

Es. Benefits 301

Chapter 301: Officially Entering the Age of Firearms_2

“Your subordinate is leaving.”

Following that, Wang Yong turned and left the yard.

Meanwhile, Lu Shuyun continued to test the power of the Piercing Cloud Bow.

Wang Yong’s letter arrived at the Dongfang Family in less than half a month, and Dongfang Yi went straight to Dongfang Longyue’s courtyard after reading it.

At this moment, Dongfang Longyue was holding a small porcelain bottle to her nose, sniffing it repeatedly.

Upon seeing Dongfang Yi enter her courtyard, Dongfang Longyue put down the porcelain bottle and asked, “Father, is there something you need from me?” Dongfang Yi handed over the letter, “Wang Yong has written, saying the Crown Prince plans to first confirm the engagement with you, as for the wedding, there’s no rush, wait until the Crown Prince has married the Crown Princess Consort.”

“Given the Sum Emperor’s personality, he probably won’t grant the Crown Prince a marriage anytime soon.”

Dongfang Longyue took the letter from Dongfang Yi's hand, glanced at it, and smiled slightly before saying, "Father, I plan to take a trip to North Country." Hearing this, Dongfang Yi was startled, then asked, "What are you going to do in North Country?"

The Crown Prince and the North Prince have a very poor relationship, if he finds out you've run off to North Country, he will probably be very angry. Dongfang Longyue said indifferently, "This is exactly how we can let the Crown Prince know that the daughter has completely fallen out with the Dongfang Family, then you can comfortably tell the Crown Prince that all of this was my own decision."

"The main reason for my trip to North Country is for those goods at the North Prince Mansion."

"Surely you've heard about the North Prince Mansion's white liquor?"

Upon hearing this, Dongfang Yi paused, then said, "Of course, now you can't even buy the North Prince Mansion's white liquor in Sufeng City with money." Dongfang Longyue said, "I plan to do business with the North Prince Mansion, transporting their goods to sell in Sufeng City, especially the North Prince Mansion's white liquor."

"The Dongfang Clan is already a commercial family, if the Crown Prince gets angry over this, he will instead fall out with the Dongfang Family. Therefore, I believe that even if the Crown Prince is uncomfortable, he won't say anything." After thinking it over, Dongfang Yi said, "That's true."

"However, once you're in North Country, be as cautious and prudent as possible. After all, we are part of the Aristocratic Family of the South, and in the eyes of the North Prince, we are the Crown Prince's people, he might not welcome people from the South Aristocratic Family into North Country." Dongfang Longyue said, "Don't worry, Father, I know the limits."

At this point, Dongfang Longyue suddenly thought of something and asked, “Father, is there any news about that matter?”

Dongfang Yi sighed, shook his head, and said, “No, I asked your greatgrandfather, and he also said he hasn’t received any news.”

“It’s hard to say whether our generation will be able to wait for it.”

Alright, let’s not talk about this. Since you are going to North Country, start preparing early. I will arrange for a Grandmaster to protect you.”

In the blink of an eye, a month passed.

In the past month, there had been constant strife within several dynasties, but the Great Xia Dynasty suddenly became exceedingly tranquil, as if all internal conflicts had vanished, and the Sum Emperor’s temperament had mellowed a great deal, as though he had completely capitulated to the Aristocratic Family. The main struggle on the Great Xia imperial court now was between the factions of the various Princes and the Crown Prince’s party. The Sum Emperor seemed to have become irrelevant, essentially remaining as a spectator, as if nothing had to do with him.

Lu Chen was in his study organizing recent intelligence. Reviewing the reports delivered by the Brocade Guard, Lu Chen was somewhat bewildered.

What exactly is his father the emperor doing? Not only did he establish Lu Shuyun as the Crown Prince, but he even went on to deregulate the salt industry, which had always been government-run, and lately, he had completely withdrawn from court disputes, as if ready to wash his hands of it all.

Lu Chen knew this was the calm before the storm, but he couldn't quite understand what the Sum Emperor was planning.

Now that every major dynasty had their own internal issues to deal with, it was the perfect opportunity to tackle the Aristocratic Families. Lu Chen couldn't believe that the Sum Emperor had no intentions regarding those Aristocratic Families at such a time.

The Sum Emperor's attitude of apparent decline was clearly an act. What mattered was what he had done while pretending to neglect affairs. According to intelligence gathered by the Brocade Guard, the Sum Emperor seemed not to be busy with any serious matters. He was simply biding his time, waiting for the various princes' factions and the Crown Prince's supporters to fight among themselves. Lu Chen even suspected his imperial father intended to swoop in and reap the benefits once they inflicted serious damage on one another.

While Lu Chen was staring blankly at the reports on the table, the voice of a maid rose at the doorway, "Prince, Commander Qin is seeking an audience." Lu Chen indifferently responded, "Come in."

The next moment, Qin Yushan entered the study, "Your subordinate pays respect to Your Highness, long live the Prince."

Lu Chen looked at the intelligence on the table and nodded slightly as he asked, "Hmm, what brings you here, Commander Qin?"

Qin Yushan answered, "Reporting to Your Highness, the cannons have been made. Moreover, the craftsmen have discovered a material that easily ignites. In the future, the Heavenly Thunder bombs will no longer need to be lit manually. One will only need to pull out the safety plug and strike the bottom to directly ignite the internal fuse."

Upon hearing this, Lu Chen was astounded.

Were the craftsmen of Great Yu so skilled?

They had so quickly created a bomb that did not require manual ignition?

Didn't this mean that the North Country had officially entered the Age of Firearms?

Following that, Lu Chen said, "Prepare the camions and the Thunderous bombs immediately. I want to test them personally."

Seeing Lu Chen's urgency, Qin Yushan took out an envelope with intelligence from his sleeve and said, "Your Highness, here is some more intelligence. Perhaps you would like to look at it first?"

Lu Chen took the intelligence from Qin Yushan's hand, glanced over it after opening it, and then smiled.

"Piercing Cloud Bow? Piercing Cloud Arrow?"

"The names are somewhat interesting."

Saying this, Lu Chen folded the intelligence in his hand and placed it on the table, "With firearms, these types of cold weapons pose no significant threat to the North Country. However, I am more concerned about the materials used to make the Piercing Cloud Bow. Try to procure some of the

bows and arrows.” Qin Yushan said, “These bows and arrows are strictly controlled. Commander Liang is already trying to figure out a way.”

As he said this, Qin Yushan shifted the topic, “Additionally, there’s another matter. On my way here to the North Prince Mansion, the Jinyiwei Guards reported that the eldest daughter of the Dongfang Family recently arrived at Yan County. The Dongfang Family has already reached an engagement agreement with Prince Lu Shuyun not long ago. Dongfang Longyue is considered to be Prince Lu Shuyun’s fiancée, despite not yet being married.” Hearing Qin Yushan’s words, Lu Chen looked at Qin Yushan with a peculiar expression, then he asked, “Commander Qin, why do I feel like you have another purpose for telling me this?”

Qin Yushan quickly said, “Your Highness is mistaken. I only wanted to ask whether Your Highness would want to pay special attention to Dongfang Longyue to prevent her from doing anything that might harm the North Country.”

After thinking for a moment, Lu Chen then said, “Indeed, we should pay special attention to her. Let me know if there’s any news about her.”

“Let’s drop this matter for now. I want to go test the cannons invented by the Mo Brothers.”

Qin Yushan promptly said, “Yes, Your Highness.”

Immediately after, Lu Chen, with Qin Yushan leading the way, went to the important military area to the east of Yan County.

The military area in the east was protected by two layers; the outer layer was guarded by the Black Cavalry and the inner by the Brocade Guard. Not even the ordinary armies of the North Country could enter this military spot, for it was an arsenal, currently the most significant military secret of

the North Country. After Lu Chen entered the arsenal, Mo Xing immediately put down his work to greet him.

“I pay my respects to Your Highness!”

Lu Chen said, “Dispense with the formalities, Mo Xing. I have heard that the cannons have been made?”

