

Es. Benefits 431

Chapter 431: Chu Yuqin is pregnant_3

The maidservants were all baffled by Chu Qingli's insistence, and seeing that she was determined to proceed in this manner, they could only stop advising against it. Now, all they hoped was that this matter would remain unknown to the Prince, otherwise, they feared that they might also face punishment.

Time ticked away, second by second.

In the afternoon, as Mu Zixuan and Lu Chen's concubines passed by the southern courtyard, they couldn't help but lift the corners of their mouths into smiles upon hearing the faint sounds that drifted from within.

The women of the inner palace were all aware of Lu Chen's attraction to Chu Yuqin, and now that Lu Chen had finally had his way, his concubines also rejoiced on his behalf.

At the same time, the addition of two sisters to Lu Chen's harem was good news for them too, since it meant there were two more people to share the responsibilities.

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Happy times always fly by quickly, and the afternoon soon passed, but Lu Chen's happiness was far from over.

Mu Zixuan and Lu Chen's concubines were still enjoying tea in the main courtyard when they noticed the crimson glow in the sky. With a smile, Mu Zixuan said, "It should be over by now, right?"

"It seems we'll have to compensate the Prince well tonight."

Upon hearing Mu Zixuan's words, the other women knew exactly what she meant. Yelv Nanyan said with a laugh, "Based on what I know of the Prince, I'm afraid he will be having his dinner in Yuqin's room tonight."

Yelv Nanyan had the best understanding of Lu Chen's capabilities. Although Mu Zixuan was the first to marry Lu Chen and had spent the longest time with him, she, along with Xiaozhou and Dazhou, were ordinary people. When interacting with these three, Lu Chen never brought his full strength to bear against them.

But Yelv Nanyan was different—already a Half-step Grandmaster—combined with her body, which was as soft and warm as cotton, Lu Chen seldom concealed his true power when visiting her.

Hence, Yelv Nanyan believed that there was a high probability that Lu Chen was still in Chu Yuqin's room. After hearing Yelv Nanyan's comments, Mu Zixuan thought for a moment and then said, "Whether the Prince has come out or not, let's prepare in advance."

Continuing, Mu Zixuan instructed a maidservant:

"Xiao Rou, go tell the kitchen to prepare some extra nourishing dishes for the Prince."

"Yes, My Lady."

After Xiao Rou departed, Mu Zixuan ordered another maidservant: "Qing'er, go to the southern courtyard and check if the Prince is finished."

"Yes, My Lady."

Having instructed the maidservants, the women continued to drink tea.

After a short while, Qing'er returned and said to Mu Zixuan, "My Lady, the Prince is still occupied."

Hearing the maidservant's words, Mu Zixuan murmured, "It seems the Prince won't be leaving the southern courtyard tonight."

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Mu Zixuan was not mistaken; Lu Chen indeed did not leave the southern courtyard all night, not only that, he didn't even step out of Chu Yuqin's room.

Next door, Chu Qingli was so agitated that she wanted to rush in with a sword and chop Lu Chen to pieces.

After listening for an entire night in her room, she was utterly tormented, yet Lu Chen did not come to her, instead choosing to afflict her sister.

At dawn.

After Mu Zixuan got up, she had the kitchen prepare breakfast, planning to have the maidservants deliver it directly to the southern courtyard once Lu Chen woke up.

Mu Zixuan, holding her child, stood in the pavilion enjoying the morning breeze. Then a maidservant approached her and said, "My Lady, the Prince is still occupied."

This...

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After hearing the maid's words, Mu Zixuan was taken aback. It had already been an afternoon and an evening, and Lu Chen still hadn't finished his work?

Mu Zixuan then said, "Let the kitchen send the prepared meals to the other courtyards, and make another one for the Prince."

Since Lu Chen was still busy, the previously prepared meals obviously couldn't be left for him anymore. As the Prince, he naturally deserved the freshest food.

Noon.

After Mu Zixuan finished her lunch, she thought of Lu Chen again and said to the maid, "Xiao Rou, go see if the Prince has woken up."

Upon hearing this, the maid hurriedly went to the southern courtyard. In a short while, the maid Xiao Rou came back.

With a blush on her face, Xiao Rou said, "My lady, the Prince is still busy."

Hearing this, both Dazhou and Xiaozhou sitting beside Mu Zixuan were stunned.

Still busy?

Hasn't it been a whole day?

Zhou Youyou whispered, "Sister Zixuan, could there be a problem?"

Mu Zixuan thought for a moment, and said with some uncertainty, "The Prince should know his limits. I guess there shouldn't be any problems."

Just like that, the women didn't take the matter to heart.

Evening.

At dinner time, the women remembered Lu Chen, who was still in the southern courtyard.

Usually, they all waited for Lu Chen to come back before eating dinner together. Looking at the nutritious foods on the table, Mu Zixuan once again said to the maid, "Qing'er, go and see if the Prince has woken up."

No sooner had Mu Zixuan spoken than Yelv Nanyan entered the main hall from outside. With a smile on her face, she said, "Qing'er, there's no need to go check. I just passed by the southern courtyard, and the Prince is still busy."

"The Prince he..."

Mu Zixuan wanted to say something, but swallowed the words before they could leave her mouth. After a moment, she finally said, "Since the Prince won't be coming back tonight, let's eat first. Later, I'll have the kitchen continue making fresh food for the Prince."

Meanwhile.

Southern Courtyard.

The southern courtyard had quieted down. After a night and a day of noise, it now seemed especially peaceful. Lu Chen was sprawled on Chu Yuqin's back, checking the system's notifications.

[Congratulations to the host for acquiring a wife and being rewarded with the Steel Smelting Technology 2.0 Version.]

[The host and wife cultivated affection, acquiring 1000 experience points for Qi Refinement Mantra, 1000 for Rejuvenating Skill, 1000 for Dragon-Phoenix Yin-Yang Spell, 1000 for Absorption Technique, 1000 for Shadow Shifting, a surge in the host and wife's affection boosts all experience tenfold, Absorption Technique breakthrough to the second layer, elevating the host's strength to the Grandmaster's Zenith Realm.]

[Congratulations to the host for helping Chu Yuqin conceive a child, rewarded with Steam Machine Manufacturing Blueprint.]

[Host and wife achieved mind and heart synchrony×20, rewarded with Train Manufacturing Blueprint, Fertilizer Manufacturing Technology, and 20 Essence Pills.]

Seeing the flood of text, Lu Chen was somewhat stunned.

He had been busy with urgent matters all day yesterday and had completely ignored the system's notification sound. He hadn't expected that after finishing the urgent matters, he would have acquired so many things.

Chapter 432: Has Lu Chen Fallen From Grace?_1

Upon seeing the Essence Pill on the system interface, Lu Chen was curious about what the pill was for, so he promptly clicked to view its information.

[Essence Pill: Taking it can temper meridians and accelerate the strength enhancement of martial artists.]

Upon reading the description of the Essence Pill, Lu Chen was stunned for a moment. Was it really that simple?

It only mentioned the acceleration of a martial artist's strength enhancement, without specifying by how much, providing no reference. How was he to know exactly how precious this pill was?

