

My Crown 971

Chapter 971: Methods

Dou Kui's eyes abruptly bulged as his entire body shrank while quivering.

"Do you still remember Qiao Lin, the crown prince consort's younger sister," the crown prince asked apathetically. "Speak, why did you want to buy the crown prince consort's younger sister back then?"

Even though it was the crown prince asking him, how would Dou Kui still remember something that had happened so many years ago? Besides, his entire body was in an extremely bad state right now, and his breathing was disjointed, as if he would breathe his last anytime.

A cold light flitted across the crown prince's eyes. "You're not willing to speak?"

While listening on the side, Ao'ye couldn't help but hang his head with a twitching mouth.

This Dou Kui might not remember, since it had happened seven to eight years ago after all.

"Then this crown prince will turn you into a golem puppet. Your flesh, blood, and even soul will be trapped inside the golem as a slave for all eternity, forever unable to reincarnate."

Evidently, this terrifying judgment caused Dou Kui to muster up his originally weak energy. That was absolutely a result of this threat!

"D-Don't—" He yelled hoarsely.

Obviously, his voice was isolated within the defensive boundary that the crown prince had set up. Even if he were to kick up a wild row inside, it would not alarm the other people inside the Qiao Estate.

"Then are you speaking or not?" The crown prince asked coldly.

"Your-Your Highness..." Dou Kui wailed in a tearful voice as he tossed about on the floor like a pitiable reptile. "I-I really don't remember, Your Highness! Your Highness! I really don't remember having offended the crown prince consort."

How did he dare offend that devil! If he really did offend her before, he was willing to kneel three times and kowtow nine times to apologize to the crown prince consort.

"You don't remember?" The crown prince's voice was indistinctly suppressing his fury. "Then do you remember Qiaotou Village?"

"I-I do. Qiaotou Village is one of the villages near our town." The Dou Family back then was one of the administrators in the town back then, and it could even be said that they were perfectly clear on how much tribute each of the nearby villages presented.

This Qiaotou Village was the poorest village. His dad had once grumbled about how poor this village was, without any profit to be made from it at all.

"Qiao Lin is the crown prince consort's younger sister. About seven to eight years ago, your Dou Family had wanted to buy this little lady from the Qiaotou Village for adoption."

At this, Dou Kui's eyes abruptly bulged. "Her? That's her?"

Speaking of Qiaotou Village, he recalled that there was indeed such an incident back then. However, that family later refused to sell their daughter, so the matter just ended like that.

“Why did you want to buy her?”

Dou Kui hemmed and hawed, unwilling to utter a word, when suddenly, a purple blaze landed on his waist and started to burn. He painfully rolled about on the floor but was still unable to extinguish that fire.

“Unwilling to speak?” The crown prince inquired icily.

“I-I’ll speak, I’ll speak! I’ll speak! I-I was the one who was being base, vulgar, and had no sense of shame.” Dou Kui trembled as he spoke, “I chanced upon that little lady once, and I saw that she looked quite cute. Afterwards, I harbored thoughts that I shouldn’t have had and wanted to buy her. After raising her by my side for a few years, I could then...”

A dark light flitted across the crown prince’s eyes. “Kill him. Dispose of his parents and family as well.”

“Yes, Your Highness!”

“No, no, Your Highness, I’ve already told you everything and admitted to everything! I have nothing to say if you want me dead, but one’s family shouldn’t be punished for one’s wrongdoings!”

Mo Lian merely threw him a frigid glance. “Would your parents be unaware of your hobbies?”

Most likely, no one in this family was innocent.

“D-D-Don’t, don’t... don’t, Your Highness! Your Highness!”

Chapter 972: Conjecture

Dou Kui paled in terror as he watched the man fling open the door and leave. He felt the blaze on his waist abruptly generating a monstrous energy, causing the flames to shoot up with a swish.

Mo Lian took a deep breath before looking up at the vast, pitch-black night sky in contemplation.

He could tell that Qiaoqiao was full of naked hatred towards this Dou Kui. It was a kind of absolute hatred that desired to kill him by dismembering his body.

Was it possible for her to harbor such intense hatred, resentment, and enmity against this Dou Family after they failed to buy Qiao Lin from Qiaotou Village back then?

Her grudges with the Dou Family should only be limited to that transaction with Qiao Lin. Ordinarily, after the transaction failed, the two families shouldn’t have crossed paths again.

In addition, even though she and Little Sixth Zheng had never met before, why did she treat him so inexplicably well back in Beilan City?

Could it be that Duan Yue, that jinx, hit the nail on the spot, and that it was some kind of old grudge from a previous incarnation?

