

## Es. Benefits 311

Chapter 311: Zhuge Zhongguang Arrives\_2

At this point, Lu Chen looked towards Mu Changtian.

“The new army must quickly learn how to use muskets.”

Mu Changtian snapped back to reality and said, “Yes, Prince!”

Lu Chen continued, “Additionally, I have one more thing to say. After we enter the Age of Firearms, some martial artists might feel they are no different from ordinary people. But I must remind you all that no matter how formidable firearms are, there exist people who cannot be killed by them.”

As he said this, Lu Chen immediately took a Mo Xing musket, loaded it with a bullet, and aimed it at his own head.

Seeing this scene, everyone was shocked, their faces turning pale with fright.

“Prince!!!”

“Prince, you mustn’t!!!”

Before anyone could stop Lu Chen, he had already fired the gun at himself.

The result was that just as the steel bullet was about to touch Lu Chen’s head, a powerful force exploded from his body. In the next instant, the steel bullet turned into powder.

This...

Once again, everyone was stunned.

The pressure emanating from Lu Chen made it hard for everyone present to breathe, even Mu Changtian who was a grandmaster felt the weight of a mountain upon him.

Lu Chen had never told them that he had become a Grandmaster, but the pressure he was now releasing was clearly that of a Grandmaster.

The summoned martial artists naturally knew that Lu Chen was a Grandmaster, but Mu Changtian and the others did not know, and the ordinary soldiers were also unaware.

By revealing this power, Lu Chen not only demonstrated the importance of martial arts but also showcased his Grandmaster strength.

The soldiers and others found it somewhat unbelievable.

Grandmaster?

Was their prince a Grandmaster?

A seventeen-year-old Grandmaster?

Indeed, their prince was the Son of Destiny favored by immortals!

If their prince had not been favored by immortals, how could he possibly have produced such a terrifying weapon, and how could he have broken through to the Grandmaster realm in such a short time!

Given their prince's rate of growth, perhaps before he turned thirty, their prince would become a Celestial powerhouse.

It was rumored that Celestial powerhouses possessed strength close to that of immortals, capable of summoning the wind and calling the rain!

Thinking of this, the soldiers were boiling with excitement.

At that moment, Lu Chen continued, “As you all have seen, with absolute power, even a musket cannot harm the body. So, do not be disheartened, martial arts remain very important. Moreover, practicing it can indeed prolong one’s life, so do not abandon the path of martial arts just because firearms have emerged.”

Lu Chen had already noticed that since the grenade cannon had shown great prowess on the battlefield, the military martial artists had been feeling lost. Some soldiers even thought that martial arts had become useless, and even Mu Changtian began entertaining such thoughts.

The advent of firearms would certainly impact martial artists. They would definitely think, if an ordinary person could easily kill a Ninth Grade martial artist, what was the point of practicing so hard for decades?

Although Lu Chen knew firearms were powerful, he would never say martial arts were useless.

On the contrary, with the emergence of firearms, martial arts might become even more important than before.

Because only by reaching the Grandmaster realm can one easily block bullets. In order not to be threatened by firearms, people will inevitably strive to improve their own realm, ensuring they won’t be easily taken down by an ordinary person with a musket.

Lu Chen glanced over the soldiers and then said, “Alright, take these weapons away with your men. Great Sum will fall into chaos, and we must prepare.”

Upon hearing Lu Chen’s words, Mu Changtian and the others felt a jolt of apprehension.

Great Sum will fall into chaos?

Why would the North Prince say such a thing, could it be...

Was the North Prince planning to take up arms directly?

While Mu Changtian and the others were lost in their wild thoughts, Lu Chen had already gone to inspect the armory. Since he was there, he might as well check the progress of the new gun’s research.

The development of the new gun was going smoothly. The bullet and primer had been combined, no longer steel projectiles, and the tip of the bullet had turned into a cone shape.

Mo Xing and his team were able to finalize the bullets so quickly mainly because Lu Chen had provided them with the Desert Eagle and Barrett bullets for reference.

However, their bullets had a significant issue, in this era of extremely weak industrial foundations, the bullets they manufactured were too rough and prone to barrel explosion.

To prevent barrel explosions from causing trouble for the users, Mo Xing thickened the gun barrel so that even if the bullets did explode, they wouldn't destroy the firearm and wouldn't harm the user.

But this led to a major problem: as the barrel thickness increased, so did the weight.

The weight of an ordinary rifle had already caught up with Lu Chen's Barrett.

Indeed, the gun was rather heavy for ordinary people, but for the martial artists of this world, this weight was not an issue.

Lu Chen found that what he had said earlier was correct, martial artists were indeed still very important in the North Country.

For instance, their newly produced firearms required at least a Ninth Grade martial artist to use them with ease, and in the future, these new types of firearms could be provided to martial artists above Ninth Grade ahead of time.

Of course, this was only a temporary measure; the current industrial foundation was poor and the materials inadequate, so they had to resort to thickening the gun barrels. Once the North Country developed a certain industrial base, the firearms they manufactured wouldn't explode as easily, and even ordinary people would be able to use new firearms with ease.

About half an hour after inspecting the armory, Lu Chen returned to the Prince's Mansion.

No sooner had he arrived at the Prince's Mansion than a Brocade Guard Commander hurriedly approached Lu Chen, "Prince, something terrible has happened!"

Seeing the anxious look on the Brocade Guard Commander's face, Lu Chen immediately asked, "What happened?"

The Brocade Guard Commander answered, "A Grandmaster has arrived at the southern gate of Yan County; now, the merchants passing by are all gathered outside, watching. It is said that this Grandmaster is the Literature Saint of the Great Qian Dynasty."

Hearing this, Lu Chen was taken aback for a moment.

He had arrived in Yan County so soon? Lu Chen thought that Zhuge Zhongguang would stay in the Da Yue Dynasty for a while and then come to Yan County quietly to avoid detection.

The Brocade Guard Commander continued, "The Grandmaster had just arrived at the gates of Yan County when he was recognized by the people. Now, the southern gate is completely blocked, as everyone wants to catch a glimpse of the Grandmaster."

Hearing this, Lu Chen frowned.

Was Zhuge Zhongguang making too much of a stir?

But on second thought, it made sense. After all, Zhuge Zhongguang was known as the Literature Saint, and he was the person most likely to break through the Heavenly Human Realm in the last few decades. It was normal for him to be so popular.

Lu Chen said, "Take me there to have a look."

Afterward, Lu Chen rode his horse directly to the south of the city.

Zhuge Zhongguang was the Literature Saint and also a Grandmaster; even the emperors of various dynasties had to show him some respect, so it was only proper for Lu Chen, as Prince, to personally go to greet him.

It wasn't long before Lu Chen arrived at the southern gate.

By then, the inside and outside of the city gate were crowded with people, all eager to see the legendary Literature Saint Grandmaster.

At that moment, guards from the Prince's Mansion shouted loudly, "The Prince has arrived!!!"

Hearing this, the frenzied commoners reluctantly made way.

With the appearance of the North Prince himself, the commoners became much more subdued.

Shortly after, Lu Chen on horseback arrived in front of a carriage drawn by four horses.

In the next moment, under the watchful eyes of everyone, an old man with white hair slowly descended from the carriage.

Nowadays, Yan County had become a commercial hub, with merchant convoys from all the major dynasties coming to do business, especially goods from the North Prince Mansion, which were their most important trade items.

The merchants had broader knowledge, many of whom had seen Zhuge Zhongguang, especially those from the Great Qian Dynasty.

"Look everyone! It's really the Literature Saint!"

"Why has the Literature Saint appeared in the North Country?"

"What is he doing in Yan County? Wasn't he supposed to move the Universal Academy to the Da Yue Dynasty?"

"Does the North Country have something that attracts him?"

"Da Yue and the North Country are close; maybe he just came to the North Country to have a look."

While people were discussing fervently, Zhuge Zhongguang approached Lu Chen.

At that moment, Lu Chen also dismounted from his horse.

Then Zhuge Zhongguang, bending at the waist, bowed and said, “Zhuge Zhongguang, Headmaster of the Universal Academy, pays respects to the Prince!”

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Upon hearing Zhuge Zhongguang’s words, the scene instantly buzzed with discussion.

“A greeting? Did I hear that wrong?”

“Why would the Literature Saint pay respects to the North Prince?”

“Did the Literature Saint misspeak?”

