

MO XIANG TONG XIU



Heaven Official's
Blessing

TIAN GUAN CI FU

8

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Heaven Official's Blessings

TIAN GUAN CI FU

8

墨香詞集





Heaven Official's Blessings

TIAN GUAN CI FU

8

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Chapter 125:

Exquisite Dice, Apprehension from Rolling a One (Part Two)

VEILED IN DARKNESS, the figure took a step forward. The firelight finally revealed his identity—Mu Qing. His face was dark, and he didn't say a single word.

Feng Xin grabbed Xie Lian. "I was searching for people in the Heavenly Capital, and I was doing just fine! But then, out of nowhere, someone struck me from behind; why else would I have fallen?"

"*He* was the one who struck you?" Xie Lian asked, his mind spinning.

"It was him—without a doubt!" Feng Xin said with absolute certainty.

"And you were knocked out instantly?" Xie Lian asked.

"Basically!" Feng Xin replied. "In any case, Your Highness, watch out for him! Don't let him near you! Or just seize him outright!"

"Bullsh—" Mu Qing swore in spite of himself, but Xie Lian quickly cut in.

"Wait! Feng Xin, there's a problem here. If he ambushed you from behind and you were knocked out immediately afterward...how do you know that Mu Qing was the one who did it?"

Feng Xin hadn't expected this question, and he didn't have an answer. Mu Qing seized the opportunity and scoffed.

"The Heavenly Capital was ablaze and completely chaotic at the time. For all you know, *anyone* could have hit you. But, as usual, you're trying to dump your mess on *me*. Can't you just admit you're wrong?"

Feng Xin held on to Xie Lian as he stood up. Tone dark, he insisted, "No, it was definitely you!"

"Do you have any proof to back that up?" Mu Qing demanded.

"It was precisely *because* the Heavenly Capital was ablaze," Feng Xin enunciated. "There was fire everywhere, and the person behind me cast a shadow on the ground. Even though I didn't get a chance to look

behind me, I saw the silhouette when I fell and the way it moved when it attacked. That was *your* shadow!”

As the two exchanged verbal blows, Xie Lian watched intently.

Mu Qing still wouldn't back down. “All this talk, but you still didn't see anything clearly. It's normal for shadows to distort reality. You think you can prove that I attacked you with nothing but a shadow as evidence? There's no way you saw enough to identify me in the moment before you blacked out!”

“You know that I can identify you with ease,” Feng Xin said. “His Highness knows it too.”

Xie Lian did know that. The three of them grew up and cultivated together; they couldn't be more familiar with each other's appearances and attack styles. None of them would need to see the others' faces to identify them.

“Your Highness, you two came here together?” Feng Xin questioned. “Did he do anything suspicious on the way?”
“Um...” Xie Lian said.

To tell the truth, Mu Qing had been acting extremely suspicious the entire way, visibly nervous and jittery. But at a time like this, it wasn't easy for Xie Lian to say so in front of Mu Qing.

“No! Think about it. It's suspicious that he even came to begin with,” Feng Xin continued. “Is he the kind of person who'd put himself in danger to rescue anyone? Is that even Mu Qing?”

Mu Qing's face grew darker. “Don't speak in such absolutes. It's hardly plausible for *you* to have sired a son, yet here we are.”

“...”

Xie Lian could tell this was headed in a bad direction, so he swiftly intervened. “All right, don't argue. Keep it up and we'll have to train idioms to calm down!”

“Besides, if I was the one who knocked you out, why would I go through the trouble of luring them here to find you?” Mu Qing added.

“Because you didn't think that I could identify you after you struck me from behind!” Feng Xin responded. “And who knows where the hell this place even is! When you lured His Highness and the others here, your goal might not have been to find me. Crimson Rain Sought Flower got separated from you on the way, didn't he?”

“Are you saying I’m an impostor who deliberately lured His Highness and the others into a trap? Well, sorry, His Highness and Crimson Rain Sought Flower have been with me the entire time; there’s no way they wouldn’t have noticed.”

“That’s true, yes...” Xie Lian said.

But that was only true for Mu Qing en route—what if he’d been switched after they entered the underground Wuyong palace? They couldn’t be sure.

Mu Qing appraised Feng Xin. “Your Highness, I think you’d better stay away from *him*. After all, he’s been lying there since we came. Crimson Rain Sought Flower is nowhere to be seen, and now *he’s* trying to tear us apart. Don’t you think *he’s* the one acting more like an impostor?”

White No-Face had disguised himself as them before. He could certainly do so again.

