
A Step into The Past

Book 08

Huang Yi

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Chapter 1

Zhao's Resident

When Xiang Shaolong returned to the residence, Teng Yi who had been waiting for a while said, "Yanran is waiting in your room now."

Once he heard this, he furrowed his brows, and said worriedly, "Both Li Yuan and Lord Longyang will send someone to watch over her movement, by coming here so rashly looking for me, sooner or later she will be found out."

Teng Yi smiled, "I've already asked her this question. She said she's used to being constantly watched, so she's already trained two substitutes. This way she can temporarily get away from the people who obsessively pestered her to do things she likes to do. Unless someone dares to charge in her room, otherwise there is no way to know which one is the fake one, so she told me not to worry."

Then he continued, quietly whispering, "Third Brother, you're unbelievable. I can see that she's so in love with you that she can't even control herself. With a pretty girl like her falling for you, aren't you going to thoroughly enjoy this world's greatest pleasure?"

Xiang Shaolong can feel Ji Yanran's astonishing charm, that even this man of iron will could barely escape her charming attraction. Grinning, he was about to quickly return to his room so that he could transfer the lust stirred-up by Zhao Zhi and her sister on Ji Yanran's beautiful body when Teng Yi stopped

him in the hallway towards his room.

Surprised, he turned towards Teng Yi, who looked at him with a determined expression, "I want to kill Tian Dan."

Xiang Shaolong was startled, suddenly remembering the tragic ending of Teng Yi's family, which in reality, indirectly came about due to Xiao Weimou's orders given by the mastermind Tian Dan. And now, Teng Yi's beloved wife, Shan Lan's whole family's massacre was also due to Tian Dan. No matter what, it's hard for Teng Yi to take this lying down. Xiang Shaolong can't help but feel a headache when thinking about this.

Everyone knew that Tian Dan was one of the Warring States' period most fearful figures, not that different from Prince Xinling, and killing him is harder than ascending the Heaven. Besides they're already busy with their own affairs and are in no condition to complicate themselves further.

Teng Yi placed his hand on Xiang Shaolong's shoulder and solemnly said, "I know Third Brother is currently in a difficult position, we'll just wait for the opportunity to come up! I'm not one who will act rashly without weighing the consequences."

Xiang Shaolong breathed a sigh of relief, "Second Brother's problem is also my problem. Even if I have to cut myself in half, I won't quibble over it at all.

Teng Yi was moved and patted Xiang Shaolong's shoulder before he turned around and left.

Xiang Shaolong fastened his steps, quickly arriving at the inner chamber. Ji Yanran, scented with a sweet smell, threw herself into his embrace and kissed him passionately.

As he was about to remove the face mask, Ji Yanran blushed, “Don’t! I want you to take me as Dong Kuang. Your display tonight made me thoroughly enchanted. Hai! Having to wait until now to be intimate with you, I already felt like I had gone through a bitter suffering.”

At that moment, Xiang Shaolong was also burning with desire, his hands wasting no time in moving hurriedly over her arousing body, as he said with a smile, “When can Learned Lady Ji publicly surrender to Old Dong?”

Ji Yanran blushed as if she is drunk with wine, and gasped for breath, “Anytime is fine. Yanran really can’t bear a moment of separation with husband anymore.”

Xiang Shaolong laughed out loud, “No separation between men and woman can have two explanations, which is the one that Learned Lady Ji refers to?”

Under the ministrations of his wanton hands, Ji Yanran trembled and panted, “Either explanation is fine, I’ll leave it all for Master Dong to decide.”

Xiang Shaolong kissed her lips deeply and at the same time, roughly embracing her and moving towards the bed. Sitting at the edge of the bed, he let her snuggle in his embrace, still not letting go of her small lips. His empty left hand slipped through her front garment, wandering over her tender breast, fondling, rubbing and pinching.

Ji Yanran's passion burst out suddenly.

Xiang Shaolong is after all a veteran in this and would not hurry towards the climax. He released her scorching hot lips and said with a smile, "I, Dong Kuang, probably am the only lucky person in the whole wide world who can confirm that Yanran is not made of stone at all, but even more bold and unrestrained compared to other beautiful girls."

Ji Yanran reluctantly opened her eyes, "You can tease me however you like. Ai! I can't believe that you don't even need to a handsome face to become the jinx of all women. Tonight, I saw Zhao Ya, Zhao Zhi and that Guo Xiu'er, were almost moved to tears by the touchingly sad parable. That was one splendid and vivid story! Even Li Yuan was crazily jealous of you."

Xiang Shaolong felt ashamed deep inside and suddenly remembered something, "Have you crossed swords with Li Yuan?"

Ji Yanran suddenly sobered up from her euphoric state, slightly nodded, "Yanran's really muddled, I forgot everything when I saw you. Xiang Lang needs to be very careful with this person. His sword skill is quick, strange and elegant, not only wonderful to watch but also deadly. Although none of us emerged the winner, I already know that I'm not his equal and that he was giving in to me. Therefore his swordsmanship can only be described as unfathomable. From what I see... oh!"

The more Xiang Shaolong heard, the more alarmed he felt. Last time, he only won by a narrow margin with Ji Yanran. He could not gain the upper hand even if he tried with all his might, not to mention about giving in to her. From

this comparison, Li Yuan's sword skill must be even better than his was before. Luckily after he found Mohist Swordplay's Addendum, his sword skill advanced by leaps and bounds, otherwise, he could only admit defeat now.

Even though Ji Yanran did not finish her words, her underlying meaning is that Xiang Shaolong couldn't possibly beat Li Yuan, but she just couldn't bear to say it out loud! He was secretly breaking out in cold sweat. This Li Yuan, regardless of literature or sword skills, has the conditions to make Ji Yanran admire him.

It's just that he already had a head start, plus he was borrowing the 21st century's knowledge, that's the why he could win him. Otherwise, in the battle for love to win Ji Yanran's hand, he could only be the loser nursing his grievance.

Ji Yanran saw that he was speechless and thought that his pride was hurt, so she said apologetically, "One never knows who the ultimate winner will be in a contest between the highly skilled, but I still don't wish for you to fight with him, not because I believe that Xiang Lang would undoubtedly lose, but because I don't wish you to take this risk. Oh! What is the worth of an ordinary person's bravery? To be able to win on the battlefield is the true hero."

This was what's called digging oneself deeper into the hole. Xiang Shaolong knows that in Ji Yanran's eyes he doesn't look promising when compared. He smiled bitterly, "Love is like a battlefield. Li Yuan failed in winning through literature, so he will try winning by sword so as to humiliate me in front of you. Everyone knows that Learned Lady Ji is looking for a husband who is

unparalleled in both literature and sword skills. Li Yuan is trying to prove that he is this ideal person.”

Ji Yanran smiled, “Love is like a battlefield, how well said. Now, besides you, I have no interest towards others anymore. Do you think Ji Yanran is a woman that constantly changes her heart like a loose woman?”

Xiang Shaolong joyfully said, “Of course you’re not like that, but you’re our loosed woman shared by both me and ‘Horse Fanatic’ Dong, so it’s impossible to not be lascivious, is Learned Lady Ji going to disagree?”

Ji Yanran’s face turned red, raised an eye at him, leaned closer to his ear, “Then Yanran can only accept fate, for a married woman must obey her husband. Since my husband wants me to serve 2 men, I have no choice but be lascivious. Yanran can only resign oneself to adversity.”

Xiang Shaolong laughed out loud, embraced her and lied down on the bed all at once. Sure enough, Ji Yanran lost whatever restrain she had, becoming his dedicated promiscuous woman.

After two breaks, this beautiful woman cuddled in his embrace like a sheep, the corners of her mouth curved up with a satisfied smile, listening to Xiang Shaolong whispering sweet nothings in her ears, words that she will never tire of.

As a 20th century person, Xiang Shaolong does not have the behavior of men during this era who considers women as slaves. He understood the reasoning that women need love and care, so all women that have been intimate with

him enjoys a happiness that is hard to find in this era.

Listening to his words like ‘You’re my soul, you’re my life’ and other words like that, Ji Yanran was so happy that she kissed him to show her gratefulness.

Xiang Shaolong was definitely in love with this enchantingly beautiful woman.

After another hot kiss, Ji Yanran heaved a sigh, “If I can quickly become pregnant with Xiang Lang’s own flesh and blood, Yanran will feel satisfied and fulfilled.”

Xiang Shaolong at once felt cold sweat running down his body, secretly thinking that this is a big problem, and could only hum and haw as a reply.

As Ji Yanran was intoxicated with hope and joy, she didn’t notice his dissent expression. Recalling something, she asked, “What is your relationship with Zhao Ya? Why does Li Yuan think that getting her could hurt you?”

Xiang Shaolong remembered the love hate relationship he had with Zhao Ya, and smiled wryly, “Li Yuan probably saw me paying attention to her frequently and thought that I am interested in her. But in actual fact it’s another thing altogether and I have already told you everything about what happened in the past.”

Ji Yanran replied, “I naturally understands husband’s intention and knows that you are the type that considers old relationship, so you still feel a bit of

love left towards Zhao Ya. She really doesn't know how to cherish herself, letting herself fall to this state, but this type of woman on the contrary can really attract men. I think both Li Yuan and Han Chuang are captivated by her already."

All of a sudden, she grabbed his shoulder and seriously said, "You need to pay attention to Zhao Zhi. I saw that Li Yuan and Han Chuang are also interested in her. Men like them, if they want to win a woman, they will resort to despicable methods."

Xiang Shaolong knew that she is very observant, so he was shocked once he heard this. If that really happens, Jing Jun won't be able to take such a blow.

Ji Yanran bashfully looked down at her own breast, biting her lips, "Is it alright if Xiang Shaolong or Dong Kuang come love me again?"

Xiang Shaolong couldn't help laughing, "We'll just do it together, alright? Seems like I don't even need to teach you to become a s.lut."

Ji Yanran was too embarrassed and pouted and at once the room was imbued with lust, indescribable loving and touching.

The next morning, Xiang Shaolong slept till the sun passed the 2nd pole before forced himself to wake up, patting the bed beside him only to find it empty. Shocked, he sobered up before he realized that she had left.

Getting off the bed, he saw on Ji Yanran's bedside the note that she wrote in her delicate and pretty handwriting, mainly to say that she couldn't bear to

wake him and so she left by herself. There were unavoidably words describing how unbearable it is to be separated, hoping that one day she can forever enjoy those sweet and charming words till sunlight.

Xiang Shaolong kneaded his backbone, remembering last night's preposterous activity and felt both joy and shock.

What's joyful was the boundless aftertaste. What's shocking was that he himself was so exhausted that he didn't even know when she left.

Last night, before the loving with Ji Yanran, he was already entangled with Zhao Zhi and her sister once, even though they did not complete the act, but his lust was continuously stirred up and that makes it easier for a person to be exhausted.

While washing and dressing, Han Chuang arrived looking for him.

Xiang Shaolong received him in the outer hall. After sitting, Han Chuang struck the table and laughed, "Brother Dong's performance last night was incredible. Who knows you might be able to receive Learned Lady Ji's favor without the aphrodisiac. If you succeed, would you mind a sharing the cup with me, so I can have a taste of her flavor?"

Xiang Shaolong almost wanted to kill this pervert with a punch but on the outside he perfunctorily said, "Marquis, you're making fun of me, Learned Lady Ji was only interested in me briefly, it doesn't even count as having a chance with her."

Not waiting for the other party to have a chance to speak, he asked “After I left, how did Li Yuan react?”

Han Chuang replied with pleasure, “That fellow’s expression was very interesting, continuously rolling his eyes, seems like he hates you to the bone. As soon as Brother Dong left, Zhao Zhi, that beautiful girl, hurriedly took leave, did she come looking for Brother Dong?”

Xiang Shaolong secretly blamed Zhao Zhi and remembered that they encountered several Zhao soldiers so he had no choice but to admit the encounter. He showed a worried expression, “Don’t think that I got lucky or something. I did get chased by her, but only to get a lashing from her, she even nearly pulled out her sword and struck me. But I detest getting entangled with women or children, so I grudgingly endured her anger. Oh! Don’t mention it anymore.”

Han Chuang breathed a sigh of relief once he listened to what happened, “Can’t believe that there are so many top-of-the-line beautiful women here in Handan, that Guo Xiu’er is not too bad either, it’ll be a pity if she’s taken by Li Yuan.”

Xiang Shaolong secretly sighed, no wonder Han has weakened to this state, all because the Han’s government is controlled by men like the marquis, who only indulged in drinks and women. He said, “For the Sword Discussion gathering, has Marquis arranged a lesson to teach Li Yuan?”

Han Chuang said excitedly, “It’s funny when we think about it, this time it can be said that we three countries are uniting to deal with the heartless Chu

people. It turned out that Zhao Mu, Lord Longyang and me all coincidentally want to send our best swordsman to pass themselves off as one of Zhao Ba's men to teach Li Yuan a lesson. Let's see how this kid can avoid the misfortune of being disgraced in the field."

Xiang Shaolong remembered the pillow talk he had with Ji Yanran last night about her evaluation of Li Yuan's high level sword skill. He was secretly sighing, thinking that the result might be different from what Han Chuang originally wished for when Wu Guo arrived to report that Zhao Ya has come to look for him.

Xiang Shaolong naturally felt very embarrassed. Han Chuang's face suddenly became stiff as he said, "It seems like even Zhao Ya is also interested in you. Hey! That flirtatious woman is really very enticing, I better leave first then."

Xiang Shaolong of course wished he could scam quickly, but if he did that, Han Chuang would hold a grudge. He smiled, "Marquis, please remain, so we can give the Lady a pleasant surprise." Then he asked Wu Guo to invite Zhao Ya in.

Han Chuang naturally had no intention to leave, so he didn't argue. Then, he pulled up a polite expression. From this, it could be seen how infatuated he was with Zhao Ya.

Following Wu Guo, Zhao Ya, came in filled with a smile, causing Xiang Shaolong to be so confused. Could it be that when he left her last night, his scowl made her more in love with him instead?

The two of them stood up, welcoming her.

Zhao Ya, on seeing Han Chuang, felt slightly stunned, displaying a flash of unhappiness before resuming her smile and said, “So Marquis has also come here.”

Han Chuang smiled, “If I know that Lady is also coming, we could have come together, so we can have more time together.”

Xiang Shaolong knew immediately that both of them were together again last night. He felt so angry that he wanted to give Zhao Ya two tight slaps except that that besides thinking about it, he couldn't do anything else.

Zhao Ya couldn't believe that Han Chuang could expose their intimate relationship in front of Horse Fanatic Dong. She felt embarrassed and ashamed, and furious at the same time. Last night, she let Han Chuang remain because it was an inexplicable subconscious thought to exact revenge on Dong Kuang for his attitude. After she woke up this morning, she regretted her actions, and now being exposed in front Xiang Shaolong by Han Chuang, it is indeed extremely embarrassing and she bowed her head.

Xiang Shaolong reluctantly forced a smile, “Since that is the case, why don't I let Lady and Marquis use this place for more happy reunions.”

Han Chuang saw that he has made his stance clear that he wants to withdraw from the fight and was grateful. He smiled, “Brother Dong please don't do this, Lady came this time specially to visit, at the very most I can only be considered as company.”

Zhao Ya returned to her normal attitude, surreptitiously glanced at Xiang Shaolong, “I don’t have any particular business too. I was only passing by and was afraid that Mister Dong doesn’t know the way to the Zhaos’ Martial Arts School, so I thought that we might go together.”

She then ruthlessly glared at Han Chuang, her tone icy cold, “Marquis, if you don’t have any other business, please don’t let us hold you back! Zhao Ya has some questions regarding breeding horse that I would like to consult with Mister Dong.”

Han Chuang couldn’t believe that after last night’s coupling like they were man, this woman could suddenly change her tone and be so heartless, not leaving any leeway. Feeling furious inside, he respectfully replied, “So Lady can change into a different person in the daytime. Since that is the case, Marquis can only look for you at night then.”

Ignoring Xiang Shaolong’s persuasion to stay, he flicked his sleeves and left.

Leaving the two of them, the atmosphere turned unbearably awkward.

Zhao Ya was so angry, her face paled. After sitting down and drinking a cup of hot tea, she still couldn’t say a word.

Xiang Shaolong intentionally stayed silent and leisurely savored the hot tea.

After awhile, Zhao Ya couldn’t endure it anymore and said, “Is Mister Dong irritated that Zhao Ya is not more self-respecting?”

Xiang Shaolong leisurely sipped a gulp of tea again, his eyes glinting sharp radiance, observing her. Slowly he said, “Lady’s too sensitive. It’s all Lady’s personal business who you want to accompany at night. I don’t have any right to ask any question, even more so to say the right to be angry at Lady.”

Zhao Ya frowned and said worriedly, “It’s all because of you. Last night, all I can think about is accompanying you, but instead I got your heartless treatment. My heart felt cold and bitter, so...”

Xiang Shaolong became indefinably angry and interrupted her, “Your word is odd, Lady. You were still fooling around with Li Yuan during the day, is that what you meant by wholeheartedly wanting to accompany me? Even though I don’t consider myself to be a prude, I still wouldn’t be so shameless as to get myself entangled in this.”

These few sentences implied a great insult towards Zhao Ya. However, not only is she not angry, but her eyes became slightly red as she said, “Zhao Ya knows she’s wrong, if Mister Dong doesn’t resent me, Zhao Ya will observe the constraints as a woman should be in future. Can Mister Dong understand Zhao Ya’s feelings?”

Xiang Shaolong did not expect her to be so meek and subservient. A pleased feeling flitted through his heart as he sneered, “Lady is too serious. How could I have the right to detest you. Even if I do, I also won’t believe empty words.”

Suddenly he stood up and blandly said, “Lady clearly knows that Li Yuan is using Lady to hurt me, yet you still can’t help but throw yourself into his

embrace so who can guarantee that this situation won't be happening again? If I like someone, I definitely wouldn't be turning towards Li Yuan, Zhao Mu and Han Chuang, flitting from one to another. Lady, please go back! I have many businesses to attend to."

His sarcastic words were driven straight into Zhao Ya's heart. She finally could not tolerate it any further and stood up angrily, saying incensely, "Dong Kuang, you're great! Have you humiliated Zhao Ya enough! Are you the only man in the whole world? I want to see what kind of end you will have." She turned around and stalked off, not even turning her head once.

Xiang Shaolong was delighted, but also blamed himself allowing his feeling to take control. Under current circumstances, offending this s.lut with the most influence in Handan brings only harm but not advantage. However, he couldn't care too much now.

After finding Teng Yi and talking to him for a while, he then made his way to the Zhao Martial Arts School.

The Zhao Martial Arts School was located in the east of Handan, occupying a wide ground. They not only have several connecting compounds to form the main building, but there's also a practice courtyard, shooting range and horse tracks that were specially set up to train warriors. Only after careful selection, the talented ones will be recommended to the Zhao military. So Zhao Ba is undoubtedly the state of Zhao's head army instructor, holding an exalted position and real power.

The Sword Discussion gathering will be held in the training ground in front of

the main residence.

When Xiang Shaolong arrived, it so happened that the warriors in the school were split into 3 pairs, practicing using wooden swords and long spears with the sharp points wrapped up. On one side, there were more than 200 seated warriors and on the other side, there was a big stand where seats were set up.

Xiang Shaolong was briefly late. Lord Longyang, Zhao Mu, Le Cheng, Guo Kai, Han Chuang, Guo Zhong, Guo Xiu'er and the others had arrived. However, he did not see Zhao Ya, whom he angered earlier and Li Yuan and Ji Yanran still hadn't appeared as well.

In addition, there were several military officers and dozens of warriors who look like house warriors who were chatting in groups; no one paid any attention to the show on the training ground.

Zhao Ba were talking to Zhao Mu and Guo Zhong when he saw Xiang Shaolong and welcomed him with pleasure, "In any occasion that Mister Dong attends, there won't be any awkward silences, come! Let me introduce you our school's 4 main instructors."

He led Xiang Shaolong towards the stand where Zhao Zhi and the 4 instructors were standing.

Zhao Zhi saw Xiang Shaolong and she pouted disdainfully before purposefully walking away to search for Guo Xiu'er to talk. On seeing that girl's anger, Xiang Shaolong started to feel apologetic.

When those 4 instructors saw Xiang Shaolong, they all revealed a look of concentration as they sized him up.

Zhao Ba smiled at them and said, “This is the person that I’ve mentioned to you often, Mister Dong Kuang.”

Those four promptly greeted him.

After Xiang Shaolong said a few polite words, Zhao Ba introduced the biggest and tallest one amongst them, a man only slightly shorter than Xiang Shaolong by an inch and said, “Dai Feng is our school’s number one instructor. His sword skill within the Zhao border is well-known. This time we will let him test the boastful lad, let’s see how awesome he can be.”

This Dai Feng’s figure was stout, with a thick waist, around 30 years of age. His bearing was calm and composed. The other three was a little bit nervous, far different from his cold demeanor.

Xiang Shaolong saw that his sword was hanging on his right waist and his left hand was also more powerful and sturdy than his right hand, apparently he’s used to using his left hand to deal with his enemies. From the right-handed swordsman’s perspective, the left-handed sword is the hardest to defend, whereas for the left-handed swordsman, he is used to fighting with right-handed swordsmen. Just from this point, the left-handed swordsman already has the advantage.

The other three were Huang Yan, Cheng Heng and Lu Zhirong. All were very polite towards Xiang Shaolong.

Cheng Heng whispered, "I heard that Mister Dong was ambushed by Li Yuan's underlings, Dai Feng will help you extract your revenge from him."

Xiang Shaolong speculated that these people must have thought that his sword skill was average, but this is a good thing, so he thanked him at once.

At this time, Li Yuan arrived, and surprisingly accompanied by Zhao Ya, following behind him were ten odd of his family warriors. The burly one who left a big impression on Xiang Shaolong when they ambushed him was shockingly amongst them.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly furious. Li Yuan seemed totally unconcerned that he'll be exposed and it clearly shows that he holds no regards for him at all, knowing that Xiang Shaolong can't do anything to him.

Zhao Ya was very affectionate with Li Yuan. Han Chuang, who was chatting with Zhao Zhi and Guo Xiu'er, on seeing this, changed his expression.

After Zhao Ba excused himself from Xiang Shaolong, he led Dai Feng and the other instructors to welcome them.

Li Yuan was wearing a martial art uniform, fitted with shoulder armors, wrist band, breast shield and sleeveless leather garment. He looked very awe-inspiring and insufferably arrogant.

Zhao Zhi and the other girls stared blankly at him.

Even though Xiang Shaolong saw that this turn of event was not too

encouraging, he's helpless to do anything about it.

Zhao Mu came beside him and whispered, "Let's see how long this kid can stay arrogant?"

Xiang Shaolong replied in a deep voice, "Who have you prepared to deal with him?"

Zhao Mu proudly said, "I will send out a swordsman, named Luo Xiang. With him alone, it will be more than enough to handle Li Yuan. We also have Lord Longyang's household's number one swordsman, Jiao Xu and Han Chuang's follower, Han's famous swordsman, Fu Jianyin, to give Li Yuan a lesson." Then, he pointed them out one by one, all of them are brave and ferocious young men.

Xiang Shaolong didn't feel as optimistic as him, if that fellow or his underlings wins, all of them would lose face instead. Even he would find it hard to walk with pride beside Ji Yanran. When he thought about this, he couldn't help but feel a bit regretful that he didn't invite Teng Yi to come together.

Li Yuan harbored a smile, exchanged greetings with the people that Zhao Ba introduced one by one, looking as if he is assured of success.

His group of house warriors all stared at Xiang Shaolong, looking as if they would like to stir up trouble.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly alarmed and knew that Li Yuan's main target today is him. Even if they're only using wooden swords, if they intended to

play viciously, they can still cripple their opponent anytime. Naturally that is Li Yuan's intention towards him.

Zhao Mu also came to this realization, and said furiously, "Would your attackers be amongst those people?"

Xiang Shaolong gave a cold snort, not saying anything at all.

Zhao Mu said angrily, "I've never seen anyone more arrogant than him before."

Xiang Shaolong whispered, "Anger and impatience will hinder the bigger plan. It's not worthwhile to fight with him over personal feelings, the real issue is more important."

Zhao Mu looked at him with admiration and nodded in agreement.

Both of them saw Zhao Ya laughing happily beside Li Yuan and their tempers rose. Zhao Mu cursed quietly, "B.itch".

Li Yuan continuously paid attention to Xiang Shaolong, even deliberately teasing Zhao Ya, seemingly to demonstrate his might.

Zhao Mu was about to lead Xiang Shaolong towards the stand to sit when Li Yuan walked out of the crowd, strode over and greeted them, staring at Xiang Shaolong, saying "Brother Dong has an outstanding sword skill, would you be interested to try a set with my men?"

He purposely raised his voice, to let others hear his deliberately humiliating challenge.

All of them immediately quieted down, watching Xiang Shaolong's reaction.

At this time, Zhao Ya came up behind Li Yuan with his swordsmen, all stared at him disdainfully.

Xiang Shaolong couldn't stand Zhao Ya's deliberate contemptuous look and forced himself to calm down. He stared at the strong and tall swordsman behind Li Yuan who previously ambushed him and smiled, "May I know the name of this brother here?"

When he saw Li Yuan nodding his head, that swordsman shouted loudly, "I am Lou Wuxin, would you deign to grant me an instruction?"

Xiang Shaolong blandly replied, "At present, this place is full of expert swordsmen. When will someone who only knows how to breed horses get a turn here, it's better to hide one's inadequacy silently than to show one's incompetence."

Li Yuan and the others heard this proverb for the first time "it's better to hide one's inadequacy silently than to show one's incompetence" and they briefly pondered over it before they understood it. All of them laughed mockingly.

Zhao Ya derisively interrupted, "Mister Dong, it's very rare that you know where you stand."

Xiang Shaolong's eyes flashed briefly and gave Zhao Ya a cold glance. This pretty girl's heart palpitated with terror, unable to continue with her words. She's not a timid person, but because for that instant, this Dong Kuang's expression was like Xiang Shaolong, giving her a weird feeling.

Lou Wuxin saw this and shouted fiercely, "Who dares to be rude to Lady?"

Zhao Mu's countenance changed, as he was about to rebuke him when Li Yuan took the chance to shout, "Wuxin, move back. Who told you it's your place to say anything in here?"

Lou Wuxin took a step back without saying a word but both of his eyes still burned with murderous glare towards Xiang Shaolong, seemingly unable to accept his failure in murdering him that day.

Li Yuan gave a hypocritical smile, "My warrior is just so straightforward, Mister Dong, please don't hold it to your heart."

Everyone could tell that on the surface he seemed to be rebuking his man, but was in fact, secretly commending him.

For a short while, a heavy sense of hostility loomed in the air.

Zhao Ba came over at this time between these two people filled with animosity and mediated, "Why don't everyone go up the stand for a cup of hot tea. How does that sound?"

Li Yuan gently said to Zhao Ya beside him, "Lady, please go up to the stand

first, I haven't exchanged a greeting with Mister Guo yet!"

Li Yuan apologized and walked towards Zhao Zhi and Guo Xiu'er, who were standing beside Guo Zhong.

Zhao Mu exchanged eyes with Zhao Ba before pulling Xiang Shaolong up towards the stand.

Han Chuang waved them over to sit beside him, and said with a cold snort, "This kid has become more and more ridiculous, I really want to see his face after a crushing defeat."

Xiang Shaolong had already calmed down, but on seeing Zhao Zhi, either intentionally or unintentionally, chatting and laughing Li Yuan in the distance, gave him additional worry.

Beside Ji Yanran, all the invited guests had arrived.

Suddenly, hoof beats could be heard.

From the tall gate, this peerless woman, who is famed throughout the world for her literature and sword skills, wearing a snowy white martial art uniform, galloped in.

Li Yuan hurriedly left Guo Xiu'er and Zhao Zhi, coming forward to welcome her.

Without waiting for Li Yuan to come and lead her horse, Ji Yanran gracefully

jumped off the horse and walked past Li Yuan without even stopping towards the stand.

Li Yuan chased after her, eagerly flattering her, which she replied noncommittally. When she got up the stand, she smiled and greeted everyone before walking straight towards Xiang Shaolong and smiled, “So Mister Dong already arrived, causing Yanran to make a trip for nothing!”

Once the words were out, Li Yuan who was beside them paled suddenly, both eyes staring venomously at him.

