

All Hail 791

Chapter 791 – Local Snake

There were even fewer supplies in the North. In the end, the You soldiers who needed supplies were stripped of them.

The You army was in a passive position because they were “seeking” from the local nobles. Naturally, the local nobles did not take the You army seriously.

After King Li of Zhou’s case, a group of nobles was punished. Then, the Imperial Court gave Youzhou the privilege of exempting salt from tribute, allowing the You army to buy supplies on their own. Those nobles would have to act according to the You army’s instructions.

After Yin Huaixi guarded the North, his control over it had been strengthened time and time again. Although the government was not under the rule of the Yue Fei’s Residence, they still had to fear the dignity of King Yue Fei and gradually began to develop trade.

After walking around Liancheng, Yu Youyao’s heart skipped a beat.

The geographical advantage of Liao Province was very obvious. There was food, medicine, labor, and resources. As long as one could live, one could be self-sufficient and did not need to rely on the Imperial Court.

Liancheng had little farmland and many forests. Raising silkworms could strengthen the soldiers and make the people rich. They could develop the economy. However, the fruit and sea industries were secondary.

The Xie family knew this better than Yu Youyao. Long ago, when the Xie family had decided to come to the North, they had also bought many special industries in the North one after another and made a lot of preparations to establish themselves in the North in the future.

In at most a year and a half, the Xie family would be able to take over the entire Liancheng.

In the past few years, Yu Youyao had bought many businesses in the North one after another. Even the forest in Liancheng was developed. She used Yin Huaixi’s connections to buy two manors with mountains in the North. The mountains were mainly planted with elms and trees, and she arranged for someone to raise silkworms. The silk produced was all bought by the You army to make armor.

The next day, the steward of the manor came over to greet her and even brought an account book.

Liancheng was considered a place in the North, and there were very few places that were less affected by the drought. However, even so, the production of the silk produced in the manor had been reduced by 40% to 50%.

Fortunately, the profits of the silk were considerable, so there were no losses.

The sweet potatoes planted in the farmland were not affected. The production was very impressive. Most of the sweet potatoes produced in the manor were sold to the You army at a low price.

After Yu Youyao flipped through the account book, she asked the stewards, "I want to expand the breeding of silkworms. What do you think the possibility is?"

One of the blue-robed stewards shook his head. "I'm afraid it's very difficult. Seventy percent of the silkworm farming in Liancheng is in the hands of the local big families. The remaining 30% all belong to small retail farmers and are not promising."

Another gray-robed steward also said, "The four families of Liancheng monopolized the silkworm business in Liancheng together and controlled the price of the silkworm cocoons, forcing those retail investors to sell the silkworm cocoons they had painstakingly raised to them at a price several times lower than the market price. Then, they sold them to silk merchants at a high price to earn huge profits."

Yu Youyao understood. "Were all the silkworm cocoons produced by their families bought by the Imperial Court?"

According to the stewards, the four families were very domineering. The four families divided 70% of the business together, and each family only had less than 20% of the business. However, they allowed those incompetent individual silkworm farmers to continue their flawed business and divided the remaining 30%.

No matter how one looked at it, there was something wrong.

Yu Youyao thought about it carefully and understood.

The four families of Liancheng controlled most of the silkworm resources. They had to deal with the purchases by the Imperial Court. The price at which the Imperial Court purchased goods was usually lower than the market price. The families also had to organize affairs at every level. The bulk of the money was occupied by those in charge of purchasing. Therefore, the four families could only earn a small sum of money after working hard.

It was impossible for the Imperial Court to monopolize all the local supplies.

Thus, the 30% in the hands of the retail investors became a loophole for the four great families to exploit.

They joined forces to control the silkworm business, so that the retail investors had no choice but to rely on them to live. They bought the silkworm cocoons at a low price and sold them at a high price, earning huge profits from them and taking away the retail investors' hard-earned money.

Even if the retail investors joined forces, 30% would not be able to resist 70%. They would not be able to do anything.

It pressed down on those silkworm farmers.

"That's right!"

The two stewards looked at each other and couldn't help but sigh inwardly. The Eldest Miss was really a powerful person. She immediately understood the twists and turns.

"All these years, even the individual silkworm farmers in the city have been bullied by the four families. In the past few years, the situation in the North hasn't been good. The production of silkworms has decreased every year, and the

small families have invested more in raising silkworms and earned less. There are already many people who can't even maintain their livelihoods. Previously, someone also targeted Eldest Miss's manor. However, when the people from the four families found out who was supporting the manor, they didn't dare to make things difficult for them."

Yu Youyao frowned. "As far as I know, the three northeastern provinces have a very wide area. The areas suitable for raising silkworms are Henan and Shandong, as well as some additional areas. There are more than 30 counties in total. However, the silkworm farming in the three northeastern provinces can't compare to that of Henan and Shandong. It's obvious that this is the case in the entire northeastern area."

King Li of Zhou's case had made many aristocratic families and nobles in the North restrain themselves a lot. However, Rome wasn't built in a day. If they wanted to control the trade in the North, the geographical location of Liancheng was the most important.

As one of the main materials for making armor, how could she tolerate these inhumane nobles monopolizing the silkworm market in Liancheng and choking the You army?!

Yu Youyao's eyes were dark and cold.

The two stewards nodded solemnly. "Princess, you're right."

Yu Youyao thought for a moment. "The spring silkworms will start growing soon. Connect the countless retail silkworm farmers in Liancheng and provide them with some help. Contract them and sell all the silkworm cocoons they produce to us at market price."

The retail investors were bullied by the four families. Usually, they would still be afraid of the power of the four families and not dare to cooperate with Yu Youyao and the others.

However, this time, it was different!

The retail investors were raising silkworms desperately to live. If they couldn't even live, what was there to be afraid of?

If they did not risk it, the outcome of the hundreds of thousands of refugees outside the city would be their future.

The gray-clothed steward was a little hesitant. "This... You're directly going against the four families. A strong dragon can't suppress a local snake. If the four families of Liancheng join forces, we..."

Yu Youyao chuckled. "Send my and King Yue Fei's business cards to the Liancheng County Office another day. According to the jargon, this is called paying respects to the sect. I wonder if my newly conferred Princess Shaoyi will be useful in Liancheng."

The blue-clothed steward looked excited. He had long disliked the actions of the four families. "Eldest Miss is right."

The gray-clothed steward immediately reacted. Princess Shaoyi was very famous in the North. The hundreds of thousands of refugees outside the city supported her very much.

Princess Shaoyi was not doing this for herself, but for Liancheng and the thousands of independent silkworm farmers who had been bullied by the four families.

There was not much farmland in the North, so raising silkworms was the best way for the refugees.

They had to join forces with the individual silkworm farmers and forcefully open the silkworm market that the four families of Liancheng monopolized. Only by further expanding silkworm cultivation would the refugees outside the city have a way out.

Everything the princess did was for the people.

It was what everyone wanted.

Chapter 792: Saint Venerable Princess Yi

Yu Youyao's gaze darkened. If there was oppression, there would be resistance. Liancheng was just a catalyst. As long as things went smoothly in Liancheng, with her reputation in the North, the retail investors in the other areas of the three northeastern provinces would move when they heard the news. They would join one after another and become a force to resist the local silkworm nobles.

She had a merchant ship and the You army as her backing. She had already controlled most of the channels in the silkworm industry in the North.

At that time, when she established a silkworm business association, she would be able to control most of the silkworm business in the three northeastern provinces. The market price would be decided by her. The demand would come from the gentry.

The next day, the county magistrate of the Liancheng County Office, Lord Li, came to the courier station to ask to see Princess Shaoyi.

Princesses also had to be divided into ranks.

Yu Youyao's title was that of the first-grade Saint Venerable Princess Yi. According to her status, this was a title that only the legitimate oldest daughter of the crown prince could receive.

Her status was second only to the legitimate princess. Even a princess who was born of a concubine had a weaker status.

Currently, there was only one princess of legitimate birth in the palace, Princess Liyang. Although Princess Shaoyi was a princess, she could enjoy the etiquette of a legitimate princess.

Liancheng was a county-level city, and the county magistrate in the county office was a seventh-grade official. After Lord Li received Princess Shaoyi's business card, he felt some fear and trepidation. He tossed and turned for the entire night without closing his eyes, wondering if Princess Shaoyi was still in Quanzhou recuperating. Why was she in the North?

Princess Shaoyi's reputation as a living Bodhisattva had almost spread throughout the Great Zhou. The food that the refugees ate was planted by and promoted by Princess Shaoyi.

The medicine that the refugees had taken when they were sick was also donated by Princess Shaoyi. There were many scholars in the Great Zhou Dynasty who wrote poems to praise Princess Shaoyi for her kindness.

With such a reputation, she would be a Buddha no matter where she went.

Furthermore!

Recently, Lord Li had also vaguely heard some rumors. It seemed that King Yue Fei admired Princess Shaoyi's kindness.

