

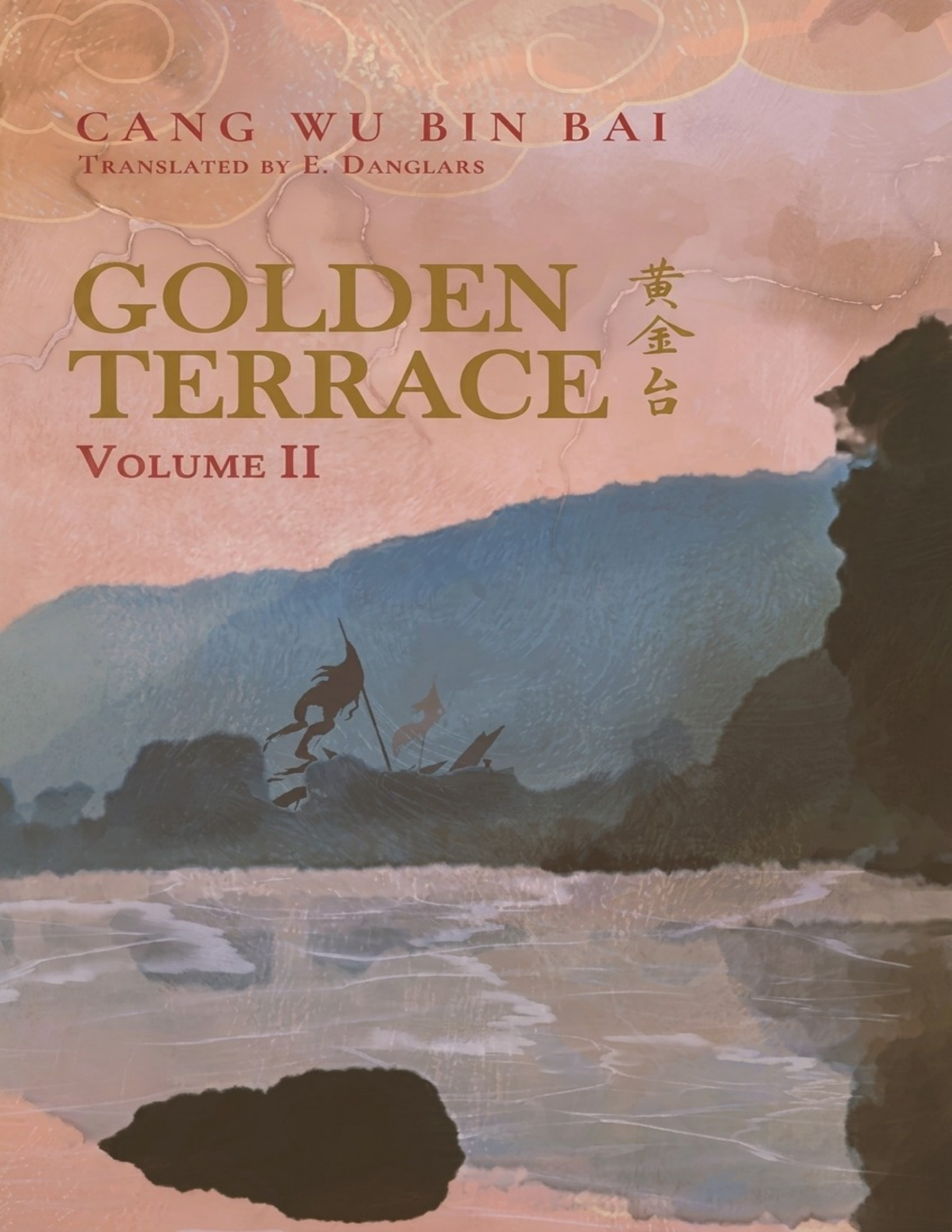
CANG WU BIN BAI

TRANSLATED BY E. DANGLARS

GOLDEN TERRACE

黄金台

VOLUME II



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CANG WU BIN BAI

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CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

THE THIRTIETH DAY OF THE THIRD MONTH, AT DAYBREAK.

A servant came urgently to knock on the door of the main room. Inside, Yan Xiaohan was startled, and Fu Shen, seeming to sense something, also moved, then was gently embraced by Yan Xiaohan, who said vaguely in a low, hoarse voice, "It's all right, sleep."

