able to neutralize them in the future.

Ye Jiuge got up and felt chills. She looked down.

F*ck!

As it turned out, she had been interacting with Zi Shang bare-naked for a long time.

Stupid, lewd snake. It is not surprising that he ran away so fast. It seems that he has taken tremendous advantage of her.

“Little Jiuge has judged me wrongly. With your scrawny figure, it is more fitting to say that you have taken advantage of me.”

Zi Shang’s languid voice filled Ye Jiuge’s mind.

“Where are you? Why are you able to read my mind?”

Ye Jiuge was very startled. She immediately searched all the corners, but there was nothing.

“I am in your body, so naturally, I can read your mind.”

Zi Shang chuckled.

That phrase ‘in your body’ was full of erotic feeling as it rolled off his tongue like a feather brushing past Ye Jiuge’s heart.

She could not help but shiver all over.

“You like my voice.” Zi Shang noticed her weakness and smiled even more charmingly, even though there was no way that Ye Jiuge would admit it.

Her face reddened. She stared at the purple imprint on her wrist and said fiercely, “I do not care what kind of demon technique you have used to hide in here. I do not allow you to read my thoughts. Otherwise, I will gouge out this imprint and dispose of it in the latrine pit.”

She could endure letting him look at her body, but she would never allow her thoughts to be exposed.

“Okay!” Zi Shang agreed without any fuss. He stopped making noise.

When the snake demon suddenly became so understanding, it made Ye Jiuge feel uneasy.

She put on her clothes and scrutinized herself carefully in front of the copper mirror.

The young lady in the mirror had a pair of cold eyes, similar to deep waters where the bottom cannot be seen.

Although her facial features were delicate, her face was covered with bumps and grooves from her black scars, similar to the burnt skin of a toad. Incomparably ugly.

Ye Jiuge raised her hand to caress the black scar on her face. The poison had been embedded in her for too long; it had damaged the foundation of her skin. She needed to concoct a spiritual medicine to neutralize it.

She remembered that there was a spiritual medicine called ‘Jade Complexion Paste’ that could remove black scars. However, the spiritual herbs that were used to produce Jade Complexion Paste were extremely valuable, and it was not easy to obtain them.

“If you beg me, I can remove your scars without the help of Jade Complexion Paste!”

Once again, Zi Shang’s graceful and pleasant voice resounded in Ye Jiuge’s mind.

You, a self-centered show-off, are reading my mind again!

Ye Jiuge felt him ruffling her feathers, and she had the impulse to murder a snake.

“I regret to inform you that I don’t have an uncle. You are incapable of killing me.”

Zi Shang’s deep laugh made her want to hit him.

“Can’t you understand the human language?”

She had already mentioned that he was not allowed to read her thoughts.

“I am a demon!”

Whether he wanted to understand her or not depended on his mood.

Ye Jiuge had never seen such a shameless demon. Just as she was prepared to use the needle to prick the snake skin, an alarmed voice came from outside the door.

“Eldest Miss! Things are not looking good...”

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

“What is going on?” Ye Jiuge asked when she emerged from the door and saw Zhen Zhu, the servant at the residence in charge of watering the plants, crying with an ashen face.

“Qing Mama was wrongly accused by Zhang Mama for stealing. She was tied up and almost beaten to death in the firewood storage room.”

Ye Jiuge narrowed her eyes and rushed off in the direction of the firewood storage room. From afar, she could hear bursts of blood-curdling screams.

She entered the firewood storage room and saw that Qing Mama was tied to a pillar. Her face was pale. She was badly mutilated from head to toe, and her torn clothes were completely soaked with blood.

A sturdy-looking maid stood holding a black leather whip, which had been submerged in salt water. She was lashing it harshly towards Qing Mama.

In a flash, Ye Jiuge grabbed the whip as it fell on Qing Mama and reversed the situation, whipping the servant fiercely. In her fury, she used eighty percent of her force.

There was a laceration on the maid’s body from the whip. “Ah!” the maid cried out. When she saw that it was Ye Jiuge, she roared angrily, “You dare hit me?”

“I wanted to hit you!” A cold, murderous intent flashed across Ye Jiuge’s face.

Whip by whip, Ye Jiuge caused the servant to writhe on the ground, begging for mercy. Zhen Zhu

took the opportunity to release Qing Mama from the pillar.

“Eldest Miss, don’t beat her anymore. If you continue to beat her, she will lose her life.”

Qing Mama glanced at the Eldest Miss, who looked like a bloodthirsty Asura. She did not have the guts to move closer to her.

“For Qing Mama’s sake, I shall spare your worthless life. Scram!”

Ye Jiuge threw the blood-drenched whip in the maid’s face. The maid ran away with her last breath.

“Eldest Miss, what happened?” Why does it seem like you have changed into a new person?

Ye Jiuge’s gaze was grave as she retold the story of how Ye Shanshan had pushed her into the Wanzhang Depths, and how she’d obtained an elixir that her grandfather had left behind. At the end, she said, “Qing Mama, the previously acquiescent Ye Jiuge died in the Wanzhang Depths. I have climbed out of Hell to make them pay their debts in blood.”

“Wu, wu, wu! Just blame me for being useless!” Qing Mama cried bitterly then fainted.

Ye Jiuge hurriedly carried Qing Mama to the Feihong Residence to apply medicine to her wounds, but when she checked her pulse, she discovered that she had been poisoned.

This did not come as a surprise. Qing Mama had already cultivated to the ninth stage. Soon enough, she would enter the state of a spiritual practitioner. However, when her mother passed away, she suddenly contracted a strange illness and completely lost her cultivation. In reality, she was poisoned.

This poison was not hard to neutralize, and it was very minor compared to Ye Jiuge’s Nine Stages of Fractured Bones. With her swift and precise needle techniques, Ye Jiuge quickly used her Lightning Fire Needle to unblock the obstructions in Qing Mama’s channels, which were situated at major acupuncture points.

Qing Mama woke up in extreme pain. She opened her mouth and vomited extremely nauseating black-colored blood. She was shocked to discover that the suppression in her chest had disappeared. Once more, long-dormant spiritual energy was flowing smoothly in her.

“Eldest Miss, I...” Qing Mama’s eyes were wide, and she was just about to ask questions when they heard a loud thud.

The residence’s main doors had been kicked open, and the windows smashed. Their fragments

flew in all directions.

Ye Jiuge peeked outside through the broken gap in the window and noticed a sharp-faced maid with an unkind demeanor leading a group of brawny old women (who had spiritual cultivation). They walked in with an aggressive manner.

"It's, it's Zhang Mama. She must have come to find us for revenge," Zhen Zhu said, trembling with shock and fear.

Zhang Mama was Madame Su Yufeng's maid who had accompanied her when she married into the family. Her spiritual cultivation was at the eighth stage. She was an arrogant and vicious woman whom no one dared provoke.

"Before I could get even with them, they've shown up here all by themselves." Ye Jiuge smiled coldly. She stood up and walked outside.

"Eldest Miss, Qing Mama has stolen from Madame. We were interrogating her when you whisked her away and injured Miss Liu. Don't you have any respect for the household rules?" Zhang Mama pointed at Ye Jiuge and scolded, as if she were the master.

"Household rules? I represent the household rules!" Ye Jiuge lifted her fingers and sealed Zhang Mama's spiritual channels. Then, she lifted up her hands and struck Zhang Mama's face with her spiritual energy. "You use your position of power to bully others. This slap is to teach you some etiquette!" As she spoke, she gave her another slap. "This slap is to teach you to be more aware of your place and think twice before acting!" Pa! Another slap. "This slap is merely because you displease me!"

Zhang Mama was stupefied by the three slaps. She glared at Ye Jiuge in disbelief and howled, "You dare to hit me."

Pa! Another slap.

"Are you satisfied with that response?" Ye Jiuge grinned.

Zhang Mama shook with anger. She channeled her spiritual energy but was unable to use it. She turned to the maid behind her and screamed angrily, "What are you standing there for? Deal with her."

"Who dares to touch me?" Ye Jiuge roared, subduing everyone. "According to the laws of the Lei Kingdom, servants who defy those with authority over them will be exiled to places thousands of miles away. If you are not afraid to die, then do not hesitate to come forward."

Ye Jiuge's burning gaze swept over them. The group of maids could not help but shudder. Slowly, they moved backwards.

Zhang Mama gritted her teeth with such hatred that they almost broke. She pointed at Ye Jiuge and scolded, "Okay. You win. Eventually, there will be a time when you will suffer the consequences."

After she finished speaking, she turned around to return to the residence and seek reinforcements.

"You wish to leave? It isn't that easy!" Ye Jiuge kicked her kneecap and turned around to address Zhen Zhu. "Get me some ropes. Zhang Mama has stolen my belongings, so I want to personally tie her up and interrogate her in the torture chamber."

"You are speaking nonsense. I did not steal anything!" Zhang Mama struggled with all her might. However, Ye Jiuge tied her up like a zongzi and hauled her off from the Feihong Residence to the torture chamber.

The servants passing by were shocked. They thought that they were hallucinating in broad daylight to see the residence's most respected servant, Zhang Mama, being dragged around like a dog by the incompetent Eldest Miss.

"I have been wrongly accused. Eldest Miss is misusing her power and abusing me for her private matters. She has even falsely accused me of stealing her belongings!" Zhang Mama howled along the way, so that everyone in the entire rear court heard her.

"If you did not steal anything, then what is this?" Ye Jiuge dragged Zhang Mama to the entrance of the torture chamber and retrieved the Purple Lightning Wood from the front part of her robe in front of everyone. She said gravely, "You are caught red-handed, so what else do you have to say for yourself?"

"I did not do this. You are framing me." Zhang Mama glared at her. She had never seen this wood before.

"You still dare refuse to admit your mistake? Servant Gan, tie her up and beat her harshly. I want to find out who instructed her to steal from me." Ye Jiuge looked at Servant Gan, who was in charge of the torture chamber.

"Eldest Miss, Zhang Mama is Madame's servant. If you misuse your power, things won't turn out well," Servant Gan said, as she was being put in an awkward situation.

"Qing Mama is my servant. However, you did not hesitate a moment when you were torturing her. Don't tell me that, in your eyes, the Madame is the mistress of this residence but I, rightful

daughter of the clan, am a nobody.” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrows. The glint in her eyes was sharp, as if it could bore a hole through a person.

Servant Gan did not dare reply. She had heard that, earlier, Eldest Miss had established such authority at the entrance that even the Old Master had submitted to her. Right now, no one could offend the Eldest Miss.

“Very well, it seems that you do not understand the human language.” Ye Jiuge slowly walked towards the rack that held the torture equipment and took up the thickest leather whip. She waved it at Servant Gan. “Do you still need me to repeat myself?”

“There is no need, no need. I understand, I understand.” Servant Gan felt her hair rise. Hurriedly, she brought out people to tie up Zhang Mama and prop her against the pillar. She said in a low voice, “No offense.”

After she finished speaking, she took up a leather whip that was moderately stiff and lashed it at Zhang Mama with a crisp sound.

She had been in charge of the torture chamber for a number of years, so she was very knowledgeable about whips. Although this lashing produced a clear sound, it was not at all painful for the person being hit.

“Servant Gan, have you not eaten yet?” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrows slightly, then said coldly, “If you have not eaten now, then you will not need to eat in the future.”

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

Servant Gan was extremely frightened by Ye Jiuge, so she did not dare slack and became even harsher towards Zhang Mama.

Zhang Mama’s spiritual channels had already been sealed by Ye Jiuge. Without the protection of her spiritual force, she was no different from a common human. As the lashes hit her skin, she let out blood-curdling screams. After one hundred lashes, her entire body was soaked in blood, and

she was left with only a single breath.

“Speak! Who really commanded you to steal my Purple Lightning Wood?” Ye Jiuge looked at the bloody Zhang Mama, expressionless. Her small number of wounds was nothing compared to the suffering that Qing Mama had experienced in the past.

Zhang Mama scowled at Ye Jiuge with bitter resentment. She moved her mouth but could not utter a single word.

Ye Jiuge moved forward unhurriedly and bent down slightly. She pretended to move her ears towards Zhang Mama’s mouth to hear her speak. Afterwards, she said in shock, “What did you say? It was the Second Eldest Miss who asked you to steal the Purple Lightning Wood to gift to the Crown Prince as a token of affection?”

Zhang Mama’s eyes widened. She wanted to defend herself, but she could not speak.

“Since you have acted on someone else’s behalf, I shall spare your life!” Ye Jiuge reacted with a benevolent expression and helped undo the ropes binding Zhang Mama’s body herself.

Shaken with anger, Zhang Mama could not endure it any longer and fainted.

Ye Jiuge asked Servant Gan to send Zhang Mama back to the Madame’s residence, then walked towards the Zhilin Residence, where she lived.

Qing Mama had already ordered the carpenters to clear away the broken front door and install a new one.

A brand-new mahogany door glowed faintly in the sunlight. Truly, it was very different from the decrepit wooden door before it.

“As expected, being soft-hearted allowed people to take advantage of us. Eldest Miss, your two rounds of lashings can be considered as part of building a ruthless reputation for our residence.” Qing Mama sighed wistfully.

In the past, the carpentry servants would have delayed in resolving matters at the Zhilin Residence, even shirking their responsibilities. Not only that, they would have sneered about how fussy the residents were.

Now, as soon as the carpentry manager heard that the Zhilin Residence needed to repair their door, he not only personally summoned his team to repair it, he also used the best door in the storage room.

The gardening servants also came forward, eager to spruce up the long-abandoned courtyard. They removed all the wilted flowers and planted fresh blossoms from the current season.

The house's old furniture was also replaced. The entire residence had never been so clean and tidy before.

"Eldest Miss is the best." Zhen Zhu grinned stupidly.

She had been right to secretly run back here and deliver the message. Eldest Miss had already raised her rank to a first-rank personal maid. To Zhen Zhu, it was truly a case of choosing the right person to depend on and benefitting from raising her personal worth. In contrast, the arrogant Hong Liu would be tied up and sold.

"Eldest Miss, you have returned. Are you tired? There is white fungus lotus seed soup boiling in the kitchen. I will fetch a bowl of it for you." Qing Mama welcomed Ye Jiuge when she returned.

Although it was for the best that, currently, the Eldest Miss was exuding an imposing air, her inclination towards deliberate cruelty and violence was too strong. She should eat some white fungus to subdue it.

"Qing Mama, there is no rush." Ye Jiuge pulled Qing Mama along and scrutinized her from top to bottom. She asked with concern, "How do you feel now?"

"I have never felt as excellent as this before." Qing Mama gave her a confident smile.

Right now, she felt like her entire body was full of energy. As long as she cultivated properly, she would regain her previous progress.

"That is great." Ye Jiuge's lips curved slightly into a faint smile. She was truly happy for Qing Mama.

"It is too sunny outside. Eldest Miss, come inside first to cool yourself down!" Qing Mama quickly ushered Ye Jiuge into the house.

Zhen Zhu hurriedly went to the kitchen to bring out the white fungus lotus seed soup. She served Ye Jiuge until she finished it.

"Eldest Miss, you must be tired after such a long, busy day. Rest well." Qing Mama helped Ye Jiuge set up her bed and left with Zhen Zhu.

Ye Jiuge felt a bit tired. She decided to rest for a while when an unpleasant feeling rose in her heart.

She lifted her wrist and looked at it. The imprint was shining with a purple light. Zi Shang appeared in front of her.

“Little Jiuge!”

As soon as Zi Shang appeared, his long snake tail coiled around her in an extremely possessive manner.

“I did not summon you, so why have you materialized in front of me?” Ye Jiuge did not want to see him at all.

“I am longing for you, so I came out to meet you.” Zi Shang’s red, wet lips curved slightly into a bright smile.

“It has not even been long enough to brew a pot of tea since our last meeting.” Not only that, since this demonic snake kept spying on her from inside the imprint in which he was hiding, what was there to long for?

“From the imprint, I observed how you taught the servants a lesson in a fearsome manner, and I was over the moon about how much I loved it. It would upset me if I did not come out and meet you personally.” Zi Shang wrapped his arms around Ye Jiuge’s waist, his purple irises thinned into a line, and the depths of his eyes shone mesmerizingly.

“Ha, ha. If the great Zi Shang loves it so much, would you like me to whip your body a few times so you can experience it? I am very willing to help you with that!” Ye Jiuge narrowed her eyes with a malicious smile.

If she was whipping this shameless demon snake, she would use more of her energy to whip him harder.

“Tsk, ts. You are a Little Jiuge without a conscience. I have treated you so well, but you are still thinking of hitting me. You are truly a brutal person who likes to use violence.” Zi Shang was not angry at her. On the contrary, he laughed happily, akin to the splendid summer flowers.

“That’s right. I am a violent person. Which is why it is for your own good that you stay away from me.” Ye Jiuge placed both of her hands on his bare chest and pushed him away forcefully.

Every time they met, he wanted to press close to her. Was that a snake’s natural instinct?

Ye Jiuge considered whether she needed to buy a wooden bat to carry around at all times.

“A wooden bat is cold to the touch; it would not be as comfortable as hugging you.” Zi Shang smiled widely as he pressed himself closer and tightened his coil around her.

“Say, can you not be so close to me?” Although the coolness and smoothness of Zi Shang’s body was very comfortable, she still felt = unused to it!

Ye Jiuge suddenly smiled. Not only that, she smiled very gently, “If you can hear me because we are so close, what use are your ears? Let me chop them off for you and clean them properly.”

“Do you think that you are capable of cutting them off?” Zi Shang grinned confidently without any fear.

“That’s right. I would not be able to beat you in a fight now, but there are many demon catchers in the Lei Kingdom. If they became aware of your presence, do you think that severing both of your ears would be sufficient for them?” Ye Jiuge gave Zi Shang’s lower body a pointed look. The meaning behind her words was obvious.

“You dared to threaten me? Aren’t you afraid that I will revoke your spiritual power?” Zi Shang raised his eyebrow. Although he seemed relaxed and unconcerned, the imposing air of a conqueror that radiated from him was as oppressive as a fierce tiger.

“If you want to revoke it, then do it. I would rather die than betray myself and yield to your wishes.” Although Ye Jiuge spoke calmly, her resolve was unwavering. Her stance on the situation was as firm as a sharp unsheathed blade.

Zi Shang was moved. No one had spoken to him in this way before. The Lady of Holy Blood was truly the Lady of Holy Blood.

In the blink of an eye, he smiled as mischievously as he had before. “I was merely cracking a joke. Why do you have to be so serious about it?”

“I never joke. If you have nothing to discuss, then please leave without further ado. Thank you!” Ye Jiuge said politely.

“Who said that I have nothing to discuss?” Something had occurred to Zi Shang that made him laugh. “That sister of yours is not easily trifled with!”

Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

“How do you know that it is not easy to deal with her?” Ye Jiuge expressed her doubts.

“Because there is nothing that I can’t do.” Zi Shang winked at Ye Jiuge, his eyes twinkling captivatively.

“So?” He had ended his sentence halfway since he needed to be careful not to get struck by the lightning.

“So, if you beg me, not only will I forgive your rudeness, but I will also tell you what they are planning to do.” Zi Shang’s breath smelled like orchids. His voice was full of temptation.

“Regardless of what you wish to know, I can tell you everything.”

“Ha, ha. I just want to know when you are planning to f*ck off.” Ye Jiuge rolled her eyes.

Actually, there were many matters about which she wished to learn. For example, the reason she had traversed into this world. Whether her grandfather was still alive, and, if he was still alive, where was he? Not only that, she wished to know why Zi Shang wanted to help her cultivation, what did he wish to obtain from her...

But she knew that it was useless to beg him for answers. Zi Shang would not tell her these things.

As for what Ye Shanshan was plotting, did he think that she was so ignorant that she did not know how to investigate such a simple matter by herself?

Ye Jiuge wore clothes meant for spying. With the darkness of night concealing her, she left the Zhilin Residence.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Ye Residence at Shuimo Garden, they saw Zhang Mama being carried back at that very moment, and chaos erupted.

“Mother, Ye Jiuge has already walked all over us. Don’t tell me that we still need to continue to tolerate her?” said Ye Shanshan furiously.

She had wanted to deal with Ye Jiuge earlier, when she was being humiliated at the entrance. However, her mother had advised her firmly that her father now thought of Ye Jiuge as a treasured person, so she had to tolerate her.

But now, Ye Jiuge's insolence was grating on her nerves. If they did not retaliate soon, the servants would think that they were afraid of Ye Jiuge. If things continued in this way, would there still be a place for the mother and daughter pair?

Su Yufeng put down the teacup in her hands in a dignified and elegant manner. She eyed her personal maid, Zhi Hua, who was beside her. Immediately, Zhi Hua led everyone from the room.

"How many times have I told you that you are a future Crown Princess Consort, so you must be prim and proper? Why are you still so quick-tempered?"

Su Yufeng looked at Ye Shanshan with displeasure because Ye Shanshan could not behave according to her expectations. She was irritated that she could not see any improvement in her sinister-looking face. How could she not be angry that her treasured daughter had been humiliated? But, this time, it was the Old Master who had whipped her. It was not like she could seek him out and avenge her daughter.

Moreover, thanks to the ruckus, the fact that her daughter had pushed Ye Jiuge down into the Wanzhang Depths was now public knowledge. At present, she did not even have enough time to help her daughter keep a low profile until the fuss died down, so where would she find the time and energy to deal with Ye Jiuge?

"After the Crown Prince was humiliated by Ye Jiuge, he redirected his anger to me. He has not sent me letters for a few days, so what kind of Crown Princess Consort am I supposed to be?" Ye Shanshan's eyes reddened, and her tears nearly fell.

During these last few days, she had commanded someone to send a message to the Crown Prince asking him to meet, but the Crown Prince kept declining by saying that he was very busy. He had completely lost his previous passion. Anxiety overwhelmed her.

"What happened? The Crown Prince was fine before, so why would he vent his anger at you now?"

As soon as Su Yufeng heard this news, she was not able to sit calmly. She had racked her brain in the hope of her daughter being crowned as the esteemed Crown Princess Consort, so she would not allow the Crown Prince to escape her grasp.

"This was all caused by Ye Jiuge, that stupid b*tch. Mother, please help me kill her and take back the Purple Lightning Wood. Then, the Crown Prince will return to my side," Ye Shanshan begged, pulling on Su Yufeng's sleeve. She knew that the Crown Prince wanted the Purple Lightning Wood. As long as she delivered it into his hands, he would definitely be impressed.

Su Yufeng's expression changed again and again. Truth be told, since Ye Jiuge had humiliated her daughter and beat her trusted aide, she was itching to dismember Ye Jiuge into a thousand pieces. However, relying on Yun Tianwei's excellent reputation, Ye Jiuge was acting so high and mighty that even Ye Yuxuan needed to ingratiate himself with her. If Su Yufeng dealt with her openly again, in the end, she and her daughter would be at a disadvantage.

"Mother, surely, you have a plan. Please, help your daughter!" Ye Shanshan trusted her mother completely.

Ye Jiuge's damaged nerves and disfigured face had both been secretly caused by her mother. After all these years, no one had noticed. As long as her mother was willing to help her, Ye Jiuge would certainly die.

"Aye, I really owe you!" Su Yufeng eyed her daughter. Finally, she decided to get involved in the situation and help her deal with Ye Jiuge.

"I know that you love me the most. So, what do you plan to do?" Ye Shanshan's eyes brightened, and she forgot to continue crying.

"Firstly, you shouldn't ask about it. After we meet with your father, you will know." Su Yufeng's eyes were full of slyness. The mother and daughter pair would not be able to deal with Ye Jiuge by themselves. They needed their trump card, Ye Yuxuan, to succeed.

Ye Shanshan pulled her shoulders back and stammered, "Didn't you say that I should stay away from Father at this time?"

Father was extremely furious that she had pushed Ye Jiuge down into the Wanzhang Depths, so she was avoiding him.

"Foolish girl, you do not need to be scared of him in my presence. Remember, when you see your father, do not mention Ye Jiuge. Just bringing up the Crown Prince will be sufficient." After Su Yufeng instructed her with these few words, she brought her daughter to the study at the main residence.

As soon as Ye Yuxuan heard that Su Yufeng had arrived with her daughter, he put down the medical book in his hands and said, "Let them come in!"

"Your daughter has come to meet you, Father!" Ye Shanshan curtsied obediently, her voice as sweet as honey.

At first, Ye Yuxuan was still angry with her, but when he saw how pretty and well-mannered his daughter was, he couldn't help but relent. He asked her gently, "Why are you and your mother

visiting me so late at night?”

“The Crown Prince recently wrote me a letter. I do not know what to do, so I have come to ask for your advice.” Ye Shanshan pretended to be deeply troubled and spoke in accordance with what her mother had told her.

“What did the Crown Prince say in his letter?” Ye Yuxuan’s heart jumped. All this while, the Crown Prince had made it obvious that he was dissatisfied with him, so he felt uneasy.

“Father, the Crown Prince has asked me to think of a way to obtain the Purple Lightning Wood!” Ye Shanshan said cautiously.

“Purple Lightning Wood?” Ye Yuxuan suddenly thought of the spectacle that had taken place in the inner courtyard earlier that day. Immediately, he furrowed his eyebrows and said with displeasure, “Since you put it that way, I have to ask: were you the one who asked Zhang Mama to steal the Purple Lightning Wood?”

“I didn’t.” Ye Shanshan was astonished and shook her head quickly. She had never ordered Zhang Mama to steal the Purple Lightning Wood from Ye Jiuge.

However, Ye Yuxuan did not believe her. He scolded her angrily, “How could you do such an idiotic thing? Did the dog eat your brain?”

This daughter seemed smart, most of the time. However, she had always lacked common sense during crucial moments, so much so that she had even harmed her own sister. Truly, she was a stupid girl. The most idiotic thing of all was how she had allowed others to discover what she had done. She was really as dumb as a pig.

“Father, really, I did not do it.” Ye Shanshan was so anxious that she almost cried. Quickly, she turned to her mother for help.

Su Yufeng came forward and said softly, “Old Master, our child Shanshan was unwise in her actions. However, what she has done she did for the Ye Clan. Jiuge insulted the Crown Prince in public. Because of this, the Crown Prince is now furious at the whole Ye Clan. If it were not for Shanshan trying to mediate between the two sides, I’m afraid that the relationship between the Crown Prince and the Ye Clan would worsen. Our daughter is so thoughtful. However, you still want to blame her. You are really too harsh.”

Translator: Nyoibo Studio Editor: Nyoibo Studio

As Su Yufeng spoke, her tears flowed like pearls from a broken necklace.

Although she was over thirty, she had taken good care of her skin. With her tears, she pulled at Ye Yuxuan's heartstrings with the unique charm of a young married woman. It pained him to see her unhappy. He immediately consoled her, "We can just talk properly if there is something you want to say. Why are you crying?"

"If you love me and my daughter dearly, then I do not need to cry." Su Yufeng was choked with emotions that were laced with a small amount of hurt.

Immediately, Ye Yuxuan softened, patted Su Yufeng's small hand, and said, "I know that you and our daughter have suffered. But you are also fully aware that there is gossip everywhere, so it is inappropriate to punish that terrible girl, Ye Jiuge, right now."

"My daughter and I are not afraid that she is deliberately making things hard for us. It is just that this child, Ye Jiuge, has undergone such a sudden, huge personality change that she even dared to offend the Crown Prince. I am afraid that she will stir up greater troubles in the future and eventually implicate the Ye Clan." Su Yufeng wiped her tears away and spoke with deep worry.

Ye Yuxuan also wanted to put that terrible, rebellious, and unfilial daughter of his, Ye Jiuge, in her place. Then, he would snatch away the treasures in her hands. But right now, everyone was so interested in the Ye Clan that he did not dare act!

"Old Master, I have some words to say. However, I do not know if I should say them." Su Yufeng hesitated.

"What are the thoughts that you won't express?" Ye Yuxuan's interest was piqued. He lowered his voice and asked, "Do you have a way to deal with Jiuge?"

He had always known that his wife was not someone easily trifled with. Otherwise, he would not have married her.

"I did have a way, truly. However, I am afraid that after I tell you, you will reproach me for it." Su Yufeng knitted her eyebrows, as if she were very troubled.

"We are husband and wife, so regardless of what you say, I will not blame you." Ye Yuxuan encouraged her.

"Old Master, just listen with a grain of salt and determine for yourself if it is suitable or not ..." Su Yufeng drew closer to Ye Yuxuan's ear and murmured.

Ye Yuxuan's eyebrows slowly creased. Then, he expressed his discontent, "Do we really need to use them as bait?"

"They are the only people who have a relationship with the Eldest Miss. If you feel that what I have suggested is wrong, then just pretend that I never uttered those words!" Su Yufeng said with fear and trepidation. She bowed her body in an attempt to kneel down and ask for forgiveness.

Ye Yuxuan pulled her up immediately. "What are you doing?"

"Old Master!" Su Yufeng lifted her head in slight distress. There was a hint of unease on her delicate and pretty face.

Ye Yuxuan was silent for a moment. In the end, he nodded as he agreed, "Alright, do it your way."

Then, he took a small jade bottle, five centimeters long, out from a secret compartment in the study and passed it to Su Yufeng.

"Thank you, Old Master, for trusting me. Don't worry, Old Master. I will definitely help you accomplish it." Su Yufeng gave him a gentle and considerate smile and accepted the jade bottle from him before leaving with Ye Shanshan.

At her mother's side, Ye Shanshan remained silent throughout the exchange. After they left the main residence, she took her mother's hand and asked softly, "Mother, did you speak the truth earlier? Did father really entrust you with False Dream?"

"Foolish girl, didn't you see it with your own eyes just now?" Su Yufeng swayed the jade bottle in front of Ye Shanshan then stowed it away.

"Did father really agree to it?" Ye Shanshan still wore an expression of complete disbelief.

It was a terrifying idea. If it had been her, she would not have even dared to speak of it. But, not only was her mother bold enough to tell her father their scheme, she had even made him participate in it.

"I am doing this for his sake, so why would he not agree?" Su Yufeng smiled coldly.

They would only be in the same boat if Ye Yuxuan was involved. That way, when she acted, she would not have any reason to fear consequences in the future.

“Mother, your method of killing two birds with one stone is too impressive!” Ye Shanshan looked at her mother with admiration. She had learned for the first time that a person could be so bold and confident about harming someone, so long as they knew that the scales of justice were tipped in their favor.

“Foolish girl, you still have more to learn.” Su Yufeng smiled and patted her daughter’s head.

She would never wish for her daughter to hear about such underhanded methods unless it helped her wise up.

“Mother, I will learn properly from you.” Ye Shanshan tugged at her mother’s hand excitedly. Only now did she realize that schemes she had used in the past had been too simple.

“Okay.” Su Yufeng smiled and patted her daughter’s hand. Her gaze turned to the Zhilin Residence, where Ye Jiuge resided. She smiled coldly. “Now, my daughter, I want to teach you the first move: how to kill someone without leaving a trace!”

Su Yufeng and her daughter thought that their plan was flawless, but they had no idea that Ye Jiuge was observing their every move.

“Your father is truly a pr*ck.” Zi Shang clicked his tongue in fascination. Humankind’s nature was truly wonderful. Every time he had the opportunity to witness it in action, it never ceased to amaze him.

Ye Jiuge’s eyes darkened.

She knew that Ye Yuxuan had treated her badly, but she had never thought that he would mistreat her to this extent. Because he wanted to deal with her, he went as far as agreeing to Su Yufeng’s malicious scheme.

“That reminds me, how does that bottle of False Dream relate to you?” Zi Shang asked.

Ye Jiuge was quiet for a while. Then, she replied calmly, “It was an elixir that was personally crafted by my mother, Yun Qiaoqiao, for Ye Yuxuan.”

During that year, a tumor was growing on Ye Yuxuan’s back which he needed to remove with a knife. Yun Qiaoqiao could not bear to see her husband suffer, so she had created False Dream. After a person consumed it, they immediately fell into a deep sleep. Even if their body was being cut with a knife, they would not feel a thing. After seven days without an antidote, the person

passed away in their sleep.

Yun Qiaoqiao worried that someone might use False Dream to perform evil deeds against the Ye Clan, so Ye Yuxuan was the only one who had this elixir. Ye Jiuge did not have it. However, as Yun Qiaoqiao's biological daughter, if she claimed to not have it, she was afraid that no one would believe her. This was why Su Yufeng had requested this specific elixir from Ye Yuxuan.

"So, what are you planning to do about it?" Zi Shang raised his eyebrow. When Su Yufeng and Ye Yuxuan used the elixir crafted by Ye Yuxuan's previous wife to frame her daughter, they had shown just how cruel they really were.

"I will certainly give them a taste of their own medicine." Ye Jiuge's beautiful red lips curved into a sneer.

Truth be told, Su Yufeng's scheme was actually perfect. She did not plan to use False Dream directly against Ye Jiuge's body; she wanted to exploit the Fifth Concubine and her daughter to deal with Ye Jiuge indirectly.

The Fifth Concubine, Gu Jingyi, was originally a second-rank maid in the residence. One night, when Ye Yuxuan was drunk, he raped her. Her body had not disappointed, and she became pregnant.

It was a happy occasion in the residence when it was discovered that another child was to be born. Based on the pointed curve of her stomach, everyone said that she had conceived a boy. In a moment of happiness, Ye Yuxuan had made an exception and promoted her to Fifth Concubine.

Unexpectedly, she gave birth to a frail and sickly girl named Ye Ruyi.

As high as she had climbed up the ranks in the past, the harder she later fell. All of a sudden, Gu Jingyi lost Ye Yuxuan's affection and was sent away to an isolated residence. She was in a worse situation than Ye Shanshan's maid, who had gained her favor.

When she was a maid, Ye Jiuge's mother had treated her kindly, so she had secretly taken care of Ye Jiuge. Theirs was a decent relationship. Ye Jiuge also loved the six-year-old, Little Ruyi, dearly.

Su Yufeng wanted to use Little Ruyi to blackmail the Fifth Concubine into helping her when she dealt with Ye Jiuge. The Fifth Concubine loved her daughter fervently. If her part in the scheme was for the sake of protecting her daughter, she would definitely agree.

Su Yufeng had even thought of why Ye Jiuge would want to harm Ye Ruyi. She would say that it was because Ye Ruyi had accidentally seen Ye Jiuge having an affair with another man, and so,

wanted to poison her to death. When the time came, with the Fifth Concubine as a witness and the special poison, False Dream, as evidence, Ye Jiuge would not be able to prove her innocence. Then, Ye Yuxuan would step in and pressure her. He would make her hand over the Purple Lightning Wood and the other treasures from WanZhang Depths to clear her name.

These plans were intertwined. If Ye Jiuge had not trailed after Su Yufeng and her daughter in the shadows, she feared that she would have certainly fallen into their trap.

But now that she knew of these schemes, she was definitely going to help Su Yufeng make them more interesting.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

When Ye Jiuge turned up at the Fifth Concubine's residence, she heard faint sounds of sad, pained cries. "Wu, wu, wu. I blame myself for being incapable of protecting you."

She peeked in through the gap in the window and saw the Fifth Concubine crouching over a shabby bed and trying to restrain her agonized tears.

Little Ruyi's face was pallid, and both of her eyes were tightly shut. Her skinny form was covered by a threadbare blanket with lotus motifs. Worry and gloom clouded the atmosphere throughout the residence; it was as if the sky had fallen.

Ye Jiuge was about to push the door open and enter when she heard Zi Shang say, "Eh?"

"What is going on?" Ye Jiuge questioned him, feeling uncertain.

"This sister of yours is quite interesting..." Zi Shang trailed off in the middle of the sentence.

It was obvious that he wanted Ye Jiuge to beg him for the rest. But it had been some time since Ye Jiuge had already gotten to know him well. If it was a serious matter, she did not need to speak

at all because he notified her. But if it was an ordinary matter, Zi Shang did not need to inform her about it because she would be able to investigate it herself.

“What is this attitude you are giving me?” Zi Shang was dissatisfied that Ye Jiuge was ignoring him.

Ye Jiuge disregarded him completely, pushed the door open, and entered the house.

“Who?” When the Fifth Concubine heard some movement, she turned around quickly. As soon as she saw Ye Jiuge, her eyes widened in shock. She was not even aware that her handkerchief fell from her hand to the ground.

“Fifth Concubine, I heard that Fourth Sister is feeling unwell. I was passing by, coincidentally, so I have come to visit her.” Ye Jiuge came over and sat by the bedside. As she glanced at the dizzy Ye Ruyi, she inquired, “How is Fourth Sister’s condition now? Have you invited the physician over to examine her?”

“I did. He said that she has contracted a common cold and that she will recover after taking some medicine.” The Fifth Concubine’s voice was sore. Panic was in her eyes as she fidgeted.

“Fifth Concubine, why are you so anxious?” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrow and pretended to ask curiously.

“I-I am worried about Fourth Miss’s illness. I am losing my mind.” The Fifth Concubine closed her eyes. She did not dare meet Ye Jiuge’s gaze.

“It’s not a huge problem. My medical skills have recently improved tremendously, so I can help diagnose Fourth Sister’s illness.” After Ye Jiuge spoke, she reached out to check Ye Ruyi’s pulse.

Ye Ruyi’s wrist was very slender, and her pulse was extremely weak. Not only that, her main qi was insufficient: the symptom of a weak body. This diagnosis was no different than what the previous physicians had found.

However, there was definitely a hidden meaning behind the words Zi Shang had uttered when Ye Jiuge had entered their residence. She guessed that Little Ruyi’s ailment could not be determined merely by checking her pulse.

Ye Jiuge turned her head and instructed, “Fifth Concubine, Fourth Sister must be uncomfortable with all that sweat on her body. You should boil some hot water and clean her.”

“Oh, okay!” Fifth Concubine nodded quickly, then left.

Ye Jiuge retrieved the Purple Lightning Wood from her pocket. She transferred her spiritual energy to it, and it transformed into the Lightning Fire Needle. She thrust the needle between Ye Ruyi's brows with precision.

The dull-colored Lightning Fire Needle briefly glowed with a dazzling red and green light.

Ye Jiuge's pupils dilated. She had never thought that this inconspicuous little sister of hers could be blessed with such luck. Su Yufeng must not know about Little Ruyi's favorable attribute. Otherwise, she would not have allowed her to reach this age.

Tsk, tsk. Ye Jiuge smiled knowingly. At first, she had only wanted to extract False Dream from Fourth Sister and remove the Fifth Concubine and her daughter from this situation. However, she had unexpectedly discovered this shocking information. She could use it to smack Su Yufeng on her face until it was swollen. However, whether she revealed Little Ruyi's favorable attribute depended on whether the Fifth Concubine was worthy of her trust.

At this time, the Fifth Concubine was also extremely conflicted. Although she did not want to betray Ye Jiuge, she was afraid that the Madame would kill her and her daughter. Whenever she felt sad and afraid, she could not stop herself from crying.

Nevertheless, she knew that she would not be able to escape death, even if she helped the Madame frame Ye Jiuge. If that was the case, she was willing to take her chances.

She had heard that the Eldest Miss had undergone so tremendous a change in personality after returning from the Wanzhang Depths that not even Su Yufeng dared to cause her trouble. Perhaps, the Eldest Miss could save her and her daughter.

After the Fifth Concubine made her decision, she ran into the house without extinguishing the fire. With a sound, she plopped herself into a kneeling posture in front of Ye Jiuge and sobbed, "Eldest Miss, I beg you, save Fourth Miss, please!"

She came clean about how Su Yufeng had ordered someone to force her daughter to ingest poison as well as threatened her to frame Ye Jiuge.

"Since you have told me about the scheme, aren't you afraid that the Madame will harm you?" Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrow. She wanted to test the Fifth Concubine's resolution.

"It is impossible to ask someone as wicked as her to act against her own interests. Since I will die eventually, it is better to take a leap of faith."

A determined expression flashed across the Fifth Concubine's delicate face. As a mother, she would not waver from her decision. For the sake of her daughter, even the most docile rabbit could

become a fierce beast.

Ye Jiuge smiled with satisfaction. She said, "Fifth Concubine, please do not worry. Fourth Sister has merely ingested the Mind-calming Powder."

"How is that possible?" The Fifth Concubine would not believe that Su Yufeng would be so benevolent as to deceive her by pretending that the Mind-calming Powder was poison.

Ye Jiuge said, "Do you not trust what I have told you?"

The Fifth Concubine studied Ye Jiuge's calm expression. She considered how she had suddenly appeared so late at night understanding everything.

Pang, pang, pang. The Fifth Concubine pounded her head against the floor and said repeatedly, "You have my utmost gratitude, Eldest Miss. You have my utmost gratitude, Eldest Miss."

"Fifth Concubine, you need not be so polite with me." Ye Jiuge reached out and helped her up. "You will experience good fortune in the future."

"I do not hope for any good fortune. As long as the Fourth Miss can live a smooth and steady life until her old age, I will be content." The Fifth Concubine wiped her tears away. It was her fault for being so useless that she had given birth to a child with such a weak body.

"It is not up to you to refuse this good fortune. You must not be aware that, actually, the Fourth Sister..." Ye Jiuge lowered her voice and informed the Fifth Concubine about the favorable attribute she had discovered.

The Fifth Concubine's eyes widened abruptly. She stared at Ye Jiuge in disbelief, and her voice trembled as she spoke, "Is this true? You-Are you lying to me?"

"Why would I fabricate such a thing?" Ye Jiuge smiled.

"Wu, wu, wu. I should have known that God would not forsake us. He would not allow other people to walk over my daughter and me for the rest of our lives." The Fifth Concubine did not know whether to laugh or cry; it was as if her entire person had descended into madness.

Ye Jiuge understood her rollercoaster feelings of deep despair soaring immediately into extreme elation. She waited quietly to the side while the Fifth Concubine vented all her emotions.

After the Fifth Concubine calmed down, she realized that she had forgotten her manners. She said sheepishly, "Please excuse my reaction, Eldest Miss."

“Don’t worry about it!” Ye Jiuge waved it away. She said, “However, I am afraid that Su Yufeng will not allow Fourth Sister to get away with such a favorable attribute. Fifth Concubine, if you want to ensure Fourth Sister’s safety, you must follow my instructions.”

“Eldest Miss, please instruct me without hesitation. Even if what you ask me to do is extremely challenging, I am not afraid,” said the Fifth Concubine with emotion.

“You should do this tomorrow...” Ye Jiuge lowered her voice and briefed the Fifth Concubine about her plans. In the end, she said, “As long as you do what I told you, I can guarantee that, in the Ye Residence, no one will dare bully you or your daughter.”

“Do not worry, Eldest Miss. I will certainly follow your orders.” Vindictiveness flitted across the Fifth Concubine’s eyes.

In the past, she’d had no way to stand up to Su Yufeng. All she could do to save her skin was put up with the oppression. But, when she became capable, she would certainly wreak vengeance on Su Yufeng as retaliation for all the pain and suffering that her daughter had endured.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

Ye Jiuge was extremely satisfied with Fifth Concubine’s vicious attitude. She would not be able to face Ye Yuxuan and Su Yufeng alone. She needed to recruit more people to assist her. Recruiting the Fifth Concubine and Fourth Sister was only the beginning. Soon, Su Yufeng and Ye Shanshan would be weeping.

Meanwhile, at the Shuimo Garden...

Su Yufeng was holding a porcelain cup and sipping her tea leisurely.

Ye Shanshan sat beside her and asked Zhi Hua impatiently, “Have you made the arrangements?”

“To answer your question: Everything is in order. Tomorrow morning, someone will personally ensure that the Fifth Concubine will invite Eldest Miss to her residence,” Zhi Hua replied

respectfully.

“Great!” Ye Shanshan nodded with relish. Then, she smiled and said to Su Yufeng, “I was always curious why you spared the Fifth Concubine and the sickly Fourth Sister and let them be. Now, I see that it was for the sake of dealing with Ye Jiuge.”

“That’s right. Being betrayed by someone you trust is truly the most painful feeling.” Su Yufeng smiled lightly.

Actually, the pawn she had wanted to use most was Qing Mama. It was a pity that Qing Mama’s personality was so unyielding. Nor did she have any sons or daughters, so it was not easy to find information to use against her. Therefore, Su Yufeng had to settle for the second-best alternative: The Fifth Concubine.

“Mother, you really are incredible!” Ye Shanshan looked at her mother with reverence. She would never reach a level where she would be capable of thinking ahead like this.

“Is this considered impressive?” Su Yufeng smiled, then asked Zhi Hua, “Have you found the person I asked for?”

“To answer your question, yes. He is a woodcutter living near the Wanzhang Depths. Currently, he is lodging at the Tongfu Inn,” Zhi Hua replied.

“You’ve done well. You may go.” Su Yufeng put down her teacup.

Zhi Hua bowed and retreated.

“Mother, why do you need a woodcutter?” Ye Shanshan asked in astonishment.

“Foolish girl! I want him to be Ye Jiuge’s adulterous partner, of course!” Without a man, how could she establish that Ye Jiuge had committed the crime of plotting against Ye Ruyi’s life to hide her affair?

“Can we trust this woodcutter? What will we do if he reneges at the last minute?” Ye Shanshan was slightly concerned. With falsified evidence, there was always a discrepancy.

“Foolish girl, dead men tell no tales,” said Su Yufeng meaningfully.

Ye Shanshan immediately understood her. She smiled and said, “Mother, you are right. It seems that, this time, Ye Jiuge will definitely not be able to turn the tables.”

Scheming to murder her own sister and poisoning her were crimes punishable by death. With the

addition of adultery, Ye Shanshan could already foresee an outcome in which Ye Jiuge would be treated with utter disdain.

“You should pick up more of these tactics from me. Don’t fixate on insignificant matters all day. Remember, you are the future Crown Princess Consort, and, one day, you will be the empress!” Su Yufeng patted her daughter’s hand and said, “It is late now, you should return to your residence and rest.”

“I don’t want to. I want to sleep here tonight. When morning comes, let’s go together to see that b*tch, Ye Jiuge, suffer,” Ye Shanshan said cutely, clinging to Su Yufeng.

“I really can’t refuse you.” Su Yufeng tapped her daughter’s forehead and agreed.

When morning arrived, Ye Shanshan and Su Yufeng waited in the residence for the show to begin. However, all they saw was Ye Yuxuan storming in with a livid expression.

“Old Master, who has made you so furious this early in the morning?” Su Yufeng asked, feeling odd.

She had not received any news from Zhi Hua, and it was too early for the Fifth Concubine to have already ratted out Ye Jiuge.

“You have the nerve to ask?” Ye Yuxuan glared at Su Yufeng in a fierce manner. He scolded, “I know that you dislike the Seventh Concubine, but you cannot mistreat her like this.”

“Old Master, I do not understand what you mean. When did I treat the Seventh Concubine badly?” Su Yufeng could not make sense of the situation.

“If you did not want to make her suffer, then why was she inflicted with False Dream?” Ye Yuxuan looked at Su Yufeng as if he wanted to swallow her alive.

Su Yufeng denied it immediately, “I didn’t do it.”

Although she hated that fox, Seventh Concubine, she would definitely not resort to such an underhanded tactic to deal with her.

“I already went to look into the matter at the Seventh Concubine’s residence. The evidence is solid and indisputable. You still dare to argue with me?” Ye Yuxuan did not believe Su Yufeng’s claim in the slightest.

There was only one bottle of False Dream in the entire Ye Residence, and it was the one he had personally handed to Su Yufeng last night.

“Old master, we have been husband and wife for a few decades now, so don’t tell me that you still don’t understand me?” Su Yufeng’s eyes reddened as she sobbed, “Even if I wanted to harm the Seventh Concubine, I would not use False Dream. Wouldn’t that incriminate me?”

Ye Yuxuan furrowed his brows. He had to admit that Su Yufeng was right: She was not that stupid. But, if not her, then who?

Su Yufeng shared his doubt. She had only obtained False Dream last night, and the Seventh Concubine was poisoned this morning. Someone wanted to frame her.

Who possessed such a remarkable ability to foresee the future and would use it to land her in hot water?

Despite much thought, Su Yufeng was perplexed. Just then, Zhi Hua walked in hurriedly and reported, “Old Master, Madame, Eldest Miss has arrived with the Fifth Concubine. They were causing a fuss outside. They said that they needed the Old Master to redress an injustice.”

Su Yufeng sobered up at once. “Ask them to wait in the outer hall.”

The fact that the Seventh Concubine had been inflicted with False Dream was now an insignificant matter. Right now, the most important thing was to deal with Ye Jiuge and obtain the Purple Lightning Wood as well as the other treasures in her possession.

Zhi Hua did not reply immediately. Instead, she looked at Su Yufeng with slight apprehension. She really wanted to inform Madame that there was something fishy going on with the Eldest Miss and Fifth Concubine.

However, the Old Master was standing in front of Madame, so she did not dare to speak. She could only signal secretly to the Second Miss at her side with a few meaningful glances.

Unfortunately, Ye Shanshan was unable to grasp Zhi Hua’s intentions. Instead, she chided her with displeasure, “Why are you still here idling? Why haven’t you taken us there yet?”

“Okay.” Zhi Hua had no choice but to turn around and walk out.

“Old Master, we will discuss the Seventh Concubine later. For now, let us first see to the Fifth Concubine!” Su Yufeng spoke gently.

“Hmph!” Ye Yuxuan’s anger did not subside. He harrumphed coldly and walked out. Su Yufeng and Ye Shanshan quickly tailed along.

The Fifth Concubine was standing in the Main Hall. She was wearing a well-worn lotus-colored dress. Her eyes were as swollen as peaches. She looked extremely thin and pale.

Ye Jiuge wore a faded green dress. Her face was expressionless as she looked at Ye Yuxuan, Su Yufeng, and Ye Shanshan as they entered. When she thought about how this trio had conspired to harm her, she felt beyond disgusted. However, the main character of today's show was the Fifth Concubine. For now, that's all she could tolerate.

"Fifth Concubine, since you have brought Ye Jiuge here, do you have any matters to discuss with me?" Ye Yuxuan lifted his robe as he sat on his seat, prepared to hear the Fifth Concubine's grievance about how Ye Jiuge was plotting her sister's death.

Unexpectedly, the Fifth Concubine did not even react to his question. Instead, she flew at Su Yufeng like a deranged tiger and screamed her lungs out. "Su Yufeng, since you dared to hurt my daughter, I am going to fight you with all my life."

Su Yufeng never expected the Fifth Concubine to have the courage to attack her. Since she was caught off guard, the Fifth Concubine's long nails violently clawed her face. Immediately, a few streaks of blood oozed from her delicate cheeks.

Su Yufeng had been Madame Ye for many years, so no one had ever dared lay a finger on her before. It was incredulous that the one who had assaulted her was the Fifth Concubine, whom she looked down on most.

In her fury, Su Yufeng lost her mind. She disregarded Ye Yuxuan's presence at her side and raised her hand to smack the Fifth Concubine on the chest.

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The Fifth Concubine spewed blood excessively as a result of the impact from Su Yufeng's blow. Her body flew like a kite with cut strings.

Ye Jiuge leapt to catch the Fifth Concubine. When she landed, she bellowed at Su Yufeng angrily,

“Su Yufeng, you really are cold-blooded. Not only did you not stop at harming Fourth Sister, you also did not spare the Fifth Concubine. Are you even human?”

Before Su Yufeng could reply, Ye Shanshan was unable to restrain herself. She stepped forward to curse at Ye Jiuge, “Ye Jiuge, what nonsense are you saying? When did my mother harm Fourth Sister? It is clear that you were committing adultery with an uncultured man out there in the wilderness, and Fourth Sister accidentally stumbled into the midst of it, so you used False Dream to harm her.”

Pa! Ye Jiuge slapped her immediately. She said coldly, “You are a nobody without any manners. Your elder sister is speaking. Since when do you have the right to interrupt me?”

Ye Shanshan covered her face with her hands and glared at Ye Jiuge. Her voice trembled as she said, “You, you dare to hit me?”

Pa! Ye Jiuge slapped her again. “How did your mother raise you? Don’t you know to use honorifics when speaking to your elder sister?”

Ye Shanshan was afraid that she would be slapped again, so she retreated behind Su Yufeng’s back and cried, “Mother!”

“Ye Jiuge, you dare to beat your younger sister in front of your father and me. Do you even respect your elders?” Su Yufeng trembled with anger. She raised her hand, ready to hit her back.

However, Ye Jiuge caught her wrist. She threw her very fiercely to the ground, “Anyone else could claim that I am ill-mannered, anyone except a wicked woman like you. You have no right to say this.”

Su Yufeng dropped to her knees pitifully in front of Ye Yuxuan. Her hair was disheveled as she shouted, “Old Master!”

“Ye Jiuge, what is wrong with you?” Ye Yuxuan’s face was ashen. He was so angry that he was trembling.

“Father, there is nothing wrong with me. Su Yufeng is the one who is out of her mind. You must not be aware that, last night, she and her accomplices rushed into the Fifth Concubine’s residence. It is unthinkable that she would pin Fourth Sister and force poison down her throat.” Ye Jiuge was stony as she spoke.

How could Ye Yuxuan not know about it? He had agreed to the whole plan. However, shameless as he was, he would never admit his involvement to Ye Jiuge. Therefore, he said coldly, “What kind of nonsense are you spouting? Why would she make my fourth daughter ingest poison for no

reason?”

“That’s right. A sickly child like Ye Ruyi cannot live long, even if we left her alone. Who has so much spare time as to force her to ingest poison?” Ye Shanshan helped Su Yufeng up. Her gaze was filled with resentment as she looked at the Fifth Concubine and said, “Not only that, neither the Fifth Concubine nor her daughter’s lowly lives are even worth an elixir, so why would someone want to incur these losses?”

“Second Miss, my life is worthless. However, the Fourth Miss is the Old Master’s flesh and blood. Don’t tell me that, in your eyes, the Old Master is worthless too?” The Fifth Concubine panted as she spoke.

“Fifth Concubine, I truly think that you are possessed. How dare you speak in such a disgraceful manner!”

Su Yufeng glared at the Fifth Concubine, who had switched sides at the last minute. She wished that she could dismember her corpse into a thousand pieces. She turned to Zhi Hua and commanded, “Someone, come and take the Fifth Concubine away, then invite a physician over to treat her properly!”

She emphasized ‘treat’ on purpose. It was obvious that she wanted to take her life.

“Let us see who has the audacity to touch her?!” Ye Jiuge shielded the Fifth Concubine with her body.

Zhi Hua did not dare move. She looked at Su Yufeng in a submissive manner.

Su Yufeng screamed at Ye Yuxuan, “Old Master, are you going to watch Ye Jiuge humiliate my daughter and me and not do anything?!”

“Su Yufeng, don’t blame your crimes on me when you were the one who committed them. It was you and your daughter who were treating other people with contempt!” Ye Jiuge smiled coldly. She turned around and spoke to the ashen-faced Ye Yuxuan, “Father, if you do not look deeply into this, you will definitely regret it for life!”

Ye Yuxuan’s eyebrows creased. He abhorred the kind of attitude that Ye Jiuge was displaying right now.

It reminded him of how smug his father-in-law, Yun Tianwei, had been in the past.

However, he also knew that, when someone was acting this smug, it meant that something was happening that should not be overlooked.

“Father, please, don’t listen to Elder Sister’s nonsense. Mother has always been virtuous and upright. It is impossible that she would harm the Fourth Sister. They are framing her.” Ye Shanshan gritted her teeth as she spoke.

Ye Jiuge did not even look at her. She leveled her burning gaze at Ye Yuxuan. One could not ignore her. If he missed this chance to probe into what was going on with her today, he would regret it his whole life.

Ye Yuxuan really wanted to leave everything behind and go. But after thinking about it properly, in the end, he harrumphed, “Alright, I want to see what kind of tricks you have up your sleeve.”

Ye Jiuge lowered her head. She spoke softly to the Fifth Concubine, “Fifth Concubine, if you have faced any injustice, feel free to tell Father. I believe that Father will definitely help you and Fourth Sister redress it.”

The Fifth Concubine wiped the fresh blood from the sides of her lips and walked unsteadily to Ye Yuxuan. Her voice was quaking as she said, “Old Master, Madame has plotted against the Fourth Miss’s life. It was because she found out about Fourth Miss’s exceptionally favorable attribute.”

“What exceptionally favorable attribute?” Ye Yuxuan’s curiosity was piqued. He could not help but look at Ye Jiuge. Could it be that this wretched girl had given his fourth daughter a beneficial item and Su Yufeng wanted to snatch it away when she found out?

He was immediately displeased at the thought of Su Yufeng misappropriating a valuable treasure behind his back.

“Old Master, please do not listen to her baseless accusations. The Fourth Miss stays in her residence every day without setting a foot outside. How is it possible that she possesses an exceptionally favorable attribute? It was clearly...” Su Yufeng started to feel a little anxious. She felt that matters had escalated beyond her control and were rapidly heading in an unknown direction.

“Shut up.” Ye Yuxuan interrupted Su Yufeng impatiently. Afterwards, he told the Fifth Concubine, “You better be honest and tell me clearly what kind of favorable attribute my fourth daughter possesses. If there is any lie to it...”

He did not need to threaten her further. He believed that the Fifth Concubine understood what could happen to her.

Without a doubt, she knew.

She straightened her back and swept her gaze past Su Yufeng and Ye Shanshan's vindictive faces. After looking at Ye Jiuge's encouraging eyes, she spoke in a serious voice, "Old Master, actually, I wanted to inform you a long time ago that our Fourth Miss's Wood Fire Spiritual Root has awakened. In the future, she will be the Ye Clan's most powerful spiritual alchemist!"

"What did you say?" Ye Yuxuan stood up abruptly. His gaze burned into Fifth Concubine as he spoke, "Did you say that our fourth daughter possesses a Wood Fire Spiritual Root?"

"Old Master, I speak nothing but the truth. A few days ago, the Fourth Miss could not stop coughing. I kneeled in front of Madame for a long time. Finally, Madame agreed to let a physician take a look at her. The physician said that this was the sign that the Fourth Miss's spiritual root has awakened. However, her body is too weak so she can only survive if she has sufficient rest. I reported this to Madame, hoping to request some tonic. I never thought that, rather than sending me tonic, she would give me poison instead..."

As the Fifth Concubine spoke, she cried. Her tears flowed down her face and dripped from her chin, mingling with the fresh blood on her lapel. With that miserable appearance, no one could suspect her of lying.

"Nonsense!" Su Yufeng replied in a shrill voice, as if she was a hen seized by the neck.

She had no idea that Ye Ruyi's Wood Fire Spiritual Root had awakened. If she had known about it earlier, weeds would already be growing over the stupid girl's grave.

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"Old Master, I did not make this up. If you do not believe me, then go ahead and investigate. If I have lied about anything, may lightning strike me five times!" the Fifth Concubine swore while sobbing.

Ye Yuxuan was no longer suspicious of her words. He turned toward Su Yufeng, and his eyes seemed as if they might shoot flames at her. "Malicious woman, you dared to harm my beloved daughter?"

Before, she had been Ye Yuxuan's most worthless daughter. But now that her Wood Fire Spiritual Root had awakened, she had abruptly transformed into his "beloved daughter." Because the Wood Fire Spiritual Root's elements were complementary, Ye Ruyi was now the most suitable candidate to practice elixir creation techniques. Although Ye Shanshan was known as a gifted Spiritual Elixir Alchemist, she possessed the inferior Fire Spiritual Root. Compared with the Wood Fire Spiritual Root, there was a huge difference.

Ye Yuxuan himself had proclaimed that the Ye Clan had the best lineage of elixir alchemists in the Lei Kingdom. However, he had allowed such a gem to gather dust in his residence. Not only that, he had almost caused her death. If this news got out, he would certainly be a laughing stock.

"Old Master, I have been wrongly accused!" Su Yufeng said, gaping at Ye Yuxuan pitifully.

After being his wife for so many years, Su Yufeng understood Ye Yuxuan's personality well. He was not furious because of his profound feelings for the Fifth Concubine and Ye Ruyi, but because she had failed to fulfill her promise to bring Ye Jiuge to her knees. He felt that he had been lied to. Su Yufeng felt slightly anxious. She did not understand how her perfect plan had culminated in this situation.

"Wicked woman, just you wait. I will return later and get even with you." Ye Yuxuan flung up his sleeves in anger then headed off to the Fifth Concubine's residence with hurried steps.

He was in a rush to find out if his beloved daughter truly possessed the Wood Fire Spiritual Root. Su Yufeng and Ye Shanshan did not dare follow him. They could only watch the Fifth Concubine leave, grasping after Ye Jiuge with vengeful eyes.

"Mother, what should we do now?" As Ye Shanshan helped Su Yufeng up, she looked downtrodden. The red palm print on her face had not yet faded.

"It's not a big deal. Your father's anger is just temporary. Once it subsides, everything will be fine." Su Yufeng's expression hardened.

This time, her plan had not gone as expected: She had underestimated the Fifth Concubine's guts. She would not make the same mistake again. The Fifth Concubine, Ye Jiuge, and Ye Ruyi—she would not spare any of these b*tches.

After the Fifth Concubine left the Shuimo Garden with Ye Jiuge supporting her, Ye Jiuge asked softly, "Fifth Concubine, are you all right?"

The Fifth Concubine had only needed to pretend to be as pitiful as possible in front of Ye Yuxuan. Ye Jiuge had never expected the Fifth Concubine to risk her life. Luckily, Su Yufeng had not hit

her with all her might. Otherwise, the Fifth Concubine would have been struck dead on the spot.

“It’s only a small matter. I am glad to receive this blow.” The Fifth Concubine laughed happily. She felt that one mouthful of blood was worth it to see Su Yufeng admonished.

“After this, I will prescribe you a few medicines. For the next few days, you should rest in your bed so that you can avoid illness in the future.” In recent years, the Fifth Concubine’s health had deteriorated. Since she was afflicted by ailments at such a young age and had endured a blow today, Ye Jiuge worried that she would die young.

The Fifth Concubine shook her head and remained silent. She hastened her steps and followed Ye Yuxuan into her dilapidated residence.

Ye Ruyi was still laying semi-conscious on her bed. Qing Mama and Zhen Zhu were keeping watch beside her. When they saw Ye Yuxuan enter, they quickly curtsayed and said, “Greetings to you, Old Master!”

Ye Yuxuan waved them away impatiently. Afterwards, he took out a Spirit Appraisal Stone and personally assessed Ye Ruyi’s spiritual root. When a green and red glow appeared, he immediately clapped his hand on his thigh and said, “Great, great, great!”

Zi Shang grinned. “Tsk, tsk. If your despicable father is this excited merely discovering a Wood Fire Spiritual Root, what about when he finds out that yours is a rare Lightning Fire Spiritual Root that only appears once every ten thousand years? Won’t he be overjoyed?”

Leaving the Wanzhang Depths with Little Jiuge had been an excellent decision. Every single day, Zi Shang was able to watch interesting dramas unfold!

“He will not have the chance to find out.” A hint of contempt flashed across Ye Jiuge’s twinkling eyes. By the time he became aware of its existence, she would already be standing on a pedestal he could never reach.

“Old Master, Fourth Miss has been unconscious ever since Madame forced poison down her throat last night. Can you please check on her?” As the Fifth Concubine spoke, her voice was choked with emotion.

To ensure that their deception would appear completely genuine, Ye Jiuge had fed Ye Ruyi some False Dream that morning.

“It is not a serious matter. Our fourth daughter is merely experiencing the effects of Mind-calming Powder. She will be fine after consuming some medicine that will help her regain her consciousness,” Ye Yuxuan said flatly. With these words, he absolved Su Yufeng of her crime of

forcing Ye Ruyi to ingest poison. Regardless of how furious he was with Su Yufeng, he still needed to protect her reputation.

The Fifth Concubine dug her fingernails deeply into her own skin. She was afraid that her expression would expose her hatred, so she did not dare raise her head.

Since Ye Jiuge was already well-aware that Ye Yuxuan would not displace Su Yufeng so easily, she was not angry at all. When she saw that Ye Yuxuan had brought out the antidote to False Dream, she stalled him, saying, "Father, let me give Fourth Sister the antidote!"

"Okay!" Ye Yuxuan passed the antidote to Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge propped up Ye Ruyi and wedged the tiny red elixir in between her thin pale lips. After Ye Ruyi consumed it, her eyebrows trembled slightly. Then, slowly, her eyes opened.

"Fourth Sister, how are you feeling right now?" Ye Jiuge placed a pillow behind her back so that she could rest on the headboard.

"Eldest Sister, why are you here?" Ye Ruyi was perplexed.

"I heard that you were sick, so I came over to visit you." Ye Jiuge patted Ye Ruyi's small hand. While she did not expect these words to bring back last night's nightmare of being forced to swallow poison, Ye Ruyi shuddered. Her eyes searched everywhere for her mother. When she found her, she was stunned by her mother's awful appearance. Shocked, she asked, "Mother, why is your chest covered in blood?"

"I am fine." The Fifth Concubine quickly covered up the blood on her chest. Then said, stuttering, "This, this is because I..."

"Wu, wu. I am certain that this happened because Madame wanted to harm you. She, she..." Ye Ruyi wheezed as she cried. Then, she rolled her eyes and fainted again.

"Fourth Miss, what is happening to you?" The Fifth Concubine was so startled that she felt like her soul was detaching from her body.

"Do not worry, Fifth Concubine, Father is here." Ye Jiuge looked at Ye Yuxuan.

Regardless of who had administered the treatment, there was no difference! As a third stage high-level Elixir Alchemist, Ye Yuxuan was skilled at treating illnesses. With concentration, he reached out and checked his fourth daughter's pulse. His expression immediately became most unpleasant.

He had never thought that his daughter's body's condition would be so feeble.

To produce elixirs, one was required, not only to possess a special spiritual root endowed with favorable attribute, but to be in good health. Otherwise, even the most optimal attribute was futile.

"Old Master, what is wrong with Fourth Miss?" asked the Fifth Concubine anxiously.

"How did the condition of my fourth daughter's body become so weak? How do you usually care for her?" Ye Yuxuan retracted his hand and glared at the Fifth Concubine fiercely. His daughter was perfectly fine, but because of her parenting, she had ended up in this state. She really was a worthless woman.

"Old Master, it is my fault for being so useless. For the past few years, I have not been able to feed Fourth Miss well." Fresh tears flowed again from the Fifth Concubine's swollen red eyes.

"What do you mean by 'not being able to feed her well'?" Despite his anger, Ye Yuxuan laughed. Did she have the impression that his Ye Residence was a beggar's nest?

"Father, before replying, you should take a look at the room where the Fifth Concubine and Fourth Sister were living!" Ye Jiuge's eyelids were slightly lowered, and her long eyelashes concealed her sneer.

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Ye Yuxuan surveyed the entire place before realizing that this wing of the residence was extremely shabby. The windows were full of cracks, the stools had lost their legs, and there was not even a teapot or cups on the table.

He had truly been unaware that such a deplorable place existed in his Ye Residence. Not only that, his concubine and daughter were living in it.

Now, he was slightly more convinced that his fourth daughter's condition was so weak because she was not eating properly.

“Father, although Fourth Sister’s body is feebler than others, if we use elixir to nurse her back to good health, it is possible that she will be healthy again. Don’t you have quite a lot of Vitality Strengthening Elixir? Why don’t you give Fourth Sister a few bottles to take?” Ye Jiuge smiled as she spoke.

She knew that Ye Yuxuan had always been stingy. Asking him to hand over his elixirs was no different than taking his life, which was why she had intentionally made this request.

Ye Yuxuan could not help but contort his face. With painful reluctance, he brought out a jade bottle and pretended to be generous as he said, “Alright. I shall give this bottle of Vitality Strengthening Elixir to my fourth daughter. If it is insufficient, feel free to ask me for more.”

Although he could not bear to part from his elixirs, he was even more unwilling to give up his Fourth Daughter’s favorable attribute. He was so conflicted that he could feel his liver throbbing with pain.

Ye Jiuge accepted the elixir and pushed it into the Fifth Concubine’s hands. She smiled and said, “Father has promised to allocate two bottles of Vitality Strengthening Elixir to Fourth Sister every month to nurture her back to good health. Fifth Concubine, quickly thank Father on behalf of Fourth Sister.”

“I would like to express my gratitude on behalf of Fourth Miss for Old Master’s benevolent love!” The Fifth Concubine immediately kneeled down and knocked her head against the floor towards Ye Yuxuan.

However, Ye Yuxuan glowered at her. When had he promised to give his fourth daughter two bottles of Vitality Strengthening Elixir every month?

In one bottle, there were fifteen Vitality Strengthening Elixirs. Without considering the time, energy, and spiritual cultivation required, the medicinal ingredients alone cost one hundred and fifty silver taels. This amount of money was too expensive to nurse his fourth daughter back to good health!

However, Ye Jiuge and the Fifth Concubine kept echoing each other, and he was not shameless enough to reject their request. He could only force a smile and say, “My fourth daughter has a weak body, but she does not need two bottles in a month. One is sufficient.”

“If you think that one bottle is enough, then one should be enough!” Ye Jiuge was extremely satisfied. It was known that his most favored daughter, Ye Shanshan, received one bottle of Vitality Strengthening Elixir monthly.

“Thank you, Old Master,” Fifth Concubine thanked him repeatedly.

“Enough. Take good care of our fourth daughter. If she encounters any more problems, I will hold you responsible.” Ye Yuxuan’s heart was still aching over the loss of his elixir, so he did not wish to linger a moment longer.

“Old Master, do not worry. I will definitely take good care of Fourth Miss.” The Fifth Concubine kept nodding her head. Afterwards, she said hesitantly, “It’s just that the Fourth Miss was in poor health, and I’m afraid that it would be inappropriate for her to continue living in this shabby room. I beg you to intercede and ask Madame to have mercy on us and allow Fourth Miss to move into a better residence. At any rate, she is also your daughter!”

“My daughter should have been tended to with the utmost care. She does not need Su Yufeng, that wicked woman, to show mercy. In the future, you do not need to defer to her regarding residence matters. You can be in charge,” Ye Yuxuan said angrily.

That malicious woman, Su Yufeng, dared to mistreat his precious daughter behind his back. Now, she has caused him to use so many elixirs to nurse his beloved daughter back to health. He is infuriated!

The more Ye Yuxuan thought about it, the angrier he became. “In the future, you and Seventh Concubine will be responsible for this household.” After he spoke, he left.

The Fifth Concubine was dumbfounded as she watched Ye Yuxuan’s figure leave. She turned her head and asked Ye Jiuge, “Eldest Miss, what did Old Master mean?”

Ye Jiuge thought about it, then said, “Father must have meant that, in the future, the Ye Residence’s household matters will be managed by you and Seventh Concubine.”

“It’s impossible!” The Fifth Concubine still felt like she was dreaming. Just last night, she was attempting to fight for a bright future for her daughter at all costs. She had never thought that, not only would she not lose her life, but she would shoot through the ranks, going from a position where anyone could look down upon her to becoming someone who wielded authority over a few hundred people throughout the entire residence.

“Father has spoken, and he will not renege on his words. You’ve had a stroke of luck, so you should seize this opportunity.” Ye Jiuge reckoned that Ye Yuxuan had made this decision in a fit of anger. However, if he wanted to go back on his words later, she would not allow it.

“But I do not know how to manage a household!” The Fifth Concubine’s face was full of trepidation.

Although she had been a lady skilled in fine arts and slightly literate before being sold into the Ye

Clan, managing such a large group of people all of a sudden was going to be an extremely difficult task for her.

“You do not need to be too worried about managing the household. After this, I will ask Qing Mama to come help you. Slowly, you will learn and be able to do it,” Ye Jiuge assured her.

In the past, Qing Mama had assisted Ye Jiuge’s mother in managing the Ye Residence’s household. She was extremely well-versed in domestic matters and could handle them proficiently at any time.

“However, if the servants refuse to listen to my orders and merely pay me lip service, what should I do?” The Fifth Concubine could not stop worrying. All these years, she had been treated very badly, so she understood the servants’ tormenting practices extremely well.

“If they refuse to listen, you can give them a good beating. After you have beaten one to death, then pick another.” Ye Jiuge smiled coldly. In any case, half of the servants in the Ye Residence were Su Yufeng’s trusted underlings, so she could beat them as she pleased.

As soon as the Fifth Concubine heard that she needed to hit someone, her heart skipped a beat. A reluctant expression appeared on her face.

Although she had hardened her heart and dared to risk her life to achieve her objective, she was still a naturally kind person; she could not just simply punish someone.

“Just keep thinking of Fourth Sister. If you do not hit these servants, when Su Yufeng is freed from any restrictions, you will be the one who will be beaten. It is impossible for her hands to be tied forever.” Ye Jiuge understood Su Yufeng’s personality well. It was impossible to expect her to resign herself to this. Now, the duel had truly begun.

“Eldest Miss, you are right. I know what I should do now.” As soon as the Fifth Concubine thought of her daughter, determination immediately flashed past her face.

“After this, I will ask Qing Mama to come over. However, regardless of how capable Qing Mama is, she is merely a servant of the Ye Clan. As a master, you need to establish your power. In the future, do not refer to yourself as a servant. You are the biological mother of Fourth Sister, so you are in a respectable position. Do not belittle yourself. Do you understand?” Ye Jiuge knew that the Fifth Concubine was used to being oppressed, so she might not be able to change in such a short period of time. However, as long as Ye Jiuge mentioned Fourth Sister, she would listen.

“Eldest Miss, do not worry. Your humble servant—No, I understand.” The Fifth Concubine nodded. She had not been born feeling inferior. In the past, her rank in the residence had been lowly. The only way she could protect her daughter and ensure her survival was to put herself beneath

everyone.

Now that she had a chance to be at the top of the hierarchy, naturally, she did not wish to continue to be tormented at the bottom.

“As long as you are aware of what to do, it will be fine.” Ye Jiuge nodded.

Although she looked young, after experiencing two lifetimes, she was composed enough not to feel conflicted about admonishing a concubine who was superior to her in terms of age and seniority.

The Fifth Concubine was also seeking her advice with utmost sincerity. She asked at once, “Eldest Miss, since Old Master mentioned that, in the future, the responsibility of handling household matters in the residence will be handed to Seventh Concubine and me, should I go ahead and sort things out with her?”

“Even if you wanted to sort things out, you should wait for the Seventh Concubine to seek you.” Ye Jiuge smiled faintly.

“Seventh Concubine is a spiritual practitioner, dearly treasured by Old Master all this time. I am afraid that she will be unwilling to come.” The Fifth Concubine was worried.

She was only an ordinary person, so she had always felt like she was less than the spiritual practitioners.

“Fifth Concubine, you only need to remember that your daughter, Ye Ruyi, possesses a Wood Fire Spiritual Root. She is an Elixir Alchemist with the best favorable attribute. In the future, those spiritual practitioners will need to accommodate her wishes. Then, everything will be fine.”

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

“Are Elixir Alchemists that impressive?” Although the Fifth Concubine knew that Elixir Alchemists were valued, her daughter was still sickly and feeble in bed. She had not even produced even one

elixir yet, so she did not feel reassured at all.

“Of course. Otherwise, why would Seventh Concubine be willing to be father’s concubine?” Ye Jiuge spoke nonchalantly.

The Seventh Concubine, Mu Xianglan, was a Wood Elemental Beginner Spiritual Practitioner. She was young and beautiful; if she had wanted to, she could have married into any of the less influential families and been a legitimate wife.

However, she claimed to deeply respect and admire Ye Yuxuan’s status as an Elixir Alchemist. She was so adamant about marrying him that she was willing to be his concubine. The frank truth was that she wished to obtain better resources for her own cultivation. A spiritual practitioner’s cultivation was extremely arduous. If she did not have elixirs to supplement her cultivation, it would be extremely difficult to progress further.

However, elixirs were very costly. It was impossible for an average person to afford them. Countless spiritual practitioners worked for affluent families to earn more money to cultivate. Many ladies as pretty as Mu Xianglan often sought patrons.

Two years after marrying into the Ye Clan, although Mu Xianglan had still not borne a child, because she had managed to progress successfully, Ye Yuxuan still favored her greatly. At present, she received an allocation similar to Ye Shanshan’s—one bottle of Vitality Strengthening Elixir every month.

Mu Xianglan was a clever woman. Although Ye Ruyi was not an Elixir Alchemist yet, on the basis of her favorable attribute, Mu Xianglan would definitely establish a good rapport with her. Therefore, she would take the initiative to find the Fifth Concubine.

After Ye Jiuge analyzed these situations clearly for the Fifth Concubine, she was at last reassured. “If that is the case,” she said, “then I will wait for her here.”

“You do not need to wait for her here. Pack up your things and move to the Qiu Shui Residence later.” Ye Jiuge instructed her.

“The Qiu Shui Residence?” The Fifth Concubine’s eyes widened in complete shock. She kept shaking her head as she said, “This will not do, this will not do. That is the residence that your mother prepared for you. How can you let us stay there?”

The Qiu Shui Residence was Yun Qiaoqiao’s most treasured residence. It was also the most magnificent place in the Ye Residence. Famed for its tranquility, when she first built it, she’d planned for her daughter, Ye Jiuge, to live there.

After Yun Qiaoqiao passed away, Ye Yuxuan claimed that his yearning for his dead wife was the reason no one else was allowed to move in. Ye Jiuge was not an exception.

Soon after, Ye Jiuge was declared to be incompetent. Subsequently, the Crown Prince divulged that he wanted to break off his betrothal with Ye Jiuge and marry Ye Shanshan instead. Then, Ye Yuxuan had tacitly agreed to allow Su Yufeng to spruce up the Qiu Shui Residence for Ye Shanshan.

“Staying at the Zhilin Residence is perfectly fine for me now. I do not need to move. Not only that, the Qiu Shui Residence is the only decent accommodation currently unoccupied in the entire Ye residence. It is perfectly appropriate for you to stay there right now.”

Seeing that the Fifth Concubine wanted to decline, Ye Jiuge said, “Since you say that the Qiu Shui Residence is mine, then you should listen to me. Let Fourth Sister live there so that those Ye Residence servants who bend their knees to power and look down on the weak may realize the prominence of you and your daughter.”

Whether someone was regarded as having high social standing depended on their clothing, food, and residence.

Because of Yun Qiaoqiao, the Qiu Shui Residence had come to distinctively represent the position of the lady of the Ye Residence. This was why Su Yufeng wanted Ye Shanshan to live there: to demonstrate to everyone that her daughter was held in higher esteem than Ye Jiuge. If Ye Ruyi lived there, beyond status in general, it would specifically mean that she was superior to Ye Shanshan.

The Fifth Concubine understood the implications of living in the Qiu Shui Residence, which was why she was afraid of the pressure that went along with it.

“Fifth Concubine, since you have already had a hostile fall out with Su Yufeng, you must persist. Otherwise, as soon as you expose any weakness, you will be trampled all over, resulting in a terrible downfall. You will never again be able to escape the suffering of repression.”

Ye Jiuge's words completely shattered any relief that remained in Fifth Concubine's heart. Her expression changed again and again. In the end, she gritted her teeth and said, “All right. I will act in full accordance with your arrangements, Eldest Miss.”

Since she had chosen to side with Eldest Miss, she had to trust her completely.

“Fifth Concubine, do not be too worried. Right now, Fourth Sister is the apple of Father's eye. No one will dare mistreat you or your daughter. Rest assured and live there without fear!” When Ye Jiuge saw how anxious Fifth Concubine was (to the point of her lips turning pale), she personally

poured her a cup of hot tea and pushed it into her palms.

The Fifth Concubine shook uncontrollably as she sipped the hot tea. Afterwards, she felt rejuvenated. She stood up and said, "Then, let me pack our things. I request that you stay here to keep Ruyi company, Eldest Miss."

"Okay. I will stay here with Fourth Sister. Go ahead and pack!" After Ye Jiuge watched Fifth Concubine leave, she sat at Ye Ruyi's bedside. She looked at the scraggly girl lying quietly on the bed and said softly, "Stop pretending. I know you have been awake this whole time."

The young girl's fingers trembled slightly before she slowly opened her eyes. She looked at Ye Jiuge sheepishly before saying, "Eldest Sister."

"Did you hear the entire conversation between your mother and me?" Ye Jiuge asked, looking into the young girl's guileless eyes.

"I heard." The young girl nodded.

"Are you aware of what those words mean?" Ye Jiuge asked again.

The reason she had expended so much effort to explain the stakes of the situation to Fifth Concubine was because she wanted to enlighten this young lady, who was merely pretending to be asleep, about what was going on. Whether Fifth Concubine could stand up to Su Yufeng as a formidable opponent would greatly depend on whether this Ye Ruyi could live up to her expectations.

"I understood." The young girl nodded and said slowly, "It is because my Wood Fire Spiritual Root has awakened, so I may become a very powerful Elixir Alchemist in the future. Therefore, Father is now showering us with lavish affection. In the future, Madame will not dare to blatantly mistreat us."

"You are correct. In the future, Madame will not dare mistreat you openly. However, she will still employ many underhanded tactics. The days ahead of you will be even tougher than before. Are you afraid?" Ye Jiuge brushed away the black hair stuck to the young girl's forehead and tucked it behind her ears.

She seemed weak, but, in reality, her character was resilient. Her personality was similar to the Fifth Concubine's. When backed into a corner, she would retaliate.

When those servants who bend their knees to power and look down on the weak had ill-treated her and her mother, the four-year-old had already known to pretend to faint to frighten them away.

She was actually a very bright child.

“Afraid!” A hint of fear glinted in the young lady’s big eyes. Her fingers grasped the tattered blanket covering her lower half. She spoke in a trembling voice, “I am afraid that I am not as powerful as they imagine. I am afraid that I will not be able to master the art of creating elixirs and that, eventually, I will let father down.”

Even at her young age, Ye Ruyi understood that the higher one climbed, the harder one fell. The better Father treated her now, after he was disappointed, he would subject her to even harsher treatment. Even if she was his biological daughter, she would not be an exception. Ye Ruyi had already realized this because of seeing how her Elder Sister had been treated in the past.

“If you know that you should be afraid, that is good.” Ye Jiuge patted her little head.

If she knew that she should be afraid, then she would not become complacent and forget the suffering that she had already endured. As long as Ye Ruyi moved forward with a good head on her shoulders, even if she could not achieve greatness by creating elixirs with her favorable attribute, she would not meet an untimely demise.

Furthermore, Ye Jiuge was still around.

“Do not worry. Your Elder Sister is here. I will help you.” Ye Jiuge caressed the young girl’s hair gently.

As long as they listened to her and allowed her to settle everything for them, she would definitely ensure that mother and daughter remained unharmed.

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After Ye Jiuge had reassured Ye Ruyi, she asked Qing Mama to help Fifth Concubine move her possessions into the Qiu Shui Residence.

Qing Mama creased her eyebrows in disapproval and said, “Eldest Miss, your mother prepared

that residence for you. How can you let Fifth Concubine and Fourth Miss live there?"

Ye Jiuge remained silent. She gave Qing Mama a look. Although her gaze was impenetrable, she exuded an indescribable aura of dignity. Qing Mama's heart immediately skipped a beat. Suddenly, she realized that she had just second-guessed Eldest Miss's orders.

"I was wrong. I will move her possessions now," Qing Mama acknowledged her mistake right away and dutifully summoned other servants to help Fifth Concubine to move her possessions.

Meanwhile, Ye Yuxuan had declared that Su Yufeng was to be confined to her residence and all household matters were now to be managed by the Fifth and Seventh Concubines. When he found out that Ye Jiuge had granted Ye Ruyi the right to reside in the Qiu Shui Residence, at once, he dispatched a housekeeper Mama and two high-ranking maids from the main residence.

When Ye Jiuge arrived with Fifth Concubine and Ye Ruyi, the housekeeper Mama and the maids had already ensured that the Qiu Shui Residence was pristine. The housekeeper Mama's surname was "Qiu." She had long eyelashes and delicate eyes. She appeared to be extremely capable and efficient. She led a group of maids and servants and helped Fifth Concubine and Ye Ruyi settle down so efficiently that not even Ye Jiuge could quibble.

"Eldest Miss, from what I can see, Fifth Concubine and Fourth Miss are very tired. If you do not have any other matters to brief them about, why not let them rest for a while?" Qiu Mama spoke as she bowed at Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge furrowed her eyebrows slightly. Qiu Mama's words implied that Fifth Concubine and Ye Ruyi were her servants; if they wanted to rest, they needed to seek Ye Jiuge's approval. Needless to say, Ye Yuxuan must have given Qiu Mama secret instructions to sow discord by hook or crook between Ye Jiuge and the mother-daughter pair. If she did not allow Ye Yuxuan to have his way, it was very likely that he would not sleep soundly at night.

Therefore, Ye Jiuge went along with Qiu Mama's words saying, "If this is the case, then I shall dismiss Fifth Concubine and Fourth Miss so that they can rest. I will visit them again tomorrow."

After she spoke, she nodded towards Fifth Concubine and Ye Ruyi then left with Qing Mama. Upon leaving the Qiu Shui Residence, she ordered Qing Mama, "Later, select some trusted servants to work at the Qiu Shui Residence."

Qiu Mama was so skilled at causing trouble that she needed to find some trusted people to serve at Fifth Concubine and Ye Ruyi's side so that nothing untoward would happen.

"Eldest Miss, should we bring back the old servants who were sent away from our residence before?" Qing Mama asked.

They had been born and bred in the Yun Residence and were extremely loyal.

“That will not do. We must never bring back the Yun Clan’s old servants,” Ye Jiuge said in a grave voice.

On the surface, it appeared that the Yun Clan’s old servants had been sent away by Su Yufeng. However, without Ye Yuxuan’s consent, Su Yufeng would not dare lay a hand on them. Although Ye Yuxuan sobbed his eyes out every year at Yun Qiaoqiao’s grave, in reality, he hoped more than anyone that the Yun Family would die out without any descendants.

If she brought the Yun Clan’s old servants back to the residence, Ye Yuxuan would immediately release Su Yufeng from her confinement and change his attitude to one of crushing Ye Jiuge and Fifth Concubine.

“Now that Old Master cherishes Fifth Concubine and Fourth Miss so much, I don’t think he will mind if we do this!” Qing Mama said hesitantly.

“Do not place so much importance on the favor he has shown them.” Ye Jiuge smiled contemptuously.

Ye Yuxuan did not actually care very much about Fifth Concubine and Ye Ruyi. He was merely trying to implement a “check and balance” strategy. Su Yufeng had become too impudent. Over time, she had stopped considering him before acting. Therefore, he wanted to help Fifth Concubine gain power to counter Su Yufeng.

Besides wanting to elevate Ye Ruyi’s status, he also wanted to cultivate Fifth Concubine’s ambition. The Fifth Concubine was too submissive. As long as someone was willing to help her, she would pledge her life to them. However, once she rose through the ranks, gaining greater experience and insight, she would start to become insatiable. In return, she would hate those who had helped her when she was at her lowest because they had seen her at her worst.

This was something Ye Yuxuan could empathize deeply with. After all, this was his experience when he was with the Yun Clan.

“Eldest Miss. Since you know that there is a possibility that Fifth Concubine will cross you in the future, why are you still willing to help her?” Qing Mama asked anxiously.

“Since I dared to help Fifth Concubine and Fourth Sister, naturally, I am confident that I can keep her under my control.” Ye Jiuge smiled without emotion. There were no ingrates around her. Those who had proved themselves ungrateful were already dead.

“Be that as it may, it is difficult to completely understand someone’s mind. We should find more trusted servants and place them at Fifth Concubine and Fourth Miss’s side. From what I have seen, Qiu Mama is not a good person,” said Qing Mama immediately.

“If we want to pick someone right now, it is too late. I plan to buy a few slaves to train. Qing Mama, let’s go together.”

Ye Jiuge changed into a simple green dress. She used a veiled hat to conceal her true face and left the Ye Residence with Qing Mama.

When they reached the streets, a few teams of officers were searching everywhere for a slave that had run away from the Su Clan.

“The Su Clan is truly important. He is just an escaped slave. Yet, they have gone as far as mobilizing officers to search for him.” Qing Mama showed her extreme disapproval towards the Su Clan’s way of handling things.

“I do not care how important they are. Anyway, it has nothing to do with us.” Ye Jiuge did not concern herself with this matter. Currently, the most important thing was to purchase some slaves.

Countless high platforms were set up on XiDa Street’s largest slave market. The slave traders were promoting their wares on the platforms with loud voices. Slaves stood on the platform dressed in ragged clothes. Their eyes were dead, as if they had already lost all hope of living. Those who looked at them felt depressed. It was not surprising that upper-class families disliked keeping slaves in their residences.

“Eldest Miss, why don’t we return to the Yun Clan’s properties and select some trusted servants to work for us?” Qing Mama did not like these slaves at all. Their appearance was dirty and uncouth. Some slave girls who were slightly attractive had obviously been specially trained to please men, so it was inappropriate to allow them to serve alongside Eldest Miss.

“Since we are here, let us look around first and then decide.” Ye Jiuge did not want any of these astute and attentive maids, but ones who were unafraid of death and willing to risk their lives for her.

These slaves were in despair because they had already lost all hope of living. If someone could provide them with some hope, they would sacrifice themselves for that person.

However, after one tour around the market, Ye Jiuge did not find any slaves that caught her eye. They looked like dead fish. It would require too much effort to train them. She needed to find one with more potential. Ye Jiuge decided to ask for help.

“Zi Shang, are you there?”

“What’s the matter?” rang out Zi Shang’s lazy voice.

“Help me pick out a few slaves with good potential,” Ye Jiuge requested.

“Left side, five hundred steps. There is a decent slave,” said Zi Shang casually.

Ye Jiuge’s eye swept round and discovered—five hundred steps to her left—a row of dark wooden huts. It was the place where they stored the slaves; unauthorized people were not allowed to enter.

This slave was truly handpicked by Zi Shang. She did not know if he would be useful, but he was certainly going to be troublesome to acquire.

“Although he is difficult to obtain, he is undoubtedly invaluable and worth more than he costs.” Zi Shang had an “it is up to you, I could not care less” expression.

For a moment, Ye Jiuge was indecisive. In the end, she decided to take a look. However, trespassing was unacceptable. Tact was required for this situation.

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Ye Jiuge contemplated it for a while before fishing two gold nuggets from her coin pouch and playing with them in her hands. Afterward, she took Qing Mama to the venue where the largest gathering of slaves was.

The slave trader was a short, stout man who was deeply tanned. His eyes kept drifting slyly to the gold nuggets in Ye Jiuge’s hand. He flattered her with a grin and said, “Welcome, Miss. Come inside. May I know what kind of slave you are looking for?”

“I am searching for some slaves with great potential to work as servants in my residence. Do you have a finer selection of slaves?” Ye Jiuge asked.

“Miss, the ones displayed on the stage right now are the best in the market.” The slave trader smacked the chests of a few slaves and spoke about them as if he was selling cattle. “Although they are not spiritual practitioners, they have robust bodies. After you take them home and train them properly, they will be useful to you.”

“These do not meet my requirements. Do you have better choices at the back where you store your slaves?” Ye Jiuge asked, pointing to the row of dark huts.

“Those are all inferior slaves. They are even less likely to meet your requirements.” The slave trader shook his head.

“I shall be the one who decides whether or not they suit my requirements.” Ye Jiuge tossed some spare change to the slave trader. She said haughtily, “You just need to lead the way!”

“All right. Come this way, please!” The slave trader accepted the money and guided them along from the front without delaying any further.

Ye Jiuge followed the slave trader into a small, dark hut. The interior was dirty and smelled. Old, frail, sickly and disabled slaves were confined behind the fences. The unpleasantness of the situation made one uneasy.

Qing Mama’s eyebrows knitted so tightly that they looked as though they might twist into a knot. Her aversion made the slave trader feel that there was a strong possibility that he was not going to be able to make a sale today.

“Which one was the slave you mentioned?” Ye Jiuge summoned Zi Shang in her mind.

“The corner to your left,” Zi Shang replied lazily.

Ye Jiuge looked to her left and saw a skinny man curled up on the ground. His entire body was filthy. He was no different from the slaves next to him.

The slave trader followed her gaze. He thought of something and beamed immediately. “Miss, you truly have good taste. That slave is the best one we have here.”

“Didn’t you say that the best slaves are already displayed outside? Why did you leave this one in here?” Ye Jiuge asked, raising her eyebrow.

The slave trader continued to speak with a smile, “Because this slave fell sick two days ago, so he has been recovering here. However, he is an excellent slave. If you do not believe me, you can examine him.”

The slave trader strode towards the slave after making his speech. He grabbed the person's hair to drag his head up and presented his face directly to Ye Jiuge. His face was unexpectedly clean. The man's skin was similar to jade, and his facial features were delicate. His long eyelashes spread out like a small fan. Between his eyebrows, a red mole accentuated his beauty with a certain elegance.

With such an appearance, he was indeed a top-quality slave.

"Miss, you cannot purchase him." Qing Mama became anxious. In the past, Second Miss had caused Eldest Miss to stay away from the residence all night. There were already unpleasant rumors spreading around the streets.

If someone found out that Eldest Miss had bought a beautiful male slave and was allowing him to stay in her residence, Qing Mama was afraid that the nasty rumors would escalate.

Ye Jiuge raised her hand to stop Qing Mama's nagging. She told the slave trader, "This slave is decent. I like him. Name me a price!"

"Miss, such a beautiful male slave is difficult to find. Since you like him, I will sell him at a loss. One thousand silver taels." The slave trader quoted a price.

Before Ye Jiuge could reply, Qing Mama had already jumped forward and pointed her fingers at the slave trader. She gave him a piece of her mind, "At first glance, this slave looks ill. Even though you handled him so roughly, he did not wake up. Still, you dare to sell him for one thousand silver taels! Do you think that we are both idiots?"

Since Eldest Miss was determined to buy him, Qing Mama had to help her haggle.

"How much are you willing to pay for him?" asked the slave trader.

"Fifty silver taels. Are you selling him?!" Qing Mama gave him a price immediately.

"That amount is too low. With his looks, regardless of whether he is sold to the restaurants or brothels, he will at least fetch one thousand silver taels." The slave trader spoke in an exasperated manner.

"How does his attractiveness change anything? He looks so sick that, if we buy him, we will need to spend even more money to buy some medicine for him. If you refuse to sell, then you can keep him!" Qing Mama made a move to leave.

"I really cannot accept fifty silver taels. I need at least five hundred silver taels." The slave trader's

expression was pained.

“Sixty silver taels. I won’t pay more.” Qing Mama did not allow him any room for argument.

“I can’t. I can’t. Four hundred silver taels.”

“Eighty silver taels.”

...

After intense haggling, they finally settled on one hundred silver taels. Ye Jiuge paid the slave trader, then took her purchase away.

“Boss, you sold such a fine slave for one hundred silver taels. That is such a loss.” The hired underling that was guarding the door felt that it was a pity. It was the first time he had seen such a pretty man.

“It’s not so bad. I earned back the money I used to buy his medicine.” The slave trader had a miserable expression.

The previous night, he had discovered a beautiful spiritual practitioner wounded and unconscious by the roadside. He had thought that, this time, he would earn a reasonable sum.

He had never expected that the beautiful man had contracted some strange illness. He invited a few physicians to treat him, but all of them said that it was impossible to nurse him back to health.

If he had not encountered a spendthrift blinded by lust that day, he would have suffered huge losses.

Meanwhile, the spendthrift, Ye Jiuge, had just brought him secretly into the Zhilin Residence.

“Eldest Miss, this is the inner residence. If Su Yufeng finds out that you have placed him here, she will incriminate you as a wh*re,” Qing Mama fretted.

“It is fine. Let him wear a dress. I can guarantee that no one will realize that he is a man.” Ye Jiuge was extremely confident about the male slave’s beauty.

“Even if he wears a dress, he is still a man!” Qing Mama felt distressed. What is Eldest Miss thinking?

“In such bad condition, even if he is male, he cannot do anything to me.” Seeing that Qing Mama’s elderly face was almost creased into a dumpling, Ye Jiuge decided to arrange some matters for

her to handle. “Qing Mama, since I ended up not buying any slaves, I would like to trouble you to go to our properties and select some suitable individuals to serve in our residence.”

“Noted. I will go and help you choose some servants now.” Enthusiasm overcame Qing Mama. She believed that if there were more servants in the residence, Eldest Miss would not continue to act so recklessly.

After Qing Mama left, Ye Jiuge closed the door to her room and started to check the beautiful man’s pulse. To her surprise, she discovered that this male slave was a spiritual practitioner. Not only that, his level was not low. His cultivation was at least at the intermediate stage.

How could a spiritual practitioner with intermediate stage cultivation end up in such a place as a slave?

Ye Jiuge was exceedingly astonished. She calmed down and scrutinized the rhythm of his pulse. It was extremely erratic—the pulse of a soon-to-be-dead person. No wonder the slave trader was willing to sell him for such a low price.

However, people with such slow pulses were often people that had been poisoned.

Ye Jiuge checked his eyes, lips, and nails meticulously. She did not find anything unusual. It was truly odd!

She took out her Lightning Fire Needle and carefully inserted it into each of the acupuncture points along the philtrum, the web between the thumb and forefinger, and others. In the end, when she pulled out the tip of her needle, it was coated with purplish-black blood, similar to the color of ink.

It was merely a small blood droplet. However, it gave off a sickly sweet stench, causing the person who smelled it to feel nauseous and light-headed with disgust. Truly, it was mystifying.

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Translator: Nyoibo Studio Editor: Nyoibo Studio

Ye Jiuge had never seen a poison like this. She thought of dabbing her finger in the drop of blood

and tasting it, when Zi Shang's voice drawled alongside her ear, "I advise you not to come into contact with it."

As soon as he spoke, his cold snake tail coiled her in his embrace, and a familiar, faint fragrance pervading her nose.

"Why?" Ye Jiuge furrowed her eyebrows as she looked at Zi Shang's exceptionally handsome face.

"No reason." Zi Shang's wet vermillion lips were raised into a beautiful curve. He lowered his head and licked Ye Jiuge's scarred face.

"Speak in a way so I can understand you, and don't use your mouth on me." The cold, sticky feeling from his touch had given Ye Jiuge goosebumps all over her body.

She pressed both of her palms against Zi Shang's solid chest. She wanted to break free from his grasp, but he hugged her even tighter. It was futile to resist him; she could only allow him to hold her.

"I don't want to tell you!" Zi Shang held Ye Jiuge's pliant body and rested his jaw on her head, feeling extremely comfortable.

Zi Shang's entire body stilled as he felt a tremor coursing through it. His abdomen convulsed, and his tail straightened immediately.

He clutched Ye Jiuge's shoulders and pushed her away. His purple eyes narrowed dangerously, and he said in a voice laced slightly with vengeance, "You really want me to eat you."

Just then, Ye Jiuge realized that she had done something terrible.

Oh my god, she had bitten his d*ck. Ridiculous!

Ye Jiuge wished that the ground would open up and swallow her whole. However, when she found herself faced with his accusation, she put on a bold face and said, "As expected, you harbor malicious intentions."

Zi Shang looked at her firmly. It was as if his bright, purple eyes could understand everything and perceive human thoughts. His stare made Ye Jiuge feel guilty. Secretly, she regretted that she had been too impulsive with her words. She lowered her gaze and said sheepishly, "You still haven't told me what kind of poison this is?"

Zi Shang's hands were still grasping Ye Jiuge's shoulders. They tightened slightly before slowly letting go. Afterward, he turned her around fiercely and pulled her into his arms again. His tail circled tightly around her as he scolded, "Idiot, can't you distinguish the demonic poison, Soul Departure?"

"Soul Departure?" Ye Jiuge blinked. Wasn't that poison unique to a third stage demonic beast, the Serpent of Departed Soul?

From what she remembered, those who had been infected with this demonic poison would be completely incapacitated. Their spiritual energy would be suppressed, and they would mostly be unconscious. Within seven days, they would undoubtedly die.

However, this kind of demonic poison was extremely difficult to obtain. "Why would anyone use this on a slave?"

"Idiot, this proves that this slave is not what he seems!" Zi Shang's expression seemed to be saying, You are so stupid that you can't even figure this out.

"I know that he must not be whom he seems, but I cannot find anything unusual about him." Ye Jiuge felt that since Zi Shang had purposely pointed this slave out for her, he must have something in mind.

"He is going to wake up soon. Ask him yourself!" Zi Shang lowered his head and bit Ye Jiuge's red lips viciously before disappearing.

Lewd snake!

Ye Jiuge wiped her mouth aggressively and lowered her eyes to look at the beautiful male slave. She saw that his black eyelashes were trembling slightly like a small fan, similar to the wings of a

butterfly about to take off. The next moment, his eyes slowly opened. When his black eyes saw Ye Jiuge, they immediately narrowed threateningly. He looked like he wanted to attack her. Unfortunately, he was utterly powerless.

“You do not need to be afraid. I am not a bad person.” After Ye Jiuge finished speaking, she realized how odd her words sounded.

The beautiful male slave propped his body against the wall. As he looked at Ye Jiuge coldly, his black eyes were similar to mountain winds that howl in the winter nights.

“What is your name,” Ye Jiuge asked with a friendly smile.

“...”

“How were you poisoned?” Ye Jiuge continued to smile.

“...”

“How did you end up as a slave?” Ye Jiuge could not smile any longer.

“...” The beautiful male slave just looked at Ye Jiuge quietly.

Something in her snapped. Ye Jiuge was furious. “Are you mute?”

“...” The beautiful male slave continued his silence.

“Brat, if I had not rescued you from the slave ring, you would have already been sold to the brothel by now.” Ye Jiuge narrowed her eyes and smiled coldly. “Do you think that I wouldn’t take you to a brothel and leave you there right now?”

A murderous intent flashed across the beautiful male slave’s eyes. His tight lips flattened into a straight line.

“Idiot, those who are poisoned with Soul Departure are incapable of speaking.” Zi Shang could not bear to watch any longer.

Well. This was awkward.

Ye Jiuge pretended to cough a few times before swiftly changing the topic. “Can you move? If you can move, change out of your dirty clothes into clean ones.”

“...”

"If you cannot move, then I do not mind helping you change." Ye Jiuge's mischievous hands reached out as she pretended to remove his clothes.

Pa! The beautiful male slave immediately slapped her hands away. His bright, black eyes were as fierce as a wolf's.

Looking at the back of her hand, which was red, Ye Jiuge formed a grudge in her heart.

She took a pink dress out of her closet and tossed it to the beautiful male slave. She smiled coldly and said, "When I return, you better be changed into these clothes. If not..."

Ye Jiuge huffed coldly twice then left the room.

As soon as she sat down in the parlor, Qing Mama merrily led in a group of young maids and said, "Eldest Miss, I have brought them here. Have a look and take your pick."

Ye Jiuge swept her eyes over them once and noticed that the younger maids were around ten years old. The older ones were about twelve. Although they were young, they were remarkably well-behaved. Every one of them had lowered heads and did not dare look at her directly.

Among them, a pair of sisters named Qing Liu and Qing Hu caught her eye. They looked unremarkable, but they were entirely composed. With one glance, one could determine that they had great potential.

Ye Jiuge was quite satisfied with these young maids. She instructed Qing Mama, "I think that they are all fine. Let them remain!"

"Quickly thank Eldest Miss," Qing Mama told the young maids delightedly.

"We express our gratitude to you, Eldest Miss!" The young maids bowed respectfully.

After Qing Mama asked Zhen Zhu to take the eight young maids away and settle them into the residence, she walked to Ye Jiuge's side and said softly, "Eldest Miss, Qing Liu, and Qing Hu are both the granddaughters of our Yun Clan's old servants. They have mature personalities and are loyal to us. I want to send them to work at Qiu Shui Residence. How do you feel about that?"

"Let them remain in our residence first and train them for some time. Then, I will give you a few prescriptions. After they have learned them, I will let them serve Fourth Sister." Right now, the Qiu Shui Residence was comparable to a lion's den. If she did not help these two young maids become proficient in certain skills, she was afraid that they would not survive Qiu Mama's malicious schemes.

“Eldest Miss, do not worry. I will train them well.” Qing Mama nodded solemnly. Afterward, she could not help but direct her gaze towards the room to the east, wondering if that beautiful male slave was still there.

“Pass along my instructions: no one is allowed to come near the East Room,” Ye Jiuge ordered sternly. Until she could make the male slave submit to her, she would not allow anyone to meet him.

“I understand.” Qing Mama decided to guard the East Room personally to prevent anyone from approaching.

Ye Jiuge dismissed Qing Mama and returned to the East Room. When she pushed the door open, the beautiful man was not moving. It was like he was a painting.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

She found the male slave unconscious on the bed, wearing her pink dress. Long, black hair with a slight sheen cascaded down the bed like a waterfall.

The red mole between his brows accentuated the shimmer on his beautiful face. It was like looking at a painting of a gorgeous man.

Ye Jiuge brushed his hair to the side. When she had seen him earlier at the slave hut, he had appeared quite filthy. She had never thought that he was actually somewhat clean. It seemed like she did not need to force him to cleanse himself in the bath after all.

“Little Jiuge, do you like this kind of effeminate man?” Zi Shang voiced his displeasure.

“How did you determine that he was effeminate?”

This whole time, the male slave had been silent. Ye Jiuge could not understand what part of him was “effeminate.” Instead, she felt that he was very fierce, similar to a cornered wild wolf.

“His face is so similar to a woman’s. If he is not feminine, then what is he?” Zi Shang was now regretting that he had advised Ye Jiuge to bring home the male slave. He had not yet made Little Jiuge his. If the effeminate man snatched her away, what could he do?

This is unacceptable. If I get the chance, I will dispose of this girly man.

“If anyone’s face is similar to a woman’s and can be called effeminate, then you must be the most effeminate demon in the entire demon clan,” Ye Jiuge sneered.

Since Zi Shang’s face was unparalleled in its beauty, he dared to make fun of others.

“So it is true!” Zi Shang had a sudden realization. He smiled gleefully, “Little Jiuge truly loves me most.”

“...Assuming that an uninterested person is interested in you is an illness. You should get treatment!” Ye Jiuge rolled her eyes.

Afterward, she lowered her head and poked the male slave’s face. When he remained unconscious, she suddenly felt anxious. He continued to sleep all day long so she could not assign him any duties. If she wanted to neutralize the demonic poison, Soul Departure, she had to obtain the spiritual herb that grew around the Serpent of Departed Soul: Violets of the Netherworld.

Violets of the Netherworld were extremely expensive. One thousand silver taels was their lowest price. If she purchased them to treat this male slave, she would incur a huge loss.

“You better be worth the price. If not, I will sell you to the brothel.”

Ye Jiuge pinched that male slave’s beautiful face once then pocketed one thousand silver taels. She was ready to head out to buy some Violets of the Netherworld.

“I advise you to change your appearance before going out,” Zi Shang’s voice rang out again.

“Why?” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrow.

“Because there might be trouble,” Zi Shang replied.

After Ye Jiuge thought about it carefully, she understood Zi Shang’s meaning. Not only was it unclear where this slave had come from, but he had also been poisoned with a rare demonic poison. He was definitely becoming a huge hassle.

Changing her appearance was a piece of cake to Ye Jiuge. She was used cosmetics to conceal the scars on her face. A few dabs here and there, and she became a young girl with an ordinary face that not even Qing Mama would recognize.

Only large medicinal stores stocked such expensive spiritual herbs as Violets of the Netherworld. Although the Ye Clan had a few large medicinal stores in the capital, Ye Jiuge was afraid that someone might recognize her. In the end, she chose another store named BaiCao Hall.

The medicinal hall had minimalist, yet imposing furnishing. Around this time of day, there were about eight workers there, sorting medicines and serving the customers.

A tall, thin clerk saw Ye Jiuge enter. He greeted her eagerly, "Esteemed customer, do you wish to fill your prescription or are you looking for a consultation about an illness?"

"I want to fill my prescription. Do you have any Violets of the Netherworld?" Ye Jiuge asked.

The clerk stiffened. However, he recovered quickly and said even more enthusiastically, "The shopkeeper is the only one who is authorized to sell a spiritual herb like Violets of the Netherworld. I request that you wait for a moment in a private room. I will immediately ask the shopkeeper to bring it over."

"All right." Although Ye Jiuge found the clerk's attitude slightly odd, she felt that such a sizeable medicinal store would not harm her, so she proceeded to the private room to wait.

The shopkeeper hurried over with an embroidered red box. He smiled then said, "Valuable customer, forgive me for my lack of manners and not welcoming you personally when you arrived at our small shop. My last name is Jin. May I know how to address you?"

"My last name is Su." Ye Jiuge used a random fake last name then said, "I want to buy one stalk of Violets of the Netherworld. Shopkeeper Jin, do you stock them here?"

"Miss Su, you came at just the right moment. We have just stocked a stalk of high-quality Violets of the Netherworld. Have a look to see if it satisfies you."

Shopkeeper Jin opened the embroidered box and placed it on the table. Inside the box, there was a giant stalk of purple spiritual herbs seven inches long with their roots still attached. They had a faint fragrance. Their quality was truly exceptional.

"Shopkeeper, how much do you plan to sell them for?" Since this stalk was packaged so extravagantly, Ye Jiuge estimated a high price.

"Miss Su, allow me to be presumptuous and ask what kind of elixir you intend to produce with this

medicinal herb after you purchase it?" Shopkeeper Jin was all smiles as he asked her.

"Why do you ask? Does your medicinal shop need the elixir recipe in exchange for selling medicine?" Ye Jiuge smiled insincerely, and a hint of wariness surfaced in her mind.

It was clear that Shopkeeper Jin's inquiry was alluding to something else.

"Of course not. I only meant that those who can use a third stage spiritual herb to produce elixirs must possess exceptional abilities, so I wanted to befriend you. Miss Su, if I have caused any misunderstandings, please, forgive me," Shopkeeper Jin quickly acknowledged his mistake.

"I do not wish to engage in any more idle chatter. How much is it?" Ye Jiuge asked directly. The more they interacted, the fishier she found Shopkeeper Jin.

"One thousand silver taels. I will consider it a favor to you—as a friend," Shopkeeper Jin said graciously.

"I accept." Ye Jiuge took out the one thousand silver taels. She politely declined Shopkeeper Jin's invitation to tea and quickly left BaiCao Hall.

After a few steps, she noticed that someone was trailing her. Without giving herself away, Ye Jiuge circled the block a few times before she identified who was tailing her. Three people in total, all skilled in martial arts. However, it seemed that they were amateurish when it came to tailing and they appeared to be unfamiliar with their job.

Ye Jiuge led them to the most remote alley in the capital and disappeared with a flash.

When the three martial artists chased her to a dead end but then could not find Ye Jiuge, they immediately shouted in surprise, "Where is she? Where did she go?"

"Gentlemen, what can I do for you?" Ye Jiuge approached them from behind.

The three martial artists immediately received a huge shock.

The short and stout martial artist standing at the front had an idea. Instantly, he gave her a wicked smile and said, "Little girl, since you have the money to purchase some spiritual herbs at the medicinal shop, you must have more where that came from. Hand it over."

"I never expected imperial guards to be so poor that they have to resort to robbery." Ye Jiuge narrowed her eyes.

Earlier, she had noticed that the palms of these three martial artists were thickly calloused. This

could only be the result of years of handling lances. In the capital, only members of the imperial guard practiced with lances. If it were not for this, she would have already killed them.

When the three martial artists realized that their identities were exposed, they immediately smiled menacingly and said, "Since you have already found us out, then come with us quietly!"

As they spoke, they edged towards her in a flanking position and pounced.

Pang! Pang! Pang!

Ye Jiuge lifted her leg and kicked the three men away.

"If you want to live, then tell me the truth: Who directed you to follow me?" Ye Jiuge seized the stout martial artist by the hair and yanked his head up.

"No one instructed us. We were passing by when we saw you. We felt that you looked vulnerable, so we followed you here." The martial artist was tight-lipped.

"It seems that you will not give in unless you experience more serious or unpleasant consequences." Ye Jiuge stepped on the martial artist's lower leg.

Crack!

His shank snapped in three sections as he howled with pain.

"Aiya, it has been a long time since I have extorted a confession from someone. My skills are slightly rusty," Ye Jiuge said apologetically, shaking her head. "Originally, I just wanted to break it in two. However, I accidentally snapped it in three places. You need not worry, I will choose somewhere else to step next time. I can guarantee that your death will be a quick and painless release."

As she spoke, she lifted her leg again!

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Translator: Nyoï-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoï-Bo Studio

“Stop stepping, stop stepping!” That short, stout man begged with agonizing cries, “I’ll tell you everything, okay?”

Ye Jiuge’s right leg hovered on his shank as she bent down and said, “Speak. I’m listening!”

“Shopkeeper Jin from the medicinal store was...the one who asked us to follow you. He wanted to use unscrupulous means to intimidate you into submission!” the short, stout man confessed with a trembling voice.

“You still dare to lie to me?” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrow.

BaiCao Hall had conducted business in the capital for so many years, so why would they mar their reputation over one stalk of spiritual herbs? It was obvious that someone else was threatening him behind the scenes.

“I am not lying to you. I am telling the truth!” the short, stout martial artist insisted.

“Ha-ha!” Ye Jiuge’s right leg stepped on him forcefully.

Ka ca, ka ca!

Two perfect sections.

The short, stout man fainted from the pain.

“Who is next? Inform me in advance how many sections you would like your bones broken into. If you speak up too late, I will not entertain any requests!” Ye Jiuge turned around and flashed a mesmerizing smile towards the two remaining martial artists.

“I’ll talk, I’ll talk!”

It was clear that the two remaining men were not as upright as the short, stout martial artist. They instantly betrayed the instigator, the one behind all this. “It was the Crown Prince who commanded us to keep an eye on the medicinal stores. When someone purchased Violets of the Netherworld, we were supposed to go after them.”

The Crown Prince?

Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrow. Why would her ex-fiancé suddenly be so concerned about Violets of the Netherworld? Don’t tell me that, because the Crown Prince was attracted to the male slave’s

beauty and harbored an illicit interest towards him, the slave had fled!

Of course, that was very unlikely. There was a better possibility that the male slave possessed something vital to the Crown Prince.

It seems that, this time, I have acquired a treasure.

Ye Jiuge's mood improved, so she spared the lives of the three martial artists. She stealthily returned to the Zhilin Residence in the Ye Residence.

The male slave had just regained consciousness. As soon as he noticed her, his expression immediately turned cold.

"Beautiful little man, come. Smile for me. If it makes me happy, perhaps I will be generous and spare your life." When Ye Jiuge saw his expression, she could not stop herself from teasing him.

"..." The male slave's expression remained the same. However, intense hatred flitted past his eyes.

"All right. I will stop yanking your chain. Now, let us discuss important matters." Ye Jiuge lost her playfulness and asked seriously, "Are you aware what kind of poison is in your body?"

"..." The male slave did not reply.

"It is the demonic poison, Soul Departure. It is unique to a third stage demonic beast, the Serpent of Departed Soul. Those who are poisoned with it become completely debilitated. Their spiritual energy is suppressed, and they are unconscious most of the time. Within seven days, they die."

Ye Jiuge paused for a moment. Afterward, she continued, "Based on your condition, I feel that you have four days left to live, at most. What do you think about this?"

The male slave's eyes contracted slightly. His beautiful red lips flattened into a straight line.

"To neutralize this poison, you need Violets of the Netherworld. However, when I visited the medicinal store today, I heard that the Crown Prince had snapped up all the stalks in town. Not only that, but he was also investigating individuals who have purchased Violets of the Netherworld."

As Ye Jiuge spoke, she observed the male slave's reaction. His brows furrowed slightly; he seemed to be deep in thought. She could not sense any animosity in him when she'd spoken about the Crown Prince.

Since there was no grudge between him and the Crown Prince, why was the Crown Prince so interested in him?

The cogs in Ye Jiuge's brain turned. Suddenly, she recalled that soldiers were searching the streets for the Su Clan's escaped slave. Immediately, the words spilled out of her mouth, "You are the Su Clan's escaped slave?"

When the male slave heard the words "Su Clan," deep-rooted hatred immediately shone in his dark eyes. His fingers balled tightly into fists. It was evident that Ye Jiuge had just poured salt on a wound.

"Great. Now, we can be friends." Ye Jiuge smiled with satisfaction.

Puzzled, the male slave looked at her.

"Do you not recognize me?" Ye Jiuge asked.

The male slave shook his head hesitantly.

"Then let me formally introduce myself to you. I am Ye Jiuge, the ex-fiancé of the Crown Prince and Su Yufeng's stepdaughter. Do you find these two pieces of information acceptable?"

Ye Jiuge wiped away the foundation powder and revealed her real face, disfigured with scars. She smiled as she said, "I thought that my ruined reputation had already spread throughout the entire capital. I never thought that there was someone left who still did not recognize me."

After staring at Ye Jiuge's face for a long time, the male slave nodded. His red lips moved slightly as he spoke wordlessly, "Friends."

"Since you have placed so much good faith in me, I will be kind and help you neutralize the poison!"

Ye Jiuge retrieved the stalk of Violets of the Netherworld from her sleeve and said with a smile, "This spiritual herb cost two thousand silver taels. I will charge you one thousand silver taels to produce the elixir. Additionally, when I purchased you, I spent three thousand silver taels. That amounts to six thousand silver taels. If you do not repay me, you will have to be my slave for the rest of your life. If you agree, nod your head."

"Little Jiuge, I never realized how wicked you are!" Suddenly, Zi Shang felt slight pity for the male slave.

"If you are not wicked, then you should help him repay his debt. I will give you a ten percent

discount, which makes it five thousand and five hundred. What do you think?" Ye Jiuge replied.

Immediately, Zi Shang stopped speaking. If that was the case, it was better for him to let Ye Jiuge double-cross others.

The male slave's eyes locked on her. It was as if he was telling her that she was not proposing a fair deal.

"If you feel that your life is not worth six thousand silver taels, then forget it. After you walk out, turn left. I won't be seeing you out. Farewell!" Ye Jiuge placed the spiritual herb back into her sleeve.

The male slave gritted his teeth and nodded his head fiercely.

"Wise men adapt to their circumstances. I admire intelligent people. All right, I will produce the elixir now. Be good and wait for me here."

Pleased, Ye Jiuge left the room.

Ye Yuxuan had always claimed that the Ye Clan was a proper clan of Spiritual Elixir Alchemists, so he had built an Elixir Production Room in each of his son's and daughter's residences, including the Zhilin Residence. However, this Elixir Production Room was tiny, and its Elixir Production Furnace was of a most inferior quality.

"Luckily, these Violets of the Netherworld are not difficult to distill. Otherwise, so late at night, I would not know where to find an Elixir Production Room."

Ye Jiuge ignited a flame with her deft hands.

As the herb that grew alongside the Serpent of Departed Soul, even if Violets of the Netherworld were eaten raw, they could neutralize the poison, Soul Departure.

However, the male slave had been poisoned for far too long. If he ate them raw, they would not be beneficial, so she needed to distill the herb into an essence.

Ye Jiuge placed the Violets of the Netherworld into the Elixir Production Furnace. She started the distillation process, controlling the flame with practiced ease.

In front of her eyes, the high temperature slowly dissolved the abundant stalk of purple spiritual herbs. In the end, it was distilled into a purple medicinal liquid.

"Strange." Ye Jiuge furrowed her eyebrows. She recalled that the medicinal liquid distilled from Violets of the Netherworld should be purplish-black. Why was it such a faint purple?

Given the quality of these Violets of the Netherworld, this kind of situation should not occur!

She leaned in closer to the Elixir Production Furnace to observe it more clearly and discovered that the distilled essence had deficient medicinal properties. Even if one consumed it, it would not wholly neutralize the poison.

Could it be that this stalk of spiritual herb was problematic?

At this time, the purple imprint on her wrist suddenly emanated a purple glow and enveloped the medicinal liquid.

“You have fallen into someone’s trap. They have applied the Fragrance of a Thousand Miles to this stalk of Violets of the Netherworld,” Zi Shang told her gravely.

The Fragrance of a Thousand Miles! Its scent could be distinguished by a pursuer from a thousand miles away!

Ye Jiuge’s eyes widened considerably. If she could not think of an idea to dispose of this medicinal liquid, the male slave’s identity would be exposed—as would her own.

Meanwhile, at that moment, at the Demonic Beast Enclosure in the Crown Prince’s residence, a large jet black butterfly gently fluttered its wings and flew away softly.

“Follow it. You must bring the person back,” Dongfang Jianming, the Crown Prince, said with a sinister expression.

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The large black butterfly fluttered through the night, flitting gracefully past all the houses. Finally, it stilled its wings in front of a large residence with an impressive entrance.

Dongfang Jianming looked up. “Su Residence” was inscribed on the door plaque, rousing his

suspicion. "Why would the Fragrance Detecting Butterfly come here?"

"Your Highness?" The leader of the guards looked curiously at Dongfang Jianming.

"Knock on the door," Dongfang Jianming ordered coldly.

"Yes, Your Highness."

Immediately, the leader of the guards went to knock on the door. When the servants learned that the Crown Prince himself was visiting the Su Residence, they quickly welcomed him in.

The head of the Su Clan was at a spiritual retreat, so his son, Su Junqing, welcomed the Crown Prince instead. He asked in surprise, "Your Highness, what is the purpose of your visit so late at night?"

Dongfang Jianming scowled silently. He lifted his finger and the Fragrance Detecting Butterfly immediately flapped its wings and flew into the front of the Su Residence. It stopped at the entrance of an Elixir Production Room.

Dongfang Jianming barged in with his men and pried open the Elixir Production Furnace. There, he discovered a drop of faint purple essence from the Violets of the Netherworld.

"Su Junqing, why are my Violets of the Netherworld in your Elixir Production Furnace?" Dongfang Jianming interrogated sternly, pointing to the Elixir Production Furnace.

He had gathered all the Violets of the Netherworld in the entire city. Afterward, he had selected a few of the best stalks and soaked them in Fragrance of a Thousand Miles before giving them back to a few large medicinal stores. He had wanted to find out who had offered refuge to the brat with the last name Ye. It never occurred to him that the Su Clan might be the culprit.

"Your Highness, you have wrongfully accused me. I have never seen this stalk of Violets of the Netherworld before," Su Junqing quickly insisted on his innocence. The Elixir Production Room was rarely used; he did not know how a stalk of Violets of the Netherworld had suddenly appeared here.

"Hmph, don't tell me that this stalk of Violets of the Netherworld grew legs and ran to your Elixir Production Furnace by itself?" Dongfang Jianming was ferocious as he spoke in a confrontational manner. "Earlier, I felt odd. How could that Ye brat evade capture after being surrounded by soldiers? It turns out that you, a double-crosser, were helping him."

"Your Highness, you are wrong!" Su Junqing dropped to one knee to express his obeisance as he reasoned with Dongfang Jianming, "To help you obtain the treasure map, I forsook my wife and

son. Why would I betray you for the sake of my wife's younger brother whose heart brims with hatred for me?"

When Dongfang Jianming recalled how Su Junqing had brutally murdered his wife's entire family, his intense emotions slowly calmed. After thinking about it carefully, he realized that it was unlikely that Su Junqing was guilty. He was not that foolish.

Dongfang Jianming reached out and helped Su Junqing to his feet. He consoled him, "I was momentarily agitated, so I might have spoken harshly towards you. Junqing, please don't take it to heart."

"I would not dare." Su Junqing's expression showed that he was feeling wronged yet also touched by the Crown Prince's gesture.

Dongfang Jianming patted his shoulder and sighed, "Since this relates to the treasure map, it's very urgent. You can understand without further elaboration that you must catch that Ye brat as soon as possible. He was poisoned with Soul Departure, so he will not be able to live longer than a few days. If he is already dead, it will be very troublesome."

"I understand. Your Highness, please do not worry. I will try my best to capture him soon," Su Junqing replied, nodding repeatedly. However, he was secretly cursing Dongfang Jianming for closing the stable door after the horse had bolted.

He had already suggested to him that the Ye brat was not afraid of death, so it was useless to threaten him with Soul Departure. However, Dongfang Jianming had refused to listen to his advice and had given his commands without thinking about the consequences. This had allowed the Ye brat to escape.

"Junqing, do your job well. Your contributions will not be overlooked." Dongfang Jianming smiled. Afterward, he mentioned casually, "I heard that Great Master Yun has recently confined your aunt to her residence?"

"That's right. For the last two days, Shanshan has been begging us to vouch for her mother. However, her father was at the crucial point of his spiritual retreat. As a member of the younger generation, it was inappropriate for me to voice my concerns to my aunt's husband. It was a difficult matter for me to handle!" Su Junqing sighed then said earnestly to Dongfang Jianming, "Your Highness, I hope that you will take the Su Clan's utmost loyalty to you into account and help Shanshan. That girl has always been devoted to you. Lately, you have been neglecting her. She was so depressed that she could not even eat a grain of rice."

"Shanshan—silly girl! I have been too busy recently, so I have not had time to see her. Why would she indulge in such foolish thoughts?" Tenderness appeared on Dongfang Jianming's face as he

said, "But if this is the case, then I will visit her tomorrow and take the opportunity to have a good chat with Great Master Yun. Shanshan's mother is also the Ye Clan's matriarch. Even if she has done something improper, she should be punished lightly."

"Your Highness, you are right!" Su Junqing smiled instinctively.

"However, you still need to conduct a proper investigation into this matter of the Violets of the Netherworld." Dongfang Jianming suddenly became severe.

"Your Highness, don't worry. I will complete this task to your satisfaction." Su Junqing also wanted to find out who was framing him.

While Dongfang Jianming and Su Junqing were resolving their hostility and strengthening their alliance, Ye Jiuge was preparing to steal some Violets of the Netherworld from the Crown Prince Residence.

The Crown Prince Residence was usually heavily guarded. However, Dongfang Jianming had just gone out taking a team of highly-skilled spiritual guards with him. At that moment, security was very lax.

Unnoticed, Ye Jiuge managed to retrieve the Violets of the Netherworld from the residence and successfully produce the antidote. The medicinal liquid had a vibrant purple color and the unique fragrance of the herb. It was undoubtedly genuine.

She filled a small jade bottle with the essence and went to show it off in the East Room.

"Look at this! This is the antidote I produced with tremendous effort."

Ye Jiuge displayed the small jade bottle as she recounted the entire process of how she had acquired the spiritual herb required to produce the antidote. At the end of her tale, she lamented regretfully, "It was such a pity that there was not enough time for me to devise a better plan to incriminate the Su Clan. I doubt the Crown Prince will be fooled."

When the beautiful male slave heard the Su Clan mentioned, a burning gaze shot out from his eyes. He reached out to snatch away the small jade bottle.

"What are you in a rush for?" Ye Jiuge slapped his hand away and said, "I will give you the antidote. However, after you have consumed the medicine, you have to be honest with me and tell me everything. If you agree, nod your head."

The male slave nodded his head without hesitation.

Then, Ye Jiuge pressed the jade bottle and a piece of cotton cloth into his hands.

“Here, vomit into this cloth.”

The male slave drank the medicine, and his beautiful, stoic face immediately became purplish red. When he opened his mouth, black blood spewed out.

Ye Jiuge waited for him to finish purging the poison from his body. Afterward, she poured him a cup of tea and asked, “Can you speak now?”

“I can.” The male slave’s voice was unexpectedly pleasant.

“What is your name? How did you become one of the Su Clan’s enemies?” Ye Jiuge asked while cleaning up the poisoned blood.

“My name is Ye Yu...” he said slowly. Then, he filled her in on his true identity.

He was a descendant of a very famous clan of assassins. Thirty years ago, his grandfather had obtained a treasure map by accident. From that moment on, he had been hunted by men he did not recognize. As a last resort, he brought his family to live in seclusion in a mountainous forest on the outskirts. Perhaps, because he had killed so many people, his tainted hands had caused him to suffer great misfortune. The number of the Ye Clan’s descendants was shrinking; in Ye Yu’s generation, there was only him and his sister, Ye Yunzhi.

Ye Yunzhi was five years older than Ye Yu and possessed a Metal Spiritual Root as a favorable attribute. She had a gentle and kind personality. Although she practiced her clan’s secret techniques, she had always been unwilling to kill. Not only that, she yearned for the world beyond the mountains.

One day, when her family was not around, she took her chances and snuck off. She never could have known that her running away would have resulted in an ill-fated relationship.

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As soon as Ye Yunzhi left the mountains, she rescued Su Junqing, who had been bitten by a poisonous snake. Romance bloomed between them, and they married in secret. Ye Yunzhi did not dare tell her family.

After the wedding, Su Junqing treated Ye Yunzhi exceptionally well. When she became pregnant, every day, he urged her to bring him home to meet her family. Ye Yunzhi also missed her family terribly, so eventually, she took Su Junqing to visit them. It never occurred to her that she was not bringing home a good husband, but a devil whose mind was filled with wicked schemes.

Su Junqing was wildly ambitious. A long time ago, he had discovered the location of the valley where the Ye Clan lived in seclusion. However, the Ye Clan had constructed a magical barrier around the valley. When he could not find a way to enter their territory, he assigned men to keep watch on the surrounding area.

The moment Ye Yunzhi left the mountains, Su Junqing was immediately informed. To gain her trust, he pretended that a poisonous snake had bitten him. It was all because he wanted her to bring him into the valley. Ye Yunzhi never suspected his intentions and threw caution to the wind when she told Su Junqing how to enter the valley.

Su Junqing brought assassins with him and surrounded the valley. He threatened the family, trying to force them to hand over the treasure map, but the Ye Clan would rather die than submit to his demands. In the violent confrontation that ensued, the entire family was slaughtered. Only Ye Yu was left alive. Subsequently, he was poisoned with Soul Departure.

When the guards saw that he was unconscious, they slacked on their watch. Ye Yu took this as an opportunity to escape. However, he fainted on the journey, so a slave trader seized him with the intention of selling him at the slave market. This helped Ye Yu evade capture by the imperial guards. In the end, he was purchased by Ye Jiuge.

When Ye Yu spoke about how his family had been killed, his beautiful eyes became bloodshot. The deep hatred on his face was unmistakable.

“Your entire family was murdered by Su Junqing. What about your sister?” asked Ye Jiuge.

“I don’t know. I have not seen her since I was caught.” Animosity laced Ye Yu’s cold face. If his sister had not trusted this evil man, the family would have avoided this tragedy.

“Women!” Ye Jiuge recalled a very famous saying: the tears women cry after marriage are the result of their foolish decisions before marriage.

Ye Yunzhi had not made foolish decisions because water occupied her mind, but sulfuric acid.

Otherwise, she would not have been entirely out of her mind and fallen in love with an ingrate.

“Miss Ye, I will never forgive him for massacring my entire family. If you help me avenge them, I am willing to give you the treasure map.” Ye Yu looked up at Ye Jiuge. He believed that a physician who could neutralize Soul Departure could help him exact his revenge.

“I am guessing that your treasure map is incomplete,” Ye Jiuge said with a raised eyebrow. Otherwise, why would the Ye Clan hold onto it without retrieving the treasure?

She had not yet located her grandfather, and Ye Yuxuan was waiting for an opportunity to bleed her dry. She did not wish to attract any more trouble for a worthless treasure map. To be honest, if Dongfang Jianming and the Su Clan were not coveting the map so much, she hardly would have given it a second glance.

When Ye Yu saw that Ye Jiuge felt it might be too inconvenient to help him, he immediately said, “Although that treasure map is only an incomplete piece, the secret treasure’s location is recorded on it. Whoever obtains the secret treasure will be the supreme leader of the Lei Kingdom.”

“Even if you are telling me that I would be the supreme leader of the world, I am not interested.” Ye Jiuge was not this ambitious.

Ye Yu panicked. He was forced to show his hand, “These last years, the Ye Clan has been studying the treasure map. We have confirmed that the secret treasure is located in the Hongyue Secret Realm.”

“Are you certain that it was the Hongyue Secret Realm?” Immediately, Ye Jiuge’s expression turned serious.

The Hongyue Secret Realm was the largest hidden land that humankind had discovered. It could only be accessed once every decade. Every time it opened, countless highly-skilled spiritual practitioners entered to seek a favorable opportunity.

Her grandfather had found the Purple Lightning Wood in the Hongyue Secret Realm.

If she could enter that place, perhaps, she would discover clues regarding his whereabouts.

“My words are absolutely true,” Ye Yu said without any hesitation.

Ye Jiuge fell silent. She called out to Zi Shang in her mind and asked, “What are your thoughts on this?”

“Since you have the same enemies, if you help him, you will be helping yourself,” Zi Shang said

calmly.

"It is easier said than done. I am afraid that with the treasure map in my hands, the Su Clan and the Crown Prince will not be the only ones troubling me."

After hearing about the Ye Clan's massacre, she had concluded that without sufficient capacity to protect herself, obtaining the treasure map was equivalent to committing suicide.

"With my presence, what are you afraid of?" Zi Shang said smugly.

"Tch! You would be more convincing if you didn't have to hide in the imprint!" Although Ye Jiuge scoffed at Zi Shang's vanity, her heart quieted down considerably. She told Ye Yu, "All right. I will help you seek revenge. However, we will not be able to overthrow the Su Clan and the Crown Prince easily. We need to devise a foolproof plan."

"As long as I can exact my revenge, regardless of how long it takes, I will wait." Ye Yu finally heaved a sigh of relief. He could not help but show the exhaustion on his face. Although the Soul Departure had been neutralized, his body was still frail.

"First, rest. We will discuss your revenge later," Ye Jiuge assured Ye Yu then left the East Room.

When she arrived at the central room, she called Qing Mama over and asked, "Qing Mama, have you heard about the Su Clan's son, Su Junqing?"

"There are no decent men in the Su Clan. Why are you interested?" Qing Mama said with furrowed brows.

"Don't be mistaken. I have heard that Su Junqing is married to a great wife, so I am just asking out of curiosity." Ye Jiuge pretended to be indifferent towards the topic.

"Where did Eldest Miss hear this news? Although Su Junqing has taken countless concubines, he has not married a proper wife yet." Qing Mama asked, baffled by this information.

"Are you certain that he is not married yet?" Ye Jiuge was stunned. Earlier, Ye Yu had undoubtedly mentioned that Ye Yunzhi and Su Junqing were married. She had even become pregnant. Even though Ye Yunzhi seemed like a complete fool, it was impossible that she could be unsure whether or not she was married.

"Look, Su Junqing is a son of the Su Clan and its future head. In the capital, he was famous for being a talented, handsome young man. If he were married, do you think I would be unaware of this?" Qing Mama chuckled involuntarily.

“Oh. Maybe, I was mistaken!” Ye Jiuge smiled as she secretly despised Su Junqing.

For the kind of bastard who cheated someone out of their possessions and heart then massacred their entire family, ten thousand deaths would not be enough to repent.

“Eldest Miss, I heard that Su Junqing is handsome and has attracted attention from many young girls. You should stay away from him,” Qing Mama warned worriedly.

Eldest Miss had already experienced failure in her relationship with the Crown Prince. She did not wish to see Eldest Miss hurt by another terrible man.

“Qing Mama, do not worry. Even if all of the men in this world were wiped out, I would never be attracted to that horrible bastard, Su Junqing.” Ye Jiuge felt that Qing Mama was going to continue nagging, so she quickly changed the topic, “By the way, after Su Yufeng was confined to her residence, did she stir up any trouble?”

“She seems well-behaved these days. On the contrary, Second Miss has made a few trips to the Su Residence to request help. However, I have heard that the head of the Su Clan was at a spiritual retreat progressing in his cultivation to be a Great Master, so all her efforts have been futile.”

As Qing Mama spoke, she was both happy and worried: happy because right now, no one could support Su Yufeng, and worried that, once the head of the Su Clan progressed to the next stage successfully, his clan's power would increase. Then, Su Yufeng would be even more arrogant.

Just when Ye Jiuge was about to reassure Qing Mama, Zhen Zhu walked in anxiously and announced, “Eldest Miss, things are not going well.”

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Translator: Nyoibo Studio Editor: Nyoibo Studio

“Why are you in such a panic? You are displaying improper behavior,” Qing Mama chided Zhen Zhu in displeasure.

Although she was a loyal maid, the appropriateness of her conduct still fell short of expectations. Even though Qing Mama had trained Zhen Zhu for a long time, her etiquette was not showing much progress.

After Qing Mama berated the maid, she cowered slightly. When Qing Mama saw the girl's reaction, she became angrier. She snapped peevishly, "If you have gotten wind of any news, please tell us quickly."

"Right away!" Zhen Zhu quickly reported, "Old Master has rescinded his order to confine Madame to her residence."

"What? Rescinded?" Qing Mama was shocked.

"I heard that the Crown Prince himself came to plea for a more lenient punishment. Right now, he is heading to Shuimo Garden with Old Master," Zhen Zhu recounted the details of everything she had heard in full.

"This truly fulfils the saying, 'Whatsoever troubles a person the most is likely to happen to them.'" Qing Mama felt uneasy. Before she could finish training the young maids whom she had brought back, Su Yufeng was being released from confinement.

Ye Jiuge smiled coldly. Although she understood that it would be impossible to imprison Su Yufeng in her residence forever, the great Crown Prince was really audacious to meddle and dictate another's household affairs.

"Eldest Miss, what should we do now?" Qing Mama asked anxiously.

"What are you afraid of? On the one hand, she has only just been released from confinement, so it is impossible for Father to allow her to manage the household straight away. On the other hand, do you think that Qing Hu and Qing Liu are proficient enough yet to prepare the medicine using the recipe I gave you before?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"I think that they are almost skilled enough. Perhaps, I can instruct them to prepare two bowls of medicine for you to taste?" Qing Mama asked.

"Go ahead!" Ye Jiuge had not yet had a chance to try the maids' concoctions.

Qing Mama passed along the order at once. Coincidentally, Qing Hu and Qing Liu were already practicing, so she promptly fetched a bowl of Tian He Snow Lotus Soup with heart-strengthening and spleen-invigorating properties.

The clear soup was presented in a white porcelain bowl. It gave off a faint fragrance and slid

smoothly down her throat. While the taste lingered in her mouth, her entire body felt rejuvenated.

"It tastes decent!" Ye Jiuge felt that the two maids had successfully learned the medicinal recipe.

"By the way, Eldest Miss, a few days ago, I made a trip to the Qiushui Residence and learned that Fourth Miss has caught the common cold. Should we use this opportunity to send over our people?"

All this time, Qing Mama had been preparing to send Qing Hu and Qing Liu into the Qiushui Residence. At first, she thought she had ample time to ensure that all was in place. She had not expected Su Yufeng's sudden release. She could only send over these two maids ahead of time.

"All right. Ask Qing Hu and Qing Liu to prepare themselves. I will visit Fourth Sister first."

During these last few days, Ye Jiuge had been busy with matters concerning Ye Yu, so she had not been visiting Ye Ruyi. When she and Zhen Zhu reached the Qiushui Residence, Fifth Concubine was sitting in the main seat with a straight back. A dangling jade hairpin was inserted on a tilt into her thick, beautiful hair. She wore a dress woven with crab apple flower motifs and embroidered with clouds and falling snow. Her face was lightly dabbed in makeup. She was almost unrecognizable.

A pretty girl in a simple emerald dress sat at a slightly lower position beside Fifth Concubine. Her translucent eyes were as beautiful as a clear autumn lake. She was Mu Xianglan, the Seventh Concubine.

"Greetings to the Eldest Miss," Seventh Concubine said and quickly curtsied to Ye Jiuge.

"Seventh Concubine, you are too formal with me," Ye Jiuge responded emotionlessly. Although she had never interacted much with Mu Xianglan, she had the impression that she was a force to be reckoned with.

"I still have other matters to attend to, so I shall not bother Elder Sister and Eldest Miss any longer." Seventh Concubine tactfully took her leave.

"Younger Sister, if you have matters to attend to, go ahead!" Fifth Concubine personally escorted out Seventh Concubine. Afterward, she waved away the servants who were in the room.

"Fifth Concubine, what are you doing?" Ye Jiuge was amused. Those who did not know any better would have thought that Fifth Concubine had important matters to discuss with her.

"Eldest Miss, why haven't you visited me these past few days? Having to assert myself here all the time is an indescribable torture." Fifth Concubine's previously straight back relaxed.

Others imagined that, since Fifth Concubine had the power to manage the household, she must be very well-off. However, they could not imagine the weight of the responsibilities burdening her.

In the past, Su Yufeng had been the only one who wielded power within the inner residences. At least half of the servants in the residence were her trusted aides. Even if Seventh Concubine and Qing Mama were helping Fifth Concubine, she would not be able to establish her authority overnight.

"Later, I will send over two capable maids to help you. Then, you will not feel so tormented," Ye Jiuge reassured her.

"They must be Qing Hu and Qing Liu. I've been trying to bring them over. Unfortunately, Qing Mama would not allow it. She told me that she wanted them to stay longer so that she could train them to be better behaved. Actually, I think that these two maids are already well-qualified for their jobs." Fifth Concubine genuinely believed that the two maids were competent enough.

"You know how Qing Mama is when handling her responsibilities. If Madame had not suddenly been released from confinement, she would not be sending them over so soon. By the way, what were you and Seventh Concubine talking about just now?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"Earlier, Seventh Concubine came to tell me that she wanted to take initiative in returning authority for managing the household to Madame. She wished to see how Old Master would react to that suggestion," Fifth Concubine replied.

"Seventh Concubine's idea is quite good. I never thought that she would confide in you with such sincerity." Ye Jiuge smiled.

"Although Seventh Concubine and I seem to get along well, she is hardly an open book," Fifth Concubine said, shaking her head.

The women had only formed an alliance for now so that they could oppose Su Yufeng together. The only one who had treated her and her daughter genuinely without expecting anything in return was Ye Jiuge.

She was clear about that.

"If you can't determine what kind of person she is, then remain guarded with her for now. By the way, I heard that Fourth Sister hasn't been feeling well. Is she better now?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"She is recovering well. She keeps asking about you. Eldest Miss, if you have some time, why don't you see her?" Fifth Concubine smiled.

“Fifth Concubine, come with me.”

Ye Jiuge walked to Ye Ruyi’s room with Fifth Concubine. Ye Ruyi was reclining on a chaise lounge reading a book. Her complexion looked much better than it had a few days ago. She had fair skin and delicate, beautiful facial features. Those Vitality Strengthening Elixirs had not gone to waste.

“Eldest Sister, why are you visiting me?” When Ye Ruyi saw Ye Jiuge, she was pleasantly surprised. She made a move to get up.

“You are still weak. It is fine for you to remain laying down.” Ye Jiuge sat on the other side of the chaise lounge and eyed the book Ye Ruyi was reading. It was about elixir production for beginners.

Fifth Concubine could not bear to see her suffer. She said, “Old Master has sent over a total of fifteen books about producing elixirs. Ruyi has been reading them all day and night, burning the midnight oil. Because of this, she has caught a cold without realizing it.”

“Fourth Sister, you are still young. Not only that, but your body is weak. You do not need to push yourself so hard. It is not worth it to overwork yourself,” Ye Jiuge said with furrowed brows.

Ye Ruyi smiled without saying anything. With a glance, Ye Jiuge knew that she had not taken her words to heart. This young girl was more stubborn than she appeared. Moreover, she had always been distraught at the thought of being abandoned for being useless. This was the reason she was so zealous—it was as if her life depended on it.

Ye Yuxuan was too cold-blooded. He saw his daughter as a tool.

Just as Ye Jiuge was thinking about how to best advise Ye Ruyi, Qiu Mama came forward and reported, “Fifth Concubine and Eldest Miss, Second Miss and the Su Clan’s eldest son are waiting in the front parlor. They wish to visit Fourth Miss.”

“Who is the Su Clan’s eldest son?” Fifth Concubine blinked. For a moment, she did not realize who he was.

“He is Second Miss’s older cousin and the legitimate son of the Su Clan, Su Junqing!” Qiu Mama lowered her eyes, concealing the disdain in them. If Fifth Concubine could not even recognize Su Clan’s eldest son, she should not be allowed to socialize publicly.

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“Su Junqing?” Ye Jiuge could not help but raise a plucked eyebrow. She had not expected to meet the renowned Su Junqing so soon.

“Eldest Miss, do you know the Su Clan’s Eldest Son?” Fifth Concubine asked, feeling uncertain. Since her previous position was so lowly and she’d been holed up in her dilapidated residence with her daughter, she had never met Su Junqing before.

“No, but I have heard about him often!” Ye Jiuge smiled slightly. She told Qiu Mama, “Since Second Sister and the Su Clan’s Eldest Son are so thoughtful, let’s invite them in!”

“Yes.” Qiu Mama bowed. However, in her mind, she felt that it was beneath her to obey Ye Jiuge.

When she hears that a handsome man was visiting, she cannot keep herself together. She really is a lewd woman.

After a while, Ye Shanshan led in a slender man with a handsome face. He was around twenty years old. A golden coronet perched on his head, and he wore a magnificent embroidered white robe. He smiled silently, and his gaze was warm. At first sight, he was unforgettable. Ye Jiuge finally got a slight clue as to why he had been able to pull the wool over Ye Yunzhi’s eyes. Sure enough, Su Junqing was very good-looking.

“Eldest Sister, you are here too. Don’t tell me, you found out that my cousin was coming to visit Fourth Sister, so you came here on purpose to wait for him?” Ye Shanshan smiled cheekily, but her eyes were full of condescension. She was implying mockingly that Ye Jiuge was secretly in love with Su Junqing.

Before Ye Jiuge could reply, Fifth Concubine spoke first, “Second Miss, you really love cracking jokes. Eldest Miss is not a goddess, so how could she have known that you were bringing over the Su Clan’s Eldest Son? We only became aware of the Su Clan’s Eldest Son’s visit after Qiu Mama informed us.”

When Ye Shanshan saw how Fifth Concubine was speaking on Ye Jiuge’s behalf, she itched to lacerate her face. If Fifth Concubine and Ye Jiuge had not joined forces to frame her mother, she would have never been locked up in her residence. However, Ye Shanshan focused on the

purpose of her visit and switched her expression into a smile.

“My cousin heard that Fourth Sister is ill, so he came with me to visit her,” she said.

Su Junqing, who was standing beside Ye Shanshan, smirked slightly. Then, he elaborated, “I heard that the Vitality Strengthening Elixir has been extremely beneficial to Younger Sister Ruyi, so I have prepared her a bottle of second-grade Vitality Fortifying Elixir. I hope that Fifth Concubine and Younger Sister Ruyi will not be offended.”

One bottle of second-grade Vitality Fortifying Elixir was worth five hundred silver taels. If he gave it away as a gift, he would be considered lavish.

“This present is too costly. I cannot accept it,” Fifth Concubine quickly declined.

“If Fifth Concubine does not accept, then I will think she is looking down on me.” Su Junqing placed the elixir down in a gentle yet persistent manner. Afterward, he smiled at Ye Ruyi and said, “Younger Sister Ruyi, are you feeling better now?”

He was acting as if he were very close to Ye Ruyi. However, as far as Ye Jiuge could recall, Ye Ruyi had never met Su Junqing before. It was clear that Ye Ruyi was unaccustomed to Su Junqing’s amiability. She lowered her gaze and said very shyly, “I would like to express my utmost gratitude to the Su Clan’s Eldest Son for his concern. I am feeling much better now.”

“I am only older than Younger Sister Ruyi by a few years. If you do not mind, you can refer to me as your cousin, just like your Second Sister!” Su Junqing beamed even more tenderly. His handsome face was entirely capable of enticing anyone to become besotted with him.

Ye Ruyi’s face reddened more. She hesitated for a moment. In the end, blushing, she called him, “Cousin!”

From the sidelines, Ye Jiuge felt that there was something fishy about this situation that she couldn’t quite put her finger on.

No matter how she looked at Su Junqing’s sly face, it looked as if he were romancing a lady! But Ye Ruyi was only seven years old. If he made romantic advances towards her now, he would be entirely out of his mind!

Su Junqing stuck around for a while then took his leave. Before he departed, he eyed Ye Jiuge deliberately. A glint of soul-stirring joviality flitted across his expressive eyes.

If Ye Jiuge were not well aware of Su Junqing’s degeneracy and the fact that it would be impossible for him to be attracted to her hideous face, she might have misinterpreted matters by

thinking that he had taken a fancy to her.

Fifth Concubine personally escorted out Su Junqing. When she returned, she beamed with joy. She kept praising how gentle and well-mannered Su Junqing was and how he had treated her with respect.

Ye Ruyi's face reddened. When she heard her mother praising Su Junqing, she could not help but curve her lips into a smile. It was clear that Su Junqing had made a positive impression on her. Although, given her young age, Ye Ruyi's response to Su Junqing did not go as far as love-struck feelings. However, she had always been lonely and suffered from hardships, so she strongly desired a gentle, handsome older brother figure with an advanced cultivation level to dote on her. This was why, unconsciously, she had developed a childlike admiration for Su Junqing.

"Fifth Concubine, Fourth Sister, lest you have forgotten, allow me to remind you: Su Junqing is Su Yufeng's nephew!" Ye Jiuge had to warn the two ladies, who were genuinely elated.

"I feel that the Su Clan's Eldest Son may not be the same kind of person as Su Yufeng," Fifth Concubine argued with conviction.

"He really is different. From what I can see, the Su Clan's Eldest Son is a far more daunting opponent than Su Yufeng. With one mere visit, he has charmed you and your daughter to the point that you cannot even determine which direction is north or south. It has even slipped your mind that Su Yufeng has been released from confinement," Ye Jiuge said, smiling coldly.

"She was released from her confinement because of the Crown Prince's appeal. It has nothing to do whatsoever with the Su Clan's Eldest Son," Fifth Concubine refuted.

"Do you truly believe that he has nothing to do with the matter, or do you think that this Su Clan's Eldest Son will help you defy Su Yufeng in the future?" Ye Jiuge asked gravely.

"The Su Clan's Eldest Son told me earlier that Madame regrets her actions very much. He said that Ruyi represents the Ye Clan. If he stands behind her, it is like he is standing behind the Ye Clan. Therefore, he wants to resolve the hostility between us so that we can communicate on friendly terms." Su Junqing had personally told her this when she escorted him out. Standing beside them, Ye Shanshan had agreed.

"You truly believe that you can live in harmony with Su Yufeng?" Ye Jiuge felt that Fifth Concubine had truly gone insane.

Fifth Concubine lowered her head guiltily to avoid Ye Jiuge's gaze.

She had never been very ambitious. If Madame was genuinely willing to have a good relationship

with her, she did not want to fight.

“Fourth Sister, do you also feel the same way?” Ye Jiuge turned to look at Ye Ruyi.

“I, I don’t know.” If she were honest, Ye Ruyi did not want to go against Madame either.

However, whenever she thought of how Madame had forced poison down her throat that night, she felt petrified.

Ye Jiuge knitted her eyebrows together. She surmised that something strange was happening. This situation was extremely suspect. Why would Fifth Concubine and Ye Ruyi suddenly change their mind about Su Yufeng? It was as if someone had cast a spell on them.

“That’s right. They are indeed entranced,” Zi Shang’s laid-back voice rang out in her head.

“What do you mean?” Ye Jiuge asked in reply.

“Can’t you see that Su Junqing has mentally manipulated them into being infatuated with him?” said Zi Shang.

“Mental Manipulation?” Ye Jiuge was stunned. Why would a spiritual practitioner like Su Junqing practice black magic?

“He is quite skilled in Mental Manipulation. These two ladies have been influenced by him. If you continue to argue, you will only exacerbate the Mental Manipulation’s hold on them.”

“What can I do to nullify it?” Ye Jiuge asked quickly.

“When you return to your residence, you must prescribe two medicinal elixirs to purify the mind and undo the curse,” Zi Shang replied.

“Very well.” When Ye Jiuge found out that there was a way to repel the curse, she immediately regained her composure.

Actually, Fifth Concubine and her daughter were so easily mentally manipulated because, in their hearts, they were hoping that Su Yufeng would spare them. In which case, she ought to let them learn a proper lesson about Su Yufeng’s scheming ways. That way, they would not lose themselves in the comfort of living in the Qiushui Residence to the point that they could no longer differentiate the good from the bad.

However, Su Junqing was too proficient in the art of Mental Manipulation. Fifth Concubine and Ye Ruyi had only needed to see him once to be charmed by his curse.

Perhaps, that fateful night, Ye Yunzhi had also been under the influence of his Mental Manipulation. Was it possible that the curse had tricked her into revealing the road leading to the entrance of the Ye Clan's valley?

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The more Ye Jiuge mulled it over, the more she felt like her hunch was likely to be true. She could not deal with Fifth Concubine and Ye Ruyi any longer, so she left immediately and returned to Zhilin Residence.

In the East Room, Ye Yu was dressed in a pink dress. He was deep in thought by the window. When he saw Ye Jiuge enter, he stood up and said, "Miss Ye, I have recovered fully. I shall not burden you anymore."

He felt that it was inappropriate for an adult male like him to stay in a lady's residence.

Furthermore, he wanted to venture out to do some reconnaissance about the Su Clan.

He would have simply left earlier, but he wanted to notify Ye Jiuge about his departure,

"Why are you in a rush?" Ye Jiuge sat beside the table and poured herself a cup of tea. After she took a sip, she said, "Can you guess who I bumped into earlier?"

"Who?" Ye Yu asked mechanically.

Ye Jiuge placed her teacup down and said, "Su Junqing."

"You saw him?" Deep hatred flashed in Ye Yu's long, narrow eyes.

"That's right. Not only that, but I also discovered something interesting..." Ye Jiuge then explained that Su Junqing was practicing Mental Manipulation.

“Could it be that my sister was entranced? Is that why she betrayed us?” Ye Yu did not know whether to express relief or grief. Although Ye Yu realized that his sister had not meant to betray the Ye Clan, the fact that she had caused the massacre of her entire family was indisputable.

“Yes. Mental Manipulation is black magic. It is said the acts that are performed to practice it successfully are very immoral. If you wanted to bring down the Su Clan, this would be the best place to start.”

Ye Jiuge had read about this subject in the ancient books: Mental Manipulation was a kind of black magic, and the tactics it utilized were ruthless. However, she was unclear about why they were considered so cruel. Nevertheless, it was unethical to practice black magic. If the public found out that the Su Clan’s Eldest Son—who was famous in the capital—had the gall to practice black magic, he would definitely land in hot water.

“All right, I will investigate him now.” Ye Yu was itching to leave the Ye Residence at once.

“Right now, the Su Clan and Crown Prince’s men are searching for you. If you head out now, can you be absolutely certain that you will be safe?” It was not that Ye Jiuge doubted Ye Yu’s abilities, he just seemed really weak.

“We are a family of assassins, so the Ye Clan is definitely capable of adapting to the situation and carrying out orders. If Su Junqing had not poisoned us without our knowledge, the Ye Clan would not have met such a tragic end.” Ye Yu’s expression was somber.

During their decades in the valley living in seclusion, the Ye Clan had never encountered any problems. They were too dependent on the Barrier for protection; they never expected that someone could enter stealthily and poison them.

It was pointless to regret now. Ye Yu needed to think of a way to find his sister and avenge his family. To prove his capability to Ye Jiuge, Ye Yu purposely emitted rays of grey light from his body as he demonstrated his ability. Then, he stepped towards a corner. Every trace of him disappeared.

Ye Jiuge searched for him everywhere, scouring all corners of the room. No matter how hard she looked, she could not find any sign of Ye Yu. Nevertheless, she could still feel his presence in the room.

“His Invisibility is pretty good!” Zi Shang’s soft voice rang out.

“Do you have a way to render it useless?” Ye Jiuge asked. She was worried that someone might use this skill against her.

“Although his Invisibility isn’t bad, he can only maintain it for a short time. Not only that but when he is invisible, he can’t attack anyone. He can spy, but not assassinate,” Zi Shang commented.

“Even if he can’t kill people, there must be other spiritual practitioners who can.”

Spiritual practitioners could acquire many levels of techniques. Assassins, like Ye Yu, could definitely be capable of Invisibility. She must ensure that she was sufficiently prepared to protect herself from them.

“I do have a way, but what benefit can you provide me in exchange?” Suddenly, Zi Shang’s tone became mischievous.

“What do you wish to gain from this?” asked Ye Jiuge warily.

“Hm!” Zi Shang posed as if contemplating. Finally, he said, “Give me a drop of blood.”

“Fair enough.” Ye Jiuge nodded. This was part of the terms of their Contract.

“Here is the technique to activate your Spiritual Eye.”

After Zi Shang spoke, he implanted the technique in Ye Jiuge’s mind. She followed his instructions and concentrated her Spiritual Energy in the area between her eyebrows. Immediately, warmth coursed around her eyes. When she opened them again, she saw Ye Yu standing in a corner refracting light rays as they hit him. The grey glowing layer around his body changed the direction of the light rays and kept him hidden. This ability was powerful enough in the daylight, so it would be even more effective at night. The Ye Clan had proven themselves worthy as a clan of assassins.

“I never thought that Miss Ye could activate her Spiritual Eye. You are truly impressive.”

When Ye Yu realized that his location was exposed, he came out of the corner. Immediately, the grey glow around his body waned.

“Since you are so capable, I feel reassured.” Ye Jiuge nodded.

“Now, I shall take my leave.” Ye Yu performed a fist and palm salute before vanishing once again.

Ye Jiuge followed him out and observed how Ye Yu brushed past Qing Mama, who was utterly unaware of his presence. Instead, she greeted Ye Jiuge and asked, “Eldest Miss, Qing Hu and Qing Liu are ready. Should we send them over?”

“She has no need for them now. Fifth Concubine couldn’t care less about our maids anymore,” Ye

Jiuge said coldly.

Although Fifth Concubine and Ye Ruyi had only spoken thus because they were not thinking clearly as a result of Su Junqing's Mental Manipulation, Ye Jiuge was still very displeased.

"What happened? Don't tell me things turned sour with Fifth Concubine?" Qing Mama asked.

Previously, Fifth Concubine had been full of praise for the two maids. It was impossible for her to change her mind out of nowhere. However, it was inappropriate for Ye Jiuge to tell Qing Mama that Fifth Concubine and her daughter were entranced by Mental Manipulation. She could only vaguely express that Fifth Concubine wanted to reconcile with Madame.

Ye Jiuge expected Qing Mama to be angered by this. However, Qing Mama surprised her by speaking as if she had predicted this would happen: "This is very normal. Before this, Fifth Concubine only fought back out of desperation when Madame pushed her against the wall. Now that her situation has taken a turn for the better, she will definitely want to regain Madame's favor. I reckon that Old Master has spoken to Fifth Concubine as well. I have seen it countless times. It is impossible that Madame will sincerely want to bury the hatchet with Fifth Concubine. We should watch closely to see how this unfolds. When she hits rock bottom again, we can help her once more. Then, she will be fully clear-headed."

"Actually, you read my mind." Ye Jiuge felt that Qing Mama had proved herself to be her trusted aide. Her comment was truly in accordance with Ye Jiuge's own thoughts.

"Then, let me send them over now!" Qing Mama said immediately.

"Yes. At the same time, inquire discreetly about the situation in the Shuimo Garden and ascertain if Su Junqing has left," Ye Jiuge ordered.

She kept feeling that when Su Junqing visited Fifth Concubine and Ye Ruyi intentionally and performed Mental Manipulation on them, the matter was not as simple as it seemed.

"Right. I will ask around immediately." Qing Mama nodded quickly.

Meanwhile, at the Shuimo Residence, Su Junqing was striking a bargain with Ye Shanshan...

"I will help you deal with Ye Jiuge, and you will help me win over Ye Ruyi."

"Consider it done!" Ye Shanshan nodded without any hesitation. However, she was slightly puzzled and asked, "Cousin, Ye Ruyi is nothing but a silly little girl. Why did you need her?"

She had never heard that her cousin possessed pedophilic tendencies!

“That has nothing to do with you. You only need to mind your own business. I already helped paint you in a positive light in front of the Crown Prince. Whether you can capture his heart depends on you,” said Su Junqing with indifference.

His cousin was really useless. She could not even retain a man’s interest. If he did not need to depend on Su Yufeng and her daughter to become more intimately acquainted with the Ye Clan, he really would not want to exchange another word of pointless drivel with this idiot.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

“Cousin, do you really think I don’t want to capture the Crown Prince’s heart? Lately, he’s been blowing hot and cold, and I can’t figure out what he is thinking.”

Whenever Ye Shanshan broached this topic, she looked hurt. In the past, the Crown Prince had behaved towards her like a considerate gentleman. He had been a totally different person compared to who he was now.

“He’s been busier than usual lately,” Su Junqing fabricated a lie that he could not even convince himself to believe.

Actually, the Crown Prince had changed his attitude towards Ye Shanshan because she had, in a moment of recklessness, pushed Ye Jiuge into the Wanzhang Depths. Although Ye Shanshan would rather die than admit her own evil deed, people in the capital were very perceptive. No one would be unaware of the Ye Clan’s dirty laundry.

If the Crown Prince continued to interact intimately with Ye Shanshan, it would further cement the public’s opinion that he had conspired with someone to murder his fiancée—this was the real reason he had estranged himself from Ye Shanshan.

“Cousin, you don’t need to comfort me. I know all about the Crown Prince’s worries. Why don’t I concede the position of the Crown Princess Consort to Eldest Sister? As long as I can stay by the Crown Prince’s side, I am perfectly willing to be his Second Princess Consort.”

Her mother had proposed this idea to her. At first, Ye Shanshan had felt that if she agreed, her position would be inferior to Ye Jiuge's, so she had been reluctant. However, now it seemed that she had no choice but to resort to such measures.

"You have the right mindset." Su Junqing nodded approvingly before saying, "Ye Jiuge has undergone a significant personality change since experiencing a period of tribulation. If you want to bring her to her knees, it will be difficult. You can only allow her to do what she wants and treat her well. If she lets her guard down, you must strike with a fatal blow when she least expects it. This is exactly how you should do it."

"Just like how we dealt with Fifth Concubine?" Ye Shanshan smiled knowingly.

"That's right." Su Junqing nodded. Then, he instructed her in a hushed voice, "You better hurry up when it comes to Ye Ruyi. You need to settle the matter before my paternal aunt's husband returns."

"Cousin, rest assured. I know what to do." Ye Shanshan nodded, a flash of malice flitting past her eyes.

Meanwhile, at the Zhilin Residence...

Qing Mama was reporting the information she had acquired to Ye Jiuge: "Eldest Miss, the Su Clan's Eldest Son stayed briefly at the Shuimo Garden then left. After Madame was released from the confines of her residence, she asked her personal maid, Zhi Hua, to send a large number of top-notch supplements and medicinal ingredients over to the Qiu Shui Residence. When Fifth Concubine received them, she was delighted. Not only that, she rewarded Zhi Hua with a sizeable purse. I heard that it was stuffed with ten silver taels."

"When you sent over Qing Hu and Qing Liu, did Fifth Concubine tip you?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"She did." Qing Mama showed Ye Jiuge her purse without being asked, then said, "She also gave me ten silver taels."

"Fifth Concubine is really generous," Ye Jiuge chuckled.

In the past, when she lived at that dilapidated residence, Fifth Concubine had not even had any copper coins to reward the servants with. Now, she was splashing out silver taels. It seemed that Ye Yuxuan was truly treating her well.

"Now, Old Master has allotted fifty wenyin grade silver taels monthly to Fourth Miss and Fifth Concubine. I heard that he has also gifted them many fine goods," Qing Mama said.

“No wonder Fifth Concubine is giving money away so extravagantly. By the way, other than making an appeal on Madame’s behalf, what else did the Crown Prince say?”

Knowing the Crown Prince’s personality, he would not have been so keen to visit the Ye Residence just for Su Yufeng’s sake. He must have dropped by to discuss some official matters before pretending to mention Su Yufeng unintentionally.

“I heard that an aristocratic family’s young son has fallen sick. The Crown Prince wished to invite Old Master to their residence to produce medicinal elixirs personally for their young son,” Qing Mama explained.

“Which aristocratic family?” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrow. If they were influential enough to convince Ye Yuxuan, who had always thought so highly of himself, to visit their residence and produce medicinal elixirs for them, this aristocratic family must be remarkable.

“I am ashamed to say that I failed to find out.” Although Qing Mama had recently expanded her social circle, she had not yet groomed any capable allies at the main residence. Therefore, this was the extent of the limited information she was able to learn.

“You do not need to feel rushed. Just keep it in mind and ask someone in the future. Right now, the vital thing to focus on is helping Qing Hu and Qing Liu establish themselves firmly at the Qiu Shui Residence as soon as possible. Regardless of any new developments, they must report to us promptly,” Ye Jiuge ordered gravely.

Lately, events were too uncanny for her to dismiss them as mere coincidences. She suspected that something fishy was going on.

“Eldest Miss, you do not need to worry. Qing Liu and Qing Hu are very bright; they will definitely help you closely monitor the Qiu Shui Residence.”

Qing Mama was extremely confident about the maids, whom she had personally trained. It would have never occurred to her that a terrible incident was going to take place just a few days after Qing Hu and Qing Liu were installed at the Qiu Shui Residence.

Zhen Zhu walked in, she looked flustered. “Eldest Miss, things are not looking good. Qiu Mama has claimed that Qing Hu and Qing Liu have stolen. She is sending them to the Torture Chamber right now,” she said.

“Eldest Miss, Qiu Mama must have set them up. Qing Hu and Qing Liu would never do such a thing,” Qing Mama quickly defended the girls.

“We shall head there now and look into the situation at once.”

Ye Jiuge took Qing Mama to the Qiu Shui Residence. As soon as they arrived, they found Qing Hu and Qing Liu sobbing uncontrollably as they knelt in the middle of the room. Qing Liu cradled her eye, and there was a red palm print on her cheek. One side of her dainty face was swollen.

“You have not been condemned yet. Who asked you to kneel?” After Ye Jiuge assessed the situation, she became angry. She interrogated Qing Liu, “Who slapped you?”

Qing Liu looked at Qiu Mama timidly.

“Eldest Miss, this is the Qiu Shui Residence’s internal household matter. Out of respect for Fifth Concubine and Fourth Miss, please do not interfere with matters that are not your concern,” Qiu Mama said without emotion, bowing from the sidelines.

“Fifth Concubine, do you also consider this to be an internal household matter?” Ye Jiuge narrowed her eyes towards Fifth Concubine.

Immediately, Fifth Concubine felt the awkwardness of her position. She looked at Qiu Mama and spoke as if negotiating, “Why don’t we let these two maids stand up first before we continue our conversation?”

“Fifth Concubine, everyone should abide by the rules. Otherwise, disorder will follow. These two maids committed theft shortly after they came to our residence. If you do not punish them severely, I am afraid that the other servants will become undisciplined,” lamented Qiu Mama.

“Qiu Mama, you speak with such audacity. Someone ignorant of the situation would assume that you are the mistress of the Qiu Shui Residence,” Ye Jiuge said, smiling coldly.

“Eldest Miss, your words are too unkind. I can hardly bear them.” Qiu Mama curtsied fearfully before continuing boldly, “Old Master stationed me at the Qiu Shui Residence to help Fifth Concubine manage the household. Therefore, I must perform my duties to the best of my abilities. Eldest Miss, if you are dissatisfied with me, do not hesitate to take it up with Old Master,” Qiu Mama retorted vehemently, repeatedly mentioning Ye Yuxuan’s name as an excuse.

Fifth Concubine sat awkwardly to one side. Throughout the entire exchange, she had neither uttered a single word nor come to Qing Hu and Qing Liu’s defense.

Ye Jiuge was extremely disappointed with Fifth Concubine’s attitude. Although the Fifth Concubine could be resolute, once she was determined to do something in the face of adversity, her unyielding character vanished utterly—especially when Ye Yuxuan sweet-talked her.

Ye Yuxuan had merely given her a bit of sop, and she had entirely forgotten about all the suffering and hatred that she had experienced in the past. To remain in his good books, she would not even dare cross Qiu Mama. She really had regressed.

Since Fifth Concubine was so foolish, Ye Jiuge no longer needed to treat her with dignity. She turned her head towards Qing Liu and Qing Hu and said, "Stand up and tell me, what did they accuse you of stealing?"

When Qing Hu and Qing Liu heard Ye Jiuge's words, they stood up right away and spoke as they wept, "Eldest Miss, we have been wronged. We are completely unaware of how Elder Sister's Xing Hua's golden butterfly hairpin appeared in our chest."

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Translator: Nyo-i-Bo Studio Editor: Nyo-i-Bo Studio

"Remind me, who is Xing Hua?" Ye Jiuge's eyebrows creased slightly. She thought that it was Fifth Concubine and Ye Ruyi who had been robbed.

"Elder Sister Xing Hua is a high-ranking maid staying in the same room as us," Qing Liu answered quickly.

"Bring her to me. I want to see for myself where this high-ranking maid comes from that makes her so important." Ye Jiuge looked at Fifth Concubine with a sly smile.

Then, Fifth Concubine ordered Qiu Mama, "Bring Xing Hua here."

"Right." Qiu Mama nodded grudgingly and summoned Xing Hua.

Ye Jiuge had assumed that Xing Hua must be an attractive, quick-witted maid. She had never expected a very plain woman with a square face, coarse eyebrows, and thick lips. Far from having a lovely appearance, it was as if Xing Hua were a villager that had sprung up from a lump on the ground.

As soon as Xing Hua saw Ye Jiuge, she was so frightened that she dropped into a kneeling

position. She sputtered, "Eldest Miss, please spare my life. I have no idea how my golden butterfly hairpin appeared in Younger Sister Qing Liu's chest."

"You are only a high-ranking maid. Where did you get such a fine golden hairpin? Was it a reward from Fifth Concubine?"

Ye Jiuge could not believe that Fifth Concubine would be so generous as to reward a maid with such a luxurious gift.

"It was not her. Old Master gifted me this golden butterfly hairpin," Xing Hua hurriedly clarified.

"Really?"

Ye Jiuge's shock was considerable. She eyed Xing Hua again: the maid was slightly pudgy and ordinary-looking. No matter how Ye Jiuge sized her up, she was not Ye Yuxuan's type.

"Eldest Miss, Old Master really did gift this golden butterfly hairpin to Xing Hua," Fifth Concubine said, guessing Ye Jiuge's thoughts. Feeling slightly awkward, she then told the following story:

Xing Hua's father had been Ye Yuxuan's personal escort. One year, when Ye Yuxuan was traveling regularly deep into the mountains to gather medicinal herbs, he accidentally provoked a pack of stage one white-furred wolves, who hunted him down. To protect him, Xing Hua's father had sacrificed himself. Before he died, his daughter, Xing Hua, was his only concern. Ye Yuxuan had wanted to appear compassionate, so he took in the girl and allowed her to remain at the residence. If Xing Hua had been more alluring, he might have conferred the position of concubine on her. Unfortunately, since Xing Hua's face was as unsightly as her father's, Ye Yuxuan simply gave her a golden butterfly hairpin and ordered her to work under Qiu Mama.

Xing Hua had cherished this precious treasure ever since. She flaunted it every chance she got. When Qing Hu and Qing Liu moved in, she went out of her way to retell the story of the hairpin.

"At that time, Younger Sister Qing Hu and Younger Sister Qing Liu kept gushing about how beautiful my hairpin was. All the maids in the residence heard them," said Xing Hua softly.

Qing Liu really wanted to mention that she merely had said these things out of politeness. However, she knew that it was useless to argue. If she made a fuss, she would only embarrass Eldest Miss. She believed that Eldest Miss and Qing Mama would prove her innocence.

"Since you put it that way...you're saying that you did not personally see Qing Liu steal your hairpin?" Ye Jiuge asked with an arched eyebrow.

"I did not, I did not!" Xing Hua shook her head quickly, then said, "Last night, I discovered that my

hairpin was missing, so Qiu Mama helped me search. In the end, we found it in Qing Liu's chest."

"And then?" As she asked the question, Ye Jiuge's face fell.

"Then, then what?" Xing Hua asked stupidly, dazed. The word "idiot" was almost written on her square face in large letters.

"..."

Right now, Ye Jiuge was sure that Qiu Mama had single-handedly arranged this cheap ploy. To her, Xing Hua was simply a tool.

Qiu Mama stood on the sidelines, looking unconcerned as if she had nothing to do with the current situation. Intentionally, she had picked Xing Hua's golden butterfly hairpin to set up Qing Liu, so that the quarrel would escalate. She hoped for the best outcome—namely, that Old Master would hear about it. When the time arrived, even if Ye Jiuge helped Qing Hu and Qing Liu clear their names, they would not be able to stay in the Ye Residence.

"Qiu Mama, Qing Liu's room is not made of impenetrable walls. If someone entered her room to frame her, you would have wrongly accused a good person of a crime, since you have so quickly declared her guilty," Ye Jiuge told Qiu Mama coldly.

"Eldest Miss, Xing Hua's hairpin was, without a doubt, found in Qing Liu's chest," Qiu Mama said respectfully.

Ye Jiuge did not want to waste her breath talking to this sly old servant. Her mouth curved into a sneer as she asked Fifth Concubine, "Fifth Concubine, what is your opinion about all this?"

Fifth Concubine felt inexplicably ashamed. She avoided Ye Jiuge's gaze and coughed lightly, then said, "Qiu Mama, this must be a misunderstanding. Perhaps, Xing Hua accidentally lost her hairpin, and Qing Liu picked it up then kept it in her chest for a time, forgetting to return it."

Actually, she knew that Qiu Mama had planned today's incident as a sorry excuse to drive away Qing Hu and Qing Liu. If this had happened in the past, she would have definitely protected the two maids.

However, Madame had come to visit Ruyi the day before yesterday, and she had personally promised that she would permit Ye Shanshan's teacher to instruct Ruyi in elixir-making. Since Ye Yuxuan was usually busy, he did not have any time to teach his daughter. Therefore, he had hired an extremely knowledgeable female teacher to come to the residence and tutor Ye Shanshan. For the sake of Ruyi's future, she had no choice but to disappoint the two young maids.

"I see. Qing Liu, you are such a foolish girl. When you picked it up, why didn't you inform me at once? You have made me misunderstand your actions," Qiu Mama immediately capitulated to Fifth Concubine's explanation.

Qing Liu had not expected Qiu Mama to change her tune so abruptly. She was at a loss and looked to Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge was about to call out Fifth Concubine for her nonsense when she suddenly realized that Qing Liu was acting strange. She scrutinized her and detected a thin, black line between Qing Liu's brows, similar to someone who has been poisoned. Her eyes flitted to Qing Hu, who was standing beside Qing Liu; her forehead bore the same black line. If Ye Jiuge had not recently cultivated the skill of using her Spiritual Eye and developed keen sight, it would have been unlikely that she could have detected the marks at that moment.

"It seems that this was truly a misunderstanding. My two maids did not know any better. Fifth Concubine, they have inconvenienced you. If I let them remain, they will only be an embarrassment. Farewell." Ye Jiuge did not wait for Fifth Concubine's reply. She stood up and instructed Qing Mama, "Bring them back."

Then, she walked out of the door. Qing Mama quickly took Qing Hu and Qing Liu with her, following Ye Jiuge.

When they returned to the Zhilin Residence, Qing Mama vented her indignation.

"Eldest Miss, if I had known before that Fifth Concubine was on Qiu Mama's side, I would have never sent over Qing Hu and Qing Liu to suffer such unjust treatment."

"Qing Mama, Eldest Miss, my older sister did not steal anything. She did not take that hairpin. Their accusations were false," Qing Hu spoke on behalf of her sister with reddened eyes.

"I am aware that they framed you. However, what I can't understand is why they wanted to poison both of you," said Ye Jiuge gravely.

This was why she had not made a fuss earlier; she had agreed with Fifth Concubine so that they could leave.

"Poisoned? What do you mean, poisoned?" Qing Hu and Qing Liu exchanged blank looks.

"Sit down and place your hands on the table!" Ye Jiuge commanded, pointing at the chairs.

Qing Hu and Qing Liu perched on the edge of the chairs obediently, before resting their hands on the table.

Ye Jiuge checked their pulses. The poison in their bodies was potent. It was the colorless, tasteless poison known as the Yin Yang Poison.

Although this poison was not as rare as the False Dream, which Ye Jiuge's mother had created, it was nevertheless worth a decent amount of silver taels. This decision to use it on two maids was rather wasteful!

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"Eldest Miss, are Qing Hu and Qing Liu really poisoned?" asked Qing Mama in disbelief.

"Yes. They are poisoned with the Yin Yang Poison, which is colorless and tasteless. If it is used in isolation, it is not effective. However, if it is used on two people who not only interact with each other all the time but also eat and sleep together, its potency intensifies. When they die, they will die without exhibiting any symptoms. Even if a physician were to check on them, he would not be able to determine the cause of death."

Ye Jiuge withdrew her hand. When she noticed how Qing Mama and the two maids' faces were pale with shock, she consoled them, "Don't worry. Although this poison is powerful, it's not difficult to produce an antidote. Tomorrow, I will purchase two sets of medicine based on a prescription I have written and alchemize them. Everything will be fine."

"That's great." Qing Mama breathed a sigh of relief. However, she still found the situation unbelievable. "Why would anyone poison these two maids without rhyme or reason?"

Their conflict with Qiu Mama should not intensify to the point that it endangered their lives.

"You will have to ask Qing Hu and Qing Liu." Ye Jiuge's beautiful eyes glinted as her gaze fell on the maids.

"Eldest Miss, we don't know either!" Qing Hu and Qing Liu shook their heads in panic.

“Eldest Miss, they have only worked at the Qiu Shui Residence for ten days. Even if there is bad blood between them, it should not have escalated so quickly!”

Qing Mama had personally trained the two maids, so she was very familiar with their personalities. Qing Hu was a lively, sweet girl with an intelligent mind, while Qing Liu was very mature and steady as a person. They were not only tolerant of others but also very astute; therefore, how could they bring such misfortune upon themselves?

Ye Jiuge contemplated for a moment then asked, “Perhaps, the two of you saw something that you were not supposed to, so now someone wants to silence you?”

This was the most likely explanation she could think of, but Qing Hu and Qing Liu looked even more baffled. They had rarely ventured beyond the Qiu Shui Residence’s main entrance, so how could they have uncovered any horrifying secrets?

When Ye Jiuge saw that these two maids could not wrap their heads around the situation, she could only say, “Forget about it. You may leave now to get some rest. If you think of anything, come and report it to me!”

“Right.” Qing Hu and Qing Liu were indeed worn out from a distressing day. They saluted Ye Jiuge and left.

“Qing Mama, during this time, you must watch the Qiu Shui Residence more closely.”

Ye Jiuge had a premonition that the Qiu Shui Residence was about to experience some turbulence. Su Yufeng must be planning to dispose of Fifth Concubine and her daughter. This must be why she was in a hurry to drive Qing Hu and Qing Liu out of the residence.

“Noted,” Qing Mama replied, nodding solemnly. She agreed that what had happened to Qing Hu and Qing Liu was unusual.

From then on, Qing Mama personally kept tabs on the Qiu Shui Residence. She did not expect the days at the Qiu Shui Residence to be exceptionally peaceful. However, after Su Yufeng was released from confinement, she reverted into the kind, gracious Madame that she had pretended to be before. Not only did she send gifts to the Qiu Shui Residence often, but she also asked Ye Shanshan to visit Ye Ruyi personally to teach her about the basics of elixir production. The two sisters were getting along well.

Other than trying to entice Fifth Concubine and her daughter into siding with them, Su Yufeng and her daughter also conveyed their goodwill to Ye Jiuge repeatedly by sending over Zhi Hua laden with gifts. Although the presents were nothing valuable, they seemed to have some thought behind them and were prepared with the utmost care.

Ye Jiuge continued to accept the gifts with reticence. As soon as Zhi Hua stepped out of the door, she threw them away. She asked the servants to pay more attention to the food that was given to her. Ye Jiuge instructed them, again and again, to prevent any cat or dog from eating the food, so that poison would not destroy their innocent lives.

Initially, Ye Jiuge thought that her actions would anger Su Yufeng and her daughter. Most unexpectedly, Shuimo Garden did not respond at all and carried on sending her presents.

The longer Su Yufeng and her daughter acted this way, the warier Ye Jiuge became.

One evening, Ye Jiuge was alchemizing the antidote for the Yin Yang Poison in the Elixir Production Room. Qing Liu and Qing Hu were critically poisoned. They needed to ingest the antidote three times before the poison would be completely neutralized.

When she was done alchemizing the poison, night had fallen. The corridors surrounding the residence were brightly lit with rows of lamps. Zhen Zhu was carrying a Lamp of Eight Treasures Palace as she kept watch outside. When Ye Jiuge saw her emerge from the room, Zhen Zhu moved forward to light the way. As Ye Jiuge walked back to her room, her heart lurched.

Someone was following her.

Ye Jiuge discreetly activated her Spiritual Eye. She pretended to sweep her gaze around her surroundings in a relaxed manner. However, she did not discover anything unusual.

Perhaps, it is merely her imagination?

She grew wary. Then, in her mind, she summoned, “Zi Shang, Zi Shang!”

Unfortunately, Zi Shang did not respond. After he had provided her with the technique to activate her Spiritual Eye, she had stopped hearing from him. He did not even claim his reward. This really did not seem like him. However, Ye Jiuge did not worry that he was in trouble. He was a powerful demon; even if everyone on this planet was wiped out, nothing would happen to him.

“Eldest Miss, there is a door ledge here. Please be careful!”

Zhen Zhu lowered the Lamp of Eight Treasures Palace and illuminated the threshold in front of them. As Ye Jiuge lifted her leg and stepped over it, she noticed a shadow flitting around the area where the lamp glowed—it was like a ghost.

Immediately, she was on her toes. However, her face remained calm. After she returned to her place, she drank a bowl of almond milk.

"Eldest Miss, I have heated up some warm water. Would you like me to attend to you now so that you can wash your face and rinse your mouth?" Zhen Zhu asked as she took the empty bowl from Ye Jiuge's hands.

"I will do it later. I am a bit tired now, so I want to rest for a while!" Ye Jiuge refused Qing Mama and Zhen Zhu's service and went back to her room by herself.

As soon as she stepped into her room, she immediately raised her hands and cast a purple Spiritual Light towards an empty corner to her left. The purple light contacted something, causing it to gleam. Ye Jiuge intensified the purple light coming from her hands. She was about to cast it again when she heard a clear, reluctant voice say, "Eldest Miss, how did you manage to see through my Invisibility?"

As the voice spoke, grey light flashed around the corner, and a gorgeous male face materialized. His black, ninja garb complemented his height, and his skin, which was similar to white jade, shimmered as if a lamp were shining on it.

The red mole between his brows accentuated his attractiveness. It was Ye Jiuge's male slave, the assassin Ye Yu.

"I will, of course, have my own way. On the other hand, you should have returned in plain sight. Why must you walk behind me in such a sneaky manner?"

When Ye Jiuge caught sight of Ye Yu, although she relaxed slightly, her words did not spare him, "You should be careful. I might mistake you as an assassin and kill you."

"Eldest Miss, you have wronged me. I could not have appeared in front of your maid!"

Ye Yu had uttered a half-truth. Last time, after his tracks were easily detected by Ye Jiuge's spiritual eye, he refused to acknowledge that she could see through his Invisibility. He felt that he could not perform well during the day, so he wanted to try to test her again at night. To his surprise, Ye Jiuge had seen through his Invisibility again. This time, even if he did not want to admit it, there was nothing he could do.

"You have been away for some time. Did you manage to find out anything?" Ye Jiuge sat down in front of the table. She poured herself a cup of tea and drank it.

Ye Yu had been gone for more than ten days without any news. She had feared that the Crown Prince and Su Junqin had caught him.

"I did find something." With a serious expression, Ye Yu pulled a letter out of his sleeve and

passed it to Ye Jiuge. He said hoarsely, "This letter was sent by my sister in secret. Please, have a look!"

"You found your sister?" Surprised, Ye Jiuge accepted the letter.

"I did not. I located an abandoned residence using the Ye Clan's unique, secret code. However, the residence is uninhabited. I could only find this letter in a secret compartment." Ye Yu shook his head.

When he had first discovered the secret messages, he had worried that they were a trap. Luckily, his sister had not disappointed him.

"What a pity." Ye Jiuge shook her head before opening the envelope.

As she began to read, her expression changed considerably.

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Ye Jiuge reread Ye Yunzhi's letter carefully before asking Ye Yu solemnly, "Is your sister telling us the truth?"

"She has no reason to lie!" Ye Yu's eyes, dark as ink, stared at Ye Jiuge. A hint of anguish flashed across his attractive face. "Su Junqing should go to hell!" Ye Jiuge slammed the letter on the table.

Although Zi Shang had told her that, to practice Mental Manipulation, one must commit wicked acts, she had never expected this extent of depravity. He would not even spare a seven-year-old girl; that was something a psychopath would do! However, she wasn't sure if the Crown Prince, Su Yufeng, and her daughter were aware that Su Junqing was plotting to use Ye Ruyi as a means of practicing his Mental Manipulation.

"Eldest Miss, what do you intend to do next?" Ye Yu had returned to the Qiu Shui Residence to consult with her about their next course of action.

"If this letter is our only proof, we are not going to be able to rattle the Su Clan to its core. However, I can already guess who Su Junqing's next target is. For the time being, I want you to keep an eye on the Qiu Shui Residence. By any means necessary, we must not let him get away with his scheme." Ye Jiuge retold the story about how Su Junqing had used Mental Manipulation on Fifth Concubine.

"What a monster!" Ye Yu's gaze turned frigid. When he thought of Su Junqing hurting his sister in the same way, he itched to kill him.

"One must face retribution from the Heavens for their sins. One day, he will have to face the music." Ye Jiuge's expression was frosty.

For Su Junqing to have mastered this level of proficiency with Mental Manipulation, he must have harmed many people. Sooner or later, she would learn things that she could use against him.

"There is no time to lose. I will head toward the Qiu Shui Residence now." In a flash, Ye Yu's figure vanished.

Ye Jiuge kept Ye Yunzhi's letter properly. She was about to call for Qing Mama and Zhen Zhu so that they could attend on her as she washed her face and rinsed her mouth when, suddenly, she heard a clamor outside.

It seemed to be coming from the direction of the Qiu Shui Residence. Could it be that, as soon as Ye Yu arrived, he discovered what was going on?

She was about to step out when Zhen Zhu shuffled anxiously towards her. She kept repeating, "Oh no, Eldest Miss. Oh no."

Ye Jiuge's brow furrowed. Promptly, she asked, "Who is in trouble?"

"It's Fifth Concubine!" Zhen Zhu took a deep breath before continuing, "They said that Fifth Concubine was caught committing adultery in her bed."

"What?" This time, Ye Jiuge was genuinely shocked. "What is really going on here?"

"I don't know. I just got word that Madame has brought some servants to the Qiu Shui Residence out of the blue and sealed off the place. She forbids anyone to come or go. Right now, Gan Mama is rushing there from the torture chamber. I'm afraid that Fifth Concubine's circumstances are looking grim." In fact, this news came from Gan Mama, who had asked someone to discreetly pass it along to the Zhilin Residence.

Ever since Ye Jiuge had asserted her authority at the torture chamber, Gan Mama had been trying

to get on her good side. This time, she was risking offending Madame to deliver this important news. This act was a demonstration of her allegiance. Ye Jiuge would not forget Gan Mama's favor. However, the most pressing matter at hand was to bail out Fifth Concubine.

Since Su Yufeng had been laying low for so long, when she finally made a move, it was definitely going to be an all-out effort. Ye Jiuge needed to stabilize the situation as soon as she could. She took Qing Mama, Zhen Zhu, Qing Hu, and Qing Liu with her as she marched off to the Qiu Shui Residence.

The Qiu Shui Residence blazed with bright lights. A group of burly middle-aged maids surrounded the entrance. Their attitude gave the impression that they were going to ransack the residence and seize Fifth Concubine and her daughter's possessions.

Zhang Mama stood at the front. Last time, Ye Jiuge had almost beaten her to death. But it had been a blessing in disguise because this incident had enabled her to progress to the next stage of her cultivation. Right now, she was halfway in her journey to becoming a Spiritual Practitioner. Now, not only was she in high spirits, but she was undaunted by any situation.

When she caught sight of Ye Jiuge and her servants, animosity flashed in Zhang Mama's eyes. She stepped forward and yelled, "Madame has ordered us to not allow anyone in."

"Lowly servant, who are you to stand in the way of our Eldest Miss? Did you learn nothing last time, when you were taught a lesson?" When Qing Mama saw Zhang Mama, her intense grudge surged in her mind.

"There is no need to waste our time with your prattling nonsense." Ye Jiuge's expression turned cold. She had no time to entangle herself with these despicable clowns.

"Eldest Miss, a repulsive person like her does not deserve to have you lay your finger on her. I will do it." Qing Mama stopped Ye Jiuge, who was preparing to hit Zhang Mama, and walked towards Zhang Mama.

"Hmph, this trash dared to be impudent to me." In Zhang Mama's eyes, Qing Mama was not anyone worth caring about.

As soon as Zhang Mama finished speaking, Qing Mama punched her stomach with lightning speed and unstoppable force. Zhang Mama clutched her stomach as she fell to the ground. She was in so much pain that she was panting.

"Zhang Mama!"

A few of the middle-aged maids who surrounded them hurriedly came forward. They wanted to

help Zhang Mama to her feet, but Qing Mama struck them all down with one blow each. Zhen Zhu gaped in shock. She had never thought that Qing Mama could be so powerful.

However, Ye Jiuge knew that, in the past, Yun Tianwei had worried about his daughter's weak body, so he had selected servants for her who were skilled in martial arts. Because of her unwavering loyalty in protecting her Mistress, Qing Mama had been rewarded with the Clear Skies Fighting Technique. She was much more powerful than Zhang Mama, a woman who could only do what she wanted without repercussions within this inner courtyard. If she hadn't been poisoned, which caused her to lose her cultivation completely, Zhang Mama could not possibly have bullied her in a degrading manner.

When the path ahead was cleared, Ye Jiuge led Zhen Zhu, Qing Hu, and Qing Liu into the Qiu Shui Residence. When she walked past Zhang Mama, she kicked her waist.

Zhang Mama's newly formed Spiritual Mind was immediately crippled. Her eyes rolled back in her head, and she fainted. The phrase "serves you right for doing something so stupid" described her perfectly.

Su Yufeng heard fighting outside and rushed out with Ye Shanshan. When she saw Ye Jiuge, her impeccably trimmed long, thin eyebrows furrowed instantly.

"Jiuge, what are you doing?" she interrogated.

"Madame, that's what I wanted to ask you: what are you doing?"

Ye Jiuge curved her lips, her eyes sweeping over the crowd that had gathered in the residence. She smiled coldly and said, "From how you are acting, I wonder if you are planning to ransack the residence and confiscate its residents' belongings?"

"What are you blabbering on about? Fifth Concubine has been unchaste. She was engaged in an illicit affair. I am here to question her on behalf of Old Master."

Su Yufeng's expression was dignified, and her gaze was cold. "It is inappropriate for you, a maiden, to hear about this filthy subject. Return to your residence at once!"

"Madame, you must be joking. Is Second Sister married? Why is she allowed to hear about these things, but I am not?" Ye Jiuge arched her eyebrow. If they thought they can dismiss her using this logic, they were sorely mistaken!

"You are the one who is married!" Ye Shanshan glared at her. She wanted to express her anger, but Su Yufeng held her back.

“Forget it. If you wish to take a look, let’s enter together. You came at the right time. We can discuss how to deal with Fifth Concubine.” Su Yufeng turned around and drew Ye Shanshan towards the Qiu Shui Residence.

Ye Jiuge followed them into the main hall. She surveyed the area but did not find any sign of Fifth Concubine and Ye Ruyi.

“Where are they?”

“When Fifth Concubine realized that her illicit affair had been exposed, she locked herself in. We were about to ram the door open when you showed up. Ruyi is still young, so she does not need to be involved in this matter.”

As Su Yufeng spoke, she walked in front of Fifth Concubine’s room. Eight burly middle-aged maids were standing there, prepared to ram the door.

“Break it down!” Su Yufeng ordered them before Ye Jiuge could say anything.

“Right!” The group of middle-aged maids chimed in unison. They carried an enormous battering ram and smashed it into the red wooden double doors.

The large double doors swung open and collided heavily with the walls with a loud bang.

Ye Jiuge and Su Yufeng walked into the room together. What they discovered inside surprised them both.

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Translator: Nyoibo Studio Editor: Nyoibo Studio

Fifth Concubine’s room was a mess—cups, plates, and teacups shattered all over the floor.

A tall, muscular man was lying on his side by the door. He looked slightly over thirty and had somewhat attractive facial features. His eyes were tightly shut, and his green robe was pulled apart to reveal a black-colored belt embellished with jasper loosened at his waist.

Near him, a woman lay—hair scattered and face pale. Her eyes were shut tightly, and the southern pearl and jasper hairpin on her head was tilted. It was Fifth Concubine.

Ye Jiuge let out a sigh of relief to see that her clothes were still on. If they had been in the throes of illicit love-making, she would have been powerless to save Fifth Concubine.

Su Yufeng frowned. The scene in front of her diverged from the plan!

Why are they unconscious instead of lying in bed? Never mind, this should suffice as “catching them in the act.”

“Someone, come and tie up these shameless adulterers!” Su Yufeng shouted.

“Wait!” Ye Jiuge lifted her hand to stop the maids rushing forward. Her eyes circled the man and Fifth Concubine before she turned to Su Yufeng and said, “You claimed that they were having an affair, yet I feel that this thief tried to rape Fifth Concubine and was knocked to the floor.”

“Jiuge, aren’t you lying through your teeth?” Su Yufeng sneered. “The Ye Residence’s inner courtyard is heavily guarded. How could a criminal enter? This adulterer was clearly brought in by Fifth Concubine.”

“Madame, your accusation must have evidence. You have claimed that Fifth Concubine secretly brought in this ruffian, but did you see it with your own eyes?” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrows as she questioned.

“Why must it be my own eyes when so many people in the Qiu Shui Residence have eyes?” Su Yufeng harrumphed coldly then commanded Gan Mama, who was standing in the corner, “Lock up the Qiu Shui Residence’s maidservants and interrogate them to see if they have seen this adulterer before.”

“Yes, Madame!” After bowing, Gan Mama led in the servants she’d brought with her from the torture chamber. Hungrily, they pounced on the maidservants and detained them.

Although Ye Jiuge appeared to be watching coldly, secretly, she was using her spiritual eye to discover Ye Yu’s whereabouts.

But even after searching the entire residence, she could not find Ye Yu. Where can he be at this critical moment?

Just then, Gan Mama brought in another Mama. Ye Jiuge recognized her as Wang Mama, an old servant Su Yufeng had assigned to the Qiu Shui Residence. It seemed that Su Yufeng had

already made arrangements.

Gan Mama bowed then reported, "Madame, Wang Mama has confessed that she showed this man in on Fifth Concubine's authority."

"Wang Mama, tell me: did Fifth Concubine instruct you to bring this man into the Residence?" Su Yufeng lowered her gaze as viciousness flitted across her eyes.

"Madame, please be the judge, Fifth Concubine forced me to bring the man in! " sniveled Wang Mama.

Apparently, the man was Fifth Concubine's distant cousin. She had developed a close relationship with him when she stayed at his house before she was sold to the Ye Residence, but had not dared to contact him while her status was lowly. However, after rising in the ranks thanks to her daughter, she began to miss her cousin tremendously. Not only did she send him money, but she had also taken advantage of the old master's absence and threatened Wang Mama, demanding she bring her the adulterer for a tryst.

"According to what Wang Mama has just explained, Fifth Concubine must trust her very much. In which case, Wang Mama, why does she never allow you to wait on her?" sneered Ye Jiuge.

Although Fifth Concubine wanted to please Su Yufeng, she was afraid of being stabbed in the back by her servants. This meant that only Qiu Mama (who had been sent by Ye Yuxuan), Xing Hua, and Tao Hua were left to wait on her. Some time ago, Qiu Mama had caught a cold and taken leave to rest.

"It's it's because," stammered Wang Mama, "Fifth Concubine deliberately alienated me out of fear that people would discover that she had assigned me this task." Not daring to look into Ye Jiuge's eyes, Wang Mama turned her head away and said to Su Yufeng, "Madame, Xing Hua has seen this adulterer before. If you do not believe me, summon her and question her yourself."

Xing Hua was renowned for being simple-minded; she never lied.

Su Yufeng nodded. "Alright, send for Xing Hua!"

Immediately, Xing Hua was brought forward. There was confusion on her honest, loyal square face. She could not understand what was happening.

"Xing Hua, let me ask you, have you seen this man before?" Su Yufeng pointed to the man, who was still unconscious.

Xing Hua opened her brass bell-like eyes wide and carefully looked at the man, before shaking her

head and replying, "Madame, I have never seen him before."

"Look again, carefully, even if you have never seen this man's face, perhaps you have seen his clothes or personal effects." Su Yufeng's words did not bother to disguise the hint.

Xing Hua opened her large eyes even wider and looked closely. This time, her face changed. Clearly, she had noticed something.

Su Yufeng slammed the table and pointed at her, chiding, "How dare you lie to me! Someone, haul her off and give her ten lashes of the whip to see if she confesses."

"Madame, please have mercy, I have only just realized it." Xing Hua's face paled with fear. She pointed to the man's waist and said, "I have seen the belt."

At that moment, Qing Liu, who was standing beside Ye Jiuge, tugged Ye Jiuge's sleeve covertly. Ye Jiuge turned her eyes slightly and saw anxiousness in her eyes. Qing Liu had something to say.

Qing Mama, who had also realized that something was wrong with Qing Liu, interrupted Xing Hua; her concern was apparent. She asked Ye Jiuge, "Eldest Miss, Fifth Concubine has been unconscious for a long time, do you think she is alright?"

Ye Jiuge understood her meaning at once. "I also find it strange. We have been here for a while, but Fifth Concubine and the ruffian are still unconscious."

As she was speaking, Ye Jiuge looked towards Su Yufeng, then continued, "Madame, don't you find this strange?"

"Jiuge, there is no need to worry, I have already sent someone to fetch your father. We should wait for him to come back if there is anything wrong!" As Su Yufeng's gaze swept the room, the maids by her side surrounded the door to the interior chamber, clearly intending to prevent anyone from coming forward.

"In that case, I shall go out and see if Father is back. Qing Mama, stay here to ensure that nobody touches Fifth Concubine. If anyone messes with her, don't be kind." Ye Jiuge shot a warning glance at the maids and Su Yufeng, then she turned and walked out.

Qing Liu trailed hurriedly behind Ye Jiuge, but Su Yufeng and Ye Shanshan did not follow her out. Both women looked confident; they did not fear any of Ye Jiuge's tricks.

"Qing Liu, did you see something?" Ye Jiuge asked Qing Liu once they reached an empty corner of the courtyard.

“Eldest Miss, that man in Fifth Concubine’s room. His belt...” Qing Liu said, lowering her voice. “I have seen it before.”

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Translator: Nyo-i-Bo Studio Editor: Nyo-i-Bo Studio

“What?” Startled, Ye Jiuge pressed Qing Liu, “When did you see the belt in Fifth Concubine’s room?”

“Three days ago!” Qing Liu replied.

Then, carefully, she explained what had happened. When she and Qing Hu first arrived at the Qiu Shui Residence, they had wanted to build good relationships with the other maids, so they consistently helped out as much as they could.

Xing Hua, who was staying in the same room as her, was responsible for cleaning Fifth Concubine’s private chamber. One day, Xing Hua was feeling unwell, so Qing Liu volunteered to help her.

However, shortly after she entered Fifth Concubine’s interior room, Qiu Mama rushed in angrily and chased her away. She also rebuked Xing Hua. From then on, Xing Hua did not dare let anyone help her again.

“I only looked at the top of the table briefly, but I vaguely saw something black with jasper embellished on it. Before I could take a closer look, Qiu Mama chased me out. Just now, after listening to sister Xing Hua, I remembered that the thing was the belt on the man’s waist!”

“Qiu Mama?” Ye Jiuge’s brow furrowed.

She had not considered that Qiu Mama was connected to this incident. Nor did she believe that Ye Yuxuan would allow Qiu Mama to help Su Yufeng frame Fifth Concubine for adultery.

“No wonder Qiu Mama wanted to poison and murder me! Here is the reason.” Hatred and fear

took hold of Qing Liu's heart. She could not believe that Qiu Mama would attempt to kill them for such a trivial matter.

"Qiu Mama must have pretended to be ill to prevent people from suspecting her. It is reasonable that she would want to silence you. The question is: how did Madame manage to secure Qiu Mama's help?" Ye Jiuge wondered.

Qiu Mama was an old servant from Ye Yuxuan's side of the family, so she had always been loyal. Unless Su Yufeng had a strong hold over her, she never would have helped Su Yufeng. It seemed that Qiu Mama needed to be investigated.

"Eldest Miss, Qiu Mama deliberately planted that belt in Fifth Concubine's room for Xing Hua to see to prove the adultery rumors about Fifth Concubine. What should we do?" Xing Hua had a worried look.

Qiu Mama had intentionally set this trap; the entire Ye Residence knew that Xing Hua was simple-minded and never lied.

"Act according to the circumstances!" Su Yufeng had planned in advance and arranged everything perfectly. At present, Ye Jiuge could not find any loopholes.

Fortunately, the situation was not as bleak as it could have been. Fifth Concubine and the man were not lying together in bed. She wanted to see Su Yufeng's next moves before countering them.

Just as Ye Jiuge was thinking of bringing Qing Liu back into the room, she heard the servants outside the courtyard cry out in unison: "Old Master."

The next moment, Ye Yuxuan appeared at the entrance to the courtyard. He looked exhausted, and his face was black, like the bottom of a pot. However, if anyone were to find out that his concubine was cuckolding him at home while he was out working, he wouldn't be happy.

"Father!" Ye Jiuge greeted him coolly.

"Why are you here?" Ye Yuxuan frowned. His mood worsened when he saw Ye Jiuge.

"I heard that Fifth Concubine encountered a thief, so I came to take a look," Ye Jiuge said with a look of worry.

"A thief?" Ye Yuxuan was stupefied. Hadn't Fifth Concubine been caught cheating? How was it that, now, she had faced a thief?

“Old Master, don’t listen to Jiuge’s nonsense, she gets along well with Fifth Concubine and is taking her side,” snapped Su Yufeng, who had been eavesdropping as she came out of the room. Now, she was furious.

This wicked girl was waiting outside to be the thief who cries thief—what a conniver!

“Is that so? Then, why did I hear that, recently, Madame, you and Fourth Sister have been chummier than Fifth Concubine and I ever were—so much so that Father even praised you for it?” The tip of Ye Jiuge’s lips curled into a smile as she laughed sarcastically.

“Elder Sister, I know that you wish to clear Fifth Concubine’s name, but you do not have to involve my mother!” Ye Shanshan growled.

Before she came out, Ye Shanshan’s mother had repeatedly instructed her not to speak carelessly. But Ye Shanshan had bitten her tongue for a day and could not hold it anymore.

“Second Sister, what do you mean? Did Madame have an affair as well?” Ye Jiuge covered her mouth, looking appalled.

“What nonsense are you spouting?” Ye Shanshan scowled fiercely, itching to step forward and tear Ye Jiuge’s mouth apart.

“You said that this matter involved Madame.” Ye Jiuge made a face as though she had been wronged.

“When did I say that? You are intentionally misinterpreting my words to insult my mother!” Ye Shanshan said through gritted teeth.

“That’s enough! Shut up!” Ye Yuxuan glared at Ye Jiuge and scolded, “Isn’t this humiliating enough for you?”

“Father, don’t be angry. You know that Second Sister has a thick skin and is not afraid to lose face. Let me apologize to you on her behalf.” Ye Jiuge’s obedient words almost made Ye Yuxuan, Su Yufeng, and her daughter swoon with anger.

Ye Yuxuan’s chest heaved a few times before he decided to ignore the infuriating Ye Jiuge. He turned his head and asked Su Yufeng, “Where is Fifth Concubine?”

“Old Master, she and the adulterer are inside her room. I was scared that you would be angry when you saw them, so I rearranged them slightly.” Su Yufeng spoke as though the sight of Fifth Concubine was too much to bear.

With a sweep of his sleeves, Ye Yuxuan hastened into the room.

Everything appeared as it had been. With Qing Mama keeping watch fastidiously, nobody had dared to mess around. However, the scene was enough to infuriate Ye Yuxuan.

“Wake up this pair of shameless adulterers.” Ye Yuxuan’s finger, which was pointing at Fifth Concubine, was shaking.

“Father, the situation has not been investigated clearly, how can you convict Fifth Concubine like this?” Ye Jiuge almost wanted to salute Ye Yuxuan; was he so eager to be cuckolded?

“Old Master, I have investigated clearly. This man was Fifth Concubine’s cousin before she entered our residence, and they did such an insufferable thing because they are deeply in love. Please, for Ruyi’s sake, forgive Fifth Concubine!” As she was wiping her tears, Su Yufeng pleaded on behalf of Fifth Concubine.

However, her pleading infuriated Ye Yuxuan even more. “That b*tch concealed this from me for so long!”

“Father, this is only Madame’s side of the story. Furthermore, you have seen that this room is a mess. Who makes such a huge mess when making love?” Ye Jiuge questioned.

“Jiuge, as I have already explained, when Fifth Concubine realized that her adultery had been discovered, she locked herself in. She made this mess all over the floor. She chose this room because she did not fear that she would be unable to dodge the bullet, because of her relationship with Ruyi.” Su Yufeng changed her demeanor completely and sneered, “If a woman is too arrogant, she easily forgets her surname.”

“Madame, why do I feel like you are describing yourself? How convenient that such a huge incident should occur in the Qiu Shui Residence just after your release from confinement!” said Ye Jiuge, standing her ground.

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“Jiuge, it is pointless to put yourself out trying to blame me: Xing Hua has already confessed.” The corner of Su Yufeng’s eyes revealed the slightest hint of triumph as she turned and bowed to Ye Yuxuan saying, “Old Master, if you do not believe me, you can ask Xing Hua.”

Ye Yuxuan glared at Xing Hua and demanded angrily, “Tell me what is going on.”

Xing Hua blinked her brass bell-like eyes and said with a little injury, “Old Master, I do not know what is going on either. I...I only saw a belt similar to the one the man is wearing on the table of Fifth Concubine’s interior room.”

Xing Hua might have been honest, but she was no fool. She was careful not to say that the adulterer’s belt was beyond a doubt the same one she had seen in Fifth Concubine’s room.

Nevertheless, Ye Yuxuan flew into a rage after listening to her, and his eyes, which were looking at Fifth Concubine, turned bloodshot. He wanted nothing more than to kick her to death.

“Old Master, Fifth Concubine has committed such a disgraceful act that I lack the self-respect to plead on her behalf.” Su Yufeng sighed and looked at Fifth Concubine as if she were dead.

“Father, Xing Hua did not say that the belt on the thief was without a doubt the one that she saw in Fifth Concubine’s room. Why don’t we wake up Fifth Concubine and hear her side of the story? You see that she has yet to show any signs of stirring, even though you have been here for some time. That doesn’t seem right!” Ye Jiuge urged, standing beside him.

In fact, when she had first stepped into the room, she had perceived that someone had knocked both Fifth Concubine and the adulterer unconscious. Needless to say, that someone was Ye Yu. Hence, she did not make a fuss about it.

Ye Yuxuan stepped forward, his face darkened, and he pinched the acupuncture points on Fifth Concubine’s philtrum. The adulterer did not have such good fortune: Ye Yuxuan kicked him in the stomach.

The adulterer’s body went flying toward the wall, and he vomited a mouthful of blood before regaining consciousness.

Ye Jiuge knew that no matter how things developed, the man would not walk away from the Ye Clan alive. For trying to frame a gentlewoman, he deserved to die.

Fifth Concubine woke up gently and looked dazedly at Su Yufeng and Ye Yuxuan, then said, “Madame, Old Master, Eldest Miss! Why are you here?”

“B*tch, see what you’ve done!” Ye Yuxuan stepped forward and slapped Fifth Concubine, forcing her head to one side.

Covering her face, Fifth Concubine lifted her gaze and saw her cousin, whom she had not contacted for many years, shrinking in the corner of her room with his mouth full of blood. Involuntarily, she shouted, “Chen Fuhan, what are you doing here?”

“B*tch!” Seeing that Fifth Concubine recognized the adulterer, Ye Yuxuan angrily raised his leg to kick her.

“Father, no!” Ye Jiuge immediately grabbed Fifth Concubine’s arm and dragged her backward so that she avoided Ye Yuxuan’s kick.

There was a loud sound. Pang!

Ye Yuxuan’s kick landed on the large, red wooden table and smashed it into pieces. If that leg had landed on Fifth Concubine, she would have been half-dead.

At last, Fifth Concubine understood that she was being framed. She lifted her head and stared at Su Yufeng with hatred as she gritted her teeth and shouted, “You are trying to hurt me!”

Their harmonious relationship had been nothing but a lie.

“Hmph, what a joke. Did I use a knife to force you and your cousin into a tryst?” Su Yufeng jeered.

“Chen Fuhan may be my cousin, but he is a heartless thug who seized my parents’ property after they died and wanted to sell me to a brothel. I hate that I am unable to kill him, so why would I have an affair with him?”

Fifth Concubine knelt on the floor and cried out to Ye Yuxuan, “Old Master, if you do not believe me, investigate the matter further. My aunt and uncle are maddened to death by this beast!”

Her aunt and uncle had sought help to sell her into the Ye Clan. Otherwise, if she had remained at home, Chen Fuhan would have sold her to a brothel.

After listening to Fifth Concubine, the furrows between Ye Yuxuan’s eyes deepened, and his facial expression became uncertain.

Nobody would be cuckolded willingly, and Fifth Concubine had always known her place: could there be more to this situation than met the eye?

Seeing this, Su Yufeng hurriedly said, “Old Master, you are being coaxed by Fifth Concubine. I

already inquired about this matter and learned that this Chen Fuhan had an excellent relationship with Fifth Concubine before he started gambling. Although their relationship became a little strained, Fifth Concubine still thinks of him constantly and even helped him settle his gambling debts secretly. If you don't believe me, ask him."

Before Ye Yuxuan could ask anything, Chen Fuhan was already yelling at Fifth Concubine: "Cousin, I know you hate me, but I want to spend the rest of my life with you. Didn't we promise to elope after selling Ye Ruyi?"

"What? If you sell my daughter, I will kill you!" Ye Ruyi had become Ye Yuxuan's treasure. Hearing that Chen Fuhan had designs on his daughter, Ye Yuxuan angrily lifted his leg and gave a kick towards Chen Fuhan's heart.

Chen Fuhan hugged his head and withdrew his legs, curling himself up into a ball. It seemed like he was overly familiar with being beaten.

Ye Yuxuan's leg landed on Chen Fuhan's calf, which was tucked in.

Crack! The kick broke the calf.

Chen Fuhan yelped as he broke out in a cold sweat from the pain.

Ye Yuxuan wanted to continue the beating, but Su Yufeng stopped him. "Old Master, this adulterer can be dealt with at any time. We should check on Fourth Miss and make sure that they have not sold her already."

After she heard Su Yufeng's words, Fifth Concubine ran like a mad tiger towards Ye Ruyi's residence.

Ye Jiuge hurriedly brought her servants and followed behind. When they approached the entrance to Ye Ruyi's residence, they saw the maidservants sprawled across the ground.

The door to the residence was open, and the interior was a mess as if ransacked by a thief. Ye Ruyi was gone.

"Ruyi, Ruyi!" Fifth Concubine gave a heart-wrenching cry as she circled like a headless fly having lost two of her three souls.

"Qing Mama, search the residence inside out!" Ye Jiuge instructed, frowning.

Qing Mama led Zhen Zhu, Qing Hu, and Qing Liu as they quickly searched the house, but they could not even find Ye Ruyi's shadow.

By then, word had reached Ye Yuxuan. When he heard that Ye Ruyi was missing, a layer of blood rose to his eyes from anger, and the look in his eyes was cold as a knife as he glared at Fifth Concubine.

Not only had Fifth Concubine committed adultery, but she had also sold his most talented daughter. If he did not slaughter the b*tch today, he would change his surname.

Fearing that Ye Yuxuan would kill Fifth Concubine on the spot, Ye Jiuge changed the subject and said, "Father, the urgent task now is to interrogate Chen Fuhan and see where he has taken Fourth Sister."

"Bring the adulterer to me," Ye Yuxuan's chest heaved as he spoke each word.

"Gan Mama, hurry up and go!" Su Yufeng instructed Gan Mama, who had arrived after her.

"Yes, yes, yes. I will go immediately!" Gan Mama turned and ran towards Fifth Concubine's residence.

A moment later, there was a piercing scream.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

Hearing the cry from the residence, Fifth Concubine was like a whirlwind as she rushed back.

Ye Jiuge quickly followed her. Just as she reached the entrance, she saw Gan Mama run out shaking and shouting, "Oh no, oh no! The culprit is dead."

"Dead?" Shocked, Ye Jiuge saw Chen Fuhan lying on his stomach on the floor. On his back was a large gray footprint.

Fifth Concubine was crazily straddling Chen Fuhan's corpse, strangling his neck and shouting, "You harmed my daughter! I will kill you, kill you!"

“Hurry up and pull Fifth Concubine away!” Ye Jiuge shouted at Qing Mama and Gan Mama.

Qing Mama and Gan Mama rushed forward hurriedly. They exerted all their strength to drag Fifth Concubine off Chen Fuhan’s corpse.

Fifth Concubine was still struggling wildly and screaming furiously, “Dare to harm my daughter, and I will kill all of you, kill all of you!”

Ye Jiuge ignored her and looked closer. The large footprint on Chen Fuhan’s back did not seem to be Fifth Concubine’s. She raised her head, surveyed the residence, and asked, “Who kicked him?”

Xing Hua panicked and shouted, “Eldest Miss, I did not do it on purpose. I saw that he wanted to flee, and as it was an emergency, I gave him a kick.”

Although Xing Hua appeared to have exceptional physical strength, she was unable to kill a man with only a kick.

Ye Jiuge stepped forward and flipped Chen Fuhan onto his back. Black blood oozed from his eyes and nose with a hint of astringency, similar to the poison of Red-crowned Crane.

The poison of Red-crowned Crane was aggressive and killed through asphyxiation immediately after entering the bloodstream, but it did not cause the seven apertures in the human head to bleed. It appeared that another drug had also been administered.

Secretly, Ye Jiuge dipped a piece of cloth into Chen Fuhan’s infected blood and kept it so that she could analyze it later.

Just then, Su Yufeng arrived. She saw Chen Fuhan’s corpse, covered her mouth using her handkerchief, and said, “Fifth Concubine is so ruthless that she would kill to silence someone.”

“Madame’s words are absurd, Fifth Concubine was not here just now, so how could she poison this thief?” Ye Jiuge’s gaze swept across the maidservants in the room. She squinted and said, “From what I see, the culprit who poisoned the thief is right here.”

All the servants present had been brought in by Su Yufeng—nobody else would lay a hand on Chen Fuhan.

“Father, look at Elder Sister: she would drag everyone through the mud to clear Fifth Concubine’s name.” Standing next to Ye Yuxuan, Ye Shanshan said indignantly, “Who doesn’t know what kind of person Xing Hua is? It is impossible that she would poison the adulterer.”

Xing Hua was Ye Yuxuan's servant, and Ye Shanshan spoke in such a manner as to ignite Ye Yuxuan's anger.

"Second Sister, I did not mention Xing Hua; why did you declare conclusively that it was her?" She could also throw mud back at Ye Shanshan!

Ye Jiuge smirked and turned towards Ye Yuxuan without waiting for Ye Shanshan to reply and said, "Father, don't you find this matter odd? Our Ye Residence's guards may not be the best, but a normal person should not be able to freely come and go. This Chen Fuhan was only an ordinary man. How could he know someone powerful enough to break into our Ye Residence and kidnap Fourth Sister without anyone noticing?"

"Jiuge, aren't you forgetting something?" Su Yufeng raised her thin eyebrows, smiled, and said, "Fifth Concubine has been managing the household recently, so it would have been easy for her to bring someone in."

"Is it so easy?" Ye Jiuge's lips curled into a smile, her eyes flashing like lightning as she faced Su Yufeng and challenged, "Why, then, do I recall that the person managing the household is unable to control the guards' patrol? If Fifth Concubine is indeed capable of bringing someone in, then I think that the first thing she would do is deal with a certain someone with a black heart and rotten liver instead of selling her daughter."

"Jiuge, there is no point in your unreasonable pestering. It is a fact that Fifth Concubine had an affair with Chen Fuhan. It is also a fact that she brought someone in to take Fourth Miss away. You cannot clear Fifth Concubine's name with a few sentences."

Ye Shanshan harrumphed coldly then said to Ye Yuxuan, "Father, although Chen Fuhan is dead, Fifth Concubine is still here. As long as we torture and interrogate her, I believe that we will discover Fourth Sister's whereabouts."

"Father, this is clearly a set-up to frame Fifth Concubine. I feel that the urgent task now is to determine how Chen Fuhan entered the residence. If a thief can intrude so easily, I fear that you will no longer be able to sleep soundly at night."

Ye Jiuge understood Ye Yuxuan's personality well and knew that he was terrified of death. Fifth Concubine was only a toy in his heart. Compared to his life, she and Ye Ruyi were worthless.

Although Ye Yuxuan did not like Ye Jiuge, he had to admit that she was right. Fifth Concubine could be dealt with at any time, and Fourth Miss could be found later, but the breach in the Ye Residence's defenses must be rectified immediately.

At once, Ye Yuxuan gave the order to Gan Mama: "Place Fifth Concubine in the dungeon and

ensure that she is guarded closely.”

“Old Master, Fourth Miss has yet to be found, if you do not take the opportunity to interrogate Fifth Concubine, you might miss the opportunity to save Fourth Miss.” Su Yufeng did not want to allow Fifth Concubine to live through the night.

“I did not harm Ruyi.” Fifth Concubine glared at Su Yufeng and shouted hysterically, “It’s you! You harmed my daughter, and I will fight it out with you!”

As she spoke, she prepared to rush at Su Yufeng.

However, Su Yufeng had learned her lesson and would not allow Fifth Concubine to get her way. She lifted her hand, and Zhi Hua led a group of burly maids in blocking Fifth Concubine’s path.

Qing Mama had wanted to allow Fifth Concubine to rush forward to deal with Su Yufeng; but, having seen this, she did not dare to let go of Fifth Concubine, who would have suffered if she had attacked.

“Su Yufeng, you say that you did not harm my daughter and me, but do you dare to swear an oath?” Fifth Concubine’s bloodshot eyes widened.

“Bah, who do you think you are? Why should my mother swear an oath for you?” Ye Shanshan said scornfully.

She has only given birth to a talented daughter. Foolishly, she thinks that she belongs to the upper class. Now that her daughter is missing, she has no one to rely on and is no different from the dirt on the ground.

“You won’t dare to swear because you have a guilty conscience!” Fifth Concubine glared at Su Yufeng and her daughter with hatred. She turned and cried out to Ye Yuxuan, “Old Master, Ruyi is flesh from my body, and I would sell myself before I would ever sell her. Old Master, please judge wisely.”

Ye Yuxuan said nothing, but his expression clearly betrayed his doubts.

Fifth Concubine knew that it was pointless for her to plead any further.

Her expression turned vicious, and she screamed desperately, “Fine, if none of you believe me, I, Gu Jingyi, will offer my blood as a curse to those who have harmed my daughter, Ye Ruyi. May they be struck by lightning and meet a terrible end, and may their sons be slaves and their daughters wh*res for generations.”

After she spoke, she lowered her head and charged the wall with a will to die.

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Translator: Nyo-i-Bo Studio Editor: Nyo-i-Bo Studio

“Fifth Concubine, no!”

At once, Ye Jiuge tried to yank her back, but Fifth Concubine had used her dying will to charge the wall.

Pang! Blood splattered.

When Ye Jiuge pulled Fifth Concubine back, there was a gaping gash in her forehead. Blood gushed from the wound; she was close to death.

“Fifth Concubine, you are so silly. Things could have been talked over; you did not have to risk your life!” Qing Mama covered the bleeding wound anxiously with her hands.

Ye Jiuge took out her Lightning Fire Needle and sealed Fifth Concubine’s major acupuncture points. Then, she lifted her head and spoke hurriedly to Ye Yuxuan, “Father, Fifth Concubine will die soon, don’t you have a bottle of Nine Transformations Resurrection Elixir? Please, save her with it.”

Ye Yuxuan’s expression darkened, and he remained quiet. One bottle of Nine Transformations Resurrection Elixir cost thousands of gold pieces. It was not worth the cost to save a concubine.

“Hmph, dream on!” Ye Shanshan’s face filled with contempt. Secretly, she was gloating. Fifth Concubine had always used this method, and this time, she would finally die!

“That’s enough. Speak less!” Although Su Yufeng felt that Fifth Concubine deserved death, it wasn’t nice to hear her daughter say such things.

“I was speaking the truth!” Ye Shanshan pouted.

“Second Sister’s mouth must be very itchy. Should I give you two slaps to help alleviate your itch?” Ye Jiuge glared at her. If she hadn’t needed to muster her spiritual power to save Fifth Concubine’s life, she would have slapped both Su Yufeng and her daughter.

Ye Shanshan reflexively covered her mouth and retreated. She was still scared from the ordeal when Ye Jiuge had slapped her.

“Old Master, you see that Jiuge has gone crazy because of Fifth Concubine. Someone who did not know better would think that they were mother and daughter, related by blood. Let’s hope that Jiuge does not learn from Fifth Concubine how to take her own life to cover up a scandal.” Su Yufeng hated Ye Jiuge for being so disrespectful, so she took this opportunity to throw mud at her.

“Fifth Concubine raised a child for Father. She has worked hard and deserves credit. Is it so wrong for me to be concerned about her?” Ye Jiuge harrumphed coldly then said, “At least I’m not like a certain someone with a black heart and rotten liver who, because of her selfish desire, ganged up on a mother and daughter with her nephew. Does she think everyone is blind?”

“Ye Jiuge, what nonsense are you sprouting?” Su Yufeng was startled. Her deal with Su Junqing was a secret. How had Ye Jiuge heard about it?

“If you don’t want anyone to know what you do, don’t do it. Paper cannot hold fire.” Ye Jiuge had only intended to probe a little. She was surprised to learn that Ye Ruyi’s disappearance was indeed related to Su Junqing. Su Yufeng and her daughter really were brazen.

“Old Master, look at Jiuge. She is becoming more and more outrageous,” Su Yufeng pleaded pitifully with Ye Yuxuan.

“That’s enough. Shut up, all of you!” Ye Yuxuan snapped impatiently. “Put Fifth Concubine back in her old residence. Gan Mama, bring someone with you and guard the place personally. Do not allow anyone to enter or exit without my instruction.” Not leaving Fifth Concubine to die in the dungeon was the greatest mercy he was willing to give.

Although Su Yufeng and Ye Shanshan were unwilling, they did not dare defy Ye Yuxuan’s orders. After all, Fifth Concubine did not seem as though she would be able to survive much longer: Their goal was achieved.

“I understand.” Gan Mama repeatedly nodded her head before asking carefully, “How should the thief’s body be handled?”

Ye Yuxuan stared coldly at Chen Fuhan’s corpse, ground his teeth, then said, “Throw it into the Mass Grave to feed the wild dogs.”

After he spoke, he turned and left without a backward glance at Fifth Concubine. Su Yufeng and Ye Shanshan hurriedly followed behind, but not before they flashed victory grins at Ye Jiuge. However, Ye Jiuge was expending all her effort to save Fifth Concubine's life and did not take heed of them.

"Eldest Miss, do you think that we should send Fifth Concubine over now or delay?" Gan Mama walked over and worriedly looked at Fifth Concubine, whose body was covered in blood. She feared that Fifth Concubine would not survive the trip back to her old, worn-out residence.

"Bring her back now, in case Madame and Second Sister make a fuss about it." If Fifth Concubine remained in the Qiu Shui Residence, Su Yufeng would not make things easy for her.

"Then I will go and fetch a sedan chair."

After receiving her orders, Gan Mama quickly brought over the sedan chair. Together, Qing Mama, Zhen Zhu, Qing Hu, and Qing Liu lifted Fifth Concubine into the litter and sent her back to her original, dilapidated residence.

Before she left, Fifth Concubine had kept the residence neat and clean. The mattress and other necessities were still there.

Ye Jiuge instructed Qing Mama and Gan Mama to place Fifth Concubine on the bed then commanded Qing Hu and Qing Liu to stay and take care of her. The two maids were kind-hearted, and, although Fifth Concubine had been instigated by Qiu Mama to chase them out of the Qiu Shui Residence, they still remembered Fifth Concubine and Fourth Miss' kindness, so they were willing to stay and tend to their former mistress.

"Eldest Miss, seeing Fifth Concubine's condition, should I invite a physician over to examine her?" Qing Mama asked softly. Feeling the stickiness of the blood in her palm, Qing Mama was scared.

"Father will never agree." Ye Yuxuan had already shown great mercy by not throwing Fifth Concubine into the dungeon. It would be impossible to summon a physician to examine her.

"How long do you think Fifth Concubine can last in this state?" Qing Mama did not mean to curse Fifth Concubine; she was in terrible shape. Her hair was messy, and her face was stained with blood. Her clothes were also dirty, but Eldest Miss refused to let anyone clean her up.

"How long she lasts depends on her!" Ye Jiuge told a small lie.

Although Fifth Concubine's condition appeared grave, Ye Jiuge had used her Lightning Fire Needle to seal the concubine's channels and her spiritual power to nourish her. For the time being, Fifth Concubine would survive. Ye Jiuge's words were meant to hide the truth from Ye Yuxuan, Su

Yufeng, and her daughter. If Fifth Concubine were healthy, she would be imprisoned in the dungeon.

“Truly, Fifth Concubine has suffered a cruel fate. I wonder how Fourth Miss is faring,” sighed Qing Mama.

Fourth Miss has experienced a terrible calamity, and she is only seven years old. Poor thing!

Although spiritual power was revered in Mainland China, a woman’s chastity was also vital. Even if Fourth Miss were returned unharmed, it would be difficult for her to marry in the future.

“Heaven helps the worthy; Fourth Sister will be all right.” Ye Jiuge believed that Ye Yu must have chased after them. It was a pity that she could not contact Ye Yu and had to wait for him to return.

Before leaving, Ye Jiuge informed Gan Mama to be wary of Madame’s servant in case they killed Fifth Concubine.

Gan Mama expressed her understanding. She preferred Eldest Miss, who was righteous and willing to assist her servants during a crisis to Madame, who was cruel and mistreated her attendants.

After returning to the Zhilin Residence, Ye Jiuge took out the cloth dipped in Chen Fuhan’s infected blood and analyzed it carefully.

Chen Fuhan was an unprincipled man. He must have been threatened or egged on by someone to risk his life to frame Fifth Concubine.

Su Yufeng and her daughter were too conceited because of their noble background; they would never do such a thing. Ye Jiuge wanted to find out who had served as their intermediary.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

After carefully analyzing Chen Fuhan’s infected blood, Ye Jiuge found that, in addition to Red-

crowned Crane, it contained a poison called Icy Vigor Powder.

Strictly speaking, Icy Vigor Powder was an aphrodisiac, not a poison. Upon consumption, it allowed a person to feel as though he or she were in paradise and live as if in a dream. It made a man more powerful in bed and increased a woman's pleasure.

This aphrodisiac also had another use that was often neglected: It could be used to suppress different toxins. However, sexual intercourse caused suppressed poison to break out with amplified effects.

Su Yufeng had used the Icy Vigor Powder on Chen Fuhan to humiliate Fifth Concubine before she brought over her servants to catch them in the act. Chen Fuhan would have died from the poison in bed, and Fifth Concubine would have never been able to cure herself even if she had jumped into the Yellow River.

However, Su Yufeng had miscalculated: she had not expected somebody to interfere and knock Chen Fuhan unconscious. Before Chen Fuhan could humiliate Fifth Concubine, Ye Yuxuan had nearly beaten him to death, which was why he was killed when Xing Hua kicked him.

Icy Vigor Powder was scarce in the capital, and only the best brothels used it to spice things up. It was unclear which brothel Chen Fuhan had been in when he fell into the trap.