The refugees were all arranged by King Yue Fei. Rumors spread from the refugees outside the city. King Yue Fei even personally went to the Imperial Court to seek credit for Princess Shaoyi.

Less than two days after Princess Shaoyi came to the North, King Yue Fei also came. When he heard that King Yue Fei had arrived in Liancheng, he did not even enter the city gate and rushed all the way to the dock.

He felt that this rumor was most likely not groundless.

Yu Youyao met Lord Li in the main hall of the small courtyard.

"Greetings, Princess Shaoyi." As soon as she entered the courtyard, Lord Li quickly lowered his head and knelt.

With his lowered eyes, he could only see the tips of Princess Shaoyi's shoes. There was a big southern pearl embroidered on them. It was bright and round.

The size of the southern pearl was a rule that only applied to first-rate princesses.

Eastern pearls and southern pearls could only be worn by officials above the fifth-grade.

There were also strict rules regarding the size of the eastern and southern pearls based on one's grade. The best eastern and southern pearls could only be worn by the noble ladies of the royal family.

Yu Youyao was the daughter of an external minister and had never liked to show off her imperial family's noble title. However, since she had been conferred a noble title, she should follow the rules regarding her daily necessities. It would not be good to neglect etiquette.

Yu Youyao accepted Lord Li's bow steadily. "Don't be so polite!"

"Thank you, Princess." Lord Li quickly stood up, his head still lowered as he looked at the ground.

"Lord Li, sit down and talk!" The four families of Liancheng were brazenly bullying the individual silkworm farmers and monopolizing the silkworm business. It was also very related to the local government.

Of course, the nobles of the North did not even take the You army seriously, so they were naturally not afraid of a mere seventh-grade county official. She did not expect Lord Li to resist the four families.

What she needed was Lord Li's attitude.

From the looks of it, 30% of what she had planned had already happened.

Lord Li quickly thanked her before being led by the maidservant to the position on Princess Shaoyi's left.

A maidservant came over to serve tea. Using the excuse of drinking tea, he quietly observed Princess Shaoyi a few times. She looked to be twelve or thirteen years old, but she was filial. She was only wearing an extremely elegant set of ash and no jewelry. Sitting upright on a chair, she exuded a reverent and noble aura.

At this moment, footsteps came from outside the door.

Lord Li's expression changed. As the county magistrate of Liancheng, he was no stranger to such footsteps. This was the sound of the official boots worn by the soldiers in the government office.

Indeed!

Yin Huaixi lifted the curtain and entered. His gaze swept across the room. Lord Li couldn't sit still anymore and knelt on the ground. "Greetings, King Yue Fei."

Yin Huaixi said calmly, "Since you're the princess's guest, there's no need to be so polite."

Lord Li heaved a sigh of relief and thanked him humbly. Only then did he get up obediently and sit at his previous seat.

King Yue Fei came and went as he pleased in the small courtyard where Princess Shaoyi lived. It was obvious that the two of them had a close relationship. Those rumors were most likely true.

Yu Youyao looked at Yin Huaixi in surprise. "Why are you here?"

"I happen to be free today, so I plan to bring you to Liancheng for a walk." Yin Huaixi glanced at Lord Li and said casually, "Since you have a guest, we'll go another day."

Yu Youyao nodded. "I have two manors in Liancheng that raise silkworms. I was just about to take some time out to take a look. However, there are many refugees gathered outside the city, so it's not appropriate for me to go rashly. If you're free, you can come with me."

However, Yin Huaixi couldn't ask for more. "When you set the time, get someone to inform me."

Yu Youyao smiled and agreed.

Lord Li felt like he was sitting on pins and needles. He wished he could find a hole to crawl into.

King Yue Fei had come to Liancheng to patrol the disaster. Almost all the famous families in Liancheng had sent invitations, wanting to hold a banquet to entertain him. King Yue Fei rejected them on the grounds that he was busy with work.

However, King Yue Fei, who was "busy with work", had time to accompany Princess Shaoyi and let her "delegate".

He was not a fool.

As soon as Princess Shaoyi spoke, she mentioned the manor where she raised silkworms. Her words were directed at King Yue Fei, but they were deliberately for him to hear.

Meanwhile, King Yue Fei's arrival was not a coincidence. It was very likely that he was "supporting" Princess Shaoyi, although he felt that with Princess Shaoyi's current status and reputation, there was no need for King Yue Fei to do this.

Indeed!

King Yue Fei changed the topic and said, “You don’t mind me being present when you discuss matters with Lord Li, right?”

“King Yue Fei, please do as you please.” Yu Youyao shook her head and changed the topic. “The matter we discussed today is originally related to King Yue Fei. It’s fine for him to listen.”

Lord Li’s forehead broke out in a cold sweat. It wasn’t the first or second time that the four families had taken control of the business of Liancheng and some of the surrounding small counties. Although he was from Liancheng County, the four families were deeply rooted and had people in the court. Thus, it was inevitable that the people would bully the officials. He couldn’t control them even if he wanted to. If Princess Shaoyi wanted to take a share of the loot, wouldn’t that be making things difficult for him?

Yu Youyao looked at Lord Li and smiled. “Most areas in the North have suffered from drought, and as many as two to three million people have fled. Liancheng is one of the few areas in the North that is less affected by the drought. Lord Li has contributed to the management of the place.”

Chapter 793 - 793: Must Inherit Its Virtue

It wasn’t appropriate for Lord Li to speak rashly. After his initial nervousness, he secretly glanced at King Yue Fei and began to ponder about the relationship between King Yue Fei and Princess Shaoyi. Suddenly, he thought of another rumor.

Princess Shaoyi received a remnant recipe for incense medicine that had been sent into the country from overseas. After research, it was made into a very powerful ointment to relieve her cousin Zhou Linghuai’s leg disease.

The ointment worked well and had a miraculous effect on blood circulation. Princess Shaoyi had also developed a Tianze Incense Pill. The two complemented each other and nourished one internally and externally, causing Zhou Linghuai’s leg disease to improve.

Cousin Zhou was on good terms with King Yue Fei. There was a divine doctor in front of King Yue Fei who was proficient in acupuncture. With three methods, he actually cured Zhou Linghuai’s leg.

After that, he used this method to treat King Yue Fei’s leg.

This was why King Yue Fei had asked the Imperial Court for credit for Princess Shaoyi.

After that, the matter of Princess Shaoyi planting sweet potatoes caused an uproar in the Great Zhou Dynasty, and her limelight even surpassed King Yue Fei’s.

When King Yue Fei did his patrols and inspected the various areas of the North, everyone finally realized that King Yue Fei’s leg had recovered, and the news spread.

However, it was also Princess Shaoyi’s credit that King Yue Fei’s leg could be cured. The person who was discussed the most outside was still Princess Shaoyi.

Not to mention whether King Yue Fei really admired Princess Shaoyi, there was no doubt that the two of them were very close.

Lord Li did not reply, and Yu Youyao did not care. "On my way here from Quanzhou, I passed by many prefectures and provinces. A large number of refugees surged in, causing frequent riots in many places. Although King Yue Fei set up a camp outside the city to accommodate the refugees who had fled from various places, all the matters of settling the refugees were handled by the government. Lord Li has contributed greatly."

Lord Li hurriedly said, "This is my duty. I don't dare to take credit."

The government would only provide relief to the refugees under their rule. Those refugees who had fled were not under their responsibility, so of course they could be left alone.

He did not want to take in refugees either. There were so many people waiting to eat. Who could manage them?

However, King Yue Fei had spoken and even sent troops over to help the government suppress the refugees. Even the food for the refugees was provided by King Yue Fei. He had to manage it even if he did not want to.

"Lord Li indeed cares about the commoners." Yu Youyao smiled and praised him. "In the current world, there are not many good officials like Lord Li who are dedicated to the people."

Not only did Lord Li not feel happy to be praised, but he also felt even more terrified. He immediately did not even dare to say anything.

Yu Youyao flattered Lord Li a few times before cutting to the chase. "As far as I know, there are already 130,000 refugees outside the city. The number of refugees is still increasing day by day. We're about to enter spring farming, but a large number of refugees don't have farmland or work to do. They can't fill their stomachs and support their families. King Yue Fei has used military supplies to help the refugees. There are millions of refugees in the entire North. I don't think that we can withstand the consumption no matter how much food there is."

This was also something that Lord Li was worried about. "Princess, you're right. The number of refugees is increasing day by day. Once the food is exhausted and a large number of refugees gather outside the city, they will definitely cause trouble."

There were too many people, and the government couldn't suppress them.

He was not worried about the lives of the refugees, but he was worried about his own safety.

Yu Youyao had investigated Lord Li and knew that he was not a good official who was dedicated to the people. He had colluded with the four families and had done many dirty and lawless things.

However, this person was quite tactful. As long as it was beneficial, he could be controlled.

