

Es. Benefits 491

Chapter 491: This Palace Advises You to Best Put Away Your Schemes_1

Hearing the words of the Sum Emperor, Wu Junwan asked, "Father Emperor, do you intend to send your daughter on a diplomatic mission to Great Jue?"

Wu Junwan, with the largest intelligence agency in Great Wu hands, had long known about the North Country's purchase of land in Yongan County and the stationing of thirty thousand Heavy Cavalry there.

Therefore, she had also basically guessed what the Martial Emperor was planning to do next. Now that the North Country was already bordering Great Wu and had stationed thirty thousand Heavy Cavalry in the border area, if Great Wu were to make a move against Great Sum at this time, it was likely that the North Country would immediately send troops against Great Wu.

The recent direction of the court discussions centered on sending troops against Great Sum, and with her understanding of her own Father Emperor, Wu Junwan knew he would not easily give up on military action against Great Sum. Thus, it was very likely that her Father Emperor's next move would be to seek an alliance with Great Jue to attack Great Sum jointly.

Seeing that Wu Junwan had already guessed his intentions, the Martial Emperor said, "It seems you already know."

"Now that the North Country has stationed thirty thousand Heavy Cavalry in Yongan County, if Great Wu were to send troops against Great Sum, it is very likely that the North Country will attack Great Wu, and this greatly worries your Father Emperor."

"The plan for now is to coax Great Jue into helping Great Wu contain the North Country. Only by doing this, will Great Wu have a chance to annihilate Great Sum."

Wu Junwan said, "Father Emperor, your daughter understands your intentions. I will head to Great Jue tomorrow."

Hearing this, the Martial Emperor looked at Wu Junwan with a smile and then, still smiling, said, "Then I shall trouble you."

At this juncture, the Martial Emperor sighed and continued, "It's only Junwan who can help alleviate some of your Father Emperor's burdens. Those brothers of yours, each is more useless than the last. Your Father Emperor often thinks how good it would be if you were a man."

Wu Junwan instantly detected the underlying message in the Martial Emperor's tone—it was a reminder that she was merely a woman, not a man, and should not entertain impractical thoughts.

Even though she picked up on the hidden meaning in the Martial Emperor's words, Wu Junwan did not take it to heart; she had long recognized her Father Emperor's attitude.

Although her Father Emperor had granted her the title of Princess Junwan, significantly elevating her status, he was also attempting to balance court power and was avidly grooming her brothers. The fact that her Father Emperor had had Wu Ming accompany her to the North Country showed he had no intention of passing the throne to his daughter.

At this moment, Wu Junwan said, "Father Emperor, your daughter understands your meaning. All of this is my duty. As the Princess of Great Wu, I should bear these responsibilities."

Hearing Wu Junwan's words, the Martial Emperor smiled and said, "If you can understand your Father Emperor's hardships, it pleases me greatly. Alright, if there's nothing else, you may go and make preparations."

Wu Junwan then bowed and said, "Yes, your daughter takes her leave."

With that, she turned and left the Imperial Study Room.

By the time Wu Junwan returned to the Green Cloud Palace, a maidservant entered excitedly, "Your Highness, there is great news!"

Hearing this, Wu Junwan asked with puzzlement, "What great news?"

The maidservant answered, "This morning at the early court session, someone proposed that His Majesty select a husband for you. Mr. Chai immediately stepped forward and requested His Majesty to marry you off to him."

Hearing this, Wu Junwan's face darkened instantly, and she said coldly, "This is what you call great news?"

Hearing the displeasure in Wu Junwan's tone, the maidservant quickly knelt on the ground and began to kowtow, saying, "Your Highness, this servant was wrong. I should not have presumed your thoughts. This servant deserves death. Please, Your Highness, punish me."

Chai Jiliang often visited the place where Wu Junwan resided, and after numerous visits, nearly all the maidservants and eunuchs in the Green Cloud Palace believed that Chai Jiliang and Wu Junwan shared a very good relationship, perhaps even an affection for one another.

Chai Jiliang, despite his age, had yet to marry—not even taking a concubine—making it clear to anyone seeing that he was interested in Princess Junwan.

The maidservants and eunuchs thought that since the Princess was already in her thirties and still unmarried, it must surely be because of Chai Jiliang.

Now that Chai Jiliang had so proactively stepped forward to request His Majesty to marry Princess Junwan to him, it was naturally good news to the maidservant as she believed that Princess Junwan and Prime Minister Chai would finally be united in matrimony.

What they did not know was that, in Wu Junwan's eyes, Chai Jiliang was nothing more than a political partner. She had never felt even the slightest attraction toward Chai Jiliang.

Wu Junwan was no fool; she knew exactly the path she was walking. The path she chose strictly forbade romantic entanglements, and thus she had long sealed her heart, essentially immune to feelings for men.

Wu Junwan swept a cold glance over the maidservant on the ground and then said, "If there's a next time, you can go back to your room and hang yourself."

Upon hearing this, the maidservant immediately said, "Thank you, Your Highness, for your mercy. I will certainly hold my tongue from now on."

Just then, a mature man's voice came, "Your Highness seems quite unhappy today?"

Seeing Chai Jiliang had arrived, Wu Junwan asked directly, "I heard you requested my Father Emperor for an arranged marriage in court today?"

Hearing the tone of Wu Junwan's voice, Chai Jiliang knew she was upset and promptly said, "Princess Junwan, this subject did it to buy you time."

"You should understand that His Majesty would never marry you off to a subject like me. By doing so, others will know of my admiration for you and hence would stop urging His Majesty to find you a suitor on the court."

Wu Junwan scoffed coldly and then said, "Mr. Chai, I advise you to keep your ulterior motives in check."

With that, Wu Junwan turned and walked away.

Wu Junwan was no fool; Chai Jiliang's actions indeed bought her some time, with no ministers likely to bring up her marriage in the near future.

However, this move also tied her to Chai Jiliang. Once their story spread among the people, they would surely be celebrated as a talented man and a beautiful woman destined for one another. And if Wu Junwan were to ascend to the supreme position in the future, how should she then deal with Chai Jiliang?

Their affair had already spread among the people, should she grant Chai Jiliang a status?

If she did not grant Chai Jiliang a status, what would the common folk say about her? Most likely, they would accuse her of being unfeeling and disloyal, the traditional indifference of an emperor's heart.

Having dealt with Chai Jiliang for so many years, Wu Junwan knew all too well what kind of person he was, he always had a long-term vision and was not someone to focus solely on the immediate gains and losses.

