



一段等待千年的禁忌之爱，
一部历经十生十世的爱情传奇

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三生石上亦无法情到的痴情，就算命中注定没有你，我也要逆天而行守护你。

继《琉璃美人煞》后，十四郎再开三千世界，
继续感动三界所有读者的仙侠爱情。

CHANGHAI AND BEIJING
CHANGHAI

CHANGHAI

The Killing of Three Thousand Crows - Chapter 00-01

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Prologue



I bought a few Chinese novels to practise and improve my reading skills, and then realised that I am horribly impatient when it comes to reading because I read so fast in English, which lead me to skipping over words I didn't understand, getting confused and quitting.

So I decided to just translate as I read, to make sure that I actually understand everything that's going on. My Chinese is not good, so if anyone actually follows my translation, there might be parts that are quite off. I translate using a combination of direct translations, and changing the sentence structures, and just getting the meaning across when it would be too awkward otherwise.

Jiu Yun Ci (九云辞) by Shi Si Lang (十四郎) is the shortest book that I bought, so I'm starting on it first. I've bought the [3rd Anniversary Revised Edition](#), but this novel was originally titled San Qian Ya Sha, The Killing of Three Thousand Crows (三千鸦杀) so I'll be using that name. I could be wrong, but I believe Jiu Yun Ci roughly translates to The Ballad of Jiu Yun, who is the male lead.

Prologue: Stained Glass Fire

There was no moonlight on the night they left; it was dark to the point of

making one feel despair.

The fierce wind beat against the window without restraint, and tore a hole in the paper screen over it. There hadn't been time to fix it, and there may not be anyone left to fix it in the future. The wind travelled back and forth through the hole, and it sounded as if someone was weeping.

The palace maid A'Man placed the last piece of clothing inside the bundle, and anxiously raised her head to look out the doorway. Di Ji was standing in the yard, long hair whirling wildly in the wind, and her flowery embroidered long sleeves like a pair of wings that were waiting to be broken.

A'Man walked out hesitantly, and placing a thick and heavy cloak over Di Ji's frail shoulders, she said in a low voice: "Princess, the time has come. Let's go."

Di Ji nodded her head, her fair white hand reaching out from inside her long sleeves, and pointed at the yard full of powdery whites and pale reds. Her voice very soft, she asked: "A'Man, look, the flowering apples^[1] have bloomed. But my Imperial Father and Mother^[2] will never be able to see them again."

A'man said gently: "Princess, you're still young, don't think too much. Let's leave quickly."

Di Ji gazed silently at the pale red petals all over the ground; the wind swept them up, as if pulling it into its embrace like the fluttering snow. It was clearly the weather of the fifth month, but but it suddenly became cold. The flowering apples which had just bloomed, unable to withstand the wind and rain, drooped down, miserably leaving the branch, submitting itself to the mud.

"A'Man, the country has been destroyed. Tell me why I can't stay with my Imperial Father and rest to protect it until my dying breath? Shouldn't I stay behind?"

A'Man was almost crying, but forced herself to show a smile: "Princess, you're only fourteen, and have a long life ahead of you. The Emperor and Empress only hope for you to live in peace, and to have a smooth and stable life."

Di Ji slowly shook her head, turning to cup an almost withered flowering apple blossom in her palms. With the greatest care, she placed inside her pouch.

"A'Man, can I look for a little longer?" Di Ji asked in a low voice.

A'Man secretly wiped away her tears, and said in a quivering voice: "Alright... Look for a little longer..."

Before she finished speaking, flames suddenly blazed across the sky like a meteor, bringing with it piercing screams, and the Imperial Palace came crashing down. With a bang, the glazed tiles on the roof of Di Ji's Jin Fang House shattered. The fire streamed down like rain, mingling the tiles with dust.

A'Man started screaming: "They've set fire to the Imperial City! Princess, if we don't leave now, it'll be too late!"

Without waiting for Di Ji to answer, A'man grasped her arm and dragged her desperately out through a secret path behind the Imperial Palace.

Di Ji's body was frail and delicate, and running against the wind, she stumbled and almost fell down. Thorny branches on the small mountain path stretched out, and left bloody marks where they hit her face. Sweat all over her face, she suddenly could not resist looking back. In the sky, there were countless magnificent meteor-like flames, raining down in the Imperial City.

