

Es. Benefits 231

Chapter 231: Chen Wanrong's Master, Lu Chen's Troubles

In the quiet and elegant courtyard, tendrils of white mist lingered.

The brook in the yard flowed endlessly, making a babbling sound.

At this moment, a bone-chilling coldness was released from a room of the courtyard, and in an instant, all within the courtyard was frozen, as if this place were in the polar regions.

A graceful figure then appeared at the entrance of the courtyard.

Chen Wanrong, dressed in a white plain robe, walked with light steps across the ice-covered stone pathway to the door of the room.

Chen Wanrong did not enter directly, instead, she bowed at the door and said, "Disciple pays respect to the master."

At that moment, the voice of a cold woman came from inside the room.

"Come in!"

As the voice faded, the wooden door of the hut opened instantly, and a gust of cold wind blew out from the room, causing Chen Wanrong's long dress to flutter incessantly.

After the cold wind had passed, Chen Wanrong crossed the threshold and entered the room.

Inside, the room was like a millennia-old ice cave, with everything encased in frost.

At that moment, Chen Wanrong's gaze was drawn to a figure on the nearby bed, a woman with long silver-white hair who was slowly opening her beautiful eyes.

The woman was like a fairy from heaven, her beauty so transcendent it seemed out of place in reality.

Though her hair was completely white, her skin was exceptionally delicate and smooth, without a single wrinkle, just like a young woman who had just come of age.

She exuded a sacred radiance, and her frigid aura was too intense for anyone to approach.

At that time, the woman fixed her gaze on Chen Wanrong's eyes and spoke, "Recently, quite a few Elders have come to me complaining that you are not dedicating your mind to cultivation and have sent many disciples to North City."

The woman's voice was pure, refined, and intensely penetrating, as if it was transmitted directly into one's brain.

With an expressionless face, Chen Wanrong replied, "To the master, this is indeed the case."

Hearing Chen Wanrong's response, the white-haired woman said, "In this world, there are very few who are fated for the Immortal path. Countless people bleed and fight over an elusive immortal chance, yet you who possess such a fate do not know to cherish it."

Chen Wanrong replied with neither humility nor arrogance, "Disciple's worldly attachments remain unresolved; thus, she has no heart for cultivation, disappointing the master."

The woman sighed and said, "So be it, everyone has their own choices."

"The reason I summoned you this time is to tell you that I am about to enter seclusion. This seclusion might last a hundred years, or perhaps five hundred."

"Once I am in seclusion, I entrust all of Mysterious Moon Palace to you and those Elders."

"I must remind you that although this world cannot accommodate the existence of Immortals, Mysterious Moon Palace is not invincible. There exist powers beyond the Heavenly Human Realm. Should there ever arise a being that surpasses the Heavenly Human Realm, you and those Elders might not be their match."

“So I still hope that once you have settled all worldly matters, you would cease causing further trouble and return to Mysterious Moon Palace to cultivate in peace, breaking through the Heavenly Human Realm as soon as possible. I do not wish to emerge from seclusion only to find your grave.”

“I have already lost one disciple; I do not wish to lose another.”

Chen Wanrong bowed again and said, “Disciple understands.”

The white-haired woman spoke, “That is all, then.”

After these words, the woman’s body astonishingly fragmented into countless pieces, and then vanished without a trace.

As the white-haired woman disappeared, the ice which had sealed the room dissolved instantly, and the sound of the flowing water outside the courtyard could be heard once more.

After the white-haired woman had left, Chen Wanrong turned and exited the courtyard.

Her master had entered seclusion, her greatest worry had been alleviated, and now, no one could stop her from restoring her kingdom.

It was time to return to North City.

Just then, the image of Lu Chen involuntarily appeared in her mind.

For some reason, in recent times, the image of Lu Chen had been appearing in her mind from time to time.

Chen Wanrong didn’t dwell on it much at the time, guessing that perhaps it was because she had been constantly thinking about planting the Love Worm in Lu Chen, which is why he kept coming to mind.

North City.

Inside the Spring Sound Court of the North Prince Mansion.

“Achoo!!!”

“Achoo!!!”

“Strange, aren’t I a Grandmaster already? Why am I still sneezing? Could it be that some woman is thinking of me?”

Lu Chen had just finished exercising, sitting on the edge of the bed and resting, when a series of sneezes took him as he stood up.

At that moment, Lu Chen turned his head to look at Xiao Wenyao, who lay collapsed on the bed with tears in her eyes, looking pitiful.

Seeing Xiao Wenyao gazing at him resentfully, Lu Chen chuckled and said, “Little pony, what’s that expression for? You weren’t cursing me in your heart just now, were you?”

Xiao Wenyao whispered softly, “This Female Slave wouldn’t dare.”

Lu Chen laughed and then smacked her buttocks, saying, “You wouldn’t dare? You, who wished to ride me like a horse—what wouldn’t you dare?”

“I think your audacity has been growing lately.”

Xiao Wenyao didn’t dare to speak, only whimpering in her heart. What she wanted to ride was a real horse, one that could gallop across the plains, yet every time Lu Chen twisted her words, treating her as if she were the horse.

Lu Chen glanced out the window, noting that the snow had stopped. He then stood up and said, “You just rest well; I have matters to attend to and must leave now.”

Seeing Lu Chen getting out of bed, Xiao Wenyao also hurriedly got up, helping him get dressed.

By now, Xiao Wenyao had also learned how to serve others, for after all, she was Lu Chen's little Female Slave, and this was something she was expected to learn.

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Lu Chen left the Spring Sound Court and made his way to the study.

The weather was nice today, with the first clear skies after the snow. When Lu Chen arrived at the entrance of the study, he didn't immediately enter but stood in the courtyard to bask in the sun for a while.

In the recent half month, he had either been cultivating his relationship with Yelv Nanyan in bed, teaching Xiao Wenyao how to ride a horse, or practicing spear with the Grandmaster Bai Qingqing. It had been a long time since Lu Chen had the chance to enjoy the sun.

As Lu Chen was soaking up the sun, a maid approached and said, "Prince, Lord Li is requesting an audience."

Lu Chen indifferently responded, "Let him come over."

Soon after, the maid led Li Rui to Lu Chen.

Li Rui greeted him, saying, "Greetings to the Prince, may the Prince live for thousands and thousands of years!"

Lu Chen, while sunbathing, replied, "Hmm, dispense with the formalities."

"Speak, what's the matter?"

Hearing Lu Chen's words, Li Rui hesitated for a moment without speaking.

Seeing that Li Rui remained silent, Lu Chen, curious, turned his head to look at him, "Why has Lord Li become so indecisive today?"

