

Es. Benefits 341

Chapter 341: Discovered_2

She had never once thought that Lin Wanyun would betray her.

But now...

Chen Wanrong suddenly felt her heart twitch, her body became unstable, she quickly braced herself on the stone table, then sat calmly in the pavilion and began to regulate her inner strength.

After a while, the turmoil inside Chen Wanrong had calmed, and so had she.

She had been blinded by the anger of betrayal, so she could not think rationally for a moment.

But now it was different, after calming down, her mind began to analyze why Lin Wanyun would do such a thing, why she would debase herself with Lu Chen.

She still did not believe that Lin Wanyun would betray her, after all, they were as close as mother and daughter, she did not believe that all the feelings Lin Wanyun had for her in the past were false.

If Lin Wanyun had not betrayed her, and instead had chosen to do that sort of thing with Lu Chen, it was very likely that it was to poison Lu Chen, and she had no choice but to sacrifice her beauty to get close to him.

Thinking this, Chen Wanrong had a sudden realization.

Thinking about it, all that Lin Wanyun had done was for her, and she had even doubted her?

At this realization, a deep sense of guilt arose in Chen Wanrong's heart.

To take care of her, Lin Wanyun had remained without a partner until now, and Lin Wanyun was already in her thirties, she was a woman, and she had needs too.

Chen Wanrong was very clear in her heart that women in the inner court of the Prince's Mansion, once they had even a little to do with Lu Chen, could easily succumb; she had long overhear the maids and servants in the Prince's Mansion talk about the miraculous aspects of Lu Chen.

Lin Wanyun, who had suppressed herself for decades, suddenly came into contact with such a handsome man, and moreover, a man very skilled at dealing with women, it was not strange that she would become the way she did earlier.

Although Chen Wanrong had never experienced the matters of men and women, she was, after all, the Palace Master of the Mysterious Moon Palace; she was also knowledgeable about these things.

The Mysterious Moon Palace did not prohibit disciples from finding partners, they simply forbade disciples from having children, and in order not to let the disciples become pregnant due to the matters of men and women, the library of the Mysterious Moon Palace contained books that taught about these matters, especially contraception, which Chen Wanrong had also learned about.

At this moment, the air in the courtyard seemed to grow colder, and Chen Wanrong's face became colder as well, her body seemed to release a chill to the surroundings.

Her dignified and virtuous Madam Lin, had just now been handled like livestock by that man. Even though she understood that everything Lin Wanyun did might have been for her, she still felt somewhat unable to forgive Lu Chen in her heart.

She had stood outside the study door for a while and eavesdropped on their conversation; judging from their dialogue, this was not the first or second time they had acted inappropriately.

Moreover, Lu Chen's intentions were far from pure. Lu Chen did not just want to possess Lin Wanyun's body; his real aim was to impregnate her, and having children in the Mysterious Moon Palace was a taboo.

Moreover, Lin Wanyun was already in her thirties this year, and Lu Chen still wanted her to have his child. What was on this man's mind, only breeding?

With such a desire to breed, once she successfully restored her country in the future, she would confine him in the Imperial Palace and find him a few hundred palace maids to let him breed day after day.

At this thought, Chen Wanrong clenched her delicate fist.

An unusual emotion stirred within her, she herself did not know what kind of emotion it was, but it made her feel restless. Even though she had calmed down a moment ago, her heart was soon again occupied by that restlessness.

Chen Wanrong adjusted her inner strength once more, trying to stabilize her emotions again.

And so, Chen Wanrong sat in the pavilion for an entire night while Lin Wanyun was also being pressed for an entire night in Lu Chen's study.

When the first rays of the morning sun touched the earth, a weary Lin Wanyun returned to the courtyard, and as soon as she entered, she saw Chen Wanrong in the pavilion.

After having just done the deed, Lin Wanyun felt guilty at the sight of Chen Wanrong, and tried to act as if nothing had happened, heading towards her own room.

But at that moment, Chen Wanrong asked, "Madam Lin, where were you last night?"

Upon hearing this, Lin Wanyun stopped in her tracks, her mind went blank.

Having come to her senses, Lin Wanyun immediately lied, "It was my turn to be on duty last night."

Chen Wanrong glanced at Lin Wanyun's slightly disheveled hair and her somewhat torn dress. In the end, she held back and didn't continue to question her.

From their childhood to the present, Lin Wanyun had almost never lied to her. Yet, because of that man, she had lied to herself, which made Chen Wanrong feel somewhat sad inside.

Seeing Chen Wanrong's frosty face, Lin Wanyun started to panic inside. She couldn't help but wonder, could it be that Chen Wanrong had noticed something?

While Lin Wanyun was thinking this, Chen Wanrong said indifferently, "Madam Lin, you may go rest."

Afterward, Chen Wanrong closed her eyes and continued meditating.

Seeing that Chen Wanrong didn't say anything, Lin Wanyun breathed a sigh of relief. She had thought that Chen Wanrong had discovered something, which had given her quite a scare.

Then, Lin Wanyun returned to her room, had a maid bring water, took a bath, and went straight to sleep.

Meanwhile.

Elsewhere, a refreshed Lu Chen left the study and saw the maid Xiao Huan leaning against the courtyard wall.

Lin Wanyun was the first to leave the study just before, and she had also seen Xiao Huan. She thought Xiao Huan had fallen asleep against the wall, a common occurrence among maids. Coupled with her urgency to take a bath so as not to be caught in that kind of relationship with Lu Chen, she didn't pay attention to Xiao Huan.

Lu Chen approached Xiao Huan and then used the Rejuvenating Skill to wake her up.

Upon awakening, Xiao Huan looked at Lu Chen with heavy, sleepy eyes. The next moment, her eyes flew open, and she jumped up from the ground.

"Prince... this servant... this servant..."

Xiao Huan was somewhat unsure of how to explain herself, fearful that Lu Chen would suspect her of dozing off and falling asleep the previous night.

"Prince, someone knocked me out last night, this servant..."

Xiao Huan was close to tears. She had no idea who wanted to harm her by knocking her out and leaving her there, and now she was at a loss for how to explain.

Lu Chen smiled and said, "This prince knows who knocked you out. You don't need to overexplain. Don't tell anyone about this."

Hearing this from Lu Chen, Xiao Huan was stunned for a moment. She hadn't expected that Lu Chen would actually know who was behind it. But since Lu Chen had said so, she figured she wouldn't be punished. With that thought, Xiao Huan breathed a sigh of relief.

Lu Chen then turned and walked towards the main courtyard, planning to take a bath first, then have breakfast before heading to the Hall of Political Affairs. There were many tasks to handle today, including finalizing the delineation of counties in North Country.

As for Chen Wanrong's visit outside the study last night, Lu Chen wasn't worried it would lead to any adverse consequences. Chen Wanrong's favorability towards him had long since maxed out at a hundred. Even if she saw him with Lin Wanyun, she wouldn't harbor any hatred towards him.

The matter between Chen Wanrong and Lin Wanyun was left for the two women to resolve on their own.

By the time Lu Chen had taken his bath, eaten breakfast, and arrived at the Hall of Political Affairs, the officials of North Country had mostly assembled.

Without wasting time, Lu Chen brought out the map drawn by the Brocade Guard and hung it on the pillars of the great hall, then allowed the officials to speak their minds. He wanted to hear their thoughts on delineation first, before making his own decisions on the matter.

