

All Hail 981

Chapter 981 - 981: The Heir's Death

Yin Huaixi nodded. "With the support of the royalists, Empress Ning naturally snatched the opportunity to hold a funeral for the Empress Dowager."

Yu Youyao was suddenly shocked. "As the first wife, Empress Ning has the advantage of status, but Concubine Lan has been in charge of the harem for many years, so she might have the ability to compete. However, now that Ning Yuanbo's case has been raised again, Concubine Lan is deeply involved, so she naturally can't spare time for this. That's why Empress Ning took the opportunity to take over the funeral for the Empress Dowager without any effort.'

From the looks of it, Empress Ning's scheme was not just about Ning Yuanbo.

It was obvious that she had the intention of killing two birds with one stone.

Previously, Empress Ning had been attending to the Empress Dowager's illness in the Longevity Palace. The imperial physician had taken her pulse, prescribed a prescription, and brewed medicine to guard Empress Ning's health. However, the Empress Dowager's health could not be hidden.

Only when Empress Ning grasped the Empress Dowager's illness could she take the initiative and accurately make such a plan.

Perhaps from the moment the Empress Dowager fell seriously ill, she had already begun to make arrangements.

Yin Huaixi said, "Empress Ning will take this opportunity to gain the connections that the Empress Dowager has been managing outside the palace for many years. At the same time, she will also use the excuse of organizing the state funeral to wantonly eliminate Concubine Lan and Imperial Concubine Xu's power in the palace."

Yu Youyao agreed deeply. "In every dynasty, there are many people who have been punished during the state funeral. This is a blatant and logical opportunity."

Ever since the Great Zhou Dynasty was established, there had been a tradition of burying servants alive with the deceased. Later on, because the Emperor of Mingzong doted on the imperial palace maid beside him exclusively, he was worried that the woman he loved would be tragically buried with him after he passed away, so he abolished this system. Even though this imperial palace maid's life was short, the system of burying servants alive with the deceased had yet to recover.

Although the system of burying people alive with the deceased had been abolished, it did not mean that no one would die.

As the saying went, once there was a new emperor, there would be new ministers. The death of the nobles was the end of their lives, and it also meant the change of power in the harem. Usually, at this time, the struggle was the most intense.

There had always been many people who had died in vain.

Firstly, almost all the palace servants in the Longevity Palace would face the outcome of being sentenced to death or secretly executed. There were at least two to three hundred people.

In addition, many palace servants who were implicated could not escape death.

For all kinds of reasons, there were even more palace servants who would die from the change of power and struggle in the harem.

When the King of Hell fought, the little ghosts suffered.

At the very least, three to five hundred people, or even thousands of people, would die.

Therefore, this was also the best time to build connections and gather people's hearts. No one wanted to die. If they did not want to die, they could only find another family to seek refuge.

The change of power in the harem also directly affected the previous dynasty.

During the state funeral, everyone's mourning almost reached a strict level. From their clothes, makeup, expressions, and even their words and actions, they had to be cautious. If there was even the slightest mistake, they would be accused of "great disrespect" and not even have a chance to seek justice.

It was also a good time to eliminate their dissidents.

In that case, how was this killing two birds with one stone?

It was clearly killing three birds with one stone.

Yu Youyao sighed. "As expected of Empress Dowager Ning from the nightmare."

Before one wave was over, another rose. The Empress Dowager's funeral had yet to be decided, and another storm rose in the capital-

The heir of the King of Liang, Liang Jingye, had been poisoned and died tragically at home.

When the shocking news reached the royal court, it immediately caused a thousand ripples.

As everyone knew, the heir of the King of Liang had entered the capital alone with only two servants who had served him since he was young. The emperor had personally given him a residence and a few servants.

Almost everyone in Liang Residence was from the Imperial Court.

It was interesting that Prince Liang had been poisoned and died tragically at home.

Now that the emperor was seriously ill and the Empress Dowager had passed away, Prince Liang's death seemed to represent a certain message. For a moment, the entire court was on tenterhooks, as if they were facing a great enemy.

The cabinet urgently summoned a group of ministers for a meeting. They jointly wrote a memorial asking for help and sent it to the Yu Clan at full speed, asking Yu Zongshen to help and return to the court to be reinstated.

At this moment, only the Cabinet Grand Secretary could assist the country in a straight and honest manner. If Yu Zongshen returned to the court, he could also stabilize the court and ease the conflict for the throne.

The meeting hall was so quiet that one could hear a pin drop.

Elder Yu was helpless and could only say, “Isn’t there a meeting? Everyone is silent. How can we discuss this matter? We can’t wait for Lord Yu to return to the court to discuss it!”

However, Prince Liang was dead. Could this be delayed?!

Lord Qi was the first to speak. “How do you think we should discuss this matter? The Empress Dowager has passed away, and there’s not even a proper person in charge of the court outside the palace. This matter concerns the vassal lords, and it’s a serious matter. How can we officials discuss it rashly? The key is to invite the emperor to the court as soon as possible to manage the court. ”

If the emperor did not appear, this matter could not even be discussed. How should they deal with it?!

The Marquis of Zhen glanced at him. Old Qi really dared to say anything just because he was from the Imperial Court. At this time, he still wanted to provoke trouble.

The Great Zhou Dynasty ruled with “loyalty” and “filial piety.” If the emperor could manage the court, would he not even come out after the Empress Dowager’s death?!

However, the death of Prince Liang made him subconsciously think of what Mingzhao had told him in the past. If the King of Liang really arranged for a “real and fake heir”, this was malicious...

The Marquis of Zhen’s expression turned very ugly.

He subconsciously looked at Elder Yu. Elder Yu looked like he was still calm, but the slightly drooping corners of his mouth revealed his serious mood.

Elder Yu wasn’t the only one who could guess it. Everyone present could.

Therefore, the court officials could temporarily put down their desire to seize power and jointly write a request for help, asking Yu Zongshen to return to the court to preside over the overall situation.

As soon as Lord Qi finished speaking, the other officials of the Imperial Court seemed to have received a certain signal and chimed in.

“This is a serious matter. We don’t dare to discuss it rashly. We still have to ask the emperor to make a judgment.”

“A country can’t go without a ruler for a day. Now that the situation is in turmoil, why can’t the emperor come to the court? There has to be an explanation for this matter. Why is it being hidden?”

“The Empress Dowager has passed away, and all the funeral matters need to be decided by the emperor.”

“Prince Liang’s death has stirred up the entire court. This concerns the country.

The emperor should come to the court to find the murderer, and comfort the King of Liang and the vassal lords of various places. The most important thing is to calm the country and calm the hearts of the people...”

“The heir of a vassal lord has died in the capital for no reason. It’s simply shocking. This matter will not only damage the dignity of the Imperial Court, but also the emperor’s prestige. We have to give the King of Liang an explanation as soon as possible. Otherwise...”

Whether it was to give the King of Liang an explanation or to comfort the vassal lords, only the emperor could step in.

Elder Yu sighed slightly. Everyone present knew that the emperor was seriously ill and could no longer come to court.

However, who knew the exact situation? There indeed had to be an explanation for the emperor’s condition. They couldn’t keep hanging around, so no matter what they did, they had to be wary of this and worry about that. They couldn’t let go and were restricted everywhere..

Chapter 982 - 982: Removing the Hairpin to Persuade Politics

A country could not live without a ruler for a day. After knowing the emperor’s health, the matter of “the heir” could be brought to the surface. They could not let the ministers fight in private.

It was a competition for succession and chaos.

In short, there were no two ways about it. Someone had to unveil this layer of paper and stand out.

An official would not be punished for remonstrating.

Only Lord Qi could stand out. Only when Lord Qi did it would the others in the Imperial Court dare to stand out. Only when the Imperial Court bore the brunt would the other ministers in the court dare to follow.

Elder Yu closed his eyes. “Let’s go to the palace to investigate!”

They were the royalists. Only by protecting the emperor and the country could they be completely loyal and filial, allowing them to plan for the family for a hundred years. Today, the royalists had to take the lead.

The law excused the masses. Immediately, the court officials led by Elder Yu went to the Ganji Palace majestically and knelt at the entrance of the palace, requesting to see the emperor.

However, they were blocked by Eunuch He, who followed the emperor.

Immediately, a court official who prided himself on being “loyal” couldn’t help but feel anxious and angry. He pointed at Eunuch He’s nose and scolded, “You dog slave, you relied on the emperor’s favor to overstep your authority and dictatorship to stir up trouble in the court. You’re just a eunuch, but you’re bullying your master and becoming the emperor’s master. Who gave you the guts?!”

“The eunuchs have harmed the country. If we don’t make a decision as soon as possible about Prince Liang’s tragic death, the consequences will be unimaginable. If we delay the important matters of the country, can a eunuch like you bear the responsibility?!”

“You eunuch dog, move aside. I don’t mind telling you that even if we leave our heads in the palace today, we have to see the emperor.”

Both sides were in an uproar. Even the Empress, who was discussing with Eunuch Zhu, received the news. She immediately couldn’t care less and hurriedly rushed to the Ganji Palace.