Han Chuang was in joy, stood up hurriedly to give up the seat. Ji Yanran didn't decline and happily sat beside Xiang Shaolong. Zhao Ya, who was looking from the other side, suddenly had an unnatural expression as well.

Xiang Shaolong felt exalted.

This time, the crowd went up the stand one after another, filling up the hundred or more seats in the stand, Zhao Zhi and Guo Xiu'er followed Guo Zhong to Li Yuan's side.

Li Yuan resentfully returned back to Zhao Ya's side.

Zhao Ba clapped twice, getting everyone's attention and smiled, “Everyone, please watch and give comments for our school's swordsman performance first.”

With a command, the school's swordsmen who had been waiting for awhile

came out to the field, their left hand holding a shield and right hand holding a sword, arranging themselves in a formation. Under the sound of the beating drums, they demonstrated the various forms of attacks and simulated a fight, immediately receiving applause.

But everyone knew that the real performance was yet to be performed.

Chapter 2

Duel at the School

Next was riding and archery performance, all were brilliant and pleasing to watch. It could be seen that Zhao Ba took painstaking care to train all of his swordsmen.

Xiang Shaolong thought that it's a pity, if it wasn't because Zhao had a muddleheaded king like Xiaocheng, it would have a bright prospect.

Ji Yanran leaned near his ear and said intimately, "I don't care anymore, from today onwards, I will follow you."

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed in surprise, "Isn't it too quick? Did you see that Lord Longyang is staring at us?"

Ji Yanran chuckled, "He's not suspicious of us, but just jealous of Yanran, everyone knew that neither man nor woman fellow loves unrefined and straightforward men like Mister Dong. If you speak vulgarity with him, he'll be really excited!"

Xiang Shaolong gave a wry smile, shook his head, "Let me chase after you for another two to three days! Otherwise if a beautiful woman like you can be subdued by a man with just two or three tricks, it could really damage your Learned Lady reputation."

Ji Yanran pouted, “Whatever suits you then! But I want you to accompany me every night.”

Xiang Shaolong joyfully replied, “Of course, it’s all that I wish for!”

Suddenly, applause could be heard non-stop, the school’s swordsmen returned successively to the seats opposite the stand, leaving only Zhao Ba standing in the center of the field.

Everyone stopped talking and looked at the owner of the training school.

The applause swiftly stopped.

Zhao Ba raised his voice, “Our training school was able to invite the famous master swordsman, Mister Li Yuan, to give us instructions on our swordsmen’s performance, it is indeed our honor. We hope that Mister Li Yuan won’t be stingy in giving us his advice.”

Guo Zhong chuckled and interrupted, “This time it’s all about exchanging pointers, everyone should control the force exerted, I don’t wish to watch any heart-stopping scenes like bones or flesh torn today.”

He and Zhao Ba are close friends, naturally he could tell that Zhao Ba was really furious about Li Yuan’s arrogance, so he made use of his status to advice both parties.

Li Yuan smiled, “Mister Guo, you can relax, I only came here with the intention of having fun, besides, there are also four beauties here! Mister

Guo, relax.”

Once he said that, all of the school’s swordsmen were burning with anger. During this period, martial arts was blooming, everyone regarded martial arts and sword skills as a prestigious and important matter, but he instead said that he only considered it as a game, meaning that he holds no regards for his opponents.

Zhao Mu leaned his head toward Ji Yanran and enquired her intention, “Miss Ji, don’t you think that Mister Li Yuan’s words are a bit unwarranted?”

On the other side, Han Chuang snorted, “Mister Li is too arrogant.”

Ji Yanran smiled, “But his abilities are truly extraordinary, he wasn’t lying.”

Those two people didn’t expect that after she had publicly shown her liking towards the Horse Fanatic, she would still defend Li Yuan and were both momentarily rendered speechless.

Xiang Shaolong knew about Ji Yanran’s independent thinking, she wasn’t going to change her mind because of other people. Unless he could win Li Yuan publicly, otherwise in her heart, he, Xiang Shaolong, will never be on par with Li Yuan in this aspect.

Therefore, for this beauty that always had strict criteria for her husband, this will always be a form of regret.

While he’s pondering, that school’s first instructor had already entered the

field and raising his hands in greeting towards Li Yuan, said, "I am Dai Feng, please grant me your instruction, Mister Li."

Li Yuan sized up Dai Feng and blandly replied, "Dong Luzi, come down and have some fun with Brother Dai Feng!"

The crowd's uproar rose from all directions, no one could believe that Li Yuan only sent his man to accept his challenge, obviously showing that Dai Feng is not qualified to challenge him yet.

Everyone from the school, from Zhao Ba all the way down, were all indignant.

Zhao Mu whispered towards Xiang Shaolong, "Oh no! If Dai Feng lost, Zhao Ba probably wouldn't be able to hold back his anger and will personally challenge Li Yuan."

While Ji Yanran whispered in Xiang Shaolong's ear, "This Dong Luzi and Lou Wuxin are Li Yuan's most reputable and great swordsmen. They are very famous in Chu."

Le Cheng who was sitting behind leaned forward and said, "I also heard about this Dong Luzi, allegedly he's from the Chu Mohist and had travelled to Lie looking for teachers and visiting friends, can't believe that he's become Li Yuan's man."

At this time, 20 odd year old man who is tall and thin like a pole, with a pale face and no moustache, walked down the stand from the seats on Li Yuan's side towards Dai Feng and said gently and politely, "Brother Dai, please give

direction!”

After Dai Feng returned the greeting, the youngsters brought out the wooden swords and helped both swordsmen wear the armors that protected their head, chest and vital spot at the lower body, as swords are merciless and may cause accidental injury. But this is only effective if the fighters control their force. To an expert swordsman, even if it's only a wooden sword, it still has the capability to kill and no armor can stand against it.

Two swords met in the air, testing the opponent's arm strength, then retreating back, demonstrating the sect's stance.

Applauses were suddenly heard, then stopped.

The crowd all held their breath in silence, looking on in concentration. Dai Feng stepped in his battle stance, probing and moving towards the opponent, waving the wooden sword energetically, displaying impressive strength.

In contrast, Dong Luzi held his sword and stood erect, immovable like a mountain, only staring coldly at Dai Feng.

Dai Feng retreated two steps back and suddenly roared as he moved forward as quickly as lightning, the sword blade slashed swiftly up into the air, emitting a whistling noise as it sliced thru the air with an unbelievable strength.

Han Chuang and the rest started cheering him on. The warrior school's

swordsmen were even more excited, giving out thunderous support. On the contrary, on Li Yuan's side, everyone sneered, showing extreme confidence.

This time, Zhao Zhi, who was sitting on the other side of Li Yuan, started to feel regretful. She was purposely being affectionate with Li Yuan, partly because she was indeed charmed by Li Yuan, but mainly because she was trying to anger Xiang Shaolong. But ultimately, she still belongs to the school and naturally she won't want her own side to lose, but because she was sitting beside Li Yuan, she's too embarrassed to cheer loudly and is now in a dilemma.

Li Yuan clearly understood her troubles so while everyone's attention was still on the field, he quietly stretched his hand over and held her slender fingers which she had placed on her thigh, leaning near her ear and spoke softly, "On Miss's account, Li Yuan definitely won't hurt anyone from your school."

Zhao Zhi's tender body trembled and in her confused state of mind she actually allowed him to freely hold her hand.

Zhao Ya noticed their odd behavior and got closer to them, saying with a slight pout, "Mister Li, you are so caring!"

Li Yuan who has often frequented brothels, was secretly happy as he said with a smile, "Didn't Lady like my playboy style?"

Zhao Ya shot him a condescending look and sat straight; her heart was again filled with Dong Kuang's unparalleled heroic spirit and couldn't help but sigh.

She secretly pondered why when she saw Li Yuan fooling around with other women, she didn't care much about it, but when she saw Ji Yanran only sitting beside Dong Kuang, her heart felt very uncomfortable.

There was a sound "Dong!", Dong Luzi lifted his sword to parry, at the same time moved diagonally, avoiding Dai Feng's second attack which came one after another.

Zhao Mu, Han Chuang, Le Cheng and the others are all expert swordsmen. With one look, it was easy to know that not only was Dong Luzi's arm strength not inferior to Dai Feng's, he's also a very good strategist, deliberately not fighting head on so that he can erode Dai Feng's strength. As expected, Dong Luzi followed by putting a defensive stance, under his opponent's chain of relentless attacks, repeatedly dodged. On the surface, it seemed like Dai Feng has the upper hand but in reality, Dong Luzi was in no danger at all, only waiting for the opportunity to counterattack.

A round of supports could be heard from all corners, cheering for Dai Feng. Zhao Zhi suddenly came out her daze and wanted to pull her hand back but did not expect that Li Yuan would hold her hand tightly and not let go. He even placed the back of his hand on top of her thigh and spoke in her ear, "Do Miss Zhi dislike me?"

Zhao Zhi developed a sense of guilt for betraying Xiang Shaolong and Dong Kuang and looked down, "Other people can see us, you know?"

Li Yuan loftily replied, "A true man stands upright in the world, why should he be afraid of others' gossip, as long as you don't dislike Li Yuan, I can assume responsibility for everything."

This person is very good with words, and also understood how to flatter women. Even Ji Yanran nearly fell in love with him. Zhao Zhi's does not have much experience about men-women relationship, furthermore, she was angry about Dong Kuang's heartlessness, so her heart was momentarily confused, thus allowing him to take advantage of her.

Li Yuan knew that they are in public and thus he cannot go overboard so he was secretly thinking of bringing her back to his residence later for some fun. Therefore he did not molest her further.

Guo Xiu'er, who was sitting beside Zhao Zhi, was paying attention to Li Yuan and on seeing that he was flirting with Zhao Zhi, her pretty face changed and felt resentful.

During the warring states period, the distance men and women had to keep from each other was very different from the period after Han Dynasty, where strict Confucian teachings was flourishing. However, it's still not considered proper etiquette for men and women to flirt in public and Guo Xiu'er couldn't help but discount her good impression of Li Yuan.

At this time, Xiang Shaolong's suddenly decided to turn and look at Li Yuan and as luck would have it, Li Yuan was also looking at him. Even though they were separated by 10 more seats, Xiang Shaolong could still clearly see that Li Yuan was holding Zhao Zhi's hand, and he can't help but flash a look of hatred through his eyes, extremely furious.

Li Yuan was pleased with himself on seeing that and smiled and nodded at him.

Zhao Zhi followed Li Yuan's gaze and looked over, straight into Xiang Shaolong's eyes and she was suddenly reminded of Xiang Shaolong. Her heart shuddered and she forcefully pulled away her hand away from Li Yuan's devilish grasp.

Li Yuan of course didn't know about the complicated relationship between Xiang Shaolong and her, and only thought that she was embarrassed for being caught in the situation with him. Instead he gently rubbed her bountiful thigh, before sitting properly and ignored Xiang Shaolong to continue watching the competition.

Xiang Shaolong's face was furiously stern as he turned back towards the fight on the field, fury burning inside. For the first time, he started to feel the need to challenge Li Yuan.

Ji Yanran saw everything and whispered, "Don't act impulsively, if you're hurt by Li Yuan, you'll have more to lose."

These few words was like pouring oil into fire, Xiang Shaolong made an effort to push down his anger, after mulling over things for awhile, turned towards Zhao Mu, "Can we send someone to invite one of my family warriors?"

Zhao Mu immediately understood and after asking clearly who this person was, he ordered someone to summon him.

At this moment, Dai Feng had at least given out 40 more moves, and yet he still couldn't do anything to that Dong Luzi, even the supporting cheers slowly died down.

Dong Luzi knew that the opportunity had come, looked up and smiled as he changed from the defending position to the attacking position, erecting his wooden sword to force his way into his opponent's sword formation, executing an exquisite and magnificent sword move. He dispelled each move as it came and he kept his sword attacks in a very tight circle such that Dai Feng's is unable to properly execute his way of brash fighting which uses wide sweeps of his sword.

Zhao Mu and the others all sighed in despair, even Zhao Ba who had absolute confidence in Dai Feng's skills was frowning.

Zhao Zhi, who was sitting beside Li Yuan, saw that her side was facing danger, came totally to her senses. She secretly blamed herself for not keeping a line between friends and enemies, even letting Li Yuan take advantage of her and felt ashamed towards her Teacher and school. However, if she leaves now, it would be too obvious and she was in a dilemma.

The two fighters on the field exchanged a few more moves. Dai Feng's previously awe-inspiring performance was never seen again as he constantly retreated in defeat.

Dong Luzi roared loudly, the sword's shadow flashed by, breaking through his opponent's flaw, quickly entering the inside of the opponent's sword moves, heading directly towards Dai Feng's chest.

Dai Feng was shocked but was unable to retract his sword in time as he abruptly stumbled backward and barely missed this severe blow.

However Dong Luzi is someone who can be merciless once he gains the upper hand. His feet flew and kicked towards the groin and if not for the armor, this kick would have made Dai Feng a eunuch. Nevertheless, it was enough to give him much pain as he cried out in pain, his hand dropping the long sword as he staggered and tumbled, with his hands gripping his groin.

The crowd did not expect that Dong Luzi, who looks so gentle and refined, can be so ruthless once he has gained the upper hand. They all stared at him shell-shocked and for a moment, the whole field was so silent that one can even hear a pin dropped and only the sound of Dai Feng's moans were heard.

Zhao Ba's face paled as he stood up and shouted, "Isn't anyone helping instructor inside to tend to his wound?"

Instantly, they all scrambled forward to help bring Dai Feng inside.

Dong Luzi didn't look at all regretful; instead he jauntily bowed towards both sides, handed over the wooden sword and returned to his seat.

Zhao Zhi had always had a good friendship with Dai Feng, so she can no longer be bothered with Li Yuan as she glared hatefully at him before quickly following Dai Feng inside.

Li Yuan didn't even care about Zhao Zhi at all as he smiled suavely, "It's hard to avoid injury during a martial arts competition, if Master Zhao is afraid of more accidents happening, let's just stop it all here and let me play host tonight as an apology?"

This time even Ji Yanran could not tolerate what has happened as she quietly cursed, “Li Yuan, you’re too overbearing!”

Zhao Ba’s huge, round eyes were glaring with murderous intent, obviously he was seriously infuriated. Xiang Shaolong was really afraid that he will volunteer to enter the fight himself, so he quickly pushed Han Chuang forward.

Han Chuang understood his meaning and made a hand signal towards his own chosen warrior whom he was planning send for the duel to come forward.

That warrior, called Fu Jianyin, obeyed the order and jumped off the stand as he called out, “Fu Jianyin would like Mister Li Yuan to give me some pointers!”

The whole field solemnly waited in silence to see if Li Yuan would personally accept the challenge.

Fu Jianyin’s stature wasn’t tall but he was strong and stout, his face has some crisscross scars. His appearance looked a little bit scary, but this is exactly the ironclad proof that he had fought in many battles.

Li Yuan displayed a condescending attitude as he languidly leaned half his body against the table next to him and said nonchalantly, “Wuxin! Why don’t you go and learn from the expert?”

The crowd had already guessed that he wouldn’t find the opponent to be

worth his time, so they weren't surprised.

The robustly built Lou Wuxin slowly walked down the stand, briefly bowed and straightened himself arrogantly. After accepting the wooden sword, he brushed off the person who was about to put the armor on him, "It's not even a battlefield, why do we even need this useless thing?"

On seeing that, Fu Jianyin said loudly, "Since Brother Lou is not wearing armor, I'll dispense with it too."

At this time, Lord Longyang stepped in behind Xiang Shaolong and Ji Yanran and delicately whispered, "In this world, is there anyone more arrogant than the Chus? We don't see such arrogance coming from them when they were facing the Qins. Will Sister Yanran be participating?"

Ji Yanran sighed, "Yanran also find this difficult to accept, but I know that I cannot win against Li Yuan, so there's nothing I can do."

Lord Longyang gave an icy snort and did not speak as he returned to his seat. He knew that he himself would be on par with Ji Yanran, so if even she said that she couldn't beat Li Yuan, there was no way that he could win. At the same time, he decided not to let his chosen Jiaoxu fight so that his man would not be beaten and humiliated.

Zhao Mu turned towards Guo Kai and Le Cheng and sighed, "If Fu Jianyin loses as well, we can only rely on Luo Xiang to redeem our face, otherwise we'll have to let the Master of the School fight, but I am really reluctant to let this happen."

Guo Kai replied, “Li Yuan is the number one swordsman of Chu. His men are already so formidable, it’s not hard to imagine the level of Li Yuan’s sword skills.”

At the moment, everyone felt helpless.

Even though Zhao Mu was a master swordsman, but due to his status, it’s not convenient for him to join the fight as it might create a discord between the two countries.

Li Yuan was lucky that he does not hold any official post, otherwise he would not be allowed to fight others on a personal basis without the orders of his King.

The two fighters on the field shouted out loud simultaneously and violently attacked the other side. Lou Wuxin’s sword moves like the wind, sweeping widely and the sword aura is like the mountain, extremely mighty and ferocious. Almost as soon as they made contact, Fu Jianyin fell into the situation of being badgered.

Xiang Shaolong at this moment caught sight of Teng Yi galloping on the horse, passing through the gate, he reached out and pushed Han Chuang on the back, saying “Go and stop this duel quickly!”

Han Chuang looked like he was in a dilemma because this Fu Jianyin was passed off as a Zhao to enter the fight. If he says anything, wouldn’t it be obvious that Fu Jianyin is actually his man.

Both sides were watching the fight quietly, it wasn't like before where everyone was screaming their support, the tension was as tight as a drawn bowstring.

Right when Han Chuang was still hesitating, the winner emerged.

Fu Jianyin lost in strength, as he stumbled slightly, Lou Wuxin swept towards his shoulder with the sword and the sound of bone breaking could be heard. As he groaned in pain, Fu Jianyin tumbled forward, and when he got back on his feet, the pain is already causing his face to be wet with cold sweat.

Lou Wuxin laughed out loud, "Thank you for giving way!"

Xiang Shaolong gestured towards Teng Yi who was walking towards them after getting off the horse. The latter understood his intention and shouted loudly from the distance, "I'm Long Shan, Dong Kuang's family warriors, this brother looks very familiar, would you mind giving me a few instruction?" The crowd at this time can't be bothered to find out how Fu Jianyin was being carried out, neither did they notice that Zhao Zhi has just returned to the field and was seated amongst her senior and junior brothers, they were all focused on sizing up this uninvited warrior.

Lou Wuxin looked Teng Yi up and down disdainfully and coldly replied, "If you want to fight, you have to use real swords to able to display real skills." Teng Yi laughed, "Why not? But Mister Li better send another fighter for me to tire me out a little bit before we can fight or so that it'll be fair when I fight with you."

Zhao Mu sighed, "Is your family warrior a moron, he didn't even know how to take advantage of the situation?"

Ji Yanran smiled, "A Master will have a servant who behaves like him, and this is what a true hero is about."

Zhao Mu couldn't help but give an embarrassed laugh, angry at himself for showing that he is not a hero at all.

Li Yuan was afraid that Lou Wuxin didn't have time to regain his breath yet and when he saw that at Xiang Shaolong did not show any reaction, happily said, "Definitely hero material!" He made a gesture and one of the warriors behind him whose face looked like an ancient copper obeyed his order and stepped out.

Xiang Shaolong turned towards Ji Yanran, "Who's this person?"

Under the crowd's expectant gaze, Ji Yanran shook her head bewilderedly. That person came in front of Teng Yi, and very calmly said, "I don't like to use fake swords too, what is your opinion?" Teng Yi frostily replied, "Brother, how may I address you?"

That person calmly replied, "My name is Yanfu, I am just a nobody!"

Once everyone heard, not one of them didn't get stirred.

Xiang Shaolong of course didn't know who he is, his questioning gaze turned towards Ji Yanran for clarification.

Ji Yanran looked solemn as she replied, “He was originally a famous swordsman from Qin but ran away to Chu because he killed someone. I did not expect him to join Li Yuan. From this, it could be seen that Li Yuan’s influence in Chu is growing by leaps and bounds, no wonder he is so arrogant.”

Han Chuang and the rest started to worry for Teng Yi.

“Clang!”

Yanfu pulled out his glimmering sharp sword, fell back two steps, pointed at Teng Yi and shouted, “Still haven’t pulled out your sword yet?”

Teng Yi was expressionless but a coldness radiated from his eyes as he unhurriedly said, “When the time comes, the sword will naturally be pulled out of its sheath!”

Yanfu was furious as he roared, straighten up the sword and attacked. Instantly, a cold glare flared, blinding everyone’s eyes.

No one could have expected that the friendly competition between influential officials could turn into a real life and death fight.

Chapter 3

Awe-inspiring at the Field

Once Yanfu attacked with his sword, everyone could tell he was formidable.

No matter the angle or the speed, technique or footwork, all these can be clearly seen in this simple looking sword execution that was moving like a swimming dragon, indeed deserving of his great reputation as a master swordsman.

The most exhilarating part was he borrowed the twisting power of his waist and legs to exert his moving strength, creating a powerful stab that pooled the energy in his whole body, moving as fast as lightning, with no warning sign in advance. It was really instantaneous, seemingly like a volcanic eruption and in the blink of an eye, the sword point arrived only a foot away from the unmoving Teng Yi's chest .

The crowd imagined themselves in Teng Yi's position. At the moment, the only path left was to retreat and pull out his sword, but this would only boost the opponent's dominance, the offensive attacks will come in waves and he may even perish under the sword. In other words, whatever happens, it's only because Teng Yi's did not draw out his sword first and thus lost his chance to act first.

A small smile escaped from the corner of Teng Yi's lips as he swiftly drew out his sword without even retreating a step.

The crowd was secretly alarmed. Guo Xiu'er and Zhao Ya were so scared that they shut their pretty eyes, unable to bear watching the tragic outcome of this hero when he spills his blood.

“Clang!”

While everyone was stupefied, Teng Yi drew out his sword to about two feet from the sheath and actually accurately blocked the edge of Yanfu's sword with his sword handle.

Even if Yanfu was stronger than Teng Yi, but the power emitted from the sword's edge is incomparable to the power emitted from the flat side of the sword handle, especially since Yanfu's arm strength simply wasn't on the same level as Teng Yi.

Ever since Yanfu started to appear in the pugilistic world, he has never seen anyone who from the start could beat an enemy using the sword handle only. He had placed his full power to attack forward, and he could not stop his momentum and was heading towards Teng Yi as if he is throwing himself into his embrace.

Just as he realized his mistake, Teng Yi's iron fist loomed in front of his eyes.

“Bang!”

Fresh blood spurted from Yanfu's mouth and nose as he stumbled backwards, unexpectedly knocked out by Teng Yi's left fist, whereas Teng Yi's sword was only half out of the sheath.

“Clang!”, the sword slid back into the sheath.

Silence reigned on the field, before the swordsmen from the training school burst into loud cheers which filled the whole field, amazed by Teng Yi’s skills and also ecstatic because he had gotten revenge on their behalf.

Li Yuan did not expect that Teng Yi could be as skillful as this, his face turned green as he shouted, “Carry that useless guy out!”

Once this word was out, even Zhao Ya, who was sitting beside him furrowed her brows, could feel that this person, Li Yuan, is an unkind and fickle person, showing no sympathy at all towards a subordinate who has failed.

Yanfu was quickly carried out of the field.

Teng Yi pointed towards Lou Wuxin, “It’s your turn now!”

The crowd’s eyes all fell on Lou Wuxin, waiting to see if he dared to accept the challenge.

Xiang Shaolong is the only one in the field who can predict the result of the fight. After Teng Yi received his instruction from the ‘Mohist Swordplay’s Addendum’, his sword and martial art skills improved exponentially, even he himself couldn’t be sure to win against him, much less Yanfu. This time he laughed out loud, “Brother Lou, if you still have not rested enough to get your breath back, we can ask Brother Dong Luzi or others to fight first.”

Once this was said, there was no way for Lou Wuxin to avoid this any further,

he stood up, snorted and walked out towards the field.

Everyone immediately quieted down.

Ji Yanran whispered in Xiang Shaolong's ear, "I have never seen anyone with such queer sword skills as your Second Brother, he not any more inferior compared to Li Yuan."

Zhao Mu was instead elated, secretly thinking that it's no wonder that this "Horse Fanatic" is so boastful, so it turns out that he has a subordinate who can fight against a hundred fighters singlehandedly with his out of the world sword skills.

"Clang," Lou Wuxin pulled out his sword and assumed a stance, yet he didn't immediately attack, quietly studying his opponent's sword movement and techniques. Teng Yi faced the sky and laughed aloud, his right hand holding the sword handle, stepped forward and looked as if he was going to pull out his sword.

Lou Wuxin felt awestricken by his imposing manner and actually took a step back, so that a gap of seven to eight steps still remained between them. Teng Yi dashed like lightning forward towards Lou Wuxin's left side, the long sword slid back in and then out of the sheath again, creating the unbelievable illusion of countless seemingly real sword sparks, looking like an attack but yet not an attack, and poisonous snakes in a pit, rearing their heads and sticking out their tongue so that at any time, it could fiercely attack its enemy with one bite, but it would definitely be a merciless killing move.

Xiang Shaolong slapped his thigh and cheered. This move that Teng Yi used was based on defending in order to attack, beyond doubt that it has reached perfection, completely utilizing the essence of Mohist Swordplay's Addendum.

Lou Wuxin was completely baffled by the opponent's sword movement, even though he shouted and assumed a fierce posture but in the end he still moved back a step, everyone could see that he had been intimidated. When master swordsmen were pitted in a battle against each other, how can one constantly retreat.

With wondrous instinct, Teng Yi's sword suddenly moved widely, changing from defending to attack into attacking to defend, waving his long sword seemingly like a rainbow, accompanied by refined and intricate footwork, dashing forward to Lou Wuxin's left, taking him by storm.

"Clang!" Lou Wuxin strenuously tried to block Teng Yi's sword, which has reached perfection regardless of technique, posture, strength or movement. Teng Yi sneered, "Is this all you have?"

The long sword slid out, and quickly morphed into a sweep.

"Clang!"

Lou Wuxin raised his sword in trepidation to block, only to be swept away by Teng Yi and there was no way he could retaliate at all.

Not one of them from Li Yuan's side that didn't turn pale, for it must be

known that Lou Wuxin's arm strength is the best amongst them all but it turned out that this "Long Shan" can easily beat him.

By this time, everyone knew that Teng Yi plans to subdue and humiliate this person in terms of strength.

Zhao Ba was ecstatic, but also secretly alarmed. He was always self-assured that his strength was unbeatable, but now looking at Teng Yi's might, he realizes that there will always be others who are better.

Le Cheng who was sitting at the back moved forward, "Your family warrior's superhuman strength was just astonishing, I won't be surprised if it's comparable to Xiao Weimou."

Xiao Shaolong secretly snickered, if Le Cheng knew that Xiao Weimou was killed by Teng Yi, who knows what would he think about it?

History is being repeated again. Earlier it was Fu Jianyin who was beaten senseless by Lou Wuxin till he cannot retaliate at all and ultimately lost; this time it's Teng Yi slowly pressing forward, making Lou Wuxin sweat with effort, continuously retreating.

This Lou Wuxin can be considered as awesome as he could ward off Teng Yi's unfathomable 25th sword stance before he lapsed and thus creating a flaw in his defense.

Teng Yi moved forward like a lightning kicking his lower abdomen.

Lou Wuxin scrambled backward holding the sword, curled up on the floor from the pain. Besides moaning, he had no more energy to get up anymore.

The crowd was awestruck by this terrible sword move that all have forgotten to cheer.

Li Yuan completely lost face. After ordering someone to move Lou Wuxin, he saw that everyone and that Long Shan's eyes are on him, he secretly groaned. If he joined in the fight, even though he might not necessarily lose, he didn't have the confidence to get the upper hand, but at this time the situation is such that there's no other way out so he snorted, "So Mister Dong has such a skillful subordinate, from this we could infer that Mister must also be an expert, why don't we use this time to play a little bit, so as to avoid others speaking badly of me for taking advantage of your subordinate when he is tired from all the fighting."

Even though his words sounded reasonable, but everyone knew that he is in fact extremely wary of Teng Yi.

Xiang Shaolong waved to Teng Yi to come back to the stand, before standing up slowly and replying calmly, "Regarding my skills, Brother Li should already have a clear understanding of my level from your family warriors, but how can listening be compared to watching. Since Brother Li is in a mood to play, I would of course love to accompany you."