He put on some clothes and got up. With disturbed weariness all over his face, he went to open the door. "What is it?"

The servant was smiling brightly joyous occasion! Prince Qi Manor just sent someone to bring news. At three o'clock this morning, Princess Qi gave birth to a little commandery princess. Mother and daughter are both safe and sound."

This really was a joyous occasion for the Fu family Princess Qi had given birth to the eldest daughter of the first wife before any of the other concubines could give birth. While this wasn't a son, it was the first child of Prince Qi Manor, and in the future would presumably be a carefully cradled royal pearl. Yan Xiaohan woke up a little and told him to go reward the person who had brought the news, then to go pass on a message to the accountant to give the manor's servants an extra half month of wages. After making the proper arrangements, he closed the door and turned around, but he saw that Fu Shen had entirely woken up at some point and was holding himself up in bed, trying to sit up.

The quilt had slipped, his belt was loose, and his lapels were wide open, revealing a smooth, sturdy chest and muscles flashing in and out of sight. Worst of all was the speckling of red marks on his collarbones, floating down like fallen red petals to his chest, irrefutable evidence left behind by a night of bliss. And the little siren who had enjoyed conjugal love with him had been unusually ardent and clinging-and had even sucked a mark onto the prominence in his throat!

Fu Shen pulled himself up but couldn't manage to sit upright. His whole "waist" seemed to have been pulled out of his body He frowned and put a hand to his back. The movement was a little exaggerated. Yan Xiaohan immediately came over and, as if guarding against thieves, pulled up the quilt and wrapped Fu Shen up tightly and set him down. "Don't get up. Just lie back."

Luckily Fu Shen had just woken up and hadn't yet taken the time to recall what had happened last night. He had only vaguely heard something about "Princess Qi," forcing his eyelids to open, he asked, "What about Princess Qj?"

"Congratulations, you're an uncle." Yan Xiaohan's dry warm palm pressed against his forehead. "Princess Qi has given birth to a daughter. They just sent

someone over to announce the good news.”

Fu Shen was immediately energized. “How is my sister?”

“Don’t worry mother and daughter are both safe and sound.” Yan Xiaohan hung up his outer clothes and also lay back in bed, taking half of his quilt. With the two of them sharing one set of bedding, it seemed that the warmth and tenderness could make a person leap into dreams as soon as they closed their eyes.

“It’s still early. Go back to sleep. You can go to Prince Qi Manor to congratulate them when you wake up.”

The low whispers could only be heard between the two of them. The little universe surrounded by these bed curtains contained a particular kind of intimacy. In fact, there would be something different from now on.

Yan Xiaohan pulled Fu Shen over and massaged his back. From soreness and numbness, the muscles gradually recovered sensation, and the absurdities all appeared at the same time. By the weak light coming in through the window he bent his head and looked at his chest. “Yan Menggui, were you born in the fucking ‘Year of the Dog?’”

Quiet laughter flowed past his ear; bringing with it a limpness that made the heart itch. The contented sigh carried even more insatiability “Jingyuan.”

“Hm?”

“Jingyuan.”

Fu Shen pulled a long face. “Go fuck yourself.”

“No.” Having had his wishes fulfilled, Yan Xiaohan was now one big demonstration of being spoiled by the certainty of favor. He maliciously spoke an obscenity into his ear: “I only want to fuck you.”

Fu Shen expressionlessly slapped him. The skin-to-skin contact made a crisp sound, but there was only the slightest sting. Yan Xiaohan knew that this was an indulgence he would never speak aloud, a small punishment to prevent future offenses, holding back his strength even if he hit him, just like last night, when he had knit his brows and panted but hadn’t once told him to stop.

He involuntarily hugged him close, with a force that seemed as if he wanted to fuse their blood and bones together. “Jingyuan, I appreciate you going to the trouble.”

“Stop showing off.” Fu Shen said coolly “Why didn’t I see this compassion when you were tormenting me last night? Next time, before pretending to be sorry in front of me, at least hide your wagging fox’s tail.”

“So there’ll be a next time?” said Yan Xiaohan.

“... No,” said Fu Shen, “scram.”

