

## Noble Ruler 721

### Chapter 721: Self-Preservation

Gusts of cold wind swept by, howling and hissing like it was hell. The eerie and bone-chilling sounds gave people the creeps and fear, and everyone retreated at once.

Soon, more and more red mist started swarming over. While the surrounding trees were withering at a rapid speed, the thick mother tree in the middle not only showed no signs of withering, but it even seemed to be receiving nourishment. Its leaves appeared greener than before, and its branches were growing thicker as well.

The most startling thing was that it seemed to be growing slowly but steadily in this red mist.

“W-what’s going on here?! Liuyue, the mist is spreading over!” Mu Hongyu looked at Chu Liuyue as she nervously held the golden mane bear cub in her arms. *The same thing we saw before is happening now! Are we going to—*

*Whoosh!*

With a wave of Qin Yi’s sleeve, a faint greenish barrier instantly enveloped him and a few other people. When the red mist came into contact with this green barrier, it quickly recoiled as if it had encountered something terrifying.

Qin Yi had only protected the people near him with his barrier, so Elder Qiuxi, Jiang Yucheng, and Mu Qinghe weren’t under his protection, although it was probably because they were standing a little further away from him.

“Y-you forgot about us, sir!” cried Elder Qiuxi when he saw how easily Qin Yi’s barrier managed to ward off the red mist. *That red mist doesn’t seem easy to deal with. We can save a lot of effort if Qin Yi helps us out.*

Unfortunately for him, Qin Yi gave him an apologetic smile. “I’m sorry, but my strength is limited. Protecting these few people is the most I can do.”

“You—” retorted Elder Qiuxi.

“Elder Qiuxi, we only met Brother Qin by chance, so we’re more than grateful to receive his help. How can we still order him to do this and that?” Chu Liuyue interrupted Elder Qiuxi’s words, wearing a very sincere smile on her face. “Besides, can’t you see that I’m also not under his protection?”

Qin Yi’s barrier was only enveloped around himself, Mu Hongyu, Ye Ranran, and Qiang Wanzhou. Lei Laosi and Chu Liuyue weren’t under his protection either.

Chu Liuyue then proceeded to cast a barrier around herself. She felt more assured when the red mist started moving away from her.

Tuan Zi rubbed itself against her cheek as its beautiful gem-like eyes sparkled.

Chu Liuyue blinked and instantly understood what Tuan Zi was trying to say. *It’s telling me that... The red mist won’t be able to hurt me when it’s around?*

Meanwhile, Lei Laosi raised his hammer and slammed it against the ground.

A transparent barrier that had crackling ice-blue lightning bolts wandering across it instantly appeared around him. He then looked up to give Elder Qiuxi a disdainful look. "In the Mystic Forest, only one outcome awaits those who aren't capable of protecting themselves—Death!"

*He's calling me incompetent right in my face!* Elder Qiuxi's face darkened. He was just about to retort, but he stopped when he saw Jiang Yucheng's look of warning that said, 'Haven't you embarrassed yourself enough?!

Thus, Elder Qiuxi could only keep his mouth shut.

"Eldest Young Master, this bottle contains the antidote for the red mist. Consume it if you accidentally come into contact with the red mist." Mu Qinghe proceeded to hand Jiang Yucheng and Elder Qiuxi one pill each from the bottle he had taken out.

While Elder Qiuxi eagerly snatched the pill from Mu Qinghe's hand, Jiang Yucheng stared at it. "You didn't mention this at the start."

"That's because I didn't know that the mist had gotten so poisonous. In the past, most of the mist could be blocked out just by setting up a barrier around ourselves. But now, we have to take the antidote. I only recalled this now, and I only have one bottle of the antidote on me," replied Mu Qinghe calmly.

*Mu Qinghe has always been a careful and serious person, so he couldn't possibly have only recalled it now. Even if he didn't have many pills on him, he could've given one to Shangguan Wan earlier since her safety is of utmost importance. However, he didn't do that. He clearly didn't want to give it to her. Jiang Yucheng studied Mu Qinghe's expression—which was calm as if he had nothing to hide—and didn't say anything. Shangguan Wan has never liked Mu Qinghe, and the feeling is mutual. Anyway, Shangguan Wan has her own ways to deal with the red mist, so she doesn't need this antidote either.*

Mu Qinghe then turned to Chu Liuyue and handed the bottle to her, his face expressionless.

The gesture surprised Chu Liuyue, as evident by the slight raising of her eyebrows. She didn't expect him to share such a precious antidote with her, although it was given to him by her past self.

She smiled politely at him, but before she could say anything, she heard Mu Qinghe say, "Please return the black shield that the red-tailed phoenix took away earlier."

*So that's his purpose... Chu Liuyue's expression blanched a little. Instead of trying to rescue Shangguan Wan at first notice, he's more concerned about this black shield. How interesting...*

Her feather-like eyelashes fluttered slightly as she lifted her eyelids calmly. "Thank you for your kindness, Lieutenant Mu, but I don't think I need the antidote since I have the red-tailed phoenix with me. You should keep it for yourself instead. As for the black shield... I'll naturally return it to the Third Princess once she's found."

*For some reason, Chu Liuyue seems a little different from the time I first met her in Country Yao Chen. She used to be polite and courteous but also a little timid, but she dares to refuse me so flatly now. But then again, now that she's contracted with a legendary fiend, it's only natural that things will change.* With pursed lips, Mu Qinghe nodded and took an antidote for himself before putting the jade bottle away.

"Look! The mist seems to be heading toward the mother tree!" cried Ye Ranran.

Everyone turned their attention to the tree at once, and sure enough, they saw that the red mist was indeed slowly moving toward the tree in the middle. On top of that, its leaves seemed to be swallowing the mist.

A frown settled between Chu Liuyue's brows as she turned to look at Qin Yi. "Brother Qin, does this have anything to do with the mother tree's seal?"

Qin Yi nodded. "The mist is no unusual sight in the Mystic Forest, but it usually lingers in the outer perimeter. It has never made its way to the center before."

That wasn't actually the truth. He and Lei Laosi had encountered the same scene when they first came here a year ago, but the seal happened to have a small crack at that time, so the Nine-Colored Heavenly Pheasant decided to perch on that tree. Its presence mended that crack and added a second layer of protection to the seal, so ever since the Nine-Colored Heavenly Pheasant hibernated there, nothing like this happened in the Mystic Forest. But now that it had left, the seal was once again broken.

### **Chapter 722: Under the Tree**

The rolling leaf fir was still growing. Several of its roots eagerly pulled out from the soil and danced wildly in the air.

Filled with fresh blood, they emanated a terrifying aura and a nauseating smell of rot. Everyone could distinctively smell it even through the barrier, and their expressions soured at that.

"W-what's underneath the tree? Is that really... human blood in its roots?" Ye Ranran couldn't help but mutter this question under her breath. *Otherwise, there's no explanation for that bloody smell. If it's really blood in there, that's truly terrifying! Just whose blood does it contain?!*

Jiang Yucheng and his gang were silent though. Having been dragged underneath, they knew exactly what was going on down there.

"We can't stay here any longer! We have to leave right away!" As Qin Yi spoke, he silently looked at Chu Liuyue.

Although Chu Liuyue didn't look back at him, she knew what he meant. Nodding in agreement, she added, "That's right! Something strange is going on with that tree, and there's no telling what will happen to us if we stay."

She then made a move to retreat further, but she stopped when Elder Qiuxi said, "We can't leave yet! The Third Princess is still underneath that tree! What's going to happen to her if we leave?"

*He forgot about her earlier, but now that he has nothing to gain since Tuan Zi has acknowledged me as his master, he suddenly remembered that she's missing?* Chu Liuyue sneered. "In that case, why don't you go down and take a look, Elder Qiuxi?"