Like a flame burning inside stained glass, the Imperial City became translucent, almost destroyed.

Following the meteor-like flames, countless strange birds that were tall as about two or three people flocked into the Imperial City. Their heads were crimson, like a pool of coagulated blood. The sad and shrill cries from inside the Imperial City was carried to their ears by the wind. A'Man couldn't take it anymore, and fell to her knees, covering her face with her hands and crying bitter tears.

Those were crimson-headed sprites; demon creatures that, by nature, ate humans.

A thin line of fresh blood slid down from the corner of Di Ji's mouth as she firmly bit down on her lips. The suffering inside of her was all but about to grind her into fine powder. As if she could stand it no longer, she suddenly threw off A'Man's hand and dashed down the mountain.

Before she ran more than a few steps, A'Man flung herself at her from behind, embracing her. Broken branches all over the ground, Di Ji struggled desperately

like a small wounded animal, mud all over her body and face.

She didn't know how long she struggled for, but slowly, she was left with no energy. A feeling of emptiness and dread spread from the depths of her soul. She thought that would die, but against expectations, she had not died; She opened her mouth, wanting to wail, but could only brokenly gasp for air.

That night, she had to watch with her own eyes the destruction of everything in her possession. Her soul felt as if it had been cut a thousand times in a lingering death. She could not be weak, and could not look back.

A'Man thought that the struggling in her arms gradually became weaker, and then Di Ji was in her arms, not moving. She used all her strength to wipe away tears, then pulled out a handkerchief, brushing aside Di Ji's hair to wipe clean the mud on her face.

In the light of the fire, Di Ji's face was pale without even a thread of blood. Her once dainty and energetic gaze was left with only absented-minded gloom. She closed her eyes tightly, her thick eyelashes quivering. It was only after a long time did a single large tear fall.

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Di Ji woke when the sky was almost light.

"A'Man, lets go." She was no longer crying, and her tone was calm, but her eyes were bloodshot.

A'Man looked at her worriedly: "Princess, it'd be better to let me carry you. You can rest a little more."

Di Ji shook her head and drew out two pieces of white paper from within her sleeve. She bit her fingertip and let the blood drip onto it, then tossed it to the ground. In a flash, the two pieces of white paper became two fine horses.

She mounted and took the reins, and at once the horse let out a loud and clear neigh.

"Let's descend the mountain, and find a place to stay for a while."

A'Man saw that her expression was serene, and began to secretly worry. She said hesitantly in a low voice: "Princess... You... What are you thinking?"

Di Ji turned her head to smile at her, a dimple appearing at her cheek. Against the dawn light, she seemed to become the gentle and charming princess that she used to be.

“A’Man, don’t worry. I’ll live on.” Live until the day she was to die.

The horse let loose its four hooves, and began descending the mountain.

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“Princess, where are we going?”

“To a place without the flames of war.”

[1] (垂丝)海棠 : I believe the plant being referred to is actually a hall crabapple, but the English name sounds disgusting and I refuse to use it.

[2] 父皇, 母后 : Literally, ‘Father Emperor’ and ‘Mother Empress.’ A pretty typical way for royalty to address their parents.

Thoughts:

I tried translating the synopsis, but I couldn’t make head or tails of it and gave up. The prologue was pretty simple, but I was still a little shocked at how many words I had to look up because I was able to understand everything even without knowing the exact pronunciation and meaning.

On to the actual content, while the synopsis doesn’t sound too bad, the prologue was pretty cliched. I don’t mind cliches too much though, and I’m hopeful that I’ll like this based on the synopsis.

Chapter One



I just realised that without the synopsis, it may be a little difficult to link the prologue to the first chapter, so here it is along with the first chapter!

Synopsis:

On the mountain balcony, Princess Di Ji stunned the world with the song《Peach Blossoms of the Eastern Wind》.

After the stained glass fire, the Great Nation of Yan was no more, the matters of it's past as if a dream. Concealing her identity, Di Ji hides herself at a place where immortality is cultivated, Mt. Xiang Qu, and becomes the servant Qin Chuan.