When he woke up again, the other side of the bed was empty. There was full daylight outside and the twittering of birds. Yan Xiaohan must have massaged his back for a long time. Fu Shen could finally sit up stiffly. He performed a close inspection and was almost frightened by the love bites and bruises on his body. It was honoring Yan Xiaohan beyond his deserts to say he had been born in the Year of the Dog. He truly lived up to being part of the Feilong Guard—in this miserable state, he simply looked as though he had been in the North Prison's interrogation department.

He definitely couldn't go out and see people like this. He vaguely remembered Yan Xiaohan saying there was ointment by the bed, so he reached out and pulled open a drawer to rummage around. He didn't find a medicine bottle, but instead he turned up a small sandalwood box.

The box wasn't locked, and Fu Shen didn't think too much of it. His hand moved faster than his brain. He lifted the lid.

Two morning calm flower jade pendants lay side by side on deep red brocade, one bright and clean as new, one broken and then inlaid with gold, just barely restored to its original form.

By a great coincidence, Fu Shen recognized both of these jade pendants. One he had gifted, and one he had broken.

He had already learned about Caiyue. At the time, he had felt a surge of emotion, hard to subdue. He had already thought that was the upper limit of heartache, not expecting that another grip on his heart would now be added.

No matter what aspect you looked at it from, Yan Xiaohan certainly didn't have a weak or passive character. He couldn't even be called good and honest. Only when it came to Fu Shen was he so careful that he feared to make a single move.

When it came to his own bad habits, Fu Shen could pick out a whole list with his eyes closed: bad tempered, peremptory ruthless when he ought to be lenient but indiscriminately nice when he ought not to be lenient. As a teenager, he had moreover been ridiculously naive. Strictly speaking, it wasn't as if he had been entirely without blame in the situation back then, but in the long run, it had been Yan Xiaohan losing sleep over it, being tormented.

What had he ever done to deserve to be treasured like this?

While he was lost in thought, light and steady footsteps came from the passage. Shortly they had reached the door. Yan Xiaohan opened the door one-handed, carrying a purple-gold hair-binding crown. He walked in and said, "Jingyuan, are you awake?"

Fu Shen got up as though nothing were the matter. “Yes. What do you have there?”

Yan Xiaohan put the crown on a small stool and brought Fu Shen’s outer clothes, freshly perfumed, to the bedside. While helping him arrange them, he said, “Aren’t you going to Prince Qi Manor today? I just had them put together some gifts and find a crown for you while they were at it. You can’t be dressed too plainly when going to pay a congratulatory visit.”

Fu Shen’s waist was still sore. He leaned against him idly and suddenly said, “Come with me when I go.”

Yan Xiaohan’s hand shook. He nearly fixed the crown crooked. He repeated in astonishment, “Come with you?”

Visiting relatives together was a thing that only a genuine husband and wife would do. Though he and Fu Shen were husband and wife in name and now in fact, in the eyes of outsiders, theirs was only a false marriage. Princess Qi probably wouldn’t recognize him as a “family member.” Why did Fu Shen suddenly want to bring him along? Didn’t he know what that meant?

“You’re going to Jingchu with Prince Qi next month. You can say hello first,” Fu She said. “You’re family, you should get to know each other ahead of time.”

Family...

Yan Xiaohan gently put his hands on his shoulders. In the not very clear bronze mirror, Fu Shen saw a helpless expression flash over his face.

“What?” he said with a careless smile. “A newborn niece, and you as an aunt don’t want to go see her?”

Yan Xiaohan could clearly sense a change in Fu Shen’s attitude. He didn’t know whether it was the influence of last night’s marital intercourse, but Fu Shen seemed to have thoroughly accepted him, and entirely opened his arms to him. Before, while Fu Shen had also yielded and indulged on many points, he had very rarely taken the initiative to ask him to do anything, and the progress of their relationship had been limited to between the two of them, unknown by outsiders. But now, he seemed to have at last been admitted by Fu Shen into the scope of his “people.”

Yan Xiaohan surreptitiously took a deep breath, attempting to calm his chaotic heartbeat. “If you and I go visit together, aren’t you worried Prince Qi will misunderstand?”

“Misunderstand what?” Fu Shen froze. Then he understood and flippantly pinched his cheek. Unable to suppress a smile, he said, “Our Lord Yan is pretty and

virtuous, gentle and likable, naturally presentable and fit for social occasions. Don't be scared, I'm not planning to keep you like a mistress in a love nest."