Li Rui coughed before saying, "Prince, the issue I have come to discuss with you mainly concerns officier salaries."

Upon hearing this, Lu Chen paused, then inquired, "Officer salaries? What's this, the officials in North City want to raise their salaries?"

Li Rui replied, "That's not it."

"It's just that..."

Li Rui stopped mid-sentence.

Seeing Li Rui speaking so hesitantly today, Lu Chen immediately said, "Lord Li, speak your business. If you have nothing else, go back to your duties."

Seeing that Lu Chen seemed displeased, Li Rui quickly said, "Previously, the salaries of officials in North City were provided by the court, but according to the court's regulations, the salaries of the officials in the Seignior's territory are to be paid by the Seignior himself."

"The court has already stopped the disbursement to North City half a year ago, so..."

Li Rui did not continue speaking but looked up at Lu Chen.

His meaning was simple and clear: North City was out of money, and it was up to the North Prince Mansion to pay the officials' salaries.

When Lu Chen heard what Li Rui said, he laughed and then spoke, "Doesn't North City collect taxes every year? I remember, according to the court's rules, the Seignior does not need to pay taxes to the court for the first ten years after being enfeoffed."

"Could it be that the taxes in North City are not enough to support the officials there?"

Li Rui said, "Your Highness, North City is impoverished, and since you came to North City, you have waived much of the taxes, so indeed there is not much silver left in the coffers."

“I’ve calculated, and if we disburse this year’s salaries to the officials, there will likely be no money left to complete the Hall of Political Affairs.”

The finances of the North Prince Mansion and the Prefectural Government were separate, with the North Prince Mansion’s money always managed by the Mansion itself, while the tax revenue of North City was managed by the Prefectural Government.

Without the court’s disbursement, the modest sum managed by Li Rui would quickly deplete, and what’s more, the funds for building the Hall of Political Affairs were also coming from the coffers of the Prefectural Government.

Having waived so many taxes in North City and without the court’s disbursement, the finances managed by the Prefectural Government were essentially only dwindling, with money going out but not coming in, and naturally, this could not be sustained for long.

After hearing Li Rui’s words, Lu Chen fell silent for a moment as if pondering something. After a while, he asked, “How much more is needed for this year’s officer salaries in North City?”

Li Rui cautiously replied, “Your Highness, no more than one hundred thousand silver.”

At that, Lu Chen’s brow furrowed and he continued, “Give me the exact amount.”

Li Rui answered again, “Around fifty thousand taels or so.”

Just fifty thousand taels, certainly the North Prince Mansion could afford that.

But this was only part of North City’s officer salaries; maintaining the Black Cavalry and the Barbarian Tribe captives also cost Lu Chen an unknown sum of silver each month. Although the North Prince Mansion had many profitable businesses, if expenditures were excessive, the earnings would definitely not keep up with the spending.

Lu Chen then told Li Rui, “You go back first. The household accounts are not managed by me. I need to consult with the Princess Consort first. As for the officers’ salaries, I will make the disbursement in a few days. You don’t need to worry about it.”

With Lu Chen's words, Li Rui was reassured. He knew that the North Prince Mansion was not lacking in funds, for the businesses that the Mansion was engaged in were very lucrative, easily netting over a hundred thousand taels of silver in a month.

The key was the attitude of the North Prince. Some Seigniors often delayed the salaries of officials upon reaching their fiefdoms, something that occurred in every territory. Initially, Li Rui's main concern was that Lu Chen might deliberately delay officer salaries.

If Lu Chen were to delay officer salaries, then the officials of North City would first think of complaining to him, the Prefecture Governor, not to Lu Chen, the Prince.

Fortunately, Lu Chen had no intention of delaying the salaries.

Li Rui then said, "I take my leave, Your Highness."

After Li Rui left the Prince's Mansion with peace of mind, Lu Chen didn't proceed to the study but went straight to the main courtyard to find Mu Zixuan.

Mu Zixuan was sitting on a wooden chair in the main hall. Although most people in Great Sum still preferred to kneel and sit, Lu Chen was worried that such a posture might affect a fetus, should his concubines become pregnant, so he had specifically commissioned craftsmen to make many chairs.

Mu Zixuan was showing signs of pregnancy, with her belly a bit rounded, though not very noticeable, mainly due to her loose clothing.

After arriving at the main hall, Lu Chen saw Mu Zixuan examining account books. He immediately brought a chair over to sit beside her, then wrapped an arm around her slender waist and whispered in her ear, "My love, you've worked hard."

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Chen's Troubles_3

Seeing Lu Chen come to find her at this time, Mu Zixuan was a bit puzzled. Usually, after she became pregnant, Lu Chen wouldn't come to snuggle up with her during the day since he had to

practice horsemanship and marksmanship with Xiao Wenyao and Bai Qingqing, leaving him no leisure to visit her.

Quickly setting aside the account book in her hand, Mu Zixuan asked, “My Prince, do you need something from your concubine?”

Without beating around the bush, Lu Chen said directly, “In the future, the North Prince Mansion will have to support the officials of North City, and I’m afraid we will have to allocate a considerable portion of our funds for this purpose.”

Mu Zixuan immediately understood Lu Chen’s implication and said, “Indeed, it is time to separate the state treasury and the private treasury.”

In Great Sum’s feudal system, once enfeoffed, seigniors were granted feudal states, and the court would no longer allocate funds to a seignior’s domain unless there was a war or a particularly significant event.

Typically, a seignior upon reaching his domain, would differentiate between the mansion’s private treasury and the state treasury, aiming to channel the majority of the tax revenue directly into the private treasury for his own enjoyment.

Of course, North City was different, currently on the verge of poverty, with little tax revenue. Lu Chen didn’t need to syphon the tax revenue from the people, and the establishment of separate treasuries in the North Prince Mansion was merely for the sake of convenience in fund allocation.

Continuing, Mu Zixuan said, “However, whom should we entrust with the management of the state treasury? Does my Prince have a suitable candidate in mind?”

The purse strings naturally needed to be in the hands of someone we trust. Once the private and state treasuries were divided, the state treasury could no longer be managed by the Prefectural Government.

Although the Prince’s Mansion was quite wealthy now, who knows if one day the state treasury would have more silver than the private treasury, especially after North City’s development and increased tax revenue; it was highly likely that the state treasury would become richer than the private treasury of the North Prince Mansion.

So, it was best to keep a firm grip on the purse strings from the start.

Hearing Mu Zixuan's question, Lu Chen pondered for a moment, "I haven't found a suitable person yet."

First and foremost, the person managing the state treasury must be one hundred percent loyal to him, and secondly, that person must have some experience.