Li Yuan did not expect that he'd be willing to fight, and his joy plummeted.

This time, besides the men on Li Yuan's side and Teng Yi, everyone else was

worried for Xiang Shaolong. Li Yuan is known as Chu's number one famous swordsman, just by looking at Lou Wuxin and the others' skills, they can all deduce his formidability. Dong Kuang, this 'Horse Fanatic', wasn't well known for his sword skills, so it's not too hard to imagine who'll win or lose.

Ji Yanran was anxious to the point where her brows all furrowed together, if Xiang Shaolong lost, even though Li Yuan wouldn't dare to publicly kill him, but he will definitely injure or maim him.

Xiang Shaolong took off his precious sword Bloodwave and gave it to the person beside him as he smiled at Li Yuan, "How can we follow these youngsters and compete with our lives. We can dispense with the armor, but we will still use wooden swords to exchange pointers and hold our strength in check, all should be carried out in the spirit of a friendly competition." Even though Li Yuan was reluctant, he couldn't openly show his desire to kill his opponent, so he smiled calmly, "Since this is Mister Dong's suggestion, I will naturally agree."

Xiang Shaolong secretly grinned, he is someone who's used to using wooden sword. Just on this point alone, Li Yuan is destined to lose. After accepting the wooden sword and testing the weight, despite it only weighing about 70% of his Mohist sword, it's still much heavier than the average iron sword.

Li Yuan used both hands to wave the sword around, pondering if he could just blind the other party in one eye, it would be most ideal.

Xiang Shaolong suddenly shouted, "Master Zhao, let's play some drums to add to the atmosphere!"

While everyone was stunned, the drummer responsible for this had already started drumming like a violent rain producing earth-shaking drumming sounds.

Li Yuan's handsome face turned cold and ruthless as he held his sword and stood erect. With his tall and graceful stature, and suave appearance, he truly had an extraordinary posture.

Xiang Shaolong placed his sword in front of him, staying as still as a mountain, both eyes shining sharply like eagle, focusing on the opponent.

The both of them stood facing each other, immediately revealing the air of an expert. Everyone was filled with tension, anticipating the coming storm, for that moment everything was silent.

After spending the past six months training intensely, Xiang Shaolong has changed from being blindingly brilliant to being calmly unwavering, even someone like Zhao Mu and the rest who had seen him fight several times in the past couldn't link through his movement that he is the Xiang Shaolong of the past.

Ji Yanran is an expert swordsman, with just a glance she can see that Xiang Shaolong's casual stand has the aura of an immovable mountain. She was inwardly surprised, could it be that the last time they fought, he didn't fight with all his might? She could never have guessed that his improvement in swordplay was all due to finding the Mohist Swordplay's Addendum.

In Zhao Zhi's eyes now, there is only Dong the Horse Fanatic who has that

natural, graceful bearing of a hero, to the extent that even the handsome looking Li Yuan seems to pale on comparison.

Zhao Ya looked at Li Yuan, and also looked at Xiang Shaolong. She felt that although both parties had their own powerfully attractive qualities, Xiang Shaolong's uniquely alluring enigmatic and mysterious quality is something that Li Yuan cannot give.

Guo Xiu'er felt something altogether different.

Li Yuan was truly the ideal husband of her dreams, talented in both literature and martial arts. He is dignified and graceful, at the same time he has status and power. Despite knowing that he's a playboy, but that's the way of all men, so she could only resign herself to this fate and obey her father's command to marry this Lord.

But the appearance of Dong Kuang allowed her to experience the lure of another type of man, unrefined and straightforward yet revealing a thrilling wisdom and extraordinary thinking, making her willing to be conquered by him. This dilemma of choosing between them is making this young girl's heart disconcerted, unable to make a choice.

Now that the both of them are finally competing to decide their superiority, would it help her make a decision? During this warring period, everyone knows martial art, sword skills has long become the standard in judging someone's skills. An expert swordsman will naturally be regarded as important and admired.

Li Yuan and Xiang Shaolong stared at each other unwaveringly, and said in a frosty manner, “Brother Dong’s horse rearing skills are unparalleled in this world, I really would like to see whether Brother Dong’s sword skill is comparable to your horse rearing skills.”

He lowered his body to assume a stance, waving the sword and pointing at Xiang Shaolong, repeatedly shaking.

Everyone in the audience broke out into cold sweat on Xiang Shaolong’s behalf, no one had expected that Li Yuan’s sword skills to have reached such high levels. Even when using the wooden sword, he’s still able to create ingenious changes, confusing the audience to the point where one can’t be sure where the attack will be coming from.

Xiang Shaolong was still standing stiff like a pillar, the corner of his mouth revealed a mysterious smile as he blandly replied, “What are you waiting for, Brother Li?”

His words were imbued with strong confidence, everyone can clearly feel that he’s not even a little bit intimidated.

Li Yuan definitely proved himself to be worthy of being Chu’s number one swordsman, he wasn’t at all provoked by these words. He smiled and swiftly attacked. When Xiang Shaolong raised his wooden sword, pointing at him diagonally, he retreated and returned to his previous position when they were facing each other, the distance between them totally remaining unchanged. It can be seen from this how precise Li Yuan’s footwork was. Just based on this point, Ji Yanran’s earlier conclusion that Li Yuan’s sword skills

were above Xiang Shaolong was definitely not without evidence.

Zhao Zhi was thinking that if Xiang Shaolong's sword skills is on par with that Long Shan, these two people together would be enough to carry out the secret task of assassinating anyone. She can't help but feel resentful towards Xiang Shaolong's heartlessness.

Teng Yi concentrated on watching both of them, with their swords drawn and poised to attack. He was originally confident that Xiang Shaolong would undoubtedly win, but when he saw Li Yuan's expertise when testing the water and his intricate and harmonized footwork, he couldn't help feeling a little bit worried.

On the contrary, the one with the most confidence was Xiang Shaolong himself, not because he was underestimating his enemy, but because he had entered the state of Mohism protection, a state where there are no others and no self, yet at the same time his opponent's intent cannot escape his observation at all.

He knew that Li Yuan is luring him into attacking first, but he was totally unmoved. If both sides are not striking at all, the one who will lose face wouldn't be this 'Horse Fanatic' but the arrogant Li Yuan who had made his boast earlier.

While training in the 21st century, they really focused on the psychology of warfare and he is currently applying what he has learnt, intending to strike at Li Yuan's weak points based on his character.

After facing each other for awhile, sure enough, Li Yuan couldn't endure any loss of face and got impatient. He gave a cold snort, single-handedly lifted his sword overhead and leapt forward. As the long sword was about to violently strike Xiang Shaolong, his left hand grabbed the sword handle as well, and the power was intensified as now he is wielding the sword with both hands instead.

Even though many disdained Li Yuan, but on seeing this outstanding move, everyone can't help but be impressed. Furthermore, this move was extremely severe and violent, gathering the power in the whole body's strength to the arms. If Xiang Shaolong raised his sword with one hand to block, then it very possible that this single move will determine the winner.

Xiang Shaolong still looked as calm as still water. He only raised his brows, turned his wrist, and actually used only one hand to block Li Yuan's move.

Ji Yanran was so astonished that her heart was beating rapidly, her slender hands rose to cover her gasping mouth that was about to scream.

In the past, she had fought both of them separately so she naturally understood that their arm strength were comparable. But this time Li Yuan is using both hands to attack and he has the added power from the running momentum so it's not hard to know who would be stronger.

Ai! How can Xiang Shaolong be so reckless?

Everyone there can only hear the swooshing of Li Yuan's sword cutting thru the air and could tell the ferocious power behind it, all couldn't bear to see

the happening of another tragic ending.

Li Yuan saw Xiang Shaolong trying to block with a single hand and was secretly happy so he intensified his strength into the strike.

Who knew Xiang Shaolong could suddenly change from blocking horizontally to flicking his sword up, heavily pushing aside his opponent's move that was bearing down on him with the weight of a mountain. The hard block changed into deflecting the enemy's blow using its own momentum.

Li Yuan watched helplessly as a surefire move was deflected to the side by Xiang Shaolong, and it went off target a little to only chop down towards the empty spot where Xiang Shaolong's left shoulder used to be.

Cheers reverberated around the field.

Even Zhao Ya and Zhao Zhi, these two beautiful ladies who hated Xiang Shaolong, enthusiastically clapped their hands and cheered. Luckily, this time Li Yuan cannot afford to be distracted, or else he would have died of anger on seeing this.

Everyone thought that Xiang Shaolong will take this advantage to attack first, who would have guessed that he would instead move back a step, his wooden sword moving in a bizarre and mysterious path, moving backwards and forward in front of his body, floating and waving around randomly.

Even with Li Yuan's sword skills and experience, he still cannot determine which moves are true and which are fake. With no alternative, he was forced

to retreat but tried to look as if he is arranging a forbidding defense. However he is not as commanding now as he was before.

Teng Yi felt relieved, knowing that Xiang Shaolong had guessed correctly that in Li Yuan's had wanted to impress Ji Yanran with his martial prowess so he purposely made him lose face, provoking him into being more impatient and reckless so that he'll lose his advantage. He's truly brilliant in strategy.

Ji Yanran is no longer worried about her lover, her eyes were shining with love and affection, looking at Xiang Shaolong's vigorous body emitting an imposing aura and indomitable charm.

The autumn sun was shining high above the sky upon the field filling it with life.

There's another person who cannot 'refrain himself from liking' Xiang Shaolong, which is Lord Long Yang. From the first moment he saw this stout and forthright man, 'his' heart was stirred. Now that he witnessed his splendid sword performance, his heart was sent into disorder and he was secretly determined to captivate Xiang Shaolong into becoming his love slave.

On the other hand, those family warriors under Li Yuan were so astounded they remained silent, they couldn't believe that even with Li Yuan's amazing sword skills, he still couldn't even get a little bit of upper hand.

Li Yuan forced himself to concentrate, the wooden sword slashed up and down, forming his second attack.

Xiang Shaolong returned to his original spot, standing still like the mountain, not even moving a little bit.

Now, no one would think that he was too self assured and belittled his opponent.

Li Yuan softly said, “Who would have thought that Brother Dong is such an expert, be careful!”

With a diagonal forward attack, he moved around towards Xiang Shaolong’s back in an instant.

Not only did Xiang Shaolong not turn around to receive the attack, instead he quickly moved forward towards Li Yuan’s last position before turning around, the wooden sword pointing at the opponent, his steps steady and his bearing confident, with the posture like an erect mountain. One look is all it takes to know that he did not flounder at all despite his enemy’s tactical attack.

Li Yuan missed his intent and landed at Xiang Shaolong’s original spot and it seemed like the two of them made an agreement to exchange places.

The spectators didn’t dare to take a breath, afraid that it might influence both parties on the field who are caught in a deadlock.

Xiang Shaolong wasn’t without his own difficulties, for it is hard for him to go all out and fight. If he did not rein himself, it would be difficult to conceal his moves and it may even trigger the memory of those who have seen him fight in the past. By then, even if he killed Li Yuan, the loss will still outweigh the gain.

Li Yuan saw that both his moves has failed and lost his patience. He waved his sword to attack again. The sword point trembled like lightning, relentless,

ruthless and flawless.

Xiang Shaolong knew that he was anxious for victory and was secretly delighted. Just before the sword touched his body, he coolly deflected to the side. The move was truly as calm as an immovable object yet as swift as an escaping rabbit. Besides, his movement was suave and unrestrained as well, thus attracting the cheers of others.

Li Yuan saw that he was evading the attack and happily thought there was hope. He shouted and waved the sword quickly.

Xiang Shaolong laughed aloud, drawing out his wooden in a flash, turned around and flew forward, continuously blocking the opponent's five sword strikes without retreating a single step. His defense was as solid as an iron bucket, while his every move contained possible hidden changes thus causing Li Yuan to be hesitant about advancing rashly.

The clash of the wooden swords rang continuously non-stop.

The crowd was so focused on the fight that they forgot to cheer for their own side, only seeing both parties' sword skills soaring powerfully without constraints, fluttering and flashing indefinitely. Not only were they marveling at Li Yuan's unparalleled moves, but also astonished at Xiang Shaolong's unfathomable moves.

Zhao Ya felt that this Horse Fanatic is just like his character, unfathomable. Judging from his appearance, anyone would have guessed that Xiang Shaolong is a proactive person and who would have thought that in actuality

it was the other way around.

Even though Li Yuan is always the initiator of the attacks, yet his opponent's defensive yet seemingly offensive moves is restricting him the use of the full strength of his skills. At the same time, the opponent displayed a strong will and tenacious power and he cannot help but feel discouraged. This is also the negative aftereffect of his two failed attacks; otherwise he wouldn't have this feeling of discouragement.

His sixth attacks haven't come out and yet the opponent's wooden sword suddenly created numerous shadows, confusing him such that he has no idea where the attack will be coming from. Li Yuan was alarmed and naturally he retreated.

Xiang Shaolong laughed out loud, placing the flat side of the wooden sword on his shoulder, appearing calm and composed, said to Li Yuan who has retreated close to ten steps away from him, "Brother Li's sword skills are indeed ingenious, I think that it will be extremely difficult for me to win, let's just quit while we're ahead and call off the battle at this point, what do you think, Brother Li?"

Li Yuan stood frozen on the field, his handsome face flitted between turning red and pale. Even though it was still not clear who will be the winner and the loser, but everyone saw that all of his three attacks were nullified by this Horse Fanatic, how can he lift his face up again?

But if he insist on continuing the fight, firstly, it will show his lack of bearing, even more importantly, he had lost his confidence and all of his fighting spirit had been dispelled.

While he was still hesitating, Guo Kai, who was worried that Xiang Shaolong will really injure Li Yuan, stood up, "Let's consider this fight is a draw, today is indeed an eye opening experience for all of us."

Li Yuan secretly hated this but he had to maintain a smiling front, accepting other people's congratulations together with Xiang Shaolong. Ji Yanran greeted Xiang Shaolong and said tenderly, "Mister Dong, from today onwards, you can be considered equally brilliant in both horse rearing and sword skills. I wonder if you would be willing to visit the place where I'm putting up for the moment to take care of my sick horse?"

Everyone who heard this envied him.

Although she's using to the horse as an excuse, but her invitation came publicly after his incredible performance of martial prowess so everyone knew that this peerless beauty known for her heart of stone is no longer concealing her feelings towards this Horse Fanatic whom had stirred her heart.

The other three girls who were rushing to congratulate Xiang Shaolong, felt snubbed as Ji Yanran snatched their chances and quietly withdrew.

Li Yuan was the one who felt the worst. Originally he thought that today he would be able to impress everyone during the martial arts competition, instead he ended up with two of his famous subordinates seriously injured, while he himself could not win the fight, which is a total loss of face. The hardest hit was Ji Yanran is actually making giving an invitation to his biggest rival right in front of his eyes. His felt a strong hatred and hurriedly left with his subordinates.

Zhao Ba was ecstatic and said as he pulled Xiang Shaolong and Teng Yi, “No matter what, I want to invite both of you to become our honored guest instructors. Please do not decline!”

Zhao Mu sighed, “If Mister Dong and Brother Long was here a year earlier, that fellow Xiang Shaolong would not be able to leave Handan alive.”

Xiang Shaolong and Teng Yi exchanged glances, both felt very amused.

Amongst all the uproars, Xiang Shaolong finally was able to extricate himself to leave with Ji Yanran under everyone’s admiration gaze.

Chapter 4

Isolated Without Support

Ji Yanran, accompanied by Xiang Shaolong and Teng Yi on her right and left, galloped out of the school.

As Xiang Shaolong remembered Zhao Ba's invitation for them to become the honored guest instructors, he couldn't help be reminded that Lian Jin must have received the same treatment when he was alive, therefore he had the opportunity to become closer to Zhao Zhi thus evoking their short affair.

Maybe Zhao Zhi is fickle in love, for her first lover was killed and she instead fell in love with him, the person who killed her lover, but because of her relationship with Jing Jun, he didn't dare to accept her love. However, if she threw herself into Li Yuan's embrace out of anger because of this, it could really make one feel resentful.

Li Yuan will definitely not appreciate or care for the fairer sex for he is too selfish.

Returning to the busy town centre, Teng Yi said, "I want to go to the Hidden Army Valley to see them, I may not be able to return by tonight."

Xiang Shaolong nodded in agreement, replied offhandedly, "Have you sent someone to see 'Father'?"

'Father' was Lu Buwei's codename.

Teng Yi replied, “Sent the day before!” After requesting leave of Ji Yanran, he rode towards the city gate direction. They have been granted the Pass Document so they could leave the city at anytime without any problem.

Ji Yanran begged, “I want you to stroll around town with me, will you agree?”

Xiang Shaolong joyfully agreed and they rode back to his residence first, before going out to leisurely stroll around town.

After walking for only a while and Ji Yanran couldn’t take it anymore because every on the street were staring at them in surprise, making her feel uncomfortable, so she had no choice but to drag Xiang Shaolong and slipped back into the borrowed residence she’s currently residing in.

The owner, a great Confucian Scholar in Handan, Liu Huasheng was playing chess with Zou Yan and when the two of them returned, they were delighted.

Liu Huasheng and Zou Yan were old friends who had known each other for thirty more years and they treated Ji Yanran like their own daughter and everyone was talking joyfully.

So far, Zou Yan hadn’t gotten a chance yet to speak of old times with Xiang Shaolong. He urged Ji Yanran to take his place playing chess, while he and Xiang Shaolong walked together into the quiet and secluded back garden, and sighed, “Since the Prince of Ping moved to the east, it’s been more than 500 years where there’s no true leader. There had been continuous wars, and who else but the common people suffered, luckily, we now have you as the new Saint to become our hope of ever stopping these wars.”

Xiang Shaolong wouldn't dare to underestimate this wise 'Five Elements' School founder, because truly without him Xiang Shaolong, Emperor Qin who united the six countries wouldn't exist. But he still didn't know how to answer his question, the only way left was just to stay quiet.

Zou Yan was intoxicated inside his own vision of vast and broad history and softly said, "I know Shaolong is someone who pursues peace, but true peace can only be achieved through war, there's no other way beside this. Otherwise with these seven states continuously fighting, sooner or later, we'll be attacked from the tribes in the northwest who are watching intently for the right opportunity to invade the mainland like locusts coming to destroy our civilization."

Xiang Shaolong was suddenly startled, Zou Yan's words were like a blow to his head, getting him to think of problems he didn't think of before. All along, he had deliberately avoided having a hand in any wars; however, he never thought that it'd be better to suffer momentarily than to suffer long-term pain, employing war as a way to bring peace. This was mainly because of his foreigner mentality.

But this problem is in fact his problem now as he had become a member of this era so naturally he have to accept the responsibility that comes with staying in this time period.

Even if Qin didn't dispatch soldiers to go on an expedition, the other six states also won't let Qin off, this is basically a time period where the strongest rules.

Instead of allowing the flames of war to reign free indefinitely to the point of flashing an open invitation for the outside tribes to invade, it'd be better to use the Qins' might to unite the whole country earlier. If he leads the army, at the very least, he can reduce the senseless massacre to the bare minimum thus reducing the burden of war on the people.

Once he reached this conclusion, his heart stirred to passion.

Zou Yan measured him with rapt attention for a while before grinning, "The universe undergoes thousands of changes constantly, but is always connected to the activities of the five elements – gold, wood, water, fire and earth. The heaven is five elements, people are also five elements. Even though from outward appearance the usage is always full of changes, on the inside the essence stays the same. If heaven and people are always interconnected, every time there's a rising energy, when both of them are taking turns, an auspicious omen can be seen. Wherever auspicious omen is, that is where the master of the new time period is. For example, the time of King Zhouwen, there was a red crow holding a red book in its beak which flew down to the sacrificial altar, signifying the time for them to develop the unification plan."

Xiang Shaolong couldn't help himself asking, "So where is the auspicious omen now?"

Zou Yan joyfully replied, "Did you remember that I once mentioned to you the appearance of a new star? Half a year ago, Shaolong left Zhao and went towards Qin, that star immediately vanished. Just when I was confused, I saw on the sky where the position of Qin is, a bigger and brighter new star

appeared, glowing in the night sky. Now I am positive that the one who will unify the whole country must be a Qin and will have a direct relation to you.”

Xiang Shaolong was stunned speechless, with this he can no longer underestimate the authority of this ancient astrologer.

Zou Yan extended his hand and placed it on his shoulder, saying sincerely, “For the sake of the well being of the people in the whole world, Shaolong, you must accelerate the Qins unification plan or else the fate of the new star might suddenly become gloomier. Do not worry about how others will see you, as long as you grab tightly to your ideals and do your best, you wouldn’t disappoint the expectations placed on you by Heaven. The unification plan must start with you and this is something I am very sure of.”

Xiang Shaolong’s heart was stirred, only now did he understand how open Zou Yan’s heart is, filled with passion and love for the universe and mankind.

His opinion is aimed at the current actual situation, unlike Confucius and Mencius who could only talk about virtue and morality, while hard reality pointed out that near expiring State of Lu can only perish.

During this warring period, the only way to fight violence was with violence.

Zou Yan continued, “Yanran always had this idea, she wish she can support a brilliant leader to unify the whole country and stop the war.”

Xiang Shaolong bitterly smiled in his heart, the path to attaining this goal is very long and arduous, but without Great Qin, it would not be possible for the following period of the two Han Dynasties to have peace, even more so

for China to exist in the 21st century. When he thought of this, he abruptly resolved to cast aside his own moral principles and see if he can help Xiao Pan a little.

At the same time, he secretly sighed. For someone like him who views all wars as evil, it wasn't easy for him to suddenly change his ideology. Right at this moment, Ji Yanran and Liu Huasheng came out side by side. Zou Yan laughed, "How did it go?"

Ji Yanran blushed, "Scholar Liu saw that I am not in the mood for war so he let me off this time!"

Everyone laughed.

That Liu Huasheng didn't know Xiang Shaolong's background and only regarded him as horse fanatic Dong Kuang. After some small talk, he and Zou Yan went back inside to continue contending for supremacy on the chessboard while Ji Yanran happily led Xiang Shaolong towards the small building she's temporarily residing in.

Two beautiful servant-girls opened the gate and welcomed them in. Xiang Shaolong recognized them and suddenly felt a surge of familiarity.

Ji Yanran took him upstairs to her room. After waving away her maid, she sat on his lap and gave him a scorching kiss.

Both of them felt like they were transported to another world.

Yanran pretended to be solemn and asked, “Brother Dong! May I dare to ask when will you officially take Yanran as your wife?”

Xiang Shaolong grinned, “Since Miss Ji is asking this question, hmm, let me inspect you first to see if you are good stuff!”

He extended his hand and start stroking her bosom.

Ji Yanran melted into his embrace, but still stubbornly asked, “I am being serious now. When I can’t see you, that longing feeling is truly tormenting for me.”

Xiang Shaolong felt deeply touched by her love for him, sighed, “If everyone knows that I have won you over and even sleeping together with you, it’ll be difficult for me to move around. By that time, everyone will pay attention to us even you surely will lose your position and status as a detached girl free from all manly and womanly lust. This will be detrimental towards my operation here in Handan.”

These few days, Ji Yanran has fallen head over heels in love and has forgotten everything else. Now that Xiang Shaolong has reminded her, she pondered and nodded, “Yanran’s too reckless, forgetting that you are in a dangerous situation, I understand now!”

After a short discussion, the two of them reluctantly parted.

Xiang Shaolong leisurely walked back to his residence instead of riding. Wu Guo interrupted him at the entrance, “Lady Ya and Miss Zhi are both

waiting for you. I brought both of them separately to the east and west room respectively.”

Xiang Shaolong felt a headache coming as soon as he heard this. His hasn't even gotten any headway for his proper work, instead he got himself entangled with relationship problems and he couldn't help but feel discouraged by this. After considering for a minute, he decided to see Zhao Zhi first.

When he entered the west room, Zhao Zhi was well-behaved and quietly sitting in the corner staring blankly. She looked down as she heard the footsteps, not sure if it means that she's still annoyed at him, or because she felt ashamed that he saw her allowing Li Yuan to be frivolous with her. Xiang Shaolong sat down beside her, “Miss Zhi, don't you have to accompany Li Yuan?”

Zhao Zhi paled and bit her lips, not answering the question at all as she replied, “Teacher asked me to invite you to our school.”

Xiang Shaolong understood that she is just using this as an excuse to come see him, otherwise why would Zhao Ba task a beautiful girl like her to come alone to invite him for it just doesn't conform with the etiquette. He sighed, “How are you these last two days? Now, my heart is very troubled.”

Zhao Zhi still looked down, whispered like a fly, “What are you troubled about? You have just flaunted your abilities today and also won the talented Lady Ji's favor. I thought you won't be home so early.”

Xiang Shaolong suddenly understood her intention for coming here looking for him. She wanted to show him that she didn't give in to Li Yuan. Coming from such a proud and arrogant beautiful girl, this is already a large concession. It can also be seen that this girl had fallen hard for him to the point of losing her self-control.

Zhao Zhi slowly lifted her head, sadly watching him, "You can do whatever you like to me, hit me, scold me, because it's Zhao Zhi's fault."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly lamenting, when a beautiful girl is willing to allow him to punish her, it's an equivalent to allowing her husband free reign to handle her. If he still rejected her, there's no other way for her to redeem her pride besides suicide. He couldn't help getting a headache and stood up.

Zhao Zhi watched him in trepidation.

Xiang Shaolong said, "Miss Zhi, just sit here first, I will be back with you right away."

He hurried over to the east room.

Zhao Ya was leaning on the window blankly watching the garden outside. Under the evening sun, the flowers and trees gave out a thick autumn feeling.

Hearing his footsteps, Zhao Ya trembled slightly, turned around and smiled, "Talented Lady Ji did not invite you to spend the night?"

Xiang Shaolong snorted, “Did you think her a wanton girl? I didn’t even have the chance to touch her little finger.”

Zhao Ya knew that he taking the opportunity to blow this up and being sarcastic that she’s making herself easy for Li Yuan. She looked down in shame and sighed, “I come here now to apologize to you. Will Mister accept my apology?”

Xiang Shaolong was secretly lamenting, he really shouldn’t have fought today. During this period where they value martial prowess over literature, there are no beautiful girls who won’t admire heroes with superb sword skills. Just because he wanted to gain a momentary pleasure and although he put managed Li Yuan down a little, he also made two girls fall head over heels over him and now he’s at a loss as to how to handle them.

At the moment where there is a lot of urgent business for him to handle, he didn’t have any more free time to cope with them two.

Zhao Zhi’s much easier to handle, Zhao Ya on the other hand gives him a headache and he is in a dilemma.

The biggest problem was that he himself still held a residue of love towards Zhao Ya and still crazy about her arousing body, so it’s easy for him to feel jealousy and resentment towards her. On the whole, Zhao Ya’s not a bad person, it’s just that she does not have a strong will. But it’s impossible to forgive her, besides he didn’t dare to trust her anymore, it’s just that sometimes he doesn’t have the heart to hurt her excessively.

He exclaimed, "Don't joke with me, Lady. You have never offended me the slightest bit so there's no need to apologize at all."

Zhao Ya gracefully walked over towards him till her chest was nearly touching him, before gazing up tenderly, "Can Zhao Ya stay here tonight?"

Watching her lips spew out these luring words, breathing in her orchid-like scent, he felt like he was brought back to the happier days when they were still delightfully entangled and for a moment, he forgot where he was.

Zhao Ya saw his indecisive expression and moved half a step forward, throwing her slender body into his embrace, her soft perky bosom pressing tightly against him and enchantingly asked, "Do you really disdain me, Mister?"

Xiang Shaolong was shaken awake, secretly relieved that he had applied the sap from the Love Plant, otherwise Zhao Ya might have recognized him. He reached out and grabbed her shoulder. With strong willpower, he hardened his heart and pushed her away a little to avoid being tempted by her enticingly soft breast.

His eyes sharp, he laughed, "Why would Lady have such a thought? Any normal man would not have let you go."

Zhao Ya bashfully replied, "What are you waiting for then?"

Looking at her laying out the obvious, a look of wantonness which hinted that he can do anything to her, Xiang Shaolong was tempted but also angered. His eyes wantonly roved over her beautiful, heaving breast, and asked with a wry smile, "If Li Yuan wants you to sleep with him tomorrow night, will Lady be

able to reject him?”

