

## Es. Benefits 221

Chapter 221: Madam Chu, what do you mean by “serving”?\_2

In the eyes of the common folk, Lu Chen was the very essence of a hero.

So even if Lu Chen really married a widow, the people still had a great tolerance for him.

Lu Chen married the Sky Wolf King’s queen, and neither the citizens of North City nor those of Great Sum said a word about it; so what if he married a widow.

But no matter what, she was still the widow of a hero who fought against the barbarians. If Lu Chen forcibly married her, it would inevitably bring about some adverse influence.

Chu Yuqin’s face flushed, and she said in a panic, “Chen’er, stop it, I am your aunt, I won’t allow you to have such thoughts!”

Feeling the intensity of Lu Chen’s gaze, Chu Yuqin knew he genuinely coveted her body.

No matter what, she had to hold her ground; she couldn’t make a mistake, nor could she let Lu Chen cross the line.

Chu Yuqin continued, “Let go of your aunt quickly. If you don’t let go of me now, I will get angry.”

Chu Yuqin felt something was off about the atmosphere; although Lu Chen had previously harbored thoughts about her body, he had never spoken them out loud. Now that he did, it meant he was ready to take the next step.

What was the next step? Did she even need to think about it? He certainly intended to dominate her body.

If this went on, she might really lose her chastity to Lu Chen.

Unlike the last time, Lu Chen did not let go this time. His arms remained firmly wrapped around Chu Yuqin's delicate form.

Chu Yuqin raised her jade hand to push against Lu Chen's broad chest, trying to push him away, but no matter how hard she pushed, it was futile.

Lu Chen glanced at Chu Yuqin's favorability level, which was still at 99 without the slightest decrease.

Lu Chen knew that there was a barrier in Chu Yuqin's heart, and as long as she couldn't get past it, she would be unable to accept becoming his woman.

Previously, he had tried to gradually get Chu Yuqin used to him by using the technique akin to slicing sausages, but Chu Yuqin would always suddenly come to her senses at critical moments.

Seeing Lu Chen hadn't let go, Chu Yuqin began to twist her waist, trying to evade him and maintain distance.

But no matter how much she struggled, she couldn't break free. Chu Yuqin then lifted her head, looking into Lu Chen's eyes.

Her eyes were foggy, her face flushed with a rosy glow, making her even more enchanting.

Chu Yuqin said softly, "Chen'er, you already have so many women, please spare your aunt, okay?"

Lu Chen did not speak. There seemed to be flames burning fiercely in his eyes. The sight of this beautiful woman before him looking so pitiful sparked an agitation in Lu Chen's heart that reached an uncontrollable edge.

Without thinking of the consequences, Lu Chen leaned down once more, aiming to kiss Chu Yuqin. When she saw this, Chu Yuqin quickly turned her head to dodge, but Lu Chen easily immobilized her and pressed his lips to hers.

While kissing, his restless hand wandered over Chu Yuqin's voluptuous body.

Chu Yuqin suddenly felt her mind go blank; she wanted to struggle, but she had completely lost her strength and could only let Lu Chen have his way.

All that remained in Chu Yuqin's heart was one thought: it's over, she was completely about to be overpowered by this little scoundrel.

Uncertain of how long they kissed, Lu Chen suddenly noticed something. He reluctantly ended the kiss and at that moment, he noticed that tears were involuntarily streaming down Chu Yuqin's face.

Seeing this, Lu Chen's mind instantly sobered up, and the restlessness in his heart was immediately quelled.

Chu Yuqin began to sob.

Lu Chen was dumbfounded, completely unsure of how to comfort Chu Yuqin.

For a moment, Lu Chen was like a child who had done wrong. He quickly said, "Madam Chu, it's my fault. I shouldn't have said such things to you. Please don't cry, okay?"

Chu Yuqin, still sobbing, said, "Boo hoo hoo, you know to consider me as your aunt, but what kind of bullying is this?"

"I am the sister of your mother, who is sworn sisters with Jin Lan. How can you harbour those thoughts about me? What do you take me for, boo hoo hoo..."

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Lu Chen, holding Chu Yuqin's soft waist, didn't know what to say.

After what seemed an eternity, Chu Yuqin finally calmed down. She wiped her tears and, seeing that Lu Chen was looking at her with an innocent face, she said, "Chen'er, let's pretend nothing happened today. Please spare your aunt, okay? We really can't do that kind of thing."

Lu Chen sighed softly, then said, "Yuqin, do you truly not like me?"

Hearing this question, Chu Yuqin was taken aback.

Lu Chen did not call her Madam Chu this time, but called her by her name, instantly drawing their relationship much closer.

Seeing Lu Chen's melancholic expression, Chu Yuqin fell silent.

She didn't know how to answer Lu Chen's question.

To say she didn't like him would be to blatantly contradict her own feelings. Lately, she had been dreaming of Lu Chen every night and occasionally nurturing thoughts that she shouldn't have.

Like the incident today in the study, she had imagined it more than once. But those were all fantasies. She had always remembered her identity strictly and restrained herself from such thoughts.

But if she admitted her liking, their relationship was right there, clear as day— they were never meant to engage in that sort of thing.

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She could not overcome the hurdle in her heart no matter what, and if she truly made a mistake that impacted Lu Chen's great undertaking, she might regret it for the rest of her life, feel guilty for the rest of her life.

Lu Chen gazed into Chu Yuqin's beautiful eyes and continued, “Yuqin, I admit, I do desire your body.”

“But my affection for you is not solely because I desire your beauty. I have liked you since I was a child. Do you remember what my mother once said? She told me that when I grew up, she would marry you off to me, for you to become my woman, to look after me for a lifetime. Since that time, I've always thought of you as my wife.”

“Yet afterward, you became engaged to the Wang Family. The day I learned you were going to marry someone else, my heart felt as if it were being twisted by a knife. For a long time, I couldn’t eat, I even thought about having someone snatch you away in a bridal raid, to bring you back.”

“Fortunately, you didn’t marry that man from the Wang Family, as he perished suddenly for some reason. If he hadn’t died, I would have lost you forever.”

“I can’t imagine what my life would have become without you.”

“It was not easy for you to remain, but because you are a generation older than me, you’ve always treated me as a child.”

“I am more than tired of having the person I love right in front of me, yet being unable to be together just because of a man-made generation gap.”

“My mother, in your presence, promised you to me for when I grew up, and you agreed. You care so much about my mother’s words, yet you’ve completely forgotten about this matter.”

Chu Yuqin was left speechless by Lu Chen’s torrent of words.

Chu Yuqin remembered a sunny and pleasant afternoon in a pavilion in the Imperial Palace, holding the one or two-year-old Lu Chen, who had just learned how to speak.

Seeing that Lu Chen seemed to love staying in her arms, Madam Chu said to him, “Chen’er, since you adore Yuqin so much, when you grow up, Mother will marry her off to you, to be your woman, to take care of you for a lifetime, alright?”