What exactly happened in Qiaoqiao’s “previous life”...

He completely didn't want to speculate any further about his Qiaoqiao's previous life. Wouldn't that mean that his Qiaoqiao had... died before?

Upon thinking about this, Mo Lian only felt that he was practically about to stop breathing.

In the dim light of the night, Mo Lian stood with a ramrod-straight back as his phoenix eyes gazed deeply into the distance, not moving at all for quite a while.

Meanwhile, the Dou Family was in a complete mess.

The Dou Family manager hastily ran over to make his report. While shaking from head to toe, he knelt down before the Dou Family patriarch, Dou Heping, and stammered, "When Dou Kui's family's courtyard caught on fire, we could not stamp it out. After we assembled enough people over and finally extinguished the fire with great difficulty, we only saw... Dou Kui's family's corpses."

"Have you taken a thorough headcount yet?" Eldest Young Sir Dou asked frigidly. "Dou Kui's family has seven people in total."

"Yes, yes, they all burned to ashes."

However, Eldest Young Sir Dou gazed icily at Manager Dou. "Then that means you couldn't take a headcount at all."

"Fengmian, what do you want to say." Dou Heping viewed his eldest and second sons very highly. Every time something happened, he liked to listen to his two sons' opinions.

"Father, I want to say that the fact this fire came so suddenly and bizarrely is probably due to arson."

"Lead the way!" Dou Fenghua stood up and swept Manager Dou a glance.

Manager Dou hastily led the way for the two young sirs and the Dou Family patriarch, Dou Heping. Before long, he promptly brought them over to Dou Kui's family's courtyard, which had blackened from the fire.

Manager Dou sent people to usher away the disciples that had crowded around the outside of the courtyard.

At last, after sending out a dozen servants to poke through the ashes, they only found six incomplete corpses.

Dou Fenghua advised with a sigh, "Dad, let this matter just blow over. Hold the funeral tomorrow and just say that it was an accident."

"Fenghua?"

Dou Fenghua took out a thin piece of paper from his sleeve, handing it to his father and eldest brother to look at.

"After offending the crown prince consort in the morning, people were sent over at night to silence them." Dou Heping was livid. "Besides, we don't know the truth of the matter written on this paper. Could it really be because Dou Kui once attempted to sully the crown prince consort's younger sister that they can kill in cold blood?"

Dou Kui was considered a very gifted young man in the Dou Clan's younger generation, so Dou Heping couldn't really swallow this grievance.

"Dad, you have to swallow it even if you don't want to." Dou Fenghua concluded apathetically, "For the good of the Dou Clan, you have to draw a clear line with Dou Kui's family in the future."

He walked off after saying this.

Chapter 973: His Decision

Dou Heping glanced at Dou Fengmian. "Fengmian, what do you think?"

Dou Fengmian nodded. "Second Brother's analysis is correct. For our Dou Clan, we have to temporarily swallow this grievance. If I'm not wrong, this isn't the crown prince consort's doing."

No matter how you looked at it, these lightning-quick, precise, and unfathomable methods were indicative of that person's doing.

Seeing that his two sons were in consensus, Dou Heping could only sigh helplessly with a nod.

"At present, the most important thing at hand is to prepare Fengchi for the journey to the Mystic Beast Forest secret realm."

Dou Heping nodded at this reminder. "That's right. It's unfortunate that Yao'er was eliminated. I had originally thought that both sisters could make the journey together."

However, Dou Fengmian commented dryly, "It's already a good result. Look at the Mu Clan. They originally had set lofty sights on two quotas, yet they didn't obtain any in the end."

The talisman patrician family's failure this time had simply made them the laughingstock of the entire capital.

Dou Heping also smiled upon hearing this.

That's right, this time, apart from the originally weaker Wu Clan that had failed, the head of the eight great patrician families, the Mu Clan, had also very unexpectedly joined the ranks of defeat.

The remaining six patrician families each had one victorious representative, so it could be said that they all had equal shares of the glory.

Meanwhile, inside the Qin Estate's Crane Garden, Second Young Sir Qin propped up the side of his jaw with his hand as he casually wrote and drew on a piece of paper.

A black-clothed female with delicate and pretty features bowed her head as she stood silently before the desk.

She was dressed in a short garment with narrowed sleeves, and her long hair was tied up neatly, revealing her high hairline.

"On this journey to the Mystic Beast Forest secret realm, your chief task is to find a ten thousand-year Xuanji Core. You should be clear on that already."

“Yes.” Qin Susu nodded briskly. She had participated in the selection as the eldest young sir and second young sir’s godsister. In reality, though, she was the second young sir’s hidden guard that he had groomed for many years.