She continued to flatter Lord Li. "Lord Li is dedicated to the people. I don't think he wants to see the tragic state of riots outside the city, starvation, and corpses for thousands of miles."

What could Lord Li say? He could only suffer in silence. As he broke out in a cold sweat, he agreed.

If Princess Shaoyi had directly mentioned that she wanted to take a share of the loot, he could still be as fierce as a tiger. He could also be helpless. With snot and tears on his face, he could complain to Princess Shaoyi and do his best to fool her regarding this matter.

However, Princess Shaoyi directly flattered him, making him helpless.

Yu Youyao said, “Lord Li, you should know that I’m the daughter of an external minister, but I’ve received the emperor’s grace and was conferred the title of Princess Shaoyi. The word ‘Yi’ implies virtue from the heart. Since I’ve been conferred the title of ‘Yi’, I must inherit its virtue. Therefore, King Yue Fei wants to promote the planting of sweet potatoes in the North. I’ve been invited by King Yue Fei to come over and help. I hope that the sweet potatoes can ease the disaster in the North.”

This was also an excuse to the public.

She was the one who had succeeded in planting the sweet potatoes. Only she knew the details best. King Yue Fei wanted to plant sweet potatoes in the entire North to relieve the disaster in the North. It concerned thousands of people in the North, so anyone had to be careful.

It was reasonable to invite Princess Shaoyi over to help.

Princess Shaoyi had received the emperor’s grace and was willing to do her best for the Imperial Court. Therefore, it was only logical for her to travel all the way to the North.

After hearing this, Lord Li was already drenched in sweat. “Princess, you’re righteous.”

Why could the North still maintain the current stable situation?

It wasn’t all because King Yue Fei was powerful, but because sweet potatoes could let the refugees live.

Last year, because the sweet potatoes were officially planted for the first time, there were limited vines available for cutting. Therefore, the scale of planting was mostly concentrated in the Xiangping area.

The sweet potatoes in this county had alleviated the drought in the entire North and saved more than two million refugees. She deserved to be conferred the title of Princess Shaoyi by the Imperial Court.

Since the refugees had food, they naturally behaved themselves.

Sweet potatoes produced a high yield. They were drought-resistant and filled the stomach, making people hunger-resistant.

The importance of sweet potatoes to drought was obvious.

Princess Shaoyi had come to the North out of righteousness. She was not a Buddha at all. She was clearly a golden Buddha. How could the four families act rashly?

Even if he offended Princess Shaoyi, he had to ask the thousands of commoners in the North for their permission.

Yu Youyao chuckled. “After arriving at Liancheng, I found out that there were many forests and little farmland in the area. Even if there were sweet potatoes, there wasn’t enough farmland, so

there is insufficient food production. This isn't a long-term solution. I think Lord Li is also in a difficult position."

Lord Li did not want to speak, but he had no choice. "Princess, you're right."

Yin Huaixi's lips curled up slightly, feeling that it was very interesting.

As soon as Lord Li walked into the house, he was completely led by the nose by her. He was helpless and fell into a passive position from the beginning. He could only be controlled.

Yu Youyao did not comment. "I have an idea. I wonder if Lord Li is willing to listen to me?"

Lord Li did not want to hear it, but he had to. The corners of his mouth twitched dryly, and his smile looked uglier than if he had been crying. "Princess, please, please speak."

Chapter 794 - 794: Princess's Kindness

Yu Youyao picked up her teacup and lowered her head to take a sip. "Even the terrain of Liancheng is similar to that of Quanzhou. There's a saying that there are eight mountains and one river. Most of the forests are naturally grown trees. Therefore, Liancheng has a tradition of raising silkworms since ancient times. Many silkworm farmers live by raising silkworms."

They were finally here! Lord Li, who had been led in a big circle by Princess Shaoyi and was exhausted, felt like the dust had settled and he finally heaved a sigh of relief.

Whatever Princess Shaoyi said, he would just listen.

How could a mere seventh-grade county magistrate like him defeat a dignified princess under King Yue Fei's watch?

If County Head Shaoyi was doing this for personal gain, he could still deal with her.

However, County Head Shaoyi was noble and upright for the sake of the hundreds of thousands of refugees outside the city. If he did not know his place, could it be that he had to wait for the refugees to rush into the city to fight him?

A wise man submitted to his circumstances!

After figuring this out, Lord Li relaxed a little. "Liancheng has been raising silkworms since the Han Dynasty. Every family has planted trees, and they have raised silkworms to supplement the family's expenses. It's just that..."

He did not finish his sentence, but Yu Youyao knew very well. "I've heard previously that King Yue Fei has found someone who's proficient in raising silkworms and taught the refugees the technique. I think this method is very good. However, seeing that the spring silkworms are about to be raised and the technique has been learned, it's time to come up with a plan."

Lord Li actively responded, "What is the Princess's opinion?"

Yu Youyao smiled and said, "Nanzhao County in Henan is known as the home of silkworms, but in fact, the advantage of raising silkworms in Liao Province is even greater than in Henan. Among them, Dandong is the best, and Liancheng is second. However, be it Dandong or the scale of raising silkworms in Liancheng, the production of silk is not as good as in Nanzhao County."

How could Lord Li not know that the local nobles were united and controlled the silkworm business? They bullied the individual investors and exploited the silkworm farmers, hindering the development of the silkworm industry.

Yu Youyao did not mention this and only said, “Liancheng is close to the northernmost sea area, and its population is far inferior compared to being located in the hinterland of the Central Plains like Henan and Shandong. It’s not an exaggeration to say that it’s vast and sparsely populated. The difference in human resources is also the fundamental reason for the low production of silk.”

It wasn’t just Liancheng. The entire Liao Province, even the three northeastern provinces, were vast and sparsely populated.

Few people meant low productivity.

With low productivity, agriculture and industry could not develop.

If the North wanted to develop, population was the most important. This was probably part of the reason why Yin Huaixi spared no effort to accommodate the refugees everywhere.

Lord Li lowered his head. Princess Shaoyi had understood the entire Liancheng, and even the three northeastern provinces, so in front of her, he always felt that he had nowhere to hide. Last night, he had been thinking about nonsense for the entire night, but in front of Princess Shaoyi, he did not dare to say a word.

Yu Youyao chuckled. “King Yue Fei has his own considerations when accepting refugees. Liancheng has a natural advantage in raising silkworms. The arrival of the refugees will cause a certain amount of trouble for the government, but it’s also an opportunity for Liancheng to develop. As long as we imitate Nanzhao County to develop the population and expand the scale of raising silkworms, the silkworm chrysalises can be eaten in spring and autumn in a year. The residue can be fed to fish, animals, and birds. At most, Liancheng will be stable in a year.”

The silkworm was actually an insect that spat out silk. It had a large appetite, unlike the mulberry silkworm that could be raised at home.

Most of them were placed on trees to be raised, so a large number of people were needed.

The advantage of raising silkworms in Liancheng was so great that it could accommodate 300,000 refugees. This was a conservative estimate.

Princess Shaoyi was not lying. Instead, she had proposed a way to resolve the issue regarding the livelihood of the refugees and placed all the benefits of accepting them in front of him. If he still did not accept it, he would be a fool.

However!

Lord Li was in a difficult position. “The Princess is kind and dedicated to the people. I’m very impressed, but as for the four families...”

Expanding the scale of raising silkworms not only violated the interests of the four families, but also the interests of the entire process behind the four families. As a seventh-grade county official, he could not afford to offend them.

Yu Youyao understood and said, “Even the silk industry in the city is controlled by everyone. The silk produced by the four families has priority over military supplies. All these years, they’ve worked hard to expand the scale of silk raising and resolve the livelihood of the refugees. I can’t ask the four families to work hard anymore. Lord Li is busy settling the refugees, so he won’t be able to do anything. I won’t make things difficult for you.”

Lord Li’s eyelids twitched. He had a bad feeling.

Indeed!

Yu Youyao changed the topic. “Why don’t we do this? I also have two manors in Liancheng that raise silkworms. I’ll take the lead and join forces with the local retail investors to form a certain scale of raising silkworms. We’ll exchange our experiences and techniques. As long as there’s communication, we’ll definitely gain something. The production of silk can also increase, and the scale of raising silkworms can also be expanded. A large number of people are needed to raise silkworms. When the refugees learn the technique, they can rely on the mountains and trees to live.”

“This, this, Princess, you...” Lord Li’s legs went limp. When the retail investors gathered together, it was enough to attack the entire business of Liancheng. It was obvious that they wanted to go against the four families!

Even if he did not have to step in for this matter, as a parent official of Liancheng, he would still be affected.

Yu Youyao waited for a while, but before he could say anything, she continued, “There’s no need for the four families to work hard to sell the silk of the retail investors. I’m familiar with King Yue Fei, so I’ll directly trade them to the You army. The You army has the privilege of being free of salt tribute and can buy some military supplies on their own. The silk produced by the retail investors is still affordable.”