But unexpectedly, old friends begin to turn up one after the other. An old lover, Zuo Zichen is now entangled with Xuan Zhu after losing his memories, and an elegant and distinguished Fu Jiu Yun suddenly appears, purposely teasing her in every way possible. It's hard to separate his truth from lies, and difficult to accept his favour.

Taking advantage of the White River Dragon King's arrival in Mt. Xiang Qu, Qin Chuan steals the Master's treasures and flees. Knowing that he had been deceived, Fu Jiu Yun is extremely angry, and chases after her however far she goes. After knowing her mission, and being unable to stop her, he can only use his own life to help her succeed.

But she doesn't know, in order to meet her, he has kept watch for a millennium.

Chapter One: Whose Faint Fragrance in the Dark?

At the end of the year, the first snow of Mt. Xiang Qu fluttered and floated all night until it was almost knee-high. Qin Chuan came out from inside the warm kitchen. It was so cold that she started shivering, and wrapped her scarf tight.

Chen *daye*^[1] who was in charge of meals and the kitchen came out, repeatedly calling her name: "Chuan'er, wait a moment!"

"*Daye*, is there something else you'd like me to help with?" Qin Chuan was so cold she was jumping up and down like a little rabbit.

"It's not anything important. I just wanted to ask when you will come help out at the kitchens tomorrow? My son, Ming'er will be coming to fix the kitchen range and I mentioned you. Maybe the two of you can meet." Chen *daye* laughed, looking like a flower of wrinkles.

Qin Chuan excelled at reading the moods of others, and knew at once what he meant. She laughed, and said: "I'm not sure either, I need to ask Zhao *guanshi*^[2]. I hope that I'll be able to meet Chen *dage*^[3] too; he's a lucky person, out of ten gambles, he'll win nine. I'm still waiting for him to teach me how to play."

Chen *daye* couldn't help but blush, knowing that she spoke so vaguely to give him face^[4]. His son clearly a spendthrift and a gambling addict who lost nine times out of ten. It really wasn't easy to find him a wife.

Chen *daye* waved goodbye awkwardly, and Qin Chuan refrained from thinking as she ran towards the Eastern Pond. After the heavy rain last night, she was afraid that willow sprites near the pond had been harmed by the cold. She

needed to brush away the snow and give it a trim, or else they'd come crying to her the next time she turned back.

When she was halfway there, she saw Zhao *guanshi* and a boy who looked like a meatball coming towards her. Qin Chuan hurriedly stopped at the side, and greeted her with a smile: "Zhao *guanshi*, hello."

The moment Zhao *guanshi* saw her, her eyes brightened, and dragged the meatball boy over: "Qin Chuan, what a coincidence that you've come. I wanted to find you for something."

The meatball boy wasn't pleased at all, pursing his lips and squinting, looking extremely bashful to be pushed in front of Qin Chuan's eyes by Zhao *guanshi*: "This is my nephew, he's does foreign business here. He's twenty years old this year, and hasn't married yet..."

Meatball became angry, and pointing at Qin Chuan, he shouted: "Aunt! Do you have any taste at all? She's so ugly, and yellower than a tangerine peel! She can't even compare Xuan Zhu *daren*'s^[5] one finger, how can she be a match for me?"

His words were vicious, and left Qin Chuan dumbfounded.

He suddenly glared: "Hey, you better not bother me! I don't have the time to associate with you."

Qin Chuan nodded quickly: "Oh course, of course. How can I be worthy of standing next to you..." As she spoke, she looked at his skin on his rounded stomach; he looked like a tangyuan which had just left the pot; fat, white and soft. She couldn't help but laugh a little, "An upstanding and handsome man like you, only a women who is so devastatingly beautiful that she can cause the fall of nations is worthy of you."

"Guess you do have some self-awareness." Meatball Boy laughed, greatly pleased. "Aunt, I'm going now. Next time, remember to find someone beautiful who is worthy of me."

"You take care, take care..." Qin Chuan smiled as she watched him leave, and only when he was far away did she turn to look at Zhao *guanshi*. Naturally, Zhao *guanshi* was extremely awkward, apologising repeatedly. "Chuan'er... His temper is just that bad, but he's really a good person... You... Don't take it to heart."