Elder Qiuxi quickened his pace and stopped right in front of Chu Liuyue. "The red-tailed phoenix had been perching on the mother tree all along. Since it's your fiend now, that makes you the most suitable person to go down! Didn't you also say that the red mist wouldn't pose any problem to you since you have the red-tailed phoenix?"

*Although I know that he's shameless, I didn't know that his shamelessness knows no bounds. Trust him to say that so calmly with conviction.* Chu Liuyue burst out into laughter out of fury. "Are you asking me—the person with the lowest cultivation level—to go find the Third Princess by myself? You sure think highly of me."

Elder Qiuxi wasn't bothered by her retort. "Since the legendary fiend is yours, you're the best person to go look for the Third Princess."

*It looks like he's still holding a grudge against me... I knew that I'd attract the envy of others, but given Tuan Zi's earlier situation, there wasn't any way I could avoid their notice. Although I expected trouble from contracting with Tuan Zi, I didn't expect it to happen so early.*

“Elder Qiuxi, I’m also very worried about the Third Princess. I don’t mind taking the lead, but our chances of finding the Third Princess will increase if we all go together. Don’t you think so?” Chu Liuyue couldn’t be bothered to make an excuse to push the responsibility away, so she just agreed to it.

In fact, she would go looking for Shangguan Wan herself even without Elder Qiuxi’s suggestion, for she clearly saw Shangguan Wan jumping into the hole entirely on her own accord. *There’s definitely something fishy going on. Who knows? Shangguan Wan might not even want to be found even though I’m willing to go look for her! Since Elder Qiuxi wants my help, then he should also do his part in searching for Shangguan Wan!*

A slight frown formed on Elder Qiuxi’s forehead. He had intended to let Chu Liuyue go down by herself, but he found himself unable to refute what she said.

Chu Liuyue turned to face Jiang Yucheng with a smile. “I believe that the person who’s most worried about the Third Princess is Eldest Young Master Jiang. Hence, I trust that he’ll definitely agree to go down with me to look for her. Am I right, Eldest Young Master Jiang?”

Jiang Yucheng’s expression darkened a little. He had no intention of going down at all since he knew what was going on below. On top of that, he had also sensed that something was wrong with his body. Even though he tried his best to rest and recover a little earlier, his internal and external injuries weren’t completely healed. *If I encounter danger again...*

Unfortunately, he couldn’t say ‘no’ in front of so many people. His voice was biting-cold as he said, “Of course.”

“That’s not a wise decision.” Qin Yi cut in with a disapproving look on his face. “The mother tree’s seal has been broken, so we don’t know what kind of danger lurks underneath. Not even Laosi and I dare to go head-to-head against it. You’ll just be courting your deaths if you go down now! Not only will you fail to find the person you’re looking for, but you might even lose your lives as well!”

Chu Liuyue knitted her brows slightly. She knew that Qin Yi was objecting to her going down, but she had to go down regardless. "Brother Qin, we appreciate your advice, but we can't just sit and do nothing when the Third Princess has gone missing and might even be in danger. I'd like to ask you to take care of my friends."

"What do you mean, Liuyue? You're not letting us join you?" asked Mu Hongyu hurriedly.

Qiang Wanzhou walked straight toward Chu Liuyue immediately. Before crossing the greenish barrier, he gripped the Cloud-Sky Copper Sword in his hand and looked at Qin Yi. "I go wherever she goes."

Although Qin Yi was also rather worried, he couldn't help but chuckle at the sight of Qiang Wanzhou. *Does he think that he's the only one who's concerned about her safety? If she insists on going, there's no way Laosi and I will stay outside.*

A loud rumbling sound came from behind just then.

When they looked back, they saw the ground suddenly collapsing along with the withered trees. A huge ravine was formed in no time, and it was getting bigger. Soon, the same thing began happening everywhere else.

An uneasy feeling crept up Chu Liuyue's heart as she pointed her toes and flew upward. A trace of shock surfaced on her face when she got a clear look at the scene below.

The ground was collapsing in the shape of a circle with the mother tree in the middle. Most importantly, it was starting to spread toward the outer perimeter as well. Like invisible waves, the entire Mystic Forest started crumbling.

The lush trees were now completely bare and withered with the red mist surrounding them.



The sky had once again turned bleak as well. Unlike the phenomenon that was triggered during the Nine-Colored Heavenly Pheasant's breakthrough, the sky appeared eerie now.

Chu Liuyue looked toward the mother tree in the middle once more.

All the trees had withered and were swallowed in this howling wind, but not only did the mother tree remain safe and sound, but it was also continuously growing.

*Could it be swallowing the other trees' energy?! A spine-chilling thought appeared in Chu Liuyue's mind as she stared at its lush, green leaves. If I'm not wrong, many people must be trapped under those trees just like Jiang Yucheng earlier. In that case... Shangguan Wan must be underneath the mother tree!*

### **Chapter 723: The Pure Gold Armor**

A stream of white light streaked across Chu Liuyue's mind.

She had known from the start that Shangguan Wan had a motive for bringing so many people to the Mystic Forest, but it was only now that she finally figured out what exactly Shangguan Wan was planning to do. *She wants to use these people to recover her Yuan meridian and strength!*

A lot of the people who came along with Shangguan Wan had Dijing Yuan meridians, and this was especially so for the various sects' disciples. After all, they were the most outstanding picks and seedlings of their respective sects.

*So the Wan Zheng Competition was held for the sake of this! She couldn't heal her Yuan meridian by herself, so she's eyeing other people's Yuan meridians instead? This might sound terrifying, but if my*

*guess is correct, then everything that previously happened makes sense now!* Chu Liuyue couldn't help but be horrified at the thought. She knew how vicious Shangguan Wan could be, but she hadn't expected the latter to have the guts to go to such lengths. *How many talented cultivators is she going to kill? The nerve of her!*

For a moment, Chu Liuyue was so overwhelmed with emotions that she didn't know what to say. *Her Yuan meridian was destroyed by my Tianjing Yuan meridian back then, and that damage is unhealable given how powerful a Tianjing Yuan meridian is. I can't think of any methods that can help Shangguan Wan heal her Yuan meridian, but she must've found a way—a despicable and vicious one, at that—if she's taking action.*

"What's wrong, Liuyue?" asked Ye Ranran as she tilted her head in concern. *Liuyue doesn't seem to be looking good...*

The question pulled Chu Liuyue out of her thoughts. She took a deep breath in before landing on the ground again, attracting everyone's attention as she did so. In a solemn voice, she said, "I'm afraid that we won't be able to leave."

A deep frown formed on Qin Yi's forehead as he heard her saying, "The entire Mystic Forest is crumbling, save for this area!"

...

Meanwhile, underground.

After a long period of free-falling, Shangguan Wan finally ended up in the soil again. She took out a water pearl that illuminated her surroundings with its faint glow.

Having been here previously, she wasn't too scared and worried this time. In fact, she was a little bit excited.

She was checking out her surroundings when her gaze was suddenly drawn to a dark-green light not far from her. The light looked a bit creepy and queer.

After a brief hesitation, she decided to go closer to check it out, only to find an imposing platform right in the middle of this moving black mud. The dark-green light was currently floating above it.

All of a sudden, Shangguan Wan felt something underneath her foot. Her heart thumped hard as she looked down, and she shifted her foot to reveal a head that had surfaced because of the moving soil.

That was the very thing that she had just stepped on. Most importantly, the head had yet to decay, so it revealed an ashen face with protruding eyes and deeply sunken cheeks.

Whoever this head belonged to looked like they didn't die in peace.