No one understood her wantonness and weak-will better than himself. Even when she was deeply in love with him in the past, she still couldn't resist Qi Yu's seduction and slept with him. After she broke off her relationship with Zhao Mu, she was still willing to allow herself to be toyed by this traitor. So these words are like a stab to her vital point.

Indeed Zhao Ya instantly was dismayed and she looked down, “Can you not ask me this kind of question! It's difficult for me to give you an answer.”

Xiang Shaolong was indescribably furious, turned around and walked out as he replied icily, “Lady, please return to your residence! I still have other guest that I need entertain!”

Zhao Ya cried out piteously, “Dong Kuang!”

Once he heard how miserable and sorrowful she sounded, his heart softened and he stopped, replying with a deep voice, “Is there anything else you wish to instruct me, Lady?”

Zhao Ya went behind him and discarding all etiquette, she hugged his waist holding tightly, melding herself to his back and suddenly cried desolately, her cries filled with untold misery.

Xiang Shaolong fears neither Heaven nor Earth but he is most afraid of women crying. Remembering their past love, he embraced her and used his sleeves to frantically wipe her tears away.

Who would have known that her cries just kept intensified unstopably, making his sleeve wet with her tears.

No matter how much Xiang Shaolong hated her, at this moment, he couldn't bear to chide her anymore.

After a while, Zhao Ya calmed down and slowly removed herself from his embrace. Her puffy red eyes glanced mournfully at him and she whispered, "Zhao Ya's leaving!"

Xiang Shaolong was stunned and he had a distinct feeling that her loss of composure was probably due to remembering him, Xiang Shaolong, and the sadness just welled up in her. At the same time she is no longer interested in other men so for that instant she did not know what to feel.

He nodded, "I'll send you out to the main door!"

Zhao Ya woodenly replied, "Mister, don't stand on ceremony!" She turned around and hurriedly left.

Xiang Shaolong returned to the inner chamber and changed his clothes. In the meantime, he also sent someone to invite Zhao Zhi who had been waiting for awhile to come to the inner hall.

He felt thirsty, so he asked someone to pour him two cups of hot tea, enjoying it together with Zhao Zhi, who sat across from him.

Zhao Zhi felt slightly flattered by his treatment and occasionally stole a glance

towards him.

Xiang Shaolong's heart started burning up and secretly thought that if he wanted to take her, she definitely will not refuse. Precisely because of this tempting thought, he had to make a lot of effort to rationalize his mind and forcefully control his impulses.

Zhao Zhi, at this moment in time, displayed a pitiful expression.

Truthfully, he himself didn't understand why he had not touched this beautiful lady, for it seems that Jing Jun is not enough reason for a deterrent, because it was apparent that she didn't fall in love with the boy.

Zhao Zhi whispered, "That traitor has entered the city!"

It took a while before what she said dawned on Xiang Shaolong and he asked in bewilderment, "Traitor? Oh! You mean Tian Dan?"

Zhao Zhi looked down, "I am afraid that Sister Rou might go and assassinate him without much thought."

Xiang Shaolong's heart skipped a beat, "You need to warn her not to be reckless in doing things, otherwise it will be too late for regrets."

Zhao Zhi was pleased, "So you do care about us."

Xiang Shaolong knew he had accidentally betrayed his intention and smiled wryly, "From the start, I have always cared about you two."

Zhao Zhi's pretty face seemed suddenly revitalized as she rolled her eyes at him, "But why are you always so indifferent and ruthless towards us?"

Xiang Shaolong replied exasperatedly, "That night, I wholeheartedly thought that I would be able to enjoy the night Miss Zhi, but instead I got ambushed from the back and nearly lost my life, how much nicer do you want me to treat you?"

Zhao Zhi is after all an unmarried maiden and to hear him speak so honestly, both her cheeks blushed but on the inside she was deliriously happy as she said with embarrassment, "Sorry! That was just a misunderstanding. Zhao Zhi will now bow and apologise to you, alright?"

Surprisingly, she really did kneel down.

Xiang Shaolong was so surprised that he jumped out of his seat and to help her up.

Zhao Zhi allowed him to grab her shoulder and pressed her to her seat again. With a blushing face, she raised an eyebrow at him and asked sadly, "You're no longer angry with me?"

Xiang Shaolong felt her delicate body trembling under his hands like a frightened little bird and a surge of sympathy welled up as he said gently, "Why torture yourself like this?"

Zhao Zhi's eyes reddened as she mournfully said, "Zhao Zhi has been unlucky since young, my whole family either separated or dead. Sister Rou is

constantly thinking of revenge, so my temper can be quite bad sometimes, consequently offending Mister.”

Xiang Shaolong sympathized even more with her as he secretly thought that he was the one who made her say all those heartless and obstinate words. He suddenly couldn't help but feel apologetic towards her as he reached out his right hand to hold her chin up and smiled, “Let's stop with the blaming game, from today onwards, why don't we forget all about our old and new hatred forgotten?”

Zhao Zhi face turned redder as she lowered her long eyelashes and with half-lidded eyes, nodded her agreement. Who wouldn't be affected by that kind of tender expression on a young lady's face?

Xiang Shaolong can't help but leaned closer and lightly kissed her lip.

Zhao Zhi's body trembled and even her ears turned red. Her reaction was more intense than the last time when Xiang Shaolong forcefully kissed her while on the horse.

Xiang Shaolong almost wanted to press her down on the bed on impulse to copulate with her but there was still an ounce of clarity in his mind as he reluctantly released her and asked, “Where will Tian Dan be staying and how many people will be coming with him to the city?”

Zhao Zhi heard Tian Dan's name and became clearheaded again, “He's staying in the Zhao Palace. I'm not sure how many people will be coming with him, but usually, regardless of where he's going, he'll have many bodyguards

around him.”

She added, “Tonight, the King of Zhao will hold a banquet to welcome this traitor, and all the envoys have been invited to attend.”

Xiang Shaolong knew immediately that he’s not invited again. The King of Zhao is obviously on Li Yuan’s side and deliberately giving him the cold shoulder.

Zhao Zhi asked shyly, “Would Mister mind going to advise my Sister Rou? In my opinion, she will definitely listen to your words.”

At any rate, Xiang Shaolong couldn’t allow Shan Rou to take the risk in trying to assassinate Tian Dan so he readily stood up and said, “Alright! Let’s go see your sister.”

Xiang Shaolong and Zhao Zhi rode their horses out of the residence. From far away, someone came riding towards them and shouted, “Master Dong, please wait!”

Both of them looked over in surprise and it turned out to be Pu Bu.

Xiang Shaolong seized the chance to tell Zhao Zhi, “Go home first and wait for me there!”

Zhao Zhi meekly nodded and left immediately.

Pu Bu stopped beside him, panting, “Marquis has invited Mister Dong to see

him at once!”

Xiang Shaolong nodded his agreement and followed him back towards the Marquis’ residence.

He had on several occasions wanted to reveal his identity to Pu Bu, but in the end he bit back his words. After all, a person’s heart might have changed within the last half year.

Xiang Shaolong met Zhao Mu inside the secret room in the Marquis’ residence.

This traitor’s expression was stern as he grimaced, “Li Yanyan has indeed delivered a crown prince!”

Xiang Shaolong took a moment to understand his meaning before he exclaimed, “That’s not good!”

Zhao Mu clenched his fists and stamped his foot on the floor, “This time, that little thief managed to take full advantage of us. He can openly become crown prince uncle whereas my father has to worry that the King of Chu will find out that the baby is actually his son. Just based on this alone, father is already at a disadvantage. Moreover, Li Yanyan’s relationship with my dad is just based on beneficiary gains and there’s no real love at all. Now with her raise in stature, she can easily manipulate the King of Chu. Li Yuan will be able to get whatever he ask for in Chu.”

Xiang Shaolong remembered Li Yuan’s scheming character and asked in shock, “Would Master be in danger?”

Zhao Mu was deeply worried, “You figured this out as well, now Li Yuan’s biggest obstacle is my father. If I am Li Yuan, the first person I would deal with is the King of Chu. The King’s health has never been good so as long as Li Yanyan leads him down the path of destruction, it’s guaranteed that he wouldn’t last much longer. Once the King of Chu is gone, Li Yanyan and Li Yuan would be able to legitimately control Chu’s politics thru that bastard. Father has not taken any precaution against this, still thinking that the pair of siblings are still pawns that he can control but it would be so easy if those wretched siblings wants to harm him.”

Xiang Shaolong calmly replied, “The only way to handle this is to use the opportunity for me to completely eliminate Li Yuan when he leaves the country by posing as horse bandits.”

A shadow hung over Zhao Mu’s expression and he did not speak for a long moment. Finally he sighed and said, “I’m afraid it won’t be so easy. Li Yuan alone has incredible sword skills and this time, inclusive of his family warriors and attendants, he has close to five hundred people with him, even more men than you’ve got. Especially now that his worth has increased so much, King Xiaocheng will surely send his army to escort him back to Chu. Even when passing through Wei, the Weis will do the same too. If you act rashly, you won’t gain any advantage at all.”

Xiang Shaolong secretly smiled as he thought that it’s a good thing that traitor knows this because it would spare him a lot of problems.

Zhao Mu was obviously very worried and after sighing in despair, he asked, “Do you have any other better strategy?”

Xiang Shaolong deliberately replied, "Let me quickly go back to Chu to report to the Master so that he would be able to take some precautions."

Zhao Mu unhappily replied, "But then who'll help me take care of things here. Besides, Father often disregard me, his own son's words so why would he listen to an outsider's advice?"

Xiang Shaolong had known for a long time that he is a selfish person, who wouldn't care about family. That's why he certainly won't let him leave. But by pretending concern like this, he will gain more of Zhao Mu's trust. He replied, "Then we have to move faster, otherwise without Master's support, even if Marquis ascend the throne, it will only attract other country's intervention."

Zhao Mu's expression was heavy as he creased his brows, "I want you to investigate for me one thing."

Xiang Shaolong said, "Marquis, please give your orders."

Zhao Mu dejectedly replied, "This last six months, King Xiao Cheng has been giving me the cold shoulder. For example he recently had a few secret discussions with Li Yuan and also today, when he received Tian Dan, he wouldn't let me attend. There must be a problem somewhere."

Xiang Shaolong also found this to be odd, but hasn't gotten a chance to consider it deeply so he said offhandedly, "Could it be because Guo Kai is carrying tales?"

Zhao Mu replied with disdain. “Guo Kai is a useless man, and does not possess the ability to create friction between me and the Zhao King. I suspect it to be Zhao Ya. She bears a heavy grudge because I ruined her relationship with Xiang Shaolong. I wonder what evidence does she holds against me that the Zhao King trusts her so much.”

Xiang Shaolong broke out in cold sweat. Despite his careful planning, he has neglected the fact that he once mentioned to Zhao Ya the possible relationship between Zhao Mu and the Chu spy. Looking at things, it is likely that Zhao Ya has told this secret to King Xiaocheng, raising his suspicions about Zhao Mu. Therefore, King Xiaocheng must have bribed Guo Kai to his side and gave him promotions and responsibilities. This is to make him stronger in order to counter against Zhao Mu. Le Cheng would also have been bribed to turn against Zhao Mu. Otherwise, how can King Xiaocheng allow him to continue serving as Handan City’s chief military commander?

A twist of events has made the simple task complicated beyond measure.

It is impossible to Zhao King to bring down an established senior official like Zhao Mu overnight. He has to work in the background, slowly removing his power, disallowing him access to state secrets, breaking up his connections with other important ministers and generals. This is to minimise any further chaos in the country. Alas, after the departure of the Wu family, this country can no longer suffer another blow.

Xiang Shaolong ponders: How would I act if I was in his shoes? The best way would be to ignore all the rules. Summon Lian Po or Li Mu (Zhao’s best generals) back to Handan City to assist in bringing down Zhao Mu. This would

guarantee success! With these two capable and famous generals protecting Zhao, any invaders will have to pay a price for their attack.

However, Lian Po and Li Mu are busy battling the Yan people and the northern Xiong Nu. If not, Zhao Mu would be finished by now. The day either general can return to Handan City is the best time to deal with Zhao Mu.

Realising the serious danger he is in, Xiao Shaolong recalled Guo Kai's initial warning about Zhao Mu. Zhao Mu is indeed someone you should not be on friendly terms. In case the relationship sours due to the smallest circumstances, you may even have your entire household annihilated.

Even more complicating is that Li Yuan is now the Imperial Uncle of Chu. With his huge increase in status, King Xiaocheng has to give in more to his demands. Who can tell if this muddle-headed king will even sacrifice his horse breeder (Dong Kuang, Xiang Shaolong) to please him? Thinking of this will only bring more headaches.

Zhao Mu watched Xiang Shaolong's deep thinking and his expression switching between both hope and dismay. He thought Xiang Shaolong is worrying about both of them. He spoke in a low voice: I can tell that Zhao Ya is smitten with you. Based on your intelligence and interaction with her, see if you can deduce any information about what she is holding against me. If we cannot salvage the situation, we will kill that weak King, control Handan and handle Lian Po and Li Mu after that.

Xiang Shaolong is awe-struck. Judging from the tone of this Zhao traitor, he seems to have a ready plan to overtake the Zhao King but is not anxious to be

the Zhao King himself. Reflecting on this point, he could help but remind himself of Zhao Queen.

Zhao Mu is proficient in medicine/poisons and can enter the Zhao inner palace without obstacles. If he can work together with the Zhao Queen who has been tolerating her anger at the Zhao King, it would be not be too difficult to overthrow the Zhao throne.

Riding on the momentum, Xiang Shao Long asked: If such a day were to come, who will be assisting Marquis in Handan City?

Zhao Mu hesitated for a moment, said: The only trustworthy fellows are Le Cheng and a few of my warriors personally trained by me. Luckily, I have you to help me as well. In addition to my 2000 family warriors, we should be able to attack the palace easily. We will use this plan as a last resort. Before he gave me the cold shoulder, I can kill King Xiaocheng as easy as lifting my hand and no one would even know that I did it. Nowadays he keeps guarding against me so killing him would be much harder.

Continuing his excited tone: By now, you should know who is Xiang Shaolong, right?

Xiao Shaolong had a big fright, just nodded his head to express a positive answer. He wonders why Xiang Shaolong was suddenly mentioned.

Zhao Mu continued: I just got word from Qin. Xiang Shaolong is leading a force here to seek revenge. I will enter the palace and report this to King Xiaocheng later. However crafty is Xiang Shaolong, he will never expect I have a spy in Xianyang (Qin capital).

Xiang Shaolong is dying to know who is the spy but he suppressed this unwise emotion. He pretended to be surprised and quoted: What has this got to do with our rebellion?

Zhao Mu replied: There is a big connection. Long Shan (Teng Yi) and your physical body resemble that of Xiang Shaolong. We can prepare wooden swords for you and disguise as him to kill the Zhao King. After “escaping”, the public opinion would put the blame on Xiang Shaolong, our scapegoat. This way, we will not bear the crime.

While thinking secretly what a close shave he had, Xiang Shaolong displayed an admiration for the flawless plan: Marquis is thorough indeed. If King Xiaocheng has any plans to leave the palace, let me know the time and place beforehand. I will do a clean job, including leaving the necessary “evidence.”

Zhao Mu grew happier and said: From today onwards, we should avoid seeing each other unless absolute necessary. You have to be careful about Li Yuan. Not only has King Xiaocheng changed his treatment, even Tian Dan has distanced himself from me and build ties with him after knowing that he is now Chu’s Imperial Uncle. You may not be familiar with Tian Dan. This man is much more powerful and scheming than Prince Xinling. Definitely not an easy man to handle.

Xiang Shaolong discovered that today is all problems upon problems.

During the expedition to steal the Lu Gong Manual, he identified Chu and Qi people are very secretive and scheming. Now that Li Yuan has the

opportunity to be the most powerful man in Chu, Tian Dan would collaborate with him due to common interests in trying to break up the Three-States Pact. This will make his own life more perilous. If both Li Yuan and Tian Dan exert pressure on King Xiaocheng, Xiang Shaolong may be a sacrificial lamb.

What can be done to handle such a dangerous trap?

Zhao Mu keep reminding Xiang Shaolong to check what is Zhao Ya up to before releasing him.

Xiang Shaolong secretly sighed. He can no longer avoid seeing Zhao Ya. With Zhao Mu numerous Handan City spies, he will know and be suspicious of Dong Kuang (Xiang Shaolong) if he never visited Zhao Ya.

Adding another worry is whether Zhao Ya will spill the beans on what Xiang Shaolong told her about the suspicion between Zhao Mu and the Chu spy. If Zhao Mu hears of this, he will be prone suspecting the Dong Kuang is a fake. Thinking about how Guo Kai promised to bring himself to the official brothel but has yet to fulfil his word, he must have been influenced by Li Yuan. Since King Xiaocheng's attitude has changed, and Guo Kai being the apple-polisher, he will naturally stay away from Xiang Shaolong.

Suddenly, he felt that he has lost the advantage he had in Handan. He felt cornered and attacked from all four directions. He bitterly suffers his isolation.

Chapter 5

Reacting with Calmness

As Xiao Shaolong starting riding away from the Marquis's Residence, he couldn't help but feel a sense of loss in his heart.

Right now is evening and the street lamps are being lighted. The autumn wind blows a chilling sensation in the air.

Teng Yi has already left the city for Hidden Army Valley and Ji Yanran is not available. Now that he wants to confide in someone, who can he look for? Thinking about his date with Zhao Zhi, he starts to feel better. His only escape to forget all the headaches is to indulge in the flesh of a beauty.

In hindsight, he cannot openly visit Ji Yanran but he can still do so discreetly. His conscious in clear and the intelligent beauty may even have a good plan to counter the present danger

With this thought, he hurried home and changed into fresh clothes. With his skills, he slipped into Liu (Huasheng) Residence and finally found his belle in her loft.

Seeing him, Ji Yanran is crazy with happiness. After an intense frenching session, Xiang Shaolong related everything he encountered at Zhao Mu's residence.

After thinking long and hard in his bosom, Ji Yanran straightened her pose and offer: I have a plan which would help to solve all the present problems, although I am not very happy to execute it.

Xiang Shaolong did not feel good hearing this and quickly asked her for the details.

Ji Yanran replied: "Li Yuan has been feeling dejected because of me. He is against you also because you won my favour. I have to openly show no interest in you and conspire with him. In the process, I have to make him understand that if he harms you again, I will ignore him forever. Thus, he may hate you but he will not dare to plot against you anymore."

Xiang Shaolong couldn't take it anymore. He revealed: "How can we proceed in such a manner? What if you really fall for him? Li Yuan is merciless when he wants to achieve an objective. He resembles Han Chuang who gave me a bottle of aphrodisiac to make you succumb to me."

Ji Yanran was incensed: "That shameless brat!"

After they consolidated their thoughts, Yanran hugged Shaolong: "Relax my dear. Yanran is well-equipped to deal with all kinds of evil men. I guard very well against people who try to tamper with my food and drink. Li Yuan will not succeed in wooing me. Moreover, I am the famous Ji Yanran, the stone cold maiden. If Li Yuan wants to marry me openly; he has to wait till he goes back to Chu."

Xiang Shaolong still feels uneasy: "Now that Li Yuan is the Imperial Uncle, he

is probably thinking of going back to Chu to consolidate his power to match Lord Chunshen Huang Xie. If he wants to bring you back to Chu and you disagree, it will reveal your real intentions.”

Ji Yanran reasoned: “If we can drag the matter for one day, we benefit the extra day. In Handan City, everyone is clamouring to Li Yuan’s side. And your situation will grow from bad to worse. If we do not hasten to hold his hand, we may not be able to survive tomorrow. Let’s hope the treaty will take more time to finish so that Li Yuan has to remain in Zhao for a longer period.”

Xiang Shaolong secretly admits that this is the best strategy. If he tried to escape now without capturing Zhao Mu, how is he to face Lu Buwei and King Zhuangxiang? No matter what it takes, regardless of personal or official obligations, he cannot retreat without settling his blood debt.

Gritting his teeth, he consented: “Sorry to trouble Yanran!”

Before he finished his sentence, the maidservant came to report that Li Yuan has come to invite Ji Yanran to enter the palace together for the banquet.

Xiang Shaolong felt the ultimate discomfort and his heart is bleeding.

Xiang Shaolong has just arrived in the bamboo grove when the large yellow dog started barking.

This time, he entered through the front main door. Zhao Zheng welcomed him in and keep tugging his clothes. “Please dissuade Little Rou. She never listens to anyone. Tian Dan is at the peak of his power and I did not want to

see Little Rou commit such a dense act akin the moth flying towards the flame”

Xiang Shaolong sighed: “But I do not have full confidence in dissuading her”

Zhao Zhen replied:”Despite her display of hatred for you, I can tell that she thinks often about you. These few days, she is depressed and throws tantrums and it is all because she is upset with you.

Xiang Shaolong thought of that night when he held Shan Rou on the floor. Her dress had spilled opened to reveal her white and supple legs. Swallowing his saliva, he headed to the back of the house. He asked: “Don’t you employ any errand boy or page?”

Zhao Zhen explained: I like peace so the errand boy goes over to sleep at the school after dinner. This is more convenient for Little Rou as she cannot be seen by the public.

Xiao Shaolong finally understood.

Zhao Zhen sent him to the stairwell and asked him to enter own his own.

Xiang Shaolong banished all the troubles in his mind, consolidate his spirits and came to the front of the door. He was about to knock when the door was pulled open. Zhao Zhi was dressed in an entirely new outfit which put her in a different light. Waiting at the door, she gives the impression of a dainty wife welcoming her husband home after a hard day’s work. In a pleasant voice she cried: “Master Dong please come in!”

He cannot bear but look at her intensely before stepping into the hall.

Zhao Zhi let him have a good look at her. Not only is she not offended, she happily tugged his sleeve and pointed upstairs: "Sister is upstairs. Would you please go and find her?"

Xiao Shaolong endured the thought of caressing her and questioned: "Aren't you going up with me?" Zhao Zhi giggled: "I am preparing cakes to pamper our esteemed guest. Please be lenient and don't bully too much. Remember Zhao Zhi has promised to do your bidding from now on."

Xiang Shaolong is aroused by her tender attitude and cannot bear to hurt her anymore. He knows he is deeply entrenched with the Zhao sisters till the point of no return. After, humans are creature with feelings. The two girls have such a pitiful background. As a typical man, he is compelled to protect the weaker sex. He cannot help but feel drawn towards them.

Hai! Since he is here, he will do his best according to the circumstances.

Xiang Shaolong smoothly gave a light pinch to Zhao Zhi's cheek before ascending the stairs.

Zhao Zhi's delicate face turned red as she returned to her baking.

He reached the place where he had his first tussle with the two ladies. He did not see Shan Rou immediately. After scanning the area, he noticed two huts on the right. One has its door blinds down while the other hut seems to be uninhabited.

Xiang Shaolong purposely took off his boots and approached the hut with the blinds down.

Shan Rou's icy voice shot out from the hut: "Who is it?"

Xiang Shaolong replied: "Me" and lifted the blinds and entered the hut.

Shan Rou is leaning on a couch at the side of the room. She straightened herself immediately. Under the candlelight, her chiselled face and curvy lips in addition to her slightly untidy hair gave off a tantalizing aura that Xiang Shaolong has never experienced before. Although he is used to beauties, his eyes lit up at the sight of her.

Shan Rou stared at Shaolong with mixed reactions. She tidied her hair and stood up and said embarrassingly: "I did not sleep well the last few nights. I unexpectedly fell asleep while leaning on the couch for a slight rest."

For Xiang Shaolong, this is the first time he saw this beauty in such a stylish light. In spite of strong external character, she carries another side of her. If not for the fact that he heard it with his own ears, he cannot believe Shan Rou can speak in such an affectionate tone.

Shan Rou caught Shaolong examining herself and became shy. But she resumed her icy tone and spoke displeasingly: "Will Mister Dong please wait outside, allow me to freshen up..."

Xiang Shaolong interrupted her: "No need to freshen up. Miss Rou is looking her best!"

Shan Rou's beautiful and big eyes blinked in puzzlement but she did not insist. Using her icy voice, she replied: "You are strange. My clothes and hair are disorderly and you said it is prettier. Fine. Let's talk outside."

Shan Rou was about to cross the door ledge into the inner hall when she had to stop. Apparently, Shaolong had blocked her path with his large hand. If she had gone a further two inches, her chest will collide into his huge arm.

Shan Rou could not apprehend why he wants to block the way and keep her in the room. She forgot to react and only stared at him dumbly.

Xiang Shaolong also couldn't understand why he is so rude with her. He knew that without a proper explanation, this female assassin will not take it easy on him. He spoke: "Will you assassinate Tian Dan regardless of whatever I say?"

Shan Rou is indeed distracted by him. She replied slowly: "You are not me, how would you understand how I feel? Zhao Zhi is still young that time and does not have a deep impression. But I saw with my own eyes how my parents, siblings and everyone who loved me caged in a row like pigs and dogs. They were led by traitorous soldiers who brought them back to Qi. From that moment I only have one wish – that is to kill both Zhao Mu and Tian Dan."

Xiang Shaolong nodded his head in agreement. "That is truly a tragedy. Supposedly, you can only kill either Zhao Mu or Tian Dan. Who will you choose?"

Shan Rou has never thought about this question. Eyes flickering, she thought for a while and replied: "I will kill Zhao Mu."

Xiang Shaolong heaved a sigh of relief but felt bewildered. He enquire: "Isn't Tian Dan the mastermind?"

Shan Rou revealed a pained expression. Gritting her teeth, she reasoned: "If not for Zhao Mu, my household will not be annihilated. What I detest most is he betrayed us while pretending to be our friends. Such a despicable man. In order to please Tian Dan, he resorted to committing these heinous crimes."

Xiang Shaolong gently offered: "Great! If you agree not to act recklessly and only to act with my permission, I will help you to assassinate Zhao Mu and let you three sisters unite. Are you agreeable?"

Shan Rou is greatly shocked. Confused, she gazed at him. Out of a sudden, her eyes turned piercing and cold. She recalled icily: "You have no reason to assist us at all. In the last meeting, Little Zhi offered you both our bodies without seeking my consent. Nonetheless, you did not waver. Why would you suddenly change your mind now? Are you not afraid this will affect your new career in Handan City?"

Xiang Shaolong is unable to answer her questions. Due to her background, Shan Rou is in a state of constant preparedness. She does not trust people easily. If he is unable to provide a satisfactory respond, he cannot win her trust, much less her cooperation. Seems like the only way out is to disclose his real identity as Xiang Shaolong. He has no idea what are consequences of this revelation.

While considering, he unconsciously let his sight rest on her naked feet. Seeing the healthy glow of her flesh, he felt attracted and aroused at the same time.

In this instant, a sharp dagger appear around his waist. Shan Rou's cold as snow voice rung out in his ears: "Can't even think of a good lie? I told Zhi Zhi long ago that you are only interested in our bodies. That is why you did not blow the whistle on us. Finally you have shown your true colours. Heh! And she is defending you."

Xiang Shaolong understands that she is thirsty for revenge and behaves differently from other people. But never in his dreams would he imagine her to start using a weapon so early in the conversation. On the other hand, he believes she will give him a chance to clarify matters before killing him. Shaking his head and smiling bitterly, he responded: "If you recognize how Zhao Mu is spreading slanders in front of the Zhao King about how I am detrimental to Zhao-Chu relationships; if you know that my only wish right now is to leave Zhao as soon as possible, then you will realise what a good reason I have to help you deal with Zhao Mu."

Shan Rou glanced at him for a while and at long last withdrew the dagger.

Shaolong's words are full of truths and falsehood. Shan Rou had heard from Zhao Zhi how King Xiaocheng ignores Dong Kuang but had no idea this was linked to Zhao Mu. She believed the majority of what Xiang Shaolong said.

Shan Rou moved her body towards him and allows her full, lively breasts to gently rest on his arm. Shyly she whispered: "If you can really lend us a hand

in killing Zhao Mu, I will be your woman.”

Xiang Shaolong is filled with unparalleled excitement. This beauty does not make him feel guilty as she is not linked to Jing Jun. Therefore, he can rest easy and enjoy the pleasure of her flesh. What makes Shan Rou even more irresistible is she can be cold, vicious and unyielding on one hand but can be affectionate and enthralling to tempt him on the other hand. Face with a lady as this, Xiang Shaolong is in cloud nine.

