

All Hail 861

Chapter 861: Locust Plague

His Eldest Sister did not persuade him. She only said, “Our Grandmother’s funeral still needs to be handled for a while. Give me an answer after you’ve thought it through.”

In the following days, his father’s disgusted attitude, the guidance and discussions behind the servants’ backs, the pitiful gazes of the people around him, and the cold attitude of the clansmen...

Everything around him changed.

Only then did Yu Shansi understand his Eldest Sister’s good intentions. His Eldest Sister, who should have hated him the most, would not be like his Third Sister, who coaxed him with honeyed words. His Third Sister calculated the pros and cons in her eyes and quietly weighed him in her heart. In order to fulfill her own wish, she could even sacrifice him and her mother.

Yu Youyao had always been a competent eldest sister.

When he was in the Yu Residence, she took good care of him.

When he arrived in the North and was far away from his family, she took on the responsibility of teaching him, testing his studies, teaching him how to deal with people, and caring about his daily life.

Worried that he was living a hard life in the school, she had prepared incense, medicine, tea, ink, paper, and an inkstone for him. She was also worried that he wouldn’t get along well with his classmates. She had also prepared gifts for him to give to others.

Yu Youyao only returned to the Jiuxiao Courtyard after the carriage left the residence.

Chun Xiao brought over the gift that Yu Shansi had brought.

It was actually a small vat carved from jade, and it was made of an entire piece of jade. The craftsmanship of digging alone required superb skills. Jade was not mud. It was thick and hard. One needed a small tool to hollow out the middle bit by bit and polish it into shape. It required a lot of time, energy, and attention. If there was even the slightest mistake, the entire jade material would crack.

The area around Anshan was rich in jade. The jade material was not top-notch, but it looked smooth. Coupled with Yu Shansi’s meticulous carving, it looked natural.

It was obvious that he had put in a lot of effort.

Yu Youyao liked it very much, so she said, “I’ll raise a daffodil there later and place it in the study.”

... .

After recuperating for a few more days, Yu Youyao’s foot injury finally recovered.

Nanny Yue had brought a few stewards over to greet Yu Youyao. They were all people who had participated in the sweet potato planting test back then, and Yu Youyao valued them very much.

Nanny Yue said, “Young Miss suggested the planting method of cutting vines. We spent a lot of time cutting flowers, but the flowers didn’t grow. Meanwhile, we inadvertently inserted vines and the vines grew. We accidentally found the most productive planting method for the sweet potatoes. Therefore, the sweet potatoes were quickly and widely planted in the north and south. I discussed this matter with a few stewards who were trying to plant the sweet potatoes. We’ll first focus on growing the seedlings like rice, fattening them and growing them. When the vines grow, we’ll cut the vines and plant them around the Dragon Boat Festival.”

Yu Youyao’s heart skipped a beat. “This is a good method. The quality of the vines that are carefully nurtured is better than planting them in pieces. The production might even increase. After the seedlings grow, the vines will become more luxuriant, and the range of cuttage will greatly increase. The most important thing is that through the seedlings, the production of sweet potatoes won’t be reduced because of excessive cutting of the vines.”

Nanny Yue smiled and nodded. “The planting of sweet potatoes in the Liaodong area is mainly concentrated in the Xiangping area. Although there’s a lot of production, other than eating at home and keeping a portion for breeding, most of them have been collected by the You army to help the refugees. There’s still a limited number. Now that a large number of refugees have surged into Liaodong, it’s urgent to expand the planting of sweet potatoes.”

This was also what Yu Youyao was most worried about.

It was true that “coming to the North to help King Yue Fei promote the widespread planting of sweet potatoes and alleviate the disaster in the North” was just an excuse to the public, but she had never lied.

Ever since she stepped into the territory of the North, she had already made up her mind to do her best to plant sweet potatoes on every inch of Liaodong.

It allowed the refugees who had surged into the North to rely on reclamation to plant sweet potatoes and settle down in the North.

Nanny Yue said, “Through seedling planting, it’s estimated that every acre of vines can be planted into at least 60 to 70 acres of land, more than ten times the original. It can also guarantee the production of sweet potatoes, perfectly resolving the problem of insufficient sweet potatoes.”

The huge rock that had been weighing on Yu Youyao’s heart for a long time was finally settled. She smiled. “I heard that the first batch of sweet potatoes has already sprouted, right?”

She had heard Yu Shansi mention it earlier.

Nanny Yue nodded. “As the climate in Liaodong is relatively wet and cold, and it’s our first time trying to breed, we chose to do it at the beginning of March. We chose commoners who are proficient in agriculture to take good care of them. Fortunately, the first batch of sweet potato seedlings is growing well.”

“The second batch of seedlings are expected to be planted at the end of the month. If there’s no problem with the second batch, there will be a large-scale breeding process at the beginning of April. At the same time, the local people will be taught how to grow seedlings.”

Yu Youyao had an idea. “How long will it take to raise the seedlings?”

Nanny Yue said, “According to past planting experience and the growth of the sweet potato seedlings, it will take about 20 days. The first and second batches of sweet potato seedlings are expected to be planted at the beginning of April and the end of April respectively. The third batch of sweet potato seedlings can be planted on a large scale around the Dragon Boat Festival.”

Yu Youyao’s expression relaxed. “Thank you for your hard work. When the second batch of sweet potatoes begins to grow, I’ll take some time to go to the manor to take a look.”

Nanny Yue looked troubled. “There will definitely be locusts if there’s a prolonged drought, and when locusts pass through, there’s often no harvest. Many areas in the North have been experiencing a drought for years. If there’s a locust plague, the Liaodong area will definitely be affected. June and July is the growth period of sweet potatoes, and the locust plague is mostly in June and June. If we don’t prevent it, I’m afraid...”

The commoners’ method of dealing with the locusts was to capture, kill, bury, and expel them after the locust plague arrived. However, in this way, the crops would definitely suffer a huge loss.

Yu Youyao’s expression turned solemn. She pondered for a long time. “I remember that in the Heavenly Works, there’s a record that using arsenic with plant ash can effectively prevent pests.”

“Huo Wenmin’s Compendium also records that Guangdong has ‘amphibious crabs’ that can eat grain buds and is very harmful to agriculture. Only ducks can eat it. Therefore, among the ducks in the world, the ducks in Guangnan are the most prosperous. The ‘amphibious crabs’ refer to locusts.”

“It’s also recorded in the Book of Flooding Victory from the Western Han Dynasty. By mixing horse bones, silkworm dung, sheep dung, appendages, and so on, the crops won’t have locusts...”

Yu Youyao had also read a lot of relevant books about agriculture. For a moment, her mind was filled with a thousand thoughts, but she did not have a serious idea, so she could only say, “Let me think about it carefully.”

Nanny Yue and the other stewards felt much more at ease when they saw that although Young Miss did not come up with any good ideas for the time being, she was not completely helpless.

Yu Youyao temporarily put down the matter of the locusts and asked, “I remember that last year, we tried to plant cotton in various areas of the North. The initial planting only succeeded in the southeast part of Liaodong, right?”

Nanny Yue hurriedly said, “The climate in Liaodong is wet and cold. Cotton can only be grown in a few warm areas in the south. The main branches are in the areas of the Great Ling River, the Little Ling River, the Loyang River, and the Daughter River. As the cotton planting period in this area is shorter than in other areas, it was planted late last year.”

Chapter 862 - 862: Epidemic

“This year, we found commoners who are familiar with the local climate and are proficient in agriculture, so we adjusted the planting time. The first batch of cotton seeds has already sprouted, and the second batch will sprout at the end

of the month. For example, the planting time for sweet potatoes is not much different.”

Yu Youyao calmed down. “Sweet potatoes and cotton are the most important. We can’t be careless. We also have to try our best to plant other crops.”

After Nanny Yue and the stewards left, Yu Youyao sent someone to invite General An Yuan over for a discussion. Then, she went to the study and wrote down in detail what she knew about the prevention method of the locusts.

At this moment, Xia Tao came over to report, “Young Miss, General An Yuan and Military Advisor Huang are here together.”

Yu Youyao was a little surprised and quickly went to the reception pavilion. “Has everything been handled in Anshan?”

Huang Wenxian nodded. “It’s all settled. Lord Li doesn’t suspect anything. Yin Qi has arranged for someone to take over the follow-up matters of the gold mine. He’ll be in charge of the rest.”

His Highness had sent him to the Little Princess Consort’s side to help her deal with some trivial matters so that she wouldn’t have to work hard. Naturally, he wouldn’t stay in Liancheng for long.

Yu Youyao smiled. “Has there been any news from the Imperial Court?”

Huang Wenxian said, “Not long ago, the Imperial Court issued a commendation document. It’s not a mistake to suppress the bandits. The palace even rewarded you. They only said that the Empress Dowager is grateful for the princess’s kindness and righteousness to calm her down.”

Only then did Yu Youyao notice that there was a wooden box in the hall.

The Empress Dowager’s reward was nothing more than some expensive medicinal herbs, spices, and some exquisite gold, silver, pearls, and jade.