Privately, Ye Jiuge investigated Chen Fuhan's recent whereabouts and heard that he had made some money a while ago and hooked up with a courtesan from the Drunken Cloud Pavilion. "Drunken Cloud Pavilion" sounded like the name of a restaurant, but it was one of the three best brothels in the capital.

The courtesan, Lady Yun, was an intriguing woman. Although she was stunningly beautiful, she chose her customers casually. If she felt an affinity for one who caught her eye, she treated him equally, regardless of his background. Hence, many vain, ordinary men tried their luck with her.

Ye Jiuge decided to investigate Lady Yun's background. She changed into a man's attire and disguised herself as the graceful son of a nobleman. Shaking her fan, she arrived at the Drunken Cloud Pavilion, which was located on Hua Street.

Red lanterns decorated either side of the street. Young women in revealing clothing were alluring customers from the brothel entrances. The entire street stank of cheap cosmetics.

The Drunken Cloud Pavilion was in the east corner. The wooden building was three stories high and decorated lavishly. The young women at the entrance looked like they were of a higher rank than those from other brothels. When they saw her walking over, they smiled and called out to her, "Guest, come in quickly!"

As soon as Ye Jiuge entered the Drunken Cloud Pavilion, the brothel's madame came to greet her.

Approximately forty years old, she was wearing make-up and had a shrewd look with sharp eyes. She wore a low-necked red tunic and smiled charmingly as she asked Ye Jiuge, "You look unfamiliar, this must be your first time here. How should I address you?"

"My last name is Ye. I have heard that Lady Yun is as beautiful as a fairy and came specially to pay her a visit. I hope that Mama can refer me." Ye Jiuge closed her fan with a snap and fished out a silver ingot.

The female brothel keeper's eyes brightened immediately. She grinned as she accepted the silver and said, "Mr. Ye, I apologize sincerely. Lady Yun is taking care of a customer now, shall I introduce you to the other ladies?"

"I came here solely out of admiration for her. Mama, please grant me this favor." Ye Jiuge took out another silver ingot.

"Since you are so sincere, I will go and ask Lady Yun. Please wait a moment in the private room." The madame smiled widely.

"Thank you!" With a snap, Ye Jiuge opened her fan again and followed the madame to a private room on the second floor with a promiscuous air.

Before she left, the madame called out to four beautiful ladies and told them to accompany Ye Jiuge. These four ladies were experienced. Holding cups of wine, they rubbed their bodies against Ye Jiuge as they urged delicately, "Mr. Ye, let me have a drink with you!"

With an indifferent expression, Ye Jiuge stopped them before she smiled and said, "I did not come here to drink."

"Then why did you come here?" One of the ladies dressed in yellow smiled tenderly as she reached for Ye Jiuge's thighs. However, Ye Jiuge caught her hand and held it.

"I want something exciting; do you have it here?" Ye Jiuge patted the lady on the cheek a few times, her eyes squinting as she smiled wickedly.

The ladies' expressions changed. These days, they were afraid of perverted customers. Those who looked refined were, in fact, the most brutal and cruel.

The lady in yellow paled with fear. She forced a smile and asked, "What kind of excitement are

you looking for?”

“Tell me what you have. Money is not an issue.” Ye Jiuge hinted by rubbing her fingers together; this was the secret code for wanting to use Icy Vigor Powder.

The ladies looked at one another. Before they could speak, a silver bell-like voice came from outside the room, “I am so sorry for making you wait.”

“Aiya, it’s Lady Yun.” The ladies immediately rose jovially and excused themselves after opening the door to welcome in Lady Yun.

Indeed, Lady Yun was beautiful. Her skin was white as snow, and she had rosy cheeks and almond eyes. She wore peach-red low-necked clothes that revealed generous glimpses of her snow-white breasts. Her sleeves were broad, and her every movement was enchanting. Her wanton charm was indeed capable of making men fall head over heels for her.

“Since I arrived late, I shall punish myself with three cups of wine!” Lady Yun drew up her sleeve and revealed her white and delicate wrist. A strange but unique smell followed.

September Fragrance?! Ye Jiuge was surprised to smell it. Immediately, she began to feel dizzy. Suddenly, there seemed to be two Lady Yuns standing in front of her.

“Mr. Ye, what is wrong?” Lady Yun’s beautiful face expressed surprise as she stretched out her hand to support Ye Jiuge.

“Don’t touch me!” Ye Jiuge slapped Lady Yun’s hand away forcefully. She tried to stand up but felt weak in her entire body.

September Fragrance paired with November Cream produced an overpowering drug that was effective against Spiritual Practitioners. It was activated immediately once inhaled. As such, both drugs were forbidden. If found in a person’s possession, he would be hunted down and killed by Spiritual Practitioners.

Ye Jiuge had been careless. She had thought that the place was an ordinary brothel and that it would be no trouble for her to ask a few questions inside. She did not believe that she would fall into a trap. The November Cream must have been activated in a hidden corner of the room.

Lady Yun looked at her wrist, which had turned red from Ye Jiuge’s slap. Her gentle and passionate expression had changed. She revealed an ugly sneer as she chastised, “Little brat, you dared lay your hands on me. I shall find out who you think you are that you dare cast your eyes on the Drunken Cloud Pavilion.”

As soon as she spoke, she reached out to grab Ye Jiuge. A layer of pale black gas appeared on her white palm.

Ye Jiuge bit the tip of her tongue forcefully as she tried to wield her spiritual power to fight back. Suddenly, Lady Yun's eyes rolled in their sockets, and she collapsed on the floor with a slam.

Zi Shang's perfect figure appeared behind Lady Yun.

His handsome face revealed a slight smile as a hint of playfulness flashed across his purple eyes. His snake tail curled into a hook and pulled Ye Jiuge into an embrace. He lowered his head and laughed, "Little Jiuge, if I had been napping, you would have wound up in a difficult situation."

Zi Shang's warm breath enveloped her face with an intoxicating flavor.

Ye Jiuge's head was spinning even more. Not wanting Zi Shang to laugh at her, she forced herself to hold on and said, "Who says that I am in a difficult situation? I came out to pick up chicks and was feeling free!"

However, the "chick," Lady Yun, had been too cold-hearted and ruthless.

"Are you? I didn't know that little Jiuge attracts both men and women. This woman doesn't seem like enough for you. How about I attend to you personally? I will ensure that you are satisfied." As Zi Shang spoke, his hands, which were holding Ye Jiuge's waist, began to roam further down...

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Ye Jiuge felt a pair of large, hot hands roaming around her entire body, igniting countless sparks. The sensation was unbearable; it was like she was burning.

She had to hug Zi Shang's cool body tightly to feel a slight relief. However, she was drugged—so why did she feel turned on?

Ye Jiuge sensed that she was in danger of losing her virginity, and she used all her might to push

Zi Shang off her. "Go away!"

But to Zi Shang, what little energy she had was no different from a kitten's scratch.

"Poor little Jiuge. Be a good girl and let me see your tongue." Zi Shang lowered his head and kissed her lips lightly, coaxing her to open her mouth.

Instinctively, Ye Jiuge opened her mouth to scold him, "Scram!"

Before she could say anything, Zi Shang's cool, fragrant forked tongue nimbly invaded her mouth. He swept the inside of her mouth like the howling wind and torrential rain before curling around the injured tip of her tongue and sucking on it. The painful and tingling sensation caused Ye Jiuge's mind to blur. Her entire body moved like waves on the beach, rolling around the large peach-red bed, tugged this way and that by Zi Shang.

The bed could not withstand their weight and began to squeak. Desperately, Ye Jiuge struggled to free herself, but Zi Shang had wrapped around her tightly. He blocked her mouth, and she could not make a sound. A numbing sensation hit her entire body, and she felt butterflies in her stomach. She wanted to sink into him.

Just as Ye Jiuge was about to surrender her virginity, there was a light knock at the door.

The brothel madame's voice rang out intimately, "Mr. Ye, are you satisfied with Lady Yun's services?"

Ye Jiuge suddenly felt pain in her neck, and her mind cleared. She opened her eyes and saw Zi Shang lift his head from her neck. His sharp white snake teeth dripped with fresh blood.

"Mama, be at ease, Mr. Ye is very satisfied!" Zi Shang smiled and spoke in Lady Yun's voice.

"Hehe, that's great," said the madame, then laughed creepily.

"Beast!" Ye Jiuge was breathing irregularly, and her face flushed. She tried to slap Zi Shang's handsome face, but he caught her hand effortlessly.

"Little Jiuge is heartless, I helped remove the poison inside you, and this is how you repay me?" Zi Shang licked the blood off his sharp teeth before placing Ye Jiuge's palm at the side of his mouth and nibbling gently, leaving two white marks.

Ye Jiuge wanted to yank back her hand, but Zi Shang clutched it tightly with an attitude that seemed to say, "If you do not justify yourself, I will not let you off the hook."

“It’s news to me that removing poison requires rubbing my breasts, touching my legs, and biting my neck.”

Ye Jiuge could still feel the burning in her chest. This perverted snake was a blasted idiot for rubbing her breasts with the strength used for kneading steamed bread. Not to mention her legs and neck! Zi Shang’s snake tail was still entangled in her thighs, and the flirtatious tip of his tail teased intimately.

“You must be speaking about this!” Zi Shang pinched her again, then pretended to be serious as he said, “I saw that your breasts have not developed well, so, out of pity, I helped you by giving them a rub. How you have wronged my kind demon heart!”

“Is that so? Then I should really thank your whole family!” Ye Jiuge smiled through gritted teeth. So what if she had small breasts?

“You are welcome!” Zi Shang’s bright red lips curled into a smile, like red spider lilies after absorbing sufficient blood.

“Let go of me. Don’t delay my work!” Ye Jiuge slapped away Zi Shang’s hands fiercely.

She could not beat him in a fight, and it was pointless to argue any further. Getting down to business was more urgent.

“Alright!” Unwillingly, Zi Shang let go of Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge turned over and got off the bed. As she adjusted her messy hair and clothes, she searched the room for the November Cream. Sure enough, she found a white candle in a secret cabinet. It had almost finished burning. This discovery alone would have been enough to shut down the Drunken Cloud Pavilion, but that was not her aim.

Ye Jiuge checked on Lady Yun and found that she was still unconscious. She planned to tie her up and bring her back for interrogation.

“Grill her and then finish her off! Why take the trouble to drag her here and there?”

Zi Shang reclined on the peach red-bed. His white jade-like palm was supporting his cheek, his crow’s feather-like black hair pooled across the bed, and his seductive face revealed an air of nonchalance.

Although he was half-man, half-snake, his perfect looks transcended gender and species. He was so beautiful that nobody would be able to look away. The courtesan, Lady Yun, was not worthy of carrying his shoes.

“Help me interrogate her.” Ye Jiuge was indifferent to Zi Shang’s beauty, but she knew that his Demonic Eye was powerful. When Hong Liu had been falsely incriminated, Zi Shang had helped her using his Demonic Eye.

“How will you repay me?” Zi Shang lifted his long eyebrows, and his amorous eyes swept intimately over Ye Jiuge’s body. He had not had enough of touching her!

“A drop of blood!” Ye Jiuge did not allow him to choose.

“Alright!”

He was in a good mood, so he agreed readily. With a swish of his snake tail, he moved in front of Lady Yun. His fingertip emitted a ray of purple light, which touched her forehead briefly.

At once, Lady Yun opened her eyes and sat up rigidly. She stared blankly at Zi Shang as though she were a doll.

“Ask whatever you wish.” Zi Shang curved his body and leaned against Ye Jiuge as though he had no bones in his body.

“Help me ask her who owns the Drunken Cloud Pavilion, and why she tried to drug me when she met me...”

“Okay!”

Zi Shang was open with Ye Jiuge as he cast his Demonic Eye in front of her. His purple pupils split in two and circled once before regaining their original appearance. Lady Yun’s eyes, which were looking at Zi Shang, dulled, and her mouth opened. She withheld nothing and told Ye Jiuge everything she wanted to know.

The Drunken Cloud Pavilion belonged to the Su Clan, and they used it to make inquiries and for human trafficking. As they were engaged in many illegal activities, they were wary of unfamiliar faces. They were on their guard when Ye Jiuge had entered and were suspicious when she said that she wanted to use the Icy Vigor Powder. Accordingly, they had planned to drug her before interrogating her using torture.

“The Su Clan is so brazen to lay hands on strangers without a care. They have no regard for the law.” Ye Jiuge gritted her teeth. Then, she asked Lady Yun, “What happened with Chen Fuhan?”

“The Su clan asked me to seduce Chen Fuhan and coax him into framing the Fifth Concubine of the Ye residence so that he could earn enough money to buy my freedom.”

Buying her freedom had always been a lie. The reality was: he was poisoned.

Chen Fuhan had thought that he had won the beauty's favor; instead, he'd merely dealt with a stunning but deadly snake.

"What other atrocities have the Su Clan ordered you to commit? Tell me everything!" Ye Jiuge planned to use this incriminating evidence to deal with the Su Clan.

"There's no time. The madame is preparing to come up." Zi Shang shook his head.

"Alright. One last question: what hold does Su Yufeng have over Qiu Mama?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"I don't know," Lady Yun said.

"Did you recently lay your murderous hands on someone with the last name Qiu?" Ye Jiuge rephrased her question.

"I did," replied Lady Yun without hesitation.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

Lady Yun had been at the Drunken Cloud Pavilion for a long time and harmed countless people. However, recently, there had only been one client with the last name Qiu.

Qiu Desheng was a Beginner Spiritual Practitioner slightly over the age of twenty. He was a frequent customer and had been wooing her for some time. Lady Yun had despised him because of his low spiritual prowess. However, she had received an order to lure Qiu Desheng into a fight with another Spiritual Practitioner after announcing that he was to be her private companion for the night. Later, Qiu Desheng was beaten up badly by the "rival suitor" and carried home to recuperate.

"Where is this Qiu Desheng staying?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"No. 17 East Main Street."

As soon as Lady Yun spoke, there were footsteps on the stairs. The brothel's madame must have calculated that Mr. Ye had been drugged and was now ready to interrogate him.

"Let's go!" Ye Jiuge wanted to avoid direct confrontation and stood up to leave.

"How should she be handled?" Zi Shang tossed Lady Yun a look.

"What do you think?" Ye Jiuge asked in reply.

"She should be killed!" Zi Shang had used his Demonic Eye on Lady Yun. If someone discovered what he'd done, it could mean trouble.

"Then kill her!" This Lady Yun had played jackal to the tiger and had perpetrated all kinds of evil. Even death would not be a sufficient punishment for her crimes.

"Alright."

Without any movement from Zi Shang, Lady Yun's body fell to the floor softly, as though she was sleeping soundly.

Ye Jiuge did not check the body. She turned, opened the window, and sailed down to the ground. It was already dawn. At that moment, the ladies and their customers were fast asleep. Golden rays of sun spilled onto the lonely Hua Street.

Quickly, Ye Jiuge left Hua Street and arrived at No. 17 East Main Street.

It was an old house, and the obsolete stone lions in front of the entrance appeared to display the owner's former glory.

Ye Jiuge climbed over the wall and entered the courtyard. Then, she heard a familiar old woman's voice saying, "Sheng'er, how are you feeling today, does your waist still hurt?"

"Mother, I still do not have any strength in my waist. Please go and find Great Master Ye. Ask him to prescribe me some suitable spiritual herbs," a young man's voice answered.

"You were injured because you were challenging someone for the affection of a courtesan in a brothel. On what self-respecting grounds can I beg Old Master for medicine?" The old woman's voice belonged to Qiu Mama.

“Mother, I have learned from my mistake. I promise you that I will turn over a new leaf after I recover from my injury. I won’t stir up trouble anymore, and I will be filial to you,” the man begged piteously. Needless to say, this man had to be Qiu Desheng.

“Aye, I will think of something when I return to the Ye Residence. Get some rest; I will come and see you later,” Qiu Mama sighed and comforted her son before opening the door and exiting.

She looked haggard. Her face was full of sorrow, and the hair at her temples had turned white. She looked as though she had aged ten years. No one would suspect a thing if she said that she was suffering from a severe illness.

Ye Jiuge waited for Qiu Mama to leave before she flipped over the crossbeam and landed. She looked into the house through the open window.

Inside, a man approximately twenty years old lay on the wooden bed. He had a high nose bridge, sunken eyes, and high cheekbones. He looked just like Qiu Mama.

Ye Jiuge carefully opened her Spiritual Eye to examine his breathing and the movement of the spiritual power in his body. She quickly found the source of his illness.

Lady Yun had no morals. Not only did this Qiu Desheng take a beating, but the nerves in his kidney were also destroyed. Even if he could recover, stand, up and move around, he had erectile dysfunction and would never be able to get an erection again. This Qiu Desheng must have been quite the promiscuous character to be beaten up in a brothel. This affliction would be the death of him.

Most likely, Qiu Mama had helped Su Yufeng deal with Fifth Concubine so that her son’s condition could be treated. However, this kind of erectile dysfunction could not be cured with regular medication. Qiu Desheng needed an Invincible Golden Gun Pill, which was produced by superior Spiritual Materials, to reinvigorate his lost glory. Furthermore, he would need a pill every time he wanted an erection.

An Invincible Golden Gun Pill cost fifty silver taels. This was no small sum. Although Qiu Mama had served many years in the Ye Residence, she was still just a servant; her monthly wage was only twenty silver taels. Even if she had an additional secret allowance, it would be impossible for her to afford the expensive treatment. If she wanted to save her son, she would have to beg Su Yufeng, which meant that she would become a pawn in her mistress’ hands.

To instigate Qiu Mama’s defection, Ye Jiuge had to make a move on Qiu Desheng.

Ye Jiuge pushed open the window and leaped into the house.

Hearing the movement, Qiu Desheng immediately turned his head and shouted, "Who's there?"

"Someone who can save you," Ye Jiuge said, sitting on the table casually.

"Get out, or I will shout for help. " Qiu Desheng looked at Ye Jiuge vigilantly.

Even though he was severely injured, he would not believe a stranger's words so easily.

"Mr. Qiu, wait for me to finish before you decide whether or not to chase me away." Ye Jiuge's eyes drooped. Her sharp eyes swept over his legs before she asked, "Don't you find it strange that you were beaten to a pulp?"

"What do you mean?" Qiu Desheng frowned.

"If I told you that someone beat you up deliberately, would you believe me?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"Deliberately? " Qiu Desheng was startled.

He did find it strange. Lady Yun had many private companions, so why was only he targeted? Why did they attack him so fiercely? Could it be that there is a conspiracy?

"Rivalry for affection in a brothel is normal, but it is not normal for you to be pulverized to this degree."

"Do you know who did this to me?"

"Of course, this was planned by the Madame of the Ye Residence, Su Yufeng. She schemed this plot to threaten your mother into helping her deal with the Fifth Concubine. Lady Yun had already been silenced by the Su Clan, and the next ones will be you and your mother," Ye Jiuge explained slowly.

"I don't believe this. What evidence do you have that the Su Clan did this?" Qiu Desheng's heart began to beat even faster.

"If you don't believe me, you can ask your mother or someone else to check if Lady Yun is still at the Drunken Cloud Pavilion." Ye Jiuge rose then said, "When you have understood this, I will come and find you again. At that time, we can discuss how to treat your injury."

"You have a way to treat my injury?" Qiu Desheng's eyes brightened immediately.

"If both you and your mother are tactful." Ye Jiuge got up and left to allow Qiu Desheng to think it over.

“Why can’t you go to Qiu Mama directly instead of making things so complicated?” Zi Shang did not understand what Ye Jiuge was thinking. She can just threaten Qiu Mama to testify against Su Yufeng, so why bother to find Qiu Desheng and offer to help treat him?

“You know nothing. Qiu Mama already betrayed Ye Yuxuan when she helped Su Yufeng harm Fifth Concubine. She will not testify unless cornered.” Ye Jiuge was just testing the waters by seeking out Qiu Desheng. She had not used her main trick.

“Tsk, you humans are troublesome,” Zi Shang teased before falling silent.

Ye Jiuge stealthily returned to the Zhilin Residence. Just as she finished changing her clothes, Qing Mama came to her and reported, “Eldest Miss, Fifth Concubine is awake.”

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Translator: Nyo-i-Bo Studio Editor: Nyo-i-Bo Studio

“Did Fifth Concubine say anything after she woke up?” Ye Jiuge sat in front of the dressing table and took out a pearl butterfly hairpin from the jewelry box to pin up her hair.

“No.” Qing Mama took the hairpin and helped Ye Jiuge insert it, then said, “Qing Liu said that Fifth Concubine just lay in bed in a daze after she woke up, as though she had lost her soul. She was even unwilling to drink any water. They were anxious and hoped that you could go over and take a look.”

“Alright, I’ll go and see!” It was a good thing that Fifth Concubine was remorseful, but if it cost her life, the losses would outweigh the gains.

Together with Qing Mama, Ye Jiuge arrived at Fifth Concubine’s run-down residence. Two burly maids, who appeared to be from the torture chamber, guarded the entrance.

Away from them, a pretty maid dressed in a long mauve gown accompanied by two middle-aged maids was also waiting by the entrance. They saw Ye Jiuge approach from a distance and bowed respectfully. “Eldest Miss.”

Ye Jiuge recognized the pretty maid as Zhi Hua, the highest-ranked maid at Su Yufeng's side. She asked, "What are you waiting here for?"

"Eldest Miss, Madame is worried about Fifth Concubine's condition and ordered us to come and wait on her," Zhi Hua replied, her eyes drooping without being overbearing or self-effacing.

"Your Madame is indeed considerate. Go on and wait on her, then." Ye Jiuge curled her red lips and sneered before walking toward the residence.

The two burly maids acted as though they had not seen a thing. Zhi Hua frowned. When she had tried to enter the residence earlier, the two maids had stopped her, claiming that no one was allowed to enter without the Old Master's orders. Now that Eldest Miss is here, they dare to pretend that they do not see her. This is too much.

Unwilling to accept this, Zhi Hua called out to Ye Jiuge, "Eldest Miss, forgive me for speaking boldly. Old Master said that nobody is to enter the residence without his orders, but you..."

Before Zhi Hua could finish speaking, Qing Mama suddenly came up to her, lifted her hand, and slapped her, hard. She scolded, "Who do you think you are? Even Madame would not dare to speak to Eldest Miss in such a manner. You have dared to put on airs in front of Eldest Miss, so you must be taught some manners."

Zhi Hua covered her face and glared at Qing Mama in disbelief.

She was a cut above the rest of the maids at Madame's side, and she had always been prideful in the residence. People curried favor with her everywhere she went. In her eyes, Qing Mama had always been inferior to the cleaning maids and was someone she could scold or hit at any time. She could not believe that Qing Mama had become so powerful that she had no scruples about hitting her.

"What are you looking at? If you are capable, go and report to Old Master. If not, tuck your tail between your legs and get lost," Qing Mama scolded without any consideration.

She had suffered under Zhi Hua when she had lost her Spiritual Power. Now that she had recovered her Spiritual Power and had the support of the Eldest Miss, she wanted to take the opportunity to establish her dominance.

Ye Jiuge approved of this tough Qing Mama. Those who worked under Su Yufeng should not be treated with kindness; they should be pummeled if necessary.

"You are right to discipline me. I have realized my mistake." Zhi Hua could not submit or stand tall

as required. She knew that she would not be able to gain any advantage and retreated to one side.

Ye Jiuge could not be bothered to pay her any mind. As she led Qing Mama into the residence, she saw Qing Hu coming out of the house.

“Eldest Miss, finally, you are here.” Qing Hu relaxed when she saw that Eldest Miss had arrived.

“Where is Qing Liu?” Ye Jiuge asked.

“Qing Liu is feeding Fifth Concubine medicine in the house.” Qing Hu pulled back the door curtains to allow Ye Jiuge to enter.

As soon as Ye Jiuge went in, she saw Qing Liu holding a bowl of medicine and coaxing Fifth Concubine to drink. “I beg you, please drink a little!”

Fifth Concubine’s forehead was wrapped in a white cloth. Her mouth was closed, and her two eyes stared up at the roof in a daze. She looked as though she had lost her soul and did not react to outside movements.

“Eldest Miss!” Qing Liu stood up and bowed while holding the bowl of medicine when she saw Ye Jiuge enter.

“Give me the medicine and leave us.” Ye Jiuge took the bowl and prepared to talk with Fifth Concubine.

Qing Mama led Qing Hu and Qing Liu out and closed the door behind them.

Throughout the exchange, Fifth Concubine did not react. It was as though she did not know that Ye Jiuge had entered the house.

Ye Jiuge held the bowl of medicine as she sat on a shabby chair next to the bed. She said slowly, “Fifth Concubine, do you wish for Ruyi to return safely?”

Fifth Concubine’s empty eyes immediately turned. She supported herself halfway up, stared unwaveringly at Ye Jiuge, and asked, “Do you know where Ruyi is?”

“I don’t know.” Ye Jiuge shook her head. Ye Yu had yet to contact her, and she did not know where Ye Ruyi had been taken to.

Fifth Concubine’s eyes immediately dimmed. She lay back down in disappointment as she mumbled, “Eldest Miss, please do not tease me.”

"I am not teasing you. Although I do not know where Ruyi is, I know who separated you from your daughter." Ye Jiuge said.

"Even if you said nothing, I'd know that it was Su Yufeng." Fifth Concubine said as tears began to pour from her eyes. She sobbed, "It was all because of me, I should not have been possessed and listened to her nonsense."

"Things have already reached this stage, so there is no use in saying that." Ye Jiuge's eyes drooped as she stirred the bowl of medicine in her hands.

Fifth Concubine had indeed been possessed when she fell under Su Junqing's Mental Manipulation.

However, after experiencing this calamity, she would not be misled so easily again.

"Eldest Miss, I have learned my mistake. Please, save Ruyi. If you can save Ruyi, I will work like an ox or a horse to repay you." As Fifth Concubine was speaking, she wanted to get off the bed to prostrate before Ye Jiuge.

"Fifth Concubine, what are you doing?" Ye Jiuge forced Fifth Concubine back onto the bed and said, "Ruyi is my younger sister. Even if you do not say anything, I will go and save her. However, you must take care of your body. If you collapse before Ruyi comes back, won't you break her heart and make your enemies happy?"

"Eldest Miss, do not worry, I will not die before Su Yufeng." Fifth Concubine raised her head, her eyes reflected a strong desire to live. She took the bowl of medicine from Ye Jiuge's hands and gulped it down noisily.

"That's the right mindset." Ye Jiuge nodded with satisfaction. If Fifth Concubine, the victim, were dead, even if she could find evidence against Su Yufeng, it would be of no use.

Meanwhile, in the Shuimo Garden, Zhi Hua, half of her face swollen, was reporting to Su Yufeng about Ye Jiuge's visit to the Fifth Concubine.

"Mother, this Ye Jiuge is so arrogant, even the old servant under her have the audacity to bully us. If you do not bring her under control, our people from Shuimo Garden will not be able to go out." Ye Shanshan said with hatred.

Although her cousin and mother had instructed that they must yield to Ye Jiuge for the time being, she was unable to stomach the insult.

“You think I don’t want her dead? Now just isn’t the time.”

Su Yufeng was also furious. She had thought that Fifth Concubine was going to die when she saw how hard she had slammed her head against the wall. She could not believe that the b*tch survived and was fated to live.

However, the most vexing thing of all was a message from the Su Clan reporting that Lady Yun had suddenly died in the Drunken Cloud Pavilion. Apparently, the murderer was a young man whose last name was Ye.

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When the young man with the last name Ye was mentioned, Su Yufeng immediately thought of Ye Jiuge. She could not believe that Ye Jiuge would investigate Lady Yun: did she know all about how she had framed Fifth Concubine?

The more Su Yufeng thought about it, the more anxious she became. Her nephew, Su Junqing, had insisted that she gift him Ye Ruyi after Fifth Concubine was dispatched. Now that she was thinking about it carefully, she realized that their plan was full of loopholes.

Although Ye Yuxuan had been unable to sniff out any details so far, that could change as time passed. If Ye Jiuge managed to rescue Ye Ruyi, she would find herself in a dire situation. Ye Yuxuan would not let her off the hook easily.

Presently, the most urgent task was to kill Ye Ruyi quickly. However, Su Junqing was refusing to disclose Ye Ruyi’s whereabouts. Come to think of it, her nephew had been handling things strangely recently. As time passed, she was unable to guess what was on his mind.

“Mother, what are you thinking about?” Ye Shanshan felt strange seeing uncertainty in her mother’s expression.

“Nothing. Didn’t you say that the Crown Prince has invited you on a trip to the lake? Why don’t you go and prepare yourself?” Su Yufeng did not wish for her daughter to know about these vexing

matters. She would be of no help and might as well make herself look pretty to cheer up the Crown Prince.

"Alright, I shall take my leave," Ye Shanshan excused herself. It was almost time to go, and she needed to get dressed.

Su Yufeng could no longer sit still and called for a horse-drawn carriage to take her to the Su residence and find Su Junqing. Unexpectedly, she was unable to find him there.

Although Sun Junqing was not in the house, he had left her a letter. After Su Yufeng finished reading it, she smiled with satisfaction and said to herself, "It seems that this brat has already arranged everything. I have been worrying about nothing."

Su Yufeng hurriedly returned to the residence and immediately instructed Zhi Hua to look for Qiu Mama and summon her.

"Madame, Qiu Mama has requested leave and has still not returned," Zhi Hua reported.

"Then, wait for her to return and immediately summon her to me." Su Yufeng knew that Qiu Mama must have gone to visit her useless son yet again. However, this was beneficial to her. The more Qiu Mama cared about her son, the stronger Su Yufeng's hold over her.

Qiu Mama returned before noon with a ghastly look on her dark face. When she heard that Madame was looking for her, an unbearable hatred flitted past her eyes.

She paced up and down in her own house before she calmed down and made her way to the Shuimo Garden.

"Qiu Mama is here. Madame is waiting for you inside," Zhi Hua greeted her warmly and pulled back the curtains to allow Qiu Mama to enter.

"Lady Zhi Hua, thank you." Qiu Mama smiled. After she entered the house and greeted Su Yufeng with a bow, she slouched and lowered her eyes in fear that Su Yufeng would find something wrong with her.

"Zhi Hua, give Qiu Mama a seat." Su Yufeng exchanged glances with Zhi Hua.

Zhi Hua carried over an embroidered stool then escorted out the other servants.

"I am fine." Qiu Mama said while standing with her hands hanging at her sides.

"Qiu Mama, you are so polite." Su Yufeng did not mind. She changed the subject and asked, "How

is your son's injury now?"

"Thank you, Madame, for your concern. He has been recovering well ever since taking the elixir you gave me. The physician said that he will be fine after some rest." said Qiu Mama softly.

"That's great. However, it takes one hundred days for the bone to knit and tendons to heal, so this injury must be treated well without any delay. I have a bottle of superior grade medicine for incised wounds: bring it home for your son." Su Yufeng took a jade bottle out of her sleeve and placed it on the table.

"Thank you, but I wouldn't dare trouble you further," Qiu Mama said, shaking her head.

"Qiu Mama, you regard me as an outsider. Are you turning your nose up at this elixir?" Su Yufeng smiled, but her eyes showed her displeasure.

"I do not dare." Qiu Mama paused before she bowed and accepted the jade bottle. Then, she said softly, "Madame, thank you for your reward."

"That's right." Su Yufeng nodded her head in satisfaction.

"What instructions does Madame have for me?" Qiu Mama said in a more respectful tone.

"Actually, it's only a small matter. I just want you to help me place something in Fifth Concubine's courtyard..." Su Yufeng began to instruct her softly.

"Madame, rest assured, I will certainly complete this task for you." Qiu Mama lowered her eyelids to hide the radiance that flitted past her eyes.

"Since you are the one handling this, I feel reassured." Su Yufeng did not suspect a thing throughout the conversation and was at ease when she handed the item to Qiu Mama.

Meanwhile, at that very moment, Ye Jiuge was drinking tea and suntanning on a soft couch in the courtyard.

Qing Mama hurriedly entered, approached Ye Jiuge, and whispered into her ear, "Eldest Miss, I heard that Qiu Mama was summoned to Shuimo Garden immediately after she returned. They could be coming up with some crafty plots and schemes."

"I would be worried if they weren't," Ye Jiuge placed her teacup down and gloated.

Qiu Mama would have known the truth from her son by now. If she was still willing to help Su Yufeng, she must have been under Mental Manipulation, or a donkey had kicked her in the head.

"Eldest Miss, what do you mean?" Qing Mama looked confused.

"Don't worry about this. Just wait for the show." Ye Jiuge rose and prepared to go and find Qiu Desheng to discuss the terms.

However, when she arrived at the Qiu family's residence, she could not see anyone inside. She looked everywhere, but she could not even find a ghost's shadow.

"Do you need my help?" Zi Shang's voice rang with gusto in Ye Jiuge's ears.

"You are not sleeping?" When she had wanted to ask him for help the last time, he'd been napping. Strangely, this time, he was very excited.

"Nope." That time, he had taken a nap because he had used up too much of his spiritual power to transmit the cultivation techniques to Ye Jiuge. However, there was no need to explain this to her.

"Help me find out where Qiu Desheng has gone," said Ye Jiuge.

If he had been captured by the Su Clan, it would be exactly what she wanted.

"What benefit will I get?" He would never do her a favor for nothing.

"A drop of blood." Ye Jiuge had nothing else that he might want.

"Add a kiss." Zi Shang was still reminiscing about the kiss that they had shared.

"No way." Ye Jiuge rejected him immediately. She refused to associate herself with a beast.

"Then you will have to find him yourself." Zi Shang was quite a character himself.

"Fine, I will find him by myself," Ye Jiuge replied firmly.

Again, she searched both inside and outside the house and saw no signs of a struggle. The house was in order, although some seasonable clothes were missing from the wardrobe.

Finally, Ye Jiuge came to a conclusion. Qiu Desheng had not been captured: he had been taken away by Qiu Mama, which meant that Qiu Mama did not want to offend Su Yufeng openly—yet.

Tsk, I did not expect Qiu Mama to be so tolerant; her son will never be able to father children after being beaten, and yet she wants to continue helping the culprit. It seems that she has been kicked in the head by a donkey.

“What did I say?”

Ye Jiuge could have found Qiu Mama and threatened her. Instead, she had decided to target her son; now, she must be humiliated. Zi Shang was gloating considerably.

“Hmph, the monk can run away, but the temple won’t run with him. Even if Qiu Mama has decided to send her son away, I still have a plan for dealing with her!” Ye Jiuge would never admit that she had miscalculated.

“If you need my help, you just have to give me a kiss!” Zi Shang’s voice was full of temptation.

Ye Jiuge retorted, “Go and kiss yourself!”

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Ye Jiuge returned to the Zhilin Residence feeling dejected. From a distance, she saw Qing Mama anxiously waiting by the entrance.

“Eldest Miss, things are not looking good. Old Master has brought servants from the torture chamber and headed determinedly for Fifth Concubine’s residence,” Qing Mama rushed up to her and said.

“What’s wrong with Father this time?” Ye Jiuge changed direction and made for Fifth Concubine’s residence.

“I heard that Fourth Miss’s body has been found. Old Master is so angry that he wants Fifth Concubine to be buried with Fourth Miss.” Qing Mama was also walking briskly.

“What? Fourth Sister’s body has been found? Who found it? Where?” Ye Jiuge was startled.

Is it possible that Su Junqing has already killed Ye Ruyi? Why has Ye Yu not reported back to her yet? Has Su Junqing caught him? No, he would never be caught. Ye Yu is smart: he would not make the same mistake twice.

"I am not very clear on the details, but Old Master's personal attendant, Song Bai, delivered the message. I heard that Fourth Miss died a tragic death. Not only was she beheaded, but she was also disfigured, and her spiritual root was carved out," Qing Mama relayed with a heavy heart.

Some people in the world were so ruthless and amoral that they would dig out others' Spiritual Roots and sell them.

"Beheaded, disfigured, spiritual root dug out..." Ye Jiuge repeated to herself mumbling.

"Yes, I heard that Old Master was furious. I am worried that Fifth Concubine will not survive this!" Qing Mama sighed again.

At that moment in Fifth Concubine's residence, Ye Yuxuan was flying into a rage. He ordered Gan Mama, "Haul this b*tch down and beat her to death."

Fifth Concubine did not understand what was happening as she was dragged out of her bed. However, she had promised Ye Jiuge that she would live. She could not accept being beaten to death and quickly begged Ye Yuxuan for mercy, "Old Master, please! Out of respect for Ruyi, let me go for now. When Ruyi is back, I will not say a word—even if you want to beat me to death."

Before Ye Yuxuan could reply, Su Yufeng rushed in, pointed at Fifth Concubine, and berated her, "Bah! How can you still have the gall to mention Ruyi, b*tch? If you had not collaborated with the kidnapper, she would not have died such a horrible death." Su Yufeng looked as distressed as if her own daughter had died.

"What did you say?" Fifth Concubine yanked up her head violently, glared unwaveringly at Su Yufeng, and said, "What did you say happened to Ruyi?"

"My poor Ruyi! Why did she have a heartless mother like you?" Su Yufeng covered her face with her handkerchief and sobbed, "Bitter-fated child, you died a wrongful death!"

"No, it's not possible. Ruyi isn't dead, you are lying to me, you are lying to me..." Fifth Concubine's eyes turned bloodshot as she sprang upon Su Yufeng like a mad tiger. She wanted to fight Su Yufeng, but Gan Mama pinned her down tightly.

Old Master was in the room; he would not allow Fifth Concubine to be presumptuous. "Yes," he said, "if you had known it would come to this, you should not have acted as you did. It is too late to regret it now."

Su Yufeng sighed smugly then said to Ye Yuxuan, “Old Master, I have determined that Fifth Concubine hid the one thousand silver taels she received from selling Ruyi in the corner of the courtyard.”

“I did not, I did not!” As Fifth Concubine struggled desperately, Gan Mama and the other servants almost lost their grip on her.

“You seem to refuse to shed a tear until you see the coffin!”

Su Yufeng squinted her eyes and instructed Zhi Hua, who was beside her, “Bring some servants to the corner of the courtyard and dig. Let Old Master see how greedy this vicious woman is—she sold her daughter for a thousand silver taels!”

“I understand.” Zhi Hua nodded and immediately directed the servants. They began to dig using pickaxes.

“Old Master, I did not sell Ruyi. This is all Madame’s handiwork. Please, say something on my behalf!” Fifth Concubine looked at Ye Yuxuan with tears streaming down her face, hoping that he would speak up for her.

She was destined to be disappointed. Not only did Ye Yuxuan not help her, but he raised a leg to kick her in the heart. In his fury, Ye Yuxuan mustered all his strength. His kick could shatter a boulder, not to mention Fifth Concubine’s weak body.

Su Yufeng used her handkerchief to cover her mouth and hide her gloating. Gan Mama looked away; she could not bear to look anymore, believing that Fifth Concubine would not be able to avoid being kicked.

Just then, Ye Jiuge arrived in a hurry. When she saw that she was too late to save Fifth Concubine, she simply thrust her palm toward Ye Yuxuan to force him to withdraw his leg.

“Evil spawn!” Ye Yuxuan did not expect that Ye Jiuge would dare attack him. As he raised his arms in self-defense, his leg paused momentarily.

When Fifth Concubine saw Ye Jiuge, a strong will to live surged within her. She used all her strength to roll to one side and avoided Ye Yuxuan’s deadly kick in the nick of time.

“Jiuge, you dare to attack your father?” Su Yufeng’s eyes brightened. This turn of events practically guaranteed her leverage over Ye Jiuge.

“Father, I only did it in the heat of the moment. Please, do not be offended.” Ye Jiuge quickly

pulled up Fifth Concubine and sighed with relief when she saw that the distraught woman was alright. Immediately, she raised her head and said in a sharp voice, “Madame, you, on the other hand, saw that Father had made a mistake. Yet, you did not stop him. Instead, you goaded him to continue making mistakes. Are you trying to harm him?”

“Jiuge, your mouth is powerful. You beat up Old Master, how can that become his fault?” Su Yufeng laughed in contempt.

“Madame, your words are absurd. Father is a spiritual master and a prominent figure in our capital. How could he possibly be beaten up by a modest spiritual practitioner like me? If your words get out, people will laugh their teeth off. What evil intentions are you harboring?” Ye Jiuge sneered.

“Elder Sister, it is pointless for you to quibble. Everyone in the courtyard saw you trying to lay hands on Father,” Ye Shanshan piped up from the sidelines.

“You saw me lay a hand on him—did you not see me try to save Fifth Concubine?” she snapped at her sister. Then, she said to Ye Yuxuan, “Father, no matter what, Fifth Concubine is Ruyi’s mother. If you try to kill her indiscriminately, Ruyi will be heartbroken when she comes home.”

“If Ruyi could return, then, of course, I wouldn’t kill her mother. But now that Ruyi is dead, why should I keep this b*tch alive?” Ye Yuxuan snarled.

“Father, you say that Ruyi is dead, but where is her body?” Ye Jiuge would not believe that Ruyi was dead without seeing her corpse with her own eyes.

“Ruyi’s body has yet to be retrieved from the Justice Department.” Ye Yuxuan had immediately brought people over to kill Fifth Concubine as soon as he heard the news; there’d been no time to retrieve Ye Ruyi’s remains.

“Father, I heard that the body was beheaded and disfigured. How can you be sure that it is Fourth Sister?” Ye Jiuge asked again.

Ye Yuxuan hesitated. He did not wish for the corpse to be Ye Ruyi. After all, the child possessed a Wood Fire Spiritual Root!

“Song Bai, I heard that it was you who brought the message. Repeat it for me.”

Ye Jiuge looked around, and her eyes fell on Ye Yuxuan’s personal attendant.

Song Bai glanced hesitatingly at Old Master, who did not seem to object. Then he said, "Eldest Miss, there was a message from the Justice Department stating that they have found the body of a seven-year-old girl holding an authenticating object from the Ye Residence. They want us to go over to examine the body to see if she is indeed one of ours."

"That means that the Justice Department has yet to draw a conclusion. Father, why do you firmly believe that it must be Fourth Sister?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"A seven-year-old girl's corpse with an authenticating object from our Ye Residence? Who else could it be?"

Su Yufeng interjected, "Furthermore, I received a reliable message that Fifth Concubine sold Ruyi to a black market that specializes in extracting Spiritual Roots and buried the one thousand silver taels she received in this courtyard."

After speaking, she turned her head and asked Zhi Hua, "Have you found the box?"

"Yes." Zhi Hua called in a servant, who placed a locked box in front of everyone.

Su Yufeng pointed at the small box and said. "The evidence of her crime makes her guilty beyond a shadow of a doubt. What else does Fifth Concubine have to say?"

"I did not do it!" Fifth Concubine shouted.

"Hmph, let me see what treasure is inside. Madame seems to know more about it than Fifth Concubine." Ye Jiuge gave the box a kick that broke the lock. She opened it and found a pile of rocks inside. Not a silver tael in sight.

Su Yufeng's eyes widened, and she almost screamed. She had instructed Qiu Mama to bury the one thousand silver taels and Ye Ruyi's slave deed in Fifth Concubine's courtyard. How had they turned into rocks?

“Madame, you claimed that this box contained the money that Fifth Concubine received from selling her daughter. I had no idea that rocks were so valuable that they would be worth her daughter’s life.” Ye Jiuge squinted her eyes and glared at Su Yufeng.

“Fifth Concubine must have secretly swapped the silver taels,” Su Yufeng said through gritted teeth.

“You said that the silver taels were buried here. Now, you are saying that they have been swapped. Madame, why don’t you tell us what Fifth Concubine swapped the silver taels for. We should hurry up and find the money so that Madame’s painstaking efforts do not go to waste.” Ye Jiuge raised her voice; everyone in the courtyard could hear everything.

Su Yufeng could not have known where Qiu Mama had placed the silver taels. Qiu Mama had deliberately called in sick and had not been staying in the Ye Residence to avoid arousing suspicion. At the moment, she could not be found.

However, even if the silver taels had disappeared, Su Yufeng still had a way to deal with Fifth Concubine.

“Old Master, I don’t know how Fifth Concubine got wind of the news and switched the silver taels in advance. She planned it all with such meticulous care. No wonder she was able to bring in someone to kidnap Ruyi.” As Su Yufeng wiped her tears, she continued pitifully, “I only pity our poor Ruyi who has died such a tragic death.”

“Madame, you shouldn’t cry so soon,” Ye Jiuge sneered. She turned her head and said to Ye Yuxuan, “Father, we should go to the Justice Department and check if the small girl is indeed Ruyi. If this was all just a misunderstanding, and you made such a big fuss, it would be ugly if the news spread around.”

Ye Yuxuan was always concerned about his reputation. Of course, he did not want such notoriety leaking from his residence. He nodded and said, “Alright, I shall go to the Justice Department.”

“Old Master, I will go with you.” Su Yufeng was scared that Ye Jiuge was up to no good.

“I will go as well.” Ye Shanshan wanted to go and have a look.

“Old Master, I...”

Fifth Concubine wanted to go too, but Ye Jiuge gripped her shoulders and said, “Fifth Concubine should be locked up in the dungeon and wait for Father to return to handle her.” Since Ye Yuxuan was furious, it was best for Fifth Concubine to avoid the limelight.

“Hmph, haul her down and guard her properly,” Ye Yuxuan ordered Gan Mama. With a flourish, he led Su Yufeng, Ye Shanshan, Ye Jiuge, and the others to the Justice Department in a formidable array.

The person in charge of welcoming them was the famous spiritual inspector, Wan Ziyang. He appeared to be approximately twenty-five years old, and his handsome facial features were as defined as though they had been engraved with a knife. His body was upright and exuded masculinity: he had a merciless look.

It was said that he had been born a commoner but was incredibly talented and had become an intermediate spiritual practitioner at such a young age. The Justice Department had expended many resources to summon him to keep watch.

When Wan Ziyang saw that Ye Yuxuan had brought along his wife and daughters, he frowned and said coldly, “The morgue is an important place in the Justice Department. Only Great Master Ye is permitted to enter.”

“Alright, everyone, wait outside!” Ye Yuxuan knew that Wan Ziyang was famous for his unfeeling personality and would never show due respect for anyone’s feelings. As such, he did not bother arguing with him.

Ye Jiuge stood in front of Wan Ziyang, looked straight at him, and said: “I am going inside too.”

“Do you not understand the human language?” Wan Ziyang’s gaze was grave, and his voice was cold. An ordinary woman would have broken down in fear.

“I suspect that somebody has deliberately used the small girl’s corpse to harm my Fourth Sister, so I want to enter and perform an autopsy.” Ye Jiuge’s eyes burned like torches as she stood her ground.

“You know how to perform an autopsy?” Wan Ziyang’s expression changed slightly.

“I do.” Ye Jiuge nodded. An autopsy was an essential skill that she, as a former agent, possessed.

“Jiuge, what nonsense are you sprouting? Get out of the way immediately,” Ye Yuxuan bellowed. Their Ye Residence was home to a clan of spiritual elixir alchemists; when had it become a clan of coroners?

“Do you have a way to inspect the remains even if the spiritual root has been destroyed?” Wan Ziyang asked, ignoring Ye Yuxuan.

“Even if the spiritual root is destroyed, the bones can still be inspected. Inspecting the bones is

more reliable than inspecting the spiritual root,” Ye Jiuge said seriously.

“You may enter!” Wan Ziyang nodded and turned towards the Justice Department’s dungeon.

Ye Jiuge followed at once. Ye Yuxuan stared at the two people in front of him with hatred then followed behind with a gloomy face.

Although Ye Shanshan wanted to tag along and take a look, she did not dare fool around when she recalled Wan Ziyang’s dirty look. She tugged at Su Yufeng’s arm with uneasiness and asked softly, “Mother, is the corpse really Fourth Sister?”

“Of course!” Su Yufeng nodded. She did not believe that Su Junqing would lie to her.

When Su Junqing had asked her for Ye Ruyi, she had suspected that Su Junqing had designs on Ye Ruyi’s spiritual root. Now that it had been a while since the girl’s kidnapping and he had removed the thing he wanted, there was no use for the corpse.

“That’s good.” Ye Shanshan felt at ease.

Since Ye Ruyi was dead, Fifth Concubine would not live, no matter what Ye Jiuge said. Furthermore, Ye Jiuge had contradicted Father for Fifth Concubine’s sake, and Father would not tolerate her any longer. Soon, for her part in collaborating with them, Ye Jiuge would also face her death.

Meanwhile, Ye Jiuge and Wan Ziyang had just reached the morgue, which was located at the back of the Justice Department. Although the room was spacious, there was only one black coffin in it. A strange odor diffused the entire space.

“This morgue is used for strange cases,” Wan Ziyang said to Ye Yuxuan and Ye Jiuge. Then, from the side, he opened the coffin.

When Ye Yuxuan smelled the odor, he almost vomited. He immediately pinched his nose and moved away from the coffin.

Ye Jiuge had realized Wan Ziyang’s trick earlier and use a handkerchief to cover her nose and mouth quietly. After the odor passed, she moved closer to the coffin’s side and carefully examined its contents.

Inside the coffin lay a small girl's naked and headless carcass. Her body was covered with knife wounds and whip lacerations and had turned white from soaking in water. It emitted a rotten odor.

The human head placed beside the corpse was even more hideous to look at. The facial features had been chopped off, and the spiritual root behind the brain extracted, leaving only messy hair behind. It was impossible to determine the girl's former appearance.

"Lord Wan, where was this small girl's corpse found, and what was the situation?" Ye Jiuge asked solemnly.

"A San Dao Wan villager found the body next to the river. We were able to identify your Ye Residence by the words 'Ye Ruyi' engraved on the longevity lock in the corpse's possession." After speaking, Wan Ziyang took out a wooden tray. Inside, there were five exquisite accessories, all of which belonged to a girl.

Among them was a longevity lock made from antique silver engraved with a design of two flowers growing from the same base. On the back of the lock were the words: Ye Ruyi.

"This longevity lock is indeed from our Ye Residence," Ye Yuxuan frowned and said.

He had commissioned an artisan to design the longevity lock for the female descendants in his house. Although he had not cherished Ye Ruyi, she was still his daughter, so she had received one of these longevity locks.

Ye Jiuge did not question further. She opened her Spiritual Eye and scrutinized the girl's corpse before saying, "The estimated time of death of this seven-year-old girl is between three and five o'clock yesterday morning. Before she died, she was abused and raped. After her death, she was beheaded and immersed in water..."

The more Wan Ziyang heard, the more surprised he became. Initially, when he permitted Ye Jiuge to enter, he had just wanted to give her a chance. He had not expected her to be able to determine so much; the analysis she had provided was more complete than the coroner's.

“Is the corpse Ruyi or not?” This question was Ye Yuxuan’s only concern.

“I am not certain; I have to inspect the bones first to see if it’s a Wood Fire Spiritual Root!” Ye Jiuge did not dare voice her opinions easily at this moment.

“How do you plan to inspect the bones? Do you need the coroner’s help?” Wan Ziyang wanted to let the coroner secretly observe so he could learn from her.

“Alright. On the way, please ask him to help me prepare some Withered Glory Herb, White Tassel...” Ye Jiuge listed five different herbs in a single breath. These herbs were the materials required for inspecting the bones.

Wan Ziyang nodded. He exited the morgue, signaled for a bailiff, and instructed him to ask Bai Songling to prepare the herbs that Ye Jiuge had requested.

Shortly after that, Bai Songling arrived with the herbs.

Ye Jiuge had thought that all coroners were eccentric old men; she had not expected that this Bai Songling would be rather young. He looked to be slightly over twenty and wore a gown of green cloth. His skin was jade-like, and he was handsome. He had a bashful smile and the appearance of a vulnerable and delicate scholar. However, Ye Jiuge felt that Bai Songling was not as weak as his appearance suggested, but she was unable to pinpoint why she felt this way.

Bai Songling was also surprised to see Ye Jiuge standing beside the coffin. He looked at Ye Yuxuan, who was positioned some distance away, unsure who to give the bag of herbs to.

“Give it to me!” Ye Jiuge took the initiative and received the bag of herbs. When she opened it, she found the herbs to be mature and of a superior grade. She could tell that they had been chosen meticulously.

Bai Songling walked over to Wan Ziyang and asked softly, “What is happening?”

He had thought that Ye Yuxuan would personally conduct the autopsy. Why was it Ye Jiuge? He knew about Ye Jiuge’s bad reputation in the capital. Anyone who mentioned her called her “stupid,” “useless,” and “ugly.”

“Wait and see.”

Wan Ziyang did not press any further. Although what Ye Jiuge had said after she inspected the corpse had surprised him, Wan Ziyang wanted to reserve his opinions until after the results of her autopsy.

“Lord Wan, is there a place for me to configure the potion?” These days, people were careful to keep their secret recipes secret. Ye Jiuge’s request was reasonable.

“Yes!”

There was a small room in the morgue used for storing items required for autopsies. Ye Jiuge used it to quickly crush and mix the herbs together to produce an ink-black solution. She poured the solution into a small ceramic bottle and exited the room. Then, she borrowed an eviscerating knife from Bai Songling and nimbly removed the hair, skin, and muscle from the corpse’s Baihui acupoint to reveal the clean, white skull.

Both Wan Ziyang’s and Bai Songling’s eyes twitched as they watched her. Ye Jiuge’s technique was even more expert than the most seasoned coroner’s.

“The solution that I mixed is used for inspecting bones. By applying it to the Baihui acupoint, this corpse’s spiritual root and bone quality can be determined. If it is a Wood Fire Spiritual Root, it will turn both red and green.” As Ye Jiuge spoke, she poured a few drops of the ink-black solution onto the small girl’s head. Immediately, the white skull turned black.

Even after a short while, there was no change in the skull: it remained pitch-black.

“What does that mean?” Bai Songling could not contain his curiosity and asked.

“It means that the small girl was just an ordinary person and did not have a spiritual root.” Although Ye Jiuge had guessed that the small girl was not Ye Ruyi, she could not control herself and sighed in relief.

“Are you sure?” Wan Ziyang frowned and asked.

He felt that Ye Jiuge was not treating this seriously and had casually determined the small girl’s identity just by using a bottle of solution.

“Of course!” Ye Jiuge said, “If you do not believe me, you can test it out on someone with a spiritual root.”

“Fine!” Wan Ziyang extended his hand towards Ye Jiuge. He wanted to test it personally.

Ye Jiuge graciously handed over the bottle and followed him to the morgue next door.

This morgue was even more enormous than the previous one and was said to contain the corpses of spiritual practitioners.

Wan Ziyang randomly opened a nearby coffin. Inside lay a perverted-looking middle-aged man. A hole in his chest was clearly the cause of his death. The hole indicated that a fire spiritual power had injured him, and the wound was charred black.

Ye Yuxuan craned his neck and peered around curiously, before asking, "Could this person be the rapist who recently committed his crimes in Mianyang County?"

"Indeed!" Wan Ziyang roughly removed the rapist's scalp and poured some of the bone inspecting solution on it. Immediately, the black liquid turned a vibrant green.

"I heard that the rapist possessed a Wood Spiritual Root and specialized in hiding; it seems that it was indeed true. Indeed, Lord Wan, you are a powerful man to have captured him." Ye Yuxuan looked at Wan Ziyang with some admiration.

The rapist had been on a rampage for many years, and the spiritual inspectors from the various regions were helpless against him. Later, when Wan Ziyang had undertaken the task, he had immediately returned with the criminal's dead body.

"Great Master Ye is too kind!" Wan Ziyang may have been arrogant, but he was no fool.

After all, Ye Yuxuan was an Elixir Alchemist, and he would not object to forging a good relationship with him.

"Lord Wan..." Ye Yuxuan began.

He wanted to win the friendship of the new appointee at the Justice Department, but Ye Jiuge interrupted him: "Lord Wan, although the small girl is not my Fourth Sister, she died a tragic death and must be given justice. Lord Wan, please arrest the culprit and close the case."

"Naturally. In fact, we have discovered that many small girls have disappeared from nearby villages. However, their family members did not come forward to report the incidents, so we are finding it difficult to investigate." Having said that, Wan Ziyang looked sharply at Ye Yuxuan, "When did the Fourth Miss of the Ye Residence go missing?"

"My daughter went missing while she was outside. Our Ye Residence has uncovered some clues as to where she could have gone. Lord Wan, you must be dealing with a host of problems every day, so I shall not trouble you with it." Ye Yuxuan's expression suggested that searching for his daughter was a trivial matter.

Ye Jiuge knew that Ye Yuxuan had always been concerned with his reputation and would never inform the Justice Department about the ugly things that happened in the Ye Residence. No matter if Fifth Concubine had cheated on him and sold his daughter; it would be unpleasant if such talk were aired here. Hence, Ye Jiuge did not say anything either.

Wan Ziyang understood that relationships were always complex in large families and did not question further.

"Lord Wan, I have a request. I hope that the Justice Department will not publicize today's matter as it could harm my daughter's reputation." The small girl had died a tragic death and had even been raped before she was murdered. Ye Yuxuan did not want anything to do with her.

Wan Ziyang found it ridiculous. Their family had arrived in such a grand fashion; even if he did not publicize the matter, people would guess what had happened. However, since Ye Yuxuan had made the request, he could only nod and agree, "Naturally."

Beside him, Bai Songling smiled and added, "Great Master Ye, please do not worry, our Justice Department is known for being tight-lipped, and we will not divulge anything. However, Great Master Ye, please keep the bone analysis a secret as well. If the evildoers learn about it, I fear they will never leave the bones behind for us to examine again."

Without waiting for Ye Yuxuan to reply, Ye Jiuge interrupted and said, "Of course. Both my father and I will keep it a secret. If word leaks, may everyone disdain and spurn our Ye Residence."

When Ye Yuxuan heard Ye Jiuge swearing an oath using his Ye Residence, he was so furious that his liver hurt. However, he could not discipline her in front of Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling. He forced a smile and said, "We will certainly not say anything about the bone analysis."

"Then I shall represent the Justice Department in thanking Great Master Ye and Eldest Miss for cooperating with us." Solemnly, Bai Songling bowed as a form of gratitude.

"Lord Bai, although this small girl is not my Fourth Sister, I feel that her death is a tragedy. If there

are any developments in the case in the future, please send someone to let me know so that I will feel better,” Ye Jiuge said sincerely.

When Ye Yuxuan heard her, he frowned. He did not wish to have anything to do with this hideous mess. However, after giving it some thought, he recognized that both Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang were new appointees to the Justice Department valued by the Emperor. This was an excellent opportunity to get closer to them, so he did not object.

“Eldest Miss Ye, please do not worry. If there are any developments in the case, I will inform you immediately,” Bai Songling said. He glanced at the Bone Analysis Solution in Wan Ziyang’s hands and asked hesitantly, “Would Eldest Miss Ye agree to part with her treasure and generously equip us with the formula to make the Bone Analysis Solution?”

“I apologize. Although the formula for the solution is simple, it is a secret recipe after all, so I cannot hand it over. However, If you need it, I will send over a few bottles later,” Ye Jiuge said.

Although the herbs used in the Bone Analysis Solution were ordinary, its strict mixture ratio was her secret recipe. Needless to say, she would not give it away easily. Furthermore, she wanted to use the Bone Analysis Solution to make a statement in the future.

“I spoke rashly,” Bai Songling said. He was not angered by the rejection and continued smiling.

Ye Yuxuan pretended to observe the time of day as indicated by the color of the sky, and said, “It is quite late already. We shall take our leave and not delay your work any further.”

“Great Master Ye, Eldest Miss Ye, take care.” Both Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang had duties to attend to and instructed the bailiff to escort them out.

On the way, Ye Jiuge took the opportunity to speak against Su Yufeng, “Father, don’t you find this incident strange? Madame discovered the silver taels that Fifth Concubine supposedly received from selling her daughter immediately after the Justice Department delivered the news to us. Furthermore, she was so certain that Fourth Sister had been sold to the black market and that her spiritual root had been dug out—this is very suspicious!”

Although Ye Yuxuan said nothing, his face clouded.

Outside the Justice Department, Su Yufeng and Ye Shanshan were waiting. Qing Mama stood behind them and glanced worriedly at Ye Jiuge. Ye Jiuge deliberately made a pained expression and shook her head at Qing Mama.

When Su Yufeng saw this, she used her handkerchief to cover her mouth and sobbed in grief, “My poor Ruyi! Why did you die so tragically?”

“Wu, wu, Fourth Sister! My poor Fourth Sister!” Ye Shanshan also began to cry.

Ye Yuxuan's face immediately soured. He yelled angrily, “What are you crying for? Ruyi is not dead.”

“What?” Su Yufeng's sobbing stopped immediately. She looked in disbelief at Ye Yuxuan and said, “Ruyi is not dead? How is that possible?”

Immediately after she had spoken, she realized that she had said something wrong and hurriedly explained herself, “I mean, your expressions were so sorrowful as though something bad had happened...”

“Shut up!” Ye Yuxuan interrupted Su Yufeng violently, and glared at her fiercely, “I will deal with you when we get home.”

After speaking, he climbed onto the horse-drawn carriage with ostentation.

Once they had returned to the Ye Residence, Ye Yuxuan furiously summoned Su Yufeng to his study. He slammed the table and demanded, “Su Yufeng, explain yourself honestly: did you orchestrate the incident regarding Fifth Concubine and Ruyi?”

“Old Master, you wrongly accuse me; I would never do such a thing,” Su Yufeng denied it, shaking her head.

“Hmph, I know what kind of person you are. It is fine by me if you try to suppress Fifth Concubine out of jealousy, but I did not expect that you would lay hands on my daughter. You have grown more and more brazen.” Ye Yuxuan took a celadon teacup and hurled it onto the ground fiercely.

The tea and shattered pieces of the china splattered, dampening the hem of Su Yufeng's Eight Fortune silk skirt.

She shook in fear but knew that she would not confess, even if she were beaten to death.

“Old Master, I don't know whose slander you have heard that you would wrong me so, but I have never done such things. If you do not believe me, I have no choice but to request a repudiation and return to the Su Clan to shut myself in and ponder my mistakes.” Su Yufeng's eyes brimmed with tears and she sobbed heartbrokenly like a slim and delicate willow under strong winds.

When Ye Yuxuan thought about his esteemed father-in-law, who was still at a spiritual retreat, and the Su Clan, which was at the summit of its power, his anger faded. This wife was still of use to him; it was impossible for him to repudiate her.

So, he eased his tone and said with some coddling, "Nonsense. Why would I repudiate you without rhyme or reason? You know about my temper. My words are a little bit harsher when I am anxious—don't take it to heart."

"I wouldn't dare." Su Yufeng wiped her tears and looked as though she was touched but wronged at the same time.

Ye Yuxuan's suspicion had almost disappeared entirely with Su Yufeng's tears. He held her in his arms and comforted her tenderly, "It is my mistake this time. I threw a tantrum without investigating thoroughly. I apologize to you."

"Old Master, please do not say that. I have not managed the Inner Courtyard well. It is my fault," Su Yufeng said softly.

Ye Yuxuan felt guilty immediately and spoke in an even softer tone, "Go back and get some rest. Don't overthink this."

"Yes." Su Yufeng nodded obediently then left the study.

After returning to the Shuimo Garden, she became more and more agitated as she thought things through. She did not know where Ye Yuxuan had obtained information that would make him suspect her.

Can it be that Qiu Mama, sly old servant, has said something?

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Su Yufeng's brow furrowed. She called for Zhi Hua and asked, "Zhi Hua, is Qiu Mama back yet?"

"Madame, Qiu Mama has just returned." Zhi Hua knew that her Madame was very concerned

about Qiu Mama's recent whereabouts, so she kept a constant lookout.

"Bring her to me," Su Yufeng gritted her teeth and said.

"Yes!" Zhi Hua quickly fetched Qiu Mama.

"Why has Madame called for me?" Qiu Mama asked respectfully.

"You still have enough self-respect left to ask?" Su Yufeng slammed the table and grilled her furiously, "I instructed you to bury a thousand silver taels and Ye Ruyi's slave deed in Fifth Concubine's courtyard, how did these things turn into rocks?"

"You wrongfully accuse me. I indeed buried those things in the courtyard as you instructed. I do not know either how they turned into rocks!" Qiu Mama kneeled down in fear and trepidation and added hurriedly, "Could it be that Fifth Concubine had an inkling of the plan and swapped out the silver taels?"

Su Yufeng squinted at Qiu Mama. She thought of something, and her anger settled. She nodded and said, "That is possible. After all, Fifth Concubine has always been full of craft and cunning. It would not be strange if she had exchanged the silver taels."

"Aye, it is my fault for being incompetent. I was complacent because Fifth Concubine was lying in bed, which resulted in this slip-up. Madame, please punish me," Qiu Mama said apologetically.

"It is not your fault. Forget it, you may go!" Su Yufeng dismissed coolly.

"Madame, thank you for not rebuking me." Qiu Mama shed tears of gratitude and thanked Su Yufeng before she bowed, retreated a few steps, and left.

As Su Yufeng watched Qiu Mama go, a flash of coldness flitted past her eyes.

The next morning, she went to the Su Residence in a carriage. This time, Su Junqing was home. When he saw Su Yufeng, he smiled and said, "Aunt, since you are here, has everything been settled?"

"Settled my *ss!" Su Yufeng rarely swore, but she did not hold back as she pointed at Su Junqing and reprimanded him, "You brat! You have caused me so much trouble. Did you take the people in the Justice Department for fools and use a random girl's corpse as a stand-in for Ye Ruyi?"

"What? The people in the Justice Department saw through it? How is that possible?" Su Junqing was a little startled.

The small girl's body has the same shape as Ye Ruyi's, and she is dressed in Ye Ruyi's clothes, accessories, and longevity lock. How did the people at the Justice Department see through it?

"How would I know? Anyway, Old Master is very certain that the small cadaver was not Ye Ruyi," Su Yufeng replied peevishly.

Su Junqing frowned slightly. Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling were the only ones who could have possibly seen through the corpse charade. Both of them were difficult to handle and had been watching his underground businesses closely. He hated them to the bone and would not be satisfied until they were both dead. However, these men had immense cultivated power. Although Su Junqing had sent assassins after them a few times, all were unsuccessful. It was a difficult task that had cost him manpower.

Su Yufeng saw her nephew's dreadful expression and thought that she had been too harsh on him. She softened her tone and said, "Junqing, it is not that I want to nag you, but Ye Ruyi is a nuisance and must not remain alive."

"Aunt, do not worry. Ye Ruyi will not live longer than seven days," Su Junqing said with certainty.

"Why do you need to keep her alive for so long?" Su Yufeng frowned.

Even if he wanted to toy with small girls, there were plenty of them in the Drunken Cloud Pavilion: why did he have to cling so tightly to Ye Ruyi?

"Aunt, don't fret over this. I heard that cousin Shanshan has been going out with the Crown Prince lately. It seems that a happy occasion will be arriving soon." Su Junqing gave a slight smile and changed the topic.

Su Yufeng knew that she could not pressure him too much. After all, he was the Su Clan's future heir, and she still needed his support. She replied, "Shanshan is immature. She still needs you to put in a good word for her with the Crown Prince."

"Aunt, you need not worry. I will definitely help my cousin achieve her aim," Su Junqing said with a laugh.

"Oh, by the way, how is the investigation into the incident regarding Lady Yun going?" Su Yufeng asked.

Although she had suspected that Ye Jiuge was the culprit, she could not be sure without evidence. After all, many people had grown envious of the Su Clan over the years.

"I haven't found anything."

Su Junqing felt unhappy at the mention of the incident. He had trained Lady Yun for many years and even taught her Mental Manipulation. Just as she was beginning to see some success with it, she was murdered. It was a massive loss for him.

"I think that the Drunken Cloud Pavilion should be managed more strictly."

"I understand."

"Oh, I have another matter that requires your help." Su Yufeng lowered her voice and carefully instructed Su Junqing.

"That is a trivial matter. Do not worry, Aunt. I will definitely help you prune the weeds and pull up the roots." Su Junqing nodded.

"It would be best if you could throw the blame to Ye Jiuge," Su Yufeng said with a cloudy face.

"That will be difficult," Su Junqing hesitated before he spoke.

Since Ye Jiuge had returned from the Wanzhang Depths, people were watching her. For now, it would be disadvantageous for them to act against Ye Jiuge.

"Do it, even if it is difficult," Su Yufeng gritted her teeth and said.

Ye Jiuge had repeatedly ruined her plots, and she could not tolerate it any longer.

"I will try my best to help you." Since his aunt had helped him obtain Ye Ruyi, he would try to find a solution within his power.

Meanwhile, as Su Junqing and Su Yufeng were discussing how to deal with her, Ye Jiuge was sitting down to tea with Wan Ziyang in the Yuwu Teahouse.

After drinking half a pot of tea and still no word from Wan Ziyang, Ye Jiuge could not control herself and blurted out, "And why is Lord Wan looking for me?"

"I came to tell you that there are developments in the small girl's case." Wan Ziyang placed his teacup down. He had expected Ye Jiuge to speak only after they had drunk the entire pot.

"Oh, what developments?" Ye Jiuge's eyes immediately brightened.

When she was performing the autopsy, she had suspected that the small girl had been killed by a perverse customer from the Drunken Cloud Pavilion and thrown into the water to impersonate Ye

Ruyi. As such, she had written an anonymous letter to request that Wan Ziyang investigate the Drunken Cloud Pavilion, but she had not expected him to act with such haste.

“The small girl was secretly sold to the Drunken Cloud Pavilion by her stepmother and was abused to death,” Wan Ziyang said with a sullen face.

While he had already arrested the girl’s stepmother, the Drunken Cloud Pavilion had refused to admit it. He did not have sufficient evidence and was unable to act against them. As such, he had been feeling dispirited.

Ye Jiuge fell silent. Although she had guessed the cause, it was still a bitter pill to swallow.

The small girl had been so young and died so tragically.

“Eldest Miss Ye, don’t you find it strange that your Fourth Sister’s longevity lock was hanging on the small girl’s body?” Wan Ziyang’s inquisitive eyes fell on Ye Jiuge.

When he had received the anonymous letter the previous afternoon, he had suspected that Ye Jiuge had sent it. There was too much of a coincidence. Frankly, he could not figure Ye Jiuge out. Even though the people in the capital had called her stupid, useless, and ugly, at present, only “ugly” appeared to describe her; he did not find her “stupid” or “useless.”

“I don’t find it strange.” Ye Jiuge shook her head.

“What do you mean?” Wan Ziyang frowned. He had thought that Ye Jiuge had wanted to find her younger sister wholeheartedly. Could it be that he had guessed wrong?

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“This is because the Drunken Cloud Pavilion is the Su Clan’s property,” Ye Jiuge explained.

“It belongs to the Su Clan?” Wan Ziyang’s pupils contracted.

That explained why, no matter how deeply he probed to discover who was behind the Drunken Cloud Pavilion, he never learned anything. As it turned out, it was the Su Clan.

This is not right. Isn’t Ye Yuxuan’s wife, Su Yufeng, a daughter of the Su Clan? If so, then why was Fourth Miss’s Longevity Lock found on the girl child’s corpse? Could it be that someone from the Su Clan abducted the Ye Clan’s Fourth Miss?

“That’s right. Lord Wan, it’s exactly what you are thinking. My Fourth Sister was abducted by the Su Clan.” Ye Jiuge smiled bitterly then said, “Speaking of which, I am not afraid that I will be a laughing stock in your eyes. My stepmother tried to ruin me with her schemes, but she did not succeed. Therefore, she targeted Fourth Sister and her mother instead. It frustrates me that I could not protect them from harm.”

“Damn the Su Clan!” Wan Ziyang’s handsome, perpetually expressionless face suddenly cracked. His speech conveyed his fury, and his sharp eyes turned bloodshot. He looked as if he were transformed into a wild beast about to devour its prey.

Ye Jiuge had not expected Wan Ziyang to become so enraged. However, from his expression, it seemed more likely that he was taking his anger out on the Su Clan for something that they had not done. Could it be that he had also suffered something similar? If so, then she would definitely be able to convince Wan Ziyang to help her find Ye Ruyi.

It was a pity that Ye Yu’s identity was considered sensitive information. Not only that, but he was also connected to that treasure map. Otherwise, she would have also asked Wan Ziyang to help her search for him.

After Wan Ziyang realized that he had acted improperly, he quickly regained his composure. His indifference returned as he said stiffly, “Ye Clan’s Eldest Miss, in the future, if you have any clues about the whereabouts of Fourth Miss, come find me. I will unquestionably help you.”

Ye Jiuge expressed her appreciation, “You have my gratitude, Lord Wan,”

“There is no need to thank me.”

After Wan Zi Yang finished speaking, another awkward silence filled the room. Ye Jiuge pretended to glance at the sky. It was too hard to strike up a conversation with Wan Ziyang. She wanted to leave.

Wan Ziyang caught on. He stood up and said, “It’s getting late. Let me send you home, Eldest Miss!”

Ever since he had learned that the Su Clan was harboring malice against Ye Jiuge, she suddenly seemed extremely vulnerable to him; she needed him to protect her.

“Alright.” Ye Jiuge nodded. She walked down the stairs of the Yuwu Teahouse with her head held high.

To her surprise, she bumped into the Crown Prince and Ye Shanshan.

When Ye Shanshan saw Ye Jiuge and Wan Ziyang, an idea came to her. She covered her mouth with her hand and smiled, “Eldest Sister, you lied to me. You mentioned that you were going out to do some shopping. As it turns out, you were having tea with Lord Wan. I was wondering where Eldest Sister got the nerve to break her betrothal with the Crown Prince. Clearly, you have found yourself a powerful backer.”

When the Crown Prince heard Ye Shanshan’s last remark, his face turned ashen. His narrow eyes glared fiercely at Ye Jiuge. Ever since Ye Jiuge had broken their betrothal, he had made it clear in private that, in the future, whoever married Ye Jiuge would do so in opposition to him. He never thought that Wan Ziyang would dare interact with Ye Jiuge so intimately; it was evident that the Spiritual Inspector had not taken him seriously.

The Crown Prince said to Wan Ziyang coldly, “I did not realize that the Justice Department had so little work to handle. Lord Wan, do you have enough spare time to drink tea here with this nasty woman?”

His snobbish attitude had made his noble position more prominent; it was as if Wan Ziyang were merely an insignificant underling in his employ.

Wan Ziyang eyed the Crown Prince coolly and replied, “Crown Prince, it is none of your concern where I drink my tea!”

Although he was a Spiritual Inspector, he was able to compel others into addressing him as “Lord Wan.” This was because he was naturally endowed with an extremely excellent attribute—the most potent among the Fire Spiritual Roots, otherwise known as Lightning Fire. As long as he cultivated well, it would not be difficult for him to establish his own prestigious clan in the future. He only worked for the Justice Department because he was a modest man. Even the Emperor treated him with respect.

Since the Crown Prince wished to be difficult in front of so many people, he must have thought very highly of himself.

“What do you mean?” The Crown Prince had not expected Wan Ziyang to challenge him. His face

became more unpleasant.

“From what I have understood, Lord Wan only meant that, even when the Crown Prince ascends the throne, he will not be too busy to concern himself with the schedules of imperial officials,” Ye Jiuge contributed helpfully from the sidelines.

“Presumptuous!” The Crown Prince’s face changed dramatically. He bellowed furiously, “Ye Jiuge, are you aware that based purely on the sentence you have just uttered, I could punish you for the crime of insubordination?”

Because the Crown Prince was an adult, almost as many of his actions could be considered taboo as for the Emperor himself. One of the worst offenses he could commit was to be ambitious about his ascension to the throne. If Ye Jiuge’s words reached the Emperor’s ears, he would suffer terribly.

“Eldest Sister, when you spew your usual nonsense in the Ye Residence, I let it slide. But how can you run your mouth like this in public? Quickly, beg for the Crown Prince’s forgiveness.” Ye Shanshan glared at Ye Jiuge uneasily. Then, she pleaded pitifully with the Crown Prince for leniency, “Crown Prince, you are also aware that Eldest Sister always speaks irresponsibly, talking nonsense. I hope that, this time, you will spare her for Grandfather’s sake.”

“Second Sister, I am not talking nonsense at all. Some so many people here have heard the Crown Prince questioning Lord Wan about his work. If my memory serves me right, Lord Wan is from the Justice Department and has been granted permission to act as he pleases. The Emperor is the only person who has the right to inquire about his whereabouts. Crown Prince, since you have overstepped your authority, do you not wish to become Emperor?” Ye Jiuge quipped innocently.

“What drivel is this?”

The Crown Prince was shaking, aghast. He never thought that Ye Jiuge had such a silver tongue. Her every sentence accused him of treason; yet, he could not refute her.

The Crown Prince could not help but land his gaze on Wan Ziyang. If Wan Ziyang could help him out of this awkward situation now, he would at least save some face.

Unfortunately, Wan Ziyang refused to even look at the Crown Prince. Instead, he lowered his head and said to Ye Jiuge, “Let’s leave!”

More and more people were now gathering at the teahouse. If they continued their spat with the Crown Prince, it would merely entertain the crowd. He worried that this could ruin Ye Jiuge’s reputation.

However, Wan Ziyang did not know Ye Jiuge very well. It was a rare opportunity indeed for her to chance upon that despicable man in such a vulnerable position. The Crown Prince was within her grasp. If she did not slap him a few times, how could she live with herself?

First, Ye Jiuge nodded to Wan Ziyang. "Alright," she said, "let's leave." Then, she walked directly up to the Crown Prince. Her tone was full of provocation as she said, "Crown Prince, you are blocking our way. What are you planning to do? Could it be that you want to rechallenge me? But for this round, I must be blunt upfront: you need to allow me to slap you six times. Otherwise, I will refuse your challenge."

"B*tch!" When the Crown Prince recalled the humiliation that he had endured last time, he could not help but raise his hand to slap Ye Jiuge's face.

However, when his hand reached midair, a large hand grabbed it.

Wan Ziyang spoke with a dark expression, "Crown Prince, please act in a dignified way." A real man does not lay a finger on a woman.

Before he could complete the second half of his sentence, Ye Jiuge lifted her leg and kicked the Crown Prince's waist violently.

The Crown Prince was unsteady on his feet, and his body staggered sideways before falling down.

"Crown Prince!"

Ye Shanshan rushed forward to help him up; however, she lost her balance and fell down beside him. Feeling his weight on her, she let out a terrifying scream.

"Crown Prince, you are truly a person who cherishes old relationships. You let me win by throwing this fight!" Ye Jiuge praised the Crown Prince with a grin. Then, she said to Wan Ziyang, "Let's go."

Together, they left the Yuwu Teahouse and walked towards where the horse carriages were stationed. Wan Ziyang took one last look at the Crown Prince, who was so angry that he almost snapped. Then, Wan Ziyang hurried after Ye Jiuge.

Before Ye Jiuge boarded the horse carriage, she turned around and said remorsefully to Wan Ziyang, "I apologize for being too impetuous and involving you in our conflict. As a result, you have offended the Crown Prince. I am truly sorry."

In reality, Ye Jiuge did not feel apologetic in the slightest. Since she planned to make Wan Ziyang her ally, naturally, she needed to ensure that her enemies became his enemies as well.

"Implicated or not, it does not matter," Wan Ziyang said and shook his head. In any case, he did not see eye to eye with the treacherous Crown Prince, who always executed grandiose deeds regardless of whether he was capable of achieving them successfully.

"However, when all is said and done, the Crown Prince is the Crown Prince. If he means to give you a hard time, I am afraid that you will be at a disadvantage." Wan Ziyang was truly worried for Ye Jiuge.

"So what? It does not faze me that he is the Crown Prince. Even if he were the emperor, if he dares to provoke me, I will let him have it without any hesitation." Ye Jiuge's red lips curved. Her phoenix eyes were impenetrable. Her aura was inconspicuous, yet also similar to a raging inferno that one could not look at directly.

Wan Ziyang was astonished. He had an inexplicable feeling: this assertive Ye Jiuge was much more intriguing than those sweet and delicate ladies from noble houses.

"Be careful on your way back. If you encounter any problems, feel free to approach me." Wan Ziyang used to dislike dealing with troublesome issues. However, he really wanted to help Ye Jiuge.

"Thank you very much."

Ye Jiuge smiled and bade him farewell. As soon as she sat down in the horse carriage, Zi Shang's chilly voice rang out beside her ear, "Don't tell me that this brat has taken a liking to you."

"You are reading too deeply into it. Not everyone has objectionable tastes like you."

Ye Jiuge rolled her eyes. Even she felt her stomach turn when she looked at her face covered with black scars. Zi Shang was the only one who found her attractive.

“You are not allowed to insult my taste,” Zi Shang said in an aloof manner.

This was one of those rare moments when Ye Jiuge did not mock him at all. Although her appearance was more grotesque now, she still felt slightly pleased that such a handsome demonic man was defending her.

“By the way, when you hit the Crown Prince earlier, what did you take from him?” Zi Shang asked.

“You have sharp eyes. I merely collected a little interest from him.”

Ye Jiuge turned her hand around with her palm facing upwards. A dark green jade ornament rested in the center of her fair-skinned palm. It was carved with an auspicious image of a dragon and a phoenix. Its dark green color seemed to be gleaming, similar to a pool of crystal-clear water. The moment someone laid eyes on it, they would know that it was no ordinary object.

“There is something unusual about this jade ornament,” Zi Shang suddenly said.

“What is odd about it?” Ye Jiuge looked at it carefully. Other than its high-quality appearance, she felt that there was nothing special about it.

“Try to press the eyes of the dragon and the phoenix simultaneously,” Zi Shang said.

Ye Jiuge followed Zi Shang’s instructions and pushed them.

She heard a click. The jade ornament split open at the center. To her surprise, a piece of rolled silk as thin as a cicada’s wing was hidden inside.

Ye Jiuge unrolled it to have a look and was immediately shocked. She did not expect to find a piece of map portraying a topography with mountains and rivers. It was clearly an incomplete treasure map.

If this were the case, it was not surprising that the Crown Prince had hunted down the Ye Clan. As it turned out, he had already obtained one half of the treasure map. He was still missing the other half, which belonged to the Ye Clan.

“What a stroke of luck—you have truly defied the odds.” Zi Shang was really impressed by Ye Jiuge’s good fortune.

The Crown Prince hid the treasure map in the jade ornament and carried it with him every day. He must have thought that the most dangerous place was the safest place.

He would have never been able to foresee that he would bump into an opportunist like Ye Jiuge. Without realizing it, she had taken the jade ornament away from him.

“You flatter me, you flatter me!” Ye Jiuge beamed, showing her teeth.

Although she was not very interested in the treasure map, as long as she thought about the Crown Prince’s distress and rage once he discovered that he’d lost the jade ornament, she felt ecstatic.

Since Ye Jiuge had managed to gain an ally and steal a precious jade ornament, she returned to the Zhilin Residence in an excellent mood.

Just as she walked into her room, she caught a whiff of a very faint smell of blood from a corner beside the door. She looked down promptly and saw a tall, slender figure wearing ninja garb slowly materializing in the corner. His beautiful face was deathly pale. It was Ye Yu, who had been gone a long time.

“What happened to you?” Ye Jiuge quickly went over to help him up.

“Eldest Miss, I have found Ye Ruyi. You should go and save her at once,” Ye Yu said with great difficulty. Then, he pressed a piece of bloodied white cloth into her hand.

“Stop talking and let me examine your injury.” Ye Jiuge checked Ye Yu’s pulse. Her expression became grim.

There was a cold sensation within Ye Yu’s body. His five viscera and six bowels were displaced, and there was a gash on his stomach. The white cloth bandaging his wound was thoroughly soaked in blood. His condition was critical.

Ye Jiuge used her Lightning Fire Needle to hit the acupressure point on his abdomen. After that, she stuffed several pills into his mouth to strengthen his vitality. Although Ye Yu’s wounds stopped bleeding after he consumed the pills, he remained unconscious.

The area beneath his long eyelashes was purple. His dry lips were cracked and discolored, while his breath was extremely erratic. If only Ye Jiuge had the Nine Transformations Resurrection Elixir in her possession. Ye Jiuge knew that Ye Yuxuan had a treasured bottle of it in his Elixir Production Furnace. However, if she were to ask him for it, he would never agree.

Ye Jiuge had no choice but to ask Zi Shang for help. “Zi Shang, can you make me invisible?”

“Of course, as long as you kiss me twice!” Zi Shang replied nonchalantly.

“Damn you. Didn’t you only ask for one kiss last time?” He had such gall to rip her off. He was too

shameless!

“That’s right. I offered it to you cheaply in the past. It serves you right for not accepting my offer back then.” Zi Shang looked as if he pitied her loss.

F*ck you! “If you ask for two kisses, I’ll give you two kisses.” She could not afford to delay treating Ye Yu’s wound any longer. At worst, she could pretend that a dog had bitten her.

“Bitten by a snake,” Zi Shang corrected her solemnly. She should not get the wrong idea.

“Whatever.” Ye Jiuge stood up and said, “I want to head to the place where Ye Yuxuan keeps his Elixir Production Furnace. You should make me invisible now.”

“Alright. It will be in effect for an hour!”

As soon as Zi Shang finished speaking, Ye Jiuge felt a mysterious energy envelope her body. She dashed out of her residence. All of the servants she met along the way ignored her.

Ye Jiuge reached Ye Yuxuan’s Elixir Production Room without a hitch. Although many sentinels were guarding the surroundings, because it was still daytime, the windows of the Elixir Production Room were open for ventilation. Ye Jiuge flitted in through a window.

The Elixir Production Room was extremely spacious. There was a bronze Elixir Production Furnace in the center, and rows of wooden shelves near the walls. On the left side of the room, there were different kinds of medicinal herbs, while there were finished elixirs to the right.

Ye Jiuge could not find the Nine Transformations Resurrection Elixir on the wooden shelves, so she started searching for hidden compartments, swiftly knocking on the floor tiles and walls of every corner. At last, she discovered a compartment hidden behind a wooden shelf.

When she pulled it open, as expected, she spotted a row of small, delicate porcelain bottles. Other than the Nine Transformations Resurrection Elixir, there were also quality medicines, such as Century-old Ling Zhi Powder, Tian Mountain’s Snow Lotus Elixir, as well as other elixirs that could clean the marrow and relocate the nerves.

When Ye Jiuge saw these medicines, her pupils dilated immediately. From what she could recall, her grandfather had left these Century-old Ling Zhi Powder and Tian Mountain’s Snow Lotus Elixirs for her mother, whose body had always been frail. Her grandfather had spent a great deal of effort to produce these two bottles of medicine to prolong her life.

When her mother had been extremely ill, Ye Yuxuan had given her all of the precious Spiritual Elixirs in the residence to save her life—or so the story went. His devotion to his wife had moved

many hearts in the capital.

It had never occurred to Ye Jiuge that he had replaced these genuine medicines with fakes and hidden the elixirs, which could have saved her mother's life, in this secret compartment.

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Yun Tianwei had also produced a bottle of a special elixir to clean Ye Jiuge's marrow and relocate her nerves. His granddaughter had already been slightly weak in her mother's womb. When Ye Jiuge was born, she was extremely scrawny, so Yun Tianwei had produced this special bottle of elixir just for her. He had wanted to wait until the girl was six years old before giving it to her to consume.

However, before her sixth birthday, her grandfather disappeared. After that, her mother passed away from illness. Then, Ye Yuxuan misappropriated the real medicine and used a fake bottle to appease her. The poison coursing through her body from head to toe had damaged every inch of Ye Jiuge's meridians and completely disfigured her face.

He was truly f*cking despicable!

At first, Ye Jiuge had only wanted to take the Nine Transformations Resurrection Elixir from him. However, she changed her mind. She took all of the medicinal elixirs in the hidden compartment and left the Crown Prince's jade ornament depicting an auspicious dragon and phoenix in their place. High-quality medicinal elixirs versus the treasure map. This was going to be a case of one person's word against another's. Heh, heh. When the time arrived, things would surely be interesting.

"Your time is almost up," Zi Shang reminded her.

Ye Jiuge left the Elixir Production Room and quietly returned to the Zhilin Residence.

"I want to rest for a while. You can repay me with your two kisses later," Zi Shang's voice trailed off gradually.

"Zi Shang, Zi Shang!" Ye Jiuge called for him twice.

Zi Shang did not respond. He was likely already sleeping like a log. When Ye Jiuge thought about how Zi Shang had to rest after transmitting techniques to her, she realized that he always went into a deep sleep after helping her. However, since he was trapped in the Wanzhang Depths and could only leave by attaching himself to her body, there must be a reason for it. She should treat Zi Shang better in the future. After all, he was the most powerful individual that she could depend on right now.

Ye Jiuge's thoughts ran wild. Nevertheless, she pushed the Nine Transformations Resurrection Elixir quickly into Ye Yu's mouth. After Ye Yu consumed the Medicinal Elixir, his breathing steadied. His five viscera and six bowels started to resume their function. His life had been saved.

Ye Jiuge breathed a sigh of relief. She planned to deal with the cold sensation within Ye Yu's body and the injury to his abdomen later. Right now, her top priority was to save Ye Ruyi.

Ye Yu had given her a ball of paper. It was a topographic map of a house. The house's location and surrounding geography were drawn clearly on the paper. One place, which seemed like an underground prison, was marked with traces of blood. It was very likely that Ye Ruyi was being held captive there.

There was no time to lose. Ye Jiuge needed to save Ye Ruyi as soon as possible. Otherwise, she feared that it would be too late. However, eyes and ears were everywhere in the Ye Residence. It was still slightly inappropriate for Ye Yu to remain in her room. She needed to find someone to watch over him.

Ye Jiuge called for Qing Mama to help her care for Ye Yu.

When Qing Mama saw Ye Yu, she was shocked. "Why is he here?"

She thought that Eldest Miss had already sent this handsome male slave away. She never expected her to bring him into her room again.

"I don't have enough time to explain everything. I want to save Fourth Sister right now. Think of a way to make some arrangements to relocate him." As Ye Jiuge spoke, she prepared the tools that she would need later.

"What? Have you found Fourth Miss?" When Qing Mama saw the ninja garb in Ye Jiuge's hands, her eyes twitched. She said, "How can you go alone? That place is too dangerous. You should ask

Old Master to go instead!”

Old Master still valued Fourth Miss dearly. Qing Mama believed that Ye Yuxuan would undoubtedly do his best to save the girl.

“If I wait for him to make a move, the ship will have sailed.” Ye Jiuge could guarantee that Ye Yuxuan would bring an excessively large group of bodyguards with him and march there. The Su Clan was not comprised of fools; it was impossible that they would wait around to be caught red-handed.

“But it is too dangerous for you to go by yourself. Let me come with you!” Qing Mama worried about Ye Jiuge going alone.

“Don’t fret. I have people helping me.” Ye Jiuge looked at Qing Mama’s incredulous face then said, “The two men from the Justice Department, Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling, must be familiar to you. Both of them have already agreed to come to my assistance. Alright, there is no time to lose. When I come back, I will discuss this with you in detail.”

Ye Jiuge left the Ye Residence and hurried towards Wan Ziyang’s house.

By now, dusk had fallen. Wan Ziyang was in the middle of recounting the incident that had taken place at the Yuwu Teahouse to Bai Songling.

After Bai Songling heard the story, his eyes curved into crescents as he smiled. He looked like a fox. “I never expected Ye Jiuge to be so interesting.”

“Exactly. She seemed feeble. However, she has a fiery temper. I heard that, after the Crown Prince went back, he entered the palace and tattled on Ye Jiuge to the Empress. I wonder, how did the Empress respond to him?” Wan Ziyang could not help but show his disdain.

The Crown Prince was no match for a woman, so he had gone to his mother and asked her to fight his battles. He was such a coward.

“What else could the Empress say? Naturally, she complained tearfully to the Emperor. However, it is unlikely that the Emperor would go so far as to make things difficult for a young girl. On the other hand, matters involving the Su Clan are rather difficult to handle.” Bai Songling’s brows creased.

The Su Clan’s Old Master’s reputation was spotless in the capital. He had always shown his utmost abhorrence towards brothels and gambling dens. Therefore, he had never expected his Su Clan to be the proprietors of the Drunken Cloud Pavilion.

Bai Songling was about to speak when he heard a sudden movement in the courtyard. After that, he stood up and roared, "Who's there?"

"It's me!" Ye Jiuge's lithe figure landed in the courtyard.

"Ye Clan's Eldest Miss, why have you come here dressed like this?" Wan Ziyang was astonished to find Ye Jiuge entirely kitted out in ninja garb.

"You said earlier that if I had any clues regarding my Fourth Sister's whereabouts, you would help me. Will you still keep your word?" Ye Jiuge asked nonchalantly.

"Of course," Wan Ziyang replied, nodding without hesitation.

"That's great. Come with me now to save her." Ye Jiuge handed Wan Ziyang the topographic map that Ye Yu had given her.

Bai Songling craned his neck to take a look. Immediately, he said with surprise, "Number 13 XiDa Street...isn't that where Baicao Hall's storeroom is located? The place where they keep their medicines?"

"Baicao Hall?" Ye Jiuge finally remembered the address. When Ye Yu had been poisoned before, she had gone to purchase Violets of the Netherworld, and the imperial guards had tailed her to Baicao Hall.

Was the Crown Prince also involved in Ye Ruyi's situation?

"Let's have a look." Wan Ziyang put the map away. Then, he and Bai Songling changed into ninja garb and followed Ye Jiuge to XiDa Street.

A curfew was currently being enforced in the capital. After the skies darkened, no one ventured out. XiDa Street was silent, and the trio arrived at Number 13 without any problems.

From the outside, this simple residence with a three-sectioned courtyard seemed no different from the other buildings in the area. But after they climbed in through the perimeter walls, they could feel the tense atmosphere permeating within.

Not only were guards patrolling, but there were also many wolfdogs. One in particular had a large build. As soon as that extremely ferocious animal sighted Ye Jiuge, Wan Ziyang, and Bai Songling, it opened its mouth wide, ready to howl. Bai Songling raised his hand and shot a ray of green light at it, causing the wolfdog to keel over.

Wan Ziyang signaled to Ye Jiuge with a hand gesture, communicating his suggestion to head

directly to the basement to assess the situation. Ye Jiuge nodded. Judging from how heavily guarded this residence was, not to mention the tight surveillance, Ye Jiuge determined that Ye Ruyi had not been moved to another location yet. If they headed to her right now, they would arrive in time to save her.

Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling advanced in a well-coordinated manner. When they encountered guards and wolfdogs that they could not avoid, they immediately sent them to sleep.

Soon, the trio reached the entrance to the basement, which Ye Yu had circled on the map with his blood. They opened the door and saw a flight of flagstone stairs winding downwards.

Ye Jiuge's vigilance heightened as she descended, step by step, into the basement.

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The unilluminated basement had a sinister air. When Ye Jiuge stretched out her hand, she could not see her five fingers. A cold draft blew out of nowhere, making her blood run cold.

Ye Jiuge retrieved a lighter. She was about to ignite it when a sudden gust of cold, dark wind rushed towards the back of her head. She raised her hand and immediately countered it with a stream of purple Spiritual Light.

Bam!

The two forces met. Countless streams of Spiritual Light erupted from the impact.

Ye Jiuge felt a wicked sensation seeping into her body through her palm, smashing her five viscera and six bowels like a heavy hammer. She could not help but take a few steps back. Blood surged up violently and frothed in her throat.

Fortunately, Wan Ziyang had quick reflexes. He shot multiple fireballs at the shadow ambushing

Ye Jiuge. Meanwhile, Bai Songling's green vines wrapped around Ye Jiuge and lifted her behind him to safety.

Ye Jiuge swallowed the blood in her throat. With the assistance of the light from Wan Ziyang's fire attacks, she discovered that she had been ambushed by a tall, thin man dressed in black. He had sadistic hooded eyes and sharp cheekbones. His drooping eyelids slanted in a way that obscured the actual shape of his eyes. His pallid hands glowed faintly with a black light. Every time he performed a certain gesture with his hands, a gust of unholy wind was summoned. Needless to say, he was the one who had hurt Ye Yu.

"Are you alright?" Bai Songling asked worriedly when he saw Ye Jiuge's pale lips.

"I'm fine." Ye Jiuge swallowed one Nine Transformations Resurrection Pill. Immediately, her blood stopped churning.

When Bai Songling saw Ye Jiuge's ashen complexion recover so rapidly, he knew that the medicinal pill she had consumed was unusual. After that, he went to Wan Ziyang's aid without any hesitation.

The man in black had attained an exceptionally high level of cultivation. Not only that, but his moves were bizarre. The unholy winds that came from him could not only extinguish Wan Ziyang's fireballs, but they could also stop Bai Songling's vines.

While Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling's combined forces were strong enough for protection, they fell short of being able to defeat the man in black.

Ye Jiuge could not ascertain what kind of Spiritual Root the man in black possessed. Metal, wood, water, fire, earth—none of these seemed right.

"This man practices Black Magic!" Zi Shang's voice, laced with slight tiredness, suddenly rang out beside Ye Jiuge's ear.

"Are you awake?" Ye Jiuge asked, pleasantly surprised.

She had expected Zi Shang to behave like last time and sleep for a few days before waking.

"How could I continue sleeping with the knowledge that you are badly hurt?" The wicked sensation assailing Ye Jiuge's body had startled Zi Shang awake.

"Then quickly help me think of a way to defeat this sorcerer," said Ye Jiuge.

If this dragged on, she feared that the guards upstairs would come down and surround them,

making it difficult to save Ye Ruyi.

“Let me use a drop of your blood.”

As soon as Zi Shang finished speaking, Ye Jiuge felt a prick on her finger. A drop of fresh blood glimmered in the purple light and flew towards the man in black. It struck the area between his brows.

The sorcerer's sadistic hooded eyes widened suddenly. His entire body was paralyzed on the spot. Wan Ziyang saw his chance and intensified the fire in his hands. He landed a punch squarely on the man in black's chest. Immediately, Bai Songling's spikey green vines wrapped around the assailant's arms and legs, pinning him to the wall.

“Ah, ah, ah!” moaned the sorcerer in agony as he struggled in pain.

Bai Songling stepped forward and gagged his mouth with vines.

“Is my blood actually this powerful?” Ye Jiuge's eyes widened. If so, hadn't the blood she'd bled in the past been wasted?

“It is not your blood that is powerful, but me,” replied Zi Shang.

He had exerted a great deal of demonic energy to invoke the power in Ye Jiuge's blood. Should she try to do it alone, even if she used a basin of blood, it would be useless.

“There is no need for you to explain. No matter what, my blood is powerful.” It seemed that, during her free time, she should store up her own blood for future emergencies.

“This Spectral Sorcerer practices Black Magic using the grudges of the dead. As long as we use an object of the living that has masculine energy, we can defeat him. Since I could not find such an object in this moment, I used your blood.” Zi Shang was forced to reveal this truth to prevent Ye Jiuge, a money-grubber, from selling her valuable blood.

“Which of your snake eyes saw me as ‘masculine’?”

Even though her breasts are small, she is a woman through and through, okay?

“I know that you refuse to admit it. It's alright. After I knead them some more in the future, they will soften.” Zi Shang flashed her a dirty smile.

F*ck your softness!

Ye Jiuge did not have time to quarrel with Zi Shang. Right now, her top priority was to interrogate the man in black.

“Speak. Where did you imprison the Ye Clan’s Fourth Miss?” Ye Jiuge walked over to the sorcerer and stepped on his wrist, which was gored by spikes.

To her surprise, the man in black did not even groan. Instead, he smiled eerily. The evil glint from his sadistic hooded eyes caused goosebumps to rise on her skin.

Ye Jiuge could tell that this sorcerer was as stubborn as a mule. Instead of wasting time trying to force him to answer, she decided to search for the secret chamber herself.

Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling had the same thought, so they went around the basement, tapping on every surface.

It was not long before Ye Jiuge detected something amiss with a floor tile. She pushed it down with force. The row of tiles flipped over to reveal a dark passage. A pungent smell of blood pervaded the air.

“I will go first and take a look. You two keep an eye on that guy,” said Wan Ziyang before his companions could say anything.

“Alright. Please be careful.” Bai Songling nodded. The man in black had many tricks up his sleeve; someone needed to stay behind to watch over him.

When Wan Ziyang emerged from below, he did not react for a long time.

Finally, Ye Jiuge blurted out, “What is the situation down there?”

“There are many corpses!” Wan Ziyang’s tone did not conceal his shock and fury.

For a moment, Ye Jiuge’s heart stopped. Then, she descended the black staircase and was struck dumb by the scene before her eyes.

The stone chamber was entirely filled with the naked corpses of young girls. They were tossed together in a pile, discarded like trash. The floor was completely drenched with blood. In the dim light, the glistening gore was horrifying.

The oldest girl was fifteen. The youngest was seven. Every one of their anguished faces

was frozen in terror. Scars covered their naked bodies. Their wrists were mutilated to the point that they could not even bleed.

Ye Jiuge shuddered uncontrollably. She recalled the contents of the letter which Ye Yunzhi had written to Ye Yu. She had mentioned that Su Junqing needed fresh virgin blood to practice his Mental Manipulation. All along, he had been using the blood of young girls for his practice and had established the Drunken Cloud Pavilion in order to procure them through trade.

“Su Junqing!” Wan Ziyang paused after every word as if he was going to tear these two words into pieces with his teeth. His expression was extremely frightening.

Ye Jiuge calmed herself down. She moved forward and quickly looked over the corpses. Ye Ruyi was not among them.

Ye Yunzhi had written that Su Junqing typically saved the girl with the best attributes for last. He would not have touched Ye Ruyi so soon.

“There is one more secret room in this place. Behind the third oil lamp to your left,” said Zi Shang without being prompted.

Ye Jiuge hurried towards the wall to her left. She snatched the third oil lamp and turned it downwards forcefully. The walls parted, revealing a tiny hidden area.

A stone bed was placed in the secret room. A beautiful young lady was lying on it.

She had fair skin and delicate facial features. She was dressed in a vermillion satin gown sewn with gold threads depicting hundreds of butterflies fluttering over blooming flowers. A pair of cream-colored satin shoes embroidered with pearls were on her feet. A golden necklace was clasped around her neck, and she wore two golden bracelets on her wrists. The make-up on her face was applied flawlessly. She looked like a gift that had been decorated with the utmost care.

“Fourth Sister!”

With one look, Ye Jiuge was sure that the beautiful young lady was Ye Ruyi. She quickly went over to check the girl's pulse and discovered that she was merely under the influence of Heavy Sleeping Fragrance. Finally, Ye Jiuge could breathe a sigh of relief.

By that time, Wan Ziyang had already examined the underground room inside out. He said gravely, “Aside from Fourth Miss, the others who could have provided us with information are dead.”

“Who said that? Do we not have someone up here?” Ye Jiuge's expression was cold.

Since the sorcerer practiced Black Magic using the grudges of the dead, he must have played a part in scarring these girls. Wan Ziyang had the same idea. He dashed up the stairs out of the underground room. Ye Jiuge followed him carrying Ye Ruyi.

Bai Songling was standing beside the sorcerer, keeping an eye on him. When he saw the girl in Ye Jiuge's arms, he asked, “Is she the Ye Clan's Fourth Miss?”

“Yes.” Ye Jiuge retrieved a piece of black cloth from the pouch that she carried with her and wrapped it tightly around Ye Ruyi to prevent her from accidentally being recognized once they left this place.

Bai Songling looked at Wan Ziyang. He was about to ask him about the situation on the floor below when Wan Ziyang wrenched the vines from the sorcerer's mouth aggressively. Then, he yanked his hair and demanded fiercely, “Where did you get those young girls we found on the lower floor?”

The sorcerer gave them a hideous, wicked smile and said, “They were merely some useless girls. If they are dead, then so be it. Why are you so upset?”

Wan Ziyang lost his temper and punched the sorcerer in the stomach with a heavy blow. The sorcerer was in so much pain that he curled up on the floor. Yet, he still wore a sickening smile on his face, looking inexplicably eerie. Wan Ziyang wanted to continue beating him up.

Ye Jiuge came forward and kicked the sorcerer's mouth. There was a crack. All of the man's teeth were knocked out. He coughed up blood.

“If you confess to us truthfully, you will suffer less. Otherwise, I have a way to make you speak.” Ye Jiuge shot him a frosty stare. She would not hesitate to use methods on the sorcerer that were as heinous as him.

The sorcerer gave her a smile, his mouth full of blood. His wicked eyes remained fixated on Ye Jiuge. He blathered incoherently, “Do you think that, after you save this girl, everything will be fine? In the future, you will regret this!”

“Even when your death is near, you are still trying to threaten us. You’ve got a death wish!” Wan Ziyang said and struck him again with his fist.

However, the sorcerer refused to spill his secrets. Even if Wan Ziyang hit him mercilessly, they would not pry any information out of him.

Ye Jiuge stopped Wan Ziyang with her hand and said, “Hitting him is useless. We need to deal with him another way.”

“What are you going to do?” Wan Ziyang shook the blood off his fist. This black-clothed man was clearly a tough nut to crack. How could Ye Jiuge, a powerless lady, possibly do it?

“It is a special technique. Forgive me for not revealing it to you. You can just wait for me here.”

As expected, Ye Jiuge wanted to ask Zi Shang for help—he was a demon after all. However, if Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling saw him, she was afraid that they would arrest him.

She dragged the sorcerer to the underground room.

“B*tch, with your hideous face, even if you lie down and open your legs for me and beg me to f*ck you, I would still have no desire to.” The sorcerer spat out a mouthful of bloody saliva. He glared at her spitefully. It was obvious that he wanted to provoke Ye Jiuge.

“Is that so?” Ye Jiuge removed her mask, exposing a face covered in black scars. Under the dim lights, there was a demonic glint to them. Her face became even more unsettling.

“Demon...Are you a demon?” The sorcerer’s eyes widened. He looked at Ye Jiuge fearfully.

“Have you ever heard that a demon’s favorite meal is a raw human heart? They rip out a man’s heart and cut it into pieces so that they can savor it. The taste is truly delicious.”

Ye Jiuge curved her red lips. The purple demonic glint in her eyes intensified. Her voice deepened, “There is also the brain. I could slice your scalp open and eat it spoon by spoon while you are still alive and thrashing about. It is a delightful experience. Do you wish to know what it’s like?”

The sorcerer could not stop himself from shuddering. Although he practiced Black Magic, he was still a human being. If he had to watch helplessly as she ripped out his heart and brain, he would

be terrified.

“Please grant me a quick and painless death.” The arrogance that the sorcerer had shown before had vanished completely. He wished that he could kneel down and beg for mercy.

“If you are completely honest with me, I will consider giving you a quick and painless death.” Ye Jiuge smiled very gently.

“I will confess to you truthfully.” The sorcerer nodded again and again.

“Let me ask you, is the Crown Prince aware that Su Junqing is practicing Mental Manipulation? Where did you get the girls from? Why was Ye Ruyi dressed like this? Where is Ye Yunzhi? How did you see past the Ye Clan’s Invisibility?” Ye Jiuge asked many questions in one breath.

“The Crown Prince does not know that Su Junqing is practicing Mental Manipulation in this place. Some of these young girls were bought, and others were captured. Ye Ruyi is dressed like this because Su Junqing intended to send her to someone else as a gift because it is so rare for a young girl to have a Wood Fire Spiritual Root. Su Junqing has already sent Ye Yunzhi away. However, I am unclear where she went,” the sorcerer answered in detail.

Although the man in black was an adept sorcerer, he could not venture out during the day because he practiced Black Magic using the dead’s grudges. Therefore, he had to rely on Su Junqing for a place to stay. In return, he became Su Junqing’s subordinate.

While Su Junqing extracted blood for his practice, the sorcerer gathered grudges from the young girls before they met their tragic demise. Each man merely took what he needed from the other.

Even though Ye Yu’s Invisibility was powerful, it was utterly useless against a sorcerer like him, who lived in the darkness. This was why, as soon as he entered this place, Ye Yu was discovered and injured with a single move. The sorcerer was overconfident in his own ability, so he had expected Ye Yu to die. Therefore, he had not bothered reporting the incident to Su Junqing.

“My lady, Su Junqing has threatened me too. Because of this, I was forced to assist him with his evil deeds. Please, spare my life. I am willing to serve you as your underling,” the sorcerer said submissively. He felt that, for such a high-ranking demon to live alongside humans in concealment, she would definitely need helpers.

At this time, Zi Shang spoke up, “If you wish for him to serve you, I can help bind him to you through a slave contract.”

Ye Jiuge swept her eyes over the bodies of the young girls behind the sorcerer; they had been murdered in such a gruesome manner. Su Junqing only needed virgin blood; his purpose did not

require the girls to bear grudges. The sorcerer must have been the one who inflicted all of the injuries on their bodies. Ye Jiuge was also sure that the sorcerer had played a part in the horrible death of the young girl at the morgue. If she allowed such scum to remain alive, it would only disgust her. Regardless of how powerful the sorcerer was, she did not want him.

“My lady?”

The sorcerer still wished to continue pleading, but Ye Jiuge responded to him with an unsympathetic smile.

“Repent for your sins in Hell!” After she finished speaking, she delivered a blow to his heart, splitting it into pieces.

Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling waited anxiously in the upper level of the basement. When they saw Ye Jiuge emerge from below, they quickly asked, “How did it go? Did you manage to get any information from him?”

“This place is, without a doubt, Su Junqing’s secret chamber. Not only did he acquire those young girls to practice his Black Magic, but he also selected girls with favorable attributes to give as offerings to others. However, the sorcerer did not know who Su Junqing gave them to.”

Ye Jiuge recounted everything that the sorcerer had confessed. However, she kept them in the dark about Ye Yunzhi. Countless men had lost themselves to riches. She did not wish to test Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling’s character using the treasure map.

They could all work together to bring down the Su Clan. However, she still needed to learn more about the two men if they were to help her search for the treasure.

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“The Su Clan colluded with black magic practitioners. For this crime, they deserve to die ten

thousand deaths," Wan Ziyang said with hatred through gritted teeth.

Although spiritual practitioners were revered in the Canglan Continent, some used dishonest and evil means to increase their spiritual power quickly. Such people were known as black magic practitioners.

"No wonder the scale of the Su Clan's operation is huge; many interpersonal networks are involved," Bai Songling said thoughtfully.

"What do you mean?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"Other than the Drunken Cloud Pavilion, there are other brothels that specialize in collecting little girls in the Lei Country," Bai Songling said with a sigh.

Although they had closed some of these brothels using force, they had yet to find the source and eradicate them completely.

"It seems that the Su Clan is rather complicated." Ye Jiuge recalled how her grandfather had despised black magic practitioners: Could the Su clan have been involved in his disappearance? If not, then why did Ye Yuxuan marry a daughter of the Su Clan immediately after her mother's death?

"This is not the place for a discussion, we should talk outside," Bai Songling said.

They had been inside for a long time. If they did not go out soon, they would be discovered.

"Let's go!" Ye Jiuge nodded.

She carried Ye Ruyi in her arms and was about to follow them out, when, suddenly, a dozen torches were flung in through the entrance. Immediately, the door was sealed.

"Oh no." Bai Songling's face changed. He rushed forward and tried to open the door, but it had been deadlocked.

Standing below, Ye Jiuge could hear screams coming from outside and the crackling of burning wood. Smoke began to slip in through the slit in the door. If it did not stop, they would die from smoke inhalation.

With both palms glowing red, Wan Ziyang violently slammed the wooden door, incinerating it with his flames. It fell to the ground in fragments, revealing a large, gray boulder behind. Someone outside had dragged over the boulder to barricade the entrance.

"This must have been done by Earth Spiritual Practitioners." Bai Songling covered his mouth and nose with his sleeve to prevent himself from inhaling the smoke.

Wan Ziyang did not utter a sound as his palms landed on the boulder repeatedly.

"They are trying to trap us to our death and will definitely not let us out. Why don't we go below and see if there are other ways to escape?" Bai Songling grabbed Wan Ziyang's hand. The smoke was too concentrated at the entrance; it was dangerous to stay there.

"It's no use. The lower levels are paved with diamonds. They are even less likely to open."

Wan Ziyang had searched the underground room earlier and found no other secret passages except the one used to hide Ye Ruyi. They had no other choice: Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang continued to exert their strength at the entrance, trying to push the colossal boulder away.

Suddenly, the huge rock turned red. When Wan Ziyang's palm contacted it, a layer of his skin almost seared off. Bai Songling's green vines also charred instantly.

"They are most generous with their money if they used a Flame Stone to blockade the entrance." Bai Songling's expression became terrible.

It was all their own fault for being complacent and thinking that the small courtyard would not be able to trap them. They did not expect their enemies to be so vicious and use a Flame Stone to blockade the entrance. Although the Flame Stone was not rare, finding such a huge piece must have been challenging.

The underground room was now engulfed with thick smoke, and the oxygen thinned as time ticked away. Ye Jiuge bent down and used a handkerchief to cover Ye Ruyi's face. She promptly called for Zi Shang in her heart and said, "Quick, think of a way to get us out."

"What will I get?" Zi Shang said unhurriedly.

"Is now the time to discuss this?" Did the demon know what it meant to be in a life-and-death situation?

"Don't worry, you won't die. As for those two, it's hard to say." It was not his responsibility to save the pretty boys of the human race.

"Get all four of us out safely, and you can kiss or touch me anywhere you like." In an emergency, Ye Jiuge could only grit her teeth and offer herself up.

"Deal!" Zi Shang laughed with satisfaction and said, "It is actually easy to get out of this situation."

You just have to use your blood to remove the seal on the Lightning Fire Needle, then you will be able to use the Red Lotus Lightning Flame to shatter the Flame Stone.”

Suddenly, Ye Jiuge felt humiliated. She herself possessed the treasure, and yet she had cried and begged to give herself to Zi Shang.

“However, the Godly Heartwood is the demon clan’s treasure. Normally, it would be fine for you to use it, just as the Purple Lightning Wood or Lightning Fire Needle. But if someone discovers the Red Lotus Lightning Flame within it, not only will the human race attack you, neither will the demon clan let you off the hook.” Zi Shang’s words made Ye Jiuge’s heart pound again.

A treasure that cannot be used—how depressing!

“It’s fine,” Zi Shang explained good-naturedly. “Just remember, kill everyone after you use it, and you will be fine.”

Ye Jiuge glanced towards the entrance. Although Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling were coughing badly from inhaling the smoke, they were still giving their all and using their spiritual power to strike the boulder. Neither believed in fate; even if they were to die, they would struggle until their last breath.

Ye Jiuge’s impression of them was favorable. She might encounter situations that required their help in the future, so she wasn’t going to kill them. However, she could knock them unconscious.

Ye Jiuge moved secretly behind the two men. Without hesitation, she smacked them on the backs of their heads. Both Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling had fixed their full attention on trying to escape; they did not expect Ye Jiuge to sneakily attack them from behind. Immediately, they crumpled unconscious to the ground.

Ye Jiuge threw them into the underground room before she pricked her forefinger with the Lightning Fire Needle. In her heart, she chanted silently, “Unseal the Red Lotus Lightning Flame!”

Her fresh, red blood seeped into the Lightning Fire Needle. Slowly, the needle changed into a bean-sized red flame quickening with a little lightning. The spark was so delicate that it looked as though it might extinguish at any moment.

She did not know if this was going to be useful. However, as things had already reached this stage, she could only give it a try. Ye Jiuge braced herself and flipped the small sparks onto the now completely red-colored Flame Stone. There was no reaction.

“F*ck, you lied to...” Before she could say “me,” Ye Jiuge’s body involuntarily flipped forward and rolled quickly down the staircase.

There was a loud thud, and the Flame Stone in the doorway exploded. The immense force of the impact blew a large hole in the entrance. Countless red fragments drifted through the air like rain.

Ye Jiuge stood up. Her head and face were covered with dirt. Fear lingered as she stared at the large hole. If she had been standing by the door, she would have become a fried dough twist from the bombardment of fragments.

“Why aren’t you leaving?” Zi Shang urged.

Carrying Ye Ruyi on her back, she grabbed Wan Ziyang’s ankle with her left hand and Bai Songling’s arm with her right and rushed out of the underground room.

Outside, a sea of flames raged. Houses crackled with fire, and the ground was strewn with the corpses of guards and wolf-dogs. Beyond the courtyard, which was now a boiling cauldron, voices yelled, “Fire, fire, come and put out the fire!”

Ye Jiuge could not carry three people and escape. She took a needle and jabbed the acupuncture points on Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling’s philtrums. They quivered and woke up.

“What happened?” Bai Songling saw the courtyard full of corpses and immediately went to investigate.

“Don’t bother, let’s leave quickly,” Ye Jiuge said hurriedly.

If the people who were putting out the fire spotted them exiting this way, they would not be able to explain themselves.

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“We can head that way and climb over. On the other side, there is a small alley,” Wan Ziyang

pointed to the southern wall and said. If they left that way, they would be able to avoid the crowd that was putting out the fire.

“Let’s go,” Ye Jiuge said.

She carried Ye Ruyi on her back and climbed out first. Pulling Bai Songling along with him, Wan Ziyang followed her and scaled the wall. All of them managed to escape from West Main Street and return to the residence.

Immediately after he entered the house, Wan Ziyang asked Bai Songling, “How did the guards die?”

“They were poisoned,” Bai Songling said, his handsome face dignified.

This Su Junqing had a malicious mind and had given the guards a poison called Collective Punishment. Usually, this poison had no effect, but once an additional ingredient was added, anyone who had been poisoned would die.

“Be careful, Su Junqing is very skilled at poisoning. His Drunken Cloud Pavilion has both September Fragrance and November Cream,” Ye Jiuge said.

Regardless of his possession of Mental Manipulation, the variety of strange poisons proved that Su Junqing had an unusual relationship with black magic practitioners. There had to be a more extensive network behind him.

“Both September Fragrance and November Cream are forbidden; where could he have gotten them?” Bai Songling’s frown deepened.

“Who knows! You will have to investigate this yourself.” Ye Jiuge was happy to create all kinds of havoc for the Su Clan.

“Let’s discuss this later. It’s not early anymore. Eldest Miss Ye, aren’t you worried that they will realize something if you are not back soon?” Wan Ziyang said, glancing at Ye Jiuge, who had dirt all over her face, and Ye Ruyi behind her.

Ye Jiuge observed the color of the sky and saw that the east side had begun to turn ash gray. Indeed, she could not stay any longer. However, before she left, she needed to request Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling’s help for something.

“Feel free to request anything from us,” Bai Songling said.

After experiencing a life-and-death situation together, their relationship had grown closer.

"I would like to ask the two of you to help me investigate someone," Ye Jiuge said solemnly.

"Who?" Bai Songling asked curiously.

"He is a beginner spiritual practitioner called Qiu Desheng. His mother, Qiu Mama, is a manager in our Ye Residence." Now that she had saved Ye Ruyi, Ye Jiuge wanted to teach Su Yufeng a lesson.

However, to deal with Su Yufeng, she needed Qiu Mama's help; Qiu Desheng was Qiu Mama's Achilles' heel.

"Alright," Bai Songling nodded. At the Justice Department, they had a book containing records of spiritual practitioners and their addresses.

"Thanks a lot." Ye Jiuge nodded in gratitude, then secretly took Ye Ruyi back to the Ye Residence.

It was peaceful and quiet at the Ye Residence. Most people were still sleeping. Ever since Ye Ruyi had been kidnapped, security had become much tighter, especially at the main residence and the Shuimo Garden. At Ye Jiuge's Qiushui Residence, however, security was still lax.

The younger servants, whom Qing Mama had previously brought back, were allocated to the side house; they were not allowed to enter the courtyard without any instructions. The courtyard itself had already been locked, and only Qing Mama was keeping watch in Ye Jiuge's residence. When she saw Ye Jiuge covered with dirt enter with Ye Ruyi on her back, she hurriedly asked, "What's wrong with Fourth Miss?"

"Nothing. Fourth Sister is just under the influence of the Heavy Sleeping Fragrance. Mama, I must trouble you to take her to bathe and change her clothes. I shall go and check on Ye Yu," Ye Jiuge said.

Then, she took off her night clothes and changed. After washing her head, face, and both her hands, she went to see Ye Yu. He was still sound asleep. His attractive face was pale, and the red mole on his forehead had become dimmer. The white cloth used to wrap the injury on his abdomen adhered to the wound.

Ye Jiuge boiled some water and placed some salt in it before she gingerly wet the white cloth and removed it slowly. The lesion revealed on Ye Yu's abdomen was hideous and required stitches to heal completely. Stitching was Ye Jiuge's expertise, and although there was no catgut suture available, she could still use a regular stitch. A spiritual practitioner's body was sturdy, so there was no worry of infection.

Ye Jiuge used suture thread that had been immersed in strong alcohol and nimbly stitched up Ye Yu. His abdominal wound was a trivial matter; the tricky part was the strange Yin Qi within Ye Yu's body.

Although the Nine Transformations Resurrection Elixir had healed his internal injury, the strange Yin Qi left behind by the black magic practitioner was still wreaking havoc in his body.

Unfortunately, she had used the Lightning Fire Needle to destroy the Flame Stone and could not use it again for a while. For now, she was unable to help him remove the Yin Qi.

"You don't have to help him remove it. When he refines the Yin Qi, he will be able to bring his Invisibility up a level," Zi Shang said.

The reason Ye Yu had been detected by the black magic practitioner was that his spiritual practitioner Qi was too obvious. If he could refine the Yin Qi for his own use, then even a black magic practitioner would not be able to discover him.

"You say it as though it's so easy. The Yin Qi is still in his body, and he cannot recover from his injury. If he can't even live, how is he supposed to cultivate?" Ye Jiuge could not help but roll her eyes.

"I have a cultivation technique here that can help him refine the Yin Qi, do you want it?" Zi Shang's tone was full of temptation.

"If you wish to gain something, go and ask Ye Yu yourself." Ye Jiuge would not sacrifice herself just to help Ye Yu.

"You can use this cultivation technique to make him sign a slave contract with you," Zi Shang said. The thin sliver of the slave deed in Ye Jiuge's hands was currently useless against Ye Yu.

"Aren't you exploiting his difficult situation?" As expected, demons took the fullest advantage of someone once they found their weaknesses.

"Tell me whether you want it or not!" Zi Shang did not believe that Ye Jiuge was more moral than him.

"Of course, I want it." Ye Jiuge was not operating a charity. Ye Yu would have to pay the price in exchange for the cultivation technique.

"Smart." Zi Shang appeared and took Ye Jiuge in his arms. He laughed and said softly, "You owe me too much. Pay your first few debts, and we will talk later."

Two drops of blood, two kisses, and one chance to kiss or touch her anywhere he wanted. He had

kept track of it in his mind.

“Come!” Ye Jiuge was like a hoodlum. At the moment, she stank; if Zi Shang were willing to touch her, she would let him.

She did not expect Zi Shang to suddenly turn his head and shout in her voice, “Qing Mama, please help me prepare hot water for a bath.”

“Alright!” Qing Mama responded quickly.

“What are you trying to do?” Ye Jiuge said, vigilantly watching Zi Shang.

“Naturally, I am going to enjoy my gourmet food.” Zi Shang squinted his purple eyes. His expression was sinister; it contrasted with his handsome and perfect face, making him look even more seductive.

“Our deal does not have any clause about taking a bath,” Ye Jiuge refused.

“Now, it does. The bath is in exchange for the cultivation technique. Do you want it or not?” Zi Shang was not worried that Ye Jiuge would refuse.

Ye Jiuge really wanted to say no. However, with her understanding of Zi Shang, she knew that if she rejected him, she would have to pay a much larger price if she asked for his help in the future.

“Fine, I will take a bath. But you are not allowed to touch me anywhere you want.” The only thing Ye Jiuge could do was to defend her last bit of chastity.

“Alright.” Zi Shang’s red lips curled into a smile. The good stuff always tasted best when saved for last.

“Eldest Miss, hot water has already been prepared. You can go over now,” Qing Mama, who was by the entrance, said enthusiastically.

When she was preparing hot water for Ye Ruyi, she had guessed that the Eldest Miss would need hot water too and readied it for her.

“Alright,” Ye Jiuge replied weakly.

It was the first time that she had ever been unhappy with Qing Mama’s efficiency.

“I will be waiting for you in the bath,” Zi Shang lowered his head and bit at Ye Jiuge’s face then disappeared.

Ye Jiuge sat in a daze for a moment before she resigned to her fate. She changed into a set of new clothes and headed toward the bath.

The steam rose in spirals. Zi Shang was reclining comfortably in the tub with his arms spread apart and supporting his body.

His beautiful, flirtatious face was even more alluring cloaked in steam. His red lips were like cinnabar, and his wet, black hair clung to the sides of his handsome face. His charm could not be easily described.

Those purple eyes watched Ye Jiuge closely, as though stalking prey.

Ye Jiuge felt an unfathomable sense of pressure. Her hands reached toward her clothes several times, but she did not dare take them off. Finally, she gritted her teeth and jumped into the bath with her clothes on.

The water in the bath only reached her waist. Ye Jiuge leaned on the side of the tub furthest away from Zi Shang and looked straight at him.

With a hook of his tail, Zi Shang pulled Ye Jiuge into his arms. His thin lips pressed close to her ear and asked in a low, seductive voice, “How do you bathe with your clothes on?”

“Like this!”

Ye Jiuge poured some water on herself and was about to splash some onto Zi Shang’s face. However, before the droplets could reach him, they froze in mid-air, doubled in volume, reversed direction, and hit Ye Jiuge in the face.

Crash!

Ye Jiuge's neck and face were soaked with hot water. Her drenched tunic clung tightly to her body, and her nipples hardened from the stimulation.

"What are you doing!" Angrily, Ye Jiuge wiped the hot water off her face.

"Helping you bathe!" Zi Shang gave her an innocent look.

"Get lost! I don't need your help." As she was already drenched, Ye Jiuge abandoned herself to despair and started pouring water on herself in the tub.

Shamelessly, Zi Shang leaned close to Ye Jiuge, narrowed his eyes, and asked with a laugh, "Should I drink your blood, or should we kiss first?"

"Drink my blood."

Ye Jiuge raised her middle finger. Initially, she had thought that drinking her blood would be a straightforward matter; she did not expect Zi Shang to make it such an arousing affair.

He placed Ye Jiuge's finger in his mouth and used his sharp fangs to repeatedly caress the tip of her finger. Those dark purple eyes affected her as though they had grown a hook and were pulling her little heart out. Ye Jiuge's heart could not control itself and skipped a few beats. To hide her embarrassment, she reprimanded Zi Shang sharply, "Just drink. Don't take your sweet time."

"Roger that!" Zi Shang smiled seductively, and his sharp fangs immediately pierced the skin on her finger.

Zi Shang's tongue was incredibly soft. Its slightly forked tip repeatedly licked her wound, sometimes speeding up or slowing down, vigorous then gentle.

The water in the bath was too hot. It was so hot that Ye Jiuge's mouth went dry, and her lips chapped. She desperately controlled the impulse to lick her lips with her tongue. She wanted to remove her finger, but her entire body felt weak, and she had no strength at all.

"That's enough!" Ye Jiuge's voice became extremely hoarse. There was a hint of pleading that she did not recognize.

Zi Shang finally released Ye Jiuge's poor finger. His palm held her slender waist, making her feminine body bend close to his masculine one. The unbelievably beautiful face inched towards Ye Jiuge with a charming smile.

Ye Jiuge could smell the fragrance coming from Zi Shang's mouth and his body. She knew that Zi Shang's tongue was very soft and nimble, and when he kissed her, he would make her soul depart her body in pleasure.

Just as Zi Shang's red lips were about to kiss Ye Jiuge, there was a racket outside, "Open up, open up!"

Ye Jiuge immediately sobered up from the intoxicating intimacy Zi Shang had created.

"D*mn it!" Zi Shang cursed in a low voice. He had finally managed to create some closeness with Ye Jiuge, and someone was interrupting them.

He wanted so badly to kill everyone in the Ye Residence.

Controlling his murderous impulse, he disappeared into the mark on Ye Jiuge's hand immediately.

At that moment, Qing Mama's voice came hurriedly from outside the bath, "Eldest Miss! Madame and Second Miss have brought over servants and claim that they demand something from you."

"I understand." Ye Jiuge splashed some water on her face. When her head cleared, she rose from the bath.

After putting on new clothes, she exited the bath and asked Qing Mama softly, "Ye Yu and Fourth Sister?"

"I have already hidden them."

Ever since Ye Jiuge had repurchased Ye Yu, Qing Mama had been thinking about how to help the Eldest Miss hide her wild man. Previously, she'd had the idea of installing secret compartments in her own room; if anyone were to come and catch the Eldest Miss in a lewd act, she would hide Ye Yu in a hidden compartment and claim that she had been the one relieving herself with him. At last, the secret compartments were finally useful: They were perfect for hiding Ye Yu and Ye Ruyi.

Ye Jiuge nodded. Accompanied by Qing Mama, she unlocked the courtyard.

Su Yufeng and Ye Shanshan had brought a group of servants with them. They stood outside the courtyard aggressively.

"Madame, Second Sister, what is the meaning of this?" Ye Jiuge's eyebrows rose. She tossed an unfriendly gaze at Su Yufeng and her daughter.

"Ye Jiuge, let me ask you: where have you placed the Crown Prince's jade pendant?" Ye

Shanshan widened her eyes, pointed her finger at Ye Jiuge, and questioned her.

“What jade pendant? I don't know what you are talking about,” Ye Jiuge frowned, looking as though she did not know a thing.

“You still have enough self-respect to quibble? After he met you today, the jade pendant that the Crown Prince had on him disappeared. Do you dare to say that you did not take it?” Ye Shanshan looked as though she had witnessed Ye Jiuge stealing.

“Ye Shanshan, you must speak with evidence. If you dare slander me again, do you think that I will not slap you?” Ye Jiuge raised her hand and waved it at Ye Shanshan.

The Crown Prince had taken so long to come and question her, which meant that he had not realized at the scene that his jade pendant was missing; therefore, he should not have suspected her.

Furthermore, she had intentionally rubbed some of the Fragrance of a Thousand Miles, which remained on the jade pendant from contact with the Crown Prince, onto Ye Shanshan's tunic. If the Crown Prince were to suspect anyone, he should have suspected Ye Shanshan.

Seeing that Ye Jiuge was angry, Ye Shanshan involuntarily hid behind Su Yufeng. A moment ago, the Crown Prince had sent a messenger to ask her if she had seen the dragon and phoenix jade pendant that he always had on him. Seeing that the Crown Prince valued the pendant immensely, she decided to deflect the blame to Ye Jiuge.

“Jiuge, the Crown Prince's jade pendant is priceless, and it is no trivial matter for him to lose it suddenly; you should think carefully. Let me ask you. After you returned home today, where did you go?” Su Yufeng asked without batting an eyelid.

She had not come over for the Crown Prince's jade pendant, but because she had received news from the Su Clan that the place used to hold Ye Ruyi had caught fire suddenly and that someone had rescued the girl.

Su Yufeng had thought of Ye Jiuge at once. In a hurry, she had rushed over to sniff out what her step-daughter was up to through roundabout questioning.

“Madame, your words are absurd. Of course, I was sound asleep in my residence during the night. If you and your daughter have nothing else to do but come over and slander me, forget it,” Ye Jiuge said coldly.

“Who is slandering you?” Ye Shanshan countered. However, when she saw Ye Jiuge’s raised palm, Ye Shanshan did not dare speak again.

“Jiuge, no matter what, the Crown Prince has already given orders for us to investigate. You should cooperate!” Su Yufeng gave the maid behind her a meaningful look and said, “Hurry up and enter.”

“Only I say who enters.” Ye Jiuge took a step forward. Qing Mama stood behind her and glared like a tigress watching her prey.

Immediately, the maids froze. The Eldest Miss’s viciousness was well-known throughout the Ye Residence.

Zhang Mama was just a step away from becoming a spiritual practitioner, but her spiritual root had been destroyed, so she had been sent to one of the properties to retire. They did not think they were stronger than Zhang Mama.

“It seems that nobody is willing to listen to me anymore.” Su Yufeng narrowed her eyes, and her cold gaze swept the maids behind her.

The maids protested silently. Madame was not to be trifled with either!

“If nobody is willing to enter, all of you shall be sold off,” Ye Shanshan shouted angrily.

In the past, nobody ever dared disobey her and her mother’s instructions. These lowly servants were bold to treat their words like the wind blowing past their ears.

The maids looked at each other. If they entered, they would die; if they retreated, they would also die! However, being beaten was better than being sold. They could only brace themselves as they began to walk forward, slowly.

Qing Mama's hand glowed with a faint golden light. If these maids dared to enter the courtyard, she would throw all of them out immediately.

Just then, Ye Yuxuan's voice rang out in the distance, "It's not even daytime yet. What is the ruckus about?"

"Father!" Ye Shanshan immediately turned her head.

Ye Yuxuan walked briskly over. Gan Mama and the maids from the torture chamber, as well as Song Bai and a few guards, followed behind him.

Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrows. Needless to say, Su Yufeng and her daughter must have invited Ye Yuxuan over as their helper. Luckily, she had already placed the Crown Prince's jade pendant in the secret compartment of Ye Yuxuan's Elixir Production Room. Why was he still so calm?

Can it be that he has yet to discover that his elixirs are missing?

Ye Jiuge's mind began to race. The current farce was an opportunity for her to divert the blame for the disappearance of Ye Yuxuan's elixirs to Ye Shanshan and the Crown Prince.

By then, Ye Yuxuan had reached Ye Jiuge. His gaze swept over all present before he said in an imposing manner, "What is going on?"

"Father, Elder Sister has stolen the Crown Prince's pendant, but she refuses to admit it," Ye Shanshan rushed to say.

"Is that true?" Ye Yuxuan frowned and looked at Ye Jiuge.

Although he was asking her, his eyes betrayed that he already deemed Ye Jiuge guilty.

"If you want to condemn someone, don't worry about the context. I only argued with the Crown Prince at the restaurant yesterday, and now he has accused me of stealing his jade pendant. I wonder what he will accuse me of stealing next," Ye Jiuge said coldly.

"What argument? You clearly ganged up with Wan Ziyang to bully the Crown Prince and even beat him up badly," Ye Shanshan growled indignantly.

However, her words just made the others feel that the Crown Prince was accusing Ye Jiuge for the sake of revenge.

"If you do not believe me, feel free to enter and check so that you can make it clear to the Crown Prince. You shouldn't just look in my house; you should check everywhere in the Ye Residence.

Father's should not be let off either, in case you argue that I have stolen the thing but hidden it elsewhere. Oh, and make a larger fuss out of the matter, so that everyone knows that our Ye Clan has investigated its legitimate daughter as though she were a thief just because of something that the Crown Prince said."

Every one of Ye Jiuge's words was like a slap to Ye Yuxuan's face. Immediately, his expression turned unpleasant.

"Old Master, please don't be angry. It is a fact that Jiuge has attacked the Crown Prince, and the Crown Prince is still lying in bed, unable to get up. The Empress is very angry. By making inquiries, we will be cooling their temper," Su Yufeng advised softly.

She had not taken the issue of the Crown Prince's pendant to heart; she'd only wanted the opportunity to search Ye Jiuge's house. The Crown Prince had never told anyone about the treasure map hidden within the jade pendant, so nobody took the matter of its missing too seriously.

After hesitating a short while, Ye Yuxuan said, "Fine, check. Gan Mama, bring someone with you and follow behind."

"Yes." Gan Mama promptly nodded.

"These maids are clumsy; I will do it personally."

After speaking, Su Yufeng took the maids with her and headed for Ye Jiuge's house. Ye Jiuge followed behind. Gan Mama and the rest could only check the other houses. Qing Mama was finally able to let out a soft sigh of relief as she followed beside Gan Mama.

Su Yufeng began checking Ye Jiuge's house, hoping to discover Ye Ruyi's whereabouts. Actually, she believed that Ye Jiuge would not have brought Ye Ruyi home; she was more likely to have left her outside the residence. Su Yufeng only wanted to check if Ye Jiuge had left her house during the night.

Su Yufeng reached out and touched Ye Jiuge's bedding. It was icy cold and looked as though it had just been changed. With a faint smile, she asked, "Jiuge, why did you change your bedding after waking up?"

"How do you know that I did? Did you see me do it?" Ye Jiuge countered coldly.

Su Yufeng wanted to say something more, but Ye Yuxuan interrupted her impatiently, "Since you have checked, get out already."

It isn't possible that she wants to find something, is it? The Ye Clan cannot afford to lose face like this.

"Yes!"

Su Yufeng was already sure that Ye Jiuge had gone out at night and was not in the mood to stay in Ye Jiuge's house any longer. Although she was not there when Ye Ruyi was kidnapped, she had to find a way to hide the evidence of her crime.

Unconvinced, Ye Shanshan followed Su Yufeng out of Ye Jiuge's house then said, "Mother, there are other houses that have not been checked yet."

"Fine, go and look!" Su Yufeng replied absent-mindedly.

Ye Shanshan brought some servants with her and headed for Qing Mama's house.

Both Ye Jiuge's and Qing Mama's heartbeats began to race. They wanted to refuse but feared that it would raise suspicion. They could only steady themselves as they followed her in.

Ye Shanshan had purely wanted to vent her anger. She knocked randomly around in Qing Mama's house. Gradually, she reached the place where Qing Mama had installed the secret compartment.

Qing Mama's hands shook. She was about to rush forward and stop Ye Shanshan but was held back by Ye Jiuge.

It was too late.

"Hm?"

Ye Shanshan had some experience with secret compartments and immediately noticed something unusual about the back of the wooden wardrobe.

Her spirits surged. Ye Shanshan quickly pointed at the closet and exclaimed excitedly, "Alright, so it is hidden here."

When Ye Yuxuan and Su Yufeng heard Ye Shanshan, they turned their gazes to Qing Mama.

“Qing Mama, you have installed a secret compartment in your room; what intentions are you harboring?” Su Yufeng narrowed her eyes, and a flash of viciousness flitted across her well-maintained face.

Qing Mama was Ye Jiuge’s right-hand person, and it would be advantageous if this were an opportunity that would allow her to remove Qing Mama.

Qing Mama’s legs felt weak. Even if she said that Ye Yu was her lover, nobody would believe her. Furthermore, if Fourth Miss, whom Madame had previously accused Fifth Concubine of selling, was discovered in her room, she did not know what mud Madame would throw at Eldest Miss.

Although Ye Jiuge appeared unemotional, she was rapidly thinking of ways to exonerate both Ye Yu and Ye Ruyi.

Should she say that she invited over Ye Yu, a spiritual practitioner, to help find Ye Ruyi?

“Jiuge, what is the meaning of this?” Ye Yuxuan faked a cough, as though he was giving Ye Jiuge a chance to explain herself.

Before Ye Jiuge could say anything, Ye Shanshan interrupted, “Father, it’s obvious that Eldest Sister has instructed Qing Mama to install this secret compartment to hide unpresentable things.”

Finally, Ye Shanshan had found Ye Jiuge’s sore spot, and her face turned red with excitement. She promptly ordered Zhi Hua, “Smash it!”

“Yes.” Zhi Hua led a group of maids and tore down the wardrobe.

Behind the wardrobe, there were two separate secret compartments. They were both empty. Ye Yu and Ye Ruyi had disappeared.

Qing Mama’s eyes brightened immediately. She knelt and said hastily, “Old Master, please be the judge in this matter. The late Madame instructed me to install these secret compartments because she was afraid that she would not be able to protect the Eldest Miss after her death. She wanted

me to help the Eldest Miss hide some family heirlooms to prevent them from being stolen. Unfortunately, Madame passed away before the secret compartments could be completed and did not leave anything behind. I could not bear to remove them and kept them for memory's sake."

Qing Mama's words caused both Su Yufeng's and Ye Yuxuan's faces to change. Especially Ye Yuxuan. He still felt guilty about Yun Qiaoqiao's death. If he had not secretly traded away those two bottles of life-saving elixirs, Yun Qiaoqiao would not have died so quickly.

As for Su Yufeng, she recalled how she had secretly moved many of Yun Qiaoqiao's things into her own keeping after marrying Ye Yuxuan. She was afraid that Ye Jiuge would turn over the old accounts.

"You sly, old servant, how dare you use the late Madame as an excuse. I think that you..." Before Ye Shanshan could finish, Ye Yuxuan interrupted her, "Be quiet! Haven't you had enough of making a scene for one night?"

"Father!" Unwilling to submit, Ye Shanshan pouted, but Su Yufeng lightly pulled at her sleeves.

Ye Yuxuan was unmistakably displeased, and it would be wise not to infuriate him at that moment.

Ye Shanshan could only keep silent grudgingly. Her eyes were still fixed on the secret compartment. She did not believe that Qing Mama, that sly old servant, would keep these secret compartments for memory's sake. She must be concealing other designs.

Unfortunately, Qing Mama's words had evoked Ye Yuxuan's unpleasant memories, and he left with a flourish.

Su Yufeng and her daughter were unwilling to linger in the residence out of fear that Ye Jiuge would fly into a frenzy and attack them.

After dismissing everyone, Qing Mama's back was drenched in cold sweat.

"Where are they? Where did you hide them?" Ye Jiuge asked softly.

"They were hidden in the secret compartments!" Qing Mama was also confused as to how they had disappeared.

Ye Jiuge thought of something and hurriedly returned to Qing Mama's room. She opened her Spiritual Eye and swept the surroundings. Sure enough, she found Ye Yu under the bed using Invisibility. Ye Ruyi was in his arms.

She had not expected Ye Yu to wake up at precisely the right moment.

"It's alright, they've all left." Ye Jiuge quickly pulled Ye Yu out.

His pretty face was pale. He tried to speak but did not have an ounce of energy. When Gan Mama and the others had entered the room, the commotion had woken him up. He had wanted to hide Ye Ruyi somewhere safer but had not expected Ye Shanshan to arrive so suddenly. His only choice was to muster what remained of his spiritual power and use Invisibility and hide under the bed.

Ye Jiuge noticed Ye Yu's unhealthy appearance and checked his pulse. The Yin Qi in his body had grown stronger. She had intended to wait until Ye Yu was better before discussing the matter of selling himself into slavery, but it seemed that she could not delay it any longer.

"I have a cultivation technique here. Not only can it resolve the Yin Qi in your body, but it can also take your cultivation and Invisibility to the next level. The price for it is to serve me for twenty years. Are you willing to make this deal?" Ye Jiuge said straightforwardly.

She felt that it was too long to ask Ye Yu to serve her for a lifetime in exchange for a cultivation technique—twenty years was fair.

"Yes," Ye Yu agreed without any hesitation.

"Aren't you even going to think about it?" Ye Jiuge had not expected Ye Yu to agree so readily. Initially, she had considered that, if Ye Yu had bargained, she would compromise on ten years.

"You have already saved me twice." Especially this time, Ye Yu thought he was finished. He had not expected that, not only would Ye Jiuge save him, but she would also give him a cultivation technique. Forget twenty years of service; if he had to sell himself for a lifetime, he would.

"Smart choice!" Ye Jiuge chirped. "Rest well tonight. I will impart the cultivation technique tomorrow morning."

The cultivation technique that Zi Shang had given her was still in her mind, and she needed to write it down from memory.

"Okay." Ye Yu nodded; he was exhausted.

Then, Ye Jiuge checked on Ye Ruyi, who was sleeping soundly. She brought Ye Ruyi back to her residence and arranged for Ye Yu to stay in her side of the house.

After that evening's farce, Ye Jiuge believed that Su Yufeng would not return to search her residence again. However, the matter regarding the jade pendant and the elixirs must be resolved

as soon as possible. Ye Jiuge changed into her night clothes and silently crept into the Shuimo Garden.

Meanwhile, in the Shuimo Garden's main residence, Ye Shanshan was sitting beside Su Yufeng complaining indignantly, "Mother, it was clear that there was something wrong with the secret compartment. How could you let that sly old servant off so easily?"

"That's enough. Speak less!" Su Yufeng used the tips of her fingers to massage her aching temples while she thought about the request she had made to Su Junqing about dealing with Qiu Mama and her son. She wondered about his progress. Speaking of which, this nephew of hers was becoming more and more unreliable lately. She repeatedly asked him to kill Ye Ruyi, but he refused to listen and allowed someone to rescue her. Useless!

"Mother, are you alright?" Ye Shanshan saw that Su Yufeng's expression had soured and, in a rare move, obediently walked over and massaged Su Yufeng's shoulders.

Su Yufeng felt better. She patted her daughter's hand and asked, "How have you been getting along with the Crown Prince?"

"Not too bad. But ever since Ye Jiuge cheated him out of his Purple Lightning Wood, the Crown Prince has reached an impasse in his cultivation. I am worried about him." Ye Shanshan sighed. Seeing that the Crown Prince was in a bad mood, she did not feel right.

"Then you should comfort him more. Men love beautiful women who are considerate," Su Yufeng advised her daughter.

"Oh, by the way, the Crown Prince has requested our help with something," Ye Shanshan looked at her mother and said hesitantly.

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"What kind of help does the Crown Prince need from me? Su Yufeng turned around and gave Ye Shanshan a puzzled look.

“The Crown Prince hopes that you will ask Father to produce a bottle of pills to clean his marrow and relocate his nerves,” Ye Shanshan replied in an endearing voice.

Although she was an Alchemist, she had only attained two levels of cultivation. She couldn't produce class five pills to clean marrow and relocate nerves. Only Ye Yuxuan, who had five levels of cultivation, could successfully produce such pills.

However, the chance that the medicine would fail was extremely high. The process required a great deal of painstaking effort. The Crown Prince worried that Ye Yuxuan would refuse to help him, which was why he had wanted Su Yufeng to ask her husband on his behalf.

Su Yufeng hesitated. Normally, she would have been happy to help the Crown Prince. But right now, her plot to falsely incriminate Fifth Concubine might fall through at any moment and be exposed. She was not in the mood, so she said, “Your father has been very busy lately. Let's wait for some time to pass first.”

“Alright!” Ye Shanshan was also aware that her father had been displeased with her and her mother, so she backed off.

Meanwhile, at that exact moment, Ye Yuxuan was pacing up and down in his residence. Qing Mama's words had reminded him that, in the past, he had misappropriated Yun Qiaoqiao's medicine. The more he thought about it, the more uneasy he felt, so he went to the Elixir Production Room and checked his secret compartment.

He did not expect to find it completely empty. Not even one bottle of the precious pills remained. Instead, a piece of a dark green jade ornament was nestled in the cabinet of the secret compartment. It was carved with an auspicious image of a dragon and phoenix.

With one glance, Ye Yuxuan recognized it as the jade ornament that the Crown Prince always carried on him. He immediately exploded with rage.

D*mn it! That must be why Su Yufeng and her daughter went to search Ye Jiuge's residence with such great fanfare tonight. They wanted to shift the blame to Ye Jiuge.

On more than one occasion, the Crown Prince had tacitly expressed that he wanted a bottle of pills that could clean his marrow and relocate his nerves. Ye Yuxuan had always pretended not to get the hint. Such pills could also be used as supplements for advancing the stages of cultivation—all the more so when it came to pills produced by Yun Tianwei. Their effect was superb. Ye Yuxuan could not even bear to use them for himself, so how could he possibly give them to the Crown Prince?

No wonder the Crown Prince had visited him personally some time ago to appeal on Su Yufeng's behalf; he had even invited Ye Yuxuan to the Gong Residence for alchemy purposes. As it turned out, he had wanted to get his hands on these pills for a long time.

Out of all of them, he hated Su Yufeng and her daughter the most. He had not expected them to help the Crown Prince devise a plan to steal his medicinal pills and use the incident to frame Ye Jiuge. Although he despised Ye Jiuge, he was not so stupid as to be taken in by their deceit.

Ye Yuxuan pressed on the jade ornament roughly with his thumb. The veins on his arms became pronounced. He wished that he could find the Crown Prince at once and confront him.

However, the Crown Prince had already spread the news about the disappearance of his jade accessory. If Ye Yuxuan went to the Crown Prince rashly, not only would he not be able to regain possession of his pills, the Crown Prince might even make a false countercharge against him.

Just as Ye Yuxuan was oscillating between rational thinking and anger, Song Bai consulted him from outside the Elixir Production Room in a soft voice, "Old Master, Qiu Mama wishes to see you. She has an urgent matter to discuss with you."

"Ask her to wait for me in the External Parlor."

Ye Yuxuan slipped the carved jade ornament into his pocket and walked out scowling. As soon as he saw Qiu Mama, he was shocked. Qiu Mama, who always appeared presentable, now had disheveled hair and was wearing ragged clothes as if she were a madwoman living on the side of the road.

The moment Qiu Mama saw Ye Yuxuan, she kneeled down with a thud and cried, "Old Master, I implore you to redress these grievances on my behalf!"

"If you have anything to say, speak properly. Why are you crying?" Ye Yuxuan furrowed his brows.

"Old Master, Madame has gone mad. To eliminate the threat of Fifth Concubine, she went so far as to order servants from the Su Clan to hurt my son and coerce me into helping her frame Fifth Concubine," Qiu Mama sobbed.

Ye Yuxuan was already in a fit of rage because of the pills. When he heard Qiu Mama's words, he blew a gasket. He yelled at her furiously, "Why didn't you mention this before?"

"I was afraid that Madame would harm my son, so I did not dare tell you." Qiu Mama cried so hard that she grew short of breath.

"Go to hell, slave!" Ye Yuxuan kicked Qiu Mama.

Qiu Mama's body slammed into the door like a calabash rolling on the ground. She violently threw up a mouthful of blood. Forcefully, she propped up her body. Coughing up blood, she wailed in a heart-rending manner, "Old Master, Madame's ambitions are as wild as the wolves. She instructed servants of the Su Clan to capture Fourth Miss and sell her to an illegal artisanal workshop. She even asked me to bury one thousand silver taels and Fourth Miss's Slave Contract in Fifth Concubine's courtyard. I could not bear to make life difficult for Fifth Concubine any longer, so I swapped the silver taels to stones."

Ye Yuxuan shook with anger. So that was why Su Yufeng and her daughter had wanted to help the Crown Prince steal his pills—to ask him to help them falsely incriminate Fifth Concubine. This was truly unacceptable.

Ye Yuxuan was furious, and he took out his anger on Qiu Mama. He was going to kick Qiu Mama again when he noticed her head lolling to the side. There were no signs of breathing.

The familiarity of this scene struck him: Hadn't Chen Fuhan, the man who'd had a clandestine love affair with Fifth Concubine, died the same way?

"Su. Yu. Feng!" Ye Yuxuan gritted his teeth as hatred seeped into his bones.

If Su Yufeng had merely wanted to bring Fifth Concubine and her daughter to their knees, he would not have felt such loathing for her. However, she had gone so far as to help the Crown Prince steal his medicinal pills. That crossed the line. If he did not punish Su Yufeng severely, that b*tch would surely overstep his authority.

Meanwhile, at the Zilin Residence...

Ye Jiuge had just removed her ninja garb when Qing Mama entered her room with a happy face.

"Eldest Miss, I heard that Old Master was extremely furious when he brought servants over to Shuimo Garden," she said.

"So fast?" Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrow in surprise. She had just pulled the ruse at Shuimo Garden. Why would Ye Yuxuan rush over there so eagerly before she could even lure him into her trap?

"I was informed that, before Qiu Mama passed away, she went to Old Master and told on Madame," Qing Mama spoke in a soft voice.

"Before she passed away... Is Qiu Mama dead?" Ye Jiuge was stunned.

“That’s right. I learned that Qiu Mama has been poisoned to death, but the specifics are unclear. I just know that Old Master was extremely furious. He immediately brought Gan Mama and servants from the torture chamber along with him to Shuimo Garden.”

“Let’s go and have a look.” Ye Jiuge took Qing Mama with her and walked out of their residence.

The first glimmer of light was shining in the sky. The domestic servants were cleaning their respective residences. Every now and then, they would huddle together to whisper to each other. When they saw Ye Jiuge walk by, they stopped speaking immediately and saluted her.

Judging by the servants’ expressions, Ye Jiuge knew they were gossiping. However, it was hard to blame them, as yesterday’s commotion had been considerable.

First, Su Yufeng and Ye Shanshan had brought servants over to her residence to terrorize them. Now, it was Ye Yuxuan’s turn to rush aggressively to Su Yufeng’s residence. The situation had not only taken a new twist, but it had also become unpredictable.

Ye Jiuge bumped into Seventh Concubine at the entrance to Shuimo Garden.

“Good Morning, Eldest Miss!” Seventh Concubine appeared with her hair adorned with a hairpin bearing Chinese snowbells and moon ornaments, fashioned in the “edging towards the clouds while being drawn in by fragrance” hairstyle. Wearing a chartreuse floral dress, she was as beautiful as a flower by the shore in full bloom.

Ever since conflict had erupted between Madame and Fifth Concubine, the Seventh Concubine had been living very comfortably. All this while, she had held the authority to run the household firmly in her hands.

Ye Jiuge had a feeling that Su Yufeng would want to sort out Seventh Concubine later, so she had not yet moved against her. The Seventh Concubine was usually an extremely shrewd woman. She had never appeared before Su Yufeng. Contrary to her normal pattern, she had come to Shuimo Garden today. It seemed that she already knew about Qiu Mama.

Since the news had traveled to her so fast, this woman must not be as simple as she appeared.

“Eldest Miss, let’s go inside right away so we won’t miss a good show.” The Seventh Concubine smiled cheerfully as if she were closely acquainted with Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge nodded impassively and walked first into Shuimo Garden.

As soon as she entered the courtyard, she heard Ye Yuxuan’s angry voice berating Su Yufeng: “B*tch, at this point, you still dare to absolve yourself of the crimes you’ve committed. Did you think that after you poisoned Qiu Mama, no one would discover your wickedness?”

“Old Master, I clearly did not harm Fifth Concubine and Ruyi. These are all Qiu Mama’s false accusations,” Su Yufeng cried, looking terribly wronged. She would never acknowledge the things she had done when Qiu Mama was alive let alone now that Qiu Mama was dead.

The Seventh Concubine stood outside the residence and smiled while covering her mouth. She spoke to Ye Jiuge in a low voice, “As matters stand, Madame is still unwilling to admit to her mistakes. Does she really take our Old Master for such a fool?”

Ye Jiuge ignored Seventh Concubine. She swept her eyes over the courtyard discreetly and caught Song Bai unearthing a small casket in the western corner. That was precisely where Ye Jiuge had planted the jade ornament to frame Su Yufeng.

Song Bai presented the small casket to Ye Yuxuan at once. He opened it to take a look. This was where he had placed the jade bottle of Nine Transformations Resurrection Pills; however, the medicinal pills were nowhere to be found.

“B*tch, what else do you have to say for yourself?” Ye Yuxuan grabbed the empty jade bottle and flung it at Su Yufeng’s head.

“Old Master, you have wrongly accused me!” Su Yufeng ducked, lying on her stomach. The bottle flew past her head and smashed into the wall behind her. Its fragments scattered across the floor.

When Ye Yuxuan saw that his wife had the nerve to dodge his throw, he went to her and lifted his leg, preparing to kick.

Su Yufeng’s maids, who served at her side, quickly stood in front of Ye Yuxuan to hinder him from moving forward. They pleaded relentlessly, “Old Master, please quell your anger.”

“Get out of my way.” Ye Yuxuan gave them one kick each, causing the maids to stagger away writhing in pain.

When Su Yufeng saw Ye Yuxuan's incensed grimace, as if he wanted to beat her to death, she summoned up the courage to shout at him, “Ye Yuxuan, I am your proper wife, not your servant. If you want to kill me, you should consider whether the Su Clan will let this go.”

“Fine, fine, fine!” Ye Yuxuan pointed his finger at Su Yufeng. He was so infuriated that his finger trembled. He tore into her, viciously, “I will not kill you. However, there is no place in the Ye Clan for a malicious wife like you. I want you to get out of my sight right now and move to the Ye Clan's ancestral shrine and reflect on your actions properly!”

Ye Yuxuan's order was the equivalent of banishing Su Yufeng from the Ye Residence.

Su Yufeng raised herself up slowly from the ground. Her cold eyes swept over Ye Jiuge and Seventh Concubine, who were enjoying the spectacle from the sidelines. Although she was aware that Ye Jiuge was a pain in the neck, she had not expected Jiuge to see through her carefully constructed scheme so quickly and strike back with a countermove. The same also went for Seventh Concubine. That b*tch used to fawn over her every day; now, she had the audacity to come to watch her suffer. Su Yufeng would not spare any of these people.

“Madame, please come with me!” Gan Mama spoke respectfully.

With her head held high, Su Yufeng left with Gan Mama. Behind her, Zhi Hua and the other servants were a crying mess.

At that moment, Ye Shanshan reached the residence in a hurry. She blocked Gan Mama's way and reprimanded her harshly, “What a presumptuous servant. Where are you taking my mother?”

Gan Mama greeted Ye Shanshan with a bow. Unperturbed, she said, “Second Miss, Old Master has ordered me to send Madame to the ancestral shrine to cultivate her virtues. Please do not stand in my way.”

“Mother, what is happening?” Ye Shanshan stared at her mother in disbelief.

Why would Father send Mother away to the ancestral shrine to reflect on her conscience for no reason? The ancestral shrine was built on the outskirts. The areas that surrounded it were desolate. It was not a place where humans could live for an extended time.

“I am fine. I am merely going to the ancestral shrine for a few days for self-reflection.” Su Yufeng shook her head at Ye Shanshan so that her daughter would not panic.

Since Ye Yuxuan was irate right now, it would be useless for Su Yufeng to say anything. She should leave for the ancestral shrine at once to keep away from him and wait for the Su Clan to bail her out.

“You must be the one who framed my mother.” Ye Shanshan glared at Ye Jiuge murderously.

“Ye Shanshan, Father was the one who commanded this. If you wish to find someone to blame, then go to him. Do not simply take it out on me like a crazy dog,” Ye Jiuge replied coolly.

Ye Shanshan gritted her teeth. She wished that she could strangle Ye Jiuge to death.

Just then, Ye Yuxuan’s angry voice came from the residence, “Ye Shanshan, I want you to come to me right now!”

Ye Shanshan quivered. This was the first time Father had spoken to her in this tone. Su Yufeng could not help but feel apprehensive. Earlier, Ye Yuxuan had accused her falsely of stealing his medicinal pills. She did not have enough time to get a full picture of what had transpired yet.

“Madame, we should leave!” Gan Mama spoke softly at her side, “If we remain here any longer, I am afraid that Old Master will become angrier.”

At first, Su Yufeng had wanted to barge in and argue with Ye Yuxuan. When she heard Gan Mama’s advice, she halted in her tracks. If she entered the residence now, it would only infuriate Ye Yuxuan further. Regardless, her daughter was still Ye Yuxuan’s flesh and blood. She was also the future Crown Princess Consort. Surely, Ye Yuxuan would not dare to harm her.

“Mother!” Ye Shanshan looked at Su Yufeng pleadingly.

“My good child, go in!” Su Yufeng steeled her heart against Ye Shanshan and turned around to leave with Gan Mama.

Then, Ye Shanshan walked into the residence.

“Eldest Miss, can you guess why Old Master asked for Second Miss?” Seventh Concubine asked in a soft voice, her beautiful eyes gleaming.

“I am not Father, so how would I know what he plans to say to Second Sister?” For some unknown reason, Ye Jiuge was always slightly wary of Seventh Concubine. When she saw that there was no other matter that concerned her at Shuimo Garden, she left at once.

As the Seventh Concubine watched Ye Jiuge leaving, an incisive glint flitted past her beautiful

eyes. Then, she turned around and left.

After Ye Jiuge returned to the Zilin Residence, Qing Mama said happily, “Eldest Miss, since Old Master has sent Madame away to the ancestral shrine, can Fifth Concubine be released?”

“Yes. I will speak to Father later and ask him to release Fifth Concubine,” Ye Jiuge responded.

She never foresaw that everything would fall into place today. Unexpectedly, Qiu Mama had chosen to come back and rat out Su Yufeng to Ye Yuxuan at the perfect moment.

“Fourth Miss will definitely be overjoyed!” Qing Mama was genuinely happy for Fifth Concubine and her daughter.

Although, before, Qing Mama had been very angry with Fifth Concubine and her daughter for wrongly trusting Madame, after this experience, they would surely know that Eldest Miss was the only person worthy of reliance.

“Yes.” Ye Jiuge planned to head out later to meet Wan Ziyang so that she could ask him about Qiu Mama. After that, she would think of a way to help Ye Ruyi return to the residence legitimately.

For now, her top priority was to quickly write down the techniques that Zi Shang had implanted in her mind. After Ye Jiuge transcribed the techniques from memory, she took the pages to Ye Yu’s room.

Ye Yu had just woken up. His entire body ached as if immersed in freezing water. Even if he wanted to move his fingers, it was excruciating for him to do so. This feeling was truly more torturous than death. If Ye Jiuge did not tell Ye Yu that she knew a way to relieve it, he would very likely despair.

When Ye Jiuge saw that Ye Yu was having difficulty moving his body, she went over to him very naturally and helped him up. After that, she pushed a large, soft pillow behind his back.

Ye Yu caught a whiff of a sweet fragrance, distinctive to young ladies, that exuded from Ye Jiuge. His slightly pallid face could not help but blush. He had grown up in the valley since birth. Other than his sister, he had never been in such close proximity to a woman before.

"Are you shy?" Ye Jiuge did not expect Ye Yu to be so naive. Suddenly, she had the urge to tease him.

She was going to imitate the idle sons of wealthy families and grasp Ye Yu's chin to flirt with him when Zi Shang's frosty voice warned, "I would like to see you try and touch him."

Flirting with other men in front of him! Did she take him for a dead demon?

Tch! Life was so dull with a demon on her back. Zi Shang's constant presence was affecting Ye Jiuge's desire to indulge in life's pleasures!

"If you wish to indulge in life's pleasures, I will accompany you to the end." Zi Shang decided that, next time, he would satisfy her completely.

Ye Jiuge sensed that things were amiss, so she did not respond to Zi Shang on that subject. She silently took out the small book, where she had recorded the technique, and asked Ye Yu, "Can you read this yourself?"

"I can!" Ye Yu lifted his hand slowly and accepted the book from her.

A line of large words written with powerful brushstrokes appeared before his eyes: "Triple Cleansing With One Breath." The handwriting was firm yet gentle. It exuded an air that commanded reverence.

Ye Yu lifted his head in astonishment and asked Ye Jiuge, "Did you write this?" Ladies usually wrote in an elegant style and small font. He had never seen a young lady whose handwriting was bolder than a man's.

"Of course!" Ye Jiuge nodded.

She had trained herself to write this way on purpose so that she could be worthy of her name, "Brother Jiu."

Ye Yu could not help but smile. Ye Jiuge was becoming more interesting. When he first met her, he'd thought that she was an unattractive girl blinded by lust. But when he encountered her again,

he'd found out that she was an extremely talented Alchemist. Now, he was discovering that she was also a peculiar lady who was unconcerned with trivial matters. Ye Jiuge was full of mysteries, waiting for him to unravel slowly.

"Do not fall head over heels in love with me. I am merely a legend. Concentrate on practicing your technique!" Ye Jiuge joked.

Ye Yu smiled again. Then, he focused his attention on reading her book of techniques. He was immediately captivated by the remarkable methods detailed in the book. When Ye Jiuge saw that Ye Yu was completely immersed, she left the room.

Ye Ruyi, meanwhile, was still unconscious. After Ye Jiuge informed Qing Mama about where she was going, she discreetly carried Ye Ruyi to Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling's residence.

As soon as Bai Songling saw Ye Jiuge, he smiled at her slyly like a fox, "I predicted that you would come to find us today."

"Older Brother Bai, you are indeed very sharp," Ye Jiuge replied, grinning. "By the way, what happened to Qiu Mama?"

After Qiu Mama died, Ye Yuxuan sent her body back to her original home in a shabby coffin. Even if Ye Jiuge wanted to perform an autopsy, it wasn't possible.

"By the time we found Qiu Desheng, the Su Clan had already killed him. Qiu Mama was out, so she escaped unscathed. But when she found out that her son was dead, she became hell-bent on avenging him. For that reason, she asked me for one poisonous pill. She wanted to incriminate Su Yufeng by dragging her into the muck." Bai Songling let out a small sigh.

Qiu Mama had pledged her loyalty to Su Yufeng for her son's sake and stabbed Ye Yuxuan and Fifth Concubine in the back. Hence, she could no longer remain at the Ye Residence. She might as well die to avoid any future repercussions.

"The Su Clan is really cold-blooded. They'd commit murder at the drop of a hat to prevent someone from divulging their secrets. They've shown a blatant disregard for human life." Ye Jiuge recalled the time when she'd visited Zuiyun Pavilion, and Lady Yun had almost killed her.

"Their ruthlessness is precisely why we keep failing to acquire information that can be used against them," Wan Ziyang said gravely.

"Justice will prevail. The guilty will not be able to escape the long arm of the law. Eventually, they will have to suffer the consequences for their misdeeds," Bai Songling said confidently. "The Su Clan has committed so many crimes, their lives can't be smooth sailing forever."

“Brother Bai is right,” Ye Jiuge concurred. “Actually, I came here because I wanted to ask you both for a favor.”

“If you need anything from us, feel free to let us know. You don’t have to be so formal,” Bai Songling said with a smile.

“As you are aware, I am in an awkward position. It was really inappropriate for me to bring Fourth Sister home. Therefore, I want to ask you to step in and state that you rescued her from the Su Clan.”

Ye Yuxuan was an inherently paranoid person. If Ye Jiuge were the one to bring Ye Ruyi home, he would suspect that she was the one who had plotted the whole kidnapping incident. Things would turn out altogether differently if Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling returned Ye Ruyi to the Ye Residence. The two men from the Justice Department had outstanding reputations. They were famous for their strict impartiality and incorruptibility. Not only that, they had been investigating and tracking down the missing young girls. It would not be surprising for them to come across Ye Ruyi while working on the case.

Of course, in this matter, they would not be representing the Justice Department. Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling had to visit Ye Yuxuan privately. On the one hand, Ye Yuxuan would owe them a favor. On the other, they could also protect Ye Ruyi’s reputation. After Su Yufeng’s scene earlier, Ye Ruyi’s excellent reputation was almost nonexistent. But if they could salvage it even a little bit, that would be better than nothing!

“Alright,” Wan Ziyang agreed without hesitation.

“Eldest Miss, I feel that it would be for the best if you woke up Fourth Miss first and told her the whole story,” Bai Songling said.

He was the more thoughtful of the two. He was worried that, as a young girl, Ye Ruyi would wrongly assume that two adult men had saved her. In the future, this would be a sore spot in her heart.

“Alright,” Ye Jiuge agreed.

She could forgo the credit for saving Ye Ruyi. However, if Ye Ruyi did not know who had saved her, how could she repay her debt of gratitude in the future?

“In that case, we will leave first and make ourselves scarce.” Bai Songling stood up and walked out of the room with Wan Ziyang.

Ye Jiuge propped up Ye Ruyi on a chair and fed her a pill to help her regain consciousness. Ye Ruyi swallowed it, and her eyelashes moved slightly. Then, she slowly opened her eyes.

“Fourth Sister!” Ye Jiuge called out softly.

At first, as Ye Ruyi’s eyes cracked open, she felt slightly bewildered. Then, something occurred to her. She wrapped her arms around herself and let out a shrill, panicked scream, “Go away, go away!”

“Fourth Sister, it’s me!” Ye Jiuge hugged her at once. She was instantly baffled.

Before, when Qing Mama had helped Ye Ruyi clean her body with a cloth, she had examined her and was sure that the girl had not been abused. Not only that, she was still a virgin. So why was she still reacting in this way?

“Eldest Sister, why are you here?” Ye Ruyi felt as if she were in a dream.

“Foolish girl, this is my friends’ place. I came to your rescue.” Ye Jiuge caressed Ye Ruyi’s forehead. It was as cold as ice.

Ye Ruyi looked around and saw that she was no longer in that extremely dark basement. Her Eldest Sister’s sweet scent lingered on her nose. The putrid, foul odor of blood was gone. She had finally left that terrifying place.

“Fourth Sister, listen to me...” Ye Jiuge told Ye Ruyi how Fifth Concubine had been incriminated and imprisoned for engaging in a clandestine love affair and how she’d devised a stratagem to prove her innocence. Then, Ye Jiuge told the girl how she’d dragged down Su Yufeng, who had, consequently, been shipped off to the ancestral shrine. In the end, Ye Jiuge said, “To avoid raising Father’s suspicions, I’ve asked my two friends who work for the Justice Department to take you home. This will make it easier for us to expose the Su Clan’s wicked schemes.”

“Alright.” Ye Ruyi nodded vigorously. Tears kept streaming down her face. “Eldest Sister, if only I had listened to your advice before.”

“Foolish girl, do not mention the past anymore. Just be more cautious in the future.” Ye Jiuge patted her small head.

“Yes!” Ye Ruyi nodded with all her might. In this lifetime, she would not trust anyone other than Eldest Sister ever again.

After reassuring Ye Ruyi, Ye Jiuge called Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling into the room. As soon as Ye Ruyi saw the two unfamiliar men, she hid behind Ye Jiuge, terrified. Although she had not been assaulted in the basement, with her own eyes, she had seen the sorcerer abuse many young girls to death. Her naive psyche had developed a fear and abhorrence of men.

“Fourth Sister, don’t be afraid. Lord Wan Ziyang and Lord Bai Songling are from the Justice Department. They are my friends,” Ye Jiuge soothed.

Ye Ruyi continued to tremble. She didn’t dare raise her head and curled up into a small shrimp. Ye Ruyi’s condition, reminded Wan Ziyang of something. A pained expression appeared on his handsome, sculpted face as he attempted to repress the thought. Bai Songling empathized with Wan Ziyang. He patted his friend’s shoulder. Then, he said to Ye Jiuge, “Eldest Miss, we will go meet Great Master Ye now, so that he can come and take Fourth Miss home. Until then, I would like you to keep her company!”

“Alright!” Ye Jiuge had initially planned to entrust Ye Ruyi to Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling and return to her residence. But judging from Ye Ruyi’s current condition, she would not be able to leave.

Ye Ruyi raised her small head and said timidly, “Eldest Miss, if you have matters to attend to, you should go back. I can do this alone.”

She did not wish to burden Ye Jiuge. Still, her small hands could not help but tightly grip her sister’s sleeve.

“Even if I go now, I have nothing to do, so I am going to stay here and accompany you. Moreover, if things go smoothly, we should be able to go back in the afternoon,” replied Ye Jiuge.

She patted Ye Ruyi’s hand, and Ye Ruyi relaxed. Nevertheless, she remained nestled into her sister’s side. Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang went to find Ye Yuxuan. Not long after their conversation, Ye Yuxuan discretely took servants with him to fetch Ye Ruyi and bring her home.

Back at the Ye Residence, Fifth Concubine had been released from the prison. As soon as Ye Ruyi returned and saw her mother, she wept on her shoulder. When mother and daughter finished crying, they did not return to the Qiushui Residence. Instead, they went back to the dilapidated quarters where they had lived before. They planned to shut themselves in and live in isolation.

Ye Ruyi still possessed her Spiritual Root, so no one would neglect her and her mother. Instead, an extra effort was made to spruce up the decrepit residence. Ye Yuxuan himself even wrote “Yaoguang Residence” on a plaque for their house. Anyone who read it would presume that Ye Yuxuan hoped that his daughter would grow up to be an accomplished individual.

At first, Ye Yuxuan had planned to assign a few maids from the main residence to serve them in the Yaoguang Residence, but Fifth Concubine declined his offer. After what had happened to Qiu Mama, it would be unseemly for Ye Yuxuan to pressure them into acquiescing to his demands. He could only raise the issue again later.

Fifth Concubine brought along the two maids, Qing Hu and Qing Liu, to the Yaoguang Residence. From then on, she never stepped out of the house, ceasing all contact with the outside world.

Meanwhile, at the Zilin Residence, Ye Jiuge was practicing a secret signal that was unique to the Ye Clan. After Ye Yu suppressed the wicked sensation in his body, he taught Ye Jiuge all of the Ye Clan’s secret signals. The two of them decided on a location where they could communicate in case of an emergency. Then, Ye Yu moved out of the Zilin Residence. Ye Jiuge did not stop him. This was still the inner courtyard—an inappropriate place for a man.

At first, Ye Jiuge had wanted to inform Ye Yu that Su Junqing had sent his sister to someone as a gift. However, when she saw that he was at a crucial juncture in his cultivation, she feared that this news would make him too emotional and deviate him from the righteous path. She decided to wait to tell him until he had quelled the wicked sensation in his body. Only then would she ask him about the treasure map.

Just as Ye Jiuge was contemplating when she might use these secret signals, Qing Mama walked into the room, slightly worried, and said, “Eldest Miss, Qing Hu said that Fourth Miss is now fervently studying alchemy. Her personality has become eccentric. Not only that, but she is behaving abnormally. Qing Hu has not seen Fourth Miss smile once. Fifth Concubine is extremely concerned.”

“Didn’t you tell Fifth Concubine about Fourth Sister’s condition?” Ye Jiuge had asked Qing Mama to hint to Fifth Concubine that, although Ye Ruyi’s body had not been violated, psychologically, her daughter was severely traumatized. Fifth Concubine needed to understand.

“I told her, but it was useless. Right now, the atmosphere in the Yaoguang Residence is so

depressing that it is making me despondent.” Qing Mama’s heart sorrowed for Fourth Miss. She was only a seven-year-old girl, but she had already experienced such hardship.

“It’s fine. Fourth Sister is resilient. She will gradually heal from this.” The incident’s impact could not be mitigated merely by comforting words. They had to allow time to slowly alleviate Ye Ruyi’s pain.

“By the way, Eldest Miss, Seventh Concubine has frequently been visiting the Yaoguang Residence lately. Do you think I should warn Fifth Concubine about her?” Qing Mama did not think that Seventh Concubine was a good person.

Ye Jiuge thought about it, then answered, “In that case, you should mention it to Fifth Concubine.”

Seventh Concubine was cunning. It was likely that she did not harbor good intentions in approaching Fifth Concubine.

“Alright.” Qing Mama resolved to have a good talk with Fifth Concubine later.

After Ye Jiuge tidied her practice books, she sat by the table and sipped tea. Then, she asked Qing Mama, “What has Ye Shanshan been up to recently?”

Ever since Su Yufeng had been sent to the ancestral shrine, Ye Yuxuan had declared publicly that Ye Shanshan was severely ill. He forbade anyone from visiting her. Even if the Su Clan sent someone over, they were refused at the entrance.

“I heard that the Crown Prince sent someone over yesterday to see her. Old Master claimed that Second Miss felt unwell and turned her down. He did not even accept his gifts. I wonder what Second Miss did that caused Old Master to be so angry with her,” Qing Mama said, reveling in Ye Shanshan’s misfortune.

What else? Obviously, Ye Yuxuan suspected that Su Yufeng and her daughter had helped the Crown Prince steal his medicinal pills!

A satisfied smirk appeared on Ye Jiuge’s face. Su Yufeng and her daughter had no one but themselves to blame for being too close to the Crown Prince. It had been so easy for her to raise Ye Yuxuan’s suspicions. She wondered when the Crown Prince would realize that Ye Yuxuan was in possession of his precious jade ornament.

Meanwhile, in the main hall of the East Palace...

The Crown Prince sat in the seat of honor wearing a splendid vermilion embroidered robe. He was listening to a lovely palace maid at his feet report on her visit to the Ye Residence. “Crown

Prince, I am incompetent. I was not able to meet the Ye Clan's Second Miss. The Ye Clan even returned the gifts."

"Did you inform them that I was the one who assigned you to hand the gifts over to the Ye Clan's Second Miss?" The Crown Prince furrowed his eyebrows. A scowl appeared on his face.

The lovely palace maid lowered her head even further. She spoke softly, "I made that clear to Great Master Ye. However, Great Master Ye firmly refused to accept them. He also said... also said..."

Pa! The Crown Prince slammed the table with his fist. He raised his voice and shouted furiously, "What else did he say?"

The palace maid kneeled with a thud. With a trembling voice, she relayed what Ye Yuxuan had told her, "Great Master Ye said that men and women should not touch each other when giving and receiving an item. He would like to ask you to conduct yourself with dignity."

"D*mn that old imbecile!" The Crown Prince shook with anger.

Originally, Ye Yuxuan had wanted to gain the Crown Prince's favor. That was why he had asked his daughter to approach the Crown Prince on her own accord. Now, based on the way Ye Yuxuan was talking about it, it sounded as if the Crown Prince had been the one who sought Ye Shanshan's attention.

"Crown Prince, please quell your anger." The lovely palace maid lifted her fair, dainty face. Her luscious bosom peeked out from her clothes. Her eyes gleamed with tenderness, and her slim waist was as pliant as a willow branch.

The Crown Prince narrowed his thin eyes. Wrath and lust consumed him. He pinned the palace maid roughly to the table and silenced her with his left hand. He ripped the lower half of her dress into pieces and shoved his c*ck into her. He did not hold back as he released his emotions.

The lovely palace maid endured the pain from sex with the Crown Prince with difficulty, but she did not dare complain. Ever since she had learned that the Crown Prince loved to bed women when he was enraged, she had been looking for an opportunity to elevate her position. She had deliberately related what Ye Yuxuan had told her. As expected, the Crown Prince had become infuriated and, subsequently, f*cked her. Even though the Crown Prince inflicted immeasurable suffering on her body, she was willing to withstand it so long as it meant that he would make her his concubine. Her suffering would be worth it.

As the Crown Prince was having his way with the palace maid, he thought about matters concerning the Ye Residence.

That b*tch, Ye Jiuge, had humiliated him over and over again. He would not let her get away with it. Also, Ye Shanshan, who seemed innocent enough, was actually a two-faced wh*re. She must have gotten close to him so she could steal his jade ornament. He had not anticipated any problems since he'd hid the treasure map in the ornament for safekeeping and carried it with him at all times. It had never crossed his mind that someone would still be able to get wind of the map.

Su Junqing, that thieving brat, must have worked it all out. He had only claimed to assist the Crown Prince so that he could ascend to the throne himself. It was f*cking bullshit. Su Junqing must be the one harboring Ye Yu. For all, the Crown Prince knew, the other half of the Ye Clan's treasure map might have already fallen into Su Junqing's hands. Su Junqing must have asked Ye Shanshan to pickpocket him.

The Crown Prince blamed himself for the oversight. He had assumed that Ye Shanshan was simply a weak girl; however, she was clever enough to pinch his jade ornament without his noticing. If the Fragrance of A Thousand Miles, which he had applied to the ornament, could not be detected on her, perhaps, he would not be able to find out the truth. Even if the Su Clan managed to get hold of the treasure map, it did not matter. The final victory would be his.

As the Crown Prince already firmly believed that Su Junqing had the treasure map, he did not worry. In any case, there were still a few missing pieces. He could wait to order a raid on the Su Residence. Recently, the Crown Prince's cultivation had plateaued. It was hard to come across top-notch pills to clean the marrow and relocate the nerves. He needed to think of a way to get the Purple Lightning Wood back from Ye Jiuge.

Once the Crown Prince had straightened out his thoughts, he ejaculated. He pulled out from the maid and hastily wiped his lower body clean. He planned to return to his bedchamber and change his clothes before meeting the Empress.

The lovely maid's knees buckled, and she dropped to the floor. She called to him, feebly, "Your Highness!"

The Crown Prince turned around and swept his eyes over her alluring form. From head to toe, the maid was in a sorry state. He had gripped her wrists and neck so hard that they were completely red. Her virgin blood smeared the hem of her dress. He coldly instructed the servants in the corner of the room, "Force Contraception Medicine down her throat and send her to the Lateral Courts!"

This palace maid was most unfortunate. Because of Ye Shanshan, the Crown Prince loathed devious women. Things would not turn out well for her. Her eyes widened. The Lateral Courts was a Cold Palace where maids who had committed crimes were banished. It was an extremely unforgiving place. If she did not die as soon as she arrived, she would surely be skinned alive.

The maid was about to plead for mercy when two elderly female servants appeared out of nowhere, covered her mouth, and hauled her away like they were dragging a burlap sack.

After the Crown Prince bathed and changed his clothes, he went to the Fengyi Palace to see his mother. The Empress sat on her throne with regal poise, donning a royal red robe embroidered with glittering golden silk chrysanthemums. A golden dangling hairpin depicting a phoenix with its wings spread and adorned with jade and seven jewels inlaid on six sides was inserted into her topknot. Not only that, a small golden hairpin decorated with an oriental greenfinch strung from pearls, which suited the Empress, was placed to the side of her hair. With her fair complexion and dainty face, she did not seem like a married woman over forty.

The Crown Prince greeted her with a respectful salute. "Mother, I have come to see you."

"Ming'er, why have you taken the time to visit me here?" Even when interacting with her biological son, the Empress' smile was formal. The curve at the corner of her lips could be measured with a ruler.

"Mother, I have come to ask you for a favor." The Crown Prince told the Empress about his stagnated cultivation and how he wanted to recover the Purple Lightning Wood from Ye Jiuge.

"Can't you ask Su Yufeng and her daughter to handle this?" answered the Empress in a flat voice.

Since Ye Shanshan wished to be the Crown Princess Consort, she must exhibit some concrete proof of her competence for the role.

"Mother, you must be unaware that, right now, Su Yufeng and her daughter are in an extremely bleak situation. The night before last, Ye Yuxuan sent Su Yufeng to the ancestral shrine. He also confined Ye Shanshan to her residence." The Crown Prince also recounted how he had sent someone over to visit Ye Shanshan, but Ye Yuxuan had refused the visitor.

“Both mother and daughter are worthless!”

When the Empress wore a dour expression, her resemblance to the Crown Prince was remarkable. After she had seen how Su Yufeng and her daughter had ruined Ye Jiuge to the point of giving her the infamous reputation of an incompetent lady with a repulsive appearance, she had thought that they had some ability. Because of this, she tacitly approved of the relationship between the Crown Prince and Ye Shanshan. She had never expected that these women would be so useless.

“Mother, considering that Ye Jiuge was previously my betrothed, it is inappropriate for me to make a flagrant move against her. I can only ask for your help.” The Crown Prince had always believed that women should settle the problems caused by women. He merely needed to stand aside and reap the fruits of his mother’s victory.

The Empress lowered her eyes and muttered to herself irresolutely. Then, she nodded and said, “After seven days, that b*stard will enter the palace to pay his respects to the Emperor. At that time, I will ask Ye Jiuge to come.”

Although half of the Empress’ plan was left unspoken, the Crown Prince understood her meaning. He buttered her up, “Mother, you are brilliant.”

“Speaking of which, you should not focus your thoughts on women. The right thing to do is cultivate more. Not only that, you should continue winning over Ye Shanshan. The Ye Clan is still an influential family of alchemists. She also has some spiritual aptitude, and the Alchemy Tournament is going to take place soon,” the Empress instructed her son impassively. Her tone was light; it was as if she were conversing casually.

However, the Crown Prince did not show the slightest hint of inattentiveness. He responded promptly, “Mother, you do not need to worry. I will keep what you have said in mind.”

“Alright. You may leave.” The Empress nodded.

The Crown Prince left Fengyi Palace. He stood at the entrance and heaved a small sigh of relief. He looked into the distance, and a malicious smile appeared on his face. Ye Jiuge, I want to see how you will get away from me this time.

Meanwhile, at that exact moment, Ye Jiuge was visiting Ye Ruyi at the Yaoguang Residence. Qing Mama had mentioned Ye Ruyi’s obsession with alchemy before, but Ye Jiuge still did not take her seriously. Now that she was visiting the girl personally, Ye Jiuge discovered that this obsession was worse than she had thought.

Ye Ruyi wore a black garment with her hair fashioned into a simple bun, held together by a black headband. Various books on basic alchemy technique filled her room. Ye Ruyi even jotted down annotations at her writing desk. There were no other decorative items. The room did not seem like it belonged to a young girl; it looked like a cell in a nunnery.

“Eldest Sister, why are you here?” Only when Ye Ruyi saw Ye Jiuge did she show the slightest bit of childlike innocence.

“I came to see you. Why are you dressed like that?”

Ye Ruyi was dressed like an old woman. She looked stiffer and more conservative than the nuns from the mountains.

Ye Ruyi begged to differ. “I think it’s fine,” she said. If she dressed in beautiful clothing, when she encountered psychopaths, she would die faster.

“Eldest Miss, please help me advise Ruyi. She refuses to listen to me,” Fifth Concubine pleaded dejectedly.

Ever since her release from prison, Fifth Concubine’s body was thoroughly drained. It was extremely obvious that she had aged. Although she was not yet thirty, she already had white hair, the area between her brows wrinkled with worries, and she seemed sickly.

“Mother, if what you say is useful, I will heed your advice,” Ye Ruyi replied rigidly.

Every time she saw how submissive her mother was, Ye Ruyi abhorred the lack of strength of character in women.

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“Fourth Sister, no matter what, Fifth Concubine is your mother. How can you speak to her like this?” Ye Jiuge frowned.

Even if Fifth Concubine had made many mistakes, she truly loved her daughter. Ye Ruyi's words were too hurtful.

Ye Ruyi did not dare contradict Ye Jiuge but pulled a long face and remained silent. She radiated an intense air of violence and cruelty and was acting entirely different from the previously cute and quick-witted girl.

Ye Jiuge was growing worried. She'd heard that children who experienced traumatic and perverted things grew up to have warped minds and became abnormal. She did not wish for this to happen to Ye Ruyi. She needed to think of a way to resolve Ye Ruyi's violent and cruel ways.

Ye Jiuge thought about it for a moment then smiled and said to Ye Ruyi, "The weather has been quite nice for the past few days. Why don't we go for a walk in the spring sun?"

Little children loved playing; it would be good to take Ye Ruyi outside.

"I still have many books that I have not read." Ye Ruyi shook her head. To her, it was more important to read than play.

"The books won't run away if you leave them here. We shall go out and play tomorrow. It's a deal." Ye Jiuge did not give Ye Ruyi the chance to refuse.

"Alright!" Ye Ruyi bulged her cheeks and agreed unwillingly. She would not disobey her Elder Sister, who had saved her from the depths of misery. Forget it, she will treat it as a chance to accompany Elder Sister on a trip.

"Eldest Miss, where do you plan on taking Ruyi?" Fifth Concubine looked at Ye Jiuge expectantly, as though a trip could immediately restore her precious daughter to her normal state.

"How about the Putuo Temple?" Ye Jiuge blinked her eyes.

Although her childhood memories were limited, she recollected that, when she was young, the trips to the Putuo Temple with her mother, Yun Qiaoqiao, had been her favorite. The vegetarian food and pastries were delicious there, and a patch of beautiful Yaoguang flowers grew on the hill behind the temple. The scenery during the day was like a fairyland; nothing more beautiful could be imagined.

"Good, good, good!" Fifth Concubine nodded her head repeatedly. She and her daughter had suffered a string of misfortunes lately. Nothing could be better for them than to go and pray to the Buddha at the temple.

"Fourth Sister, do you wish to go? The Yaoguang flowers there are pretty, and they share the

same name as your residence. Furthermore, their vegetarian food and pastries are really delicious.” Ye Jiuge grinned like the grandma wolf.

“Elder Sister, we shall go if you wish,” Ye Ruyi spoke like an adult. She looked at Ye Jiuge with an indulgent yet helpless look in her eyes, as though Ye Jiuge was the child.

Ye Ruyi’s gaze made Ye Jiuge’s hair stand on end. This child was getting weirder, and she needed to be straightened out at once.

When Qing Mama heard that the Eldest Miss was taking the Fourth Miss out, she immediately set about the preparations happily. She also did not forget to help them inform Old Master.

Ye Yuxuan agreed to let Ye Jiuge take Ye Ruyi out, but he refused to allow Fifth Concubine to accompany them. Firstly, Fifth Concubine’s body was too weak. Secondly, because of the incident regarding Chen Fuhan, he now loathed her. If it weren’t for Ye Ruyi’s young age and her need for her mother, he would have sent Fifth Concubine away to one of the other estates.

Ye Jiuge was very angry when she heard this. She wanted to find Ye Yuxuan and argue with him, but Fifth Concubine stopped her.

“Eldest Miss, my body is too weak to leave the residence. You don’t have to go and find Old Master,” Fifth Concubine pleaded humbly. She was already satisfied that she could stay in the Ye Residence and take care of her daughter. She did not dare to wish for anything else.

Fifth Concubine could not even stand straight by herself. Ye Jiuge wanted to help her but had no way of doing so, and she could only sigh. No matter which world a woman was in, she was always in a weak and powerless minority.

Even if Ye Yuxuan had known that the incident regarding Chen Fuhan was not Fifth Concubine’s fault, he would still label her guilty. He felt that, if she had known her place, the incident would not have occurred. After all, no such thing had happened with his other concubines. Furthermore, he had already shown great mercy by not having her executed.

Ye Ruyi was unaware of how many things had to happen before the trip. For now, she was still arguing that she wanted to wear men’s clothes. Fifth Concubine felt helpless and could only ask Ye Jiuge for instructions.

“If she wishes to wear men’s clothes, let her.” Ye Jiuge knew that the incident in the underground room had severely traumatized Ye Ruyi.

She felt that being a woman was a weakness, so she wanted to wear men’s clothes. Forcefully refusing to let her wear them would only cause her to become more rebellious. It would be better

to placate her and improve her mood first.

On the day of the trip, Ye Jiuge dressed like a man as well. First, she hid the black scar on her face. Then, she wore a long ice-blue gown embroidered with bamboo leaves. Her black hair was neatly combed into a hairpin and contained within an exquisite white jade crown. Her body had yet to develop fully, and she had a flat chest. As such, she did not need to bind her breasts. She only used some ointment to cover her pierced ears.

Ye Jiuge had a masculine personality, so she dressed up as a handsome teenager. Her face wore a hint of confidence and boldness.

“Elder...Elder Sister?” Ye Ruyi blinked. Looking at the handsome teenager in front of her, she felt that Ye Jiuge was even better looking than any man she had seen before.

“What Elder Sister? Call me Elder Brother, Fourth Brother!” Ye Jiuge flicked Ye Ruyi’s forehead.

Although Ye Ruyi was wearing a sapphire blue men’s suit, her red lips and white teeth as well as her delicate appearance, still gave her a feminine look.

“Elder Brother.” Ye Ruyi covered her forehead and revealed a shy smile.

She had initially been worried that she would make her Elder Sister angry by wearing a men’s suit. She had not expected her Elder Sister to wear a man’s outfit as well. Furthermore, her Elder Sister looked confident and handsome, and she was envious.

“Let’s go.” Ye Jiuge picked up Ye Ruyi and got onto the horse-drawn carriage.

“Elder Sister, since you have a way to hide the black scar on your face, why don’t you always do it?” Ye Ruyi asked curiously. Her Elder Sister would always look beautiful if she removed her black scar.

“A person’s worth cannot be determined only by her appearance,” Ye Jiuge replied lazily.

Since Zi Shang had taken a fancy to her even with her ugly appearance, she felt that it would be a defiance of the natural order if she were to become more beautiful.

“Is it?” Ye Ruyi blinked as she began to consider the meaning behind Ye Jiuge’s words.

“That’s enough. You shouldn’t be thinking about these problems at such a young age. Otherwise, you’ll lose all your hair!” Ye Jiuge played with Ye Ruyi’s hair for a while, then changed the topic.

The Putuo Temple was not very far from the Ye Residence. It only took about half an hour to

reach their destination.

They saw a towering ancient temple amidst the mountains. White smoke was coming out from the top, giving it a Buddhist appearance. The Putuo Temple was a prominent, centuries-old shrine always enshrouded in incense smoke. Many high officials and nobles came here to worship the Buddha.

After Ye Ruyi offered incense to the Buddha, Ye Jiuge was about to bring her to the hill behind to enjoy the scenery of the Yaoguang flowers when she was stopped by a novice monk. “Benefactor, the Yaoguang flowers on the hill behind is not open to visitors today.”

“We just want to take a walk along the perimeter, small master. Please grant us this favor.” Ye Jiuge recalled that the perimeter of the patch of Yaoguang flowers in the hill behind was always open for visitors to tour.

Only the temple’s interior was segregated to allow some of the influential families to sightsee.

On this occasion, since she was wearing men’s clothes to escort Ye Ruyi, she did not use the name of Ye; she had only wanted to take a walk outside the perimeter. After all, there was plenty to look at.

“Merciful Buddha! The exterior perimeter of the hill is not open today either, benefactor. I apologize and seek your understanding,” the novice monk said with his hands clasped together.

Ye Jiuge studied his expression and understood that the entire hill had been reserved by an influential family. She wondered which hedonistic son of a wealthy clan had reserved the hill for himself.

That hill is so huge, you b*stard. How many eyes do you have? Can you even see anything with them?

Although Ye Jiuge was upset, she would not vent her anger at a novice Buddhist monk. As such, she nodded to symbolize her agreement.

“Elder Brother, since we can’t see the Yaoguang Flowers, let’s head back!” Ye Ruyi said sensibly.

“Silly, why should we do what he says?” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrows and replied.

“Then, how do we see the flowers?” Puzzled, Ye Ruyi blinked.

“Like this.” Ye Jiuge took Ye Ruyi in her arms and stealthily avoided the monk, heading for the hill behind them. From a distance, she could see several guards patrolling the foot of the hill. Still, they were unable to survey everything at once, so Ye Jiuge successfully snuck by with Ye Ruyi.

“Elder Sister, is this allowed?” Ye Ruyi was excited and worried at the same time.

“What are you afraid of? We are just here to enjoy the flowers, not for murder and arson,” Ye Jiuge replied absentmindedly; she would not be afraid—even if they were here for murder and arson.

At first, Ye Ruyi was worried, but she soon became enchanted by the beautiful scenery. The Yaoguang Flowers had milky white branches that bloomed with an abundance of small, pure white flowers. In the sunlight, a dazzling glitter seemed to dance around them. Ye Jiuge shook the tree trunk lightly, and petals fluttered away on the breeze. It was like a scene from a dreamscape. Ye Ruyi could not control herself and let out whoops of delight.

Before she could contain her laughter, a fierce reproach came from deep inside the peach grove, “Who’s there?”

Ye Jiuge turned her head and saw a man dressed in the vermilion uniform of a guard. He had a sinister look and was leading a squadron of guards towards them.

Ye Ruyi’s face paled, and she hid behind Ye Jiuge, shaking like a frightened rabbit.

“Why are you shouting? Can’t you see that my brother is frightened?” Ye Jiuge glared at the guard before she patted Ye Ruyi’s head and said, “Don’t be afraid, Elder Brother is here.”

“Didn’t the monk tell you that nobody is allowed in this hill today? Leave immediately!” When the guard saw that Ye Jiuge was just a teenager with a young child, his tone softened slightly. However, his attitude remained unyielding.

“This hill is not named after the Dongfang family. What right do you have to prevent me from coming here?” Ye Jiuge narrowed her eyes and gave the guard a look of haughty disdain.

Only a descendant of the Emperor would have such a guard in his service.

“Such audacity!” The guard did not expect the teenager to be so brazen as to speak the Emperor’s family name directly.

“Just a little bit more audacious than you,” Ye Jiuge replied and smiled lazily. She was not scared of the Crown Prince, so why would she be afraid of the other princes?”

“If you continue to be so arrogant and conceited, do you believe that I won’t order my men to tie you up and throw you outside?” The guard, who was wielding a blade, snarled.

He hoped that Ye Jiuge would leave on her own accord, but from what she had just said, he was sure that she belonged to a noble family. Aristocrats were challenging to deal with these days; even royalty would not dare mishandle them.

“If you have the capacity to do so, then do it.”

Ye Jiuge did not actually mean to argue with the guard. However, she had brought Ye Ruyi out to prove to her that dressing up unattractively was not a way to solve her problem. As long as her fists were hard enough, even a woman would be able to support heaven and earth and trample men beneath her heel.

“Don’t blame us for our impertinence then.” The guard with the blade was responsible for guarding the peach grove and preventing anyone from entering. Even if the teenager in front of him was a son of the nobility, he could only brace himself and attack.

“Fourth Brother, stand back! Take care not to get hurt.” Ye Jiuge paid no attention to the guards, who surrounded her slowly.

After making Ye Ruyi stand further away, Ye Jiuge cracked her knuckles and prepared to have a go.

Just as the atmosphere was tensing, a cold voice came from deep inside the peach grove, “Lei Peng, come back.”

The guard hastily sheathed his blade and retreated with the rest of the men. Shortly after, he wheeled out a man wearing a long black robe.

Momentarily, the patch of Yaoguang Flowers lost their vividness.

The man’s skin was white and smooth like a millennium snow mountain. His looks were exquisite and beautiful. There was a sharp contrast between the black and white in his dark eyes, which

were, unfortunately, clouded with intense worry. His black pupils were like a bottomless abyss that did not allow light to pass through, as though nobody could enter the depths of his heart. His back was straight as the white poplar, and his body seemed to contain tremendous power. Although he was sitting in a wheelchair, he had a frigid demeanor that prevented people from looking into his face.

Ye Jiuge did not expect that it had been the renowned Dongling Prince of the Lei Country, Dongfang Que, who had reserved the hill.

Dongfang Que's mother was the Emperor's most cherished Imperial Noble Consort, Bai Linglong. The Bai Clan was a clan of generals, and they had stood guard in Dongling for generations, defending it from the Demon Clan. As such, the Emperor held the Bai Clan in high regard.

Although the Empress had given birth to a legitimate son, Dongfang Jianming, she nevertheless had to bow down to the Imperial Noble Consort in her husband's harem. This was because Bai Linglong's son, Dongfang Que, was outstanding. At three years old, he had successfully cultivated spiritual power. At seven, he had become a spiritual practitioner. By the age of twenty, he was an advanced spiritual practitioner, a mere step away from becoming a spiritual master.

He had also inherited the talent of a general from the Bai Clan and was familiarized with the art of war at a young age. He was a renowned genius teenager and the indisputable heir of the Lei Country.

However, nothing lasts forever. Bai Linglong passed away from an illness when Dongfang Que was twelve years old. Heartbroken, Dongfang Que requested to go to his maternal grandfather to gain experience in war. There, he directed military operations with miraculous skill and mounted successful defenses against a few of the Demon Clan's attacks.

Unfortunately, heaven was always jealous of heroic geniuses. In one of the battles, he was injured by the Demon Clan and became handicapped. As such, he lost the qualifications to contest for the title of Emperor.

Although the Emperor was upset, he had listened to the cabinet ministers and announced that Dongfang Jianming would be the Crown Prince. This had allowed the Empress to gain her power.

Ye Jiuge did not know Dongfang Que personally, but she had heard about how he had been harmed by the Demon Clan and felt an unfathomable sense of guilt. She had wanted to ask Zi Shang something, but he had fallen into a deep slumber after giving her Ye Yu's cultivation technique. He would probably not wake up for at least half a month.

"Eldest Miss Ye, my subordinates have been impolite towards you. Please, do not take it to heart." Dongfang Que's voice was pleasant, soft, and chilly. It contradicted the gloom in his eyes.

“How did you recognize me?” Ye Jiuge was surprised. Although she had not made a special effort to disguise herself, even someone who knew her would have been unable to recognize her immediately.

Dongfang Que smiled. His handsome face gave off a feeling of coolness like chrysanthemums, bringing with it the scent of a balmy fragrance. However, he did not answer Ye Ruyi’s question.

He said coolly, “I only came to see the Yaoguang Flowers on a whim and did not expect to disturb anyone. I apologize. I shall take my leave and not disturb Eldest Miss Ye any further.”

Having spoken, he adjusted his wheelchair and left. The guards followed him in formation, obscuring the sisters’ view of the prince’s upright posture.

“I heard that the Dongling Prince became ruthless after his injury. I did not expect him to be so amiable!” As she spoke to Ye Ruyi, Ye Jiuge’s eyes were fixed in the direction where Dongfang Que had departed.

Ye Ruyi did not respond for a long time.

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Ye Jiuge turned and looked at Ye Ruyi. She saw that the small girl’s face had turned red, and her eyes shone brightly in the direction where Dongfang Que had gone. She looked as though she were under Su Junqing’s Mental Manipulation.

Ye Jiuge had been beside her; she was very sure that Dongfang Que had not even looked in the small girl’s direction. She did not expect Ye Ruyi to become a member of the good-looks club or that her spirit would drift away when she saw a handsome man. However, this Dongfang Que was indeed exceptionally handsome in both looks and temperament, and it was no surprise that Ye Ruyi would be captivated.

Still, he was inferior compared to the evildoer, Zi Shang. If only Ye Ruyi could see Zi Shang. Ye Jiuge did not know if his beautiful looks would enchant the girl or if his demon body would frighten her.

"Elder Sister, are we still seeing the flowers?" Ye Ruyi quickly freed herself from her captivation with Dongfang Que and regained her cynical demeanor.

"No, let's head back!" Ye Jiuge shook her head lazily. After seeing Dongfang Que, there was not much of a reason to continue viewing the Yaoguang Flowers.

"Okay." Ye Ruyi nodded with a taut face.

On the way home, she maintained an appearance of deeply ingrained resentment. In her mind, she repeatedly spurned herself for not standing firm; because of one handsome man, she had abandoned her dream of taking revenge on all men.

Ye Jiuge sent Ye Ruyi back to the Yaoguang Residence then returned to her Zhilin Residence and changed into a set of plain, lake-green colored silk robes.

After she finished combing her hair, Zhen Zhu entered from outside the courtyard in an ecstatic mood. She said, "Eldest Miss, a court eunuch has come from the palace. The Old Master wishes for you to hurry and go to receive the imperial decree."

"Imperial decree? Whose imperial decree?" Ye Jiuge set aside the white jade hairpin in her hands and turned to look at Zhen Zhu.

"I am not sure; I think it is the Empress'." Zhen Zhu shook her head. She had heard the news from the main residence and rushed to notify the Eldest Miss.

"Eldest Miss, I think you should go and take a look!" Qing Mama said softly.

She quickly chose a long jasper double-flowered hairpin from the red wooden jewelry box and put it on for Ye Jiuge. Then, she selected a pair of turquoise-green earrings, which gave a hint of nobility to Ye Jiuge's otherwise simple attire. After all, Ye Jiuge was receiving an imperial decree; it was suitable for her to look dignified.

Ye Jiuge adjusted her expression so that she looked like a lady and leisurely led Qing Mama and Zhen Zhu to the parlor. A short, fat court eunuch was sitting in a chair. His face was pale and beardless, and he had kind brows and pleasant eyes.

Ye Yuxuan was sitting on the top seat and interacting with the court eunuch. When he saw Ye Jiuge enter, he immediately said unhappily, "Who relayed the message to you? Why did you let Court Eunuch Fu wait for so long?"

Zhen Zhu, who was standing behind Ye Jiuge, immediately trembled when she heard Ye Yuxuan.

She felt weak in her knees and almost genuflected. Before kneeling, she glanced at Qing Mama and saw that Qing Mama's sharp eyes signaled to her to stand firm. Immediately, she straightened her knees.

During this period, Qing Mama often repeated a phrase – The servants of the Zhilin Residence were the face of Eldest Miss, and they must always bear in mind their obligations outside the residence. They were neither allowed to bully others nor let others bully them. No matter what, only the Eldest Miss could be trusted; the words of other people were like utter nonsense.

Ye Jiuge's face fell slightly. When Zhen Zhu had received the news, she had immediately returned to the Zhilin Residence to inform her. The entire procedure did not take more than the time needed to brew a pot of tea and should not be considered slow.

Ye Yuxuan's words were a slap in her face to curry favor with the court eunuch. Earlier, when she had seen Ye Yuxuan forcefully refusing to allow the Crown Prince to visit Ye Shanshan, she had thought that he had finally grown firmer. She did not expect him to cling to the Empress, and even humiliate his daughter to do so. He was just as despicable, sly, and treacherous as ever.

"Father, it is all my fault. I heard that the Empress sent someone to deliver an imperial decree. Not wanting to slight him, I made myself more presentable before coming over. Father, Court Eunuch, please forgive me," Ye Jiuge curtsied to the court eunuch and spoke in a mild and soft tone, behaving like a well-bred young lady.

"Eldest Miss Ye, this is more than I can bear. I wouldn't dare blame you." Although Court Eunuch Fu was beaming, he was surprised by how different Ye Jiuge was compared to the past.

The Ye Jiuge of the past would have shivered in fear when faced with Ye Yuxuan's anger, and she would not have spoken appropriately. Furthermore, her black scar had imbued her with a sense of inferiority, so she always spoke with her head bowed, making her appear like a yes-man. Now, her demeanor had changed completely.

Although the black scar was still there, her limpid phoenix eyes reflected a bright light, which caused people to overlook her appearance and think that she was not to be belittled.

Ye Yuxuan heard what Court Eunuch Fu said and felt that it was inappropriate to continue picking on Ye Jiuge. He changed the topic and said, "Court Eunuch Fu, what is the imperial decree that the Empress has sent you to deliver?"

"The Empress said that she has not seen Eldest Miss Ye for a very long time, and she misses her dearly. As such, she wishes to invite Eldest Miss Ye to the palace for a chat," Court Eunuch Fu announced beaming as though the Empress wanted Ye Jiuge to enter the palace and exchange household words with her.

Ye Jiuge believed that Court Eunuch Fu's words harbored ulterior motives. Previously, she had smacked the Crown Prince in the face twice and taken back the Purple Lightning Wood. The Crown Prince must hate her to the bone and would have said nasty things about her in front of the Empress. The Empress must have wanted to settle the score by inviting her to the palace. She would be a fool if she fell for it.

Just as Ye Jiuge was about to refuse, Ye Yuxuan hurriedly said to Court Eunuch Fu, "It is Jiuge's honor that the Empress has requested to see her. I represent Jiuge in thanking the Empress for her kindness. Court Eunuch Fu, please return to the palace and report to the Empress that Jiuge will certainly go and pay her respects."

"Alright. I shall come back in seven days to take Eldest Miss Ye to the palace." Court Eunuch Fu rose to take his leave.

Ye Yuxuan ordered the housekeeper to see him off. As an Elixir Alchemist, he had already shown due respect for the Empress' feelings by personally receiving Court Eunuch Fu. He would have lowered his status by escorting the visitor out himself.

Ye Jiuge could not interrupt from the sidelines. After Court Eunuch Fu left, she said to Ye Yuxuan, "Father, do you really believe that the Empress would ask me to go to the palace just for a chat?"

"No matter the Empress' intentions, you have to go," Ye Yuxuan straightened his face and said unhappily. "You have been acting out against the Crown Prince recently. You are very fortunate that the Empress has not made a fuss over it. This time, when you enter the palace, cooperate and apologize to the Empress so she will cool her temper."

F*ck you! Why don't you go to the palace to cool the Empress' temper?

Ye Jiuge's face turned black as she did not bother to disguise her anger.

"It's fine, the Empress has always been compassionate, and she will not do anything to harm you. When the moment comes, just kowtow to her a few times, and everything will be alright," Ye Yuxuan comforted her self-righteously.

He had humiliated the Crown Prince out of anger because his elixirs had been stolen. However, he did not actually want to fall out with the royal family. After all, the Dongfang Clan was the royalty of the Lei Country, and there were no benefits to be gained by clashing with them.

Ye Jiuge badly wanted to roll her eyes. She knew that she could not count on her disreputable father, Ye Yuxuan, to help her.

Fine, he wants her to enter the palace? Then, she will enter the palace.

However, when the moment comes, it will not be up to him whether the Empress' temper is cooled or inflamed.

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After Ye Jiuge returned to the Zhilin Residence, Qing Mama said to her worriedly, "Eldest Miss, the Empress is clearly going to deal with you. What should we do?"

"Counter soldiers with arms and water with a dam. There is nothing to be worried about," Ye Jiuge replied absentmindedly.

Her grandfather, Yun Tianwei, was the Lei Kingdom's top elixir alchemist. People from other countries who had never even heard of the Lei Kingdom knew of him. As her grandfather's only blood descendant, even the Emperor wouldn't dare touch her—let alone the Empress.

If they challenged her limits, she would appear and say that the Dongfang Clan had persecuted the faithful and honest. The elixir alchemists who worshipped her grandfather would curse the Dongfang Clan to its doom.

"No matter what, this is a feast at Hongmen, Eldest Miss, so you should be prepared." Qing Mama's face was still full of worry.

If the late Madame were still alive, many upper-class women would be competing to accompany the Eldest Miss to the palace to keep her safe. However, since the late Madame had passed away, the Eldest Miss's case had become hopeless, and the aristocratic families who had relations with the Yun Clan had broken off communications. It would be difficult to pick up these relationships again.

"Yes, you are right."

Certainly, Ye Jiuge felt the need to make preparations. She needed a way to survive in case the

Empress flew into a rage out of humiliation and contrived an “accident” so that she would perish inside the palace.

“I will write a letter to the Jin Clan, the Zhao Clan, and the Li Clan to see if they are willing to escort you into the palace,” Qing Mama said with a strong fighting spirit.

No matter what, she had to try. Perhaps someone kind-hearted would still remember the gentility of the Yun Clan.

“There’s no use seeking them; it will be a waste of energy.” Ye Jiuge did not believe in any of these kind-hearted people. She only trusted herself.

Using her energy, she could produce more elixirs to protect herself: Mind Calming, Antidotes, Illusion Breaking, and Vitality Strengthening, as well as elixirs for plotting against others such as Bone Dissolving and Spiritual Dissipating elixirs...

She needed to prepare multiple vials of each. Using the silver taels she had brought with her, Ye Jiuge purchased the ingredients she needed before calling a meeting with Ye Yu.

It had been a few days since they’d seen each other, and Ye Yu’s complexion had improved. His pretty face had more color in it, and the red mole on his forehead reflected a luminous and beautiful aura.

“It seems that you have increased your cultivation.” Ye Jiuge nodded in satisfaction. Ye Yu’s half-dead appearance had been unpleasant.

“It’s all thanks to you, Eldest Miss,” Ye Yu said sincerely.

During this time, he had been in a spiritual retreat. The more he cultivated, the more powerful he found the cultivation technique to be. The corrupting Yin Qi had severely weakened his spiritual channels. However, when he had cultivated using the technique, not only did his channels recover quickly, but they also grew stronger.

Most surprising of all, the black magic practitioner had left Yin Qi behind in his body. After refining it, his Invisibility improved. Before, his Invisibility had been at the first stage; he was only able to become invisible and could not attack while cloaked in Invisibility. Its duration was also minimal. Now, this skill had been upgraded to the second stage. Finally, Ye Yu could be considered a shadow assassin. The time limit for his Invisibility had increased, and he had gained an additional practical skill.

“The cultivation technique was a reward for selling your service to me. There is nothing to thank me for.” Ye Jiuge gestured with her hands then said, “I called you here because I have something

for you to do.”

“What instructions do you have for me?” Ye Yu asked solemnly.

“The Empress has requested that I visit the palace in seven days. I am afraid that she will act against me, so I need you to help me do something.” Ye Jiuge lowered her voice and explained the rest to Ye Yu.

“Eldest Miss, please rest assured; I will definitely complete your task.” Ye Yu nodded resoundingly.

This was the first time Ye Jiuge had asked him to do something, and he wanted to do it well.

“That’s good. I am going into a spiritual retreat to produce some elixirs. Are there any elixirs that you want?” Ye Jiuge asked Ye Yu as though she were asking him about dishes he wanted to eat.

“I don’t need any.” Ye Yu hurriedly shook his head. Ye Jiuge had already treated him well, and he did not want to be insufferable.

“You don’t have to stand on ceremony with me. The stronger you are, the less I have to worry about utilizing you.” Ye Jiuge meant that Ye Yu was overthinking; she was helping herself—not him.

Ye Yu hesitated momentarily before he said, “I need some elixirs that can improve my spiritual channels.”

Although the cultivation technique that Ye Jiuge had given him could repair his spiritual channels, it was still too slow. He wanted to recover quickly so that he could go and seek his sister.

“Sure. Come and find me five days from now at the Zhilin Residence for the elixir.” Ye Jiuge nodded. She wanted to see how much Ye Yu would recover. After all, he had been cultivating for a while now and should be much stronger than before.

In the days that followed, Ye Jiuge remained immersed in the Elixir Production Room. She was able to produce some second-grade elixirs. Although she had multiple recipes, her cultivation was insufficient, and it was impossible for her to produce higher grade elixirs, which required the control of soul power in addition to the support of spiritual power. Even though her soul power was incredibly strong due to the fusion of her two lives, her low spiritual power limited her ability to produce higher grade elixirs.

After producing another furnace of Vitality Strengthening Elixir, she finally left the Elixir Production Room.

“Eldest Miss, didn’t you say that it wasn’t good for Fourth Miss to lose herself in producing elixirs? Why are you doing the same?” Qing Mama carried a cup of hot tea over to Ye Jiuge. She was distressed by the bags under Ye Jiuge’s eyes.

When Ye Jiuge had gone into a spiritual retreat in the Elixir Production Room, Qing Mama dared not interrupt. She only delivered her food regularly through a small window in the room. However, Ye Jiuge did not eat more than two meals a day, and this worried her immensely.

“Yes, yes, yes. I won’t do this in the future.” Ye Jiuge took the cup of hot tea and drank it before she asked Qing Mama, “What is Father busy with lately? Has anything happen outside?”

“I don’t know what he has been up to recently, but he has been leaving early in the morning and returning late at night. Zhen Zhu, on the other hand, heard some rumors outside.” Qing Mama lowered her voice and said, “I heard that the Empress is inviting you to the palace to seek revenge for the Crown Prince!”

“Really?” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrows.

When she initially sought out Ye Yu, she had wanted him to spread rumors to control the Empress and Crown Prince using public opinion. She had not expected him to act so quickly that the rumors would already be spreading around the Inner Courtyard of the Ye Residence.

“It’s true. I personally have made some inquiries. I heard that, besides the rumors in the streets, the Inner Courtyards of many officials have also been gossiping about this matter.” Qing Mama still had some connections from accompanying Yun Qiaoqiao to social affairs. It was not a big deal for her to make some small inquiries.

It wasn’t likely that these were Ye Yu’s rumors spreading in the Inner Courtyards of these officials. Ye Jiuge thought about it and could only think of Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling. They were genuinely loyal; her energy had not been wasted in rescuing them from the adversity that they’d experienced together.

“Eldest Miss, I finally feel reassured. Even if the Empress is bold enough to harm you, such actions would only confirm these rumors about the Crown Prince seeking revenge, and he will have broken faith and abandoned what’s right. He still has enough pride to seek revenge after breaking off the marriage, bah!” Qing Mama wanted badly to spit on the floor to show her disdain for the Crown Prince.

When the late Madame was still alive, the Crown Prince had shown a deep love for the Eldest Miss and gifted her with presents daily. Even though the Eldest Miss’s spiritual channels were utterly destroyed, and she looked hideous, he had acted as though he did not mind at all.

However, when the late Madame had passed away, he immediately cooled his affection for the Eldest Miss and became intimate with Ye Shanshan. How revolting!

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“Qing Mama, pass down an order for the servants to keep their mouths shut,” Ye Jiuge instructed. “Our residence shall take no part in spreading any of these rumors, no matter what is said in the streets.”

Ye Jiuge was sure that Ye Yuxuan would cause trouble for her once he heard the news. She was not afraid of Ye Yuxuan, but she feared that he would have the servants in her residence killed as a warning.

“Eldest Miss, please rest assured, I have already given the orders.” Qing Mama knew that, regardless of who spread the rumors, everyone would pin the blame on the Eldest Miss.

In such an extraordinary situation, keeping quiet was the right thing to do. Ye Jiuge was relieved to have an old fox like Qing Mama at her side.

“Eldest Miss, Zhen Zhu has made almond milk. Do you want some?” Qing Mama felt that Ye Jiuge had become too skinny; she needed to replenish her body.

“Alright, I will have some!” Although Ye Jiuge was not hungry, she did not want to reject Qing Mama’s consideration.

“Good.” Qing Mama was just about to go and look for Zhen Zhu when she heard the terrified voices of the servants from the courtyard. “Greetings to you, Old Master.”

Immediately after, Ye Yuxuan stormed into the house in a rage.

“Greetings to you, Father!” Ye Jiuge curtsied to Ye Yuxuan then said, “Father, why have you come to see me?”

"You still have the decency to ask?" Ye Yuxuan scowled fiercely as he glared at Ye Jiuge and said, "Do you think that I have no idea what you have done?"

"Father, what do you mean?" Ye Jiuge said, perplexed with a hint of grievance. "I have been staying in my residence lately producing elixirs and have not stepped out of the house. What could I possibly have done?"

"You dare to say that you did not spread the rumors that the Empress has invited you to the palace to seek revenge for the Crown Prince?" Other than this d*mned girl, nobody could have done this.

"What? The Empress is inviting me to the palace to seek revenge for the Crown Prince?" Ye Jiuge covered her mouth in surprise. She spoke like a frightened little white rabbit, "Father, what should I do? Should I say that I am ill and cannot go to the palace?"

"Pretend! Continue pretending!"

Seeing Ye Jiuge feign innocence, Ye Yuxuan was so angry that his liver hurt. If this d*mned girl were so cowardly, she would not have slapped the Crown Prince in the street.

"Father, I am not pretending. I am terrified. If someone were to break off an engagement with a daughter of another clan, that clan would hate the person bitterly. Only in our clan do we rush to have our faces stepped on by the injuring party. Being born into this kind of clan, how could I not be afraid?" Ye Jiuge flashed a sarcastic smile.

"What rubbish are you sprouting? Are you aggrieved to have been born into the Ye Clan?" Although Ye Yuxuan had come here to criticize his daughter, he was now profoundly infuriated by her.

"Indeed, if Grandfather were still around, I would have been born into the Yun Clan." Ye Yuxuan had married into the Yun Clan, and her last name, originally, had been Yun.

Ye Jiuge's words cut deep into Ye Yuxuan's heart. He was so furious that his face turned red, and his eyes widened. He raised his hand and was about to slap Ye Jiuge's face.

"Old Master, please! Calm down!" Qing Mama knelt and begged piteously, "Eldest Miss is still young, and her words are unpleasant to hear. Please, for the sake of the late Madame, forgive her this time!"

Hearing of the late Madame, Ye Yuxuan halted. However, his hand remained raised in the air and was still prepared to land.

The words of this unfilial daughter were too nasty. If she were still not tactful enough to beg for mercy, he would teach her a lesson.

“Eldest Miss, just apologize to Old Master!” Qing Mama turned and pleaded to Ye Jiuge.

Recently, Ye Yuxuan had treated Ye Jiuge quite well, and Qing Mama felt that they could reconcile. However, not only did Ye Jiuge not apologize, she raised her face and said to Ye Yuxuan, “Go ahead and hit me. If you can, beat me to death. Then I won’t have to enter the palace to be grievously insulted.”

Ye Yuxuan was so infuriated that his body shook. He wanted badly to kill this unfilial daughter with blows. However, he thought about how she needed to enter the palace two days later, so he did not dare.

Forget it, there will be more opportunities to deal with this d*mned girl!

Ye Yuxuan glared crazily at Ye Jiuge before he turned and left the residence. His black face terrified all the servants.

Qing Mama crumpled to the floor softly. She looked at Ye Jiuge and wept, saying, “Eldest Miss, is it really worth the trouble? No matter what, Old Master is your father. What good is it to you to oppose him?”

“Qing Mama, retract your words. I don’t have the kind of father that can distinguish between right and wrong; he constantly wants me to go and die.” Ye Jiuge’s face was cold, and her voice was icy, like an icicle on the millennium snow mountain.

She could never forget how he had agreed without any hesitation when Su Yufeng had sought him out to discuss how to “deal” with her. He had even secretly traded away her mother’s elixirs. Such a despicable, shameless, and selfish douchebag was not fit to be her father.

“Eldest Miss!” Qing Mama’s face crumpled, and she could not stop her tears flowing. She felt that her Eldest Miss had been born under an unfortunate star. The eldest daughters from the other clans were all treated like a treasure by their parents, while the Eldest Miss had a more difficult time than those who had lost their fathers.

“Alright, stop crying.” Seeing how Qing Mama was sobbing miserably, Ye Jiuge quickly changed the topic and said, “Didn’t you say that you were bringing me some almond milk to drink? Hurry up and go. I am hungry.”

“I shall go immediately.” Qing Mama wiped her tears and stood up. Since the Old Master would not dote on the Eldest Miss, they, the servants, must hold her in their hearts all the more.

Ye Jiuge watched Qing Mama leave the house. Strangely, she thought that her vision blurred: Qing Mama's shadow seemed to distort momentarily. Immediately after she left, the sandalwood burner with an interlaced floral design of the green leaves from the peony tree in the corner of the room produced a gentle knocking sound. It was as though someone had lightly knocked it.

Ye Jiuge was startled, and she immediately opened her Spiritual Eye and moved away from the corner. She also adopted a defensive stance. Within the range of the Spiritual Eye, she saw a slender figure coming out of the shadow in the corner. Slowly, he revealed himself. His skin was as white as snow, and there was a red mole on his forehead. It was Ye Yu!

"Eldest Miss!" Ye Yu flashed Ye Jiuge a big grin. His pleasant voice had a hint of delight.

Before, Ye Jiuge had always easily seen through his Invisibility, which he'd been unwilling to accept. He'd always wanted to startle her and was finally able to.

"Qing Mama's shadow was also your doing?" Ye Jiuge thought of the distorted shadow.

"Yes, since refining the Yin Qi, I've evolved into a shadow assassin and can now move stealthily in shadows." Ye Yu did not tell Ye Jiuge about the other ability—she was in for another surprise in the future.

"You little rascal, you are so strong!" Ye Jiuge was genuinely happy. She now possessed a hired assassin.

"No, the cultivation technique you gave me is strong," Ye Yu said humbly.

He used to think that his Ye Clan's cultivation technique comprised a book of treasured wisdom for assassins. However, after seeing the cultivation technique that Ye Jiuge had given him, he realized that his family's cultivation was only at the introductory level.

Ye Jiuge had never thought that Zi Shang's technique could be so powerful. She'd assumed that he simply used any random technique as an opportunity to flirt with her. It seemed that she had misunderstood him. This time, he had been dormant for almost ten days. Why hadn't he woken up yet? Could implanting the technique in her mind have worn him out so much?

When Ye Yu saw Ye Jiuge's look of deep contemplation, he thought that he had done something wrong. "Eldest Miss, what's the matter?"

"It's nothing important," Ye Jiuge snapped. Then, she collected her thoughts before speaking again: "By the way, I am giving you this bottle of Arteries and Veins Nourishment Pills."

Ye Yu had completed his task well this time, and this was his reward. Although they were only second-grade medicinal pills, these Arteries and Veins Nourishment Pills were much more effective than the third-grade ones currently on the market.

"You have my gratitude, Eldest Miss," said Ye Yu, accepting the pills. He hesitated for a moment, then added sheepishly, "Actually, I just approached some thugs and asked them to spread around a few rumors. But I can't take credit for our enormous success. It seems that someone else is also secretly adding fuel to the fire. Do you need me to investigate?"

Ye Yu's injury had not fully recovered. He did not dare act impulsively—in case Ye Jiuge had another plan in mind.

"There is no need. I already know who is responsible."

If Ye Jiuge guessed correctly, then Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling from the Justice Department were helping to spread the rumors. Since Ye Yu worked for her now, there was no harm in letting him know.

"Eldest Miss, do you also socialize with people from the Justice Department?" Ye Yu felt slightly uncomfortable. Since he was an assassin, he did not get along well with the authorities.

"Yes. Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling are both decent men. If the opportunity arises, I will introduce you." However, now is not the appropriate time.

"Oh." Ye Yu did not wish to become acquainted with anyone from the Justice Department, so he replied unenthusiastically. Then, he asked very carefully, "Eldest Miss, although the rumors are spreading like wildfire in public, the Empress may not pay them any heed. Do you need me to accompany you to the palace?"

“The Imperial Palace is not the sort of place you can just walk in and out of. You should set your mind on cultivation. Improving your abilities would be a sensible move.”

Ye Jiuge clapped Ye Yu’s well-defined shoulder without any reservations. A multitude of experts worked for the imperial family. If a lowly assassin like Ye Yu were to enter the palace, as soon as they became aware of his presence, it was very likely that Ye Yu would be dead.

“Alright.”

Ye Yu could only focus on the tingling warmth on his skin where Ye Jiuge had brushed him earlier. It was so warm. He could not stop himself from blushing. Worried that Ye Jiuge would notice that he was acting odd, he turned around and hid in the shadows.

“In the future...”

Ye Jiuge was about to give Ye Yu a few words of encouragement. She hadn’t expected him to vanish into thin air. She activated her Spiritual Eye and observed her surroundings carefully. There was no trace of Ye Yu.

F*ck, this brat is quite a character. How can he just walk away when he pleases?

It didn’t occur to Ye Jiuge that her perverted hand might have scared him off. After grumbling for a while, she took a few bottles of Spiritual Revitalization Pills, which she had specially produced herself, and got ready to leave.

At that moment, Qing Mama carried almond milk into the room. When she saw that Ye Jiuge was leaving, she asked curiously, “Eldest Miss, where are you going?”

“I am planning to visit Lord Wan and Lord Bai. There were many problems in the household earlier, which I had to settle. All this time, I’ve not had a chance to visit them at their residence. At the end of the day, they were the ones who rescued Fourth Sister. We should show our appreciation,” Ye Jiuge explained. Then, she raised the almond milk to her lips and chugged it down in one gulp.

“Eldest Miss, you are right. Since Lord Wan and Lord Bai saved Fourth Miss, we should definitely call on them and thank them. I have prepared some gifts to show our gratitude on your behalf. When the palace sent us an imperial decree out of the blue, it slipped my mind,” Qing Mama said.

She quickly retrieved the presents: a box of Four Happiness Pastries, a pot of peach blossom wine, and a jar of Yuqian Longjing Tea. Although the items were not expensive, they were very well thought-out. When combined with Ye Jiuge’s Spiritual Revitalization Pills, they made a fitting gift. Considering that the situation surrounding Ye Ruyi’s return was being kept under wraps, it

would be inappropriate for Ye Jiuge to attract attention by visiting their residence to thank them. She kept a low profile and headed to their residence in a horse carriage.

When Bai Songling saw that Ye Jiuge had arrived, he was delighted. He spoke, grinning, "You didn't need to bring presents with you."

"It's nothing valuable," replied Ye Jiuge, entering the residence. When she noticed that Wan Ziyang was not around, she asked, "Where is Brother Wan?"

"There was news of a few homicide cases in Heyang County. He suspects that the Su Clan is involved. He rushed there a few days ago to investigate." After Bai Songling welcomed Ye Jiuge and sat down, he poured her a cup of hot tea.

"I heard that, lately, Su Junqing has been lying low. Even when Su Yufeng was sent to the ancestral shrine, he did not send anyone to plead for her."

Ye Jiuge had a feeling that, after being hit, Su Junqing was simply afraid and behaving like a coward. Still, the man was ruthless when it came to dealing with others. Not only that, he was very astute. It was going to be difficult to take him down.

"That's right. It's almost time for the Su Clan's Old Master to return from his spiritual retreat. It's likely that he does not want any trouble at this crucial moment. By the way, why did the Empress summon you to the palace?" Bai Songling asked.

At first, he had wanted to follow Wan Ziyang to Heyang County. But after he heard about this, he had stayed behind.

"What else? It's because she wanted to assert her dominance over me and vent her anger," Ye Jiuge replied, unfazed by the Empress.

"The Empress is an extremely devious woman. Whenever she wants to accomplish something, she lays a foundation for her schemes and slowly works her way to success. In the past, she's tolerated obstacles for an extended time—for instance, when the Imperial Noble Consort's position in the limelight was unrivaled. You should never underestimate her." When Bai Songling saw Ye Jiuge's unperturbed expression, he could not help but advise her.

"Based on what you've said, could it be that, when the Imperial Noble Consort passed away from illness, there was actually another story?" Ye Jiuge's eyes brightened as she asked in a lowered voice. Listening to gossip was her favorite.

Wait a minute—the Imperial Noble Consort's last name is Bai. Can she be related to Bai Songling? No, it's unlikely.

The Bai Clan was an aristocratic family. It would be impossible for a member of their younger generation to be allowed to work as a coroner for the Justice Department. Regardless of how exceptionally he could perform the role, this kind of work would only bring shame to his clan.