She was very clear on her own position and what she needed to do. On this journey, she only needed to follow the second young sir’s orders, and she didn’t harbor any other thoughts at all.

“Also.” Second Qin set down his brush and swept a faint glance at Qin Susu. “You must ensure Miss Qiao’s safety on this journey. If necessary, you have to protect her with your life.”

Qin Susu was taken aback, after which she immediately nodded briskly. “Yes, this subordinate will do as you bid.”

After saying this, she glanced very cautiously at Second Qin again.

Second Young Sir Qin then inquired coldly, “What other questions do you have?”

“If... Miss Qiao also wants to obtain the Xuanji Core. What should this subordinate do?” Qin Susu frowned with a serious expression on her delicate and pretty face.

Second Qin suddenly smiled with a vibrant, ink-green coursing through the depths of his eyes and a faint tenderness between his brows. “If she wants it, then give it to her. After all, it’s only a mere Xuanji Core...”

His statement left Qin Susu stunned. *Wasn’t the second young sir pampering her too much?*

Then could this subordinate ask the purpose of this subordinate’s strenuous journey? Was it to assist Miss Qiao in obtaining the Xuanji Core?

The second young sir left the desk and walked out the door alone, leaving behind Qin Susu, who stood there in stupefaction for a long time.

A piece of blotting paper then drifted down from the desk, landing lightly beside Qin Susu’s feet.

As Qin Susu looked down, she saw that it was filled with the character ‘Qiao.’ The ink had seeped through the back of the paper with distinct and vigorous strokes...

Qin Susu drew her lips into a thin line.

She was only a hidden guard, so she would definitely carry out her master’s order, even if it was at the cost of her own life.

After walking out of the room, Second Qin stroked the large cranes sauntering about the peaceful courtyard as his gaze deepened...

Chapter 974: Lying in Wait

The Mu Family’s patriarch, Mu Boming, was nearly exploding in anger.

They had originally attended this selection match with full confidence, yet in the end, their Mu Clan didn’t obtain a single quota at all!

Moreover, Madam Mu was weeping endlessly beside him the entire time, saying that something must have happened to their daughter since she hadn't come back by now. She had been pestering him nonstop for him to send people to look for her, which made him frustrated to no end.

"Master, Madam." A servant rushed in to report, "Miss has returned."

"Ah, my Qianqian has returned!" Madam Mu promptly leaped up from her chair in joy.

Nevertheless, Mu Boming glared at Madam Mu in displeasure. "You're the only one getting keyed up the entire day for no reason. What can happen to Qianqian. She must have gone to who knows where again to make trouble."

Madam Mu simply ignored him as she went by herself to greet her daughter.

However, when she saw Mu Qianqian being carried in with a ghastly pale face, she promptly cried out in alarm.

"Qianqian! My daughter." Madam Mu immediately pounced over to hug her daughter, roaring, "Who exactly harmed you into this state!"

Mu Boming was also shocked, and he turned to interrogate that servant, "What exactly is going on?"

"Master, this humble one also does not know. Eldest Miss was tossed by the side door, and no one knows who had sent eldest miss back either."

"Qianqian, my daughter." Madam Mu bawled her eyes out as she wiped her tears. "Master, hurry and think of a way to save our daughter."

Mu Boming's complexion was very unsightly as he turned to roar at that servant. "What are you still standing there for? Hurry and go request for the capital's most famous doctor to come and diagnose the eldest miss!"

After this upheaval in the Mu Family, several old physicians informed Mu Boming at last that his daughter Mu Qianqian was afflicted by a very rare soul-loss illness, and they feared that she would never be able to wake up again in this lifetime.

It was deep into the night.

A short and small figure appeared on the Marquis of Jiayuan' Estate's outer wall.

This person was precisely Sir Black Cat, who had slunk away after throwing the body Mu Qianqian had abandoned at the Mu Family's door.

After self-assuredly leaving with 'Qiao Mu,' he found a remote location to hide in. Nevertheless, he couldn't wake up Mu Qianqian no matter how he tried.

After trying various methods and going through his bag of tricks, including even fire and knives, Mu Qianqian still remained like a corpse and didn't budge at all.

Only then did Sir Black Cat realize that something might have gone wrong with the soul swap process.

This was why this body of Mu Qianqian's had entered a soulless state. It was a completely useless piece of trash now.

Hence, Black Cat had come to the Marquis of Jiayuan's Estate under the cover of the night in order to check out the exact situation with Eldest Miss Qiao at the moment.

Unfortunately, just as he leaped onto the wall, he was almost struck by a swift mystic energy.

There was an ambush?