Mo Xing replied, “They were made half a month ago, but, to avoid any issues during Your Highness’s test, I’ve made some improvements to the cannons. Moreover, they were enhanced with reference to Your Highness’s Grenade Cannons. In the end, we settled on three types of cannons.”

Hearing Mo Xing’s answer, Lu Chen was already impatient and immediately said, “Bring out those cannons, and let me test them.”

“Please follow me, Your Highness.”

Mo Xing then led Lu Chen to a specialized testing area for the cannons.

In the middle of the forest, there was a barren area full of craters, void of any vegetation. The area was used daily for bomb testing, which prevented any plant growth.

Before long, the Jinyiwei Guards brought several wooden carts pulled by horses to Lu Chen’s presence. As the boxes were opened, the cannons made by Mo Xing and his team appeared before Lu Chen.

Chapter 302: Firearms Beyond Lu Chen's

Expectations_i

Mo Xing and his team produced three types of cannons, one kind with wheels was the red-cloak cannon, one was a mortar, and the last one no longer belonged to the category of cannons, being only the size of a rifle and resembling one more closely.

The red-cloak cannon was very similar to Lu Chen's 122mm howitzer, although not as large and complicated in structure, but from the cylindrical shape of the cannonball, it was clear that this red-cloak cannon was different from the ones in his blueprints.

Lu Chen caressed the muzzle, carefully sizing it up, this cannon was about three meters long, apparently firing cannonballs around 75mm in diameter.

He then lifted the cannon's wheels slightly, easily lifting them with one hand, and estimated the weight to be around three to four hundred kilograms.

This heavy cannon had a rather rough exterior and a thick barrel, obviously thickened due to the insufficient strength of the materials.

In the North Country, which had no industrial foundation whatsoever, creating such a cannon was quite an accomplishment, and Lu Chen wasn't the least bit bothered by the cannon's unsightly appearance.

He squatted down to take another look at the loading port and discovered that the firing principle of this cannon was pretty much the same as his 122mm howitzer, where both operate by triggering the detonator at the base of the cannonball to ignite the fuel inside and launch it.

This...

Wasn't it a bit too advanced?

All he wanted was to make red-cloak cannons.

Traditional red-cloak cannons used a fuse ignited by fire to then launch the cannonball.

The heavy cannons made by Mo Xing and his team could be essentially considered a replica of the howitzer.

It was evident that these craftsmen had almost completely grasped the firing principle of the howitzer,

Lu Chen couldn't help but think to himself, who says ancient people were foolish? Given a howitzer, they were able to create a miniature version, which might be smarter than some modern people.

If he had the same number of people, he definitely wouldn't be able to produce a similar cannon.

Of course, looking similar was one thing, but the key was whether it could actually be fired.

Afterward, Lu Chen picked up a cannonball from the side and discovered it also resembled a scaled-down version of the 122mm howitzer's cannonball.

Then, Lu Chen loaded the cannonball into the chamber and proceeded to fire the cannon at a distant target himself.

Accompanied by a thunderous "boom," the cannonball was fired, quickly followed by another "boom" as it exploded in the distance.

The explosion wasn't as powerful as that of the 122mm howitzer, due to the gunpowder used, but this cannon was basically sufficient for the Martial Arts World.

As long as there were no Grandmaster Martial Artists from the opposing side, carrying this type of heavy cannon, the soldiers of the North Country could essentially overpower any dynastic army, even Grandmasters being of no use.

After trying out the first type, the improved version of the red-cloak cannon, Lu Chen then checked the second type, the mortar.

The basic principle of the mortar was the same as the heavy cannon, using gravity to drop the cannonball, which then triggers the firing pin inside the barrel upon impact.

At that moment, Lu Chen was extremely excited inside, he hadn't expected that by just providing one howitzer for Mo Xing and his team to disassemble, not only did they reproduce an improved version of the red-cloak cannon but also invented a portable mortar.

Lu Chen had never taught Mo Xing and his team how to create a mortar.

Lu Chen didn't test the mortar, he just glanced at the mortar's cannonballs and then shifted his gaze to the so-called "small cannon" Mo Xing and his team had made.

What they called a small cannon, Lu Chen saw as a rifle, only firing steel balls and having a separate detonator, and only being able to load one bullet at a time.

However, this was just the first version of the firearm, so it was normal for it not to be very effective. Moreover, there was no complete industrial base in the world at the moment, so the fact that they could make such a simple firearm was quite impressive.

Even though the firearm wasn't very practical at the moment, compared to those that required manual loading of gunpowder, Mo Xing and his team's firearm was evidently much easier to use. They had included the firing gunpowder in a container, eliminating the need for manual loading, which made it very convenient to carry, and most importantly, the gunpowder was less prone to moisture.

Lu Chen picked up the "small cannon," loaded it with bullets and priming powder, and then personally tested the firelock.

Bang!

As the gunshot sounded, steel pellets propelled by the exploding gunpowder shot out and, the next moment, bore directly into the trunk of a tree dozens of meters away.

The power was quite decent.

If it could be further improved, transforming the steel pellets into pointed bullets, the power could be enhanced even more.

After testing the firelock, Lu Chen turned his head and, pointing at the improved Red Cloth Cannon and the mortar, said to Mo Xing, “Next, we’ll mass-produce these two types of cannons, at least three hundred of each.” Mo Xing asked, “Prince, should we manufacture the small cannons as well?”

The small cannon Mo Xing referred to was naturally the firelock, which he had figured out himself, inspired by the launching principle of the shell-firing cannon. He believed that the cannonballs were too heavy, not nearly as convenient to carry as the small cannon, and moreover, if the small cannon were used on the battlefield, their soldiers would no longer need to carry so many arrows.

Upon hearing Mo Xing’s question, Lu Chen pondered for a moment. Although this was only the first version of the firelock and not yet very handy, their firelocks would surely become more advanced in the future, so it was essential to get the soldiers accustomed to it in advance.

With this thought, Lu Chen said, “Let’s first make a thousand of the small cannons. Oh, and from now on, this small cannon will be renamed—stop calling it a small cannon, call it a firelock.”

Mo Xing was very pleased to hear that Lu Chen wanted to manufacture the small cannon and had specially changed its name. He immediately said, “Yes, Your Highness!”

At that moment, Lu Chen looked at the firelock and asked, “Who designed this firelock?”

Mo Xing replied, “Your Highness, it was designed by this humble one.”

Lu Chen was taken aback for a moment, then smilingly said, “Well then, from now on, this firelock will bear your name. It shall be called the Mo Xing Firelock.”

Excited, Mo Xing said, “Thank you, Your Highness!”

Being able to name a weapon after himself made Mo Xing feel highly valued by Lu Chen. To be esteemed by the Son of Destiny was such an honor.

Lu Chen continued, “Although the first version of the firelock is already usable, it is still not convenient enough. I hope you can further improve it and create an even more user-friendly Mo Xing Firelock.”

Mo Xing said excitedly, “Yes, Your Highness, I will definitely not disappoint your expectations!”

Lu Chen glanced again at the improved Red Cloth Cannon and the mortar, then said, “From now on, this heavy cannon shall be called the Fire God Cannon, and the second type of mortar shall be called the Wind Thunder Cannon.”

Having said this, Lu Chen turned and said, “Let’s end the testing here for today. Hurry up with the production; I want to equip the army with these weapons within a year.”

“Commander Qin, take me to see the place where the cannons are cast.”

“Yes, Your Highness, please follow me.” Qin Yushan then led the way and escorted Lu Chen to inspect the entire armory.

By the time Lu Chen returned to the Prince's Mansion after inspecting the armory, it was already dark.

Lu Chen was delighted today; the firearms had taken shape, and now all he needed to do was wait for these weapons to be mass-produced.

With the deployment of these firearms, coupled with the army's reforms, the soldiers of the North Country would undoubtedly become very powerful in battle. By then, there might be no dynasty in the world that could defeat the North Country.

Thinking of this, Lu Chen was filled with high spirits, full of anticipation for the future.

In the following months, as the new city began construction, Lu Chen was very busy every day. If he wasn't handling government affairs in his study, he was overseeing the construction of the new city. Occasionally, he would also visit the armory to check on the progress of the firearms production.