Lu Chen sighed and said, "Let's not even talk about the state treasury for now; the current official structure of North City is almost like a makeshift troupe—there are hardly any useful people. It looks like we'll need to adjust the official structure of North City first."

A feudal state was called a state precisely because the seignior within had a lot of autonomy, including the power to appoint and dismiss officials.

Usually, upon arriving at their domain, one of the first things a seignior did was establish his own base, also known as a small court. Just as the court had six ministries, a feudal state also had six ministries.

Lu Chen had been in North City for over a year, and not even the six ministries had been established, unclear in their duties and responsibilities, North City was still being managed in the same old fashion.

Of course, the most important reason was the lack of capable people in North City. Lu Chen couldn't find enough civil officials to establish the six ministries. At that moment, Lu Chen glanced down at Mu Zixuan's belly then extended his hand and gently stroked it, thinking that both times Mu Zixuan and Zhou Youyou were pregnant, the system rewarded him with talents.

Once it was a member of the Brocade Guard; another time, it was a member of the Black Cavalry. This indicated that the pregnancy rewards were likely to be talents.

In this way, what Mu Zixuan and the others were carrying was not just their children but potentially the civil officials he desired.

He hoped that when Mu Zixuan and the others gave birth again, the system would reward him with some capable people, for North City was in dire need of civil officials.

At this point, Mu Zixuan suggested, “My Prince, perhaps we could temporarily entrust the state treasury to sister Nanyan.”

Hearing this, Lu Chen was taken aback.

Yelv Nanyan did indeed have extensive management experience, and with her favorability towards him having reached one hundred, it was impossible for her to betray him now.

However, since Yelv Nanyan was formerly the Sky Wolf King’s wife, entrusting her with the state treasury would definitely cause dissatisfaction among some people.

Mu Zixuan continued, “Now, sister Nanyan is one of your women, my Prince. Moreover, she has recently assisted in handling Mansion affairs, and I have found that her accounting abilities are hardly inferior to mine. If she is only to manage the treasury temporarily, I think there should be no problem.” “Besides, given my Prince’s charm, I believe you will soon find suitable talent to take over the treasury, so leaving it in her hands is only a temporary measure.”

“I also think that entrusting her with the treasury has another significant advantage, that is in placating the tribes of North City. If the Barbarian Tribe learns that sister Nanyan, who was once the wife of the Sky Wolf King, is entrusted with such responsibility, it will prove that you do not discriminate against the tribes, and they will see hope.”

Lu Chen’s marriage to Yelv Nanyan did have a significant political function, which was to calm the tribes of North City, especially those of the Sky Wolf King Tribe.

Although Lu Chen genuinely lusted for Yelv Nanyan’s body, marrying her wasn’t due to his lust, it was a political marriage.

It was equivalently a political alliance between the Sky Wolf King Tribe and the North Prince Mansion.

Of course, even if Yelv Nanyan hadn’t been the wife of the Sky Wolf King, Lu Chen would still have desired to possess her upon seeing her. A political alliance was secondary in his consideration.

After pondering for a while, Lu Chen said with a smile, “My beloved concubine, by letting Nanyan manage the treasury, aren’t you afraid that when she gains power, her status in the Mansion will surpass yours?”

Mu Zixuan replied with a smile, “The status of women in the North Prince Mansion is not up for competition, it is given by my Prince. Whoever you wish to elevate will have high status.”

If this were elsewhere, a woman with power in her hands might indeed dominate the master.

But in the North Prince Mansion, it was different. Lu Chen held absolute authority, and all the women of the inner court were centered around him.

Mu Zixuan knew the effects of the Dragon and Phoenix Tea, so she wasn’t worried at all that Yelv Nanyan would have a higher status than herself because she had power, unless Lu Chen wanted Nanyan to surpass her.

If Lu Chen truly wanted to raise Yelv Nanyan’s status above hers, even to the point of deposing her as his wife, that was not something Mu Zixuan, a daughter of a convicted man, could prevent.

However, after living together for over a year, Mu Zixuan believed that Lu Chen was not that kind of person. Her trust in Lu Chen was absolute, which was also a benefit of one hundred percent favorability—there was no scheming between

husband and wife.

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Upon hearing Mu Zixuan’s response, Lu Chen’s lips curled into a slight smile.

He appreciated a wise and virtuous wife like Mu Zixuan who could discern right from wrong and wouldn’t succumb to jealousy in significant matters.

In terms of beauty, Mu Zixuan had a score of 93, which was still somewhat less compared to Chu Yuqin, but Lu Chen’s affection for her wasn’t based on any system rating.

As long as they were women he liked, they were very important to him, and not something a mere system rating could influence.

At that moment, Lu Chen said, "Alright, then I'll temporarily let Nanyan take charge of the national treasury to see how she manages, and when I find a suitable candidate, I'll replace her."

As the words left him, Lu Chen reached out with his other hand, sidling up to loop an arm around Mu Zixuan's slender waist.

Even though Mu Zixuan was pregnant, it did not prevent them from hugging and embracing each other.

Suddenly recalling something, Mu Zixuan asked, "Speaking of which, Your Highness, isn't the construction of the straight road scheduled to start next spring? I heard that you asked people to produce a lot of cement."

Lu Chen said, "Hmm."

Mu Zixuan, deep in thought, commented, "Then we'll need a considerable amount of grain next year, and with Great Sum and Great Wu at war, grain prices inside Great Sum territory have skyrocketed."

Hearing Mu Zixuan's words, Lu Chen was taken aback for a moment; since he had delegated the procurement of grain to Mu Zixuan, he wasn't aware of the current grain prices in Great Sum.

However, upon her mention, Lu Chen could roughly guess that the current grain prices within Great Sum territory must be extraordinarily inflated.

Mu Zixuan continued, "Moreover, grain prices are manipulated by the aristocratic families of the South, and the price of white rice within Great Sum territory has already risen to nearly six silver per dan."

Lu Chen was stunned by her words; he might not be responsible for buying grain, but he had a rough understanding of past rice prices in the Capital city, which used to fluctuate between 0.5 to 0.6 silver.

If the price of a dan of white rice had climbed to six silvers, that meant the price of grain had increased tenfold.

“Six... Six silvers?”

“That expensive?”

Mu Zixuan replied, “If the conflict between Great Sum and Great Wu continues, grain prices may rise further, and by the time the Great Wu army reaches the Capital city, I fear that the common people will...”

Mu Zixuan suddenly realized that she was being too outspoken and immediately stopped speaking.

Seeing that Mu Zixuan had abruptly ceased talking, Lu Chen said with a smile, “My consort, you don’t need to be so restrained in front of me; speak your mind.”