At this moment, Wu Junwan was indeed very angry, Chai Jiliang even schemed against her.

Watching Wu Junwan's departing figure, Chai Jiliang muttered to himself, "It seems I went a bit too far this time."

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Half a month later.

North Country.

Hall of Political Affairs.

Lu Chen sat on the throne, full of vigor. With a smile, he said, "This is our last time discussing important matters in this Hall of Political Affairs. Gentlemen, if you have any issues to discuss, bring them up quickly."

"If not, let's talk about the city relocation."

Thanks to the tremendous efforts of the common folk of North Country and the slaves of the Barbarian Tribe, the new city of North Country had been built. It was constructed mainly of steel and concrete, with very wide streets. There was also a Prince's Mansion in the new city, with a very large area. Lu Chen was already eager to move there.

The current Prince's Mansion was somewhat too cramped for him; he felt constricted. Once he moved to the new city, he and his wives and concubines could live as they pleased.

After hearing Lu Chen's words, Li Rui took the initiative to stand and say, "Prince, although the new city has been constructed, the houses there are expensive, and the general populace can hardly afford them. It is feared that few people from Yan County will move to the new city to live."

The new city was already built, but it was constructed using steel, concrete, and red bricks, all of which were almost exclusively produced by the North Prince Mansion and were considered new and costly materials. As one could imagine, the prices of the homes built with these were quite high.

Despite the growing prosperity of commerce in Yan County since Lu Chen's arrival in North Country, enabling the locals to make some money through trade, the particularly wealthy among them made up probably less than one percent of Yan County's populace.

If only the North Prince Mansion moved to the new city, and the civilians of the old city remained, what use would the new city serve?

Lu Chen said with a smile, "I anticipated this issue early on, which is why I had the Jinyiwei Guard register the population of Yan County. Currently, there are a total of one hundred thousand original inhabitants, each household only needs to pay five hundred wen to own a house in the new city."

"Those who truly can't afford it can owe the amount temporarily, as long as it's repaid within ten years."

Hearing this, the officials in the great hall thought it over, and if it was just five hundred wen, most of Yan County's locals should be able to afford it.

The key was that the North Prince offered a ten-year repayment period. Although the people of North Country were previously quite poor, since the North Prince arrived, the North Prince Mansion had created quite a few industries.

These industries required a large labor force, and although the core industries all involved signing lifetime contracts, the North Prince Mansion employed a hiring system for certain simple handicrafts, meaning the people of Yan County could earn five hundred wen by working for the North Prince Mansion's industries.

Even if they did not work in industries established by the North Prince Mansion, with the flourishing trade in Yan County today, it wouldn't be a problem for the locals to find some work to make money.

And even stepping back ten thousand steps, if the Yan County locals didn't work for anyone else, but merely leased some land to farm, paying off five hundred wen within ten years wouldn't be an issue at all.

Therefore, the price set by Lu Chen was fairly reasonable.

Lu Chen then said, "Of course, this price is only for the locals of Yan County. If outsiders wish to buy houses in Yan County, that would be a different price."

At this moment, an official asked, "Prince, what if the Yan County locals sell their houses to others at a high price?"

Lu Chen said indifferently, "The first house owned by Yan County locals is not allowed to be traded."

Hearing this, Li Rui returned to his spot, "Your servant has no further questions."

Lu Chen asked, "Do any of you have other questions? You may also raise any issues related to the relocation now."

Seeing no one spoke up, Lu Chen said, "Since all of you have no questions, then I will go over the arrangements for the city relocation."

As his voice fell, a Jinyiwei Guard beside Lu Chen took a small booklet and walked to the center of the great hall, then began to read from the contents of the booklet.

The booklet addressed the arrangements for the city relocation and how the new city should be managed.

Two hours later, after the discussion about the city relocation was complete, Lu Chen returned to his study.

Sitting on a chair in the study, Lu Chen glanced over the entire room, a hint of reluctance rising in his heart.

This study held many beautiful memories for him. He had flirted with Chu Yuqin in this room, had retorted Wang Qingci, made deals with Chu Qingli, and even carried out mischievous deeds with Lin Wanyun in secret. He never thought he would soon have to leave this place.

As Lu Chen was immersed in his memories, a familiar voice called out, "Prince, this is the first time I've seen you daydreaming in the study."

Lu Chen snapped back to reality, looked up at the doorway of the study, and saw Wang Qingci's S-shaped enchanting figure.

Chapter 492: What are the beautiful memories the Prince mentioned?_1

Wang Qingci was wearing a red gauze dress today, the upper part loosely revealing a vast expanse of snowy white skin.

The lower part of the skirt had a slit, exposing her long, white legs. Standing at the doorway, her slim and charming figure was made even more enticing by the light from outside.

Seeing Wang Qingci appear at the doorway of the study, Lu Chen's lips curled into a slight smile. If he hadn't remembered wrongly, the most frequent acts they performed were in that study. Since Wang Qingci had come, it would be the perfect ending to wrap things up with her.

Lu Chen asked with a smile, "Mr. Wang, do you have any important intelligence to report today?"

Wang Qingci entered the study and conscientiously closed the door before swaying over to the side of the desk and placing a letter on it.

"Great Wu has sent Wu Junwan as an envoy to the North Country to prepare for an alliance with Great Jue against Great Xia, aiming to start a war of annihilation."

Upon hearing this, Lu Chen was slightly taken aback before he picked up the intelligence on the desk, opened it, and scanned the contents.

After reading the content, Lu Chen frowned slightly. If Great Wu truly allied with Great Jue, then it was likely Great Jue could tie down North Country. In that case, North Country would be unable to stop Great Wu from deploying troops against Great Xia.

This was indeed a troublesome issue.

Seeing Lu Chen silently reviewing the intelligence, Wang Qingci reminded him, "Wu Junwan and the Yue Emperor are very close, referring to each other as sisters. Once Wu Junwan arrives at Great Jue, the likelihood of their alliance is very high."

Hearing this, Lu Chen came back to his senses, thinking that unless Great Jue were unwilling to get involved, preventing the alliance between the two great dynasties would indeed be quite challenging.

After the annihilation of the Great Xia Dynasty, Great Jue would gain a large swath of land and population, becoming even more powerful. It was likely that the Yue Emperor might be tempted.

North Country can expect some difficult times ahead.

They need to become stronger faster.