Nevertheless, if Shaolong gives in and make love to her, it would make Shan Rou look down on herself.

Pretending to be disinterested, Shaolong declared:”I wish to make things clear. Unless Miss Rou obliges me with a willing and pure intention, I would never take advantage of Miss. If this is to be a transaction, you can definitely forget about it as I am not a crafty man who takes advantage of someone when they are in need.”

Shan Rou was dumbfounded and remained still. She did not move her breasts away but instead subconsciously increased the pressure. Xiang Shaolong hoped to move his arm away except he lack the superhuman willpower and determination.

In this moment, both parties exist in an extremely delicate and subtle situation, with neither person willing to move apart or make any adjustments.

Shan Rou furrowed her eye brows:”In that case, why are you willing to

accompany us in this dangerous expedition?”

Scrutinizing her beautiful jade face that is as charming as a scenery of hills and lakes, Xiang Shaolong felt both adoration and sympathy. In a warm voice, he answered: “The main reason is that I really like the both of you from the bottom of my heart. It is also because of my best friend, who happens to be Shan Lan’s husband. When you meet Shan Lan in the future, you will grasp the full picture.”

Footsteps sounded.

Both of them panicked. Xiang Shaolong extracted his arm from the comfort of the twin peaks while Shan Rou takes the chance to quickly get out from the room. Following behind Shan Rou, Shaolong saw Zhao Zhi carrying heated wine and aromatic cakes, smiling cheekily as she climbed the final steps.

Shan Rou moved a coffee table into the centre of the hall. Mesmerized by the two flawless beauties, Shaolong experienced a wave of romance. He took down the hanging lamp from the wall and set it in the centre of the coffee table, making it a candlelight dinner panorama.

With the three persons sitting around the table, Zhao Zhi hastily pour a cup of hot, steaming wine for everyone. The wine smelled wonderful. She then dispensed the pastries and smiled sweetly: “Mister Dong, please try Zhao Zhi’s baking skill. They taste best when hot.”

Xiang Shaolong recalled that he had missed his dinner and busied himself

with the cakes. Whether it is due to hunger or not, the cakes taste delicious and he kept praising them to no end. Zhao Zhi's smile brightened with his compliments.

Shan Rou only took one piece and watched Shaolong as he handled his first wave of wine and cakes. When he finished the first round, she asked in a surprisingly intimate tone: "Has Mister Dong prepared a plan yet?"

Xiang Shaolong knew that unless he showed some trump cards, Shan Rou will never believe him. He simply replied: "Zhao Mu is planning to rebel; are you aware of it?"

Both girls look at each other for answers.

Shan Rou reasoned: "How would you know about such matters? Didn't you just say that he is out to harm you?"

Xiang Shaolong silently thought this it is indeed not easy to deceive this head tigress. Holding a calm outlook, he replied: "This matter is complicated beyond measure."

He abruptly creased his eye brows and remained mute.

Both girls are amazed at his reaction and looked at him dumbly.

Xiang Shaolong is pondering over if he should reveal his true identity. This will save a lot of needless explanation and prevent further misunderstanding.

The conditions are all very obvious. Based on Shan Lan's sisterhood, they will not betray him. In addition, both sisters are attracted to him. Zhao Zhi is even in love with both of his characters.

Shan Rou asked with suspicion: "Are you deceiving us? That's why you cannot justify your answers"

Zhao Zhi came to his defence: "Sister Rou, Mister Dong is not that kind of person."

Shan Rou demanded angrily: "You let him explain himself"

Xiang Shaolong suddenly decided. He was relieved to unload such big burdens off his shoulder. He gazed upward and let himself down, lying on the floor, rubbing his stomach, "Zhi Zhi, you made the best cake in the whole world."

Shan Rou was angry, "Don't try to deflect the question towards her. Quickly answer my question."

Xiang Shaolong spread out both his hands and his legs crossing under the big table just barely grazing Shan Rou's leg on the opposite side of the table.

Shan Rou was annoyed as she moved aside, "If you keep evading, I'm going to kill you."

Xiang Shaolong pointed at his neck, "You pointed your sword here then I'll tell you the truth."

Both sisters locked gaze and felt totally confused. This person's behaviors were always out of the ordinary, truly made them unsure on what to do.

Xiang Shaolong took advantage of the time that he wasn't in their line of vision, to turn around and bend over to take off his mask, before swiftly sitting down again. As if there's nothing wrong, he extended his hand and grabbed another cake, slowly munching it.

Both girls at first didn't realize what's going on until they saw him clearly, then they started screaming in shock.

Shan Rou moved backward, pulled out her knife, returning to her old scary bad wolf expression.

Zhao Zhi, on the other hand, was dumb struck. She kept staring at him in disbelief.

Xiang Shaolong sat on his knee, continued to drink his wine calmly, narrowed his eyes as he lazily stared at them, "I truly have been lying to you all along, but you have to understand my difficulty!"

Zhao Zhi calmed down again, stood up, her whole face was blushing up to her ears. She looked down shamefully, upset, "Xiang Shaolong, you truly ashamed me, how could I face you again?"

Xiang Shaolong of course understood her meaning, smiled, "Relax! I won't be jealous of Dong Kuang. Even more, he hasn't done anything towards you yet."

Zhao Zhi was both upset and embarrassed. She doesn't know what to say

anymore but everyone can see how joyful she is deep inside.

Shan Rou suddenly lighted up, packed away his knife and sat down, “You are truly amazing. You even deceived the whole town of Handan.”

Xiang Shaolong put on his mask again, returning back to his Dong Kuang’s identity. Both girls marveled at the change.

Shan Rou turned towards Zhao Zhi, “He looks better like this.”

Xiang Shaolong didn’t know whether to cry or laugh, stretched his waist, “Now you don’t have to be suspicious of why I want to kill Zhao Mu! But I felt that it’s too easy for him to just be killed right away, so I want to capture him alive to bring back to Xian Yang to receive just punishment. I hope you two sisters wouldn’t object.”

Both girls were stunned.

Xiang Shaolong continued, “The Qis sent Shan Lan to Lu Buwei as a gift. Fortunately, Lu Buwei turned around and gave her to me. She and my brother, Teng Yi, fell in love at first sight and got married right away. It’s all very romantic.” He turned towards Zhao Zhi and said, “Today, the one who beat Li Yuan’s famous underlings in a row was Teng Yi. Now you understand why he’s called Long Shan, right?”

Shan Rou was murmuring, “Fell in love at first sight”. She felt that these words were totally refreshing.

Zhao Zhi suddenly understood and looked down, “So where is Jing Jun?” Xiang Shaolong started to hope again for Jing Jun, honestly replied, “Sister Zhi, are you interested in my brother?”

Zhao Zhi was so surprised that she looked up again, afraid that Xiang Shaolong misunderstood her intention, spit out, “No! I only thought of him as a playful kid! But he’s very friendly!”

Xiang Shaolong became somber. He realized that he can’t force feelings, Jing Jun can only kill his feeling towards her.

After knowing that he’s Xiang Shaolong, Shan Rou’s curiosity was aroused and she continuously watched him, “So what is our next move?”

Xiang Shaolong directly explained the situation to them, “Zhao Mu or Tian Dan. Between the two of them, we can only choose one. Before Sister Rou already chose Zhao Mu, so we used this as our goal. If only we could get Zhao Mu to rebel, we will get the opportunity to capture him alive from Han Dan.”

Zhao Zhi had already stopped being embarrassed, happily asked, “What can we sisters do to help?”

Xiang Shaolong was touched and told them of Tian Zhen, “Lady Zhi, would you mind contacting her on my behalf so she won’t be worried. If it’s not important, please don’t look for me. I will send Jing Jun to contact you.”

Both girls were disappointed.

Shan Rou stubbornly insisted, “No one has seen me before. If you can arrange for me to be by your side, we’ll be able to work together towards this.”

Xiang Shaolong’s head was spinning, “This could arouse suspicion, let me think about it first, alright?”

Shan Rou frostily replied, “If I don’t hear back from you in two days, I will pretend to be your wife coming to Han Dan to look for you.”

Xiang Shaolong lost his voice, “What?”

Shan Rou haughtily raised her chin, atrociously replied, “Too bad if you didn’t hear it!”

Zhao Zhi pitifully asked, “What about me?”

It’s too late for Xiang Shaolong to regret his decision. He bitterly smiled as he stood up and shrugged, “Give me some time to think about this!”

Zhao Zhi astonished, “Where are you going?”

This time, it’s Xiang Shaolong’s turn to be surprised, “Of course going home!”

Shan Rou grunted, “Men! Don’t understand women heart! Zhi Zhi wants you to stay and spend the night with her! Stop pretending to be dumb.”

Shan Rou stood up and headed out of the room. Just as she reached the

curtain, she stopped and turned around, leaning on the door, “My room’s just next door. The only thing barring the room is this curtain. If you’re not afraid to die, just come and look for me, Shan Rou!”

She grinned right after she finished spoken. With a slightly flushed face, she lifted the curtain and left. Xiang Shaolong saw a flaming red face Zhao Zhi. He couldn’t help but feel excited, thinking that it has all come to this. He doesn’t need to be considerate anymore. Furthermore, Zhao Zhi’s life so far has been miserable. Her love life also wasn’t as one wishes, how could he not sympathize with her.

Anyway, in this time period, who doesn’t have three wives four concubines and a large harem, as long as both sides agree, no one would blame you. But he also thought that that place wasn’t an appropriate place, gently said, “Come home with me?”

Zhao Zhi was terribly embarrassed that she doesn’t know where to hide, nodded slightly. He felt warm throughout on seeing this.

Xiang Shaolong shouted towards Shan Rou’s room, “Zhi Zhi will follow me home, what are you planning to do?”

Shan Rou replied, “I’m very sleepy. You guys should leave! Remember, you only have two days to think.”

Xiang Shaolong shook his head in grim and waved Zhao Zhi to go ahead downstairs.

Chapter 6

Cornered!!

As he reached his residence, Wu Guo was waiting for him.

This joke-loving person was imposing, “Lady Ya is looking for you. She seems very unsettled, insisting on waiting for you to come home inside.”

Xiang Shaolong didn’t expect Zhao Ya to return again after leaving earlier, now that banquet specially set up to welcome Tian Dan hadn’t finished, how come she left the banquet halfway and come looking for him?

He gently said to Zhao Zhi, “Zhi Zhi, you go first to the east room to wait for me!”

Zhao Zhi at that time had become very attentive towards him. Without any protest, she went and followed Wu Guo.

Xiang Shaolong quickly went to the inner hall. As he was about to step over the threshold, Zhao Ya had in a flash already turned around, her face paled, her pair of eyes were full of despair.

He was shaken, came over and said, “What happened? What scared you so badly?”

Zhao Ya seemed to have changed into another person, with a shocking voice replied, “Dong Kuang! Zhao Ya is here to do an irresistible transaction with

you.”

Xiang Shaolong became wary. His eyes became grim and his lips hinted of a smile, calmly asked, “Even if it’s got to do with my life, I might still reject it.”

Zhao Ya realized that she had provoked the opponent, sighed and became soft, “Let’s consider another circumstance then, just think of this as me requesting your help. As long as you agree, from this moment on, Zhao Ya would only listen to your command. What do you think Mister Dong?”

Xiang Shaolong was confused. What kind of circumstance would force this lascivious lady to not hesitate to sacrifice everything, betting everything on this request? He creased his eyebrows, “I’ll listen to your request first.”

Zhao Ya replied with a bleak voice unlike her usual calm and gentle voice, “Dong Kuang, you might not know that you are currently in a critical situation. After Li Yuan had been informed that he had just become the country’s uncle, he proposed to our king to detain you back to Chu. Otherwise, he wouldn’t support the alliance between the two countries.”

Xiang Shaolong was furious. If this afternoon, he had killed him, then he would have gotten rid of any future troubles.

Zhao Ya saw him turned solemn, but still in a calm mood without displaying any of his emotions and thoughts. She admired this of him, softly said, “Brother currently is still hesitating. What he was most afraid of is that even if he sacrificed you, Chu will still be like in the past break their promises. In that case, he would lose in both cases.”

Xiang Shaolong suddenly felt like laughing out loud.

Among the absurd things in the world, there is none that surpassed this example. From this event, you can tell that Xiaocheng is an exceptionally selfish being and every person is just a statistic to him.

If he has a troop of elite Qin soldiers on call, he would definitely make trouble for both Xiaocheng and Li Yuan these two crafty bastards. Zhao Ya continued: "Presently, I am the only person who can influence Xiaocheng, allowing you to flourish in Handan alive. So if Zhao Ya is dead set on doing your bidding, it will benefit Mister Dong in many areas."

Xiang Shaolong recollects the day after he defeated Lian Jin (history: the guy he defeated in Zhao palace and won Wu Tingfang's marriage). Zhao Ya had this same display of intensity of power when she negotiated with him. Snickering, he solicited: "I know Miss is great both in bed and out of bed but you have yet to tell me what assignment you have in mind for me."

Zhao Ya's eyes shot out a look of determination. She plainly said: "I want to you contact a person and warn him never ever to step into Handan City. The Zhao King has received secret information that he is on his way to Handan and has laid traps everywhere, waiting for him to send himself to his demise."

Xiang Shaolong athletic body trembled, gazing at Zhao Ya with eyes wide open.

He finally understood what has transpired.

Zhao Da (Zhao Ya's bodyguard) is right; Zhao Ya has been unable to forget her feeling for him. The moment she knew about Zhao Mu's secret message from Qin, she dropped everything and approach him to warn Xiang Shaolong so as to save him from the traps of Zhao.

Composed, Zhao Ya explained: "You, Dong Kuang, are the only man in Handan with the courage and strength to accomplish this task. Most of your subordinates are staying outside the city and are used to the wilderness. I reckon only your forces have the ability to intercept Xiang Shaolong and his followers."

Xiang Shaolong almost wanted to embrace her deeply and tell her he is the Xiang Shaolong she had wanted to save.

Zhao Ya squirmed under his stare. Hanging her head lowly, she pressed: "Dong Kuang, please give me answer quickly. Let me remind you. If I am rejected again, even I would not know what I will do next."

Xiang Shaolong has seen what she will resort to when driven to the wall. Letting out a big sigh, he chided: "If you had known this would be the result, why do it in the first place?"

Zhao Ya was expressionless as she chanted his words twice. Unable to hold her tears anymore, she wailed: "Because Zhao Ya does not want to betray him for a second time."

Xiang Shaolong could feel his emotions rising. Rushing forward, he grabbed her shoulders and barked sharply: "Look at me!"

Zhao Ya was taken aback at this outburst. "Why is Mister Dong so emotional?"

"I am Xiang Shaolong!"

"I am Xiang Shaolong!" he was about to explode but at the last moment, he swallowed his words and made a heart-rending promise: "Rest assured Princess. I will help you not because of your threat, but because I am touched by the selfless love you have for Xiang Shaolong. I, Dong Kuang, hereby swear that if Xiang Shaolong stepped into Handan City one step, I will bear no descendants and die an inconceivable death!"

Zhao Ya stuttered: "Dong Kuang! Do you know how grateful Zhao Ya is towards you?" From her bosom, she produced a cloth painting and gave it to Xiang Shaolong. "This is his portrait. Obviously, he will assume a different identity and appearance to cover his tracks."

Receiving the painting, Xiang Shaolong yanked it open for a look. The fine lines detailing his appearance gave it a life-like manifestation. He was shaken and enquired: "Who drew this?"

Zhao Ya replied: "I did."

Xiang Shaolong surmised: "Seeing this painting is like seeing the real person. From this we can conclude Xiang Shaolong has left a deep and strong impression in the mind of Princess."

Zhao Ya shot out a strange look. She looked closely at him and slowly

quotes: "You have strong piercing eyes that could compare to Xiang Shaolong's."

Xiang Shaolong smilingly said: "Princess's love for Xiang Shaolong is well-known. Are you not afraid of jealousy from evil admirers?" Zhao Ya heartbreakingly answered: "You are a special man. Among the men I have come across, you are the only one who can make me forget Xiang Shaolong. Are you happy now?"

Xiang Shaolong naturally accepted: "Very happy. Princess, please return to your home. I need to assign my men and investigate the surroundings so as to accomplish this case that you have appealed to me. At the end of the day, I have full confidence in intercepting Xiang Shaolong and invite him to return back to Xianyang."

Zhao Ya gratefully agreed to his recommendations to leave. Her mind is full of concern for Xiang Shaolong's safety and can longer think of other matters. But if Dong Kuang had asked her to stay, she would not reject him.

All the love and hatred for Zhao Ya has dissipated for Xiang Shaolong at this point in time. He accompanied her to the main door and both parties remain in silence.

Reaching the waiting horse carriage, Zhao Ya can no longer hold herself and beseeched softly: "Mister Dong is indeed someone who does not bother about the danger around him"

Xiang Shaolong heaved a sigh: "Birth and Death are fated. Worrying is good

for nothing”

Amidst laughter, he returned to his villa.

Zhao Ya waited until his silhouette had disappeared before rousing up. Within the carriage, her mind kept revisiting “Birth and Death are fated”

Having untied his knotty issue regarding Zhao Ya, Xiang Shaolong completely recovered his self-confidence and has the strength to deal with his powerful foes such as Li Yuan and King Xiaocheng

The mindset of the Special Forces is to win through unique methods.

Using smaller numbers to defeat bigger numbers. Using elite to defeat the ordinary.

Utilising the highly efficient organization, he is convinced that no one can keep them in Handan City. Once they leave the city and enter the wild, their chances of escape and survival would be even higher.

Momentarily, he abandons all his thoughts and fear and march towards the unforeseeable future.

Tonight, he still needs to seek out Ji Yanran and inform her that she need not put up with Li Yuan the petty thief anymore.

Arriving in the east room, Zhao Zhi is leaning her face on her palm with her elbow on the table. She is waiting for him painfully.

Watching Xiang Shaolong stepping over the door ledge and looking full of energy, she happily pounced on him and checked: "Has Zhao Ya left?" Xiang Shaolong held her soft fingers and brought her through different rooms, going deeper into his villa. Halfway through, Wu Guo intercepted them. Peeping twice at the shy Zhao Zhi, he reported: "Since dawn, there are some stalkers outside our quarters. We have located their exact locations. There are four of them and situated in front and behind our villa."

Xiang Shaolong coldly commanded: "Capture them alive and interrogate them. I want to know who sent them."

Zhao Zhi was stunned and focused her beautiful big eyes on him

Wu Guo is pleased and rushed off.

Xiang Shaolong reached out and gives a light pinch to Zhao Zhi's egg-shaped face. Dragging her along the way, he grinned: "Does Miss Zhi know where I am bringing you and what are we about to do together?"

Zhao Zhi's face turned red and whispered: "I know!"

Xiang Shaolong chuckled: "What do you know?"

Zhao Zhi cannot resist looking at his wonderful physique. Bashfully, she protested: "You are very good with your methods. No matter which identity you assumed, you are able to make me feel attracted to you, causing me days of untold suffering!"

Xiang Shaolong pulled her straight into the bath quarters. Someone has prepared hot water and poured it into a pool. There are another three bronze pots of hot water on standby.

How in the world would Zhao Zhi have guessed the destination is the bath quarters? Not knowing what to do and at a complete loss, she hesitated between going ahead and backing away. Observing her introvert expressions only caused Xiang Shaolong's blood to race even faster.

Waving the servants to take their leave and after closing the door, Xiang Shaolong remove Blood Wave and laid it besides the pool. Stripping his outer garments, his climbing tools and flying needles are exposed.

Zhao Zhi was horrified that Xiang Shaolong was a single man armed like an entire army. Putting aside her shyness, she lightly assisted him to remove his hardware.

Xiang Shaolong took off his mask and placed it neatly, and proceeded to take off her clothes.

Reacting to his movements, Zhao Zhi's entire body turned soft and cannot even stand properly.

Under Xiang Shaolong's well trained hands, Zhao Zhi is only left with a thin and tight singlet and a pair of short panties. Her neck, shoulder, breasts and feet are all fully displayed.

Her flexible and curvy silhouette, her firm flesh and her scent would cause anyone to undergo the magical seduction of a youthful body.

Xiang Shaolong is not in a hurry to strip her all the way. Locking her strongly in an embrace, he kissed her for long session, making her pant. Releasing her, he mocked: "Xiang Shaolong and Dong Kuang, who is a better suitor to win your heart?"

Zhao Zhi chose: "I'm afraid it is Dong Kuang! Sometimes you use hard tactics, sometimes, you use soft tactics. It has made me terribly confused and lost my bearings. I cannot even have a good meal and have no idea how to please you."

Xiang Shaolong felt apologetic and felt more love for her. Hugging her and sitting by the pool, they dipped their feet into the hot water. Cheekily he asked: "Let me serve Zhi Zhi to take a shower as an apology, it is ok?"

Zhao Zhi was both happy and timid. "It should be Zhi Zhi serving hubby instead" she corrected.

Xiang Shaolong took off the rest of her clothes. Admiring her ivory white skin and her full naked body in the misty bath quarters, he said in a soft voice: "If you regret, you can reject me now!"

Zhao Zhi's heart was thumping non-stop but she maintained her stand and shook her head vigorously.

The steam generated caused the light from two wall lamps of the bath quarters to become blurred, creating a special romantic ambience.

Xiang Shaolong swiftly stripped to his birthday suit and exhibits his manly

aura and perfect toned body. He leaped into the pool first and carried Zhao Zhi from her seat at the poolside into the warmth of the water. He started to scrub her carefully.

Zhao Zhi's flawless body started to tremble. She stood in the centre of the pool and allowing her lover to do whatever he wants. Her wet black hair was glowing and they were sticking to her back and her chest. Such a seductive posture made Xiang Shaolong stopped scrubbing and grabbed her for an intensive kiss.

After being through the various challenges, their love is finally seeing a bright future.

Under Zhao Zhi's passionate and active responses, Xiang Shaolong remembered the times when he was frolicking with the different girls and maids in the Zhao palace pool. Now that Zhao Ni (the other princess who committed suicide after being raped by Zhao Mu) is no longer around and Zhao Ya's relationship has taken a different turn, he swelled up with various emotions.

In this condition, he has a strong urge and his target is of course the beauty naked in his embrace. Even if someone held a knife to his neck, it will not discourage him from taking her.

For a while, the bath quarters is filled with Xiang Shaolong's wild breathing and Zhao Zhi's delirious and delighted moaning

When Xiang Shaolong slipped into her room agilely, Ji Yanran has just taken down her accessories and is looking at her bronze mirror blankly. Catching

the man she has been pining for, she leapt into his arms.

Xiang Shaolong blew out the lamp and cuddled her onto the bed. After a passionate and intense kiss, he related Zhao Ya's encounter.

Ji Yanran mused, "She is still unable to forget you! Yanran has always been bewildered at why would any woman want to betray you?"

Avoiding the question, he chortles: "Please do not get entangled with Li Yuan anymore. This will affect me emotionally and distract me from the circumstances at hand"

Ji Yanran cooed: "Judging at how confident you are, Yanran loves you even more! You have caught Guo Kai's four-man surveillance team, what do you plan to do next?"

Xiang Shaolong replied innocently: "Early tomorrow, I am going to employ some methods to force King Xiaocheng to explain his stand. This muddle-headed king has always been indecisive. If I do not give him a wakeup call, he may well heed Li Yuan's advice."

Ji Yanran loved his "wake up call" description. At the same time, she sighed: "I had thought Li Yuan is a man of talent. This cad is a loser who doesn't care about the big picture. If the governance of Chu were to be in his scheming hands, what hope does the state of Chu have?"

Xiang Shaolong thought of something and enquired: "You have seen Tian Dan. What kind of a person is he?"

Thinking silently for a while, Ji Yanran gave a rundown. "He is a very powerful and charming man but is also a lecher. The way he looks at you makes you feel that he want to swallow you up immediately into his stomach. Compared to Li Yuan, he has the air of a powerful general."

Xiang Shaolong joked: "In this case, you are also attracted to him."

Ji Yanran said: "You can put it this way, but it is not male-female attraction but human to human observation." Xiang Shaolong guffawed: "You don't have to clarify. I am not a petty person."

Ji Yanran joyfully kissed him and state: "Of course you are not petty, but I am your woman and it is necessary to be transparent for matters like these."

Xiang Shaolong thought about Li Yuan. Frowning, he asked: "What about the Li little thief?"

Ji Yanran followed his (frowning) tone and sighed: "I wittily hinted the little thief that we do not have any relationship. His spirits rose and started speaking with better composure. Along the way he kept bragging on how he will manage the politics of Chu in the future. He sounds correct but he neglected the threat of Qin. He is only concerned about expanding his territory but has no idea on ruling the country well internally. I can only sigh at him."

Xiang Shaolong continued: "Did he send you back?"

Ji Yanran countered: "I will not cheapen myself to that level. Riding with him

to the palace is torturous enough. This person may look good on the outside is actually full of crap.”

Xiang Shaolong put down the huge rock on his mind. Both hands slithered into her inner vest and started to fondle.

Ji Yanran could not speak another word. Nights of passion are always too short. She was still having the sweetest dreams while Xiang Shaolong slipped away before dawn breaks.

Stealing back to his house, Zhao Zhi laid flat in his tent. (?). Tucked under a blanket, a blissful smile hanging by the corners of her mouth.

Xiang Shaolong silently laughed at himself, thinking that the entire episode had been ludicrous.

It might be due to the extreme danger surrounding him or the ruthlessness of his enemies. Either way, Xiang Shaolong is all fired up to put up a good fight and to win both battles of love and war. After enjoying two beloveds in a row, he is dog tired and gave up thinking. Embracing Zhao Zhi, he threw his head back and went into slumber.

He finally woke up in the afternoon. He caught Zhao Zhi with her eyes closed but her eye lashes fluttering. Knowing that she was awake but pretending to be asleep, he purposely exclaimed:”Hey! Since you are still asleep, let’s go for second round!”

Flipping around he got on top and pinned her down.

Zhao Zhi has just had her first love-making session and had no energy for the second battle. Opening her eyes widely, she pleaded for mercy.

Xiang Shaolong laughed: "Ha ha ha. See if you still dare to deceive me?" Jumping up from the bed, he was in great spirits as he washed up and got dressed whereas Zhao Zhi continued to laze in bed.

Stepping out of the inner hall, Teng Yi, Wu Zhuo, and Jing Jun have followed his instructions to summon all the 300 elite force soldiers back to his residence.

Not knowing if it was initiated by Teng Yi, Jing Jun kneeled down immediately and declared in a thankful manner: "Jing Jun knows third brother is helping fifth brother to take care of Sister Zhi. Regarding her issue, I only have happiness and not even a hint of jealousy!"

Xiang Shaolong realised why Teng Yi rushed back to Hidden Army Valley. He wanted Jing Jun to spell out matters once and for all and not making himself feel bad. Zhao Zhi is Teng Yi's sister-in-law and obviously he did not want love to spoil the relationship between the two sisters.

Xiang Shaolong supported Jing Jun up. Wu Zhuo was chuckling at the side: "You need not worry about this kid. He made an excuse to go hunting but went to a nearby village to pick up a sweet-like-honey village girl. You have no idea how much fun he had these few days."

Jing Jun nearly died from embarrassment.

Teng Yi enquired: "What has happened? When we got the news this morning, we set off immediately."

Xiang Shaolong did not answer him first. Glancing at Wu Guo who looked like he wanted to say something, he predicted: "How long has Guo Kai been waiting?"

Wu Guo was impressed: "Third master is indeed good at forecasting. Master Guo has been waiting for one hour in the outer hall."

Xiang Shaolong explained his plan to Teng Yi and company. He returned to his room and spoke briefly with Zhao Zhi before going out to receive Guo Kai.

When this malicious man saw Xiang Shaolong, he put on a smile and said: "Mister Dong must be mistaken. These four men are merely here to ensure your safety!"

Xiang Shaolong is very amused: "Using these four clowns to protect me, Master Guo sure knows how to joke. Having said that, I would not hold it against them. As a matter of fact, I am about to leave Handan City and definitely have no time to hold it against them."

Guo Kai was blown away. He asked in disbelief: "Why is Mister leaving?"

Xiang Shaolong coldly answered: "Since this place does not desire me, other places will. Except for Zhao and Chu, who will not welcome a horse breeder like myself?"