After a morning of discussion, the new map of North Country was finally determined, dividing it into six jurisdictions and eighteen counties, with all the grasslands from Tianguang City to Great Yu City included within the borders of North Country.

Once the map was confirmed, Lu Chen estimated the area and realized that, excluding the original North Country, the current territory of North Country had now surpassed the entire Great Xia Dynasty.

Of course, North Country was nominally also a part of the Great Xia Dynasty, so this was considered a territorial expansion of the Great Xia Dynasty.

Now that the map of North Country was set, Lu Chen had no intention of keeping it a secret. The North Land was originally ownerless, and if it were to be claimed, sovereignty must be declared.

In the following days, the North Prince Mansion issued an announcement to inform the citizens of North Country about the incorporation of the North Land into North Country. Furthermore, Lu Chen personally wrote a memorial to be submitted to the Great Xia Imperial Court.

Chapter 342: Dongfang Clan Plans to Flee_1

Great Xia Capital city, Imperial Palace.

Imperial Study Room.

The Sum Emperor was reviewing memorials when he suddenly saw the one submitted by Lu Chen.

He paused.

Besides the times when Lu Chen had submitted memorials when the Barbarian Tribe moved south, Lu Chen hardly ever sent memorials to the court.

Especially since the Great Xia court declared that they would no longer aid the North Country with any supplies, Lu Chen had not submitted any memorials to the court thereafter.

What was the purpose of him submitting a memorial this time?

Out of curiosity, the Sum Emperor opened Lu Chen's memorial and started to read it carefully.

Seeing the content within the memorial, the Sum Emperor's expression turned sour.

He scoffed and said, "Swallowing the whole North Land, such grand ambition, not afraid of choking to death!"

"It seems that since Zhuge Zhongguang went to the North Country, he has become even more inflated."

“After dealing with the Aristocratic Families of the South, it’s time to take care of this hidden threat.”

The Sum Emperor had thought that even with the support of a certain power behind him, North Country’s development wouldn’t be too fast, but with the ongoing reforms in North Country, he began to have an uneasy feeling.

North Country was developing too quickly, and the refugees it absorbed did not become a burden to North Country but instead helped it gain a vast labor force.

Moreover, Universal Academy had openly declared its intention to join North Country, which further unsettled the Sum Emperor. He even suspected that the initial power supporting North Country was this very Universal Academy.

When Lu Chen went to North Country, he was merely a useless Prince without anyone’s support. It could be that Universal Academy took advantage of this and seized the opportunity to control Lu Chen.

Universal Academy’s ideals had always been loathed by the great dynasties, especially the royal families. The Sum Emperor had reason to suspect that Zhuge Zhongguang intended to bring Universal Academy’s ideals to Great Xia, and that the strange reforms in North Country might well be the work of Universal Academy.

After Situ Ce’s return from North Country, he mentioned traces of a Grandmaster. Now, thinking about it, that Grandmaster is very likely Zhuge Zhongguang.

Just thinking about Zhuge Zhongguang, the Sum Emperor’s face darkened as he muttered to himself, “This world should not have Celestials.”

Above the realm of Grandmaster is the Heavenly Human Realm, which has long kept the Grandmasters of the martial world from taking a breath. Over the years, Grandmasters from all dynasties have been low-key, avoiding action if possible.

It was all thanks to a Celestial from Mysterious Moon Palace from years ago, who killed many Grandmasters, including those from different dynasties.

After that individual retreated into seclusion in Mysterious Moon Palace and never emerged again, decades have gone by, but what the Celestial did still instills deep fear among the Grandmasters.

The events of those years led all the Grandmasters of the Great Xia royal family to take a step back and haven't come forth in decades. Now, people generally only know of the State Preceptor Situ Ce as a suspected Grandmaster, with few aware that there are still Grandmasters in the royal family.

Just one Celestial has kept the Grandmasters of all the dynasties from raising their heads. If another Celestial were to appear, the Grandmasters might never dare to show themselves again.

What's more crucial is that this Grandmaster on the brink of breaking through to the Heavenly Human Realm had come to the Great Xia Dynasty, causing the Sum Emperor even more unease, to the point of losing sleep at night, haunted by memories of when the Grandmasters of his royal family were slain by the Celestial of Mysterious Moon Palace with a single stroke.

The Sum Emperor did not wish to have another sword hanging over his head after resolving the Aristocratic Families. If the Great Xia Dynasty was to grow stronger, there could be no force on Great Xia's land more formidable than the Great Xia royal family.

At that moment, the Sum Emperor turned to the eunuch beside him and handed over the memorial, directing, "Take this memorial to the State Preceptor for review."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

After the eunuch took Lu Chen's memorial away, a cold glint flashed in the Sum Emperor's eyes.

Aristocratic Families, Sects, Universal Academy—all these powers, he would erase from the land of Great Xia.

Even the Dongfang Clan would not be spared; as far as he was concerned, the Dongfang Clan was just a pawn, to be discarded once its use had ended.

Although the Dongfang Clan was a commercial family, differing significantly from traditional Aristocratic Families, the fact that the Dongfang Clan sought to extend its reach into the court had already crossed the Sum Emperor's red line. While he had outwardly agreed to their request, he would never allow past occurrences to be repeated in the court.

The more the Dongfang Clan tried to reach into the court, the more the Sum Emperor felt their ambition was too great, no different from the Ancient Families.

How could the Sum Emperor possibly allow such an ambitious family with such profound impact on Great Xia's economy to remain?

Of course, for now, the Aristocratic Families of the South had not yet been annihilated, and other families were still present in the court, so the Sum Emperor would not move against the Dongfang Clan just yet. At least until the Ancient Families in the court were eradicated, he would not touch the Dongfang Clan.

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Meanwhile.

Sufeng City.

Wang Family.

Today, the Family Heads of the Aristocratic Families from the South had all arrived at the Wang Family's residence. Ever since Lu Shuyun came to the South, he had been staying with the Wang Family. The primary reason for the Family Heads of the major Aristocratic Families coming to Wang Family was because of Lu Shuyun's presence there.

Chapter 343: Dongfang Clan Plans to Flee_2

In fact, some families were somewhat uncomfortable with Lu Shuyun staying with the Wang Family, for although the Wang Family was the family of Lu Shuyun's mother, it was not the only one supporting him, Lu Shuyun. Why should Lu Shuyun reside with the Wang Family?

By residing with the Wang Family, Lu Shuyun instantly elevated their status to a new height; their standing in the South was already high, and now with Lu Shuyun staying there every day, the Wang Family's status went even further up.

After Lu Shuyun raised troops in the South, many of the generals leading these forces were also from the Wang Family.

Where there were people, there was the martial world. Even if the Aristocratic Families of the South openly supported Lu Shuyun, they felt discontent with Lu Shuyun's actions in their hearts. They merely didn't speak out about it at this critical time for confronting the Imperial Court.

In the middle of the great hall, Lu Shuyun sat facing the entrance. He swept his gaze over the Family Heads of the various major families seated on both sides before he spoke, "Family Heads, I am delighted that you all stand with me at this critical moment."

"Today, I have called you here primarily because I have received intelligence that the Grandmaster of the royal family has ended his seclusion, information delivered by none other than Prime Minister Zhao."

Upon hearing this, the hall erupted with discussion.

"A Grandmaster? This complicates things."