Xie Lian rubbed his forehead. “How about this—why don’t you two say something that only the three of us would know? That way, we can verify everyone’s identity.”

“Like what?” Mu Qing asked.

After giving it a moment of thought, Xie Lian asked casually, “What were you two screaming about on top of the snowy mountain?”

Their faces froze. Xie Lian tucked his hands into his sleeves.

“If your answers don’t match, it means one of you isn’t the real deal.

We can move on after we’ve sorted this out.”

The pair exchanged looks of dismay, and neither said a word. At first Xie Lian hadn’t been all that curious about what they’d said behind his back, but now he couldn’t help wanting to know.

Moments passed, and Feng Xin still didn’t answer the question. “You’re both missing the point,” he said instead. “I never said I think he’s an impostor.”

Mu Qing narrowed his eyes. “So what *were* you trying to say?”

“From the beginning, I’ve thought he’s the real Mu Qing. He can’t stand either of us, so I’m not surprised he pulled something like this,” Feng Xin said bluntly.

Mu Qing's hands clenched into fists, his knuckles cracking. Then he raised his open palm, ready to strike! The wounded Feng Xin barely dodged the blow, and the two of them began to brawl in earnest. Although Xie Lian had expected this, his head couldn't help but throb.

"Calm down... Why don't we train some idioms, hmm?"

As they traded blows, Xie Lian could sense that the murderous aura surrounding them was intensifying. Several haphazardly thrown fireballs brightened the entire chamber, and only then did Xie Lian see that there were shelves all around that were stacked high with a collection of sabers, spears, swords, and other such weapons. The arms emitted an ominous, chilling air.

This was likely an armory. No wonder the air was choked with a cold, murderous aura.

Xie Lian himself used to own such an armory. It had been very dear to his heart, and he'd often lose track of time while visiting it. But this armory filled him with a strange, intense dread, and he didn't want to stay here another minute. Still, he didn't know whose words to trust at the moment, so he didn't know which side to help—truth be told, they'd both been acting very suspicious!

In the end, Xie Lian had to call out, "Ruoye!" Well, he'd bind them both first and talk after!

Ruoye had been waiting for an opportunity to show off and leapt at this chance. Yet before the white silk band could shoot forth, Xie Lian sensed another chill from behind him.

The direction of his attack changed in an instant; he caught Ruoye and swung it behind. The moment he felt the white silk band catch on to something, Xie Lian seized it and yanked forcefully. However, whatever it had caught didn't move. Dread washed over Xie Lian, and the next moment, he was yanked backward by the other end of the silk band. His back crashed solidly into someone's embrace, and something cold and hard jabbed into his waist.

Xie Lian was stunned into silence. Although his physique didn't make him look particularly tough, Xie Lian knew he was shockingly strong. So unless his target was some gigantic creature, who could yank him over so easily? Just as he was about to strike back, he felt a hand wind around his waist and heard a voice from above his ear.

"Gege, it's me."

“San Lang?” Xie Lian asked.

Sure enough, the arm that circled him was wearing a silver vambrace carved with maple leaves, butterflies, and ferocious beasts. When he whipped his head around, he saw that the one who had caught him was a tall, slender man clad in red. The man was calm and collected, and a silver scimitar hung at his hip. The thing that had jabbed into his waist earlier was most likely the scimitar’s hilt.

Hua Cheng!

Xie Lian instantly understood what had happened—Ruoye had dragged him to Hua Cheng’s side on purpose. He’d essentially been fighting them two-against-one, so of course it had been easy to yank him over.

Steadying himself, he was left speechless as he picked Ruoye up. Eventually, he managed to mutter at it, “You little traitor..”

Ruoye lay unmoving, wisely playing dead. Xie Lian decided scolding it wasn’t worth it. He tossed it aside.

“San Lang, what happened? Weren’t you right behind me? Where’s Master?”

“This place is very strange,” Hua Cheng said. “The path sealed itself when we reached the halfway point, both ahead of us and behind us. Then we bumped into something a little difficult, so taking care of it took some time.”

If even Hua Cheng said it was a little difficult, it really must have been.

Xie Lian was faintly worried. “Are you all right?”

“Of course,” Hua Cheng said. “But I don’t know where the state preceptor is now, so we may have to keep going deeper. By the way, what are those two fighting about? So noisy.”

“Oh.” Xie Lian glanced over. “Them...”

Feng Xin and Mu Qing finally noticed what was going on outside their conflict. They called a temporary truce.

“Hey! Be careful!” Mu Qing shouted. “Don’t casually hang around people who pop out of nowhere!”