Forget it, once someone uses it, then he would know how precious the pill was. The effects of the Preserving Beauty Pill they used before were so good, so the effects of this Essence Pill should not be too far off.

At this time, Lu Chen gently stroked Chu Yuqin's hair, a brilliant smile appearing on his face.

It's said that martial artists have difficulty becoming pregnant, and his other powerful wives had yet to conceive his child up to now. But Chu Yuqin was completely different from them.

Now a Half-step Grandmaster herself, Chu Yuqin had conceived his child the very first time they were intimate.

It seemed that there really was a great difference in constitution between martial artists, and perhaps some women are simply more prone to pregnancy.

Chu Yuqin, who was sprawled on the bed, felt her hair being disturbed and spoke in a feeble voice, "Chen... Chen'er..., enough... enough already..."

Although Lu Chen had always used the Rejuvenating Skill to treat Chu Yuqin, and she had not felt any pain, the depletion of her physical energy was very real. She was only a Half-step Grandmaster; how could she be a match for a Grandmaster.

At this point, Chu Yuqin felt her mind was entirely muddled, incapable of pondering any questions.

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Now she finally understood why, when she used to patrol the inner court of the Prince's Mansion, she always heard certain noises. So this was the reason.

Chu Yuqin felt that if this continued, she might completely lose consciousness.

Hearing Chu Yuqin's words, Lu Chen laughed, then whispered into her ear, "Yuqin, what did you just call me?"

"Calling the wrong name deserves a punishment, you know."

Feeling the voice in her ear, Chu Yuqin's delicate body involuntarily trembled.

Punishment? What punishment?

Could it be...?

Scared, Chu Yuqin quickly said, "Darling, I was wrong..."

Seeing Chu Yuqin suddenly get flustered, Lu Chen hugged her slender waist tightly and didn't proceed with his mischief, saying, "If you really can't change your ways, you can continue to call me Chen'er in the future. I like that name; it has a nice ring to it."

Upon hearing this, Chu Yuqin's face immediately flushed with intense heat, realizing Lu Chen's teasing intent—this little rascal just wished to humiliate her.

If she continued calling Lu Chen 'Chen'er,' it meant she was still looking at Lu Chen from the perspective of an elder. For an elder to behave in that manner before Lu Chen, wouldn't it signify that she lacks propriety?

Chu Yuqin huffed at that moment, then said, "Don't think that I don't know what naughty ideas are going through your mind."

Lu Chen smiled faintly, then responded, "What bad thoughts could I possibly have?"

That's when Chu Yuqin spoke up, "Come on, get up already. Qing Li is waiting for you next door."

Lu Chen said, "The night has just fallen; there's no need to rush."

Hearing this, Chu Yuqin immediately felt a bit of annoyance and promptly said, "What do you mean night has just fallen? Do you take me for a fool? It's already the next evening."

Although from yesterday afternoon till just before Lu Chen finished his mischief, she had been mostly groggy, she had somewhat regained consciousness a few times and knew it was now the next day.

Chu Yuqin could also guess why she had managed to hold on until now; this bad guy's Immortal Technique could heal injuries without her feeling the least bit unwell—persisting till now was only too normal.

Seeing Chu Yuqin's emotional tone, Lu Chen chuckled and whispered in her ear, "I thought my wife had already lost her mind and didn't realize it was already the next day. I didn't expect you to find out."

At that moment, Chu Yuqin said, "Qing Li also married you after all. Letting her wait in her room alone for a day and a night—should word get out, it would affect her reputation. You better go to her room quickly."

A woman marrying a man, yet the master doesn't enter the bridal chamber for an entire day and night—if word of this spreads, people might think the woman had something amiss, which kept the master from the bridal chamber all day and night.

Lu Chen remarked, "Alright then, you rest well. I'll go to her room right now." Saying this, Lu Chen finally agreed to part with Chu Yuqin.

After he got up from Chu Yuqin, he prepared to get dressed. Just then, Chu Yuqin slowly turned over, attempting to get up and help Lu Chen dress, but as soon as she moved a bit, she realized she had no strength in her body.

Seeing Chu Yuqin prop herself up only to collapse back down, Lu Chen said with a laugh, "My dear wife, you better rest up. Don't overexert yourself."

Hearing that, Chu Yuqin snorted coldly, looking at Lu Chen with a face full of reproach, "It's all your doing; I don't have any strength left."

Lu Chen chuckled, not teasing Chu Yuqin further. He quickly dressed and then headed straight to Chu Qingli's room next door.

When Lu Chen arrived at Chu Qingli's room, she was already fast asleep on the bed, and Chu Qingli's maidservants had fallen asleep leaning against the bed.

Chapter 433: Has Lu Chen Fallen From Grace?_2

Seeing this scene, Lu Chen was stunned for a moment, realizing that neither of them must have slept last night.

Just then, the maid suddenly awoke and seeing Lu Chen inside the room, she was almost scared out of her wits.

After all, she was a maid brought over as part of a dowry, responsible for Lu Chen and Chu Qingli's marital affairs, and yet before the male master entered the bridal room, she herself had fallen asleep by the bed.

The maid instantly became very panicked, and hurriedly kneeled on the ground, wanting to beg Lu Chen for forgiveness.

But just as she was about to kneel, she found her body being dragged up by an incomprehensible force, and her mouth unable to make a sound, as if invisible hands were covering her mouth.

The maid was desperate, thinking that the North Prince was angry and about to dispose of her on the spot.

However, it was at this moment that she saw the North Prince raise his finger to his lips, and make a "shush" gesture.

Realizing this, the maid understood that the North Prince didn't intend to kill her, but rather, he didn't want her to make noise and wake up Chu Qingli who was deeply asleep in bed.

The maid's heart relaxed.

Lu Chen then whispered to the maid, "You go rest first."

The maid didn't speak, but she bowed to Lu Chen and then quietly tiptoed out of the room.

After the maid left, Lu Chen glanced at Chu Qingli on the bed; she was wearing a red wedding dress, lying there, completely unaware of his presence.

Generally speaking, a high-quality warrior could sense approaching danger even while asleep, and would quickly open their eyes to dodge an attack.

If Lu Chen were anyone else, Chu Qingli should have already woken up by now.

The reason Chu Qingli hadn't woken up and was sleeping so soundly was largely because in her subconscious, Lu Chen was already not considered a threat, therefore, even as Lu Chen approached, Chu Qingli wasn't alerted to any danger.

At this moment, Lu Chen's lips curved into a slight smile. He had played with Chu Qingli hundreds of times already, and her body and mind already belonged to him; it was normal for her not to sense danger in her sleep.

Since she didn't sense any danger, then he, the rascal, was going to take advantage of her.

With that thought, Lu Chen went straight to the bed and gently pressed down.

Even at this stage, Chu Qingli still didn't open her eyes, sleeping very deeply.

However, she was vaguely aware of something as she talked in her sleep, "Lu Chen, you bastard, leave my sister alone, if you dare... come at me..."

At this, Chu Qingli turned her head to the side and continued sleeping. NovelBin-original

Hearing Chu Qingli's sleep talk, Lu Chen chuckled, so you're challenging me to come at you, huh?

Alright, I'm coming at you now.