With this in mind, Lu Chen glanced at Wang Qingci beside him and said with a smile, "Mr. Wang, now that the various dynasties are aware of your identity and the relationship between Rain-listening Pavilion and the North Prince Mansion, there's no need for Rain-listening Pavilion to keep hiding its affiliation."

Wang Qingci paused upon hearing this.

Ever since Wu Junwan returned from her mission to North Country, news that Rain-listening Pavilion belonged to the North Prince Mansion had spread throughout the various dynasties, and now almost all of them were aware of the association between Rain-listening Pavilion and the North Prince Mansion. Rain-listening Pavilion's ability to gather intelligence was no longer as easy as before.

Clearly, the leak of the relationship between Rain-listening Pavilion and the North Prince Mansion was done intentionally by that woman, Wu Junwan. She did not want North Country to develop smoothly, hindering their ability to gather intelligence from other dynasties.

After hearing Lu Chen's words, Wang Qingci thought he was planning to disband Rain-listening Pavilion and felt somewhat disappointed internally.

Rain-listening Pavilion was established from the ground up by Wang Qingci herself, and she had used it to collect a considerable amount of intelligence from the various dynasties. It was through the Rain-listening Pavilion that she had been able to realize her value by Lu Chen's side.

If Rain-listening Pavilion ceased to exist, what else could she do in the future?

Deep down, Wang Qingci was concerned and afraid that Lu Chen would ask her to return to the Prince's Mansion to attend to him.

Attending to Lu Chen wasn't really an issue for her; she enjoyed their time together, but she had her own stubborn streak. She didn't want Lu Chen to see her only as someone to fulfill certain desires.

At this moment, Wang Qingci asked, "Does the Prince intend to disband Rain-listening Pavilion?"

Lu Chen said, "Why would you think that? What reason would I have to disband Rain-listening Pavilion without just cause?"

This...

Wang Qingci paused, then asked, "Didn't the Prince say that Rain-listening Pavilion has been exposed..."

Wang Qingci hesitated, not continuing further.

Rain-listening Pavilion, as an intelligence organization, is generally abandoned once exposed.

Since its affiliation has been revealed, it will surely be closely watched, making it much harder to collect intelligence undercover from that point on.

Lu Chen said with a smile, "Although Rain-listening Pavilion's relationship with the North Prince Mansion has been exposed, it can still continue to serve its purpose."

"Now with Rain-listening Pavilion's business reaching all the great dynasties, the commercial scale of the North Prince Mansion would not be what it is today without Rain-listening Pavilion's assistance."

Wang Qingci instantly understood Lu Chen's intention; he wanted Rain-listening Pavilion to continue playing its commercial role, aiding the North Prince Mansion in selling various goods.

Wang Qingci felt somewhat excited internally. Although Rain-listening Pavilion could no longer collect intelligence as it did in the past, as long as Rain-listening Pavilion still existed, she could continue to demonstrate her value.

Then, Lu Chen continued, "Even if Rain-listening Pavilion is exposed, it can still collect intelligence overtly."

"Now that the various dynasties are aware that Rain-listening Pavilion belongs to the North Prince Mansion, they will not directly move against Rain-listening Pavilion before they fall out with the North Prince Mansion."

"Moreover, we have already signed trade agreements with both Great Jue and Great Wu. Even when Rain-listening Pavilion conducts business in Great Jue and Great Wu, they are following the trade agreements, so neither can raise any objections."

Lu Chen's idea was straightforward. Now that Rain-listening Pavilion's backing power had been exposed, it should openly become another commercial group of the North Prince Mansion.

In the past, Rain-listening Pavilion collected intelligence secretly; once it turned official, it would gather intelligence openly. With the North Prince Mansion's backing, Rain-listening Pavilion would not likely be targeted publicly in non-war times, but rather face minor underhanded tactics.

Chapter 493: What are the beautiful memories the Prince mentioned?_2

No matter the tricks the great dynasties use, it's fine as long as Rain-listening Pavilion can still do business with each of them.

At this moment, Wang Qingci revealed a seductive smile, "Hearing Prince speak like this, this slave can rest easy. I was afraid I might lose my job."

Lu Chen reached out, pulled Wang Qingci next to the desk into his arms, then hugged her slender waist tightly, and whispered in her ear, "My capable female slave, everyone else could lose their job, but it's impossible to let you become unemployed."

Hearing this, Wang Qingci's voice turned coquettishly soft, "Prince is so good to this slave."

Lu Chen chuckled, this bitch.

"By the way, I have something to tell you."

Wang Qingci asked, "Please speak, Prince."

Lu Chen's hand caressed her jade legs through the red gossamer skirt as he said, "Soon we will be relocating to the new city. The construction is complete, and from now on, we'll be moving there."

Caught off guard by his words, Wang Qingci was stunned for a moment. She had also heard that the new city was nearing completion, but she hadn't taken it to heart. Now that Lu Chen suddenly mentioned moving, she felt a sudden sense of loss, an unwillingness to leave.

The old city held too many of her memories, memories of the first time she saw Lu Chen, of being conquered by him, and of the absurd things they did together in the study.

She hadn't expected to leave this place so soon.

At that moment, Wang Qingci's gaze involuntarily swept over the whole study, and the events that had taken place there flashed before her, replaying over and over in her mind.

Gradually, Wang Qingci's face flushed more and more, and it was then that Lu Chen, smiling, asked, "Are you also reluctant to leave the current North Prince Mansion?"

Wang Qingci replied, "This slave is Prince's female slave, wherever Prince goes, this slave will follow. Wherever Prince is, that is this slave's home, there's nothing to be reluctant about."

Lu Chen said, "Oh? Is that so?"

"I thought you had some affection for the current North Prince Mansion, but it seems I thought too much."

With a sigh, Lu Chen continued, "I, for one, am quite reluctant to leave the current North Prince Mansion."

Hearing this, Wang Qingci responded with a teasing smile, "I didn't expect Prince to be a nostalgic person."

Lu Chen's hand slapped on Wang Qingci's derrière with a smack as he said, "What, did you think I was someone who grew tired of the old and loved only the new?"

Wang Qingci let out a "mmn" and shivered slightly. "This slave never said that."

Lu Chen then said with a laugh, "Since we're leaving here, let's create even more beautiful memories before we depart."

As he spoke, Lu Chen's hand slid beneath Wang Qingci's robe, caressing her soft and delicate skin.

