

My Crown 251

Chapter 251: An Unnecessary Existence

By the time Qiao Mu woke up, the sun hung high in the sky.

As she knelt on the bed while hugging her thin blanket, her expression was a bit dazed.

She actually slept very well last night, but her heart felt rather unsettled for some reason.

In her vague dream, she seemed to have seen the crown prince departing on the back of a dragon. The youth's cool back figure turned into a red dot and grew more intense the farther he got before he turned into a blazing ball of flames that could incinerate thousands of layers of icebergs and thousands of miles of snowy peaks...

He left. Duan Yue also ran off. Master, Eldest Senior Sister, everyone all left. It was as though the air around her turned silent in that instant, and she was the only one left in the world again.

A faint trace of loneliness lingered in her heart, unable to be brushed off for a long while.

It was like a long time ago, she was also abandoned by someone important once.

"Master, good morning! Master is beautiful like a flower today! Pretty, pretty, really pretty!" The silence was utterly shattered by a certain golem's boisterous voice.

"Sister!" Qiao Lin slammed opened the door with a bang with her round body and sent a large grin to her sister.

Qiao Mu hopped down from the bed, the gloominess in her heart swept away. She took her sister's hand and said with a smile, "Let's wash up."

"Master... Master, wait for me!" The little golem bounced after the sisters.

Xiao Lin'er curiously glanced back. "Ah, Sister, that little puppet knows how to talk!"

"That's right. His name is Big Treasure. Not only can he talk, but he can also do many things." Qiao Mu half carried her chubby sister across the high door sill and walked to the ground floor of the building.

After pushing open the door, a ray of sunlight shone in from outside, the warmth causing her eyes to involuntarily squint.

Qiao Mu's footsteps paused and she dug out the messenger jade tablet universally used by the Hidden Pavilion and Night Pavilion.

A row of characters swiftly appeared on the surface. [Dear Miss, Guard Nian of King of An'nan's Estate arrived at Guanlan City and is currently rushing toward the King's Estate.]

Qiao Mu took out her talisman pen and wrote her reply back on the messenger tablet: [Keep watching them. Quickly report as soon as the guard meets that something-something commandery princess.]

"Sister, what are you writing?" Xiao Lin'er blinked with curiosity.

“Sister’s writing how to punish an evil person.” A cold smile spread across Qiao Mu’s lips. A swipe of her hand and the strand of Nian Kui’s soul was in her grasp.

‘Hui’an of the Vassal King of An’nan’s Estate, is it? Did you think it was over that easily?’

‘We’ve never met but you had the nerve to harm me. It’s unnecessary for a person like you to exist then, no...?’

—Darling Qiao Mu’s section break—

“Cha cha cha cha!!!” The hurtling horse rapidly dashed through the main road of Guanlan City, causing all the pedestrians to quickly dodge in fright and yield a path.

The people who lived in the royal capital had long since learned the servant uniforms of all the high officials and patrician families who resided here.

When they saw that it was a guard of the Vassal King of An’nan’s Estate who was rapidly galloping past them, they did not dare to say anything and obediently dodged to the side.

The people of the Vassal King of An’nan’s Estate were used to being arrogant and running rampant inside Guanlan City. No one dared to offend them, or else they would not end well.

Nian Kui’s face was dark and his hands were tightly clutching the horse’s reins as he dashed back to the Vassal King’s Estate.

When the horse arrived in front of the estate, Nian Kui leaped down from the horse and threw the reins to the door boy.

He had to immediately report to the commandery princess that His Highness the Crown Prince had left the royal capital overnight and had an illicit meeting with that lowly commoner girl. He even extracted a strand of his soul because of that girl.

Extremely abominable! He had to request the commandery princess to act on his behalf and ask for that strand of his soul back!

Chapter 252: Exploded

When Nian Kui was led inside the room, Commandery Princess Hui’an was trying on two new pieces of jewelry in front of the mirror.

The commandery princess did not look up when she heard his footsteps. She nonchalantly asked, “Did you complete the matter? How did the little wench react after consuming the medicine I bestowed on her?”

Nian Kui’s expression was rather foul looking. He knelt down on one knee and said, “Commandery Princess, this subordinate was unsuccessful.”

Commandery Princess Hui’an was taken back and heavily slapped the dressing table. She angrily glared at the kneeling Nian Kui through the mirror. “You’re saying you failed?!”

Nian Kui was a layer-seven body cultivator, so how could he have failed on his mission to handle a commoner in a tiny town?

Hui'an could not accept this kind of failure. She coldly and angrily stared at Nian Kui and asked, "What happened?"

Nian Kui did not dare to look up and organized his words before speedily reporting the events.

Hui'an's face switched between red and white. She mulled over the matter for a long time before asking with a dark expression, "You're saying that Brother Crown Prince likes a seven-or-eight-year-old brat?"