After the Empress Dowager’s death, Empress Ning gradually gathered together. Some of the Empress Dowager’s connections in the palace deepened her control over the harem.

However, Concubine Lan was not someone to be trifled with after all. Even though she was overwrought by Ning Yuanbo’s case, she still firmly controlled the Ganji Palace.

This was an opportunity for Empress Ning.

Now that Ning Yuanbo’s residence was in jail, Concubine Lan did not have any external support and was alone. How could she still firmly control the harem?

Why had the Second Prince obtained the support of many old officials?

To put it bluntly, Concubine Lan’s favor was not bad, and the Second Prince was also valued by the emperor.

At this moment, if the news of the emperor’s serious illness was made public, the court officials who supported the Second Prince would definitely be swayed. Not only could it further attack Concubine Lan, but Empress Ning could also take the opportunity to win over the hearts of the people in the court.

Empress Ning had a good plan and rushed over.

At this moment, there was already an argument in front of the Ganji Palace.

It wasn’t until the eunuch’s sharp voice sounded that the court officials realized that the Empress was here. They quickly bowed and greeted her.

“Lords, please don’t be so polite.” Empress Ning hurriedly went forward and helped the leader, Elder Yu, up.

Elder Yu stood up, and the other ministers quickly followed.

The atmosphere became heavy.

Since Elder Yu was the leader, he naturally couldn’t give up halfway. “The emperor hasn’t been in court for a long time. It’s against the path of a wise ruler. If we, the officials, take it lightly, it’s also against the path of a loyal ruler. In the Great Zhou Dynasty, we have always been loyal and filial to govern the country. Now that the Empress Dowager has passed away, the harem of the previous dynasty needs the emperor to step in to manage the overall situation to ensure filial piety and stabilize the country. Therefore, we specially entered the palace to beg the emperor to come to the court.”

These words were dignified, resonating with everyone present.

Inviting the emperor to the court was the way to be loyal.

When the emperor came to court, it would show filial piety.

The Great Zhou Dynasty ruled with loyalty and filial piety. If loyalty and filial piety were incomplete, they would be struck down by the gods.

Even a loyal minister could not sit back and do nothing. The emperor was still unwilling to come to the court.

The Empress immediately felt extremely emotional. “Everyone, you’re worried about the state’s affairs. In order to be loyal to the emperor, you’re not concerned about life and death. It’s really the emperor’s great virtue and the blessing of the country that the Great Zhou Dynasty can have you as supporters. I’m just a woman and don’t know much about the politics of the previous dynasty. I’m settled in the inner residence. I simply hope that everyone lives a long life. I’m also mourning for the Empress Dowager. I only hope to be of the same mind as the emperor and don’t dare to exceed my duty.” These words were indeed brilliant.

However, it was not a lie. For many years, Empress Ning had not left the palace and was living in the inner residence. Even if she did follow the rules, the reason why she had opened the palace gate was because the Empress

Dowager’s health was not at peace. It could be considered filial piety to the Empress Dowager. No one could refute her.

All the court officials present had ulterior motives.

The Empress did not care what they were thinking and only continued, “All of you are the pillars of the country and trusted aides. To be able to make all of you willing to risk the crime of ‘disrespect’ to seek an audience with the emperor, it’s obvious that the situation has already become so serious.

Although I’m not talented, I’m willing to imitate Empress Jiang’s words of

‘removing the hairpin and persuading politics’. Together with all of you, I will beg the emperor to come to court.”

As soon as these words were spoken, there was immediately a commotion.

King Xuan of Zhou had neglected political affairs for a period of time. Empress Jiang understood righteousness and advised King Xuan of Zhou to work hard. She removed her hairpin and earrings. Then, she knelt in the Yong Alley for a long time to show that she was guilty.

When King Xuan of Zhou found out about Empress Jiang’s intentions, he was touched and ashamed. Hence, he worked hard to establish the revival of the Zhou royal family.

Empress Ning imitated Empress Jiang. She was virtuous inside and out, showing the virtuous demeanor of the mother of a country.

Then, the Empress took off her phoenix robe in public and knelt in front of the hall. Then, she took off the crown with nine dragons and nine phoenixes, earrings, necklace, bracelets, and other accessories on her head.

Eunuch He was shocked. “Your Majesty, that won’t do...”

Empress Jiang removed her hairpin to persuade politics, creating a revival for the Zhou royal family. Empress Ning imitated her for the sake of the Great Zhou Dynasty. Not to mention Eunuch He, even the emperor himself could not ignore it.

After taking off her phoenix robe and jewelry, the Empress knelt in front of the Ganji Palace and kept saying, “Why can’t I do what Empress Jiang did?!”

The court officials also reacted and quickly shouted, “Her Majesty is magnanimous...”

The Empress held the phoenix robe, the crown with nine dragons and nine phoenixes earrings, and other accessories in her hands. “I’m guilty. When the emperor comes to court, I’ll naturally deal with him personally. Eunuch He, please move aside. Don’t delay the important matters of the country.”

At this moment, Eunuch He did not dare to stop them anymore. His slender eyes swept across the officials present. “All of you are seeking an audience with the emperor to do your best to be loyal. It’s not good to disturb his health too much, so please discuss who will enter the palace with me and seek an audience with the emperor.”

There were more than 20 ministers present, so it was naturally impossible to bring them all into the palace.

Now that the court officials had achieved their goal, they would not be vague about this matter. They immediately elected three ministers, including Elder Yu, to meet the emperor with the Empress..

Chapter 983 - 983: Traitor

Eunuch He ordered someone to open the palace door.

The Empress was the first to enter the palace, and the court officials quickly followed.

The group walked into the inner hall unhindered. They saw the emperor lying on the dragon bed with an ashen expression. His mouth was crooked and his eyes were slanted, and his mouth was drooling.

Ah, this...

The few people present hurriedly lowered their heads, not daring to look at him anymore. They finally understood why Eunuch He wanted to stop them.

The emperor had a stroke. Looking at him now, his heavenly might had been damaged. Even if they saw the emperor, everything they had seen in the hall today would rot in their stomachs.

To the public, they could only say that the emperor was seriously ill and could not come to court.

Before entering the palace to see the emperor, the court officials had already prepared for the worst. Although they were a little disappointed, at least they knew the emperor’s exact situation and knew what to do.

Next, it was naturally time for Yu Zongshen, who they had asked for help from and returned to the court, to manage the court.

However, after this incident, the news that the emperor was seriously ill and could not come to court could no longer be covered up.

There was no time to delay.

However, was it that easy to become the heir?

Due to the matter of the heir apparent, a new round of disputes had arisen in the royal court. The matter of the heir apparent fell into a stalemate and could not be decided for a moment.

Under Yu Zongshen's orders, the capital began to be under full martial law.

His actions could not be said to be fast. However, before the Imperial Court could make a decision, Prince Liang died.

Far away in Liangzhou, the King of Liang, who had lost his beloved son in pain, angrily issued a denunciation of the Imperial Court. "The Imperial Court's expenditure is inexhaustible. The officials are greedy and rampant, and the incompetent ruler has usurped the throne. He's shameless and emotionless. He's tarnished the truth of history and has no virtue for the country. He's harmed the people. The people are not living well. The heavens are angry and the people are resentful, so a calamity descended from the sky. The floods are torrential, and droughts have occurred...'

A scattered denunciation angrily stated that the current throne had not been earned rightfully. Instead, it had been usurped. It also counted all the immoral actions that had been taken since the emperor ascended to the throne.

He insisted on doing things his own way and mobilized his troops to attack the North, causing the tragic death of 800,000 troops.

In order to cover up his crime, he attributed the tragic defeat in the north to

Duke Nine, who had died tragically on the battlefield because of his contribution to the rescue.

There was the calamity of the eldest son of the emperor dying prematurely.

There was the ruthlessness of killing his master and annihilating his family.

He abused his authority and falsely accused those who were loyal.

He didn't care about or sympathize with the people.

He protected villains and harmed his brothers.

There were too many crimes to be recorded.

It was impossible to stop the waves of the East Sea!

"Today, the hearts of the people have already left. We will calm the anger of the heavens and appease the resentment of the people. We will raise a righteous army and eliminate the disciples who have brought disaster to the country. By the might of the world, we will take tiger-like steps. We want to show kindness to the world. I have a duty of loyalty. This is just the right time for loyal ministers to

report to the country. When the martyrs make contributions, the entire country will mobilize its troops to fight against the rebellion.”

After Yu Zongshen regained his emotions and returned to court, Ning Yuanbo’s case was raised again. In the end, it forced the King of Liang to panic and he couldn’t hold back at all.

It was already June 24th.

Historically, it was known as the Chaos of Zhou Liang!

It had been less than a month since the heir of the King of Liang had died and the King of Liang had angrily issued an order to mobilize his troops.

King Liang used the death of his heir to make a big fuss. He used dignified excuses like “eliminating usurpation and rebellion”, “ridding the emperor of evil ministers”, and “revenge for his child” to conspire and shock the world.

The “usurpation” in “eliminating usurpation and rebellion” referred to illegally taking the throne.