The term “to greet” should not be used lightly; it is generally reserved for when someone of lower status presents their respects to someone of higher status, yet Zhuge Zhongguang is the Literature Saint. Wherever he goes, emperors of every dynasty personally receive him.

As for the status, the North Prince’s cannot possibly be higher than Zhuge Zhongguang’s.

Although the North Prince is a prince, at most he is but a Seignior. It is well known that Zhuge Zhongguang does not need to pay respects in the presence of the emperors of dynasties.

And yet today Zhuge Zhongguang was actually taking the initiative to pay respects to a Seignior?

What was going on?

Was this elder truly Zhuge Zhongguang?

Just as people were puzzled as to why Zhuge Zhongguang would offer a greeting to Lu Chen, Lu Chen immediately stepped forward, took Zhuge Zhongguang by the arms, and said, “Dean Zhuge need not be so courteous.”

At that moment, Zhuge Zhongguang spoke, “If the Prince does not mind, how about we share a carriage?”

Even though Lu Chen had come on horseback, if he, a prince, rode back on a horse while his subject, Zhuge, took a carriage, it would seem disrespectful.

Lu Chen said with a smile, “Then the younger generation shall humbly accept the offer.”

Afterward, Lu Chen followed Zhuge Zhongguang onto the carriage. Seeing this scene, the surrounding commonfolk were immediately shocked.

The Literature Saint not only paid his respects to the North Prince but even treated him so courteously?

Were they seeing things?

After all, the Literature Saint is a Grandmaster and, moreover, an entity on the verge of breaking through to the Heavenly Human Realm. Was there any need for him to be so polite to the North Prince?

He even invited him to share a carriage!

Under the astonished gazes of the crowd, Lu Chen boarded Zhuge Zhongguang’s carriage, and afterward, the carriage slowly headed into the city, leaving behind a stunned crowd.

Within the crowd, a fat middle-aged man clad in gold-threaded brocade watched the carriage as it gradually receded into the distance, then muttered to himself, “It appears that the North Prince might truly become my future lord.”

The man was still uncertain about whom to pledge his allegiance to, but considering the recent events of the past two years, only the North Prince seemed to stand out as an anomaly in this world, as if he didn’t belong.

The more unique the North Prince's existence seemed, the more it indicated that he might be the Son of Destiny the man was to serve; the Son of Destiny was bound to be unlike ordinary people.

With this in mind, the middle-aged man revealed a slight smile, his chubby cheeks creasing and his eyes narrowing into slits; indeed, coming to the North Country had been the right decision.

He just needed to wait in the North Country from then on; he believed that it wouldn't be long before the Son of Destiny gave him his orders.

At this very moment.

Inside the carriage.

Zhuge Zhongguang said, "Prince, a part of the students from Universal Academy is already on their way to the North Country; by now, they should have reached Great Xia territory. I wonder how you plan to arrange for them?"

Lu Chen replied, "The North Country is currently in dire need of officials; I plan to have some of the learned students take office."

"In addition, I have already had someone build a new academy in the city. Once Universal Academy moves to the North Country, they can immediately begin their scholastic activities."

Hearing this, Zhuge Zhongguang expressed his thanks, "Thankyou, Prince."

At that moment, Lu Chen contemplated that Zhuge, who was a Literature Saint and a sage granted to him by the system, had lived for so many years and must be an extremely intelligent person. He had recently been troubled by some doubts.

Since Zhuge was so clever, perhaps he could shed light on the matters that had been puzzling him.

With this in mind, Lu Chen directly asked, "Dean Zhuge, there are a few questions in my heart; may I ask if you can help me find the answers?"

Zhuge Zhongguang then responded, “Prince, there’s no need to stand on ceremony. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask. I shall spare no effort in answering to the best of my knowledge.”

Lu Chen immediately asked, “You must be aware of some recent events that have taken place in the Great Xia Dynasty, aren’t you?”

Zhuge Zhongguang answered, “I have heard a bit.”

Lu Chen continued, “At first, my father, the Emperor, did not take action against the Aristocratic Families of the South, but instead waited until now to dispatch the troops southward. In your opinion, is this troop deployment for the purpose of dealing with the Aristocratic Families of the South or to prevent the plague from the Great Qian Dynasty from spreading into the Great Xia Dynasty?”

Zhuge Zhongguang replied, “In my view, it is very likely that the Sum Emperor intends to take action against the Aristocratic Families of the South.”

Lu Chen remarked, “Logically, a few months ago would have been the perfect opportunity to act. Why didn’t my father initiate action then, instead of waiting until now? Isn’t this a bit too late?”

Zhuge Zhongguang asked in return, “Prince, you must be aware of the Great Xia imperial court’s decision to open up salt trade rights, correct?”

Although Zhuge was in the Great Qian Dynasty, the decision by Great Xia to open up salt trade rights was major news for all dynasties. Salt was incredibly important in that era, and all dynasties managed it through official channels. Great Xia was the first dynasty to dare to liberalize salt trade rights. Over the past year, Zhuge had frequently heard discussions about Great Xia’s move to open up salt trade rights.

Lu Chen responded, “That is certainly true. I have also been very curious about this matter. Opening up the salt trade rights equates to handing over the lifeblood of Great Xia to the Aristocratic Families. If in the future everything is operated by the Aristocratic Families, they will hold the entirety of Great Xia’s economy in their hands. Then, if my father ever tries to eliminate the Aristocratic Families, the outcome would be the collapse of Great Xia’s economy. My father couldn’t afford the consequences of such an act..”

Zhuge Zhongguang said, “Although I was not in Great Xia before, I also knew about the Sum Emperor’s determination to eliminate the Aristocratic Families; in my view, the Sum Emperor would definitely not completely compromise with the Aristocratic Families.”

“Since the Sum Emperor would not fully compromise with the Aristocratic Families, every action he takes must be driven by his own interest considerations.”

“I believe that when the Sum Emperor handed over the salt industry management rights, it was not to compromise with those Aristocratic Families, but to trade with a certain Aristocratic Family.”

“Even though the salt industry management rights, once released, would benefit most Aristocratic Families, within this, there must be one family that gains the most.”

Hearing Zhuge Zhongguang say this, Lu Chen suddenly thought of something and then said, “Dean Zhuge means that my imperial father does not plan to eliminate all the Aristocratic Families, but intends to ally with some in order to first deal with those he most wants to remove?”

Zhuge Zhongguang said, “This is just my personal speculation, your Highness should just listen to it; as to whether it is truly the case, I am not sure, especially since I was always in the Great Qian Dynasty in the past and I’m not particularly familiar with the internal situation of the Great Xia Dynasty’s Aristocratic Families.”

Lu Chen said with a smile, “Dean Zhuge’s speculation has reminded me. I couldn’t understand why my imperial father would make some seemingly compromising moves, but now it seems that he may have been scheming all along.”

Lu Chen thought to himself that it was not for nothing that he was awarded a sage by the system; unexpectedly, the person saw through the current situation of Great Xia at a glance.

If Zhuge Zhongguang’s speculation is correct, then his imperial father is probably already working with a certain Aristocratic Family or some interest groups in secret.

Thinking this way, has he not made a move against the Aristocratic Families of the South for nearly a year because he was secretly rallying some people?

Now that he suddenly dispatched troops south, is it because he has negotiated the distribution of benefits with certain interest groups?

Lu Chen smiled knowingly. So that's how it is – it seems his mind is still not flexible enough, he hadn't thought of this at all. He had previously wondered whether his imperial father had completely given up on taking action against the Aristocratic Families, intending to indulge in pleasures within the Imperial Palace like emperors before him, then just muddle through life that way.

Many emperors in history were like this, starting with ambitious intent and harboring all sorts of grand aspirations. Yet, once they faced slightest hindrances, they would begin to degenerate, staying in the Imperial Palace indulging in pleasures until they grew old and died.

On his way back to the North Prince's Mansion, Lu Chen took the opportunity to ask Zhuge Zhongguang several questions.

The answers from Zhuge Zhongguang enlightened him greatly. Lu Chen lacked political wisdom, and he hadn't been involved in politics in his previous life, so he did not understand the rules of politics, making it hard for him to comprehend some of the sly actions of the old foxes.

But with Zhuge Zhongguang, it was different. If he had any questions in the future, he could directly ask him.

The arrival of Zhuge Zhongguang made Lu Chen very happy, and he personally held a banquet in the Prince's Mansion to entertain both Zhuge Zhongguang and the students from Universal Academy who accompanied him.