Nian Kui bobbed his head a few times. "That's right. His Highness the Crown Prince secretly left the capital for this girl. I reckon Commandery Princess already knows about this."

"You ran into Brother Crown Prince in Xijiu City." Hui'an's sweet face was so dark that ink could drip from it.

"Yes!"

"Great! Wonderful," Hui'an uttered between gritted teeth, the jade bracelet threaded with gold that she was holding was instantly snapped broken.

Brother Crown Prince treated her like nothing and never gave her an amiable look. She looked at how he treated people normally and how he always kept a thousand miles between himself and other people, so she thought he treated every girl like he treated her.

Cold, noble, indifferent, and indecipherable, as though he was a clear stream in the depths of the mountain. He was haughtier than anyone in the world and did not allow any girl to approach him.

However, she never expected this kind of person to do something so inappropriate—abandoning the kingdom's official affairs and leaving the capital overnight. He disappeared for so many days simply to see a commoner girl from a tiny city.

This was utterly incomprehensible! It was also utterly unacceptable and disagreeable!

Brother Crown Prince's actions pierced a delicate girl's glass-like heart.

Hui'an fiercely slapped down the broken jade bracelet and ordered with clenched teeth, "Nian Kui, I want you to take another group of people to Xijiu City. This time, I want you to kill this impetuous and arrogant slut mercilessly! Does a slut like her think she can soar into the heavens and turn into a phoenix one day? I absolutely won't allow her to get her wish!"

"Commandery Princess! This subordinate got a strand of his soul extracted by the crown prince and handed to that girl, so this subordinate is afraid he can't accomplish this task. This subordinate hopes Commandery Princess will first plead for mercy with the crown prince on this subordinate's behalf and request that strand of soul back..."

Hui'an's eyes abruptly shot open. From the mirror, she could see the jabbering guard's figure suddenly start to swell up like a balloon.

'No!!!'

Commandery Princess Hui'an absolutely could not imagine the immensity of the damage brought by the self-detonation of a layer-seven body cultivator at such close proximity!

Her legs made to escape.

However, Nian Kui's body exploded all of a sudden!

The enormous sound radiated out of the Vassal King of An'nan's Estate and shocked half of the capital.

Whether it was the peddlers standing at their stalls or the people chattering with their neighbors or the pedestrians hastily walking on the streets, they all froze and turned to look at the direction of the Vassal King of An'nan's Estate in shock.

The ground continuously trembled from the detonation that originated from the commandery princess' bedroom in the Vassal King of An'nan's Estate. The terrifying explosion damaged at least half of the commandery princess' room, as well as snapping a countless number of trees and plants in the rear garden.

Chapter 253: Fortification

In the western study of the Eastern Palace:

An oppressive atmosphere circulated around the officials.

The officials looked at His Highness the Crown Prince, who sat behind the desk and had his head lowered as he read through the memorials, and then at each other. They were all unwilling to be the first one to speak.

"I heard everyone has been quite lively recently! Quite a number of memorials berating this crown prince were sent to the Queen Dowager!" The crown prince swept his eyes over the people before him while flipping through the memorials.

The Marquis of Stability, Zhao Sheng, stood outside of the crowd with his head haughtily facing the sky, his face taut and his mouth silent.

Without any surprise, the people standing behind the Marquis of Stability were from the crown prince's party led by the marquis, and they were all aiming murderous looks at their fellow officials.

Humph! Who told you to be cocky and jump around?!

The Marquis of Jiajing, Xu Pingyong, stood to the side of Zhao Sheng and subconsciously used his sleeves to wipe the sweat on his forehead.

"Censor Zhao, Censor Huang, We heard you two sent 18 impeachment memorials to the Queen Dowager in the last few days! The censors who consider you their leader have truly worked hard and done well." The crown prince tossed his pen onto the desk and coldly asked, "How should We thank you?"

"Please calm down, Your Highness." The officials knelt down in salutation, trembling with fear.

Censor Zhao was nearly 70 years old, the hair on his temples gray. When he knelt in front of the desk and saluted, his back was straight and his head was high. "Your Highness the Crown Prince abandoned a pile of state affairs and left the capital for so many days without a word. This old official did initiate a petition and rally many censors to remonstrate Your Highness. If Your Highness wants to blame someone, this old official is willing to shoulder all of the responsibility and accept any punishment.

Even if Your Highness wants this old official to immediately retire from his position and leave the capital, this old official must say that Your Highness' actions were truly improper! The king went to Mt. Hong to pray for the people and entrusted the state affairs to Your Highness, so how can Your Highness do as you please and ignore the state affairs?"

The crown prince stared at the old man for a moment before snorting.

The elderly officials who were friendly with Censor Zhao all fretted for him.

This crown prince might appear gentle and kind on the surface, but he handled matters very recalcitrantly in reality. There was a high possibility that he would secretly deal with the elderly Censor Zhao.