Hearing Lu Chen's words, Wang Qingci knew he was about to be up to no good again, but she didn't do anything, just quietly sat on his lap, waiting for Lu Chen to have his way with her.

At that moment, Lu Chen said, "Once we move to the new city, I will give you a proper status, especially now that Rain-listening Pavilion is known to be part of the North Prince Mansion."

Upon hearing this, Wang Qingci's mind went blank, and then she said, "This slave is but Prince's female slave, how dare I hope for a status."

Lu Chen said with a smile, "You're afraid I'll keep you in the North Prince Mansion, making you serve me every day, and not allow you to go out, aren't you?"

Wang Qingci replied, "Serving Prince is this slave's duty, I dare not harbor such thoughts."

Lu Chen squeezed her with his strong hand, and Wang Qingci let out another "mmn."

"Rest assured, even if I give you a status, Rain-listening Pavilion will still be yours to manage, and you will still be able to leave the North Prince Mansion. I won't keep you caged up like a canary."

At that moment, Wang Qingci, being caressed by Lu Chen, was blushing and restless. She wriggled a bit in his arms, then asked weakly, "Is what Prince says true?"

Lu Chen replied, "Of course it's true. Look, my wives and concubines in the inner court are often out and about, aren't they?"

With Lu Chen's clarification, Wang Qingci suddenly realized it indeed seemed to be the case. Not to mention how Mu Zixuan, the princess consort, often went out to manage the Prince Mansion's industry, Lu Chen's other wives and concubines also left the mansion from time to time.

In the whole North Prince Mansion, it seemed only Xiao Wenyao remained in the inner court all the time, even Xiaozhou and Dazhou, who usually had little to do, frequently left the mansion.

It was clear that Lu Chen didn't impose many restrictions on his women, unlike typical Aristocratic Families or other princes who strictly forbade their wives and concubines from making public appearances.

At this point, Wang Qingci asked, "Prince is so confident in his women, aren't you afraid they'll go looking for other men?"

Upon hearing this question, Lu Chen chuckled and then said, "What? Are you doubting my charm?"

Then came the sound of tearing in the study. Noticing yet another robe being ruined, Wang Qingci glared at Lu Chen, then said, "Prince, this dress was a gift from the princess consort to this slave."

Lu Chen, smiling, replied, "Wait a while, and I'll tell Zixuan to send you a few more."

Before Wang Qingci could say anything more, Lu Chen picked her up and placed her on the desk. He then leaned in closer and continued, "I'm quite confident in my charm, and of course, I'm also confident in my women. I believe none of you would betray me."

Chapter 494: What are the beautiful memories the Prince mentioned?_3

Wang Qingci knew she was definitely going to be dealt with by Lu Chen today. Her delicate, jade-like hands reached out toward Lu Chen, and then she fixed her gaze on Lu Chen's handsome face and asked, "This humble woman is very curious, from where does the Prince derive his confidence, may the Prince be willing to enlighten this humble woman?"

As she spoke, Wang Qingci sent Lu Chen a seductive glance, her eyes brimming with unspoken promise, and a coquettish air spread across her face.

Seeing Wang Qingci provoke him again, Lu Chen said with a smile, "Qingci, are you so eager to create more beautiful memories with me?"

Wang Qingci's cheeks flushed crimson, her eyes sultry like silk. She smiled and said, "This humble woman doesn't quite understand what kind of beautiful memories the Prince is referring to."

Lu Chen could no longer restrain himself at the sight of Wang Qingci's tempting appearance, and he leaned in, kissing her rosy lips.

This bitch needed to be put in her place more often, or else she would become insufferably arrogant in just a few days.

Before long, Wang Qingci experienced what Lu Chen meant by beautiful memories.

Although she had gone through similar situations countless times before, Wang Qingci still felt that this time with Lu Chen was something she would cherish even more.

Lu Chen also clearly sensed that Wang Qingci was different today; she seemed to become even more proactive.

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Meanwhile.

When Mu Zixuan and the others heard that they were moving, they immediately instructed the maids and servants of the Prince's Mansion to start packing.

There were many items in the North Prince Mansion, and it was certain they couldn't be moved in a single day. Therefore, before the official move, they needed to transport most of the belongings to

the new city. Only then, on the actual moving day, could they settle into the new North Prince Mansion within one day.

The servants bustled in and out of the Prince's Mansion, packing items under Mu Zixuan's watchful eye, while her gaze remained fixed on a tree not far away in the pavilion.

Could it be that tree? Mu Zixuan fell into thought, knowing the purpose of the Dragon Phoenix Tree, she was well aware of its significance.

The Dragon Phoenix Tree had grown to about seven or eight meters tall by now and its trunk was incredibly thick. Moving such a tree to the new Prince's Mansion would likely be troublesome.

Seeing Wang Qingci's eyes fixed on the Dragon Phoenix Tree not far away, Zhou Youyou asked, "Sister Mu, why are you staring at that tree all the time?"

Hearing Zhou Youyou's words, Mu Zixuan snapped back to reality and replied, "This tree has grown so big, it's not easy to transplant it to the new Prince's Mansion, and as it's a Fairy Tree, I don't know if it can be moved easily."

Zhou Youyou said, "This tree was planted by the Prince, he should know the most about it. Why not ask the Prince about it and see if it can be moved to the new Prince's Mansion?"

Mu Zixuan thought that made sense, as the tree was so important to Lu Chen, he would probably find a way to relocate it. She decided to ask Lu Chen during dinner how he intended to handle the Dragon Phoenix Tree.

At dusk.

When all of Lu Chen's wives and concubines arrived at the main hall to prepare for dinner, they found that Lu Chen had not yet returned.

Usually, if Lu Chen was not back for dinner, it was likely that he was up to no good with one of his wives or concubines. Mu Zixuan scanned the hall and saw that nearly all of Lu Chen's wives and concubines were present. She then turned to her maid behind her and said, "Xiao Rou, go check the study and see if the Prince is there."

"Yes, my lady."

The maid then went to the study.

A short while later, the maid Xiao Rou came back to the main hall with a flushed face. Seeing her red-faced maid, the women all understood what was happening.

Maid Xiao Rou said, "My lady, the Prince says he will not return tonight, he has already eaten."

Hearing this, Mu Zixuan smiled and said to Chu Yuqin and the others, "Since the Prince won't be coming back, let us eat first."

The women stopped waiting and began dining while talking about the topic of moving the city.

Chapter 495: Wang Qingci Is Pregnant_1

Great Xia Dynasty.