Lord Li was sweating profusely. Not only did he have to go against the four families, but he also had to cut off their wealth.

It had to be known that there was a quota for the Imperial Court to buy military supplies.

King Yue Fei had received orders from the retail investors. It was obvious that the Imperial Court’s purchases would be relatively reduced, and the transactions between the four families and the Imperial Court would also decrease.

The four families could no longer exploit the individual investors by buying at a low price and selling at a high price to obtain huge profits.

A large number of silk produced by their families had to be suppressed in their hands. Even if they found a way, the price of silk would definitely fall when a large number of silk entered the market.

It was obvious how great the losses were.

Even if the people behind the four families were powerful, could they still cause trouble on the heads of the vassal lords who had a large army? Did they think that there were too many heads and not enough to cut off, or were they afraid that their heads wouldn’t fall fast enough?

If some people in the court benefited less, they would definitely be dissatisfied and vent their anger on the four families. The four families would also have to spend additional money to organize everything inside and out.

It was simply a double loss.

Yu Youyao chuckled. "I'm doing this to give the refugees a livelihood. However, King Yue Fei has offered deals with retail investors, so it's inevitable that the four families will suffer losses. I have a merchant ship under my name, and the Xie family has been transferred to the North to also do the silk business. When the time comes, I'll step in to buy the silk of the four families so that they can avoid losses."

Lord Li was speechless. This was giving them a taste of their own medicine.

Chapter 795 - 795: Helping the Wicked

However, Princess Shao Yi had clearly said that with her and the Xie family's connections in the southeast coast, as well as Princess Shaoyi's reputation, who would offend them?

As long as Princess Shaoyi gave the word, no merchant would dare to accept the silk from the four families.

What could the four families do?

How could King Yue Fei not accept Princess Shaoyi's silk?

Even if King Yue Fei did not accept it, Princess Shaoyi had a ship and channels. She could still sell the silk of the retail investors. The four families could not do anything to her.

Could it be that the four families would throw away the silk that they had painstakingly nurtured?

If they wanted to sell it, they had to rely on Princess Shaoyi.

At that time, Princess Shaoyi would have the final say in the price. If she wanted them to earn, they would earn. If she made them lose money, they would have to swallow it all.

That wasn't what was scary.

Instead!

Princess Shaoyi's actions were on the side of benevolence. Not only did she give the refugees a way to live, but she also saved the four families from losses. What was there for the four families to be dissatisfied with?

If the four families dared to obstruct them, the spit of the commoners could drown them. If the scholars criticized them, they could be killed with a brush.

Princess Shaoyi had taken drastic measures to deal with the four families.

Lord Li understood. Lord Li also understood that Princess Shaoyi was forcing him to express his stance. Under King Yue Fei's dark gaze, what else could Lord Li do?

Lord Li could only say, "Princess, you're dedicated to the people. I'll definitely support you fully."

Yu Youyao smiled. "With Lord Li's words, I'm relieved."

The four families might not take Lord Li seriously, and she did not plan for him to be of any use.

If they joined forces with the retail investors to resist the deeply rooted nobles, it would definitely cause a certain impact on the local trade and economy. The four families had a deep foundation in Liancheng, and their connections could not be underestimated.

With the support of the government, her actions would be legitimate and logical.

Back then, many nobles in the North had joined forces with the local officials and jointly sued King Li of Zhou.

She was a dignified first-rate Saint Venerable Princess.

Even if the four families had any response to her, they had to go through the government first.

Lord Li bade farewell to Princess Shaoyi and left the courier station.

As soon as he left, Xia Tao came over. "The guard outside said that after Lord Li entered the courier station, there were a few groups of people investigating outside."

Yu Youyao said calmly, "There's no need to care."

She did not have to be pedantic and lower her status to get involved with the four families.

After Xia Tao left, only Yu Youyao and Yin Huaixi were left in the living room.

Yu Youyao looked at Yin Huaixi. "The drought affected most of the northwest region. Shaanxi and Shanxi are especially serious. These two places are vast and densely populated. They can be considered the areas that are most prosperous in terms of agriculture and industry in Youzhou." Her expression was a little hesitant. "You're taking in so many refugees. Regarding the issue of food..."

The drought was more serious in the three provinces of the capital. The three northwestern provinces, and the three northeastern provinces had also been affected, but the situation was not too serious.

However, most of the supplies in the North came from Shaanxi and Shanxi.

Currently, Shaanxi and Shanxi did not produce food. As the three northeastern provinces were vast and sparsely populated, and agriculture was not developed, they were short of supplies. Yin Huaixi had taken in so many refugees, so food was a problem.

The sweet potatoes from a county could only resolve an urgent matter.

It was impossible for Yin Huaixi to use the military rations he had accumulated to help the refugees. It wasn't that he couldn't bear to part with them, but that there was a war in the North, so he had to maintain the You army first.

Arranging the refugees to raise silkworms seemed to be a way out, but where would the food come from?

The disasters in Shaanxi and Shanxi were too serious. Even the land was desolate. It was definitely not viable to grow sweet potatoes. Thus, they could only be planted in the three northeastern provinces, but there was very little farmland in the three northeastern provinces.

The North seemed stable.

However, after walking around Liancheng, Yu Youyao already understood the hidden danger behind stability.

Unless Yin Huaixi wanted to...

Yu Youyao suddenly thought of King Liang, who had attacked the Xie family. Her eyelashes trembled slightly, and her thick and long eyelashes lowered to hide the storm.

Yin Huaixi played with the yellow jade coiling dragon ring in his hand and said casually, "The largest Baotong Bank in the Great Zhou Dynasty is managed by the nobles of the North led by Shanshaan. They built a huge merchant guild in the North with Shanshaan as the center, and dominated the North. Even the Imperial Court finds it troublesome."

The merchant guild was a huge network alliance that was centered on a region. It was formed with blood ties and village ties. A large-scale merchant guild covered a region. Almost all the businessmen with prestige were involved.

There was a river between Shanxi and Shaanxi. Since ancient times, there had been a saying that described the marriage alliance between two families.

In the early days of the Great Zhou Dynasty, in order to consolidate the border defense and resist foreign countries, the Imperial Court implemented a series of national policies such as the salt-grain exchange, the trade of tea and horses, cotton levies, and the trade of cloth and horses in Shanshaan.

The merchants in the Shanxi and the Shaanxi areas seized this opportunity. They used the two main trade routes in the northwest region, as well as the Silk Road and the Ancient Tea Horse Road, to transport tea, sell salt, and destroy opium. They formed the Shanshaan Alliance.

As the businesses of the merchants in the North spanned many regions, the giant merchants of the two places jointly opened the Baotong Bank to facilitate trade between many regions.

This was a huge power that dominated the Great Zhou Dynasty. The Imperial Court dared to attack the Xie Residence, which occupied the southeast coast and controlled maritime trade, but they did not dare to provoke the merchant guild in the North.

This was one of the reasons for the tragic disaster of King Li of Zhou's family.

The emperor used the King Li of Zhou's case to slaughter the nobles of the North wantonly. He also had a reason to weaken the power of the nobles of the North.

Yu Youyao recalled the scene of the Xie Residence escaping Quanzhou in a sorry state like a stray dog, and the nightmare where the Xie Residence was forced to a dead end by King Liang and Song Mingzhao!

"Are you going to attack the nobles?" Yu Youyao was a little frustrated, but she couldn't criticize anything, because what she was doing now was helping the wicked.

Perhaps she knew Yin Huaixi better than she had imagined.

After entering Liancheng, she had vaguely guessed what was going on when she heard that King Yue Fei was teaching the refugees how to raise silkworms. Later, she went to Liancheng Street to take a look and already had a plan.

Without even discussing it with Yin Huaixi, she sent a business card to Lord Li and invited him over to greet him.

Without needing Yin Huaixi to say anything, she had already started doing what he wanted to do.

This was a long-standing tacit understanding.

Yin Huaixi neither denied nor admitted it. "I set up a refugee camp in the North to prevent the refugees from causing trouble and to maintain the stability of the North. After all, the North is often disturbed by external enemies. Only by dealing with the internal problems can it be stable outside. The North is vast and sparsely populated, with poor supplies and low productivity. Food is scarce. I'm teaching the refugees the technique of raising silkworms because I hope that they can take root in the North in the future and have another way to live."

Yu Youyao pursed her lips slightly. "You want the nobles to accept the refugees and help them settle down in the North."

Chapter 796 - 796: Death Is Not Worthy

Arranging so many refugees required a huge amount of money and food. Yin Huaixi couldn't take it out, so he was about to swing the butcher's knife at the nobles.

In essence, his actions were no different from the King of Liang's. They were both for wealth and food.

However, for selfish reasons, Yin Huaixi could let the refugees live.