“Rebellion” referred to acting perversely. It referred to the current emperor. He had even taken out evidence that the emperor had joined forces with Duke Duan’s relatives to launch a palace riot and steal the country’s power to spread throughout the world.

There was no mention of the Empress Dowager in the evidence.

No matter what, the dead were the most important.

The rules of the court also pointed out that the three current princes did not want to assist the court and fight for the throne.

Meanwhile, “ridding the emperor of evil ministers” referred to eunuchs stealing power and dictatorship.

These three excuses were completely valid on the surface. They were even reasonable. However, no matter what, they could not hide the ambition of the King of Liang.

But so what? As long as there was a reason, history was written by the victors.

Although she had long guessed this situation, Yu Youyao still felt a little uncomfortable at the end of the day. “When the King of Liang mobilizes his troops, the world will be in chaos. From now on, there will be no more rules of the Imperial Court. Do you think the King of Liang can reach the capital?”

Liangzhou was very far from the capital. They had to pass through many cities and experience many battles. The Imperial Court would also send troops to quell the rebellion. No matter how one looked at it, this was a tough battle.

“Of course,” said Yin Huaixi calmly. “Before the King of Liang infiltrates the capital, the King of Dongning and the King of Zhenxi will not move. After the Great Zhou Dynasty exists only in name, they will mobilize troops to suppress

him in the name of killing the rebels. At that time, we'll see who can enter the capital first and kill the rebels.”

Yu Youyao understood immediately. The King of Liang wanted to rebel, but he might not be willing to be the first to rebel.

There was a saying that the hunter would shoot the bird that stuck out. The first to rise would stand out. Without the proper Imperial Court, as a rebel minister, anyone, including the King of Liang, could use the excuse of a crusade.

The King of Liang might understand this logic.

However, he was schemed against by Yin Huaixi step by step, forcing him to take the lead. The King of Liang had staked everything this time and led a suicide army.

Success or failure depended on this.

“The North will take in all the refugees who have fled.” Yin Huaixi looked down at her. The Empress Dowager had passed away, and the entire country mourned. Yu Youyao had changed into a plain robe and had a light belt around her waist, making her look even more delicate and beautiful.

Yin Huaixi suddenly thought of something.

“Others cannot personally witness her. Only the king can enjoy her beauty.” “Her figure is solemn and noble. How can it be described with words?”

This poem revealed her beauty.

It wasn't unreasonable for her to be beautiful and filial.

Only then did Yu Youyao feel a little comforted. “King of Liang is rebelling, and the Great Zhou Dynasty is in flames. The Empress Dowager's funeral date has never been set.”

Yin Huaixi suddenly lowered his head and played with the jade tablet in his hand. He couldn't help but feel a little distracted. “It's not appropriate to hold a state funeral now. At the very least, we have to wait until the world is at peace and the new emperor takes over.”

Back then, the Empress Dowager had launched a palace riot and helped the current emperor ascend the throne. This was a secret history of the palace. It would not be recorded in the official history, nor would it be written randomly in the unofficial history.

Therefore, the Empress Dowager did not lose her virtue on the surface.

In addition, she had been balancing the court for many years and empathized with the people. No matter who became the emperor, they had to bury the Empress Dowager with the highest standards to show their respect and the benevolence of the new ruler.

“Will it take that long?” The King of Liang had 100,000 troops under him. They had traveled all the way north from Liangzhou and nurtured themselves with the resources of the territories they occupied. They kept gathering the local troops, plundering the local resources, and strengthening themselves. The army's eyes

were red from killing, and they were filled with bloodlust. The army that the Imperial Court had mobilized might not be a match for the King of Liang.

To put it bluntly, the army of the Imperial Court was sending themselves to death.

The army of the Imperial Court, whose purpose was to quell the rebellion, had the best weapons and equipment. All of this would become a way for the King of Liang to further arm the Liang army and increase his strength.

The King of Liang would become stronger and stronger.

The Imperial Court would become weaker and weaker.

Even if the King of Liang fought his way to the capital, the other vassal lords probably wouldn't be able to sit still. There was still a chance to fight this battle.

Yu Youyao couldn't help but ask, "How long will this battle last?"

Chapter 984 - 984: Accepting Fate

Yin Huaixi's lips curled up slightly, but his tone was still calm. "In at most three years, the sky of the Great Zhou Dynasty will completely change."

Three years!

To the annals, it was just a blink of an eye, but to the thousands of commoners in the world, it was cruel and long.

"It's been so long." Yu Youyao also knew that if the calamity of the vassal kings was not resolved, there would be many conflicts between the same family for the throne, let alone among different families!

Emperor Gaozu was majestic. Back then, he divided the dynasty into vassal states and governed them because the new dynasty had just been established. There were still many things to do. At that time, the other races were strong and restless, and generals who were good at war were needed to guard against them.

After Emperor Gaozu ascended the throne, he said, "The world is so big, so we have to build vassal states. We have to protect the country and let the people live in peace. Now that the new dynasty is established, the ruler and you will guard it together. It's good for each to have their own titles and be divided into various states."

The general idea was that the world was so big that it was impossible to protect it with just one emperor. It had to be divided into vassal states to protect the country and the people. Now that the new dynasty had been established, the emperor would fulfill his promise and guard the country with the officials. The officials would be allocated to various states to defend the borders. Only then could the Great Zhou last for generations.

That was why the Great Zhou Dynasty was divided into areas governed by vassal lords.

This move made Emperor Gaozu's prestige unprecedented. Later on, Emperor Gaozu issued a call for action. They fought wherever he pointed to. He was unstoppable, flattening the Northern

Barbarians, the Southern Barbarians, the Western Barbarians, and the Eastern Tribes one after another.

It created the peaceful and prosperous situation of the Great Zhou Dynasty for hundreds of years.

However, the vassal lords had been guarding the vassal lands for generations, so it was inevitable that their ambitions would grow. By the time Emperor Xianzong was around, the vassal lords had already become a disaster.

Why did the previous emperor value literature over martial arts?

On the surface, it was targeted at the generals and also to recuperate.

However, in fact, anyone with discerning eyes knew that the previous emperor was really suppressing the vassal lords. In the later stages of the previous emperor's reign, the strength of the vassal lords had already decreased greatly, and it was in sight to remove them.

Unfortunately, the previous emperor had been brooding over Consort Hui's death, so he had worked so hard that he had fallen ill and died at his prime.

The current emperor's expedition to the North had ruined most of the previous emperor's hard work and reignited the ambition of the vassal lords.

The death of King Li of Zhou further intensified the vassal lords' rebellion.

Yu Youyao suddenly remembered that she had seen an incomplete map of the grassland in Yin Huaixi's study previously. When Yin Huaixi was young, he had already sent spies deep into the grassland to investigate the terrain. It had been ten years.

It was obvious that Yin Huaixi already had the intention to attack the North.

If King Li of Zhou did not die and went into battle with his son to calm the expedition to the North first, he would not have to worry about the vassal lords being unable to resolve the injustice!

It could only be said that all of this was fate.

Now, Yin Huaixi was only following the will of the heavens to take back everything that belonged to him and his father to start another peaceful era.

Yu Youyao took a deep breath. "Looking at history, it's very rare for a dynasty to change in just three years."

Yin Huaixi changed the topic. "According to the etiquette system of the state funeral, it's not uncommon for the Empress Dowager's coffin to be kept in a temporary shelter for two to three years before burial. The royal family has a secret spice that can keep corpses from decaying for decades. The emperor hasn't established an heir yet, and the new emperor hasn't taken over. The Longevity Palace is temporarily empty, so it can be used as a place for storing her coffin.'

If the new emperor ascended the throne, the Empress Dowager's body would have to be moved to the Fengxian Hall.

Yu Youyao had an idea. She only said, "In that case, I don't have to return to the capital to attend the state funeral for the time being. I'll write a eulogy later and send it to the capital to express my sorrow."

Yin Huaixi nodded. "That's how it should be."

The Imperial Court's crusade document was also very fast. "Thief Liang is a traitorous vassal. You're a rebel. We have received the heavenly mandate to rule the world. My brothers and I will bow and be filial..."

Later on, the document counted in detail some of the benevolent actions that the emperor had done since he ascended the throne. This included many merits when the emperor was in power, such as honoring the Empress Dowager, not recruiting any new concubines, resolving the flood, promoting national policy, eliminating the disasters that the people faced, and so on.

Although it was an exaggeration, they weren't all groundless.

Behind these merits was the Empress Dowager's push. The denouncement letter borrowed the Empress Dowager's virtue.

After that, the Imperial Court stood on the standpoint of morality to condemn, comment on, and criticize the King of Liang. "If you eat the salary of a ruler, you should worry about the lives of the world. The oaths of the royal court are still in your ears. How can you forget your loyalty? Thief Liang killed the supreme leader with your officials and broke the usual etiquette..."

They gave a long speech, mentioning that the King of Liang was disloyal and unrighteous. He was heartless and could not be trusted. He was rude and unwise.

At the end, the Imperial Court said, "All the ambitious people in the world will fight against the rebellious Thief Liang. All the prefectures and counties will use their anger to calm the country and eliminate the rebellion of the King of Liang. Thief Liang will be flattened and the people will be satisfied. Our country and the world will be at peace!"