The Lu Chen in Chu Yuqin’s arms joyfully replied, “Yes, yes!”

Madam Chu looked toward Chu Yuqin, “Yuqin, are you willing to marry Chen’er and take care of him on my behalf for a lifetime?”

Chu Yuqin responded, “Yue, of course I’m willing. Chen’er is so adorable; what woman wouldn’t like him?”

As she spoke, Chu Yuqin bent down and rubbed her forehead against Lu Chen's continuously, while saying, "Little Chen'er, I will be your woman in the future; you mustn't bully me, all right?"

Time had passed for so long that Chu Yuqin had almost forgotten the words she had said back then, considering that Lu Chen was only one or two years old at the time.

Moreover, she had always remembered that she had been married and did not deserve to be Lu Chen's woman, so she forcibly assumed the role of an elder in Lu Chen's life.

When a mask is worn for too long, it cannot be removed, and she indeed always regarded Lu Chen as her junior.

At this moment, the study was engulfed in silence.

After what seemed an eternity, Chu Yuqin stuttered, "Chen... Chen'er, I... I have been married..."

Lu Chen, looking into Chu Yuqin's eyes, said, "I don't care."

Chu Yuqin didn't know what to say, freezing again.

Seeing that Chu Yuqin remained silent, Lu Chen knew it was almost enough and said, "Madam Chu, let it be. I will act as if none of this has happened. From now on, you are still my aunt and I am your Chen'er."

With that, Lu Chen let go of Chu Yuqin.

All of a sudden, being released from Lu Chen's embrace, Chu Yuqin felt as if she had lost something inside.

She panicked, even more flustered than when Lu Chen was doing bad things to her, although she herself didn't understand why she was panicking.

A wave of guilt immediately took over her brain; Chu Yuqin couldn't help but wonder if she was being too selfish. Although she claimed that she was doing it for Lu Chen's sake, she never considered that Lu Chen might truly like her.

Avoiding Lu Chen all the time, wasn't she hurting him?

"Chen... Chen'er... I..."

Chu Yuqin cut herself off, unsure what to say.

At this point, Lu Chen said, "Madam Chu, you don't need to take my previous words to heart. I've come to understand—everyone has their choices. If you're unwilling, I won't insist. You will still be my aunt in the future, and I will continue to treat you as such. Our relationship will not change."

Although Lu Chen said this, Chu Yuqin felt as if they could never go back to how things were. It seemed that a rift had formed between her and Lu Chen.

Lu Chen did not say anything further and simply turned to leave.

Seeing Lu Chen about to leave the study, Chu Yuqin's internal turmoil erupted, and she quickly grabbed his hand.

Lu Chen was taken aback, turning his head to look at Chu Yuqin.

At this moment, Chu Yuqin's face was full of confusion, but she still mustered the courage to say, "Chen'er, give your aunt some time, alright..."

Hearing her words, Lu Chen was momentarily taken aback. This time, he had intended to cut ties abruptly, although the cut turned out to be a bit deeper than expected. His main goal was to remind Chu Yuqin of the promise she had made to his mother to marry him.

He hadn't expected the shackles in Chu Yuqin's heart to loosen.

Surprised, Lu Chen asked, "Madam Chu, what kind of time are you talking about?"

Chu Yuqin, with a flushed face, replied, "I certainly can't marry you; the Wang Family won't easily let me go, but I can attend to you..."

Chu Yuqin's voice became fainter; she felt her face growing hotter and had not expected herself to speak these words.

Lu Chen was also stunned by Chu Yuqin's words and remained silent.

After a moment, Lu Chen recovered from his shock and tentatively asked, "Madam Chu, when you say attend to me, what do you mean exactly?"

Chu Yuqin with a red face said, "However Zixuan and the others attend to you, I will attend to you in the same way..."

As she spoke, Chu Yuqin wished she could find a crevice to crawl into, and then she added, "Don't ask anymore; just give your aunt some time to calm down..."

Chapter 223: Xiaoxiao is Pregnant\_i

Seeing Chu Yuqin already so embarrassed she wished she could dive into a hole, Lu Chen didn't press her any further.

"I understand."

"Madam Chu, I will always be waiting, waiting for you to accept me."

Hearing Lu Chen's words, Chu Yuqin glanced at Lu Chen's entire body, then let go of his arm and said, "You... you should go find Zixuan and the others."

Chu Yuqin knew Lu Chen was barely holding back, so she no longer clung to him.

"Okay, then I'll leave first," Lu Chen said.

Lu Chen thought since Chu Yuqin's inner chains had begun to loosen, his first stage task was also considered complete.



After some more time, Chu Yuqin would be able to accept him completely, nothing further was needed for today.

The recent hugging and kissing with Chu Yuqin had left him on fire; he desperately needed somewhere to cool off.

With that in mind, Lu Chen turned and left the study.

Watching Lu Chen's retreating figure, Chu Yuqin sighed softly. What had she just said?

She had actually offered to serve Lu Chen.

Although she had taken care of Lu Chen since they were young, what she just said about serving him was clearly different from usual care.

Was she really going to be with him...

As she thought this, Chu Yuqin's cheeks burned even hotter.

She had often dreamed of doing bad things with Lu Chen in bed, but after all, those were just dreams.

No one would know about the things in dreams unless she spoke of them, but if her dreams turned into reality, they might get exposed eventually.

Moreover, her sister had been watching her closely; she might get found out any day.

With this thought, Chu Yuqin sighed again. She would have to take it one step at a time.

Anyway, there was still time. She had already told Lu Chen to give her some time to cool off, and she didn't specify how long, so stalling a bit longer wouldn't matter.

After leaving the study, Lu Chen went straight to the northern courtyard and entered Zhou Xiaoxiao's room.

At that moment, Zhou Xiaoxiao and Zhou Youyou were holding their children and talking about something. Seeing Lu Chen come in suddenly, they both hurriedly said, “We greet the Prince!”

Lu Chen smiled and said, “Ladies, what are you discussing?”

Zhou Youyou replied, “Prince, we were discussing Huanhuan. Sister said she likes to move around a lot and will surely be a very lively girl in the future.”

Hearing Zhou Youyou’s words, Lu Chen approached Zhou Xiaoxiao, bowed his head, and glanced at Lu Huanhuan in Zhou Xiaoxiao’s arms.

Seeing Lu Chen, Lu Huanhuan smiled and lifted her hands as if asking to be held.

This sight soothed the restlessness within Lu Chen, his daughter’s smile almost melted his heart.

He immediately took Lu Huanhuan from Zhou Xiaoxiao’s arms, then said, “Huanhuan, let Daddy hold you.”

As soon as Lu Chen held Lu Huanhuan, she started babbling something—she hadn’t learned to speak yet, so she could only make babbling sounds.

Lu Chen said with a laugh, “Little Huanhuan, you’re not scolding Daddy, are you?”

“Could it be that you already know that Daddy is going to compete with you for your mother today?”

Hearing this, Zhou Xiaoxiao’s face flushed with a hint of red.