“What’s that to me, he’s straightforward and isn’t fake, like a real man.” Qin Chuan said with a straight face.

Zhao *guanshi* thought it was really regrettable, and sighed. Although Qin Chuan had only been around for less than three months, she worked agilely and had no improper ideas and thoughts, and her words were sweet to exactly the right extent. There were not many maidens these days who were so good, and she had set her mind upon finding a good wife for her nephew. What could be done, that her precious nephew had high standards but low abilities, and would not take any woman that was not exceedingly beautiful.

Qin Chuan, that child, was just a little plain. Her eyebrows and eyes were thin, her nose and lips small, and her complexion like someone who hadn’t had a full meal in ten years, waxy yellow. In a crowd, one would lose sight of her if they blinked.

“That’s right, did you find me to give me any orders?” Qin Chuan straightforwardly changed the subject.

With great care, Zhao *guanshi* took out a wooden box: “I still have a load of things to do. Take this box up to the Southern Manor. You must be extremely careful, don’t knock it about, this belongs to Xuan Zhu *daren*.”

Qin Chuan nodded, and was about to leave with the box in both hands when she suddenly said with a laugh: “*Guanshi*, Cui Ya told me today that she has recovered from her sickness and is able to work again. Should the task of helping out in the kitchens tomorrow be given to her?”

Without even thinking, Zhao *guanshi* said: “Then let her to go there tomorrow. You can come help me, it just so happens that I don’t have enough people.”

With a smile on her face, Qin Chuan walked away.

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The heavenly grounds of Mt. Xiang Qu were divided into the outside and inside areas. The outside was a place for general servants to live and work, while the inside was where the Master of the Mountain lived with disciples. The servants of the outside area were strictly forbidden to enter the inside area, and so the

Eastern, Western, Southern and Northern Halls served as checkpoints. The four halls were connected by high stone walls, and for weak and ordinary people like them, it would be hard to fly in even if they sprouted wings.

With the morals of the world today, even immortals were exhausted.

It was at Mt. Xiang Qu the the Master first became an immortal, and since then the mountain had been claimed by immortals. While plundering rare treasures without restraint, the Master pitied the common people and did many good deeds. Perhaps it was because he was old now, and understood worldly affairs too well, that he was holed up inside counting his treasures, taking in countless young boys and girls as disciples, and living the peaceful life of an old man.

The Mt. Xiang Qu of today had become a tightly closed birdcage, and a double layered one at that.

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Qin Chuan held the box in both hands as she approached the Southern Hall. The watchman there was holding a handwarmer and reading a book, and without even looking at her, he said in a muffled voice: “Stop. Put that down and sign your name over there. There’s no need to take that directly to Zi Chen *daren*, understand?”

Qin Chuan rolled her eyes, and shook her head with a smile: “I don’t understand. Why?”

The watchman pointed behind him in a smooth motion, extremely impatient: “All these things are gifts for Zi Chen *daren*, how can he accept them all? You servants from the outside really are shameless. Who do you think you are, wanting to play up to those with power? Every time the gifts are thrown out, but you people just won’t stop giving them!”

Qin Chuan looked over curiously, and saw a room full of boxes, bottles, jars, caskets and copper medallions. It really was a sight to behold.

She couldn’t help but smack her lips disapprovingly: “All these things... They’ve all for Zi Chen *daren*?”

The watchman finally raised his head and looked at her: “Exactly. Now, if

you're sensible then leave quickly now. Even if you left it here, there's no way that it would be taken inside."

Qin Chuan smiled, and placed the box in front of him: "I understand, and I'll take note for next time. This is an item that Xuan Zhu *daren* wants, so please take it inside immediately so no mistakes will be made."

The watchman startled and jumped up, cupping the box in his hands and saying: "Why didn't you say so earlier? So this is something that Xuan Zhu *daren* wants! If a mistake was made... That temper of hers...!"

As Qin Chuan wrote her name down, she asked: "*Dashu*^[6], do so many people from outside send gifts to Zi Chen *daren* everyday?"

"Not at all, you must be new here? No wonder you didn't know. The day after tomorrow is Zi Chen *daren*'s twenty-third birthday, so naturally people who know will send gifts. But those servants from the outside, they don't think about it all, Zi Chen *daren*'s status. How could he value their cheap, worthless little things? They send gifts every year, and I have to go to the trouble of throwing them out!"