Then Lu Chen began to carefully remove Chu Qingli's wedding dress.

At this point, no matter how gentle Lu Chen's movements were, they still made Chu Qingli aware of something.

But every time Chu Qingli was about to wake up, Lu Chen stopped and remained completely still, and waited until she fell back into a deep sleep before continuing.

Because Lu Chen was touching Chu Qingli's body, the skill within her was sealed, and when a martial artist is devoid of their skill, their perception greatly decreases. Additionally, since Chu Qingli no longer saw Lu Chen as a threat, she didn't wake up even when he had removed her clothes.

Time passed, and after a while, Lu Chen glanced over Chu Qingli's whole body and smiled to himself, realizing that she had been prepared for his arrival all along.

Since that was the case, he might as well work overtime; no sleep for him tonight.

Then Lu Chen moved closer and captured Chu Qingli's red lips with his own.

Now, Chu Qingli gradually felt that something was amiss. She abruptly opened her eyes, only to find that Lu Chen, the scoundrel, was doing bad things on top of her. Chu Qingli struggled immediately, but Lu Chen didn't mind her and continued with what he was doing.

After struggling for a while, Chu Qingli completely gave up.

Forget it, after all, she was already this man's woman, and she had officially married this scoundrel yesterday. Whatever he wanted to do to her now was his right.

...

Meanwhile.

In the next room.

Chu Yuqin lay on the bed while several maids entered the room to clean up the bed.

The sheets were already soaked through; things that needed changing had to be changed.

At this moment, Chu Yuqin heard noises from the next room, hearing Chu Qingli's voice, she was momentarily stunned.

She had thought that the scoundrel, after being busy all day and night, would go to Chu Qingli's room and finally sleep.

But unexpectedly, he was not behaving himself even after going to Chu Qingli's room, not resting, and continuing to abuse Chu Qingli.

Chu Yuqin sighed, "This scoundrel, he's really not taking care of himself more and more."

In Chu Yuqin's view, even if Lu Chen had become a Grandmaster, he still needed rest. Nowadays, Lu Chen was completely overexerting himself.

Chu Yuqin thought to herself that now she too was Lu Chen's woman, and soon there would be no elders of Lu Chen in the Prince's Mansion, he would probably become even more unrestrained in his actions.

Chapter 434: Has Lu Chen Fallen From Grace?_3

This was not a good thing, and it seemed that she had to continue calling him Chen'er. Even if she wasn't managing him, when Lu Chen heard her addressing him this way, it always gave him the feeling that he still had an elder, and perhaps he would restrain himself a little.

As for whether it was effective, only time would tell.

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As the saying goes, "The tender homeland is the grave of heroes," Chu Yuqin and Chu Qingli's first half month after marrying into the North Prince Mansion, Lu Chen spent every day in the southern courtyard, nearly reaching the state of blissful neglect of his duties, even government affairs were nearly abandoned.

This made Chu Yuqin very worried. She was determined once again that Lu Chen must have an elder to manage him; otherwise, who knew how much longer he would continue to waste away.

Finally, one morning after Lu Chen got up from the gentle jade fragrance of Chu Yuqin's embrace, she directly spoke up, "Chen'er, there's something your aunt must tell you off about."

Hearing Chu Yuqin's tone as that of an elder once again, Lu Chen immediately showed a smile.

Most young people dislike being lectured by their elders, but Chu Yuqin wasn't an ordinary elder. Her status was somewhat special, which could be understood as role-playing, and Lu Chen actually liked this approach.

Lu Chen then said, "Madam Chu, what is it that you wanted to tell me?"

Chu Yuqin was still calling herself 'aunt', so she directly said, "I've heard that you've recently thrown all the government affairs onto Zhuge Zhongguang and haven't been doing anything yourself. Now there are rumors outside that you have completely degenerated." exclusive-to-NovelBin

Hearing this, Lu Chen said with a smile, "Then, Madam Chu, do you think I've degenerated?"

This...

Seeing Lu Chen asking her, Chu Yuqin didn't know what to say.

This bad guy's degeneration was quite obvious, wasn't it? He was coming to her place every day, often staying up all night, then sleeping during the daytime.

Seeing Chu Yuqin not speaking, Lu Chen, smiling, said, "I haven't degenerated. I just wanted to see if, without me, the Prince managing things, my reform policies could continue without any problems. That's why I let the Great Scholar take over all the government work."

Hearing Lu Chen's words, Chu Yuqin looked at him doubtfully, then she said, "When you led the troops to Ningbei City to resist the Tianqi King's army, didn't you leave all government affairs to Zhuge Zhongguang for a month or two? Wasn't that enough to test what you wanted to verify?"

Hearing Chu Yuqin's words, Lu Chen simply stopped pretending and said, "Alright, I'll come clean. I just wanted to do wicked things to you every day and throw the governmental affairs to Zhuge Zhongguang."

Seeing that Lu Chen actually admitted it directly, Chu Yuqin was stunned again, "You... "

Chu Yuqin sighed softly and then said, "Chen'er, you are, after all, the Prince, and you should prioritize state affairs. How can you waste your energy on your aunt every day? If this continues, I'm afraid people will start saying your aunt is a femme fatale."

Lu Chen said with a smile, "If I don't focus my energy on you, how can I make you pregnant with my child?"

Chu Yuqin didn't know at the time that she was already pregnant. She continued, "Children can't be forced, and you know martial artists are not easy to get pregnant. Look at how you visited Yelv Nanyan every day before, and she still hasn't gotten pregnant."

Hearing her words, Lu Chen leaned close to Chu Yuqin's head and whispered in her ear, "I have good news for you. You're actually pregnant."

At those words, Chu Yuqin's whole person froze instantly.

Pregnant?

She was carrying this bad guy's child?

Could that be true?

How come she didn't feel it at all?

Chu Yuqin, in disbelief, asked, "You... you're not lying to me?"

Lu Chen, looking into Chu Yuqin's eyes, teased, "How could I dare to deceive my Madam Chu?"

Chu Yuqin's face turned bright red in an instant, and she said in a soft voice, "You... you should stop calling me Madam Chu."

Chu Yuqin had intended to use her status as an elder to persuade Lu Chen to put his mind on the right path, but she didn't expect to become pregnant with Lu Chen's child so quickly.

If Lu Chen continued to call her 'aunt', what would they call each other after the baby was born? Wouldn't that throw everything into confusion?

Chu Yuqin felt puzzled. How did she get pregnant with this little bad guy's child so quickly? Lu Chen had been visiting Yelv Nanyan every day before, and she hadn't gotten pregnant with his child either.

Seeing Chu Yuqin with a flushed face, Lu Chen said with a smile, "Didn't you just find it so natural to shout 'Chen'er, Chen'er' before, and now all of a sudden, you're telling me not to call you 'aunt'?"

Feeling ashamed, Chu Yuqin said, "Anyway, you shouldn't call me that from now on."

Lu Chen then embraced her and said, "Alright, I understand. From now on, I'll just call you my wife."

Saying this, Lu Chen continued, "Actually, you got pregnant the very first night of our marriage. However, I worried if I only touched you once and then never again, you might think that I had started to despise you, so these past few days I simply stayed in the Prince's Mansion every day, intending to do all that we planned to do during your pregnancy."