A wave of nausea overcame Shangguan Wan as she stomped her foot on the head, pressing it down again. It was only when the head was swallowed by the black soil again that she patted her chest and closed her eyes to heave a sigh of relief. *The soil underneath the ground really is fluid. I was quite far away from here when I killed that person, yet I still managed to find their head here. Just my luck!*

She quickly left that spot and ran toward the platform. She easily stepped on the edge of the platform as there wasn't any barrier cast around it.

After shaking the dirt off herself, Shangguan Wan looked up to study the dark-green light floating in the air.

It was a palm-sized fireball.

*What's that?* Shangguan Wan wondered curiously. *Judging by its position, it's located directly underneath that mother tree.*

A tree root from the opposite direction suddenly came flying toward her, which made her startle and hurriedly crouch down.

The root's target wasn't her though—it had obviously come for that fireball as it stopped right in front of it.

A thin stream of fire flew over to touch that root, and the force contained in the root began flowing into the fireball. Not long after, the root disappeared.

The fireball, however, had grown in size.

Shangguan Wan's heart started racing. *So... The force was swallowed up by this fireball. If... this fireball becomes mine, won't that mean... that force will become mine too?!*

Her eyes lit up at the thought of this, and she could barely contain the excitement inside of her. She then took out a blood-red pill and swallowed it down.

Soon, her damaged Yuan meridian came to life again as if it had been stimulated by something. Her skin became red with strange and faint black lines running across it.

She was just about to approach the fireball when she suddenly stilled herself. *That fireball might be dangerous...*

With a mere thought, the pure gold armor appeared right in front of her.

She quickly put it on, and only then did she feel assured enough to step forward.

#### **Chapter 724: May I Know When You Came to the Mystic Forest?**

If she looked closely enough, she could even identify those people, which included the Black Guards and the various sects' disciples. There were a few people she couldn't identify though. They were likely to be people who had entered the Mystic Forest on their own and ended up swallowed by the ground.

It had never crossed Shangguan Wan's mind that she'd receive such a huge and pleasant surprise. According to her initial plan, she had intended on making a move on only a handful of people after entering the Mystic Forest, for she would inevitably arouse suspicion if something happened to everyone.

Also, she could only act when she was certain that nobody would discover what she was up to. It was just like how she dealt with the dozen people when trapped in the enclosed area.

Everyone else would think that they were swallowed by the soil and thus wouldn't associate their deaths with her. After all, it was only normal that accidental deaths would occur in a dangerous place like the Mystic Forest.

With all those factors combined, the chances of her making a move became even slimmer. However, it was different now—she could easily kill those people without anyone’s knowledge.

She checked her condition once more. After unleashing its force twice, the fireball finally settled down in her dantian, no longer causing any trouble.

She even waited a while to make sure.

As Shangguan wan recalled what happened earlier, she surmised that the force came from the two tree roots, but it only healed one-tenth of her Yuan meridian. This meant that she had to continue absorbing force if she wanted her Yuan meridian to recover fully. *The force from those people trapped underground should be enough, right?*

Shangguan Wan trembled in excitement at the thought there was hope for her Yuan meridian to recover fully. *God knows how long I’ve been waiting for this day. Nobody will know that I’m the culprit behind their deaths, so I can just kill them without a care. On top of that, my cultivation level might even increase.*

Her eyes glowed red in excitement as she started selecting her first picks, which were naturally those with higher-grade Yuan meridians. Not only could she convert all the force contained within their Yuan meridians into hers this way, but the recovery effectiveness of her Yuan meridian would also be maximized.

One person suddenly came into her mind just then. *Oh right, where’s Chu Liuyue? Her Yuan meridian is the best among these people. That girl is an eyesore. I won’t feel relieved until she’s dead.*

Unfortunately, she couldn’t find Chu Liuyue even after searching everywhere. She was slightly disappointed to know that the latter’s force hadn’t been swallowed by the rolling leaf fir. *Forget it. Healing my Yuan meridian is more important!*

With just a thought, the tree root suddenly tightened its hold on one of the disciples who was just about to break free from it. It then pierced right into his heart.

“Ugh!” A sharp, strangled cry escaped from his throat, but it quickly died off, for all the force in his body had been sucked by the tree root.

He was dead in an instant, with no chance to even react. His eyes were wide open, his cheeks were sunken, and his body was curled into a ball, making it a strange sight.

The same scene repeatedly played out in this dark space.

...

The news of the crumbling Mystic Forest left everyone in shock.

When Chu Liuyue noticed Qin Yi’s grave expression, she knew that he and Lei Laosi had never encountered this situation before, which made things even trickier than she thought.

“Why is it suddenly crumbling?” asked Jiang Yucheng with a frown.

Chu Liuyue pointed to the rolling leaf fir in the middle. “It might be what Brother Qin said earlier. Someone has touched its seal...”

Knowing very well why Shangguan Wan came on this trip, Jiang Yucheng fell silent at that. *It must be Shangguan Wan... She jumped into the hole from there earlier.*

“In that case, we have no choice but to go down now,” said Chu Liuyue as she walked forward.

Lei Laosi hurriedly followed in her footsteps. “I’ll take the lead!”

Chu Liuyue looked back and smiled at him. “Don’t worry, Brother Lei. Since the red-tailed phoenix is my contracted fiend now, I’m likely the safest person here.”

“That won’t do. How can I let Your—a lady like you be in the front?” said Lei Laosi immediately. *Even though Her Highness has a legendary fiend, she’s only a stage-five warrior!*

“My big brother and I have been here for a long time, so we know how to go down. It’ll also be more efficient if I take the lead!” Lei Laosi finally came up with a justifiable reason.

Refusing Lei Laosi’s offer would seem a little strange at this point, so Chu Liuyue conceded and went along with his suggestion. “I’ll have to trouble you then, Brother Lei.”

Lei Laosi’s hands trembled once more. Unable to stand hearing Chu Liuyue address him as ‘Brother Lei,’ he rushed forward to the spot where Shangguan Wan had jumped down earlier.

Said spot was currently sealed.

His expression turned serious as he tightened his grip on the hammer.



Everyone else had followed him here as well. Since there was nowhere they could escape to, it was safer for them to stick together.

Lei Laosi's aura surged as he channeled his internal force. An ice-blue lightning bolt swam across his hammer, and a mighty pressure poured out from it.

The next instant, he lifted his hammer, shouting, "Wind Strike!"

Strong winds violently blew across them as the dust in their surroundings flew about.

With a dull *thump*, Chu Liuyue immediately felt the ground underneath her feet trembling.

A crack was instantly formed, which grew bigger as the hammer's force continuously spread out. Soon, the ground was filled with web-like cracks.

*Rumble!*

The ground in front of them started crumbling again, revealing a huge and deep hole.

Lei Laosi was the first person to jump down, followed by Chu Liuyue.

Qiang Wanzhou and the others moved to follow suit but were stopped by Qin Yi's barrier. They looked back to see Qin Yi patiently and lazily looking at Jiang Yucheng and his gang. "Please go ahead."

Despite the narrowing of his eyes, Jiang Yucheng didn't argue with him and jumped down straight away.

Elder Qiuxi dared not be the first and last person. It was only after seeing Jiang Yucheng jump down did he dare to follow him.

*For some reason, this person looks familiar...* thought Mu Qinghe as he glanced at Qin Yi. "May I know when you came to the Mystic Forest?"

Qin Yi raised his eyebrows and smiled. "Sorry, but I can't tell you that since it has nothing to do with you. Besides, Eldest Young Master Jiang has gone down. Aren't you going to follow him, Lieutenant Mu?"

Mu Qinghe could only suppress the questions in his heart for now. He then turned around and jumped into the hole as well.

That made Qin Yi smile in satisfaction. Only then did he take Mu Hongyu and the others down the hole to catch up with the others.

### **Chapter 725: Fire Spark!**

After going one step up, Shangguan Wan nervously clenched her fists. She then waited for a moment, but nothing surprising happened.

Everything in the surroundings was the same as before.

