

## Es. Benefits 281

Chapter 281: Even if Given Another Hundred Years, the North Country Would Not Develop\_2

Seeing that Lu Chen remained silent, Liu Zhong thought Lu Chen was still not planning to agree and continued, “Prince, before I left Qi Country, our king had discussed with the grain merchants of Qi Country. If North Country is willing to accept those refugees, North Country can purchase grain from Qi Country at the prices before the outbreak of the war between Great Sum and Great Wu, and Qi Country promises not to increase the prices within a year.

Lu Chen thought to himself that it seemed the refugees had seriously affected the local landlords and aristocratic families in Qi Country. Otherwise, they would not have agreed to this condition.

Seeing Lu Chen still silent, Liu Zhong frowned, wondering if the North Prince was still unwilling to agree. Was he being too greedy?

It was evident that North Country now needed people, and Qi Country was both offering people and grain, having lowered their stance so much. If North Country still refused, that would be truly ungrateful.

Just then, Lu Chen said, “Considering that the Qi Prince is my uncle, I will give Qi Country this face. The refugees may be sent to North Country, but not a grain less of their annual food supply can be missing. When the time comes, I will arrange for the military to receive them.”

Seeing that Lu Chen agreed, Liu Zhong relaxed inwardly and then said, “Of course.”

Afterwards, Lu Chen said to Wu Yuan, “Commander Wu, Lord Liu has traveled a long way. Make sure he is treated well.”

Wu Yuan immediately replied, “Yes, Prince.”

Liu Zhong then said, “Thank you, Prince. I take my leave.”

After Wu Yuan took Liu Zhong out of the study, Lu Chen immediately sent for the officials of Yan County to discuss receiving the refugees.

The number of refugees from those three districts was assuredly vast; several hundred thousand was the least to expect. Otherwise, Qi Country would not have paid such a high price.

With its vast land and many wastelands, it was not too difficult for North Country to accommodate these refugees. However, managing these refugees well would not be easy. Hence, it was necessary to discuss how to settle these refugees and where would be best to place them.

Meanwhile.

In the Capital city of Great Sum, at the East Palace.

Crown Prince Lu Shuyun was dealing with some governmental affairs in his study when one retainer after another entered the room.

After seeing them arrive, Lu Shuyun put down what he was doing and said, “Recently, many refugees have arrived outside the Capital city. My emperor father has tasked me with dealing with these refugees, but I have yet to find a good solution.”

The refugee issue was the first political matter Lu Shuyun had taken on since becoming Crown Prince, and he had to handle it well, or he would inevitably be impeached by the people of other princes in the court.

For this reason, Lu Shuyun had called all his retainers, and some officials from the aristocratic families were also present in his study.

At that moment, the Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Household said, “Your Highness, the farmland within Great Sum has already been fully allocated, and it is hard to find any more land to settle so many refugees. Therefore, I suggest relocating all these refugees to North Country to prevent disasters and chaos.”

“North Country is full of wastelands, and it is in dire need of people. I believe the North Prince would be happy to accept these refugees, which would conveniently solve the problem.”

Hearing these words, Lu Shuyun frowned slightly.

Whenever he thought of the North Prince, he was reminded of what Wang Yong had told him not long ago. The Wang Family had dispatched an assassin from the Spirit Martial Tower to kill the North Prince, and it had been so long without any news.

At that moment, Lu Shuyun turned to Wang Yong and asked, “Wang Yong, is there any news on that matter?”

Wang Yong replied, “Your Highness, there is still no news, and I’ve even inquired at the Spirit Martial Tower. Their people also haven’t received any information from North Country. Su Teng and his group disappeared after going to Yan County.”

Lu Shuyun thought for a moment. Su Teng was at least an Extreme Realm Master, yet he disappeared upon reaching North Country?

Moreover, during this time, numerous aristocratic families had sent assassins to North Country, yet the North Prince was still alive, and those assassins had all vanished without a trace.

How many experts does the North Prince have by his side?

At that time, an adviser in the study said, “I don’t recommend that Your Highness send the refugees to North Country. If North Country develops, it will definitely become a major threat to Your Highness.”

Although the refugees from those three counties are indeed a big problem, if all these refugees were sent to North Country, it might become an even bigger problem in the future.

So many aristocratic families within Great Su have sent assassins, yet none have managed to kill the North Prince. This proves that the North Prince has already secured a firm foothold in North Country. If he were to receive so many more people, then North Country will surely experience further development and strengthening.

After hearing the adviser’s words, the Assistant Minister of Revenue said, Mr. Li’s concerns are not without reason, but currently, North Country lacks clothing and food and simply cannot support such a large population. These refugees moving to North Country will only create more chaos. I think it is unlikely that the North Prince can manage these refugees well.” “Moreover, this is the first policy matter Your Highness is dealing with after becoming the Crown Prince. The most urgent task is to first resolve the refugee crisis. In my opinion, we should not be concerned about North Country’s problems at the moment.”

“Additionally, North Country has already reclaimed all land ownership rights back under the North Prince Mansion. These refugees going to North Country will not get any land. In time, these refugees will inevitably revolt, which actually is advantageous for the court to handle North Country’s issues later

on.”

Hearing the Minister of Revenue’s words, Lu Shuyun thought there was some merit to them. Although there were many refugees from the three counties, enough to significantly supplement the population of North Country, it was precisely because there were too many people that North Country wouldn’t be able to manage them, potentially leaving behind seeds of trouble.

Such a poor feudal state definitely couldn’t support such a large population. Moreover, the court has already decided not to interfere with North Country’s affairs. Any difficulty North Country faces, the court will not step in. As soon as these refugees move to North Country, internal strife will be a matter of time. Thinking of this, Lu Shuyun said, “Lord Qin is right. If I am unable to quickly resolve the refugee crisis within Great Su’s borders, I will inevitably be subjected to the ministers’ impeachment. This is the first policy matter I am dealing with after becoming the Crown Prince, and I must resolve it quickly.

“As for North Country, not only is it impoverished, but the winter there is also long. If they can’t solve the problem of food and warmth, they won’t be able to develop even in a hundred years.”

Seeing that Lu Shuyun had made up his mind, no one in the study said anything more.

They all understood that for their faction, it indeed wasn’t the time to consider how to deal with North Country. Lu Shuyun had just become the Crown Prince and had to accomplish something significant; otherwise, he couldn’t stop the ministers’ mouths.

If he couldn’t even quickly resolve a refugee crisis, what kind of Crown Prince would he be?

Time passed quickly, and in the blink of an eye, another half month had gone by-

North Country, Hall of Political Affairs.

The main topic of today's court meeting was the matter of North Country accepting refugees during the past half month. Qi Prince was true to his word, not only sending the refugees to North Country but also sending a fair amount of grain. Moreover, in the past half month, Lu Chen had instructed the North Prince Mansion to hurry and purchase grain from Qi Country.

Lu Chen anticipated that a civil war was about to break out in Great Su, which would drive up the price of grain. Finally having an opportunity to buy grain at pre-war prices, the North Prince Mansion couldn't afford to miss this chance. Now Yan County had established quite a few grain storages, specifically for storing grain.

As the court meeting neared its end, a Brocade Guard entered the hall, "Prince, urgent news from the capital city."

Upon hearing this, the hall immediately quieted down.

Lu Chen on the dais said, "Present it."

The Brocade Guard then placed the intelligence before Lu Chen, who picked up the freshly arrived report and painstakingly read it.

After a while, he put down the report and said to the officials in the hall, "The court has decided to relocate all refugees from the three counties to North Country. The imperial decree will arrive in Yan County in a few days.

Hearing this, the hall immediately burst into discussion.

At this moment, Li Rui asked, "Prince, is the court going to provide grain to North Country?"

Lu Chen chuckled and then said, "Grain? Lord Li really has a sense of humor. When the court recalled Lin Xiuming's army of twenty thousand last time, it was said that from now on, the court would not aid North Country with anything, including grain."

Chapter 282: Qin Mei, Beautiful Scenery, Even More Beautiful People\_1

Upon hearing Lu Chen's words, the Hall of Political Affairs immediately became as noisy as a marketplace.

“Prince, if the court doesn’t provide grain, we absolutely must not accept those refugees.”

“The court is going too far. There are close to a million refugees from the three counties. If they don’t provide grain, how can the North Country possibly support them?”

“Exactly. The North Country is already so poor, and yet they send so many refugees over. In the end, the North Country will be even poorer. It seems like the court is deliberately trying to weaken the North Country through these refugees.”

Seeing the officials in the great hall looking indignant, Lu Chen revealed a faint smile. The officials of the North Country had essentially completed their transition; in the past, they looked at issues from Great Sum’s perspective, but now they all considered matters from the North Country’s standpoint, focusing on the interests of the North Country.

After the officials in the great hall had discussed for a while, Li Rui once again spoke up, “Prince, does the North Country really have to accept these refugees?”

Lu Chen said, “According to the intelligence this prince has received, the court’s stance is that accepting those refugees is a duty the North Country must fulfill as a feudal state, so the North Country cannot refuse.”

This...

The officials within the hall were dumbfounded. Not being able to refuse? This was treating the North Country like an easy mark.

If the court didn’t give grain and they dumped all those refugees on the North Country, wouldn’t the refugees rise up in rebellion immediately if there was nothing for them to eat upon their arrival?