"I can't ..." Mn Xiaohan knew that he had made a slip of the tongue and immediately stopped.

Fu Shen's expression gradually turned serious. "What are you trying to say? Finish what you were saying."

As soon as his grandeur came into play Yan Xiaohan immediately shrank. Seeing him like this, what was there for Fu Shen not to understand? He felt affection and anger, and a sliver of dissatisfaction at expectations not met. Therefore, he said with a cold laugh, "Wonderful. Since when has the mighty Imperial Investigator and commander had a problem with feeling inferior?"

He was too skilled at seizing the crucial point, hitting the target at the first strike. Yan Xiaohan was briefly struck dumb, then finally said, roughly, "Jingyuan, I'm covered in muck myself I can't ..."

Fu Shen hit the table with a bang and sternly said, "Yan Xiaohan! Just try saying it and see what happens!"

He had just made him "finish what he was saying, and now he wasn't letting him speak. It really was a little unreasonable. But Yan Xiaohan knew that he had already understood what he meant.

He couldn't from his own selfish interests stain Fu Shen with dirty water; the Marquis of Jingning's clean name up to now couldn't be tarnished by a crafty sycophant like him.

Though it sounded absurd, that was indeed what he thought.

Fu Shen hadn't been wrong to say he felt inferior. With such an undesirable background, censured ever since childhood, growing up in such surroundings, one would either be deranged or willing to degrade oneself Yan Xiaohan's current state already amounted to the outcome of utmost restraint.

In fact, Fu Shen knew very well that Yan Xiaohan's sticking point lay in "making too much of himself," and Fu Shen had been unable to give him an adequate sense of security. The difference in their positions was too great; the more you cared, the more worried you would be about personal gains and losses. While he couldn't keep himself from wallowing in it, he also couldn't keep himself from knowing that every bit of intimacy was stolen time.

Living in this world, it was one thing not to be able to recklessly pursue your heart's desires; Yan Xiaohan also had to burn up his heart's blood like this. Born to the life of a treacherous official, he didn't have the disease of the treacherous official. Thinking about it like this, he was rather pitiful.

Fu Shen said, “When His Majesty arranged the marriage between us, wasn’t he planning on making you half a member of the Fu family by force, to pave the way for you to legitimately take over Beiyan’s military authority in the future? That being the case, shouldn’t you be dedicating your efforts to making that reputation a reality? Why are you dodging and hiding instead, not daring to see people?”

Every word struck to the heart.

“Jingyuan.” Yan Xiaohan’s expression looked as though he had stabbed him in the chest. He closed his eyes and earnestly said, ““You know I’m not doing this for military authority.”

“Right, you’re doing it for me,” Fu Shen said. “But when I want to be with you openly you don’t want it.”

Yan Xiaohan also got angry “You think this is what I want? I... A spotless national hero getting mixed up with the court’s dog—are you going to tell me that sounds good?!”

“Fine, I understand.” Fu Shen laughed coldly extremely angry. “After all this talk, in Lord Yan’s heart, I’m less important than a false reputation.”

Yan Xiaohan choked. Shortly he sighed, his anger departing as quickly as it had come. He didn’t want to argue with Fu Shen today Conciliating, he said, “Jingyuan.”

“Do you think now that being with me will sully my reputation?” Fu Shen wasn’t taking the kindness, however. He suddenly raised his voice. “You’ve even sullied my person, why didn’t you think then that it would come to this?!”

Yan Xiaohan said nothing.

Ancestor; I beg you, don't shout.

“Yan Xiaohan, I’m going to leave the conversation at this today. A marriage was arranged between us by the emperor; our wedding presided over by the Ministry of Rites. We were legally married and bowed to heaven, earth, and the ancestors on Golden Terrace. Last night we engaged in marital relations, and a hundred years from now we’ll fly on cranes to the Western Paradise together, and you will be buried with me.” With rare solemnity Fu Shen said, “Husband and wife are one. There is no discussion of worthy or unworthy Even when you go out this door, you can still openly call me your husband.”

The rims of Yan Xiaohan’s eyes burned. He was both moved and amused.