“How could there be any inside story? You should not make such reckless assumptions to avoid transgressions,” Bai Songling said without emotion, lowering his eyes.

Although he tried his best to conceal the expression on his face, Ye Jiuge could still feel the turmoil in his heart. It seemed that he was similar to Wan Ziyang. Both of them had secret pasts. However, it was apparent that Bai Songling was unwilling to tell her his secrets. Ye Jiuge could understand why he was reluctant. After all, they had not been acquainted long, so they had not yet reached that level of intimacy. Nor did she dare tell them about Ye Yu.

Ye Jiuge smiled and dropped the topic. She switched subjects, saying, “After two days, I will go to the palace. Brother Bai, do you have any advice for me?”

“After you enter the palace, you should keep your mouth shut and your eyes open. The Dongling Prince will arrive for an audience with the Emperor. If the Empress is really malevolent toward you, you can ask someone to seek help from the Dongling Prince. He has always admired Great Master Yun’s character, so he will definitely lend you a helping hand.” Then, Bai Songling wrote a person’s name on a piece of rice paper and passed it to Ye Jiuge. He said, “Regardless of what has happened, you can find her at the Jinxiu Palace.”

Ye Jiuge glanced at the slip of paper. The name of a palace maid was written on it: Hongxiu.

Ye Jiuge discerned a hunch in her heart once more. Bai Songling was definitely related to the Bai Clan. Otherwise, he would not have told her to reach out to the Dongling Prince for help.

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“Jiuge, don’t worry too much about it. This is just a back-up plan. You might not even have to resort to it.” Bai Songling looked at Ye Jiuge in a composed manner.

"Then I would like to express my gratitude to you now, Brother Bai." Ye Jiuge put away the slip of paper with a faint smile.

Bai Songling's willingness to help her had demonstrated his absolute sincerity. She was not a deity, so there was no reason to make others selflessly confer benefits on her. Giving and taking on both sides was the proper way to maintain their alliance.

"You are welcome. In the future, feel free to come to me if you face any trouble." Bai Songling genuinely held Ye Jiuge in high regard. A woman with such fortitude, capability, and charisma was hard to come by in the Lei Kingdom.

"Alright, it's getting late now. I shall take my leave," Ye Jiuge said as she stood up.

"Let me see you out." Bai Songling moved to follow her.

"There is no need. My carriage is just outside. I can head out on my own," Ye Jiuge declined Bai Songling's offer and left the residence unescorted.

Shortly after Ye Jiuge went on her way, someone emerged from behind a screen in the main parlor. It was Wan Ziyang, who was supposed to be handling the cases in Heyang County. He appeared weary after a long journey. There were dark circles under his eyes, and the fatigue on his face was unconcealable. Evidently, he'd rushed back overnight.

"When did you arrive home?" Bai Songling asked in surprise.

"When you were telling Ye Jiuge to be wary of the Empress." Wan Ziyang showed his displeasure. Besides exhaustion, there was a hint of stiffness noticeable about him.

"Are you holding me accountable for dragging her into the mire?" Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang had known each other for such a long time; naturally, Bai Songling could read his friend's mind by merely glimpsing his expression.

"This is a feud between us, the Su Clan, and the Dongfang Clan. Do not simply drag an outsider into this." Wan Ziyang was angry that Bai Songling had acted without consulting him.

"Even if I had not entangled her in all this, she was already enmeshed. Do you think that the Crown Prince and the Empress will spare her? Or that Ye Yuxuan can protect her?" Bai Songling raised his eyebrow. He had not made an ally of Ye Jiuge because he wanted to take advantage of her, but to keep her safe.

Wan Ziyang was at a loss for words. He also knew that Bai Songling was right. However, the

political situation in the Lei Kingdom right now was extremely complicated. The Su Clan and the imperial family, the Dongfang Clan, were the only political influences visible to the public. It was the unknown entities in power that were genuinely troubling. Although he'd only just touched the tip of the iceberg, Wan Ziyang already understood that he might die a gruesome death. He did not want Ye Jiuge mixed up in such a dirty affair. Such a bold and unaffected young girl should not be subjected to suffering.

"Well, I simply warned her to be careful of the Empress. I did not ask her to do anything dangerous. You don't need to be so agitated," Bai Songling said. Then, to break the ice, he reached for Ye Jiuge's tokens of appreciation and unwrapped them. He offered them to Wan Ziyang with a smile: "Have a look at the fine goods Jiuge brought us."

A box of Four Happiness Pastries, a pot of peach blossom wine, and a jar of Yuqian Longjing Tea. Why do all these gifts cater to women's tastes? Huh, what kind of medicinal pill is this?

Bai Songling removed two small jade bottles from their gift packaging. Four words were written on them: "Second-grade Spiritual Revitalization Pills." Ye Jiuge's handwriting was magnificent, with firm, yet delicate strokes.

"There are only three pills in one bottle. This young lady is too stingy." Bai Songling opened the jade bottle and glanced inside. He deliberately used a disdainful tone when he spoke.

"Give it to me." Wan Ziyang had rushed back overnight, so he had expended a great deal of spiritual energy. This was the perfect opportunity to assess the Spiritual Revitalization Pills' effectiveness.

"There." Bai Songling generously passed the two bottles of medicinal pills to Wan Ziyang.

To the best of his knowledge, Ye Jiuge was only an Alchemist of the second rank. The medicinal pills she produced could not be that beneficial. Unexpectedly, after Wan Ziyang ate a pill, his expression changed slightly. Then, he hid the two jade bottles away without another word.

"How is it? Does it taste like candy?" Bai Songling asked with a grin.

Medicinal pills explicitly used to reinvigorate spiritual energy were difficult to produce. Even if an Alchemist of the third rank was capable of producing ten bottles of these pills, three bottles of superior quality were considered satisfactory. Average pills could only help a person recover a decent amount of spiritual energy, while inferior pills helped an even scantier amount. Spiritual practitioners liked to joke that they were eating candy.

Wan Ziyang did not reply to Bai Songling. He claimed that he was tired and hurried back to his room to cultivate. How could he inform this idiot, Bai Songling, that not only did Ye Jiuge's bottles

of Spiritual Revitalization Pills immediately restore his depleted spiritual energy, but they provided him with more than he needed? If he did not meditate right now to absorb the spiritual energy, it would go to waste. He had never seen such a potent Spiritual Revitalization Pill. It would not lose a contest with a third-grade medicinal pill. Consuming one of these pills during a fight would be equivalent to having an extra life. If he used it to recover his spiritual energy now, it would be a pity.

Bai Songling watched Wan Ziyang dash out of the parlor with a baffled expression. Although he was bewildered, it never occurred to him to associate his friend's odd behavior with Ye Jiuge's medicinal pills. He thought that it was due to an unrelated matter.

Ye Jiuge did not know that the pills she had produced had left such an impression on Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling. After she returned to the Zilin Residence, she placed the slip of paper that Bai Songling had given her on the table.

When Qing Mama first entered the room, she wanted to ask Ye Jiuge about her visit to Lord Wan and Lord Bai's residence. However, when she read that slip of paper, she was surprised and asked, "Eldest Miss, could it be that this Hongxiu is the Lady Hongxiu from the palace?"

"Qing Mama, do you know Lady Hongxiu?" Ye Jiuge never realized that Qing Mama's social network was so extensive as to include palace acquaintances.

"I don't consider us close. We just bumped into each other a few times at the Kunyuan Palace."

Qing Mama could not help but reminisce about the past. Long ago, when Old Master Yun Tianwei was still in the capital, Ye Jiuge's mother (who was already married to Ye Yuxuan) was the most popular person in the city. Not only did aristocratic ladies want to be on friendly terms with her, but also the women from the imperial harem. In those days, the Imperial Noble Consort often invited Ye Jiuge's mother to the palace to spend time with her. On many occasions, Qing Mama had accompanied her, and her memory of the Imperial Noble Consort's lady-in-waiting, Hongxiu, was exceptionally clear. At a young age, Hongxiu was already a spiritual practitioner. She'd inspired a deep respect in Qing Mama, who, at that time, was still at the stage of cultivating her body. This was why she remembered her.

"Speaking of which, the Imperial Noble Consort wished for your mother's help to arrange a marriage for her child and you. It was unfortunate that she did not get pregnant, so the Empress overtook her position at court."

Qing Mama wrung her hands as she spoke. Her thoughts were evident from her expression: if, long ago, a marriage had been arranged between Ye Jiuge's mother and the Imperial Noble Consort, then the Crown Prince would not have abandoned the Eldest Miss.

“A disabled man sounds like the perfect match for a disfigured woman.”

Ye Jiuge chuckled, yet she could not care less. An incompetent, hideous girl like her couldn't catch the eye of a member of the imperial family, like Dongfang Que. It was likely that, after he fell out of love with her, he would not act much better than the Crown Prince had.

“Eldest Miss, how can you be so self-deprecating?”

Qing Mama disliked it when Eldest Miss behaved like a defeatist. In her heart, Eldest Miss would forever be perfect. No man in the world would be suitable for her. Even if that man were a prince.

Ye Jiuge refused to comment on Qing Mama's blind adoration and confidence in her. She considered whether she should meet Lady Hongxiu after entering the palace. Right now, besides Ye Yuxuan, the Su and Dongfang Clans were Ye Jiuge's nemeses. Somehow, these people were related to her grandfather's disappearance. With her power alone, overthrowing them would be quite a challenge. She needed allies. As it turned out, Dongfang Que was an excellent candidate.

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Even though Dongfang Que was a solid choice, Ye Jiuge still felt slightly uneasy about him. For a long time now, a rumor had been circulating in the capital: because Dongfang Que had injured his leg, he had already lost the will to fight for the throne. As Ye Jiuge thought about it, she concluded that he was hiding his light under a bushel, biding his time, and disguising himself as weak to vanquish his stronger foes. It would be difficult to manipulate a crafty, ruthless character like him, who excelled in self-restraint, into wrapping himself around her little finger. She did not want a large tiger pouncing on her from behind right after she'd driven the wolves away.

Forget it. I will enter the palace first and assess the situation before deciding.

Ye Jiuge set fire to Bai Songling's slip of paper and reduced it to ashes. After that, she shut herself in the Pill Production Room and continued her work.

The day that Ye Jiuge was to go to the palace, Qing Mama woke her early in the morning. After

she washed her face and rinsed her mouth, Qing Mama dabbed balsam diligently on her face and hands. Then, she painstakingly fashioned Ye Jiuge's hair into a topknot in the "spiritual snake" style and inserted a golden openwork hairpin adorned with beaded plum blossoms, giving the impression of a refined, dignified lady. In her bamboo-colored pleated dress peppered with flower motifs, Ye Jiuge looked youthful and immaculate without appearing plain. Though Qing Mama had planned to apply makeup, Ye Jiuge refused.

"This heavily scarred face is my characteristic feature. If you conceal it with cosmetics, perhaps they will refuse me entrance at the palace," Ye Jiuge said half-jokingly.

In any case, even if she met the Empress looking like a goddess, the Empress would not pay her more attention. There was no need for her to put so much effort into attempting something so futile.

"Fine!" In Qing Mama's mind, even if Eldest Miss's face was covered with scars, she was still a soul-stirring beauty.

A carriage from the palace was already waiting outside. However, it was not Court Eunuch Fu who had come to fetch her, but a stern, long-faced elderly palace maid who acted as if her father and mother had passed away. She maintained a ramrod-straight posture, even as she stood on the carriage. As soon as Ye Jiuge set her eyes upon her, she already knew that she would be difficult to deal with.

With a smile, Qing Mama walked over to the elderly maid and tried to push a money pouch into her hands. However, she was turned down coldly by the maid's unaccommodating personality. Ye Jiuge did not feel inclined to be friendly to someone who reacted to her goodwill with disdain. She pulled Qing Mama away and climbed into the carriage alongside the maid.

A carriage from the Ye Residence followed them, in case of emergency. Just because the palace had sent someone to fetch her did not mean that they would send her back. It was prudent to be prepared and bring along her own carriage. Not only that, Qing Mama was not authorized to enter the palace. When they arrived, Ye Jiuge's loyal servant needed a suitable place to wait for her mistress.

The streets were tranquil early in the morning. The journey between the Ye Residence and the palace normally took about an hour. When they set off, the first glimmer of light was just peeking out. By the time they reached the palace entrance, the sun was in full view. Its faint, golden beams shone on the majestic palace gates, causing them to appear indescribably solemn and evoke reverence.

The elderly palace maid took a plate inscribed with her identity from her waist and handed it to an imperial guard. The guard inspected it and confirmed that everything was in order, then allowed

them to pass through the imperial gates. Although the elderly maid was past her prime, she stepped lightly. It was evident that she cultivated spiritually.

Ye Jiuge had no choice but to quicken her steps as she followed her. They passed through long palace corridors with vermilion walls, bypassing Yuhua Garden before reaching Fengyi Palace. A row of palace maids stood at the palace's splendid entrance dressed in cerise uniforms.

A beautiful young maid walked towards the elderly maid and said in a low voice, "Elderly Lady Xu, the Empress is currently in an audience with the Crown Prince. She would like you to bring the Ye Clan's Eldest Miss to the secondary palace and wait there for now. When the Empress is not otherwise engaged, she will summon her."

The elderly palace maid furrowed her brows and nodded. "Alright." Then, she turned her head and said to Ye Jiuge, "Ye Clan's Eldest Miss, please come with me!"

Ye Jiuge followed calmly behind Elderly Lady Xu and went past the Fengyi Palace, heading toward the secondary palace behind it. To her surprise, she arrived at the Jinxiu Palace.

"Ye Clan's Eldest Miss, please wait inside patiently. When the Empress is unoccupied, someone will come to call for you," said the elderly palace maid. Then, she saluted insincerely and left.

Ye Jiuge glanced up at a sign carved with two large words, "Jinxiu Palace," which hung outside the dilapidated palace. She could not help but furrow her brow. She had heard that Lady Hongxiu had once served here and wondered about the Empress' intentions. Why had she instructed Elderly Lady Xu to guide her to this place? It was unlikely that Elderly Lady Xu also worked for the Dongling Prince!

With her curiosity piqued, Ye Jiuge walked into the Jinxiu Palace. Although the large exterior was covered entirely with dust, its interior was remarkably pristine. Clearly, it was cleaned regularly. The palace's architecture glowed faintly with gold, indicating that it had been quite a sight in its time. Ye Jiuge made a move to walk into the palace. Suddenly, the sound of a stifled breath came from within.

"Who's there?" Ye Jiuge raised her voice. No one answered.

Immediately, she felt that something was amiss. She was about to turn and leave when she heard a creak behind her. Suddenly, the palace doors slammed fast. Ye Jiuge hurried to the main entrance and kicked the doors forcefully, but they did not budge. Someone had barred the main entrance from the outside!

Damn! Don't tell me that the past is repeating itself and they're setting fire to the palace!

Her Lightning Fire Needle was not yet fully restored. Zi Shang was also still deep in slumber. If a fire broke out again, she would definitely end up dead.

Ye Jiuge speedily ventured further into the palace. Since there was still someone else there, perhaps, she could pry some information from his mouth. The main doors of the inner palace were tightly shut as well. Ye Jiuge pushed the doors open with all her might. Suddenly, a figure lunged at her with lightning speed and fiercely pinned her to the ground.

Ye Jiuge lifted her leg to kick him away, but her movement was entirely restricted. The assailant even managed to seize her neck, as if his hands were a pair of iron pincers. She was about to deploy her spiritual energy to counterattack when she scrutinized the man sprawled on top of her. In spite of herself, she froze. He was incomparably handsome with exquisite facial features. Slightly flushed skin, like the millennium-old snowy mountains, and eyes similar to deep ponds, but filled with lust. They belonged to the Dongling Prince.

His fervent body and passionate panting undeniably indicated that this blue-blooded prince had ingested an Aphrodisiac. He was fixated on seeking a woman to release his sexual mania.

“Dongling Prince, please look at me with your eyes wide open and see clearly who you are forcing yourself on.” Ye Jiuge spoke with difficulty. “Also, can you please move aside your golden cudgel?” She was most uncomfortable feeling it poke her thigh!

Dongfang Que’s bloodshot eyes gawked at Ye Jiuge. A hint of confusion appeared in his eyes. Just when Ye Jiuge thought that Dongfang Que had recognized her and was prepared to shake hands with him and exchange words of happiness and relief, all of a sudden, he lowered his head and aggressively bit her lip.

Ye Jiuge was dumbfounded. She turned her head away quickly so that Dongfang Que’s soft, burning lips seared on her face. He even trailed his lips from her cheek toward the lower part of her body.

What the f*ck! How potent was this Aphrodisiac that it could cause the Dongling Prince, known as the most dispassionate man in the capital, to completely lose control and pursue an unattractive lady like her with relish? Although it felt good to have a handsome man throw himself at her, it was unfortunate that Ye Jiuge could not enjoy it.

Thinking on her toes, she concluded that the Dongling Prince was here because the Empress had laid a trap. A large crowd was likely on the way to catch them in the act of illicit sex, anticipating the voyeuristic pleasure of the erotic scene.

Ye Jiuge refused to perform for the enjoyment of others. However, Dongfang Que’s hands held her down tightly. His long legs were planted firmly on either side of her thighs. She was wedged so

hard in between his legs that her entire body was in pain. A man caught up in lust's climax had zero rationality left. Ye Jiuge feared that if she struggled too much, the movement would only stimulate Dongfang Que more. All she could do was resign herself to allowing him to stroke her body and lavish it with bites and kisses. Seemingly, she surrendered to the prospect of being taken advantage of.

Just as Dongfang Que released Ye Jiuge's hands, ready to rip her clothes off and force himself into her, the Lightning Fire Needle in Ye Jiuge's hand suddenly exposed itself. In the blink of an eye, she plunged it ruthlessly into the back of his ear.

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Ye Jiuge deftly stabbed her Lightning Fire Needle imbued with purple spiritual energy into a Feng Chi Acupoint at the back of Dongfang Que's ear. This acupoint was considered to be a primary one in the human body. Applying pressure to it could help someone regain lucidity. Of course, this could also be a harrowing experience.

Dongfang Que was in so much agony that his face was deathly pale. In an instant, he regained a hint of clarity. Ye Jiuge seized the opportunity to push him away. After that, she took several Mind-clearing Pills from her pocket and stuffed them into his mouth. Although they could not alleviate the Aphrodisiac's effects, they should have no problem helping him maintain his presence of mind.

When Dongfang Que recovered his self-control, he was shocked to see Ye Jiuge.

"Why are you here?" he asked. Then, he looked down and saw his palms still placed on the front of her disarrayed clothes and quickly retracted them.

"I don't have enough time to explain everything to you. We should leave this place at once. If we delay further, it will be too late." Ye Jiuge carelessly fixed her clothes and stood up. She hurried towards a window.

Dongfang Que followed her automatically. When he saw her pounding on the window with full force, he said with furrowed brows, "These windows are all shut from the outside."

As soon as he had spoken, they heard a flurry of erratic footsteps. It went without saying that the mob had arrived to catch their illicit affair in the act.

Ye Jiuge glanced at her disorganized clothes before examining Dongfang Que's stiff yet flushed handsome face. She considered the possibility of presenting themselves as two people having a conversation while drinking tea at the inner palace. Meanwhile, Dongfang Que also came to the realization that something fishy might be going on.

"You should hide in here first," he said, a hint of viciousness flitting past his glowering, gorgeous face.

He opened an old cupboard situated in a corner. Ye Jiuge did not have time to think; she squeezed into the cupboard. As soon as she closed the doors, a deafening clang came from the palace's outer area. Shortly after, a shrill voice distinctive to eunuchs rang out: "Ye Clan's Eldest Miss, why did you close the main doors? Ah! Your Highness, why are you in here?"

Then came the sound of knees hitting the floor. "Scram!" The frost in Dongfang Que's voice, laced with murderous intent, instantly brought the entire palace to a standstill.

Ye Jiuge could envision his incomparably handsome face encased in a terrifying layer of ice. At a glance, the bastard appeared thin. In reality, he was powerful. He had squeezed her thighs to the point of bruising them.

This can't be right. Doesn't Dongfang Que have a disability? How did he knock her over with such immense strength?

D*mn! Dongfang Que's performance, this feebleness to trick others into lowering their guards around him, had already reached the level of an accomplished actor. When he was pretending to be handicapped, he seemed so genuine.

Meanwhile, another group of people was making their way to Jinxiu Palace's outer area.

"Your Majesty, I saw the Ye Clan's Eldest Miss walk into Jinxiu Palace with my own eyes," Elderly Lady Xu said reverently. Servility was apparent in her voice.

"Is that so? Then, where is she now?" rang out a dignified, elegant voice without any emotion.

"This, this..." the elderly palace maid stumbled over her words evasively, then fell silent.

As the Empress conversed with her servant, it was evident that they meant for their conversation to reach Dongfang Que's ears. Unfortunately, Dongfang Que did not respond. Still, the Empress

did not feel awkward.

"I invited the Ye Clan's Eldest Miss to the palace as my honored guest. Nothing untoward should happen to her. I want you to conduct a proper search and find out where she ran off to," she said.

"Right," Elderly Lady Xu answered in a loud voice and made a racket as she dispersed her subordinates. She gave the impression that they were going to turn Jinxiu Palace upside down.

Dongfang Que started attacking them. A few eunuchs and palace maids let out anguished screams.

"Seventh Brother, what is your intention behind this?" boomed the Crown Prince's angry voice. "Earlier, you left Fengyi Palace in a hurry. I thought that you had to attend to something important. Never did I expect to see you here, having a tryst with Ye Jiuge. Even though Ye Jiuge and I annulled our betrothal, regardless of how you put it, she is still your former sister-in-law. Can you face me with a clear conscience?"

Pfft! Hidden inside the cupboard, Ye Jiuge almost laughed in derision, irked by the Crown Prince's shameless words. He was truly brazen to mention that she was Dongfang Que's former sister-in-law!

"Crown Prince, you do not need to react so emotionally. Even if the Dongling Prince and Ye Jiuge are truly engaged in a romantic dalliance, we can't say for sure who is seducing who!" The Empress spoke with a detached tone.

At this point, Ye Jiuge understood the situation. She sensed that this set-up was meant for her! Although Dongfang Que had faked his disability, he was still the Emperor's dearest son and the sole descendant of the Bai Clan's maternal line. As a woman who had impudently enticed him into performing sexual acts with her, she would become the laughing stock of the entire capital. If the Empress incriminated Ye Jiuge for administering an Aphrodisiac to the Dongling Prince, she would tarnish her reputation. This move was really ruthless, inciting public scorn. When the Empress targeted Ye Jiuge again in the future, no one would stand up for her.

Other than dispersing the gawkers at the beginning and incapacitating several eunuchs with his own hands, Dongfang Que had stopped making noise. Ye Jiuge presumed that the Aphrodisiac was kicking in again. The medicinal pills that she had forced him to ingest could only mitigate the effects; they could treat the symptoms, not the root cause. If the Dongling Prince did not consume the antidote in time, the desire to relieve his sexual urgency would likely continue to devour his mind.

Ye Jiuge thought about the regal, handsome, and dignified Dongling Prince jumping a palace maid's bones under the Aphrodisiac's influence. Her heart ached for him. However, when she

thought about the Empress catching her instead, she became the sorrowful one.

Just as the elderly maid was about to scour the inner palace, Ye Jiuge suddenly felt a chill on her back. She turned around. To her surprise, the wall behind her swiveled open without a sound, and an unfamiliar, middle-aged palace maid appeared. With her eyes, she conveyed: "Follow me."

Ye Jiuge's intuition told her that this maid must be Lady Hongxiu herself. Ye Jiuge did not hesitate. She followed the woman into the tunnel, then the wall rotated anticlockwise, back to its original position. By the time the elderly palace maid opened the cupboard, it was empty.

Ye Jiuge and the middle-aged stranger traversed through the tunnel until they arrived at a remote corner of a bamboo forest.

"Ye Clan's Eldest Miss, my name is Lady Hongxiu. I am a senior palace maid at Jinxiu Palace."

Lady Hongxiu curtsied to Ye Jiuge. She appeared to be in her early thirties. Although her looks were average, she was fair-skinned with clear, bright eyes and black hair. Not a hair was out of place. She appeared extremely refined.

"So, you are Lady Hongxiu. Why have you come to save me?"

Ye Jiuge was very curious. Did Bai Songling warn Lady Hongxiu about all this in advance?

"Quite the contrary. I did not turn up on purpose to rescue you."

Lady Hongxiu smiled resignedly; she had only wanted to save her master, the Dongling Prince. As it turned out, the day before, someone had sent her a letter in the Dongling Prince's name asking her to meet at the peach blossom forest. The letter-writer wished to divulge a secret about the Imperial Noble Consort. Lady Hongxiu had been well aware that it might be a ruse.

However, she still showed up at the peach blossom forest. After ascertaining that no one was there, she'd rushed back to Jinxiu Palace. From afar, she'd noticed the Empress's servants surrounding the palace. Not only that, they were prohibiting anyone from entering or leaving the area. She'd worried that something unpleasant might be happening inside, so she'd snuck into the palace using the secret tunnel to consult the Dongling Prince. Instead, she'd arrived in time to save Ye Jiuge from trouble.

"I have no idea how His Highness is faring right now." Lady Hongxiu looked at Ye Jiuge anxiously. Since the Empress had deliberately devised such an elaborate set-up, she must be planning to harm the Dongling Prince.

"Your master, the Dongling Prince, is not in a dire condition. He was just given an Aphrodisiac," Ye

Jiuge told Lady Hongxiu nonchalantly.

Since sexual intercourse could neutralize this poison, this news did not alarm Lady Hongxiu at all. Anyway, there was no shortage of beautiful palace maids. The Dongling Prince would just need to call for them at the top of his voice, and they would undoubtedly all lie down together at once for him.

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“What! His Highness was given an Aphrodisiac?”

Lady Hongxiu was taken aback by the revelation, and her face turned a ghastly white. She muttered to herself, “A while ago, I caught wind of a rumor that the Empress had secretly obtained a bottle of Lingering Affection Herb. I assumed that she wanted to use it against a certain imperial concubine. I never thought that, in the end, she would force it on my master, the Dongling Prince.”

The Aphrodisiac was actually Lingering Affection Herb? Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrow. She had a bad feeling about this. One drop of that Aphrodisiac could allegedly cause a feisty, unwilling woman to become promiscuous. A man with erectile dysfunction could become rock hard. They would not feel any exhaustion, even if they fornicated ten times in a single night. Without peeling off at least one layer of skin, the potent poison could not be neutralized!

“This will not do. I need to return to the palace immediately to save His Highness,” Lady Hongxiu said.

She was so distressed that her face alternately flushed and paled. She dashed in the direction of Jinxiu Palace. How could her master, the regal Dongling Prince, be defeated by such a revolting poison?

“I will go with you.” Ye Jiuge quickened her steps, mirroring Lady Hongxiu’s pace.

The Dongling Prince could have certainly escaped through the secret tunnel by himself and abandoned her at Jinxiu Palace to face the Empress’s interrogation. However, he had chosen to

send her away. This act of kindness was enough to make Ye Jiuge return to Jinxiu Palace and save him.

“You have my undying gratitude!” Lady Hongxiu exclaimed.

She led Ye Jiuge through a shortcut to an area close to Jinxiu Palace. The Jinxiu Palace was thronging with people. Even the imperial guards had made their way there. Lady Hongxiu was about to rush inside when Ye Jiuge stopped her in her tracks.

“Lady Hongxiu, if you enter the palace now, there is nothing you can do to help the Dongling Prince. You would be better off seeking assistance at this crucial moment.” Ye Jiuge pressed herself close to Lady Hongxiu and exchanged a few words with her.

A hint of hesitation flashed across Lady Hongxiu’s face. “But what about His Highness? He is still inside.”

“With me here, you can rest assured that His Highness will be fine. I guarantee it.”

Ye Jiuge smiled gently. After finding out that Dongfang Que had been poisoned with Lingering Affection Herb, she had already thought of a way to help him neutralize the poison. Lady Hongxiu looked at Ye Jiuge, who was brimming with confidence, and felt, somehow, that she could trust her.

“Alright. I will go and ask for help. I entrust His Highness to you,” said Lady Hongxiu through gritted teeth. After hesitating, she finally steeled her resolve, turned around, and left.

Ye Jiuge made herself presentable. After ensuring that nothing was out of place, she crept closer to Jinxiu Palace. Next, she pretended to cry out in astonishment, “What are you doing?”

When Elderly Lady Xu, who was inside the palace, heard Ye Jiuge’s voice, her expression changed instantly. She had seen Ye Jiuge enter Jinxiu Palace with her own eyes and locked her in with her own hands. How did Ye Jiuge manage to escape?

“Let her in,” the Empress instructed coolly.

Her noble, virtuous face did not have any trace of emotion. It had already crossed her mind that Ye Jiuge could have escaped from Jinxiu Palace through a secret tunnel. Still, she had not completely believed that the old, derelict palace still possessed such a tunnel. She’d failed to notice its existence. However, it did not matter now. She’d managed to learn one of Jinxiu Palace’s secrets, so she considered it useful information.

“Right,” responded Elderly Lady Xu.

She hurried outside to meet Ye Jiuge. The imperial guards surrounding the area stepped aside immediately.

As soon as Ye Jiuge saw Elderly Lady Xu, she preempted her by complaining, "Elderly Lady Xu, how could you abandon me at Jinxiu Palace's entrance and leave? Because of you, I couldn't even quench my thirst with water. I ventured outside and looked for someone for a while, but there wasn't a soul in sight."

"It was my negligence. Eldest Miss, I hope you can forgive me." Elderly Lady Xu forced a smile as she spoke; it was a complete contrast to the dark expression she'd worn earlier on her old, grave face.

"When you slight me, it's not a serious matter. However, if you also treat other noble ladies in such a disrespectful way, I fear that it may be difficult for you to keep your head attached to your body," Ye Jiuge said with a fake smile. Then, disregarding Elderly Lady Xu's scowl, she swept into the palace with her head held high.

The lanterns in Jinxiu Palace's main hall were already lit, illuminating everything clearly. Dongfang Que was propped against the back of the Duobaoge display cabinet with a droopy head. His handsome face was concealed by shadows. From afar, he looked like a sculpture. The Empress and the Crown Prince stood opposite Dongfang Que with their minions. A split was apparent between the two sides; they were in a state of confrontation.

As soon as the Crown Prince saw Ye Jiuge walk in, he chided her, "Ye Jiuge, where did you run off to? Don't you know that Mother is anxious about you? When she heard that you went missing, she immediately brought people over to look for you."

He spoke as though Ye Jiuge mattered to him. She rolled her eyes discreetly. She was about to mock this shameless Crown Prince when the Empress moved her red lips lightly to speak. "Crown Prince, now that we have found her, it's fine. You should get off her back!"

"Right." The Crown Prince nodded deferentially.

Then, the Empress looked at Ye Jiuge and said in a somewhat doting manner, "Jiuge, you cannot behave in the palace the same way you do at the Ye Residence. When you enter the palace in the future, you should be more mindful of your actions. You cannot walk around as you please. Otherwise, if anything unfortunate were to occur, you would not be able to deny your involvement."

"Your Majesty, your words of caution are excellent advice. I realize now that I was wrong." After Ye Jiuge acknowledged her mistake with a sincere attitude, she acted as if she had just noticed Dongfang Que's presence and said with surprise, "Eh? What's wrong with the Dongling Prince?"

Why is his face so red? Has he been poisoned?"

After she finished speaking, she walked quickly towards Dongfang Que. When Dongfang Que saw Ye Jiuge making her way towards him, he lifted his head slightly, revealing tempestuous undercurrents flickering in his black, bloodshot eyes. It was clear that, by now, his endurance had reached its limit.

The look in his eyes made Ye Jiuge uneasy. She activated her Lightning Fire Needle and plunged it into several of his primary acupoints. Dongfang Que remained still, allowing Ye Jiuge to treat him as she pleased. She pierced the prince's body with thirteen consecutive needles; the last was inserted into his philtrum. Purple spiritual energy seeped into Dongfang Que's entire body from the Lightning Fire Needle. His pupils contracted. A drop of light green blood oozed out of his fair skin. It was extremely viscous, similar to a round green crystal, and released a sweet fragrance.

With just one whiff, Ye Jiuge's whole body began warming up, and her blood flowed faster in her veins. She could not help but marvel inwardly that the Lingering Affection Herb was truly the most potent Aphrodisiac in the palace. She had merely smelled it, and its influence had been so powerful. It was hard for her to imagine what it felt like to Dongfang Que, who had this poison coursing throughout his entire system.

To be honest, the fact that he could withstand it up until now demonstrates that he is truly more impressive than the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

When the Empress saw that Ye Jiuge was helping Dongfang Que expel the poison from his body, she raised her elegant eyebrows. Though she did not express it, she was most surprised.

Isn't this stupid brat publicly recognized as incompetent? How does she know how to treat someone with acupuncture?

Moreover, when the Empress observed the deftness of Ye Jiuge's hands, she seemed more practiced than the experienced imperial physicians. She could even force the Lingering Affection Herb out of Dongfang Que's body. That being said, this time, Ye Jiuge was going to be a victim of her own ingenuity. When she helped Dongfang Que eliminate the poison from his body, she would not be saving him. On the contrary, she would be doing him harm.

The Crown Prince was not aware of the Empress's plan. He thought that Ye Jiuge would be able to save Dongfang Que successfully. He shouted at her with agitation, "Ye Jiuge, what are you doing?"

"Your Highness, are you blind? Can't you see that I'm currently neutralizing the poison in the Dongling Prince's body?" Ye Jiuge smiled coldly.

To her surprise, as soon as she'd finished speaking, Dongfang Que's face abruptly turned deathly white. He opened his mouth and vomited fresh blood. His eyelids drooped before his body collapsed weakly onto the ground. His breath became extremely shallow, giving the impression that he was on the edge of death.

Ye Jiuge was utterly flabbergasted. She reached out her hand and checked Dongfang Que's pulse. She was confident that the procedure she'd used to neutralize the Lingering Affection Herb was free from error. There must be another reason why the prince's condition was worsening. She needed to find it as soon as possible. Otherwise, she and Dongfang Que were doomed.

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As she checked Dongfang Que's pulse, Ye Jiuge opened her Spiritual Eye and examined his body. His five viscera and six bowels had turned black. Only a ball of bright, golden light near his heart meridian was protecting his heart. His pulse was extremely erratic: it sped up suddenly then slowed down. Ye Jiuge could barely obtain a reading for his liver and spleen—a symptom of poisoning.

Furthermore, from the look of his body's condition, she knew that he had been afflicted with a strange demonic poison. This poison was even trickier than the Soul Departure that had previously afflicted Ye Yu.

At first, she thought that Dongfang Que was only pretending to be handicapped. But actually, he really was disabled! The Lingering Affection Herb had temporarily suppressed the demonic poison in his body, which was why he had been able to stand and attack her.

Now that she had forced the Lingering Affection Herb out of his body, the uncontrolled demonic poison had bounced back and abruptly invaded Dongfang Que's five viscera and six bowels. If she could not think of a solution soon, the poison would kill him.

Just thinking about it made Ye Jiuge break out in a cold sweat. She lifted her head to look at the Empress. The Empress' lips, painted with a vermilion lipstick, curled into a delighted smirk. Her eyes, slender like the Crown Prince's, glimmered with a malicious light. Obviously, she had

planned everything.

Ye Jiuge gritted her teeth. The Empress was most devious and manipulative to have dreamed up such a vicious scheme. One layer of a trap on top of another. If Dongfang Que had utilized Ye Jiuge as an antidote and made love to her, the Lingering Affection Herb would have caused him to die suddenly on top of her. If that had happened, not only would she have been unable to demand redress for the grievance, she would also have been declared guilty of killing Dongfang Que. Even the extent of her grandfather's fame would have been unable to save her, a murderer.

Ye Jiuge was not someone who believed in fate. Even in this situation, she would fight for a chance to survive. She had the Millennium Snow Lotus Elixir with her that she had taken from Ye Yuxuan. If it did not work, she still had the Godly Heartwood. Zi Shang had warned her not to allow people to discover the secret of the Godly Heartwood, but the present situation called for her to give her all.

Although Ye Jiuge seemed to be considering many things, everything unfolded in the blink of an eye. After deciding on her strategy, she threw herself at Dongfang Que shouting frantically, "Your Highness, what's wrong with you? Please, wake up!"

Her hand, hidden by her body, slipped the Millennium Snow Lotus Elixir into Dongfang Que's mouth. Then, she covertly used the Lightning Fire Needle to prick her own finger and silently chanted, "Unseal the Godly Heartwood," before she poked his body with it.

A breath of life was injected into Dongfang Que's body, which shook violently. He vomited up a stream of black-colored blood.

At first, the Empress' attitude towards Ye Jiuge had been a game of cat-and-mouse. In her mind, she had already pronounced Dongfang Que dead. Once Ye Jiuge, the murderer, had been seized, Dongfang Que's corpse could be buried. This twist of events startled her: she had not expected Dongfang Que to come back to life.

The Crown Prince widened his eyes and shouted at the guards, "Come, seize the murderer, Ye Jiuge!"

He had waited so long for Dongfang Que to die, and he would not allow Ye Jiuge to destroy his plan.

The Empress had recovered from her daze and ordered Elderly Lady Xu, "Seize Ye Jiuge."

"Yes!"

Elderly Lady Xu immediately turned and rushed at Ye Jiuge. Her right hand formed a claw, and a

dark red glow appeared on her fingertips. She viciously clawed Ye Jiuge's back like a fierce tiger.

If Ye Jiuge did not avoid her attack, Elderly Lady Xu would gouge out her heart. Ye Jiuge had no choice but to withdraw her Godly Heartwood and turn to counterattack with her palm.

Thud!

Purple and red light splattered everywhere. Ye Jiuge retreated three steps. She could feel numbness and pain in her right hand. A cold stream of Black Magic traveled along her palm and entered her body. It was similar to the feeling she had experienced when facing the Black Magic Practitioner in the underground room.

Astonished, Ye Jiuge raised her head and looked at Elderly Lady Xu; she did not expect the old woman to be a Black Magic Practitioner—and far more powerful than the last one she'd encountered.

"Jiuge, I advise you to surrender obediently. Although you killed Seventh Brother, you were only trying to save him. If my father, the Emperor, wishes to punish you, I will put in a good word on your behalf. For Great Master Yun's sake, perhaps he will spare your life," the Crown Prince hypocritically advised, confident that victory was in his grasp.

Ye Jiuge said nothing and silently gave him the middle finger. Although the Crown Prince did not understand the meaning of the gesture, he could feel Ye Jiuge's disdain. His face reddened with anger.

Ye Jiuge, this b*tch, she dares to flaunt her arrogance even when death is near.

After capturing her, he would lock her up in the dungeon and torture her regardless of the time of day so that she would know what it was like to prefer death to life.

The Empress's face also darkened. She said coldly to Elderly Lady Xu, "Don't waste time." She wanted the fight to finish as quickly as possible, as undue delay might bring trouble.

Elderly Lady Xu nodded knowingly. She turned and soared towards Dongfang Que. There was an indistinct layer of dark-red glow beneath her feet. With a sharp, murderous intent, she clearly wanted to finish off Dongfang Que on the spot.

Ye Jiuge's pupils constricted. She repositioned a Bone Melting Elixir from her sleeve into her palms and counterattacked Elderly Lady Xu using her palm again.

This time, Ye Jiuge took four steps back.

Elderly Lady Xu took two steps back.

Ye Jiuge's blood surged. She was barely able to swallow the blood rising in her throat, but a stream of red liquid nevertheless trickled from the corners of her mouth. She lifted the back of her hand and wiped away the blood. She bowed slightly to adopt an attacking stance in front of Dongfang Que. Her expression was similar to that of a lone wolf. Her aura was terrifying, as though she would bite anyone who dared approach her.

Elderly Lady Xu's face was unpleasant. Her hand, which had collided with Ye Jiuge's palm, was trembling slightly. Her palm had already turned red as a result of an injury from Ye Jiuge's Bone Melting Elixir. This was the first time that Elderly Lady Xu had been wounded since she began serving the Empress many years ago. What's more, the person who had injured her was the most infamous, useless, and ugly girl in the capital. The humiliation was too much for her to bear.

With surprise and anger in her heart, she was determined to shred the wretched girl into pieces. As such, she did not contain her real power and used all her might to swat Ye Jiuge.

A faint, pale red glow appeared on Elderly Lady Xu's body like a layer of protection that shrouded the top half of her body. It was the Spiritual Light of Protection, which only Advanced Spiritual Practitioners who were approaching the stage of Spiritual Master could create.

Ye Jiuge's pupils constricted. She had not expected that this Elderly Lady Xu was an Advanced Spiritual Practitioner. Ye Jiuge lamented inwardly to herself: she was just a Beginner Spiritual Practitioner, and although she could handle Intermediate Spiritual Practitioners using her immense Soul Power, she still fell short of being able to deal with Advanced Spiritual Practitioners. Even if Ye Jiuge used her poison, it would not work on Elderly Lady Xu; the Spiritual Light of Protection would obstruct the poison before it could reach her body.

In the midst of this emergency, Ye Jiuge involuntarily called out in her heart, "Zi Shang, you b*stard, if you don't wake up soon, you will have to seduce my corpse!"

However, Zi Shang did not respond.

As she watched Elderly Lady Xu's dark red palm approach, Ye Jiuge wanted to avoid it, but she dared not.

If Elderly Lady Xu's palm were to land on Dongfang Que, who was behind her, even if Ye Jiuge survived, she would not be able to wash off the accusation that she had murdered a prince.

Just as Ye Jiuge was prepared to fight Elderly Lady Xu with all her might, the terrified voices of the palace maids and eunuchs echoed from the entrance: "Greetings to Your Majesty! Long live Your Majesty!"

The Emperor had arrived!

This news stunned Elderly Lady Xu, and Ye Jiuge took the opportunity to scoop Dongfang Que in her arms and ran towards the entrance. Elderly Lady Xu would not try to kill Dongfang Que in front of the Emperor and quickly returned to the Empress's side.

The Empress glared viciously at Elderly Lady Xu before she put on a dignified and virtuous demeanor and went to welcome the Emperor.

A brilliant yellow figure appeared at the entrance. With a few long strides, Emperor Xuanwu entered the Jinxiu Palace. He was seven feet tall, and his skin was slightly dark. He had a short beard and a majestic appearance. At first glance, he appeared to be a hardline ruler. Furthermore, his cultivation had already reached the stage of Beginner Spiritual Master.

Emperor Xuanwu's gaze swept the main hall of the Jinxiu Palace and finally landed on Ye Jiuge and Dongfang Que. He said coldly, "What is going on?"

The Empress replied indifferently, "Your Majesty, exactly what you see. Ye Jiuge has come to the Jinxiu Palace to meet privately with the Dongling Prince."

The Crown Prince followed the Empress' words at once, speaking in a grievous, angry tone, "Father, I found it strange that Ye Jiuge broke off our engagement for no reason. I did not expect her to have taken a fancy to Seventh Brother. To make sure that it would be too late to change the outcome, she fed him an aphrodisiac in spite of him being afflicted with a demonic poison. When we received the news, we rushed here, but Seventh Brother was already unconscious. We wanted to seize her, but she used Seventh Brother as a shield, causing him to spit up blood. Father, quickly, please save Seventh Brother!"

By the time the Crown Prince finished speaking, he was already weeping as though he had a very close relationship with Dongfang Que.

Emperor Xuanwu frowned. He looked at Ye Jiuge and said, "Is this true?"

"I am deeply impressed by the Empress and Crown Prince's ability to distort the truth. I have nothing to say. Your Majesty, why don't you wait for the Dongling Prince to wake up then ask him!" Ye Jiuge said.

She could not be bothered to argue with the Empress and Crown Prince—they were a family after all. No matter what she said, the Emperor would be biased in their favor. She might as well wait for Dongfang Que to wake up. A single sentence from him would be worth more than a hundred from her.

"What is wrong with Que'er?" Seeing his pale and unconscious son, Emperor Xuanwu could no longer maintain his dignified manner and shouted angrily at the others present, "Are all of you dead? Don't you know that you should have called for the Spiritual Doctor as soon as you saw that the Dongling Prince was injured?"

"That's right. I already ordered you to call for the Spiritual Doctor. Why is he not here yet? What is going on?" The Crown Prince also began angrily reprimanding the guard beside him.

The guard knelt and begged for mercy, "We have not done our job properly. Please, forgive us."

"Quickly, go and investigate the situation." The Crown Prince kicked the guard and said anxiously, "Even if you have to carry him, bring the Spiritual Doctor here."

After seeing the Crown Prince's clumsy performance, Ye Jiuge lifted her hands to check Dongfang Que's pulse. She had not fed him the Millennium Snow Lotus Elixir in vain. The demonic poison inside Dongfang Que had stabilized, and the golden light around his heart had quickly recovered, forcing the demonic poison back to the nerves in his legs.

"Jiuge can conduct a medical examination by checking the pulse?" Emperor Xuanwu asked curiously.

The last time he had seen Ye Jiuge was the day that Yun Tianwei disappeared. Ye Yuxuan had brought her with him to the palace to ask for help. At the time, Ye Jiuge had only been about seven or eight years old. She had been very skinny and had no spiritual power at all. Then, she became a good-for-nothing young woman, so he did not pay any further attention to her. Now, however, he found her to be calm, but with an acute spirit. She seemed to have the graceful bearing of her grandfather, Yun Tianwei.

"Your Majesty, you must be kidding. My grandfather was the top Spiritual Elixir Alchemist in the Lei Country. No matter how useless I am, I would not dare insult his name."

Ye Jiuge's attitude towards Emperor Xuanwu was respectful, but also calm. She behaved as though the man in front of her was not the Emperor of the Lei Country or a Spiritual Master whose cultivation was higher than hers, but an ordinary elder.

Emperor Xuanwu found this strange. Even the Crown Prince automatically bowed his head when he saw him. He did not expect Ye Jiuge to have such courage. Indeed, she was worthy of the Yun Clan's bloodline.

The Crown Prince, however, was agitated. "Ye Jiuge, how can you speak to the Emperor like this?"

"Using my mouth, what else?" Ye Jiuge looked at the Crown Prince as if he were an idiot.

"You..." The Crown Prince's eyes widened, and he was about to fly into a rage.

"Crown Prince!" Emperor Xuanwu frowned and gave an annoyed look to the Crown Prince, which silenced him immediately.

Only then did Emperor Xuanwu's demeanor improve. He asked Ye Jiuge, "Can you determine what poison has afflicted the Dongling Prince?"

"Demonic poison," Ye Jiuge replied.

"Who in the Lei Country does not know that Seventh Brother has been infected with a demonic poison?" sneered the Crown Prince.

"That's right, everyone in the Lei Country knows that the Dongling Prince has been infected with a demonic poison, but they do not know that this kind of demonic poison is not from the Demon Clan. It is man-made using a spiritual poison," Ye Jiuge retorted coolly.

Both the Empress and the Crown Prince had tried to harm her, so she was obliged to repay the favor of their "kindness."

"You are spouting nonsense!" The Crown Prince cried out involuntarily.

"How does the Crown Prince know that I am spouting nonsense? Could it be that you are a Spiritual Doctor, or do you also have a seventh-grade Spiritual Elixir Alchemist as a grandfather?" Ye Jiuge said sarcastically while glaring at the Crown Prince.

"Father has invited many Spiritual Doctors to treat Seventh Brother, and they all said that he was infected with a demonic poison," the Crown Prince protested.

“Are these Spiritual Doctors as outstanding as my grandfather?” Ye Jiuge gave the Crown Prince a disdainful look.

“No matter how exceptional Great Master Yun may be, you are not him. On what basis have you determined that it was not a demonic poison that infected Seventh Brother?” asked the Crown Prince.

Ye Jiuge's face was grave as she explained rationally, “the Antidote Elixir I gave him was able to suppress the toxins in his body. As everyone knows, an Antidote Elixir only works for spiritual, not demonic, poison. Since it was effective for the Dongling Prince, it means that the poison in his body has components of spiritual poison.”

The Crown Prince could not refute her because he was not a Spiritual Doctor. Furthermore, he could hardly say that he himself had personally obtained the demonic poison infecting his Seventh Brother!

Hearing Ye Jiuge's words, Emperor Xuanwu's eyes shone. He asked, “Do you have a way to cure the poison in the Dongling Prince's body?”

“No,” Ye Jiuge answered bluntly.

The demonic poison in Dongfang Que was too potent, and she was not certain that she could cure it. Furthermore, she did not want to attract trouble.

“I thought that you were so capable, but it turns out that you were just shooting off your mouth.” The Crown Prince would never admit that his anxious heart had calmed down when he heard Ye Jiuge say that she could not cure the poison in Dongfang Que's body.

Emperor Xuanwu was not disappointed to hear that Ye Jiuge could not cure the poison. If she had said that she could, he would not have believed her. From the bottom of his heart, he did not believe that Ye Jiuge was capable of such a feat.

Translator: Nyoï-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoï-Bo Studio

At this moment, Spiritual Doctor Zhang finally arrived from the palace.

He looked to be over fifty years old and was short and fat with grizzled hair on his temples. Just one glance at him was enough to reveal that he was the kind of person who would never seek to offend anybody.

“Spiritual Doctor Zhang, quickly examine the Dongling Prince,” Emperor Xuanwu ordered.

“Yes,” replied Spiritual Doctor Zhang.

He wiped away the sweat from his forehead and hurriedly squatted to check Dongfang Que’s pulse. He was always the one who checked Dongfang Que’s pulse, so he was very familiar with it. But as he carefully examined the prince’s pulse now, he could tell that something was wrong. The rapid pulse seemed to indicate that he had been affected by a Lingering Affection Herb.

Spiritual Doctor Zhang sniffed the patient. Indeed, he could smell a hint of something sweet and unctuous. Immediately, his heart thumped, and he glanced at the Empress out of the corner of his eye.

The Empress’s face was slightly lowered, and her cold gaze caused Spiritual Doctor Zhang to tremble in fear. Having served at court for a long time, Spiritual Doctor Zhang understood clearly that he could not participate in this kind of palace intrigue or he would soon lose his head.

He collected himself and continued to check Dongfang Que’s pulse, ignoring the sweet and unctuous smell. Then, he said respectfully to the Emperor, “Your Majesty, there is no issue with the demonic poison in the Dongling Prince’s body. His condition is just as it was before.”

“Just now, Ye Jiuge said that the Antidote Elixir could only cure spiritual poison and not demonic poison. Since it was effective for the Dongling Prince, it means that the poison in his body has a component of spiritual poison. Is this true?” Emperor Xuanwu asked.

“This...” Spiritual Doctor Zhang broke into a cold sweat.

He did not dare to answer such a question. If he agreed with Ye Jiuge’s theory, it meant that Dongfang Que had not been injured by the Demon Clan, but by someone of the human race. If this news were to spread, it would definitely cause an uproar in the Lei Country. By then, the

Spiritual Doctor would have lost his head.

“What is this? Do you need me to teach you how to speak?” Emperor Xuanwu’s expression darkened.

“Your Majesty, please calm down.” Spiritual Doctor Zhang hurriedly knelt in apology. He braced himself and said, “I once saw something related to this in a medical book written by Great Master Yun. However, I have never validated it; hence, I would not dare to jump to a rash conclusion about the Dongling Prince’s condition.”

Emperor Xuanwu was momentarily quiet, then he said coolly, “You may stand up now. If it was written by Great Master Yun, it should be correct. Go back and research this with the other Spiritual Doctors to see what spiritual poison has also afflicted the Dongling Prince. It might be from a previous injury.”

His words validated that Dongfang Que had been harmed by the Demon Clan. Even if there were a spiritual poison in his body, it would have been from the past.

“Yes.” Spiritual Doctor Zhang wiped his sweat again and stood up shakily. If his colleagues shared the responsibility, at least he would not lose his head.

Emperor Xuanwu said coolly to Ye Jiuge, “Jiuge, even if you are unhappy with the Dongling Prince, you need not use such despicable methods to reach your objective. I will forgive you for this, but if it happens again, don’t blame me for punishing you.”

His confident tone and threatening gaze implied that he was sure that Ye Jiuge would admit to the accusation.

Ye Jiuge lowered her gaze. Dongfang Que had been poisoned by an aphrodisiac unfathomably in the Jinxiu Palace after leaving the main hall. Needless to say, the Empress and Crown Prince must have been behind it.

Not only was Emperor Xuanwu not looking into the matter, but he was also fearful that what he might find would damage the royal family’s reputation—he wanted to throw the blame to her. It was nothing short of wishful thinking. The old Ye Jiuge would have taken the blame. However, the current Ye Jiuge did not plan on accepting this accusation of shamelessness.

Hearing no reply from Ye Jiuge, Emperor Xuanwu frowned. Annoyed, he said, “Jiuge, do you disagree with me?”

Bullshit, you b*stard! Why must I smile and take the blame just because you want me to?

Ye Jiuge wanted badly to gift Emperor Xuanwu with the declaration, "Your mother is a prostitute," but she managed to control herself.

"I have no complaints, but the Dongling Prince may have something to say."

Ye Jiuge squatted and jabbed the acupuncture point at Dongfang Que's philtrum. When she was checking Dongfang Que's pulse earlier, she had found that he was already awake and only pretending to be unconscious. Now that Emperor Xuanwu wanted her to take the blame for putting the Prince under the effects of an aphrodisiac, she did not mind giving Dongfang Que a few jabs of the needle if he would not wake up on his own to clear her name.

After Ye Jiuge jabbed him, Dongfang Que's fan-like black eyelashes twitched slightly before he finally opened his eyes.

"Father, what are you doing here?" Dongfang Que appeared bewildered as he looked at Emperor Xuanwu. His tone was puzzled.

"I heard that you had fallen unconscious in the Jinxiu Palace, so I came to take a look. How are you feeling now?" Emperor Xuanwu asked with concern.

"My head hurts." Dongfang Que applied significant force to massage his temples and appeared to be recalling something. Then, he said, "I seem to remember that the Empress sent me a message saying that someone was waiting for me in the Jinxiu Palace with information regarding my mother. Is that person still here?"

"The Empress?" Emperor Xuanwu frowned and immediately looked towards the Empress.

He was aware that the Empress' hand was likely behind everything that was happening here. However, since his son was safe and it had been the insignificant and useless Ye Jiuge that the Empress had wanted to deal with, he was hoping to turn a blind eye.

However, since Dongfang Que had brought up the late Imperial Noble Consort, he could not play deaf and dumb, pretending to know nothing, especially since the Bai Clan was still garrisoned in Dongling Town.

"Dongling Prince, I did not ask anyone to pass the message to you. Perhaps you are misremembering?" the Empress responded coolly, without any fear that Emperor Xuanwu would blame her.

She understood her husband well. As long as she was still valuable to him, he would not touch her.

“Perhaps!” Dongling Prince lowered his face and said distantly.

The Empress has always been vicious. She never leaves anyone who can furnish information alive.

Even if he does mention the Lingering Affection Herb, the person who poisoned him will never be found. This would cause Father to be suspicious, so he might as well not speak about it.

“Oh, Your Highness, the Crown Prince said that I gave you an aphrodisiac so that I could force myself upon you. How do you feel now? Do you still have your chastity?” Ye Jiuge asked sincerely.

“Ridiculous! That is ridiculous!” Dongfang Que sneered. His black eyes bored into the Crown prince like a sharp blade. “I fell asleep as soon as I entered the Jinxiu Palace. Nobody gave me an aphrodisiac. Second Brother, even if you are unhappy with Eldest Miss Ye about the marriage, you should not accuse her wrongly!”

The Crown Prince’s face changed. He wanted badly to ask Spiritual Doctor Zhang to verify that Dongfang Que had indeed been under the effects of an aphrodisiac. However, he understood that arguing further would be disadvantageous to him and the Empress.

As such, he forced a smile and said, “I must have misunderstood the matter.”

“Second Brother, although Great Master Yun is no longer in the Lei Country, you cannot bully Eldest Miss Ye like this. After all, Eldest Miss Ye is the only remaining descendant of Great Master Yun’s bloodline. Forget about how you broke off the engagement of your own accord—how could you slander her as you wish? If word of this spreads, people will think that you are a heartless rat with the heart of a wolf and the lungs of a dog, who forgets favors and violates justice. They will say you are no better than a dog or pig.”

Dongfang Que disciplined the Crown Prince solemnly, as though the Crown Prince were his grandson.

The Crown Prince’s expression changed regularly with his anger. However, seeing that Emperor Xuanwu, who was beside him, said nothing, he controlled his temper.

Ye Jiuge did not expect the quiet Dongfang Que to have such a wicked tongue. Mentally, she gave him a nod of approval.

Unexpectedly, Dongfang Que was still not satisfied to see the Crown Prince at a loss for words. He continued to probe further, “Second Brother, am I right?”

Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

The Crown Prince's complexion turned ashen, and he was about to erupt when Emperor Xuanwu finally spoke.

"Since this is only a misunderstanding, it is good that everything has been stated openly," he said. "Que'er, your body is weak. You should go home and rest!"

He gave a knowing look to the Highest Ranked Court Eunuch. Immediately, a guard pushed in a wheelchair. This lead guard was Lei Peng, whom Ye Jiuge had seen at the hill behind the Putuo Temple. Worry filled his eyes. He reached out to support Dongfang Que, but his assistance was rejected.

"Can Eldest Miss Ye give me a helping hand?" Dongfang Que looked calmly at Ye Jiuge. His black pupils were as limpid as a lake, calm and peaceful.

"Of course." Ye Jiuge reached out her hands to assist Dongfang Que into the wheelchair then took the opportunity to wheel him out of the Jinxiu Palace.

Meanwhile, the Empress said nothing. Her cold gaze only followed Ye Jiuge like a shadow.

Ye Jiuge pushed Dongfang Que near the Yuhua Garden, where Lady Hongxiu was waiting anxiously. When Lady Hongxiu saw them, she immediately rushed forward and asked, "Your Highness, are you alright?"

"I am fine. It's all thanks to Eldest Miss Ye. She helped me cure the poison," Dongfang Que said distantly.

He was aware that had Ye Jiuge not saved him, he would have died in the Jinxiu Palace.

"Many thanks to you, Eldest Miss Ye." Lady Hongxiu looked at Ye Jiuge with gratitude.

If Ye Jiuge had not made that guarantee to her, she would not have invited the Emperor for reinforcement.

“Lady Hongxiu, you are too kind. Didn’t you save me too?” Ye Jiuge smiled.

“Lady, if you have anything else to say, save it for later!” Lei Peng said, vigilantly scanning the Yuhua Garden. The place was filled with the Empress’s spies; it was not suitable for a chat.

“Alright, then I shall return to the Jinxiu Palace.” Lady Hongxiu curtsied to Dongfang Que and left quickly.

“Eldest Miss Ye, if you have time, can you take me back?” There were many things that Dongfang Que wanted to ask Ye Jiuge, especially about the demonic poison in his body.

“Sure.” Ye Jiuge also had many questions for Dongfang Que.

For example, why had Emperor Xuanwu allowed the Empress and Crown Prince to harm the Dongling Prince even though the Emperor seemed to dote on him? Furthermore, why had Emperor Xuanwu refused to speak of the demonic poison in Dongfang Que’s body? Why refuse to admit that Dongfang Que had been harmed by someone of the human race? Everything about the palace was a mystery, and she wished to get a clearer understanding of it. After all, the Empress, the Crown Prince, as well as the Emperor, who had wanted her to take the blame, were all considered her enemies.

Dongfang Que’s Prince Mansion was located on Hulu Lane off East Main Street, where only descendants of the royal family lived. Dongfang Que’s Prince Mansion was the most imposing residence on the entire street, demonstrating Emperor Xuanwu’s affection for him.

Ye Jiuge followed Dongfang Que into the splendorous and majestic house. An elderly man, who was an Intermediate Spiritual Practitioner, came to welcome them. His hair and beard were white, but he stood straight and upright. Although he was surprised to see Ye Jiuge beside Dongfang Que, his face did not reveal his surprise.

He bowed respectfully to Dongfang Que and said, “Your Highness, do you have any instructions for me?”

“Elder He, I am going to the study to discuss something with Eldest Miss Ye. Help me prepare some tea and cake for her,” Dongfang Que said.

“Yes.” Elder He nodded and personally went to see to the preparations.

When Ye Jiuge reached the study with Dongfang Que, a cup of piping hot spiritual tea was sitting on the table. The tea's refreshing fragrance had diffused the entire room. There were red-colored pastries in the shape of flower petals on a white jade plate. They looked delicious.

"Eldest Miss Ye, please have a seat," politely, Dongfang Que invited Ye Jiuge to sit before he pushed his wheelchair to the back of the table.

Tactfully, Lei Peng immediately led his men out of the study, closing the door behind them.

"What does the Dongling Prince wish to discuss with me?"

After taking a seat, Ye Jiuge held the teacup and took a sip. Indeed, it was high-quality spiritual tea. Its fragrance lingered in Ye Jiuge's mouth. Then, she tried some of the pastries. They were sour and sweet, with a faint rose fragrance. They were so delicious that she wanted more.

Dongfang Que waited for Ye Jiuge to finish eating and drinking before he asked, "Eldest Miss Ye, earlier on, you said that the demonic poison in my body was mixed with spiritual poison. Is it true?"

"False. I said that deliberately to provoke the Empress and Crown Prince. The poison in your body is likely from a fifth stage demonic beast. However, I cannot determine which one."

Ye Jiuge put down her teacup. She specialized in human poisons and was not an expert on the Demon Clan. All she could do was wait for Zi Shang to wake up so she could ask him about the origin of the demonic poison. Perhaps, she would be able to help Dongfang Que cure it. However, there was no need to let him know that in advance. After all, the higher his hopes, the greater his disappointment.

"I see!"

After hearing Ye Jiuge's response, Dongfang Que was considerably discouraged. If the demonic poison in his body were mixed with a spiritual poison, it would mean that his conflict was only with the human race. However, if it were a pure demonic poison, it would mean that the Empress and the Crown Prince were colluding with the Demon Clan. That was something he did not wish to deal with.

Ye Jiuge did not know about Dongfang Que's worries. To console him, she said, "Your Highness, you don't need to be so anxious. Although curing the demonic poison in your body will be difficult, at least it won't cost you your life." He just won't be able to walk.

"Eldest Miss, since you have a way to suppress the demonic poison in my body, do you have a way to clear the toxins?" Dongfang Que pulled himself together and asked.

"I apologize, but I don't have a solution at the moment. Earlier on, I used the Millennium Snow Lotus Pill, which my grandfather left me, to suppress the demonic poison in your body, but only just barely." Ye Jiuge silently gave a sigh of relief when she saw that Dongfang Que did not realize that she had used the Godly Heartwood.

"I have heard that you received Great Master Yun's pills in the Wanzhang Depths. Is this Millennium Snow Lotus Pill one of them?" Dongfang Que's eyes shone.

"Sorry, I can't tell you." Ye Jiuge smiled.

Although they had just faced an ordeal together, she still did not know him well enough to discuss that particular matter.

"I have spoken rashly." Dongfang Que did not question any further. Instead, he began to speak about the confusing situation that they had just been through. "Just now, in the Jinxiu Palace, I was under the effects of the Lingering Affection Herb and offended you..."

Before Dongfang Que could finish speaking, Ye Jiuge, who was not in the least concerned, shook her head and said, "It's alright. I know that you were poisoned. I don't blame you."

She had only been touched and pinched. They did not even kiss or remove their clothes, so it was no big deal.

"..." Dongfang Que's handsome face stiffened as he experienced mixed feelings.

If any other lady had experienced such humiliation, she would have screamed at him to take responsibility. He was upset that Ye Jiuge was unexpectedly unaffected. However, when he glanced at his legs, he could not bear to say that he wanted to take responsibility for his actions. As he was handicapped in both legs, he was not worthy of Ye Jiuge. It was no surprise that she did not pay any attention to the matter. Ye Jiuge did not know that Dongfang Que's opinion of her was so high that he felt unworthy of her.

She thought that Dongfang Que was still glum from being poisoned by the Empress. She could not control herself and said, "I have some doubts and must pour out what is on my mind. Your Highness, I seek your forgiveness."

Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

“Eldest Miss Ye, please feel free to clarify any doubts that you may have.” Dongfang Que pulled himself out of his gloomy mood and flashed a sincere smile.

“Your Highness, the Emperor clearly knows that the Empress has harmed you. Why doesn't he hold her accountable for her actions?” asked Ye Jiuge.

She felt that the situation was strange. It would be understandable if Dongfang Que were merely a Prince who had fallen out of favor with Emperor Xuanwu. However, he was the son of the Emperor's beloved companion, and his maternal relatives were valorous. Emperor Xuanwu's actions went too far.

“Father has his concerns. We cannot casually guess at his intentions,” Dongfang Que said distantly, as though he were used to it.

Ye Jiuge understood at once. This former genius endures a disreputable Father, just like she does.

Emperor Xuanwu must have been suspicious of his son because of the Bai Clan's valor. Even though Dongfang Que was handicapped, he would not let him off easily.

Sure enough, the family of Emperors was the most ruthless!

Dongfang Que did not want to discuss the issue any further. He said, “I have nothing else to repay the kindness that Eldest Miss Ye has shown me by saving my life. I hope that you will like this gift.”

Then, he retrieved a small, embroidered red box from a secret compartment in the study. He placed it in front of Ye Jiuge and said, “Open it and take a look.”

Ye Jiuge opened the embroidered box and was surprised to see a three-inch-long silver snake inside. When she took a closer look, Ye Jiuge realized that the silver snake was not a living creature, but an exquisitely crafted soft whip. A soft whip was usually made up of either seven or nine sections. The one in front of her only had three, making it resemble a small snake.

“This is a second-grade spiritual weapon: the Lightning Snake Magical Whip. My grandfather found it unexpectedly while fighting off the Demon Clan. Although it was damaged, leaving it with

only three sections, it is still superior to an ordinary spiritual weapon. Furthermore, it is the most suitable weapon for Lightning Elemental Spiritual Practitioners,” explained Dongfang Que.

Although he looked calm, the Dongling Prince felt apprehensive. The Crown Prince had racked his brain to try and find a way to obtain the whip from Dongfang Que, but he had refused to part with it. He did not know if Ye Jiuge would like it.

A spiritual weapon? Ye Jiuge was instantly excited. These last years, obtaining a spiritual weapon hadn't been easy. Not only was a collection of materials with an abundance of spiritual power required, but a reliable weaponsmith with an advanced level of cultivation also had to be found to forge such a weapon.

This particular spiritual weapon appeared to be a little bit damaged, but it still glowed with a bright light. The manufacturing process had been perfect. It was clearly expensive.

Someone else would have declined the gift. However, Ye Jiuge felt that she had used up much of her energy while saving Dongfang Que's life, so it was not a big deal to accept a Lightning Snake Magical Whip from him. She grinned and said, “The Dongling Prince is so considerate. It would be impolite to refuse your gift.”

Dongfang Que smiled. He liked Ye Jiuge's straightforward personality.

Immediately after Ye Jiuge accepted the embroidered box, Lei Peng's respectful voice came from outside the door. “Your Highness, there is a Mama from the Ye Clan waiting outside. She says that she wishes to see the Eldest Miss.”

“It must be Qing Mama,” Ye Jiuge exclaimed with quiet alarm; she had forgotten to inform Qing Mama when leaving the palace.

She must have waited outside the palace for a long time before finally finding this place.

“In that case, I shall not keep you any longer,” Dongfang Que said tactfully. “Lei Peng, escort out Eldest Miss Ye!”

“Yes.” Lei Peng nodded then said respectfully to Ye Jiuge, “Eldest Miss Ye, this way, please.”

“I shall take my leave now,” Ye Jiuge informed Dongfang Que then left with Lei Peng.

As Dongfang Que looked at Ye Jiuge's departing form, the expression on his handsome but gloomy face changed repeatedly. He seemed to be thinking about something.

Suddenly, a voice rang outside the study windows, “Your Highness!”

"Come in!" Dongfang Que collected himself and said.

A man in a black garment opened the window and climbed in. It was Ye Jiuge's old friend, Bai Songling.

"Why have you come here?" Dongfang Que asked.

"I was anxious when I heard that you fell into the Empress's trap in the palace, so I came to have a look. Are you alright?" Bai Songling said then casually took a seat.

It was easy to see that he was very close to Dongfang Que. They interacted as though they were friends or brothers instead of subordinate and superior.

"I am fine." Dongfang Que shook his head and said, "It's all thanks to Ye Jiuge; she saved my life."

"I said before that you could take this opportunity to save Ye Jiuge so that she would owe you a favor. I did not expect that we would owe her the favor instead."

Bai Songling was overwhelmed with mixed emotions. This Ye Jiuge was practically a lucky star; every time, she was able to avert disaster. When they had accompanied Ye Jiuge to save Ye Ruyi, they had only escaped the fire thanks to her.

"She is indeed a lucky star." Dongfang Que agreed wholeheartedly.

If only this lucky star belonged to him.

Bai Songling was unaware that Dongfang Que had become interested in Ye Jiuge. He questioned further, "Oh, didn't you go to the palace today for an audience with the Emperor? How did you fall into the Empress's trap?"

"The Empress has become so brazen that she laid hands on me in front of Father." Dongfang Que's expression immediately darkened.

Emperor Xuanwu had recently received a pot of spiritual wine that could fortify cultivation. He'd wanted to share it with his sons, and the pot of spiritual wine was poured for each prince in order of seniority. As the Eldest Prince had died young, the Crown Prince was served first. When the wine reached Dongfang Que, he vaguely felt that something was wrong. Secretly, he used a silver needle to test the wine but did not find anything amiss. As everyone received wine from the same cup, he could not refuse it without evidence. So, he drank.

Soon after, Dongfang Que had realized that he was under the effects of an aphrodisiac. He had

wanted to go to the Jinxiu Palace to seek Lady Hongxiu's help before the aphrodisiac flared up. He had not expected to meet Ye Jiuge there.

"The Empress's behavior has been presumptuous recently, and yet the Emperor turns a blind eye." Bai Songling frowned.

The Empress was mad to have struck in front of the Emperor. However, the craziest thing of all was that the Emperor had tolerated it.

"I have not been able to understand Father's actions in recent years." Dongfang Que looked out the window. His gloomy black pupils were as deep as the lake and reflected profound worry.

While his mother was still alive, his father had shown genuine care for him. But after she died, his father had changed completely. His care for his son was feigned, an act for others.

"I feel that you should avoid entering the palace. The Empress has obtained all kinds of strange and rare poisons from the Su Clan in these recent years. You may be able to dodge her for the present, but not forever!" Bai Songling said worriedly.

"Okay, I will be more careful next time."

Dongfang Que understood that Bai Songling was worried about him. He too felt that it was becoming more and more difficult to defend himself against the Empress. The cup of spiritual wine was only one example. Dongfang Que did not know how the Empress had found a way to mask the Lingering Affection Herb's distinctly sweet and unctuous smell.

Not only had Dongfang Que's silver needle been unable to detect it, but when he drank, he had not tasted anything strange. He had not even realized that he was under the sway of the Lingering Affection Herb until the poison was active in his body.

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Translator: Nyoibo Studio Editor: Nyoibo Studio

Something occurred to Bai Songling. He asked Dongfang Que, "I heard that Ye Jiuge used acupuncture to expel the Aphrodisiac from your body. Did she have a way to neutralize your poison?"

"She told me that she didn't." Dongfang Que thought of the Millennium Snow Lotus Pill, which Ye Jiuge had recommended, and asked Bai Songling, "Did she mention anything to you about her experience in the Wanzhang Depths?"

"No." Bai Songling shook his head. He and Ye Jiuge were not that close.

"When you return, you must conduct a proper investigation," said Dongfang Que.

Although the Dongling Prince was still semi-unconscious and could not properly think or react, he managed to vaguely recall that, other than consuming a medicinal pill, a stream of potent life force had also resuscitated him. However, from what he could tell from Ye Jiuge's attitude, it was unlikely that she would divulge this secret easily.

As Dongfang Que was instructing Bai Songling to look into the matter of Ye Jiuge's fall into the Wanzhang Depths, the Empress was interrogating the Crown Prince at Fengyi Palace.

"Is it true that Ye Jiuge obtained an unknown, invaluable object from the Wanzhang Depths?" demanded the Empress.

"I am not sure. Ye Jiuge claims that, after falling to the bottom of the Wanzhang Depths, she discovered a treasure, which Yun Tianwei left for her. This is how she regained her ability to cultivate spiritually," said the Crown Prince, shaking his head.

It was unlikely that Yun Tianwei was still alive. It was even more improbable that he'd left a secret treasure for his useless granddaughter in the Wanzhang Depths. Hence, the Crown Prince did not take this report seriously.

"There must be some basis for these rumors. Even if Ye Jiuge did not get her hands on Yun Tianwei's medicinal pills, she must have obtained something precious," said the Empress, raising her long, thin eyebrow; she was exceedingly displeased that the Crown Prince had overlooked such important news.

"At first, I thought so too. However, later, I ordered someone to investigate and discovered that Ye Jiuge has no such treasure," the Crown Prince explained at once.

In private, he'd sent many men to probe. However, he hadn't managed to find any useful information. Then, the incident involving Ye Yu had occurred, so the Crown Prince had suspended

his investigation.

“Even if Ye Jiuge has obtained a priceless object, it is impossible for her to use it openly. You should assign some men to keep a close watch on her and find an opportunity to abduct her so that we could interrogate her properly. I do not believe that getting any information out of her would be impossible.”

As the Empress spoke, she examined her long, bright red fingernails. Her flat tone was filled with murderous intent. At first, she'd wanted to spare Ye Jiuge's insignificant life. However, the girl had chosen death when she allied with Dongfang Que. The Empress wanted to use news of Ye Jiuge's death to demonstrate that anyone who allied themselves with Dongfang Que would face terrible consequences.

“As you wish. I will do it immediately.” The Crown Prince nodded deferentially.

Ye Jiuge was not aware that Dongfang Que and the Empress had already set their sights on her. After boarding the horse carriage, Qing Mama nagged Ye Jiuge incessantly.

“Eldest Miss, even if you intend to repay the Dongling Prince for this favor, do not sacrifice yourself. The imperial family's conflict is not something we should get involved with.”

“Yes, yes, yes. I know.” Ye Jiuge nodded half-heartedly.

“Eldest Miss, I wouldn't care about another matter, but you must listen to me on this,” Qing Mama said fretfully.

Last time, when Eldest Miss assaulted the Crown Prince on the street, the worst that other people could have said when asked about it was that she did it out of hatred due to unrequited love and anger from being humiliated. As long as they were able to respond to the situation with a smile, people would move on quickly. However, if Eldest Miss were really to side with Dongfang Que and oppose the Crown Prince, she would become embroiled in a political feud. If she were not careful, she would attract serious trouble.

“Qing Mama, I know that you are concerned about me. However, you do not need to be worried. I know where to draw the line. I will definitely not get entangled with this.”

Ye Jiuge tried to put Qing Mama's mind at rest. Right now, she was in a situation where the Empress and the Crown Prince strongly believed that she and Dongfang Que had joined forces. Even if she wanted to extricate herself from the situation, at this point, it was impossible. However, even Ye Jiuge's reassurance could not make Qing Mama shut her mouth.

After they returned to the Zilin Residence, Qing Mama relentlessly continued convincing Ye Jiuge

not to play with fire and remain within the residence like a well-behaved aristocratic lady. Once a few years had passed, she could seek to marry into a reputable family.

As Qing Mama harped on, Ye Jiuge became increasingly vexed until she could not stand it anymore. To redirect Qing Mama's attention, she showed her the Spiritual Weapon that Dongfang Que had gifted her.

"Qing Mama, take a look at this."

"Oh gosh, where did you get this snake from?"

Qing Mama was deeply shocked by the silver snake inside the box.

"This is not a snake. It is a rank two Spiritual Weapon: the Lightning Snake Magical Whip."

When Ye Jiuge saw Qing Mama jump out of her skin, she could not help but smile gleefully, as if she were a child who had succeeded in playing a prank.

"Is this the legendary Spiritual Weapon?"

Qing Mama widened her eyes and stared at the small silver snake as if admiring an exceptional treasure. She wanted to touch it but did not dare. Ye Jiuge took the whip in her hand and channeled spiritual energy into it. The slumbering silver snake elongated; it grew from three inches to seven feet long, as if it were being awakened. Flashes of purple lightning surrounded it.

Ye Jiuge nonchalantly lashed the whip at an odd-looking piece of stone positioned in the courtyard. Bang. The massive rock was reduced to smithereens. The weapon's strength doubled her usual offensive potency. No wonder Spiritual Practitioners yearned to own one, even in their dreams.

"Eldest Miss, this Spiritual Weapon must not have been cheap!"

Qing Mama was also a Spiritual Cultivator. When she laid her eyes upon such an invaluable weapon, naturally, she was unable to tear herself away.

"Without several tens of thousands of gold taels, you wouldn't be able to get your hands on one." This is a conservative estimation.

"Tens of thousands of gold taels?"

Qing Mama's eyes widened considerably. In her lifetime, the most money she'd ever seen was a few thousand silver taels. A few ten thousand gold taels for a Spiritual Whip? This has really

opened her eyes!

“Come on, Qing Mama. Give it a try.”

Ye Jiuge handed the Spiritual Whip to Qing Mama. Although the Lightning Snake Magical Whip was most suited for Lightning-type Spiritual Practitioners, other Spiritual Practitioners could still use it.

“I can only use Metal-type Spiritual Energy. I might damage it!”

Qing Mama hesitated. However, her eyes were completely glued to the Spiritual Whip. It was apparent that she was itching to try it.

“If it could be ruined so easily, it would not be a Spiritual Weapon. Instead, it’d be a weapon made out of glass.”

Ye Jiuge pushed the Spiritual Whip into Qing Mama’s hands, coaxing her to use it without any doubt or fear. Qing Mama tried to channel a small amount of Metal Spiritual Energy into the Spiritual Whip. Before her eyes, the little snake transformed into metal. However, it was much smaller than Ye Jiuge’s snake. The force that it exhibited was only thirty percent of Ye Jiuge’s earlier attack.

Content, Qing Mama passed the Spiritual Whip back to Ye Jiuge, saying, “It is still more fitting for Eldest Miss to use it.” Only her Eldest Miss is a match for such a treasured weapon!

Ye Jiuge was about to tell Qing Mama that, if a chance arose in the future, she would obtain a tremendous Spiritual Weapon for her too, when, suddenly, she felt an odd sensation in her wrist. She lowered her head discreetly and looked at the inner side of her wrist. Before her eyes, the purple imprint, already sunken into her skin, suddenly surfaced. A faint purple Spiritual Light glowed erratically. It was clear that Zi Shang, who had been in a deep sleep for a long time, was waking up.

Ye Jiuge recalled that she still owed Zi Shang two kisses. She was afraid that he would demand them when he woke up. Therefore, she told Qing Mama hastily, “I’m tired now. I want to rest.”

“Do you need me to help you prepare hot water for a bath?” Qing Mama asked thoughtfully. She believed that, after a bath, Ye Jiuge would rest more comfortably.

Ye Jiuge frowned. She felt that Qing Mama wanted to clean her up properly so Zi Shang could taste her.

Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

When Qing Mama saw how displeased Ye Jiuge was, she wondered if she'd provoked her mistress with her nagging. "Eldest Miss, did I say something wrong?" she asked.

"You did not." Ye Jiuge shook her head. She feigned a worried expression as she said, "I was just thinking that it has been some time since we came back from the palace. However, Father still hasn't sent anyone to ask me about it. I have no idea what the situation is right now. As you know, when I entered the palace this time, I offended the Empress. I'm afraid that Father won't forgive me."

"I will head to the main residence now and inquire," Qing Mama responded in a worried tone.

There was a taut expression on her aged face. Even when nothing eventful was happening, Old Master still showed utter disdain for Eldest Miss. Now that Eldest Miss had upset the Empress and also associated herself with the Dongling Prince, it was highly probable that Old Master would want to skin Eldest Miss alive. She needed to ask around so that she could keep tabs on Old Master.

After Ye Jiuge ensured that Qing Mama had left, she walked into her room. As soon as she shut the doors, Zi Shang's wicked, charismatic, feral, yet dignified voice rang out beside her ear, laced with a hint of coldness: "When I wasn't around, Little Jiuge really became more daring."

Then, she slid into the familiar embrace. A distinct fragrance, which belonged only to Zi Shang, filled her nose and alluded to a sense of coolness. Ye Jiuge realized that Zi Shang's voice didn't sound quite right. She turned around and asked, "What are you hinting at?"

"I warned you before not to leak information about the Heart of the Celestial Tree."

This girl did not heed his advice. She'd even used the Heart of the Celestial Tree to save a human prince's life. If he didn't wake up in time to subdue the Celestial Tree's aura, it was very likely that the old farts, who hid in the imperial palace, would instantly appear before her and eat her alive.

Ye Jiuge looked at Zi Shang's cold, handsome face. His pupils, purple vertical slits, were wholly fixated on her, along with repressed anger. Under Zi Shang's forceful stare, out of nowhere, she experienced a guilty conscience. It was as if she were being caught red-handed having an adulterous affair by her husband, who had returned unexpectedly from a trip.

Ew, ew, ew! Zi Shang is not her husband! Ye Jiuge threw this horrible thought out of her mind before explaining, "It was an emergency. If I hadn't saved Dongfang Que's life, the Empress would have implicated me in the murder of a prince. If that had happened, I wouldn't have survived, and it would have been useless to debate whether the Heart of the Celestial Tree should be kept a secret or not."

Zi Shang narrowed his eyes at Ye Jiuge; they gleamed as if they were able to see through everything. He appeared to be evaluating the truthfulness of her words. Ye Jiuge looked him in the eyes calmly and said, "I am neither a relative nor a friend to Dongfang Que. There is no reason for me to risk my neck to save him. When all is said and done, I am merely trying to save myself."

"Is that so? If you are unrelated to him in any way, why are you still willing to let him touch you like that?"

Danger emanated from Zi Shang's eyes. The one thing that he could not stand was another man lusting after his woman. The Heart of the Celestial Tree was secondary.

"Pah! Who said I wanted to be touched? He was poisoned with Lingered Affection Herb!"

Ye Jiuge really felt that she'd been wronged. Groped by one man, accused by another. Now, even this demon was interrogating her! D*mnit! Does justice still exist?

When Zi Shang saw that Ye Jiuge was so furious that her face flushed with anger, he finally believed that she'd not been a willing participant. However, he did not want to let this willful girl off the hook so easily. He moved closer to Ye Jiuge's ear and whispered into it in a husky voice, "In that case, I am currently experiencing the effects of an Aphrodisiac. Will you let me touch you?"

"Haha. Who could possibly have such impressive capabilities that they are capable of poisoning our Zi Shang, an absolute pervert, with an Aphrodisiac?"

Ye Jiuge rolled her eyes. Even when he was lying, he did not bother putting much thought in.

"Other than you, who else?" Zi Shang's snake tail coiled around Ye Jiuge tightly. One hand wrapped around her waist, while the other trailed along her back before moving toward her stomach and stilling. "Where did he touch you? Was it here?"

Earlier, when Dongfang Que had stroked her skin and kneaded her body, Ye Jiuge hadn't felt anything. Now that Zi Shang was caressing her, her skin felt like it was being scalded. Her entire body was on fire.

Ye Jiuge's face reddened. Suddenly, she slapped Zi Shang's hand away. She put on a brave front and rebuked him, fiercely, "Don't put your hands where they don't belong."

"Let me ask you once more: did he touch you here?" Zi Shang's hand remained on Ye Jiuge's stomach, unmoving.

"It's none of your business." Ye Jiuge turned her head away. She refused to answer this absurd question.

"Little Jiuge, don't forget that you are mine." Zi Shang felt that he needed to make that clear to Ye Jiuge.

"If you want to f*ck me, tell me. Don't be so long-winded with such nonsense," Ye Jiuge provoked him intentionally. Even if she had to prostitute herself to Zi Shang, she did not want him to dictate her actions.

"Stubborn little thing."

Zi Shang's eyes darkened with a menacing glint. He reached out and deactivated several of Ye Jiuge's main acupressure points. After that, he threw her on the bed aggressively. Then, from nowhere, he yanked out a silk scarf and tied her hands firmly to the bedpost.

"Are you mad? Let go of me!"

Ye Jiuge was infuriated. She wanted to lift her leg to kick him, but she was pinned under his body.

"If you are obedient and do what you're told, I will be gentler with you."

An austere expression appeared on Zi Shang's incredibly gorgeous face. His coldness was laced with an alluring thirst for blood. Ye Jiuge was so shaken that her entire body quivered. When she collected her thoughts, she realized that there was a dissonance between Zi Shang's expression and actions. He took off her upper outer garments, piece by piece, tenderly. Ye Jiuge could not help but tremble slightly. She'd never thought that Zi Shang, who always smiled at her mischievously and had never got angry with her regardless of what she said to him, would be so terrifying when angered. He frightened her, she who had always flaunted herself as a tough, strong woman.

When her upper garments were entirely peeled off, leaving only her close-fitting underwear, tiny

goosebumps rose on her smooth skin. She tried her best to regain her composure. She shot a fierce glare at Zi Shang, silently vowing in her heart, If this guy really forces himself upon me, I will sever all ties with him and ignore him for the rest of my life.

“Where did he touch you? Here?” Zi Shang rubbed the smooth skin of Ye Jiuge’s stomach and watched her closely.

“That’s right.” Ye Jiuge wanted to provoke Zi Shang, so she said haughtily, “He touched me everywhere. Now you should be satisfied with my answer!”

Zi Shang’s eyes instantly darkened. Contrary to Ye Jiuge’s expectations, he did not lose his temper. Instead, he lowered his head and kissed her stomach deeply. Then, he used his sharp snake teeth to nibble her lightly, before switching to sucking on her skin. Determined to leave a red mark, he kissed Ye Jiuge until she ached and felt numb all over. She wanted to scold him, but when she opened her mouth, her voice came out soft as cotton candy: “Don’t touch me!”

Zi Shang lifted his head and locked his eyes on her. His moist, red lips curled upward. His raspy voice was filled with resolve as he said, “I want to brand you on every spot where another man touched you so that you will forever remember who you belong to.”

After he finished speaking, he lowered his head once more and kissed her again and again, moving his mouth up from her stomach. His kisses were assertive and demanding. He left a line of red marks on Ye Jiuge’s smooth skin, arrogantly staking his claim to her.

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Translator: Nyoibo Studio Editor: Nyoibo Studio

As Zi Shang’s kisses moved further upwards, they became more and more fervent. This was not “planting strawberries.” He was practically planting carrots! Not only that, but this was the kind of farming that required plowing.

Ye Jiuge felt like her flesh was going to be torn apart by Zi Shang's mouth. The terrifying sensation made her scalp feel numb, and her whole body shuddered. She gritted her teeth and expended the last of her energy to resist him like her life depended on it. She shouted, "Move aside!"

Without any mercy, Zi Shang pinned Ye Jiuge under his body. The cold, harsh glint that shone from his purple eyes was as piercing as the blade.

"Did he touch you here?" Zi Shang's large palm covered her bosom entirely. His deep voice made her shiver, even though she wasn't cold.

"No. No. No!" Ye Jiuge screamed while shaking her head.

"He really didn't?" Zi Shang narrowed his eyes. The frost that exuded from his body was enough to freeze the air, making it difficult to breathe.

"He really did not," Ye Jiuge insisted adamantly. Dongfang Que definitely had not touched her there. At most, he'd just come into contact with this part of her body when he'd held her down.

Instantly, Zi Shang saw through Ye Jiuge's lies. With a word, he shattered her hopes. "Liar!" He lowered his head and aggressively bit her lip. He took one bite after another, and his mouth began to wander.

Zi Shang's kisses were not gentle at all. He was like a deranged wild beast gnawing its prey. His expression was so ferocious; it was as if he wanted to devour her. Ye Jiuge nearly thought that Zi Shang would bite her to death. If God gave her another chance, she would keep her distance from Dongfang Que and never allow him to get close to her. Zi Shang appeared to sense her regret. He finally softened and caressed her tenderly, like a lover. Ye Jiuge realized that when Zi Shang was gentle, he was even more deadly!

When Zi Shang finally pulled away from her, Ye Jiuge was already soaked in sweat. Her whole body was sprawled soft and pliant on the bed. At first, she'd thought that Zi Shang was going to force himself on her, so she had already prepared to cut all ties with him and not talk to him ever again, until her death. She'd never expected Zi Shang's kisses to extinguish the deep resentment that filled her. She even experienced a small moment of blissful pleasure. She was too mortified to lay into Zi Shang.

"Did I please you?" Zi Shang smirked like the cat that ate the canary.

Please your uncle! Boom! Ye Jiuge's face was thoroughly flushed. Red as a tomato. She wished that she could kill this perverted snake with a kick and forget about him.

"Next time, will you dare to let another man touch you?" Zi Shang lowered his head, and his hot breath skimmed over Ye Jiuge's beet red ear. His tone was threatening.

Ye Jiuge really wanted to tell him that she was not the head courtesan at a brothel looking to prostitute herself to any man with nothing better to do than touch her. What happened with Dongfang Que was a total accident, alright? However, Zi Shang would not accept this explanation. Right now, she could not afford to anger this psychopath. She could only bottle up her feelings and nod. She was as meek as a lamb as she said, "I will not allow it again."

"Good girl!"

Zi Shang stroked Ye Jiuge's face. He pressed a tender kiss, which was devoid of any sexual desire, onto her cheek. After that, he helped her undo the silk scarf binding her hands. When he saw that her wrists were completely red, he was considerate enough to help her massage them. Ye Jiuge was utterly spent and could only let Zi Shang do what he wanted with her.

Zi Shang helped Ye Jiuge put on her clothes properly again. Afterward, he told her, "Your despicable father is here to find you." Then, he returned to the imprint on Ye Jiuge's wrist.

F*ck, is there any situation more awful than this? Ye Jiuge really wanted to cry, but tears refused to come. Wobbly on her feet, she propped herself up and quickly changed into a dark green dress. She also patted her face with cold water so that the sexual pleasure she was experiencing in her body would subside.

When she was done, Qing Mama's voice rang out, "Eldest Miss, Old Master is here."

"Ok! Please ask Father to wait for a moment in the Main Parlor." Ye Jiuge tried her best to make her voice sound calm.

"Alright. However, Eldest Miss, you should get ready as soon as you can," Qing Mama urged before leaving.

Ye Jiuge sat in front of the dressing table and checked herself carefully to make sure nothing was out of place. Fortunately, other than her eyes and mouth being slightly redder than usual, the black scars that covered her face entirely concealed any other aspect of her appearance that would otherwise appear out of the ordinary.

With her mind at ease, Ye Jiuge left the bedroom and walked into the Main Parlor. Ye Yuxuan was pacing back and forth with his hands behind his back. Everyone could see that he was extremely irritated and unhappy.

As soon as he saw Ye Jiuge, he yelled at her furiously, "Insolent girl! when you had the nerve to

be discourteous to the Empress, did you have a death wish?"

"Father, what are you implying? Why can't I understand you?"

Ye Jiuge did not bother to greet Ye Yuxuan with a curtsy. She walked directly to a chair and sat before motioning to Qing Mama to serve her a cup of tea. She was extremely thirsty.

Soon after, Qing Mama brought her a cup of hot tea. She communicated with Ye Jiuge with her eyes; she was asking her to speak to Old Master using her manners. If she had something important to tell him, she should not talk back. Ye Jiuge disregarded Qing Mama's gestures and sipped her tea indifferently.

It was not that she wanted to answer defiantly to Ye Yuxuan. He was the one who had come to her just to find fault. It was in her character to accept insults without retaliation.

When Ye Yuxuan saw that Ye Jiuge treated him with complete disrespect, he was so livid that his face turned purple with rage. He jabbed his finger at her and tore into her, saying, "The Empress was so insulted that she came knocking on our door. You still have the gall to drink your tea here. If you want to continue drinking, take your tea with you and get out. The Ye Clan refuses to acknowledge a shameless woman like you as part of the family."

Bang! Ye Jiuge slammed the teacup on the table. She glowered at Ye Yuxuan with her beautiful eyes. Won't you let me enjoy my cup of tea?

Ye Yuxuan jumped out of his skin. When he came to his senses and realized that he could, to his surprise, be afraid of this recalcitrant daughter, he became even angrier. "Great, now you even dare to show your displeasure to me."

"Father, as soon as you came in, you berated me. Why didn't you ask me what happened in the palace? Why would I offend the Empress without rhyme or reason?" Ye Jiuge asked in a cold tone.

"Hmph, I know your impudence too well. Even when you're at home, you act without a sense of propriety. Isn't it perfectly expected to hear that you offended someone when you went to the palace?" Ye Yuxuan was completely uninterested in Ye Jiuge's explanation.

"Father, since you are fully aware that I am a person without manners, why were you so keen to have me visit the palace to meet the Empress? Did you not intend for me to anger her?" Ye Jiuge rubbed the embossed pattern on the teacup, and a snide smile appeared on her face.

"Don't you try to twist my words. This time, you've provoked the Empress and the Crown Prince. You need to appease their anger. Otherwise, the whole Ye Clan will be implicated because of your

wrongdoing,” Ye Yuxuan insisted firmly.

“Then, Father, what are you planning to ask me to do?” Ye Jiuge raised an eyebrow. She wanted to see whether her reprehensible father was capable of expressing more bizarre ideas.

“Hmph, the Crown Prince has already said that, as long as you return the Purple Lightning Wood to him, he will be merciful enough not to blame you for what you did. Not only that, he will even allow you to marry into his family as his Secondary Crown Princess Consort.”

Ye Yuxuan thought that this was a fantastic idea. Not only would the Crown Prince be placated, but he could also send this troublemaker away. It would kill two birds with one stone. Before, Ye Yuxuan had thought that Ye Jiuge really had obtained some sort of treasure in the Wanzhang Depths, so he’d put up with her in every possible way. He hadn’t anticipated that Ye Jiuge would become so infuriating.

Even if there was a treasure, he didn’t want it anymore. Instead, he would let the Crown Prince have it as a token of gratitude for taking this problematic brat away from him!

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

“Secondary Crown Princess Consort?” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrow, smiled insincerely, and said, “Father, are you really planning to let your legitimate daughter, Great Master Yun’s granddaughter, become the Crown Prince’s concubine? Furthermore, why are you pursuing this on the basis that I was previously betrothed to the Crown Prince when I didn’t even want to marry him as the Crown Princess Consort?”

She had not been willing to become his Crown Princess Consort, so why would they ask her to become his concubine? The Crown Prince and Ye Yuxuan’s brains must have been kicked by the same mule.

“Jiuge, even if you used to be a noblewoman, you’ve marred your own reputation over all these years. Since the Crown Prince is willing to let you marry into his family, your heart should be full of gratitude,” Ye Yuxuan said disapprovingly.

If Ye Jiuge were an incomparably brilliant legitimate daughter with a high level of cultivation, then, naturally, he would not make her marry the Crown Prince as a concubine. Otherwise, when it became publicly known, the Ye Clan would be a laughingstock. However, Ye Jiuge was infamous in the capital as an incompetent, hideous woman. Even if she had performed some impressive feats recently, the people who knew about them were a minority. If he made her marry the Crown Prince as a concubine, no one would fault him for it. Instead, they would show their approval because he did not sully the position of the Crown Princess Consort with an incompetent, hideous woman from his own clan.

Ye Jiuge ignored Ye Yuxuan's brainless demand. She poured another cup of tea for herself and savored it carefully. Hmm, the taste is quite decent. It was unfortunate that it was still slightly inferior to the Spiritual Tea served at Dongfang Que's residence.

When Ye Yuxuan saw that Ye Jiuge refused to acknowledge what he said, he was not angry at all. He paid no heed to her and proceeded to act as he wished. He said, "Fine. I have decided to send you to the Crown Prince's Residence after seven days to be his Secondary Crown Princess Consort."

Seven days. Not only that, he would escort her there personally. He should not f*cking disguise this as 'sending' her to the Crown Prince to become his Secondary Crown Princess Consort. He was clearly selling her off to the Crown Prince as a sex slave!

Ye Jiuge set down her teacup. Her eyes were dark as she spoke coldly, "What if I am unwilling?"

"If you are unwilling, fine. Then, you should move out of the Ye Residence and scram. In the future, dead or alive, you will have nothing to do with the Ye Residence," Ye Yuxuan said callously.

"If you want me out of the Ye Residence, I am fine with that." Ye Jiuge's slim fingers moved around in circles on top of the teacup. Yet, the voice that came from her mouth was as cold and hard as nails. "However, when I leave, I want to take the things my grandfather left for me."

"What are you getting at?" Ye Yuxuan furrowed his brow, and deep lines appeared on his forehead.

"Father, I think that you can't have forgotten that you were the one who married into the Yun Clan on the condition that you would use Yun as your last name. Even though you renamed the Yun Clan's official residence as the 'Ye Residence' without permission and transferred ownership of the estates from my mother's name to yours, you can never change the fact that these assets were bequeathed by my grandfather to my mother."

Moreover, she was truly the only descendant of the Yun bloodline. If someone had to leave, it should be Ye Yuxuan. He should bring those concubines of his along with him and get out of her Yun Residence.

“What kind of nonsense are you blabbering? I worked hard to single-handedly earn this wealth.” Ye Yuxuan was so infuriated that he flushed with anger.

“Haha. Right or wrong, others are capable of judging you with universally acknowledged moral and ethical principles. There are some things in this world that cannot be judged in the way you want simply because you bury your head in the sand.”

When Ye Jiuge saw that Ye Yuxuan was so mad that he was about to go off the deep end, she gave him a kind reminder, “You should go back and consider which is more important: the prestige attached to your name or winning the Crown Prince’s favor. If I really sever my familial ties with the Ye Clan and leave this house with nothing, others will condemn you behind your back, and criticize you as a disloyal, unfilial man blinded by wealth to the point that you have forgotten your humanity. Not only that, but you also murdered your wife and abandoned your daughter. You are such a cruel and unscrupulous creature; even pigs and dogs are better than you.”

“You, you, you...” Ye Yuxuan was so furious that he could feel blood frothing at the back of his throat. The tip of the finger that he was pointing at Ye Jiuge was trembling uncontrollably.

“Qing Mama, Father seems quite unwell. Please find someone to send him back to his residence quickly so that he doesn’t die here. If his anger triggers a sudden cardiac arrest, I do not want others entertaining themselves with the Ye Clan’s dirty laundry for nothing,” Ye Jiuge told Qing Mama in a relaxed manner.

At her side, Qing Mama brimmed with distress. She wanted to advise Eldest Miss to speak less and not provoke Ye Yuxuan further, but she did not dare. When she saw that Eldest Miss had issued an order, she hurried closer to Ye Yuxuan and tried to placate him.

“Old Master, please quell your anger. Eldest Miss is still young. You just have to teach her how to act properly over time.”

Ye Yuxuan had always loved taking out his anger on someone else. When he saw the old servant by Ye Jiuge’s side approach him, he raised his hand without the slightest hesitation and gave her face a tight slap.

Pa! A crisp sound rang out. However, this blow landed on Ye Jiuge, who had shielded Qing Mama from the front. Ye Yuxuan hit her small face with so much force that it jerked violently to the side. Not only that, it immediately became red and swollen, and her teeth accidentally bit into the corner of her lips. A hint of blood oozed from the opening.

Ye Jiuge lifted her hand to wipe away the blood from the corner of her lips. She looked at Ye Yuxuan expressionlessly before saying, "Father, are you satisfied with this slap?"

Ye Yuxuan looked at Ye Jiuge's dead, black eyes. All of a sudden, he felt a sense of guilt. He let out a cold 'hmph' before leaving in a hurry.

"Eldest Miss, why would you be so foolish? I am merely a servant. If Old Master could have given me a beating to appease his anger, then we could have let this pass. What were you thinking when you rushed over here?"

Qing Mama felt a lump in her throat, and tears instantly streamed down her old face. She'd deliberately moved closer to Ye Yuxuan's side with the thought that, after he'd hit her several times, she could pacify his anger. Then, everything would be fine. It hadn't occurred to her that Eldest Miss would pull her away and endure the slap in her place.

"You are not a servant. You are the closest person to me." Ye Jiuge's face was so puffy that it was shaped like a round steamed bun. Even speaking was painful for her.

After her mother passed away, if Qing Mama had not protected her, it was very likely that Su Yufeng and her daughter would have eaten her alive, down to her skin and bones! Because of her, Qing Mama had suffered many hardships. She had always wanted to repay her for that. Other than compensating her with material items, she wanted to return the favor emotionally. This was why she'd made a move to receive this slap on Qing Mama's behalf. Ye Jiuge had wanted to use this action to let Qing Mama know that it was useless to demean oneself and lick Ye Yuxuan's boots.

Qing Mama wiped away her old woman's tears. As she prepared ice cubes for Ye Jiuge to apply to her face, she thought fiercely to herself, if Ye Yuxuan is such a despicable man with no conscience who has already stopped treating Eldest Miss like his daughter, then she will no longer respect him as her Old Master.

"I don't need this ice compress. I still need to head outside tomorrow to present this face to the public."

Tomorrow, on her way to the palace to see the Empress, Ye Jiuge planned to take the long way so everyone could see the harm that Ye Yuxuan had inflicted on her. She would not need to say anything more after that. The imagination of the people living in the capital would run wild. As long as she instructed someone to guide the direction of their thoughts slightly, she would, without a doubt, make the Empress and Ye Yuxuan feel regret. She would regard this as a gift to the Empress in return for the way she'd treated her. That way, the Empress would not think that sitting on the phoenix throne really made her the most esteemed woman in the realm.

In an instant, Qing Mama read Ye Jiuge's mind and knew what she was planning to do. She was also being incredibly supportive by giving her a bottle of Golden Wound Remedy, which had been one of her prized possessions for many years. She said, "Eldest Miss, you should apply this to your face. I guarantee that you will be satisfied with the results."

Ye Jiuge was dubious. She dabbed the Golden Wound Remedy on her face. After a length of time similar to the time it takes to boil a pot of tea, her cheeks, which had initially only been slightly swollen, immediately became black and blue. Her whole face blew up so much that it became even larger than a pig's head. When a person looked at her, they would think that someone had used the sole of a shoe to beat her face a few hundred times.

"Isn't this excessive?" Ye Jiuge stared at her utterly unrecognizable face after the Golden Wound Remedy had transformed it. Appearing in public with this pig face would be extremely challenging!

"I want everyone in the capital to find out what kind of man Ye Yuxuan is," Qing Mama said ruthlessly.

In the past, to remain in Ye Yuxuan's good books, she'd always urged Eldest Miss to put up with him. However, the slap that Eldest Miss had received today had made it clear to her that if she continued to exercise forbearance toward people who were undeserving and reprehensible, they would only step on her.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

"It's all settled then. You must go to the stable now to arrange for a horse carriage on my behalf. Tomorrow, I want to visit Yuwu Teahouse and sit there for a while," Ye Jiuge instructed Qing Mama.

The Yuwu Teahouse was the most popular gathering place among the younger generations of aristocratic families. These young nobles were undaunted by the repercussions of their actions, and they dared to talk about anything and everything. Most of all, they liked to gossip. Before, when Ye Jiuge had put the Crown Prince in his place, these young aristocrats were the reason

news of the incident had spread like wildfire. Not only that, they had created an atmosphere of sympathy for her. When they saw this pig-looking face of hers today, their conversations would liven up.

"I'll make arrangements now." Qing Mama curtseyed.

She was about to leave when Ye Jiuge stopped her in her tracks, saying, "I need you to do another thing for me. Help me send out invitations to Lord Bai and Lord Wan to meet at Yuwu Teahouse tomorrow afternoon."

She intended to use this opportunity to ask about the relationship between Bai Songling and Dongfang Que so that she could be clear about how they were related to each other. If she was to ally with them, they needed to be frank with her.

"Alright, noted."

Out of the blue, a cheerful expression appeared on Qing Mama's face. She went outside in high spirits. In the past, she had asked around and found out that Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling were both talented and handsome young men from the Justice Department. Their faces would match well with her Eldest Miss'. Ye Jiuge was not aware that Qing Mama was trying to play matchmaker for her again with random men. She turned her face to the left and right, scrutinizing herself in the mirror. When she was contemplating whether to make her lips paler, Zi Shang's figure appeared.

Ye Jiuge jumped out of her skin. She hugged her chest and spoke fiercely, "Don't you tell me that you are going to punish me for this." She really would turn against him.

Fortunately, Zi Shang was not that psychotic. He reached out with his hand and caressed Ye Jiuge gently once, before speaking in a lowered voice, "Fool!"

His fingers were cold, yet they carried warmth. His tone was calm but laced with heartache. For some inexplicable reason, Ye Jiuge found herself with mixed feelings. Before, when Qing Mama had felt sorry for her, it had not been a huge deal. Now that Zi Shang's heart pained for her, she felt an unfathomable urge to act affectionately toward him. How repulsive! This kind of d*mn emotion should not exist inside a tough woman like her.

Ye Jiuge pretended to be indifferent as she said, "This seemed serious, but actually, it's bearable."

Zi Shang did not reply. The tip of his cool fingers brushed across Ye Jiuge's red and swollen cheeks. A chilly stream of energy seeped into her skin. Ye Jiuge was astonished to find that her face no longer hurt. She quickly went to look at herself in the mirror and discovered that her injury was more grotesque than earlier. Her face was so swollen that she could not even open her eyes properly.

“You must have done it deliberately!” Ye Jiuge looked askance at Zi Shang.

Feeling pleased, Zi Shang retracted his fingertips. Perhaps, others might find Ye Jiuge very unattractive with such a face. However, she looked adorable to him, even when her face was hideous. As expected, an ordinary person would not be able to make heads or tails of the psychopath’s inner thoughts.

“By the way, Zi Shang, do you know what kind of Demonic Poison was in Dongfang Que’s body?” When Ye Jiuge realized that Zi Shang was in a good mood, she took advantage of it and asked what she wanted to know.

“Of course.” Ye Jiuge could not hide her devious thoughts from him.

However, he’d observed that this young girl had been through a lot, so he decided to be kind to her, for once, and help her. “Dongfang Que was poisoned with a King Poison that came from a Level Five Demonic Beast, the White Jade Spider.”

“That was a King Poison!” Ye Jiuge was horrified.

That was why the Spiritual Doctors could not identify it. The most powerful of the Level Five Demonic Beasts were all living in seclusion in the deepest parts of the Demonic Race’s territory. Only a few legendary, brilliant Spiritual Practitioners could set foot in that area. Even if an ordinary person wanted to enter that place, there was no way for them to do so without being killed.

She had never heard of a Spiritual Practitioner in the Lei Kingdom who was so exceptional that he or she was capable of this. If this were the case, how did the Empress procure the King Poison? Furthermore, Elderly Lady Xu, who had worked for the Empress, had practiced black magic. Where had they found her? Was there any link between her and the Su Clan? Did Emperor Xuanwu know anything about this? Puzzling questions appeared in Ye Jiuge’s mind, one by one, but she could not find any answers.

“Stop thinking about it. Anyway, this has nothing to do with you.” Zi Shang disliked seeing Ye Jiuge stress about other people.

“How can this be none of my business? If they can obtain a King Poison from the White Jade Spider King to harm Dongfang Que, they can get their hands on another Demonic Poison to harm me. How could I not safeguard myself against that?” Ye Jiuge spoke in a displeased manner.

“You think too highly of yourself.” Zi Shang’s face was deadpan.

Did she think that King Poison could be so easily acquired? In a worst-case scenario, even if Ye

Yiuge was poisoned with an extremely potent Demonic Poison that could rival a King Poison, he could help her neutralize it.

Ye Yiuge was accustomed to Zi Shang pouring cold water on her opinions. Therefore, she did not feel self-conscious. She persisted, "Do you have a way to save Dongfang Que?"

"Why should I save him?" He considered himself very forgiving for not severing that bold human brat's limbs and grinding him into a meat patty when he'd dared to touch his woman.

"Because I accepted his payment in exchange for medical consultation. If you don't help me save him, then I can only think of other ways of compensating him." Ye Yiuge deliberately emphasized the word 'compensate.' As for what she meant by 'other ways,' she would let Zi Shang guess himself!

As expected, Zi Shang's face immediately darkened. He growled, "Isn't it just a small Spiritual Whip? That's only a lousy chain whip separated into six sections. There's nothing special about it."

"If you are capable of gifting me something better, then you can give me a Spiritual Whip with nine sections as a present!" Ye Yiuge said on purpose.

It was challenging for Zi Shang to even pass a technique to her via mental transference. He would not be able to offer her anything of value. Ye Yiuge's guess was not wrong. All of Zi Shang's old treasures were not with him. Right now, for him to materialize, he had to depend fully on the Soul Contract that he'd signed with her. At this point, he could not gift her anything good.

However, he was unfazed. He said, "It is true that I am not able to give you a Spiritual Whip with nine sections right now. Since you like that inferior whip, then you should accept it. I will help you save him." He would consider this a contribution toward Ye Yiuge's payment for her medical consultation.

"I just knew that you give me the best treatment."

Ye Yiuge was slightly affectionate. It was a rare occurrence. Although her sappy way of speaking revolted her, Zi Shang quite enjoyed hearing it. As soon as he was in a good mood, he told her how to save Dongfang Que.

As it turned out, the Icy Snow Spider King lived deep in the snowy mountains. The poison from its body was the coldest in existence. If they wanted to remove this kind of Ice Poison from his body, they needed to find the fieriest Spiritual Herb, a Level Five Fire Dragon Herb, and perform acupuncture using the Lightning Fire Needle. Only then would they be able to neutralize the Ice Poison.

“Where can I find a Level Five Fire Dragon Herb?” Ye Jiuge felt slightly worried. Since this kind of Spiritual Herb sounded so impressive, it would be very likely that she would need to go to great lengths to get her hands on it.

“If you can help him expel the poison from his body, that will be good enough. Don’t tell me that you still want to help him search for the Spiritual Herb?”

Zi Shang felt that this young girl was too stupid. As a human prince, wouldn’t Dongfang Que be more powerful and influential than her? She did not need to get all worked up about this.

“That’s right!”

Ye Jiuge also realized that she had tied herself in knots over nothing. Even if they only relied on the Bai Clan’s power in Dong Ling and the Capital and randomly dispatched a few teams of men and horses to ask around about the Fire Spiritual Herb, they would still be more efficient than her.

“Enough. Stop overthinking. You should have a good night’s sleep!” Zi Shang prodded the area between Ye Jiuge’s brows lightly.

A sense of drowsiness overcame her at once. She grasped the front pieces of her jacket and said sleepily, “I don’t want to sleep with you!”

“Idiot!” Zi Shang carried Ye Jiuge in his arms like a princess.

He placed her on the bed gently and tucked her in by covering her with a blanket. After that, he returned to the imprint on her wrist.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

Ye Jiuge had an excellent sleep, enveloped in Zi Shang’s faint fragrance.

The next morning, after she washed her face and rinsed her mouth, Qing Mama came to the house and reported, "Eldest Miss, the horse-drawn carriage is ready. Lord Wan and Lord Bai responded earlier this morning saying that they would be punctual for your appointment. Will you be going over now?"

"Yes, I'll go now!"

Ye Jiuge knew that Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling would arrive early. It wouldn't be polite for her to make them wait. She dressed in a mauve blind-stitched tunic with a clove design and put on a matching curtain hat. She refused Qing Mama's company and went to the Yuwu Teahouse alone.

As she exited the carriage, she removed her curtain hat, successfully scaring off the shop assistant.

"Lady, we are a teahouse, not a medical center." You must be in the wrong place!

"That's right, I am here to drink tea." Ye Jiuge, whose face was swollen like a pig's, replied aggressively.

"I apologize, but our main hall has been reserved. I am afraid there are no other seats," the shop assistant refused her tactfully.

Ye Jiuge's face was too frightening. If she were to sit in the main hall, the other customers could not converse and enjoy their tea.

"It's fine. I reserved the Xueshan Private Room. Lead the way!" Although Ye Jiuge's goal was to show off her swollen pig face, the endless stares of the customers in the teahouse were making her impatient.

"The Xueshan Private Room has been reserved by the Ye Clan. Could it be that you are the Eldest Miss Ye?"

The shop assistant gasped in astonishment. He almost blurted out "who hit you?" However, he knew his place and forcefully swallowed his tongue.

"You don't say? Can't you recognize me from the black scar on my face?"

Although the shop assistant was inexperienced, indirectly, he had helped Ye Jiuge achieve her desired effect.

"I have eyes but failed to recognize Mt. Tai. Eldest Miss Ye, please forgive me! This way, please!" The shop assistant finally realized that the woman was indeed Ye Jiuge.

As Ye Jiuge followed the shop assistant to the second floor, she heard all kinds of talk behind her back:

“How did the Eldest Miss Ye get beaten up like this?”

“Who knows!”

“Oh, I heard that she visited the palace yesterday to see the Empress. Could it be?”

The meaning behind these words was self-evident!

“It’s hard to tell. Everyone knows that the Empress and Crown Prince dislike her.”

“Not only the Empress and Crown Prince, but I also heard that her own father, Great Master Ye, has some complaints about her.”

“Truly, this motherless child was born under an ill star!”

“No, she is unfortunate because she lost her grandfather...”

Ye Jiuge was most satisfied with the contents of these discussions. After entering the Xueshan Private Room, she ordered a pot of Longjing tea picked before the Grain Rain and a few plates of peanuts and broad beans. She ate with relish while enjoying the scenery outside the window.

Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling arrived at the Yuwu Teahouse in time to hear the customers in the main hall discussing Ye Jiuge. They were chatting about how the Empress, Crown Prince, and Ye Jiuge’s Father had taken turns smacking her face with a shoe board. Her face was, at the moment, swollen like a pig’s head. Those who had seen or heard about what had happened to Ye Jiuge grieved for her.

Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling were startled. Quickly, they entered the private room and saw the victim, who ought to be inconsolable, eating joyfully. She was helping herself to a mouthful of broad beans one minute then sipping tea the next.

“Come, quickly, take a seat, take a seat!” Ye Jiuge smiled and welcomed them.

Her swollen pig face made her smile look uglier than her weeping face.

“Eldest Miss Ye, what is wrong with your face?” asked Bai Songling. When he saw her yesterday, Ye Jiuge had been fine. What could have happened in just one night?

"It's nothing. I accidentally made Father angry." Ye Jiuge sighed, revealing a hint of a sorrowful expression.

"Is it because of the Empress and Crown Prince?" Bai Songling frowned and asked. He had not expected Ye Yuxuan to be a good-for-nothing capable of behaving so viciously and mercilessly towards his eldest daughter.

"The Dongling Prince as well!" That was the main issue.

Bai Songling was silent. After a long time, he finally heaved a long sigh and said, "We have implicated you."

His words admitted the nature of his relationship with Dongfang Que.

"Big Brother Bai, what exactly is the nature of the relationship between you and the Dongling Prince?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"It's a long story." Clearly, Bai Songling did not want to explain further. He simply said, "Although my last name is Bai, I am not part of the Bai Clan. I came to know the Dongling Prince by coincidence. As such, I am helping him do something."

"I see!"

Bai Songling's reply satisfied Ye Jiuge. After all, she could not expect Bai Songling to be so candid as to tell her stories about his ancestors and the past eight generations of his family.

Wan Ziyang silently took out a bottle of spiritual medicine for external use. He placed it near Ye Jiuge's hands and said, "Apply this!"

"There's no need. This injury may look scary, but it has already healed on the inside." Ye Jiuge pushed back the medicine and smiled. "Do you really think that I can't heal my own face?"

Bai Songling immediately understood Ye Jiuge's meaning. He shook his head helplessly and said, "Even if you want to deal with the Empress and Crown Prince, there's no need to ruin your own body!"

Ye Jiuge did not want to discuss the topic any further. She straightened her face and said solemnly, "Actually, I invited the two of you here to discuss the demonic poison in the Dongling Prince's body."

Bai Songling's heart jumped. He could not control himself and asked, "Have you found a way to help His Highness cure the poison?"

“That’s right. I went back and took a careful look at the medical book that my grandfather left me and realized that the poison afflicting the Dongling Prince is the King Poison from the Ice Snow Spider King, a fifth stage demonic beast,” Ye Jiuge said gravely.

“A King Poison?” Bai Songling gasped in shock.

Wan Ziyang’s brow furrowed. The creases in his forehead were almost deep enough to trap and kill a fly. They all knew what a King Poison meant, and the mood became somber.

“The two of you need not worry so much. There is actually a way to cure it. If you can find a fifth stage Fire Dragon Herb, I will be able to help His Highness configure an antidote,” Ye Jiuge repeated Zi Shang’s words.

“Fifth stage Fire Dragon Herb!” Bai Songling exclaimed.

The agony on his face was evident. The best quality herbs currently found in the Lei Country belonged to the third stage. A fifth stage spiritual herb had not been heard of for many years. How were they supposed to find one?

Ye Jiuge saw that the men’s spirits were low and encouraged them. “If the Empress can find the King Poison of a fifth stage demonic beast, we can find the fifth stage Fire Dragon Herb!”

“Yes, you are right.” Bai Songling instantly pulled himself together. He planned to return and inform Dongfang Que and the Bai Clan of this news.

In any case, the demonic poison was not life-threatening; they had time to hunt for the spiritual herb. Even if they could not find it for a year, they would continue searching for five. If five years still proved insufficient, they would search for another ten. Bai Songling refused to believe that they would never find it.

Since the matter regarding the spiritual herb could not be rushed, Ye Jiuge asked Wan Ziyang, “Big Brother Wan, I heard that you went to the Heyang County to investigate a homicide case. What is the situation?”

“Several girls have been found with their blood sucked dry in the Heyang County. But by the time I rushed there, their bodies had already been cremated. Even their skeletons could not be found.” As he spoke, the expression on Wan Ziyang’s handsome face darkened.

Translator: Nyo-i-Bo Studio Editor: Nyo-i-Bo Studio

As it turned out, the Heyang County's magistrate was a brainless idiot. He believed the rumors in the street and thought that if he did not immediately cremate the remains of the girls whose blood had been sucked out, they would become zombies.

Before Wan Ziyang could reach the crime scene, the girls' corpses had already been burned. All the eyewitnesses had also been killed. The magistrate, with the courage of his convictions, had argued to Wan Ziyang that he had gotten rid of the evil for the greater good.

Wan Ziyang had been so angry that he had almost killed the idiot with a slap. For now, the idiot magistrate was imprisoned in the Justice Department, but Wan Ziyang wanted him locked up for life.

"Did the Su Clan do it?" This was Ye Jiuge's primary concern.

Wan Ziyang shook his head and said, "I could not find any concrete evidence that the Su Clan was responsible."

Lately, Su Junqing had been as obedient as a baby. He had not stepped outside his residence, and the brothels and properties suspected to be connected to him were keeping a low profile. They had not bought or sold any small girls, and Wan Ziyang could not find a single clue.

Ye Jiuge frowned. Su Junqing was someone who planned rigorously. If he were deliberately hiding something, it would be even harder to obtain information to use against him.

Suddenly, Ye Jiuge thought of something. She immediately said, "Oh, the Elderly Lady Xu, who fought me in the palace yesterday, is a sorceress!"

"What?" Bai Songling was startled.

He had heard of the Elderly Lady Xu from Lady Hongxiu. Apparently, she was the Empress's right-hand woman, and she handled all the Empress's matters involving human lives. In recent years, countless palace maids and court eunuchs had died at her hands. They had thought that the

Empress used such bloody means to make a statement without realizing that the real purpose of this cruelty was to enable Elderly Lady Xu's Black Magic practice.

"The background of this Elderly Lady Xu must be thoroughly investigated." Wan Ziyang's sculpture-like facial features were as grave as a stone statue.

Ever since he had seen the small girls in the underground room who had been tortured and killed by the sorcerer, he had possessed a deep-seated hatred for sorcerers and wished that he could eliminate all of them in a single stroke.

"Yes, I fear that this Elderly Lady Xu is not simple. Investigate her thoroughly. Perhaps, something can be found. However, the two of you need to be careful. Although she is only an Advanced Spiritual Practitioner, she has formed the Spiritual Light of Protection around half of her body. Dealing with her won't be so easy."

Ye Jiuge recalled her fight with Elderly Lady Xu: had Lady Hongxiu not arrived in time with Emperor Xuanwu, it would have cost her dearly.

"She has formed the Spiritual Light of Protection?" Bai Songling exclaimed in quiet alarm.

Both he and Wan Ziyang were Intermediate Spiritual Practitioners, but they were gifted and possessed extraordinary spiritual powers. As such, they were usually able to hold their own against Advanced Spiritual Practitioners in a fight. However, if Elderly Lady Xu had already formed the Spiritual Light of Protection, even if they joined hands, they would be no match for her.

"The two of you don't need to worry so much. These sorcerers cultivate using the grudges of the dead. An item with adequate masculine energy, Yang Qi, can subdue them." Ye Jiuge recalled something that Zi Shang had once said to her.

"What is an item with adequate Yang Qi?" Bai Songling asked. If it was not challenging to obtain, he wanted to carry a dozen at all times in case of emergency.

"Probably the prayer beads of the Buddhist Practitioners, the amulets of Daoist Priests, swords made of peach wood, the blood of a black dog, and so on." Ye Jiuge recalled the zombie movies she had seen. These items tended to be the treasures used in exorcisms.

"There are neither Buddhist Practitioners nor Daoist Priests in our Lei Country. What is a black dog? Is it a spiritual beast?" Bai Songling asked, puzzled.

Although there were temples and monks in the Lei Country, these monks were not Spiritual Practitioners. To become a Buddhist Practitioner, the aspirant needed to start by seeking enlightenment in the Tianchan Mountain of the West. After that, he had to deliver all living beings

from suffering. The cultivation process was arduous and could not be accomplished simply by sitting in a temple and chanting Buddhist texts.

Daoist Priests, on the other hand, gathered in the Qingyun Mountain of the East, which was a hundred and eight thousand miles away from the Lei Country. As for black dogs, there were no such spiritual beasts in the Lei Country. They could only be found in the Wanshou Mountain.

Ye Jiuge used to think that spiritual power alone was revered on the continent. She had not realized that so many different forces were entrenched. Sure enough, the world was vast and full of extraordinary things. Ye Jiuge had only glimpsed the tip of the iceberg.

“Oh, there is some peach wood. Although, how can swords be crafted using peach wood?” Wan Ziyang asked.

They couldn’t just chop branches off the peach trees and use them directly, could they? If they could, wouldn’t sorcerers be too vulnerable?

“I have only heard about it; I am not so sure about the specifics.” Ye Jiuge suddenly regretted putting her heart and soul exclusively into completing missions. She had never bothered to learn more about exorcism.

“Stupid!” Zi Shang could not bear it anymore. He took the initiative and said, “Both of them have an abundance of Yang Qi already; they don’t need to find a black dog’s blood. They just have to bite the tip of their tongues and spit out their spiritual blood when they face the sorceress, and they will be able to subdue her.”

Especially Wan Ziyang—his spiritual root was Lightning Fire, the most powerful of all Fire Spiritual Roots, and it had a natural subduing effect on sorcerers. However, his cultivation was insufficient; hence, he could be suppressed by sorcerers. When his cultivation increased, his Lightning Fire would be capable of burning up all these filthy things.

Ye Jiuge quickly relayed Zi Shang’s words to Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling.

“Many thanks to Eldest Miss Ye for the advice!”

Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang were not afraid of sorcerers, but they were uneasy when it came to the unknown. Now that they knew how to subdue the sorcerers, they felt more confident about handling them.

“It’s getting late. Let’s conclude our discussion. Stay in contact if there is any news,” Ye Jiuge said.

They had been conversing for more than an hour. All the information they needed to discuss had

been exchanged.

“Do you need us to escort you home?” Wan Ziyang asked.

“No need.” Ye Jiuge was not a child anymore.

She got onto the horse-drawn carriage and returned to the Zilin Residence, where she found Fifth Concubine and Ye Ruyi waiting inside.

“Eldest Miss—your face?” Fifth Concubine was startled when she saw Ye Jiuge.

“Father hit me.” Ye Jiuge took a seat, prepared to impart a lesson to Fifth Concubine and her daughter.

“How could Father do this to you?” Ye Ruyi frowned.

Her adorable face was filled with outrage. Her Eldest Sister was the person she respected the most; nobody, not even their father, could bully her.

“There is nothing to be done, it’s my fault for not listening to him and kowtowing apologetically to the Empress and Crown Prince.” Ye Jiuge sighed. The pretense of her sorrowful and grievous look appeared genuine.

Fifth Concubine opened her mouth, but she did not know how to comfort Ye Jiuge. She understood Ye Yuxuan’s violent tendencies better than anyone. Ever since Ye Yuxuan had kicked her, her body had not been as nimble.

Ye Ruyi said indignantly, “Eldest Sister did nothing wrong. Why should he make you go and apologize to the Empress and Crown Prince?”

Father is trying to humiliate Eldest Sister by making her grovel and apologize. It is clear that the Crown Prince and Second Sister are fooling around. They abhor Eldest Sister and have even tried to kill her.

Father clearly knows that it was not Eldest Sister’s fault, but he has directed all the blame to her. He is unable to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil. He is not worthy of being their father!

Translator: Nyoi-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoi-Bo Studio

“In Father’s eyes, there is no such thing as affection, only utility. No matter how well he is treating you now, he is only thinking of using you. Do you understand?” explained Ye Jiuge.

She had not wished to teach Ye Ruyi this lesson so soon. However, recent events had demonstrated how sinister the people in the Ye Residence really were—they would not even spare a child. Instead of allowing Ye Ruyi to die ignorantly, she might as well help her mature sooner rather than later so she could find a way to protect herself. If not, Ye Yuxuan would foolishly sell her off.

Fifth Concubine felt that such dark things should not be said to her daughter and was about to advise Ye Jiuge against it. However, Ye Ruyi nodded her head forcefully and said, “I know. Father only wants me to help him produce pills.”

Although Ye Ruyi was still young, she’d endured hardships while growing up. Furthermore, she had lived through a terrifying kidnapping, so her mind was maturing early. Already, she understood when someone was being genuine with her and when they were putting up an act.

“Good sister, you just need to know this in your heart. Do not reveal even the tiniest bit in front of Father. If not, what happened to Eldest Sister today will be your fate tomorrow.” Ye Jiuge intentionally placed her terrifying swollen pig head in front of Ye Ruyi.

“Eldest Sister, is it excruciating?” Ye Ruyi sniffled as her eyes brimmed with tears. She looked as though she wanted to touch Ye Jiuge’s face but did not dare.

“It’s alright. It doesn’t hurt now.” When Ye Jiuge saw that she had made the young lady cry, she felt terrible about it.

“Oh, I have made some medicine for you. Take a look and see if you can use it.” Ye Ruyi turned and took out a small jade bottle from the giftbox on the table. Slightly bashfully, she said, “This was my first time producing medicine. I am not sure if it will be effective.”

“Sure, I will test it out.”

Ye Jiuge opened the jade bottle and sniffed. The medicine's smell was quite strong, but the heat control during its production had been slightly off. However, for a young lady producing medicine for the first time, it was quite impressive. A Wood Fire Spiritual Root was indeed extraordinary—no wonder Ye Yuxuan treated Ye Ruyi like a treasure.

"When Ruyi heard that you were beaten by Old Master yesterday, she immediately went and made this medicine," Fifth Concubine said.

It would be a lie to say that Fifth Concubine did not feel sad that the first time her daughter had produced medicine was neither for her nor the Old Master, but the Eldest Miss. On second thought, the Eldest Miss had been affectionate and sincere to her and her daughter. She had even saved their lives a few times.

Now, her daughter had demonstrated that she was a grateful person, thinking of the Eldest Miss in all respects. A person who knew how to be grateful would not grow up to become wicked. As she considered this, Fifth Concubine felt better.

"Little girl, you still have a little conscience left." Ye Jiuge pressed Ye Ruyi's forehead, then said to Qing Mama, "Bring the personal letters about pill production that I have prepared."

Recently, Ye Jiuge had been collating what she had learned from producing pills. On the one hand, this practice was a form of study. On the other, Ye Jiuge also wanted to keep the notes for Ye Ruyi.

Although Ye Yuxuan had given Ye Ruyi many books about pill production, the contents were cryptic and too tricky for a seven-year-old girl. As such, Ye Jiuge had deliberately written using easy-to-understand colloquial words to allow Ye Ruyi to read side by side for comparison, enabling her to improve significantly.

"Many thanks, Eldest Sister!" Ye Ruyi received the personal letters as though they were a treasure and impatiently started to read them.

She was fascinated after only a few sentences. As it had been her first time producing medicine, she had encountered many problems. After checking the books her father had given her, she was still confused. When she read her Eldest Sister's personal letters, she immediately understood—it was as though her head was anointed with the purest cream. She had a feeling that Eldest Sister was an even better Spiritual Alchemist than Father.

"That's enough. Go back to your room and read them. Don't disturb the Eldest Miss's rest," Fifth Concubine advised softly. Books about pill production always fascinated her daughter, and the girl did not listen to anything her mother said.

“Okay.” Ye Ruyi’s eyes were still glued to the book. Without lifting her head, she said to Ye Jiuge, “Eldest Sister, have a good rest. I will come and visit you again when I am free.”

“When you go back, you are not allowed to read the books if you neglect sleep and forget about food. If not, these personal letters will be confiscated.” Ye Jiuge drew the books out of Ye Ruyi’s hands and threatened her.

“I know, Eldest Sister. Please give them back to me!” Ye Ruyi replied pitifully.

She wanted to stay up all night to finish reading her Eldest Sister’s personal letters, but after hearing Ye Jiuge’s warning, she would not dare.

“Eldest Miss, you have helped me a great deal,” Fifth Concubine said gratefully.

As she grew up, Ruyi was becoming more and more disobedient. She could only be controlled when Fifth Concubine mentioned Ye Jiuge.

“Go back and read the books carefully. You can ask me if you do not understand anything.” Ye Jiuge stroked Ye Ruyi’s head and asked Qing Mama to see them off.

In the days that followed, Ye Jiuge shut her door and declined to see any visitors using recuperation as an excuse. Ye Yuxuan had come to her residence when he had heard about the rumors in the streets. When he was barred from entering, he was so enraged that he wanted to tear down the Zilin Residence. However, he did nothing of the sort.

Rumors in the streets ran amok. They claimed that Ye Yuxuan had sold his daughter to please the Empress and the Crown Prince. Many of his fellow Spiritual Alchemists mocked him behind his back. For the time being, he did not dare lay a hand on Ye Jiuge.

Unfortunately, the Crown Prince was pressing him continuously. Finally, Ye Yuxuan wrote a letter to the Crown Prince saying that Ye Jiuge was unwilling to marry him as a concubine and told him to find a way to win her over himself.

Meanwhile, in the Fengyi Palace...

After the Crown Prince read Ye Yuxuan’s reply, he said tactfully to the Empress, “Mother, Ye Jiuge is disgusting and stubborn like the stones in the latrine pits. She would never marry me as a concubine.”

If the Empress had not suggested the idea, he never would have sought out Ye Yuxuan, even if he were being beaten to death.

"I was merely testing out Ye Yuxuan's attitude," said the Empress coolly. "As long as he is still willing to help you out, it does not matter if your request is successful or not."

"Mother is wise," the Crown Prince immediately buttered her up.

The Empress lifted a celadon teacup and moistened her throat. Then she said, "What did the Su Clan say about the matter regarding Su Yufeng and her daughter?"

It was strange that the Su Clan had not said a single word after Su Yufeng and her daughter had been confined for such a long time.

"I sought out Su Junqing and asked him, but his opinion was that the time had not yet come."

The Crown Prince was frustrated when he recalled his interaction with Su Junqing. He had tried to probe by asking Su Junqing about the matter regarding Ye Yu and the treasure map.

However, Su Junqing had claimed that he had absolutely no idea. Furthermore, he had the audacity to complain tearfully that his medicine warehouse on West Main Street had been burned down, causing him to suffer a significant loss. Su Junqing had wanted the Crown Prince to subsidize some of the damage. The Crown Prince had wanted to subsidize Su Junqing with a slap. If Su Junqing weren't useful for now, the Crown Prince would have gotten someone to cut him down.

"The Su Clan's Old Master should be leaving his spiritual retreat soon." The Empress looked pensive.

They would be more confident when the moment came for them to support Su Yufeng and her daughter if the Su Clan's Old Master had successfully reached the stage of Spiritual Master.

"I think so." The Crown Prince nodded. He had not laid a finger on Su Junqing because the same thought had also occurred to him.

"Is there anything going on with Dongfang Que?" the Empress questioned again.

"He's been in close contact with the Bai Clan lately; they seem to be searching for something. However, they have kept the information a closely guarded secret, and we were unable to ascertain the exact item. We could only determine that it is some sort of spiritual medicine." The Crown Prince did not take the matter seriously.

In recent years, the Bai Clan had left no stone unturned in their quest to help cure Dongfang Que of his poison. They did not miss an opportunity to try out any spiritual medicine rumored to be useful.

The Empress and the Crown Prince had tried to stop them a few times. However, after losing some of their manpower, they became disinclined to care.

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Translator: Nyoi-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoi-Bo Studio

“Okay.” The Empress did not take the Bai Clan’s matter seriously either, so she inquired about another issue, “What has that d*mned girl, Ye Jiuge, been up to recently?”

The Crown Prince’s heart thumped when he heard the Empress’s words. He glanced at her cautiously before replying, “I heard that she has been recuperating at home.”

“From what injury?” asked the Empress curiously.

As she resided in the Harem, she was not well-informed. The people around her did not dare mention the rumors spreading in the streets. She was still unaware that Ye Jiuge had framed her.

“Ye Jiuge was beaten by Ye Yuxuan after she returned to her residence from the palace. I heard that she was so badly beaten that her face swelled up like a pig’s head. It is likely that she will be disfigured.”

The Crown Prince had been gleeful when he first heard about the incident.

Since Ye Jiuge’s face was already scarred, now that she’s been beaten so badly that her head resembles a swollen pig’s, will she still have enough self-respect to see anyone?

“Idiot!” The Empress’s delicate facial features distorted. It was apparent that she was outraged.

Ye Jiuge was beaten immediately after leaving the palace. Wouldn’t that signal to everyone that the Empress was unhappy with Ye Jiuge?

The Crown Prince said nothing. The rumors outside were nasty at the moment, and he was trying to suppress the fire. He had not dared tell the Empress anything.

The Empress soon curbed her anger. She instructed the Crown Prince, "Forget it, handle these things later. The Alchemy Convention will be taking place soon; remember to start making preparations."

"Yes." The Crown Prince nodded respectfully, but he felt strange.

The Alchemy Convention was held annually. Those who performed brilliantly were usually the descendants of aristocratic families, so there was nothing much to prepare. However, since the Empress had instructed him, he could only do as commanded.

"I am getting tired. You may go!"

After the Empress dismissed the Crown Prince, she closed her eyes and began to contemplate while sitting on her phoenix chair. Night slowly fell, and darkness engulfed the majestic palace. Without the Empress's orders, the palace maids would not enter to light the lamps.

Elderly Lady Xu silently appeared in front of the Empress. She still smelled faintly of blood.

"Has the matter been handled?" asked the Empress. With her eyes closed, she gently massaged her temples.

"Your Majesty, please rest assured. Those talkative palace maids have been dealt with," Elderly Lady Xu answered respectfully.

Her old, cloudy eyes still glowed with a faint red light. This meant that Elderly Lady Xu had yet to withdraw from the state in which she practiced her Black Magic.

"By the way, Ye Jiuge is just a Beginner Spiritual Practitioner. How could she have injured you? Does she carry some treasures on her?" The Empress opened her eyes slightly.

After being tricked by Ye Jiuge, Elderly Lady Xu had immediately gone into a spiritual retreat at the Jinxiu Palace. The Empress had been forced to wait to ask her about what had happened.

"Although the d*mned girl has not attained an advanced level of cultivation, she practices the conventional Lightning Spiritual Power. She is also cunning and an expert in poisons. I was not paying attention and fell for it," Elderly Lady Xu said with hatred. "However, the d*mned girl doesn't seem to be that capable. Had the Emperor not appeared suddenly, I am confident that I could have killed her on the spot."

“Does that mean that the d*mned girl did not have any treasure on her?” the Empress asked.

“No, I did not find any treasure on her,” Elderly Lady Xu answered truthfully.

The Empress’s thin eyebrows knitted in a slight frown. She had witnessed the situation that day: Ye Jiuge had seemed like an arrow at the end of its flight. If she possessed anything that could have saved her life, she would not have kept it hidden.

Perhaps the d*mned girl is fated to live.

Elderly Lady Xu now spoke of another matter, “By the way, Your Majesty, my superior sent me a message saying that he has left the Heyang County. He should arrive in the capital a few days before the Alchemy Convention.”

“Okay. I will ask the Crown Prince to receive him when the moment comes. Oh, and ask him to exercise restraint and not make trouble over nothing,” the Empress warned. In recent years, she had helped clean up their messes too many times.

“Yes, I will try my best to pass on your message.”

Elderly Lady Xu bowed. Her superior was not someone to be trifled with, and he would likely treat her words like nonsense.

Forget it, she is only responsible for conveying the Empress’s message. He can do whatever he wishes.

“If there is nothing else, you may go.” The Empress gestured with her hand.

“Yes!” Elderly Lady Xu slowly retreated, her form disappearing into the darkness.

At that very moment, Ye Jiuge was sitting in front of her dressing table. She studied the scar on her face in the mirror and frowned as if her resentment were deeply ingrained. As the clotted blood on her face dissolved, unexpectedly, the black scar also began to peel off. Near her forehead, she could already see a patch of smooth, white skin. She examined the disappearing black scar and guessed that her original looks would be restored once the injury on her face healed.

Blast! This is not what she wants.

“Zi Shang, explain yourself honestly. What have you done to me?” Ye Jiuge asked solemnly.

“Nothing!” Zi Shang replied lazily. He had merely found the black scar on Ye Jiuge’s face offensive to the eye and accidentally knocked it off.

“Hmph, don’t lie to me. You must want to turn me into a woman of unmatched beauty. When those lascivious men pounce on me, you will blame me and find an excuse to punish me.” Ye Jiuge suspected that this perverted snake was addicted to punishing her and was deliberately laying a trap.

“Little Jiuge is so clever. Why don’t we change punishment methods next time?” Zi Shang’s low and alluring voice tickled like a feather sweeping past the tips of her ears, making her shudder involuntarily.

“Sure, my a*s.” Ye Jiuge had a sharp tongue but a soft heart. Although she had felt very comfortable at the end of her previous punishment, the process had been agonizing—she did not want to experience it again.

“Then it is pleasantly agreed.” Zi Shang ignored Ye Jiuge’s refusal and expressed that, next time, he would satisfy her even more.

Pervert! Ye Jiuge scorned him fiercely in her heart.

Just then, Qing Mama knocked on the door. She said jubilantly, “Eldest Miss, Lord Bai Songling has sent a card inviting you to the Bingxue Private Room in the Yuwu Teahouse for a gathering this afternoon.”

Qing Mama knew that the Eldest Miss was charismatic. The Crown Prince was a dirty dog and must be blind not to see her goodness.

“Okay.” Ye Jiuge took the charcoal pencil on the table and colored in the smooth white skin revealed on her forehead. Then, she changed her clothes and put on her curtain hat before leaving the residence.

This time, she did not remove her curtain hat when she entered the teahouse. The shop assistant who received her had probably received instructions, and he immediately brought her to the Bingxue Private Room.

Ye Jiuge saw that, in addition to Bai Songling, Dongfang Que was also present, sitting in his wheelchair. He wore a pale green blind-stitched robe, and his hair had been fastened in his crown. He looked handsome and other-worldly. His sullen eyes brightened immediately when he saw Ye Jiuge enter. His attractive and outstanding face dazzled as if bathed in bright light.

“This fellow must have fallen for you.” With a single glance, Zi Shang saw into Dongfang Que’s mind.

D*mn snake! He'd also said that Wan Ziyang had taken a shine to her. He must be sick!

Ye Jiuge mentally rolled her eyes at Zi Shang before waving hello to Dongfang Que as usual. "I did not expect Your Highness to be here. Is this a coincidence?"

"No, I intentionally instructed Bai Songling to ask you out." It was not appropriate for Dongfang Que to invite Ye Jiuge, so he'd had no choice but to ask Bai Songling for help.

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Translator: Nyoi-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoi-Bo Studio

"I see." Ye Jiuge glared at Bai Songling.

This fellow is not a good friend because he did not tell her in advance that Dongfang Que would be coming!

"Actually, His Highness wanted to ask you about the fifth stage Fire Dragon Herb."

Bai Songling smiled awkwardly. He had wanted to inform Ye Jiuge about Dongfang Que ahead of time, but the prince had not allowed him to. Dongfang Que had feared that Ye Jiuge would not come if she knew. He must have been joking. Ye Jiuge, with her fearless personality, would not be afraid of him.

Dongfang Que took over from Bai Songling and asked, "Eldest Miss Ye, where does this fifth stage Fire Dragon Herb grow?"

Although he had already sent word of this news to the Bai Clan, it was extremely challenging to find a fifth stage spiritual herb in these vast mountains.

"Fire Dragon Herbs are sun-loving and hot-natured plants. They usually grow near volcanoes or where molten lava has once flowed," Ye Jiuge replied. Getting this information from Zi Shang had not been easy.

“Volcanoes? Molten lava?” Dongfang Que stared blankly. What are these things?

“A volcano is a mountain that spews fire. A red river hotter than molten iron flows out from the inside of such a mountain,” Ye Jiuge explained.

“Such incredible mountains exist in this world?” Bai Songling found it unimaginable. There were only plains near the capital and not many mountains, let alone volcanoes.

Dongfang Que muttered to himself hesitantly for a moment. Finally, he said, “I once read a passage in a book of travel notes. It said that, a few thousand miles south of the river, there is a volcano that spews red rivers. Wherever the red river flows, plants and trees wither, and birds and beasts die. Could this be the volcano and molten lava that you speak of?”

“It should be.” Ye Jiuge nodded. She had never seen a volcano on this vast continent and was not very sure about it.

When Bai Songling heard that the volcano was a few thousand miles south of the river, he involuntarily sighed. The current transport system was still underdeveloped. People usually rode horses, and only a few owned spiritual beasts. Even if they traveled across the plains, a few thousand miles would take more than half a year to traverse. If they met an obstacle, like high mountains, it would take even longer.

“Many thanks to Eldest Miss Ye for telling us,” Dongfang Que expressed his gratitude calmly. As long as there was hope, he would definitely find the herb.

“You are welcome, Your Highness,” Ye Jiuge smiled and said. “Since

Your Highness has specially invited me here, you must have other matters to discuss with me.”

“You are right.” Dongfang Que saw that it was easy to speak freely with Ye Jiuge, so he spoke straightforwardly of his goal, “I would like you to help me save someone.”

“Who?” Ye Jiuge asked curiously.

Something about this person must not be so simple if Dongfang Que is personally asking her for help.

“A woman who can oppose the Empress,” Dongfang Que answered solemnly.

“Who is it?” Ye Jiuge’s eyebrows raised in surprise.

It would be incredibly magical if a woman existed who could oppose the vicious Empress.

“Imperial Consort Xi,” Dongfang Que spoke the words slowly.

“Oh, it’s her!” Ye Jiuge realized suddenly.

Imperial Consort Xi was famous. She was noble-born, the grand-niece of the Empress Dowager and the cousin of Emperor Xuanwu. Her beauty was said to be unparalleled. Furthermore, she was considerate, gentle, and very sensible.

Long ago, the Empress Dowager had wanted Consort Xi to marry Emperor Xuanwu, who had yet to ascend the throne, and be his legitimate wife. However, Consort Xi had requested to be Emperor Xuanwu’s concubine and gave way to the current Empress, whose maiden name was Xue. With the support of the Xue Clan, Emperor Xuanwu had successfully ascended the throne.

When Bai Linglong entered the palace, Consort Xi took good care of her. Emperor Xuanwu had wanted to promote Bai Linglong to Imperial Noble Consort, but she had refused using all sorts of excuses. She had argued that Consort Xi was more qualified than her to be the Imperial Noble Consort. However, Consort Xi had personally advised Bai Linglong, who finally agreed to be the Imperial Noble Consort. Meanwhile, Consort Xi was promoted to Imperial Consort. The two of them were as close as sisters and served Emperor Xuanwu together, and their story was spread far and wide, capturing the imagination of the people.

When Bai Linglong passed away from illness, Imperial Consort Xi fell gravely ill and never recovered. There was no further news of her. Some claimed that she had gone to the Emperor Temple to accompany the oil lamps before the statue of Buddha.

“Imperial Consort Xi was as close to my mother as a sister. After my mother passed away, she became afflicted with a strange illness. Tumors grew on her face, and even spiritual doctors were unable to treat her. She then requested to go to the Emperor Temple to personally tend to the ancestors’ graves. If you can treat her strange illness, she will be able to return to the palace,” Dongfang Que said.

While Dongfang Que could not be sure that his mother, Bai Linglong, had been the woman whom his father had loved the most, he was confident that the Emperor respected Imperial Consort Xi more than any other woman.

“Sure, I will treat her illness,” Ye Jiuge agreed without any hesitation.

Forget about helping to treat an illness— if she could cause trouble for the Empress, she would happily pay money for it.

“Imperial Consort Xi is currently in my residence. She can see you at any moment.”

Sending a letter to the Emperor Temple to invite Imperial Consort Xi out of obscurity was the first thing Dongfang Que had done after leaving the palace. At first, Imperial Consort Xi had refused. But when she had heard that Ye Jiuge had inherited Yun Tianwei’s teachings and was able to treat the demonic poison in her son’s body, she was willing to give it a try.

“Then let’s go over now!” Ye Jiuge said eagerly.

The sooner Imperial Consort Xi’s illness was treated, the sooner she could stab the Empress in the back.

“Not many people know that Imperial Consort Xi is back in the capital. To prevent the news from spreading, I must ask Eldest Miss Ye to follow me through a secret passage,” Dongfang Que said solemnly.

“Sure.” Ye Jiuge nodded.

She had initially thought that the secret passage was outside. She had not expected Bai Songling to remove a work of art depicting Admiring the Plums, which was hanging on the wall of the private room. He forcefully pushed away a floor tile, and a passage was revealed.

“The Yuwu Teahouse is His Highness’s property,” Bai Songling explained.

“I see.” Ye Jiuge realized that Dongfang Que was a secret passage maniac. Not only did he have a secret passage in the Jinxiu Palace, but he also had one in the teahouse. How many more secrets does he have?

“Eldest Miss Ye, this way please!” Bai Songling called out to Ye Jiuge before he took the lead and pushed Dongfang Que’s wheelchair into the secret passage.

Ye Jiuge followed behind them. After walking in the secret passage for approximately the time needed to burn two sticks of incense, they finally arrived in one of the houses behind the Prince Mansion.

Then, Ye Jiuge changed into a cloak, which Dongfang Que had prepared, and followed them into the Prince Mansion through the back door. After turning many corners along the long corridors, they came to a secluded courtyard.

The doors and windows of the house were tightly shut. The courtyard was empty, and the flowers and plants had already withered. It was difficult to imagine a person like Imperial Consort Xi staying in such a place.

“Elderly Lady Zhou, please help me convey the message that I have brought the Eldest Miss Ye here,” Dongfang Que called out softly at the entrance. It was clear that he respected Imperial Consort Xi immensely.

The door opened with a creaking sound. A short, fat Elderly Lady with a benevolent look bowed to Dongfang Que. She said softly, “Greetings to you, Your Highness. The Imperial Consort has requested that Eldest Miss Ye enter alone.”

“Alright.” Dongfang Que looked apologetically at Ye Jiuge. He said softly, “Ever since Imperial Consort Xi was stricken with illness, she has become unwilling to receive visitors.”

“Okay.” Ye Jiuge understood. Any woman whose beauty had once been unparalleled would be unwilling to let people see her now that she was ugly.

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“Eldest Miss Ye, this way, please!” Elderly Lady Zhou curtsied to Ye Jiuge, turned, and entered the house. Ye Jiuge followed her in.

The house wasn’t spacious, but the items decorating it were exquisite. All the furniture was made using high-grade redwood. Although palace lanterns hung in the corners, the place was still dim. From a sandalwood burner with an interlaced floral design of green peony leaves, smoke from burning incense rose in spirals. There was a faint, rotten stink within the incense smell that could not be detected without a careful sniff.

Elderly Lady Zhou brought Ye Jiuge in front of a beaded hanging screen that led to the interior room. The beads were strung together using thumb-sized Southern Pearls, and they shone with a gentle glow under the effects of the light. They were extremely luxurious. Imperial Consort Xi certainly led an exquisite life, likely due to her noble birth.

Elderly Lady Zhou did not show Ye Jiuge in immediately. Instead, she bowed in front of the beaded hanging screen and said, "Imperial Consort, Eldest Miss Ye has arrived."

"Okay, you may take your leave!" A beautiful voice came from inside the room.

"Yes." Elderly Lady Zhou bowed and left quietly.

Ye Jiuge stood in front of the beaded hanging screen, feeling awkward because she did not know whether to enter. Fortunately, Imperial Consort Xi spoke up after a short pause.

"Eldest Miss Ye, I've heard that you are notorious in the capital for your uselessness. How did enlightenment dawn on you suddenly?"

Although Imperial Consort Xi's words were unkind, her voice was soft and gentle, so Ye Jiuge could not get angry.

"The people in the capital misunderstood me," Ye Jiuge replied coolly. Her background could not be investigated, and it would be better to leave it a puzzle for people to guess.

Imperial Consort Xi laughed softly. "Ha, ha. Your reply is comparable to Great Master Yun's style"

"You've seen my grandfather before?" Ye Jiuge asked curiously. According to her calculations, her grandfather should have already left the capital by the time Imperial Consort Xi had fallen ill.

"I saw Great Master Yun once in the Emperor Temple. Unfortunately, he had to attend to an emergency and only gave me one pill before leaving. I waited for his return for many years in the Emperor Temple but to no avail," Imperial Consort Xi said with faint resentment.

At that time, her heart had been ashen, and she had merely been waiting for death to arrive. After giving her hope, Great Master Yun had disappeared for over ten years. She had looked forward to his return, day after day. The ordeal had been intolerable.

"Imperial Consort Xi, can you tell me more about the specific circumstances back then?" Ye Jiuge had been investigating her grandfather's whereabouts for so long, and she had finally obtained some useful clues. As such, she was very excited.

"No." Imperial Consort Xi laughed and said, "Unless you can treat my illness."

"Okay."

Ye Jiuge had only planned to use eighty percent of her efforts when she arrived, but now, she was willing to put in a hundred and twenty percent.

“Then, please enter!” Imperial Consort Xi beckoned.

Ye Jiuge lifted the beaded hanging screen and walked into the room. The lighting inside was even dimmer. Only two palace lanterns engraved with images of beauties were lit at the entrance. The engraved beauties glowed under the candlelight, and their vermilion-colored lips were especially striking. The incense smell was also stronger, and its thickness could bring tears to one's eyes. Of course, the rotten smell was also more intense.

Imperial Consort Xi sat beside a table. She wore a pink cotton yarn skirt, and her figure was lithe and graceful. Although she sat there unmoving, she gave off a gentleness and elegance comparable to that of a young lady.

Ye Jiuge had heard that Imperial Consort Xi was adept at dancing. Her Wind Spiritual Power allowed her to dance lightly and gracefully. Those who had seen her dance undoubtedly worshiped her as a goddess. At the moment, her face was covered with a veil that only revealed a pair of beautiful limpid eyes, which looked like lakes in the spring. They reflected a radiance that could intoxicate anyone.

“Have a seat!” Imperial Consort Xi called out to Ye Jiuge in a soft, gentle voice.

Ye Jiuge sat in front of her. The rotten stench hidden beneath the incense's fragrance became even stronger. It was clear that the stink was coming from Imperial Consort Xi.

Without changing her expression, Ye Jiuge said to Imperial Consort Xi, “Imperial Consort, can you please extend your arm so I can feel your pulse?”

“Of course.”

Imperial Consort Xi placed her arm on the table, revealing a tender and white jade-like wrist. Her wrist felt soft and smooth and was more well-maintained than a young lady's hand. Ye Jiuge calmed herself down and felt Imperial Consort Xi's pulse. She had a slow pulse, as though something was firmly suppressing it. This type of pulse was only found in the elderly whose five viscera and six bowels had begun to deteriorate. It was the pulse of a dying person.

“The other hand.”

Ye Jiuge felt Imperial Consort Xi's other wrist. She had not expected the other hand's pulse to be quick and regular, like the sound of horses' hooves. It was unheard of for one person's two hands to have completely different pulses.

“Eldest Miss Ye, can you discern anything from this?” Imperial Consort Xi asked indifferently.

There wasn't a hint of expectation in her tone; it was clear that she did not really trust Ye Jiuge.

"Imperial Consort Xi, can you remove your veil so that I can take a look at your face?" Ye Jiuge said.

She already had a conjecture in her heart, but she needed to verify it.

"No." Imperial Consort Xi refused unenthusiastically. "Unless you can tell me what my illness is. If not, you may go."

"Imperial Consort, you have been poisoned," Ye Jiuge said without any hesitation.

"That is impossible." Imperial Consort Xi shook her head and kept her hand. She said coldly, "At first, I thought that I was poisoned as well, but I have visited Spiritual Doctors all over the world and eaten many antidotes and medicines. All of them said that I am afflicted with a strange illness and not poisoned."

"That is because they cannot identify the root of the poison," Ye Jiuge said assuredly.

"Ha, ha!" Imperial Consort Xi laughed before she continued with a sarcastic tone, "These Spiritual Doctors included your grandfather! Even he said that I was not poisoned. Are you refuting your grandfather's diagnosis?"

That makes things awkward! Ye Jiuge often announced that she had inherited her grandfather's medical expertise. If she were to reject her grandfather's opinion, wouldn't that be a slap to her own face?

She thought about it for a while before saying, "My grandfather is more experienced than me, and he must have his reasons for his diagnosis. I am unable to see him now, so I cannot verify his opinion. However, from my point of view, you have been poisoned."

Imperial Consort Xi was momentarily silent before she laughed softly and said, "Actually, your grandfather did not even have the time to feel my pulse before he left."

Ye Jiuge was very curious about the situation. However, judging from Imperial Consort Xi's attitude, she would not tell her anything right now. As such, she could only say helplessly, "Imperial Consort, it is of the utmost importance to determine the exact cause of illness during treatment. If I had not been straight with you, wouldn't I have prolonged the state of your illness?"

"If you weren't forthright, you wouldn't be worthy of being Great Master Yun's granddaughter or treating my illness," Imperial Consort Xi replied coolly.

These were tests that she had set for Ye Jiuge. Imperial Consort Xi had experienced way too many disappointments over the years, and she did not wish to be let down again.

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Translator: Nyoi-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoi-Bo Studio

“Can I take a look at your face now?” Ye Jiuge asked.

She wasn't angry. She understood that people who suffered from chronic illness could become eccentric. Imperial Consort Xi had actually been very refined.

“Sure. However, I must remind you not to reveal any emotions that shouldn't be shown. I have a bad temper and might get angry,” Imperial Consort Xi warned in a soft and gentle voice.

“Okay.”

Ye Jiuge had seen all kinds of violent storms and waves, and Imperial Consort Xi's words did not frighten her. Imperial Consort Xi lifted her white jade-like hand and grasped the buttons on the left side of her veil. Slowly, she removed it. As the veil parted, the left side of Imperial Consort Xi's face was revealed. Her skin was as smooth as jade, with no hint of wrinkles, and her face was beautifully noble and elegant. She was like a sacred fairy.

Ye Jiuge's line of sight moved with the veil. When she saw the right side of Imperial Consort Xi's face, she shuddered even though she had already mentally prepared herself. A nauseous feeling rushed up to her throat, but Ye Jiuge forcefully suppressed it. The right side of Imperial Consort Xi's face was covered with yellow, pus-filled tumors. Many of them had already ruptured, secreting yellowish-white pus with a hint of blood. One part of her face was festering, and it emitted the pungent stench of rotten flesh in stinking gutters. The right side of her face was just as repulsive as the left side was beautiful. The sharp contrast prevented anyone from looking at her directly.

Ye Jiuge quickly composed her emotions. She opened her Spiritual Eye and scrutinized Imperial Consort Xi's face. Within the field of view of her Spiritual Eye, she could see green-colored Spiritual Power flowing underneath the left side of Imperial Consort Xi's face. On the right side, the

Spiritual Channels had been entirely blocked by black-colored particles. Blood was unable to flow through, let alone Spiritual Power. If not for a pale violet Spiritual Light in her aorta, which continuously transported a mysterious power, Imperial Consort Xi's face would have already turned into a white skull.

Imperial Consort Xi stared unblinking at Ye Jiuge, waiting for her to reveal any hint of disgust, revulsion, or shock. She did not expect Ye Jiuge to curb her emotions so quickly and observe her face clinically. She had only seen that kind of composed reaction in an elderly Spiritual Doctor. At that time, he'd been diagnosing a child who had fallen ill. The elderly Spiritual Doctor had also been the only person capable of suppressing her illness. It was unfortunate that he passed away not long after. His disciple, who had inherited his medical skill, was the one who had continued her medical treatment. Although the disciple's medical ability was mediocre, it had sufficed.

Imperial Consort Xi was surprised; Ye Jiuge was so young, and yet, she had the elderly Spiritual Doctor's bearing. This caused hope to twinge in her heart.

"Imperial Consort, may I venture to ask about the medicine that you have been consuming?"

Ye Jiuge was finally sure of the root of the illness. She closed her Spiritual Eye and inquired attentively. Her cultivation was insufficient, and it would harm her body to open her Spiritual Eye for too long.

"I've been eating pills that activate blood circulation to dissipate blood stasis, as well as applying an ointment on my face."

The elderly Spiritual Doctor had prescribed them for her. Although they could not eradicate the root of her illness, they brought great relief to her pain. Otherwise, she wouldn't have been able to bear it for so many years.

"Can you show me the ointment?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"Sure."

Imperial Consort Xi rose and retrieved an exquisite white porcelain bottle from a cabinet and placed it in front of Ye Jiuge. Ye Jiuge opened the bottle and looked inside. It was filled with a dark green ointment that gave off a faint smell of grass. She sniffed carefully before scooping some of it up with her fingers. Finally, she said with certainty, "This ointment is the reason your illness has worsened."

"What?" Imperial Consort Xi thought that she had misheard.

"I don't know who prescribed this ointment for you. I can only say that they were trying to harm you

and not save you,” Ye Jiuge said slowly.

“How can that be?” Imperial Consort Xi was not convinced. She said, “Before, my face was rotting terribly, and I felt soreness and pain in my entire body. It was after I started using this Spiritual Doctor’s prescription that my condition slowly began to improve.”

“Did these symptoms only appear after you ate the pills my grandfather gave you?” Ye Jiuge asked.

“Yes.” Imperial Consort Xi nodded slowly, as though she had realized something.

“The pills that my grandfather gave you could have cured the poison. Had you waited for the rotten flesh to fall off before seeking a reliable Spiritual Doctor to purge the remaining toxins, your condition would have gradually got better.”

Ye Jiuge sighed. Imperial Consort Xi had not needed to bear this pain for so many years. Because she hadn’t believed in Ye Jiuge’s grandfather and sought out other Spiritual Doctors, she’d caused her own treatment to fall short.

Imperial Consort Xi was stupefied. She recalled the elderly Spiritual Doctor on his deathbed. He had looked at her with worry and sadness, but he was unable to say a single word. She had thought that he was regretting that he was unable to continue treating her. Now that she thought of it, the elderly Spiritual Doctor was repenting before his death. That’s not right, either! Imperial Consort Xi frowned. She remembered that, when she had started using the elderly Spiritual Doctor’s medicine, her face had continued to fester. It had just been a little less itchy. Later, the elderly Spiritual Doctor had suddenly changed his prescription. A few days later, he’d died, and his disciple had popped up to treat her using the elderly Spiritual Doctor’s modified prescription. Meaning, the elderly Spiritual Doctor was killed because of her, and the disciple was the main culprit behind her worsening illness.

That d*mned b*tch, Xue Mingzhu! She’d dared to follow her to the Emperor Temple and continued actively plotting to harm her.

“Xue Mingzhu, I will not die in peace until your death!”

Imperial Consort Xi gritted her teeth, and her facial features became wrenched. The boils on the right side of her face immediately ruptured, and blood and pus splattered everywhere. It was a horrifying sight. Ye Jiuge realized that something was wrong with Imperial Consort Xi; she seemed to be having a sudden heart attack. She hurriedly applied a few needles to Imperial Consort Xi’s various acupuncture points.

Imperial Consort Xi opened her mouth and spewed out blood. Her expression became calmer.

She took out a handkerchief to wipe away the blood on the corners of her mouth, looked at Ye Jiuge with gratitude, and said in a soft voice, "Thank you!"

Had Ye Jiuge not helped her force out this mouthful of clotted blood, she would have fainted on the spot.

"Imperial Consort, for a noble to take revenge, ten years is not so long. If you gradually recuperate, there is hope for you to restore your looks. Then, you will be able to seek revenge," Ye Jiuge advised.

"You can treat my illness?" Imperial Consort Xi was in a daze.

From Ye Jiuge's tone before, she had thought that her illness was incurable since she'd missed her opportunity when Great Master Yun had given her the antidote.

"Although it will be slightly more difficult, it's not impossible. If you believe in me, I am willing to give it a try."

Ye Jiuge was deliberately misleading Imperial Consort Xi into believing that her illness was incurable.

Imperial Consort Xi was too haughty, and Ye Jiuge feared that she would not listen to her unless suppressed. Treating such a difficult patient was going to be a challenge.

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"I believe you. As long as you can treat my illness, I will give you anything." Imperial Consort Xi finally took off her mask of pride and showed the frailty of a patient.

"I don't want anything, except for you to rest and recuperate. You've just vomited blood, and you need a good rest. We can speak later after you have slept," Ye Jiuge said gently.

"You are leaving?" Imperial Consort Xi's eyes filled with worry.

Great Master Yun's departure had cast a shadow in her heart.

"I am going out to talk to the Dongling Prince about the prescription. It may be challenging to obtain some of the spiritual medicines, and we need to think of a plan. However, you don't need to worry. When you wake up, I will be back as soon as you shout for me." Ye Jiuge knew that Imperial Consort Xi was at her most fragile at the moment, and she needed to comfort her patiently.

"Okay." Imperial Consort Xi nodded slowly. She felt tired and sleepy, and she called for Elderly Lady Zhou to wait upon her so that she could rest.

Only then did Ye Jiuge take her leave and depart the house. Dongfang Que was still waiting outside. His upright posture looked as sturdy as the evergreen pine. When he saw Ye Jiuge coming out of the house, his handsome face involuntarily showed signs of hope and expectation.

He asked, "How is it going?"

"Your Highness, do you want to chat about the Imperial Consort's illness here?" Ye Jiuge had some things to say that she did not want Imperial Consort Xi to hear.

Dongfang Que immediately understood her meaning. He said, "I have prepared some tea and snacks. Eldest Miss Ye, please do me the honor."

He led Ye Jiuge to his study. Inside, on the table was laid a pot of spiritual tea and a box of rose pastries, just like last time. However, this time, there was an additional plate of peach pastries. Ye Jiuge was not in the mood to try them. After she took a sip of spiritual tea and organized her thoughts, she asked Dongfang Que, "Your Highness, how was Imperial Consort Xi poisoned? Can you tell me in detail about the specific circumstances?"

"Poison? You say that Imperial Consort Xi is poisoned and not ill?" Dongfang Que looked distracted momentarily before he revealed a knowing look and muttered, "I knew it."

"Since you knew, why didn't you call for a Spiritual Doctor to examine her?" Ye Jiuge asked curiously.

"I did. Imperial Consort Xi consumed all kinds of antidotes and medicine, and Father even obtained a Thousand Mountain's Snow Lotus for her to eat. However, none of them had any effect. Later, all of the Spiritual Doctors said that she was afflicted with an illness." When Dongfang Que finished speaking, a hint of viciousness flitted across his handsome face. He continued, "Those d*mned charlatans have prolonged her condition."

"It's not the Spiritual Doctors' fault that they couldn't tell," Ye Jiuge said.

"What do you mean?" Dongfang Que raised an eyebrow.

"Imperial Consort Xi's symptoms from the poison were suppressed by her illness. So, the Spiritual Doctors thought that she was ill; they were unable to tell that she was poisoned," Ye Jiuge explained.

"What do you mean by that?" Dongfang Que was confused. Is Imperial Consort Xi poisoned or ill?

"Tell me about the circumstances when she was poisoned first," Ye Jiuge said, returning to the topic. Her suspicion wasn't pleasant, so she didn't want to state the truth directly.

"Elderly Lady Zhou has always served the Imperial Consort. I will get her to tell you!" Dongfang Que called for Lei Peng and instructed him to invite over Elderly Lady Zhou.

Elderly Lady Zhou arrived shortly after.

"Elderly Lady Zhou, Eldest Miss Ye would like to ask you about the circumstances when the Imperial Consort fell ill. Please tell her carefully and meticulously," Dongfang Que instructed.

"Yes."

Elderly Lady Zhou nodded and began to recall the details of when Imperial Consort Xi had fallen ill. At that time, the Imperial Noble Consort had just passed away, and Imperial Consort Xi had fallen ill from her grief. In the beginning, she'd felt distraught and nauseous and had a poor appetite. Later, tumors began growing on her face. The tumors had spread like wild grass, instantaneously covering half of her face and body. Emperor Xuanwu had been startled and immediately called for Spiritual Doctors to treat her.

The Imperial Consort had taken different types of medicine, but her illness had returned repeatedly. She had continued to vomit and have diarrhea. Finally, her genitalia had bled. The poor woman had become immensely dejected and feared that she would disgust Emperor Xuanwu if it were to drag on. As such, she decided to go to the Emperor Temple to guard the ancestors' graves on behalf of her late maternal grandmother.

Having heard this, Ye Jiuge was momentarily silent before she finally asked, "When Imperial Consort Xi was ill, was her menstruation cycle normal?"

"The Imperial Consort's body has been weak since youth, and her cycle has always been irregular. Sometimes, it would come early. Other times, it would be late. It was also common for it to not come for a few months."

“Why wasn’t a Spiritual Doctor called to regulate it for her?” Ye Jiuge asked strangely.

An irregular menstruation cycle was harmful. It could affect the bearing of a child. Imperial Consort Xi was born a noble, and it should have been easy to instruct a Spiritual Doctor to regulate her menstruation cycle.

“We did, but the Imperial Consort refused to continue with it after a few days.” Elderly Lady Zhou looked helpless as she spoke of it.

Imperial Consort Xi had always wished to appear beautiful, and she loved dancing. To maintain a light and graceful figure, she stuck to a strict diet. As such, her menstruation cycle had always been irregular. The Spiritual Doctors’ prescriptions increased her appetite so that she could take in more nutrition, so Imperial Consort Xi was unwilling to take them.

It was only after Bai Linglong gave birth to the bright and cute Dongfang Que that she began to consider having a child. At that time, she started regulating her cycle. Unfortunately, before she could conceive a child, she’d been harmed by the Empress’s evil scheme. [Read more chapter on our vipnovel.com](#)

“I see.” Ye Jiuge nodded. This explanation validated her suspicion.

Dongfang Que felt a strange awkwardness as he listened to them talk about menstruation cycles as if nobody were around. Seeing that Ye Jiuge was silent, he asked, “Eldest Miss Ye, you haven’t told me yet: what illness and poison afflict Imperial Consort Xi?”

Ye Jiuge recovered from her daze. After some deliberation, she said, “If my inklings are right, Imperial Consort Xi suffered from blood stasis in her genitals. This was due to a lack of proper recuperation from her miscarriage. This condition suppressed the poison’s symptoms and explains why the Spiritual Doctors didn’t realize that she’d been poisoned.”

“What did you say?” Dongfang Que suspected that something was wrong with his ears. Miscarriage? What did she mean that Imperial Consort Xi had a miscarriage?

“I believe that Imperial Consort Xi was pregnant before she fell ill. Accordingly, she had a poor appetite, tightness in her chest, and also felt nauseous.”

Ye Jiuge did not know what else to say. How is it possible that an Imperial Consort was unaware that she’d been pregnant or that she’d miscarried? Ye Jiuge did not know whether they’d been careless, or if the Empress was simply so cunning that she’d been able to lay layers of traps before Imperial Consort Xi could realize anything.

“Eldest Miss Ye, are you serious? Imperial Consort Xi was pregnant?” With a pale face, Elderly Lady Zhou stared at Ye Jiuge.

“That’s right.” Ye Jiuge nodded affirmatively.

“Imperial Consort! My poor Imperial Consort!”

Elderly Lady Zhou’s lips trembled. Suddenly, she slapped herself fiercely as tears of remorse flowed uncontrollably. As the Imperial Consort’s personal nurse, she deserved to die ten thousand deaths for not realizing that the Imperial Consort was pregnant in time.

“Eldest Miss Ye, what is the poison that afflicts Imperial Consort Xi?”

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Translator: Nyoi-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoi-Bo Studio

“Imperial Consort Xi has been afflicted with Fantasy Beauty,” Ye Jiuge explained.

Fantasy Beauty was a very strange poison that could repress injuries. On the outside, while the injury may have seemed to recover, inside, the wound was festering continuously. The even stranger thing about Fantasy Beauty was that a patient could not consume medicine capable of clearing internal heat or detoxifying. The more powerful the Spiritual Medicine, the greater the pushback from Fantasy Beauty.

The Thousand Mountain’s Snow Lotus, which Emperor Xuanwu had obtained, was practically a lethal poison for Imperial Consort Xi. As Fantasy Beauty was a very elusive poison, when they checked her pulse, the Spiritual Doctors had not been able to tell that Imperial Consort Xi had suffered a miscarriage or that she’d been poisoned. As such, they’d blamed her condition on a strange illness.

“How did the Empress obtain all these poisons?” Dongfang Que’s heart sank.

None of the Spiritual Doctors have heard of either the King Poison in his body or the Spiritual Poison afflicting Imperial Consort Xi. How can they fight the Empress like this?

"I am not sure about that. However, the world is vast and full of extraordinary things. You may find these poisons bizarre, but they are commonly used in other places. Take this Fantasy Beauty, for example. When used on Imperial Consort Xi, who'd had a miscarriage, it acted as a poison. However, if used on an ordinary woman, it can have the effect of retaining her youthful looks. As such, nobles from some of the smaller kingdoms consume it regularly for detoxification," Ye Jiuge said.

Imperial Consort Xi was from Dongfang Que's mother's generation. She was also older than Bai Linglong. No amount of care could prevent the effects of the passage of time. The poison was why she still looked as tender and lovely as a young lady. However, this method of maintaining beauty was extreme and very dangerous. One could face eternal damnation if care was not taken.

Elderly Lady Zhou wiped away her tears and asked, "Then, how can this poison be cured?" It was too late to save Imperial Consort Xi's child. The more important thing now was to cure the poison.

"The blood clotted inside Imperial Consort Xi needs to be drained using some medicine before the Fantasy Beauty can be forced out. Although the solution seems simple, the process is agonizingly painful. When the clotted blood is drained, there will be a recoil from the repressed Fantasy Beauty. Her flesh will rot, and as the Fantasy Beauty is forced out, the rotten flesh will peel off. The feeling will probably be akin to that of Lingering Death," Ye Jiuge said with a sigh.

Although she could use her needle techniques to seal Imperial Consort Xi's sensation of pain, it would only be temporary and would affect the treatment. As such, pain could not be avoided. Elderly Lady Zhou immediately felt cold sweat rising from the soles of her feet as she heard Ye Jiuge's description. She was stunned into silence.

"From my observations, Imperial Consort Xi has a firm and persistent personality, and she should be able to bear the pain. The only problem is whether we should tell her that she suffered a miscarriage." Ye Jiuge looked toward Dongfang Que and Elderly Lady Zhou.

Earlier on, Imperial Consort Xi had been so furious that she had spewed up a mouthful of blood after hearing that she had been lied to by the Spiritual Doctor for so long. Ye Jiuge did not know how Imperial Consort Xi would take it if she were to hear that the child that she had dreamed of was right in front of her but was lost due to her negligence and her enemy's persecution. Even worse, she'd been unaware of the pregnancy from the beginning to the end.

Dongfang Que was silent. Elderly Lady Zhou could not help but cry. She'd been Imperial Consort Xi's wet nurse and had watched her grow up. She loved Imperial Consort Xi dearly, as if she were her favorite child. No one knew more than she how much Imperial Consort Xi had wanted a child. To bear that child, the Imperial Consort had given up the vegetarian diet, which she had insisted on for many years, to consume traditional Chinese medicines that increased her appetite. She'd

even been wild with joy when she'd started putting on weight. It would have been better if she'd never successfully conceived. The feeling of obtaining and then losing was the most painful.

Ye Jiuge realized that she could not depend on the two of them. As such, she said, "Let's discuss this matter in the future. Elderly Lady Zhou, you have been outside for quite some time, and you should return to take care of the Imperial Consort. Please tell me if she wakes up."

"Yes." Elderly Lady Zhou was worried about the Imperial Consort as well, and she hurriedly returned to the house.

She heaved a sigh of relief when she saw that the Imperial Consort was still sound asleep. Then, she drew some water to wash her face so that the Imperial Consort would not notice that she'd been crying. However, just when she was halfway done washing her face, Imperial Consort Xi woke up and called for her from the interior room. Elderly Lady Zhou hurriedly wiped her face clean and entered the internal chamber.

"Why have you been crying?" Imperial Consort Xi had been living with Elderly Lady Zhou for a few decades and knew her well. She could tell that Elderly Lady Zhou had been crying just from a look.

"Nothing. I just blinded my eyes accidentally. With my age, it is easy for my eyes to tear up," Elderly Lady Zhou smiled and said.

"You don't have to lie to me. Did Eldest Miss Ye tell you something? Is my poison difficult to treat?" Imperial Consort Xi watched Elderly Lady Zhou's face closely.

She had felt uneasy even when she was fast asleep. She was worried that everything that had happened earlier had only been a dream. Perhaps Ye Jiuge had only said that her poison was curable to comfort her, and it would all be for nothing once she woke up.

"No, Eldest Miss Ye said that she can treat your illness. She has even prescribed medicine. If you do not believe me, you can ask her later," Elderly Lady Zhou immediately comforted Imperial Consort Xi.

"Then why are you in such a state?" Imperial Consort Xi was still unwilling to believe her.

In recent years, the people around her had often told her white lies to comfort her. She knew that they were doing it for her sake. However, she did not need these lies. She wanted the truth. It was better to be told the cruel fact than to be kept in the dark.

Elderly Lady Zhou could not bear to speak of Imperial Consort Xi's child. As such, she repeated the treatment method that Ye Jiuge had spoken of. Then, she wept and said, "Imperial Consort, I

felt so upset when I heard that you have to bear such pain. I want nothing more than to bear the pain on your behalf.”

“The pain of Lingering Death!” Imperial Consort Xi pondered over these blood-filled words.

It would be a lie if she were to say that she was not afraid. She had seen the sentencing of a court eunuch, who had committed all sorts of evil, to a Lingering Death. His flesh had been cut from his body by one hundred and twenty slices of the knife. In the end, he was a bloodied skeleton, even though he was still alive. She’d been so terrified that she didn’t sleep for a few days after witnessing it.

Emperor Xuanwu, who back then, had only been the Third Prince, had made a solemn vow to comfort her: “One day, if I ascend the throne, I will get rid of all these cruel and barbaric punishments.” Because of this promise, Imperial Consort Xi had believed that Xuanwu Emperor would be a benevolent ruler. To help him ascend the throne, she’d been willing to give up the seat of the Empress to the vicious Xue Mingzhu.

To draw the Bai Clan to their side, she’d roped in Bai Linglong and treated her like a sister. She had doted on Bai Linglong’s son as though he were her own child. However, in the end, Xue Mingzhu’s seat as the Empress was as steady as the Mountain Tai, and she became the motherly model of the kingdom. The idiotic son, Dongfang Jianming, whom Xue Mingzhu had given birth to, had also become the Crown Prince. She, on the other hand, had become disfigured and was forced to live a life worse than death. Even Linglong’s child had become crippled.

Meanwhile, Emperor Xuanwu and Xue Mingzhu had continued to rule over a vast swathe of territory and lead a peaceful, smooth life. On what basis do they deserve this? Imperial Consort Xi’s eyes suddenly widened. Her face revealed a hatred carved in her bones and engraved in her heart. Speaking slowly, she said, “Tell Eldest Miss Ye that as long as my looks can be restored, I shall be willing to taste the pain of Lingering Death.”

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Translator: Nyoibo Studio Editor: Nyoibo Studio

“Imperial Consort!” Elderly Lady Zhou looked at Imperial Consort Xi with distress.

“Go!” Imperial Consort Xi commanded fiercely.

“Yes.”

Elderly Lady Zhou was aware that, ever since the Imperial Consort Xi had fallen ill, she hated it when others wept uncontrollably. She wiped away her tears and returned to her usual state, capable and efficient. Then, she stepped out and called for Eldest Miss Ye.

“Eldest Miss Ye, the Imperial Consort Xi wishes to see you. Please don’t say anything about the child for now,” Elderly Lady Zhou pleaded in a low voice.

“Okay, I understand.”

Ye Jiuge was not a talkative person. She would not speak unnecessarily unless there were a need to do so. When Ye Jiuge entered the house, Imperial Consort Xi’s attitude toward her was much more courteous than before. Not only did she cooperate earnestly, but she also instructed Elderly Lady Zhou to write down anything that would require precaution. She was as earnest as a scholar preparing for the preliminary round of imperial examinations.

“Imperial Consort, first, please take this medicine. After the clotted blood has been drained from your body, we will continue with the next stage of detoxification.”

Ye Jiuge had thought about it carefully before writing out a prescription that could activate blood circulation to dissipate blood stasis and act as a tonic. She indicated that the medicine must be decocted before the Imperial Consort could consume it. Although a pill would expel her poison quickly, the effect would be too potent. As such, the first few doses had to be decocted.

After Imperial Consort Xi adapted to the medicine’s effects, the dosage could be increased gradually. In the end, a Spiritual Clearing Pill could be used to completely dissipate her blood stasis.

“Alright.” Imperial Consort Xi nodded as she accepted the prescription cautiously.

Then, she began to look through the medicine names carefully. A long illness turns the patient into a doctor, and Imperial Consort Xi had some understanding of medicine. With one glance, she understood that the ingredients Ye Jiuge was using could stimulate blood circulation and dissipate blood stasis. There was also medicine for strengthening the heart meridian.

“Near your heart, there are still some remnants of the antidote pill which my grandfather left you. These ingredients are used to activate their effects.” Noticing that Imperial Consort Xi was examining the prescription closely, Ye Jiuge explained the various ingredients used and their

effects on her body carefully.

“Eldest Miss Ye, you are indeed meticulous.” Imperial Consort Xi was delighted with Ye Jiuge’s patience. She kept the prescription. With a smile, she said, “I have been studying medical books in recent years, and I thought myself to be half a Spiritual Doctor. However, today, after seeing your prescription, I realize that my knowledge is limited.”

“Imperial Consort, you are too humble. Not many people understand the pharmacology principles as well as you do,” Ye Jiuge praised.

Imperial Consort Xi had understood the ingredients’ effects immediately. This meant that she had a strong foundation of the basic principles and only lacked clinical experience. However, the Imperial Consort had studied medical books to analyze her own illness and not because she had wanted to become a Spiritual Doctor. As such, it was understandable that she lacked experience.

“I’ve seen a similar prescription in a medical book. However, that prescription was used for women who had blood stasis after a pregnancy. I did not realize that it could be used to expel poison,” Imperial Consort Xi smiled and said.

Ye Jiuge’s heart thumped rapidly. Had Imperial Consort Xi realized something? However, when Ye Jiuge examined Imperial Consort Xi’s facial expression, she realized that the consort was speaking off the top of her head. Her appearance was normal.

“Imperial Consort, allow me to keep this prescription instead. I will go and fill the script later and decoct it for you,” Elderly Lady Zhou said without revealing any trace of her emotions.

“Sure.” Imperial Consort Xi did not suspect anything as she handed the prescription to Elderly Lady Zhou.

“Imperial Consort, it’s not early anymore, judging by the color of the sky. I will head back first and return to see you tomorrow.”

Ye Jiuge rose. She had been out for almost half of the day, and she feared that Qing Mama would be worried if she didn’t return home soon.

“Eldest Miss Ye, it is not convenient for you to enter and exit the Prince Mansion. Why don’t you wait for me to finish this course before you come back to continue the treatment?”

Imperial Consort Xi understood that her house had an unpleasant smell. It was already enough that Ye Jiuge had patiently accompanied her for so long that day. Furthermore, her condition required a slow treatment process, and it wouldn’t be pleasant to keep Ye Jiuge there.

“Sure.” Ye Jiuge nodded.

Imperial Consort Xi’s medical treatment plan had been determined, and she did not need Ye Jiuge to be by her side at all times. She would be fine as long as she carried out the treatment in sequence, step by step.

Ye Jiuge left Imperial Consort Xi’s residence and went to look for Dongfang Que and bid him farewell.

“Eldest Miss Ye, there are no second-grade Thousand Threads Herbs, which you have prescribed for Imperial Consort Xi, in the capital’s medicinal shops. Do you know where I can find it?” asked Dongfang Que.

A hint of worry flitted past his handsome face. He was worried that Ye Jiuge would say that it could only be found on an ice mountain or in an alpine region.

“Thousand Threads Herbs usually grow in forest swamps. I plan on going to gather medicinal herbs soon. Conveniently, I can get some on the way.

“Do you need me to dispatch some men to help you?” Dongfang Que asked.

Ye Jiuge had already been extremely benevolent by diagnosing and treating Imperial Consort Xi. He felt terrible for also letting her gather the medicinal herbs personally.

“I won’t need them. We shouldn’t act as though we are familiar with each other, or the Empress may suspect something.”

Ye Jiuge was worried that the Empress’s suspicion would be aroused if Dongfang Que’s men were to go and seek the Thousand Threads Herb.

“Alright. Feel free to give me any instructions if you need anything. I will not refuse if it’s something I can do.” Dongfang Que nodded as he made a mental note of Ye Jiuge’s kindness.

After Ye Jiuge returned to the Zilin Residence from the Prince Mansion, she told Qing Mama that she would be heading out to gather medicinal herbs the next day.

“You will be going alone? What about Lord Bai or Lord Wan?” Qing Mama immediately asked.

Qing Mama was ready to accompany her if she were going alone, so Ye Jiuge lied. “Lord Wan is not free, and Lord Bai will accompany me into the mountains.”

Bai Songling did not have to go to the Justice Department every day, and it was less likely that her

lie would be exposed.

“How long will you be gone?” Qing Mama asked.

“Three days at a minimum, and seven days at most,” Ye Jiuge gave a conservative estimate. As she was pretending to rest due to her injuries, she could not be out for too long.

“Fine. I will make preparations for you at once.”

Qing Mama left grinning ear to ear to prepare Ye Jiuge's luggage. If Lord Bai is willing to accompany the Eldest Miss into the mountains to gather medicinal herbs, isn't this evidence that they have a close relationship? Perhaps I will hear some good news soon. Hmph, when that time comes, I shall see which b*tch will dare to say that the Eldest Miss is an ugly woman who cannot be married off.

Ye Jiuge allowed Qing Mama to fiddle with her luggage. She, on the other hand, entered the Pill Production Room to prepare some medicine, which she would need to enter the mountains. As she would be seeking the Thousand Threads Herb in the swamp, she required something to prevent insect bites as well as to repel venomous snakes and beasts. The insects in the swamp were no joke; there would be so many of them that they could carry her away. Also, the billowing smoke could be deadly. She needed to prepare some antidotes in advance.

For more than an hour, Ye Jiuge was busy, before she was finally sufficiently prepared. Walking in the dark, she returned to the well-lit house and found a large bundle on the table. It was the luggage that Qing Mama had prepared for her.

When Ye Jiuge opened the bundle, she was momentarily stunned. She saw exquisite and magnificent-looking dresses inside. They were made of very costly silk. Every dress was paired meticulously with head ornaments, earrings, and necklaces. None of the decorations were repeated. There were even a few pairs of embroidered shoes. In a red-wooden box, there was make-up, lip rouge, eyebrow pencils, as well as other cosmetics.

Qing Mama's packing job is clearly intended for a match-making session instead of a journey to the mountains!

Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

Ye Jiuge was speechless. She pointed at the bundle and said, "Qing Mama, do you hope that I will die faster by making me wear these clothes to gather medicinal plants in the mountains?"

"Bah bah bah! Children's words can do no harm, so why speak of death?" Qing Mama glared haughtily at Ye Jiuge before she laughed mischievously and said, "What do you know? Men love delicate women. If you do not create some opportunities for the hero to save the damsel in distress, how will he fall for you?"

Her Eldest Miss is good in every aspect, except that she is too plucky. No man would dare woo her if he considered himself her inferior.

As such, Qing Mama had prepared Ye Jiuge's things with the utmost care.

If the Eldest Miss sprained her ankle at the foot of the mountain, Lord Bai could carry her uphill on his back. It would be even better if there were a drizzle, and the two of them could start a fire in an abandoned and run-down temple. That would be perfect.

Thinking of the run-down temple, Qing Mama said to Ye Jiuge with a solemn expression, "Eldest Miss, it's alright if you spend the night with Lord Bai, but you absolutely must not do anything that should not be done. It would be stupid to lose your virginity before marriage."

A lady's virginity was like a gem. When she handed it to her husband on their wedding night in the bridal room amidst ornamental candles, it would become the cornerstone of their relationship. If her virginity were taken before marriage, she would become even more worthless than cow dung found on the roadside.

"Qing Mama, you are overthinking things." Ye Jiuge was really impressed with Qing Mama's vivid imagination.

Losing her virginity before marriage? Even if she wanted to, Zi Shang would never agree.

"If you want to lose your virginity, come find me!" Zi Shang's teasing voice rang out.

"Get lost!" Does this pervert think that he is reading from a script?

"Eldest Miss, men are full of sweet speeches and honeyed words before marriage. You must be wary of them!"

Qing Mama continued to give her earnest and well-meaning advice. She had heard that this Lord Bai was not only handsome, but he was also an eloquent and fluent speaker. This kind of man was the most flattering—the type that a woman could easily sink deep into.

In her opinion, Lord Wan was the better man. Handsome, but also capable. There had never been any gossip about him, and he had always been cold towards women. If her Eldest Miss were to marry such a man, she would not have to worry that he would marry other women and create havoc in their residence.

“I know, I know,” Ye Jiuge replied half-heartedly.

“Eldest Miss, I am serious.” Seeing that the Eldest Miss was not paying her any heed, she was prepared to give a long speech to prove her point.

Ye Jiuge believed that she would go crazy if Qing Mama continued harping on. She pushed Qing Mama towards the door and said, “Alright, alright. I know. I will pack my luggage myself. Help me think of a way to get away with this in case Father finds out and scolds me again.”

Having spoken, she shut the door. Qing Mama stood outside and laughed mischievously. The Eldest Miss must be embarrassed. Before, she had behaved too maturely for her age. Now, she was more like a girl yearning for love. However, the Eldest Miss was right. Qing Mama knew that she had to think up the perfect strategy to cover for her mistress.

Hearing Qing Mama’s departing footsteps, Ye Jiuge sighed with relief. Quickly, she began to pack. She removed all the dresses and accessories. Black-colored practice clothes and cloth shoes were the most practical for traveling. Fire starters and other camping necessities were also required.

Ye Jiuge finished packing her things and shoved them into an animal skin, which she had sewn herself. Feeling relieved, she went to sleep. She did not know that her every action in the Zilin Residence—including the items which Qing Mama and the other servants prepared daily, ingredients used in the Pill Production Room, and dregs leftover from making medicine—had been under the surveillance of a pair of beautiful and scheming eyes.

The seductive red lips of the owner of these beautiful eyes curled into a smile. She gave an order to someone in the darkness, “Send a message to the Empress to inform her that Ye Jiuge is going to the Demonic Beasts Forest tomorrow to gather medicinal plants. Ask her to make preparations.”

The following morning, at the first glimmer of light, Ye Jiuge changed into a man’s suit and stealthily left the Ye Residence. She rode a horse swiftly down the road. At noon, she finally arrived at the Demonic Beasts Forest, which was located five hundred miles away.

The Demonic Beasts Forest, as its name implied, was the place where demonic beasts gathered. Inside, the woods were dense. There were venomous insects everywhere, and demonic beasts ran amuck. Even an Advanced Spiritual Practitioner would not dare venture too deep into the forest.

Ye Jiuge patted the head of her big black horse and said, "Go find a place to have some grass and water!"

The old horse had been trained by the Yun Clan since it was young. It would be able to survive in the wild. After the horse left, Ye Jiuge walked briskly into the Demonic Beasts Forest.

Having gathered most of the medicinal plants from the forest's perimeter, Ye Jiuge planned to push deeper into the woods to find better medicinal plants. She oriented herself using the humidity in the air and the crowding of the trees, then headed west towards the swamp. The Beast Repellent Pill she had prepared came in handy.

The path she took was uneventful, and she found a small brown swamp in less than half an hour. Strictly speaking, the Thousand Threads Herb did not grow near swamps; it grew on the head of a second stage demonic beast known as the Mud Frog. This species usually hid in swamps. To tempt it out of hiding, a spiritual herb, Wonderful Frog Seed, was required.

Ye Jiuge took out a thumb-sized brown seed from her pouch. She peeled off the exterior layer of brown skin and placed the white-colored pulp at the edge of the swamp. Then, she stealthily hid in the massive tree beside it.

Bubbles began to emerge on the swamp's otherwise calm surface. With a plop, a huge frog covered in a thick layer of mud jumped out. A deep green, palm-sized plant, which looked like a ball of string, grew on its round brown head. This was the Thousand Threads Herb that Ye Jiuge was looking for.

The enormous frog surveyed its surroundings. When it did not detect any danger, it leaped towards the white-colored pulp. It opened its mouth, stuck out its thin tongue, and swept up the seed, swallowing it.

Ye Jiuge took the opportunity to pounce. With a single stroke of her blade, she cut off the Thousand Threads Herb from the top of the frog's head.

Croak croak croak!

The huge frog escaped in fear. With a thud, it jumped back into the swamp.

Ye Jiuge did not pursue it. It wasn't easy for a frog to grow to such a large size, and it would be a

pity to kill it. More importantly, the Thousand Threads Herb on the top of its head would grow back again. The herb was much more valuable than the frog itself, so Ye Jiuge decided to allow it to return to the swamp. If need be, she would return to pick it again.

Ye Jiuge stored the Thousand Threads Herb carefully and prepared to leave. Suddenly, the unique stench of a high stage demonic beast wafted on the breeze, assailing her nostrils.

The next moment, a white figure pounced at her, followed by the swift and sharp sound of the wind. Ye Jiuge turned and struck with her palm. Seizing the opportunity, she retreated three feet.

Clash!

There was a sound like metal hitting a sturdy slab of stone. The white figure landed on the ground. It was a third stage Wolf Beast.

Its deep green eyes gleamed like emeralds. From time to time, they shone with an irritable red light. Its entire body was covered with snow-white fur. On top of its head grew a patch of circular black hair similar to the black hat worn by a county magistrate. This was the symbol of the leader of the pack.

The dark green eyes of the alpha glared unwaveringly at Ye Jiuge. Behind it, a dozen grey Wolf Beasts appeared and surrounded Ye Jiuge.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

This isn't right!

Ye Jiuge frowned. The swamp was the Mud Frog's territory; Wolf Beasts shouldn't hunt in this area.

Something must have happened that forced them to come here.

Ye Jiuge opened her Spiritual Eye and discovered that a strange red light glowed in the depths of

these Wolf Beasts' eyes. This strange light was spreading throughout their entire bodies. It was evident that these Wolf Beasts were poisoned. With their malice heightened, they were treating Ye Jiuge like an enemy.

Ye Jiuge took out her Beast Repellent Pills and scattered them in the animals' direction. The alpha took a few steps back. However, urged on by its malice, again, it moved closer to Ye Jiuge. Then, it opened its mouth and spewed out swift and sharp green-colored wind blades.

Ye Jiuge dodged the wind blades, and they landed behind her on a large tree, which was as wide as two people. The tree crashed to the ground.

The alpha bristled and dug several holes in the ground with its claws. The rest of the pack crouched low and snarled threateningly. They were impatient and ready to attack at any moment.

Ye Jiuge looked around for an escape route. She could kill all these Wolf Beasts, but the smell of blood would send the other demonic beasts in the forest into a frenzy. If another group of demonic beasts arrived, she would never get out of the forest alive.

The alpha loosed another battle howl, and three more Wolf Beasts in a battle formation lunged at Ye Jiuge. She did not engage with them but turned and climbed up a tree. Agile as a monkey, she fled this way and that while the Wolf Beasts chased her under the trees.

After running in circles a few times, she was still unable to shake them. The Wolf Beasts had a way of locking in on their prey; unless she could escape the Demonic Beasts Forest, they would hunt her down.

Zi Shang seemed to be enjoying the show. "Look at your silly expression," he said.

"Since you aren't silly, why don't you give it a try?" Ye Jiuge shot back peevishly.

"Sure, I will have pity on you today and let you see what it means to have a king's aura!" Zi Shang laughed.

Suddenly, Ye Jiuge felt a mysterious power in her body. She lifted her head high, puffed up her chest, and swept the demonic beasts with her gaze as though she were watching mole crickets and ants.

The frenzied Wolf Beasts shuddered. They began whimpering for mercy and prostrated on their bellies, as though they were worshipping their Wolf King.

Ye Jiuge had to admit that Zi Shang's ability was impressive. She took out some Antidote Powder and scattered it on the ground. Then, she ordered the Wolf Beasts, "Eat."

Anger and fear flitted past the alpha's green eyes. It must have thought that Ye Jiuge was forcing them to eat poison. Ye Jiuge did not explain, using only Zi Shang's king's aura to subdue them.

Helplessly, the alpha could only lead over its younger brothers and swallow the Antidote Powder. The Wolf Beasts yelped loudly in pain. Then, they opened their mouths and vomited black blood. After retching, the redness faded from their eyes and insides. They began to recover their consciousness.

"Black Hat, take your younger brothers and go. Next time, if you feel that something is wrong, quickly run downwind." When Ye Jiuge saw them vomiting blood, she'd guessed how they'd fallen into the trap.

The alpha looked at Ye Jiuge with gratitude before hurriedly leading its younger brothers away.

"Zi Shang, can you find the people who urged on these Wolf Beasts?" Ye Jiuge asked in a low voice.

She had only told Qing Mama that she was gathering spiritual herbs in the mountains. How could anyone ambush her? She did not believe that Qing Mama would betray her. She had to capture and interrogate the person who had ambushed her to find out.

"They are on the east side," Zi Shang said.

"I would like to see who has been plotting against me!"

With a flash, Ye Jiuge ran east. She covered half a kilometer in less than the time needed to burn half a stick of incense.

Ye Jiuge stopped and stood on a tree branch. In the distance, she could see a group of people dressed in black standing in a clearing. One of the figures was short, skinny, and very familiar. It was Elderly Lady Xu.

"Why is she here?" Ye Jiuge frowned.

"With me by your side, what are you afraid of?" Zi Shang replied unenthusiastically.

He already knew that the old lady was leading a group of men into the mountains to track Ye Jiuge. He had said nothing because he was waiting for Ye Jiuge to find out for herself. However, the girl was so fixated on the spiritual herbs that she had not realized a thing.

With her muddle-headed personality, what would she do without his protection? It seems that, in

this lifetime, she is going to rely on him forever.

“To take revenge, I must do it myself. What am I if I always require your help?”

Ye Jiuge knew that Zi Shang was powerful. As long as he was willing to put his hand to something, no threat could pose too big a problem for him. It was easy to depend on his strong power, but she did not wish to become a useless person who had to rely on others.

Besides, Zi Shang was a demon. If he acted too frequently, she feared that he would leave a trace. If anyone discovered that she was colluding with the Demon Clan, she would be done for.

“Stupid, have you forgotten about the medical consultation fee I earned for you?” Zi Shang asked.

“Are you talking about the Lightning Snake Magical Whip?” Although the spiritual whip was powerful, it was no match for Elderly Lady Xu.

“Yes. Actually, it is not a spiritual weapon but a demonic one,” Zi Shang said.

In fact, the Lightning Snake Magical Whip was somewhat connected to Zi Shang. It had been made from a seventh stage demonic snake known as the White Qilin King, a traitor whom Zi Shang had killed when he had attempted to seize the throne. Then, he had thrown the corpse onto the ancient battlefield. Zi Shang did not know who among the Demon Clan’s younger generation had secretly entered the ancient battlefield to retrieve the White Qilin King’s corpse and refined it into a demonic weapon. It was really quite well-made. Nevertheless, an unsuspecting person would mistake it for a badly damaged spiritual weapon.

“How can it be a demonic weapon?” Ye Jiuge was bewildered. How can her spiritual power possibly control a demonic weapon? Does he think that she is a three-year-old child?

“In the hands of the human race, it is merely an ordinary spiritual weapon. However, in the Demon Clan’s control, it is an extremely powerful and bloodthirsty demonic weapon. Although you are not from the Demon Clan, in my presence, I can awaken it to recognize you as its master.” For Zi Shang, the matter was simple.

“Aren’t you afraid that people will find out that there’s something between us if you let me use a demonic weapon to murder somebody?” Ye Jiuge rolled her eyes.

She wanted nothing more than to hang a sign in front of her chest announcing that she had no dealings with the Demon Clan. Why would she wield a demonic weapon and recklessly go around killing people?

“Silly, if I hadn’t told you, would you have been able to tell that it is a demonic weapon?” As long

as Ye Jiuge did not tell anyone, no human would ever know the true nature of the magical whip.

“No matter what you say, I will not use it.” Ye Jiuge shook her head firmly.

Becoming entangled with a demon was dangerous enough. Adding a demonic weapon to the mix would be like playing with fire and getting burned.

“Not even if it can help you kill Elderly Lady Xu?” asked Zi Shang in reply.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

The temptation to kill Elderly Lady Xu was immense! After hesitating momentarily, Ye Jiuge asked, “Are you sure that nobody will be able to tell that this is a demonic weapon?”

“Yes, I am sure.”

“Alright!” Ye Jiuge had to admit that she could not resist the lure of power. “How do I awaken it?”

Zi Shang answered straightforwardly, “Just feed it a drop of your blood.”

A drop of blood, again. Is my blood so valuable?

Ye Jiuge complained inwardly, but she obediently followed Zi Shang’s instructions. She bit her finger and dripped her blood onto the Lightning Snake Magical Whip’s snakehead. As Ye Jiuge’s blood seeped inside it, the whip shuddered. A line of blood swiftly spread from its head to its tail before disappearing. Then, the lifeless Lightning Snake Magical Whip opened its bloody eyes and emitted a terrifying aura.

Meanwhile, a few men in black clothes were speaking respectfully to Elderly Lady Xu in the clearing. “Elderly Lady, the Wolf Beasts should have consumed most of Ye Jiuge’s energy by now. Shall we go over and take a look?”

“Go ahead but remember—bring her back to me alive.” Elderly Lady Xu’s skinny and shriveled

face wore a vicious expression.

When Elderly Lady Xu first heard that Ye Jiuge had entered the mountains, she volunteered for the task. As long as she forced out Ye Jiuge's secret, she could deal with her any way she liked. Although Ye Jiuge was only a Beginner Spiritual Practitioner, she was still better than ordinary people with no cultivation. Elderly Lady Xu believed that, once she had sucked out all of Ye Jiuge's blood, she would be able to break through to the stage of Spiritual Master.

Elderly Lady Xu was imagining the beautiful days ahead when she suddenly felt cold sweat dripping down her back. Following her instincts, she ducked. The men in black were momentarily stunned, frozen in their original positions, before they saw the shadow covered with purple-colored lightning that was assaulting them. They turned and tried to flee.

Bang!

The shadow tore their bodies into pieces. Blood and flesh flew in all directions, and a few broken limbs scattered onto the ground. Elderly Lady Xu's old eyes widened in disbelief to see Ye Jiuge wielding the Lightning Snake Magical Whip. Even though she had started off as a sorcerer, she had never witnessed such a gory, terrifying attack before.

Ye Jiuge cracked the Lightning Snake Magical Whip in her hand. Her face was pale; the attack had consumed much of her spiritual power. From her experience, Elderly Lady Xu immediately realized that something was wrong.

She laughed sinisterly and said, "D*mned girl! There's a road to heaven, but you did not take it. Instead, you've chosen hell, even when there is no door. Since you are already here, leave your life now!"

Then, Elderly Lady Xu used all of the Black Magic in her body to form the Spiritual Light of Protection. It reeked strongly of blood and had increased since the incident at the Jinxiu Palace. She must have acquired it over many lives.

Ye Jiuge's expression darkened. She clutched the Lightning Snake Magical Whip and shouted, "Demonic old hag, soon you will see who is going to die here today."

The Lightning Snake Magical Whip attacked automatically, morphing into multiple shadows. Elderly Lady Xu waved her hands and used her palm's red-colored shadows to block the assault. The more Elderly Lady Xu fought, the more apprehensive she became. At first, she thought that such a powerful attack would surely deplete most of Ye Jiuge's spiritual power. However, the more Ye Jiuge fought, the stronger she became. The spiritual whip was like a huge, cunning, and vicious python in Ye Jiuge's hands. It opened its ferocious mouth wide, trying to swallow her up. Elderly Lady Xu did not know that Ye Jiuge was also in a lot of pain. The Lightning Snake Magical

Whip frantically drew spiritual power from its wielder's body. Ye Jiuge felt as though she were being sucked dry.

"Zi Shang, what is happening?" Ye Jiuge tried to disengage forcefully but could not. If this continued, she would be turned into jerky before she could kill Elderly Lady Xu.

"Well, it's a demonic weapon and has some personality. Just communicate with it nicely," Zi Shang replied lazily.

"How do I communicate with it?" He can't mean that she has to yell and shout at a whip, can he? She is not crazy.

"Use your soul power to give it an order," Zi Shang said. Then, he kind-heartedly reminded her, "It will suck you dry in about two and a half hours, so you have to hurry up!"

Hurry up his ass!

Given the life and death crisis, Ye Jiuge shouted with all her soul, "You d*mned Lightning Snake Magical Whip, if you dare absorb my spiritual power again, I will destroy you!"

The Lightning Snake Magical Whip trembled. Sure enough, it stopped absorbing Ye Jiuge's spiritual power. It flew away from her hand, jabbed into Elderly Lady Xu's chest, and began gobbling in a frenzy. Elderly Lady Xu's body dried up fast. As she stared in disbelief at the silver snake stuck to her chest, her face went as white as paper. She was usually the one who sucked others' blood; it had never occurred to her that, one day, her own blood would be sucked out of her.

Ye Jiuge's expression was grim as she looked at the Lightning Snake Magical Whip, which had turned blood red.

Who can't tell that this is a demonic weapon? Is everyone blind?

"It's okay. It is just too thirsty and will be fine after absorbing this one," said Zi Shang without any sincerity.

Ye Jiuge had a feeling that she'd been played. Elderly Lady Xu's body, meanwhile, had already turned as thin and dry as a human skeleton. It was almost time for Ye Jiuge to stop, when Elderly Lady Xu's body suddenly expanded. A strange blood color appeared on her face. The Lightning Snake Magical Whip immediately returned to Ye Jiuge's hand as though it had seen a ghost and resumed its previously innocent appearance.

"Oh no, she is going to self-detonate. Run!"

Zi Shang quickly delivered a portion of his demonic power into Ye Jiuge. At the same time, Elderly Lady Xu's body exploded with a loud bang. The explosion's massive wave hit Ye Jiuge like an iron hammer. She felt her blood churn as she went flying like a kite whose string had been cut.

"Hold on, I need to take a nap!" Zi Shang delivered his last words then went quiet.

F*ck f*ck f*ck!

Ye Jiuge was going mad. The Lightning Snake Magical Whip had already sucked her spiritual power dry, and she could not move at all. She could only fall from the sky, snapping off countless branches and leaves on the way down before crashing face-first into a human-shaped pit on the ground.

Buried in the earth, Ye Jiuge strongly suspected that she had been disfigured. Her face hurt badly. Then, the howls of demonic beasts rang in her ears. The sounds were filled with threats to the outsider.

With all her might, Ye Jiuge lifted her head. She saw a round black hat and recognized the Wolf Beasts that she had released earlier. They were having a meal together, and the sides of their mouths were still stained with blood.

The alpha gazed at her with a bewildered look. It was trying to determine who she was; her nose was bloody, and her face was swollen from the fall. Ye Jiuge could barely manage a greeting.

"Hello, Black Hat. We meet again."

She did not know if the Wolf Beasts remembered her kindness. She was in so much pain that she could not even lift a finger. It would be as easy as the turn of a hand for them to kill her. Fortunately, the alpha recognized Ye Jiuge. Encircling her, it wailed as if it were asking her how she had been injured.

"I battled for three hundred rounds with the evil human who controlled you, and she unexpectedly sent me flying," Ye Jiuge duped the creature, speaking with difficulty.

Howl!

United in anger against a common enemy, the alpha howled twice before lowering its head, scooping Ye Jiuge up in its mouth, and placing her on top of its body. Then, with Ye Jiuge on its back, the alpha moved towards the depths of the forest.

Translator: Nyoi-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoi-Bo Studio

With Ye Jiuge on its back, the alpha took a route with many twists and turns before unexpectedly returning to the swamp where they'd first met. It howled a few times. Multiple bubbles rose to the swamp's surface, making popping sounds. Then, the giant Mud Frog's shiny round head peeked out.

Croak croak croak!

Howl howl howl!

After this communication, the Mud Frog looked at Ye Jiuge with some irritation before submerging gloomily into the swamp. There was another plop sound; then, a lake blue stone was spat out. The alpha Wolf Beast caught the stone with one of its claws and rolled it close to Ye Jiuge's mouth, howling twice. It was clear that it wanted her to swallow the stone.

Ye Jiuge glanced at the stone out of the corner of her eye. Could this be the Demon Clan's divine medicine?

Howl Howl! The alpha impatiently urged her.

Ye Jiuge made up her mind and swallowed the stone in a single gulp. However, it did nothing to help the pain. The burning in her five viscera and six bowels worsened. Her lungs, especially, felt as though they were on fire. It was incredibly painful to breathe.

Then, the alpha again took Ye Jiuge onto its back and carried her. It ran so fast that it was almost flying as it brought her across more than half of the Demonic Beasts Forest. Finally, the alpha reached the edge of a precipice. The chilly mountain wind caused the alpha Wolf Beast's fur to dance in the breeze. Suddenly, Ye Jiuge had a bad feeling.

It can't be thinking that, can it?

Before Ye Jiuge could react, the alpha crouched and threw her over the edge.

F*ck! It's a lie that demonic beasts know how to repay a kindness.

Ye Jiuge's body fell. With a loud bang, she landed heavily in the vast lake below. The water's intense pressure crushed her chest. Her entire body was in so much pain that her survival instincts finally kicked in.

In the serene but icy lake, Ye Jiuge waved her hands desperately, trying to swim to the surface. To her horror, her body continued to sink as if something were dragging her legs down. After momentarily panicking, Ye Jiuge realized with surprise that the lake water had not gushed into her nose and mouth. She was able to breathe freely underwater. She thought of the lake blue stone that the alpha had made her swallow.

Can it be that the beast doesn't want to kill her? Maybe it's trying to save her instead?

Ye Jiuge steadied herself and swam downwards, following the force from the center of the lake. The small fish looked curiously at the foreign visitor. They started to swim alongside her in little schools, but soon lost their patience and left.

Ye Jiuge descended until she reached a cave at the bottom of the lake. Something inside that dark, serene place attracted her. Ye Jiuge hesitated for a moment before following her instincts and swimming into the cave. She passed a dark, narrow tunnel, which brightened before her eyes.

On the cave walls, light blue water plants grew plentifully. They emitted a crystalline glow and were very beautiful. Ye Jiuge's eyes brightened. She tore off a handful of the water plants, placed them in her mouth, and began to chew. A bitter and astringent taste with a hint of sweetness diffused in her mouth. Then, a cooling spiritual power rose from her elixir field. The agonizing pain in her body and face was immediately soothed.

"I've just made a bundle of money!" Ye Jiuge exclaimed. Her eyes turned the shape of gold ingots as she realized that these plants were second-grade Indigo Jade Water Plants.

An Indigo Jade Water Plant was a healing treasure that contained extremely pure water spiritual power. If it were sold to a medicinal store, a single plant could fetch a thousand silver taels. In that patch, there were at least ten thousand plants. Undoubtedly, she would become impossibly wealthy overnight if she brought them back! Besides monetary value, this spiritual herb had another important use: it was a natural painkiller. With such spiritual medicine, Imperial Consort Xi would not only avoid the physical pain of Lingering Death, but she would also recover faster. This discovery was a most unexpected blessing.

Joyfully, Ye Jiuge cut away the Indigo Jade Water Plants and squeezed them into her animal skin bag. She was broken-hearted at having to leave when she had filled her bag to the brim. Nevertheless, Ye Jiuge continued forward. After passing a tunnel under the bottom of the lake,

deep waters spread above her. Ye Jiuge rose and emerged from the water before realizing that she had reached the inside of a cave.

The tall and wide cave was desolate. Ye Jiuge became apprehensive, and alarm rose in her heart. Such a place was either the lair of a giant demonic beast or the boobytrapped location of a buried treasure. No matter what it was, it was dangerous. Ye Jiuge stayed close to the walls and slowly walked deeper into the cave. Suddenly, a rolling sound came from somewhere far away. Something was heading toward her.

Ye Jiuge tightly gripped the Lightning Snake Magical Whip in her hands. Although the demonic weapon was a pitfall, it was powerful. In a critical moment, it would give her a sense of security. The rolling sound came closer, and Ye Jiuge's nerves were on edge. Just as she raised the Lightning Snake Magical Whip, a round black figure pushing a dirty pill production furnace with all its might appeared in front of her.

"Pipi!" The small, fat figure raised its head, revealing a pair of large, dark grape-like eyes.

The eyes were bright and intelligent, making it look adorable. Although it resembled a rat, it was different from the rats with pointed mouths and apes' cheeks that lived in the sewers. Its ears were round and its eyes large, and it had a small nose and a fat body. It appeared to be soft, cute, and harmless. Ye Jiuge, however, did not completely let down her guard. She did not know if the cute and cuddly appearance was a disguise. For all she knew, it could turn into a giant monster at any moment and swallow her up.

The creature rolled the pill production furnace closer to Ye Jiuge before it again cried out tenderly, "Pipi!"

Indescribably, Ye Jiuge understood what it was trying to convey.

"Is this for me?" Ye Jiuge pointed to herself.

The Black Fat Rat nodded its head eagerly. "Pipi!"

Ye Jiuge did not rashly pick up the pill production furnace. Instead, she opened her Spiritual Eye and scrutinized it. There was nothing unusual about this furnace, nor did it look like a concealed weapon, so she picked it up from the ground. When she blew the dust off it, she realized that it was a three-legged bronze cauldron. An intricate flower pattern was engraved on its surface, giving it an ancient feel. Ye Jiuge strangely felt that it was a treasure. Her greed took over, and she kept it without any hesitation.

"Pipi!" exclaimed the creature happily before it turned and retreated into the cave's depths.

Ye Jiuge kindled a fire with her fire starter and carefully followed the Black Fat Rat. Soon, they arrived at an even more extensive cave. When her light illumined the walls around her, Ye Jiuge gasped in astonishment. Scar-like gouges covered the cave walls, emitting an incomparable bleakness. Pale blue paint was mixed into the middle of the scars. When Ye Jiuge examined them, she observed that the blue pigments were traces of murals. Unfortunately, the crisscrossed scars had destroyed them, and she could not learn anything further.

She touched the paint remnants with her fingers and realized that the pigments were made from a kind of ore that contained spiritual power. Ordinarily, murals produced from such paint were extremely durable. They could easily be preserved for at least a thousand years. However, these cave paintings had been badly damaged. The person who had destroyed them must have been incredibly powerful.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

Ye Jiuge examined the traces of the cave wall paintings again. They had no regular patterns. In some places, there were even large gouges. They did not seem to have been made intentionally; they were more like scars left behind from a violent fight. Only a Great Spiritual Master could have destroyed the murals and degraded the sturdy cave walls into their current state.

Ye Jiuge attempted to analyze the badly damaged murals, but they were too marred to decipher. Then, she found some faint writings in the corner. She squatted down and wiped away the dust. As Ye Jiuge scrutinized the letters, she realized that the handwriting was her grandfather's, Yun Tianwei.

He wrote that he'd intentionally sought out this place because he'd heard that it contained historical ruins. However, he'd found it destroyed and condemned whoever did this for lacking the morality to leave the murals alone. From her grandfather's long abusive rant, Ye Jiuge had apparently discovered his secret hobby. She tried to seek clues about his disappearance. However, other than insulting words, the only useful information she gleaned was that these ruins were likely to contain a cauldron that was extremely useful for alchemists.

Then, in another corner, she found a relatively intact mural. It depicted a majestic and spectacular

three-legged bronze cauldron. Below it burned a fire in the shape of a golden lotus. Countless small golden fishes frolicked in the pill production furnace. Above it, red-crowned cranes danced lightly and gracefully. It was as if a pill of life had been born.

Ye Jiuge hurriedly took out the small bronze cauldron that the Black Fat Rat had given her.

This thing can't be the precious ancient cauldron that her grandfather once spoke of, can it?

The Black Fat Rat had pushed the treasure, which even her grandfather could not find, right in front of her.

Was she just lucky with beasts today?

When she compared her small cauldron to the giant vat depicted in the mural, she felt that she was imagining the wildest thing possible. The dusty object did not have a trace of spiritual power. How could it be the precious ancient cauldron?

Just then, the Black Fat Rat threaded its way toward her. Bumping its buttocks, it made its way to Ye Jiuge's foot. It cried adorably, "Pipi!"

Ye Jiuge lowered her head to look at it. She saw that the rat was carrying a small bag, which resembled her animal skin bag.

Is this why the rat gifted her the bronze cauldron?

The rat raised its head to look at her. Its black eyes were filled with admiration. Ye Jiuge was speechless. Receiving the Black Fat Rat's appreciation was nothing to cheer about. After ensuring that there were no secret passages or treasures in the cave, she returned to the deep waters through which she had come and prepared to leave. Carrying the small animal skin bag, the rat followed closely behind Ye Jiuge like it wanted to go with her.

Ye Jiuge picked it up by the back of its neck and exclaimed, "What do you want?"

It curled up its limbs and cried out softly, "Pipi!" Its large eyes blinked a few times in an attempt to look cute.

"You are so fat and yet, you are trying to look adorable. You have knocked on the wrong door," Ye Jiuge said, expressing her scorn.

"Pipi Jam!" The creature trembled. Its large eyes brimmed with tears, and it looked as pitiful as a small abandoned puppy.

“Fine, fine. Seeing that you have given me the bronze cauldron, I will keep you for a while. However, you better pay your food and living expenses on time!”

Ye Jiuge glanced at the small animal skin bag. She had a feeling that some precious things were inside.

“Pipi!” The Black Fat Rat used its paws to cover the small bag. It vigilantly watched Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge released the nape of its neck and said, “Follow me if you can!”

She jumped into the water, retraced the path she had followed in, and swam toward the surface. At first, Ye Jiuge had thought that she would be merciful and carry the rat if it could not keep up with her. But she had not expected the rodent to be a better swimmer than her. When it slid its fat paws, it glided a few hundred meters forward. In its own way, the creature found amusement as it followed alongside Ye Jiuge. As it swam through the passageway, it even grabbed a handful of Indigo Jade Water Plants and began chewing on them.

Ye Jiuge, meanwhile, after swimming halfway, realized that she was running out of oxygen. The effect of whatever the Wolf Beast had given her was gradually wearing off. She increased her speed. She managed to emerge from the lake before drowning. By then, it was already late at night. The surface of the lake glinted under the bright moonlight. It was like a scene from a dreamland.

The Black Fat Rat emerged from the lake after Ye Jiuge. It forcefully shook its fur, sprinkling water all over the ground.

“Who are you?” Ye Jiuge looked with surprise at the rat’s fur; it had suddenly become gorgeous. It was as if, halfway through the trip, the Black Fat Rat had been swapped out for some other creature.

“Pipi?” The rat tilted its head to look at Ye Jiuge as though it did not understand why she was so surprised.

Ye Jiuge scrutinized the small rodent. Its black fur had turned a light silver under the moonlight. It glimmered with a beautiful glow. Many patterns of gold veins rippled like waves through its fur. Most incredible of all, a small golden lotus had appeared on top of its head. However, the changes to its body soon disappeared, and the Black Fat Rat resumed its original lackluster appearance.

Seeing that Ye Jiuge was in a daze, the rat traversed the shore, minding its own business. Then, with its head held high and chest thrust out, it walked into the Demonic Beasts Forest as if touring its territory.

Ye Jiuge hurriedly followed. The creature swiftly reached the swamp and called out, "Pipi!"

The giant Mud Frog leaped out. The alpha Wolf Beast, leading its younger brothers, also converged on the spot.

"Pipi!" The rat thrust its chubby chest forward. Solemnly, it raised its paws and waved at the other creatures like a leader conducting an inspection.

The large Mud Frog and the alpha Wolf Beast, cooperating fully, made some noises. The Black Fat Rat then put down its small paws in satisfaction and rooted around inside its animal skin bag. It took out a green seed larger than its body and a round black stone. Then, it placed both objects on the ground in front of it. With her sharp eyes, Ye Jiuge saw that the items were actually a third-stage Wonderful Frog Seed and a third-stage Wind Spiritual Stone.

"Croak, croak, croak!"

"Howl, howl, howl!"

Both the Mud Frog and the alpha Wolf Beast's attitudes were now passionate and enthusiastic.

"Pipi Jam!"

The Black Fat Rat generously pushed the two items toward the Mud Frog and the alpha Wolf Beast. It looked like a boss rewarding its subordinates for performing well! Both the Mud Frog and the alpha Wolf Beast looked satisfied with their rewards. After eating them, they quickly retreated.

D*mn! This Black Fat Rat must be a local tycoon if it offers such valuable items as rewards!

Ye Jiuge's opinion of the Black Fat Rat immediately changed. In particular, its small pouch seemed to be some kind of four-dimensional bag. It must be very costly. Perhaps, even Emperor Xuanwu would not be able to obtain one like it. Ye Jiuge wondered about the rat's background. Why did it have so many treasures?

"Pipi!" the Black Fat Rat called out adorably to Ye Jiuge.

Then, its plump body leaped into the air. Like a small cannon shell, it landed perfectly in Ye Jiuge's pocket. The pocket was filled with junk, so it dug out some space. Then, it curled into a ball, ready for a rest. Before napping, it did not forget to call out "pipi" to Ye Jiuge one last time. Its smug and pampered expression clearly said, "I am going to rest now. Kneel and pay your respects, my slave!"

Translator: Nyo-i-Bo Studio Editor: Nyo-i-Bo Studio

As Ye Jiuge looked at the black fat rat, she had a feeling that she'd been deceived. Its arrogant and pampered vibe was completely different from its soft and cute appearance back in the cave.

Did she bring back a little devil? It doesn't matter, she will tolerate the local rodent tycoon for its treasure! Ye Jiuge was not in the mood to remain in the Demonic Beasts Forest. She placed her fingers in her mouth and whistled for the large black horse that had brought her there.

Clatter clatter clatter! A wave of human noises followed the clatter of the horse's hoofs. Ye Jiuge leaped onto a tall tree and saw countless torches lighting up in the distance. It was clear that someone was searching the mountains. Ye Jiuge was startled. Could it be that the Empress had shed all pretense of cordiality and dispatched a group of troops to get rid of her?

At that moment, a familiar voice rang out, "Eldest Miss Ye, where are you?"

Ye Jiuge recognized it as Bai Songling, and she jumped down from the tree. She saw that he was leading her large black horse by the nose and asked,

"What are you doing here?"

"Qing Mama asked us to look for you," Bai Songling said.

"Why would she look for you?" Ye Jiuge was surprised. Qing Mama did not usually step out of the Ye Residence for anything insignificant.

"Something must have happened at the Ye Residence. Qing Mama suddenly rushed over to find me." Bai Songling sighed and looked helplessly at Ye Jiuge.

Qing Mama had been startled to see him. She repeatedly questioned him regarding why he was at home instead of gathering medicinal herbs with her Eldest Miss. It was as though he had discarded Ye Jiuge after having made use of her. Bai Songling had to explain needlessly before Qing Mama finally believed that he knew nothing about Ye Jiuge wanting to enter the mountains with him to gather medicinal herbs. After the Dongling Prince had heard about this, he immediately

dispatched some men to follow them into the mountains to search for Ye Jiuge.

"I apologize. Qing Mama has got used to worrying. She would not have rested easy if I hadn't told her that I was out with you," Ye Jiuge said, embarrassed. She knew well how long-winded Qing Mama could be, and Bai Songling must have suffered gravely.

"It's okay as long as you are fine. However, the next time you want to use me as a shield, please tell me in advance. I will definitely cooperate," Bai Songling said light-heartedly.

"Thank you." Ye Jiuge laughed awkwardly.

Then, Wan Ziyang arrived together with some Spiritual Guards from the Dongling Prince Mansion. Obviously, Dongfang Que considered Ye Jiuge to be someone important. Immediately after hearing that Ye Jiuge had suffered an accident, he'd dispatched the most outstanding Spiritual Guards from his residence.

"Eldest Miss Ye, you..." Wan Ziyang walked toward Ye Jiuge while holding a torch. However, he was stunned before he could finish speaking, and a hint of astonishment flitted past his eyes.

"Eldest Miss Ye, what happened to your face?"

Bai Songling's eyes widened as he stared at Ye Jiuge. His expression was as though he had seen a ghost. Earlier, the color of the sky had been too dark for him to see, and Ye Jiuge had been standing under a tree. He had been so preoccupied with talking that he had not realized that something about Ye Jiuge's face had changed.

"What's wrong?" Was her face disfigured from her fall in the Demonic Beasts Forest?

She remembered that her face had been hurting badly. Ye Jiuge immediately reached for her face; it felt as smooth as silk. She immediately had a bad premonition, and she hurriedly asked, "Does anyone have a mirror?"

But they were all men, so none of them carried mirrors. In the end, a Spiritual Practitioner with a Water Spiritual Root conjured a small puddle of water for Ye Jiuge. When Ye Jiuge saw her reflection in the puddle, she momentarily felt as though she'd been struck with a bolt out of the blue.

A stunning beauty appeared on the surface of the water. She had long, shapely eyebrows, an elegant and pretty nose, as well as long eyelashes. Her fair and flawless skin had a hint of color, and her delicate, ruby-lipped mouth was as tender and plump as a rose. Her eyes were especially alluring and exquisite. They were as bright and clear as the spring waters.

F*ck, why do I look like a white lotus flower? Ye Jiuge was unwilling to accept her new appearance.

“Eldest Miss Ye, what’s wrong?” Bai Songling felt strange seeing Ye Jiuge so grieved. Isn’t she supposed to be joyous about becoming beautiful? Why is she behaving like this?

“Nothing. I am just not used to it.” Ye Jiuge shook her head.

When she lifted her face, she saw that all the male Spiritual Practitioners were awestruck. In that instant, Ye Jiuge felt despondent. No matter which world one is in, looks are everything!

“Eldest Miss Ye, it is not early anymore. Qing Mama must be anxious for you, and we should head back now!” Bai Songling said.

If they were to head back immediately, they would return just as the city gates opened.

“Sure.” Ye Jiuge put on her curtain hat, climbed onto the large black horse, and followed Bai Songling and the others back to the capital.

It was early in the morning when they reached the capital. The guards on duty walked out drowsy-eyed and yawning. When they saw the Justice Department badge, which Wan Ziyang displayed, they immediately and respectfully welcomed the group into the city. Astride her horse, Ye Jiuge followed Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang back to their residence. The rest of the Spiritual Practitioners returned to the Dongling Prince Mansion to report on the completion of their mission.

At that moment, Qing Mama, who had not slept the entire night, was pacing up and down in Wan Ziyang’s residence. When she saw Ye Jiuge, she cried out emotionally, “Eldest Miss, where have you been? I have been so worried.”

“Didn’t I tell you that I was going into the mountains to gather medicinal herbs?” Ye Jiuge said as she climbed off her horse.

“It’s fine if you were in the mountains. However, why did you have to lie to me that Lord Bai was accompanying you?” Qing Mama began to harp on unhappily.

What an embarrassing question! Bai Songling is right next to them! Ye Jiuge quickly pulled Qing Mama along with her toward the house. With a soft voice, she said, “I will explain to you later.”

“Fine!” Qing Mama realized that it was inappropriate to pursue the issue in front of outsiders, so she said nothing further.

When they entered the house, Ye Jiuge asked Qing Mama, “Why did you rush here in the middle

of the night?”

“Not long after you left in the morning, the Old Master came to the Zilin Residence and asked to see you. I said that you were recuperating from your injury and could not attend to visitors, but he did not believe me. He was yelling furiously, and he even smashed in the door. I realized that something was wrong, and as such, I rushed out to find you.”

Qing Mama had wanted to ask for Wan Ziyang’s help, but Bai Songling had opened the door! She’d thought that the Eldest Miss had been duped by Bai Songling, and she’d even wanted to kill him.

“How did Father know that I wasn’t in my residence?”

Ye Jiuge frowned as she recalled how Elderly Lady Xu, who was hiding in the Demonic Beasts Forest, had ambushed her. It was clear that someone in the Ye Residence was monitoring her secretly; whoever it was, the person was very good at it.

“I am unsure as well. However, we should head back quickly. I fear that the Old Master will seek Zhen Zhu and the rest in the Yaoguang Residence to vent his anger.” Before Qing Mama had left the Ye Residence, she had instructed Zhen Zhu to bring the other maids to the Fourth Miss to take refuge.

“Sure, let’s go back now.” Ye Jiuge nodded, then said to Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang,

“Can I trouble the two of you to help me deliver a message to His Highness? Tell him that I have found the Spiritual Herb and that I will go and find him once I have dealt with the matter at the Ye Residence.”

Having said so, she led Qing Mama home.

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Translator: Nyoibo Studio Editor: Nyoibo Studio

At that moment, the Yaoguang Residence was in turmoil. It was like the chaos of war. Zhen Zhu

and the other young maids from the Zilin Residence trembled in fear as they hid in a remote house.

Qing Hu and Qing Liu comforted them quietly. Fifth Concubine, with a pale face, looked out through a window. She saw Ye Yuxuan frowning as he shouted at Ye Ruyi, who was obstructing his path, "What are you doing?"

"Father, I cannot allow you to take Zhen Zhu and the rest away." Although Ye Ruyi was tiny, she stood bravely in front of Ye Yuxuan with her arms spread. She did not look like she was going to back down.

"They are not the Yaoguang Residence's servants. What is it to you?" Ye Yuxuan demanded impatiently. He had already allowed Qing Mama to escape, and he would not let off the rest of the maids. He could not deal with Ye Jiuge, but he could still kill some of her maids.

"Although they are not servants of the Yaoguang Residence, they are important to me." Ye Ruyi racked her brain for an excuse. She had to delay Father until Eldest Sister could return.

"Why are they important to you?" Ye Yuxuan was not convinced. How important could these maids be?

"They... they can help me to clean my Pill Production Furnace as well as arrange my personal letters when I am producing pills." Ye Ruyi could not think of any other excuses, and she could only talk nonsense.

"Ha!" Ye Yuxuan sneered. "You ask the servants from the Zilin Residence to help you clean your Pill Production Furnace and arrange your personal letters. Then, what's the use of your residence's servants?"

"They..."

Before Ye Ruyi could finish speaking, she was forcefully interrupted by Ye Yuxuan. "Since your servants are useless, there is no reason to keep them. They shall all be sold away."