So that was why Lu Chen came here—it was to do bad things with her.

At this moment, Zhou Youyou seemed to understand something, then said, “Prince, let this concubine take Huanhuan next door to rest.”

It was time for Lu Chen to get serious with Zhou Xiaoxiao, so naturally, Huanhuan shouldn't be left there to see.

"It's alright, I'll hold my dear daughter a bit more," Lu Chen said, still smiling.

At that moment, Lu Huanhuan continued to babble, raising her little fist to hammer Lu Chen's chest. Seeing her behavior, Lu Chen couldn't help but laugh.

Seeing that Lu Chen was so fond of Lu Huanhuan, Zhou Xiaoxiao also smiled.

She had always been worried that Lu Chen might distance himself from her because she hadn't given him a son.

Although Lu Chen had always said it didn't matter whether it was a girl or a boy in the North Prince Mansion, the era prioritized sons over daughters, and his words hadn't dispelled Zhou Xiaoxiao's worries.

However, judging by how Lu Chen treated Lu Huanhuan, he genuinely seemed to like his daughter, or else he wouldn't be so willing to hold her.

As long as Lu Chen didn't resent having a daughter, it was fine.

After playing with Lu Huanhuan for a while, Lu Chen handed her over to Zhou Youyou.

Next, he was about to steal Huanhuan's "food", and of course, she couldn't be around to witness that.

Once Zhou Youyou left Zhou Xiaoxiao's room with the nursemaid and two children, Zhou Xiaoxiao then said, "Prince, allow me to undress you."

As she spoke, Zhou Xiaoxiao started to reach for Lu Chen's belt, but Lu Chen quickly grabbed her wrist.

Looking into Zhou Xiaoxiao's eyes, he smiled and said, "Xiaoxiao, what are you doing, unbuckling my belt in broad daylight?"

Hearing this, Zhou Xiaoxiao's face reddened even more. Lu Chen was clearly teasing her.

He came all the way here and still asked her why she was untying his belt.

Zhou Xiaoxiao whispered, "Prince, you've worked hard defending against the Barbarian Tribe's invasion to the north. Let me help you relax."

Seeing Zhou Xiaoxiao's shy demeanor, Lu Chen lifted her delicate chin with his hand, gazed into her eyes, and said, "Xiaoxiao, why do I feel it's not you who's helping me relax, but rather me helping you relax?"

## Chapter 224: Xiaoxiao is Pregnant\_2

"It's been over two months since we last saw each other, do you miss me that much?"

Being stared at so directly by Lu Chen, Zhou Xiaoxiao felt her body becoming more restless. A watery gleam quickly surfaced in her eyes, and with a blush heating her cheeks, she said, "Prince, stop teasing your consort, let me serve you."

Lu Chen immediately wrapped his arms around Zhou Xiaoxiao's slim waist and whispered in her ear, "Since you're so eager, Xiaoxiao, I won't hold back."

Then Lu Chen captured Zhou Xiaoxiao's red lips, fostering a deep connection with her.

Originally, Lu Chen had planned to go see Yelv Nanyan – earlier in the study, Chu Yuqin had ignited a fire within him. Since becoming a Grandmaster, he had never felt so agitated.

Zhou Xiaoxiao was just an ordinary person, and Lu Chen did not want to seek her out in his almost frenzied state, lest she couldn't withstand it.

However, after giving it some thought, he realized that precisely because Zhou Xiaoxiao was an ordinary person, she was more likely to get pregnant.

If he were to go to Yelv Nanyan, even if he stayed with her for a night, it was quite possible that she wouldn't conceive his child. Hence, Lu Chen simply decided to come to Zhou Xiaoxiao.

His main goal in teasing his daughter just now was to calm himself down and soothe the wild emotions inside him so that Zhou Xiaoxiao could withstand what was to come.

But soon, Lu Chen discovered that even though he had calmed down a bit just now, as soon as he thought about what had happened in the study before, his emotions became agitated once again.

[Host has developed a deeper relationship with Zhou Xiaoxiao once, Qi Refinement Mantra experience value increased by 60, Rejuvenating Skill experience value increased by 60, Dragon-Phoenix Yin-Yang Spell experience value increased by too.]

[Congratulations, Host, Zhou Xiaoxiao is pregnant with your child, and you have been rewarded with 50,000 tons of breeding corn.]

[The pregnancy reward is an encouragement. It is hoped that the Host will ensure the child's safe birth as much as possible, as a safe birth will lead to even richer rewards.]

Upon hearing the system prompt, Lu Chen's lips curled up slightly. It was indeed not a wasted trip; coming to Dazhou was the right choice.

Even though the reward wasn't much, as long as Zhou Xiaoxiao was pregnant with his child, that was all that mattered. The rewards for the birth would be most significant.

And the breeding corn was good too. When North City opened up new farmland next year, it would be the perfect time to plant corn.

He now had potatoes, sweet potatoes, and corn – three types of staple crops. Once North City sowed these crops, the food problem would be solved.

Agriculture is the foundation, and the people must not go hungry, or else his next step in the industrial plan would be completely impossible to execute.

As for the sorghum seeds he had obtained not so long ago, they could also be planted next year. Sorghum could be used to brew alcohol, and with so much land in North City, especially the wasteland, he could plant whatever he desired.

At this moment, Zhou Xiaoxiao lay in Lu Chen's arms, and she could clearly feel that he wasn't fully satisfied. She then whispered softly, "Prince, your consort... your consort can still continue..."

It wasn't easy for Lu Chen to visit, so how could he be content with just that? Zhou Xiaoxiao feared disappointing Lu Chen and that he might not return next time.

Zhou Xiaoxiao and Zhou Youyou were daughters of a convicted official, so both of them were very cautious around Lu Chen and always rather sensitive. They both had a pleasing-type personality, with everything centered around Lu

Chen.

Hearing Zhou Xiaoxiao's words, Lu Chen smiled faintly, gently caressing her jade back, "No need, you're already pregnant with my child."

Zhou Xiaoxiao was taken aback. Pregnant?

So soon?

Although she didn't understand the specifics of pregnancy, she knew it took some time for a woman to conceive; they had just made love and she was already pregnant?

Zhou Xiaoxiao asked in disbelief, "Prince, am I truly pregnant?"

Lu Chen replied, "Yes, you are. I am a disciple of the immortal, trained in Immortal Law, so I can accelerate your pregnancy."

Upon hearing Lu Chen mention 'immortal,' Zhou Xiaoxiao immediately realized, that made sense. Lu Chen was an immortal, and anything related to him naturally seemed logical.

Zhou Xiaoxiao was now reassured, and the thought of carrying Lu Chen's child again filled her heart with immense joy.

Last time, she hadn't been able to bear Lu Chen a son, which had always troubled her. Now that she was once again pregnant with Lu Chen's child, she was determined to give birth to a son for him this time.

Although Lu Chen did not care whether he fathered a son or a daughter, it mattered greatly to her. Without a son, she always felt that she had no standing in the Prince's Mansion.