The Great Zhou Dynasty was in flames, and everyone was in danger.

In just two months, the King of Liang fought his way to Quanzhou and occupied the most prosperous city on the southeast coast.

Only at this moment did the court officials come back to their senses. During this period of time, the various abnormalities in Quanzhou were not caused by the pirates, but by the King of Liang secretly crossing the river.

Due to Heir Song, the Marquis of Zhen had vaguely sensed the abnormality in Quanzhou. Previously, in the royal court, he had strongly suggested that they send an invigilator to patrol the southeast coast, but he had received intense objections from Concubine Lan.

The Marquis of Zhen had no evidence, so the matter of inspection was left unsettled.

This gave Thief Liang an opportunity.

It was inevitable that Concubine Lan would be accused of causing trouble for the country and politics.

The Second Prince could not absolve himself of the blame and was forced to resign from his position in the Grand Council.

When it rains, it pours. The Grand Secretary, Yu Zongshen, personally tried Ning Yuanbo's case. He calmed the protests and disputes inside and outside the court, winning the support of thousands of students in the world.

At the same time, Ning Yuanbo's residence had colluded with the Di people and conspired with the King of Liang to persecute King Li of Zhou, form cliques for personal gain, harm loyal and good people, and so on. More than 30 crimes surfaced.

Ning Yuanbo had colluded with the enemy to betray the country and wanted to rebel. The evidence was conclusive.

Concubine Lan was immediately stripped of her position and sent to the cold palace. Empress Ning snatched the phoenix seal and took charge of the harem. For a moment, she was in the limelight. Even Imperial Concubine Xu had to avoid her.

The Second Prince was implicated and imprisoned in the palace.

As a minister, Yu Zongshen could not overstep his imperial authority. He had to wait until the new ruler took over before dealing with the situation.

In the end, death couldn't be escaped.

The Fourth Prince, who had always kept a low profile, naturally took on all the administrative matters of the Second Prince in the military and began to interfere in the military matters. Coincidentally, he became the most popular prince to be the heir.

The radical faction in the royalist party that supported Empress Ning also took advantage of the victory to pursue and spare no effort to recruit, suppress, and cut off Concubine Lan's henchmen.

It was said that when the tree topples, the monkeys scatter. In order to protect themselves, the court officials who supported the Second Prince all turned to Empress Ning.

Concubine Lan had planned step by step for many years, but she had benefited Empress Ning and the Fourth Prince.

No one had expected that the first to fall would actually be the Second Prince, who seemed to have the most hope of winning the position of heir. For a moment, everyone sighed.

However, Yu Youyao knew that this was the outcome that Yin Huaixi had arranged for Concubine Lan and the Second Prince. Back then, King Li of Zhou had been accused of colluding with the enemy to betray the country and wanted to rebel..

Chapter 985 - 985: Cold Palace

Concubine Lan and the Second Prince were deeply rooted in the palace. Even if Ning Yuanbo's residence was convicted and imprisoned, it still couldn't shake their status. Yin Huaixi knew better than anyone else that the root of the problem had to be eliminated. He had kept Ning Yuanbo alive firstly to force the King of Liang to rebel, and secondly to use the King of Liang to eliminate Concubine Lan and the Second Prince.

Yin Huaixi retaliated and attacked Concubine Lan's family with the same crime. Even the ashes had been scattered, so it was impossible for the ashes to rise again.

It had been three days since Concubine Lan had been sent to the cold palace.

It was completely different from the cold palace she had invited herself into previously. This place was dark and rotten, and the smell of decay and mold lingered, exuding a sinister and ominous aura.

On the beam, a large net made of spiderwebs tightly wrapped around her. No matter how unwillingly and angrily she screamed and cursed, it did not matter.

At this moment, the dilapidated door was pushed open with a creak.

“Is someone here?!” Concubine Lan muttered and looked up in a daze.

A beam of light from the open door suddenly pierced into her eyes. A graceful and noble figure stood in the light and slowly walked towards her with high and mighty steps.

Concubine Lan’s eyes hurt from this dazzling figure, and tears flowed uncontrollably.

She blinked hard, and the blurry figure in front of her gradually cleared.

Empress Ning looked at her arrogantly, as if she was looking at an ant that could be crushed with a raise of her foot.

She slowly squatted down.

“You’re really in a sorry state!” Empress Ning’s slender fingers gently tidied the messy hair by Concubine Lan’s cheek.

Concubine Lan felt that the hand by her cheek was extremely cold. “What do you want?”

Empress Ning’s compassionate expression suddenly became ferocious. “What do I want to do?!” Her fair fingers suddenly pinched Concubine Lan’s chin at lightning speed. “Have you forgotten that hundreds of lives have been lost because of the Ning Residence? My father and brother died on the battlefield, but they were covered in filth. Also, my son died young not long after I was born.”

Concubine Lan saw a pair of hateful eyes on her calm face. They looked like they wanted to devour her.

“The hatred of my entire family being exterminated, and the pain and animosity of losing a son.” Empress Ning’s voice seemed to be squeezed out from between her teeth. There was a ferociousness of grinding her teeth. “I’ve never forgotten them.”

Concubine Lan screamed in panic, “You, let go of me. Get lost quickly!” She shook her head hard, wanting to break free from Empress Ning’s grip. “I didn’t do anything related to the Ning Residence. It was the Xu Residence. The emperor’s eldest son died prematurely, and it was also Concubine Yang’s doing. It has nothing to do with me. Every injustice has its perpetrator and every debt has its debtor. You...”

Imperial Concubine Shu was stripped of her title and sentenced to death. As she had lost her title, her mother’s surname was Yang, so she was called Concubine Yang. This was the general naming convention of those concubines who had been doted on and then lost their favor.

Empress Ning had been sealed in the palace for many years and often took care of flowers and plants. There were calluses on her fingers, and the rough calluses hurt Concubine Lan's cheeks, almost crushing them.

"You're right. Every injustice has its perpetrator, and every debt has its debtor. Therefore..." Empress Ning chuckled. In the empty and dead cold palace, accompanied by the clanging doors and windows, she looked strange and cold.

"I'm here to look for you!"

Concubine Lan subconsciously shook her head in denial. "It wasn't me..."

"You're like a vicious viper that's hiding in a hole all the time. Did you think I couldn't find you?" Empress Ning grabbed her neck. "Did you think that I wouldn't know you were helping to encourage it from behind?"

Her grip was very strong. In just a moment, Concubine Lan's face turned red and her eyes rolled back. "Let go of me, no..."

Empress Ning admired her terrified expression when she was on the verge of death.

Just as Concubine Lan thought that she would be strangled to death by Empress Ning, Empress Ning suddenly let go and slowly stood up. She tidied her clothes. "I won't kill you easily. I'll let you see Ning Yuanbo's blood splatter in the residence. I'll let you see your most beloved son suffer the pain of a thousand knives and ten thousand cuts until he's tortured to death bit by bit."

Concubine Lan clutched her neck and lay on the ground, breathing heavily. A broken voice came from her throat. "No, don't. If— If there's anything, come at me..."

"I know that you still have something to rely on." Empress Ning stared at her with a fierce gaze. "Even if you're stripped of your title and sent to the cold palace, you can still pass and quietly contact Ning Yuanbo's old subordinates in the court."

Concubine Lan's eyes suddenly opened, and a sentence kept echoing in her mind. Had the person she had arranged been discovered? How was that possible? It was impossible, impossible...

Empress Ning saw through her thoughts. "That dog slave is quite loyal to you.

He would rather die than confess. I could only chop him up and feed him to the dogs."

Concubine Lan's body couldn't help but go limp. Before she could heave a sigh of relief.

"However." Empress Ning changed the topic, and her light voice made Concubine Lan's heart rise to her throat again. Then, she heard the cold voice in her ear ring out. "This palace has always had a vine that when pulled, produces a string of gourds. I followed the vine and found many interesting things."

Concubine Lan's face turned pale.

Empress Ning looked at her forced calm expression and felt a burst of joy. “Why don’t you let me guess what your final reliance is?”

Concubine Lan subconsciously held her breath.

Empress Ning smiled. “After the emperor fell seriously ill, you regained control of the harem and did your best to act as a concubine who kept to herself. You spared no effort to push the Second Prince to the court and accumulated a lot of reputation for virtue.”

Compared to her and Imperial Concubine Xu, who were jumping up and down in the court, Concubine Lan had suddenly become a model concubine.

Others only thought that since Ning Yuanbo’s residence was in jail and Concubine Lan did not have the support of her mother’s clan, she naturally had to keep a low profile.

But!

Empress Ning had fought with Concubine Lan for decades. All these years, in Yi

Kun Palace, she had repeatedly reviewed everyone and everything related to Concubine Lan. She had carefully broken them open and analyzed them.

The person who knew one best would always be one’s enemy.

Concubine Lan quickly calmed down. “The harem can’t do political work, and I’m just a concubine. Is that wrong?”

She simply hated the fact that Duke Xu was too stupid.

Back then, Duke Xu was originally a small general under Duke Ning. When he exposed Duke Ning’s mistakes on the battlefield, it was inevitable that people would accuse him of being ungrateful.