Lu Chen's three consorts were also showing more each day; in the blink of an eye, it was Mu Zixuan's time to give birth.

Chapter 303: The Birth of the Fourth Child I

North Prince Mansion.

Outside the main courtyard.

The women of Lu Chen waited anxiously at the doorway. Chu Yuqin glanced at Zhou Xiaoxiao and Zhou Youyou, both with prominent bellies, then said, "Xiaoxiao, Youyou, with your own pregnancies, there's no need for you to stand here waiting. Better go back and rest."

Zhou Xiaoxiao said, “Madam Chu, we’re fine.”

No sooner had Zhou Xiaoxiao finished speaking than a pained cry came from within the room.

Hearing Mu Zixuan’s cries, Chu Yuqin quickly turned to a female guard at the courtyard door and asked, “Has the Prince not returned yet?”

Though Mu Zixuan could give birth with the help of a midwife, childbirth was a very painful process. Chu Yuqin had already sent someone to notify Lu Chen, urging him to come back quickly and use his Immortal Technique to alleviate Mu Zixuan’s pain.

The female guard at the door replied, “Madam Chu, the Prince has gone to the new city. I have sent a Brocade Guard to inform him, and he should be back soon.”

At this, Chu Yuqin sighed. Without Lu Chen, Mu Zixuan had no choice but to endure the pain.

They, who did not know Immortal Technique, could only stand outside and wait helplessly.

At this moment, Mu Zixuan’s heartrending screams came from the birthing room again.

However, just then, a tall and majestic figure appeared at the entrance of the courtyard.

Seeing Lu Chen’s return, the people outside the birthing room quickly made way.

Chu Yuqin said anxiously, “Chen’er, go in quickly and check on Zixuan. She’s giving birth.”

Lu Chen, wearing a smile, said, “Mm, alright.”

There was no urgency on Lu Chen’s face; with his return, Mu Zixuan would be fundamentally safe.

In ancient times, childbirth was risky for women, with frequent occurrences of childbirth complications leading to both mother and child perishing. But in the Prince’s Mansion, with Lu Chen present, his wives and concubines were safe from such complications.

Lu Chen strode into the birthing room, where Mu Zixuan lay on the bed, drenched in sweat, her complexion deathly pale, with her wet hair clinging together on her forehead.

Seeing Lu Chen enter, a smile surfaced on Mu Zixuan's pale face. With this man's return, nothing was a problem.

Lu Chen walked over to the bed, took Mu Zixuan's hand, and immediately started to use the Rejuvenating Skill to take away her pain.

Mu Zixuan wanted to speak, but as the child had not yet been born, she needed to focus her strength. She swallowed her words before they could leave her mouth.

Lu Chen then infused Mu Zixuan with Spiritual Power, which, once inside her, separated the baby from her body. The baby was enveloped in a cocoon of energy, its skin becoming smooth, and it slipped out effortlessly.

The next moment, the sound of the baby's crying filled the birthing room.

The midwives immediately began to take care of the newborn.

Lu Chen chuckled to himself, finally understanding why the system had rewarded him with the Rejuvenating Skill—its greatest use was aiding women in childbirth.

After the child's birth, Lu Chen continued using the Rejuvenating Skill to treat Mu Zixuan until she regained her strength and her complexion became rosy.

Now, Mu Zixuan gazed into Lu Chen's eyes and said, "Prince, thank you."

Hearing this, Lu Chen smiled slightly, raised his hand to caress her forehead, and brushed aside the messy strands of hair.

"We are husband and wife; there's no need for such formalities."

"Let's take a look at the child instead."

By this time, the midwives had finished caring for the baby. Hearing Lu Chen's words, one of them immediately brought the child over.

Lu Chen sat on the bed, laid the baby down, and looked him over carefully.

It was a boy.

And a hefty one at that, weighing at least ten pounds.

Mu Zixuan also slowly sat up and looked down at the male infant on the bed.

"Prince, the child has no name yet. Give him a name," she said.

Lu Chen was about to speak when suddenly the system's voice resounded in his mind.

[Congratulations to the host for gaining an heir, rewarded with one Grandmaster Literature Saint and five thousand talents of Civil Officials.]

Lu Chen paused.

His guess was right.

Months before, he had pondered whether not only his children rested in their mothers' wombs but also the talents he desired. It turned out the system did indeed reward him with civil officials.

The governance of North Country desperately needed talent.

In recent months, Lu Chen had been overwhelmingly busy, handling everything personally to the point of frustration.

By nature inclined towards enjoyment, he suddenly found himself bogged down with numerous responsibilities, with his only leisure being the cultivation of relationships with his women in the inner court. Over time, even that grew tedious.

Now, with the addition of five thousand talented civil officials, there were finally others to handle affairs of state, freeing him from having to attend to everything personally.

Moreover, the talents rewarded by the system were one hundred percent loyal, so he had no worries of backstabbing and intrigue. As for the possibility of officials vying with one another, that didn't concern him much.

The stone that had hung heavy in Lu Chen's heart for nearly a year finally fell.

Returning to the present, Lu Chen, gazing at the infant on the bed, smiled and said, "How about we call him Lu Ziming?"

At that moment, Chu Yuqin and the other women entered the birthing room. Thanks to Lu Chen's treatment, Mu Zixuan had nearly recovered and did not need to rest like other women after childbirth.

Chapter 304: The Birth of the Fourth Child_2

Hearing Lu Chen's words, the baby who had been moving restlessly on the bed gradually calmed down, and a smile seemed to appear on his small face.

Mu Zixuan smiled and said, "Prince, it seems that Ming'er really likes the name you picked for him."

Lu Chen lifted his hand and gently touched Lu Ziming's small face, smiling as he said, "Ziming, you have really helped daddy a great deal."

Seeing this harmonious scene, Yelv Nanyan couldn't help but touch her own belly. She also wanted to have a child with Lu Chen, but nearly a year had passed, and there was still no response from her belly. She began to wonder if she was too old and had lost the ability to conceive.

At this thought, Yelv Nanyan sighed softly in her heart.

Lu Chen stayed in the delivery room for about two hours. Once Mu Zixuan had fully recovered both physically and mentally, he then left the delivery room and went to his study.

Entering the study, Lu Chen opened the system panel again to check where the talents he needed were located.

[Literature Saint Grandmaster implanted identity: Universal Academy's headmaster Zhuge Zhongguang, who has already received your information. He is currently in the Great Wu Dynasty and will soon head to Da Yue. Should you require his immediate presence in the North Country, host can issue a direct command once.]

[Five thousand civil officials' talents implanted identity: They are currently tutors and students at the Universal Academy in the Great Qian Dynasty. If their immediate presence in the North Country is needed, the host can issue a direct command once.]

Seeing the system interface, Lu Chen was momentarily stunned.

Universal Academy?

As someone who had transmigrated to this world since childhood, Lu Chen was naturally aware of this academy's name. It was said that the students of this academy harbored very lofty ideals, aiming for a world of great unity, which put them at odds with the typical ruling class.

Although the Universal Academy was within the borders of Great Qian, the royal family of the Great Qian Dynasty had always had reservations about it and had wanted them to leave the dynasty for good. If not for a Grandmaster Literature Saint at the academy, the royal family of the Great Qian Dynasty would've probably dissolved it with military force long ago.

The Universal Academy certainly had many talents, and in recent years, they had also engaged in politics, but no ruling class of any dynasty favored them. Even if they held official positions, they wouldn't hold significant ones.

Those with the notion of "a world of great unity" were considered outliers in the current world, unlikely to be accepted by rulers.

If the world achieved such unity, what would sustain the ruling class's power? Therefore, the status of the Universal Academy in this world has always been somewhat awkward.

Despite the abundance of talents in the Universal Academy, they were not put to significant use, which led to a decline in popularity over the years. There were fewer and fewer people willing to go there to study.

After entering the Universal Academy, the students held ideologies that contradicted those of the ruling class. It was impossible for those in power to let them hold office; hence, they were not put to significant use. All their learning amounted to naught.