Hearing this, Chu Yuqin felt even hotter, not expecting that she would conceive the first time they did such a thing. She seemed too easily pregnant, being a Half-step Grandmaster. This gave her a strange feeling--it was as if her body had been ready to conceive Lu Chen's child all along, and Chu Yuqin felt immensely embarrassed.

Lu Chen said, "I still have to go to the armory later, so I should get up now. You go back to sleep a little longer."

With that, Lu Chen got up and dressed. Chu Yuqin was about to help him with his clothes but realized she had no strength at all. With no choice, she had to call in the maidservant to help Lu Chen dress.

After leaving Chu Yuqin's room, Lu Chen had a simple breakfast in the main courtyard before heading to the armory to find the Mohist brothers.

The steam engine blueprint was ready, and so was the train blueprint. If these two things could be constructed, they would surely bring a cross-era change to the North Country.

Chapter 435: Zhuge Zhongguang's Opportunity to Break through the Heavenly Human Realm_1

After arriving at the military workshop, Lu Chen called the two Mohist brothers together and showed them the blueprints for the steam engine and the train, explaining the working principles of these two inventions.

Upon hearing Lu Chen's explanation, the two brothers felt as if the doors to a new world had suddenly opened before them.

As craftsmen, once Lu Chen had explained, they immediately realized the impact that the steam engine and the train would bring to the world, especially the steam engine.

At this point, Lu Chen said, "Mo Fei, you will need to remain in the military workshop to continue with the firearms research and development. Therefore, the task of manufacturing the steam engine and the train will be entrusted to your brother."

Upon hearing Lu Chen's words, the excited Mo Xing said, "Thank you for your trust, Prince!"

Mo Xing was very interested in the steam engine and the train. He was eager to see the changes these two inventions would bring to the world.

Moreover, Mo Xing firmly believed that these two inventions could definitely promote the development of the era. With the task of manufacturing the steam engine and the train assigned to him, he, the man who made them, could also leave his mark on history.

Lu Chen then continued, "By the way, let's manufacture the steam engine and the train in Great Yu City. The craftsmen in Yan County are not quite sufficient."

Although a number of refugees had come to the North Country and the population had significantly increased, skilled craftsmen were still very scarce. NovelBin-hosted

It might work to have most refugees till the fields, but involving them in industrial production would require lengthy training.

However, Great Yu City was different, with almost every household being home to craftsmen. If the manufacturing of the steam engine and the train were to be placed in Great Yu City, recruiting craftsmen would be much easier.

Additionally, Lu Chen's main purpose for manufacturing the steam engine and the train in Great Yu City was to build a railway directly connecting Great Yu City with Yan County once the train was completed.

Great Yu City had a population of several hundred thousand, and these people were crucial for Lu Chen's industrial development plans, so he did not intend to keep them in Great Yu City indefinitely.

Once the railway connecting Great Yu City was in place, it would be much easier for the city's residents to travel to Yan County and to return to Great Yu City. Thus, the residents of Great Yu City would no longer have to stay there just because they were worried about being too far from home.

Mo Xing instantly grasped Lu Chen's intentions and immediately responded, "Very well, Prince. I will pack up my things as soon as possible and head back to Great Yu City."

Lu Chen said, "There's no need to rush. I plan to inspect Great Yu City in a few days, and you can return with my entourage then."

The people of Great Yu City were also his subjects, after all, and even though the system had established the ownership of Great Yu City quite some time ago, Lu Chen had not yet visited it, feeling that he had somewhat neglected Great Yu City's existence.

As there wasn't much happening in the North Country now, and the government in Yan County would function without him, the bureaucratic system he had set up was starting to take hold. His absence from Yan County for a while would not cause any issues.

Hearing Lu Chen's words, an excited Mo Xing said, "The citizens of Great Yu City will be very happy to hear that you are going to visit."

Lu Chen was seen as the Son of Destiny, the Human Emperor they in Great Yu City had been waiting many years for. If Lu Chen were to visit in person, the city's residents would surely be overjoyed.

After hearing Mo Xing's words, Lu Chen smiled and then said, "Let's leave it at that for today. I have other matters to attend to, so I will be returning now. As for the work at the military workshop, you should also make time to hand it over to someone else, then pack your things. I will send someone to pick you up in a couple of days."

"Yes, Prince."

Lu Chen did not linger long at the military workshop; he soon left and returned to the North Prince Mansion to summon Zhuge Zhongguang to the study.

He was going to be bound for Great Yu City for a while, and there were things that he needed to discuss with Zhuge Zhongguang.

After delegating the upcoming tasks for the North Country, Lu Chen thought of the recent actions of the Sun Emperor and said to Zhuge Zhongguang, "Great Scholar, I've recently received news that my father is joining forces with some Grandmasters to move against you."

Hearing this, Zhuge Zhongguang smiled faintly, stroked his graying beard, and replied, "I had long anticipated this day would come."

"The last time a Celestial realm powerhouse appeared in this world, many Grandmasters died. Now, as I am on the verge of breaking through to the Heavenly Human Realm, it's natural that some will be concerned the same events could occur again."

Seeing that Zhuge Zhongguang was not worried at all, Lu Chen directly asked, "I want to know how much longer it will take for the Great Scholar to break through to the Heavenly Human Realm?"

"The disturbance in the South is nearing its end, and next, my father will in all likelihood move against the North Country. He probably has already swayed quite a few Grandmasters. If you cannot break through soon, there could be a great calamity ahead."

Lingering on Lu Chen's words, Zhuge Zhongguang answered, "Breaking through to become a Grandmaster is not easy. Although I can clearly feel that I am on the cusp of a breakthrough and have even touched the threshold of the Heavenly Human Realm, I still feel as if I am missing something."

"The Heavenly Human Realm transcends the scope of Martial Arts. Simply raising one's strength is not enough to break through to the Heavenly Human Realm. There must be a special rule in this world. Only by passing this rule, or rather, by gaining the approval of this world, can a Grandmaster break through to the Heavenly Human Realm."

Chapter 436: Zhuge Zhongguang's Opportunity to Break through the Heavenly Human Realm_2

"I suspect that the reason why the Heavenly Human Realm expert from Mysterious Moon Palace massacred the Grandmasters of this world is mainly to break through,"

"The common belief is that he hunted Grandmasters so flagrantly to demonstrate the power of the Heavenly Human Realm, but in my opinion, it was a necessity for his breakthrough to the Heavenly Human Realm, thus he had to kill so many Grandmasters,"

Hearing Zhuge Zhongguang's words, Lu Chen furrowed his brows.

So, does this mean that it's unlikely for Zhuge Zhongguang to manage a breakthrough to the Heavenly Human Realm in a short period?

This could be problematic, for if Zhuge Zhongguang can't break through to the Heavenly Human Realm, he might not be able to handle a siege by Grandmasters.

Even though he had reached the Zenith Realm of Grandmaster, allowing him to assist Zhuge Zhongguang from the sidelines, who knew how many Grandmasters his father the Emperor could call upon.