This event quickly spread throughout Yan County.

The common people of Yan County, as well as the secret agents from various powers, found it somewhat unbelievable.

The famous Literature Saint actually came to the North Country, and it was said that he was very courteous to the North Prince.

What in the North Country could attract the Literature Saint?

Could it be that the Literature Saint is planning to move the Universal Academy to the North Country?

Various speculations and rumors circulated among the people.

As for the news that the Literature Saint appeared in Yan County, not only outsiders were surprised, but even members of the North Prince's Mansion were somewhat incredulous; after all, the Literature Saint was a Grandmaster, and how could such a Grandmaster come to such a remote place as the North Country.

At this moment.

Yunrong Courtyard.

The name Yunrong Courtyard is what the servants of the North Prince's Mansion called this place. Previously, this courtyard had no name, but because Lin Wanyun and Chen Wanrong had been living here for a long time, the servants, for the sake of differentiation, gave this courtyard its name.

Just like with Spring Sound Court – it was also the maids and servants of the North Prince's Mansion who first called it that, and then Mu Zixuan and the others simply adopted the name.

At this moment, Chen Wanrong was sitting in the pavilion, her delicate fingers placed on the guqin, preparing to play a tune when Lin Wanyun rushed into the courtyard in a fluster.

“Palace Master, there is trouble.”

Hearing Lin Wanyun's words, Chen Wanrong was taken aback.

What could make Lin Wanyun so flustered?

Chen Wanrong asked, “Madam Lin, what has happened?”

Lin Wanyun did not immediately answer. She walked over to Chen Wanrong and whispered in her ear, "Just now, the Literature Saint Zhuge Zhongguang came to our Prince's Mansion, and the North Prince held a banquet to receive him."

Chen Wanrong's heart skipped a beat.

Literature Saint?

If she remembered correctly, her master once told her that among all the known grandmasters in the world, Literature Saint Zhuge Zhongguang was the most likely to breakthrough to the Heavenly Human Realm.

It wasn't because Zhuge Zhongguang was older that he was most likely to be the first to breakthrough to the Heavenly Human Realm, but because the cultivation technique Zhuge Zhongguang practiced was not an ordinary martial arts technique.

According to her master, Zhuge Zhongguang could no longer be considered merely a martial artist; among those who were grandmasters, several of them together might still not be a match for Zhuge Zhongguang.

How could such a formidable person come to the North Country, this remote place?

Wasn't Zhuge Zhongguang in the Great Qian Dynasty?

With the distance from the Great Qian Dynasty to the North Country, what was a grandmaster like him doing here, seemingly finding nothing better to do?

Chen Wanrong's eyebrows knitted slightly, and she instantly understood why Lin Wanyun said it was bad news just now.

Zhug Zhongguang was no ordinary person. If they used the Love Worm on Lu Chen at this time, it was very likely Zhuge Zhongguang would discover it, and if Zhuge Zhongguang had not left the North Prince Mansion by then, it would ruin their big plan.

This was indeed a big problem.

With the limited forces of Mysterious Moon Palace in the North Country, they had no way to shake a grandmaster, let alone one who was about to breakthrough to the Heavenly Human Realm.

Chen Wanrong asked perplexed, “Madam Lin, why has he appeared in the North Country?”

Lin Wanyun replied, “I just eavesdropped on the conversation between him and the North Prince, it seems he plans to relocate the Universal Academy to the North Country, and he will reside in the North Country from now on.”

At these words, a chill immediately emanated from Chen Wanrong’s body.

This was the last thing she wanted to see.

If Zhuge Zhongguang stayed in the North Country, then everything Mysterious Moon Palace had done there would have been in vain.

Why would a grandmaster, who could stay in the Great Qian Dynasty and enjoy their offerings, come to this secluded North Country to run a school?

Lin Wanyun looked at Chen Wanrong and said, “Palace Master, what should we do next?”

“If we continue to wait, I’m afraid all of our efforts over this past year will have been wasted. Zhuge Zhongguang is not an ordinary person, and if we use the Love Worm on the North Prince by then, he is very likely to detect it.”

Chen Wanrong did not immediately answer Lin Wanyun’s question. She sat in the pavilion, falling into deep thought.

After a while, Chen Wanrong took out a small porcelain bottle from her sleeve, then said to Lin Wanyun, “Madam Lin, find a way to get the powder inside this bottle into the water that Lu Chen drinks.”

Chen Wanrong decided she could not wait any longer. Initially, she did not want to resort to this method, but there was no alternative. If they continued to delay, all their efforts might come to nothing.

After Lin Wanyun took the bottle from Chen Wanrong's hand, she asked puzzled, "Palace Master, what is in this bottle?"

Chen Wanrong replied expressionlessly, "It's powder from the wings of Pair- Wing Butterflies."

This...

Hearing this response, Lin Wanyun was momentarily stunned.

The Pair-Wing Butterfly was a rather special butterfly, whose female powder from the wings could attract male Pair-Wing Butterflies to mate.

After men come into contact with the powder from the Pair-Wing Butterfly wings, they would develop strong feelings for the women who had been in contact with the female Pair-Wing Butterfly powder.

Chen Wanrong then continued, "Add a little at a time, try not to let him notice."

This powder was not poisonous and wouldn't harm the human body, so it would be difficult to detect.

Of course, Pair-Wing Butterflies were extremely rare, and powder from their wings was even harder to collect. Even members of cults rarely used Pair-Wing Butterflies for misdeeds.

Chen Wanrong had managed to collect so much powder because her master had raised a group of Pair-Wing Butterflies.

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As a member of the Mysterious Moon Palace, Lin Wanyun was naturally aware of the effect of the Pair-Wing Butterfly, it was just that she hadn't expected Chen Wanrong to actually resort to using this tactic.

This was a desperate move that injured the enemy while causing self-harm, once Chen Wanrong consumed the powder from the female Pair-Wing Butterfly, she would likewise develop a strong interest in the man who had taken the male Pair-Wing Butterfly powder, which was why Chen Wanrong initially refrained from this approach.

Of course, another major reason she hadn't used it before was that it had taken the disciples of the Mysterious Moon Palace a considerable amount of time to collect the powder from the Pair-Wing Butterfly, only recently had the disciples sent over the collected Pair-Wing Butterfly Powder to the North Prince Mansion.

Although the Pair-Wing Butterfly Powder could influence people, with Chen Wanrong's strength, she was fully capable of using her skill to expel the consumed Pair-Wing Butterfly powder from her body, however, by doing so, she would lose her allure to Lu Chen.

Therefore, in order for the Pair-Wing Butterfly Powder to be effective, she had to endure the strange sensations in her body and also ensure that the powder from the wings of the Pair-Wing Butterfly remained inside her.

Once Lu Chen could no longer endure it and came seeking her out, she would take that opportunity to directly implant the Love Worm into Lu Chen's body.

Lin Wanyun looked at the vial in her hand, then glanced at Chen Wanrong again, and asked with certainty, "Palace Master, are you sure you want to resort to this method? Once the Pair-Wing Butterfly Powder is used, you too might develop feelings for the North Prince."

Chen Wanrong replied expressionlessly, "We're out of time. Even if we can't control him for a long time, we must refine the Subtle Dragon Spell before Zhuge Zhongguang discovers our intentions. Great Sum will be in chaos, this is my last chance."

Lin Wanyun sighed and said, "Alright, I will seize the opportunity to serve him tea and water to slip the Pair-Wing Butterfly Powder into his drink."

Having said that, Lin Wanyun turned around and left the courtyard.

After Lin Wanyun departed, Chen Wanrong took out another small porcelain bottle and looked at the female Pair-Wing Butterfly powder in her hand. A faint change came over Chen Wanrong's frosty expression, as if she had made some determinations.

The Imperial Army of Great Sum was about to head south, and the internal war was about to begin; she needed to hurry and refine the Subtle Dragon Spell, then take advantage of Great Sum's internal strife and the weakened defenses of the Capital city to strike directly at the Imperial Palace and seek revenge for her parents' death by killing the Sum Emperor.

After the Sum Emperor's death, the common people from the former territories of Chen Nation would surely be invigorated, and then she would reveal her identity as the Princess of Chen Nation and lead the old officials of Chen Nation to restore the country.

All plans had already been fermenting in the heart of Chen Wanrong, this plan had been brewing for nearly a year, and now it was time to implement it.

The incident today in Yan County quickly spread to other dynasties, and the people from the various dynasties were very surprised when they heard about it.

