

## Es. Benefits 241

### Chapter 241: North City Reform\_2

The servants immediately opened the wooden chests, which were full of shimmering silver. Looking at the silver, Lu Chen muttered to himself, "Trading 70,000 taels of silver for several hundred thousand, this business isn't losing out at all."

He had only allocated 70,000 taels of silver to the officials of North City for their salaries, but before the salaries had even been distributed, the officials of North City had handed over several hundred thousand taels of silver.

Lu Chen crouched down, picked up a silver ingot from one of the wooden chests, and then continued, "Li Rui really isn't honest, just the officials from Yan County can hand over several hundred thousand taels of silver, yet he came to me for salary just a few days ago."

With that said, Lu Chen turned his head and said to the servants of the Prince's Mansion, "Count it, see how much silver there is."

Upon hearing Lu Chen's words, the servants of the Prince's Mansion immediately began to count the silver.

Lu Chen didn't stay in the great hall of the Prince's Mansion. He had a maid fetch Mu Zixuan to take care of the silver, and then he himself returned to his study to continue drafting the reform proposal for North City.

When Mu Zixuan saw the several hundred thousand taels of silver in the great hall of the Prince's Mansion, she was incredibly shocked. Inquiring about its origins only added to her surprise; the poverty-stricken North City's officials had managed to embezzle four or five hundred thousand taels of silver.

However, Mu Zixuan did not discuss this matter further with Lu Chen afterward. After all, it was a matter of state affairs, and it was Lu Chen's responsibility to deal with it. As for the silver, it was all to be placed in the royal treasury, as they were about to set one up soon.

A few days later, the minor assembly of North City officially began. Since the Hall of Political Affairs hadn't been completed yet, Lu Chen had no choice but to use the outer court's grand hall of the Prince's Mansion as the venue for the assembly.

Not only did all the officials from North City attend this meeting, but the military generals also participated.

In the morning, after Lu Chen got up and had a simple breakfast, he headed to the Prince's Mansion's great hall, where the officials and military generals had already arrived.

Facing this meeting, the officials of North City were very nervous, while the military generals stood around as if nothing was bothering them, casually watching the officials discuss the meeting.

At that moment, the voice of a Jinyiwei Guard was heard from the entrance, "The Prince has arrived!"

Upon hearing this, the originally noisy great hall of the Prince's Mansion fell silent in an instant, as people shut their mouths in anticipation.

Lu Chen then made his way through the crowd and took his seat directly opposite the main door.

Li Rui immediately took the lead and said, "I pay my respects to the Prince, long live the Prince, long live, long live!"

Lu Chen indifferently replied, "Dispense with the formalities."

Then Lu Chen said, "I believe everyone has heard that I have summoned you all to the Prince's Mansion to discuss politics, mainly for the matter of reform in North City."

"I have been in North City for over a year, and as is customary, I ought to establish my own team. However, due to other matters and the Southern incursion of the Barbarian Army on two occasions, I haven't had the time until now."

"After contemplating these past few days, I have decided to make some adjustments to North City."

Having said that, Lu Chen turned his head to a Jinyiwei Guard by his side and ordered, “Read it.”

At Lu Chen’s command, the Jinyiwei Guard took out a lengthy scroll and began to read.

“Effective immediately, North City is officially disbanded. North City will be known as North Country, and North Country will establish the Ministries of Personnel, Household, Rites, War, Criminal Justice, Works, Commerce, and Education. North Country will adopt a policy of separating military and civil governance. The Ministry of War will be managed solely by the North Prince, and the military forces of North City will also undergo reform. The military reform of North City is as follows...”

As the Jinyiwei Guard read the “reform measures,” the hall was quiet, with everyone listening intently to what closely concerned them.

After half an hour passed, the Jinyiwei Guard finally finished reading the contents of the scroll. Once the Jinyiwei Guard stopped reading, Lu Chen spoke up, “Now, if you have any questions about the reform measures, or if there’s something you disagree with, feel free to bring it up.”

Hearing Lu Chen’s words, the civil officials looked at each other, but none of them stood up.

Of course, they had many questions internally, but most of them were minor officials. How could they dare to speak out about such reform measures?

Just then, Li Rui stepped forward and said, “Prince, since ancient times the court has had six ministries, so why does North City need to add the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Education? I’ve heard what the Jinyiwei Guard read, and I find that the Ministry of Commerce could be merged into the Ministry of Household and the Ministry of Education into the Ministry of Rites. There is no need to set up two additional ministries. If two more ministries are established, I believe it will lead to an excess of officials.”

Lu Chen replied, “The Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Education are set up in anticipation of North City’s future needs. They will be managed by me alone for the time being.”

Hearing this, Li Rui no longer dwelt on the issue. Since they were preparatory departments, it didn’t involve him.

However, another issue concerned Li Rui greatly. He promptly said, “Prince, among your reform measures, there is a rule stating that all the land in North Country legally belongs to you, the Prince. No one has ownership, only the right to use. This could provoke protests from the common people.”

The issue of land consolidation was something every dynasty paid a great deal of attention to, but no dynasty had dared to directly proclaim all the soil of the realm to revert to the court or to be handed over to the Emperor.

While nominally the entire country belonged to the Emperor, it was only in name.

Taking back the ownership of the land would certainly displease the landlords, and the common people would not agree either..

## Chapter 242: North City Reform s

Li Rui felt that Lu Chen’s measure was simply too bold, and it might lead to dissatisfaction among the common people.

Lu Chen said, “Reclaiming the ownership of the land is first to avoid the issue of land annexation and second to prepare for the future development and construction of North City.”

“The reason I dare to do this is that I naturally have reasons to be so bold. Firstly, there are currently not many large landlords in North City, and from today onward, all agricultural taxes in North City are abolished. As long as the common people are willing to farm, they can keep what they sow, and they can also apply for land from the North Prince Mansion. By paying a small land fee, they could contract a large plot of land. This is the benefit I’m offering to the common people after reclaiming the land.”

Li Rui was taken aback upon hearing Lu Chen’s words.

Abolishing all agricultural taxes?

Isn’t that a bit too bold?

In this era, agricultural tax is a major source of income for a country!

At this point, even Mu Changtian, the military general, couldn't help but stand up and say, "Prince, isn't the policy of abolishing all agricultural taxes too radical? Without agricultural taxes, how would the national treasury of North Country have money in the future?"

Lu Chen replied, "The agricultural taxes collected by North City aren't even enough to cover the officials' salaries. What's the point of such a meager amount of tax? Moreover, the Prince's Mansion has a large area of land for food cultivation. I don't need the common people to deliver food to me."

"As for where the newly established treasury of North Country should collect its money, naturally, it should come from increased commerce taxes. From now on, any goods entering or leaving North Country will have to pay commerce taxes. In addition, I will divest some of the industries from the North Prince Mansion and hand them over to the Ministry of Commerce. The money earned by those industries will all go to the national treasury."

After hearing these words from Lu Chen, the officials were stunned again, not expecting the North Prince to be so generous.

One should know that the industries of the North Prince Mansion are highly profitable, especially the recently emerging coal industry. The common people in Qi Prince's territories have been buying coal in a frenzy, and this winter, the North Prince Mansion has made an untold amount of silver.

If the North Prince Mansion hands over industries to the Ministry of Commerce, then the national treasury of North Country will certainly not be short of money in the future.

This makes the Ministry of Commerce seem extremely important, after all, it's the department that makes money.

At this time, an official from Yan County asked, "Prince, wouldn't this action potentially lead to a conflict of interest with the people?"

Lu Chen wasn't angry about this question. He answered indifferently, "How would it lead to a conflict of interest? Did the common people ever own those industries of the North Prince Mansion? By divesting those industries and handing them over to the Ministry of Commerce and then hiring workers for those industries to provide food for the common people, isn't that providing benefits to them? Who dares to accuse me of competing with the people for profit?"

“Unless someone wants my industries and uses that argument because the money is going into the national treasury, not their pockets. As far as I know, only the Aristocratic Families would think that way.”

“However, there shouldn’t be an Aristocratic Family bold enough to snatch nationally managed industries under my nose in North City, right?”

With Lu Chen’s words, everyone in the hall fell silent.

Indeed, if the industries divested by the North Prince Mansion were to actively recruit workers, then the vagrants of North City would have work and food in the future. That would be granting benefits to the common people, not competing with them for profit.

Of course, the common people include the Aristocratic Families too. The money the Aristocratic Families can’t make, if earned by the Ministry of Commerce and the North Prince Mansion, they will surely claim that the mansion is competing with the people for profit.

But it is unlikely that such a voice would emerge in North City.

At this moment, Lu Chen continued, “By the way, I’d like to ask General Mo and Lord Li, is it possible to change the name of my feudal state? You two are more familiar with court regulations and should know this.”

As far as Lu Chen knew, the name of a feudal state couldn’t be changed at will; it usually followed the title of the prince. Since he was the North Prince, his feudal state was consequently North Country.

However, Lu Chen always felt uncomfortable with the name North Country; it seemed too informal.

His father, the Sum Emperor, had disdained him and carelessly conferred upon him the title of a prince, causing even his state’s name to follow suit.

Mu Changtian replied, “Prince, as far as this servant is aware, it is possible to change the name. There is precedence for it in Great Sum, but it demands that the prince write to the emperor to request a change of title before the state’s name can be changed.”

“However, as the title was conferred by the emperor, who showers us with grace like thunder and rain, although there are precedents, if the prince requests a title change from the emperor, the emperor will surely reclaim some things.”

“Moreover, based on precedents, the prince who proposes a title change is likely to be relocated from their feudal state to another place.”

Upon hearing Mu Changtian’s words, Lu Chen immediately said, “Then forget it. Let’s end this topic here.”