Shangguan Wan heaved a slight sigh of relief and continued going forward. She felt much more confident after wearing the pure gold armor.

Within the quiet and dark space, she could only hear the movement of the black soil and her own footsteps.

Shangguan Wan held her breath in.

*Whoosh!*

Another tree root floated over.

This time, Shangguan Wan was experienced as she stood at her spot and waited.

As expected, the tree root directly flew to the fire spark.

The dark-green spark lightly wound around it, and the energy it contained was quickly transferred to the spark.

Shangguan Wan waited at the side.

Very quickly, the second root also left.

That spark had already become twice the size compared to before.

Shangguan Wan thought to herself, *The energy contained within this root seems to be even richer than I expected...*

She waited for a moment and went forward again.

That spark had no place to hide.

When she was about three steps away from it, Shangguan Wan then shockingly discovered that it was a burning seal.

*However, the pattern looks very unfamiliar. I wonder who left it here?* Shangguan Wan's heart beat wildly; then, she slowly stretched out her hand toward that spark.

*Huala!*

The moment her hand touched it, the spark suddenly flew up and harshly burned her hand.

"Si—" Shangguan Wan felt the pain and hurriedly retracted her hand. *This thing doesn't seem like anything special, but it's very hot!*

Shangguan Wan lowered her head and discovered that half her palm was already burned. This was because... That pure gold armor only covered half her palm!

The parts covered by the armor were in perfect condition, while the exposed parts had large blisters and looked frightening.

While Shangguan Wan was stunned, a thought popped up in her mind: *It turns out that this pure gold armor is really this formidable! I haven't even used it and am just wearing it, but its defensive powers are already so strong. I wonder how formidable it will be when I truly awaken this pure gold armor!*

Shangguan Wan licked her lips as greed and excitement flashed across her eyes. She then thought for a moment and swiftly chose to use both hands at the same time.

The pure gold armor wrapped her wrist tightly. This way, she didn't need to worry much as long as the spark didn't touch the skin exposed on the outside.

Shangguan Wan gradually stretched out her hand and hugged the fire spark from outside.

Sparks would fly from time to time, but Shangguan Wan wasn't affected by it as they all landed on the pure gold armor.

Her eyes stared at the dark-green spark closely as she inched closer to it.

*Boom!*

Suddenly, the spark erupted!

Shangguan Wan was taken aback and was about to move backward when she discovered that the spark suddenly flew toward her!

*Swoosh!*

That spark directly hit her heart!

Shangguan Wan felt like a giant rock was pressing against her chest, and it was so heavy that she couldn't breathe.

However, this feeling quickly subsided.

At that moment, it was like something forcefully pierced through her chest and entered her heart.

A scorching sensation came from her heart.

Shangguan Wan panicked—she never thought that the spark would directly enter her heart!

At this temperature, her entire person would be burned to ashes in no time!

The painful burning sensation made her recall the night at the royal family's ancestral hall. She thought that that day was her most painful day, but she didn't expect this thing to be even more torturous!

“Ah!” Shangguan Wan yelled and directly collapsed onto the ground.

Her hands held the area near her heart, wanting to chase that spark away. But afterward, she felt that the thing actually started to move!

She felt an excruciating pain in her stomach, and her originally flushed face turned slightly pale.

The pain was very unbearable as she could only clutch the ground harshly and knock her head against it in an attempt to knock herself unconscious and forget this pain.

*Tsing!*

A low sound was heard.

However, Shangguan Wan had forgotten that she was wearing the pure gold armor, so her forehead was protected.

She couldn't even torture herself, but she didn't actually dare to take off the pure gold armor. Thus, she could only endure it!

She didn't notice that during this entire process, the strange black pattern on her body was also undergoing some strange changes.

After an everlasting struggle, the terrifying pain finally subsided by quite a bit.

Shangguan Wan curled up into a ball on the ground, and her entire body broke out into cold sweat. Her hands were bloodied as she used a lot of strength to scratch the ground, and one could even see her white bones. Her lips were bitten by herself until they broke, and blood was everywhere.

She looked very unkempt.

She breathed in heavily and finally recovered her senses after much difficulty.

The pain on her body reminded her: I'm still alive!

Shangguan Wan reacted and immediately started checking her body. In the end, she was stunned by this check.

Because...

That spark finally landed in her dantian!

She had connected her five treasures, so the spark could directly enter her dantian.

Shangguan Wan looked at it in a trance and discovered that the item had lost its previous seal look and completely became a fireball.

It floated quietly in the center of her dantian, and the scorching pain seemed to have gradually subsided.



Ever since Shangguan Wan's Yuan meridian was damaged, her pearl of essence was also implicated. The current position of this dark-green fireball was where the pearl of essence actually was.

A heavy force suddenly flowed out from that fireball and extended toward her limbs, and that strange pattern on Shangguan Wan's body seemed to have been revived!

Not long later, the pattern began to seep into her skin.

Everything happened too quickly. Before Shangguan Wan could even react, she felt that her Yuan meridian was completely wrapped in a layer of dark-green light.

Then, a rich force flowed past it.

Shangguan Wan was harshly stunned. *This... My Yuan meridian is healed?!*

As if to confirm her guess, another wave of force came out from the fireball in her dantian and spread across the dark-green Yuan meridian.

Shangguan Wan didn't dare to believe what was happening, so she confirmed again and again and tried repeatedly.

When she discovered that the dark-green light covering the Yuan meridian could very smoothly circulate her body's force, Shangguan Wan could finally confirm: *My Yuan meridian is indeed healed!*

The black pattern in her body had almost completely disappeared, leaving the last bit of traces on her glabella. It looked like some strange, black symbol.

At this point, something extra appeared in her mind.

She closed her eyes and felt it closely. Then, she widened her eyes in surprise! *I can actually feel the positions of the people being trapped by the rolling leaf fir in the Mystic Forest! As long as I want, I can absorb any of their strength!*

### **Chapter 726: Not Weird**

The surroundings were pitch black.

Within the dark and pressing space, it was filled with a thick, rotting, and bloody smell as if the surrounding air was becoming sticky.

Tuan Zi suddenly raised its wings.

A red fire flew out instantly like a shooting star flying across the sky, leaving behind a clear and bright outline before it disappeared into the deep pit below.

With this spark as a guide, the crowd went forward even more conveniently.

Lei Laosi—who was at the front—directly flew down.

Chu Liuyue followed him closely.

The crowd behind also followed thereafter.

...

“Big Brother Lei, have you guys been here before?” asked Chu Liuyue softly as she dropped.

Lei Laosi nodded. “We came here once, but that was a very long time ago.”

They had arrived at the Mystic Forest for not long at that time and were very unfamiliar with everything here, so they accidentally met with this trouble. Afterward, he relied on his big brother to escape from this hell.

After that, the duo basically stayed beside that mother tree and looked after the Nine-Colored Heavenly Pheasant. Hence, they naturally never met with such an incident again.

From time to time, some people would barge in from the outside, but they would be stopped at the outer area.

Chu Liuyue and the rest were the only ones who entered the Mystic Forest’s depths within this more than one year or so.

“I don’t know whether whatever is below is still the same as before...” muttered Lei Laosi.

Chu Liuyue’s heart tingled, and she asked again, “Oh yes, Big Brother Lei. I heard that the mist inside the Mystic Forest is actually white, but why was the one we met red?”

*And it was even mixed with a fishy blood smell that made one very uncomfortable.*

Lei Laosi knitted his brows. “Talking about this... Big Brother and I don’t actually know what’s going on either. When we first came, the mist was indeed white. For a very long time in the middle, we didn’t go out. When we saw it again, it was already red. But at that time, the color was still quite light, but it gradually became darker later. Then, it became the state it is in today.”

At the start, he was also curious. However, his big brother kept telling him to ignore it.