The palace had never lacked such rare things.

The Empress Dowager was not stingy with her rewards.

These things were often priceless outside.

Naturally, Yu Youyao was happy to have obtained such good things for no reason. She was in no hurry to take a look. Instead, she changed the topic to serious matters. “A large number of refugees have surged into the Liaodong area. How did they settle down?”

General Anyuan said, “Longcheng is the gate city of Liaodong. It also takes time to settle the refugees, so we’ll temporarily settle them outside Longcheng and let the You army guard them. The government will step in to verify the identities of the refugees.” At this point, he added, “Your clan brother, Yu Shande, is there. The refugees follow his lead. We’ll discuss many matters with him. It’ll be much more convenient for him to step in and communicate with the refugees.”

Yu Youyao had also been paying attention to the news about Yu Shande and had heard about this.

General Anyuan continued, “Those who are literate and proficient in craftsmanship will be prioritized according to their needs. The remaining people will be specially taught silkworm raising,

fishing, and other skills. As the North wants to develop the silkworm industry vigorously, there are few people in the silk weaving, printing, and dyeing fields, so they will also choose some people from the refugees to learn these skills.”

The best talents would prioritize the needs of the princess and the Xie family. The rest would be distributed by the Yue Fei’s Residence.

It was appropriate. Yu Youyao continued, “In March, the weather will begin to heat up greatly. The weather will be hot and humid, and it will breed germs. If a large number of refugees gather together, it’s easy for an epidemic to spread.”

It was also because Nanny Yue had mentioned the locust plague that she realized that compared to locust plagues that only occurred in June and July, it was easiest for diseases to breed in April and May.

This was an urgent matter.

They did not have much time to prepare.

As soon as these words were spoken, not only did General An Yuan react, but even Huang Wenxian’s expression turned solemn.

The You army was only in charge of taking in, suppressing, and resettling the refugees. Everything else was the government’s business, so they did not care too much.

Disasters were often accompanied by epidemic diseases. The government had also taken corresponding measures. The refugee camp had arranged for a doctor and some medicinal herbs to prevent illnesses in case of emergencies.

However, with the influx of refugees, the government was clearly not prepared.

It wasn’t that the government hadn’t realized this problem, but there were too many refugees, and the North lacked supplies. The government didn’t have enough manpower and energy, so it was inevitable that they would lose focus.

In addition, the temperature in Liaodong was wet and cold. Even in history, there were very few epidemics. It was inevitable that they would take a chance. They wanted to settle the refugees and evacuate them as soon as possible before the weather heated up greatly so that they could avoid an outbreak.

Now that Princess Shaoyi had directly pointed it out, they could not be negligent.

Yu Youyao continued, “We have to gather doctors from the city and have them stay in the refugee camp permanently. We have to set up a patrol team to check the cleanliness of the refugee camp every day. We have to force the refugees to pay attention to their personal cleanliness and encourage the refugees to supervise and report to each other. If anyone is not feeling well, they have to be isolated and treated immediately to prevent more people from being infected and to prevent a pandemic from spreading. We have to explain the seriousness of an epidemic to the refugees.”

General An Yuan nodded solemnly.

Yu Youyao continued, "In addition, Uncle Sun has some treatment methods for an epidemic. Prepare as many medicinal herbs as possible in case of emergencies. If necessary, invite Uncle Sun over to take charge."

Uncle Sun had traveled the north and south and was knowledgeable. He had experience and methods to treat an epidemic.

She pondered for a moment. "The most important thing about an epidemic is prevention. I have some incense recipes that can prevent a plague. I'll arrange for someone to speed up the production and burn them every day. They're the most effective for preventing and controlling the epidemic."

Epidemics all spread through insects and rats. Incense medicine had the effect of preventing insects, cleansing the body, and clearing the air. It was also a treatment method.

There were many similar incense recipes. They were either used to expel filth, detoxify insects, or prevent embalming.

Huang Wenxian immediately said, "It's just that medicinal herbs are scarce in the North..."

With so many refugees gathered together, it was impossible to guard against them. If an epidemic really broke out and there were not enough medicinal herbs, the consequences would be unimaginable.

"This is my negligence." The climate in Liaodong prevented her from realizing this. In addition, her desire to treat the refugees made her overlook everything that had happened after that. Yu Youyao blamed herself. "I should have been prepared for this when I decided to settle the refugees."

The fact that the government was unwilling to take in refugees did not necessarily mean that they would leave them in the lurch. It was just that supplies were already very difficult to obtain. There were all kinds of trouble in the future. Without the support of the Imperial Court, it was impossible for the government to deal with it.

If she did it well, she would do it for the people.

If she did not do it well, she would harm others.

She had taken it for granted. She had thought that settling down the refugees would give them hope for survival. Little did she know that this hope still had to face too many tests.

She had gathered a large number of refugees in the North. If an epidemic broke out, she would not be saving people, but harming them.

I didn't kill the people, but they died because of me.

Didn't Yin Huaixi know about this?

He knew!

As she wanted to do it, Yin Huaixi was willing to help her.

It was precisely because he knew the severity of the matter that Yin Huaixi kept running around outside. He wanted to settle the refugees down as soon as possible to prevent a tragedy from happening.

She pursed her lips tightly, her gaze cold, and her expression firm. “Tomorrow, release the news that the Xie family has donated a batch of medicinal herbs to prevent an epidemic among the refugees. They’ve also encouraged the commoners to pick medicinal herbs. I’ll buy the medicinal herbs picked by the commoners. The bigger the matter, the better.”

Chapter 863 - 863: Benevolence and Power

The medicinal herbs needed to prevent and treat the epidemic were also ordinary medicinal herbs, and a lot had grown on the mountain.

They were not prepared enough. Since there was still time now, they had to prepare with all their might.

Huang Wenxian immediately understood. “With the Xie family taking the lead to donate medicine, and the Princess accepting the medicine for the refugees, the bigger the matter is, the more the nobles in the North won’t be able to sit still.”

Resettlement of the refugees was a matter of national policy, so it was impossible for the nobles to stand by and do nothing.

Yu Youyao said calmly, “Release the news again. On March 15th, I’ll go to the Dragon Phoenix Temple to worship the Medicine Buddha and pray for the people of the North to recover.”

General An Yuan said, “With the Princess’s reputation in the North, as soon as the news spreads, the epidemic will attract everyone’s attention. I think that not only will the North help, but even the imperial court and rich businessmen from all over the country will help.”

Now that the Empress Dowager was in charge of the court and the royalists were powerful, the Imperial Court would not sit back and do nothing when the refugees were moved to Liaodong.

Instantly, they changed from being passive to taking the initiative.

After discussing the epidemic, Yu Youyao mentioned the locust plague.

Huang Wenxian and General An Yuan immediately looked bitter.

Yu Youyao said, “I’ve written down the method to prevent the locust plague. Among them, we can use a mixture of horse bones, silkworm feces, sheep feces, and so on to soak the seeds. This method can be popularized on a large scale. The things used in the prescription are also simple and easy to obtain. It’s also possible to raise ducks and geese to eliminate the locusts. Considering that there aren’t that many ducks in the North, we can send a merchant ship to Guangdong to buy ducks and geese, and incubate eggs...”

They were all coastal cities, so it was convenient to travel by sea. If the method of soaking the seeds did not prevent the locust plague, the locust plague would not be a threat once the ducks and geese appeared.

The army needed a large amount of meat every day, so there was no need to be afraid no matter how many ducks and geese they raised.

Huang Wenxian and General An Yuan looked at each other, as if anything could be easily resolved in front of the Princess. So why had the Princess called them over?!

Yu Youyao said, "After careful consideration, I think these two methods are the most effective. Of course, the more methods to prevent the locust plague, the better. There are many books in the Lushan Academy, so there must be other ways. Send someone over to search. It's almost spring planting time. We have to get the government to make an announcement as soon as possible and let the commoners prepare early. We can't miss the farming period."

General An Yuan said, "I'll handle the Lushan Academy."

Huang Wenxian also said, "I'll go to the government office later to meet Lord Ye and report this matter. I'll get the government to make arrangements as soon as possible."

Yu Youyao felt much more at ease.

There were also differences between state capitals.

For example, Lord Jia governed Quanzhou, which was a state capital. There were also people like Ye Cixiao, who governed the three provinces in Liaodong that consisted of more than ten counties of various sizes.

Although they were both third-grade martial artists, Lord Ye also held several positions at the same time. He was not someone Yu Youyao could order around. Interfering in the court was not a small matter. He should not have been criticized in the first place.

Huang Wenxian was the most suitable person to step in.

She sent Huang Wenxian and General An Yuan off.

Not long after, Xia Tao came over to report, "Head Steward Jiang, Manager Wan, and Carpenter Zhao have come to kowtow to the Eldest Miss to thank you."

After the Matriarch passed away, Nanny Liu also passed away.

Most of the others in the An Shou Hall stayed in the residence to continue serving.