Lu Chen didn’t believe that the Sum Emperor would grant him a new piece of land upon seeing his application; he felt instead that the emperor would take back many of his possessions, such as the Military Expansion Order.

If it was going to be so troublesome, then it was better not to change it.

North Country would remain North Country.

The name would have to be changed sooner or later anyway.

“If you have other questions, please continue to raise them. I’ve instructed the servants to prepare lunch, and we have ample time today to discuss the reform measures I’ve proposed.”

At this point, Li Rui continued, “Prince, your reform measures, when viewed in the long term, are beneficial to North Country, and these reforms are unlikely to face obstacles here. However, I believe the greatest obstacles may not lie within North Country, but in the imperial court.”

Let’s set aside whether Lu Chen’s establishment of the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Education violates ritual propriety. Just the reclamation of land ownership by the North Prince Mansion alone is enough to provoke denunciation from the court officials.

Land issues have always been sensitive in a feudal dynasty. Currently, North City has few common people and no large landlords, so Lu Chen can easily implement the decree with some pressure.

But within the confines of Great Sum, it's a different story. The land held by the Aristocratic Families and officials tends to be the most extensive. A prince reclaiming all land ownership is like setting a dangerous precedent.

Even though this matter has yet to affect them, they would never allow anyone to set this precedent. If a prince can do this today, even the Sum Emperor might follow suit tomorrow..

Chapter 243: What does that little man want to do?\_i

Upon hearing Li Rui's words, Lu Chen immediately understood his meaning. The court was now controlled by the Aristocratic Families, who had the most land and were the most sensitive group toward land issues.

At this moment, if Lu Chen were to implement land reforms, it would inevitably touch the nerves of the Aristocratic Families, and they would definitely impeach him like crazy, trying every means to trouble him.

Not only the Aristocratic Families, but the Scholar Officials would surely criticize him as well.

In a word, whoever had more land would possibly jump out to trouble him.

Lu Chen then said, "The reason why I am reforming now is that the court's attention is all on the war with Great Wu."

"Even if they become aware of the reforms in North City, as uncomfortable as it may be for them, they don't have the energy to attend to North City at this time."

"By the time those in the court have the energy to care about North City's affairs, the reforms there will have mostly been completed, everything will already have settled, and by then it will be too late for them to oppose." After hearing Lu Chen's words, Li Rui thought it over and felt that Lu Chen was right. If the reforms were to be tackled after Great Sum's war with Great Wu had ended, the resistance they would face would definitely be countless times greater than now.

The best time to carry out reforms is now, even if some officials from the Aristocratic Families in the court wished to stop the reforms in North City, they wouldn't be able to divert much energy to make trouble for North City. The war between Great Sum and Great Wu had entered a white-hot stage. Currently, both sides were continually sending reinforcements to the front line, and Great



Sum had already lost two counties' worth of land; how could the court possibly have the energy to care about a Seignior's meddling in his own territory?

For Great Sum at the moment, as long as the Seignior doesn't rebel or add fuel to Great Sum's situation, that's already quite good. As for what reforms they undertake, that's not a focal point of their concern.

Lu Chen continued, "There's absolutely no need to worry about the court's obstruction to the reforms in North City, if you have any questions about the reform measures, bring them up now. Don't wait until the implementation stage when you don't know what to do."

At this time, the officials in the hall looked at each other, none of them spoke again.

They were clear in their minds that Lu Chen's reform measures were bound to continue, so whatever they said actually had little effect.

In fact, deep down, they had many questions about the reforms, such as the separation of military and civilian governance.

The separation meant that from now on, North City's military power would be entirely in the hands of the North Prince Mansion, in the hands of the North Prince; they, as Civil Officials, would be unarmed. If the North Prince wanted to clean them up, he could do so easily.

This was even more terrifying than the Sum Emperor revoking military power, for the Sum Emperor's revocation was only nominal. In fact, during wartime, the Sum Emperor would still have to discuss military affairs with certain military officials.

Moreover, the current Ministry of War in Great Sum was not solely dictated by the Sum Emperor.

But North City was different; the separation meant that the Ministry of War and other departments would not interact at work. From now on, the work of the Ministry of War would only be connected with the North Prince, leaving almost no possibility for other departments to intervene with the military.

The key point is that there are no positions such as Prime Minister in North City's reform to lead the officials, and even the power of Li Rui, who once was the Prefecture Governor, has been greatly weakened.

However, this made Li Rui's position somewhat awkward. He used to be the manager of all officials in North City, and now, after the reform, he did not even know where he should be.

Li Rui did not inquire about Lu Chen's arrangements for him, as it was not appropriate for him to bring it up. He believed that Lu Chen must have considered a suitable position for him, and it was better not to ask.

At this moment, Lu Chen spoke, "From now on, apart from the Ministry of War, Ministry of Commerce, and Ministry of Education which I will manage directly, the remaining five ministries will be managed by Li Rui for the time being. Above the five ministries, a Minister of State Affairs will be appointed, and the first Minister of State Affairs will be temporarily served by Li Rui." Hearing this, Li Rui breathed a sigh of relief. Although he had never heard of the title Minister of State Affairs before, this position was above the five ministries, and furthermore, he would be managing the five ministries. This position was not much different from that of the Prime Minister or his previous position as Prefecture Governor.

After Lu Chen arrived at North City, he handed over the military power of North City to Lu Chen and since then had only been responsible for civil affairs. Although North City had reformed, the subsequent civil affairs would still be his responsibility, which was basically the same as before.

At this moment, Li Rui asked, "Prince, I wonder who you plan to put in charge of the treasury?"

The Ministry of Commerce was directly managed by Lu Chen, but the treasury was not, so Li Rui paid great attention to the choice of manager for the treasury.

This was the money bag, which everyone wanted to hold in their own hands. Upon Li Rui's query, Lu Chen smiled faintly and then said, "From now on, the treasury will be renamed as North Country Bank, and the head of the bank will be called the President, appointed and dismissed by me personally." Li Rui was stunned, thinking to himself that the North Prince was indeed unwilling to hand the treasury over to anyone else.

They did want to make the treasury independent of the North Prince Mansion, but currently, the civil officials of North City did not have the capability to snatch the money bag from the North Prince's hands.

Lu Chen then continued, "As for the first President of North Country Bank, I plan to appoint Yelv Nanyan as the first bank President."

On hearing this, the hall instantly erupted. Li Rui quickly said, “Prince, this must not be done!”

Lu Chen spoke calmly, “Are you trying to suggest that because she is a woman, a woman is not fit to hold office?”

“I am simply looking for someone to manage my finances. As long as she can handle the money and is absolutely loyal to me, it doesn’t matter whether they are a man or a woman to me.”

“As for her previous identity, my reliance on her is the perfect opportunity to appease the Barbarian Tribe of North City, letting them know that I treat the Barbarian Tribe without discrimination.”

Lu Chen continued, “Oh, right, she was recommended to me by my wife.”

Upon hearing what Lu Chen had said, Li Rui and the others were stunned. If even the Princess Consort recommended Yelv Nanyan to manage the treasury, then it seemed they had nothing more to say.

Moreover, Yelv Nanyan was now a woman of the North Prince. If they continued to oppose this, it would appear as though they were objecting to someone from the North Prince Mansion managing the treasury, which would be a clear sign of competing with the North Prince Mansion for control of the finances -a thought Li Rui dared not entertain, and he didn’t bother to say anything further.

At that moment, Lu Chen turned his head to look at Mu Changtian. “General Mo, you’ve rushed back from Tianguang City amidst considerable hardship. Do you really have no issues with the military reforms in North City?”

Mu Changtian had originally been on a special mission near Tianguang City, but when Lu Chen thought of reform, he had someone notify him to come back in advance. Upon receiving the order, Mu Changtian traveled day and night amidst snowstorms, only returning to Yan County last night.

To come such a long distance and not offer any suggestions, wouldn’t that be a wasted trip?

After hearing Lu Chen’s remarks, Mu Changtian replied, “Prince’s military reforms can greatly improve the soldiers’ combat abilities. I believe the Prince’s reform measures are already perfect and lack no drawbacks.”

At this, Lu Chen chuckled.

He then said, “Perhaps the reform measures for North City were read out too quickly just now, and you didn’t manage to remember them.”

“Next, let’s discuss each measure one by one. If you have any issues, bring them up.”

Lu Chen then signaled the Jinyiwei Guard to continue reading the reform measures, and they spent the whole next day discussing his reforms.

Meanwhile.

In the Great Wu Dynasty, Imperial Palace, Green Cloud Palace.

Princess Junwan lay sideways on a couch, holding a piece of intelligence in her hand, reading it over and over with great focus.

She then turned to address the man kneeling in the hall, who had delivered the intelligence, “Have you confirmed whether the Heavy Cavalry of North City has truly been annihilated?”

The man kneeling in the middle of the hall immediately replied, “Princess Junwan, there are many military restricted areas in North City that are difficult for our people to infiltrate, so we have not been able to confirm it for the time being.”

“However, I have heard that the Great Sum Imperial Court has not recalled the Imperial Army but has instead appointed Lin Xiuming to take over Tianguang City. Therefore, I believe that Great Sum has indeed confirmed the annihilation of the Heavy Cavalry and chose not to recall Lin Xiuming but let him stay in North City.”

After hearing the man’s words, Princess Junwan chuckled softly and then said, “That’s not necessarily the case.”

The annihilation of the Heavy Cavalry in North City was somewhat too peculiar, which made Princess Junwan raise her guard.

The Sky Wolf King's army of three hundred thousand couldn't defeat the Heavy Cavalry of North City, yet the rumor was that the North Fre King's army of two hundred thousand had annihilated the fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry of North City?