Qing Hu and Qing Liu shivered when they heard this. They feared that Ye Yuxuan would tie them up and sell them.

"That won't do. They are also useful." Ye Ruyi shook her head repeatedly.

"Now, hear this. You can only keep one group of servants: those of the Zilin Residence or the Yaoguang Residence."

Ye Yuxuan's expression darkened as he released the aura of a fifth stage Alchemist at Ye Ruyi. He was outraged as he felt that his efforts had gone to waste. Ye Ruyi was an ingrate to favor Ye Jiuge instead of someone on her side. She had repeatedly sided with Ye Jiuge, that annoying brat. He was going to sort this d*mned girl out today, or she would become a second Ye Jiuge.

Ye Ruyi turned pale as her eyes widened with fear. She felt as though Ye Yuxuan's image had overlapped with that of the sinister and scary Sorcerer in the underground room. Cold sweat began to seep out from her forehead and back. Immediately, her clothes became drenched. Ye Yuxuan revealed a satisfied grin as he thought his aura had crushed her.

Fifth Concubine realized that something was wrong with her daughter and was about to open the door.

"Fifth Concubine, no!" Qing Hu immediately restrained Fifth Concubine. Ye Ruyi had specially instructed her not to allow Fifth Concubine to appear in front of Ye Yuxuan so as not to infuriate him again.

"Even if it comes to worst, I will just take a beating from the Old Master." Fifth Concubine pushed Qing Hu away and rushed out to hold her daughter in her arms.

She realized that Ye Ruyi was completely soaked, and her entire body was trembling. Her pupils were dilated as if she were having a nightmare.

"Ruyi, Ruyi, what's wrong with you?" Fifth Concubine patted her daughter's face but did not see any reaction. She hurriedly turned to Ye Yuxuan and cried, "Old Master, there's something wrong with Ruyi. Please take a look at her!"

"Stop putting on an act in front of me." Ye Yuxuan thought that they were acting. He glared at them in disdain before instructing the guards behind him, "Go in and tie up all the servants. Don't leave even one."

Song Bai hesitated momentarily before asking in a soft voice, "What about the servants from the Yaoguang Residence?"

Towering above Fifth Concubine, who was out of her wits, the corners of Ye Yuxuan's mouth curled into a vicious sneer as he said, "Tie them up too."

"Yes!" Song Bai immediately led in the guards and chased Zhen Zhu, Qing Hu, Qing Liu, and the rest out.

"Fifth Concubine, save us!" Qing Hu and Qing Liu panicked as they screamed.

Hearing Qing Hu and Qing Liu's sobs, Fifth Concubine finally recovered from her trance. Holding Ye Ruyi in her arms, she implored piteously, "Old Master, those two are Ruyi's personal maids, and they serve her well. Please, spare them!" She could not save the servants from the Zilin Residence, but she must protect Qing Hu and Qing Liu.

"Ruyi's personal maids?" Ye Yuxuan's furious gaze swept past Qing Hu and Qing Liu. His vicious expression could make anyone tremble with fear.

Fifth Concubine opened her mouth to speak, but nothing came out.

"I see that the two of them must have instigated Ruyi to be disobedient toward me." Ye Yuxuan nodded and said to Song Bai, "Bring these two maids to the Torture Chamber and beat them to death!"

"Old Master!" Fifth Concubine screamed mournfully. She did not expect her plea for leniency to bring fatal calamity to Qing Hu and Qing Liu.

"Tell the other servants to come and see what will happen to them if they make such a mistake. Then, they will know what they should and shouldn't do in the future," Ye Yuxuan said coldly.

"Yes." Song Bai nodded, then called out to the guards, "What are you waiting for? Quick, bring them to the Torture Chamber!"

"Yes!" The two guards were big and tall, and they looked perverted and cruel. With a burst of malevolent laughter, they moved closer to Qing Hu and Qing Liu.

Their large hands deliberately grabbed the maids' small chests. It was clear that they were taking advantage of the situation.

"You are seeking death!"

Suddenly, an angry shout accompanied the arrival of the swift and sharp sound of the wind. In a flash, a purple whip attacked the two guards. They let out a blood-curdling screech as their arms dangled unnaturally. Their muscles and bones had been severed.

"Eldest Miss!"

"Qing Mama!"

Their eyes brimming with tears, Qing Hu and Qing Liu each gave a look of surprise. Wearing a curtain hat and holding the Lightning Snake Magical Whip in her hand, Ye Jiuge stood protectively in front of them. Qing Mama hurriedly untied the two maids.

“Ye Jiuge, you still have the gall to return!” Ye Yuxuan pointed at Ye Jiuge and shouted.

“Father, you have the gumption to bring male outsiders into your Inner Courtyard to kick up a fuss. Why would I not have the audacity to return?” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrows and said unruly.

“What nonsense are you spouting? They are my personal guards, not male outsiders. Furthermore, I am instructing them to punish disobedient servants. What does that have to do with the Inner Courtyard?” Hearing that Ye Jiuge was mocking him for cuckolding himself, Ye Yuxuan was so mad that his face became twisted.

“Is that so? I wonder what the servants from my Fourth Sister’s residence have done that you need to involve a great number of people to punish them,” Ye Jiuge sneered.

“You stayed out all night. Not only did these servants fail to report it, but they also tried to hide your mistake. They deserve ten thousand deaths for their crimes! As for the Yaoguang Residence’s d*mned servants, they have corrupted the Fourth Miss and instigated her to rebel against me. They deserve to die, as well!” Ye Yuxuan said viciously.

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Translator: Nyoibo Studio Editor: Nyoibo Studio

“Father, why don’t you ask me why I stayed out all night?” Ye Jiuge pushed back.

“Hmph. You know in your heart what shameful things you have done, and you still have the self-respect to ask me?” Ye Yuxuan acted as if he were embarrassed to have such a shameless daughter.

“Father, you are mistaken. I do indeed have enough self-respect to ask you to ask me. I wanted to surprise you, but I did not expect you to raise such a ruckus indiscriminately. Do you hate me so much that you wish for my death?”

Although Ye Jiuge already knew that her Father was disreputable, she still felt weak and powerless at times.

“What nonsense are you spouting? I am teaching you a lesson for your own good!” Ye Yuxuan could never admit that he was reminded of the fact that he’d married into the clan every time he saw Ye Jiuge. Yes, he wished badly for her to die.

“Is that so? Since you are so considerate toward me, you should be happy to see my good looks now!”

As Ye Jiuge spoke, she lifted her hand to remove the curtain hat from her head. Golden rays of sunlight spilled on her beautiful facial features. Her fair and flawless skin glowed like fine jade. Her alluring and exquisite eyes were clear as the spring waters. They sparkled continuously. She was like a fairy who had descended to the world of mortals, untainted by even a speck of dust.

Any father whose ugly daughter suddenly turned into a beauty would be happy. However, Ye Yuxuan acted as though he had seen a ghost. He involuntarily took a few steps back as a hint of fear flitted across his face.

This was also the first time Qing Mama had seen Ye Jiuge since her looks had been restored. She blurted out, “Madame?”

Madame? Did she look similar to her mother? Ye Jiuge’s memory of her mother was very hazy. Every time she tried to recall her mother’s image, she could only remember her weak and skinny figure, and also her benevolent but pale face.

“Eldest Miss, if Madame knew in the afterworld that your looks have been restored, she would be happy for you.” Qing Mama did not know whether to cry or laugh when she saw Ye Jiuge’s appearance.

Ye Yuxuan’s face changed once again when he heard the afterworld mentioned. No matter how much he had hated Yun Tianwei, he could not deny that Yun Qiaoqiao had been a good woman, gentle and virtuous. She had not had the demeanor of a pampered lady at all, and she had always been very gentle and considerate toward him. However, he had done countless unforgivable things to her.

“Father, are you happy to see your daughter’s looks restored?” Ye Jiuge deliberately took a few steps towards Ye Yuxuan.

“Yes, yes!” Ye Yuxuan nodded hurriedly, but his feet involuntarily retreated a few steps.

Then, he turned and fled as if chased by a ghost. Song Bai immediately instructed some men to carry the two guards, who had broken their arms, and left the courtyard following Ye Yuxuan.

As she watched Ye Yuxuan flee, Ye Jiuge began to contemplate. Ye Yuxuan, with his despicable and shameless nature, must have committed an enormously appalling deed for him to flee in fear when he saw that her face now looked so similar to his late wife's. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been so afraid.

"Eldest Miss, please take a look at Ruyi!" Fifth Concubine let out a shriek that was full of grief. She didn't dare make a sound earlier in fear of attracting Ye Yuxuan's attention, and she only cried for help as soon as he'd left.

"What's wrong with Fourth Sister?"

Ye Jiuge hurriedly squatted down and saw Ye Ruyi lying unconscious in Fifth Concubine's arms. Her entire body was soaked with cold sweat. Ye Jiuge reached out to check Ye Ruyi's pulse: it was rapid. She was in shock. Fortunately, it was not very severe.

"There's no major issue with Fourth Sister; she's just been frightened. Quickly, bring her back and change her clothes so that she will not catch a cold."

When Ye Jiuge rose, she saw Zhen Zhu, Qing Hu, Qing Liu, and the rest looking at her anxiously. As such, she said, "Everything is fine. Return to the Zilin Residence and do what you are supposed to be doing. Qing Hu and Qing Liu, go and heat some water for the Fourth Miss to wash her body."

With a single command from Ye Jiuge, the maids, who had been frightened stiff, were immediately calmed. They went off to work automatically. Ye Jiuge waited for Ye Ruyi to change into a set of new clothes before she applied a few needles to her body.

The young lady opened her eyes suddenly, and she started waving her limbs wildly as she screamed in fear, "Go away, go away!" This was like how she'd behaved after returning from the underground room.

"Fourth Sister, it's okay. Your Eldest Sister is here!" Ye Jiuge held Ye Ruyi's tiny hands tightly as she comforted her.

Ye Ruyi gradually steadied herself. With a dazed look at Ye Jiuge, she said, "Eldest Sister?"

"Yes, you are fine. You are very safe now. Have a good rest, and everything will be okay once you wake up." Ye Jiuge comforted her softly.

"Eldest Miss, what exactly is wrong with Ruyi?" Fifth Concubine's face was still pale.

Before, Ye Jiuge had only said that Ye Ruyi was in shock from being kidnapped. However, it

seemed like the matter wasn't so simple after all.

"Nothing." Ye Jiuge did not plan on telling Fifth Concubine about the underground room. There was no reason to—what could she do about it now?

"It's all my fault for being useless. I can't protect my daughter or the maids in the residence. Other than making Old Master angry, I am worthless. I might as well die. Perhaps, my death would allow Ruyi to recover her reputation." Fifth Concubine wept.

"If you are thinking like this, then you are truly useless," Ye Jiuge said coldly. "It is easy to die and difficult to continue living. If you are really concerned about Ruyi, then shed fewer tears and do more things."

Having said so, she turned and left. She was too exhausted from the day, and whether Fifth Concubine could stand up firm would depend on her own awareness.

Qing Mama followed Ye Jiuge. Once they had entered the Zilin Residence, she immediately questioned Ye Jiuge closely, "Eldest Miss, how did you recover your looks suddenly?"

"I unintentionally picked a Beautifying Herb when I entered the mountains to gather medicinal herbs. I did not expect the black scar on my face to fall off after I consumed it." Ye Jiuge said nothing about Elderly Lady Xu attacking her.

"Eldest Miss, you are giving me a half-hearted explanation again." Qing Mama clearly did not believe her.

"It's true. If you don't believe me, take a look. I picked up this Spiritual Beast as well, and it was the one that took me to the spot where I picked the Beautifying Herb." Ye Jiuge quickly took out the Black Fat Rat.

"What kind of Spiritual Beast is this?" Qing Mama took a careful look before she said with distaste, "Why is it a rat?"

Although the Black Fat Rat was cute, it did not change the fact that it was a rat. The Black Fat Rat could feel Qing Mama's disgust. It immediately puffed its chubby chest, squinted its eyes, and looked at Qing Mama with loathing. It was as though it were saying, "You dumb mortal, it is beneath my dignity to deal with you." Then, it returned to Ye Jiuge's pocket.

"This Black Fat Rat has developed consciousness." Qing Mama laughed. She finally believed that the Black Fat Rat had been the one to bring good luck to the Eldest Miss. She immediately asked, happily, "What does this fat rodent like to eat? I shall instruct the servants to make something for it."

“There’s no hurry. I need you to do something for me now.”

Then, Ye Jiuge told her about how someone in the Ye Residence had been watching the Zilin Residence closely. She said, “Although there are many spies in the Ye Residence, there must be something special about this person to be able to guess my whereabouts accurately. We must find them.”

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Translator: Nyoibo Studio Editor: Nyoibo Studio

“Eldest Miss, please rest assured. I will find this person.” Qing Mama nodded solemnly. She decided to start by investigating the Zilin Residence first.

With Qing Mama personally attending to the matter, Ye Jiuge was at ease. She was exhausted after a day of tirelessly working. After a bath and a change of clothes, Ye Jiuge went to sleep. When she woke up, it was noon. She planned to head to the Dongling Prince Mansion to check on Imperial Consort Xi. She put on her curtain hat and arrived at Wan Ziyang’s and Bai Songling’s residence in a horse-drawn carriage.

Wan Ziyang was at the Justice Department, and only Bai Songling was at home. When he saw Ye Jiuge, he was surprised. He asked, “Eldest Miss, have you dealt with everything back in your residence?” He had thought that Ye Jiuge would be busy for a few days.

“Yes.” It wouldn’t be right to air the Ye Residence’s dirty laundry in public, and Ye Jiuge did not want others to know about her conflicts with Ye Yuxuan. “I have just returned from the Dongling Prince Mansion. His Highness and the Imperial Consort are thrilled to hear that you have found the Spiritual Medicine in the Demonic Beasts Forest. They also said that you could feel free to instruct them if you require their help in any way,” Bai Songling smiled and said.

Dongfang Que had wanted to head over to help when he’d heard that something had happened at the Ye Residence. Unfortunately, Ye Yuxuan was from the Crown Prince’s faction, so Dongfang Que would have merely added fuel to the fire if he’d gone over there.

"I wouldn't dare. Brother Bai, if it is convenient for you, please bring me to the Dongling Prince Mansion," Ye Jiuge said. She could not go to the Yuwu Teahouse by herself through the secret passageway.

"Of course it's convenient! Follow me!"

Bai Songling did not have much to do at the residence anyway. Ye Jiuge followed Bai Songling through the secret passageway into the Prince Mansion. However, she had not expected Dongfang Que to be out. Ye Jiuge headed directly to the courtyard to see Imperial Consort Xi.

When Elderly Lady Zhou saw her, her expression immediately became fervent. She began to give an account of the medicine's effects on Imperial Consort Xi in a low voice: "The Imperial Consort is going to the bathroom frequently. Her body is frail now, and she is currently resting in the house."

"That's normal." The Imperial Consort needed to go to the bathroom frequently to discharge her blood stasis.

Imperial Consort Xi was resting, but when she heard that Ye Jiuge had arrived, she forcefully lifted herself in the bed.

"Imperial Consort, you need not stand on ceremony. Please, lie down!" Ye Jiuge hurriedly advised. She took a red silken pillow embroidered with a Chinese Peony design and placed it behind Imperial Consort Xi.

"My body is so useless now." Imperial Consort Xi did not have any energy, and she had to lie against the head of the bed.

"Imperial Consort, you look better."

Ye Jiuge carefully examined Imperial Consort Xi. Although she looked dispirited and listless, the rotten flesh and pustule on the right side of her face seemed to have improved. The pustule had begun to form scabs and had stopped discharging pus frequently. The stink of rotten flesh was also better.

"I feel so much better now. It must be the effects of using the correct medicine," Imperial Consort Xi smiled and said.

"After your blood stasis has been completely discharged, the effects will be even more distinct." Ye Jiuge laughed as she told Imperial Consort Xi about how she had managed to obtain the Indigo Jade Water Plant in the mountains.

The Imperial Consort was overjoyed to hear that she did not have to experience the pain of the

Lingering Death. After she calmed down, she could not help but ask Ye Jiuge, “I have wanted to ask you something ever since you walked in. Why are you wearing a curtain hat?”

“I consumed some medicinal herbs in the mountains and recovered my looks. I am still not used to it, so...” Ye Jiuge laughed with embarrassment. She was not accustomed to walking around with a face that looked like a white lotus flower.

“Silly girl, it is a good thing to be beautiful. Why are you hiding it? Quick, take off your hat, and let me have a look,” Imperial Consort Xi said benevolently.

Ye Jiuge placed her hand at the side of her curtain hat. Before taking it off, she thought of something suddenly, and she asked, “Imperial Consort, I heard that you often had tea with my mother?”

“Indeed. Back then, Linglong and I would often invite your Mother to the palace. Your mother had a good personality. It was too bad that she had poor judgment.” Imperial Consort Xi did not hide her contempt for Ye Yuxuan.

Back then, Ye Yuxuan had been handsome, and his aptitude had stood out. He’d spoken eloquently and skillfully and was deemed to be a decent son-in-law among the men in the capital. However, Imperial Consort Xi had still been able to see that Ye Yuxuan was selfish, despicable, and shameless. He’d always cozied up to those in power. The pretty boy had no abilities other than his attractive appearance and his skillful mouth.

Ye Jiuge took off her curtain hat and revealed her looks. Imperial Consort Xi had been leaning on the bed frame. However, seeing Ye Jiuge’s face, she could not help but straighten her body as her eyes filled with incredulity.

“Do I look very similar to my mother?” Ye Jiuge asked.

“Yes, in a way, but also no!” Imperial Consort Xi looked carefully at her for a moment before she sat back down.

“How do I look different?” Ye Jiuge had heard from Qing Mama that she looked almost identical to her mother.

“Your Mother was sweet-tempered, but she was also moody and overly emotional. In both appearance and temperament, you are better,” Imperial Consort Xi said ruefully.

If Yun Qiaoqiao had had Ye Jiuge’s personality, she would not have fallen gravely ill after Great Master Yun’s disappearance and given up the Yun Clan’s properties to Ye Yuxuan.

“Imperial Consort Xi, you flatter me.”

Ye Jiuge smiled. She spoke no more of her mother and began to talk about the treatment. Ye Jiuge planned to allow the pustulate and rotten flesh on Imperial Consort Xi’s face to form scabs before she began the final detoxification. Imperial Consort Xi expressed her willingness to follow Ye Jiuge’s arrangements.

Ye Jiuge stayed for about half an hour before she finally took her leave. Just then, Dongfang Que returned. He had heard from Bai Songling earlier that Ye Jiuge had recovered her looks, and he was calm when he saw her. However, he’d brought back a piece of bad news.

“Eldest Miss Ye, when the Su Clan’s Old Master exited his Spiritual Retreat today, he immediately sent some guards to bring Su Yufeng, who was at the Ancestral Shrine, back to the Su Clan.”

“Why did the Su Clan’s Old Master exit his Spiritual Retreat suddenly?” Ye Jiuge was startled. When she’d seen Ye Yuxuan’s expression earlier, he’d seemed unaware. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have been in the mood to cause trouble for her.

“I just received the news. The Su Clan’s Old Master has successfully advanced to the Spiritual Master stage.” Dongfang Que looked worriedly at Ye Jiuge and said, “Be careful.”

“It is the Su Clan’s business that their Old Master has exited his Spiritual Retreat. It has nothing to do with me.” Ye Jiuge was not very concerned. She thought, So what if Su Yufeng is back? If she dares to act, I will chop off her hands.

“You may not know this, but the Su Clan’s Old Master was born a commoner. He has a fiery personality and is unreasonable. He is also very protective of his family, even if they are in the wrong. If Su Yufeng and her daughter were to bad-mouth you in front of him, I fear that he would make things difficult for you.” Dongfang Que sighed.

“Will he personally discipline me even though I am from the younger generation? Is he that shameless?”

“I don’t think so, but I am afraid that he will say nasty things!” Dongfang Que felt that the Su Clan’s Old Master would not discipline her.

“Then, I will treat his words as though they are farts,” Ye Jiuge said indifferently.

No matter what, she was the Ye Clan’s eldest daughter. If the Su Clan’s Old Master were to say nasty things about her, Ye Yuxuan and the Ye Clan would be implicated as well. If Ye Yuxuan did not mind, she would not care either.

"It is still better to be prepared." Dongfang Que advised.

"I know."

Ye Jiuge nodded half-heartedly. She did not take Dongfang Que's words to heart. In her eyes, Su Yufeng and her daughter were merely annoying. If she had dealt with them in the past, she could do the same now.

Dongfang Que knew that it was useless to say anything more, and he did not advise further. He sent Ye Jiuge out before returning to the study. After a moment of consideration, Dongfang Que made his decision. He instructed Lei Peng, "Prepare the horses to head for the mail relay station."

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

Just as Ye Jiuge returned to the Zilin Residence, Qing Mama rushed up to her hurriedly. She said, "Oh no, Eldest Miss, the Old Master has ended Second Miss's confinement."

"Oh." Ye Jiuge nodded. She sat down and began to drink some tea.

"Why aren't you surprised?" Qing Mama's expression was confused. When the news had broken, everyone from the Ye Residence had been astonished.

"What is there to be surprised about?"

Ye Jiuge told her about how the Su Clan's Old Master had exited his Spiritual Retreat and brought Su Yufeng back to the Su Clan. With Ye Yuxuan's personality, he would have wanted to curry favor with his father-in-law, who had become a Spiritual Master. As such, it was no surprise that he had released Ye Shanshan.

"The Su Clan's Old Master is old and senile. I can't believe that he has the gall to bring his daughter back home after she's behaved worse than a dog or a pig. If I were him, I would have locked Su Yufeng up in a swine's cage and drowned her," Qing Mama said viciously.

"I've heard that the Su Clan's Old Master is very protective of his family, even if they are in the wrong. Instruct the servants to be more obedient during this period. Don't leave the residence, unless there is a need." Ye Jiuge was worried that her shameless Father, Ye Yuxuan, would use the servants from the Zilin Residence to win his father-in-law's favor.

"Eldest Miss, please rest assured. They know what to do."

The maids in the Zilin Residence, under Qing Mama's discipline, were even more sensitive than rabbits regarding the goings-on in the Ye Clan. When they'd witnessed the Second Miss's release, they'd become even more honest than quails. They also took detours just to avoid passing by the main residence.

"They have suffered just for following me. Later, given each maid a red packet to help them get over the shock."

Ye Jiuge felt helpless as well. Ye Yuxuan and Su Yufeng had not dared to deal with her. Instead, they were always pondering how they could dispose of the people around her. The servants in her residence must have been startled practically every day and suffered greatly.

"What suffering? They must have cultivated enough good fortune in their previous lives to serve the Eldest Miss."

Qing Mama was not bragging. In the Ye Residence, none of the masters treated their servants as well as Ye Jiuge did. Although they were frequently scared out of their wits by the Old Master and Madame, Ye Jiuge always arrived in the nick of time to save them. As such, they were extremely fond of her. Compared to the masters, who not only scolded and beat their servants but also frequently used them as scapegoats, Ye Jiuge was practically the reincarnation of Buddha. The frequent scares only served to unite the servants from the Zilin Residence more and more. Furthermore, Ye Jiuge was very generous. She gave out sufficient wages and frequently rewarded them.

"Qing Mama, you don't have to be so strict with them." Ye Jiuge was always busy. Apart from Zhen Zhu, who was her personal maid, she could not interact as much with the other servants.

In Qing Mama's eyes, the maids still needed to be trained. "Eldest Miss, you do not need to worry. I am well aware." Qing Mama had recently found that two of the young maids had decent aptitudes. She was ready to train them carefully to see if they could serve the Eldest Miss in the future. Ye Jiuge could only allow her to do as she wished.

In the following days, Ye Jiuge locked herself inside the Pill Production Room to prepare the detoxification pill for Imperial Consort Xi. It was challenging to prepare the Thousand Threads Herb. It had to be immersed in dew water for an entire night before the exterior membrane layer

could be washed off. After washing off this layer, the messy and thin threads inside had to be picked out before the herb could be used to make a pill.

Ye Jiuge spent almost half a day preparing the Thousand Threads Herb. Just as she was ready to produce the pill, she suddenly remembered that the Black Fat Rat had given her a small bronze cauldron. She wondered about the effects of using it to create pills.

Ye Jiuge took out the small bronze cauldron, which was ash-gray with dust. No matter what she did, she could not remove the rust from the cauldron. It looked filthy and damaged. If anyone were to see that she'd used such a cauldron to produce pills, she feared that they would not dare consume her pills.

Ye Jiuge did not dare use the Thousand Threads Herb to test out the cauldron. Instead, she took out some pseudo-ginseng, borneol, Contusion Dispelling Herb, Sheep Ear Inula Herb, Chuanlong Yam, Common Yam Rhizome, Bitter Ginger, and Common Heron's Bill Herb to prepare a traditional hemostatic medicinal pill. When she injected some Spiritual Power into the small bronze cauldron, it expanded slowly, like an old ox pulling a shabby cart. Ye Jiuge had almost fallen asleep by the time the small cauldron finally grew to regular size. She had a bad feeling about it. Holding onto a glimmer of hope, she placed all the medicinal ingredients into the small bronze cauldron and started to refine them.

The alchemy fire that Ye Jiuge used in the Pill Production Room was merely an ordinary flame. If she were to use her Pill Production Furnace, it would take approximately the time needed to brew a pot of tea. However, the small bronze cauldron was a poor conductor of heat. The medicinal ingredients did not melt even after a long time.

Ye Jiuge looked gloomily at the Black Fat Rat, which was still sleeping soundly in the animal-skin bag. Indeed, it was true that inferior products were sold at a lower price. She could not depend on a cauldron that she had received for free. [Read latest chapters at vipnovel.com](http://vipnovel.com)

She allowed the small bronze cauldron to be refined, slowly, as she turned to prepare the things required to refine the Thousand Threads Herb. Just then, the bronze bell in the corner of the Pill Production Room rang faintly to signal that someone outside had something to report.

Ye Jiuge opened the door to see Qing Mama speaking hurriedly: "Eldest Miss, the Old Master has requested that you head to the parlor."

"Why?" Ye Jiuge asked.

Qing Mama lowered her voice and said, "I heard that the Su Clan's Old Master has brought Madame back."

“What does her return have to do with me?” Ye Jiuge asked with disdain.

“Eldest Miss, after all, you are the Old Master’s daughter. You still need to show him some respect,” Qing Mama said helplessly.

It was alright for them to make a ruckus when they were alone in the house. However, in the presence of outsiders, they needed to maintain the façade of compassionate father and filial daughter, or else, everyone in the capital would laugh at them.

“Fine, I will go and have a look!”

Ye Jiuge returned to her room to change out of the everyday cotton clothing that she wore for producing pills. She put on a pale blue long skirt. Then, she rolled up her black hair into a ‘spiritual snake’-style topknot and fastened it with a pearled emerald and jasper hairpin. A thumb-sized southern pearl dangled from the hairpin, which emphasized her fairness and beauty.

“Eldest Miss, you are truly gorgeous!” Qing Mama said in satisfaction. She believed that Su Yufeng and her daughter would be extremely startled to see the Eldest Miss.

Ye Jiuge smiled as she led Qing Mama and Zhen Zhu leisurely to the parlor. Just as they arrived outside the parlor, they heard a loud and clear voice: “Yuxuan, it is not my intention to reprimand you, but how could you send your pregnant wife to the Ancestral Shrine to suffer? Back then, when I allowed Yufeng to marry you, what did you say? Did you forget all about it?”

“Yes, yes, yes. Father-in-law, you are right to discipline me,” Ye Yuxuan replied meekly and subserviently.

“Father, please stop reprimanding Old Master. It is my fault for not managing the Inner Courtyard well and making him angry.” After persuading her Father, Su Yufeng said softly to Ye Yuxuan, “Old Master, I have learned from my mistake. Please forgive me this once!”

“Let’s not talk about the past. Since you are back now, you need to rest and take care of the baby.” Ye Yuxuan’s tone was incomparably gentle with a tinge of upset. He said, “If I had known that you were already three-months pregnant, I would not have sent you to suffer at the Ancestral Shrine.”

Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

Su Yufeng is pregnant?

Ye Jiuge frowned. She hadn't expected this. Calculating the time, Su Yufeng must have been pregnant before she went to the ancestral shrine.

Did she not know that she was pregnant, or was she deliberately hiding in the ancestral shrine and not returning? Tsk, she must be really strong-willed to tolerate living there for so long if she was already pregnant.

"Eldest Miss, what should we do?" Qing Mama looked uneasily at Ye Jiuge.

At first, she had thought that Ye Yuxuan would not be happy about Su Yufeng's return. However, she had not expected Su Yufeng to be pregnant. In which case, Su Yufeng's value to Ye Yuxuan would increase significantly, and it would be much harder to use Ye Yuxuan against her.

"It's fine."

So what if she's pregnant? If Su Yufeng has not learned her lesson and continues to cause trouble, Ye Jiuge will undoubtedly deal with her.

Ye Jiuge stroked her hair softly and adjusted her appearance before heading for the parlor. Song Bai saw Ye Jiuge approaching from a distance. Quick-wittedly, he went into the parlor and reported, "Old Master, Madame, and Su Clan's Old Master: Eldest Miss is here!"

"Tell her to enter!" Ye Yuxuan said solemnly.

"Yes!" Song Bai walked briskly out and smiled at Ye Jiuge, trying to curry favor with her. "Eldest Miss, this way please!"

Ye Jiuge glanced briefly at the lackey before walking into the parlor. Su Yufeng was sitting on the first seat to the right wearing a light grey satin gown printed with a cloud pattern. Her cheeks were mellow and full, and her stomach protruded slightly. It seemed that she had not suffered at all at the ancestral shrine. Even three months pregnant, she's been very well taken care of!

Ye Shanshan sat beside Su Yufeng holding her hand tightly. Ye Shanshan had become thinner during her confinement. Her pointed chin, large eyes, slim waist, and long moon-white dress decorated with a plum pattern made her look frail and pitiful.

Ye Yuxuan kept a straight face as he sat in the first chair on the left. In the seat of honor was an elderly man wearing plain green cotton clothes. His hair was pure white, and his eyes were bell-like. He had a dark complexion and looked formidable. He turned to Su Yufeng and asked, "Who is this girl?" He did not recognize Ye Jiuge.

Su Yufeng did not hear her father's question; she was too busy gaping in disbelief at Ye Jiuge. Although she had heard from Ye Yuxuan that Ye Jiuge's looks had been restored and she now resembled Yun Qiaoqiao, Su Yufeng had not expected the girl to be her late mother's identical twin.

"Greetings to you, Father, and to you, Su Clan's Old Master!" Out of respect for the Su Clan's Old Master's age, Ye Jiuge bowed to him. She behaved like a lady from a prominent family.

"You are Ye Jiuge?" The Su Clan's Old Master frowned. He had the impression that Ye Jiuge was ugly, wretched, and silly. How did she turn into a beauty?

Ye Shanshan looked jealously at Ye Jiuge, then said ambiguously, "I have not seen Eldest Sister for some time. I did not expect her to turn from a toad into a swan."

"You flatter me, Second Sister. Nor did I expect you to change your bad habit of shooting off your mouth, not even after Father confined you for so long." Ye Jiuge smiled coolly.

"Jiuge, how dare you speak to your sister like that?" Su Yufeng, apparently, had forgotten entirely about her own sorry conduct when she was chased out of the Ye Clan. She put on airs and reprimanded Ye Jiuge arrogantly, "You have no manners at all."

"Madame, you are right to rebuke me. I must, without a doubt, learn more manners from you. Next time you go to the ancestral shrine, remember to inform me in advance," Ye Jiuge replied respectfully.

Su Yufeng's face paled, and her expression turned unpleasant.

"Grandfather, see for yourself. Mother has only reprimanded Eldest Sister a little bit, and she dares to talk back like this," Ye Shanshan pouted and complained to the Su Clan's Old Master.

"Second Sister, what do you mean?" asked Ye Jiuge, pretending to be surprised. "Am I wrong to say that I should learn more manners from Madame? Or do you think that it was wrong that she went to the ancestral shrine?"

Ye Jiuge's words left Ye Shanshan speechless. She could not say anything further.

“That’s enough. Jiuge, your mother has only uttered one sentence. Don’t talk back to her so often,” Ye Yuxuan said, adopting a paternal posture.

Anger churned in Ye Jiuge’s heart when she heard Ye Yuxuan refer to Su Yufeng as her “mother.” There was nothing she could do to control it. Anything else Ye Yuxuan said, she could tolerate. But not this. She looked at her father and emphasized every word as she retorted, “My mother’s last name is Yun, not Su!”

“It’s fine, Old Master. Jiuge has grown up; it is normal for her not to be close to me. Please do not blame her.” Su Yufeng’s eyes brimmed with tears as she bit her lip. She looked delicate and woeful.

“Eldest Sister, how can you treat Mother like this? People say that gratitude for the love and care given to someone from childhood ought to be greater than that owed on account of merely having given birth. Mother has brought you up since you were little. She always thinks of you when there is something good and has treated you better than me. Meanwhile, this is how you repay her kindness—do you have any conscience at all?” Ye Shanshan rebuked Ye Jiuge cleverly and eloquently. Obviously, she had been preparing this speech for a long time.

“Indeed.” Ye Jiuge smiled faintly. Then, she continued in a ridiculing tone, “Had Madame not raised me, I would not have become the most infamously useless and ugly girl in the capital.”

Both Su Yufeng and Ye Shanshan’s faces changed. For a moment, they did not know what to say.

“Enough!” The Su Clan’s Old Master suddenly slammed the table. Immediately, the red wooden table shattered into pieces.

“I have heard that the Ye Clan’s Eldest Miss is arrogant and despotic. How she dares to contradict the clan’s legitimate wife, bully her younger sister, and has no respect, even for her Father. I did not believe it, but now that I have seen it, she is indeed a little c*nt with no manners.”

The Su Clan’s Old Master was full of energy, and his voice was so loud that the ears of those listening started to hum. Even the slaves outside could hear every word he said clearly. By describing Ye Jiuge as a “little c*nt,” it was as if he had pointed at her and called her a “little b*tch.” Ye Jiuge did not plan on backing down just because the Su Clan’s Old Master was so overbearing.

With a curl of her lips, her chilly voice rang out, “I have heard that the Su Clan’s Old Master sides with his family members even when they are wrong. He deliberately distorts the truth and is unable to distinguish between right and wrong. I did not believe it, but now that I have seen it, he is indeed an old fool who sides with his family and not the truth, makes presumptions based on his seniority, and bullies the younger generation!”

“You, you!” This was the first time that a youth had insulted him in his presence since he began to move unhindered about the capital. He was so angry that his entire body trembled.

“Unfilial daughter, how dare you speak to the Su Clan’s Old Master like that. Kneel down immediately!”

Ye Yuxuan banged the table repeatedly. He looked even more emotional than the Su Clan’s Old Master. Ye Jiuge said nothing as she stared straight at him. Her beautiful eyes, so like Yun Qiaoqiao’s, looked as if they were emitting raging flames. Just seeing Ye Jiuge’s face made Ye Yuxuan feel guilty. He looked away and spoke dryly to the Su Clan’s Old Master, “Father-in-law, Jiuge is still young and insensitive. Please pay no mind to her offending you.”

“Yes, Father, please let Jiuge off this once for my sake!” Su Yufeng stood up and exclaimed, her eyes brimming with tears. “Jiuge lost her mother when she was young and has been a little pampered. She will become more sensible as she grows older.”

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

“Mother, this is not the first time that Eldest Sister has talked back to you. You’ve always tolerated it for Father’s sake. I feel so sorry for you,” Ye Shanshan said. Then, she turned and knelt before the Su Clan’s Old Master, sobbing, “Grandfather, please redress her grievances!” Her pathetic appearance made it seem as though Ye Jiuge had committed some wickedness beyond redemption.

“Good, good, good!” The Su Clan’s Old Master pointed at Ye Jiuge and shouted angrily, “You little c*nt, you rely on your grandfather’s power and have no respect for your father and mother. If this continues, you will eventually become an evildoer! Today, on behalf of Great Master Yun, I shall discipline you—you disloyal and unfilial thing!”

He lifted his palm to slap Ye Jiuge. However, Ye Jiuge did not think that the Su Clan’s Old Master would lower his status by acting against her, one of the younger generation. It was too late for her to take out her Lightning Snake Magical Whip. She could only concentrate all her spiritual power in

her hands and prepare to resist his attack.

Just then, Qing Mama's skinny figure rushed forward in front of Ye Jiuge and shielded her.

Bang!

The Su Clan's Old Master's palm, glowing with a faint golden phosphorescence, landed heavily on Qing Mama. Her body went flying like a kite with its string cut before landing heavily. Her face was white as a paper, and her lips turned pale. With a cry, she vomited a few mouthfuls of red blood. Beside her, Zhen Zhu was out of her wits with fear and collapsed on the ground. Ye Jiuge rushed to Qing Mama and checked her pulse. She realized that the blow had dislocated Qing Mama's five viscera and six bowels. Her injuries were dire.

With a solemn expression, Ye Jiuge took out her Lightning Fire Needle and sealed Qing Mama's major acupuncture points to stop the bleeding. Then, she took out a Vitality Strengthening Pill and fed it to Qing Mama to stabilize her injury.

"Hmph, now I know why Ye Jiuge, this little c*nt, is so arrogant and willful. These d*mned slaves must be starting a rebellion alongside her." The Su Clan's Old Master had wanted to discipline Ye Jiuge; he was most displeased when the old slave blocked his attack.

Hearing his words, Ye Jiuge's eyes blazed and emitted an intense hatred. She reached for the Lightning Snake Magical Whip in her belt.

"Eldest Miss, don't." Qing Mama used all her strength to hold Ye Jiuge's hand. Her cloudy eyes were filled with pleading. "Don't let my beating go to waste."

Ye Jiuge's body trembled. Glistening teardrops of humiliation flittered past her eyes, but she finally unclenched her fists with gritted teeth. Qing Mama was right. Ye Jiuge was no match for the Su Clan's Old Master, and it was not smart to fight him right now. She could wait. One day, she would make this rude and unreasonable old fool pay!

Ye Jiuge forcefully expelled the foul air from her stomach and lifted up Qing Mama. Then, she said to Ye Yuxuan, coolly, "Father, I understand my mistake now. Can you dismiss me?"

"It's good that you've comprehended your error. You may go!"

Ye Yuxuan knew that Ye Jiuge treated Qing Mama like family. The Su Clan's Old Master had indeed disciplined Ye Jiuge by beating Qing Mama. As such, Ye Yuxuan nodded and allowed her to leave.

"Father, you dote on Eldest Sister too much. If things continue like this, she will have no regard for

the law or natural morality,” Ye Shanshan said unhappily. She was unsatisfied that her father had let Ye Jiuge leave without hurting or tickling her.

“Shanshan, don’t say anymore. So long as Jiuge knows her mistake, it’s fine,” Su Yufeng said. She held Ye Shanshan’s hand and spoke again with a deeper meaning, “We couldn’t let her kneel and admit her mistake, could we?”

“Why not? Every time I say something wrong and make Father angry, you punish me by making me kneel and apologize. Why can’t Eldest Sister kneel?” Ye Shanshan pouted and complained to the Su Clan’s Old Master, “Grandfather, don’t you agree that Mother is too partial toward Eldest Sister?”

“Shanshan is right. Simply pronouncing the sentence ‘I understand my mistake’ is not enough. The girl should kneel and apologize to Yufeng.” The Su Clan’s Old Master nodded in agreement.

“She should kowtow and apologize to you as well. Just now, Eldest Sister contradicted you. Although I was outraged to hear it, I did not risk saying anything to her.” Ye Shanshan covered her face and aired some of her grievances, “Last time, I only spoke a few sentences to Eldest Sister, and she slapped me until my face was swollen.”

“She had the gall to do that to you?” The Su Clan’s Old Master’s thick eyebrows knitted in a frown. He said fiercely to Ye Yuxuan, “It seems that this little c*nt must be taught a lesson. Let her prostrate and apologize to Yufeng, Shanshan, and me. Then, drag her out and flog her fifty times...”

Before the Su Clan’s Old Master could finish speaking, Ye Shanshan added impatiently, “And slap her another fifty times.”

“Sure! Slap her another fifty times. Let this be a lesson for her.” The Su Clan’s Old Master nodded as though such punishments were simple and matter of fact.

“Isn’t that too much?”

Ye Yuxuan glanced to his left then his right, feeling awkward. If he were dealing with the Ye Jiuge of the past, he would have carried out the sentence without any hesitation. However, during these few days, he had remembered Yun Qiaoqiao’s kindness. Because of his daughter’s resemblance to her late mother, Ye Yuxuan could not bear to lay hands on Ye Jiuge.

“What? You are too soft-hearted. That is why this little c*nt has no regard for the law or natural morality.” The Su Clan’s Old Master was getting impatient. He barked to his guards, whom he had brought with him, “Get to work and bring that little c*nt to me.”

“Yes.”

The Su Clan’s guards were loyal to their Old Master, and they acted without any hesitation. Ye Yuxuan frowned. He wanted to stop the Su Clan’s guards, but Su Yufeng held him back.

“Old Master, Father has just exited his spiritual retreat. You know about his temper. If he gets angry, he might hit you too,” Su Yufeng said in a low voice.

Ye Yuxuan froze in his tracks. The Su Clan’s Old Master was already irritable. If he were to become enraged, he would lose all restraint. It was entirely possible that the Su Clan’s Old Master would beat Ye Yuxuan as well.

Ye Jiuge watched the Su Clan’s guards rush toward her. She turned to Ye Yuxuan and asked, “Father, do you really plan on letting the Su Clan’s men run amok here?”

“It is only because you have disrespected your seniors. The Su Clan’s Old Master is going to teach you a lesson now.” Ye Yuxuan avoided Ye Jiuge’s gaze.

“Old Master, how can you treat the Eldest Miss like this?” Qing Mama yelled sternly. Her hair was a mess. In her own clan’s territory, the Eldest Miss was forced to kowtow—flogged and slapped by the Su Clan. This was the equivalent of beating her to death.

“This sly, old servant has spoken way too much. Give her a hundred slaps first.” Su Yufeng’s eyes narrowed and flashed with coldness.

“Yes!” The Su Clan’s guards raised their hands and reached for Qing Mama.

A cold glint burst from Ye Jiuge’s eyes, and her body radiated a murderous intent. With a flip of her hand, she took out the Lightning Snake Magical Whip and transferred all the spiritual power in her body to the weapon. The Lightning Snake Magical Whip turned into a purple lightning snake. With the sound of thunder and a cold, imposing manner, it lashed viciously toward the guards.

Pang, pang, pang!

As the Su Clan’s guards went flying, they let out a blood-curdling screech. They landed on the ground and retched mouthfuls of fresh blood containing shattered pieces of their internal organs. Then, they stopped breathing and collapsed to the ground.

Translator: Nyoi-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoi-Bo Studio

“Well done, little c*nt. You are bold enough to strike a vicious blow at the first sign of disagreement. Your heart is indeed as malicious as a snake or scorpion’s.”

When the Su Clan’s Old Master saw his guards, whom he had trained with the utmost care, killed by Ye Jiuge in one move, his anger erupted like a volcano. He was so irate that his face turned red. Although they were not spiritual guards, he had meticulously selected them to boost his reputation.

“Su Clan’s Old Master, I respect you as an elder and have been deferential to you. However, to help your daughter and granddaughter forcefully occupy my Yun Clan’s estate, you have dared to lay murderous hands on me. Let me tell you, even if you beat me to death today, the Yun Clan’s assets will not land in your hands.” Ye Jiuge used her spiritual power to speak these words, so they carried far into the streets.

“You d*mned c*nt, what rubbish are you spouting?” The Su Clan’s Old Master was so angry that his beard trembled. He pointed at Ye Jiuge and cursed in a rage, “My Su Clan will not lose out to your family. Why would I covet the Yun Clan’s meager assets?”

“Even with the number of properties that you own, do you have enough to bequeath to your daughter and granddaughter?” Ye Jiuge sneered. “It’s not enough to kill me. If you can, then kill my Father as well. That way, your Su Clan can occupy our properties by force in a way that is right and proper.”

Not only did Ye Jiuge wish to kill the Su Clan’s Old Master, but she also wanted to smear the rotten old fellow’s reputation.

“D*mned c*nt, I will tear off your mouth and see if you spout any more rubbish!”

The Su Clan’s Old Master flew into a rage. In an instant, he reached Ye Jiuge, and his palm, which shone with a golden light, assaulted her. Ye Jiuge shook the Lightning Snake Magical Whip in her hands. With a purple shadow, it attacked the Su Clan’s Old Master. The Su Clan’s Old Master did not dodge the blow. He raised his hand and caught the Lightning Snake Magical Whip’s head. The golden light from his hand followed the whip’s path and headed toward Ye Jiuge. She felt as though a massive hammer had hit the hand which was holding the whip. The web between her thumb and forefinger went numb, and the Su Clan’s Old Master snatched her weapon away.

The Su Clan's Old Master was delighted with the spiritual weapon, and he spoke with reverence-inspiring righteousness, "This spiritual whip is a murder weapon in your hands. You are not worthy of it."

He lifted his hand to slap Ye Jiuge. This time, he was only using half of his power. Still, if his palm were to land on her, it was very likely that her face would immediately be destroyed. A furious red light flitted across Ye Jiuge's eyes. Her Lightning Fire Needle slid out from her sleeves into her delicate white fingertips, ready to pierce the Su Clan's Old Master's heart.

At that moment, the thunderous sound of a palm assailed the Su Clan's Old Master's back. The old man's eyes widened, and he immediately placed one hand behind his back and faced his attacker. However, the attacker suddenly stopped to ridicule his victim, "Old Man Su, you're a rotten old geezer; half of your body is in the grave already. You dare lay hands on a young lady, don't you have any shame?"

The Su Clan's Old Master seemed to recognize the voice; it stopped him in his tracks. The red light in Ye Jiuge's eyes retreated, and she quickly tucked away the Lightning Fire Needle. She looked toward the door and saw Dongfang Que enter in his wheelchair. His intense, black eyes examined Ye Jiuge worriedly. A Spiritual Master was beside him. The man was skinny and had deep eyes, and he gave off the aura of a high mountain. He was rather handsome, and his forehead showed signs that he had endured life's hardships. He gave off an unusual attraction force, and it was very likely that he'd been the one to step in and stop the Su Clan's Old Master.

"Gong Xifan, what are you doing here?" The Su Clan's Old Master frowned as he addressed the handsome stranger.

Ye Jiuge was surprised to hear Gong Xifan's name. Was this man a member of the Gong Clan of Baimu City? Baimu City was a holy city, much more esteemed than the Lei Kingdom. The Gong Clan's current head was an Advanced Spiritual Master, one mere step away from a Great Spiritual Master. Hence, it was no surprise that the Su Clan's Old Master would not wish to fall out with someone from the Gong Clan.

"Great Master Ye produced a pill for my nephew, and my older brother is very grateful. Hence, if I ever passed through the capital, my brother asked me to pay a visit and give our thanks." Gong Xifan smiled faintly.

"Great Master Gong is too kind."

Ye Yuxuan hurriedly made his way forward. He felt honored to have a Spiritual Master visit him personally. However, Ye Yuxuan had not expected Gong Xifan to change the topic. Gong Xifan himself indicated as much, saying with a spurious smile, "But I did not expect to witness a great

show.”

Ye Yuxuan felt embarrassed. His father-in-law was shouting at him to kill his daughter from his late wife in his own residence, yet he had stood on the sidelines and said nothing. If word of this were to spread, his reputation would be tarnished.

“What show? This little c*nt was disobedient, and I was disciplining her on behalf of her father and grandfather. You, on the other hand, are an outsider. Do you have so little shame that you get involved in other people’s family matters?” demanded the Su Clan’s Old Master, his eyes wide.

“Is this your family? Your last name is neither Yun nor Ye. How did this residence’s matters become your family matters?” Gong Xifan smiled and asked.

The Su Clan’s Old Master straightened his neck and answered, “My daughter married into this residence. How, then, are their matters not my family matters?”

Hearing his defensive words made Su Yufeng feel that things were going awry. Indeed, Gong Xifan immediately started laughing and said, “Old Man Su, your words have widened my horizons greatly. If you had a few more daughters and married them off, wouldn’t this capital be under your rule?”

“Pff!” Even Ye Jiuge could not control herself and laughed. She felt that this Gong Xifan was undoubtedly an intriguing individual.

“You!” The Su Clan’s Old Master was still fuming. He was about to continue arguing with Gong Xifan, but Su Yufeng stopped him, saying, “Father, today is the auspicious day on which you exited your spiritual retreat. Don’t let my worries spoil your mood.”

She gave Ye Shanshan a meaningful look. Ye Shanshan knew that if her grandfather were to continue arguing, he would lose even more face. As such, she rushed forward, tugged his hand, and said, “Grandfather, I heard that cousin has arranged a banquet for you with the Su Clan. It isn’t nice to keep the guests waiting, so we should head over there soon.”

“Hmph!” The Su Clan’s Old Master glared at Gong Xifan before he unwillingly headed for the exit accompanied by Ye Shanshan.

“Su Clan’s Old Master, please wait a moment!” Dongfang Que suddenly cried out.

“What other matters does Your Highness wish to address?” The Su Clan’s Old Master was still polite towards Dongfang Que. After all, besides his status as a Prince, the Bai Clan, which supported him, could not be taken lightly.

Dongfang Que looked at the Lightning Snake Magical Whip in the Su Clan's Old Master hands and asked politely, "May I ask how that spiritual whip came into your possession?"

The Su Clan's Old Master wanted to retort that the spiritual whip was the murder weapon that Ye Jiuge had used to kill his guards. But Ye Jiuge rushed to say, "He stole it. The Su Clan's Old Master wanted to kill me. He does not want to return the whip to me."

"Su Clan's Old Master, I gifted this Lightning Snake Magical Whip to Eldest Miss Ye. If you really like it, I will find you an even better spiritual weapon for a gift. Is that acceptable?" Dongfang Que appeared refined and courteous, but his words caused the Su Clan's Old Master's expression to change.

"Old Man Su, it is most unexpected that the first thing you did after leaving your spiritual retreat was bring your daughter back from the ancestral shrine to snatch assets bequeathed by Great Master Yun to his granddaughter. You won't even leave her a spiritual whip. We really admire you for your heroism," said Gong Xifan smugly as he made the fist and palm salute.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

The Su Clan's Old Master was so angry that his face turned red. He felt that he had been utterly embarrassed. He did not dare fight Gong Xifan, and he could only throw the Lightning Snake Magical Whip viciously to the side of Ye Jiuge's legs.

"You little c*nt, I will remember this!" he bellowed, then shook off Ye Shanshan's hand, turned, and left.

"Grandfather, wait for me!" Ye Shanshan hurriedly chased after him.

Ye Jiuge's lips curled into a smile as she squatted down to pick up the Lightning Snake Magical Whip. Then, she dipped it in some blood, wrote a few lines in massive letters on the Su Clan guards' corpses, and flung them toward the large residences.

"Jiuge, what are you doing?"

Ye Yuxuan was startled. He quickly tried to stop Ye Jiuge, but it was too late. All the corpses had flown far away, and the last one landed just outside the Ye Residence. With a thud, it crashed down right in front of the Su Clan's Old Master's horse-drawn carriage.

The Su Clan's Old Master leaned out of the carriage to look. He almost blacked out from anger. He saw the large words scribbled on the body of his loyal guard!

"For snatching other people's family property, may you die a terrible death without any heirs!"

"Grandfather, are you alright?" Ye Shanshan was shocked and quickly rubbed his chest gently to help guide his breath.

The Su Clan's Old Master finally recovered, but his eyes were red with fury. He was ready to rush back into the Ye Residence to settle accounts with Ye Jiuge.

"Grandfather, forget it, forget it. There will be more opportunities to deal with her later. There is no need to act rashly in front of the Gong Clan and the Dongling Prince."

Ye Shanshan clung tightly to the Su Clan's Old Master. Behind closed doors, it was alright to deal with Ye Jiuge by any means. However, the Dongling Prince and someone from the Gong Clan were now in the house. For now, her Grandfather would not be able to achieve anything in the Ye Residence.

Although the Su Clan's Old Master was impetuous, he was no fool. He knew in his heart that his granddaughter was right. By laying hands on Ye Jiuge, he had given people the pretext for gossip. According to his understanding of Gong Xifan's personality, the Spiritual Master would publicize his scandal everywhere.

It would not be wise to rush back into the Ye Residence!

The Su Can's Old Master's chest heaved slowly before he finally suppressed the rage in his heart. Fiercely, he ordered the coachman, "Go!"

"What should I do with the body?" the coachman asked gently and cautiously, his face pale. He had not expected the bodies of the valiant and spirited guards, who followed alongside the Su Clan's Old Master, to come flying out of the Ye Residence like this.

"Bring it along." The Su Clan's Old Master forced his words out between gritted teeth.

The coachman immediately picked up the guard's body. He did not dare place it inside the carriage. He could only wrap it in cloth and put it under his seat before driving back to the Su

Residence.

Su Junqing was still receiving the guests who were arriving to congratulate the Su Clan's Old Master on his cultivation advancement when he heard that the Old Master had returned. He quickly rushed out to welcome him. Unexpectedly, he smelled faint traces of blood coming from the horse-drawn carriage. He raised his eyes and saw that all of the guards who had escorted the Su Clan's Old Master that morning had disappeared. The Su Clan's carriage returned alone.

Su Junqing hurriedly rushed forward and saw the Su Clan's Old Master leap off the carriage with a darkened expression. Ye Shanshan also looked dejected.

"What happened?" Su Junqing had a feeling that something had gone awry.

Didn't they say that they were going to settle accounts with Ye Yuxuan and Ye Jiuge? Why do they look like they've been mistreated?

"Hmph!" The Su Clan's Old Master did not wish to lose face in front of his beloved grandson. With a flourish, he entered the house.

Ye Shanshan moved closer to Su Junqing and told him what had happened at the Ye Clan's residence.

"Dongfang Que brought someone from the Gong Clan to rescue Ye Jiuge?" Su Junqing frowned. Things are going to be difficult now that the Gong Clan of Baimu City is involved.

"Indeed!" Ye Shanshan thought of Ye Jiuge's beautiful face and said jealously, "I don't know what seductive method she has used to make Dongfang Que infatuated with her."

Dongfang Que used to be the dream lover of all the noble ladies in the capital. Although the disaster had taken away his ability to walk, he still had his cultivation and the Bai Clan's support. As such, he was not significantly worse off when compared with the Crown Prince.

"Oh, where have all the guards gone?" Su Junqing asked again.

"They're dead." Ye Shanshan swallowed hard. She was still shocked by Ye Jiuge's fierceness when she had slaughtered the guards.

"Dead? How did they die, and where are their corpses?" Su Junqing asked in quick-fire succession.

"They were killed by a single lash from Ye Jiuge."

Ye Shanshan told her cousin everything. That spiritual whip is incredibly powerful. If only Grandfather had taken it and gifted it to her.

When Su Junqing heard that the corpses of the guards had words written in blood on them before they were thrown away, his eyelids twitched. He said to Ye Shanshan, "Hurry up and go back. Ask Uncle to find the guards' remains as soon as possible and send them back here."

News of today's incident, Grandfather causing a scene in the Ye Clan's residence, will spread in the capital quickly. He must minimize the loss.

"But today is the day of Grandfather's cultivation advancement, and Mother has asked me to accompany him."

Ye Shanshan pouted. It was a big day for the Su Clan, and respected and prominent figures would be attending. She had been confined for a long time and wanted to show her face at the banquet. She did not wish to go back home.

"Grandfather has lost face because of you two. Do you really want to stay and make him angry?" Su Junqing's expression darkened.

Initially, he had not approved of Grandfather bringing Su Yufeng back to make a scene. He knew that many people had been watching Ye Jiuge recently, and it was not wise for Grandfather to involve himself right now. However, Grandfather was impetuous. When Su Yufeng had complained tearfully, he had rushed there impatiently. He had not anticipated suffering such a significant loss.

"I wasn't the one who did it to him," Ye Shanshan mumbled to herself. If someone is to blame, it's Ye Jiuge. Why is the blame being pushed to her?

"You still dare to speak nonsense? Hurry up and go!" Su Junqing's face was frighteningly grave, and his tone chilly. "If there is even one guard's corpse missing, you and your mother need not return to our Su Clan."

Su Junqing's coldness terrified Ye Shanshan. She did not talk back to him, and obediently climbed onto the carriage and returned to the Ye Residence.

Meanwhile, at that very moment, Ye Yuxuan had extended a sincere invitation to Gong Xifan to chat with him in the main residence.

"Alchemist Ye must be busy with other things, I shall not disturb you anymore." Gong Xifan spoke as if he were thinking of something else.

At once, Ye Yuxuan's face changed. He knew that Gong Xifan was alluding to the guards' corpses, which Ye Jiuge had flung away. If he did not find the bodies and recover them quickly, considerable trouble would ensue. The Ye and Su Residences' reputations would stink.

"Alchemist Ye, seeing that there is some relationship between our Gong Clan and you, I advise you to cherish your reputation like the birds cherish their feathers and beasts their fur. Don't tarnish your reputation because of someone irrelevant." Gong Xifan paused before he continued speaking, calmly, "After all, this residence previously bore the name of Yun. You may have forgotten that, but we have not!"

When he heard that, the blood drained from Ye Yuxuan's face. Although he stood under the hot sun, he felt as though he'd been stripped of his clothes and thrown into a world of snow with the freezing wind piercing his bones. He had completely lost face.

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Translator: Nyoi-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoi-Bo Studio

Su Yufeng realized that things had gone awry. She feared that Gong Xifan would persuade Ye Yuxuan, so she clutched her belly and cried, "Old Master, my stomach hurts."

Ye Yuxuan collected his wits and promptly took her in his arms. Then, he bade farewell to Gong Xifan and Dongfang Que in a hurry.

"My wife is not feeling well. I shall not accompany you two. Please, make yourselves at home." Having spoken, he supported Su Yufeng with his hands and walked away briskly. He looked like a defeated man fleeing.

It made Ye Jiuge incredibly cheerful to see Ye Yuxuan and Su Yufeng embarrassed. She approached Gong Xifan and Dongfang Que and bowed solemnly.

"Great Master Gong, Your Highness, thank you for the favor today. I will engrave it in my memory."

Had they not stopped the Su Clan's Old Master in time, she would have killed him in anger, and the Lightning Fire Needle would have been exposed to the public.

“Eldest Miss Ye, you need not be so courteous.” Gong Xifan held her up politely before he laughed and said straightforwardly, “In the olden days, I had the honor of receiving a pill produced by Great Master Yun. You can consider what I did today returning the favor.”

Ye Jiuge knew that Gong Xifan was being polite, but she still felt incredibly grateful to him.

“Eldest Miss Ye, Old Man Su is narrow-minded; he will seek revenge for the smallest grievance. I fear that he will not let you off. If you ever require the Gong Clan’s assistance, use this token to find us.”

Gong Xifan took out a palm-sized black token and handed it to Ye Jiuge. A mysterious eye was carved on it. Inside the eye, the word “Gong” was written in bold cursive calligraphy. On the Canglan Continent, the color black was revered. The token was obviously very precious. Ye Jiuge did not expect Gong Xifan to hand it to her. Her doubtful gaze landed immediately on Dongfang Que—after all, he was the one who had brought Gong Xifan here. Dongfang Que nodded, signaling to her that it was alright to accept the token.

After hesitating, Ye Jiuge received it and gave her thanks with a Fist and Palm Salute. “In that case, I thank Great Master Gong for this.”

“Eldest Miss Ye is too kind. Now, I have something else to attend to, so I shall take my leave,” Gong Xifan replied. Then, he gave a Fist and Palm Salute and disappeared with a flash.

“Your Highness?” Ye Jiuge looked toward Dongfang Que.

What is happening? He ought to give her an explanation!

“It’s inconvenient to speak here, Eldest Miss. Can you suggest another place?” Dongfang Que asked in a low voice.

“If Your Highness does not mind, why don’t we go to my residence!” Ye Jiuge replied. Qing Mama was hurt, so Ye Jiuge did not want to leave the Ye Residence.

“Sure!” Dongfang Que nodded.

Ye Jiuge wanted to support Qing Mama with her hands, but she was rejected.

“There’s no need, I can walk by myself,” Qing Mama said, leaning on Zhen Zhu’s body.

She is but a servant. How can she let the Eldest Miss lend an arm to support her? If news of it were to spread, people would think that their Zilin Residence was a place with no rules or

established standards.

“Eldest Miss, please rest assured. I have the strength to support Qing Mama,” Zhen Zhu said.

Zhen Zhu was formerly a cleaning maid, so she was sturdy. Seeing Qing Mama’s insistence, Ye Jiuge did not force her.

When they returned to the Zilin Residence, Ye Jiuge insisted on diagnosing and treating Qing Mama. After she used some pills to stabilize Qing Mama’s condition, she went to see Dongfang Que.

Dongfang Que was deep in thought, standing under the red-flowered tree in Ye Jiuge’s courtyard. He did not even realize it when Ye Jiuge walked over to him.

“Your Highness, what are you thinking about?” Ye Jiuge poured the prince a fresh cup of hot tea.

Dongfang Que snapped out of his trance and saw Ye Jiuge, who appeared even more delicate and beautiful under the sunlight. He lowered his eyes and said, “Eldest Miss, aren’t you curious why the Gong Clan has expressed goodwill toward you?”

“Indeed.”

Ye Jiuge did not believe that the Gong Clan had a close friendship with her grandfather. Even if it were due to the pill they’d received, their relationship should have been built on money.

“It’s because I told them that you have superb medical skills. You are even capable of curing the demonic poison in my body and Imperial Consort Xi’s strange illness.” Dongfang Que lifted his head, looked apologetically at Ye Jiuge, and said, “I acted on my own initiative without your permission. Do you fault me?”

“You are trying to help me. Why would I blame you?” Ye Jiuge smiled and asked, “The Gong Clan has a patient in need?”

“Yes. The youngest son of the Gong Clan’s current head has an aptitude belonging to the violet class. Furthermore, he has inherited the Gong Clan’s purest Pupil Technique Bloodline and manifested the White Pupil Technique. However, a year ago, he was suddenly afflicted with an eye disease and is now blind in both eyes. The Gong Clan has sought the advice of Spiritual Doctors all over the world, but the problem persists,” Dongfang Que said slowly.

Ye Jiuge considered for a moment before replying, “I have not seen the Gong Clan’s young son’s eyes, and I cannot guarantee that I will be able to treat them.”

Blindness in both eyes could be complicated and challenging to treat, and Ye Jiuge would never boast about her capabilities.

“There’s no harm. The Gong Clan do not only attach importance to short-term benefits. You just have to forge a friendly relationship with them and put in a good word for them with Great Master Yun if you receive news of him in the future,” Dongfang Que said coolly.

The Gong Clan had not expected Ye Jiuge to be able to treat their young son’s eyes. They cared more about Yun Tianwei’s reputation. In recent years, they had wanted to seek him out through Ye Jiuge. However, the old Ye Jiuge had been useless, and there had been no point in working with her. As such, the Gong Clan had changed their minds and asked for Ye Yuxuan’s help producing pills instead. If Ye Jiuge had not revealed that she had received treasure intentionally left behind by her grandfather in the Wanzhang Depths, the Gong Clan would not have stepped in to help her.

“Alright!” Ye Jiuge did not dare say that the incident in the Wanzhang Depths was a lie and that she was still searching for her grandfather’s whereabouts.

However, taking a look at the boy’s disease to gain the Gong Clan’s goodwill wasn’t asking much. Although she would never compare her medical skills to her grandfather’s, she was undoubtedly more skilled than Ye Yuxuan.

“Gong Xifan is an outspoken and straightforward person, worthy of befriending. You need not worry,” Dongfang Que comforted Ye Jiuge, worried that she might have reservations.

“I thought that the Gong Clan had a good relationship with the Crown Prince,” Ye Jiuge said. After all, it was the Crown Prince who had pulled strings for Ye Yuxuan.

“The Crown Prince has a good relationship with every aristocratic family.” With his eyes lowered slightly, Dongfang Que spoke with a slight hint of ridicule.

The Crown Prince always maintained a high profile, and he had made an unnecessary fuss about this matter involving the Gong Clan. It was as though he feared that people would not know about his relationship with the Gong Clan. Ye Jiuge understood immediately: if the Crown Prince truly had a good friendship with the Gong Clan, he would have come over to the Ye Residence with Gong Xifan instead of Dongfang Que.

“It’s not early anymore. I shall take my leave.” Dongfang Que was a male outsider and it would be better if he did not stay too long in Ye Jiuge’s residence.

“I will see you out.”

Ye Jiuge rose, but Dongfang Que gestured with his hand and said, “There’s no need. You have

many things to attend to here. I can see myself out.”

Thinking of Qing Mama's injury, Ye Jiuge did not insist. Instead, she asked Zhen Zhu to escort Dongfang Que out.

Ye Jiuge returned to Qing Mama's house. When she saw her, the trusty servant propped herself up.

“Eldest Miss, why didn't you personally see off His Highness?” she asked hurriedly.

That would have been an excellent opportunity for them to spend some time together.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

“His Highness asked me not to send him away. Furthermore, I am worried about you.” Ye Jiuge had known Dongfang Que for quite some time already; she knew that he was not pretentious. If he had asked her not to send him away, he meant it.

“His Highness, the Dongling Prince, is merely being polite. How can you take his words seriously? I am doing just great, and I don't need you to worry about me.” Qing Mama was so furious that she almost vomited blood again.

Qing Mama thought, Why is the Eldest Miss such a blockhead? She has finally restored her looks, and this is the perfect opportunity to get to know all the handsome and capable young men. How can she push one away? If she continues acting like this, how can she find a good husband?

Ye Jiuge did not know that Qing Mama was trying to matchmake her with Dongfang Que. She thought that Qing Mama's injury had worsened. As such, she hurriedly rose and said, “Rest well. I will go and help you produce some hemostatic pills.”

Having said this, she left before Qing Mama could say anything else.

Ye Jiuge arrived at the Pill Production Room to see that the fire under the small bronze cauldron

was dying. She remembered that she had initially been producing hemostatic pills, which would come in handy when the moment came for her to examine the grade of the pills that came out of the cauldron.

Ye Jiuge opened the cauldron mindlessly, and a faint fragrance diffused across the entire Pill Production Room.

She thought to herself, Hm, this smell...Can it be a superior grade pill?

Ye Jiuge's spirits rose as she began to pick up the pills. Suddenly, a fat, black shadow flew, swift as lightning, to the side of the cauldron. The Black Fat Rat had awoken from its slumber. It puffed its cheek, and its face immediately turned into the shape of a blowfish.

"What are you doing?"

A bad feeling rose in Ye Jiuge's heart as she quickly reached out to grab the rat. However, with a plop, the rat had already spit out a mouthful of colorless, odorless saliva into the cauldron.

"F*ck!"

Without even bothering to reprimand the Black Fat Rat, Ye Jiuge hurriedly picked up the pills from the cauldron. However, the hemostatic pills, which were supposed to be red, had turned white. Only a single pill was deep crimson.

Ye Jiuge glared viciously at the unhygienic Black Fat Rat. It had cost her a cauldron of pills. The rodent had yet to realize that it had caused an enormous mess. It reached out its tiny paws and called out to Ye Jiuge, "Pipi!"

It looked like it was asking for its reward.

"Are you going to swallow the saliva that you spit out? How disgusting!" Ye Jiuge looked at it with disdain.

"Pipi!" The Black Fat Rat stomped its foot and puffed its cheeks. It seemed to be saying that it would fight her to death if she dared to withhold its reward.

"Here, here, here!"

Ye Jiuge did not want the cauldron of pills filled with its saliva anymore, and she shoved all of them toward the Black Fat Rat. However, the Black Fat Rat was ethical. It only took the dark red pill. Using its two tiny paws to hold it, the rat puffed its cheeks and began to gnaw on the pill. It did not touch the rest of the pills.

Seeing that the Black Fat Rat was eating happily, and the fact that it had always behaved like a local tycoon, she involuntarily suspected that there was something special about the pill. She picked up one of the white pills and scrutinized it using her Spiritual Eye.

Although the surface of the pill was plain and ordinary, the distribution of the medicine inside was very even. The most magical thing was that there was not a hint of poison. It was frighteningly pure. After all, it was known that all medicine had a bit of poison in it, naturally. A pill was graded on its proportion of residual impurity. The smaller the amount of impurity in a pill, the stronger the effects of the medicine, and the higher the grade of the pill.

However, even the best Alchemists were unable to produce pills that were entirely free of impurity. The cauldron of pills that the Black Fat Rat had produced was incredible.

Ye Jiuge thought: How did it manage such a feat? Does it have something to do with the saliva?

The more Ye Jiuge thought about it, the stranger she felt. Seeing that there was still a small bit of the deep red pill in the rat's paws, she quickly snatched it.

"Pipi!" The Black Fat Rat was so furious that it started jumping around. It showed its tiny white incisors to Ye Jiuge. It seemed to be screeching, "I will bite you to death for daring to steal my pill!"

"Let me take a quick look. I will return it to you shortly." Ye Jiuge scrutinized the deep red pill and realized that it was completely different from the white pills. It was made entirely of poison from the pill-making process, and it wouldn't be wrong to call it a "Poison Pill."

It seemed that all the impurities in the cauldron of pills had concentrated in that single pill.

Ye Jiuge thought, Maybe this little fellow really is some rare magical beast?

Ye Jiuge looked at the Poison Pill and then back at the silly looking Black Fat Rat. She could hardly believe that it was a magical beast.

"Pipi!" The rat reached out its meaty paws as if to say, "If you are finished examining it, then give it back to me!"

Ye Jiuge was unable to tell anything else from her examination of the pill, and she could only return it to the Black Fat Rat. The rat quickly slipped away and burrowed its way to the back of the table. As it chewed, it snuck a peek at Ye Jiuge, as though afraid that she would rob it of its food.

Ye Jiuge rolled her eyes at the rat before she took the rest of the hemostatic pills. Although Qing Mama's injury had stabilized, the damage to her five viscera and six bowels could not recover

entirely immediately. She needed a long period of rest to recover.

When Ye Jiuge entered the house again, Qing Mama had just coughed up a mouthful of blood onto a handkerchief. When she saw Ye Jiuge enter, she hurriedly kept the handkerchief and said with a smile, "I have just coughed up another mouthful of clotted blood. I feel better in my chest now."

"Do you really feel better after coughing up blood?" Ye Jiuge knew that Qing Mama must be trying to comfort her.

The Su Clan's Old Master's palm, which had landed on Qing Mama, had not been light. At her age, how could she be okay?

"I am fine. I just need a few days of rest," Qing Mama shook her head and said.

"I just produced a cauldron of hemostasis pills. Try one." Ye Jiuge took out a jade bottle and poured out a milky-white pill.

"I am already fine. Why do I need to eat a pill? Eldest Miss, you should keep it for yourself instead! Oh, Lord Bai and Lord Wan will be out frequently, and they will need these pills the most. They would be delighted to receive them from you."

Qing Mama felt that it would be a waste for her to consume one of the pills. After all, she would not be leaving the residence, so she could recuperate gradually.

Ye Jiuge knew that Qing Mama often felt that she, being a servant, was not worthy of eating a quality pill. She was very stubborn in this regard. As such, Ye Jiuge said, "I was experimenting with a newly-developed recipe, so I don't know how effective this cauldron of pills will be. I would like you to test them for me."

"Experimentation? Sure!" Qing Mama immediately nodded in agreement.

Ye Jiuge was worried about the pills' effectiveness, and she gave Qing Mama two of them.

Without any hesitation, Qing Mama swallowed them. Immediately, she could feel two cool, fresh springs rising from her Elixir Field. Her five viscera and six bowels, which were hurting before, now felt fine—they did not hurt at all.

"Eldest Miss, your pills are so powerful." Qing Mama, at her age, had sustained countless injuries. As such, she clearly knew that she would need at least a month or two of bed rest.

However, she had not expected to regain her health just from eating two of the Eldest Miss's pills.

The Eldest Miss's pills were so much better than even the best quality ones from the medicinal stores.

"It is good that they are effective." Ye Jiuge was very satisfied with the pills' effects. She decided that she would use the small bronze cauldron to produce detoxification pills for Imperial Consort Xi.

However, she worried that the Black Fat Rat would be unable to spew out a second mouthful of saliva in one day. Therefore, she decided to produce the pills the next day.

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Translator: Nyoibo Studio Editor: Nyoibo Studio

After Ye Jiuge finished her dinner, she sat down on a chair to think.

She thought about how she would dispel the poison from Imperial Consort Xi's body and wondered if news of Elderly Lady Xu's death had spread. She thought about the Gong Clan's youngest son, who was afflicted with the eye disease...

Just then, Zhen Zhu carried in a cup of rose tea, freshly brewed. She said softly, "Eldest Miss, please have some tea."

Although Qing Mama had recovered after eating the hemostasis pills, Ye Jiuge had instructed her to stay in bed to recuperate. As such, Zhen Zhu was serving her.

Ye Jiuge received the cup and sipped the rose tea. Then, she asked, "What are the Old Master and Madame doing?"

"I heard that the Old Master sent many guards to search for the corpses of the Su Clan's guards. They have recovered five, but one is still missing. Madame is so worried that she has no appetite at all," Zhen Zhu replied with a wide smile.

The servants from the Zilin Residence felt an unspeakable delight to hear that the people from the Shuimo Garden were having a hard time. The corners of Ye Jiuge's lips curled into a satisfied

smile. She'd wanted to create such an effect. She had thought that this would sufficiently damage the Su Clan's reputation—and Ye Yuxuan's. She did not know that Wan Ziyang had another surprise waiting for her.

Zhen Zhu then revealed another piece of information: "Oh, Eldest Miss, I heard this from a maid from the Cleaning Room. Recently, someone has been making a mess of the trash collected from our residence. Many of the maids responsible for sorting the trash have been reprimanded, and their monthly wages have even been slashed."

Zhen Zhu was the child of a servant from the residence, and she was popular in the Cleaning Room. Even after becoming the highest-ranked maid in the Zilin Residence, Zhen Zhu often returned to visit her sisters. She did not put on airs, and people gladly told her anything she wanted to know. The Cleaning Room's maids swept and cleaned the entire Ye Residence. They left their quarters early and returned late, and they frequently witnessed strange things. They often told Zhen Zhu about these things.

When Ye Jiuge heard this, she immediately thought of the person in the Ye Residence who was watching her. She wondered to herself, Is this person predicting my actions using the trash collected from the Zilin Residence?

Ye Jiuge pondered momentarily before instructing Zhen Zhu, "Go to the Cleaning Room and make some inquiries. Ask when the trash was sorted, and whether anyone else took part recently."

"I understand." Zhen Zhu nodded.

Qing Mama had told her that someone was watching the Zilin Residence. As such, she had intentionally been keeping an eye out for clues.

"You have done well. After this matter concludes, I will reward you handsomely." Ye Jiuge felt that Zhen Zhu had an innate gift to become an intelligence official. It was a pity that she had no Spiritual Root; it would have been worthwhile to train her.

"Many thanks to you, Eldest Miss," Zhen Zhu said and laughed merrily.

The reward was not what was most important to her. It was the Eldest Miss's undisguised appreciation for her that made Zhen Zhu feel special.

"Alright. If there is nothing else, you may go!" Ye Jiuge determined the time of day by the color of the darkening sky outside the window. She decided to sneak out.

"Yes!" Zhen Zhu retreated tactfully.

Ye Jiuge changed into her nightclothes in the interior room. After carefully avoiding the residence's patrolling guards, she secretly slipped into Ye Yuxuan's study to search for the place where he had hidden his medical records.

Just then, Zi Shang's lazy voice rang out: "The left corner!"

"You are finally awake?" Ye Jiuge immediately straightened her body.

"Yeah!"

Zi Shang had just woken up. He had been secretly reading Ye Jiuge's memory through the Soul Contract to understand what had happened when he hadn't been around. He provided Ye Jiuge with some directions after realizing that she was trying to find Ye Yuxuan's medical records.

Although Ye Jiuge had many questions for Zi Shang, she knew that now was not the right time to ask. Following Zi Shang's instructions, she took a look in the left corner of the room. Sure enough, she found a secret compartment under one of the floor tiles.

Inside the compartment, there was a large brown notebook and a smaller, red booklet. The large notebook documented Ye Yuxuan's connections. The small booklet, on the other hand, recorded his more prominent clients.

The medical record of the Gong's Clan's youngest son, Gong Baiyu, was among them. After reading the case carefully, Ye Jiuge found that Gong Baiyu's illness was indeed strange. In fact, no cause of his disease had been found. Apart from not being able to see, he had no discomforts. His pulse was healthy and robust, and there had been no prior indications that something was wrong before his blindness set in. This kind of illness was the most difficult to treat.

Ye Yuxuan did not dare to prescribe medicine carelessly, and he had merely prescribed a series of pills to nourish Gong Baiyu's eyes and liver. The liver governed the eyes. A problem with one's eyes was usually related to the liver, and there was nothing wrong with Ye Yuxuan's prescription. However, the liver corresponded to the wood element, but Gong Baiyu had an Earth Spiritual Root. Wood counteracted earth. By merely nourishing the liver, the wood element in Gong Baiyu's body would become too vigorous and suppress his Spiritual Power.

Ye Yuxuan's method was palliative. Sooner or later, Gong Baiyu would become crippled under his treatment.

However, Ye Jiuge could not think of a different treatment method. Furthermore, Ye Yuxuan was a fifth-grade Alchemist, whereas she was only second-grade. Even if she were to tell the Gong Clan that Ye Yuxuan had mistreated Gong Baiyu, she doubted that they would believe her.

She needed to work out a strategy carefully. It was a good thing that Ye Yuxuan had not dared to be abrupt with his treatment, and Gong Baiyu would be fine for a short while. This gave her plenty of time to think.

Ye Jiuge placed the booklet back in the secret compartment before stealthily returning to the Zilin Residence. Just as she was about to ask Zi Shang about the small bronze cauldron and the Black Fat Rat, she heard Zi Shang's angry words: "That Su Clan's old b*stard dared to treat you like this!"

It seemed that he had read her memory of how the Su Clan's Old Master had relied on force to bully her. Adding to his fury was the fact that Dongfang Que had brought someone to help Ye Jiuge.

"What is the point of saying all this now?" Ye Jiuge rolled her eyes, showing her disdain for how Zi Shang was shutting the stable door after the horse had bolted.

"How can it be pointless?" Zi Shang's voice was soft but filled with menace. The temperature in the entire residence dropped.

"What do you going to do?" A bad feeling rose in the depths of Ye Jiuge's heart.

"Of course, I am going to avenge you." Zi Shang's tone was cold and emitted a murderous intent.

"The old man is a Spiritual Master; it won't be easy to deal with him." Ye Jiuge frowned. They were in the human race's territory, and there would be trouble if Zi Shang were revealed.

"There is no need for you to worry!"

Immediately after Zi Shang spoke, Ye Jiuge felt a sting in the purple mark on her hand. She lifted her sleeves to take a look. The purple mark turned into a snake-shaped purple light and shot toward the Su Residence.

"Zi Shang, don't do anything foolish!" Ye Jiuge yelled, flustered and exasperated.

The Su Clan's Old Master was respected in the capital. If anything were to happen to him, the Su Clan would not be willing to take things lying down.

Ye Jiuge thought, What will I do if they begin to investigate me?!

"Don't worry, I will not kill him," Zi Shang said coolly.

"Then, what do you plan to do?" Ye Jiuge could not rest easily without knowing.

“You will know tomorrow,” Zi Shang said, and his voice gradually faded away as though he had gone into hibernation again.

Ye Jiuge almost vomited blood. She thought, This unreliable demonic snake! Why does he always cause trouble for me right before going to sleep?

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

Ye Jiuge could not wait until the next day, so she used the Ye Clan’s distinctive secret signal to call for Ye Yu.

After approximately the time it takes to drink a cup of tea, a soft knock came from outside Ye Jiuge’s window. When she opened the window, nobody was outside. Anyone else would have been scared to death. However, Ye Jiuge merely said, “Come in.”

Something flitted past the window. Then, Ye Yu became visible in Ye Jiuge’s house, revealing his beautiful face.

“Eldest Miss, why did you call for me?” Ye Yu had recently been cultivating, and Ye Jiuge had not summoned him for some time.

“Go and keep a close watch on the Su Clan. If anything happens, inform me immediately!” Then, Ye Jiuge added solemnly, “Keep an eye on the Su Clan’s Old Master in particular.”

Ye Yu was a little surprised. Although he had been on a spiritual retreat, he knew that the Su Clan’s Old Master would hold a banquet in honor of his advancement to the Spiritual Master stage. Eldest Miss Ye seemed to be implying that someone there would cause trouble.

However, seeing Ye Jiuge’s serious expression, Ye Yu did not dare ask any questions. He nodded and replied, “Sure. I will go now.”

“Be careful. Don’t let them discover you,” Ye Jiuge said.

Although Ye Yu had significantly increased his cultivation, the Su Clan's Old Master was, after all, a Spiritual Master. Caution was vital for him.

"Eldest Miss, please rest assured. I know what to do." Having said so, he turned invisible and disappeared into the night.

That night, Ye Jiuge tossed and turned in bed, unable to sleep well. In her heart, she repeatedly called for Zi Shang, but there wasn't any response.

Ye Yu did not return for the entire night, and Ye Jiuge did not know anything about the situation at the Su Residence.

Ye Jiuge could not sleep anymore, even before daybreak. When she got out of bed and looked at her reflection in the mirror, she found that her complexion was terrible. Dark circles had formed around her eyes, as if someone had punched her.

When Zhen Zhu entered with a basin of water, she was shocked to see Ye Jiuge so depressed and listless. She immediately asked, "Eldest Miss, what happened to you? Did you not sleep well last night?"

"I am fine." Ye Jiuge received the warm, soft cloth from Zhen Zhu to wipe her face.

She was anxious about the Su Clan, and she had been considering whether to ask Dongfang Que to help her investigate or find Wan Ziyang.

Zhen Zhu thought that Ye Jiuge was worried about the spy in the Ye Residence, so she said, "Eldest Miss, I went to the Cleaning Room yesterday to inquire. During this period, Yuan Yang, the maid from Seventh Concubine's residence, has frequently come to the Cleaning Room, making discreet inquiries. She often asks about our Zilin Residence. The maids from the Cleaning Room suspect that Yuan Yang is the one who has been rummaging through our residence's trash."

"Seventh Concubine?" Ye Jiuge's brow raised. She had not expected this.

Ye Jiuge thought: Why would Seventh Concubine—a concubine—set against her? Why not vie for power and love with Su Yufeng? Could she be a spy that the Empress has been planted in the Ye Residence?

"I heard that Seventh Concubine has made great progress in her cultivation recently, and she is planning to hit the Intermediate Spiritual Practitioner stage," Zhen Zhu said.

"She is advancing again?" Ye Jiuge was startled.

She remembered that, when Seventh Concubine had married into the residence two years ago, she had just advanced to the Beginner Spiritual Practitioner stage.

Although her cultivation had increased with the help of Ye Yuxuan's pills, she should still be some way from advancing to the Intermediate Spiritual Practitioner stage. Unless she had some superior-grade pills that could increase her cultivation quickly. However, knowing Ye Yuxuan's stinginess, he would never give them to Seventh Concubine. It seemed that there were still many secrets surrounding her.

Just as Ye Jiuge was deep in thought, the voices of two young maids came from outside the door: "Eldest Miss, Yu Die and Hua Die have something to report."

Ye Jiuge mused, "Yu Die, Hua Die?"

Ye Jiuge recovered from her daze and thought about it momentarily before she remembered that the two maids were indeed from her residence.

They were the descendants of the Yun Clan's veterans, and they had a decent aptitude. Qing Mama had recently allowed them to begin cultivating their bodies.

"Let them in!" Ye Jiuge instructed Zhen Zhu. [Read latest chapters at vipnovel.com](http://vipnovel.com)

"Yes!" Zhen Zhu curtsayed and led in the two maids, who were approximately twelve years old.

Yu Die wore green clothes. Her eyes looked intelligent without arrogance, which made her look steady and earnest.

Hua Die was dressed in pink, and the corners of her mouth curled into a smile. She looked like a clever girl.

Both had Flawed Spiritual Roots. Although they weren't able to advance to the Spiritual Practitioner stage, they could still cultivate their bodies.

"Greetings to you, Eldest Miss!" The two maids knelt and bowed to Ye Jiuge.

"Get up!" Ye Jiuge indicated to Zhen Zhu to help the two young maids up. Then, she said, "This form of etiquette is not followed in our Zilin Residence. The two of you are still young, and there is no need for you to kneel frequently. It will be bad for your knees in the future."

"Yes." Yu Die and Hua Die curtsayed properly. They were delighted.

They had heard that the Eldest Miss was magnanimous, and they could tell that it was true.

“What is the matter that the two of you would like to report?” Ye Jiuge asked.

“Eldest Miss, we heard something earlier from the Gatehouse. A corpse suddenly dropped from the sky into Lord Xu’s house on our street. The family members were so frightened that they immediately contacted the authorities. The corpse has already been sent to the Justice Department, and the officials have asked the Old Master to go over and take a look.”

Needless to say, the corpse had been one of the Su Clan’s guards.

“This Lord Xu is fascinating.” Ye Jiuge laughed involuntarily.

The entire street had probably heard every word of her argument with the Su Clan’s Old Master.

The rest of them had returned the corpses of the Su Clan’s guards out of respect for Ye Yuxuan. Lord Xu was the only one who had sent the body to the Justice Department. It was clear that he wanted to add to Ye Yuxuan’s troubles.

“I have heard that Madame was so mad that she could not get out of bed. She has recently been taking medication to protect her unborn child,” Hua Die said.

The corners of Ye Jiuge’s mouth curled up. She had no sympathy for Su Yufeng at all.

She had caused trouble immediately after her return. It served her right to fall ill from her anger.

“Zhen Zhu, ask the Carriage House to prepare a carriage for me. I’ll head to the Justice Department.” Ye Jiuge believed that Wan Ziyang would not leave the matter of the Su Clan’s guards at that.

She wanted to go over there to provide him with some advice.

“Yes!” Zhen Zhu nodded. Then, she asked, “Eldest Miss, will you be bringing anyone with you?”

When Yu Die and Hua Die heard this, their eyes lit up immediately.

“Let them follow me!” Ye Jiuge preferred not to bring anyone along. However, after some consideration, she felt that it was essential to develop some capable and trustworthy aides.

“Thank you, Eldest Miss!” The two young maids immediately bowed to Ye Jiuge in joy.

“Eldest Miss, should we tell Qing Mama about this?” Zhen Zhu lowered her voice and asked.

“Yes,” Ye Jiuge replied.

These maids were under Qing Mama’s charge, and they needed to inform her.

“Yes!” The two maids could already imagine Qing Mama’s nagging. Their shoulders slumped as they left.

Ye Jiuge found this funny. It seemed that she was not the only one who was afraid of Qing Mama’s nagging!

It was only when Ye Jiuge was ready to leave that Yu Die and Hua Die came out from Qing Mama’s house.

It seemed that they had been drilled. Their faces, initially joyous, were now steady and unsmiling. They did not dare speak a single sentence.

Ye Jiuge was very satisfied with this. After all, they were outside the residence, so it would be beneficial for them to behave more sensibly.

She led the two young maids into the horse-drawn carriage and set off toward the Justice Department.

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When Ye Jiuge arrived at the Justice Department, she asked to see Wan Ziyang. The guard at the gate went inside to report. Ye Jiuge did not expect Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling to come out and welcome her personally.

“Eldest Miss Ye, why didn’t you tell us in advance that you would be coming?” Bai Songling asked.

“I heard that the Justice Department asked my Father to come and identify the corpse, so I am here to take a look. Where’s my Father?” Ye Jiuge asked.

When he heard this, Bai Songling made a strange face and said, "Did you not hear that something has happened to the Su Clan?"

Did something happen? Ye Jiuge thought: the Su Clan's Old Master can't be dead, can he?

"I heard that Su Clan's Old Master drank too much last night. Then, suddenly, he was unable to wake up. The Su Clan consulted countless Spiritual Doctors, but to no avail. Your Father has already rushed over there," Bai Songling said, rejoicing in the Su Clan's misfortune.

They had both heard of how the Su Clan's Old Master had brought Su Yufeng back to the Ye Clan's residence to bully Ye Jiuge the previous day. Therefore, they had intentionally wanted to use the Su Clan's guard's dead body to make a fuss. However, before they could act, something had happened to the Su Clan's Old Master.

"I see!" Ye Jiuge gave a slight sigh of relief. It was good that he wasn't dead.

"Eldest Miss Ye, the Su Clan's Old Master fell unconscious after going to your place to make a scene. I am afraid that the Su Clan will blame this on you. Be careful," Wan Ziyang said.

He had been investigating the Su Clan, and he knew that they were shameless scoundrels. It was likely that they would falsely accuse Ye Jiuge.

"Counter soldiers with arms and water with a dam." With Zi Shang around, the Su Clan was in trouble—not her.

"Eldest Miss Ye, you don't need to be too worried. The cause of the Su Clan's Old Master's illness has yet to be determined. I expect that the Su Clan will have no time to deal with other things," Bai Songling comforted her.

"Yeah." Ye Jiuge was glad that the Su Clan's Old Master was merely unconscious. If he were to die suddenly, the Su Clan would surely bite indiscriminately, like wild dogs.

"This is not the place for that discussion. Shall we go to the Yuwu Teahouse?" Bai Songling had some questions for Ye Jiuge.

"Sure." Ye Jiuge wished to seek their help about something as well.

"Eldest Miss Ye, please return to your carriage first. I need to go back to give some instructions so that the corpse can be returned to the Su Clan." Bai Songling laughed and added, "Which will cause even more trouble for the Su Clan."

“Okay.” Ye Jiuge nodded.

After Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang had given their instructions, they headed to the Yuwu Teahouse together. Bai Songling waited for the shop assistant to deliver their tea and snacks.

After speaking about some other matters regarding the Su Clan, he asked Ye Jiuge, “Oh, Lady Hongxiu conveyed a useful piece of information yesterday. She said that Elderly Lady Xu has disappeared and cannot be found anywhere in the Harem. She suspects that something may have happened to Elderly Lady Xu. Eldest Miss Ye, have you heard anything about this?”

Ever since Ye Jiuge had revealed that Elderly Lady Xu was a Sorcerer, Lady Hongxiu had been keeping an eye on Elderly Lady Xu’s every move. Immediately after she had disappeared, Lady Hongxiu had sent the message. Bai Songling realized that the day Elderly Lady Xu had gone missing coincided with the day that Ye Jiuge had entered the Demonic Beasts Forest to gather medicinal ingredients. As such, he had some suspicions.

“I have not heard about this before. Do you think that the Empress may have sent Elderly Lady Xu away to do something?” Ye Jiuge asked without much thought.

She was not worried that anyone would suspect her. After all, the level of her cultivation was plain for everyone to see. Nobody would believe that she could kill Elderly Lady Xu. She just needed to hide her demonic weapon, the Lightning Snake Magical Whip, carefully.

“Hearing you say this made me think of something. The Justice Department just received news from Hepu County this morning. Around ten days ago, they found a female corpse with all her blood sucked out. However, the relay station for mail horses was suddenly destroyed on the day that the news was sent, so our Justice Department only received it today.”

Bai Songling had initially planned to head over to Hepu County with Wan Ziyang to take a look.

“Do you suspect that Elderly Lady Xu is the cause of this female corpse?” Ye Jiuge asked.

“I don’t think so. The crime in Hepu County was likely carried out by the same perpetrator as the case in Heyang County. Previously, when this happened in Heyang County, Elderly Lady Xu was at the palace. However, even if it wasn’t Elderly Lady Xu, the murderer must be related to her. I can’t say for sure, but they could be allied with Su Junqing. I just can’t fathom why they have appeared in the Lei Kingdom.” Bai Songling had lately been pondering over this question.

“The Su Clan, the Empress, and the Crown Prince—they are all connected to the Sorcerers. This must mean that the Sorcerers desire something from them,” Wan Ziyang added.

Ye Jiuge thought of the treasure map. Suddenly, a strange feeling came from the table and chair

to her left, as though someone had accidentally bumped into her seat. Ye Jiuge knew immediately that Ye Yu had arrived. She could even feel his rapid breaths, and she reckoned that he had also thought of the treasure map.

Ye Jiuge was about to think of an excuse to leave. However, she did not expect Wan Ziyang to notice Ye Yu's anomaly. He shouted at the corner behind Ye Jiuge, "Who's there?"

Bai Songling's reaction was quick, and a green light flashed in his hands. Immediately, a green vine reached out.

"Don't! He's one of us!" Ye Jiuge raised her hand to block Bai Songling's vine.

Wan Ziyang, who was preparing a fireball, immediately stopped in his tracks. He asked hesitantly, "One of us?"

"Ye Yu, show yourself!" Ye Jiuge turned toward the corner and said.

The shadow in the corner became distorted, and Ye Yu's figure appeared.

"Someone from the Ye Clan?" Ye Jiuge had not expected Wan Ziyang to be able to recognize Ye Yu's background immediately.

"Brother Wan, how do you know?" Ye Jiuge asked strangely.

"The Crown Prince and the Su Clan have been searching for him. We've heard all about it."

After all, due to their profession, Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang had more access to information than ordinary people.

"Why are the Crown Prince and the Su Clan looking for him?" Ye Jiuge asked. She was testing to see if Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang knew about the treasure map.

"You will have to ask Mr. Ye that," Wan Ziyang said. It appeared that he was unaware.

Ye Yu was silent. He had utterly ignored Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling.

"Cough, cough. It is fine if Mr. Ye is unwilling to say. I have previously heard that the Ye Clan's Invisibility is outstanding. Today, after seeing it in person, I must say that it is indeed impressive." Seeing that things had become awkward, Bai Songling tried to smooth the situation over.

"You flatter me," Ye Yu responded with three words, but only out of respect for Ye Jiuge.

Wan Ziyang looked Ye Yu up and down. Suddenly, he said, “Are you interested in investigating a Sorcerer’s whereabouts?”

Wan Ziyang’s reputation preceded him. Frequently, before he could rush over to the scene of a homicide, the physical evidence was usually already destroyed. He needed a partner to work with him in secret.

Bai Songling had often used to work with him. However, recently, there were many pressing matters in the Dongling Prince Mansion, and Bai Songling could not leave. Wan Ziyang was not satisfied with the abilities of the rest of the people from the Justice Department. He hoped that Ye Yu could help him.

“Not interested!” Ye Yu rejected him coldly. He did not wish to be involved with the Justice Department.

“If we can catch the Sorcerer, perhaps we will be able to find evidence that Su Junqing is practicing Black Magic.” Wan Ziyang looked toward Ye Jiuge as he said this. He could see that Ye Yu trusted Ye Jiuge very much.

If Ye Jiuge were willing to help speak for him, it was very likely that Ye Yu would agree.

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“I wish to speak to Ye Yu privately for a while,” Ye Jiuge said coolly.

“Sure.” Both Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling left the private room immediately.

“Eldest Miss, you do not need to say anything. I will not go with them,” Ye Yu said without even waiting for Ye Jiuge to speak. He hated Su Junqing—not the Sorcerers.

“You are not willing, even if it could save your sister?” Ye Jiuge sighed.

Out of fear that it could affect his cultivation, she had not told Ye Yu before about Ye Yunzhi.

However, Wan Ziyang was right that it was tricky to deal with Su Junqing. It was unlikely that such an arrogant and brainless Sorcerer would just drop by. If they could find him, they would be able to obtain more clues.

“Eldest Miss, what do you mean?” Ye Yu’s heart pounded.

“I apologize for keeping this a secret from you.” Ye Jiuge then told him about what had happened in the underground room. Then, she said, “If what the Sorcerer said was true, then Su Junqing has already sent your sister to a Sorcerer who is more powerful than him.”

Ye Yu’s face turned pale immediately. The red mole on his forehead seemed to have lost its vibrancy. His body trembled, and his breath became erratic. A thread of blood flowed out from the corner of his mouth.

Ye Jiuge immediately helped Ye Yu into a seat. When she checked his pulse, she realized that his Method was revolving in the wrong direction. He seemed to be straying from the right path. Ye Jiuge hurriedly applied her needle technique to help Ye Yu adjust his breathing.

Ye Yu opened his mouth and spewed out a mouthful of fresh, red blood before he could breathe normally. It was a good thing that he’d had some success with his cultivation recently. Even though his mind was in chaos, he’d been quickly able to protect his Elixir Field, and his cultivation was not damaged.

“I did not dare tell you earlier because I was afraid that you would not be able to take it.”

Ye Jiuge sighed involuntarily. It was already tricky dealing with Su Junqing. Now that Ye Yunzhi had landed in the hands of a Sorcerer who was stronger than Su Junqing, it would be even harder to save her.

Ye Jiuge thought: Adding to the difficulty, we know nothing about who this Sorcerer is—let alone where he is. We know nothing about him.

Ye Yu sat in a daze momentarily before he began to speak slowly. “Tell Wan Ziyang that I am willing to go and investigate the Sorcerer with him.”

His sister was his only relative in the whole world. Even if she had made an irrevocable mistake, he should be the one to punish her on behalf of their clan, and not let her be tortured by Sorcerers. No matter how hard it was going to be to save her, he would.

“Okay.” Ye Jiuge had known that Ye Yu would agree, and she went outside the room to call for Wan Ziyang.

Wan Ziyang did not know what Ye Jiuge had told Ye Yu. However, judging from his pale face and dull eyes, Wan Ziyang knew that it must have been something incredibly painful. He thought about himself, and he felt a sympathy for Ye Yu—like how fellow sufferers empathize with each other. The subtle hostility that he had felt earlier was mostly dissolved.

“Brother Wan, when do you plan on setting off to investigate the Sorcerer?” Ye Jiuge asked.

“As soon as possible!” Wan Ziyang said. He did not have to worry about the Justice Department in his absence with Bai Songling in charge.

“Let’s set off in half an hour,” Ye Yu said coldly.

“So soon?” Bai Songling grimaced.

Wan Ziyang was the Justice Department’s backbone. After his sudden departure, Bai Songling would have a busy time.

“Sure. Once we have packed our things, we shall leave immediately.” Wan Ziyang nodded. He greatly admired Ye Yu’s swift and decisive manner.

“Oh, that’s right. Brother Wan, this time, when you are investigating the Sorcerer, you don’t have to keep it a secret. It would be great if you could spread the news. The wider the better,” Ye Jiuge said.

“Why?” Confused, Wan Ziyang asked.

“If you don’t make a huge fuss, how can Su Junqing pay for his crime in the future?”

The corners of Ye Jiuge’s mouth curled up into a smile, but her eyes were frighteningly chilly. She could not kill the members of the Su Clan—it was too problematic. She had to think of a way that would make their suffering even more painful than death.

If the Su Clan’s Old Master were to know that Su Junqing, the grandson whom he doted on and trusted most, was a Sorcerer whose hands were covered in blood and who trafficked young girls through brothels, he would surely jump out of bed, even if he was unconscious!

Wan Ziyang thought about it momentarily before he nodded slowly and said, “I understand.”

Previously, they had suppressed the news out of fear that it would sow panic among the masses. Unlawful individuals would be able to make use of the opportunity to create chaos, swindle the commoners, and rob them of their wealth. However, Ye Jiuge was right. If they did not make a big deal out of the matter, even if they could find evidence against Su Junqing in the future, it was very

likely that Su Junqing would be able to escape. The water that bears the boat is the same that swallows it up. To defeat the Su Clan utterly, they needed to make use of public opinion.

As Wan Ziyang and Ye Yu had to rush to Hepu County to investigate, they planned to leave first. Bai Songling was responsible for sending Ye Jiuge back.

Before he left, Ye Yu revealed something. The Su Clan's Old Master did not fall unconscious while drinking; he had been on the toilet. Apparently, feces had landed on his entire body, and he had almost suffocated to death.

Smiling widely, Bai Songling said to Ye Jiuge, "This is indeed a piece of good news, even if it spoils one's appetite."

"I think that I won't eat for the entire day." Ye Jiuge laughed. Then, to Bai Songling, she said, "Brother Bai, I hope that you can help me to investigate someone?"

"Who?" Bai Songling asked.

"The Seventh Concubine from the Ye Residence. Her name is Mu Xianglan, and she is twenty years old. She is a Wood Elemental Beginner Spiritual Practitioner." Ye Jiuge told him about the Seventh Concubine's background carefully.

"Why are you investigating this Seventh Concubine?" Bai Songling found it strange. He thought: Does her Father's concubine have a conflict with her?

"I suspect that she is a spy that the Empress planted in the Ye Residence." Ye Jiuge then told him about how the Seventh Concubine had been monitoring her secretly.

"The Empress has reached too far if she will not even leave alone another clan's Inner Courtyard. Don't worry, I will make sure that the truth comes to light." Bai Songling immediately set his heart on the matter when he heard that it was related to the Empress.

"Many thanks!"

Ye Jiuge knew that it was the right move to find Bai Songling. His hatred for the Empress was just as intense as Ye Yu's hatred for the Su Clan and Wan Ziyang's for the Sorcerers.

After bidding farewell, Ye Jiuge got into the horse-drawn carriage. She saw that Yu Die and Hua Die had been sitting inside obediently. They did not gossip or meddle, and their behavior was excellent. Ye Jiuge was satisfied with their performance, and she decided to put in a good word for them in front of Qing Mama when they returned.

When she returned to the Zilin Residence, she saw Qing Mama walking in the courtyard.

Immediately, she frowned and asked, "Who allowed you to come out?"

"I am becoming moldy from lying down, and I wanted to take a walk outside." Qing Mama gave a smile, trying to curry favor with Ye Jiuge.

"Better moldy than to have an incompletely cured illness. Do you still need me to teach you that?" Ye Jiuge was furious.

"I am sorry. I know my mistake now."

Qing Mama grimaced. She was usually the one to nag others. This time, Ye Jiuge had taken the opportunity to reprimand her firmly. Qing Mama wanted to howl in the bitterness of her distress.

Yu Die and Hua Die covered their mouths and laughed secretly behind Ye Jiuge's back.

Ye Jiuge turned and instructed them, "Bring Qing Mama back inside to rest."

The two young maids quickly rushed over and affectionately supported Qing Mama with their arms. With a smile, they said, "Qing Mama, let us help you in!"

Then, Ye Jiuge headed to the Pill Production Room.

The Black Fat Rat was still sleeping in her animal-skin bag. The chubby rodent had been asleep for the majority of the day. Its laziness was almost in the same league as Zi Shang's.

"You are brazen for comparing me to a rat!" Zi Shang's listless voice rang out.

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Ye Jiuge did not expect Zi Shang to wake up at that moment. She stared blankly for a moment before questioning him.

“Tell me, what have you done to Old Man Su?”

“Nothing much. I just sealed his five senses,” Zi Shang answered calmly.

“Your method is so vicious!”

Ye Jiuge was speechless. She knew that Zi Shang was ruthless, but she did not know that he could be so cruel. A person whose five senses were sealed could not react to his surroundings. Although he could not speak, move, or feel anything, he was still conscious. The feeling was terrifying, like falling into the deep, dark sea. Ye Jiuge believed that, at that moment, Old Man Su was going crazy.

“I have already been merciful to him.” If they were among the Demon Clan, he’d have a million ways to make Old Man Su wish he were dead.

“Then, I shall thank you on his behalf!” Ye Jiuge said sincerely.

“Are you not going to reward me for helping you vent your anger?” Zi Shang materialized and caught Ye Jiuge in his arms.

“Did I beg you to go?”

Ye Jiuge was very cold-hearted and pitiless as she pushed him away. Zi Shang had acted on his own initiative, causing her to sleep poorly the previous night. Now, he had the gall to ask for a reward. Giving him two slaps would be more appropriate.

“Little Jiuge, could you bear to?” Zi Shang replied, raising his long eyebrows.

His dark purple eyes were like amethysts hiding in mines. They shone with a mysterious light, gazing deeply into Ye Jiuge. When Ye Jiuge saw that Zi Shang’s thorn apple-like face, usually tender and beautiful, had turned a little pale, a hint of guilt rose spontaneously in her heart. After Zi Shang had passed the cultivation technique to her, he’d fallen into a deep slumber for a few days. Now, he must have expended even more Demonic Power to deal with Old Man Su. No matter what, he had done this for her, and it wasn’t appropriate for her to be so heartless toward him.

“Take your reward.” Ye Jiuge reached out her forefinger and offered generously, “Suck as much blood as you want!”

Gazing at Ye Jiuge’s slim, white finger, the corners of Zi Shang’s mouth curled into a smile. He looked as beautiful as the blooming cactus during the night. This was the first time that Ye Jiuge had freely offered to let Zi Shang suck her blood. Although it wasn’t the reward he wanted, it was

better than nothing!

Zi Shang took Ye Jiuge's forefinger into his mouth. His sharp snake fangs bit down, and he began to suck gently. For a moment, Ye Jiuge worried that the demon would misbehave. However, it made her slightly uneasy when he did not. She tried to make conversation.

"Do you have a way to make me stronger?"

The incident with Old Man Su was a wake-up call. Although Ye Jiuge was considered powerful among Beginner Spiritual Practitioners, others were stronger. She must continuously improve.

"Yes, if we have Dual Cultivation, I can increase your cultivation exponentially at once."

While Ye Jiuge's finger was in his mouth, Zi Shang's eyes remained fixed on her. They were enticing.

"Another way!" Ye Jiuge knew that this pervert was full of evil thoughts.

"I don't have any other ideas." Zi Shang released Ye Jiuge's finger and started stroking her hair. He said, "You don't have to worry too much. I will never let you face that kind of situation ever again."

"I beg you, let me handle them myself!"

Ye Jiuge did not want Zi Shang to flip out and cause a massacre suddenly. Such a disaster would cause the human race to hunt her down and kill her. Zi Shang was unhappy that Ye Jiuge mistook his goodwill for ill intent. His hands wrapped around Ye Jiuge's slim waist; he was ready to teach her a lesson.

"I'm warning you, don't mess with me." Ye Jiuge raised her knee to push against Zi Shang's lower abdomen. She would never let him have his way easily, like last time.

Their standoff was setting off sparks flying in all directions when a tender voice came from their legs, "Pipi!"

Ye Jiuge lowered her head and made eye contact with a pair of large, bright, and intelligent eyes. The Black Fat Rat took out two red fruits from its small bag. It looked at Zi Shang with the intention of currying favor with him. It seemed as though it was offering sacrifices to a deity.

"What's this?" Ye Jiuge looked at the fruit. It emitted a faint fragrance. Intuitively, she knew that it was something good.

“Sacred Vitality Fruit. It can rapidly recover all kinds of power,” Zi Shang answered. At that moment, it was exactly what he needed. This little thing is quite attentive.

“Pipi!” The Black Fat Rat pushed the red fruit toward Zi Shang.

Its servile behavior annoyed Ye Jiuge. Zi Shang pointed with his finger, and the two red fruits floated in the air and flew into his hands. The Black Fat Rat gave a slight sigh. Then, it puffed up its chubby chest and stared at Ye Jiuge with contempt and a hint of delight. It behaved as if it were telling Ye Jiuge that it had found its patron.

“What should I do? I want to give it a beating.” Ye Jiuge’s hands itched. The last few days, she had been taking care of the creature. It hadn’t paid its food expenses, and now it was sucking up to Zi Shang. Did it not know who its owner was?

“Do whatever you want!” Zi Shang popped the fruits into his mouth.

The Black Fat Rat looked like it had been struck by lightning. He agreed to protect me after receiving my fruits. Where is the essential trust between beasts?

Ye Jiuge snatched the Black Fat Rat by the nape of its neck and raised it to her eye level. “Black Fatty, are you aware of who your boss is?”

“Pipi!” The creature gave a grievous cry as it clutched its small bag in distress. It could not bear to take anything out.

“Forget it; I don’t want your protection fee. Later, when I am producing pills, help me to purify the pill poison just like you did yesterday.” Ye Jiuge felt that it was better to be more practical.

“Pipi Jam!” The Black Fat Rat pushed out its thick chest again to signify that it still had a lot of saliva.

“Get lost!”

Ye Jiuge released it, and the Black Fat Rat quickly scurried off.

“Where did you get this fifth-stage Spiritual Rat?” Zi Shang asked.

“Fifth-stage Spiritual Rat? Are you talking about Black Fatty?” Ye Jiuge expressed her doubts. How can that stupid thing possibly be a fifth-stage Spiritual Rat?

As far as she knew, Spiritual Beasts were much rarer than Demonic Beasts. Animals that had developed intelligence were bright and witty. Spiritual Beasts of the first to third stages were

uncommon. Those of the fourth to sixth stages were born with an innate skill or magical power. Powerful Spiritual Beasts of the seventh stage could even transform into humans. They could easily crush those of the same level from the Demon Clan and the human race.

“Yes. Although it may not appear so, that creature is indeed a high stage Spiritual Beast.”

Zi Shang had flown into a rage when he had first read Ye Jiuge’s memory of the Su Clan’s Old Master. As such, he was uncertain about the origin of the Black Fat Rat and the small bronze cauldron.

“It brought along its small, damaged cauldron when it sought refuge with me.”

Ye Jiuge filled Zi Shang in on what had happened in the Demonic Beasts Forest. Then, Zi Shang scrutinized the small bronze cauldron, but he could not understand what was special about it.

“I’ve never seen the material used to craft this medicinal cauldron on this continent before. It’s not ordinary. However, it’s been badly damaged. By restoring it to its original state, we should be able to guess its origin,” Zi Shang said.

“Who cares about its origin. It’s fine as long as it’s useful.” Ye Jiuge was too busy to investigate the origin of a rat and its small, damaged cauldron.

“Okay!” As these were mere worldly possessions, Zi Shang couldn’t be bothered—so long as they posed no harm to Ye Jiuge.

“I’m going to produce pills now. Have a nice and cold wait over there!”

Ye Jiuge pushed Zi Shang away and prepared to produce the pills needed to expel the poison from Imperial Consort Xi’s system.

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Translator: Nyo-i-Bo Studio Editor: Nyo-i-Bo Studio

Ye Jiuge took out the Thousand Threads Herb that she had prepared earlier. The herb, which had

been extracted and soaked, glittered green and emitted a faint light. Besides its ability to expel poison from a person's system, it could also cleanse waste materials from the body. It was an instrumental Spiritual Herb. However, to manifest its detoxification ability, it required another Spiritual Herb, the Blackberry Fruit. Hence, not many Alchemists knew about the Thousand Threads Herb's capabilities. They preferred to use Green Algae Flower to produce Antidote Pills.

Ye Jiuge took out the Blackberry Fruit and the Thousand Threads Herb. She placed them together in a medicinal bowl and pounded them in a large container of dark green solution with her Spiritual Power before mixing them with other supplementary Spiritual Herbs.

Zi Shang perched at a crooked angle on the red wooden chair beside her. He supported his forehead with his hand, and his long black hair draped over his shoulders. His purple eyes stared unwaveringly at Ye Jiuge as his snake tail roamed around her. The flirtatious tip of his tail unconsciously played with her light green dress, which was embroidered with Yaoguang Flowers, as though he was trying to seduce her.

Honestly, Ye Jiuge's pill production process was dry and dull. Nevertheless, Zi Shang watched her with great interest. He realized that he had grown fond of Ye Jiuge, who had a vicious tongue and was a little willful and barbarous, but always strove for self-improvement. If he had figured this out earlier, he wouldn't have restored her original appearance.

People liked her even when she was ugly. Now that she is beautiful, won't it be more dangerous? It seems that I have to work harder to regain my Demonic Power. If not, when there are more rival lovers in the future, I won't be able to defeat them!

As Zi Shang's thoughts wandered, his eyes squinted slightly, and the corners of his mouth curved into a faint smile. The golden sunlight gave his beautiful face a radiance, making it look as gentle and intoxicating as the peach blossoms in March. He was so beautiful that his looks could take a person's breath away.

However, Ye Jiuge had no time to relax and enjoy the beautiful scenery. Once she started producing pills, Ye Jiuge withdrew into herself. Carefully, she calculated the amount of each Spiritual Herb needed and meticulously placed them into the Pill Production Furnace. Then, she adjusted the strength of the flame.

The detoxification pill required to remedy the Fantasy Beauty currently poisoning Imperial Consort Xi had to be tailor-made, so flame control was essential. Furthermore, she had to use her Soul Power to observe the changes in the ingredients in the Pill Production Furnace to ensure that all of them would fuse together perfectly.

The blazing flame turned Ye Jiuge's face deep red. Her eyes, which were like the clear autumn waters, locked single-mindedly on the Pill Production Furnace, as if beholding a treasure. The

Black Fat Rat squatted beside Ye Jiuge, watching the Pill Production Furnace with a solemn expression. The time passed slowly.

Zi Shang finally grew bored of watching. In a flash, he retired into the mark on Ye Jiuge's hand. Ye Jiuge did not notice anything; she was still paying close attention to the situation inside the Pill Production Furnace.

Just then, the medicinal suspension dissolved to form a crystal-clear, pale green solution. As the pale green solution became more viscous, its color turned darker as it began to take the shape of a pill.

"Black Fatty, go!" Ye Jiuge yelled as she opened the Pill Production Furnace.

The Black Fat Rat rushed over like a flash of lightning. It puffed its cheeks and spat its colorless, odorless saliva into the Pill Production Furnace. When the dark green solution absorbed the rat's saliva, it split and formed two separate pills. One was slightly larger than the other. It was the size of a thumb and glittering green. It was the Antidote Pill for Fantasy Beauty. The second pill had taken on a deep crimson color and was the size of a red bean. This was the pill poison. Ye Jiuge gave the red-colored pill poison to the Black Fat Rat and stored the Antidote Pill for Fantasy Beauty in a jade bottle. [Read latest chapters at vipnovel.com](http://vipnovel.com)

Outside the window, the sky was starting to darken. Although it was a little too late to go to the Dongling Prince Mansion, the pill had just been produced. She wanted to give it to Imperial Consort Xi quickly so that she could consume it. Ye Jiuge considered what to do before deciding that the poison should be cured as soon as possible. She believed that Dongfang Que and Imperial Consort Xi would be thrilled to see the Antidote Pill.

As before, Ye Jiuge found Bai Songling and asked him to secretly bring her into the Dongling Prince Residence. Knowing that Ye Jiuge had produced the Antidote Pill for Imperial Consort Xi, Bai Songling exclaimed happily, "Your pill is right on time!"

"What do you mean?"

Ye Jiuge was a little confused. When she had gone to see Imperial Consort Xi, she was recovering well, and her need to consume the Antidote Pill was not that urgent.

"You must be unaware that the Empress has been up to something again," Bai Songling answered.

As it turned out, after Elderly Lady Xu had gone missing, the Empress was gloomy for a time. Then, she suddenly said that she wished to select a few prospective concubines for the Emperor. She claimed that there had not been any newcomers to the Harem—hence, no recent newborns

of royal lineage. She wanted to open selections for the Harem.

Those who were ignorant of her character would have thought that the Empress was genuinely considerate of the Emperor. They did not know that, in recent years, no less than ten imperial concubines had suffered miscarriages. Countless palace maids had also been forced to drink Contraception Medicine. Some were even forced to drink Contraception Medicine before visiting the Emperor for his sexual pleasure, just because they were pretty. Accordingly, nobody believed the Empress when she said that she was helping the Emperor spread his seed.

“What did the Emperor say?” Ye Jiuge frowned and asked. She felt that the Empress’s action was strange as well.

“The Emperor has said that the Alchemy Convention will be taking place in a month, and he will discuss the matter only after the competition. However, he is a man, so he won’t say no to having a large Harem!” Bai Songling did not hide the contempt on his face. It seemed that he had a poor opinion of Emperor Xuanwu.

“What do the selections for the Harem have to do with curing Imperial Consort Xi of poison?” Ye Jiuge was puzzled.

“If Imperial Consort Xi returns to the Harem, the Emperor will not hold any selections,” Bai Songling said with certainty.

“But you have already said that a man prefers a larger Harem. There is no conflict between Imperial Consort Xi returning to the palace and the Emperor’s selections.”

Ye Jiuge felt that Bai Songling overestimated Imperial Consort Xi. If Emperor Xuanwu had loved Imperial Consort Xi dearly, he wouldn’t have left her outside the palace for over ten years without any concern for her.

“That is because you don’t know what Imperial Consort Xi means to the Emperor!” Bai Songling smiled. His words had a much deeper meaning.

Previously, when both the Imperial Noble Consort and Imperial Consort Xi were around, Emperor Xuanwu had never chosen any prospective concubines. He had seemed satisfied with the company of just those two consorts. Emperor Xuanwu had started selecting prospective concubines without restraint only after the Imperial Noble Consort had passed away and Imperial Consort Xi had left the palace. Now that Imperial Consort Xi was back, to protect the reputation of his profound love, Emperor Xuanwu would not select any prospective concubines.

“Fine. You are right. Let’s head to the Dongling Prince Mansion to cure Imperial Consort Xi now!”

No matter what, Ye Jiuge would be happy so long as she could cause trouble for the Empress.

Bai Songling led Ye Jiuge through the secret passage from the Yuwu Teahouse to the Dongling Prince Mansion. Dongfang Que had just returned from the palace. When he heard that Ye Jiuge had produced the Antidote Pill, he was elated.

“She should not be asleep yet,” he said. “If you go over now, you’ll arrive just in time.”

Although the rotten flesh on Imperial Consort Xi’s face had improved, she still refused to see anyone.

Apart from Elderly Lady Zhou, only Ye Jiuge was allowed to enter her residence at will.

“Then I will go now.”

Ye Jiuge was familiar with the path. She bid farewell to Dongfang Que and Bai Songling and headed toward Imperial Consort Xi’s residence.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

Elderly Lady Zhou knew that Ye Jiuge was on her way, so she stood outside the house, waiting. When she saw Ye Jiuge, she asked excitedly, “Eldest Miss Ye, it’s so late. Did you finish producing the Antidote Pill?”

“Indeed!” Ye Jiuge took out the small jade bottle and shook it.

“Thank goodness!” Elderly Lady Zhou exclaimed. Her eyes shifted upwards. With her palms devoutly pressed together, she bowed to the sky. Then, she bent her knees to kneel and thank Ye Jiuge.

“Elderly Lady, what are you doing? Please get up.” Ye Jiuge quickly lifted up the old servant.

“Eldest Miss Ye, you saved the Imperial Consort’s life. I have nothing to repay you with, so allow

me to give you three prostrations!"

Though Elderly Lady Zhou was extremely grateful to Ye Jiuge, she could not express her emotions clearly without actions.

"Elderly Lady Zhou, at your age, you could be my grandmother. You will be torturing me if you kneel before me. Please don't mention such words again, or I will never come back," said Ye Jiuge, pretending to be angry.

Elderly Lady Zhou had the same kind of character as Qing Mama. They loved their masters dearly and treated them like their own daughters. They would always take their master's point of view, no matter what they did, and endured hardship gladly. Ye Jiuge respected them.

"Alright. Please pretend that I did not say anything."

Elderly Lady Zhou could tell that Ye Jiuge was speaking from her heart, and she felt an ease that was hard to articulate. Elderly Lady Zhou had been a slave for her entire life. Although people treated her with courtesy out of respect for Imperial Consort Xi, nobody had ever compared her to their grandmother before. She felt warmth in her heart, as though she had drunk a cup of hot tea in the winter.

No wonder everyone likes Ye Jiuge. She is truly a fine lady. Elderly Lady Zhou placed her gratefulness at the bottom of her heart and hurriedly brought Ye Jiuge into the house.

Imperial Consort Xi was pacing up and down. Her palms were sweaty from nervousness. At first, she had thought that it would require considerable effort for her to recover from her illness. She had not expected Ye Jiuge to begin the final stage of detoxification so soon. The sudden arrival of the pleasant surprise had left her at a loss.

When Imperial Consort Xi heard the door open, she quickly sat back down and put on a calm and relaxed expression. Ye Jiuge was very impressed to see Imperial Consort Xi's calm appearance. She bowed to her and said, "Greetings to you, Imperial Consort."

"Jiuge, please have a seat!" Imperial Consort Xi called out with a faint smile.

She had been taking the detoxification medicine that Ye Jiuge had given her. The rotten flesh on the right side of her face had formed scabs, which were turning into a large, dark red scar. It was as though she wore a mask. Although her face was still terrifying, it was much better compared to the festering boil of rotten flesh that it had been.

Ye Jiuge sat in front of Imperial Consort Xi and asked, "Imperial Consort, are you ready?"

Although she had already made countless preparations for situations that could possibly arise during the detoxification process, she could not rule out all unforeseen circumstances.

“Yes!” Imperial Consort Xi said, nodding slowly.

Even when Ye Jiuge had said that the detoxification process would be as painful as the experience of Lingering Death, she had not been afraid. Now that Ye Jiuge had found a way to reduce her pain, she was even less scared.

“Ok, then let’s begin!” Ye Jiuge said straightforwardly.

“Eldest Miss, is the detoxification going to take place here, or should we find somewhere else?” Elderly Lady Zhou asked in a low voice. If they needed to go someplace else, she had to make preparations first.

“Later on, when the Imperial Consort consumes my Antidote Pill, I will use my needle for the detoxification. The Imperial Consort may discharge a lot of black toxins, so it would be best to conduct the procedure in the bathroom.” It would also make it easier to clean up.

“There is a stand-alone bathroom behind the courtyard. Imperial Consort, Eldest Miss, please wait here for a while. Allow me to make preparations,” Elderly Lady Zhou responded immediately.

Imperial Consort Xi nodded. “Alright.”

Elderly Lady Zhou quickly prepared clean towels, clothes, soap, and other things before she called for Ye Jiuge and Imperial Consort Xi.

In the bathroom, hot steam rose in spirals. As they stood in front of the soft couch to the side of the bath, Ye Jiuge said to Imperial Consort Xi, “Imperial Consort, please lie here after you have undressed.”

Ye Jiuge was going to have to apply her needle later, and it wouldn’t be convenient if Imperial Consort Xi were clothed.

“Ok!”

Imperial Consort Xi began to undress. Elderly Lady Zhou took out a moon-white silk bathrobe and draped it on her mistress. Then, she let down Imperial Consort Xi’s hair and tied it back loosely. When the Imperial Consort was ready, Ye Jiuge took out a large jade bottle.

“What’s that?” Imperial Consort Xi asked curiously.

“It’s the Indigo Jade Water Plant I found in the Demonic Beasts Forest. Please, eat this first.”

Ye Jiuge opened the large jade bottle and poured out a lump of water plants emitting an indigo light. The lump of Indigo Jade Water Plants weighed about twenty-five grams. The dose had been configured based on Imperial Consort Xi’s weight. Consuming it before the Antidote Pill would create an anesthetic effect.

Without any hesitation, Imperial Consort Xi swallowed the Indigo Jade Water Plants. After eating them, she felt a cooling sensation in her Elixir Field. The blood in her limbs felt as though it had stopped circulating, so she laid weakly down on the soft couch.

When Ye Jiuge observed that the Indigo Jade Water Plant had taken effect, she handed the Antidote Pill to Imperial Consort Xi. As Imperial Consort Xi received the Antidote Pill, a complicated expression flitted past her face. Once she consumed the pill, the toxins in her body would be expelled, and her original looks restored.

The thing that she had wished non-stop for was finally right in front of her eyes. Instead of rejoicing, she began to worry about personal gains and losses. She feared that the detoxification effects would not be satisfactory. If that happened, her entire life would be destroyed, and the pain unendurable.

“Imperial Consort, please don’t worry and consume it. I will be here,” Ye Jiuge softened her tone and said.

Ye Jiuge did not make any guarantees or offer a genuine expression of reassurance. Nevertheless, Imperial Consort Xi felt inexplicably at ease and placed the dark green pill in her mouth. Due to the candlelight—or something else—a dark green light flitted past Imperial Consort Xi’s brilliant red nails then disappeared. Ye Jiuge was startled; she seemed to recall something. However, when she tried carefully to remember, she could not think of anything. All she could do was carefully observe Imperial Consort Xi, watching her every movement.

After Imperial Consort Xi swallowed the pill, she felt it dissolve immediately. It turned into a sweet, warm current that entered her stomach, where it began to expel the remnants of the Fantasy Beauty in her body. The detoxification process was like using a small shovel to root out rubbish that had stuck to her spiritual channels. Although it was excruciating, the experience was still tolerable thanks to the cooling anesthetic effect of the Indigo Jade Water Plant.

Imperial Consort Xi could clearly feel that small shovel following the path of her spiritual channels toward her fingers. When the Antidote Pill’s effect reached her fingertips, it suddenly exploded with a bang. It was as though a spark had been thrown into a barrel of oil. The surging wave of heat spread out frantically from her fingertips. She let out a blood-curdling screech.

At that moment, Imperial Consort Xi understood Ye Jiuge's warning about the pain of Lingering Death.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

Ye Jiuge looked at Imperial Consort Xi's skin, which had turned as red as a cooked lobster, and finally recalled the thought that had flitted across her mind earlier.

There is something wrong with Imperial Consort Xi's fingernails!

Imperial Consort Xi's brilliant red-colored fingernails had turned a strange, dark green color. They emitted a faint fishy smell—the unique smell of a Green Toad.

Needless to say, this must have been the doing of the Spiritual Doctor who had been prescribing her fake medicine. He had used the Green Toad's poison as nail polish for Imperial Consort Xi. The Green Toad and Fantasy Beauty poisons counteracted each other's effects. When Imperial Consort Xi consumed the antidote for Fantasy Beauty, the Green Toad's poison was immediately activated.

However, since the amount of Green Toad poison afflicting Imperial Consort Xi was minute and diluted with nail polish, Ye Jiuge had neglected it. Ye Jiuge opened her Spiritual Eye to observe Imperial Consort Xi's body; the Green Toad's toxins had completely clogged her spiritual channels. If they were not cleared soon, Imperial Consort Xi would die.

"Imperial Consort, hang in there!" With a solemn expression, Ye Jiuge took out the Lightning Fire Needle. As fast as she could, she applied it to Imperial Consort Xi's body.

Ever since she had released the Godly Heartwood's seal to save Dongfang Que, the Lightning Fire Needle had acquired a hint of the breath of life. Since then, its effectiveness had increased exponentially. The red-colored needle with a trace of violet was like a raindrop in Ye Jiuge's hand as it landed on Imperial Consort Xi. Every one of her jabs accurately pierced the patient's acupuncture points.

Ye Jiuge removed a droplet of dark green blood. Imperial Consort Xi felt the blazing fire burning hotter as Ye Jiuge applied her needle. The pain was worsening, and she was losing her mind.

Ye Jiuge's expression was grave, and her heart burned with anxiety. The Indigo Jade Water Plant's anesthetic effect would not last for long. If she could not force the Green Toad's poison out soon, Ye Jiuge feared that Imperial Consort Xi would not be able to endure what came next. Everything depended on her will, not the Indigo Jade Water Plant's effects.

All of Ye Jiuge's Spiritual Power was operating frantically. The Lightning Fire Needle in her hand was like a shadow flashing by. In the blink of an eye, the needle landed eighty-one times on Imperial Consort Xi. Her entire body was now covered with dark green droplets of blood. The infected blood soaked the hem of Ye Jiuge's dress, and a fishy stench diffused the bathroom.

Elderly Lady Zhou watched anxiously from the sidelines. Instinctively, she realized that something was wrong. The Imperial Consort's expression, notably, was worsening. Elderly Lady Zhou had never seen the Imperial Consort in so much pain. She seemed to have given up hope of survival. And she was right to. Under the pain of torture, Imperial Consort Xi had already surrendered her will to live.

What is the point of pressing on? The detoxification has failed, and she will return to days of pure misery. She may as well die.

Elderly Lady Zhou was startled. She hurriedly kneeled beside Imperial Consort Xi and cried out, "Imperial Consort, please don't give up!"

Imperial Consort Xi shook her head as if to say that she could not persevere.

"Elderly Lady Zhou, think of a way to help her hang in there," Ye Jiuge quickly instructed. She was so close to forcing the Green Toad's poison out of Imperial Consort Xi.

Elderly Lady Zhou raised her voice and shrieked mournfully, "Imperial Consort, have you forgotten how the Empress hurt you? How can you abandon me without taking your revenge?"

Imperial Consort Xi was still shaking her head. She won't be able to take revenge; Que'er will have to avenge her.

Elderly Lady Zhou's face paled. After hesitating momentarily, she cried out in a shaky voice, "Imperial Consort, even if not for your sake, you have to avenge Little Master! He was killed by the Empress before he could even grow up in your womb. If you go now, how can you face the Little Master in the Netherworld?"

What? What Little Master?

Imperial Consort Xi rolled her head toward Elderly Lady Zhou as if urging her to get to the heart of the matter.

“During the period after the Imperial Noble Consort’s death, didn’t you feel dizzy and nauseous? You couldn’t eat anything? Eldest Miss Ye said that was because you were pregnant. Later on, when you bled, you were miscarrying, not discharging the poison.” Emotion choked Elderly Lady Zhou as she spoke. “It’s all my fault. Why didn’t I realize that you were pregnant? Why did I allow the Empress, that vicious woman, to harm Little Master?”

Hearing this, blue veins stood up on Imperial Consort Xi’s palm as she gripped the bedsheet beneath her. Her long fingernails scraped the bed board, emitting a sharp, intense sound. She was so angry that her longest nail broke into two pieces.

Ye Jiuge took the opportunity and applied the Lightning Fire Needle to Imperial Consort Xi’s last few acupuncture points. A stream of dark green poisoned blood spurted out and quickly turned bright red.

She had finally succeeded! Ye Jiuge almost blacked out and collapsed to the ground. Quickly, she supported herself on the sides of the bed. She had used too much Spiritual Power. Additionally, she had opened her Spiritual Eye for too long and overexerted herself.

“Imperial Consort, Imperial Consort, are you alright?” Elderly Lady Zhou wanted to clean up the Imperial Consort’s body, but she had no clue where to start. She feared that she would touch the Imperial Consort’s wounds.

“The Imperial Consort is fine. Wipe her body with hot water then feed her two Vitality Strengthening Pills,” Ye Jiuge closed her eyes and instructed Elderly Lady Zhou weakly.

“Eldest Miss Ye, are you alright?” Elderly Lady Zhou realized that something was also wrong with Ye Jiuge.

“I’m fine. Just a little tired. Go and serve the Imperial Consort. I will be alright after resting a while.” Ye Jiuge used her last bit of energy to walk over to the chair. She finally felt a little better when she sat down.

Elderly Lady Zhou used six full buckets of hot water to clean Imperial Consort Xi’s body. After helping her mistress change into a clean bathrobe, she quickly fed her two Vitality Strengthening Pills. A hint of color was restored to Imperial Consort Xi’s ghastly pale face. Her elegant and thick eyelashes blinked a few times before she opened her eyes slowly.

“Imperial Consort, how are you feeling?” When Elderly Lady Zhou saw Imperial Consort Xi waking

up, her heart, which had been in her mouth this whole time, finally felt relieved.

“Just now, you said that I was pregnant. What do you mean?” Imperial Consort Xi’s gaze was as sharp as a sword as she stared firmly at Elderly Lady Zhou.

The servant’s face paled. It was as though someone had poured a basin of cold water on her head. Looking into Imperial Consort Xi’s bloodshot eyes, she trembled and said, “When Imperial Noble Consort passed away, you felt nauseous and vomited because you were actually pregnant...”

Before Elderly Lady Zhou could finish speaking, Imperial Consort Xi sat straight up. Abruptly, she lifted her hand and slapped Elderly Lady Zhou.

Bang!

Elderly Lady Zhou’s wrinkled face careened to one side. The old servant was unharmed, but the blow sent Imperial Consort Xi reeling. She landed heavily on the bed and writhed like a fish that had leaped onto the shore, left only with pain and misery at its deathbed struggle.

“Imperial Consort, go ahead and hit me. Or scold me. Please don’t keep the anger bottled up in your heart.”

Elderly Lady Zhou knelt beside Imperial Consort Xi’s bed and wept in sorrow.

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Translator: Nyoibo Studio Editor: Nyoibo Studio

“My child, my child!”

Imperial Consort Xi’s cheeks streamed with tears. Choked with emotion, she let out miserable sobs. Her entire body trembled, and she felt as though her heart had been cut into pieces. This pain was much more excruciating than that of the poison.

The child that she had wished for had been in her womb, and yet she had not realized it. Her child

had disappeared from this world without a sound. He had not been given a name or a memorial tablet, and nobody had cried or grieved for him. Worst of all, she'd only learned of the matter after sixteen years had passed. What right did she have to meet her baby in the Netherworld?

At her side, Elderly Lady Zhou sobbed too hard to speak. Mournful and sorrowful emotions filled the bathroom. Ye Jiuge sighed. She did not know how to comfort Imperial Consort Xi and her servant. Her gaze swept the bathroom and observed a mirror, which Elderly Lady Zhou had prepared, in the corner. She must have wanted her mistress to see her reflection after the poison was cured.

It was an exquisite mirror. The back of it was made from rosewood, and it was engraved with the folding pattern of a lotus. The mirror was made of polished crystals, and it was brilliant enough to clearly reflect a person's image. Ye Jiuge took the mirror to Imperial Consort Xi and said softly, "Imperial Consort, the things of the past cannot be remedied; we can only look forward. No matter what you wish to do, now, you can do it." Having said so, she set the mirror upright in front of Imperial Consort Xi.

Imperial Consort Xi lifted her eyes and saw the reflection of a beautiful woman. Her skin was spotlessly white, like a piece of jade. Her eyes, bright like autumn waters, brimmed with painful tears, but they were undeniably gentle and touching. Not only had her looks been restored, but she was even more beautiful than she had been sixteen years ago.

"Fantasy Beauty's poison has an enormous effect. If one can overcome the pain of Lingering Death, one is reborn." Ye Jiuge believed that the Empress would kick herself if she could see Imperial Consort Xi now.

"Reborn?" Imperial Consort Xi mumbled to herself.

The beauty's gaze in the mirror firmed. Her eyes burned with hatred, and a bitter expression covered her beautiful face. She was like a scorpion with a venomous sting, ready to attack. Ye Jiuge was startled by this; she feared that Imperial Consort Xi would not be able to hold her emotions in check and that she would enter the palace to fight the Empress to the death.

However, Imperial Consort Xi soon recovered her regular expression. Her plump, red lips curved into a graceful smile. "Dongfang Yan, Xue Mingzhu, I am back." Then, Imperial Consort Xi's eyes closed, and she fell unconscious.

"Imperial Consort, what's wrong?" Elderly Lady Zhou hurriedly straightened her body and looked worriedly at Ye Jiuge. She asked, "Eldest Miss, please take a look at the Imperial Consort."

Ye Jiuge checked her pulse. Imperial Consort Xi had merely fallen asleep from exhaustion. "The Imperial Consort is fine," she said. "She will be alright after sleeping."

Elderly Lady Zhou sighed with relief. Her legs gave way, and her body collapsed onto the ground.

“Elderly Lady, get up please.” Ye Jiuge lifted up Elderly Lady Zhou and said, “The Imperial Consort still needs you to serve her. If you collapse, she will have nobody to rely on.”

“Eldest Miss, you are right.” Elderly Lady Zhou wiped her eyes and took a deep breath. She buried all the sorrow, pain, and exhaustion in the depths of her heart. If she had not been cultivating so that her body was healthy, she feared that she would not be able to withstand her rapidly fluctuating emotions.

“Elderly Lady, please take Imperial Consort Xi to rest. I will go and speak to His Highness to ease his worries,” Ye Jiuge said.

Now that Imperial Consort Xi’s poison had been expelled, she needed to recuperate.

“Sure. Eldest Miss, there is still some hot water left as well as new clothes. Please change out of your things as well!” Elderly Lady Zhou offered, seeing that the hem of Ye Jiuge’s dress was covered with blood. Ye Jiuge’s figure was similar to Imperial Consort Xi’s, so she should be able to wear her clothes.

“Ok, I will change later.” Ye Jiuge realized that she smelled of Imperial Consort Xi’s infected blood.

“Then, I shall take my leave.” Elderly Lady Zhou said. She cocooned Imperial Consort Xi with blankets and carried her back into the house.

Ye Jiuge wiped down her body. She picked a pale purple dress and changed into it before walking out of the courtyard, where Dongfang Que and Bai Songling were waiting. They raised a lantern when they saw her coming toward them in new clothes with an exhausted expression. “Did something go wrong?” they asked anxiously.

“Yes. There was a setback during the detoxification process, and I almost failed. It’s my fault for not examining her more carefully before beginning.”

Ye Jiuge explained about the Green Toad’s poison. Since she had focused mainly on Imperial Consort Xi’s injury and the Fantasy Beauty, she had accidentally overlooked the second poison.

“The Empress is cautious and vicious. Her poisons are extremely rare, so it is understandable that you missed it,” Dongfang Que said.

He was not merely trying to comfort Ye Jiuge; he’d been poisoned by the Empress before, so he had a clear understanding of her methods. Just when a person thought that he had cured the

poison in his body, he discovered that another toxin had broken out.

“Yes, Eldest Miss Ye. It is a good thing that it was you who treated the Imperial Consort’s poison. Someone else might not even have had the opportunity to remedy the problem.”

Although Ye Jiuge did not say anything about the detoxification process, Bai Songling could tell from her pale face and exhausted appearance that it must have been challenging and dangerous.

“Just now, to help the Imperial Consort persevere, Elderly Lady Zhou told her about her miscarriage. I fear that she will be in a terrible mood during this period. Please take note of it,” Ye Jiuge instructed.

Although the poison in Imperial Consort Xi had been expelled, the follow-up recuperation was important as well. If she did not take good care of her health, there could be repercussions.

“Don’t worry, I will take good care of her.” Dongfang Que treated Imperial Consort Xi like a family member, and he would be diligent and attentive.

“That’s great. I’ll head back now. Notify me if Imperial Consort Xi needs anything.” Ye Jiuge was so exhausted that she barely had any energy to speak. She wanted nothing more than to return to the Zilin Residence and have a good sleep.

“Songling, escort Eldest Miss Ye home!” Dongfang Que instructed Bai Songling.

“Yes.”

Bai Songling led Ye Jiuge out of the Dongling Prince Mansion and personally escorted her to the Ye Residence’s back door. Ye Jiuge climbed over the walls. She fell asleep immediately and only woke up at noon the next day. Qing Mama came in a few times and saw Ye Jiuge sleeping soundly. She could not bear to disturb her, so she instructed Zhen Zhu to stand guard outside the door and inform her immediately when the Eldest Miss stirred.

When Ye Jiuge woke up, Qing Mama did not ask her anything. She prepared a good meal and served it to her. When Ye Jiuge was halfway done eating, Zhen Zhu entered. In her hands, she held a black invitation card. She said, “Eldest Miss, Lord Wan’s residence just delivered this.”

Ye Jiuge put down her bowl and chopsticks. She accepted the card and took a look. It was from Bai Songling; he was inviting her to the Yuwu Teahouse that afternoon.

Has something happened to Imperial Consort Xi?

Ye Jiuge was not in the mood to eat anymore. She changed her clothes and prepared to head out.

Translator: Nyoï-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoï-Bo Studio

“Eldest Miss, no matter how important this appointment may be, you can’t neglect your body!” Qing Mama couldn’t help but say.

She knew that the Eldest Miss, Lord Wan, and Lord Bai had some important business and weren’t making small talk. No matter how important this business was, it shouldn’t be that exhausting.

“It’s alright. My body is fine,” said Ye Jiuge. She wouldn’t die if she skipped two meals.

“You are not an Alchemist from the Justice Department, so why do they come looking for you for everything?” Qing Mama asked angrily.

Every time the Eldest Miss came back from the Yuwu Teahouse, she was either outside collecting medicine or doing alchemy in the Pill Production Room. No matter how foolish she was, she knew that Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling came to the Eldest Miss for alchemy. At first, they’d looked like two good potential husbands. Now, it seemed that there wasn’t anything good about them.

“Helping them is helping me, ok? You don’t need to care so much about this.” Ye Jiuge changed her dress and went in the carriage alone.

Bai Songling was waiting at the Yuwu Teahouse. When he saw Ye Jiuge, he said apologetically, “Eldest Miss, I’m truly sorry to bother you.”

“You are too polite, Brother Bai. Is there something wrong with Imperial Consort Xi?” asked Ye Jiuge.

“Yes...the Imperial Consort said that she will return to the palace now.” Bai Songling sighed repeatedly.

“Now?” Ye Jiuge was shocked.

Imperial Consort Xi had only finished expelling the poison last night and still did not even have the strength to speak. Why did she want to return to the palace now?

“Yes, His Highness has been arguing with her for a long time, but she still insists on returning to the palace immediately. His Highness had no choice but to seek your help.”

Imperial Consort Xi had woken up that morning and started making trouble. They’d barely managed to delay her until Ye Jiuge’s arrival. They were worried that all this might affect Imperial Consort Xi’s rest.

“Ok, I’ll go with you and take a look.” Ye Jiuge knew that provoking Imperial Consort Xi was child’s play.

Imperial Consort Xi was so eager for revenge that she couldn’t wait anymore. However, entering the consort’s chamber with this body was extremely dangerous.

After hurrying to the Dongling Prince mansion, Ye Jiuge couldn’t even take off her coat. Elderly Lady Zhou quickly dragged her toward the courtyard, saying, “Eldest Miss, please go and persuade the Imperial Consort. His Highness isn’t able to stop her anymore.”

Ye Jiuge walked quickly toward the courtyard and saw Dongfang Que blocking the entrance and Imperial Consort Xi standing right in front of him. Her hair was coiled up in a traditional bun held in place by a blue-golden phoenix hairpin. She wore a pink dress embroidered with black-golden phoenixes with red phoenix flat shoes. Her determination to return to the palace immediately could be discerned by her outfit, which consisted exclusively of clothes made for the harem.

The make-up on her face couldn’t cover up her paleness, and her straight back shivered as she said to Dongfang Que in a cold voice, “Step aside, don’t make this Majesty repeat herself.”

“Imperial Consort, I can’t let you return and bring death to yourself.” Dongfang Que shook his head.

He’d spent half the day advising her, listing all the advantages and disadvantages. But the Imperial Consort simply wasn’t listening, so all he could do was block the entrance.

“You don’t need to worry about this Majesty’s life and death. You’ve blocked the entrance for some time, but you can’t block it for a lifetime. If this Majesty is hell-bent on leaving, your blockage won’t mean anything,” said the Imperial Consort in harrowing tone with a ruthless expression.

The Dongling Prince mansion wasn’t impregnable. As long as she screamed, a spy could hear her and carry this information back to the palace. Then it wouldn’t matter if Dongfang Que blocked her. Dongfang Que knew this too, so he didn’t dare be too forceful. He urged, “Imperial Consort, even if

you want to go, you should let Eldest Miss Ye treat you before leaving.”Read latest chapters at vipnovel.com

“There’s no need. This Majesty remembers Jiuge’s favor and will repay it when she has the chance.”

The Imperial Consort had no desire to see Ye Jiuge because she reminded her of the pain of losing her child. This pain tormented her deeply and hadn’t allowed her even a moment’s rest. All she wanted to do now was return to the palace so she could make her enemies taste the same pain.

Having made up her mind, she no longer hesitated and walked toward the door. If Dongfang Que still dared to stop her, he shouldn’t blame her for her ruthlessness.

“Imperial Consort!” At this time, Ye Jiuge quickly entered the courtyard.

“Eldest Miss Ye, you’ve finally arrived.” Dongfang Que finally relaxed.

“Jiuge!” the Imperial Consort looked at Ye Jiuge and firmly said, “You don’t have to persuade me. No matter what you say, I will return to the palace.”

“Imperial Consort, I’m not here to persuade you.” Ye Jiuge had already prepared a pep talk on the way. But seeing that the Imperial Consort had made up her mind, she realized that it would be better to change her method.

“You can go back to the palace if you want, but the harem is different than the prince’s mansion. If the Queen poisons you again, I won’t be able to rush into the harem to save you, even if I had extraordinary powers. Please, wait for a few days until I find a way to identify the poison so you can bring it with you to the palace. Would that be possible?”

“Yes, Imperial Consort, we should go back to get revenge, but we shouldn’t get caught up in that evil woman’s plan before we know how we will exact our revenge,” Elderly Lady Zhou jumped.

She had been by the Imperial Consort’s side for many years and knew her personality very well. If people advised her to rest, she definitely wouldn’t listen, for she had already put her life aside long enough. However, if it was in the name of revenge, she might listen.

After hesitating for a moment, the Imperial Consort said to Ye Jiuge, “When you think of a method, you can come to the palace and tell me.”

“Imperial Consort, do you really think I can just go home and think of a method while you’re already at the palace?” Ye Jiuge asked helplessly.

She had already imagined a scene where the Imperial Concubine was poisoned by the Empress as soon as she returned to the palace.

“Imperial Consort, making preparations won’t delay the work. The arrangements in the palace are not yet complete. Now is not the best time for you to return,” Dongfang Que also tried to persuade her.

The Imperial Concubine was silent. It seemed she hadn’t given up completely.

Ye Jiuge thought for a moment then slowly said, “Moreover, it’s too cheap for you to return like this. I say the Emperor should roll out a red carpet for three miles and personally go to the Emperor Temple to meet you. Only in this way can the Empress’ reputation be severely damaged.”

The red carpet was only rolled out for three miles when the Empress returned to her chambers. If the Imperial Consort Xi returned in such a fashion, she would truly step on the Empress’ toes.

The Imperial Consort’s eyes brightened as she slowly nodded and said, “You’re right, Jiuge.”

There had to be a beautiful beginning to her revenge. She could wait a few more days if it meant seeing the Empress’ ugly face.

“Imperial Consort, I will escort you back to the Emperor Temple tomorrow and send someone to inform my royal father about your recovery.” Dongfang Que was relieved after finally seeing the Imperial Consort’s change of attitude.

“This Majesty will personally write a letter, and you will send it to the Emperor. Also, you will escort this Majesty to the Emperor Temple tonight,” Imperial Consort Xi said decisively.

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Translator: Nyo-i-Bo Studio Editor: Nyo-i-Bo Studio

“Ok.” nodded Dongfang Que. Everything would be easier if Imperial Consort Xi didn’t make any

more trouble about returning to the palace.

“Imperial Consort, since you are going back to the Emperor Temple, it’s better to let Eldest Miss Ye retake your pulse,” Elderly Lady Zhou took the opportunity to say.

“I’ll have to trouble you, Jiuge.” Imperial Consort Xi apologetically looked at Ye Jiuge. She wasn’t set on making trouble, but the hatred in her heart didn’t allow her to care about anything else.

“You are too courteous, Imperial Consort,” said Ye Jiuge as she accompanied Imperial Consort Xi back to the bedroom and began taking her pulse.

Imperial Consort Xi’s pulse was feeble, and her internal organs had not yet adjusted, so she needed more time to recover.

“The Imperial Consort didn’t sleep well last night,” Elderly Lady Zhou said quietly.

After remembering her pregnancy symptoms, Imperial Consort Xi had woken up in the middle of the night crying and scolding herself for her carelessness. When she’d finished crying, she’d freshened up and said that she wanted to return to the palace. She hadn’t slept through a single night.

“Don’t worry, Imperial Consort, you just need to take care of your body carefully,” said Ye Jiuge as she looked at Imperial Consort Xi. If things went on like this, Imperial Consort Xi’s body wouldn’t last.

“Jiuge, don’t listen to Elderly Lady Zhou’s nonsense. I know my body. It’s no big deal!” said Imperial Consort Xi as she retracted her hand. Compared to all the things that she had suffered in the past, staying up all night meant nothing.

“Anyway, you’ll need to recuperate first,” said Ye Jiuge.

She knew it was impossible to make Imperial Consort Xi rest, so she took up a pen and wrote a prescription to relieve her mind. Then, she said seriously, “Imperial Consort, don’t blame me for being vulgar, but the desire for sex and food is in our human nature, and when you return to the palace, you’ll have to rely on your face to entice the Emperor. However, it’s very easy to become old and ugly if you don’t sleep well.”

Hearing this, the Imperial Consort Xi touched her face and nodded. “I know, I’ll take care of myself.” She was still waiting to see the Empress’ remorseful face after meeting her again.

“Don’t worry, Eldest Miss Ye, I will make sure that the Imperial Consort takes her medicine on time,” said Elderly Lady Zhou as she took the prescription. She decided to prepare it for the

Imperial Consort as soon as she returned to the Emperor Temple.

As Imperial Consort Xi wanted to return to the Emperor Temple, Ye Jiuge didn't say much more and quickly left. Outside the courtyard, Dongfang Que was still waiting, and when he saw the furtive glance from Ye Jiuge, he led her into a study room and asked, "Eldest Miss Ye, how do you plan to help the Imperial Consort test the poison? Also, if it's not too troublesome to return, can I also get one?"

Dongfang Que was utterly terrified of the Empress' strange poisons, and it would be for the best if he had some methods to prevent them.

"I have to return and carefully think about it." Ye Jiuge had only come up with this idea to appease Imperial Consort Xi, but she didn't know a thing about refining weapons. She needed to ask Zi Shang.

"Eldest Miss, if you need anything, just tell me," Dongfang Que said sincerely.

Ye Jiuge had saved Imperial Consort Xi, so he wanted to repay her. However, giving her money was too rude, and gifting her other things wasn't doable either since she could dislike them.

"Actually, right now, I need a spiritual fruit called Sacred Vitality Fruit. I wonder if Your Highness can help me get it." In fact, she really needed the Sacred Vitality Fruit for Zi Shang.

"Eldest Miss Ye, please wait a moment while I check to see if there are any in the warehouse."

Dongfang Que summoned Elder He. After carefully examining the warehouse, they found the Sacred Vitality Fruit that Ye Jiuge wanted.

"Thank you!"

After taking the spiritual fruit, Ye Jiuge returned to the Zilin Residence and summoned Zi Shang, who coiled around Ye Jiuge as usual and rested his chin on her head before lazily asking: "Why did you call me?"

Ye Jiuge went numb from the coiling. She asked without moving, "Can you make a spiritual weapon that lets Imperial Consort Xi identify the Empress' poison?"

"What are the benefits?" Zi Shang asked back.

"Stop wanting benefits all the time. Don't you understand that talking about money hurts people's feelings?" Ye Jiuge rolled her eyes.

"I only know that talking about feelings hurts the money," said Zi Shang as he nibbled Ye Jiuge's little face. This chick was still too young to provoke him.

"Fine. Take your benefits."

Ye Jiuge wiped her face and took out the box with the Sacred Vitality Fruit. This Sacred Vitality Fruit had been obtained by Dongfang Que after he and the Bai family had gone to battle against the demon race. Because he didn't know its use, Dongfang Que had kept them inside the warehouse. Zi Shang looked down and saw that there were five Sacred Vitality Fruits as big as a human thumb in the wooden box, and they were giving off a light fragrance.

Although this gift wasn't as big as the Black Fat Rat, it was indeed a rarity. However, the rarest thing was still Ye Jiuge's heart. He had only consumed the fruit once, yet she'd remembered that it was beneficial to him. Seeing no reaction from Zi Shang, Ye Jiuge thought that he no longer needed the Sacred Vitality Fruit.

She said, disappointed, "Other than Sacred Vitality Fruit, tell me what else can help you restore your original demonic force. I'll help you look for them in the future." Rather than sacrificing herself for Zi Shang's benefits, she would rather do her best to collect all the things he needed.

"There's no need; this is enough," said Zi Shang as he took the fruits and threw them into his mouth. The things that he wanted couldn't be obtained with Ye Jiuge's current power. The fruits would do for now.

"How can I make a spiritual weapon for identifying poison?" You should answer me after eating the fruits, thought Ye Jiuge.

"Refining weapons requires a foundation. If you think you can do it after a couple of days of learning, you're in for a surprise." Zi Shang gave her a look.

He wasn't looking down on Ye Jiuge, but she hadn't studied enough. Her ability just wasn't sufficient.

"Are there other methods besides refining weapons?" Ye Jiuge didn't want to refine a weapon either since she was busy with alchemy and had no time for refining.

"I have a way that will allow your Imperial Consort Xi to learn to identify poisons quickly."

Since Ye Jiuge had gifted him the Sacred Vitality Fruit, he gave her an idea. "In this world, there's an insect called Poison Earthworm, and it's very sensitive to poison. It will run away in fear as soon as it sees poison. You can try this."

“I’ll look for it now!”

Ye Jiuge had heard of Poison Earthworms. In alchemy, the Poison Earthworm was rarely seen alive since they were frequently used after being dried up and crushed into dust. However, some places still raised them live, so Ye Jiuge quickly went out and returned with a few. The Poison Earthworms looked very much like newly hatched bee larvae. White and fat, they lay motionless inside the wooden can.

Ye Jiuge poured one on the table, then took a piece of leper grass that looked like wheat straw and put it in front of the worm for testing. The leper grass wasn’t very poisonous, and it was colorless and tasteless. However, after eating it, a person became paralyzed. It was also a commonly used ingredient in alchemy.

The Poison Earthworm lifted its head and looked at the leper grass then slowly wriggled in the same place before turning motionless. Black lines immediately covered Ye Jiuge’s forehead. One needed to keep a close eye on this worm if one wanted to identify poisons with it. Wasn’t that funny?

“Is this the thing that you said runs away in fear when it sees poison?”

Ye Jiuge threw the leper grass on the table and wondered if Zi Shang misunderstood the meaning of the word “run.”

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“This Poison Earthworm’s level is too low. There wouldn’t be this reaction if you could find one at the third level,” Zi Shang said coolly. He had already provided a solution, yet he was still blamed for not finding the right thing.

“Are you sure that there’s a third-level Poison Earthworm in this world?” Ye Jiuge had already asked the people from the medicine store, and they said that the Poison Earthworm’s lifespan was only 15 days so that they couldn’t advance.

"I've seen it in the demonic race," Zi Shang offered mysteriously.

However, that Poison Earthworm had advanced to the third level after obtaining a remarkable opportunity. Finding one in such a lowly place as the Lei Kingdom would indeed be impossible.

"Demonic race... why didn't you just say the Celestial race?" Ye Jiuge rolled her eyes.

Zi Shang wouldn't admit that his idea was impractical. After thinking for a bit, he said, "Actually, you can use this worm in another way."

"What way?" asked Ye Jiuge.

"Make that Imperial Consort Xi swallow the worm. It will wriggle inside her stomach as soon as she encounters poison. After spitting the poison out, the chances of her being poisoned will be lessened."

Zi Shang thought this was a good idea. Although Poison Earthworms had a short lifespan, they were cheap, so it was easy to keep eating them. One every 15 days wasn't a problem.

"Do you think I can make her swallow this worm?" Ye Jiuge was feeling nauseous just thinking about it. Imperial Consort Xi wouldn't even be able to comprehend such a thing.

"I've given her a method. It's her business if she wants to use it or not," said Zi Shang indifferently. How could there be a convenient way to identify poisons while also feeling comfortable?

"Is there really no other way?" asked a reluctant Ye Jiuge.

"You could learn about refining weapons, but it would take you three years," said Zi Shang.

Three years? I'm afraid the Imperial Consort Xi will die a hundred times in three years.

"Who cares if it's disgusting or not when her life is at stake? If it's useful, then it's alright." Zi Shang disliked this compassionate side of Ye Jiuge.

"Ok," Ye Jiuge helplessly replied. She looked at the fat, white worm on the table and went straight to find Bai Songling.

"Oh? Isn't this a Poison Earthworm? Why did you bring it here?" Bai Songling doubtfully asked after recognizing the worm in Ye Jiuge's hands.

"Ahem, ahem!" After coughing twice, Ye Jiuge said, "Didn't you ask me how I would help Imperial Consort Xi identify poisons? The Poison Earthworm is the key."

"Tell me the details!" Bai Songling's expression immediately turned serious. After hearing Ye Jiuge's method, his handsome face twitched a little, and he couldn't help but ask, "Did you just say swallow?"

"Yes." Ye Jiuge nodded, her face serious.

Bai Songling swallowed and asked, "She must swallow it alive? Can't she boil it or fry it?"

"No. It won't have any effect if it's dead," replied Ye Jiuge. She had to feel the worm wriggling inside her stomach!

Bai Songling looked at the Poisonous Earthworm then back at Ye Jiuge before asking, "Do you really want me to take this to Imperial Consort Xi?" He was afraid that Imperial Consort Xi would throw this worm in his face!

Ye Jiuge silently placed the Poison Earthworm in Bai Songling's hands. Anyway, she'd done her job and came up with a solution. Convincing Imperial Consort Xi was up to them.

"Alright, I'll try to see if it really works!" Bai Songling sighed and accepted his fate. It was already good enough that Ye Jiuge had come up with a solution. They couldn't be picky.

"Brother Bai is really brave!" said Ye Jiuge admiringly. She encouraged him with a thumbs-up.

"Stop making fun of me!" Bai Songling stared at Ye Jiuge with a disgruntled expression. Although he moonlighted as a coroner, it didn't mean he could tolerate such squishy, disgusting things.

Ye Jiuge looked at Bai Songling's brave appearance, almost as if he were a martyr. She kindly comforted him, "You don't have to be so miserable. This Poison Earthworm is commonly used in medicine. You must have eaten one before, so there's no difference."

"I want to wash them. Is it alright if I use wine?" Bai Songling felt that eating them after washing them with wine wasn't quite so disgusting.

"Yes." Ye Jiuge nodded.

Actually, the Poison Earthworms had a very tenacious vitality. Killing them before their lifespan ended was very difficult, so a strong wine wouldn't do any harm. Bai Songling took out the strongest wine he could find, picked up two Poison Earthworms that he thought were the cleanest, and soaked them in the wine. Then, he swallowed them whole with his eyes closed.

Ye Jiuge looked at Bai Songling's squirming Adam's apple and couldn't help asking, "How's the

taste?”

“Like wine!” cried Bai Songling.

“Is there any uncomfortable feeling besides the taste of wine?” That was the main point.

“Well, I just feel miserable and disgusting.” Bai Songling shook his head. Who would feel good after swallowing a live worm?

“Nausea can affect the test, so let’s wait and slowly talk about something else. By the way, did the Bai family find the Fire Dragon Herb?” asked Ye Jiuge.

“No.” Bai Songling shook his head and said, “The warriors sent by the Bai family have not sent back news for a long time. I’m afraid they’ve already died on the road.” Death was really a simple thing on a thousand-mile mountain road.

“Don’t be too pessimistic. Maybe they’ve been delayed by something, and they will still report back.” Ye Jiuge led Bai Songling onto other topics. After he slowly relaxed, she secretly crumbled a bewildering medicine in her hands.

Bai Songling immediately frowned and looked around, then, doubtfully, he asked Ye Jiuge, “Do you smell anything strange?”

“No!” Ye Jiuge blinked and innocently shook her head.

“No, there’s a strange smell!” Bai Songling covered his nose and mouth, then looked at Ye Jiuge’s fingers with sharp eyes and shouted, “Have you used poison?”

“I just crushed a bewildering medicine. Did you smell it?” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrows. She thought she had to wait for the medicine’s effect to be fully released before Bai Songling would notice it. She hadn’t expected it to happen so soon.

“It stank to death.” Bai Songling immediately vomited after saying this.

Ye Jiuge moved away from Bai Songling, but she felt no sympathy at all when she saw him vomiting. Instead, she felt delighted because this tasteless and colorless medicine was the most difficult one to detect. Bai Songling’s prompt reaction showed that the Poison Earthworm was indeed very effective, which made her feel relieved. As for persuading Imperial Consort Xi, Ye Jiuge had her own ideas. “I don’t think it’s necessary to tell the truth to Imperial Consort Xi. Just put this Poison Earthworm into this empty pill and let the Imperial Consort Xi take it.”

Sometimes lying was necessary.

“Good idea.” Bai Songling wiped his mouth and nodded. This lie must be kept hidden from Imperial Consort Xi for the rest of her life.

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Translator: Nyoibo Studio Editor: Nyoibo Studio

“I should raise some worms if I want to make this Poison Earthworm into a Poison Dispersion Pill.” Ye Jiuge estimated that she would use many Poison Earthworms in the future. If she were always going to the medicine store for them, it would be tough to keep it a secret.

“The medicine stores under our Dongling Prince Mansion’s charge have a special hut for raising the Poison Earthworms. When the time comes, we’ll let them keep a good batch since it isn’t expensive,” said Bai Songling.

“Ordinary Poison Earthworms’ lifespans are too short. I want to select a group of excellent eggs and raise them myself.” Ye Jiuge wanted to raise Poison Earthworms with a longer lifespan and greater utility.

“No problem. I’ll take you to pick them right now.”

The fact that Ye Jiuge wanted to improve the Poison Earthworms was a good thing for Bai Songling. The Dongling Prince Mansion had a large medicinal manor in the suburbs that, besides raising Poison Earthworms, also grew many precious herbs. After hearing that she needed them as medicinal ingredients, Chief Chen, the person in charge of the manor, personally led Bai Songling and Ye Jiuge to the hut where they were raising Poison Earthworms.

There were huge baskets stacked inside the shed, all full of white, fat Poison Earthworms constantly being fed Poisonous Maple Leaves by four or five servants. The Poisonous Maple Leaves had a grayish color and were a little bit toxic—they were the worms’ main food. After eating the leaves, the Poison Earthworms spat out green saliva, which was the antidote for the Poisonous Maple Leaves, as well as an ingredient sold in the medicinal stores.

Looking at the numerous white, fat worms, Bai Songling immediately felt his scalp go numb and

asked Chief Chen, "Is there anyone here who has studied the Poison Earthworms? If so, let him or her pick a good batch for us."

Every specialty had its experts, so it was better to let them pick the batch rather than having Ye Jiuge personally choose her worms.

"There are." Chief Chen nodded and shouted toward the hut, "Little Mute, come here."

Hearing Chief Chen's shout, a thin boy dressed in a dark blue robe walked out from the corner of the hut. He was about 11 years old and had a thin face; his big, dark eyes resembled those of a puppet. They had a terrifying vibe.

Ye Jiuge felt like something was off as she looked at this little boy. She asked, "Who is he?"

"This is the adopted son of my distant relative. He has no name, but we all call him 'Little Mute.' Although he can't speak, he is very good at taking care of the medicinal insects. It's because of him that these Poison Earthworms are raised so well." Chief Chen was afraid that Bai Songling might accuse him of abusing his power to take care of his relative, so he quickly explained.

"Alright, let him pick some good worms," said Bai Songling indifferently.

Such a little kid, and a mute on top of that! Even if he had no skills, the manor should still raise him. After hearing Bai Songling's words, Little Mute took a basket and began to pick up the Poison Earthworms. Soon, he'd picked more than 100 worms and filled up the basket.

"That's enough," said Ye Jiuge.

She had already opened her Spiritual Eye and confirmed that the Poison Earthworms selected by Little Mute had the highest vitality and were indeed the best ones. Little Mute first looked at Chief Chen, and when he nodded, Little Mute stopped and silently put the basket in front of the visitors.

"This boy is somewhat interesting," Zi Shang's lazy voice resounded in Ye Jiuge's ears.

"What's interesting?" asked Ye Jiuge.

"You'll know after you bring him back with you." Zi Shang smiled then said no more.

Ye Jiuge had been accustomed to Zi Shang's mysterious way of talking for some time. However, only extraordinary things attracted Zi Shang's attention, and this Little Mute was no exception. Ye Jiuge made up her mind and decided to bring this Little Mute back with her, so she smiled and asked him, "Little Mute, I need someone to help me raise these Poison Earthworms. Would you like to come and help?"

Little Mute didn't accept or deny; he only stood there expressionless. It was almost as if he didn't even hear Ye Jiuge's question. Chief Chen knew that this boy was a blockhead. He was afraid that this might anger his lord, so he quickly said, "Miss, this boy is the servant of our manor. Since you want to take him away, you don't need to ask his opinion."

"I asked him, not you." Ye Jiuge was a little dissatisfied with Chief Chen's way of viewing people as objects.

"I said too much. I beg your pardon, miss." Chief Chen was so scared that he started sweating and didn't dare say another word.

Ye Jiuge looked at Little Mute and continued, "If you come and work for me, you will have food and a place to live, 12 silvers every month, two days off every month, bonuses, and holidays. If you raise some good worms, you'll even receive a reward. Also, 12 silvers are only the start."

These conditions were one hundred times better than being a servant at the manor. Even Chief Chen wanted to accept the offer for himself. He gave Little Mute an eye signal then quietly said, "Quickly accept!"

Only then did Little Mute slowly nod his head.

"Then, go back and pack your things and return with the Poison Earthworms," Ye Jiuge immediately closed the deal.

After Ye Jiuge successfully acquired Little Mute, she arranged a small courtyard behind the houses of Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling. This small courtyard had initially been part of the Dongling Prince Mansion, but it had already been given to Ye Jiuge.

"Little Mute, you will live here from now on. Someone will come and help you with your three meals per day. You need to focus on helping me raise these Poison Earthworms," Ye Jiuge said to him.

Little Mute still looked like a blockhead and did not react. Ye Jiuge didn't overthink it and continued, "I specifically called you here to raise the Poison Earthworms and increase their lifespan and detoxification effect. So, the feeding method will be different from before. First of all, these Poison Earthworms will be divided into three groups, and each group will be fed different ingredients. You should observe and compare them after they've been fed."

The ingredients Ye Jiuge had prepared were Leper Grass, Red Butterfly Piece, and Oleander. All poisonous herbs with toxicity levels higher than the Poisonous Maple Leaves.

“Why bother with all this?” asked Zi Shang.

“Don’t mind me. I like bothersome things,” replied Ye Jiuge.

Although she knew Zi Shang probably had a better method, she had no benefits to offer him in exchange for it. She could only try things herself, which was fine for now, since there wasn’t any urgency.

“I’m feeling good today, so I’ll tell you a method for free...” offered Zi Shang.

After hearing the method, Ye Jiuge doubtfully asked, “Is that method real?”

“You’ll know if it’s useful after you try it.”

“Well, trying doesn’t require any money.” Ye Jiuge looked at Little Mute, transmitted the method that Zi Shang had given her, then said, “If you can help me raise better Poison Earthworms, I’ll give you a Spiritual Beast Pill.”

Hearing this, Little Mute raised his head and looked at Ye Jiuge. A strange light flashed through his big dark eyes, making them shine like obsidian with an inexplicable sense of beauty. However, the light quickly disappeared, and his eyes returned to their usual deep darkness.

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“This boy doesn’t believe you.” There was a hint of schadenfreude in Zi Shang’s voice.

How was this possible? She looked so kind and pure that everyone must have always believed her.

Ye Jiuge put on a serious face as if she were treating a patient that had a secret disease, then solemnly said to the Little Mute, “I’m not interested in other things apart from the advanced version of the Poison Earthworms.”

The Little Mute still had that distracted look on his face, as if he didn't understand what was being said. However, Ye Jiuge had no time to talk to him. She told Bai Songling to take care of him and returned to the Zilin Residence.

Imperial Consort Xi was going to return to the palace in three days. She was planning to use common Poison Earthworms to refine the Poison Detection Pill then change them to the advanced level after waiting for the Little Mute. Refining the simple version of the Poison Detection Pill was very easy. First, you needed to refine the pill; then, you had to seal the living Poison Earthworm inside it. However, this pill had to be dissolved at a very particular time—neither too late nor too early. It had to dissolve the moment it entered the stomach so that the Poison Earthworm could settle down smoothly.

Ye Jiuge tried several kinds of materials and finally selected Erdong, Gastrodia, Golden Cypress, White Orchid, Wolfberry, Schisandra, and other herbs. Made in this way, not only would the pill dissolve well, but it would also nourish the spleen and kidney. Ye Jiuge ground the herbs into a powder, then mixed them with walnut oil and kneaded them until they became little pills. Then, she sealed up the Poison Earthworms inside. Creating a lot of pills would be useless, so Ye Jiuge stopped after she'd made ten pills.

Zi Shang sensed that Ye Jiuge wanted to sleep and suddenly coiled up around her and teased, "Didn't you forget something?"

"What did I forget?" She was completely clueless.

"You didn't refine the Spiritual Beast Pill to exchange with that little boy for the Poison Earthworms." Zi Shang had a vicious expression as he gripped Ye Jiuge's ears and continued, "Or, don't tell me that you want to profit without paying?"

"Are you sure he can make an advanced version of the Poison Earthworm?" Ye Jiuge allowed Zi Shang to pull her ears and continued to put the newly made pills into the bottle.

"Of course." Zi Shang was having a great time pinching Ye Jiuge's soft and meaty earlobes.

"Then, I will refine one now, so can you please let go of my ears?" Ye Jiuge put down the jade bottle and politely asked.

She had found that problems could be solved more quickly if she responded mildly, rather than instigating a violent confrontation.

"Alright!" Zi Shang couldn't do anything against this cute Ye Jiuge.

Although Zi Shang released Ye Jiuge's ears, he was still tightly wrapped around her. He really was

a boneless snake. Ye Jiuge was already very numb to Zi Shang, but she still carried him around and began the difficult alchemy process.

Fortunately, refining the Spiritual Beast Pill was not too challenging; everything worked well so long as the materials were thrown into the bronze cauldron. Although the bronze cauldron looked tattered and was very slow in refining the pills, it had a very high success rate. The Black Fat Rat's saliva gave it a success rate of 100%, which saved Ye Jiuge a lot of trouble.

"Why does Little Mute want this Spiritual Beast Pill? Don't tell me he is raising some kind of spiritual beast?" asked Ye Jiuge. She hadn't kicked Zi Shang away partly because she'd wanted to ask this.

"Judging by his impoverished appearance, do you think he can afford to raise a spiritual beast?" Zi Shang was sitting in his favorite position, resting his chin on Ye Jiuge's head.

"Then why does he need a Spiritual Beast Pill?" Ye Jiuge didn't understand.

This expensive Spiritual Beast Pill was just like imported cat food. Except for cat slaves that paid tribute to their cat masters, ordinary people couldn't buy it.

"Obviously, it's because he wants to eat it!" Zi Shang caressed Ye Jiuge's head and narrowed his eyes.

"He doesn't have a spiritual beast. He can't eat it himself!" said Ye Jiuge inconceivably.

Don't tell me Little Mute has a liking for strange food and likes eating Spiritual Beast Pills?

"Guess!" As usual, Zi Shang was keeping things suspenseful and waited for Ye Jiuge's conjecture.

"If you don't want to tell me, then forget it." Ye Jiuge didn't take the bait. She wasn't interested in information that didn't concern her.

"You are not cute, Little Jiuge! You are getting harder and harder to deceive."

Zi Shang's chin, which was resting on Ye Jiuge's head, had already made a small nest in her hair. He suddenly smelled a strange smell.

"How long has it been since you last washed your hair?" Zi Shang immediately got up and asked.

"Not too long!"

A month, at most! Ye Jiuge played dumb. Ever since she'd found out that Zi Shang liked to rest on

her head, she purposely didn't wash her hair so that she could suffocate him to death.

"Wash it!" Zi Shang couldn't stand his royal pillow being so dirty.

"It's my hair!" Ye Jiuge smirked inwardly: This lady likes a sour smell. What are you gonna do about it?

However, she quickly learned that there were no happy endings for those who opposed tyrants. After disagreeing about washing her hair, Ye Jiuge was dragged by Zi Shang into a public bath and drenched in cold water, causing her to regret her actions deeply. She was soaked to the skin, and her thin clothes stuck to her body, revealing her graceful curves.

"Have you forgotten that you still owe me two kisses?" Zi Shang complacently sized up Ye Jiuge's body. Personally helping her open up her chest meridians hadn't been in vain.

"Wait until I change my clothes." Ye Jiuge's past experiences told her to run away.

However, Zi Shang's hands reached out and tightly embraced her, bringing their bodies even closer.

"Let me go!" Ye Jiuge raised her foot to kick him. However, it was firmly locked in place by his tail.

"Be good." Zi Shang bowed his head and kissed Ye Jiuge's cherry mouth, pushing her to the ground.

Ye Jiuge felt as if her entire soul were being sucked away by Zi Shang's frantic and crazy kiss. The pain was suffocating, and when Zi Shang released his hands for a moment, she delivered a kick to his stomach. However, the demon did not react; Zi Shang's muscles were made of stone and incredibly hard.

"You aren't obedient!"

Zi Shang's hand slipped out and vigorously rubbed Ye Jiuge's body. He squeezed Ye Jiuge's newly-developed chest. The more she struggled and resisted, the more Zi Shang suppressed her. Their struggle even knocked down the public bath's clothes hanger.

Qing Mama happened to pass by. When she heard the sounds inside, she shouted, "Who's in there?"

Hearing Qing Mama's voice, Ye Jiuge immediately shivered. She gripped Zi Shang's shoulders and pushed him away. Zi Shang moved from her lips to her ears then bit her meaty earlobe. He was breathing right into her ear as if eating a delicious meal. This was Ye Jiuge's very sensitive

spot, and numbness spread out from her belly to her limbs. Her whole body was trembling, and even her voice became soft.

“It’s me!”

“Eldest Miss, why are you inside?” Qing Mama was surprised. Wasn’t the Eldest Miss in the Pill Production Room? When did she come out, and why did she go straight to the bath?

“My head was too itchy, and I just couldn’t bear it, so I came to wash my hair. Help me prepare the hot water, quickly,” said Ye Jiuge while she tried to block Zi Shang’s fiery hands.

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“I’ll go and prepare some hot water,” Qing Mama announced. Then, she turned and left. She felt incompetent because she hadn’t realized that Eldest Miss’s head was unbearably itchy.

“You really can’t bear the itch?” Zi Shang whispered softly into Ye Jiuge’s ear. His wicked hands began to move.

“Zi Shang, d*mn you, can’t you warn me before you’re in heat?” If Ye Jiuge had known that her unwashed hair would compel Zi Shang to touch her in such a way, she would have shaved it all off.

“My estrous cycle is coming soon, you’ll need to adapt,” Zi Shang said earnestly.

This girl’s development is too slow, when will he be able to taste her? The wait is unbearable!

“You have an estrous cycle?” Ye Jiuge’s skin crawled.

Was her tiny figure sturdy enough for Zi Shang to trample on even once?

“You’ll know when it comes.” Zi Shang was reluctant to part and he rubbed Ye

Jiuge’s head before returning into her mark.

Just then, Qing Mama and Zhen Zhu brought the hot water. Qing Mama knocked,

saying, “Eldest Miss, the hot water has been prepared.”

“Come in!” Ye Jiuge did not feel like moving.

When Qing Mama entered and saw Ye Jiuge’s scattered hair and messy clothes,

she did not overthink it. After all, who dressed perfectly in the bathroom? With Qing

Mama and Zhen Zhu’s help, Ye Jiuge finished her bath. Then, she collapsed onto

her bed, unable to move.

When she woke, it was daybreak. Ye Jiuge was stretching herself on her bed when

she suddenly remembered the Spiritual Beast Pill, which she’d produced halfway last

night. Speedily, she sprung out of bed.

Oh no, oh no! After this long, it must be destroyed.

Ye Jiuge rushed fretting into the Pill Production Room and opened the small bronze

cauldron. Nine round Spiritual Beast Pills waited inside. To her surprise, they emitted

a faint glow. They were second grade Spiritual Beast Pills.

“Pipi!” The Black Fat Rat jumped onto the small bronze cauldron. It pushed out its

chubby chest to express that this result had occurred because of its contribution.

“Well done. I shall increase your wages.” Ye Jiuge gave the Black Fat Rat a thumbs-

up.

“Pipi Jam!” The Black Fat Rat wasn’t interested in wages, it just wanted to please King Zi Shang.

“No problem,” reassured Ye Jiuge, “I’ll put in a good word for you.”

Feeling pleased, Ye Jiuge stashed the Spiritual Beast Pills in a bag together with the Poison Detection Pill, which she had produced last night. After breakfast, she went to find Bai Songling.

When Bai Songling saw Ye Jiuge, he expressed his relief, “You’re just in time.”

“What’s wrong?” Ye Jiuge asked Bai Songling curiously.

“The Little Mute locked himself in his room last night and has yet to come out. He hasn’t eaten dinner, and I have no idea what’s going on,” he replied.

Bai Songling worried that the Little Mute was employing Ye Jiuge’s secret technique for producing Poison Earthworms; he wouldn’t dare act blindly. Ye Jiuge’s eyebrow arched. Is the Little Mute really developing evolved Poison Earthworms?

“If you can, please take a look. I need to head over to the Dongling Prince Mansion, so I can’t accompany you.” Bai Songling had something urgent to attend to.

“I’ll head there now. Go ahead and do what you need to!”

After bidding farewell to Bai Songling, Ye Jiuge reached the house where the Little Mute was staying. Inside, it was quiet. On the table outside the house sat two large red wooden food boxes. Ye Jiuge opened them; the dishes inside were nutritious.

The main breakfast dish consisted of thin porridge and steamed buns, some

vegetables, corn, sweet potato, and other coarse grains. The two meat patties also smelled delicious. Bai Songling had certainly been considerate of the creature.

Ye Jiuge closed the food boxes then faked a cough. “Little Mute, what are you doing inside?”

The wooden door creaked open. The Little Mute’s snow-white face appeared behind the door. His red lips and his large black eyes gave him a frightening appearance.

Why did her skin crawl every time she saw him?

She pointed to the food on the table and said, “You must be hungry. Eat something first.”

The Little Mute did not look at the food. Instead, he gestured for Ye Jiuge to follow him inside, so she grudgingly went into the dark house with sealed windows and doors. The further she went, the more she felt that something was wrong. A strange odor reached the tip of her nose. It smelled a little like blood, but different.

She looked carefully and observed a jug in the corner of the dark house—the source of the strange smell. The Little Mute stood beside the jug and pointed to it, indicating for her to take a look. Curious, Ye Jiuge lowered her head. Suddenly, a tiny black shadow shot out of the jug and attacked her face.

Just as Ye Jiuge was about to retaliate, two of the Little Mute’s fingers clasped the black shadow. Immediately, it went limp, like a strand of noodles. The black shadow was a black Poison Earthworm, which was larger than an ordinary Poison Earthworm. Its entire body was pitch black, and it emanated vigorous vitality. It was

easy to see that this was no ordinary creature, but it also differed from a normal evolved Poison Earthworm.

The Little Mute's right hand gripped the black Poison Earthworm and offered it to Ye Jiuge. His left hand unfolded—a clear sign that he wanted to make a trade. She took out the Spiritual Beast Pill and handed it to him, then asked, “How did you develop this Poison Earthworm?”

The Little Mute received the Spiritual Beast Pill and sniffed. His eyes immediately lit up with pleasant surprise. He seemed satisfied with the Spiritual Beast Pill that Ye Jiuge had given him. Carefully, he stashed it away. Next, he drew a circle in front of his chest and explained that the circle represented a bamboo winnowing basket. He pretended to pour the contents of the bamboo winnowing basket into the jug. Ye Jiuge understood at once.

“You poured the Poison Earthworms from the winnowing basket into the jug so that they'd massacre each other, and this is the only one left?” she asked.

Since such a bloody and cruel method had developed the Poison Earthworm, it was no surprise that the thing looked unnatural. The small mute nodded and turned to leave. Outside, he opened the food boxes and began to eat. Seeing how he wolfed down his meal, the question arose in Ye Jiuge's mind: Where did this Little Mute come from?

The method he'd detailed resembled the way the Miao people had once raised their legendary venomous insects. It could only be done using a unique secret technique.

Furthermore, he'd caught the Poison Earthworm with his bare hands; this child was no ordinary orphan.

The Little Mute ignored Ye Jiuge's inquisitive gaze. After he devoured all his food, he wiped his mouth using his sleeves and returned to the dark house to rest.

"Wait!" Ye Jiuge called out. "Can you continue developing this kind of Poison Earthworm?"

The Little Mute raised his skinny fingers and showed her the pill. His meaning was clear: as long as Ye Jiuge had Spiritual Beasts Pills, she could trade for Poison Earthworms anytime.

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"I don't want this kind of Poison Earthworm. I want the kind that evolves naturally."

Although this development technique could produce strong and powerful Poison Earthworms, it had adverse side effects. Furthermore, it went against the law of nature, so it was not a long-term plan.

The Little Mute hesitated for a while. Then, he raised his hand and made a strange gesture. Ye Jiuge understood immediately.

"You mean that the natural way takes a long time?"

The Little Mute nodded.

"It's alright. It's fine if it's a slower process. As long as you can develop naturally evolved Poison Earthworms, I will trade you five Spiritual Beast Pills for one," Ye Jiuge offered generously.

The Little Mute's eyes brightened, and he nodded forcefully.

"If you need anything, feel free to tell me. I will try my best to meet all your needs."

This time, Ye Jiuge wanted to spare no effort. The Little Mute was straightforward. He tried to explain by gesturing with his hands, but he felt that it wasn't sufficient. He dipped his finger into the tea and wrote "Second-grade Blackfly Grass" on the brown table.

"You're going to use second-grade Blackfly Grass as supplementary feed for the Poison Earthworms?" Ye Jiuge asked curiously.

Blackfly Grass was a Spiritual Herb that resembled a housefly. It was usually used to treat festering wounds. Although it was a Spiritual Herb, it grew plentifully and was not expensive. She could afford it. Again, the Little Mute nodded.

"Your handwriting is quite good; who taught you to write?" Ye Jiuge asked as an afterthought. Very few commoners these days were literate. Even Chief Chen could not recognize many words, let alone an adopted orphan like the Little Mute.

Alarm flitted across the Little Mute's face. He frowned and scribbled out a line of words: "Didn't you say that you're not interested in anything besides Poison Earthworms?" The phrase had a questioning tone, as though he'd been lied to.

"You don't need to worry. I was just asking out of curiosity. Go and sleep. I'll get someone to bring the Blackfly Grass over later."

Ye Jiuge immediately stopped thinking about investigating the Little Mute. Who cares about his background so long as he can do his work?

The Little Mute watched Ye Jiuge closely for a while to ensure that she harbored no evil intentions. Then, he smoothed his knitted brows, turned around, and returned to the house.

Ye Jiuge wiped away the words on the table. Then, carrying the food boxes which the Little Mute had emptied, Ye Jiuge went to find Bai Songling to ask for some Blackfly Grass. She did not expect Bai Songling to rush up like a hurricane just as she reached the door. He dashed out and pulled her along.

"Oh no! The demonic poison in His Highness has flared up. Quick, follow me!"
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"Let's go!"

Ye Jiuge quickly threw the food boxes to one side and followed Bai Songling to the Dongling Prince Mansion. Dongfang Que lay on the majestic bed. His eyes were shut tightly, and his handsome face was deathly pale. His lips had turned icy blue, and his body was as hard as ice.

Ye Jiuge placed her fingers on Dongfang Que's wrist. It felt like touching a piece of ice. She could not feel his pulse. She opened her Spiritual Eye and observed that the Spiritual Power in his elixir field was a mess. She could vaguely make out a blurred white spider. Needless to say, the Ice Snow Spider King's poison had flared up.

"Why would the poison flare up without rhyme or reason?" Ye Jiuge asked Bai Songling.

"Today, the Emperor summoned His Highness to the palace to ask about Imperial Consort Xi. The poison suddenly flared up after he returned," Bai Songling explained through gritted teeth. "It must have been the Empress, that vicious woman. Her poisons are so mysterious that even gods and spirits cannot predict them, and His Highness was unable to protect himself from her."

"Why didn't you make His Highness consume a Poison Detection Pill before going to the palace?" Ye Jiuge asked. If Dongfang Que had swallowed the Poison Earthworm before entering the palace, it would have at least warned him.

"I forgot."

Bai Songling was so single-mindedly fixed on keeping the Poison Earthworm a secret that he had not even told Dongfang Que about it. Ye Jiuge rolled her eyes at him.

"Why didn't you forget about yourself instead?" she chided.

"Indeed. Please, stop reprimanding me. I've already kicked myself over this."

Bai Songling seemed to regret his misstep so much that he almost kneeled to beg Ye Jiuge.

"Help me remove His Highness's upper garments," Ye Jiuge instructed, preparing to apply her needle techniques to save Dongfang Que.

Without fooling around, Bai Songling removed Dongfang Que's upper garments. His skin was smooth and firm. The shape of his muscles was beautiful and attractive. It was easy to see that he had been training. Ye Jiuge took a good look in silence before she took out her Lightning Fire Needle and jabbed it into Dongfang Que's acupuncture point. However, a strange and cold energy forced the needle out.

Ye Jiuge refused to be deterred, so she injected more Spiritual Power. The Lightning Fire Needle,

glowing with faint violet light, pierced into Dongfang Que's body. Although the needle had successfully entered his body, if every jab required Spiritual Power, Ye Jiuge feared that she would not be able to last until the end of the treatment.

Seeing Ye Jiuge's expression change, Bai Songling worriedly asked, "Eldest Miss, what's wrong?"

Ye Jiuge shook her head. "His Highness's poison is too powerful; I cannot eradicate it completely." With her current Spiritual Power, she could not expel all of the poison from Dongfang Que's body.

"What should we do? The usual medicine cannot suppress His Highness's poison either!" Bai Songling exclaimed.

He looked anxiously at Dongfang Que, fearing that the prince could stop breathing at any moment. Just then, Ye Jiuge thought of something—the Little Mute's Poison Earthworm. The thing had a powerful dispelling effect on poison; it might cure Dongfang Que. Since there were currently no other solutions, she had to give it a try.

Ye Jiuge took out the jade bottle containing the Poison Earthworm and passed it to Bai Songling. She said, "Feed His Highness this."

When Bai Songling opened the bottle and saw the black-colored Poison Earthworm, a scowl immediately came across his handsome face, as though he'd taken a bite of a bitter Chinese goldthread. If he really fed it to Dongfang Que, he would make him suffer for it. Forget it, there is no other way to save him. Bai Songling pinched open Dongfang Que's mouth. Without any hesitation, he poured in the Poison Earthworm.

The Poison Earthworm followed the path from Dongfang Que's throat into his stomach. Ye Jiuge opened her Spiritual Eye and clearly observed the Poison Earthworm commence fighting with the spider's image once it entered Dongfang Que's elixir field. The two beasts were evenly matched, and neither gave way to the other. They made a mess of the Spiritual Power in Dongfang Que's elixir field.

In his unconscious state, Dongfang Que frowned. Light blue sweat droplets escaped from the pores of his body. Then, he suddenly opened his mouth and vomited a mouth of icy blue blood. Bizarrely, the blood froze as soon as it landed on the floor.

Ye Jiuge took the opportunity to apply her needle, and a few flashes of purple light landed on Dongfang Que's body. In particular, she gave forty-nine jabs to the two sides of his backbone to suppress the spider image's toxins. The Poison Earthworm seized the opportunity and counterattacked. Frantically, it engulfed the spider image.

Dongfang Que vomited a mouthful of blood for every inch of the spider image that the Poison

Earthworm engulfed. Gradually, the blood turned a pale red, then it became bright crimson. At that moment, the image of the spider was almost annihilated. Ye Jiuge gave a small sigh of relief, and her needles landed a little bit slower.

All of a sudden, the spider's image expanded tremendously. Now, it was about to engulf the Poison Earthworm instead.

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As her heart raced, Ye Jiuge's Lightning Fire Needle spewed out the last of her Spiritual Power to firmly suppress the spider's image. The Poison Earthworm took the opportunity to engulf the spider's image completely. After gobbling it up, it stopped moving. The Ice Snow Spider King was no ordinary creature; to defeat it, the Poison Earthworm had to swallow it down.

Just then, Dongfang Que vomited one last mouthful of infected blood. A dried-up Poison Earthworm was also discharged together with the bright red blood.

"Done," said Ye Jiuge.

She stashed her needle and leaned against the bed frame weakly. With trembling hands, she reached for the Spiritual Revitalization Pill in her bag. Bai Songling understood her intentions instantly. He helped her take out a Spiritual Revitalization Pill and poured her a cup of hot water. After consuming the medicinal pill, Ye Jiuge finally felt some energy in her body. However, the soreness in her right arm was so intense that she could not even lift it.

"Are you alright?" Bai Songling asked with concern. If anything were to happen to Ye Jiuge, he would not escape reproach.

"I'm fine, just a little tired."

Ye Jiuge swung her sore, painful right arm. Today's application of her needle technique had been even more tiring than last time, when she'd treated Imperial Consort Xi.

Bai Songling heaved a sigh of relief. He lowered his head to look at the Poison Earthworm's carcass and said, "Eldest Miss, has His Highness been cured of the poison?"

"The residual toxins have been forced out. However, to completely eradicate it, the Fire Dragon Herb is still required. If not, the residual poison will slowly erode his backbone like before, and he will not be able to walk."

The Poison Earthworm had only cleaned up Dongfang Que's spiritual channels; it could not clear the poison's source. Hearing Ye Jiuge's words, Bai Songling realized something important.

"You said that the residual poison will slowly erode his backbone so that he will not be able to walk. Does that mean that he can stand up and walk now?" he asked.

"Of course."

Now that there were no toxins in Dongfang Que's body, he could easily run a lap around the city. Certainly, he could stand up and walk.

"That's great! That's great!"

Bai Songling was so excited that his face flushed. He wanted nothing more than to shake Dongfang Que awake and tell him the good news.

"His Highness will wake up in about the time needed to finish a cup of tea. Find someone to tidy him up," Ye Jiuge instructed.

She looked at Dongfang Que. Half-naked and covered with blue blood, he looked like he'd been trampled on. Bai Songling called for the housekeeper, Elder He, who was waiting outside.

When Elder He heard that the residual poison in His Highness's body had been cleared and that the prince could now stand up and walk, Elder He wanted to kneel and give thanks to Ye Jiuge.

"Let's wait outside. Brother Bai, please come with me," Ye Jiuge said and signaled to Bai Songling.

"Ok."

Bai Songling also wanted to ask Ye Jiuge about the black Poison Earthworm, so he brought her to the parlor. Ye Jiuge did not keep the matter a secret; she told Bai Songling that the Little Mute had developed the Poison Earthworm but did not reveal his development technique.

“I didn’t expect such talent from the Little Mute.”

Bai Songling’s eyes lit up. He immediately decided to investigate the Little Mute once he returned. Ye Jiuge shrugged; she did not ask Bai Songling to investigate him. However, speaking of investigations, Ye Jiuge recalled something.

“Have you investigated Seventh Concubine?”

“I did. There doesn’t seem to be any problem with your residence’s Seventh Concubine. Are you sure she’s the Empress’s spy?” Bai Songling asked.

“I’m not certain.”

Ye Jiuge only suspected it. Recently, nothing had happened with Seventh Concubine, nor had she sent anyone to the Cleaning Room again. When Ye Jiuge had investigated the maid, Yuan Yang, who was sorting the residence’s rubbish, she’d found that the maid had only wanted to take things from the house to give material assistance to her old, sick mother. Yuan Yang knew nothing about Seventh Concubine.

“That’s right. Are Su Yufeng and her daughter still making a scene?” Bai Songling wanted to hear the gossip.

“Ever since the Su Clan’s Old Master collapsed, they’ve been well-behaved. They are always revolving around Father and have no time to cause me trouble,” Ye Jiuge answered unenthusiastically.

The Su Clan blamed Su Yufeng for bringing them bad fortune by leading the Old Master to the Ye Clan to raise a ruckus when he’d just exited his spiritual retreat. Without her family of origin as a shield, Su Yufeng could only concentrate on the child in her womb and Ye Yuxuan.

Ye Shanshan was also becoming cleverer. Other than practicing pill production, she’d also sought out the Crown Prince to strengthen their bond. As such, there was an unprecedented peace in the Ye Residence.

“Su Junqing has been well-behaved too,” Bai Songling said regrettably.

“He needs human blood for his Mental Manipulation, so he won’t be well-behaved for long.”

Having spoken, Ye Jiuge remembered something. "It's been a long time now; have Brother Wan and Ye Yu found the Sorcerer in Hepu County?" Ye Jiuge had been busy with Imperial Consort Xi lately; she hadn't had time to ask about the case.

"They've found some important clues. Preliminary investigations have determined that the Sorcerer is a middle-aged man. Apparently, he is dressed like a scholar and appears to be polite and courteous."

"Is there a portrait?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"They've been looking for painters to sketch one, but the portraits have not been accurate," Bai Songling answered and shook his head. It was an arduous task to sketch a portrait from only the Sorcerer's temperament and no descriptions of his facial features.

"What a pity. It would be good if the Sorcerer's portrait could be posted on the Imperial News Board."

These days, commoners had to rely on the Imperial News Board for information.

"Ziyang instructed the government offices in various counties to post a sign on their Imperial News Boards warning citizens to beware of the Sorcerer and prevent their daughters from speaking to strangers."

After the notice was posted, the people were anxious. Everyone kept a close watch on their daughters; nobody risked letting a young lady leave the house by herself.

"That's great. It won't take Brother Wan and Ye Yu long to find the Sorcerer." Ye Jiuge was very satisfied with this.

"Indeed. However, the most important thing now is the Imperial Consort's return to the palace. Since His Highness has already consumed the black Poison Earthworm, can you ask the Little Mute to grow another?"

Bai Songling had witnessed the black worm's power. If Imperial Consort Xi could consume it before returning to the palace, she would surely be able to annihilate the Empress's poisons.

"I will seek him out later and ask."

Ye Jiuge was of the same opinion—it would be better if Imperial Consort Xi could consume one.

"Can he grow a few more?" Bai Songling wanted to keep one for himself in case of an emergency.

“It's not easy to develop this thing.”

Although the Little Mute had acted like the process was effortless, Ye Jiuge still felt that the development technique was tricky.

“Come on, just let him try!” Bai Songling responded, unwilling to accept Ye Jiuge's refusal.

“Try what? The Empress's poison won't be used on you since you don't have to enter the palace. If it really comes to that, just consume a normal Poison Detection Pill.”

Ye Jiuge pressed the Poison Detection Pills, which she had produced last night, into Bai Songling's hands. Then, in passing, she told him that the Little Mute needed Blackfly Grass to develop and evolve the Poison Earthworms.

“No problem. Leave it to me,” agreed Bai Songling immediately.

It was only Blackfly Grass, after all. The herb was common enough in His Highness's medicinal stores.

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“His Highness should be waking up soon. Let's head back!” According to Ye Jiuge's estimation, the time needed to finish a cup of tea had passed.

“Let's go!” agreed Bai Songling.

As he led Ye Jiuge out of the parlor, he saw Dongfang Que and Elder He walking toward them.

“You really can walk now!” Bai Songling exclaimed excitedly. Although he'd already heard it from Ye Jiuge, he was still surprised to see Dongfang Que walking.

“Yes!” answered Dongfang Que. He nodded slightly toward Bai Songling, but his deep eyes were fixed on Ye Jiuge. He did not conceal his gratitude.

"If the Empress knew that Your Highness has profited from this setback and recovered his power, I believe she would go mad," Ye Jiuge smiled and said.

"Indeed. Imperial Consort Xi has also recovered, so these are two simultaneous happy events," Bai Songling said, nodding repeatedly.

At first, Dongfang Que had wanted to conceal his strength and bide his time by hiding his injury. But when he heard Ye Jiuge, he immediately nodded and said, "I will inform Father of this good news." He'd endured silently for so long; it was time for a counterattack.

"Then I will quickly produce two Poison Detection Pills for you and Imperial Consort Xi."

Although the toxins in Dongfang Que's body had been eliminated, eating another pill could help suppress the Ice Snow Spider King's poison.

"Yes, yes, yes. Go quickly. This matter should not be delayed." Bai Songling nodded his head repeatedly.

"What Poison Detection Pills?" Dongfang Que asked curiously.

Ye Jiuge and Bai Songling exchanged glances and mutually decided to keep the matter a secret.

"It's the spiritual pill that I told Imperial Consort Xi about last time, the one that will detect poison for her" Ye Jiuge explained. "Ok, I have something to do and have to make a move. If you have any problems, come and find me!"

She feared that Dongfang Que would continue questioning her. Like a wisp of smoke, she ran back to the residence to find the Little Mute and requested two developed Poison Earthworms. The Little Mute was very proactive about the purchase order. He immediately asked Ye Jiuge to take him back to the villa to select another batch of ordinary Poison Earthworms.

The next morning, he handed two Poison Earthworms to Ye Jiuge and received two Spiritual Beast Pills in return. Ye Jiuge squeezed the Poison Earthworms into the medicinal pills to make superior-grade Poison Detection Pills. Then, she asked Bai Songling to send them to Dongfang Que and Imperial Consort Xi. In just one night, news of Dongfang Que's recovery had spread across the entire capital. The Harem was no exception.

Fengyi Palace's main hall was brightly lit, but the court eunuchs and palace maids were not present to wait upon the Empress. A lone man, masked and in black clothes, knelt in the middle of the hall.

The Empress sat in her phoenix chair with a frosty expression. She stared coldly at her secret guard and demanded, "How is Dongfang Que, that d*mned thing, able to walk all of a sudden?"

"I'm still investigating. However, I have yet to discover who cured him," the secret guard reported in a hurry.

"Then continue investigating!" replied the Empress, coolly.

She was not very concerned about Dongfang Que. So what if he can walk? The Ice Snow Spider King's poison can't be cured so easily. She cared more about another problem.

"You said that the wretched Imperial Consort Xi has recovered her looks and the Emperor is going to the Emperor Temple to bring her back to the palace?"

"Yes. The Emperor has elected to go personally to the Emperor Temple to pray tomorrow. He will bring Imperial Consort Xi back with him," the secret guard nodded and said.

"The b*tch's looks have been restored!"

A sinister expression flitted past the Empress's composed face, revealing fine lines around her eyes. Years ago, she'd refrained from killing Imperial Consort Xi because she'd wanted to see how long the Emperor would continue doting on his consort after glimpsing her disgusting, rotting face. The Empress hadn't expected Imperial Consort Xi to be so decisive and leave the palace before her face putrefied. Since then, she'd been avoiding Emperor Xuanwu.

Now, sixteen years had passed, and the Empress had thought that Imperial Consort Xi was waiting for death to arrive in the Emperor Temple. She'd never anticipated that Imperial Consort Xi would return.

"What should we do now?" asked the secret guard cautiously.

The Emperor had kept the matter a secret, and they had not obtained this information in advance. It was too late for sabotage.

"Hmph, let her return to the palace if she wishes. I shall see how long she can run rampant," hissed the Empress.

Her hands clenched tightly into fists, and her red fingernails dug deep into her flesh. Since she'd defeated Imperial Consort Xi once, she could strike her down a second time. If that b*tch wants to throw her life away, I'll fulfill her wish. This time, I will not allow that b*tch to live.

The secret guard didn't dare speak. He kneeled in silence, awaiting the Empress's next order. The

Empress recovered her usual dignified expression and asked the secret guard, "Is there still no news of Elderly Lady Xu?"

The secret guard shook his head. "No."

The Empress frowned. Ever since Elderly Lady Xu had left the palace to hunt and kill Ye Jiuge, there had been no news from her. On the other hand, Ye Jiuge's looks were restored, and she'd returned home grandly. She'd even ganged up with someone from the Gong Clan.

In her heart, the Empress suspected that the Gong Clan had secretly helped Ye Jiuge eliminate Elderly Lady Xu. Therefore, she would not act blindly without thinking.

"Did Xu Hansen say when he will enter the capital?" the Empress asked again.

Xu Hansen was Elderly Lady Xu's superior, and he would have to take revenge on the Gong Clan by himself. The Empress did not plan on interfering.

"Lord Xu said that he is not done playing and still needs a few more days." The secret guard hesitated momentarily before he continued speaking. "When I saw Lord Xu in the Hepu County earlier, he'd killed quite a few women again. I had to burn down the relay station for the postal horses to prevent the mail from being delivered to the Justice Department."

"Brainless idiots."

The Empress hated Sorcerers who did not know how to clean up their own mess. Although the commoners they killed were as insignificant as mole crickets and ants, if this news spread, calming things down would be complicated. Even though she was angry, the Empress had to clean this mess up, no matter what.

"Bring two more people with you and rush to Hepu County. Tell Lord Xu that Elderly Lady Xu has been killed and instruct him to come to the capital at once!" ordered the Empress frostily.

"Yes!"

The secret guard nodded. He left the palace and immediately hastened to Hepu County.

It was the dead of night in Hepu County, and a remote and empty house emitted a moldy stench. The trees and plants in the courtyard had withered.

Ye Yu stood in the shadow close to the wall. As much as possible, he relaxed his body to allow the Spiritual Power to flow. His and Wan Ziyang's investigation had been nonstop. At last, they'd finally found the Sorcerer's hiding place and planned to set a trap to capture him. Since the

Sorcerer was very sensitive to Spiritual Power, Wan Ziyang was currently waiting two streets away. The plan was for Ye Yu to delay the Sorcerer there as long as possible until Wan Ziyang could arrive.

Although the Sorcerer was stronger than Elderly Lady Xu, ever since he'd started practicing the cultivation technique that Ye Jiuge had given him, Ye Yu's Invisibility had vastly improved. After refining the Yin Qi, he was better at merging into shadows. Ye Yu was confident that the Sorcerer, an Advanced Spiritual Practitioner, would not be able to discover him before it was time.

Just as Ye Yu was adjusting his position, a blue shadow sprang across the wall and landed silently in the residence's courtyard.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

Squinting, Ye Yu saw a beardless and pale scholarly-looking man dressed in a long blue robe. He looked refined and was carrying a black sack into the house. The man in blue did not light a fire. He dumped the thing in the sack onto the bed. It was a twelve-year-old girl.

She was chubby. Her skin was white and tender, and she wore a pink coat that was short and lined. She carried a small golden lock with her and was likely a Young Miss from a wealthy family.

"Hmph, you stupid commoners, do you really think that a post on the Imperial News Board will stop my practice? How ridiculous," the Sorcerer sneered.

His white, refined face twisted under the moonlight, and his pupils reflected a pale red light. Coarsely, he pulled apart the young girl's clothes and lowered his head to bite her neck. Just then, a cold light filled with a murderous intent attacked him from behind. The Sorcerer was immediately startled. Instinctively, he mobilized his Spiritual Power to protect his body. However, he was a little too slow.

The sharp and fierce attack pierced the Sorcerer's back before his Spiritual Light of Protection could be activated, causing blood to spurt out. The Sorcerer turned around suddenly. A red light glowed in his palm, ready to strike at the attacker, but nobody was there.

“A Shadow Assassin.”

The Sorcerer's expression darkened. There was a layer of red light across his eyes as he scanned the house carefully. However, he could not see anything. How can that be? His Ghost Eye is sensitive to Spiritual Power, so why can't he find the Shadow Assassin? The Sorcerer recognized that the matter was tricky. He turned around at once and grabbed the young lady.

With an evil grin, he said, “Come out now, or I will kill this little girl.”

Still, there was no movement in the empty room. The Sorcerer clutched the small girl's slender neck tightly. His eyes were glued to the corners of the house, so he failed to notice that the little girl's shadow was changing strangely.

Ye Yu had shrunk himself to fit into the little girl's shadow; secretly, he was controlling her body. Since the Sorcerer was not paying attention, Ye Yu struck his chest again using the skill, which he had learned after advancing. Puppet Strike!

The Sorcerer's full attention was on his surroundings, and he did not expect his hostage to attack. When a strange gray shadow pierced his chest, the Sorcerer was surprised. He had been scared out of his wits after being inflicted with two serious injuries, consecutively. The most frightening thing of all was that he could not find the location of the enemy. In his panic, the Sorcerer did not linger any longer. He threw the little girl aside then turned and ran.

Ye Yu staggered out of the shadows with a face as pale as a ghost. The previous two strikes had consumed all his Spiritual Power. He reached out to catch the little girl before collapsing onto the ground. It was good that she was not badly hurt.

Ye Yu placed her in the corner. With trembling hands, he took out the Spiritual Revitalization Pills, which Ye Jiuge had given him, and consumed one. Dense Spiritual Power began filling his elixir field. Ye Yu's eyes brightened. He immediately stood up to follow the trail that the Sorcerer had left behind. Although Wan Ziyang had instructed him not to act without permission, if he did not chase after the Sorcerer, it would be challenging to find him again.

When Wan Ziyang arrived at the residence, the only person left inside the house was the unconscious little girl.

“D*mn you, Ye Yu, how dare you act without permission,” he cursed.

Wan Ziyang was so angry that his expression darkened. They had already agreed that if Ye Yu were unable to keep the Sorcerer there, he would wait for him to arrive before coming up with another plan. Instead, Ye Yu had pursued the Sorcerer by himself. Ye Yu was only an

Intermediate Spiritual Practitioner; even with Ye Jiuge's Spiritual Revitalization Pills, he would not be able to kill a Sorcerer.

Wan Ziyang surveyed his surroundings carefully. He was unable to determine Ye Yu's direction, so all he could do was send the little girl ahead to the Government Office. Just then, two strange auras appeared outside. Carrying the little girl, Wan Ziyang jumped up onto the crossbeam to hide.

Two men in black leaped across the wall. Then, they respectfully addressed the house: "Lord Xu, Elderly Lady Xu has gone missing. The Empress has requested that you rush to the capital to discuss an important matter."

Lord Xu?

It seemed that the Sorcerer's last name was Xu, and he was indeed working with the Empress. Wan Ziyang's eyes narrowed. He laid the little girl carefully on the crossbeam and adjusted his Spiritual Power in preparation for an attack.

The two men in black did not understand why Lord Xu had not replied to them. Just as they were prepared to enter the house to check, two red spots flew out and hit their acupuncture points.

Wan Ziyang sprang out of the house only to realize that the two men in black had already committed suicide by crushing the poison in their teeth when they realized that something was wrong.

"The Empress's method is indeed vicious," said Wan Ziyang.

Carefully, Wan Ziyang examined the two men. Although he could not find any clues, he deduced from their words that the Sorcerer, whose last name was Xu, must have been headed for the capital. After quickly sending the little girl to the Government Office, Wan Ziyang rushed back to the capital to find Ye Jiuge.

At that exact moment, Ye Jiuge was making Bones Nourishment Pills for Ye Ruyi in the Zilin Residence. Since her body was developing, the little girl had been experiencing pain in her bones lately. Hence, Ye Jiuge had planned to produce some Bones Nourishment Pills as a supplement for Ye Ruyi.

Just as she finished producing the pills, she was surprised to receive Wan Ziyang's urgent notice that Ye Yu had disappeared. She immediately rushed to the Yuwu Teahouse without even changing her clothes. Wan Ziyang was seated there, covered in dust, and his face was filled with exhaustion. The patch below his eyes was blue-black colored, and he looked as though he had rushed back from Hepu County. Bai Songling's expression was solemn as he sat beside him.

“How did Ye Yu disappear?” Ye Jiuge asked as soon as she had taken a seat.

“After we found the Sorcerer’s hiding place, we agreed to deal with him together. I did not expect Ye Yu to chase after him without my permission.” Wan Ziyang’s eyebrows knitted into a frown.

“Could he have been kidnapped by the Sorcerer?” That was what worried Ye Jiuge.

“No, none of Ye Yu’s blood was in the house, only the Sorcerer’s blood was found. Ye Yu activated his secret technique twice against the Sorcerer. Then, after eating the Spiritual Revitalization Pills, he pursued the Sorcerer, despite the pain.”

Wan Ziyang described the scene and told them about the two soldiers trained to complete missions without a care for their own lives, whom the Empress had sent.

When Ye Jiuge heard that Ye Yu was safe, she thought of another question. “Why is the Empress in such a hurry to find the Sorcerer with the last name Xu?”

“What else can the Empress be up to, other than harming people? Wait. It’s logical that Ye Yu’s Spiritual Power would have been completely depleted after he used his secret technique twice, so how did he have the strength to chase after the Sorcerer?” Bai Songling asked curiously.

An ordinary Spiritual Revitalization Pill could only recover about thirty percent of a person’s Spiritual Power. Is the Spiritual Revitalization Pill that Ye Yu consumed very special?

Wan Ziyang nodded and replied, “Although the Spiritual Revitalization Pill that Eldest Miss Ye produced was only second-grade, its effects are comparable to third-grade Spiritual Pills.”

However, the Spiritual Revitalization Pill was only capable of replenishing Spiritual Power quickly. It could not restore the three energies, which was precisely why Wan Ziyang was so worried about Ye Yu.

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"How many Spiritual Revitalization Pills do you have left?" Bai Songling asked Wan Ziyang. He remembered that Ye Jiuge had given them two bottles of pills, but Wan Ziyang had consumed them all.

"Is now the time to ask this?" Wan Ziyang gave Bai Songling an annoyed look. What did Ye Jiuge think about this miser who was asking about Spiritual Revitalization Pills while Ye Yu's situation was still unknown?

Bai Songling smiled awkwardly and said, "I am not worried that the Spiritual Revitalization Pills Ye Yu took were not strong enough. I just want you to take out one pill and look at it."

"You don't have to worry about this. The pills that I refine have no problems," Ye Jiuge said, waving her hand. Then, she continued, "since Ye Yu was not injured, it should be no big deal, later I'll use the secret signal to contact him and see." She was very confident about Ye Yu's defensive abilities.

"That's good." Apart from Ye Yu's safety, Wan Ziyang was also worried that Ye Jiuge would blame him. After all, he felt very guilty because he'd borrowed Ye Yu and hadn't returned him to Ye Jiuge intact.

"If that's all, then I'll go back first," Ye Jiuge said candidly, but she was still anxious about Ye Yu in her heart.

"We have nothing more here. Go back and let us know if you find out anything about Ye Yu." Although Bai Songling still had many things to ask her, he didn't dare to take any more of her time after seeing her worried expression.

After Ye Jiuge left the Yuwu Teahouse, she returned to the Zilin Residence, changed into night clothes, then went out again and began searching for Ye Yu. According to Wan Ziyang, the Sorcerer with the last name Xu had most likely fled back to the Capital, probably searching for the Empress.

Ye Jiuge looked around the imperial palace but did not find the Ye Clan's secret signal. She did, however, find a clue at the city's entrance. She followed the secret signal that Ye Yu had left behind and unexpectedly arrived in the vicinity of the Su Clan's mansion. She wondered: How did this fellow arrive here? Is he chasing that Sorcerer, or has he come to look for Su Junqing?

Ye Jiuge looked up and saw red lanterns hanging outside the Su Clan's mansion and bright candle lights illuminating the entrance. Although it was late, there were still many carriages parked in front of the gate, all of which belonged to people who had come to visit the Su Clan's Old Master.

Although Old Master Su was still unconscious, his cultivation base as a Spiritual Practitioner was still intact, so people who wanted to attach themselves to the Su Clan's thigh continued to visit. They brought all sorts of things with them—spiritual medicines, pills, home remedies, and Jianghu traveling doctors. Speaking of which, Old Master Su had been unconscious for a while now, and Ye Jiuge had not yet visited him.

She hid herself then quickly climbed over the wall and entered the Su Clan's residence. She glanced around and found a small building in the middle with the brightest lights. Many servants were going in and out of it. Most likely, this was the place where some important person lived, so she quietly headed that way. Ye Jiuge's guess was spot on; this place was Old Master Su's residence.

Right now, Old Master Su was lying on the bed with his eyes closed. His appearance was quite healthy, and he looked like he was in a deep sleep. The clansmen were gathered around his bed, personally serving him, showcasing their filial piety. Su Junqing was also nearby, and a worried look was plastered on his handsome face.

Ye Jiuge hid outside and when she saw the unconscious Old Master Su, she couldn't help asking Zi Shang in her heart, "How do you plan to remove the seal from his body?"

"Why? Do you feel sorry for him?" asked Zi Shang with a half-smile.

"Feel sorry my a*s!" Ye Jiuge was looking forward to the old b*stard's death.

"Then why do you ask?" Zi Shang couldn't understand why Ye Jiuge was never grateful when he helped her vent her anger.

"I'm worried that you will expose yourself, alright?" Ye Jiuge rolled her eyes.

Although Zi Shang always used his demonic power covertly, there was no guarantee that an expert couldn't discover it.

"Worry about yourself!" Zi Shang's voice was utterly cold. This ignorant fool questioned his ability every single day.

"What do you mean?" Ye Jiuge wanted to ask more, but unfortunately, Zi Shang was no longer paying any attention to her.

At that moment, a stout middle-aged man anxiously said to Su Junqing, "Junqing, your grandfather has been asleep for so long that even the palace doctors can't find any clues. What should we do?"

The middle-aged man was Su Junqing's father, Su Yongming. Although he was the Su Clan's eldest son, his aptitude wasn't outstanding. His character was also mediocre. If he had not given birth to such an exceptional son as Su Junqing, he would have been suppressed by his brothers and sisters to the point that he wouldn't have been able to lift his head.

"Father, you don't have to worry. The doctors have already seen grandfather and said that there isn't anything majorly wrong with him and that he will wake up after a while!" Su Junqing still had the appearance of a modest young master.

"I hope so!" Su Yongming wrinkled his face and looked even older than Old Master Su, who was lying on the bed. He looked exactly like a worthless man.

A trace of contempt and disgust flashed across Su Junqing's face, but he quickly closed his eyes to cover it, then left the residence under the pretext of entertaining the guests. After arriving at an empty place, his gentle and handsome face immediately became very ferocious and ugly, and he smashed a stone in the rock garden with his fist. He thought to himself, Ever since grandfather has become unconscious, the entire Su Clan has been in a mess. His worthless father can't do anything but sigh.

Although the Su Clan still looked like a group of beautiful flowers, everything was dangerous. Outsiders were checking up on Old Master Su's condition under the pretext of visiting him. If the Su Clan showed even a little weakness, strangers would immediately rush in and try to crush them.

Although Su Junqing had said to the public that his grandfather had advanced too fast and was dormant because he needed to adjust his breathing, he knew that Dongfang Que was manipulating public opinion in secret. They'd said that the Su Clan coveted Yun Tianwei's property and wanted to kill Ye Jiuge. That's why they'd angered Yun Tianwei's friends and Old Master Su suffered a sneak attack.

Now, many people were saying that the Su Clan had deserved this misfortune, and they were just waiting for the family to appear so they could start mocking them. Su Junqing's chest heaved strongly. He felt upside down just thinking of those mocking words. However, he quickly calmed down. There was no point in thinking about these things now. He must become stronger as soon as possible so that no one would dare to offend his Su Clan.

Su Junqing hurried towards a remote room in the Su Clan's residence.

Ye Jiuge secretly followed behind him, jumped on the roof, then uncovered the tiles. She looked down and discovered a very simple room with no extraordinary arrangements.

When Su Junqing entered, he lifted a lotus flower painting from the wall and firmly pressed down the brick behind it, which caused the wall to rotate, revealing a dark room. The faint lights coming from it fell on Su Junqing and stretched his shadow long.

Ye Jiuge's eyes narrowed. She thought that Su Junqing's shadow seemed quite strange, so she opened her Spiritual Eye and almost cursed immediately. Ye Yu, that audacious guy, was playing with fire. He was actually hiding in Su Junqing's shadow!

Su Junqing was not expecting anyone to hide in his shadow. But, if he looked closely, he would discover it immediately.

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At that moment, Su Junqing didn't notice anything suspicious, so he entered the secret room. Ye Yu, who was hiding in his shadow, followed behind him.

Ye Jiuge looked at the secret room and felt her heart leap into her throat. The Sorcerer was most likely inside. If Su Junqing talked with him about how he'd become injured, he could guess Ye Yu's special ability, which could endanger him. She paced back and forth, unsure of what to do. If she rushed in right now, she might miss out on learning some secrets.

In the end, she gave Ye Yu as long as it took an incense stick to burn, which was also how long Ye Yu could remain invisible. If he did not come out after that amount of time had passed, she would break in to save him. However, now was not the wisest moment to confront Su Junqing head-on. It was better to use gentler methods.

Meanwhile, as she waited for Ye Yu's allotted time to run out, Ye Jiuge snuck into Old Master Su's residence to make some arrangements before returning to the spot where they'd parted. When Ye Jiuge was considering whether or not to rush in after Ye Yu, the door to the dark room suddenly opened, and Su Junqing stepped out with the faint smell of blood on him.

Ye Yu was still in his shadow, and he didn't look so good. Ye Jiuge could sense that Ye Yu's invisibility was about to wear off, and he was in danger of being discovered at any moment. Su

Junqing also looked as though he'd noticed something strange, and his pace began to slow. Although the expression on his face did not change, his eyes were vigilant.

Meanwhile, a lot of noises were heard from the Su Clan, "Fire! Fire!!" Along with those voices, a somewhat terrifying flame erupted from Old Master Su's residence. Su Junqing's face immediately changed, and he rushed toward Old Master Su's residence, afraid that outsiders were harming the Su Clan's last pillar. Ye Yu took this opportunity to escape from Su Junqing's shadow.

"Let's go!" Ye Jiuge jumped down from the house, took Ye Yu's hand, and rushed out of the Su Clan's residence as fast as possible.

After Su Junqing arrived at Old Master Su's residence, he discovered that the fire was just a bluff. Only a corner of the room had been set alight, and servants had already extinguished the flames. Suddenly, he had a bad feeling. Immediately, he returned to the remote room and thoroughly searched it, but he couldn't find anything unusual.

After hesitating for a moment, he took out a small porcelain vase from his chest and blew it on the floor. The red powder fell to the ground and revealed two pairs of footprints, one large and one small. Obviously, a man and a woman had just been here a moment ago. The footprints were following each other, as if the two people were walking one after the other. One set of footprints was his, while the other definitely belonged to someone hiding in his shadow.

"Shadow Assassin?" Su Junqing narrowed his eyes and said to himself, "I didn't expect Ye Yu to advance so fast. I looked down on him, but he dared to come to me and look for trouble. He's really courting death."

Ye Yu had seen what had transpired in that dark room a moment ago, so he had to be killed alongside his partner, that woman who'd led him away.

After Ye Jiuge and Ye Yu left the Su Clan, she wanted to take Ye Yu back to Zilin Residence, but he refused.

"Eldest Miss, it's more convenient if we go to my place, not yours."

Ye Yu took her to a small courtyard on North Main Street. He was the only one living there, so it was indeed more convenient than going to the Ye Mansion.

When Ye Jiuge and Ye Yu returned to his place, she fiercely scolded him, "You dared to sneak into the Su Clan's residence! Do you have a death wish? What if Su Junqing had discovered you?"

Su Junqing had once had a close relationship with Ye Yu's older sister. Maybe she'd told him about the advancements of the Ye Clan's methods. If so, it wouldn't be too hard to find out that Ye

Yu had become a Shadow Assassin.

"I will be careful next time," said Ye Yu weakly.

His face was pale, and his eyes were black as if he had been beaten. His body was on the verge of collapse, and it was obvious that his spirit was exhausted.

Ye Jiuge couldn't bear to scold him again after seeing him like this, so she took out a bottle of Vitality Strengthening Pill and stuffed it into his mouth, saying, "Eat, quickly."

Ye Yu silently took the jade bottle in his hands. After taking the pills, his entire body felt rejuvenated, and the sensation of exhaustion began to fade. He thought: Eldest Miss' pills are always good and must be treasured.

When Ye Jiuge saw that Ye Yu had recovered, she asked, "What did you see when you followed Su Junqing into the secret room?"

Ye Yu looked grim as he said slowly, "I saw the Sorcerer Xu Hansen's corpse."

"Corpse? What do you mean? Did you kill that Sorcerer?" Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrow and asked.

Xu Hansen was an Advanced Spiritual Practitioner; Ye Yu couldn't have killed him even in a sneak attack.

"I didn't. Su Junqing killed him," Ye Yu said one word at a time.

"Su Junqing?" Ye Jiuge was startled and asked, "Why did he kill Xu Hansen? Weren't they partners?"

"They were partners. Xu Hansen was Su Junqing's older brother. Even so, after seeing that his brother was injured, Su Junqing did not help him. Instead, he killed him."

Ye Yu's stomach began to turn upside down thinking about Su Junqing's bloodsucking just moments ago. Who would have thought that such a handsome man was a ruthless and crazy monster?

"Isn't Su Junqing afraid of being found out by his comrades for killing one of them?"

Ye Jiuge felt that this was a little inconceivable. Although the Sorcerers were evil, they wouldn't go as far as killing each other.

"Judging by Su Junqing's appearance, he plans to blame someone else for this crime. And this

someone else is obviously Wan Ziyang.”

“Su Junqing’s cunning really is exorbitant. If he pulls it off, not only would he improve his cultivation base, but he could also remove Wan Ziyang.” Ye Jiuge understood more about Su Junqing’s shamelessness.

“Su Junqing must not be allowed to succeed,” said Ye Yu while grinding his teeth.

“It’s really too difficult since Xu Hansen has died, and dead people don’t talk.” Ye Jiuge shook her head.

Xu Hansen’s comrades would definitely believe Su Junqing. Ye Yu was silent. He suddenly felt that he and Wan Ziyang’s ambush of Xu Hansen had just been a joke. He didn’t interrogate anyone. Instead, he’d treated Su Junqing to a huge meal.

“It’s not your fault, so don’t think too much about it. Who would’ve thought that Su Junqing was so monstrous?” Ye Jiuge saw that Ye Yu’s mood was down, so she comforted him, “Anyway, Xu Hansen died, so at least there’s one less evil person out there.”

“Yes.” Now, only Ye Yu could be comforted like this.

Compared with Su Junqing, who did things in secret, Xu Hansen had no scruples about killing people. He definitely couldn’t be allowed to live.

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Translator: Nyoibo Studio Editor: Nyoibo Studio

“Brother Wan was very angry that you left the team and kept chasing Su Junqing by yourself. You should apologize to him when you can. Remember, next time, you should not act without permission,” said Ye Jiuge. She didn’t want this to create a rift between Wan Ziyang and Ye Yu.

“I’ll look for Wan Ziyang later,” Ye Yu said.

He knew he was at fault for acting without permission. He would certainly be worried if the

roles were reversed, and Wan Ziyang kept pursuing Su Junqing by himself without telling him a word.

“Also, you should stay away from Su Junqing for the time being. You can’t get close to him, by any means. Do you understand?” warned Ye Jiuge.

It would be very dangerous for Ye Yu to follow Su Junqing now that he’d killed his older brother and greatly increased his cultivation. Ye Yu closed his eyes and remained silent. It was impossible for him to stay away from Su Junqing. That monster provided the only clues for finding his older sister.

Ye Jiuge changed the subject after seeing Ye Yu’s expression and asked, “By the way, where is the Ye Clan’s treasure map now?”

Although according to their initial agreement, she should’ve received the treasure map after helping him deal with the Su Clan, the present situation demonstrated that the Su Clan, the Empress, and the Sorcerers had all come for the treasure map. It would be better if she were the one holding it. She would have to deal with the Su Clan anyway, so it made sense to get paid in advance.

“It’s on me.”

Without hesitation, Ye Yu pulled out a red string from around his neck, which had a black bag hanging from it. He knew that he could not keep the treasure map, so it was better to give it to Ye Jiuge than let the Su Clan and the Crown Prince steal it. Even if she could not get rid of the Su Clan, she was still worthy of receiving this treasure map for all the help that she had given him.

Ye Jiuge took the red string, opened the bag, and found a bronze key inside. It was carved with exquisite patterns that looked like decorations.

Zeng! Ye Jiuge held the key and twisted it, which divided it into two parts. The top of the key was attached to a thin blade that flashed with a cold light, while the bottom part contained a silk fabric that was as thin as a cicada’s wings. Ye Jiuge examined the silk fabric and saw that there were mountains and rivers above it. It was clearly a map.

Then, Zi Shang piped up casually, “It’s a fake.”

Fake? How could it be a fake? Ye Jiuge scrutinized every detail of Ye Yu’s map, the ink and other aspects, and thought that it was the same as the Crown Prince’s map.

“You think I’m lying to you?” Zi Shang’s voice was a little cold.

"You wouldn't lie to me," Ye Jiuge immediately replied.

However, she didn't think that Ye Yu would lie to her either, so it was very likely that he didn't know that this treasure map was fake. Ye Jiuge thought about it for a moment, then she raised her head and looked at Ye Yu.

"This treasure map is fake," said Ye Yu.

"Why did you give me a fake map?" Ye Jiuge put the silk fabric inside the key and threw it back to Ye Yu.

"Don't be angry, Eldest Miss." Ye Yu picked up the bronze key and said in a low voice, "the fake map inside this key is a smoke bomb that's used by our clan to deceive outsiders. The real map is actually inside my flesh."

"If it is dangerous to take it out, then forget about it." Ye Jiuge felt uncomfortable as soon as she heard the word 'flesh.'

"It's not dangerous."

Ye Yu smiled then twisted the key again and cut open his arm with the thin blade on the top of the key. Next, he dug out a sealed amber slip and gave it to Ye Jiuge. Ye Jiuge didn't accept it; she just kept staring at Ye Yu's wound.

"A little injury like this is nothing." He'd cut himself quickly and accurately, so he hadn't shed much blood.

Ye Jiuge took the amber slip, crushed it, then took out the silk fabric from inside. This time, Zi Shang did not make any noise, so this had to be the real thing. In fact, this map was very similar to the fake map. Only the silk was different. The fake map had a darker color, but this couldn't be known without checking both of them.

"Actually, our clan has two treasure maps. One is mine and the other is my sister's. Only the thin blade of the bronze key can be used to dig out the amber slip. If you try to take it out in other ways, the amber will dissolve and destroy the treasure map," explained Ye Yu.

His father had told him this right before he died on the night when the Ye Clan was exterminated. Before that, neither he nor his sister had known that treasure maps were hidden inside their bodies.

"Hahaha. I wonder if Su Junqing would regret sending off Ye Yunzhi if he had known that the treasure map he deeply desired was inside her," Ye Jiuge mocked.

"I'm sure my older sister wants to tell him this, personally." A dark light flashed in Ye Yu's eyes.

"Don't worry; your sister will have the opportunity." Ye Jiuge patted Ye Yu on the shoulder and put away the map.

"Hmm." Ye Yu nodded.

He put the fake map back in the bronze key and was about to hang it around his neck, but Ye Jiuge suddenly grasped the fake and said, "Wait, I have a good idea."

"What?" asked Ye Yu.

"Later, give this fake map to Wan Ziyang and tell him that you took it from the Sorcerer Xu Hansen. Then, let him offer it as a tribute to the Emperor," Ye Jiuge whispered into Ye Yu's ear.

Ye Yu's eyes brightened. Letting Emperor Xuanwu deal with the Sorcerers was a good idea indeed.

"Remember what I said, stay away from Su Junqing so as not to frighten the enemy," Ye Jiuge once again warned Ye Yu.

"I know." Ye Yu nodded.

"Good. It's getting late, so I'll go back. Make sure you rest well, then go to Wan Ziyang!" said Ye Jiuge as she got up.

"Be careful on the road, Eldest Miss!"

Ye Yu wanted to escort Ye Jiuge home, but she refused.

"I can walk on my own. You don't have to accompany me. All you have to do is recuperate." After she finished talking, she quickened her pace and left.

Ye Yu returned to his room. He sat at the table thinking rather than going to sleep. The red mole between his eyebrows shone even more brightly due to the yellow light brushing against his face. Actually, he'd also heard something about Su Junqing and Xu Hansen in the secret room. They'd come from an evil cult called the 'Bloodthirsty Sect,' which was located in a mountain 3,000 miles to the west. Ye Yu's sister had been given as a tribute to them by Su Junqing.

Ye Yu lifted his eyes and gazed at the dark night sky. He decided that, after helping Ye Jiuge, he would go there and look for clues about his sister.

Meanwhile, 3,000 miles away from the Capital, on the Bloodcloud Peak, in an eerie cave that was full of small black lamps...

The lamps had no oil inside them, but a dark-red candle was on top. In that exact moment, a small lamp, under which the name of Xu Hansen was written, was suddenly extinguished.

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Translator: Nyoui-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoui-Bo Studio

“F*ck, Elder Xu actually died.”

The short man saw that Xu Hansen’s soul lamp was extinguished, and his face immediately changed as he carried it through multiple dark tunnels before arriving at the entrance of a vast cavern.