At this moment, Lu Chen said, “This prince will write a memorial and send it to the capital city later. If the court doesn’t provide grain, and these refugees arrive in the North Country and don’t wish to stay, then it will no longer be the North Country’s concern. After all, these refugees are citizens of Great Sum; this prince cannot restrict their freedom.”

“If the court insists on doing this and a peasant uprising like the one in Great Wu erupts, the court will have to find a solution themselves.”

The North Country is very poor, which is something all of Great Sum’s common people know. If the refugees are sent to the North Country without providing grain, it is as good as trying to starve the refugees to death. When the common people hear about this, they will undoubtedly be extremely disappointed with the court.

At that moment, Lu Chen rose from the throne, waving his sleeve as he said, “Today’s meeting concludes here. Commander Qin, come to my study.”

“Yes, Prince.”

Soon after, Lu Chen went to his study, with Qin Yushan following closely behind.

“Prince, do you have any tasks for this subordinate?”

Lu Chen said, “Write a letter later and notify Commander Liang to mobilize all the Brocade Guards within Great Sum’s borders to spread the news that the court isn’t giving grain to the North Country, especially to the refugees.”

Upon hearing this, Qin Yushan immediately understood Lu Chen’s intention, “Understood, Prince. This subordinate will convey the message to Commander Liang right away.”

As Qin Yushan’s voice faded, he prepared to leave the study, but Lu Chen then said, “Wait a moment, this prince has another matter.”

Qin Yushan stopped and said, “Please speak, Prince.”

Lu Chen asked, “How are things being handled with the Spirit Martial Tower?”

Qin Yushan replied, “The Spirit Martial Tower has sent quite a few spies to Yan County recently to search for their Pavilion Master. However, most of those spies have been captured by us. We are trying to draw the craftsmen of the Spirit Martial Tower to the North Country, but they are too cautious and absolutely no one is willing to come.”

Lu Chen said, “Find a way to control a person, then release that Grandmaster back, and nurture him to become a member of the Brocade Guard.”

Qin Yushan replied, “Prince, making a Grandmaster obey is likely not so easy, and it might require Your Highness to personally meet with the Grandmaster.”

While it is indeed possible to use certain drugs to control a Grandmaster, martial artists of the Master Realm generally don’t give in so easily. They might submit on the surface, but once out of danger, they would find ways to break free from control.

To make a Grandmaster truly submit, they need to be convinced in both heart and voice. Otherwise, once the Grandmaster learns how to neutralize the drug controlling them, they will inevitably betray you.

Ordinarily, where there is a controlling poison, there is an antidote. In a situation with an antidote, it is impossible for only one party to possess it.

Even if Qin Yushan poisoned the Grandmaster from the Spirit Martial Tower, the Grandmaster would likely try to find an antidote after returning to their own group. Therefore, Qin Yushan’s plan was for Lu Chen to meet the Grandmaster directly, to display Lu Chen’s true strength.

Apart from Wang Qingci, Lu Chen had not revealed to others that he had already broken through to the Grandmaster Realm. However, the followers summoned through the system could easily sense the changes in the aura exuding from Lu Chen. They were well aware that Lu Chen had become a Grandmaster.

At that moment, Qin Yushan knew that Lu Chen had already become a Grandmaster. Qin Yushan thought that a seventeen-year-old Grandmaster was enough to deter the master from Spirit Martial Tower and make them willingly follow Lu Chen.

Of course, this could also potentially reveal Lu Chen’s strength; it would all depend on how Lu Chen himself decided.

After pondering for a bit, Lu Chen then said, “Good, I will meet that master later.”



“You go ahead with your business.”

Qin Yushan immediately performed a ritual salute and said, “Your subordinate takes his leave.”

Following that, Qin Yushan left the study.

Once Qin Yushan had gone, Lu Chen went to sit down at his desk to start dealing with government affairs. Lately, there had been an increasing number of matters in North Country that required Lu Chen’s personal attention, which had made him very busy.

Lu Chen wanted to delegate power but thought that the officials of North Country, being locals of this world, might not understand some of his policies and could act contrary to his intentions. So, he felt compelled to take care of matters personally.

Of course, although his work was busy, Lu Chen did not forget to relax. Lately, he often visited Chu Qingli’s room to find relaxation with her, and he always found these visits particularly exhilarating.

At this time, Lu Chen suddenly heard a faint sound of a zither playing in the distance. Despite the distance, his hearing was far better than an average person’s since he was a Grandmaster, and he could hear it very clearly.

Lu Chen put down his pen and listened attentively. The music from the zither was flowing and melodious, making one feel extremely relaxed and comfortable.

Lu Chen grew curious about who was playing the zither and decided to rise and walk in the direction from which the music came.

After a short while, Lu Chen stopped at the entrance to the courtyard where Chen Wanrong and Lin Wanyun lived.

As soon as he arrived at the courtyard entrance, the scene before him was touching.

Clad in a white long dress, Chen Wanrong sat in the pavilion. Her slender hands hovered over the wooden zither, gently plucking the strings. As her delicate fingers danced over them, the flowing, melodious sounds reached Lu Chen’s ears.

At this moment, Chen Wanrong seemed to blend into one with the whole world, her being seemingly radiating a holy light, like a fairy descended from heaven, giving an immensely warm feeling.

The zither was beautiful, the scenery was beautiful, and the person even more so.

Lu Chen was no stranger to beautiful women; his inner palace was full of lovely ladies of various types.

However, few women made him feel the beauty in the way that Chen Wanrong did, yet his heart could not rise with any improper thoughts.

If Wang Qingci and Chu Qingli were to play the zither before him like this, it's quite possible that Lu Chen would have taken them right there and then.

But Chen Wanrong was different. Hearing the zither music and admiring Chen Wanrong's beauty, Lu Chen's heart became incredibly peaceful.

The scene before him was like a beautiful painting.

Lu Chen stood at the entrance to the courtyard, listening for quite a while, until the music finally subsided, which was when he came back to his senses.

Just then, Lin Wanyun came in from outside. Seeing Lu Chen standing at the entrance and looking continuously at Chen Wanrong in the pavilion, her heart leaped with joy and she immediately said, "Chen'er, do you enjoy listening to the Palace Master play the music?"

Hearing Lin Wanyun's voice behind him, Lu Chen was startled for a moment, then turned his head to look at Lin Wanyun and said with a smile, "I do. The sound of the zither brings peace to my heart."

"I didn't expect Miss Chen's zither music to have such an effect."

At that moment, Chen Wanrong in the pavilion also noticed Lu Chen at the entrance and rose to salute, saying, “Your Highness, greetings.”

Chen Wanrong then took the initiative to say, “If Your Highness enjoys the music of this commoner girl, you are welcome to come and listen more often.”

Hearing this, Lin Wanyun’s heart skipped a beat.

Finally, their Palace Master was becoming wise and actually took the initiative to invite the North Prince.

## Chapter 283: Our Child Will Become the Next Emperor of Chen Nation 1

Although Chen Wanrong had long been determined to take the initiative and make Lu Chen develop feelings of affection for her, so she could then use the Love Worm on him,

she just couldn’t find the opportunity to get close to Lu Chen. Lu Chen was busy dealing with state affairs during the day, and at night, he was occupied with sorting out his women. He was truly a busy man, leaving her no chance at all.

Today, Lu Chen had taken the initiative to come to the entrance of her courtyard, finally presenting Chen Wanrong with an opportunity that she could not afford to miss.

After hearing Chen Wanrong’s words, Lu Chen replied with a smile, “That wouldn’t be quite appropriate. After all, I am a man, and if I frequently enter the courtyard where Miss Chen resides, I’m afraid it could damage Miss Chen’s reputation.”

At this point, Lin Wanyun chimed in, “Chen’er, we are staying at the North Prince Mansion and have received such great care. We should indeed do something for you.”

“The playing of the Palace Master indeed has the power to allow one to relax. You have been preoccupied with state affairs recently and must be extremely fatigued every day. If you could listen to the Palace Master’s music every day, it would be of great benefit to both your body and mind.”

“Moreover, you would only be in the courtyard to listen to the Palace Master’s music, not entering her boudoir, so there should be no idle gossip.”

Hearing Lin Wanyun's words, Lu Chen gazed into Chen Wanrong's eyes as if waiting for her response.

At this moment, Chen Wanrong, with an emotionless face, said, "If Prince wishes to hear me play, I can play the Prince's favorite pieces every day."

Seeing Chen Wanrong agree, Lu Chen smiled and said, "Since Miss Chen has consented, it would seem ungrateful of me to refuse. Very well, if I am too exhausted from dealing with state affairs, I will come to this courtyard to listen to Miss Chen's performance."

Upon hearing Lu Chen's words, both Lin Wanyun and Chen Wanrong were visibly stirred. Having stayed in the North Prince Mansion for so long, they finally found an opportunity to employ the Love Worm on Lu Chen.

As long as Lu Chen was willing to visit the courtyard they resided in frequently, it might not take long before they could use the Love Worm on him.

Once the Love Worm was in place, the entire North Prince Mansion would fall under the control of the Mysterious Moon Palace, and Chen Wanrong's restoration of her nation would become much easier.

At this moment, Chen Wanrong took a glance at Lu Chen and, for some reason, suddenly found that he seemed to have become even more handsome recently, and his aura had undergone significant changes. She wondered if it was just her imagination.