North Country was clearly just a remote feudal state. Why would Zhuge Zhongguang, the Literature Saint, go there, and why was he so courteous to the North Prince, a mere Seignior? Could it be that Zhuge Zhongguang was planning to move the Universal Academy to North Country?

While the Universal Academy was indeed not well-liked, Zhuge Zhongguang was nevertheless a Grandmaster and securing the Universal Academy would mean gaining the allegiance of Zhuge Zhongguang.

Now that the Grandmaster Zhuge Zhongguang had gone to North Country, it made the rulers of the Great Qian Dynasty very uncomfortable.

Even though the Qian Emperor disliked those self-righteous scholars of the Universal Academy and the court ministers had been wanting to shut it down, the Qian Emperor had refrained from taking action against the Universal Academy for the sake of the Grandmaster Zhuge Zhongguang.

And now, Zhuge Zhongguang had actually gone to the Great Xia Dynasty, and he seemed to be considering moving the Universal Academy there, which made the Qian Emperor very uncomfortable inside.

This was all the fault of those ministers who spread rumors among the populace every day, offending the Grandmaster Zhuge Zhongguang.

To win back Zhuge Zhongguang, the Qian Emperor quickly sent envoys to North Country, wanting to persuade Zhuge Zhongguang to stay in the Great Qian Dynasty, and he also promised that in the future he would provide opportunities for the scholars of the Universal Academy to hold official positions.

At this moment, the Qian Emperor still thought that Zhuge Zhongguang had left in a huff and was completely unaware that Zhuge Zhongguang had already sided with Lu Chen.

The Great Wu Dynasty.

The Green Cloud Palace.

The breathtakingly beautiful Wu Junwan, dressed in a gold-trimmed bright red robe, lay half-reclining on the Phoenix Chair, seeming somewhat listless.

In the grand hall, a middle-aged man was speaking, and after hearing the man's words, Wu Junwan yawned indolently before saying, "Prime Minister Chai, as a chancellor you are not very competent, are you? Almost a year has passed, and yet the civil unrest in the southwest has not been settled."

"My father granted you a chance, if it still cannot be resolved soon, he will have to deploy the army to suppress the rebellion by force."

"I have heard that Great Xia has already sent troops southward to target the Aristocratic Families in the South, at this time Great Xia has no leisure to come and trouble Great Wu."

After the uprising broke out in the Great Wu Dynasty, the Martial Emperor quickly dispatched a large army to suppress it. Initially, the Martial Emperor and all the courtiers of Great Wu thought that the rebel peasants were just ordinary people, and the rebel forces would disperse in fear once Great Wu's army arrived; they wouldn't even need a month to resolve the rebellious troops.

But to everyone's surprise, until now, Great Wu hadn't settled the unrest in the southwest, and the Imperial Army had even been brought to a standstill with the rebel forces.

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This made the Martial Emperor, who always preferred to solve problems with military force, feel extremely angry inside. The rebel army was nothing more than a few hundred thousand peasant soldiers, with hardly any martial artists among them. Yet, these few hundred thousand peasants had managed to hold against the Imperial Army for so long.

If it were not for the fear that Great Sum might retaliate against Great Wu at this time, the Martial Emperor might have directly transferred those elite soldiers from the Great Sum border to attack the southwest rebels.

Chai Jiliang belonged to the peace faction in the imperial court; he intended to resolve the southwest turmoil with the least cost and peacefully.

In his view, the reason why those commoners rebelled was because the Martial Emperor had been waging wars abroad for years, making life difficult for the common people. This allowed some schemers to exploit the situation, stirring up the commoners' hatred towards the imperial court.

Therefore, if the Martial Emperor wanted to resolve the civil unrest, the best way would be for him to first issue a self-incriminating edict and make some promises to the commoners, pacifying those among the rebels and persuading some who were on the fence about rebelling to abandon their cause.

However, it was very unfortunate that the Martial Emperor would absolutely not publish a self-incriminating edict. He never believed he was in the wrong, and as the Emperor, how could he admit his mistakes so readily.

But in order to resolve the unrest in the southwest, the Martial Emperor still heeded some of Chai Jiliang's suggestions and sent envoys to convey some peaceful intentions to the rebels.

The Martial Emperor's envoys told the rebels that as long as they surrendered and stopped rebelling, he would pardon all their crimes, and he could even confer the rank of general upon the rebel leaders.

It was a common method to quell rebellions by using interests to entice the leaders of the rebels and then persuade them to lay down their weapons.

Nonetheless, it seemed the rebel leaders were not swayed by what the Martial Emperor offered. They had greater appetites and wanted much more, which resulted in many envoys being sent to negotiate with them without reaching a satisfactory result for both sides.

This made the Martial Emperor somewhat impatient. As an Emperor, he had already made such significant concessions, yet these obstinate people were still not content, still wanting even more.

If negotiations failed, then it was simply time to fight.

Just then, they received news that Great Sum had deployed troops to the south.

Anyone could see what Great Sum intended by sending troops southward; it was evident that Great Sum would soon be in great turmoil, and at that time, Great Wu would not need to worry about retaliation. Moreover, Great Qian was currently impacted by an epidemic and could not spare the effort to trouble Great Wu.

As for Great Jue, the relationship between the Yue Emperor of Great Jue and Wu Junwan was like that of sisters, very close. And with the Barbarian Tribe putting pressure on from the north, it was unlikely that Great Jue would take advantage of someone's predicament at this time.

Since there were no external threats, the Martial Emperor had nothing to worry about; he planned to recall those elite soldiers guarding against Great Sum and resolve the southwest rebellion within two months.

The Martial Emperor's decision put Prime Minister Chai, very much in an awkward position, since he had initially advocated for a peaceful resolution to the turmoil in the southwest. After dragging on for half a year, it had come down to a military solution in the end.

After hearing Wu Junwan's words, Chai Jiliang said, "If Your Majesty really uses force to suppress the rebellion, it will only create opportunities for the Seigniors within Great Wu's territory. The ones who most want to revolt are not the commoners, but those Seigniors with control over substantial forces. The reason the southwest turmoil remains unresolved is precisely because someone is causing trouble in the shadows."

“If Your Majesty cannot keep his composure and sends troops now, it’s very possible that those Seigniors will also choose this moment to rise.”

Wu Junwan gave a soft laugh, then said, “My father the Emperor isn’t burdened with as many concerns as Prime Minister Chai. Anyone who dares to make a move, their end will surely be heads rolling on the ground.”

Just as Wu Junwan’s voice fell, Chai Jiliang was about to say something when a maid entered the hall, “Princess Junwan, intelligence from North Country!”

Upon hearing this, Wu Junwan immediately stood up, straightened her body, “Bring it here.”

The next moment, the maid presented the intelligence from North Country to Wu Junwan, who took it and quickly glanced over the document.

Her brows furrowed, and she muttered to herself, “I thought Zhuge Zhongguang would go to Great Jue, but he unexpectedly went to North Country...”

Seeing Wu Junwan’s expression darken, Chai Jiliang asked, “Princess, what has happened? Why does your face look so troubled?”

Without responding, Wu Junwan folded the intelligence in her hand and sent it flying towards Chai Jiliang.

Chai Jiliang caught the intelligence that came flying from Wu Junwan and after quickly scanning it, he sunk into contemplation.

Wu Junwan said with a smile, “Prime Minister Chai knows so much, so why don’t you analyze for this palace why Zhuge Zhongguang refused me and didn’t stay in Great Jue but went to North Country instead?”

Hearing Wu Junwan’s question, Chai Jiliang regained his focus and directly said, “This official does not know.”

The current situation in North Country is very peculiar, not only might there be a mysterious superpower there, but Mysterious Moon Palace is also in North Country, and nobody knows how long the Palace Master has stayed there. Now that Literature Saint Zhuge Zhongguang has also gone to North Country, nobody knows what they want to get from it.

Wu Junwan said teasingly, "It's unexpected that there's something in the world that Prime Minister Chai doesn't know about, this is indeed surprising to this palace."

At this point, Wu Junwan stood up and walked slowly to the center of the hall. Looking out at the sky beyond the hall, she said, "With Zhuge Zhongguang added to the equation, there are now two Grandmasters in North Country. It wouldn't be surprising to me if the North Prince declared independence, but I am curious, what exactly is it about North Country that makes them come one after another."