Two guards stood at the entrance. Seeing him in such a hurry, they laughed, “Shou Hou, why are you in such a hurry?”

“This is an important matter. Elder Xu’s soul lamp was extinguished.” A worried expression was plastered on Shou Hou’s face.

The two guards looked at each other. Both of their faces were dignified. Then, one of them said, “Wait here. I’ll go and report this to the Patriarch.”

“Ok.” Shou Hou waited right where he stood.

After some time, the guard returned and allowed Shou Hou to enter the Patriarch’s cavern, after adjusting his robe. Upon entering, he saw how luxurious the place was. A red carpet covered the floor, and the room was full of fine wine and food while glowing pearls hung from the ceiling.

In the place of honor, there was a large sofa on which peacefully reclined a beautiful woman in a red robe. On top of her body lay a dry, thin old man. His head was buried in the woman’s neck and he was greedily sucking her blood.

Shou Hou couldn't help but swallow hard after smelling the bloody stench. He raised his head and sneakily looked at the red-robed woman. Her skin was white as jade, and she had delicate facial features, long eyelashes like a small fan, and a red mole between her eyebrows, which made her even more alluring.

After the old man dressed in black had sucked enough blood, he got up and looked up at Shou Hou. His face was skinny, like a dried corpse, with sunken eyes that contained unimaginable viciousness. He reeked of blood. This man was the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, an advanced Spiritual Master, who only had one step to go before becoming a Great Spiritual Master. He was also the most horrifying being on this mountain.

He'd established the Bloodthirsty Sect by relying on his Mental Manipulation and Blood Spirit Arts, then accepted many disciples and taught them the evil arts so that they could go out searching for women with Spiritual Roots to make his blood slaves.

The red-robed woman, who just had her blood sucked, pulled her skirt, and knelt. She curled up at the old man's feet with her head resting on his thigh, just like a spoiled cat. The old man complacently petted the woman's soft hair then looked up at Shou Hou and asked, "What happened?"

"Reporting back, sir, Xu Hansen's soul lamp was extinguished." Shou Hou stepped forward and respectfully placed the soul lamp on the table in front of Bloodthirsty Patriarch.

Bloodthirsty Patriarch picked up the soul lamp and glanced at it. His skinny, dried-up face flashed a cruel smile as he said coldly, "The Capital sure has a lot of talents if two of my disciples have been killed consecutively."

He put down the soul lamp and asked, "What did Su Junqing say?"

"Reporting back, sir, Su Junqing wrote that several Spiritual Practitioners from the Justice Department found him collecting virgins and wouldn't let him go. He also said that Yun Tianwei's granddaughter, Ye Jiuge, kept opposing him so he wanted to ask the Patriarch to send some disciples with a profound cultivation base to help him," Shou Hou respectfully explained.

"Humph, Su Junqing really is trash. He couldn't even deal with a few Spiritual Practitioners," Bloodthirsty Patriarch snorted.

"The Patriarch is right, however Su Junqing is all alone cultivating outside and can't receive your instructions, so it's normal for his cultivation base to be lacking. Even so, please forgive him for his filial piety, Patriarch. The status of his Su Clan is still very beneficial for our sect," Shou Hou flattered.

Although the Patriarch had enjoyed all the women with Spiritual Roots whom Su Junqing had sent, other girls also tasted good. After hearing of Su Junqing's filial piety, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch couldn't help but look down at that red-robed beauty and reveal a complacent expression. Then, he ordered, "Fine, call Liu Yunfei."

"Patriarch wants to send out senior sister Liu Yunfei?" Shou Hou was startled. Although both he and Liu Yunfei were advanced Spiritual Practitioners, she couldn't be provoked!

Most of the Bloodthirsty Sect's disciples were men who usually cultivated using women's blood—their favorites were women with Spiritual Roots. Since Liu Yunfei, a woman, could stand tall in this kind of sect, her ability was obvious.

"That's right. Isn't Su Junqing looking for someone with a profound cultivation base? No one is more suitable than Liu Yunfei." Bloodthirsty Patriarch waved then said, "Go, quickly."

"Yes." Shou Hou quickly withdrew.

After a short time, a girl in a pink robe arrived. She looked around 16 years-old and had a cute appearance, with two dimples that appeared on her cheeks when she smiled. She looked naive as she walked over, skipping around.

"What's the Patriarch desire in calling me here?" Liu Yunfei blinked her big eyes and asked.

"Xu Hansen and Elderly Lady Xu's soul lamps were extinguished. You need to go to the Capital to find their killers and help Su Junqing finish the mission I told you about before. Also, you need to bring back the girl named Ye Jiuge. Yun Tianwei's granddaughter must taste very good."

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch revealed a sinister expression, and he began stroking the red-robed girl much more forcefully.

"Meow!" The red-robed woman suddenly let out a cat cry, then gave the Patriarch a few unhappy hisses before turning away.

"It's my fault, little baby. I was too distracted and accidentally hurt my little baby." The Bloodthirsty Patriarch did not want her to get upset because she had been hit. He went to coax the red-robed woman with a smile on his face.

The red-robed woman slowly turned back and rested her head again on the Patriarch's thigh, then looked at Liu Yunfei with watery eyes. Liu Yunfei looked at the red mole between the woman's eyebrows. He suddenly pointed at her and said to the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, "Can you give her to me after I bring back this Ye Jiuge?"

“Do you want her?” he strangely asked.

“Yes, I like her face and that red mole. I want her skin to add to my collection.” Liu Yunfei revealed an innocent smile.

“Oh, you like to collect the skin of beauties.” Bloodthirsty Patriarch Old Zu revealed a doting smile, then nodded and said, “after you return from your mission, I’ll give her to you. By that time, I should have sucked all her spiritual blood dry.”

“No, if you suck her dry, she’ll turn into trash and I wouldn’t be able to skin anything.” Liu Yunfei pouted then put one leg in front of the other. A wanton expression appeared on her face.

“Alright, alright, alright. I won’t suck her dry. I’ll leave her for you.” Bloodthirsty Patriarch was very tolerant with capable subordinates.

“Good, then it’s settled.” Liu Yunfei bowed slightly then blinked at the beautiful red-robed woman and smiled. “Just obediently wait for my return.”

From start to finish, the red-robed woman hadn’t said a word. It was as if she could not understand what they were saying. Her watery eyes had no luster to them. Liu Yunfei did not care about this and she waved at her as she skipped out of the cavern.

She looked in the Lei Kingdom’s direction and revealed a bloodthirsty smile, then eerily said, “Ye Jiuge, right? I want to see what skills you have.”

Then, her silhouette disappeared in a flash.

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Translator: Nyoibo Studio Editor: Nyoibo Studio

When Ye Jiuge returned to the Zilin Residence, it was already dawn. She slept until noon, not knowing that, in that very moment, a monstrous woman was thinking about her.

After Qing Mama entered Ye Jiuge's room, she couldn't help but mutter, "Eldest Miss, what business is so important that it requires you to go out late at night?"

"Obviously, it's important, so you don't need to ask about it." Ye Jiuge didn't want to bring any external business into the Zilin Residence. As long as Qing Mama helped her manage the household, that was enough.

"Alright!" Seeing that Eldest Miss didn't want to talk about it, Qing Mama changed the subject. "Eldest Miss, Yu Die and Hua Die have good potential, and I plan on letting them officially embark on the cultivation road. I want to buy them the Bone Opening Medicine. Can you recommend which grade is best?"

The Bone Opening Medicine was the first step in cultivation. It made the practitioners' meridians more stable, allowing them to get better results with less effort. However, Bone Opening Medicine was expensive. Usually, it was bought by wealthy families for training their subordinates; it was a great thing if someone could afford to buy a medium-grade Bone Opening Medicine.

"You don't need to buy it; I'll give it to them."

Ye Jiuge had a good impression of the two young maids. Qing Mama was old, and Ye Jiuge wanted to let her enjoy her later years. Although the young maids did not have Spiritual Roots, it would be great if they could carefully cultivate and be helpful to Qing Mama.

"In that case, I shall thank you on their behalf." Qing Mama's face was full of smiles.

In her mind, Ye Jiuge was an even better Alchemist than the Old Master. Obtaining Bone Opening Medicine personally made by her was an enormous blessing.

"First, you need to call over Hua Die and Yu Die so I can inspect their bones." Ye Jiuge had to inspect their bones before giving them the Bone Opening Medicine.

"Yes, I'll go fetch them at once." Qing Mama excitedly went and called Yu Die and Hua Die.

After finding out that the Eldest Miss was personally making Bone Opening Medicine for them, the young maids couldn't hide the excitement on their small faces. Then, Ye Jiuge inspected their bones and immediately understood the situation.

The materials needed for the Bone Opening Medicine were elementary. They were all herbs used for tempering the bones and muscles, and the only difference was the dosage used as well as the pairing of some of the herbs. For example, Hua Die had a small skeleton but many muscles, so she needed very little Baizhu, which had to be paired up with Tree Peony Root so her bone density could increase. Yu Die was the opposite; she needed a lot of Baizhu, which had to be

paired up with Azure Bamboo Leaves so that her muscle strength could increase.

Ye Jiuge had no idea that this preliminary examination almost killed the two young maids. She made up her mind, then quickly wrote two formulas and gave them to Qing Mama so that she could pick up the medicinal herbs.

Qing Mama happily received the formulas and planned to pick up the herbs later. She would then find a good day for opening the girls' bones.

Due to the discussion they'd had last night, Ye Jiuge secretly came to Ye Yu's house. However, he was not there. Instead, she found Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling.

"Is Eldest Miss looking for Ye Yu?" asked Bai Songling.

"Yes, where did he go?" curiously asked Ye Jiuge.

"I don't know. We are also waiting for him." Bai Songling rolled his eyes, then smiling, said to Ye Jiuge, "Did you know that Ye Yu came looking for us last night and brought a treasure map?"

"I do. In fact, I made him do it." Ye Jiuge had a smile on her face too and continued, "A person's talent can arouse the envy of others. Ye Yu and I aren't people of great importance, so it's better if this treasure map is gifted to the Emperor."

Bai Songling did not believe Ye Jiuge's nonsense one bit. If she wasn't a person of great importance, then who was?

Wan Ziyang said flatly, "I handed over the treasure map captured from Xu Hansen to the Emperor."

"The Emperor should be very excited," Ye Jiuge said sensibly.

The Crown Prince placed the treasure map inside the Dragon Phoenix Pendant and kept it on his person for safekeeping. That is, he was obviously keeping it hidden from the Emperor, the Crown Prince, and the Empress. Now that Ye Jiuge had revealed this matter, the Empress and Crown Prince were very nervous.

"Indeed, the Emperor has ordered the Justice Department to investigate thoroughly any incidents of people harmed by Sorcerers. A generous reward has been offered for catching Sorcerers."

Previously, the members of the Justice Department had not been very supportive of Wan Ziyang's

pursuit of Sorcerers, and they'd thought that it was a waste of energy. But now that the Emperor has ordered it, they were all eager to perform meritorious deeds in front of him.

"Generous rewards will bring forth brave men. Su Junqing will not dare run rampant again this time." Ye Jiuge was delighted at the thought of Su Junqing's misfortune.

Now that Emperor Xuanwu has personally ordered it, Su Junqing would certainly face ruin if they found proof of him cultivating evil arts.

"Leave Su Junqing to us. The Alchemy Convention will be held in the Medicine Refinery Valley. What are your plans, Eldest Miss?" asked Bai Songling.

"There are no plans." Ye Jiuge had never been interested in the competition because she liked doing research and practicing alchemy in silence.

"I heard that the winner of this Alchemy Convention will be rewarded with an alchemy furnace from the Weapon Refinement Sect, which is worth 30,000 gold coins." Bai Songling felt that it was a pity that Ye Jiuge didn't want to participate, so he conveniently revealed some information.

Over these last years, Emperor Xuanwu had raised the standards for the Lei Kingdom's alchemy competition to attract more alchemists, which was why the prize was now so big.

"30,000 gold coins?" Ye Jiuge's eyes lit up. She said without hesitation, "Alright, I'll participate." Although she hated competitions, she liked rewards.

Bai Songling then revealed additional information, "This time, besides the alchemists from the Lei Kingdom, there will be many alchemists from other places, so the business trade will be very lively. Maybe there will be some good things up for exchange."

Both he and Dongfang Que were very interested in this Alchemy Convention because they hoped to find pieces of information about the Fire Dragon Herb from the alchemists from distant regions. The Fire Dragon Herb was necessary for removing the poison from Dongfang Que.

"Ok, we'll take a look at that time." Ye Jiuge was very interested in this business trade; the batch of Indigo Jade Water Plants that she'd collected at the bottom of the lake could be sold.

"By the way, your father, Great Master Ye, is one of the judges. He has the power to advance one person directly to the finals. Do you want to look for him and ask him about it?"

Although Bai Songling had confidence in Ye Jiuge's alchemy skills, she would be saved a lot of effort if she could obtain a pass straight to the finals.

“There’s nothing to ask. He will give that spot to Ye Shanshan.” Ye Jiuge was certain about this. Moreover, she didn’t want that spot. As long as Ye Yuxuan wasn’t making things difficult for her, she was content.

“How about if the Dongling Prince gets you a spot?” asked Bai Songling.

Although the recommendation spots in the Alchemy Convention were very hard to obtain, they were not impossible, so long as one worked hard.

“Don’t bother. I’ll just get a spot by relying on my own strength.” Ye Jiuge gestured with her hands.

How could she return home with the furnace worth 30,000 gold coins if she couldn’t even get through the first several trials?

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“The first few rounds aren’t difficult. There shouldn’t be any problems,” Bai Songling said.

Then, he shared some information about the Alchemy Convention. Ye Jiuge memorized it carefully. After Bai Songling finished explaining about the convention, he thought of something else.

“Oh, Imperial Consort Xi wishes to invite you to the palace for a chat three days from now,” he said.

“How is the Imperial Consort free to see me?” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrow.

Ever since rolling out a five-kilometer long red carpet to welcome Imperial Consort Xi home, Emperor Xuanwu had showered her with adoration. He even wanted to build a new palace for her. However, Imperial Consort Xi insisted on staying in Jinxiu Palace. As such, Emperor Xuanwu could only instruct the Ministry of Works to slave round the clock to renovate Jinxiu Palace. During this period, he arranged for Imperial Consort Xi to stay in a chamber in his own palace. His affection for her was unprecedented and had elicited many spirited discussions in the streets.

“The Imperial Consort misses you dearly. If there weren’t so much going on, she would have

already invited you to the palace,” Bai Songling said.

When Imperial Consort Xi had first returned to the palace, things were indeed a mess. However, since the renovation was finished and she’d moved back into the palace, there was now more time for the Imperial Consort to invite Ye Jiuge over for a chat.

“Please convey my many thanks to the Imperial Consort for her great kindness toward me. Is she doing well?” Ye Jiuge asked with concern.

Although everyone said that Emperor Xuanwu’s adulation of Imperial Consort Xi was unprecedented, her well-being in the palace depended on whether the Empress was playing dirty tricks.

“She has been well. Ever since the Imperial Consort returned to the palace, the Emperor has not set foot in the Empress’s Fengyi Palace.” Bai Songling knew that Imperial Consort Xi would be able to hold Emperor Xuanwu close to her.

“With the Imperial Consort in the limelight, did the Empress do nothing?” Ye Jiuge asked. Such behavior doesn’t sound like the vicious woman’s usual conduct.

“How could she? The Empress tried to poison the Imperial Consort on the second day after her return to the palace. Luckily, the Imperial Consort detected it in time. Not only did the Empress’s scheme fail, but it backfired,” Bai Songling said, looking at Ye Jiuge with gratitude. If the Imperial Consort hadn’t realized the Poison Earthworm’s function, she would not have escaped the Empress’s evil scheme.

“Oh! How did the Imperial Consort cause the Empress’s scheme to backfire?” Ye Jiuge asked with some interest.

“Ask the Imperial Consort when you enter the palace!” Bai Songling said, smiling mysteriously. He believed that the Imperial Consort would want to tell Ye Jiuge the good news herself.

“Fine,” Ye Jiuge replied. She knew that Bai Songling was prudent in his speech; he would not converse excessively.

Wan Ziyang quietly listened to their chat. Suddenly, his eyes shifted. He fired a red Spiritual Light at the left corner and shouted, “Who’s there?”

Ye Yu revealed himself and replied grumpily, “I should be the one asking you that.” It’s unreasonable—not only do they occupy his residence, but they also attack him!

“Where have you been?” Ye Jiuge saw that Ye Yu was still wearing his nightclothes. She frowned

and asked, "You didn't find Su Junqing, did you?"

"I didn't go to the Su Clan. I went to have a look around the Crown Prince Residence to see if he has been meeting Su Junqing in secret," Ye Yu said.

The Crown Prince usually resided in the Crown Prince Residence; he seldom stayed in the East Palace.

"What did you find?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"The Crown Prince is in charge of the arrangements for the Alchemy Convention. He has been very close to Ye Shanshan lately, so you should be careful if you participate in the Alchemy Convention."

"Even if I don't, I'll be wary of them."

If the Crown Prince tried to act, Ye Jiuge would smash his teeth. Ye Yu knew about Ye Jiuge's ability and did not say anything further. Instead, he turned to Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling and asked, "Why are you two looking for me?"

"We wanted to ask you about the treasure map, but there is no need now."

Ye Jiuge had already told Wan Ziyang all he wanted to know. Wan Ziyang was concerned about things back at the Justice Department, so he pulled Bai Songling along and bid them farewell. Before leaving, Bai Songling reminded Ye Jiuge again to visit Imperial Consort Xi, and Ye Jiuge expressed that she would go to the palace soon.

After Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling left, Ye Yu said to Ye Jiuge, "According to my investigation, previous Alchemy Conventions took place in the capital. This time, it will take place at the Medicine Refinery Valley. The Crown Prince personally volunteered to organize it. I find that very strange."

"Yes, it's strange," Ye Jiuge said and frowned slightly.

The Crown Prince thought highly of himself, and he had always felt that making arrangements was beneath his dignity.

"Watch the Crown Prince closely for now. Report any anomalies to me."

No matter what, watching the Crown Prince was much less dangerous than surveilling Su Junqing.

"Okay." Ye Yu nodded.

After sending Ye Jiuge away, Ye Yu again infiltrated the Crown Prince Residence. At that moment, the Crown Prince was in Fengyi Palace reporting to the Empress about his preparations for the Alchemy Convention.

“Mother, everything is ready in the Medicine Refinery Valley. We just need the convention to start,” said the Crown Prince, respectfully.

He had been busy with the preparations and only rushed back after hearing about Dongfang Que’s recovery. The court councilors who had initially supported Dongfang Que were becoming restless. If his mother hadn’t told him that the Ice Snow Spider King’s poison was incurable, he wouldn’t have been able to sit still.

Perching on the phoenix chair, the Empress wore a long silk robe woven with the pattern of a phoenix’s plumage. Her usually dignified and virtuous expression was dark and gloomy, and she seemed not to have heard the Crown Prince.

The Crown Prince snuck a peek at the Empress. After a moment’s consideration, he asked cautiously, “Mother, are you angry because of Imperial Consort Xi?”

“Hmph, is that b*tch worth my anger?” The Empress arched her thin eyebrows and gave a murderous look.

“Mother, you are right. So what if Father adores her now? She is just a lowly b*tch who will die from any of your methods without a burial site,” the Crown Prince said to gain favor with the Empress.

In recent years, countless women in the palace had died mysteriously. Even Dongfang Que was unable to escape his mother’s poison, so he was very confident of her ability. No matter how many times he asked, his mother refused to tell him where the strange poisons came from. For the Crown Prince, this was a pity. If he could control the poisons’ source, he would be able to deal with people whom he disliked.

“Shut up!”

The Empress suddenly slammed the table. The anger on her face was even more evident. Her son’s words had touched a raw nerve. The poisons which succeeded in every endeavor had failed completely with Imperial Consort Xi—they’d even backfired on her. The Empress could only pin her hopes on Xu Hansen bringing her new poisons. She had not expected that the idiot would be killed by someone from the Justice Department before he could even enter the capital. Furthermore, his Sorcerer identity had been revealed, and the Emperor knew about the treasure map.

“Mother, I apologize for my mistake. Please don’t be angry.”

Although the Crown Prince did not know what had infuriated the Empress, he knew that apologizing immediately was the right move.

The Empress’s chest heaved slightly, but she quickly curbed her anger. With lowered eyes, she said to the Crown Prince, “Bring Su Junqing to the palace tomorrow. I have something to ask him.”

She could only contact the Bloodthirsty Sect with Su Junqing’s help.

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“Mother, you can ask me to convey your message. You don’t have to meet that vile man personally.” The Crown Prince detested Su Junqing bitterly.

“Don’t make me repeat myself.” The Empress’s tone was cold, and her sharp gaze was terrifying.

The Crown Prince started. He hurriedly made a fist and palm salute and said, “I wouldn’t dare.”

The Empress waved her hand impatiently and said, “Alright. You may go!”

She had kept her association with the Bloodthirsty Sect a secret from the Crown Prince so that he wouldn’t get involved. The Bloodthirsty Sect’s disciples were madmen with no morals. She couldn’t say for sure whether they would or would not court disaster one day. The Empress wouldn’t have asked the tiger for its pelt if she didn’t have to deal with Bai Linglong and her son, as well as the wretched Imperial Consort Xi. This was all their fault.

Seeing the Empress’s sinister expression, the Crown Prince did not ask anything else. Hurriedly,

he left the palace then arranged for a carriage to bring him to the Su Clan.

“Your Highness, we are honored by your presence. Please excuse me for not coming out to meet you,” Su Junqing said, then bowed respectfully to the Crown Prince.

The Crown Prince’s slender eyes swept up and down Su Junqing before he replied with an aloof and remote attitude, “No need for formality.”

“Thank you, Your Highness.”

Su Junqing stood up straight. His refined and handsome face smiled as if he had not been humiliated. Hmph, this fellow sure can act! The Crown Prince sneered coldly in his heart.

After sending away the servants, he said arrogantly, “Mother wishes to see you. Tomorrow, dress up like a court eunuch and follow me to the palace!”

In truth, Su Junqing could have entered the palace openly as himself, but the Crown Prince wanted to humiliate him. After all, no man wanted to dress up like a court eunuch.

A flash of coldness flitted across Su Junqing’s eyes, but he hid it. He continued to inquire respectfully, “May I ask why the Empress summons me to the palace?”

“Why do you have to ask so many questions? Just go as instructed!” snapped the Crown Prince. His eyes narrowed, and his sharp gaze resembled the Empress’s.

“I’ve gone too far. Please, forgive me,” Su Junqing bowed and apologized hurriedly.

“Fine. Go and make the preparations. I will send someone to receive you tomorrow.”

The Crown Prince could not be bothered to talk more with Su Junqing, so he left after he was finished speaking. Once he had shown the Crown Prince out, Su Junqing’s handsome face darkened. The Empress must have summoned him about Xu Hansen and the treasure map’s exposure.

The situation in the capital these days was complicated; the Justice Department was apprehending Sorcerers everywhere. When they could not find any, they indiscriminately captured people as scapegoats. Su Junqing could no longer continue his business of trading young girls. As the deadline for delivering the goods drew closer, he was becoming anxious.

On the surface, Su Junqing was the Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s disciple. However, the truth was that he was only a lackey. He would die a tragic death if he could not deliver on time. In addition to practicing his cultivation technique, Su Junqing also wanted to create a tense atmosphere in the

capital. As a result, Bloodthirsty Patriarch would send over an even stronger disciple. Then, not only would Su Junqing be able to complete the Patriarch's mission, with the second disciple's help, he could also get rid of Wan Ziyang and his companions. However, he did not know who the Bloodthirsty Patriarch would send. If he sent a useless idiot like Xu Hansen, Su Junqing would simply use the disciple to practice his cultivation technique.

Su Junqing could not help but smirk sinisterly. Xu Hansen had already enabled him to reach Mental Manipulation's second stage. Another disciple would allow him to reach the third. If that happened, Su Junqing's useless superiors would be no match for him, unless the Bloodthirsty Patriarch dealt with him personally.

The next morning, the Crown Prince sent someone to receive Su Junqing. He did not ask him to dress up as a court eunuch. No matter how much the Crown Prince wanted to humiliate Su Junqing, he would not mess around in front of the Empress.

The Empress had been up all night. Her face was gloomy as she sat like a sculpture on her phoenix chair. Fengyi Palace was as quiet as a graveyard. The palace maids and court eunuchs held their breath in fear. The mood only lightened up once the Crown Prince escorted Su Junqing into the palace.

When the Empress saw Su Junqing, her mood improved. She ordered the Crown Prince, the palace maids, and the court eunuchs to take their leave. Only Su Junqing remained in the palace. The Crown Prince hadn't expected the Empress to dismiss him too. Although he was unwilling to accept his mother's order, he did not disobey her. Instead, he blamed Su Junqing.

"Greetings to you, Your Majesty." Su Junqing bowed respectfully to the Empress.[Read more chapter on vipnovel.com](#)

"No need for formality!" The Empress lifted her hand and got right to the point, saying, "I need a poison that can kill Imperial Consort Xi and Dongfang Que."

"What do you mean? Didn't Elderly Lady Xu give you multiple poisons?" Su Junqing asked curiously.

Elderly Lady Xu was a poison expert. Since she'd served the Empress for many years, the Empress should have a store of a variety of poisons.

"They are useless against that wretched Imperial Consort Xi," the Empress said fiercely.

In recent days, she'd tried all the poisons in her possession. Forget Imperial Consort Xi, she was even unable to kill Elderly Lady Zhou and Hongxiu, who served Imperial Consort Xi. The Empress controlled the Harem using these poisons. Everyone's life or death was wrapped around her little

finger. She was unwilling to accept that she could not count on them anymore. Desperately, she wanted to regain the ability to use poisons.

“It seems that Imperial Consort Xi had a stroke of luck and obtained a treasure that allows her to avoid poisons.” Su Junqing was confident about the poisons produced by the Bloodthirsty Sect. No ordinary person could recognize them.

“It’s very likely.”

The Empress had similar doubts, and she’d sent spies to investigate. However, Hongxiu had taken strict precautions, and her spies were unable to enter the Jinxiu Palace. If only Elderly Lady Xu were still around, she would have helped her get to the bottom of the matter! The second thing on the Empress’s mind (besides poison) was finding another helper similar to Elderly Lady Xu.

“Ask the Bloodthirsty Sect to send me someone else,” she commanded.

“Your Majesty, you know that there are only a few women in our sect. It was difficult enough to find Elderly Lady Xu, and it won’t be easy to find another suitable woman in a short period,” Su Junqing replied, shaking his head. He was telling the truth. The rest of the women in the Bloodthirsty Sect were abnormal—they would never serve the Empress.

“How difficult can it be? I will be choosing some prospective concubines for the Emperor soon. I can get you any girl you like. If that’s not enough, I can send someone to search for you among the commoners. The Emperor is watching your kind closely at the moment, and you won’t be able to get away with anything. With my help, you will achieve twice the result with half the effort,” the Empress said hurriedly.

Before, when the Bloodthirsty Sect had asked for her help collecting little girls, she’d only promised a convoy for protection. She’d refused to undertake the task herself. However, at this moment, she no longer had time to care.

Su Junqing was tempted. However, he could not agree on the Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s behalf, so he replied, “I will send a pigeon post when I get back and convey your request to the Sect. However, I cannot guarantee that the Patriarch will agree.”

“That won’t do. I want you to convey a message to the Bloodthirsty Patriarch and ask him to send a female disciple to the palace immediately to assist me. Then, send over a batch of useful poisons,” the Empress sneered. Then, she added, threateningly, “And don’t forget about the Alchemy Convention. If you can’t satisfy my needs, don’t blame me when we fall out.”

“Are you threatening us, the Bloodthirsty Sect?” Su Junqing’s expression darkened, and his figure became more imposing.

“You violated our agreement first,” replied the Empress without betraying any impression of weakness. “Your Bloodthirsty Sect initially promised me this vast swathe of territory. Now, it’s going to land in Dongfang Que’s hands, and you still have the nerve to say this to me? Let me tell you this. If you cannot satisfy my needs, I will announce what you did to the whole world, and we’ll see how your Su Clan survives in the Lei Kingdom in the future.” Her face was sinister, and madness filled her eyes.

“Your Majesty, please calm down.” Su Junqing gave a Fist and Palm Salute and hid the murderous intent that flitted past his eyes.

“Go back and consider this carefully: which is more important to you, the Bloodthirsty Sect or the Su Clan?”

Then, the Empress summoned back the palace maids and court eunuchs. After following an old court eunuch out of the palace, Su Junqing finally loosened his tightly clenched fists.

The Empress has gone mad. She hasn’t considered Imperial Consort Xi’s recent return to the palace or Dongfang Que’s recovery. It’s dangerous to lay hands on them right now, yet she wants to drag the Su Clan down into the water. It seems that this chess piece cannot be held any longer. He must think of a way to get rid of the Empress and the Crown Prince.

Just as Su Junqing was about to climb into the Su Clan’s carriage, he saw a beautiful lady sporting the Flying Fairy Hairstyle descend from a wagon. Her long, thin eyebrows were delicate and pretty, and her eyes were shaped like peach blossoms. Her beautiful eyes were as limpid as ponds of clear water. Her cherry-like mouth curled into a faint but dazzling smile, and she looked like a fairy who had landed in the mortal world. People around her were involuntarily attracted to her. Even the eyes of the guards at the palace gates were glued to her.

Beside the beautiful lady, a second woman dressed in a cerise palace dress stood respectfully. It was Lady Hongxiu, who served as the highest-ranked palace maid under Imperial Consort Xi. Su Junqing frowned. He'd heard from the Crown Prince that this Lady Hongxiu was an Intermediate Spiritual Practitioner with a Water Root. As she was one of Imperial Consort Xi's capable subordinates, dealing with her would be challenging. He did not expect Lady Hongxiu to serve the beautiful lady respectfully. Who is this lovely lady?

"Eldest Miss Ye, please, slow down," Lady Hongxiu's voice rang from a distance.

Eldest Miss Ye – could it be Ye Jiuge? Su Junqing's eyes narrowed. Although he'd heard that Ye Jiuge's looks had been restored, he had not expected her to be so attractive. The Bloodthirsty Patriarch would love her. If he could help the Patriarch obtain her, not only would he remove a mortal threat, the Patriarch would also reward him. It would be killing two birds with one stone. As he thought about it, Su Junqing walked closer to Ye Jiuge.

"Eldest Miss Ye, a housefly is heading toward you," Lady Hongxiu said sarcastically.

Ye Jiuge raised her head in surprise and saw a handsome young man dressed in a white brocade robe embroidered with gold at the sides. He was walking toward her with a warm and amiable smile. Ye Jiuge frowned; she hadn't expected to see Su Junqing. How unlucky! Ye Jiuge did not wish to acknowledge him, so she walked toward the palace gates without so much as a sideways glance.

Su Junqing, however, blocked her path. Smiling, he said, "Sister Jiuge, what are you doing at the palace today?"

Ye Jiuge's skin crawled, and she almost puked when she heard how Su Junqing addressed her.

"Su Junqing, do I even know you well?" Ye Jiuge looked at him with disdain. It was almost as though the words "you are disgusting" were written on her face.

"Sister Jiuge, are you still angry at my grandfather for being hot-headed? My aunt and cousin were insensible for instigating Grandfather to go to the Ye Residence. I apologize on their behalf. Sister Jiuge, I hope that you can forgive them."

Su Junqing's voice was gentle, and his handsome face was filled with sincerity. A strange red light flitted through his eyes, which were looking directly into Ye Jiuge's. Immediately, Ye Jiuge felt dizzy. She suddenly felt that she had made a big fuss over a minor issue. Her grudge was against the Su Clan's Old Master and Su Yufeng, not Su Junqing. How could she take her anger out on him?

"Sister Jiuge, you look as beautiful as a fairy who has descended to the world. Let's get to know

each other better in the future, okay?" Su Junqing's voice was so soft and gentle.

"Sure," Ye Jiuge replied in a daze.

Su Junqing was about to speak again when Lady Hongxiu realized that something was wrong. She quickly said to Ye Jiuge, "Eldest Miss, Imperial Consort Xi is still waiting for you. We cannot miss the time to visit the palace."

"Oh, right!" Ye Jiuge was slightly soberer.

"Sister Jiuge, in that case, please go to the palace first. We can chat again later."

Su Junqing felt that this was a pity. If he'd run into Ye Jiuge somewhere else, he could have spent more time strengthening the Mental Manipulation's effect.

"Sure."

Ye Jiuge smiled at Su Junqing reluctantly then followed Lady Hongxiu into the palace. Once they were inside, Lady Hongxiu pulled Ye Jiuge into a corner and asked, "Eldest Miss, since when are you so close with the Su Clan's Eldest Son?"

"That's not true! I just feel like Su Junqing is a good person. He's different from Su Yufeng. I've misunderstood him in the past," Ye Jiuge objected.

"How can he be different from Su Yufeng when his last name is Su? Didn't you detest him before? Why did you change your mind suddenly? You aren't captivated by his looks, are you?"

Lady Hongxiu could understand a young lady's infatuation with a handsome man but falling in love with Su Junqing was definitely not right.

"What are you saying?" If I were infatuated with someone, it would be Zi Shang.

Thinking of this, Ye Jiuge also felt that something was wrong. How could she believe that Su Junqing was a decent person after he'd kidnapped Ye Ruyi, betrayed Ye Yunzhi, and used virgins' blood to practice his cultivation technique?

"Idiot, you are under the effect of his Mental Manipulation," Zi Shang's voice rang out coldly.

"How is that possible?" Ye Jiuge did not feel anything at all.

"That fellow is gifted at Mental Manipulation, and he has already reached the second stage. It's reasonable for you to fall into his trap because you're not guarding against him," Zi Shang said

coolly.

“Then, why didn’t you remind me?” He is useless even though he is currently residing inside her body.

“You’re blaming me for your stupidity?” Zi Shang did not inform her, deliberately. This silly girl would never learn from her mistake if he didn’t let her fall into Su Junqing’s trap once.

Ye Jiuge knew that she was in the wrong and didn’t argue with Zi Shang. She took out her pill bottle and swallowed two Mind-clearing Pills.

“Eldest Miss, what are you doing?” Lady Hongxiu exclaimed.

She looked strangely at Ye Jiuge. What ailment does she have that she just suddenly starts eating medicine?

“Don’t say anything. Consume two pills quickly, too.” Ye Jiuge poured out two Mind-clearing Pills for Lady Hongxiu before she said softly, “That Su Junqing used Black Magic on me just now. That’s why I suddenly thought that he was a good person. If not for your timely reminder, I would have fallen into his trap.”

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Chapter 134: Treatment: Don’t Stop Consuming the Pills

As she recalled the young ladies in the capital who’d been involved with Su Junqing, Lady Hongxiu was terrified. “I see,” she said. “Eldest Miss, please be careful.” She did not want Ye Jiuge to become one of them.

“Don’t worry. When I see Su Junqing again, I’ll consume some medicine in advance.”

Ye Jiuge shook the jade bottle in her hand. As a Spiritual Alchemist, she had an abundance of pills.

“That’s good.” Lady Hongxiu was very confident in Ye Jiuge’s alchemy.

“Let’s go. We shouldn’t make the Imperial Consort wait too long.”

When Ye Jiuge arrived at Jinxiu Palace with Lady Hongxiu, for a moment, she thought that they’d had come to the wrong place. The last time she’d come here, the Jinxiu Palace had still been obsolete and old-fashioned. Now, it was decorated with gold and jade and shone in glorious splendor. Beautiful flowers adorned the path, and there was even a newly planted peach grove. Since Imperial Consort Xi had been receiving unprecedented adoration, it was no wonder!

Elderly Lady Zhou was waiting outside the entrance. When she saw Ye Jiuge from a distance, she walked towards her and welcomed her with a smile.

“Eldest Miss, you are finally here. The Imperial Consort was just reminiscing about you.”

“Elderly Lady Zhou, long time no see.”

Ye Jiuge smiled at Elderly Lady Zhou and followed her into the majestic Jinxiu Palace. Inside, Imperial Consort Xi was dressed in a rusty red gown embroidered with golden chrysanthemums. Her hair was pinned up with a dangling ornament decorated with jade and gold and engraved with a phoenix spreading its wings. The sides of her updo were adorned with golden-phoenix pearls and golden-winged hairpins. She looked indescribably beautiful and strikingly imposing; the dignity of a pampered Imperial Consort was on full display.

“Jiuge, you are here,” Imperial Consort Xi smiled and said, standing up. Her harsh aura softened as she came closer and held Ye Jiuge’s hands. She was as friendly now as she’d been at the Dongling Prince Mansion.

“Imperial Consort, Eldest Miss brought you a present!” Lady Hongxiu placed the red wooden brocade box on the table.

“It’s good enough that you are here. Are you distancing yourself from me by bringing a present?” Imperial Consort Xi pouted playfully.

“It’s nothing expensive. I just made some nail polish and cosmetics,” Ye Jiuge said. Then, she opened the red wooden brocade box and took out the white porcelain bowl.

“Jiuge understands me well. I haven’t dared use the things provided by the palace, and I’ve been worrying about where I should buy them,” Imperial Consort Xi replied with some surprise.

“Imperial Consort, please see if they suit your taste.”

Ye Jiuge opened all the containers. Imperial Consort Xi’s skin was snow-white, and colors that were too vibrant would make her look vulgar. As such, Ye Jiuge had created a set of fresh, natural tones, arranged from pale to saturated, for Imperial Consort Xi to choose from.

“Eldest Miss is really considerate. I have never seen such beautiful nail polish before,” Elderly Lady Zhou praised sincerely.

“They’re gorgeous. I love them.”

After looking at them for a while, she chose the palest pink and asked Elderly Lady Zhou eagerly to apply it for her. In contrast with the nail polish’s color, her fingers looked even more fair and delicate, like green onions.

“Oh, Imperial Consort, I heard from Brother Bai that the Empress tried to poison you immediately after your return to the palace. What happened?” Ye Jiuge asked.

“Speaking about the incident helps me vent my anger. Not only did I humiliate that vicious woman, but I also cut off one of her right-hand men,” Imperial Consort Xi said.

Gleefully, she explained what happened. The day after Imperial Consort Xi’s return, the Empress had arranged a banquet to welcome her home. At the feast, Imperial Consort Xi had been happily eating when she’d suddenly felt nauseous. Upon careful examination, she’d realized that there was something wrong with the wine. At this point in her narration, Imperial Consort Xi flashed a mysterious smile and asked Ye Jiuge, “Do you know how I handled that cup of poisoned wine?” Visit web novel. live If You like manga , comics

Ye Jiuge thought for a moment and guessed, “You poured it away?”

Imperial Consort Xi shook her head. “No, guess again.”

Ye Jiuge could not guess correctly after a few more tries, so she finally conceded, “Imperial Consort, please don’t leave me in suspense.”

The Imperial Consort replied unhurriedly, “I gave the poisoned wine to someone else.”

“Someone else?” Ye Jiuge glanced at Elderly Lady Zhou in surprise. The Imperial Consort didn’t let her drink the wine on her behalf, did she?

“Speaking of it, I was frightened out of my wits that day.” Looking at Imperial Consort Xi, Elderly

Lady Zhou sighed and said, "Imperial Consort, you are courageous for giving the Emperor poisoned wine."

What? She gave the poisoned wine to the Emperor? Ye Jiuge stared at Imperial Consort Xi in shock. For a moment, she suspected that Imperial Consort Xi had gone mad.

"I am not crazy," Imperial Consort Xi smiled and said. "I didn't poison the wine. If anything had happened to the Emperor, the one who'd poisoned the wine would be in trouble."

The palace maid who had poisoned the wine was so scared that she'd immediately smashed the wine jug when she saw Imperial Consort Xi pass her cup to the Emperor. After a few instigating words from Imperial Consort Xi, the Emperor had angrily interrogated everyone responsible for the banquet that night. Although they did not confess the Empress' involvement, the highest-ranked court eunuch, who had been in charge of the Imperial Kitchen for many years, was beheaded. Imperial Consort Xi had taken this opportunity to fill the role with someone loyal to her. The Empress had almost fainted from anger.

"Imperial Consort, you are most impressive," Ye Jiuge said in admiration. It really is true that a determined woman will go to any length.

"Speaking of impressive, I'm grateful for the Poison Detection Pill you gave me. If not for that, I wouldn't have survived, let alone countered the Empress's move." Imperial Consort Xi looked at Ye Jiuge with gratitude.

"It's all thanks to you that Elderly Lady Zhou and I escaped the Empress's evil schemes."

This was why Lady Hongxiu had been behaving so respectfully toward Ye Jiuge.

"You're welcome. If you've been consuming the pills frequently, I will ask Brother Bai to send a few more bottles to the palace. You can let someone else consume one, but you must watch them swallow it. Do not let these medicinal pills fall into the Empress's hands or there will be trouble," Ye Jiuge warned prudently.

Poison Detection Pills contained living Poison Earthworm; anyone could see that once they opened one up.

"Don't worry. I will not give the pills to anyone other than Elderly Lady Zhou and Lady Hongxiu," replied Imperial Consort Xi, smiling faintly.

She needed this Poison Detection Pill to survive, and only Elderly Lady Zhou and Lady Hongxiu, who'd attended to her for most of her life, were worthy.

“Imperial Consort, I ran into Su Junqing at the palace entrance. What’s he doing here?” Ye Jiuge asked.

“It’s because of the Empress, that vicious woman. I suspect she has sought him out to harm us.” With the Poison Detection Pills in her possession, Imperial Consort Xi had not been paying much attention to the Empress lately.

“Imperial Consort, there is no harm in being cautious. Su Junqing’s Black Magic is pretty powerful, and even I have almost fallen into his trap,” Ye Jiuge said solemnly. “When you see him again, remember to consume some Mind-clearing Pills in advance.”

“Don’t worry. Su Junqing won’t be free to bounce around for long. The Emperor has set his heart on eradicating Sorcerers. Apart from the Justice Department, he also has secret guards investigating. Su Junqing’s true nature will be unmasked soon. As for the Empress and the Crown Prince, the Emperor has been suspicious of them since I mentioned it once in front of him,” the Imperial Consort explained with a smile.

She wanted nothing more than for the Empress to remain close with Su Junqing. Once Su Junqing’s identity as a Sorcerer was revealed, the Empress and the Crown Prince would meet a tragic end.

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“Imperial Consort, it would be better to be cautious.” Ye Jiuge was worried that Imperial Consort Xi was too fixated on revenge. The gains would not make up for the losses if Emperor Xuanwu were to deduce anything.

“Don’t worry, I’m well aware of the situation.”

Imperial Consort Xi was in no hurry for revenge. She was enjoying how the Empress loathed her but could not get rid of her. After some time chatting with Imperial Consort Xi, Ye Jiuge observed the sky getting darker. Making an excuse about preparing for the Alchemy Convention, she bid Imperial Consort Xi farewell.

Although Imperial Consort Xi was reluctant to see Ye Jiuge go, she did not want to delay her, so she allowed Lady Hongxiu to send Ye Jiuge back.

Not only did she gift Ye Jiuge a carriage full of things, but Imperial Consort Xi also gave her an “advanced placement” token for the Alchemy Convention. Ye Jiuge walked towards the Zilin Residence while playing with the red-colored token. Although she did not need it, she appreciated Imperial Consort Xi’s kindness.

Song Bai stood outside the Zilin Residence. It seemed that he had been waiting for a long time. He said, “Eldest Miss, Old Master requests to see you in the study.”

“Why is Father looking for me?” Ye Jiuge had not met Ye Yuxuan face-to-face for some time.

“Old Master said that he has something important to discuss with you. I do not know the details,” Song Bai replied respectfully.

“I see. I will head there in a moment.” Ye Jiuge gestured with her hand.

“Yes.” Song Bai bowed and left.

Just as Ye Jiuge entered the house, Qing Mama approached her and said, “Eldest Miss, Old Master is looking for you because of the Alchemy Convention.”

Recently, Qing Mama had bribed an informer in the main residence, so she was better informed than before.

“Alchemy Convention?” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrow. She did not understand why Ye Yuxuan wanted to speak to her about the matter.

“Oh, Eldest Miss, I heard that Second Miss is determined to win the Alchemy Convention. Recently, she has been very close to the Crown Prince, who has sent over many pill ingredients.” Zhen Zhu had made discreet inquiries to obtain this information.

“The Crown Prince is quite good at winning people over!” Ye Jiuge could not help but laugh.

“Winning over my *ss! Eldest Miss, it’s a good thing that you became clear-headed sooner rather than later and broke off your engagement to that douchebag,” Qing Mama said with disdain.

When Su Yufeng had been sent to the Ancestral Shrine, and Ye Shanshan was confined, the Crown Prince had only sent over a palace maid to check on her. Now, the Alchemy Convention was coming up, and the Crown Prince had remembered Ye Shanshan's worth. He was pursuing her proactively again. Double-dealers and back-stabbers like him are rotten douchebags. Ye Jiuge nodded her head in full agreement.

After Qing Mama had helped Ye Jiuge to tidy up her, she said, "Eldest Miss, you should head over soon, or Old Master will get angry again."

Ye Jiuge brought Zhen Zhu with her to the main residence but entered the study alone to see Ye Yuxuan.

"Why are you back so late? Where have you been today?" Ye Yuxuan asked unhappily.

"I'm back late because Imperial Consort Xi requested my presence in the palace," Ye Jiuge replied unenthusiastically.

"Why am I unaware that Imperial Consort Xi invited you to the palace?" On top of his surprise, Ye Yuxuan felt infuriated. "You unfilial daughter, do you still see me as your Father? Why have you not told me about such an important matter?"

Of course not! Ever since Ye Yuxuan's tacit agreement when the Su Clan's Old Master had laid hands on her, Ye Jiuge had hated him bitterly for his hypocrisy. If not for the fact that she would be condemned for patricide, she wanted to murder her obnoxious father.

Ye Jiuge suppressed her anger and said coldly to Ye Yuxuan, "If you asked me here to speak about this matter, forget it."

Having said so, she stood up to leave.

"Wait!" Ye Yuxuan shouted to halt Ye Jiuge. Speaking quickly, he said, "The upcoming Alchemy Convention will be held in the Medicine Refinery Valley. Away from home, you and your sisters need to help each other. You, as the eldest sister, should take good care of your two younger sisters..."

"I will definitely take care of Fourth Sister. As for Second Sister, please find somebody more qualified than me!"

What kind of joke is this? Asking her to take care of Ye Shanshan? She would be displaying benevolence if she refrained from finding a gulf and drowning Ye Shanshan.

“What kind of attitude is this?”

Ye Yuxuan slammed the table and reprimanded, “I know that you are upset about the incident with the Su Clan. However, away from home, you and your sisters represent the Ye Clan. I don’t care what kind of family conflict is going on. Outside, everyone needs to unite as one and defend and protect each other.”

“Pft!” Ye Jiuge suddenly laughed.

“Why are you laughing?” Ye Yuxuan questioned fiercely.

“I did not expect Father to understand that we represent the Ye Clan’s reputation when we are away from home. I thought that we represented the Su Clan instead!” Ye Jiuge smiled and said.

“What nonsense are you spouting? The Su Clan is the Su Clan, and the Ye Clan is the Ye Clan. How can you mix them up?” Ye Yuxuan responded with a dark expression.

“Father, your actions contradict your words.”

The Su Clan’s Old Master had brought his guards and aggressively called for her death. Not only did he want her to kneel, but he had also wanted to slap her. Ye Yuxuan had stood to the side and watched as though the Su Clan’s Old Master was the head of his family. Now, he dared to tell her that the Su Clan was the Su Clan, and the Ye Clan was the Ye Clan. His words disgusted her.

Flying into a humiliated rage, Ye Yuxuan snapped, “The Su Clan’s Old Master is your elder. Why can’t you concede to him in his old age?”

“Concede to allow him to kill me?” Ye Jiuge’s tone was as cold as ice.

“He only said that. He wouldn’t really do it. You, on the other hand, are so stubborn at such a young age. How could you kill every single one of the Su Clan’s guards? The Su Clan’s Old Master was so angry that he fell unconscious after returning home and has yet to wake up, even now. If I weren’t around to put in a good word for you, those people from the Su Clan would have captured you and brought you to the Justice Department for punishment.”

As he spoke, Ye Yuxuan’s confidence grew. He thought he had justice on his side. Ye Jiuge was only sitting here talking to him because he had protected her.

“Is that so? If you are so capable, let the people from the Su Clan capture me and bring me to the Justice Department. We’ll see who will be punished!” Ye Jiuge sneered.

Does he think that she is frightened? So what if she killed the Su Clan’s guards? It was their fault

for coming to the Ye Clan to try to kill her. No matter what, she is in the right.

“Fine, fine. I just said a few sentences, and you’re acting as though you have a deeply ingrained and long-standing resentment,” Ye Yuxuan said impatiently as he looked at Ye Jiuge’s face.

She bore a remarkable resemblance to Yun Qiaoqiao, but her personality was completely different. Yun Qiaoqiao was gentle and submissive toward him. She would never disagree with him. Ye Jiuge had an unyielding personality like a raging inferno. If he were to say a single word, she could rebut with ten. Everything she said was like a spark capable of burning a scar.

“Father, if you have nothing else to say, I shall take my leave.” Ye Jiuge did not want to hear any more of Ye Yuxuan’s nonsense.

“What about the Alchemy Convention?” Ye Yuxuan demanded, unwilling to give up.

“Father, don’t worry. I will take good care of Second Sister!”

A sinister look flitted across Ye Jiuge’s face. After all, wouldn’t she be deeply disappointing her father if she were to refuse after he had used all kinds of methods to beg her to look after Ye Shanshan?

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Chapter 136: A Class-three Spiritual Medicine Can Nullify Mental Manipulation

“Ye Jiuge, let me repeat once more. Regardless of how you fight with each other in the residence, both of you still have the last name Ye. When you leave the residence, I want the two of you to ...” Before Ye Yuxuan could finish speaking, Ye Jiuge had already walked away. She made him so upset that he threw a teacup from the table to the ground.

He thought, This defiant daughter infuriates me so much! Ye Yuxuan panted heavily for a few breaths before heading to Shuimo Garden.

As soon as Su Yufeng saw Ye Yuxuan, she asked him at once, "Old Master, what did Jiuge say?"

"What else could she say? As expected, she expressed her unwillingness," Ye Yuxuan told her sourly.

He had already told her that, given Ye Jiuge's willful temper, she would never agree to his request. However, Su Yufeng refused to believe him. She insisted that he should try to reason with her.

"How could this child, Jiuge, not understand the principle of association through blood ties? What sisters do not quarrel at home? But, when you walk out of the house, in the eyes of the public, both of you belong to the same family. If you do not even help your own family, how can others think highly of you?"

Su Yufeng expressed her exasperation that Ye Jiuge had acted contrary to her expectations. She even hoped impatiently that Ye Jiuge would change and behave according to her wishes.

Ever since Gong Xifan had stood up for Ye Jiuge, she had been trying to gain favor with someone from the Gong Clan. But, when she'd asked around and managed to discover Gong Xifan's address, he had already left.

She'd heard that the Gong Clan would also send someone to attend the main tournament, which was to take place during the Alchemy Convention. Therefore, she wanted to ask Ye Jiuge to bring her daughter to call on a member of the Gong Clan. Her daughter's character, appearance, and aptitude in alchemy should impress a member of the Gong Clan. They would see her in a new light.

"Enough. What is the use of saying such words now? You better tell Shanshan to keep her distance from our disobedient daughter to avoid being harmed by her." When Ye Yuxuan recalled the expression in Ye Jiuge's eyes earlier, he could still feel his blood boil slightly.

"Alright." Su Yufeng nodded half-heartedly. She thought to herself that, since she was not able to achieve her objectives through Ye Jiuge, she could only exploit Ye Ruyi.

It seemed that she should ask Shanshan to visit Yaoguang Residence on another day and spend some time winning over the little girl, Ye Ruyi.

Meanwhile, Ye Jiuge was having a conversation with Ye Ruyi at Yaoguang Residence about the Alchemy Convention's main tournament.

“This time, as we are going to the Pill Production Tournament together, Ye Shanshan will approach you for sure and try to convince you to help her. This mother and daughter pair is extremely thick-skinned and shameless. You should be more careful about them.”

Truth to be told, in a way, Ye Jiuge admired Su Yufeng and her daughter. There were such deviants in this world! After stabbing you a few times, because they did not end up killing you, they'd still have the gall to claim that they'd spared your life on purpose. Since you did not die, you should be thankful to them.

“I do not want to talk to her!” Ye Ruyi's small face was taut. Her eyes were filled with hatred.

“Ruyi, when all is said and done, she is still your Second Elder Sister. If you refuse to treat her with respect in front of outsiders, I am afraid that others will find fault with you.” Fifth Concubine was aware that gossip could become extremely terrifying.

“I could care less about what others say.” Ye Ruyi pulled a long face. Her expression showed her anger.

She would rather let others condemn her. Even if this put her in an extremely dire situation, she still did not want to act as if she were close to Ye Shanshan.

“There is no need to be afraid. I will be there!” Regardless of the kind of people that they were going to meet, Ye Jiuge did not plan to be civil to Ye Shanshan.

“Right!” Ye Ruyi nodded forcefully. She knew that her Eldest Sister would surely side with her.

Ye Jiuge also tested Ye Ruyi's knowledge of what she had learned during her studies. After she discovered that Ruyi had a solid grasp of topics related to Pill Production processes, Ye Jiuge returned to Zilin Residence with confidence.

“Eldest Miss, what did Old Master say to you?” Qing Mama walked up to her, carrying a cup of hot tea. The thing that worried her most was that Old Master had unleashed his wrath on Eldest Miss again.

“Nothing significant. He merely spouted a load of rubbish.” Ye Jiuge sat down before taking a sip of the tea in a relaxed manner. After that, she asked, “I heard that you took Hua Die and Yu Die to activate their bones. Were they able to undergo the process smoothly?”

“It went off without a hitch. Both Hua Die and Yu Die have Rank Seven Spiritual Bones. The Bone Activation Medicine that Eldest Miss gave them was indeed potent,” Qing Mama said excitedly.

To the best of her knowledge, bones could be categorized into three grades: high, medium, and low. Rank Nine to Rank Seven were considered high grades, Rank Six to Rank Four were medium grades, while Rank Three to Rank One were low grades.

With Hua Die and Yu Die's attributes, if they had used a standard Bone Activation Medicine, then the highest grade that they could have reached was the medium grade.

"Not bad. If they cultivate using Rank Seven Spiritual Bones, they will progress swiftly. If they encounter any extraordinary opportunities, they might even be able to advance further." When Ye Jiuge had examined their bones earlier, she had already foreseen the result.

"Eldest Miss, this revelation came at the right time. You can bring them with you when you attend the Alchemy Convention." Although the attributes of these two young maids' bones were decent, ultimately, they were not Spiritual Practitioners. They would not be able to help Ye Jiuge achieve the aura that Qing Mama envisioned.

She sighed. If Old Master Yun Tianwei were still alive, he could have managed to find Spiritual Practitioners to serve Eldest Miss as her maids.

"I am perfectly fine with Hua Die and Yu Die." Ye Jiuge did not think that her status could be elevated by using Spiritual Practitioners as her maids.

She placed her teacup down before heading toward the Pill Production Room. She aimed to produce some better quality Mind-clearing Pills so that she could avoid being affected by Su Junqing's Mental Manipulation.

"Your ordinary Mind-clearing Pills are useless against Su Junqing's Mental Manipulation." Zi Shang materialized gradually and used his snake tail to coil around Ye Jiuge tightly before saying coolly, "Today, when Su Junqing used his Mental Manipulation, it was spontaneous. Because of this, you were able to shake it off easily. If he made the necessary arrangements and put everything in place with careful thought before acting against you, it would not be so easy to escape his clutches." [Read comics on our webnovel.live](#)

"Then, what kind of pill can be effective?" Ye Jiuge furrowed her eyebrows.

If she had known earlier that, after Su Junqing had devoured Xu Hansen, he would become this powerful, she would not have let Wan Ziyang and Ye Yu make life difficult for Xu Hansen.

"Your Mind-Clearing Pills need to be at least Rank Three," Zi Shang said.

"In that case, I will need to become a Rank Three Alchemist before I can produce them. I am only at Rank Two right now, so I need to make considerable progress."

Ye Jiuge creased her brow. A full year had not yet passed since her meridians had recovered. When she considered that, she felt that she had already made some serious advances by becoming a Rank Two Alchemist. If she wished to advance to Rank Three, she would need to accumulate a certain amount of cultivation. However, Su Junqing had set his sights on her now. He was watching her covetously, like a tiger watching its prey. She could not wait until she reached that rank.

“You do not need to be a Rank Three Alchemist to produce those pills.” As Zi Shang spoke, he sniffed Ye Jiuge’s hair.

“How can I produce them?” The hot breaths that Zi Shang exhaled caused Ye Jiuge to feel a tingling sensation. She could not help but turn her head to the side.

Ever since Zi Shang had punished her for having smelly hair, she’d washed her hair every day. She’d even gone as far as turning the Zixun Flower, a kind of purple blossom with a sweet fragrance, into a bar of soap to ensure that its aroma would linger forever.

“If you beg me, I might feel kind enough to perform a good deed and tell you.” On the surface, Zi Shang’s expression was dignified. It was a pity that the tip of his flirtatious tail snaked along Ye Jiuge’s thigh, moving slowly upward...

Ye Jiuge gritted her teeth before restraining the tip of his teasing tail by pressing down on it. After that, she showed him an adorable expression that looked quite pathetic. She used her most tender voice to say, “Chieftain Zi Shang, would you please explain it to your darling?”

“Darling, you did well!” Zi Shang patted Ye Jiuge’s head in satisfaction. He told her, “If you use the Spiritual Flame to heat your small, inferior cauldron, you will be able to produce Rank Three Medicinal Pills.”

“Are you referring to the flame that was formed from a fusion of Spiritual Energy from heaven and earth when you mentioned the Spiritual Flame?” Ye Jiuge blinked with her puppy dog eyes.

“That’s right.” Zi Shang reached out with his hand to play with Ye Jiuge’s earlobe.

Ye Jiuge did not move. She asked him another question: “The Red Lotus Lightning Flame, which was transmuted from the Godly Heartwood that I used in the past, is this also a Spiritual Flame?”

“Of course. However, I do not know where the Red Lotus Lightning Flame is!” If he knew, he would have gotten his hands on it long ago as a toy.

“Then, what is the point of being so long-winded with me!” Ye Jiuge changed her attitude

immediately and became hostile. She slapped Zi Shang's hand away with her palm.

Tch! The Spiritual Flame was extremely elusive. She would be better off putting her efforts into cultivation. Advancing to a higher rank shortly sounded more realistic.

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“Little Dumb Dumb, although you won't be able to find Red Lotus Lightning Flame, lesser flames are a dime a dozen.” Zi Shang gave her a wicked, charming smile. He pinched Ye Jiuge's face and pulled her cheeks lightly on both sides. After that, he lifted them upward, like he was kneading dough.

Ye Jiuge was infuriated. However, she did not dare verbalize her anger. In order to obtain a Spiritual Flame, she swallowed her pride and flattered him in a loud voice: “Chieftain~ Zi~ Shang~, can you please take your darling to search for the Spiritual Flame?”

Her dignity meant nothing compared to the Spiritual Flame. She would not hesitate to call him ‘Daddy’ or ‘Chieftain.’

“Good girl!” Pleased, Zi Shang tousled Ye Jiuge's hair. After that, he beckoned to the Black Fat Rat, who was curled up in a corner.

“Pipi!”

The rat scuttled over at once. It placed both of its paws in front of its chest and looked at Zi Shang with an obliging expression. She had no idea how Zi Shang and the rat communicated. The Black Fat Rat's furry face was serious. In the end, it raised its right paw and nodded. It squeaked, “Pipi!”

“What are you two doing?” Ye Jiuge could not help but ask.

“Follow it. It will guide you to the Spiritual Flame.” After Zi Shang told her this, he returned to Ye Jiuge's imprint.

“Black Fatty, where is the Spiritual Flame?” Ye Jiuge directed an intense gaze toward the rat.

“Pipi!” The Black Fat Rat waved its flabby paw, then transformed into a stream of light and ran off.

Ye Jiuge followed the Black Fat Rat beyond the capital walls. It ran without stopping to a place situated deep in the mountains three hundred meters away, surrounded by an old forest. She nearly passed out from exhaustion.

“Black Fatty, are you certain that we will find the Heaven and Earth Spiritual Flame in this godforsaken place?” Ye Jiuge wiped the sweat from her forehead while looking at the miserable valley in front of her. The environment was so desolate that even animals would not want to live there.

However, places where things related to the fire element were brought into existence would definitely be concentrated with Spiritual Energy.

Still, this abysmal mountaintop was overgrown with random trees. Vines were everywhere. The entire valley was blanketed with putrefying leaves. The moist air smothered with the stench of decomposition.

If Ye Jiuge hadn't consumed a Poison-resistant Pill, she very likely would have fainted after walking just a few steps.

“Pipi!” the Black Fat Rat squeaked and nodded. Its small, bright black eyes surveyed the place. Its large ears pivoted to and fro before it scampered west.

Ye Jiuge's eyes brightened, and she went after it.

The rat moved like lightning as it darted toward the deeper part of the valley.

Ye Jiuge was right behind it. She trod on the muddy ground and dashed fervently toward the bottom of a cliff. Soon, she saw a deep, gloomy lake.

The lake occupied approximately one-fifteenth of a hectare of land. It was smaller than the one in the Demonic Beasts Forest, but it was just as bottomless.

Ye Jiuge stared at the dark waters of the lake's depths. She felt apprehensive.

The Black Fat Rat dove gracefully into the lake. After that, its chubby belly protruded from the water, and it splashed around leisurely.

“Don’t tell me you came here to take a dip!” Ye Jiuge flung a blade of grass, which was clinging to her hair, at the Fat Black Rat.

“Pipi Jam!” the rat retorted back unhappily. Afterward, it showed its fat rump before swimming to the bottom of the lake.

“Hey, wait a moment. You should give me a piece of Blue Stone first!” Ye Jiuge splashed the water’s surface with her hand as she called out to the rat.

Although she was capable of holding her breath underwater, without the Blue Stone, she would drown—especially if this lake was as deep as the last one.

Unfortunately, the Black Fat Rat did not respond to her, as it had already swum too far away.

Ye Jiuge knitted her brows as she stared at that murky lake.

She silently contemplated whether she should plunge underwater to explore or wait for the rat’s return.

“What are you waiting for? Why are you still lingering here?!” Zi Shang asked.

Ye Jiuge felt a sudden pain on her buttocks before she fell into the lake. She almost suffocated.

She floated to the surface in a disorderly state and wiped the water droplets from her face. She cursed the imprint on her hand, “Are you f*cking out of your mind?” She could not believe that he’d kicked her into the lake.

“I did it for your good,” Zi Shang answered her lazily. He did not feel any remorse.

“Thank you. I do not need it. You can save it for yourself!”

Ye Jiuge spat at the imprint before swimming toward the bank.

“Treasures will never wait around for anyone. If you are still dawdling, even the Black Fat Rat will run from you, let alone the Spiritual Flame,” Zi Shang told her coolly.

“If it wants to run off, then it can go ahead! Who cares?” Although Ye Jiuge said this, she still could not bear with the thought of parting with a Spiritual Rat capable of helping her produce Poison Pills.

After she mulled over it, she held her breath before starting her journey to the bottom of the lake.

As she descended, she discovered that the water here was even colder than in the lake in the Demonic Beasts Forest.

She thought that it was really bizarre that no small fish could be seen swimming around.

Generally, people didn't fish in old lakes situated so deep in the mountains, so there should be an abundance of small fish.

Unless, an unknown creature was eating all the creatures that lived in this lake.

Her heart skipped a beat. She felt an inexplicable sense of uneasiness. Moreover, the oxygen in her lungs was running out. If she continued downward, it would become perilous for her.

Although the Spiritual Flame was critical for her, her delicate life was even more valuable.

Ye Jiuge turned around decisively, thinking about returning to dry land.

Just then, a threatening aura emanated from the shadowy depths.

The currents coursed past her swiftly, as if a mysterious creature were approaching her at a high speed.

The very next moment, a hideous, deformed face with sharp teeth appeared in front of her.

It was a Rank Two Demonic Beast: the Giant Iron-skinned Crocodile.

This type of giant crocodile was extremely ferocious. Any body of water in which it was found would not contain any living creatures.

Its iron skin was exceptionally tough, while its sharp, strong teeth were capable of crunching rocks into smaller fragments. It was dubbed 'The Tyrant' wherever it was found.

On dry land, Ye Jiuge was as invincible as a dragon, but underwater, she was merely a vulnerable worm. She was not able to take on the Giant Iron-skinned Crocodile.

However, looking at the situation, there was no escape. Therefore, she could only put up as much of a fight as she could muster.

Ye Jiuge detached her Lightning Snake Magical Whip from her waist and infused her Spiritual

Energy into it. She lashed the giant crocodile.

The Lightning Snake Magical Whip turned into purple lightning. Although its movements slowed significantly in the lake, she was still able to land the whip right on the Giant Iron-skinned Crocodile.

The Giant Iron-skinned Crocodile writhed in pain. An ominous glint appeared in its eyes. It swished its thick tail before swimming toward Ye Jiuge as fast as a flying arrow.

Ye Jiuge whipped its voracious mouth again. She took advantage of the force from its recoil and drifted backward. She managed to avoid its assault.

The dark-skinned crocodile felt another bout of pain from the Lightning Snake Magical Whip's blow. It became more frenzied. It opened its mouth wide and ejected a jet of water, generating continuous undercurrents.

The impact of the undercurrents caused Ye Jiuge to feel pangs of discomfort in the pit of her stomach. She became unsteady. She knew that if she continued to fight the Giant Iron-skinned Crocodile, it would not bode well for her.

She needed to defeat it as soon as possible.

Ye Jiuge held her Lightning Snake Magical Whip up again and inserted the tip of her finger into the snake's head.

Within the snake's head, there were two fangs. Once they absorbed blood, the Demonic Weapon's Seal would be undone immediately. However, she could only undo the seal once a day.

"Undo your seal, Lightning Snake Magical Whip!" Ye Jiuge commanded inwardly.

Once the fangs tasted blood, the eyes on the snake's head glowed, and a menacing aura instantly radiated from it.

It was like a fierce, starving beast that had been imprisoned for far too long with nothing but the thought of devouring every living creature on its mind.

Initially, the Giant Iron-skinned Crocodile was aggressively trying to gobble Ye Jiuge up.

When it sensed the Lightning Snake Magical Whip's bloodthirsty aura, it flicked its tail and attempted to flee.

In a flash, the Lightning Snake Magical Whip increased in size. It transformed into a long,

poisonous snake with silver scales. Immediately, it pierced its way through the entire Giant Iron-skinned Crocodile.

The Giant Iron-skinned Crocodile exploded. Its blood dyed the water red.

The Lightning Snake Magical Whip swam around the lake, greedily swallowing the blood.

With the crisis averted, Ye Jiuge relaxed. She realized that the level of oxygen in her lungs was getting low. If she were not able to inhale some fresh air, she would die from oxygen deprivation.

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“Little Dumb Dumb, if you needed mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, why didn’t you ask me?” Zi Shang materialized in the lake, blithely swaying his long, inky snake tail. He drew Ye Jiuge close, watching over her protectively.

His skin glowed faintly like a piece of jade.

His dazzling face, which had always been incomparably handsome, was similar to an underwater Devil’s Snare in full bloom.

Those purple eyes, in particular, had pupils that shimmered like the most beautiful crystals. They contained sharp glints that viewed everything in the periphery with visible disdain.

He was as alluring as a water deity, whose arrival illuminated the entire murky lake reeking of blood.

Even though Ye Jiuge was used to Zi Shang’s good looks, she could still not help herself from being captivated by him.

“Do you want it or not?” Zi Shang smiled.

She thought, Of course!

As Ye Jiuge almost suffocated to death, she no longer bothered upholding her sense of dignity.

She grabbed Zi Shang's arm before sinking her teeth into his mouth viciously.

She wished to thrust into his mouth and entwine her tongue with his forked tongue so that he would not desert her.

Zi Shang was extremely pleased that Ye Jiuge had initiated their act of intimacy so enthusiastically.

His long snake tail wrapped around her tightly. He held her in his embrace before they sank together to the bottom of the lake.

Zi Shang's cool lips were quite soft with a hint of faint fragrance. She could not stop kissing him, even if she wanted to.

Once Ye Jiuge recovered her senses after such extreme difficulty breathing, she felt absolute bliss. Her head was dizzy, while her entire body was limp. She even felt oddly pleased.

That must be why certain perverted individuals loved erotic asphyxiation. It was indeed a very interesting experience. However, it was not something that she wanted to try again.

They had already reached the deepest part of the lake and set their eyes on an underwater trough with an exceptionally sinister atmosphere and a strange, foul stench. This stretch of the underwater trough was so dark that she'd have to explore it blind. Normally, this would have terrified her. However, because she was focused on Zi Shang's handsome face, Ye Jiuge was utterly oblivious to her eerie surroundings.

All she saw was Zi Shang's mesmerizing purple eyes, his straight nose, rosy lips, and the mysterious, exquisite demonic patterns on his body.

Ye Jiuge had no clue that, in Zi Shang's eyes, she was beautiful and enchanting in ways that affected him emotionally, just like a blooming white lotus.

This underwater trough seemed endless.

After half an hour, Ye Jiuge started to feel herself running out of oxygen again. She had no choice but to seek Zi Shang's help to save her own life.

Their bodies were entwined, one on top of the other. The act of them nuzzling each other in the lake evoked an inexplicable, ambiguous sense of romance.

Before this, their mouth-to-mouth resuscitation had been purely innocent. Gradually, it turned into something slightly different.

Ye Jiuge could feel that Zi Shang was teasing her flirtatiously.

In the beginning, the soft, forked tongue had just experimentally skimmed her sensitive palate.

When she did not shy away from him, he became bolder and engaged her little tongue in a dance.

Ye Jiuge was actually against making out underwater. What should she do if Zi Shang accidentally sucked all the oxygen out of her?

However, she could not resist Zi Shang's experienced provocation. He toyed with her tongue in between the mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. In catching their breaths, he insisted on making her lose herself in their passion. She did not even realize that they were no longer at the bottom of the lake.

After hearing a splash, Ye Jiuge finally came back to herself. She pushed away Zi Shang, who was pressed against her tightly, before discovering that she'd ended up in a creepy cavern. Before her eyes, there were mountains and mountains of skeletons. The decomposed corpses of beasts towered ominously over them.

In the dark cavern, a cold draft blew past them. It even carried the fetid smell of decay. It made her blood run cold.

"If you feel scared, hug me tight!" Zi Shang made it clear to her that she could always find comfort in his arms.

"Tch, I have seen more bones than salt in my lifetime. What is there to be afraid of!" She was just a little surprised.

Ye Jiuge surveyed the area and discovered that the Fat Black Rat was lying on its stomach in a corner, so she struggled out of Zi Shang's embrace and stepped onto dry land.

She saw that the rat was casually sprawled over an unremarkable piece of bone.

The bone was only as long as an adult's arm. Compared to the large bones nearby, which had unnerved her, its appearance had no unique or distinctive features. There was nothing about it that was worthy of attention.

"Black Fatty, why did you lie down here?" Ye Jiuge held the rodent up by its neck and asked.

The Fat Black Rat disregarded Ye Jiuge. Eager to please Zi Shang, who was slowly swimming toward them, it looked at him and used its chubby paw to point at the bone repeatedly, as if it were

presenting him with treasure. It squeaked, "Pipi!"

Zi Shang assessed that bone with his impassive, purple eyes. He commented indifferently, "Acceptable!"

Ye Jiuge's interest was piqued. An object that Zi Shang thought was noteworthy would, undoubtedly, be anything but ordinary!

She activated her Spiritual Eye and examined the bone carefully. She detected a flickering orb of light beneath the bone, similar to a flame.

Bingo! she thought.

Ye Jiuge infused the Lightning Snake Magical Whip with her Spiritual Energy and lashed the bone. A wisp of sinister, bone-chilling Spectral Flame emerged slowly from the fracture!

It was a Rank-three Spectral Flame—the White Bone Flame!

Although this Spectral Flame's rank was considered low, it had unique abilities, which other flames that were Yang in nature lacked entirely.

As the Spectral Flame had thrived amidst the abundant bones that were several thousand years old, it could absorb different kinds of grudges, unholy energy, and the life forces of ghosts. Therefore, its special attacks with dark attributes were terrifying.

Anyone who was burned by a Spectral Flame would suffer from a serious illness as if possessed by a ghost.

Other than that, if she used this Spectral Flame to produce various Yin Spiritual Pills, the resulting Spectral Spiritual Pills would have greatly enhanced potency.

If Ye Yu, an assassin who worked stealthily in the dark, could consume these Yin Spiritual Pills as a supplement during his cultivation process, his cultivation would considerably expedite.

The most important thing was that the White Bone Flame could become more powerful. If she could evolve it into the Spectral Flame of the Netherworld, it would not be inferior to Red Lotus Lightning Flame.

Then, she would possess the Red Lotus Lightning Flame, the Spectral Flame of the Netherworld, and the Lightning Fire Needle. Such a glorious sight!

As long as it still had potential, even though the process for advancing the White Bone Flame in

rank would be extremely time-consuming, she would be undeterred.

“Can I ingest this flame?”

Ye Jiuge excitedly watched the sinister, faintly-burning white Spectral Flame.

“Of course. Just absorb it here!” Zi Shang stood behind Ye Jiuge and drew up protective spells to keep her safe from harm.

In her heart, Ye Jiuge suppressed her euphoria forcefully. She formed the Spirit Attraction Technique with both her hands before attempting to absorb the White Bone Flame.

Since the White Bone Flame had been in this place for more than a few thousand years, it was not be willing to assimilate into Ye Jiuge’s body. It turned away, planning its escape.

“I want you to come here!” Ye Jiuge shot a beam of Spiritual Light at it, forcibly drawing it into her.

After Ye Jiuge absorbed the White Bone Flame, her expression became even more serious.

Ingesting the flame was merely the first step. Her highest priority right now was taming it.

Ye Jiuge manipulated her Spiritual Force and began to subdue the White Bone Flame.

In the beginning, the White Bone Flame was quite well-behaved. It followed Ye Jiuge’s Spiritual Force to her Elixir Field.

Afterward, she only needed to mark the White Bone Flame with her Cognitive Imprint before completing the subjugation process.

Then, an explosive sound suddenly came from the White Bone Flame. It released an icy aura in a stream, which traveled along Ye Jiuge’s meridians, spreading rapidly through her body.

Ye Jiuge promptly exerted more pressure to suppress the icy aura. Out of desperation, the flame spewed even more of its icy aura into her body.

As the White Bone Flame struggled to break free, Ye Jiuge’s Spiritual Force expended a considerable amount of her energy. At this rate, her Spiritual Energy would be exhausted very soon.

When that time arrived, she would not be able to restrain the White Bone Flame. It would set her inner body on fire until her entire body was burned to ashes.

Ye Jiuge could not help but shiver. During a moment of absent-mindedness, countless apparitions suddenly appeared before her eyes.

Ominous winds blew ceaselessly. Legions of ghosts wailed collectively, and the Main Gates of Hell opened slowly.

An endless numbers of spirits snatched at Ye Jiuge's legs and neck, trying to pull her to Hell.

Ye Jiuge went numb with fear. She could not stop herself from shrieking.

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Zi Shang watched her from the side with indifference. He had no intention of helping her. If she could not even subdue this puny White Bone Flame, she should not even consider taming the Red Lotus Lightning Flame.

Ye Jiuge could feel Zi Shang's disparaging stare. She came to her senses immediately. Vicious anger sparked within her. She thought: If Zi Shang is the one walking all over me, then fine. For a pathetic, impertinent flame, you to have the audacity to treat me with such insolence? Do you really think that I am a frail, helpless cat?

Ye Jiuge summoned all the Spiritual Energy she possessed. In her body, she formed a silver miniature version of the Lightning Snake Magical Whip. The smaller Lightning Snake Magical Whip opened its insatiable mouth murderously wide in a violent manner, just like a wild beast escaped from the abyss.

"If you refuse to be obedient, I will eat you up!" Ye Jiuge conveyed her ruthless murderous intent to the White Bone Flame clearly through the Lightning Snake Magical Whip.

She already owned an unruly Demonic Weapon, the Lightning Snake Magical Whip; she did not want another recalcitrant Spiritual Flame in her possession.

Once the White Bone Flame sensed Ye Jiuge's murderous intent, it immediately transformed into a small skeleton. It curled itself up in her Elixir Field and hugged its knees, trembling in fear. It was as if it were a small child being threatened by an evil bully.

Ye Jiuge knew that this was a sign of submission from the White Bone Flame. She seized the opportunity to mark it with her Cognitive Imprint.

After she managed to tame the White Bone Flame successfully, the energy, which had emanated from that extremely icy aura earlier, was converted into pure Spiritual Energy. This had allowed her to directly advance from a Beginner to an Intermediate Level Spiritual Practitioner.

She thought: As expected, it is truly a treasure!

Ye Jiuge was in a good mood. She reached out with her slender index finger.

Before her eyes, a faint wisp of ghastly white fire appeared. It illumined her face and imbued it with a sense of abnormal beauty. She was similar to a white lotus that had bloomed in a pool filled with the blood and bones of the dead. The juxtaposition between the dark colors and the white lotus accentuated the flower's beauty, and Ye Jiuge was even more untainted and ethereal than the goddesses from the Ninth Heaven. She was truly stunning.

Ye Jiuge did not realize that she had gained a closer resemblance to those women who pretended to be sweet and innocent but were scheming and manipulative in reality.

After she put the White Bone Flame away, she examined the White Bone Cavern carefully. Other than the skeletons of dead Iron-skinned Crocodiles, it was empty. It seemed that this cavern was the final resting place of Iron-skinned Crocodiles. Every Iron-skinned Crocodile that was nearing its death came to this place to draw its last breath. If this were the case, then a new Iron-skinned Crocodile would be making its way here soon to guard its grave.

When this occurred to Ye Jiuge, she had a strong desire to leave. Suddenly, the Lightning Snake Magical Whip wriggled free from Ye Jiuge's hand. It shifted its form into a gigantic python. After that, it opened its mouth wide and devoured every bone in the Iron-skinned Crocodile's graveyard.

"What is happening now?" Ye Jiuge turned to ask Zi Shang.

"After it satisfied you, you won't allow it to feast on your leftovers?" Zi Shang wrapped himself around Ye Jiuge. He rested his chin on her head, as if he were boneless.

“Are you telling me that it’s healing itself?” Ye Jiuge’s eyes brightened.

“After a Demonic Weapon such as the Lightning Snake Magical Whip recognizes someone as its owner, it develops an awareness to mend itself. Since the Spiritual Energy from the bones in this place have coalesced into a Spiritual Flame, they contain a great deal of Spiritual Energy. This can help to repair the Lightning Snake Magical Whip’s defects.”

As Zi Shang explained, he used his chin to nudge Ye Jiuge’s head. Although Zi Shang’s sharp chin made Ye Jiuge feel pain in her head, when she heard that the Lightning Snake Magical Whip would advance to a higher rank, she beamed. That must be why Spiritual Practitioners loved to embark on treasure hunts. Indeed, one could start out with nothing and end up with unimaginable riches and valuables. This time, she had not only procured the White Bone Flame, she had also restored her Demonic Weapon at the same time. She really felt as though she had struck gold!

After the Lightning Snake Magical Whip wolfed down every bone, it returned to Ye Jiuge’s hand. The hues of its scales became more layered, and there was an indication that it would grow a fourth section. It looked as though it had gained improved intellectual capabilities.

Pleased, Ye Jiuge caressed the Lightning Snake Magical Whip before attaching it to her waist.

At that moment, the Black Fat Rat, which was standing by her side, squeaked in dissatisfaction, “Pipi!”

Every one of you has benefited from this, now what about me?

“Just tell me, what do you want?” Right now, Ye Jiuge was in an excellent mood.

She was well aware that it had been thanks the Black Fat Rat that she’d been able to find the White Bone Flame. Naturally, she needed to reward it generously.

“Pipi!” The Black Fat Rat pointed at Ye Jiuge’s finger before revealing its little sharp white teeth. After that, it nibbled its small paws and made a sucking gesture.

“You wished to feed on my blood?” Ye Jiuge understood it instantly.

She never thought that her blood was so impressive that even the Black Fat Rat coveted it.

“Pipi Jam!” The Black Fat Rat nodded, blinking its large eyes pleadingly.

Before Ye Jiuge could agree to its request, a savage, terrifying aura penetrated the air.

“You dare to sink your teeth into my woman? How bold of you!” Zi Shang lifted his hand, using his

intangible force to choke the Black Fat Rat as it ascended midair.

“Pipi...” The Black Fat Rat was so frightened that it stuffed both of its chubby paws into its mouth.

Its large eyes glistened with tears and it looked at Ye Jiuge pitifully.

“That’s enough. A true man would never intimidate a rat. That is not an admirable act. Moreover, it wanted my blood, not yours.”

Ye Jiuge tapped Zi Shang’s arm. She still needed to depend on the Black Fat Rat to purify the poison she needed for pill-making.

She thought: What if Zi Shang causes it to flee in fear?

Zi Shang narrowed his eyes at Ye Jiuge. He did not make any move to let the Black Fat Rat down. Instead, he asked it threateningly, “Do you still want to drink her blood now?”

“Pi, pi, pi, pi!” The Black Fat Rat shook its head fervently with humble repentance.

Only after this did Zi Shang place the Black Fat Rat down. The Black Fat Rat picked itself up and ran back to Ye Jiuge’s pocket.

Ye Jiuge patted the pocket lightly, before telling the rat secretly, “Don’t worry. When Zi Shang falls into another deep sleep, I will feed you without his knowledge!”

“Let me warn you that you better not have such thoughts!” Zi Shang narrowed his purple irises as he said coldly. “This Spiritual Rat’s origins are unknown. Until you know its history inside out, you better not get so close to it.”

“It’s merely a Black Fat Rat. What is there to be concerned about?” Ye Jiuge felt that Zi Shang was making a mountain out of a molehill.

This Black Fat Rat was so weak; it did not have slightest bit of power to attack her. It would not cause any trouble.

“Do not forget about our agreement. Every drop of blood in your body belongs to me. If you dare to take me lightly and act without my permission, you will only have yourself to blame when I have my way with you.”

When Zi Shang saw that Ye Jiuge was still objecting to him, a dangerous glint flitted past his eyes. He hugged her before holding her down against his lower body. The punishment that he was implying was evident.

Ye Jiuge could clearly feel two solid bulges prodding her back. She recalled something she'd heard: Snakes have two hemipenes...

Instantly, Ye Jiuge felt numbness in her skull. She promised him quickly, "I won't do it. I won't do it."

"Are you absolutely certain?" Although Zi Shang sounded smug, his voice carried a little disappointment.

"I really won't." She thought: So, can you please retract those unwelcome, large hemipenes of yours at once?

Zi Shang curved his red lips, before releasing Ye Jiuge slowly from his grasp.

Actually, he'd never thought of doing anything to Ye Jiuge in this godforsaken place. He was merely teasing her. However, this was also Ye Jiuge's fault. This idiot was too stubborn. He could only threaten her in this way to make her listen to him. She'd landed herself in this situation.

Ye Jiuge furtively breathed a sigh of relief. However, she did not want to remain in this grim place any longer.

She refused to press herself against Zi Shang during her return to the surface. She took the Black Fat Rat out from her pocket and said, "I used a Blue Stone last time. Do you still have any left? Give me one."

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The Black Fat Rat eyed Zi Shang. When it saw that he raised no objections, it unenthusiastically

retrieved a piece of Blue Stone from its little Bestial Pouch, before tossing it to Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge swallowed the Blue Stone. Then, she said to Zi Shang, "Let's go!"

Without further ado, Zi Shang went into the water with Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge's heart was set on returning to her residence at the speed of light, so she swam back to the bank quicker than the time it had taken her to travel from the lake's shore to its bottom.

After Zi Shang followed Ye Jiuge to dry land, he patted her head warmly and said, "Since you have the Spiritual Flame in your possession now, you should return to your residence obediently and produce some pills!"

Ye Jiuge did not dare provoke the snake with the large hemipenes, so she nodded compliantly. Satisfied, Zi Shang returned to the imprint. As Ye Jiuge breathed a sigh of relief, she couldn't help but feel glad. Luckily, Zi Shang had not completely recovered his Demonic Power yet. Hence, the time he had to torment her each day was limited. If he could appear beside her twenty-four hours a day, that would be her worst nightmare.

Within Ye Jiuge's imprint, a shrunken Zi Shang was preparing to cultivate when he read Ye Jiuge's thoughts. He could not help but smile.

Since Ye Jiuge was looking forward to having him follow her around relentlessly like a shadow, he should not disappoint Little Dumb Dumb! Unbeknownst to Ye Jiuge, her 'nightmare' was near.

She could not wait to return to the Zilin Residence so that she could start producing pills.

Not long after Ye Jiuge left the deep lake, a smear of pink appeared in front of it. A faint, foul smell of blood came from the girl's body. Wild beasts from the surrounding valley caught her scent and hunted her down, but she killed them quickly. In the end, they became clots of blood on her hands.

"Little Darling, after you drink this blood, you should hurry up and bring me to the Spiritual Flame."

This pink-clad young lady, who was smiling sweetly, was the Bloodthirsty Sect's female disciple, Liu Yunfei.

She held a palm-sized purple scorpion in her fair hand. After it devoured the congealed blood, its long scorpion tail pointed toward the bottom of the lake.

"As it turns out, it is located in the lake's bed. It never occurred to me that, in such a godforsaken place on the Capital's outskirts, a Spiritual Flame might exist."

Liu Yunfei smiled in satisfaction. After leaving Bloodcloud Peak, she'd ridden her horse at full speed to the Capital. At first, she'd wanted to find Su Junqing directly to understand the situation. She'd never expected that, when she was nearby, her Treasure-hunting Scorpion would suddenly become restless and bring her running all the way here.

"Lead the way." Liu Yunfei snapped her fingers.

The Treasure-hunting Scorpion leaped into the deep lake and swam toward the bottom.

Liu Yunfei went after it without any hesitation. Soon after they reached lake's bed, she smelled the faint metallic stench of blood. It was undeniable that there'd been a fight. Not only that, it had not been long since it had happened.

She thought: Don't tell me that someone else got their hands on the treasure first!

Liu Yunfei's expression was dark. She expedited her movements as she followed the Treasure-hunting Scorpion to a desolate cavern. She looked up and down, front to back, left and right, and turned the place upside down. Other than a pile of broken bones, there was nothing.

"D*amn it. Who snatched my treasure away?" Liu Yunfei was so furious that her expression was feral. She slammed the cavern wall with her palm, creating a hole.

She thought: Something is amiss. That person cannot have traveled far yet. If I chase them down now, I will be able to catch up in time.

"Bring me to the person who took away the White Bone Flame." Liu Yunfei punctured the tip of her finger with her teeth and dribbled a drop of blood on the Treasure-hunting Scorpion.

The essence of her blood was exponentially more potent than the blood of the wild beasts she had killed earlier. A beam of red light shone from the Treasure-hunting Scorpion's body. Its scorpion tail swayed from side to side. Finally, it pointed east, the direction in which Ye Jiuge had headed when she left.

Liu Yunfei plunged into the deep lake again, planning to get to dry land so that she could pursue whomever the person was. However, she was stalled by an Iron-skinned Crocodile, which came after her due to the smell of her blood.

She did not have enough spare time to engage the Iron-skinned Crocodile in combat. She raised her hand and hurled a mass of coagulated blood in the opposite direction. The Spiritual Blood's sweet fragrance attracted the Iron-skinned Crocodile. It pounced immediately.

Liu Yunfei swiftly returned to the bank. However, by this time, the Treasure-hunting Scorpion had

lost track of Ye Jiuge.

Although the Treasure-hunting Scorpion was a Spiritual Beast, it could only sense the White Bone Flame within a radius of 5 kilometers. Right now, the distance between the White Bone Flame's location and the Treasure-hunting Scorpion had already exceeded the scope of its abilities.

"D*mn it, d*mn it, d*mn it!" Consumed by rage, Liu Yunfei jumped into the water, rushed to the bottom of the deep lake, and tied up the Iron-skinned Crocodile.

The Iron-skinned Crocodile was skinned alive, and its tendons were ripped off its bones. After that, she stomped on it repeatedly until it became a patty—only then was the bitterness in her heart eased.

"It's your fault that I am completely drenched in blood." Liu Yunfei sent the Iron-skinned Crocodile flying with a kick. She took a clean set of clothes from her Magical Bottomless Satchel and changed into them. Then, she continued her journey to the Capital.

Ye Jiuge was unaware that an innocent Iron-skinned Crocodile had been tortured to death because of her. She was currently preparing to use her White Bone Flame to produce a Rank Three Mind-clearing Pill. Essence of Goldthread Rhizome, Icy Mint, Mind-sobering Herb...One by one, Ye Jiuge threw the ingredients into the small bronze cauldron. After that, she summoned the White Bone Flame and started to produce her pill.

As expected, using the Spiritual Flame to aid her pill production process felt different. In the past, the small, inferior cauldron not only took a long time to work, but it was also inefficient. Now, it rotated much faster.

The impurities in those Medicinal Herbs spun in the centrifuge at a high speed. The result was a green solution with a slight fragrance.

When the production process was almost complete, Ye Jiuge called for the Black Fat Rat, as usual, to help her to purify the solution from its poison.

"Pipi!" the Black Fat Rat did not even raise its head as it replied to her glumly. It hugged its small tail and curled up into a furry black ball. It was as if it were telling her that it was not in a good mood, so she should not bother it.

Ye Jiuge could empathize with the rat's depressed feeling. It had gone through a lot of trouble for her in guiding her search for the treasure. Everyone else had reaped the benefits of the effort, and it had merely wished to suck some of her blood. As soon as it had asked her for it, Zi Shang had threatened it. Unsurprisingly, it was unhappy. However, regardless of how much Ye Jiuge understood the Black Fat Rat's feelings, she did not dare give it her blood. Zi Shang's two large

hemipenes were quite intimidating to her.

Fortunately, she had used the White Bone Flame in the furnace to produce the Mind-clearing Pill. The final product was of an acceptable quality. Even though the Black Fat Rat did not help her refine the poison from the pill, the pill was still a better Rank-two Spiritual Pill, compared to similar pills of the same rank.

After Ye Jiuge used a jade bottle to store the pale green Medicinal Pill, she left the Pill Production Room to rest in her room. Then, she suddenly sensed a shadow moving slightly beside the door. She halted her footsteps and demanded, "Ye Yu, why are you here?"

"Eldest Miss, how did you notice me?" Ye Yu showed himself. His handsome face was filled with amazement.

Ever since he had turned into a Shadow Assassin, as long as nothing seemed out of place, there was practically no one who could discover his presence.

"You tell me." Ye Jiuge gave him the smile of someone who had just progressed in their cultivation.

Ye Yu looked at her carefully. He only now realized that Ye Jiuge had already advanced to an Intermediate Level Spiritual Practitioner. He cupped his hands in obeisance and said, "Congratulations, Eldest Miss, for successfully moving to a higher level."

"Thank you very much!" Ye Jiuge's tender, rosy lips curved slightly. She flashed him a modest smile.

Ye Jiuge's smile caused Ye Yu to feel a little dizzy. He had no idea if the dizziness was due to the moon or if Ye Jiuge just looked exceptionally beautiful tonight. Like an elf during a moonlit night, she was so ethereal that she didn't look like a real human.

"It is quite late now. What's the matter?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"There's something I need to report to you." Ye Yu snapped out of his mesmerized state immediately and spoke to her with a serious expression.

"Then, come in!" Ye Jiuge turned around to return to the Pill Production Room. She informed Ye Yu, "Sit where you like."

Ye Yu swept his eyes over the cluttered Pill Production Room and thought to himself that there was barely a place to stand, much less to sit. Ye Jiuge pushed some things off a stool roughly and forced them into a corner, attempting to clear a place for him.

"It's fine. I'll stand." Ye Yu stopped Ye Jiuge hurriedly, so that she would not violently tear down the entire place.

"Alright!" Ye Jiuge gave up on tidying. She turned to ask him, "Tell me, why are you here?"

"Today, in the afternoon, a young lady wearing a pink dress visited Su Junqing," Ye Yu said with a grave expression

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"Did I not ask you to stay away from Su Junqing?" Ye Jiuge furrowed her brow. This fellow, Ye Yu, was too willful. What if that psychopath, Su Junqing, had discovered him?

"I did not go anywhere near him. The rats that keep watch near the Su Residence told me," Ye Yu explained quickly.

When he'd helped Ye Jiuge spread some rumors before, he'd become acquainted with the unseen amoral side of the Capital. Now, he used their influence to complete the task. He'd never thought that those informants would respectfully regard him as their leader and help him spy on the Su Residence, gathering information on their own accord.

The informants had passed him this news.

"I see!" Ye Jiuge's expression relaxed. Slightly puzzled, she asked, "Can you describe the lady who went to see Su Junqing?"

Su Junqing had always been indifferent toward women, and never interacted with them intimately. She'd never heard of a woman visiting him at his residence.

"I was told that she was a very beautiful girl with a sweet smile. Her age was roughly eighteen. She did not have a local accent. At that time, Su Junqing welcomed her personally at the door. He seemed to treat her with utmost deference." Ye Yu paused for a moment, before continuing, "I rushed over immediately once I found out. When I reached the doorstep, I detected a smell very similar to Su Junqing's. Both reeked of blood, and the stench was imbued with an unholy aura. It must have come from that lady."

Recently, Ye Yu had made a great deal of progress with his cultivation. He was becoming more and more sensitive to the presence of wicked energy or the smell of blood.

"I think that the lady also practiced Black Magic." Ye Jiuge thought of the Empress, whose plans faced constant setbacks, and wondered if she were the one who'd summoned her to the Capital.

"How about allowing me to investigate further?" Ye Yu asked tentatively.

All this while, Ye Jiuge had refused to let him go near the Su Residence. He would not dare to go against her word and act rashly.

Ye Jiuge thought about it for a moment, before shaking her head. "Lately, the authorities are cracking down hard on Black Magic practices in the Capital. This lady blatantly appeared in front of the Su Residence. She exuded such a heavy smell. It was really abnormal."

"You mean, this could be a trap?" Ye Yu understood her instantly.

"It is highly likely." Ye Jiuge nodded.

As the sorceress had traveled to the Capital at this particular time, it was very likely that she was here to find Su Junqing and look into Xu Hansen's murder. It would not be out of place to think that Su Junqing might take this opportunity to devise a plot to use the sorceress to deal with them.

Just as Ye Jiuge and Ye Yu were trying to determine what Su Junqing was trying to achieve, Su Junqing was welcoming Liu Yunfei into his study in an obsequious manner.

"You've furnished this place quite well!" Liu Yunfei eyed the tastefully decorated study in front of her. She reached out to toy around with a row of neatly arranged writing brushes.

"Senior, it is still quite lacking." Su Junqing wore a golden coronet on his head and white clothes on his body. He presented himself as a gentle and cultured man who was considered to be an outstanding individual. He did not give the impression that he was a disciple of the Bloodthirsty

Sect.

Liu Yunfei played with the ends of her black hair, and her gleaming eyes were fixed on Su Junqing. Her dainty pink tongue ran over her lips lightly, suggesting a tacit implication.

Su Junqing felt as if he were a frog being preyed upon by a poisonous snake. A layer of cold sweat seeped out from his back instantly.

Although he rarely returned to Bloodthirsty Sect, he'd briefly heard about this Senior who loved to collect the skins of beautiful women.

Other than her thirst for blood, he also knew that she would practice certain kinds of Black Magic involving sexual intercourse.

Several good-looking male disciples in the Bloodthirsty Sect had mysteriously died.

The male disciples that were still alive dressed themselves from head to toe in an unkempt manner. They kept a respectful distance from her. Even the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, who loved pretty women, did not dare make any sexual advances toward Liu Yunfei.

"Junior, why are you sweating so much?" Liu Yunfei drew herself nearer to Su Junqing and rested her small, soft hand on his shoulder. Her voice was as sweet as honey.

"It's probably because of the hot weather. Senior, you must be tired from the long journey. Why don't you have a drink first to alleviate your fatigue?" Su Junqing turned around calmly, before taking a tall, long-stemmed glass from a secret compartment in the study.

It reeked of dark red blood, which it was completely filled with. The flickering, yellow candlelight that reflected on it shone eerily.

"Spiritual Blood from a virgin with an Earth Spiritual Root, not bad!" Liu Yunfei reclined on a chair. Her eyes were still glued to Su Junqing. It was obvious that she was more interested in him.

"Senior, you are certainly well-versed." Su Junqing poured Liu Yunfei a cup, smiling. "I don't have any fine delicacies here. For my sake, I hope that Senior will accept this."

"Junior, you are really too modest." Liu Yunfei pursed her lips slightly as she took a sip. After that, she gave him a false smile as she said, "Such an excellent drink. Even the Patriarch would not be able to get his hands on this!"

"Senior, you are teasing me. At the Patriarch's place, you can obtain the blood of any attractive individuals that you want, regardless of the type of Spiritual Root. You can even obtain them fresh,

unlike here in my shabby home. Once I have procured a small amount of Spiritual Blood, I will have to stow it away and drink it sparingly.” Su Junqing smiled faintly.

He indicated that he had drawn this Spiritual Blood discreetly from living humans before storing it.

It was not uncommon for members of the Bloodthirsty Sect to perform such acts for their own benefit.

Females with a Spiritual Root were highly sought after. If the Bloodthirsty Sect’s disciples wished to find one, it could be challenging. Usually, they would extract some blood behind the Patriarch’s back before presenting the woman to him as an offering.

“Heh, heh. I’ve heard that Junior is extremely capable. Last time, your beautiful lady with the Metal Spiritual Root not only pleased the Patriarch, even I was very interested when I met her. I also found out that Junior snared that lady with his Mental Manipulation. When do you plan to find one for me too?”

Liu Yunfei peered at him through a half-lidded gaze. Her blood-stained lips were extremely seductive. Every part of her was so mesmerizing that it was as if she were the reincarnation of a succubus.

In that instant, Su Junqing felt his mind sway slightly. However, he was able to clear his head quickly. Immediately afterward, he felt astonished.

He’d never thought that the Mental Manipulation abilities of this witch, Liu Yunfei, were so powerful.

If he had not recently achieved a higher level of cultivation, he would have been entranced.

He did not dare act as if he were in his right mind. Instead, he continued to pretend that he was confused. He asked, “May I know which beautiful lady Senior is referring to?”

“The beautiful lady with a red mole between her eyebrows!” Liu Yunfei pinched and squeezed Su Junqing’s handsome face with her soft, supple fingers. She feigned disappointment with a coquettish tone, “You really have no conscience. It did not take you long to forget her.”

Other than Ye Yunzhi, there were no other beautiful ladies with a Metal Spiritual Root and a red mole between their eyebrows.

As soon as Su Junqing was reminded of Ye Yunzhi, the smile on his face almost cracked.

All these years, he had pulled the wool over many eyes so that he could help the Patriarch acquire

many beautiful women with Spiritual Roots. Without a doubt, Ye Yunzhi was the most memorable of them all.

What had made her special was neither her Spiritual Root's power nor her peerless beauty. It was the fact that Ye Yunzhi had become pregnant with his child after their wedding night.

Ye Yunzhi's lovely face, when she'd been pregnant, flashed into his mind. In the depths of his heart, he suddenly felt a sense of grief and regret.

At that time, he'd truly wanted to hide Ye Yunzhi's existence from the Bloodthirsty Sect and allow her give birth to their child safely.

He'd never thought that, when she'd found out that the Ye Clan had been massacred, she'd go so far as to abort their child.

When Su Junqing recalled the mangled, bloodied mass—his unborn child—he could not help but clench his fists.

He did not need a b*tch who'd broken from his control.

Therefore, he had not hesitated to send Ye Yunzhi to the Bloodthirsty Patriarch. At first, he thought that she would die shortly, just like the other women in the past. He'd never foreseen her living to this day. Contrary to his expectations, she was quite tenacious.

Liu Yunfei kept observing Su Junqing's expression.

When she saw his vindictive, resentful face, which was not any different to the other Bloodthirsty Sect's scum, she lost her interest immediately.

Liu Yunfei's sweet face vanished at once. She told him impatiently, "This time, I am here to investigate the cause of Elderly Lady Xu and Xu Hansen's deaths. I want you to tell me everything that has happened."

Liu Yunfei's abrupt change in demeanor perplexed Su Junqing. However, her current indifference was much more manageable than when she'd been deliberately seducing him. Therefore, he straightened his face and said, "Both Elderly Lady Xu and Xu Hansen were killed by Ye Jiuge, Wan Ziyang, and Bai Songling."

"Give me more information about them." Liu Yunfei drank the Spiritual Blood nonchalantly.

Su Junqing told her everything about the trio, including their backgrounds.

"Ye Jiuge is Great Master Yun's granddaughter, Wan Ziyang holds a considerable amount of power and influence in the Justice Department, while Bai Songling is the Dongling Prince's trusted aide. You want me to lay a finger on these three? Are you itching to let others find out about our existence as a sect that practices Black Magic?" Liu Yunfei's gaze immediately became dangerous.

Although she was full of herself, she was not brainless.

The practices of Black Magic Cultivation were extremely heinous and inhumane. For a long time, they had been a thorn in the Righteous Spiritual Practitioners' side. Otherwise, the Bloodthirsty Sect would not have been forced to deep hide within the mountains in isolation.

Emperor Xuanwu had decreed that all Black Magic Practitioners in the kingdom should be hunted and arrested. If Lin Yunfei continued to garner attention by messing with them, she would just provide the Righteous Spiritual Practitioners with something else to hold against them.

"Senior, please quell your anger and take a moment to listen to me..." Su Junqing laid out his plan.

After Liu Yunfei heard everything, she could not help but give Su Junqing the once-over. She smiled and said, "I've really underestimated you. Junior, you are really a brilliant, capable disciple. It's amazing that you could even think of such an idea."

"Senior, you flatter me. I am also doing this for the Bloodthirsty Sect's benefit. As soon as we get rid of these people, I can guarantee that Emperor Xuanwu will not dare mention the words 'Black Magic' again," Su Junqing said confidently.

He'd racked his brains to come up with this ploy to turn the tables and eliminate those threats.

"Alright, then I shall act according to your plan." Liu Yunfei nodded. She could not care less.

"Senior, I am extremely thankful for your support." Su Junqing performed a fist and palm salute before saying, "Senior, I am afraid that you attracted some attention when you showed up at the Su Residence today. Perhaps, they will send some scouts to investigate. I want to request, Senior, that you do me a favor."

"Why? You can't even handle a few scouts?" Liu Yunfei swirled the blood in the glass before taking another sip of the Spiritual Blood.

"Senior, forgive me for my shortcomings. Other scouts do not faze me. However, there's a particular scout who is incredibly difficult to deal with." Su Junqing sighed before saying, "His name is Ye Yu. He has already advanced into a Shadow Assassin and is capable of sneaking in and out of the residence without a trace. He is really giving me a headache."

"Interesting. I love meeting such thrilling opponents." Liu Yunfei licked the corner of her bloody lips like a cat that has detected the smell of fish.

"With your help, that scout will surely die." Although Su Junqing wore a smile on his face, he kept sizing up Liu Yunfei, discreetly.

He noticed that her irises were becoming progressively red. This clearly indicated that she had cultivated her Bloodthirsty Skill to the Third Level.

If he could absorb her power, his cultivation would take a giant leap forward and reach the level of a Spiritual Master. Then, his Mental Manipulation would become even more powerful.

Su Junqing felt a burning desire for that possibility, but he quickly placed the thought in the back of his mind.

If Liu Yunfei discovered that this had crossed his mind, it was very likely that she would devour him first.

It was too risky to be around a woman like her. He should send her away as soon as possible.

Su Junqing and Liu Yunfei appeared to be getting along with each other, regardless of their differences.

Meanwhile, a disagreement was taking place between Ye Jiuge and Ye Yu.

“Eldest Miss, the set-up was merely your conjecture. Despite walking on thin ice, this Black Magic Practitioner still entered the Capital. Without a doubt, there is something odd about this. I still think that we need to find out what they intend to do.”

Ye Yu had a hunch that that this sorceress would definitely know about his sister. He had to make his way to the Su Residence.

When Ye Jiuge saw how determined Ye Yu was, she knew that there was nothing that she could do to stop him. Therefore, she said, “Fine, but we should still take some time to prepare first—as a safety measure. Then, we can get to the bottom of this tomorrow night.”

“I am afraid that tomorrow will be too late.” Ye Yu wanted to head there now.

“I said tomorrow night, so we will do it tomorrow night. If you refuse to listen to me, then you don’t need to consult me about anything else in the future.” Ye Jiuge’s face turned serious.

At this time, Zi Shang’s languid voice rang out beside Ye Jiuge’s ear.

“If you’d heeded my advice earlier and bound him with a Slave Contract, he would not dare to act against your wishes.”

“I have no desire to be a slaveholder.” Ye Jiuge did not aspire to conquer the continent. She did not feel the need to own slaves.

She preferred to form agreements based on mutual benefit, which both parties could end quickly without hard feelings if a situation arose that necessitated parting ways.

Zi Shang was extremely irked by Ye Jiuge’s lack of ambition. However, he did not argue any further.

On the other hand, when Ye Yu observed how Ye Jiuge’s expression kept changing, he thought that she was furious at him. He said quickly, “I will listen to you.”

“It is quite late now. You should return first. Meet me around eleven o’clock tomorrow night.” Ye Jiuge pinched her nose.

To capture the White Bone Flame, she was always on the move throughout the entire day. She was so tired that she did not have the energy to do anything else.

“I would like to apologize for disturbing you at such a time. You should have a good rest first.” When Ye Yu noted Ye Jiuge’s weary face, he instantly felt a slight pang of guilt.

Ye Jiuge waved him away with her eyes half-closed. She drifted back to her room like a wandering spirit. Once her head hit the pillow, she fell asleep.

The next day after Ye Jiuge woke up, she took a stroll outside and gathered some information. She also made some arrangements before going back to the Zilin Residence.

When she changed into her ninja garb, it was still early. She went to the Pill Production Room to carry on with her Rank Three Mind-clearing Pill production.

Night quietly fell. It was a starless night, and the moon was nowhere to be seen. Tree leaves rustled as cold winds blew by.

Ye Jiuge produced another two bottles of Rank Three Mind-clearing Pills. When she walked out of the room, she was just on time.

Ye Yu was already waiting at her courtyard. He said, "Eldest Miss, the mole that I planted in Su Residence has reported to me that, after that lady entered the Su Residence, Su Junqing stationed her in his study. Not only that, he has forbidden anyone from entering or leaving the area."

"It seems that Su Junqing is worried that we will not go to her!" Ye Jiuge smiled.

Anyone with any interest in the Su Residence would be unable to stop themselves from investigating why Su Junqing had made the odd decision to allow this mysterious lady to stay in his study, of all places.

"Eldest Miss, how about letting me sneak into the Su Residence alone?" Ye Yu was undaunted by the prospect of a trap. He was just concerned that he would place Ye Jiuge in danger.

"Stop being an idiot and take this with you. Before you enter the Su Residence, suck on one pill. It can help you resist Su Junqing's Mental Manipulation." Ye Jiuge tossed a bottle of freshly produced Mind-clearing Pills to Ye Yu.

"Thank you very much." Ye Yu accepted the Medicinal Pills. Once again, he felt lucky that he was serving an Alchemist. He did not need to fret about obtaining any Medicinal Pills.

Ye Jiuge concealed her face with a mask, before stealthily making her way to the Su Residence with Ye Yu.

During her last visit to the Su Residence, the view had been splendid. Now, the Su Residence was looking bleak.

“Su Junqing’s study is located beside the Main Residence.” Ye Yu stood in the shadows, and he pointed toward a brightly-lit small building situated right at the center.

Ye Jiuge swept her eyes over the Main Residence. After that, she looked at the small building where the Su Clan’s Old Master resided, and asked, “How is the Su Clan’s Old Master doing now?”

“How else? His children and grandchildren are so filial that they pay respects to him day and night. Moreover, he has many servants at his beck and call. He is living such a happy and comfortable life.” Ye Yu smiled coldly.

He detested every member of the Su Clan, including the Su Clan’s Old Master.

“Knowing that he is suffering gives me joy!” Ye Jiuge grinned.

Until now, the Spiritual Doctors from the Capital had failed to diagnose correctly the reason for the Su Clan’s Old Master’s coma. They’d determined that Demonic Magic was the cause and were unable to prescribe the correct medicine to treat it.

Ye Yu resonated with Ye Jiuge’s words deeply. He asked softly, “Eldest Miss, should we proceed now?”

“There is no need to rush. Let’s wait a little while longer.” Ye Jiuge shook her head. Right now was not the best time to make a move.

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Ye Yu felt slightly puzzled. He was about to ask Ye Jiuge to fill him in on the current situation when he heard steady footsteps coming from the silent street.

He lifted his head to take a look. He was astonished to see a squad of officers being led by Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling.

As soon as they reached the Su Residence's doorstep, they pounded on the door without any hint of civility and shouted, "Open the door! Open the door!"

"Officer, is there anything that I can help you with at such a late hour?" the Su Residence's watchman asked apprehensively.

"Move out of our way." Wan Ziyang shoved the servant aside rudely before rushing into the residence with his men.

Su Junqing and his guards stood in Wan Ziyang's way. He spoke to them in an unfriendly tone, "Sir, you are imperious. What are you trying to accomplish by barging into our Su Residence in the middle of the night?"

"Someone reported that the Su Clan is harboring a Black Magic Practitioner. Su Clan's Eldest Son, please cooperate with us during our investigation." Wan Ziyang's gaze was sharp and cold, while his stance was unyielding.

"You want to search our Su Residence on the grounds of a baseless statement? Lord Wan, what do you take the Su Clan for?" Su Junqing's tone was laced with hostility. The guards behind him drew their swords immediately and formed a row behind him.

"Su Clan's Eldest Son, what do you mean? The Emperor has decreed that we are to conduct formal inquiries into all suspicious Black Magic activities. Are you trying to defy the Emperor's decree?" Bai Songling started to enforce the law to pressure Su Junqing into conceding to his demands.

"Investigating the potential presence of a Black Magic Practitioner? I think that you are attempting to abuse your power for personal reasons." Su Junqing refused to cave in. The situation reached a stalemate right away.

"What are you waiting for? Hurry up and go." Ye Jiuge elbowed the stunned Ye Yu.

"Is this a part of your plan?" Ye Yu looked at Ye Jiuge in surprise. He never thought that she'd call over Wan Ziyang as backup.

"Nonsense. Helpless civilians like us should report to the authorities immediately when we discover a dangerous, wanted criminal!" Ye Jiuge smiled gleefully. "Alright. You should get moving now. I will stay here as support. If you have any problems, send me our secret signal."

Ye Yu did not utter another word. While the ruckus continued, he stepped out from the shadows and infiltrated the Main Residence.

He pried open the study window before climbing inside and landing on the ground. He instantly felt like he was standing on a bog.

Ye Yu looked down and saw that a thin layer of Reaumuria Songarica covered the unlit area of the floor. He was about to withdraw from the study when a sickly-sweet voice called for him.

“Hey, handsome. What are you looking for? Do you need my help?” After that, a small, soft hand with fair skin reached into the shadows and yanked the mask off Ye Yu’s face with deft fingers.

Ye Yu jerked his head upward and saw a young lady in a pink dress standing in front of him.

“Oh my, what a pretty man!” When the young lady saw Ye Yu, one could tell from her eyes that she was momentarily stunned by his beauty.

“Who are you?” Ye Yu watched this cheerful, cute young lady warily.

“My name is Liu Yunfei. I am the Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s Third Main Disciple. You can also call me Xiao Fei!” Liu Yunfei twisted the ends of her hair around her finger while giving him a dazzling smile.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch had many disciples in his sect. However, he only had three Main Disciples. Liu Yunfei was his Final Main Disciple.

When Ye Yu heard the words ‘Bloodthirsty Sect,’ his heart leaped. Without giving away his emotions, he asked, “Why are you here? Are you here to ask Su Junqing for human blood for cultivation purposes?”

“Hehe. Only Secondary Disciples cultivate using human blood. I don’t need it.” Liu Yunfei’s large, puppy dog eyes roamed over Ye Yu’s tall and straight body in a flirtatious manner, shining with a desire that is only associated with mature women.

Her expression was guileless yet sinister and pure yet sensual. She had distinct, conflicting auras meshing into a unique charisma, which could cause men to be fascinated with her.

Ye Yu could feel a strange fragrance wafting into his nose, prompting him to take an involuntary step toward Liu Yunfei. However, shortly after, a stream of bitter chill surged to his brain from his stomach.

Ye Yu came to his senses instantly. He retreated into the shadows. On his guard, he asked, "Since you do not require human blood to cultivate, why would you conspire with Su Junqing against us? Aren't you aware that he is a liar?"

Liu Yunfei blinked her eyes before asking curiously, "What do you mean? Did he fool you in the past?"

"I have never been deceived by him. On the contrary, he double-crossed a member of the Bloodthirsty Sect named Xu Hansen. He led the man to a hidden room before killing him to extract his blood."

Ye Yu smiled at her with contempt, conveying his thought that all the people in the Bloodthirsty Sect were complete imbeciles.

"What are you saying? Did Su Junqing murder Xu Hansen?" Liu Yunfei's expression hardened immediately. She never thought that she would hear such news from Ye Yu's mouth.

"That's right. It happened in a secret room in the western building that caught fire. I saw it with my own eyes when I was hiding in Su Junqing's shadow," Ye Yu replied with certainty.

Liu Yunfei narrowed her eyes unconsciously. In her mind, she was determining the truth of Ye Yu's words.

From a rational perspective, she should not believe an enemy's words.

However, when she considered it emotionally, Su Junqing might indeed do such a thing. After all, the Bloodthirsty Sect was dog-eat-dog.

If she were in his position, and there was a heavily wounded and immobile Bloodthirsty Sect Disciple in front of her, she would kill him to further her cultivation instead of treating his injuries and saving his life.

Ye Yu saw that Liu Yunfei had an odd expression on her face. He did not know if she believed him.

When he realized that he did not have much time left but still had not managed to obtain an answer to the question that concerned him the most, he could not help but say, "I can help you to take care of Su Junqing. However, you must do me a favor."

"What kind of help do you need from me?" If Liu Yunfei wanted to bring Su Junqing to his knees, she did not need Ye Yu's assistance. She was merely toying with him.

For a moment, Ye Yu was having second thoughts. However, he wanted to ask Liu Yunfei to help him find his sister.

If the Bloodthirsty Sect found out that the extent to which he cared for his sister, he was afraid that they would hold her hostage.

However, when he thought about it in another way, his attachment could also give them one more reason to exploit his sister. Perhaps, she would have a better chance of survival.

Ye Yu made up his mind and said, "I hope that you can help me to find a lady. Su Junqing might have sent her to the Bloodthirsty Sect. Her appearance is very similar to mine. She also has a red mole between her eyebrows."

Ye Yunzhi and Ye Yu looked like each other. Both of them had a red mole between their eyebrows.

Compared to Ye Yunzhi, who seemed gentle but was inwardly headstrong, Ye Yu's personality was not only colder, but he was also more beautiful and charming.

"Who is she to you?" Actually, when Liu Yunfei had laid eyes upon Ye Yu for the first time, he'd given her a familiar feeling.

When she listened to him, she immediately thought of the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's favorite pet. That beautiful, cat-like lady would be her reward for completing her mission.

"She is my only living relative," Ye Yu told her without any hesitation.

"Aren't you worried that I will inform the Bloodthirsty Sect of this?" Liu Yunfei had no idea if Ye Yu was naive or just plain stupid. He had told her about his Achilles heel, just like that.

"Terrified." Under the wavering candlelight, Ye Yu's attractive face darkened considerably. His voice was brimming with agony as he said, "But I am even more terrified that she is dead."

Liu Yunfei's eyes widened. She could not stop an inexplicable feeling rising within her heart.

She'd been raised in the Bloodthirsty Sect since she was a baby. Before she'd learned how to drink milk, she was already drinking blood.

She'd been conditioned to seize cultivation resources every day by making devious plans, taking the lives of others, and preventing herself from being killed.

Birds of a feather flocked together. The scum and dregs of society surrounded her.

This was the first time she'd met a fool like Ye Yu, who valued blood ties.

She really hated idiots like him!

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Liu Yunfei's fingernails dug into the hollow of her palms. Still, she wore a saccharine smile on her face as she said, "Sure. If you help me take on Su Junqing, then I will help you find your sister. Now, how should we contact each other?"

"I will approach you myself." Although Ye Yu had cut a deal with Liu Yunfei, he still did not trust her.

"But I won't stay here long." Liu Yunfei pouted.

"Where are you planning to go?" Ye Yu asked.

"I will travel to the Medicine Refinery Valley. A Pill Production Tournament will be held there in ten days. Let's meet then!" Liu Yunfei beamed as if she was discussing the spot where she would meet her lover for a date.

"Medicine Refinery Valley? Pill Production Tournament?" Ye Yu mulled over her words. Then, he questioned her for more information: "Why are you going there?"

"Hehe. You will find out when the time comes. However, the next time we see each other, you will be mine." Liu Yunfei's figure gradually vanished into thin air, leaving the empty study with a declaration that seemed to hint at something.

Ye Yu creased his brow, before meticulously searching the study.

Other than the few bottles of human blood stored within the secret compartment, he did not uncover anything new. There was no trace of Liu Yunfei.

Meanwhile, the confrontation between the two parties outside the study became more and more intense.

Ye Yu worried that Wan Ziyang would cave to Su Junqing's pressure, so he left the study reluctantly.

Ye Jiuge had been keeping a close eye on the study. When she saw Ye Yu emerge, she imitated the warbling of a nightingale three times, which was the secret signal that she had earlier specified to Wan Ziyang.

When Wan Ziyang received her secret signal, he knew that it was time to pull back. He told Su Junqing stiffly, "Since you refuse to allow us to investigate the Su Residence, we have to report this matter to the Emperor."

After he finished speaking, he gestured to his men with a wave and said, "Let's retreat."

"Su Clan's Eldest Son, you should think hard about how you will explain this to the Emperor!" Bai Songling swished his sleeves in an extremely pretentious manner before swaggering off with Wan Ziyang.

Su Junqing stared at their backs as they walked away, shooting daggers at them.

If his grandfather were present, then those b*strds would not have the audacity to act so rudely.

When Su Junqing thought of his grandfather, who was still in a coma due to unknown reasons, he could not stop himself from sighing.

After he completed the task that the Patriarch had assigned to him, he would plead for a reward in return. He wanted to ask the Patriarch to send someone over so that they could take a look at his grandfather to determine what was happening to him!

However, these were issues that he had to consider in the future. Right now, he still needed to smooth things over with Liu Yunfei.

Su Junqing reined his emotions before returning to the study.

Liu Yunfei was propped up against a chair near the window. The moonlight gave her alluring face

a faint gleam.

She held a full glass of fresh blood in her pale hand. From time to time, she took a small sip. She seemed unusually content.

“Senior, I apologize for the disturbance. But you can also see for yourself that I am in a tight spot now. I hope that you will lend me a helping hand.”

Su Junqing eyed Liu Yunfei fervently. He wished that she could make a move immediately to defeat Wan Ziyang and his allies.

“Just now, I heard a fascinating tidbit.”

As Liu Yunfei fixed her gaze on the Spiritual Blood contained within the glass, she mentioned casually, “Someone told me that Junior Xu Hansen was not murdered by an unrelated individual but devoured by you to improve your skills. Is that true?”[Read more chapter on vipnovel.com](#)

“Absolutely not. Regardless of how bold I may be, I would not dare do such a thing!” Su Junqing was alarmed. Again and again, he insisted on his innocence.

He worried that others would be suspicious of the growth in his cultivation. Therefore, when he acquired the Wicked Power from devouring Xu Hansen, he used all of it to boost his Mental Manipulation. As long as he did not use his Mental Manipulation, no one could see any difference in his capability.

“I could care less about how Xu Hansen died. However, if someone is planning to play me for a sucker, he should reflect on whether he can make me his pawn.” Liu Yunfei flung her small hand toward him. The Spiritual Blood from the glass splattered on Su Junqing’s face.

The wet, viscous blood smeared his face. But he did not dare move.

“Brat, you are still too young to go against me.” Liu Yunfei walked to Su Junqing with a spring in her step. She tapped on his face with the glass. Smiling coldly, she said, “Tomorrow, I will make my way to the Medicine Refinery Valley. If there you slip-up even slightly in the task that the Patriarch has given you, you should just present your head on a platter!”

“Noted.” Su Junqing bowed deeply. When Liu Yunfei’s pink dress swished past him, he hardly concealed the malevolence shining in the depths of his eyes.

...

After Ye Jiuge met up with Ye Yu outside the Su Residence, they furtively went to Wan Ziyang and

Bai Songling's house.

Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang were already waiting for them inside. As soon as they saw Ye Yu, Bai Songling asked him impatiently, "Ye Yu, you were in the study for quite some time. Did you manage to find anything?"

"I encountered the sorceress. Her name is Liu Yunfei." Ye Yu recounted his earlier conversation with Liu Yunfei.

However, he kept quiet about his sister. He only told them that Liu Yunfei would meet him in the Medicine Refinery Valley.

"It seems that they will target the Pill Production Tournament this time. Brother Wan, I think that you should send someone to comb the Medicine Refinery Valley thoroughly, especially the places where the Crown Prince is in charge."

When Ye Jiuge heard that the Crown Prince was in charge of organizing the Pill Production Tournament, she felt that something was fishy. Sure enough, she now knew that something shady was going on.

"The Pill Production Tournament is the Lei Kingdom's renowned annual event. Other than people from the Lei Kingdom, Alchemists from all over will travel here to participate. If the Crown Prince plans to stir up trouble in the Medicine Refinery Valley, isn't he afraid that the Emperor will beat him to death?"

Bai Songling felt that the Crown Prince would not be so foolish.

"You can't be too careful." Ye Jiuge was also planning to bring Ye Ruyi with her so that she could participate in the tournament. She did not want anything untoward to happen.

"Fine, I will check the place out tomorrow." Wan Ziyang nodded. Then, he turned to Ye Yu and asked, "Do you want to come with me?"

Since he had never seen the sorceress before, there was a possibility that would miss the mark if he attempted to identify her without Ye Yu's help.

Ye Yu was about to say yes when he felt a sharp pain in his back. It was as if something was gnawing at his skin.

"Don't move." As quick as lightning, Ye Jiuge pinned down the thing wriggling around Ye Yu's back.

It was around the size of an index finger and squirming very fiercely.

Wan Ziyang ripped Ye Yu's clothes apart. To his surprise, he discovered a Poison Earthworm that was entirely black. It was currently struggling relentlessly beneath Ye Jiuge's hand.

"Isn't this the Little Mute's Poison Earthworm? How did it end up here?" Bai Songling looked at that black worm with revulsion.

The Poison Earthworm looked extremely vicious.

It had no eyes, only a large mouth crowded with white teeth. It had two thin wings on its back.

As soon as Ye Jiuge released it from her grasp, it would escape into the blue.

"Who is Little Mute?" Wan Ziyang furrowed his brows instantly.

Lately, he had been so busy spending his time at the Justice Department. To thoroughly investigate the Black Magic activities, he left the residence early and returned late. He was completely unaware that a young, mute boy lived in a building at the back of their home.

"Eldest Miss hired him to help us to raise insects." Bai Songling explained about the Little Mute and his background in detail.

"Can we trust this person?" Wan Ziyang's face was taut as he watched the Poisonous Earthworm writhing non-stop beneath Ye Jiuge's hand.

This thing had crawled into the room without any warning while they were having a private discussion and attacked Ye Yu. No matter how he looked at it, it did not feel right.

"If you cannot trust him, then we should meet him face to face and ask him for more information." Ye Jiuge did not believe that the Little Mute would double-cross them.

Ye Jiuge climbed over a wall and entered the Little Mute's residence. Ye Yu, Wan Ziyang, and Bai Songling followed her.

"Little Mute, come out." Ye Jiuge pinched the worm with her left hand while using her right hand to knock on Little Mute's bedroom door.

The wooden door opened without a sound.

Little Mute's scrawny, puny figure was concealed behind the door. His small, pale face poked through the doorway.

Two large eyes in the darkest shade of black stared at the four of them impassively. They were particularly chilling late at night.

Ye Jiuge and Bai Songling were already accustomed to Little Mute's disconcerting appearance.

As Wan Ziyang and Ye Yu saw him for the first time, they could not help but stare at the Little Mute warily.

On the other hand, Little Mute did not even spare a glance at Wan Ziyang and Ye Yu, who were strangers to him.

He reached his small, bony hand toward Ye Jiuge before raising his thin index finger. He expressed that he would like a bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills in exchange for the Poison Earthworm.

"I am not here to trade." Ye Jiuge motioned to Ye Yu, who was standing behind her. She asked, "How did this thing end up on my friend's body all of a sudden?"

Little Mute's large jet-black eyes swept over Ye Yu. After that, he signaled with his hand that the worm was eating.

Others could not make heads or tails of his hand gestures. However, Ye Jiuge instantly understood Little Mute's meaning. "Are you trying to tell me that this worm was consuming something on my friend's body?"

Little Mute nodded emotionlessly.

“What is there to eat on my body?” Ye Yu could not stop scratching his back.

“Turn around and let me have a look.” Ye Jiuge asked Ye Yu to rotate his body before activating her Spiritual Eye to examine his back carefully.

In the end, she discovered that there were a few subtle red lines near his shoulder blade. If one did not look carefully, there was no chance of finding them.

“It seems that Liu Yunfei left something on your body.” Ye Jiuge used her Lightning Fire Needle to extricate the ‘red thread’ from Ye Yu’s back.

To their surprise, the ‘red thread’ was a living creature. After it was pulled off Ye Yu’s body, it wanted to flee. However, the Poison Earthworm in Ye Jiuge’s hand devoured it abruptly with a slurp.

“What the h*ll is this?” Bai Songling stared at the Poison Earthworm before moving his eyes to Ye Yu’s back. He could feel himself getting goosebumps all over.

“This is a type of tiny poisonous worm used mainly to keep track of a person’s whereabouts. Usually, it is well-hidden during inactivity. However, once triggered, she could locate you even if you were more than a thousand miles away.” Ye Jiuge looked at Ye Yu and asked, “Did you not feel it when she poisoned you?”

“Not at all.” Ye Yu shook his head.

At that time, he had been focused entirely on extracting details about his sister out of Liu Yunfei. He had not realized that Liu Yunfei had been doing something to his body during their entire interaction.

“Just because she’s female doesn’t mean that you should let your guard down,” Wan Ziyang said flatly.

Earlier, when Ye Yu had told them about the sorceress, his tone had sounded protective. He could tell that she had an unusual place in Ye Yu’s heart.

He even thought that Ye Yu was under the influence of Mental Manipulation. He was about to ask Ye Jiuge to perform a check-up on him.

“I was careless.” Ye Yu could not help but lower his head.

Liu Yunfei had kept giving him radiant smiles. He’d really thought that she was a rare, kind soul.

He had been quite complacent with her.

“Liu Yunfei’s cultivation level is much higher than yours. It’s normal that you were not able to see through her. Truth to be told, when you came out from the study, I scanned your body. I did not find anything out of place at all.” Ye Jiuge’s Spiritual Eye was not omnipotent.

She started to consider if it would be better to let them swallow a few Poison Detection Pills before undertaking their tasks in the future.

“Think nothing of it. Even though you couldn’t smoke her out, we still have this little critter!” Bai Songling looked at the Poison Earthworm in Ye Jiuge’s hand with a burning gaze, as if he was feasting his eyes upon an exceptional treasure.

“You are right.” Ye Jiuge nodded.

Since the adept Poison Earthworm possessed special skills that could help them deal with this kind of weird poisonous creature, they should leave it alone.

“Little Mute, do you have more of this particular breed of Poison Earthworm? We will take them all,” Ye Jiuge told him with the air of someone who has deep pockets.

Little Mute showed Ye Jiuge his palm immediately.

“Five bottles of Spiritual Beast Pills? Didn’t you tell me earlier that you would take one bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills in return for each Poison Earthworm?” Ye Jiuge widened her eyes.

This Little Mute was becoming more and more cut-throat in naming his price.

Little Mute made more gestures with his hand with an impassive face.

From the side, Bai Songling watched their interaction anxiously. He could not stop himself from asking Ye Jiuge, “What is this Little Mute saying?”

“He told me that this Poison Earthworm is the only one he has and that it is a rare commodity worth owning. Take it or leave it.” Ye Jiuge could only curse in her mind: F*ck.

At first, she’d thought that this Little Mute was an honest child. She’d never expected him to raise his price on the spot.

“The market price of a bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills is five hundred silver taels. Five bottles of Spiritual Beast Pills is worth two thousand and five hundred silver taels. I do not consider this expensive.”

Unbelievably, Wan Ziyang, who was standing beside him, nodded in agreement.

In his mind, anything that could be used against Black Magic was worth its weight in gold.

This was one of the rare instances when the Little Mute met Wan Ziyang's eyes. During this rare moment, a hint of approval shone in his huge obsidian eyes. It was as if he was saying, "You have a discerning eye for quality goods!"

Sound judgment, my a*s! Ye Jiuge thought.

Ye Jiuge really wanted to send Wan Ziyang, who'd dug them into a hole, flying with a kick.

Those Spiritual Beast Pills in the market which sold for five hundred silver taels per bottle were all inferior products. They could not compare to the Spiritual Beast Pills that she herself produced.

Not only that, Little Mute had initially been just demanded one bottle. In the blink of an eye, he'd increased his price to five bottles.

If she whetted his appetite, it would make things very difficult for her in the future.

"If any of you want the Poison Earthworm, then make that trade yourselves!" Ye Jiuge tossed the Poison Earthworm back to Little Mute. She'd decided that she would not let him get away with his corrupt practices.

"Give it to Ye Yu!" Wan Ziyang was not aware that Ye Jiuge was being sarcastic. Instead, he chose to give the Poison Earthworm to Ye Yu.

After all, this worm had turned up especially on Ye Yu's body. This was considered a form of it recognizing Ye Yu as its owner.

Ye Yu looked at Ye Jiuge inquiringly.

"If you want it, then take it!" At any rate, without her involvement, no one would be able to get anything out of the worm.

"I don't mind if I do." Ye Yu really wanted that Poison Earthworm.

In the future, he wanted to infiltrate the Bloodthirsty Sect to save his sister. This worm would undoubtedly be an indispensable help.

"Little Mute, since he has already decided to buy your Poison Earthworm, can't you let him have it

now?" Bai Songling felt that, because they were already well-acquainted, they should face no issues when they took the worms with them ahead of time.

In the past, Ye Jiuge also did this often.

He didn't expect the Little Mute to shake his head unhesitatingly. Little Mute only trusted Ye Jiuge. If the others wanted to buy from him, they needed to pay during the transaction.

"Then I will buy the Spiritual Beast Pills tomorrow morning and bring them to you." Although Ye Yu was itching to take the worm away immediately, he still respected Little Mute's wishes.

"Brother, if I encounter any problems in the future, you have to lend it to me!" Bai Songling said and grabbed Ye Yu by the arm.

He and Wan Ziyang were currently capturing Black Magic Practitioners every day. Perhaps, there would be times when they needed Ye Yu's help.

"I will." Ye Yu was rather generous with his allies.

Ye Jiuge laughed dryly as she watched the trio, who were too engrossed in themselves to realize what Little Mute wanted, before returning to the Ye Residence to sleep.

She slept until noon.

When she ate her meal after she woke up, she could not avoid Qing Mama's nagging about her irregular sleeping hours.

"Yes, yes, yes." Ye Jiuge interjected here and there to get Qing Mama off her back. After that, she excused herself to the Pill Production Room, claiming that she wanted to produce some pills.

Before she could enter the room, a shadowy figure thrust its head halfway through the window.

"What brings you here?" Ye Jiuge opened the window and welcomed Ye Yu into the room.

"Eldest Miss, the Little Mute suddenly refused to trade with us." Ye Yu looked at Ye Jiuge helplessly.

Last night, they had clearly agreed on five bottles of Spiritual Beast Pills. However, after Little Mute took one whiff of the Spiritual Beast Pills that they'd brought, he'd turned them down.

They could not understand Little Mute's hand gestures. Therefore, they could only ask Ye Jiuge for help.

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Ye Jiuge had expected this to happen. She took a bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills and headed with Ye Yu to the place where the Little Mute was staying.

Meanwhile, at that moment, Bai Songling was trying to communicate with the Little Mute: "Little fellow, how could you go back on your word? You clearly said that you would exchange the insect for five bottles of Spiritual Beast Pills. Even if you wish to raise the price, you have to tell me how many you want!"

The Little Mute did not even look at him. He took the basket with the Blackfly Grass and began to feed the Poison Earthworms. The batch of Poison Earthworms had already evolved once. Their initial plump, white bodies had an additional hint of a jade-like glow, and their lifespan had increased from fifteen days to two months.

The Little Mute had kept the better batch of insects to breed and produce the next generation. The remainder were developed into Legendary Venomous Insects. The one with wings that had run out the previous night to find food was among those that had just been nurtured.

Bai Songling's mouth and tongue turned dry as he tried to communicate with the Little Mute, but the Little Mute continued to ignore him. Impulsive due to his anger, Bai Songling snatched the Little Mute's basket away and yelled, "I am speaking to you!"

The Little Mute raised his eyes to look at Bai Songling. His blank face was emotionless, but it had an unfathomably frightening effect.

At that moment, Ye Jiuge happened to arrive. Witnessing the scene, she raised her eyebrows and said, "Brother Bai, what are you doing? Are you trying to bully him?"

"I wouldn't dare bully him. He is bullying me." Embarrassed, Bai Songling handed the basket back to the Little Mute.

After receiving the basket, the Little Mute turned and looked at Ye Jiuge.

"I heard that you weren't willing to exchange with them?" Ye Jiuge asked.

The Little Mute fanned his hands beneath his nose and signaled a thumbs-down to Bai Songling.

"What do you mean?" Bai Songling was hopping mad.

"He means that your Spiritual Beast Pills are fake." Ye Jiuge translated.

"Bullsh*t. These were produced by the third-grade Alchemists from our Baicao Hall. How can they be fake?" Bai Songling retorted.

Claiming that a medicinal store sold fake pills was the most vicious form of slander, and nobody should tolerate it. The Little Mute said nothing, but his eyes showed disdain.

"Brother Bai is right. He has given you the best pills from the market. However, the pills that you ate previously came from me, and they are not sold in the market." Ye Jiuge returned the hand signal that the Little Mute had given her the previous night.

A bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills for an insect! It was as if she were saying: "The pills that I have produced are rare commodities worth hoarding. Go ahead and suit yourself."

The Little Mute frowned. He seemed to be at a loss because he knew that what Ye Jiuge had said was true. The Spiritual Beast Pills that Bai Songling had brought were decent. In fact, they were better than those that he had secretly stolen in the past.

However, after using the pills that Ye Jiuge had personally produced, he had become dissatisfied with the others' quality. The Little Mute was straightforward and agreed immediately. Ye Jiuge did not make things difficult for him. She took out the Spiritual Beast Pills, which she had already prepared, and successfully traded them for the Legendary Venomous Insect.

"How do you control this thing?" Ye Jiuge asked.

The Little Mute's eyes lit up. He stretched out his hand to ask for more pills.

"My dear friend. I advise you to be a little more honest. You are so much less experienced at raising the price at the place of transaction." Ye Jiuge gave a gentle smile. If the Little Mute were

up to something, she did not mind treating him in the same way in the future.

The Little Mute sensibly kept his hands still. Then, he gave the Legendary Venomous Insect a slight pinch. Nobody knew how he communicated with the Legendary Venomous Insect. The sinister-looking Poison Earthworm made a squeaking sound. It flapped its wings, flew onto Ye Yu's hand, and bit his middle finger. Then, it lay there and did not move anymore.

"It has accepted me as its owner." Ye Yu raised his head in surprise.

After the little insect had drunk his blood, he felt that he had developed a faintly discernable connection with it.

"Little Mute, are there any side-effects when your insect accepts an owner?" Bai Songling was not assured—he had found the practice strange.

The Little Mute gave Bai Songling a look of disdain before he carried off the basket and continued to feed the Poison Earthworms.

"Zi Shang, will this thing that the Little Mute has developed cause any side-effects?"

Ye Jiuge decided to ask Zi Shang instead. After all, he was the one who'd recommended the Little Mute.

"You're overthinking it. He cannot control these little insects yet," Zi Shang replied lazily.

"Not yet? You mean that he will be able to in the future?" Ye Jiuge asked warily.

The Poison Detection Pills that Imperial Consort Xi and Dongfang Que had been eating were all made from the Poison Earthworms, which the Little Mute had grown.

Ye Jiuge thought: If he can control these Poison Earthworms, won't I be leading the wolf into the house?

"Yes. He will probably have the ability to control them after finishing the bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills that you gave him," Zi Shang replied earnestly.

"Then, can we still use the things that he has grown?" Ye Jiuge suddenly had a mind to take back the bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills.

"If he can control the insects, why can't you control him?" Zi Shang's tone seemed to harbor evil designs.

He had intentionally recommended the Little Mute to see if Ye Jiuge would still be unwilling to become a slave-boss after seeing the little fellow lose control.

“What is Little Mute’s background?” Ye Jiuge questioned.

“You do not need to know. You just need to know how to control him.” Zi Shang threw Ye Jiuge a sphere of light.

When Ye Jiuge had absorbed the sphere, her gaze landed on the Little Mute, who was fiddling with the Poison Earthworms. He was wearing a plain blue cotton shirt. His sleeves and the lower hem of his clothes were dirty, and his hair was messily tied up. The new clothes that Bai Songling had delivered to him had not been touched. It was as though he liked his head and face filthy with grime, as well as his name – Little Mute.

Ye Jiuge had initially felt that calling him “Little Mute” was humiliating, and she’d wanted to change the way he was addressed. However, the Little Mute had refused. She felt that there was still a need to investigate his background to discern his true identity. However, at the moment, the most important matters at hand were the Sorcerers and the competition at the Alchemy Convention.

“Where’s Brother Wan?” Ye Jiuge asked Ye Yu.

“He is still at the Justice Department making preparations to go to the Medicine Refinery Valley. I will head over to meet him later,” Ye Yu replied.

If not for the delay due to the Little Mute, he would have been ready to set off.

“Bring these two bottles of pills with you and give one to Brother Wan. Be on the alert, and don’t fall for the venomous beauty’s Mental Manipulation.” Ye Jiuge took out another two bottles of third-grade Mind-clearing Pills.

Ye Yu was slightly embarrassed. Liu Yunfei’s Mental Manipulation was indeed powerful, and this was why he had developed an unfathomably favorable opinion of her. He’d told himself to be more alert in the future.

“Those who are participating in the competition have already started heading over to the Medicine Refinery Valley. When do you plan on setting off?” Bai Songling asked Ye Jiuge.

“The day after tomorrow.” Ye Yuxuan had initially arranged her departure in three days, but Ye Jiuge had refused.

“Do you want to accompany the Dongling Prince there?” Bai Songling asked again.

“There’s no need.” Ye Jiuge shook her head.

Ye Shanshan had headed off with the Crown Prince the day before. It would be too eye-catching for Ye Jiuge to go with the Dongling Prince.

“Sure. I will bring some guards to protect you in secret,” Bai Songling said.

“As you wish.” Although Ye Jiuge felt that this was not necessary, she thought that it be unpleasant to reject his good intentions.

“Hehe. If someone were to deliver themselves to my door, I would be able to catch them and discover some clues.” Bai Songling laughed deviously.

“That’s inauspicious.” Ye Jiuge wanted to kick Bai Songling.

She thought: Does he really want to protect me, or is he merely using me as bait?

While Ye Jiuge and Bai Songling chatted casually, they did not notice the cryptic glint in the Little Mute’s eyes when he heard about the Medicine Refinery Valley.

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When Ye Jiuge returned to the Zilin Residence, she began to make preparations for the Medicine Refinery Valley. Although the competition would only take three days, she was going to stay there for at least seven days.

Qing Mama had prepared a carriage of things to ensure that her Eldest Miss could live comfortably outside the residence. When Ye Jiuge saw the heap of stuff, she sighed involuntarily.

It would be much easier if she had a Magical Bottomless Satchel. However, a Magical Bottomless Satchel was too costly and could be not bought anywhere in the Lei Kingdom. It was only available in larger Spiritual Cities. According to what she had heard, she needed Spiritual Coins instead of gold to purchase a Magical Bottomless Satchel. With her current level of cultivation, this was merely wishful thinking.

Apart from the necessities, Ye Jiuge also brought the small bronze cauldron and the Black Fat Rat along with her. Ever since their return from the deep lake, the rat had seemed depressed. It curled up in Ye Jiuge's pocket and remained sullen. Ye Jiuge felt ashamed, and she inwardly told herself to compensate the Black Fat Rat in the future if an opportunity arose.

On the day of her departure, Ye Yuxuan personally sent them off. Su Yufeng, on the other hand, claimed to be unwell and did not exit the residence. Although Ye Yuxuan was upset with Ye Jiuge, he still treated Ye Ruyi well. He dispatched ten guards under the leadership of a Spiritual Practitioner whose last name was Pan to protect them on their journey.

Ye Jiuge and the rest left early in the morning, and they arrived at the Medicine Refinery Valley in the evening.

The Medicine Refinery Valley was nestled in the plains between two small mountains. The royal family had funded the construction of a city in the Medicine Refinery Valley, and they had also appointed someone to manage it.

Ye Jiuge looked out of the horse-drawn carriage's small window.

She saw a magnificent-looking castle that stretched across the mountain ridge. The gray castle walls were about a hundred meters tall, making the castle look like a group of tall buildings.

"Eldest Sister, why did the Emperor build a castle here?" Ye Ruyi asked curiously.

"I heard that there is a third-grade Spiritual Land behind the Medicine Refinery Valley. Many different types of expensive Spiritual Medicines are grown there, which is why the Medicine Refinery Castle was built here." Ye Jiuge had heard this from Bai Songling.

Third-grade Spiritual Lands were scarce in the Lei Kingdom. Naturally, the royal family treated these lands as a treasure.

The Medicine Refinery Valley was seldom open to the public. It only welcomed outsiders during the period of the Alchemy Convention.

"Oh." Ye Ruyi nodded, not fully comprehending.

She was only able to produce low-grade pills at the moment, and she could not yet understand why a piece of land would be so valuable that it required a castle's protection.

Ye Jiuge wanted to increase Ye Ruyi's knowledge. She got off the horse-drawn carriage and pulled Ye Ruyi's hand and lead her into the Medicine Refinery Valley.

It was already evening, but the city was still bustling with noise and excitement. In the streets, there were many shops selling medicine, Pill Production Furnaces, and minerals. Many outsiders had even placed pieces of cloth on the ground and laid out goods to sell.

"My esteemed guests, please don't miss the chance to buy something as you pass by!"

Anything could be found in these street stalls. Apart from the common Spiritual Herbs, there were minerals and beast skeletons. Some stalls even sold rocks and roots.

Many people came and went along the streets. Some wore bizarre-looking clothes, as they'd clearly come from other kingdoms.

This was the first time that Ye Ruyi had seen such a lively sight. Her face turned red with excitement, and she seemed eager to buy something.

"Eldest Miss, should we head to the Medicine Refinery Building to settle down first?" Captain Pan asked respectfully.

All the participants of the Pill Production Tournament had been assigned accommodation at the Medicine Refinery Building, which had been prepared by the Dongfang Clan.

"There's no hurry." Ye Jiuge wanted to shop around as well.

Ye Jiuge and Ye Ruyi visited a few stores. After they purchased a few things that could be used to produce pills, they headed toward the Medicine Refinery Building.

When they passed by an old, shabby miscellaneous goods store, an unusual feeling suddenly arose in Ye Jiuge's heart. She stopped automatically.

Zi Shang's voice rang out: "Go in."

"Is there a treasure inside?" Ye Jiuge was excited. She had felt that there was something strange about this store.

"Indeed. Something very useful to me. If you don't act soon, I'll have to do so personally." There was a rare urgency in Zi Shang's voice.

“My king, please behave yourself!”

If Zi Shang were to show himself, Ye Jiuge feared that the entire Medicine Refinery City would go crazy.

“Eldest Sister, what’s wrong?” Ye Ruyi raised her head curiously and asked.

“Come. Let’s go in and have a look.” Ye Jiuge pulled Ye Ruyi with her and headed inside the small store.

As the store was tiny, Captain Pan and the guards could not enter, so they stood guard outside the entrance.

The store owner was an old skinny man with silvery hair. His face was covered with wrinkles, and he wore a dirty gray shirt. He was dozing off on his stool and did not even open his eyes when customers entered the store.

“Which one of these is the treasure that you speak of?” Ye Jiuge opened her Spiritual Eye to examine everything in the miscellaneous goods store.

The things inside were messy and had no trace of Spiritual Energy at all. Ye Jiuge had no idea which one was the treasure.

“The rock that is placed under the shelf near your feet,” Zi Shang said.

Ye Jiuge looked down and saw a rectangular-shaped gray brick under the shelf. A thick layer of dust covered the top of the brick, and it looked connected to the shelf. It was difficult even to notice it.

“This is a treasure?” Ye Jiuge was speechless. She did not know that Zi Shang had a hobby of collecting bricks.

“That is no ordinary brick. You wouldn’t understand, anyway. Hurry up and buy it,” Zi Shang said in an unquestionable tone.

It was a difficult task.

If she were to buy the brick without any reason, Ye Jiuge feared that it would arouse the store owner’s suspicion, and he would likely raise its price.

The best method was to purchase a few decent things and request the brick as an add-on.

However, the small store was very shabby. Nothing in it seemed valuable!

“Eldest Sister, what’s this?” Ye Ruyi pulled out a box of small, pale green beads from the messy pile of goods in the corner.

Ye Jiuge’s eyes swept the box, and she said, “That is a Wooden Bead. It is useful for Wooden Elemental Spiritual Practitioners, but the spirituality inside has completely run out.”

“Is that so? I think it is quite pretty.” Ye Ruyi held the little Wooden Bead. She seemed to like it too much to part with it.

Ye Jiuge had an idea immediately. It would raise suspicion if she were to buy the brick. However, it would be a different story if the customer were a child, like Ye Ruyi. After all, children had the privilege of willfulness.

Just as Ye Jiuge was thinking of asking Ye Ruyi to help her purchase the brick, she suddenly realized that she had no control over her own body.

“That’s too troublesome.” Zi Shang was too impatient, and he began to control Ye Jiuge’s body.

He extracted the brick from underneath the shelf, threw it onto the table, and said coldly, “Quote a price!”

The old store owner slowly raised his drooping eyelids. His cloudy eyes swept the gray brick, and he raised a palm. He said unhurriedly, “Five thousand taels.”

Before Ye Jiuge could say anything, Ye Ruyi’s eyes widened in surprise. She exclaimed, “What? You want five thousand silver taels for a brick?”

“No.” The old man shook his head and said calmly, “Not silver. Gold.”

Ye Ruyi’s mouth widened as she stared in shock at the old man. Then, she turned her head toward Ye Jiuge, as if to say, “You are not really going to buy this, are you?”

Ye Jiuge knew that the old man would ask a sky-high price. She would be crazy to buy a brick for five thousand gold taels.

Zi Shang instinctively wanted to slaughter the old man for demanding such an exorbitant price. However, Ye Jiuge stopped him, "Don't be foolish."

There were many people outside who had seen her enter the store. If the store owner were to die suddenly, everyone would know that she'd done it.

"You humans are troublesome." Zi Shang was in a bad mood. In the demonic race, they robbed or snatched anything that they wanted. Only hypocritical humanity preferred to go through such pains.

"If you find it troublesome, then return my body to me," Ye Jiuge bellowed. This problem, which could have been easily solved, had become so complicated because of him.

"No way," Zi Shang refused firmly.

Ye Jiuge almost went mad. However, Zi Shang had suppressed her consciousness. She could not return to her body no matter what she did.

Ye Ruyi did not notice Ye Jiuge's anomaly. She rolled her eye at the old man and said peevishly, "You must have gone mad thinking about money."

"Eldest Sister, let's go!" Having said so, she reached out to pull Ye Jiuge's hand.

Zi Shang could not bear to leave without obtaining the brick. He avoided Ye Ruyi's hand and stared straight at the old man. In a low voice, he said, "Old man, it pays to be kind and honest. You are selling a brick for five thousand gold taels. Aren't you scared of choking to death?"

"That is none of your business," the old man replied unhurriedly.

To survive in the Medicine Refinery City, he had relied on his ruthlessness and lack of conscience.

"Is that so?" Ye Jiuge's eyes narrowed. Purple vertical lines appeared inside her black pupils and

shone with a bewitching glow.

After seeing the glow, the old man felt dizzy immediately, then he felt unfathomably guilty. He suddenly realized that even the Heavens could not tolerate the way he'd tried to cheat his customers. As such, he hurriedly stood up and said with fear and trepidation, "I understand my mistake now. I should not have opened my eyes so wide at the sight of profit. It is merely a piece of brick. If you want it, go ahead and take it!"

"Then, I shall help myself." The corners of Ye Jiuge's lips curled into a smile, and her eyes became normal again.

Ye Jiuge could finally control her body again. As she cursed Zi Shang for his tyranny, she reached out to grab the brick.

At that moment, Ye Shanshan's voice suddenly rang out from outside: "Captain Pan, what are you doing here?"

"Greetings to you, Second Miss." Captain Pan bowed respectfully to Ye Shanshan and said, "I am acting under orders to escort the Eldest Miss and the Fourth Miss."

"Eldest Sister, Fourth Sister, is it really you?" Ye Shanshan, who was wearing a long aqua blue dress, walked into the store.

Behind her was a young lady wearing a gorgeous long gold dress. The young lady looked approximately eighteen or nineteen years old. Her skin was fair, and she was beautiful. However, she had a haughty expression as she looked toward Ye Jiuge unpleasantly. With a sneer, she said, "You're Shanshan's eldest sister?"

"Who are you?" The corners of Ye Jiuge's mouth twitched. She wasn't happy being called "Shanshan's eldest sister."

"Eldest Sister, this is the Gong Clan's Third Miss," Ye Shanshan introduced her with a hint of pride.

"I see." Ye Jiuge thought of the Gong Xifan, who had previously helped her, and she forced a smile at the Third Miss.

However, the Gong Clan's Third Miss harrumphed coldly. She turned her head back to Ye Shanshan and said, "Shanshan, is your eldest sister so poor that she can only afford to shop in such a shabby store?"

Her eyes swept over the small store, as well as Ye Jiuge and Ye Ruyi, with disdain.

“You are the one who’s poor!” Ye Ruyi immediately countered after realizing that her Eldest Sister, who she loved and respected, had just been insulted.

“Fourth Sister, don’t be disrespectful,” Ye Shanshan reprimanded Ye Ruyi. Then, toward the young lady, she said apologetically, “Miss Gong, my Fourth Sister was conceived by a concubine, and she has not been taught manners. Please, don’t hold it against her.”

Ye Ruyi scowled angrily when she heard this.

Ye Jiuge kneaded her little hands and said calmly, “Fourth Sister, don’t be angry. A second wife conceived your Second Sister, so it can’t be helped that her manners are lacking.”

Now, it was Ye Shanshan’s turn to have an unpleasant expression.

“Ye Jiuge, you must have been raised poorly as the eldest sister if you vilify your younger sister.” The Third Miss of the Gong Clan raised her thin eyebrows. Her tone was filled with ridicule.

“What does my disciplining of my younger sister have to do with you? Or does the Gong Clan teach you to be the dog that catches mice and meddles in other people’s business?” Seeing that the Gong Clan’s Third Miss was looking for trouble, Ye Jiuge did not feel the need to be kind to her.

“You dare insult our Gong Clan?” The Gong Clan’s Third Miss’s face turned red, as though she had received a great humiliation.

“Wrong. I am not insulting your Gong Clan. I am only insulting you.” Ye Jiuge’s wicked tongue was impossible to stop.

“Eldest Sister, you are wrong. I feel that the Gong Clan’s Third Miss brought this humiliation on herself,” Ye Ruyi said, deadly earnest.

“You little c*nt, you dare to insult me? I will kill you.” The Gong Clan’s Third Miss had never been humiliated like this before. She raised her palm and was about to slap Ye Ruyi’s face.

Ye Jiuge raised her hand and gripped the Gong Clan’s Third Miss’s palm. She said coldly, “Out of respect for Spiritual Master Gong Xifan, I will forgive you, this time. If you dare mess around with me again, don’t blame me for being impolite.”

“You think too highly of yourself to use the Gong Clan to pressure me.” A pale green light suddenly glowed from the Gong Clan’s Third Miss’s body, and it turned into a sharp wind blade that attacked Ye Jiuge.

Good thing Ye Jiuge was prepared. She raised her foot and kicked the Gong Clan's Third Miss's abdomen.

The Gong Clan's Third Miss went flying with a yelp. She landed on the ground, tragically. The wind blade did not hit Ye Jiuge but sliced off one of the store's beams. Almost half of the old roof collapsed immediately.

Ye Jiuge grabbed Ye Ruyi with one hand and the old man in the other. Fortunately, they managed to rush out of the store before the entire building collapsed.

"Eldest Miss, are you alright?" Hua Die and Yu Die immediately rushed up. Their faces had turned pale from fear.

"I am fine." Ye Jiuge shook her head.

"Eldest Sister, you are too much. How can you treat the Gong Clan's Third Miss like this?" Ye Shanshan rebuked Ye Jiuge angrily before she rushed with buttocks bouncing to support the Gong Clan's Third Miss.

The Gong Clan's Third Miss stood up in a sorry state. She shook off Ye Shanshan's hand forcefully and said viciously, "Ye Jiuge, our Gong Clan will not let you off easily for treating me like this."

"If you are capable, fight me one-on-one. Don't involve your Gong Clan at the first opportunity." Ye Jiuge was not scared by the Gong Clan's Third Miss's threat.

No matter her status in the Gong Clan, she could not be as important as Gong Baiyu. If Ye Jiuge could find a way to treat Gong Baiyu's eye disease, the Gong Clan would keep this Third Miss under control and apologize for her offense.

"You." The Gong Clan's Third Miss's eyes had turned red. Her hands glowed with a green light. She was about to retaliate.

"Gong Clan's Third Miss, you must not." Ye Shanshan hurriedly rushed forward to stop her. She urged anxiously, "You cannot fight in the Medicine Refinery City. Your eligibility for the competition will be revoked!"

Although Ye Shanshan wanted nothing more than to be the only participant in the Pill Production Tournament, the Crown Prince would not let her off easily if she could not control the Gong Clan's Third Miss.

“Get lost.” The Gong Clan’s Third Miss glared viciously at Ye Shanshan.

Ye Shanshan’s expression turned sour.

Although she wanted to curry favor with the Gong Clan, Ye Shanshan was indignant at being berated by the Gong Clan’s Third Miss over and over again. She did not wish to stop her anymore.

Just as Gong Clan’s Third Miss was about to act, a familiar voice suddenly rang out: “Stop!”

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Translator: Nyoibo Studio Editor: Nyoibo Studio

Ye Jiuge looked up and saw the familiar Crown Prince, Dongfang Jianming, arrive with a team of guards.

“Crown Prince, you’ve arrived just in time.” Ye Shanshan’s spirits rose. She complained promptly, “Eldest Sister is bullying the Gong Clan’s Third Miss, and she has even destroyed someone else’s shop.”

“Ye Jiuge, do you think that this is your Ye Residence? How dare you commit such a violent act here.”

The Crown Prince glared darkly at Ye Jiuge, who had restored her looks. Her beautiful face caused him to hate her even more.

“Neither is this Your Highness’s East Palace.” Ye Jiuge remained calm and composed.

“You are trying to twist words and force logic. Come, arrest this woman who is creating a

disturbance.” The Crown Prince immediately gave an order to the guards he’d brought along.

Hua Die and Yu Die immediately stood nervously in front of Ye Jiuge.

“Your Highness, I am here to participate in the Pill Production Tournament. Don’t you think that you are too biased to arrest me without distinguishing between right and wrong?” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrows and asked.

“The facts are obvious, and evidence of your crime is conclusive. There is no use trying to quibble.” The Crown Prince gave a hand signal in an imposing manner, then said, “Arrest Ye Jiuge. If she resists, don’t hold back.”

“Eldest Sister.” Ye Ruyi held onto Ye Jiuge’s sleeve tightly. Her tiny face paled with fear.

“Don’t worry. Although the Crown Prince is muddled in the head, there are still sensible people in Medicine Refinery City,” Ye Jiuge comforted her calmly.

“Eldest Sister, how dare you say that the Crown Prince is muddled in the head! I will report this to Father when I am back so that he can punish you.” Ye Shanshan wanted to continue to frame Ye Jiuge, but she was startled by Ye Jiuge’s cold gaze.

“Ye Shanshan, if I were you, I would keep my mouth shut. Otherwise, you may not get the chance to open it again in the future.” Although Ye Jiuge’s tone was indifferent, Ye Shanshan knew that she was not joking.

Her phobia of being beaten flooded into Ye Shanshan’s mind, and she involuntarily hid behind the Crown Prince.

“Ye Jiuge. How dare you bully the small and weak in front of me. You have no respect for the royal family at all!” the Crown Prince barked.

“All of you are either representing the Gong Clan or the royal family. Someone who didn’t know better might think that the Emperor suddenly died and that there’s nobody left in the Gong Clan,” Ye Jiuge sneered.

“How dare you!”

“Impudent!”

The Gong Clan’s Third Miss and the Crown Prince flew into a violent rage at the same time. They wanted nothing more than to capture Ye Jiuge.

At that moment, the sound of orderly footsteps came from a distance. The patrolling soldiers in the Medicine Refinery City had received news of the incident.

The man who led the soldiers wore a dark red jersey. His handsome face was profound, as if engraved by a knife, and he had a grim appearance. It was Wan Ziyang.

"See, a sensible person has arrived," Ye Jiuge smiled and said.

"Lord Wan, Ye Jiuge has committed a violent act and attempted to rob someone. You are not thinking of harboring her, are you?" the Crown Prince said coldly.

"Yes. Lord Wan, I witnessed it," Ye Shanshan said, hiding behind the Crown Prince.

Wan Ziyang gazed coldly at the Crown Prince and Ye Shanshan before he turned and asked Ye Jiuge, "What happened?"

"I was just shopping with my younger sister when the Gong Clan's Third Miss came inside to insult me. She also destroyed the store..."

Before Ye Jiuge could finish speaking, the Gong Clan's Third Miss denied it angrily: "I did not. Obviously, you were trying to rob me. You were the one who damaged the store."

"This store was destroyed by someone with a Wind Spiritual Root. Lord Wan, you can send someone to investigate," Ye Jiuge said coolly.

"Investigate!" Wan Ziyang ordered.

The soldiers began to search systematically in the rubble. Soon, they found a beam that had been severed by a Wind Elemental Spiritual Power. The sliced surface was still pale green.

"Sir, this little store was indeed destroyed by a Wind Elemental Spiritual Power," a tall and skinny soldier reported.

"I have a Lightning Spiritual Root. I wonder what is the element of the Gong Clan's Third Miss's Spiritual Root?" Ye Jiuge looked at the Gong Clan's Third Miss maliciously.

She thought to herself, Some people try to distort the truth deliberately and frame others, and yet they are unaware that they have blundered.

"So what if I have a Wind Spiritual Root? It is such a shabby store, and I can compensate him easily. However, how do you plan to settle the fact that you have injured me?" The Gong Clan's Third Miss remained arrogant and despotic.

The people around them began to discuss spiritedly, even without Ye Jiuge saying anything.

“This woman from the Gong Clan is so overbearing. So what if she is from a rich and powerful family?”

“Indeed. How dare she be so arrogant in our Medicine Refinery City? In their Baimu City, wouldn’t they be the overlords?”

“And that Ye Shanshan. She must have a vicious heart to act against her sisters to help an outsider.”

“The Crown Prince is also muddled if he is so captivated by her beauty. He has gone so far as to harbor the culprit. If he were to manage the Pill Production Tournament, I think that there’d be no need for us to compete in it...”

Hearing the spirited discussions of the people around them, the Gong Clan’s Third Miss’s face changed. Her eyes, which were watching Ye Jiuge, revealed her desire to tear Ye Jiuge into pieces.

“Nobody is allowed to cause a disturbance in the Medicine Refinery City. Your Highness, you don’t wish for news of this matter to reach the Emperor’s ears, do you?” Wan Ziyang stared coldly at the Crown Prince.

The Pill Production Tournament was no small matter, and any problems would not be tolerated. Even the Crown Prince would not dare mess around.

The Crown Prince did not dare say anything. He glared viciously at Ye Jiuge before speaking softly to the Gong Clan’s Third Miss.

The Gong Clan’s Third Miss was clearly unwilling to accept it. However, no matter how unbridled she may have been, she was still in the Dongfang Clan’s territory. She had to show the Crown Prince some respect.

“You’ll pay for this!” the Gong Clan’s Third Miss threw out some harsh words before leaving in a rage.

Ye Shanshan hurriedly followed behind her. Her fawning over the Gong Clan’s Third Miss was extremely disdainful.

“Shameless.” Ye Ruyi stared at Ye Shanshan’s retreating figure with contempt. She did not wish to admit that Ye Shanshan was her Second Sister.

"That's enough." Ye Jiuge patted Ye Ruyi's shoulders.

It would only make them the subject of ridicule if they had a catfight with Ye Shanshan. They could deal with her once they returned home.

Ye Ruyi bit her lip and said no more.

Just then, the dazed old man finally recovered from his shock. When he saw his collapsed little store, he immediately let out a miserable shriek, "My store!"

That was when Ye Jiuge remembered an important question. "Where's my brick?"

"Eldest Sister." Ye Ruyi pulled Ye Jiuge's sleeve and then touched her embroidered backpack.

It looked full and bulging—the bulge was the shape and size of a piece of brick.

"You are so clever." Ye Jiuge patted Ye Ruyi's head in reward.

Ye Ruyi gave a grin. She thought: This thing is worth five thousand gold taels. Obviously, I had to keep it safe.

"Captain Pan, stay here and help this elderly man make an inventory. Compensate him the full amount," Ye Jiuge instructed.

Although the unexpected misfortune had been caused by the Gong Clan's Third Miss, Ye Jiuge felt that she should still compensate the old man for the brick.

"Yes." Captain Pan nodded respectfully.

As a guard, he had failed in his obligations when he did not prevent the Eldest Miss from being attacked by the Gong Clan's Third Miss. As such, he had to atone for his mistake through meritorious acts.

"Let me accompany you to the Medicine Refinery Building," Wan Ziyang said to Ye Jiuge.

"Will that delay you?" Ye Jiuge looked at the soldiers behind him.

"Nope." Wan Ziyang was an imperial envoy, and he could do his inspection job from anywhere.

"Then, let's go!" Ye Jiuge and Wan Ziyang led the way.

Considerately, Ye Ruyi stood behind with Hua Die, Yu Die, and the rest, so that Ye Jiuge could interact alone with Wan Ziyang.

“What is the Gong Clan’s Third Miss’ background?” Ye Jiuge asked Wan Ziyang softly when she saw that nobody was near them.

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Translator: Nyoi-Bo Studio Editor: Nyoi-Bo Studio

“The Gong Clan’s Third Miss name is Hongyu. She comes from the Gong Clan’s cadet branch and has always had a crush on the Dongling Prince. She’s probably misunderstood you due to some rumors,” Wan Ziyang said plainly.

“What rumors?” Ye Jiuge felt that her relationship with the Dongling Prince was purely doctor-patient. How could there be any rumors?

Seeing Ye Jiuge’s conviction, Wan Ziyang sighed; there was relief deep in his heart. Dongfang Que was an outstanding talent. He had a powerful background and a handsome appearance—he had always been the capital women’s dream lover. Wan Ziyang had expected that Ye Jiuge would have at least some romantic thoughts about Dongfang Que. However, it seemed that Dongfang Que’s hopes were doomed.

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“What rumors can there be? Second Sister must be spouting nonsense to sow dissension,” Ye Ruyi said with a long face.

“Do you need my help?” Wan Ziyang also felt that the Ye Clan’s Second Miss had acted too boldly.

“It’s fine. Let her say what she wants. The more she says now, the more tragic her death will be in the future,” Ye Jiuge laughed sarcastically. If Ye Shanshan were to remain so close to the Crown Prince, she would not ever know how she was going to die.

Seeing that Ye Jiuge did not require his help, Wan Ziyang did not meddle any further.

“Where’s Songling? Didn’t he say that he would escort you here?” Wan Ziyang asked curiously as his eyes swept the surroundings.

“I have no idea. I did not see him.” Ye Jiuge’s journey had gone without a hitch. As such, she had not intentionally looked for him.

“That shouldn’t be the case!” Wan Ziyang felt that this was strange.

Given Bai Songling’s gossipy nature, seeing Gong Hongyu attack Ye Jiuge probably made him ache for the opportunity to save a damsel in distress.

“It’s fine. I don’t need his protection. Oh, that’s right, have you found Liu Yunfei yet?”

Compared to Bai Songling, Ye Jiuge was more concerned about the Sorcerers’ activities.

“Not yet.” Wan Ziyang shook his head. He was responsible for Medicine Refinery City’s defense. Even with Ye Yu’s secret help, he had been unable to discover Liu Yunfei’s whereabouts.

“What about Su Junqing?” Ye Jiuge asked again.

“He received the Empress’s orders to help the Crown Prince manage the Pill Production Tournament. My men have been watching him closely. But, at the moment, there don’t seem to be any anomalies,” Wan Ziyang said.

“Watch him closer. As long as they harbor ulterior motives, they will blunder sooner or later,” Ye Jiuge said.

“You don’t have to worry about these things. Put your effort into competing in the Pill Production Tournament.”

Having said so, Wan Ziyang took out a yellow leather booklet from his sleeve. He passed it to Ye Jiuge and said, “This a list of the participants in the Pill Production Tournament. You can have a look at it when you are free.”

It was a form of aid for the Lei Kingdom’s participants. The Crown Prince had a booklet as well.

“Thanks.” Ye Jiuge received the booklet. So the saying goes: know yourself and know your enemy, and you will never be defeated. She would be foolish not to take advantage.

“By the way, the tournament’s advanced placings have all been canceled, and everyone must

begin from the first round. Apparently, it was Dongfang Yao, the Imperial Uncle, who requested this change.” Dongfang Yao was the lord of the Medicine Refinery City, as well as Emperor Xuanwu’s uncle. He was also in charge of the Pill Production Tournament.

“Oh.” Ye Jiuge had not intended to use the advanced placing anyway, so she was not affected by the news.

While they were speaking, they arrived at the Medicine Refinery Complex’s entrance.

“Your rooms are in the Feishuang Building on the west side. The Crown Prince is staying in the Lingyun Building in the east, while Gong Hongyu and Ye Shanshan are in the Fengye Building next door. So long as you don’t go there intentionally, you won’t meet them.”

Wan Ziyang hoped that Ye Jiuge would be able to restrain herself and not create a disturbance during the tournament, which would have a negative impact.

“I won’t attack others unless I am attacked.” If the Crown Prince and Gong Hongyu were to come to her door foolishly, she would not tolerate them.

Wan Ziyang was aware of Ye Jiuge’s bad temper. Hearing this, he could only smile grudgingly. Then, he instructed one of the soldiers beside him, “Ask Lady Chang to come here.”

In a moment, a middle-aged lady with an amiable smile and dressed in a dark red waistcoat exited the Medicine Refinery Complex. She bowed to Wan Ziyang and said, “Greetings to you, Lord Wan.”

“Jiuge, this is Lady Chang. She is in charge of the Medicine Refinery Complex. If you have any issues in the future, you can find her.” Wan Ziyang clearly meant that this Lady Chang was one of his people.

“Greetings to you, Eldest Miss Ye. I wish you happiness and health forever.” Lady Chang bowed respectfully to Ye Jiuge.

“Lady Chang, you are too kind.” Ye Jiuge smiled.

“I have something to do, so I shall not follow you in. Lady Chang, please take good care of Eldest Miss Ye.” Before leaving, Wan Ziyang gave some instructions to Lady Chang.

Lady Chang escorted Ye Jiuge and the rest to the Feishuang Building. On the way, she told Ye Jiuge about the Medicine Refinery Complex. The Medicine Refinery Complex covered an area of approximately thirteen hectares. It was made up of eighty-eight smaller buildings that were built to the north, south, east, and west, surrounding Medicine Refinery Hall.

The tournament was held at Medicine Refinery Hall. At the moment, fifty-three Alchemists had already moved into the Medicine Refinery Complex. Out of all fifty-three, thirty were women, and twenty-three were men. They were mostly at the first level.

After Lady Chang brought Ye Jiuge and the rest to the Feishuang Building, she said, "Eldest Miss, if you have no other instructions for me, I shall take my leave."

"I have troubled you, Lady Chang." Ye Jiuge signaled at Hua Die using her eyes, and the young maid tactfully pushed an embroidered pouch filled with loose change into Lady Chang's hands.

"Eldest Miss, you are too kind." Although Lady Chang spoke as though she wished to decline it, her hands nimbly received the embroidered pouch. She had an avaricious expression.

After Ye Jiuge instructed Hua Die to send Lady Chang away, she began examining the two-storied building, which was built from bamboo. The front courtyard leaned left, and the backyard leaned right. They were quite distinct. Ye Jiuge was the most satisfied by the Feishuang tree in the back courtyard. Its azure leaves glowed lightly under the sunlight and emitted a faint fragrance.

There were two maids and two female servants allocated to the Feishuang Building. Ye Jiuge arranged for Yu Die, Hua Die, Qing Hu, Qing Liu, as well as the maids and female servants to stay on the first floor. Captain Pan and the guards would reside in the outer courtyard. She chose a room on the second floor that faced north and left the south-facing one for Ye Ruyi.

"Why are you making such a long face? You don't like this place?" Ye Jiuge asked Ye Ruyi.

"No. I am just upset because of how Second Sister helped that woman bully you."

Although Ye Ruyi had already known that her Second Sister was up to no good, she still found this difficult to accept.

"You've already seen it. They can't bully me that easily." Ye Jiuge touched Ye Ruyi's fuming face lightly and said, "Alright, give me the brick."

Ye Ruyi obediently took out the brick. Then, she asked curiously, "Eldest Sister, what is this treasure? Why did you have to buy it?"

"Children should not ask so many questions. You must be tired; go and rest, or you may not have the energy to participate in the competition."

Ye Jiuge did not know what kind of treasure the brick was, and she could not answer Ye Ruyi's question. Fortunately, Ye Ruyi was not overly curious, so she did not question any further. She

turned and headed to her room.

Looking at the gray brick, Ye Jiuge impatiently called for Zi Shang: "Quick, come out and take a look at your treasure."

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Zi Shang appeared instantly. His slit pupils were trained on the brick, and his tail continuously shook side to side. Even hugging Ye Jiuge flew far from his mind.

"What's this treasure?" This was the first time Ye Jiuge had seen Zi Shang so agitated.

"This is a Transformation Pearl. It was lost after the Great Demonic Tribe War. Who could have thought that it would end up here?" Zi Shang felt that his luck was off the charts. Now, he could fully transform into a humanoid form.

"If the Transformation Pearl is so precious, how did it become a brick for supporting shelves?" Ye Jiuge was in disbelief.

"Who knows?" Zi Shang did not care. He swiped his palm across the brick and extracted an azure pearl that emitted a faint fragrance.

Lured by the fragrance, Ye Jiuge unconsciously swallowed. She could tell that the Pearl was something useful, something greatly beneficial to her.

"Don't even dream of it. It's mine." Anything else, Zi Shang would not mind giving to her. But this Transformation Pearl was a no-no.

"I'm just looking." Ye Jiuge would never dream of snatching it from Zi Shang's mouth.

"From now on, I am going into Enclosed Cultivation. Take care of yourself, and don't get into trouble!" Zi Shang swallowed the Transformation Pearl and returned to Ye Jiuge's Imprint.

"When will you be back?" Ye Jiuge asked hurriedly, but there was no response from Zi Shang. It seemed like he had already gone into a deep sleep.

Ye Jiuge cursed silently: D*mn! It's always like this. Elder Sister prays that your transformation ends in a flop.

Afterward, she had dinner, settled some errands, and went back to her room to start looking through the yellow leather booklet Wan Ziyang had given her. She found detailed introductions about every participant at the Alchemy Convention, including their local addresses in the Medicine Refinery Building.

This time, including Ye Shanshan and herself, six Level-two Alchemists were participating. Besides Gong Hongyu from Baimu City, the other names were foreign.

She carelessly glossed over the booklet, then sat crossed-legged on the bed and began to cultivate the All-encompassing Scripture.

Ever since she had obtained the White Bone Flame, her cultivation speed had become very fast. Even when she was not cultivating intentionally, her Spiritual Power still spiraled slowly. However, her Cognitive abilities were still the best. In the past, her Cognitive could only cover the space of one room. Now, it could reach beyond that.

She slowly released her Cognitive into the next room and received a clear image of a peacefully sleeping Ye Ruyi. She was about to continue practicing her Cognitive reach when, suddenly, something bloody swept past her building and flew toward the east. It jerked her Cognitive back in place.

Ye Jiuge's eyes snapped open. The cold and bloody presence just now was very odd. It did not feel like Su Junqing. Could it be Liu Yunfei?

Ye Jiuge jumped out of the window, chasing alongside the row of buildings on the eastern side. Sadly, even after going around thoroughly, the abnormal presence could no longer be found.

Besides the Crown Prince, Su Junqing, Ye Shanshan, and Gong Hongyu, she remembered that a few other important people were staying here. Ye Jiuge took out the yellow leather booklet again to investigate. She found that, besides herself, the rest of the Level-two Alchemists were all staying in the eastern buildings. Was this a coincidence or an accident? The more Ye Jiuge thought about it, the more uneasy she felt.

She returned to her room and had trouble sleeping. Before dawn, she got up to find Lady Chang.

"Lady Chang, did anything happen in the eastern buildings?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"No. The night guards reported that everything was fine. Did Eldest Miss find something?" Lady

Chang asked hurriedly.

If Ye Jiuge had found something they hadn't, this would mean that the guards were lax in their duty.

"No, I'm merely asking." Ye Jiuge shook her head. She could not help but glance to the east.

It looked tranquil. Besides the coming and going of the slaves and servants, there was not an Alchemist in sight. Everyone was absorbed in preparing for the next day's tournament. Thinking about the upcoming tournament, Ye Jiuge could only lay her doubts to rest and place her full concentration on preparing for the Pill Production Tournament.

The next day, the Pill Production Tournament officially started. All contestants had to await entry in the Medicine Refinery Hall's parlor. Ye Jiuge pulled Ye Ruyi along and stood in one corner, carefully observing the Level-two Alchemists participating in this tournament.

Gong Hongyu wore a long red skirt and stood in the middle of the parlor, arrogant and cocky. She looked at the others with a demeaning glint in her eyes as if saying, 'you losers are only here to boost the numbers.'

Ye Shanshan had on a long white skirt and stood beside Gong Hongyu like a delicate lotus flower. She appeared quite low-key.

A youth wearing a black and red robe with a head full of small braids stood in a corner to the left. His eyes roamed around, highly alert and watchful.

In the right corner, there was a high-cheeked middle-aged lady whose facial features looked rather mean. She seemed aloof.

A tall, well-built, black-faced, and rough-looking man stood at the door. His eyes were bright with intelligence, and his short hair stood on end. While he looked like a thug, he was definitely a level-two Alchemist.

Just as Ye Jiuge was observing the rest, they were also doing the same. Observing and trying to gauge the gaps between each other. Before, Ye Jiuge had been a notorious loser, so these Alchemists did not give her too much thought. Instead, they focused more on Gong Hongyu and Ye Shanshan.

"Eldest Sister, why hasn't the tournament started?" Ye Ruyi was growing a little tired of standing.

"Soon, just bear with it for a little longer."

Just as Ye Jiuge finished speaking, 20 youths wearing green robes with bamboo motifs entered the parlor. These were the Medicine Refinery City's apprentices, who oversaw various tasks to ensure that the Pill Production Tournament ran smoothly.

One of the apprentices held a large green box in his hands, and announced clearly: "Honored guests, please come over here to draw lots. The number on the lot denotes the Pill Production Room that you will be using later."

Ye Jiuge drew number 36, while Ye Ruyi drew number 48.

After the drawing of lots came to an end, the apprentices lined up in two rows and called out in unison: "Paying respects to Great Master Dongfang."

Thump, thump, thump!

In walked a skinny-looking elder with messy hair and wearing a grey robe. He was the host of this tournament—the Level-five Alchemist of the Lei Kingdom's imperial family, Dongfang Yao.

The elderly Imperial Uncle tied his white hair back with a simple cloth strip, and a few strands fell loose against his forehead.

His sleeves were uneven lengths—one long, one short. It was easy to see that he did not care for propriety norms. He'd stayed in the Alchemist City his entire life and was a well-known Alchemy Freak. He was a judge at the Pill Production Tournament every year and was an impartial person whom everyone trusted.

Dongfang Yao was a man of few words. He stepped up and immediately rang the bell signaling the start of the tournament and for participants to enter.

Ye Jiuge's Pill Production Room was located in the center-right corner. The furnishings were simple and functional. On the left was a Level-two Pill Production Furnace; and on the right, some equipment for handling herbs had been placed.

None of the Pill Production Rooms had roofs, which allowed the judge to monitor the tournament from above with ease.

Dongfang Yao's voice resounded all around the hall: "Today's test topic is the Heart Nourishment Pill."

Hearing this test topic, Ye Jiuge was taken aback.

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In previous Pill Production Tournaments, Ye Jiuge remembered that the first two rounds tested basic Medicinal Pills. Only the last round featured a test on Medicinal Pills at higher levels of difficulty.

Who could have known that there would be such a big surprise in the first round? No wonder, this time, the guaranteed placement had been canceled.

“Heavens! Why have they started with the Heart Nourishment Pill? I’ve never refined one before.”

Quite a few participants bemoaned the test topic.

The Heart Nourishment Pill’s recipe was obscure. It also required many herbs, and the refining technique required was quite complicated. Very few people could refine this pill.

“In Alchemy, besides experience, you need to have the ability to learn and apply. I will provide three sets of herbs and a pill recipe. If don’t you think you’re up for the task, then you can get lost now,” Dongfang Yao said impatiently.

In the past, the tests had been based on basic pills that Alchemists produced often. However, with each passing tournament, it was becoming harder to evaluate the participants’ standards. This had always left Dongfang Yao feeling very frustrated.

Recently, he had been researching a new pill recipe. He did not feel like hosting the Pill Production Tournament. So, he’d simply picked an obscure pill that most people would not produce thinking that this would disqualify a large majority of participants.

The Imperial Family’s Level-five Alchemist was most willful.

Although Ye Jiuge had never refined the Heart Nourishment Pill, she wasn't daunted. While methods varied, the principles remained the same.

The Heart Nourishment Pill required around 49 different herbs. The herbs the Apprentice had delivered filled one big basket.

Ye Jiuge overturned the basket, poured the herbs out, and sorted them into small bamboo baskets.

As she checked the Heart Nourishing Flower, her pupils dilated.

The Heart Nourishing Flower was about the size of a thumb, with pink petals and a gray stamen. It was the main herb for producing the Heart Nourishment Pill.

Among the mass of Heart Nourishing Flowers were dozens of small flowers with black-spotted stamens. Mixed into the batch of flowers, they were hard to notice.

However, Ye Jiuge's eyesight was unmatched. With just a glance, she could tell that these small flowers with the black stamen were not the Heart Nourishing Flower. Instead, they were the Heart Devouring Flower.

Although the Heart Devouring Flower was similar in appearance to the Heart Nourishing Flower, its effects were the opposite of the Heart Nourishing Flower.

If mistaken as the Heart Nourishing Flower during refining, the resulting pill became a potent poison. Once consumed, the least serious consequence was the loss of one's Spiritual Power. A more serious outcome could result in a violent death.

Because the two herbs were grown in different environments, most people did not mistake one for the other.

Unless the person who had delivered the herbs had mixed them up intentionally.

Ye Jiuge lifted her eyes to look at the tall, thin Apprentice standing in front of her. He was the one who'd delivered the herbs just now.

The Apprentice was peeking at her out of the corner of his eye. When their eyes met, he immediately looked away out of guilt.

Besides the Crown Prince, she couldn't think of anyone else who would be able to get an Apprentice to sabotage her allocation of herbs.

An Alchemist who wasn't familiar with the Heart Nourishment Pill might fall for it. But this was a piece of cake to Ye Jiuge.

She did not intend to raise the issue because it was pointless.

The Heart Devouring Flower and Heart Nourishing Flower looked similar. So, if the Apprentice gave the excuse that he'd made a mistake, this would not be hard to accept.

Besides, sifting herbs had initially been a part of the tournament. There was nothing to dispute.

After Ye Jiuge picked out all the Heart Devouring Flowers, she went on to inspect the Pill Production Furnace. As expected, there were also problems with it.

There were a few small holes in the Pill Production Furnace, which would result in lower quality pills.

Ye Jiuge did not hesitate this time. She called for the Apprentice and requested to change the Pill Production Furnace.

Meanwhile, in the Judges' Observatory at the top floor...

Besides the main judge, Dongfang Yao, two Level-four Alchemists were also present as assistant judges.

The short and fat one was called 'Elder Chen.'

The tall and thin one was called 'Elder Xiao.' Both were elders of Medicine Refinery City.

Besides the three judges, Crown Prince Dongfang Jianming was also present as a representative of the Imperial Family.

He was standing respectfully beside Dongfang Yao, accompanying him as they observed the situation in each Pill Production Room.

Now that all the participants had started preparing the herbs, the commotion with Ye Jiuge immediately caught the attention of Dongfang Yao.

"What's happening in room 36?" Dongfang Yao frowned.

"She said there was a problem with the furnace and requested a change." Dongfang Yao's Chief Apprentice, Li Zijun, swiftly got wind of the situation.

"I reminded all of you to scrutinize everything. How is there still a problem?" Dongfang Yao glanced over sharply.

The herbs and equipment used in the Pill Production Tournament were sent to the participants at the same time. He was very strict about this practice.

"This is your student's oversight. Your student seeks punishment from his teacher!" Li Zijun bowed and pleaded guilty with haste.

"Imperial Uncle, Zijun cannot be blamed for this. Ye Jiuge in Room 36 is a famous troublemaker. Unless you give her the Spirit Nourishing Precious Cauldron, which costs 30,000 gold ingots, she will not be satisfied," the Crown Prince commented to Dongfang Yao, adding his two cents.

"Who is Ye Jiuge?" Dongfang Yao was momentarily stunned.

"Great Master Yun's maternal granddaughter," Elder Chen offered from the side.

"Isn't Great Master Yun's maternal granddaughter a loser? How did she end up in the tournament?" Although Dongfang Yao had been based in Medicine Refinery City all these years, he'd still heard the rumors of Ye Jiuge's inability.

"Imperial Uncle may not know this, but Ye Jiuge claimed to have had a favorable encounter. Not only did she regain her looks and cultivation, but she also reached the rank of Level-two Alchemist." The Crown Prince laughed, and his insinuation suggested otherwise.

"Oh? Did such a thing happen? I wonder what kind of favorable encounter she experienced." Elder Xiao sounded keen.

"Who knows? Ye Jiuge claimed to have regained her cultivation after receiving a pill left behind by Great Master Yun while she was in the Wanzhang Depths. I want to ask the Great Masters here, can any pill in this world allow a person whose meridians are broken to regain their cultivation and gain Alchemy knowledge?" the Crown Prince asked exaggeratedly.

"If there were such a pill, then this old man would like to get to know about it." Elder Xiao rubbed his beard. It was evident he did not believe this story.

Elder Chen did not say anything, but his expression was one of disapproval.

However, Dongfang Yao disagreed with the Crown Prince and Elder Xiao: "The world is large, and filled with mysterious wonders. Old Man Yun has always been lucky. It isn't hard to believe that he would leave behind precious pills for his bloodline."

Although he had not been on good terms with Yun Tianwei when they were young, ever since Yun Tianwei's disappearance, he had been feeling lonely with no rivals to pit against.

Hearing someone casting doubt on his rival made him feel like he was being doubted as well.

"Imperial Uncle is right. I have been ignorant and narrow-minded." The Crown Prince never imagined that his Imperial Uncle would speak up for Ye Jiuge. He instantly swallowed the insulting words he was about to speak about Ye Jiuge.

Dongfang Yao scrutinized Ye Jiuge's refining technique and nodded. "Her technique does not seem too bad. It looks like she's not been lax in practicing."

Meanwhile, Ye Jiuge did not know that she had already made a good impression on Dongfang Yao.

She concentrated on sorting out all the herbs and started refining.

This was why the Heart Nourishment Pill was so difficult to produce: there were too many herbs involved.

To ensure that all herbal essences fused completely, strict flame control was needed. The slightest mistake would result in failed pills. Flame control could only be achieved by an Alchemist who had refined and accumulated experience, bit by bit and repeatedly.

However, ever since Ye Jiuge had advanced in rank, her Cognitive ability had also expanded. The 49 herbs laying inside the Pill Production Furnace were plainly visible in her Cognitive.

At this time, most of the herbs had already dissolved. Only the Heart Nourishing Flower needed a bit more time to dissolve fully.

She increased the flame. When the Heart Nourishing Flower had completely dissolved, she lowered the heat and let the furnace burn slowly.

While the cauldron was simmering, she did not rest. She used her Cognitive to swirl the herbal essence up and down so that the essence received balanced heat on all sides.

Then, just as the pill was almost ready, something went wrong.

The previously quiet Earthly Flame suddenly turned ferocious. It morphed into raging flames that spread at an alarming speed. The herb rack closest to the furnace had already caught fire.

Soon, the raging flames were about to lick Ye Jiuge's face.

Her fingers twitched, and a wisp of white flame quietly burrowed into the Earthly Flame's core and was swallowed with a large 'chomp.'

With a wave of Ye Jiuge's hand, the Earthly Flame that had lost its core disappeared, leaving behind a charred Pill Production Furnace.

The commotion from the fire was so huge that even Ye Ruyi realized that something was not right. She ignored the Apprentice, who tried to stop her, asking anxiously, "Eldest Sister, are you alright?"

"I'm alright. What are you doing here? Get back and continue with your Pill Production now!" Ye Jiuge replied.

"Eldest Sister, why are you still bothering with Pill Production?" Ye Ruyi's face turned red with anger. She hollered at the Apprentice, "What are you people doing? You can't even control the Earthly Flame. What would you have done if someone were burned?"

Those who were refining stepped away. They kept their distance from the Earthly Flame after hearing Ye Ruyi's words.

The Heart Nourishment Pill was already difficult to begin with. With this distraction, it meant that the pills had all failed. Immediately, laments and complains could be heard about how the Earthly Flame was unreliable.

"What's going on?" Dongfang Yao rushed down from the Judges' Observatory when the Earthly Fire lost control. Behind him, Elder Chen, Elder Xiao, and the Crown Prince also followed.

“Teacher, the Earthly Fire lost control.” Li Zijun’s facial expression was wretched. In the Pill Production Tournament’s long history, this was the first time such a large mishap had occurred.

“The other participants’ Earthly Flames are fine. Why did only yours lose control? It can’t be that you did something that you shouldn’t have—can it?” The Crown Prince laughed coldly, sending Ye Jiuge a venomous look.

“If I knew how to make the Earthly Flame lose control, then I would be in the Crown Prince’s position,” Ye Jiuge shot back.

“What do you mean by that? Are you saying that the Crown Prince did something to make the Earthly Flame lose control?” Dongfang Yao asked Ye Jiuge directly.

“Imperial Uncle, I did not do that,” the Crown Prince quickly denied.

“There has to be some misunderstanding here. Eldest Miss Ye, why don’t we go to the Judges’ Observatory for a chat?” Elder Chen thought the situation was out of hand and quickly chimed in.

“No way! We should make things clear here. Eldest Sister even changed her Pill Production Furnace just now. Does that Pill Production Furnace have any issues?” Ye Ruyi was small in stature, but her manner was imposing. She looked determined to demand justice on behalf of her eldest sister.

“Yes, someone made holes in it.” Ye Jiuge nodded.

Initially, she had not wanted to address these issues. But the Earthly Flame’s loss of control had made her very angry.

Sabotaging her herbs and furnace was one thing, but she’d never thought that the Crown Prince would dare sabotage the Earthly Flame.

If it weren’t for the fact that her White Bone Flame could swallow other flames, she could have been hurt.

Just as everyone was discussing among themselves, Dongfang Yao said coldly, “During the pill production process, anything can happen. Accidents are common. However, as an Alchemist, you must maintain your original intent. Those who do not want to continue in this tournament can get lost.”

Once he’d said that, no one dared to say anything further. Everyone shrunk back to their rooms to restart their Pill Production process.

Although the medicinal pills had failed just now, there were still two more chances. They could not waste these opportunities again.

“Fourth Younger Sister, Great Master Dongfang is right. To tread the path of an Alchemist, you must ignore your surroundings. Go back!” Ye Jiuge patted Ye Ruyi on the head.

“Alright!” Although Ye Ruyi still felt a little reluctant, she obediently went back to her Pill Production Room.

“Give her a new Pill Production Room and three sets of herbs,” Dongfang Yao ordered the disciples standing behind him.

“No need.” Ye Jiuge shook her head.

“What’s the matter? A little setback, and you want to withdraw from the tournament?” Dongfang Yao had a displeased look on his face.

“With so little ability, it’s amazing that have the gall to call yourself Great Master Yun’s maternal granddaughter,” mocked the Crown Prince, who was beside Dongfang Yao.

“I never intended to withdraw from the tournament,” Ye Jiuge replied with a harmless look.

“What do you intend to do?” Dongfang Yao frowned, thinking that Ye Jiuge was trying to take advantage of the situation to make impudent demands.

“I do not intend to do anything.” Ye Jiuge gave Dongfang Yao an incredulous look, then replied, “My Heart Nourishment Pill has been produced. I do not need a new Pill Production Room or herbs.”

“Didn’t your medicinal pill fail?” Dongfang Yao looked at Ye Jiuge’s furnace in surprise.

“Who said it failed?” Ye Jiuge opened the Pill Production Furnace’s charred lid.

Inside rested three lustrous, pink medicinal pills. They emitted a sweet, fragrant scent.

She’d used her Cognitive to wrap protectively around the Heart Nourishment Pill that had already been produced. So, her pill had not been affected by the Earthly Flame when it went out of control.

“Heart Nourishment Pill, Grade One.” Dongfang Yao could discern the medicinal pill’s grade with just a single glance. When he looked at Ye Jiuge again, it was with a tinge of approval.

“Can I rest now?” Ye Jiuge expression was indifferent.

“Hold on. Come with me, I have something to ask you.” Dongfang Yao turned and headed toward the tearoom on the second floor.

Ye Jiuge carefully stowed the Heart Nourishment Pill and followed Dongfang Yao up the stairs.

The Crown Prince glared at Ye Jiuge’s back, and his expression expressed his desire to kill.

“What business does the Great Master Dongfang have with me?” Ye Jiuge stood at the door and asked.

Dongfang Yao was an odd person. Without offering Ye Jiuge a seat, he asked without hesitating, “Girl, is your spiritual flame for sale?”

For a moment, Ye Jiuge’s pupils contracted. Despite how careful she’d been, in the end, he’d still found out about the White Bone Flame.

In these situations, one should never admit the truth.

Ye Jiuge was about to play dumb when Dongfang Yao continued, “It’s useless. Even if you deny it, this old man has ways of verifying. The Earthly Flames here were all cultivated by my endless efforts. Shouldn’t you give this old man an answer after you ordered your Spiritual Flame to swallow them?”

Ye Jiuge was silent for a while. Then she opened her mouth and said, “That’s because you harmed me first.”

“The incident this time, indeed, was because of our oversight. This old man will give you answers after investigating everything.” Dongfang Yao might immerse himself in cultivation, but he was not an idiot who knew nothing about the ways of the world.

“If it turns out that Dongfang Jianming is behind everything, will you still be able to give me an answer?” Ye Jiuge raised an eyebrow. Her expression was one of skepticism.

“Even if it were Dongfang Yan, this old man would still be able to give you an answer,” Dongfang Yao declared boldly. Even the Emperor Xuanwu was a nobody in his eyes.

Ye Jiuge could tell that Dongfang Yao was not bluffing.

Even so, she had no intentions of selling him the White Bone Flame.

“However, these are separate issues. I am offering you 100 Spiritual Coins for your Spiritual Flame. In addition, I will also give you a Wood Elemental Flawed Spiritual Flame. You can tell me if you have any other requests. If they are within my means, I will agree.”

The price offered by Dongfang Yao was quite reasonable.

The value of one Spiritual Coin was about 10,000 gold ingots. Even if one had gold, one could not exchange it for Spiritual Coins.

Although the Wood Elemental Flawed Spiritual Flame was not a Spiritual Flame, it was still a rare flame. And it was also suitable for Ye Jiuge’s current cultivation level.

The most important factor was the fact that the promise had been offered by the Imperial Family’s Level-five Alchemist, Dongfang Yao.

Other people would most likely have accepted. But Ye Jiuge could not sell, because selling meant death.

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“Girl, this is a very reasonable price. I’m giving you an inch, but you want a mile.” Dongfang Yao expressed his displeasure.

“I am not greedy. No means no,” Ye Jiuge said flatly.

She had already melded the White Bone Flame into her Elixir Field. If she extracted it from her body, it would leave a hole in her Elixir Field. She would be as good as dead.

“If you refuse to sell it to me, then forget about it.” Dongfang Yao gestured with his hand to show

his frustration.

If Ye Jiuge were just an insignificant Alchemist, even if he had to extort the Spiritual Flame from her, he would coerce her into giving it to him.

However, Ye Jiuge was Yun Tianwei's granddaughter. He was not that shameless.

When Ye Jiuge saw that Dongfang Yao was so complacent, she felt slightly apologetic for turning him down. After she hesitated for a moment, she said, "Actually, it is pointless for you to acquire this Spiritual Flame."

"What do you mean?" Dongfang Que asked, perplexed.

Ye Jiuge extended her fingers. A ghostly wisp of white flame materialized, exuding an eerie and sinister feeling. The atmosphere of the room became exceptionally gloomy.

"Spectral Flame?! Have you gone bonkers? You really dared to integrate the Spectral Flame into your Elixir Field?" Dongfang Yao was stupefied. He stared at Ye Jiuge as though he had seen a ghost.

The Spectral Flame could only be used to produce Yin Pills. However, the medicinal pills that Spiritual Practitioners required were all Yang Pills. Only Black Magic Practitioners and Devil Cultivators needed Yin Pills.

Currently, Yin Pill Recipes were extremely scarce in the market. Even someone in his position just owned only a few. If he obtained this Spectral Flame, he would have no use for it.

Ye Jiuge smiled. She did not elaborate further.

She could never tell Dongfang Yao that she had a complete set of Yin Pill Recipes in her possession!

"Young lady, you seem gentle. Contrary to what I expected, you are full of mettle. You have proven yourself worthy as a descendant of Old Codger Yun."

Although Dongfang Yao thought that it was insane that an Alchemist would capture and tame a Spectral Flame, he was still impressed by Ye Jiuge's courage.

"Great Master Dongfang, did you know my grandfather? Do you know where he was before he went missing?" Ye Jiuge promptly questioned him for more information.

"Young lady, don't misunderstand me. I was not close to your grandfather at all," Dongfang Yao

huffed with feigned nonchalance.

“Oh.” Ye Jiuge immediately made her disinterest evident.

When Dongfang Yao saw how she treated him, he felt slightly upset. After he harrumphed loudly to express his annoyance, he said, “Old Codger Yun left without any notice. According to the rumors, he wanted to travel to some secret realm to search for a hidden treasure.”

She thought: Hidden treasure? Is it possible that Grandfather’s disappearance is related to that treasure map?

Although Ye Jiuge was inwardly astonished, her expression remained unchanged. She replied calmly, “Great Master Dongfang, I am extremely thankful for your guidance.”

“Young lady, you should not follow in Old Codger Yun’s footsteps and embark on a search for the treasure. It would be in vain. How can there possibly be so many hidden treasures in this world for you all to seek?” Dongfang Yao muttered.

Just when Ye Jiuge was feeling light-headed from Dongfang Yao’s nagging, a knock came at the door.

Li Zijun informed them respectfully, “Master, the current round has ended.”

“Alright.” Dongfang Yao answered authoritatively. After that, he instructed Ye Jiuge, “Bring your Medicinal Pill with you when you leave.”

After he finished speaking, he stood up and exited the room.

Ye Jiuge quietly returned to the designated contest venue.

This time, the Pill Production Tournament had a total of fifty-two participants. In the end, only six Rank-two Alchemists managed to produce the Heart Nourishment Pill successfully.

The others produced pills which were completely unusable.

At that time, Ye Jiuge and the other contestants’ Heart Nourishment Pills were displayed in a line in front of the judges.

“Ye Jiuge’s Heart Nourishment Pill was the best in quality,” Dongfang Yao stated decisively.

“Although her Heart Nourishment Pill is quite good, I feel that Gong Hongyu and Ye Shanshan’s pills are better. Furthermore, when they produced their pills, their methods adhered firmly to the

standard practice.” Elder Xiao and Elder Chen held a different opinion.

“Then I will award Ye Jiuge the Highest Distinction, Gong Hongyu and Ye Shanshan with Distinction, and the other three with Merit,” Dongfang Yao ended the discussion—he had the final say.

Elder Chen and Elder Xiao nodded silently.

Anyway, it was only the first round of the tournament. After this, there would be two more.

The Crown Prince disagreed with the decision: “Imperial Uncle, the Medicine Testing Session has not even started yet. It is too early to make your judgment now.”

The Medicine Testing Session of the Lei Kingdom’s Pill Production Tournament would recruit individuals from the people, who would voluntarily test the medicine. [Read more chapter on vipnovel.com](#)

During the tournament, they would pick a suitable patient according to the efficacy of the Medicinal Pill and assess the medicine’s effectiveness in treating the person’s illness.

If the Medicinal Pill could cure the illness completely, it would be considered a good pill. If the person died after consuming it, it would be considered a bad pill.

During the previous Pill Production Tournament, there were considerable cases of healed patients. No lives had been lost due to a bad pill, yet. After all, the quality of the Medicinal Pills that achieved a certain ranking was always acceptable.

“Bring the patients here,” Dongfang Yao ordered Li Zijun.

“Yes.” Li Zijun nodded dutifully, before instructing the apprentices to lead them into the place.

Shortly after, six pale faces with blue lips walked in. It was apparent from their debilitated conditions that their heart problems were extremely severe.

A young, handsome man with sculpted facial features and slightly tanned skin had the responsibility of being Ye Jiuge’s Medicinal Pill Tester.

Even though he was wearing the Lei Kingdom’s traditional clothing, Ye Jiuge was convinced that he was not from there.

When the other patients saw the Medicinal Pills, they expressed their surprise, nervousness, excitement, terror, and worry. This young man was the only one whose head was drooping. He

was so still that it gave her an odd feeling.

“Let’s proceed with the Medicine Testing!” Under Li Zijun’s command, the apprentices helped the patients consume the Heart Nourishment Pills.

Gong Hongyu’s patient had a slender figure and was pretty. She was a girl in the prime of her youth. When she covered her chest with her hand, she had some similarity to a sickly Xi Shi.

After swallowing the Heart Nourishment Pill, the color gradually returned to her ashen face. She straightened her slightly hunched body. She was in high spirits as if she had just ingested the Divine Panacea.

“My God, I can’t believe that I have recovered completely. Great Master, you have my undying gratitude for saving my life.” The lady prostrated herself on the ground immediately, weeping profusely.

“Based on what I have seen, Gong Hongyu’s Medicinal Pill deserves the Highest Distinction.” The Crown Prince nodded in satisfaction.

However, a hint of disdain flashed in Ye Jiuge’s eyes.

If the Heart Nourishment Pill were the right cure for the lady’s illness, the effect would have been extremely obvious. This young lady’s acting was somewhat exaggerated.

Either her illness was not as severe as it appeared to be, or she was a healthy person in the first place.

Given the Crown Prince’s personality, it was highly likely that he had come up with this plan to help Gong Hongyu become the champion.

She wondered how Ye Shanshan felt when she saw the Crown Prince helping Gong Hongyu to this extent.

Ye Shanshan’s patient was a gaunt seventeen-year-old man. His thin lips were a deep shade of purple. Even breathing was difficult for him.

After he took the Heart Nourishing Pill, his breathing immediately became more regular. The purple in his lips subsided and turned a pale pink color. He seemed livelier.

He knocked his head solemnly against the ground three times while facing Ye Shanshan to thank her for saving his life.

After the other patients consumed their Heart Nourishing Pills, their health took a turn for the better.

However, their results could barely compare to Gong Hongyu's, who'd managed to cure the illness completely.

Ye Jiuge's young male patient was the last one left.

"It is your turn to eat!" The apprentice, who helped the young man hold his medicine, was the same person who had delivered the Medicinal Ingredients to Ye Jiuge.

The young man stared at the Medicinal Pill. A determined expression appeared on his slightly tanned, handsome face. After that, he swallowed the pill.

As Ye Jiuge's Medicinal Pill had earned the Highest Distinction, everyone was looking forward to seeing its effects.

After the young man ate the Heart Nourishing Pill, his pallid face slowly became rosier.

His purplish lips also went back to normal. Although his reaction was not as dramatic as Gong Hongyu's patient, the outcome was rather satisfactory.

Now, the Medicine Testing Session was concluded.

The Crown Prince was about to propose that they changed the rank of Gong Hongyu's Medicinal Pill to Highest Distinction when there was a sudden commotion from the group of Medicinal Testers.

That young man, who ate Ye Jiuge's Medicinal Pill, repeatedly tripped as he rushed forward.

His terrifying face was contorted by pain. He was about to say something when he threw up fiercely, spewing out a mouthful of bright red blood. After that, he collapsed on the ground.

“What is happening?” Everyone was extremely shocked.

Ye Jiuge immediately rushed toward the young man and checked his pulse. All the arteries and veins in his heart had ruptured. It was indeed a miracle that he did not die on the spot.

She used her Lightning Fire Needle to seal his fractured arteries and veins. After that, she looked at Li Zijun and shouted, “Prepare a quiet room for me. I want to treat him.”

“Alright!” Li Zijun was about to order an apprentice to get a room ready for her when Gong Hongyu blocked their way.

She pointed at Ye Jiuge and scolded her in a shrill voice: “D*mn you, Ye Jiuge. You produced Poison Pills to harm others. You are truly cruel and unscrupulous — you have no conscience at all.”

Then, she turned to the judges’ table and said, “I strongly implore the Pill Production Tournament judges to disqualify her from participating in the tournament.”

“I agree.” The Crown Prince immediately gave her the nod.

Agree my foot! Ye Jiuge thought.

Ye Jiuge raised her head and said furiously, “It is more important to save his life now. Is this the right time to discuss this?”

“He is already dead from your poison. You still have the gall to claim that you want to save him.” Gong Hongyu harrumphed coldly before saying to Dongfang Yao, “Great Master, Ye Jiuge is vicious and heartless. You should not let her get away with this.”

Dongfang Yao lifted Ye Jiuge’s remaining Heart Nourishing Pills to his nose and sniffed them. He furrowed his brows as he said, “There is nothing wrong with these Medicinal Pills.”

“Great Master, Ye Jiuge’s Medicinal Pill Tester drew his last breath in front of you. How can you insist that her Medicinal Pills are fine?” Gong Hongyu persisted vehemently.

“Gong Hongyu, you keep reiterating that there is an issue with my Medicinal Pills. Did you do

anything to me?”

Ye Jiuge realized that she would not be able to save the patient. Since she could not resolve the conflict over her Medicinal Pill, she stood up then and there and pointed at the tall, thin apprentice and said, “He placed Heart Devouring Flowers among my Medicinal Ingredients. You must have been the one who gave him instructions to do so.”

“What Heart Devouring Flowers? I never gave them to you,” the tall, thin apprentice denied, shaking his head hurriedly.

“If you did not slip these Heart Devouring Flowers into my Medicinal Ingredients, are you saying that I brought them to the tournament myself?” Ye Jiuge pulled out a stalk of Heart Devouring Flowers from her pocket and smiled coldly.

Li Zijun walked up to Ye Jiuge and took the Medicinal Ingredient from her. He examined the flowers carefully before presenting them to Dongfang Yao. “They seem to be Heart Devouring Flowers.”

With one glance, Dongfang Yao was sure that they were Heart Devouring Flowers.

This flower was very similar in appearance to the Heart Nourishing Flower. Therefore, he’d deliberately reminded the apprentices to pay extra attention when they selected the flowers. It had never occurred to him that someone would place a large stalk of Heart Devouring Flowers among the Medicinal Ingredients on purpose.

The identity of the person behind this was crystal clear to Dongfang Yao. Originally, he’d wanted to wait until this round of the tournament finished before giving the Crown Prince a warning. However, he could not bear to restrain himself any longer.

The Crown Prince was unaware that his Imperial Uncle was dissatisfied with him. He even argued with conviction, “I do not know what Heart Devouring Flowers you are talking about. I only saw that, after your Medicinal Pill Tester ate your Medicinal Pill, he died. You are responsible for his death.”

“Unfortunately, my Medicinal Pill Tester has not lost his life yet. I am afraid that this news disappoints you,” Ye Jiuge replied stiffly.

Although the Medicinal Pill Tester was as good as dead, the Crown Prince’s words provoked her so much that it made her more determined to save the dying patient.

With a solemn face, Dongfang Yao went to the young man and checked his pulse. After that, he took a bottle of Rank Three Heart Nourishment Pills out and told Ye Jiuge, “Let him consume this.”

Ye Jiuge accepted it without any qualms then poured the entire bottle of pills into the young man's mouth.

The sickly pallor of the young man's face finally regained some color.

"Imperial Uncle, he is merely a Medicinal Pill Tester. I cannot believe that you gave him pills of such excellent quality. You are too wasteful!" The Crown Prince was foaming at the mouth.

Even if one had the money, one might not be able to purchase Rank Three Heart Nourishment Pills. His Imperial Uncle had given such a precious item to the Medicinal Pill Tester who was destined to die. He must have become senile.

As the young man was at death's door, his heartbeat was extremely weak. There was a risk that he might expire at any moment. That was why he'd specifically assigned that young man to Ye Jiuge.

He'd never thought that his Imperial Uncle would help Ye Jiuge to this extent. He had not predicted that this would happen.

"Shut your mouth." Dongfang Yao looked up and berated the Crown Prince, "Before your involvement, everything went smoothly. Ever since you meddled in this tournament, there have been problems. I cannot afford to have someone as troublesome as you around. You should just return to the Capital!"

"Imperial Uncle, what do you mean?" The Crown Prince was so alarmed that his voice was trembling.

"That's right. Great Master Dongfang, it's obvious that Ye Jiuge produced the wrong Medicinal Pill and caused the Medicinal Pill Tester's death. How can you hold the Crown Prince responsible?" Gong Hongyu was aggrieved.

She wanted to stand up for the Crown Prince. However, she didn't realize that Dongfang Yao was about to deal with her next.

"Gong Hongyu, I disqualify you from the tournament." Dongfang Yao's gaze was devoid of emotion.

"Why?" Gong Hongyu shrieked.

"Because you cheated." Dongfang Yao was not blind. Naturally, he'd figured out that Gong Hongyu's Medicinal Tester was not actually sick at all.

Normally, he'd just turn a blind eye and forget about it.

After all, the Medicinal Pill that Gong Hongyu had produced was not bad.

However, since she was imperious to such a degree, she should not blame him for being inconsiderate of the Gong Clan.

Gong Hongyu was seething to the point of quivering. However, she did not dare talk back to a livid Dongfang Yao.

After she shot a spiteful glare at Ye Jiuge, she ran away crying.

Elder Chen and Elder Xiao looked at each other. Neither of them dared speak up.

The other Alchemists also maintained their silence.

Dongfang Yao gave a new order: "The Medicine Testing Session has concluded. Now, the Judging Session shall begin."

Although Ye Jiuge's Medicinal Pill Tester did not end up dead, her ranking still dropped to the bottom.

The other three Rank Two Alchemists retained their Merit grade, while Ye Shanshan came in first with the Highest Distinction.

Ye Jiuge did not mind this final result. She only asked Li Zijun to send the Medicinal Pill Tester to the Soaring Frost Hall.

With Dongfang Yao's tacit approval, Li Zijun complied with her request.

Meanwhile, at the Ascending Skies Pavilion, the Crown Prince was scowling. It was as if dark clouds were hanging over his head.

When he returned to his lodging, he summoned Su Junqing immediately and gave him a dressing down. "Didn't you tell me that if I acted according to your plan, we would definitely ruin Ye Jiuge? How can it be that she's not only won the tournament round but also made Imperial Uncle hate me?"

As soon as he thought about how his Imperial Uncle would tell his father about this, he felt a chill permeating his body from head to toe.

“Your Highness, please quell your anger. I did not predict that things would spiral out of our control.”

Su Junqing had devised numerous pitfalls for Ye Jiuge and her allies so that he could doom them eternally.

He'd never expected that Ye Jiuge would not only see through his stratagem but also turn the tables on the Crown Prince. This turn of events was really unanticipated.

“By hook or by crook, I want you to destroy Ye Jiuge,” the Crown Prince raged.

“Crown Prince, you can rest assured that, even if Ye Jiuge becomes the champion of the Pill Production Tournament, she will not escape from our clutches,” Su Junqing said confidently.

“You keep repeating this every time. Yet, you have not managed to execute your strategies successfully even once. I have no idea why Mother sent you to help me. You are downright worthless,” the Crown Prince yelled at Su Junqing.

A dark glint flitted across Su Junqing's eyes. However, they returned to normal shortly after.

He met the Crown Prince's eyes with a smile, before speaking gently, “The Empress must have had her own reasons when she sent me to assist you. You might not trust me, but you cannot lose your faith in the Empress!”

When the Crown Prince looked into Su Junqing's bottomless eyes, something clicked in him. He felt that Su Junqing was completely right.

Anyone could make a mistake, except his mother.

“Then, I shall believe you one more time,” the Crown Prince submitted.

“Alright. Then, I would like to ask you to do as I say!” Su Junqing briefed the Crown Prince on his next plan.

However, as the Crown Prince listened, he was stunned.

“You must be mad. She is a member of the Gong Clan!” The Crown Prince stared at Su Junqing in incredulity.

“Your Highness, I know that you want to gain the Gong Clan’s support. However, Gong Hongyu is not a suitable target because she only has eyes for Dongfang Que. Regardless of how well you treat her, your efforts will be futile,” Su Junqing explained calmly.

The Crown Prince immediately recalled that, after Dongfang Yao had disqualified Gong Hongyu from the Pill Production Tournament, she’d kept yapping about him being a failure. She’d gone on about how he was incapable of knocking Ye Jiuge out from the tournament and, instead, he’d landed her in hot water.

The more he thought about it, the angrier he became. His hands were clenched into fists as he asserted, “You are right. Winning over a foolish woman is not worth it at all. We should make use of her for our benefit!”

“You’ve made a wise choice, Your Highness.” The corners of Su Junqing’s lips were curved slightly. He bade the Crown Prince farewell and left.

He returned to his room. When he opened his door, he smelled a faint, metallic odor.

“Little Junior, I heard that you got chewed out pretty badly today!” Liu Yunfei’s sickly sweet voice came from Su Junqing’s bed.

After that, an arm, fair as a lotus root section, lifted the green bed curtain, revealing an adorable face and smooth, light-skinned shoulders.

“Senior, you are really omniscient. Nothing can escape your eyes.” Su Junqing lowered his eyes. He did not dare fix his gaze on the bed.

“So, do you need me to avenge you?” Liu Yunfei stepped down from the bed, completely naked.

Behind her, a male corpse was laid out, bony as a human skeleton.

Since Liu Yunfei had sucked this Spiritual Practitioner's vitality and blood dry only a moment ago, her skin was glowing. A faint fragrance drifted to the tip of Su Junqing's nose.

"Senior, I am extremely thankful for your support. However, the Crown Prince is still a useful pawn. We should let him off for now!" Su Junqing sealed his nostrils discreetly, distracted from the ongoing conversation.

"If you come over to dress me, I will consider sparing him." Liu Yunfei gave a promiscuous giggle. The paleness of her swaying bosoms seemed to shine with some dazzling glimmer.

"Alright." Su Junqing calmed himself once again before picking up the pink undergarment, which was meant to cover the chest and abdomen, from the ground. He helped Liu Yunfei get dressed and was very composed throughout the entire process.

"I am surprised that Little Junior can remain so unperturbed!" After Liu Yunfei was completely clothed, she reached out with her hand to pinch Su Junqing's chest and pouted coquettishly. "Tell me, why did you call for me?"

"Senior, the Crown Prince has already agreed to go along with our next plan. The most crucial turning point for us will happen tonight. I hope that Senior can lend us a helping hand in person and cooperate with us to prevent any unforeseen developments."

Su Junqing had acquired a man with a tremendously high level of Spiritual Cultivation for Liu Yunfei as an offering to convince her to return to him. He hoped that she could come back to take on Ye Jiuge.

"Don't worry. Since I've accepted your gift, I will naturally do my best to help you." Liu Yunfei patted Su Junqing's face flirtatiously with a captivating smile.

During these past few days, she'd been away playing Ye Yu, the Shadow Assassin, for a fool by tantalizing him with clues about his sister.

Initially, she'd planned to force herself on him tonight and reap the fruits of her victory.

However, the earlier offering had been just to her liking. Right now, she felt very satiated. Therefore, she would take Ye Yu's life later!

"Thank you very much, Senior." Su Junqing seemed as though he was going to shed tears of gratitude. However, he was extremely resentful in his heart.

He was not the only one working on this task. Yet, Liu Yunfei acted as if she was merely here to

help without bearing any of the responsibility.

Nevertheless, he did not dare voice his dissatisfaction, regardless of how he felt.

If they were unsuccessful in completing the mission this time, in the worst-case scenario, the Patriarch would punish Liu Yunfei by making her spend her time in captivity. However, Su Junqing might not escape death.

“Alright. I will check out the prey now.” Liu Yunfei poked out her pink tongue and licked her lips. She said to herself, “Although that woman has quite a temper, she is rather attractive.”

Then, she vanished like a demon.

Su Junqing disposed of the shriveled corpse on the bed, eliminating all evidence of its presence. After that, he cleaned up the messy room. Then, he opened the window and stared westward at the Soaring Frost Hall. He smiled coldly as he thought: Ye Jiuge, you will die tonight.

At this time, Ye Jiuge was in a room behind the Soaring Frost Hall, attempting to save the Medicinal Pill Tester.

Although the young man had already consumed Dongfang Yao’s bottle of Grade Three Heart Nourishment Pills, he was still in critical condition.

His veins and arteries were ruptured, leaving his inner body a bloody mess. His blood and airflow were constricted, and he was in danger of losing his life at any time.

If she wanted to save him, she would need to use external force to sort out his veins and arteries so that the blood and air in his body could circulate normally.

If Ye Jiuge did not advance in cultivation, it was highly probable that she would not be able to do anything in this situation.

She held the Lightning Fire Needle between her fingers and inserted it into the young man’s body before doing her utmost to repair his veins and arteries.

Ever since Ye Jiuge had progressed in her cultivation, she’d not only doubled the Spiritual Energy in her body, but she’d become more adept in handling the Lightning Fire Needle.

In her hands, the purplish-red Lightning Fire Needle shimmered. One by one, it mended the young man’s veins and arteries.

Time flew by. After she’d finished restoring the final blood vessel, she almost collapsed from

exhaustion.

Luckily, the veins and arteries were repaired correctly.

After the flow of the young man's blood and air resumed their usual course, his breathing became regular. His tightly knitted brow also relaxed.

Ye Jiuge estimated that he still needed about four hours to regain consciousness, so she left the room.

Ye Ruyi was waiting outside anxiously. As soon as she saw her, she asked immediately, "Eldest Sister, what exactly has happened? Who is that man?"

After she'd failed to progress beyond the first round of the tournament, she'd been forced to leave the venue. Therefore, she did not know what had transpired in her absence.

Earlier, when she'd seen Ye Jiuge bring back a dying man, she'd been flabbergasted.

"He is my Medicinal Pill Tester today." Ye Jiuge recounted what had happened during the tournament round.

When Ye Ruyi heard that Gong Hongyu had been disqualified from the tournament and the Crown Prince had been asked to leave for the Capital, she immediately jumped for joy. She kept insisting, "We should celebrate such good news properly."

"If you want to celebrate, then let's do it!" The Crown Prince and Gong Hongyu's misery made Ye Jiuge very happy.

"Qing Hu, Qing Liu, Yu Die, and Hua Die, bring some money to our kitchen and tell the staff to add a few more delicious dishes to our menu. Tonight, we shall feast," Ye Ruyi instructed ecstatically.

"Yes!" Qing Hu, Qing Liu, and Yu Die answered in unison.

"Where is Hua Die?" Ye Jiuge swept her eyes over the girls. One of her young maids was missing.

"Hua Die found out about a Pastry Shop in the Medicine Refinery City that makes traditional Hawthorn Jelly Cakes. She wanted to buy some for Eldest Miss, so that you could taste them. Looking at the time, she should return soon," Yu Die replied hurriedly.

Ye Jiuge could not help but furrow her brows. She said, "As of late, this place is not very safe. Next time, all of you should avoid going out."

As the Crown Prince had suffered such a significant loss at their hands this time, it was very likely that he would feel bitter about it. He could take it out on anyone.

“Yes, we understand.” Yu Die and the other maids nodded quickly.

Qing Hu took some money and went to their personal kitchen. When she came back, she said, “Eldest Miss, Lord Wan is here to visit you. He is waiting in the main parlor.”

Although Wan Ziyang and Ye Jiuge were very close, there were still some rules of conduct regarding male and female interaction. Hence, they observed the etiquette of a visit.

“Please ask him to wait for a moment. After I put on a new set of clothes, I will head downstairs.” Right now, Ye Jiuge’s entire body smelled of medicine.

“Yes.” After Qing Hu curtseyed, she went downstairs.

Ye Jiuge changed her clothes then went to the main parlor. She saw Wan Ziyang sitting on a chair with his eyebrows locked tightly together.

“Brother Wan, is anything bothering you?” Ye Jiuge asked curiously.

“This time, I came to tell you something.” Wan Ziyang had brought Ye Jiuge some bad news.

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As it turned out, when Bai Songling had escorted Ye Jiuge to the Medicine Refinery Valley, he’d found out that many of the Spiritual Practitioners participating in the Pill Production Tournament had disappeared during their journeys.

The number of missing Spiritual Practitioners added up to more than ten. Bai Songling suspected that members of the Bloodthirsty Sect had captured them.

“The Black Magic Practitioners of the Bloodthirsty Sect dared to lay their fingers on Spiritual Practitioners so brazenly. They are really audacious!” Ye Jiuge ceased her brow.

In the past, the Bloodthirsty Sect had only gone so far as abducting ordinary people for their cultivation. Even if they wanted to get their hands on Spiritual Practitioners, they would have done so discreetly.

Now, they’d captured more than ten Spiritual Practitioners. This was a crazy development.

“Songling has already reported this matter to the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance. They plan to send some people over to investigate.” Wan Ziyang was also shocked by the Black Magic Practitioners’ boldness.

More than ten Spiritual Practitioners was not a small number. They needed to report it to the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance.

Otherwise, when the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance pursued the matter after the dust had settled, they might blame them for keeping the situation under wraps.

“Do you know who the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance has assigned to follow up on this case?” Ye Jiuge was worried that Spiritual Practitioner Alliance would send over a pompous idiot who would just hinder them.

“I am not sure.” Wan Ziyang shook his head. His social network was not extensive or influential enough to infiltrate the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance.

“However, you do not need to worry. The Lei Kingdom is still our territory. The Spiritual Practitioner Alliance’s main purpose in dispatching someone is to look into the matter. As long as we stand our ground, everything will be fine.”

Wan Ziyang had been involved with the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance in the past. He knew that they were very inefficient when handling matters.

However, as long as the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance identified the Bloodthirsty Sect as a threat and issued an extermination order to all of its members, every Spiritual Practitioner would hunt and kill Bloodthirsty Sect members until none were left alive. This was the most crucial part.

“Alright.” Ye Jiuge trusted Wan Ziyang’s judgment.

"This matter is still confidential. You should never inform anyone else about this to avoid unrest," Wan Ziyang warned her.

"Rest assured. I know that this is a significant matter and will act accordingly. By the way, do you know where Ye Yu is? Why hasn't he come to meet me after such a long time?" It had been three days since Ye Jiuge had arrived at the Medicine Refinery City. She had not seen Ye Yu at all. It was really strange.

"Ye Yu discovered traces of Liu Yunfei's presence on the outskirts of the city. He is currently tracking her down," Wan Ziyang said.

"We must ask him to be more vigilant." Ye Jiuge recounted how she'd encountered signs of Black Magic in the small building east of her last night.

"Don't worry. I have been keeping an eye on the Crown Prince." Wan Ziyang did not dare lower his guard, even for a second.

"There is no longer a need for that. The Crown Prince will leave for the Capital soon." Ye Jiuge recounted what had happened during the tournament.

Wan Ziyang was astonished. However, he smiled shortly after and said, "I believe that when this news reaches the Capital, it will be extremely challenging for the Crown Prince to retain his position."

No one knew better than him how the Emperor was taking this year's Pill Production Tournament very seriously.

Instead of handling his responsibilities properly, the Crown Prince had abused his power to cause problems during the tournament. Not only that, but he'd made a terrible mess. After the Emperor found out about it, he would definitely be infuriated.

Initially, when news of Dongfang Que's recovery had gotten out, highly ranked ministers had repeatedly attempted to replace the Crown Prince. Now, the Crown Prince had given them something that they could hold against him. He was truly stupid in every way.

"Reasonably speaking, the Crown Prince should not be this dumb." Based on Ye Jiuge's understanding of the Crown Prince, regardless of how much he hated her, he would not go as far as treating the tournament as a joke.

"The Crown Prince has actually been behaving quite oddly recently." Wan Ziyang thought about it then spoke after a moment of hesitation, "Can it be that he was under the influence of Su Junqing's Mental Manipulation?"

"It is quite possible. If that is the case, then they are truly dogs fighting each other, gaining no benefit but mouthfuls of fur." Ye Jiuge spoke with gleeful delight about their conflict.

"Su Junqing would never do anything pointless. You should never underestimate him. Look after the people around you, so that he will not be able to take advantage of them." Although Wan Ziyang had never encountered Su Junqing while he was using his skill, he was also aware that Su Junqing's Mental Manipulation was quite powerful.

When Ye Jiuge heard this, her heart immediately skipped a beat. She called Yu Die into the room hurriedly. "Has Hua Die returned yet?"

"She hasn't." Yu Die's face was filled with anxiety.

Hua Die had ventured out early in the morning. Even if she took her time, she should have arrived back at Soaring Frost Hall by now.

"Brother Wan, I have a personal maid who went out this morning. She hasn't returned. May I trouble you to help me to search for her?" Ye Jiuge had a bad feeling.

"Sure, I will assign some men to look for her now." Wan Ziyang instructed his subordinates immediately to check the pastry shop where Hua Die had gone to buy Hawthorn Jelly Cake.

Unfortunately, when Wan Ziyang's men went to the street where the pastry shop was located and asked everyone around, no one had seen Hua Die.

It was obvious to them that, by now, this young maid had gone missing.

When Yu Die found out about this, she broke down in tears. She kept repeating that if only she'd stopped Hua Die from leaving the Soaring Frost Hall, nothing terrible would have happened to her.

Qing Hu and Qing Liu were also distraught.

Ye Ruyi became extremely dispirited. She wrung her hands so tightly that they were about to become two sticks of Fried Dough Twists.

Hua Die's disappearance made her recall her days in the dark basement.

Those young girls, who'd been abused and killed and whose blood had been extracted by the Sorcerer, were the same age as Hua Die.

Ye Jiuge had the calmest expression of all of them.

As she pacified Ye Ruyi, she asked Wan Ziyang to continue the search.

“If she is alive, I want to meet her in person. If she is dead, I want to see her corpse. I find it hard to believe that she would go missing in the Medicine Refinery City without rhyme or reason,” Ye Jiuge said determinedly.

“Do not worry. No matter what, I will track her down.” Wan Ziyang nodded.

In the dead of night, the Medicine Refinery Complex was peaceful.

Cold winds blew, blanketing the ground with frost.

Ye Jiuge was not in the mood to cultivate. She laid on her bed, tossing and turning. She could not sleep a wink.

Hua Die’s disappearance weighed heavily on her heart, like a massive rock.

She had been hunting down the Black Magic Practitioners, yet they had managed to capture her personal maid right under her nose. She truly felt provoked by this.

Just then, a peculiar scent drifted in through the window.

Ye Jiuge opened her eyes and sat up without a sound. She activated her Spiritual Eye before scanning outside the window.

She saw a body of glowing purple light crawl into the room through the open window.

It was a purple scorpion that was as large as her fist. The thing was currently running rampant in her room in a rude and arrogant manner.

Ye Jiuge lifted her bed curtain to scrutinize it. She discovered that a tiny golden earring was tied to the scorpion’s body. The word ‘Hua’ was even written on the scorpion using cinnabar.

She immediately figured out that this purple scorpion was related to Hua Die’s disappearance.

When the purple scorpion noticed Ye Jiuge’s gaze, it raised its stinger and shot light purple Poison Needles toward her.

Ye Jiuge used her hand to knock the Poison Needles to the ground, before sending a ray of purple light back at it, enveloping the scorpion’s body.

When the purple scorpion recognized that it was in deep trouble, it turned around to escape from her. It moved as quick as lightning.

Ye Jiuge did not have the time to think. Instinctively, she chased after it.

After the purple scorpion left the Medicine Refinery Complex, it took many turns before it reached an area with many stone mounds.

Its silhouette wormed its way into the highest one in a flash.

Ye Jiuge halted her footsteps. She summoned her Spiritual Energy and aimed purple lightning at the pile of stones.

Bam! The stones from the mound flew everywhere at once, revealing a dark entrance on the ground below.

The night winds gust past her. A distinct bloody stench came out from the hole.

Ye Jiuge was instantly on her toes.

She walked slowly to the entrance. The White Bone Flame materialized from her fingers, illuminating the underground cave.

She gave the place a once-over. Immediately, she widened her eyes. She could not help but take a deep, shaky breath.

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A flayed female corpse was abandoned inside the sinister and forbidding underground cave. Her

red flesh dripping with blood was appalling.

Her fractured eye sockets and dilated pupils displayed a deep grudge and sent shivers down the spines of anyone who looked at her.

Ye Jiuge felt cold all over. She tried to contain her repugnance as she directed her eyes toward the center of the corpse's cranium.

The skull was empty. This was the only substantial evidence needed to prove that the victim's Spiritual Root had been extracted from her body.

Since this female corpse had a Spiritual Root, Ye Jiuge was sure that she was not Hua Die.

However, as this female corpse was severely disfigured, Ye Jiuge could not recognize her.

She raised her hand to let the White Bone Flame light up the entire underground cave and discovered that, behind the skinned female corpse, lay more than ten additional bodies.

Although their clothing and accessories significantly differed, they had all died because their blood had been sucked dry.

These should be the bodies of the Alchemists who had disappeared on their way to the Pill Production Tournament.

Ye Jiuge's heart throbbed fast. She felt inexplicable unease.