Is that possible?

The spies of Great Wu haven't even confirmed if the North Fre King truly marched south, and suddenly news comes out of North City saying that the Heavy Cavalry is gone?

Wasn't the annihilation of North City's Heavy Cavalry too swift?

It gave one the feeling that North City was deliberately concealing troops to have this force carry out some special mission.

Now, with the war between Great Sum and Great Wu intensifying, the sudden disappearance of a Heavy Cavalry force from Great Sum was bound to draw extra attention from Great Wu.

Princess Junwan continued, "Send more spies immediately to North City; I demand precise information about that Heavy Cavalry unit."

"Yes, Princess Junwan."

"I shall take my leave."

Once the man had left the hall, the corners of Princess Junwan's mouth subtly lifted; then, with a smile on her face, she murmured to herself, "I'm quite curious to see what that young man is up to.."

Chapter 244: Chu Xiong's Observations !

The reform in North City was unstoppable; although spring had not yet arrived, the reform announcements had already plastered every city under North City's jurisdiction, and North City's military was paving the way.

When the common people heard that North City had proclaimed itself a sovereign nation, they were overjoyed, as it meant the North Prince had formally taken over North City.

However, their happiness soon faded when rumors spread that the North Prince intended to reclaim all land in North City for the North Prince Mansion, leaving the common people with only the right of use, and no ownership rights.

For most commoners, land was their lifeline. Seizing the land all of a sudden, how could the people feel secure?

The commoners flocked to where the announcements were posted, listening intently to the Jinyiwei Guards explaining the reform measures.

In order to make the common people of North City understand the benefits of reclaiming the land use rights, Lu Chen mobilized the majority of North City's military might.

Besides the Black Cavalry and artillery camp, both the Brocade Guard and North City's soldiers were called to action.

This reform was extremely important for North City and for Lu Chen, but he was not trying to establish a world of equality; rather, he was preparing for the industrial development of North City.

As a modern-era transmigrant, Lu Chen was well aware of the importance of land. If the problem of land annexation was not solved, a dynasty could not last long, and land annexation would severely hinder future industrial development.

For instance, if you wanted to build a road and it was on private land, you would have to spend a substantial amount of money compensating others, but now the situation was different.

By law, all lands of the North Country were deemed property of the North Prince; henceforth, no one could obstruct road construction by the North Prince Mansion, nor dare dispute over land when the North Prince Mansion decided where to develop any industry.

Yan County.

Today, like in previous days, Yan County's city gate was crowded with people, and under the control of North City's soldiers, only a main thoroughfare to the city inside was left open.

Without the control of North City's soldiers, the main entrance to the city would probably have been blocked by the commoners.

At that moment, an elderly man with white hair arrived at the city gate. He had originally come to Yan County by coach, but seeing so many commoners gathered at the city gates, he grew curious and told the coach to go on without him while he joined the crowd at the city gate's announcement board.

Then, a Brocade Guard dressed in black and red clothes stood on a table beside the announcement board and loudly read out, "Under the expansive sky, all land is the king's; to the edges of the realm, all are the king's subjects. Effective today, all land ownership rights within North City legally belong to the Prince, and no person shall sell the land ownership rights..."

Upon hearing the Brocade Guard's words, Chu Xiong's heart trembled.

Such a bold move!

It was the first time he heard the saying, "Under the expansive sky, all land is the king's; to the edges of the realm, all are the king's subjects."

He originally thought the Sum Emperor was radical enough, given that the Sum Emperor had been determined to undermine the Aristocratic Families, but unexpectedly, his own grandson was even more radical than the Sum Emperor —reclaiming all the land and thus cutting off the roots of the Aristocratic Families completely.

Although there were no major Aristocratic Families in North City yet, with the North Prince's policies in place, the possibility of the emergence of Ancient Families like those in the Great Xia was almost nil.

At this moment, Chu Xiong's expression turned gloomy, and his emotions were incredibly complex. He had actually been supportive of his grandson becoming Emperor, yet it had never occurred to him that his grandson would be even harsher on the Aristocratic Families.

If the Sum Emperor were to step down and his grandson took the throne, his grandson would likely be more intent on eliminating the Ancient Families than the Sum Emperor.

Chu Xiong couldn't help but wonder if he had been mistaken?

Was pledging allegiance to Prince Lu Shuyun the right choice?

After all, Prince Lu Shuyun was on the side of the Aristocratic Families of the South; if Prince Lu Shuyun ascended to the throne, he would probably have few conflicts with the Ancient Families, and it would continue to be a world governed by both the Prince and the Ancient Families.

But his grandson was different. Looking at his grandson's policies, it was clear he aimed to prevent land annexation and the formation of powerful families in North City.

Without land, Aristocratic Families were like fish without water, unable to last for long.

Thinking this, Chu Xiong sighed deeply in his heart.

Despite feeling somewhat distressed, Chu Xiong decided to meet with his grandson.

After all, they were related by blood, and his grandson had called him grandfather when he was little.

At this point, the crowd started to grow restless, and a commoner shouted, "How can the Prince do this? If all the land is taken back, how will we commoners survive!"

As these words were spoken, the crowd instantly became noisy and agitated.

"Exactly! We cleared that land ourselves, by what right does it belong to the North Prince Mansion!"

"The Prince is too overbearing! I absolutely will not hand over my own land." "Whoever wants my land will have to fight me for it!"



Facing the impassioned common folk, the expressions on the Jinyiwei Guard's faces were very calm. They had been disseminating the news for several days now, and the initial reactions of the commoners were all like this; they had grown accustomed to it.

At this moment, one of the Jinyiwei Guard said, "Since the day the Great Xia Dynasty was founded, the lands of Great Xia have belonged to the Emperor. Now, the Emperor has granted North City to the North Prince, so the lands of North City should rightfully belong to the Prince. The Prince is merely enforcing the laws strictly to prevent the arbitrary sale of land."

"The land that you originally possessed will still belong to you for use. The Prince has no intention of taking back your rights to use it."

"Furthermore, the Prince has said that from now on, all agricultural taxes are to be waived. Whatever you harvest, you will keep!"

"Not only that, but next year the North Prince Mansion will also distribute seeds for high-yield crops. I believe you all have already heard about the North Prince Mansion having grains that yield several thousand pounds per acre, have you not? Just give it one year, and none of you here today will have to worry about hunger or cold again."

Upon hearing the Jinyiwei Guard mention the exemption of all agricultural taxes, the common folk immediately became incredibly excited.

"Is that true? Is the Prince really going to waive all agricultural taxes?"

"Is this policy permanent?"

"The Prince wouldn't be deceiving us, would he?"

"Where do we go to receive the North Prince Mansion's grain seeds?"

For a moment, the entrance to Yan County was a clamor of voices.

Chu Xiong squeezed out of the crowd alone and watched the excited commoners from a distance.

He found it incredibly unbelievable. The policy of waiving all agricultural taxes was simply too radical, almost equivalent to legally determining land ownership to be under the North Prince.

Was this idea his own grandson's, or did it come from the Sum Emperor's wishes?

The Sum Emperor, as a traditional ruler, although he held immense hatred for the Ancient Families, would he have ever come up with a policy like waiving all agricultural taxes?

Agricultural tax was an important source of revenue for the national treasury. Without this tax, the Great Xia Dynasty might not even be able to pay its officials' salaries.

Initially, Chu Xiong had begun to wonder if his grandson could truly be a pawn of the Sum Emperor, but as soon as this policy was announced, he immediately felt his grandson had no relation to the Sum Emperor whatsoever.

The waiving of the agricultural tax would have a very negative impact on the rest of the Great Xia's territories. In the future, when the commoners see that North City has waived the agricultural tax, they would surely think, as people of the Great Xia, if North City has waived it, why should they not have their taxes waived as well?

This could lead to instability within the Great Xia, and over time, it would inevitably result in discontent among the commoners, so the Sum Emperor would never allow such a policy to come into effect.

At this moment, Chu Xiong's mind was full of questions. He felt he could only unravel the doubts in his heart after seeing his own grandson.

He did not linger any longer and headed straight for the city gates.

Just then, a lavishly decorated carriage passed by Chu Xiong. A gust of wind blew, lifting the curtains of the carriage. Chu Xiong's gaze just happened to meet the eyes of the woman inside the carriage.

He did not recognize who the woman in the carriage was, but he instantly discerned from her aura that she was a Grandmaster.

After the carriage passed him by, Chu Xiong frowned as he looked at the emblem on the back of the carriage.

“Mysterious Moon Palace? Could the woman inside the carriage be the Palace Master of the Mysterious Moon Palace?”

“It seems the situation in North City is more chaotic than I imagined..”

Chapter 245: The Immortal Artifact of the

Mysterious Moon Palace\_i

After entering Yan City, Chu Xiong did not immediately head to the North Prince Mansion. Instead, he wandered around Yan City to catch up on the recent situation.

Back in Sufeng City, he had heard about the annihilation of the Heavy Cavalry of North City, and so he was very curious about this news. He went around inquiring about the state of the Black Cavalry, wanting to know if the Black Cavalry had truly been destroyed. However, his inquiries also drew the attention of the Jinyiwei Guard in Yan City.

It didn't take long for the news of Chu Xiong's presence in Yan City to reach Lu Chen's ears.

Upon hearing that his grandfather had come, Lu Chen felt somewhat surprised. He had not expected Chu Xiong to come looking for him in North City after losing the position of Family Head.

In the study, Lu Chen pondered for a moment before saying to the Jinyiwei guards by his side, “Arrange it, I wish to meet my grandfather.”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

Meanwhile.