Just then, Zhou Xiaoxiao suddenly thought of the warm current that had appeared in her body and curiously asked, "Prince, there was a warm current in my body just now. Is that related to you?"

Lu Chen replied, "Yes, starting today, you, Zixuan, and Youyou will be able to practice the Immortal Law as well."

Upon hearing Lu Chen's reply, Zhou Xiaoxiao wore a look of disbelief. She got up and gazed at Lu Chen, who was lying on the bed, and asked, "Prince... Are... Are you serious? Can I too become an immortal?"

Women are extremely concerned about their age; everyone is afraid of growing old, especially the women in the North Prince Mansion.

Lu Chen was already a Grandmaster and a disciple of an immortal. He had a great chance of breaking through to the Heavenly Human Realm and might even become an immortal someday; perhaps he would remain youthful forever.

Zhou Xiaoxiao's constant worry was that she would grow old one day and that once old, Lu Chen would no longer fancy her. No one knew what her future would be like then.

So, when she heard Lu Chen say that she could practice the Immortal Law, the first thing Zhou Xiaoxiao thought of was becoming an immortal, forever youthful and beautiful.

Seeing Zhou Xiaoxiao so excited, Lu Chen lifted his hand and caressed her cheek, answering, "Becoming an immortal isn't easy. I might not become one either, but ensuring you live a few hundred more years and remain youthful and beautiful should still be possible."

After listening to Lu Chen's words, Zhou Xiaoxiao was not disappointed. Living a few hundred more years and maintaining her youth and beauty was already quite satisfactory; she knew that only a Grandmaster could live for hundreds of years.

Zhou Xiaoxiao immediately said, "Thank you, Prince, for bestowing the chance of immortality upon me!"

"I shall endeavour to practice diligently from now on..."

As she was speaking, Zhou Xiaoxiao paused. Although Lu Chen had said she could practice the Immortal Law, she had no idea how to go about it.

Then Zhou Xiaoxiao curiously asked, "Prince, how shall I practice the Immortal Law?"

Lu Chen replied with a smile, "Weren't we just practicing it a moment ago?"

This-

Hearing Lu Chen's response, Zhou Xiaoxiao's face flushed a deeper red, spreading to her neck.

So that was practicing the Immortal Law...

Why did she feel this Immortal Law was somewhat indecent?

Lu Chen then pulled Zhou Xiaoxiao's delicate body into his arms and, holding her, said, "Alright, don't think too much about it."

Seeing that was all Lu Chen had to say, Zhou Xiaoxiao softly hummed an affirmation and said no more.

After a while of intimacy, the voice of a maidservant sounded at the door.

"Prince, Lady Wang is looking for you."



Hearing the words, the pair that was cuddled close snapped back to reality. Zhou Xiaoxiao immediately said to Lu Chen, “Prince, if Sister Wang is looking for you, it must be for something important. You should go and tend to it.”

Lu Chen stood up, kissed Zhou Xiaoxiao on the lips, and then said, Alright, my treasure. Rest well; I shall take my leave.”

Zhou Xiaoxiao then helped Lu Chen dress. Once he was clothed and stepped out, he saw a seductive figure at the entrance of the northern courtyard.

Wang Qingci was dressed in a red Cloud Attire with a white fur over her shoulders. She leaned slightly against the doorpost, exuding allure.

Upon seeing Lu Chen emerge, Wang Qingci immediately said, “Prince, it’s my fault. I didn’t know you were busy. Why don’t you continue what you were doing, and I can report to you later?”

After a glance at Wang Qingci’s voluptuous figure, Lu Chen smiled slightly, “No, your timing is perfect. Let’s go to your room; I have matters to discuss with you as well.”

Chapter 225: Are You Trying to Rebel?\_i

Prince’s Mansion, Spring Sound Court.

Snowflakes flutter down in the courtyard, creating a tranquil atmosphere.

Yelv Nanyan sat in the room, with a steaming pot of tea in front of her. She sipped the tea and listened to noises coming from the next courtyard.

“Prince, spare me...”

“Prince, your servant knows she was wrong...”

“Prince... darling... dear brother...”

At this moment, Xiao Wenyao whispered, “Nanyan, the woman next door is also one of the Prince’s women, right?”

Yelv Nanyan took a gentle sip of her tea and replied, “Everyone living in the inner court belongs to him.”

Xiao Wenyao said, “Oh.”

After thinking for a while, Xiao Wenyao continued, “But I rarely see the Prince visit next door.”

Yelv Nanyan explained, “She’s different from us. She has responsibilities outside and is not often in the Prince’s Mansion.”

Hearing this, Xiao Wenyao sighed and then said, “I wish I had some responsibilities, too. It’s so boring being in the Prince’s Mansion every day.”

Yelv Nanyan smiled slightly and then said, “Wait until the Prince goes to your room later, then you won’t be bored.”

Hearing this, Xiao Wenyao’s body trembled, and she blushed as she said, “Nanyan, what are you talking about? The Prince is still doing bad things next door, how could he possibly come to find me?”

Xiao Wenyao was still somewhat hopeful, after all, it had been more than two months since she last played the horse-riding game with Lu Chen.

However, she also knew that Lu Chen had many women, and it was not certain when he would come to her. Even if Lu Chen did come to Spring Sound Court, he would likely visit Yelv Nanyan first.

Once Lu Chen entered Yelv Nanyan’s room, there was not a night when he would definitely not leave. It was always like this, and Xiao Wenyao had already discerned the pattern.

Lu Chen seemed to enjoy attacking Yelv Nanyan's weaknesses. Xiao Wenyao was curious why Lu Chen always managed to stay so long in Yelv Nanyan's room. Was it because Yelv Nanyan was a Ninth Grade Martial Artist, and Lu Chen needed more time to suppress her to make her submit?

Seeing Xiao Wenyao's blushing face, Yelv Nanyan smiled again and then said, "Yaoyao, bear the Prince a chubby little son early, and maybe in the future, you'll be able to go out whenever you want."

Hearing this, Xiao Wenyao asked, "Really?"

Yelv Nanyan said softly, "The people of Great Sum value offspring. If you bear the Prince an heir, your status in the North Prince Mansion will be elevated, and naturally, you'll be able to go out at will."

Xiao Wenyao said, "But I heard it's very difficult for Martial Artists to get pregnant, it's not so easy to have children."

Yelv Nanyan said with a smile, "That's easy, just take good care of the Prince and let him visit you a few more times. Perhaps, one lucky day, you'll find yourself with child."

Hearing this, Xiao Wenyao pouted. She really didn't want Lu Chen running to her place often.

Though being pressed by Lu Chen wasn't uncomfortable for her, if Lu Chen frequented her place, she certainly couldn't endure it.

It wasn't just her; no woman in the entire inner court of the Prince's Mansion could withstand Lu Chen seeking their company too often.

She felt conflicted about Lu Chen. She was afraid that he wouldn't come to her, yet also feared that he would come every day.