Capital city, Sum Emperor's sleeping palace.

The Sum Emperor lay on the bed, looking as if he was on his last breath. At this moment, Zhao Wenhan and Lin Gaoyuan were reporting the latest movements of the major dynasties.

A little while later, the Sum Emperor suddenly began coughing violently. A maid hurried over with a yellow silk handkerchief; in the next moment, the Sum Emperor coughed up fresh blood onto the handkerchief, dyeing the yellow silk a deep red.

Seeing this scene, Zhao Wenhan and Lin Gaoyuan both frowned slightly, their eyes darting with different thoughts, each plotting their own schemes.

After a while, the Sum Emperor spoke, "I never thought that as soon as I fall, the major dynasties would surround us like vultures."

Saying this, the Sum Emperor glanced at Zhao Wenhan and Lin Gaoyuan, then asked, "Zhao, Lin, in your opinion, which prince can succeed my position?"

Upon hearing this, Lin Gaoyuan and Zhao Wenhan immediately knelt on the ground, and said in unison, "Your servants would not dare to speak carelessly!"

Some things must not be spoken lightly, especially on the matter of appointing a successor.

The Sum Emperor coughed a few more times, then said, "Do not worry; speak freely. I absolve you of any blame.

The two remained prostrate on the ground, not daring to lift their heads. Seeing that they still would not speak, the Sum Emperor snorted coldly, "The esteemed Prime Ministers, yet you dare not declare your stance on the matter of succession, what kind of Prime Ministers are you?"

After another long pause, the Sum Emperor said, "Enough, both of you stand up. If you do not dare to say, I won't force you."

After hearing this, Zhao Wenhan and Lin Gaoyuan finally stood up.

At that moment, the Sum Emperor continued, "Since its establishment, the Great Xia has practiced the tradition of the eldest legitimate son inheriting the throne.

However, as the interference from the Aristocratic Families over the throne has become increasingly severe, most of the recent legitimate eldest sons have not lived past thirty years of age, and the transfer of the throne has always been accompanied by heavy bloodshed."

"Now that the Southern Aristocratic Families have been destroyed and the Ancient Families have become much more restrained, it is time to return to the tradition of the eldest legitimate son's succession."

Hearing the Sum Emperor's words, Lin Gaoyuan and Zhao Wenhan had a sudden realization. Could it be that the Sum Emperor was planning to appoint Prince Lu Yi as the Crown Prince?

After coming to his senses, Zhao Wenhan was inwardly overjoyed. Fortunately, after Prince Lu Shuyun's rebellion, he had promptly sided with Prince Lu Yi. If Prince Lu Yi could smoothly succeed, he would still be heavily utilized.

At this time, the Sum Emperor went on to say, "I plan to appoint Prince Lu Yi as the Crown Prince. What do you two think of this decision?"

Zhao Wenhan and Lin Gaoyuan said in unison, "We fully abide by your Imperial decision!"

Although Lin Gaoyuan was somewhat surprised by this outcome, he was not uncomprehending; after all, the Sum Emperor was nearing his end, and a successor had to be chosen without further delay.

If talking about capability, Prince Lu Yi could indeed be considered competent. Key is, Prince Lu Yi is the legitimate eldest son and was supposed to inherit the throne to begin with. It's just that for the past few generations, the excessive interference of the Aristocratic Families had made the legitimate eldest son's right to the throne in name only.

However, Lin Gaoyuan did not believe that Prince Lu Yi could inherit the throne so smoothly. He was quite familiar with the current political landscape of the court and knew that almost all princes were backed by several factions, and most critically, most princes had the backing of Seigniors.

Once the Sum Emperor appointed Prince Lu Yi as the Crown Prince and passed the throne to him, it was very likely that Prince Lu Yi would not be able to suppress the other princes, let alone the Seigniors of Great Xia. At that point, Prince Lu Yi could very possibly be pulled down from the throne.

Lin Gaoyuan did not have much faith in Prince Lu Yi; in his view, the North Prince remained the most suitable candidate for the throne.

He was well aware of the North Country's development, which was progressing very rapidly, and the Northern military strength had also become increasingly powerful. At present, no feudal state in Great Xia had a military might as formidable as the North Country.

Should the Seigniors across the land rise in rebellion, it would inevitably lead to a fight to the death. Once the North Country saw its opportunity, given its military capability, the North Prince would undoubtedly be able to ascend to that position smoothly.

Nonetheless, Lin Gaoyuan was currently somewhat worried about the Great Wu and Da Yue Dynasties. If Great Xia truly fell into internal strife, these two great dynasties would not just sit by idly.

But now was not the time to think about these matters; there was no solution to be found at the moment, and he could only wait and see how events unfolded.

At this time, the Sum Emperor, looking wan and sapped, said, "Zhao, Lin, you may leave. The words I have spoken to you today must not be spread carelessly."

The two responded in unison once more, "We understand."

"We shall take our leave."

Afterward, they both turned and left the Sum Emperor's sleeping palace. After they had gone, a shadow emerged from behind a pillar in the room.

At that moment, the Sum Emperor stood up from the bed, hands clasped behind his back, looking out the window. He was a completely different person from the sickly image he had portrayed moments ago; now, he looked entirely unafflicted.

Then, the Sum Emperor asked in a cold voice, "Who does Lin Gaoyuan support?"

Hearing the question, the shadow behind the pillar answered, "There is no evidence yet; he maintains a distance from every prince and appears to wish to remain neutral."

The Sum Emperor chuckled, "That old fox; he probably has seen through my feigned illness."

With most of the court officials already taking sides, Lin Gaoyuan, as the Left Prime Minister, had yet to choose a prince he favored amidst a possible change of rulers, which appeared suspicious.

If he did not take a stand now, when the struggle for the throne finished, the Lin Family would no longer enjoy their current prosperity, and it's uncertain whether Lin Gaoyuan could continue as Prime Minister.

The Sum Emperor did not believe Lin Gaoyuan was neutral. In his opinion, Lin Gaoyuan must have discovered something.

...

However, even if Lin Gaoyuan had discovered something, the Sum Emperor didn't care; his plan had been very successful. All the Seigniors across the Great Xia had entered the game, and now it was just a matter of whether the one in the North would take the bait.

If the one in the North also took the bait, then he could solve the problem once and for all.

Just then, a Shadow Guard appeared at the doorway, "Your Majesty, there is a disturbance in the North Country!"