Chu Xiong had already checked into an inn run by Mysterious Moon Palace. He planned to spend a few more days touring before going to the North Prince Mansion to see his grandson.

Although Yan City could not compare to the prosperity of Sufeng City, its potential was tremendous. He discovered that there were quite a few merchants in Yan City, nearly rivaling those of Sufeng City.

In this era, emphasizing agriculture over commerce, only in some cities where aristocratic families congregated would such bustling trade and commerce occur.

Chu Xiong hadn't expected to see caravans coming and going in Yan City, and he was keen to understand what the business environment in Yan City was like. After settling into the inn, Chu Xiong sat in his room drinking tea and resting when there was a knock at the door. Thinking it was the inn's attendant, he asked, "What is it?"

Immediately, a man's voice came from outside the room, "Master Chu, my master wishes to meet with you."

Upon hearing this, the teacup in Chu Xiong's hand suddenly halted in midair.

Master Chu?

They've recognized me?

I've just arrived in Yan City, and already I have been identified?

Chu Xiong set down his teacup and asked, "Who is your master?"

The person outside replied, "If Master Chu follows me, you will find out. Please rest assured, Master Chu, our master is someone you know."

Someone I know?

Chu Xiong was curious. He didn't seem to have any acquaintances in Yan City, right?

Those he knew were all in the North Prince Mansion.

Such as Chu Yuqin and Chu Qingli.

But he didn't remember them creating any forces or becoming someone's master.

Clearly, the person outside was referring to someone else.

Without giving it further thought, Chu Xiong got to his feet.

Since he had already been recognized by someone, there was no point in hiding any longer.

He wanted to see for himself which acquaintance had also come to Yan City.

Chu Xiong then opened the door and saw a Jinyiwei guard dressed in black and red standing at the entrance. He was taken aback for a moment.

He was unaware of the Jinyiwei as an organization, but he had seen similarly dressed individuals at the city gate announcing the reform, which indicated that this person was likely from the North Prince Mansion.

If it was someone from the North Prince Mansion, who else could the master of the house be?

Realizing this, Chu Xiong had a moment of clarity. He had intended to visit the North Prince Mansion a few days later, but his grandson had already discovered him shortly after he entered the city.

Well, then.

It was time to meet his grandson earlier than planned.

With that in mind, Chu Xiong followed the Jinyiwei guard to a restaurant next to the inn, run by Mysterious Moon Palace, and then they entered a private room.

Upon entering the private room, Chu Xiong immediately saw a face that was unfamiliar yet familiar.

Seeing Chu Xiong, Lu Chen said with a smile, “Grandfather, it’s been a while. How come you didn’t tell me, your grandson, that you were coming to Yan City?”

Chu Xiong was startled for a moment and quickly bowed, saying, “This commoner pays respects to Your Highness.”

Lu Chen stepped forward and, supporting Chu Xiong by his arms, said, “Grandfather, what’s the meaning of this? We are meeting privately, there’s no need for such formality between us.”

Chu Xiong replied, “Your Highness, propriety cannot be discarded.”

Lu Chen smiled without dwelling on the topic and used the system to identify Chu Xiong’s information.

[Name: Chu Xiong]

[Identity: Former Chu Family Master, 86 years old, extremely fond of his daughter. Ever since Chu Yue’s death, he transferred this affection to the North Prince. Having been stripped of his position as Family Head, he came to Yan City to see how his grandson was faring, as well as to verify whether his grandson really was the Sum Emperor’s pawn.]

[Strength: Master Realm]

[Loyalty: 95]

Seeing Chu Xiong’s personal information, Lu Chen was somewhat surprised. He hadn’t expected Chu Xiong to value his grandson from outside the family so highly.

This also proved that Chu Xiong indeed held great affection for his mother; otherwise, his feelings for Lu Chen wouldn’t be so deep.

In an era that favored sons over daughters, to think there was a “daughter slave,” was something Lu Chen hadn’t anticipated.

After looking through Chu Xiong's personal information, Lu Chen sized up Chu Xiong once more.

Chu Xiong had gray hair and a long white beard, and his face was lined with many wrinkles. However, his body appeared very robust. The muscles on his body even stretched the gray robes he was wearing tight against his frame, evidence that he was someone who practiced martial arts regularly.

As for Chu Xiong, his grandfather, Lu Chen honestly didn't know what to do with him. For starters, he was like the Sum Emperor in the fact that he wasn't fond of the aristocratic families.

However, Chu Xiong was his grandfather after all, and he had been quite good to Lu Chen.

While Lu Chen was examining Chu Xiong, Chu Xiong was also looking at Lu Chen.

At this moment, Chu Xiong felt a flood of emotions in his heart.

He looked so much like her!

His grandson bore a striking resemblance to his daughter, and their temperaments were also very similar. His daughter herself leaned towards a more masculine demeanor, exuding a dashing and spirited presence; and Lu Chen, being a man, resembled Chu Yue even more.

At that time, Lu Chen asked, "Grandfather, did you come to Yan County this time specifically to find me?"

Hearing Lu Chen's question, Chu Xiong returned to his senses and immediately said, "I'm no longer the Chu Family Head. With nothing pressing to attend to, I simply wanted to visit you in North City."

"Oh no, it shouldn't be called North City anymore but North Country."

Lu Chen said, "Grandfather, I've already heard about what happened to you with the Chu Family. Honestly, you could have sided with Prince Lu Shuyun. There's no need to worry about me—I'm just a seignior banished to the borderlands, and it's very likely that I'll have trouble returning to the Capital City. The position of Crown Prince will likely have nothing to do with me." Hearing this, Chu Xiong sighed and said, "Prince, this has little to do with you. Even if I sided with Prince Lu

Shuyun, my other two brothers would find a way to edge me out of the Chu Family, related to the conflict between the Mysterious Moon Palace and the Chu Family.”

Hearing this, Lu Chen was taken aback.

Related to the Mysterious Moon Palace?

He had always thought Chu Xiong was ostracized from the Chu Family because he was his grandfather and tended to support Lu Chen’s claim to the throne, leading to his expulsion. What did this have to do with the Mysterious Moon Palace?

Curious, Lu Chen asked, “Grandfather, I heard that you were deposed as the family head because you didn’t support Prince Lu Shuyun, and others joined forces against you. How is this related to the Mysterious Moon Palace?”

Chu Xiong said, “Your mother became the Goddess of the Mysterious Moon Palace. She brought back an extremely potent weapon from there, which was reportedly an Immortal Artifact used by immortals. Some people in the Chu Family wanted to claim that weapon for themselves, believing the Mysterious Moon Palace to be an insignificant sect force, unworthy of fear.”

“At that time, I did not agree. Moreover, I believed that weapon could potentially bring disaster to the Chu Family. So, I had your mother return the weapon temporarily. However, while your mother was handing that mysterious weapon back to someone from the Mysterious Moon Palace, some people from the Chu Family betrayed me and ambushed the disciples of the Mysterious Moon Palace behind my back.”

“The result was that the disciples of the Mysterious Moon Palace not only survived but also eliminated those from the Chu Family who had attacked them mid-way. Some in the Chu Family believed your mother was the Goddess of the Mysterious Moon Palace, so they thought I, the Family Head, had betrayed them, leading to the failure of their plan.”

“Since then, the seeds of discord had been sown. They had always wanted to strip me of my position as Family Head. Ten years ago, they even tried to join forces with the elders of the family to take my place, but ultimately, they failed.”

“This time they repeated their tactics, finding an additional excuse, and finally, they succeeded. It was a struggle for power within the Chu Family and had nothing to do with who I supported.”



Hearing Chu Xiong's words, Lu Chen fell into thought.

An Immortal Artifact used by immortals?

What kind of weapon was that?

He remembered the system saying that it was difficult for immortals to emerge in this world, right?

How did an immortal's Immortal Artifact end up in this world?

Could it be some kind of firearm?

The Barrett and Desert Eagle in his possession were referred to as immortal artifacts by the soldiers of the North Prince Mansion.

The people of this world did not understand the principles behind firearms; they only knew that firearms were very powerful, that's why they considered them immortal artifacts.

Was there a possibility that the so-called Immortal Artifact his mother brought from the Mysterious Moon Palace was also a firearm?

Could it be that, besides himself, there were others in this world who also possessed firearms?

With that thought, Lu Chen furrowed his brow, then he asked, "Grandfather, could you describe what my mother's Immortal Artifact from the Mysterious Moon Palace looked like?"

Chu Xiong thought for a moment, then replied, "That Immortal Artifact looked like a long box, and the light that flew out of the box could instantly pierce through a small mountain."

Hearing this, Lu Chen was stunned.

That sure as hell sounded like a laser weapon.

Lu Chen then asked, “With such a powerful weapon, why didn’t you have my mother keep it in the Chu Family?”

Standing in the position of Master Chu, he would definitely want the Chu Family to be as strong as possible. Yet, he showed no desire for that mysterious and powerful weapon, even letting his own daughter return it to the Mysterious Moon Palace, which made Lu Chen somewhat perplexed.

Chu Xiong said, “An innocent man incurs no blame, but possession of the jewel makes him guilty. I understand that principle. Your mother is the Goddess of the Mysterious Moon Palace, and I have some understanding of the Mysterious Moon Palace. As far as I know, the Mysterious Moon Palace might have a power beyond the Heavenly Human Realm.”

“Since the Mysterious Moon Palace dared to entrust that weapon to your mother, it proved that they had the capability to retrieve it..”

#### Chapter 246: Lu Chen’s Recruitment\_i

Hearing Chu Xiong’s words, Lu Chen reflected, and his grandfather’s considerations seemed not entirely unreasonable.