Remaining calm in the face of this unexpected turn, Black Cat bent over in mid-air before landing steadily on the ground inside the courtyard that was paved with small cobblestones.

When he finally beheld the person in front of him, his pupils involuntarily contracted.

Clap, clap, clap. Mo Lian clapped his palms sardonically, curving his lips slightly as he ambled out from beneath the hidden tree shade.

Under the shining stars in the night sky, his pair of phoenix eyes appeared particularly bright.

"I guessed that someone would come, but I didn't expect it to be you." A cold smile bloomed on Mo Lian's face. "You are... that clown in the Luo Family Troupe, right. Why the need to hide one part only to reveal another?"

His Highness the Crown Prince's remark truly gave Black Cat a serious scare.

In his impression, he had only seen His Highness the Crown Prince from afar with the rest of the Luo Family Troupe on the day they entered the palace.

Chapter 975: Lotus Seal

After that, although he and the rest of the Luo Family Troupe were arranged to perform inside the palace, it was always the imperial concubines who came over to listen to the opera. He had never seen the crown prince come.

In other words, the crown prince recognized him immediately just from that glance when they entered the palace?

How formidable was his eye of discernment?

When they entered the palace, it could be said that he, as a midget clown among the crowd, hardly attracted any attention at all.

Even so, the crown prince's discerning eye was still this accurate.

Sir Black Cat's pupils shrunk again as he quietly stepped backwards.

The crown prince's lips curved into an endlessly frigid smile.

Suddenly, Black Cat moved.

He threw out a mystic yin curse from each hand.

This was the foundational offensive curse among the forbidden curse techniques. It catalyzed and guided the harmful yin energy between heaven and earth into people's bodies, which could then subsequently damage their bodies on a large-scale.

At the moment, Black Cat was manipulating an intermediate-level mystic yin curse.

If Qiao Mu were present, she could block it with an advanced-level defensive talisman.

Yet at this moment, Mo Lian didn't even spare Black Cat a glance. Clusters of purple flames had ignited in his palm and promptly burned towards the two mystic yin curses.

The harmful yin couldn't ward off the fire spirit. Besides, the purple fire spirit that Mo Lian was manipulating right now was grade-nine spiritual fire, which overpowered all fire spirits other than sacred fire.

The two mystic yin curses struggled with all their might to break free from the raging flames, but they were ultimately burnt to a crisp.

Sir Black Cat's pupils contracted abruptly, after which he immediately turned around to flee.

However, just as he moved, countless arrows shooting down from the wall forced him back.

With a wave of his hand, Ao'ye indicated for everyone to stand up from their hiding spots on the wall. They had been waiting for this Sir Black Cat to arrive.

"A curse practitioner, huh," Mo Lian mused faintly. "Say, how do you think We should deal with you?"

"Detestable." While gritting his teeth, Sir Black Cat suddenly flung a dozen mystic yin curses from his sleeves towards Ao'ye and the rest.

"Scatter," Mo Lian commanded frigidly.

As Ao'ye and the rest weren't fools, they quickly jumped down from the wall upon seeing so many mystic yin curses shooting over.

Bang bang bang. The dozen mystic yin curses split apart in the air, and waves of cold, harmful yin energy assaulted them.

After leaping rapidly onto the wall, Mo Lian formed several complex hand seals that resembled a lotus at lightning speed.

Afterwards, several ink-colored lotus seals suddenly appeared, abruptly flying towards Sir Black Cat.

With a grunt, Black Cat swiftly turned around to dodge, lightly covering his face with his sleeve as he accumulated energy for a defensive maneuver.

Suddenly—

With several explosive booms, this force directly tore the walls to rubble.

Sir Black Cat staggered out from the pulverized walls before crashing to the ground with his damaged body.

“Cough cough, cough...” Black Cat coughed out several mouthfuls of blood in terror before turning to look disbelievingly at that tall and graceful crown prince standing there in silence.

How could this be?

His Highness the Crown Prince actually defeated him in a single move!

He was considered one of the more well-known curse practitioners, yet he had no means of fighting back against His Highness the Crown Prince at all.

How ashamed should he be when the young’uns now were so formidable?

“Ugh, cough cough.” Sir Black kept hacking nonstop.

After Mo Lian sent his subordinates a look, Ao’ye and the rest immediately leaped forward. They picked up Sir Black Cat from the ground and forced him to kneel before Mo Lian.

“I see that, you look a bit familiar,” Mo Lian remarked faintly.

Chapter 976: Identity

Swish! Ao’ye took the hint and pulled down the black hood from Sir Black Cat’s head.

He had also clutched Sir Black Cat’s hair in passing, successfully lifting his face up.