"I don't think any of our Aristocratic Families in the South boasts a Grandmaster, do they?"

"Not necessarily, the Wang Family puts such emphasis on Martial Arts; it's possible they have a Grandmaster within their ranks."

"Gentlemen, no need to worry. Our Qin Family has a Grandmaster. Even if the royal family's Grandmaster really shows up on the battlefield, there is no cause for fear."

"Have you forgotten the incident a few decades ago when a certain powerhouse of the Heavenly Human Realm slaughtered the royal family's Grandmaster? The Grandmaster of the royal family has been quiet all these years because they fear the reappearance of that Celestial powerhouse. Even if the royal family sends out the Grandmaster, he won't dare to act rashly, for who knows if that Celestial power will strike again?"

"Master Zhao is right, a Celestial, given his lifespan of several hundred years, wouldn't die so soon. If he hears of the royal Grandmaster acting, he may very well make an appearance again."

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Over the years, one major reason why the great Aristocratic Families have become increasingly unrestrained is that they know the royal Grandmaster generally does not act wantonly, or more correctly, dares not to act lightly. They even suspect the royal Grandmaster might have been annihilated by that Celestial powerhouse decades ago.

Although they do not know why the Celestial strongman from decades ago wanted to kill the royal Grandmaster, they can infer that the Celestial did not wish for the Great Sum's royal family to grow any stronger.

As for Situ Ce, the State Preceptor, the Aristocratic Families feared him even less.

Situ Ce was not a royal kin; at best, he was loyal to the Great Sum royal family, but not to any one Emperor.

As far as Situ Ce was concerned, as long as it was someone of the Lu lineage and the Great Sum was not overthrown, it made no difference to him which member of the Lu family sat on the throne. This could be seen from his non-involvement in the previous generation Prince's struggle for succession.

Back when Lu Xingqiu vied for the throne, he secretly disposed of many of his brothers. Situ Ce, already the State Preceptor during the prior Sum Emperor's reign, could have interfered if he chose to, and Lu Xingqiu might not have become Emperor.

Listening to the discussion of the Family Heads in the hall, Lu Shuyun then continued, "Everyone, this is a critical time for the lives and survival of the Aristocratic Families of the South. If any of your families have a Grandmaster, now is not the time to remain hidden."

"My father the Emperor has already sent a Grandmaster southward. If we do not have a Grandmaster to hold them in check, our mere few hundred thousand soldiers might not even reach the Capital city, let alone 'rid the emperor of "evil" ministers.'"

"Initially, I came south for your sakes. If anyone still harbors other intentions or is not fully committed, you should not blame me for turning my face and becoming unrecognizable once I find out."

Hearing this, Dongfang Yi sat unmoved in the hall.

The Dongfang Family had a Grandmaster, but the Dongfang Family's Grandmaster would absolutely not come forward.

Whether standing with the Sum Emperor or with the North Prince, there was no need to bring out their Family's Grandmaster in this war.

It was then that Lu Shuyun directly asked, "Master Chu, your family has always been the most powerful among the South's Aristocratic Families. I have heard that your family has even had conflicts with the Mysterious Moon Palace and dared to confront them. Surely, your family must have a Grandmaster, right?"

Smiling at the question posed by Lu Shuyun, Chu Liang replied, "Of course. Please be reassured, Crown Prince. Our Chu Family stood with you from the beginning; we will not engage in any scheming behind your back. Should the Crown Prince need the help of a Grandmaster, our Chu Family will surely send one to protect you."

Lu Shuyun was very pleased with Chu Liang's response.

When he convened these Family Heads, he had already had people secretly inquire if any of the South's Aristocratic Families might have a Grandmaster. The Wang Family certainly had one, as did the Qin Family; now with the Chu Family also saying they would send a Grandmaster to assist, they would have three Grandmasters on their side.

If the royal family's Grandmaster truly appeared on the battlefield, with these three Grandmasters, the Imperial Army might not fare well at all.

Chapter 344: Dongfang Clan Plans to Flee_3

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The most crucial point was that they still had the Piercing Cloud Bow. If a Grandmaster used the Piercing Cloud Bow, there was a chance to kill the royalty's Grandmaster. Their advantage was immense.

With this thought, Lu Shuyun's lips curved slightly upward, and he couldn't help but think to himself, "My dear father, Emperor, you will soon regret letting me leave the Capital. You've occupied that position for so many years, it's about time you let me sit in it for a while."

Having finished discussing the Grandmaster, Lu Shuyun then began to arrange their tasks.

Although they had already assembled hundreds of thousands of troops, among these soldiers were many private armies belonging to various families. These private soldiers had not fully integrated and were basically fighting on their own.

Lu Shuyun had no intention of disrupting these soldiers and reorganizing them, because doing so would mean interfering with the interests of the Aristocratic Families.

He needed the help of these Aristocratic Families for the rebellion and didn't dare meddle with their interests at such a time.

Since it was not feasible to disband and reorganize the private armies of these Aristocratic Families, the only option was to assign them tasks.

Lu Shuyun, according to the current situation, assigned the private armies of the Aristocratic Families to some important counties in the north to defend against attacks from the imperial army.

At that moment, Lu Shuyun turned his head to Dongfang Yi and said, "Dongfang Family Master, your family has been in commerce for generations and owns many merchant ships, and your private soldiers are mostly adept at naval warfare. Therefore, the defense of the southeast coastal areas will be entrusted to you, lest the imperial army attacks from the sea."

Dongfang Yi immediately responded, "Please rest assured, Crown Prince, the Dongfang Family will surely hold the southeast coast and not allow any imperial soldiers to come ashore."

Upon hearing Dongfang Yi's words, Lu Shuyun felt very satisfied. However, he suddenly remembered something and then said, "By the way, I've heard that Longyue has run off to the North Country and has yet to return?"

Dongfang Yi sighed deeply and with a helpless expression, he said, "Your Highness, it's all my fault for not raising her properly from a young age, which has resulted in her becoming so willful. I've sent people several times to bring her back, but she has escaped every time. She's adamant about

not returning home. Please forgive me, Your Highness. After the war is over, I will make sure she is brought back to kowtow and apologise to you.”

Lu Shuyun said, “That’s alright, the South is about to go to war anyway, so it’s fine for her to stay in the North Country for the time being.”

Lu Shuyun brought up Dongfang Longyue primarily to remind Dongfang Yi that they were now in an alliance through marriage, so he wanted the Dongfang Family to wholeheartedly support him.

That evening.

Dongfang Yi returned home.

As soon as he arrived, he was informed by the servants that the core members of the Dongfang Family had gathered in the council hall waiting for him.

Dongfang Yi then proceeded to the council hall.

At that moment, an elderly man with white hair was seated facing the entrance. As Dongfang Yi returned, the elder spoke up, “Yi’er, what are your plans moving forward?”

Hearing the elder’s address, Dongfang Yi’s lips twisted slightly, feeling somewhat discontented in his heart.

He was of such an age, yet the old man still insisted on calling him “Yi’er.”

However, these were minor matters. Dongfang Yi then said, “The Crown Prince intends for our Dongfang Family to guard the southeast coast to prevent an attack from the imperial army by sea. I plan to take the opportunity, while defending the southeast coast, to send some family members to the North Country aboard our merchant ships.”

Although the Dongfang Family was an inside agent for the Sum Emperor in the South, the uncertainties of war were great. Dongfang Yi didn’t want to get too involved and planned to escape to the North Country and seek asylum with the Son of Destiny, the North Prince.