Undoubtedly, the purple scorpion was a Black Magic Practitioner's Spiritual Pet.

She wondered: Why did it bring me to this underground cave?

Ye Jiuge checked the cave carefully. She wanted to locate the purple scorpion.

Suddenly, she heard a swoosh. It came from a Spiritual Arrow piercing the air behind her.

She turned around promptly and formed a hand technique to cause the Spiritual Energy in her entire body to increase sharply and create a purple Protective Barrier around her. This allowed her to defend herself against the green Spiritual Arrow.

The green Spiritual Arrow transformed into Spiritual Energy before disappearing into thin air.

The very next moment, a light green silhouette landed in front of her.

The handsome man who now approached her had a slender figure. There was an official crest bearing a green Seven-leaf Clover on his chest, representing his position in the Medicine Refinery City. She had not expected to see Dongfang Yao's Chief Disciple, Li Zijun.

"Li Zijun, why did you ambush me?" Ye Jiuge asked in an unfriendly tone.

"I thought that you were a Black Magic Practitioner." Li Zijun caught sight of the cave behind Ye Jiuge. His expression changed at once. He spoke to her in disbelief, "Did you kill these people?"

"Of course not." Ye Jiuge denied immediately.

She was about to describe what had occurred from her perspective when she heard a clamor in the distance.

She saw troops carrying torches and swiftly closing in.

The person who was leading them was dressed in magnificent clothing made from brocade and adorned with a golden dragon with five talons. It was the Crown Prince, Dongfang Jianming.

As soon as the Crown Prince reached the stone hillocks, he immediately ordered his soldiers to surround Ye Jiuge. From his attitude, it was as if he were going to capture a massive, ferocious beast.

"Crown Prince, what is the meaning of this?" When Ye Jiuge saw the battle array of the Crown Prince's men, it had already dawned on her that this was part of his ploy. Otherwise, everything would not be so coincidental.

"Ye Jiuge, I should be the one asking you that." The Crown Prince looked toward the underground cave behind Ye Jiuge.

Burning torches lit up the entire area. The situation in the cave was apparent with one glance.

"Ah!" When Ye Shanshan saw the skinned female corpse, she widened her eyes and covered her mouth with her hands. She was so horrified that her face went as white as a sheet.

"Gong Clan's Third Miss!" the Crown Prince exclaimed. After that, he glared at Ye Jiuge and growled, "You are a psychopath. I cannot believe that you have done such a cruel thing to the Gong Clan's Third Miss."

"How do you know that this female corpse is the Gong Clan's Third Miss?" Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrow.

"I discovered a letter in the Gong Clan's Third Miss's room. The letter states that you enticed her to come alone to this stone mound under the pretense of having a way to restore her right to participate in the tournament. I never thought that you lured her here to murder her..." The Crown Prince was so overwhelmed with grief that he could not continue.

"I never sent any letter to the Gong Clan's Third Miss. I am here because my personal maid, Hua Die, was kidnapped. A purple scorpion with her earring brought me here. Only then did I discover these corpses," Ye Jiuge reasoned.

"Ye Jiuge, as matters stand, you still dare to refute me. Your maid, Hua Die, was not abducted. She escaped from your clutches and sought help from us.

"A long time ago, she discovered your true identity as a Black Magic Practitioner. She did not have the courage to expose you until she eavesdropped and learned that you wanted to make a move against the Gong Clan's Third Miss. Only after this did she run away. I never thought that we were one step too late." The Crown Prince acted as if he were filled with regret.

"Elder Sister Hongyu, you died so horribly!" Ye Shanshan bawled and covered her mouth with her hand. Those unfamiliar with the situation would have thought that her parents had passed away.

"What did you say? Hua Die is with you?" This information hit Ye Jiuge like a bolt from out of the blue.

"Ye Clan's Eldest Miss, your maid has testified against you, claiming that you are a Black Magic Practitioner who drinks human blood for cultivation. You not only abducted the contestants who came to Medicine Refinery City to participate in the tournament, you even murdered the Gong Clan's Third Miss. Please, explain yourself," Li Zijun said solemnly.

"Zijun, right now, we have a witness and physical evidence of her crime. What else is there to explain? We should hurry up and arrest this murderer and Black Magic Practitioner and punish her," said the Crown Prince in exasperation.

"Although Your Highness often incriminates me with false accusations, this time, you've gone as far as accusing me of the crime of practicing Black Magic. Who knows what kind of benefits those Black Magic Practitioners have given you."

Ye Jiuge narrowed her eyes. Her voice was as cold as ice as she spoke, "You asserted that my personal maid, Hua Die, has testified that I am a Black Magic Practitioner. In which case, you should bring her here so that I can confront her face to face."

"Ye Jiuge, do you really refuse to repent until the final nail is hammered into your coffin? Someone go fetch Hua Die and bring her here," the Crown Prince commanded his men.

Shortly after, two soldiers brought a forward petite girl from the rear of the troops.

She had large eyes and a small, round face. She looked exactly like Hua Die.

Hua Die's gaze was fixed on the ground. She did not dare to look at Ye Jiuge.

"Hua Die, you do not need to be afraid. Repeat to everyone what you told me today," said the Crown Prince confidently.

"Eldest Miss is not human at all. She is a Black Magic Practitioner who drinks blood. To progress in her cultivation, she has killed many people. She even said that, since the Gong Clan's Third Miss kept jumping down her throat, she had to skin her alive, break her bones, and extract her Spiritual Root to alleviate her hatred..." Hua Die's head remained lowered. Her voice and body were trembling like a leaf.

Ye Jiuge fixed her eyes on Hua Die. She spoke in a measured tone, "Since you have the nerve to incriminate me, why do you not have the courage to look at me?"

"Eldest Miss, please do not kill me." With a thud, Hua Die kneeled with her forehead on the ground, looking frightened to the core.

"If you are really Hua Die, of course I will not take your life." Ye Jiuge's gaze became more indifferent.

She could not believe that this talkative young maid would betray her.

Unless, she was under Su Junqing's Mental Manipulation.

Perhaps, she was not Hua Die at all. Someone else was impersonating her.

"Hua Die, you do not need to feel scared. With my presence, Ye Jiuge cannot lay a finger on you." The Crown Prince moved forward to shield Hua Die from Ye Jiuge and pointed at Ye Jiuge while shouting sternly, "Ye Jiuge, as a bloodthirsty and ruthless Black Magic Practitioner, you have harmed and killed so many people for your Black Magic cultivation. Surrender quickly."

"Your Highness, if I am really a Black Magic Practitioner, how could Great Master Dongfang not see through me?"

Ye Jiuge turned to Li Zijun and asked, "Black Magic Practitioners exude evil energy. They are not able to hide from those who have a higher level of cultivation. Since Great Master Dongfang is a Spiritual Master, do you think that I can deceive him?"

“This...” Naturally, Li Zijun did not dare to discredit his own Master.

However, the Crown Prince had Gong Hongyu’s last words in his hands and Ye Jiuge’s personal maid as a witness. Ye Jiuge was indeed very suspicious.

At this time, Ye Shanshan suddenly came forward to speak in an unwavering tone, “Senior Li, even though I am unable to prove that Eldest Sister is a murderer, I can show you evidence that she is really practicing Black Magic.”

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Li Zijun probably never expected Ye Shanshan to come forward and testify against her own sister. He was stunned for a moment before asking, “Ye Clan’s Second Miss, can you please share what kind of evidence you have incriminating her?”

“Senior Li, anyone in the Capital knows that, in the past, my Eldest Sister was seriously ill. Her meridians were completely damaged. She was unable to cultivate at all. Not only that, her face was absolutely hideous. She was drained of her strength and vitality all the time.

“However, a while back, she suddenly said that she had experienced a miraculous occurrence in the Wanzhang Depths.

“She not only managed to restore her meridians, but her cultivation level also grew exponentially. Within a short time of three months, she advanced to a Rank Two Alchemist. Her appearance also became extremely beautiful.

“Other than Black Magic cultivation, I cannot think of another favorable encounter that could justify such a drastic change in her.”

It was obvious that Ye Shanshan had rehearsed every word before reciting them now.

Ye Jiuge had to acknowledge that her speech was very persuasive.

After Li Zijun listened to her, even he was convinced.

He furrowed his brow and turned his gaze toward Ye Jiuge's face.

Because he admired Great Master Yun, he'd once met Ye Jiuge privately three years ago.

At that time, Ye Jiuge had indeed been extremely ugly. She'd also been so timid that she could not even speak clearly.

However, the Ye Jiuge in front of him was exceptionally beautiful, like a Frozen Snow Lotus in full bloom during the dark night.

Even though she was surrounded by hostile soldiers, her clear, bright eyes remained resolute. They displayed the unique, unfaltering, and assertive side of her.

She was very different compared to her past self.

"Second Sister, admittedly, you make some good points. However, if I am really a Black Magic Practitioner, you should have been the first person to die by my hand. Although the smell of your blood would be repugnant, I think that it could be a good idea to feed you to the dogs."

Ye Jiuge had a pair of pretty, emotive eyes, which were as clear as a pristine lake. However, the gleam that flashed from their depths was exceptionally cold, like a terrifying abyss.

Ye Jiuge's gaze made Ye Shanshan's skin crawl, and she immediately cowered behind the Crown Prince.

"Ye Jiuge, you still refuse to repent even now. You dared to threaten Ye Shanshan right in front of me. Did you really think that you could hide the truth from the public?" The Crown Prince stepped forward fearlessly.

"I am innocent. Why do I need to feel any remorse over things that I never did? You are the one who wants to hide the truth from the public!" Ye Jiuge snorted with laughter.

"You..." The Crown Prince was so furious that his face turned red. However, he knew that he was no match to Ye Jiuge when it came to sparring verbally with her, so he turned to Li Zijun and said, "Zijun, we have a witness and physical evidence that prove that Ye Jiuge is a murderer. We must

jail her in the Imperial Prison. Otherwise, it will be difficult for us to placate the Gong Clan!"

Before this, Dongfang Yao had turned his back on the Crown Prince, so the Crown Prince had wanted to get on Li Zijun's good side. Otherwise, he would have ordered his men to capture Ye Jiuge a long time ago.

When Li Zijun thought of the Gong Clan, he suffered a headache.

Although Gong Hongyu was merely one daughter from the collateral branch of the family, she was still a member of the Gong Clan.

She'd come to the Lei Kingdom to participate in the Pill Production Tournament. In the end, she'd died tragically in the Medicine Refinery City.

Regardless of who was responsible for her death, the authorities would not be able to stay out of it. The Gong Clan would hold them accountable.

Li Zijun sighed. He said to Ye Jiuge, "Ye Clan's Eldest Miss, at present, we have a witness and evidence. You are our most likely suspect. I would like to request that you cooperate with our investigation. If you are really innocent, we will definitely acquit you."

Ye Jiuge evaluated the situation quickly. She knew that, given the current circumstances, it would be impossible for her to escape unscathed.

Li Zijun has been quite civil with her. It might be better for her to oblige.

She swept her eyes over Hua Die, who was trembling behind the soldiers and trying to hide herself. Then, Ye Jiuge replied to Li Zijun, "Fine, I will leave with you. However, I do not want Hua Die to remain by the Crown Prince's side. You should hand her over to Wan Ziyang."

"I will not allow this," the Crown Prince objected right away. "Everyone knows that you connived with Wan Ziyang. How can Hua Die stay alive once she's in his hands?"

Ye Jiuge narrowed her eyes at the Crown Prince. After this, she slowly turned to Li Zijun before saying, "The events which took place during the Pill Production Tournament are still fresh in everyone's minds. You are well aware of the Crown Prince's character. I do not trust such a person to investigate this case. Perhaps, he is colluding with the Black Magic Practitioners."

"You are talking nonsense. How can I possibly have connections with the Black Magic Practitioners? You should not slander me maliciously." The Crown Prince almost jumped.

When Li Zijun recalled how the Crown Prince had messed with the Pill Production Tournament, he

agreed that the Crown Prince was untrustworthy. Therefore, he said, "Since this has happened in the Medicine Refinery City, it is my responsibility to investigate this thoroughly. I will send someone to watch over Hua Die while she is in captivity."

"Zijun!" the Crown Prince shouted. However, when he saw that Li Zijun was firm in his decision, he could only shut his mouth grudgingly.

"You must keep an eye on Hua Die in case someone kills her to silence her and blames her death on me." Ye Jiuge eyed the Crown Prince. Her meaning was obvious.

"Of course." Li Zijun nodded gravely. After he asked his men to look after Hua Die, he said to Ye Jiuge, "Let's go!"

"What will happen to those corpses?" Ye Jiuge remained still.

"I will send someone to deal with them." Li Zijun looked indifferent. It was apparent that he would not handle this matter personally.

Ye Jiuge furrowed her brow. She said, "As these corpses were produced by Black Magic Practitioners' activity, they will definitely contain a lot of clues. If we just clear them from the scene without any careful examination, I am afraid that this is not be a proper way to handle the case. I would like to advise you to find a professional coroner or Spiritual Doctor to examine them."

"Fair enough." Li Zijun had a whole new level of respect for Ye Jiuge.

Most people in her situation would be a bundle of nerves, but she had a good head on her shoulders. She really did not look like a murderer.

"Hmph, what a hypocrite!" the Crown Prince jeered with a mocking laugh. He said to Li Zijun, "Zijun, you should not let this witch delude you. Black Magic Practitioners are extremely capable of manipulating others' minds. Her words are meant to pull the wool over your eyes. In my opinion, we should quickly make arrangements for the Gong Clan's Third Miss's funeral so that the Gong Clan will not feel let down by us."

"That's right. We should respect the dead. It is better for us to stop tormenting their remains," Ye Shanshan chimed in sorrowfully.

Li Zijun felt slightly hesitant.

At that moment, another battalion of men and horses hurried to the scene from the distant darkness.

As it turned out, Wan Ziyang had caught wind of what was happening and was now rushing over to the stone hillocks.

When he saw Ye Jiuge surrounded by the Crown Prince, he immediately asked in an unfriendly manner, “What is going on?”

“Ye Jiuge practices Black Magic. She killed people and drank their blood. We have solid evidence of her crimes. Right now, we are going to take her to the Imperial Prison to interrogate her,” the Crown Prince answered before anyone else could speak.

“That is absurd,” Wan Ziyang declared—he was certain that the Crown Prince’s accusations were untrue. “It’s possible for anyone to be a Black Magic Practitioner, except for Ye Jiuge.”

“How do you know that it’s not possible? Can it be that you are the real killer?” the Crown Prince questioned him aggressively.

Wan Ziyang was about to argue with the Crown Prince when Ye Jiuge cut him off, “Brother Wan, His Highness is bent on incriminating me. Even if you want to reason further with him, it is useless. You may as well hurry up and uncover evidence to prove my innocence.”

Gong Hongyu’s letter and Hua Die’s testimony had put her in an extremely disadvantageous situation. Not only that, but Ye Shanshan was making things worse for her from the sidelines.

As matters stood, Ye Jiuge could only clear her name by finding the real murderer.

Wan Ziyang composed himself immediately. Reason returned to his eyes at once.

When Ye Jiuge saw that he had calmed down, she said gravely, “Brother Wan, there is something wrong with those corpses in the underground cave.”

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“There was something off about the corpses at the cave entrance.” Ye Jiuge gave the Crown Prince a glance, seemingly implying something.

She said it to ruffle him, wanting to see what kind of reaction he would have.

As expected, the Crown Prince's eyes shifted.

When Su Junqing had told him that he wanted to make use of Gong Hongyu to deal with Ye Jiuge, he'd had no idea that the Sorcerers would be involved.

Truth be told, he was frightened by the sight of so many corpses.

But there was no way to back out now. He could only grit his teeth and see it through to the end—until Ye Jiuge was dead.

After all, he would deal with Wan Ziyang and the rest, so it didn't matter if they found anything.

The Crown Prince became calm. He turned to Li Zijun and said, "Zijun, leave those corpses to Lord Wan. Let's bring Ye Jiuge back quickly to prevent anything from cropping up again."

Li Zijun looked at Ye Jiuge questioningly.

Ye Jiuge calmly said, "I have two things to instruct Big Brother Wan. We can leave after that."

"No, that cannot happen," the Crown Prince objected fiercely.

"Alright!" Li Zijun nodded in agreement.

"Tell me!" Wan Ziyang swiftly made his way to Ye Jiuge's side.

"The first thing..." Ye Jiuge told him why she'd appeared at the ruins. Using the purple scorpion as an excuse, she made a vague comment about how Hua Die was acting weird.

"The second thing..." She hoped that Wan Ziyang could send some men to protect Ye Ruyi and Yu Die.

She knew that this trap had been set in advance by the Crown Prince and the Sorcerers from the Bloodthirsty Sect. She feared that the people around her would be implicated too.

"I've already sent people to Soaring Frost Hall." The moment Wan Ziyang had gotten wind that Ye Jiuge was in trouble, he'd immediately sent soldiers to protect Ye Ruyi and the rest.

"Thank you!" Ye Jiuge heaved a sigh of relief. Wan Ziyang was genuinely reliable.

But the expression on Wan Ziyang's face was hesitant.

Ye Jiuge's heart skipped a beat, and she asked, "What's wrong? Did something happen?"

"It's nothing serious. It's just that, your Medicinal Pill Tester has gone missing. My men searched high and low for him, but he was nowhere to be found."

Although Wan Ziyang did not think that the Medicinal Pill Tester's disappearance was important, he still had to inform Ye Jiuge.

"It doesn't matter. Just leave him be." Ye Jiuge did not care that the Medicinal Pill Tester was missing.

After all, saving the Medicinal Pill Tester would only be for morality's sake.

"Humph! I think he isn't missing—you ate him!" The Crown Prince continued maliciously, "I wondered why you were so kind as to save someone with a Medicinal Pill. Now we know. You were just using him for practice."

"Your Highness, please be prudent with your words before everything has been investigated. It would not be good if word got around to the Emperor." Wan Ziyang's sharp eyes gave the Crown Prince a poignant look.

"Wan Ziyang, are you threatening me?" The Crown Prince was furious.

"I'm merely stating a fact." Wan Ziyang had never thought much of the Crown Prince in the past. He wasn't afraid to talk back to him.

"Wan Ziyang, you sure have guts insulting the Imperial Family. Do you really think that I won't touch you?" The Crown Prince's face swelled red with anger.

He was about to order Wan Ziyang's arrest when Li Zijun stopped him, "Please calm down, Your Highness. The most important thing now is to fully investigate the murders committed by the Sorcerers."

Li Zijun was trying to be the peacemaker. But, to the Crown Prince, it was as if Li Zijun were slighting him.

Furthermore, Ye Jiuge added lightly, "Big Brother Wan, Senior Li is right. The most important thing now is to investigate the Sorcerers. If the mad dog wants to bite, just let him be!"

The expression on the Crown Prince's face turned frightfully chilly. His fists were clenched so tightly that his nails sank into his flesh.

When he ascended the throne, he would make sure all these people paid.

Li Zijun never noticed the change in the Crown Prince. Resigned, he turned to Ye Jiuge and said, "Eldest Miss Ye, since your affairs are in order, let's get going!"

"Sure!" Ye Jiuge was very cooperative and followed Li Zijun out.

Wan Ziyang stood where he was, silently watching Ye Jiuge leave.

Her green-clad and graceful figure stood out like a sore thumb among the soldiers surrounding her. Looking at the scene made him feel a little desolate.

Ye Jiuge is strong. She will be fine!

Wan Ziyang took a deep breath, reigned in his emotions, and led his men to the underground cave entrance.

He searched the ruins but was unable to find the purple scorpion that Ye Jiuge had mentioned.

But this outcome was expected, so he wasn't too discouraged.

He continued to search through the corpses in the cave.

The Spiritual Roots had been removed from the Spiritual Practitioners' bodies.

Besides Gong Hongyu, who had been flayed, the others had died because their cultivation and blood had been sucked dry.

Gong Hongyu's cadaver was still fresh, and the wall beside her was still spotted with fresh blood. It was likely that the blood had been spilled not too long ago.

The splatter was very uniform, and it seemed like the deceased did not put up much resistance.

Wan Ziyang's preliminary deduction was that Gong Hongyu was killed at a different location. The body was then brought here, after her death, to be flayed.

As for the corpses whose cultivation and blood had been sucked dry, the stiffness of each body differed. So, they'd not all been killed at the same time.

Wan Ziyang searched the corpses carefully for quite a while. Finally, on the sole of one of the corpses' shoe, he found a thin layer of red mud.

He found the same mud on Gong Hongyu's shoe. This meant that the two had been in the same place before.

Once they found the source of the red mud, they would be able to find the place that the victims had visited before their deaths.

To verify his conjecture, Wan Ziyang decided to head out of the City to investigate.

Before heading out, he wrote down everything he'd found in a letter and gave it to Li Ziyang to pass to Ye Jiuge. During this time, Ye Jiuge was held up in Medicine Refinery City's innermost hall—Nine Pills Hall.

Although the Crown Prince had vehemently requested that Ye Jiuge be locked up in jail, after Li Zijun sought advice from his teacher, Ye Jiuge was placed under house arrest in Dongfang Yao's private area, the Nine Pills Hall.

The Crown Prince was furious with this decision. He endlessly made a fuss over wanting to meet personally with Dongfang Yao to set things straight.

Unfortunately, ever since Dongfang Yao had publicly chased the Crown Prince away back to the Capital, he had not been seen in public.

Now, the excuse was that Dongfang Yao's recurring headache ailment had relapsed, so he was unable to receive guests.

The Crown Prince had no way of redeeming himself. He could only seek out Li Zijun every day, pestering him to be impartial and punish Ye Jiuge as soon as possible.

Li Zijun was so frustrated by the Crown Prince's pestering that he was about to tear his hair out.

Recently, there had been a string of unfortunate incidents in the Medicine Refinery City. Even the tournament had to be halted. Normally, in such situations, teacher should be the one holding the fort.

However, he despised his Eldest Disciple for being too engrossed with Medicine Refinery—to the point that he'd almost become an idiot.

But, with the excuse of training Li Zijun, he'd left everything to him.

Using the name of Dongfang Yao, Li Zijun gave an order forbidding anyone to visit Ye Jiuge.

Be it the Crown Prince, Ye Shanshan, Ye Ruyi, or Wan Ziyang—no one could visit.

To get Li Zijun to help him send a letter to Ye Jiuge, Wan Ziyang had to plead and pester for quite a while.

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When Wan Ziyang's letter arrived, Ye Jiuge was inspecting the purple imprint on her wrist.

Zi Shang had been sleeping ever since he'd swallowed the Transformation Pearl. So far, there has been no sign of him, and she was unsure when he would come out again.

It was quite lonely without a Snake Demon dishing out barbs and ridicule beside her!

Ye Jiuge sighed and caressed the imprint's smooth surface. Then, she turned her attention to Wan Ziyang's letter.

Just as she was reading the part about Wan Ziyang heading out of the city to find footprints in red mud, a booming voice resounded from outside the door, "Come out, Ye Jiuge!"

Shocked, the letter in Ye Jiuge's hand slipped to the ground.

The Nine Pills Hall was Dongfang Yao's private area, and trespassing was forbidden. Even the servant who delivered her meals was mute. How could there be someone here with such a loud voice?

Ye Jiuge listened intently. After the person finished shouting, she realized that it was two people.

Li Zijun's placating voice and the Crown Prince's dissension rang out at the same time.

“Brother Honglei, please calm down. Before the investigations are completed, we cannot accuse Ye Jiuge of being the culprit.”

“Brother Honglei, you’ve seen the note that the Third Miss Gong left behind. There isn’t anyone else besides Ye Jiuge.”

“Come out now, Ye Jiuge!” The person’s voice sounded even more uncontrollable, and it was getting closer to Ye Jiuge’s room.

Ye Jiuge stashed Wan Ziyang’s letter carefully. Then, she fixed her appearance. Finally, she opened the door.

A group of people clustered at the end of the path.

At the forefront was a youth with a ferocious expression on his face. He carried a sword on his back and was rushing toward Ye Jiuge aggressively.

The Crown Prince followed behind him on the left. His expression was like the cat that got the canary.

Li Zijun followed the youth on the right. He was repeatedly trying to placate the youth, “Please calm down, Brother Honglei!”

Like a gust of wind, the young man stopped in front of Ye Jiuge. His large, bell-shaped eyes ran over Ye Jiuge. He questioned her fiercely, “You are the one who murdered Hongyu?”

“Senior Li, who is he? After forcing his way in, why does he spit out slander?” Ye Jiuge turned to Li Zijun after sending the youth a sidelong glance.

“This is the Envoy from the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance, Gong Honglei. He is also the Third Miss Gong’s elder brother.” Li Zijun sighed and gave Ye Jiuge a worried look.

Teacher’s name might be able to restrain the Crown Prince, but not the Alliance’s Envoy, who sought revenge for his sister.

“Humph!” Ye Jiuge scoffed coldly. Her beautiful eyes turned sharp as she looked Gong Honglei up and down. She commented with disdain, “The Envoy from the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance doesn’t look like much.”

“What do you mean by that?” Gong Honglei glared. He looked ready to draw his sword and cut someone down.

“The Alliance sent you here to investigate the murders committed by the Sorcerers. Yet here you are, abusing your power and trying to torture me into a confession. Is that how the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance conducts their work?” Ye Jiuge’s voice was not loud, but it exerted so much pressure on Gong Honglei that he could not speak.

Seeing the situation turn in Ye Jiuge’s favor, the Crown Prince immediately chimed in, “Ye Jiuge, you murdered someone’s sister. Yet, you still have the guts to say such things. It’s too much!”

The Crown Prince looked toward Gong Honglei. “Brother Honglei, this Ye Jiuge is just a deranged Sorcerer. You better kill her quickly to take revenge for your sister!”

“Dongfang Jianming, you accuse me of murdering Gong Hongyu. Did you witness me killing her? Did you witness me practicing blood-sucking sorcery?”

Before the Crown Prince could say anything, Ye Jiuge went on boldly, “And don’t revisit the topics of the note that was left behind and Hua Die! The note could have been faked, and Hua Die could have been bribed. Unless you have any other evidence, you can shut up now.”

“Ye Jiuge, this evidence is enough. It’s useless, even if you deny it. Besides, there is no one else except you,” the Crown Prince insisted.

“Ever since I came to Medicine Refinery City from the Capital, I’ve never gone out. Now, tell me, when would I have had the time to kidnap and kill a person?” Laying the facts out and making sense of the situation, Ye Jiuge was not afraid of him.

“You might not have the time, but your buddies did. Bai Songling was lurking around the outskirts of Medicine Refinery City, and Wan Ziyang has left the city. Who knows? Perhaps he left to prepare for your escape because the plan was exposed.”

A vicious chill flashed in the Crown Prince’s eyes. He wanted to take this chance to get rid of Wan Ziyang and Bai Songling at the same time.

“So, based on your theory, Great Master Dongfang and Senior Li are also Sorcerers because they placed me here?”

Ye Jiuge raised an eyebrow then turned to Gong Honglei. “The Crown Prince is possessed. Besides him, everyone is a Sorcerer. Perhaps you might like to contact the Alliance to send more people here? Just so that you can catch everyone.”

“You are ridiculous!” the Crown Prince hollered.

Before Ye Jiuge could reply, Gong Honglei burst out, "Shut up, all of you!"

He was overwhelmed by the squabbling. His original intention to rush in and kill Ye Jiuge and revenge his sister had mysteriously vanished.

As an appointed Envoy of the Alliance, Gong Honglei was not incompetent.

However, his emotions were unstable after seeing his sister's tragic end. As a result, he'd rashly rushed here at the Crown Prince's provocation.

After calming down, he solemnly turned to Li Zijun and said, "No matter what, Ye Jiuge is a suspect. Normally, she should have been placed in jail. Holding her here isn't quite keeping with the rules."

"Although Ye Jiuge is a suspect, she is also a participant in our tournament. Without concrete evidence, it's not good to lock her up. She is a frail lady, after all!"

Li Zijun could not bear to send the delicate-looking Ye Jiuge into the cold, damp jail.

"She's a lady, so what? All suspects should be locked in jail," Gong Honglei insisted.

He could spare Ye Jiuge's life, for now, but that didn't mean that suspects should comfortably enjoy living in an annexed building.

"Ye Jiuge is a frail lady? Are you blind, Zijun?" After experiencing foul play from Ye Jiuge so many times, he had never seen a more formidable woman than her.

"The Envoy is right. In that case, send me to jail!" Ye Jiuge was apathetic.

Where she was locked up didn't matter to her. There was no need to cause Li Zijun trouble over such a small issue.

"Alright!" Li Zijun gave Ye Jiuge an apologetic glance. Under Gong Honglei and the Crown Prince's watch, Ye Jiuge was brought to Medicine Refinery City's jail.

The jail did not house many prisoners. Most of the convicts were thieves who'd stolen herbs, so the jail didn't feel too sinister.

Li Zijun had already given instructions for people to clean up a single-person cell before their arrival. Not only was the bedding made of silk, but there was also even a bright-pink Chinese violet placed in the corner.

Gong Honglei and the Crown Prince weren't too happy with the cell's furnishings, but they did not make too much fuss.

Giving an excuse of being suspicious of the jail's security—and to prevent Ye Jiuge from escaping—they insisted on sending their own people to guard her.

Li Zijun couldn't argue. In the end, he could only agree to them sending their own people.

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It was late at night and quiet. The only light in the dark jail was the flickering of a few dim, dusty oil lamps hanging on the wall.

Ye Jiuge was curled into a ball in her cell with her eyes shut tight. Her long lashes pointed downward like a bushy, small fan.

Her breathing was steady, and she looked as if she had entered dreamland.

The bright-pink Chinese violet in the corner bloomed bit by bit, emitting a thick, murky fragrance.

The jail was still. The warden on night watch and the Crown Prince's guards sat on either side of the cell—one to the left and one to the right. They both leaned against the wall and dozed off.

Suddenly, a light-green smoke wafted through a gap in the door and quickly spread through the whole area.

The dozing warden's body suddenly lost its strength and fell to the ground.

The others, too, dropped to the ground with a "plop," just like how dumplings are dropped into

water to be cooked.

The jail's metal doors opened with a creak.

Five black-clad men slipped nimbly into the jail. After searching for keys from the warden's fallen body, they headed straight for Ye Jiuge's cell.

Just as they were about to open the cell door, a clear and cold voice rang out, "Who's there?"

The leader of the group stepped back, motioning for his subordinates to light torches.

The bright torch flames lit up, illuminating every inch of the small cell.

Ye Jiuge, who was supposed to be sleeping, was standing in a corner.

Dressed in green, she stood gracefully. Her features were beautiful, exquisite, and beyond compare.

The clarity in her dewy eyes made it look as if she had never been asleep.

"Eldest Miss Ye, we were sent by Lord Wan and Lord Bai to rescue you. The Crown Prince wants to kill you, so please come with us!" the leader of the men in black said, moving to unlock the cell's door.

He had no warning when a purple light that sparked thunderbolts landed on the lock.

If it weren't for the man's fast reflexes, he would have been struck by the thunderbolts.

"Eldest Miss, what do you mean by this?" The man in black lifted his gaze to Ye Jiuge. He sounded anxious as if he were in disbelief.

Ye Jiuge dissipated the purple light from her hand and flashed the man a fake smile. "Tell Lord Wan and Lord Bai that I will not leave this place until the investigation is complete."

"But you will die if you remain here!" the man in black urged anxiously. He made it sound like the Crown Prince was going to appear in the next instant to drag Ye Jiuge out for execution.

Ye Jiuge replied slowly, "Dongfang Jianming wouldn't dare kill me. He still needs me as a shield so that the real Sorcerer can kill more Spiritual Practitioners for their cultivation. You can go back without worrying. Tell Lord Wan and Lord Bai to investigate the Crown Prince, Su Junqing, and the Sorcerers from the Bloodthirsty Sect."

If Ye Jiuge believed that these men had sent by Wan Ziyang, then she would be as stupid and inept as Dongfang Jianming.

Hearing what Ye Jiuge said, the leader of the men in black frowned. He quickly came out of his daze and continued urging, "Eldest Miss, I don't know about any Crown Prince or Sorcerers. I only know that I was sent by Lord Wan and Lord Bai to rescue you. I have to bring you with me!"

Ye Jiuge rubbed the bright-pink Chinese violet's petals with her fingers. The slight smile on her face was more attractive than the flower in full bloom. Except that the words that came out from her cherry lips were not so sweet: "What if I said no?"

"Then, you have to forgive us!" A cold glint flashed in the leader's eyes.

He swung down, hacked through the metal lock, and rushed into the cell after kicking open the door.

Ye Jiuge lifted her finger slightly. A purple Spiritual Force glowed at its tip. She was about to attack with the Thunder Spiritual Force and the Befuddlement Drug.

But suddenly, the man in black, who was standing right at the back, turned on his peers. Swiftly and nimbly, they were all put down quickly.

Internal strife? How interesting!

Ye Jiuge clamped down on her Spiritual Force and trained her gaze on the black-clad man, waiting to see what he was up to.

The man tugged down the mask covering his face, revealing a tanned and ruggedly handsome face. His eyes danced with a wolf's sharpness. It was the Medicinal Pill Tester who had disappeared.

"You belong to the Crown Prince?" Ye Jiuge raised an eyebrow before continuing in admiration, "You are so ruthless."

It was amazing. This Medicinal Pill Tester's heart meridians were broken, which was a severe injury that could kill him at any time.

"No, I don't know any Crown Prince." The Medicinal Pill Tester's voice was hoarse, but it sounded surprisingly pleasant.

However, his accent was not from the Lei Kingdom. It sounded like he came from the southern border.

“So, what business do you have with me? Seeing if I’ll repay your kindness, perhaps?” If that were the case, then this guy was not so bad.

She was sure the Crown Prince had sent the men in black. He was quite capable of infiltrating into the group.

“No,” The Medicinal Pill Tester confessed with a shake of his head.

Being slapped with reality hurt.

Ye Jiuge was a little unhappy, and her face fell as she said, “Since you aren’t trying to repay my kindness, then let’s talk about your medication fees. The bottle of Level-three Heart Nourishment Pills from Great Master Dongfang is worth about 10,000 gold pieces. My consultation fee is 10,000. Pay up now.”

“I have no money.” The Medicinal Pill Tester shook his head.

“What are you doing here, then?” Ye Jiuge narrowed her eyes, running her eyes up and down the Medicinal Pill Tester’s muscular body.

If this guy dared to make fun of her, she would make him pay with his body.

“My Master would like to discuss a deal with you,” the Medicinal Pill Tester announced in a no-nonsense manner.

“Who is your Master?” Ye Jiuge raised an eyebrow.

The situation in Medicine Refinery City was so messy. It was amazing that someone would dare get involved during such a time. It would be interesting to meet this Master.

“He said you would understand after seeing this.” The Medicinal Pill Tester raised his hand and opened his palm.

Then, there was a movement at his sleeve, and a small poisonous worm-like parasite slithered out. It had a blood-red body, a mouth full of sharp fangs, and wings.

Its long body curled up in the palm of the Medicinal Pill Tester, and its small eyes gave Ye Jiuge a lethal glare.

This poisonous worm-like parasite looked even more powerful than Ye Yu’s.

Not only was its body blood-red, but its eyes were also fully developed.

Although the black, beady eyes were small, its gaze was a vicious testament to its prowess.

Besides Little Mute, Ye Jiuge couldn't think of anyone else who could raise such dangerous and fierce worms.

"I thought he was an orphan?!" Ye Jiuge said with a sigh, although she was probing at the same time.

"My Little Master and I were separated while we were escaping. I have been searching for him all these years." The Medicinal Pill Tester paused for a while, then continued, "Not only did you save my life, but you were also a great help to my Little Master. Therefore, my Little Master would like to discuss a deal with you."

The Medicinal Pill Tester sounded rather earnest.

Most likely, in his opinion, the best way to pay back his benefactor was to bring her to meet his Little Master to discuss this deal.

If anyone else had presumed to decide on such a method of repayment, Ye Jiuge would punish them without fail.

But, knowing the Little Mute's aloof nature, she decided to forgive this simple and honest Medicinal Pill Tester.

"I can leave with you. But, before I do, you have to answer a few of my questions."

"Where did you two escape from? Who are the people after you? Why doesn't he speak? Also, where did he learn how to practice parasite witchcraft?" These questions had been boggling Ye Jiuge's mind for quite a while. Now that she had a chance to ask, it felt really satisfying.

“Can’t these questions wait until we leave?” asked the Medicinal Pill Tester earnestly.

“Sure.” For the sake of getting answers, Ye Jiuge decided to go with him.

Although the Crown Prince would surely pin the crime of escape from jail on her, she didn’t care anymore.

Liu Yunfei wouldn’t be caught if Ye Jiuge stayed in jail. Why not get out and have a chat with the Little Mute? Perhaps she might discover some useful clues.

“What did you intend to do with these people?” probed the Medicinal Pill Tester. He kicked the men in black lying on the ground.

“They are just small fries. Just leave them here.” Ye Jiuge left the small cell. While walking, she turned to the Medicinal Pill Tester and said, “I haven’t asked you for your name.”

“Luo Tian.” As he replied to Ye Jiuge, Luo Tian was still observing his surroundings. He soon led her out of the jail.

Hidden in the shadows, they avoided the guards on patrol and successfully left the Medicine Refinery City.

“Where are we going now?” Ye Jiuge looked toward the gloomy mountains.

Medicine Refinery City was situated in front of two mountains. No matter in which direction they walked, they would only be heading into the deep mountain forest.

“Follow me.” Luo Tian headed east into the thick forest.

Ye Jiuge followed him closely, casually asking, “Luo Tian, how did you infiltrate that group of men?”

The men were seasoned in their movements, and it was obvious that they were skilled. They would not fail to realize that one of their men had been switched.

“Secret.” Luo Tian did not want to answer.

“Then, let’s talk about your consultation fee!” Ye Jiuge flashed him a taunting smile.

You’re 100 years too early to try and go against me.

Luo Tian staggered but soon started moving again. His hoarse was tinged with helplessness as he said, “I infiltrated the group by using my Life’s Origin Parasite to control them.”

“Life’s Origin Parasite? You are from the blood-clad Miao people?” Ye Jiuge looked at Luo Tian in surprise.

Ever since she’d gotten to know the Little Mute, she had looked into cultivating parasites.

The most potent parasite cultivators were the blood-clad Miao people who lived near the southern border.

After a baby was born in the Miao tribe, their parents would select and cultivate suitable parasites for them. Every day, the parasite would be fed the child’s blood. When the child came of age, the child would then cultivate the parasite to become their Life’s Origin Parasite.

The more powerful the Life’s Origin Parasite was, the greater the cultivator’s ability became. The formidable blood-clad Miao would also gather different types of parasites as fodder for their Life’s Origin Parasites.

The fate of the Life’s Origin Parasite was closely linked to its master. Some Life’s Origin Parasites with resilient and strong lives could also extend their masters’ lifespans.

“Yes,” Luo Tian nodded. He avoided a shrub and headed deeper into the dark forest.

Ye Jiuge followed him as he turned, then questioned, “Then, why didn’t I see your Life’s Origin Parasite while I was treating you?”

“To save my life, my Life’s Origin Parasite depleted all its powers. So, it hid to recuperate,” Luo Tian offered despite feeling a little reluctant to answer Ye Jiuge’s questions.

After all, his Life’s Origin Parasite was only able to recover because Ye Jiuge had healed his injuries.

“I see. No wonder you were able to survive for so long despite your broken heart meridians.” Ye Jiuge did not ask where Luo Tian’s Life’s Origin Parasite was hidden.

To a parasite cultivator, the hiding place of their Life’s Origin Parasite was as important as their own life. To ask for its location was like announcing one’s intent to kill the parasite cultivator.

Luo Tian had worried that Ye Jiuge would continue her barrage of questions. He breathed a sigh of relief when she stopped.

He wasn't an ungrateful person. He would always remember that Ye Jiuge saved his life.

But now, his Little Master was his priority. No matter who they were, benefactor or no, everyone else had to come after Little Master.

"The blood-clad Miao people should be mighty. How did you end up being hunted down? Didn't your clan help you seek revenge?" Ye Jiuge was confused.

The blood-clad Miao were famed for their strange parasite witchcraft. They were also very protective of their own and vengeful, too. No one dared cross their path.

Luo Tian went silent for a long while, then gave a subdued reply: "My clan members are all dead. Only my Little Master and I managed to escape."

Ye Jiuge was gobsmacked. She asked immediately, "Who has so much ability that they can kill a whole clan?"

Luo Tian hadn't had the time to reply when a high-pitched and indiscernible childlike voice rang out from the forest's depths. The tone was filled with violence and ruthlessness. "Don't tell her, Luo Tian."

"Master!" Luo Tian stopped in his tracks.

Ye Jiuge lifted her head, looking toward a large pine tree with a trunk so large that three people could hug it at once.

Although the area was pitch black, her intuition told her that Little Mute was there.

True to her intuition, the next moment, a small and thin shadow drifted down from the tree. The figure landed like a falling leaf right in front of Ye Jiuge.

The Little Mute was dressed in blue clothing made of coarse cloth. The sleeves were dirtied at the hems. Besides, he had messy hair, a pale face, and large, black eyes. Looking at the Little Mute always made one pity him.

"So, you can speak! Why were you pretending to be mute?" Even if he wanted to hide his identity, there was no need to use such a troublesome method!

“Because humans are too stupid,” a proud yet delicate childlike voice rang out. Evidently, the Little Mute was replying to Ye Jiuge’s question.

But when Ye Jiuge looked over, his mouth wasn’t moving. There were no emotions in his eyes.

It was as if the childlike words were being uttered by a ghost.

Truthfully, experiencing such a scene in the dark and gloomy forest, where tree shadows lined the forest floor, was slightly creepy. Anyone faint of heart would be frightened to death.

“The Little Master’s vocal cords cannot produce sounds. He can only speak through his Life’s Origin Parasite,” Luo Tian explained.

“You should be honored that you can hear my voice.” The prideful voice coupled with the indifferent expression on the Little Mute’s delicate face was somewhat contradictory.

Ye Jiuge couldn’t help but inwardly ridicule: Truly, the Little Mute makes the right decision by staying silent.

“Little Master, this isn’t the place to talk. Let’s change locations, shall we?” Luo Tian offered earnestly.

Although their voices were not loud, the forest was very still. It would be hard to notice if someone were listening to their conversation.

“Fine, come with me.” Little Mute turned, crossed a few sections of the forest, and brought Ye Jiuge to a small remote cave.

Deep inside the cave were remains of ashes from a fire and some beast’s bones. The cave seemed to be the Little Mute’s temporary dwelling.

After reaching the cave, Ye Jiuge asked without delay, “Luo Tian mentioned that you have a deal to discuss with me?”

“That’s right.” The haughty yet delicate childlike voice was back again. “I will help you with the Bloodthirsty Sect. In exchange, for every life taken, you will give me 100 Spiritual Beast Pills.”

“You sure have struck a good deal,” Ye Jiuge laughed, raising her eyebrow. “The Bloodthirsty Sect is also your enemy, yet you are charging me for your revenge? Do you really think I’m an idiot?”

“How do you know that the Bloodthirsty Sect is our enemy?” The arrogant, childish voice sounded astonished and angry. It screamed at Luo Tian in agitation, “Did you tell her?”

“It wasn’t me,” Luo Tian’s face was helpless. He added, “She’s bluffing.”

That’s right. Ye Jiuge was bluffing with the Little Mute.

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“How dare you trick me?” Little Mute was expressionless as always, but the haughty yet delicate voice trembled with anger.

“I didn’t trick you. Strictly speaking, I should be the one saying that.”

Ye Jiuge sent Little Mute an accusing look and continued, “I provided you with food, a place to work, and even traded you Legendary Venomous Insects for Spiritual Beast Pills. I also saved your subordinate. Yet here you are, plotting and scheming to trick me into giving you Spiritual Beast Pills. Who exactly is in the wrong here?”

As Ye Jiuge finished saying her piece, Luo Tian felt ashamed and guilty—not to mention the Little Mute.

As unreasonable as he was, he had to admit that Ye Jiuge was right.

Back then, if it hadn’t been for Ye Jiuge, who’d allowed him to cultivate the poison earthworm and exchange Legendary Venomous Insects for Spiritual Beast Pills, his Life’s Origin Parasite would not have awakened. What to speak of chasing after Ye Jiuge to Medicine Refinery City?

Ye Jiuge saw the Little Mute caving, and she decided to entice him. “Little Mute, since we have a common enemy, let’s be friends. Why don’t we be honest and open with one another? When you need Spiritual Beast Pills, I can offer them to you at a special rate.”

Spiritual Beast Pills might be easy to produce, but that didn't mean she had to give them out for free.

The Little Mute's emotionless face wavered at last. The haughty yet delicate voice sounded less arrogant than before as he asked, "How do you want us to be honest with each other?"

"First, tell me your name," Ye Jiuge felt that the first step in a friendship was to exchange names.

The Little Mute hesitated for a moment, then reluctantly gave in. "I am Jun Yichen."

Such a cultured name didn't fit Little Mute's image. No wonder he'd refused to acknowledge it.

"Do you have a problem with my name?" Jun Yichen felt that something was amiss, and he was a little ruffled.

"No. It's nothing of the sort." Ye Jiuge shook her head immediately and quickly changed the subject: "I was just wondering, the blood-clad Miao people were so powerful, so how did you end up hunted by the Bloodthirsty Sect?"

Jun Yichen's face was stony. He stayed silent, and his big, dark eyes were like two black holes radiating a gloomy and violent chill.

Obviously, the memory was painful to him, so painful that he could go berserk at any time.

Ye Jiuge felt a little regretful. She shouldn't have mentioned an incident that made Jun Yichen so sad.

She was about to change the topic when Jun Yichen gave a chilly order, "You tell her, Luo Tian."

"Yes, sir," Luo Tian answered. "The Bloodthirsty Patriarch is a cunning and ruthless man. Somehow, he found a Spiritual Poison that suppresses our witchcraft. He took advantage of our absence, while we were engaged in a worship ritual honoring the Parasite God, to poison our drinking water. When our people lost strength, that's when the massacre started."

Although Luo Tian gave a watered-down account of the events, from Luo Tian's words, Ye Jiuge could imagine the terror and slaughter.

But Ye Jiuge was still confused. "Why did the Bloodthirsty Sect target the blood-clad Miao people?"

The Bloodthirsty Sect used blood in their black magic.

The blood-clad Miao people, as Parasite Cultivators, did not have clean or pure blood. They should not have been a target.

Luo Tian hesitated for a moment. Then, finally, he revealed the blood-clad Miao people's secret.

Their branch of the tribe had split from the main people, who lived at the southern border.

They had discovered a small Spiritual Vein on a mountain peak. They'd settled there, cultivating and expanding the clan.

After 100 years of hard work, the blood-clad Miao people had cultivated a Spider King using the demonic beast, Ice Snow Spider.

The clan leader in each generation would sign a contract with the Spider King, seeking its protection.

Jun Yichen was the son of the last clan leader. He was also a genius and the blood-clad Miao people's most outstanding parasite cultivator. At a young age, his Life's Origin Parasite had already been cultivated to Level Five.

The blood-clad Miao people had heaped their high hopes on him. They'd hoped that he would be the one to subjugate the Spider King.

At first, Jun Yichen and the Spider King had fostered a good relationship. Jun Yichen had also started feeding the Spider King with his blood. Just when he was about to sign the contract with the Spider King, misfortune had struck.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch had attacked their camp with his subordinates. Not only did they take over the Spiritual Vein, but they had also imprisoned the Spider King.

"I see." Ye Jiuge was puzzled: How did the Empress manage to obtain King Poison from the Ice Snow Spider to harm Dongfang Que?

The Ice Snow Spider Kings were found only in the wastelands on the Eastern border.

That was the Demonic tribes' territory. Only death awaited Spiritual Practitioners who ventured too far.

She now knew that it had been obtained from the blood-clad Miao people.

"Alright, I have answered your questions honestly. What kind of special rate can I expect for the

Spiritual Beast Pills?” Jun Yichen’s unique voice carried a hint of impatience.

“First things first: how will you pay for the Spiritual Beast Pills?” Ye Jiuge appeared open for discussion.

“I can cultivate parasites for you,” Jun Yichen’s voice was haughty and delicate as ever—and confident.

“This isn’t the Miao people’s territory or the southern borders,” Ye Jiuge replied, dead-pan. There was no market for parasite cultivation in the Spiritual Practitioners’ territory.

“I can kill someone for you,” Jun Yichen’s voice sounded hesitant.

“The people I want dead are already dead,” Ye Jiuge said. She could kill people herself, so there was no need for other assassins.

“Then, what do you want?” the little boy finally erupted with frustration.

“I just want to know how you will buy my Spiritual Beast Pills.” Ye Jiuge shrugged, looking as innocent as can be.

Just as Jun Yichen was about to bite off Ye Jiuge’s head, Luo Tian said, “Eldest Miss Ye, when my Little Master and I escaped, we had nothing on us except the clothes on our backs.”

Then, sell yourselves to me!

That was Ye Jiuge’s goal. But she couldn’t be so straightforward, lest they turned against her.

So, Ye Jiuge changed tact. “Then, what do you intend to do?”

Luo Tian thought for a moment, then said carefully, “It is true that the Bloodthirsty Sect is our enemy. But they are currently targeting you and your companions. I believe that no one knows the tricks of the Bloodthirsty Sect better than we do. If you want our help, for just one bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills, I am willing to work for you for a year.”

“I remember that your consultation fee has not been paid—or has it?” It wasn’t that Ye Jiuge wanted to harp on the debt forever, but these blood-clad Miao people were famous weirdos.

Rumor had it that, after repaying a debt of gratitude, they would turn on their benefactor and seek revenge. Just like how a parasite backstabs its host.

Ye Jiuge did not want to deploy the secret method given by Zi Shang and subdue Jun Yichen like

some parasite. Therefore, she could only use their debt of gratitude as an excuse.

First, she would get them to work for her for a few years. When she was powerful enough, then it wouldn't matter if they betrayed her or not.

Luo Tian went silent at the mention of the consultation fee.

It was true—Ye Jiuge had saved his life. Asking her to employ him for the Spiritual Beast Pills was rather ironic.

“Since you saved him, his life is yours to do with as you please.” Jun Yichen was someone who drew a clear line between his likes and dislikes. Just like that, he sold his only subordinate into servitude.

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“Master!” Luo Tian thought his Master was abandoning him, and his face turned pale.

“She treats her subordinates well. You'll work for her, get paid with Spiritual Beast Pills, and bring them back to me,” Jun Yichen said as if there nothing were wrong with this arrangement.

During this period, he hadn't just been cultivating earthworms, but he had also been secretly observing Ye Jiuge's personality.

Ever since Ye Jiuge had purchased Legendary Venomous Insects for Ye Yu with the Spiritual Beast Pills, he'd realized that Ye Jiuge wasn't so bad. She was generous to her people.

“Yes, sir!” after realizing that his Little Master wasn’t abandoning him, Luo Tian swiftly agreed to work for Ye Jiuge for the sake of the Spiritual Beast Pills.

Ye Jiuge felt like ridiculing him: Little prideful boy, do you have to be so blatant about your intention to let your subordinate work for me just for the sake of some Spiritual Beast Pills?

After selling his subordinate into servitude, Jun Yichen continued, “As for me, for every person that I help you kill, I will trade you for a bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills. That is all I can offer. Working for you is impossible.”

He was from the blood-clad Miao people’s purest bloodline. Shouldering the hopes and dreams of his clan made it impossible for him to work for someone else.

“As I mentioned earlier, I don’t need you to kill for me,” Ye Jiuge rejected him with a shake of her head.

Jun Yichen’s big and dark eyes flashed with violence and viciousness.

He loathed rejection.

What’s more, Ye Jiuge had rejected him repeatedly.

Luckily, just as Jun Yichen was about to turn against her, Ye Jiuge added, “What about this? For every favor you do me, I will give you one bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills. How about that?”

Jun Yichen silently calculated — this offer seemed fine. He nodded. “Alright. Now speak. What do you want me to do?”

“I haven’t thought about it yet. For now, I’ll just give you a bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills as a deposit!” Ye Jiuge took out a bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills and threw it at Jun Yichen.

Jun Yichen caught it. Opening the bottle, he took a whiff — top grade, as usual.

“Luo Tian, you are my subordinate from now on. Correct?” Ye Jiuge turned to Luo Tian.

“Indeed. Please do not hesitate to give me your orders, Master!” Luo Tian placed his right hand over his chest and bowed. His demeanor was solemn and serious.

Ye Jiuge tossed Jun Yichen a side glance.

Jun Yichen’s expressionless face was stony. He was trying to decide how and when to consume the Spiritual Beast Pills. He had no reaction to Luo Tian calling Ye Jiuge ‘Master.’

Something was off about Jun Yichen's attitude!

Ye Jiuge thought for a while, then turned to Luo Tian. "Your Life's Origin Parasite, does it have to take orders from Jun Yichen?"

"Yes, Little Master's Life Origin Parasite is the strongest among the blood-clad Miao people, so everyone has to defer to him." Luo Tian was honest.

D*mn!

Ye Jiuge wanted to vomit blood.

Luo Tian claimed to want to work for her, yet his life was in someone else's hands. What kind of logic was that?

But what made her most upset was how Luo Tian addressed her.

He'd called her 'Master' and referred to Jun Yichen as 'Little Master.' To outsiders, it might seem like Jun Yichen was her son!

"From now on, call me Eldest Miss!" Ye Jiuge decided on a title that set her apart from Jun Yichen.

"As you command." Luo Tian had no issue with that.

Ye Jiuge collected her thoughts and asked, "Why is your Master so fixated on the Spiritual Beast Pills?"

She had some guesses, but she wanted a clear answer.

"Because the Spiritual Beast Pills you produce are beneficial for the Life's Origin Parasite's recovery," Luo Tian replied seriously.

Before he'd met Ye Jiuge, his Life's Origin Parasite had entered a death-like state. Unless it swallowed other parasites, it would not have been able to recover.

Sadly, there were no parasite cultivators in the Lei Kingdom.

He'd lost all hope, thinking that death was not far away. But he'd met Ye Jiuge by chance, and both he and his Life's Origin Parasite had been saved.

"Alright, take this bottle as your wage for the month." Ye Jiuge threw Luo Tian a bottle of Spiritual

Beast Pills as well.

She was rather satisfied with Luo Tian's attitude.

He might look wild and unruly, but he was rather good-tempered — especially when compared with Jun Yichen.

Ye Jiuge had always been generous.

Before she rode a horse, she would feed it.

"Thank you," Luo Tian wanted to keep the bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills he'd received from Ye Jiuge, but she stopped him. "This bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills is meant to help you to regain your powers quickly. That way, you can work harder for me. It wasn't given for free."

"She's right. We must invest to get greater returns," Jun Yichen agreed. Then, he turned to Luo Tian and ordered. "Eat!"

Little Master, you should be more subtle!

Luo Tian felt like crying.

When they'd first escaped from the siege, the old clan leader's decision that the Little Master should pretend to be mute had been right, after all.

As Ye Jiuge's expression darkened, Luo Tian decided that, for the sake of his Little Master, he had to establish himself while working under Ye Jiuge.

In that case, he had to get into tip-top shape quickly.

If not, instead of helping, Ye Jiuge would probably have to save him again.

Luo Tian swiftly downed the bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills. Turning to Ye Jiuge, he said, "Eldest Miss, if my guess is right, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch did not just send his disciples to Medicine Refinery City to kill the Spiritual Practitioners and obtain their Spiritual Roots. He definitely has something larger in mind."

"He's right. The Bloodthirsty Patriarch is going to advance his Blood Calamity Skill. The slaughtered Spiritual Practitioners' blood and Spiritual Roots are not enough for him." Jun Yichen's voice was steely, and his large black eyes glinted coldly.

"Blood Calamity Skill? What's that?" Ye Jiuge's heart skipped a beat hearing that name, and she

asked hurriedly.

Jun Yichen clammed up, and he remained silent.

Luo Tian offered an answer: "The Blood Calamity Skill is the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's Life's Origin Technique. Each time he advances in rank, besides requiring a large amount of blood, he also needs a person whose cultivation level is about the same as his."

The last time the Bloodthirsty Patriarch had advanced this skill, he'd used their old clan leader's blood.

But the Bloodthirsty Patriarch had not foreseen something. The old clan leader's blood and that of his successor, Jun Yichen, had the ability to support and connect.

After the Bloodthirsty Patriarch had absorbed the old clan leader's blood, Jun Yichen had found out many of the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's secrets.

"The Bloodthirsty Patriarch is not only powerful in his cultivation, but he also has another secret ability. Using the essence of his blood, he can produce a type of Blood Pearl. Each of his disciples owns one of these Blood Pearls. At critical moments, once swallowed, they can borrow power from the Bloodthirsty Patriarch to break past their limits and fight with extraordinary potential and capability. At that time, some clan members who had not been poisoned also perished due to this ability."

A pained expression flashed past Luo Tian's face. He had fought in the battle, too.

The opponent he'd faced had looked weak and small. But, after he'd laid defeated on the ground, his cultivation had suddenly surged. And he 'd attacked while Luo Tian was caught off guard, leaving Luo Tian badly injured.

Ye Jiuge became troubled. This meant that Bai Songling, Wan Ziyang, and Ye Yu were all in danger.

"Let's go and find Wan Ziyang and the others," Ye Jiuge decided without hesitation.

They still lacked knowledge about the Bloodthirsty Sect. Their preparations weren't nearly enough. They had to reconstruct their plans.

Although it was a moonlit night, the jungle was still covered in darkness. Squatting low, Ye Jiuge pondered over a critical problem as she drew circles on the ground.

Although Ye Jiuge had wanted to meet up with Wan Ziyang, Bai Songling, and Ye Yu, they were not in the Medicine Refinery City. She had no way of finding them!

In the letter that Wan Ziyang had given her, he had written that there was red mud on the soles of the murdered Spiritual Practitioners' shoes. If she followed this clue, she should be able to find them.

However, that would take too long.

Luo Tian stood still as a statue beside Ye Jiuge.

When she sighed for the fifth time, he could not help asking, "Eldest Miss, I heard that you have a subordinate named Ye Yu. And that he has a Poisonous Earthworm King, which Master developed?"

"Indeed!" Ye Jiuge nodded. Then, she asked, "Why do you ask? Can your Poisonous Earthworm Kings communicate with each other?" If so, that would save a lot of time and effort.

"I can give it a try," Luo Tian said cautiously.

"Quickly, do it!" Ye Jiuge stood up and urged Luo Tian hurriedly.

Luo Tian unfolded his hands, and the red Poisonous Earthworm King came out of his sleeve. It lay obediently in his palm.

Luo Tian closed his eyes and began to mumble to himself. However, he did not make any sounds.

The red Poisonous Earthworm King's eyes began to whirl around. Its body turned in circles on Luo

Tian's palm. It was seemingly trying to find the direction that led to Ye Yu.

"Small Jun Jun, when did you develop this Legendary Venomous Insect?"

Ye Jiuge felt that Luo Tian's Poisonous Earthworm King was much stronger than Ye Yu's. If she could get a few more for Wan Ziyang and the others, she would not need to fear losing contact with them in the future.

"Don't call me 'Small Jun Jun.'" Although Jun Yichen was expressionless, there was unmistakable irritation in his tone.

"Jun Yichen is so difficult to pronounce. Furthermore, calling you by your last name makes it seem as if we don't know each other!" Ye Jiuge grinned. She was not afraid of Jun Yichen's delicate aloofness.

Honestly, she found Jun Yichen's expressionless anger somewhat cute.

Jun Yichen restrained himself and said, "Then, you can address me as Little Mute."

He thought to himself: I will tolerate her for the sake of the Spiritual Beast Pills!

"But you are not a mute!" Ye Jiuge continued to tease him.

Jun Yichen thought: D*mned woman, how dare you mock me!

He was going mad.

Fortunately, Luo Tian finally opened his eyes. In a low voice, he said, "Eldest Miss, Xiao Hong has found Ye Yu's location. He is in a bad situation. Let's head there as soon as possible!"

Xiao Hong was the name of the Poisonous Earthworm King in his hand.

"Let's go!" Ye Jiuge had no time to tease Jun Yichen anymore.

Luo Tian immediately gave Xiao Hong a command, "Go."

The red Poisonous Earthworm King spread its thin wings, which were like a cicada's, and began to fly rapidly east.

Ye Jiuge and the rest sped along behind it.

...

In a ruined temple, which had been worn down by years of non-repair on the Luoxia Peak, the enshrined statue of the Tudi Gong was mottled beyond recognition.

The corners of the roof were covered with spider webs, and a thick layer of dust blanketed the floor.

Moonlight spilled into the temple from a hole in the roof. It illumined a small area in the center, but the surroundings were still shrouded in darkness.

Ye Yu was holding his breath, hidden in a shadow on a roof beam. In his mouth, he held two Mind-clearing Pills — the last of his supply.

Ever since he'd known that the Crown Prince had framed Ye Jiuge, Ye Yu had been searching for Liu Yunfei with all his might. He wished to capture her to prove the Eldest Miss's innocence.

He had finally traced Liu Yunfei to a place near the ruined temple. He had not expected her trap and had received a palm to his back.

In the critical moment, he had hidden in the shadows to wait quietly for an opportunity to escape.

"My little Ye Yu, be obedient. Quick, open the door. I am going to come in," Liu Yunfei's sweet and phony voice rang out from outside the ruined temple.

Then, there was a loud bang.

The temple's wooden door flew off and landed on the floor with a thud. It kicked up a large amount of dust.

Liu Yunfei, as usual, was dressed in pink. The colorful butterflies embroidered onto the hem of her dress danced lightly and gracefully as she moved.

She strolled into the ruined temple. Her deft and graceful movements were nimble as a butterfly's.

Her eyes glowed with a faint red light and swept the entirety of the ruined temple. She laughed to herself as she said, "Little Ye Yu, come out! I will make you really happy!"

As she spoke, thoughts of love seemed to radiate, and an arousing mood flowed within the temple.

From where he was standing in the shadows, Ye Yu felt that Liu Yunfei's sweet and phony voice was like a white feather tickling him from the sole of his foot to the bottom of his heart. It was an

unbearable itch.

The place where Liu Yunfei's palm had landed on his back had turned burning hot. The surging heat spread from his back to his abdomen. The temperature was intolerable.

Ye Yu knew that Liu Yunfei had used an aphrodisiac on him. However, his Poisonous Earthworm King had also been injured by Liu Yunfei earlier, so it could not help to cure his poison. He could only rely on the Mind-clearing Pills in his mouth to resist the unbearable lust.

Even after circling the entire ruined temple, Liu Yunfei did not hear any movement or sound from Ye Yu. She had some admiration for Ye Yu for being able to resist temptation. He was indeed worthy of being saved for the last. His ability to cleanse his heart and limit his desire was comparable to Liuxia Hui's.

Since carnal desire was ineffective at drawing him out, Liu Yunfei decided to use another method. She rolled her eyes and took out a white piece of skin from her Magical Bottomless Bag.

When she opened it up, the skin looked like it had once belonged to a woman. The human hide was intact.

"Little Ye Yu, this is the skin that I peeled off a beautiful woman the night before yesterday. Do you like it? However, although this skin looks smooth, its texture isn't right. Speaking of beautiful women, I think that one of the Patriarch's blood slaves has the prettiest skin.

"Her skin is as fair as the snow, and she has a red mole on her forehead. She looks like you, so she must be your poor sister — the one Su Junqing sent away.

"The Patriarch promised to give me the blood slave after I complete this mission. When the moment comes, I will peel her skin off and give it to you as a present, okay?"

Liu Yunfei became even more excited as she spoke. The pupils of her eyes turned crimson. Even her skin was flushed.

She was breathing hard as she continued to speak, "I get so excited and happy whenever I think of peeling off your sister's skin. Little Ye Yu, are you really going to look on helplessly as your sister dies?"

Ye Yu's mental state was already hanging by a thread when Liu Yunfei began talking about his sister.

Different emotions – hatred, worry, anger, and fear began to boil inside his heart. He felt as though he could explode at any time.

Unwittingly, he swallowed the Mind-clearing Pills in his mouth.

An extreme frenzy immediately followed the brief, intense coolness.

Seeing that it had all gone wrong, Ye Yu was about to leave the ruined temple. However, Liu Yunfei's voice rang out like a demon behind him.

"I have caught you, my little bunny."

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At the moment, Ye Jiuge was leading Luo Tian and Jun Yichen toward the ruined temple.

Luo Tian followed behind her. As they were running, he said, "Eldest Miss, why didn't you ask Little Master when he developed these Poisonous Earthworm Kings? According to my knowledge, he developed a batch before coming to Medicine Refinery City. I used my blood essence to make one of the best ones from this batch into my Life's Origin Parasite."

"Luo Tian, do you wish to die?" Jun Yichen's haughty voice rang out from the trees above them.

He felt that it was beneath his dignity to run on the ground with Ye Jiuge and Luo Tian. He insisted on jumping from tree to tree, probably thinking that it was more dignified this way.

"Little Master, there are some things that you can't hide from the Eldest Miss." Luo Tian's voice reached Jun Yichen's ears through the whistling sound of the wind. "If you can't hide it, you should explain honestly to improve Eldest Miss's impression of us."

"Hmph!" Unhappily, Jun Yichen snapped off a tree branch with his feet. However, he seemed to

have accepted Luo Tian's statement.

Ye Jiuge was already used to them plotting in her presence.

When she passed another large tree, she continued to question, "Did the Poison Earthworm become like this after you used your blood essence or because of how he grows them?"

"No. These Poisonous Earthworm Kings display different characteristics according to a person's blood essence. Mine can not only cure poisons, but it can also be used for searching. Ye Yu's one should be good at hiding, just like its master."

As he ran, Luo Tian gave a careful introduction to the batch of Poisonous Earthworm Kings that his Little Master had developed.

Ye Jiuge had to admit that Jun Yichen had come up with something innovative. This new batch of Poisonous Earthworm Kings chose their masters based on the compatibility of their attributes. Hence, the abilities that they gained as they evolved became more comprehensive.

For example, Luo Tian must have undeniable strength to be one of the only two Blood-clad Miao people who had survived. His Poisonous Earthworm King, Xiao Hong, had grown eyes and thorns. It could attack and defend and had a potent offensive ability.

After Luo Tian quickened his pace and caught up with Ye Jiuge, he asked while looking at her with sincerity, "Eldest Miss, do you want one too? With your ability, you can develop a formidable one!"

His expression was saying, "I am not just promoting a Legendary Venomous Insect. I am showing my wholehearted loyalty!"

"If you wish to buy one, I can give you a discount."

Jun Yichen jumped down from a tree and landed beside Ye Jiuge. He looked like he was conferring a favor on her.

Although his haughty expression was slightly annoying, Ye Jiuge was interested in these Legendary Venomous Insects.

She considered momentarily before saying, "Show me first."

Jun Yichen rolled up his sleeve to reveal thirteen black spots on his pale, thin arm. He said, "These are the Legendary Venomous Insects that have yet to hatch. You just have to flash a drop of your blood essence, and one of them will choose you automatically."

Following his instructions, Ye Jiuge pierced the tip of her finger. A drop of her blood essence floated in front of her.

All of the black spots on Jun Yichen's arm rapidly expanded as they attempted to outdo one another and consume Ye Jiuge's blood essence. Even Jun Yichen was shocked by their fanatic behavior.

Moreover, the Life's Origin Parasite in his body transmitted a message to him frantically: "This drop of blood essence is beneficial to me. Quick, bring it here!"

Jun Yichen and his Life's Origin Parasite were inseparable, and their desires were the same. He used all his strength to suppress the rioting Legendary Venomous Insects and reached out to grab the blood essence that was floating in the air.

However, he did not expect a black, fat figure to be faster. With a whoosh, it swallowed the drop of blood essence and landed on Ye Jiuge's shoulder.

It was the Black Fat Rat.

It had a large head and big ears, and its round stomach stuck out. Its paws held Ye Jiuge's hair tightly as it cried out resentfully, "Pipi!"

"Black Fatty, why have you come out?" Ye Jiuge was shocked as well.

She then remembered Zi Shang's warning. He had said that every drop of her blood belonged to him, and if she were to give it to anyone recklessly, he would use his big stick to punish her.

She thought to herself: Is it too late to kill the rat and destroy the evidence?

"How dare you steal what's mine?" Jun Yichen's large, dark eyes glared at the Black Fat Rat.

The Legendary Venomous Insects in his arm were revolting. It was as though they wanted to rush forward and gobble up the Black Fat Rat.

The Black Fat Rat looked at the small parasites with contempt. It was not afraid of Jun Yichen. The rat took out a carrot that was taller than Jun Yichen from the animal-skin bag. Squatting on Ye Jiuge's shoulder, it began to gnaw with great interest.

"Fight later. Don't hold me up and prevent me from saving Ye Yu." Ye Jiuge grabbed the Black Fat Rat without looking and stuffed it back into her bag.

With his target gone, Jun Yichen looked furiously at Ye Jiuge and shouted, "Return the blood

essence to me.”

“Return your *ss. It's mine.” Ye Jiuge said peevishly. She would not indulge his bad temper.

“You...” Jun Yichen was about to flip out when Luo Tian held his shoulders and said, “Little Master, it is more important to earn our Spiritual Beast Pills.”

Jun Yichen gritted his teeth as he silently held a grudge for the blood essence's theft.

Ye Jiuge could not be bothered with his haughty thoughts. To Luo Tian, she said, “Pick up the pace. I want to find Ye Yu within the time it takes to burn an incense stick.”

After he had calmed down his Little Master, Luo Tian propelled Xiao Hong forward with his power. Soon, they arrived at the ruined temple.

“Ye Yu should be inside. I can feel that his Poisonous Earthworm King had been injured,” Luo Tian said softly.

Ye Jiuge opened her Spiritual Eye to examine the situation.

She saw a few red aureoles surrounding the ruined temple. They emitted a thick stench of blood, and many strange shadows hid within them.

Clearly, the ruined temple was one of Liu Yunfei's traps, and she was using Ye Yu to lure the others here.

“Eldest Miss, are we going to attack?” Luo Tian rubbed his fists and wiped his palms. He was eager to perform.

“Are you confident about dealing with someone from the Bloodthirsty Sect?” Ye Jiuge asked.

She was not looking down on Luo Tian and Jun Yichen. However, one of them was disabled, and the other was very young. They did not seem very reliable.

“Aren't you ashamed to ask this kind of bullsh*t?” Jun Yichen still held a grudge against Ye Jiuge for not giving him her blood essence.

“You mean that you have found a way to deal with the Bloodthirsty Sect?” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrows and asked.

“Of course.” Jun Yichen nodded arrogantly. Out of habit, he was about to ask for Spiritual Beast Pills in exchange for his answer.

However, Luo Tian rushed to reply, "Little Master has indeed found a way to deal with the Bloodthirsty Sect. Speaking of it, we will have to thank you for it."

Having said so, he looked at Ye Jiuge with gratitude.

Ye Jiuge was momentarily stunned. After pondering, she asked hesitantly, "Can it be that you are relying on the Poisonous Earthworm Kings to deal with the Bloodthirsty Sect?"

"Eldest Miss, you are indeed intelligent." Luo Tian nodded with a gratified expression as if to say, "I have chosen to follow the right person."

Ye Jiuge thought to herself: I did not expect this fellow to be so good at buttering people up.

However, despite his flattery, Ye Jiuge still wanted to be clear about the matter.

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"How can you be sure that the Poisonous Earthworm Kings can deal with the Bloodthirsty Sect? I don't want guesses. I want evidence," Ye Jiuge said bluntly.

"Duh. Of course, I verified it," Jun Yichen replied proudly.

When Bloodthirsty Patriarch had stormed into the Blood-clad Miao people's territory, one of his must-kill targets had been Jun Yichen, the chieftain's successor. Although the old chieftain had sacrificed his life to save him, Jun Yichen had been afflicted by the poison that suppressed his witchcraft.

At first, he had endured the torment of the toxins daily, until he inadvertently discovered that swallowing Poison Earthworms could bring relief. Then, he felt better.

However, Poison Earthworms were rare in the wild, and it took too much time to search for them. Hence, Jun Yichen devised a plan involving the breeding bases of medicinal stores.

When he saw the opportunity, he used his witchcraft to control an older man from a medicinal

store, and he successfully infiltrated the breeding manor for the Poison Earthworms. Since the Poison Earthworm only had a lifespan of fifteen days, the people from the manor were not overly concerned about daily consumption. As such, Jun Yichen was able to settle in and cure his poison quietly.

Then, Ye Jiuge had poured money and effort into the development of evolved Poison Earthworms and given him Spiritual Beast Pills as a reward. As a result, he had successfully developed a few batches of Legendary Venomous Insects.

“That’s great. I’ll take all of them.” Ye Jiuge waved her hand in a wealthy and imposing manner.

If these Legendary Venomous Insects could really cure the Bloodthirsty Sect’s poisons, she wouldn’t need to worry about their evil schemes anymore. Although she wasn’t particularly wealthy, she had an abundance of Spiritual Pills—just in case.

“I don’t want Spiritual Beast Pills. Give me a drop of your blood essence, and I will give all these Legendary Venomous Insects to you.” As he thought about that drop of Ye Jiuge’s delicious-looking blood essence, Jun Yichen couldn’t help but salivate.

“Hehe, my blood essence is precious. You wouldn’t be able to obtain it even if you tried to exchange your Life’s Origin Parasite for it. Just trade obediently for Spiritual Beast Pills!” Ye Jiuge wanted badly to extract the drop of blood essence from the Black Fat Rat’s stomach. She was not willing to sell another drop.

“If you are not going to give me your blood essence, I won’t sell them,” Jun Yichen threatened angrily.

“Suit yourself.” Ye Jiuge shrugged and threw up her hands.

She had a hundred ways of dealing with the Bloodthirsty Sect. However, Jun Yichen could only consume the Spiritual Beast Pills that she produced. Compared to him, she had plenty of time to squander.

“Little Master!” Luo Tian held Jun Yichen’s shoulders again.

At the moment, they had to look to Ye Jiuge for help, and they could not afford to be fussy.

Jun Yichen understood this as well.

No matter how much he hated being suppressed by Ye Jiuge, he could only accept it grudgingly.

“Fine. The same old price – a bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills for one.”

“Sure. However, I don’t have so many Spiritual Beast Pills on me at the moment. I can only complete the deal once we return to the Lei Kingdom,” Ye Jiuge said.

Her plan was for everyone to have a Legendary Venomous Insect by the time they returned to the Lei Kingdom.

“Okay.” Knowing Ye Jiuge’s character, Jun Yichen was not worried that she would renege on the deal.

“Okay, now, let’s discuss how we can break in and save Ye Yu.” After Ye Jiuge had settled Jun Yichen, they began to discuss the main issue.

“There’s no doubt. We will simply rush in.” Jun Yichen’s eyes were filled with murderous intent as he stared at the ruined temple.

He’d decided that his revenge against the Bloodthirsty Sect would begin with Liu Yunfei.

“No way.” Ye Jiuge shook her head.

Ye Yu was in Liu Yunfei’s hands, and if she were to use him as a hostage, it would be difficult for them to save him.

Ye Jiuge thought: Since Liu Yunfei does not have information about us yet, it would be better to seize the opportunity and come up with a reliable solution. For example, luring the tiger from its domain in the mountains, or making a sound in the east then striking in the west.

“Eldest Miss, what do you think? We will act as you instruct.” Luo Tian took the opportunity to show his wholehearted loyalty.

Ye Jiuge happened to think of something. She said, “Then, act according to my instructions...”

“No problem.” Luo Tian nodded calmly.

“Easy!” Jun Yichen made an expression as if to say, “As long as I undertake the task, nothing will go wrong.”

“Alright, let’s move!” Ye Jiuge nodded. She led Luo Tian and Jun Yichen stealthily towards the ruined temple.

In the ruined temple, the light and shadow interweaving made for exquisite scenery.

Liu Yunfei had sealed Ye Yu's major acupuncture points, and he was placed horizontally on the snow-white human hide.

"Tsk tsk tsk. I did not expect you to be so good at running!"

Liu Yunfei was in no hurry to enjoy her feast. She was engrossed in her caress of Ye Yu's smooth, fair skin. Then, she said with pity, "I have not seen such a beautiful man for so long. I can't bear to do this!"

"What do you plan to do?" Ye Yu was fully immobilized. His eyes radiated hatred as he glared viciously at Liu Yunfei.

"Hehe. A single man and a single woman in a secluded room. What do you think I plan on doing?" Liu Yunfei placed her small hands on Ye Yu's muscular chest and softly kneaded his well-developed pectoral muscles, trying to arouse him sexually.

"You shameless b*tch." Ye Yu had always believed that men who hurled abuse at women were do*che-bags. However, now that he was faced with such a treacherous, cunning, and vicious woman, he could not help himself.

"Is that the only insult in your vocabulary?" Liu Yunfei's laugh was coquettish. Ye Yu's insult did not hurt or tickle. Instead, it delighted her.

"B*tch, sl*t..." Ye Yu gritted his teeth. He hated to be unable to pour dogs' blood on Liu Yunfei. Unfortunately, he was not skilled at swearing, and he could only repeat these few words.

"Hmm, I like it. Louder."

Liu Yunfei became even more excited as she listened to Ye Yu's insults. Impatiently, she tore apart his shirt and reached for his belt.

"Get lost. Don't touch me." Ye Yu did not wish to behave like a clueless girl who was about to be raped by a pervert.

However, then he thought about how he was about to lose his virginity to a sl*t like Liu Yunfei. Furthermore, she was going to suck his blood and vital energy dry. Death was a better alternative.

"Not only will I touch you, but I am also going to eat you!" As Liu Yunfei pulled off Ye Yu's belt, her laughter was like the sound of a hen laying eggs.

Ye Yu was about to be stripped naked by Liu Yunfei.

Suddenly, a red shadow the size of a thumb rushed down silently from the roof and sped toward Liu Yunfei's neck.

Although Liu Yunfei's hands were still on Ye Yu's chest, something on the back of her clothes moved.

A violet scorpion landed on her neck, and its stinger struck at the red shadow viciously. However, the red shadow turned craftily and spewed a viscous red liquid at the violet scorpion.

It was too late for the violet scorpion to avoid it, and it became immobilized, having been covered entirely by the red liquid. The red shadow flapped its wings and hastily dragged the scorpion away.

The entire incident happened in just a few seconds. When Liu Yunfei finally reacted, her Treasure-hunting Scorpion had already been stolen.

She had obtained the Treasure-hunting Scorpion from a favorable encounter, and she had put in a lot of effort over the past few years to foster it to the Third Stage. It had become useful to her. She had benefited from the Treasure-hunting Scorpion, and she was unwilling to let it be stolen.

Liu Yunfei could not attend to her meal at the moment, and she chased after the shadow. In the blink of an eye, only Ye Yu was left in the ruined temple.

Ye Yu tried to gather the Spiritual Power in his entire body to break free of the seals on his acupuncture points. Unfortunately, Liu Yunfei's technique was very peculiar, and he could not gather his Spiritual Power at all.

Ye Yu was panicking as Liu Yunfei could return at any moment. A thin layer of cold sweat had broken out over Ye Yu's skin, and he almost strayed from the right path.

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Ye Yu was about to hold his breath and force open his meridian point when he heard numerous footsteps coming from outside the ruined temple.

He thought that Liu Yunfei had returned. In his shock, the blood force he was channeling went the

wrong direction, and he spit out a mouthful of blood. Ye Yu hadn't expected that the person who'd walked in would be someone familiar.

The person's green robes swayed with the wind. She had a graceful figure, delicate and pretty features, and a subtle, pleasant fragrance followed her. It was Ye Jiuge.

"Are you alright, Ye Yu?" Ye Jiuge was shocked, looking at Ye Yu. His clothes were messy and revealed his chest. Even his waist belt had been removed.

It couldn't be that she was too late. Had Liu Yunfei taken advantage of Ye Yu?

"I'm fine," he said. Ye Yu was embarrassed that Ye Jiuge had seen his sorry state. He wanted to sink into a hole.

Ye Jiuge, meanwhile, wanted to help Ye Yu undo his meridian point.

But when she saw his expression, she could tell that he wanted no contact with the opposite sex, so she felt a little awkward. She turned to the door and hollered, "Luo Tian, come in for a minute."

Luo Tian came in quickly. Looking at the disheveled and ravaged Ye Yu, he also assumed that the young man had been taken advantage of by Liu Yunfei. His heart filled with pity for Ye Yu as he stretched his hand to undo his meridian point.

Once Ye Yu was able to move again, he quickly adjusted his clothing. But he was heavily injured, so his movements were a little slow. Luo Tian had to help him again.

"Useless!" a haughty and disdainful voice rang out from the beams above.

"Little Mute?" Ye Yu raised his head in question. He was a little uncertain whether that insult was for him.

"Humph! You had my Poisonous Earthworm King and stealth ability, yet you were still outdone by that woman. You're really useless!" Jun Yichen continued to ridicule Ye Yu with his usual expressionless face.

Ye Yu did not have any rebuttal for Jun Yichen's accusations and said guiltily, "I was too careless. I never thought that Liu Yunfei would have helpers."

"Eat these Medicinal Pills first. Then, tell me what kind of helpers did she have?" There was a strong Aphrodisiac scent coming off Ye Yu, so Ye Jiuge gave him two pills—the Mind-clearing Pill and the Desire Snuffing Pill.

Ye Yu swallowed the pills, and the heated arousal faded instantly. Then, he recounted his encounter with Liu Feiyun.

The day before, after detecting Liu Yunfei's presence, he'd followed her using his stealth abilities. Then, he discovered that Liu Yunfei had kidnapped a Level-two Alchemist, who had participated in the tournament.

He wanted to rescue the Alchemist so that she could testify against Liu Yunfei and Su Junqing. That way, Ye Jiuge could be cleared of all accusations.

But he'd never expected that the Level-two Alchemist was fake and was even messing with him in retaliation.

While he was escaping, Liu Yunfei had struck him from behind. Then, he fled to this dilapidated temple.

"Which Level-two Alchemist did the Sorceress pretend to be?" Ye Jiuge frowned.

Before the tournament began, she had observed and scrutinized the participating Level-two Alchemists. There weren't any signs of the Black Magic Practitioners.

"It was a high-cheeked middle-aged woman with a mean face and wrinkles around her mouth. Her name was Guo Yingxi," Ye Yu recalled the woman's distinct features.

"I recognize the woman."

Once she heard Ye Yu's description, Ye Jiuge remembered the woman. After participating in the tournament, the woman had remained inside the Medicine Refinery Complex. No one had seen her since.

"Me too," Luo Tian added.

At the time, as a Medicinal Pill Tester, he'd been on stage testing the pills. He had secretly taken note of all the Level-two Alchemists present.

The middle-aged woman was rather eye-catching. She should not have been easy to imitate.

"The Sorceress was very capable. There was no hint of sorcery about her, and it was impossible to tell that she was in disguise," Ye Yu defended himself.

"If she was able to deceive you, it means that the Sorceress is skilled at disguise. It will be troublesome if she chooses to cause any mayhem." uneasiness crept into Ye Jiuge's heart.

Ye Yu was very good at disguising. To be able to trick him showed that this Sorceress was not easy to handle.

“Eldest Miss, let’s head somewhere else first, shall we? Xiao Hong can’t hold on for much longer.” Luo Tian frowned.

The purple scorpion was connected to Liu Yunfei and Xiao Hong. It was having a hard time shaking it off its tracks.

“Take Ye Yu with you. I’ll deal with Liu Yunfei,” Ye Jiuge said quietly.

After chasing the Bloodthirsty Sect’s Sorcerers for so long, she had only dealt with Su Junqing. Besides Mental Manipulation, she had no clue what other tricks the Sect had up their sleeves. Crossing swords with Liu Yunfei was an excellent opportunity to find out more about them.

“Eldest Miss, Liu Yunfei has many sly and unexpected tricks. Please be very careful.” Ye Yu was worried about Ye Jiuge.

“There’s me. What are you afraid of?” Jun Yichen declared in arrogance.

“Four against one—it is possible to defeat her,” Luo Tian nodded as well.

Although he and Little Master had not recovered their full strength, they were strong enough to test the woman’s prowess.

“There’s no need. Luo Tian will leave with Ye Yu. Little Mute will assist me from the shadows. It would be good to capture her. If not, we will retreat immediately.” Ye Jiuge was only testing the waters with Liu Yunfei. There was no need for so many people.

“Alright.” Luo Tian had confidence in both Ye Jiuge and Little Master.

Without a word, he turned and left carrying Ye Yu on his back, who was still unable to move freely.

“Little Mute, summon Xiao Hong here,” Ye Jiuge ordered.

Jun Yichen’s Life’s Origin Parasite could control all the parasites cultivated by the blood-clad Miao people. Luo Tian’s Xiao Hong was no exception.

The next moment, Jun Yichen concentrated. His mouth remained unmoving, but a strange vibrating sound came from his body.

Soon, like lightning, Xiao Hong flew in their direction, and landed in front of Jun Yichen.

It looked battered, and the color of its body was faded. Its outstretched wings were quivering uncontrollably, a sign of over-exhaustion.

There was a palm-sized purple scorpion attached to its underside. Although Xiao Hong had it frozen in liquid, it still appeared to be struggling to escape.

Ye Jiuge recognized the creature as the wretched scorpion that had led her to the ruins. When the miserable scorpion saw Ye Jiuge, it struggled even harder. It was like it knew that it was in deep trouble.

“Hand me that purple scorpion,” Ye Jiuge reached out toward Jun Yichen.

“One Spiritual Beast Pill,” Jun Yichen raised a finger, and expressionlessly added, “To reward Xiao Hong.”

“Stingy! Here, take it!” Ye Jiuge was speechless and couldn’t be bothered to ridicule him anymore. Jun Yichen had to wring his rewards out of her.

After Jun Yichen fed the Spiritual Beast Pill to Xiao Hong, he took the purple scorpion and threw it in Ye Jiuge’s direction.

After enveloping the scorpion with her Spiritual Power, Ye Jiuge started to examine it. The scorpion was only the size of a palm, and its purple outer shell seemed to be made of metal that glittered with cold, dim flashes of lights.

The most bizarre thing was that there was a red eye on the tip of its tail, which repeatedly appeared and disappeared under the sun.

“It’s a Treasure-hunting Scorpion,” Ye Jiuge had heard of these unusual beasts.

It was not only very good at finding Yin Spiritual treasures. After advancing in rank, it could also dispel and protect against demons and swallow ghosts. It was a rather enthusiastic type of demonic beast. No wonder Liu Feiyun would prefer to give up Ye Yu and chase after it.

“The Sorceress is here,” Jun Yichen whispered.

Ye Jiuge peeked out of the ruined temple. There was a light breeze, and the falling leaves drifted down silently. Then, there came a sudden rush of killing intent.

“We will act according to plan.” Ye Jiuge stuffed the purple scorpion into her sack. Then, she raised a palm and started gathering purple lightning energy.

Jun Yichen disappeared with a flicker.

The moment he disappeared, swift as lightning, Liu Yunfei barged into the ruined temple. As soon as she entered, she was welcomed by Ye Jiuge’s purple lightning energy.

She’d already prepared to face a trap. She raised a hand and sent out a ball of blood fog to deflect Ye Jiuge’s lightning energy. Then, she followed up with an attack on Ye Jiuge’s chest.

Ye Jiuge channeled Spiritual Force throughout her body and raised a palm to clash with Liu Yunfei. The purple and red energies clashed violently, emitting red and purple rays. Liu Yunfei backflipped and landed beside the door of the ruined temple.

Ye Jiuge stood in her spot, unmoving. On the surface, it seemed like Ye Jiuge had the advantage. But she’d actually suffered the attack’s backlash.

Liu Yunfei’s palm strike was very sinister. If it weren’t for Ye Jiuge’s Spiritual Lightning’s ability to ward off sorcery, she would have taken a hit.

“You are Ye Jiuge?” Liu Yunfei stood by the door. Her big and bright eyes surveyed Ye Jiuge from top to bottom, sighing in appreciation. “You look passable, barely good enough to be a blood slave for my Patriarch.”

“You are Liu Yunfei?” Ye Jiuge’s eyes narrowed as she condescendingly scrutinized her from head to toe. Then, she added with disdain, “You look so mundane. No wonder you use underhanded means to get a man.”

“Watch your mouth, wench, lest you die a mysterious death.” Liu Yunfei’s expression turned stormy. She had received her fair share of insults. But she had to admit that Ye Jiuge had a poisonous tongue.

“Can’t be helped. My mouth can’t help but cry out at the sight of ugly women,” Ye Jiuge pretended to be troubled.

Ye Jiuge was beautiful to begin with. Since obtaining the White Bone Flame, there was an otherworldly feel to her. The way she looked, so ethereally beautiful even while assaulting someone, could drive a woman crazy.

Although Liu Yunfei wanted to flay and dissect Ye Jiuge, she wasn’t some fledgling who did not have self-control. Suppressing her rage, Liu Yunfei asked after the two most important things: “Where are my Ye Yu and Treasure-hunting Scorpion?”

“Already mine,” Ye Jiuge laughed smugly, her arrogance off the charts.

“You are seeking death,” Liu Yunfei’s eyes flashed savagely.

Having dominated the Bloodthirsty Sect for so many years, she had never been so humiliated.

“That should be my line,” Ye Jiuge clasped a Five Lightning Scripture in her right hand and sent another purple lightning energy toward Liu Yunfei.

Liu Yunfei retrieved a tiny blood-colored bell from her Magical Bottomless Bag and waved it gently. Then, a strange sound chimed. The moment Ye Jiuge heard the chime, the blood in her body churned violently. It was as if it wanted to break through her skin and rush at Liu Yunfei.

Alarmed, Ye Jiuge quickly took out a Mind-clearing Pill and swallowed it. The resulting chilly feeling made her shudder.

“Oh? You can withstand my Blood Bell’s Chime. As expected, you aren’t easy to take down.” Liu Feiyun raised her hand and rang the bell twice more.

The chime was clearer this time. It was as if a heavy hammer had slammed onto Ye Jiuge’s head.

The churning of her blood became even more violent, like a horse gone wild. Her blood was threatening to burst out through her pores. Ye Jiuge did not suppress the blood energy, but rather, went along with the flow to send out thumb-sized purple lightning energy.

Liu Yunfei didn’t think Ye Jiuge could retaliate under the influence of her Blood Bell’s Chime. She

started treating Ye Jiuge seriously. Stretching out, she thrust forward her blood energy to break through Ye Jiuge's lightning energy. She rang the Blood Bell in her hand even more mercilessly.

Ye Jiuge cupped her ears and retreated backward. She wanted to attack with the Lightning Snake Magical Whip on her waist. But Liu Yunfei opened her mouth and spat out a thick ball of blood energy. The energy formed into a blood-colored arrow, spewing a rotten stench, and stabbed toward Ye Jiuge's chest.

Ye Jiuge was not too far away. Caught off-guard, she could only try her best to fend off the attack.

Meanwhile, Xiao Hong, who was hiding with Jun Yichen, rushed out. Its body glowed red, and it transformed into a fist-sized apparition, stretched its mouth, and swallowed the blood-colored arrow.

"Retreat!" Ye Jiuge took the opportunity to fall back. She jumped through the window and left the ruined temple.

Hearing Ye Jiuge's call for a retreat, Liu Yunfei thought there must be another trap in the temple. She paused to search the area. By the time she burst out of the temple, Ye Jiuge was long gone.

"That accursed b*tch! Just you wait! When I take you back to the Bloodthirsty Sect, I will get the Patriarch to make you into a blood slave and feed you to the Spider King," Liu Yunfei cursed and promised darkly.

After Ye Jiuge left the ruined temple, she rushed to the meeting point where she had agreed to meet Jun Yichen.

Jun Yichen was already waiting for her.

"Is Xiao Hong alright?" Ye Jiuge asked.

If Xiao Hong had not intercepted that attack, she would have been in deep trouble.

"It's fine." Jun Yichen flexed open his palm.

Xiao Hong's abdomen was swollen like an inflated ball. Its body was so red, and it looked like it was about to drip blood soon. It was coiled up and unmoving.

"It's pregnant?" Ye Jiuge asked hesitantly. She felt as if Xiao Hong could give birth to a large colony of little earthworms soon.

"Squeak!" Xiao Hong protested in a fury.

Ye Jiuge had an inexplicable feeling that she could understand Xiao Hong's meaning. Turning to Jun Yichen, she asked, "Is it saying, 'Your old man is male'?"

"No idea. But there is no mistaking that it is male," Jun Yichen shook his head.

He could only give orders to the earthworm parasites, not communicate with them.

"Why is its stomach so large then?" Ye Jiuge was a little worried.

Xiao Hong might be just an earthworm parasite, but if it died because of her, she would feel very guilty.

"It overate. The arrow that Liu Yungei shot out just now contained a lethal poison. If you had been hit, you would have instantly melted into a puddle of blood," Jun Yichen was very knowledgeable about the arrow because many of his clan members had been killed by them.

"Squeak! Squeak!" Xiao Hong called out twice.

Although it looked like it was about to explode from overeating, it was still rather energetic.

"Xiao Hong saved your life. Aren't you going to show your appreciation?" Jun Yichen looked at Ye Jiuge expressionlessly, formally demanding payment.

"There are only two pills left. Take them!" Ye Jiuge offered the Spiritual Beast Pills without protesting. She knew she wouldn't win.

Although she had ways of dealing with the blood arrow, she couldn't disappoint Xiao Hong. Earthworm parasites had their worm rights too.

Jun Yichen received the Spiritual Beast Pills and stuffed them into Xiao Hong's mouth. After swallowing the pills, Xiao Hong's stomach swelled even bigger. But the expression on its face was one of satisfaction, and it started moaning.

"Shut up!" Jun Yichen face turned black as he ordered.

He did not want Ye Jiuge to know that Xiao Hong had intercepted and swallowed the blood arrow not because he'd wanted to save her, but because the blood arrow was useful for helping him advance in rank.

By the time Xiao Hong finished absorbing the blood arrow and the Spiritual Beast Pills, it would advance another level.

In truth, Ye Jiuge had already realized this. But because Xiao Hong was on her side, she was happy to see it advance in rank. So, she did not expose Jun Yichen's hidden agenda.

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"Luo Tian has been calling for us. Let's go!" Jun Yichen placed Xiao Hong, whose tummy was very swollen, into his sleeve, and made his way into the dense forest.

Ye Jiuge followed beside him closely. "Did you recognize the blood-colored bell that Liu Feiyun took out?"

The chime the bell had produced was terrifying.

If Ye Jiuge hadn't swallowed the Mind-clearing Pill, she wouldn't have been able to resist the chime's lure. A regular person would probably be dead.

Jun Yichen thought for a moment, then replied, "It was a magical weapon made from the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's essence for his main disciple. It has the same effect as the Blood Pearl and can borrow the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's strength."

Although he had obtained a lot of information about the Bloodthirsty Patriarch from the clan leader's blood, the information was all buried deep in his mind. He had to see the actual object to be able to force the information out.

"Blood Pearl, Blood Bell, Blood Sword, Mental Manipulation, Disguising Technique..." Ye Jiuge mentally noted down the Bloodthirsty Sect's abilities.

She was planning to record the information into a small booklet for Wan Ziyang and the rest. That way, it would be helpful when dealing with the Bloodthirsty Sect in the future.

Following the markings left by Luo Tian, they managed to arrive at a concealed valley before sundown. Turning into the valley, they saw a firepit lit near the mountain cliff, which kept the wind out. There was even a whiff of roasted meat drifting in the air.

“They sure know how to enjoy life!” Ye Jiuge sounded somewhat resentful.

Who would be happy after fighting with the enemy in a ruined temple then returning to find their teammates roasting meat and relaxing?

It was one of the rare occasions when Jun Yichen agreed with Ye Jiuge.

At the moment, Ye Yu, who was roasting a hare, caught sight of Ye Jiuge and Jun Yichen's arrival.

He was about to stand and welcome them when a shadow strode swiftly over, running toward Ye Jiuge.

As the person ran, he lamented exaggeratedly: “My Eldest Miss! You’ve finally appeared! Medicine Refinery City and the Capital are in disarray because of you!”

Besides Bai Songling, there was no other person who spoke in such a hyperbolic manner.

“Really?” Ye Jiuge raised an eyebrow. Then she asked Bai Songling in return, “Since when am I so important?” She’d never known.

Bai Songling forced a laugh. “Think about it, the Great Master Yun’s maternal granddaughter, the Ye family’s eldest daughter from the main wife and the Crown Prince’s ex-fiancée turned out to be the leader of the Sorcerers. Not only did you murder many Spiritual Practitioners who participated in the Pill Production Tournament, you even killed a member of the Gong family. And, after being arrested, you fled. Did you know how sensational that sounds?”

“Gong Honglei has already sent a letter back to the Spiritual Practitioners Alliance requesting that they list you as their most wanted fugitive. Ye Yuxuan has also announced to the Tianxia Board that he wishes to sever your father-daughter relationship.

“The Crown Prince has offered a reward of 10,000 gold pieces for reports on your location. Su Yufeng and her daughter have been spreading rumors about you, which ignorant bystanders take at face value and slam you as a sinner.”

Bai Songling wasn’t exaggerating. The real situation was worse than what he’d described.

Alchemists had always been in a position of respect. No matter who they were, it was taboo to touch an Alchemist.

After Ye Jiuge had escaped, the Crown Prince had worked behind the scenes to slander her and spread rumors to tarnish her reputation.

If Ye Yuxuan could have withstood the pressure and stood behind Ye Jiuge, the situation wouldn't have gotten so out of hand.

But not only did Ye Yuxuan not support Ye Jiuge, but he'd also even renounced their father-daughter relationship before the Tianxia Board. So, in the future, whether she lived or died would have nothing to do with him.

Furthermore, Ye Shanshan and her mother had been openly and indirectly blaming Ye Jiuge for a lot of things, making people believe that Ye Jiuge was really the Sorcerers' leader.

"Ye. Yu. Xuan!" Ye Jiuge forced from between clenched teeth. She wanted to spit the name into the mud.

Even though she knew that this scoundrel father of hers was a little heartless, she'd never imagined that he could be so cruel. He'd framed her without concrete evidence for something she hadn't done. He was always setting a new low.

"Forget it. You'd do better without such a father!" Bai Songling consoled Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge sighed and asked, "What about the servants in my residence?"

Her only worry now was for Qing Mama and Zhen Zhu.

Even if Ye Yuxuan left them alone, Su Yufeng wouldn't.

"Don't worry. When Dongling Prince got wind of the situation, he immediately sent men to rescue your servants and hide them." Bai Songling had to take his hat off to the servants of the Zilin Residence.

When Dongfang Que had sent someone to inform Qing Mama, she'd immediately and swiftly arranged for the departure of all the servants. Then, she'd also made her escape. By the time Su Yufeng had rushed over, even the servants guarding the door had disappeared.

"That's good," Ye Jiuge heaved a sigh of relief.

"By the way, Fourth Miss Ye did not believe that you were a Sorceress. She stayed in Medicine Refinery City and refused to go back. But her mother, the Fifth Concubine..." Bai Songling couldn't help but sigh as he continued: "We wanted to bring Fifth Concubine with us, but she insisted on staying at Ye Manor until Fourth Miss Ye returned. Shortly after, we heard that she fell ill and passed away.

"According to Su Yufeng's rumors, you were not happy with Ye Yuxuan, so you wanted to poison

them. But Fifth Concubine was accidentally poisoned instead.”

“Fifth Concubine is dead?” Ye Jiuge was surprised to hear this, although it wasn’t hard to guess.

“Yes, we have investigated and confirmed that Su Yufeng poisoned her. Ye Yuxuan knew about it, but he turned a blind eye when Su Yufeng pushed the blame on you.”

Having been in the Justice Department for so long, Bai Songling had seen his fair share of tragedies. But he had never seen a man with such a rotten character.

“In the end, she couldn’t avoid being harmed by Su Yufeng,” Ye Jiuge sighed.

She had done her best for Fifth Concubine. Even after protecting her so many times, she still couldn’t save her. It was a pity for Ye Ruyi.

“Eldest Miss, the rumors in Medicine Refinery City and the Capital put you at a disadvantage. Unless you think of a way to curtail these rumors, things will only get worse.” Although Bai Songling pitied Fifth Concubine, Ye Jiuge was still more important to him.

Ye Jiuge was also aware of the gravity of the situation. But merely defending herself wasn’t the way to reverse the situation.

Just as Ye Jiuge was frowning in thought, Luo Tian made his way over and urged, “Eldest Miss, why don’t we discuss matters around the firepit? It’s warmer there, and you’ve had a long day. You must be hungry.”

“Right, right! We’ve roasted hares for you and made some mushroom soup too,” Bai Songling said. “When you are down, you must eat well so that you have the strength to carry on.”

Ye Jiuge didn’t feel hungry at first. But now that food had been mentioned, she suddenly felt starving.

Moving toward the firepit, she found Jun Yichen already crouched by the fire. He had already polished off half of a hare.

“Eldest Miss, please take a seat,” Ye Yu offered her a hare roasted a perfect golden brown.

Ye Jiuge took a bite. The flavor was not too bad – crispy on the outside, tender on the inside. It was also very fragrant.

Besides roasted meat, there was a bubbling pot of soup above the firepit. White mushrooms were floating on the surface, and it smelled good.

While Ye Jiuge was eating, Bai Songling crouched beside her, continuing the conversation from before: “The moment you left the jail, you established yourself as the Sorcerers’ leader. Liu Yunfei and Su Junqing will definitely take this opportunity to kill more Spiritual Practitioners and blame on you.”

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“We don’t have to bother about the rumors. When the truth is revealed, the situation will be overturned. The most important thing now is to reveal Liu Yunfei, Su Junqing, and the Crown Prince’s true colors. How was the situation with Big Brother Wan?” Ye Jiuge asked.

She was already in muddy waters. Wan Ziyang couldn’t have had it easy, either.

“The Crown Prince claimed that he was on good terms with you. But you wanted to label him a Sorcerer and throw him in jail. Thank goodness Great Master Dongfang did not listen to his drivel. However, he has been stripped of his military authority. Until the truth of the Sorcerers has been revealed, he must keep a low profile.

“The Crown Prince’s men have been watching him closely, so he couldn’t come to find you, even if he wanted to. Thank goodness I’ve been running around outside and never set foot in Medicine Refinery City. Otherwise, that mad dog of a Crown Prince would be on my case too,” Bai Songling related the situation in Medicine Refinery City.

Medicine Refinery City had split into three factions.

The Crown Prince and Gong Honglei formed one faction, and they were fervent about insisting that Ye Jiuge was the culprit.

Wan Ziyang and Ye Ruyi comprised another faction. They did not believe that Ye Jiuge was a Sorcerer. Dongfang Yao and Li Zijun were neutral.

“You’ve missed one more faction,” Ye Jiuge added. “Su Junqing and Liu Yunfei. The most important one.”

"You're right," Bai Songling nodded, then he turned to Ye Yu and said, "You brat, even after following Liu Yunfei for so long, you've found nothing useful."

"Don't blame Ye Yu. I just crossed swords with Liu Feiyun, and her tactics were dangerous."

Ye Jiuge swallowed a mouthful of soup, then started talking about her encounter with Liu Yunfei.

Recalling the Blood Bell's Chime, she stressed, "If you see her taking out the Blood Bell, the best thing to do is knock it out of her hands. If that's not possible, leave the vicinity immediately. There are limitations to the bell's reach; the closer you are, the more affected you will become."

She had experienced this herself while fighting Liu Yunfei.

Ye Yu and Bai Songling hurriedly noted this information down.

"Now, you should watch the remaining two Level-two Alchemists carefully. If my guess is right, they will be Liu Yunfei's next targets." Ye Jiuge had already guessed this when she'd heard about the Sorcerer disguised as the middle-aged Guo Yingxi.

"Just watching them carefully isn't enough. It is best to contact them, get them to cooperate with us, and capture the Sorcerers," Luo Tian said quietly.

"This guy is right. Before, Wan Ziyang's men were watching the Crown Prince, yet something still happened. We should get them to increase their awareness so that they can inform us as soon as possible when they notice something strange," Bai Songling agreed with Luo Tian.

For a while, he had been investigating the Spiritual Practitioners who had been murdered. He realized that they'd been killed because they weren't on high alert.

Either they had succumbed to Liu Yunfei's honey trap, or they were tricked by someone disguised as a person they knew very well. Their deaths could have been prevented if they had been more careful.

Jun Yichen, who had been silent all along, suddenly spoke up: "Remember the Sorcerer's ultimate motive."

"Do you mean to say that they are looking for someone with a similar level of cultivation to the Bloodthirsty Patriarch?" Ye Jiuge felt that it was quite impossible to find such a person.

According to Jun Yichen and the rest, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch was about to break through to a high-level Spiritual Practitioner and become a Great Spiritual Master.

Currently, the only person who fulfilled these criteria in Medicine Refinery City was Dongfang Yao.

The old man may have looked wizened, but to have survived for so many years in Medicine Refinery City, he was not easily dealt with or tricked.

“One can never go wrong in being too careful.” Luo Tian’s face was reserved.

Back then, the blood-clad Miao had been even more powerful. Yet, they were still annihilated by the Bloodthirsty Patriarch.

“I will write to Li Zijun asking him to pass on the message to Great Master Dongfang.” Ye Jiuge felt that there was nothing wrong with Luo Tian’s thinking. It never hurt to be careful.

Suddenly, Bai Songling shuffled up to Jun Yichen. He had an ‘up to no good’ expression on his face. He said, “Little Mute, I heard you have many Legendary Venomous Insects. Sell one to me!”

Ever since he’d heard Ye Yu saying that the Legendary Venomous Insects could resist the Bloodthirsty Sect’s poison, he’d become impatient to obtain one.

Jun Yichen looked at Bai Songling expressionlessly, wordlessly rejecting his request.

He loathed this chatty, noisy guy.

“Just give him one!” Ye Jiuge piped up.

Ye Jiuge had reserved all his Legendary Venomous Insects, so she had the most critical say.

“Blood essence,” Jun Yichen replied. Reluctantly, he lifted his sleeves, revealing a row of Legendary Venomous Insects on his arm.

“Here!” Bai Songling happily pricked his finger, squeezed out some blood, and offered a drop of blood essence.

Soon, a black speck flew over. It sucked Bai Songling’s blood essence and landed on his palm quietly like a rooster.

“It will hatch tomorrow.” Jun Yichen tugged his sleeve down.

“That long?” Bai Songling frowned, then asked. “What kind of Legendary Venomous Insect will I hatch? Will it be as powerful as Ye Yu’s?”

“I have no idea. The new batch of new Legendary Venomous Insects will evolve according to their

master's characteristics." Jun Yichen was quickly becoming impatient with Bai Songling.

"Since I'm such an awesome person, the Legendary Venomous Insect I nurture will be great." Bai Songling was full of confidence. He then shuffled up to Ye Jiuge and said, "Then, you'll have to give me a few bottles of Spiritual Beast Pills for my Legendary Venomous Insect!"

"500 taels per bottle, thank you!" Ye Jiuge wasn't too shy to collect payment from Bai Songling.

The pills she'd provided previously had been a one-time thing. If they wanted to feed their Legendary Venomous Insects with Spiritual Beast Pills, she could not afford to give them out for free.

"Tsk! 500 taels! Fine, I'll take one bottle!" Although Bai Songling felt the pinch. In order to nurture a powerful Legendary Venomous Insect to save his life, he would purchase the pills no matter how expensive they were.

"I have no pills with me now, so we will settle this later." Ye Jiuge secretly decided to mass-produce the Spiritual Beast Pills the moment they got back.

"Fine." Bai Songling nodded.

"Before I forget, Ye Yu, where is your Legendary Venomous Insect? How is it?" Ye Jiuge turned toward Ye Yu.

"My Black Dictator isn't doing too well." Ye Yu carefully flipped up his belt to show his Legendary Venomous Insect.

The once awe-inspiring large black earthworm looked shriveled.

It was coiled on Ye Yu's palm, looking half-dead.

"It ate a poison that didn't quite agree with it. It'll be better after some rest." Jun Yichen knew what was wrong the moment he laid eyes on the parasite.

Although the Poisonous Earthworm King could swallow many different types of poison, it could still be badly hurt.

Aphrodisiac poisons were particularly harmful.

When they swallowed such poisons, they became very excited. However, if they were unable to relieve themselves, they became like this.

Ye Yu felt a little sorry after hearing this. He gently touched Black Dictator's body with his fingers.

If Black Dictator hadn't absorbed so much of the aphrodisiac poison from Liu Yunfei's Poisonous Love Strike, Ye Yu would have become a lustful beast—even if he'd swallowed the Mind-clearing Pill.

"Poor Black Dictator!" Ye Jiuge was also sympathetic to Black Dictator's plight.

It was a pity that she had no more Spiritual Beast Pills with her. Otherwise, she would have given it a few to reward and console it.

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The night was tranquil, and stars peppered the sky. In the blink of an eye, it was already late.

Bai Songling yawned and turned to Ye Jiuge. "It's getting late. Are we camping here or are going to find somewhere else?"

While the men could put up with spending the night in the wilderness, Ye Jiuge was a woman. It would be rather miserable for her.

Ye Jiuge thought for a moment, then replied to Bai Songling, "Let's head back to Medicine Refinery City. Tomorrow, we'll try to figure out a way to rent a place for me in the city. I want to produce the Mind-clearing Pill and a few more bottles of Spiritual Beast Pills."

The Legendary Venomous Insects needed Spiritual Beast Pills to recover. She had better produce more pills, just in case.

"Sure. The Dongling Prince has a few secret hideouts in Medicine Refinery City of which the

Crown Prince is unaware.” As he spoke, Bai Songling couldn’t help but respect Dongfang Que for his foresight.

Before the Pill Production Tournament, Dongfang Que had prepared a few secret hideouts in Medicine Refinery City. Now, they could finally be put to good use.

“Let’s go!” Ye Jiuge stood up.

Luo Tian extinguished the fire pit.

Ye Yu dug a hole to bury the hares’ bones.

Bai Songling washed his precious metal pot, then stowed it.

There were about two hours until daylight. Ye Jiuge, Bai Songling, Luo Tian, and Ye Yu had to disguise themselves. Otherwise, they would be arrested the moment they stepped into the city.

For Ye Yu, the Disguising Technique was an essential skill. He made his skin yellowish, and, with some other additions, a plain and unassuming youth soon appeared. Wearing an item of blue coarse-cloth clothing, he looked like a page boy from a large, wealthy household.

Luo Tian painted his face black, pretending to be a solemn and taciturn guard.

Bai Songling drew on an eight-figured eyebrow and added a goatee. He put on a royal blue brocade robe, instantly transforming into a rich landowner.

At first, Bai Songling had suggested that Ye Jiuge disguise herself as the landowner’s wife so that they could pair as husband and wife. But he was rejected.

She already had an idea of her own. She dabbed some medicinal powder on her face, and swiftly became a high-cheeked, mean-faced, middle-aged woman who had fine lines around her mouth.

“You look like Guo Yingxi!” Ye Yu frowned, looking at the woman’s face brought back painful memories.

“That’s the effect I wanted.” Ye Jiuge had done it on purpose.

“But it’s too risky!” Bai Songling objected as well.

They had to be careful with entering the city. By boldly disguising as the same person whom the Sorceress had pretended to be, wouldn’t that attract more attention?

“Nothing ventured, nothing gained. The best defense is a good offense.” Ye Jiuge had her reasons.

Now, thanks to the Crown Prince’s plots, the whole Lei Kingdom was spitting on her. The more she retreated, the more she would lose her chance to overturn the situation. She had to think of a way to go on the offensive.

Who knew? By pretending to be Guo Yingxi, she might even experience a breakthrough.

“Alright. Things can’t get any worse than they are now, anyway.” Bai Songling was somewhat positive.

By the time the group had finished with their disguises, daylight had arrived.

After the city guards opened the gates, they did not probe the group too much, and they were soon let through into the city.

According to Bai Songling, the hideout was located at No. 17 East Main Street, beside a medicinal hall.

It was still early, so there weren’t many people on the streets. Even most of the shops weren’t open yet.

The group made their way successfully into the residence.

The house had three courtyards. The furnishings were simple, but everything that they needed was there.

Bai Songling was about to allocate their rest areas when, suddenly, his heart skipped a beat. He turned to the group and announced, “My Legendary Venomous Insect seems to be hatching.”

He exposed his arm as he spoke. The black speck on his hand had already grown much larger.

It moved now and then. Finally, it opened. When it finally revealed its face, there was an odd expression on every onlooker’s face.

Ye Yu’s Black Dictator looked fierce and powerful. It was an expert in concealment and was able to swallow poisons.

Luo Tian’s Xiao Hong was exceptional for its speed. Attacking and ambushing enemies was its forte.

Bai Songling's Legendary Venomous Insect was white. It had no eyes or wings, only an enormous mouth. It looked terribly ugly.

"As expected, it looks like its master." Jun Yichen nodded in satisfaction. "You are too noisy, that's why you've hatched such a big-mouthed Legendary Venomous Insect."

"Impossible!" Bai Songling was unable to accept that he, a sophisticated and cool youth, would hatch such an ugly Legendary Venomous Insect.

"Just face reality!" Ye Jiuge mocked without mercy.

Bai Songling glared at the big-mouthed Legendary Venomous Insect, unable to say anything. He could only console himself. "Forget it! Having a big mouth means it can eat more, so it'll be more powerful than the other Legendary Venomous Insects."

"Sure, I admire your ability to lie to yourself," Ye Yu deadpanned.

"Get lost!" Bai Songling glared at Ye Yu. He shuffled up beside Ye Jiuge. "Help me produce a few bottles of Spiritual Beast Pills. I don't believe that Big Mouth will remain so ugly."

He had already decided to cultivate Big Mouth until he became the world's most powerful Legendary Venomous Insect.

"As long as you can afford it, you can have as many bottles as you wish." Ye Jiuge was very generous.

"I want some too." Jun Yichen's face was stony as if he were telling her, 'don't you forget about me.'

"Do you have any money?" Ye Jiuge struck back heartlessly.

Jun Yichen's eyes bulged, and he said, "I'm working for you!"

"Tell me again when you've done something," Ye Jiuge gave him a wave of dismissal then turned to Luo Tian and Bai Songling. "I'll be heading out to get some herbs later. Then, I'll be going into retreat to produce pills. As for you guys, don't just stay here. Get cracking and investigate the remaining two Level-two Alchemists' location. Also, try to find out where Guo Yingxi is. If she's doing well, that's great. If not, we best let others know of her death. Ye Yu, your injury is still healing, so you stay with me."

"Alright." Luo Tian and Bai Songling accepted their mission and left.

Jun Yichen also left with Luo Tian.

Ye Jiuge counted her taels and left the residence with Ye Yu, heading out to purchase the medicinal herbs needed.

The ordinarily bustling street of Medicinal Halls looked rather deserted now. Even the shop assistants looked listless.

Ye Jiuge walked into the largest Medicinal Hall. The moment the shop assistant saw her, he went up to her enthusiastically. "Honored guest, what can I help you with?"

"I am looking for some medicinal herbs," Ye Jiuge handed over the list of herbs she wanted. Then, she asked, "There are very few people on the streets. Is business not good?"

"Sigh, it's terrible. The accursed Sorcerers murdered many people who came here on business. Now, no one dares to come here," the shop assistant replied while picking out the herbs that Ye Jiuge wanted. "There is a rumor that the Sorcerers' leader is Great Master Yun's maternal granddaughter, Ye Jiuge. How true it is, no one knows."

"Of course, it's true! I heard that even her father has announced that he is disowning her," another shop assistant added.

Hearing the rumors, Ye Jiuge didn't think much of them. But Ye Yu's expression turned glacial as he said, "Please do not spread unproven rumors."

The shopkeeper standing behind the counter hollered at the two shop assistants in admonishment, "Have you finished picking the herbs? You were hired to work, not to gossip."

The two shop assistants became quiet and bent their heads down to concentrate on their chore. They quickly picked out the herbs and sent off Ye Jiuge warmly.

Ye Jiuge carried the bag of herbs out of the medicinal hall. Suddenly, Ye Yu spoke up in a low voice: "We are being followed."

“Who’s following us? What is his spiritual level?” Ye Jiuge asked in a hushed tone.

“He’s around the level of a high-level Spiritual Practitioner. The person is very cautious,” Ye Yu replied.

If he weren’t a naturally sensitive tracker, he wouldn’t have noticed their stalker.

“Find an opportunity to capture him,” Ye Jiuge said, scanning their surroundings.

They were now on the Medicinal Halls’ busiest street.

Although the local businesses had been severely affected because of the Sorcerers, the crowd was still denser than on the other streets.

This was especially true of the free market area in front of the Medicinal Halls. There, spiritual herbs gathered by the locals in the mountains could be found, and there were also many rare herbs.

Many low-leveled Alchemists would bring their attendants here to pick out herbs. With so many people moving around, it was a very lively area.

An idea formed in Ye Jiuge’s mind, and she headed toward the free market.

She made a right turn, then a left, and walked into a small alley.

During this time, Ye Yu split up from Ye Jiuge due to the heavy human traffic.

Ye Jiuge walked deeper into the dirty alley. The more she walked, the more secluded it became.

Now, she could sense someone following her. The person kept a low profile. If Ye Jiuge hadn’t been looking out for him, the stalker would have been impossible to notice.

Ye Jiuge walked into a junk-filled dead end then turned around. “My friend, wouldn’t you like to show yourself?”

There was no reply. Only silence reigned in the alley.

“Since you want to stay hidden, then don’t blame me for forcing you out,” Ye Jiuge raised her finger, and a purple lightning bolt shot out toward the pile of wood in the corner.

A black shadow jumped out from behind the woodpile and ran toward the entrance of the alley.

Ye Yu was already waiting there. Stepping out of the shadows, he waved two grey Spiritual Lights at the black shadow and forced it back into the alley.

The black shadow landed in front of Ye Jiuge, and she could see the person’s face. It was a youth with a distinctive face.

“You?” Ye Jiuge looked at the stalker. He had a head full of small braids and wore a black and red robe. She remembered that he was one of the Level-two Alchemists—a Prince from one of the small, remote countries in the West. He was called Ouyang Sen.

“You recognize me?” Ouyang Sen gave the disguised Ye Jiuge an evaluating look with his light-brown eyes.

“There are only a few Level Two Alchemists left in Medicine Refinery City. It would be strange if I didn’t recognize you. What about you? Why are you following me?” Ye Jiuge’s face turned stony, and she interrogated him fiercely.

“You look like a friend of mine, Guo Yingxi. Do you know of her?” Ouyang Sen’s words were calm, but his tone was probing.

“Don’t know her. Do we look alike? If you get the chance, you should introduce her to me,” Ye Jiuge replied expressionlessly.

“It will never happen now,” Ouyang Sen shook his head. Then, he continued forcefully, “She is dead, murdered by the Sorcerers.”

Ye Jiuge raised an eyebrow, reeling with shock.

Guo Yingxi was dead!

But the death of a foreign Level Two Alchemist in Medicine Refinery City was hard to cover up. How did Ouyang Sen come to know of it?

Ouyang Sen seemed to know what Ye Jiuge was thinking and explained in a subdued tone, “Guo Yingxi was my Senior. We came to Medicine Refinery City together to participate in the

tournament. To be safe, we were pretending to be strangers. Senior Guo was murdered by the Sorcerers three days ago. Before her death, she contacted me using a secret technique. I have been searching for her body but have been unable to find it.”

When Ouyang Sen finished, he stared at Ye Jiuge like a hawk, observing her reaction.

“Your Senior wasn’t killed by me.” Ye Jiuge was frank. “There is a Sorcerer around who is adept in Disguising Technique. He heavily injured my subordinate while pretending to be Guo Yingxi. I wanted to lure this Sorcerer out by disguising myself as Guo Yingxi.”

Ye Jiuge did not reveal too much information about Ye Yu’s incident. Ouyang Sen’s appearance was too much of a coincidence. Enemy or ally, it was too soon to tell.

Ouyang Sen appeared to believe Ye Jiuge.

He was silent for a while, then asked. “If you are chasing the Sorcerers, do you have news about Ye Jiuge?”

“Do you believe that Ye Jiuge is the leader of the Sorcerers?” Ye Jiuge asked in reply.

Ouyang Sen was silent for a moment, then opened his mouth to reply: “If she were the leader of the Sorcerers, Great Master Dongfang would have realized it.” He, too, would have noticed.

Ouyang Sen was exceptionally sensitive to Sorcerers’ auras.

“That’s right. Ye Jiuge merely played the role of scapegoat. The real Sorcerers are from the Bloodthirsty Sect, and they are still running free in Medicine Refinery City. If they are not caught soon, even more Spiritual Practitioners will be harmed. Honestly, you have been too rash just now. If I were a Sorcerer who had disguised himself as Guo Yingxi, you would have been dead by now.” Ye Jiuge gave Ouyang Sen a look of disapproval.

“I have my ways of identifying Sorcerers. In fact, I have already met the Sorcerer who disguised himself as my Senior.” Ouyang Sen’s revelation was shocking.

If he hadn’t been confident that Ye Jiuge was not a Sorcerer, he would not have dared to follow her.

“Where is the Sorcerer?” Ye Jiuge’s eyes lit up in excitement as she asked urgently after the Sorcerer’s whereabouts.

“In a bar on the West Main Street. Some time ago, I was going to that place for a drink. I think that he went there on purpose, waiting for me to take the bait.” Ouyang Sen shuddered with chills as

he recalled the situation.

The Sorcerer's disguise looked identical to his Senior. If he hadn't already known about his Senior's death, he probably would have fallen into the trap.

"Since you escaped, he will probably try again. You are in danger. Do you want to work with us?" Ye Jiuge enticed, sounding like the big bad wolf trying to deceive Little Red Riding Hood.

"Are you sure you can deal with the Sorcerers?" Ouyang Sen's face revealed his disbelief.

Although he wanted to avenge his Senior, he wasn't about to risk his life.

"You have no other option," Ye Jiuge said, matter-of-fact.

She was confident about taking down the Sorcerers.

But she and Ouyang Sen were just getting to know one another. There was no need to reveal all the cards in her hand.

Ouyang Sen's expression kept changing. It was obvious he was struggling to decide what to do. In truth, he was aware of his predicament. The Sorcerers had already targeted him. It was only a matter of time before he had to fight them.

Senior Guo's cultivation level had been higher than his, yet the Sorcerers had brutally killed her. There was no question as to what would happen to him.

But, he couldn't risk believing the two Spiritual Practitioners in front of him, who were obviously in disguise

"You do not have to rush into a decision. I'll leave this Communication Charm with you. If you are in a pinch, just use it, and we'll rush over to save you. The Sorcerers' tricks have always been unorthodox. Going on the offense is always better than going on the defense. Think about it carefully!" Ye Jiuge took out a Communication Charm.

It was a rare item. She only had three such charms, and she couldn't even bear to give one to Ye Yu and Wan Ziyang. Ouyang Sen was a lucky guy.

"Thank you." Ouyang Sen reached out to take the Communication Charm.

He had to admit, Ye Jiuge's decision dispelled some of his hesitations. He started seriously considering the possibility of working with them.

"I still have some things to do, so I'll make a move now," Ye Jiuge swiftly bade him farewell and left with Ye Yu in tow.

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"Eldest Miss, that guy is still looking at us," Ye Yu said softly.

"It's alright. We'll leave him hanging. After all, he should be more anxious than us." Ye Jiuge was unconcerned.

If she showed Ouyang Sen that she needed him, he would probably be conceited.

So, she had to show him that she didn't care. Because he was unsure where things stood, he would seriously consider cooperating with them.

"Should I go spy on him?" Ye Jiuge was a little worried.

There were only two Level Two Alchemists left in Medicine Refinery City. If Ouyang Sen were murdered too, their predicament would worsen.

"That's fine, but you be careful. If you encounter Liu Yunfei again, then you should eat more Medicinal Pills. Your elder sister has nothing but medicinal pills." Ye Jiuge shoved a few bottles of Mind-clearing Pills and Desire Snuffing Pills toward Ye Yu.

Ye Yu's concealment abilities were top-notch. However, Liu Yunfei's Seduction was still too strong. As a young and vigorous youth, it would be easy for him to succumb to her wiles.

Ye Yu received the Medicinal Pills awkwardly.

Previously, he had been a little reluctant to waste pills and would only take them when he was in a pinch. Had he downed them beforehand, he wouldn't have fallen for Liu Yunfei's seduction.

After Ye Jiuge split up from Ye Yu again, they both went around in circles. In between, they even changed their disguises before heading back to the hideout. When they arrived, they saw that Luo Tian and Jun Yichen had already returned.

"Was Eldest Miss followed?" Luo Tian guessed after looking at Ye Jiuge's disguise. She had on a pale-yellow dress and looked like an innocent young girl.

"Yeah, we were followed. What about you guys? How did your mission go?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"We went to the Medicine Refinery Complex. After going around, we only saw the rough-looking Level Two Alchemist, Xiong Yunhu. We didn't see Ouyang Sen. It seems that he went out for a drink.

"We also got some intel on Guo Yingxi. Apparently, after the end of the Pill Production Tournament, she left the Medicine Refinery Complex and went into the mountains to harvest herbs. She only came back once, not too long ago, then went out again after organizing the herbs she'd harvested.

"Based on the timing, we can conclude that this person returned specifically to set the trap for Ye Yu," Luo Tian reported his findings in detail.

"The one called Xiong Yunhu has the appearance of a bear but is actually a scaredy-cat. He cried and demanded that the guards from Medicine Refinery City protect him. He also insisted on moving into Dongfang Yao's private residence. When rejected, he even acted shamelessly to try getting his way," Jun Yichen laughed.

"Oh? Did that really happen?" Ye Jiuge had an impression of Xiong Yunhu as a formidable and strong person. He didn't look like a wimp.

"Yes, indeed. He even wanted to get Ouyang Sen to join him in creating a fuss but was ignored," Luo Tian nodded and said. "I heard that he has become very sullen recently. He often frequents the bars to drink."

Although Sorcerers were running amuck in Medicine Refinery City and the atmosphere was tense, most of the Spiritual Practitioners had been murdered outside of the city. Accordingly, no one dared to leave the city.

"I see. By the way, where is Bai Songling? Weren't you guys together?" Ye Jiuge continued.

She had been planning to wait until Bai Songling returned to tell them about the incident with Ouyang Sen so that she wouldn't have to repeat herself.

"After searching the Medicine Refinery Complex with us, he said he was going to look for Wan Ziyang and left."

Although he had never met Wan Ziyang, Luo Tian had heard of him through Little Master.

It seemed like he was more reliable than the big-mouthed and gossipy Bai Songling. And he was a serious and careful person with formidable cultivation.

Just as Luo Tian finished speaking, Bai Songling came through the doors followed by an elderly man with greying hair at his temples. He had an awe-inspiring and dignified aura around him.

Luo Tian and Jun Yichen looked at the old man guardedly.

Ye Jiuge also glanced at the elder repeatedly in confusion. "Brother Bai, who is this uncle?"

Bai Songling and the rest had profiled most of the people in Medicine Refinery City. There was no mention of a man with such an imposing aura.

"Haha! Even Eldest Miss does not recognize you. Wan Ziyang, your Disguising Technique has improved!" Bai Songling laughed loudly, slapping the old man on the shoulders.

The old man swiped his face, revealing a chiseled, handsome appearance. It was Wan Ziyang.

"How did you come here, Brother Wan?" Ye Jiuge was a little surprised.

She thought the Crown Prince was watching Wan Ziyang like a hawk so he couldn't come out.

"I found a stand-in." Wan Ziyang did not elaborate much.

Having worked in the Justice Department for so long, he too had picked up quite a few tricks.

In the past, he couldn't be bothered to use them, but the situation was different now. He couldn't care too much about it.

"How is my little sister and the rest? Does she know what's happened to Fifth Concubine?" Ye Jiuge asked.

Ye Ruyi had been implicated by her sister. She had been held in Medicine Refinery City all this while and hadn't been able to go back to see Fifth Concubine for the last time. Ye Jiuge felt a little guilty and sorry.

"Fourth Miss Ye and your servants have been placed under Li Zijun's protection. They are safe, for now. I feared that Fourth Miss would become agitated by her mother's death, so I kept the news from her.

"As for the servant, Hua Die, she was missing for quite a while.

"Then, Li Zijun found her corpse outside the city. Like Gong Hongyu, she was flayed, and her blood had been sucked dry. Her death was tragic. I saw her corpse and it didn't look like she'd died recently; it had been quite a while since she was killed," Wan Ziyang related in a subdued tone.

Although his military authority had been stripped, Great Master Dongfang and Li Zijun did not restrict his freedom. If an incident occurred, they would inform him too.

"When did Hua Die disappear?" Ye Jiuge asked.

She had already guessed that Hua Die was dead.

That 'Hua Die' who had made accusations against her was most probably the Sorcerer, who was adept in disguise.

She had to admit, this Sorcerer was very capable.

Although she'd had her suspicions then, she had not been able to find any clues to prove that this supposed Hua Die was a fake.

"It was the same night that Liu Yunfei injured Ye Yu." Wan Ziyang's reply confirmed Ye Jiuge's suspicion.

She related the incident with Ouyang Sen, then continued, "Based on the clues we have at hand, I believe that the Sorcerer first disguised himself as Hua Die to accuse me of the crimes, then disguised as Guo Yingxi to lure Ye Yu away. Now, he's trying to harm Ouyang Sen as well."

"Ouyang Sen seems like he does not know good from bad. Even at death's door, he was still hesitating and dragging his feet. If it were me, I would have brought him back by force." Bai Songling smacked his fists together.

"Our identities cannot be mentioned, after all. If you had brought him back forcefully, and he'd

escaped angry and suspicious, wouldn't that just have exposed us to danger?" If it had been feasible, Ye Jiuge wouldn't have let Ouyang Sen go free either.

"Eldest Miss is right. In such a situation, it's only a matter of time. Ouyang Sen will cooperate with us. What we must do now is figure out how to use him as a bait to capture the Sorcerers," Wan Ziyang said gravely.

"This Sorcerer, who is adept in disguise, won't be too difficult to deal with. I'm only afraid that capturing him will lead Liu Yunfei to us. With just a few of us, it will be difficult to stop them from working together!" Bai Songling sighed.

If they were in the Capital, he would request dozens of Spiritual Practitioners from Dongfang Que. Even the Sorcerers couldn't defeat so many Spiritual Practitioners at the same time.

But, unfortunately, they were the scapegoats now. They had to be careful when moving around. If they mobilized too many people at once, they wouldn't have to wait for Liu Yunfei to strike, and the Crown Prince would immediately send his troops to annihilate them.

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"Yes, it's a problem indeed. If we could deal with them separately, that would be great." Wan Ziyang had heard of Liu Yunfei's abilities from Bai Songling.

He was very fearful and wary of the Blood Bell and Blood Sword.

"I have an idea to lure Liu Yunfei away," Ye Jiuge announced.

"What idea?" Bai Songling turned to her, then continued, "There are so few of us. If too many of us are deployed to lure Liu Yunfei away, there will be no one left to catch the disguised Sorcerer."

"Relax. We don't have to lure her away ourselves."

From her backpack, Ye Jiuge took out a purple scorpion, which was tightly bound. Its body was

immobilized by a thick layer of yellow mud shaped into a sphere.

Wan Ziyang looked closely at the frail, weak scorpion and asked, "Is this the scorpion that took you to the ruins?"

"The very same!" Ye Jiuge nodded.

"D*mn! What are you waiting for, then? Just bomb it to smithereens!" Bai Songling exclaimed.

If it weren't for this thing, Ye Jiuge wouldn't have been framed.

The frail purple scorpion heard Bai Songling's words and squeaked in fright.

"Oh? It was most unexpected. This scorpion seems to be enlightened."

Bai Songling looked at the squeaking scorpion in surprise.

Ever since he'd hatched Big Mouth, he had become interested in getting to know more about Spiritual Beasts and Demonic Beasts.

"Fool, you can't even recognize this Unusual Beast—the Treasure-hunting Scorpion," Jun Yichen mocked expressionlessly.

"What?" Bai Songling couldn't be bothered to quarrel with Jun Yichen. He turned to Ye Jiuge with his eyes wide in shock. "It's an Unusual Beast?"

Treasure-hunting Scorpion—it sounded very formidable!

"That's right. It was Liu Yunfei's treasure. If it is used as bait, Liu Yunfei will definitely jump into the trap."

Ye Jiuge carelessly waved the Treasure-hunting Scorpion in her hand.

She already owned the Black Fat Rat, so she wasn't too desperate for this Treasure-hunting Scorpion.

"You should keep it since it's such a rare find," Bai Songling gushed.

Wan Ziyang glared at him, then asked Ye Jiuge, "What do you intend to do?"

"I believe Li Zijun will be very interested in this Treasure-hunting Scorpion." Ye Jiuge handed the Treasure-hunting Scorpion to Wan Ziyang then continued, "As for the method for luring Liu Yunfei,

I believe that Brother Wan knows better than I do. The yellow mud wrapped around the scorpion contains a substance that masks its presence. We just have to shatter the mud wrapping.”

“I understand,” Wan Ziyang said then took the Treasure-hunting Scorpion from Ye Jiuge.

Dongfang Yao wielded the greatest influence in Medicine Refinery City. However, the next most influential person was not the Crown Prince Dongfang Jianming, but Dongfang Yao’s Chief Disciple, Li Zijun.

Li Zijun was a careful man. In such a situation, in which the Medicine Refinery City was so chaotic and Dongfang Yao was washing his hands of the situation, his every move was conservative and safe. He made stabilizing the situation in Medicine Refinery City his top priority.

Though it wasn’t wrong, this was not helpful for catching the Sorcerers.

However, Li Zijun hated the Sorcerers a lot. If he knew that the Treasure-hunting Scorpion belonged to a Sorcerer, he would certainly be willing to help capture Liu Yunfei.

After all, an Unusual Beast like the Treasure-hunting Scorpion was a prize for Spiritual Practitioners.

Be it searching for Spiritual herbs or items or using it as an ingredient to produce pills, the Treasure-hunting Scorpion was a rare find.

“Alright. You guys start planning to capture the Sorcerers. I’ll be going into retreat to produce pills,” Ye Jiuge said and stood up.

Wan Ziyang, Bai Songling, Luo Tian, and Jun Yichen weren’t incompetent.

With Ouyang Sen as bait, and the treasure to lure Liu Yunfei away, it would be easy to come up with a plan to ambush and capture the Sorcerers. She did not have to participate in the planning.

She should concentrate on more practical matters, like producing Mind-clearing Pills and Spiritual Beast Pills.

“Hurry along!” Bai Songling and Jun Yichen chimed in unison. They looked at one another, then harrumphed and turned away.

They both wanted the Spiritual Beast Pills to feed their Legendary Venomous Insects, but Ye Jiuge couldn’t mass produce the pills this time.

In order to get more Spiritual Beast Pills from Ye Jiuge, they had to show her their capabilities.

With that, the duo's fighting spirit was ignited. They swore to take down the disguised Sorcerer.

Ye Jiuge was in retreat for two whole days. She produced 38 bottles of Spiritual Beast Pills and 16 bottles of Mind-clearing Pills.

She had also produced a few other pills, like the Desire Snuffing Pill, Spiritual Revitalization Pill, and Qi Replenishing Pill.

By the time she left her room, her legs felt like jelly, and her body had lost all of its strength.

"Eldest Miss, are you alright?" Luo Tian looked at the black rings around Ye Jiuge's eyes. She looked like someone had punched her. Even her flawless, snow-white skin couldn't even hide her exhaustion.

He sighed inwardly. Ye Jiuge looked otherworldly, like a delicate lady, but she was rather scary when she became serious.

He would not do poorly by following such a talented and hardworking Master.

"I'm fine. What's the situation with Ouyang Sen?" Ye Jiuge felt that two days was more than enough time for Ouyang Sen to come to a decision.

If he still did not agree to cooperate with them, then she couldn't be blamed for taking forceful action.

"Ouyang Sen sent word yesterday agreeing to work with us to lure the Sorcerer," Luo Tian replied.

"What do you guys intend to do? Has the plan been confirmed?" Ye Jiuge had been busy producing pills these past few days, and she'd had no time to participate in their discussions.

"We've decided on a plan. Ouyang Sen will pretend to run away from Medicine Refinery City and ambush the Sorcerer on the outskirts. Wan Ziyang has completed all preparations. We are just waiting for you," Luo Tian reported.

Although Ye Jiuge was not involved in the planning process, she was the most important leader in their small group because she held everyone together.

Without her leadership, Bai Songling and Jun Yichen quarreled endlessly, and no one could stop them.

"What about Ye Yu? Since he's following Ouyang Sen, has he encountered Liu Yunfei?" Ye Jiuge

asked.

“No. Security in Medicine Refinery City has been rather strict recently. The Spiritual Practitioners on patrol around the Medicine Refinery Complex has have equipped with a magical weapon to test for sorcery. Even Liu Yunfei wouldn't be so bold.” Luo Tian shook his head.

“Pass this bottle of pills to Ouyang Sen. We will take action tomorrow.” Ye Jiuge took out a bottle of Mind-clearing Pills.

Although Ouyang Sen was an Alchemist who never lacked in pills, the ones he owned were not as effective as the pills which she produced.

“Eldest Miss, how many bottles of Spiritual Beast Pills did you produce this time?” Luo Tian felt a little embarrassed by his question.

“Not a lot.” Ye Jiuge did not want Jun Yichen and Bai Songling to know how much stock she had, lest they chase after the pills like hell hounds.

“I see.” Luo Tian face fell in disappointment.

His Xiao Hong was about to advance in rank. If it could consume some Spiritual Beast Pills, it would not suffer too much while advancing.

“I'll give you guys one bottle each, for now.” Ye Jiuge took out four bottles and passed them to Luo Tian. “You deliver these for me. And don't forget to make a record—it's 100 taels per bottle.”

Ye Jiuge was not rich, and she had spent quite a lot on pill production. She couldn't act like she had before—like a philanthropist.

100 taels per bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills was only the cost price. After all, the herbs she used were top-grade. If they were sold to someone else, the price would surely be double what she'd asked for.

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"I will deliver these pills to them. You've worked hard, Eldest Miss. Please rest well!" Luo Tian chirped in excitement.

"I'm going to bed. Don't call me unless there's a natural disaster." Ye Jiuge's legs felt like jelly, and her body had completely lost its strength. She drifted to her room and collapsed on the bed, instantly knocked out.

When she woke, it was already the afternoon of the next day.

She only dragged herself up because she was starving.

Thank goodness Luo Tian was an attentive person. He'd left some porridge in the kitchen. When she appeared, he immediately served it to her, accompanied by two spicy, sour, and refreshing side dishes.

Ye Jiuge did not bother with decorum. She finally found the strength to speak after gulping down two bowls of porridge. "Where did the others go?"

"Bai Songling and Little Master have gone out of the city to prepare their ambush. Ye Yu is still with Ouyang Sen. They will leave Medicine Refinery City tonight, just before the gate curfew," Luo Tian said as he tidied up Ye Jiuge's dirty dishes.

Initially, Bai Songling had wanted to remain here to accompany Ye Jiuge. But after a few barbs from Jun Yichen, he left while arguing with the emotionless boy.

They had argued over whose trap the disguised Sorcerer would fall for first.

"Let's make a move, too!" Ye Jiuge rose from her seat.

Preparing for an ambush was an important task. Ye Jiuge did not feel safe leaving it to those unreliable eternal foes, Jun Yichen and Bai Songling.

As soon as Ye Jiuge and Luo Tian left the city, Luo Tian brought out Xiao Hong.

The previously big-bellied Xiao Hong's appearance had massively changed.

Its small, beady eyes brimmed with vitality, and it wasn't elongated anymore. Round and fat, its figure was now generous, just like a golden tortoise.

The wings on its back, which were previously thin like a cicada's, had become sturdy and strong. It would have no trouble dragging two Treasure-hunting Scorpions at once.

"Look for Little Master," Luo Tian ordered Xiao Hong, and it immediately flapped its wings and took flight.

Ye Jiuge and Luo Tian ran behind Xiao Hong.

After running for around four hours, they stopped in front of a concealed cave.

Overgrown weeds covered the entrance, and there was even a crooked tree. Without careful observation, the entrance would be hard to notice.

They did not enter the cave immediately. Instead, they sent Xiao Hong to scour the cave to avoid wrecking the ambush that Bai Songling and Jun Yichen had set up.

Soon after Xiao Hong flew in, Big Mouth came back out with it.

Before, the Legendary Venomous Insect only had a big mouth. However, after eating a bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills, which Bai Songling had fed it, it had also changed considerably.

The most obvious change was that its mouth had shrunk. It had a delicate forehead, a white body, and light, shimmering wings. It had a rather impressive aura, but its other abilities remained to be seen.

The two Legendary Venomous Insects circled in front of Luo Tian, then landed on either shoulder.

"Eldest Miss, it's safe to enter now." Luo Tian turned around to face Ye Jiuge.

After that, Ye Jiuge followed Luo Tian into the cave.

There was a narrow passageway. They rounded a corner, and the scenery changed completely.

The cave's interior was large, and there were even a few holes in the walls. Where they led, no one knew.

Big Mouth flew toward one of the holes, and Bai Songling's head popped out. He greeted Ye Jiuge, "Eldest Miss, you're here!"

Bai Songling peeked out from another hole, peering at Ye Jiuge reservedly.

"How are your preparations?" Ye Jiuge looked around and couldn't feel anything out of place.

"Almost done. I promise the Bloodthirsty Sect Sorcerer will not leave this place alive," Bai Songling boasted.

"With me around, the Bloodthirsty Sect Sorcerer will definitely disintegrate," Jun Yichen added quickly.

"That confident?" Ye Jiuge channeled her Spiritual Eye and scrutinized her surroundings. She got chills.

At the bottom of the cave's seemingly harmless grey walls were countless dense, black spots.

This had to be Jun Yichen's handiwork. After regaining his full strength, not only could he control parasites, but he could even summon poisonous insects and snakes.

Besides the countless poisonous insects and snakes lying in waiting, Bai Songling had also laid several traps.

If the Sorcerer came after them to this place, he would undoubtedly die an instant death.

"Eldest Miss, my area is clean. Come join me while we wait!" Bai Songling waved to Ye Jiuge.

"No need. I'll wait in ambush outside!" As a reserved and genteel lady, Ye Jiuge did not want to be in the company of the elongated species for a long time in such a small space.

1"Alright!" Bai Songling was a little disappointed that his offer wasn't taken up.

Jun Yichen did not have any objections. It made no difference to him whether he or Luo Tian accompanied Ye Jiuge outside.

After Ye Jiuge and Luo Tian exited the cave, they restored the original look of the weeds and trees before finding a hiding spot to wait for the Sorcerers.

Night came quickly. In the eerie darkness, the mountain wind was biting cold.

Ye Jiuge crouched in a huge banyan tree, hidden from view by its branches and peering out into the distance.

Ye Yu and Bai Songling had picked out this cave together. There should not be any problems.

However, she would only feel relief once the Sorcerer arrived.

Soon, a few shadows appeared in the darkness of the forest at the foot of the mountain. They were making their way up the mountain in haste.

Ye Jiuge was momentarily startled. The time had come.

Ouyang Sen's escape from Medicine Refinery City had been meticulously planned. He had secretly hired four mid-level Spiritual Practitioners to protect him while he escaped, promising them top-grade Medicinal Pills, which he had produced, and a large sum of money.

The Spiritual Practitioners were not local, and they had already become impatient about staying in Medicine Refinery City for so long. Lured by Ouyang Sen's promise of a large reward, they had accepted the job without hesitation.

Ye Yu had disguised himself, pretending to be a Wind Elemental Spiritual Practitioner named Feng Qingyang. He was also part of the group hired to guard Ouyang Sen.

Seeing that the cave wasn't far away, he faked tiredness and turned to Ouyang Sen. "Alchemist Ouyang, it's getting late. Shall we find a place to rest?"

"We're still near the city. We may still be within the area where the Sorcerers hunt. For safety, we should try and increase our distance from Medicine Refinery City!" Xia Chenfeng, a Spiritual Practitioner, commented gravely.

The other two Spiritual Practitioners quickly agreed with Xia Chenfeng.

Although they were exhausted, just thinking about the Sorcerers made them think twice about stopping to rest.

"The Sorcerers may be frightening, but the forest is also dangerous at night. We have been running for a few hours, and we are drained. Should we encounter any powerful beasts, we won't be able to deal with them," Ye Yu reasoned.

The Spiritual Practitioners were swayed just by hearing Ye Yu's words. They looked together toward their employer, Ouyang Sen.

Ouyang Sen pretended to hesitate, then turned toward Ye Yu. "Feng Qingyang, you are the quickest with your wind element. Why don't you scout the area and find a resting spot for us?"

"Yes, sir." Ye Yu nodded and ran like the wind up the mountain.

After leaving their sight, he swiftly made his way toward the cave.

“Over here, Ye Yu!” Ye Jiuge waved at Ye Yu from her spot up the banyan tree.

With a few jumps, Ye Yu landed next to Ye Jiuge. “Are Bai Songling and the rest ready with their preparations? I will bring Ouyang Sen here soon.”

“All ready. Did the disguised Sorcerer come?” Ye Jiuge asked.

“I’m not sure. But the three Spiritual Practitioners hired by Ouyang Sen have arrived, and I suspect that the disguised Sorcerer is hiding among them,” Ye Yu replied darkly.

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“Who are these Spiritual Practitioners whom Ouyang Sen hired? Do you have someone in mind?” Ye Jiuge asked.

If they could ascertain the Sorcerer’s identity, it would be easier to strike.

“Ouyang Sen hired three Spiritual Practitioners. The first is Hu Lin, a Mid-level Water Elemental Spiritual Practitioner. He’s very talkative and easily swayed when a decision must be made.

“The second is Jiang Shengjie, a Mid-level Wood Elemental Spiritual Practitioner. He looks honest and doesn’t talk much.

“The last is Xia Chenfeng, a High-level Earth Elemental Spiritual Practitioner. Ever since we set off, he has been constantly asking to change routes. I think he might have realized that something is amiss.

Among the three, Xia Chenfeng is the most suspicious, but we have no proof at this point.”

While following Ouyang Sen, he had been secretly observing the Spiritual Practitioners.

On the surface, the Spiritual Practitioners seemed normal enough. But his gut told him otherwise.

“We will know when they are captured,” Ye Jiuge declared.

If given enough time to observe the group, she was confident about drawing the Sorcerer out.

“Alright. I will lead them here now.” Ye Yu jumped down the tree and quickly returned to Ouyang Sen.

“How was it? Did you manage to find a place?” Ouyang Sen pretended to be tired.

In fact, he was exhausted.

Alchemists were well respected in the Canglan Continent by both Spiritual Practitioners and Sorcerers alike.

Usually, he was engrossed in Pill Production and rarely ventured out. The shock and fear he’d experienced this time had taken a toll on him. Furthermore, after running for so long, he was physically and mentally drained.

“I found a concealed cave ahead that’s suitable for the night,” Ye Yu replied calmly.

Without waiting for the rest to react, Ouyang Sen gave the green light immediately: “Let’s check it out!”

Ye Yu led the group to the cave entrance and was about to enter when Xia Chenfeng stopped in his tracks. He turned to Ye Yu suspiciously. “Brother Feng, have you investigated the cave?”

“I went in for a while. There’s nothing suspicious.” Ye Yu shook his head and continued, “Even if a beast were inside, with five Spiritual Practitioners, we should certainly be able to defeat it.”

“Brother Feng’s right. If we can’t deal with one beast, then we shouldn’t even think about getting through this forest.” Ouyang Sen showed his unhappiness.

He had spent a large sum of money to hire the guards, but they kept hesitating out of fear for their lives. No employer would be happy with their overcautious performance.

“I only feel like we should be more prudent. If Brother Feng insists, then pretend like I never said anything.” Xia Chenfeng’s face clammed up.

“Let’s head in!” Ye Yu lighted a torch and led the way in.

Ouyang Sen and the rest followed him.

Xia Chenfeng scanned the cave carefully.

Although the interior was empty, there were quite a few holes at the top. Xia Chenfeng immediately voiced his unhappiness. "Brother Feng, do you know where these mouths lead?"

"They are merely empty caves. If Brother Xia is afraid, you can seal them up." Ye Yu swept an area clean and gestured for Ouyang Sen to take a seat.

Ouyang Sen sat right by Ye Yu, then looked up at Xia Chenfeng. "Xia Chenfeng, aren't you an Earth Elemental Spiritual Practitioner? Sealing a few cave mouths shouldn't be that difficult for you!"

Hu Lin and Jiang Shengjie took a seat as well. Both looked reluctant to leave.

Xia Chenfeng was left with no choice. He could only channel his Earth Spiritual Power to form three pale-yellow walls to seal the cave mouths.

He felt a little tired after sealing the holes but did not want to sit with the rest. Finding a quiet corner, he sat and took out some rations and water and started to eat.

Hu Lin offered his water container with enthusiasm, "Alchemist Ouyang, here, have some water."

"No, thank you. I have my own," Ouyang Sen retrieved his water container from his waist, politely rejecting Hu Lin.

Before setting off, he had been warned by Ye Yu that the disguised Sorcerer might conceal himself as one of the three Spiritual Practitioners. He was also told not to have too much contact with them or consume anything offered to him.

Hu Lin's expression did not change after being rejected. He still maintained his smile and tried to continue conversing with Ouyang Sen. "Alchemist Ouyang, have you thought of where you'll go after leaving Medicine Refinery City?"

"After being away for so long, it's time I returned home," Ouyang Sen said without faltering.

He'd only requested that the Spiritual Practitioners protect him as far as the Capital. From there, he would handle the rest of the journey himself.

"Sigh! You've been down on your luck, Alchemist Ouyang. You experienced such a horrible

incident after coming all the way here to participate in the tournament. If the Sorcerers had not wreaked havoc, it would have been easy for you to win,” Hu Lin flattered.

“Sigh, I was lucky to escape with my life intact. I won’t dare dream about the tournament now,” Ouyang Sen laughed bitterly.

“Don’t be afraid, Alchemist Ouyang. You are perfectly safe with us protecting you.” Hu Lin slapped a hand across his frail-looking chest.

He was small in stature—a weak Water Elemental Spiritual Practitioner who had not been doing well in his career.

When Ouyang Sen had issued his request, Hu Lin had jumped at the chance to make his acquaintance with a Level Two Alchemist. He’d wanted to rely on Ouyang Sen to look after him.

Xia Chenfeng held his water container in his hand and scoffed. His eyes revealed an open disdain for Hu Lin.

“Xia! I have been tolerating you for a very long time now. Alchemist Ouyang hired you as a guard, not to be a Master. What kind of attitude is this? Brother Feng has found us such a good place to rest, yet you are griping at everything. What exactly did you expect?” Hu Lin hollered at Xia Chenfeng in dissatisfaction.

“Feng did not even protest, so who are you to talk?” Xia Chenfeng put down his water container and laughed coldly.

“You!” Hu Lin trembled in anger. But Xia Chenfeng’s ability was higher. If they fought, he would be on the losing end.[Read more chapter on vip novel. com](#)

Hu Lin looked at Ye Yu for help, but Ye Yu kept his eyes closed. It was apparent that he was going to stay out of the matter.

“Coward!” Hu Lin screamed at Ye Yu in his heart. He tried pulling Jiang Shengjie into the situation. “Don’t be so taciturn, Brother Jiang. Otherwise, you won’t even know when someone is trying to pick a fight with you.”

Jiang Shengjie only replied to him with a small smile and continued gathering firewood.

Soon, he had pieced together the foundation of a fire pit.

Deep in the mountains, the nights were chilly and wet. The later it got, the colder it became. With a fire pit, they could not only keep warm but could also scare away wild beasts. So, everyone was

happy to see him building a fire pit.

Seeing that no one could be bothered with him, Hu Lin felt that it was pointless to continue and kept his mouth shut.

Although Ye Yu had closed his eyes, he was listening in on their conversation on high alert.

He had initially suspected that Xia Chenfeng was the Sorcerer.

But, with Hu Lin sowing discord like that, he felt a little unsure about his guess.

Soon, Jiang Shengjie finished building the fire pit.

He took out flintstones from his bag, hit the stones together, and successfully started the fire.

The moment the warm fire pit was lit, a pungent stench and smoke drifted to their noses and the surrounding area.

Ye Yu's eyes shot open, but he found that his body had lost its strength, and he was unable to move.

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Ye Yu's body went numb, and his head felt dizzy and heavy. Then, he felt a stab of pain on his arm.

Black Dictator, who was hiding underneath his sleeve, had bitten through his skin. It began drawing the poison from his body.

The rest of them weren't so lucky.

Hu Lin rolled his eyes and fell to the ground with a plop. Xia Chenfeng was both shocked and angry, but he could not resist. Ouyang Sen fared slightly better. He had enough energy to raise a finger at Jiang Shengjie, who was squatting beside the bonfire and yelled, "Who are you, and why have you plotted against us?"

"Hehe, who do you think I am?" Jiang Shengjie's initially honest and straightforward face had warped and become demonic under the firelight.

"You are a Sorcerer! There is neither rancor nor hatred between us, so why are you tracking me?" Ouyang Sen shouted in fear.

"Blame yourself for coming to Medicine Refinery City. In the next life, let's hope that you reincarnate as an ordinary person!" Jiang Shengjie laughed nastily. A green wood elemental blade appeared in his hands, and he was about to cut down Ouyang Sen.

Having recovered his Spiritual Power, Ye Yu pulled Ouyang Sen to one side to avoid Jiang Shengjie's attack.

"Oh?" When Jiang Shengjie's blade missed, he looked in surprise at Ye Yu. He said, "Good fellow, you can still move after being afflicted by my Muscle-paralysis Sleeping Powder. Is this because of some treasure that you possess?"

Having said so, the green Spiritual Power in his body rose dramatically. His cultivation increased from the Intermediate level to the Advanced.

Then, using the blade in his hands as a pike, he thrust it at Ye Yu in a swift and fierce attack. Although Black Dictator had mostly cured the poison in Ye Yu's body, he was still unable to move freely. Furthermore, he was still holding on to Ouyang Sen, who was a burden.

Seeing that Jiang Shengjie's long blade was about to reach his head, Ye Yu hurriedly cried out, "What are you waiting for?"

Immediately, many black hornets burst out of the walls and rushed buzzing at Jiang Shengjie.

Jiang Shengjie's face changed. The green light on his body immediately turned into an impenetrable armor that stopped the hornets' attack.

He brandished his long blade, and his attack became even more ferocious. Immediately, almost half of the hornets were destroyed.

Bai Songling's delighted voice rang from behind the earth wall, "Little Mute, didn't I tell you that your little insects wouldn't be effective? Let me show you my power."

As soon as he had spoken, countless celadon-colored vines rose up from the earth where Jiang Shengjie was standing. They immediately twisted around his legs tightly.

“Hmph!” Unwilling to be outdone, poisonous snakes, under Jun Yichen’s control, began spewing venom at Jiang Shengjie. Soon, his armor had corroded, and a large hole appeared.

Ye Yu could finally take a breather. After catching his breath, he began to hide inside Jiang Shengjie’s shadow and was about to use Puppet Strike to capture him.

Facing a multitude of assaults, Jiang Shengjie was shocked. Immediately, he realized that he had fallen into a trap, and he had no intention of continuing to fight vigorously.

Making finger gestures as he chanted a spell, the armor on his body released a stinking black gas that diffused the cave.

One by one, the venomous snakes and hornets crashed to the ground as they were exposed to the black gas.

Immediately, Bai Songling held his breath and retreated. At the same time, he fished out some Antidote Pills.

Meanwhile, Ye Yu rushed forward to save the unconscious Ouyang Sen and Hu Lin. Seeing this, Bai Songling cursed inwardly. He turned to save Xia Chenfeng, who nearest to him.

Their Poisonous Earthworm Kings could help them cure their poisons, but the three of them would die immediately if they were to be inflicted with the poison.

Just then, Bai Songling’s Poisonous Earthworm King suddenly flapped its wings and flew out of his sleeve.

Its small and exquisite mouth rapidly expanded and swallowed all the poisonous smoke.

Seeing this, Jiang Shengjie became even more apprehensive, and he quickened his pace as he rushed toward the cave’s exit.

He passed through the narrow passageway and was just about to leave the cave when, suddenly, a violet lightning snake rushed at him from the exit.

The lightning snake’s ferociousness could only have come from a top-grade Spiritual Weapon.

In the narrow passageway, Jiang Shengjie had no way to avoid it. He could only concentrate all

his Spiritual Energy and Black Magic in his arms to defend himself.

Bang! The violet lightning snake struck Jiang Shengjie's arms, causing the sputtering of many black and green Black Magic energies.

Jiang Shengjie felt as though a charging Demonic Bull had hit him. His arms hurt as though they were broken, and his five viscera and six bowels were gravely injured. His mouth opened, and he spurted out blood. Then, his body was sent flying back into the cave.

Ye Yu and Bai Songling had already saved Ouyang Sen and the others and placed them in the passageway of the cave. Immediately, their hands were free to deal with Jiang Shengjie.

After a few rounds of their attacks, Jiang Shengjie was finally knocked onto the ground.

"You d*mned brat, let me see how capable your disguise is." Bai Songling pulled Jiang Shengjie's face roughly as he tried to find traces of his disguise.

However, even after Jiang Shengjie's face had turned red from his grip, Bai Songling could not find anything.

Wailing miserably, Jiang Shengjie begged for mercy repeatedly, "My chivalrous heroes, please let me go. I should not have tried to steal Alchemist Ouyang's pills and silver taels."

"Is that so? I thought that you wanted to peel off his skin, pull out his sinews, and dig out his Spiritual Root as a gift to your Patriarch?" Sneering, Ye Jiuge came up to Jiang Shengjie.

"I don't know what you are saying. I just wanted to steal some of your belongings after knocking you out." Jiang Shengjie had resumed his previously honest and straightforward appearance.

"Alright, you don't have to hide it anymore. We all know that you are from the Bloodthirsty Sect and that you specialize in deception. How many of you are here, and who are they? And, why has Bloodthirsty Patriarch sent you to Medicine Refinery City? If you confess truthfully, I will make sure that you die painlessly," Bai Songling said viciously.

"I really don't know any Bloodthirsty Patriarch. I am just an ordinary Wood Elemental Spiritual Practitioner. I don't know any Sorcerers." Jiang Shengjie wept bitter tears like a useless coward.

If Jiang Shengjie had not released his Black Magic to survive, they would have thought that they had captured the wrong person.

"D*mned brat, how dare you refuse to admit it, even as death is near. Since you say that you are not a Sorcerer, what is the black gas that you released earlier? Don't tell me that it was your stinky

fart,” Bai Songling scoffed.

“Brother Bai, why bother wasting your breath? Let’s break his limbs first and interrogate him later.” Luo Tian’s eyes were watching Jiang Shengjie as though he was already a dead man.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch had exterminated the Blood-clad Miao people, and they hated the Bloodthirsty Sect to the bone.

Luo Tian spoke no more as he raised his leg to crush all of Jiang Shengjie’s limbs.

Jiang Shengjie lay on the ground, and his limbs were twisted and at an awkward angle. However, although his brow was beaded with sweat from the pain, he would not admit that he was a Sorcerer.

Ye Yu frowned. He had initially thought that they would be able to prove Ye Jiuge’s innocence once they captured the Sorcerer. He had not expected Jiang Shengjie to be so staunch and unyielding.

“Should we hand him over to Li Zijun? They have a magical weapon that can test for Black Magic. Perhaps, they will have a way to deal with him.” Bai Songling could not think of another solution.

“It’s no use. Jiang Shengjie was staying in an inn near the Medicine Refinery Complex. The soldiers went there for interrogations multiple times, but they did not discover that he was a Sorcerer.” Ye Yu had not been able to find any anomalies connected with Jiang Shengjie throughout the journey, so he did not believe that Li Zijun would be able to find anything either.

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“Even if they cannot detect his Black Magic, Ouyang Sen and the others’ testimony proves that he

is a Sorcerer,” Bai Songling said, unwilling to accept it. “Even if they cannot detect his Black Magic, Ouyang Sen and the others’ testimony proves that he is a Sorcerer,” Bai Songling said, unwilling to accept it.

“If he insists that he was blinded by greed and attempted to rob us, the most that Li Zijun can do is to lock him up. That is not our objective.” Ye Yu shook his head.

Their objective was to prove the Eldest Miss’s innocence.

It would be useless if they could not prove that Jiang Shengjie was a murderous Sorcerer.

“If we can’t prove anything, then what can we do?” Bai Songling asked, discouraged.

Ye Yu looked toward Ye Jiuge.

She had been quiet this whole time. She had already opened her Spiritual Eye and was secretly examining Jiang Shengjie’s body.

On the surface, he looked like an ordinary Spiritual Practitioner. There was no hint of Black Magic about him.

However, earlier, she had found something strange.

Jiang Shengjie had a palm-sized brown wound on his lower back. It looked like an old injury.

However, oddly, whenever his Spiritual Power traveled through the wound, its speed increased.

Immediately, a theory formed in Ye Jiuge’s mind. She raised her head and said to Ye Yu and the others, “Turn him over and pin him down.”

Ye Yu was surprised but quickly recovered. He turned Jiang Shengjie over and tightly held onto the top half of his body.

Bai Songling and Luo Tian gripped his lower half.

Jiang Shengjie seemed to have realized something, and he bawled desperately, “I am a Spiritual Practitioner, and you have no right to torture me! I will go to the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance and report you for abusing a prisoner!”

“Pft. You b*stard, you tried to kill me, and yet you want to report me for abusing you? So what if I abuse you?” Bai Songling sneered.

Ye Jiuge ignored Jiang Shengjie's screams.

She took out the Lightning Fire Needle, infused it with Spiritual Power, and stabbed it into the wound on Jiang Shengjie's back.

Before the tip of the needle could even touch Jiang Shengjie, black gas shot out of his body again. His broken limbs were instantly healed.

Sparing no effort, he began to struggle. Immediately, he shook off Ye Yu and Bai Songling.

Seeing this, Luo Tian securely gripped Jiang Shengjie's thighs.

The Blood-clad Miao people cultivated their bodies in addition to practicing parasite witchcraft.

Luo Tian's Body Cultivation Technique was considered to be the best or second-best in their clan. Now, he used all his might to hold down Jiang Shengjie. Fortunately, he prevented Jiang Shengjie from struggling free.

Ye Yu and Bai Songling immediately got up and held Jiang Shengjie firmly again.

Jiang Shengjie was struggling desperately like a cornered beast. A large amount of black gas escaped from his body, but Bai Songling's big-mouthed Parasite swallowed it.

Summoning his Spiritual Power, Bai Songling created a green-colored net made of vines to hold Jiang Shengjie, but it was no use.

Finally, Ye Jiuge used her Lightning Spiritual Power to create a blade and struck Jiang Shengjie's neck.

Jiang Shengjie's body twitched, and his hair charred. At last, he fell unconscious.

"F*ck! This fellow was playing dumb!" Bai Songling wiped away his sweat.

Since Jiang Shengjie was already crippled, Bai Songling had not expected his counterattack to be so ferocious.

If Luo Tian had not pinned him down, he would have escaped.

"Why did this guy suddenly go crazy? Eldest Miss, did you find something?" Ye Yu raised his head and looked at Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge was squatting beside Jiang Shengjie. She tore open the clothes covering his back and

pointed at the old palm-sized wound. "There's something inside here. If I am right, it should be an advanced magical weapon that can hide his Black Magic."

"Something is indeed inside." As Bai Songling forcefully pressed the wound on Jiang Shengjie's back, he noticed something.

It was hard, and roughly the size of a fist.

"Even if he has a magical weapon that can hide his Black Magic, he shouldn't be able to disguise himself so perfectly!" Ye Yu was still perplexed.

Although he was also an expert in disguises, when one put on the skin of another human face, there still ought to be marks.

However, there were no such marks on Jiang Shengjie.

"I remember that Spiritual Practitioners with a Water Wood Spiritual Root can practice a Method called the 'Tissue Regeneration Technique.' I think that he must have used this technique to merge his skin and victim's. Look, apart from the wound on his back, the color of his skin is the same tone everywhere. That is abnormal."

Boldly, Ye Jiuge tore Jiang Shengjie's upper garments into pieces.

Ye Yu, Bai Songling, and the rest were speechless.

Luo Tian was not affected. The women of the Miao clan were much bolder than Ye Jiuge. Removing a man's clothes was nothing surprising for him.

He scrutinized Jiang Shengjie's exposed skin and realized that his skin color was indeed uniform, as though it had been dyed.

Although Spiritual Practitioners did not fear heat or cold, their exposed skin was usually a different tone compared to other areas.

This was especially true for men. Hence, this was indeed a strange sight.

"I have heard of the Tissue Regeneration Technique. However, this method can only grow new tissue and is mainly used by women to maintain their looks. I did not expect this fellow to be able to combine it with his disguise."

Bai Songling was impressed by Jiang Shengjie's creativity.

"No matter what, we have finally captured this Sorcerer. Once we deliver him to Li Zijun, we will be able to prove the Eldest Miss's innocence." Ye Yu sighed with relief because their efforts did not go to waste.

"You are right." As Bai Songling spoke, he reached out to touch Jiang Shengjie's skin.

"What are you doing?" Jun Yichen, who had not spoken at all, narrowed his eyes. He looked curiously at Bai Songling, who was reaching for the lower half of Jiang Shengjie's body.

"I am looking for the place where he merged their skins. No matter how magical this Tissue Regeneration Technique is, it cannot create something from nothing," Bai Songling said confidently.

As a Wood Elemental Spiritual Practitioner, he was inquisitive about the method.

Ye Jiuge was engrossed in watching Bai Songling inspect Jiang Shengjie. With good intentions, she advised, "Why don't you remove his pants and take a look? I have a feeling that he must have used the Tissue Regeneration Technique someplace that nobody would want to see."

Bai Songling's face immediately stiffened. It was humiliating for him to touch the crotch of another man's trousers.

"Aren't you a coroner? Just pretend that you're examining a corpse." Ye Jiuge grinned as she urged him.

Bai Songling's face twitched. He gritted his teeth and said, "Fine. I will do it like I am examining a corpse. But you are not allowed to watch."

"Eldest Miss, you must be tired. Why don't you go and have a rest?" Ye Yu asked suggestively.

In his heart, Ye Jiuge was like a fairy. Such a vulgar scene should not taint her eyes.

"Alright!" Ye Jiuge turned regrettably to go. She thought to herself: These guys are so conservative. Before, when I was practicing medicine, I touched more penises than they've ever seen.

Bai Songling made up his mind and removed Jiang Shengjie's pants. Sure enough, he found the merging point at the man's private parts.

"No wonder we were unable to find it. This guy sure knew how to choose the location of his merging point." As he spoke with disdain, Bai Songling also retrieved a small Magical Bottomless Bag from inside the crotch of Jiang Shengjie's pants.

It was the size of a palm and a dark red color. It didn't look like anything out of the ordinary, but it was no doubt a priceless Magical Bottomless Bag.

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“Bloodthirsty Patriarch must have spent a lot of money to give him a Magical Bottomless Bag,” Luo Tian said with envy, jealousy, and a hint of hatred.

Even during the golden age of the Blood-clad Miao people, they had been unable to obtain such things.

Not because they lacked money, but because they had no way of buying them. Magical Bottomless Bags could only be found in larger Spiritual Cities.

“Liu Yunfei has a Magical Bottomless Bag too,” Ye Yu added.

He had been tracking Liu Yunfei for a long time, and he had seen her use it frequently.

“This Bloodthirsty Patriarch is not simple,” Ye Jiuge said solemnly.

To be able to give his subordinates Magical Bottomless Bags, apart from being extremely wealthy, he must have some connections.

“Who cares if he is simple or not? As long as he is on the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance’s Kill List, he will end up dead, sooner or later.” As Bai Songling spoke, he forcefully removed Jiang Shengjie’s mark from the Magical Bottomless Bag and poured out its contents.

Human skin!

Pile after pile of human hides.

The skins emitted a faint blood stench. The hollow eyes seemed to be recounting the pain and suffering they'd experienced before their deaths.

"D*mn this Bloodthirsty Sect." Bai Songling could not help but kick Jiang Shengjie's leg again.

"Alright, alright. You should be satisfied now. Don't kill him, or all our efforts will go to waste." Ye Yu immediately stopped Bai Songling.

"Indeed. With these things, we will be able to bring Jiang Shengjie to justice. The Eldest Miss will also be acquitted of the crimes." Luo Tian nodded.

Bai Songling's color improved slightly. Extending the Magical Bottomless Bag toward Ye Jiuge, he said, "Eldest Miss, although this Magical Bottomless Bag is not exactly spacious, it is still quite useful."

"You can keep it. I don't need it." Ye Jiuge shook her head resolutely.

Whenever she thought of how the bag had been retrieved from inside the crotch of Jiang Shengjie's pants, she felt disgusted.

"Liu Yunfei has another one." Ye Yu agreed that it wasn't appropriate for Ye Jiuge to use Jiang Shengjie's bag. It would be more suitable to snatch Liu Yunfei's for Ye Jiuge.

"Sure. Then, I will keep it for now. We'll discuss how we should handle this Magical Bottomless Bag after we have returned home." Bai Songling stowed the Magical Bottomless Bag.

"Make sure that Ouyang Sen and the rest are safe first," Ye Jiuge said.

They were essential eyewitnesses.

Ye Jiuge thought: I am still a fugitive, and it is unsuitable for me to show myself. Ouyang Sen and the rest can handle the matter of proving my innocence.

Ye Yu placed Ouyang Sen, Xia Chenfeng, and Hu Lin on the ground then woke them up using Antidote Pills.

"Don't kill me! Don't kill me!" Hu Lin screamed immediately after opening his eyes.

"Brother Hu, please, calm down. We have already captured the Sorcerer." Ye Yu hurriedly

restrained him.

“What Sorcerer? Are you saying that Jiang Shengjie is a Sorcerer?” Hu Lin was confused.

He had been the first to fall unconscious, so he had not seen Jiang Shengjie unmasked.

“That’s right!” Just as Ye Yu finished speaking, Ouyang Sen and Xia Chenfeng woke up.

“The Sorcerer has been captured?” Ouyang Sen asked Ye Yu excitedly.

“Yes.” Ye Yu nodded.

“Exactly what is happening?” Xia Chenfeng frowned. He felt that Ouyang Sen and the man with the last name ‘Feng’ were keeping something secret from him.

“Brother Xia, is this how you treat the person who has just saved your life?” Although his suspicions of Xia Chenfeng had been cleared, Ye Yu did not have a favorable impression of him.

“Hmph, the person who saved my life?” Xia Chenfeng’s eyes swept past Bai Songling and the rest. He sneered, “I think it’s more like the person who made monkeys out of us.”

Clearly, he’d realized that Ye Yu was using Ouyang Sen to fish out the Sorcerer.

“These Sorcerers have gravely breached societal norms. Everyone has the right to kill them. Brother Xia, please don’t fuss over minor matters. Once we’ve sent this Sorcerer to Pharmacist Dongfang, you’ll be credited as well,” Ye Jiuge said to help resolve the dispute.

“You will make sure to credit us?” Taking in Xia Chenfeng’s words, Hu Lin was ready to make a scene. However, hearing Ye Jiuge, his expression changed immediately.

“Of course. Without everyone’s help, how could we possibly capture such a vicious ruffian?” Ye Jiuge spoke with a devotion to righteousness that inspired reverence—as though she really meant it.

Her main objective was to acquit herself, and there was no harm giving credit to Xia Chenfeng and the rest.

Furthermore, Liu Yunfei and Su Junqing, the two bosses, had yet to be caught. It would be a much more significant contribution to capture them.

“Hmph!” Xia Chenfeng harrumphed grumpily, but he did not continue to cause a fuss.

"This fellow killed my senior! I want him to taste the feeling of a painful life." Ouyang Sen stared viciously at the unconscious Jiang Shengjie. He pounced on Jiang Shengjie and was about to give him a few punches to vent his anger.

"Brother Ouyang, please, calm down." Ye Yu hurriedly rushed forward to stop him.

However, Ouyang Sen's fists had already landed on Jiang Shengjie.

Ouyang Sen immediately realized that something was wrong as he struck Jiang Shengjie. The icy sensation was like a dead person.

Ouyang Sen reached out to check Jiang Shengjie's breath. Immediately, he cried, "How did he die?"

"What?" Bai Song hurriedly pushed Ouyang Sen away and squatted down to check Jiang Shengjie's pulse. He found that Jiang Shengjie was indeed dead.

"It wasn't me. I only punched him once, and I did not even use much force." Ouyang Sen shook his head repeatedly.

"He committed suicide." With a single gaze, Ye Jiuge was able to discern that Jiang Shengjie had severed his meridians.

Ye Jiuge thought to herself: I miscalculated in thinking that everything would be alright since he'd fallen unconscious. I did not expect him to commit suicide in this way. This will be troublesome.

"Even if he is dead, he is still a Sorcerer. We can still drag him to the Medicine Refinery City." Bai Songling rose and said with a darkened expression. "Let's not waste any time. We will head back now!"

It was already very late at night. If they rushed back in the dark, they should be able to reach back to the Medicine Refinery City at dawn.

"Go, go, go! Let's go now!" Hu Lin displayed a high fighting spirit. He would be silly not to want to be credited with this free meritorious service.

Xia Chenfeng and Ouyang Sen agreed as well. A long night would be fraught with dreams, and they nodded one after the other.

Ye Jiuge and the rest lifted Jiang Shengjie's corpse and hurriedly headed toward the Medicine Refinery City.

On the journey, Jun Yichen ordered the venomous snakes and hornets to open up a path. Without the harassment of demonic beasts, they successfully reached the Medicine Refinery City.

The sky was already bright.

The gates of the Medicine Refinery City were open, and the soldiers were inspecting the people entering and exiting the city.

Seeing that Ye Jiuge and the rest were covered in dust and carrying a black sack behind them, the soldiers on duty were immediately wary.

“Stay right there. What do you have inside the sack?” One of the soldiers raised his pike and aimed it at Bai Songling, who was standing in front.

“It contains a Sorcerer’s corpse,” Bai Songling said proudly.

“What?” The soldiers on duty thought that they had misheard him.

“We are the guards of the Rank Two Alchemist, Ouyang Sen. A Sorcerer attacked Alchemist Ouyang outside the city. After doing everything we could to resist him, we finally killed him.”

Although Bai Songling’s voice was not loud, it caused a ruckus among the soldiers on duty. The captain walked out and carefully examined Bai Songling, Ouyang Sen, and the rest. Cautiously, he said, “Alchemist Ouyang, the matter regarding Sorcerers is not of the everyday sort, and I have no authority to make decisions. Please wait for a moment while I consult my superiors.”

Having said so, the captain instructed the soldiers to protect Ouyang Sen and the others. He, on the other hand, rushed to the Medicine Refinery Complex.

“Brother Bai, what are you doing? What if something goes wrong?” Ye Yu disagreed in a low voice.

“You know as well I that the Eldest Miss is now famous. If we don’t cause a large scene, how are we going to acquit her?” Bai Songling had given this a lot of thought.

“Alright!” Hearing that it was for the Eldest Miss’s sake, Ye Yu said no more.

Not long after he left, the captain returned hurriedly with a group of people.

They were headed by a person wearing a purple gold crown. He wore a purple brocade robe embroidered with the image of a golden dragon with claws. It was Dongfang Jianming, and he had an arrogant demeanor.

“Why is it this guy?” Bai Songling groaned inwardly.

When he’d left the city the night before, he’d had a discussion with Wan Ziyang. If they caught the disguised Sorcerer, he was to put on a show at the city gates, and Wan Ziyang would provide support.

However, he had not expected the Crown Prince to arrive instead of Wan Ziyang.

Furthermore, Su Junqing was following behind him.

Although they had disguised themselves, it would be troublesome if Su Junqing were to see through their disguises.

Thinking of this, Bai Songling hid behind Ouyang Sen.

“Are you the ones who caught the Sorcerer?” The Crown Prince sized up Ouyang Sen and the others.

Before Ouyang Sen could say anything, Hu Lin had stepped forward and said loudly, “That’s right. It was us.”

At the city gates, he’d wanted to hold out the black sack containing Jiang Shengjie’s corpse to display his heroic qualities.

However, nobody had agreed to this. Neither Ouyang Sen nor Xia Chenfeng were on his side, and he’d had to drop the subject.

Finally, he’d found his opportunity to be in the limelight.

“Who are you?” The Crown Prince glanced at him. Hu Lin was short and did not even reach his chest. The Crown Prince did not believe that such a weak person could capture the Sorcerer.

"I am Hu Lin, Alchemist Ouyang's guard!" Hu Lin replied loudly.

"Alchemist Ouyang, didn't we ask you to stay in the Medicine Refinery Complex and wait for our news? Why did you secretly leave the city?" the Crown Prince asked aggressively.

"I am not a prisoner, and I have the right to leave the city whenever I wish. I don't think that it's any of your business!" Ouyang Sen replied with a hostile expression.

He was a revered noble in his kingdom, and he was not concerned about the Crown Prince at all.

Just as the Crown Prince was about to flip out, Su Junqing held him back.

Intentionally or otherwise, Su Junqing's eyes swept past the black sack that Bai Songling and the others were carrying.

Although he put on a calm expression, he was flabbergasted.

The previous night, Brother Jiang had told him that he would get rid of Ouyang Sen and the rest outside the city. He had also requested that Liu Yunfei coordinate with him.

However, shortly after Brother Jiang had left, Liu Yunfei had insisted on going somewhere else to deal with a personal matter first.

Then, Su Junqing had experienced a bad feeling. Indeed, something bad had happened.

Brother Jiang was dead, and Liu Yunfei had yet to return. This turn of events was not encouraging.

He had to think of a way to get rid of this group of people.

Standing at the back of the group, Ye Jiuge secretly observed Su Junqing's expression. Seeing the bewilderment and frenzy in his eyes, she immediately worried that he would make trouble out of nothing.

Just as she expected, Su Junqing suddenly said to Ouyang Sen, "Was Ye Jiuge the Sorcerer whom you killed?"

Ye Jiuge wanted badly to give Su Junqing two slaps for pronouncing her dead in such a manner.

Upon hearing this, Luo Tian, Ye Yu, Bai Songling, and Jun Yichen were furious as well. Their murderous intent permeated everything, and they were about to turn hostile.

Ye Jiuge hurriedly reached out to restrain Luo Tian and Ye Yu. Then, she spoke up in reply to Su

Junqing, "It was a male Sorcerer, not Ye Jiuge. He was an expert in disguise."

Having said so, she held onto Bai Songling and signaled with her eyes for him to think of the big picture.

Su Junqing glanced at Ye Jiuge and the rest with doubt in his eyes. Disguised as an ordinary teenager, Ye Jiuge pretended to be timid and avoided Su Junqing's gaze.

With a cold expression, Ye Yu poked Ouyang Sen in the back.

Ouyang Sen understood his meaning immediately. He took a step forward and said, "Your Highness, I am sorry, but I am rushing to find Great Master Dongfang and show him the Sorcerer's corpse. Please, excuse me."

"Wait." Su Junqing spoke up and stopped Ouyang Sen. Then, he said righteously to the Crown Prince, "Your Highness, the Medicine Refinery City has offered a bounty of a thousand gold taels for capturing a Sorcerer. In the past few days, many have preyed on ordinary people and masqueraded them as Sorcerers to earn the reward. Hence, it is my opinion that you should check the corpse first."

"You are right." The Crown Prince nodded. Then, he said to Ouyang Sen, "Give me the Sorcerer's corpse. I wish to examine it personally."

"Your Highness, we are the ones who risked our lives to kill this Sorcerer. I don't think that it's appropriate for you to take this corpse away from us based merely on your words." With no other choice, Bai Songling could only lower his voice and pretend to speak angrily.

"That's right." Hu Lin hurriedly stood beside Ouyang Sen. He straightened his back and said, "Alchemist Ouyang is of the Second Rank. Would he really covet the reward? He simply could not bear to allow the Sorcerer to continue harming people, so he led us to capture this villain. It would be excessive for Your Highness to do this."

"Brother Hu is right." Bai Songling wanted to give Hu Lin a thumbs-up.

Previously, he had looked down on Hu Lin for his toady, pestering nature. However, he was an effective weapon for dealing with the Crown Prince.

The Crown Prince's expression darkened. Usually, he would not offend a Rank Two Alchemist in such a manner in the middle of the street.

However, ever since Su Junqing had used the Sorcerers to help him get rid of Ye Jiuge, he was tied to Su Junqing.

For his great cause, he must protect these Sorcerers.

Thinking of this, the Crown Prince raised his voice and said to Ouyang Sen, “Alchemist Ouyang, you are mistaken. I did not mean to target you. However, the matter regarding Sorcerers is of paramount importance, and we have no choice but to be cautious. If this is really a Sorcerer’s corpse, there shouldn’t be any issue for you to take it out to show us, right?”

“That’s right! These d*mned Sorcerers have made a mess out of our Medicine Refinery City! I would like to see if they have three heads or six arms!”

“Yes, these Sorcerers have been causing trouble for so long, and it’s the first time that anyone has been able to kill them. Please, let us take a good look!”

“That’s right. Open it up and let us see!”

The surrounding commoners were extremely curious. One by one, they raised their voices to demand that Ouyang Sen untie the sack.

Ye Jiuge frowned. If Jiang Shengjie’s corpse displayed traces of Black Magic, it would be fine for them to open the sack to show the Crown Prince.

However, she worried that she would by removing the magical weapon that hid Jiang Shengjie’s Black Magic from his body would damage it, so she had yet to dig it out.

At the moment, Jiang Shengjie’s corpse was like that of an ordinary Spiritual Practitioner. They could not prove that he was a Sorcerer. Hence, they absolutely could not take it out for everyone to see.

Seeing their hesitation, the Crown Prince immediately demanded imperiously, “What’s the matter? Why don’t you dare to bring the corpse out? Is this a trick?”

“Your Highness must be joking. Why would I use a Sorcerer as a trick?” Ouyang Sen replied furiously.

“Who knows what evil you are plotting?” the Crown Prince sneered.

As Ouyang Sen wrangled with the Crown Prince to stall for time, Bai Songling stared anxiously at the street in the distance.

He thought, It’s strange – why isn’t Wan Ziyang coming? Did something happen?

Ye Jiuge also found this strange. She thought to herself, Can it be that, last night, when he'd set a trap for Liu Yunfei, the girl had injured him instead?

Just as they seemed deadlocked, another group of people arrived from the direction of the Medicine Refinery Complex.

Ye Jiuge thought that it was Wan Ziyang. However, when she took a closer look, her heart sank.

She thought, Why does it have to be him?

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The person who had arrived was Ye Yuxuan.

He was wearing the long blue robe that Alchemists usually wore. Behind him stood Ye Shanshan, Captain Pan, and the rest of the guards who had escorted Ye Jiuge to the Medicine Refinery City.

When the Crown Prince saw Ye Yuxuan, his eyes lit up immediately. Hurriedly, he greeted, "Great Master Ye, you have arrived!"

"Yes!" Ye Yuxuan came to the Crown Prince's side. He glanced at Ouyang Sen and said, "Alchemist Ouyang, I heard that you killed a Sorcerer outside the city?"

"That is correct." Ouyang Sen nodded. He was very respectful.

As an Alchemist, he could look down on the Crown Prince, but he could not do the same to Ye Yuxuan, a Rank Five Spiritual Alchemist.

"Alchemist Ouyang, will you allow me to handle the Sorcerer's corpse? As you know, my daughter,

Ye Jiuge, was bewitched by the Sorcerers and willfully slaughtered the innocent. In practicing Black Magic, she made a huge mistake. I have been searching for her, and this Sorcerer's corpse may give me some clues." With a dignified demeanor, Ye Yuxuan spoke with a devotion to righteousness that inspired reverence.

However, in front of everyone, he had declared Ye Jiuge to be a Sorcerer and made her a scapegoat.

Ouyang Sen was silent.

However, Ye Yu and the rest were so mad that their livers hurt.

Ye Jiuge almost exploded on the spot.

Earlier, she had wanted to give Su Junqing two slaps. Now, she wanted badly to stab Ye Yuxuan with a knife.

Her d*uchebag Father was beyond obnoxious.

"Great Master Ye, you don't have to watch what you eat, but you do have to watch what you say. You keep insisting that your daughter, Ye Jiuge, practices Black Magic. However, do you have any evidence of this?" asked Ye Jiuge, controlling her anger.

"Hmph. Even at my age, I have never seen anyone so eager to proclaim that his daughter is a Sorcerer. Do you really treat Ye Jiuge like a daughter?" Bai Songling's words were even sharper.

Great Master Ye frowned. However, he did not turn agitated and angry, as he would have done in the past.

To maintain his dignified demeanor, he said calmly, "It's because Ye Jiuge is my daughter that I cannot overlook her repeating her mistakes.

"In fact, when she returned from the Wanzhang Depths some time ago, I realized that something was already amiss with her.

"However, out of my affection for her, I was not willing to investigate it. I did not think that she had such crazed cruelty in her to lay murderous hands on Spiritual Alchemists during the Pill Production Tournament. Her actions are intolerable."

As Ye Yuxuan spoke, he seemed devoured by pain and regret. He looked as though he could collapse at any time due to his emotional state.

“Indeed. Because of my Eldest Sister, Father cannot sleep at all. Ignoring the danger posed by the Sorcerers, he has rushed to the Medicine Refinery City through the night. He hopes that he can find my Eldest Sister and persuade her to turn herself in to give everyone closure.”

As she supported Ye Yuxuan with her arms, Ye Shanshan’s delicate expression was filled with sorrow.

Witnessing the father-daughter pair’s acting, the commoners around them could not help but reprimand Ye Jiuge for going completely crazy and acting worse than dogs or pigs.

Ye Jiuge clenched her fists.

She thought: I will tolerate this! I must endure this! When the truth comes to light, Ye Yuxuan will regret his actions today.

Ye Yuxuan was still unaware that Ye Jiuge, the eldest daughter whom he was thinking of, was standing in front of him.

Seizing the opportunity once the crowd was agitated, he said to Ouyang Sen, “Alchemist Ouyang, we acknowledge your painstaking efforts. However, please empathize and leave the Sorcerer’s corpse to me!”

“Yes. Alchemist Ouyang, Father and I wish to find Eldest Sister as soon as possible so that she will not make any more mistakes,” Ye Shanshan chimed in.

“This...”

Ouyang Sen was trapped in an impossible situation.

As he was working with Ye Yu and the rest, he had already guessed that they were chasing down the Sorcerer to prove Ye Jiuge’s innocence.

However, he found it challenging to decide what to do when Ye Jiuge’s own Father announced that he would deal with Ye Jiuge himself.

“Alchemist Ouyang, you need not overthink this. I only wish to borrow the corpse to take a look. I will not snatch your meritorious service from you.” Having said so, Ye Yuxuan signaled with a look to Captain Pan.

Captain Pan nodded knowingly. He led the other guards, and they stepped forward to snatch Jiang Shengjie’s corpse away from Bai Songling.

As if a formidable enemy was confronting them, Bai Songling, Jun Yichen, Luo Tian, Ye Yu, and the rest moved closer to each other.

They had not obtained Jiang Shengjie's corpse easily, and they were not willing to give it to anyone.

Just as Captain Pan was about to act, a bright and pleasant voice suddenly rang out: "Wait!"

Captain Pan hesitated momentarily. Unfathomably, he felt that the voice was familiar.

However, when he stared toward the source of the sound, he saw an ordinary-looking, skinny teenager.

"Eldest, Eldest Sir!" Bai Songling shouted hurriedly.

It was not yet time to reveal her identity!

Ye Jiuge took a step forward. Standing in front of Ye Yuxuan and Ye Shanshan, she said viciously, "This blind father and daughter pair distorted the truth deliberately in front of me. I can't tolerate it anymore."

She thought: If I can tolerate this, then I am a Ninja Turtle.

"You? You are Eldest Sister?!" Ye Shanshan had finally realized that it was Ye Jiuge's voice.

"That's right!" Ye Jiuge wiped her face with her hand and revealed her exquisite and attractive appearance.

The crowd was in an uproar immediately. They had not expected that Ye Jiuge, a Sorcerer boss they were screaming to kill, would dare to appear in front of everyone.

Furthermore, they had not expected the ruthless female monster to be such a delicate and exquisitely cute teenage girl.

"Unfilial daughter, you dare to appear here?" Ye Yuxuan pointed at Ye Jiuge and reprimanded.

"Why can't I appear here?"

Ye Jiuge sneered and said, "To prove my innocence, I have killed a Sorcerer with great difficulty.

"However, refusing to distinguish between right and wrong, my dear Father has announced publicly in the capital that he has severed all ties between us. Now, he has even traveled a great

distance to kill me. I really want to know what the Sorcerers have given you that you willingly push me away to be their scapegoat.”

“What nonsense are you spouting? You were clearly the one who colluded with the Sorcerers. How dare you try to throw dirt at me?” Ye Yuxuan was indignant.

“If I were to collude with the Sorcerers, why would I kill one of them?” Ye Jiuge asked incisively.

“Hmph, who knows what dirty tricks you are playing again?” Ye Yuxuan’s expression had turned unpleasant.

Ye Jiuge’s chest heaved, and she felt as though something was blocking her air passage.

She closed her eyes and forcefully calmed herself down. Then, in a hoarse voice, she said to Ye Yuxuan, “Father, this is the last time I will address you as such. I know that you don’t like me, but I did not realize that you hated me so much.

“Such a huge incident has taken place, and yet you have not given me any chance to explain myself. You immediately believed that I am a vicious murderer and even helped outsiders harm me. Will you only be satisfied after you have hounded me to death?”

Ye Jiuge’s tears flowed quietly down her pale cheeks as she spoke hoarsely.

Her speech was sharp, like a hedgehog rolling itself into a ball of quills. She refused to show any weakness or delicateness.

However, precisely because of this, her tears were authentic and sorrowful. They broke the hearts of everyone watching.

In the surrounding crowd, the women's eyes—whether elderly, married, or very young—brimmed with tears.

They could not help but think: If I were the one being scolded in the middle of the street by my father who believed that I was a murderer guilty of terrible crimes—and he had even helped outsiders chase me down—how would I be feeling?

Tears began to stream down the cheeks of those with more delicate minds. They looked at Ye Jiuge with sympathy.

“What a sin. How can there be such a callous father in this world?”

“Indeed. This Ye Jiuge does not seem to be over twenty years old. How can she possibly be the Sorcerers' leader?”

“I agree. If she really were their leader, she wouldn't dare appear in front of us so casually.”

Naturally, differing opinions rang out.

“You may know a person's face but not his mind. Who says that someone young cannot be the Sorcerers' leader?”

“Even if this Ye Jiuge is really their leader, isn't her father guilty of an even more terrible crime?”

“That's right. To feed without teaching is the father's fault. The father must be just as bad if his daughter has become so twisted.”

“No matter what, he struck her down with a single stroke without even giving her a chance to explain. What if he is mistaken?”

In the crowd, everybody was talking spiritedly at once. No matter whether they thought that Ye Jiuge was the Sorcerers' leader, they agreed that, if Ye Jiuge were really in the wrong, her Father was definitely worse.

Hearing the tone of the discussions, Ye Yuxuan's face changed.

He had thought that by placing righteousness before family, he would be admired and praised by the crowd. He had not expected that they would declare him guilty based on the saying, “to feed without teaching is the father's fault.”

To make things worse, he could not refute their claims. The aggrievance was stifling.

Hearing the spirited discussions in the crowd, the Crown Prince worried that something would happen if things were to drag on. Hurriedly, he yelled, "Come, put the Sorcerers' leader, Ye Jiuge, in jail."

The soldiers behind him immediately surrounded Ye Jiuge to capture her.

After Ye Jiuge had revealed her identity, Hu Lin had secretly snuck away.

Xia Chenfeng did not wish to be involved in the conflict either, and he pulled Ouyang Sen with him to the side.

Seizing the opportunity, Su Junqing crept noiselessly towards Bai Songling.

Then, he suddenly reached out to grab the black sack.

Bai Songling was already on the alert for sneak attacks, and countless green vines appeared on his body. They wrapped around the black sack tightly.

Luo Tian, who was standing beside him, punched Su Junqing, and they began to tangle.

It wasn't suitable for Ye Yu to hide into the shadows. Together with Jun Yichen, they guarded Ye Jiuge to deal with the Crown Prince's soldiers.

Ye Yuxuan had already decided to get rid of Ye Jiuge, and he jumped right into the fight to deal with her personally.

His cultivation was getting close to the Spiritual Master level, which was two levels higher than Ye Jiuge.

His Wood and Fire Spiritual Powers combined and emerged as a green-red flame. A surging heat wave rushed at Ye Jiuge as he attacked.

Ye Jiuge knew that her d*uchebag Father would not start his attack leniently.

At once, she drew out the Lightning Snake Magical Whip from her waist and whipped it toward Ye Yuxuan.

The violet lightning snake collided with the green-red flame. In the exchange, the violet lightning snake was slightly inferior.

Although Ye Yuxuan had gained the upper hand, he was not happy at all. In fact, he was stunned.

He had not expected his useless daughter to be so strong.

She could even withstand his full-on attack.

Ye Yuxuan's gaze landed on the Lightning Snake Magical Whip in Ye Jiuge's hands. He believed that this was because of the Advanced level Spiritual Weapon. Immediately, covetous thoughts appeared in his mind. He advanced and did not hold back anymore.

At that moment, Bai Songling and the rest were fighting Su Junqing and his men. The scene was chaotic, and many bystanders who were standing close by had been injured.

Bai Songling drew back until he reached Ye Jiuge then said, "Eldest Miss, we can't carry on like this. Let's retreat as soon as possible!"

"Let's go!" Ye Jiuge did not wish to fight Ye Yuxuan any longer.

If she were to kill him, she would be guilty of patricide. Even if she proved that she was not a Sorcerer, in the future, her reputation would still be sullied.

Just as Ye Jiuge and the rest were prepared to give up Jiang Shengjie's corpse and take the opportunity to retreat, an authoritative presence enveloped them. It was accompanied by a loud, furious roar, "Who permitted you to fight in the Medicine Refinery City?"

Then, a skinny figure appeared. It was Dongfang Yao, lord of the Medicine Refinery City and a Rank Six Alchemist.

Dongfang Yao grabbed Ye Yuxuan, who was furiously attacking Ye Jiuge, and flung him some distance away.

Seeing that things had gone wrong, Su Junqing immediately retreated to the Crown Prince's side.

"Imperial Uncle, you are finally here," the Crown Prince hurriedly said. "Ye Jiuge has trespassed in the Medicine Refinery City, and we were about to arrest and bring her to trial. Please, capture her quickly."

Dongfang Yao turned and stared coldly at the Crown Prince. He said, "Who gave you the authority to capture anyone?"

The Crown Prince was stunned. He was in an awkward position. Summoning up courage, he said, "Ye Jiuge is the leader of the Sorcerers, and anyone has the right to kill her. Isn't it natural for me

to capture her?”

“Who told you that Ye Jiuge was the leader of the Sorcerers?” Dongfang Yao stared at him with wide eyes and asked.

“Isn’t this something everyone knows?” the Crown Prince asked.

“Everyone knows? Then why am I unaware?” Dongfang Yao’s expression darkened.

Discontented, he said, “I seem to recall that there is no warrant for the arrest of Ye Jiuge posted on the Imperial News Board in the Medicine Refinery City!”

“Imperial Uncle, you have been on a Spiritual Retreat. Naturally, you are unaware of this.” The Crown Prince was beginning to realize that things were going wrong.

“Are you saying that I am old and foolish?” Dongfang Yao’s expression was extremely hostile.

“I wouldn’t dare.” The Crown Prince hurriedly shook his head.

He knew that his Imperial Uncle was partial toward Ye Jiuge, but he had not expected him to be this biased.

He was prepared to take out the evidence, but Dongfang Yao had already impatiently said, “If you wouldn’t dare, then shut up.”

“Imperial Uncle!” the Crown Prince cried out angrily.

He could not understand why his Imperial Uncle was favoring Ye Jiuge. Why did he look down on him even though he was the one with the last name ‘Dongfang’?

Dongfang Yao could not be bothered to care about his nephew, who was short-sighted, selfish, and full of evil ideas.

He looked at Ye Jiuge and said, “I heard that you killed a Sorcerer.”

“That’s right. This Sorcerer is an expert in disguise and he has flayed many people alive. He used the Tissue Regeneration Technique to merge his skin with his victims’ flesh, and this allowed him to trick the Spiritual Practitioners who participated in the Pill Production Tournament.” As Ye Jiuge spoke, she waved at Bai Songling.

Bai Songling opened up the black sack and poured out Jiang Shengjie’s corpse and all the human skins.

There was an immediate uproar from the surrounding bystanders.

Although rumors that Sorcerers enjoyed flaying humans had caused mayhem in the streets, this was the first time that the commoners had seen it with their own eyes.

Everyone was trembling with fear to see so many human hides.

The Crown Prince felt his limbs go numb, and he involuntarily looked toward Su Junqing.

Su Junqing was still somewhat calm. After all, Jiang Shengjie was a dead man, so he could provide any information he needed to about him.

He took out a gray disk and placed it on Jiang Shengjie's corpse. He looked like he was scrutinizing the body.

The gray disk was a magical weapon that the Medicine Refinery City had developed to check for Black Magic. However, at the moment, it did not react at all.

Su Junqing was secretly delighted. He said hurriedly to the Crown Prince, "Your Highness, there is no hint of Black Magic on this body. He is not a Sorcerer."

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Hastily, the Crown Prince glanced at the gray disk. Seeing no reaction from it, his spirits rose immediately.

He glared at Ye Jiuge and rebuked her in an arrogant and imposing manner, "Ye Jiuge, you staged an ordinary man's corpse with a pile of human skins to pass him off as a Sorcerer. What were you trying to achieve?"

Ye Jiuge could not be bothered to explain to the Crown Prince. She simply said, "He is a Sorcerer!"

"Bullsh*t! Do you think I am blind? This Black Magic Detection Disk shows no reaction at all." After

reprimanding Ye Jiuge, the Crown Prince turned toward Dongfang Yao. He said, "Imperial Uncle, you have been deceived by Ye Jiuge. She is a liar."

Dongfang Yao gave a slight frown.

He pondered momentarily before taking out a bottle of white liquid medicine from his bosom. To the Crown Prince, he said, "I made this Black Magic Detection Solution. If there is Black Magic in the corpse, the solution will turn gray."

Having said so, he poured some onto Jiang Shengjie's body. The white translucent solution immediately turned pale gray.

Dongfang Yao's heart sank immediately.

If the man were a Sorcerer, the solution would turn dark gray. Darker colors represented higher cultivation levels.

"Great Master Dongfang, this man's corpse has been stashed together with many human skins. It is normal for it to be contaminated with some Black Magic. However, such a change cannot prove that this man is a Sorcerer."

As a Rank Five Alchemist, Ye Yuxuan had made some Black Magic Detection Solution before.

"Eldest Sister, if you wished to prove your innocence, you should not have used an innocent person's corpse and tried to pass it off as a Sorcerer!" Ye Shanshan looked at Ye Jiuge in distress and anguish.

"Sinful daughter, you have refused to change despite repeated warning and continued to repeat your errors. Today, I must punish you and earn back the honor of our clan, which you have tarnished." A green-red flame lit up on Ye Yuxuan's hand again. He looked as though he was going to strike Ye Jiuge down at any moment.

"Wait." Dongfang Yao lifted his hand and said solemnly, "There's something strange about this Sorcerer's corpse."

"Great Master Dongfang, I respect you as a Great Master, but why are you always trying to help Ye Jiuge?"

Ye Yuxuan narrowed his eyes and sized up Dongfang Yao up suspiciously. He looked as though he suspected that there was something shameful going on between Dongfang Yao and Ye Jiuge.

After all, Ye Jiuge was gorgeous.

Dongfang Yao had a straightforward personality, and he almost exploded when he understood Ye Yuxuan's intimation.

He was of the same generation as Yun Tianwei. Strictly speaking, Ye Jiuge should address him as "Grandfather." Ye Yuxuan's insinuation that there was something between them was akin to reprimanding him for not behaving as an elder should.

Ye Jiuge was calm. She said coldly, "I thought that, as a Rank Five Alchemist, Great Master Ye should be able to unravel the mystery behind this corpse. However, you know nothing. I wonder where you earned your title of 'Great Master.' It seems that you are merely angling for fame and cannot live up to your name."

"Ye Jiuge, do you know whom you are speaking to?" Ye Yuxuan reprimanded her viciously.

"Of course, I know. I am speaking to ungrateful and cold-hearted scum." Ye Jiuge's every word was like a blade stabbed into Ye Yuxuan's heart.

When she said this, there was yet another uproar from the crowd.

Although filial piety was not one of the virtues enshrined above all others on the Canglan Continent, it was unprecedented for a daughter to insult her Father in such a manner on the street.

Ye Yuxuan's entire body trembled with rage. He regretted not strangling his sinful daughter to death when she was in her infancy so that he would not have to be so infuriated by her.

"Well said!" Dongfang Yao clapped his hands. Then he praised, "Back then, this Ye Yuxuan relied on your Grandfather and Mother to become prosperous. Yet, now, he wants to get rid of you. You would be better off without such an immoral Father!"

Having managed the Medicine Refinery City for so many years, Dongfang Yao had good moral standing and a respected reputation in the city.

Due to his approval of Ye Jiuge's actions, the surrounding commoners immediately changed their tone. Instead of reprimanding Ye Jiuge for being unfilial, they praised her for rising up to fight evil.

Ye Jiuge was still calm and unaffected. Without expressing anything about their opinions, she turned to Dongfang Yao and said, "Great Master Dongfang, there is a magical weapon hidden in this Sorcerer's body. Your solution does not work because it conceals his Black Magic."

She signaled to Bai Songling with her chin.

Bai Songling flipped over Jiang Shengjie's body. Using a sharp blade, he sliced open a piece of skin on Jiang Shengjie's back and scooped out a red, palm-size magical weapon engraved with many magic symbols.

Once the magical weapon was scooped out, Jiang Shengjie's slightly tanned skin immediately turned white with a touch of green.

The gray disk in Su Junqing's hands began to rotate frantically.

The solution that Dongfang Yao had poured onto the corpse of Jiang Shengjie also turned dark gray.

"He is really a Sorcerer!"

The surrounding commoners were stunned by the turnaround, and they began to discuss spiritedly again.

"Let me have a look at the magical weapon," Dongfang Yao said to Bai Songling.

"Please, give me a moment," Bai Songling tore a piece of the hem off his clothes and wiped off the bloodstains from the magical weapon.

Hu Lin, who had been hiding at the sides, moved closer again. With jiggling buttocks, he produced a ball of water and said flatteringly, "Why don't I wash it for you?"

"Alight!" Bai Songling was aware that Hu Lin was timid, afraid of getting into trouble, and easily swayed. He did not fault Hu Lin for fleeing earlier when the battle broke out.

After washing the magical weapon, he received it from Bai Songling and respectfully passed it to Dongfang Yao.

Dongfang Yao took it and examined it carefully. After infusing some Spiritual Power into the magical weapon to inspect it, his face turned solemn.

The magical weapon was of the third grade and had an exceptional function. Only a Rank Five Weaponsmith or above could forge such a thing.

Dongfang Yao thought: Only the Weapon Refinement Sect has Rank Five Weaponsmiths. Could it be that someone from that sect has colluded with the Sorcerers? If so, that would certainly be troublesome.

A myriad of thoughts ran through Dongfang Yao's mind, but his expression remained calm. After

putting away the magical weapon, he said to Ye Jiuge, "As the water recedes, the rocks appear. Your innocence has been proved. Thank you for your trouble."

"Many thanks to you, Great Master Dongfang, for believing that I am innocent," Ye Jiuge expressed her thanks solemnly.

She was genuinely grateful to Dongfang Yao.

If Dongfang Yao had believed that she was the Sorcerers' leader like the rest of the people, she would not have been able to prove her innocence so easily.

"Even if I don't trust you, I do trust Old Codger Yun. Why would his only granddaughter become the Sorcerers' leader? Would she be able to earn as much as the Sorcerers' leader as a Spiritual Alchemist?" Dongfang Yao laughed heartily and said.

When the rest of the people heard this, they could not help but laugh along. They began to discuss among themselves: "That's right. In our Lei Kingdom, Spiritual Practitioners are the most revered, followed by the Alchemists. If a Spiritual Alchemist can reach a high level in both areas, he has boundless prospects in the Lei Kingdom. Only a fool would try to become the leader of the Sorcerers instead."

"Ye Yuxuan, you seem very disappointed that your daughter's innocence has been proven." Dongfang Yao changed the subject as he addressed Ye Yuxuan, who was standing to the side.

"Great Master Dongfang, you must be joking. Jiuge is my daughter. Why would I be disappointed to see her innocence proved? I am truly happy for her." Ye Yuxuan forced a smile.

He regretted his decision to listen to Ye Shanshan's instigation and travel to the Medicine Refinery City, ready to punish his family member if justice demanded it. It had caused him such humiliation.

"Eldest Sister, congratulations on your acquittal. I am happy for you." When Ye Shanshan saw that she was about to land herself in hot water, she stepped forward immediately and tried to hold Ye Jiuge's hand.

However, Ye Jiuge dodged her, and said emotionlessly, "You were singing a different tune earlier!"

"Eldest Sister, are you still angry at me for that?" Ye Shanshan had a hurt expression. She held back her tears as she said, "I was so concerned about you that rumors misled me. That is my fault. Eldest Sister, if you still hold a grudge against me, then you can beat me up to vent your anger. I will not complain!"

"Jiuge, your younger sister was worried that you'd strayed from the right path." Ye Yuxuan carried himself with the imposing air of a father as he said, "Although you've managed to clear your name this time, if you had not acted so recklessly, you would not have fallen so easily into the Black Magic Practitioner's trap. You should take this as a lesson and be more careful in the future."

"Great Master Ye, you are right. I will engrave your advice in my heart." Ye Jiuge looked directly into Ye Yuxuan's eyes as she slowly uttered every word.

When Ye Yuxuan heard 'Great Master Ye,' he frowned instantly.

Although he hated Ye Jiuge, Ye Jiuge had embarrassed him greatly by speaking against him that day in such a setting.

Therefore, Ye Yuxuan put on a stern face as he spoke, "This time, I have wronged you. I was mistaken. Don't tell me that you are still holding onto your resentment toward me?"

"Eldest Sister, we are a family. Blood is thicker than water. Father did this for your good. He was concerned that you had strayed onto the wrong path, so he came here in a hurry. Actually, you are always in his thoughts." Ye Shanshan's eyes were slightly red, as if she were extremely saddened by Ye Jiuge's actions.

"There is no need to talk about this further. Great Master Ye is always a man of his word. He always fulfills his promises. Since he has already posted notices far and wide announcing that he has disowned me, there is no need for him to force himself to repair our relationship. From now on, we shall go our separate ways. Whether Ye Jiuge is dead or alive is no longer any of your business."

Although Ye Jiuge's indifferent voice was soft, everyone heard her clearly.

The observers were silent. They stared at Ye Yuxuan with sadistic pleasure.

It served him right. He could not distinguish right from wrong. Not only that, but he had distorted the truth deliberately and acted cold and ruthless towards his daughter. He had let her down.

Ye Yuxuan was ashen. He had never been so humiliated in his life.

He wished that he could slap her before dragging this recalcitrant daughter back to the Ye Residence to discipline her properly.

Pity this was only a fantasy.

Ye Jiuge did not care what Ye Yuxuan was thinking about. She turned to Dongfang Yao and said, "Great Master Dongfang, I have some matters regarding Black Magic that I want to discuss with you. Why don't we head over to the Medicine Refinery Complex?"

"Sure!" Dongfang Yao nodded. With disdain, he eyed Ye Yuxuan, whose face was as black as the bottom of a frying pan, before walking off with Ye Jiuge and the others.

Ouyang Sen, Xia Chenfeng, and Hu Lin quickly followed them.

In the blink of an eye, only the Crown Prince, Su Junqing, Ye Yuxuan, and Ye Shanshan were left at the scene.

"Father, Eldest Sister is being too heartless. How can she cut her ties with us just like that? We are family!" Ye Shanshan was anxious and dejected. In reality, she wanted to take this opportunity to pull the wool over Ye Yuxuan's eyes.

However, Ye Yuxuan had an angry face. He glared at her and scolded, "You are so incompetent. You never accomplish anything, but you ruin everything."

After he finished speaking, he flung his sleeves before leaving.

While Ye Shanshan wanted to chase after him, she felt that it was too shameful. She stopped walking and looked at the Crown Prince with hurt.

She'd written a letter egging on her father to sever the connections between the Ye Clan and Ye Jiuge was because the Crown Prince has instructed her to do so.

The Crown Prince's face was completely red. He did not notice Ye Shanshan's expression.

His ears were filled with the voice of the public condemning him for being so useless.

He could not understand at all. They had clearly driven Ye Jiuge into a corner, so how could she turn her situation around so easily?

“Crown Prince, let us return now!” Su Junqing said gravely. “At such a time, we must keep our cool.”

“Let’s leave!” The Crown Prince turned around and led his men back to the Medicine Refinery Complex.

Ye Shanshan quickly followed the Crown Prince back to the Ascending Skies Pavilion at the Medicine Refinery Complex.

At first, she wanted to discuss with the Crown Prince what to do next.

She’d never expected the Crown Prince to disregard her completely. He went to the study with Su Junqing, and even asked someone to guard the entrance and forbade her from entering.

Ye Shanshan currently felt ashamed, angry, and resentful.

The Crown Prince was her ideal partner, while Su Junqing was her cousin.

These two were the men whom she held dearest in her heart, so they should be very close to her. However, they’d decided to exclude her. They made her feel like they did not trust her at all.

Unfortunately for her, she did not have the courage to barge into the study and make a huge fuss. She could only leave feeling aggrieved.

The Crown Prince threw a tantrum in the study. He pointed at Su Junqing as he berated him, “Su Junqing, how did you execute your plans? Did you not tell me that Ye Jiuge would be screwed this time? Instead, she’s now become a hero for eradicating the Black Magic Practitioners. My Imperial Uncle sees her in a new light. On the other hand, I have become a laughingstock, the biggest joke in the Lei Kingdom.”

“Crown Prince, please quell your anger. Ye Jiuge has merely cleared her name. This will not affect our overall plan. Our preparations in the Capital are almost complete. The throne will be yours. Why should you waste your thoughts on Ye Jiuge?” Su Junqing advised him calmly.

The Crown Prince’s eyes brightened as he questioned Su Junqing immediately for more information, “Really? Everything in the Capital is almost in order?”

"That's right. After the dust has settled in Medicine Refinery City, you will become the next emperor of the Lei Kingdom," Su Junqing replied unhesitatingly.

"Great, great, great! As long as you serve me well, I will not give you less than you deserve." The Crown Prince patted Su Junqing's shoulder excitedly, and his face was full of complacency.

"Your Highness, I am extremely thankful that you have recognized my worth. Now, I shall go and do some work." Su Junqing smiled obsequiously.

"Go ahead!" Feeling pleased, the Crown Prince waved him away.

Su Junqing bowed deferentially before returning to his room.

Immediately, his extremely confident face became uneasy.

He took out a Communication Talisman and sent a message: "Senior, Brother Jiang is dead. When you hear this message, please reply immediately."

After he burnt the Communication Talisman, he was still worried. While pacing around the room, he thought things over. Then, he used an ointment and transformed his appearance into that of a middle-aged man with a clean and handsome face. After that, he went to the Medicine Refinery Hall with a demeanor suggesting that he was familiar with the area. He told the guard at the entrance that he wanted to meet Zhang Peng.

The guard looked Su Junqing up and down warily then asked, "May I ask who you are?"

"I am his father." Su Junqing smiled in a relaxed manner.

The guard immediately complied. "So, you are Uncle Zhang. Please wait a moment. I shall ask him to come now."

Zhang Peng was the third most influential person in the Medicine Refinery Complex. His position was right below Li Zijun's.

After a short moment, a handsome young man clad in white walked in. When he saw Su Junqing, he spoke welcomingly, "Father, how did you find the time to see me?"

"I was just passing by, so I thought I'd visit you," Su Junqing replied benevolently.

"Father, come here and have a seat." Zhang Peng brought Su Junqing to a secluded place before asking him in a low voice, "Right now, the situation is so tense. Why have you come to see me?"

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“I had no choice—this is an emergency. I had to come to find you. Do you know what Ye Jiuge told Dongfang Yao after her return?” Su Junqing asked.

He’d racked his brains to win over Zhang Peng, spending money and using magic on him. He would only use this pawn as a last resort.

But right now, Brother Jiang had been killed, and Liu Yunfei was missing. He was starting to feel slightly anxious.

“They are still having a secret meeting in the tearoom. Other than Li Zijun, the others could not enter the place.” When Zhang Peng mentioned Li Zijun, jealousy flashed in his handsome face.

He regarded himself as being on par with Li Zijun, whether in terms of cultivation level, character, or pill production mastery.

Unfortunately for him, Great Master Dongfang favored Li Zijun. He’d not only accepted him as a Final Disciple, but he’d also entrusted him with the Medicine Refinery Hall.

Zhang Peng has spent more than twenty years in the Medicine Refinery Hall. He had invested himself mentally and physically. However, he was forced to remain a mere Nominal Disciple. His status would be lower than Li Zijun’s for eternity. This upset him.

“As long as you find out everything about their next move, Li Zijun won’t stay alive for long. Then, you will be the highest-ranking disciple in Medicine Refinery Hall.” Su Junqing dangled a carrot in front of him.

He made use of Zhang Peng’s hatred of Li Zijun to gain his support.

“Alright. As soon as I have some news, I will inform you.” Zhang Peng nodded before returning to the Medicine Refinery Hall.

At that moment, Ye Jiuge was in discussions with Dongfang Yao and Li Zijun in the tearoom about how they would deal with the Black Magic Practitioners from the Bloodthirsty Sect.

She told Dongfang Yao and Li Zijun everything she knew about the Bloodthirsty Sect, including their standard tactics.

“From what I can infer from your words, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch keeps stirring up trouble in the Medicine Refinery City because he wants to use me as a Medicinal Ingredient?” Dongfang Yao asked, raising an eyebrow.

“That’s right.” Ye Jiuge nodded.

“This Bloodthirsty Patriarch has the audacity even to consider this!” Dongfang Yao smiled coldly.

He had been a famous figure for a very long time, so he had the power to do as he wished in the Lei Kingdom. He was considered a prominent member of society.

Being treated as a Medicinal Ingredient by a Black Magic Practitioner was incredibly insulting.

“This ruthless Bloodthirsty Patriarch has many tricks up his sleeve. Great Master Dongfang, you should never let your guard down,” Ye Jiuge advised with a solemn face.

“Hmph. If he approaches me personally, I will still feel some fear. Since he’s sent a few Black Magic Practitioners to take me down, he must look down on me!”

Dongfang Yao was really furious. He turned to Li Zijun and said, “I want you to circulate my order. I will offer a bounty of one thousand gold ingots for any leads that can help us crack down on Black Magic Practitioners and a bounty of ten thousand gold ingots for anyone who brings their heads to me. Then, I want you to dispatch every guard in Medicine Refinery City to hunt and eliminate these Black Magic Practitioners from the Bloodthirsty sect.”

“Yes.” Li Zijun nodded forcefully. Then, he asked with slight hesitation, “What should we do with the Crown Prince and Su Junqing?”

“Leave them for now. Send someone over to keep a close eye on them. Once I exterminate this scum from Bloodthirsty Sect, I will personally bring this foolish idiot, Dongfang Jianming, back to the Capital so that his father can punish him,” Dongfang Yao answered fiercely.

How had the Dongfang Clan ended up nurturing such a muddle-head? He could not believe that the Crown Prince had conspired with Black Magic Practitioners. The Crown Prince must have hated the thought of living a long life.

“Noted.” Li Zijun nodded gravely.

Ye Jiuge furrowed her brow. She disagreed: “Great Master, Su Junqing is a very cunning and immoral man. He has many tricks up his sleeve. If we do not take measures against him, I am afraid that it will be a mistake to let him off. I think that it would better for us to just imprison him now.”

If they could expose Su Junqing’s identity as a Black Magic Practitioner immediately, that would be fantastic.

That way, they would not need to be worried about him using his Mental Manipulation to cause problems for them.

“I know what I am doing. You do not need to say more.” Dongfang Yao shook his head.

The Su Clan had established its power firmly in the Capital. Not only that, but they were closely associated with the Crown Prince. If they arrested Su Junqing rashly, it was very likely that he would implicate the Crown Prince and expose him as his ally.

Regardless of how wicked the Crown Prince was, he was still a member of the Dongfang Clan. If his cooperation with the Black Magic Practitioners were made public, the scandal would significantly damage the Dongfang Clan’s reputation. It might even shake the people’s confidence in their authority.

As a part of the Dongfang Clan, he had to consider how this would affect his family.

When Ye Jiuge saw that they had reached an impasse, she did not argue further. Instead, she asked Li Zijun about drawing Liu Yunfei into their trap so that they could capture her.

“Senior Li, you were so well-prepared last night. How did Brother Wan end up injured?”

“Last night, we used the Treasure-hunting Scorpion, which you gave us, to lure her here. However, the woman was indeed powerful. She killed many of our men and wounded Brother Wan. In the end, we could not stop her from leaving. She even snatched the Treasure-hunting Scorpion away from us.”

Li Zijun spoke shamefully with a lowered head.

Because of this, he had gone to his Master and asked him to take charge of the entire situation.

“Liu Yunfei is the Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s Main Disciple, so she must possess many valuable treasures. It is quite normal that you were defeated this time,” Ye Jiuge comforted him kindly.

“Normal my foot!”

Dongfang Yao glared at Li Zijun as he admonished him, “What have I told you in the past? I asked you not to spend all of your time practicing Pill Production Techniques single-mindedly. You should also cultivate your Spiritual Skills at the same time.

“Last night, if not for Wan Ziyang, who took a blow on your behalf, you would have lost your fragile life. Do not assume that if you surround yourself with countless Spiritual Guards that they will be able to protect you completely. In this world, the safest move is to rely on yourself.”

“Master, you are right. I have learned a good lesson. I realized my mistakes now.” Li Zijun bowed hurriedly, showing his repentance.

In the past, he had always thought that he only needed to practice his Pill Production Techniques and excel at them. As long as he hired more guards, he would not have to worry about his safety.

However, those guards had no time even to protect themselves during the big fight last night, much less him. This had shown him the importance of Spiritual Cultivation.

“I shall go and see Brother Wan first.” Ye Jiuge did not want to listen to Dongfang Yao lecturing his disciple, so she stood up to take her leave.

“Let me assign someone to bring you there!” Li Zijun stood up and opened the door. He was about to call an apprentice over when he saw Zhang Peng passing by. He initiated conversation with a question, “Senior Li, is there anything I can help you with?”

“I need an apprentice who can help me guide the Ye Clan’s Eldest Miss to Lofty Mountains Pavilion to see Wan Ziyang,” Li Zijun said in passing.

“I was just about to head to Lofty Mountains Pavilion. If the Ye Clan’s Eldest Miss does not mind, then let me show her the way!” Zhang Peng said with a smile.

“Thank you for your trouble.” Ye Jiuge thought nothing of it. She followed Zhang Peng as they walked to the Lofty Mountains Pavilion.

“Eldest Miss, this time, you have suffered an injustice. I told them that Great Master Yun’s granddaughter would never be the leader of Black Magic Practitioners. They would not believe

me. Luckily, you finally managed to clear your name,” Zhang Peng said with righteous indignation.

“It’s all thanks to Great Master Dongfang’s wisdom,” Ye Jiuge replied flatly.

Although Zhang Peng had a clean, handsome appearance, she could not put her finger on why she disliked him.

“Before this, Great Master Dongfang did not have the time to handle this matter as he was in Enclosed Cultivation. Now, he has stepped up to take charge of the whole situation. He will bring those brazen Black Magic Practitioners to justice. When he does, I would like to request that Eldest Miss help us where possible.” Zhang Peng continued to speak with a smile. Yet, his tone was probing.

“You overestimate me. I am merely a helpless lady. I would not dare shoulder such a heavy responsibility.” Ye Jiuge shook her head gently.

“Ye Clan’s Eldest Miss, you are too humble. You are the first person to kill a Black Magic Practitioner. I heard that they are ruthless. Eldest Miss, you must have exerted yourself!”

Zhang Peng kept bringing up the Black Magic Practitioners. He wanted to sniff out some information from Ye Jiuge.

Alas, Ye Jiuge was very tight-lipped. After all that talking, she only replied to him with some superficial words.

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When Zhang Peng and Ye Jiuge reached the entrance of Lofty Mountains Pavilion, he could not pry any useful information out of her. He could only leave in frustration.

Ye Jiuge pushed open the pavilion’s unlocked door and walked into the building with light

footsteps.

From the entrance, she spotted Wan Ziyang lying on a bed looking pallid. Bai Songling and the others surrounded him.

“Eldest Miss, you came.” Ouyang Sen was closest to the door. He was the first person to catch sight of her walking into the room.

“Where are Hu Lin and Xia Chenfeng?” When Ye Jiuge swept her eyes over the room, she noticed that Hu Lin and Xia Chenfeng were not around.

“They went to claim their reward,” Ouyang Sen answered.

“Who is this?” Ye Jiuge looked at the person beside Ouyang Sen.

A tall, heavily-built man with tanned skin, bright eyes, and short, spiky hair stood beside him.

He was the Rank Two Alchemist, Xiong Yunhu, who had been so scared out of his wits by the Black Magic Practitioners that he’d insisted on staying in the Medicine Refinery Hall.

“Greetings, Ye Clan’s Eldest Miss.” Xiong Yunhu grinned, giving them the impression that he was a simple and honest man.

“Good Afternoon, Alchemist Xiong!” Ye Jiuge nodded at him. This fellow had a tall and sturdy stature; she really could not tell that he was such a coward.

Contrary to expectations, Xiong Yunhu was quite perceptive. When he saw that Ye Jiuge had something to discuss with Wan Ziyang, he took his leave immediately, saying, “I still have to attend to some matters. I shall not disturb Brother Wan from getting a good rest. We will chat another day.”

“Alchemist Xiong, take care!” Wan Ziyang nodded.

“Let me see you off.” Ouyang Sen was very close to Xiong Yunhu, so he offered to accompany him to the door.

“Alchemist Ouyang, if you have some free time in the future, come and see me. There are many things I wish to speak to you about.” Before Xiong Yunhu walked away, he invited Ouyang Sen over to visit him again. Ouyang Sen agreed readily.

Ye Jiuge stared at Xiong Yunhu’s figure as he walked further away. She turned to ask Wan Ziyang, “Are you on good terms with him?”

"I spoke to him for the first time today." Wan Ziyang shook his head.

"If you are not close to him, then why would he come to see you for no reason?" Ye Jiuge asked suspiciously.

"He must have heard that Alchemist Ouyang was here, so he dropped by to see me!" Wan Ziyang answered hesitantly.

"He is only an acquaintance." Ouyang Sen quickly distanced himself from Xiong Yunhu.

He did not want others to perceive him as a coward, like Xiong Yunhu.

"He is merely a scaredy-cat. If he wants to come here, then let him. There is no need to be so concerned about him." Bai Songling curled his lip dismissively. After that, he asked Ye Jiuge, "How was your discussion with Great Master Dongfang?"

"Great Master Dongfang has already mobilized everyone to take down the Bloodthirsty Sect's Black Magic Practitioners. He will also be personally involved in this case." Ye Jiuge sat at Wan Ziyang's bedside.

"That's great. A while ago, when you were not around, Gong Honglei almost raised a huge ruckus. Li Zijun tried his best to reason with him and allowed him to take Gong Hongyu's corpse away. Only then was he able to make him leave." Bai Songling felt slightly glad.

If Gong Honglei had also been in attendance today, Ye Jiuge would not have been able to prove her innocence so easily.

That stubborn fellow maintained that Ye Jiuge was the one who had caused his sister's death. Every day, he kept shouting about killing her to avenge his sister.

"Now, everything has been brought to light. Even if he continues to make a fuss, it will be pointless." Ye Jiuge's face tightened.

She did not have a good impression of Gong Honglei.

Although that fellow's Cultivation Level was high, he was brainless. It would serve him right being used by someone else as a tool.

"Later, I will write a letter to the Capital requesting that the emperor issue an imperial edict to announce all this to the world. This will prevent those people, who are still completely in the dark about what's happened, from spreading unfavorable rumors about you." Wan Ziyang was truly

happy for Ye Jiuge.

Before this, Ye Yuxuan and the Crown Prince had smeared Ye Jiuge's name. The fact that everyone knew about it was a massive scandal.

If an imperial notice weren't plastered everywhere in the kingdom to clear Ye Jiuge's name, even if she were acquitted in Medicine Refinery City, their efforts would be in vain.

"This is not an urgent matter. Give me your hand." Ye Jiuge reached out to check Wan Ziyang's pulse.

She discovered that his injury was quite serious. Although he had already consumed Medicinal Pills that could heal his wounds, the remaining poison in his five viscera and six bowels was still present. She could imagine how intense the fighting had been last night.

Ye Jiuge retracted her hand. She knitted her brow. "Didn't I tell you to be wary of Liu Yunfei? How did you still manage to get hurt?"

"Her Blood Bell was too powerful. Even if we outnumbered her, we could not stop her from leaving. However, we also managed to injure her." Wan Ziyang did not tell her that he was hurt because he had saved Li Zijun, who had almost been killed for being too careless.

"Little Mute, give Brother Wan a Legendary Venomous Insect." Ye Jiuge felt that the reason Wan Ziyang was at a disadvantage was that he did not have a Legendary Venomous Insect to neutralize the poison in his body.

Wan Ziyang could not help but show a delighted expression on his usually composed face. He said in a deep voice, "Thank you."

Earlier, Bai Songling had been showing off his parasite, Big Mouth, non-stop and flaunting how powerful the insect was.

As soon as it opened its large mouth, it sucked up all of the poison released by the Black Magic Practitioner.

Listening to Bai Songling made him envious. Still, he was too embarrassed to request one from Ye Jiuge.

"There is no need to thank me. Everyone has been given a Legendary Venomous Insect. Of course, I will not exclude you," Ye Jiuge said generously.

In any case, she had already gifted them to Ye Yu and Bai Songling. There was no harm in giving

one to Wan Ziyang.

"This one is good." Jun Yichen did not ask Wan Ziyang for a drop of blood. He chose the largest Legendary Venomous Insect for him at once.

Wan Ziyang looked at the Legendary Venomous Insect resting on his arm. He was delighted.

He did not believe that the Legendary Venomous Insect he was going to nurture would be worse than Bai Songling's.

"Little Mute, you are biased," Bai Songling complained immediately. "Did you not tell me that these Legendary Venomous Insect choose their owners voluntarily? When it comes to Wan Ziyang, why was he able to pick the one he desired?"

"Wan Ziyang is a man of character, so these Legendary Venomous Insects are willing to serve him. Naturally, I chose the strongest one for him," Jun Yichen said assertively.

"What do you mean? Are you telling me that I am a dishonorable man?" Bai Songling became angry. He rolled up his sleeves, prepared to fight Little Mute.

"That's enough. Stop quarreling. Let's focus on important matters." Luo Tian deescalated their fight. He said with a serious face, "Last night, Liu Yunfei was wounded. I think that it is the right time to take her down now. Otherwise, when her injury fully recovers, it will be very challenging for us."

"But the problem is that we have no idea where to find her!" Ye Yu said, stumped.

"I know where she is." Luo Tian smiled slyly.

As it turned out, when Xiao Hong had captured the Treasure-hunting Scorpion, he'd secretly instructed Xiao Hong to leave a tracker on its body.

Regardless of the Treasure-hunting Scorpion's whereabouts, Xiao Hong could discover its location.