However, behind letting them live, it was still to control the North and develop a stable and powerful backing to prepare for the future.

However, Yin Huaixi said, "Martial officials can't do political work. As for the resettlement of the refugees, it depends on the government's arrangements. I shouldn't interfere in the rest, in case it's exposed. As for whether they can survive on this path, it depends on whether the government and the local nobles are willing to give the refugees a way out."

Yu Youyao thought of the situation in Liancheng and understood what Yin Huaixi meant.

Indeed!

Yin Huaixi looked at her. "The water and soil of a place support the people of that place. The Xie family still knows about the wealth of the world. You should take it from the people and use it for them. Be it a water disaster or a drought, you should actively join forces with the merchants who are on good terms with you to organize disaster relief for the commoners. There are two natural disasters in the south and north. The role of the Imperial Court is almost negligible. However, the relief of the commoners is even more important."

He respected Old Master Xie and everyone in the Xie family not only because they were Yu Youyao's maternal family, but also because they were worthy of respect.

With the Xie family's influence on the southeast coast, it wasn't impossible for them to organize a huge business alliance like the merchant guild in the North.

But!

The Xie Residence knew very well that the wealth in the hinterland of the Central Plains came from the commoners of the Great Zhou. The merchant guild was too powerful, and in the end, it would harm the interests of the commoners.

The Xie Residence focused on maritime trade and brought the resources of other countries back to the Great Zhou Dynasty to nourish it. The money that they earned was also actively used to repair roads and build bridges to help the commoners and the Imperial Court.

When the North Business Gang was first established, they had also developed the Silk Road vigorously. They took the ancient path and traded to earn money from other countries. But now, the gentry in the North were powerful, and it had become normal to exploit the commoners.

This was because the merchant guild was too powerful. When the merchant guild developed to a certain scale, they should have developed their needs and controlled the local resources. When the potential of the local resources was exhausted and their productivity had reached the limit, it was inevitable that they would exploit the commoners. In the end, the entire North entered a state of internal strife.

Yu Youyao felt a little upset. "It's a national policy to prioritize agriculture over business. However, business is more profitable than agriculture. In turn, bullying the commoners will also lead to low productivity."

Since ancient times, agriculture had never bullied business. Business had bullied agriculture. Meanwhile, agriculture was the first source of power for productivity. Food was the foundation.

The Great Zhou Dynasty's productivity was not enough to support it. It allowed trade to develop freely. King Li of Zhou's death was a serious consequence of overdevelopment.

It was impossible for Yin Huaixi to ignore it.

Yin Huaixi sneered. "In the entire North, including the refugees who fled the drought, there are nearly five million people. There are still a few nobles who are willing to organize disaster relief for the commoners. The money of the nobles is taken from the North, but they don't want to repay it. For example, Liancheng's silk production is decreasing year by year because of the drought, but the nobles are still firmly in control of the silk industry. They buy at a low price and sell at a high price to earn huge profits. There are many people who are unwilling to give the commoners a way out."

Part of the reason for this was even more ironic. When he was still the heir, he had slaughtered officials and nobles wantonly to gather rations for the You army. Later, in King Li of Zhou's case, blood flowed for 3,000 kilometers in the North. With the previous example, some nobles were worried that they would provoke him, so they deliberately covered themselves with hypocrisy.

Yu Youyao sighed softly. "Take in refugees, develop the population of the North, increase the productivity of the North, improve the vastness of the land and the sparse population, and achieve the goal of suppressing the nobles of the North and controlling the important resources of the North in your own hands. I'll support you in whatever you want to do."

Governing a place was not as easy as she thought. Some methods were indispensable.

It was impossible for her to watch helplessly as Yin Huaixi was controlled by the nobles.

King Li of Zhou was an example.

Perhaps Yin Huaixi had all kinds of schemes. At the very least, he had let millions of refugees live.

King Liang wasn't able to do it, while the nobles weren't willing to do it.

"I don't want to follow in my father's footsteps." Yin Huaixi came to Yu Youyao and squatted in front of her. "I've also given them many chances."

Yu Youyao nodded. "When you released the rumor that you wanted to teach the refugees to raise silkworms, it's not like the nobles didn't understand what you meant. However, when they saw that the spring silkworms were about to be raised, the four families of the city did not express anything at all. You're a vassal lord, so you can't interfere too much in the matters of the refugees, in case it's exposed. The nobles also understand this, so they're fearless about your hint. They're exploiting the commoners and disregarding the lives of the refugees. The deaths of unrighteous people are not worthy of pity."

She had always understood that Yin Huaixi wanted to save the refugees, but because of his status as a vassal lord, he couldn't interfere in the government's matters. He could only use this method to hint to the nobles.

They accepted refugees to raise silkworms. The food supply of the early refugees was supported by sweet potatoes, and there were also abundant seafood resources. Moreover, when the weather warmed up and everything revived, the refugees could also get food from the mountains. The government and the nobles did not have to pay too much. It was just a drop in the bucket.

When the first spring silkworm turned into a cocoon, the refugees could use silk to exchange for food. The Yue Fei's Residence had stored food. Although they couldn't give it to the refugees for nothing, the silk could be treated as military supplies and exchanged for food with the refugees.

The silkworm chrysalises also became one of the refugees' food.

The sweet potatoes were fully planted in the three northeastern provinces, which were less affected. They were edible and were produced in large quantities, so the North would not face a food shortage.

The silk of the refugees could also be exchanged for food with the nobles, allowing the nobles to benefit.

Taking in refugees was beneficial and harmless to the nobles.

The nobles were unwilling to do it because over the years, they were already used to exploiting the commoners and sitting back to enjoy their achievements. They were unwilling to make any contributions.

It was also because they controlled a lot of resources and were used to being high up in the air. In their eyes, refugees were like grass, and they were even more unwilling to be pedantic and help.

However, that wasn't right.

They had already seen how big the world was, but they still pitied the greenery. This was the magnanimity that a superior should have.

And Yin Huaixi had done it.

After figuring this out, Yu Youyao's heart opened up and she smiled. "I'll do what the nobles don't want to do. With my help, you can still achieve your goal."

There were many areas in Liao Province that were suitable for raising silkworms, and they all had the natural advantage that allowed them to accept refugees. The areas that accepted refugees also developed their population one after another and increased their productivity. The newly developed resources would also break through the inherent resources controlled by the nobles and inject live water into a pool of stagnant water in the North. Moreover, under King Yue Fei's control, they would have greater capital to suppress the nobles and let them follow the rules set by him.

Yin Huaixi's plan was in line with the interests of the commoners and him as King Yue Fei. It was a win-win situation.

Yin Huaixi heaved a sigh of relief. "The development of the North can't do without the nobles. A ruthless method like the King of Liang's also depends on the person."

Chapter 797 - 797: National Policy

Yu Youyao felt much more at ease. "The nobles dominate the North. They're deeply rooted and intertwined. It's like strangling a banyan. They absorb the nourishment of the North and provide it to themselves. It harms the interests of the commoners and violates King Yue Fei's dignity. They brought it on themselves. However, you have a butcher's knife in your hand. No matter what, don't forget your original intention."

The nobles represented huge benefits and were charming.

After witnessing the King of Liang's madness and the tragedy of the Xie family in her nightmare, she had a deeper understanding of "power desires" and was filled with reverence.

Yin Huaixi held Yu Youyao's hand. "You're devoted to kindness, and I'm devoted to you. I only want to protect you for a lifetime and give you a lifetime of peace."

Yu Youyao smiled. "I'll look for my Grandfather tomorrow and plan carefully with him."

Back then, King Li of Zhou had a large army, but he was controlled by the local gentry. He was not even afraid of the Di people's cavalry, but in the end, he died tragically under the scheme of the nobles.

It wasn't that the nobles were so powerful that no one could shake them.

It wasn't that King Li of Zhou was weak and didn't know how to resist.

Instead!

King Li of Zhou was a vassal lord!

When he was a prince, King Li of Zhou was a playboy and ridiculous. He did not manage his connections in the court. His father-in-law had become an official from a poor family and passed away not long after retiring.

He had no one in the court, and the word “vassal king” restrained his hands and feet. In addition, his foundation in the North was too shallow, and the merchant guild was deeply rooted. It had already formed an inherent circle of interests. It was inevitable that he would fall into a situation where he was alone.

Yin Huaixi cared about his status as a vassal lord and couldn’t attack the nobles easily.

However, Yu Youyao did not have such scruples.

The next day, Yu Youyao looked for Old Master Xie and explained her intentions.

When Old Master Xie heard this, he sighed softly. “When the Great Zhou Dynasty was first established, Emperor Gaozu had once said that the sea was in the east, and Liao is at the border. Since China was peaceful, they definitely had to guard it. Then, in Xiangping, he set up a military town in the capital of Liaodong with hundreds of thousands of troops guarding it. First, he had to ensure military supplies. However, at that time, there were few people in the Liaodong area. Emperor Gaozu moved a group of refugees who had been displaced by the war to the three northeastern provinces and encouraged farming. He even distributed the more prosperous northwestern areas of Ningxia, Shanxi, and Shaanxi to Youzhou in the North and vigorously developed business, achieving the goal of strong border management.”