Then Lu Chen said, "Madam Lin, Miss Chen, I still have matters to attend to, so I will not disturb you further."

"I will come another day."

With those words, Lu Chen turned and left. Chen Wanrong then said, "Prince, take care."

Before long, Lu Chen returned to his study to continue handling state affairs.

After Lu Chen had left, Lin Wanyun said to Chen Wanrong, “Palace Master, it seems that it won’t be long before you can use the Love Worm.”

Hearing this, Chen Wanrong showed no emotion on her face as she looked towards the entrance, seemingly lost in thought.

Lin Wanyun continued, “Palace Master, if possible, I hope that in the end you won’t harm him. After all, he is the child of your senior sister and is also considered the God’s Son of the Mysterious Moon Palace.”

Chen Wanrong then slowly sat down and gently placed her jade hands back on the guqin, “Madam Lin need not worry, I will not kill him.”

Hearing Chen Wanrong say this, Lin Wanyun breathed a sigh of relief. Though Lu Chen was the bloodline of the Sum Emperor, he was also Chu Yue’s child. If something were to happen to Lu Chen, she would surely feel guilty for the rest of her life.

Since Chen Wanrong had already stated she would not kill him, Lin Wanyun assumed that, after using Lu Chen, Chen Wanrong would probably release him.

While Lin Wanyun was thinking this, Chen Wanrong spoke up, “After the restoration of Chen Nation, I will need a child. His conditions are not bad, suitable to be my husband. I will have a child with him, and our child will become the next Emperor of Chen Nation.”

Lin Wanyun was completely stunned by Chen Wanrong’s words.

Is this what Chen Wanrong was thinking?

She had always assumed that Chen Wanrong simply wanted to use Lu Chen to create the Subtle Dragon Spell, kill the Sum Emperor, restore her nation, and then discard Lu Chen once he had served his purpose. To think that Chen Wanrong also had designs on Lu Chen’s body!

But on second thought, Lu Chen was handsome and dashing. Although somewhat lecherous, his qualities were not lacking in any aspect. Plus, with the control of the Love Worm, Lu Chen would absolutely obey Chen Wanrong’s commands.

In the future, whatever Chen Wanrong wanted Lu Chen to do, he would have to comply. His lecherous nature would also change eventually.

Collecting herself, Lin Wanyun hurriedly said, “Palace Master, there is a rule in the Mysterious Moon Palace that disciples are not allowed to have children.”

Although the Mysterious Moon Palace allowed men and women to become partners, to avoid worldly trouble, disciples were forbidden from having children.

Chen Wanrong said indifferently, “Once my child inherits the throne of Chen Nation, I will return to the Mysterious Moon Palace to meditate and cultivate in seclusion, and will no longer concern myself with worldly affairs.”

This...

Lin Wanyun thought for a moment. After all, Chen Wanrong was a disciple of the Honorable, and even if she truly had a child, the current elders of the Mysterious Moon Palace would not have the authority to punish her, only the Honorable would have that right.

But with the Honorable in seclusion, who knew how long it would be before he emerged? It could be that they all turned to dust while the Honorable remained in seclusion.

So for now, there was no one who could stop whatever Chen Wanrong wanted to do.

Chapter 284: Our Child Will Become the Next Emperor of Chen Nation\_2

For some reason, Lin Wanyun always felt that Chen Wanrong regarded Lu Chen as more than just a tool—could it be that she truly had feelings for Lu Chen?

Lin Wanyun dared not to think further.

After all, Lu Chen was the child of Chen Wanrong’s enemy, if Chen Wanrong really fell for Lu Chen, who knows what kind of torment she would suffer in her heart.

Time flew by, and in the blink of an eye, another month had passed.

In the Capital city of Great Sum, at Xuanzheng Hall.

Today's Great Court Assembly was rather noisy. Recently, a series of incidents had occurred in Great Sum, causing the officials much distress.

At this moment, an official from Prince Lu Yi's faction stood up and said, "Your Majesty, I accuse the Crown Prince of neglecting his duties, idling away his days. The affairs entrusted to the Crown Prince by Your Majesty have not been completed on time. The Crown Prince does not deserve his position and should be dismissed."

The official's attack was very aggressive; he was short of pointing at Lu Shuyun's nose and calling him useless.

No sooner had he finished speaking than another official stood up and said, "Your Majesty, I too accuse the Crown Prince. The Crown Prince has allowed refugees to wander aimlessly, leading to frequent murders in Great Sum recently."

After the two officials finished speaking, other officials stood up, all voicing accusations against Lu Shuyun.

At this time, Lu Shuyun's brows were tightly furrowed, and his face looked very grim.

The Sum Emperor sat on the Dragon Throne, watching indifferently the events unfolding below. After a long while, he finally opened his mouth and said, "Crown Prince, the first task I assigned you, you have handled so poorly, how can I trust you with the whole of Great Sum in the future."

Hearing this, Lu Shuyun quickly knelt down and said, "Father Emperor, your son admits his mistake, please grant your son more time."

At that moment, Right Minister Zhao Wenhan stood up and said, "Your Majesty, the fact that the Crown Prince has been slow to deal with the refugee issue doesn't have much to do with him."

"Recently, among the refugees, there have been frequent rumors saying that the court does not provide North Country with food, and that sending the refugees to North Country is to let them die

there. This has made the refugees uncooperative with the government's work; they are unwilling to go to North Country."

"I believe that these rumor mongers have ulterior motives and sinister intentions, they are the real culprits behind the Crown Prince's inability to address the refugee problem, and it has nothing to do with the Crown Prince's personal ability."

Just as Zhao Wenhan finished speaking, the Sum Emperor was about to speak when Lin Gaoyuan stood up and said, "Rumors? It's probably no rumor that the court doesn't provide North Country with food. Your Majesty has long said that he would no longer aid North Country with any supplies, how can Prime Minister Zhao claim they are rumors."

"North Country has no food, to push such a large number of refugees there is just to let them fend for themselves; the common people are not fools."

Having said this, Lin Gaoyuan looked at the Sum Emperor and continued, "I believe that sending all the refugees to North Country is a mistake to begin with; failing to provide North Country with aid in food is an even greater error. The decision of His Highness the Crown Prince has been wrong from the very start."

"If these refugees arrive in North Country and find no food, once they gather, unrest will inevitably arise. What's happening in Great Wu might very well unfold in our Great Sum too."

"His Highness the Crown Prince did not even consider this before hastily deciding to send all the refugees to North Country, and this is neglecting the welfare of the nation, seeking only convenience."

Seeing Lin Gaoyuan standing up to criticize him, Lu Shuyun's complexion instantly darkened.

Lin Gaoyuan, this Left Minister, had always been neutral, never siding with any Prince. How come now that he himself had become the Crown Prince, Lin Gaoyuan actually came out to speak against him?

Could it be that this old fox Lin Gaoyuan had been won over by Prince Lu Yi?

At this time, Zhao Wenhan said, "Prime Minister Lin's words are somewhat alarmist. They're just some unarmed refugees; what kind of insurrection can they stir up?"



“Moreover, now only North Country has a vast amount of land. If not for North Country, where else can these refugees go? Does Prime Minister Lin intend to offer his own lands to these refugees?”

Seeing the two Prime Ministers arguing, the other officials in the hall suddenly fell silent, now just watching the two of them debate.

After the two had argued for a while, the Sum Emperor finally spoke, “North Country has many wastelands, indeed a suitable place for these refugees. However, I have already stated that I will no longer provide North Country with any aid.”

“Since it’s a word that I, myself, have already spoken, I won’t take it back.”

“The matter of the refugees was the first state affair Prince Lu Shuyun dealt with after becoming the Crown Prince. It’s a trivial issue, so I will not provide any assistance. If even this matter can’t be settled properly, he won’t be qualified to inherit my position in the future.”

“Shuyun, I’ll only give you two more months. You must quell this refugee unrest within this time.”

Lu Shuyun immediately knelt and said, “Thank you, Father Emperor!”

The Sum Emperor continued, “Moreover, recently quite a few officials have petitioned, saying that many people in remote areas of Great Sum can’t afford salt. The government offices don’t care, and the court doesn’t inquire. They hope that I will decentralize the salt monopoly to let trading caravans...”

Before the Sum Emperor could finish, Lin Gaoyuan hastily said, “Your Majesty, that must not be done. Salt is essential to the nation’s economy and the people’s livelihood and has always been run by the court. How can we decentralize its management rights?”

“Once the management rights are released, there will inevitably be merchants who will drive up the price of salt. Then, it won’t be just the people in remote mountainous areas who can’t afford it; even the common people in more prosperous areas won’t be able to.”

Once the monopoly on salt is released, it could very well shake the foundations of the state, not to mention it would greatly reduce the revenue of the national treasury.

Lin Gaoyuan simply couldn't understand why the Sum Emperor would bring up such a matter in court.

As soon as Lin Gaoyuan finished speaking, an official from an aristocratic family stood and said, "I agree with decentralizing the management rights of the salt industry. Currently, the price of salt is generally high as it's monopolized by the court; therefore, salt production has always been low."

"I believe that if the salt industry's management rights are decentralized, more merchants will produce salt, which could actually help decrease the price of salt and allow the common people to access cheaper salt."