As for the war between the court and the Southern Aristocratic Families, they no longer needed to intervene.

The Dongfang Family had already secretly moved a number of elite soldiers to the southeast coast on behalf of the court. Assuming there were no major surprises, once the war started, the rebels would be caught in a pincer attack, and it was highly likely that Lu Shuyun and his forces would suffer a bitter defeat.

Whether the Aristocratic Families' Grandmaster in the South could turn the tide was uncertain; after all, the Sum Emperor had prepared for such a long time and would have been aware of the existence of a Grandmaster among the Aristocratic Families. Therefore, it was likely that he had long been ready to deal with the Grandmaster of the Aristocratic Families.

After hearing Dongfang Yi's plans, the patriarch Dongfang Qi stroked his white beard and then spoke, "With the Son of Destiny now revealed, we indeed should not continue to be involved in the conflict between the court and the Aristocratic Families."

They had initially chosen to cooperate with the Sum Emperor and side with the court mainly because they had their own mission.

Rebellion carried too many uncertainties. If they wanted to play it safe, they needed to hedge their bets.

Now that the Son of Destiny had appeared in the North Country, why should they bide their time any longer? They might as well flee to the North Country. What was the point of serving the court and the Southern Aristocratic Families anymore?

The Dongfang Clan was a commercial family, and the mission of a commercial family was to make money for the Son of Destiny. Staying in Sufeng City and meddling in the conflict between the court and the Southern Aristocratic Families would only delay fulfilling their family's mission.

Seeing that the patriarch had spoken, Dongfang Yi added, "Since you, father, have said so, then it's settled. We'll make the preparations. Once the battle up front breaks out, we'll take our merchant ships and head for the North Country by sea."

This was still the Land Power Era, and people did not pay much attention to the seas. Only the Dongfang Clan had built several large merchant ships. If they were to head for the North Country

by sea, it was highly unlikely the Southern Aristocratic Families would notice, unless they were under constant surveillance by them.

However, the Brocade Guard of the North Country had already infiltrated the South, so the Dongfang Family would be able to receive advance notice of any movement by the Aristocratic Families through the Brocade Guard, so there was no need to worry too much about being discovered.

As for resupplying the merchant ships en route to the North, that was even less of a concern. The Dongfang Family had already reached an agreement with the Sum Emperor, and their ships could stop at ports governed by the court during their journey northward.

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Chapter 345: The Birth of the Sixth Child_1

The Qian Family, in one of the separate courtyards.

Inside the courtyard, birds chirped, and flowers bloomed while various colored carps swam back and forth in the pond, shuttling non-stop among the lotus leaves.

A woman dressed in a red phoenix robe stood in the pavilion of the separate courtyard, quietly watching the carp in the pond.

At that moment, a corpulent man entered the yard and, upon arriving outside the pavilion, immediately bowed and said,

“This humble one greets Princess Junwan!”

Wu Junwan responded indifferently, “Rise.”

Qian Dahai promptly got up.

Wu Junwan then said, “President Qian, you should know why I personally left the palace to see you this time, shouldn’t you?”

Qian Dahai immediately said, “Presumably Princess Junwan is here because the North Prince wants this commoner to serve as the Minister of the Ministry of Commerce in the North Country.”

Wu Junwan didn’t turn around; she continued looking at the koi swimming in the pond.

“President Qian, you are very clever. It is because of your cleverness that the Qian Family has been able to develop to this point, and that the Qianhai Commercial Association has become the wealthiest commercial association in Great Wu.”

Hearing this, Qian Dahai pretty much guessed why Wu Junwan came to see him personally—it was clearly a warning, but he didn’t mind at all.

“Thank you for the compliment, Princess.”

Wu Junwan then asked, “In your letter, you only mentioned that the North Prince met you alone and mentioned what benefits he planned to offer you. I am very curious, did the North Prince promise you any benefits?”

Qian Dahai said, “The North Prince told this commoner that the North Country is different from all other dynastic nations; it is a country that emphasizes commerce, where the status of merchants will be greatly elevated. In North Country, everyone is important, there is no hierarchical ranking like scholars, farmers, workers, and merchants.”

“As long as this commoner joins North Country, the future will see North Country prosper because of this commoner, and this commoner will have his name remembered in history because of North Country. Furthermore, the North Prince has promised this commoner that after the Qian Family moves to North Country, some of the North Prince Mansion’s industries will be transferred to the Qian Family, making the Qian Family even more prosperous in the future.”

Upon hearing this, Wu Junwan chuckled lightly, “This little man is quite interesting, trying to steal people right from under my nose.”

The smile on Wu Junwan’s face was natural, with no hint of anger.

At this point, Qian Dahai expressed his loyalty, “Princess, the Qian Family is what it is today because of your care; this commoner will definitely not betray you. On the fourth day after the North Prince met with this commoner alone, this commoner immediately returned to Great Wu; this commoner will not leave Great Wu just because of some small profit promised by the North Prince.”

Hearing Qian Dahai’s words, Wu Junwan said indifferently, “Betrayal? The Qian Family joining the North Country is in my interest; how can that be called betrayal?”

“This...” Qian Dahai feigned a stunned look.

At this moment, Wu Junwan turned her head to glance at Qian Dahai, then said, “From today on, you are a man of the North Country.”

Upon hearing this, Qian Dahai immediately knelt down and, with a face full of fear, said, “Princess, this commoner does not wish to go to North Country. The Qian Family has been in Great Wu for over a hundred years; our roots are in Great Wu. How could the Qian Family move to North Country? Did this commoner do something to displease the Princess, so you wish to expel the Qian Family from Great Wu?”

Wu Junwan said, “President Qian, there is no need to be nervous; I do not mean that. The Qian Family will naturally still be the Qian Family of Great Wu. However, I need you to join North Country, to gather more intelligence about North Country for me.”

“Would President Qian be unwilling to do so?”

Qian Dahai hurriedly said, “If this is your highness’s will, this commoner will naturally obey.”

Wu Junwan continued, “President Qian, rest assured, even if the Qian Family moves to North Country, I will not abandon you. If President Qian is worried, you may leave your eldest and second sons in Great Wu to continue managing the entire Qianhai Commercial Association.”

Hearing this, Qian Dahai was not at all surprised; he had already guessed this would be the outcome. Although Wu Junwan verbally expressed trust in him, her heart most certainly still feared a complete betrayal by the Qian Family.

However, Qian Dahai didn't care. Leaving his eldest and second sons in Great Wu could actually help Lu Chen obtain more intelligence about the Great Wu Dynasty, which would be a good thing for the North Country and the North Prince.

At this time, Wu Junwan continued, "President Qian, hurry and pack your belongings, and head for North Country at once. If there's anything in the future, I will have someone notify you."

"Yes, Princess."

Wu Junwan left without further words and departed from the Qian Family.

"Safe travels, Princess!"

After Wu Junwan left the Qian Family, she said to a soldier beside her, "Go and invite the two sons of the Qian Family to the Snowstorm Tavern."

"Yes, Princess," replied the soldier, immediately mounting his horse and heading for the Qianhai Commercial Association.

Although Wu Junwan planned to keep two hostages from the Qian Family in Great Wu, she still had some worries about the Qian Family. To ensure that Qian Dahai would obediently follow her orders, Wu Junwan intended to directly win over the two brothers of the Qian Family.