In her heart, the best scenario was for Lu Chen to visit her once every seven or eight days.

While Xiao Wenyao was lost in thought, the sounds from next door grew louder. Yelv Nanyan laughed and said, "It seems the Prince is quite fiery today, isn't he?"

Hearing Yelv Nanyan's words, Xiao Wenyao couldn't help but clench her legs together, thinking that she must behave herself in front of Lu Chen in the future, otherwise, she might end up being dealt with by the Prince like the woman next door.

Time passed, unknowingly.

The snow in the sky grew thicker, and the sounds within the inner court of the Prince's Mansion were gradually muffled by the blowing wind and snow.

As time went by, only the whistling sound of the wind and snow remained.

Meanwhile.

In a certain room.

Wang Qingci lay sprawled across the bed, her hair disheveled, looking despondent.

At this time, Lu Chen was looking through the intelligence about Great Jue that Wang Qingci had given him.

The snow fluttered in through the window, but the room had been transformed into a warm chamber, free from any chill.

Had the room not been warmed, there wouldn't have been an issue; Lu Chen could also use manpower to make the room warm, and then Wang Qingci would be sweating all over her body.

Lu Chen glanced at the glaring white expanse beside him and said with a smile, "Mr. Wang, weren't you here to report intelligence to me? Why are you lying still?"

"You have a serious work attitude problem. You dare to be so lazy before this Prince."

"It seems I need to properly discipline you."

Hearing Lu Chen's words, Wang Qingci slightly rolled over and, lying on her side, gazed mournfully into his eyes.

"Prince, you really like to accuse others first. It's clearly you who won't let your servant report properly," she said.

"Next time you do this, I'll have someone else deliver the intelligence and never return to the Prince's Mansion again."

Lu Chen said indifferently, "Oh? As this Prince's female slave, you dare not come back in person to report to me?"

"Are you thinking of rebelling?"

At Lu Chen's words, Wang Qingci uttered somberly, "Prince, you are so fierce; how could your servant dare to rebel?"

Seeing Wang Qingci's mournful expression, Lu Chen raised his hand and smacked her buttocks before saying, "Mr. Wang, remember, serving me is also part of your job."

Chapter 226: Are You Trying to Rebel?\_2

"Speaking of which," Lu Chen turned his head again to look at the intelligence in his hand, "let's get down to business."

The anger in his heart had almost dissipated, and it was time to discuss serious matters.

Wang Qingci then said, "Prince, the business of the Rain-listening Pavilion has already expanded to the Great Wu Dynasty. However, gathering information about the Great Wu Dynasty is not an easy task."

“I have heard that the Princess Junwan of Great Wu is extremely formidable. She controls an intelligence network that spans the entire Great Wu. Any intelligence agencies from other dynasties that try to enter would be discovered by her.”

“Even though the Rain-listening Pavilion has successfully opened a few taverns and inns in Great Wu, I dare not let them inquire about anything.” Hearing this from Wang Qingci, Lu Chen’s interest was piqued, “Oh? A princess can control such a vast intelligence network? Doesn’t Great Wu have any princes? How can they allow a woman to manage such an extensive network?”

This was an era that favored men over women; even the princesses of the royal family usually had little power. They were mostly political tools used by the emperor to maintain governance.

An intelligence network that spanned the nation was nearly on par with the Shadow Guards held by the Sum Emperor. It was indeed hard to believe that a princess of a dynasty could possess an intelligence organization similar to the Shadow Guards.

Wang Qingci replied, “Of course, Great Wu also has princes, and not just a few. However, Princess Junwan of Great Wu is not simple—none of those princes are a match for her.”

At this point, Wang Qingci seemed to think of something and then continued, “Speaking of women in power, I am reminded of another person, and that woman is relatively close to North City.”

Lu Chen asked curiously, “Who?”

Wang Qingci answered, “The new Yue Emperor.”

“The Yue Emperor?” Lu Chen repeated, though he had not been very familiar with the Da Yue Dynasty that bordered North City initially.

However, recently the Rain-listening Pavilion had collected quite a bit of intelligence about the Da Yue Dynasty, but there was little information about the Yue Emperor in these reports.

Wang Qingci continued, “It is said that the new Yue Emperor is also a woman, but for some reason, there is very little intelligence about her from other dynasties.”

“Moreover, there are no voices within the Da Yue Dynasty opposing the Yue Emperor.”

“Logically, a woman becoming Emperor would definitely cause upheaval in the dynasty, discontent among various powers, but Da Yue’s interior is unusually quiet; there is absolutely no discussion about whether the Yue Emperor should or shouldn’t be the ruler.”

Listening to Wang Qingci’s words, Lu Chen said with a smile, “Now that is truly interesting—a female Emperor. I never thought that there would be such a presence in this world.”

Wang Qingci went on, “What’s coincidental is that I have heard Princess Junwan of Great Wu and the Yue Emperor of the Da Yue Dynasty are old acquaintances and have a very good relationship.”

“The Da Yue Dynasty’s stationing of two hundred thousand troops at the border with North City could likely be because Great Wu sought help from the Yue Emperor to guard against North City’s fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry.”

“However, all this is just my speculation and lacks evidence.”

After pondering for a moment, Lu Chen said, “Your speculation is not without merit.”

“Great Wu was able to gather hundreds of thousands of troops to attack Great Sum the moment conflict erupted, indicating they were already prepared. This also suggests they might have alerted their allies or friendly dynasties, which is why Da Yue’s two hundred thousand troops were moved in advance to the border with North City to monitor the Heavy Cavalry.”

“Of course, speculation is still just speculation.”

Having said that, Lu Chen looked into Wang Qingci’s beautiful eyes and said, “Since it’s easy to be exposed when gathering intelligence in Great Wu, you should not collect overly sensitive information, only what you hear from the common people.”

“In the next step, have the Rain-listening Pavilion focus on the Da Yue Dynasty, I am quite interested in that Empress there.”

Hearing Lu Chen’s words, Wang Qingci playfully chided, “Prince, you wouldn’t be planning to abduct that Empress to bear your children, would you?”

Lu Chen chuckled, then gave Wang Qingci’s buttocks a slap, causing her to let out an involuntary yelp.

“What do you know? A woman who can hold such great power and having no man oppose her becoming an Empress certainly means she is very capable and resourceful. Besides, the Da Yue Dynasty borders our North City. Wanting to understand her is only appropriate, isn’t it?”



“By the way, how old is this new Yue Emperor?”

Just when Wang Qingci had started to believe what Lu Chen said, she heard him ask about the age, and she immediately looked at him skeptically. Nevertheless, she answered, “She is only in her thirties, I think. I’m not too sure about her exact age. Since she and Princess Junwan are friends, their ages shouldn’t be too far apart.”

Wang Qingci then reminded, “Although I am not sure what you are thinking, Prince, I must remind you, I have heard the Yue Emperor has quite a few male favorites; she is not as untarnished as your women.”

