

Chapter 77

The Secret of Happy Cloud Manor

Li XunHuan smiled and said, "That's just the way life is. Sometimes even when you know that you are walking right into a trap, you have to keep walking anyway."

"Right, if it was someone who I cared for deeply, I would walk into the same trap as well." Mr. Sun said.

Sun XiaoHong stamped her feet, looked at the two of them and said, "Even if you are both willing to be deceived, there's no way that I will be."

"But you have already fallen for his ploy. Even you had suspected that the strand of hair belonged to Ms. Lin. You are already distracted, if you were to duel with someone right now, even if the other person is not your match, you would still lose at their hands." Mr. Sun said.

"But... but..." Sun XiaoHong said.

If she were in the same situation, she really did not know what she would do either.

ShangGuan JinHong's intention was to put Li XunHuan's mind in disarray. Whether Li XunHuan believed it was Lin ShiYin's hair or not, just by him thinking about it, ShangGuan JinHong had succeeded.

How could it not be on Li XunHuan's mind?

She was the one who haunted his every dream, how could he ever forget her?

Even if he knew that it wasn't her hair, he still couldn't help but feel uneasy and his mind would still be in a mess. Because ShangGuan JinHong had already made him think about her.

The problem wasn't whether the strand of hair was hers or not, but what kind of person Li XunHuan was.

This was the only way to deal with Li XunHuan. If you had tried the same on any other person, it might not work at all, because any other person wouldn't think so much and so deeply.

This is why ShangGuan JinHong was so formidable.

He knew how exactly to deal with every single opponent. Although his methods might seem questionable or even silly, their effectiveness was always guaranteed.

Because he understood the most profound rule of military strategy: 'Always attack the opponent's mind'.

Li XunHuan sat down on the floor and stretched out his four limbs.

Even though he did not say a word, Mr. Sun and Sun XiaoHong knew what exactly was on his mind: to go to Happy Cloud Manor to see whether Lin ShiYin was still there.

Before embarking on this journey, he must first rid himself of his weariness.

Everytime after he made an important decision, he always had to relax his entire body and mind.

This was one of his habits.

It was a very good habit.

Sun XiaoHong stared at him very hard.

"So he hasn't forgotten her, in fact she's more important to him than anything else, no one could ever take her place in his heart... not even me."

Sun XiaoHong's eyes started to turn red, she couldn't help but ask, "Do you have to go?"

Li XunHuan did not answer her.

Sometimes not answering is the best answer one could ever give.

"He must go, only by going can he calm his mind." Mr. Sun said.

"But... what if she really isn't there?" Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan's eyes almost fell as dark as the night. "No matter what I still have to go. Whatever happens afterwards, I will decide when that time comes."

"If you go, you will really be falling into ShangGuan JinHong's trap." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Hmm?" Li XunHuan said.

"ShangGuan JinHong's biggest goal in his plan is to make you go to Happy Cloud Manor. The duel is already set for the day after tomorrow. Happy Cloud Manor is not close to here at all. Even if you can make it there and back in time you will be

completely exhausted while he is most likely resting and saving up his energy." Sun XiaoHong said.

"There are some things that you know you shouldn't do, but can't help but do nonetheless." Li XunHuan said.

"But if you go, you will be handing over your life without a fight. Is she really that important to you? Is she even more important than your own life?" Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan was silent for a while. He then looked up and stared at her.

Sun XiaoHong's eyes were already watery, she turned her head to avoid his eyes.

"I just want you to understand, if you were in my situation you would do the exact same thing. And if you were in her situation, I would do the exact same thing for you as well." Li XunHuan said.

Sun XiaoHong did not show any reaction as if she had completely missed what he had just said.

But her tears had already started to flow.

When a woman loves a man, she wants to be the only one in his life. She can't have another person in the picture.

But whatever the case may be, Lin ShiYin was already in his heart.

She just stood there idly. What was she feeling right now? Was it sweet? Was it sour? Or was it bitter?

Mr. Sun let out a long sigh and said, "This is something that he must do, just let him go."

Sun XiaoHong slowly nodded her head and a smile slowly formed on her face. Even though it was a bitter smile, it was a smile nonetheless.

With a tear in her eye, she smiled and said, "I suddenly feel incredibly stupid. He knew her long before he ever met me, and they had a history long before I was ever a part of the picture. If anyone should be upset, it should be her and not me."

"When a person can admit that they are stupid, it really shows how smart they have become." Mr. Sun said with a laugh.

"But there is something that I also must do." Sun XiaoHong said.