Having said this, Wu Junwan told the maid, "Write to Qianhai Commercial Association immediately, and tell them they may get a bit more active."

Hearing Wu Junwan's words, Chai Jiliang expressed his dissatisfaction, "Princess, the rebellions within Great Wu have not yet been resolved; is there a need to concern ourselves with the affairs of North Country?"

Wu Junwan asked with a smile, "Aren't you the least bit curious, Prime Minister, about what North Country has?"

Chai Jiliang said, "If there truly is something in North Country that attracts all the major powers, it won't be long before news leaks out. The most important matter for Great Wu at the moment is to quell the rebellion."

"If the Princess desires that position, quelling the rebellion is the best opportunity. Unless enemy nations invade Great Wu, what happens in other countries right now isn't important."

Listening to Chai Jiliang's words, Wu Junwan stated indifferently, "Prime Minister is right, then I will trouble you to come up with a way for this palace to get involved in this matter."

Chai Jiliang said unhurriedly, "Please don't worry, Princess, the opportunity will present itself soon."

After Zhuge Zhongguang arrived in the North Country, Lu Chen directly appointed him as the Minister of the Ministry of Education, to oversee the entire education work of the North Country, and also conferred upon him the title of Great Scholar, allowing him to participate in discussions of any major military or state affairs in the future.

Although Zhuge Zhongguang obtained such a high position upon his arrival in the North Country, not a single official within the North Country had any objections, including Li Rui, who was acting as the de facto Prime Minister with the powers of a Vice Minister over state affairs.

The authority of Great Scholar Zhuge Zhongguang far surpassed that of Li Rui, his status was clearly above Li Rui's, and yet Li Rui showed no temper whatsoever.

Zhuge Zhongguang was a Literature Saint Grandmaster, and moreover, he was one who had the potential to break through the Heavenly Human Realm; who would dare vie with him for power?

If they couldn't surpass him in literature, and he was still a Grandmaster in the martial realm, Li Rui had no choice but to concede most of his power.

Having a Grandmaster in the Small Court of the North Country brought much harmony to the official scene, since everyone knew that beneath the Prince, Zhuge Zhongguang wielded the greatest power; no matter how hard they tried to climb, it would be futile, as the Grandmaster's status was set in stone.

Moreover, Lu Chen did not only arrange for Zhuge Zhongguang to hold an official position. He also made arrangements for each of the scholars who had followed Zhuge Zhongguang to the North Country; however, most of them started at the grassroots level. Lu Chen did not immediately arrange very important positions for them, even if the students from the Universal Academy were his own people.

For Lu Chen, loyalty was indeed important, but capability was equally vital. If he only wanted loyalty without requiring others to have abilities, then the North Country would not be currently in need of officials.

Lu Chen's idea was simple; he first wanted to send the scholars from the Universal Academy down to the grassroots to temper them and rectify their predisposition to idle talk. Once they had accumulated a certain amount of experience, he would then promote them.

Fortunately, their loyalty was one hundred percent. With the students from the Universal Academy placed at the grassroots level, Lu Chen could easily grasp the situation at the lower levels, even from a high position. Additionally, with the surveillance of the Brocade Guard, his control over the grassroots far exceeded that of other rulers.

The construction of the new city was booming, and nearly half of the construction of the main roads was completed. Now, the politics, economy, and military of the North Country had entered a stage of stable development.

After firearms were integrated into the army, the troops of the North Country began to practice new tactics relentlessly. Still, the North Country was most lacking in food supplies. Although Lu Chen had obtained high-yield crops like corn and sweet potatoes, time was limited, and only one round had been planted, which had not yet spread throughout the entire North Country.

To solve the food problem in the North Country and ensure it wasn't affected by famines, it would take at least two to three years. Before that time, the North Country would need to purchase grain from other dynasties.

Luckily, the commerce of the North Country was already very developed, and the merchant caravans of various dynasties kept coming in a continuous stream. Even if the merchant caravans from the North Prince Mansion did not actively go to other dynasties to purchase grain, those caravans would bring grains from other dynasties to sell in the North Country, which somewhat alleviated the food shortage.

Seeing everything in the North Country developing in a favorable direction, Lu Chen had recently felt much less pressure. He delegated many of his tasks to Zhuge Zhongguang.

Although Zhuge Zhongguang was a person from ancient times, he was hardly less intelligent than modern people. Lu Chen didn't need to explain much, for Zhuge Zhongguang was able to accurately implement Lu Chen's policies, which greatly relieved Lu Chen.

With Zhuge Zhongguang and the scholars from the Universal Academy, Lu Chen no longer needed to toil as he had before. He just needed to continue with his plan of propagating his progeny and quietly wait for opportunities.

North Prince Mansion.

In the evening, the study.

The lights in the study were bright; Lu Chen had stayed a bit late at work today, as a lot of intelligence from the Capital City had arrived in the evening, and he was sorting through this information.

The conflict between his father, the Sum Emperor, and the Aristocratic Families of the South, had become increasingly apparent. The Sum Emperor wished to send troops southward, but the official members of the South Aristocratic Families strongly obstructed him, and the contradiction between the two parties had become public.

The Aristocratic Families of the South likely realized by now that the Sum Emperor intended to take action against them. Therefore, they didn't hold back any longer and directly used various means to stop the Sum Emperor from deploying troops. Enraged, the Sum Emperor had already beheaded several officials from the Aristocratic Families.

In the past, the Sum Emperor feared the Aristocratic Families, so he rarely executed their officials. Even if those officials committed some wrongdoing, at most, they would be stripped of their official hats. Now that he had started executing officials from the Aristocratic Families, it meant he had reached the limits of his patience.

The atmosphere in the Capital City was especially tense, with a sense of an impending storm brewing.

Lu Chen sat at his desk, continuously flipping through the intelligence that had arrived at the North Prince Mansion tonight, while Qin Yushan still stood in front of Lu Chen, not immediately leaving.

After Lu Chen looked through some of the intelligence on the desk, he asked, "How is the investigation, ordered by this Prince for Commander Liang to carry out, going?"

Qin Yushan replied, "Your Highness, ever since the Emperor opened up the salt industry rights, the Dongfang Clan from the South Aristocratic Families has profited most from salt production. Even before the court had opened up the rights to operating the salt industry, they had already purchased a lot of coastal land for salt production, and they were smuggling salt into the Great Qian Dynasty."

"Ever since the court liberalized the salt industry rights, the Dongfang Clan has been selling the previously smuggled salt openly to the whole country. In less than a year's time, they've earned nearly ten million pieces of silver, and this is only the data we were able to find."

## Chapter 317: Lin Wanyun Poisons\_2

“If we include the data we couldn’t find, my estimate is that the Dongfang Clan must have earned over ten million taels of silver,” said Qin Yushan.

Upon hearing Qin Yushan’s words, Lu Chen stopped the action of flipping through the reports and fell into deep thought.

Since the Dongfang Clan was the biggest profiteer, did that mean there was some sort of deal between the Dongfang Clan and the Sum Emperor?

Seeing that Lu Chen had sunk into thought, Qin Yushan did not continue further. After a while, Lu Chen spoke, “What else have they found about the Dongfang Clan, Commander Liang and the others?”

Qin Yushan went on to say, “The Dongfang Clan has always wanted to enter the court, but they are not like other aristocratic families. They migrated to the Great Xia from another dynasty and do not possess much land here. Moreover, having been merchants for generations, they have always been looked down upon by other families. Although they have some say in the court, it is extremely difficult for members of their family to get positions there.”

“In the past year, the Dongfang Clan’s trade with the Capital City has been very frequent; their merchant ships have hardly ever stopped.”

Hearing Qin Yushan’s report, a smile appeared on Lu Chen’s face. Could it be that the chess piece his father, the Emperor, had planted among the southern aristocratic families was most likely the Dongfang Clan?

Although the Dongfang Clan was considered an ancient family, they only had wealth but not the matching political status, so strictly speaking, they were different from the typical ancient families.

If the Dongfang Clan desired political status and wanted to secure positions in the court, the Sum Emperor could fully take advantage of this opportunity and reach a covert agreement with them. They could eliminate the other families first, then raise the status of the Dongfang Clan afterward.

However...

Would the Sum Emperor really keep his promise?

If the Dongfang Clan was indeed a chess piece of the Sum Emperor, would he discard them after making full use of them?

After all, in the eyes of the Sum Emperor, the aristocratic families were the root cause of the chaos in Great Xia, and he personally detested them greatly. He might not necessarily honor his promises.