His Highness even dared to punish the king's favored consort, let alone an old geezer.

"Let them take a look." To their surprise, the crown prince did not grow angry and coldly uttered these words instead.

Xiao'xi'zi immediately went forward and distributed a sheet of paper that resembled an inventory, as well as an architectural plan.

The officials passed it around after reading it, astonishment promptly surfacing on every official's face.

"It turned out His Highness received news that a large quantity of supplies would appear in Qinghe Town, so His Highness immediately led people there!"

"The soldiers from the South Battalion sent by His Highness the Crown Prince will escort the supply of food back the day after tomorrow." Everyone had joy but also bewilderedness on their faces. After they meticulously examined the plan, increasing guilt crept onto their faces.

"We saw the fortification plan of Xijiu City and plan to use this as the basis to construct the fortification of all the major cities, using the royal capital as the center and expanding outwards. This process will take several years, but it will definitely be advantageous to both the people and the country once it's constructed..." When the crown prince finished speaking, everyone circled around the architectural plan, scrambling to see it.

A moment later, all the officials knelt down to beg for pardon in panic, and the elderly officials who remonstrated the crown prince a countless number of times were especially guilty.

It turned out the crown prince left the capital for official business. Without any words, he had transported the grains back to the capital and inspected the defensive structure of Xijiu City. He even had a plan for the Mo Kingdom's defense in the following years.

"These officials are ashamed."

The crown prince raised his eyebrows and coldly surveyed the officials. "Stand up. We hope that you will carefully think before you do anything in the future. Don't be hot-headed and act rashly, allowing people to use you in vain."

"This official was muddle-headed..." Censor Zhao wanted to kneel down and beg for pardon again, but the crown prince waved his hand at the censor.

Censor Zhao was about to say something with a guilt-ridden expression when a loud explosion abruptly reverberated throughout Guanlan City.

The corner of Mo Lian's lips minutely turned up.

Chapter 254: Something Terrible Happened

"Your Highness, Your Highness!" The manager steward eunuch, Gong Changan, scampered into the room in a panic. "Something terrible happened! Someone self-detonated inside the Vassal King of An'nan's Estate and attacked Commandery Princess Hui'an. They say she was harmed quite severely, and Vassal King of An'nan has sent people into the palace to request several royal physicians to go and save the commandery princess."

The crown prince had an indifferent expression and merely nodded slightly when he heard this. He waved his hand to excuse the manager eunuch.

The officials glanced at each other but did not say anything.

"He Qizheng, We will entrust you with the full responsibility of constructing the fortification." The crown prince looked at the dark-toned man around 50 years old. He was the right assistant minister of the Ministry of Works and the father of He Tian, He Qizheng.

He Qizheng cupped his hands in acceptance of the order, his square face brimming with overwhelming righteousness.

Everyone secretly looked back at the constipated face of the Minister of Works and silently gulped.

The crown prince surpassed the minister and directly handed the task to the right assistant minister, He Qizheng. His attitude could not be any clearer.

As people said, don't go too far with anything you do, especially since their crown prince was not someone to be trifled with to begin with. The crown prince had a disagreeable personality and was extremely blunt. The connections and contacts within his control were perhaps more than they expected too.

The Marquis of Jiajing, Xu Pingyong, who typically liked to paper over matters, wiped the cold sweat on his forehead when he heard the crown prince's orders.

He had a feeling that the Minister of Works and the Left Assistant Minister of Works were about to be met with misfortune after being such pests...

Soon, the officials all bade farewell. The crown prince slightly looked up from his motion of flipping through the memorials at the swiftly entering Huifeng.

“How is it.”

“Reporting to Your Highness,” Huifeng said as he cupped his hands. He quickly said, “Commandery Princess Hui’an was sitting in front of the dressing table at that time. After Nian Kui self-detonated in close proximity, Commandery Princess Hui’an was injured by the shattered pieces of the mirror. Her face is unrecognizable, and her left eye lost its sight.”

“She didn’t die?” The Crown Prince sounded surprised.

His little one was cruel and merciless, after all. She intentionally allowed Nian Kui to return to Hui’an’s side before squeezing his soul without any hesitation and causing him to self-detonate.

It was inevitable for Hui’an to taste her own bitter consequences.

However, the crown prince did not expect such a close and large self-detonation to not kill Hui’an.

“At the last minute, the commandery princess used a level-four defensive mystic weapon,” Huifeng answered. “Although she couldn’t completely guard against Nian Kui’s self-detonation, she managed to save her life.”

Of course, that level-four defensive mystic weapon was now utterly damaged beyond repair and could not be used again.

“What did Vassal King of An’nan say?” The crown prince took a cup of warm tea and loosely held it in his hand, a stark contrast to his incomparably sharp eyes.

“The Vassal King of An’nan just sent several hidden guards out of the capital.”