Only by making the two brothers of the Qian Family wholeheartedly pledge loyalty to her could she better control the Qian Family. However, what Wu Junwan did not know was that the Qian Family's loyalty to Lu Chen was absolute, even that of the two brothers; thus, all her efforts were doomed to be in vain.

No matter how she tried to win over the two brothers of the Qian Family, she would not be able to secure their true loyalty.

Chapter 346: The Birth of the Sixth Child_2

About half a month later, the Qian Family began the gradual move to North Country. With substantial holdings in the Great Wu Dynasty, it certainly wasn't an easy task to relocate to North Country overnight; the Qian Family's move would take several months.

However, Qian Dahai didn't focus his efforts on the move. He had already taken some family members and set off swiftly on horseback for North Country.

Meanwhile.

In North Country, at the North Prince Mansion.

Today was the day Zhou Xiaoxiao was due to give birth. Lying in bed, she was calm and collected with Lu Chen sitting beside her. Zhou Xiaoxiao felt no urgency whatsoever.

She'd already heard from her sister about her experience giving birth last time. As long as the Prince was by their side, they wouldn't experience any pain during childbirth, and within an instant, the child would be born. Thus, Zhou Xiaoxiao was very relaxed.

Still, she had a nagging worry. She feared giving birth to another daughter. Although Lu Chen's affection for his daughters was well-known, deep inside, she couldn't overcome a personal barrier. After all, in this era, her mind had been steeped in the idea of prioritizing male heirs, and changing such a mindset wasn't easy.

At that moment, Lu Chen stroked Zhou Xiaoxiao's cheek and smiled, "Xiaoxiao, no need to be nervous, it will be over soon."

Zhou Xiaoxiao also revealed a hint of a smile, "With the Prince here, your consort isn't nervous."

No sooner had Zhou Xiaoxiao spoken than a pained expression suddenly crossed her face and her complexion turned ashen.

Seeing this, Lu Chen didn't hesitate to use the Rejuvenating Skill on Zhou Xiaoxiao.

Soon after, just as when Lu Chen helped Zhou Youyou give birth last time, his spiritual power entered Zhou Xiaoxiao's body and the gentle spiritual power wrapped around the child in her womb.

Quickly after, the infant slid out from Zhou Xiaoxiao's body. In the next moment, the room echoed with the child's tearing cries as the midwife and maids hurried to bathe the baby and cut the umbilical cord.

Feeling considerably lightened, Zhou Xiaoxiao was a bit dazed. Although she had heard from her sister how easy childbirth was with the Prince present, this was her first experience. She didn't expect it to be so effortless, the baby really born in an instant.

Lu Chen continued to treat Zhou Xiaoxiao, and a short while later, the midwife approached him with the child and said, "Congratulations, Prince, it's a son."

Hearing this, Zhou Xiaoxiao, lying on the bed, let out a sigh of relief. Thankfully, it was a boy this time.

Lu Chen then took the infant boy from the midwife's hands and placed him beside Zhou Xiaoxiao. Before she could ask about a name, he said, "From today on, your name will be Lu Zi'an."

The infant boy, originally crying loudly, suddenly fell silent upon hearing Lu Chen's words, even smiling.

Seeing this, Zhou Xiaoxiao said contentedly, "Prince, An'er seems to like the name you picked too. Look, he stopped crying as soon as he heard it."

Lu Chen smiled but didn't reveal the real reason. Lu Zi'an had stopped crying not because of his name, but because Lu Chen had used the Rejuvenating Skill to calm him.

The infant's skin was still rather sensitive. As soon as he felt the gentle spiritual power, Lu Zi'an felt incredibly comfortable and therefore stopped crying, instead showing a smile.

Of course, these were trivial matters. There was no need for Lu Chen to voice them out. At that moment, he was more interested in what reward the system would bestow upon him.

This was his sixth child. The system had once mentioned that the more children he had, the richer the reward could potentially be.

He wondered what the system would reward him with this time.

While Lu Chen was thinking this, a system notification chimed in his ear.

[Congratulations to the host for gaining an heir. Reward: two Master Level Military Generals, one hundred thousand soldiers proficient in aquatic operations, with a bonus reward of six hundred thousand civilians.]

Surprised by the reward, Lu Chen paused. He hadn't expected to be rewarded with a population again.

However, considering his current situation, the hundred thousand soldiers proficient in water didn't seem to have much immediate use. It was the Land Power Era, after all, where wars mostly occurred on land, with few opportunities to employ a Navy.

Nevertheless, since the system had rewarded him, it was best to accept it.

Afterward, Lu Chen set that matter aside. He spent some more time with Zhou Xiaoxiao until she had fully recovered, then left her room and went to his study alone.

Arriving at his study, Lu Chen immediately opened the system to review the rewards.

"System, where are these hundred thousand soldiers and six hundred thousand civilians now?"

[These seven hundred thousand individuals have been given the identity of Great Shang Adherents and are currently located on an island in the eastern sea of North Country called Wind Cloud Island.]

The sea?

No wonder the system mentioned their proficiency in water.

Lu Chen continued to ask, "Are the Master Level Military Generals granted as rewards also on Wind Cloud Island?"

[Yes, those two Grandmasters lead that military force.]

[The host has one opportunity to issue a direct command. Would you like to issue an order?]

Lu Chen responded without hesitation, “Have them bring some soldiers to North Country immediately. There’s no need for everyone to come, just a few thousand will suffice; the rest can stay quartered on Wind Cloud Island.”

Chapter 347: The Birth of the Sixth Child_3

[The host’s command was conveyed, and Military General Wei Siyuan had led ten thousand soldiers to set sail on warships to the North Country.]

After hearing the system notification, Lu Chen immediately spoke to the maid outside the door, “Have someone call for Wu Yuan to come here.”

“Yes, Prince.”

Before long, Wu Yuan appeared in Lu Chen’s study, “I pay respects to the Prince. What commands do you have for your subordinate, Prince?”

Lu Chen said, “You take some of the Brocade Guards to the seaside to meet the army returning by sea to the Prince.”

“The General leading them is named Wei Siyuan.”

Wu Yuan was not too surprised, as it was normal for people to come to pledge allegiance to the Son of Destiny, and he promptly said, “Your subordinate obeys.”

Lu Chen said, “All right, you may go.”

“Your subordinate takes his leave.”

After Wu Yuan left, Lu Chen also planned to leave the study, but just at that moment, a seductive figure appeared at the door of the study.

Wang Qingci said with a charming demeanor, "Congratulations, Prince, for gaining another descendant."

Hearing this, Lu Chen said with a smile, "Why don't you also have one for me some day?"

Qingci replied somberly, "This one is already a Half-step Grandmaster; it's not so easy for me to become pregnant."

At this point, Qingci walked into the study, placed the intelligence report in her hand on the table, and then said, "The Princess Junwan of Great Wu personally led troops to suppress the remaining rebels in the southwest who refused to surrender. It is heard that her prestige in the Great Wu army is very high, and it's possible that there might be another Empress in the future."

Hearing Qingci's words, Lu Chen opened the intelligence report that Qingci had placed on the table and glanced at it quickly.

Qingci continued, "The conflict between Great Yue and the Barbarian Tribe has ended. The Great Yue Empress led her army into battle personally, and it's rumored that the Barbarian Army crumbled and fled at the mere sight of the Great Yue Empress's countenance on the battlefield."