If it were one or two Grandmasters, then he wouldn't be so worried, but if there were five or six, he feared that he and Zhuge Zhongguang wouldn't be able to withstand them.

Even though North Country had entered the Age of Firearms, guns could only serve to suppress Grandmasters; to actually kill one, guns could not play a decisive role.

At that moment, Lu Chen suddenly thought of something, and then he took out an Essence Pill from the system space and said to Zhuge Zhongguang, "This is an Essence Pill, a type of Immortal Pill that can refine the meridians. Take it and see if it might help you break through to the Heavenly Human Realm."

Upon hearing these words, Zhuge Zhongguang was stunned. Once he regained his composure, Zhuge Zhongguang immediately said, "Prince, this shouldn't be, such a precious pill shouldn't be used by me."

Although Zhuge Zhongguang didn't know what an Essence Pill was and had never heard of it before, when Lu Chen mentioned that it was an Immortal Pill, Zhuge Zhongguang recognized the significance of the item.

Anything related to Immortals was invariably precious.

Lu Chen said indifferently, "I have plenty more here; take one and use it. For North Country, the value of a Heavenly Human Realm is far greater than that of this Immortal Pill."

Seeing Lu Chen insist, Zhuge Zhongguang felt it was inappropriate to continue refusing. He took the Essence Pill from Lu Chen's hand and then said, "Then, I must thank you greatly, Prince."

After receiving the Essence Pill, Zhuge Zhongguang wasted no words and immediately placed the Essence Pill in his mouth and swallowed it.

After consuming the Essence Pill, Zhuge Zhongguang instantly felt an indescribable lightness throughout his body. In the next moment, innumerable bamboo slips seemed to appear before his eyes, flashing by swiftly.

In Lu Chen's view, Zhuge Zhongguang's body was emitting a faint golden light, which seemed both mystical and extraordinary. In not too long, Zhuge Zhongguang's golden light converged, and then a sky-piercing golden pillar of light extended from his body, piercing through the roof of Lu Chen's study.

The phenomenon in the study swiftly caught the attention of all the citizens of Yan County; of course, it also caught the attention of the people in the Prince's Mansion.

When the wives and concubines of Lu Chen saw the pillar of light rising from the study, they were startled, fearing that something had happened to Lu Chen. They quickly made their way towards the study.

Soon the courtyard of the study was crowded with people.

At this time, Mu Zixuan also arrived outside the study courtyard. Seeing Chu Yuqin and the others at the door, not entering the study, she asked, "Chu, what has happened inside?"

Chu Yuqin replied, "I don't know either. Xiao Huan said the Prince and the Great Scholar were discussing important matters inside and asked us not to go in."

Hearing this, Mu Zixuan felt puzzled. What were Lu Chen and Zhuge Zhongguang discussing in the study that could cause such a phenomenon?

Dark clouds gathered in the sky above Yan County at that moment, growing denser as if the heavens were about to collapse. The golden pillar of light emerged from the clouds, amidst which thunder roared and lightning flashed. chapter-source-NovelBin

The thunder was like the roaring of a dragon within the clouds. The citizens of Yan County, seeing the golden pillar of light shooting from North Prince Mansion and witnessing such extraordinary phenomena, including the appearance of a "dragon," believed that the heavens were showing favor to the North Prince, causing the entire city's populace to kneel in the direction of North Prince Mansion.

Meanwhile, Lu Chen in the study saw that the golden pillar of light showed no signs of dissipating and was utterly astounded.

The commotion seemed to be getting a bit out of hand.

A pillar of light that thick shooting up into the sky would have been seen by all the citizens of the city by now, and since it was emanating from North Prince Mansion, how was he to explain this to the people?

Lu Chen sighed and thought to himself, well, let's take things one step at a time and see if Zhuge Zhongguang can break through to the Heavenly Human Realm.

At that moment, Zhuge Zhongguang stood rooted to the spot with his eyes closed, as if he had entered a meditative state.

After an indeterminate amount of time, countless golden bamboo slips appeared before Zhuge Zhongguang. Initially, these golden bamboo slips only appeared in Zhuge Zhongguang's mind, visible only to him. Now, Lu Chen could see them too.

Seeing these golden bamboo slips, Lu Chen couldn't help but feel awestruck. It seemed this world was far more magical than he had imagined; his understanding of it was probably less than one percent.

After the golden bamboo slips circled around Zhuge Zhongguang's body for a while, they instantly entered his body. Zhuge Zhongguang suddenly opened his eyes, emitting two beams of golden light.

Chapter 437: Zhuge Zhongguang's Opportunity to Break through the Heavenly Human Realm_3

Zhuge Zhongguang then took a deep breath, as all the golden light entered his body. Gradually, the golden pillar of light emanating from his body also slowly dissipated.

Zhuge Zhongguang adjusted his breathing, and Lu Chen quickly used the system to check Zhuge Zhongguang's status. [Name: Zhuge Zhongguang]

[Identity: Chancellor of the Universal Academy, Great Scholar of the North Country.]

[Strength: Grandmaster at the Zenith Realm]

[Loyalty: 100]

Seeing Zhuge Zhongguang's personal information, Lu Chen was stunned.

Grandmaster at the Zenith Realm?

Like himself?

Should it not be the Heavenly Human Realm?

Lu Chen immediately asked, "Great Scholar, how do you feel now?"

Hearing Lu Chen's question, Zhuge Zhongguang sighed and then said, "I have disappointed the Prince, I still have not been able to cross that threshold."

This...

Lu Chen was somewhat speechless. The commotion just now was obviously not something a Grandmaster could cause; he had thought that Zhuge Zhongguang would definitely break through to the Grandmaster Realm, but still no breakthrough?

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Where did the problem occur?

Why couldn't he break through?

Could it really be as Zhuge Zhongguang said, that one has to pass through some special rule of this world before a Grandmaster can break through to the Heavenly Human Realm?

While Lu Chen was in deep thought, Zhuge Zhongguang spoke up, "Prince, although I have not broken through to the Heavenly Human Realm, I now know the opportunity that will allow me to break through."

Lu Chen directly asked, "What opportunity?"

Zhuge Zhongguang answered, "As long as there are more and more scholars in the North Country, and more and more talented individuals, once I have absorbed enough Qi of Literature, I will be able to break through to the Heavenly Human Realm."

"After entering a meditative state just now, a voice guided me in the darkness."

"This isn't much different from my previous conjecture. To break through to the Heavenly Human Realm, everyone must go through some special rule and gain this world's recognition."

Now that I think about it, the Celestial from Mysterious Moon Palace who killed so many Grandmasters back then, it's very likely that he had to kill a certain number of Grandmasters to authenticate his path and break through to the Heavenly Human Realm."

After contemplating, Lu Chen then said, "So that's how it is. In that case, this Prince will let the Ministry of Education issue a decree starting next week; every child aged six to sixteen must go to school."

Lu Chen had intended to implement universal education all along. A long time ago, he had the disciples of Mysterious Moon Palace teach the common folk of North Country how to read and write; however, at that time, it was just allowing the disciples to teach reading and writing, and it was not mandatory for the children of the common folk to learn literacy.

As a result, many still think learning to read is unnecessary.