“Take care of them,” the crown prince nonchalantly said. “If the Vassal King of An’nan is smart, he should know what he should and shouldn’t investigate.”

The crown prince’s tone was so clearly detached, but Huifeng’s heart inexplicably clenched.

If the Vassal King of An’nan dared to infuriate His Highness the Crown Prince, it would be an absolutely idiotic move.

“Your Highness, how should we handle the Minister of Works and the Left Assistant Minister instigating the censors to stir up trouble?”

“It appears he’s rather unsuitable for the position of minister, how about he resign his position to someone more suitable?” The crown prince looked cold and indifferent. “Last time, the youngest brother of the Minister of Works obtained a lucrative position from the king. Their entire Huang Family gained quite a lot of benefits from repairing the canal in Meilong City...”

Huifeng understood immediately. “This subordinate will order the members of the Night Pavilion to organize the information we previously gathered and hand it to... those censors.”

The crown prince’s eyes glinted and his lips pursed into a straight line, mirth flickering through his face.

Chapter 255: Eldest Brother, Seek Justice for Me

The next day, a copy of the evidence and details of the Minister of Works' youngest brother taking advantage of his position and embezzling funds were handed to each of the censors.

The censors led by Censor Zhao all bristled in anger and sent a flurry of remonstrations to the crown prince.

The Minister of Works was caught unprepared by this matter and was buried head deep in his own troubles, so he naturally did not have any more energy to stir trouble with the crown prince.

On the other hand, the crown prince was sitting in the study and silently listening to Huifeng's report.

"Vassal King of An'nan personally led the group to escort the commandery princess out of the city today, claiming that they were going to find the Ghost Doctor of the Ghost Sect and try their best to save the commandery princess' face," Huifeng calmly said. "However, the royal physicians said that the commandery princess' eye can't be repaired even if they saved her appearance."

The crown prince nodded, uninterested in hearing more about Hui'an's matter.

"The hidden guards of the Vassal King of An'nan's Estate who were sent to investigate the cause behind Nian Kui's self-detonation were all dealt with by the Hidden Pavilion, so the Vassal King of An'nan probably understood Your Highness' intent since he didn't send any more scouts later."

The crown prince snorted. "Tactful of him."

If they dared to hold any motives toward his little one again, he did not mind giving the king's sworn brother a lift to his demise.

"Your Highness, the food transported by the soldiers of the South Battalion arrived this morning."

"Very good. Have Song Yuan of the Ministry of Revenue settle this batch of supplies." The crown prince stood up and walked outside as he coldly asked, "How is the king doing at Mt. Hong recently?"

Huifeng lowered his head as his lips twitched. "The king isn't doing that well! It would be strange if the king could have a delightful time when Your Highness is causing trouble for the king in every way possible!"

"Twelfth Prince! Twelfth Prince, be careful! His Highness the Crown Prince is discussing politics in the southern study! Your Highness can't charge in so rashly!" The wet nurse's anxious voice could be heard from far away.

"Eldest Brother, Eldest Brother!" A tiny, round, purple-and-red figure strenuously stepped over the high door sill of the study and rolled to his brother's feet in a tumble. He hugged his brother's thigh and started wailing, "Eldest Brother, Eldest Brother! Grand Tutor Li hit my study companion, Song Xiaotie! Eldest Brother, you must seek justice for me! Hit him for me! Hit him!"

Huifeng: "..."

The crown prince speechlessly looked at his young brother who was bawling at his feet before looking up at the pale-faced, middle-aged man in cyan robes who bowed in greeting.

"This official greets Your Highness the Crown Prince."

“Please rise, Grand Tutor.” The crown prince pressed his temples, feeling a headache rising. He picked up a certain brat, who was tightly hugging his thigh and unwilling to release him, and propped the brat on his leg. He exasperatedly looked at the poised and gentlemanly grand tutor in his cyan robes. “Grand Tutor, what happened?”

Without waiting for Grand Tutor Li to answer, the five-year-old brat, Mo Yu, took the initiative to cry thief and tattled, “Eldest Brother, it’s him! He hit my study companion, Song Xiaotie! He’s unreasonable! I don’t want to study! No more studying!”

Huifeng: ‘...His Young Highness is challenging his brother’s patience!’

“Grand Tutor Li is the most knowledgeable person in the Royal College and even taught me, your brother!” The crown prince brusquely lifted the child and was both annoyed and amused as he looked at the child whose face was flushed from crying. “What did you do that caused Sir Grand Tutor to punish you and dragged down the Minister of Revenue’s third son?”

“Your Highness the Crown Prince, it’s Xiaotie’s fault. Xiaotie wanted to have fun and led His Twelfth Highness to skip our lessons...” the seven-year-old Song Xiaotie guiltily cast his head down.