Qin Chuan, with her hand on her forehead, imagined Zuo Zi Chen carrying a load of copper medallions and silver boxes, but with his stern and unapproachable attitude, she couldn't help but find it funny. Without knowing why, the time she first saw him five years ago floated into her mind. That lithe youth on the mountain balcony, with a rare and graceful laugh. He was truly handsome like irises and orchids^[7], and she didn't know how many wistful young girls were lovestruck by him that day.

His heart was colder than snow and ice, and yet so many people liked him.

After she finished writing her name, she clapped her hands and was ready to leave when the watchman suddenly called to her: "Wait, seeing as you're here, take this letter to Zhao *guanshi*. It's an extremely urgent matter."

Qin Chuan narrowed her eyes a little, pinched the letter into her hand and replied: "Okay, I'll make sure it gets there."

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As she left the Southern Hall, the sky had already darkened.

Qin Chuan found a secluded place, and leaned against the stone wall where a torch shone. The letter was not sealed—mountains of immortality usually did not take these defensive measures, and it's people were upright and honourable. But today, there was someone who was not really either.

Opening the letter, she read it over quickly under the light of the fire. Qin Chuan's eyebrows knit together, and she wasn't sure if she should be startled or pleased. The White River Dragon King would be a guest at Mt. Xiang Qu next month, and the *guanshi* for the inside had ordered Zhao *guanshi* to send some servants from the outside to help with various preparations.

She was so focused on the letter that when she heard the sound of approaching footsteps in the snow, she startled and quickly threw the torch on the ground, stamping on it. A moment later, a pair of arms held her tightly.

Qin Chuan knew that she was in the wrong, and other than to breathe, she did not move an inch. The person had a large stature, and it seemed as if he had been drinking wine. The scent of alcohol was puffed warmly onto her ear, and it felt itchy and tingly.

"I've come late, are you resenting me for it?" The person laughed softly, his voice mellow, and insistently bringing about a thread of languidness, each word alluring.

Qin Chuan didn't speak and shook her head slowly, bewildered and unsure.

The man placed his hands on her shoulders to turn her around, and she didn't dare resist. Fortunately, it was dark and the tops of their heads were separated by the stone wall. Even if she faced him, he wouldn't be able to see even her silhouette clearly.

"Qing Qing, why aren't you talking? Are you still mad at me inside?" His hand slid up from her shoulder to rest against the back of her head. His other hand pinched at her soft earlobe, caressing it tenderly.

Qin Chuan was ticklish, and quickly ducked away. He laughed like he was a little tipsy: "Still not talking? I have my ways of making you talk."

Qin Chuan suddenly felt a warmth in front of her nose; his face was suddenly pressed close, sniffing lightly near her lips before blowing softly at the source of

the sweet smell, saying in a low voice: “What a nice smell... What fragrance do you use?”

She startled, and unexpectedly, he grabbed her chin and kissed her deeply.

This time, it really could be said that she turned pale with fright. A short moan came from her throat, and she used all her strength to hit and struggle, but could not move him by even a fraction. His kiss was very deep, and even a little rough, going back and forth to suck at her lips. Teeth and lips ground against each other, and their breaths intermingled. Qin Chuan was left almost unable to breathe, like there was a fire raging in her chest, burning into her four limbs and all her bones, as if she were a prairie set ablaze. She really couldn't take it anymore, her red-hot lips had begun to hurt and her arms and legs trembled from the shock.

With difficulty, Qin Chuan felt inside the bag at her waist, but her fingers were limp and shaking so hard she could not pick anything up. She cursed herself for being so useless, and then with great effort, felt a silver needle. Pinching it with two fingers, she stabbed it into the person's shoulder without warning.

Before the needle went in more than halfway, the person suddenly tensed. His five fingers like a metal vice, he wrapped them around her wrist at lightening speed.

“The needle was poisoned, who are you?” His voice suddenly dropped lower, but he was not flustered at all.

Qin Chuan stubbornly bit her lip; she'd let him shatter her wrist bone, but did not make a sound.

The person's eyes sparked in the dark like stars, and looked at her for a long time before laughing: “I definitely... have ways... to... find you...”

