

MO XIANG TONG XIU



Heaven Officials' Blessing

TIAN GUAN CI FU

5

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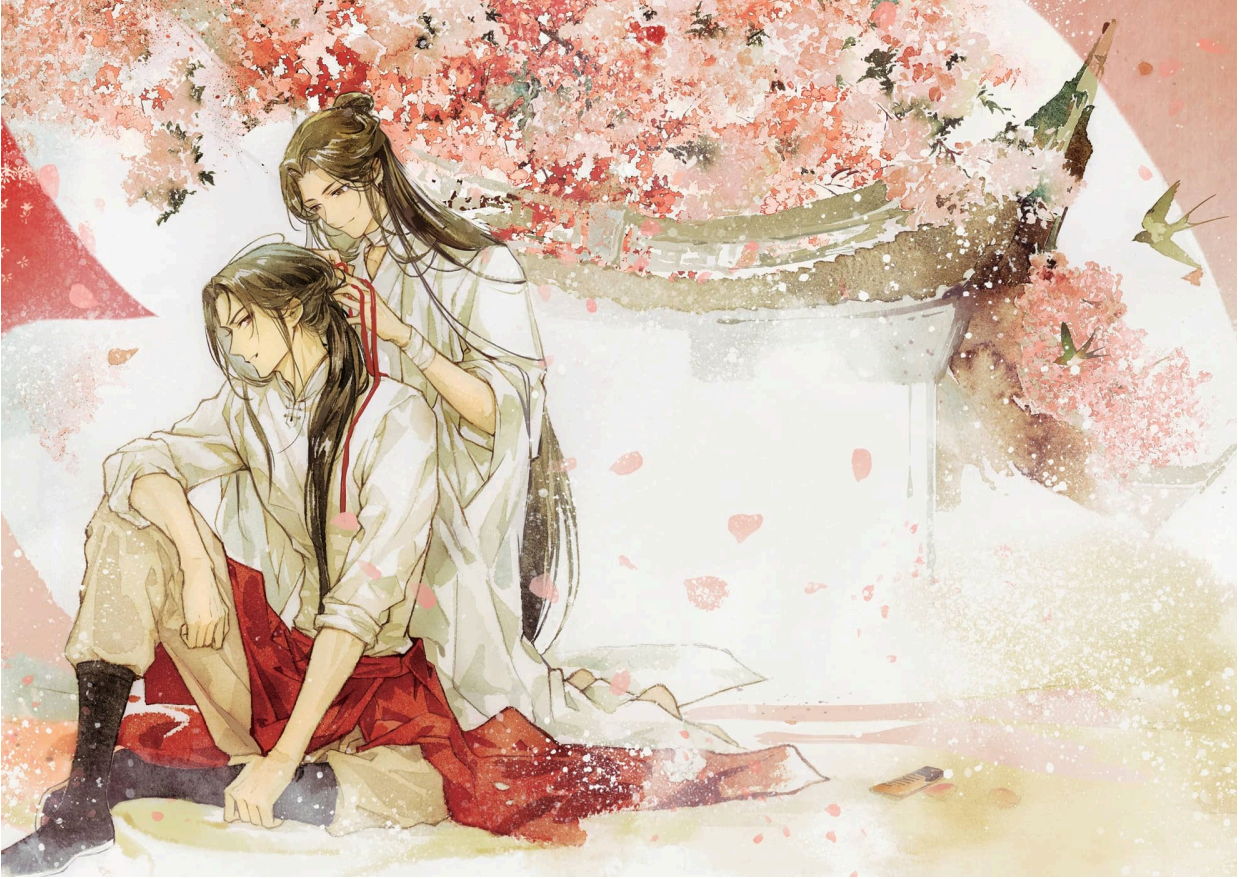
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墨香銅臭





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Chapter 73: My Puqi Shrine Will Collapse Supremely (Part Two)

NO ONE IN THE SPIRITUAL communication array paid any attention to Xie Lian's urgent announcement. The chatter in the general array was deafening—it seemed something huge had happened.

“Your Highness? Did you say something?” Feng Xin shouted to him. “It’s really chaotic in here right now...”

Xie Lian raised his voice to reply. “Feng Xin! I said, Ling Wen is the original creator of the Brocade Immortal! She ran away wearing it; watch out for her!”

“What?!” Feng Xin shouted. “That’s what happened?!”

Xie Lian was about to expand on the details when the noise by his ear abruptly stopped and nothing more could be heard. Confused, he tried calling again.

“Everyone? Is everyone still there?”

He attempted to reconnect a few times, but still, no one answered.

“It’s no use,” Hua Cheng spoke up. “Ling Wen created the Upper Court’s spiritual communication array, and she must’ve just destroyed it. It’ll need to be entirely rebuilt.”

“What should we do, then?”

If he wasn't contacting Ling Wen or the Wind Master directly, he primarily communicated with the Upper Court through the general spiritual communication array. He didn't know the verbal passwords of any other heavenly officials. Now that the general communication array was destroyed and he could no longer depend on Ling Wen or the Wind Master, what should he do?

Hua Cheng seemed to sense his concerns. “Don't worry. Didn't gege already make the key issue clear? Not all the heavenly officials of the Upper Court are idiots, and Jun Wu is present in the heavens right now. As long as you've done your due diligence in reporting, it'll be fine.”

Xie Lian had been thinking the same thing, and he nodded in agreement as he brought his mad dash to a stop. They had already crossed several mountaintops and left the pursuing religious masters far behind, though it seemed they wouldn't be able to catch up with the Brocade Immortal and Quan Yizhen.