Mo Yu immediately jumped up and swayed his head with a hand clutching it. “Eldest Brother, Yu’er’s head really hurts from studying every day! Can Yu’er not study anymore?”

The crown prince gently smiled at Mo Yu. “Today, your head won’t be the only thing hurting, your hand and bum will hurt even more! Bring me a ferule!”

Xiao’xi’zi covered his mouth. “...”

Chapter 256: Fake Eldest Brother

Mo Yu’s hands were flogged twice as punishment by His Highness the Crown Prince, and the child had cried for a whole 15 minutes since then.

When Mo Yu saw that no one paid attention to him, he tactfully stopped his bawling and used his tiny handkerchief to wipe his tears while sniffing and sneaking covert glances at his eldest brother, who was sitting behind the desk and evaluating the memorials.

“Give His Twelfth Highness some water to moisten his throat,” the crown prince coolly ordered as he laid down his pen.

Mo Yu felt his reddened hands sting as he held the cup, and his tears started dropping down in a tumble again.

When Eldest Brother got angry, he did not even look at his younger brother. So scary...

Mo Yu moved his bottom and eagerly sprinted to the crown prince’s side, hugging his thighs and seeking pets. Mo Yu pitifully avowed, “Eldest Brother, Eldest Brother, I was wrong. I will study well from now on! I also won’t drag Xiaotie out to play and contradict the Grand Tutor anymore. I’ll be obedient and won’t cause trouble or mess around! I’ll be a good child! Don’t be angry anymore, Eldest Brother.”

The crown prince glanced back at him and lifted him onto the desk. He seriously looked at Mo Yu and said, "Yu'er, you have to remember, the responsibilities shouldered by Eldest Brother will eventually be passed on to you. You will also need to take care of Mother from now on and be a responsible man."

He deliberated for a moment before lightly saying, "Eldest Brother... will eventually have to leave."

The brat, Mo Yu, hugged his brother's arm while noisily protesting, "No! Yu'er won't allow Eldest Brother to leave! Where is Eldest Brother going? Bring Yu'er with you, Royal Mother too! Let's leave together!"

It was impossible to communicate with a brat!

The crown prince flicked the brat's forehead. "Eldest Brother will assess your homework in two days. If it's still in complete shambles, just wait! You shamed your eldest brother in front of Grand Tutor, so Eldest Brother will also shame you even more!" This brat...

Mo Yu's round face wrinkled together into a ball. He intended to fake a few more sobs when his sight landed on a certain corner of the desk and his voice broke off.

The child crawled forward on the desk, his hand reaching for a fresh and red peach sitting on the corner of the desk. "Eldest Brother, is this for Yu'er to eat?"

"It's not." Crown Prince Mo mercilessly took the peach from Mo Yu's hand. His face unperturbed, utterly lacking the realization that he was bullying a child.

Mo Yu's eyes turned round as he turned to look at his brother in disbelief!

Usually, Eldest Brother would give anything delicious and fun to him! Eldest Brother would give it to him as long as he asked Eldest Brother! Why wasn't Eldest Brother giving him the peach today? This must be a fake Eldest Brother!

"Eldest Brother, I want to eat the peach!" Mo Yu persisted and fought for his benefits!

"I don't have any." The crown prince stood up and locked that seemingly delicious, pink and juicy peach into a jade box.

Mo Yu's eyes turned even rounder!

Eldest Brother was so stingy that he locked the peach inside a jade box and did not even allow him a second look?!

'Eldest Brother doesn't like Yu'er anymore.' This shocking piece of news reverberated inside the young Mo Yu's mind.

The child instantly felt like there was nothing to live for anymore and plopped onto the desk, laying spread eagle.

When Mo Lian turned around and saw the little fellow's position, he almost laughed out loud.

He walked over and shifted his brother to the side. "Don't disturb Eldest Brother from taking care of state affairs."

“Why can’t Yu’er eat Eldest Brother’s peach?” the brat stubbornly asked.

Chapter 257: Who’s Darling Qiao?

Crown Prince Mo completely ignored his brother’s spread-eagle position and lightly chuckled as he skimmed the memorial in his hand. “Because... it was given to your Eldest Brother by Darling Qiao.”

Mo Yu rolled up from the desk and blinked, insisting on getting to the bottom of the matter. “Who’s Darling Qiao?”

“A little girl two years older than you.” Crown Prince Mo did not look up.

“Then what about her studies? Has she read more books than me?” Brother Mo Yu curiously pursued while sitting on the crown prince’s desk.

The crown prince looked up and glanced at him with a smile. “She studies. She isn’t chased with a ferule by her teacher every day like you.”

Mo Yu was defiant. “The Grand Tutor also praises that I am academically talented! I would be more awesome if I worked harder normally!”

“Heh, is that so?” The crown prince looked sardonic.

“Of course!” Mo Yu climbed up and stood on top of the crown prince’s desk. He propped his hands on his hips and faced his brother. “Eldest Brother, if Darling Qiao doesn’t study well, will you also hit her?”