Seeing that the emperor was about to banish the Empress, Duke Xu immediately stood up to plead for Empress Ning.

At that time, Duke Xu had contributed to the rescue. He was in the limelight, and there were still many ministers in the court who were on good terms with Duke Ning, as well as some old subordinates. With Duke Xu in front of them, these people naturally did not have any scruples and pleaded for Empress Ning.

Later on, even the Empress Dowager stood up to protect the Empress, so the emperor did not banish the Empress.

Thus, Concubine Lan lost the chance to eliminate the root of the problem..

Chapter 986 - 986: Slander

The one who had advocated the expedition was the emperor, and it was also the emperor who had insisted on going against everyone’s opinions. Now that the entire expedition to the North had been destroyed, Duke Ning and his son had taken the blame, still causing the emperor to lose all his dignity and face. The emperor couldn’t wait to settle the matter. If Concubine Lan didn’t know her place and continued to attack Empress Ning, the matter would escalate.

Not long after, she realized that the emperor had rejected the Zhan Residence's suggestion to choose teachers for the emperor's eldest son.

The Zhan Residence wanted to build a solid foundation for the emperor's eldest son in advance.

These people would be the teachers of the emperor's eldest son when he was young.

When the eldest son of the emperor grew up and was conferred the title of crown prince, they would be the crown prince's aides.

When the crown prince ascended the throne, they would be the emperor's right-hand men.

Ever since the emperor's eldest son was young, the teachers would have been tied to his interests. They shared honor and disgrace, and the status of the emperor's eldest son had become unshakable.

Therefore, choosing teachers for the eldest son of the emperor was the most important. It often took a year and a half, or even a few years, to go from inspection to selection. The sooner they prepared, the better.

At that time, the emperor had high hopes for the crown prince. He even wanted Mr. Hu Shan to return to the court and raise the emperor's eldest son.

The emperor's sudden rejection of the Zhan Residence's suggestion made Concubine Lan acutely realize that the emperor's intention to nurture the emperor's eldest son had faded.

The majestic ambition in Concubine Lan's heart was like wild vines.

She made a crazy and bold move.

She took the opportunity to attack the crown prince.

Not long after the emperor's eldest son was born, his soul was very light. The empress was too sad and neglected the emperor's eldest son, causing him to die prematurely. It was reasonable.

The emperor's eldest son had died prematurely, and the empress was no longer a threat to Concubine Lan.

It was also the Empress's fault for losing her virtue.

The Empress lost all her dignity, and her position was nothing.

Empress Ning continued, "You controlled the Ganji Palace and instructed the Senior Imperial Censor to write a warning to bring the news of the emperor's serious illness to the surface, further inciting conflict in the court. I'll govern Consort Xu's harem, and the Third Prince and the Fourth Prince will compete for the throne. Then, you will be able to contact the ministers in the court who support the Second Prince and enter the Ganji Palace to ask the emperor to appoint the Second Prince as the heir."

Concubine Lan subconsciously denied. "You're talking nonsense. The emperor has the final say in the matter of choosing the heir. I'm just a concubine. How can I have the ability to control the emperor's heart?"

Empress Ning sneered. “You can’t change the emperor’s mind, but you’ve always been good at analyzing his heart. You’re also the best at catering to his will. By serving the emperor’s heart, you can always achieve your goal.’

Concubine Lan still refused to admit it. “The Weining Marquis Residence owes the emperor a favor. It’s only right for us to share the emperor’s burdens.”

Empress Ning did not argue with her. “Back then, the Xu Residence participated in the old matters of the Ning Residence. Although it went according to the emperor’s wishes, it also became a thorn in his heart. All these years, the emperor has been very tolerant of the Xu Residence because of this. The Xu Residence relied on the emperor’s kindness to form cliques in the court for personal gain. They’re deeply rooted, causing the emperor to be afraid and want to get rid of them.”

Concubine Lan’s heart skipped a beat. She had a bad feeling.

Indeed!

Empress Ning changed the topic. “However, the Ning Yuanbo’s Residence was hiding behind the scenes and helping to encourage it. You used the Xu Residence to uproot the Ning Residence.”

At that time, the Ning Residence was supporting the new ruler, and they were like the sun in the sky.

As the first wife, her position was very stable.

Concubine Lan had been conferred the title of Imperial Noble Consort. In terms of status, she would never surpass the Empress, and she was still a concubine.

However, the position of Imperial Noble Consort was only a step away from the Empress, as if it was at hand.

The defeat in the north had allowed Concubine Lan to find a chance to rise to power.

At that time, the general guarding the North was one of the generals who had participated in the expedition to the North.

This person was greedy for credit and advanced rashly, flattering the emperor. When he was on the northern expedition, he often slandered the emperor, causing the relationship between him and her father and brother to become more and more tense.

Discord between rulers and ministers was a huge taboo on the battlefield.

It was precisely because of this person that the emperor was so smug as a result of winning a few rounds of battle, causing the calamity of Lishan.

At that time, the emperor had wanted to push the blame to this person. However, the emperor did not wrong him completely.

It was the Weining Marquis Residence who had interfered, causing the bad reputation that shouldn’t have been borne by Empress Ning’s father and brother to fall on them.

However, Concubine Lan had never expected the Empress Dowager to step in to protect the Empress.

This had completely cut off Concubine Lan's path to success.

However, she had also lost her eldest son because of this.

Concubine Lan sneered. "Empress, don't slander me."

Empress Ning was not angry. "The Xu family forged evidence of my father and brother's mistakes on the battlefield. The Weining Marquis Residence was hidden and helped to encourage them, so they know very well. They even took the opportunity to preserve the evidence of the Xu family framing loyal officials. They secretly have something on the Xu family."

Therefore, Concubine Lan had never taken Imperial Concubine Xu seriously.

From the beginning, Imperial Concubine Xu was like a grasshopper in her hands.

Concubine Lan held her breath for a moment, but she quickly calmed down. "All of this is just the Empress's wild guess."

Empress Ning did not mind if she admitted it or not. "You just have to tell the emperor that back then, the reason why the emperor was trapped in Lishan was because Duke Xu had colluded with the enemy and betrayed the emperor by selling his information to the Di people. After that, Duke Ning and his son died tragically when they saved the emperor. Duke Xu was shameless and stood up to save the emperor righteously. Then, he was ungrateful and played the blame game. He slandered Duke Ning and his son, and blamed the Ning Residence for the crushing defeat of the expedition to the North. As a result, he achieved his goal of framing loyal and kind people."

At that time, the emperor was besieged, and her father and brother led troops to Lishan to save him. At that time, Duke Xu, who was still a small general under Duke Ning, was arranged to wait at the foot of Lishan to receive the emperor.

Although her father and brother had died tragically, they had still severely injured the Di Army who had been lying in ambush at that time.

That was why Duke Xu could successfully save the emperor.

Concubine Lan's expression changed drastically. "Don't slander me."

Empress Ning sneered. "Back then, the Xu family could forge evidence of my father and brother's mistakes on the battlefield. Why can't Ning Yuanbo's residence forge evidence of the Xu family colluding with the enemy to betray the country? After so many years, there are already some slight flaws. I don't think there's any way to investigate. Ning Yuanbo's residence doesn't have to worry about being exposed at all."

This was why Concubine Lan was so brilliant.

It was as if a dirty poisonous snake was spying on the enemy at all times, not missing any opportunity to bite back.

Concubine Lan couldn't help but gasp and take a deep breath. "The Ning Yuanbo's residence has always looked up to Duke Ning and the heir for loyalty and righteousness. We happened to find out the tip of the iceberg behind the crushing defeat of the expedition to the North. I couldn't bear to see Duke Ning and the heir be so loyal, yet end up with a reputation full of dirt. Therefore, for so many years, I've been secretly investigating the truth of the crushing defeat in the northern expedition back then. I wanted to avenge Duke Ning and the heir."

When Empress Ning heard this, her face was filled with mockery. “The emperor might fall for it, but I won’t fall. Forging evidence and framing charges are all the usual methods of Ning Yuanbo’s residence. How did King Li of Zhou die back then? You did it once in the past. This time, you’re even more proficient..”

Chapter 987 - 987: Letting a Dragon Into the Sea

At the mention of King Li of Zhou, Concubine Lan couldn’t help but hold her breath. She thought of Yue Fei, the King of the North, and a deep sense of fear flashed across her eyes.

Empress Ning sneered. “The emperor hates the Xu Residence deeply. Naturally, if a huge problem in his heart can be eliminated, and there is a proper explanation for the personal expedition to the North back then, if the emperor is satisfied, it’s inevitable that Ning Yuanbo, who has been imprisoned, will be able to make up for his mistakes. When he’s released from the prison, with the help of the ministers, it’s only logical for the emperor to appoint the Second Prince as the heir.”

Although her father and brother had taken all the faults of the crushing defeat in the North, the many details of the crushing defeat in the North were shrouded in fog and had become a taboo in the court.

The court officials did not dare to mention it much, even in private. This matter was left unsettled.

If the culprit was Duke Xu, all of this would be accountable.