No sooner had this official from the aristocratic family finished speaking than another from the same class also stood up, "I also agree with decentralizing the management rights of the salt industry..."

Afterwards, even more officials expressed their stance, all in favor of decentralizing the salt industry's management rights.

Seeing this unfold, Lin Gaoyuan frowned. The aristocratic families would be the first to benefit from opening up the salt industry. Of course, they couldn't wait to decentralize the management rights of the salt industry.

What mattered next was what the Sum Emperor thought. He has always been uncomfortable with the aristocratic families, finding them an eyesore. Surely he wouldn't really open up the salt industry now by heeding the words of these officials?

However, just when Lin Gaoyuan thought the Sum Emperor would never agree to open up the salt industry, the Emperor addressed the court, "The advice of my loving subjects is beneficial. Merchants pursue profit. Once the salt industry is opened up, surely more merchants will join the salt-making industry, and the price of salt will fall, allowing more of Great Sum's common people to afford salt."

"I have decided that from today on, the management rights of the salt industry will be decentralized."

Upon hearing these words, Lin Gaoyuan was entirely dumbfounded.

When had the Sum Emperor become so foolish?

He was actually decentralizing the management rights of the salt industry?

Wasn't he the one who hated the aristocratic families most? And the Sum Emperor had already been preparing to make a move against the aristocratic families in secret. Why would he make such a concession to them at this time?

Appointing Prince Lu Shuyun as the Crown Prince could still be explained as an attempt to stabilize the aristocratic families, to prevent them from sensing what the Sum Emperor planned to do next.

The policy of decentralizing the management rights of the salt industry couldn't possibly bring any advantage to the Sum Emperor.

Although baffled, Lin Gaoyuan said no more.

Internal strife was impending. The aristocratic families wouldn't be able to make trouble much longer. Let the Sum Emperor do as he pleased.

After the Great Court Assembly had adjourned, Lu Shuyun, accompanied by a group of low-ranking officials of his own faction, arrived at the East Palace.

His Father Emperor had only given him two months. He had to act quickly to deal with those refugees; otherwise, his reputation would suffer enormously.

Within the grand hall of the East Palace, the atmosphere seemed oppressive. Lu Shuyun had faced a barrage of impeachment attempts by ministers at the court assembly, leaving him in a very foul mood.

After a long silence, Lu Shuyun said, "Let's discuss it. How should we resolve this matter with the refugees? They have come to know that the court won't provide grain to the North Country, and since all the land there is owned by the North Prince Mansion, they wouldn't have land even if they went to the North Country. It's even less likely they would go there voluntarily."

## Chapter 285: The Aid of the Crown Prince\_1

Upon hearing Lu Shuyun's words, the people in the hall did not immediately respond. The majority of them had initially agreed to drive the refugees to the North Country. They had not anticipated what they thought would be an easily resolved issue becoming so troublesome.

After a while, the Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Household spoke up, "His Majesty's stance is clear. The court will absolutely not provide food to the North Country. The only solution now is for us to gather food ourselves and send it to the North Country, ensuring those refugees have something to eat once they arrive there."

"However, this would likely require the cooperation of the major aristocratic families in the South."

Handling the refugee matter should have been the responsibility of the court, but now Sum Emperor had completely dumped it onto Crown Prince Lu Shuyun. If Lu Shuyun failed to manage the refugee issue properly, he feared his tenure as Crown Prince would be short-lived.

If he couldn't handle the first state affair properly, the officials from other princely factions wouldn't miss the opportunity to strike. His position as Crown Prince had been shaky to begin with. If it weren't for Sum Emperor's compromise with the Southern aristocratic families, he might not have been able to become Crown Prince at all.

Now with internal turmoil in Great Wu as well as in Great Qian, Great Sum was free from external pressures. It would be easy for Sum Emperor to depose him as Crown Prince.

If the officials from the other Imperial Prince Factions applied pressure, Sum Emperor could simply go with the flow and dispose of the Crown Prince. At that time, the Southern aristocratic families wouldn't be able to say much, since Lu Shuyun indeed hadn't managed the refugee crisis well.

After hearing the Assistant Minister's words, Wang Yong, speaking on behalf of the Wang Family, said, "Your Highness, please rest assured. The Southern aristocratic families absolutely support His Highness the Crown Prince. We are willing to donate food to the refugees to help the court resolve the refugee crisis."

Seeing that the representative of the Wang Family had spoken, the Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Household immediately said, "If the Southern aristocratic families are willing to donate food to the refugees, then we can tell the refugees that, if they are willing to go to the North Country, they will receive a year's worth of rations."

Lu Shuyun thought for a moment and said, "This is indeed a solution."

If the Southern aristocratic families were willing to donate food to the refugees, then they would earn a good reputation, and Lu Shuyun would resolve the refugee crisis, which would be a favorable outcome for everyone.

However, Lu Shuyun then had another thought and continued, "Relying on the food donated by the Southern aristocratic families might not be enough. It would be best to find a way to lure these refugees to other feudal states, having the seigniors there help resolve the refugee crisis."

Hearing this, the Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Household said, "Your Highness, this is a good method. I've heard that Qi Prince, in order to resolve the refugee problem within his feudal state, spared no effort in sending refugees to the North Country, not only offering lower grain prices but also providing a year's worth of rations for those refugees."

"Since these refugees are unwilling to go to the North Country, we'll send them to other feudal states. Once they go to other feudal states, the seigniors there will naturally find a way to send the refugees on to the North Country."

"By doing this, the pressure on His Highness the Crown Prince would also be greatly reduced."

After hearing the words of the Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Household, the look of worry on Lu Shuyun's face gradually dissipated.

Now that they had a plan, it was just a matter of carrying it out.

Over the next half month, Lu Shuyun did as they had discussed. On one hand, he publicly promoted the Southern aristocratic families' donation of food to the refugees; on the other, under the guise of the seigniors fulfilling their duties, he sent some of the refugees to other feudal states.

Once those feudal states took in the refugees, the first thing they did was send envoys to the North Country to negotiate the acceptance of refugees.

At first, Lu Chen had only wanted a small amount of food for the refugees, but when he found that quite a few seigniors were approaching him, he demanded more terms, especially concerning the trading conditions for North Country goods.

Lu Shuyun's strategy had inadvertently done a great favor for the North Country. For a long time thereafter, every time Lu Chen thought of Lu Shuyun's cunning maneuvers, he couldn't stop laughing.

If the North Country was to develop, it would decidedly be thanks in part to Lu Shuyun's significant contribution.

Spring was gradually passing, and summer was nearing. The population in the North Country was growing, and almost the entire spring, Lu Chen was occupied with handling the refugees' affairs.

North Prince Mansion.

The study.

Lu Chen was dealing with the paperwork for the resettlement of displaced people when a Brocade Guard at the entrance said, "Prince, there is intelligence from Sufeng City."

Lu Chen said indifferently, "Bring it in."

The Brocade Guard then entered the study and placed the newly arrived intelligence in front of Lu Chen, who opened it and glanced over it.

The next moment, a smile appeared on Lu Chen's face. He hadn't expected the Chu Family to let Chu Xiong and the others leave so easily; he had thought the Chu Family would do everything possible to prevent their departure, fearing a weakening of their strength.

Instead of preventing them, the Chu Family even allowed Chu Xiong to take the food they donated to the displaced people up north.

But on second thought, this move was beneficial for the Chu Family. On one hand, the opposing forces within the Chu Family had disappeared, and now with only one voice, things could not be more perfect for the new Family Head of the Chu Family.

On the other hand, by letting Chu Xiong take the donated food north, the Chu Family also seized the opportunity to promote themselves. After all, Chu Xiong was the former Family Head.

With the former head of such a notable Aristocratic Family personally leading so much food up north to be donated to those in need, the Chu Family's actions instantly maxed out their favorability with the common people.

Just then, another voice sounded outside the study.

"Prince, are you in the study? I have some intelligence that you might be very interested in," said the voice.

Hearing the familiar voice, Lu Chen promptly told the nearby Brocade Guard,

"You may leave."

"Yes, Prince."

As the voice fell, the Jinyiwei Guard turned and left the study. Seeing the Guard open the door and exit, Wang Qingci immediately entered the study and closed the door behind her.

As Lu Chen sat at his desk, stamping the documents, he asked, "Tell me, what intelligence might that be which interests me?"

Wang Qingci said with a smile brimming with mischief, "It's about the Princess Junwan of the Great Wu Dynasty. Do you have any interest in it, Prince?"

Upon hearing this, Lu Chen was momentarily startled, and the hand holding the seal stopped mid-air as he looked up at Wang Qingci.

Today, Wang Qingci was dressed in a red gown that hugged her shapely body, the silk fabric revealing just enough to set the imagination alight.

Lu Chen asked curiously, "Princess Junwan of the Great Wu Dynasty? What has she done lately?"

“I recall you mentioned recently she went to the Da Yue Dynasty, right?”

Wang Qingci replied, “She indeed was in the Da Yue Dynasty a month ago, but...”

She paused, leaving her sentence hanging.

Seeing Wang Qingci’s hesitation, Lu Chen said flatly, “But what? Finish your sentence. It seems you haven’t been disciplined by me for a while, and your ‘hide’ is itching again.”

Since Lu Chen had become a Grandmaster, Wang Qingci hadn’t returned to the North Prince Mansion except to report intelligence.