The Matriarch had given her dowry to the Eldest Miss. They were also the first batch to come to Xiangping and were first in charge of doing some repairs to the courtyard.

In the past few days, the Eldest Miss had been busy reorganizing the courtyard and arranging official work for them.

Carpenter Zhao's family was still the same as when they were in the Yu Residence. They did some repairs and renovation work, which was leisurely and dignified.

The Eldest Miss had not treated the other two families badly either. In the past, they had arranged everything in front of the Matriarch. In front of the Eldest Miss, everything was arranged according to the same treatment as before.

One replaced the head steward, while the other filled in the gaps in the shop.

In addition, the Eldest Miss had also arranged for the corresponding supplements, cloth, food, rewards, and so on from her own accounts every month to show her preferential treatment to them.

Yu Youyao smiled. "Please come in."

Carpenter Zhao and his son had all come over. Of the people from the Jiang and 10,000 families, only the men in charge had come.

The four of them kowtowed to Yu Youyao obediently.

Yu Youyao quickly said, "Get up and sit down. You were all the most capable people in front of my Grandmother in the past. My Grandmother trusted you and was worried about me, so she asked you to work for me. Now that I've just come to the North and have bought many new businesses under my name, I still need you to take care of them."

They were all born into the family and had served the family for generations. They were also old people who did not lack ability and loyalty. Yu Youyao was relieved to use them.

There was no reason not to place them in important positions.

These words not only acknowledged their relationship with the Matriarch in the past, but also expressed how much they valued them.

Head Steward Jiang was also in tears. "We've served the Matriarch for most of our lives. When she was alive, she doted on the Eldest Miss the most. Before she died, she also treated us eagerly and asked us to serve the Eldest Miss well in the future. When the Matriarch was alive, she treated us well, so we should do our best to fulfill our master-servant relationship with her."

Head Steward Wan said excitedly, "The Matriarch has arranged for us to serve the Eldest Miss. We're her servants. The Eldest Miss treats us well because of our relationship with the Matriarch. This is our blessing."

The Eldest Miss made arrangements for them based on what was done in the past. On the one hand, she entrusted them with a heavy responsibility to show how much she valued them.

On the other hand, wasn't she secretly reminding them that they had to maintain their original appearance, which they displayed in front of her grandmother in the past, in front of her? They had to abide by the rules of the residence and do their best. They couldn't be arrogant just because they were serving her grandmother.

Otherwise, if they broke the rules of the residence, hindering their affection towards her grandmother, it would be very difficult for them to work.

This was business. Benevolence and power were mixed.

The preferential treatment they received was not from the government, but from the Eldest Miss herself. This also showed that the Eldest Miss treated them differently because of her grandmother and their relationship.

It was also because of their relationship.

Not only had they been placed in an important position, but they had also received dignity and benefits from the Eldest Miss. Anyone who knew what was going on should know that their master had put in a lot of effort for them.

After taking over from the residence today, they quickly came over and kowtowed to the Eldest Miss to show their loyalty.

After chatting for a while, they became much closer.

When Head Steward Jiang and Manager Wan left, they saw a young maidservant leading Bai Kui into the courtyard.

Miss Bai Kui was wearing a dark green jacket dress and did not plan to get married. She combed her hair and became a nanny. As she wanted to wear mourning clothes for the Matriarch, she did not have any accessories on her. However, her aura was even greater than before, and she had the aura of Nanny Liu back then.

The Eldest Miss wanted to start a medicinal incense business. Previously, when she was in Quanzhou, she had arranged for Bai Kui and Qing Xiu to go to the Jade Pavilion to learn from the manager.

Chapter 864: Everything was Ready Except the Crucial Element

It was said that Manager Ren was Eldest Madam Xie's maidservant in the past and had an extraordinary relationship with the Young Miss. It was obvious that they really took the Young Miss seriously.

Later on, when the Xie Residence was about to leave Quanzhou, Bai Kui and Qing Xiu were the first to come over like them.

They were in charge of repairing the courtyard in the residence.

Bai Kui and Qing Xiu were outside the residence, busy preparing the incense.

The two of them became true managers.

The status of Bai Kui and Qing Xiu couldn't compare to that of Head Steward Jiang and Manager Wan. However, in terms of their relationship, only Dong Mei and Chun Xiao, who lived with the Eldest Miss, could compare to Bai Kui and Qing Xiu.

At the thought of this, Butler Jiang smiled and greeted, "Miss Bai Kui, aren't you busy today? Why are you free to return to the residence?"

Young Miss wanted to expand the business of the Jade Pavilion throughout the country and even overseas. She opened an incense shop in Xiangping and planned to supply the needs of incense medicine in the country.

Bai Kui was in charge of the preparation and operation of the incense shop.

Qing Xiu was in charge of recruitment and teaching the knowledge of incense.

The two of them were extremely busy.

Bai Kui said politely, "Young Miss has been in Xiangping for a few days. I specially came to visit you today and report to you about the incense business."

Manager Wan hurriedly said, "In that case, I won't delay Miss Bai Kui's business."

When Yu Youyao was young, Bai Kui and Qing Xiu had been serving her grandmother. Other than Nanny Liu, Bai Kui and Qing Xiu took the most care of her.

Yu Youyao was very happy as she had not seen Bai Kui for a long time. Before Bai Kui could bow, she had already stepped forward and held her hand. "Sister Bai Kui is here. Sit down and talk."

"I thought that since you've settled down, I'd have to come over and disturb your peace." Bai Kui smiled and helped Yu Youyao to a low table at the side.

It wasn't until Yu Youyao was settled that she sat down beside her.

Bai Kui picked up the tea tray and picked up a few pieces of lychee wood charcoal from the small yellow clay stove. She placed them on the tea tray. Then, she took out tea leaves from the tea box. She sprinkled them on the bowl above the charcoal fire before covering the tea and charcoal with a teacup.

Then, she picked up the teapot and slowly poured hot water.

The hot water was absorbed by the charcoal tea in the bowl, and the bowl boiled. Golden tea seeped out along the edge of the cup, and the strong fragrance of tea filled the air with the unique fragrance of roasted tea.

Roasting tea seemed simple, but it tested one's skills.

Preserving the original mellowness of the tea leaves under the charcoal fire and integrating it with the unique fragrance of the charcoal fire was usually very difficult to do without a few years of effort.

Bai Kui picked up the tea tray with one hand and pressed the bottom of the bowl with the other. She slowly poured the roasted tea into the cup and handed it to Young Miss respectfully. "Young Miss, please have some tea."

Yu Youyao took the teacup. The charcoal tea had absorbed the astringency of the tea leaves and looked even more mellow. "Why didn't Sister Qing Xiu come over too?"

Bai Kui was holding a small pair of tongs and peeling pine nuts. "The incense shop is about to start operations. Qing Xiu is in charge of recruiting workers, as well as teaching the rules and some common knowledge about incense medicine. She's so busy that her feet don't touch the ground. She wants to come, but she can't leave. She plans to come and greet you when the incense shop is open."

Yu Youyao smiled as she ate the pine nuts. "It's been difficult for you to set up such a big stall." In the past, when they were in the An Shou Hall, Bai Kui was in charge of the management, while Qing Xiu was in charge of the people. The two of them had been taught by Nanny Liu. "By the way, you've been in Xiangping City for more than three months. Are you used to it?"

After her grandmother passed away, Bai Kui and Qing Xiu did not want to get married. They wanted to comb their hair. They also wanted to stay in the residence to be the mother in charge and continue to serve her.

Personally, Yu Youyao did not want them to keep serving others.

Coincidentally, she wanted to do the incense business, so she asked them for their opinions. Naturally, the two of them took on the responsibility.

At the mention of this, Bai Kui also smiled. “We’ve never done anything outside in the past, so we have a lot of ideas. However, when we do it, we’re gaining experience by actually doing the job. Fortunately, Madam Xie and Third Madam Xie helped. Butler Wen also helped a lot. The incense shop has only been perfected day by day. Although it’s been a little tiring, we’ve learned a lot. It’s not as comfortable as before, but we’re much more at ease.”

They were able to continue serving Young Miss and exhibit their value to the greatest extent. She and Qing Xiu were both very satisfied with their current lives.

Next, she mentioned the incense shop.

The incense shop was built. Yu Youyao was in a manor in the south of Xiangping City, close to Anshan.

Currently, there were about 300 people. In the future, there would be more and more. According to Eldest Miss’s request, the families of the martyrs would take priority, followed by the orphans and widows.

Everyone was introduced by Butler Wen. After Qing Xiu’s guidance and observation, they were screened twice. Those who were suitable were left to sign a contract with the incense shop.

Those who had signed an indenture would definitely have to be investigated carefully. If they had the ability, they would also be placed in an important position. Those who had signed a work contract would only do some incense-making work.

The incense recipe was in her and Qing Xiu’s hands.

The incense masters were also maidservants who had served the Young Miss in the past. They had learned a lot from her, so there was naturally no need to mention their loyalty.

In terms of spices and medicinal herbs, not only were they in agreement with the largest spices and medicinal herb businesses in Xiangping, but they were also supplied by the Lin and Yan families and the escort business. Naturally, they were not lacking.