Concubine Lan had catered to the emperor’s thoughts and sought favor with the emperor. The emperor would definitely express something. With the persuasion of the ministers, the Second Prince would naturally be appointed. Concubine Lan’s face turned slightly pale, and she subconsciously clenched her fists.

Empress Ning sighed. “After Ning Yuanbo’s residence was locked up, you had no intention of exonerating him at all. You acted as if you were completely at the mercy of the emperor and even claimed that you were guilty. You invited yourself into the cold palace and further gained the emperor’s trust. You paved the way for the Second Prince in the court and paved the way for you to come

out of the cold palace in the future.”

Not long after Concubine Lan entered the cold palace, the Second Prince openly entered and left the Imperial Study, the Hall of Diligent Governance, and other important locations when the emperor dealt with government affairs.

The emperor’s attitude made many ministers in the court treat the Second Prince well, like cats that had smelled fish.

It laid the foundation for the Second Prince’s status in the court.

“But in fact, because of King Li of Zhou’s case, Ning Yuanbo’s residence has gradually lost the emperor’s trust. The case of the imperial examination fraud has completely angered the emperor. At that time, Ning Yuanbo’s power in the court was also crazily suppressed by the cabinet. Ning Yuanbo barely stayed in

the court and was also surrounded by enemies. If he was not careful, he would have been doomed.”

The cabinet, led by Xia Yansheng, used the case of King Li of Zhou to eliminate many of Ning Yuanbo’s henchmen in the court.

At that time, Concubine Lan’s faction was already weak.

However, when Ning Yuanbo’s residence was locked up and Concubine Lan invited herself into the cold palace, not only did it stabilize the Second Prince’s precarious status, but it also boosted his reputation.

It was obvious how powerful Concubine Lan’s methods were.

“You were the one who arranged for Ning Yuanbo’s residence to be imprisoned. It was to seek benefits and avoid harm. You secretly held evidence that the Xu family had presumably ‘colluded with the enemy to betray the country’ back then and framed loyal people. You were confident that as long as you produced this evidence, not only would Ning Yuanbo’s residence be cleared of all crimes, but they would also be able to offset their mistakes and return to the royal court to be valued by the emperor again.”

The emperor was afraid of the Xu Residence and hated it deeply. However, because of the old matters of the Ning Residence back then, he had no choice but to tolerate the Xu Residence.

Ning Yuanbo’s residence had proved with its actions that it was still the emperor’s sharpest knife. There was no reason for the emperor to give up on Ning Yuanbo’s residence.

After all, the emperor had single-handedly promoted Ning Yuanbo’s residence until now.

It was indeed a little difficult to give up on Ning Yuanbo’s residence, which he had nurtured for many years. Otherwise, why hadn’t the emperor mentioned a trial after Ning Yuanbo’s residence was locked up?!

Now that Ning Yuanbo had proven his value again, he should be placed in an important position again.

Concubine Lan had seen through the emperor’s thoughts.

Previously, she had worked hard to plan for Yu Shuangbai’s natural phoenix fate and the Fourth Prince’s patrol to the North.

However, the old minister’s advice caused the emperor to come to court. She was caught off guard and the matter of the patrol to the North was left unsettled.

If it weren’t for the fact that “that person” had sent a message to remind her that she could use the reopening of Ning Yuanbo’s case to counterattack and catch the other party off guard, Concubine Lan might really have achieved her goal.

Unfortunately...

Concubine Lan had offended someone she shouldn’t have.

However, Empress Ning did not guess that the real goal of reopening Ning Yuanbo's case was to force the King of Liang to panic and mobilize his troops to rebel.

Concubine Lan's body went limp, as if she had lost the last thing she could rely on. She was so cold that she was trembling.

After entering the cold palace, she had been thinking of a way to contact her father's old subordinates and get them to expose the fact that the Xu family had framed loyal people.

She did not believe that Empress Ning did not want to overturn the case concerning her father and brother!

She didn't want to clear her father's and brother's names?!

Didn't she want to clear Duke Ning's name?!

Before the injustice of the Ning Residence was redressed, Empress Ning would definitely not touch her easily. Empress Ning would even protect her.

Empress Ning was deeply involved in her father and brother's justice, so she couldn't care less about her.

She still had a chance.

However, her last reliance was gone.

Since Empress Ning could reveal her scheme, she must have control over the evidence of the case concerning her father and brother.

Empress Ning smiled faintly. "Ning Yuanbo's Residence exposed the Xu

Residence in the name of resolving the rebellion for the Ning Residence. Publicly, other than Imperial Concubine Xu's side, the Third Prince will definitely be implicated. As for me, I've lost my position because of the harem engaged in politics. The Fourth Prince's background is lowly, so he's under your control. The Second Prince is no longer a threat in the court. It's really killing two birds with one stone."

"Haha, releasing a tiger back to the mountain and letting a dragon return to the sea will cause endless trouble in the future." Concubine Lan laughed a little sadly. "I've planned everything flawlessly, but I'm not a match for the Empress. I've planned and won invisibly."

The old minister's advice was an opportunity for her to join forces with the ministers to expose the Xu Residence and let the emperor appoint the Second Prince as the heir. However, she never expected that she would be caught off guard by the court bringing up Ning Yuanbo's case again. However, she did not panic. She might as well carry it through and use this opportunity to expose the old case of the Ning Residence.

However, before everything could be implemented, the Empress Dowager had passed away. As she was deeply involved in Ning Yuanbo's case, she had lost the initiative and missed the opportunity to hold the state funeral.

Immediately after, the news of the heir's tragic death spread to the royal court.

Yu Zongshen returned to the court.

The King of Liang had mobilized his troops!

One disaster after another had completely thrown Ning Yuanbo's residence into eternal damnation, causing her to miss the opportunity to expose the Xu family again and again.

In the end, she was sent to the cold palace.

"Release a tiger to the mountain, and let a dragon return to the sea." Empress Ning seemed to have heard a huge joke and almost laughed until tears streamed down her face. "You shouldn't have said this to me.

Concubine Lan had a bad feeling. "What do you mean?"

"If I had such ability, I wouldn't have been played by you." Empress Ning looked like she was crying, yet she also looked like she was laughing. "Someone has already arranged for the end of the Ning Yuanbo Residence."

"Who?" Concubine Lan's eyes suddenly widened. "Who is it?"

"Release a tiger to the mountain, let a dragon return to the sea." Empress Ning laughed silently. She laughed happily. "What happened to the Marquis of

Changxing, Elder Tian, the Minister of War, and those nobles in the North? How could you be so naive as to think that he would let you off? As the culprit, Hahaha..."

Chapter 988 - 988: Suppressing the Thief

"King Yue Fei of the North." Concubine Lan's eyes suddenly widened. Her bloodshot eyes were filled with blood vessels, as if they wanted to devour someone. "It's Yin Huaixi..."

She thought that she was in control of the inner palace, but she never expected that Yin Huaixi had already reached into the inner palace for a long time. How ridiculous.

After Yin Huaixi returned to the court, the power of the Weining Marquis Residence suffered a destructive blow.

She had no choice but to use the matter of cheating in the examination to send Ning Yuanbo's residence to jail. Then, she invited herself into the cold palace to avoid it.

Others only thought that she was guarding against Imperial Concubine Xu.

However, from the beginning to the end, she was afraid of Yin Huaixi.

At that time, she understood that Yin Huaixi was already powerful. Unless the Second Prince could ascend the throne and rule over the vassal states, Yin Huaixi would definitely not let them off.

However, her struggles had become a joke.

Ever since Ye Hanyuan beat the drum, Yin Huaixi had already prepared an ending for Ning Yuanbo's residence.

In his eyes, Ning Yuanbo was just a tool to force Thief Liang to rebel.

Everything was connected.

"Release the tiger back to the mountain, let the dragon into the sea..." Concubine Lan screamed crazily and cursed angrily, hating herself for not eliminating the root of the problem back then. However, there was no medicine for regret in the world.

Empress Ning left the palace with a laugh.

Women from the palace were really pitiful. In the past, they had been raised in their own rooms. After entering the palace, they had been trapped in the inner courtyard of the palace for the rest of their lives. They only cared about this piece of land. It seemed to be high up in the air, but they were just a group of ignorant women with long hair and limited knowledge.

They couldn't see the outside, and they couldn't understand the patterns.

Concubine Lan was such a scheming person. She controlled the harem and played her and the emperor in her hands. There were so many schemes, but after Ning Yuanbo's residence fell, Concubine Lan became a bad judge of character.

It wasn't that she wasn't wary of Yin Huaixi.

Instead, she was too wary of Yin Huaixi. Instead, she was blinded by the competition.

Unknowingly, it was September.

In less than three months after the King of Liang's rebellion, riots of varying degrees happened everywhere. Memorials requesting the Imperial Court to send troops to suppress the riots were sent to the capital like snowflakes.

The dregs of society floated up again.

The hidden dangers and decay that had accumulated in the Great Zhou Dynasty for many years surfaced one after another, completely shattering the appearance of peace.