Mo Lian examined that face with flickering eyes before finally revealing a detached smile. “No wonder you look so familiar. You are the snake-charming pygmy’s brother, right.”

That’s right, if Qiao Mu were present, she would discover that this Sir Black Cat’s face was identical to the two pygmies that had attacked her before.

The pygmy triplet’s Eldest Brother was this Sir Black Cat that was adept at curses.

He was one of Shuntian Prefecture’s Liu Yizhi’s henchmen!

As he narrowed his eyes, Mo Lian lightly nodded at Ao’ye.

Ao’ye followed up by promptly knocking out that Sir Black Cat with a clean knife-hand strike.

“Interrogate him well. This time, you must acquire Liu Yizhi’s whereabouts.” Mo Lian curved his lips as he snorted, “We are no longer interested in playing a game of cat and mouse with him anymore.”

“Yes, Your Highness.” Ao’ye was clearly aware that His Highness the Crown Prince was in a very bad mood right now, so he shrunk his neck as he received his order.

“Repair this wall later.” Mo Lian turned around and strode quickly into the courtyard.

Early the next day.

As Qiao Mu laid askew on the bed, she felt not much different from a paralyzed patient. She could wiggle her hands and feet somewhat, but she still didn’t have the strength to get up from bed.

Wei Ziqin, Qiao Zhongbang, Qiao Lin, and the others visited her in worry. It was only after she placated them that they left Nanzhu Garden slightly more at ease.

She finally felt hungry at noontime, so the crown prince lifted her up and fed her half a bowl of porridge.

“How is it.” Mo Lian caressed her forehead, looking at her as he softly asked, “Do you feel a bit better?”

“I can’t muster up any strength at all.” Our dear Qiao Mu tilted her small head dejectedly. “Will I stay a cripple like this?”

Mo Lian couldn’t help chuckling as he reassured, “How can that be. It’s your soul that got shaken up, so it definitely won’t affect your body. Your situation will definitely slowly improve after recuperating for two days.”

“Even though you say that, don’t we have to set out for the Mystic Beast Forest secret realm soon?”

“There’s ten more days, so it’s still early. It won’t be too late if you set out then.” While speaking of this, Mo Lian couldn’t help but look at her worriedly. “Qiaoqiao, on this journey to the Mystic Beast Forest secret realm, I can only escort you to the entrance, since I can’t enter it together with you.”

“But of course,” Qiao Mu replied with a nod. Qiao Dongbo had previously said that people who were 20 years old and older would be mercilessly annihilated at the entrance should they attempt to force their way into the Mystic Beast Forest secret realm.

That was to say, this secret realm had an age restriction. Although she didn’t know how it determined their ages, she of course didn’t wish for Mo Lian to take this risk.

“Then I won’t be seeing you for a month,” Mo Lian grumbled sulkily.

The secret realm only opened once every ten years, and it would stay open for a month. The secret realm wasn’t going to open up again until a month had passed.

Of course, if they weren’t able to leave from the secret realm after a month had passed, then it was possible that they would remain inside forever.

“You must remember to come out once the one-month time limit is up! You must not be greedy and advance rashly, okay?” Mo Lian quickly reminded her upon recalling this point.

“Don’t worry, it’s not like I’m dumb.” Qiao Mu puffed out her cheeks, musing that she was only going inside to take a stroll and check it out.

Most importantly, she wanted to seize this opportunity and make a trip to the Mystic Beast Forest, so that she could collect some mystic beast cores to nourish the little white squirrel’s body.

Chapter 977: Ill Feeling

Previously, Mo Lian had Morning Sunlight Pavilion’s people gather a batch of mystic beast cores and send it over. Sure enough, after feeding them to the little white squirrel, it greatly benefited its body.

Presently, the little chubby squirrel had grown one size bigger than before, and its large tail had also gotten longer.

Perhaps after feeding it some more mystic beast cores, it’ll be able to wake up!

As she thought of this, Qiao Mu’s mood couldn’t help but improve.

After the two huddled together and chatted for a while longer, someone from the palace came in the afternoon to request for Mo Lian's return.

Subsequently, Shaoyao stayed by Qiao Mu's bedside to take care of her.

Due to her languid energy, Qiao Mu took a nap, and by the time she woke up, it was already evening.

Qiao Mu only felt dizzy in her dazed state. After getting up and taking a quick bite, she laid down to sleep again.

She had no idea that after she fell into a deep slumber, the moon-shaped jade pendant around her neck kept glowing faintly.

For these two days, Qiao Mu just kept eating and sleeping, switching back and forth between a half-dreaming and half-awake state.