“And you’re not wrong; if grain prices continue to rise, the common people might indeed rebel. But they still have surplus grain at home, enough to last another half a year or a year without much issue. Besides, I suspect the war will be over soon.”

War invariably leads to rising grain prices, whether Great Sum initiates it or not. It’s inconceivable that upon the mere onset of war and rising grain prices, the populace would instantly revolt.

For the common people to revolt, it usually takes them being on the brink of subsistence. And the war has only been going on for a few months, not long enough for Great Sum’s population to be at such a point.

But Lu Chen surmised that the war was likely drawing to a close. Although warfare spikes grain prices, the conflict between Great Sum and Great Wu had just begun and was nearing a stalemate. The price hike of Great Sum’s grain should not have been so outrageous.

A tenfold spike in the price of rice clearly indicated the aristocratic families of the South were putting pressure on the Sum Emperor.

On one hand, they manipulated grain prices to exert pressure; on the other, they used the external war. It was very likely that the Sum Emperor was on the verge of conceding.

The only question was what form that concession would take.

Given that his father, the Emperor, was young and strong, abdicating was out of the question, but designating an heir was a possibility.

However, if the Sum Emperor were to capitulate to the aristocratic families of the South and decide to proclaim Prince Lu Shuyun as the Crown Prince, other factions in the Capital city would not stand for it. A bitter round of political strife would erupt once again within Great Sum.

At the thought, the corners of Lu Chen's mouth lifted slightly. Fortunately, he had been enfeoffed to North City, so whatever happened in the Capital city mattered little to him; he just had to focus on his own development.

Let them fight, preferably to the death. That way, he could swoop in and benefit from the chaos.

Then, Lu Chen spoke, "My consort, in a few days, allocate seventy thousand silver to the Prefectural Government for Li Rui to distribute officials' salaries and have my Hall of Political Affairs repaired."

Although Li Rui had only requested fifty thousand silver and obviously exaggerated his request, Lu Chen didn't intend to quibble over these details. Instead, he even added an extra twenty thousand silver for Li Rui.

He decided to sweeten the situation for the officials of North City first, as he was preparing to take major actions. The principle of 'combining a carrot with a stick' was something Lu Chen certainly understood.

Mu Zixuan responded, "I understand. I will have seventy thousand silver transferred from the treasury to the Prefectural Government right away."

Lu Chen pondered for a moment, and then said, "As for the grain issue..."

He hesitated as he spoke.

Indeed, the grain price was a major concern. Prices in Great Sum were controlled, and North City, being the most affected due to its poverty, nearly exclusively purchased grain from outside.

Paying six or seven silver for a dan of rice made Lu Chen question if there was something wrong with his own mind.

However, crops like potatoes, sweet potatoes, and corn had not yet been popularized. Spreading new agricultural crops takes time; it doesn't mean you can harvest immediately after planting.

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Furthermore, the first crop of agricultural produce still needs to be reserved for seeds, and it will be at least a few years before North City can truly resolve its food security issues. In those years, North City will still have to rely on purchasing grain from the outside.

After thinking for a moment, Lu Chen said to Mu Zixuan, "Let the Prince's Mansion temporarily halt grain purchases. I'll ask Wang Qingci about the current grain prices in other kingdoms, and then we'll use the Rain-listening Pavilion to buy grain from other kingdoms."

Mu Zixuan asked, "Prince, won't this expose the relationship between the Rain-listening Pavilion and the Prince's Mansion?"

Lu Chen replied indifferently, "Just falsify the accounts. The Rain-listening Pavilion can claim that the price they sold grain to the North Prince Mansion is similar to that in Great Sum."

"The Rain-listening Pavilion is, after all, a commercial entity. It should serve its purpose to some extent."

Although the main function of the Rain-listening Pavilion is to gather intelligence, its overt function is to engage in commerce. There is nothing that the Rain-listening Pavilion does not offer for sale. It is perfectly normal business practice for the Rain-listening Pavilion to resell grain to North City and profit from the markup, given the shortage of grain there.

Mu Zixuan responded, "This servant understands."

After being intimate with Mu Zixuan for a while, Lu Chen left the main hall and headed to his study.

Just as he arrived at the study, he said to a Brocade Guard, "Summon Mr. Wang for me. I have business with her."

Wang Qingci had been rarely seen in the North Prince Mansion for the past half month. It was unclear whether it was because of the severe scolding last time that had left her scared, scared enough not to dare to return.

However, she was ultimately his female slave. If she did not come back, he would simply have someone call her. As long as she had not left Yan County, she was obligated to come to the North Prince Mansion and report to him.

Lu Chen didn't wait long in the study before he heard Wang Qingci's voice outside, "Prince, your servant has arrived."

Sitting at his desk and writing a reform proposal for North City with a brush, Lu Chen said, "Come in."

Wang Qingci then pushed the door and entered the room.

Seeing Lu Chen busy with his work, Wang Qingci breathed a sigh of relief, thinking that perhaps Lu Chen had called for her to satisfy some of his other desires.

But then she thought, with so many women in the inner courtyard of the North Prince Mansion, even if she did not return, Lu Chen wouldn't be idle; he didn't need her to satisfy him.

And Lu Chen had no reason to have the Brocade Guard find her specially for that kind of matter; probably, he had something important to discuss.

Wang Qingci proactively asked, "Prince, what business do you have with your servant?"

Lu Chen spoke up, "I want to know which kingdom or country currently has relatively lower grain prices. The North Prince Mansion is planning to stockpile some grain."

Upon hearing this, Wang Qingci instantly understood Lu Chen's intent. Working in intelligence, she knew all too well how frightening the recent rise in Great Sum's grain prices had been. She had already scouted out which kingdom had lower grain prices for Lu Chen.

Wang Qingci promptly said, "Prince, your servant has already inquired for you. Currently, the grain prices in the Da Yue Dynasty are relatively low. However, the main grain crop of the Da Yue Dynasty is wheat."

The people of Great Sum favored rice, while those from Da Yue, primarily living in the northwestern regions, preferred wheat-based foods. Most of their grain was also wheat.

Despite North City being even further north than Da Yue, its people had only migrated from Great Sum in recent years, so most of them still primarily ate white porridge.

After hearing Wang Qingci's words, Lu Chen pondered for a moment before saying, "Wheat will do as long as the price is relatively low."

Habits can be changed. With rice prices today in Great Sum rising to six taels per stone, it is good enough just to fill one's stomach. Is there any need to distinguish between wheat and rice?

Wang Qingci said, "Alright then. I'll have the trade caravan hurry to purchase the grain."

At this point, Wang Qingci glanced at the writing on Lu Chen's desk, then tentatively asked, "Prince, if there's nothing else, your servant will get busy with her tasks."