"Xiao Hong is a pretty good insect!" Bai Songling gave it a thumbs up.

"That's right." Luo Tian was proud of it.

"There is no time to lose. Let's head out now!" Ye Yu said, itching to get on with it.

Ye Jiuge expressed her agreement.

Since Liu Yunfei was the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's Main Disciple, if they could defeat her, they could inflict heavy losses on the Bloodthirsty Sect.

"Ziyang, you should rest well so that you can recover quickly. Wait for our victorious return." Bai Songling clapped Wan Ziyang on the shoulder. He waved his hand in a spirited manner as he said, "Let's go!"

Luo Tian summoned Xiao Hong and used his mind to command it to track down the Treasure-hunting Scorpion.

Xiao Hong flew in a circle inside the room. After it had determined the direction, it flapped its wings and fluttered away.

As soon as Ye Jiuge left the Lofty Mountains Pavilion, she immediately sensed countless eyes staring at them in the darkness.

She turned her head to look at the exceptionally quiet Medicine Refinery Hall. Suddenly, a feeling of restlessness arose in her heart.

She had a premonition that something unpredictable was about to happen.

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"Eldest Miss, what's wrong?" Ye Yu mirrored Ye Jiuge's gaze and stared at the Medicine Refinery Hall in confusion.

"Nothing." Ye Jiuge suppressed this strange feeling. She comforted herself over and over again. "With Dongfang Yao personally taking charge of the Medicine Refinery Hall, nothing bad will

happen to Wan Ziyang and the others.”

“Come on!” Ye Yu did not think much of it. His mind was fully occupied with hunting down Liu Yunfei.

Ye Jiuge nodded. She followed Xiao Hong, leading the group as they left Medicine Refinery City and ventured into a dense jungle in the mountains. In the end, they reached a precipice.

The roaring mountain winds whipped Ye Jiuge’s skirt, making loud flapping sounds.

When they looked down from above, everything was obscured by a thick layer of fog. They could not see what was at the bottom of the cliff.

“Did Liu Yunfei jump?” Bai Songling stared at the precipice, puzzled.

“The chances that she threw herself off the cliff are slim to none,” Jun Yichen sneered.

“It is highly likely that Liu Yunfei discovered the Fragrance of a Thousand Miles on the Treasure-hunting Scorpion,” Luo Tian said solemnly.

“Since we’ve reached a dead end, what should we do next?” Ye Yu knitted his brow. As a thick jungle surrounded them, it would not be easy for them to find Liu Yunfei.

“Luo Tian, can you ask Xiao Hong to pinpoint the general direction in which Liu Yunfei disappeared?” Bai Songling asked hopefully.

“Let me try.” Luo Tian gave Xiao Hong a command.

Xiao Hong flew around for a while. In the end, it still did not manage to determine her approximate location.

“This area is too vast. It is beyond Xiao Hong’s capability.” After a few attempts, Luo Tian shook his head.

“Since Liu Yunfei was around the Medicine Refinery City for such a long time, she must have established a base at the outskirts. Let’s scout extensively. Maybe we can discover some clues.” Bai Songling was unwilling to let the witch off so quickly.

A base? Ye Jiuge thought.

Her eyes brightened. She recalled, “Those corpses that were abandoned in the stone hillocks—they had red clay soil on their soles. That red clay must have come from Liu Yunfei’s

hideout. Do you know of a place close by with red clay soil?"

"I know of a ravine with red-colored soil," Bai Songling said immediately.

In the past, when he'd relentlessly investigated the Spiritual Practitioners' disappearance, he'd searched every mountain nearby, large or small, at least once. No one could be more familiar with this place than him.

"Let's have a look!" At that point, they did not want to overlook a single clue.

Bai Songling led the group through another dense jungle. In the end, they reached a gorge.

This ravine was overgrown with weeds. There were vines everywhere. The exposed part of the soil was brown, with no traces of red clay soil at all.

"Beneath the weeds, there's red clay soil." Bai Songling pointed to the leftmost side of the greenish-gray weeds.

He discovered this coincidentally when he'd led his team here to search the area. An unfortunate soul had fallen accidentally and stained his clothes with red clay soil at the buttocks. It had been quite amusing.

"There is something odd about these weeds." Ye Jiuge activated her Spiritual Eye and scrutinized them. She detected an extremely strange, blackish-red mist permeating the space below.

Bai Songling was about to jump into the ravine when he heard Ye Jiuge. He retracted his leg immediately and asked, "Should I release Big Mouth and let it deal with these weeds?"

Ever since he'd discovered that his Big-mouthed Parasite was capable of devouring poison, he wanted to brag about it all the time.

"Big Mouth's cultivation level is not high enough to handle this wicked energy. This is beyond its capability. Let's not risk it." Ye Jiuge shook her head. After that, she chose a gray, hard stone from the ground, and infused her Spiritual Energy into it before flinging it at the weeds.

Boom!

It was as if someone had poured oil into a deep fryer.

A black aura surged out and gobbled up that gray, fist-sized stone in the blink of an eye, leaving nothing behind.

"This did not happen last time we came here." Bai Songling swallowed his saliva as fear overcame him.

If Ye Jiuge had not warned him earlier, it was highly probable that he would have suffered the same fate as the stone.

"The last time you came, she had probably not yet placed this wicked energy here. This proves that Liu Yunfei must have hidden herself at the bottom of the ravine," Ye Jiuge said. Finally, they'd managed to find her.

"But it will be complicated for us to get past this wicked energy. What should we do?" Ye Yu was slightly demoralized. His Black Dictator was not adept at devouring poison.

"Liu Yunfei has forcibly confined this wicked energy here. So long as we can find its Vital Point, we can deactivate it," Ye Jiuge said.

"Where is its Vital Point?" Luo Tian and others said in unison.

Ye Jiuge's Spiritual Eye was not powerful enough to determine its secret position right now. She could only barely make out that the wicked energy was weakest in the northmost corner.

She did not have the time to discover the location of its Vital Point. They might be better off dismantling it by force.

Ye Jiuge conjured her White Bone Flame. She drew their scope of attack with an imaginary line toward the corner of weeds. She told Bai Songling and others, "Its Vital Point is there. On my command, all of you should bombard that corner with your strongest attack."

"No problem. You can count on me," Bai Songling said eagerly.

The others also nodded at the same time. They lifted their hands in the corner's direction and silently waited for Ye Jiuge's order.

"Ready, boom!" Ye Jiuge's raised hand swiped down without delay.

Bai Songling and the others mustered all of their Spiritual Energy right away. Beams of light in multiple colors landed in that area, just like torrential rains.

A loud bang was heard!

The jet-black wicked energy gushed outward violently, destroying the entire land of weeds.

A light pink silhouette emerged from underground, attempting to flee to safety outside the ravine by concealing itself within the wicked energy.

“Don’t even think of escaping.” Ye Jiuge detached the Lightning Snake Magical Whip, which was attached to her waist, and made a move intended to kill.

The massive purple lightning snake opened its mouth threateningly, as it rushed toward Liu Yunfei.

Liu Yunfei’s pupils dilated. She released clouds of Blood Fog repeatedly from her hands.

Although she managed to defend herself from the purple lightning snake’s attack, she lost her opportunity to slip away.

Ye Yu, Luo Tian, Jun Yichen, and Bai Songling closed in on her, eyeing her menacingly.

Liu Yunfei’s face was slightly pale. Her usually coquettish expression was nowhere to be seen.

She ran her eyes slowly over Ye Yu and others, smiling mockingly at them. “Despite proclaiming yourselves as a part of the distinguished Righteous Sects, as grown-up men, you’ve ganged up on a frail lady like me. Shame on you.”

Bai Songling instantly felt slightly guilty. He thought that they were bullying her.

He swept his eyes over his allies. Luo Tian and Jun Yichen’s faces were filled with vengefulness. They were hardly embarrassed that four adult men like them had encircled Liu Yunfei, ready to attack.

He turned his eyes to Ye Yu. He discovered that his throat was moving as if he had just swallowed something.

Bai Songling’s heart skipped a beat. He realized that he had forgotten something very important.

Then, Liu Yunfei suddenly charged at him, fast as lightning. Countless clouds of Blood Fog released from her palms, which were enveloped in a Bloody Glow.

Earlier, Bai Songling’s mind had wandered slightly, so he did not have enough time to shield himself from her attack.

When Ye Yu saw that Bai Songling was about to get hurt, he managed to shoot out a grey Spiritual Light in time to deflect Liu Yunfei’s attacks.

Luo Tian also delivered a blow to Liu Yunfei with his fist, forcing her to retreat to Bai Songling's side.

“Xiao Bai, eat your Medicinal Pill!” Ye Yu managed to find the time to shout at Bai Songling.

Bai Songling suddenly remembered that Ye Jiuge had often reminded them to consume a Medicinal Pill as soon as they met Liu Yunfei.

He hurriedly took out his Mind-clearing Pills and ate one. Then and there, his rationality returned. The remorse that he had felt earlier vanished completely.

Their group should assault a woman who was as vile as Liu Yunfei. It was ridiculous that he would feel ashamed about it.

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Bai Songling's hands radiated green light with increasing intensity as he magically summoned two green vines to participate in the fight.

The Blood Fog around Liu Yunfei's body waxed and waned. Although she was fighting four men, she could still withstand their attacks without breaking a sweat.

The longer Bai Songling fought her, the more horrified he was by her prowess. It has never occurred to him that Liu Yunfei would still be such a formidable opponent after being injured.

She had not even started using her Blood Bell and Blood Sword yet.

Thinking of this, Bai Songling did not dare stay complacent. He began to take her seriously and went all out. The others did the same.

In that instant, the pressure on Liu Yunfei increased exponentially.

She used Seduction to entrance the four men.

Ye Yu had eaten his Medicinal Pill earlier, while Luo Tian and Jun Yichen were unaffected. The only one who fell under Liu Yunfei's spell was Bai Songling, a Wood Elemental Spiritual Practitioner.

Unfortunately for her, Bai Songling regained his cognitive abilities swiftly. She failed to force her way out of the barrier they'd formed around her.

It was those pissants' fault for wounding her last night. Otherwise, they were no match for her.

In all these years, Liu Yunfei had never been hurt. She was furious that someone had managed to harm her.

In her rage, she disregarded her unhealed injury, and promptly used her Blood Bell.

She needed to finish off these four as soon as possible so that she could take on Ye Jiuge, who was assisting them from the sidelines.

During her last face-off with Ye Jiuge, she'd felt that Ye Jiuge had nothing on her. She'd never expected Ye Jiuge to keep her true capabilities secret. She'd really underestimated her.

An eerie jingle rang out from the Blood Bell.

Bai Songling, Luo Tian, and Ye Yu had heard about this mighty Blood Bell. They sprang backward immediately so that it would not affect them.

Ye Jiuge also became wary. However, she noticed that the Blood Bell's influence was weaker than before. It was likely that this was related to Liu Yunfei's severe injury.

They should take advantage of her weakened state to kill her. If they did not do it now, they might not get this opportunity again.

"Everyone, let's defeat her together!"

Ye Jiuge wasted no time deciding that she would join their fight.

The Lighting Snake Magical Whip in her hand made swooshing sounds as it sent continuous Purple Lightning toward Liu Yunfei.

Bai Songling's green vines expanded as they wrapped themselves around her, rendering her immobile.

Jun Yichen's abdomen vibrated. Then it emitted a creepy sound, and countless Rank One Demonic Beasts, including the Black-headed Snake, slithered toward Liu Yunfei to perform sneak attacks on her.

Since Luo Tian had a sturdy physique, he threw punches at Liu Yunfei repeatedly.

Since Liu Yunfei was already hurt, now that they'd combined their forces to attack her together, things became slightly challenging for her.

For one moment, Liu Yunfei was careless, and Ye Jiuge's Lightning Snake Magical Whip hit her wrist. The Blood Bell flew out of her hand.

She opened her mouth and expelled a sharp, red blade in Luo Tian's direction.

She had not expected Xiao Hong, Big Mouth, and Black Dictator to already be at his side, guarding him. They swarmed around him, polishing off the Blood Sword.

Liu Yunfei ran out of tactics. She knew that she could not beat these people.

She had no desire to carry on fighting, so she wanted to make use of the Protective Blood Fog around her body to escape. However, she discovered that she could not move at all.

Ye Yu concealed himself in Liu Yunfei's shadow. At the opportune moment, he used Puppet Strike to control Liu Yunfei's body.

Ye Jiuge led Luo Tian and others, and they rushed forward and pinned Liu Yunfei on the ground.

She sealed all of Liu Yunfei's crucial acupoints before tying her up firmly with a rope.

Liu Yunfei's hair was disheveled, and her entire body was smeared with dirt. She looked terribly bedraggled.

However, her vicious expression was like a mad woman's. It was as if she would pounce at any moment and bite them.

"Even on the verge of death, you still have the nerve to act so impudently. Later, we will make you cry your eyes out." Ye Jiuge smiled coldly.

“Pah! All you lowlives have dared to use such underhanded tricks on me. I will flay you alive and rip your tendons apart. After that, I will use your remains to create the most inferior Blood Slaves, so that I can feed you to the dogs...”

Halfway through Liu Yunfei’s frenzied cursing, Ye Jiuge gave her a tight slap.

She still wanted to continue her swearing. However, as soon as she opened her mouth, Ye Jiuge smacked her face. She had a bloody nose and a swollen face. She could not even part her lips.

“Let me warn you: I have quite a temper. You better not provoke me.”

Ye Jiuge towered over her. She gazed at Liu Yunfei unfeelingly, like looking at an ant.

“The Patriarch will definitely not let you get away with this.” Liu Yunfei’s eyes burned with rancor.

Then, blood suddenly spilled from the corner of her lips. She died—just like that.

Her tender, beautiful fair skin instantly turned grey.

Her corpse was as stiff as a rock. Her Blood Bell also lost its Spiritual Power.

“She is really dead.” Ye Yu placed his hand under Liu Yunfei’s nose, and his tone was full of disbelief.

At first, he’d thought that they would need at least one prolonged fight to take down Liu Yunfei. He’d never expected her to die so easily.

Ye Jiuge had also not foreseen killing Liu Yunfei so effortlessly.

She furrowed her brow and said to Jun Yichen, “Little Mute, I remember that you once mentioned to me that Main Disciples like her possess something called the ‘Blood Pearl’?”

“Yes. I do not know why she did not use it.” Jun Yichen was immensely surprised by this.

“Ye Yu, search Liu Yunfei’s body and see if she has anything else on her,” Bai Songling told Ye Yu.

“You are more experienced in performing autopsies!” Ye Yu did not budge.

“Although I am a veteran when it comes to postmortem examinations, you are more closely acquainted with her. You must be more familiar with her body than me,” Bai Songling said with a straight face.

Immediately, Ye Yu looked as if a fly had flown into his mouth. He felt uncomfortable.

He thought: Know her intimately my foot! More like being harassed by her all the time.

However, he was too lazy to argue with Bai Songling. He crouched down cooperatively and checked Liu Yunfei's body carefully from head to toe.

Other than some accessories, she was only carrying a Magical Bottomless Satchel. Two scorpions hid in her sleeves, trembling with fear.

One of them was the purple Treasure-hunting Scorpion, which Ye Jiuge had caught earlier, and the other was a scorpion as small as a baby's fist.

Its shell was light brown and completely covered with scars inflicted by a knife.

Some of the scars were darker in color. They must have been there for a long time.

Others were still extremely fresh; it was likely that they were recent.

This brown scorpion seemed very meek. It cowered behind the purple Treasure-hunting Scorpion.

The purple Treasure-hunting Scorpion tried its best to protect the brown scorpion. Its long tail was raised, with its stinger poised for attack. It was telling the humans that if they dared to lay a finger on them, it would fight at all costs.

"What is going on?" Ye Yu was completely puzzled.

"This smaller scorpion must be the Treasure-hunting Scorpion's mate. Liu Yunfei must have used her to control the Treasure-hunting Scorpion."

Jun Yichen had been raising Legendary Venomous Insects since birth. He knew these Unusual Beasts like the back of his hand. He immediately provided them with an explanation.

As it turned out, Treasure-hunting Scorpions were extremely devoted to their partners. As soon as one met its mate, it would remain faithful until death.

To coerce the Treasure-hunting Scorpion into using its power, some ruthless individuals would torment its female.

Judging from this female scorpion's scars, Liu Yunfei must have abused her often.

“That witch is really evil. She did not even spare a scorpion,” Ye Yu expressed his revulsion for Liu Yunfei.

As soon as he thought of how her Seduction had manipulated his own mind in the past, causing him to flirt with her, he became extremely nauseated.

“Tsk tsk. Any male who knows how to treasure his wife deserves respect,” Ye Jiuge said, moved by the scorpion’s fidelity.

After that, she took out two Spiritual Beast Pills and gave them to the Treasure-hunting Scorpion. “You are a natural-born Unusual Beast. Even if I release you and your wife now, it will be tough for you to evade capture again in the future. Therefore, I suggest that you choose to serve under a good master!”

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Although the Treasure-hunting Scorpion was enlightened, it still did not fully understand Ye Jiuge’s words.

Because of Liu Yunfei, it hated all humans. It also scorned their fawning. It flicked its stinger, wanting to smack away the two seemingly fragrant pills.

But before the Treasure-hunting Scorpion could react, the female scorpion hiding behind it suddenly scurried out and swallowed a Spiritual Beast Pill.

“Squeak, squeak, squeak!” the Treasure-hunting Scorpion whined in anger. “How can you eat something that offered by humans? They are bad news!”

“Squeak, squeak, squeak!” the female scorpion sounded equally angry and fierce. It had strikingly

improved from its earlier weak and delicate condition. "Are you out of your mind? You can't even recognize a good item! Your old woman would have died if I hadn't eaten it."

Despite its injuries, it was still fiery when angry.

The Treasure-hunting Scorpion's stance softened immediately. Cooing at its female, it offered the remaining Spiritual Beast Pill and squeaked softly, "If it is good for you, then you should eat more."

"Squeak, squeak!" the female scorpion had wanted to keep it for her male.

But it felt weak. If it did not nourish itself soon, there was a good chance that it would not grow old with its male. Hence, it swallowed the remaining Spiritual Beast Pill without hesitation.

"As expected, their marital relationship is solid!" Ye Jiuge sighed wistfully.

"Eldest Miss, did you understand their conversation?" Ye Yu looked at Ye Jiuge oddly. He hadn't heard that Eldest Miss possessed this ability.

Ye Jiuge was startled for a moment. Only then did she realize that she could understand what the two Scorpions were saying.

She'd never had this ability before.

"Come to think of it..it seems like you understood Xiao Hong last time, too." Jun Yichen gave Ye Jiuge a probing, deep look.

Although the blood-clad Miao people could communicate with Legendary Venomous Insects, they could only glean a vague understanding of what the insects wanted to convey. They could not listen to or speak to the insects.

"Really?" Ye Jiuge thought about it for a while, then realized it was true.

Earlier, she had commented that Xiao Hong was pregnant because of its engorged stomach. She'd then received an angry protest from Xiao Hong that it was male.

But the message she felt that time had not been so clear, so she had not taken it to heart.

But this time, after eating the Spiritual Beast Pills, the female scorpion's injuries had started healing so quickly that the process was visible to the naked eye. In no time, the wounds had fully healed.

Seeing that the Spiritual Beast Pill was beneficial to its female, the Treasure-hunting Scorpion

swiftly turned to Ye Jiuge and pleaded, "You are a good person. I beg you: please, take us in. I can search for treasures and also infiltrate and assassinate. I am very capable. If you can give my female that pill every day, I am willing to work for you."

This time, Ye Jiuge could perceive the Treasure-hunting Scorpion talking to her very clearly. Heavens!

Since when had she learned how to speak to beasts? She didn't even know that she had this ability.

Ye Jiuge thought back carefully. It all seemed to have started after the Black Fat Rat had swallowed her blood essence.

Could it be, that after swallowing her blood essence, the Black Fat Rat had done something without her knowing?

The Treasure-hunting Scorpion saw that Ye Jiuge did not reply for a long time and thought that it had asked for too much. It quickly lessened its demands, speaking gingerly, "Well, one pill a day does seem a little too much. How about one pill a month?"

But Ye Jiuge wasn't paying attention to the Treasure-hunting Scorpion.

She was still engrossed and reeling from the shock that the Black Fat Rat had secretly done something to her.

Zi Shang had once warned her to be careful of the Black Fat Rat, strictly telling her never to feed it with her blood essence.

Now, she'd messed up big time. How was she supposed to answer to Zi Shang?

But with so many people present, she could not drag out the Black Fat Rat and interrogate it.

The Treasure-hunting Scorpion watched Ye Jiuge's expression with trepidation.

Her expression changed from doubtful and suspicious to frustrated, then finally murderous. Its little heart pounded nervously. It quickly added, "Alright! Forget about the pill, then. I'll work for you as long as you do not bully my female!" After that, it emphasized: "My female suffered a miscarriage because of the evil woman. She is very weak now, so she can't be tormented or stressed. If you kill her, I will not continue living either."

The Treasure-hunting Scorpion's poisonous stinger stood straight and high, reflecting its determination.

The female scorpion, which had been sitting quietly by the side, was suddenly reminded of the scorpiling it had lost. The fury and hatred it felt turned its shell a deep brown.

It had mated with the Treasure-hunting Scorpion for many years and failed to produce any offspring.

The evil woman had wanted another Treasure-hunting Scorpion, so she had fed them a lot of drugs to incite their heat and make them copulate.

After many tries, the female had finally gotten pregnant.

But the evil woman had tested the scorpiling inside the female with a potion and found that it was only an ordinary scorpion. So, the evil woman had forced a miscarriage.

It hated that evil woman, but it was powerless to fight against her—that evil woman was simply too powerful.

But now, the evil woman had been killed by these humans. This meant that these humans were stronger than the evil woman.

Most importantly, the fair-skinned and devastatingly beautiful girl who looked like a frail lotus was very kind.

The female scorpoin could tell because the girl had not prevented it from swallowing those two wonderful pills just now. The female scorpion decided to follow the frail lotus girl and live with her. It turned to the Treasure-hunting Scorpion and said, “Tell her that you are willing to enter into a contract with her.”

“Why?” The Treasure-hunting Scorpion was stunned.

Its female was very stubborn. Even when the evil woman had tortured it, the female had the grit to dig down and resist. It had refused to allow the male to create a contract with the evil woman. So, why was the female agreeing to a deal so quickly now?

“She is a good person.” The female scorpion was helpless, too. But it felt that, besides creating a contract, the frail lotus girl would not be swayed.

“Alright!” The Treasure-hunting Scorpion had always listened to its female’s words. It turned to Ye Jiuge, wanting to offer her a contract.

By this time, Ye Jiuge had come out of her shocked stupor due to the Black Fat Rat’s having

played such a trick on her.

She overheard the Treasure-hunting Scorpion couple's conversation and allayed their fears immediately, "I don't need a contract with you. If you wish to follow me, you're welcome to do so! In future, if you find a Master you wish to follow or decide on other plans, just let me know beforehand."

With Zi Shang absent, Ye Jiuge would not dare enter into a contract with other Unusual Beasts so haphazardly.

More importantly, with the Black Fat Rat around, the Treasure-hunting Scorpion's abilities weren't so desirable to her.

The Treasure-hunting Scorpion couple were shocked into silence. After being abused by Liu Yunfei for so long, they couldn't dare imagine that there such a good person existed.

"I still have some things to do. Both of you can rest in my bag for now, and we will talk about the rest later," Ye Jiuge told the husband and wife. She opened the bag she carried with her.

The Black Fat Rat, who was lying in a corner, shifted in its sleep and continued its slumber.

The Treasure-hunting Scorpion couple wisely chose the spot furthest away from the Black Fat Rat and quietly started hibernating.

Jun Yichen and Luo Tian had been observing Ye Jiuge's conversation with the two Scorpions. When they realized that Ye Jiuge's was fluent in beast-speak, a complicated expression appeared on their faces.

Jun Yichen was about to speak when he was interrupted by Ye Jiuge.

“It’s useless to ask me. I don’t know how I learned beast-speak, so I can’t tell you.”

Before Zi Shang reappeared, Ye Jiuge did not want to reveal the Black Fat Rat’s uniqueness.

A small frown appeared on Jun Yichen’s face. He wasn’t satisfied with Ye Jiuge’s reply.

Fluency in beast-speak was a much needed and essential skill for the Blood-clad Miao people.

If he could learn it, he could return home immediately to take revenge for the clan leader.

Luo Tian placed a hand on his Little Master’s shoulders, shaking his head to stop him from asking anything more.

Everyone was entitled to their own secrets.

They did not have the right to force an answer. Furthermore, the secret belonged to Ye Jiuge.

Jun Yichen bit his lower lip hard.

He knew it wasn’t right, but he wanted revenge so badly.

Ye Yu noticed that the atmosphere was tensing, so he quickly spoke up: “Beast-speak or not, we should talk about it later. Why don’t we see what Liu Yunfei keeps in her Magical Bottomless Bag?”

He forcefully wiped away the imprint on Liu Yunfei’s Magical Bottomless Bag and dumped out the contents.

The first thing that fell out was a thick stack of beautiful human skins. Gong Hongyu’s skin was there too.

Besides that, there were 18 bottles of thick, red blood and 15 jade boxes.

Inside the jade boxes were lumps of bloody flesh. These were the Spiritual Roots obtained from recently murdered Spiritual Practitioners.

But they did not find the Blood Pearl that Jun Yichen had mentioned.

Ye Yu went through the rest of the items and still did not find anything resembling the Blood Pearl.

He was not sure whether he had missed something, so he looked up at Jun Yichen and asked, "Could you have misremembered?"

"Impossible. As a core disciple, Liu Yunfei would have had been given a Blood Pearl for sure. Unless she had given the Blood Pearl to someone else." Of this, Jun Yichen was very confident.

"Could the Blood Pearl have been passed on to someone else?" Bai Songling thought that this was strange.

"Of course. The Blood Pearl enhances the battle abilities of the person who consumes it. However, the consequences of consuming it are terrible too.

"Based on Liu Yunfei's domineering personality, she probably felt that she would never need it. So, it's likely that she gave her Blood Pearl to someone who needed it more." Although this was Jun Yichen's conjuncture, he felt like it was probably what had happened.

Bai Songling and Ye Yu both agreed with Jun Yichen.

But Ye Jiuge had her doubts.

For some reason, she felt that they were missing an important piece of the puzzle, a crucial lead. And this lead was so vital that it could affect the entire situation.

But what exactly was the missing puzzle piece?

Ye Jiuge felt the onset of a headache. She could not think of what was missing.

Suddenly, Jun Yichen's expression changed. "It's not good. Wan Ziyang's Legendary Venomous Insect has been killed."

"Ziyang's Legendary Venomous Insect has been killed? How did that happen?" Bai Songling couldn't believe the news. Wan Ziyang had been doing fine in Medicine Refinery Hall. What could have gone wrong?

"Do you think I would joke about such matters?" Jun Yichen's expression was dark.

Before Wan Ziyang's Legendary Venomous Insect had hatched, it had been controlled by his blood essence.

Now that it was dead, he'd also suffered a considerable backlash.

“Little Master did not lie. Wan Ziyang’s Legendary Venomous Insect is dead,” Luo Tian gravely supported Jun Yichen’s claim.

As soon as he announced that, Xiao Hong, Big Mouth, and Black Dictator flew around their heads restlessly. They circled non-stop. It was obvious that they were agitated and spooked.

“Could it be that Su Junqing realized that his tricks had been exposed? Then, out of desperation, he tried to harm Wan Ziyang?” The more Bai Songling thought about it, the more he felt that this was probable. He turned to Ye Jiuge in haste. “Should we go back and check things out?”

Among the group, he was the one who had the closest relationship with Wan Ziyang. Hearing that he was in trouble, Bai Songling wanted to fly back to Medicine Refinery Hall to rescue him immediately.

“Let’s go. We will go back now,” Ye Jiuge ordered.

It wasn’t convenient to bring Liu Yunfei’s body back with them, so Ye Yu found a spot to hide her corpse.

Ye Jiuge kept the Magical Bottomless Bag.

Once they finished their preparations, they set off in the direction of Medicine Refinery City.

There was quite a distance between the mountain valley and Medicine Refinery City.

Despite their speed, they were still unable to arrive before the gate curfew.

It was already dusk. The setting sun cast its light upon the tightly shut city gates to reflect a yellow hue.

Ye Jiuge and the rest crouched atop a small hill located a short distance from Medicine Refinery City, peering at the city.

For some reason, when she looked at the tightly shut gates, her heart couldn’t stop pounding. She did not dare get close.

“What happened, Eldest Miss?” Bai Songling looked at Ye Jiuge in confusion. He did not understand why she refused to enter the city.

Although the gates were shut tight, sneaking in wasn’t a problem. All they had to do was find an isolated part of the wall and jump over.

“Somehow, I get the feeling that something isn’t right. Going into Medicine Refinery City now isn’t the right move.” Ye Jiuge shook her head.

She did not know how to explain her feeling, but her gut told her not to go in.

“What if I infiltrated the city to check things out?” Ye Yu offered.

It was already nightfall, and the city’s walls were covered in shadows.

If he were careful, it wouldn’t be a problem for him.

“Alright. But you be careful.” Ye Jiuge nodded in agreement.

Ye Yu slunk off like a cat. Keeping to the shadows, he crept closer to the city walls.

Ye Jiuge and the rest were watching Ye Yu with bated breath. Seeing that he had succeeded in his attempt to infiltrate the city, they finally breathed a sigh of relief.

The sun gradually disappeared, taking away the light’s last remnants.

Suddenly, the city gates were flung open. Two troops of soldiers, armed with magical weapons to scour for Sorcerers, appeared and charged the two hills on either side of the city.

The gates slowly shut behind them, and the security at the top of the wall appeared to be even tighter.

Torches were lit along the top of the wall, making the surrounding area very visible, and platoons of armed soldiers were on patrol.

Ye Jiuge even saw many Spiritual Practitioners among them. They were patrolling as well. It was as if Medicine Refinery City were about to face an invasion.

“What exactly happened in Medicine Refinery City?” Even Bai Songling, too, felt that something was amiss.

Even when the Sorcerers were running amuck, Medicine Refinery City had never been on such tight security.

“I don’t know about the Lei Kingdom’s customs. But in the Blood-clad tribe, something like this would occur happen if the clan leader had been assassinated,” said Luo Tian in a staccato voice.

Ye Jiuge had a sudden epiphany. She finally realized what the missing puzzle piece was. “The

Bloodthirsty Sect's aim has always been Great Master Dongfang. Can it be that something has happened to him?"

"It can't be!" Bai Songling couldn't believe what she'd said. "As powerful as the Bloodthirsty Sect's Sorcerers are, they couldn't possibly touch Great Master Dongfang in Medicine Refinery Hall, could they?"

If they were that skilled, the people in Medicine Refinery Hall would have been killed long ago.

"No. I'm pretty sure that something has happened to Great Master Dongfang. There must be something we missed at Medicine Refinery Hall."

Ye Jiuge wracked her brain, but she still couldn't make heads or tails of the situation.

While she was thinking about it, the Treasure-hunting Scorpion's voice rang out from within Ye Jiuge's bag: "Master, while we were with Liu Yunfei, I overheard her grumbling about a Sorcerer named Xiong. She said that he destroyed half of her human skins, and even snatched away the Blood Pearl given to her by the Bloodthirsty Patriarch. She even said that she would complain about him to the Bloodthirsty Patriarch."

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Xiong? Could it be Xiong Yunhu?

Ye Jiuge's heart skipped a beat.

No wonder Xiong Yunhu had pretended to be a coward and forced his way into Medicine Refinery Hall. He had an ulterior motive.

It seemed like the Bloodthirsty Patriarch had not just sent one disguised Sorcerer.

Xiong Yunhu had been living in Medicine Refinery Hall for quite a while now. What he did there, no one knew. If he were really a disguised Sorcerer, then Ye Yu was in danger.

Ye Jiuge was very worried. She was thinking about whether to send in someone to support Ye Yu.

Suddenly, her bag moved, and a purple scorpion head peeked out.

“Master, would you like me to find out more about the situation in Medicine Refinery Hall?” the Treasure-hunting Scorpion volunteered his services.

“You?” Ye Jiuge was a little surprised. She’d never thought that the Treasure-hunting Scorpion would be so proactive about helping with their problems.

But with Medicine Refinery Hall under such heavy security, she feared that the Treasure-hunting Scorpion was only going in so that it would be caught.

“Don’t look like that, Master. I’m competent at moving underground,” the Treasure-hunting Scorpion waved its two pincers and said.

Treasures and hidden gems were buried deep underground in caves. If it couldn’t move well underground, how could it find so many treasures?

“Alright. Go on, then. But just try within your limits. Make sure to retreat at the first sign of trouble.” Ye Jiuge nodded.

If it entered the city underground, it should be fine.

Last time, it had been able to find her location and appear by her window without anyone knowing. It was rather capable indeed.

“Alright. Then, I’ll go now.” The Treasure-hunting Scorpion crawled out of the bag and got ready to leave for Medicine Refinery City.

“Wait a moment,” Ye Jiuge stopped the Treasure-hunting Scorpion. She popped out a Spiritual Beast Pill and offered it to the Scorpion. “Eat this to boost your energy.”

“Leave it for my female!” the Treasure-hunting Scorpion replied immediately.

“Eat it. If you perform well this time, then there will be other rewards,” Ye Jiuge ignored its request and stuffed the pill into the Treasure-hunting Scorpion’s pincer.

The Treasure-hunting Scorpion was already enlightened. Although it felt sorry for its female, it wanted to complete the mission to gain the promised reward.

With a crunch, it swallowed the Spiritual Beast Pill and tunneled underground, quickly disappearing from Ye Jiuge's sight.

Ye Jiuge channeled her Spiritual Eye and saw a pale purple shadow heading towards in direction of Medicine Refinery City. The shadow was moving fast.

She was relieved and opened her bag to peek in.

The female scorpion was quietly lying in the corner, fast asleep.

It had been badly tortured in the past, so it was very weak. After swallowing the Spiritual Beast Pills, it had gone into hibernation to recover its strength.

At the other end of the bag, the Black Fat Rat hugged its tail, curled into a small furry ball. It too was deep in sleep.

Ye Jiuge poked its chubby body, calling out softly, "Black Fatty, Black Fatty."

There was no response.

Ye Jiuge grabbed it from the bag and began rubbing and prodding its body as she pleased.

But the Black Fat Rat was like a dead pig. There was still no reaction.

If it weren't for the fact that its tiny body was warm, Ye Jiuge would have thought that it was dead. The rat had been hibernating ever since it had drunk her blood essence. She didn't know what was going on.

Black Fatty was becoming more and more secretive. She had to figure out its background and motive.

If only Zi Shang were here. The Black Fat Rat was terrified of him.

Ye Jiuge couldn't help but sigh.

Bai Songling thought that she was worried about Wan Ziyang and consoled her, "Eldest Miss, you don't have worry. Heaven helps the worthy. Ziyang should be fine."

“Hopefully!” Ye Jiuge stuffed the Black Fat Rat back into the bag. She was about to speak to Bai Songling and the rest about Xiong Yunhu when a purple glow shot out of the city walls and moved toward them at a fast pace.

It was the glow from the Treasure-hunting Scorpion. Why was he back so quickly?

Ye Jiuge was very surprised. She channeled her Spiritual Eye and saw a grey shadow following the Treasure-hunting Scorpion.

With just one glance, she knew it was Ye Yu.

Ye Yu’s shadow flickered on and off. It seemed like he wasn’t doing so well.

Ye Jiuge immediately sent Bai Songling and Luo Tian to meet up with them.

Ye Yu was already exhausted. He was running on his last bit of fuel and gritting his teeth to hold on until he reached the group.

The moment he saw Bai Songling and Luo Tian, he finally collapsed with relief.

Bai Songling carried Ye Yu on his back, and Luo Tian protected their backs. The trio quickly returned to where they’d come from.

“Let’s change locations,” ordered Ye Jiuge decisively.

Although there no one was chasing after Ye Yu, in the current situation, it wasn’t safe to remain in one location for too long.

Jun Yichen led the way. They made their way deeper into the forest. When they reached a more hidden location, they settled down.

Ye Jiuge started Ye Yu’s treatment immediately.

His face was a very whitish pale. His eyebrows, temples, corners of his eyes, and his lips were stained a strange, deep red.

His body burned, and the breath he spewed was hot. He had been hit with Fire Poison.

Black Dictator sprawled on Ye Yu’s neck. Its black body had turned a deep red too.

“How is Ye Yu?” Bai Songling asked worriedly.

“He’s fine. Thank goodness Black Dictator absorbed most of the poison. Otherwise, even if he didn’t die, he would have been severely weakened.”

Ye Jiuge forced Ye Yu to swallow the Icy Frost Powder, then took out the Lightning Fire Needle to prick Ye Yu and let out blood.

Droplets of fiery red blood dripped to the ground, searing countless small holes into the grass.

“What a devastating poison!” Bai Songling shivered at the thought of falling for such a poison.

He looked at Black Dictator again, then glanced at Little Mute.

The Bloodthirsty Sect’s poison magic was strange and unpredictable. If he hadn’t had the protection of the Legendary Venomous Insect, which Little Mute had cultivated, Ye Yu would have died multiple times by now.

Bai Songling thought about it and subconsciously caressed Big Mouth, who was attached to his wrist. He secretly decided that he would ask Ye Jiuge for more Spiritual Beast Pills to nurture Big Mouth.

After Ye Jiuge forced the Fire Poison from Ye Yu’s body, she pierced a needle into his upper lip acupuncture point.

Ye Yu’s body jerked once. Then, he finally came around.

The moment he opened his eyes, he struggled to sit up. His voice was raspy. “It wasn’t good—the situation in Medicine Refinery City.”

“What isn’t good? How is Ziyang?” Bai Songling was impatient to have his questions answered.

“Ziyang has been sent to jail,” Ye Yu said, his face pale as can be.

“What? Who did it?” Bai Songling shouted angrily.

Although Wan Ziyang’s military authority had been revoked, he was still working for the Emperor. Who would dare touch him?

“It was the Crown Prince,” Ye Yu spoke through gritted teeth. “Su Junqing and the Crown Prince took advantage of Ziyang’s heavy injuries. They tied him up, and even squashed Ziyang’s Legendary Venomous Insect to death.”

“Since when did the Crown Prince have a say in matters regarding Medicine Refinery City? Where

were Great Master Dongfang and Li Zijun? They just ignored his overstepping of boundaries?”

Bai Songling suddenly thought of something and his facial expression changed. “Could they have been hypnotized by Su Junqing’s Mental Manipulation? That’s not right—otherwise, they would have been hypnotized long before. Why would they be hypnotized now?”

“They were not hypnotized. According to the people at Medicine Refinery Hall, Ziyang was the one who was hypnotized and secretly poisoned Great Master Dongfang and Li Zijun. Now, Great Master Dongfang is heavily injured and in a coma, and Li Zijun’s life is in danger. The entire Medicine Refinery City is in chaos. Ye Yuxuan collaborated with the Crown Prince. With the help of Zhang Peng, Medicine Refinery Hall’s second-in-command, they have taken over control of the city’s guards.

“They have accused Ziyang of being the culprit and denounced us as Sorcerers in disguise. They are calling for our capture.” Ye Yu took a breath, then continued, “Even worse, Gong Honglei suddenly rushed back this morning. Hearing that Great Master Dongfang had been harmed by Wan Ziyang, he immediately sided with the Crown Prince.”

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“G*dmmit! Sc*ew those b*tches! Since when did the Sorcerers hypnotize us?” Bai Songling was so pissed that he wanted to rush back to Medicine Refinery City and choke the Crown Prince to death.

“Xiong Yunhu was the real Sorcerer. He probably did the same thing as Jiang Shengjie and hid his aura with a magical weapon. Besides, his cultivation was even stronger than Liu Yunfei’s.” Ye Jiuge recalled what they knew about Xiong Yunhu in a murmur.

“So, it was him. I knew there was something off about him. If not, why else would he suddenly pay

a visit to Ziyang? It was obvious that he was up to no good. He must have planned it long ago.”

Bai Songling was full of terrible regret. If he had known, he would have stayed at Medicine Refinery Hall with Wan Ziyang.

“Regrets are useless now. We should be thinking of a way to rescue Ziyang.” Ye Jiuge’s expression was grave.

Besides rescuing Wan Ziyang, she also wanted to visit Dongfang Yao and Li Zijun, who had been poisoned.

She had the Lightning Fire Needle and numerous top-notch Medicinal Pills, which her grandfather had left behind. No matter how serious their injuries, she would still be able to save them.

The only troublesome thing was that there were too many obstacles in Medicine Refinery City. The security at Medicine Refinery Hall was also too tight.

With the Crown Prince, Ye Yuxuan, and Gong Honglei working together to stop them, it wouldn’t be easy to infiltrate Medicine Refinery Hall, even for her.

What Ye Yu said next confirmed her suspicions: “The security at the jail wasn’t too bad. The guards were mostly ordinary soldiers.

“But Great Master Dongfang and Li Zijun’s compound—Medicine Refinery Hall—is surrounded by guards sent by the Crown Prince, Su Junqing, and Ye Yuxuan. It is so heavily guarded that a fly can’t buzz by unnoticed.

“Furthermore, Su Junqing has even set a Fire Poison trap for me around Medicine Refinery Hall. If the Treasure-hunting Scorpion had not made a timely appearance and caused a disturbance to allow me to escape, I would have been captured.”

Ye Yu gritted his teeth in fury as he remembered the Fire Poison trap that Su Junqing had set.

The ruthless fellow had set it using human sacrifices.

Otherwise, he would not have fallen for the trap.

Sixteen guards, 16 lives—sacrificed just for the sake of that trap.

Hearing Ye Yu’s report, everyone’s spirits sank, and the atmosphere became oppressive.

It was ironic that they had only cleared their names yesterday. Today, they were facing another

pickle that was even more troublesome and difficult.

“Don’t be disheartened, guys. Think about it another way: this is the Sorcerers’ last gamble.

“If we manage to rescue Wan Ziyang and heal Great Master Dongfang and Li Zijun’s injuries, we will be able to thwart the Bloodthirsty Sect’s schemes once and for all,” Ye Jiuge encouraged the others calmly.

“Eldest Miss is right. We have already killed Jiang Shengjie and Liu Yunfei. It is only a matter of time before we get Xiong Yunhu and Su Junqing, too. Once we expose their evil schemes, the Crown Prince, Ye Yuxuan, and Gong Honglei will have to brace themselves to be slapped with embarrassment!” Bai Songling cracked a sly smile, then continued, “They have been paving the way for the Sorcerers. If you ask me, they are the ones who consorted with the Sorcerers.”

“That’s right. When that happens, we will watch as they try to clear their names.” Ye Yu thought about it and suddenly felt very excited.

He had thought that it would be years before the Su Clan and the Crown Prince could be toppled from their positions. It had seemed like revenge for his clan was still far away.

But, by a stroke of luck, the day of revenge was now closer than expected. If Su Junqing were taken down, the Crown Prince, who had conspired with the Sorcerers, would not be able to get off scot-free either.

“What are you waiting for, then? Let’s go!” Bai Songling was pumped up and ready to act.

Even the Treasure-hunting Scorpion, which was on Ye Jiuge’s shoulder, squeaked with a heated fighting spirit.

Ye Jiuge was a generous Master. Since it had made a considerable contribution, it would surely receive rewards from her.

“A bunch of fools!” Jun Yichen mocked expressionlessly. It was obvious that going into Medicine Refinery City was to seek death, yet they were praising the act like it was heroic and honorable.

“Being a fool isn’t a bad choice.” Luo Tian smiled lightly.

He had been always been curious.

Wan Ziyang, Bai Songling, and Ye Yu were not simpletons. But why did they obey Ye Jiuge’s every command? Even his awkward and delicate Little Master trusted her a lot too.

He finally understood now. Ye Jiuge was mysterious and alluring at the same time. No matter how difficult or against-the-odds a situation was, she could convince them of victory.

If Ye Jiuge knew what Luo Tian thought of her, she would have laughed bitterly. She was merely trying to hoodwink the rest.

Although she had pep-talked the group into feeling confident, she still dared not lead them and venture into Medicine Refinery City openly.

She planned to rest for six hours, and when the soldiers were most tired, they would sneak into the city.

Everyone agreed to this plan.

After they had killed Jiang Shengjie last night, the group had rushed back to Medicine Refinery City without resting.

There, they had fought with the Crown Prince and Ye Yuxuan, briefly visited Wan Ziyang, then rushed off to kill Liu Yunfei.

After hurrying here and there, they were all exhausted.

If their bodies hadn't been very strong and aided by Ye Jiuge's Spiritual Revitalization Pills, they would have collapsed long ago.

Luo Tian and Jun Yichen volunteered for the night watch.

Their bodies were much sturdier and more resilient, and they specialized in the night watch.

Jun Yichen took the first half, and Luo Tian took charge of the remainder.

No one fought them for the night shift. Bai Songling and Ye Yu found a place to lie down and prepared to rest.

Ye Jiuge climbed up an ancient banyan tree. She stood on a branch, looking at the brightly lit Medicine Refinery City in the far-off distance.

During times like this, she always missed Zi Shang terribly.

Although he wasn't reliable, he always provided her with aid during crucial times. She looked down and caressed the purple imprint on her inner arm.

It had been half a month since Zi Shang had gone into enclosed cultivation, and there had been no news from him. She wondered when he would return.

Sigh. When Zi Shang was around, she found him annoying. When he wasn't there, she missed him a lot. It was so absurd.

As Ye Jiuge was agonizing over her own ironic and unreasonable feelings, the imprint seemed to stir.

Her eyes widened, and she quickly raised her hand to peer at the imprint carefully.

The flat imprint remained dull as ever. There was no visible change.

It must have been a figment of her imagination.

Forget it! She should rest and recoup so that she would have enough energy to rescue Wan Ziyang!

Ye Jiuge pulled down her sleeve and closed her eyes to rest.

Suddenly, there was a tremendous uproar from the walls of Medicine Refinery City.

Ye Yu and Bai Songling, whose eyes were closed, woke up immediately.

Luo Tian and Jun Yichen also appeared beside Ye Jiuge. Together, they looked toward the city's walls.

The city's walls were still brightly lit, and a few Kongming lanterns had been also been lighted.

Below the lanterns, glittering words could be seen: "Surrender, and Wan Ziyang will be spared."

It was an outright threat.

"What should we do, Eldest Miss?" Bai Songling paled after reading the words. He felt very lost.

The Crown Prince and Su Junqing had immensely hated Wan Ziyang for a long time now.

She wouldn't put it past them to deal with him first.

"Wait and see," Ye Jiuge replied gravely.

No matter what, Wan Ziyang was the Imperial Envoy as decreed by the Emperor.

Even the Crown Prince wouldn't dare act rashly by harming him. He still needed to return to the Capital.

If Dongfang Que were to find out about his actions and report him to the Emperor, the Crown Prince would not be able to get off easily.

Just as Ye Jiuge predicted, the Crown Prince had not dared to kill Wan Ziyang.

"Crown Prince, this is the moment when you should act decisively. Danger cannot be overcome without taking risks!" Su Junqing urged.

If it were up to him, killing Wan Ziyang would be the wisest choice.

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"Wan Ziyang is Father's man. If I punish him without asking, it will anger Father immensely," the Crown Prince was adamant about refusing to kill Wan Ziyang rashly.

He knew his father too well.

Although the accusations he'd pinned on Wan Ziyang would be enough to warrant death, the execution order could only come from his father. If the Crown Prince took matters into his own hands, this would be equivalent to usurping power.

"You do not have to worry about that, Your Highness. The great plan in the Capital has been executed. The Emperor is no longer a threat." Su Junqing was explicit about his intentions.

The spies hidden in the Capital had started taking action against Emperor Xuanwu. They no longer needed to care about whether the Emperor would be furious or not.

"We should decide when the plan has succeeded." The Crown Prince shot Su Junqing a side glance.

It wasn't that he did not believe in Su Junqing's abilities, but his father also had a Spiritual Master's

cultivation. Furthermore, there were so many capable and powerful guards in the palace. The possibilities of succeeding were very slim. So, he had to have a backup plan.

Seeing that the Crown Prince would not be swayed, Su Junqing gave up. Besides, Wan Ziyang would not live long, anyway. There was no point in falling out with the Crown Prince over such a small issue. Hence, he changed plans. "If the Crown Prince isn't willing to use Wan Ziyang as bait, then let's use someone else!"

"Who did you have in mind?" The Crown Prince was confused.

Besides Wan Ziyang, they did not have anyone else suitable.

"I've heard that Ye Jiuge is very protective and attached to her servants. I wonder if it's true?" Su Junqing released a cunning laugh that betrayed his ill intentions.

When he'd used the maid, Hua Die, as bait last time, Ye Jiuge had successfully been lured to the Ruins.

This time, they would use the maid called Yu Die!

Meanwhile, in the Soaring Frost Hall of the Medicine Refinery Complex...

Ye Ruyi clenched her fist as she stood in front of Yu Die, looking exactly like a small beast as she glared at Ye Shanshan. "No way! Yu Die is my maid. You can't take her away."

"Fourth Younger Sister, Yu Die was Eldest Sister's maid. How has she now become yours?" Ye Shanshan's tender, beautiful face smiled coldly. She continued lazily, "Eldest Sister had committed so many crimes. I advise you not to get involved with her."

"Eldest Sister isn't a Sorcerer. All of you have framed her!" Ye Ruyi screamed back sharply.

Her Eldest Sister had already turned the tables on the situation this morning. Then, Great Master Dongfang had suddenly been harmed, and Elder Sister's situation had worsened yet again.

She did not understand what exactly had happened, but she saw that her father and Second Sister had rubbed salt in Ye Jiuge's wounds and collaborated with the Crown Prince to frame her.

"Shut your mouth!" Ye Shanshan's eyes narrowed. She suddenly raised her hand and struck out at Ye Ruyi.

Ye Ruyi was only seven years old. Although she had an outstanding aptitude, she had only started cultivating recently. She wasn't a match for Ye Shanshan.

The slap hit Ye Ruyi's face, and she flew backward, slamming over the tables and chairs nearby.

"Fourth Miss!" Qing Hu and Qing Liu's faces changed, and they hurried over to the fallen Ye Ruyi.

Yu Die wanted to go over and check the Fourth Miss' injuries, but she was subdued by Ye Shanshan's guards, gagged, and tied up.

"Don't blame me, Fourth Younger Sister. That slap was for your own good. If Father were here, this wouldn't have been settled with just a slap," Ye Shanshan heaved a pretentious sigh and left with her guards.

Ye Ruyi's hair fell apart, and her small face was swollen like a pig's.

She glared at Ye Shanshan's retreating figure with hatred. At the same time, she also cursed her own helplessness and inability.

If she were as capable as Eldest Sister, she wouldn't be in this pitiful situation.

"Fourth Miss, you've already done your best. Please, take care of yourself. Eldest Miss would not blame you for it." Qing Hu and Qing Liu wept uncontrollably.

Ye Ruyi bit her lip hard and forced her tears back. She stood up and walked to the edge of the table. Picking up a Pill Production book, she started flipping through it. There was only one burning thought running through her head: I will get stronger. More and more.

Meanwhile, outside Medicine Refinery City, in the dense forest...

Ye Jiuge and the rest were slowly creeping closer to Medicine Refinery City.

Although Ye Jiuge had predicted that the Crown Prince would not touch Wan Ziyang, just in case, it would be better to stay close.

Just then, the clamor from the top of the walls changed again.

Under the Kongming lanterns, a new set of glittering words were reflected: "Surrender, and Yu Die will be spared."

Shortly after, a little maid wearing a jade-green robe was dangled off the top of the city's wall.

"Yu Die!" Ye Jiuge reeled in shock. Her eyes widened and her pupils dilated.

With a glance, she knew it was Yu Die.

“Despicable lowlife! They’ve even harmed a little girl. Are they even human?” Bai Songling growled through clenched teeth, and his fists clenched into tight balls.

“Let’s go rescue them, Eldest Miss!” Ye Yu suggested calmly.

“Of course, we must rescue them! If not, Su Junqing will take us for cowards.” Bai Songling was very agreeable to the suggestion.

Ye Jiuge remained silent.

Her face was calm, but her eyes kindled with a fire that burned ferociously.

The Crown Prince would not dare kill Wan Ziyang, but he certainly had no qualms about killing Yu Die. Ye Jiuge did not want the innocent Yu Die to be harmed. But, if they surrendered so quickly, they would lose their current advantage. If they backed down, it would be impossible to deal with the Crown Prince and Su Junqing in the future.

If it were just her, she would have rushed in, no matter what.

But there was too much at stake now.

The Sorcerers, Dongfang Yao, Li Zijun, and Wan Ziyang...she could not just go along with her emotions.

This was such a pickle.

As Ye Jiuge was hesitating, an enticing and familiar voice rang out inside her head: “If you want to go, then just go!”

...

At the gates of Medicine Refinery City, Yu Die was tied to the top of the city wall with her hands locked above her head.

Her head hung low, and her thin, frail body looked pitiful and sad as it swayed with the cold winds blowing through the night.

“Ye Jiuge, if you surrender quietly, I will spare this little Sorcerer’s life. If not, don’t blame us for what will happen to her,” Su Junqing’s cold, evil voice drifted out from Medicine Refinery City.

Yu Die raised her head with great effort, calling out, "Eldest Miss, don't worry about me! They made Hua Die frame you!"

Before she could finish speaking, a terrifying scream sprang from her lips.

The guard standing next to Su Junqing had flung a whip across her body.

"Give her the chili water treatment. It's alright if she's maimed, but just don't let her die," Su Junqing heartlessly ordered.

"Yes, sir!" The guard was called Gan Er.

He was tall and slim. His eyes were triangle-shaped, and he had bushy eyebrows. He looked very sly, and his favorite pastime was torturing people into confessing.

This was the first time that he going to display his skills in front of the whole city. He was very excited thinking about it, and he immediately prepared a bucket of chili water.

Dipping the whip into the bucket, he flicked the whip toward Yu Die.

The whip soaked in chili water broke Yu Die's skin. The stinging pain was bone-deep. It was enough to make a person go crazy.

Yu Die's body twitched in pain, and her bound hands made matters worse.

She gritted her teeth harshly, swallowing the scream of pain and blood into her stomach.

She knew these evil people were trying to use her to lure out Eldest Miss. She would not let them get their way.

"The little lass isn't too bad, after all!" a ruthless glint flickered across Gan Er's face. He started whipping Yu Die with renewed enthusiasm.

He switched to a thorny whip.

This whip was not only painful when it struck the body, but it also ripped Yu Die's clothes to shreds.

Thinking about how Yu Die's clothing would be shredded to nothing and how she would bleed naked for his pleasure, especially with the whole city enjoying this view, he felt so giddy with excitement that his eyes turned red.

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“Little servant girl, enjoy this!” Gan Er raised the whip dipped in chili water and cracked it toward Yu Die’s chest.

With her eyes closed, Yu Die gritted her teeth as she awaited the arrival of the sharp pain.

However, the pain did not come. Instead, the rope binding her suddenly broke apart, and she could hear the sound of the wind ringing in her ears.

Yu Die immediately opened her eyes. An azure figure soared toward her and scooped her up. They landed safely on the ground.

“Eldest Miss!” Seeing the beautiful face in front of her eyes, Yu Die thought that she was dreaming.

“You are fine now.” Ye Jiuge quickly examined Yu Die’s body. After ensuring that she only had flesh wounds, Ye Jiuge passed her to Bai Songling.

“You really came?” Su Junqing felt that Ye Jiuge was just a fool. She was so soft that she had risked her life for an unimportant maid.

Su Junqing did not care about Yu Die.

Even without her, Qing Hu and Qing Liu remained.

Ye Shanshan had told him that the two maids had been transferred to Ye Ruyi from Ye Jiuge.

“Su Junqing, you are the Su Clan’s oldest son, yet, you have used an innocent twelve-year-old girl

to lure me here. Furthermore, you have abused her in front of everyone in the city. I wonder if this is your Su Clan's custom or the Crown Prince's orders."

As she stood in front of the city gates, Ye Jiuge's beautiful gaze was tranquil and calm, but this made her expression appear proud.

The night wind blew through Ye Jiuge's long dark hair, and she looked like a fairy who rode the clouds. She was elegant and other-worldly, and her captivating beauty ensnared every soul present.

Her chilly voice was not loud, but it spread throughout the entire city.

At that moment, the Medicine Refinery City's residents were on tenterhooks and unable to sleep.

Although the Crown Prince and Su Junqing had been spreading the news that Yu Die was a Sorcerer too and Ye Jiuge's accomplice. Their abusive methods were ruthless.

Parents with young daughters held them close and covered their ears. They did not dare let them witness such a brutal scene.

No matter Ye Jiuge's reputation, everyone admired her righteousness when she arrived suddenly to save her maid.

When the Crown Prince, who was standing at the city wall, heard this, his heart leaped.

As the Crown Prince, who was supposed to place righteousness above all, it sullied his reputation to use such a vicious and despicable method.

However, Su Junqing calmly said, "Ye Jiuge, you have killed and flayed so many people. You drained them of their blood for your cultivation, and your evil crimes fill the heavens. Yet, you dare to say that my methods are cruel? The Sorcerers act in defiance of the natural order, and everyone has the right to kill them. I am only working expediently. If you had surrendered quickly, I would not have done this to them..."

"I am willing to surrender!" Ye Jiuge suddenly interrupted Su Junqing's lengthy speech.

"What?" Su Junqing was momentarily stunned. He thought that he had misheard Ye Jiuge.

"Eldest Miss!" Bai Songling and Ye Yu cried out at the same time.

Earlier, in the thick woods, they had been unable to bear letting the young maid suffer, so they'd decided to save her. However, they had not planned to surrender!

"However, I have two conditions." Ye Jiuge's beautiful face was calm as a tranquil lake.

"Let's hear them," Su Junqing replied with some interest.

"Firstly, kill the guard who laid his hands on Yu Die earlier." A murderous intent was clear in Ye Jiuge's chilly voice.

Hearing this, the blood drained from Gan Er's face, and he immediately knelt down with a plop.

He was about to beg for mercy when Su Junqing raised a finger. A black ray entered Gan Er's body and sealed off his throat, preventing him from speaking.

Su Junqing gave a meaningful glance to the guard beside him.

The short but muscular guard immediately stepped on Gan Er and prevented him from moving.

"What's your second condition?" Su Junqing pulled back his hand and said.

Although killing the donkey when the grinding was done would be detrimental to his reputation, Su Junqing did not care.

Then, Ye Jiuge raised her voice and said, "Secondly, send Wan Ziyang out of the city."

Su Junqing frowned involuntarily.

He would not agree to Ye Jiuge's condition rashly. Instead, he asked, "Are you only surrendering yourself, or does your surrender include everyone else?"

"I will exchange only myself for Wan Ziyang," Ye Jiuge said, emphasizing every word.

"Eldest Miss, no!" Ye Yu disagreed immediately.

"I have the closest relationship with Ziyang. I should be the one to exchange myself for him," Bai Songling cried out anxiously.

"Eldest Miss, we must consider this matter more carefully." Luo Tian did not agree either. He felt that it would be unwise for Ye Jiuge to give her life to feed a tiger.

Jun Yichen rolled his eyes silently.

"I have made my decision." Ye Jiuge turned and showed Su Junqing her back.

Her expression was calm. Her bright eyes looked at Bai Songling and the rest, and she winked mischievously. She whispered, "Trust me."

Bai Songling and Ye Yu were momentarily confused, and they exchanged glances.

They had known Ye Jiuge longer than the others, and they knew that she was full of ideas. She was also powerful and usually did not take risks unless she was sure of the outcome.

Seeing that Bai Songling and Ye Yu had agreed, Luo Tian and Jun Yichen did not oppose her any longer.

While Ye Jiuge hinted to Bai Songling and the others, Su Junqing was discussing with the Crown Prince whether they should agree to Ye Jiuge's conditions or not.

"Your Highness, I feel that it is worthwhile to exchange a half-dead Wan Ziyang for Ye Jiuge." Su Junqing was resolute. He was determined to obtain Ye Jiuge.

The Crown Prince was still hesitant. He said unhappily, "Our reputations will suffer if we follow Ye Jiuge's conditions for the exchange. If we were to make a deal, I want all of them."

"Your Highness, Ye Jiuge is undoubtedly their leader. If she were to land in our hands, do you think that the rest would escape us?" Su Junqing smiled and said confidently.

"You are right." After he pondered it, the Crown Prince felt that what Su Junqing had said made sense. He laughed and said, "Ye Jiuge is so stupid to think that it is righteous for her to exchange herself for the hostages. When she lands in my hands, I will make her pay."

As he spoke, there was a vicious glint in his eyes. He was probably thinking of countless torture methods he would use for dealing with Ye Jiuge.

"Your Highness. No matter what, Ye Jiuge's last name is 'Ye.' Although Great Master Ye has broken off ties with her, this will still affect his reputation. Please control yourself for now so that Great Master Ye will not be placed in a difficult situation," Su Junqing advised earnestly.

"These are Great Master Ye's words?" The Crown Prince frowned.

If this were Ye Yuxuan's idea, he would have to reconsider.

Recently, Dongfang Que had roped in many aristocratic families from the capital, and the Crown Prince desperately needed Ye Yuxuan's support.

Su Junqing gave a slight nod.

In the Crown Prince's eyes, the Su Clan and Ye Clan, as in-laws, were family. There was nothing wrong with Su Junqing representing Ye Yuxuan.

"Alright!" Although the Crown Prince would have loved to deal with Ye Jiuge immediately, he told himself that there would be plenty of time for that in the future.

"Your Highness is wise and brilliant." Su Junqing gave a small sigh of relief.

Bloodthirsty Patriarch had asked for Ye Jiuge to be personally delivered to him, so there was no room for mistakes.

After Su Junqing finished discussing with the Crown Prince, he gave an order to the guard beside him, "Go and bring Wan Ziyang here."

The guards left, acknowledging his order.

Then, Su Junqing said to Ye Jiuge, who was standing at the foot of the city wall, "I agree to your conditions. To show my sincerity, I shall fulfill your first request now."

Having said so, he threw Gan Er from the city wall.

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Ye Jiuge watched coldly as the guard plummeted and crashed head-first onto the ground, forming a pool of blood.

"He's dead." With a glance, Bai Songling knew that the guard was incurable.

“That’s good. We won’t have to dirty our hands.” Ye Jiuge apathetically withdrew her gaze and looked toward the city gates.

After a short wait, the gates opened.

Su Junqing led out a squad of guards. Behind them was an army green stretcher.

Wan Ziyang was lying on it. From a distance, his face looked as pale as a dead man’s, and his chest was barely moving.

“What have you done to him?” Bai Songling roared in anger.

“Brother Bai, you need not panic. Brother Wan is fine. It’s just that, earlier, he tried to get off his bed and hop around before his severe injury could completely heal. I was afraid that his injury would worsen, so I fed him some Muscle-paralysis Sleeping Powder,” Su Junqing explained, significantly understating.

Ye Jiuge held back the furious Bai Songling and whispered, “I have an antidote for Muscle-paralysis Sleeping Powder in my bag. After we exchanged for him, give it to him to consume.”

Before leaving, she’d left all her antidotes behind.

“I understand. Eldest Miss, please be careful.” Bai Songling nodded forcefully.

“Eldest Miss, if you have finished talking, please come over here!” Although Su Junqing was still smiling, he was very nervous.

He feared that Bai Songling would suddenly try to rush over and grab Wan Ziyang. Then, the situation would be like giving away a bride on top of losing an army, and he would become a laughingstock.

Ye Jiuge calmly walked toward Su Junqing.

The guards who were carrying Wan Ziyang avoided her carefully and headed toward Bai Songling and the rest. The two sides brushed past each other.

Wan Ziyang was successfully received by Bai Songling and the others, and Ye Jiuge arrived beside Su Junqing.

“Eldest Miss Ye, you are indeed righteous. I admire you very much.” Smiling at Ye Jiuge, Su Junqing’s eyes began to glow pale-red.

A hazy power enveloped Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge felt dizzy, and her body involuntarily began to sway.

She knew that Su Junqing was using Mental Manipulation on her, and she did not resist.

After ensuring that Ye Jiuge was under the influence of his Mental Manipulation, he began to interrogate her, "Where is Liu Yunfei?"

"We have successfully besieged and killed her," Ye Jiuge replied.

Su Junqing's eyes narrowed. When he heard that Ye Jiuge and the others had gone out of the city to chase down the injured Liu Yunfei, he'd had a bad feeling in his heart.

However, he was still astonished to hear that Liu Yunfei was dead.

After all, Liu Yunfei had a high cultivation level, and she was careful, treacherous, and cunning. He had not expected her to die so quickly.

Su Junqing thought: Forget it. So what if she's dead? As long as I can complete the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's task, he will not make a fuss about Liu Yunfei.

Su Junqing steadied himself and asked again, "Where is her corpse and her Magical Bottomless Bag?" Those were the more critical questions.

"The corpse is buried in the Red Mud Valley, which is one hundred and fifty kilometers away from the city. The Magical Bottomless Bag is in Ye Yu's hands," Ye Jiuge said honestly.

Su Junqing thought: The Red Mud Valley is the secret stronghold that we agreed on earlier. It seems that Ye Jiuge is not lying.

He then said to Ye Jiuge, "Eldest Miss, to be safe, please hand your weapon over to me!"

"I don't have a weapon on me. I passed everything to Bai Songling and the rest before coming here," Ye Jiuge replied while staring blankly into space.

Su Junqing's gaze swept Ye Jiuge's body. He saw that she was not wearing any accessories, and her close-fitting dress did not seem capable of storing anything. He believed her.

"Alright. This way, please!" Su Junqing led the way.

"Ye Jiuge, serves you right," the Crown Prince arrogantly sneered while standing on the stairs not far away.

Ye Jiuge's eyes were still dull and lifeless. It was as though she had not heard the Crown Prince.

The Crown Prince frowned and was about to speak again, but Su Junqing stopped him.

"Your Highness, we have plenty of things to do. Why don't we put Ye Jiuge in jail and lock her up with Spirit Restricting Manacles?"

"Sure, Spirit Restricting Manacles will suit her." The Crown Prince nodded in satisfaction.

The death cell in the Medicine Refinery City was installed with a pair of Spirit Restricting Manacles.

The manacles were forged from Spirit Absorbing Stone, which sealed a Spiritual Practitioner's Spiritual Power after they were put on.

Wearing the manacles for a long time damaged the prisoner's meridians. Ye Jiuge did not wear them when she was locked up.

In the dark and damp jail, the metal bars of the death cell glinted with a cold light under the dusky candlelight.

The only death cell in the Medicine Refinery City was located in the depths of the jail after passing through a musty passageway.

Dongfang Yao was not a bloodthirsty person.

In the history of the Medicine Refinery City, the death cell had only been used to lock up a few bandits who had committed murder. In the last five years, there had been no occupants.

Moss grew in the corners, and rats and cockroaches scurried across the floor.

Forget about a mattress—there was not even a pile of hay for the occupant.

The Spirit Restricting Manacles was installed on the gray wall. Mottled iron chains were connected to two gray metal bands.

"Eldest Miss, this way, please!" After reaching the wall, Su Junqing smiled as he held the two gray metal bands. His eyes glowed with a red light.

He appeared relaxed, but his entire body tensed at the thought that Ye Jiuge would suddenly flee. Behind Ye Jiuge, a group of Intermediate Level Spiritual Practitioners guards surrounded her in a ring.

Ye Jiuge seemed not to have realized that the Spirit Restricting Manacles were harmful. She silently moved forward, slid down her azure sleeves, and stretched out her snow-white arms.

After attaching the gray Spirit Restricting Manacles to Ye Jiuge's wrists, Su Junqing was finally relieved. He could not help laughing, "Ye Jiuge, you have finally landed in my hands."

He felt an indescribable exhilaration after having completed half of his mission.

Now, he only needed to wait for Xiong Yunhu to transport Dongfang Yao.

As for Wan Ziyang and the rest, he was not in a hurry to capture them.

Previously, when he was helping the Bloodthirsty Sect collect young girls and Spiritual Practitioners, he'd had to act in secret.

With Wan Ziyang, Bai Songling, and the others serving as his scapegoats, he could pluck up the courage and do whatever he wanted.

The look in Ye Jiuge's eyes was still lifeless, and she did not react to Su Junqing's laughter.

After Su Junqing was finally satisfied, he left, delighted, with the guards.

The death cell immediately plunged into pitch-black darkness.

A dirty and fat rat threaded its way out from the corner and encircled Ye Jiuge curiously. It bared its fangs, wanting to nibble on its fragrant prey.

The sound of the chains suddenly rang out, and the dirty fat rat fled in fear.

Ye Jiuge, who had looked dull and lifeless, slowly opened her eyes. They were clear and bright. Lowering her voice, she said, "Didn't you say that you have a way to deal with this? What are you waiting for?"

"Little Jiuge, you are so impatient. Don't you want to have some fun after not seeing me for so long?" His pleasant laughter rang in the dark death cell. It was like night wind blowing at lilies of the valley.

"Stop being so pesky. These manacles are really painful. Quick, get rid of them for me." Ye Jiuge

pulled at the manacles forcefully.

The chains made a continuous rattling sound. A gray glow flashed from the Spirit Restricting Manacles and entered from Ye Jiuge's wrists, sealing the Spiritual Power in her entire body.

"Tsk tsk. Little Jiuge's temper has worsened. It seems that you have not been doing well while I wasn't around." As he chuckled, a tall, straight human figure gradually appeared in front of Ye Jiuge.

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The previously pitch-black jail was suddenly aglow with starlight shining on Zi Shang's entire body. His long, purple hair had turned black and was mostly contained by a golden coronet. The remainder of his hair, which looked like crow feathers, was scattered behind his head.

His purple vertical slit pupils had become as dark as the unmeasurable depths of a pond. Occasionally, they shone with a light of exceptional sharpness.

He wore a long robe with dark violet fringe. He had a slender figure and looked as impressive as an immortal.

More importantly, his long, obsidian snake tail had transformed into a pair of long legs.

"You have really transformed into a human?" Ye Jiuge's eyes widened.

She had guessed that this was possible when Zi Shang had talked about the Transformation Pearl.

However, she was still astonished to see the demonic snake transformed into a human.

“Don’t you want me to accompany you day and night?” Zi Shang’s pretty and flirtatious face revealed a slight helplessness and indulgence, as though he were only thinking about what was best for Ye Jiuge. He said, “My original body is not convenient. It’s better for me to take on a human form.”

“Who wants you to accompany them day and night?” Ye Jiuge would have been mad to want him to keep her company around the clock!

“You don’t want that?” Zi Shang raised his eyebrows and turned to the jail door. “Then, I’ll be leaving.”

“Come back!” In a flash, Ye Jiuge dramatically reached out her palm.

She was wearing the Spirit Restricting Manacles and could not use any of her body’s Spiritual Power. If Zi Shang did not save her, she would end up as meat on the cutting board for the Crown Prince and Su Junqing.

“Come back for what?” Standing at the door, Zi Shang turned his head slightly. His handsome face was filled with a teasing expression, and his black pupils showed an abundance of interest. He was clearly poking fun at Ye Jiuge.

“Come back to spend every day with me and accompany me day and night.” Ye Jiuge forced herself to finish the sentence. Goosebumps rose on her entire body, and she felt like she was about to disgust herself to death.

“Since you are so sincere, I will take pity on you and come back.” Zi Shang returned to Ye Jiuge’s side, bent down in front of her, then said with a smile, “To show your sincerity, give me a kiss.”

Ye Jiuge’s face twitched. She thought, Why is Zi Shang even more shameless as a human?

“Why are you not saying anything?” Zi Shang raised his eyebrows. Then, as if he had suddenly realized, he said, “I know. You must be thinking that a kiss isn’t enough. I don’t know what to do with you. Fine, let’s have two kisses then!”

Ye Jiuge thought, Two kisses my a*s!

Ye Jiuge wanted to vomit blood, badly.

To prevent Zi Shang from behaving even worse, Ye Jiuge could only brace herself and aim a kiss at his face.

Just then, Zi Shang turned around, and they ended up kissing lip-to-lip.

The contact of soft skin and faint fragrance made the pitch-black jail seem as though it had turned pink with the feelings of love.

As Zi Shang kissed Ye Jiuge, he grabbed the two metal bands on her wrists.

His palm discharged a faint, purple flame, and the metal bands landed on the ground with a thump.

Ye Jiuge could feel the familiar Spiritual Power returning to her body.

She finally sobered up from the intoxication of Zi Shang's kiss, and she pushed him aside immediately.

"We are still missing one kiss. You owe me." Zi Shang placed his long fingers beside his red lips meaningfully as he winked at Ye Jiuge.

"You are making me owe you a debt as soon you are out of my wrist. Why don't you just go back inside?" Ye Jiuge reprimanded him in her heart as she massaged her numb wrists.

The Spirit Restricting Manacles were indeed powerful. She had only worn them for a short while, and her wrists were already hurting.

Although Zi Shang had transformed into a human, he still retained some of his demon snake habits. He immediately took Ye Jiuge in his arms and rested his chin on her head.

After a sniff, he questioned her in disgust, "How long has it been since you washed your hair?"

"I have been busy working every day. When would I find the time to wash my hair?"

While she secretly cursed at Zi Shang for being pretentious and crazy, Ye Jiuge put on a bright and beautiful smile and said, "Please allow me to save Great Master Dongfang and Li Zijun first. After that, I will immediately go and wash my hair to ensure that I smell fragrant, okay?"

"That's better." Zi Shang was quite satisfied with Ye Jiuge's attitude.

"Look. I am by myself, and I have no weapon on me. If I go out now, I will be immediately captured again. My King, do you have any wise ideas?" Ye Jiuge smiled to curry favor with Zi Shang.

She was dependent on Zi Shang, so she surrendered herself and cut off her other means of retreat.

“Simple.” Zi Shang reached out and drew an invisibility symbol on her forehead. He said, “You can walk out now, and the guards will not be able to see you. It will last for the time it takes to burn a stick of incense.”

“That will be sufficient.” Ye Jiuge’s eyes lit up. She found Zi Shang’s reminder extremely timely.

“However, I have to tell you. My Demonic Power was all used up consuming the Transformation Pearl, and the amount that I can now employ each day is limited. I just used up a lot of it to help you remove the Spirit Restricting Manacles and draw this invisibility symbol. I only have around one-third of it left,” Zi Shang said.

“What do you mean?” Ye Jiuge suddenly had a bad feeling.

“It means that later, when we encounter a fight, you will have to go first. If you can’t win, I will carry you and flee.” Zi Shang flashed her a smile as captivating as the night-blooming cactus blossoming. There was a hint of fragrance as he spoke, and he looked extraordinarily beautiful and alluring.

However, Ye Jiuge only wished that she could punch him.

“Or, if you wish to flee now, that’s also possible.” Zi Shang showed that he was very democratic.

“Let’s fight first.” Ye Jiuge had racked her brain for ways to sneak in. It was not her style to escape without even seeing anyone.

“Alright!” Zi Shang was indifferent to her decision.

“Wait.” Ye Jiuge bent over and lifted up the hem of her dress. Murmuring in a low voice, she said, “It’s a good thing that I already know that you aren’t reliable.”

There was a small silver rope tied around one of Ye Jiuge’s calves. It was the shrunken Lightning Snake Magical Whip.

After surrendering, she had shown weaknesses in all aspects. She had even allowed Su Junqing to use Mental Manipulation on her so that she could hide her weapon.

Ye Jiuge untied the Lightning Snake Magical Whip and wound it around her waist. Then, she asked Zi Shang, “Can I attack when I am invisible?”

“Sure. However, once you attack, the invisibility will be removed,” Zi Shang replied.

“That’s good enough.” Ye Jiuge sighed with relief. If she could launch a sneak attack, she had a better chance of success.

“Go ahead. I will cover your back.” Having said so, Zi Shang turned invisible as well.

Noiselessly, Ye Jiuge left the death cell. On her way out, the soldiers in the jail couldn’t see or hear her.

Once she exited the jail, she discovered that many secret guards were lying in wait, ready to ambush. There were also traps everywhere, filled with poisons.

Needless to say, these were intended to prevent Bai Songling and the rest from breaking into the jail to save her.

Ye Jiuge did not alarm the secret guards. Walking quietly on tiptoe, she headed for Medicine Refinery Hall.

Many guards were patrolling the path. Near Medicine Refinery Hall, a sentry was stationed every ten paces.

If it were not for the invisibility symbol that Zi Shang had helped her draw, she would have found it extremely difficult to get near Medicine Refinery Hall.

Ye Jiuge avoided all the guards and secretly sneaked into Dongfang Yao’s house.

A strong medicine smell pervaded the entire house.

Dongfang Yao was lying on the bed. His face had turned black, and his breathing was barely perceptible.

Su Junqing and Xiong Yunhu were speaking next to Dongfang Yao’s bed.

As she hid in a dark corner, Ye Jiuge frowned.

The invisibility symbol was only effective for as long as it took an incense stick to burn. If they did not stop talking soon, she would be in trouble.

Although Ye Jiuge had not fought Xiong Yunhu before, based on what Liu Yunfei had said, she knew that he was going to be a tough opponent.

Even if she were to fight him alone, she was not confident about winning. She would lose for sure if she had to fight Su Junqing as well.

She needed to think of a way to draw away Su Junqing first.

Just then, Zi Shang's finger suddenly landed on Ye Jiuge's back and drew something. It tickled her.

Ye Jiuge's expression darkened. She thought: Doesn't he know where we are? How can he even think of taking advantage of me now? Could he have picked a worse location?

Zi Shang seemed to have guessed Ye Jiuge's thoughts, and he gave her forehead a knock. Then, he began drawing again.

After she had calmed down enough to feel what he was doing, she realized that Zi Shang was writing the word "wait."

She thought: Alright! Since Zi Shang wishes to wait, let's wait! I hope they will finish talking soon.

Su Junqing was unaware that Ye Jiuge was peeking at them in a secret corner.

He was reporting to Xiong Yunhu about Ye Jiuge.

"Ye Jiuge is currently locked up in the death cell, and she is wearing the Spirit Restricting Manacles. I have set up many traps in the surrounding area. If Bai Songling and the rest were to come to save her, I guarantee that they wouldn't be able to escape, even if they had wings."

"I don't care about Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang. However, Ye Jiuge and the two Blood-clad Miao people must be left to me," Xiong Yunhu said coldly.

After the Bloodthirsty Patriarch had consumed the Blood-clad Miao people's chieftain, he'd realized that he had been tricked. As a result, many of the Patriarch's bloodline secrets had been divulged.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch had spent a lot of manpower searching for the surviving members of the Blood-clad Miao. Unfortunately, he'd been unable to find them.

If he were to bring back the two fish that had escaped from the net to the Patriarch, this would be a great merit.

"Liu Yunfei and Brother Jiang are both dead. Can you bring so many people with you?"

Su Junqing frowned and said disagreeably, "Don't forget that our mission is to bring Dongfang Yao back for the Patriarch to use as an ingredient."

To successfully poison Dongfang Yao, he had racked his brain to rope in Zhang Peng. The poison was made from the Patriarch's blood essence and the Ice Snow Spider King's king poison.

It was the only portion of this poison in the whole world, and there was no way to obtain more.

"You do not need to worry about this. Just do what you are supposed to." Xiong Yunhu grabbed the front piece of Su Junqing's clothes and lifted him viciously into the air.

He'd dared to snatch Liu Yunfei's things, what to speak of Su Junqing, who was merely a Secondary Disciple!

If Su Junqing weren't still useful, Xiong Yunhu would have killed him for what he'd said.

"Senior, please calm down. I recognize my mistake now." Faced with Xiong Yunhu's savage glare, Su Junqing shuddered in fear.

He had initially thought that Liu Yunfei was in charge of the mission. It was only later that he realized that the person in charge was Xiong Yunhu.

Xiong Yunhu was the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's Chief Disciple and had learned most of his teachings.

He was savage, brutal, and often could not speak a sentence without disagreement. He would kill to practice his cultivation, and he was a vicious figure feared by all in the Bloodthirsty Sect.

"Hmph!" Xiong Yunhu softened his grip on Su Junqing.

Su Junqing did not dare straighten his clothes. He smiled apologetically and said, "Senior, I spoke out of turn because I was worried that things could go wrong. You are a gracious person. Please do not hold this against me."

"Alright. Enough with the bullsh*t. I will give you half an hour to bring Liu Yunfei's body back for me. If not, don't blame me for falling out with you." Xiong Yunhu grinned, baring his teeth. His white teeth were even scarier than a shark's.

Liu Yunfei was one of the top ten fighters in the Bloodthirsty Sect, and her corpse would be a superb ingredient for his cultivation.

If he could absorb Liu Yunfei's corpse, Xiong Yunhu believed that his cultivation would dramatically increase.

Unfortunately, he had to watch over Dongfang Yao, an important target. Otherwise, he would have gone to look for Liu Yunfei's body himself.

"Yes. I will go now." Su Junqing nodded repeatedly.

He understood the meaning behind Xiong Yunhu's words.

If he could not bring Liu Yunfei's corpse back for Xiong Yunhu, he would decapitate him and use him for his cultivation instead.

"Then, get lost!" Xiong Yunhu waved his arm impatiently and sat cross-legged on the floor.

He took out a bottle of blood from his Magical Bottomless Bag and gulped down a few mouthfuls. Then, he looked greedily at the unconscious Dongfang Yao.

If not for the fact that Dongfang Yao was afflicted with a highly toxic poison that only the Patriarch could cure, Xiong Yunhu would have secretly absorbed some of his blood essence.

After all, given Dongfang Yao's level, every single drop of his blood essence was the quintessence of his cultivation.

Shyly and meekly, Su Junqing left the room. However, when he turned his head to glance at Xiong Yunhu's figure from behind, his eyes were filled with bitter resentment.

If he hadn't been so weak at that moment, he would have gotten rid of Xiong Yunhu. Su Junqing thought: Hmph, once the Patriarch has rewarded me with a Method, these people will grovel at my feet.

Ye Jiuge had been hiding quietly on the sidelines. Once Su Junqing left, she took out the Lightning Snake Magical Whip from her waist and dripped a drop of blood into its mouth. In her heart, she chanted, "Unseal the Demonic Power!"

After absorbing her blood, the Lightning Snake Magical Whip's bloodshot eyes opened slowly.

In its quiet state, the Lightning Snake Magical Whip was even more dangerous than when it had gone berserk before.

It was noiseless, like a venomous snake hiding in the grass, waiting to give its prey a deadly strike.

Ye Jiuge did not rashly mount an attack.

She only had one chance, and she wanted to find the best opportunity to attack.

Although Xiong Yunhu was still practicing, he was still paying some attention to his surroundings. He was ready to act in case of an emergency.

When he neared the end of his practice, his state of mind became more relaxed.

Suddenly, he felt a jolt in his heart. Surprised, he immediately opened his eyes.

Every time he felt this kind of palpitation, he was in danger.

The stronger the throbbing, the higher the danger.

In his early years, when he had not yet perfected his Blood Sea Technique, he would frequently experience this feeling.

However, ever since he had gotten rid of the obstacles in his path and become the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's Chief Disciple, he had not felt the palpitation again.

Xiong Yunhu did not ignore his intuition, and he was immediately on the alert.

Suddenly, a terrifying gust of Spiritual Power erupted behind him accompanied by a faint trace of Demonic Power. It engulfed him with earth-shattering omnipresence.

Xiong Yunhu immediately activated his Red Light of Protection as he quickly dove for the side of the room.

However, the attack was too fast and near, and he could not avoid it.

As quickly as the Red Light of Protection had arisen, it was ferociously shattered.

Xiong Yunfei felt like a sharp blade was violently stabbing into his back. The great force caused damage to his five viscera and six bowels as he felt his vitality slip.

His body was sent flying, and he crashed into the wall, creating a large hole.

Once Ye Jiuge attacked, her invisibility was automatically lifted.

Although the attack had consumed about half of her Spiritual Power, she did not dare let her guard down.

With a crack, the Lightning Snake Magical Whip turned into a violet-colored lightning snake that whipped in Xiong Yunhu's direction.

Bang! Her attack landed on a cloud of thick Blood Fog.

Xiong Yunhu stood up from the wall, battered by the attacks.

His upper garment had been destroyed, revealing a body covered with bloody scars.

There was even a sizable charred wound on his back.

The wound was so deep that his backbone could be seen. It looked sinister and stretched across more than half of his back. Even his internal organs could be glimpsed.

"Ye Jiuge, how can it be you? Aren't you wearing the Spirit Restricting Manacles?" Xiong Yunhu could never have guessed that Ye Jiuge had been the one to mount a sneak attack on him.

Seeing that Xiong Yunhu had already taken on a defensive stance, it was impossible to mount another sneak attack. Ye Jiuge tried to provoke him instead. "Because you don't even know why I am here, you deserve to die!"

"It was Su Junqing, right? That d*mned piece of sh*t dared to deceive me." Xiong Yunhu's expression warped.

Xiong Yunhu thought: Dongfang Yao is already unconscious, and Liu Yunfei is dead. If Su Junqing gets rid of me, he will be able to monopolize the credit for completing the mission. If I had known earlier, I would have murdered that stupid piece of sh*t.

Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrows. She had not expected Xiong Yunhu to think of Su Junqing. However, she was happy for them to fight each other.

She laughed sarcastically and continued to put on an act, "Since you know the truth now, don't even dream of going back alive."

"Do you think that such weak attacks can kill me?" Xiong Yunhu roared viciously.

"I have already smashed your five viscera and six bowels to pieces. You are merely an arrow at the end of its flight. You better stand down and accept your death obediently, or I won't leave your corpse intact." Although Ye Jiuge appeared to be arrogant and despotic, she was alarmed.

The attack from the Lightning Snake Magical Whip earlier was no joke.

Anyone else would have been torn into pieces.

She had not expected Xiong Yunhu to be so full of energy and speak this vigorously to her. He was no ordinary opponent.

"We will see who will be the first to die." Laughing nastily, Xiong Yunhu took out a Blood Pearl from his Magical Bottomless Bag and swallowed it.

Ye Jiuge had a bad feeling, and she took a few steps back.

After Xiong Yunhu swallowed the Blood Pearl, a strange red light began spreading across his body. All the bloody wounds, as well as the sinister-looking injury on his back, recovered immediately.

Xiong Yunhu's aura increased dramatically, and the Blood Fog wound around his body. The bloody stench was so strong that it would have made anyone feel nauseous. He was like a

monster that had crawled out of a pool of gore.

“You are no match for him. Let’s go!” Zi Shang pulled Ye Jiuge’s arm and was ready to escape with her.

“Wait.” Looking at the bloody man, Ye Jiuge had an idea.

She raised her Lightning Snake Magical Whip and attacked Xiong Yunhu again.

The violet-colored lightning snake landed above Xiong Yunhu’s head.

He flashed a frightening grin as his bloody hands gripped the violet-colored lightning snake as though pinching an insect with his fingers.

With a forceful pull, the violet-colored lightning dissipated.

Ye Jiuge’s face paled. She thought: This Xiong Yunhu is so scary!

After consuming the Blood Pearl, Xiong Yunhu had reached the Spiritual Master stage.

“Go and die!” After breaking Ye Jiuge’s lightning snake into pieces, Xiong Yunhu grinned nastily and reached out his hands. The Blood Fog immediately solidified and became two bloody hands that smothered her.

Ye Jiuge wished to escape, but she was locked in by Xiong Yunhu’s Blood Fog. She could not move at all.

In the nick of time, Zi Shang grabbed Ye Jiuge’s waist and retreated quickly. Smashing through the walls, they managed to exit the house.

Xiong Yunhu was momentarily stunned. He had not expected anyone to be able to save Ye Jiuge right in front of his eyes.

He was already close to exploding, and this development made him fly into a great rage. He gave a mad roar and chased after them.

Jumping onto the highest building of the Medicine Refinery Hall compound, Ye Jiuge used all her might to cry out, “The Sorcerer Xiong Yunhu is plotting against Great Master Dongfang’s life. Quick, come and protect him!”

It was midnight, and the entire city was under martial law. A profound silence prevailed.

Ye Jiuge's voice rang out like a sudden clap of thunder that resonated in the sky.

Not only was everyone in Medicine Refinery Hall and the Medicine Refinery Complex startled, even the citizens in the city could not help but rush from their homes to see what was happening.

Ye Shanshan was woken up by Ye Jiuge's voice. She immediately put on her clothes and arrived beside Ye Yuxuan. Bewildered, she asked, "Father, didn't they say that Eldest Sister would be locked up in jail using Spirit Restricting Manacles? How did she escape?"

"Who knows. Go and look for the Crown Prince. I will go and take a look." Ye Yuxuan's expression had turned unpleasant.

He had a feeling in his heart that something terrible had happened.

"Father, please be careful," Ye Shanshan urged worriedly.

"Quickly, go." Having said so, Ye Yuxuan left with a flourish.

Ye Shanshan immediately headed for the Ascending Skies Pavilion to find the Crown Prince. Just as she entered the courtyard, she heard his angry voice say, "Where has Su Junqing gone?"

"Your Highness, I led a squad to search the entire Medicine Refinery Complex, but we have not been able to find the Su Clan's Eldest Son. The guards on duty did not see him head out either!" the leader of the guards reported fearfully.

"Search! Continue searching for him." The Crown Prince's face turned ashen. He hated that he was unable to tear Su Junqing to shreds.

Standing at the entrance, Ye Shanshan advised from a distance, "Your Highness, please calm down. Don't hurt yourself because of your anger."

"Tell me, did you help Ye Jiuge escape?" Steam was coming out of the Crown Prince's nostrils. He was out of control as he grabbed Ye Shanshan and snarled.

"Your Highness, our Ye Clan had already severed ties with Ye Jiuge. Why would we let her out? Father has already gone to Medicine Refinery Hall to capture her. Before he left, he specifically instructed me to find you, Your Highness, and help out," Ye Shanshan hurriedly explained, trembling from fear.

The Crown Prince's chest heaved a few times before he suppressed his anger and bellowed, "Come! Let's go to Medicine Refinery Hall."

...

Outside Medicine Refinery Hall, Ye Yuxuan met Gong Honglei.

“Great Master Ye, you weren’t the one who helped Ye Jiuge escape, were you?” Gong Honglei asked, half-jokingly.

He did not know that Ye Yuxuan and Ye Jiuge had a horrible relationship. Hence, he based his remarks on the idea of an ordinary father-daughter relationship. He’d mistakenly assumed that Ye Yuxuan would not stand by and watch as his daughter was imprisoned.

“If I helped her escape, may I be struck by lightning and die a terrible death,” Ye Yuxuan snapped.

Gong Honglei was shocked to hear Ye Yuxuan swear such a severe oath.

He was embarrassed and hurriedly changed the topic. “Forget it. We will know who let her out once we capture her.”

“That’s right.” Ye Yuxuan wanted to know who in Medicine Refinery Complex had dared to help Ye Jiuge.

The two of them walked toward Medicine Refinery Hall side by side. As they reached the entrance, they heard frantic yells from the guards inside.

“My God, what is that thing?”

“You fool, can’t you tell? It is obviously a Sorcerer.”

“Why would a Sorcerer leap out of Great Master Dongfang’s house, and why would he be fighting Ye Jiuge?”

Frowning, Gong Honglei kicked the door open and rushed in.

He saw a tall, bloody figure covered entirely in Black Magic in the space in front of the Medicine Refinery Hall. The fierce figure was chasing after Ye Jiuge.

It looked as though Ye Jiuge was being pulled along by someone else. Although her body swayed from left to right and moved chaotically, she was still able to escape the bloody man’s grasp.

“What are you looking at? Are you all blind? Can’t you tell who the Sorcerer is?” As Ye Jiuge dodged her assailant, she reprimanded the guards while pointing at them. “Great Master Dongfang raised every one of you for nothing. Not only have you led the wolf into the house, but

you also don't dare to capture the culprit. When the Great Master wakes up, he will definitely cut off your heads and kick them."

The guards were flabbergasted. The Crown Prince and Zhang Peng had ordered that Ye Jiuge be arrested. If they were to help her, their target, wouldn't they be guilty of rebelling against authority?

However, the bloody man was such a horrifying sight.

"What are you all waiting for? Capture both the bloody man and Ye Jiuge!" Gong Honglei shouted angrily.

The guards finally recovered from their surprise. They raised their weapons and rushed into the fight.

However, they were all rushing at Ye Jiuge.

The bloody man was too frightening. His palm could shatter a large boulder. If they fought him, they would be seeking death.

Ye Jiuge almost vomited blood from her anger. She thought: These guards are such sh*t-stirrers! Actually, no, the real sh*t-stirrer is Gong Honglei!"

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As she avoided Xiong Yunhu's and the guards' attacks, Ye Jiuge turned to Gong Honglei and yelled, "Gong Honglei, you blind idiot! Do you still have enough self-respect left to claim that you are from the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance? I think it's more likely that you are from the Bloodthirsty Sect! If your sister finds about this in the nether world, she will regret having such a blind brother!"

"Shut up! The rest of you, retreat!" Gong Honglei bellowed at the guards, who were useless.

Although he believed that Ye Jiuge was the murderer who had killed his sister, no matter how he looked at the scene before his eyes, Gong Honglei knew that the bloody man was a Sorcerer.

He knew about Ye Jiuge's abilities. Even if she were to escape, he could capture her again. However, the bloody man must be taken down immediately.

Gong Honglei made his decision.

He whipped out the Six Yang Sword from behind his back and infused it with Spiritual Power.

As the golden Spiritual Power ran through the long sword, it lit up with intense, dazzling light. It made a razor-sharp sound like wind, and it seemed to pierce the air as he thrust it toward the bloody man.

Xiong Yunhu dismissed Gong Honglei's attack. He stretched out a hand and released a cloud of Blood Fog to block it.

However, he had not expected the golden sword light to be unbelievably oppressing.

Not only did it pierce through the Blood Fog and gore through his palm, but it also flew on without stopping and stabbed into his chest.

"Aw, aw, aw!"

Xiong Yunhu immediately let out a mad roar. He was severely injured.

He solidified a large ball the size of a human head using the Blood Fog around his body and blasted Gong Honglei with it. It exploded just as it reached Gong Honglei, sending his body flying.

Ye Jiuge was waiting dormant on the sidelines like a wild beast.

She took the opportunity when Xiong Yunhu was dealing with Gong Honglei to whip the Lightning Snake Magical Whip at the sword wound on his chest.

She had already sealed her Demonic Weapon, and the Lightning Snake Magical Whip had become an ordinary-looking Spiritual Weapon.

Although it did not have the strength of a Demonic Weapon, the Lightning Elemental Spiritual Power within had a counteracting effect on Xiong Yunhu.

The violet-colored lightning snake landed on Xiong Yunhu's chest, worsening his injury. Xiong Yunhu was close to a breakdown after not failed to catch Ye Jiuge. When he was severely injured

again, he let out a few more angry roars.

He took out a Blood Pearl from his Magical Bottomless Bag and swallowed it.

“Oh no! Quick, kill him, or you won’t get the chance to escape!” Ye Jiuge cried out.

A Blood Pearl had allowed Xiong Yunhu to reach the Spiritual Master level.

If he swallowed another, he would be even more dangerous.

Ye Yuxuan was standing to the side, watching the battle. When he heard this, he immediately frowned, and his feet moved noiselessly toward the exit.

He was only here to deal with his sinful daughter, Ye Jiuge. He did not want to be involved in this hideous mess.

More importantly, he could sense that the bloody man was perilous, and he was no match for him. He felt that it would be wiser for him to flee at once.

There was a dramatic transformation in Xiong Yunhu, who had now swallowed two Blood Pearls.

His muscles expanded rapidly, and his entire body swelled up.

His skin ruptured, and a large amount of blood spurted out.

However, his blood did not flow to the ground. Instead, it integrated into the protective Blood Fog covering him.

The fog diffused quickly. In an instant, all of Medicine Refinery Hall was covered in it.

Ye Yuxuan was startled. He immediately activated his Spiritual Light of Protection and rushed for the exit. However, he was pushed back by a flash of blood-red light at the door.

“Nobody will be leaving here alive today.” Xiong Yunhu’s wide eyes were bloodshot, and a terrifying glint flashed in his eyes.

His voice was hoarse like a frenzied beast, and he gave off a bloodthirsty and violent presence. Countless small Blood Bells formed in the Blood Fog and flew onto Xiong Yunhu’s body. They made him look ridiculous.

“Be careful. There is something strange about the Blood Fog,” Zi Shang whispered in Ye Jiuge’s ear while holding onto her.

“You don’t have to tell me that.” Ye Jiuge watched the Blood Bells on Xiong Yunhu’s body carefully.

Before she could finish her sentence, the Blood Bells began to shake rapidly.

A peal of devilish chimes reached their ears. It felt as though countless ants had crawled onto their flesh and blood and were biting furiously.

It was so unbearable that Ye Jiuge could feel her entire body tremble.

In the next moment, an icy cold vital force entered her body from Zi Shang’s palm. It was as though a dam had burst had caused the ants to be flushed out of her body.

The rest were gobbled up by the White Bone Flame in her Elixir Field.

Ye Yuxuan and Gong Honglei did not fare as well as Ye Jiuge.

They trembled as they covered their ears, resisting the devilish chime with all their might.

They could only hang on because of their level of cultivation. However, the guards, who were Beginner Spiritual Practitioners, were in a miserable state.

One by one, they let out mournful shrieks as their bodies exploded.

“Hahaha!” Xiong Yunhu rumbled with mad laughter.

He opened his mouth. To everyone’s horror, he absorbed the blood and flesh of the eviscerated guards. Then, he licked his lips with relish.

Looking at Xiong Yunhu’s blood-red tongue, Ye Jiuge felt goosebumps rise on her entire body. Compared to Xiong Yunhu’s attack, Liu Yunfei’s Blood Bell was like heavenly music!

“Great Master Ye and Ye Jiuge, we must take down this Sorcerer together today. Otherwise, our lives are in danger.” Gong Honglei steadied his surging qi and blood as he watched Xiong Yunhu vigilantly.

“Hehehe. Didn’t you say that I am the Sorcerers’ leader and that you wish to bring me to justice and execute me on the spot? Why do you want to work with me now? Aren’t you afraid that if news of this spreads, people will say that you’re the Sorcerers’ accomplice?” Ye Jiuge sneered as she mocked him with no trace of politeness.

“Ye Jiuge, don’t be too pleased with yourself. Even if this Xiong Yunhu is a Sorcerer, it’s hard to say whether you are his accomplice or not. You could be doing the dirty on him because of an argument over the distribution of your spoils,” Gong Honglei rebuked her, straightening his neck.

“If what you just said were true, I’d have even less reason to help you.” Ye Jiuge did not know whether to be annoyed or amused by Gong Honglei.

“Fine. Suit yourself.” In a rage, Gong Honglei raised his sword and rushed at Xiong Yunhu.

As a member of the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance in addition to his background as a member of the Gong Clan, he was gifted in the art of the sword.

He was a Second Level Sword Master, and he was also proficient in the Seventh Golden Sword Technique.

Among those with the same level of cultivation, Sword Masters were usually the strongest. This was the reason behind his upright and fiery temper.

“Let me help you.” After Ye Yuxuan was repeatedly unable to break through the shrouding Blood Fog, he finally understood the situation.

If they could not kill the Sorcerer, they would not be leaving here alive.

Making a prompt decision, he took out a palm-sized fiery Magic Gourd. He had placed all the flames that he had gathered over the years inside it.

Although they couldn’t compare with the Heaven and Earth Spiritual Flames, they were still extraordinary. If not for the dire situation, he would never have used them.

Ye Yuxuan infused his Spiritual Power into the fiery Magic Gourd. A green-red flame spurted out of it and attacked Xiong Yunhu at the same time as Gong Honglei’s sword light.

The golden sword light and the green-red flame split open the Blood Fog and advanced toward Xiong Yunhu.

Seeing this, Ye Jiuge hurriedly controlled her Lightning Snake Magical Whip and added her whip to the fray.

“It’s no use. Save your Spiritual Power!” Zi Shang suggested lazily.

In such an intense situation, he was like an outsider. From time to time, he even covered his mouth to yawn.

“It’s fine if you do not wish to help, but don’t pour cold water on me,” Ye Jiuge snapped.

Even though he had been reprimanded, Zi Shang was not angry. Instead, he replied lewdly, “Fine, fine, fine. You get to call the shots since your breasts are huge.”

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Ye Jiuge thought: Sarcasm. This is undisguised sarcasm.

Although Ye Jiuge’s body had recently begun to develop, she still had a long way to go until her breasts could be considered ‘substantial.’

If not for their dire situation, Ye Jiuge wanted to give Zi Shang a good beating. It was unfortunate that she was no match for him.

In her anger, she channeled her humiliation into strength and whipped a violet-colored lightning snake at Xiong Yunhu.

“Insignificant thing! How dare you be so brazen!”

With a wave of his hands, Xiong Yunhu dissipated Ye Jiuge’s violet-colored lightning snake.

Ye Jiuge’s attack was merely a stopgap. She was counting on Ye Yuxuan’s flame and Gong Honglei’s sword-light.

However, the Blood Fog covering Xiong Yunhu’s body surged up violently and extinguished Ye Yuxuan’s green-red colored flame like a flood.

Ye Yuxuan's face turned pale as he took two steps back.

Although he'd preserved some strength during his attack, he was incredibly shocked that his flame was so easily obliterated.

Fortunately, Gong Honglie's Six Yang Sword was still flying.

Xiong Yunhu stretched out his blood-red hands and reached for the Six Yang Sword. The golden sword-light turned agilely like a fish and avoided Xiong Yunhu's palm.

Seeing that Gong Honglei's sword-light had broken through Xiong Yunhu's defensive line, Ye Jiuge's eyes lit up.

"Go!" Gong Honglei bellowed as he performed an incantation gesture to direct the Six Yang Sword to pierce Xiong Yunhu's eyes.

However, Xiong Yunhu suddenly opened his mouth and bit the Six Yang Sword.

Snap!

The sound of the sword shattering into small pieces reached their ears.

Xiong Yunhu had shattered Gong Honglei's Six Yang Sword with his teeth.

The Six Yang Sword was spiritually linked to Gong Honglei. When the sword was shattered, it damaged his vital energy.

As his face paled, he retreated a few steps and spewed out a mouthful of blood.

"Hahaha! Today, I shall taste the flavor of a Sword Master." After chewing the Six Yang Sword into fragments, Xiong Yunhu spat them out onto the ground.

Then, he raised his broad palms and attacked Gong Honglei.

Gong Honglei took out a stack of Spiritual Talismans and threw them at those blood-red palms.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Thunderclaps boomed.

However, to Xiong Yunhu, the injury that he received from these low-grade talismans was even less painful than a mosquito bite.

As he watched the large hands draw near, Gong Honglei's eyes widened. A feeling of despair

overwhelmed him.

Seeing that things had gone wrong, Ye Yuxuan hurriedly controlled his fiery magic gourd and summoned a few more green-red flames to stop Xiong Yunhu.

He knew that if Gong Honglei were to die, he would be next.

“Hmph! You insignificant little Alchemist, how dare you try to stop me! Go to hell!” The Blood Fog surrounding Xiong Yunhu’s body expanded rapidly again, and he extinguished Ye Yuxuan’s flames with a single palm.

Cracks began to appear on the surface of Ye Yuxuan’s fiery magic gourd. He almost vomited blood from his anguish over the damage to his magic gourd.

It seemed that Gong Honglei was about to land in Xiong Yunhu’s hands.

In the nick of time, a soft whip wrapped around Gong Honglei’s waist and pulled him to the side.

Gong Honglei crashed into a tree with a loud bang. As he collapsed weakly, falling leaves began to land on him, covering his entire face.

He was sure that Ye Jiuge had done this deliberately.

However, even if it had been intentional, he did not dare speak up and criticize her.

He had been nasty to her in the past, and Ye Jiuge was merciful to save his life. He would daydream of her being gentle toward him.

“Jiuge, let’s put away our grudges. If you have a way to deal with this Sorcerer, then tell me quickly!”

In this critical moment, Ye Yuxuan did not dare abuse his authority as Ye Jiuge’s Father. He could only entreat her piteously.

“If I had a solution, I wouldn’t be trapped here either,” Ye Jiuge snapped.

Although she did not have a solution, she knew that Zi Shang did.

Seeing that the situation was dire, she lowered her voice and begged Zi Shang, “Please, help me this once!”

If they were to let Xiong Yunhu escape, not only would he cause endless chaos, but she also

wouldn't be able to prove her innocence.

"I have already said that I only have one-third of my Demonic Power," Zi Shang replied coolly.

Ye Jiuge bit her lower lip. After swallowing the Blood Pearls, Xiong Yunhu had become extremely dangerous. She would not ask Zi Shang to risk his life for her.

If it was impossible to defeat him, she'd have to flee.

If she left immediately, she could still go and ask for reinforcements—there was still a chance to save Great Master Dongfang.

As for Ye Yuxuan and Gong Honglei, they should only blame themselves for being unlucky and for not trusting her.

Ye Jiuge had made her decision. Just as she was about to ask Zi Shang to take her and flee, she heard him speak again: "Although I only have one-third of my Demonic Power, if you agree to my one condition, I can recover all of it."

"What condition?" Ye Jiuge's spirits rose. She knew that Zi Shang was not so useless!

"I have heard that a virgin woman's Yin is an excellent supplement." As Zi Shang spoke, his peach blossom eyes flung out a wink that hooked into Ye Jiuge. The meaning of his words was self-evident.

Ye Jiuge was stunned into silence. After speaking at length, the demonic snake was still thinking about her body.

It would be better to have a thing stolen than coveted.

Ye Jiuge thought: Forget it. I won't be able to keep it anyway. I might as well gift it to him sooner rather than later.

As she gritted her teeth, Ye Jiuge made her decision and said, "Fine. I will give you my virginity."

"So straightforward?" Zi Shang's eyebrows rose in surprise.

He had tried to seduce her multiple times, but she had always refused.

"I have a condition too. You must wait until I am eighteen." Seeing Zi Shang frown, Ye Jiuge added, "I will turn eighteen in a month. It won't be a long wait, ok?"

“Fine. I promise.” One month was not a long wait. After all, Zi Shang had no intention of deflowering her immediately.

“Also, you must tell me before we sleep together. Don’t throw me onto my back suddenly.” Ye Jiuge said solemnly. “Since it’s my first time, I need to be prepared.”

Now, it was Zi Shang’s turn to be stunned into silence.

He thought: Shouldn’t an ordinary lady be shy and blush when discussing such a topic? This Ye Jiuge is not demure at all to speak of sleeping together so casually.

However, he liked Ye Jiuge’s brazen attitude.

“What? You want to come at me hard?” Ye Jiuge frowned. She would not entertain Zi Shang if he had such a perverted fetish.

“How will I come without being hard?” Zi Shang could not help but chuckle.

His peach blossom eyes continued to hook into Ye Jiuge.

“You hoodlum!” Ye Jiuge rolled her eyes. She was sure that Zi Shang was teasing her.

She thought: Forget it. There is still one month to go. I will think of something when the problem arrives!

Although Ye Jiuge and Zi Shang seemed to be discussing terms, they were actually flirting.

Ye Yuxuan was already scared witless from Xiong Yunhu’s attacks, and he was close to crying his heart out. “Jiuge, are you listening to me?”

“Nope,” Ye Jiuge replied coldly.

She felt no warm emotions for her d*uchebag Father.

“You...” Ye Yuxuan almost blurted out and called her “sinful daughter.”

However, he knew that he needed her help, so he bit his tongue. Instead, he said pitifully, “Jiuge, no matter what, I am your biological Father. Can you really bear to watch me die?”

Having said so, he hurriedly performed a lazy donkey roll to avoid Xiong Yunhu’s attack.

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Before Ye Jiuge could reply to Ye Yuxuan, Xiong Yunhu burst out laughing. “Ye Yuxuan, it must be tough for you to proclaim yourself a ‘Great Master’ in Alchemy. Earlier, at the city gates, you declared your intention to kill your daughter, and you even called her ‘sinful daughter’ repeatedly. Now, you are asking your sinful daughter to save you. I am going to laugh my head off.”

He could kill Ye Yuxuan at any moment, and he was only toying with him to satisfy his anger.

“Tsk. This Xiong Yunhu speaks so well. I can’t bear to kill him anymore,” Ye Jiuge sighed regrettably.

However, Xiong Yunhu continued to laugh wildly and shout arrogantly, “Ye Yuxuan, don’t worry. I will bring your sinful daughter back for our Patriarch to dote on dearly!”

Ye Jiuge immediately changed her mind. “Forget it. It’s getting cold. Let’s send him to hell!” She hated these d*uchebag men who treated women like playthings.

“Let’s wait for a while.” Zi Shang was in no hurry.

“What are you waiting for?” Ye Jiuge was confused.

“His Blood Pearl has a time limit. It will be too late for us if we wait until he has finished playing around,” Zi Shang said plainly.

“It’s fine if we wait. However, please keep Ye Yuxuan and Gong Honglei alive. That way, I will receive even more credit,” Ye Jiuge added.

Otherwise, if the people of Medicine Refinery City were to enter and see a pile of corpses, they would claim that she had fallen out with Xiong Yunhu and done the dirty on him instead.

“Sure,” Zi Shang answered indifferently.

In his eyes, Ye Yuxuan and Gong Honglei were two ants. Since Little Jiuge had said that she wanted them alive, he would keep them alive.

“I have enough of playing around. Await your deaths obediently!” Xiong Yunhu was also aware that there was a time limit to his Blood Pearl.

However, he felt that he had full control over the situation—nobody in Medicine Refinery City was a match for him. He was in the mood to toy with Ye Yuxuan and Gong Honglei. Seeing that time was almost up, and the two men were practically half-dead, he felt that it was time to finish his work.

As he was thinking this, he summoned two thick, sharp Blood Swords and sent them flying at Ye Yuxuan and Gong Honglei.

The two sharp Blood Swords were even more powerful than Liu Yunfei’s.

If they were even to scrape their skin, they would immediately turn into two pools of blood and be absorbed into Xiong Yunhu’s abdomen.

Ye Yuxuan was gasping for breath as he sprawled on the ground. He did not even have the energy to try and avoid the Blood Sword.

Gong Honglei lifted his arms with difficulty, but the Spiritual Light that he conjured was not sufficient to stop the Blood Sword that was coming at him.

“Quick, save them!” Ye Jiuge was anxious. She pulled Zi Shang’s sleeves tightly and said, “If they die, don’t blame me for going back on my word!”

“Why are you so anxious?” Zi Shang rolled his eyes at Ye Jiuge.

He lifted his arms lazily. Then, he opened and closed his hands, which looked like a pair of white jades.

An incredibly strong aura shot out from his palms.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Ye Yuxuan’s and Gong Honglei’s bodies flew shakily backward like marionettes.

The two sharp Blood Swords ran through the ground where they had been lying, blasting two large holes.

Ye Yuxuan's eyes lit up. He knew that it must have been Ye Jiuge who had saved him.

Just as he was about to speak, the sky started spinning, and the earth rotated. Something, it seemed, had been inserted into his nostrils.

He looked closely and realized that Gong Honglei's fingers were thrust into his nostrils, and his own smelly feet had been placed right beside Gong Honglei's mouth.

Vines began to wrap them up tightly and hang them up.

Someone must have deliberately placed them in such an awkward position.

"Gross!" Seeing Ye Yuxuan with fingers up his nostrils and Gong Honglei, who had to tolerate a pair of stinky feet beside his mouth, Ye Jiuge had to admit that she was rejuvenated!

"Who's there?" Xiong Yunhu had not expected that someone would be able to hide in his Blood Fog. Yet, he was unable to detect the person.

Suddenly, he remembered that when he was chasing down Ye Jiuge, she had been saved by a mystery man.

"Xiong Yunhu, you have committed all kinds of evil and conspired with Su Junqing to frame me. You have also murdered so many people! It's time for you to tie up your own hands and wait for capture!" Ye Jiuge yelled loudly, like a fox exploiting the tiger's might.

"On what basis should I tie up my own hands and wait to be captured? Peh!" Xiong Yunhu appeared to have gone berserk, but his palms began to move secretly.

A thick, venomous snake was created from the Blood Fog. Under the fog's cover, the snake noiselessly slithered closer to Ye Jiuge.

Bang! Before the Blood Snake could reach Ye Jiuge, it had already exploded.

Xiong Yunhu felt a throbbing in his heart again. This time, it was so painful that it was as though a giant hand was tightly gripping his heart.

He had never had such an awful feeling before. It felt like despair on the point of death.

Immediately, he knew that the mysterious person who had been standing behind Ye Jiuge was not

someone that he could deal with.

He gave a wild roar, and the Blood Fog surrounding him transformed into countless sharp swords. They began to attack Ye Jiuge like the howling wind and torrential rain.

This was his unique skill and last resort: Ten Thousand Blood Arrows. Usually, he used it to kill his foes. However, this time, he was using it so that he could escape.

Xiong Yunhu did not dare to stay and watch the result of his attack. He turned and rushed toward Dongfang Yao's room.

Although it was a pity that he could not bring Ye Jiuge and the two Blood-clad Miao people back with him, he would have completed his mission so long as he returned with Dongfang Yao. He believed that the Patriarch would not fault him.

Before Xiong Yunhu could reach Dongfang Yao's house, counting his chickens before they hatched, a strange but powerful force flew at his back. He immediately turned to counteract the force with his palm, but it was as though he had only hit the air.

"Be obedient. Don't make me waste my Demonic Power." A faintly audible and pleasant voice rang out.

Following this, a flirtatious, handsome face appeared in front of him.

His hair was as dark as ink, and his red lips were the color of blood. His smile was devilishly charming.

His dark eyes seemed to be covered by a mysterious light.

His pupils began to dilate and became violet-colored vertical slits. Countless small pupils seemed to be rotating in his eyes, like a kaleidoscope. It was dazzling and enchanting.

Those demonic violet pupils deeply drew in Xiong Yunhu, and he said involuntarily, "Yes."

"Good child!"

Zi Shang flashed a thin smile. His black fingernails grew rapidly then suddenly sliced open Xiong Yunhu's throat.

With a splash, Xiong Yunhu's head tumbled off his neck.

Blood spurted everywhere and converged into a pool, staining the door red.

As he stood in the pool of blood, Zi Shang turned and smiled at Ye Jiuge.

His jade-like beautiful face was stained with a drop of fresh blood that had spurted out from Xiong Yunhu.

He was so beautiful, enchanting, yet bloodthirsty and alluring. It was breathtakingly captivating. His beauty was mixed with a strong murderous intent and dominance that seemed to say, "Submit to me and prosper, or oppose me and perish." This earth-shattering omnipresence surrounded Ye Jiuge, preventing her from escaping.

Ye Jiuge's tiny heart wanted badly to hide.

She felt that Zi Shang was even more demonic and terrifying after he had transformed into a human than when he had been half-snake, half-man.

"By good fortune, I was able to complete the mission!" Zi Shang returned to Ye Jiuge's side.

He placed his right hand by his chest and bowed slightly, as though reporting to his superior.

Ye Jiuge finally recovered from her shock. She realized that Zi Shang had killed the terrifying Xiong Yunhu with a single stroke.

She felt that she had been lied to, and she uncontrollably cried out, "Didn't you say that you were only left with a third of your Demonic Power?"

"Indeed. After killing Xiong Yunhu, I don't have any of Demonic Power left in me at all!"

Zi Shang blinked his eyes innocently. Then, he lifted his hand and rested it on his forehead. His body began to sway, and he collapsed onto Ye Jiuge.

Delicately, he said, "Aiya! It's no good. I feel so dizzy! Quick, support me with your arms."

“Pretend! Continue putting on your act!” Ye Jiuge tried pushing Zi Shang off a few times but was unable to do so. She could only resign herself to her fate and allow him to stay.

“You are not going to take a look at your spoils of war?” Since he had already taken advantage of Ye Jiuge, he would not forget to give her some benefits.

“That’s right!” Ye Jiuge’s eyes lit up. Without a trace of politeness, she took Xiong Yunhu’s Magical Bottomless Bag.

As the Bloodthirsty Sect’s Chief Disciple, he must have some treasure on him. She made up her mind to thoroughly inspect his belongings later.

After safely stowing Xiong Yunhu’s Magical Bottomless Bag, Ye Jiuge entered the house to check on Great Master Dongfang.

After Xiong Yunhu had died, his Blood Fog dissipated.

At first, the Crown Prince, Ye Shanshan, the troops that Gong Honglei had brought with him, as well as the Rank Four Alchemists, Elder Chen and Elder Xiao, were unable to enter. When Xiong Yunhu’s Blood Fog dissipated, they rushed in immediately.

The serene and beautiful Medicine Refinery Hall had turned into a hell on earth. Broken limbs filled the place, and the stench of blood was so strong that it made them feel nauseous.

“Great Master Ye and Young Master Gong are over there.” Elder Chen’s eyes were sharp, and he immediately noticed that Ye Yuxuan and Gong Honglei were hanging half-dead on a tree.

“Great Master Ye, Young Master Gong, are you alright?” The crowd immediately rescued them.

“Brother Honglei, where did Ye Jiuge go?” The Crown Prince squeezed his way through and reached Gong Honglei. He reached out a hand to support Gong Honglei.

However, Gong Honglei avoided it. Using his trusted sword attendant’s shoulder as support, he stood up and said coldly, “Eldest Miss Ye is in the house protecting Great Master Dongfang. If it weren’t for her, this would have been a calamity for Great Master Ye and me, as well as Great Master Dongfang.”

“What are you talking about? Ye Jiuge was protecting Great Master Dongfang, and she saved

you? Are you joking?" The Crown Prince could not help but raise his voice. He strongly suspected that Gong Honglei's brain had been damaged.

"I am not joking. Ye Jiuge is not the leader of the Sorcerers, and she has been trying to deal with them this whole time. She protected us, Great Master Dongfang, as well as all Medicine Refinery City. On the other hand, Dongfang Jianming, you have spoken irresponsibly and deliberately distorted the truth. You tried to make Ye Jiuge the Sorcerers' scapegoat and misled me into dealing wrongly with her. We almost killed an innocent person!" Gong Honglei bellowed at the Crown Prince.

"Gong Honglei, you better realize who you are talking to." The Crown Prince's face turned red from anger.

Apart from his Father, nobody dared to address him by his name.

"Of course, I know who I am talking to, you c*nt. You let in Xiong Yunhu and caused Great Master Dongfang to be inflicted with a deadly poison. F*ck you! What are you playing at?"

Recalling what had just happened, Gong Honglei's fear still lingered.

He'd come so close to dying a violent death.

Due to his near-death experience, he did not care about the Crown Prince's authority, and he rebuked him freely.

The Crown Prince was so infuriated by Gong Honglei that his face crimsoned with anger. He loosened then clenched his fists repeatedly. He was close to exploding.

"Alright, everyone, that's enough. Xiong Yunhu concealed himself well, and the Crown Prince did not let him in deliberately. We should hurry and go take a look at Great Master Dongfang!" Ye Yuxuan struggled to stand up.

"Father, was it really Ye Jiuge, I mean, Eldest Sister, who killed the Sorcerer and saved you?" Earlier, Ye Shanshan had been waiting outside Medicine Refinery City together with the Crown Prince.

The blood-red light had been terrifying, and they had been unable to destroy it even after they had racked their brains.

Needless to say, the Sorcerer who had set up the blood-red light must have been incredibly powerful.

Ye Shanshan did not believe that Ye Jiuge was able to kill such a Sorcerer.

If Ye Jiuge could do that, she wouldn't have been pressured into surrendering.

"Although it wasn't her who killed the Sorcerer, the elder who did must be closely connected to her. When you go in later, you must be respectful so that you won't infuriate this elder," Ye Yuxuan warned Ye Shanshan solemnly.

As he had been hanging on a tree, he had not gotten a good look at what had happened.

He'd only seen a flash of a violet-colored figure near where Ye Jiuge had been standing. Then, five breaths later, Xiong Yunhu's head had tumbled to the ground.

The entire episode had taken place in the blink of an eye. It had been incredibly quick and had felt like a dream.

Ye Yuxuan had been unable to see the elder's appearance clearly, and but he had witnessed Ye Jiuge casually stashing Xiong Yunhu's Magical Bottomless Bag in her own satchel.

Ye Yuxuan believed that this elder was related to Ye Jiuge. Otherwise, he wouldn't have allowed her to plunder his loot.

"Yes, I understand," Ye Shanshan replied obediently.

If her father had shown so much deference to this elder, he must not be simple.

If she were to draw him over to her side, she would benefit immensely.

"Great Master Ye, was this elder really so powerful?" After Gong Honglei had rubbed his nose in the dirt, the Crown Prince could only approach Ye Yuxuan for more information.

"Young Master Gong and I could not fight back against Xiong Yunhu, and yet, the elder chopped off his head in a single stroke. What do you think?" Ye Yuxuan replied ruefully.

If he had realized that Ye Jiuge knew such an elder, he would never have chased her out of their clan.

However, since Ye Jiuge had been willing to save him, she must care about their relationship. Perhaps there was still room for remedy.

No matter what, he was still Ye Jiuge's Father. As the saying goes, "we are connected by our flesh even if our bones are broken." If he were to coax her using the words that she wanted to hear, Ye

Yuxuan believed that she would not fuss over the problems of the past.

While Ye Yuxuan was counting his chickens before they hatched, he did not notice the Crown Prince's flustered expression and his guilty, fearful gaze.

Su Junqing had asked the Crown Prince to recommend that Xiong Yunhu take care of Great Master Dongfang because he was a Rank Two Alchemist and an expert in treating strange poisons.

Elder Chen and Elder Xiao had been vigorously opposed. They'd felt that they should not leave Great Master Dongfang in an outsider's care.

However, the Crown Prince had made a solemn vow to vouch for Xiong Yunhu. As such, Elder Chen and Elder Xiao finally relented and allowed Xiong Yunhu to enter Medicine Refinery Hall.

The Crown Prince thought: Now that Xiong Yunhu's identity as a Sorcerer has been revealed, aren't Su Junqing and I in danger? If that's the case, then Su Junqing isn't missing. He fled after realizing that our plot fell through and that we are about to be exposed. That d*mned sc*mbag has made things miserable for me!

Gong Honglei had begun to suspect the Crown Prince, and he was watching his facial expressions closely.

When he saw the changes in the Crown Prince's face and no signs of joy that the real culprit had been found and killed, Gong Honglei knew that the Crown Prince had a guilty conscience.

Perhaps, his sister's death was connected to him.

Gong Honglei had personally asked Dongfang Jianming to take care of his sister when they arrived in Medicine Refinery City. Also, his sister had written to him that she was close to the Crown Prince.

Thinking of this, Gong Honglei wanted badly to kill Dongfang Jianming with a single stroke of his sword.

However, he had used up all his Spiritual Power during the fierce battle earlier, and his Six Yang Sword was destroyed. If he were to act rashly, he would only be beating the grass to scare the snake.

He could only suppress his anger and say coldly to the Crown Prince, "Let's put everything aside. The most important thing now is to ensure Great Master Dongfang's safety!"

“Young Master Gong is right. We should hurry and go check on Great Master Dongfang!” Both Elder Chen and Elder Xiao hurriedly nodded.

Although they were both Rank Four Alchemists, they usually took no part in worldly events and were often practicing. Hence, when Great Master Dongfang and Li Zijun had fallen unconscious, they’d handed the reigns over to the Crown Prince and Zhang Peng.

They had not expected the Crown Prince and Zhang Peng to make such a massive mess of things. Now, they had no choice but to handle everything personally.

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The Crown Prince, Ye Yuxuan, Ye Shanshan, Gong Honglei, Elder Chen, Elder Xiao, and the rest majestically squeezed into the house.

When they entered the interior room after crossing the outer hall, they saw Ye Jiuge sitting upright beside Great Master Dongfang’s bed. She was calmly checking his pulse, and her lucid, elegant face wore a solemn expression.

Behind her stood a captivatingly beautiful man dressed in a long, pale violet robe.

When he saw everyone enter, he lifted a pale finger and lifted it to his rosy lips to signal for quiet.

Even though his action was simple, it was incredibly enchanting and devilish. He was so beautiful that it was suffocating.

Everyone held their breath and stared blankly at him.

Ye Shanshan stood foolishly rooted to the ground.

She had never seen such a pretty, flirtatious, and captivating man who transcended notions of

gender.

Although the Crown Prince was a giant among men and extraordinarily handsome, he was nothing compared to the man who now stood in front of her.

Ye Shanshan's heart thumped rapidly and felt as though it could fly out of her mouth at any moment and land in the man's hand.

However, besides Ye Shanshan, even the Crown Prince and Gong Honglei were so captivated by Zi Shang that they felt as though their spirits and souls had turned upside down.

They thought: No wonder homosexuality exists in this world. He is such a beautiful man, and it is worth anything just to grovel at his feet.

After Ye Jiuge had finished checking Great Master Dongfang's pulse, she looked up to see everyone drooling over Zi Shang. Unable to stand it, she fake coughed a few times and glared warningly at him.

She thought: He already knows that he is such an evildoer. Please don't make everyone's hormones go crazy and cause trouble for me.

Zi Shang smiled knowingly at Ye Jiuge as if to say, "I know. I will only use my charms on you."

They exchanged flirtatious glances like the glint and flash of cold steel.

Then, everyone awakened from the temptation caused by Zi Shang's presence.

Ye Shanshan arranged her hair and curtsied to Zi Shang bashfully. Using her most attractive voice, she asked delicately, "May I ask your name, Great Master?"

Zi Shang did not reply. Instead, he lowered his head and asked Ye Jiuge, "What do you think I should be called?"

"Call yourself whatever you want. Why are you asking me?" She felt a glare of enmity from Ye Shanshan. Ye Jiuge was in a bad mood.

"Since I am your bodyguard, it is natural for me to listen to you. Eldest Miss, please bestow a name on me." Zi Shang's voice was extremely gentle.

Ye Jiuge thought: Bestow your stupid head!

Ye Jiuge did not have enough nerve to give Zi Shang a name. At once, she said perfunctorily, "If it

is convenient to use your original name, we can address you by that!"

It was out of consideration for her that Zi Shang was acting sneakily. He would not be able to use his original name, but Ye Jiuge had given him a way out.

"Alright. Then, I will take on your last name and call myself Ye Zi!" Zi Shang smiled.

A Demon's name cannot be easily revealed to anyone. Apart from Ye Jiuge, nobody else in the world was worthy of calling him by his name.

"Ye Zi sounds decent." Ye Jiuge nodded perfunctorily. Then, to Ye Shanshan, who was still completely stunned, she said, "Did you hear that? He is called Ye Zi."

Ye Shanshan could not believe that such an incredibly beautiful man was so loyal to Ye Jiuge that he had asked her to bestow a name on him. Immediately, Ye Shanshan felt indescribable pain, like a knife had been twisted into her heart.

"Oh, sir, your name is Ye Zi!" Ye Yuxuan immediately let out a hearty laugh. He said, "I am indebted to you for taking care of my daughter. Since you have chosen to take on our name, we are all a family from now on."

"Who are you calling family? Great Master Ye, please don't forget that the relationship between us had been severed," Ye Jiuge said with a serious face.

"Jiuge, I was wrong in the past. I know my mistake now; please, forgive your Father this once!" Putting away his pride, Ye Yuxuan begged.

"Great Master Ye, you overwhelm me with more than I deserve. I wouldn't dare be angry with you. When I wasn't angry, you wanted me dead. If I were really angry with you, would you poison me in my sleep?" Ye Jiuge sneered.

"It's my fault. Feel free to reprimand me in any way you see fit. I will be happy as long as you are still willing to recognize me as your Father." Ye Yuxuan looked battered and exhausted. He was covered from head to toe with dirt. There was also a wound on his head.

When he implored Ye Jiuge to forgive him using such a humble and pitiful tone, everyone who witnessed it felt like Ye Jiuge was too hard on him.

Ye Jiuge was helpless against this thick-skinned Ye Yuxuan.

Before, when she had made cutting remarks to Ye Yuxuan, he would swing his sleeve in anger and leave in a huff. However, this time, he was utterly shameless.

Even though she wished to give him a beating, she had no reason to do so. Ye Jiuge felt sullen.

“Jiuge...” Ye Yuxuan was about to continue, but Zi Shang lifted a hand, and Ye Yuxuan's body involuntarily flew in front of Zi Shang.

Zi Shang clenched his fist and held Ye Yuxuan in the air.

Ye Yuxuan's face was turning blue from a lack of oxygen, and his legs were kicking in vain to struggle free.

His hands dug at his throat, trying to pry free from the force that was clenching his neck. However, it was no use.

“Ye Zi. Just give him a little punishment; don't kill him.” Ye Jiuge's tone was so apathetic that it showed her cold-heartedness toward Ye Yuxuan.

“Yes,” Zi Shang responded gently. Then, with a lift of his hand, he threw Ye Yuxuan out of the house.

Ye Yuxuan was sent flying like a kite with a cut string. He landed on a tree and fell unconscious.

“Father!” Ye Shanshan shrieked. Infuriated, she pointed at Ye Jiuge and said, “Eldest Sister, even if Father has made a thousand mistakes, he is still our Father. Have you forgotten his kindness in bringing you up? How dare you treat him so viciously and ruthlessly, you...”

Ye Shanshan's words suddenly stuck in her throat. No matter how hard she tried, she could not say another word.

Her eyes widened in fear as she looked at Zi Shang. She could not believe that he would treat her like this.

“Noisy!” Zi Shang's hands returned to his sides as he looked around calmly. In a soft voice, he asked, “Anyone else?”

The recipients of his gaze felt as though they were frogs under the watch of a venomous snake. They could not help but shudder, and they quickly shook their heads. They would not dare speak up.

In their minds, they thought: He must be joking! This person killed Xiong Yunhu with a single stroke!

Furthermore, he does not even show Ye Jiuge's Father, Ye Yuxuan, any respect. No one would dare act up in front of him.

"Alright. Don't scare everyone away. You must be tired. Go rest!" Satisfied, Ye Jiuge patted Zi Shang's arm.

If they were to go over the top with their acting and infuriate everyone, it wouldn't be good for them.

"Yes," Zi Shang respectfully replied.

He withdrew his overpowering presence and took a step back.

Although he still stood there, everyone had the unfathomable feeling that he had disappeared.

He was definitely a master!

Elder Chen, Elder Xiao, and the rest were apprehensive about Zi Shang's strange movements.

As they could not determine his background, they were even more wary about Ye Jiuge.

"Wu, wu, wu!" Flustered and exasperated, Ye Shanshan, whom everyone had forgotten, pointed at Ye Jiuge and then at her own throat. She was signaling for Ye Jiuge to help her.

"If you bring Great Master Ye with you and leave now, I will consider allowing you to speak again." Ye Jiuge's tone was unenthusiastic, but anyone could hear the threat in her words.

Ye Shanshan gritted her teeth. She looked with hidden bitterness and misery at Zi Shang. Still, she finally turned, picked up the unconscious Ye Yuxuan, and left.

"Alright. Everyone, now let's talk about Great Master Dongfang!" Ye Jiuge gave a little smile and called for the crowd's attention.

“Right, right, right! Eldest Miss, how is Great Master Dongfang?” Elder Chen and Elder Xiao hurriedly asked.

“Great Master Dongfang is inflicted with a very rare poison. This poison was made from the Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s blood essence and the Ice Snow Spider King’s poison. At the moment, I have no way of curing it.” Then, Ye Jiuge added, “The Ice Snow Spider King’s poison can only be obtained from the Bloodthirsty Sect. Dongfang Que was previously afflicted with it.”

When the crowd heard this, a commotion immediately arose.

“Eldest Miss Ye, since you can recognize this poison, you must have a way to cure it. We will agree to all of your requests so long as you tell us,” Elder Chen pleaded, his heart torn with anxiety.

“Yes. Eldest Miss Ye, not only is Great Master Dongfang the lord of Medicine Refinery City, but he is also the only Rank Six Alchemist in the Lei Kingdom. If anything were to happen to him, there would be an uproar,” Elder Xiao begged piteously.

If Great Master Dongfang were to pass away, their Medicine Refinery City would also be done for.

“Although I don’t have a way to cure Great Master Dongfang’s poison, I can help bring him some relief,” Ye Jiuge said slowly.

“Eldest Miss Ye, please tell us more.” Both Elder Chen’s and Elder Xiao’s eyes lit up at once.

“However, this solution to relieve his condition is not with me but with my companions. Last night, you shouted that you wanted to kill them. I fear that they won’t dare come.” It was impossible for Ye Jiuge to not hold a grudge against her boneheaded teammates for endangering her last night.

“Eldest Miss Ye, we were instigated by the crafty scoundrel and wrongly blamed you. You are open-minded. Please forgive us for it!”

“Indeed. Eldest Miss Ye, we are willing to make amends to apologize for our mistake.”

“Eldest Miss Ye, Great Master Dongfang never suspected you!”

There was a lively discussion with everybody talking at once as they tried to apologize.

“There is no use, even if you beg me. I don’t have the solution with me.” Ye Jiuge rose. Her cold gaze swept everyone in the room as she said unemotionally, “Think of a way to invite my companions back here. I will only treat Great Master Dongfang when they are back.”

“Ye Jiuge! Do you dare to treat Imperial Uncle’s life as a joke? Aren’t you afraid that he will blame you in the future?” barked the Crown Prince.

“You should be worried about yourself instead!” Ye Jiuge looked at the Crown Prince as though she were looking at a dead man.

“You...” The Crown Prince was about to reprimand her again, but Elder Chen stopped him and said, “It is our fault, and it is only natural for us to make amends and apologize. Eldest Miss Ye, please rest assured. We will sincerely invite your companions back to save Great Master Dongfang.”

“I will go and instruct someone to draft an Imperial Notice and announce the Eldest Miss and her companion’s contributions to Medicine Refinery City.”

“That’s right. Then, let’s put a banner on the city gates to apologize. We will do anything to please them so long as they are willing to forgive us.”

“Let’s not be all talk and no action. Someone should bring a bramble and ask for punishment!”

“Right, right, right. Bring a bramble and ask for punishment.”

Both Elder Chen and Elder Xiao nodded hurriedly.

“The idea of bringing a bramble and asking for punishment is a good one. However, it depends on who does it.” Ye Jiuge’s gaze landed on the Crown Prince, and the meaning of her words was evident.

“How dare you! I am the Crown Prince of the Lei Kingdom. Who dares to tell me to bring a bramble and ask for punishment?” the Crown Prince snapped indignantly.

“Your Highness, are you not aware of the current situation? Why are you still putting on airs as the Crown Prince?”

The Crown Prince had not expected both Elder Chen and Elder Xiao to be unafraid of his authority. They straightened up their necks and roared, “If you had not led the wolf into the house, then Great Master Dongfang would never have been harmed by the Sorcerers. Let us tell you this,

bringing a bramble and asking for punishment would be a light sentence for you. If anything were to happen to Great Master Dongfang, you better be prepared to chop off your head to see the Emperor!”

The Crown Prince trembled with anger, but he knew that Elder Chen and Elder Xiao were right.

His Father had many sons. If he were to die, there would be many other candidates for the position of the Crown Prince.

However, his Imperial Uncle was the only Rank Six Alchemist in the entire Lei Kingdom. It would be devastating for the country if anything happened to him.

“Alright. To save Imperial Uncle, I am willing to bring a bramble and ask for punishment.” The Crown Prince could submit or stand tall as required, so he immediately bowed down.

Elder Chen and Elder Xiao’s expressions improved, and they praised the Crown Prince, “That’s right. When Great Master Dongfang wakes up, we will tell him what you have done for him.”

“Many thanks!” The Crown Prince performed a Fist and Palm Salute. Suddenly, he felt that bringing a bramble and asking for punishment was not a bad idea. At least it allowed him to make up for his mistake.

“There’s no time to lose. Everyone, please get to it!” Ye Jiuge had already decided to go and watch the bustling scene.

Elder Chen, Elder Xiao, and the rest acted fast. Quickly, the Imperial Notice, the banner, as well as the bramble, were prepared.

The Imperial Notice was pasted in the city’s great streets and small alleys alike, and there were even soldiers on the streets to inform the citizens.

Everyone, including the Crown Prince, had a thorny shrub tied behind them. Holding the banner, they marched majestically towards the city gates.

Meanwhile, on a small hill outside the Medicine Refinery City, Bai Songling watched the gates closely and racked his brain for an idea to infiltrate that city to save the Eldest Miss.

“Should I go in and take a look?” Ye Yu said as he approached Bai Songling.

“Forget it. Your injury has yet to recover, and it will be useless, even if you can enter. What if you fall into a trap again? Furthermore, Ziyang still needs you to take care of him!” Bai Songling shook his head.

He was not familiar with Luo Tian and Jun Yichen, and he felt embarrassed to ask them to take care of Wan Ziyang.

The Treasure-hunting Scorpion squeaked and waved its pincers. It wished to volunteer to go into the city and have a look at the situation.

However, nobody could understand its beast-speak, making it a hero without a place to display his prowess.

“Look! Something is happening on the city walls.” Luo Tian started to rise. He was intently watching the wall.

“It looks like a banner.” Bai Songling had noticed it as well. He nervously said, “These guys are not trying to threaten us again, are they?”

“No.” Luo Tian had good eyesight, and he immediately saw the big words written on the banner. He read them out loud, “Eldest Miss Ye and her companions are the saviors of Medicine Refinery City. We deserve ten thousand deaths for mistaking them for the villains, and we have brought brambles to ask for punishment.”

“Hmm, there really is someone carrying a bramble.”

“Aren’t those the Rank Four Alchemists of the Medicine Refinery City, Elder Chen and Elder Xiao?”

“Oh my god! Dongfang Jianming is there as well, is this some trap?”

Bai Songling and the rest began discussing spiritedly. They did not believe these people until Ye Jiuge’s arrogant voice came from the city walls. “They have already apologized for their mistake. Everyone, you can come back now!”

“The Eldest Miss is awesome! How did she manage this?” Bai Songling was stunned.

Because of the Crown Prince and people of Medicine Refinery City, last night, they were treated like stray dogs. However, now, the people of Medicine Refinery City had brought brambles to ask for punishment. It was magical!

“If the Eldest Miss were not awesome, she wouldn’t be our Eldest Miss,” Ye Yu laughed.

“Let’s not lower our guard. We should be careful in case of a trap,” Luo Tian said vigilantly.

Years of being chased down had made him someone who did not easily trust any situation.

“Luo Tian has a point. How about this? Ye Yu, you stay here and take care of Ziyang. The three of us will go and have a look.” Bai Songling took out Liu Yunfei’s Magical Bottomless Bag and passed it to Ye Yu. Just as he was about to nag Ye Yu, Bai Songling heard Ye Jiuge’s voice gradually growing closer. “Why are you guys dillydallying?”

Ye Jiuge did not see Bai Songling and the rest appear, even after waiting for a long time. As such, she leaped down from the city walls to find them.

Zi Shang followed leisurely behind Ye Jiuge, and he appeared in front of Bai Songling and the others with one arm resting on her shoulder.

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“Eldest Miss, who is this?” Ye Yu’s eyes narrowed as he stared at Zi Shang’s big, strong palm that was resting on Ye Jiuge’s shoulders.

He thought: His pose is filled with a possessive lust. This beautiful man must have an extraordinary relationship with the Eldest Miss!

“This is Ye Zi. He is my bodyguard.” Ye Jiuge shrugged her shoulders and shook off Zi Shang’s restless hands.

Glaring warningly at Zi Shang, she thought: Since when does a bodyguard dare to touch his Miss’s shoulders? Is he courting death?

The corners of Zi Shang’s mouth curled into a smile, but he became obedient.

“Eldest Miss, since when did you have a bodyguard? Why have we not seen him before?” Bai Songling looked vigilantly at Zi Shang.

He thought: With one look, I can deduce that such a devilishly beautiful man is not ordinary. Could he be one of the Sorcerers?

“Erm... It is a long story.” Ye Jiuge scratched her face. She could not say that Zi Shang was her creditor, could she?

“Eldest Miss, there is no hurry. We have time.” Ye Yu’s tone was gentle but firm.

Bai Songling nodded swiftly as well.

Although Luo Tian and Jun Yichen did not say anything, they distanced themselves from Zi Shang. It was apparent that they did not trust him.

Ye Jiuge had a dilemma. Judging from her friends’ reactions, they would not let it go unless she answered them.

Zi Shang had stolen too much of the show, and it was indeed necessary to give him a reasonable identity. Otherwise, there would be trouble, even after they had returned to the capital.

She looked toward Zi Shang in the hope that he would give her a hint.

Zi Shang raised his eyebrows as he looked back at her. His expression seemed to say, “I await your arrangements.”

“Eldest Miss, do you have some hidden trouble that cannot be mentioned?” The more Bai Songling observed, the more he felt that something was off.

The Sorcerers were incredibly cunning—Lun Yunfei had been an excellent example.

This beautiful man named Zi Shang was clearly devilish, and it was likely that he had even more powerful cultivation. Perhaps, the Eldest Miss was already under his control.

As he was thinking about it, Bai Songling tossed a meaningful glance at Ye Yu and Luo Tian.

The three men silently surrounded Zi Shang.

At the same time, the three Legendary Venomous Insects—Xiao Hong, Black Dictator, and Big Mouth—took to the air.

Even the Treasure-hunting Scorpion had quietly dug its way through the ground until it reached Zi Shang's feet. It was ready to coordinate with the rest and attack.

Zi Shang's rosy lips curled up. A mocking glint flashed past his pitch-black pupils. His devilish look was so enchanting that Ye Jiuge's tiny heart began to quiver.

She was frightened, not infatuated.

Zi Shang's fingers moved slightly, and an undiscoverable force began to diffuse around him.

"Don't mess around." Glaring at him, Ye Jiuge reached out a hand in a dramatic way.

However, it was too late.

Xiao Hong let out a sharp cry as it returned to Luo Tian like a cat whose tail had been stepped on. Cowering in Luo Tian's arms, Xiao Hong shivered as it wept, "I am just a little insect."

Both Black Dictator and Big Mouth were also confused as they scuttled back into Ye Yu's and Bai Songling's clothes in fear.

"Black Dictator, what's wrong?" Ye Yu hurriedly tried to calm his Legendary Venomous Insect.

"Big Mouth, get out of there!" Big Mouth was scrambling around Bai Songling's body, which was unbearably itchy, and he reached into his clothes to grab it.

Big Mouth was in such a panic that it threaded its way into Bai Songling's pants, and he had to stifle a scream.

Ye Jiuge lowered her face into her hands as she watched the chaotic scene helplessly.

The more she saw, the angrier she became. Ye Jiuge lifted a leg to kick Zi Shang's back.

Zi Shang moved his feet, and Ye Jiuge stepped on the Treasure-hunting Scorpion, which had just emerged from the ground.

The Treasure-hunting Scorpion was just about to attack when it received a kick from its owner.

Heartbroken, it returned to the female scorpion to seek comfort.

"Eldest Miss, who is he?" Flustered and exasperated, Bai Songling held Big Mouth tightly.

"He...he was sent here by my grandfather to protect me." Ye Jiuge immediately thought of the

perfect cover story. "There are specific reasons why Grandfather cannot appear personally. Hence, he has sent this bodyguard here to protect me secretly.

"I was able to recover my cultivation and looks because of him.

"Before, he was hiding in the dark. However, because the Sorcerers are so powerful, I asked him to come and help out." Before Bai Songling and the rest could say anything further, Ye Jiuge immediately changed the topic and said, "How is Brother Wan? Is he okay?"

Bai Songling was frank, and he immediately fell for Ye Jiuge's devious plan to divert attention. He replied honestly, "I already fed him the antidote to the Muscle-paralysis Sleeping Powder. Last night, he woke up once, but he is now asleep again."

"Let me have a look." Ye Jiuge followed Bai Songling to the back of the little hill.

Wan Ziyang was still lying on the stretcher, but his complexion looked better than last night.

Ye Jiuge checked his pulse before she nodded and said, "He is fine now. His body is still a little weak, and he will need to eat something to nourish his body."

"Where can we find food to nourish his body here in this wilderness?" Bai Songling scratched his head.

"I was just about to tell you this. Great Master Dongfang has been afflicted with the Bloodthirsty Sect's King Poison. The people of Medicine Refinery City are begging us to go back and help cure his poison," Ye Jiuge explained as her hands returned to her sides.

"No wonder they are carrying a banner and bringing a bramble to ask for punishment." Bai Songling understood immediately.

"Let's hurry back then. Oh, Eldest Miss, here's your bag. Please take a look to see if anything is missing." Ye Yu took out the bag that Ye Jiuge had left with him.

Ye Jiuge took a glance and saw that the Black Fat Rat, the Treasure-hunting Scorpion and its wife, the bronze cauldron, as well as other miscellaneous things were still there. She nodded and said, "Nothing's missing."

Then, she thought of something else and asked, "Oh, where's Yu Die?"

"Last night, we secretly sent Yu Die to a stronghold in the Medicine Refinery City," Bai Songling replied.

They were a group of men, and it was difficult for them to take care of a little girl. Hence, they had secretly sent her back.

If not for the fact that they had agreed to meet Ye Jiuge outside the city, they would have stayed inside the city as well.

“Alright. Let’s go!”

Bringing Bai Songling and the rest with her, Ye Jiuge quickly returned to Medicine Refinery City.

Elder Chen, Elder Xiao, and the Crown Prince still had the brambles behind them as they anxiously waited on the city wall. When they saw Ye Jiuge and the rest running toward Medicine Refinery Hall, they hurriedly rushed down and followed behind them.

When she reached Great Master Dongfang’s house, Ye Jiuge chased everyone out. She instructed Bai Songling, Ye Yu and Luo Tian to guard the entrance, and Jun Yichen and Zi Shang to stay.

“Little Mute, can your Legendary Venomous Insect cure the poison in Great Master Dongfang’s body?” Ye Jiuge pointed at Great Master Dongfang and asked.

Jun Yichen stepped forward. He carefully examined Great Master Dongfang’s eyelids. Then, he pierced Great Master Dongfang’s finger and squeezed out a drop of blood.

“How?” Ye Jiuge was nervous. If Little Mute’s Legendary Venomous Insect could not suppress the Ice Snow Spider King Poison, she had no other ideas for how to save him.

“If it were just the Ice Snow Spider King Poison, my Poisonous Earthworm King could cure it. However, after it has been mixed with the Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s blood essence, my Legendary Venomous Insects can’t do anything.” Little Mute shook his head.

“What if I can force out some of the poison from Great Master Dongfang’s body?” Ye Jiuge’s Lightning Fire Needle was only capable of forcing out some of the toxins. She depended on the Poisonous Earthworm Kings to cure the remainder.

“We can give it a try!” Jun Yichen said. He was willing to try anything in a desperate situation.

“Alright. Hatch your Legendary Venomous Insects first and get ready!” Ye Jiuge took out her Lightning Fire Needle and pierced Great Master Dongfang’s body. She infused the needle with her Spiritual Power and began removing the poison.

It was like Great Master Dongfang’s meridians were clogged with silt.

The Lightning Fire Needle struggled to move inside them.

After pushing it for a while, Ye Jiuge was dripping with sweat. She could feel her Spiritual Power depleting.

She took out a Spiritual Revitalization Pill and was about to consume it when, suddenly, Zi Shang reached out and snatched it away.

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“What are you doing?” Ye Jiuge reached out to snatch back the Spiritual Revitalization Pill.

However, Zi Shang threw the pill into his mouth and said, “I will give you something better.”

Having said so, he placed his palm on Ye Jiuge’s back. An extremely pure stream of Spiritual Power gushed into her.

The Lightning Fire Needle, which had stopped moving, surged forward like it was on steroids. Immediately, it passed through a few of Great Master Dongfang’s meridians.

“Why are you being so nice and helping me?” Ye Jiuge watched Zi Shang vigilantly.

She thought: This fellow is a wicked demon who will not do anything except for benefits. It is suspicious that he is helping me for no reason.

“I am in a good mood today, so I am giving you a sweet taste.” Zi Shang would never admit to Ye Jiuge that he was seeking attention.

Although Ye Jiuge was suspicious of Zi Shang, with his help, the treatment process became remarkable, so she did not refuse.

After a short while, the Lightning Fire Needle had completed a microcosmic orbit in Great Master Dongfang's meridians, and it exited his body via his Baihui Acupoint.

As her hands returned to her sides, Ye Jiuge said, "Little Mute, send in the Legendary Venomous Insects."

Jun Yichen lifted his sleeves, and a large black spot flew out of his arm.

Then, it turned into a beautiful pink caterpillar with a round head and entered Great Master Dongfang's body.

"Why is it pink?" Ye Jiuge asked in surprise.

"It is the only female in this batch of Legendary Venomous Insects." If it weren't for the dire situation, he would not have taken out the female.

After many years of cultivating Legendary Venomous Insects, this was the first time that he had developed a female.

"It's quite pretty." Ye Jiuge was rather interested in it. The pink caterpillar was girlish and suitable for her!

"Don't speak. Watch the old man carefully," Jun Yichen said solemnly.

The darkness in Great Master Dongfang's face subsided gradually. The pink caterpillar was already demonstrating its use.

Then, Jun Yichen suddenly asked, "The people from Medicine Refinery City treated you so terribly. Why are you still helping to save him?"

"Firstly, Great Master Dongfang has always helped me. He is not a bad guy. Secondly, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. The Bloodthirsty Patriarch has so tragically harmed great Master Dongfang, and they were already mortal enemies. If we help him, it's another way of dealing with the Bloodthirsty Patriarch," Ye Jiuge explained straightforwardly.

"You believe that this old man can deal with the Bloodthirsty Patriarch?" Jun Yichen's disdainful gaze swept over Great Master Dongfang.

He thought: He must be a weakling to have been so easily harmed by the Bloodthirsty Sect.

“He is the only Rank Six Alchemist in the entire Lei Kingdom, and he has friends around the world. If he cannot deal with the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, surely he can find people to help him.” Ye Jiuge was still confident in Dongfang Yao’s ability.

“You have a point.” Jun Yichen looked pensive.

While she was talking to Jun Yichen, Ye Jiuge’s gaze did not leave Great Master Dongfang.

Once it had subsided as far as his neck, the darkness suddenly burst like a dam. Then, it surged violently again.

Hurriedly, Ye Jiuge applied her needle technique to seal the darkness before asking Jun Yichen, “What is happening?”

“The female Legendary Venomous Insect cannot cure his poison,” Jun Yichen replied coolly.

“D*mn it!” Ye Jiuge bit her lower lip as she looked toward Zi Shang.

He had said that he was in a good mood, so perhaps he would provide them with a solution for free.

However, Ye Jiuge realized that Zi Shang’s eyes were half-open. His breathing was smooth and steady; he had fallen asleep standing up.

Gloomily, Ye Jiuge looked away from him.

She thought: Sure enough, Zi Shang is such an unreliable fellow. He cannot be depended on. I can only rely on myself!

Ye Jiuge swallowed a Spiritual Revitalization Pill and was ready to continue using the Lightning Fire Needle to cure Great Master Dongfang. Suddenly, she heard Jun Yichen’s cold voice, “This old man better be able to deal with the Bloodthirsty Patriarch.”

Then, there was a violent heave from Jun Yichen’s abdomen. He opened his mouth abruptly and spat out a shining gold insect.

The insect looked like a scarab, and it was around the size of a thumb.

Although it had an insect’s head, it had grown a human face.

At close glance, it looked like Jun Yichen.

Apart from the human face, the scarab's wings were covered with black spots that looked like faces. They were numerous, packed layer upon layer, and flickered constantly. It was strange and terrifying.

"Is this your Life's Origin Parasite? It's already grown a human face." Ye Jiuge was stunned.

The Blood-clad Miao people's cultivation method was strange. They paid particular attention to the oneness of human and Legendary Venomous Insect.

Throughout their lives, they devoted their efforts to cultivating their Legendary Venomous Insects into Human Parasites.

According to legends, after they successfully cultivated their Human Parasites, the Human Parasites became their second incarnations.

Their bodies became diamond hard and indestructible—it was like immortality.

"Tut! If not for that d*mned man, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, who injured me, not only would I have a human face, I would have already grown a human head as well," the Life's Origin Parasite said while flapping its wings. It was in a bad mood.

Its voice sounded exactly the same as Jun Yichen's.

After spitting out the Life's Origin Parasite, Jun Yichen turned into a real little mute.

With a stone face, he made a hand gesture at the Life's Origin Parasite.

"Rush my a*s! I am the king of the Legendary Venomous Insects, and my usual diet consists of the world's deadliest poisons. It is so tragic that I am reduced to sucking an old man's blood to cure his poison."

As it grumbled, the Life's Origin Parasite flew over and landed on Great Master Dongfang's neck. It opened its large mouth and revealed its little sharp, white teeth. Viciously, it bit onto the vein.

The Life's Origin Parasite was much more powerful than the pink caterpillar.

Great Master Dongfang's darkness subsided like an ebbing tide. In the blink of an eye, it disappeared without a trace.

The pink caterpillar flew shakily out of Great Master Dongfang's mouth.

Its body was three times bigger than before. It was as fat and round like a pink ball.

Struggling to fly, it finally crashed onto the floor with a thud and rolled until it reached a table leg.

As she picked up the round pink caterpillar, Ye Jiuge asked, "Will it be alright?"

"It has sucked in too much diseased blood. It won't live." With a straight face, Jun Yichen gestured at Ye Jiuge with his hands.

"Would it help if I gave it Spiritual Beast Pills?" Ye Jiuge felt that this was a pity. After all, the creature had been an outstanding help, and female Legendary Venomous Insects were so rare. It would be a pity if it were to die.

"You can try, but it's not very likely." After Jun Yichen gestured to Ye Jiuge, he did not continue to watch.

"Alright. Let's give it a go!" Ye Jiuge had quite a large amount of Spiritual Beast Pills with her. She took out two, crushed one into smaller pieces, and fed it to the female Legendary Venomous Insect.

The fat pink caterpillar was so bloated that it was near death. When it saw the delicious food, it forced itself to swallow.

A small bulge grew out of its round stomach, as though it had developed a tumor.

Ye Jiuge feared that it would burst to its death, so she held back the other pill. Then, she reached out her fingers and massaged the insect's stomach to help it digest.

The pink caterpillar revealed a comfortable expression. With its round belly sticking out, it fell asleep.

Ye Jiuge thought: This pink caterpillar is so easily contented and easy-going that it sleeps immediately after eating.

With a smile, Ye Jiuge massaged the pink caterpillar. At the same time, she watched Jun Yichen expel the poison from Great Master Dongfang's body.

Although Jun Yichen was not moving, a constant vibration and strange noises came from his abdomen.

The Life's Origin Parasite revealed a fierce expression. It seemed to be in a lot of pain.

It removed the poison faster and faster, and the darkness within Great Master Dongfang subsided.

However, a black gas the size of a soybean was firmly stuck to his heart.

Jun Yichen's face was drenched in sweat. He began to pale. It seemed that propelling the Life's Origin Parasite was very straining on him.

Ye Jiuge opened her Spiritual Eye and examined Great Master Dongfang. She observed the black gas stuck to the top of his heart.

She took out the Lightning Fire Needle and pricked that spot, giving out a small purple electric current.

The black gas flickered off immediately.

Seizing the opportunity, the Life's Origin Parasite redoubled its efforts and sucked harder. Suddenly, it extracted a drop of dark red blood from Great Master Dongfang's neck.

The drop of blood was extraordinary because it had the shape of a heart.

After it was sucked out, it began to wiggle and escape, but the Life's Origin Parasite swallowed it in one mouthful.

"Hehe. Bloodthirsty Old Man, you didn't expect me to be here waiting for you, did you?" The Life's Origin Parasite let out a delightful cackle as it returned to Jun Yichen's abdomen.

"What is it with that drop of blood?" Ye Jiuge finally realized that Jun Yichen did not care about curing Great Master Dongfang's poison. His real intention had been to absorb the drop of blood!

"It is the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's blood essence. It is an essential component of his Bloodthirsty Fundamental Technique." The Life's Origin Parasite replied from inside Jun Yichen's stomach. It was immensely pleased with itself.

Due to his determination to get his hands on Great Master Dongfang, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch had willingly used his blood essence to produce the poison. However, although he had planned everything carefully, he had not expected Jun Yichen to appear in Medicine Refinery City. Nor could he have anticipated that his Life's Origin Parasite would have recovered some of its cultivation due to Ye Jiuge's Spiritual Beast Pills. Hence, Jun Yichen had been able to snatch away the drop of his blood essence.

"Then, the poison in Great Master Dongfang's body is cured?" Ye Jiuge did not care about the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's blood essence. She was only concerned about Great Master Dongfang's condition.

"This old man is fortunate to have met me. However, Bloodthirsty Patriarch is very cunning. Although the poison has been successfully removed, Great Master Dongfang's body has sustained a great deal of damage. For him to heal completely, he needs to consume the Blood Lotus Flower from the Bloodthirsty Sect. Otherwise, he won't be able to cultivate in the future," Jun Yichen explained.

"Blood Lotus Flower...What's that?" Frowning, Ye Jiuge asked.

"It is a treasure that Bloodthirsty Patriarch grows in his Blood Pond. It has no roots or duckweeds, and its blossom is the most beautiful lotus flower. Even though it feeds on blood, it can purify a person's bloodstream. Bloodthirsty Patriarch cultivates by sucking human blood, and this results in a lot of impurities in his body. He relies on this Blood Lotus Flower to recover." Jun Yichen was extremely envious as he spoke about the Blood Lotus Flower. It was a great treasure, after all!

"Let's wait until Great Master Dongfang wakes up before we speak of the matter regarding the Blood Lotus Flower!" It was already valiant of Ye Jiuge to save his life, and she did not plan on helping him to cultivate.

"He will wake up in the time it takes for an incense stick to burn. I will go and cultivate first." After swallowing the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's blood essence, Jun Yichen needed to refine it quickly, or there would be trouble for him.

"Go ahead. I will look after him here." Ye Jiuge gestured with her hand.

After Jun Yichen left, Zi Shang, who had been pretending to be asleep while standing up, opened his eyes. He stared at Ye Jiuge's fingers, which were massaging the pink caterpillar and said, "How long do you plan on massaging it?"

"You are not jealous of an insect, are you?" Surprised, Ye Jiuge looked at Zi Shang. It was a female insect!

“That’s right. I am jealous. Don’t forget that your body belongs to me.” Zi Shang’s smile was gentle, and his voice was pleasant to the ears. “By the way, did anything happen while I was in my Spiritual Retreat that you should report to me?”

Ye Jiuge understood Zi Shang’s words. He had a hidden meaning!

She carefully recalled the forbidden things which she had done during that period. Immediately, she thought of how the Black Fat Rat had swallowed a drop of her blood essence.

“My King, I am in the wrong. I did not expect this to happen.”

Ye Jiuge obediently explained what had happened. Then, she took out the Black Fat Rat from her bag and placed it in front of Zi Shang. She said, “Ever since it swallowed a drop of my blood essence, it’s been unconscious. Please, take a look and see what is going on.”

“At least you are tactful about it.” Zi Shang cast a sidelong glance at Ye Jiuge before he received the Black Fat Rat from her.

When the rat landed in his hands, its eyes were still tightly shut. However, it sensed impending danger. Its chubby body curled up even tighter, and it seemed to shiver with cold.

Zi Shang emitted a black ray from his palm that enveloped the rodent.

The Black Fat Rat’s dull black fur suddenly underwent a massive transformation.

Its coat turned pale silver, and it began to shine with a beautiful glow.

Golden patterns began to spread everywhere on its fur, like a wave ripple.

The most magical thing of all was a small gold flower bud, which grew on its head.

“When I picked it up the other day, it looked like this,” Ye Jiuge hurriedly said.

Zi Shang did not reply to her, but the black ray that he was emitting from his hand blazed even hotter.

The Black Fat Rat revealed a harrowing expression.

The flower bud on its head began to blossom. From the stamen, a gold ray of light emerged and enshrouded its body.

Enveloped in that gold ray of light, the Black Fat Rat transformed into a small baby with a flower

blossom on his head. It was plump with tender skin and exquisite facial features. It was incredibly cute.

Ye Jiuge blinked forcefully. She thought that she was seeing things.

In a short while, Zi Shang stopped emitting the black ray from his palm. The child disappeared and turned back into the rat.

“What is happening?” Ye Jiuge was surprised, and she immediately asked, “Did the rat transform into the child, or is it a child that has a rat skin draped over his shoulders?”

“Neither.” Zi Shang shook his head.

“Is it an illusion?” Ye Jiuge questioned again.

“Nope.” Zi Shang shook his head again.

“Then, what is it?” Ye Jiuge was tired out.

She thought: How is it possible for a fat rat to turn into a cute baby?

If she did not make sense of the matter, Ye Jiuge felt that she would not be comfortable enough to summon the Black Fat Rat again to spit its saliva for her pill production!

“We will have to wait until it wakes up before we can know.” Zi Shang continued to shake his head. No matter how many times Ye Jiuge asked, he refused to tell her.

“Hmph! Fine, don’t tell me! Anyway, the rat belongs to me.” Annoyed, Ye Jiuge snatched the Black Fat Rat away from Zi Shang and thrust it together with the pink caterpillar back into the bag.

Just then, the Crown Prince’s agitated voice came from outside the door: “What is the meaning of this? Let me in immediately! If anything were to happen to my Imperial Uncle, are you prepared to pay the price?”

“The Eldest Miss is helping Great Master Dongfang cure his poison. Unauthorized people are forbidden from entering,” Bai Songling replied coldly.

“I am an unauthorized person? Both Elder Chen and Elder Xiao are unauthorized personnel?” The Crown Prince’s pitch was as high as a hen with its neck nipped. At the door, he began shouting hysterically, “Ye Jiuge, come out now!”

“How dare you call the Eldest Miss by her name?” Bai Songling was infuriated.

Although the situation seemed to be out of control, Ye Jiuge was calm and unhurried.

She reached down to check Great Master Dongfang's pulse. When she was satisfied that his pulse was steady and he would be waking up soon, she raised her voice and instructed Bai Songling, "Let them in!"

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"Yes." Bai Songling glared viciously at the Crown Prince before asking Luo Tian to give way.

The Crown Prince harrumphed in disdain before he took the lead and went in.

Elder Chen and Elder Xiao followed him into the house.

Ye Jiuge was smiling and sitting on the chair.

She wore an azure dress. Against her skin, the color made her look like a cloud in the clear sky. She was illusory yet beautiful.

Zi Shang stood quietly behind her. His eyelids were closed, and he seemed to be sleeping.

As soon as he entered the house, the Crown Prince struck first to gain the initiative. He pointed at Ye Jiuge's nose and roared angrily, "Ye Jiuge! You were brazen enough to stop us from entering! Are you trying to do something horrible to Imperial Uncle?"

Ye Jiuge said nothing. Even the smile on the corner of her lips was unaffected.

However, Zi Shang looked up slightly. A cold glint gleamed in his eyes as he raised his arms and emitted a violet ray of light at the Crown Prince.

With a terrible cry, the Crown Prince was sent flying. In a sorry state, he landed on a tree.

"You should speak normally when you come in, or you might scare Great Master Dongfang."

Ye Jiuge's voice was soft and incredibly gentle. Dignified and composed, she looked as though she were unaware that her bodyguard had sent the Crown Prince flying.

"Eldest Miss, you are right." Elder Chen and Elder Xiao did not dare offend Ye Jiuge. As they spoke, they nodded repeatedly. Neither of them looked at the Crown Prince.

"Eldest Miss, has the poison in Great Master Dongfang's body been cured?" Elder Chen asked respectfully.

"By a stroke of good luck, yes." Just as Ye Jiuge finished speaking, Dongfang Yao, who was lying on the bed, suddenly moved his fingers. His eyelids began to twitch, and he finally opened his eyes.

"City Lord, you are finally awake." Elder Xiao hurriedly moved closer to support him. He was so emotional that tears began to stream down his face.

Dongfang Yao lifted a hand to stop the emotional Elder Xiao. Slowly, he sat up. He lifted the blanket that covered him and was about to get off the bed.

"City Lord, your body had just recovered. You should lie down a while more!" Elder Chen said anxiously.

"I am fine. Where are Dongfang Jianming and Zhang Peng?" Although Dongfang Yao's face was a little pale, the razor-sharp glint that emitted from his eyes was like a cold wind scraping past an iceberg. It was frightening.

"The Crown Prince is right outside. During these last two days, Zhang Peng had been busy with matters at Medicine Refinery Hall. I have not seen him for a while," Elder Chen replied carefully.

"Instruct someone to capture Zhang Peng immediately," Dongfang Yao ordered.

"Yes." Without any hesitation, Elder Chen sent the order to his men.

Then, Dongfang Yao gave another order coldly, "Send two men. Capture Dongfang Jianming, that d*mned beast, and bring him in."

"Capture him?" Elder Chen was stunned, and he looked at Elder Xiao.

After all, Dongfang Jianming was the Crown Prince. It might be alright to reprimand him, but it would be another matter altogether if they were to capture him. Neither of them dared.

"Are my words useless because I fell ill?" Although Dongfang Yao's voice was not loud, and he

gave off an intense presence.

“We wouldn’t dare.” Elder Chen shuddered. He immediately turned and instructed the guards, “What are you waiting for? Quickly, go and capture the Crown Prince.”

“Yes.” Medicine Refinery Hall’s guards did not question his orders. Immediately, they captured the Crown Prince, who was hanging on a tree, and dragged him in.

“Imperial Uncle, what are you doing?” The Crown Prince was alarmed. Then, to Ye Jiuge, he roared, “Did you manipulate Imperial Uncle with your Sorcerer techniques and make him arrest me?”

“Shut up!” Suddenly, Dongfang Yao grabbed the teacup on the table and viciously threw it at the Crown Prince.

Bang!

The teacup struck the Crown Prince’s face, leaving behind a bloody bruise.

“Dongfang Jianming, you crazy and ridiculous beast! How dare you collude with the Sorcerers to harm Eldest Miss Ye? You didn’t even let me off. You deserve ten thousand deaths for this!” Gritting his teeth, Dongfang Yao rebuked him.

“Imperial Uncle, I did not!” The Crown Prince’s head was shaking like a pinwheel.

“You’re still quibbling even though things have reached this stage? Over the past few days, Su Junqing and Xiong Yunhu have spoken at my bedside about the terrible things which you have done!” Hearing Dongfang Yao’s words, the Crown Prince’s face paled in fright.

The Crown Prince’s body collapsed onto the floor. Kneeling, he wailed and begged piteously, “Imperial Uncle, I have been wronged! Su Junqing was trying to frame me!”

“You need not say anything more. Our Dongfang Clan will not stand for a beast with the heart of a wolf and lungs of a dog like you. Come, men, and lock Dongfang Jianming in the jail. I will fix a date to send him under escort back to the capital.” Having said this, Dongfang Yao looked as though he had aged ten years in a short while.

Although he did not like this nephew of his, he was still heartbroken to know that Dongfang Jianming had joined hands with one of his disciples and tried to harm him.

“Imperial Uncle, I was forced to! Su Junqing used me with his Mental Manipulation. I am innocent!” Dongfang Jianming continued to shout as he struggled desperately. The guards did not dare move

closer to him.

“What are you all waiting for? Do you need me to make a move myself?” Infuriated, Dongfang Yao bellowed.

The guards no longer hesitated. They quickly grabbed Dongfang Jianming and dragged him away.

“What about Su Junqing? Where has he gone to?” Dongfang Yao asked.

“Su Junqing has gone to the Red Mud Valley to dig up Liu Yunfei’s corpse,” Ye Jiuge replied.

“Send someone to look for him at once. Don’t let him escape.” The person that Dongfang Yao hated the most at this moment was Su Junqing.

“I can go.” Bai Songling stepped forward voluntarily.

“Me too,” Ye Yu said.

He had a death feud with Su Junqing, and he wanted badly to be the one to capture him.

“Ye Yu, bring some men with you to the Red Mud Valley. Brother Bai, send out a message immediately and make sure the Su Clan is closely watched. Many things happened in Medicine Refinery City last night, and I fear that Su Junqing will be able to escape,” Ye Jiuge said.

“Okay. I will do so immediately,” Ye Yu and Bai Songling agreed in unison.

Bai Songling decided to rush back to the capital through the night and personally watch the Su Clan.

“Eldest Miss Ye is more considerate than me,” Dongfang Yao sighed. After this incident, he had finally realized that Medicine Refinery City was ill-equipped to deal with such emergencies. The Sorcerers had merely exploited an opportunity.

“Great Master Dongfang, you flatter me. But your body has just recovered, so please, rest more!” Ye Jiuge hurriedly advised.

“I am not tired. Eldest Miss, if you are free, are you willing to accompany me to have a look at Zijun?” Dongfang Yao had become extremely respectful toward Ye Jiuge, and he no longer addressed her as “Little Girl.” Instead, he called her “Eldest Miss.”

“I wish to see Senior Li too.” Ye Jiuge followed Great Master Dongfang to go and have a look at Li Zijun.

Although Li Zijun had been poisoned as well, his ordeal was nothing compared to the Great Master Dongfang's King Poison.

He had not yet woken up because everyone had been focused on saving Great Master Dongfang. Nobody had paid any attention to him.

Great Master Dongfang personally undertook the task. He produced an antidote soup and poured it down Li Zijun's throat. In no time, Li Zijun was awake.

"Master, Zhang Peng was the one who poisoned us," Li Zijun said as he struggled to get up.

"I know." Dongfang Yao forced Li Zijun to lie back down and said, "Elder Chen has already instructed some men to capture him. He can't escape for long."

"Master, I don't understand. You have treated Zhang Peng so well, and you even put him in charge of Medicine Refinery Hall. Why did he poison us?" Li Zijun's expression was sorrowful. Being stabbed in the back by someone close was the most painful experience.

"What other reason can there be? It all boils down to benefits." Dongfang Yao sighed. Then, to Li Zijun, he added, "We must learn from this lesson."

"Yes." Li Zijun nodded as he began to reflect on his mistake.

Standing to the side, Ye Jiuge was bored, and she was about to give a reason to excuse herself.

Just then, Luo Tian arrived and reported to Ye Jiuge, "Eldest Miss, Fourth Miss requests to see you outside."

“Fourth Sister, what brings you here?” Ye Jiuge was slightly curious, so she stood up and said to Great Master Dongfang, “My younger sister might want to tell me something. I will leave first so that I can meet her.”

“Eldest Miss, if you are busy now, then go ahead!” Dongfang Yao replied politely.

“I will be spending quite some time at Medicine Refinery Hall. Great Master, if there is anything that you want to discuss with me, feel free to approach me.” Ye Jiuge took her leave then went to see Ye Ruyi.

Ye Ruyi stood straight as a ramrod in the garden outside. The black dress wrapped around her small figure made her appear even more petite.

The lovely scenery in the garden could not soften the edges of her vindictiveness, which was fully displayed on her dainty face.

As soon as Ye Jiuge emerged from the building, Ye Ruyi’s eyes curved into crescents, and she gave Ye Jiuge a cute smile. She called out to her, “Eldest Sister.”

“Why are you here? I was thinking of visiting you later!”

Ye Jiuge held Ye Ruyi’s hand and studied her carefully. Her heart broke slightly for her. She said, “You’ve gotten thinner. Things must have been tough for you lately.”

“It’s nothing. Eldest Sister, you are the one who’s got it hard.” Ye Ruyi shook her head demurely. After that, she said, “Eldest Sister, I came here to bid you farewell. I will return to the Capital with Father soon.”

“You do not need to follow them back to the Capital. When I have settled my affairs here, you can come to the Capital with me. You do not need to set foot in the Ye Residence ever again.”

It surprised her to see Ye Ruyi shaking her head. Ye Ruyi declined apologetically, “I am sorry, Eldest Sister. I want to leave with Father.”

“Fourth Sister, you might not know it yet...” Ye Jiuge paused for a moment, before sighing, “But your mother passed away a while ago.”

“I know. Madame killed my mother,” Ye Ruyi said in a composed manner.

“Then why do you want to return to the Capital with them?” Ye Jiuge could not understand her younger sister right now.

The death of a mother should be the most painful thing in the world. However, she was abnormally unemotional.

“That is precisely why I wanted to follow them back to the Capital.

“As Su Junqing is now a fugitive and the Crown Prince has been arrested, Su Yufeng and Ye Shanshan have lost their pillar. After all this, they will stop living comfortably. At this time, it is even more crucial for me to stay by Father’s side so that I can avenge my mother.”

There was a strange, ominous undercurrent hidden beneath Ye Ruyi’s calm voice. It caused Ye Jiuge to feel an inexplicable feeling of dread.

“You are still young. You do not need to worry about revenge. Leave it to me.” Ye Jiuge did not want Ye Ruyi to have blood on her hands at such a young age.

“Eldest Sister, you have been a great help to me, but I want to avenge my mother myself.” Ye Ruyi smiled faintly.

She curtseyed to Ye Jiuge, before walking away without looking back. Her tiny, skinny body exuded a mysterious sense of resolve.

Ye Jiuge sighed. When she returned to her room, she was still slightly worried about Ye Ruyi.

Just then, Zi Shang suddenly opened his mouth: “Your Fourth Sister is pretty good. She has the potential to be a Devil Cultivator.”

“Stop talking nonsense. She is still a child.” Ye Jiuge knitted her brow. She had enough problems with a certain Demonic Male to whom she was indebted. She did not want Ye Ruyi to become a Female Devil Cultivator, burdening her further.

“That is beyond your control.” Zi Shang shrugged. He refused to tell Ye Jiuge that Ye Ruyi had already shown signs of succumbing to her Inner Demons.

“Hmph! I am here for her. Even if her Inner Demons completely consume her, I will pull her out of that mental state.” Ye Jiuge rolled her eyes at Zi Shang.

She was unconvinced that Ye Ruyi would become a Devil Cultivator at such a young age.

She’d never expected Zi Shang to suddenly move closer to her, deliberately speaking in a hurt tone, “You treated me so callously. All you can think about is your sister. Why don’t you think of saving me as well?”

“Save you from what?” Ye Jiuge was baffled.

“I am currently bobbing up and down on the sea of lust. I am waiting for you to come to my rescue.” Zi Shang talked as if this were expected of Ye Jiuge. He did not forget to wink flirtatiously.

Once I disagree with you, you start making sexual advances toward me. Do you really think that you can bully me so easily? She thought.

Ye Jiuge elbowed him without the slightest hesitation, as she added, “Back off!”

“Tsk, you are so aggressive.” Zi Shang dodged Ye Jiuge’s hand nimbly.

“If you do it again, this will not be the only thing I do to you.” Ye Jiuge narrowed her eyes with a threatening tone.

Earlier, if Zi Shang had been standing right in front of her, she definitely would have kicked his reproductive organ.

“You will need to wait a month for the next time.”

Zi Shang swept his eyes over Ye Jiuge’s slightly flat chest. He hinted to her, “Then you should make an effort to improve yourself. Don’t disappoint me!”

“If you are unhappy with them, then don’t touch them!” Ye Jiuge suddenly felt that she was fine with her small breasts.

If Zi Shang expected her tangerines to grow into watermelons in a month, he should not waste his time!

“That will not do.” Something occurred to Zi Shang. All of a sudden, he grabbed one of Ye Jiuge’s tangerines and said earnestly, “From now on, I should knead them as much as possible.”

Ye Jiuge lowered her head expressionlessly, as she stared at Zi Shang’s large hand.

After that, she reached her hand down toward his lower body. Without any second thoughts, and said in a deadpan voice, “If you dare to go ahead, let’s massage each other at the same time.”

She threw caution to the wind as the last resort.

Zi Shang evaded Ye Jiuge’s unexpected attack again.

After that, he looked at Ye Jiuge, as if she were the difficult one. He said solemnly, “I am serious.

Otherwise, do you really think that your delicate body can handle me?"

Ye Jiuge furrowed her brow. She suddenly recalled something terrifying. The words just slipped out of her mouth, "Don't tell me that after transforming into a human, you still have hemipenes—those two snake penises!"

Before Ye Jiuge could wait for Zi Shang's reply, she thought of something even more horrifying. "Don't tell me that you want to use your true form. F*ck! What a monster!"

Ye Jiuge drew the line at bestiality.

"What exactly are you thinking about?" Zi Shang felt that he could not keep up with Ye Jiuge's unconventional mind.

"Oh, you don't?" When Ye Jiuge realized that Zi Shang had no intention of doing this, she breathed a small sigh of relief.

"I never expected Little Jiuge to be so kinky." Zi Shang narrowed his eyes. A dangerous glint flitted across his eyes as he said unhurriedly, "Do you want to experience my original form? Then, I will surely satisfy you one day."

However, his previously half-human, half-snake appearance was not his final form.

If Little Jiuge saw his true form, it was very likely that her breath would be taken away.

"There is no need for that. I am perfectly content with who you are now." Ye Jiuge shook her head firmly.

As she spoke, she did not feel quite right. Why did she feel like she was lusting after Zi Shang's human form?

"Alright, Little Jiuge does not need to speak words that contradict her inner desires. I understand you." Zi Shang fluttered his eyes seductively at Ye Jiuge, a loving gesture.

Ye Jiuge maintained her poker face. She was thinking about how to keep this impudent fellow in check when the playful expression disappeared from his face. He said in a serious voice, "I did not ask for you Yin Core to further my cultivation. Although the Spiritual Channels in your body are no longer clogged, the Nine Stages of Fractured Bones Poison is still present in your Elixir Field. If you do not open the access to the Dual Cultivation Channel beforehand, when the moment comes, it will cause your Elixir Field to explode."

After Ye Jiuge listened to him, she understood his intention.

Zi Shang did not want to sleep with her for no reason. The process would be advantageous for her.

She would not only benefit from improving her cultivation level considerably, but she could also fortify her Elixir Field to prevent the Nine Stages of Fractured Bones Poison from spreading throughout her body.

Although the Nine Stages of Fractured Bones Poison had stayed dormant all this while, Ye Jiuge understood that this poison was a time bomb. As she progressed in her cultivation, it could detonate at any time.

"I will do whatever you say." Ye Jiuge nodded gravely. She could not brush this aside. She needed to take the matter seriously.

"Now, strip naked and lie down on the bed," Zi Shang said sternly.

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Chapter 212: This Is Really Just a Massage

"If I have to get naked, then fine!" This time, Ye Jiuge decided to risk it all.

She undid her sash and boldly started taking off her clothes.

Her sudden nonchalance about baring herself scared Zi Shang.

He thought: Can it be that I've driven this girl insane by going overboard with my teasing?!

Thinking of this, Zi Shang coughed twice. He said solemnly, "Since you are experiencing this for the first time, it is alright if your clothes are not removed. Just lie down!"

Ye Jiuge did not say anything about Zi Shang's inconsistent behavior, and she chose to lay down quickly instead.

"Close your eyes, and enjoy my touch." Zi Shang's cool hands covered Ye Jiuge's eyes.

Darkness enveloped her. Ye Jiuge smelled a faint, delicate fragrance coming from Zi Shang's body.

Unlike a woman's lovely tenderness, this delicate fragrance possessed a penetrative quality. When she breathed it in, her mouth and tongue felt slightly dry. She felt as if her body were bathed in flames.

Ye Jiuge restrained her impulse to lick her lips. She corrected her behavior at once. This was not the right time for her to be sexually aroused.

Perhaps, this was part of Zi Shang's secret plan. She had to resist his seduction.

Ye Jiuge composed herself. She closed her eyes, on her guard against his next move.

In the beginning, he positioned his large hands three inches below her navel and rubbed there with a suitable amount of pressure. His touch was delightful.

After that, he slowly kneaded upward, pressing her acupoints according to a pattern. The areas around those acupoints were aching and swollen. However, after an initial soreness, she felt rejuvenated.

Just as Ye Jiuge was so comfortable that she almost fell asleep, Zi Shang's palms slowly reached the acupoint at her chest.

All of a sudden, a pang of acute pain rushed straight to her forehead.

Ye Jiuge's body jerked upward, like a fish leaping from the water. However, Zi Shang pinned her down forcefully.

"Endure it." Zi Shang's voice was humorless. Instead, it had an unprecedented seriousness.

This was the first time that Ye Jiuge had seen Zi Shang with such an attitude. She gritted her teeth and tolerated the pain.

Both of his hands were glowing with a faint, blackish-purple light. He squeezed Ye Jiuge's chest here and there as if kneading dough.

Ye Jiuge's face contorted slightly. She could only feel her acupoints throbbing in pain as if ants were biting them. She found it so unbearable that she could not help but curl her toes.

Although the entire process did not take long, Ye Jiuge's whole body was covered with cold sweat. Her back was completely drenched.

Her long, black hair was disheveled and damp. Sweat clung to her ashen forehead. She looked extraordinarily unkempt and weak.

"Are you alright?!" Zi Shang had not expected Ye Jiuge to have such an intense reaction.

"How much longer will this massage take?" Ye Jiuge was sprawled over the bed like a dead fish.

Although the process was excruciating, she had to admit that, after Zi Shang massaged her, the air circulation in her chest improved.

"You have a high accumulation of qi and blood in that area. You need to clear it once per day. However, it hurts the most during your first time. In the future, you will feel less pain."

This time, Zi Shang did not tease Ye Jiuge. Instead, he used a soft towel and gently helped her wipe her sweat clean.

"Alright!" Ye Jiuge nodded. As long as this benefitted her, she would put up with the suffering, regardless of how painful it might be.

"Do you want to rest for a while?" Zi Shang asked.

"No need." Although she was exhausted, this was not the right time to take a break. She still needed to attend to a lot of matters in Medicine Refinery City.

Ye Jiuge rummaged through Liu Yunfei's Magical Bottomless Satchel and discovered a piece of human skin.

She shook out the human skin and was astonished to find out that it belonged to Gong Hongyu.

When Zi Shang took one look at it, he caught onto Ye Jiuge's plan. "Are you going to give this to Gong Honglei?"

"That's right. I should give him an opportunity to avenge his sister!" Ye Jiuge smiled meaningfully.

After she stored the skin in a wrapping cloth, she went to see Gong Honglei.

Lately, Gong Honglei had been recovering from his injuries at Medicine Refinery Hall. When Ye Jiuge appeared in front of him, his face could not help but show embarrassment, guilt, and remorse. He greeted her awkwardly, "Ye Clan's Eldest Miss, please sit."

"Gong Clan's Young Master, there is no need to be so formal with me. I am here today because there is something that I wanted to give you." Ye Jiuge went straight to the point.

"What is it?" Gong Honglei furrowed his angled eyebrows. Suddenly, his curiosity was piqued.

Ye Jiuge placed the tied-up blue wrapping cloth, which was in her hand, in front of Gong Honglei.

Gong Honglei paled instantly. He had a strong feeling in his gut about the contents of the bundle. When he was unraveling it, the tips of his fingers trembled like a leaf. A long time passed, and he still could not bring himself to undo that small knot.

As a Swordsman, he should never experience hand tremors.

Ye Jiuge sighed softly in her heart. However, she did not help him. She just sat beside him, waiting silently.

In the end, Gong Honglei undid the tied-up wrapping cloth.

The skin of a human being with a fair complexion rested on the soft cloth, unmoving. Its head faced him directly. There was a tiny, distinctive mole on its cheek.

Gong Honglei was completely shaken up. His heart ached excruciatingly, while his eyes went completely red. He could not stop his tears from falling.

If a man does not shed tears easily, it is because nothing has yet affected him so deeply that it can make him cry!

Gong Honglei's parents had passed away when he was very young, leaving him and his sister, Gong Hongyu, to look after each other and fend for themselves.

They were just children, and they were neglected by their clan. In their early years, they'd experienced many hardships.

It was not until he'd turned ten that his sister's social ranking rose with his because he'd exhibited a talent for sword-fighting and joined the Supreme Blade Sect as a proper disciple.

Perhaps, the experience of being bullied during childhood had caused his sister's personality to become more headstrong and domineering.

But, he had loved his sister dearly and protected her at every turn.

He thought that, although his sister was slightly willful, she was far from wicked. He'd never expected her to die so violently after being skinned alive.

"Gong Clan's Young Master, please accept my condolences for your sister's passing!" Ye Jiuge knew that this phrase was pointless. However, after she racked her brain, she did not have any other comforting words for him.

Gong Honglei pulled himself together after a brief moment.

He carefully stored his sister's skin in an appropriate place then solemnly performed a fist and palm salute and bowed deeply to Ye Jiuge. "Ye Clan's Eldest Miss, I was too hot-headed before. This led me to believe those scoundrels' slanderous accusations. Because of this, I have wronged you. Eldest Miss, please forgive me."

"Don't worry about it!" Since Gong Honglei was willing to admit to his mistake, Ye Jiuge's opinion of him had changed for the better.

"Thank you very much!" Gong Honglei stood up. Then, he said suddenly, "I plan to head to the Capital tomorrow to seek revenge on the Su Clan."

Ye Jiuge knitted her eyebrows. It seemed that Gong Honglei had already caught wind of Su Junqing's flight.

She muttered to herself for a moment before shaking her head. "Su Junqing is a conniving and cunning person. I think that it is highly unlikely that he will return to the Su Residence at this time. Gong Clan's Young Master, if you want to avenge your sister, I have a suggestion for you."

"Ye Clan's Eldest Miss, please enlighten me," Gong Honglei said earnestly.

"The Crown Prince is also one of the main conspirators. Lord Wan is under orders to escort him back to the Capital discreetly. Gong Clan's Young Master, if you go straight to the Emperor to ensure that justice is served, I believe that the Emperor will not dare to help the Crown Prince to cover up his crimes or protect him from punishment."

Although Ye Jiuge gave her advice in a relaxed tone, if the Crown Prince had heard her, he would have gone berserk. She'd even gone so far as to prevent him from using his father as a lifeline—that always was his last resort.

“Alright. I will return to the Capital with Lord Wan.” Since Gong Honglei was already suspicious of the Crown Prince, he accepted her suggestion without any hesitation.

“Gong Clan’s Young Master, you’ve made a wise decision. The spirit of your deceased sister will surely rest in peace. It is getting late, so I shall take my leave now.” After Ye Jiuge exchanged some pleasantries with Gong Honglei, she left his temporary residence.

After that, she took the remaining bloodstained Spiritual Roots and human skins, which she’d found in Liu Yunfei’s Magical Bottomless Satchel, and gave them to Li Zijun so that he could deal with them.

While Ye Jiuge was busy as a bee, Dongfang Yao wrote Emperor Xuanwu a secret letter.

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In his letter, Dongfang Yao recounted the entire situation in detail. He strongly recommended that Emperor Xuanwu punish that little b*stard, Dongfang Jianming, severely.

Lastly, he highlighted that Yun Tianwei had assigned a highly-skilled bodyguard named Ye Zi to protect Ye Jiuge. He implored Emperor Xuanwu to recruit this adept master at any cost.

Meanwhile, at Zhengqing Palace in the Lei Kingdom’s capital, Emperor Xuanwu had finished reading Dongfang Yao’s letter. He sat motionlessly on his imperial throne with an exceptionally dark expression.

The Head Eunuch, Li Fude, stood by his side and waited on him. Although Li Fude’s heart raced, he did not breathe too heavily.

Ever since Gong Honglei had escorted the Crown Prince back to the Capital and appealed to Emperor Xuanwu to reward the Gong Clan, a smile had not appeared on the Emperor's face.

Suddenly, a clamor came from outside. It sounded like people were arguing loudly.

Li Fude panicked. He wished that he could walk outside and beat the sentries and eunuchs guarding the palace entrance to death.

They should not allow this kind of problematic incident to occur now; it was terrible timing.

"Go and see what is happening outside," Emperor Xuanwu instructed with his eyes closed.

"Yes." Li Fude wiped the cold sweat off his forehead before leaving the room. When he returned, his face was even more ashen. He said in a low voice, "The Empress is outside. She's asked to see you."

"Did I not order the servants to prevent her from leaving Fengyi Palace? How did she get here?" Emperor Xuanwu eyed Li Fude. This gesture inspired fear in the eunuch, despite his composed expression.

"I am at fault for handling things poorly. Your Imperial Majesty, please punish me." Immediately, Li Fude kneeled. He was terrified.

In truth, he should not be blamed for the commotion.

Although the Crown Prince had been placed under house arrest, Emperor Xuanwu wouldn't dare convict him of conspiring with the Sorcerers. Being guilty of such a crime was too disgraceful. All this while, he had been trying to find an appropriate criminal charge for him.

Nor had he stripped the Empress of her title. He'd merely confined her in Fengyi Palace and commanded some palace maids and eunuchs to keep an eye on her.

Ordinarily, palace maids and eunuchs should be sufficient for the task.

However, the Empress was a Spiritual Practitioner, after all. For years, she had been nurturing her body with various Spiritual Pills. Therefore, she still possessed a certain level of Spiritual Cultivation.

After the Crown Prince had gotten into trouble, she'd repeatedly asked for an audience with the Emperor.

When she realized that no one was paying any attention to her, she rushed out of Fengyi Palace

like a madwoman while the palace maids and eunuchs chased after her. This was the cause of the racket now taking place outside the palace. "Take her back to Fengyi Palace and feed her some Spiritual Dissipating Pills. As for those good-for-nothings from Fengyi Palace, punish them as you see fit!" Emperor Xuanwu shut his eyes again as if he were unaware that Spiritual Dissipating Pills were lethal for Spiritual Practitioners.

"Yes." When Li Fude heard the Emperor's words, he knew that the Emperor no longer had any feelings for the Empress.

He walked outside briskly to pass the Emperor's order to the servants. Soon after, the clamor subsided.

The Empress, who had led a tremendously successful life in the past, was dragged back to Fengyi Palace. The imperial servants forced the Spiritual Dissipating Pills down her throat. In the future, it would be challenging for her to walk, much less cause any trouble.

Li Fude returned quickly. He kept his body bowed beside Emperor Xuanwu. He did not breathe loudly. Zhengqing Palace was as quiet as a graveyard.

With his eyes still closed, Emperor Xuanwu spoke as if merely making small talk. "How is the situation with the Su Clan?"

Li Fude sweated even more profusely. He mustered his courage to reply, "The Su Clan's Old Master is still in a coma, and Su Junqing hasn't returned to the residence."

Emperor Xuanwu's expression didn't show any noticeable change.

He opened his eyes. He could not help but land his sharp gaze on Dongfang Yao's letter.

He was silent for a moment, then said suddenly, "What's all this buzz about Ye Jiuge?"

"I do not know much about her. However, I've heard that the Imperial Consort and the Dongling Prince are friends with the Ye Clan's Eldest Miss," Li Fude answered tactfully.

Although he was not able to view the contents of Dongfang Yao's secret letter, everyone knew what had transpired lately in Medical Refinery City.

Ye Jiuge had managed to transform her reputation from the heinous, irredeemable leader of the Sorcerers into a hero who had taken them down and saved Medicine Refinery City. This turnaround awed the entire Lei Kingdom.

People were particularly amazed when Ye Yuxuan had made a statement supporting his daughter,

whom he'd previously disowned, and pleaded for her to change her mind about cutting ties with the Ye Clan. This had convinced people even more that this whole mess had merely been a misunderstanding.

All of a sudden, Ye Jiuge had reached the peak of her fame.

Imperial Consort Xi and Dongfang Que were on good terms with her, which would be immensely beneficial for the Imperial Family's image. Lately, their Dongfang Clan had suffered dramatically in prestige.

"It seems that Que'er has foresight after all," Emperor Xuanwu said ruefully. In his heart, he had already made a firm decision.

Li Fude glanced at the Emperor's expression. He realized that the political situation in the Capital was about to change due to the potential nomination of a new Crown Prince.

Meanwhile, Ye Jiuge had just settled her affairs in Medicine Refinery City and was making ready to return to the Capital.

She'd never expected Dongfang Yao to suddenly announce that she'd come in first in the Pill Production Tournament. Not only that, as a prize, he'd given her a Pill Production Furnace worth ten thousand gold taels.

"As the tournament has not ended yet, I do not deserve this reward." Ye Jiuge shook her head. Ambitious though she was, she refused to accept it.

"This decision was made collectively by all the Alchemists who participated in the Pill Production Tournament. If the tournament had not been interrupted midway, you would have been its champion." Dongfang Yao was being truthful. Among the participants in this year's tournament, no one else could compare with Ye Jiuge when it came to Pill Production Techniques.

Ye Jiuge declined the prize in every possible way. However, Dongfang Yao insisted on giving it to her. He even told Ye Jiuge that this Pill Production Furnace belonged to her now. If she did not want it, then she could throw it away.

Ye Jiuge had no choice but to accept it.

She opted for an equivalent amount of money in exchange for the furnace. After that, she divided the funds equally among the family members of the Alchemists who had been killed by the Sorcerers.

Seeing this, Dongfang Yao lauded her deeds. He also converted the other tournament prizes,

which had been prepared beforehand, into their cash equivalent, and distributed the money to people who had been wrongly targeted by the Sorcerers.

Initially, Ye Jiuge had not put much thought into her actions. She had not expected to earn the public's praises for her righteousness, which had even helped Medicine Refinery City recoup a decent amount of their damaged reputation.

Just when Ye Jiuge was about to begin her return journey, Bai Songling sent her a letter from the Capital.

"Why would the Su Clan's Old Master disappear so suddenly?" After Ye Jiuge finished reading the letter, she looked at Zi Shang with a baffled face. Was it possible that there was a problem with his Demonic Seal?

However, Zi Shang shook his head. He explained that if he did not personally remove the Demonic Seal, the old man would not regain consciousness.

"Did Su Junqing move his grandfather to a safe place?" asked Luo Tian, who was standing beside her.

"That's impossible. Right now, that geezer is a burden to him. Su Junqing has nothing to gain from whisking him away from the Su Residence. Unless Su Junqing has another purpose." Ye Jiuge thought of a possible reason. Her expression changed slightly.

The same thing had occurred to Luo Tian. He asked in astonishment, "Are you telling me that Su Junqing wanted to use his grandfather to further his cultivation level?"

Although the members of Bloodthirsty Sect used human blood to practice their Black Magic, not many individuals were monstrous enough to use their blood relations for cultivation.

"It's highly likely." Ye Jiuge's expression turned grim.

Lately, Su Junqing had searched high and low for Spiritual Doctors who could treat the Su Clan's Old Master. However, none of them had a way to cure his strange illness. Therefore, it seemed perfectly reasonable for him to capitalize on the old man's remaining worth. He no longer had any other use for Su Junqing.

"All this while, Su Junqing has been heartless and ruthless. I am not surprised that he would do such a thing," Ye Yu said through gritted teeth.

In the past, when his sister, Ye Yunzhi, had been pregnant with Su Junqing's child, he'd personally sent her into the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's hands.

“Please respond to this letter and tell Bai Songling that he must hunt down Su Junqing. By hook or by crook, we should never let him bring the Su Clan’s Old Master back to the Bloodthirsty Sect,” said Ye Jiuge solemnly. If the Bloodthirsty Patriarch devoured the Su Clan’s Old Master, he might successfully advance his cultivation level. Then, they would be in serious trouble.

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“Songling and Ziyang have assigned men to search for him. However, since Su Junqing succeeded in slipping past the tight security in the Capital, it will be even harder for us to catch him now.” Luo Tian was skeptical.

Ye Jiuge thought about it for a moment. She asked Luo Tian, “Can you breed a Legendary Venomous Insect that specializes in pursuing trails of Black Magic Aura?”

“That is beyond my capability. Little Master is the only one who can rear Legendary Venomous Insects. However, he is still in the middle of his Enclosed Cultivation now. I reckon that he will only be available in another two days.” Luo Tian shook his head. It was not easy to purify the Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s blood essence.

“You should stay here and wait for him. When he completes his Enclosed Cultivation, I want you to ask him to breed a Venomous Hunting Insect.” Ye Jiuge made up her mind very quickly then said, “We will return to the Capital first.”

“Alright.” Luo Tian nodded solemnly. He’d made a personal decision to help his Little Master speed up the blood essence’s purification process.

Meanwhile, at Bloodcloud Peak, three thousand miles from the Capital...

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch was lying on a large, mahogany bed dozing with his eyes closed.

Four gorgeous Blood Slaves wearing clothing made from thin, transparent silk surrounded him in various elegant poses, attending to him.

Two of these lovely Blood Slaves massaged his leg lightly.

The other two Blood Slaves, who were older, held heavy feather fans and fanned the Bloodthirsty Patriarch.

The Blood Slave fanning on his left had a red mole between her eyebrows. She was Ye Yu's older sister, Ye Yunzhi.

Since many young and pretty Blood Slaves had recently arrived, the Patriarch had lost interest in her.

If Liu Yunfei hadn't asked for Ye Yunzhi's skin before leaving, she would have most likely been sent to the Blood Brothel and used as a Human Cauldron.

All this while, she had behaved in an acquiescent manner to gain the privilege of serving the Bloodthirsty Patriarch as a fanner.

The cave-dwelling was quiet, except for the swishing sounds from the upward and downward movement of the feather fans.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch's eyes were completely shut. He looked like an old, shriveled tangerine with wrinkles all over his aged face.

He opened his eyes abruptly. They blazed with fierce viciousness.

"Patriarch?" The two Blood Slaves who were massaging his legs lifted their heads, puzzled.

They never expected the Bloodthirsty Patriarch to send them flying with a kick.

Bang! The force from the kick blew the two Blood Slaves apart. Their body parts flew everywhere, splattering blood.

Ye Yunzhi's fell to the ground immediately. She did not dare utter a single word.

"Patriarch, please spare my life." The other Blood Slave's beautiful face was tear-stained. She looked ravishing as she begged for mercy.

The gossamer fabric she was wearing slid down her body, revealing a considerable area of pale skin. This made her appear very seductive.

However, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch did not even spare her a glance. He was so furious that he could not think straight.

He never thought that his Life's Origin Blood Essence would be purified by someone else. To him, this was extraordinarily shameful and humiliating.

Just then, Shou Hou entered the place with a panicked expression. He reported, "Patriarch, we have a problem. The fire in Senior Xiong's Soul Lantern has gone out."

"A bunch of useless good-for-nothings." The Bloodthirsty Patriarch flew into a rage and struck that alluring Blood Slave with his palm, killing her.

Ye Yunzhi lowered her body even further. She shot Shou Hou a very pitiful gaze.

Shou Hou had already noticed that Ye Yunzhi was in a dangerous situation. Therefore, he told the Bloodthirsty Patriarch hurriedly, "Patriarch, although Senior Xiong is dead, the flame in Su Junqing's Soul Lantern is still burning."

When Ye Yunzhi heard that Su Junqing was still alive, the grudge that she held against him immediately reflected in her eyes.

She'd never thought that the cruel and unscrupulous man would still be alive, just like she wanted him to be.

There would eventually come a day when she would dismember Su Junqing's body into ten thousand pieces.

Ye Yunzhi's forehead was pressed close to the ground. It took every ounce of strength she possessed to suppress the emotions stirred up by Shou Hou's words.

"Everyone is dead, except for him. This is quite impressive!" As expected, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's attention was diverted. He narrowed his eyes and asked, "Do we have anyone else in the Capital right now?"

"Patriarch, we still have one person in the Ye Residence and two in the imperial palace," Shou Hou answered respectfully.

"Why are there so few left? How can we achieve things on a greater scale with only three of them?" The Bloodthirsty Patriarch furrowed his brow. The creases were so deep that it was as if someone had carved them in his skin.

"Patriarch, you are very observant. Our remaining members in the Capital are all old hands. We can still use them," Shou Hou replied after a moment of careful consideration.

"Alright." The Bloodthirsty Patriarch nodded. He commanded, "Send some of our members to the

Capital and ask them to get to the bottom of this. They should be extra careful around that brat, Su Junqing.”

At this point, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch paused for a moment. After he changed his mind, he said swiftly, “I retract my previous order. If you find him, bring him back to me immediately. I want to interrogate him personally.”

“Yes.” Shou Hou breathed a sigh of relief.

Three people had died during this assignment. All of them were highly-skilled members of the Sect.

Everyone in the Sect felt like the Sword of Damocles was hanging over them. No one dared to voice their thoughts. They were afraid that they would be sent on a mission. Fortunately, the Patriarch did not mention them at all.

“Everyone, you may leave!” The Bloodthirsty Patriarch tiredly waved them away.

When Shou Hou retreated from the room with his body bent, he gestured discreetly to Ye Yunzhi with his hand.

After that, Ye Yunzhi followed Shou Hou out of the room without attracting any attention.

When Shou Hou left the Patriarch’s cave-dwelling, he finally breathed a sigh of relief.

He wiped his sweat forcefully, before speaking to Ye Yunzhi in a relieved manner, “At first, when I assigned you to fan the Patriarch, I thought that it was a cushy job. I did not expect you to have a brush with death. You were quite lucky.”

“It’s all thanks to you, Shou Hou. Otherwise, it is very likely that I would have ended up dead today.” Ye Yunzhi’s endearing face was filled with gratitude.

“Don’t mention it.”

Shou Hou said in a lowered voice, “Right now, the Sect is an unsafe place. During this time, you should be more careful. Stay in the Hundred Flower Palace and try not to leave. I will help smooth things out so that you won’t have to attend to the Patriarch for the time being.”

“Shou Hou, I will listen to your advice,” Ye Yunzhi said in a gentle voice.

Her voice was very pleasing to the ears. It was not sugary sweet in a sickening way. Instead, it was pure. When matched with her docile nature, he felt an itch in his heart.

“When I am promoted to Rank Two Blood Guard, I will ask the Patriarch to reward me with you. Then, you won’t need to be afraid anymore!”

Shou Hou stared at Ye Yunzhi’s gaunt face with an aching heart. He said tenderly, “Before that happens, you’ll have to put up with this for a while longer!”

“As long as I am not sent to the Blood Brothel, I can tolerate anything.” Fear flashed across Ye Yunzhi’s pretty face. Her extremely delicate and vulnerable position made him feel affection for her.

“You can rest assured that I will never let you end up in that filthy Blood Brothel.” When Shou Hou saw that the little beauty was still very scared, he said softly, “Since the Patriarch’s plan to murder Great Master Dongfang has been thwarted, he’s not in the mood to focus on that right now. You do not need to worry.”

“Really?” Ye Yunzhi blinked her large eyes and stared helplessly at Shou Hou.

“Of course. I am telling the truth. Brother Jiang, Xiong and Liu Yunfei failed in their mission. They both died at Medicine Refinery City. The members of the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance will inevitably come to take us down. However, you do not need to lose sleep over this. As long as the Patriarch is still here, no one can come near Bloodcloud Peak.”

Shou Hou looked left and right before taking a Blood Pill from a pouch on his belt and pressing it into Ye Yunzhi’s palm. He told her in a soft voice, “Consume this Blood Pill in private. Never let the others find out. Right then, let’s stop talking for now. You should hurry up and return to the Hundred Flower Palace!”

“Shou Hou, you should also take care. Please do not make me worry about you,” Ye Yunzhi told Shou Hou, reluctant to part from him.

“Rest assured. I will be fine.” Shou Hou kept urging Ye Yunzhi to leave.

He stared at the back of her lithe body, and a small, stupid smile appeared on his face.

Since he had worked for the Patriarch for many years, he had seen all of the most attractive Blood Slaves.

However, for him, Ye Yunzhi was the only one who stood out.

Most of all, he loved Ye Yunzhi’s voice when she told him to be careful and to take care of himself. It made him feel warm in his heart.

To hold onto this feeling, he needed to put more effort into his cultivation. He had to save Ye Yunzhi before the Patriarch annihilated her.

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Only two oil lamps were suspended from the cave ceiling in the bend of the Bloodthirsty Sect's dark passageway. Their flickering flames cast a gloomy atmosphere over the corridor.

Ye Yunzhi tried her best to conceal her silhouette within the shadows as she furtively made her way to the Hundred Flower Palace.

After she passed through a walkway, she took a turn and bumped into a few of the Bloodthirsty Sect's disciples, who had just returned from their practice.

Every one of them ogled the lithe figure beneath the red gossamer clothing.

Ye Yunzhi ignored their lecherous gazes and continued to walk forward.

The Patriarch was extremely possessive of his personal Blood Slaves. He implanted Blood Soul Flowers in the hands of all the Blood Slaves that lived in the Hundred Flower Palace.

The Blood Soul Flower's fragrance was very distinctive. Not only that, it rubbed off easily.

Anyone who dared to molest the Patriarch's Blood Slaves would smell like the Blood Soul Flower. Once the scent was detected on them, they died horribly.

However, sooner or later, once someone new caught his eye, the Patriarch lost interest in the Blood Slaves who had been with him for a long time.

After he tired of them, he removed their Blood Soul Flowers and sent out-of-favor Blood Slaves to the Blood Brothel. There, they would pleasure anyone who visited.

Many disciples had been coveting Ye Yunzhi for a long time. They laughed gleefully and said, "This Blood Slave has been with the Patriarch for quite a while. She must be amazing in bed."

"Tch! The Patriarch has already been sick of her for some time. If he had not promised her skin to Liu Yunfei, he would have sent her to the Blood Brothel ages ago."

"Little Beauty, listen to my advice. You should hurry up and learn how to please a hundred men in one night. My brothers and I can hardly wait to touch you."

"How could one hundred men satisfy her? I heard that someone once brought his Blood Beast to the brothel. He wanted to experience a threesome with a human and a beast!"

"F*ck. After they're done with her, she'll be completely ruined. We won't be able to play with her."

"Don't worry about that. They definitely won't be the last ones to touch her. Then, they'll have her all to themselves."

"Hahaha! That's more like it."

Ye Yunzhi turned a deaf ear to the disciples' nasty words. She quickened her steps toward the Hundred Flower Palace.

While the Hundred Flower Palace sounded like a beautiful place, in reality, it was merely a larger cave.

Its chiseled walls created long and narrow cave dwellings. A piece of shabby drapery hung at the entrance. This was their residence.

When they heard Ye Yunzhi return, a few ghastly pale faces poked out from the worn curtain of a small cave room.

All of the Blood Slaves that lived here were girls with Spiritual Power.

When the Bloodthirsty Patriarch implanted their bodies with the Blood Soul Flower, all their Spiritual Energy melded with their blood.

This Blood Soul Flower was extremely magical. It formed a protective light around their bodies, which prevented sharp blades from harming them. They were also impervious to all kinds of poison. Even if they wanted to commit suicide, they would not succeed.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch was extremely unforgiving toward suicidal Blood Slaves.

After newcomers witnessed his cruelty firsthand a few times, they stopped thinking about ending their own lives. Instead, they resigned themselves to living as Blood Slaves and waited for death.

Ye Yunzhi was highest in seniority because she has served the Patriarch the longest. Therefore, she stayed in the uppermost cave room.

She slowly climbed up to her room using a rope and stepping on the ledges protruding from the cave walls.

The cave room was so cramped that one could only take a single step into it before being forced to turn around.

Other than a bed with thin blankets, there was nothing else in the room.

She let down the cave room's curtain and sat quietly for a while.

Once she was sure that no one was paying attention to her, she fished out the Blood Pill which Shou Hou had given her.

This Blood Pill was a Medicinal Pill exclusive to the Bloodthirsty Sect. It was produced by combining various kinds of medicinal herbs with blood essence. It could raise the level of a Bloodthirsty Disciple's cultivation.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch often drank the Blood Slaves' blood. After a long time, their complexions became sallow. When that happened, they did not have long before they were sent to the Blood Brothel.

Shou Hou did not have a way to save her from this, so he'd come up with an idea for her to consume Blood Pills to retain her beautiful appearance. At least the Patriarch would not cast her aside as soon as he laid eyes on her.

It had never occurred to Shou Hou that the Ye Clan's Cultivation Techniques, which Ye Yunzhi practiced, were Yin in nature. This Blood Pill, therefore, not only preserved her beauty, but it also allowed her to steal some Spiritual Energy from the Blood Soul Flower.

After Ye Yunzhi swallowed the Blood Pill, she started cultivating.

Her Elixir Field emitted rays of Spiritual Light that passed through a few of her main meridians before expanding steadily. In the end, the light entered her left arm and remained there.

After Ye Yunzhi completed her cultivation, she caressed the inner area of her left arm gently.

A large amount of Spiritual Light had already concentrated there. It was an adequate amount for her to activate the Ye Clan's Invisibility Skill and leave this place. However, she was not in a rush.

She'd gained a thorough understanding of all of the routes in and out of Bloodcloud Peak from Shou Hou. Right now, she was just waiting for the perfect opportunity.

If possible, she hoped that she could give the Bloodthirsty Sect a harrowing lesson to avenge her suffering.

She only had one chance. She needed to be incredibly patient.

Ye Yunzhi regulated her breathing and continued her meditation.

Meanwhile, at an incomparably magnificent residence located at No. 17 East Main Street, in the Lei Kingdom's Capital...

Under Qing Mama's supervision, officers from the Jingzhao Commandery were hanging up a plaque inscribed 'Ye Jiuge's Residence,' which had been conferred by the Emperor.

This was a great day. However, Ye Jiuge and Zi Shang were performing Enclosed Cultivation.

She had declared that she would be performing Enclosed Cultivation so that she could avoid dealing with the aristocratic families in the Capital as well as the Emperor fawning over her.

The news that Great Master Yun had assigned an extremely adept master to protect Ye Jiuge had spread throughout the entire Lei Kingdom.

Everyone burned with curiosity about this master. At the same time, they also wanted to forge ties with Ye Jiuge, who'd not only struck out on her own but was also an Alchemist with bright prospects.

A flurry of invitations were sent to her. Even Imperial Consort Xi and Dongfang Que wanted to meet her in private.

It was said that Emperor Xuanwu had even drafted an imperial edict that permitted her to visit the palace at any time to have an audience with him.

If Zi Shang were truly a bodyguard sent by her grandfather, Ye Jiuge should also bring him along whenever she left her residence.

However, this fellow was a demon. Not only that, he was a shameless demon who kept complaining loudly that he did not have enough Demonic Energy, so he needed to kiss and touch her.

Ye Jiuge did not have the confidence to take him for a walk, much less enter the palace.

There were still several highly-skilled masters left in the Capital. If he exposed himself accidentally, then everything that she had achieved in the past would go down the drain.

Since this was a case of 'in for a dime, in for a dollar' for Ye Jiuge, she made the most of the opportunity afforded by her excuse to perform Enclosed Cultivation and progress in her cultivation.

However, her excuse was not just a way to fob off the aristocratic families and the Emperor.

She'd encountered a few setbacks during the events that had taken place in Medicine Refinery City, and it had since dawned on her that her martial arts ability was still lacking.

If Zi Shang had not woken up in time and defeated Xiong Yunhu, it was very likely that everyone in the Medicine Refinery Hall would have died.

Lately, Zi Shang had been helping her massage her meridians. This was increasing her Spiritual Energy considerably. Even the White Bone Flame was becoming much stronger.

Therefore, Zi Shang had suggested that she use the White Bone Flame to nurture the Lightning Snake Magical Whip so that it would be able to integrate the Bone Essence from the White Bone Cavern more effectively.

During Ye Jiuge's Enclosed Cultivation, political upheaval broke out, causing a massive storm in the Capital.

As the Crown Prince was deemed to have conducted himself in a dishonorable and unacceptable manner, he was stripped of his rank and became a commoner. Not long after, it was rumored that he'd passed away suddenly.

The Empress missed the Crown Prince so much that she committed suicide to accompany her son in grief and despair.

A kingdom cannot go a day without its Emperor. The same also goes for the heir to the throne.

Therefore, Emperor Xuanwu proclaimed to the whole world that he was appointing Dongfang Que as the new Crown Prince and lord of East Palace.

Initially, Emperor Xuanwu had wanted to bestow the position of Empress on Imperial Consort Xi. However, contrary to his expectations, Imperial Consort Xi declined. Instead, she recommended that the Emperor confer a posthumous title on Dongfang Que's biological mother, Imperial Noble Consort Bai Linglong .

Emperor Xuanwu agreed and posthumously renamed Bai Linglong as Empress Rende. Then, he promoted Imperial Consort Xi to Imperial Noble Consort.

This news spread throughout the entire Lei Kingdom. Even Ye Jiuge heard about it amid her Enclosed Cultivation.

Nothing that was happening was a surprise to her.

The Crown Prince and Empress had dug their own graves. Out of everyone they could have allied with, they chose to collude with Black Magic Practitioners. Hence, they suffered the consequences of their actions.

Right now, Ye Jiuge felt troubled because she could not keep performing Enclosed Cultivation to avoid the aristocratic families and the Emperor. She needed to think of a way to deal with these nosy people who wanted more information about Zi Shang.

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A pile of invitations rose on Ye Jiuge's table like a little hill. However, she did not even spare them a glance.

As she thought things over, she realized that she'd already made her decision. Once she finished her Enclosed Cultivation, she would meet Imperial Consort Xi.

"No, I should change the way I address her now and refer to her as 'Imperial Noble Consort.'"

Ye Jiuge felt that, since she was a lady, she should see the Imperial Noble Consort first. This was far more appropriate than immediately seeking an audience with Emperor Xuanwu. At the same time, she could fish for information.

However, Imperial Noble Consort Xi had become a successful, influential figure feared by many. Ye Jiuge did not know if Imperial Noble Consort Xi would treat her differently than she had in the past.

After Ye Jiuge decided, she went to the Pill Production Room to produce a bottle of Anti-aging Pills and felt ready to stop her Enclosed Cultivation.

"After so many days of Enclosed Cultivation, I can finally go outside." Zi Shang stretched himself.

When Ye Jiuge was performing her Enclosed Cultivation, he'd naturally stayed by her side to guide her through the process as a personal bodyguard.

"When we go outside, please behave. Cut back on your sexually suggestive actions." Ye Jiuge laid eyes on Zi Shang's alluring face and felt a headache coming on.

In the past, she'd proposed that Zi Shang change his appearance to something more plain-looking. However, he'd stubbornly refused.

"Hehe, those typical ladies will never catch my eye. You are my true love." Zi Shang pulled Ye Jiuge into his embrace and lightly smooched her face.

"After we leave the residence, treat me with more respect." Ye Jiuge was impassive. She remained rigid as he kissed her.

Recently, she'd discovered a method for dealing with Zi Shang. As long as she hardened her heart, showed him a cold face, and drew a line, Zi Shang exercised restraint.

"I will do as you say!" As expected, once Zi Shang saw Ye Jiuge's stern face, he behaved immediately.

Ye Jiuge pushed the door and walked out. Zhen Zhu was keeping watch outside. During these last few days, Yu Die and Zhen Zhu had taken turns guarding the door. They were prepared to carry out Ye Jiuge's orders at any time.

"Have you hung up the plaque that the Emperor granted me? Has anything happened recently in the residence?" Ye Jiuge asked while walking.

"Qing Mama has already asked officials from the Jingzhao Commandery to help us to hang it." Zhen Zhu walked alongside Ye Jiuge and gave her an account of everything that had happened in the residence, regardless of whether it was important or insignificant.

When Ye Jiuge had left the Ye Residence and struck out on her own, her personal household had only consisted of maids that had followed her from the Zilin Residence.

When Ye Jiuge had announced to the public that she was performing Enclosed Cultivation at this inconvenient time, they'd become a group without a leader.

Fortunately, Qing Mama had kept in contact with the Yun Clan's senior servants throughout the years. She relied on those senior servants to set up and manage Ye Jiuge's Residence.

Even when the Emperor had assigned some officials to send his conferred plaque, Qing Mama had been the one to put on a bold face and accept it.

"Congratulations, Eldest Miss, for progressing in your cultivation level!" An old man with graying hair on his temples walked over to Ye Jiuge and bowed at her deferentially with a serious expression.

He was also one of the Yun Residence's senior servants. His name was Huo Zhenwei.

In the past, he had been the leader of the bodyguards chosen by Yun Tianwei to serve Yun Qiaoqiao. He had a high level of cultivation. He was one step away from Spiritual Master.

After Yun Qiaoqiao had passed away, Ye Yuxuan had dispatched Huo Zhenwei to carry out a mission. He had never expected this mission to be a set-up carefully devised by his foes.

After falling into their trap, his cultivation level had dropped sharply. In despair, he'd lived anonymously in a village where no one could find him.

Qing Mama had personally gone to see him and brought him back to Ye Jiuge's Residence.

Ye Jiuge had helped him heal his internal injuries completely and regain his cultivation. Then, she'd employed him as the Ye Jiuge Residence's servant.

The Ye Clan had not stirred up any trouble during Ye Jiuge's Enclosed Cultivation thanks entirely to Old Huo, who was now overseeing the household affairs.

"Old Huo, can you please summon Qing Mama? I have some things to ask her," Ye Jiuge instructed him politely.

"I will go and fetch her now." It did not take long for Old Huo to return with Qing Mama.

"What has the Ye Clan been up to lately?" Ye Jiuge lifted her teacup and took a sip.

"Eldest Miss, after the Su Clan fell from power, Old Master treated Su Yufeng and her daughter terribly. A while back, he sent Ye Shanshan away under the pretense of learning a new skill. In reality, he gave her to the Danyang Sect's Patriarch, Lingyun, as a concubine. In return, he obtained a stalk of Rank Five Medicinal Herb, the Purple Cloud Perilla," Qing Mama said scornfully.

"If I remember correctly, Patriarch Lingyun is already more than two hundred years old." Ye Jiuge was quite shocked.

Ye Shanshan was merely seventeen. It was ridiculous to make her the concubine of a man old enough to be her great-grandfather.

"Aren't you aware of Old Master's character by now? There's nothing he won't do," Qing Mama laughed coldly, and her face was full of contempt.

Although she disliked Ye Shanshan, she still found a father who traded his biological daughter – a virgin, no less – for Spiritual Medicine to be reprehensible.

Ye Jiuge sighed heavily. She thought of Ye Shanshan; she'd always been vain and imprudent. Now, she had to sleep with an old codger. She must feel miserable!

However, this was the consequence of her actions. Ye Jiuge would not feel sorry for her. Therefore, she changed the topic. "How is Fourth Sister?"

She cared about this sister most of all.

"Old Master dotes on Fourth Miss now. However, she has been getting a little too close to Seventh Concubine." When Qing Mama mentioned this, she furrowed her brow.

"Keep a close eye on Seventh Concubine. If she does anything unusual, report it to me immediately." Before, when she'd still be living in the former Ye Residence, Ye Jiuge had

suspected that the Seventh Concubine was associated with the Empress. Unfortunately, she could not find any evidence to support this suspicion.

Now that the Empress had been ousted from power, Seventh Concubine had approached Ye Ruyi all of a sudden. Perhaps, she had another plan in mind.

“Eldest Miss, do not worry. I have already asked someone to monitor her every move.” Qing Mama thoroughly disliked Seventh Concubine, so she’d instructed someone to watch her a long time ago.

Ye Jiuge asked another question, “Has anything else happened?”

As soon as she’d disassociated herself from the Ye Clan, she’d performed Enclosed Cultivation. Qing Mama was the only person managing the household. Therefore, she was still unclear about a lot of things.

“There aren’t that many servants in our residence, so there were no problems. It was just that, every day, people visited. Eldest Miss, you cannot keep avoiding them!” Qing Mama fretted.

In the past, she had always hoped that Eldest Miss would restore the Yun Clan’s former glory and become the most successful aristocratic young lady in the entire Capital.

Now that her dream had been fulfilled, she was worrying again.

Since so many people wanted to meet her Eldest Miss, she needed to consider them carefully and make arrangements. Eldest Miss would have to entertain them all. In the end, her Eldest Miss would be the one who was exhausted!

“There is no need to pay attention to these people. I plan to enter the palace tomorrow to meet Imperial Noble Consort Xi. Please help me to wrap this bottle of Anti-aging Pills.” Ye Jiuge took out an exquisite bottle made from white jade from her Magical Bottomless Satchel.

“Alright.” Qing Mama accepted the bottle. Then, after a moment’s hesitation, she asked, “Should we send a message to the palace to notify her first?”

It would be rude for Ye Jiuge to enter the palace to meet the Imperial Noble Consort Xi without informing her beforehand.

“There is no need. I want to avoid unnecessary complications.” Ye Jiuge shook her head.

She possessed a palace entry pass, which Imperial Noble Consort Xi had granted her. It allowed her to enter the palace at any time.

“Then let me accompany you tomorrow!” After Qing Mama finished talking, she left to make preparations.

Ye Jiuge rested for a night then climbed into a horse-drawn carriage with Qing Mama at the dawn the next day. She soon arrived at the palace to meet the Imperial Noble Consort.

The leader of the sentries examined her palace entry pass and discreetly gave Ye Jiuge a once-over. He did not ask her many questions before letting her in.

In the past, even if she'd been in possession of this palace entry pass, she would not have been able to escape an interrogation.

But now, Ye Jiuge had become famous because of the events that has transpired at Medicine Refinery City. Every Imperial Guard recognized her face. They did not dare to offend her.

Ye Jiuge brought Qing Mama to Jinxiu Palace. From a distance, they could see Lady Hongxiu waiting at the entrance. She welcomed them with a smile.

“Eldest Miss, how did you enter the palace without telling us first? When I heard this news, I was taken aback!”

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“That’s right. I want to give you a nice surprise.” Ye Jiuge also smiled.

“We are pleasantly surprised. Imperial Noble Consort was so happy that she wanted to come outside to welcome you personally.” Lady Hongxiu beamed.

"I do not deserve such grand treatment." Ye Jiuge knew that Lady Hongxiu was joking, so she played along.

Ye Jiuge walked into Jinxiu Palace and saw Imperial Noble Consort Xi standing in the middle of the hall.

Although she was wearing a simple, light blue embroidered dress, her authoritative aura was not diminished. She was beyond reach as if standing high up in the clouds. She was most worthy of her Imperial Noble Consort title.

As soon as Imperial Noble Consort Xi saw Ye Jiuge, a smile instantly appeared on her face as she walked over her to greet her. She held her hand and pretended to be angry as she said, "Little heartless girl, at long last, you've come to see me after completing your Enclosed Cultivation."

When Ye Jiuge heard Imperial Noble Consort Xi referring to herself as 'me,' she relaxed slightly. Judging from how she was acting, Imperial Noble Consort Xi hadn't changed.

Imperial Noble Consort Xi led Ye Jiuge to the chairs. After they were seated, a hint of guilt appeared on her gorgeous face. "I am incredibly sorry about the plaque. I wanted to ask the Emperor to inscribe it with 'Yun Residence.' I never expected that the Emperor..."

Imperial Noble Consort Xi did not finish. She sighed.

When she'd found out that Ye Jiuge planned to leave the Ye Residence and strike out on her own, she was genuinely happy for her. Therefore, she wanted to urge the Emperor to inscribe the plaque with 'Yun Residence' as a way to support her.

After all, Ye Jiuge was the Yun Clan's only living descendant. When she'd been born, her last name had been 'Yun.'

However, though the Emperor had listened to her suggestion, he had not said anything at all. In the end, he went ahead and inscribed the plaque 'Ye Jiuge's Residence' and sent it to Ye Jiuge shortly after their conversation. Even if she'd wanted to stop him, it was too late.

"There is not much difference between 'Ye Jiuge's Residence' and 'Yun Residence.' Your Highness, you do not need to take it to heart." It did not bother Ye Jiuge.

A name was merely something that others addressed her by.

If she insisted on changing her surname for the sake of cutting Ye Yuxuan out of her life, then she would be making a mountain out of a molehill.

“Regardless, I should have thought this through before proposing it to the Emperor.” Imperial Noble Consort Xi breathed out a prolonged sigh.

If Ye Jiuge had not helped her force the poison out from her body, she would still be living aimlessly in the Emperor Temple. She would not be the high-status person she was today, much less ousting the Empress and the Crown Prince.

“Your Highness, if you feel bad about it, then accept this!” Ye Jiuge smiled as she changed the topic and pulled out a wrapped bottle of Anti-aging Pills from her Magical Bottomless Satchel.

“Every time you visit me, you bring me a gift. You are too courteous.” Imperial Noble Consort Xi knew that Ye Jiuge did not want to continue the conversation about the plaque, so she eyed her with mild displeasure.

Imperial Noble Consort Xi accepted her present and passed it to Lady Hongxiu, signaling to her with her eyes.

Lady Hongxiu understood. She took the gift from Imperial Noble Consort Xi before leaving the room with the other palace maids.

When Ye Jiuge saw this, she knew that Imperial Noble Consort Xi wanted to speak to her in private. Therefore, she straightened her face.

“Jiuge, I heard that your grandfather has sent an exceptionally adept master to protect you. Is that true?” Imperial Noble Consort Xi’s tone was somber.

“That is correct.” Ye Jiuge repeated the lie that she had previously mentioned to others. In the end, she pretended to sigh ruefully before saying, “Unfortunately, this master is too eccentric. Usually, it is hard for me to get ahold of him. If he does not want to show up, I cannot find him.”

Ye Jiuge’s words effectively dissuaded those people who wanted to meet Zi Shang.

In any case, Zi Shang was a master with a mind of his own. She would not be able to command him as she wished. If they wanted to meet him, then they should find him themselves!

When Imperial Noble Consort Xi heard Ye Jiuge, she wanted to say something, but her face was full of hesitation.

Ye Jiuge looked at her in a puzzled manner.

The expression on Imperial Noble Consort Xi’s face kept changing. In the end, she made up her mind and said, “In the past, I heard a rumor about Great Master Yun. I do not know if it is true.”

“Regardless of whether it is true or fake, I would like to ask Your Highness to be honest with me.” Ye Jiuge straightened her back, conveying how much she cared about this.

“You are also aware that, all this while, I have been trying to find out about Great Master Yun’s whereabouts. I accidentally caught wind of news that Great Master Yun was murdered because of a piece of a treasure map,” Imperial Noble Consort Xi said gravely, before looking at Ye Jiuge worriedly.

Ye Jiuge paled immediately.

This expression was half-sincere, half-deceptive.

She’d already had a hunch that the treasure map was related to her grandfather. Imperial Noble Consort Xi merely helped her to confirm her suspicion.

However, she’d never thought that someone had already taken her grandfather’s life.

When she first returned from Wanzhang Depths, Ye Yuxuan had been behaving very oddly, as if he were sure that her grandfather was no longer living in this world.

Ye Jiuge forced herself to close her eyes. When she opened them again, she was calm.

She asked Imperial Noble Consort Xi, “May I know where did Your Highness heard this?”

“I’m afraid that I can’t tell you. Right now, the most important thing is to ascertain whether that extremely skilled master is a sham!” Imperial Noble Consort Xi avoided Ye Jiuge’s gaze.

She could not let Ye Jiuge know that she’d found out about this when eavesdropping on Emperor Xuanwu.

Although she used to loathe Emperor Xuanwu, after the Empress passed away and Dongfang Que moved into the East Palace, her hatred gradually faded.

Irrespective of what had happened, her future and Que’er’s depended on this man.

Regardless of how much she hated him, she would never go against him.

She was only informing Ye Jiuge of this news out of consideration for their existing friendship.

“I understand. Your Highness, you have my utmost gratitude for telling me.” Ye Jiuge nodded.

She knew that this time, she was in serious trouble.

Her grandfather's disappearance was linked to the treasure map. Now, Zi Shang had shown himself in public, claiming to be sent by Ye Jiuge's grandfather. This clearly implied that Zi Shang knew the treasure map's location.

People who wanted to get their hands on the treasure map would swarm her like bees.

However, this was also an opportunity.

Those who knew that her grandfather was connected to the treasure map would know the truth behind his disappearance.

Or, as now seemed more likely, the truth behind his murder.

Thinking of this, Ye Jiuge was shaken. She was not in the mood to remain in Jinxiu Palace. She stood up to take her leave.

Imperial Noble Consort Xi did not try to convince her to stay. She only said one more thing: "In the future, you have to be more careful."

"Your Highness, I will engrave your kindness in my heart." Ye Jiuge felt that she'd made the right decision in doing her utmost to save Imperial Noble Consort Xi.

Imperial Noble Consort Xi smiled. She said pointedly, "Rather than thanking me, you should express your gratitude to Que'er. He keeps you close to his heart."