Since this immensely powerful weapon was entrusted to his mother to bring out, it indicated that the Mysterious Moon Palace likely did not fear the weapon falling into the hands of the common people.

He wouldn’t dare to let others use weapons like the one in his hand, the Barrett, or the Desert Eagle, fearing that if someone carelessly lost them, he wouldn’t be able to retrieve them.

In light of this, Chu Xiong’s decision to let his mother return the terrifying weapon was, in fact, the correct choice.

If such a frightening weapon stayed with the Chu Family, it would inevitably attract the covetous eyes of many forces in the martial world, and even that person in the Capital city might take an interest. By then, the Chu Family would become a target for all, and its annihilation would likely be only a matter of time.

But such a decision would definitely lead to dissatisfaction among some members of the Chu Family.

In the eyes of some, obtaining such a formidable weapon would make them significantly more powerful, whereas Chu Xiong not only didn't keep the weapon but also returned it to the Mysterious Moon Palace, causing the Chu Family to miss the opportunity to become even more powerful.

At this point, Lu Chen spoke up, "Grandfather, I have another question. How did my mother actually die?"

Lu Chen had the Brocade Guard investigate many things about his mother and had a rough idea that her death was likely related to his father, the Sum Emperor, but he still did not know how she died, whether she was poisoned or killed. The Brocade Guard hadn't found these details.

All he knew was that one morning, when he got up, the palace maids in the courtyard were all crying, and then his mother in this world was gone.

Chu Xiong responded, "I am not clear about the circumstances of your mother's death either, but it's highly probable that it was related to your father, the Sum Emperor."

As he said this, Chu Xiong paused, looking at Lu Chen's reaction, wanting to gauge his thoughts.

If Lu Chen were truly a chess piece of the Sum Emperor, hearing his words would certainly make Lu Chen dissatisfied with him.

Because if the Sum Emperor wanted Lu Chen to be a pawn, he would have surely fostered a secret relationship with Lu Chen; hence, upon hearing someone speak ill of his father, the Sum Emperor, Lu Chen would naturally defend him.

However, Chu Xiong noticed that Lu Chen seemed completely indifferent to what he had just said.

At that moment, Lu Chen said, "I also know it's related to my father, the Sum Emperor, but I want to know more details about this matter."

Chu Xiong then said, "Prince, the past is the past, and your mother would probably not wish for you to be trapped by the events of the past while she rests beneath the nine springs."

"As the ruler of a country now, it would be better for you to look forward."

Lu Chen replied, "That's true."

Smiling, Lu Chen then asked, "Grandfather, how long do you plan to stay in North City during this visit? What if I give you a residence here, so you can spend your old age in North City from now on? After all, the Chu Family has stripped you of the position of Family Head, and there's no need for you to return."

Hearing Lu Chen's words, Chu Xiong realized that his grandson was trying to win him over. Chu Xiong did indeed plan to stay in North City for a while, but it was meant to be a short stay; he still intended to return.

Chu Xiong then said, "I came to North City mainly to see you and will return to the Chu Family in a month or two. Although I am no longer the Chu Family Master, I am still a member of the Chu Family, and I cannot stand idly by if the Chu Family is in trouble."

Hearing Chu Xiong's reply, Lu Chen frowned slightly. It seemed that his grandfather still sided with the Aristocratic Family, which conflicted with his own stance toward those families.

After all, his grandfather was a member of an Aristocratic Family, while he himself held the same position as the Sum Emperor; their stances were opposed to each other.

Lu Chen then said, "Grandfather, you should be very clear about the current predicament of the Chu Family. If you return to the Chu Family, you might be taken down by my father, the Sum Emperor, just like the Chu Family. Why put yourself through that?"

Chu Xiong did not respond to Lu Chen's words, instead saying, "Prince, I want to ask you a question."

Lu Chen replied, "Go ahead."

Chu Xiong then directly asked, “The Aristocratic Families see the fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry of North City as the private army of the Sum Emperor, and they see you as the Sum Emperor’s pawn. I want to know if this is really the case?”

Without beating around the bush, Lu Chen answered, “Rest assured, Grandfather, I am not a pawn of my father, the Sum Emperor. As for how those fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry came to be, I cannot tell you that for now. All I can tell you is that I have the support of a very mysterious and powerful force behind me, a force so formidable that even the Mysterious Moon Palace is but a minor player in comparison.”

Upon hearing this, Chu Xiong was momentarily stunned.

This grandson of his had another powerful force backing him?

Could this be real?

But observing the tone and expression of his grandson as he spoke, it seemed that he was not lying.

Could it be true that there was another mysterious force behind him?

But surely there were not many forces in this world stronger than the Mysterious Moon Palace?

Lu Chen was actually claiming that to this mysterious force behind him, the Mysterious Moon Palace was no more than a minor character?

Chu Xiong came to his senses and asked with certainty, “Has the Prince not deceived me?”

Lu Chen replied, “Of course not. For my father, the Sum Emperor, to create fifty thousand suits of heavy armor right under the Aristocratic Families’ noses is simply impossible. It’s ludicrous that they actually believe the fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry at North City are my father’s private troops.”

Upon hearing Lu Chen’s explanation, Chu Xiong thought it over and found it quite reasonable.

Now the entire Great Sum is under the control of the Aristocratic Families. Currently, the Sum Emperor only retains control over the military, while the court and the economy of Great Sum are predominantly under the Aristocratic Families' control.

If the Sum Emperor were to create heavy armor, it would be impossible for them not to hear anything about it, especially when it's fifty thousand sets, not just five hundred.

Five hundred might be concealable, but once the numbers reach into the thousands, it would be impossible not to leave any trace.

Moreover, producing fifty thousand sets of heavy armor is not something that can be accomplished overnight. Under the surveillance of the Aristocratic Families, the fact that not a single piece of information about the Sum Emperor creating fifty thousand sets of heavy armor has leaked is obviously against common sense.

At this point, Chu Xiong furrowed his brows and then said, "Prince, if that mysterious power provided you with fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry all at once, I fear they may have ulterior motives."

All of Great Sum has only twenty thousand Heavy Cavalry, yet that mysterious power is treating a nominal wasteful Prince so generously, offering fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry right from the get-go. If there weren't any ulterior motives, I doubt anyone would believe it.

Lu Chen indifferently said, "Grandfather, there are some things I cannot discuss in detail with you. However, you can rest assured that this mysterious power does not harbor any designs against me, at least not at the moment, and I have absolute control over this mysterious power."

Hearing Lu Chen's words, Chu Xiong was once again taken aback.

His own grandson has absolute control over that mysterious power?

Could it be true?

That represents a massive power capable of providing fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry!

If Lu Chen truly has absolute control over that mysterious power, doesn't that mean he himself is an important figure within that power?

But isn't Lu Chen only seventeen this year?

How did he manage to connect with such a vast power in the shadows in just a few short years?

Chu Xiong found it hard to believe.

But at the same time, he felt that Lu Chen really did not intend to deceive him.

He is no longer the Family Head of the Chu Family, so there's nothing to gain from deceiving him.

Lu Chen continued, "Grandfather, I've heard that a significant portion of the Chu Family actually supports you. Why not have those people also come to North Country?"

"I have a premonition that once the war between Great Sum and Great Wu concludes, civil war in Great Sum is inevitable. My father has endured for so many years mainly because he lacked military authority, but now that he holds it, and considering that the Aristocratic Families have instigated this war in the shadows, it's highly likely that he has been provoked to the limit and can no longer endure."

A divided Chu Family poses no threat to Lu Chen. Moreover, once the Chu Family moves to North Country, Lu Chen would be able to legitimately marry Chu Yuqin and Chu Qingli.

Chu Yuqin and Chu Qingli are officially members of the Chu Family, and as for Chu Yuqin's arranged marriage to the Wang Family, all that would be needed is for Chu Xiong to publicly annul the marriage. Whether the Wang Family accepts it or not doesn't matter to them. Chu Yuqin never even saw the face of the man she was supposed to marry back then, so how could such a marriage count?

With Chu Xiong bringing forth another branch of the Chu Family, that marriage arrangement would be easy to annul; moreover, Chu Yuqin and Chu Qingli are nominally Chu Xiong's adopted daughters.

After hearing Lu Chen's words, Chu Xiong pondered for a while before saying, "Prince, let me think it over. I will give you an answer in half a month."

Chu Xiong's heart wavered; he actually did not wish to openly confront the Sum Emperor. A civil war would be detrimental both to the Chu Family and to Great Sum.

Most people who support his faction were initially against starting a war, but his two brothers still incited a war between Great Wu and Great Sum in secret.

Chu Xiong even felt that their true goal might not be as simple as provoking war; they might actually aim to force the Sum Emperor to abdicate.

Following the Wang Family's reckless schemes would inevitably lead to ruin one day.

However, Chu Xiong couldn't fully trust his grandson either. He wanted to observe the situation in North Country further before deciding. If North Country lacked potential, then it would be better for the Chu Family to relocate to Great Wu or Great Jue.

That would surely be better than staying in Great Sum.

At this thought, Chu Xiong's emotions grew complex; when had his own thoughts begun to align with those of his undutiful son?

His son had thought the same way before: should a civil war break out in Great Sum, he would immediately take Chu Yuqin and escape to Great Wu or another dynasty.

And now, he too had the idea of fleeing Great Sum.

Seeing Chu Xiong's hesitation, Lu Chen said with a smile, "No problem, Grandfather. Whenever you decide to settle in North Country, you can let me know anytime. North Country's gates will always be open for you.."

## Chapter 247: Chu Qingli's Inner Decision 1

Lu Chen and Chu Xiong talked for an entire afternoon, only returning to North Prince Mansion when dusk fell, while Chu Xiong still stayed at an inn opened by Mysterious Moon Palace.