Furthermore, with Lu Chen’s focus lately being on Chu Qingli and Yelv Nanyan, Wang Qingci had not yet experienced how formidable Lu Chen had become since becoming a Grandmaster.

Chapter 286: Princess Wu of Great Wu in North Countryi

After hearing Lu Chen’s words, Wang Qingci put on a delicate facade and said, “Prince, you’ve changed, become so fierce. You never used to be like this.”

Lu Chen chuckled. This bitch really hadn’t been taken care of by him for too long.

Wang Qingci then continued, “The Princess Junwan from the Great Wu dynasty might have come to Yan County.”

Upon hearing this, Lu Chen suddenly froze.

What?

The Princess of the Great Wu dynasty had come to his feudal state?

A princess of a dynasty, and moreover, a power player, actually came to the territory of an enemy state without any notice.



This Princess Junwan of Great Wu was really too bold, wasn't she?

After snapping out of it, Lu Chen frowned.

This Princess was a hot potato, being a power player of the Great Wu dynasty. If something were to happen to her in North Country, Great Wu would certainly send troops to invade Great Sum.

The key issue was that this Princess also had a good relationship with the Great Yue Empress. Should anything happen to her, it was possible that the Great Yue Empress might also lend a hand. Currently, Great Yue still had an army of two hundred thousand stationed at the border between North Country and Great Yue.

Lu Chen then asked, "Is this news accurate?"

Wang Qingci replied, "It's not one hundred percent confirmed yet. The other party came to North Country under the guise of being Miss Qian from the Qian Family. She also plans to meet with the person behind Rain-listening Pavilion and discuss a cooperation with them."

Hearing Wang Qingci's words, Lu Chen fell into deep thought.

She came to North Country to seek a cooperative relationship with Rain-listening Pavilion?

Could it be that the Princess of Great Wu has discovered the connection between North Prince Mansion and Rain-listening Pavilion?

That shouldn't be the case.

There are many people associated with Rain-listening Pavilion who are not even aware of their connection to North Prince Mansion, and whenever Wang Qingci appears at Rain-listening Pavilion, she uses an alias and disguises herself.

How could she have been found out by that Princess so quickly?

If she really did find out that North Prince Mansion is behind Rain-listening Pavilion, then she would be even less likely to want to meet the person behind it, since the mastermind behind Rain-listening Pavilion is him, the North Prince. It would be highly inappropriate for Great Wu's Princess to come and secretly meet with him, the Seignior.

After pondering for a moment, Lu Chen asked, "How many experts did she bring with her to North Country this time, and how capable are they?"

Wang Qingci said, "She came following the Qian sea merchant fleet. I'm not clear about the exact number of experts she has with her, but there are two elders by her side that give me palpitations. In their presence, I feel as if I'm seeing you, Prince."

Hearing this from Wang Qingci, Lu Chen frowned again.

The fact that Wang Qingci felt like she was seeing him indicated that the two elders might have strength comparable to his own.

In other words, they were very likely Grandmasters.

It made sense, after all; a princess of a dynasty wouldn't dare to venture privately into enemy territory without strong protectors by her side.

However, there is an unspoken rule among the nations that Grandmasters usually do not take action.

Great Wu's Grandmasters coming to Great Sum without prior notice was not much different from provoking a war.

It seems that this Princess Junwan of Great Wu doesn't put Great Sum in her eyes at all.

At that moment, Wang Qingci asked, "Prince, do you plan to meet with this Princess?"

"I've seen her for you; this Princess is certainly very beautiful. Her looks might even compare to the Palace Master of Mysterious Moon Palace and definitely match your taste."

Hearing Wang Qingci's words, Lu Chen smiled and said, "Daring to tease this Prince, Mr. Wang seems to have grown quite arrogant lately."

"Come here to this Prince!"

Hearing Lu Chen's words, Wang Qingci's heart skipped a beat, and she quickly said, "Prince, that Princess of Great Wu is still waiting for my response. I will head back first today. Whenever you want to meet the Princess, just tell me, and I'll arrange a time for you."

As she said this, Wang Qingci was planning her escape. She hadn't yet experienced just how formidable Lu Chen had become as a Grandmaster, but she knew well enough that the current Lu Chen was even more powerful than before.

Lu Chen hadn't yet become a Grandmaster, but he was already capable of disciplining her to the point of crying and screaming. If she were caught by Lu Chen now, wouldn't she be pulverized by him?

Just as Wang Qingci was about to make her escape, she suddenly realized she could no longer move her body. Wang Qingci was stunned. What was happening?

Lu Chen looked at her with a smile and said, "Mr. Wang, daring to defy this Prince's orders. Are you ready to accept your punishment?"

While speaking, Lu Chen raised his hand and channeled all his Spiritual Energy, and in the next moment, a powerful suction force released from the palm of his hand, pulling Wang Qingci's delicate body directly in front of him.

What Lu Chen used wasn't the Absorption Technique but simply the Release of Spiritual Power, which anyone in the Grandmaster Realm could use.

Soon, Wang Qingci's delicate body was completely controlled by Lu Chen's large hand, held in his embrace. Wang Qingci simply gave up struggling, as she knew she wasn't getting away today.

Seeing Wang Qingci's resigned demeanor, Lu Chen said with a smile, "Why isn't Mr. Wang running now?"

Wang Qingci turned her head to look at Lu Chen and said with a demeanor of someone unfazed by threats, "The Prince has me under control, how could I run away?"

Lu Chen raised his hand and slapped her bottom with a smack. Wang Qingci's delicate body trembled, and she let out a soft cry.

Chapter 287: Princess Wu of Great Wu in

North Country\_2

Lu Chen wrapped his arms around Wang Qingci's slender waist, whispering in her ear, "It has been a long time since I've been in contact with Mr. Wang's body; I didn't expect you to still be so sensitive."

At this moment, a blush appeared on Wang Qingci's face, her eyes filled with the mist of autumn water, and she then said, "Prince, you just like to bully me."

Seeing Wang Qingci's pitiful appearance, Lu Chen completely lost his self-control and pressed her down onto the desk.

Meanwhile.

At a certain restaurant opened by Rain-listening Pavilion.

Inside a private room, a stunningly beautiful woman was quietly sipping her tea.

The woman was dressed in a red garment, bordered with golden thread embroidery. Her hair was done up in a bun, adorned with golden hairpins, making her appear noble and elegant.

At that time, an old granny in the private room said to the woman, "Your Highness, do you think the woman we met earlier isn't the true owner behind Rain-listening Pavilion?"

Wu Junwan smiled slightly and then set down her teacup, saying, "She is merely a Half-step Grandmaster. A Half-step Grandmaster cannot be running such a large power. After all, Rain-

listening Pavilion's business extends across several dynasties, with traces even in the Great Qian Dynasty."

The old granny asked curiously, "Then why does Your Highness think that the real owner behind Rain-listening Pavilion must be in the North Country?"

Wu Junwan extended her delicate jade-like hand, softly picked up the teapot, and poured herself another cup of tea. While pouring the tea, she said, "Although Rain-listening Pavilion engages in all sorts of business, they started from the North Country. Based on my palace's judgment, the true owner behind Rain-listening Pavilion is likely connected with the superpower supporting the North Prince Mansion."

At this point, Wu Junwan picked up the teacup from the table and sipped her tea once more.

In her heart, Wu Junwan thought that this superpower must be plotting something, which is why she wanted to make contact with this force in advance to test their true intentions.

As a key figure in control of intelligence work within the Great Wu Dynasty, she needed to be aware of potential enemies—not just to know about them, but to understand their ins and outs and identify their weaknesses.

Only in this way, when facing this enemy in the future, the Great Wu Dynasty could come up with countermeasures more swiftly.

At this moment, another old man with white hair in the room asked, "Your Highness, how can you be sure that the real owner behind Rain-listening Pavilion will agree to meet with you?"

Wu Junwan smiled lightly, then said, "Whether he wants to see me or not is irrelevant. My request to meet their Tower Master is ostensibly for the purpose of business cooperation."

No sooner had Wu Junwan's words fallen than a portly man entered the private room. Upon entering, he immediately bowed and said, "This subordinate pays respects to Princess Junwan! May Your Highness live for a thousand, a thousand, a thousand more years!"

Wu Junwan nodded and then said, "President Qian, starting today, you will stay in the North Country. I've discovered that there are many good things in the North Country, and the commercial

environment is also very favorable. The North Prince is not like the other Seigniors; he values commerce highly, which is very beneficial for Qianhai Commercial Association.”

Qian Dahai immediately said, “Yes, Princess Junwan.”

At that time, Qian Dahai said, “Princess, will you be meeting with the North Prince during your visit to the North Country?”

“Our company often interacts with the North Prince Mansion. If you wish to meet the North Prince, Qianhai Commercial Association can provide the connection.”

Qianhai Commercial Association, on the surface, is just a regular business association, but in actuality, it is an intelligence organization operated by Wu Junwan. Like Rain-listening Pavilion, Qianhai Commercial Association does business across several dynasties and also collects intelligence everywhere.

After hearing Qian Dahai’s words, Wu Junwan thought for a moment and then said, “No need. Making a pointed effort to get close to the North Prince may expose my identity too easily.”

“My main purpose in coming to the North Country is to see for myself what the reforms here really entail.”