“Your Highness,” Feng Xin called out a moment later, “don’t just pounce on him the moment you see him!”

Xie Lian hurried to explain himself. "What?! What do you mean by that?! I'm not the one who tackled him! It was Ruoye's fault..."

He trailed off, suddenly realizing why they were so nervous. Both Feng Xin and Mu Qing were suspicious of impostors, so...shouldn't Hua Cheng be subject to that same scrutiny?

Was the one standing before him the real Hua Cheng?

Hua Cheng cocked an eyebrow. "So now you're all worried whether I'm the real thing, hmm?"

Supporting his elbow with one hand and leaning his cheek against the other, Xie Lian began to inspect him seriously. Hua Cheng noticed his gaze and stared back at him.

"..." Met with that stare, Xie Lian could inspect no longer. After a moment of contemplation, he came to a conclusion. He turned back to his other companions.

"I think he's real."

"What you *think* might not be correct," Mu Qing snapped. "Don't forget where we are—this is White No-Face's old lair. Anything is possible. Figure out a way to test him."

"Well, that's easy," Hua Cheng chuckled. "Gege, come here. I'll tell you a good way that'll clear up your doubts immediately."

Thus, Xie Lian stepped over to Hua Cheng, modestly requesting his guidance as he did. "What good way?"

"Can you please not do everything he tells you to do? He's under suspicion right now, do you understand?!"

"Recite the first half of the verbal password to my communication array, and I'll tell you the second half," Hua Cheng said. "Then you'll know whether I'm the real thing."

"..."

The two whispered in each other's ears, then Xie Lian turned around, lightly clearing his throat. "Well...he's the real thing," he told the others.

Feng Xin finally didn't seem as tense anymore, but Mu Qing was still doubtful. "Are you sure? Don't lose your marbles the second you look at his face."

“I just told you he’s definitely real!” Xie Lian argued. “Why do you two always have to act like I’m some—”

“All right, that’s over and done with,” Hua Cheng said. “Back on topic. Gege, why were those two fighting?”

With one hand over his forehead, Xie Lian gave Hua Cheng a brief rundown. “And that’s about it... To be honest, I really don’t know who’s more suspicious.”

“Really? *He’s* clearly the most suspicious one,” Hua Cheng replied, gesturing in Mu Qing’s direction.

Mu Qing was vexed. “If you’re going to slander me, at least have a reason, all right? Don’t blame me every time something happens.”

“Fine,” Hua Cheng said. “Then let me ask you this—what’s on your wrist?”

At that question, Mu Qing’s face changed color in a flash. He staggered back a few steps, wanting to flee, but Feng Xin was faster and seized him easily.

“Your wrist?”

There, on his wrist, was a cursed shackle.

Veins popping on his forehead, Mu Qing pushed Feng Xin’s hand off him and glared at him furiously.

When Xie Lian saw that thing, he went silent in shock and his arms dropped to his sides. “Mu Qing, your wrist...?”

Mu Qing didn’t reply, and his expression was dark.

“I suggest you respond honestly to the following questions,” Hua Cheng said. “Why did Jun Wu summon you to the Palace of Divine Might? What did he say to you? Why did you receive better treatment than the other heavenly officials, returning unharmed? Why are you behaving so uncharacteristically by volunteering to come to Mount Tonglu to rescue people despite the danger? What is the purpose of that shackle on your wrist? Why did you lure us here?”

“Wait!” Seeing the situation go downhill, Mu Qing backed a step away hastily. “Don’t attack me yet! Let me explain myself!”

Hua Cheng opened his arms. “Please, do go on.”

“Tell me first, were you the one who struck me?” Feng Xin demanded.

After a pause, Mu Qing finally said through gritted teeth, “Technically...yes, I did. But it’s not what you’re thinking!”

Feng Xin was furious, but Xie Lian said, “Let him continue.”

Mu Qing inhaled deeply and admitted, “That’s right...I was the one who hurt Feng Xin.”

“I *knew* it was you!” Feng Xin yelled.

Mu Qing turned to Xie Lian. “But it was because the Heavenly Capital was done for! He was still wandering around while everyone else was trying to escape; he refused to leave and wouldn’t listen. If he kept meandering around, he would’ve burned to death in the flames of hell sooner or later. That was why I decided to knock him out and pass him off to you!”

“But you didn’t pass him off to me. Feng Xin went missing and ended up here instead,” Xie Lian said.

“Well, there was a little accident on the way,” Mu Qing said.

“What kind of accident?”