Now, everything was ready except for the crucial element.

“We bought a shop in the best part of Xiangping and took the main shop of the Jade Pavilion. The layout of the shop is all renovated according to the Jade Pavilion in Quanzhou, and the operation is similar to that place. As the customs of the north and south are different, the two places are the same but not the same. The incense shop is expected to start operating at the beginning of April, and the shops will also open one after another...”

Yu Youyao listened to her until she finished speaking. Then, she knocked on her teacup and said with a serious expression, “Let’s put aside the matter of the incense shop. Since ancient times, there have been ten disasters and nine plagues. Many refugees have surged into the North, so we have to be on guard as soon as possible. Next, the incense shop has to do its best to make all kinds of incense medicine to avoid the plague.”

Hearing Bai Kui say that the incense shop was already operational, Yu Youyao heaved a sigh of relief.

Only with a well-equipped incense shop could they quickly avoid the plague and incense medicine in the most efficient way.

Bai Kui's expression also became much more serious. "I'll contact the merchants who supply spices and medicinal herbs later and get them to supply a large number of spices and medicinal herbs to make the incense medicine shop. We'll start making the incense medicine tonight."

Hearing Bai Kui's certainty, Yu Youyao felt relieved again. "Three hundred people are still too few. In my name, hire more temporary workers to speed up the production. It's not difficult to make incense medicine to avoid the plague, and the requirements aren't high. Considering that the incense making process is more complicated, we can separate the steps to make incense. We can deal with the medicinal herbs, grind them, sieve the powder, match them, and so on. We can hand the tasks over to different people to be in charge. Let them focus on only one task and not divert their attention. Then, we can form a large-scale production line and speed up the production."

Bai Kui thought for a moment and felt that this method was feasible. "I'll contact Butler Wen again and ask him to help hire a group of people. I'll discuss in detail with Qing Xiu and the incense masters from the incense shop later."

Chapter 865: Foundation

If they hired people at the last minute, they would not know their foundation. It was not good to use them, and it was inconvenient to order them around. If there was trouble, it would delay things. Should the incense medicine be used for others, she should be more cautious.

The people that Butler Wen had introduced were all more reliable, saving her a lot of trouble.

The two of them discussed some more details. Yu Youyao couldn't help but sigh with emotion. She had many people around her. No matter what she did, it would follow a logical train of thought.

Not long after Bai Kui left, Xie Xun came over.

Yu Youyao bowed to her Eldest Uncle and mentioned that she wanted to use the Xie family's name to do things.

Xie Xun smiled. "What a coincidence. I came over today to discuss with you. Old Master plans to donate 70% of the Xie family's money. Fifty percent will be given to King Yue Fei, while 20% will be given to the government."

Yu Youyao was stunned for a moment. "Actually, there's no need to..."

These were all the assets that the Xie family had accumulated for generations.

Xie Xun shook his head. "Everyone knows that the Xie family is rich. Now that we've left our hometown and come to the North, as the saying goes, it's cheap to leave our hometown. We don't have much foundation in the North. With this money in our hands, it's also tempting. It's worth it to use 70% of our assets to exchange for the Xie family's safety in the North."

Yu Youyao subconsciously said, "There's no need for so much..."

Xie Xun said, "King Yue Fei isn't the only one in the North. All the officials and local nobles are not easy to get along with. If we only donate a portion, others think that we are hiding well. It won't be good even if we donate the money. It won't be good either. If we donate quickly, others will

think that we're noble and benevolent. Only then will our family be able to settle down in the North."

This logic was actually the same as foreign merchants bringing a large number of supplies over to donate to King Yue Fei and help the government settle the refugees.

Yu Youyao's heart felt heavy. She had escaped the King of Liang and fled Quanzhou, but the nobles of the North were powerful and deeply rooted. They were not the King of Liang, but even stronger.

Xie Xun took a sip of tea and said, "The main reason is to help King Yue Fei and take the opportunity to teach the nobles of the North a lesson. In the eyes of outsiders, our family has such a relationship with King Yue Fei. In the future, if others want to touch us, they have to consider the Yue Fei's Residence first. If anyone is blind, King Yue Fei doesn't have to worry and will openly support us. The Xie Residence won't be too passive. Once we open up a way to earn money, why should we worry about not being able to recover?"

If the King of Liang wanted to rebel, the North couldn't stay out of it.

Now, Little Yao'er and Yin Huaixi's every move was also making full preparations for the upcoming chaotic world.

Putting aside the relationship between Little Yao'er and Yin Huaixi, the Xie family was lucky to have received King Yue Fei's protection. How could they take advantage of it for nothing and not think of repaying him?

The Imperial Court had issued a national policy. On the surface, the nobles were cooperating and helping to settle the refugees, but they did not do much. Everyone was watching.

At this time, someone should take the lead and set an example.

With a comparison, the nobles would not be careless.

The more supplies King Yue Fei had, the more stable the North would be.

At this point, Yu Youyao knew that her horizons were narrow.

In terms of understanding and relationships, she was far inferior to the Xie family. "What do you plan to do?"

Xie Xun said, "We'll still follow the original plan and donate 50% to King Yue Fei as military funds. The other 20% will be used to buy medicinal herbs to avoid the epidemic. We will donate the herbs to the state government office. We'll use the Xie family's name to do things. It's better to confirm it directly."

Medicinal herbs for avoiding the epidemic were not expensive. Even if it was only 20%, it was enough to buy all the relevant medicinal herbs in the three provinces of Liaodong.

Most of Yu Youyao's worries had been resolved, but she was not happy.

Xie Xun knew her scruples and explained, "The control of the banknotes is strict and they're also supervised by the government. When the Xie family left Quanzhou, in order to prevent the Jiazhou Residence from suspecting them, they only exchanged a small amount of banknotes for real money. Therefore, they accumulated a large number of banknotes."

This was considered most of the Xie family's assets.

Yu Youyao knew that the bank had the support of the Imperial Court, which was why they could exchange and circulate throughout the country. In places where trade and development took place, banknotes were more commonly circulated.

However, Liaodong was a military town, and the banknotes were very strictly controlled here.

Indeed!

Xie Xun said, "There are rules for the current circulation of money in the bank. The Xie Residence is only a merchant, so it's impossible for such a large sum of banknotes to be exchanged at will. During the peaceful years, these banknotes were placed on the surface to express goodwill to the Imperial Court behind the bank and seek better development. However, if it really comes to a chaotic world, it's still unknown what will happen to this money. It's better to donate it to avoid any worries."

To put it bluntly, only a small number of banknotes could be used in the hands of the Xie family. They were like pieces of waste paper. However, it was different in King Yue Fei's hands.

At that time, he would bring a thousand elite troops and surround the bank.

Even if the bank didn't want to pay, they had to.

If this money was donated to King Yue Fei, it would belong to him. If King Yue Fei wanted to withdraw his money, did he still need the bank's approval?

This money was military funds. If the bank did not pay, they would be charged with delaying the military. Even if they were killed on the spot, no one would dare to say anything.

Although the Imperial Court was behind the bank, how could the Imperial Court manage the military funds donated by the commoners?

In addition, the amount of banknotes from the Xie family was too large. A single bank did not have that much cash at all. At that time, they would definitely have to transfer money from the entire country.

Only Yue Fei could order the bank to be so ostentatious.

Yu Youyao pursed her lips. "If the Xie family wants to develop in the North, they also need a large sum of money..."

Old Master Xie smiled. "Those placed in the bank are all for others to see on the surface. For the convenience of doing business and for the sake of the higher-ups, the bank is inferior to your own family."

Yu Youyao immediately understood that it was impossible for a truly powerful family to exchange money for banknotes and throw it away.

Banknotes were only a proof of the prosperity of a family. It was the standard for the world to measure value, but it was not the key to measuring the foundation of a family.

Antiques in a golden age became gold in a chaotic world.

During the golden age, people collected all kinds of gold, silver, and jewelry, ancient books, calligraphy, and antique utensils.

In troubled times, if they exchanged it for real money, that money could be used as real money. As long as the family's foundation was still there, there would always be people in the family who could stand tall.

The Xie Residence put their wealth on the table.

He hid his foundation on every painting in the house, every antique in the treasure vault, and every treasure in the treasury...

Yu Youyao nodded. "In that case, I'll get Military Advisor Huang to introduce you to the government office tomorrow to meet Lord Ye. I think he's also worried about this matter."

At this time, standing up for the Xie family was like sending a pillow when one was sleepy. The provincial government would remember the credit of the Xie family, and the Xie family's path in the government would be completely cleared.

Xie Xun nodded. "In that case, it can't be better."

The next morning, Huang Wenxian arrived at the Xie Residence early in the morning. When he found out about the Xie Residence's big move, he was shocked.

Chapter 866 - 866: Seeing a Dragon in the Field

Huang Wenxian walked into the hall and bowed deeply to the Old Master. "On behalf of His Highness, the 500,000 soldiers, and the thousands of commoners in the North, I thank the Xie family for their benevolence."