He finished the sentence, and slowly fell to the ground. That anaesthetic was a fast-acting one that triggered the moment it touched flesh and blood. For someone to have held on for that long, it was not an easy thing to do at all.

Qin Chuan was covered in cold sweat, and throwing off his hand, she did not dare stay even a moment longer and fled. Ice and snow covered the ground, and she slipped and fell many times, but could not bring herself to care.

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Some time later, that person got up from the ground and saw that not far away, there was a light yellow pouch on the ground in the snow.

Picking it up, he held it in front of his nose and inhaled deeply. A light scent filled his heart; it was the scent in her hair and between her lips. He weighed the bag in the palm of his hand, as if lost in thought.

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From that day forth, Qin Chuan was as easily startled as a bird, feeling uneasy all day long, afraid that a man would suddenly pop up from a corner at any time, point her out and tell her to pack her bags and leave.

After a few days of being worried all the time, she had lost weight and become skinnier and looked frail and pitiful, as if she had fallen sick.

Zhao *guanshi* couldn't look on for any longer and held her hand, consoling her: "Chuan'er, I know that you're upset. That nephew of mine spoke tactlessly and hurt you. But a maiden's outer appearance isn't the most important; being generous, intelligent and capable is better than anything else."

Qin Chuan could only laugh bitterly, accepting her words.

Completely opposite to her constantly worried state, the servants of the outside were in a frenzy. The news that the White River Dragon King would be a guest at Mt. Xiang Qu and that servants from the outside would be needed to go inside for preparations had spread everywhere overnight. Everyone was anxiously hoping this piece of good fortune would fall from the Heavens and onto their heads.

Lately, Zhao *guanshi* had accepted bribes until she was lenient, and smiled to the point where a few more wrinkles appeared on her face, like peach blossoms blooming in the autumn wind.

In the end when the list of names was confirmed, it contained the names of a few servants who gave the most money, and the rest were servants who were both capable and sensible. After all, the inside was different from the outside, and one could not be perfunctory when doing work for immortals.

Not at all unexpectedly, Qin Chuan's name was first on the list. Everyone guessed that she gave the most in bribes, and since then looked at her with a worshipping expression in their eyes, as if looking at a walking piece of gold.

The inside was large, and there was little time, so Zhao *guanshi* arranged for eighty servants to go, half of them male and half of them female. Before letting them go, she spent an entire day detailing the rules of the inside. High and mighty people lived in the inside, and if one accidentally offended them, it wouldn't be as easy to solve as simply packing up and leaving.

The next morning, they gathered at the Southern Hall. The young female servants had meticulously dressed up, twittering sweetly in front of the Southern Hall. Even servants who normally weren't very pretty had dressed up and become a lot better looking. Qin Chuan arrived neither late nor early, and stood under a tree joking with others. She only carried a small bag, and wore clean grey clothes, and nothing else. She was dressed simply from head to toe, with not a thread of femininity.

Zhao *guanshi* pulled her alone over to the side, expression imposing: "You've been obedient and sensible, I don't need to say anything more about the rules inside. There's only one thing you must remember, if you meet Xuan Zhu *daren*, be careful of what you say and do. She's got an eccentric temperament, and can suddenly turn hostile at will, and doesn't consider the face and feelings of servants at all. If you accidentally offend her, even I can't protect you."

Qin Chuan felt a warm feeling in her heart, Zhao *guanshi* was usually strict and harsh, but actually treated her really well.

"Don't worry *guanshi*, I understand. It's just that I don't know what Xuan Zhu *daren* tries to avoid? So if I do meet her, I'll be prepared."

Zhao *guanshi* exhaled: "If I knew that, I would have already said so. I heard that before Xuan Zhu *daren* became the disciple of the Master, she was a princess and was forced to come here after her country fell, and that even the Master has to show her some respect. Because she's royalty, it's normal for her to be more arrogant than normal people."

The corners of Qin Chuan's mouth lifted a little, and smiled lightly: "I understand. If I see Xuan Zhu *daren*, my manners will be as if she were royalty."