Lu Chen set down his brush, smiled slightly, and gazed into Wang Qingci's eyes before asking, "Has Mr. Wang been very busy lately? Busy enough to not visit the North Prince Mansion even once in half a month? How come I heard that Mr. Wang hasn't left Yan County?"

Upon hearing this from Lu Chen, Wang Qingci's heart skipped a beat.

Lu Chen's treatment of her was different from his treatment of the other women in the Prince's Mansion. Typically, when discussing official matters with her, he would refer to himself as "I", not as "the Prince".

In these past times, whether Lu Chen was playing a role or not, he would refer to himself as “the Prince” and call her “Mr. Wang” when he had wicked intentions toward her.

As long as she heard Lu Chen referring to himself as “the Prince” in her presence, followed by addressing her as “Mr. Wang,” it signified he had bad intentions for her.

Wang Qingci hurriedly said, “Prince, your servant was solely focused on gathering intelligence about other kingdoms more quickly to help you, that’s why I haven’t returned to the Prince’s Mansion. Your servant meant nothing else by it.”

Lu Chen said indifferently, “Is that so? Mr. Wang, you haven’t forgotten one of your responsibilities, have you?”

Hearing this question from Lu Chen, Wang Qingci knew she couldn’t escape what was coming. She gave Lu Chen a resentful look, then said, “Prince, your servant has been injured from martial arts training recently, so I hope that today you will not be so rough.”

With these words, Wang Qingci, swaying her slender waist, came directly to Lu Chen’s side.

Seeing Wang Qingci’s seductive figure, Lu Chen spoke no further. He promptly rose from his seat and pressed her onto the desk for a thorough handling.

Chapter 236: Must Let Her Sister See the Evil Side of This Man_3

If it had been a matter of leaving Yan County to carry out missions, that would have been fine, but Wang Qingci stayed in Yan County for half a month and did not leave at all.

Staying in Yan County for half a month without returning to the Prince’s Mansion, she clearly did not regard him as the master at all, so a punishment was definitely in order.

During this time, Chu Qingli had completely accustomed herself to life in the Prince’s Mansion.

Moreover, she gradually found herself unwilling to leave the North Prince Mansion.

Originally, she came to convince her sister to leave the North Prince Mansion with her and lead a life for just the two of them. Instead, she began entertaining the idea of staying herself.

This made Chu Qingli somewhat unable to accept; she always felt that she was being seduced by some mysterious power.

Otherwise, how could she possibly have such thoughts?

Chu Qingli patrolled while analyzing what power might be seducing her.

Before long, she patrolled to the entrance of the study.

Without even approaching the study, she heard some groaning noises.

While Chu Qingli was deep in thought about why she wanted to stay, the sounds made her furrow her brows slightly, and her expression suddenly turned exceedingly cold.

That lecherous fiend was up to no good again.

She really did not understand how he could have such boundless energy every day; since her arrival at the North Prince Mansion, she had not seen that scoundrel quiet down even for a day.

Yet from her observations, not a single woman in the mansion seemed to be troubled. Not only were they untroubled, but they appeared even more radiant and beautiful the day after being with that scoundrel.

Although she did not understand the specific principles involved or what was going on, Chu Qingli was very clear that what Lu Chen was practicing could not possibly be some Devilish Skill like the Happy Union Skill.

If Lu Chen practiced Devilish Skill with his abilities, the women of the inner court of the mansion would probably have turned into dried corpses long ago.

At this moment, Chu Qingli's mind blanked.

Ever since her arrival at the mansion, she had always heard that Lu Chen was someone blessed by the Immortal.

If the Cultivation Technique that Lu Chen was practicing was an Immortal Law that only brought benefits and no harm to people, then that could explain the situation with Lu Chen and his concubines.

With this thought, a new association suddenly appeared in Chu Qingli's mind.

If Lu Chen truly had a destiny with the Immortal, then the Immortal Technique he obtained couldn't possibly only be one kind, right? He had done so many bad things to his women, yet none of his concubines bore any resentment towards him.

Moreover, Lu Chen's women seemed to be extremely fond of him, as if they were under hypnosis.

Could there be a possibility that among the Immortal inheritance Lu Chen received, there was an Immortal Technique capable of hypnotizing others into willingly staying?

She's cracked the case! The reason she wanted to stay must undoubtedly be because of that lecherous fiend!

In truth, Chu Qingli was speculating about Lu Chen with the utmost malice, but her intuition was a bit too on the nose, inadvertently guessing part of the reason for her psychological change.

Lu Chen obviously had no knowledge of hypnotism, Chu Qingli thought this way mainly because of her experience in the Jianghu (martial world). Being an assassin, she was well aware there were Cultivation Techniques in the martial world capable of hypnotizing people—it's just that she didn't know them personally.

Chu Qingli now thought it must be that lecherous fiend who had surreptitiously used some form of hypnotism on her, otherwise how could she ever think of staying?

That's right, his women were tormented by him day after day; how could they possibly not harbor any resentment towards him? It turned out he was using such despicable means!

No, she had to make her sister see the evil side of this man!

Of course, the most important thing was to help her sister escape this sea of misery and elope far away with her.

Having thought this through, Chu Qingli cast a glance at the study and began to plot how to break Lu Chen's hypnotism.

Chapter 237: Is There Something Wrong with This Guy's Body?_1

After Lu Chen had sorted out Wang Qingci, he tossed her onto another chair and then continued to work on the reform proposal for North City.

At this time, Wang Qingci was slumped in the chair, her gaze fixed on the hardworking Lu Chen, and she couldn't help but admire him a little.

Wang Qingci said in a faint voice, "Prince, how can you be so energetic? You just did that to me, and now you can calm down to work on other things."

Hearing this, Lu Chen chuckled while writing and then said, "Sorting out a female slave hardly exhausts any of my energy."

If it were someone else hearing Lu Chen's words, they might have felt hurt, but Wang Qingci felt nothing of the sort, considering her status was indeed that of Lu Chen's female slave.

However, Wang Qingci said somewhat unconvinced, "The Prince is a Grandmaster, and speaks so assertively. When your servant breaks through to the Master Realm one day..."

Upon hearing this, Lu Chen put down his pen, looked up at Wang Qingci sitting in the chair, and asked, "When you break through to the Master Realm, what are you planning to do?"

"Don't tell me you're considering rebellion?"

At this point, Lu Chen revealed a trace of a kind smile.

Wang Qingci pursed her lips and then said, “Once your servant breaks through to the Master Realm, I will serve you even better.”

Wang Qingci also felt somewhat uncertain; although breaking through to the Master Realm would greatly enhance her strength and physical fitness, and she might be able to spar with Lu Chen, it wasn't beyond possibility.