Huifeng felt like these two brothers’ conversation was too hilarious...

“I won’t.” The crown prince placed down a memorial and picked up another one to read it, overlooking his brother’s dumbstruck expression.

Mo Yu indignantly asked, “Why?”

‘Eldest Brother, isn’t your treatment too biased?!’ Mo Yu was unwilling to accept this!

“You’re a boy, she’s a girl. You can endure a beating, she can’t be beaten.” The crown prince looked aloof.

“Pft...” Xiao’xi’zi could not hold it back and secretly peered at the round-eyed and shocked little prince, Mo Yu.

“Eldest Brother, you’re playing favorites!” Mo Yu was enraged. He tilted his head and pondered over it before suddenly asking, “Eldest Brother, is Darling Qiao my eldest sister-in-law?”

If she was not his eldest sister-in-law, Mo Yu could not figure out why Eldest Brother treated her so well. She would not be beaten even if she did not study well? It was unlike him, who would not only be criticized by Sir Grand Tutor but would also be beaten by Eldest Brother. He felt like he was adopted!

Crown Prince Mo paused in his motion of flipping through the memorial and looked up at the dejected Mo Yu. He was unable to restrain a smile. “Yu’er, you’ve turned smart.”

Mo Yu unexpectedly realized that Eldest Brother looked like a meteor shower was raining inside of his eyes when he said this and he looked quite happy.

Mo Yu quickly jumped into his brother's arms. "Eldest Brother, when can I meet Eldest Sister-in-Law? Does Eldest Sister-in-Law have more peaches? Will she allow me to eat one?"

When Huifeng heard this as he was about to depart, he nearly tripped and finally left, both amused and exasperated.

"You'll meet..." the crown prince lightly murmured, his voice gentle like water.

—The Crown Prince and his family's section break—

Darling Qiao Mu spent these past two months fairly comfortably.

There were not any miscellaneous people disturbing her. She could keep her family company during the day and enter secluded cultivation during the night. She even requested City Lord Gu to help her purchase blank talisman papers from the whole city.

Through that, she managed to purchase more than 500 blank talisman papers in exchange for 50 pounds of husked rice, causing the two owners of the talisman shops to be overjoyed.

When it was the middle of September, Mother gave birth a few days earlier than in her previous life.

The birthing process was smoother than Qiao Mu expected. In this life, Mother's body was nursed very well and stepped into the ranks of mystic cultivators a while ago. Although she was merely a level-two mystic cultivator right now, her constitution was still much better than a normal person's.

Moreover, the Qiao Family made preparations ahead of time and brought the midwife to live inside the Qiao residence some time ago so that she could be ready to deliver the newborn at any time.

Hence, not a single accident occurred.

When the midwife carried her younger brother outside with a wide grin and announced the good news, Qiao Mu's gentle gaze landed on her brother's swaddle.

'Xiao Sen, we meet again.'

Chapter 258: Aura-Repressing Talisman

In these two months, Qiao Mu's cultivation stayed at the realm of an initial success level-four mystic cultivator and did not have any major breakthroughs.

Entry, progress, initial success, phenomenal success, peak—these were the common division ranks amongst mystic cultivators.

These little steps in one's cultivation did not hold apparent differences for mystic cultivators under level seven. However, for the mystic cultivators further advanced in their cultivation, like level eight, level nine, and even level ten, there was a heaven-and-earth difference in cultivators' strength at different ranks, even if they had tiny rank differences like entry and progress.

Since her cultivation did not rise, Qiao Mu focused on drawing talismans the past few days.

She used about 200-300 of the blank talisman papers that City Lord Gu gathered for her for supportive-type talismans.

Today, she planned to draw a few of the newly learned aura-repressing talisman.

Beginner-level talisman—aura-repressing talisman: It lowered the user's cultivation by five levels for one month.

This talisman was rather interesting. After Qiao Mu copied the model and drew 20 aura-repressing talismans, she used one and immediately discovered that all of her mystic energy was covered by the aura-repressing talisman. Even if she stood in front of Father and Second Uncle right now, they would shockingly realize that they could not feel a single ripple of energy from her body.

She resembled a normal child and did not have any cultivation.

Qiao Mu lowered her head and ardently drew more than 100 summoning talismans.

For the remaining 120 blank talisman papers, she securely stored them inside her purple storage talisman before joyously looking up and massaging her aching shoulders.

The sky revealed that it was near dusk.

Her talisman-drawing speed increased quite a lot again. She drew more than 150 talismans this afternoon.

This was especially true for the super ordinary beginner-level summoning talisman. After failing a few times, she became more and more adept as time went on and drew 108 summoning talismans. Later on, she even drew 28 blue summoning talismans, causing Qiao Mu to be abnormally happy.