After that, Huang Wenxian brought Xie Xun to the Ye Residence to visit Ye Xiaoci.

Ye Xiaoci looked to be in his forties and had a beautiful beard. Compared to ordinary middle-aged scholars, he was a little taller and stronger, but his aura seemed reserved and elegant.

At this moment, he was playing chess with his aide when the servant in front of him came to report.

Ye Xiaoci frowned.

The Xie Residence operated a wide range of businesses. It involved almost half of the Great Zhou Dynasty's business and controlled half of the Great Zhou Dynasty's shipping. Its business spanned the north and south of the river, and the inner and outer seas.

In terms of the other half of the shipping volume, it wasn't that the Xie family wasn't capable, but that they had a good relationship and often left room for maneuver. The Xie family had a lot of influence on the southeast coast and even in the Jianghuai area, forming an equal with the nobles in the Shanxi area.

The "merchant guild" in the North was as fierce as a tiger, but it was entrenched in the northwest. Even though they were greedy for the rich people in the south, they still did not dare to cross the line and touch the fat meat that belonged to the south.

On the surface, when the Xie Residence moved to the North, it looked like a small stone that had been thrown into the lake and could not cause any waves. However, there was an unknown undercurrent hidden at the calm bottom of the lake.

In terms of family management, the Xie family had already threatened the interests of most of the nobles in the North.

Even if the “merchant guilds” in the North joined forces to suppress them, the Xie family would not be controlled by others. The sea near Liancheng was the capital for the Xie family to resist the nobles.

The three provinces of Liaodong were military towns. Previously, because of King Li of Zhou’s case, the nobles of the three provinces of Liaodong were the first to bear the brunt and were cleaned up. King Yue Fei also took the opportunity to further control the three provinces of Liaodong and devoured most of the local forces.

The Liaodong area was King Yue Fei’s territory. The merchant guild was weak, so it was impossible for them to restrain the Xie family on the sea.

Princess Shaoyi, who was behind the Xie Residence, and the Yue Fei’s Residence had also restrained the nobles, causing them to be wary. Before there was a need to form a death grudge, no one dared to do anything rash.

“The sky is about to change.” Ye Xiaoci lost interest in playing chess and threw the white chess piece back into the chessboard.

The aide was a little surprised. “Why do you say that, sir?”

Ye Xiaoci said meaningfully, “The Xie family has lived in Quanzhou for generations, and their foundation is also in the Jianghuai and the southeast coast. Why should they give up on their business?”

The aide subconsciously said, “In the King Li of Zhou’s case, in order to appease the Imperial Court’s thunderous anger, the nobles have pushed out many scapegoats to take the blame. They’ve already suffered a huge blow. Some of the nobles are afraid of the power of King Yue Fei and have turned to Yue Fei to seek refuge with him. Yue Fei took the opportunity to further control the situation in the North and gained the upper hand in the battle with the nobles. However, Yue Fei did not take the opportunity to pursue the nobles. Instead, he hid and waited for the opportunity. In my opinion, it’s best not to use the hidden dragon.”

Concealed dragons were “hidden”. This line was at the bottom of the hexagram and was called “First Nine”. It suggested that dragons hid in the abyss, and the depths of yang were deep. They should wait for an opportunity and not use it so that it would be beneficial to their next move.

Ye Xiaoci smiled but did not say anything. A golden dragon would not stay in a pool and would fly into the sky once there was a storm. He had never underestimated Yin Huaixi.

This storm was the storm of the Great Zhou Dynasty.

Seeing that he did not refute, the aide continued, “Then, the nobles joined forces and pulled each other together. The struggle between the two sides also fell into a stalemate. As mentioned in the

Warring States Strategy, the two tigers competed with each other. The small one would definitely die, and the big one would definitely be injured. It's also true that a hidden dragon should not be used. It's obvious that Yue Fei is farsighted. The Xie Residence is now led by Princess Shaoyi. This is the opportunity King Yue Fei has been waiting for."

Ye Xiaoci smiled. "The first hexagram of the 64 hexagrams of the I Ching is called the Force hexagram. It's called the Hexagram of the Creative Heavens. Both of the lower and the upper trigrams are made of the trigram for 'force'. The hexagram suggests that hidden dragons should not be used. The line in the first position is a solid line. It suggests that the dragon is hidden in the ground, and its hidden virtue is not obvious. This is how to describe Yin Huaixi." His smile paused, and his voice stopped. Then, he changed his tone. "It's appropriate."

The aide's heart was in turmoil, but he did not show it on his face. "The Xie family has climbed up to the King of the North of Yue Fei and is protected by him. They should be used by him. The Yu family and even the royalists behind Princess Shaoyi have restrained the noble families, preventing them from acting rashly. The huge channels and connections behind the Xie family are also important chess pieces to suppress the nobles. From the looks of it, the North has already become a battlefield for the merchants. The conflicts between the merchants affect the overall situation of the North."

Other than sighing, the world was not surprised that the Xie family had moved to the North.

Meanwhile, the Xie family's operations in the Huai River and the southeast coast had already reached the limit. If they wanted to further expand their family business and accumulate money, they needed to rely on stronger nobles.

The North was vast and had abundant resources. There were also two trade routes. In the early years, Emperor Gaozu had issued a national policy to strengthen the borders and resist external forces. All the merchants in the world were eager to follow him. The Xie family had Princess Shaoyi behind them and had gotten close to Yue Fei, the King of the North. Now that the nobles were weak, it was only right for the Xie family to come to the North to develop.

The world did not suspect anything.

After guessing this, the aide finally understood why Lord Ye had said that the sky in the North was about to change.

Ye Xiaoci said playfully, "After the hidden dragon is used, it will appear in the field, and that it will be advantageous to meet a great man. This line is second in position and is also called 'Second Nine'. There is a collision and a dragon emerges. Therefore, it's a dragon wandering in the wild and staying above the people." He clapped his hands and said playfully, "It's also a Force hexagram. However, the field turns into a force. The force represents heaven, while the field represents the earth. Heaven is masculine, and the earth is feminine. Heaven and the earth are compatible. The dragon is in the sky and on the ground. It suggests that one will always be successful.

One could see the larger situation from a small part. One could tell that there was probably something else behind the Xie family's visit to the North.

The aide hid the shock in his heart.

“Yesterday afternoon, Huang Wenxian came to look for me and told me that a large number of refugees had gathered outside Longcheng. Now that the temperature is rising, I’m afraid a plague will erupt and the government will be on guard.” Ye Xiaoci stood up and tidied his clothes. “The Xie family wants to use money to clear the way for King Yue Fei. I think they can help me.”

The aide understood. Looking at how much the Xie family could worry for Lord Ye, he could basically foresee the outcome of this business war.

Before leaving, Ye Xiaoci sighed. “The nobles of the North are indeed too outrageous. Isn’t it good to be a person? Why do you have to be a Pixiu who has a mouth but no anus and swallows everything without leaking? No matter how much money a Pixiu collects, it’s still a beast. It’s time for someone to step forward and uphold justice.”

Whether they would give up their wealth to save their lives or not depended on how much the Xie family wanted to do.

Ye Xiaoci went to the living room.

Not long after, the butler led Huang Wenxian, Xie Xun, and the others into the living room.

It turned out that they were just visiting in private. It was fine as long as they were polite. There was no need to kneel to an official.

Chapter 867 - 867: Everyone Is a Chess Piece

Ye Xiaoci had to consider Princess Shaoyi and King Yue Fei’s status. The Xie family gave 70% of their assets, saving the remaining 30%. He politely invited Huang Wenxian and the others to sit down.

After the tea, Xie Xun explained his reason for coming.

Ye Xiaoci smiled and did not beat around the bush. “The sweet potatoes will only be planted on a large scale around the Dragon Boat Festival. There are a million refugees gathered in Liaodong, and they won’t be settled until May. The temperature continues to rise in May. If a plague erupts, it will definitely affect all of Liaodong. The consequences will be unimaginable. The matter of avoiding the plague is already imminent.”

Twenty percent of the Xie family’s wealth would not be less than ten million. It was indeed a huge sum. With such boldness, the nobles had already lost.

When Xie Xun heard his words, he knew that Lord Ye was a practical person. He couldn’t help but feel relieved.

Ye Xiaoci changed the topic. “To be honest with you, Master Xie, I’m also worried about this matter. The Xie family is righteous and it’s the blessing of the tens of thousands of people in the North. After the refugees are settled, I’ll definitely become a servant of the Imperial Court and ask for credit for the Xie family.”

Xie Xun hurriedly said, “Lord, you shouldn’t praise me so much. The Imperial Court has issued a national policy. We can’t be negligent in settling the refugees. It’s only right for everyone to follow it.”

Ye Xiaoci’s gaze moved slightly. No matter how dignified his words were now, it would hurt as much as a knife scraping against a noble’s body.

The Xie Residence was in the lead. It wouldn’t be long before Princess Shaoyi from the Yu Garden, who had just arrived in Xiangping and lived in seclusion, made a move.