Yu Youyao’s gaze flickered slightly as she said, “The merchants relied on the country’s policies to make a fortune wantonly. The nobles relied on the merchants to accumulate wealth wantonly. As it was in line with Emperor Gaozu’s national policies, the nobles seemed to have obtained a gold medal and controlled the local resources. Naturally, they were fearless.”

Old Master Xie said meaningfully, “Taking in refugees, developing the population, and increasing the productivity of the North are also in line with a series of national policies issued by Emperor Gaozu.”

Since it was a national policy, how could the nobles stop it?

As expected, the older one was, the wiser they were. “I’ll send a letter to the Yu Clan later. The nobles of the North are very powerful. We still need the support of the Imperial Court to implement the national policy.”

Old Master Xie smiled but said nothing.

Yu Youyao blinked and looked at her grandfather with admiration. “Grandfather, are you familiar with every national policy issued by the Great Zhou Dynasty since it was established?”

Old Master Xie nodded. “We’re all people under the Great Zhou Dynasty. Everything we do and the money we earn have to be in line with the interests of the Imperial Court, the commoners, and the general situation. We can avoid many troubles and seize more opportunities to earn money.”

Yu Youyao nodded thoughtfully. “The merchants in the North developed because they grasped the national policies of the strong borders and the outside world.”

Old Master Xie nodded, but his tone was very stern. “However, Little Yao’er, you have to remember that farming is ten times more profitable, but doing business is a hundred times more profitable. However, merchants are also humans. They have a mouth and need to eat. Where does their food come from? It’s naturally farmed. For staple food like rice and wheat, there are only two seasons a year, and the production is also low. What they earn from doing business is the result of buying at a low price and selling at a high price. They buy the blood and sweat of the commoners at a low price, and sell the blood and sweat of the commoners at a high price. It’s not a wise move to skin the commoners. If the commoners can’t grow food, the world will be in chaos. At that time, the merchants will bear the brunt. The current situation is the best example.”

Before the Great Zhou Dynasty was completely in chaos, the ambitious King Liang first calculated the Xie family’s money.

Yin Huaixi couldn’t resist the temptation of being rich. When he was short of money and food, the first thing he had to do was think of a way to deal with the nobles.

In her nightmare, the Fourth Prince’s foundation was shallow. In order to support the fourth prince, the first thing Song Mingzhao did was to attack the Xie family.

The Xie Residence’s huge network of connections provided them with cover during the peaceful years.

However, in this chaotic world, they actually did not even have the ability to protect themselves.

Not only was this the case for the Xie family, but all the merchants in the world were the same.

Old Master Xie slowed down his voice. “Since you’ve stepped into business, you have to remember the Xie family’s ancestral teachings. Don’t earn ill-gotten wealth. The wealth of the world should be taken from the people and used for the people. Seventy percent of your wealth will be used to repair roads and build bridges to benefit a region, while the remaining 30% will belong to you.”

Yu Youyao said solemnly, “Grandfather, since I’ve received guidance from the Xie family, I naturally have to remember their ancestral teachings.”

Old Master Xie nodded in satisfaction and changed the topic. “King Yue Fei’s garrison is in the Liaodong area. It spans the Liao, Ji, and Hei lands and is a military town. It’s under King Yue Fei’s watch. Therefore, the main power of the North merchant guild is in the Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Ningxia areas. After King Li of Zhou’s case, the emperor cleaned up a group of nobles who occupied the North. The control of the merchant guild in the North over the three northeastern provinces isn’t that strong anymore. This is the weak point of the merchant guild in the North.”

“Most of the silk and cloth industries in the North come from the three northeastern provinces. It’s a good choice for you to start with the silk industry in Liancheng. The three northeastern provinces are quite far from Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Ningxia. With King Yue Fei and the government controlling the news, when the news reaches Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Ningxia, the situation in Liancheng is no longer up to them.”

Yu Youyao nodded. “I’ve already met Lord Li. He promises his full support.”

There were three ways to send a message.

First, they could go through the courier station, but the courier station had to pass through the government's hands. If necessary, the government could review the letters.

Second, they could send someone to pass on the message. However, the three northeastern provinces were military towns. There were checkpoints everywhere, and the checks were very strict. King Yue Fei could get stuck at the checkpoint.

Third, they could use a pigeon to send messages. However, the defense in the Liaodong area was tight, and pigeons were only used for military purposes. Ordinary people were not allowed to raise pigeons to send messages. There were sentry towers everywhere that specially shot pigeons.

Without a fast horse to send a message, the message sent would be very slowly. It would take two to three months. At that time, it would be over.

Therefore, after making up her mind, she immediately looked for the government's support.

Old Master Xie also knew about this. "The silk industry involves the local land-owning class. As a merchant, it's not good for the Xie family to make a move, in case it backfires. In this matter, the Xie family can only help you very little. You can only rely on yourself."

Chapter 798 - 798: Four Great Families

There was also the strong and the weak among the land-owning class. In terms of foundation, the land-owning class in the North was definitely not as good as the Yu Clan. Even the land-owning class had to be polite to the noble ladies of the imperial family.

This was also why Little Yao'er dared to become enemies with the nobles.

Yu Youyao had also considered it. "The Xie family's connections and channels are my backing. The silk of the retail investors has to go through the Xie family's channels. The Xie family has a silk manor under their name and thousands of looms. They can dye silk weaves and seals into exquisite silk, and they can also turn the silk into tenacious threads that can be used for armor. The interests of the Xie family and I are mutually beneficial. We're integrated and unbreakable."

If they wanted to deal with the land-owning class, they could not lack status, connections, and channels.

The Xie Residence played a huge role in this. Even Yin Huaixi had to follow behind.

Sooner or later, the Great Zhou Dynasty would be in chaos. The matter of manufacturing armor had to be handed over to someone they trusted.

The technology to weave armor threads was in the hands of the Imperial Court. She had seen similar threads on the Xie Residence's merchant ship that could be used at sea. It was obvious that the technology the Xie Residence had mastered was even better, but they were hiding their strength.

Old Master Xie understood immediately and nodded. "The first batch of silk will be produced in April or May. I'll first send 300 looms from Henan and Zhejiang, as well as a group of people who are proficient in weaving. I'll set up a silk manor in Liancheng. Later, based on the production of silk in the North, the looms can increase one after another."

It took about three months for the silkworm to grow. As soon as the tree germinated, it could breed eggs. Every spring, the silkworms would be plucked in April or May.

Some things had to be prepared now.

Yu Youyao calmed down. Now that the silk manor had been set up, the nobles of the North couldn't do anything to them. Compared to the local nobles who bullied the commoners, the commoners trusted her and the Xie family more.

Old Master Xie continued, "By the way, the Xie Residence is in the three northeastern provinces. There are still seven silkworm farms. When the time comes, it'll be easier for you to transfer them to your name."

Yu Youyao was a little surprised. "Were they bought previously?"

Old Master Xie nodded. "Before I decided to come to the North, I sent someone to buy assets there. However, most of the silkworm industry in Liao Province is in the hands of the nobles. I found a lot of tricky connections and channels to get these seven manors and bought them at a high price. It was really not easy."

The silkworm industry in the three northeastern provinces was more developed. If the Xie family wanted to take root here, they would definitely have to buy related industries.

Yu Youyao understood that if she wanted to buy some more important resources in the North, Yin Huaixi's connections as King Yue Fei were actually not very useful.

The nobles controlled the silkworm industry, but not all the silkworm farms were under their own names. The nobles did not have such an appetite. They were definitely under the names of the circle of interest formed by their relatives and friends.

Due to the drought in Liao Province, the production of silk decreased year by year. There were always some people who couldn't resist the temptation of a high price and sold their silk manors at a high price.

The land-owning class was not too worried. The silk industry in the entire North was under their control. As long as it was not related to King Yue Fei, no matter who bought the manor, the silk produced would still be sold to them at a low price in the end.

Old Master Xie smiled and said, "There are many forests in the mountainous area north of Liancheng. Most of the silkworm farms are concentrated in the Zhuanghe area, and the scale of silkworm farming has reached more than a million acres."

"If King Yue Fei wants to settle down the refugees, he has to explore new silkworm forests. Fuzhen and New Gold Town are not bad choices. Tai Mo Shan in Fuzhen is tall and dangerous. The forest is dense, and the vines are overgrown. It's a natural silkworm farm. As there are often wild beasts in the mountains, there's no silkworm farm developed. There are also many silkworm forests in Lianzhen. It's just that most of the local land is suitable for farming, so it's mainly used for agriculture. There's no silkworm industry."