"The Prince should pay attention to the situation in the North Land these days."

Hearing Qingci's words, Lu Chen furrowed his brows and then curiously asked, "Isn't it true that the Barbarian Tribe had assembled nearly five hundred thousand troops? How did they fall so quickly?"

Qingci said, "The exact situation on the battlefield has not been thoroughly investigated by our people, but one thing we can confirm is that the Barbarian Tribe indeed suffered a great defeat. The Great Yue Empress is formidable; this one surmises that her strength is very likely above that of a Grandmaster."

Lu Chen fell into deep thought, recognizing that the Great Yue Empress was not a simple character since she was able to defeat several large Barbarian tribal coalitions in such a short time. Moreover, the Da Yue Dynasty didn't have the advanced weaponry that North Country possessed.

Capable of defeating the Barbarian Army so quickly with cold weapons alone meant that Great Yue was a fearsome opponent, especially since Great Yue bordered the North Country at its southwestern corner.

Originally, when Great Yue had stationed more than two hundred thousand troops at the border of the North Country, Lu Chen hadn't considered the Da Yue army a threat, seeing the Da Yue Dynasty as newly founded and lacking real strength. Now it seemed he had underestimated the Da Yue Dynasty.

It appeared that in the future, he would have to be wary of the Da Yue Dynasty.

Of course, now was not the time to focus on the Da Yue Dynasty. With the Barbarian Tribe suffering defeat at the hands of Great Yue, it was likely that some of the Barbarians would migrate to the North Land. Furthermore, there was another possibility: the Barbarian Tribe might try to regain their confidence by taking it out on someone else.

Lu Chen wasn't familiar with the situation in the west, but the Da Yue and North Country's borders were adjacent to the area where the Barbarian Tribe was active. If the Barbarian Tribe didn't move west but instead came east, then it was highly likely they would attack North Country.

This was not impossible—the Barbarian Tribe from the northwest had attacked Great Sum in the past.

Having suffered a defeat in Great Yue, losing face, Lu Chen didn't believe those Barbarians would just let it be.

If the Barbarian Tribe decided to advance eastward, if they reached North Land, or if they set out to attack North Country, it would be the perfect opportunity to drill the troops.

At this thought, Lu Chen immediately said to the maid outside the door, "Xiao Huan, notify the generals that they are to come to the Hall of Political Affairs for a military meeting at dawn tomorrow."

"Yes, Prince."

At this moment, Qingci said, "Prince, if there is nothing else, this one shall take her leave first."

Hearing this, Lu Chen teased, “Don’t you want to eat your fill before you go back?”

Qingci gave Lu Chen a resentful look and then said, “With the Prince being so busy recently, this one would not want to bother you, lest a certain jealous one starts to nag this one again.”

Lu Chen said with a laugh, “Very well, then. Today I will let you go, but next time you visit, I will make sure to feed you until you’re full.”

Qingci pouted and did not say much more before she left the study.

Just as Qingci departed, Qin Yushan entered the study. Seeing that Qin Yushan was holding a bamboo tube used to transmit intelligence, Lu Chen asked, “Is it intelligence from the Capital City?”

Qin Yushan placed the newly arrived bamboo tube on the desk, “Yes, the Brocade Guards from the Capital City have run into some issues recently. Our people seem to have been discovered by the Shadow Guards, and the Shadow Guards are conducting a thorough search for the Brocade Guards.”

Upon hearing this, Lu Chen was stunned for a moment.

Lu Chen had known for a long time that the Brocade Guard would eventually be exposed. Previously, when the Brocade Guard was inactive, very few people were aware of its existence.

However, since the Brocade Guard had been put into operation, it had been gathering all kinds of intelligence, and additionally, the number of people in the Brocade Guard had increased significantly in this period.

Once the numbers increased, problems with management could arise, and it wasn’t surprising that the Brocade Guard in the Capital City was detected by his father’s Shadow Guard.

Coming back to his senses, Lu Chen opened the intelligence report from the Capital City and looked at it carefully, while Qin Yushan continued, “The imperial army has already marched southward, and according to observations by Commander Liang, the court has sent at least three Grandmasters to the South this time, not including Situ Ce.”

Hearing Qin Yushan's report, Lu Chen was not too surprised, as there were Grandmasters among the Aristocratic Families in the South. If his father wanted to eliminate the Aristocratic Families in the South, he would surely need to send Grandmasters with the army.

Lu Chen spoke while reading the report, "Is there any other intelligence?"

Qin Yushan said, "Recently, the remnants of Chen Nation within the Great Sum territory have become more active and appear to be gathering towards North Country."

Chapter 348: The Door is Open, Come on In_1

Upon hearing Qin Yushan mention the remnants of Chen Nation, Lu Chen immediately set aside the intelligence report he was holding, lifted his head to glance at Qin Yushan, then continued, "Gathering towards the North Country? Is their number large?"

Qin Yushan replied, "Many. The Palace Master of the Mysterious Moon Palace has issued a call to arms, planning to take advantage of the Great Sum's internal strife to restore their nation."

At this point, Qin Yushan looked at Lu Chen and then asked, "Prince, do we need to stop those people from Chen Nation from coming to the North Country?"

Qin Yushan knew that the Palace Master of the Mysterious Moon Palace had been living in the Prince's Mansion, and it was clear to any discerning eye that Lu Chen was definitely interested in the Palace Master of the Mysterious Moon Palace.

Unsure whether Lu Chen had succeeded with Chen Wanrong, Qin Yushan found the affair regarding Chen Nation somewhat difficult to deal with through the Brocade Guard.

Lu Chen said with a smile, "Since they wish to come, then let them come."

Lin Wanyun had been thoroughly bamboozled by him by now; she could no longer leave him and had become his person, and Chen Wanrong was close behind.

Mu Zixuan and the two Xiaozhous had already been pregnant twice, so Lu Chen no longer intended to let them have more children. He planned to let them rest for a few years, focusing next on the women in the Prince's Mansion who possessed inner strength, with Chen Wanrong being one of them.

Chen Wanrong was too saintly, which is why he never entertained those thoughts in front of her. Lu Chen knew very well that to entertain wicked thoughts in front of Chen Wanrong, a "fairy," he would need to become close to her. Next, he would look for opportunities to get close to Chen Wanrong.

Finding an opportunity to get close to Chen Wanrong was very easy because she too was looking for such an opportunity to bewitch him with her gu; they were both eagerly rushing towards each other.

At that moment, Lu Chen asked, "Any other intelligence?"

Qin Yushan continued, "The Dongfang Family plans to move directly to the North Country. I am not sure if the Dongfang Family Master's letter has reached your hands, Prince."

Because the Brocade Guard made extensive use of the Pigeon Letter, their intelligence was often quicker than that delivered by horse. Even as Dongfang Yi's letter was still en route, Qin Yushan was already aware of the Dongfang Family's plan to migrate to the North Country.

Upon hearing this from Qin Yushan, Lu Chen curiously asked, "Move to the North Country at this time? War has already broken out in the South, how can they extricate themselves?"

Qin Yushan answered, "Their plan is to use the Dongfang Family's large merchant ships to come directly by sea to the North Country."

After hearing Qin Yushan's explanation, Lu Chen realized that, as rumored, the Dongfang Family's large merchant ships were even bigger than the warships of the Great Sum court and could transport a great many things.