Reflecting on his understanding of the Universal Academy, Lu Chen's lips curved slightly upward.

A world of great unity...

This ideal was indeed too advanced for its time; no wonder the ruling class was unwilling to let the students of the Universal Academy become officials.

To be honest, if these students of the Universal Academy were not arranged by the system, Lu Chen, as the seignior of a feudal state, would not want to employ these literati whose heads were full of visions of a world of great unity.

In an era with such low productivity, how could one achieve a world of great unity?

To achieve such a world would mean that the ruling class must cede their interests and share their resources with the common people. How then could the ruling class enjoy life?

Lu Chen himself was a beneficiary of the status quo. He could never uphold the idea of a world of great unity.

Yet, he still needed officials who would fight for the interests of the common people. Only by having officials serve them would the people of the North Country trust him as their North Prince, and his rule would be more secure.

Thus, while to other ruling classes the people of the Universal Academy might be a cancer, to Lu Chen, they were a treasure.

With this in mind, Lu Chen immediately said to the system, “Send out the summoning order, have them relocate to the North Country within half a year.”

As Lu Chen’s words fell, the system’s notification sounded once more.

[The summoning order has been issued, and all members of the Universal Academy have received your command.]

Meanwhile.

In a tavern within the Great Wu Dynasty.

A woman dressed in a purple gown with a stunningly beautiful countenance was seated at a table, and facing her was a white-haired, elderly man.

Although the old man’s hair and beard were completely white, he appeared to be very spirited and did not look like someone who is one hundred fifty years old at all.

At this time, the woman spoke, “Grandmaster Zhuge, since the Great Qian Dynasty cannot accommodate you, why not move the Universal Academy to the Great Wu Dynasty?”

“The doors of the Great Wu Dynasty are always open to the Universal Academy.”

Hearing Wu Junwan’s words, Zhuge Zhongguang smiled faintly, stroking his snow-white beard.

How could Zhuge Zhongguang not know what Wu Junwan was plotting? Wu Junwan had no interest in the Universal Academy; what she truly wanted was to use it to garner the support of him, the Literature Saint and Grandmaster.

Zhuce Zhongguang then replied, “I appreciate Princess Junwan’s kindness, and

I take it to heart. However, the Universal Academy advocates peace, and the Great Wu Dynasty wages war every year, which is inconsistent with the Academy’s ideology.”

“If the Universal Academy were to move to the Great Wu Dynasty, there could be conflicts between the scholars of the Academy and some people of the Great Wu due to ideological disagreements.”

Seeing Zhuge Zhongguang’s polite refusal, Wu Junwan was still somewhat unreconciled and continued, “Grandmaster Zhuge, as far as I know, the situation at the Universal Academy is quite bad at the moment. There are rumors in the Great Qian Dynasty that the Academy is not abiding by rituals and respect for the Rites, leading to heavenly calamities, and the common people are all calling for its abolition.”

“If the Universal Academy does not move out of the Great Qian Dynasty, it will eventually be abolished one day. Why does Grandmaster Zhuge insist on staying in the Great Qian Dynasty?”

Upon hearing these words, Zhuge Zhongguang’s face still bore a smile. As he was about to speak, suddenly, his mind blanked, and he paused as if he had remembered something important.

Wu Junwan naturally noticed the change in Zhuge Zhongguang’s expression and tentatively asked, “Grandmaster Zhuge?”

Zhuce Zhongguang quickly regained his composure and once again revealed a benevolent smile, and this time, his smile was even more pronounced, indicating he had indeed recalled something pleasant.

“Again, I thank the princess for her invitation, but I have made up my mind and will not be leaving the Great Qian Dynasty for the time being. As for whether the Universal Academy will move out of the Great Qian in the future, that is a matter for another time.”

Having said this, Zhuge Zhongguang stood up and continued, “Princess Junwan, I will now be heading to the Da Yue Dynasty and will no longer delay in the Great Wu.”

Upon hearing this, Wu Junwan immediately said, “In that case, I shall not keep you any longer. Safe travels, Grandmaster Zhuge!”

Afterwards, Zhuge Zhongguang left the tavern and led the disciples of the

Universal Academy straight to the Da Yue Dynasty.

Watching the hurried carriage downstairs, Wu Junwan furrowed her brow slightly.

She indeed wanted the Universal Academy to move to the Great Wu Dynasty for the sake of winning over Zhuge Zhongguang, the Literature Saint and Grandmaster, but it seemed that he was unlikely to come to the Great Wu Dynasty.

With this in mind, Wu Junwan sighed and said, “It seems that Zhuge Zhongguang has no interest in the Great Wu at all.”

Hearing Wu Junwan’s words, her protector Pei Hong reminded her from behind, “Your Highness, Zhuge Zhongguang broke through to the Grandmaster Realm decades ago, and he must be close to reaching the Heavenly Human Realm by now. A powerhouse like him tends to have a stubborn personality and is not so easily swayed.”

Wu Junwan calmly said, “That’s true.”

“Well, it’s not necessarily a good thing for the Universal Academy to move to

the Great Wu anyway. If we can’t win them over, then so be it.”

“He just mentioned going to the Da Yue Dynasty, from the look of it, he probably plans to move the Universal Academy there. I have a good relationship with the Yue Emperor. If the Universal Academy really moves to the Da Yue, I still might have a chance to win him over in the future.”

With these thoughts, Wu Junwan’s mood improved somewhat.

Chapter 305: Wang Qingci: The Prince has Changed_i

Ever since Mu Zixuan gave birth to her child, Lu Chen has hardly ventured outside for a while, neither inspecting the new city’s construction nor visiting the armory, spending most of his time in the Prince’s Mansion handling state affairs.

The construction of the new city was proceeding methodically, and the first batch of weapons produced by the armory was about to be completed. Lu Chen was mainly waiting for the arrival of the Grandmaster Zhuge Zhongguang.

Of course, in addition to Zhuge Zhongguang, Lu Chen was also waiting for the children in the bellies of the two Xiaozhou to be born; he was eager to find out what kind of surprises these two children could bring him.

Early morning.

Lu Chen came out from Yelv Nanyan's room with a beaming face, his whole being feeling very delighted after spending the previous night cultivating affections with Yelv Nanyan.

After leaving the Spring Sound Court, Lu Chen planned to eat breakfast in the main courtyard first, but at that moment, a maid came walking towards him.

"This servant pays her respects to the Prince, long live the Prince!"

Lu Chen nodded slightly, intending to continue toward the main courtyard, but the maid did not step aside and instead said, "Prince, Commander Qin is looking for you."

"He's waiting for you in the study."

Upon hearing this, Lu Chen was momentarily startled.

Qin Yushan was looking for him so early in the morning; could it be some important intelligence?

Lu Chen then skipped breakfast and went straight to the study to see what Qin Yushan needed.

By the time Lu Chen arrived at the courtyard of the study, he found that not only Qin Yushan but also Wang Qingci was standing at the entrance of the study.

Seeing Lu Chen's arrival, Qin Yushan immediately performed a greeting, saying, "I pay my respects to the Prince, long live the Prince."

Lu Chen nodded, then directly walked into the study, saying as he went, "Come in."

Following closely behind, Qin Yushan and Wang Qingci entered the study. Lu Chen then asked, “Commander Qin, what brings you to seek me out so early in the morning?”

Qin Yushan took out a piece of intelligence from his sleeve and placed it on the desk, “Prince, there’s movement in the Capital city!”

Hearing this, Lu Chen’s mind jolted.

In recent months, he had been waiting for his father, the Sum Emperor, to act against those Aristocratic Families. Only if turmoil arose in Great Xia could the court’s attention be completely diverted, allowing him to annex the North Land into the North Country.

If he were to annex the North Land into the North Country now, it would inevitably attract the court’s scrutiny, which would be highly disadvantageous for him.

However, after waiting several months, there had been no movement from the Capital city, making Lu Chen doubt whether his father had truly given up on striking down those Aristocratic Families.