Hearing this, the Sum Emperor paused for a moment before taking the report from the Shadow Guard's hands and carefully reading it.

Seeing that the North Country had stationed thirty thousand Heavy Cavalry in Yongan County, the Sum Emperor slightly furrowed his brow.

He didn't quite understand what the North Country was up to; if the North really planned to head south, they would likely attack the Qi Country directly. To pass through the Qi Country would be the logical strategy—what use would it be to station thirty thousand Heavy Cavalry in the northwest at Yongan County?

Moreover, the North Country had only a total of fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry—thirty thousand constituted a significant military force. Placing such a force on the border with the Great Wu Dynasty could potentially provoke the Great Wu.

The Sum Emperor thought for a moment but still found the actions of the North Country perplexing and then told the Shadow Guard, "Go summon the State Preceptor to see Us!"

The Shadow Guard before the Sum Emperor immediately replied, "As you command, Your Majesty."

Before long, Situ Ce appeared in the Sum Emperor's bedchamber, and the Sum Emperor handed the report he was holding directly to Situ Ce, then asked, "The North Country is not sending troops southward but has instead moved the Heavy Cavalry to Yongan County, what does the State Preceptor make of this?"

Caught off guard by the question, Situ Ce took the report from the Sum Emperor's hand and scrutinized it carefully. After a while, Situ Ce finally answered, "Your Majesty, your humble servant believes that the North Prince is trying to deter the Great Wu and prevent them from launching an attack on the Great Xia during its internal strife."

Upon hearing this, the Sum Emperor's face darkened, and he said somewhat displeased, "He has moved such an important military force to Yongan County. Are you implying that he has no designs on the Capital at all?"

If the North Prince truly had his sights set on the throne, like the other Seigniors, he would either be expanding his forces or mustering troops, waiting for the right moment.

But the North Country had directly relocated its most capable Heavy Cavalry to ward off the Great Wu Dynasty. This indicated that the North Prince had no intentions of heading south; otherwise, he would never deploy such an important force to guard against the Great Wu.

At that point, Situ Ce said, "Your Majesty, the North Prince is absolutely loyal to the court. In your humble servant's opinion, the North Prince will not revolt unless there comes a day when the Capital cannot hold and Your Majesty orders the North Prince to move south; that might be when the North Prince would lead his troops southward."

The Sum Emperor snorted coldly upon hearing Situ Ce's words, then retorted, "Since when has the State Preceptor also started taking Chen's side?"

Situ Ce replied, neither humbly nor arrogantly, "Your servant merely speaks the truth."

The Sum Emperor spoke lightly, "We do not believe that the North Country will stay out of the game."

All of his scheming was for the North Country. If the North Country didn't fall for it, wouldn't all his efforts be in vain? He had to compel the North Country to advance southward.

At that moment, the Sum Emperor said to Situ Ce, "We are tired, State Preceptor. You may attend to your own affairs."

Knowing the Sum Emperor had wholly disregarded his counsel, Situ Ce realized the Sum Emperor was determined to persist in his course, insistent on removing the North Country.

Situ Ce did not say anything further; he simply bowed and said, "Your servant will take his leave."

Situ Ce believed that with Zhuge Zhongguang in the North, the Sum Emperor's schemes would come to naught.

Even if the North Prince did not understand politics or cunning strategies and could not see through the Sum Emperor's scheming, as long as the North Prince was adept at heeding Zhuge Zhongguang's advice, the Sum Emperor's schemes would ultimately fail.

...

In the North Country.

In the North Prince Mansion, the study.

Today, Lu Chen and Wang Qingci created even more wonderful memories together. Wang Qingci was so utterly spent by these delightful moments that she had gone limp; if Lu Chen hadn't been hugging her, she would have probably fallen to the ground unable to get up.

Lu Chen then picked Wang Qingci up and proceeded towards the secret chamber of the study. Seeing that Lu Chen was actually carrying her into the secret chamber, Wang Qingci suddenly remembered all the things Lu Chen had done to her in there last time. She quickly mustered her remaining strength to plead, "Prince, please have mercy on your servant..."

Lu Chen smiled and then said, "We shall spend the night here."

At the mention of spending the night, Wang Qingci's face turned deathly pale.

But after Lu Chen placed Wang Qingci on the bed of the study's secret chamber, he just lay down on the bed, letting Wang Qingci rest in his embrace and didn't continue to do anything else to her.

Seeing that Lu Chen made no further move, Wang Qingci paused. She had thought Lu Chen would continue to 'torture' her, but it turned out he just wanted to sleep.

Thank goodness, thank goodness.

Just as Wang Qingci breathed a sigh of relief, Lu Chen's lips slightly curved in a barely perceptible smirk.

At this moment, Lu Chen looked up at the system interface, feeling incredibly contented.

[Congratulations, Host, for making Wang Qingci pregnant. You have received the reward of the steamship blueprints.]

[The pregnancy reward is an encouragement. Please ensure the child is born safely, and upon the child's safe birth, you will receive a richer reward.]

Chapter 496: What do you think about marrying you off to the Prince?_1

Early morning.

After Lu Chen woke up, he continued to create some beautiful memories with Wang Qingci, so much so that Wang Qingci felt she couldn't hold any more memories inside her.

However, Lu Chen seemed much gentler today and did not tidy up Wang Qingci as he had before.

This made Wang Qingci somewhat unaccustomed, but she didn't pay much mind to it.

At this moment, Wang Qingci was completely unaware that she had fallen for his trap. Once she returned to her bedroom, she immediately had her maid draw water for a bath, cleaned herself, and expelled the impurities from her body through her cultivation.

Wang Qingci thought it would be just like before, without any issues.

Meanwhile, Lu Chen, beaming with joy, returned to the main courtyard. Mu Zixuan was there, gazing at the Dragon Phoenix Tree beneath it, pondering how to transport this Dragon Phoenix Tree to the new Prince's Mansion.

Seeing Mu Zixuan standing under the Dragon Phoenix Tree, staring intently at it, Lu Chen came up behind her, wrapped his arms around her slim waist, and whispered in her ear, "My love, what are you looking at?"

Upon seeing Lu Chen's return, Mu Zixuan immediately said, "Prince, we are about to move soon. What are your plans for this Dragon Phoenix Tree? Surely you cannot leave it here, can you?"

Hearing this, Lu Chen paused. He hadn't considered this issue at first.