But this guy Lu Chen couldn't be judged by ordinary standards; who knew if he had more powerful moves up his sleeve that he hadn't yet used, and she might be subdued again quite quickly.

By the time she reached the Master Realm, Lu Chen might already be a Grandmaster.

The gap between a Grandmaster and a Master was enormous.

Lu Chen was already so fierce, so powerful; if he were to break through to the Grandmaster Realm, who knew how much stronger he would become.

Just thinking about Lu Chen breaking through to the Grandmaster Realm and the significant improvement in his physical strength, Wang Qingci's delicate body couldn't help trembling.

But fortunately, Lu Chen had so many women; although she was Lu Chen's female slave, she had her own matters and didn't have to stay in the Prince's Mansion to serve him every day.

It seemed she shouldn't provoke Lu Chen anymore in the future.

Just then, the voice of a Jinyiwei Guard came from outside the study, “Prince, a letter has arrived from Tianguang City.”

After hearing this, Lu Chen said indifferently, “Xiao Huan, bring it in.”

Since the study had just been the site of a great battle, Jinyiwei guards were not allowed in.

The maid at the door of the study immediately went to the Jinyiwei Guard, took the intelligence report from his hands, and then brought it into the study.

Lu Chen took the bamboo tube from the maid's hand, pulled out the intelligence report, and started to read it seriously.

Seeing the content on the report, a smile spread across Lu Chen's face once again.

He had initially instructed the soldiers of Tianguang City to dress the corpses of the dead Barbarian Tribe captives in Great Sum attire, mainly as a precaution; he did not truly believe that Lin Xiuming would have nothing better to do than to go digging up graves.

Unexpectedly, there indeed were spies within the Imperial Army who went to excavate the graves to confirm whether the bodies of North City soldiers were buried inside.

It seemed that for a while, he wouldn't be able to let the Black Cavalry show themselves in North City; the concealment of the bodies could only be temporary, and sooner or later others would come to Yan County to inquire about the Black Cavalry.

If the Black Cavalry were seen around at this time, it would be noticed that North City's Heavy Cavalry hadn't been wiped out.

North City was about to undergo reforms; in the coming time, it was essential to be as low-key as possible to avoid drawing the attention of the Imperial Court.

As for whether the reforms in North City would catch the attention of the Imperial Court, Lu Chen believed that those people wouldn't have the leisure to concern themselves with a Seignior messing around in his own territory.

After setting aside the intelligence, Lu Chen continued writing the reform strategy for North City.

In the following days, Lu Chen essentially spent all his time in the study; he didn't ride or practice spear for several days, and the women of the inner courtyard of the Prince's Mansion noticed Lu Chen's unusual behavior.

They sensed that something significant was bound to happen in North City soon; otherwise, Lu Chen wouldn't have stayed in the study for several consecutive days.

About seven days later, the North Prince Mansion directly issued a royal decree, calling for the officials of North City to come to the Prince's Mansion for a council.

Upon receiving the royal decree from the North Prince Mansion, the officials in North City were somewhat bewildered. Typically, lower-ranking officials did not qualify to participate in the council, but the North Prince was summoning all ranked officials to the Prince's Mansion for a council.

What was he planning to do?

The North Prince wasn't planning to purge the officials of North City, was he?

Once the royal decree was issued, some corrupt officials instantly felt extremely guilty and panicked.

Some of them were so frightened that they immediately fled North City, but those who ran were quickly recaptured by Lu Chen's Jinyiwei Guard.

In fact, Lu Chen had no intention of dealing with the corrupt officials; North City was short of Civil Officials, short of managerial talents, and if he struck at the corrupt officials now, he wouldn't have many people left to work for him.

However, for those who were more severely corrupt, he still intended to make an example of a few, and those scared enough to run were, for the most part, the more seriously corrupt ones.

Early the next morning.

Lu Chen had just gotten up and after washing up and finishing his porridge, a maid came to tell him that Li Rui and some other officials from Yan County had already arrived at the door of the study, waiting for him.

Chapter 238: Is There Something Wrong with

This Guy's Body?_2

Upon hearing the maid's words, Lu Chen immediately went to the study.

Seeing a crowd of people standing at the entrance to the study, Lu Chen said with a smile, "Lord Li, it is still several days until the time for my political discussions, isn't it? Why have you all come today?"

Upon Lu Chen's arrival, Li Rui and a group of other officials from Yan County promptly saluted, "We greet Your Highness, may the Prince live for ten thousand, ten thousand years!"

After completing the salute, Li Rui spoke up, "Your Highness, your Brocade Guard have been zealously arresting officials from North City. Now North City is in a state of panic, with quite a few officials having already submitted their resignations to me, planning to return home."

Most officials in North City were not locals. Before the Sum Emperor granted North City to Lu Chen, the officials in North City were all dispatched there by the court from other places.

Now, hearing that Lu Chen was to cleanse the bureaucracy, some officials were so frightened that they were hurrying to flee.

According to the rules, after a Seignior arrived in his fief, the officials arranged by the court all had the right to submit their resignations. Moreover, without the need for the Seignior's consent, those officials could leave the Seignior's territory directly.

This was a trap set by the previous Sum Emperor for the Seigniors. If a Seignior did not position his own people on his land, not only could the court-appointed officials monitor him, but they could also render him powerless.

Furthermore, the court could use these officials to discipline any recalcitrant Seigniors.

Under normal circumstances, if all the officials of a fiefdom fled, the area would quickly fall into chaos. There was once a Seignior who did not obey, and the court directly reassigned all the officials away, instantly leaving the Seignior's territory without any competent individuals.

Even though the court's officials were reassigned, it appeared as though the Seignior had gained power and the fiefdom's authority had transferred to him, but most Seigniors who were newly granted their fiefdoms did not have their own administrative base.

For instance, Princes like Lu Chen, who at first knew only to indulge in pleasure, did not have their own administrative base when they arrived in North City. If the court were to transfer away all the officials of North City at that time, Lu Chen would only have been able to look on helplessly, inheriting a complete mess in North City, with no way to keep the whole area operational with just the few people he initially had.

Hearing Li Rui's words, Lu Chen said with a smile, "No wonder you all rushed over to the Prince's Mansion so early in the morning. It turns out it's because of this."

"Don't worry about this. Those whom the Brocade Guard are arresting are all corrupt officials and embezzlers."

Upon hearing this from Lu Chen, Li Rui and the group of officials became even more panicked.

Corrupt officials and embezzlers?

Being in the bureaucratic field, how many of the officials present could claim to be clean, even Li Rui himself had accepted silver from others.