Their only motive here was to guard the Nine-Colored Heavenly Pheasant.

Lei Laosi had always listened to Qin Yi, and in addition to his loud nature, he never asked further.

Chu Liuyue entered deep thought. *According to what Lei Laosi said, there’s a very huge possibility that the Mystic Forest started changing after they came. And the time that they came here...*

Chu Liuyue guessed that they should’ve come here after she met with that incident back then. *Moreover, it might very well be possible that they brought Tuan Zi over...*

Thinking of this, Tuan Zi suddenly glanced at her and tilted its head.

Chu Liuyue was a little surprised. *Tuan Zi is saying... Qin Yi's group of two didn't bring it here? Then, how did it come here?*

Chu Liuyue asked Tuan Zi seriously in her heart, *"Tuan Zi, did you come here yourself back then?"*

Tuan Zi shook its head.

Chu Liuyue squinted, but she saw that Tuan Zi looked confused.

In actual fact, even Tuan Zi didn't know what exactly happened to it. Before Shangguan Yue burned herself to death back then, she forcefully dissolved the agreement between her and it.

That was why it could live.

It originally wanted to drag Shangguan Wan and Jiang Yucheng down together to avenge her. In the end, it fainted before it could do anything. When it woke up again, its physical body was already left behind in this Mystic Forest, and its soul was split into two.

Half was left in the physical body, and the other half... entered the body of a third-grade blood ferret.

It didn't know what it had experienced in between.

Tuan Zi sent its thoughts to Chu Liuyue clearly.

Chu Liuyue thought for a very long while and didn't make a sound. *It seems like someone helped me, but I don't know who this person is. Perhaps I can find out something by asking Qin Yi and Lei Laosi, but it's not the right time now.*

"Quickly, look! There seems to be someone below!" shouted Lei Laosi suddenly.

Chu Liuyue immediately suppressed her many emotions and looked in the direction he was pointing.

As expected, there seemed to be a vague figure within that dark space.

Chu Liuyue's heart tingled, and she immediately increased her speed. But when she gradually got nearer, she slowly knitted her brows. *That person... doesn't seem to be Shangguan Wan! Even if Shangguan Wan turned into ashes, I would still recognize her. But the person below... Even though I can't see her appearance, I'm sure her figure isn't Shangguan Wan's.*

However, Chu Liuyue only hesitated for a moment and continued rushing downward.

Lei Laosi saw that she had overtaken him and anxiously quickened his pace. *There are all sorts of things below. How can I let Her Highness go first?!*

But Lei Laosi quickly and shockingly discovered that Chu Liuyue's speed was in no way slower than him. *In this space below, all cultivators are restricted to a certain extent. But it seems like Chu Liuyue isn't... Perhaps it's because she has made an agreement with a red-tailed phoenix?*

Lei Laosi didn't have time to ask as he utilized his full speed to follow her.

After a while, Chu Liuyue finally stopped.

Lei Laosi reached almost simultaneously. Seeing that Chu Liuyue was about to walk toward the figure, he hurriedly said, "Hold on! Danger!"

Chu Liuyue shook her head. "Don't worry. This person is already dead."

Lei Laosi was dazed as he walked closer.

This figure was a young woman, and her shin had sunk into the black soil. Most of her body was still outside.

They previously saw her back view from above, so it was no wonder that they couldn't tell. However, her eyes were tightly shut, and she wasn't breathing anymore.

She was indeed dead.

Chu Liuyue snapped her fingers, and a spark appeared in her palm, instantly illuminating the surroundings.

With this, they finally saw that woman's appearance.

Her face was purple, and her cheeks had sunk in. Her features were distorted, and she looked like she had experienced great torture before she died. However, there was only one wound on her chest as if something pierced through her and caused a lot of blood to flow out.

Chu Liuyue's eyes shrunk.

Lei Laosi's expression also changed. *How did this woman die in such a miserable and strange manner?*

"Who is this?" The people behind also caught up respectively.

Jiang Yucheng walked in closer and saw that the woman wasn't Shangguan Wan.

Chu Liuyue glanced at him. "She's a disciple from Jiu Xing Alliance."

In actual fact, this woman was the one that kept mocking and teasing them previously. It was also this woman who bullied Ye Ranran at Thousand View Garden back then.

When they last saw her, she was still very arrogant. But in the blink of an eye, she had already lost her life.

Jiang Yucheng walked to the duo, and his face turned cold when he saw the woman's appearance.

Chu Liuyue had been observing him the whole time. Seeing his reaction, she raised her brows slightly. *That's weird. Upon seeing this scene, Jiang Yucheng's first reaction isn't shock or confusion, but it's more like... anger? Why does he seem not surprised about all of this?*



## Chapter 727: Save

“This person isn’t the Third Princess?!” Elder Qiuxi also walked over, and he was shocked as he couldn’t help but blurt out that sentence. “Isn’t this directly below the mother tree? The Third Princess clearly jumped down from here previously, so why isn’t she here?”

Jiang Yucheng coldly said, “This black soil moves. After such a long time, she might’ve gone to a place we don’t know of.”

Elder Qiuxi slapped his forehead. “I actually forgot about this... Then, isn’t it much harder to find the Third Princess?”

Nobody spoke to answer him.

Elder Qiuxi finally felt a little awkward.

At this point, Mu Qinghe and the rest also caught up with them.

When Ye Ranran saw that woman’s face, she gasped. “I-isn’t she the new disciple that Jiu Xing Alliance accepted?”

Among all the Jiu Xing Alliance disciples, she had the deepest impression of this woman. She didn’t expect to meet this woman again in such a scenario!

Chu Liuyue nodded. "It's her."

"How can it be... Aren't Jiu Xing Alliance's people extra protective of her? Oh right, where are the other Jiu Xing Alliance disciples?" muttered Ye Ranran softly as she turned around to survey the surroundings. However, she didn't discover anybody.

"There seems to be only herself here. The other people from Jiu Xing Alliance are all not around." Chu Liuyue shook her head.

After she confirmed this woman's identity earlier, she already checked the surroundings and didn't see an extra figure anywhere.

Mu Qinghe scrutinized that woman and said in a low voice, "She should've been separated from the rest and came here alone. Then, she was squeezed to death by the rolling leaf fir."

Upon closer look, her body did have the signs of being tightly wound by something.

"...That rolling leaf fir is really terrifying..." Ye Ranran was scared, and she looked conflicted.

She originally wanted to find a chance to get Jiu Xing Alliance's people to repay this debt, but she didn't expect...

Now, she had already guessed what happened before. *The wilted trees... Perhaps they all have people trapped underneath! In this case, it means that the thousand-plus people that came to the Mystic Forest are all in such a scenario. We don't know how many of them have already quietly died here like this woman!*

Thinking of this, it really chilled one's heart.

"She wasn't constricted to death by the root." A crisp and calm voice suddenly sounded.

The crowd kept quiet.

Mu Qinghe looked at Chu Liuyue. "What did you say?"

Chu Liuyue raised her chin. Her gaze was light, but her eyes were stable and stubborn. "She shouldn't look like this if she was constricted to death by the root."

Mu Qinghe went two steps closer and used the light from the fire to have a clearer view. Shock then flashed across his eyes.

He kept quiet for a moment and finally nodded. "I saw wrongly. She shouldn't have died because of this."

*I've seen what people look like when they're constricted to death by the root, and this woman... Her death is too strange and weird! But the weirder thing is...*

Chu Liuyue continued, "Her body's force completely disappeared."

Mu Qinghe pressed his lips against each other. *This is also what I just found out.*

“What does that mean?” Mu Hongyu couldn’t help but ask when she heard this as she comforted Ye Ranran.