Actually, Wu Junwan also wanted to meet the North Prince, but as he is now an important piece of that superpower, the superpower would certainly have people protecting the North Prince. If she approached the North Prince rashly, it was highly likely her identity would be discovered by others.

At this time, Wu Junwan was unaware that her identity had already been found out.

From the moment Wu Junwan left the Great Wu Dynasty, Rain-listening Pavilion had been monitoring their movements.

While they apparently returned to the Great Wu after leaving the Da Yue Dynasty, they had secretly come to the North Country. They had not expected Rain-listening Pavilion to find out about their little maneuver.

Furthermore, with the two Grandmasters behind Wu Junwan, Wang Qingci was almost certain that this so-called Miss Qian was actually the Princess of Great Wu.

Wang Qingci had a good eye for people; even without having seen the Princess of Great Wu, she could deduce from the aura exuding from Wu Junwan that the so-called Miss Qian was someone of high status.

Someone with Wu Junwan's distinguished and noble temperament couldn't possibly belong to a daughter of a commercial family. Whether it was her speech or her every action, she emanated the aura of a superior, clearly someone with great authority.

In the Great Wu Dynasty, the only woman holding great power was their Princess Junwan.

At first, Wang Qingci actually couldn't believe her own guess, but then she thought about it, this woman was protected by two martial artists whose aura was nearly as strong as Lu Chen's. Even upon coming to North Country, North Country might have no way to deal with her, so it was normal for her to dare to come to North Country.

Although she didn't know what the woman was doing by stealthily coming to North Country, there must be some special purpose since she had come.

As for whether she was really the Princess Junwan of the Great Wu Dynasty, that would have to be left for Lu Chen to judge.

At this very moment, Wang Qingci was enduring the endless rage of Lu Chen in his study.

Lu Chen had not disciplined Wang Qingci for too long, and today his anger was especially intense.

A mere female slave, actually daring to disobey him, was simply looking for a rebellion, and needed to be severely punished.

The little maid at the study's entrance blushed as she listened to the sounds coming from inside, her ears turning red.

At that moment, the figure of a beautiful woman appeared outside the study.

As the beautiful woman entered the courtyard, she heard the noises coming from the study. Seeing the maid's blushing face, she immediately understood what was happening.

Chu Yuqin suddenly felt a sour jealousy in her heart and snorted, mumbling to herself, "Bitch! Coming in broad daylight to disturb Chen'er with his official duties, truly a calamity brought by a beautiful face!"

Even though Chu Yuqin felt somewhat uncomfortable hearing Wang Qingci's voice, she didn't leave the courtyard and just quietly waited outside.

After an unknown amount of time, the sound inside the study finally subsided.

In a little while, Wang Qingci emerged from the study, limping. She didn't even glance at Chu Yuqin and used her qinggong to run away as if fleeing for her life.

After Wang Qingci left, Chu Yuqin walked straight towards the study. With the door still open, seeing Chu Yuqin at the entrance, Lu Chen quickly adjusted his clothes and said with a smile, "Madam Chu, when did you arrive?"

Chu Yuqin looked at Lu Chen somberly, then spoke, "Chen'er, with so many official duties to handle every day, how can you do such things with that bitch during the daytime?"

As she spoke, Chu Yuqin entered the study without closing the door, standing at the entrance as if to guard against Lu Chen.

Lu Chen sighed and said, "Ah, Madam Chu, you may not know, but recently I..."

Lu Chen hesitated, looking at the open study door, and then continued, "Madam Chu, please close the door first, I have a secret to tell you."

Seeing the secretive look on Lu Chen, Chu Yuqin's curiosity was piqued.

A secret?



What secret?

Could it be about immortals?

With this thought, Chu Yuqin turned and closed the room door, but as soon as the study door closed, a pair of restless hands wrapped around her slender waist.

Chu Yuqin's mind paused, just about to say something, when she heard Lu Chen whisper in her ear, "Madam Chu, you might not know yet, but I have already broken through to the Grandmaster Realm."

Hearing Lu Chen's words, Chu Yuqin was completely stunned.

Grandmaster?

How is that possible?

Lu Chen is only seventeen years old, right?

A seventeen-year-old Grandmaster?

Others who want to break through to the Grandmaster Realm, even martial arts geniuses, would have to be at least in their forties or fifties.

He's already a Grandmaster at seventeen!

Chu Yuqin quickly collected herself; after all, Lu Chen was someone with a destiny linked to immortals, so him becoming a Grandmaster so quickly didn't seem too strange.

Chapter 288: Young Prince, You Wait for Your Sister

Chu Yuqin regained her composure, and with a slight twist of her waist, she turned her head toward Lu Chen and said, "Chen'er, you are someone with a destiny for immortality, so it's not surprising that you could advance to the Grandmaster level so quickly."

“Based on your current speed of cultivation, I’m afraid it wouldn’t take many years for you to break through to the Heavenly Human Realm.”

“If Sister Yue were aware down below, she would certainly feel happy for you.” Upon hearing Chu Yuqin’s words, Lu Chen smiled slightly, his eyes reflecting his gaze at Chu Yuqin as he said, “Is it that only my mother would be happy for me? Madam Chu, wouldn’t you rejoice for me as well?”

Feeling the heat of Lu Chen’s intense gaze, Chu Yuqin found her heart becoming restless and her throat a bit dry, “Madam is, of course, also happy for you.”

Lu Chen then said, “Although breaking through is certainly a good thing, ever since I reached the Grandmaster level, I’ve found my vigor growing increasingly robust, making it utterly impossible for me to calm down and deal with political affairs.”

“Now that Zixuan, along with Xiaozhou and Dazhou, are pregnant, neither Nanyan nor Yaoyao can help me release this energy, and even occasional visits to Bai are of no use.”

“Madam Chu, you must have noticed that recently Nanyan seldom leaves Spring Sound Court.”

At this point, Lu Chen’s deep eyes were intently fixed on Chu Yuqin.

Hearing Lu Chen’s words, and feeling his bodily agitation, Chu Yuqin instantly understood what he meant.

Just as Chu Yuqin was about to speak, Lu Chen continued, “Madam Chu, several months have passed, do you still remember what you said in my study?” Blushing, Chu Yuqin answered, “Madam remembers, it’s just that...” “Madam also wants to help you, but now that Qing Li is the Deputy Commander of the guards at the Prince’s Mansion, she frequently patrols everywhere. If you were discovered by her serving me, there’s a good chance she would harbor resentment towards you,” Chu Yuqin said.

“Qing Li grew up with me and holds special affection for me. I fear that if she finds out about us, she might take extreme actions, to your detriment.” “You can see that once she sets her mind on something, nothing anyone says can change her mind; she has a personality that can easily become extreme.” Having heard this, Lu Chen smiled and said, “So you mean, as long as I can send Qing Li away from the North Prince Mansion for a while, Madam Chu would then be willing to help me?”

Chu Yuqin's cheeks blazed with heat, and her body burned, thrown into disarray under Lu Chen's gaze. She quickly averted her eyes to the side, daring not to meet his gaze anymore.

Chu Yuqin hastened to change the subject, "Chen'er, the other reason I came to you today is about Qing Li. Recently, she's had issues with her training; there are many scars on her body that won't go away. Since you know Immortal Techniques, could you maybe help remove those scars."

Lu Chen replied with a smile, "Although my Immortal Technique can heal wounds on the body, eliminating those kinds of scars is not easy. I also tried to help Qing Li to remove those scars, only to find out that it takes a lot of effort, and even when removed, the next day Qing Li would have even more scars. I am at a loss."

"Unless Qing Li can stop practicing martial arts for a while, even if I use Immortal Techniques each day to remove the scars, it will not be effective." Upon hearing what Lu Chen said, Chu Yuqin took a deep breath and then proposed, "How about this, I'll temporarily relieve her duties as Deputy Commander for a while and let her rest. You can call Bai back to the inner courts to take over her post."

Close to Chu Yuqin's ear, Lu Chen inquired, "Does this mean that after Qing Li is relieved of her duties, Madam Chu will come to my room at night?" In a soft voice, Chu Yuqin replied, "That won't work either. Even though she'll be relieved from her duties, she will still be in the inner courts, and there is still a chance she might discover us. It would be better to have Qing Li leave the North Prince Mansion for a while."

Understanding her concern, Lu Chen said, "I see. I will find something new for Qing Li to do, to make her leave the North Prince Mansion for a bit."

At that moment, Chu Yuqin was feeling weak all over, her legs barely able to hold her upright. If not for being firmly embraced by Lu Chen's strong arms, she might have collapsed.

Remembering that Chu Qingli had duty during the day, Chu Yuqin quickly said, "Chen'er, today is Qing Li's turn for patrol duty. If she comes this way and there's nothing else, Madam will take her leave first."

Saying this, Chu Yuqin struggled lightly, wanting to leave Lu Chen's embrace, but his grasp was too tight for her to escape.

Lu Chen then said with a smile, “Madam Chu, ever since I ascended to the Grandmaster level, I have been feeling a dull pain in my Damian. How about you help me regulate it?”

At his words, Chu Yuqin’s face turned even more flushed, like a ripe red apple about to drip with moisture.

Before she could speak, Lu Chen leaned down and captured her tempting red lips in a kiss.

Then, Lu Chen’s hand snuck into Chu Yuqin’s clothes, boldly roaming her body Unlike before, this time Chu Yuqin did not resist, but instead actively went along with him.