If Lu Chen was really going to purge all the corrupt officials and embezzlers, then arguably not a single official in North City would be spared.

According to the Great Sum court's standards, the poorer the place and the fewer the population, the less salary officials received.

North City was an impoverished area, and the salaries provided by the court to the officials sent there were minimal.

Therefore, the first thing that most officials did upon arriving in North City was to look for ways to make money. With such limited salaries, how could they lead a good life without resorting to corruption and bribery?

This group of people joined the officialdom for status and money. Now, with Lu Chen attacking the corrupt and the embezzlers, it was like he was planning to wipe them all out in one go.

When Lu Chen first came to North City, they had been worried, but seeing him indulging in pleasure at the Prince's Mansion every day, they thought that Lu Chen would be easy to handle.

But unexpectedly, Lu Chen had been hiding his blade all this time, and it had only now been revealed.

Li Rui hurriedly responded, "Your Highness, North City is poor, and according to the court's regulation, officials in North City receive less than half the salary of those in places like the South. The salaries provided by the court are hardly enough to support an official's family. Therefore, more or less every official in North City has accepted some extra benefits."

"If Your Highness intends to arrest all the corrupt officials, I'm afraid not a single official in North City will be exempt. Please reconsider, Your Highness!"

No sooner had Li Rui finished speaking than the group of officials behind him also promptly bowed and entreated, "Please reconsider, Your Highness."

Although many officials thought that the Black Cavalry had truly been destroyed, Lu Chen still had the Brocade Guard at his disposal.

To arrest all of North City's officials, Lu Chen did not need his Black Cavalry at all — the Brocade Guard alone could take care of arresting them all.

At the present moment, not one official in North City was unafraid of Lu Chen.

Li Rui continued, "Your Highness, North City's officials are all appointed by the court. If you strike against the corrupt officials, some officials may become frightened and could possibly flee North City without even submitting their resignations. This could lead to difficulty in implementing certain policies and orders among the common folk."

"I implore Your Highness to give those officials an opportunity to rectify their mistakes and reform themselves over time."

Hearing Li Rui's words, Lu Chen spoke with an expressionless face, "Lord Li, you wouldn't be threatening me now, would you?"

Realizing the grave tone, Li Rui instantly broke into a sweat and quickly said, "I dare not, Your Highness. I am merely discussing the actual situation."

"North City is destitute, and talented individuals are naturally reluctant to come here. If even the court-appointed officials all leave, this could very well affect Your Highness's grand legacy."

Li Rui's words were not only to protect the other officials of North City but also himself, as nobody could predict whether Lu Chen's blade might fall on him

next.

Chapter 239: Is There Something Wrong with This Guy's Body?_3

At this moment, the atmosphere in the courtyard was oppressively somber, with small snowflakes still drifting from the sky. Li Rui and a group of officials stood motionless within the courtyard.

The officials didn't dare to take deep breaths, feeling a chill on their backs as

cold sweat broke out all over their bodies.

Now, it all depended on what North Prince would do.

If North Prince had set his heart on striking down the corrupt officials, it was likely none of them would escape.

Lu Chen scanned the loyalty of Li Rui and these officials, seeing that Li Rui, the Prefecture Governor, had the highest loyalty at ninety-five, while the other officials had loyalty scores around seventy to eighty.

Loyal they might be, but each had their own ulterior motives.

After a moment of contemplation, Lu Chen calmly said, “This prince has no intention of conducting a major purge. The reason I have summoned you all to the Prince’s Mansion to deliberate is merely because I intend to announce a reform plan. Some officials from North City panicked at the call to council and fled overnight with the silver they embezzled.”

“Times of need are when North City requires its officials the most, yet those officials embezzled so much silver and the moment trouble arose, they fled with the money. If such people are not arrested, then this prince would indeed be too lenient.”

Upon hearing this, the officials felt a jolt in their hearts.

The meaning of the North Prince seemed to be...

They had embezzled so much money without offering any to him, instead fleeing with it, leaving nothing behind, and that is why he had the Brocade Guard apprehend the fleeing officials?

It seemed they were not completely without options.

Once they returned, if they handed over the embezzled silver, then maybe North Prince wouldn’t trouble them, right?

At that time, Lu Chen continued, “You may all go back. If this prince wanted to arrest you, you would have been in Yan County’s prison by now.”

Upon hearing Lu Chen’s words, Li Rui seemed to understand the message; Lu Chen was making an example out of a few to warn other officials in North City.

He probably wouldn’t be affected, as he had immediately relinquished his authority when North Prince first came to North City. Although at that time, North Prince had only taken over military power, his initial attitude must have pleased North Prince.

The authority he now held was also granted by North Prince. If the prince wanted to move against him, he could easily crush him. Lu Chen posed no threat to him and was unlikely to deal with him for that reason.

With that thought, Li Rui finally breathed a sigh of relief.

Then Li Rui politely said, "Your servants will take their leave."

After Li Rui and the officials left the Prince's Mansion, one of them immediately asked, "Lord Li, is the prince really not going to settle accounts with the officials from North City?"

Li Rui replied, "Didn't the prince just say it? He ordered the Brocade Guard to arrest those people because they were taking the silver they had embezzled and attempting to flee North City; that's why he caught them."

"If you do not harbor such intentions, the prince is unlikely to bother you. If the prince wanted to settle accounts with the officials from North City, I'm afraid everyone here, including myself, would have already been arrested."

With that, Li Rui glanced at the officials and continued, "The prince will be reforming North City next, so you should all be diligent from now on, not like before, doing as little as possible each day."

"The prince has great ambitions, and if you hold him back, even if he has not settled accounts with you now, you will eventually end up in prison."

At this moment, an official asked in a low voice, "Lord, what should we do about the silver we have received in the past?"

Since North Prince had said he would definitely arrest anyone trying to flee with the silver, it was quite likely that these officials who remained in Yan County wouldn't be able to escape.

If even small county officials could be arrested by the North Prince's Brocade Guard, how could they, right under the nose of the Brocade Guard, possibly escape?

Given that, the silver they had embezzled in the past seemed to burn in their hands, as no one knew when the embezzled silver might become evidence that would land them in jail.

Li Rui said, “That’s simple. When you all return, bring all the ‘gifts’ of silver you have received over the years to my residence, and I will deliver them collectively to North Prince Mansion.”

“Ah, and a word of advice: the prince’s Brocade Guard is formidable. They can easily find out how much money you have taken if they wish to investigate, so I urge you not to hold onto any hope of luck.”

Upon hearing this, some officials who had thoughts of secretly hiding their money quickly abandoned the idea.