Chu Liuyue explained, “After a cultivator dies, the force accumulated in their body won’t immediately disappear even if their life is gone. This is especially so for people who have decent abilities and talents... Within her muscles, blood, and bones, there must be a lot of force. She looked like she died not long ago, but all the force in her body is gone.”

Chu Liuyue’s words attracted the crowd’s attention.

“I knew it!” Lei Laosi had a high cultivation level and was naturally more sensitive toward this. “Her body’s force seemed to have been sucked away by something very cleanly, without leaving a single trace behind! Wait a minute! Her pearl of essence also seems to be destroyed?!”

Lei Laosi used his force to check, and he looked stunned.

Jiang Yucheng’s lashes moved, and he looked down slightly.

Chu Liuyue saw this clearly from the side, and she chuckled in her heart. *It seems like Jiang Yucheng clearly knows what Shangguan Wan is doing. If I didn’t recall wrongly, this woman has a Dijing Yuan meridian.*

“It seems like something has absorbed her strength, and the rolling leaf fir was just a convenient tool,” said Qin Yi lightly.

The crowd fell into silence together.

This was probably the only possibility in this situation.

“What exactly used such a ruthless and horrifying method?” Ye Ranran was young and had never witnessed such a scene before, so she was petrified and enraged.

Elder Qiuxi was very worried. “I didn’t know that there’s actually such a terrible thing in this place! We must find the Third Princess as soon as possible! If not...”

Chu Liuyue’s lips curled up undetectably. “Elder Qiuxi, you don’t have to worry. The Third Princess is very blessed, and she’ll definitely be safe and sound even if others meet with danger.”

Elder Qiuxi was stumped as he felt that Chu Liuyue’s words sounded weird, but he didn’t know how to retort her, so he could only fling his sleeves. “Anyway, it’s most important to find the Third Princess first!”

Chu Liuyue couldn’t be bothered with her. *I’m afraid Shangguan Wan doesn’t want us to find her now.*

“Save me! Save me!” A hoarse cry for help could be heard from far away.

Chu Liuyue found this voice familiar, and she looked in the direction of the sound.

Mu Hongyu’s eyes widened. “It’s Senior Brother Zhu Hong’s voice!”

*It's actually someone from Dragon Teeth Mountain?*

Mu Hongyu was very worried, but she was stopped by Qin Yi when she wanted to go over. "If you leave this barrier, you'll be sucked by this black soil in less than 15 minutes."

Mu Hongyu was shocked and stopped in her tracks as she looked anxious. "B-but that's Senior Brother Zhu Hong..."

"It's not only him," said Chu Liuyue suddenly.

There seemed to be quite a few people in that dark shadow.

She gave Mu Hongyu a reassuring look. "Don't worry. I'll go take a look."

Then, she flew in that direction.

Perhaps it was because of the red-tailed phoenix, but she clearly could move around much more freely as compared to the others.

Mu Hongyu nodded and stared at her closely.

Lei Laosi hurriedly followed her.

“Save me... cough, cough! Save—” The nearer she got, the clearer Zhu Hong’s voice was.

He struggled in the black soil with much difficulty, and he dragged along a few people that had fainted.

The surroundings were pitch black, and their bodies kept sinking in as the force in their body continuously flowed out.

His entire body seemed to be gradually turning cold, and a deep sense of hopelessness filled his heart. *Am I... really going to die here? When I came, I said that I wanted to take good care of the disciples in my clan... But now...*

Zhu Hong’s voice gradually became softer as he laughed bitterly. *Who can hear me when I cry for help in such a space? I have already exhausted my strength, and I really can’t hang on anymore...*

Zhu Hong closed his eyes.

“Zhu Hong?” A woman’s clear voice was suddenly heard.

Zhu Hong opened his eyes and tried his best to look over.

A figure was coming toward him.

The red light shone on her figure, and it was like a sharp knife that tore through the darkness, blooming in colorful light!

**Chapter 728: Suspicion**

At that moment, Zhu Hong thought that he was hallucinating. He closed his eyes, but he discovered that the person didn't disappear. Instead, that person continued walking toward this side.

And... he had seen this face before!

"C-Chu Liuyue?!" muttered Zhu Hong in disbelief.

Chu Liuyue had already arrived in front of him. When she saw Zhu Hong's situation, she gathered her focus. *More than half of his body has already sunk into this black soil, and he's still dragging four people behind him. It looks like they've all fainted, and they're all relying on Zhu Hong using a string to tie all of them together so that they don't get separated from each other. But Zhu Hong's face is ghastly, and he's hanging onto his last breath as if he has exhausted most of his energy and can't hold on any longer.*

Chu Liuyue immediately stretched out her hand. "Zhu Hong, give me your hand."

Seeing this white and slim hand, Zhu Hong finally realized: *This is really Chu Liuyue!*

Zhu Hong stretched out his hand dazedly.

Lei Laosi immediately went forward, grabbed Zhu Hong's wrist, and exerted strength. *How can I let Her Highness do this kind of thing...*

Lei Laosi was very strong and had natural godly powers, so he easily dragged the few people out.



Before Zhu Hong could even react, he was already away from the terrifying soil.

Lei Laosi set up a barrier and covered the few of them. This way, they wouldn't drop down so easily anymore.

Chu Liuyue smiled and glanced at Lei Laosi. "Thank you so much for helping, Big Brother Lei."

Lei Laosi's eyelids twitched. *I haven't seen Her Highness in such a long time. How did she suddenly become such a jokester? Hearing the calls of 'Big Brother' is really making my legs go weak!*

"Y-you're welcome! I should do it, I should do it!" Lei Laosi coughed and turned away.

Chu Liuyue teased him, and her lips curled up slightly before she looked toward Zhu Hong and the few people he brought along. *They're indeed people from Dragon Teeth Mountain.*

Chu Liuyue took out a bottle of pills and handed it to Zhu Hong. "Recover your energy."

Zhu Hong instinctively lifted his hand and accepted the pill bottle.

When he opened the bottle, an intense fragrance wafted toward his nose.

Zhu Hong was shocked. *The standard of these pills isn't low, and the herbs needed to refine them are very precious. It's extremely hard for normal people to have one pill, yet Chu Liuyue has an entire bottle! However, she is so willing to give it to me, which proves her generosity.*

Zhu Hong was originally a little embarrassed, but thinking about his current situation, he still chose to accept it after hesitating for a moment.

The pill immediately dissolved upon putting it into his mouth, and a gentle strength spread toward his limbs and bones from his chest.

Very quickly, Zhu Hong looked much better. He looked at Chu Liuyue with a conflicted gaze. "...I really don't know how to thank you."

He originally planned to help Chu Liuyue and the rest when they first came, but he didn't expect that they were the ones who helped him in the end...

"May I know who this is—" He glanced at Lei Laosi nervously. *I can confirm that this man didn't come with us, but he's extremely strong! Even just by standing in front of him, I can feel his vague suppression! Since when did Chu Liuyue know such a strong warrior?*

"This is Big Brother Lei Laosi. We accidentally bumped into him in the Mystic Forest, and he's helped us quite a bit." She looked at Lei Laosi again. "This is Zhu Hong. He's in charge of bringing the Dragon Teeth Mountain disciples over."

Lei Laosi scrutinized Zhu Hong.

Zhu Hong instantly became nervous.

“You’re a pretty loyal fellow!” Lei Laosi chuckled. “Not bad! You’re a real man!”

He could tell that if Zhu Hong wanted to escape by himself, he could totally do it. However, he still chose to bring all these people along.

It was rare to have such determination.

Zhu Hong heaved a sigh of relief and smiled bitterly and helplessly. “We’re all from the same clan, and this is what I should do. However... I’m still useless in the end. If it wasn’t because I met you, I’m afraid—”

Then, he passed the jade bottle back to Chu Liuyue.

But Chu Liuyue shook her head. “Keep this item first. You can feed them a pill later when we find a better location.”