In her heart, she was already prepared to serve Lu Chen; her only worry now was whether Chu Qingli would detect them sneaking around in the study.

After kissing for a while, Lu Chen broke away from Chu Yuqin’s lips. He had no intention of going any further, as he had other matters to attend to shortly.

At this moment, Chu Yuqin’s eyes were misty with spring, her beauty magnified as she leaned into Lu Chen’s embrace.

Chu Yuqin’s body was incredibly soft and warm, like holding a fluffy wad of cotton, very much akin to Yelv Nanyan’s physique.

Most mature women were like this, their body fat evenly distributed, making them neither seem chubby nor too thin, their touch was simply delightful.

After a brief moment, Chu Yuqin came to her senses, and upon thinking how she had just actively cooperated with Lu Chen, she felt an immense shame wash over her, truly a woman without integrity.

Having been married already, yet still, she engaged in such secret affairs with a much younger man inside a study.

Right then, Lu Chen, with a smile, said, “Madam Chu, thank you for helping me recover my body; I am feeling much better now.”

Chu Yuqin spoke in a voice as tiny as a mosquito's, "If there's nothing else, I'll be leaving first."

Lu Chen then let go of Chu Yuqin, "Alright."

She immediately turned and exited Lu Chen's embrace, opened the door to the room to get some air, that strange smell in the study was suffocating her. At that moment, Chu Qingli's figure appeared just by the courtyard entrance;

Chu Yuqin, like a thief caught in the act, hurried out of Lu Chen's study, terrified her sister might notice something.

However, at this point, Chu Qingli already noticed Chu Yuqin at the entrance of the study; seeing Chu Yuqin, her face flushed as she came out, such suspicions sprang up instantly within her.

She coldly eyed the study, thinking to herself that the lecher still had his designs on her sister.

The very thought of what the lecher had done to her recently made Chu Qingli's delicate body tremble involuntarily, her legs going weak.

In recent times, they had "transacted" twenty times, with eighty more to go.

She had wanted to push through and finish the transactions within three months, but Chu Yuqin staying in the inner court had made it difficult to find the opportunity to be alone with Lu Chen.

Most importantly, Lu Chen's strength had improved to the Grandmaster Realm, and she could hardly withstand it; each transaction with him required her to rest for several days to recover.

Moreover, this detestable man always enjoyed leaving marks on her snow-white body, which troubled her immensely.

Lucidly, her sister was oblivious to how these marks came about; otherwise, her relationship with Lu Chen might be in danger of being exposed.

Meanwhile, Lu Chen appeared at the doorway of the study, locking eyes with Chu Qingli at the courtyard entrance. Chu Qingli glared coldly at Lu Chen after seeing him.

Lu Chen smiled, utterly undisturbed, remembering how she had called him daddy the night before, and now she scorned him; women truly are fickle, not recognizing him once they're dressed.

But he was magnanimous by nature; he wasn't mad at all, for he knew that come evening, Chu Qingli would revert to her last night's state.

Simultaneously,

Wang Qingci returned to her residence, instructed her maids to ready some hot water, and peeled off her torn clothes before plunging into the bath.

As she wiped her body, she used her Inner Strength to expel the impurities from within.

Wang Qingci still felt a sense of dread; she hadn't expected that little deviant to become so formidable after breaking through to the Grandmaster Realm.

It was fortunate that it had happened in the study, and during the day when he had to deal with state affairs, for if it had taken place in her room, and moreover at night, she shuddered to think what would have become of her.

At this moment, Wang Qingci gently touched her lower belly, noting it had already begun to swell, and couldn't help but hum softly, "Young Prince, you just wait for your sister, once I break through to the Grandmaster..."

She stopped mid-sentence.

Once she broke through to the Grandmaster Realm, Lu Chen would have likely already ascended to the Celestial Realm, or even above that realm; she would stand even less of a chance against him then.

Thinking of this infuriated Wang Qingci; she hated that she couldn't match Lu Chen, allowing him to be so arrogant.

Even though she was a Female Slave, she, too, had aspirations to become the one in control, to pin Lu Chen beneath her.

At that moment, Wang Qingci sighed; it was better to focus on expelling the impurities from her body with her practice, or else there would be consequences later on.

And so, Wang Qingci continued with her practice.

After bathing, Wang Qingci changed into a purple dress, and as evening approached, she took Lu Chen with her to visit Wu Junwan's place of stay.

## Chapter 289: Cooperation 1

As evening approached and the sun dipped in the west, a fiery red sun hung in the sky, accompanied by vast spreads of crimson sunset clouds.

At this moment, with the glow of the sunset reflecting on their faces, even the whitest skin took on a tawny hue.

When Lu Chen entered the private room of the tavern where Wu Junwan was, he was slightly taken aback by the sight of Wu Junwan near the window.

Dressed in a striking red garment that hugged her figure, Wu Junwan exuded a serene yet charming aura of a mature woman.

She was stunningly beautiful, as if she were a goddess descending from the heavens, noble and graceful.

At that moment, Wu Junwan turned her head to look toward the entrance where Lu Chen stood, his face obscured by a mask. Still, from Lu Chen's attire and skin tone, one could tell the newcomer was a young man in his twenties at most.

Seeing such a young visitor who could exert a sense of pressure, Wu Junwan involuntarily raised her eyebrows slightly, though the movement was subtle and barely noticeable.

The two elders in the room tensed up instantly. They had not expected that the North Country would have a Grandmaster, especially one so young.

Having regained his composure, Lu Chen used his system to identify Wu Junwan's personal information.

Wang Qingci had suggested that the woman before him was the Princess of Great Wu, but that was only speculation; it would take a system check to confirm its accuracy.

The next moment, Wu Junwan's personal details appeared before Lu Chen's eyes.

[Name: Wu Junwan]

[Identity: Princess Wu of Great Wu, daughter of the Martial Emperor, friend of the Yue Emperor, 30 years old this year, possesses extremely high martial arts talent, having reached the pinnacle of the Master Realm. She is very interested in the North Prince, so she took the opportunity of a diplomatic mission to the Da Yue Dynasty to sneak into the North Country, wanting to see what the North Prince was up to and to test the Rain-listening Pavilion, to see if the shadowy power behind the North Prince Mansion is indeed the same superpower that supports it.]

[Rating: 98]

[Favorability: 10]

Seeing the information before him, Lu Chen chuckled to himself.

Well, well, she really is the Princess of Great Wu!

Wang Qingci's intuition, the wily bitch, was indeed accurate.

If it were someone else, it's likely they would not have guessed that this woman was the Princess of Great Wu, and she could have come and gone from Yan County without the Prince being any the wiser.



The fact that the Brocade Guard hadn't reported any information about Wu Junwan showed that she and her companions were adept at concealing their presence; even the Brocade Guards in the city failed to detect the formidable strength of the three individuals in the room.

Normally, once the Brocade Guards discovered a martial artist of the Master Realm entering Yan County, they would report to the North Prince Mansion immediately, whether they recognized the individual or not, in accordance with the rules set by Lu Chen.

Thinking this, it became clear to Lu Chen that the Brocade Guards had their limitations; they were unable to detect martial artists who were adept at hiding their presence when they entered Yan County.

This gave Lu Chen a sense of crisis.

If these three had escaped the Brocade Guards' detection, were there other powerful figures in Yan County that had also gone unnoticed?

Such individuals might not pose a threat to the military, but if they were to carry out assassinations, launch surprise attacks, or covertly infiltrate significant places to uncover the secrets of the North Country, it was certainly possible.

There was no other choice but to strengthen the alert level.

With this in mind, Lu Chen glanced again at the two elders standing behind Wu Junwan.

[Name: Pei Hong]

[Identity: Protector of Wu Junwan, 105 years old.]

[Strength: Grandmaster]

[Loyalty: 0]

[Name: Hu Shu]

[Identity: A martial artist sent by the Great Yue Empress to protect Wu Junwan, 120 years old.]

[Strength: Grandmaster]

[Loyalty: 0]

Lu Chen frowned slightly, Wang Qingci's instincts were not wrong; there indeed were two Grandmasters.

What Lu Chen didn't know at this moment was that, compared to his wariness of the trio, Wu Junwan and her companions were even more apprehensive of him.

A Grandmaster in a feudal state, and such a young one at that, signaled massive backing; a Grandmaster was nothing remarkable to the superpower behind the scenes, otherwise they would not have sent one to the North Country.

Moreover, the youth's early achievement as a Grandmaster was virtually unheard of.

If he could reach the Grandmaster level at such a young age, he might breakthrough to the Heavenly Human Realm by his middle age. Most Grandmasters from the major dynasties had reached the Grandmaster Realm around the age of a hundred, with the exception of one woman.

After a brief moment of astonishment, Wu Junwan quickly recovered and, with a warm smile and unassuming grace, said, "Allow me to introduce myself. I am the daughter of the President of Qianhai Merchant Association, named Qian Wanyun. I am here to visit the Rain-listening Pavilion primarily to discuss a commercial alliance. May I know if that's possible?"

Lu Chen replied with a smile, "Of course it is."

Then he walked toward the window.

As Lu Chen drew closer, Pei Hong and Hu Shu immediately tensed up.