By the time Lu Chen came back to North Prince Mansion in the evening, it was already completely dark. It was winter now, and night fell early.

At this moment, Chu Yuqin stood at the entrance of Prince's Mansion, seeming to wait for someone.

Upon seeing Lu Chen's return, Chu Yuqin became incredibly nervous, and her pretty face flushed with heat.

She quickly turned her head, pretending not to see Lu Chen, ready to leave the entrance of Prince's Mansion in a hurry.

Lu Chen had already noticed that graceful figure at the entrance. Seeing that Chu Yuqin wanted to dodge him, he immediately coughed and then said, 'Madam Chu, wait a moment, I have some good news to tell you.'

Hearing Lu Chen's words, Chu Yuqin was taken aback for a moment, then she still pretended that she hadn't seen Lu Chen return moments before and said, "Oh? Chen'er, how come you're coming back from outside?"

"What is the good news you speak of?"

Seeing Chu Yuqin's clumsy acting, Lu Chen burst into laughter, as she was clearly waiting at the entrance for his return, and yet she pretended not to have seen him.

Lu Chen immediately dismounted, handed the reins to a guard, and then approached Chu Yuqin.

Seeing this grown young man draw ever closer to her, Chu Yuqin's heart throbbed uncontrollably. If it had been before, she wouldn't have been nervous even if they were close, let alone if she touched Lu Chen's body.

But times had changed. Ever since Lu Chen had openly expressed his desire for her body, every time she saw Lu Chen, she became so nervous. Whenever he came near, she remembered the words she had said in the study not long ago. As soon as she thought about having to serve Lu Chen with her body, that little rascal, she couldn't help but shiver uncontrollably.

After Lu Chen approached Chu Yuqin, he noticed her face was flushed, and he said with a smile, “Madam Chu, why are you so red? You’re not running a fever, are you?”

As he spoke, Lu Chen raised his hand to touch Chu Yuqin’s forehead. She instinctively wanted to step back but was caught by Lu Chen by the wrist and had to stand still.

After touching Chu Yuqin’s forehead, Lu Chen muttered, “As I thought, very hot. You must have a fever.”

Chu Yuqin gave Lu Chen a faint look, then spoke up, “Chen’er, what are you doing? This is still at the entrance of Prince’s Mansion; it’s not good to be seen by others. How can a prince behave so frivolously?”

Lu Chen said with a smile, “All, I forgot about that. It’s just that I was too worried about your health, Madam Chu. That’s my fault.”

Chu Yuqin, with a face full of tender resentment, said, “Didn’t you say you had some good news? Why’d you walk over and not say it?”

Lu Chen then said, “My grandfather came to North City to see me, and we talked for an entire afternoon.”

Hearing this, Chu Yuqin’s eyes fixed on Lu Chen’s, asking in disbelief, “Really? How did he come to North City?”

Chu Yuqin had a general understanding of the current situation of Chu Family. With the Sum Emperor and the Aristocratic Family at loggerheads, it surprised her that Chu Xiong would leave the Chu Family and run to North City.

Lu Chen replied, “He said he wanted to come to North City to see his grandson.”

Hearing this, Chu Yuqin said, “That does match his way of doing things.”

At this point, Chu Yuqin asked, “Then where is he staying now?”

Lu Chen answered, "He's staying in an inn opened by Mysterious Moon Palace."

"But I've already planned to give him a residence to live in, and he can move to a different place tomorrow."

Then Lu Chen, holding Chu Yuqin's smooth and delicate hand, said, "The wind is strong outside, let's go in and talk, Madam Chu."

As Lu Chen's hand caressed hers, Chu Yuqin immediately felt a tingling sensation, as if a strange feeling was spreading throughout her body.

Lu Chen, regardless of the servants' eyes, directly pulled Chu Yuqin by the hand into the courtyard of the Prince's Mansion.

Chu Yuqin quickly said, "Chen'er, let go of your aunt, it won't be good if others see."

What Chu Yuqin meant by 'others' was not the servants of Prince's Mansion, but specifically Chu Qingli. She wouldn't have minded being seen by the servants at the entrance of the mansion, but it would be problematic if her sister saw it.

Lu Chen, holding Chu Yuqin's hand tightly, said, "So what if they see? My aunt's hand is so cold, what's wrong with me warming it for my aunt? I'd like to see who dares to gossip."

As he spoke, Lu Chen not only didn't let go, but he also raised his other hand, holding both of Chu Yuqin's hands in his palms.

As the cold wind blew, Chu Yuqin didn't feel cold in the least. Instead, she only felt her body becoming hotter and hotter.

At that moment, Chu Yuqin suddenly remembered something and then said with a flushed face, "Chen'er, I forgot to tell you, Miss Chen has come to North City again. I arranged for her to stay in the same room as last time."

Lu Chen said, "Oh, if she has come, let her be."

After entering the courtyard of Prince's Mansion, the two stood in the snow without moving forward, as Chu Yuqin's hands were both held by Lu Chen, which also made it inconvenient to walk.

Chu Yuqin felt this was improper, so she said again, "Chen'er, you've been busy with reform work these days, and you're tired. You should go back to your room and rest early."

"Your aunt is going on patrol now, you... you let go of your aunt..."

Chu Yuqin's voice grew softer as she spoke. Seeing her blush and feel her warm hands, and witnessing this beautiful woman's expressive demeanor, Lu Chen couldn't help feeling restless.

Lu Chen then said, "Madam Chu, have you forgotten what you said to me in the study not long ago?"

Hearing Lu Chen bring up the study, Chu Yuqin's heart began to beat even faster, and her breathing became labored. She quickly whispered, "Your aunt remembers, it's just that..."

Pausing for a moment, she looked into Lu Chen's eyes and said, "Chen'er, can you give your aunt some more time?"

Lu Chen said, "Madam Chu, winter is about to pass, and before the spring warmth blossoms, you should be ready. As you know, when spring arrives, men get rather restless. Now that Zixuan and the other two are pregnant, and Qingci and Bai are often not in the Prince's Mansion during this time, only Nanyan and Yaoyao are serving me. I'm afraid those two won't be able to handle it." When Lu Chen brazenly spoke these words, Chu Yuqin was so embarrassed she wished she could crawl into a crevice in the ground.

At this moment.

Behind a rockery in the outer courtyard.

Someone was staring intently at the two people at the entrance of the outer courtyard

Chu Qingli watched the pair from a distance with a cold expression, and said icily, "I knew those two were having an affair; today, I finally caught them in the act."

After finishing her patrol, Chu Qingli had intended to find Chu Yuqin in her room, but discovered she wasn't there. She thought Chu Yuqin might have gone to Lu Chen's study, so she checked there too, but still didn't see Chu Yuqin.

Just as she was about to ask the guards at the entrance if her sister had left the Prince's Mansion, she found her sister being pulled around by that lecherous man in the outer courtyard of the Prince's Mansion.

Seeing her sister's flushed face and shy expression, she looked completely like a new bride.

Previously, she had only been suspicious without evidence, but today she finally caught them red-handed.

Her sister must have been hypnotized by that lecherous man.

Otherwise, how could her sister have such an expression?

She has always regarded herself as Lu Chen's aunt! As his aunt, would she be pulling and dragging with Lu Chen?

Clearly, her sister was completely confused now, utterly unaware of what she was doing!

No, this couldn't go on any longer!

She had to rescue her sister!

But...

How should she rescue her?

Her sister was hypnotized, at least she's willing to stay in the Prince's Mansion for now. Until the hypnosis was lifted, even if she used various means to take her sister out of the Prince's Mansion, her sister would eventually return to the North Prince Mansion.

So if she wanted to take her sister away from the Prince's Mansion, there was only one way to do it: deal with Lu Chen and make him voluntarily lift the hypnosis on her sister.

Only then would her sister come to her senses and be willing to leave with her.

Thinking this, Chu Qingli silently made up her mind.

After Lu Chen and Chu Yuqin pulled and tugged at each other in the outer courtyard for a while, Lu Chen let Chu Yuqin go. Then he did not return to the inner courtyard, but instead headed to his study; he had some government affairs to deal with.

No sooner had Lu Chen entered the study and closed the door than he heard the young maid at the entrance speaking to someone.

"Chief Chu, the Prince has just arrived at the study."

"I have something to discuss with him, let him know."

"Certainly, Chief Chu, please wait a moment."

Then the maid knocked on the door and said, "My lord, Chief Chu is seeking an audience."

Hearing this, Lu Chen immediately opened the door of the study again. Looking at Chu Qingli standing at the doorway, he asked with confusion, "Qingli, what's the matter?"

Chu Qingli did not immediately answer Lu Chen's question, but instead told the maid at the door of the study, "Stand guard at the entrance of the courtyard. I have important matters to discuss with the Prince, and no one is allowed to come in."

Upon hearing these words, the maid hesitated.

Generally speaking, Chu Qingli was not in a position to send her away; only the Prince had that right.

The maid then turned to look at Lu Chen to see what he would say.

Upon hearing Chu Qingli's words, Lu Chen was filled with puzzlement. Important matters to discuss with him? What could be so important coming from her? She spent her days aimlessly wandering the inner courtyard and was unlikely to have any important matters.

Nevertheless, Lu Chen still told the maid, "Xiao Huan, listen to Chief Chu and stand guard at the courtyard entrance."

Seeing Lu Chen say so, the maid promptly replied, "Yes, my lord."

The maid then left the entrance to the study.

After sending the maid away, Chu Qingli walked straight towards the study.

Lu Chen promptly stepped aside to let Chu Qingli enter the study.