He couldn’t cry and he couldn’t laugh. A hundred thousands of words came to his lips and all turned into a sigh. “To hear you say that, even if I should die on the spot, I would have no regrets. It’s only that rumor and gossip kill invisibly It’s enough that my reputation alone is burdened. Listen to me, don’t pay with your reputation as well. It isn’t worth it.”

“Didn’t you understand what I just said?” Fu Shen said categorically “Having you is enough. What would I want with an empty reputation?!”

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

“CAN...” YAN XIAOHAN ACTUALLY TRIPPED OVER HIS WORDS, stuttering, “Can you... say that again?”

Fu Shen looked at him in great exasperation. Finally, after a long time, he sighed and reached his arms out to him. “Come here.”

As if he didn’t dare to use strength, Yan Xiaohan hugged him loosely “Say it again.”

Some words could be blurted out perfectly naturally, but if they were said again, they would change in flavor. Fu Shen was for once a little embarrassed. He blushed. “Go on, don’t fool around.”

Yan Xiaohan hugged him a little tighter. “Say it again.”

“Have you been possessed by a myna bird spirit?” Fu Shen twisted cleverly slipping out of his hands. “Stand aside, we’re in a hurry to go see our niece, don’t make trouble.”

Lord Yan’s arms were left empty Disappointment showed clearly in his manner. Fu Shen carried on straightening his lapels and cuffs, then suddenly said, “Don’t reproach yourself I must have spent three lifetimes accumulating merit to have received the blessing of meeting you.”

No sooner had he spoken than he was pushed down by Yan Xiaohan onto the soft bedding. His strained back let out a sound suggesting it wasn’t up to bearing heavy burdens.

Yan Xiaohan looked down on him from on high, a crafty smile flowing through his eyes, like radiant stars sprinkled over a pitch-black sky Fu Shen suddenly thought that perhaps Yan Xiaohan really was a fox from deep in the mountains who had cultivated a human form, every bit of his countenance exquisite and beautiful, yet there was nothing feminine about it. The corners of his mouth were seductive, and so were the slightly curved corners of his eyes. Even his slightly curled eyelashes made an arc that looked ready to be kissed.

Like a sigh, he said, “So long as you feel as I do.”

Fu Shen, held down like prey caught by a wild beast, unexpectedly didn’t feel awkward. Perhaps because he knew in his heart that this person wouldn’t hurt him no matter what, he even felt at leisure to raise his hand to pinch his cheek. Even his fingertips were gentle. “I really don’t understand it. Look at you, wealthy and handsome, in a high position with great power, boundless future prospects—how could you still think no one would like you?”

“Surrounded by gems, it’s easy to know your own vulgarity.” Yan Xiaohan squeezed his hand and affectionately nuzzled his cheek. “It’s because you’re too good.”

Not only in external things like family background and position—what made it really hard to compare to Fu Shen were his mind and character. Yan Xiaohan had been contemptuous, doubtful, but having weathered the elements, he knew that he could never do what Fu Shen did. An upright gentleman was like the splendor of the moon. You might not be able to meet one in a whole lifetime. He had only watched from afar; never daring to entertain the extravagant hope that the moon in the highest heavens would one day land in his embrace.

Fu Shen laughed in spite of himself “Just which one of us has bewitched the other? ... All right, get up, we still have to go to Prince Qi Manor to congratulate them. I’ll remember this and settle the accounts with you when we get back.”

Yan Xiaohan said, “There are still accounts to settle?”

“What did you think?” Fu Shen smiled slyly. “If I don’t give you a severe seeing to, I don’t think you’ll remember who has the final word in this house.”

Yan Xiaohan didn’t respond.

Prince Qi Manor.

Prince Qi Sun Yunduan, hearing that the uncle had come, quickly went to the front hall himself to welcome their guest, not expecting that he would first come face to face with Yan Xiaohan. He froze on the spot. “Lord Marquis Fu.”

“Congratulations, Your Highness,” Fu Shen said, cupping his hands, “on the happy occasion of the birth of your daughter.”

Prince Qi automatically returned the salute and recovered from the head-on attack. Putting a smile on his face, he said, “Thank you. Please come in and sit down, both of you.”