When the nobles reacted, it would be time for a knife to be at their throats.

Smart people were often good at distorting people’s hearts. They only needed a chessboard. On the chessboard, they were all chess pieces. There was no need to participate personally and pretend to be polite to others.

Indeed!

That day, news spread in Xiangping City that Princess Shaoyi had arranged to meet the General’s Residence of Ningyuan and the families of the Huang Residence. Tomorrow, she would go to the Dragon Phoenix Temple to worship the Medicine Buddha and pray for the refugees. She would also buy the relevant medicinal herbs from the commoners in her own name.

Medicine Buddha held a medicinal pot in his left hand and medicinal herbs in his right. As the Sutra of the Medicine Buddha said, “... When you encounter all kinds of illnesses, you will lose weight, be dehydrated, and experience yellow fever and other illnesses. You will either be poisoned by nightmare ghosts and poisonous insects, or you will live a short life, or you will die while lying horizontally at any time. You want to wait for the illnesses to disappear and your wish to be fulfilled. At that time, the World Honored One will enter the Sandlands. He will eliminate all the troubles of all living beings...”

Therefore, she also worshiped the Medicine Buddha.

Princess Shaoyi’s intention to gather medicinal herbs to prevent and treat the epidemic was already obvious to everyone.

As soon as the news spread, the name of Princess Shaoyi’s kindness spread throughout Xiangping again. It was as if she had wings that quickly spread from Xiangping.

The Xie family was the first to respond to Princess Shaoyi.

The Yue Fei King’s Residence released news that the Xie Residence had donated 50% of their assets to King Yue Fei as military funds for the You army.

The government also announced that 20% of the Xie family’s assets would be used to buy all kinds of medicinal herbs to prevent the plague after the disaster. The government and the people who were managing the land should cooperate fully.

This matter caused a huge commotion in Xiangping City.

“Those wealthy merchants and nobles are all heartless because of their wealth. They earn the hard-earned money of the commoners. How can they be willing to

spend most of their assets? Who knows how many assets the Xie family has? Who knows how much they've donated? It's obvious even if you think about it. It's just a trick to fool the commoners."

Wasn't such a thing rare in the North?

"That can't be. As far as I know, the Xie family has always been known for being benevolent merchants. Not to mention the distant past, just look at the water disaster in Zhejiang earlier. Later, when there was a drought in the North, the Xie family was generous and tried their best to help the refugees. Princess Shaoyi is kind. As an external family, the Xie family can't really be those people who lie to the world."

"That's right. No matter how much they donate, as long as they really donate, I'll respect the Xie family. They are countless generations better than those stingy nobles in the North."

"..."

Everyone had their own opinions on this matter.

"The Xie family is rich. How much money does 70% of their assets translate to? Even real money can't circulate, so their assets definitely have to be placed in the bank. Behind the bank is the Imperial Court, and the banks everywhere are supervised by the government. If the Xie family wants to donate money, they definitely have to go through the bank's accounts. The stakes here are huge. Even if the Xie family wants to fake it, they can't possibly fool all the forces behind the Imperial Court, the government, and the bank, right? The Xie family dares to say this openly, so I think it's not far off."

"Brother, you're right. After causing such a huge commotion, many things can't be hidden. This isn't like real money. Who knows what's inside?"

"Banknotes need to go through the Imperial Court and the huge power behind the bank. There are too many people handling such a large sum of money. How can it be easily covered up?"

"Who do you think King Yue Fei is? The Xie family can fool the commoners, but can they fool King Yue Fei and the Imperial Court? Anyway, I don't believe that King Yue Fei will join forces with the Xie family to fool the commoners."

There was immediate silence. Everyone looked at one another, and an unbelievable thought appeared in their minds.

"So, is the Xie family really donating?"

"Most likely."

“...”

There was silence again. Soon, exclamations sounded one after another, all of them convinced by the righteousness of the Xie family.

With comparison, there was damage.

The righteous actions of the Xie Residence made the nobles seem even more heartless.

Under Huang Wen's deliberate arrangements, rumors quickly spread in Xiangping City. In less than half a day, it actually vaguely formed a wave of criticism against the nobles.

Moreover, this commotion actually seemed to be intensifying and spreading to the surroundings.

Huang Wenxian reported the situation outside.

Yu Youyao was not surprised by this. “After the emperor ascended the throne, he personally conquered the north, causing the 800,000-strong army to be completely wiped out. After that, the harassment of the border by the Northern Barbarians intensified. The commoners were in danger and suffered heavy casualties.”

“This situation only gradually improved when King Li of Zhou guarded Youzhou. In the next ten years, King Li of Zhou achieved glorious results in the North. The Di people were afraid of King Li of Zhou's bravery and retreated to the area 50 kilometers away from the narrow Yu Pass. The commoners in the North also treated King Li of Zhou as the War God of the North.”

“King Li of Zhou wanted to improve the situation of the nobles colluding and bullying the commoners. However, he had just arrived in the North and did not have a deep foundation in the North. He was also of no help in the court. Gradually, he was restricted by the nobles, and King Li of Zhou's situation in the North became more and more difficult.”

“Later, the Di people invaded wantonly, and the You army was defeated repeatedly because of a lack of supplies. Only then did the nobles realize the seriousness of the matter. No matter if they win or lose this battle, what awaits them is an interrogation from the Imperial Court.”

If they lost, the Imperial Court would definitely thoroughly investigate the reason behind it. The nobles would become the culprits and would not be able to escape death.

If they won this battle, King Li of Zhou would definitely enter the capital to meet the emperor. The Imperial Court would reward those who had contributed. At the same time, they would also punish those who had sinned. The nobles would still be unable to escape punishment.

Chapter 868 - 868: A Thousand-Mile Dyke

Huang Wenxian's expression was sad as he smiled bitterly. “They'll die either way. If they cooperate with the Marquis of Weining, there's still a chance of survival. Therefore, they're putting everything on the line and striking first. They might as well accuse King Li of Zhou of treason...”

At that time, the Weining Marquis Residence had all the power in the court. Imperial Consort Lu was doted on and could be said to be in the limelight.

Yu Youyao sighed softly. “The commoners have been bullied by the nobles for generations and have a deep grudge against them. King Li of Zhou’s death has even planted the root of their hostility towards the nobles in the hearts of the commoners. Later, King Li of Zhou’s injustice was cleared, and the evil deeds of the nobles were exposed to the world. This hostility was gradually replaced by hatred. It’s just that because of the power of the nobles, no one dared to resist.”

King Li of Zhou wasn’t the only one who had died in that battle back then.

There were also thousands of soldiers who eventually died at the hands of the Di people because they lacked supplies. They were the guardians of the North and the husbands, fathers, sons, and relatives of millions of commoners.

As long as they grasped this point and used it a little, it was easy to arouse the hatred of the commoners towards the nobles.

Many ants could bite an elephant to death.

This was just like when Madam Yang had claimed that she was sick and handed over the butler’s key. Her grandmother had asked her to help manage the household, and she had realized that there was a problem with the purchase in the main kitchen.

Yang Shuwan, Mother Yang, and Steward Zhou formed a stable and secret chain of interests. It was not easy to touch anyone.

Even if they were moved, it wouldn’t solve the fundamental problem.

Therefore, Yu Youyap controlled the others in the small village. A thousand-mile dyke could collapse because of an ant’s nest. One could not underestimate any of them.

The key to dealing with the nobles was clear.

If she couldn’t touch the land-owning class, could she still control those nobles?

As long as she controlled them, she could follow the clues and implicate the land-owning class.

Although it was not enough to uproot the land-owning class, her goal was not to completely eliminate them. After all, the land-owning class was the cornerstone of the development of the North. If they were exterminated, it was inevitable that the North would fall into civil strife. This was disadvantageous to Yin Huaixi. Her fundamental goal was to greatly weaken the power of the land-owning class.

... .

There were two major sources of medicinal herbs in the North.

One was led by the Bai family of Xiangping City. The place where the medicinal herbs were produced was in the three provinces of Liaodong.

The other area was led by the Qin family of Shaanxi. The medicinal herbs produced in the northwest were from the vast area west of Xi’an, including Shaanxi, Gansu, Ningxia, and Qinghai.

Even with the unique medicinal herbs, the North was still short of them.

The medicinal herbs produced in the Daoist area had priority over military resources.

The Imperial Court was suspicious of the vassal lords and had the protection of the local nobles. Whenever there was a conflict between the vassal lords and the nobles, the Imperial Court would first be suspicious of the vassal lords.

This was also the source of the nobles' fearlessness.

The You army was weak, so they had to be controlled by others.

King Li of Zhou was an example.

Old Master Bai sat in the front hall and listened to the servant report the situation outside. "... I originally praised the righteousness of the Xie family. I wonder who took advantage of the situation and instigated a condemnation. They said that the gentry were tyrannical and took advantage of the commoners..." This was a better excuse. In fact, there were all kinds of curses. "They even said, said..."