“If gege still wants to investigate the Brocade Immortal, you'll have to hurry,” Hua Cheng added.

However, Xie Lian shook his head. “That was before. Now that Qi Ying is chasing Ling Wen, we've got more important matters on our hands. San Lang...” He stared at Hua Cheng in his arms, his gaze intent. “Your form... seems to have changed again.”

When Hua Cheng was disguised as Lang Ying earlier, he had the appearance of a fifteen- or sixteen-year-old boy, and it wasn't easy for Xie Lian to carry him—even if he could, it wouldn't look good. But Hua Cheng seemed to have shrunk, and he now looked to be at most eleven or twelve.

Xie Lian could carry him with one arm, or even have him perch on his shoulder. However, Hua Cheng's air of composed ease had never wavered.

“No need to worry, gege; it's a non-issue. The mountain will open its gates soon. Changing form is only a temporary tactic, and my old self will return after this situation is over.”

He unwrapped the bandages on his head as he spoke. A pair of deep black eyes gazed at Xie Lian from that snow-white face; the shadow of that handsome young man was still there upon his brow. Although he wore the face of a child, he still had that familiar laid-back, unhurried air and expression.

Xie Lian watched him in a daze, not speaking a word.

Hua Cheng frowned slightly. “Your Highness, you...”

Suddenly, Xie Lian's free hand reached out and pinched Hua Cheng's cheek. Hua Cheng's eyes widened as his face changed shape from the entirely unexpected squishing.

“...Gege!”

Xie Lian laughed. “Ha ha ha ha ha ha...sorry, San Lang, but you're too cute; I can't help myself. Ha ha ha ha...”

Hua Cheng was speechless.

Xie Lian continued to tenderly squish him. “Then San Lang, are you going to keep changing?” he asked gently. “Are you going to turn into a child of five or six? Or even better, a little baby?”

Hearing the hope in his voice, Hua Cheng could only reply helplessly, “I’m afraid I will have to disappoint gege.”

Xie Lian dropped his hand and grinned. “Nonsense. San Lang has never disappointed me. I’m really happy to have this chance to protect you.”

However, Hua Cheng muttered glumly, “I’m not happy.”

“Why is that?” Xie Lian asked.

Hua Cheng’s tone turned cold. “I...hate looking like this!”

Xie Lian could actually detect a trace of loathing in his voice and was slightly taken aback. Hua Cheng lowered his head.

“I don’t want you to see me in such a useless form, much less be forced to protect me!”

His emotions seemed unsettled—perhaps it was because his physical age had regressed. Xie Lian felt his heart stir, and he quickly gathered the boy into his arms and gently patted his back.

“By that logic, I might as well just die; you’ve seen me in messes so many times.” He chuckled. “Besides, it’s not like you’re actually useless right now. You’re just temporarily conserving your strength, that’s all.”

Hua Cheng buried his face in his shoulder. “...It’s not the same,” he grumbled, voice muffled. “Your Highness, I have to be the strongest. I have to become stronger than anyone else. Only then can I...”

Although his voice was young and tender at the moment, a trace of fatigue lingered in his tone.

“You’ve always been the strongest. But you don’t need to be strong every waking moment of every day,” Xie Lian soothed him. “Just...think of this as giving me some face. Let me protect you this once. Please? Okay?”

It was a long time before Hua Cheng lifted his head. He placed his hands on Xie Lian’s shoulders and gazed at him.

“Your Highness, wait for me.”

“All right, I’ll wait for you,” Xie Lian promised.

Hua Cheng vowed to him, very seriously, “Give me a little time; I’ll be back very soon.”

Xie Lian smiled. “No rush. Go at your own pace.”

The next day, the two came to a small town.

Xie Lian was holding Hua Cheng’s hand, and the two chatted leisurely as they strolled along the streets together.

“Ghost kings of earlier generations are affected by Mount Tonglu’s opening tremors. Does that also apply to Black Water?” Xie Lian asked.

Hua Cheng stood with one arm folded behind his back and held Xie Lian’s hand with the other. “Yes,” he replied. “But our situations are different, as are our training methods. Naturally, our ways of responding to stimulation are different as well.”

“For example?” Xie Lian prompted him. “How does he respond to the aggravation?”

“Hibernation, probably,” Hua Cheng replied.

A phrase written in large letters surfaced in Xie Lian’s mind. *“Eat when hungry, sleep when full.”*

“When Black Water was mortal, he suffered the torment of jail. With only one meal every three days, he had to swallow it down even if he was given swill,” Hua Cheng continued. “Hunger ruined his stomach. Sometimes he’ll feed nonstop, sometimes he’ll refuse to eat anything at all.”

“No wonder he was always so impressive when it came to swallowing things,” Xie Lian mused.

Given He Xuan’s situation, he could have focused on devouring hungry ghosts—he possessed the same attribute, so they should have better suited his palate. However, of the five-hundred-some ghosts devoured by Black Water Demon Xuan, the majority were water ghosts. He must have chosen them because he remembered the face of Shi Wudu and would intentionally pick such meals to break his water magic.

At the end of these feeding frenzies, he would need to slumber and digest.

“Indeed,” Hua Cheng said. “I might as well mention that Qi Rong was trying to imitate He Xuan by feasting on human flesh.”

Xie Lian was briefly speechless. *How could anyone consider eating humans the same as eating ghosts?* After pondering for a moment, he asked, “The forest of upside-down corpses... Was he trying to imitate *you* with that?”