Guo Kai's face changed colour and turned cold."Since Mister Dong belonged to Zhao, leaving like that is as good as rebelling. Please reconsider."

Xiang Shaolong eyes blinked coldly. Staring at Guo Kai face to face, he used his strongest tone:"Under my command are three hundred death warriors. They have all spent years with foreign horse bandits and are used to fighting for their lives. Every one of them is capable enough to fight a hundred enemies all by himself. We are going to force our way through the city gates. Your Majesty may feel free to dispense his army. We shall see if my subordinates are cowards who flee in danger. We can also show that world how Your Majesty repays kindness with cruelty."

Ignoring Guo Kai's persuasion, he walked towards the courtyard. Teng Yi and the three hundred elite troops are armoured and armed with swords and bows, ready to fight when commanded.

As Xiang Shaolong climbed onto his war-house (Jifeng?), Guo Kai rushed over and held onto the head of the horse. Almost begging, he pleaded:"Mister Dong, please stop whatever that you are doing. Everything can be discussed. Why don't we ride into the palace to see the King and clear up the misunderstanding?"

Xiang Shaolong smiled coldly:"If Master Guo wishes to keep his hands where they are, please let go now."

Guo Kai knows his swordsmanship is excellent and quickly withdrew his hands in fear.

Xiang Shaolong roared: "The way Zhao king treats Dong Kuang is enough to send shivers down the spine. Pei!" He spit and continued in a loud voice: "We are leaving the city now. We will kill whoever that blocks our path!"

The three hundred elite soldiers rallied in unison. The commotion can be heard far and wide, causing fear to those who heard it.

The residence door flew open and Teng Yi rode out first, leading the pack.

Guo Kai knew that things are going out of control and hastily left for the palace to report to King Xiaocheng.

The huge body of troops slowly moved towards the nearest East Gate.

Under the planning of Xiang Shaolong, the news spread like wild fire and in a while, the entire city of Handan knew about their departure. Everybody came to surround and watch the proceedings while a large number of people begged them to stay.

After the exit of the Wu Family, everyone viewed this horse fanatic as their new saviour. The gift of a thousand war-horses is like a life-saving pill for the people of Zhao. Their abrupt leaving is causing public panic.

The East Gate commander has gotten word of the situation and hurriedly closed the city gate. He assembled archers on the battlements and foot soldiers in front of the gate.

Funnily, the city gates are built to repel external invaders and not internal

attacks so there wasn't much of an advantage.

Le Cheng was the first to reach the gate. After fortifying the gate defences, he rode out and waited on the main road leading to the gate, ready to negotiate with this horse fanatic

Teng Yi saw the huge army blocking the path. Under his command, everyone held up a large shield on the right hand and a bow on the left hand. Using only their legs to control the horse, this display highlighted a huge attacking power and made everyone shrink back.

Le Cheng shouted: "Mister Dong, please come and speak with Le Cheng."

Teng Yi issued a new command and the three hundred troops broke up into two groups. Divided on two sides, each group gathered debris and wood to serve as fortification. Smart and imposing, they were on high alert and ready to fight on command.

This leaves only Xiang Shaolong highly perched on his horse in the open. Facing Le Cheng, he hollered bravely: "Although I respected General Le greatly, times have changed. If General insists on preventing me, there will be a skirmish and I will not hold my hand."

Le Cheng was troubled: "What has happened that Mister had taken such an extreme measure? Everything can be discussed. Why not Mister and General pay a visit to His Majesty? If His Majesty approves, Mister can leave in peace. Isn't this better than staining the gates with blood?"

By now, there are more and more people crowding to see the excitement. The nearby streets and alleys are all filled up. Of course, nobody dared to enter the main road that is packed with countless soldiers.

Xiang Shaolong has a sharp vision. He noticed a large body of royal bodyguards appearing near an area behind Le Cheng. He deduced that Zhao King is on his way here via one of the city wall outlets. Laughing in his heart, he called out: "Is General Le jesting with me? If I enter the palace just like that, it would be a miracle if I am not tied up and sent to Chu as a gift. I only hate myself for being a blind boor. Undertaking such an arduous journey back to serve my country, I thought Zhao will follow tradition (using horses instead of chariots) as dictated by the previous kings and use horse battles to conquer the world. Who would have expected that Zhao will fall not on the battlefield but on the negotiating table with the state of Chu? I am disheartened and I will fight to my death in Handan to show that I, Dong Kuang, am a man of resolution."

Le Cheng was dumbfounded. All his captains and soldiers displayed looks of pity and morale was low. On the other hand, Xiang Shaolong's troops were not afraid to die. Their spirits were high and are just waiting to attack.

Zhao soldiers made some movement. King Xiaocheng rode out with Guo Kai and Cheng Xu on his two sides. He has a determined look and upon reaching Le Cheng, he called out: "Subject Dong, please ignore those rumours. I have no intention of sending you back to Chu. It is a misunderstanding."

Xiang Shaolong looked up into the sky and gave a long laugh. "Your Majesty, please forgive me for being frank. Now that Qin has their soldiers on our

borders and the Xiong Nu are up north waiting for opportunities to invade us, our country is in mortal danger. But all I, Dong Horse Fanatic, can do is waste my time away because we are afraid to offend some contentious a55holes. History has told us that if we fight among ourselves, the only result is broken families and a conquered country. You win the war by fighting, not by begging.”

Someone in the crowd started to cheer and more people are affected. Soon, there was thunderous applause all around, praising Shaolong’s words.

Xiang Shaolong put on a very angry expression and yelled:”Your Majesty, please move away from the battlefield. I am going to lead my troops to break out of this encirclement and the city. If I am unlucky enough to sacrifice on the battle grounds, let it be my repayment towards you. If my death can inspire Zhao to flourish and not be manipulated by people with bad intentions, I will die in peace.”

These words are both hard and soft, giving the Zhao King the break he needed.

King Xiaocheng is in a dilemma. He loved and hated this Dong horse fanatic, but he has a guilty conscious. He has had plans to sacrifice this Dong Kuang in exchange for Li Yuan persuading the Chu King to join hands against Qin.

King Xiaocheng surveyed his army and civilians from near and far. Everyone felt sympathy for Dong Kuang. Sighing to himself, he promised:”Subject Dong’s words are provoking indeed. I concur with your thinking and from today onwards, Brother Dong, please open up your heart and help Zhao rear

horses and related. Please stay Mister. I will not ill-treat Mister.”

From all four corners, the army and the civilians cheered like thunder and it is the first time they cheered for King Xiaocheng.

Xiang Shaolong delightedly confirmed:”The king keeps his promise!”

King Xiaocheng helplessly confirmed:”Definitely keeping my promise!”

Xiang Shaolong knew that the show is about to finish. He flipped down his horse and kneeled down, giving his thanks.

On Teng Yi’s command, three hundred elite troops dismounted and prostrate themselves in a swift and orderly manner. In one voice, they shouted:”Long live the king.” This gives a lot of face to King Xiaocheng.

An earth-shattering event ended on a satisfactory note.

That moment, King Xiaocheng and Xiang Shaolong rode together back to the palace for a feast while Teng Yi led the troops back to Hidden Army Valley.

That same afternoon, Xiang Shaolong led a second and last batch of five hundred war horses into the farm while making it a grand affair. This is to teach Zhao King not to belittle the usefulness of this horse fanatic.

Relying on bravery and opportunity, Xiang Shaolong resolved the frontal danger brought by Li Yuan.

Chapter 7

Giving in to Madam

After the event, Xiang Shaolong's status rose a few times. That night, Zhao King hosted a special banquet to appease him. Those present were all ministers and generals. Both Zhao Ya and Zhao Zhi were present and their relationships with him are now very different. They do not have to make any excuses to get close to him like before.

Zhao Zhi has tasted the forbidden fruit for the first time. Since then, she has become more attractive and charming.

Zhao Mu saw an opening and berated him in a low voice: "Such an important matter, why didn't you discuss with me in the first place?"

Xiang Shaolong has long prepared his model answer. Sincerely, he replied: "Firstly, things are moving too quickly. Secondly, I deliberately kept this from Marquis. If there was an inquiry, this would have nothing to do with you and would not raise any suspicions."

Zhao Mu is still slightly uncomfortable but he couldn't help but praised: "You did a beautiful job. With a talent like you by my side, what can I not achieve?"

To increase Zhao Mu's trust in himself and to stir him to rebel at the same time, Xiang Shaolong lied: "I have gotten some information from Zhao Ya. This

matter has got Qi involved. I haven't got the details but who is Zhao Ya closest to among the people of Qi? ”

At the mere mention, Zhao Mu's face darkened: "It must be Qi Yu; he came along with Tian Dan on this trip. Heh! Despite my loyalty towards Tian Dan, he still betrayed me!"

Xiang Shaolong then came to know that Qi Yu is here as well. Leveraging on this, he asked: "Why is Marquis so unwise to reveal your secret to Tian Dan?"

Zhao Mu explained: "It is only because of the Lu Gong's secret manual and that Xiang Shaolong. But they do not know my real identity; they only knew I keep in secret contact with Dad. But if King Xiaocheng knows about this matter, then I would be in a precarious situation."

Xiang Shaolong was about to delve deeper into the secret manual incident when Zhao Ba led Zhao Zhi over. He asked: "When is Mister Dong free to come and give us some pointers at the training school?"

Xiang Shaolong knew that he could not refuse. Powerless, he fixed a date and time. Admiring Zhao Zhi, he added: "Let Zhao Zhi come and fetch me on that day." Knowing that Xiang Shaolong is crazy over her and created this excuse and opportunity, this horny beauty is mad with joy.

Both Zhao Mu and Zhao Ba gave Zhao Zhi a strange glance.

This time, the voluptuous Zhao Ya came by. Taking him aside, she commended: "I am beginning to feel that you are a brilliant man. Without my

help, you are able to turn the tables around. Just wondering if your promise is still valid?"

Xiang Shaolong beat his chest and promised: "A man's word is his bond. Why would I want to cheat a beauty like you? Just rest assured. As long as he is really coming to Handan, I will have his news within a few days."

Zhao Ya looks at him with regrets: "Why is Mister Dong suddenly showing love and concern for Zhao Ya?"

Xiang Shaolong's mind was blank. Stalling for time, he said: "Seriously speaking, I have heard rumours about Xiang Shaolong's incident and did not have a good opinion about Princess. I have a better opinion only last night when I found out that Princess is not a heartless and vicious woman."

Zhao Ya depressingly agreed: "Mister's reprimand is right. Zhao Ya is truly regretful. If not for some unfinished business, I would have committed suicide, avoiding this living-worse-than-death punishment."

Xiang Shaolong questioned: "What has Princess left unfinished?"

Zhao Ya threw him a stern gaze: "You seem to have no objection about my death."

Xiang Shaolong gave a bitter laugh: "A beauty's heart is the hardest to fathom. Since Princess is living a worse than death life, if I advised you not to die, wouldn't that make you suffer more? If Princess is not satisfied, that what kind of logic is that?"

Zhao Ya smiled charmingly: “Chatting with you is truly enjoyable. My door is always open to you. No matter when Mister feels like dropping by, Zhao Ya will wait for you wholeheartedly. ”

Xiang Shaolong could not bear it anymore: “In that case, you had better break Li Yuan’s legs. I am not willing to wait outside your bedroom for hours.”

Zhao Ya was dumbstruck. Knowing herself, it would be really difficult to decline Li Yuan. When she committed herself exclusively to Dong Kuang last night, it was because she was frantic over Xiang Shaolong’s welfare. She would not be able to keep her word. Luckily, King Xiaocheng arrived followed by other guests so she was able to avoid answering this tough subject.

That night, King Xiaocheng frequently toasted Xiang Shaolong and decreed all officials to support Xiang Shaolong in expanding the farm. The party lasted till midnight before her left happily.

Zhao Zhi’s desires are hard to withhold. Following Xiang Shaolong back to his Residence, they proceeded to use their time most effectively. Xiang Shaolong is so exhausted that he had to cancel his other romp with Ji Yanran. Early next morning, Ji Yanran could not wait any longer and came to visit him.

They were delighted to see each other again.

Ji Yanran led him to the back garden, strolling shoulder to shoulder, she informed: “Not only has your stunt caused Li Yuan to bang into a wall, even Tian Dan is starting to notice you. He believes that you are an extraordinary

talent and may even try to recruit you.”

Xiang Shaolong assumed with displeasure: “You make me feel that by mixing with Li Yuan and Tian Dan all the time, you are able to forecast their actions very well.”

Ji Yanran giggled: “Do not be angry, husband. Yanran has been disobedient but my goal is only to collect intelligence for you. Now, Tian Dan and Li Yuan are exerting pressure on King Xiaocheng to withdraw his soldiers against the State of Yan. They are naturally afraid that after defeating Yan, their territory and standing will increase by a lot. This ending will be detrimental to Qi and Chu’s conquests. Tian Dan is more anxious, as the fall of Yan will mean that Zhao will surround the entire west border of Qi.”

Xiang Shaolong had a dreaded feeling. Forgetting to chide Yanran, he frowned: “That will be disastrous. If the Zhao soldiers do not retreat, the treaty will not be completed and Li Yuan will not leave Handan City. This will risk exposing my identity and my fake promise of more livestock.”

Ji Yanran cooed: “Don’t worry. Zhao Mu has been checking up on Tian Dan’s secret agenda for the past two days. He is even more alarmed than you.” Xiang Shaolong stared at her in wonder: “You even found out about this!”

Ji Yanran laughingly fell into his embrace. Giving a tortured sighed, she said: “Yanran is elated that husband is jealous. Oh! No! Fearful is more correct. Yanran’s actions are to help husband from being the target. Yanran has successfully shifted Li Yuan’s hatred to Tian Dan. They appear to be good friends but are not really on good terms. As they fight to discuss governance

with Yanran, it has allowed me to spy on their actions easily. If hubby feels than Yanran is wrong, you are free to punish me as you like.”

Xiang Shaolong understood that Ji Yanran has an independent character. Although she is smitten with himself, she will not submit blindly. Smiling bitterly, he advised: “Your better be careful. No matter how confident you are, you are still surrounded by tigers and wolves. Who would not wish to gain the fortune of bedding you?”

Ji Yanran was mesmerized: “Hubby is really good at sweet-talking. {Fortune of bedding you} such a nice phrase. All right! I have to make a move. Will you be as vicious tonight as what you were last night, making Yanran sleep alone?”

It has never crossed Xiang Shaolong’s mind that she would even pursue the absence of one night. Feeling sweet in the heart and pain in the head, he made a solemn promised enquired: “I will not pretend to go to Hidden Army Valley to work on the farm. What are your plans?”

Ji Yanran whined: “The Zhao Queen has invited me on several occasions. I have run out of excuses and have to make this trip.” They finally parted dejectedly and Zhao Zhi went back to the training school on her own.

That night, he rushed back to Handan with Teng Yi. All the soldiers at the gate recognized him and allow him to enter without verification.

Jing Jun’s girlfriend is beyond doubt an exquisite beauty. Enjoying her companionship, Jing Jun has forgotten all past relationships. Xiang Shaolong

finally rest easy and left him at the farm.

After Wu Zhuo's management, the Hidden Army Valley farm is starting to take shape. More importantly, he had designated several strategic locations and prepared a few secret escape routes. In short, they are ready to turn the tables and flee anytime into the wild mountains and dense vegetation. Once Zhao Mu is lured to this place, they can bring him back to Qin alive.

On the way back to the residence, Teng Yi reported: "I have send men to collect animals from all over the place. When our farm reaches a bigger scale, the time will be right to act."

Xiang Shaolong nodded his head in agreement.

The moment they stepped into the villa, Wu Guo welcomed them with a strange expression: "Third Madam is here!"

Xiang Shaolong and Teng Yi stared at each other. Exclaiming together: "Third Madam?!"

Wu Guo smiled indignantly: "Third Master's wife is Third Madam. Third Madam is pretty but not as pretty as her temper"

Teng Yi is disgruntled: "What crap are you talking about?"

Xiang Shaolong recalled Shan Rou's deadline. Lamenting that he is so occupied the past two days, how can he remember her comic warning. Hauling Teng Yi into the residence, he told him about this affair.

Teng Yi could feel the same headache coming. He proposed: “Coincidentally, we had a batch of war horses that came in yesterday. Let’s just pretend she came along with the horse shipment. I’ll see to it.”

Xiang Shaolong countered: “Aren’t you going to persuade your elder sister to give up the idea of becoming my wife?”

Teng Yi gave a pained expression: “You try to handle her first. I can tell that she is interested in you. Using hard and soft methods, your woman-handling skill should be able to manage her just right.” Casting their brotherhood to the wind, he disappeared.

Xiang Shaolong hardened his resolve and entered the inner chamber.

Before he could step in, he caught Shan Rou chiding: “What has the world become? There is not even a female maid here. You expect these rough and unruly men to serve me?”

Xiang Shaolong has just crossed the door ledge and his foot has yet to land when Shan Rou cried: “Hubby is back. You guys are done here. Now get lost!”

These four men are considered the cream of the cream, the best of the elite troops. They slipped out of the room hastily as if they have just offended the king himself.

Shan Rou has changed into a gorgeous gown. Her hair is tied up neatly in a bun and she looks grand and imposing. Her beauty made Xiang Shaolong’s eyes pop out and can longer say another word. However, her arms on her

waist pose will send fear into those who saw her.

Shan Rou giggled: “Hee! Do I look well disguised as your wife?”

Xiang Shaolong reached to her back and caught a whiff of her white neck. Praising her bewitching aroma, he frowned: “The deadline has yet to pass and you cannot wait to rush here and masquerade as my wife. Is sister having the desire?”

Shan Rou raised her chiselled face and gave him a glance. Hesitating, she replied: “You can think whatever you like; I am definitely staying with you and almost motivate you at the same time.”

Xiang Shaolong slipped to her side and purposely leaned on her shoulder. Nudging her lightly, he timidly asked: “Big sister, aren’t you concern that the show becomes reality and I took advantage of you?”

Shan Rou purposely did not look at him at all. In an awe-inspiring manner, she quoted: “You can do whatever you want. People who undertake big tasks do not sweat the small stuff. Letting some fools take advantage is just part of the process.”

Xiang Shaolong could not do anything to her. Infuriated, he shot: “Whoever is the one that is taking advantage of the other, Miss knows the truth in her heart!”

Shan Rou smiled sweetly. Turning around, she cuddles his firm and stout neck, her curvy and captivating breasts leaning on him without reservation.

In a teasing voice, she raised: “Good hubby! When are you getting two maids to serve your wife?”

The wife of the reputable Dong Horse Fanatic surely deserves some maids.

Mad and humoured at the same instant, Xiang Shaolong is bowled over by her display of intimacy. Grabbing her thin waist, he unwillingly agreed: “You lass is just desperate to marry me but does not know to do to it without putting yourself down. You cannot even wait for just one more night; I can only resign myself to fate. After all, your brother-in-law is my second brother.”

Shan Rou kept her cool and did not dispute with him. She conceitedly watched him and does not mind his caressing.

Xiang Shaolong pats his hand on her pert butt twice and moan: “Fine! I will transfer two maids from the outer chamber to serve you. But you have to behave yourself and check your temper. Do not flash your knives at the slightest discontent. Hai! With outsiders, I may have to sleep with you without taking off my mask.”

Seeing that Xiang Shaolong has been forced into obeying her requests, she slipped out of his grasped gleefully. She pleasantly warned: “Who is sleeping with you? I will be sleeping next door. Don’t blame me for not warning you beforehand; if there is any silly thief who steals into my bedroom, be prepared to face my flying daggers!”

Eyeing her as she disappeared into the corridor leading to the adjoining

room, Xiang Shaolong shook his head and let out a long sigh. Having this forever-stubborn beauty at his side, he could foresee the arrival of many more troubles.

On the other hand, her present cheerful disposition is way better than the depressed and tortured-by-revenge outlook before. Xiang Shaolong believed that he had done a good deed by giving in to her.

Honestly speaking, Xiang Shaolong is more attracted to Shan Rou than Zhao Zhi. Maybe this is the theory of the harder it is to achieve something; the more value is placed on it. While hesitating to follow her for a romp, Wu Guo came to report that Zhao Mu had sent for him.

Xiang Shaolong is mystified. Zhao Mu has earlier told him to meet up less often to minimise suspicions. Why did he send someone to fetch him now?

Arriving at the outer hall, his escort turned out to be Pu Bu.

Xiang Shaolong questioned: “Why has Marquis sent for me?”

Pu Bu replied respectfully: “Subordinate was here this morning only to find Mister Dong had left for Hidden Army Valley. Luckily, Master Dong is back. Marquis is hosting Chancellor Tian (Dan) tonight. Chancellor Tian has indicated that he wishes to meet Master Dong, so please leave with me. The horse carriage is waiting outside the gate.”

Xiang Shaolong is anxious that he is about to meet the legendary history titan. Checking himself, he thought that titan is also a human. In hindsight, who is more famous than Qin Shi Huang whom he is nurturing? Releasing his

stress, he hurriedly changed and came to the main gate.

The courtyard is lined with fifty plus soldiers guarding a luxurious horse carriage, giving an imposing aura.

Xiang Shaolong smiled at Pu Bu: “Brother Pu! Come! Join me in the carriage and let’s have a good chat!”

Pu Bu cannot decline and boarded the carriage with him.

After some idle chat, Pu Bu shone: “Master Dong is a great man who views life and death with fear. Our band of brothers thinks highly of you.”

Xiang Shaolong cannot fathom that his risky feat will bring about so much goodwill, including Tian Dan’s attention. He gave his humble thanks: “That is nothing. Just staking everything I have got and forcing the tiger to jump the wall.” (Force the other party to act)

Pu Bu affirmed: “Other than Master Dong, subordinate has met another great hero. Please pardon me for not saying who he is.”

In his heart, Xiang Shaolong recognized that this man is still loyal to himself.

Pu Bu enquired: “Why has Master Dong chosen Zhao to settle down?”

Xiang Shaolong jumped: “Does Brother Pu know that if word leaks out, you will lose your head?”

Biting his teeth, Pu Bu stated: "I know. But I appreciate that Master Dong is not that kind of person. I must ask or I will not be in peace."

Xiang Shaolong put his hand around his shoulder and leaned to his ear. He whispered: "Good brother! You have good eyesight because I am Xiang Shaolong!"

Pu Bu was floored. He tried to bend down and pay his respects. Xiang Shaolong held him back and using this opportunity, he disclosed his mission and the big plan for this trip. Pu Bu is mad with ecstasy and cursed fiercely: "That traitor Zhao Mu is inhuman. He is bad-tempered and has a cruel hand. At his whim, families are destroyed. We have been waiting for Master Xiang in agony!"

Xiang Shaolong calmly state: "His retribution is near."

By this time, the horse carriage has reached the Marquis's residence. Both men fixed the future methods of communication before alighting. The banquet location is the same hall where Xiang Shaolong first met Mohist Yan Ping. Since he came to Handan City, he has yet to hear about this man. He will inquire about him the next time he saw Zhao Zhi.

Thinking of Zhao Zhi, he chanced upon her coaching a bunch of top-grade song courtesans at her usual place.

Zhao Zhi caught his eye and signalled him to speak to her. Xiang Shaolong understood her wink and instructed Pu Bu to stop leading the way and wait for him at the side. Striding towards Zhao Zhi, he called: "How are you, Miss

Zhi!" The courtesans were awestruck by Shaolong's magnificent posture and their beautiful eyes lit up, not hiding their appreciation.

Zhao Zhi left the courtesan group and met him welcomingly. Strolling shoulder to shoulder, she informed: "Last night, Zhao Mu sent the Tian Zhen sisters into the palace to accompany the treacherous Chancellor. Tian Dan is full of praises and may demand them from Zhao Mu. Tian Zhen begged you to save them."

Xiang Shaolong nodded. "Got it! Tell them I will not sit by and do nothing." Despite saying that, he had no idea how to save them.

Zhao Zhi almost treated Xiang Shaolong like a deity, believing that he will honour his words. Joyously, she added: "I already told them you are not a heartless man and will definitely help them."

Xiang Shaolong groaned internally and updated Shan Rou's intrusion. Zhao Zhi covered her mouth chuckling: "Hubby Xiang is really great. I think sister is going wild over you."

Xiang Shaolong's heart trembled. "What about you?"

Zhao Zhi's petite face shone red and pretended to think deeply. She posed: "I, hmmm, want to be with you every minute."

Xiang Shaolong is originally composed but is affected but the twin's development. Collecting himself together, he returned to the corridor and made his way towards the inner hall.

Chapter 8

Chancellor of Qi, Tian Dan

Light shone through the inner hall and faint music can be heard.

Security is especially tight and scores of shadows can be seen everywhere.

Right outside the door of the inner hall, there are fifteen to sixteen sturdy and serious-looking Qi warriors. This is the first time Xiang Shaolong has seen such a parade at a banquet location.

Among them, there is a young and handsome swordsman who is especially majestic and carries an imposing air. His athletic frame appeared from the corridor garden and he marched over in big strides. Bowing, he greeted politely: "This must be the glamorous Mister Dong that Chancellor Tian has been eager to befriend. Your subject is Qi citizen Dan Chu, head of Chancellor Tian's personal bodyguards. I take this opportunity to wish Mister well."

Xiang Shaolong was awe-struck and returned the compliments.

Shan Rou and Zhao Zhi had mentioned Dan Chu before. He is Qi's famed general and possess outstanding swordsmanship. He truly matches up to his fame. He has a rare domineering spirit that emits right from his bones.

After the pleasantries, Dan Chu beamed at Pu Bu: "Brother Pu can hand over Mister to General."

Pu Bu was intimidated by his spirit and hastily agreed.

Dan Chu projected the posture of a guide and invited Xiang Shaolong to walk in front of him.

The gate keepers retreated to two sides and allow Xiang Shaolong to enter the inner hall.

At that instant, someone announced: “Mister Dong Kuang is here!”

Xiang Shaolong thought of the sword scar on Shan Rou’s breasts and wondered how she managed to stay alive after trying to assassinate Tian Dan twice.

Xiang Shaolong crossed the door ledge and saw Tian Dan for the first time.

He knew it was Tian Dan not because of the two well-built and cool-looking Liu Zhong Xia and Liu Zhong Shi bodyguards cum brothers behind him; nor was it the full white outfit he wore that contrasted with the rest of the flowery costumes. It was because his spirits and complexion are hard to forget once you set your eyes on him.

He had heard about the Liu brothers from Shan Rou and Zhao Zhi.

No wonder Ji Yanran who has seen heroes from all over the world is also impressed with him.

Tian Dan is around forty with a slender frame with a high nose bone like an

eagle's beak. Coupled with his high cheekbones, they form a threatening air. Adding his thick eyebrows and penetrating sharp eyes, he exudes leadership and dominance. It is no accident he managed to rise from a small official post and occupy one of the most powerful positions under the sky.

Seated beside him, the traitorous Zhao Mu looks like a kitten beside a tiger.

There are twenty people seated around the table. The biggest surprise Xiang Shaolong had was seeing the voluptuous Zhao Queen. Except for palace banquets, this is the first time he saw her at an official's private banquet. It seems that Tian Dan's status is high enough for her to make the concession.

Familiar faces like Guo Kai, Le Cheng and Zhao Ba are not present. Those present were Guo Zhong, Guo Xiu'er, Ji Zhong, Li Yuan, Han Chuang, Lord Longyang and Zhao Ya.

There were two Qi citizens. One of them is 'old friend' Qi Yu. Seated left of Zhao Ya, he spoke incessantly but Zhao Ya paid no attention to him.

The other is a knowledgeable and fine-looking scholar. With a wide and full forehead, he gives an intellectual impression.

A group of musicians were initially playing on the side. When Zhao Mu heard about Dong Kuang's arrival, he clapped and the ten over musicians left through the side door. The inner hall quietened.

Tian Dan's glare shot towards Xiang Shaolong like an arrow. Observing him, he was obviously shaken by his bearing. His eyes shone and he stood up.

Putting his hand out, he chuckled: "People say fame is exaggerated. I say fame is understated. Finally, I get to make your acquaintance. What great fortune!"

Other than the three ladies, which are the Zhao Queen, Guo Xiu'er and Zhao Ya, the rest of the guests are forced to stand up and welcome Xiang Shaolong after seeing Tian Dan's example. Li Yuan is the most unwilling, but his attitude has improved probably due to Ji Yanran's effective strategy.