Since the opportunity for Zhuge Zhongguang to break through to the Heavenly Human Realm is linked to having more and more scholars and talented people in North Country, it's the perfect chance to accelerate the push for universal education.

Hearing Lu Chen's words, Zhuge Zhongguang hurriedly said, "Prince, I'm afraid that won't do. Nowadays, most commoners believe that one should only learn to read if they aim to become officials. Otherwise, reading is a waste of time and money. And for most families, children are contributors to labor. If their children are sent to academies, the commoners will surely be reluctant."

Lu Chen said indifferently, "Any policy implementation will meet resistance. If we do nothing because the commoners oppose it, then we wouldn't be able to reclaim land ownership rights, and North Country would not have developed at its current pace."

Seeing Lu Chen so resolute, Zhuge Zhongguang didn't say anything more. Then Lu Chen continued, "Each year, the North Prince Mansion will set aside a sum of money as a scholarship. Students who excel in conduct and learning can apply, and those who are approved will receive scholarships distributed by the North Prince Mansion."

"Moreover, within fifty years, students who pass the entrance exams to the Higher Academy founded by the North Prince Mansion will have guaranteed job assignments once they graduate."

Hearing this, Zhuge Zhongguang instantly understood Lu Chen's intention; Lu Chen planned to use various methods to motivate the common folk to send their children to school.

At that moment, Lu Chen sighed and continued, "To be honest, starting now, I don't even know if it will be timely enough."

The Sum Emperor had long been preparing to deal with Zhuge Zhongguang, yet they had only just begun to implement universal education. It's very possible that before their education effort even gets underway, the Grandmasters could come to assassinate Zhuge Zhongguang before he breaks through to the Heavenly Human Realm.

Zhuge Zhongguang said, "Your Highness, please be at ease. Although His Majesty has long been preparing to eliminate me, everyone knows that I am a Grandmaster on the verge of breaking through to the Heavenly Human Realm.

The phenomenon seen just now by the common folk of Yan County, once word gets out, it's very possible that some Grandmasters will believe I have already broken through, thereby refusing His Majesty's orders."

Upon hearing this, Lu Chen quickly realized the point.

Right, the commotion was so great that the spies in Yan County must have seen it already. If they can use this to their advantage, letting people think that Zhuge Zhongguang has broken through, then naturally the Sum Emperor wouldn't dare act rashly.

Though they themselves knew Zhuge Zhongguang hadn't broken through to the Heavenly Human Realm, others didn't know that, and those who had actually seen a Celestial were scarce – who really knew what being a Celestial was like.

With this in mind, Lu Chen said with a smile, "I understand the Great Scholar's implication."

"From this day on, the Great Scholar shall be known as a Celestial. The Great Scholar should refrain from showing his true strength easily."

Zhuge Zhongguang instantly guessed what Lu Chen intended to do and immediately said, "Yes, Your Highness."

Lu Chen, with a smile, added, "Alright, let's leave it at this for today. The earlier noise was quite loud, and there are probably already numerous rumors outside. This Prince needs to find someone to dispel them."

Zhuge Zhongguang then bowed and said, "I shall take my leave."

Chapter 438: The Rumors in the Capital City of Great Xia_1

Lu Chen's wives and concubines anxiously waited at the entrance of the academy, all fearing that something had happened to Lu Chen in the study, as they, too, were witnessing such an extraordinary phenomenon for the first time.

As the women were on tenterhooks, the door to the study opened, and Zhuge Zhongguang and Lu Chen emerged one after the other.

At that moment, Mu Zixuan quickly approached and asked with concern, "Prince, are you all right?"

Seeing so many people standing outside the study, Lu Chen said with a smile, "I'm sorry, the Great Scholar had an epiphany and broke through just now. The commotion was a bit loud, and it worried you all." novel-hosted-NovelBin

Lu Chen merely stated that there had been a breakthrough, without revealing to which Realm Zhuge Zhongguang had ascended. His words could not be considered a lie, for indeed Zhuge Zhongguang had advanced from the Grandmaster to the Zenith of the Grandmaster Realm—it was a breakthrough nonetheless.

Upon hearing Lu Chen's words, however, the crowd gathered at the door of the study was instantly dumbstruck.

A breakthrough?

Zhuge Zhongguang had a breakthrough?

Wasn't Zhuge Zhongguang already a Grandmaster? If he were to break through again, wouldn't that mean...?

Heaven... the Heavenly Human Realm???

The very thought left everyone speechless.

A strong person from the North Country had reached the Heavenly Human Realm?

Didn't that mean that no one would dare to provoke the North Country anymore?

Seeing everyone at the door stunned, Lu Chen and Zhuge Zhongguang exchanged smiles. Zhuge Zhongguang hurriedly said, "Prince, I have political affairs to attend to, so I must leave now."

Lu Chen replied with a smile, "Alright, take care."

After Zhuge Zhongguang left, the women finally came to their senses. Mu Zixuan then asked disbelievingly, "P... Prince, did the Great Scholar really br... break through?"

Although Mu Zixuan was still a commoner, she was well aware of what it meant for the North Country to have someone in the Heavenly Human Realm. The news was truly shocking.

Lu Chen said, "Didn't you see the pillar of light that shot up to the sky just now? With such a great event, how can you still not believe he has broken through?"

"Do you think an ordinary Grandmaster could cause such a commotion?"

Upon hearing this from Lu Chen, the women felt it made sense. A Grandmaster couldn't possibly create such a disturbance; the sky had been covered with dark clouds, as if it were about to collapse.

Only the Heavenly Human Realm, which people referred to as the realm of pseudo-Immortals, could cause such changes in celestial phenomena.

Seeing the excitement of his wives and concubines, Lu Chen helplessly revealed a smile. If only Zhuge Zhongguang had truly ascended to the Heavenly Human Realm.

...

By the afternoon, news of Zhuge Zhongguang's breakthrough had spread throughout Yan County, instantly stirring the civilians, and leaving the spies of Yan County taken aback.

Even the most ordinary civilians knew what the Heavenly Human Realm signified. The Heavenly Human Realm was also known as that of pseudo-Immortals. Before having witnessed real Immortals, those who possessed the strength of the Heavenly Human Realm were regarded as Immortals.

Now, the common folk were all abuzz with tales of Zhuge Zhongguang becoming an Immortal, asserting that the pillar of light they had seen at noon marked the moment Zhuge Zhongguang ascended during his tribulation.

Spies from various countries were stunned by this news, and they dispatched their agents to gather information to verify its authenticity.

Following the investigations by spies from different countries, the official reports of the North Country did not mention Zhuge Zhongguang's breakthrough. The official reports merely discussed the advancement of universal education, while the Eastern Newspaper Agency's reports did carry news of Zhuge Zhongguang's breakthrough.

However, the reports from the Eastern Newspaper Agency did not specify his ascension to the Heavenly Human Realm.

But since Zhuge Zhongguang was already at the Grandmaster Realm, according to people's understanding, the only realm above a Grandmaster is the Heavenly Human Realm; there are no other realms between Grandmaster and Heavenly Human.

Since the Eastern Newspaper Agency reported on Zhuge Zhongguang's breakthrough, didn't that imply that Zhuge Zhongguang had indeed become a strong person of the Heavenly Human Realm?