It was only after a full two days that she felt her head wasn't hurting as much anymore, and she also recovered a bit of her energy.

When she got up from bed early in the morning, it even gave Shaoyao a big fright.

"Miss! Why have you gotten up."

"I've been lying down for two days already. It's high time for me to get up and move about now," Qiao Mu sighed. After carelessly wiping her small face, she tossed the washcloth into the water basin.

"That is rather so." Agreeing with a nod, Shaoyao then said, "Since Miss can finally get up and walk, I'll go share this good news with Madam and Master."

"Go then." Qiao Mu nodded. "Oh, ready the carriage too. I want to go out for some fresh air."

She was almost stifled to death from languishing at home!

After boarding the carriage, she had Shaoyao specially raise up the curtains slightly so that she could breathe in the cold wind outside.

"Miss, it's cold outside today. You might catch a cold." Yet Shaoyao draped a fur coat around her worriedly.

Qiao Mu couldn't help but chuckle.

She knew her own body the best, after all. There was nothing wrong with it at all. She was only a bit fatigued because someone had tried to displace her soul.

However, she reckoned that she would be able to recover completely after recuperating for one or two more days.

"These two days, it hasn't been too peaceful inside our Guanlan City." Shaoyao pursed her lips in contempt as she explained, "You can see very large mice and ants everywhere on the streets. They say that it's because there's a problem with the Great Sea Monastery's Pacification Pagoda."

"There's also been a rumor going about, saying that a witch has come into the world, so disaster will befall from heaven."

“These few days, His Highness the Crown Prince has been busy curbing the rumors in the capital.” Shaoyao turned to look at Qiao Mu with a giggle. “Do you want to enter the palace to see His Highness?”

Qiao Mu gave a start, but then she shook her head disinterestedly. “I only wanted to come out for some fresh air.”

“Oh.” Just now, Shaoyao clearly caught sight of the revulsion that swirled for an instant in the depths of the crown prince consort’s eyes.

This was a revulsion she had for the deep palace.

Sigh! Shaoyao heaved a long sigh. It seemed like it would be very difficult for the crown prince consort to enter the palace most willingly after that incident during the Lantern Festival.

“Oh, that’s right, that Priest Dayu.” Qiao Mu creased her brows as she inquired, “Did they find him yet?”

She kept feeling that there was something fishy with this person. It seemed like he harbored a great enmity toward her.

But she didn’t know him at all.

“They weren’t able to find him even after searching through the entire city, so he probably escaped.” Shaoyao also creased her brows.

His Highness the Crown Prince had sent out a lot of people for this search, after all.

Chapter 978: Packed Her Bags

Even so, that old Daoist was still able to slip away. This went to show how exceptionally unequalled his methods were.

Qiao Mu nodded upon hearing this. When she recalled Priest Dayu’s derisive gaze, she couldn’t help secretly clenching her fists.

There was definitely something fishy with this person.

The two people casually strolled about the city while sitting inside the carriage.

As expected, Qiao Mu saw many large and hulky mice appear in passing. They wantonly scurried through the city streets, freaking people out into screaming.

“Miss, it’s that type of large mice! They really do look disgusting.” Shaoyao grabbed the curtain as she looked back to glance at Qiao Mu.

A strange light flashed in Qiao Mu’s eyes, and she said with a nod, “Mhm, I’ve gotten about enough fresh air. Let’s return now.”

A witch has come into the world? Disaster will befall from heaven?

Ha ha...

It wasn’t that she was sensitive, but she sensed a hint of conspiracy involved in this matter.

However, she wanted to see, if she were to be absent from the capital, how would such a huge accusation fall upon her?

The next day.

His Highness the Crown Prince, who was currently discussing politics inside the Eastern Palace's small study, received his subordinate's report: "Your Highness, it's terrible. The crown prince consort packed her bags and ran off!"

"What??" Mo Lian cast down his red pen at once and leapt up from his chair.

Huifeng also swept a glance at Hidden Flower, who had come to make the report. *Ha ha, was it just his imagination?*

Why did he feel like Hidden Flower, this guy's eyes were smiling unbridledly in schadenfreude? Wasn't he afraid that his impish expression might make the Crown Prince the Great directly annihilate him with a single hand?

"What happened exactly, tell me quickly!" Mo Lian was both astonished and surprised after receiving the news.

He had just gone to the Qiao Estate last night to visit his little emperor darling, and he had even been extremely delighted when he saw that she could already get out of bed and move about safely.

But why did she run off today?

"This subordinate doesn't know!" Hidden Flower's body shook in laughter as he covered his mouth with his hand. "Maybe the Crown Prince Consort the Great wanted to give you a surprise!"