There seemed to be a warm liquid circulating in Zhu Hong’s heart as his lips moved. Finally, he said two words seriously: “Thank you!”

Chu Liuyue smiled. “We’ll go over there first. Hongyu is very worried about you.”

“Hongyu is there too?” Zhu Hong widened his eyes in shock.

Chu Liuyue lightly nodded and was about to turn around.

*Smack!*

An air-piercing sound was heard.

Chu Liuyue's gaze focused, and she looked up.

She saw a root as thick as an adult's waist suddenly fly over—it was ferocious and very fast!

Zhu Hong's expression changed. "Quickly, escape! This thing is dangerous!"

*We previously met with this thing, so we ended up in that state!*

Chu Liuyue's eyes turned cold and sharp as she flung her hand.

A sharp dagger flew out!

*Whoosh!*

The dagger directly cut the root apart from the middle, and red liquid immediately exploded out. The bloody smell was so intense that it was suffocating.

That tree root thrashed around crazily as if it wanted to go near them again.

Chu Liuyue sneered coldly. The next moment, two thin flying blades flew out of the dagger!

She heard two continuous sounds!

That root was actually cut uniformly!

*Bam!*

Two parts of the root fell down at the same time, and the soil moved and quickly drowned them.

Chu Liuyue raised her hand, and the dagger flew back. The two thin flying blades that were like a pair of cicada wings quickly stuck back on it.

It was very clean and didn't leave a trace behind.

Chu Liuyue glanced at it in satisfaction and retracted the dagger.

The entire process was very smooth, and it ended in one breath.

Zhu Hong watched on with his eyes wide open and mouth agape. *W-what did Chu Liuyue do just now? She actually settled the maniacal root so easily?!*

Chu Liuyue glanced at the half-root that escaped deeply and smiled slightly. "Let's go!"

...

At the same time, on the other side.

Shangguan Wan lowly grunted, and blood oozed out of the corner of her mouth. She was shocked and enraged as her flushed face contorted.

The strange black symbol on her glabella also moved along.

*Someone actually stopped my attack so easily! Those few people are all talents with a Dijing Yuan meridian! Originally, I could already get them, but I didn't expect—*

"W-Who did it?" Shangguan Wan clenched her teeth tightly.

Even though her view was extensive and almost covered the entire Mystic Forest, there was a crucial point: She could only feel the existence of the people who had been trapped by the rolling leaf firs.

She didn't know about the rest, so she also couldn't guess who exactly did it.

*But... There are a few people who aren't within my view from the start—Chu Liuyue's people! Shangguan Wan couldn't help but suspect Chu Liuyue, but she wasn't too sure either. This was because she didn't feel that Chu Liuyue had such capabilities!*

*Could it be... There are some other strong existences here?! Shangguan Wan was extremely confused, but she only struggled with it for a while before she temporarily set the matter aside. *If this group of people won't do, I'll change to someone else! I've already healed a quarter of my Yuan meridian. Without long, I can completely recover!**

A dark-green light flashed across the bottom of Shangguan Wan's eyes.

### **Chapter 729: Debate**

The moment Chu Liuyue turned around and was about to leave, Zhu Hong suddenly called after her. "Wait a minute!"

Chu Liuyue turned around and looked at him in confusion. "What, is there something else?"

Zhu Hong furrowed his brows and hesitantly pointed in the direction they came from. "Actually... When we first came over, we met a group of Black Guards. There are about a few dozen of them, and their situation isn't very optimistic... We were too far apart back then, and we just missed them. I don't know how they're doing now..."

Chu Liuyue paused. "You want me to go and help them?"

Zhu Hong looked hesitant. He didn't have such an idea at the beginning, but he started thinking about it when he saw that Lei Laosi was extremely capable and that Chu Liuyue's combat power couldn't be underestimated.

He wasn't actually related to the Black Guards, but he just felt that it was a pity if they lost their lives like that. However, he also knew that he was making a forceful request.

In this hellhole, it was already very hard to protect one's life. How would they have the additional energy to help others?

If he had such an ability, he would do it himself. However, it was a pity that even he had to depend on Chu Liuyue and the rest to help him so that he could forcefully survive.

He had received enough favors from them. How could he ask them to do anything else?

"...No..." Zhu Hong kept quiet for a moment and finally shook his head.

But once he said that, he was interrupted by Chu Liuyue. "Where are they?"

"What?" Zhu Hong looked at Chu Liuyue in shock and couldn't react in time.

Chu Liuyue saw his expression and could tell what he was thinking. "In our group of people, there's also the Black Guard's Lieutenant Mu. Both logically and emotionally, we should save them."

Then, she looked at Lei Laosi. "Big Brother Lei, may I trouble you to get everyone here so that we can go together?"



“Okay!” Lei Laosi actually didn’t have much interest in this, but since Her Highness had this plan, he must carry it out to the best of his abilities.

Lei Laosi turned around and quickly ran back.

Watching Lei Laosi’s figure quickly disappear, Zhu Hong finally recovered his senses as he looked at Chu Liuyue with his mouth agape. “Y-you really want to go over?”

*Chu Liuyue does know how much energy it would cost to save people here, right?*

*“Why won’t I?” Chu Liuyue’s lips curled up slightly, and her gaze was clear as pride filled her eyes. Mu Qinghe was the one who brought these Black Guards up, but at the end of the day, they were once my soldiers! If Shangguan Wan wants to use these people to craft her future by stealing their strength... She has to ask me first!*

Zhu Hong looked at the woman in front dazedly.

She clearly had the appearance of a beautiful young woman, and there was a smile plastered on her face. But for some reason, she had a vague elegance to her as if she looked down on the rest of the world.

Zhu Hong instantly felt more assured. It was as if she could definitely do it when she said she wanted to save those people!

It was the elegance and pride that exuded from her bones, which weren’t something that ordinary people had.

*Didn't they say that Chu Liuyue had an ordinary background? But now, it seems like she's very different from the rumors! Thinking of how I even said that I wanted to take care of the people from Chong Xu Cabinet... Zhu Hong's face turned red. All of us have underestimated Chu Liuyue!*

...

Lei Laosi quickly brought the remaining people over.

Once Mu Hongyu saw Zhu Hong and the rest's disheveled looks, she was worried and hurriedly asked, "Senior Brother Zhu Hong, how are all of you?"

"Fine—we're fine. Liuyue and B-Big Brother Lei saved us just now, and they even gave us pills. At this point, we're mostly fine." Seeing that Mu Hongyu was safe and sound, Zhu Hong heaved a sigh of relief as well. "It's good that all of you are safe. When we saw that you disappeared at the beginning, we were still quite worried..."

*But now, it seems like all the worries were for nothing. It seems like it was safest to follow Chu Liuyue's group.*

Mu Hongyu then heaved a sigh of relief.

Other than Zhu Hong, the rest of them were in a coma and looked disheveled. However, Zhu Hong did indeed look much better.

"We coincidentally met with a small acci—forget it. All of this isn't important, and we can talk about it later. It's most important that we're all safe."

Mu Hongyu looked at Chu Liuyue with gratitude. "Thank you, Liuyue!"

Chu Liuyue smiled. "Zhu Hong and the rest helped us first, so we should return the favor."

Zhu Hong instantly became embarrassed. *The thing that Chu Liuyue is talking about... It shouldn't be us speaking up for them at Ping Liang Square, right... How can that be considered help? Chu Liuyue saved our lives!*

"Zhu Hong, you said that there are some Black Guards there?" said Mu Qinghe directly as he questioned with a low voice.

Zhu Hong's expression became much more stern as he nodded. "I did see some people just now, but I don't know if they're still there now. But it hasn't been long, so we should be able to find them successfully."

Mu Qinghe nodded. "I'm afraid you'll have to lead the way then."