A feudal state in the North Country had given rise to a Celestial!!!

Spies and merchant caravans from various countries sensed that the world was on the verge of monumental changes.

Under the Heavenly Human Realm, all are mortals; a single individual of the Heavenly Human Realm could easily annihilate hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Now that the North Country had a Celestial, would they remain content being a mere feudal state?

One stone stirred up a thousand ripples.

In less than a week, the news of Zhuge Zhongguang's ascension to the Heavenly Human Realm had spread across all the major dynasties, and each dynasty was shaken by the news.

The Heavenly Human Realm! To date, no dynasty had overtly seen a strong person of the Heavenly Human Realm. The strongest known were merely Grandmasters, and as for the rumored Celestial of the Great Xia Dynasty, that individual was from the Mysterious Moon Palace, a Sect not considered part of the mortal world's strength and thus not counted as a Celestial of the Great Xia Dynasty.

Soon enough, several dynasties began to consider how to interact with the North Country. Of course, they had to verify the truthfulness of Zhuge Zhongguang's supposed breakthrough to the Heavenly Human Realm. But until then, it did not hinder them from seeking good relations with the North Country.

Spies from various countries had witnessed the changes in celestial patterns in Yan County, so to most people, the news of Zhuge Zhongguang's breakthrough to the Heavenly Human Realm seemed very likely to be true.

As the news spread across all the major dynasties, it quickly reached the ears of the Sum Emperor.

In the Great Xia Dynasty, within the Imperial Palace.

In the Royal Garden.

The Sum Emperor, having just read the war dispatch delivered by the Red Ribbon Messenger from the South, couldn't help but feel a surge of relief. The heavy burden of the Aristocratic Families in the South, which had been weighing on his mind, seemed finally about to be shattered by him.

Chapter 439: The Rumors in the Capital City of Great Xia_2

As long as the aristocratic families of the South were eradicated, the other aristocratic families within Great Sum's territory posed no real threat. In fact, these families had tried to aid the Southern aristocratic families through various means, but the Southern rebels still lost disastrously. Now, they could only shrink back within Sufeng City, awaiting their doom.

This was a clear sign that the era of Great Sum's ancient families was coming to an end.

The Grandmaster of Great Sum's royal family was already waiting outside Sufeng City. The final battle would be between the Grandmasters of the royal family and the Grandmasters of the major aristocratic families. Once the royal Grandmaster triumphed over the Grandmaster from the Southern aristocratic family, the war would be thoroughly concluded.

With the death of the Grandmaster from the Southern aristocratic family, no one would be able to resist the imperial army. At that time, the Southern aristocratic family would be completely eradicated from this world.

As Sum Emperor read the battle report in his hand, he thought that once the Southern aristocratic family was dealt with, he would immediately join forces with the Grandmasters of various dynasties and then eliminate Zhuge Zhongguang. Without Zhuge Zhongguang, even if North Prince had exceptional abilities, he would not be able to stir any trouble.

Just as Sum Emperor was contemplating this, suddenly a dark figure appeared before him. A Shadow Guard soldier knelt on the ground, holding up a letter, "Your Majesty, an urgent report from Yan County!"

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Upon hearing that it was an intelligence report from Yan County, Sum Emperor didn't hesitate. He took the envelope directly, then opened it to check the contents of the report.

After viewing the contents of the envelope, the Sum Emperor was struck as if by a bolt from the blue, rendered utterly stunned.

The content of the report was simple, just one line: "Zhuge Zhongguang has broken through to the Heavenly Human Realm!"

This...

How is this possible?

Since when has breaking through to the Heavenly Human Realm become so easy?

Although people always said that Zhuge Zhongguang was about to break through the Heavenly Human Realm, this statement had been repeated for decades without any sign of him actually achieving it.

And now Zhuge Zhongguang had not been in North Country for long, and he had already broken through?

The Sum Emperor couldn't accept this piece of news.

If Zhuge Zhongguang were one of Great Sum's court, one of his own, then it would be a different story. But Zhuge Zhongguang belonged to North Country, he was that most unwelcome person who may very well not be his biological son.

A feudal state with a Celestial-level powerhouse, what it would do next was almost self-evident.

Seeing the Sum Emperor staring at the letter in his hand for a long time, unable to recover, and looking as if he had been petrified, Situ Ce in the nearby pavilion seemed to understand something.

Although he did not know what had happened, something that could cause Sum Emperor to lose composure like this must be no small matter in North Country.

After a long time, Sum Emperor finally came back to his senses and said, "Investigate, have the Shadow Guards in Yan County investigate immediately. I want to know the exact news!"

Heavenly Human Realm is the pinnacle of Martial Arts, a realm of pseudo-Immortals, an existence not to be offended. Once North Country had a Celestial-level powerhouse, even the Sum Emperor's throne might become unstable. At this point, Sum Emperor no longer cared whether he was acting undignified.

What he feared most was the recurrence of the incidents from his childhood. Back then, the Celestial-level powerhouse from Mysterious Moon Palace had killed numerous Grandmasters, to the point that there are still Grandmasters hiding in the deep mountains and forests, not daring to emerge.

If Zhuge Zhongguang were like that Celestial-level powerhouse, would it be possible that the royal Grandmasters would be slaughtered again? The key issue was that he himself was now a Grandmaster. If Celestial-level powerhouses were to slay Grandmasters, then it was very likely that he, the Emperor, would die at the hands of a Celestial-level powerhouse.

At this moment, for the first time, Sum Emperor felt the fear of death, as those terrifying memories of his childhood once again enveloped his mind.

Seeing Sum Emperor so distraught, Situ Ce could no longer hold back and asked, "Your Majesty, may I know what has happened?"

Without responding, Sum Emperor simply threw the letter to Situ Ce. Situ Ce caught the letter and glanced at its contents.

Upon seeing those words, Situ Ce was also taken aback.

The Heavenly Human Realm... That is the level many Grandmasters yearn for their entire lives, a threshold most Grandmasters cannot even reach until their deaths. Since his birth, the only person he knew who had broken through to the Heavenly Human Realm was that one from Mysterious Moon Palace.

If Zhuge Zhongguang were to be counted as another, that would make two people.

But...

Has Zhuge Zhongguang really broken through to the Heavenly Human Realm?

Just then, a soldier hurriedly approached Sum Emperor and reported, "Your Majesty, there is activity in North Country!"

Hearing this, both Sum Emperor and Situ Ce were taken aback.

The Sum Emperor immediately asked, "What's going on?"

The soldier responded, "North Country has assembled an army of a hundred thousand at the border with Qi Country, claiming that if the court has difficulty dealing with the Southern rebels, they can move south at any time to assist in quelling the rebellion."

Upon hearing this, Sum Emperor's face turned dark on the spot.

Now that the Southern rebels were almost wiped out and were cowering within Sufeng City, North Country was talking about sending troops southward. What was the intention of North Country, one might easily guess?

Sum Emperor couldn't help but wonder if Zhuge Zhongguang had indeed broken through to the Heavenly Human Realm. Otherwise, why would that brat be so eager to send troops southward?