The area of Liancheng was quite wide. Fuzhen and Lianzhen alone were already the size of a small county, which one enough to accommodate more than a hundred thousand refugees.

The refugees could raise silkworms or explore some land themselves. The Great Zhou Dynasty had a clear rule that the commoners could explore and plant their own land without paying taxes

The reclaimed land had to be taken care of for three to five years before crops could be farmed. However, sweet potatoes were very cheap and were also growing in the wasteland.

Yu Youyao admired her grandfather too much. He had only been in Liancheng for a few days, but he had already figured out the terrain of the city.

“Get King Yue Fei to send troops over. They’ll go up the mountain to chase away the wild beasts and build some fortifications. They’ll set up a silkworm farm. There are also many soldiers who have retired from the army due to injuries and illnesses. Find some to raise silkworms. While preventing the refugees from causing trouble, they can also deal with the wild beasts in the mountains and solve their livelihood problems. It’s killing three birds with one stone.”

A large number of refugees were gathered together. They had to be familiarized with different local accents, customs, and human relationships. Over time, there would definitely be many conflicts. Soldiers who had retired from the army would just not be able to go to the battlefield. Their battle-hardened skills were enough to intimidate and even suppress the commoners. With them keeping an eye on them, the refugees could settle down in an unfamiliar place faster.

Old Master Xie felt that it was very appropriate. With a thought, he said, “We have to find someone who’s proficient in soil, conservation, and wood to maintain the forest. We have to plant trees and forests regularly to avoid destroying the natural silkworm farm.”

Yu Youyao had investigated a lot about raising silkworms, but she had never raised silkworms before. It was all a one-sided matter. “It takes ten years to grow into tree, thirty years to grow a forest, and a hundred years to grow a large forest. It’s not advisable to fish when you’re exhausted.”

Large-scale raising of silkworms would definitely cause a certain amount of damage to the environment of the forest, causing the number of trees to decrease. Maintenance was indispensable, and they could not be careless with afforestation. They even had to explore and plant trees.

When Yu Youyao returned to the courtyard, Xia Tao came over to report, “Young Miss, Official Liu from the county office is here. He’s waiting outside.”

Yu Youyao nodded. “Invite Official Liu in!”

Xia Tao quickly agreed and went out to get someone.

Not long after, he brought Official Liu in. Official Liu was a tall and thin middle-aged man in his forties. After being invited into the living room, he did not look up. He knelt down respectfully and bowed to Princess Shaoyi. After receiving the princess’s permission, he stood up humbly and explained the reason for his visit.

“I’ve disturbed the princess’s peace. Please be angry. When the four families in Liancheng found out that the princess was kind, they wanted to host a vegetarian meal at the Pure Spirit Temple outside the city. However, they were

worried that they would offend the princess, so they specially invited my lord over. Out of consideration, my lord couldn't refuse, so he agreed to this matter."

Some people from the aristocratic families became officials, while others did business. They were divided into branches, but they did not differentiate between clans. The aristocratic families were also citizens. According to the law of respect and etiquette, the citizens were not allowed to see officials without permission.

Therefore, if the four families wanted to see Princess Shaoyi, they had to go through Lord Li. Only with Princess Shaoyi's approval could the four families greet her.

Of course, if there was a scholar with meritorious status in the family, he could come over with Lord Li to greet and see the princess.

Official Liu respectfully handed over a greeting card.

Just as Xia Tao was about to step forward, Yin Shi took the greeting card first. After flipping through it, he handed it to Yu Youyao. "Princess, please take a look."

Chapter 799 - 799: Have a Death Wish

Even though there was no problem with this invitation, after this incident, Official Liu still broke out in a cold sweat.

Yu Youyao took the invitation and nodded. "I already know about this. It's just that I'm in mourning, so it's not appropriate for me to meet outsiders. Lord Li, please thank the four families for me."

Official Liu hurriedly said, "I'll go back and report to Lord Li now."

The Pure Spirit Temple was a famous temple in Liancheng. The four families had invited Princess Shaoyi there and given her enough respect. However, Princess Shaoyi rejected the four families as she was mourning. It was obvious that she did not take them seriously.

The expressions of the four family heads, who were waiting in the government office to hear the news, immediately darkened.

Lord Li lowered his head and drank his tea without saying anything.

Official Liu moved closer to Lord Li and said in a low voice, "The courier station is heavily guarded inside and out. There are sentry posts every five steps in the small courtyard where Princess Shaoyi lives. When they're pulled together, all of them will be activated. The princess also has an expert who's proficient in poison techniques with her. Anything that the princess obtains has to be tested before it's sent to her."

As soon as these words were spoken, the scene was so quiet that one could hear a pin drop.

After a while, the Qiao family head slammed his palm on the table and was furious. "She's the daughter of an external minister. She's really putting on the airs of a princess. We're already giving her respect."

Master Zhang said sarcastically, "Tell this to Princess Shaoyi. Let's see if she doesn't punish you for being disrespectful and offending your superiors."

Master Zhao gloated. “Her title as a first-grade Saint Venerable Princess is what everyone wants. She hasn’t even warmed up to it yet. If we provoke her, we’ll have a death wish.”

Master Qiao was furious. “You...”

“Alright.” Master Wan interrupted his anger impatiently. “Each of you, speak less. Why are you still fighting among yourselves at this time?”

Only then did the three of them reluctantly shut up.

Master Wan looked at Lord Li. “In Lord Li’s opinion, what kind of person is this Princess Shaoyi?”

After Princess Shaoyi arrived in Liancheng, the dock was cordoned off by King Yue Fei’s troops. Even the four families did not know what was happening and thought that there was an important resource. They secretly investigated and realized that King Yue Fei patrolled the area every day. There was nothing unusual, so they did not care.

It wasn’t until yesterday when Lord Li went to the courier station that they sent someone to investigate. They didn’t expect that the entire courier station would be under martial law and they didn’t find any news.

Only then did they suddenly understand that there was definitely a big shot living in the courier station. Even King Yue Fei had to treat them with respect.

How could they sit still?!

He quickly went to the government office to ask, and Lord Li did not hide it. “Princess Shaoyi was invited by King Yue Fei to help him promote the planting of sweet potatoes in the North and relieve the drought in the North. She’s now staying at the Liancheng courier station.”

As soon as these words were spoken, the four families knew that a big Buddha had come to Liancheng.

It was the kind that had to be presented with offerings.

However, what Lord Li said next made the hearts of the four family heads sink to the bottom.

The four families thought about it. Princess Shaoyi had come to plant sweet potatoes and would not stay in Liancheng for long. Princess Shaoyi was kind and wanted to take in refugees. This was not a big deal.

Each family would pay tens of thousands of taels of silver. They would first settle a group of refugees and fool this Buddha away.

That was why there was an invitation.

They had never expected Princess Shaoyi to refuse.

Lord Li said cautiously, “How much do you know about Princess Shaoyi?”

Master Wan’s heart sank again.

Lord Li was very crafty and slippery, and he was also very good at playing along with the wind. From his cautious attitude towards Princess Shaoyi, it was obvious that Princess Shaoyi was definitely not someone to be fooled.

Lord Li put down his teacup. "It's said that aristocratic families are made of iron. The Yu Clan is undoubtedly a flowing dynasty. Although it has fallen for hundreds of years since our dynasty, the family's foundation is still there. The Yu Clan has always taken root in the royal court. They even nurtured another cabinet aide, a first-grade Saint Venerable Princess."

The so-called superiority of the four family heads was shattered by these words.

In the previous dynasty, the Yu Clan was once the number one family that produced high-ranking officials in the Great Zhou Dynasty.

Why were they given this title?

Among the many families, in terms of the history of their family, the Yu family was rare.

The only one who could compete with them was the Ye family of Linjiang.

"In history, the Wang clan of Langya nurtured 36 empresses. This means that the upbringing of the daughters of aristocratic families is not inferior to that of men. The so-called teachings restrict ordinary women. Look at Princess Shaoyi. During the mourning period for her grandmother, she went to Quanzhou to recuperate. Everyone in the world said that she was extremely filial. During the mourning period for her grandmother, she was invited by King Yue Fei to the North. She should have been rebellious, but if this news spreads to the world, the world will praise her for her kindness."

It was definitely not a coincidence that a woman could do this.

He who understood the times was a wise man. However, how many people in this world could see the current affairs through its surface appearance and make a choice that was beneficial to them?

Not everyone had the ability to adapt to the situation.

To be able to do this, one had to be at least a talent.

"Princess Shaoyi is a disciple of Madam Ye, and she also has a nanny in the palace by her side who has raised her well. Her horizons and breadth of mind are not something ordinary people can compare to. In the past dynasties, most of the daughters of foreign ministers have been conferred noble titles and married into the royal family. Just look at King Yue Fei's solicitous attitude towards her. You should know how much the royal family values Princess Shaoyi."