If they only eliminated a batch of ancient families and then supported another batch, it was very likely that the Great Xia Dynasty would fall into a historical cycle. Perhaps in not too many years, it would again reach the current situation of Great Xia.

Lu Chen was very curious about what his father the Emperor would do eventually.

With these thoughts in mind, Lu Chen said, "Have Commander Liang keep a close watch on the Dongfang Clan. Every move they make should be written in a memorial and sent to the North Country."

Qin Yushan replied, "Yes, Prince."

Lu Chen continued, "Alright, it's already so late. If there's nothing else, you should go back."

"Your subordinate takes his leave." With those words, Qin Yushan turned and left Lu Chen's study.

After Qin Yushan had left, Lu Chen continued to sift through the reports on his desk. He felt very pleased with the current state of the world.

All major dynasties and nations had their own problems, and solving these issues would take at least two or three years based on the intelligence he had gathered before the world would stabilize.

By the time the other dynasties had sorted out their internal strife, the North Country would already have grown. Now that the commercial trade of the North Country was developing more and more, if

they could accomplish the primitive accumulation of capital in the next few years, perhaps it wouldn't be long before they could embark on the road to industrialization.

Just as Lu Chen was contemplating the future, a maid's voice sounded from outside, "Prince, Commander Lin is here."

On hearing this, while still looking through the reports, Lu Chen said, "Let her come in."

The next moment, Lin Wanyun pushed the door open, carrying a multi-tiered food box.

Upon entering the study, Lin Wanyun said, "Chen'er, this is the supper Zixuan just made for you."

Hearing this, Lu Chen looked up at Lin Wanyun and then glanced at the food box, "Thankyou, Madam Lin."

With a smile, Lin Wanyun said, "It's no trouble at all, this is what I should do. Have something to eat first."

At this point, Lin Wanyun placed the lunch box on the desk, then opened it and served out all the food inside.

Lu Chen moved all the intelligence reports to one side of the desk and then looked at tonight's supper. He found that, as usual, it was a soup brewed from various kinds of nourishing ingredients.

In fact, these things were of no use to Lu Chen, who was already a Grandmaster, with abundant physical strength and energy, and did not need these supplements. It was completely unnecessary for Mu Zixuan to prepare these tonics for him.

However, this was a gesture of kindness from his consort, and Lu Chen wouldn't say anything about it. Moreover, having some tonics wouldn't do any harm, and although his physical strength was bountiful, he needed something like this for cultivating affection with his wife and concubines.

With that thought, Lu Chen picked up a spoon, ready to take a sip of the soup.

Just then, his mind reeled and he suddenly felt that something was amiss.

Even though Lin Wanyun had now become the head of the inner court of the Prince's Mansion, she was, to a certain degree, still an outsider. Outsiders usually didn't have the right to bring food to Lu Chen. The food was typically brought to him by the closest maids of Mu Zixuan, and Mu Zixuan would not have given the food to Lin Wanyun to deliver.

Mu Zixuan was a clever woman. How could she fail to see that Lin Wanyun had ulterior motives concerning Lu Chen? Moreover, Mu Zixuan had already told Lu Chen that Chen Wanrong and Lin Wanyun might have some purpose in choosing to stay at North Prince Mansion.

Lu Chen smiled faintly, suspecting that tonight's supper might have an extra ingredient.

Thinking this, Lu Chen glanced at Lin Wanyun.

Lin Wanyun was wearing a purple dress today, looking enticing and voluptuous, her ample figure filling out the clothes, which made her appear quite mature and charming.

Lu Chen used the system to identify Lin Wanyun's personal information.

[Name: Lin Wanyun]

[Identity: Adopted daughter of the Great Xia Left Minister Lin Gaoyuan. Later left the Lin Family to join the Mysterious Moon Palace, a Half-step Grandmaster, 32 years old. She followed Mysterious Moon Palace Master Chen Wanrong to North City, intending to use the blood of the North Prince to concoct the Subtle Dragon Spell against the Sum Emperor. Sensing the impending chaos in Great Xia and feeling pressured by Zhuge Zhongguang's arrival, Chen Wanrong decided to use the Love Worm on the North Prince in advance. In order to succeed with the enchantment, Chen Wanrong had Lin Wanyun add Male Paired-wing Butterfly Powder into the North Prince's food, so that once the North Prince consumed the Male Pair-Wing Butterfly Powder, he would fall under the influence of Chen Wanrong, who had ingested the Female Pair-Wing Butterfly Powder, which they believed would greatly increase the success rate of the enchantment.]

[Rating: 95]

[Favorability: too]

Seeing the update on Lin Wanyun's personal information, the smile on Lu Chen's face grew even brighter. He wondered why Lin Wanyun had taken the initiative to bring him supper today—so this was Chen Wanrong and Lin Wanyun's plan to drug him.

However, speaking of which, the effect of the Pair-Wing Butterfly Powder seemed to be similar to that of the Dragon Phoenix Tree.

Lu Chen was somewhat uncertain whether this thing could affect him, so he asked in his mind, "System, can the Poison Immunity Body neutralize the Pair-Wing Butterfly Powder?"

[Yes, the Pair-Wing Butterfly Powder is a type of spring poison.]

Hearing the system's reply, Lu Chen felt reassured. Since he was immune to poison, there was nothing to worry about.

Chen Wanrong and Lin Wanyun no longer wanted to wait, and coincidentally, he didn't want to wait either. It was time to add two more women to his life, as he had always been coveting the body of this beautiful woman in front of him.

Seeing Lu Chen suddenly stop his spoon, Lin Wanyun felt a pang of unease and began to have a bad premonition. She worried whether Lu Chen had discovered the Pair-Wing Butterfly Powder in the soup.

Lin Wanyun immediately tried to reassure herself. She had only added a little powder today; Lu Chen should not be able to detect it, plus the Pair-Wing Butterfly Powder wasn't exactly poison, and it was tasteless.

Then Lin Wanyun tentatively asked, "Chen'er, what's wrong?"

Lu Chen pretended to sigh and said, "Alas, why did Zixuan prepare so many nourishing foods for me again? If I eat these at night, how can I possibly sleep?"

Hearing Lu Chen's words, Lin Wanyun breathed a sigh of relief—thankfully, he hadn't noticed.

Chapter 318: You wouldn't want Miss Chen to become my female slave, would you?\_i

After Lu Chen finished speaking, Lin Wanyun said, “You exhaust your mind over the affairs of the North Country and still look after your wives at night; you really should take in more nourishment.”

Hearing this, Lu Chen smiled slightly, then put down his hand and scooped up a spoonful of soup. “Madam Lin is right, with so many women of mine, I really should replenish.”

At this point, Lu Chen lifted his hand again and brought the spoonful of soup to his lips, as Lin Wanyun stared intently at Lu Chen’s movements, eager to see him drink the soup.

The next moment, Lu Chen blew on the spoon and tipped it, drinking the soup into his mouth.

After seeing Lu Chen’s throat move to swallow, Lin Wanyun’s heart tensed up again. Chen’er hadn’t noticed before because he hadn’t touched the soup; she was unsure whether he would detect anything now that the Pair-Wing Butterfly powder had entered his body.

Lin Wanyun tentatively asked, “Chen’er, how is the soup?”

Lu Chen replied with a smile, “Not bad, no different from the soup Zixuan used to brew. I’ve been fortifying myself every day recently; I’ve grown accustomed to it.”

With that, Lu Chen took out a small bowl from the lunchbox, ladled some more soup into it, and continued to drink.

Seeing Lu Chen drink so much soup at once, Lin Wanyun’s face also revealed an almost imperceptible smile.

The first attempt at drugging Lu Chen should have been a success.

She would find another opportunity to drug Lu Chen a couple more times, and once Chen Wanrong had also ingested the female Pair-Wing Butterfly’s powder, it should be very easy to infect Lu Chen with the Love Worm.

While Lin Wanyun was thinking this, Lu Chen began to eat his midnight snack. He seemed completely unaware of anything amiss.

Seeing this, Lin Wanyun was completely reassured.

Awhile later, Lu Chen suddenly remembered something and said, “Oh, right, Madam Lin, what has Miss Chen been up to lately?”

Lin Wanyun replied, “She’s been practicing in the pavilion every day, the same as before.”

“Chen’er, it’s been a long time since you listened to her play the zither, hasn’t it? Are you tired of it?”