Once she was inside, Lu Chen closed the door again and continued to ask, "Qingli, what is this important matter you mentioned?"

Chapter 248: Prince, you wouldn't want your secrets to be known by your women, would you?\_i

At this moment, Chu Qingli stood in the study, her expression cold and indifferent, seemingly radiating an icy aura.

She was dressed in a close-fitting, cyan long dress that tightly wrapped around her graceful figure, fully accentuating her slender and curvaceous body.

Lu Chen glanced at Chu Qingli and used the system to detect her favorability, discovering that her favorability towards him had already reached ninety-nine.

After Chu Qingli's arrival at the Prince's Mansion, she had been staying there and drinking Dragon and Phoenix Tea every day, so it wasn't surprising that her favorability had soared to ninety-nine.

Yet...

For some reason, Lu Chen always felt that Chu Qingli harbored some malice towards him.

He had encountered many icy beauties, Bai Qingqing was one, Chen Wanrong was another, even though they all exuded a cold temperament, he didn't feel that distant rejection from them.

However, in front of Chu Qingli, he had this feeling. Was it his own delusion? At that moment, Chu Qingli looked at Lu Chen with cold eyes and said, "Prince,

I already know about those things you've done."

Hearing this, Lu Chen froze.

What did Chu Qingli mean by that?

What did she mean by knowing about the things he had done?

It was like a constable saying to a wrongdoer, "Your deeds have caught up with you, come with us."

Regaining his senses, Lu Chen asked with a puzzled face, "Qingli, what do you mean by that?"

Seeing Lu Chen pretending to be oblivious, Chu Qingli thought he was feeling guilty and went straight to the point, "I already know why all the women in the Prince's Mansion like the Prince so much."

"Prince, you wouldn't want your secret to be known by your women, would you?"

This...

Confronted with Chu Qingli's icy expression, Lu Chen was momentarily at a loss for words.



Was Chu Qingli threatening him?

Although it didn't sound like it, the way she spoke was indeed threatening.

Lu Chen slightly furrowed his brow.

Chu Qingli said she knew why the women of the Prince's Mansion liked him; could it be that she knew about the effects of the Dragon and Phoenix Tea?

The Dragon and Phoenix Tea could foster marital affection and increase the favorability of the women in the inner court of the Prince's Mansion towards him. If Chu Qingli knew about the effects of Dragon and Phoenix Tea, she would most likely think that the women's affection for him was all due to the tea.

However, so far, he seemed to have only discussed the effects of the Dragon and Phoenix Tea with Mu Zixuan, so how could Chu Qingli possibly know about it?

Could it be that this world also had the Dragon Phoenix Tree, and Chu Qingli had seen one before?

With this thought, Lu Chen looked at Chu Qingli's frosty face and then said, "Oh? You know my secret? I am quite curious to hear what sort of secret you think you know about me."

If it had been earlier, Lu Chen would indeed have been afraid of the effects of the Dragon and Phoenix Tea being known by his other women, but now all the women in the inner court of the mansion were united with him, and he was not worried that they would find out about the tea's effects.

So what if they knew? All their favorability was already at one hundred, and the high level of affection they had for him was not solely because of Dragon and Phoenix Tea.

The Dragon and Phoenix Tea was just a seasoning, merely a catalyst for promoting affection. The real enhancement of feelings happened when they were physically close to each other.

So Chu Qingli's words didn't threaten Lu Chen at all.

However, Lu Chen was somewhat curious as to what Chu Qingli was trying to achieve by saying this.

Or perhaps her arranging to meet me alone was to obtain something from me. Seeing Lu Chen seemingly trying to test whether she really didn't know, Chu Qingli simply stopped playing cryptic and said directly, "The reason those women of the Prince are so obedient to him is because he used hypnosis on them, including my sister."

"Without hypnosis, they wouldn't be so fond of the Prince."

Eh...

Hearing Chu Qingli say this, Lu Chen understood that she was purely guessing, and by chance guessed correctly, although she hadn't figured out the real reason.

Lu Chen subsequently revealed a hint of a smile. Although Chu Qingli hadn't guessed the real reason, he still planned to tease her.

Then Lu Chen said with a smile, "Since you've found out, what would you like to do about it?"

"Your request for a private talk indicates you have conditions. Speak, what do you want in exchange for keeping my secret?"

Hearing Lu Chen's apparent admission, Chu Qingli thought to herself, sure enough, this man can use hypnosis, and her sister had been hypnotized by him. Since he has admitted it, so much the better.

Now that she held this man's weakness in her hands, she didn't believe he would ignore his own reputation and forcibly keep her sister in North Prince Mansion.

Chu Qingli then said, "Lift my sister's hypnosis, let her leave North Prince Mansion, and I will pretend I never knew anything."

Hearing this, Lu Chen chuckled, no wonder Chu Qingli came looking for him – it was still about Chu Yuqin.

After laughing, Lu Chen looked at Chu Qingli's beautiful cold countenance and said, "Qingli, do you think that's possible?"

"I was raised by Madam Chu since I was a child; do you think she would leave me? Regardless of whether I can use hypnosis or not, Madam Chu will never leave me. You should give up on that thought."

Chu Qingli threatened, "Aren't you afraid I'll expose your secret?"

Lu Chen responded indifferently, "If you want to tell others, then go ahead. It's not like my reputation is that good anyway."

Hearing Lu Chen's shameless words, Chu Qingli was temporarily stunned.

Right, how could she have forgotten that? The North Prince was already seen as a man of no learning and immersed in lust.

Even if she disclosed the North Prince's secret, it wouldn't impact him greatly. It was a ruin to begin with; there's no talking of collapse. This would only further solidify Lu Chen's image as a licentious man in the people's hearts. Moreover, even if the women of the Prince's Mansion found out they had been hypnotized by a lecherous man, they might not think it's absurd.

Those under hypnosis wouldn't believe they had been hypnotized; they'd only think the person claiming so is out of their mind.

However, Chu Qingli was not willing to let it go just like that. She still wanted to save her sister – how could she just let it be?

Chu Qingli then asked, "What will it take for you to release my sister?" Hearing this question, Lu Chen put on a pensive look, contemplating for a while.

Then, his gaze scanned over Chu Qingli's beautiful, cold face. After a while, Lu Chen spoke, "If you want me to lift the hypnosis on Madam Chu, I can agree to that."

“It’s just that...”

As he said this, Lu Chen’s gaze once again swept over Chu Qingli’s entire body. He hadn’t thought of conquering Chu Qingli so quickly these recent days, but since Chu Qingli herself came to offer, he couldn’t be blamed.

## Chapter 249: Everything is for My Sister 1

For Lu Chen, there was no reason not to indulge in a delicacy that presented itself at his door.

Chu Qingli’s threat today completely caught him off guard, but it no longer mattered.

Now that Chu Qingli had entered his study, he didn’t intend to let her leave in one piece.

Lu Chen asked with a smile, “Qing Li, what kind of price do you think you’ll have to pay for me to agree to lift the hypnotism on Madam Chu?”

Seeing Lu Chen’s eyes firmly fixed on her body, Chu Qingli suddenly felt an odd sensation.

She wasn’t the same as Bai Qingqing. Although both were considered cold beauties, Bai Qingqing initially had a kind of emotionless coldness, while Chu Qingli did have emotions within her.

However, Chu Qingli was an assassin who had long concealed her feelings, which gave her that chilly demeanor.

Having emotions, combined with the catalytic effect of the Dragon and Phoenix Tea, made her heart rate unconsciously quicken for a moment.

Under Lu Chen’s burning gaze, she felt as though she was a little white rabbit in the snow being targeted by a big, grey wolf.

Although Lu Chen had yet to say anything, she could already sense the sinister thoughts in his heart.

This lecher's intent gaze clearly signified his desire for her body.

The thought made Chu Qingli's delicate body involuntarily tremble.

Trying to suppress the abnormality in her body, Chu Qingli said indifferently, "As long as you lift the hypnotism on my sister, I'll do anything you ask."

Chu Qingli thought to herself that sacrificing a little was nothing if it could free her sister from this demon. She was determined to help her sister escape from the lecher's mansion.

Hearing Chu Qingli's response, the corners of Lu Chen's mouth lifted again. He walked toward her, saying, "Oh? Is that so?"

As Lu Chen drew closer, panic surged in Chu Qingli's heart, and a hint of alarm appeared on her otherwise cool facade.

When Lu Chen stopped just a step away from Chu Qingli, he looked into her beautiful eyes and said with a smile, "Qing Li, you've been at the North Prince Mansion for quite some time now. You should understand me very well, what kind of person I am, what I like."

"My only hobby is to discuss feelings with my wives and concubines, so women are very important to me."

"In my heart, Madam Chu is one of my women, and you're thinking of taking her away from me, which I'm afraid is not acceptable."

"Unless..."

At this point, Lu Chen trailed off, his predatory gaze sweeping over Chu Qingli's graceful body once more.

Although Chu Qingli was incredibly tense, she still managed to say expressionlessly, "Unless what?"

Lu Chen replied with a smile, "Unless you take her place."

Upon hearing this, Chu Qingli's heart skipped a beat.

Indeed, this lecher was thinking exactly that, coveting her body.

But for the sake of her sister, in order to ensure her freedom and happiness, she was willing to take the risk.

With that in mind, Chu Qingli swiftly said, "I agree to your terms. As soon as you lift the hypnotism from my sister, I will become your woman in her stead and serve you."

Seeing Chu Qingli's righteous demeanor, Lu Chen let out a chuckle.

Was she truly doing this just for her sister?

For some reason, Lu Chen found it suspicious.