Hearing this, Lu Chen looked at Wang Qingci and said, “Why do you tell me this? You don’t really think I am interested in the Yue Emperor in that way, do you?”

“Even if I were foolish, I would not be interested in an Empress. When a woman has such power, she will inevitably rely on men to some extent. Even male Emperors secure their positions through marital alliances, let alone a woman as an Emperor..”

### Chapter 227: Are You Trying to Rebel?\_3

“The only reason I want to understand her is because I’m worried she might become a great enemy of North City in the future.”

“Mr. Wang, you actually think of me as the kind of man who only thinks with his lower half; you’re maliciously speculating about me.”

In this era, the status of women is quite low, and they are expected to follow the Three Obediences and Four Virtues, but this is all relative.

All rules are made by those with power in their hands, and when women hold power, they can completely disregard those rules.

Men in this era may have three wives and four concubines, and women with power can have several men just the same.

Not to mention the Empress, even the married princesses of the Capital city of Great Sum indulge in affairs, and keeping male consorts is nothing out of the ordinary. As for the princess's husbands, they dare not speak out unless they are from great families; otherwise, they just have to bear it and move on.

Even a princess, used by the Emperor as a tool for political marriage, keeps male consorts. What more can be said about an Empress of a dynasty?

An Empress of a dynasty has such great power that she can have any man she wants. If someone says she is still pure and untouched by men, who would believe that? Especially since the Yue Emperor is already in her thirties, unless she's entirely devoted to martial arts training.

Only martial artists would abstain from sexual desires, and even they do so for a lifetime.

However, Lu Chen doesn't believe the Yue Emperor is the type to abstain. A woman at the center of power, surrounded by such temptations, could she abstain from men? That's highly unlikely.

It was clear that Lu Chen did not visit the Yue Emperor for her beauty, but Wang Qingci actually thought of him as a man who would have improper thoughts as soon as he heard of a woman, which greatly angered Lu Chen.

He, a gentleman, was actually being mistaken for a lecher.

Such insolence from a mere female slave, to dare to slander him; she must be severely punished!

If she dares to slander him today, who knows what she might do tomorrow!

Hearing Lu Chen's words, Wang Qingci's face changed slightly, and she quickly said, "Prince, this slave knows her mistake... mmm..."

Lu Chen, without a second thought, tossed the intelligence report aside, then leaned over and sealed Wang Qingci's red lips.

The snow outside the window was still falling, though it had lessened significantly.

The servants of the Prince's Mansion had begun to clear the snow when they heard noises coming from a certain courtyard, and wisely chose to avoid that courtyard.

Yelv Nanyan and Xiao Wenyao were still in the room tasting Dragon and Phoenix Tea. Hearing the noise from next door, Xiao Wenyao said, "Nanyan, do you think that girl will be killed by the Prince?"

Yelv Nanyan took a gentle sip of her tea and said with a smile, "Don't worry, the Prince knows his limits. This is just the beginning, the night has not yet fallen."

Xiao Wenyao's voice carried a hint of regret as she said, "Oh."

It seemed that Lu Chen wouldn't be visiting any other courtyards today, probably not even their Spring Sound Court.

Winter is a long season for most, with many only able to stay indoors; this era lacks entertainment.

But for Lu Chen, time flies quickly because the political affairs in North City are less during winter. He spends his mornings reviewing intelligence in his study, then goes to teach Xiao Wenyao how to ride a horse at Spring Sound Court and tastes tea with Yelv Nanyan. He would stay there the entire day.

In the evenings, Lu Chen would return to his main courtyard to sleep with his beloved consort, living every day to the fullest.

Half a month later.

Great Sum, Capital city.

Imperial Palace.

While North City is covered in snow, the Capital city of Great Sum still feels like autumn, with no signs of winter's approach.

The Sum Emperor, dressed in a yellow dragon robe, stood in a pavilion in the Royal Garden, frowning as he listened to the report from the leader of the Shadow Guards.

After the Shadow Guard leader finished reporting, the Sum Emperor turned to a eunuch and said, "Go see if the two Prime Ministers have arrived."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

At that moment, in the pavilion, State Preceptor Situ Ce said, "Your servant believes that this news is very likely to be true."

Hearing this, the Sum Emperor replied, "Are you joking, State Preceptor? Last time at Wanning Valley, North City was able to defeat Sky Wolf King's army of three hundred thousand. Now, facing the North Ere King's army of two hundred thousand, not only did they fail to win, they even lost fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry."

Situ Ce said, "Your Majesty, have you forgotten the last incident at Wanning Valley where a Grandmaster was suspected to have appeared?"

"Your servant believes that if North City truly has a Grandmaster, it's very unlikely that he would stay in North City all the time."

"The great victory at Wanning Valley could be largely due to that Grandmaster's aid. Without the Grandmaster, North City's Heavy Cavalry is still vulnerable."

"These Heavy Cavalry have only appeared recently. Their combat effectiveness and whether they can compare with the court's Heavy Cavalry is still an unknown. We focused too much on their armor and thus overlooked their true strength."

"Even if North City has the armor for Heavy Cavalry, training an effective Heavy Cavalry force is not something that can be done overnight, something Your Majesty should be well aware of."

The Sum Emperor didn't say a word after hearing Situ Ce's statement, but his expression kept changing.

Situ Ce's words were sensible; they were all taken in by the sudden appearance of the Heavy Cavalry in North City, mainly because they subconsciously equated North City's Black Cavalry with the well-trained two thousand Heavy Cavalry of Great Sum.

Although they had received intelligence about the Black Cavalry of North City, neither Lin Xiuming's battle report nor Bai Qingqing's intelligence mentioned the strength of these Black Cavalry.

They never considered whether these newly formed Heavy Cavalry had the same combat effectiveness as the Heavy Cavalry of the Great Sum court.

Now, thinking about it, if those Heavy Cavalry were not soldiers directly entering North City from other forces but were recruited from North City and simply donned heavy armor to form a Heavy Cavalry unit, then their combat power definitely couldn't match that of real Heavy Cavalry..

## Chapter 228: The Sum Emperor's Ulterior Motives\_i

When the Sum Emperor was involved in the struggle for succession, he also secretly trained a unit of heavy cavalry. He was very clear in his mind about how long it would take to train a heavy cavalry unit to be combat-ready.

Lu Chen had only been in North City for a little over a year. If the heavy armor in North City was given to Lu Chen by others and was not crafted by him, and the heavy cavalry of North City was also set up by him, then it would definitely take several years for the North City heavy cavalry to become battle-worthy.

Simply having soldiers don armor and then considering them heavy cavalry doesn't necessarily mean they are strong in battle.

In a short period of time, if heavy cavalry are well-trained, they might be stronger than regular infantry, but if the training methods are inappropriate, the heavily armored cavalry might end up being chased around by light cavalry. Thinking that the heavy cavalry of North City might just be a facade, the Sum Emperor's emotions suddenly became very complex.