Both Great Wu and Great Qian had already descended into internal strife, and yet after such a long delay without action, if he didn’t promptly eliminate those Ancient Families within the Great Xia Dynasty, Great Xia would miss a golden opportunity once Great Wu and Great Qian recovered their strengths.

After several months, there was finally some activity.

Lu Chen immediately opened the intelligence on the table and read it earnestly.

Having read the intelligence on the desk, a slight smile appeared on Lu Chen’s face; it seemed that Great Xia’s civil war was about to erupt.

A few days ago, the Sum Emperor had purged some Aristocratic Family officials from the court and began to mobilize troops on a large scale, claiming that there was an epidemic in the Great Qian Dynasty to the South. He planned to send troops southward to guard the southern border, to prevent the contagion from spreading into the Great Xia Dynasty.

Even a fool could see this was an excuse.

First, he purged some officials from the South's Aristocratic Families, then mobilized a large army southward—this was obviously aimed at the Aristocratic Families of the South.

It was true that the Great Qian Dynasty was experiencing an epidemic, but even with the outbreak, with Seigniors guarding the borders, it would not be so easy for the epidemic to spread into Great Xia.

Although the military force in a Seignior's domain was limited, at least each domain had fifty thousand soldiers. Couldn't fifty thousand soldiers defend a border? The Great Qian Dynasty was not waging war, so the soldiers of the domain merely needed to prevent the population infected with the epidemic from fleeing to Great Xia.

This minor matter definitely didn't necessitate the court deploying a large army southward; the Sum Emperor's intentions were all too obvious.

Lu Chen now found his father quite baffling.

He had previously refrained from acting, and instead of acting, he had established Lu Shuyun, that fellow, as the Crown Prince. Later, he even opened up the management rights to the salt industry, causing the salt prices within Great Xia to continue to rise, fattening up those salt-producing Aristocratic Families of the South.

After such a long time, he's now remembered to purge the Aristocratic Families, and with such overt moves.

Even the dimmest Aristocratic Families from the South could guess that the Sum Emperor was planning to send troops southward to deal with them, could they not?

Considering the current situation, it probably wouldn't be long before news of the Aristocratic Families' rebellion would arrive.

After reviewing the intelligence in hand, Lu Chen said, "Send a message back to Commander Liang, telling him to keep a close eye on the movements of the Aristocratic Families in the South."

"Yes, Prince."

“Prince, if there are no other matters, then your subordinate will take leave.”

With Wang Qingci still standing by, Qin Yushan certainly knew how to take his leave.

Lu Chen nodded and said, “Alright, go attend to your duties.”

As soon as the words fell, Qin Yushan turned and left the study.

After Qin Yushan’s departure, Lu Chen looked up at Wang Qingci standing before him.

Thanks to Lu Chen’s nurturing over time, Wang Qingci’s figure had become even more enchanting, and her whole demeanor even more seductive.

Lu Chen smiled and asked, “Mr. Wang, what brings you to seek me out so early in the morning?”

Wang Qingci took out a piece of intelligence and placed it on Lu Chen’s desk, speaking lightly, “Prince, there is a rumor that the Grandmaster from Universal Academy has gone to the Da Yue Dynasty, and has privately met with the Yue Emperor about something. It seems they might be planning to relocate Universal Academy to the Da Yue Dynasty.”

Chapter 306: Wang Qingci: The Prince has Changed_2

Hearing this, Lu Chen gave a faint smile. He picked up the intelligence report from the desk and glanced over it.

Clearly, Zhuge Zhongguang’s visit to the Da Yue Dynasty was merely a smokescreen; his real objective was North Country.

After all, with so many students at Universal Academy, it was impossible to move to North Country all at once; the process would require some time.

As for the meeting between Zhuge Zhongguang and the Yue Emperor, this was not at all surprising. After all, Zhuge Zhongguang was a Literature Saint Grandmaster, and a grandmaster would be respected in any dynasty.

It was highly likely that the Yue Emperor wanted to win over Zhuge Zhongguang, to have him join the Da Yue Dynasty, which is why he would meet with Zhuge in secret.

However, unfortunately for the Yue Emperor, Zhuge Zhongguang would never join the Da Yue Dynasty.

At this moment, Wang Qingci reminded, "Recently, the situation for Universal Academy in the Great Qian Dynasty has been poor. Some say that the reason the Great Qian Dynasty is suffering from the plague is because the students from Universal Academy do not abide by rituals, nor respect gods and spirits; hence, the heavens have sent down the plague as a punishment for the Great Qian Dynasty."

"As the head of Universal Academy, Zhuge Zhongguang visiting other dynasties at this time is likely in search of a new location for the academy. Prince, don't you think this is an opportunity?"

Wang Qingci could also see what North Country was lacking the most right now.

For the past few months, Lu Chen hardly engaged in that kind of activity with her inside the study; most of the time, it was because Lu Chen was too busy.

North Country did not have that many officials, and many matters required Lu Chen's personal attention, which led to him being in a state of high-intensity work upon entering the study, leaving him no time to seek relaxation with Wang Qingci.

It used to be Lu Chen who took care of Wang Qingci in the study, but ever since Lu Chen's workload increased, it had been Wang Qingci who went back to the inner court by herself, luring Lu Chen to her room on his way to Spring Sound Court at night.

Not cultivating feelings with the Young Prince for a long time, Wang Qingci would pine for him, so she would occasionally return to the inner court to find Lu Chen for relief. Although every time she returned, she would wake up the next day with her head in a fog, it wasn't too much of a problem as long as it wasn't a daily occurrence.

What Wang Qingci was thinking now was that, since Universal Academy was so unpopular, why not take advantage of this opportunity to attract Universal Academy to North Country?

Putting aside the fact that Universal Academy's students were all fit to be officials, having Zhuge Zhongguang, a Literature Saint Grandmaster, alone was worth Lu Chen welcoming the entire Universal Academy.

With Grandmaster Zhuge Zhongguang, North Country's deterrence would grow significantly, and even if North Country wanted to become independent in the future, the court would not dare to act rashly.

So far, no feudal state of a Prince in the Great Xia Dynasty had a Grandmaster. Secretly, perhaps, but at least not publicly.

North Country already had Lu Chen, a Grandmaster; with another grandmaster, that would be two Grandmasters. A feudal state with two Grandmasters could completely disregard the imperial court's commands.

Of course, this was just Wang Qingci's personal idea. She also knew that those scholars from Universal Academy were filled with impractical ideas in their heads, so it remained to be seen whether Lu Chen, the ruler, would be willing to accept these scholars.

After all, no ruler so far had been willing to embrace scholars filled with the ideology of a great unity.

After hearing what Wang Qingci said, Lu Chen smiled and then asked, "Opportunity? What opportunity?"

"In your view, Qingci, do you think the scholars from Universal Academy are of great use to North Country?"

Hearing Lu Chen say this, Wang Qingci thought he looked down on the scholars from Universal Academy like other rulers and replied, "Prince, although those scholars are filled with unrealistic ideas, their principles are good for the common people. If the students from Universal Academy could come to North Country to serve as officials, I believe they would wholeheartedly work for the people."

"If the officials work wholeheartedly for the people, the people will surely credit their achievements to you. This would increase the people's trust in North Prince Mansion and consolidate your rule."

Having listened to Wang Qingci's words, Lu Chen smiled and then asked, "Have you not considered that if these people all come to North Country, they might one day sideline me, the Prince, and decide everything in North Country, or even demand that I hand over the properties of North Prince Mansion?"

This...

Wang Qingci thought about it; if it were those people from Universal Academy, they might indeed try to have the ruling class surrender their benefits to the common folk.

So, these people were indeed a threat to Prince Lu Chen, and it was not surprising that he did not want them.

Then Wang Qingci said, "The Prince is right, I was being fanciful."

Just when Wang Qingci thought Lu Chen had no interest in Universal Academy, Lu Chen suddenly said, "No, you were not being fanciful. If it were an ordinary Prince, indeed he would not want the scholars from Universal Academy, nor would he worry about those people coming to his feudal state and sidelining him."

"But I am different from other Princes."