Haha, it truly is a surprise! After rolling his eyes at Hidden Flower, Huifeng retracted his gaze and cupped his fists toward the crown prince in obeisance. "Your Highness, this subordinate is willing to set out immediately and bring the crown prince consort back."

However, Hidden Flower pursed his lips upon hearing this. "Come on, you. The Crown Prince Consort the Great ran off while riding Qingluan. How are you going to chase after her? Can your two legs outrun the heavenly bird Qingluan, ha ha!"

Mo Lian hastily strode towards the outside. "Where did she go?"

"Your Highness, Your Highness, don't be so anxious!" With a flash, Hidden Flower blocked the crown prince's path and pulled out a letter from his sleeve. "The crown prince consort left a letter for you."

Following this, Mo Lian rapidly took the letter and unfolded it.

'Mo Lian: I'm bringing the little monk for a trip back to Hulan Mountain. I'll be able to return within three days, so don't worry!'

Mo Lian was stunned, but he still started to stride out of the study.

Hidden Flower quickly dissuaded, "Your Highness, Your Highness, you really are going? The crown prince consort said that as you've been busy with government affairs recently, she wanted you to handle them at ease."

Who was in the mood to handle government affairs?

His wife had run off! Why the heck would he still handle those affairs!

While they were speaking, Gong Chang'an ran over with short, mincing steps, crying out while panting the entire way, "Your, Your Highness, the-the king is summoning for you. Her Majesty the Queen Dowager and the twelfth prince have returned."

"Your Highness, you can go without worry. As for the crown prince consort, Lightning and the others have already followed after her." *Even though it's possible that they won't catch up...*

Meanwhile, our dear Qiao Mu, who had packed her bags and ran off, was already seated on Qingluan as they flew straight for Qiaotou Village.

In her embrace, she was also holding the bald little monk, Kongkong.

"Benefactress, where are we going?"

Chapter 979: Return

As Qiao Mu sat cross-legged inside a defensive barrier, she flipped through the parchment map in her hands. "Kongkong, you're quite practiced in your Buddhist hand seals?"

Upon hearing this, the little monk promptly patted his chest emphatically with his paw. "But of course, it is this young monk's compulsory course."

"Qingluan, we'll be there soon. Let's descend."

"Okay, Masta." Qingluan then promptly flapped its pair of wings in gradual descent.

That day at the Shadow Moon Monastery, she had obtained a parchment map from the old monk. With a single glance, she recognized the location of the secret inheritance realm marked on the map precisely as Qiaotou Village's Hulan Mountain.

It really made one flabbergasted, right?

She didn't expect that she would once again come back after leaving the village for so many years.

Besides, according to the markings on the map, this secret inheritance realm was actually...

Next to the stone forest where she had discovered the paradise back then!

This truly was too coincidental that it couldn't be any more coincidental, right? A faint misgiving drifted past Qiao Mu's mind.

After Qiao Mu hopped down from Qingluan's back, Qingluan promptly transformed into its human form—a 17 to 18-year-old charming youth with very striking eyes. However, his suit of cyan-green robes was a bit tight-fitting on his body.

"Big Cyan, you seem to have gotten a bit taller again." Qiao Mu compared their heights with her hand.

Qingluan had only looked to be 13 to 14 years old when it first transformed into its human form, so it shot up quite tremendously in this half month. As a Masta, she should probably purchase some clothes for her subordinates, so as to avoid the comicality of wearing tight clothes outside...

"I also benefit a lot at the same time that Masta is assimilating the essence earth," Qingluan quickly explained with a nod.

"Benefactress, carry me." The little monk dragged his feet before suddenly yanking at Qiao Mu's hem.

"Scared?" Asked Qiao Mu as she picked him up, carrying him in her arms as she advanced forwards.

By this time, Qiaotou Village had already been reduced to ruins. After being exposed to the elements for seven to eight years, the originally unfinished earthen houses had also collapsed by now.

As Qiao Mu slowly walked along on the dusty rubble, she was continuously observing the surroundings.

Suddenly, the little monk formed a Buddhist seal with his small chubby hand and crisply slapped Qiao Mu's forehead.

Qiao Mu: "..."

"Benefactress, there are many ghost spirits around here. Did your body feel unwell just now?"

Qiao Mu's mouth twitched as she shook her head. "I didn't."

Why did it feel like this imp was acting like a charlatan?

The little monk shook his head as he muttered to himself, "Benefactress, as expected, you are the unique oddball of the world. Then look again right now. Do you see anything?"