He had originally planned to use the heavy cavalry of North City to intimidate those aristocratic families, but he hadn't expected the heavy cavalry of North City to be destroyed so quickly.

However, on second thought, the destruction of the heavy cavalry in North City was a good thing for him. After all, he had been considering dealing with the issues of the aristocratic families first before handling the affairs of North City.

Lu Chen and North City were both potential threats to him. Even if Lu Chen was truly his own son, he would never allow a prince who could threaten his position to exist during his lifetime.

Moreover, behind Lu Chen was the support of the Mysterious Moon Palace and some mysterious force. Clearly, Lu Chen was a pawn, with someone intending to use him against Great Sum, against him.

At this moment, Situ Ce asked, "Your Majesty, what do you plan to do next?" "Will you send a large army northward, or will North Prince continue to defend the north?"

The Sum Emperor said expressionlessly, "Since Chen has a mysterious force and the help of Mysterious Moon Palace behind him, it shows that those people still see value in using Chen. They won't just watch Chen disappear. Let Chen continue to guard the North; I really want to see what kind of force is behind Chen."

Just then, the eunuch who had left earlier came into the pavilion, "Your Majesty, Prime Minister and the others have arrived; they are waiting for you in the study room."

The Sum Emperor didn't continue the conversation with Situ Ce and headed straight for the study room.

After a while.

Imperial Palace, Imperial Study Room.

Several key ministers of the court had already gathered in the study room, waiting. Everyone glanced at the people in the room and instantly had a rough idea of why the Sum Emperor had summoned them.

In addition to the two Prime Ministers, the Minister of Revenue and the Minister of War were also present, and several generals promoted by the Sum Emperor, including the Assistant Minister of War, were in the study room. Clearly, the Sum Emperor had something military to tell them, and it was likely that there had been some changes in the war between Great Sum and Great Wu.

At this moment, the voice of an eunuch rang at the doorway.

“His Majesty has arrived!”

The people inside the study room immediately stood in two rows, waiting for the arrival of the Sum Emperor.

After the Sum Emperor entered the study room and settled at his desk, all the ministers immediately greeted him, “We greet Your Majesty. Long live, long live, long may you reign!”

The Sum Emperor said indifferently, “Dispense with the formalities.

Right Minister Zhao Wenhan stepped forward first and asked, “Your Majesty, have you summoned us at this time because there’s been a change in the front-line warfare?”

As the Prime Minister held a certain status, they could take the initiative to ask the Sum Emperor questions at such times.

The Sum Emperor answered expressionlessly, “There has indeed been a change in the front-line warfare, but it’s not in the west; it’s in the north.”

Hearing this, the ministers inside the study room were taken aback.

The north?

Wasn’t that North City?

Could it be that North Prince had already led the heavy cavalry of North City to annihilate the advancing army of the North Ere King?

Really? Could that be true?

Was the North Prince that powerful?

Last time, the North Prince had already defeated the Sky Wolf King's army of three hundred thousand. If he had now annihilated the North Fre King's army of two hundred thousand, then the North Prince would truly be in a position of power that overshadowed the emperor's.

As people were lost in their wild guesses, the Sum Emperor handed the report in his hand to the eunuch, "Pass it down for them to see."

The eunuch immediately took the military report and then handed it to Lin

Gaoyuan.

Seeing the military report written by his own son, Lin Gaoyuan was instantly stunned.

The annihilation of North City's fifty thousand heavy cavalry?

How could this be possible?!

At that moment, so as not to waste time, the Sum Emperor spoke directly, "News from the North Land reports that the fifty thousand heavy cavalry of North City, in a decisive battle with the large army of the North Fre King at Tianguang City, were ultimately annihilated, leaving only a few thousand wounded. Meanwhile, the army of the North Fre King has retreated to the steppes but continues to send cavalry south from time to time to harass Tianguang City."

Hearing the words of the Sum Emperor, all the ministers were immediately dumbfounded.

The annihilation of North City's fifty thousand heavy cavalry?

How could that be possible?

They were heavy cavalry!



Although heavy cavalry lacked the mobility of light cavalry on the steppes and likely couldn't catch up with light cavalry, they wore heavy armor. It shouldn't be so easy for them to be wiped out by the army of the Barbarian Tribe.

The first thought in the ministers' minds was that this news must be false, surely it was deception by the Sum Emperor to divert their attention and to make them forget that North City had fifty thousand heavy cavalry.

Lin Gaoyuan also thought this way, but he felt something was amiss. After all, this was a military report sent back by his son. Even though his son might withhold some information, it was unlikely he would send back a false report.

## Chapter 229: The Sum Emperor's Ulterior Motives\_2

Moreover, the Sum Emperor's response was too direct; those were fifty thousand heavy cavalry, how could they be wiped out so easily? Others ministers, as well as the aristocratic families, will hardly believe such news when spoken aloud.

It was precisely because the message was too direct that Lin Gaoyuan felt it might not be false. Just like the initial annihilation of three hundred thousand from the Barbarian Tribe in North City, the more something seemed like false information, the more it became likely not to be.

Snapping back to reality, Zhao Wenhan immediately stood up and asked, "Your Majesty, has it been confirmed that the news is true? After all, that was fifty thousand heavy cavalry; how could they be so easily defeated?"

The Sum Emperor indifferently replied, "My Shadow Guard has confirmed the truth of this news. I too was unwilling to believe it at first, but the State Preceptor reminded me that, although North City has fifty thousand heavy cavalry, these forces were newly established and not very strong in battle."

"When facing the Barbarian Tribe, their greatest advantage was only their heavy armor. It is very normal for these fifty thousand heavy cavalry to be destroyed by the army of the North Ere King."

“However, it cannot be said that they were defeated. The North Fre King has already retreated to the grasslands, and North City is now safe. The mission of the fifty thousand heavy cavalry is thus considered complete. The royal court can now focus all its attention on the war with Great Wu.”

Although the Sum Emperor said this, all the ministers present knew very well that they had not been concerned with the warfare in the north; they had been focused on the hostilities between Great Sum and Great Wu from the very beginning.

As for what happened to North City, it was of no concern to them; in their view, the fifty thousand heavy cavalry of North City were the Sum Emperor’s private forces. Their combat effectiveness was supposed to be very strong, and they should have had no significant problem dealing with the North Fre King, so the ministers had not bothered with events in the north.

But now the Sum Emperor was telling them that the fifty thousand heavy cavalry of North City had been almost entirely annihilated, leaving only some wounded soldiers behind.

Of course, to most of those present, this was good news, but they were not yet able to confirm whether the Sum Emperor’s assertion was true or false.

If it was true, in the eyes of the Aristocratic Families, the Sum Emperor would have lost a power base, and after the war between Great Wu and Great Sum ended, the Sum Emperor would not have the courage to act against the Ancient Families.

The key was the reliability of this news.

If true, the Aristocratic Families would all rejoice.

But if it was false, it would mean that the Sum Emperor was hiding his strength, proving he hadn’t given up and still aspired to act against the Ancient Families. He probably just felt that he might not have a chance in the following years, so he chose to bide his time.