“The Palace Master mentioned this matter a few days ago; Chen Wanrong seems somewhat disheartened that you don’t visit her. I think she might have fallen for you,” she said.

As she spoke, Lin Wanyun’s beautiful eyes gazed at Lu Chen’s handsome face, eager to see his reaction.

Hearing Lin Wanyun’s words, Lu Chen sighed, “Ah, I really want to listen to her play, but I’ve been so busy lately. I hardly have any spare time every day.”

“Fortunately, Dean Zhuge has brought his students from the Universal Academy to the North Country. In some time, once I hand over some government affairs to Zhuge Zhongguang, I will have time to listen to Miss Chen play the zither again.”

Lin Wanyun said, “So it’s because you’ve been too busy. I thought maybe you’d lost interest in the Palace Master since you haven’t gone to listen to her play in several months.”

Lu Chen said with a laugh, “How could I not be interested? Miss Chen is as beautiful as a celestial being. If I were not interested in her, would I even be a man?”

After he spoke, Lu Chen continued to eat, and Lin Wanyun did not say much more, just stood quietly at the side.

After a while, Lu Chen finished the midnight snack that Mu Zixuan had prepared and picked a soft piece of paper from the table to wipe his mouth.

Lin Wanyun then said, “Chen’er, I’ll take these things away.”

Lu Chen said indifferently, “Hmm, alright.”

Lin Wanyun then bent down to start cleaning up the lunchbox on the table.

As Lin Wanyun bent down, the graceful curves of her body became even more pronounced, stirring some restlessness within Lu Chen.

Lu Chen then said, “Sigh, it’s really better not to eat such nourishing food late at night; I’m afraid I won’t be able to sleep again tonight.”

Lin Wanyun thought Lu Chen was just making small talk and didn’t take his words to heart, as she busied herself cleaning up while distractedly saying, “Zixuan is just looking out for your well-being.”

As Lin Wanyun finished tidying up the lunchbox on the table and was about to leave the study, Lu Chen suddenly spoke up, “Oh, Madam Lin, there’s something I want to ask about.”

At these words, Lin Wanyun hadn’t yet realized what Lu Chen was planning to do next; she thought he wanted to ask about some serious business.

Lu Chen rose from his seat and asked, “Madam Lin, General Lin once came to see me and told me about a few things.”

“General Lin?” Lin Wanyun was momentarily startled.

She quickly reacted, “Do you mean my sworn brother Lin Xiuming?”

Lu Chen nodded, “Yes, him.”

Lin Wanyun’s eyebrows knit slightly, sensing this was probably not going to be good news; after all, Lin Xiuming had previously discussed Lin Mansion’s intentions with her.

Lin Mansion planned to marry her off to Lu Chen as part of an alliance.

Of course, she was definitely against it. She was already thirty-two years old, and at her age, women had children as old as Lu Chen.

Their age difference was nearly that of a generation; how could she marry Lu Chen?

Curious, Lin Wanyun asked, "What did Xiuming tell you?"

At that moment, Lu Chen rose from his chair and walked slowly to the center of the study. Then, he said to the maid at the door, "Xiao Huan, stand guard at the entrance of the courtyard. Without my command, do not approach the study."

No sooner had Lu Chen's words fallen than Xiao Huan's voice could be heard from outside the study.

Chapter 319: You wouldn't want Miss Chen to become my female slave, would you?\_2

"Yes, Prince."

Afterward, the maid at the door left the study entrance.

What...

Seeing Lu Chen sending the maid away from the door, Lin Wanyun became even more curious about what he was going to say next.

Just then, Lu Chen said with a smile, "Madam Lin, General Lin told me that you are not yet married, and the Lin Mansion intends to marry you to me. What do you think of this proposal?"

Lin Wanyun's heart skipped a beat—just as she thought, it was about this matter.

Lin Xiuming, that shameless man, despite my having already said I wouldn't marry Lu Chen, he went ahead and personally brought it up with him.

Lin Wanyun quickly said, "Chen'er, your mother and I are sworn sisters, and besides, I am already of such an age—how could I marry you? If this were to spread, it would greatly affect your reputation."

Lu Chen said nonchalantly, "I think it shouldn't be too much of an issue, and age isn't really a big problem. Isn't Nanyan also over thirty this year? She married me, and as you know, having been Guard Commander in the Prince's Mansion for so long, I often visit her room to conduct matters between a man and a woman."

"Therefore, age is not a serious concern for me, the main question is how you, Madam Lin, feel about it."

Lin Wanyun was taken aback, then responded, "Chen'er, I still feel that we aren't suitable for each other."

Lin Wanyun was also aware that her age truly wasn't much of a problem in Lu Chen's eyes, though she had her reservations, Lu Chen was certainly unconcerned about it.

Moreover, having stayed at the North Prince Mansion for over a year, she had long noticed that Lu Chen seemed to particularly fancy mature women, especially one like Yelv Nanyan. Whenever Lu Chen entered Yelv Nanyan's room, he would nearly always stay up the whole night.

The thought that Lu Chen might fancy her caused Lin Wanyun's cheeks to suddenly feel warm, a blush creeping onto her face.

Seeing the slight reddening of Lin Wanyun's complexion, Lu Chen slowly advanced toward her. Seeing the young man approaching closer and closer, Lin Wanyun instinctively stepped back two paces.

Lin Wanyun again said, "Chen'er, you needn't listen to Xiuming's words; he's ignorant and speaks nonsense."

"Plus, don't you still wish to pursue our Palace Master? If she knew you harbored such thoughts about me, she might take a disliking to you."

Since age was no barrier for Lu Chen, Lin Wanyun had to use the connection with Chen Wanrong as her defense.

She was still in the North Prince Mansion, so she couldn't flatly reject Lu Chen; she had to use all kinds of methods to gently dissuade him.

If she outright rejected Lu Chen without giving face, she definitely wouldn't be able to stay at the North Prince Mansion anymore. Without the support of the Prince's Mansion, relying solely on Chen Wanrong could easily lead to the failure of their plans.

Seeing Lin Wanyun somewhat afraid of him, Lu Chen stopped in his tracks and said indifferently, "Madam Lin, Chen Miss already knew from the start that I'm quite fickle in love. If she truly takes an interest in me, she probably wouldn't mind if I took another wife, right?"

Lin Wanyun quickly said, "Chen'er, although I always address Rongrong as Palace Master, in truth, I raised her from a young age. Despite her addressing me as 'aunt,' we are as close as mother and daughter. If you want to be with her, you cannot marry me. If she found out about this, her heart would definitely not accept it."

Lu Chen remarked, "Oh? You and Miss Chen share such a relationship?"

Lin Wanyun replied, "When I left the Lin Family that year, I met Rongrong on the way to the Mysterious Moon Palace. Seeing her plight, I took her in. Later, the Honorable of the Palace recognized her exceptional martial arts talent, and subsequently handed over the position of the Palace Master to her."

"Although we're not blood-related, our connection is no different from that of a mother and daughter. If you were to marry me and yet wished to be with her, wouldn't our relationships become hopelessly entangled?"

Hearing Lin Wanyun's words, Lu Chen fell into contemplation. Seeing that Lu Chen had silenced, Lin Wanyun thought to herself that with the link to Chen Wanrong, Lu Chen most likely wouldn't consider her romantically anymore.

Chen Wanrong was even more beautiful, and he should know who to choose.

As Lin Wanyun pondered this, Lu Chen suddenly spoke up, “Madam Lin, since Miss Chen means so much to you, akin to a mother-daughter relationship, wouldn’t that imply she holds an extremely important place in your heart?”

Hearing his question, Lin Wanyun was startled; she didn’t understand why Lu Chen was suddenly asking this.

Lin Wanyun responded, “Of course, I have no other desires in life than to always protect her and help her achieve her ambitions.”

Lu Chen’s lips curled slightly upward, his smile looking quite sinister—as if he were a major villain from a television drama.

Then Lu Chen continued, “Madam Lin, since Miss Chen is so vital to you, I presume you also wouldn’t want to see her become my forbidden delight, a female slave for the rest of her life, right?”

What...

Lin Wanyun was instantly bewildered. What did Lu Chen mean by that?

After coming back to her senses, Lin Wanyun asked, “Chen...Chen’er, what do you mean by this?”

Lu Chen chuckled, then looked at the food box on the table before continuing, “Madam Lin, did you really think I didn’t know you put Pair-Wing Butterfly Powder in the food box?”