They had had plenty of dealings with the Brocade Guard and knew its fearsomeness. Lord Li was right; if the Brocade Guard really decided to examine them, they could indeed be stripped bare.

In the dead of night,

Lu Chen was still busy in his study.

The study was brightly lit, and as Chu Qingli patrolled to the door of the study and noticed it was still lit, she found it incredible.

Not long ago, Lu Chen was misbehaving daily with the women of the Prince’s Mansion. Why had he suddenly become so well-behaved these past few days? It seemed she hadn’t seen Lu Chen engaged in any misdeeds with that woman for several days now.

Could it be that he was having problems with his body, and he wasn’t able to perform anymore?

Given his nature, if he didn’t indulge in pleasures with women one day, he certainly wouldn’t feel good.

Hmm! It must be that his body can’t take it anymore!

What did it matter if he had a magical fate, after all, he was still human. Indulging in carnal pleasures day in and day out would take a toll on anyone. This guy must be hiding in the study every day, probably so that his women wouldn't notice that he's lost his ability, preserving his pride by hiding away in the study and not returning at night.

While Chu Qingli was contemplating the light in the study, a gentle voice appeared behind her, "Qing Li, what are you looking at?"

Chu Qingli quickly snapped back to reality, turned around, and saw Chu Yuqin, then promptly said, "Nothing much, I was just thinking about something."

At that moment, Chu Yuqin's gaze also turned toward Lu Chen's study, and seeing the light there, she muttered to herself, "Chen'er has indeed grown up." As she spoke, a blush involuntarily spread across Chu Yuqin's face, her thoughts suddenly returning to an incident that had recently taken place in the study..

Chapter 240: North City Reform 1

Hearing her sister's words, Chu Qingli said expressionlessly, "Since Sister also knows he has grown up, why do you still linger by his side?"

"He has so many powerful people around him now, even that woman surnamed Bai is stronger than Sister. Sister, you are now an expendable presence in the North Prince Mansion."

Upon hearing Chu Qingli's words, Chu Yuqin's memories vanished in an instant, and she turned her head to look at Chu Qingli and said, "Qingli, you've been in the North Prince Mansion for so long, yet I feel like you still haven't given up?"

Chu Qingli's gaze turned towards the study as she said, "As long as Sister has not extricated herself from suffering, it's impossible for me to give up."

After hearing Chu Qingli's words, Chu Yuqin let out a slight sigh and then said, "To me, Chen'er is the most important person. I will never leave his side and I don't think it's suffering for me to be there."

Chu Qingli spoke indifferently, "The reason Sister thinks this way is merely because you've been hypnotized by him."

“One day, I will wake Sister up, and you’ll see the evil side of this man.”

“I believe that by then, even if I don’t say anything, Sister will leave the North Prince Mansion on her own.”

Seeing that Chu Qingli was still stubborn, Chu Yuqin simply discontinued the topic as she felt anything else she said would be futile.

But then again, with her sister constantly in the Prince’s Mansion, how was she supposed to attend to Lu Chen?

At that thought, Chu Yuqin’s face grew a little hot.

She had asked Lu Chen for some time the last time, and before she knew it, so much time had passed without fulfilling her promise. She feared that if she continued to procrastinate, Lu Chen might think she had broken her word.

It seemed like she needed to find an opportunity to send her sister away. Only once her sister had left the Prince’s Mansion could she fulfill her promise and attend to Lu Chen.

But how should she send her away?

After thinking for a while, Chu Yuqin then said to Chu Qingli, “Qingli, life in the North Prince Mansion might be somewhat dull for someone who’s always running around like you, causing you to overthink things. Why don’t you leave the North Prince Mansion temporarily, go out to clear your mind, and perhaps after some time, you won’t overthink anymore.”

Hearing this, Chu Qingli immediately showed a skeptical expression, and then she said, “Sister, are you trying to send me away so that you can do indecent things with that man?”

Seeing that her sister had instantly seen through her thoughts, Chu Yuqin’s face flared up even hotter, and she felt incredibly ashamed.

Without a good reason, it was indeed difficult to send her own sister away.

Chu Yuqin then stubbornly said, “Qingli, I am Chen’er’s aunt, how can you think such thoughts!”

“Forget it, there’s no use in saying more to you, since you won’t listen anyway.”

Saying this, Chu Yuqin turned and left, or more accurately, fled from the place. She felt that if she stayed any longer, her sister might discern even more, her intuition was too sharp, somehow guessing right away that she wanted to send her away.

At the moment, Chu Yuqin regretted having allowed Chu Qingli to enter the North Prince Mansion. It’s easy to invite the divine but hard to send it away; now that she had let her in, it would not be easy to make her leave.

Watching the retreating figure of Chu Yuqin, Chu Qingli always felt Chu Yuqin and Lu Chen had done some indecent things.

But she had no evidence, only conjecture.

At that moment, Chu Qingli turned her head again toward the study not far away.

The man in the study was the root of all evil. If she could handle the man in the study, perhaps her sister could free herself from suffering.

With that thought, Chu Qingli headed straight for the study, feeling it was time for a serious talk with Lu Chen.

However, just as she reached the door of the study, a Jinyiwei Guard hurried to the study, and before she could speak, the Jinyiwei Guard spoke first, “Prince, the Prefectural Government has sent several hundred thousand taels of silver, saying it is for the road repairs the Prince wanted, and the officials have volunteered to donate this money for the construction.”

Hearing this, Lu Chen, who was writing reform plans in the study, was momentarily stunned. Coming to his senses, he immediately put down his brush and came out the door.

Upon opening the door of the study, Lu Chen first glanced at Chu Qingli, then his gaze fell on the Jinyiwei Guard.

“Where is the silver?”

The Jinyiwei Guard answered, “In the outer courtyard, just arrived.”

Lu Chen immediately said, “Bring the silver to the grand hall of the Prince’s Mansion, I want to have a look.”

With these words, Lu Chen’s gaze turned back to Chu Qingli, “Qingli, did you need something from me?”

Chu Qingli was taken aback, indeed she had intended to talk to Lu Chen, but after being interrupted by the Jinyiwei Guard, her desire to talk dissipated instantly.

She suddenly felt as if she were possessed, how could she ever think of seeking a private talk with Lu Chen?

Chu Qingli replied, “It’s nothing, I was just patrolling the area.”

Lu Chen indifferently said, “Oh, is that so? Then, I shall leave first.”

Chu Qingli hastily stepped aside, “Prince, take your time.”

After that, Lu Chen went to the outer courtyard’s hall where, not long after, the Prince’s Mansion servants carried several large chests of silver into the hall.

Seeing the chests in the hall, Lu Chen’s face revealed an odd smile, whether of joy or something else. He then said, “Open up the chests..”