Both were Grandmasters, and although it's often said that old ginger is hotter than young, this young man had reached the Grandmaster Realm at such a young age, which indicated his extraordinary martial arts talent. It was impossible to say just how formidable his strength might be.

Just as there are gaps between Masters, there are disparities between Grandmasters as well.

Pei Hong and Hu Shu were afraid that the young man might suddenly attack Wu Junwan upon approaching her.

However, it was clear that Lu Chen had no such intention; he simply took a seat by the window and then said, "Allow me to introduce myself as well. My name is Chen Lu, and I am the true Tower Master of the Rain-listening Pavilion."

## Chapter 290: Cooperation\_2

Upon hearing Lu Chen's words, Wu Junwan smiled and said, "I was thinking from the start that the Tower Master of Rain-listening Pavilion, whose business spans across several dynasties, could not possibly be just a Half-step Grandmaster. It seems I have guessed right."

"Only a Grandmaster like Master Chen could have the capability to expand

Rain-listening Pavilion to its current scale."

Seeing that Wu Junwan directly pointed out his strength, Lu Chen was not surprised at all. Although he was trying hard to conceal his aura, the imposing presence of a Grandmaster still lingered, making it easy for others to discern his true strength.

Unless he could cultivate a technique that completely concealed his realm, no matter how much he tried to hide his aura, it would always be detectable by others.

Especially in front of Grandmasters and Grandmasters, a Grandmaster needs not to be mentioned, for as a Grandmaster, one can easily sense the realm of another Grandmaster.

And in front of some particularly sensitive Grandmasters, as long as they felt a sense of crisis, or discomfort throughout their body, they could easily determine that the person in front of them was a Grandmaster.

No sooner had Wu Junwan finished speaking than Pei Hong, who stood to the side, said, “Master Chen really is young and promising. I have never before heard of such a young Grandmaster. Master Chen must certainly possess exceptional martial arts talent and a vast wealth of resources for cultivation. It seems Rain-listening Pavilion is even richer than we imagined.”

Pei Hong’s words were clearly probing Lu Chen. A Grandmaster so young was truly astonishing, and without a vast wealth of resources for cultivating martial arts, even with high talent, Pei Hong did not believe that one could break through to the Grandmaster Realm in their youth.

In his view, there might very well be a superpower behind the Tower Master of Rain-listening Pavilion, like what Wu Junwan had guessed. Whether this superpower was the one supporting the North Prince Mansion, they could not yet ascertain.

However, they had come with the intention of gathering information and naturally wanted to probe the other party further.

Lu Chen smiled lightly, then said, “You flatter me, elder. Rain-listening Pavilion is but a small trade association, and it has been established only recently. How could it be wealthy?”

“If we’re talking about wealth, Qianhai Commercial Association is far richer. Not only is the daughter of the chairman an Extreme Realm Master, but they also have two Grandmasters. As far as I know, the Great Xia Dynasty has but one Grandmaster, yet the Qianhai Commercial Association alone has two sitting Grandmasters. I’m afraid when it comes to wealth, no force is qualified to compare with Qianhai Commercial Association.”

At this moment, Wu Junwan smiled and said, “Master Chen, let’s leave the compliments here and discuss the cooperation instead.”

Lu Chen said, “No problem. How does Miss Qian propose we collaborate?”

Wu Junwan replied, “As I understand it, Master Chen has always been keen to do business in the Great Wu Dynasty. Only due to some obstacles, Rain-listening Pavilion has been unable to enter the Great Wu Dynasty.”

Lu Chen smiled faintly and then said, “Yes, my people came back and told me that the princess of the Great Wu Dynasty is very domineering. The tavern we opened in the Great Wu Dynasty was shut down within days by the princess, citing threats to the dynasty’s security.”

“Our Rain-listening Pavilion caravans also can’t enter the Great Wu Dynasty, often being excessively scrutinized by the soldiers of the Great Wu Dynasty.”

At this point, Lu Chen’s eyes sparkled with a smiling gaze fixed on Wu Junwan.

For a moment, the atmosphere inside the room grew tense.

Pei Hong and Hu Shu both prepared themselves for action.

They couldn’t help but suspect that, by mentioning the princess of Great Wu at this time, Lu Chen might have already discovered Wu Junwan’s identity.

This was not good.

After all, they were in a foreign land, and they had come to North Country discreetly. If their identities were exposed, it could not only potentially reignite conflict between the two great dynasties, but Wu Junwan might also be in danger.

Before coming to North Country, they had never thought that North Country would have any presence capable of threatening Wu Junwan’s safety—until they met the Tower Master of Rain-listening Pavilion.

To cultivate such a young martial artist into a Grandmaster proved the power of Rain-listening Pavilion. Perhaps there were even more Grandmasters behind Rain-listening Pavilion, which made them wary of Lu Chen.

Wu Junwan didn’t pay much attention to Lu Chen’s words, speaking indifferently, “What if I said that I could help Rain-listening Pavilion establish a presence in the Great Wu Dynasty, and even without being scrutinized?”

Lu Chen feigned a puzzled expression, “Oh? Miss Qian, you have a way?”

“I’ve heard that the Princess of Great Wu is a very unreasonable woman. Once she sets her mind on something, no one can persuade her otherwise. Moreover, she holds real power. There are hardly a few on the entire court of Great Wu who dare to challenge her.”

Wu Junwan’s eyebrows raised slightly, and a faint line of annoyance appeared on her forehead, as if angered, but she still sat gracefully, smiling as she said, “Master Chen may not be aware, but our Qian Family has a very special relationship with the Princess.”

“The reason Qianhai Commercial Association has been able to grow to its current size is inseparable from the Princess’s support. If Rain-listening Pavilion can reach a cooperation with Qianhai Commercial Association, then naturally the Princess won’t trouble Rain-listening Pavilion again.”

Lu Chen looked skeptically at Wu Junwan’s mature and beautiful face, “Really? But I’ve heard that the Princess of Great Wu is a key figure in controlling national intelligence, holding a status second only to the Martial Emperor in the Great Wu Dynasty. If she has decided that Rain-listening Pavilion is a threat to the Great Wu Dynasty, would she really allow us to cooperate with Qianhai Commercial Association?”

Wu Junwan said, “It’s precisely because our Princess holds such a high position in Great Wu that whether Rain-listening Pavilion is a threat to the Great Wu Dynasty is merely a matter of her say-so.”

“If Rain-listening Pavilion can offer enough benefits, I believe our Princess would allow Rain-listening Pavilion to do business in Great Wu.”

Continuing, Wu Junwan said, “And with the guarantee from Qianhai Commercial Association, Master Chen can be completely at ease.”

Hearing Wu Junwan’s words, Lu Chen appeared pensive. After a moment, he said, “If it’s possible to allow Rain-listening Pavilion to establish a presence in the Great Wu Dynasty, certainly, we’ll grant the benefits we should. It’s just that I’m unsure how Miss Qian plans to cooperate with Rain-listening Pavilion.”

Seeing Lu Chen agree, Wu Junwan smiled and said, “Our cooperation is simple. In the future, Rain-listening Pavilion and Qianhai Commercial Association will establish a new commercial

association. All of Rain-listening Pavilion's business in the Great Wu Dynasty will be managed by the new association, and both parties will hold a fifty percent share."

"Master Chen shouldn't misunderstand. Of the fifty percent stake that Qianhai Commercial Association holds, forty percent will go to the Princess. That's the only way she might agree to let Rain-listening Pavilion enter the Great Wu Dynasty."

Hearing Wu Junwan's words, Lu Chen let out a chuckle.

Well, Wu Junwan is looking to deploy a reverse infiltration strategy, huh?

By forming a new commercial association through cooperation between the two, Rain-listening Pavilion would be in a position of constant surveillance while doing business in the Great Wu Dynasty. Besides, it's possible for people from the Great Wu Dynasty to glean some internal information about Rain-listening Pavilion in return.

The Princess of Great Wu certainly plays a shrewd game.

However, that said, although it seems greatly advantageous for Wu Junwan, Lu Chen still decided to agree.

He was very interested in forging ties with the royalty of Great Wu, a connection they would inevitably need sooner or later.

Thereupon, Lu Chen said, "Alright, no problem. I'll leave the matter with the Great Wu Princess up to the Qian Family."

Seeing how straightforwardly Lu Chen agreed, Wu Junwan was momentarily taken aback. She had thought that Lu Chen would ask them some questions, like why they wanted to cooperate, or perhaps demand more conditions. Instead, this man didn't ask anything.

At this point, Wu Junwan asked, "Isn't Master Chen curious why Qianhai Commercial Association wants to cooperate with Rain-listening Pavilion?"

Lu Chen said with a smile, "Your reason is quite apparent, isn't it? Qianhai Commercial Association is a commercial group from the Great Wu Dynasty and has a very good relationship with the

Princess of Great Wu. Qianhai Commercial Association wants to enter Great Xia and North Country to do business, and it's best to find a partner for cooperation. Otherwise, Qianhai Commercial Association might face the same obstacles Rain-listening Pavilion has encountered in Great Wu."

"Moreover, Qianhai Commercial Association must have already realized that North Country holds great business potential, and the products manufactured by the North Prince Mansion have high commercial value as well, so you too want a share of the profits."

"I'm right, aren't I, Miss Qian?"

With that, Lu Chen's gaze fixed on Wu Junwan's beautiful eyes.