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The eighty servants were taken by the *guanshi* from the inside, and walked forward in a neat formation on the limestone path behind the Southern Hall. At first, they talked excitedly, but after over half an hour^[8], everyone quietened down. All around they could only hear the sound of the wind. On the two sides of the path, there were willow trees that they had never seen before, reaching high up into the clouds, and even though it was a frosty winter, the leaves were verdant green and glistening. The wind blew through the willow trees, and the leaves made a swooshing sound. Snowflakes fell slowly onto their hair, making one assume an air of solemn respect and caution.

After walking for a full two hours, an enlightening view suddenly appeared. A large valley in the mountain appeared in front of their eyes, and in the basin of the valley were pavilions and flowing water, a magnificent mansion, there were even a few tall buildings made of treasures, far higher than the basin, and even they who stood in a high place could only raise their heads to look.

The basin was surrounded by a sheer cliff, and a winding thin flight of stairs led from top to bottom. If there were waterfalls in that space, the silver dragon fish would rush down in torrents like jade, glimmering in a rainbow light. Following the snake-like set of stairs down, within the heavenly grounds were all sorts of exotic flowers and grasses, upturned eaves and murals. All sorts of beautiful sights that they had never seen before was enough to make them feel suffocated. It looked just as a rich, noble and magnificent sect should.

It looked like even immortals who reached old age couldn't refrain from taking pleasure in these enjoyments.

Qin Chuan looked silently at the familiar yet unfamiliar manor and imperial temple, old memories and new experiences piled up together, and for a moment she thought that flowers did not seem to be flowers, and dreams did not seem to be dreams. To compare the self of today and the self in her memories, she had changed beyond recognition. Time passed like flowing water, like a white colt flashing past a crack in the wall^[9]. Could she at that time truly experience the meaning of the four words "things remain, people change^[9]?"

The group suddenly stopped walking, and Qin Chuan, still thinking of things

which weighed upon her mind, bumped unexpectedly against Cui Ya's back. Cui Ya absent-mindedly lent a hand to support her.

“What is it?” Qin Chuan asked quietly.

Cui Ya pointed to the a pavilion under delicately wrought eaves where around ten beautiful young girls were gathered, sitting or standing around white stone steps. On top of the stairs a young man reclined, his posture indolent and held in his hands a lustrous green flute which he held up to his lips, playing it leisurely.

The sound of the flute was clear and melodious, it's timbre free and natural, washing off all sorts of sadness and resentment inside. Qin Chuan's gaze could not help but be roused.

The lead *guanshi* respectfully kept watch from the side, and after he finished playing, said in a clear loud voice: “Greetings, Jiu Yun *daren*. We have disrupted the mood here, and deserve to die ten thousand deaths.”

Fu Jiu Yun put his chin on his hand, and played with that lustrous green flute between his fingers. He looked up and down at the dense mass of servants with eyes full of interest, his gaze like warm spring water, sweeping past the faces of the servants, one by one. If they met his gaze, they would feel their entire body warm up, as if they were slightly intoxicated.

The Master's disciples were all extraordinarily beautiful people, and Fu Jiu Yun could be said to be one who stood out, suppressing the rest. Until today, they had only heard of his name, but no one had the fortune to have seen him in person. Today, he sat lazily in front of their eyes, totally different from the image of an haggard and delicately pretty immortal that they held. His colour of his skin was like old copper, and his long eyebrows stretched to his temples, and it could be said that he had the air of a hero. When he laughed, it was as if a warm breeze brushed by; there was a special sort of naivety to it. At the lower corner of his left eye was a small mole, adding a thread of sad but moving melancholy to his gaze. It was easy for the more soft-hearted maidens to develop intentions of becoming close to him, and no wonder that when he played the flute, there would be girls gathered around like they were fools or intoxicated.

Cui Ya had obviously been dazzled by his beauty until her two legs felt like jelly, and leaned into Qin Chuan's chest, and sighed with her voice like fine silk: “So...

So beautiful... Don't let go of me, Qin Chuan *jie*, I can't stand up anymore."

Qin Chuan didn't know whether to laugh or cry: "You already feel like jelly after just one glance?"

"There's so many people, they can't all be the Master's new disciples?" Fu Jiu Yun's gaze swept over everyone, asking the lead *guanshi* with mirth.