Lu Chen looked up at the lush Dragon Phoenix Tree. It had grown rapidly at first, becoming a large tree in just a few days. Although the growth of the Dragon Phoenix Tree had slowed down, it was now as tall as a several-story building, with a thick trunk.

To relocate the Dragon Phoenix Tree to the new Prince's Mansion was indeed a huge project, but not an insurmountable problem. As long as the roots were dug out and more people were found, the tree could be transplanted to the new Prince's Mansion.

What worried him was whether the Dragon Phoenix Tree could be transplanted at all.

Then Lu Chen asked in his mind, "System, can this Dragon Phoenix Tree be transplanted?"

If the Dragon Phoenix Tree couldn't be transplanted, then it would have to stay put. In that case, he would need to assign someone to guard it, to prevent any harm to the tree.

At this moment, the system's voice echoed in Lu Chen's mind.

[It can.]

Relieved by the system's response, Lu Chen then heard the system speak again.

[After the host transplants the Dragon Phoenix Tree to the new location, you need to feed it with your blood again.]

Lu Chen thought that was no big deal, as long as the Dragon Phoenix Tree could be moved.

He then said to Mu Zixuan beside him, "In a few days, we'll get some more people to trim the branches of the Dragon Phoenix Tree, collect the branches and leaves, and then have someone dig up the roots and transplant it to the new Prince's Mansion."

Mu Zixuan continued to ask, "Can a Fairy Tree also be transplanted like this?"

Lu Chen said with a smile, "It is precisely because it is a Fairy Tree that it has a stronger vitality. It's easier for it to survive the transplant than ordinary trees."

Relieved by Lu Chen's words, Mu Zixuan realized she had been overly concerned—there was no issue with moving the tree after all.

At this moment, Mu Zixuan smiled and said, "Prince, you must have been busy all night long. You must be hungry by now. I have already asked the servants to prepare breakfast."

At this time, Lu Chen bore a very fragrant scent on him that Mu Zixuan could immediately recognize as that of Wang Qingci, which clearly indicated that Lu Chen had spent the previous night with Wang Qingci in the study.

As for what Lu Chen did in the study with Wang Qingci, there was no need to guess; a man and a woman alone in a room is self-evident.

Lu Chen replied with a slight smile, "My love understands me well, I am indeed a bit hungry."

With that, Lu Chen, holding Mu Zixuan's slender waist, walked toward the main hall.

As Lu Chen had breakfast, Mu Zixuan sat by his side watching. Suddenly, Lu Chen thought of something and spoke up, "I plan to give Wang Qingci a proper status after we move to the new residence. What do you think, my love?"

Mu Zixuan smiled slightly, "If the Prince wishes to grant her a status, then do so. There's no need to ask for my opinion."

"Wang has been with you for some time now; indeed, it's time to afford her some recognition."

Lu Chen said, "Since my love agrees, I'll leave the matter of the formal recognition to you. She is already carrying my child, so I intend to give her a complete wedding ceremony."

Upon hearing this, Mu Zixuan was taken aback, then she said, "Congratulations, Prince, on another heir!"

Wang Qingci was a Martial Artist, and a high-quality one at that, which made her very unlikely to become pregnant. In the entire North Prince Mansion, only Chu Yuqin was an exception, succeeding on her first attempt.

Besides Chu Yuqin, Lu Chen, Wang Qingci, and even Yelv Nanyan, these high-quality warriors did not know how many times they had been with him without conceiving. Now that Wang Qingci, the Half-step Grandmaster, was pregnant with Lu Chen's child, it was indeed a cause for celebration.

With one child on the way, there would likely be a second and a third; with Wang Qingci pregnant, it should be possible for Lu Chen's other women too.

At this point, Lu Chen put down his chopsticks and reminded, "By the way, she does not yet know that she is carrying my child. You should keep it to yourself for now."

Hearing this, Mu Zixuan asked with a puzzled look, "Why is that?"

Chapter 497: What do you think about marrying you off to the Prince?_2

Lu Chen said with a smile, "This is to give her a surprise."

Mu Zixuan smiled lightly, then spoke, "This concubine understands."

While Lu Chen was still having breakfast, a maid entered the main hall, "Prince, Miss Dongfang requests an audience."

When Lu Chen had left his study earlier, he had instructed a Jinyiwei Guard to notify Dongfang Longyue to come to the Prince's Mansion, but he did not expect her to arrive so quickly.

Lu Chen hurriedly finished his porridge, then stood up and walked towards the study.

By this time, Dongfang Longyue had already arrived at Lu Chen's study. Although the study had been restored to its original state, Dongfang Longyue still felt there was a strange odor in the room, one she had never smelled before, and thus did not know what was emitting it.

As Dongfang Longyue was curious about the strange smell in Lu Chen's study, Lu Chen entered the room, "Longyue, sorry to have kept you waiting."

Dongfang Longyue quickly saluted and said, "This commoner greets the Prince!"

"This commoner has just arrived as well."

At this point, Dongfang Longyue looked up at Lu Chen, "May I know why the Prince has summoned me here?"

Lu Chen said, "Your Dongfang Family has built large ships before and has many shipbuilding craftsmen. I plan to build several special warships soon, so I need the assistance of your Dongfang Family."

As his words fell, Lu Chen's gaze swept over Dongfang Longyue.

She was dressed in a light purple gown, her black hair partially pinned up with a white jade hairpin, her fair neck appearing exceptionally slender, with strands of hair draping over her fragrant shoulders, the tips of her hair resting in front of her delicate collarbones.

Dongfang Longyue exuded an indescribable aura that seemed transcendent above the mundane world.

In addition to her presence, her perfect figure and long jade legs, as well as her flawless visage, could equally stir sinful thoughts in a man.

Lu Chen then glanced at Dongfang Longyue's favorability level. After spending time together, Dongfang Longyue's favorability towards him had risen to ninety-five.

As for Dongfang Longyue, a character arranged by the system, Lu Chen had never given her Dragon and Phoenix Tea, hence her favorability was purely genuine.

Feeling Lu Chen's stare, Dongfang Longyue's gaze subconsciously shifted aside. She then said, "If the Prince has a need, the Dongfang Family will naturally cooperate fully with the Prince in building warships."

With a heated look in his eyes, Lu Chen made Dongfang Longyue unable to meet his gaze. She was no fool; she well knew what kind of man Lu Chen was with so many women in his harem.

However, she did not dislike Lu Chen for this. In her view, Lu Chen was the Son of Destiny, and reproducing heirs was his duty, so having a few more women was of no consequence.