At these words, Lin Wanyun’s mind went blank. She hadn’t expected Lu Chen to have already discovered her little trick.

How could this be?

Had she not just put a tiny bit?

Could such a small amount really be detected?

With a panicked look, Lin Wanyun defensively said, “Pair-Wing Butterfly, what is that? Chen’er, what are you talking about? I don’t... understand?”

Lu Chen continued to approach Lin Wanyun who nervously kept backpedaling, soon finding herself against a wall with no more room to retreat.

Lu Chen, gazing at Lin Wanyun’s flustered face, said, “Madam Lin, are you now thinking that Pair-Wing Butterfly is colorless and tasteless, and just by putting such a tiny amount, how could I have possibly discovered it?”

This... this... this...

Lin Wanyun’s heart became filled with intense horror. Lu Chen not only knew that she had put Pair-Wing Butterfly Powder in the meal, but he also seemed aware of her inner thoughts.

How did he do it?

Could he possibly read minds?

Impossible...

How could there be a person in this world capable of reading minds?

Yet Lin Wanyun still stubbornly said, “Chen’er, I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Lu Chen said indifferently, “I not only know that you put Pair-Wing Butterfly Powder in my food, I also know why you came to North Country, to North Prince Mansion, and I’m also aware of why you always pushed me to pursue Miss Chen.”

Hearing Lu Chen’s words, Lin Wanyun’s heart pounded wildly. She was uncertain whether Lu Chen was deceiving her or if he genuinely knew everything.

As Lin Wanyun wondered whether Lu Chen was just bluffing to trick her, he bluntly stated, “You came to North Country initially intending to use my blood to create the Subtle Dragon Spell against my father, the Emperor.”

Upon hearing this, Lin Wanyun's eyes widened and her pupils shrank. She had thought Lu Chen was only bluffing before, but now, to her dismay, she realized he actually knew their purpose for coming to North Country.

How did Lu Chen know?

What else was he aware of?

Then, Lu Chen continued, "Later, seeing that my skills were extraordinary, you harbored the thought of using the Love Worm to control me, and then use North Country as a springboard to help Miss Chen reclaim her throne."

"Oh, and by the way, I've known for a long time that Miss Chen is the princess of Chen Nation."

Lin Wanyun clenched her fists slightly, her skill circulating involuntarily within her. This was the greatest secret between Chen Wanrong and her, a secret scarcely known even in Mysterious Moon Palace, yet Lu Chen was aware of it.

If this secret got out, the Sum Emperor would certainly go to great lengths to eliminate Chen Wanrong; the secret could not be revealed at any cost.

But then...

The young man before her was her dear sister's son; she couldn't bring herself to harm him.

Lin Wanyun looked coldly at Lu Chen and stopped pretending, asking bluntly, "What else do you know?"

Lin Wanyun felt that continuing the charade was pointless—since Lu Chen knew the secret that Chen Wanrong was the princess of Chen Nation, it meant he had thoroughly investigated their backgrounds.

Seeing that Lin Wanyun seemed prepared to resort to violence against him, Lu Chen smiled faintly and continued, "I also know that Miss Chen has grown impatient, which is why she had you put the

Pair-Wing Butterfly Powder in my food, intending to swiftly infect me with the Love Worm, so I would cooperate with you in crafting the Subtle Dragon Spell.”

## Chapter 320: I Agree to Your Terms\_1

Seeing that Lu Chen had already seen through all their scheming, Lin Wanyun no longer hid her intentions. She looked at Lu Chen with cold eyes and asked, “Since you already know what the Palace Master and I intend to do, why did you still drink the soup just now?”

Lu Chen laughed and said, “Madam Lin, you may not know this, but I have a Poison Immunity Body. The powder of the Pair-Wing Butterfly is useless to me, so why wouldn’t I drink it?”

Hearing this, Lin Wanyun was taken aback and said subconsciously, “Impossible...”

She refused to believe that anyone in this world could be immune to all poisons.

Lu Chen said with a smile, “Believe it or not, that’s up to you.”

Lin Wanyun also stopped discussing this topic. Her beautiful eyes stared straight into Lu Chen’s as she asked, “What do you plan to do with us?”

At this point, Lin Wanyun was ready to take action. She planned to rush out immediately and then take Chen Wanrong away from North Prince Mansion.

Now that their plans had been exposed, there was no longer any reason for them to stay at North Prince Mansion.

Just as Lin Wanyun was thinking this, Lu Chen laughed and said, “Deal with you? Why should I deal with you?”

Hearing Lu Chen’s words, Lin Wanyun was slightly stunned. They had planned to use the Love Worm on Lu Chen, then control him, and also intended to use his blood to refine the Subtle Dragon Spell. Could it be that Lu Chen wasn’t the least bit angry?

Lin Wanyun found it hard to believe what Lu Chen was saying, as she didn't think he was so magnanimous.

Lu Chen continued, "Madam Lin, you've been in North Prince Mansion for over a year now. Don't you understand what I am like yet?"

Lin Wanyun's eyebrows knit slightly as she asked coldly, "What do you mean?"

Lu Chen smiled and explained, "You wanted to enchant me with the Love Worm because you thought I was a lecher who could be seduced by a beauty, didn't you? How come you don't know now what I want to do?"

When Lu Chen said this, Lin Wanyun immediately understood his meaning. Lu Chen wanted to keep the two of them and make them his women.

Lin Wanyun snorted lightly and said, "Chen'er, if you want to keep us to have your children, you'll have to see if you have the ability."

As she spoke, Lin Wanyun swung a palm toward Lu Chen. An invisible palm force struck directly at him, knowing she might not be able to defeat Lu Chen, she didn't plan to engage in battle. As long as she could leave the study and let Chen Wanrong know that their plan had been exposed, they should be able to escape North Prince Mansion easily.

Although Chen Wanrong was a Grandmaster, she was no ordinary Grandmaster. Even if North Prince Mansion had several Grandmasters, they wouldn't be able to keep them there. Lin Wanyun was very confident in Chen Wanrong's strength, after all, she was the disciple of an Honorable and did not practice ordinary martial arts skills.

Just as Lin Wanyun thought she could repel Lu Chen, she found that her palm force had no effect on him upon contact with his body.

Her palm force seemed to disappear into thin air.

Seeing this, Lin Wanyun was startled for a moment, then she struck again, aiming another palm at Lu Chen.

Currently a Half-step Grandmaster, although her skill was nearly at the Master Realm, she was not well-versed in the use of Spiritual Energy. Since relying on palm force was ineffective against Lu Chen, she had no choice but to confront him directly.

Watching the jade palm coming straight at him, Lu Chen also made no attempt to dodge. Lin Wanyun was slightly stunned; she couldn't understand why Lu Chen wasn't defending himself, even though his skill was at the Master Realm, and she was after all a Half-step Grandmaster.

If she, a Half-step Grandmaster, struck him, even a Grandmaster would be injured. Just as Lin Wanyun's hand was about to touch Lu Chen's chest, he suddenly reached out and grabbed her wrist.

Then, with blinding speed, Lu Chen twisted Lin Wanyun's hand behind her back, pinning her. Lin Wanyun's left hand slapped out towards Lu Chen in an attempt to break free.

However, Lu Chen easily caught her left wrist and then pressed both of her hands down on her buttocks. Now, Lin Wanyun's hands were under Lu Chen's control.

With her back against Lu Chen, Lin Wanyun tried to kick backwards, only to discover that the skill within her body had suddenly vanished, and her body had softened.

Lin Wanyun was stunned.

This...

How could this be???

Lin Wanyun couldn't remember eating anything that day that would dissipate her skill.

All of this must have something to do with the young man controlling her from behind.

Lin Wanyun hurriedly twisted her waist, attempting to break free from Lu Chen's grasp.

Lu Chen held her jade hand tightly against her backside, and no matter how much she struggled, it was useless.

Feeling Lu Chen's body pressing tightly against hers, Lin Wanyun became immensely panicked. She quickly said, "Let me go..."

"I was just trying to escape, I didn't really mean to hurt you."

With one hand holding Lin Wanyun's wrist, Lu Chen used his other hand to encircle her slender waist, and rested his arm on her neck, whispering in her ear, "I knew all along what you were planning to do. Did you really think I was unprepared?"

Lin Wanyun's body was exceptionally soft, and Lu Chen found holding her waist quite comfortable. Coupled with the mature scent of a woman coming from her, this made Lu Chen's heart grow even more restless.