Upon hearing this, Wang Qingci was taken aback, then she asked, "Does the Prince mean to attract Zhuge Zhongguang and the students from Universal Academy?"

Chapter 307: Wang Qingci: The Prince has Changed_3

"Recruitment?" Lu Chen smiled lightly.

"You're thinking too much, I have no intention of recruiting them."

This...

If Lu Chen isn't going to recruit them, how could they possibly come to North Country? It was clear that Lu Chen was still not very interested in Universal Academy.

It made sense, after all. Lu Chen was the supreme ruler of North Country. Although he said he wouldn't be too opposed to them, deep down he surely wasn't very interested in the scholars from Universal Academy.

Just as Wang Qingci was thinking this, Lu Chen suddenly said, "Universal Academy is already mine; there is no need for me to recruit them."

What?

Upon hearing Lu Chen's words, Wang Qingci was completely stunned. She seriously wondered if there was something wrong with her ears, causing her to hallucinate.

After recovering her wits, Wang Qingci immediately asked, "Your Highness, you aren't joking with me, are you? Universal Academy is yours?"

Lu Chen asked with a smile, "What, are you surprised?"

"This slave..."

Wang Qingci hesitated, lost for words. This was no longer a matter of being surprised or not.

Universal Academy was located within the Great Qian Dynasty, and the whole academy belonged to Lu Chen?

As far as she knew, Universal Academy's history seemed to precede Lu Chen's age by quite a bit, didn't it? Universal Academy had been around for decades, founded by Zhuge Zhongguang in his youth. How could it now all belong to Lu Chen?

Curious, Wang Qingci inquired, "Your Highness, is Zhuge Zhongguang also one of your people?"

Lu Chen replied, "Naturally."

"His trip to the Da Yue Dynasty wasn't to pledge allegiance to them but to come to North Country."

“In a few days, Zhuge Zhongguang will arrive in Yan County.”

This...

Although it seemed unbelievable, Wang Qingci quickly came to accept this shocking news. After all, she was dealing with Lu Chen, a miraculous man who had broken through to the Grandmaster Realm at the mere age of seventeen. Nothing seemed impossible with him.

After thinking for a moment, Wang Qingci then said, “Since Universal Academy is under your influence, this slave will no longer pay attention to its affairs.”

“No, you should still keep a close eye on Universal Academy’s situation. Universal Academy is still within Great Qian’s borders and hasn’t moved to North Country yet. If something happens to Universal Academy, Rain- Listening Pavilion can provide appropriate assistance from the shadows.”

Wang Qingci said, “This slave understands. If there’s nothing else, I shall take my leave now.”

“Yes, go ahead. You have things to do.”

As his voice faded, Lu Chen lowered his head and picked up the intelligence report that Qin Yushan had brought earlier, reading it carefully.

Seeing this, Wang Qingci pursed her cherry lips. Lu Chen’s recent changes were indeed significant. If it had been before, he would have surely reprimanded her in the study. But now, Lu Chen didn’t scold her in the study anymore, making her feel quite uncomfortable.

With a soft sigh, Wang Qingci felt that the Young Prince was becoming too serious, which wasn’t necessarily a good thing.

Just as Wang Qingci was feeling sentimental, Lu Chen noticed that she did not leave the study immediately. He looked up at her and asked curiously, “What’s wrong? Do you have something else on your mind?”

Wang Qingci quickly responded, “No... nothing, this slave is leaving now.”

With that, she turned around and left the study.

Wang Qingci thought to herself, the absurd things Lu Chen had done in the past were due to his youth, being only sixteen or seventeen years old.

As Lu Chen grew older, his temperament would become more mature. The mature Lu Chen might not do those absurd things anymore.

For some reason, she didn't want Lu Chen to grow up. In the past, she could act like an older sister in front of him, then provoke him, spurring him to give her a good punishment.

But in the future, it likely wouldn't be the same. Once a person matures, their thoughts change as well. If she continued to tease Lu Chen like before, it might not excite him but instead could make him dislike her.

The thought made Wang Qingci feel extremely dejected.

She had realized that this day would come, but she hadn't expected it to come so quickly. Within a year's time, there had been such a great change in Lu Chen, becoming so mature, so manly.

She still preferred the Young Prince who would carelessly lay hands on her, always thinking about treating her roughly.

The more Wang Qingci thought about it, the more suffocated she felt.

Lu Chen also sensed something was off with Wang Qingci.

He always felt that Wang Qingci had something on her mind.

Lu Chen then accessed Wang Qingci's personal profile.

[Name: Wang Qingci]

[Status: The North Prince's favorite female slave, the North Prince's concubine, Tower Master of the Rain-Listening Pavilion, Half-step Grandmaster. She has noticed that the North Prince has changed recently; he has become more serious, mature, and no longer treats her as he used to, which makes her feel very despondent, feeling that the North Prince is tired of playing with his female slave and might abandon her at any moment.]

[Rating: 95]

[Favorability: 100]

This-

Seeing Wang Qingci's latest profile, Lu Chen was somewhat speechless.

Indeed, he hadn't been treating Wang Qingci in the same way lately. One reason was that he was so occupied with endless affairs of state that he hardly had any thoughts about women when he was in his study, so whenever Wang Qingci came to the study, he talked about business.

Despite rarely engaging in such acts with Wang Qingci in the study, he would still visit her room occasionally at night and role-play with her.

So Wang Qingci thought he had changed? And even felt despondent about it?

Could it be that, in Wang Qingci's mind, his previous way of treating her indicated care, and now that he had suddenly become so serious, it meant he no longer liked her?

Heh...

This M...

Chapter 308: This Servant Will Definitely Cooperate with the Prince's Inspection !

Just as Wang Qingci was about to step over the threshold of the study, Lu Chen suddenly spoke, "By the way, something just occurred to me."

Upon hearing this, Wang Qingci paused, halted her steps, and turned to look at Lu Chen, “Does the Prince have any other matters?”

Lu Chen didn’t immediately answer; instead, he waved his hand, and the study door closed directly.

Wang Qingci was slightly stunned.

In her view, Lu Chen had become more mature, and she believed he would no longer do the things he used to do in the study. The sudden closure of the door by Lu Chen left her bewildered, unclear about what Lu Chen had in mind.

At that moment, Lu Chen said, “Mr. Wang, I’ve noticed that you seem to have some opinions about me recently.”

At these words, Wang Qingci was taken aback once more.

Opinions?

What opinions could she have?

Dare she have any opinions?

Without delay, Wang Qingci replied, “Prince, what do you mean by that? How could I possibly have any opinions against you?”

With a smile, Lu Chen said, “No opinions? If you had no opinions of me, why would you sneakily meet with someone from the Qianhai Commercial Association in private?”

At this, Wang Qingci immediately became flustered.

Indeed, she had met privately with someone from the Qianhai Commercial Association, who wanted to win her over, but she had rejected them. In her view, it was a trivial matter, so she hadn’t reported it to Lu Chen yet.

Unexpectedly, Lu Chen already knew about it.

Now there was trouble.

If she had reported to Lu Chen in advance, perhaps he wouldn't have given it much thought, but if Lu Chen discovered on his own that she had been in contact with the Qianhai Commercial Association, there was a real possibility he might misunderstand her.

Rushing to explain, Wang Qingci said, "Prince, my private meeting with the president of the Qianhai Commercial Association was for discussing business, and I haven't done anything to betray the North Prince Mansion or Your Highness."

Internally panicking, Wang Qingci was afraid of being abandoned by Lu Chen. And now he brought up this matter, could it be that he was about to completely discard her, his female slave?

While Wang Qingci pondered, Lu Chen spoke, "Discussing business? I somehow find that hard to believe. According to the Brocade Guard's report, you left the Rain-listening Pavilion quietly at dusk without anyone accompanying you. Would you be so cautious in a mere business negotiation?"

"Mr. Wang, it seems you're not telling the truth."

Wang Qingci's face turned deathly pale, and she hurriedly said, "Prince, the reason I did this was to mislead the president of the Qianhai Commercial Association. The president wanted to recruit me, and I was planning to pretend to be swayed, then extract some information. It's not that I wanted to hide it from you, Prince; it's just that I hadn't yet obtained any valuable information."