The Sum Emperor, in order to catch the aristocratic families of the South off guard, even borrowed the Dongfang Family's merchant ships to transport some imperial soldiers to the South.

If they were to come by sea, indeed, they would not be easily discovered.

With this thought, Lu Chen said, “Dongfang Yi’s letter should still take a few days to arrive. If they wish to migrate here, then let them. As long as they are not discovered, that will suffice.”

Lu Chen had originally planned to have the Dongfang Clan act as undercover agents, lying dormant on his father emperor’s side, and then one day, when he needed them, he would have them switch to his side.

But seeing how eager the Dongfang Family was to flee to the North Country, Lu Chen had mostly guessed the Dongfang Family’s thinking.

They probably believed that the Sum Emperor might end up killing the donkey after the milling is done, so they decided to escape in advance, letting the imperial army and Jiangnan’s aristocratic families, led by Lu Shuyun, slowly fight it out.

At this point, Qin Yushan said, “That’s all the intelligence for now. If the Prince has no other orders, your subordinate will take his leave.”

Lu Chen said, “Mhm, you may go.”

“Your subordinate takes his leave.”

Qin Yushan then turned and left the study.

...

After the Great Sum’s imperial army headed south, fierce battles broke out with the rebel forces led by Lu Shuyun. In just a short month’s time, hundreds of thousands perished.

The war was more brutal than people had anticipated, with many commoners choosing to head north to avoid being swept into the conflict.

Lu Chen had the Brocade Guard spread quite a bit of information to the South about redistribution of land in the North Country. The common people knew that the land in the North Country wouldn’t belong to them, but the crops they grew on it did, and there were no agricultural taxes to pay. Just

for that alone, the North Country wasn't a loss; it was certainly better than being affected by the war and dying in it.

For the refugees to travel to the North Country, they would have to pass through Qi Country, which gave the Qi Prince a major headache. When Great Sum had ceded three provinces to Great Wu, a large influx of refugees had already poured into Qi Country. Now, with Great Sum's civil war, more refugees were running to Qi Country.

With no better options, the Qi Prince had no choice but to send envoys once again to North Country and transferred all those refugees to the North Country. This further bolstered the population of the North Country.

When Lu Chen ordered a new population count, the North Country's population had already exceeded five million. With such a sudden surplus in labor, the North Country was poised for rapid development.

Meanwhile.

Great Sum, Capital city.

Within the Royal Garden.

The Sum Emperor was playing chess with the State Preceptor, Situ Ce. The hand that Situ Ce used to hold the chess piece paused above the board as he scrutinized the entire game, then asked, "Your Majesty, you are willing to abandon such an important piece?"

The Sum Emperor responded indifferently, "To me, as long as I can achieve the final victory, nothing is irreplaceable."

No sooner had the Sum Emperor uttered these words than the leader of the Shadow Guard appeared outside the pavilion, "Your Majesty, the Brocade Guard in the Capital city have almost entirely vanished overnight, and those we captured have all taken poison to commit suicide."

Chapter 349: The Door is Open, Come on In_2

Upon hearing the Shadow Guard Commander's report, the face of the Sum Emperor instantly darkened.

He said coldly, "To have those Brocade Guards willingly take poison and commit suicide, Chen has quite the skill!"

Generally, those who are caught and immediately commit suicide can be considered devoted soldiers. What the Sum Emperor didn't expect was that Lu Chen had cultivated so many loyal to death.

The Sum Emperor had only recently learned about the Brocade Guard; not long before, the Shadow Guard had accidentally discovered their existence while investigating matters related to Lu Shuyun. Further inquiries by the Shadow Guard revealed that the Brocade Guard was a massive intelligence organization similar to the Shadow Guard, and their information-gathering capabilities had even surpassed those of the Shadow Guard.

The Shadow Guard immediately reported this matter to the Sum Emperor. When the Sum Emperor learned of the Brocade Guard's existence, he flew into a rage. He had established the Shadow Guard mainly to collect intelligence throughout Great Sum, to monitor officials, and most importantly, to conduct dirty deeds on his behalf.

He had never anticipated that someone else had set up a similar organization. The Sum Emperor immediately ordered the Shadow Guard to investigate the Brocade Guard. To his dismay, upon investigation, it turned out that the Brocade Guard was actually an intelligence agency of the North Country, and furthermore, it was publicly known.

This infuriated the Sum Emperor even more. He wasn't even dead yet and Lu Chen had created an organization akin to the Shadow Guard. What was he trying to do, stage a coup?

In a fit of anger, the Sum Emperor ordered all Brocade Guards within the Capital City to be eradicated. However, the result was not very effective. Knowing they had been exposed, the Brocade Guards immediately went into hiding.

The Brocade Guards were essentially contacted through individual channels, making it difficult to capture all of them through one person. The most critical point was the Brocade Guards' absolute loyalty to the North Prince; even if one was captured, they would not reveal anything.

Because of the Brocade Guard's actions, the Sum Emperor promptly gave up on Bai Qingqing, the Deputy Commander of the Shadow Guard. This was the important chess piece that Situ Ce had just mentioned as having been sacrificed.

The Sum Emperor had already noticed that although Bai Qingqing had been relaying intelligence about the North Country to the Imperial Court and to him, she had completely omitted some critical information about the North Country in her reports.

Most crucially, the Brocade Guard was a publicly known intelligence agency of North Country, but Bai Qingqing, the Deputy Commander of the Shadow Guard, had never once reported on the Brocade Guard in her intelligence briefings from beginning to end.

Bai Qingqing had already climbed into Lu Chen's bed, becoming his confidante, yet she still knew very little about Lu Chen's affairs.

The Sum Emperor did not believe that Bai Qingqing, having shared a bed with Lu Chen for so long, had failed to uncover any useful intelligence. It was evident that Bai Qingqing had defected.

Although he didn't know why Bai Qingqing had betrayed the Imperial Court, the Sum Emperor was certain that he would no longer trust the intelligence she sent back in the future.

The fact that Lu Chen had managed to subjugate an emotionless Deputy Commander of the Shadow Guard deepened the Sum Emperor's wariness of Lu Chen or, to be exact, of the power behind him.

At this moment, the Sum Emperor said to the Shadow Guard Commander, "Bai Qingqing was selected and trained by you. Since she has betrayed the Shadow Guard, you will take care of it."

The Shadow Guard Commander immediately responded, "Your subordinate obeys."

The Sum Emperor said, "Go now. Leave not a single Shadow Guard hidden in the North Country."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"Your subordinate takes his leave."

Afterwards the Shadow Guard Commander left the Royal Garden.

After the departure of the Shadow Guard Commander, the Sum Emperor no longer continued his game of chess. He rose from his seat and walked out of the pavilion, hands clasped behind his back, as he watched the fish swimming leisurely in the lotus pond.

He couldn't help but wonder if Lu Chen could be the illegitimate son of Zhuge Zhongguang and Chu Yue. However, Zhuge Zhongguang had already been over a hundred years old decades ago, and Chu Yue was in the prime of her youth; it seemed inconceivable that she would fancy an old man.

If Lu Chen wasn't the illegitimate child of Zhuge Zhongguang and Chu Yue, then why would Zhuge stand by Lu Chen, even moving the entire Universal Academy to North Country?