Qiao Mu held a summoning talisman in one hand and propped her chin up with her other hand as she pondered, 'Should I try to use the talisman again?'

Last time she used the talisman, she summoned a weak chicken...

It imprinted a great trauma upon her!

Qiao Mu sprinted down the building and circled to the little garden in the back before standing still. She took a deep breath and looked down at the yellow summoning talisman in her hand.

She felt like she did have some luck since she was reborn!

How could she summon the same weak chicken two times in a row? That was impossible, right?!

'So I should try again!'

Qiao Mu took another deep breath before heroically extending two fingers and lightly swiping across the yellow talisman.

After a yellow light faded, a "caw" was heard.

Qiao Mu first thought, 'Why does that call sound so freaking familiar?'

Then, Qiao Mu's eyes nearly popped out of their sockets from her shock when she saw the thing that spread its stubby wings and shot toward her with a "Caw caw"!

'Oh my god!'

'Why! Is! It! This! Weak! Chicken! Again?!'

'What kind of sinful fate was this?!'

However, another glance revealed that this chicken grew a lot taller since the last time she saw it. Its shape started to resemble a young peacock.

Also, its body of feathers was a bit more resplendent than their first meeting, and the feathers on the tip of its tail grew quite a bit too and started emitting a bluish light.

However, regardless of how it transformed, it did not change the fact that it was a weak chicken!

'Deep breath! Deep breath, deep breath! Don't be angry, you can't be angry! Calm, calm your mood down! You aren't a child anymore, you're an adult! You're an adult, so you can't get into an altercation with a chicken!'

'Ahhhh! I'm so angry!' Qiao Mu abruptly exploded and pulled out a knife from who knows where and started chasing that chicken and slashing it. "Ah, you bastard! Why is it you again?! I want to summon a ferocious beast! A ferocious beast, you understand?! Why is a weak chicken like you charging at the forefront? Go back! Go back!!!"

Chapter 259: A Fraud

"Caw... Caw caw caw! Caw caw!!!" the weak chicken released a sharp shriek and started flapping its stubby wings to flee toward the front of the garden.

Its slender ankles might look insanely thin, but it could flee especially fast.

Qiao Mu's pounce ended up fruitless and landed her into a tumble in the flowerbed. When she leaped out with a head of flowers and leaves, Qiao Zhongbang, Qiao Zhongxing, Shaoyao, Qiao Hu, and the others were dumbstruck!

"Don't run, you weak chicken! I'm going to butcher you today and serve you as a dish for Second Uncle to eat with his liquor!" Qiao Mu brandished her knife high in the air and charged across the front of her audience. She did not even notice how she lost a shoe in her chase.

Qiao Zhongbang: "..."

Second Uncle was dying from laughter and clutching his stomach as he followed his niece. "Qiaoqiao, don't worry about it! Second Uncle has simmer-fried fish today, so Second Uncle won't need this chicken as a dish!"

"Stop running!" Qiao Mu angrily chased the chicken.

The weak chicken did not run outside the residence and merely circled through the garden, weaving from east to west and from west to south.

After running several laps around the residence, Qiao Mu finally stopped with her knife propped on her shoulder, out of breath. She confusedly looked at the flailing and cawing chicken.

'Hm? How did this guy run so fast?'

How ashamed should she be that a level-four mystic cultivator like herself could not catch up to a chicken?!

“Come over here, weak chicken!”

“Caw!” The weak chicken spread its wings and haughtily raised its head, its expression looking like “As if I would go”!

Qiao Mu beat her waist and angrily thrashed her sleeves. “Come over here! Will you come over or not?! If you won’t come over, stay away for the rest of your life!”

Qiao Zhongbang was about to die from laughter because of his daughter.

He had never seen this expression on his daughter as she raved at the chicken. It was rather hilarious.

“Caw!” The weak chicken frantically moved its slender ankles and sprinted to the child with a “Caw caw.”

The child smashed a fist on its chicken head, and the weak chicken bristled in anger with a “caw,” its feathers sticking out.

How aggravating!

Our darling Qiao Mu took out two more summoning talismans from her pocket.

D*mn it! She refused to believe in this curse! She was going to summon two more times and see if she could randomly summon something more reliable!

She used two summoning talismans in a row.

Qiao Mu looked left and right in front of the small flowerbed for half a day.

‘Eh? Why isn’t there anything? It’s a fraud talisman as expected!’

At this moment, the weak chicken lifted its slender feet, and Qiao Mu immediately saw the tiny golden “Summon” character engraved on its feet.

She felt like a bucket of ice water was poured over her head, and her face turned livid in a second. She plucked the chicken toward her by its neck and furiously shouted, “You can’t possibly be telling me that my three successive summons were all fulfilled through you???”

Didn’t this mean she summoned this weak chicken three times in a row?! This weak chicken... was going to stay with her for at least three days!