It was clear that the brat could hardly wait to claim his throne.

The more Sum Emperor thought about it, the angrier he became, and the next moment, he suddenly began coughing violently.

"Cough cough cough... Pfft..."

As he coughed, a mouthful of fresh blood suddenly sprayed out. Seeing this, Situ Ce hurried out of the pavilion and rushed to Sum Emperor's side, quickly placing his hand on the Emperor's back to help regulate his breathing.

Chapter 440: The Rumors in the Capital City of Great Xia_3

"Your Majesty, please do not be enraged, take care of your dragon body!"

The Sum Emperor also realized that if he continued to be angry, he might indeed suffer from qi deviation, so he quickly stabilized his breath and calmed himself down.

After a while, the Sum Emperor's heart had slightly settled.

However, at this moment another shadow appeared in front of the Sum Emperor. He was about to report intelligence when Situ Ce furrowed his brows, fearing that the news from this Shadow Guard was another piece of bad news that would anger the Sum Emperor. He hurriedly said, "Your Majesty is not feeling well at the moment; whatever it is, report it tomorrow."

Upon hearing the State Preceptor's words, the subsequent Shadow Guard swallowed back the words he was about to say. At that time, the Sum Emperor, having calmed down, spoke up, "No need, speak."

He did not believe that any news that followed could be worse than the news that Zhuge Zhongguang had broken through to the Heavenly Human Realm. In his view, there was no news that could be worse than that.

Seeing that the Sum Emperor had allowed him to speak directly, the Shadow Guard did not hesitate and said, "Your Majesty, the Valley Master of Peach Blossom Valley has sent a message that she is going into closed-door cultivation. She may not come out for ten years, and if you have any matters, please seek her after ten years."

Hearing this, the Sum Emperor snorted coldly without saying a word.

Obviously, the Valley Master of Peach Blossom Valley had also heard the news of Zhuge Zhongguang's breakthrough and was scared into hiding.

What nonsense closed-door cultivation, all but a bunch of cowardly old antiques afraid of death.

The Sum Emperor then said, "Issue a decree, have Zhao Quan speed up and quickly settle the rebel forces in the South, and capture Shuyun back."

Although the Sum Emperor still found it somewhat unbelievable that Zhuge Zhongguang had broken through to the Heavenly Human Realm, he knew some preparations had to be made in advance.

The North Country had already stationed a hundred thousand troops at their border with Qi Country, clearly showing that the little beast had set his sights on something. If he wanted to remain secure on the throne, he had to rapidly quell the turmoil in the South and then shift all his elite forces to the north.

Some time later.

A rumor spread in the streets and alleys of the Great Sum Capital city. Some said that the royal family of Great Sum had obtained a Sacred Artifact from Mysterious Moon Palace, claiming this artifact could temporarily raise a person's strength to the level of the Heavenly Human Realm.

Once the rumor spread, it immediately caused a stir, with many people doubting its credibility. After all, if such a thing truly existed, why would Mysterious Moon Palace give it to the Great Sum royal family?

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The Goddess of the Mysterious Moon Palace may have married the Sum Emperor, but their ending was not a happy one; the palace had long fallen out with the Great Sum royal family, and they wouldn't give the emperor anything valuable, let alone their sacred artifacts.

Meanwhile.

North Country.

Lu Chen had already embarked on his inspection journey to Great Yu City. This trip to the north was rather leisurely and without much danger, so Lu Chen took Xiao Wenyao with him.

Xiao Wenyao had always wanted to gallop on a horse across the grasslands, right? During the journey to the north, the endless grasslands offered the perfect opportunity. During the day, Xiao Wenyao would ride freely on the prairie, and at night, it was Lu Chen's turn to relax on horseback.

Although Lu Chen had traveled north, their convoy was not particularly fast, and any news from the Brocade Guard could still catch up with Lu Chen's convoy.

In the evening, Lu Chen's convoy had already set up camp. Just as he was about to have someone call for Xiao Wenyao, a Jinyiwei Guard approached him, "Prince, there is intelligence from the Capital!"

Upon hearing this, Lu Chen immediately took the intelligence from the hands of the Jinyiwei Guard and scanned it.

Seeing the rumor from the Great Sum Capital, Lu Chen's lips curled slightly. He had already learned of the Sum Emperor's possession of the Mysterious Moon Palace Sacred Artifact from Chen Wanrong.

However, the fact that this news had spread and was circulating throughout the Great Sum Capital was quite thought-provoking.

It was most likely not Mysterious Moon Palace that released the news; they didn't want people to know that their Sacred Artifact was in the hands of the Sum Emperor.

It would not sound good for such a powerful Sect Force as Mysterious Moon Palace to have lost their Sacred Artifact, only for it to end up in the hands of a secular royal family.

Moreover, that Sacred Artifact must have some importance to Mysterious Moon Palace. If too many people knew it was in the hands of the Great Sum royal family, what would they do if more people covet the Sacred Artifact?

Since the news did not come from Mysterious Moon Palace, who could have released it?

To guess who released the news, one must consider that there surely aren't many who know that the Great Sum royal family possesses the Mysterious Moon Palace Sacred Artifact, so it definitely wasn't spread by a commoner. Secondly, whose interests would be served by releasing this news?

Lu Chen's mind instantly pictured the Sum Emperor.

The news of Zhuge Zhongguang's breakthrough to the Heavenly Human Realm had spread to all dynasties, plus, to make the act more convincing, Lu Chen had ordered Wei Siyuan's army of a hundred thousand to be stationed near the border with Qi Country, portraying a posture ready to advance southward, causing unrest in Great Sum.

Without a doubt, the Sum Emperor was also scared.

The Sum Emperor truly feared that the North Country would rebel by leveraging the Heavenly Human Realm.

Thus, to prevent North Country from actually rebelling, he had no choice but to release information about possessing the Sacred Artifact from Mysterious Moon Palace, creating an impression that Great Sum's royal family had a secret weapon capable of fighting at the level of the Heavenly Human Realm.

With that, if the North Country contemplated rebelling or marching south to attack the Capital, they would have to consider whether Great Sum's royal family really possessed a Sacred Artifact that could elevate someone to the Heavenly Human Realm.

Essentially, it was a deterrence against North Country.

After reading the intelligence, Lu Chen said to the Jinyiwei Guard in front of him, "Go tell Wei Siyuan to have his troops also make a move, show their faces more near the Qi Country border."

"Yes, Prince."

Lu Chen continued, "Alright, you may leave."

"This subordinate takes his leave."

The Jinyiwei Guard had just left when Xiao Wen Yao, who had been riding all day, returned. She was very relaxed, hardly having been so happy in a long time.

At that moment, Lu Chen asked Xiao Wen Yao with a smile, "Yaoyao, how do you feel?"

Xiao Wenyao gratefully responded, "Thank you, Prince, for allowing this servant to accompany you to the north."

Lu Chen then said, "You must be tired from riding all day. Come, join me in the tent, and I'll help you ease the fatigue."

Hearing Lu Chen's words, a blush flashed across Xiao Wenyao's face; after all, she had indeed let Lu Chen 'ride' enough for the day.

Xiao Wenyao spoke softly, "This servant will join you shortly."