After a long speech, Lord Li still did not answer Master Wan's question directly or comment on Princess Shaoyi. Instead, he mentioned Princess Shaoyi's family background and reputation.

Even though the four families were inferior to the Yu Clan, they understood what Lord Li meant.

If they wanted to be enemies with Princess Shaoyi, they had to first consider if they could afford to provoke the Yu Clan behind her. Secondly, they had to consider the imperial family behind her.

Now, there was King Yue Fei, who had a large army, standing behind her. It was obvious how much the imperial family valued her.

Princess Shaoyi was the eldest daughter of the first wife of the clan. She had been raised since she was young and was not inferior to a man. She did not lack breadth of mind, methods, temperament, and shrewdness.

The furious Master Qiao's expression turned solemn.

Master Li sighed softly. "A large number of refugees have gathered outside the city. If we don't settle them down, trouble will happen sooner or later. As the county magistrate of Liancheng, it's my responsibility to help them. You've already offended King Yue Fei. Even if the city is in chaos, you won't be able to escape responsibility. Even if your crime isn't punishable by death, it will delay your plan to earn money."

King Yue Fei advocated taking in refugees, but the four families turned a deaf ear. Princess Shaoyi's involvement in Liancheng's silkworm business might not be without King Yue Fei's intentions.

Unfortunately, after being a local tyrant in Liancheng for so long, the four families had forgotten their limits. From the moment Princess Shaoyi handed over her business card, Master Li knew that once something happened in Liancheng, the four families would not be able to respond.

The four family heads looked at one another, unable to make up their minds for a moment.

Lord Li did not want to persuade them anymore and only said, "That's all I've said. You should make the decision yourselves!"

Chapter 800 - 800: The Winner Is the King and the Loser Is the Bandit

Yu Youyao drafted the letter and handed the Empress Dowager a memorial. She sent someone to send it to the capital as soon as possible.

After that, she ordered someone to go to the county office to borrow a map of Liancheng. She prepared a sand table and fiddled with it according to the mountain terrain on the map.

When Yin Huaixi entered the courtyard, he saw her studying the map and fiddling with the sand table. He couldn't help but stop in his tracks. His eyes were filled with shock.

Even generals who had been through hundreds of battles in the army might not be proficient in maps.

During a war, the main general who was proficient in maps would draw the terrain alone and review it on the sand table. He would explain it to the generals who led the troops. The generals who led the troops were all experienced in battle. Although they did not know how to read maps, after simplification, review, and explanation, they would naturally understand. Soon, they could set their tactics through the terrain review.

He had never taught Yu Youyao to read maps.

The first time Yu Youyao came into contact with the map was when he went to Shandong to quell the rebellion. He used the map to fiddle with the sand table in his room. Coincidentally, Yu Youyao came over to look for him. Seeing that he was serious, she did not disturb him. She only rested her chin on her hand and sat at the table to watch.

Yu Youyao fiddled with it for a while before looking up to see Yin Huaixi standing not far away and looking at her. She quickly said, "Nineteenth Brother, come over and help me take a look. Is the sand table set up properly?"

After coming to the North, she did not know what to call Yin Huaixi.

She couldn't call him her Cousin. Brother Jingzhi was too unruly, and King Yue Fei was too distant. She couldn't call him by his name. After hesitating for a long time, she might as well call him Nineteenth Brother.

She was on the jade plate of the imperial family as an adopted daughter. Yin Huaixi was ranked 19th in the imperial family's generation, so it was appropriate to call him Nineteenth Brother.

Yin Huaixi agreed happily. He took the map and looked at it for a moment. "So it's the terrain of the mountains north of Liancheng. It roughly matches the map."

Then, he helped make subtle adjustments. As he made the adjustments, he explained to her how to accurately map and set up sand tables.

Since she had talent, regardless of whether she had the chance to use it in the future, he had to teach her carefully.

When the terrain of the entire northern mountain area appeared in front of Yu Youyao, her eyes widened. "It's as if the entire northern mountain area has shrunk and is placed in front of me. I can see everything."

Yin Huaixi asked her, "Why did you suddenly set up a sand table?"

As Yu Youyao observed the terrain on the sand table, she said, "I want to see which places in the northern mountains are suitable for settling down and raising silkworms. Everyone says that one should help others to the end. Since I've interfered in the refugees' matters, I have to settle this matter well."

Yin Huaixi was not surprised.

Yu Youyao focused on Fuzhen and Lianzhen, which her grandfather had recommended, and asked Yin Huaixi for his opinion.

Yin Huaixi smiled. "A few days ago, I brought someone who's proficient in soil and forestry to the northern mountains to investigate. Lianzhen and Fuzhen both have natural forests which are advantageous for raising silkworms. It's also because there's a small population. Thus, raising silkworms hasn't been developed there, and it's not controlled by the four families. It's suitable for the refugees to settle down. After the matter is settled, I'll personally bring people to the mountains to chase away the wild beasts and plan for a silkworm farm. Then, the refugees will be moved over in batches."

Since Yin Huaixi had already made arrangements, there was no need for her to worry. Yu Youyao was completely relieved. "I've sent a letter to the Yu Clan. The Yu Clan values fame and fortune, but they have the pride of Duke Zhonglie in their bones. They're considered one of the few people in the court who's willing to stand up for the commoners. With the premise that they won't harm their own interests, they'll definitely make a move."

Even a greedy and shameless person like Yu Zongzheng did it himself when he went to Zhejiang to relieve the disaster. He spared no effort and was even injured by the mob.

A clan that had been passed down for hundreds of years not only inherited culture, but also the mental will of a family.

The human heart was easily changed, but the spirit was immortal.

It had only been three months since she left the Yu Residence, but Yu Youyao had already learned to control the Yu Clan. On the premise that she did not offend the other party's interests, she made it her own. It was obvious that she had broadened her horizons and breadth of mind.

Yin Huaixi nodded. "The vassal lord's every move will be controlled by the Imperial Court. To deal with the nobles, you have to rely on the Yu Clan behind you and the Xie Residence's huge channels."

This was a contest between scholars and nobles.

Fortunately, both the Yu Clan and the Xie Residence had the ability to compete with the nobles.

Yu Youyao nodded. "Liaodong is a military town. There's an official road that leads straight to the capital to ensure that the information between the two places is interconnected. The news can be sent to the capital in three days at the earliest. I even sent an invitation to the Empress Dowager to come to the North to help promote the planting of sweet potatoes at your invitation. In addition, I mentioned some of the current situation in the North and didn't mention anything about Quanzhou."

After the Xie Residence fled Quanzhou, Quanzhou was already on full alert. All the merchants who passed by the Quanzhou dock were not allowed to enter the city. Outside, they only knew that thieves were killing and setting fires in the city, but they did not know the exact situation.

The matter in Quanzhou involved the vassal lords who were about to rebel, and it was not something a princess like her could get involved in.

She had no evidence that the Liangzhou army had disguised themselves as bandits.

Yin Huaixi's gaze suddenly darkened. "The King of Liang will rebel sooner or later. Not just anyone can stop him."

Yu Youyao understood that rebellion would implicate the entire family. The King of Liang was not a fool. He had been hiding his strength for many years and thought that he had made full preparations. By attacking the Xie Residence, he was increasing his chips for his hegemony. Even if the Imperial Court found out about this in advance, the King of Liang would not sit back and do nothing. He would just rebel in advance.

The winner was king, and the loser was a bandit.

History books were written by victors.

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In February, there were still fireplaces burning in the Longevity Palace.

Auntie Shen was wearing a gray coat dress with a collar inlaid with rat fur. She held a memorial and lifted the curtain to enter the inner hall.

The hot air in the hall mixed with the lingering smell of medicine rushed into her nose, making Auntie Shen dizzy. She felt as if something was blocking her heart.

She frowned slightly. "The Empress Dowager is resting in the inner room. Don't fully close the windows in the inner hall. Leave a thin crack so that there is air circulation. Don't burn the fireplaces too brightly either. Instead, it'll be suffocating. If the room is cold, you can add charcoal cages and add a few more foot warmers."

The palace maids in the inner hall quickly bowed in agreement.

Auntie Shen was worried and instructed sternly, "The Empress Dowager's health is not stable. All of you, serve her carefully. You can't be careless."

After knocking on the palace maid's door, Auntie Shen bypassed the door and entered the inner room.

The Empress Dowager got up and wore a bright yellow inner robe. She leaned against the pillow and closed her eyes to rest.

Auntie Shen walked to the bed without saying anything. The Empress Dowager had removed her high and mighty phoenix crown. After untying her hair, it revealed the gray and white strands that had been hidden in her bun in the past. Her face looked sickly and she looked much older.

Auntie Shen's heart felt a little bitter. She bowed and was about to call her the Empress Dowager.

Unexpectedly, the Empress Dowager's eyelids twitched and she slowly opened them. She rebuked, "Why don't you make a sound when you walk?"