Xiang Shaolong respects Tian Dan for his open and easy-going nature. He did not put on any airs like Prince Xinling. If he were to compare both of them, Tian Dan won him by half a grade.

He increased his speed and paid his respects to Zhao Queen before he faced Tian Dan and shake his hand strongly with both hands.

Tian Dan's hands are wide and thick until the bones cannot be seen. Yet, they feel strong and warm.

The legendary character sized him up and grinned: "Imperial Uncle (Li Yuan) has told me on several occasions that Mister is not only great with horses but also highly-skilled with the sword!"

Xiang Shaolong looked over to Li Yuan unconsciously and forced a smile, nodding his head slightly.

Tian Dan gently commanded the Liu Brothers: "Add a seat beside me for Brother Dong!" In the same breath, he introduced Qi Yu and Tian Bang, the

military advisor. Tian Bang seems to be related to Tian Dan.

After the commotion, everybody settled down again.

Footsteps sounded and Tian Zhen and Tian Feng emerged out of nowhere and started to fill up the wine cups. By using these two girls to serve the guests, one can tell how much importance he placed on Tian Dan.

Tian Feng did not appear to know Xiang Shaolong's real identity. Although she peeped at him, there was no change in her composure. Tian Zhen has kept her promise to Xiang Shaolong and has even withheld the secret from her own sister. Based on this alone, Xiang Shaolong felt responsible for her.

When Tian Zhen is pouring wine for Xiang Shaolong, her delicate hands actually trembled.

While other guests are chatting with their partners, it did not escape Tian Dan's eyes. He questioned: "Why is Little Zhen so nervous?"

After he spoke, everyone was focusing on Tian Zhen.

When Tian Zhen saw Xiang Shaolong, it is like seeing a light in the ocean of suffering. Misery swirled through her heart and she lost her calm.

Interrogated by Tian Dan, she thought she had exposed Xiang Shaolong. She panicked and the bronze jug crashed onto the table and wine splashed over Xiang Shaolong's vest.

Zhao Mu's countenance changed and was about to hurl abuses.

Xiang Shaolong gave a big laugh and supported the terrified and shaking Tian Zhen. Soothingly, he coaxed: "It's Ok. It's Ok. Beauty, please don't take it to heart." Lowering his head for a whiff, he exclaimed: "Good wine!"

Everyone was humoured and have a good laugh.

Zhao Queen joked: "People drink wine. Mister Dong sniffs wine."

As Tian Zhen is propped up by Xiang Shaolong on her back and hand, she cooled down and believed that this long awaited gentleman will protect her well.

Zhao Mu knows that it is not a time to blame her and ordered lightly: "Dismiss yourself."

Both girls kneel down to pay their respects and withdraw to the back.

Zhao Mu looks like he has something to say to him. Standing up, he invited: "Mister Dong, please come with me. I trust that my clothes should fit your body."

Xiang Shaolong excused himself and left with him.

Once they stepped out, Zhao Mu spoke in a low voice: "I have investigated Tian Dan's intentions. He is quite offended with King Xiaocheng. He hinted that if I can overthrow Zhao, he will do his best to lend a hand."

Xiang Shaolong secretly cursed: IDIOT! For Tian Dan, a chaotic Zhao will give

him more opportunities.

Instead, he proclaimed: “What is the deal with Qi Yu? Why did he leak your relationship (with Tian Dan) to Zhao Ya?” This is a pre-emptive tactic.

Zhao Mu sighed: “Don’t simply discount Zhao Ya as a free for all ****. In actual fact, she is more intelligent and powerful than anyone. Qi Yu only needs to say a wrong sentence and she will blackmail him.”

Reaching the inner chamber, Zhao Mu got fresh new clothes for Xiang Shaolong to change.

Xiang Shaolong intentionally mentioned: “Marquis is truly resourceful. Acquiring these twin beauties that look exactly like each other is no easy feat”

Zhao Mu’s face showed dilemma. Sighing: “Why don’t you say so earlier? Tian Dan tried them last night and was showering with praises. Needless to say, I have presented them to him. How can I break my promise now?”

Xiang Shaolong’s heart sank to the bottom and his face showed total disappointment.

Zhao Mu has regarded him as his confidante and able assistant. Frowning he suggested: “These is an alternative. And success will depend on how important are you to Tian Dan. ”

When they returned to the banquet, the courtesans have just finished

performing.

Lord Longyang haughtily hit on Xiang Shaolong: “Mister Dong’s luxurious clothes have made me look at you differently!” Winking at him, he continued: “Marquis has promised to bring Mister Dong to attend to my sick horses. Why has he not made good his word?”

Everyone witnessed Xiang Shaolong’s embarrassment and felt sorry but hilarious at the same time.

Zhao Mu knows that Xiang Shaolong is straight and laughed: “Mister Dong is always running off to the farm. How can I grab hold of him?”

Tian Dan joined in the laughter. Digging Lord Longyang: “If it is only for horses, I have a few vets. Of course they are not as good as Brother Dong but we can let them have a try first and see if they can solve the problem on behalf of the expert.” Lord Longyang recognized that Tian Dan is jesting with him. “Hiyah!” he cried and gave him a look.

Tian Bang the scholar approached Xiang Shaolong: “My country has a horse named Playful. It runs like the wind and nobody has been able to tame it. We have tried both hard and soft tactics but to no avail. Since we have the good fortune to meet, I wish to consult Mister.”

Once spoken, even Tian Dan furrowed his eyebrows, knowing that he is out to make things difficult.

How can anyone predict how to tame a horse without laying his eyes on the

horse beforehand? But if Xiang Shaolong said he needs to see the horse first, it becomes a lame excuse that anyone could have given and does not add to his reputation.

Amazingly, Xiang Shaolong answered at leisure: “In The Art of Horse Taming, the initial step is to make it defenceless against you, but this is a low method used by common folks. The best would be to make them view you as equals and treat them with utmost care. The wildest horse will start to listen and cooperate.”

Mentioning this, he could not help but look opposite to Zhao Ya who is seated between Qi Yu and Han Chuang. This beauty that he shared a love-hate relationship is paying attention to him intently. Catching his eyes and reminding herself that he had once compared her to a horse (at the banquet where XSL first saw Ji Yanran in Handan), she started to feel uncomfortable and bat him an eye.

Tian Dan’s interest is piqued: “Humans are humans. Animals are animals. How can you treat an animal like a human?”

Xiang Shaolong reasoned: “They are many methods. A newborn animal will regard their parents as the first being that comes into contact with them. If you have any doubts, you can feel free to experiment with a bunch of newborn ducklings and you will agree that I am not kidding.”

His words carry logic and it has been proven by modern psychology.

Everyone begin marvelling at this enlightenment.

Han Chuang helped: “No wonder there are stories of babies that have been abandoned in the wild and brought up by wolves. They became werewolves and treated wolves like their birth parents. Mister Dong is definitely a first class animal expert! ”

Seeing that everyone nodded in consensus, Li Yuan is still unconvinced and interrupted: “Master Tian’s Playful Jade Horse is no longer a newborn. We cannot employ this method anymore. Does Mister Dong have a suitable strategy?”

Everyone in the dining hall, including Tian Dan is well aware of the animosity between the two of them. Li Yuan is long expected to make Dong Kuang look bad. They look to see how this Horse Fanatic will counter him.

Xiang Shaolong leaned forward and deepened his voice. Secretively, he announced: “I have a horse-taming methods that never fails. All along it is my hidden weapon and I have never told a second person about it. Since today is such a joyous occasion, allow me to showcase my talent and honour Chancellor Tian!”

Everyone unconsciously leaned forward and await his big revelation.

Xiang Shaolong gradually started: “It is pretty simple actually but it will not be easy unless you are a horse lover.”

Holding the suspense of his audience, everyone’s hearts begin to itch.

Knowing that everyone is addicted to his words, he divulges: “It is to sleep

with the horse and he will loosen his guard against you and regard you as his own kind.”

Initially, everyone is astounded. Comprehending the logic, they cried: “Excellent!”

Xiang Shaolong theory is backed by science. He learned from a television documentary about a wild animal tamer who confesses that he often sleeps with beasts. Using this technique, they will really accept you one of their family and no longer guard against you.

This is another difference between modern men and ancient men.

The twenty-first century is the boom of the information age. One only needs to sit at home and surf the internet and one will be able to gain access and utilise plenty of resources from all over the world and different periods in history.

Ancient men travelled all over the place and relied on precious books written on bamboo stems or on word of mouth. Compared to Xiang Shaolong who came from the 21st Century where data is prevalent, he has transformed into a know-it-all.

Tian Dan slapped the table and professed his highest regard: “Come! Let us toast to Dong Kuang’s enlightenment through years of hard experience!” Qi Yu added: “Now we all realize why Mister has been crowned the champion of all horse fanatics”

Everyone raised their cups and joined in the toasting.

Li Yuan banged into another wall and toned down his hostility. He dared not belittle his opponent and start thinking of another scheme.

Tian Zhen and Tian Feng emerged again and started filling up the wine cups.

After the twins retreated, Zhao Mu winked at Xiang Shaolong and faced Tian Dan smilingly: “Chancellor Tian and Mister Dong not only hit it off well but shared the same interests. Both are keen on the twins and after Mister Dong realised that they belonged to Chancellor Tian... ..”

Xiang Shaolong cackling interrupted: “Beauty going to the Ruler, I only offer congratulations and not a hint of jealousy.”

Zhao Mu is pleased with his words and silently praised his timely interruption. Now it is up to Tian Dan to see if he is willing to let go of the twins.

Tian Dan is no common man. Generously, he joked: “Since brother Dong has such interests, I will transfer both of them to you as a welcome gift. This will give Mister Dong more than just horses for sleeping companions.”

Such acts of generosity are common among high ranking officials and come as surprise to no one.

Xiang Shaolong purposely rejected his proposal but Tian Dan will not hear the end of it. With great relief, he gave his utmost thanks.

Zhao Mu intentionally showed goodwill to Xiang Shaolong. He summoned the two girls and instructed: “From this moment, both of you will be sent to Master Dong instead of Chancellor Tian as gifts. Perform your duty with care, diligence and perfect obedience.”

Both girls were initially shocked.

Tian Zhen is smart. Lowering her head to hide her gratitude and glee, she kneeled and gave her thanks.

Tian Feng performed appropriately. Her face turning pink, she stole a look at her new master and kneeled down.

Zhao Mu ordered simply: “Go and pack your belongings now and wait for Master Dong to bring you home.”

Zhao Queen sniggered: “With these pair of jade-liked maidens, Mister Dong must not forget to sleep with the horses.”

Xiang Shaolong had hugged her one. Sensing the emotions in her words, his heart stirred.

Keeping quiet all this while, Guo Xiu'er gazed at Xiang Shaolong with her appealing eyes and asked: “Has Mister Dong really accompanied horses to sleep?”

Xiang Shaolong detected the innocence in her tone and replied warmly: “Of course. I have been sleeping with horses since I was seven. We did not sleep

in the stable but in my bedroom.”

Everyone was greatly amused and burst out in guffaws.

Li Yuan smirked at Lord Longyang and challenged: “I want to speak up for Lord Longyang. After the sword duel, Talented Lady Ji needed help with her horse and Brother Dong went to her assistance immediately. Why has Lord Longyang received inferior treatment?”

This incident is new to Tian Dan and he raised his concentration.

Lord Longyang could not hide his bitterness and shot Xiang Shaolong a look, making all his hairs stand up.

Xiang Shaolong released a heavy sigh and apologised: “Imperial Uncle is correct. I should not have left that day. Talented Lady Ji got me to discuss about songs and poems and I disappointed her greatly. I dare not face her in the future.”

Everyone knows of Ji Yanran’s characteristics. Notwithstanding those who still bear grudges against him, most of those present have reduced their jealousy towards him.

This Dong Horse Fanatic is strikingly charming. Regardless of the occasion, he is able to grab the centre of attraction. Luckily he is a boor or he may even entice Ji Yanran.

Accepting his automatic retreat, Li Yuan greatly reduced his enmity and

toasted him sincerely for the first time.

The atmosphere is back in harmony.

Only Zhao Ya still subtly suspects that things are not so simple between him and Ji Yanran.

Those present at the banquet consists of powerful representatives from Qi, Chu, Han, Zhao, Wei and Eastern Zhou (Yan?). The conversation topics naturally drifted to the common enemy Qin.

Ji Zhong analysed the Qin situation and explained: “We have allied on several occasions but still failed to defeat them. The main rationale is that Qin has used the terrain well and constructed crucial Passes. They have Han Gu Pass, Hu Lao Pass, Yao Sai Pass in the east and Wu Pass in the southeast. As long as we can break through one of them and continue to advance, what further resistance does the Qin have?”

During the Spring-Autumn Warring period, chariot battles are fought on plain land. After war developed into infantry (foot soldiers) and cavalry (on horseback), the Passes become even more important. They play a life-death role in the fate of Qin.

Ji Zhong appears to be highlighting the Qin’s prowess but is actually identifying the strongest and potentially weakest point.

In this manner, he is taking the chance to unite everyone and destroy Qin.

Tian Dan smilingly retort: “A country’s size, ruler, economy and army cannot be discussed separately. In my opinion, Qin is putting up a strong front but is weak internally. After Bai Qi’s death, there is no strong general in Qin. Lu Buwei is managing the court affairs but is not on good terms with the military. I dare guarantee that as long as this person is the Prime Minister, the Qin people are disunited. If we raise a campaign against Qin, the threat of foreign aggression will unite the Qin people and turn the tables against us. Does anyone see my point of view?”

Ji Zhong is dumbstruck and his face darkened.

Guo Zhong asked: “So I assume Chancellor Tian is against this collective agreement?”

The hope of this agreement is his last hope for staying in Zhao. If it fails, he will have to relocate somewhere else.

Although Xiang Shaolong highly regarded his insight, he sighed inwardly that no matter how brilliant one is, he can never foretell what may develop in the future. King Zhuangxiang has only three more years to live. When Xiao Pan the Qin Shi Huang takes his place on the throne, there will be no one under the sky who can hold a candle to him

Tian Dan gently replied: “Of course not. The agreement has to go ahead. But the strategies and methods has to be discussed in great detail. Otherwise, I would not have made the long journey here.”

When he speaks, his words carry a natural intimidation and nobody dared to

rebut him. At the same time, countering him may result in being put down further.

Lord Longyang shrieked in a high pitch voice: “Chancellor Tian is so familiar with the Qin’s activity; can you update us on what has occurred to Xiang Shaolong? Many of us here are interested to know if any calamity has befallen him.”

Xiang Shaolong was shaken. Since his return to Handan, his name has been mentioned here and there but was never brought out as a topic for discussion.

Zhao Mu’s eyes shone fiercely when he heard his name.

Zhao Ya turned a shade paler but exhibits a keen curiosity.

Zhao Queen’s eyes lit up and increased her concentration.

Qi Yu gave a cold snort as he hated Xiang Shaolong to the bone.

Masking his thoughts well, Tian Dan happily said: “Xiang Shaolong is not a simple man. He manages to come out tops every time. Even my old friend Bother Wuji is turning in his grave after being tricked by him. The rest of his story is well-known to the rest of you.”

Wuji is Prince Xinling’s real name.

Han Chuang peeped at the dazed Zhao Ya besides him and began to feel

jealous. Unsatisfied he cried: “Is Chancellor Tian exaggerating? I think this creep is probably just lucky he got away!”

(Note: Zhao Ya helped XSL in stealing the Lu Gong manual from Prince Xinling. Probably revival of sweet memories of their adventures)

Tian Dan affirmed: “Knowing yourself and your enemy, you can fight and win every single battle. I hate him to the core but must never belittle him. Xiang Shaolong had barely reached Qin but his accomplishments are accumulating quickly. In front of Qin King and all major officials, he proved to be a good match against Qin’s number one strongman Wang Jian. Using his weapon’s edge, Xiang Shaolong untiringly deflected his enemy’s arrows. His arrows are shot from an iron bow and can even penetrate a shield. I guess he is giving way in order to preserve the dignity of the military. Qin King immediately promoted him to be the Grand Tutor and Lu Buwei gained a lot of prestige from him. If he is not eliminated, Lu Buwei will be like a tiger with wings. Given time, he will control the entire Qin Court.”

Ji Zhong smile chillingly: “From what you have said, Qin should not have a shortage of people who wanted him dead.”

Tian Dan laughed coldly: “If Xiang Shaolong is an easy target, he would have died numerous times. Qin assassins have tried to harm him but suffered a great blow and even lost a few men. Now that the Wu Family is becoming more and more influential in Qin is also due to Xiang Shaolong. Even the Qin military that are anti-Lu Buwei are changing their opinion about him and are trying to win him over to their side.”

Guo Zhong revealed an envious expression on his face but he could not say anything.

Listening, Xiang Shaolong could feel his entire body turning cold. Tian Dan would not be so foolish to divulge all his information. But just analyzing what he has alleged, his facts are accurate as if he had been there to witness the event himself. This man is deadly efficient and like what he believed in – Knowing your enemy and knowing yourself and never belittle your enemy, are the ways of the Victorious!

Zhao Mu may have gotten the news of his arrival from Tian Dan. Zhao Queen laughed coquettishly: “I don’t believe he cannot be defeated, he does not have three heads and six arms.” Finishing, she purposely threw a glance at Zhao Ya.

Zhao Ya turned a shade of anger.

From these two reactions, Xiang Shaolong knew that these two girls are having some disagreement.

Qi Yu started: “Of course we have a plan to fix him. Chancellor Tian... ...”

Tian Dan made a sound of displeasure and Qi Yu was frightened into silence.

Everyone was staring at Tian Dan and knew that he had a good plan to deal with Xiang Shaolong.

Tian Dan declared: “Everyone has a weakness. Xiang Shaolong’s weakness is

he placed too much importance on relationships and is too soft. This will be the cause of his downfall.”

Guo Xiu'er's eyes turned confused. Thinking to herself, this is a strength; when has it become a weakness?

Thinking that Xiang Shaolong is on his way to Handan City, Zhao Ya began to feel anxious and looked at Dong Horse Fanatic pleadingly.

Xiang Shaolong is both edgy and amused. Hearing how everyone is pondering hard on how to deal with him, he felt distasteful and funny and the same time. Fortunately, no one noticed him.

The banquet is concluding and Tian Dan left first with Zhao Queen and Ji Zhong. Before he went, he bid his fond farewell to Xiang Shaolong reluctantly and promised to meet up in near future. Under the heavy protection of his personal guard, he boarded his carriage and rode off.

Zhao Mu has wanted Xiang Shaolong to stay and chat but he was hampered by the large crowd of guests. He also feared that Zhao Ya would see through their relationship. Helpless, he reminded: “The pair of beauties are awaiting Mister Dong in the horse carriage. The journey may take some time so do take this opportunity to inspect the goods.”

All the guys who heard him laugh out loud.

Li Yuan had wanted to accompany Zhao Ya and be fresh with her. Seeing her coldness and invited by Guo Zhong to share his carriage, he departed

unwillingly.

Lord Longyang saw them boarding the same carriage and joked: “Seems like the Guo Family will soon have an Imperial Uncle son-in-law.”

As his carriage went past Xiang Shaolong, he batted an eyelid and him and groaned: “I had wanted to share your carriage but Mister Dong had female companions. Why not I visit Mister tomorrow?”

Han Chuang looked elsewhere, reluctant to witness Xiang Shaolong’s distress.

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed: “So sorry. I still have to work at the farm tomorrow!”

Lord Longyang added with pleasure. “Even better. I’m sick of the city and would love to wander around. I will look for you at dawn.”

Not waiting for his reply, he rode off.

Xiang Shaolong could feel all his goose bumps standing and stood there in a daze.

Zhao Mu patted his shoulder and recommended: “Want me to teach you a few tricks to take care of him?”

Xiang Shaolong sourly reassured: “Thanks for Marquis concern. But I’ll be fine.”

Zhao Mu and Han Chuang grinned.

The quiet and flustered Zhao Ya softly invited: “Marquis Han, please proceed home first!” but did not give a further explanation.

Seeing her icy demeanour, the hot and passionate Han Chuang lost half his enthusiasm. Harboured hatred and yet powerless, he left with disappointment.

Leaving only Zhao Mu, Zhao Ya and Xiang Shaolong, the atmosphere became slightly embarrassing.

Xiang Shaolong knew in his heart that Princess Zhao Ya was frustrated by the updates of himself. She wanted to approach him and get the matter off her chest. On the same note, she would want to know how he is progressing with his plan to prevent him from coming to Handan City. Remembering the tigress in his residence, he dare not invite her home and create more complications.

In addition, he has vowed to visit Ji Yanran and could not have Zhao Ya over. The worst issue is Lord Longyang’s visit tomorrow. Even if he is made of iron, he cannot satisfy so many people.

Though he sympathises with Zhao Ya’s condition, he can only offer: “It’s late! Let me escort Princess to her carriage.”

Zhao Ya looked at him faintly and did not agree or disagree. On her own, she stepped ahead to her own convoy of servants and horse carriage.

Xiang Shaolong rushed to her side but Zhao Ya boarded straight into her booth and did not say a single word.

Xiang Shaolong is afraid of Zhao Mu holding him back. Taking the opening, he waved goodbye to him and slipped into his aromatic carriage booth, diving into the wonderful and lively paradise created by the Tian sisters.

Chapter 9

Unpredictable Woman

He had just boarded his horse carriage when the twin sisters leaped into his embrace without a care in the world and start to cry happily.

In the confusion, Xiang Shaolong could not tell them apart. Cuddling and consoling, he finally got them to calm down.

One of them disobeyed: "You kept us waiting in agony."

Xiang Shaolong concluded: "You are Tian Feng!"

The horse carriage had left the Marquis Residence for a while when it suddenly halted.

Xiang Shaolong got the two girls to behave properly. Stretching his head out of the window, he inquired: "What is going on?"

His escort Pu Bu came from the front and reported: "Princess Ya's convoy has stopped in front of us and invited Mister to go over."

Xiang Shaolong could feel a tremendous headache coming but he is powerless to do anything. Soothingly, he patted the exquisite faces of the two girls and jumped down the carriage. Before he left, he ordered: "Protect the carriage well and follow me." Finishing, he stride towards Zhao Ya's

stationary carriage in big steps.

The carriage start to move off but they are heading to Xiang Shaolong's place instead.

The two of them sat side by side.

Zhao Ya has a wooden expression and remained in silence for a long while.

Just as Xiang Shaolong was starting to feel awkward, Zhao Ya faintly cried: "Dong Kuang! Tell me! You are not lecherous by nature (yah right!), but why did you pay so much attention to the Tian Sisters?"

Xiang Shaolong was feeling fearful that Zhao Ya is very suspicious of him. He had once made love to the Tian sisters (during his first visit to Zhao Mu's place) and Zhao Ya knew about it.

Although he has more confidence that Zhao Ya will not betray him again, this matter concerns the lives of a few hundred people. He cannot act on his own wistfulness and abandon his train of thought. Moreover, he has yet to fully comprehend the degree of loyalty she has towards King Xiaocheng.

Fearing that he will deny, she continued: "Knowing that they belonged to Tian Dan, Zhao Mu and you signalled each other and wrestle them back. This is unlike your usual way of doing things! Otherwise, you would have accepted the courtesans from Zhao King."

Totally lost, Xiang Shaolong illogically retort: "I have no idea what you are

talking about!”

In an angered and pitiful voice, she cried softly: “Shaolong! Are you still pretending that you do not know me? Do you want me to die in front of you?”

Xiang Shaolong was filled with sorrow but hardened his heart as she is too fickle-minded.

Strengthening his resolution, he mock surprise and exclaimed: “My God! So you have mistaken old Dong to be another person. Come, examine my face and see if I am wearing any disguise.”

Using the oldest trick in the box, he deceived her as she had never seen such a well made mask.

Zhao Ya’s delicate body trembled. She was baffled and disappointed and dare not touch his face. Still shaking, she tried: “You are really not him?”

Xiang Shaolong had applied “Love Seed” scent. Challenging, he proposed: “If you still have doubts, you can smell my scent. Every horse smells different and humans are the same. Come!”

Moving forward, he exposed his neck to her nostrils.

Zhao Ya sniffed twice and discovered a new but refreshing scent that leaves a deep impression on her. Disappointed, she grunted and like avoiding scorpions, she withdrew to the other side of the carriage and leaned on the

window. Curious, she asked: “Then why are you eager to possess them?”

Xiang Shaolong has a burst of inspiration and grumbled: “It is all because of that tigress. Leaving Chu, I had wanted to avoid her for a while. How would I predict that she would single-handedly pursue all the way to Handan City? She threw a huge tantrum and even wanted two maidservants. Seeing that the two sisters would serve her fine, I requested them from Zhao Mu. If I knew they belonged to Tian Dan, I would have asked for any other two girls and it will be good enough. Alas, Marquis misunderstood my intentions and tried his best to interfere, causing this mess and your misunderstanding.”

Inquisitively, he pondered: “What has the sisters got to do with Xiang Shaolong?”

Zhao Ya’s face is void of colour. Her pretty eyes were shining at the peak of excitement and cheer. In an instant, they dimmed to disillusion and depression. Turning her head fiercely, she wallowed: “Please leave!”

Coincidentally, the horse carriage has stopped at the main gate of his residence.

Sighing inwardly, Xiang Shaolong alighted.

Shan Rou had not expected Xiang Shaolong to come home with two similar looking beauties. Entering the inner hall, she saw his gloomy face and asked in an unpleasant tone: “Where the hell have you been? You should inform me if you have to go out.”

Xiang Shaolong is troubled over Zhao Ya. Impatiently, he shouted: “You saw me changing in my room. You think I do not know that you are sneakily spying on me?!”

Both Tian Zhen and Tian Feng were startled and their pretty faces lost all colour. Terrified, the two sisters stared at them.

Xiang Shaolong realised he had overreacted. Before he had a chance to make up, Shan Rou put her hands on her waist and anger was written on her face. Short of brandishing her knives, she snapped: “Who is sneaky? Do you only change when you have a d@mn banquet? Can’t you change to shower? Can’t you change to pee?” With a snort, she covered her mouth and could not stop laughing. Batting an eye at him, she ended: “That’s all!”

Seeing the matter is resolved, Xiang Shaolong is relieved. He did not want the Tian ladies to undergo any frightening situations. They are all lonely and vulnerable are cannot withstand any shock.

Joining in the laughter, he praised: “Great acting, Sister Rou. Even I was convinced that you are really my wife.”

Hearing these two lines, Shan Rou faced darkened.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly filled with glee. Acting surprised, he declared: “You do not let me touch you and yet you wanted to be my real wife; how can such a deal exist?”

Shan Rou glared straight at him. She resembled a wounded beast which is

ready to bite, showing her vicious yet adorable self.

Xiang Shaolong instantaneously softened. Hand around her shoulder, he promised: "Say you love me and let us soar through the skies together!"

Tian Zhen and Tian Feng finally come to the conclusion that they are teasing each other and find them very fascinating.

Shan Rou's complexion turned loving and arms still on her waist, her view landed on these two alluring sisters. Pointing, she asked: "Who are they?"

Xiang Shaolong was afraid that she will vent her anger on the two girls. Slipping behind her, he caressed her sweet smelling shoulders and replied in the tenderest voice: "They are the maids who are here to serve the wife of myself, The Horse Fanatic Dong Kuang!"

Tian Zheng and Tian Feng obediently kneeled down and pay their respects.

Shan Rou was overjoyed. "Get up," she commanded. And shouted: "Wu Guo!"

Wu Guo nearly appeared as soon as her voice thundered. He was obviously eavesdropping outside the door.

Shan Rou let out another command: "Bring those luggages outside to my adjoining room now!"

Facing the Tian sisters, she added: "Go and tell them to place your luggage

nicely”

The Tian sisters have gotten the “Madam’s” permission to stay on and they left in a great mood. As long as they are with Xiang Shaolong, they are willing to endure all kinds of hardship.

Only this “real imposter” is left in the inner hall.

Witnessing that the Tian sisters have overcome the obstacle, his mood improved. Kissing her fine face, he laid out: “Is wifey satisfied now? You wanted a husband, you got one. You wanted maids and there they are!”

Shan Rou was humoured by him but she kept her icy look. She snubbed: “We are not laying a beauty trap; why have you gotten such first class beauties? Judging by their elegance, I think it is better that I serve them instead.”