Just now, he had used a Buddhist seal to trigger her sight, which could temporarily allow her to see some floating ghost spirits. It was better to avoid them as best as one could, since it wasn't good to get infected with yin energy.

"No." Qiao Mu continued to shake her head. She merely saw crumbling fences and dilapidated walls.

She pinched his small chubby face as she couldn't help but inquire curiously, "There really are ghosts in this world?"

"Not ghosts but ghost spirits." The little monk puffed out his cheeks as he responded in his baby voice, "Since there are immortal spirits in this world, there are naturally ghost spirits. Aren't you great talisman practitioners able to produce deity-inviting talismans that can invite immortal spirits to possess people?"

Qiao Mu silently shut up.

She hadn't heard of deity-inviting talismans before...

This imp actually understood a lot.

"In the past, after being done with the evening recitation, Master would tell me fantastic stories and anecdotes before bedtime. Benefactress, you have to read more books!"

Chapter 980: Strong Enemy Approaching

Qiao Mu was both amused and exasperated. *Was this imp looking down on her?*

“What else did Venerable Master Kongyin tell you?”

“Master said that ghost spirits form due to a convergence of grudge energy, and that they inherently carry harmful yin energy. Oh, in the past, there was a curse practitioner who once wantonly massacred villagers in order to purposefully generate ghost spirits. This was just to practice a kind of forbidden technique, the mystic yin curse.”

Qiao Mu nodded in comprehension. “I understand now. At present, I have yet to learn the deity-inviting talisman.”

“Then it’s no wonder that you are ignorant and ill-informed.” The little monk sighed with affected ancientness.

While twitching her small mouth, Qiao Mu rubbed his small bald head with her hand. “Speak nicely. Don’t be so sardonic.”

“Benefactress, you really can’t see the ghost spirits?” The little monk pointed to the front in passing.

“I can’t see them.”

Qiao Mu, too, found it quite strange that she couldn’t see ghost spirits.

After all, the little monk did trigger her sight.

These ghost spirits probably didn’t look too splendid either, so she didn’t care too much whether or not she could see them.

As the two people spoke, they heard a rustling sound in the wreckage ahead, and they immediately gave a start.

There was suddenly a single-armed and single-legged ugly zombie hopping out from the wreckage. Since the flesh on its body had basically decayed completely, it looked more like a moving skeleton.

“Ah!” The little monk automatically reached up to firmly lock his arms around Qiao Mu’s neck.

In the next second, Qiao Mu raised her arm, directly shooting the skeleton zombie flying with a crow-gold arrow before it crashed heavily to the ground.

Since she had made a move, it was naturally an exploding headshot that didn’t leave the zombie with any chances of getting up again.

Once she lowered the crow repeating crossbow in her hand, she looked a bit blankly at that zombie.

After so many years, she simply couldn’t recognize whom this person was.

Yet perhaps, even if she recognized the person, she would still shoot him to death.

Qiao Mu frowned and didn’t speak anymore.

Only after examining the surroundings and observing that there weren’t any more abnormal movements did she finally continue forward.

After so many years had passed, the villagers in the nearby Wei Clan Village and the like had all probably already either died or fled. Therefore, the zombies had pretty much left this wasteland to forage for food elsewhere.

“Benefactress, you lived here in the past?” The little monk asked softly while hugging her neck, “Are you in a bad mood?”

“Mhm, so don’t talk.” Qiao Mu picked up her pace as she strode towards Hulan Mountain with the child in her arms.

Along the way, she could make out how tragic it had been in the Qiaotou Village at the time.

Most of the villagers should have escaped, while those whose bodies had been torn to pieces didn’t turn into zombies. Due to their lingering resentment, they turned into the ghost spirits the little monk was talking about instead.

“If those senior brothers of mine didn’t go out to wander, they could come and help the villagers here redeem their souls,” the little monk murmured.

Qiao Mu didn’t respond anymore, carrying him as she walked towards Hulan Mountain with Qingluan.

Although she hadn’t returned for many years, she still remembered some of the paths.

After taking a shortcut to get to the stone forest, Qiao Mu looked around. “Did you find anything?”

The little monk shook his head.

“Should I first use the Startled Swan Dagger to open this secret inheritance realm?” Qiao Mu muttered to herself.

The Startled Swan Dagger abruptly flew out from her conscious, spiraling above her head.

Suddenly, a cyan figure whisked across mid-air, abruptly grabbing at the Startled Swan Dagger with a huge paw.

“You’re seeking death.” Qiao Mu’s gaze sharpened as she flung out several concealed weapons.

That huge paw promptly retracted from the concealed weapons attack.

Meanwhile, Qiao Mu focused her gaze with icy eyes.