At this moment, the 100,000-strong army of the Imperial Court had long set off from Rehe to Quanzhou to suppress the rebels. This was already the largest number of troops the capital could mobilize. If they continued to mobilize troops to calm the chaos everywhere and the capital's troops were scattered, they would definitely face the predicament of having an empty army.

Facing the aggressive King of Liang, the Imperial Court was clearly at a disadvantage.

The Imperial Court had no choice but to order the government to issue a reward and organize the righteous people to suppress the rioters themselves.

With heavy rewards, there would definitely be brave people.

This move had indeed recruited a lot of people, but at the same time, a greater hidden danger had also been exposed.

The goal of suppressing the mob was to subdue it with force to achieve long-term peace.

However, most of the righteous people who could be recruited at a high price were outlaws or bloodthirsty people. They were unruly and unrestrained by the government, causing the suppression of the mob to have the opposite effect. It even caused many lives to be lost, and the suppression also became a case of officials forcing the people to rebel. Many innocent commoners were implicated and died tragically.

In order to survive, the commoners had no choice but to band together to survive. They joined forces to resist the government.

The Great Zhou Dynasty was in chaos.

During the attack of the Liang, the main generals gathered a portion of the troops from various cities and recruited ambitious people from all over the country to attack the Liang together. Soon, the army expanded to 150,000 soldiers.

When the two armies officially fought, there would be no less than 200,000 troops on their side.

The advantage of 200,000 troops against the 100,000-man Liang army greatly boosted the morale of the army. There was almost no suspense about their victory.

However, anyone with discerning eyes knew that the attack on the Liang was only the beginning. The King of Liang had rebelled and stood out. How far was it for the other vassal lords to govern the land and establish themselves as king?!

The Great Zhou Dynasty was destined to fall apart.

Smoke rose everywhere. The first to be in chaos was the hinterland of the

Central Plains, where the military was weak and the people were wealthy. Youzhou was located in the extreme north, and its troops were strong. Since ancient times, it had been easy to defend and difficult to attack. It was the first border of the Great Zhou Dynasty, and also the area with the most troops. It was chaotic on the outside but stable on the inside. It was the safest.

Moreover, after the King of Liang's rebellion, King Yue Fei had sent an official letter to the world. Youzhou would accept all the refugees who had fled from the war.

There were camps at all the checkpoints in the North.

However, Youzhou was located in the extreme north after all. The journey was long, and there were still very few ordinary people fleeing to Youzhou.

Therefore, a lot of merchants and squires who had fled from the south rushed into the North. These people could use tools to escape first.

It was raining heavily in Xiangping City. Every year, in September, the weather would turn cold.

Yin Huaixi became very busy. He had to go to the army every day, and he stayed longer and longer in the army. Sometimes, he would disappear for a few days in a row.

Yu Youyao could feel that the atmosphere in the city had become tense, and the checkpoints had become more guarded.

At this moment, Xia Tao walked into the house. “Young Miss, His Highness has sent Chang An back to pass on a message. Tonight, His Highness is returning to the Yu Garden to accompany you for dinner.”

Yu Youyao perked up and instantly threw away all the messy thoughts in her mind.

“What time is it now?” As she asked, she subconsciously looked out of the window and saw that it was gloomy outside. There was no sun, and it seemed to be getting dark soon.

Immediately, she couldn’t sit still anymore and quickly stood up. “I’ll cook personally and go to the kitchen to make a few medicinal dishes.”

Xia Tao pursed her lips and chuckled. “It’s just 3pm. It’s still early. His Highness won’t be back so soon. Miss, don’t be too busy.”

There was one bad thing about Xiangping City. In August and September, the weather was wet and cold, and there was never any sun in the sky. It was always gloomy.

Seeing this bold girl laughing secretly, Yu Youyao immediately did not know whether to stand or sit. Her face turned fierce. “It’s already late. It’s autumn in Xiangping, and the sky turns dark early. It’s better to prepare early than to be flustered later.

Xia Tao pursed her lips tightly and nodded repeatedly. “Young Miss is right.”

Yu Youyao glared at her. “Yesterday, Madam Huang sent a lamp over. Go and instruct the kitchen to clean it up. I’ll personally cook a pot of mutton soup later. I’ll keep the lamb spine to make a lamb spine dish. His Highness likes this.”

After his body recovered, Yin Huaixi, like most northerners, had a strong taste.

Yu Youyao returned to her room to change her clothes before going to the kitchen.

The mutton was still being processed. She first instructed the servants to prepare all the necessary ingredients. She picked the medicinal herbs that she needed and soaked them in spiritual dewdrop.

When everything was ready, the mutton was also cleaned.

Yu Youyao planned to make mutton and radish soup. It was a little different from what she usually ate. There were more than 30 types of medicinal ingredients in total. It had the effect of nourishing the body, strengthening the muscles, and nourishing the kidneys.

It was also complicated to make..

Chapter 989 - 989: Remove the False Appearances of the World to See the Truth

After the mutton and radish soup was stewed on the stove, Yu Youyao marinated the mutton spine and mutton ribs. Then, she made a few more types of snacks that Yin Huaixi liked.

“Get me some pine nuts.” When she was almost done, Yu Youyao suddenly looked up. Seeing that the sky was getting darker and darker, she turned around and instructed, “His Highness should be back soon. Go and set up the oven. Prepare some mushrooms and vegetables...”

She stopped abruptly.

At some point, the servants in the kitchen had already left. Yin Huaixi stood beside her, still holding a half bowl of peeled pine nuts.

She had asked for it just now.

The pine nut cakes had just been made. She still needed to crush pine nuts and sprinkle a layer of pine nut fragments on the outside. She was too focused to notice that someone had changed hands beside her.

“Here are the pine nuts you wanted.” Yin Huaixi smiled.

“Oh.” Yu Youyao subconsciously took the pine nuts. She crushed them with a rolling pin and sprinkled them on the pine nut cake. She opened her mouth and said, “Help me bring the bamboo steamer beside me.”

Yin Huaixi quickly brought over the last bamboo steamer on the table.

Yu Youyao quickly placed the finished pine nut cakes into the bamboo steamer one by one. She arranged them neatly and covered the steamer. “Put the bamboo steamer on the steamer.”

Yin Huaixi did as he was told. The steamer had four layers of bamboo steamers, all the results of her afternoon of work.

After the pine nut cakes were placed in the steamer, Yu Youyao suddenly realized that she seemed to have instructed Yin Huaixi to do something just now?!

Yin Huaixi asked again, “Is there anything else you need to do?”

Yu Youyao subconsciously shook her head and suddenly reacted. “When did you come back? Why didn’t you say anything at all? I’ve asked the servants to prepare dinner. Recently, the weather has been cold and humid, and you’ve been running around outside. I’ve made medicinal sheep soup to warm your body and dissipate the cold. I’ve stewed it for more than four hours. It’s very nourishing. I’ve even made mutton burgers. Later, I’ll set up a grill. There will be mutton soup, mutton burgers, and mutton spine.”

Yu Youyao was still in mourning and did not eat any meat. These were specially prepared for him.

Yin Huaixi lowered his head. The little girl was standing in front of him, her head only reaching his chest. She was wearing a simple dress, but it made her

eyes look gentle and real.

A sentence suddenly appeared in his mind. “Remove all the false appearances of the world to see the truth.

Only by removing all pretense of being worldly could one see true love and sincerity.

Yin Huaixi suddenly reached out and rubbed his hand against her cheek. “Your face is covered in flour.”

There was a thin calluses on his fingers, caused by him holding brushes and knives. He gently rubbed her face, revealing a hint of roughness, making her face feel a little itchy and hot.

Yu Youyao blushed and subconsciously tilted her face. She rebuked, "Who asked you to say this? I was asking you a question. Why didn't you answer?"

"I've been back for a while. I heard from the maidservant that you were in the kitchen, so I came over to take a look." Yin Huaixi took a step forward, his shoes almost touching her toes.

His majestic and tall body was as rugged as a mountain, and the waves of the sea fell towards her with an overwhelming force.

Yu Youyao was a little flustered. Her first reaction was not to escape, but to bury her head in her hands. She suddenly closed her eyes and shrank her head like a little quail.

Her slender eyelashes fluttered pitifully.

She was obedient and cute.

He wanted to kiss her even more!

Yin Huaixi pursed his lips and did not smile. "Why are you closing your eyes?!"

That's right, why was she closing her eyes?! It was as if he was going to do something bad. Yu Youyao also felt a little inexplicable. "Then I'll open my eyes!"

Yin Huaixi said nothing.

"I'm opening my eyes!" As if she wanted his permission, Yu Youyao emphasized it again. Then, she raised her head, straightened her neck, and quickly opened her eyes.

However, before she could adapt to everything in front of her, her vision was suddenly replaced by a blur.

"Mm..."

Therefore, her feeling was indeed right. Yin Huaixi was going to play tricks on her.

The sky gradually darkened. The dim yellow candlelight on the lamp rack danced and swayed lightly, scattering charming and beautiful light. Occasionally, there would be a sizzling sound from the wick.

In the side room, Mother Yang, who had instructed the old maids to work, looked at the time and called a young maidservant over. "It's already late when His Highness is back. Go and ask Miss Chun Xiao when dinner will be served."