"What is that?" Mr. Sun said.

"I have to go along with him, I just have to." Sun XiaoHong said.

"That is fine, except..." Mr. Sun said as he turned to face Li XunHuan.

Li XunHuan smiled and said, "Since she said that she just has to go, then I guess that she must go."

"It took me almost sixty years before I learned not to argue with women. It seems that you have caught on much more quickly." Mr. Sun said with a laugh.

Li XunHuan stood up and said, "Since we have to go, let us get ready immediately. You..."

"Don't assume that all women are slow and indecisive. Some women are just as to the point as men are. Once they have said that they will go then they will go." Sun XiaoHong said.

"When you have arrived there, don't forget to visit your second uncle and see what the situation is like." Mr. Sun said.

"I will..." Sun XiaoHong said. She caught a glance at Li XunHuan and said, "If he doesn't want me to go inside with him, then I will wait for him with second uncle."

"Second Hero Sun has been living outside Happy Cloud Manor for over twelve years, do you know why?" Li XunHuan asked.

He always thought that this was somewhat strange.

Twelve years ago was about the same time that he had decided to leave his house forever. This was about the same time as when Hunchback Sun had decided to take up residence across the street. No matter how much he thought about it, Li XunHuan just couldn't figure out the connection.

Hunchback Sun had no relations with the Li family, nor did he have any relations with Long Xiao4Yun. Lin ShiYin was an orphan since birth and was taken in by the Li family at an early age.

She was an extremely introverted person. She had probably never left that manor in her entire life, much less have any relations with prominent figures in the martial arts world.

If Hunchback Sun was acting on the order of others, who exactly had instructed him to stand guard outside Happy Cloud Manor?

What exactly was Hunchback Sun trying to protect?

There was probably only one person in the entire world who knew the answers to all this, and that person was old Mr. Sun.

He only hoped that Mr. Sun would reveal this secret to him.

But he was about to be disappointed.

Mr. Sun put his pipe to his mouth and began to take another puff.

Sun XiaoHong looked at her grandpa for a second and then said, "There's something that I have always found really strange."

Li XunHuan looked at her and waited for her to continue.

"Long Xiao3Yun cut off his own hand in front of ShangGuan JinHong. Did you know about this?" Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan nodded his head and sighed, "He was always a very peculiar child, even his actions are rather peculiar."

"That he could cut off his own hand is not what I find weird." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Huh?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"At the time, ShangGuan JinHong had every intention to kill him. He acted first so that he could prevent this. By doing so, not only did he save his own life, but he also made himself look better as well by saving the life of his father." Sun XiaoHong said.

Sun XiaoHong sighed and continued, "This shows how intelligent and smart he is. But he has always been smart and crafty, this is not what I find strange."

"Then what is it that you find strange?" Li XunHuan said.

"His martial arts had already been crippled by you. His strength should be much weaker than a normal person, correct?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"I have always wondered whether I had done the right thing back then." Li XunHuan said.

"Human bones are quite thick. Only someone with extremely strong wrists would be able to cut off their own hand in one clean swipe. Unless they were using an incredibly sharp and precious sword." Sun XiaoHong said.

"It wasn't such a sword?" Li XunHuan said.

"Absolutely not!" Sun XiaoHong said.

"But once he swung his sword, his hand fell off immediately." Li XunHuan said.

"He appeared as if he didn't use a single ounce of strength at all." Sun XiaoHong said.

"You really are more careful than I am. After hearing your explanation, I do find it kind of weird." Li XunHuan said.

"In addition, if a normal person had their hand cut off, there's no way they could stand the pain and would definitely faint." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Right, even the strongest of men wouldn't be able to bear the pain, unless they had an extremely powerful inner strength base." Li XunHuan said.

"But Long Xiao3Yun is just a powerless little child, how could he possibly bear the pain of cutting off his own hand?" Sun XiaoHong said.

Li XunHuan had stopped talking, but his eyes flashed back and forth as if he had just figured something out.

"Not only was he able to withstand the pain, but he was able to talk, and even pick up his own severed hand. How could a normal person possibly do such things?" Sun XiaoHong said.

"Are you suggesting that he has already recovered his martial arts? That the weak appearance he normally puts up is just a show?" Li XunHuan said.

"I don't know." Sun XiaoHong said.

"When I crippled his martial arts, I was using a lot of force. There really is no way that he could recover, unless..." Li XunHuan said.