Xiang Shaolong frowned: “Are you jealous?”

Shan Rou’s excellent and small lips curled at the corner: “This is not jealousy. This is logical deduction. What good can come out from a lecher?”

Despite her harsh tone, she did not protest Xiang Shaolong’s caressing of her shoulders and back. For a masculine beauty like her, it is actually a sign of consent but she is unwilling to say so verbally.

Xiang Shaolong saw through her and was amused and annoyed at the same time. Thinking hard, he pleaded: “Good Rou Rou! Please obey me. These two sisters are very pitiful. Having been insulted and tortured by Zhao Mu, this is

their new freedom. I must definitely give them a blissful and happy future. If you disbelieve, you can always verify with Little Zhi Zhi. She will relate their story to you.”

Shan Rou was touched and lowered her pretty face, maintaining silence.

Xiang Shaolong turned her over and let her face himself. Pressing his lips, he was about to kiss her.

Shan Rou put up a violent struggle and escaped. Red-faced and dazed, she decreed: “You think I am Zhi Zhi; following you without question? After eliminating Zhao Mu, we will go our separate ways. Don’t think you are the only man for me.”

Knowing she is just using tough words, Xiang Shaolong still find it unbearable and shot back: “Going on separate ways is all right with me, must I kneel down and beg you to spare me some love? Be careful that I will divorce you in the heat of my anger and kick you out of the Dong family. Ha!”

Finishing the last part, he could not hold it any longer and burst out laughing.

Shan Rou face was about to darken but seeing his comics, she had to laugh too. Swiftly straightening her cute face, she warned icily: “Miss has no intention to go against you and is retiring now. If I detect any thief breaking into my bedroom, I will kill first and ask later. Don’t say that I did not give you this warning”

Closing, she levelled her chest and sauntered gracefully into the corridor

leading to the back.

Xiang Shaolong thanked the heavens that she did not enter his room. Otherwise, he would not have any more energy to please Ji Yanran who has recently tasted the forbidden fruit and is dying for his attention.

At this point in time, he discovered that Shan Rou had inadvertently facilitated him to forget about Zhao Ya's incident.

Shan Rou's charm is indeed world class, definitely the hottest type.

As Xiang Shaolong was walking towards the Tian sisters' bedroom, Wu Guo and a few elite soldiers were humouring the two girls, making them laugh like a blossoming flower. When Xiang Shaolong entered, they quickly left.

As Wu Guo passed Xiang Shaolong, he whispered: "Amazingly, this world can produce a pair of similar looking beauties. Absolutely a prized possession." Adding a huge sigh, he led the "porters" away.

The two girls are kneeling on the floor, awaiting Xiang Shaolong's instructions.

Seeing their heads pressed down on the floor, and their high collar exposing their snow white necks followed by their enthralling back, Xiang Shaolong experienced a strong surge in emotions.

Xiang Shaolong dedicated himself to aid Xiao Pan to conquer the world and build a strong China; however, the non-supportive cultures and traditions are

things that he still cannot change overnight.

The lowly status of female slaves has to go on until the Nineteenth and Twentieth century before they are abolished.

The only thing he can do is to treat the females around him with love and care. He admired Mozi for he is the bright light of knowledge, illuminating these ancient times. His “Universal Love” is to counteract long established vices of society. It is deplorable that most rulers chose to adopt rituals and ceremonies and further lowered the status of women. Thinking that the issue has been buried in darkness for over two thousand years, he cannot help but feel sadness for all women.

Xiang Shaolong approached them and lifted them from the floor. Lovingly, he put his arms around their slender waists and they sat on the couch together. Softly, he stated: “I have yet to really talk to both of you. I am unlike Zhao Mu. My only rule is that you need not kneel and greet me and in the bedroom, there is even less need to do so.”

Blushingly, one of them spoke: “Master Xiang has put us in a difficult position; we are totally willingly to serve Master Xiang well and make you delighted!”

Xiang Shaolong recognized the deep dimple on her face. Like he had won the lottery, he cried happily: “You are Tian Feng!”

Both girls covered their mouths and giggled charismatically. Behaving in the same fascinating manner, Xiang Shaolong was swept off his feet by the

display and could not move his sight away from them.

Appreciating, Tian Zhen cried: “Master!”

Xiang Shaolong corrected: “Address me as Master Dong for the time being and be careful not to let the cat out of the bag!”

Both girls were taken aback and obediently agreed.

Observing their reaction and submissive nature, Xiang Shaolong discerns that this change is hard for them. Astonished, he gave them each a comforting long kiss.

Amidst their strong responses, he can finally tell the difference.

Tian Zhen is gentle; Tian Feng is wild.

Xiang Shaolong was in complete ecstasy and forgotten where he was.

Tian Zhen commented considerably: “Master Dong should be exhausted, let us serve you in showering and changing. We are well-versed in massaging and Tui-Na (accupoint massage), oh... ...”

Her small mouth has locked with Xiang Shaolong’s once again.

Separating, Xiang Shaolong smiled: “I would love to enjoy your Tui-Na but I still have things to attend to. You girls go ahead and wash up and have a good rest. I will shower and share your room tomorrow night and make great

love to both of you.”

Hearing his words, both girls are over the moon, rejoicing in complete safety and bliss for the first time in their lives.

Tian Feng teased: “Does Master Dong know I have always envied elder sister who managed to copulate with Master Dong? Since you left, we have been pining for you every day and night. We chatted about you whenever we are alone and can only be happy when we meet you in our dreams.” Xiang Shaolong was praised to the skies like he was some deity. Curious, he asked: “We have only met once; why have you taken such strong fancy to me?”

Tian Zhen joyfully exclaimed: “Master Dong is not the same as anyone. You truly care from the heart. We have never seen a hero like yourself. The staff from Marquis’s residence often gossiped about your exploits. When we heard about your legendary prowess and your wondrous escape from Handan City, we were exhilarated beyond imagination.”

Tian Feng continued: “We thought we would never see Master Dong anymore. It is our great fortune that Heaven has finally heard our prayers and ultimately let us serve Master Dong”

Xiang Shaolong almost wanted to caress them. Recollecting Ji Yanran, he suppressed his desire. If he starts any activity with them, he would be too worn out to go anywhere else. While he is still in control of himself, it is best to leave.

Just as he was about to pacify them with a few words and slip out, Shan Rou

materialized at the open door of the bedroom. A cold and emotionless face, she directed icily: “Dong Kuang! Get out here! I need to talk to you.”

Up till this point in time, the Tian sisters still do not have a clear idea on the ambiguous relationship between Xiang Shaolong and Shan Rou. Traumatized, they kneeled down on the floor and beg for forgiveness from the “real imposter wife.”

Shan Rou hurriedly explained: “This does not concern you, please get up!”

Xiang Shaolong helplessly pacified them with a few words and ordered them to shower and rest. He then followed Shan Rou to her room next door.

This inner chamber holds a total of four spacious rooms. The four of them have taken up three rooms, leaving one vacant. With her back facing him and her arms folded in front of her chest, she looked out of the window. Staring at the little garden illuminated by moonlight, she mentioned coldly: “Xiang Shaolong, I cannot fall asleep!”

“What?!” Xiang Shaolong was bowled over.

Stamping her feet, she unreasonably threatened: “Are you deaf? Help me to fall asleep now!”

Xiang Shaolong moved his well-built body and attaches himself to her enticing backbone. Looping his two strong hands around her slender but alarmingly supple and flexible waist, he remembered their first encounter. She had mistaken him for Zhao Mu and carried out a fumbling and

embarrassing assassination. Sweet feelings arise in his heart. Xiang Shaolong smooches her jade neck, he suggested: “Allow me to undress you and coax my darling you into the deepest slumber?”

Shan Rou did not resist his invasion and harassment. Twisting her waist, she yelled: “Who wants you to coax? You did not close your door and expose me to all your sweet talking. The noise unsettled my nerves and causes my insomnia!”

Stunned, Xiang Shaolong reasoned: “If you have closed your own door, how would you have heard our whisperings?”

Shan Rou’s faced reddened. Maintaining her nonsense, she retorted: “What has my door’s opening or closing has to do with you?!”

Xiang Shaolong joked: “Good Sister is jealous. Come! Let me also kiss your chirpy mouth and make them disorientated with our noise and cannot fall asleep!”

In a sharp turnabout, Shan Rou slithered out of his grasp like a slippery fish. She demanded: “I am jumping mad and you are so thick-skinned to take advantage of me. Scram!”

Xiang Shaolong is gradually getting used to her unpredictable mood swings. Stretching in a yawn, he recalled his date with Talented Lady Ji. Passing her, he reached out his hand and patted her egg-liked face: “I’m scrambling. In fact, I am scrambling to the streets. Is Rou Rou contented?”

Displeased, Shan Rou enquired: “Where are you going?”

Grinning bitterly, Xiang Shaolong answered: “Do you think we are here on vacation? Do not forget your blood debt. To accomplish our goal, how can hubby not put in more effort?”

Stressed by her mission, Shan Rou kept quiet.

Like a dragonfly skimming the water surface, Xiang Shaolong bypassed her full lips and pecked her lightly on her cheek. Wishing her a good night, he slipped out.

Unexpected, Shan Rou kept on his tail tightly. Astonished, he stopped: “What are you following me?”

Shan Rou replied naturally: “I am your assistant and bodyguard. Logically, I have to escort you.”

Xiang Shaolong was at his ends. How to bring her to rendezvous with Ji Yanran?

Turning around in the blink of an eye, he wanted grab her tender waist. Shan Rou’s hand made a sudden wave and a sharp dagger is pointing straight at his throat. The fast turn of events gave Xiang Shaolong a big scare.

Proudly, she presents: “Skilled enough to be your assistant?”

Assuming that the dagger is nonexistent, he tried to seize her breasts.

Dismayed, she retreated and avoided his grasping palms, shouting: “How dare you!”

Xiang Shaolong gave a hiss. “I did what I did, what is the use of asking if I dared or not. You better comply and go back and sleep. If you disobey, I will divorce you immediately. A man will make good his word. Don’t try my patience.’

Shan Rou stared at him ferociously. Evaluating his degree of seriousness, she eventually shrugged her shoulders in a cute manner and scolded: “Since you begged me to sleep, I will! What’s the big deal anyway? And why do you keep mentioning about divorce!”

She turned around and returned to her room.

Xiang Shaolong can sense the thoughtful part of her character, making him feel love and sympathy at the same time. As she stepped over the door ledge, he shouted: “Rou Rou!”

Thinking that Xiang Shaolong had a change of heart and is willing to bring her along, she speedily turned her slim frame and cheered happily: “Yes?”

Xiang Shaolong looked at this wonder woman with deep passion. Opening his arms, he called: “Come! Let me hug you before you go back to sleep.”

Shan Rou glanced at him with disappointment. Two red clouds formed around her cheeks. Shooting him another furious look, her small, straight mouth let out a cold grunt. She entered her room and slammed the door

shut.

Thrilled, Xiang Shaolong gave a big laugh. He then left his home in the direction of Talented Lady Ji.

Chapter 10

Surmounting Problems

When Xiang Shaolong arrived at Liu (Huasheng) Residence, he felt extremely uneasy. It was because there is a huge increase in the number of guards and all the nearby houses have all been evacuated and converted into security posts.

Based on this fact, it is evident that Lord Longyang has the backing of Zhao. If not, there is no way he can relocate the neighbours.

The surrounding high points are all ambushed by reconnaissance troops and are very well-hidden. If Xiang Shaolong is not an expert in this field plus his familiarity of the neighbourhood, he may just rush head in.

Lord Longyang is awfully obstinate. Swearing that Ji Yanran and Xiang Shaolong (not Dong Kuang) are keeping in touch, he has deployed more men and cast his net wide and big, hoping to catch Xiang Shaolong who is rumoured to be on his way back to Zhao.

However, he has to admit that Lord Longyang has laid his bets on the correct stake. The only hiccup is that Lu Buwei and himself has, through Lord Yangquan (Lu Buwei's Qin Court rival), tricked everyone who wishes to capture him. The fact that he has arrived much earlier makes it crucial to the success of his plan.

After a thorough examination of the environment, he has a seventy percent probability of success if he tries to enter her room undetected. Still, the risk is too high to undertake. When he was about to quit, he heard the whistling sound of an arrow. A strong arrow shot out from Ji Yanran's loft and fly through the backyard, burying itself into a soldier laying in ambush on the high tree outside the wall.

The receiver of this arrow fell from the tree and broke dozens of branches before he landed on the street with a loud "pong!" In terms of accuracy and arm strength, the shooter sends fear into one's heart.

The nearby ambushers were thrown into confusion and did not know how to deal with the enemy archer from the loft. Two more cries were heard on the other side of the room. Two more men were shot and they slipped and fell head-down from different levels of the building onto the pavement.

Under the mesmerizing moonlight, Ji Yanran appeared on the balcony of her loft. Dressed in a full black spying suit and holding a strong bow, she hollered: "If there is anyone else who dare to peep at me Ji Yanran, I will kill without mercy."

The ambushing soldiers were frightened by her posture and her sure-kill arrows. Everyone withdrew, especially those hiding at the higher positions.

Xiang Shaolong was full of excitement. He could not imagine the usual gentle and scholarly Ji Yanran could be full of female prowess when provoked. Compared to Shan Rou, she do not lose even one bit. Without hesitation and while the enemy's monitoring network is in chaos, he used his agile climbing

skills and swiftly vaulted over the high wall. Travelling within the shadows, he arrived at the bottom of Ji Yanran's loft and sent out his secret signal.

Ji Yanran was heard dismissing her maidservant.

Xiang Shaolong knew that the obstacle is gone and he started climbing to the second floor with his back facing the street. Ji Yanran is already waiting at the door with a big welcome.

This beauty leaped in for a full embrace. Both happy and annoyed, she chided: "You should not have come amongst all these danger. I can hold out for one night right?"

Laughing, Xiang Shaolong explained: "Beauty has commanded and regardless of danger and obstacles, it must be done. Moreover, one night's waiting is equivalent to three autumns (一晚已等若三秋). If Talented Lady cannot hold her desires and someone else took advantage of this, who can I find to settle the score?"

Ji Yanran is still dressed in her tight night outfit, revealing her full delicate curves, making Xiang Shaolong busy with his hands like a desperate lecher.

This beauty was violated until her desires can be seen from her eyes. She groaned: "I want to quit. I, Ji Yanran, would only yield to two men. It is either Dong Kuang or Xiang Shaolong. You are degrading me, humph!"

Both males and females are alike. Once their last line of defence has been broken, even virgins and gentlemen will pursue the need for sex. This is basic

human nature and nothing to be surprised about.

Somersaulting in the blankets, both of them are entangled in the peak of passion. The thought of danger right outside the room only serves to increase the excitement of the rendezvous.

Until both of them are exhausted did all the heavy action started to slow down and stop.

Still wearing his mask, Xiang Shaolong laid horizontally on the bed while the naked Ji Yanran has transformed into a warm and lovely little lamb. She rested on his board chest with her silky hair spread over his face and neck.

Both of them do not want to spoil the peace and serenity of the loft and listened quietly to each others' subsiding breath.

The wind begins to blow harder outside the loft and the curtains rattled "pi pah."

The moon is gradually covered by dark clouds.

Charmingly, Ji Yanran complained: "You have harmed me and made me more and more wild. Yanran dare not look down on those loose and wanton women anymore."

Xiang Shaolong could hear the howling wind outside. Affectionate and tenderly stroking her delicate back, he summarized what has happened in the past few days, including that of Tian sisters, Shan Rou and Zhao Ya.

Hearing Shan Rou's masquerading as his wife; the carefree Ji Yanran could not resist a bout of jealousy. "That person should be Yanran! I also want to keep you company!" She whined.

Reassuring her, Xiang Shaolong observed: "Tian Dan did not come with good intentions. He wants to stir up internal strife and weaken Zhao from within."

Forgetting her whining, Yanran climbed up from his chest and shared his pillow. Kissing him, she painted: "I have the same thinking too. Yan may even be instigated by him to attack Zhao in the first place. Qi shares its border with Zhao and Yan. If Tian Dan does not have any motives towards Zhao and Yan, even a kid will not believe it. Including the powerful Qin, no one is unafraid of Li Mu and Lian Po (Zhao's best generals fighting Xiong Nu and Yan respectively). If Tian Dan can borrow Zhao Mu's hands and get rid of these two men, it would be his dream come true."

Xiang Shaolong nodded his head, adding: "King Xiaocheng may be muddle-headed but he still has the basic wisdom that Lian Li both generals are the pillars of Zhao and must not be shaken. But if Zhao Queen and Zhao Mu assassinates the Zhao King and takes over the state, this will be a different matter altogether."

Ji Yanran surmised: "Breaking all norms, Zhao Queen attended Zhao Mu's banquet tonight. This may be Zhao Mu's display of strength to Tian Dan, showing him that even the Queen has to listen to him."

Continuing in a smile: "Regarding Yanran's husband (Dong Kuang), it is also a point of contention between them. Fearing another Li Mu or Lian Po

appearing, even the rare twin sisters have to be forced to change hands”

Xiang Shaolong is engrossed with her story. Patting her twice on the shoulder, he digged: “Are you jealous, my darling?”

Ji Yanran gave a serious reply: “Jealous to the max! Unless you come and accompany every other night, Oh! I am joking only. It is too dangerous.”

Xiang Shaolong felt a sensation in his heart. He bemoaned: “I may find a solution to this problem. Hai! I have to go again. That Lord Longyang is coming over early in the morning. I’d rather face thousands of soldiers in battle than to face this eyelid-batting and coquettish man no matter how womanly he is.”

Ji Yanran giggled: “In Daliang (Wei’s Capital), there are tonnes of gay men who wish they could swallow him in their stomach. Are you taking things for granted?”

Upset, Xiang Shaolong whimpered: “You are still making fun of me?”

Ji Yanran hurriedly gave him a sweet kiss and some passion as compensation.

After another bout of entanglement, they both got dressed. Ji Yanran set off to distract the enemy to cover his departure.

As the beauty was riding her horse out and looking for targets to vent her jealousy, he had long disappeared into thin air.

Back at home, Teng Yi had yet to retire and was drinking by himself.

Shaolong was amazed. Joining his for a couple of cups, he checked: “Does second brother have any difficulties?”

Sighing, Teng Yi explained: “When I saw Shan Rou, I thought of her sister. Before we left for Zhao, she got pregnant. How can I not be worried?”

Xiang Shaolong happily congratulated him. Then he apologised: “It is my fault to take you away from Sister in law and also from witnessing your child’s birth.”

Teng Yi chortled: “We are brothers and these words are unnecessary. Even if we cannot make it back to Xianyang, I will not be the least upset. However, our emotions do fluctuate and stuck in such a boring place with no task in sight, I tend to let my mind wander. Do you really think I can abandon all thoughts and meditate my Mozi everyday for a few hours?”

Xiang Shaolong can finally detect some humanity in this iron man. Pleased, he proposed: “There is a new task that needs your attention.”

Teng Yi solicited: “What?”

Xiang Shaolong sniggered: “Disguise as me!”

Still surprised, Teng Yi called: “What?” Comprehending, he asked: “Xiang Shaolong or Dong Kuang?”

Xiang Shaolong leisurely answered: "I will take responsibility for Dong Kuang. I only need second brother to use my flying needles to harm a few Zhao citizens. After that, leave a trail pretending that you are escaping to Wei. Once this is done, it will arouse everyone's suspicions."

Teng Yi nodded: "You can let the big sized Wu Guo wear my disguise and the plan will be flawless. But why are you escaping to Wei instead of Xianyang?"

Xiang Shaolong concludes: "This is my style, never returning until the mission is completed."

Teng Yi confidently spoke: "Who can understand you better than yourself? I will act as planned within the next ten days. In the wilderness, no one is my match."

After further discussion, it is past four in the morning. On his way back to his room, he remembered the Tian sisters. Excited, he yawned and visited their room.

Both girls were having sweet dreams and the bed is full of their scent. If he had not given his all on Ji Yanran, he would join them in bed. Now, all he can do is to give a longing sigh.

Suddenly, it began to rain heavily.

Xiang Shaolong frantically shut the windows and happened to hear Shan Rou closing the windows too.

Xiang Shaolong could not resist his adoration for this wilful girl. Reaching her door, he knocked lightly twice. No response.

Thinking how funny it is, he pushed open the door, entered and closed the door, latching it.

In the fine bed, Shan Rou was pretending to be asleep.

Thrilled with excitement, he slowly took off his clothes and weapons. Leaving only a pair of shorts, he lifted the blanket and was about to climb onto the bed. As expected, a gust of cold air blew into his face. Armed to the teeth, Shan Rou jumped up and pointed a dagger at his bare chest. Infuriated, she challenged: "Are you going to use force on me?"

Xiang Shaolong reached out his hand and twisted the tip of the dagger. Moving aside, he cheered: "Use force? Tonight is not appropriate. It will be dawn soon. Maybe tomorrow night! Now I only wish to hug my wife and have a short nap."

Shan Rou could only watch as he yanked her dagger away and put it aside. Following that, his exploring hands squeezed her against his near naked body but she could not put up any resistance.

Hugging her to sleep on the bed and covered with a blanket, he kissed her nice smelling face and enquired: "Do you always sleep armed like that?"

Drumming with anger, Shan Rou offered: "I trailed you secretly just now. You walk very fast and purposely find the hardest roof and tallest walls to climb. I

was tired and lost track of you. If you promised to give me a set of scaling and climbing tools, Shan Rou will let you hug until the cows come home but you cannot take my virginity.”

Xiang Shaolong jumped. Giving her cheek another peck, he rejected: “Whether you are agreeable or not, you must accompany me to sleep tonight.”

Shan Rou roared: “I dare you to repeat what you just said!”

Xiang Shaolong gave up: “Fine! I surrender. You want the wind, I’ll give you wind. You want the rain, it is raining outside. Come! Let me kiss your lips and we’ll sleep. Want me to undress you so that it is more comfortable to sleep?”

Flustered, Shan Rou stated: “You dare! I sleep like this every night so that it is easier to run away!”

Xiang Shaolong was hit by a wave of realisation. Remembering that she was on the run for seven years, he felt fearful and gently coaxed: “Come and sleep in my arms. This is the safest and most enjoyable place in the whole world.”

Shan Rou really yawned and closed her pretty eyes. Resting her face between his neck and shoulder, she begins to sleep deeply and made soft breathing sounds.

Filled with a strong urge to sleep, Xiang Shaolong lost consciousness and entered dreamland.

Not knowing how much time has passed, Xiang Shaolong suddenly woke up in a fluster.

The sky has yet to brighten. In his embrace, the weeping Shan Rou is shouting for her Mum and Dad. Xiang Shaolong kissed her tears away. In a moment, this beautiful girl begins to quieten down. Apparently, she is having a nightmare.

Xiang Shaolong is really dog-tired and resumed sleeping.

When he woke up again, he could hear the Tian sisters wishing Shan Rou good morning. He then noticed that the person in his embrace has gotten up long ago.

He overheard Shan Rou protesting softly: "Let the Lord Longyang have a good wait! Our master slept late last night and must let him rest a while more."

The Tian sisters would not dare to go her against her wishes and obediently complied.

Xiang Shaolong jumped off the bed. The sky is brightly lit. Walking to the door, he commented: "I have slept enough."

Three pairs of eyes turned to his direction. Witnessing his topless and muscular built, the three faces turned red at the same time.

The Tian sisters have seen quite a few naked men but it is Xiang Shaolong's body that made them lost their bearings. Making an excuse to retrieve the

washing up tools, they make a quick exit.

Xiang Shaolong put one hand around Shan Rou's cute waist and invited: "Accompany me to the farm?"

Shaking her head, Shan Rou rejected: "Not today. I have something on."

Xiang Shaolong frowned: "Where are you going? You are now my wife. If you leak out our identity, we shall perish together."

Shan Rou's round almond eyes stared at him. Angrily, she boasted: "Are you the only one who knows how to trick other people? Yesterday, I slipped out of the city and re-enter to look for you. Using the identity as your official wife, I was escorted in by the gate soldiers. Last night while you were out partying at the traitor's place, Teng Yi and I had a good talk about our plans. I guarantee I am not someone who will give you away with just a normal interrogation."

Xiang Shaolong could not defend himself from her attacks. Kissing her, he asked again: "You have yet to say where you are headed to." Shyly, Shan Rou divulged: "Zhi Zhi is accompanying me to the tailor and make some dresses. Otherwise, how I can dress up to match your status?"

As Xiang Shaolong is thinking over her words, Shan Rou took the chance and slipped away. Before she entered the corridor, she turned around pretended to speak sternly: "Don't hug me every time we meet; I am not born for you to take advantage of!"

Disgruntled, Xiang Shaolong asked: "Want me to coax you to sleep tonight?"

"Let me think about it." Shan Rou answered cheekily and left laughing.

Thought comforted at her happy disposition, Xiang Shaolong could not help feeling some fear.

Carrying a bronze basin, the Tian sisters assisted him in washing up and changing.

Continuing his earlier train of thought, Xiang Shaolong thought deeper about his conversation with Tian Dan.

He is definitely too soft hearted and is not suitable to survive in this cold-blooded and unfeeling times. It is his soft-heartedness that all these girls come under his wing of care one by one. He has even released all his hatred for Zhao Ya and did not hold her betrayal to heart.

In these times, anyone with power will be surrounded with wives, concubines, courtesans and maids. At the end of the day, he is still someone from a different time zone and a different mindset. At the beginning, he is overjoyed and tireless with all his companions. Now that he has more and more beauties around him and does not want to compromise the quality of each relationship, he starts to feel the surmounting problems.

Not including the Tian sisters in his harem, he has Wu Tingfang, Zhao Qing and Ting Fangshi in Xianyang. Here, he has Ji Yanran, Zhao Zhi and Shan Rou. Despite having a lesser burden than Tang Bohu the Ming Dynasty playboy

who has eight wives, he is still slightly overwhelmed. Making a silent vow, he will not get into any future love traps or he may die of exhaustion from his night activities.

Li Mu has warned him about sex and alcohol running one's health but he has forgotten this great advice on many occasions.

As his mind was wandering, Shan Rou's voice can be heard asking in the corridor: "Who are you?"

Wu Guo was heard answering: "Madam! This is Wei's Lord Longyang. He wanted to see if Master has woken up."

Lord Longyang's eerie voice sounded: "So it is Madam Dong who just came to Handan City."

Afraid that Shan Rou may say something wrong; Xiang Shaolong groped the breasts of the Tian sisters for a moment and scampered out.

Out of the blue, Shan Rou is acting like a gentle and mild-mannered wife, appropriately counteracting this gate-crasher Lord Longyang.

Giving a loud laugh, Xiang Shaolong put on a false front and paid his respects to the "beautiful" Lord Longyang from afar. Lord Longyang was dressed in a snow white battle gown.

Lord Longyang's phoenix eyes brightened. He apologised: "I forgot that your wife has just arrived here plus you received a pair of beauties last night. I

should have come later and not disturb your sweet dreams. Please forgive me.”

Xiang Shaolong was secretly fascinated by his “consideration.” To Shan Rou, he announced: “Hubby and Lordship are leaving the city. The earliest I will return would be in the evening.”

Shan Rou submissively agreed.

Xiang Shaolong caught the look of sympathy Wu Guo had for him and escorted Lord Longyang to the front hall.

Lord Longyang smiled: “Your wife is so exquisite. No wonder you are not interested in any of the beauties in Handan City.”

Xiang Shaolong does not know how to answer him. Giving two dry coughs, he avoided the question.

Stepping out of his residence, he can feel the warm sunshine all over the place. Even the wet floor from last night’s rain was completely dried up,

Outside, there were nearly a hundred of Lord Longyang’s personal bodyguards. Holding their horse, they waited patiently. Witnessing this display, Xiang Shaolong unconsciously shivered.

Lord Longyang’s “fragrant shoulder” leaned towards Xiang Shaolong. With a soft nudge, he explained tenderly: “Now that the roads are unsafe, it is better to have more swords protecting the excursion.”

Smelling the flowery scent on Lord Longyang's clothes, Xiang Shaolong did not know whether it is good or bad.

Before he left for Zhao, he had not foreseen the dramatic turn of events. Not only does he have to deal with women, he must also deal with this man. To make it worse, he cannot offend him.

The complexity of Handan's situation is getting out of hand.

When can he successfully escape all this?

End of Book 08