He knew about Chu Qingli's unusual feelings for Yuqin. He had seen Chu Qingli's emotional profile the first time he laid eyes on her, thanks to the system's introduction.

But now that Chu Qingli's favorability toward him was nearly at one hundred, did she still harbor those unusual feelings for Yuqin?

To the extent that she would sacrifice herself for her sister?

This made Lu Chen doubt.

At this moment, Lu Chen had a hypothesis in mind that he planned to test.

He then said with a smile, "Good, since you have agreed, I can promise to lift the hypnotism on Madam Chu, but it's not so easy to remove hypnotism."

"My control over the art of hypnotism isn't very skilled; removing it requires some time."

Chu Qingli coldly stated, “When you’ve lifted the hypnotism from my sister, that’s when I will become your woman.”

Lu Chen replied indifferently, “I’m afraid that won’t do.”

Chu Qingli coldly asked, “Why not?”

Lu Chen said with a smile, “Do you really think that by serving me once, I’d be willing to release your sister from hypnosis?”

“Qingli, you think too highly of me. You should know that I’m a despicable and shameless man.”

“I can resort to dirty tricks like hypnosis; how could I possibly let your sister go after just one time?”

Upon hearing Lu Chen’s words, Chu Qingli’s hand tightened slightly into a fist.

Chu Qingli continued to ask, “What exactly do you want?”

Lu Chen raised a hand and held up a single finger to represent the number one.

Chu Qingli asked, “What do you mean?”

Lu Chen replied, “One hundred times.”

Chu Qingli was stunned for a moment, then said, “You’ll release the hypnosis on my sister if I serve you one hundred times?”

Lu Chen said, “Yes.”

Chu Qingli asked, “What if you go back on your word by then?”

Lu Chen, looking into Chu Qingli's eyes with a smile, asked, "Do you think you have a choice?"

"It seems the initiative is mine, isn't it? If you're unwilling, you can leave right now."

"I..." Chu Qingli was at a loss for words.

Indeed, she couldn't overpower Lu Chen, and her sister was still under hypnosis. Even if she could beat Lu Chen, what if something happened to him and her sister died out of heartbreak?

Seeing a trace of conflict on Chu Qingli's icy face, Lu Chen continued, "You only have one chance. If you don't agree today, then your sister will stay in the North Prince Mansion forever."

As he said this, Lu Chen turned around as if to leave. In a panic, Chu Qingli hastily said, "Alright, I agree."

Chu Qingli thought to herself that as long as her sister could regain her freedom, everything she did was worth it, she would just consider it being bitten by a dog.

Seeing Chu Qingli's agreement, a playful smile spread across Lu Chen's face.

Was the ploy of women in this era already this sophisticated?

Chu Qingli wouldn't be making up an excuse about doing this for her sister's sake and then come to let him do that kind of thing to her, would she?

Whether that was the case or not, he would soon find out.

Once he entered her heart, he would know what she was thinking.

Lu Chen then said, "Since you've agreed, let's begin."

Upon hearing Lu Chen's words, Chu Qingli said in confusion, "Begin what?"



Lu Chen smiled and then said, "Serving me."

Chu Qingli froze.

Although she had seen and heard a lot, she had never experienced it; she had no experience at all. How was she to serve him?

Seeing Chu Qingli standing there dumbfounded, Lu Chen said, "Never mind, you probably haven't served someone like this before. Let me personally teach you."

As he spoke, Lu Chen took Chu Qingli's hand directly. Suddenly grasped by a man, Chu Qingli became extremely nervous. She tried to pull away, only to find that Lu Chen was strong and had pulled her into his embrace.

Before she could even speak, he took her first kiss.

"Mmm..."

Chu Qingli's mind was thrown into panic, and the more she thought about the sounds she had heard in the North Prince Mansion, the more fearful she became.

She tried to break free but discovered that her inner strength had vanished.

Chu Qingli thought to herself, it's over, she must have been hypnotized by this lecher too!

Forget it, everything is for her sister.

Soon, Chu Qingli allowed Lu Chen to kiss her, her mind getting foggy from the kisses.

She didn't know how much time had passed when Lu Chen finally let her go. Just when she thought it was all over, she heard the sound of fabric tearing, followed by a chill on her buttocks, and the next moment, she became Lu Chen's woman.

Chapter 250: Come in, let's have a good talk 1

[Congratulations, Host, for gaining a wife. Reward: Improved Paper-making Technique, Printing Technique, Simple Pen-making Technique.]

[The Host and wife have cultivated feelings once, Qi Refinement Mantra experience value increased by 300, Rejuvenating Skill experience value increased by 300, Dragon-Phoenix Yin-Yang Spell experience value increased by 400, Host triggered an Emotional Crit, all Cultivation Technique experience values doubled.]

[The Host and wife have achieved a heart-to-heart connection, special reward Absorption Technique, with an additional gift of 100 Barrett bullets.]

Lu Chen paid no attention to the system's notification sound; he devoted all his energy to Chu Qingli.

The beauty known as the ice mountain always has a unique flavor, and Lu Chen spent the entire night in the study.

The study had been thrown into complete disarray by them.

The night passed quickly, but the noise inside the study had not faded away.

Early morning.

Upon rising, Mu Zixuan noted that Lu Chen had not returned the entire night. At first, she thought that he might have spent the night at Yelv Nanyan's place since Lu Chen had so many women, it was impossible for him to come home to sleep beside her every night.

However, after breakfast, Yelv Nanyan and the women of the Prince's Mansion came to the main courtyard to enjoy some tea.

At this point, Mu Zixuan asked, "Nanyan, did the Prince go to Spring Sound Court last night? I had someone prepare porridge to send over there."

Yelv Nanyan answered, "No, he didn't."

Upon hearing Yelv Nanyan's response, Mu Zixuan turned her gaze towards both Xiaozhou and Dazhou; Zhou Xiaoxiao immediately said, "The Prince didn't come to our place last night either."

Mu Zixuan muttered to herself, "Could he have gone to Bai or Qingci's place?"

Yelv Nanyan said, "There was no sound from the neighboring courtyard last night, so he probably didn't go to Qingci's place."

If Lu Chen had gone to the courtyard next to Spring Sound Court, there would have been noise. He was quite rough with his female slaves, so it was impossible for there to be no sound.

Just as Mu Zixuan was thinking about where to have the porridge sent, Bai Qingqing and Chu Yuqin passed by the courtyard.

Seeing the two, Mu Zixuan immediately said, "Bai, Madam Chu, did you see the Prince last night? It seems like he didn't come back."

Upon hearing this, both of them stopped in their tracks. Bai Qingqing, expressionless, said, "Replying to the Princess, this slave did not see him."

Hearing Mu Zixuan's question, Chu Yuqin instantly thought of what had happened the night before. A blush surfaced on her face, and she then answered, "Last night he went to the study, he must have been busy with something until dawn."

Mu Zixuan said, "So he was in the study."

"Xiao Rou, have someone take the porridge to the study."

The maid next to Mu Zixuan immediately said, "Yes, Your Highness."

At that moment, Chu Yuqin and Bai Qingqing left one after another, with Chu Yuqin heading directly to the study to see if Lu Chen was still there.

Chu Yuqin had only just reached the entrance of the study's courtyard when a maid dressed in pink clothing was shivering at the door.

Chu Yuqin paused, then asked, "Why are you standing here?"

Usually, maids would stand at the entrance of the study during the day, but at night, if Lu Chen was still in the study, the maids would enter the study as well because it would get extremely cold outside, maids wouldn't be able to stand for long, and they also had to keep an eye on the lamp to ensure it didn't go out and affect Lu Chen's work.

The maid quickly answered, "Last night, when changing shifts, Xiao Huan told me that the Prince and someone inside the study were discussing important matters and that we must not approach the study, so I have been standing here all night."

Upon hearing the maid's words, Chu Yuqin looked puzzled. Discussing important matters?

What matter could take an entire night to discuss?

Chu Yuqin didn't ask further and directly entered the courtyard, heading towards the study.

Ordinary people couldn't just enter the study, but she was no ordinary person. In the entire North Prince Mansion, apart from Lu Chen, she could go anywhere she pleased; this was the privilege Lu Chen had granted her.

Shortly, Chu Yuqin arrived at the entrance of the study, tentatively calling out, "Chen'er, are you still in the study?"

Hearing the voice from outside, the drowsy Chu Qingli instantly sobered up. She hurriedly got up to hide, but as soon as she rose, Lu Chen pushed her back down.

Hmm?

Seeing that Lu Chen didn't immediately respond, Chu Yuqin was taken aback.

What was going on?

Afterward, Chu Yuqin heard muffled sounds coming from inside the room.

At this moment, Chu Qingli's face was flushed with shame, and her heart was filled with extreme fear. She was terrified that her sister would walk in and see everything; how could she face her sister in the future if she discovered that Chu Qingli was actually having an affair with Lu Chen?

Chu Qingli twisted her waist again, trying to break free from Lu Chen's grasp, but the more she struggled, the tighter Lu Chen held onto her slender waist. Having stayed up all night, Chu Qingli was already out of strength; it was completely impossible for her to escape Lu Chen's hold now.

Perhaps it was because Chu Yuqin was outside, Lu Chen suddenly felt extremely excited.

Seeing no response from the study, Chu Yuqin spoke up again, "Chen'er, may your aunt come in?"

Hearing Chu Yuqin's words, Chu Qingli's face turned deathly pale with fright.

It's over, it's over, her sister was coming in!

Chu Qingli became so nervous that the fear in her heart maxed out, causing every muscle in her body to tighten.

Lu Chen couldn't help but inhale sharply, knowing he couldn't go on like this. Then he coughed and said, "Madam Chu, I'm discussing important matters with someone. Please come back later."