The servant, who was originally eloquent, immediately trembled. His mouth trembled, and he couldn't squeeze out a word from his throat. For a moment, his face turned pale.

Old Master Bai suddenly had a bad feeling.

However, Madam Bai was flustered and exasperated. She said angrily, "No matter what the people outside say, tell me everything in detail."

As the servant's calves trembled, he knelt on the ground with a thud and said in a trembling voice, "They said— They said that if the nobles were as benevolent as the Xie family, why would every family in the North be dressed in white? Everyone raised a white flag, and orphans and widows suffered. Fathers cried, wives lost their husbands, and sons lost their fathers. Even King Li of Zhou... was killed..."

"How can that be?" Madam Bai's expression changed and she immediately flew into a rage. With a bang, she slammed her palm on the table. "This is nonsense."

The scene of thousands of corpses in the North when the emperor was angry was still vivid in her mind.

These words were really sinister. They pushed all the nobles in the North to the limelight.

Old Master Bai's pupils were constricted. He quickly realized that the servant had always been talking about nobles and not the "gentry." It was difficult not to think deeply.

Madam Bai was worried that the rumors would become more and more intense, so she quickly said, "Send someone to keep an eye on the outside. If anyone dares to spread rumors and slander our Bai Residence, capture them and send them to the county office..."

Although the government office was located in Xiangping City, the big and small matters in Xiangping City were under the jurisdiction of the county office.

“Shut up!” Old Master Bai glanced at Madam Bai warningly and interrupted her coldly. He turned to the servant and said, “You can leave first!”

The servant felt as if he had been pardoned. He got up from the ground and ran away.

Madam Bai frowned. “Master, why are you...”

Old Master Bai said angrily, “Back then, King Li of Zhou’s case was like a river of blood. To this day, no one dares to discuss King Li of Zhou’s death wantonly. What right do those people outside have to be so brazen? Who gave them the guts? Who started it? If you want to capture them and bring them to the government office, wouldn’t it be revealing what we intended to hide and confirming the rumors about King Li of Zhou’s death?”

Madam Bai’s breathing tightened. “Master, you mean that the rumors outside were all premeditated? Could it be that the Xie family was behind it?”

The rumors only appeared after the Xie family donated military-funded medicinal herbs.

It was difficult not to associate it with the Xie family.

Old Master Bai nodded with difficulty. “It should be said that all of this was instigated by Princess Shaoyi and supported by King Yue Fei. Otherwise, the rumors wouldn’t have developed to this extent in just half a day.”

The Xie family had donated military resources and medicinal herbs, targeting the nobles.

It was not difficult to associate this with the soldiers who had died tragically on the battlefield because of a lack of supplies during the large-scale invasion of the Northern Barbarians back then, as well as the cause of King Li of Zhou’s death.

Madam Bai felt dizzy. “We can’t arrest them, but if we let these rumors become more and more intense, others will think that we have a guilty conscience and are hiding.” Her eyes widened. “Isn’t our family caught between a rock and a hard place now?”

Old Master Bai closed his eyes, his face ashen. “This is how brilliant Princess Shaoyi is. This matter was all caused by her. She was concerned about the plague of the refugees and used the Xie family’s righteousness to roast the nobles of the North over the fire. King Li of Zhou and King Yue Fei have extremely high prestige in the North, and the commoners have a deep grudge against the nobles. It’s very easy to anger them...”

Once it caused large-scale public anger, the government would have no choice but to interfere.

No matter how good they were at managing the government office, they only did what they could. It was impossible for the government to offend Princess Shaoyi or even the Yu Clan behind her for a mere merchant.

Chapter 869 - 869: Fall Because of an Ant’s Nest

Not to mention, he had heard that Princess Shaoyi’s master was a very famous female teacher from the Ye family.

She had some ties with Lord Ye.

It was said that a person who regularly walked by the river could not avoid getting their shoes wet. The Bai family could control the origin of medicinal herbs in the northeast area and manage such a huge family business. They had countless wealth. How could their family assets be clean?

Without the protection of the land-owning class, many things could not withstand a thorough investigation. Once a crime was confirmed, it would be a disaster for them.

As the chief official of the three provinces of Liaodong, it was impossible for Lord Ye to cover up for a guilty person.

Madam Bai's throat was a little dry. "How— How dare they? Although the Bai Residence is only a merchant family, the Han family behind us is a noble family in Xi'an..."

Old Master Bai shook his head with a bitter smile. "Don't you understand? This is a battle between the nobles and the Xie family. Princess Shaoyi, the Yu Clan behind her, the royalists behind the Yu Clan, and King Yue Fei are all involved. They all have a tacit understanding with the noble families in the North and won't easily get involved in the conflict between the merchants and nobles."

Everyone understood that once the aristocratic families were involved, it would affect the entire royal court, or even the Great Zhou. At that time, it would become a situation where the nobles fought.

No one could bear the consequences.

The land-owning class did not dare to act rashly.

Madam Bai couldn't help but be stunned. For a moment, she didn't understand what he meant. "Our family has been very filial to them. How can they remove their subordinates? If anything happens to our family, what good will it do to the Han family?"

Old Master Bai shook his head. "Not only is Princess Shaoyi a princess, but she's also the only first-grade Saint Venerable Princess in our dynasty. Her status is comparable to that of a legitimate princess. Behind her is the Yu Clan, the royalist party led by the Empress Dowager, the imperial family led by King Yue Fei, and even tens of millions of commoners. She's a princess who can control the structure of the court. It's not easy for aristocratic families to pass down their inheritance. As long as they're not mortal enemies, no one from the land-owning class will threaten another behemoth. They would not make enemies, using a hundred-year-old family business as a bet."

It was said that a wealthy family took three generations to build, while an aristocratic family took 100 years.

Wealthy families and aristocratic families had to go through generations of accumulated foundation and reputation to become truly powerful families. They would have a long history and prosperity.

Xu Jie wanted to defeat Yan Song and knew that the key was the emperor. Thus, he greeted the emperor and received his support. Only then did Xu Jie succeed.

Why were the nobles so fearless and not afraid of King Li of Zhou's might?

Wasn't it because the Imperial Court was so suspicious of the vassal lords that they were on the side of the land-owning class?

However, the King Li of Zhou case had provoked the dignity of the royal family, and the emperor hated the nobles of the North.

Just from this imperial examination, there were very few scholars on the rankings in the north, so it was obvious how the emperor treated the North.

Right now, the royalists in the court were very powerful.

The nobles did not dare to fight Princess Shaoyi head-on. Ever since Princess Shaoyi came to the North, the nobles did not act rashly. Everyone was watching the situation.

Old Master Bai said dejectedly, "We've already become abandoned pawns of the land-owning class."

In Xiangping, they were more sensitive to the situation in Xiangping, so they understood it faster and more thoroughly. Looking at Princess Shaoyi's actions in Liancheng, it was not difficult to deduce their current situation.

It was inevitable that they had to consider a way out.

There was dead silence in the room.

After a long time, Madam Bai said in a dry voice, "What should we do now?"

Old Master Bai sighed heavily. "The day after tomorrow, Princess Shaoyi will go to the Dragon Phoenix Temple and pay her respects to the Medicine Buddha to prevent the plague and pray for the refugees. On the surface, she only has an appointment with the General An Yuan's Residence and the Huang Residence. I believe the families that are on good terms with King Yue Fei will also go over to greet Princess Shaoyi. At the same time, they will express their support for Princess Shaoyi's attitude towards preventing the plague. At that time, bring our daughter over and mix with them."

When Madam Bai heard this, she understood that they were expressing their stance to Princess Shaoyi, indicating the Bai Residence's strong support for preventing the plague.

Old Master Bai continued, "Didn't the Xie Residence want to buy the medicinal herbs and donate them to the government? All the medicinal herbs related to preventing an epidemic will be sold to the Xie Residence at a 30% discount. I heard that Princess Shaoyi has established an incense shop and wants to make incense medicine to prevent an epidemic. Let's mix a batch of medicinal herbs and spices needed to make incense medicine and donate them to Princess Shaoyi's incense shop for free."

Madam Bai was a little hesitant. "But in that case, the Han family..."

If the Bai Residence joined King Yue Fei, they would definitely offend the Han family.

Their family had worked with the Han family for many years, and both sides knew a lot about each other. The Han Residence did not dare to rashly offend Princess Shaoyi, but it was easy for them to make a move on the Bai family.

King Li of Zhou's death was also related to the Bai Residence. If the Han family wanted to attack the Bai Residence, it was impossible for Princess Shaoyi to become enemies with the Han Residence for the Bai family.

Old Master Bai looked helpless. “Back then, when King Li of Zhou was avenged and the North fell into the hands of King Yue Fei, I should have known that such a day would come sooner or later. I should have made a decision back then.”

However, at that time, they were all scared out of their wits by the Imperial Court. They were worried that Yin Huaixi would hold a grudge against them, so they had no choice but to stand by and do nothing when they joined King Yue Fei.

In addition, at that time, Yin Huaixi’s body was crippled. The imperial physician had confirmed that he would not live past 20. They were not even afraid of King Li of Zhou, so why would they be afraid of a weak and sick cripple?