The young maidservant quickly left the house and saw Miss Chun Xiao guarding outside the kitchen.

She quickly leaned over and opened her mouth to ask about the food.

She saw Young Miss walk out of the house with her head lowered. Her footsteps were anxious and chaotic, as if there was a ferocious beast chasing after her.

Immediately after, she saw His Highness come out and follow behind Young Miss unhurriedly.

The two of them maintained a distance between them, as if they were having an argument. The young maidservant shuddered and quickly lowered her head, not daring to take another look.

Yu Youyao lowered her head and stared at the road. She walked all the way to the moon gate and suddenly stopped. She pinched her handkerchief and gently pressed the corner of her mouth, as if she was doing it casually. "Get Mother Yang to prepare dinner! "

With that, she quickly turned around and returned to the Jiushao Courtyard.

When Xia Tao saw that Young Miss had returned to the Jiushao Courtyard, she quickly leaned over. "Young Miss, when His Highness returned just now, he brought you pink osmanthus candy cake with lotus root. I heard that it's an established name. When His Highness returned, he specially took a detour to buy it."

Yu Youyao walked on her own and ignored her.

Xia Tao found it strange. "Young Miss, what's wrong? By the way, where's His Highness? After he returned to the residence just now, he didn't even take a sip of tea and went to the kitchen to look for you. Didn't you see him?"

If she had seen His Highness, she wouldn't have such an attitude!

Yu Youyao pinched her handkerchief and pressed it against her swollen mouth. She couldn't help but feel embarrassed and angry.

However, she kept her head lowered and looked a little unhappy. Xia Tao thought that Young Miss did not know that His Highness had returned and wanted to say it to make her happy.

"If His Highness didn't go to the kitchen to look for you, he must have been delayed by official business again. I heard from some old people in Xiangping City that judging from the commotion the Di people have caused in the past few years, the North is going to war with them this year...'

Every sentence was about "Your Highness." Yu Youyao was furious. She walked into the house in three steps. Xia Tao quickly followed and heard the open door close with a bang. She walked in a hurry and did not stop for a moment, almost bumping into the door.

Xia Tao was a little confused. "That's strange. What's wrong with Young Miss?"

Outside the door, Xia Tao was at a loss. In the room, Yu Youyao quickly entered the inner room and sat in front of the dressing table. The bright glass mirror clearly reflected her face, like a spring apricot. It was as bright as the sun rising into the morning sky.

It was as bright as a lotus flower.

It was extremely beautiful..

Chapter 990: If a Man Wants to Look Good, He Must Wear Black

It was a sweet color that appeared after peaches, vermillion, and plums were ripe.

The image of Yin Huaixi pressing her against the kitchen table and kissing her appeared in his mind again. His majestic body was as rugged as a mountain and as turbulent as the sea.

It was as if the rugged mountains stretched on and on.

It was as if waves surged in the sea.

The rashness that assaulted her face made her panic. She placed her arms on the kitchen table and bent her back repeatedly. Later, she leaned against the kitchen table and raised her face, looking completely inviting.

Next, it was unstoppable.

Yin Huaixi had never been so rash.

His breath was shockingly hot, as if it was on fire. The hot air he exhaled hit her face, as if there were sparks, with a burning heat.

She did not understand how a person's body temperature could be as hot as fire?!

She was a little afraid.

In a daze, he let go of her lips.

Yu Youyao finally heaved a sigh of relief. His small kiss landed beside her ear again, rubbing against her ear and neck. He kept calling her name, his voice hoarse with hysterical pain and almost pious begging.

It was like what had happened when she was young. She had gone to the Precious Peace Temple with her grandmother to offer incense. She had heard all living beings kneeling piously in front of Bodhisattva and begging for blessings from Bodhisattva in a painful voice to help them escape their sea of suffering and obtain redemption.

Why were they in pain?

What were they begging for?

Yu Youyao did not understand.

She vaguely understood that only husband and wife could do what Yin Huaixi wanted to do with her. However, when she thought about it seriously, it was foggy and unclear.

Yin Huaixi kept pestering her, kissing her tirelessly, landing on every inch of her face over and over again.

Yu Youyao suspected that he had melted her. Her body was soft and she couldn't use any strength. Her mind was in a mess, and she was almost at his mercy.

This was until she suddenly felt a numbing pain on her lips.

"This is too unrestrained." Yu Youyao seemed to have woken up from a dream. She suddenly covered her hot face and sighed. "Where's the dignity a woman should have?! The etiquette and manners she learned in the past have all been learned by a dog..

She looked at her swollen and bloodshot lips in the mirror. They were as beautiful as pills.

When she leaned closer, Yu Youyao saw that the corner of her mouth was a little damaged. Tiny traces of blood seeped out of the delicate patterns, like natural lip fat, making her red lips look even brighter and more beautiful.

There was still a faint numbing pain on her lips, all caused by Yin Huaixi's bite.

Her mouth was already so swollen. How was she supposed to face anyone?! Yu Youyao was furious. "Little dogs bite people. This looks as if I entered a dog's stomach."

Yu Youyao sat in front of the mirror with a conflicted expression.

At this moment, there was a knock on the door.

Yu Youyao was a little angry and raised her voice. "What is it?"

There was a moment of silence outside the door before Xia Tao's careful voice sounded. "Young Miss, the kitchen is asking when to set the table."

The remaining anger in Yu Youyao's heart was completely wiped out with a puff. Sparks splashed tenaciously for a while before finally calming down.

She recalled that as soon as Yin Huaixi returned, he had gone to the kitchen to look for her without even taking a breath.

A gentleman stayed away from the kitchen. She washed his hands and made soup for him, but he stood beside her and helped her with the details of the daily necessities, namely fuel, rice, oil, salt, soy, vinegar, and tea.

It wasn't that she hadn't sensed the situation in the North. Yin Huaixi had taken time out of his busy schedule to come back and have dinner with her.

Yu Youyao's heart softened, and even her voice softened. "It's getting late. Let

Mother Yang prepare dinner!"

Xia Tao agreed and hesitated. "Young Miss..."

"What else is there?" Yu Youyao took off her headscarf and let her hair down. She lifted a wisp of her hair and couldn't help but frown. There was too much oil and smoke in the kitchen today. She had stayed in the kitchen for too long today. Even though she had wrapped a headscarf around her hair, her hair was still stained with the smell of oil and smoke.

Xia Tao quickly said, "Young Miss has been busy in the kitchen for the entire afternoon and is a little tired. His Highness has instructed the small kitchen to prepare hot water and let Young Miss wash up first before going for dinner."

"Prepare the hot water!" Yu Youyao took the rose lipstick and applied it on her lips, barely covering the swelling between her lips and the slight damage.

When Yu Youyao finished washing up, it was already 5pm. It was completely dark outside.

The sound of the wind made wild shrieks and howls, like a hundred ghosts in the night. The dim lights in the long corridor reflected the shadows of the trees outside, like ghosts baring their fangs and brandishing their claws.

As soon as Yu Youyao entered the house, she took off her fire fox fur cloak and handed it to Chun Xiao.

Chun Xiao took the cloak and hung it on the hanger.

There was an oven in the room. On one side, it was roasting lamb spines and mutton, and on the other side, it was roasting mushrooms and vegetables. There was a fresh and salty fragrance in the air that made one's appetite increase.

Yin Huaixi washed up again and changed into a black python robe. The black color was endless, as if after a drop of thick ink was dissolved in water, the solemnity, weight, and oppression dissipated, making him look even more elegant.

If a man wanted to look good, he had to wear black.

This black outfit made Yin Huaixi's rugged and heavy aura seem to have melted into thick ink. It was filled with elegance, revealing the refined aura that he should have at his age.

Seeing her come over, Yin Huaixi couldn't help but look at her lips.

Her flower-like lips were covered with rose lipstick, and they were even brighter than usual. She was like a ripe red cherry, sparkling and translucent, full and tempting. The sweetness she emitted could be smelled through the air.

It was like when a person saw sour and sweet food, such as plums, cherries, and green fruits, their saliva would subconsciously start to secrete rapidly.

At this moment, Yin Huaixi felt this way. He couldn't help but swallow his saliva secretly.

Unknowingly, the image of him hugging her in his arms and entangling with her in the kitchen appeared in his mind. His body temperature, which had cooled down with cold water, showed signs of rising again. He gritted his teeth and cursed inwardly.

How promising!

His burning gaze made Yu Youyao feel a faint pain on her lips. She was immediately furious.

"Where are you looking? You've already burned the lamb spine."

One look at this posture and he knew that he had been too rash just now. He had bullied her so badly that her embarrassment had yet to dissipate.

Yin Huaixi immediately felt guilty. He quickly looked at the oven and saw that there were indeed two lamb spines that were emitting thick smoke and a burnt smell. He quickly took a pair of tweezers and flipped the lamb spines over.

He was usually very restrained. Most of the time, he took care of her feelings and progressed step by step. He hated those unnecessary etiquette and rules the most in his life. They were added to the world, forcing people to be restrained and unable to have freedom. However, in his life, he had used all the rules and etiquette on her..