She was willing to reveal this secret to Ye Jiuge because of Dongfang Que's tacit approval.

"Your Highness, rest assured that I have never forgotten about the Dongling Prince. I have found a way to help him to expel the remaining poison in his body," Ye Jiuge swore.

Although the Poisonous Earthworm King had eliminated more than half of the poison in Dongfang Que, it still had not gotten rid of all of the toxins from his body's most vital parts.

When Jun Yichen returned, they could use his Life's Origin Parasite to help Dongfang Que to eradicate the poison.

Imperial Noble Consort Xi had never expected Ye Jiuge to be so dense. She could not catch the underlying meaning of her words at all.

She smiled helplessly. Deep down, she understood that it was very likely that Que'er and Ye Jiuge

were fated to meet but not to be together as lovers.

Imperial Noble Consort Xi summoned Lady Hongxiu and asked her to accompany Ye Jiuge to the palace entrance before seeing her off.

As they passed through Yuhua Garden, they saw Dongfang Que standing beneath a tree with red flowers in the distance.

He was wearing a golden coronet with seven pearls on his head. He was clad in a dark purple robe embroidered with a golden dragon with five talons, and his handsome face brooded, as usual. When he saw Ye Jiuge walking over, a glint of happiness flashed in his eyes. He brightened up considerably.

“Your Highness, why are you here?” Ye Jiuge asked in surprise.

“I came here to wait for you.” Dongfang Que’s gaze was unusually gentle as he looked at Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge did not notice a thing. She asked in a forthright manner, “Your Highness, is there something you want to tell me?”

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“Did the Imperial Noble Consort Xi inform you about the treasure map and your grandfather?” Although Dongfang Que’s gaze was laced with slight disappointment, he still pretended as if he were not affected as he asked her this question.

“She told me.” Ye Jiuge nodded.

"You should be careful. Many people want to get their hands on the treasure map. You should not trust anyone easily, especially those masters." Dongfang Que might as well have said that Zi Shang was a fraud.

"Alright. Your Highness, your concern is greatly appreciated."

Ye Jiuge did not make an effort to explain.

She knew Zi Shang better than anyone. He could not possibly be an impostor.

Just then, Zi Shang suddenly said with great displeasure, "Does this brat want to die?"

Although he could now materialize in human form, it would still be inappropriate for him to accompany Ye Jiuge to the imperial harem's residential quarters. Therefore, he hid inside her imprint.

He'd never expected to catch them red-handed. He'd made the right decision by coming here.

"Don't mess around," Ye Jiuge admonished hurriedly.

She'd more or less noticed Dongfang Que's feelings for her. However, she did not take them seriously.

Leaving aside Zi Shang, who was a possessive hindrance to the development of their potential relationship, she and Dongfang Que would never be lovers—even if Zi Shang did not exist.

Dongfang Que was not her type.

He was not aware that Ye Jiuge was secretly having a mental conversation with Zi Shang. He even told Ye Jiuge very sincerely, "No matter what happens, you can come to me if you need me. I will stand by your side forever."

He might as well confess his love.

"Thank you very much. I will turn to you for help if I need it. It is getting late now, so I shall take my leave." It was quite apparent that Ye Jiuge had given Dongfang Que the brush-off.

Since it was impossible for them to have a romantic relationship, she should not give him false hope. Ye Jiuge bade him farewell without any intention of stringing him along.

Dongfang Que stared at Ye Jiuge's back for a long time as she walked away, before sighing softly.

Although he could already guess that Ye Jiuge did not have any feelings for him, he still felt dejected that she'd left without any hesitation.

"Your Highness?!" Lady Hongxiu's face was full of worry.

It did not take Dongfang Que long before he recollected himself. He instructed Lady Hongxiu, "Pass this message on to the others. I want them to protect Ye Jiuge and ensure her safety at all costs."

Although Ye Jiuge had rejected him, he still did not want anything untoward to happen to her.

After Ye Jiuge returned to her residence, she summoned Zi Shang, "Come out. I need you to do me a favor."

Shortly after, Zi Shang materialized from her imprint. He landed in front of Ye Jiuge, grinning as he asked, "Your wish is my command. Even if your request puts me in extreme danger, I will not think twice!"

He was extremely pleased with Ye Jiuge when she'd rejected Dongfang Que.

"I plan to meet Ye Yuxuan tonight." Ye Jiuge's expression was grave.

Although she already had a hunch that Ye Yuxuan had something to do with her grandfather's disappearance, he was still her biological father, no matter how despicable he was.

If he did not cross the line, she would not treat him too harshly.

Be that as it may, this concerned her grandfather's safety, so she had no choice but to see him.

However, if she wanted to weasel some information out of Ye Yuxuan, she needed Zi Shang's help.

"No problem." Zi Shang nodded without any hesitation.

That night, the moon was lonely. Stars were sparse in the vast, dark sky.

Ye Yuxuan locked himself in his room, drowning his sorrows in booze. His usually genteel mannerism was absent. Instead, he seemed extremely miserable. He did not know what he'd done wrong to end up like this.

At first, he thought that disowning Ye Jiuge had been an excellent move. He'd wanted to rid of this horrid, rebellious daughter.

He'd never expected Ye Jiuge to turn the tables after being forced into a corner and become the hero who took down the Black Magic Practitioners.

On the other hand, he'd become a laughingstock. Even Emperor Xuanwu was rubbing salt on his wounds. He'd conferred a new plaque with the inscription 'Ye Jiuge's Residence' to Ye Jiuge. He was encouraging her to go against him!

The more Ye Yuxuan thought about it, the more upset he felt. He could not help but take another swig of wine.

At that time, Song Bai walked into the room with soft footsteps. He reported cautiously, "Old Master, Madame said that she feels ill. She requests your presence."

"If she is unwell, then she should send for a physician. She should not disturb me for every single problem!" he shouted at Song Bai. As Ye Yuxuan was already slightly intoxicated, his face was swollen and red.

"The physician said that the cause of Madame's discomfort is depression. She needs to take things easy," Song Bai replied with a long face.

Ever since Old Master had sent Second Miss away, Madame had been crying her eyes out every day. Unfortunately, Old Master treated her with loathing. Even though some time had passed, he had not visited her residence.

As their servants were caught in the middle of this awkward situation, both sides were making things difficult for them!

"I want you to tell her that if anything untoward happens to the child in her stomach, she is as good as dead," Ye Yuxuan said ruthlessly.

If not for the sake of the unborn child, he would have divorced Su Yufeng and told her to get lost.

Song Bai never thought that Old Master would treat Madame so heartlessly. He did not dare to continue the conversation. His heart pounded as he left the room.

Ye Yuxuan still felt angry, so he seized his wine cup and violently flung it at a wall. He screamed furiously, "B*tch! Ignorant woman!"

In the past, he'd thought that Su Yufeng was a clever lady. He'd never expected her to be dumber than a pig. He'd made an error in judgment.

"If she is an ignorant woman, then you must be more even brainless," a cold voice rang out.

"Who?" Ye Yuxuan looked around angrily. To his surprise, he saw a slender figure wearing an azure dress standing beside the mahogany window.

Her black hair was fashioned into the simple Spiritual Snake Hairstyle and adorned with a pearl hairpin. A few loose strands of hair fell on either side of her pale cheeks.

Her eyebrows were dyed royal purple. She had naturally seductive eyes and well-shaped facial features. Spiritual Energy oozed from her body. It was as if she were a goddess who'd descended to the mortal realm.

"Qiaoqiao!" Ye Yuxuan cried out involuntarily. He was so drunk that he was not thinking straight.

"You have no right to mention that name," Ye Jiuge replied stiffly.

Ever since she'd found the pill that could have saved her mother's life in a secret compartment in his study, she'd known that her reprehensible father's love for her mother was entirely fake.

"Oh, it's you." Ye Yuxuan's muddled brain finally regained some clarity.

The young lady in front of him was not his first wife, Yun Qiaoqiao, but his unfilial daughter, Ye Jiuge.

"Why are you here?" Ye Yuxuan yelled at her fiercely. He already knew that there was no possibility that Ye Jiuge would accept him as her family. It was apparent that she approached him as a hostile visitor.

"Let me ask you, did you have a hand in my grandfather's disappearance?" Ye Jiuge got straight to the point. She did not bother to speak politely to her horrible father.

"What are you talking about? How could I be involved with your grandfather's disappearance?" Ye Yuxuan raised his voice, similar to a provoked fighting bull. He glared at Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge could see that he was very feeble-minded. Therefore, she continued to lock eyes with him in a confrontational manner.

Cold sweat slowly formed on Ye Yuxuan's forehead. That face, which bore a remarkable resemblance to Yun Qiaoqiao, exerted a significant amount of pressure on him.

Ye Yuxuan swallowed. He could not help but avert his eyes guiltily.

Suddenly, he discovered that there were three shadows on the ground where the candlelight was dim.

That extra shadow stood beside Ye Jiuge.

Ye Yuxuan jerked his head upward. However, nobody was standing beside her.

He thought: Wait a minute. Something's amiss!

All of a sudden, an alluring, demonic face flashed in Ye Yuxuan's mind. He was immediately shaken.

That shadow beside Ye Jiuge must be that skilled master, Ye Zi.

Ye Yuxuan was about to open his mouth to interrogate Ye Jiuge, but he was frightened by the shadow, which pounced on him without warning.

The very next moment, he stood rooted to the ground, unable to move his body.

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A pair of cold purple pupils appeared before Ye Yuxuan. They were similar to an ancient, bottomless well. Beneath the calm expression, darkness swirled in those incredibly eerie eyes.

After that, that purple pupils separated into four parts and revolved continuously like a fascinating kaleidoscope.

Ye Yuxuan's eyes moved in a circular motion, their path replicating a mosquito coil. The expression on his face became more and more vacant.

"I'm done." Zi Shang retreated to Ye Jiuge's side, indicating that she could start her interrogation.

"Did you harm Yun Tianwei?" Ye Jiuge asked as she fixed her glare at Ye Yuxuan.

"I did not instigate his murder. I was following someone else's orders." Ye Yuxuan's expression was wooden as he truthfully narrated everything.

Back then, everyone had looked down on him because he was Yun Tianwei's live-in son-in-law. Therefore, he had always resented them.

A masked man had come to him and given him a Poison Pill. He'd asked him to find an opportunity to make Yun Tianwei consume it.

At first, Ye Yuxuan had been very hesitant and scared. However, as his ambition grew, his desire to possess everything that belonged to the Yun Clan kept tempting him.

In the end, he had made Yun Qiaoqiao his unwitting accomplice and used her to poison Yun Tianwei.

After Yun Tianwei was poisoned, he went missing. From then on, there was no news of him.

When Yun Qiaoqiao, who was already in poor health, fell ill, he'd taken over everything and proclaimed himself the master of the house, quietly erasing all traces of the Yun Clan.

Then, Yun Qiaoqiao had come across a few things that had made her suspicious of him. She'd questioned him and even wanted to take back Yun Clan's assets.

That's when Ye Yuxuan had panicked.

He had not dared to poison Yun Qiaoqiao, so he'd secretly switched her top-quality medicinal pills to inferior medicinal pills. Without any remorse, he had knowingly allowed his first wife to die from an illness.

Because of these shameful deeds, he had always disliked Ye Jiuge, who had the Yun Clan's blood coursing through her. He'd find fault in her in an extremely scrupulous manner.

He felt as if Ye Jiuge's death would allow him to cover up his wicked crimes.

After Ye Yuxuan confessed everything, he continued to stand on the same spot with empty eyes.

The room was as silent as a graveyard.

“Should I kill him?” Zi Shang asked Ye Jiuge.

For a brief moment, Ye Jiuge wanted to kill Ye Yuxuan for being such a heartless, despicable man!

However, Ye Ruyi’s petite figure appeared in her mind all of a sudden.

Ye Yuxuan was also Ye Ruyi’s father.

Although he’d treated Fifth Concubine horribly, he was a decent father to Ye Ruyi because of her aptitude.

Ye Ruyi was still young. If she had a father who was a Great Master with pill production skills, it would brighten her prospects.

“Feeding him with Spiritual Dissipating Pill will suffice,” Ye Jiuge answered coldly.

The most painful thing that could happen to a Spiritual Practitioner was to watch their cultivation level decline gradually before disappearing entirely.

By the time Ye Yuxuan lost all of his Spiritual Energy, Ye Ruyi would be grown up.

Ye Jiuge intended to make her worthless father live in misery forever. He had it coming.

“Piece of cake.” Zi Shang pulled out a bottle of Spiritual Dissipating Pills and used his Demonic Force to envelop it before implanting a few pills within a few of Ye Yuxuan’s main acupoints.

This way, there would be no significant changes to Ye Yuxuan’s cultivation level during the early stage. However, when he realized what was happening, it would be too late to reverse.

“Let’s go!” Ye Jiuge did not spare her contemptible father another look. She left with Zi Shang.

On their way home, a sense of gloom hung over them.

Ye Jiuge’s heart felt heavy. She did not want to speak.

Zi Shang suddenly said, “There is a possibility that your grandfather is still alive.”

“You do not need to console me.” Ye Jiuge stared straight ahead. She did not even turn around.

According to Ye Yuxuan, the Poison Pill had been extremely potent—capable of killing anyone

that ingested it. It was most likely that her grandfather was dead.

“These are not mere words of comfort. If your grandfather had passed away, his corpse would have been discovered by now. Instead, he’s still declared missing. Perhaps, he is still finding a way to neutralize the poison and waiting for you to seek him out,” Zi Shang said earnestly.

“You are right. My grandfather must be waiting for me.” In an instant, this ignited a fighting spirit within Ye Jiuge.

She not only wanted to save her grandfather but also find the masked man who had plotted to take his life.

Ye Jiuge racked her brain. The only clue that she had was the treasure map.

She returned to her official residence and took out the treasure map immediately.

Currently, the map in her possession was only half-complete.

She’d obtained a piece of it from the previous Crown Prince.

Ye Yu had given her another piece. The remaining part was with Ye Yunzhi.

Ye Jiuge had a hunch that she might be able to find some clues about her grandfather’s disappearance from the Bloodthirsty Patriarch.

After all, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch must be well acquainted with Poison Pills.

After Ye Jiuge decided to head to the Bloodcloud Peak to take down the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, she sent Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang an invitation to meet up for a chat.

Both of them had wanted to meet Ye Jiuge for quite some time. As soon as they received her invitation, they rushed to her residence at once.

Ye Jiuge welcomed them in the main parlor.

They opened the conversation with small talk. After that, Ye Jiuge feigned nonchalance as she asked Bai Songling, “Brother Bai, I heard that Jun Yichen has succeeded in breeding a Venomous Hunting Insect. Did you manage to track down Su Junqing?”

During Ye Jiuge’s Enclosed Cultivation, Jun Yichen, Luo Tian, and Ye Yu had spent their time helping Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang with their investigation to find Su Junqing. They’d managed to breed a Venomous Hunting Insect.

"We haven't. Jun Yichen said that Su Junqing has already fled to Bloodcloud Peak." Bai Songling looked glum.

They had gone to great lengths to lay a trap for Su Junqing. However, that brat had still managed to slip through their net. It made them feel dejected.

"Then what did the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance say? Don't tell me that they are going to allow the Bloodthirsty Sect's Black Magic Practitioners to act so brazenly," Ye Jiuge asked. This was what concerned her the most.

Without the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance's help, she was not confident that her little group of allies would be able to save Ye Yunzhi at Bloodcloud Peak.

"The matter is still under discussion. However, Great Master Dongfang approached the Alliance personally and offered a bounty to anyone who could present him with the Blood Lotus Flower and kill the Bloodthirsty Patriarch. He is willing to give them a Master Solidifying Pill in return," Bai Songling revealed the big news.

"Wow! Great Master Dongfang has Master Solidifying Pills." Ye Jiuge was astonished.

The Master Solidifying Pill was a beneficial pill that could increase one's chances in rank progression to Spiritual Master.

In recent years, Spiritual Energy in this realm had become scarce. The Spiritual Herbs available were not as ancient as they used to be. Therefore, it was difficult to produce a Master Solidifying Pill, and Spiritual Practitioners found it extremely challenging to advance further in their cultivation.

There were not more than ten Spiritual Masters in the entire Lei Kingdom. Countless people were stuck at the Advanced Spiritual Practitioner stage, unable to make any further progress.

Although Ye Jiuge's current level of cultivation was still far from the rank of Spiritual Master, there was no harm in obtaining that pill.

She was rather tempted to go for it.

"That's right. Right now, many Spiritual Practitioners are falling over each themselves to register their names. Numerous important Main Disciples of the famous Righteous Sects are among them. According to rumors, a few hundred people have already put their names down. Currently, the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance is fretting about whom they should elect as the mission's leader. After all, it will be tough to defeat the Bloodthirsty Patriarch!" Bai Songling said ruefully.

This Master Solidifying Pill was Dongfang Master's most treasured item.

If it weren't for the fact that he needed the Blood Lotus Flower urgently to recover his cultivation, he would never have taken it out from his storage.

"I hope that the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance will send more skilled masters there. That would make things easier for us." Although Ye Jiuge was slightly interested in the Master Solidifying Pill, her top priorities were to rescue Ye Yunzhi and find clues about her grandfather's disappearance.

"Eldest Miss, are you also going to the Bloodcloud Peak to exterminate the entire Bloodthirsty Sect?" Bai Songling asked in surprise.

The Bloodcloud Peak was more than 500 kilometers from the Lei Kingdom. The journey would be extremely dangerous. After all, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch was not a sitting duck.

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"Yes, Ye Yu wants to save his sister from the Bloodthirsty Sect, while Luo Tian and Jun Yichen wish to avenge their clan members. As their friend, I need to lend them a helping hand." Ye Jiuge omitted any mention of the treasure map.

Even though her friendship with Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang had been forged during difficult times, she had not forgotten that they were also imperial officers.

They must know that even Emperor Xuanwu had his heart set on the treasure map!

"With Senior Ye Zi around, Eldest Miss will certainly be able to kill the Bloodthirsty Patriarch this time and get the Blood Lotus Flower." As Bai Songling spoke, his gaze fixed on the handsome demonic man standing behind Ye Jiuge.

This extremely skilled master, Ye Zi, was the talk of the town. Countless people in the Capital wanted to strike up a friendship with him so that they could ask about Great Master Yun's whereabouts.

Unfortunately, this adept master was elusive and eccentric. He completely ignored anyone other

than Ye Jiuge. Even the two of them, who were quite close to Ye Jiuge, did not have a chance to talk with him.

Zi Shang, who stood behind Ye Jiuge, turned a deaf ear to Bai Songling. He had a lazy expression as if he was not yet fully awake.

“Brother Bai, you overestimate him!” Ye Jiuge smiled then changed the topic, “Brother Bai and Brother Wan, do you want to come with us?”

“We want to go, but we cannot take time off to join you.” Bai Songling’s face was full of disappointment.

Dongfang Que was now the new Crown Prince, so they needed to help him with a lot of things. Even if they wanted to take part in the mission, they were not able to.

“Since the two of you will be performing your official duties in the Capital, I would like to ask you to take good care of my residence.” Ye Jiuge smiled.

If Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang did not facilitate the process, Old Huo would not receive the conferred plaque so quickly.

“You don’t need to be so formal with me.” Bai Songling pretended to be disgruntled.

Ever since they’d returned to the Capital, Ye Jiuge had grown apart from them.

Although this was because they were working for people with an agenda that conflicted with Ye Jiuge’s, it still saddened him slightly.

If it were possible, he wanted to accompany Ye Jiuge on this mission with Ye Yu and Luo Tian. It was such a pity that he was so much indebted to the Bai Clan. His whole self belonged to Bai Clan and Dongfang Que.

Wan Ziyang was in the same situation.

In the past, the Wan Clan had been wrongly punished for a crime that they did not commit, and the entire clan had been executed. If not for the Bai Clan’s help, he would not have been able to clear the Wan Clan’s name. Therefore, he needed to repay them for their kindness.

Ye Jiuge also knew that they would not be able to go with her, so she said, “I would like to ask you two for another favor.”

“Please feel free to let us know if there is anything that we can do for you. As long as it is within

our capabilities, we will help you," Bai Songling told her without hesitation.

"As you know, it will not be easy to put an end to the Bloodthirsty Sect. That is why I would like to ask the two of you to help me to gather more information from the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance." Ye Jiuge did not skirt the topic with pleasantries. The two of them had connections in the Alliance.

"Rest assured that, as soon as we learn anything new, we will notify you immediately."

Bai Songling, Wan Ziyang, and Ye Jiuge chatted for a while longer before Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang noticed that night was falling. They stood up at the same time and said, "We still have some official matters to attend to, so we will take our leave now."

They had both been promoted.

Bai Songling was now the head of the army in charge of protecting the Capital, while Wan Ziyang was as a high-ranking official in the Justice Department.

Every day, the two of them were so busy that they hardly had time to rest. Only today had they finally managed to make time to meet Ye Jiuge. After they ended their discussion, they could not stay any longer.

"Let me see you off," Ye Jiuge said as she stood up.

"It is just a short distance to the door. There is no need for you to come and see us off. If you continue to be so polite, I will not visit you in the future," Bai Songling joked.

"Alright. I will ask Old Huo to see you off on my behalf!" Old Huo was an Advanced Spiritual Practitioner, so it was perfectly acceptable for him to represent Ye Jiuge as a host.

"My Lords, please follow me." Old Huo came forward promptly and escorted them out.

In the blink of an eye, the main parlor became quiet.

Ye Jiuge returned to her seat and lifted a teacup to her lips to moisten her throat. She was about to talk to Zi Shang when he suddenly raised his hand and shot a ray of blackish-purple Spiritual Light toward the roof.

"Who's there?" Ye Jiuge looked up immediately.

She saw Ye Yu, Luo Tian, and Jun Yichen fall from the rafters like three dumplings.

"What on earth are you doing?" Ye Jiuge put down the teacup and stared at Jun Yichen curiously.

"I did not want to bump into Bai Songling. He is such a chatterbox. So, I hid in your roof beams." Jun Yichen eyed Zi Shang with slight fear.

Ever since he'd assimilated the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's blood essence, his cultivation level had risen considerably.

At first, he'd thought that he could startle Ye Jiuge. However, Ye Zi had shot him down almost as soon as he'd climbed up.

This handsome demonic man was extremely skilled. The precision in his aim was too terrifying, which was why he'd been able to kill Xiong Yunhu during a rampage.

"How childish of you! You must have too much free time on your hands." Ye Jiuge realized that Jun Yichen wanted to show off.

Tch! What a rascal. In the past, he'd pretended to be very proud and aloof. Now, he was finally showing his true colors.

Luo Tian has always indulged Jun Yichen's antics, so she could understand why he'd gone along with such a crazy stunt.

However, Ye Yu is not a child anymore, so why did he participate in this silly activity? Ye Jiuge thought.

Thinking of this, Ye Jiuge asked Ye Yu, "Brother Bai rubbed Jun Yichen the wrong way, so it's understandable that he did not want to meet him. But why didn't you want to meet them?"

"It is not that I did not want to see them. I just did not want them to know about the treasure map." Ye Yu was forthright with her.

He had the same idea as Ye Jiuge. He must keep them in the dark about the treasure map.

"Do they know that you have a piece of the treasure map in your hand?" Ye Jiuge was slightly surprised. However, on second thought, it was quite obvious.

Su Junqing had connived with the former Crown Prince to massacre the entire Ye Clan. As long as someone put two and two together, they should be able to infer that Ye Yu had the treasure map.

"Yes. Lately, many people are trying to find the treasure map. Eldest Miss, please be more careful." Ye Yu was really worried.

The map's existence was an incredibly well-kept secret. However, when the former Crown Prince had been stripped of his rank, it had come to light and caused turmoil in the Capital.

"Mere vigilance is no use. During a time like this, we have to be more proactive and complete the treasure map as soon as possible. Since the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance is sending people to kill the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, this time, we must seize this golden opportunity to save your sister from the Bloodthirsty Sect," Ye Jiuge said decisively.

"Alright." Ye Yu was filled with vigor. He nodded forcefully.

He'd been looking forward to this moment for a long time.

Suddenly, Jun Yichen, who had been quietly listening to their conversation from the sidelines, asked Ye Jiuge, "If there were a piece of the treasure map in front of you, what price would you be prepared to pay for it?"

"You are speaking as if you have it in your hands." Ye Jiuge raised an eyebrow. Blood-clad Miao people always kept a low profile. They did not seem like the type to get involved in something like this.

"That's right. In our clan, a piece of treasure map has been passed down for generations. If you are willing to teach me beast-speak, I will give it to you." Jun Yichen really wanted to learn beast-speak from Ye Jiuge.

"There is no way that I can teach you beast-speak. It is an innate ability that I inherited from my grandfather." Ye Jiuge had already come to a consensus with Zi Shang that she would just use her grandfather as the pretext for her beast-speak.

Jun Yichen furrowed his brow. If that were truly an innate ability, then there was nothing he could do about it.

Therefore, he changed his terms right away.

“Let’s exchange for 100 bottles of Spiritual Beast Pills, then,” Jun Yichen demanded with an aggressive wave of his hand, his intentions blatantly obvious.

He and Luo Tian were the only two Blood-clad Miao tribe members left.

Luo Tian had already been sold into Ye Jiuge’s service, and the treasure map was useless to him. He might as well give it to Ye Jiuge.

When she went searching for the treasure with his and Luo Tian’s help, they could trade for even more Spiritual Beast Pills with the treasures they found.

In a nutshell, for them, Spiritual Beast Pills were the greatest reward.

“It’s too troublesome. How about I give you the recipe for the Spiritual Beast Pill, and you can produce them to your heart’s content?” Ye Jiuge had already lost her patience after being hounded daily by Jun Yichen for Spiritual Beast Pills. It would save her a lot of trouble if she just handed over the recipe.

“I have no interest in producing pills,” Jun Yichen rejected with a shake of his head. He had his eyes locked on Ye Jiuge’s ability.

“Fine! A hundred bottles, then! But I have no time for pill production now. I’ll give you ten bottles first. The rest will have to wait until 15 days later.” Ye Jiuge shrugged in defeat.

“There are also the ones you owe us from the sale of the Legendary Venomous Insects. Don’t forget,” Jun Yichen added seriously.

“Even if I did want to forget, you would never give me a chance to!” Ye Jiuge was very upset.

“Cough! Cough!”

At that moment, Luo Tian suddenly covered his mouth and coughed a few times. Then, he made an offhanded remark: “If it is convenient for Eldest Miss, maybe you’d like to give me my monthly allotment of Spiritual Beast Pills at the same time?”

The monthly one-bottle benefit could not be forgotten or scrapped!

“Eldest Miss, what about my monthly remuneration? Can I change to Spiritual Beast Pills as well? Or, perhaps, I can buy them from you?” Ye Yu looked at Ye Jiuge carefully.

Recently, he had received a lot of squeaking complaints from Black Dictator, griping about how Xiao Hong worked for its Master and was fed Spiritual Beast Pills for every meal. But it was only fed poison while working for him. He felt like it was about to go on strike soon.

“Fine, alright, okay! You’ll all get them!” Ye Jiuge felt like she must have owed them a lot in her past life.

“Thank you, Eldest Miss,” Luo Tian flashed her a reserved smile.

“Don’t say your thanks too early.” Ye Jiuge glared at Luo Tian then turned to Jun Yichen and said, “If you want the Spiritual Beast Pills from me, you will have to help me with something first.”

“What?” Jun Yichen looked at Ye Jiuge warily, then added, “You can forget it if it’s too difficult.”

“It’s not difficult. There’s still a bit of king poison left from the Ice Snow Spider in the new Crown Prince’s body. I would like you to dissolve it.” Ye Jiuge felt that this request was not a tall order.

Without her help last time, Jun Yichen would not have been able to obtain the drop of the Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s blood essence.

He would probably accept such a small request.

“Piece of cake! I will go tonight.” Jun Yichen slapped his chest confidently.

Ye Jiuge was taken aback. The way Jun Yichen was acting today was a little weird.

In the past, Jun Yichen did not show much expression on his face. Today, the wealth of emotions that he was displaying was honestly freaking her out. Happiness, anger, sadness, and joy—it was all written on his face.

“You’ve noticed that I’ve changed!” Jun Yichen laughed at Ye Jiuge. The row of sparkling white teeth that greeted Ye Jiuge was terribly shocking.

“Can it be that you are possessed by something dirty?” Ye Jiuge looked at him in suspicion.

“Curses! You are the one who is possessed!”

Jun Yichen glared at Ye Jiuge with dissatisfaction, and then he continued gloating, "After I absorbed the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's blood essence, my cultivation improved by leaps and bounds. Now my soul is finally intact; this is how my real self is supposed to be."

His attitude was hard to accept and like!

Ye Jiuge tossed Luo Tian a glance.

She felt that the cause of Jun Yichen's changed attitude wasn't so simple as he'd described. Luo Tian evaded Ye Jiuge's eyes and remained silent.

Although he had been sold into Ye Jiuge's service, he still kept quiet about Little Master's secret.

Seeing their exchange, Ye Jiuge did not force the issue. She started on another topic. "Since we have decided to go to Bloodcloud Peak to deal with the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, we should start making plans now.

"I will oversee the Medicinal Pills we need. You guys will oversee gathering information about the Bloodcloud Peak and any movements within the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance."

Ye Jiuge finished, then turned to Luo Tian. "Both of you should be familiar with Bloodcloud Peak. Is there anything that we need to be careful of?"

"It has been three years since we left Bloodcloud Peak. Over the past three years, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch has never stopped expanding. We have to investigate the changes that we made," Luo Tian said prudently.

"Then investigate as you make preparations!" Ye Jiuge was not too worried.

After facing Sorcerers like Liu Yunfei head-on, they had a bit of confidence and expectations about what they would be facing.

For now, the Legendary Venomous Insects were the greatest weapon they had against the Bloodthirsty Patriarch.

As she thought about it, Ye Jiuge turned to Jun Yichen. "You should cultivate more Legendary Venomous Insects during this period, just in case we need them."

"Did you think the Legendary Venomous Insects are cabbages? They are not easy to cultivate, and you need resources to do so." Jun Yichen's eyes shifted around. He wanted to take the opportunity to request more Spiritual Beast Pills, but Ye Jiuge squashed his ambitions. "If you don't want to cultivate the parasites, that's fine. But you will have to take revenge yourself!"

The request for more Spiritual Beast Pills that had already reached the tip of Jun Yichen's tongue was swallowed back in. He glared daggers at Ye Jiuge.

Luo Tian quickly played the mediator. "Rest assured, Eldest Miss. Little Master is aware of the situation. He has been cultivating Legendary Venomous Insects all this while. He even harvested a batch recently."

"That's good." Ye Jiuge did have some trust in Luo Tian.

Seeing that the hour was late, Ye Jiuge rose from her seat. "If there is nothing else, we will leave it at that! Dismissed!"

"I will take my leave now." Ye Yu rushed off to gather information about the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance.

Luo Tian and Jun Yichen left shortly after. They had an even more critical role. Cultivating Legendary Venomous Insects was not an easy task.

After Ye Jiuge sent them off, she came to the Pill Production Room to start producing pills.

She had just gotten the herbs for the Spiritual Beast Pills out when Zi Shang suddenly spoke up: "Something's up with the brat, Jun Yichen."

"What's the problem?" Ye Jiuge stopped moving and looked up at Zi Shang.

"The parasite witchcraft that Jun Yichen practices and cultivates is very dangerous. First, the person has to leave a fragment of his soul with his Life's Origin Parasite. When the Life's Origin Parasite cultivates a humanoid form, there is a breaking-in period.

"His cultivation did indeed improve by leaps and bounds after absorbing the blood essence of the Bloodthirsty Patriarch. But something happened during the breaking-in period. Didn't you notice how he was too lively?" Zi Shang asked.

"Now that you say it, it does seem like that was the case." Ye Jiuge thought that Jun Yichen's childlike behavior had just been breaking loose. The thought that his cultivation had become unstable had never once crossed her mind. She grew nervous. "What should we do?"

Jun Yichen was their secret weapon against the Bloodthirsty Patriarch. It would be troubling if something happened to him.

"It's his cultivation. It's all up to him," Zi Shang replied carelessly.

A word of advice was already extremely benevolent of him.

As for helping—he wasn't that kindhearted.

“He's still so young, so how could he have gotten past this obstacle on his own?” Ye Jiuge frowned with worry.

Despite how he made himself look mature, Jun Yichen was still only 11 years old. Ye Jiuge did not think that he could handle the situation alone.

“Don't talk dirty,” Zi Shang chided seriously.

“Stop it! What kind of relationship are we having now that you can still make these kinds of unwelcome jokes?” Talking dirty? She felt like blasting dirty cannons!

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Seeing that Ye Jiuge was about to flip out, Zi Shang wisely switched subjects. “If you are intent on helping him, why don't you try producing the Spiritual Beast Pills with the White Bone Flame?”

“Are you out of your mind? The White Bone Flame is a spectral flame that can only produce yin pills. I do not want the Legendary Venomous Insects to end up as spectral parasites.” Ye Jiuge thought that Zi Shang was trying to be funny.

“The Legendary Venomous Insects are not spiritual beasts. Who knows? They might find the yin pills to be even better. Your Green Bronze Cauldron is special, and it can accept all heavenly and earthly energy. Perhaps you might be able to produce some unknown special pill. Why don't you give it a try?” Zi Shang did not look like he was joking.

Ye Jiuge thought about it for a moment. What Zi Shang had said made sense.

Parasite witchcraft was an unearthly witchcraft to begin with. Perhaps, the yin pill might be more suitable.

First, she would try her hand at producing the pills!

As an Alchemist, Ye Jiuge did not lack in experimental spirit; she did not shy from trying new things.

Besides using White Bone Flame, Ye Jiuge was also thinking about tweaking the recipe for the Spiritual Beast Pills.

Previously, although the Spiritual Beast Pill contained pretty good Spiritual Power, it was very bitter. It was like eating poison.

Once, Ye Jiuge had tried eating it. But the gagging taste was so off-putting that it had significantly reduced the effects of absorbing the pill.

She had always wanted to change the pill's taste and had done considerable research. Now, she had an idea of what to do, so she was going to take today's opportunity to try tweaking the recipe.

Ye Jiuge was planning to add two ingredients to the original recipe—Crimson Red Fruit and Orange Daylily.

The Crimson Red Fruit, when its essence has been extracted, tasted very fragrant and sweet. It was well-loved by children.

When she was producing the Vitality Strengthening Pill for Ye Ruyi, she had added some Crimson Red Fruit, and the result had tasted pretty good. Ye Ruyi had eaten the pills with relish.

Later, she'd found out by chance that mixing a small amount of Orange Daylily into the Crimson Red Fruit could enhance the taste and make it sweeter and more fragrant.

Ye Jiuge took out the Green Bronze Cauldron.

Ever since the Black Fat Rat had gone into hibernation, the Green Bronze Cauldron had changed a lot. After channeling a bit of Spiritual Energy into it, the cauldron enlarged until its height reached an adult's waist.

Not only could it contain more Medicinal herbs, but its pill production speed was also increased.

The probability of successful pills was also increased.

In the past, the cauldron could only produce 20 Spiritual Beast Pills at a time. Now, 200 pills could be created in one go.

Because she had this mythical tool, she'd agreed to Jun Yichen's request. Otherwise, producing so many Spiritual Beast Pills would have run her ragged.

Ye Jiuge placed the ingredients needed for the Spiritual Beast Pills into the Green Bronze Cauldron then summoned White Bone Flame and started her production.

The bean-sized White Bone Flame appeared insignificant and small beneath the large body of the Green Bronze Cauldron. But its force was very strong.

The medicinal herbs in the Green Bronze Cauldron quickly melted, turning into a lump of black liquid.

Seeing it was almost the time for the next step, Ye Jiuge threw in the Crimson Red Fruit and Orange Daylily, using a one-to-five ratio.

The Crimson Red Fruit and Orange Daylily melted into a deep red fluid, mixing perfectly with the Spiritual Beast Pill liquid. Finally, it formed into small Medicinal Pills the size of red beans.

Ye Jiuge called upon a specific skill with a flick of her finger and uncovered the cauldron. Then, a pleasant and comforting scent drifted up to her nose.

The cauldron's green interior was filled with countless small pills in a delicate, pretty color as alluring as cherries.

"Why does this pill look like candy?" Zi Shang raised his eyebrow.

"That was my intention," Ye Jiuge replied. She popped one into her mouth and started chewing.

She found that the pills contained a Spiritual Power that was more concentrated than the ordinary Spiritual Beast Pill, and there was no hint of any spectral yin spiritual power.

"How did this happen?" Ye Jiuge exclaimed in shock.

Was the Green Bronze Cauldron was so brilliant that it could transform Spectral Force into Spiritual Energy?

"Nature exists in balance. Spectral Force is one of the heavenly and earthly energies. When you

use the White Bone Flame to produce pills, it can trigger the Spiritual Energy concentrated in Medicinal herbs.”

Zi Shang rested his head on top of Ye Jiuge’s and trained his eyes on the cauldron filled with Spiritual Beast Pills. He suddenly started drooling.

“It sounds reasonable.” Ye Jiuge nodded contemplatively.

She pinched another pill between her fingers, wanting to have another taste, but it was snatched away by Zi Shang and disappeared into his mouth.

“If you want to eat, can’t you just help yourself?” Ye Jiuge condemned Zi Shang’s bad habit of snatching food from her hands.

“Food is tastier when it is snatched. Do you want to have a try?” Zi Shang held a pill in his mouth and pressed his face closer to Ye Jiuge’s.

“Disgusting,” Ye Jiuge pushed Zi Shang’s head away. She did not want to drink the demon’s saliva.

But Zi Shang locked his hand behind Ye Jiuge’s neck, forcing his mouth on her, and pushing the pill that was in his mouth into hers. Then, he started kissing her deeply.

It was a very, very sweet kiss.

Especially once the Spiritual Beast Pill dissolved, the concentrated Spiritual Energy from the pill permeated from her mouth to her throat and stomach. It was warm and comforting.

Her whole body relaxed, her mood became peaceful, calm, and satisfied. There was even a hint of reluctance to stop the kiss.

Finally, it was Zi Shang who broke away.

He did not tease Ye Jiuge like he usually would. Instead, he turned to the cauldron of pills and boldly declared, “This cauldron of pills belongs to me!”

With that, he flicked his sleeve at the cauldron.

The 200 Spiritual Beast Pills lying within the cauldron flew in a neat line into his sleeve and disappeared.

“You just declared ownership and stole the pills. Did you ask for my permission?” Ye Jiuge

objected.

She would never admit that she was pissed at Zi Shang for kissing her then forgetting about it the next second.

“Do you need another reminder from me about who you belong to?” Zi Shang blinked, his seductive eyes whispering, ‘If you do not understand, I will be happy to remind you.’

“No thanks!” Ye Jiuge glared at Zi Shang.

She clearly understood that she had been sold to Zi Shang a long time ago.

“The pill wasn’t too bad. Its name sounded horrible.”

Zi Shang threw a pill into his mouth, making his dissatisfaction known. “Calling it ‘Spiritual Beast Pill’ is too insulting for my demonic sensibilities. At least change it to ‘Unparalleled Pill’ or ‘Domineering Pill,’ or something of that sort.”

“Dream on. I am hoping to earn money from this pill.” Ye Jiuge would not adopt such a lame name.

More importantly, ‘Heavenly Spiritual Pill’ and ‘Domineering Pill’ did not match the medicine’s characteristics!

“Then, let’s call it ‘Heavenly Dragon Pill,’” Zi Shang decided.

“Heavenly Dragon, your head!” Ye Jiuge rolled her eyes at Zi Shang. She thought for a moment, then said, “Let’s call it ‘Cherry Pill,’ instead!”

The pill looked like a small cherry, so the name ‘Cherry Pill’ was quite fitting.

After she’d tried one just now, she’d realized that the pill had the same Spiritual Energy replenishing effect on humans too. They should not limit it to beasts.

“Alright!” Zi Shang agreed reluctantly. Then he popped another in his mouth, relishing in the taste.

Ye Jiuge couldn’t help but stare. She had never imagined Zi Shang to be a demon who loved sweets.

Who knew? She could bank this knowledge to threaten and entice him into doing her bidding.

While Ye Jiuge was secretly planning, her hands did not stop moving. Soon, she had produced

another cauldron of Spiritual Beast Pills.

This time, she did not wait for Zi Shang to steal them. She quickly stashed the Spiritual Beast Pills and started researching the new pill's characteristics.

After eating the first pill, she'd felt that it contained nothing but Spiritual Energy.

The second pill had been disrupted by Zi Shang. The feeling of ecstasy was too prominent.

With the third, Ye Jiuge finally found something novel about this new pill—it could calm the mind.

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Ye Jiuge looked at the Cherry Pill in her hand in disbelief. She then ate three pills in a row before confirming that it had mind-calming and qi-gathering effects.

Calming the mind and gathering qi. It might sound simple, but many Spiritual Practitioners couldn't achieve this.

When Spiritual Practitioners tried to advance in rank, if they failed, they fell a level. The process was never easy or safe. So many were unable to keep a clear, stable mind.

Some Spiritual Practitioners who had the means would purchase some the Mind Soothing Pill before they tried to advance.

But some better-quality Mind Soothing Pills required many high-grade spiritual herbs. Also, the pill production process was complicated and difficult. Hence, it made the price of the pill so expensive that it was out of reach for most Spiritual Practitioners.

But now, the Cherry Pill had a mind-calming effect.

Although it was weak, there were pills aplenty!

The cost of the ingredients for an entire cauldron of Cherry Pills was still considerably less than the price of one Mind Soothing Pill.

“Well, continue producing your pills, and you will reap in financial stability!” Zi Shang had to admit that Ye Jiuge did have talent in Pill Production.

The Cherry Pill contained Spiritual Power and could calm the mind. It was even beneficial to him, let alone humans and Spiritual Beasts.

Of course, the taste was impeccable, to say the least.

“Do you think that the Cherry Pill’s mind-calming and spirit-gathering effects could help Jun Yichen get past his breaking-in period?” Ye Jiuge was still concerned about Jun Yichen.

“Yes,” Zi Shang nodded.

“Then, let’s go look for him now!” Ye Jiuge swiftly decided and packed the pills up to take along with her. Zi Shang followed after her.

Jun Yichen was still staying at the place that had been given to him for cultivating the Poisonous Earthworm Kings. Luo Tian had moved in with him.

The sun was up high, and its heated rays shone on the grounds below.

The courtyard was quiet. The only sound that could be heard was the swishing of the Poisonous Earthworm Kings eating.

The large courtyard was filled with winnowing baskets housing many Poisonous Earthworm Kings that had made their second advancement.

The previously white, fat, and silly-looking Poisonous Earthworm Kings now looked a little more enlightened. The way they ate the Blackfly Grass was savage.

Ye Jiuge and Zi Shang walked into the courtyard, prepared to holler for Jun Yichen.

Suddenly, they heard a child’s high-pitched laughter coming from one of the buildings. It was Jun Yichen’s voice.

“What happened?” Ye Jiuge’s heart stopped for a moment. Then, she walked in the direction of Jun Yichen’s voice.

Deep in the dilapidated building, it was dark and eerie.

Jun Yichen had his back to the door. He was keeling on the ground and drawing circles on the floor while emitting that strange and high-pitched laughter. The whole picture seemed weird.

Luo Tian was lying near the door. His mouth showed traces of blood, and there was no sign of the rising and falling of his chest. It looked like he was dead.

“Luo Tian.” Ye Jiuge’s eyes widened. She was about to rush over to Luo Tian to check on him, but Zi Shang stopped her.

“Something isn’t right.” Zi Shang frowned, and a dark look crossed his handsome face.

“Isn’t that a given?” Ye Jiuge panicked. How could Zi Shang even say that? This scene was particularly crazy, creepy, and frightening.

Zi Shang ignored Ye Jiuge and shot a cold light at Jun Yichen from his fingertips. The black spiritual light had not even reached Jun Yichen when it was flicked off by an unseen force.

After that, Jun Yichen suddenly disappeared.

The next moment, he reappeared and pounced on Ye Jiuge like an evil spirit.

Ye Jiuge’s reaction was fast. She protected her body with a purple spiritual light barrier.

Kaboom! The spiritual light barrier shattered.

Sharp nails burst forth from Jun Yichen’s small hands. After shattering the spiritual light barrier, he aimed for Ye Jiuge’s chest.

Ye Jiuge sucked in a breath.

She had never thought Jun Yichen would attack her with intent to kill. But now, it was a little too late to defend herself.

Thank goodness Zi Shang was by her side.

With her aristocratic fingers flexed outwards, a purplish-black spiritual force appeared and turned into a shield to block Jun Yichen’s attack.

After his attack failed, Jun Yichen immediately retreated, intending to escape.

Zi Shang gently closed his fist, and the purplish-black shield exploded. It formed a gigantic web that covered Jun Yichen.

“Roar! Roar! Roar!” Jun Yichen howled, sounding like a wild beast. Trapped in the gigantic web, he did not stop struggling.

Ye Jiuge calmed down and looked at Jun Yichen carefully.

She realized that Jun Yichen’s eyes were bleeding. The sinister look on his face was frightening.

The strangest thing was that, in between his eyebrows, there was a thumb-sized protrusion. It looked like a heart sac.

“He is being counter-controlled by the Bloodthirsty Patriarch.” Zi Shang glanced at Jun Yichen’s forehead and instantly understood what had happened.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch was indeed ruthless and unscrupulous. He had actually hidden a trap in his blood essence drop.

It seemed like Jun Yichen had successfully absorbed the Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s blood essence. But during the fragility of his breaking-in period, he had been counterattacked. That was why he’d suddenly lost his mind and attacked Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge channeled her Spiritual Eye and scrutinized the blood sac. There were many thin blood strings wrapped around the mass of Jun Yichen’s brain. The only exception was the dazhui acupuncture point.

Without a second thought, Ye Jiuge took out the Lighting Fire Needle. Channeling some spiritual force into it, she pierced Jun Yichen’s dazhui acupuncture point.

The blood sac was blocked, and the blood receded from Jun Yichen’s eyes. His body immediately collapsed.

Ye Jiuge did not go up to him. Instead, she rushed over to Luo Tian to check on his condition.

Thankfully, Luo Tian was only severely injured and in a coma. His life was not at stake.

Otherwise, when Jun Yichen awoke and saw that he’d killed Luo Tian, he would be devastated.

“Chirp!” a weak-sounding chirp rang out from around Luo Tian’s neck.

Ye Jiuge tugged around Luo Tian’s neck and saw Xiao Hong. Its body was cut in half. It was struggling to breathe but continued to call out, “Save my Master!”

“Your Master is fine, and you will be fine too,” Ye Jiuge told Xiao Hong. Crushing a Cherry Pill in her hands, she scattered its powder on Xiao Hong’s battered and broken body.

Parasites did not have to swallow a pill to absorb its benefits. Externally applying the medicine had the same effect.

Xiao Hong had been in so much pain that it was about to lose consciousness. But it soon fell asleep peacefully after smelling the pill’s sweet scent.

Ye Jiuge also shoved some Cultivation Recovery Pills into Luo Tian’s mouth. Then, she turned her attention to Jun Yichen.

Jun Yichen was curled up on the floor. The protruding blood-red bulge on his forehead made it look like he’d grown a horn.

The veins around his eyes bulged, and his face looked menacing.

Even the Lightning Fire Needle, which was piercing his dazhui acupuncture point, seemed to be weakening its hold on suppressing the attack.

In such a situation, the only way out was to retrieve the Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s blood essence from Jun Yichen’s forehead.

But this blood essence drop was very sly. The moment it was retrieved from Jun Yichen’s forehead, it was sure to escape.

“Are you able to seal the Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s blood essence?” Ye Jiuge turned to Zi Shang.

“No, I can only destroy it,” Zi Shang shook his head. Destruction was his forte, not sealing.

“Destroying it would be such a pity.” Ye Jiuge hesitated. She decided to awaken Jun Yichen first.

The Lightning Fire Needle was in the dazhui acupuncture point, suppressing the situation. Ye Jiuge took out 49 golden needles and pierced various locations on Jun Yichen’s body, completely subduing the Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s blood essence.

The blood sac on Jun Yichen’s forehead gradually softened. It almost disappeared.

Then, Jun Yichen slowly opened his eyes. At first, he looked at Ye Jiuge and Zi Shang lost in a daze. When he came around, he turned his head hurriedly toward where Luo Tian had collapsed.

“He’s fine. But you, on the other hand, almost lost your life.” Ye Jiuge sounded none too pleased.

If he had sought her help earlier, this dangerous situation could have been avoided.

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“I never thought that the Bloodthirsty Patriarch would set such a trap.” Jun Yichen had returned to his formerly expressionless way of speaking.

“What do you intend to do? Leaving the blood essence in you is dangerous. You might die!” Ye Jiuge felt that if she did not exaggerate the issue, this brat would not be sufficiently afraid.

“Absorb and digest the blood essence.” Jun Yichen was firm in his decision. He did not hesitate one bit.

He carried the weight of seeking revenge for his clan members on his shoulders, so he had to find ways to get stronger—even if it meant risking his life.

Seeing him like this, Ye Jiuge could not discourage him. She looked to Zi Shang for help. “Do you have any way to help him?”

“The battle is between him and the Bloodthirsty Patriarch.” Zi Shang’s expression was calm.

If Jun Yichen could not absorb the blood essence and make it his own, he could forget about taking revenge.

“That’s right. It is my destiny and obstacle. Only I can break past this.” Jun Yichen stood up, reaching behind him to pluck out the Lightning Fire Needle. It fell from his hand, and the rest of the golden needles on his body dropped away too.

Ye Jiuge summoned the Lightning Fire Needle and the rest of the golden needles back with a spell. Then, she took out the newly produced Cherry Pills and told Jun Yichen, “These are the new Spiritual Beast Pills that I produced. I hope they will serve you well!”

“Why are they red?” Jun Yichen opened the bottle and looked at Ye Jiuge in confusion.

“I made a little tweak to the recipe. I’m confident that you will be happy with them.” Ye Jiuge did not elaborate. Connoisseurs knew when they ate something good.

Jun Yichen doubtfully took a pill to his mouth, then his eyes widened. His expression was one of disbelief.

“Look! Mind-calming and qi-gathering!”

Ye Jiuge felt proud. Jun Yichen was rather adept at identifying the good stuff.

Jun Yichen was not paying attention to what Ye Jiuge was saying. He just poured the whole bottle down his throat and swallowed the pills without biting.

The drop of blood essence had also realized that something was off. It split in two, turning into two blood-red horns protruding from Jun Yichen’s forehead.

Jun Yichen sat down cross-legged. The force in his abdomen started churning, and a golden-red light sped from his stomach in the direction of the two blood-red horns.

The edges of the horns shrank, and it ran in different directions trying to evade the attack.

The golden-red light swiftly chased after the blood-red horn on the left, swallowing it whole instantly.

The blood-red horn on the right suddenly exploded. It even burst through Jun Yichen’s neck and flew out.

Jun Yichen calmly opened his mouth. His golden, glittering Life’s Origin Parasite looked menacing as it flew out. With a stretch of its mouth, it swallowed the blood essence as it ran away.

Jun Yichen’s Life’s Origin Parasite had changed a lot.

Its head had already become human-like, and it had features resembling Jun Yichen's cocky and proud expression.

Besides the head, it had also formed two thin arms. The rest of it was still worm-like.

It flew back to Jun Yichen's head, then landed and griped, "Are there any more of the Cherry Pills? Give me some more."

Jun Yichen raised his palm, poured out two Cherry Pills, and placed them in his mouth.

The Life's Origin Parasite screamed. With a whoosh, it turned into a golden light and burrowed back into Jun Yichen's mouth.

"You've succeeded?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"Yeah!" Jun Yichen nodded. He took out a red cloth package from his chest and threw it at Ye Jiuge.

After receiving Ye Jiuge's help, he felt very grateful. But his awkward personality made him unable to express gratitude directly. He could only express his thanks through his actions.

Zi Shang snagged the cloth package from mid-air and opened it. It was half of the treasure map.

"At least you know what you have to do, brat." Ye Jiuge did not stand on ceremony and stowed the treasure map.

"I still have to solidify my cultivation. I'll leave Luo Tian in your care." Jun Yichen was worse than Ye Jiuge when it came to immodesty. After throwing Luo Tian at Ye Jiuge, he headed for his room to continue cultivating.

"Wait a moment! Have you settled Dongfang Que's issue for me?" Ye Jiuge shouted after him.

"Dongfang Que's poison has been eliminated," Jun Yichen replied without turning his head, then slammed the door shut.

Ye Jiuge could not abandon him at such a time. She could only suck it up and protect him from outside the door.

"Have a seat." Zi Shang waved a hand, and two chairs appeared in front of them.

Ye Jiuge sat next to Zi Shang, then asked, "Say, if we openly strike Bloodcloud Peak, what do you

think the Bloodthirsty Patriarch will do when he finds out?"

Zi Shang was silent for a moment, then answered, "Most likely, he will think about how to use the opportunity to eat more people!"

"Do you think he's treating us like cabbage?" Ye Jiuge did not believe that the Bloodthirsty Patriarch was so powerful.

If he were that powerful, he would have become a god long ago. Why would he hole up at Bloodcloud Peak?

"If it were me, that was what I would have done," Zi Shang stated, matter-of-fact.

"I'm not asking about you. I'm asking about the Bloodthirsty Patriarch." Ye Jiuge didn't know what to say to Zi Shang.

"I'm not the Bloodthirsty Patriarch. If you want to know, go ask him yourself," Zi Shang refused to answer such a stupid question.

Meanwhile, at Bloodcloud Peak, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch was submerged in cultivation at the center of a large Blood Pond.

Liu Yunfei and Old Master Su's corpses were submerged in two smaller Blood Ponds beside him.

Their bodies had already melted, leaving only two heads floating on the surface. It was a horrifying scene.

Soon, the two heads would also melt away and turn into two thick bloody lights that gathered in the middle where the Bloodthirsty Patriarch was.

The two bloody lights were the most critical part of the technique. The Bloodthirsty Patriarch calmed his mind and prepared to absorb them.

Suddenly, his heart contracted, and the spiritual channels in his body became blocked.

He had already absorbed half of the bloody lights, but the part that remained unabsorbed vanished instantly.

"Curses!" Bloodthirsty Patriarch's technique had failed, and he was furious. His anger caused the Blood Pond to boil, and bubbles gurgled on the surface.

He had never imagined that, at this crucial point in his cultivation, his Life's Origin Blood Essence

would be wholly absorbed by someone else. Even the trap he'd set had been eliminated.

Shou Hou had been protecting the Bloodthirsty Patriarch nearby. When he heard the Patriarch's scream of rage, his heart rang stopped for a moment.

Having protected the Bloodthirsty Patriarch for so many years, he had never once seen his cultivation being interrupted by anything.

"What's the matter, Patriarch?" Shou Hou did not dare enter, so he could only call out worriedly from outside.

"I'm fine!" Bloodthirsty Patriarch's chest heaved with anger, but he quickly brought his temper under control.

The Bloodthirsty Sect was not a place for the weak. The disciples beneath him were cunning wolves, and it would be dangerous if he showed even a hint of weakness.

Now that a situation had cropped up during his cultivation, he had to make sure this news did not reach them.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch suddenly thought about the plan he had been hatching for a long while.

Initially, he had thought that sending Liu Yunfei and Xiong Yunhu out together would ensure that Dongfang Yao could be successfully brought to him to be used as an ingredient. Never could he have imagined that the plan would fail so spectacularly—he'd even lost his Life's Origin Blood Essence.

Although Su Junqing had brought back the bodies of Liu Yunfei and his grandfather, it could not make up for his losses.

If the Bloodthirsty Patriarch didn't have to worry about whether killing Su Junqing would affect the disciples' morale, he would have killed him for use in his cultivation.

But this was a crucial time, and they had to fend off the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance's attacks. Besides keeping that brat appeased, he'd also had to reward him so that the rest of his subordinates knew that they too would be rewarded if they performed well.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch had an idea. Rising from his position in the Blood Pond, he called for Shou Hou.

"What are your instructions, Patriarch?" Shou Hou bowed and asked eagerly.

"Su Junqing has performed well this time. Bring out Blood Slave 13 and gift it to him." The Bloodthirsty Patriarch took out a red flower imprint and threw it in Shou Hou's direction.

Shou Hou's heart skipped a beat as he received the flower imprint. Blood Slave 13 was Ye Yunzhi!

Years before, to suck up to the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, Su Junqing had offered Ye Yunzhi as a gift.

Now, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch was regifting Ye Yunzhi to Su Junqing. What did it mean?

"What's wrong? Is there a problem?" The Bloodthirsty Patriarch looked at the silent Shou Hou. His voice carried a trace of suspicion.

Shou Hou immediately snapped out of his daze and replied, "Your Subordinate couldn't remember who Blood Slave 13 was."

"It's the one with a red mole on her forehead." The Bloodthirsty Patriarch remembered clearly who Blood Slave 13 was.

"Oh! That one!" Shou Hou's face showed an expression of epiphany. Then a vulgar yet regretful smile came upon his face. "My fellow brothers thought that Blood Slave 13 would end up in the Blood Brothel. They are going to be so disappointed."

"What's there to be disappointed about? Relay my message. When the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance attacks are fended off, my Blood Slaves will be available for their enjoyment," the Bloodthirsty Patriarch generously offered.

“Thank you for your generosity, Patriarch.” Shou Hou was over the moon, and he started sucking up to the Bloodthirsty Patriarch again. “Patriarch is wise and almighty. With you here, we will be able to defeat the useless Spiritual Practitioner Alliance for sure. And this victory will provide the Bloodthirsty Sect with even more blood materials for his cultivation.”

“Enough with your sucking up. Get lost and go back to work!” the Bloodthirsty Patriarch waved his hands at Shou Hou impatiently.

“Yes, yes, yes, sir!” Shou Hou bowed and retreated in a hurry.

He did not dare dally and headed directly to the Hundred Flower Palace with the imprint.

Ye Yunzhi had been secretly cultivating. When she heard that Shou Hou was looking for her, her heart skipped a beat.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch should have been cultivating during this time, so, usually, no blood slaves would be summoned. Could it be something terrible had happened?

Her heart felt heavy, and her expression revealed some of that heaviness.

The moment she saw Shou Hou, she asked nervously, “Brother Shou Hou, did something happen?”

“The Patriarch wants to gift you to Su Junqing,” Shou Hou replied in a muted tone.

“To whom?” Ye Yunzhi thought that she had misheard.

“Su Junqing,” Shou Hou repeated, stressing the name slowly.

“Why is he here?” A cold chill enveloped her body. It made her blood run cold.

At the same time, her heart lit with an intense fire. It was so strong that she had to breathe slowly to prevent herself from dying of suffocation.

Shou Hou was aware of the sour relations between Ye Yunzhi and Su Junqing. He could fully understand her pain. So, he decided to inform her of how Su Junqing had brought his grandfather to the Bloodthirsty Patriarch to seek meritorious gains.

“He did not even spare his grandfather. Su Junqing is crazy ruthless,” Shou Hou sighed.

Although he wasn’t a good man and had also harmed many people, even he wouldn’t hurt his own family. He would also do his best to protect the people he wanted to protect.

Not Su Junqing. Besides himself, he thought nothing of sacrificing others. That was terrifying!

“Su Junqing,” Ye Yunzhi muttered under her breath. She uttered the name as if she wanted to crush it to shreds and swallow it with his blood.

“Don’t do anything rash.” Shou Hou was very worried that Ye Yunzhi make a wrong move by acting rashly.

“In my predicament, what right do I have to act rashly?” Ye Yunzhi laughed in distress, looking exceedingly sorrowful.

“You do not have to be too worried. You are the Patriarch’s gift. Su Junqing will not dare kill you,” Shou Hou told her gently.

“I would rather he did kill me.” Ye Yunzhi sounded distressed, and tears flowed down her fair, flawless cheeks.

There was sincerity in those tears. Even more importantly, it was there for Shou Hou to see.

As expected, Shou Hou’s heart wrenched at this sight. He rushed to console Ye Yunzhi, “I know that you feel wretched inside, but don’t worry, Su Junqing will not be alive for long. After the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance’s attacks are fended off, the Patriarch will not spare him. Of this, I’m sure!”

Shou Hou had been serving by the Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s side for many years. He was very in tune with the Patriarch’s moods, so he knew that the Patriarch would not accept Su Junqing’s failure.

“Hopefully, I’ll still be alive then!” Ye Yunzhi wiped away her tears. She took out something from her pouch and handed it to Shou Hou. “Brother Shou Hou, thank you for looking after me all this time. I have nothing to offer you, but please accept this token as a remembrance!”

Shou Hou took the item and glanced down at it. It was a small wood carving of a vivid and realistic monkey.

“I will rescue you.” Shou Hou grasped the wooden monkey tightly, as if swearing an oath to Ye Yunzhi.

Ye Yunzhi only laughed in reply. Her face displayed helplessness and gratitude plain for Shou Hou to see.

“Let’s go!” Shou Hou squashed the surge of emotions in his heart, then turned in the direction of Su Junqing’s cave-dwelling.

Ye Yunzhi followed him silently. They soon arrived at a somewhat worn out cave-dwelling and knocked on the wooden door.

“Who is it?” Su Junqing’s voice rang out.

“Brother Su, it’s me. Shou Hou!” Shou Hou’s voice sounded normal—his tone was not off in the slightest.

Su Junqing quickly opened the door and invited him in warmly. “Brother Shou Hou! What can I do for you?”

As he spoke, he glanced behind Shou Hou. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw a slim Blood Slave. Her head was down, and her long, black hair covered both sides of her face. It was hard to see her features.

“Blood Slave 13 has been gifted to you by the Patriarch.” Shou Hou took out the red imprint that the Bloodthirsty Patriarch had given him. He pretended to sound envious. “You little brat! You are now his favorite. Don’t forget to give me a hand when you’re accomplished!”

“What is Brother Shou Hou saying? Little Brother has to rely on you more in future,” Su Junqing replied humbly in haste.

“Alright. Don’t stand on ceremony with me. Store this imprint well. Place a drop of blood on it, stamp it on the blood slave’s body, and she’ll be yours. This is the Patriarch’s personal gift. so you better enjoy it well!” Shou Hou clamped down the pain in his heart and presented a happy and envious image. He handed over the imprint to Su Junqing, continued praising him for a bit, then bid him farewell.

“Take care, Brother Shou Hou.” After Su Junqing sent off Shou Hou, he held the blood imprint in his hand and looked toward the blood slave that the Patriarch had given him.

Although the blood slave’s head was down, her figure wasn’t too bad. Her blood and flesh looked plump, so she should not have been harvested for too long.

Su Junqing knew that the Patriarch kept blood slaves for their blood only. He never copulated with them, so this blood slave’s body should be quite clean.

“Raise your head and let me look at you.” Su Junqing’s voice was as gentle as if he were speaking to his lover.

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Su Junqing had his plans too. This Blood Slave had served beside the Bloodthirsty Patriarch for so long, so she probably had a better idea of the present situation.

He had just arrived at Bloodcloud Peak and needed information. The Blood Slave was a good source.

The Blood Slave, whose head was down, gradually lifted her face. Her black hair swayed as she moved and fell on the sides of her face. A tender, beautiful face was revealed, and the red mole on her forehead was a striking vermillion under the dim candlelight.

“Yun...Yunzhi!” Su Junqing looked at Ye Yunzhi in disbelief, his eyes widening in shock.

How was she still alive?

“Young Master Su, it’s been a while.” Ye Yunzhi’s bitter and resentful voice rang out in the cave-dwelling as if resounding from the depths of hell.

“Yunzhi, how...how are you doing?” Su Junqing recovered fast. He changed his expression to a complicated mix of awkwardness, depression, worry, and guilt.

“Thanks to Young Master Su, I’m still alive,” Ye Yunzhi spoke word by word.

“I know you resent me.” Su Junqing sighed deep and long. His mind churned with ways to deceive Ye Yunzhi.

He had never thought that Ye Yunzhi would still be alive, or that the Bloodthirsty Patriarch would

return her to him as a gift.

In which case, could the Bloodthirsty Patriarch be giving him a warning?

“You ruined my life and eliminated my clan. Do you not think I should resent you?” Ye Yunzhi’s heated gaze burned with hatred.

If not for the fact that her Spiritual Force did not match up to Su Junqing’s, she would have rushed up to this heartless, ungrateful jerk and gone “kamikaze” on him.

“I know that you hate me, Yunzhi. But I have my reasons.” Su Junqing appeared to have more to say. He sighed painfully before continuing helplessly. “You’ve been in the Bloodthirsty Sect for quite some time now, so you should understand my predicament. I am just a lackey, and I can’t go against the Patriarch’s orders.”

“So, you mean that the filthy things you did were all forced on you by the Patriarch?” Ye Yunzhi laughed coldly.

“The Patriarch wanted the treasure map. The Ye Clan only fell because it had the map. If other members of the Bloodthirsty Sect had been in my position, your entire clan would have been captured and used as Blood Fertilizer. Besides, Ye Yu wouldn’t have been able to escape.” Su Junqing was smart in choosing his words.

While he did not deny his guilt, his explanation made it seem like he had already let the Ye Clan off lightly.

At the very least, she and Ye Yu were still alive.

“So, you’re saying I should thank you?” Ye Yunzhi was no longer an innocent, carefree young girl. She would not believe the rubbish that Su Junqing spouted.

“I know you resent me, and I have no excuses. But since the Patriarch gifted you to me, I will treat you well to make up for my sins.” Su Junqing looked gentle, appearing as if he wanted to make up for past mistakes.

“Haha! Do you think the Patriarch gifted me to you because he wanted to reward you?”

Ye Yunzhi laughed mockingly. Then, she continued maliciously, “All he wanted was to ensure that the rest of the sect is appeased. When the threat of invasion has passed, your existence will be put to an end.”

Su Junqing’s eyes widened in shock, and he stammered, “What do you mean by that?”

“You should know about the Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s temper. He never tolerates people who fail.” Su Junqing’s rapidly paling face gave Ye Yunzhi an indescribable sense of satisfaction.

“The failure at Medicine Refinery City wasn’t my fault. It was all because Ye Jiuge was too cunning and thwarted the Patriarch’s grand plan. I even offered my grandfather as a gift to the Patriarch.” Su Junqing was grasping at straws.

“What’s the use of telling me these things? I’m not the Patriarch,” Ye Yunzhi drawled.

Su Junqing’s face turned green. Deep down, he knew that Ye Yunzhi was right.

The Patriarch had an eccentric personality, and he loathed failure.

The Medicine Refinery City plot, in particular, had played a significant role, which could have affected his advancement. There was no room for error.

But Liu Yunfei and Xiong Yunhu were both dead, and he was the only one still alive.

Originally, Su Junqing had thought about escaping with Liu Yunfei’s body. But his Mental Manipulation had reached a crucial point of advancement, so he’d needed to return to the Bloodthirsty Sect to retrieve the next portion of the technique.

Su Junqing had considered his next move carefully, before finally deciding to present the old man as a gift.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch had much praise for him after seeing how he was so filial and well-behaved.

Although the Patriarch did not hold him responsible for the failure at Medicine Refinery City, he still did not return the Mental Manipulation Technique.

Su Junqing had already thought of the worst-case scenario, but Ye Yunzhi’s words struck home.

“Yunzhi, you have to help me.” Su Junqing squeezed Ye Yunzhi’s shoulders hard. His eyes flickered red; this was the sign of Mental Manipulation at work.

Ye Yunzhi looked into Su Junqing’s eyes, and her head started to spin.

The feeling was very familiar. She immediately knew Su Junqing was using Mental Manipulation on her again.

Mental Manipulation played a significant role in why she had wholeheartedly sided with this heartbreaker in the past.

She longed for revenge day and night. How could she not be prepared against Su Junqing's technique?

Ye Yunzhi clenched her fist tightly under her sleeve.

Her red nails, which had been coated with the Heart Devouring Powder, broke through her skin. The Heart Devouring Powder's stinging pain brought her back to her senses.

Ye Yunzhi's mind was clear, but her face portrayed a dreamy expression as she murmured her reply to Su Junqing's questions.

"The Patriarch's cultivation has failed. The Blood Lotus Flower is about to bloom, and the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance is waiting for an opportunity to strike. The Bloodthirsty Sect's members are wavering in their loyalty..."

Su Junqing heard this stream of good news from Ye Yunzhi's lips, and his expression revealed his greed and exhilaration.

If this were true, not only could he take the opportunity to obtain the full Mental Manipulation Technique while the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance attacked, but he could also secure other benefits, like the precious Blood Lotus Flower.

Through glassy eyes, Ye Yunzhi looked at Su Junqing's face shining with unconcealed greed, and her lips curved into a small smile.

Su Junqing, I swear that the pain that I felt last time we were together will be returned to you a thousand-fold—a million-fold!

While the tension at Bloodcloud Peak was building up, the Capital was peaceful.

After Ye Jiuge had finished protecting Jun Yichen, she left a bottle of Spiritual Replenishing Pills and Cherry Pills for Luo Tian, who had woken up. Then, she left with Zi Shang in tow.

Just as they stepped past the doors, they heard a buzzing sound.

A black and imposing fat earthworm flapped its wings and flew toward Ye Jiuge. It was complaining endlessly, "Where have you been? My Master and I had been waiting for you for a very long time now."

This was a new experience, being questioned by a parasite. Ye Jiuge replied in all seriousness, “I went to visit Jun Yichen. There was an issue with his cultivation.”

“Right.” Black Dictator did not care for its parasite father, who had cultivated it. Instead, it flew around Ye Jiuge in circles, buzzing continuously, “Where is my Master’s remuneration? Give it over.”

Since when were parasites in charge of claiming remuneration?

Ye Jiuge felt that the parasites were going in a direction where their personalities were getting more and more interesting. To encourage their personality growth, she swiftly decided to give Ye Yu’s remuneration to Black Dictator.

“This is a Spiritual Beast Pill with a new recipe. It’s called the Cherry Pill.” Ye Jiuge took out a bottle of Cherry Pills.

Black Dictator’s small eyes glowed with an excited light. It rushed up to the jade bottle, which was larger than its body, and hugged it tightly. Then, with a swish, it transformed into a black light and disappeared.

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Black Dictator had just left when Ye Yu burst in, demanding hurriedly, “Have you seen Black Dictator?”

“It claimed your remuneration and flew off.” Ye Jiuge pointed in the direction where Black Dictator had vanished.

“That idiot parasite is one step ahead of me again.” Ye Yu was so angry that his face turned black.

Black Dictator showed no self-restraint. Whenever it tasted something good, it wanted to eat as much as possible without thinking of the consequences.

It could polish off a bottle of Spiritual Beast Pills in just 15 minutes. It was a classic example of living from day to day.

When it ran out of food, it showed envy and jealousy toward Xiao Hong and the rest.

Then, it would start pestering him to buy more Spiritual Beast Pills. It was very annoying!

“Cough, cough...Do you want to bring it back now?” Ye Jiuge asked offhandedly.

“It’s useless. Let’s talk about more important things first!” Ye Yu sighed.

Ye Yu thought about Black Dictator’s big mouth. It had probably swallowed the entire bottle by now. There was no point in searching for it.

“What important things?” Ye Jiuge went along with Ye Yu’s topic diversion.

“The Spiritual Practitioner Alliance is in chaos, fighting about Great Master Dongfang’s Master Solidifying Pill. The sects have been sending their people into various factions of the battle. It’s getting out of hand, and the end doesn’t seem near. If we wait for them to settle their issues, we will have to wait forever.” Ye Yu did not want to delay; he didn’t have much time left.

“Have they decided on a leader?” Ye Jiuge asked.

“Yes. It’s Gong Xifan from the Gong Clan,” Ye Yu confirmed.

“So, it’s him!” Ye Jiuge remembered the suave uncle who had helped her out of a pickle. He wasn’t a simple person. If he were leading, the unrest in the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance would probably be quelled soon.

“Gong Xifan, was it?”

Zi Shang’s voice rang out coldly.

Obviously, he remembered. This was the person who’d helped Ye Jiuge while he’d been in hibernation.

“Get Dongfang Yao to put pressure on the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance. If their infighting isn’t settled within ten days, we should not wait any longer,” Zi Shang glanced at Ye Yu and ordered.

“Is it alright if we do not wait for them?” Ye Jiuge did not think that just a few of them would be able to deal with the Bloodthirsty Patriarch alone.

“The Bloodthirsty Patriarch has been preparing for the upcoming battle. With the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance in constant gridlock, we will have to assert some pressure to stop their infighting,” Zi Shang reasoned.

Ye Jiuge thought that this was a good idea. She turned to Ye Yu and commanded, “Just do what he said!”

“Yes, ma’am.” Ye Yu prepared to leave.

A thought suddenly came to Ye Jiuge, and she hurriedly stopped Ye Yu from leaving. “Wait a second! First, let me draw a bit of your blood.”

“Blood?” Ye Yu took a second look at Ye Jiuge, confused by her request to draw blood.

“At your present cultivation level, heading to Bloodcloud Peak is too dangerous. I will be producing some secret pills that can boost your abilities for a short period.” The inspiration for such a pill had come from the Bloodthirsty Patriarch.

His Blood Pearl caused the Sorcerers’ abilities to spike crazily for a short time.

Using the same principle, she could also produce some secret pills, just in case her people were in a pinch. This could help prevent a repeat of the same scenario where Liu Yunfei had toyed with them.

“Alright.” Having such an item could potentially be a life-saving boon. Ye Yu was all for it, and he stretched out toward Ye Jiuge without hesitation.

Ye Jiuge sterilized a needle and tube before starting to draw Ye Yu’s blood.

“Eldest Miss, you have been producing pills for us every day. Doesn’t this disrupt your cultivation time?” Ye Yu asked carefully.

The thought had been gnawing at Ye Yu’s mind for some time.

Other Alchemists and Spiritual Practitioners were always in retreat, continually improving and practicing their pill production abilities and cultivation. They were rarely distracted.

But Eldest Miss was very hands-on in a lot of situations. She frequently joined them at the

forefront and fought together with them.

When did she have the time for cultivation?

“Don’t you worry about it. I know my limits,” Ye Jiuge could not possibly tell Ye Yu that it wasn’t her choice not to focus on cultivation and advance in the ranks. It was because she had the lethal Nine Stages of Fractured Bones Poison in her body. If she tried cultivating, she could easily explode her Elixir Field.

By that time, she wouldn’t even know how she’d died.

Speaking of which, the last time she’d met with Ye Yuxuan, she had forgotten to ask if he was the culprit who had poisoned her with the Nine Stages of Fractured Bones.

Honestly, Ye Jiuge did not think it was Ye Yuxuan.

She had been very young then. It would have been easy for Ye Yuxuan to take her life, so there was no need to poison her with such a complicated and unique toxin.

Still, she wanted to hear it from the horse’s mouth.

Although Ye Jiuge was lost in her thoughts, her hands did not stop moving. Soon, she had drawn a bottle of Ye Yu’s blood.

“Is that enough?” Ye Yu was so excited. He hoped that Ye Jiuge would draw more blood so that she could produce more secret pills for him.

“That’s more than enough.” The secret pills were to be used as a last resort. They weren’t meant to be eaten as a meal replacement.

Ye Yu adjusted his sleeve, then curled his fingers into his mouth, and whistled.

Swiftly, Black Dictator appeared clutching a jade bottle and swaying from side to side as it flew. Its engorged stomach sagged downward.

Black Dictator, who had claimed his Master’s remuneration, was a classic example of one who lived from day to day. The jade bottle in its grasp was empty.

“Let’s go,” Ye Yu huffed to Black Dictator. Then, he stuffed it into his pocket before taking his leave of Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge stored Ye Yu’s blood and turned to Zi Shang to discuss the Nine Stages of Fractured

Bones Poison.

"I already asked for you. It wasn't your rotten father who did it." Zi Shang's reply took Ye Jiuge by complete surprise.

"When did you ask?" Ye Jiuge stuttered.

They had been together all this while. When had Zi Shang found the time to question Ye Yuxuan?

"Is that important?" Zi Shang raised his eyebrow.

"No, it isn't important. But if it not Ye Yuxuan, then who?" Ye Jiuge could not think of anyone else.

"I suspect it was your mother, Yun Qiaoqiao," Zi Shang threw another bombshell.

"You mean to say that my own mother poisoned me?" Ye Jiuge was so ruffled, and she was about to go ballistic on Zi Shang.

Besides having a rotten father, did she also have a wicked mother?

"I guess that your mother knew about your rotten father's sinister intentions even then. She poisoned you in the hopes that it would give you a chance to lie low and seek an opportunity to survive!"

If Ye Jiuge had been the main wife's daughter with limitless potential, most likely, she would have been killed by Ye Yuxuan. Becoming a loser was the only way to survive.

So long as she was alive, it meant that there was a chance to strike back.

Ye Jiuge thought silently for a moment. Although she did not have many memories of her mother anymore, Qing Mama used to say that while her mother's appearance was gentle, she had a decisive and strong personality. It was possible that she would have done such a thing.

"Although you are unable to forge ahead in your cultivation now, once the Nine Stages of Fractured Bones Poison is removed, you will be reborn. You will have a Spiritual Dictator's Body," Zi Shang told her.

Having a Spiritual Dictator's Body was not only good for body cultivation, but it was also the ideal body for spiritual advancement.

"But how do I remove the Nine Stages of Fractured Bones Poison?" Ye Jiuge was anxious for the solution to her problems.

It did not sit right with her, knowing that there was a time bomb planted in her Elixir Field.

“Cultivation should not be rushed. First, you should connect all your meridians. When we dual cultivate, I will help you force out the second type of poison.” Zi Shang was not anxious at all.

He had already achieved a humanoid form and could provide Ye Jiuge with round-the-clock protection. She could take all the time in the world.

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“Even if you aren’t anxious, I am!” Because Zi Shang had been so unreliable in the past, Ye Yuxuan did not believe him.

“Don’t even think about cultivating. For now, concentrate on refining your Lightning Snake Magical Whip with the White Bone Flame. You can enhance your fighting abilities just the same.” Zi Shang sounded severe, but his attitude was condescending.

“Really?” Ye Jiuge took the Lightning Snake Magical Whip from her waist and looked at it.

After a long period of refining, the demonic weapon had become more intelligent, and the snake eye on the handle flickered and glowed with spiritual lights. The snake body slithered continuously. But there was still some time before it could advance to the next rank.

“If you can obtain a fourth-level Dark Spirit Herb and temper the Lightning Snake Magical Whip with it, it will not only advance to the next rank, but it will also gain a poison fog ability,” Zi Shang said.

“The Dark Spirit Herb isn’t available for sale in Lei Kingdom. Where am I supposed to find it?” Ye

Jiuge huffed angrily.

The Dark Spirit Herb could only be found in extremely poisonous demonic beasts' cave-nests. These nests were located in the demonic tribe's territory where high-leveled demons resided, it was hard to find this herb.

"If I could, I would return to the demonic tribe and find a bunch for you." But this opportunity would only be available sometime later. It was impossible for him to reveal himself to the demonic tribe now.

"Forget it. I'll find a solution on my own," Ye Jiuge shook her head, rejecting Zi Shang's offer.

Zi Shang had been constantly hollering that his demonic power was enough. Unless there were no other choices, Ye Jiuge did not want to ask him for help.

Ye Jiuge stowed the Lightning Snake Magical Whip, then started preparing the herbs for the pills she planned to produce.

Previously, Luo Tian had told her about the protective formation that the Bloodthirsty Sect had cast on the mountain.

The formation was made up of miasma, poisonous gas, and sleeping gas. There was a colony of vicious Blood Mosquitos. The formation was dangerous and lethal.

Therefore, Ye Jiuge wanted to produce a type of high-level pill to detoxify poison and repel pests.

But the Spiritual herb required to produce such a pill, Three-star Nether Grass, could not be obtained in Lei Kingdom. She was considering whether she should get Ye Yu to purchase it abroad.

Just as Ye Jiuge was organizing her station, Qing Mama called to her from outside the room, "Eldest Miss, the Gong Clan has sent a representative. Would you like to meet with them?"

"The Gong Clan?" Ye Jiuge put down her brush and glanced at Zi Shang.

Zi Shang turned his head in the direction of the parlor, then said lazily, "It's Gong Xifan and Gong Honglei. There are also a few other small fries."

"What does Gong Xifan want with me?" Ye Jiuge was puzzled. She checked her appearance, then stepped out of the room.

Of course, Zi Shang was right by her side.

“Wait!” Ye Jiuge stopped in her tracks, then turned to Zi Shang. “You observe from the wings and play it by ear.”

Gong Xifan had the cultivation of a Spiritual Master. He was also very experienced and knowledgeable, and she was afraid that Zi Shang would be exposed.

“Fine.” Zi Shang wasn’t bothered by Ye Jiuge’s decision and immediately hid himself from view.

Although Ye Jiuge could not see him, she could still feel his presence by her side. Relieved, she walked toward the main hall.

There was a tall, thin man in the parlor’s seat of honor. His eyes were filled with a deep profoundness, and his aura was like an immovable mountain.

Between his eyebrows, it was easy to see that he had experienced a lot in his life. A charismatic aura cloaked him, making him very attractive. It was Gong Xifan.

Sitting next to him was Gong Honglei.

A little bit further down the line sat a man and a woman. Both had the spiritual cultivation of high-ranked Spiritual Practitioners.

The man was wearing a blue robe, and he looked to be around 25 years old. He was fairly handsome, but his eyes roved around endlessly. It didn’t seem like he was a forthright person.

The woman had on a pale-yellow dress and looked to be in her early 20s. She was not tall, and her cheekbones were very high. Her eyes were thin and elongated, and her nose rather flat. Her features were terribly plain, and even a little ugly.

A high-level Magical Bottomless Bag hung at her waist, and the expression on her ugly face was one of haughtiness. The moment she saw Ye Jiuge appear, she looked at her with open disdain, and even let out a cold harrumph.

Ye Jiuge was rather baffled by this attitude, but she ignored the woman. Turning to Gong Xifan, she greeted him, “Jiuge greets Great Master Gong. How can I serve the Great Master Gong today?”

“My visit is nothing of that sort. I was merely in the area and thought to come pay a visit to Eldest Miss Ye.”

Gong Xifan smiled slightly at her, then pointed to Gong Honglei. “This is my nephew, Honglei. I’m

sure you've met."

"Yes." Ye Jiuge nodded, then greeted Gong Honglei, "Young Master Gong, it's been a while."

"It has been a while, Eldest Miss," Gong Honglei laughed, looking at Ye Jiuge with sincerity and gratitude.

Gong Xifan then introduced the man and the woman.

"These two are Qiao Shaohua and Yue Lingjun from the Danyang Sect."

"Greetings," Ye Jiuge's addressed them mildly.

Yue Lingjun rudely sized up Ye Jiuge, then opened her mouth arrogantly and said, "You are Ye Shanshan's older sister, right? The younger sister is shameless, but at least the older sister looks decent."

Her words were blunt and fully intended to deride and humiliate Ye Jiuge.

"What does Miss Yue mean by that?" Ye Jiuge's face darkened.

Yue Lingjun had already given her a verbal slap in the face. If she did not fight back, it would seem like she was easily bullied.

"The Danyang Sect's Patriarch, Lingyun, is my grandfather," Yue Lingjun revealed proudly.

Danyang Sect? Patriarch Lingyun?

Ye Jiuge suddenly remembered. Wasn't that where Ye Shanshan had been sent to become a concubine?

Such a disgusting misunderstanding!

The younger sister had been sent to be a concubine, and she, the older sister who shared the same last name, was now being looked down on. It was all because of Ye Yuxuan.

"Miss, Eldest Miss Ye has already become independent. She has nothing to do with the Ye family. You should not treat them as one entity." Gong Honglei frowned, looking at Yue Lingjun with disapproval.

"If they are not related, then why didn't she change her last name?" Yue Lingjun dismissed Gong Honglei's words.

“I don’t think that has anything to do with Miss Yue!” Ye Jiuge seethed. She barely refrained from telling the woman that she had overstepped by poking into business that wasn’t hers.

“Who said I don’t have anything to do with it? Your younger sister is so shameless. She seduced my grandfather! The upbringing in the Ye family is really nauseating.” Yue Lingjun was about to continue her tirade but Qiao Shaohua held her back.

“Junior, give it a rest!” Qiao Shaohua gave her a hint by moving his eyes in the direction of Gong Xifan.

Yue Lingjun then realized that Gong Xifan’s face had turned cold. His eyes were glacial. It was obvious he was unhappy with her attitude.

“Humph!” Yue Lingjun did not dare offend Gong Xifan and could only shut her mouth grudgingly.

“Eldest Miss, we came here today to find out more about what happened in Medicine Refinery City and about the Sorcerers.” Having finally shut up Yue Lingjun, Gong Xifan started speaking again.

“I assume that Brother Bai and Brother Wan has already filled you in.” Ye Jiuge had heard from Ye Yu that Gong Xifan had already sought the details from Bai Songling and Wan Ziyang.

“Indeed, they have spoken with me about the details. I heard that the Sorcerers are formidable at using poison, and the only way to counter their poison is to use the Legendary Venomous Insects that your subordinate cultivates. Here is my request, can you sell them to me?” Gong Xifan’s wording was very polite.

As the individual in charge of leading the taskforce against the Bloodthirsty Sect, he had investigated how to go about performing his duty meticulously. Ye Jiuge’s Legendary Venomous Insects were essential items on his preparation list.

Ye Jiuge’s eyes lit up. She suddenly realized that the Gong Clan could exchange the Legendary Venomous Insects for the Dark Spirit Herb.

The Gong Clan possessed vast wealth. Trading with them would certainly be faster than looking for the herb by herself.

Ye Jiuge was still contemplating how to bring up the issue of the trade when Yue Lingjun spewed out her opinion: "Dealing with the Sorcerers should be everyone's duty. Don't tell me you're thinking about profiting at this time?"

Ye Jiuge looked up in surprise. Who gave this woman the right to demand things for free?

"That should be the case. Aren't you a self-proclaimed hero who claimed to have resisted the Sorcerers? Don't tell me you are unwilling to offer such a small thing?" Yue Lingjun continued in a matter-of-fact tone.

She did not like Ye Jiuge. She was just the elder sister of a lowly concubine, yet, she'd gained massive fame in Medicine Refinery City.

Now, the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance was going to eliminate the Bloodthirsty Sect. Competition within the Alliance was intense; even she had not come by her current position easily.

Yet, Ye Jiuge had been able to gain a spot on the task force without much trouble. She was even able to obtain the approval of the taskforce's leader, Great Master Gong.

Those Legendary Venomous Insects were merely an unorthodox method. To think that she was planning to use it as a bargaining chip was entirely shameless.

This time, Qiao Shaohua did not stop his Junior.

Although the Danyang Sect had gained fame through pill production, they did not have a steady supply of Master Solidifying Pills.

Having a Patriarch for a grandfather, Yue Lingjun was in an advantageous position.

People like him who had no backing could only rely on themselves. He was very determined to get his hands on the Master Solidifying Pill. To him, Ye Jiuge was a rival for the pill.

Lessening a rival's strength sounded like a good idea to him.

Gong Honglei was stunned by Yue Lingjun's shamelessness. When he came around, he scolded her angrily, "What right do you have to ask someone to contribute selflessly? Who do you think you are?"

"Young Master Gong, I am speaking to Eldest Miss Ye. Why are you so agitated? Could it be..."

Yue Lingjun's gaze danced suggestively between Gong Honglei and Ye Jiuge. Then she muttered in a voice that everyone could hear, "The younger sister is shameless, and the older sister isn't any better either!"

"You!" Gong Honglei was so mad that his face turned red. If Yue Lingjun weren't a woman, he would have attacked at her.

"Please mind your words, Miss Yue. Young Master Gong and I are only friends."

Ye Jiuge formally set the relationship between Gong Honglei and her straight. Then, she turned to Gong Xifan. "But what Miss Yue said was correct. Dealing with the Bloodthirsty Sect is everyone's duty. Those who have the ability should contribute, and I am willing to offer my Legendary Venomous Insects for free."

"Sheesh, they're just some Legendary Venomous Insects. You make it sound like they're something great." Yue Lingjun burst out laughing.

"Enough," Qiao Shaohua also felt that his Junior had gone overboard, and he hurriedly tugged at her to stop.

"You do not have to do that, Eldest Miss Ye." Gong Xifan frowned. He regretted his decision to bring these two fools from the Danyang Sect with him.

"Don't stand on ceremony, Great Master Gong. Everyone should do their part in fighting the Sorcerers. If it were Miss Yue, I'm sure she would do the same." Ye Jiuge smiled cunningly at Yue Lingjun.

"Of course," Yue Lingjun replied cockily.

"In that case, there is something that I needed Miss Yue's help with. I have a high-level Detoxifying Repellent Pill recipe with me. It can help defend against the protective formation that the Bloodthirsty Sect has cast. However, I still lack Three-star Nether Grass. As a member of the Danyang Sect, I'm sure Miss Yue has plenty of these spiritual herbs. She is surely willing to contribute them to the cause," Ye Jiuge said with a grin, carefully wording her trap for Yue Lingjun.

Gong Honglei recognized this verbal trap.

He was very willing to help Ye Jiuge, so he said loudly, "Eldest Miss Ye can produce such a pill! How wonderful! Now, we will have another card in our hands when dealing with the Bloodthirsty Sect."

As he finished, he turned to Yue Lingjun. "Miss Yue, we will have to rely on you to provide us with the Three-star Nether Grass. Don't be all talk and no action!"

Yue Lingjun's facial expression changed, and she hurriedly said, "The Three-star Nether Grass is not cheap. You..."

"Miss Yue, don't tell me that you want me to give up my pill recipe for free too!" Ye Jiuge shot out before Yue Lingjun could say anything.

Yue Lingjun had been thinking about it.

Gong Honglei snatched the opportunity to speak. "Don't worry, Eldest Miss Ye. The Danyang Sect has so many pill recipes, but I've never seen or heard them offering the recipes to anyone for free."

The meaning of this statement was, "if you want someone to offer their recipe, you have to do the same!"

Yue Lingjun's facial expression kept changing. Pill recipes were not allowed to be released outside of the sect.

It didn't matter if her grandfather was the Danyang Sect's Patriarch. Even he wasn't allowed to go against this rule.

Seeing that the situation was getting worse, Qiao Shaohua chipped in, "Young Master Gong, the Three-star Nether Grass is very expensive. We are merely the disciples of the Danyang Sect, and we have no say in making such a decision."

"Really? When you were trying to get Eldest Miss Ye to offer her Legendary Venomous Insects for free, both of you were hollering at the top of your lungs!" Gong Honglei did not care about saving face for these two.

Although the Danyang Sect was large, the Gong Clan was not to be trifled with either. There was no need to give them cover.

"How can those puny Legendary Venomous Insects compare to the Three-star Nether Grass?" Yue Lingjun huffed in anger.

The Three-star Nether Grass was a level-three spiritual herb. Cultivating it wasn't easy, and it was impossible that they would give it to someone so easily.

"I disagree with Miss Yue. Everyone contributes to the mission based on their ability, whether the value is large or small. Besides, my Legendary Venomous Insects do not lose out in value to your Three-star Nether Grass. Three-star Nether Grass is merely valued at 1,000 gold each. My Legendary Venomous Insects are priceless," Ye Jiuge said coolly.

"For those puny, miserable insects, and you dare to ask for so much? Bah!" Yue Lingjun's face contorted in anger, and she wanted to give Ye Jiuge two tight slaps.

"Enough!" Gong Xifan was finally angered. He placed the force of a Spiritual Master on Yue Lingjun and Qiao Shaohua. "Either the Danyang Sect provides two jin of Three-star Nether Grass, or you both can scram. I do not need untrustworthy people on the team."

"How can you be like this, Great Master Gong?" Yue Lingjun's face twisted in anger.

She was the Danyang Sect's Main Disciple, and Great Master Gong wanted to chase her away all because of a lowly concubine's elder sister?

"Great Master Gong, my Junior is young and rash. Please forgive her."

Qiao Shaohua could tell that Gong Xifan was indeed angered. If they continued, they would probably be kicked off the task force.

But the opportunity to be in the task force had come after significant hardship. There was no way he was going to be kicked out.

Since Yue Lingjun had caused the trouble, she had to be the only one to answer for it.

"You have three days to get everything ready," Gong Xifan told them coldly.

"Yes." Qiao Shaohua nodded helplessly, then turned to Yue Lingjun. "Junior, let's go back first!"

Yue Lingjun stomped her foot, then glared at Ye Jiuge before turning to leave.

Gong Honglei looked at the retreating duo, then turned to Gong Xifan in frustration. "Third Uncle, those two are ridiculous. Did you really have to bring them along to fight against the Sorcerers?"

"Yes. If they are willing to part with the Three-star Nether Grass." Gong Xifan did not express his thoughts on their personalities.

“They better be willing. Without the Detoxifying Repellent Pill, we will be hard-pressed to handle the Bloodthirsty Sect’s protective formation.” Ye Jiuge had not just set a verbal trap because she’d wanted to spite Yue Lingjun.

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“Can the Eldest Miss explain more about this protective formation?” Gong Xifan stiffened his expression into a more serious one.

There was no mention of any protective formation in the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance’s investigative reports.

“Certainly.” Ye Jiuge did not hide anything, and she revealed everything that Jun Yichen had told her.

Gong Xifan listened as Ye Jiuge described a protective formation riddled with obstacles and poisonous traps—it even had swarms of poisonous mosquito lurking around. At that moment, his heart skipped a beat. “It was that powerful.”

“Yes, so having the Detoxifying Repellent Pill is a must.” She couldn’t care less about others, but Ye Jiuge had to produce the pill for herself.

“The Danyang Sect probably won’t have enough Three-star Nether Grass. I will also arrange a batch for you from my end. I would like you to help produce enough pills for about 30 people. Also, the Legendary Venomous Insects that I mentioned just now, I will be purchasing them from you myself. You are free to name your price.”

Gong Xifan earnestly entrusted the task to Ye Jiuge. From the start, he had never considered

taking advantage of Ye Jiuge.

“Great Master Gong is forthright indeed. Forget about the payment. But if it is possible, I hope you can help me find an herb—Dark Spirit Herb.” Ye Jiuge was taking a soft approach to getting her way.

The Gong Clan had their own Spiritual Medicine Hall in Baimu City. They would have a way to obtain the Dark Spirit Herb for her.

“That is no problem,” Gong Xifan promised without even a hint of hesitation. Although the Dark Spirit Herb was rare and expensive, it was worth the price of befriending Ye Jiuge.

“You have my thanks.” Ye Jiuge nodded. She appreciated dealing with someone so forthright.

“We only have 15 people on our small team, and we will be leaving in ten days. What are your plans, Eldest Miss Ye? Will you be coming with us?” Gong Xifan asked.

“No. We will be leaving five days ahead of you to check out the situation. We will just meet at Bloodcloud Peak!” Ye Jiuge had initially been thinking about going with Gong Xifan, but seeing Yue Lingjun’s attitude had made her think twice.

If the people of the famous and orthodox sects were all snobbish and arrogant like Yue Lingjun, she would spare herself the pain.

“Alright!” Gong Xifan knew that Yue Lingjun and Qiao Shaohua’s attitude just now had disgusted Ye Jiuge. So, he did not force the issue and changed the topic. “I heard Great Master Yun has sent a highly skilled guard to protect you. Is that true?”

“Yes.” Ye Jiuge nodded.

“Is it possible for Eldest Miss to introduce me?” Gong Xifan smiled.

“My apologies, but he isn’t here at the moment.” Ye Jiuge sent him an apologetic look.

“That’s a pity,” Gong Xifan laughed.

“If there is a chance, I will bring him along when I call at your place,” Ye Jiuge offered out of politeness. She still had to rely on the Gong Clan for the Dark Spirit Herb, so keeping up the niceties of social etiquette was a necessity.

“I will be awaiting your visit.” Gong Xifan’s attitude turned serious again. Then, he said gravely, “Eldest Miss, I have one more thing to ask of you.”

“Please, speak, Great Master Gong.” In fact, Ye Jiuge had already guessed what he was about to say.

“Eldest Miss would probably have heard this by now, but my eldest brother’s son, Gong Baiyu, was born with an eye disease. After visiting so many spiritual doctors, there is still no cure. I have been thinking of seeking Great Master Yun’s help. If Great Master Yun is able to cure Baiyu’s disease, the Gong Clan will pay any price for his service.”

Gong Xifan’s solemn promise was very attractive, and even Ye Jiuge wavered.

But sadly, she did not even know where her maternal grandfather was. The promise could only be fulfilled through her own efforts.

Hence, Ye Jiuge told the man apologetically, “My grandfather’s whereabouts are unknown. Even if I had a way to contact him, I don’t know when he would receive the message. If Great Master Gong doesn’t mind, why don’t I have a look at Young Master Baiyu’s condition first?”

“Of course, that would be great. But Baiyu isn’t in Baimu City now, he’s with the Wuliang Sect,” Gong Xifan replied.

“Isn’t Wuliang Sect for Buddhist Practitioners? Why is Young Master Baiyu going there?” Ye Jiuge was puzzled.

Based on how highly the Gong Clan thought of Gong Baiyu, it was impossible that they would allow him to become a Buddhist monk.

Gong Xifan hesitated for a moment, then confessed, “Baiyu’s condition has worsened, making him unable to sleep at night. Only at the Wuliang Sect has he enjoyed short bouts of reprieve.”

“It has already gotten to that stage?” Ye Jiuge suddenly felt that the situation was not looking good.

Eye disease affected the brain. If it spread too fast, even for her, there was no possibility of saving him.

“That’s right, rumor has it that the Blood Lotus can calm the heart. I was thinking of finding one for him to try.” The most important reason why Gong Xifan had agreed to lead the small taskforce team—besides seeking revenge for Gong Hongyu—was because he wanted to obtain the Blood Lotus to delay the deterioration of Gong Baiyu’s condition.

“I see,” Ye Jiuge sighed.

Great Master Dongfang was also determined to get his hands on the Blood Lotus, and he was even willing to exchange it for the Master Solidifying Pill. Hopefully, the Blood Lotus in the Bloodthirsty Sect would be enough for them to fight for!

Gong Xifan chatted with Ye Jiuge for a little while longer. Just as he was prepared to leave, Gong Honglei, who had been silent all this while, suddenly spoke up: "Eldest Miss, I have a question, but I'm not sure if it is appropriate."

"Please ask, Young Master Gong." Ye Jiuge turned to him politely.

"You are the only bloodline of the Yun Clan left. Why don't you change your name back to Yun?" When Yue Lingjun had been humiliating Ye Jiuge earlier, Gong Honglei had wanted to ask this.

"Well..." How was she going to answer this question?

When she'd fallen out with her rotten father and become independent, the thought of changing her name had crossed her mind. But Emperor Xuanwu had suddenly bestowed a Ye Mansion plaque on her, so he obviously wanted her to continue her fight against her rotten father.

She had just become independent, so it would not be nice to slap Emperor Xuanwu in the face—especially in case Imperial Consort Xi landed in a bind.

But when Yue Lingjun had attacked her because Ye Shanshan had become a concubine, she realized that, so long as she kept the Ye name, she would be dragged into the mud by any of Ye Yuxuan's stupid actions.

Now that it had been brought up, she had to change her last name. But she had to find the right time to do it.

"I have a bit of say with the Emperor Xuanwu. If Eldest Miss Ye would like to change her name, perhaps I can help?" Gong Xifan saw the wariness in Ye Jiuge regarding the Emperor Xuanwu.

Just that simple sentence showed the brilliance of an erudite person.

Emperor Xuanwu might be the Emperor of Lei Kingdom, but he still paled in comparison with the Gong Clan.

It was really no big deal for the Gong Clan to ask him to change his edict.

"In that case, I would be grateful." Ye Jiuge nodded.

Since the Gong Clan was willing to help, she would not be pretentious and reject the offer.

“I will send people over with the Three-star Nether Grass and Dark Spirit Herb soon. Will Eldest Miss be available in the afternoon?” Gong Xifan asked.

“I will be home these next few days.” Ye Jiuge nodded.

“It’s getting late. We will take our leave now.” With that, Gong Xifan bade his farewell.

Later that afternoon, the Gong Clan sent over the Three-star Nether Grass and Dark Spirit Herb.

The amount of Three-star Nether Grass they’d sent was only enough for three to four doses of pills. This was all the stock the Gong Clan held in the Lei Kingdom. The rest had to be urgently dispatched from other countries and would probably take another two days to reach Ye Jiuge.

However, the Dark Spirit Herb they’d sent over was more than enough. The box brimmed with black spiritual herbs and emitted a thick, heavy spiritual energy like a black fog. The quality was very good. Gong Xifan was really a forthright man.

With the Three-star Nether Grass in hand, Ye Jiuge decided to produce a batch of Detoxifying Repellent Pills to examine the results. As for the refining of the Lightning Snake Magical Whip with the Dark Spirit Herb, that was Zi Shang’s duty.

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Ye Jiuge stood in front of the Green Bronze Cauldron in the Pill Production Room and focused on controlling the White Bone Flame to finish the pill formation.

Inside the cauldron, the glowing, misty white medicinal liquid quickly solidified, turning into dozens

of snowy white pills.

The cauldron's lid was lifted, and a chilly burst of air rushed out, causing the temperature within the Pill Production Room to drop significantly in an instant.

"The Yin Pill isn't too bad." Zi Shang raised an eyebrow.

To perfect such a difficult Yin Pill on the first go, Little Jiuge was brilliant indeed.

"Did you think Gong Xifan would eat this if he knew it was a Yin Pill?" Ye Jiuge looked at Zi Shang with worry.

She would not inform Gong Xifan that the Detoxifying Repellent Pill she had produced was a Yin Pill.

Yin Pills were not suitable for Spiritual Practitioners, so consuming them could cause discomfort.

But the Bloodthirsty Sect's protective formation was too powerful. Spiritual Pills were not enough to resist it, and only Yin pills could do the trick.

"He would be a fool to refuse to eat it." Zi Shang did not think Gong Xifan was a fool.

The greatest advantage of the Yin Pills, which Little Jiuge had produced, was their ability to absorb poison and kill the insects rather than simply detoxify poison and repel.

After consuming such a pill, no matter what poison entered the body, it would be metabolized immediately. It would be forced out in the form of poisonous sweat. Once mosquitos touched the sweat, they would be killed instantly. The pill was the counter-solution she'd settled on after researching about the Bloodthirsty Sect's protective formation.

"You are right. Besides, the pill has already been produced. It's up to them to decide," Ye Jiuge said as she bottled the Yin Pills.

"Help me with the Dark Spirit Herb. There's two more batches." Zi Shang glanced at the remaining Three-star Nether Grass.

The Gong clan had sent over another batch of Three-star Nether Grass with the Danyang Sect. They'd sent enough for about 300 Yin Pills. This was much more than they had expected.

"Alright." Ye Jiuge swiftly refined the remaining Three-star Nether Grass then went on to help Zi Shang with the Dark Spirit Herb.

Each stalk of Dark Spirit Herb was the size of a pinky. The herb was black, and the more fog it emitted, the more poisonous the plant was.

Ye Jiuge had to extract the toxins from the Dark Spirit Herb using the White Bone Flame.

Zi Shang stood in a corner, channeling Demonic Power into the Lightning Snake Magical Whip.

The black-purplish light was sent into the Lightning Snake Magical Whip, which seemed to have suddenly awakened. The snake's eyes glinted with a vicious glow as nimbly flew from Zi Shang's hand and swirled around Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge placed a three-finger thick, one-meter wide metal slab in the center of the Pill Production Room. Then, she put all of the Dark Spirit Herb onto the slab and summoned the White Bone Flame to heat it.

Once each Dark Spirit Herb was entirely burned, it formed a ball of black fog and tried to escape.

But before the fog could drift far, it was swallowed by the Lightning Snake Magical Whip. More and more black fog appeared, all sailing in different directions, trying to escape.

The Lightning Snake Magical Whip moved faster. Like black lightning, it moved swiftly and swallowed every inch of black fog in the room.

The whip's silvery-white body was slowly tainted by the black fog, looking even more ferocious.

Zi Shang had been concentrating intently on the Lightning Snake Magical Whip's movements. As it swallowed the last of the black fog, he flicked a finger and sent a drop of blood into the whip's mouth.

"What are you doing?" Ye Jiuge was stunned. Wasn't it her job to offer blood to claim the whip as its master?

Was this guy trying to steal the weapon from her?

"You are overthinking it," Zi Shang would never be satisfied with such a small demonic weapon.

He offered his blood merely to give the demonic weapon an extra layer of protection.

After absorbing Zi Shang's blood, the Lightning Snake Magical Whip completely changed its appearance.

Above the silver snake, another black snake appeared.

The snakes' heads, necks, and bodies entwined completely.

"Try it." Zi Shang threw the Lightning Snake Magical Whip at Ye Jiuge.

She caught the whip and channeled Spiritual Power into it.

The Lightning Snake Magical Whip grew instantly. The silvery-white light shone brightly, covering the black snake completely.

After advancing in rank, the Lightning Snake Magical Whip's attack was even more powerful. But Ye Jiuge felt that this was not the only change.

She placed her index finger on the snake's fang at the handle. After drawing blood, the whip changed into a demonic weapon, its body rapidly turned black, and its attack became unpredictable and strange. Anyone who was hit died of poison at once.

If the battle were fought at night, this weapon would be formidable.

Ye Jiuge was delighted with the results.

"I placed a seal inside the whip. If you are backed into a corner, you should release it." Then, Zi Shang explained the method for releasing the seal to Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge noted it down with care.

This seal had been formed from Zi Shang's blood essence. It was failsafe insurance for her life.

Ye Jiuge took some time to adjust to the Lightning Snake Magical Whip's new abilities. Then, she tied the whip around her waist, left the Pill Production Room, and called for Qing Mama.

"Has there been any movement in the palace? Did the Emperor send over any decrees to our manor?" Ye Jiuge asked.

"I have heard no news of any movements!" Qing Mama shook her head. Then, she asked Ye Jiuge carefully, "What decree does Eldest Miss think the Emperor will send us?"

"It's nothing to worry about." Ye Jiuge had not informed Qing Mama of her decision to revert to the Yun name.

If the Gong Clan were unable to handle the issue, then Qing Mama would be very disappointed.

Zi Shang's voice rang out next to Ye Jiuge's ears: "Check with Gong Xifan. Also, check who else the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance has sent."

"Fine." Ye Jiuge nodded.

The Spiritual Practitioner Alliance was the main force fighting the Bloodthirsty Sect. She needed to get an idea of their strength.

If they were all like the Danyang Sect's useless bums, she would have to reconsider collaborating with them.

The Spiritual Practitioner Alliance's base in the Capital was located at 17 West Main Street. It wasn't too far away.

Ye Jiuge gathered the three Legendary Venomous Insects, which Jun Yichen had sent, and 200 Yin Pills. She headed for the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance's base in a horse-drawn carriage with Zi Shang.

When she was about to get down from the carriage, Ye Jiuge turned to Zi Shang. "Same old rules. You hide and watch from the shadows. Play things by ear."

"No," Zi Shang refused.

"Why?" Ye Jiuge frowned. This guy was usually obedient, why was he so fussy today?

"No reason." Zi Shang got down from the carriage and strode toward the main gates of the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance's base.

"Wait for me!" Ye Jiuge chased after him hurriedly. Didn't he remember his duty as her guard?

"Sorry, I forgot." Zi Shang quickly resumed his role as a guard.

He stood behind Ye Jiuge, keeping a low profile and not drawing any attention to himself.

Ye Jiuge knocked on the gates, and the person who opened them was a sharp looking youth.

When he heard that Ye Jiuge was here to deliver pills to Great Master Gong, he invited her in with enthusiasm. "Great Master Gong is in the practice hall. Please, come this way."

With that, he led the way.

Ye Jiuge followed the youth, crossing a long corridor and making a turn before arriving at a wide

practice hall.

The practice hall was filled with Spiritual Practitioners. This was the team that Gong Xifan was going to lead this time.

All present were high-level Spiritual Practitioners. Among them, Yue Lingjun and Qiao Shaohua stood opposite Ye Jiuge.

Seeing Ye Jiuge approach, Yue Lingjun's eyes revealed a glint of hatred. Then, she turned to the young girl beside her and told her something.

The young girl glanced at Ye Jiuge with a strange, ridiculing expression before nudging her neighbor.

Just like that, all of the Spiritual Practitioners present noticed that Ye Jiuge had arrived.

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The Spiritual Practitioners looked at Ye Jiuge with hatred, disdain, scorn, and unpleasant leers.

As one might expect, Yue Lingjun had spread rumors that she was the elder sister of a concubine.

For this privileged lot, a woman who willingly became an old man's concubine was cheap. By association, her sisters were also seen as cheap.

But Ye Jiuge ignored the nasty gazes. She merely turned to the youth who guarded the gates. "Where is Great Master Gong?"

"Please wait for a moment. I will call Great Master Gong now." The young guard turned and

entered the building, leaving Ye Jiuge where she stood.

“Look who it is! Isn’t that the Eldest Miss Ye? What are you demanding for today?” Yue Lingjun folded her arms, mocking Ye Jiuge sarcastically.

“I’m here to deliver the Legendary Venomous Insects and Medicinal Pills to Great Master Gong.” Ye Jiuge flashed a small smile as she addressed Yue Lingjun earnestly, “Thank you, Miss Yue, for contributing the Three-star Nether Grass. Otherwise, the Detoxifying Repellent Pill would not have been produced so successfully.”

Hearing this turned Yue Lingjun’s face red.

Because of the Three-star Nether Grass, she had been scolded harshly by her grandfather, who’d said she was too willful and oblivious.

Ye Shanshan’s behavior, however, was the most disgusting of all. She’d even shed crocodile tears and taken the blame on herself, saying she wanted to apologize.

Although Yue Lingjun did not care for the harlot’s apology, she did not mind humiliating her. But she’d never expected her grandfather to protect the harlot. He’d even chastised her for being ill-disciplined and bullying an elder.

As she thought about her grievances, the glare Yue Lingjun gave Ye Jiuge burned with hatred. She hollered at her angrily, “In that case, hand over the Legendary Venomous Insects and Medicinal Pills.”

“To you?” Ye Jiuge sounded strangely confused. “Perhaps Miss Yue is in charge of the procurement of goods?”

“Of course not.” It was not Yue Lingjun who replied to Ye Jiuge, but a youth carrying a long sword. “Why would the important duty of goods procurement be given to her?”

“What do you mean by that, Baili Moyun?” Yue Lingjun turned her glare to the youth.

“I meant it literally,” Baili Moyun replied in a tone that was like speaking to an idiot. This riled Yue Lingjun terribly.

Ye Jiuge observed Baili Moyun. He had red lips and white teeth, was attractive, and his eyes were scintillating and seductive. The way he spoke was also annoyingly frustrating.

A man in black stood at his side. His figure was magnificent. He had thick, black eyebrows and a cold and haughty expression on his face.

Sensing Ye Jiuge's evaluating gaze, he lifted his eyelids to look at her without much emotion. These two were the only ones present who did not show any disdain for Ye Jiuge.

Judging from the long sword on Baili Moyun's back, there was a possibility that he belonged to the same sect as Gong Honglei. Gong Honglei must have put in a good word for her with the duo.

Besides these two men, the rest of the Spiritual Practitioners were like Yue Lingjun and thought that she was beneath them.

Ye Jiuge cast her eyes downward. Her plan was already in place.

They would regret looking down on her.

Just then, Gong Xifan, who had received news of her arrival, approached with Gong Honglei. He greeted Ye Jiuge warmly, "What can I do for you, Eldest Miss?"

"I'm delivering Medicinal Pills and Legendary Venomous Insects," Ye Jiuge took out the nicely wrapped boxes from her Magical Bottomless Bag.

"How many Legendary Venomous Insects are there?" Gong Xifan asked casually.

"There wasn't much time, so we were only able to cultivate three." Ye Jiuge had an apologetic look on her face.

In fact, Jun Yichen had successfully cultivated 13 Legendary Venomous Insects. But she wasn't silly enough to surrender all of them to Gong Xifan.

"How can three Legendary Venomous Insects be enough to go around? Aren't you putting Great Master Gong in a bind?" Yue Lingjun interrogated her, quick to jump on Ye Jiuge's weakness.

"There is no need to hand them out. The Legendary Venomous Insects will search for their Masters," Ye Jiuge replied softly. She did not reveal any change in attitude despite Yue Lingjun's hostility.

"If the Legendary Venomous Insects can find their Masters, they are enlightened indeed." Gong Xifan nodded in satisfaction.

It was common knowledge that superior-grade items, whether weapons or Spiritual Beasts, searched for their own Masters.

"How can the Legendary Venomous Insects search for their Masters?" Baili Moyun flashed an

enormous smile at Ye Jiuge.

It didn't seem like he was interested in the Legendary Venomous Insects. Instead, he seemed interested in getting to know more about Ye Jiuge.

"Everyone takes turns placing their fingers in the box. If a Legendary Venomous Insect recognizes you as its Master, it will bite your index finger and forge a contract with you."

Ye Jiuge ignored Baili Moyun's seductive gaze, pulling out the box with the Legendary Venomous Insects with utmost seriousness. There was a small hole right at the top of the box. It was the size of an index finger.

"Tch! Just a gimmick." Yue Lingjun threw her a look of disdain.

The rest of the female Spiritual Practitioners also looked as though they'd politely rejected the offer. They detested these insects at once. Now, seeing that they had to insert their fingers into the box for the insects to draw blood, they preferred to stay away from the box.

As for Ye Jiuge, seeing that she wasn't afraid to mess around with insects, their dislike of her increased tremendously.

"I'll go first. What should I do?" Baili Moyun volunteered enthusiastically.

"Just place your finger inside." Ye Jiuge brought the box before him.

Baili Moyun lifted a long, aristocratic finger. Under the watchful gaze of those present, he stuck his finger into the hole.

"Ouch!" Baili Moyun's handsome face instantly changed into an expression of shock and surprise.

"What's the matter?" Gong Honglei asked after him hurriedly.

"I got one!" Baili Moyun retracted his finger, and there was a small wound at the tip.

Then, a black speck flew out from the box at the speed of lightning.

It landed on Baili Moyun's arm, quickly formed a cocoon, and soon hatched. It was a small, peach-red, bird-like parasite.

It had a small sharp beak, intelligent black pupils, and peach-red feathers. It was only the size of a thumb, and it looked very cute and adorable.

“Heavens! It is so cute,” The female Spiritual Practitioners had thought that the Legendary Venomous Insects would be grotesque. They had never imagined that they could be so cute and adorable.

This was one of the improvements that Ye Jiuge had requested from Jun Yichen.

The blood-clad Miao people only focused on power and strength, so the Legendary Venomous Insects they produced were vicious looking and grotesque.

But Gong Xifan’s team members came from the various large and famous sects. To them, keeping a parasite was unorthodox.

If the Legendary Venomous Insects looked like Xiao Hong and Big Mouth, they would probably be abandoned after the Bloodthirsty Sect had been dealt with. Therefore, Ye Jiuge had asked Jun Yichen to improve the appearances of the three insects given to the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance.

It was alright to compromise a little on their power, but their forms had to be acceptable.

Just as she expected, the reception was good.

In an instant, two pretty and lively young girls made their way over to tease the cute and adorable peach-red bird parasite on Baili Moyun’s arm.

The small bird parasite was also very cooperative, chirping delicately and winning the hearts of the people around it with its cuteness.

A female Spiritual Practitioner named Lin Yanxi laughed as she suggested, “Give it a name, Young Master Baili!”

Baili Moyun thought for a while, then decided on a name. “It shall be called Xiao Tao!”

He was delighted with the small bird parasite. Its ability to dispel poison was still unknown, but it would certainly be helpful when he was trying to hook up with a girl.

Seeing the warm reception, Ye Jiuge called for the next person quickly, “Next.”

Yue Lingjun pushed Qiao Shaohua and urged, “Go try, Senior.”

If the Legendary Venomous Insects were so cute and adorable, she wouldn’t mind keeping one herself.

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“You can count on me, Junior,” Qiao Shaohua replied with confidence.

Although Yue Lingjun was arrogant, willful, and unpleasant looking, on account of Patriarch Lingyun, he had to appease her.

“Hurry!” Yue Lingjun became anxious when she saw Lin Yanxi standing nearby, looking tempted to own a Legendary Venomous Insect.

Lin Yanxi was a disciple of the Tianxiang Sect. The foul-smelling men who wanted to fawn over her would surely fight to obtain the remaining two Legendary Venomous Insects.

“My turn.” Qiao Shaohua pushed his way in front of Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge shrugged and pushed over the box.

Qiao Shaohua copied the previous person and poked his finger into the box, but his finger was immediately refused.

“Unfortunately, you do not fulfill the requirements to become a Master of a Legendary Venomous Insect. Next.” Ye Jiuge ignored Qiao Shaohua’s disappointed expression and moved away with the box.

“Hold on!” Qiao Shaohua was unable to accept the fact that the Legendary Venomous Insects had rejected him. He wanted to argue with Ye Jiuge but was pushed aside by a tall, thin and dapper youth.

Qiao Shaohua had not yet begun his proper objection when Yue Lingjun hollered in exasperation, “Wang Haoqiang, why are you in such a rush?”

“There are so many people waiting. If everyone were as long-winded as you two, when would we ever finish?” Wang Haoqiang tossed a side-glance of disdain at Yue Lingjun.

Her features were so pathetic, yet she had the boldness to holler at the top of her lungs. Did she think that Patriarch Lingyun’s name was matchless?

The Qiqiao Sect was not afraid of the Danyang Sect.

“Bah! You do not have any intention of using the Legendary Venomous Insect for yourself. You are only hoping to use it to flirt,” Yue Lingjun spat harshly.

“Tch, that is none of your business.” Wang Haoqiang did not care whether his intentions were exposed.

Just now, he had grown jealous when he saw how Baili Moyun had become so popular among the female Spiritual Practitioners because of his small bird parasite.

When his crush, Lin Yanxi, hadn’t stopped cooing over the little bird parasite, it had strengthened his resolve to get his hands on one.

“Please insert your finger here,” Ye Jiuge continued as if she were unaware of their squabbles. She remained calm and indifferent.

Wang Haoqiang made a show of raising his finger high, then stuck it into the box fiercely and repeated in his heart continuously, “Bite me, bite me!”

But his finger was rejected even faster than Qiao Shaohua’s.

“Unfortunately, you do not fulfill the requirements to become a Master of a Legendary Venomous Insect. Next,” Ye Jiuge repeated her rejection line.

“Impossible! Are these Legendary Venomous Insects stupid? They didn’t even recognize me.” Wang Haoqiang was in disbelief.

“Strength! That’s real strength!” Baili Moyun laughed boastfully, then turned to the stone-faced, dashing man beside him. He prodded him in the waist in encouragement. “A’li, have a go!”

A’li, or Nangong Li, was the core disciple of the Ziyun Sect. He was also Baili Moyun’s best friend.

“Next!” Ye Jiuge walked straight toward Nangong Li.

Nangong Li frowned. He was not keen to participate.

“Give it a try!” Baili Moyun kept urging.

Nangong Li was annoyed by Baili Moyun until he couldn’t take it anymore, then he carelessly stuck his finger into the box.

“Did you get one?” Baili Moyun was more nervous than Nangong Li.

“Yes.” Nangong Li nodded. The look he gave Ye Jiuge was deep and complicated, but he did not say much.

“Quick, take a look. Which Legendary Venomous Insect did you get?” Baili Moyun pulled Nangong Li’s finger out of the box.

Another black speck burrowed out of the box. When it came out of its cocoon on Nangong Li’s arm, it took the form of a hawk with a black body and blood-red eyes.

The thumb-sized hawk was a combination of awe and adorableness, and it caused the female Spiritual Practitioners to scream.

“Yours isn’t too bad, after all!” Baili Moyun sighed in surprise.

Although, he still preferred his own Xiao Tao.

“Yes!” Nangong Li had worried that the Legendary Venomous Insect would be slightly feminine looking, so he was relieved after seeing the hawk.

“There’s only one remaining.” Ye Jiuge raised the box high and asked, “Who else wants to try?”

“You try, Honglei.” Baili Moyun dragged Gong Honglei over hurriedly and forced his finger into the box.

“You!” Gong Honglei looked at Baili Moyun with exasperation.

There were only so many Legendary Venomous Insects available. He had never thought about participating in the selection.

“You got this,” Baili Moyun called out knowingly based on his previous experience.

The last Legendary Venomous Insect had already hatched. It was a jade-green praying mantis that looked rather impressive.

“Haha! That suits you,” Baili Moyun couldn’t help but laugh.

Gong Honglei’s personality was rash and overwhelming, and he often rushed headlong into a situation without being able to stop, just like a praying mantis. This Legendary Venomous Insect complemented him very well.

“It seems like the Legendary Venomous Insects take an image that is pleasing to their Master,” Gong Xifan laughed.

“That’s right. Pleasing their Master also represents their pledge of allegiance.” Ye Jiuge took this opportunity to boast about the insects’ intelligence, just in case Gong Xifan thought they had lost out in the deal.

“These three insectcs are useless. Who can really know for sure whether they really sought their Masters themselves? It’s obvious that you’ve manipulated the whole thing,” Wang Haoqiang accused while screaming, and his words incited the rest of the unsuccessful Spiritual Practitioners to agree with him.

“I was curious as to why Great Master Gong would be so protective of her. It’s no wonder. Someone is very good at sucking up. We should learn from that someone!” Yue Lingjun said sarcastically, and her words received quite a bit of agreement and support.

The Spiritual Practitioners were all from the various large and famous sects. They were not happy or satisfied with the leader, Gong Xifan, in whom they saw the person obstructing their Senior’s path.

While they did not dare voice their views aloud, secretly agreeing with a dissident was alright with them.

Ye Jiuge treated Yue Lingjun’s sarcasm like a dog barking.

This was Gong Xifan’s territory. It wasn’t her place to garner too much attention.

In the end, Gong Xifan had yet to open his mouth when a clear voice rang out from behind Ye Jiuge: “Intelligent things should be paired with capable people. What right do losers have to question?”

“Who’s there?” Yue Lingjun’s eyes bulged as she stared in Ye Jiuge’s direction, and she saw an unworldly, handsome man.

His hair brushed his eyebrows, and he had glittering black eyes, a high nose, and a flushed face

that was very seductive and tempting.

Just standing near him made one feel like they were in the presence of a true king.

Yue Lingjun's heart pounded.

She had seen her fair share of beautiful men in the Danyang Sect. But they all paled in comparison to the man in front of her.

For a moment, it seemed like the whole world turned dim and dark, and he was the only glittering light in the abyss.

When had such an unworldly handsome man appeared? She hadn't even realized it, which seemed impossible.

Many others shared Yue Lingjun's thoughts, and all the female Spiritual Practitioners couldn't take their eyes off the man.

Meanwhile, the male Spiritual Practitioners saw the man as an enemy. They had also failed to notice the arrival of such an unworldly, handsome man.

It was like he had appeared only after he'd spoken.

"What are you doing?" Ye Jiuge was very frustrated with Zi Shang—seducing people wherever he went. Was he so worried that others wouldn't see how handsome he was?

"I'm teaching these losers to know their place, of course." Zi Shang was very serious.

A demon teaching a human their place—was he kidding? Ye Jiuge glared at Zi Shang harshly, ordering in a low tone, "Go away. Don't create trouble for me."

Unfortunately, in such a situation, it would be impossible for Zi Shang to go away even if he wanted to. Gong Xifan had already looked over.

The moment Zi Shang appeared, Gong Xifan guessed that he was the expert who'd made waves in Medicine Refinery City.

He stepped forward and flashed Ye Jiuge a small smile. "This must be the guard sent by Great Master Yun. Ye Zi, isn't it?"

"Yes." Ye Jiuge nodded helplessly.

"I heard that Brother Ye Zi singlehandedly defeated the highly-skilled Sorcerers at Medicine Refinery City. Having met you today, I can understand why," Gong Xifan praised.

"I heard that the team led by Great Master Gong consists of the elite of the various large and famous sects. Having seen the team today, I think much is left to be desired," Zi Shang drawled with disdain.

Gong Xifan's brow furrowed. He turned to Ye Jiuge, silently asking her to control her guard.

"Don't create a fuss, Ye Zi." Ye Jiuge's admonishment did not sound too threatening. It was obvious that Zi Shang intended to create trouble today.

As a fake Master, how could she control him?

"Eldest Miss, these people are losers. Let's not waste our time here," Zi Shang continued, making the situation worse.

"Please be mindful of your words, Brother Ye Zi." Gong Xifan's voice turned chilly.

Although he wished to have the expert on their side, Zi Shang's indifference and disrespect did not sit well with him. But he couldn't ignore Zi Shang either.

"Don't be too cocky, brat! If you are so capable, let's battle it out!" Wang Haoqiang hollered angrily.

The rest of the Spiritual Practitioners started calling out, "Beat him to death!"

"Just your little group?" Zi Shang's red lips curved into a teasing and condescending smile. "If you

wish for a battle, don't take turns. Come at me all at once!"

"You are such an arrogant brat! Do you think we can't harm you?" Wang Haoqiang did not hold back his anger and immediately spat back. "Let's all go at him together and make him fear our prowess!"

"Defeat him!" Qiao Shaohua took the lead in responding to Wang Haoqiang's call.

The rest of the Spiritual Practitioners went with the flow and surrounded Zi Shang.

The Spiritual Practitioners who'd made it onto the team were not incompetent. They had their moments of pride and arrogance, but they also knew when to wait for the right moment to strike.

They had all heard about the battle at Medicine Refinery City. A person who was able to defeat and kill highly-skilled Sorcerers would not be easy to beat. In a one-on-one, they would not have had much chance of victory. But if they attacked as a group, their chances were assured.

The only ones who did not join in were Nangong Li, Baili Moyun, and the few female Spiritual Practitioners, like Yue Lingjun.

"Third Uncle?" Gong Honglei looked worriedly at Ye Jiuge and Zi Shang, who were standing in the middle of the group.

"Since Brother Ye Zi is so excited for a battle, then we should accompany him until he's had his fill!" Gong Xifan said flatly as if the scene in front of him were just a game.

Ye Zi had trampled upon his face so roughly just now. This was also an opportune time to test Ye Zi's strength using Wang Haoqiang and the others.

"Please allow me to borrow your spiritual weapon for a moment, Eldest Miss," Zi Shang pretended to be respectful to Ye Jiuge.

So fake! Keep up your act!

Ye Jiuge flushed as she unwound the Lightning Snake Magical Whip from her waist and handed it over to Zi Shang slowly. Then, she retreated to one side.

Zi Shang flicked the whip once, facing Wang Haoqiang and the rest. "Come!"

"Charge!" Wang Haoqiang took the lead, holding a sickle-like spiritual weapon.

He waved it lightly, and crescent wind knife blades shot out from the blade.

Qiao Shaohua's spiritual weapon was a medicinal pestle. It emitted green light, and numerous vines shot up from the ground, trapping Zi Shang in place.

Seeing that Zi Shang was trapped, the rest of the Spiritual Practitioners were overjoyed. They did not care about working with one another and ordered their spiritual weapons to strike Zi Shang.

In an instant, multi-colored spiritual lights arched in Zi Shang's direction.

Yue Lingjun watched the spectacle nervously from the side.

As frustrating as Zi Shang's words might be, she was still reluctant to see such a handsome and dashing man be defeated.

The spiritual lights exploded, then dispersed.

Zi Shang, who should have ended up defeated and sorry, was nowhere to be found.

"Where did he go?" Wang Haoqiang looked around.

"Over there!" Qiao Shaohua's eyes were sharp. He had already found Zi Shang by Ye Jiuge's side.

"What are you doing here?" Ye Jiuge looked at Zi Shang warily.

Surely his demonic powers were enough? He couldn't possibly intend to drag her into the mess?

"Inviting you to watch a show," Zi Shang offered a casual and lazy smile, but the dominance he projected was palpable.

He did not move, but the Lightning Snake Magical Whip in his hands suddenly emitted a glaring light. It transformed into a giant python and surged toward the Spiritual Practitioners.

"Beat it to death!" Wang Haoqiang screamed, leading the attack against the Lightning Snake Magical Whip.

Qiao Shaohua and the rest of the Spiritual Practitioners followed his lead, attacking from behind Wang Haoqiang.

The brightly glowing Lightning Snake Magical Whip was suspended high in the air, and there was nowhere to escape. After being hit with numerous spiritual lights, it immediately dispersed.

“Tch. I thought that he would be more powerful. We overestimated his powers,” Wang Haoqiang boasted.

The Spiritual weapon was a Spiritual Practitioner’s lifeline. Destroying a Spiritual Practitioner’s weapon was akin to destroying their life.

But Qiao Shaohua did not lower his guard. His eyes were trained on Zi Shang’s every move. Watching as Zi Shang formed his fingers into a weird-looking spell, he shouted out quickly, “Be careful!”

The Lightning Snake Magical Whip exploded again. This time, it shot uncountable silvery lights at every Spiritual Practitioner present.

The explosion was too fast for the Spiritual Practitioners to react. By the time they moved, the light had already pierced their bodies, and moans and screams could be heard.

“You’re mad.” Wang Haoqiang reacted fastest. In that instant, he fended off two rays of light but had still been hit by the lights. Numerous injuries appeared on his face and body.

Qiao Shaohua was in the worst shape. His face had been injured by many of the light rays, and his face was bleeding badly. It was quite horrific.

“Stop it, quick!” Yue Lingjun started screaming.

Gong Xifan acted swiftly, and he channeled Spiritual Power to attack the Lightning Snake Magical Whip with a thumb-sized Spiritual light.

At that moment, Zi Shang merely waved his hand.

With whirlwind speed, the Lightning Snake Magical Whip flew into his hand and reverted into the form of a whip.

“Brother Ye Zi, it was only a spar. Why did you have to harm them so much?” Gong Xifan’s expression was dark as he looked at Zi Shang.

Even though he frowned upon Wang Haoqiang and the others’ actions, but he’d also lost face when they were defeated so easily and terribly.

“These are merely superficial wounds. If they were unable to withstand such small injuries, then they should refrain from going to Bloodcloud Peak to their deaths,” Zi Shang provoked.

Gong Xifan did not have a comeback.

Zi Shang handed the Lightning Snake Magical Whip to Ye Jiuge and shook his head. “Merely a bunch of losers, yet they have the nerve to look down on others. It’s ridiculous.”

Ye Jiuge was taken aback. Was this guy taking revenge on her behalf?

“Senior Ye Zi, our cultivation might not be on a level with yours. But I do not think we should be labeled as losers!” Gong Honglei called out in dissatisfaction.

“I wasn’t referring to you, but them.” Zi Shang jerked his finger and pointed in the direction of Wang Haoqiang, Qiao Shaohua, and the rest of the Spiritual Practitioners who had attacked him.

Wang Haoqiang, Qiao Shaohua, and the others were angry but did not dare defend themselves.

If they were still unable to see the gap between their abilities and Zi Shang’s, they should retire from being Spiritual Practitioners.

“Great Master Gong, I still have some errands to run, so I’ll be taking my leave!” Given the awkwardness of the situation, Ye Jiuge did not dare to stay any longer.

Gong Xifan did not try to retain her and sent them on their way.

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Ye Jiuge was a little melancholic when she returned home. Seeing Zi Shang’s lazy expression, she couldn’t stop herself from prodding his chest in anger. “You’ve strained our relations with the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance. How am I going to work with Gong Xifan and the rest?”

Although it felt good watching Zi Shang teach those a**es who had only grand ambitions and no

real abilities a lesson, he still needed to think about their priorities.

“Besides Baili Moyun and Nangong Li, the rest are losers. If your hopes rely on them, you may as well pray that the Bloodthirsty Patriarch surrenders.” Zi Shang shrugged carelessly with an innocent expression.

“Alright, I get it. No matter what, you always have a comeback.” Ye Jiuge did not have much faith in the abilities of Spiritual Practitioners like Wang Haoqiang.

“You forgot to ask about the name change.” Zi Shang blinked.

“Forget it. I’ll deal with it myself.” Changing her last name was a small matter. Now, it was more important to let Jun Yichen and Ye Yu know about their falling out with the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance.

Heeding Ye Jiuge’s call, Jun Yichen and Ye Yu quickly arrived. After hearing about their encounter and subsequent falling out with the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance, Jun Yichen said expressionlessly, “I never wanted to rely on those losers to begin with.”

Ever since he’d absorbed the Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s blood essence and made it his, he had been confident that vengeance would be his. There was no need to involve other people in his thirst for revenge.

“Our goals are the same as the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance’s, and there was no need to fight with them. The more allies we have, the better.” Ye Yu’s attitude was more conservative.

“That’s right. Therefore, I am thinking about sending someone to stay with Gong Xifan’s group. The rest will follow me to Bloodcloud Peak.” Ye Jiuge agreed with Ye Yu.

No matter how lousy and useless the Spiritual Practitioners were, they should still make full use of them.

“Don’t look at me. I’m not going,” Jun Yichen rejected without hesitation.

Ye Yu was also quick to voice his preference, “Eldest Miss, I would like to travel with you.”

Ye Jiuge felt a little awkward hearing their rejection. They couldn’t possibly send Zi Shang to the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance!

“There is no need to be so troublesome. Didn’t you leave three Legendary Venomous Insects there? If there are any movements, summon them back to ask,” Jun Yichen said carelessly.

“With your Life’s Origin Parasite?” Ye Jiuge’s eyes brightened.

“Besides my Life’s Origin Parasite, your Queen Parasite can also summon them.”

After rearing so many batches of Legendary Venomous Insects, Jun Yichen had only managed to hatch one Queen Parasite. The lure of the Queen Parasite was hinted at by its name. Its call was even more powerful and effective than the forceful summons of Jun Yichen’s Life’s Origin Parasite.

“If you had not mentioned it, I would have forgotten about it.” Ye Jiuge had an epiphany.

Reaching into a drawer, she took out a Spiritual Beast sack, which she’d made herself.

The sack had three compartments. The left one housed the Treasure-hunting Scorpion couple, the pink Queen Parasite occupied the middle, and on the right, the Black Fat Rat hibernated.

Ye Jiuge took out the pink Legendary Venomous Insect. Beneath its fat body, it had already begun cocooning. Only its small, round head was visible.

The moment it saw Ye Jiuge, it stretched its neck long and started chirping, sounding just like a chick wanting to be fed.

“Master, I’m hungry! So hungry!”

“Sorry, I forgot about you,” Ye Jiuge apologized as she crumbled a Cherry Pill and fed it to the parasite.

The pink Legendary Venomous Insect showed its happiness as it ate over 20 Cherry Pills before reluctantly turning into a pink cocoon because its belly had bulged so much.

“It’s already started evolved so quickly!” A glint of surprise flashed in Jun Yichen’s eyes.

“Is that good or bad?” Ye Jiuge had never reared a Legendary Venomous Insect before. She was unable to tell if this hasty advancement was good or bad.

“A good thing, of course. The Queen Parasite was hard to cultivate because its development is very slow. They also have a high death rate when they are young. Generally, Queen Parasites advance in abilities after at least five years of cultivation.

“But your Queen Parasite is already advancing in ability after only half a month. It must be because you feed it well.” Jun Yichen shot an accusing look at Ye Jiuge.

It was as if he were accusing Ye Jiuge of secretly feeding the good stuff to her Queen Parasite without the others knowing.

“As you have seen, I only fed it some Cherry Pills.” Ye Jiuge displayed a face of innocence.

She had already guessed that the Queen Parasite’s advancement had to do with Black Fat Rat.

Previously, the Treasure-hunting Scorpion had felt that the sack was too small, and it had wanted to search for a more comfortable spot with its mate. But the female scorpion had said that she was comfortable in the sack. Even its injuries were mostly healed.

The sack was made from ordinary cotton cloth. There was nothing special about it. The only unique factor was the hibernating Black Fat Rat. But Jun Yichen did not need to know about that.

The pureblooded parasite child’s life goal was to make the Blood-clad Miao tribe powerful again. If he knew that Black Fat Rat could enhance the Legendary Venomous Insects’ advancement, he would most likely do anything to obtain it.

“Humph! You must have done something.” Although Jun Yichen was not satisfied, he only grumbled a little but did not probe further.

To him, Ye Jiuge was the best Alchemist in the world. It was no surprise that she would be able to produce superior pills.

The Queen Parasite was her Legendary Venomous Insect. It wasn’t a shock that she gave it the very best.

“How long will the Queen Parasite’s advancement take?” Ye Jiuge asked as she placed the pink cocoon back into the sack.

“It’s hard to tell. It varies by situation.” Jun Yichen did not dare to offer a conclusion about a Legendary Venomous Insect being cultivated by Ye Jiuge.

“In that case, we will have to rely on you to summon the three Legendary Venomous Insects. But when you do it, be careful no one notices,” Ye Jiuge ordered.

It was a little unethical to secretly control other peoples’ Legendary Venomous Insects. If Baili Moyun and the others knew about it, the three Legendary Venomous Insects would probably be abandoned without question.

“Do I look like an idiot?” Jun Yichen also knew that the Legendary Venomous Insects they had sold should not be summoned carelessly.

Unless there were no other choice, he would not summon these insects.

“You guys hurry up with your preparations. We will leave in three days,” Ye Jiuge announced.

“Alright.” Ye Yu and Jun Yichen nodded. They had been looking forward to this day.

Meanwhile, on Bloodcloud Peak, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch called for Shou Hou and threw him a letter. “Look at this.”

“Yes,” Shou Hou opened the letter carefully, scanning its contents.

The letter meticulously recorded the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance’s every move. It included the names of the team members, their sects, departure timing, and an inventory of pills and Legendary Venomous Insects, which Ye Jiuge had sent over.

There was even a name written in red—Ye Zi.

This man, Ye Zi, had killed Xiong Yunhu, who had swallowed a Blood Pearl, with just one move. His skill was unknown. With him around, they had to take care.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s eyes were half-open as he casually asked, “What did you think?”

“Gong Xifan’s cultivation level was high. Also, they have Ye Zi. It will be hard to deal with them!” Shou Hou replied with caution.

The Spiritual Practitioner Alliance would not just be ‘hard to deal with.’ They would have a hard time fending off their attacks!

Initially, Shou Hou had trusted in the security of their protective formation. Even if the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance came, they would not return alive.

Who knew that their enemies were so knowledgeable about their protective formation? They’d even prepared pills and Legendary Venomous Insects to counter it!

If the protective formation were broken, they would most likely be defeated.

Luckily, Shou Hou had already started planning how to escape with Ye Yunzhi should the protective formation break. After all, the Bloodthirsty Sect was centered around the Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s strength. His disciples were not a loyal bunch, and no one would trade their lives for the Patriarch.

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“Naturally, I have a way to deal with these things, so you do not need to worry. Instruct the men to take care of the protective formation. If anything goes wrong, don’t blame me for sacrificing all of you for my cultivation.” The Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s eyes widened. They flashed like lightning, as though he could read minds.

Shuddering, Shou Hou hurriedly replied, “Patriarch, please rest assured. I will ensure that the protective formation is taken care of.”

“Do your job well, and I won’t mistreat you.” The Bloodthirsty Patriarch nodded. After a moment, he asked, “What has Su Junqing been up to recently?”

“Su Junqing has been very active in the sect lately, and he has made new friends everywhere. He has a large amount of blood essence on him, and he has managed to secure connections with higher status people.”

“He is really generous, isn’t he?” The Bloodthirsty Patriarch’s withered face revealed a strange smile.

“I have also brought his gift to you. Patriarch, please take a look at it.” Shou Hou took out a glass bottle the size of a palm and respectfully presented it to the Bloodthirsty Patriarch.

The bottle was filled with a viscous red solution—the essence formed from human blood.

“Since he is so considerate, feel free to accept it!” The Bloodthirsty Patriarch gestured with his hands. He did not take a fancy to this offering because he felt that it was beneath him.

“Yes.” With a flattering smile, Shou Hou stashed the glass bottle.

“How has Blood Slave Number Thirteen been serving him?” the Bloodthirsty Patriarch asked.

“This...I don’t know what to say. Although Su Junqing treats Blood Slave Number Thirteen well, he seems restrained around her. I don’t understand what is going on.” Shou Hou’s interactions with Ye Yunzhi were very discreet, and he pretended as though he knew nothing about her grievances with Su Junqing.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch would never expect Shou Hou to be so daring as to covet his Blood Slaves, so he did not notice anything strange. He only instructed, “Watch Su Junqing carefully. That’s all. You may go!”

“Yes!” Shou Hou bowed and left.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch pondered deeply for a moment, sitting on a large chair. Then, he hit the chair’s handle and turned it.

A dark passageway immediately appeared below the chair.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch followed the gloomy passageway, walking until he reached the end.

There was a red platform half the height of a man with a spotless white skull on top.

The top of the skull had been torn open and was faintly stained with blood. It seemed that it was frequently used.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch bit open the skin of his finger and squeezed a drop of blood onto the top of the skull.

In the eye sockets, two flames immediately flickered. A beam of light flashed out and shone onto the opposite wall.

In the light, there appeared an image of a young boy in black robes. He looked to be approximately five or six years old.

Although he had a cute appearance, his phoenix eyes made him look arrogant. He was seated on a red chair three times bigger than him, and the scene was comical.

“Greetings to you, Elder Qiu.” The Bloodthirsty Patriarch bowed respectfully to the boy.

“What matter do you have?” the boy asked impatiently.

“Elder Qiu, the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance has unexpectedly found out that the Bloodthirsty Sect is cultivating Blood Lotus Flowers. They have sent a taskforce to snatch them from us. I fear this will delay you, so I decided to report it to you.”

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch did not confess that he was facing an attack because he had tried to plot against Medicine Refinery City’s lord. Instead, he pushed all the blame onto the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance.

“F*ck! How dare those people from the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance covet my Blood Lotus Flower! Let them all go to hell!” The boy was infuriated. He slapped his seat forcefully, looking as though he hated the fact that he could not immediately rush out and deal with the taskforce from the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance himself.

“Recently, something has gone wrong with my cultivation. With the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance bearing down on us menacingly, I fear that I will be unable to fend them off. I have no choice but to request your help,” said the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, scowling miserably.

He was trying to coax Qiu Sen.

Although he had been unable to complete his Spiritual Retreat as he would have liked, this had only impacted him a little. He had no problems fending off the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance.

However, like a wily old fox, he naturally sought helpers to assist him with such chores.

“No worries. I will send someone over to help immediately. I will eliminate every member of the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance in one stroke and use them as fertilizer for my Blood Lotus Flowers,” the boy roared arrogantly.

“Then, I shall patiently await the Envoy.” The Bloodthirsty Patriarch looked as though he was beside himself with emotions and moved to tears.

“Just wait patiently. The Envoy will arrive in two days, at most.” The boy gestured with his hands, and the image disappeared immediately.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch finally straightened his back. There was a satisfied expression on his face.

With the Yin Corpse Sect’s help, no matter how sufficient their preparations, the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance’s taskforce was courting death.

Meanwhile, in the Yin Corpse Sect, more than a thousand miles away...

After Qiu Sen had stopped transmitting his image to the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, he used the Communication Talisman to make another call. "Youyue, come here."

A moment later, a nonchalant voice came from outside Qiu Sen's cave room: "Elder, did you ask for me?"

"That's right. Come in!" Qiu Sen replied.

The stone door opened, and a fragrance drifted in.

Then, a tender-skinned and beautiful woman walked in. She was Qiu Sen's Chief Disciple, Si Youyue.

She had bright eyes like clear autumn waters. They seemed capable of reading a person's mind.

She wore a traditional chest jacket skirt in dark red. Her clothes revealed much of her snow-white skin, making her look charming.

Because of his method, Qiu Sen had a young boy's appearance. However, he admired the woman's looks like a grown-up. He liked this tender-skinned and beautiful Chief Disciple of his very much.

"Greetings to you, Elder. What instructions do you have for me?" As Si Youyue leaned over to bow, her cleavage deepened. It could dazzle any man.

"Go to the Bloodcloud Peak and bring back the Blood Lotus Flowers that grow there. While you're at it, get rid of the Bloodthirsty Patriarch," Qiu Sen instructed her calmly.

He showed no signs of his previous rage. Instead, he was frighteningly calm.

"Bloodcloud Peak is so far away!" Si Youyue looked annoyed as her gaze landed on Qiu Sen. Pouting, she added, "If I am doing this for you, and there's nothing in it for me, I won't accept the task!"

"Apart from the three Blood Lotus Flowers, everything else at Bloodcloud Peak belongs to you." Qiu Sen waved his hand generously.

"Many thanks to you, Elder!" Si Youyue immediately revealed a soothing, obedient smile.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch had been operating in the Lei Kingdom for a long time, and he must have accumulated quite a lot of wealth. She would not lose out if she were to head there.

“I will send a Demonic Corpse to accompany you.”, Qiu Sen made finger gestures as he cast a spell.

Behind him, a tall man noiselessly appeared. His curly black hair draped over his shoulders. His handsome face was as pale as a corpse, and his empty eyes emitted a terrifying aura.

However, his ears were the strangest thing of all.

They were shaggy like a wolf's.

“Elder, you dote on me the most.” Seeing the Demonic Corpse, Si Youyue was even more satisfied with her mission. This gesture was the equivalent of handing her treasures for free.

“Take care to clean up the mess. Don't leave any evidence behind.” Qiu Sen took out a token sculpted from the bones of the dead and threw it at Si Youyue.

This token controlled the Demonic Corpse, and Si Youyue hurriedly caught it.

Respectfully, she said, “Elder, rest assured. I will complete the mission.”

“Alright. You may go!” Qiu Sen casually gestured with his hands.

Si Youyue took the Demonic Corpse with her and left.

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* On Bloodcloud Peak *

After the Bloodthirsty Patriarch obtained Elder Qiu Sen's vow to help, he spread the news

throughout the sect.

There was an uproar among the Bloodthirsty Sect's disciples.

They had never known that the Bloodthirsty Patriarch had relations with the Yin Corpse Sect. After all, the Yin Corpse Sect was one of the five great evil sects. They were infamous for controlling corpses and their sinful conduct.

The Lei Kingdom's Spiritual Practitioner Alliance was no match for the Yin Corpse Sect.

When this news broke, everyone in the Bloodthirsty Sect felt honored. Their morale, which had waivered earlier, immediately steeled. Everyone rubbed their fists and wiped their palms, eager to perform in front of the Yin Corpse Sect's elder.

When Su Junqing heard the news, he was extremely excited.

These influential sects were usually active in the larger Spiritual Cities, and it was extremely unusual to see them in a small place like the Lei Kingdom. Su Junqing had not expected that the Bloodthirsty Sect would be able to secure connections with such an influential sect.

If he could make use of the Bloodthirsty Sect to enter the Yin Corpse Sect, he would certainly make a splash.

If that happened (not to mention if he achieved the Spiritual Master stage), it wouldn't be difficult for him to reach the Great Spiritual Master stage or even that of Spiritual King.

If he could reach the height of his cultivation, the Dongfang Clan, the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance, and the Bloodthirsty Patriarch would all have to grovel at his feet and beg for mercy.

However, when Su Junqing thought of the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, he felt as though a tray of cold water had been poured on him.

It was incredible that the Bloodthirsty Patriarch had spared his life until now. It was impossible that the Bloodthirsty Patriarch would recommend him to the Yin Corpse Sect.

Su Junqing thought: This won't do. I must think of a way to make use of this opportunity. I have heard that the helper from the Yin Corpse Sect is a woman. If I can devise a careful plan, there might still be some hope...

Two days later, Bloodcloud Peak bustled with noise and excitement. The Parlor was heavily decorated to the point that it was transformed beyond recognition. Fine wine and delicacies were served.

The Blood Slaves, who were usually dressed in revealing red gauze, had changed into conservative blue cotton dresses, and they acted as maids.

The Bloodthirsty Sect's other disciples were ordered to stay in their accommodations to prevent them from offending the guests from the Yin Corpse Sect.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch led in Shou Hou and his other trusted aides, and they escorted Si Youyue to the Parlor.

"Lord Envoy, the banquet had been prepared, and you can take your seat now. Everything here is simple and crude, Lord Envoy, so please forgive us if anything is unsatisfactory," the Bloodthirsty Patriarch said respectfully.

"Bloodthirsty Patriarch, you are too kind. You have been working tirelessly in the Lei Kingdom on behalf of Elder Qiu. Elder Qiu has a favorable impression of you." Si Youyue put on an appropriate smile.

She was wearing an ordinary cherry-red dress with a pink veil covering her face. She did not wish to allow the Bloodthirsty Patriarch and the other country bumpkins to even glance at her skin.

Behind her, the Demonic Corpse wore a black hooded cloak. It covered his face and body completely.

"It is my honor to work for Elder Qiu. Lord Envoy, please put in a good word for me in front of Elder Qiu." As the Bloodthirsty Patriarch spoke, he took out a gift that he had prepared with the utmost care and handed it to her. It was a bottle of pure Blood Vitality Pills.

A Blood Vitality Pill nourished Qi and enhanced cultivation speed. It also had a refining effect on Black Magic Techniques.

Even Si Youyue had not seen many of these pills before.

"Bloodthirsty Patriarch, you are too kind." Si Youyue received the gift with no trace of politeness.

Seeing that Si Youyue had accepted his gift, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch put on an even happier smile.

Just as Si Youyue and the rest were heading toward the Parlor, a white-colored figure rushed out from a side passageway. It was Su Junqing.

Frowning, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch immediately reprimanded him, "Impudent fellow!"

He had specially instructed his disciples to keep a close eye on Su Junqing. He did not know how Su Junqing had managed to escape.

“Patriarch, please do not be angry. I suddenly smelled a delicate fragrance when I was in the passageway and took a wrong turn because I was so enchanted by it. Please, forgive me.” Su Junqing hurriedly bowed to the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, and his handsome face revealed an anxious expression.

“What bullsh*t! Are you treating me like a three-year-old child?” The Bloodthirsty Patriarch sneered back then gave an order, “Come, capture him and take him away.”

He had kept Su Junqing alive up until now so that the Bloodthirsty Sect’s morale would not be affected. Since the helper from the Yin Corpse Sect had arrived, he had no further use for Su Junqing. Now, he could use him as fertilizer for the Blood Lotus Flowers.

“Brother Su, are you going to leave by yourself, or do you need us to escort you?” Grinning widely, Shou Hou stepped forward.

“Patriarch, I was attracted here by a fragrance, really.”

Su Junqing was behaving as though he were unaware that he was facing imminent calamity. He continued to explain things earnestly to the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, “I have never smelled such an appealing fragrance before. This lady must be a fairy, and I am willing to die just to see her once.”

“What nonsense are you saying? Take him away.” The Bloodthirsty Patriarch could not be bothered to hear Su Junqing’s madness.

Shou Hou and the rest immediately rushed at Su Junqing like wolves and tigers, and they were about to drag him away when Si Youyue, who had been silent, suddenly spoke up, “Stop.”

There was a sudden thump in Shou Hou’s heart, and he hurriedly looked at the Bloodthirsty Patriarch.

“Lord Envoy, something has gone wrong with this disciple’s cultivation. His brain has always been muddled. If he has offended you, please forgive him,” the Bloodthirsty Patriarch immediately explained to Si Youyue.

“Is that so? I think that your disciple is not so bad!” Si Youyue’s flirtatious glance landed on Su Junqing.

Su Junqing was dressed in white. He had a graceful figure and gave off a refined aura. As he

smiled, his eyes were full of tender feeling. He made an unforgettable first impression. Furthermore, in comparison to the Bloodthirsty Sect's ugly disciples, he was like the early morning sun brightening up the place. He was precisely Si Youyue's type.

"Lord Envoy, if you are interested, I can arrange to bring you someone even better." The Bloodthirsty Patriarch had a bad feeling when he observed Si Youyue's gaze, and he tried to remedy the situation.

Su Junqing was too treacherous and cunning, and they had nothing in common. It would not be beneficial for him if Su Junqing were to secure a connection with Si Youyue.

"It's fine. I will take him!" Looking at the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, Si Youyue flashed a faint smile as she said, "Can it be that you are unwilling to part with him?"

"Haha! What are you saying? Not only him, but if you want my entire Bloodthirsty Sect, I will offer it to you with both hands." The Bloodthirsty Patriarch forced a straightforward laugh.

He was dependent on Si Youyue to deal with the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance's taskforce, and he could not afford to fall out with her over Su Junqing.

Shou Hou was anxious as he watched from the side. He hated that he couldn't stab Su Junqing. However, he knew that he could not play games in front of the Yin Corpse Sect's Envoy. Immediately, he changed his attitude and politely helped dust off the non-existent dirt on Su Junqing's clothes.

He laughed and said flatteringly, "Brother Su, I apologize for offending you. Please don't take it to heart."

"Brother Shou Hou, you are too kind." Su Junqing flashed a gentle smile at Shou Hou. Then, bashfully, he stood beside Si Youyue and said meekly and with gratitude, "Many thanks to you, Lord Envoy, for helping me out."

"Don't be all talk and no action. Shouldn't you express your thanks?" Si Youyue peered at Su Junqing. Her long, snow-white fingers clutched Su Junqing's chin coquettishly. Her pinky flirtatiously scratched his throat. She was very experienced at teasing.

Su Junqing smiled shyly, as though he were a virgin with no knowledge of love and sex. He knew in his heart that Si Youyue, an evil and demonic woman who had slaughtered countless men, loved men who looked young and inexperienced but were bold and fierce in bed. Although he had successfully attracted Si Youyue's attention, everything depended on his performance that night.

Si Youyue was itching from Su Junqing's teasing, and she was not in the mood to deal with the Bloodthirsty Patriarch.

At the banquet, after she'd drunk a few cups of wine, Si Youyue excused herself, claiming that she was tired from the journey. She took Su Junqing along with her and went to rest.

Watching Si Youyue and Su Junqing's retreating figures, the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's expression darkened.

He ordered the Blood Slaves and the other disciples to leave and requested that Shou Hou stay.

"You will need to work a bit harder tonight. Watch Su Junqing closely. Once they are done, find an opportunity, and kill him." The Bloodthirsty Patriarch did not dare oppose Si Youyue directly, but he believed that, as long as he could get rid of Su Junqing secretly, Si Youyue would not fall out with him.

"I understand." Shou Hou hurriedly nodded.

He was initially worried that the Patriarch would let Su Junqing off, and he was relieved by the Patriarch's words.

"Be careful. Don't let Si Youyue discover you." Bloodthirsty Patriarch warned again.

Although Shou Hou's Invisibility was powerful, there was no guarantee that there would not be any accidents.

"I understand." Shou Hou bowed and left the Parlor. He used a secret passageway then arrived noiselessly at the cave room, which had been prepared for Si Youyue.

He heard a burst of faint panting.

It had only been a short time since they'd left, but Si Youyue was already going at it with Su Junqing.

Su Junqing had dared to seduce Si Youyue because he was confident of his abilities in bed.

While practicing Mental Manipulation, he had also learned a unique technique named the 'Invincible Golden Spear Technique.' With this technique, he could take on ten women in a night, and his Yang Core would not leak. He had no fear of being sucked dry.

Su Junqing gave it all that he had. He examined every single inch of Si Youyue's body. Initially, Si Youyue had treated Su Junqing as entertainment. She had not expected his technique to be so outstanding.

His mouth and lips were nimble, and his hands were large and scorching hot. He made Si Youyue crazy and delirious, and she felt as though her entire body were on fire. She was unable to stop even though she wanted to...

Squatting in the secret room, Shou Hou listened attentively to the voices and moans coming from the cave room. These sounds, which could make a normal person's blood vessels burst, had no impact on him.

In his mind, he was thinking of how to kill Su Junqing.

Shou Hou waited quietly on the spot, but he had not expected Su Junqing to be so powerful and fierce in bed. He showed no signs of weariness, even after an entire night.

Furthermore, he had a variety of moves that made Si Youyue hover between life and death. Finally, with a hoarse voice, she screamed, "My Lord, please spare me!"

Given Si Youyue's status, Su Junqing was only worthy of carrying her shoes. Shou Hou could not believe that she was addressing Su Junqing as 'my Lord.'

Although they were only words said in bed, from her sweet and unctuous voice, it was clear that Su Junqing's technique had conquered her.

It was not going well. If Si Youyue wanted to keep Su Junqing, it was likely that she would bring him with her back to the Yin Corpse Sect.

Sure enough, when Si Youyue was delirious, Su Junqing seized the opportunity and began to

coax her using all kinds of sweet speech and honeyed words. He begged her to bring him with her back to the Yin Corpse Sect.

“My darling, you need not worry. I will bring you back.” Si Youyue’s eyes were charming as she pinched Su Junqing’s exposed chest fiercely.

While he had been pleasuring her, she had tormented Su Junqing continuously. Su Junqing was a capable man, and the injuries were nothing – so long as he could achieve his goal.

He began to talk sorrowfully about his situation in the Bloodthirsty Sect. Finally, he sighed and said, “The Bloodthirsty Patriarch intends to kill me. Even you might not be able to protect me here.”

Si Youyue’s beautiful face turned fiendish as she yelled, “He wouldn’t dare!”

Su Junqing was a rare and extraordinarily handsome man. She would not allow anyone to touch him before she tired of him.

“He is more daring than you think.” Su Junqing bit Si Youyue’s earlobes as his hands continued to roam her body.

Si Youyue had to admit that Su Junqing was right. The Bloodthirsty Patriarch was indeed daring.

Elder Qiu Sen had instructed him to gather blood to cultivate the Blood Lotus Flowers, but he’d used his position to put together a group of disciples to go around killing and fighting for his benefit. He had even drawn the attention of the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance, which was trying to chase him down.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch had thought that his actions were a secret. However, Elder Qiu Sen had observed his every move.

Since Elder Qiu Sen had already ordered her to eradicate Bloodcloud Peak, everyone had to die. In that case, it wasn’t suitable for her darling to stay, as she could injure him unintentionally in a fight.

Si Youyue immediately made her decision. She reached out her hand, and the Magical Bottomless Bag, which was on the ground, flew up to her.

She took out a black token and said to Su Junqing, “Since that is the case, you can go to the Yin Corpse Sect straightaway. Use this token, and you can become a Secondary Disciple. Once I am done here, I will come and find you.”

“Okay.” Although Su Junqing was ecstatic, his expression remained calm.

He placed the token at the head of the bed, casually. Then, with a flip of his body, he pressed against Si Youyue. Immediately, another round of absurdness ensued.

Hiding in the secret room, Shou Hou felt as though his heart had gone cold. He could not believe that Su Junqing had successfully secured a connection with Si Youyue and received a token allowing him to enter the Yin Corpse Sect.

Shou Hou thought: How can such a crazy, cruel beast be so lucky?

Is it because he is handsome and good in bed? This Si Youyue is a wretched sl*t if Su Junqing so easily conquers her. Sooner or later, Su Junqing will be the cause of her death.

All kinds of hatred and frustration arose in Shou Hou’s heart, but he knew that he couldn’t kill Su Junqing right now.

Seeing that Su Junqing had reached heaven in a single bound, Ye Yunzhi was in a most dangerous position. Shou Hou had to think of a way to save her...

Su Junqing’s cave room was not far away from the secret room.

A single candle burned on a simple, crude stone table. It had already left a thick layer of wax on the table’s surface.

Feeling ill at ease, Ye Yunzhi paced up and down. From time to time, she looked toward the large door.

Su Junqing had not returned that night, and she did not know if anything had happened.

Of course, she was not worried about Su Junqing’s safety. She feared that Su Junqing had deviated from her plan.

Ever since she had been bestowed on Su Junqing by the Patriarch, she had been instigating him to act against their leader.

She could tell that Su Junqing was indeed thinking of doing something.

She had been patiently waiting for the day where Su Junqing would destroy himself.

However, last night, Su Junqing had left without a single word. She did not know what he had gone to do, and this made her uneasy.

Just as Ye Yunzhi's heart was burning with anxiety, the door to the cave room finally opened.

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"Su Junqing, you..." Ye Yunzhi thought that Su Junqing had returned. She did not expect Shou Hou to be standing outside the cave room.

Looking at Shou Hou, who seemed anxious, she asked in surprise, "Brother Shou Hou, what are you doing here?"

"Quick, follow me. I will explain later." Shou Hou rushed forward, wanting to bring Ye Yunzhi with him.

Ye Yunzhi frowned and moved away from him. "Where are you taking me?" she asked.

"Su Junqing has secured a connection with Si Youyue, the Yin Corpse Sect's Envoy. Soon, he will become a disciple of their sect." Shou Hou spoke urgently as he told her briefly about what had happened.

Ye Yunzhi's beautiful, tender face immediately paled.

Her body trembled, and she took a few steps back. Even as her lower back crashed into the table, she seemed not to notice.

She thought: Why is this happening? How is this possible? I have endured humiliation and racked my brain for ways to send him to hell. Yet, he's deftly stepped into heaven, leaving me behind to struggle in the swamp. I am not willing to accept this. I am unwilling to accept it!

“Yunzhi, Su Junqing has no respect for the Bloodthirsty Patriarch anymore. I fear that he will act against you. Quick, leave this place!” Shou Hou could not think of a way to protect Ye Yunzhi, and he could only help to send her away.

“Where can I go?” Ye Yunzhi gave a sad smile.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch had planted a Blood Soul Flower inside her and would know immediately if she left Bloodcloud Peak. She would die a worse death should be recaptured.

“I have a way to seal the Blood Soul Flower temporarily. Since the team from the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance is heading here, you can go to them. They will not make things difficult for you.” This was the exit strategy that Shou Hou had thought up for Ye Yunzhi.

Ye Yunzhi was a Blood Slave, not a Sorcerer, and she was one of the pitiful victims harmed by the Bloodthirsty Sect. Since the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance was renowned for its righteousness, they would not make things difficult for a poor lady.

“What about you?” Ye Yunzhi looked up at Shou Hou.

By saving her, he was betraying the Bloodthirsty Patriarch. Furthermore, as a Sorcerer, the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance would not believe anything he said. Shou Hou would only be faced with death if he were to go to them.

“You do not need to worry about me. Of course, I have a plan to escape. The only thing you need to do is to survive.” Shou Hou grinned. “You must live on.”

His grin was whole-hearted and different from his usual flattering, fake smiles. It made his slightly ugly face look much more pleasant.

“What plan can you possibly have?” Ye Yunzhi mumbled.

She had been at the Bloodcloud Peak for a very long time. Naturally, she knew the extent of Shou Hou’s abilities. He was using his life to save hers.

Ye Yunzhi knew that Shou Hou cared for her, but she never realized that Shou Hou cared for her so much that he was willing to die for her.

She thought about how she had been making use of Shou Hou’s feelings for her survival. Suddenly, Ye Yunzhi felt embarrassed.

Love was a powerful thing, and she could not afford to play with it.

Furthermore, she knew how formidable the Bloodthirsty Patriarch was. Even if Shou Hou sacrificed himself to save her, there was no way that he could assure her escape.

Since that was the case, she could not possibly implicate him and let him die with her!

Thinking about this, the rims of Ye Yunzhi's eyes reddened. With an agonized expression, she said, "Brother Shou Hou, you don't have to treat me so well. I have been taking advantage of you. I am not a good person..."

Shou Hou suddenly interrupted her, "You have no one to rely on here. If you didn't take advantage of others, how could you possibly have survived?"

"Alright. That's enough. The Patriarch's thoughts are focused on Si Youyue for now, and he won't have time to care about us. Let's go as quickly as possible!" Shou Hou urged Ye Yunzhi. He did not waver in his decision.

Ye Yunzhi stared dazedly at Shou Hou. Then, nodding, she said, "Alright," then stood up.

Shou Hou immediately went to open the door, but he suddenly felt a sharp pain in his neck.

His eyes rolled back as he fell unconscious to the floor with a thud.

A Spiritual Light flickered in Ye Yunzhi's hands as she quickly sealed Shou Hou's major acupuncture points. Then, she muttered, "Brother Shou Hou, I am so sorry."

She stealthily sent Shou Hou away before returning to the room.

Then, she collected a basin of water and carefully freshened herself up. She fashioned her long jet-black hair into a 'spiritual snake'-style topknot. This was the hairstyle that Su Junqing liked most.

Calmly, she sat beside the table and waited for Su Junqing to return. She had to put an end to things between them.

After approximately the time it took to drink a cup of tea, the door to the cave room opened again.

A depleted Su Junqing stepped inside. He could see that Ye Yunzhi had been waiting for him by the table.

In the candlelight, Ye Yunzhi's tender and beautiful face looked incomparably gentle.

"You are back," Ye Yunzhi called out softly as she walked toward Su Junqing.

Su Junqing was momentarily stunned. He recalled how, when they were newlyweds, she had always waited for him to return before going to sleep. Her affection swayed his stone-cold heart.

Su Junqing had indeed fallen in love with Ye Yunzhi when he was first trying to seduce her. Otherwise, he wouldn't have married her in the village or conceived a child with her. He had been hesitant to eradicate the Ye Clan. However, he'd had no other choice because he knew how powerful the Bloodthirsty Patriarch was.

Su Junqing thought: The fact remains that everything is the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's fault. However, none of that matters anymore. I have already secured a connection with Si Youyue, and I will be able to enter the Yin Corpse Sect. In the future, once I have reached greater heights in my cultivation, I will cut off the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's d*mned head and use it to beg for Ye Yunzhi's forgiveness.

Su Junqing deflected all of the blame to the Bloodthirsty Patriarch. He still clung to the hope that one day, he would be able to make up with Ye Yunzhi.

He opened his arms, ready to hug Ye Yunzhi.

Suddenly, a sharp glare flitted across her eyes, and the Spiritual Power within her, which she had been accumulating for a long time, burst forth.

Her right hand glowed with a gray Spiritual Light.

Her short red nails elongated rapidly, and she stabbed at Su Junqing's chest violently as though wielding five sharp knives.

After all, Ye Yunzhi had been born into an influential Assassin Clan. Her attack at such short range was impossible to parry.

Her red nails glowed with a faint gray light as they stabbed into Su Junqing's chest.

Ye Yunzhi was pleased, but she had not expected a ball of golden light to emerge from Su Junqing's body suddenly. Her nails bounced off the ball of light.

Ye Yunzhi took a few steps back, and she only stopped after crashing into the table.

She stared in disbelief at Su Junqing, thinking, Diamond Protection Talisman! Was he on guard against me?

Su Junqing lowered his head and saw five holes in his chest. His expression turned sinister as he

said fiercely, "Yunzhi, you are so heartless!"

If not for the Diamond Protection Talisman that Si Youyue had just given him, Ye Yunzhi's plot would have succeeded.

"Go ahead and kill me if you want!" Ye Yunzhi said with a stupefied expression.

She had used up all of the Spiritual Power inside her body, and there was no way she could fight back.

"How could I bear to kill you?" With a sinister smile, Su Junqing walked over to her. Forcefully, he pinched Ye Yunzhi's chin and tilted up her face to look at her properly.

Ye Yunzhi closed her eyes, not wanting to see Su Junqing's arrogant and unbridled appearance.

Sorrowfully, she thought: This was all predetermined by fate! I was destined to be deceived and betrayed by Su Junqing, and I will never be able to beat him.

Su Junqing bit into Ye Yunzhi's slender and fair neck. Then, as if to make a vow, he said viciously, "Don't worry. Even if I am going to hell, I will bring you along with me."

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Ye Yu was still clueless that Ye Yunzhi was in danger amidst the winds of change in the Bloodthirsty Sect.

He was discussing which route to take to Bloodcloud Peak with Luo Tian and Jun Yichen.

"There are no signs of human life within a 50-kilometer radius of Bloodcloud Peak. There are a few water sources as well. Everyone can come and stay at the Blood-clad Miao people's former encampment. It is only five kilometers away from Bloodcloud Peak, and it is very convenient for surveillance." As he spoke, Luo Tian gestured continuously to the map he had drawn.

"Will the Bloodthirsty Sect have anyone monitoring the place?" Ye Yu was a little worried.

"The place is in ruins now. They won't waste any manpower keeping a close watch on it," Jun Yichen answered coldly.

He thought: If someone were there, that would be even better. I could sacrifice them to my Life's Origin Parasite.

"Alright. Let's look there first." Ye Jiuge was not familiar with Bloodcloud Peak, and she could only trust the two natives, Jun Yichen and Luo Tian.

"Eldest Miss, should we inform the people from the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance?" Ye Yu felt that prudence was preferable.

"There is no need." Seeing that Ye Yu had disagreement written all over his face, Ye Jiuge explained, "There is a spy planted inside the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance. If we tell them about it, we will be informing Bloodthirsty Patriarch as well."

"There is a spy in the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance? Who?" Ye Yu was startled.

"I don't know." Ye Jiuge shook her head. She pointed helplessly at Zi Shang, who was sitting on a chair eating Cherry Pills, and said, "That guy refuses to tell me."

Ye Yu snuck a peek at Zi Shang.

He still had yet to figure out this expert guard who had suddenly appeared. He was beautiful, but they could not work out his personality at all.

As long as he did not speak, everyone subconsciously neglected him. Because of this, Ye Yu, as someone who walked among the shadows, was afraid.

"It's not the people who have the Legendary Venomous Insects." Zi Shang was in a merciful mood, so he rewarded them with this single sentence.

"Isn't that the same thing as saying nothing?" Ye Jiuge rolled her eyes.

Gong Xifan had 15 men in his command. Excluding the three who owned the Legendary Venomous Insects, twelve remained.

It would be difficult to deduce which one was the spy.

"Who cares who the spy is? It will be fine as long as we don't have one among us," Jun Yichen said in a very straight forward manner.

“Yes. Since we know that they have a spy in their midst, perhaps we can make use of this information.” Quickly, Luo Tian began to think of different countertactics for dealing with this situation.

“Let’s set off first. We can speak about it when the time comes. Let’s aim to reach your encampment in three days.” Ye Jiuge immediately made a decision.

They had already finished their preparations, so at noon, they headed off. After three days, they successfully reached the Blood-clad Miao’s encampment.

The valley before them was in complete disarray. All the trees and plants had withered, and no tracks indicated that people used to live here.

Standing on the hill, Jun Yichen and Luo Tian watched the scene in a daze. Grotesque images of that bloody night flashed through their minds.

The Bloodthirsty Sect’s disciples had rushed into their encampment and cut down anyone they saw. They had not let anyone go.

Finally, the old chieftain had sacrificed himself so that he could cut a bloody path out of the battlefield for his people.

“Are they alright?” Ye Jiuge whispered to Ye Yu.

She thought: What if Jun Yichen and Luo Tian become depressed because this place triggers horrible memories, causing them to want to suddenly rush to Bloodcloud Peak and fight the Bloodthirsty Patriarch to the death?”

“They will be fine.” Ye Yu shook his head.

His situation was remarkably similar to Jun Yichen’s.

Their clans had both been exterminated by the Bloodthirsty Sect, and they both wanted to take revenge and wipe out an old grudge.

This was also why Jun Yichen was willing to accept Ye Yu, even though he hated Spiritual Practitioners.

“You don’t have to be anxious. Since we are already here, we will save your sister.” Ye Jiuge patted Ye Yu’s shoulder to comfort him.

“Yes.” Ye Yu nodded. He had already endured the pain for so long, and he was in no hurry.

The atmosphere was filled with sadness and strength at the same time. However, a voice that dampened their spirits suddenly rang out, "I am hungry."

"Didn't you just finish half a bottle of Cherry Pills? How can you be hungry again? Are you a pig?" Ye Jiuge glared peevishly at Zi Shang.

Before leaving the capital, she had been forced by Zi Shang to refine a few cauldrons of Cherry Pills. The pills she had produced were stored in a large pot.

When he had nothing to do, Zi Shang chewed on them noisily. Ye Jiuge thought: How dare he say that he is hungry!

"A pig will not help you fight," Zi Shang said seriously.

"Yes, yes, yes. You are a pig that knows how to fight." Because of Zi Shang, Ye Jiuge was not in the mood to comfort Jun Yichen and the others. Instead, she called out to them, "The sky is getting darker. Let's find a place to rest."

"This way." Jun Yichen quickly collected himself. He led Ye Jiuge and the rest into a remote cave. After many turns, they finally arrived at a spacious and empty cave room.

The walls were filled with cavities. There was also a dried-up pond, which made the place look even more desolate.

"These were the sacred grounds of my people." Jun Yichen looked sadly at the cavities in the stone walls.

The place had once been filled with different species of parasites. When the Bloodthirsty Sect had breached their encampment, the chieftain had killed them all.

The pond had once been used to baptize the clan's newborns and cultivate parasites.

The place was very well hidden, and the Bloodthirsty Sect's disciples had been unable to discover it. They were safe.

"I see." After Ye Jiuge kept Jun Yichen company for a while, she took out the rations that she had prepared. She told everyone to rest and eat while they discussed the plan.

"I want to surveil the Bloodthirsty Sect tonight. It would be best if we can find the eye of their protective formation," Ye Jiuge said solemnly.

The Bloodthirsty Sect's protective formation was extremely powerful, and she would not be able to get past it easily, even with the Yin Pills she had produced. The best way would be to render it useless by destroying the formation's eye.

"If we can find my sister, we will be able to learn more. Know yourself and know your enemy, and you will never be defeated," Ye Yu consented readily to Ye Jiuge's plan.

"Alright. We can split into two parties when the moment comes. Ye Zi and I will go and find the eye of the protective formation, and everyone else will look for Ye Yu's sister." Ye Jiuge wasted no time coming up with the game plan.

Ye Yu, Luo Tian, and Jun Yichen expressed their agreement.

Zi Shang continued to eat his Cherry Pills as though he had no opinions.

At midnight, everything was quiet except for the sounds of nature.

Ye Jiuge and the rest left the sacred grounds and headed noiselessly towards Bloodcloud Peak.

In the dark, Bloodcloud Peak emitted a faint red fog. Although the Protective Formation was not yet activated, there were defensive spells everywhere.

After the Bloodthirsty Patriarch had exterminated the Blood-clad Miao, he had gathered many venomous snakes and deadly insects to improve Bloodcloud Peak's defenses.

There were many dangers hidden beneath the ordinary-looking grass.

However, since Jun Yichen and Luo Tian were around, these dangers posed no threat at all.

Ye Jiuge and the others carefully avoided the patrolling disciples and finally arrived at the foot of Bloodcloud Peak.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch had drilled through the mountain and set up many cave rooms that now served as the sect's base.

The area to the left was where the disciples rested and practiced their Methods.

The Hundred Flower Palace, where Bloodthirsty Patriarch indulged in his pleasures, was in the middle.

The Bloodthirsty Patriarch rested in an area on the right side. This was the Bloodthirsty Sect's forbidden grounds.

According to the information transmitted to him through the Bloodthirsty Patriarch's blood, Jun Yichen was very sure when he told Ye Jiuge, "The eye of the Protective Formation is in the forbidden grounds on the righthand side."

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"Fine. Ye Zi and I will head toward the right. You guys go for the center. Once we've succeeded, retreat. If you encounter any danger, call for help," Ye Jiuge told Ye Yu.

"Alright." Ye Yu nodded. Grey specks of light flickered around his body, and he disappeared into the shadows.

The black shadows made up of small Legendary Venomous Insects started to envelop Jun Yichen's body. The insects covered his body and even reached out toward Luo Tian. Then, the three people disappeared.

Ye Jiuge turned to Zi Shang and asked, "Give me a Concealment Talisman."

Zi Shang began drawing a Concealment Talisman on Ye Jiuge without asking permission.

The Concealment Talisman was not effective against advanced opponents like the Bloodthirsty Patriarch. But it worked on the Bloodthirsty Sect's ordinary disciples.

After Ye Jiuge and Zi Shang hid, they kept to the shadows and made their way toward the right.

The Bloodthirsty Sect had probably never imagined that anyone would be so bold as to infiltrate their base, so security was rather lax.

As Ye Jiuge and Zi Shang made their way in, they only encountered two patrol teams.

The guards were tired and unfocused, and they kept yawning. They did not notice Ye Jiuge and Zi Shang sneaking past.

The duo successfully arrived at the Forbidden Grounds.

A severe warning dripping with blood and filled with murderous intent hung on the stone walls—Death to Trespassers.

Zi Shang did not even spare it a glance and pulled Ye Jiuge into the Forbidden Grounds.

They entered and found themselves in a cave-dwelling with many tightly shut stone doors. From top to bottom, it was like a maze.

“Where should we go?” Ye Jiuge felt a little heady just looking at the doors.

If they searched each room one by one, they wouldn’t be able to find the formation’s core by the time the sun rose.

Although the Bloodthirsty Sect’s security was lax, if they took too long, it was inevitable that they’d be found out.

“The dwelling is designed based on the protective formation’s ability to disrupt hearing and sight. The formation’s core isn’t a treasure. Even I can’t find it.” Zi Shang shook his head.

The core was not a living thing. It was the same as a stone. No matter how powerful his pupil technique, it was still unable to differentiate and identify the core of the formation.

“Treasure?” Ye Jiuge’s eyes lit up. She was suddenly reminded of what Jun Yichen had said about how the Bloodthirsty Patriarch treasured the Blood Lotus Flower so much that he’d planted it near the formation’s core. If they found the Blood Lotus Flower, they would find the core.

Ye Jiuge quickly summoned the Treasure-hunting Scorpion.

“What can I do for you, Master?” The Treasure-hunting Scorpion crawled out of the sack with great difficulty.

It had been following Ye Jiuge for some time, living a comfortable life. It could keep its mate company without having to work. Its life was so relaxed that it had bloated like a sausage.

“Can you help me find the location of the Blood Lotus Flower?” Ye Jiuge looked at the Treasure-hunting Scorpion’s plump waist with worry. Would he be able to move?

“Blood Lotus Flower? Easy-peasy!” The Treasure-hunting Scorpion did not even stop to ponder, and it waved its large pincer in the direction of the east. “It’s behind that cave-dwelling.”

“You are certain?” Ye Jiuge raised an eyebrow. Even Zi Shang was unable to discern its location.

Yet, the Treasure-hunting Scorpion had found the spot with a mere flick of his pincer. It was so unbelievably haphazard!

“Of course! I lived with Liu Yunfei here for many years and am very familiar with the Blood Lotus Flower. For instance, I can tell that three stalks will bloom in five days,” the Treasure-hunting Scorpion explained with pride, puffing up his stocky chest.

On the surface, Liu Yunfei had displayed the utmost reverence for the Bloodthirsty Patriarch. But she had always been secretly plotting for the Blood Lotus Flower.

Every time the Patriarch went into cultivation, she sent the Treasure-hunting Scorpion to check things out. The location of the Blood Lotus Flower was like the Treasure-hunting Scorpion's backyard. It knew the place like the back of its pincer.

“Then, are you aware of the core of the formation's location?” Ye Jiuge had not forgotten that their mission was to destroy the core.

“Core of the formation? What's that? Can it be eaten?” The Treasure-hunting Scorpion was perplexed.

“Well...let's just get going. Lead us to the Blood Lotus Flower.” Ye Jiuge knew she should not place too much hope in the Treasure-hunting Scorpion.

“Let's go!” the Treasure-hunting Scorpion's chubby body landed on the ground heavy and hard, but it still moved speedily.

Ye Jiuge and Zi Shang followed it until they came to a stop outside the cave-dwelling where the Blood Lotus Flower was planted.

They pushed the stone door hard, but it did not budge.

“The mechanism is here.” Zi Shang pointed to a dull grey corner of the cave-dwelling solemnly. He continued, “Be careful to avoid touching the Shrieking Grass.”

Ye Jiuge took a careful look and spied a handful of greyish-green grass growing in the corner. It blended in with the stone wall. It was hard to notice unless one looked carefully.

This was a small trap set by the Bloodthirsty Patriarch.

All the blades of Shrieking Grass were connected. Once one stem started shrieking, the rest would do the same.

If she were not careful and brushed against it, everyone in the Bloodthirsty Sect would be immediately notified of their presence.

Just as Zi Shang was about to show off his high-level demonic magic by freezing the Shrieking Grass in front of Ye Jiuge, she took out a bag of poisonous powder from her sack and scattered it in the direction of the Shrieking Grass.

Before the Shrieking Grass could even emit a peep, it had already dissolved into a puddle of powder residue.

Ye Jiuge quickly pressed the mechanism. The moment the cave dwelling's doors opened, she stepped in immediately.

Zi Shang quietly retracted a finger, pretending that nothing had happened, and followed her into the cave-dwelling.

The moment they entered, the doors swiftly swung shut.

It was pitch black inside. They could not even see their fingers.

Zi Shang flicked a ball of purple light upward, and the surroundings lit up.

There were three dark, forbidding paths in front of them, and they looked like some monster with its mouth wide open.

"Which path is the right one?" Ye Jiuge asked the Treasure-hunting Scorpion.

"The center path. But if you just head straight in, you will have to get past 49 traps to reach the Blood Lotus Flower's pond," the Treasure-hunting Scorpion replied.

This was the reason Liu Yunfei had never dared enter the cave.

The 49 traps were meticulously complex in their design. Even if an intruder could circumvent all the traps, the alarm would still be triggered.

"The center path leads to the Blood Lotus Flower. What about the left and right paths?" Ye Jiuge asked.

Jun Yichen had mentioned that the core was near the Blood Lotus Flower. That meant that the center path could be eliminated. That left the left and right paths.

"No idea. I have never gone there." Whenever the Treasure-hunting Scorpion traveled through the

ground, it always went straight to the targeted location.

“Go take a look,” Ye Jiuge ordered.

“Alright.” The Treasure-hunting Scorpion’s body shimmered with yellow light as it burrowed into the ground and disappeared.

After about five minutes, the Treasure-hunting Scorpion’s haggard face reemerged. It reported gloomily, “The left path leads to 13 stone pillars. The right path leads to a deadly and poisonous hole.”

The minute it appeared on the right-hand path, mere moments before, it had been immediately attacked by hordes of poisonous things. It almost hadn’t escaped.

“You’ve worked hard. You can return to the sack!” Ye Jiuge beckoned to the Treasure-hunting Scorpion to come back then turned to Zi Shang and said, “Which way should we go?”

“Left,” Zi Shang said without hesitation.

“Then you take the lead!” Ye Jiuge stood behind Zi Shang resolutely.

In such a dangerous place, she had to let that devil go first!

“Wimp! Come on!” Zi Shang tossed Ye Jiuge a look of disdain, and his body started emitting a light purple fog.

Ye Jiuge headed into the purple fog and realized that it did not smell as pungent as she had expected. Instead, it had a faint fragrance, similar to the way Zi Shang usually smelled.

If it not for the current life-and-death situation, it would have been very romantic.

“What crazy thoughts are you having?” Zi Shang admonished her with a straight face as if Ye Jiuge was trying to take advantage of him during such a time.

“You’re the one with the crazy thoughts. Get in!” Ye Jiuge gave Zi Shang’s rear a slap.

Since Zi Shang wanted her to take advantage of him, she would not disappoint. He grabbed onto Ye Jiuge’s naughty right hand, and his beautiful eyes narrowed. Was the wimp trying to rebel?

Ye Jiuge laughed and raised her left hand, seemingly to show that she could still take advantage of him with her other hand.

“You win!” Zi Shang released Ye Jiuge’s hand, turned, and started walking down the path.

Satisfied, Ye Jiuge followed.

The path was so narrow that only one person could pass at a time. The ground was paved with grey stones.

Zi Shang walked without a care. He did not think that the cave and pathway were worthy of his attention.

In contrast, Ye Jiuge was on high alert.

A few steps in, something cracked under her foot.

On both sides of the path, there were countless thin beams of light shining toward them and raining down on them like arrows in a war.

Any ordinary person would have been pierced by the beams and died a horrible death.

But Zi Shang’s purple fog was not ordinary, and it securely deflected the light beams.

“Walk!” Zi Shang continued walking. Then came another thump.

Lumps of pink fog drifted into the path. The stench was pungent and piercing, but it was blocked by the purple fog.

They had only gone a short distance, but the path was already fraught with light sword beams and

poison. If it weren't for Zi Shang, Ye Jiuge would have difficulty making her way in alone.

They had finally gotten to the end of the path and were standing in the large cave with the 13 blood-colored pillars.

The pillars were not made of stone or metal. They were covered with carvings of poisonous snakes and ferocious beasts. In between each carving, lights glowed and flowed. This was the core of the protective formation.

If the pillars were destroyed, the protective formation would be eliminated.

Ye Jiuge tried to hit one with a Spiritual Light.

The pillar shimmered slightly and distributed the Spiritual Light's power to the other 12 pillars.

The only way to destroy all 13 pillars was to increase the power of their attacks.

"There isn't much time left. Let's attack together," Ye Jiuge said and took out the Lightning Snake Magical Whip from her waist.

She channeled Spiritual Power into the whip and was about to hit the pillars when Zi Shang grabbed by the collar and threw her backward.

What the hell?

Ye Jiuge was puzzled and was about to start b*tching when a Teleportation Spell floated out from the center of the pillars.

A black shadow appeared. Swift as lightning, it landed where Ye Jiuge had previously been standing. With a wave, it launched an attack with so much force that the air became pressurized.

If Zi Shang had not pulled Ye Jiuge back in time, she would have most likely have been torn in two. Seeing that the attack had failed, the black shadow refracted and speared toward Zi Shang.

Zi Shang threw Ye Jiuge to one side. His right hand glowed until it was about to burst, then it turned into a long spear and thrust itself at the black shadow.

A sizeable explosive bang and streams of light shot out.

The black shadow was forced back by Zi Shang's long spear. Then, with frightening speed, it came at Zi Shang again and started attacking him.

It was hard to tell who was who. Ye Jiuge could not even make out the shape of the black shadow.

During the heated battle, Zi Shang took a minute to duck out and throw a lump of purplish-black light at Ye Jiuge to cover her. He ordered curtly, "Get out of here!"

Ye Jiuge knew that she would not be much help even if she stayed. She left the forbidden grounds without a second thought, running in the direction of Hundred Flower Palace.

They had not been at Bloodcloud Peak very long, and Jun Yichen and the rest might not have found Ye Yunzhi yet. So, she had to go meet up with them.

As she ran, she could hear murmurs and unrest in the Bloodthirsty Sect. There were repeatedly hollering, "The enemy has attacked! The enemy has attacked!"

The disciples ran in the direction of the forbidden grounds, so the road to the Hundred Flower Palace was relatively empty, and Ye Jiuge successfully made her way in.

She was greeted by an attack by Jun Yichen's Legendary Venomous Insect the moment she stepped into the palace.

Ye Jiuge called out in a hurry, "It's me!"

"What are you doing here? Where is Ye Zi?" Half of Jun Yichen's head peeked out from the cave wall, while the rest of his body was still hidden in the shadows.

"There is a trap at the formation's core. Ye Zi told us to go ahead. Where are the others?" Ye Jiuge asked urgently.

"Inside." Jun Yichen did not dare say much in such a situation, and he quickly led Ye Jiuge into the Hundred Flower Palace.

"Did you find Ye Yu's elder sister?" Ye Jiuge asked as they rushed in.

"No. They caught a disciple and are interrogating him now. But the situation doesn't look good." Jun Yichen's voice was somber.

Although he was keeping a lookout, he was vaguely aware of the situation inside because of his Legendary Venomous Insects. The Hundred Flower Palace was in disarray, and dozens of beautiful blood slaves were slumped on the ground.

Ye Yu's eyes were bloodshot. He was choking a thin, small man, and screaming in anger, "It's impossible! I don't believe it!"

Luo Tian frowned and advised, "Calm down."

The scene playing out in front of Ye Jiuge was a little unexpected, but now wasn't the time for questions.

She quickly stepped forward and knocked the small, thin man unconscious. Then, she nudged Ye Yu. "There's a change in plans. We will retreat now."

Although Ye Yu's emotions were hanging on by a thread, hearing Ye Jiuge's words, he turned around and followed her. They left the place without question.

Jun Yichen had sent ten Legendary Venomous Insects ahead to scout the area.

The group walked behind him on alert, avoiding the Bloodthirsty Sect's disciples. Soon, they burst out of the chaotic Bloodcloud Peak.

"Oh no! They are about to activate the protective formation. Hurry!" Jun Yichen suddenly screamed.

Ye Jiuge turned and saw thick red smoke emerging from the midway up Bloodcloud Peak. It rolled down the mountain like a massive tidal wave.

"Eat the medicinal pill, hurry!" Ye Jiuge worked quickly to swallow a Yin pill.

Jun Yichen and the rest ate the pills while running forward as fast as they could.

Although they were fast, the protective formation's activation was even quicker. The Blood Mosquitoes were like ferocious tigers that had just escaped their cages. They formed into blood clouds and pounced on the group.

Once Ye Jiuge had swallowed the Yin pill, a layer of fat formed on the surface of her skin. Although the Blood Mosquitoes died the moment they touched it, they still surged forward relentlessly. Soon, a thick layer of the Blood Mosquitoes swarmed on each of their bodies.

In another instant, red armor also covered them. This armor helped to block the remaining Blood Mosquitoes.

"There they are!" The Bloodthirsty Sect's disciples on patrol finally found Ye Jiuge and the others.

As they ordered the poisonous snakes and insects to surround the intruders, the disciples also mounted countless vicious attacks.

A myriad of lights formed into a giant web, covering Ye Jiuge and her friends from above. At the same time, a large blood vine thicket suddenly shot up in the path in front of them, obstructing their escape.

“Charge!” Ye Jiuge hollered, whipping out the Lightning Snake Magical Whip and slicing it through the air toward the thicket.

The Lightning Snake Magical Whip exploded in a show of purple lights, transforming into a gigantic and savage python that roared as it surged forward.

The blood vine thicket was shredded instantly, raining bits and pieces of loose vines and branches.

Ye Jiuge channeled a spell, and the gigantic python turned and rushed forward again. Although it was unable to break past the giant web of lights, this move bought some time for Ye Jiuge and the rest.

Jun Yichen and the rest gritted their teeth and fought hard. Finally, they managed to escape before the giant web descended.

The Bloodthirsty Sect’s disciples had every intention of continuing their pursuit, but they were summoned back by the Bloodthirsty Patriarch. “Don’t bother chasing them. They are just negligible foot-soldiers.”

Ye Jiuge felt that this was a pity. She had initially intended to capture a few disciples to interrogate them.

She prudently led Jun Yichen and the others around in circles. After confirming that no one was chasing them, they finally went back to the Blood-clad Miao’s Sacred Land.

“What happened in the formation’s core?”

“What happened to Ye Yu’s elder sister?”

Jun Yichen and Ye Jiuge asked in unison, even ending on the same note.

A moment later, Ye Yu’s raspy voice rang out: “Su Junqing took my sister to the Yin Corpse Sect.”

“Yin Corpse Sect?!” Ye Jiuge was taken aback, then pressed on, “When did the Bloodthirsty Patriarch and the Yin Corpse Sect join forces?”

“No idea.” Ye Yu tugged at his hair in torment, and his tired body slid down the wall he was leaning on.

He had prepared for this moment for a long time now, yet it had all been for nothing. If only he had come earlier to Bloodcloud Peak.

But there was no medicine for regrets.

Seeing him like that, Ye Jiuge did not have the heart to continue her questioning, so she turned to Luo Tian.

Luo Tian had been with Ye Yu all along, so he should be very aware of what had happened.

“Apparently, the Blood Lotus Flower was nurtured by the Bloodthirsty Patriarch for the Yin Corpse Sect. The Yin Corpse Sect’s female envoy, Si Youyue, brought a demonic corpse to help the Bloodthirsty Sect fend off the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance’s attack. Su Junqing seduced Si Youyue and beguiled his way into obtaining an entrance token for the Yin Corpse Sect. Then, he left with Ye Yu’s sister. We’ll have to verify this information by capturing and interrogating a few Bloodthirsty Sect disciples.” Luo Tian was careful and reserved in his report.

“The information is real,” Ye Yu uttered in torment.

“How are you so sure?” Luo Tian frowned. He felt that Ye Yu was too negative.

“I found a wooden carving on Shou Hou that was made by my sister. He must have been someone she trusted.” Ye Yu whipped out a lifelike wooden carving of a monkey from his waistband.

“How do you know that your sister carved it?” Ye Jiuge took the carving and inspected it carefully. There was nothing special about it.

“It was carved using a special method of the Ye family. You can try pressing it.” Ye Yu gestured for Ye Jiuge to press the bottom of the carving.

Ye Jiuge pressed it and saw a “Ye” character peeking out from the previously smooth, blank surface.

“What do you intend to do?” Ye Jiuge returned the wooden monkey to Ye Yu.

That question had Ye Yu at a loss.

Ever since Su Junqing had gifted his elder sister to the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, he had believed that he would be able to rescue her.

But now, Su Junqing had taken his elder sister to the Yin Corpse Sect.

They were a Black Magic sect infamous for controlling corpses. His sister’s life was most certainly in peril.

Even if she were still alive, he had no way of rescuing her.

Although it was widely known that the Yin Corpse Sect’s headquarters were located at the peak of Mozong Mountain, no righteous practitioner would dare to venture up the mountain.

It was the territory of the devilish sects, anathema to Spiritual Practitioners.

“We will speak of it again later. First, let’s think about how we will deal with the Bloodthirsty Patriarch and the Yin Corpse Sect’s envoy!” Luo Tian calmly assessed the situation. “If we can capture the envoy, perhaps we can exchange her for your elder sister.”

“You are right, Shou Hou mentioned that the envoy’s cultivation was only at the level of a Flawed Spiritual Master.” Ye Yu’s dull eyes relit with renewed vigor. That idea was so much better than infiltrating the Yin Corpse Sect.

“The Yin Corpse Sect’s envoy won’t be so easy to capture!” Ye Jiuge recalled the black shadow she’d seen in the formation’s core. That must have been the demonic corpse that Si Youyue had brought with her.

The demonic corpse’s speed had been alarming. Even Zi Shang had trouble capturing it, let alone

the rest of them!

“No matter how difficult, we must also capture her,” Jun Yichen said.

Whoever aided the Bloodthirsty Patriarch was his enemy. They all had to be killed.

Ye Jiuge was about to inform them about the frightening power of the demonic corpse when there was a noise outside the cave.

“Who is it?” Jun Yichen’s inner alarm was instantly triggered. He released his Legendary Venomous Insect.

“It’s Ye Zi.” Ye Jiuge could already smell Zi Shang’s fragrance.

Just as she finished speaking, Zi Shang appeared by her side, unharmed.

His clothes were neat and clean, and not a hair was out of place. He did not look like someone who had struggled in battle and had been beaten badly.

Ye Jiuge heaved a sigh of relief then asked, “Was that black shadow a demonic corpse?”

“Yes.” A dark look flittered across Zi Shang’s handsome face as he confirmed Ye Jiuge’s suspicion.

As part of the demonic tribe, seeing his distant cousin subdued and controlled by humans like a puppet made him very uncomfortable.

“Did you have a way to deal with it?” Ye Jiuge continued.

“The demonic corpse’s cultivation is around the level of a mid-rank Spiritual Master. It would take a lot of effort to kill it. It’s not worth it.” Of course, Zi Shang was able to kill it.

But if he did, his demonic powers would be depleted. Then if anything happened to Ye Jiuge, he would not be able to look after her.

Zi Shang would never put himself into such a situation.

In his eyes, the Blood Lotus Flower and treasure map were worthless compared to Ye Jiuge’s puny little life.

Ye Jiuge thought for a moment, then turned to Zi Shang. “What if you do not kill it, but bind it?”

“Acceptable.” Zi Shang nodded.

The demonic corpse might be ferocious and powerful, but it had no intelligence. With some tricks, binding it would be easy.

“Does Eldest Miss have an idea?” Ye Yu asked with anticipation.

“I do. But we do not have enough manpower. We will require the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance’s help.” Ye Jiuge nodded.

With the Yin Corpse Sect involved, no matter what, they had to inform Gong Xifan.

“But there are spies within the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance. Informing them means that the Bloodthirsty Patriarch will also be informed.” Luo Tian frowned in disagreement.

“Who are the spies?” Ye Yu asked as he secretly threw a glance at Zi Shang.

“Wang Haoqiang and Lin Yanxi,” Zi Shang offered coolly.

“So, it was them?!” Ye Yu exclaimed.

Wang Haoqiang, he could understand, because he looked like one.

But Lin Yanxi, the beauty from the Tianxiang Sect, was a spy! It was unbelievable. No one would believe it even if they told them.

“Could it be that they had spiritual weapons and donned other people’s skins? Just like Xiong Yunhu.” Ye Yu still felt wary at the thought of Xiong Yunhu.

“No. They simply infiltrated the Qiqiao Sect and Tianxiang Sect with their original appearance,” Zi Shang confirmed, shaking his head.

“Then how are you so sure that they are spies sent by the Bloodthirsty Sect?” Ye Yu asked uncertainly.

It was not that he doubted Zi Shang’s judgment. But he felt that being an inner disciple of a branch of a large sect was much better than being a sorcerer.

Furthermore, Lin Yanxi was a beauty with charisma and status.

“Of course, I investigated thoroughly. Wang Haoqiang has a fetish of playing with young girls, and Lin Yanxi relies on the Fragrant Blood Pill provided by the Bloodthirsty Sect to maintain her

appearance.” Ever since Zi Shang had caught wind of the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance’s ill-intentions regarding Ye Jiuge, he had conducted a thorough inquiry. As a result, he had also flushed out the two spies concealed deep within its ranks.

“I see.” Those fetishes were wicked indeed. Ye Yu was finally convinced.

“Jun Yichen, tonight, you will summon the three Legendary Venomous Insects from the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance for questioning.” Ye Jiuge took this piece of information seriously, and she immediately acted.

“Summoning all three at once is too suspicious,” Jun Yichen rejected this idea with a shake of his head. For questioning, just one would suffice.

“Alright. You play it by ear.” Ye Jiuge nodded and called for everyone to rest.

They’d all had a long night. If they did not rest and recoup, they would not be able to handle the upcoming battles.

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Night came quickly. It was a quiet night, starless and moonless, and the forest was pitch black. Jun Yichen sat on the ground cross-legged. A buzzing sound came from his abdomen, which constantly moved.

After a while, a pink thumb-sized shadow shot over like lightning and stopped in front of him. It was Baili Moyun’s Xiao Tao.

“Chirp, chirp, chirp!” Xiao Tao flew in a circle around Jun Yichen and Ye Jiuge then landed on Ye Jiuge’s shoulder.

Although Ye Jiuge's Queen Parasite had not yet hatched, the scent it emitted was very alluring for Legendary Venomous Insects.

Despite its cute appearance and feminine behavior, Xiao Tao was still a roaring male parasite.

"How have you been? Has Baili Moyun been treating you well?" Ye Jiuge stroked Xiao Tao's head.

"Chirp, chirp, chirp!" Xiao Tao replied cheerfully.

Baili Moyun treated it well. He had even specially purchased Spiritual Beast Pills for it at the market.

Jun Yichen rose and gave a psychic order to Xiao Tao, "Cut the crap. Now, tell us about the situation with the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance in detail."

"Chirp, chirp, chirp!" Xiao Tao suddenly burst out loudly.

It accused them of being unreasonable, trying to find out details about its master. It declared that it would not betray its master even if it died.

Ye Jiuge had never imagined that Xiao Tao would be so loyal. In that instant, she felt ashamed for using the innocent Legendary Venomous Insect to do something dishonest.

She was about to return Xiao Tao to Baili Moyun when Jun Yichen calmly took out a Cherry Pill. He looked at the Legendary Venomous Insect coldly. "A pill for a piece of information. Deal?"

Xiao Tao smacked its beak and hesitated, but it was unable to resist the temptation of the Cherry Pill. It flew over and snatched the pill away.

Once it had swallowed the pill, Xiao Tao's eyes immediately widened. It started chirping loudly.

"What did you want to know? Ask quickly. Hurry!"

Its change in attitude made Ye Jiuge, who had felt moved a moment ago, start sweating.

"When will the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance arrive? And how are they planning on dealing with the Bloodthirsty Sect?" Jun Yichen asked methodically.

Xiao Tao vomited up everything it knew.

The Spiritual Practitioner Alliance would reach the vicinity around noon the next day. The current plan was to send a few scouts to assess the situation at Bloodcloud Peak before commencing their attack.

Ye Jiuge also took the opportunity to ask about Wan Haoqiang and Lin Yanxi.

“Those two are very annoying.” Xiao Tao relished this chance to complain and diss the duo.

Wang Haoqiang was like a clown, creating trouble in front of its master. He’d even started challenging its master secretly and was very annoying.

Lin Yanxi wasn’t great either. She looked pretty and gentle, but whenever her hand touched Xiao Tao, she was always looking for ways to kill it. Thank goodness Xiao Tao was intelligent. Otherwise, it would not be able to escape death.

The green praying mantis that followed Gong Honglei was so pitiful. Its master was so thick-headed that he never noticed Lin Yanxi’s evil intentions. Many times, it had almost been killed.

Thanks to Xiao Tao’s advice to the green praying mantis, each time Lin Yanxi came by, it sprayed a green substance. Soon, Lin Yanxi became so disgusted that she stopped appearing.

The small eagle that followed Nangong Li was the best. Its master was an icicle who ignored everybody. Even if Lin Yanxi had bad intentions, she had no chance to strike.

“Did your Master realize that they were acting oddly?” Ye Jiuge asked.

Xiao Tao and Baili Moyun were bound together by a contract. In a way, they were able to feel each other’s emotions.

“Master cannot understand what I say. But after finding out that I hate that bad woman, he does not allow her to get close to me.” Xiao Tao was still delighted with its master.

“With Baili Moyun’s smarts, he should have realized something.” Ye Jiuge still had a good impression of the swordsman with the seductive eyes.

As soon as someone suspected something, she was confident about exposing Lin Yanxi and Wang Haoqiang as spies.

“Eldest Miss, we should just inform Gong Xifan directly. Why do we have to make things so complicated?” Ye Yu could not understand.

“Without concrete evidence, accusing them of being spies would only cause people to doubt what

we say. Especially since we are not on good terms with Wang Haoqiang. The people from the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance will think that we are trying to seek revenge.” Ye Jiuge shook her head.

Accusing them without concrete evidence would only put them on guard. By then, dealing with the two spies would be difficult.

“Then, what should we do now?” Ye Yu asked with worry.

“Naturally, we should meet up with Gong Xifan. No matter what, they are the main force against the Bloodthirsty Sect.” Ye Jiuge flashed a reserved smile that conveyed a thousand words.

Once Ye Yu saw her smile, he knew that someone was going to suffer.

He could not help but think that it was a good thing they were on the same side.

“You’ve done well, Xiao Tao. You can go back now!” Ye Jiuge gave the insect half a bottle of Cherry Pills. The creature was obviously in a good mood. Then, she released it.

The next morning, Ye Jiuge disguised herself with a disheveled look and went alone to meet up with Gong Xifan and the others.

“What happened to you guys?” Gong Xifan saw Ye Jiuge looking a sorry sight and was shocked.

“Do we even need to ask? Obviously, they were defeated and ran for their lives.” Yue Lingjun smiled, delighting at the thought of Ye Jiuge’s group’s defeat.

“Great Master Gong, let’s talk alone!” Ye Jiuge did not even spare Yue Lingjun a glance. She looked straight at Gong Xifan.

“Alright.” Gong Xifan nodded. He led Ye Jiuge to a cozy corner and asked, “Do you bring news of the Bloodthirsty Sect?”

“That’s right.” Ye Jiuge relayed the information about the Yin Corpse Sect.

“The Yin Corpse Sect?” Gong Xifan was stunned to hear the name of the infamous Devilish Sect.

Although the Gong clan was mighty, it still paled in comparison to the larger Devilish Sects.

No wonder the Bloodthirsty Patriarch was so audacious. He had the backing of a giant.

“You have no cause for concern, Great Master Gong. The Yin Corpse Sect has only sent over a

Flawed Spiritual Master female envoy and a demonic corpse. They still have not dared to declare war on the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance,” Ye Jiuge explained in detail and analyzed the situation for Gong Xifan.

Gong Xifan’s brow creased, and he asked silently, “Then what are your plans?”

“I have a simple idea. First, let Ye Zi keep the demonic corpse occupied. While the demonic corpse is distracted, we will cooperate to defeat the Bloodthirsty Patriarch and the Yin Corpse Sect’s female envoy, Si Youyue. Then, we will work together to kill the demonic corpse,” Ye Jiuge relayed her plans without much flourish.

“Are you sure that Ye Zi will be able to keep the demonic corpse under control?” Gong Xifan was on high alert ever since hearing that the demonic corpse was at the level of a Mid-leveled Spiritual Master.

“Of course,” Ye Jiuge laughed, then continued, “I fear death too.”

“Then where is he now? What about your companions?” Gong Xifan asked.

“My companions are near Bloodcloud Peak. Along with Ye Zi, they are waiting to meet up with us,” Ye Jiuge lied boldly to Gong Xifan with a straight face.

Ye Yu and Luo Tian were indeed near Bloodcloud Peak waiting to meet up with the group. However, Zi Shang was her trump card. She would not let him appear until the most crucial moment.

“The attack is a grave matter. You should let me think it through.” Gong Xifan’s face was dark and severe.

He had thought that the Bloodthirsty Patriarch was only at the level of a Low-leveled Spiritual Master. His disciples were disorderly and scattered. That was why he had dared to lead the team here to attack the Bloodthirsty Sect.

Now, with the addition of a Flawed Spiritual Master Si Youyue and a Mid-leveled Spiritual Master demonic corpse, he had to think twice about whether he would be able to complete the mission.

"You can gain a lot from taking risks. How else could there be free lunches in this world? If the Bloodthirsty Sect were that easy to deal with, Great Master Dongfang would not have offered the Master Solidifying Pill in exchange for their elimination. He would have just asked Emperor Xuanwu to send soldiers to eradicate the sect." Ye Jiuge tried to reason with Gong Xifan, but Gong Xifan was not swayed.

Ye Jiuge added, "The Yin Corpse Sect sent Si Youyue to collect the Blood Lotus Flower, which will bloom in five days. If you wish to obtain it, you should make your decision before then."

Her words hit home.

As Gong Xifan thought about the Blood Lotus Flower, he was reminded of his poor nephew, Gong Baiyu, who was still suffering. He nodded without hesitating. "Alright, we will go along with your plan."

"Great Master Gong is decisive, indeed! By the way, there is one other thing I have to inform you about. There are spies within the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance." Just like that, Ye Jiuge exposed Wang Haoqiang and Lin Yanxi.

"Lin Yanxi is also a spy? Do you have any evidence?" Gong Xifan frowned.

"No, but I am very certain," Ye Jiuge replied.

"No one will believe it." Gong Xifan shook his head. The male Spiritual Practitioners in their group thought very well of Lin Yanxi. Even if he were the group's leader, no one would believe him without evidence.

"I do not mean for you to expose them. You only have to be clear about it for yourself. When you find a suitable time, Baili Moyun and Nangong Li can be informed. Forget about Gong Honglei." Given Gong Honglei's straightforward but rash personality, telling him would mean exposing everything.

"Baili Moyun and Nangong Li are the core disciples of the main school of the Supreme Blade and Ziyun Sects. If anything happens to them, we will not be able to answer for it," Gong Xifan told her solemnly.

Although Gong Honglei was purported to be a core disciple of the Supreme Blade Sect, he belonged to the branch school, which did not compare with the main school.

“Those two have such impressive backgrounds. What are they still doing here?” Ye Jiuge raised her eyebrow. As the core disciples of the main school, obtaining a few Master Solidifying Pills should not be difficult!

“They left their Sects to experience the world. That’s why they joined us. Before I left, the Alliance Elder specifically instructed me to ensure their safety, no matter what.” Gong Xifan had not revealed their backgrounds because Baili Moyun and Nangong Li did not want too much attention.

“Judging by what you said, then, should we leave them out of the mission entirely?” Ye Jiuge frowned. They were the only ones out of the whole group worth anything!

“That will not be necessary. We will just exclude them from any dangerous tasks. That will be better for us all,” Gong Xifan said with deep undertones.

As soon as Ye Jiuge had mentioned informing those two about the spies, he knew at once that something was up.

“Alright!” Ye Jiuge sighed in resignation. As expected, she could only rely on herself!

“There isn’t much time left. We better hurry!” Gong Xifan looked at the group stationed in the distance.

If he wanted to obtain the Blood Lotus Flower, he had to defeat the Bloodthirsty Sect within five days.

They only had a short time to complete the difficult task ahead, and they could not afford to dally any longer.

“Fine.” Ye Jiuge nodded and followed Gong Xifan back to the group.

Yue Lingjun and Qiao Shaohua’s attitude was, of course, sarcastic. They were full of barbs when they saw Ye Jiuge.

“We will be facing the enemy soon. You better control your emotions. If anyone dares to spew any useless drabble again, don’t blame me for what happens next.”

Gong Xifan had been rather gentle and friendly all along. His sudden change in temper was quite scary.

With that, Yue Lingjun and the rest did not make a sound. They only glared fiercely at Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge, naturally, could not be bothered with them.

Suddenly, a familiar voice rang out. "Chirp, chirp, chirp!"

Xiao Tao flapped its wings happily and landed on Ye Jiuge's shoulder. It asked in anticipation, "Dearest, are you here to ask questions?"

The little insect was hooked on Cherry Pills.

Ye Jiuge pretended not to understand Xiao Tao as Baili Moyun approached. Stroking its head, she turned to Baili Moyun and said, "You've raised it well."

"Really? It's my first time keeping a pet, so I do not have much experience. Eldest Miss Ye's words make me feel relieved." Baili Moyun's eyes turned into crescents as he smiled, seductively blinding the people around him.

"Chirp, chirp, chirp!" Xiao Tao jumped up and down on Ye Jiuge's shoulder. Then it gestured in Gong Honglei's direction with its wings. "Dearest, take a look at Little Greenie, quick! It was injured by that bad woman last time and did not recover till today."

Ye Jiuge looked in Gong Honglei's direction. He was still busy setting up camp, so he wasn't able to come over.

"I'll go fetch Little Greenie." Xiao Tao beat its wings and quickly took flight.

A while later, the green praying mantis came over with Xiao Tao perched atop its body. The mixture of red and green was really glaring to the eyes.

When Ye Jiuge unclenched her fist, Xiao Tao threw the green praying mantis into her open palm.

"Buzz, buzz, buzz!" the green praying mantis moaned weakly. "Pain! So painful."

Ye Jiuge channeled her Spiritual Eye and saw a grain-sized black mist around the green praying mantis' stomach. It was quickly spreading outward.

Although Legendary Venomous Insects fed on poison, some toxins were their natural enemies. For example, the Antiparasitic Spirit that sucked energy that was often used by Spiritual Herbalists to kill insects. The Antiparasitic Spirit was very damaging to newly hatched Legendary Venomous Insects that had not yet evolved.

"Honglei mentioned that the green praying mantis has been listless lately. Unfortunately, there is no clinic along the way. Even if he wanted to seek out a veterinarian, there is no way of finding one," Baili Moyun shared as he saddled up next to Ye Jiuge.

“It was poisoned with Antiparasitic Spirit,” Ye Jiuge said and took out the Lightning Fire Needle. She pierced the black mist surrounding the green praying mantis.

Immediately, the mist dispersed.

The green praying mantis curled into a ball, quivering endlessly. But it did not utter a single word. It knew that Ye Jiuge was trying to save it.

“Chirp, chirp, chirp! Little Greenie, hold on!” Xiao Tao jumped up and down. Its normally sleek mane was messy from its nervousness.

“How was the green praying mantis poisoned by the Antiparasitic Spirit?” Baili Moyun frowned and asked.

The green praying mantis was always with Gong Honglei. It had never left his side, and it was impossible that Gong Honglei would poison it!

“That’s my question to you. Recently, who has come close to the Legendary Venomous Insects? And who might want them to die?” Ye Jiuge answered mysteriously, glancing at Lin Yanxi, who was standing in the distance.

“Chirp, chirp, chirp, chirp!” Xiao Tao jumped on top of Baili Moyun’s head. Tugging on his hair in anger, it screamed, “It’s that bad woman! I’ve said it so many times, and you never understand me! You are really a stupid Master!”

“Let go! Release your claws!” Baili Moyun’s scalp burned as Xiao Tao tugged on his hair. He hurriedly caught hold of Xiao Tao and scolded, “Are you trying to rebel?”

“Chirp, chirp, chirp, chirp!” Even when captured, Xiao Tao was adamantly stubborn and unyielding. “Stupid! Moron! Idiot!”

“Does Eldest Miss know what Xiao Tao is saying?” Baili Moyun looked helplessly at Ye Jiuge.

He could not scold or punish the rebellious Xiao Tao in front of Ye Jiuge. He did not have the heart for it anyway.

“I’m guessing that it is trying to tell you who the culprit is. If Brother Baili observes from the heart, you will be able to understand.” Ye Jiuge blinked and continued the task of countering the green praying mantis’s poison.

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A curious ray of light flitted past Baili Moyun's eyes.

As he patted Xiao Tao's head, he recalled how Xiao Tao had always ignored Lin Yanxi when she'd sought him out to tease Xiao Tao.

He thought, Lin Yanxi seems very interested in the Legendary Venomous Insects. She went to Honglei and A'li as well. Can it be that...

"Alright." Ye Jiuge withdrew her needle. She had finally removed the Antiparasitic Spirit from the green praying mantis.

Fortunately, it was not severely poisoned, and treatment had been timely.

"Sisi! Thank you!" The green praying mantis expressed its gratitude in a soft voice. Compared to the noisy Xiao Tao, it was much more civilized.

"Good boy!" Ye Jiuge patted the green praying mantis' head and gave it a Cherry Pill.

It swallowed the pill slowly and brushed lightly against Ye Jiuge's palm in humble gratitude.

"Chirp chirp chirp! Cherry Pill!" Xiao Tao began shrieking immediately when it saw the Cherry Pill.

It did not go so far as to steal the green praying mantis' food. Still, it began circling frantically around Baili Moyun while whining, "Delicious, delicious, delicious!"

"Stop it!" Baili Moyun had a headache from Xiao Tao's screams. He reached out to catch it, but it dodged his hands and assaulted its owner with an even more frantic cry. "I want to eat, to eat, to eat..."

“Eldest Miss, please save me!” Baili Moyun had no choice but to cover his ears.

At times, Xiao Tao was cute and angelic, but when it turned nasty, it was like the devil.

“Alright. Isn’t it just a Cherry Pill? You are so immature.” Ye Jiuge glared at Xiao Tao and took out another Cherry Pill.

Xiao Tao immediately flew over to her and hugged the pill. Then, it hid on Baili Moyun’s head and began to chew happily.

The world was finally peaceful!

Although Baili Moyun’s hair was a mess, he looked as though he had nothing else left to live for.

“What are you doing?” At that moment, Gong Honglei finally finished his work, and he walked over with Nangong Li.

“Eldest Miss is helping cure your Little Greenie.” As he spoke, Baili Moyun gave Ye Jiuge a meaningful look.

He did not say that the green praying mantis was poisoned because he worried that Gong Honglei would confront Lin Yanxi.

Ye Jiuge flashed a knowing smile. Then, she said to Gong Honglei, “Little Greenie is just not acclimatized yet. It is nothing severe.”

“That’s great.” Gong Honglei sighed in relief. He doted on his green praying mantis.

Changing the topic, Baili Moyun asked, “A’li, why don’t you seize the opportunity and ask Eldest Miss to check on your Xiao Ying?”

Hearing this, Nangong Li summoned Xiao Ying without a word.

Xiao Ying had black feathers and red eyes. It lifted its chin slightly, trying to imitate its owner’s pride.

However, although Nangong Li was indeed arrogant, Xiao Ying was merely ostentatious.

“It’s very healthy.” Ye Jiuge had already heard about Xiao Ying’s circumstances from Xiao Tao, so her inspection was quick. Finally, she gave Xiao Ying a Cherry Pill.

Facing the delicious food, the haughty and aloof eagle immediately lowered its noble head and quickly swallowed the Cherry Pill. Then, it lifted its chin and turned into an ostentatious eagle again.

“Eldest Miss, can you tell us where you purchased these pills?” Nangong Li asked.

It was easy to see that the unsmiling Nangong Li cared a lot about his Xiao Ying. Otherwise, he would not have taken the initiative to ask.

“I produced these pills myself. I call it the Cherry Pill. It has the effects of calming the mind and gathering Qi. It can nourish the meridians as well,” Ye Jiuge spoke highly of her Cherry Pills.

“Mind-calming and Qi-gathering?” Gong Honglei looked at the tiny red pill in doubt. He asked, “Can humans eat them?”

“Of course.” Ye Jiuge nodded. After all, humans had evolved from apes, so the pills worked on them too.

“I will try one.” Baili Moyun rushed to be the first to grab a pill. He threw it into his mouth and began chewing.

After he had finished eating, he expressed his surprise, “The taste is great! Although its mind-calming effect is a little weaker than that of specialized pills, it is worth buying. How will you price your pills?”

Baili Moyun thought, It would be great if I could buy some for my female juniors to taste.

“I will sell them at a discounted price. Two hundred silver taels for a bottle. There are sixty pills in one bottle,” Ye Jiuge said.

“Two hundred silver taels for sixty pills? That is so cheap!” Baili Moyun was in disbelief. After all, a Mind Soothing Pill cost more than five hundred silver taels.

“I said it was discounted.” Ye Jiuge hoped that Baili Moyun and the rest would treat Xiao Tao and the others well. As such, she did not expect to take their money.

“Give me a hundred bottles!” Baili Moyun cried out with heroic spirit.

“Give me a hundred bottles too!” Nangong Li followed.

“Me too!” Gong Honglei did not hesitate.

Ye Jiuge thought, They are conspicuous spenders!

Ye Jiuge was filled with emotions. Xiao Tao and the others had picked the right owners.

“I don’t have that many on me at the moment. I can only give each one of you ten bottles for now.” The thirty additional bottles had to be dug out from Zi Shang’s ration.

“We will give you the money first. You can pass us the pills when it is convenient for you!” Baili Moyun was ready to pay up on the spot.

However, he did not use silver taels. Instead, he paid with Spiritual Jades.

A Spiritual Jade was worth two hundred silver taels in the large Spiritual Cities, and it was mainly used for the cultivation of Spiritual Practitioners.

The currency unit above Spiritual Jade was Spiritual Pearl. A Spiritual Pearl was worth ten thousand gold pieces, and supplies were limited. Spiritual Jades were also sold in the Lei Kingdom. However, their price was higher—two hundred and fifty silver taels for one.

Ye Jiuge had no use for Spiritual Jade, so she had never purchased it. However, she knew that its value was stable and it was the common currency used by the larger Spiritual Cities.

In addition to paying with Spiritual Jades, Baili Moyun and the rest insisted on using the larger Spiritual Cities’ exchange rates. They expressed that they were unwilling to take advantage of Ye Jiuge.

Ye Jiuge knew that Baili Moyun and the others did not take what of them was an insignificant amount of silver taels to heart, so she did not decline.

After completing the deal, Ye Jiuge’s relationship with Baili Moyun and Nangong Li improved significantly. Even Gong Honglei followed closely behind her, suddenly eagerly attentive.

Yue Lingjun’s eyes turned red with jealousy. Viciously, she said, “What a vixen. How can she not be satisfied with that handsome guard, Ye Zi? She is such a sl*t. Always flirting and attracting the opposite sex.”

Lin Yanxi, who was beside Yue Lingjun, advised her gently, “Lingjun, you don’t have to split hairs over that country bumpkin. You will ruin our great sects’ reputation.”

“I will embarrass her sooner or later,” Yue Lingjun said nastily.

Lin Yanxi’s smile became even gentler, and her eyes turned toward Wang Haoqiang.

Wang Haoqiang happened to meet her gaze, and both understood each other's meaning.

Sow discord and attack using another's strength!

Lin Yanxi and Wang Haoqiang thought that their interactions were very discreet, but Gong Xifan had witnessed their every action.

However, he did not say anything. Instead, he continued to lead everyone forward in haste.

Everyone hastened throughout the journey, and they finally neared Bloodcloud Peak in the evening.

"Eldest Miss, didn't you say your men were nearby?" Gong Xifan asked. He felt an uneasiness in his heart when he did not see Ye Zi.

"That's right. I will call them here now." Ye Jiuge curled her fingers, placed them at her lips, and emitted three long whistles followed by two short ones.

Moments later, two dark shadows appeared mysteriously. Respectfully, they bowed toward Ye Jiuge and said, "Greetings to you, Eldest Miss."

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The two men who had appeared were Luo Tian and Ye Yu.

To show the snobbish disciples of the great sects what they could do, they had intentionally made a grand entrance. Indeed, they had shocked Qiao Shaohua and the others.

Qiao Shaohua was utterly unable to figure out when Luo Tian and Ye Yu had approached them. If it they had been enemies attacking, he would likely be dead already.

Thinking of this, his chest tightened, and he became more wary of Luo Tian and Ye Yu.

Yue Lingjun was also paying close attention to Luo Tian and Ye Yu. However, she was thinking about how Ye Jiuge's subordinates were all unique, handsome men. One was beautiful, and the other was dashing.

She thought, Is she so lucky with men just because she is good looking? I am unwilling to accept this!

"Ye Yu, Luo Tian, you have arrived," Gong Honglei greeted them.

Although he had not interacted much with them in the Medicine Refinery City, he recognized these men as Ye Jiuge's capable helpers.

"Young Master Gong," Ye Yu greeted.

Unaccustomed, Luo Tian merely nodded.

"Inform Great Master Gong about the state of Bloodcloud Peak!" Ye Jiuge got down to business immediately.

"Yes. There are now more sentries patrolling the peak. Furthermore, the protective formation has been activated. We are only left with the option to mount a strong attack if we are to reach inside before the Blood Lotus Flowers can be reaped," Ye Yu solemnly explained the situation.

"So what if we have to mount an attack? I want to witness the strength of the Bloodthirsty Sect's protective formation," Wang Haoqiang argued noisily.

The rest followed suit and began heckling. They did not take the Bloodthirsty Sect seriously at all.

Gong Xifan knew that Wang Haoqiang was trying to sow dissent, and he looked toward Ye Jiuge. When he saw that she was quiet, he said, "We will discuss the matter regarding the protective formation later. Everyone, let's set up camp and take a break. Honglei, take charge of this. Eldest Miss, Luo Tian, and Ye Yu, please follow me."

Having said so, he was about to bring Ye Jiuge, Luo Tian, and Ye Yu to the side. It was clear that they were going to have a secret discussion.

"Great Master Gong, how could you? Why can't you speak in front of us? You are acting so

mysterious. It's as though you work with Ye Jiuge instead of us." Yue Lingjun was resentful.

"That's right." Qiao Shaohua had complaints about this as well.

"Don't spout nonsense. My uncle is merely being cautious," Gong Honglei explained.

"Tsk. Why don't you look into the mirror? You should see your faces when you look at Eldest Miss Ye. Why should she share her inside information with you ingrates?" Baili Moyun said with contempt.

"Baili Moyun, don't talk as though you are not one of us," Yue Lingjun snarled.

"Who's part of you?" Baili Moyun rolled his eyes at Yue Lingjun. Then, holding Nangong Li's shoulders, he said, "I am on the same team as A'li."

Nangong Li emotionlessly shook off Baili Moyun's hand and went to help Gong Honglei set up camp.

"A'li, you are making me look bad." Baili Moyun's expression was aggrieved.

"Chirp, chirp, chirp! Master, losers should stand up and jerk off without crying!" Xiao Tao comforted him compassionately.

"Xiao Tao is still the best." Baili Moyun patted Xiao Tao's head.

If he had been able to understand Xiao Tao's vulgar words, he probably wouldn't be smiling.

"Moyun, don't play with your bird anymore. Come over quickly and help," Gong Honglei called to him.

"I am coming." Baili Moyun walked over.

Gong Xifan and Ye Jiuge stood on the hill. They could clearly see that the rivers Jing and Wei were dividing the members of the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance.

On one side, stood Nangong Li and Baili Moyun. On the other hand, were Yue Lingjun, Qiao Shaohua, Wang Haoqiang, Lin Yanxi, and the rest.

Gong Honglei, as Gong Xifan's nephew, could be narrowly considered a centrist.

"It will be difficult to mount an attack on the Bloodthirsty Sect with this mob!" Ye Jiuge said unkindly.

As her understanding of these great sect disciples deepened, Ye Jiuge felt even more disdain for them. If she were to describe them in one sentence, it would be that they had egos more massive than the heavens and were always aiming for the sky, even though they had no abilities at all.

“They have been spoiled in the Lei Kingdom,” Gong Xifan said helplessly.

These people were indeed God’s favored in the Lei Kingdom, and it was natural for them to be cocky since they had yet to see the world.

The great sect’s Core Disciples would never be so shallow.

Gong Xifan had once been fortunate enough to see a Core Disciple from the Supreme Blade Sect out on a mission. His spirit was indeed incomparable, and it had been terrifying to see his blade pierce the skies.

However, it was useless to speak of it. The Core Disciples would never appear in an insignificant place like the Lei Kingdom. No matter how useless these individuals were, he could only put up with them and utilize them.

“Then let them taste the power of the protective formation. Conveniently, we can see what the two spies have up their sleeves,” Ye Jiuge recommended.

“Sure.” Gong Xifan nodded. It was about time to let these little guys with such exaggerated opinions of their abilities see the world.

Gong Xifan carefully asked Ye Yu and Luo Tian for the information about the protective formation. Then he began to plan and prepare.

Yue Lingjun and the rest did not know the secret behind it. When they heard that they would be attacking the Bloodthirsty Sect’s protective formation that night, they were all excitedly imagining how they would display their prowess impressively and break through the protective formation to get rid of the Bloodthirsty Patriarch.

Sitting on the hill and watching the mob talk idly about such an important matter, Ye Jiuge felt exhausted.

“If you don’t like them, then why don’t you just kick them aside?” Zi Shang suddenly appeared beside Ye Jiuge and sat down. Conveniently, he draped his arm around her shoulders.

“Didn’t you promise to keep a low profile?” Ye Jiuge moved her shoulders and shook off Zi Shang’s arm.

Zi Shang winked and reminded her kindly, "I just want to remind you. There are only five days left before it's time for our Dual Cultivation."

"Wait until the battle is over." Ye Jiuge was in no mood to think about the Dual Cultivation!

"Roger that!" Zi Shang gave Ye Jiuge a kiss and disappeared again.

Meanwhile, on Bloodcloud Peak, Si Youyue sat idly on a large chair. Absent-mindedly, she asked the Bloodthirsty Patriarch, "The team from the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance is arriving. How do you plan on dealing with them?"

"Naturally, I will obey Elder Qiu Sen's orders and eliminate all of them with a single stroke. When that moment comes, Lord Envoy, I will need your help," said the Bloodthirsty Patriarch respectfully.

"Patriarch, don't worry. I will definitely help." Si Youyue gave a slight smile and said, "Leave the expert named Ye Zi to me. I will leave the small fry from the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance to you!"

When the Bloodthirsty Patriarch heard this, his expression turned unpleasant immediately. This was not what he had been thinking.

The Demonic Corpse was sufficient for dealing with Ye Zi. He wanted Si Youyue to handle the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance with him. However, it seemed that she did not wish to act at all.

"Patriarch, are you unhappy with the arrangement?" Si Youyue raised her long, thin eyebrows. With a smile, she said, "Then, let's make an exchange. You can deal with Ye Zi while I deal with the Spiritual Practitioner Alliance."

"Lord Envoy, you must be joking. How can I possibly deal with Ye Zi? Only you can take him on," the Bloodthirsty Patriarch immediately fawned.

If the Demonic Corpse with the cultivation of an Intermediate Spiritual Master was unable to keep Ye Zi from leaving, then it would be impossible for him to do so.

Furthermore, if they could kill such a powerful Spiritual Practitioner, his remains would be superior grade raw materials for making a new Demonic Corpse.

If so, this Demonic Corpse could definitely be presented to Elder Qiu Sen, so there was no point for him to be proactive. It would be better for him to earnestly defend his Bloodcloud Peak!