He looked at Sun XiaoHong and said, "Unless the stories are really true, that there really is a long lost martial arts manual hidden somewhere inside Happy Cloud Manor, and that Long Xiao3Yun had somehow stumbled upon it."

"I don't know." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Is the reason Second hero Sun stood guard outside Happy Cloud Manor all these years somehow related to this martial arts manual?" Li XunHuan said.

"I don't know." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Since you want him to know, why not just tell him outright." Mr. Sun said.

Sun XiaoHong looked at her grandpa and said, "I am afraid I will be scolded."

Mr. Sun laughed and said, "The only way that you can get a woman to keep a secret is by never telling them in the first place."

"But I never said anything..." Sun XiaoHong said.

"Your method is even better, you didn't have to say anything yourself, but made me reveal it to him instead." Mr. Sun said.

"Even if I did tell, I would only tell him. He... he's not an outsider." Sun XiaoHong said.

"He's not an outsider."

When Li XunHuan heard these words, he really didn't know how to feel.

He knows that he already owes so much in this life that he won't ever be able to repay.

When a woman no longer considers you an outsider, then it means that she is already set on you. Even if you grew long legs and turned into a horse, you could forget about ever being able to escape.

Mr. Sun's tone suddenly became serious as he said, "There really is a martial arts manual hidden in Happy Cloud Manor, this is not just a rumor."

"Who does it belong to? How come I have never heard about this?" Li XunHuan said.

Mr. Sun lit up his pipe again and as the clouds of smoke circled around in all four directions, he asked, "Have you ever heard of a person by the name of Wang LianHua?"

"I am sure everyone in the world knows this name, how could I not have heard of him before." Li XunHuan replied.

"Wang LianHua was originally the mortal enemy of the great Hero Shen Lang, later on the two had become the best of friends. Because Wang LianHua had always been someone who was in between good and evil. Although wicked at times, he was never completely evil. Although mischievous and greedy at times, he could also be very righteous and loyal. And although he had harmed Shen Lang on several occasions, Hero Shen had always forgiven him."* Mr. Sun said.

"I have also heard that Wang LianHua had decided to retire with Shen Lang somewhere past the oceans. This had also happened a very long time ago." Li XunHuan said.

"Correct, Shen Lang had convinced Wang LianHua to reform his ways in the end." Mr. Sun said.

He sighed and continued, "It is very easy to kill someone, but much harder to get them to change. Hero Shen was definitely an amazing person. If you had been born a few years earlier, I am sure that the two of you would have been great friends."

Li XunHuan was unable to restrain the look of admiration in his eyes that he had for Shen Lang. But little did he know that for generations to come, his heroic name and story, and the admiration that he would receive, would definitely not be less than that of the great Hero Shen.

* The story of Shen Lang and Wang LianHua is told in Gu Long's 'Wu Lin Wai Shi'.

"Shen Lang was an amazing talent, but Wang LianHua was not your average person either. Otherwise, how could he have become Hero Shen's greatest rival?" Mr. Sun said.

If there was a great difference between two people in terms of intelligence and talent, although they could be friends, there is no way that they could ever end up as rivals. That is why ShangGuan JinHong was the only one who was qualified to be Li XunHuan's arch rival.

"I have heard that he was one of the most gifted individuals in the martial arts world. Not only in the martial arts, but in scholarly aspects as well. His knowledge of many subjects was broad and deep, he was unmatched in the realm." Li XunHuan said.

"Correct, he was well versed in astrology and divination, music, chess, literature, and art. He was also an expert in medicine as well as disguise. Ten people couldn't learn all the things that he had, yet he mastered them all himself." Mr. Sun said.

He sighed and continued, "But because his interests were so vast, he never fully devoted himself to the martial arts. Otherwise, with his intelligence and talent, he probably would not have been beaten at the hands of Shen Lang."

Li XunHuan suddenly thought of Ah Fei.

Was Ah Fei's talent even greater than Wang LianHua? Because he only focused on one field, the sword. His sword's potential was boundless and was well on its way to becoming virtually invincible.

"It is unfortunate that the talented always choose to do stupid things."

Li XunHuan let out a sigh and did not want to think about it any further.

"After Wang LianHua had reformed his ways, he realized that all the he had learned was not only too mixed and diluted, but also too unorthodox. He had originally planned to put his 'LianHua Compendium' to the torch." Mr. Sun said.

"'LianHua Compendium'?" Li XunHuan said.

"It was a complete volume of all the knowledge that he had accumulated during his lifetime." Mr. Sun.

"Why did he want to burn it?" Li XunHuan said.