Fu Shen had in fact had little contact with Prince Qi. In his position, it wasn’t a good thing to get too close to anyone, so even though Prince Qi was his relation by marriage, they still didn’t visit each other regularly. The two of them were unusually distant when they met.

At this time, his foresight became obvious. After all his time in the palace, Yan Xiaohan had long ago developed the ability to speak to everyone in their own language. Seeing that Fu Shen didn’t speak, he understandingly took over the subject of conversation.

Prince Qi was quite respectful toward Fu Shen; when it came to Yan Xiaohan, only dread remained to him. The Feilong Guard were His Majesty’s personal guards, and Yan Xiaohan was naturally His Majesty’s man. Though he didn’t know why he had taken the unprecedented action of coming to visit with Fu Shen, it obviously

wasn't for the sake of delivering congratulations. Prince Qi had already been worried about Emperor Yuantai arranging for the two of them to go to Jingchu together; now he let his imagination roam even further, involuntarily slipping into official jargon as he spoke.

One was focused outward and one was focused inward, the apportionment of work evident as they tacitly cooperated, and Fu Shen didn't care now for the dignity and self-respect of a "husband." Carefree and unhurried, he looked at the wrinkly little baby then asked about Fu Ling's condition. He looked back and—wow—in the cool spring breezes of the third month, His Highness Prince Qi had started to sweat.

He glanced at Yan Xiaohan with a smile, indicating for him not to go overboard.

Yan Xiaohan understood his signal perfectly. In a few words, he turned the subject to household chatter. Fu Shen didn't lose time interjecting: "We're all family so we won't stand on formalities. In the trip to Jingchu next month, I'll rely on Your Highness to put up with and look after this fellow for me."

Prince Qi couldn't work out right away what kind of "looking after" he was talking about. He was stuck. Then he forced a smile and said, "You overstate matters, Marquis Fu. In these distant travels, it ought to be me relying on Lord Yan."

"This fellow"... Without a vast difference in position, what man would be willing to acknowledge himself in the position of a "first wife?" While Great Zhou permitted marriage between men, the country still belonged to the "husbands." Prince Qi guessed that when he had arranged this marriage, Emperor Yuantai had intended to have Fu Shen in the role of the "wife." In saying such a thing in front of him now, did Fu Shen mean it to be an insult to Yan Xiaohan's dignity, or a slap in the face to Emperor Yuantai?

When his doubtful reaction appeared before the two of them, Fu Shen felt rather regretful, while Yan Xiaohan could hardly resist feeling delight at his suffering. He gave a dry laugh and said, "Your Highness and the princess have both had it hard, and we've taken up a lot of your time. We'll be taking our leave now."

Prince Qi wanted them to fuck off as soon as possible. He delivered a few hypocritical civilities and finally got the two great divinities out the door. When he returned inside, taking no care for his deportment, he plopped down and gave a weary sigh.

Just then, Fu Ling woke up and said in concern, "What's wrong, Your Highness?"

"Your big brother, is he ..." Prince Qi hesitated, then haltingly asked, "... really a cut-sleeve?"

Fu Ling immediately said, "Of course not! If he'd really been of the Longyang proclivity that would have saved trouble. What need would there have been for him to wait for His Majesty to arrange him a marriage and let that court lackey bully

Seeing that she was truly angry, Prince Qi quickly restrained her and soothed, "Don't be angry don't be angry I was only asking. It's just that they came together to visit today; and Marquis Fu said something suggestive, so my thoughts went astray."

Fu Ling thumped on the bed hatefully "It must be that horrid Yan forcing him!" Yan Manor.

Fu Shen changed clothes and let down his hair. He asked casually, "What do you think of Prince Qi as a person?"

Yan Xiaohan coiled a strand of hair around his finger, thought about it briefly then said, "Sticks to established practices, overcautious in small matters."

"Yes," Fu Shen said, "and he has his father's excessive suspicion. Come to think of it, that niece of mine doesn't look like her mother, but she looks quite a lot like Prince Qi, the chin and the eyes are identical... Huh?"

He suddenly stopped talking and reached out to pinch Yan Xiaohan's chin and examine it from all angles. "I've just realized that your chin is also a lot like theirs."

Yan Xiaohan responded with nonsense: "Don't they say that marriages are predestined? We were meant to be family."

Fu Shen laughed. "So now we're 'family' again? Who was it pitching a fit just now, unwilling to go out and see people dead or alive?"