"Lieutenant Mu, you don't have to be polite," said Zhu Hong immediately. Then, he lifted his legs and was about to walk in that direction.

"Stop right there!" A very frustrated voice was heard—it was Elder Qiuxi.

He had a very ugly expression as he looked at Mu Qinghe. "Lieutenant Mu, are you really planning to save those people now? Did you forget that our current task is to find the Third Princess?! If you go and save those Black Guards now, what should we do about the Third Princess? If this delays our search for the Third Princess, can you take responsibility for it, Lieutenant Mu?"

Mu Qinghe's everlasting icy face finally had a tinge of frustration and sharpness. "I never said that I didn't want to go look for the Third Princess, but we don't have any news of her now, not even a single clue. Even if we want to search, where should we go and find her? As the Black Guard's lieutenant, I naturally have the responsibility to save my own men! Elder Qiuxi, you have been worried about the Third Princess all along, so why don't you go look for her yourself?"

"You..." Elder Qiuxi's face flashed white and red, and he was about to scold when he met with Mu Qinghe's harsh and sinister gaze. His heart trembled, and he swallowed his remaining words.

"Elder Qiuxi, if you don't plan to look for the Third Princess yourself and want to follow us, then please don't mention this again. We know very clearly what we should do and what we should not do. Elder Qiuxi, you don't have to teach us about this." Mu Qinghe's words were very crude, and he didn't give Elder Qiuxi any face at all.

Elder Qiuxi had never been reprimanded like this in public before, and he was so angry that his teeth were itchy. He looked at Jiang Yucheng, but he saw that the latter didn't have any plans of speaking up.

It was obvious that he was standing on Mu Qinghe's side.

Elder Qiuxi secretly hated him.

Mu Qinghe had been very low-key for more than a year, especially because he was the Princess's confidant in the past. He had been very meticulous with his words and behavior, so Elder Qiuxi thought that he was superior to Mu Qinghe.

He didn't expect that when Mu Qinghe was determined, he was no different from before.

Mu Qinghe looked at Zhu Hong. "Please lead the way."

### **Chapter 730: Retaliation!**

Then, under Zhu Hong's leadership, the crowd went forward and quickly rushed in the direction they came from.

Elder Qiuxi was angered, and he finally shut his mouth honestly.

This way, everyone had a peaceful time.

Zhu Hong first gave the few of them medicine respectively. In the end, the few of them woke up respectively during the journey not long later.

The good thing was that the few of them weren't too injured. With the effects from Chu Liuyue's pill, they could forcefully follow the rest.

After a while, Zhu Hong finally stopped but gradually knitted his brows. This was because... This place was only left with a few corpses that were about to be completely drowned.

Judging from their clothes and appearances, they were indeed Black Guards. However, the other few dozen people were missing.

"Those people were here previously... Why are there only a few of them left now..." muttered Zhu Hong.

Mu Qinghe surveyed his surroundings, and his face was so cold that it seemed like a layer of frost was on his face. "The black soil is moving much faster than before."

Chu Liuyue and the rest hadn't come here before, so they couldn't compare. But the remaining people, including Jiang Yucheng, all realized this after a close inspection.

"As expected... Perhaps it's because of this that those people left this area?" Zhu Hong guessed. "It's just that I don't know what their situation is now..."

Everything would be fine if they were alive, but if they were dead...

"It should be the commotion caused by that mother tree," said Mu Qinghe as he looked up.

That was the direction the black soil was flowing toward.

After stopping for a moment, he went forward first.

However, Chu Liuyue purposely slowed down and walked next to Qin Yi. "Big Brother Qin, the seal you talked about just now... What exactly is it?"

Qin Yi lightly shook his head. "I only know that there's a seal below, but I've never personally seen it before. Hence, I don't know it very clearly."

Then, he silently glanced at Tuan Zi.

Chu Liuyue's heart tingled slightly. *He's saying... Tuan Zi might know a thing or two?*

Tuan Zi blinked.

Chu Liuyue confirmed it in her heart. *It seems like it does understand it.*

"Tuan Zi, why didn't you speak up the whole time?" Chu Liuyue asked in her heart.

Tuan Zi buried its head in her shoulders. *Because I don't want you to go!*

It had stayed here for quite some time and had vaguely guessed something. There probably was something that shouldn't be trifled with under the seal.

Since the start, it didn't wish to implicate Chu Liuyue. Thus, it didn't say anything the whole time.

Chu Liuyue patted its head, and it retracted its expression a little.

*Tuan Zi has already broken through to become a legendary fiend. It was probably something formidable for it to be so fearful. And Shangguan Wan... She vaguely felt that something was amiss. But since we were already here and there's no way to move back, we can only go for it!*

The few of them continued walking forward.

...

They were very fast, and after about ten minutes or so, they finally heard some sounds coming from the front.

Mu Qinghe immediately looked over and faintly saw a group of figures.

They were the Black Guards, but they numbered much more than what Zhu Hong had said. Giving a rough estimate, there were at least a hundred people.

Mu Qinghe was about to go over when he suddenly realized that those few people were all tightly bound by the tree roots, especially those on the outer side. They were all filled with injuries and hanging onto their last breaths.

A few of them were already unconscious. Nobody knew if they fainted, or...

Those few roots seemed to be trying to separate them, but the crowd of soldiers was huddled together tightly as they continuously struggled with those crazy roots.

The scene looked very tragic.

The crowd that followed all fell into silence, and they couldn't hide their shock when they saw this scene.



Mu Qinghe's expression was terrifyingly cold, and he immediately wanted to go forward.

"Lieutenant Mu, I think it's inappropriate if you suddenly rush forward like that, right?" said Chu Liuyue suddenly.

Mu Qinghe turned around, and his gaze was knife-like. "What do you want to say?"

Chu Liuyue smiled and pointed toward the place where the roots were entangled. "As long as we solve this, we can naturally save them. If not, you're just wasting your efforts."

Mu Qinghe looked at Chu Liuyue calmly for a while, and the anger and impulsiveness in his heart gradually subsided. *Chu Liuyue is right. Given the current situation, we need to act sensibly, not rashly. The previous scene was too impactful toward me, so I almost just rushed over instantly.*

"You have a way?"

She nodded. "Yes."

...

A tree root flew over.

Shangguan Wan raised her hand, and she gently slid her hand across the roots.

That fresh blood rapidly entered her palms and then went toward the dark-green fireball in her dantian. The nourished force then flowed out of the fireball and spread toward Shangguan Wan's limbs and bones.

Detecting that another portion of her Yuan meridian had healed, Shangguan Wan sighed deeply. *Having strength again... It feels too great!*

She already couldn't remember how long she had waited for this day.

*As long as I just persist for a while longer and absorb enough energy, I can completely recover!* Shangguan Wan flicked the root away and looked at her hands.

Her skin had already gradually turned from the initial blood-red color to a normal color. *I believe that without long, I can—*

Suddenly, Shangguan Wan's face changed. Her chest heaved up and down violently until her legs went soft, and she kneeled on the ground.

The pure gold armor hit the stone table and made a low sound.

Shangguan Wan's gaze almost broke. *The net I had meticulously set up was directly cut down by someone! That was a total of a hundred-plus people! If I had succeeded this time, I would basically recover completely! However, I was actually stopped by someone just like that!*

The energy erupted in Shangguan Wan's chest, and it almost tore her organs apart.

Blood kept oozing out of her mouth, and it rapidly spread across the ground. Some of it even landed on the front of the pure gold armor.

“Who is it? I must cut you up into pieces!” Shangguan Wan hollered as her eyes turned red, and her expression turned maniacal.

Suddenly, the air in front of her started vibrating violently. Then, a rainbow light flashed across.

A red ball of fire containing a tremendous force went toward her glabella.