Due to their instinctive fear of the vassal lords, even though they trusted Yin Huaixi, they still had a backup plan. They wanted to use the nobles of the North to restrain the vassal lords. Therefore, back then, the ones the emperor killed the most were nobles. Meanwhile, relatively fewer people from the land-owning class were killed.

They were still useful to the Imperial Court. As long as they did not commit a crime on the surface, Yin Huaixi could not touch them openly.

If they surrendered to Yin Huaixi, who knew what the consequences would be?

For all kinds of reasons, after weighing the pros and cons, it was best for them to maintain the current situation for the time being.

Old Master Bai shook his head. “Unfortunately, King Yue Fei isn’t King Li of Zhou after all.” He wouldn’t be easily controlled.

After Yin Huaixi guarded the North, his control over it deepened day by day, especially in the three provinces of Liaodong. They were almost all under his control.

Everyone believed that most of the resources and economy in the North were concentrated in the mountains, Shaanxi, Gansu, and Qinghai. The three provinces of Liaodong were vast and sparsely populated, and there was a shortage of resources. In the short term, it could indeed alleviate the predicament of the You army being controlled by others. However, as time passed and the supplies in the three provinces of Liaodong were consumed, King Yue Fei still had to “control” them.

However, she had never expected Princess Shaoyi to grow high-yielding sweet potatoes that were not picky with soil.

She did not expect that the Xie family, who was in charge of shipping, would come to the North.

The supplies that King Yue Fei lacked could be shipped to him by sea, and they would not be controlled by any nobles. They would become the most powerful bargaining chip to deal with the nobles.

Madam Bai understood what he meant, but she still had scruples. “I’m afraid that if I hadn’t made a decision back then, King Yue Fei wouldn’t have appreciated it now.”

Not only were they not getting along, but they were also in trouble.

At that time, the Bai Residence would really be finished.

Chapter 870 - 870: Use Money to Save Their Lives

Translator: Atlas Studios Editor: Atlas Studios

How could Old Master Bai not understand this logic? However, they had no way out. "It's impossible for the aristocratic families to become enemies with Princess Shaoyi for our sake. I think that the Han family is already busy dealing with the aftermath so that they can cut ties with us as much as possible. When they're implicated in the future, we can cut the Gordian knot and escape as soon as possible."

It was impossible to escape unscathed, but the aristocratic families had a deep foundation. As long as their vitality was not damaged, they could be safe.

Old Master Bai continued, "If we continue to serve the land-owning class, we will definitely die. There's still a chance of survival if we join King Yue Fei."

Madam Bai looked exhausted. "We businessmen are all gamblers. Since you want to bet on King Yue Fei, let's bet on him. If you want to do it like the Xie family, do it quickly. Donate 70% of our family's assets to King Yue Fei as military funds. In addition to the medicinal herbs needed to avoid the plague, donate a batch of commonly used medicinal herbs in the army to the You army. In the future, the You army will buy medicinal herbs from our family at a 30% discount. At the same time, increase the supply of medicinal herbs."

To put it bluntly, they were using money to save their lives.

They hoped that King Yue Fei would give their family a way out on account of their "sincerity."

Old Master Bai looked conflicted. The Bai family's assets had also been painstakingly earned by their family for generations. Now that they were going to be donated just like that, he couldn't make a decision for a moment.

Madam Bai also understood this. "As long as the Bai family's foundation is still there and the family business can still be earned, the more money we use to buy our lives, the better. Besides, with the Xie family in front, we have to imitate them."

Otherwise, it would seem insincere. Wouldn't it be a loss?

"Even if we donate, there's a huge difference between doing so early and late. We have the advantage of territory and can know all the movements of Xiangping immediately. We have the initiative, so this is also our chance to express our stance to Princess Shaoyi."

"You're right. It's better to do this sooner rather than later. When you return from the Dragon Phoenix Temple, we'll go look for Military Advisor Huang and discuss the donation." Old Master Bai looked like he was struggling. Finally, he gritted his teeth, and a ruthless look appeared in his eyes. "In that case, we might as well go all out and hand over the evidence in our hands that's disadvantageous to the Han family to Princess Shaoyi."

Since the Xie Residence had donated their assets, a noble had to step forward to respond. Only then could they shake the hearts of the other nobles and distance themselves from the relationship between the nobles and the landowning families.

The Bai Residence was the first to step forward and join King Yue Fei. The more they helped him, the more valuable they would be. It was very likely that they would be seen by others. After the Bai Residence joined King Yue Fei, King Yue Fei would not make things difficult for the Bai Residence. The other nobles would also fight to join him.

This way, the Yue Fei's Residence might be able to protect them.

Madam Bai frowned. "When you pull out a radish, some dirt comes up with it. The evidence in our hands regarding the Han family is all related to our family. In that case..."

Weren't the stakes too high?

If King Yue Fei kicked them to the curb once they had outlived their usefulness... The Bai Residence would be finished.

Old Master Bai said, "That depends on whether King Yue Fei is willing to give our family a way out. I've thought about it carefully. Although the Bai Residence has been helping a villain do evil for many years, at least on the surface, we haven't made things difficult for the You army. The medicinal herbs supplied to the You army can't be said to be of top quality, but they're not inferior. We won't give them short weight too. Although our family has participated in forcing King Li of Zhou to death, we've only waved the flag and secretly given some support. We haven't participated directly. I see that King Yue Fei's actions are not that ruthless. The reputation of Princess Shaoyi's kindness can't be faked..."

The foundation of the Bai Residence was in Xiangping City. Under the eyes of the vassal lords and state capitals, they naturally had to be more cautious. At the very least, on the surface, they could not easily offend others.

In addition, in the past, King Li of Zhou was extremely famous in the Liaodong area. If they openly made things difficult for the You army, it would be equivalent to making things difficult for the millions of local commoners.

Unexpectedly, this had become their family's only straw to clutch at.

... .

The next day, Yu Youyao got up before dawn.

Nanny Xu had specially chosen a set of clothes for her. She was wearing a round-collared long dress that was ochre-colored, a large reddish-black sleeved shirt, and a purple ceremonial robe. The Great Zhou Dynasty valued gold, purple, and red, but black was still a color that only nobles could wear.

Only the royal family could bestow a purple ceremonial robe. Yu Youyao was a first-grade Saint Venerable Princess. She was given a jade crown and a ceremonial robe. It was decorated with ruyi patterns and had golden embroidery at the edges. There were seven phoenixes on her chest, with two phoenixes facing each other. There were cranes, bats, and other bird patterns, as well as lotus flowers, lingzhi, peonies, and so on.

Purple was used as the background, and the embroidery was golden. Green, red, and blue were used for the phoenixes. These three colors were also used for the flower and bird patterns. Then, all kinds of pearls and jade treasures were inlaid.

It was heavy, but beautiful.

Nanny Xu picked out a crown and fixed it in her bun. The crown was inlaid with red gems and pearls.

Yu Youyao looked at herself in the glass mirror. She was glowing with jewelry. She quickly said, "I'm only going to the temple to offer incense and pay respects to the Medicine Buddha. There's no need to dress up so well."

The imposing manner from her entire body could almost compare to her imperial order.

Nanny Xu said, "This is the first time you've appeared in public since you arrived in the North. You should show off the etiquette through what you're wearing, in case others neglect you because of your status as the daughter of an external minister. Besides, you're here to pray for the tens of thousands of commoners. The more solemn your performance is, the more important it will be to others.

As the saying went, fine clothes opened all doors!

This was not very accurate, but it was undeniable that this was indeed a benchmark for a person. The noble families were respected in the North, and most people had never seen the world. By showing off the dignity of a princess, she could intimidate everyone.

Yu Youyao had also considered this, but she said, "After all, I'm mourning."

Only when one often felt close to their family would they have all kinds of scruples. Nanny Xu smiled. "According to Confucian thought, heaven, the earth, the king, one's parents, and one's teachers should be respected in that order. The king is higher than one's parents. You've been conferred the title of princess. The etiquette between the Matriarch and her subjects still needs to be observed. This trip is for the sake of the ruler and the people. There's no need to be wary."

A dignified first-grade Saint Venerable Princess appeared publicly. If she did not have any attire that represented her status, it would not be appropriate.

The purple robe looked the best with yellow and red. She had also considered that Yu Youyao was mourning, so she had matched it with a long skirt that was ochre-colored and a dark color that was between red and black.

Although it wasn't bright enough, it was stable and noble, making her look grand.

After putting on her clothes, Yu Youyao got into the carriage. Accompanying her were Madam Yao and some of the guards in the Yu Garden. It was still dawn, and the group set off majestically for the Dragon Phoenix Temple.

The Dragon Phoenix Temple was surrounded by trees and was located in the wilderness.

When the carriage reached the foot of the mountain, Yu Youyao alighted.

She stood at the foot of the mountain and looked at the winding mountain path that led up to the mountainside. A red-walled and green-tiled building was vaguely visible in the forest.