The Sum Emperor’s greatest skill was enduring humiliation and biding his time. He had compromised with the Aristocratic Families countless times, but after each compromise, his hatred for them deepened, increasing his desire to eliminate the Ancient Families. The Ancient Families naturally understood that the Sum Emperor could no longer tolerate them after multiple compromises.

But even though the Sum Emperor could no longer tolerate them, he still needed strength. He couldn't eradicate all the Ancient Families alone; without weapons, they would not be afraid of him.

At this point, the Minister of War, Chu Qinwu, said, "Your Majesty, the western front is under severe pressure. Now that the northern warfare is concluded, should we consider recalling General Lin?"

The Sum Emperor glanced at Chu Qinwu, just about to say something, when Lin Gaoyuan suddenly spoke up, "Although the North Fre King's army has withdrawn to the grasslands, according to the reports from the North Land, soldiers of the North Fre would still periodically attack Tianguang City."

"Now the North Prince hardly has any soldiers left under his command, and Tianguang City is defended by twenty thousand troops of the royal court. Relocating these forces now would be tantamount to abandoning the north."

As Lin Gaoyuan's words fell, he passed the campaign report he was holding to Zhao Wenhan. Zhao Wenhan took it from Lin Gaoyuan's hands and read it carefully.

At this moment, officials from the Aristocratic Family faction eyed Zhao Wenhan, wanting to gauge his reaction.

After giving the campaign report a quick browse, Zhao Wenhan remarked, "If what General Lin's report states is true— that the Barbarian Tribe's cavalry still sporadically attack from the south— then the royal court's twenty thousand soldiers indeed should not be recalled so promptly."

The Sum Emperor then said, "Enough about the northern warfare; I have summoned you today mainly to discuss peace talks with Great Wu."

In name, the war between Great Sum and Great Wu was instigated by Great Sum. Since it was Great Sum who initiated it, it is naturally up to Great Sum to propose an end to the hostilities by initiating peace talks.

Although the Sum Emperor was reluctant to engage in peace talks, if the war were to continue like this, Great Sum's military strength would be further weakened, and then how could he take care of the Aristocratic Families within Great Sum?

Even though quite a few Seigniors had dispatched troops to the front line, their soldiers were one worse than the other with hardly any combat ability. The western front was currently being held solely by Great Sum's troops.

If only the Seigniors' forces were left on the front line, it wouldn't be long before Great Wu's million-strong army would advance towards the Capital city of Great Sum.

For Great Sum at the moment, the best outcome would indeed be peace talks.

The Sum Emperor also understood that engaging in peace talks meant that he would have to compromise once again with the Aristocratic Families. It was highly likely that this war had been initiated by the Chu Family in collusion with the Great Wu dynasty. The Chu Family belonged to the Aristocratic Families of the South, and by now, they had completely sided with Prince Lu Shuyun. His compromise would likely result in declaring Prince Lu Shuyun as the Crown Prince.

### Chapter 230: The Sum Emperor's Ulterior Motives\_3

Although he was unwilling to do so, the Sum Emperor had no choice but to stop the fighting. Continuing the battle would deplete the reserves he had accumulated with great difficulty.

In the following two hours, they discussed the matter of negotiations. Zhao Wenhan and some officials were somewhat confused; if they were to discuss negotiations, it should be done in the Great Court.

Why had the Sum Emperor today only called the officials who were related to the frontline warfare to discuss the negotiations, while other officials were not involved in the discussion?

As the discussion went on, Zhao Wenhan noticed a detail: nearly all the officials in the study were from the Aristocratic Families of the South.

The Military Generals and the officials from the South had completely different attitudes towards the negotiations.

The Military Generals in the study were strongly opposed to the negotiations, whereas the officials from the Aristocratic Families of the South were wholeheartedly in favor. They could gain more benefits from the Sum Emperor's compromises only if the negotiations happened.

By bringing these two parties together, the officials from the Aristocratic Families of the South would find excuses to describe how the warfare at the front was of a certain nature, insisting that they should prioritize the people, and attacking the Military Generals for only seeking to achieve military merits.

The Military Generals believed that His Majesty's suggestion of negotiations was forced by these officials from the Aristocratic Families of the South, which invisibly sparked the discord between the Military Generals and the Aristocratic Families of the South.

The Military Generals certainly sought to achieve military merits—who among Generals would not wish for that? Especially since most Generals of Great Sum were recently promoted and had little to no military achievements.

The result was that the Aristocratic Families of the South insisted on negotiations, making it impossible for the Military Generals to be happy about it.

In the end, the matter of negotiations was discussed for a long time without reaching any concrete results. Then, the Sum Emperor decided to discuss it again at the Great Court Assembly.

After leaving the study, the officials from the Aristocratic Families' faction all gathered around Zhao Wenhan. Chu Qinwu asked curiously, "Master Zhao, why would His Majesty discuss the matter of negotiations with us and a bunch of Military Generals? Shouldn't this be discussed at the Great Court Assembly?"

Touching his beard, Zhao Wenhan's eyes revealed a light as if he had seen through everything. He said, "In my opinion, His Majesty plans to stir up conflict between the Aristocratic Families of the South and the Military Generals."

Upon saying this, Zhao Wenhan turned his head to glance at the officials following him, then continued, "Look who came today among the Civil Officials besides Lin Gaoyuan. How many are from factions other than ours? Most of you are officials from the Aristocratic Families of the South, aren't you?"

Upon hearing Zhao Wenhan's words, everyone immediately came to their senses. It turned out the Sum Emperor knew the war could not continue much longer, so he set a trap for the Aristocratic Families of the South in advance.

Not long ago in the study, they had been arguing with the Military Generals, insisting on putting an end to the war.

In their view, the war had reached an adequate stage, and if it continued, it might corner the Sum Emperor into a tight spot, possibly undermining the interests of the Aristocratic Families of the South.

War is just an extension of politics; it is not always beneficial for them if the battle drags on.

Chu Qinwu was about to say more when Zhao Wenhan, still touching his beard, said, “Let’s not discuss this matter for now. Better you have your people investigate whether the fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry of North City were truly annihilated.”

“If the Heavy Cavalry of North City are indeed gone, His Majesty’s subtle maneuver today won’t have much effect.”

Without the fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry of North City, even stirring up conflict between the Aristocratic Families of the South and the Military Generals would be futile. Could it be that the Sum Emperor is planning to act against the Aristocratic Families of the South after the war between Great Wu and Great Sum ends?

Zhao Wenhan did not believe the Sum Emperor would dare to do that. The more the Sum Emperor engaged in petty actions, the more it showed his insecurity and reluctance to directly confront the Ancient Families.

After listening to Zhao Wenhan’s reminder, the officials from the Aristocratic Families of the South immediately returned to their respective Families to convey the day’s news and then utilized their various resources to investigate whether the Black Cavalry of North City had indeed been annihilated.