As the Sum Emperor's thoughts were in utter disarray, a Shadow Guard soldier entered the Royal Garden, "Your Majesty, merchant ships of the Dongfang Clan have recently been transporting grain to North Country. Should we intercept them?"

His eyebrows furrowed at these words, his expression turning even grimmer. It seemed as if gusts of cutting wind rose in the air, and the carps in the lotus pond, as if startled by something, dived deep into the water.

The Dongfang Clan had already reached a cooperation agreement with him, yet at this moment, instead of focusing on assisting the Imperial Army in eradicating the rebels, they were conducting business.

The Sum Emperor didn't suspect that the Dongfang Clan's merchant ships heading to North Country had any ulterior motives. In his eyes, merchants were profit-driven, and with the current internal strife in Great Sum jacking up the price of grain several times over, it didn't surprise him at all that the Dongfang Family was looking to make money in these times.

However, the actions of the Dongfang Family greatly displeased him.

After a moment, the Sum Emperor finally said, "If the Dongfang Family's merchant ships require supplies, provide them with whatever they need. In addition, assign someone to escort the Dongfang Family's merchant ships to North Country."

Although the Sum Emperor didn't believe the Dongfang Family would turn around and head north with the rebels at this time, it was best to be cautious when necessary.

Chapter 350: The Door is Open, Come on In_3

"Yes, your subordinate has understood."

"Your subordinate shall take his leave."

As the words fell, the Shadow Guard soldier left the Royal Garden.

After the Shadow Guard soldier had left, a trace of icy light flashed in the Sum Emperor's eyes. In his view, the Dongfang Family dared to conduct business at this time because they relied on having established a cooperative relationship, believing the royal family wouldn't dare to do anything to them, which was why they were so brazen.

The behavior of the Dongfang Family clearly showed that they did not regard him, the Emperor, highly.

The Dongfang Family was already acting this way before entering the court; who knew what they would be like once they did.

However, the Sum Emperor would not act against the Dongfang Family over this small move. The Dongfang Family did not belong to the Ancient Families and lacked a stable power base. Once the other aristocratic families in the South were eradicated, the Dongfang Family would lose their foothold.

Eradicating an aristocratic family without any foundation is the easiest.

For now, let the Dongfang Family indulge for a few days. Once the aristocratic families of Great Sum have been dealt with, he would slowly take care of the Dongfang Family.

...

North Country.

North Prince Mansion, Yunrong Courtyard.

At dusk, the fiery red sunset filled the sky, and the red glow bathed the world in a bronze hue.

At this moment, Chen Wanrong in the pavilion was looking at the intelligence report in her hand, her face devoid of any fluctuations.

At that time, her gaze lightly glanced at Lin Wanyun, who was sorting the intelligence.

In recent days, Lin Wanyun had been leaving every night, and she would not return until daylight.

As for what she was doing outside, Chen Wanrong had more or less guessed in her heart. Clearly, Lin Wanyun was having an affair with Lu Chen.

Every time Lin Wanyun returned at dawn, she appeared very tired, and her clothes were often torn.

For some reason, Chen Wanrong felt that Lin Wanyun was becoming more mature, more dignified and virtuous, and there was a significant change in her demeanor; she now more closely resembled a married woman.

Chen Wanrong couldn't help but wonder if this was because she had been defiled by Lu Chen, which was why there was such a great change in her temperament?

At this point, Lin Wanyun finished sorting the intelligence and looked up at Chen Wanrong, saying, "Palace Master, Wei Siyuan should arrive at Yan County within a few days."

Upon hearing Lin Wanyun's words, Chen Wanrong snapped back to reality and said emotionlessly, "Hmm."

Lin Wanyun asked, "Palace Master, who is this Wei Siyuan? I remember you used to correspond with him frequently through letters?"

Lin Wanyun was not from Chen Nation and therefore did not have a deep understanding of it, even less of its former powers.

She guessed that this Wei Siyuan was probably from Chen Nation; otherwise, Chen Wanrong would not correspond with him so frequently through letters.

Chen Wanrong replied, “He is a descendant of the loyal and good of Chen Nation. After Chen Nation was destroyed, the Wei Family escaped and took refuge on a small island known as Wind Cloud Island. They developed their forces on Wind Cloud Island, waiting for the day Chen Nation would be restored.”

Lin Wanyun revealed, “I see.”

At that time, Chen Wanrong said, “Madam Lin, I need to go out tonight.”

Hearing this, Lin Wanyun was momentarily stunned, then she asked, “Where are you going, Palace Master?”

Lin Wanyun thought about the fact that she still hadn’t found the antidote from Lu Chen; what if Chen Wanrong had a poison outbreak while out and about?

Chen Wanrong replied, “Some of the former officials of Chen Nation have already arrived at Yan County. I’m going to meet with them tonight.”

Lin Wanyun suggested, “Then I’ll accompany you.”

Chen Wanrong said, “There’s no need. Madam Lin, you haven’t been feeling well these past few days. You should rest well tonight.”

Lin Wanyun’s mind went blank for a moment.

In fact, it wasn’t that she was unwell, but rather that being roused every day left her brain slightly fuzzy, sometimes making her walk as if she were floating.

Lin Wanyun said, “Alright then.”

Lin Wanyun planned to ask Lu Chen in the evening about how long Chen Wanrong could last outside the Prince's Mansion without the antidote.

With this in mind, Lin Wanyun continued to ask, "Palace Master, where will you be meeting tonight?"

Lin Wanyun thought that if Chen Wanrong couldn't endure the poison for an entire night, knowing where Chen Wanrong was going would allow her to rush to the scene immediately if necessary.

Chen Wanrong answered indifferently, "The tavern in the southern city of Mysterious Moon Palace."

Lin Wanyun said, "I understand. Palace Master, if anything happens, remember to notify me right away."

Chen Wanrong softly uttered "Hmm" and then said no more.

After nightfall, Chen Wanrong took a carriage to the southern city, while Lu Chen, having finished dinner, planned to go to the study to handle some affairs. He just happened to see Chen Wanrong leaving the North Prince Mansion.

Seeing Chen Wanrong leave the North Prince Mansion, Lu Chen changed his route and headed for the Yunrong Courtyard.

At that time, the light in Lin Wanyun's room was still on; seeing this, Lu Chen's lips curved up slightly.

Working overtime there wasn't really working; he decided not to go to the study to work overtime tonight, but to Lin Wanyun's room instead.

With that thought, Lu Chen made his way to Lin Wanyun's room.

At that moment, Lin Wanyun was sitting in her room, sewing clothes, and judging by the size, they were clearly intended for a child.

Although Lin Wanyun had not yet conceived Lu Chen's child, she understood that if she didn't bear Lu Chen a child, he would likely not let her be. Thus, she planned to prepare several sets of clothes for her future child, as she had time on her hands.

As Lin Wanyun was sewing intently, a knock on the door suddenly sounded, jolting her into alertness, "Who is it?"

Chen Wanrong had already left the North Prince Mansion, so at this hour, no one should be visiting her room. Just then, the familiar voice of a young man reached her ears.

"Madam Lin, it's me."

Hearing Lu Chen's voice, Lin Wanyun's plump body involuntarily trembled slightly.

Soon after, Lin Wanyun regained her composure, quickly put down the clothes she was working on, and stuffed them all into a bamboo basket, which she then hid in the cupboard.

After finishing all this, Lin Wanyun spoke, "The door is unlocked, come in."