"To answer Jiu Yun *daren*, these people are outside servants. Because the White River Dragon King will be visiting our Mt. Xiang Qu next month, they have come in to make preparations. I will manage them well, and won't let these laymen disturb your peace and quiet." The lead *guanshi* spoke as she ushered all the servants away to avoid them, taking the route around them behind the hall.

"Chuan *jie*... my... my legs are like jelly, I can't walk! What should I do?" Cui Ya said with a long face, holding firmly onto Qin Chuan.

This child really had not seen the world. Qin Chuan impatiently supported her arm, and followed the crowd. Suddenly, there was a 'ding' sound, and a jade bracelet fell from Cui Ya onto the ground, rolling smoothly far away. Qin Chuan remembered that the bracelet was a valuable object left behind by Cui Ya's mother before she died, and hurriedly bent down from the waist to pick it up, but someone else had beaten to it, bending down in the same way to pick up the jade bracelet. The corners of their clothes swayed with the wind, and on it was embroidered a silver peony. It was Fu Jiu Yun.

"This jade is lustrous and translucent, and a quality item among suet white jade. Does it belong to this maiden?" He brought the bracelet to Cui Ya, smiling slightly.

Cui Ya had already gone limp, confused and disorientated, her entire body slumped on Qin Chuan's, she murmured: "Yes... My mother... left it for me...."

Fu Jiu Yun made an 'en' sound, stretching the syllable out alluringly, and suddenly lifting his hand, he lifted Cui Ya's chin with his fingers, and lowered his head until the tip of his nose was less than three inches from her red lips, carefully and sweetly measuring her up.

Poor Cui Ya, she was about to faint.

There was a gust of wind, and a faint fragrance made its way from behind Cui

Ya and into his nose. Fu Jiu Yun's eyes fluttered closed for a moment, then he suddenly opened his eyes again. The fingers holding her chin tightened, and he said in a low voice: "So fragrant... Miss, can I kiss you?"

With a 'xiu' sound, Qin Chuan swore that in that moment, she really could see Cui Ya's vigour emit from the top of her head, dancing for joy as her body flailed crazily. Her excitement was too intense, and she fainted.

In a flurry, the servants hurriedly tugged and carried away that embarrassing girl.

Qin Chuan fled with the others in the confusion, not daring to look back, her ears burning like they had just been boiled, not knowing if she felt awkward or afraid.

There was no mistake, the lecherous man from that night was him. She never would have thought that he was one of the Master's disciples.

Qin Chuan exhaled heavily, and for reason, suddenly felt that the road ahead would be very long, and be extremely dangerous.

Translation Notes:

[1] 大爷 *daye*: uncle, a respectful way of addressing an elderly man

[2] 管事 *guanshi*: steward, manager

[3] 大哥 *dage*: elder brother, a polite way of addressing a man around one's age

[4] 面子 *mianzi*: reputation, self-respect (lit. face)

[5] 大人 *daren*: an honorific used for person of high status (lit. big person, adult)

[6] 大叔 *dashu*: uncle, a polite way of addressing a man about one's father's age

[7] 芝兰 *zhilan*: irises and orchids are symbolic of noble character, true friendship, or beautiful surroundings

[8] 时辰 *sichen*: an hour will refer to one *sichen*, which is about about two

hours of our time

[9] 白驹过隙 *baijuguoxi*: refers to how time flies by quickly

[10] 物是人非 *wushirenfei*: while things remain the same, people have changed

Thoughts:

Well, things certainly got intense fast. I'm not a fan of sudden forced kisses, but at least Qin Chuan got him back with the needle. I'm not quite sure what I think about the characters just yet, I am tentatively liking Qin Chuan and remain undecided about Fu Jiu Yun. There were a few lines I was unsure of, so I either skipped or glossed over them.

My version of the novel has 23 chapters + 3 epilogues and each chapter is around 10 pages long, compared to online versions I've seen with about 50 chapters. As this is my first novel translation project, I've spent a lot of time on this chapter trying to figure out the technical stuff (where to put spaces, where to capitalise, what do I italicise, do I translate titles, etc.), but from now on, I'll try to be a little quicker and have a full chapter out every 1-2 weeks.

Wish me luck not getting distracting and sticking to writing/translating/studying between classes this semester!