"And besides, this incident happened just yesterday, so I..."

As Wang Qingci tried to explain further, Lu Chen interrupted indifferently, "Enough, I do not wish to hear any explanations. It seems Mr. Wang has grown complacent, meeting men in secret is bad enough, but the fact that you did so alone and stealthily, shows you completely disregard me."

"Unless you are severely taught a lesson, you probably won't learn. Come here."

As he spoke, Lu Chen lifted his palm, and the next moment, a force promptly drew Wang Qingci into his embrace.

Lu Chen wrapped his arms around Wang Qingci's waist and pressed her onto the desk, and as she turned her head about to offer an explanation, she heard the sound of tearing, and then her red lips were sealed.

"Mmmph mmmph..."

In that instant, a mixture of complex emotions intertwined in Wang Qingci's heart—fear, conflict, shame, surprise, excitement, and worry...

In such a state, Wang Qingci's entire body became incredibly hot, offering Lu Chen a completely different sensation.

Lin Wanyun was on patrol early in the morning when she passed by the study and heard some noises inside.

"Say it, do you desire to betray me by meeting men alone?"

"Yingyingying, this... this slave... won't dare again..."

"Won't dare again? Does that mean you actually had such thoughts to begin with? Hinh... You're quite bold!"

"Oh no, this... this slave absolutely didn't entertain such thoughts, alive I am Your Highness's person, and in death I'll be Your Highness's ghost..."

"I don't believe your words, I won't let you off until I've punished you thoroughly today."

"Prince... Your Highness, spare my life, I realize my mistake..."

Hearing the conversation coming from within the study, Lin Wanyun stood perplexed.

What was Lu Chen doing in the study so early in the morning?

The voice sounded like it belonged to that Wang woman who had come back.

Thinking of that Wang woman, Lin Wanyun frowned.

There was a time when Lu Chen would daily visit Chen Wanrong's quarters in the evening to listen to her play the zither, but then he suddenly stopped.

To this day, it's been almost two months since Lu Chen last visited Chen Wanrong's quarters for her music, and just when the Love Worm was prepared, Lu Chen stopped coming, which once again foiled their opportunity to implant the Love Worm in him.

Although it's possible to directly affect Lu Chen with a worm, both being in the inner courtyard and needing only to get close to him, the Love Worm is somewhat unique. It won't affect Lu Chen unless he harbors affections for Chen Wanrong.

If Lu Chen doesn't have feelings for Chen Wanrong, then the Love Worm will be ineffectual.

Chapter 309: This Servant Will Definitely Cooperate with the Prince's Inspection_2

The reason they hesitated for a few more months before daring to implant the Love Worm in Lu Chen was precisely due to Lu Chen's sudden absence from the musical gatherings, which left Chen Wanrong uncertain whether Lu Chen had truly fallen in love with her or not.

If Lu Chen had really fallen for her, it wouldn't make sense for him to suddenly stop attending her music sessions for over two months.

Lin Wanyun frowned upon hearing Wang Qingci's voice primarily because she felt Wang Qingci had diverted Lu Chen's attention away from herself.

Lu Chen's original method of relaxation was listening to Chen Wanrong play the qin, but lately, his way of unwinding had turned to doing that sort of thing with a woman in the bedroom. Lin Wanyun had heard sounds coming from Wang Qingci's room several times.

Lin Wanyun could tell that Lu Chen had a particular fondness for Wang Qingci, whom he treated like a so-called female slave. Almost every time the two of them were together, they would spend a long time without parting.

Thinking this, Lin Wanyun felt that this situation could not continue. That Wang surnamed woman was too annoying, always monopolizing Lu Chen's time. Now, she even prevented Lu Chen from visiting the Palace Master to listen to the Palace Master play music. A plan was needed to redirect Lu Chen's gaze back to the Palace Master.

After what seemed like an eternity, the noise inside the study gradually ceased. Lu Chen sat in the chair with Wang Qingci straddling his legs, embracing his neck.

At that moment, Lu Chen said with a smile, "Mr. Wang, now do you realize what kind of consequences betrayal brings?"

Hearing this, Wang Qingci chuckled and then spoke in a coquettish tone, "The Prince is really mean, always bullying me. I really thought the Prince was angry with me."

By this time, Wang Qingci had basically come to understand that Lu Chen had never doubted her, nor did he believe that she had betrayed him. Lu Chen had simply used it as an excuse to unnerve her and then confront her.

Just when she was about to leave the study earlier, she had thought that Lu Chen had changed, become more serious and mature.

Now, it appeared that the Young Prince hadn't changed one bit; it was just that there might have been no time to deal with her before.

At this thought, for some reason, a subtle, uncontrollable smile appeared on Wang Qingci's lips.

Not changing was good! She wished this Young Prince would always stay mischievously the same, always confronting her.

Wang Qingci continued, "Prince, how did you know I met with the head of Qianhai Commercial Association alone? Could it be that you do not trust me and ordered the Brocade Guard to follow me?"

Lu Chen said, "That's not the case. However, the Qianhai Commercial Association has been a bit too active in Yan County lately, and I worried they might act against Yan County's interests. So, I had the Brocade Guard keep an eye on them, especially their chairman Qian Dahai."

"I never expected that yesterday, the Brocade Guard who was watching Qian Dahai would spot you meeting with him alone."

Wang Qingci said, "So, that's how it was. I thought the Prince had stopped trusting me."

Lu Chen breathed into Wang Qingci's ear and said in a deep voice, "Darling, your body and soul have long been branded with my mark. How could I possibly not trust you?"

Upon hearing this, Wang Qingci felt her whole body involuntarily shudder, and goosebumps rose all over her skin. Shifting the subject, she said, "Recently, that Qian Dahai has sent me quite a few gifts. He is desperately trying to win me over, and I've noticed he seems to be very interested in North Prince Mansion's affairs, constantly trying to glean information about it."

"Yesterday, he even praised you in my presence, calling you a virtuous prince, friendly to merchants. He wants to move the entire Qian Family to North Country and then stay in North Country for good after that."

"I wasn't sure if he was testing my relationship with North Prince Mansion with those words. Since I haven't obtained any useful information, I haven't thought to report this matter. But it turns out the Prince already knew I met with him alone."

At this point, Wang Qingci's tone clearly carried a hint of grievance.

Lu Chen slapped Wang Qingci's buttocks and said, "What, Mr. Wang, are you dissatisfied with the punishment I just gave? Do you want me to continue punishing you?"

Hearing this, Wang Qingci tightly wrapped her arms around Lu Chen's neck and subtly moved her waist as she said, "How dare I be dissatisfied with the Prince. Thunder and rain are all your graces."

Lu Chen chuckled and then said, "Good, you understand. Next time you dare to meet alone with another man, see if I don't kill you when you return."

Wang Qingci pouted and said, "Prince, you're so domineering. I'll pay more attention from now on."

Lu Chen said, "You little enchantress, if this prince doesn't keep you in line, who knows how many cuckolds you will make for me? From today onwards, you must return to the Prince's Mansion every five days. I need to personally check your body."

Wang Qingci coyly responded, "This humble woman understands. I will cooperate fully with the prince's inspection."

Although her tone seemed somewhat reluctant, deep down Wang Qingci felt extremely happy. The Young Prince was still the Young Prince, the same man with an intense possessive desire over her. He hadn't changed at all.

Lu Chen said, "By the way, keep an eye on the Qianhai Commercial Association. They have suddenly become so active lately, there must be a reason."

Since the last time Wu Junwan signed a business agreement with Rainlistening Pavilion under the identity of Miss Qian, the Qianhai Commercial Association had been quietly doing business in Yan County, rarely as active as they had been recently. For the past few months, they had almost not probed any intelligence from the North Country.

However, in the past two months, the Qianhai Commercial Association suddenly showed a lot of interest in the comings and goings of the North Prince Mansion, even attempting to curry favor with Wang Qingci. Lu Chen couldn't help but suspect that the Qianhai Commercial Association was planning to stir up trouble in North Country.