“The fetus spirit,” Mu Qing said. “It ambushed me from behind, bit me and wouldn’t let me go. It refused to let me take him. I didn’t get a chance to grab him before the Heavenly Capital started reshaping itself, so...”

So Feng Xin was somehow moved here, along with the piece of land beneath him. If that was the truth, then Mu Qing had meant to do a good deed, but instead made things worse and screwed Feng Xin over. It was a very awkward situation.

“Why didn’t you tell us this sooner...?” Xie Lian asked.

Feng Xin was dubious. “Are you sure your plan wasn’t to let me burn to death in the Heavenly Capital? To just knock me out and leave me there?”

Mu Qing’s face stiffened, and he turned to Xie Lian. “The fetus spirit was crouching on his chest the entire time, and that ghost woman Jian Lan came over eventually too. I figured she would wake Feng Xin or move him instead of just watching him burn to death.”

Now, Xie Lian understood. Mu Qing had likely come to rescue Feng Xin out of guilt; he was the one who knocked his rival out, after all, so his sense of responsibility made him put in some effort. That

would explain why he was so jittery the entire way—he was probably worried that Feng Xin had died.

Still, this set of excuses was hard to believe.

Feng Xin pulled at his hair madly. “What a mess you’ve made! Didn’t you already know I was looking for them? If you didn’t knock me out, maybe I would’ve found them!”

“The fetus spirit is White No-Face’s subordinate. White No-Face wouldn’t do anything to harm them,” Mu Qing said calmly. “And they didn’t want to go with you, so staying behind was a waste of time. You could call for them a thousand times and it’d be pointless. Why not escape the Heavenly Capital alive first, then find a chance to look for them later? Why did you insist on recognizing your son when the situation was so dire? I simply made the best possible decision for all parties in the moment.”

Feng Xin wasn’t nearly as calm as Mu Qing. “Best possible decision, my ass! You can only say that because it’s not your family! Wait—so you’re saying you were trying to save me by making me leave?”

“That’s enough nonsense,” Hua Cheng cut in. “Just answer my questions. What did Jun Wu say to you?”

Mu Qing went silent. He clearly didn’t want to answer.

Hua Cheng stared at him. “Are you currently under his command?”

“Not at all!” Mu Qing instantly replied.

“Then please explain that cursed shackle,” Hua Cheng said.

Mu Qing had been arguing for so long that his mouth had gone dry. A moment later, he croaked, “If I told you...you might not believe me.”

“When we asked you earlier, you denied everything left and right. Of course it’s going to be hard to believe you when you admit it now,” Feng Xin said.

“You want to know why I didn’t admit to it earlier?” Mu Qing asked, slightly indignant. “If I’d told you what had happened, you never would’ve believed me anyway! Who’d admit to anything when that’s the attitude they can expect? I wouldn’t be able to explain myself if I *did* admit to anything, so I might as well not bother!”

Besides, although they were lucky that nothing had happened to Feng Xin, the whole incident was rather embarrassing.

Considering Mu Qing's personality, it made sense that he wouldn't want to admit to what he'd done.

Xie Lian, who'd been listening patiently the whole time, said, "Just let him finish."

Mu Qing glanced at Xie Lian, and it took a moment for his words to stagger out with difficulty. "This is...because...he wanted me to harm His Highness. I refused, so..."

At this point, even he felt so uncomfortable that he couldn't continue.

"So he put a cursed shackle on you in a fit of rage?" Hua Cheng finished for him.

Mu Qing didn't respond.

"Nothing else?" Feng Xin demanded.

There was nothing particularly notable in Hua Cheng's expression. "Do you honestly believe what you just said?"

"..."

Mu Qing looked absolutely humiliated. "Believe me if you want," he spat coldly. "There was a misunderstanding about why I knocked Feng Xin out, but I'm not under anyone's command."

"Mu Qing...you'd better just tell the truth," Feng Xin responded.

When Mu Qing saw his expression, his knuckles cracked. "That *is* the truth! What did you want to hear? That I surrendered to Jun Wu, and now I'm out to destroy you all? That's the person everyone thinks I am, right? Your Highness?!"

He gazed at Xie Lian, emotions brimming in his eyes. Xie Lian stared pensively at him for a long time. Just as he was about to speak, Hua Cheng crossed his arms and moved to shield him, staring down Mu Qing.

"There's no need to glare at His Highness like that," he said coolly. "After all, you've got a bad track record."

"I didn't ask you!" Mu Qing countered. "What bad track record?"

Hua Cheng smiled. "What bad track record, you ask? How did your cultivation go after you stole that piece of blessed land from His Highness?"