Yan Xiaohan, trying to get out of it, kissed him on the lips. "A great man can afford to be broad-minded, Lord Marquis. Don't squabble with me, hm?"

"Hey how pathetic." General Fu was hardhearted, remaining unmoved. "Let's have none of that. I'll make sure to give you something to remember today."

He casually grabbed a book off the small bedside stand and tossed it to Yan Xiaohan. This was a thin volume with an indigo cover whose label said the name of the book: *Essays from the Xuemei Temple*.

Yan Xiaohan was bewildered. He casually flipped open to a page and took a cursory glance through it, then was instantly awed by the words "the nation belongs to all, tyrants are traitors to the people" written in the essay.

"I'm not mistaken?" He flipped back to the cover and looked at the name of the author. "There's a banned book hidden in the home of the Feilong Guard's Imperial Investigator? Lord Marquis, where did you get this?"

"That's none of your business." Fu Shen said. "I'll just ask you, last winter after I returned to Beiyan, the Feilong Guard conducted a case at the Kuangshan

Academy, yes or no?”

Yan Xiaohan thought back to it. “Here I was thinking this wise gentleman seemed familiar. It turns out it was him.”

“This former wise gentleman was the respected teacher who instructed Gu Shanlü, Imperial Censor Gu. I owe Imperial Censor Gu a favor for the Eastern Tartar diplomatic mission case. While his teacher has violated a prohibition, his crime doesn’t merit death. Having spent this long in prison, he’s suffered enough,” Fu Shen said. “So I wanted to ask you to intercede. Can you be magnanimous and release this old gentleman?”

Yan Xiaohan’s eyes slowly turned cold.

“Jingyuan.” He cast down his eyes to look at the writing on the page. “Have you really forgotten, or are you deliberately reminding me?”

Fu Shen said, “What did you say?”

“The Jin Yunfeng case.” Yan Xiaohan raised his eyes. His gaze unexpectedly seemed to have been dipped in snow and ice. “What, after seven years, you still want to test me with a case just like that? Aren’t you afraid I’ll revert to my old ways and stab you in the back again?”

Ordinarily had anyone dared to speak to him like this, Fu Shen would have boxed their ears for them by now. But today he was extraordinarily calm and collected. He didn’t get angry only evenly said, “You’re overthinking it. I wasn’t trying to test you, I only wanted to ask for something. Can’t I?”

Yan Xiaohan said irritably “No, you can’t ask for something on behalf of another man.”

Fu Shen nearly lost his temper. Forcing himself to hold back, he said, “It’s give and take. I’ll compensate you.”

“How will you compensate me?” said Yan Xiaohan.

“I’ve given you two morning calm flower jade pendants.” Fu Shen said. “If you help me with this, those two jade pendants will act as vouchers, each one representing a favor. If you command, I will be sure to comply. What do you say to that?”

As if a bolt of lightning had struck his head out of the blue, Yan Xiaohan went rigid.

His consciousness seemed to float out of his body. He vacantly listened to himself numbly ask, “Apart from the one you sent me last year; the other one... Which do you mean?”

Fu Shen quoted his words back to him. “The Jin Yunfeng case. What, after seven years, don’t you remember?”

He knew everything.

The slack gaze gradually focused. Fu Shen's image came clear in his eyes bit by bit, then was carved in perfect lifelike detail at the bottom of his heart, like the descent of a hurricane, sweeping away all past wounds with unmatched force. The regret and dejection shut away from the sun were at last lit up by bright light, then instantly dispersed like clouds breaking up before a strong wind.

To be struck dumb several times in one day was an unprecedented experience for Yan Xiaohan. In this instant, he suddenly understood the reason behind all of Fu Shen's words and actions since this morning.

Fu Shen had given himself to him, and he was also offering up his whole heart with both hands.

There was no question of who was first and who was last, or who didn't deserve whom. This was a predestined opportunity ordained by fate; they were a match made in heaven.

Yan Xiaohan's breathing suddenly became rapid. When he opened his mouth, his voice was as hoarse as though there were grit in his throat. There was even a fine tremor in his voice. "Then it's settled?"

"Ns." Smiling, Fu Shen repeated, "If you command, I will be sure to comply."