Lu Chen was highly suspicious whether the Qianhai Commercial Association wanted to probe into the manufacturing secrets of the Prince's Mansion, such as the methods of coal production, the brewing process of white liquor, and so on.

But this seemed a bit far-fetched. If the Qianhai Commercial Association really wanted to probe the secrets of the North Prince Mansion, winning over Rain-listening Pavilion would seem useless; after all, Rain-listening Pavilion seemingly had no open ties with the North Prince Mansion, unless the Qianhai Commercial Association already knew that Rain-listening Pavilion was the intelligence agency of the North Prince Mansion.

While Lu Chen was speculating about what the Qianhai Commercial Association might be up to, a shy voice of a maidservant came from outside, “Prince- Prince, General Mu and the others have arrived.”

Hearing the maidservant’s voice, Lu Chen then remembered that today was the day the army would display their firearms.

Lu Chen immediately responded, “Let them go to the Hall of Political Affairs first. I’ll be there shortly.”

The maidservant at the door responded, “Yes, Prince.”

Afterward, Lu Chen gave Wang Qingci’s buttocks a pat, then said, “Alright, get up. I’ve fed you well; now it’s time for me to attend to serious matters.”

Upon hearing this, Wang Qingci slowly stood up and cast a lingering look at Lu Chen, wondering what he meant by having ‘fed her well,’ when it was clear that he had been the one to take advantage of her.

After they parted, they quickly adjusted their clothes. Once Wang Qingci had straightened herself out, she said, “Then this humble woman shall take her leave.”

Lu Chen gave a hum of acknowledgment. The next moment, as Wang Qingci turned to leave, Lu Chen said, “From now on, don’t be so full of wild thoughts. You are my woman; I detest others touching my belongings the most. I would rather confine you in the mansion than abandon you. I am not the type of man who likes to wear the green hat.”

Wang Qingci was stunned upon hearing Lu Chen’s words.

Although she didn’t know what ‘wearing the green hat’ meant, she understood that Lu Chen had figured out what she had been thinking about. No wonder he had been so fierce with her just now.

Thinking about what had just happened, Wang Qingci’s face grew hot. She had not expected her little schemes to have been so transparent to Lu Chen.

This little man was truly formidable; with him, she had no privacy at all.

At that moment, Wang Qingci's heart was wildly thumping. She suddenly realized that this man cared about her more than she had imagined. In an instant, Wang Qingci's love for Lu Chen deepened again.

If it weren't for the system's upper limit of favorability set at a hundred, the favorability displayed for Wang Qingci in Lu Chen's system interface would likely be skyrocketing.

In this life, she no longer had any ambitions; she just wanted to stay by this man's side, doing things for him.

Wang Qingci then said, "This humble woman understands."

As her words fell, Wang Qingci left the study.

After Wang Qingci departed, Lu Chen went to take a bath and changed into fresh clothes before heading to the Hall of Political Affairs.

Chapter 310: Zhuge Zhongguang Arrives 1

When Lu Chen arrived at the Hall of Political Affairs, apart from those responsible for patrols, nearly all important military figures were already present.

Upon seeing Lu Chen's arrival, everyone uniformly saluted and said, "Greetings to the Prince, long live the Prince!"

After the salutations, Mu Jingwu immediately spoke up, "Prince, the Artillery camp has already completed its assembly."

Lu Chen nodded, his gaze resting on Mu Changtian who then spoke, "Prince, the thousand new recruits you requested are ready as well. They have all been trained exactly according to the methods you provided."

Lu Chen said, "Since everything is ready, let's set out."

Then, under the lead of the Jinyiwei Guards, everyone proceeded to the military strategic area near the munitions factory.

This was a place Mu Changtian and the others had never been to before. They only knew that it was shrouded in mystery, guarded solely by the Black Cavalry; ordinary soldiers were not allowed to enter, not even Mu Changtian himself.

After the Artillery camp and the new army had arrived at the designated spot, Lu Chen then addressed Mu Changtian and the others, “You should know that I’ve brought you here today mainly because the army is about to be equipped with new-style weapons.”

“These new weapons are similar to howitzer cannons. Although their power is not as great as that of the howitzer, they boast a much larger quantity. Moreover, these are weapons that the North Country is now able to mass-produce.”

Upon hearing this, a jolt went through Mu Changtian and the others. Mass-production?

Wouldn’t that mean the military strength of the North Country could soon surpass other dynasties?

The last time they saw the howitzer, it made a profound impression on everyone. Back then, they were thinking that if such weapons could be mass-produced, then Lu Chen’s ascension to the supreme position would be utterly effortless.

However, at the time, people thought they were using Immortal weapons, which would not be available in large numbers and would be gone once used up.

It had been a while since the Artillery camp’s soldiers last touched a howitzer, and Mu Jingwu even wondered if the camp might be disbanded. Unexpectedly, the North Country had already started manufacturing similar weapons, which meant that the Artillery camp would play a crucial role on the battlefield in the future.

At this moment, Lu Chen said to Mo Xing, “Let the Jinyiwei Guards bring out the weapons.”

“As you command, Prince.”

With the assistance of the Black Cavalry, soon three hundred cannons and over a thousand mortars were presented before the soldiers.

Seeing such a vast arsenal, Mu Changtian and the others were stunned. At that time, Lu Chen said to Mu Jingwu, “Captain Mu, starting today, the Artillery camp will train with live ammunition. I need you to become thoroughly familiar with these new cannons within two months.”

Mu Jingwu immediately replied, “As you command, Prince!”

The Artillery camp’s soldiers had long been eager to handle the real McCoy. Ever since the howitzer ammunition was used up, they had primarily been studying theoretical knowledge, which, no matter how thoroughly taught, does not compare to hands-on learning.

At that moment, Li Feng noticed the stick-like weapons placed on the wooden boards, and his mind instantly conjured the scene where Lu Chen used a Barrett to kill a high-quality warrior.

Li Feng couldn’t help thinking, could these stick-like weapons be the same type of formidable arsenal that Lu Chen had previously used?

With this thought, Li Feng immediately asked, “Prince, are these stick-like weapons also considered cannons?”

Before Lu Chen could respond, Mo Xing answered from the side, “General Li, these are not cannons, they are muskets.”

Lu Chen said, “From now on, the new army should gradually abandon bows and arrows and switch to using muskets. Mo Xing, demonstrate the use of the musket for them.”

“Very well, Prince.”

As soon as he finished speaking, Mo Xing picked up a musket, efficiently loading the primer and a steel ball bullet.

Next, he raised the musket and pulled the trigger at a distant tree. With the sound of a gunshot, the steel ball was shot out, instantly embedding itself into the tree.

Witnessing this, Li Feng and the others were taken by surprise; the weapon indeed resembled the mysterious black weapon previously used by the Prince.

However, it seemed to be less powerful than that mysterious weapon of Lu Chen's.

After Mo Xing demonstrated the use of the musket, he told everyone, "The musket's bullet and primer are smaller in size, making them more convenient to carry than arrows."

"In battle, a soldier can easily carry several hundred bullets on his person."

"Of course, that's not the most critical aspect. The most important thing is that even an ordinary person can use this musket, and the musket's bullets can easily penetrate armor."

Hearing this, those present were again stunned.

If they were using bows and arrows, soldiers without training might not even be able to draw the bow, and even if they could, the arrows lacked force and certainly couldn't pierce an enemy's armor.

But once equipped with muskets, it meant that from then on, any ordinary person could join the army of the North Country; all they needed to learn was how to use a musket.

An average person proficient with a musket would possess a strength comparable to that of a Second Grade warrior.

Mu Changtian sighed inwardly.

Indeed, the era of warriors was coming to an end.

After Mo Xing finished speaking, Lu Chen reminded them from the side, "These are training guns; the bullets and primers are separate, and not yet convenient for carrying. I have already instructed the craftsmen to improve the muskets and produce ammunition that combines the primer and bullet."

“Such muskets will be more powerful, and not even a Ninth Grade warrior can withstand their bullets.”