‘UGH!’

The weak chicken humanly nodded its head and was promptly kicked into the flowerbed by the child...

At dinner, a low pressure hung around the child. Qiao Zhongbang and Qiao Zhongxing both really wanted to laugh but had to repress it and try their best to not make any noise. As they held their bowls with lowered heads, their shoulders were continuously shaking.

The weak chicken intensely requested to be at the table and made Shaoyao move a wide chair so that it could sit next to the child.

The chicken's head gracefully bobbed down and pecked at the rice in its plate.

Qiao Hu was about to laugh when Shaoyao reached out to cover his mouth.

Qiao Mu glanced up at Qiao Hu and snorted. She used her chopsticks to fiddle with the rice in her bowl and angrily inhaled it. "I'm done. I'm going to see Mother."

She planned to depart tomorrow afternoon, so she needed to bid farewell to her mother before leaving.

Chapter 260: Leaving from Home

"Mom, please stop crying. Didn't we talk about this already? I'm returning to my sect to cultivate, so I won't be in any danger. It's just... I'll be gone for a while." Qiao Mu grasped Wei Ziqin's hand and comforted her, "Mom, don't worry. I'll take good care of myself. I guarantee that I'll return chubby and whole!"

Wei Ziqin was between laughter and tears as she looked at her daughter and sighed.

Their daughter had previously brought this up with her and her husband, but she had thought that her daughter would at least attend Xiao Sen's one-month feast before leaving. She did not think her daughter would leave so soon.

Their separation was imminent, so she naturally found it hard to accept.

Qiao Mu looked at her sound asleep brother laying in his swaddle and softly smiled.

"Qiaoqiao, allow your dad to escort you part of the way tomorrow."

"Mom." Qiao Mu swung Wei Ziqin's sleeves. "Dad doesn't need to escort me! Have you forgotten that I have the great mystic cultivator, Ao Ye by my side?!"

Qiao Zhongbang regained his status as a mystic cultivator two months ago, and his cultivation also advanced a level after he ate the peach, so he was now a level-six mystic cultivator.

With her dad, a level-six mystic cultivator, holding down the fort at home, Qiao Mu felt more at ease about leaving.

"Mom, do you have enough food?"

"You just like to fret needlessly, child. Mom already told you we have enough. You gave us 30 talismans filled with food, and the remaining provisions in our kitchen will sustain us for more than half a year. Also, didn't the City Lord's Estate send us a cart of grains and beans last time? The city lord is truly too polite. He insisted that it was the ration for Xiao Mo, but Xiao Mo didn't eat that many meals here in reality. Yet, he gave us so much, and we can't even return it."

"Do you have enough storage talismans?"

“There’s enough, enough. We’ve stored everything that the City Lord’s Estate gave us inside of them and still have empty talismans. Don’t worry. Moreover, your dad and second uncle will occasionally accept a few minor missions, so our family will definitely improve even more.”

“Mom.” Qiao Mu buried her head into her mother’s arms.

Wei Ziqin caressed her daughter’s long hair with a smile. “Good child, you must remember Mom’s words when you’re outside on your own. You must be very, very careful when you run into trouble.”

“The whole family is waiting for you to return, alright?”

She seemed to have exchanged parting words for a whole night and reluctantly parted with her parents, Second Uncle, Brother Qiao Hu, Xiao Lin’er, and Shaoyao one by one.

The next morning, when the first glimmer of light crept onto the horizon, Qiao Mu silently left and headed for the Ah-Wang Trading Company located in the central district.

When she arrived at the entrance of the Ah-Wang Trading Company, she saw that the whole caravan was ready to go and the leader, a middle-aged man, was looking around.

When he saw her tiny figure, he immediately went to receive her and courteously nodded. “You must be Miss Qiao, right? City Lord Gu already told us the details. We’ll be in charge of bringing Miss Qiao safely to the western border of Qiu Kingdom.”

Qiao Mu looked at the rolls of fabric in the carriages and looked up at the leader. “You must be the Uncle Wang that the city lord mentioned, right? Thank you.”

“You’re too polite, Miss Qiao,” Uncle Wang said with a chuckle. “You’ll ride in the first carriage. It’s a long journey to the Qiu Kingdom and will take at least 10 days. It might be a bit bumpy part of the way.”

“Thank you for your trouble.” Qiao Mu nodded and boarded the first carriage.

This carriage had a bit more space compared to the carriages behind it that were brimming with rolls of fabric, but there was still a lot of fabric piled in the corner.

Qiao Mu sat leaning against the side of the cabin and ignored all of the astonished gazes of the workers following the caravan.

When the carriage driver whipped his rein and the wheels started rolling forward, Qiao Mu could not resist flicking open a corner of the curtains and longingly looking at the direction of Pear Blossom Alley.

She had no idea that this departure would lead to years of separation, and the world would drastically change...