After spending time together, Dongfang Longyue had realized that Lu Chen was interested in her. Whenever Lu Chen was alone with her, he would unintentionally touch her body. Especially during the opening period of the Eastern Newspaper Agency, she often came to Lu Chen for advice on how to write articles, and through these interactions, she and Lu Chen became very familiar with each other.

At this moment, Lu Chen approached the desk, took out a blueprint of a steamship, and laid it on the desk, "Longyue, take a look at this blueprint of the ship first."

Upon hearing this, Dongfang Longyue also approached the desk, her body leaning slightly forward, her black hair sliding in front of her shoulders, her purple skirt parting to reveal her snow-white long legs.

Lu Chen naturally leaned closer, then pressed against her side and pointed at the map on the desk, "This kind of steamship doesn't need manpower, nor does it rely on wind, to move forward."

Feeling Lu Chen's arm against hers, Dongfang Longyue's delicate body trembled slightly. She did not immediately move away but continued to seriously examine the steamship blueprint on the desk for a moment before asking, "Prince, I'm afraid the Dongfang Family might not be able to build such a warship, as we have never built anything of this kind before."

Initially, when Dongfang Longyue heard that Lu Chen wanted the Dongfang Family to assist with shipbuilding, she thought that Lu Chen simply wanted to construct the large merchant ships of the Dongfang Family, but she soon realized that the warships Lu Chen mentioned were not at all the same as their large merchant ships.

Particularly the steam turbine depicted on the steamship blueprint, she had never even heard of it, let alone manufacturing it.

Lu Chen then said, "The Dongfang Family would only assist in the construction, the core components of the steamship will be manufactured by craftsmen from Great Yu City."

Upon hearing this, Dongfang Longyue realized her misunderstanding, having initially thought that Lu Chen would delegate the entire construction of the warship to the Dongfang Family.

If it was just assistance in construction without making the core components, then there would be no problem at all, as the Dongfang Family already had experience in building large ships.

Continuing, Lu Chen said, "When you go back, let your father know about the shipbuilding plans. As soon as the city's relocation is completed, we will begin on the steamship."

Dongfang Longyue replied, "Yes, this commoner understands."

With that said, Dongfang Longyue turned to look into Lu Chen's eyes, then asked, "Prince, do you have any other matter? If there is nothing else, I shall take my leave."

At this moment, Dongfang Longyue and Lu Chen were very close, their shoulders touching, and her complexion became slightly hot, revealing a faint blush.

Chapter 498: What do you think about marrying you off to the Prince?_3

The Son of Destiny was good in all aspects, skilled in everything. Not only was he handsome, but he was also exceptionally excellent. He was good to the commoners as well, but he was a bit too lustful.

Dongfang Longyue wasn't foolish either; how could she not see through Lu Chen's ulterior motives? Lu Chen was deliberately touching her body to test her reaction.

At that moment, Lu Chen caught a whiff of a faint fragrance drifting from Dongfang Longyue's body, and he couldn't help feeling somewhat restless inside. Dongfang Longyue, as a woman of unparalleled beauty, was naturally someone Lu Chen wanted to possess.

However, Lu Chen didn't plan to be too direct. He said with a smile at this time, "Well then, go about your business."

As soon as Lu Chen finished speaking, Dongfang Longyue immediately said, "This humble girl shall take her leave."

Having said that, Dongfang Longyue turned and left the study, heading straight back to the Dongfang Family.

At this time, Dongfang Yi was in the pavilion calculating the silver and gold they had lost in Great Sum. When they initially left Sufeng City, they hadn't been able to take many things with them, and they didn't have time to move some of their shops in Great Sum to the North Country.

After they arrived in the North Country, those shops were quickly sealed by the Great Sum court, leading to significant financial losses for the Dongfang Family.

Fortunately, the North Prince Mansion had handed over some of their properties to the Dongfang Family, who would soon be able to earn back the money they had initially lost.

Just then, the voice of a maid sounded in Dongfang Yi's ears, "Master, the young miss has returned."

Dongfang Yi looked up, about to say something, when he saw Dongfang Longyue appear before him. Dongfang Yi asked with a smile, "Longyue, ever since you opened the Eastern Newspaper Agency, you don't come home often."

On hearing this, Dongfang Longyue replied, "The Eastern Newspaper Agency has a lot of business, and we're also planning to open branches, so I've been a bit busy."

Continuing, Dongfang Longyue added, "Father, the Prince came looking for your daughter just now. He wants the Dongfang Family to assist in building warships with the craftsmen of Great Yu City."

Dongfang Yi was taken aback for a moment, then said, "Build warships?"

Seeing her father's expression turn somewhat strange, Dongfang Longyue thought he might be worried they couldn't complete the warship construction task, so she continued, "The Prince has the blueprints for the warships ready; the core components will be made by the craftsmen of Great Yu City. The Dongfang Family will be just assisting. It shouldn't be too difficult for us."

On hearing Dongfang Longyue's words, Dongfang Yi laughed heartily while stroking his beard.

Dongfang Longyue asked with a puzzled look, "Father, what are you laughing at?"

Dongfang Yi said indifferently, "Building a warship is something the Prince should discuss directly with me. Now that you are managing the Eastern Newspaper Agency, building a warship is not

really your concern. The Prince could have summoned me to the Prince's Mansion, but he specifically asked for you, to bring me the message."

Dongfang Longyue asked, "What do you mean by that?"

Dongfang Yi revealed a mischievous smile, "My daughter, back when we were in the South, you looked down on all those scholars, and I've been worried about whom you would marry in the future. But now, I suddenly find that there seems to be someone who is quite suitable for you."

"Your personality is rather dominant, but you become incredibly submissive in front of the Prince. Moreover, I've noticed that the Prince clearly has an interest in you."

"Why don't I speak with the Prince next time I see him and suggest marrying you off to him? What do you think?"

Dongfang Longyue's mind blanked for a moment, her cheeks tinted with a blush, then she said, "What are you babbling about? The Prince is the Son of Destiny; whom he wants for a woman is his business, not yours to meddle in."

Dongfang Yi said, "Longyue, do you take your father for a fool?"

"Your father has heard from the employees of the Eastern Newspaper Agency that you often visit the Prince's Mansion and discuss the agency's affairs with the Prince, alone in a study."

"Besides, shipbuilding has nothing to do with you; the Prince could have directly summoned me. Clearly, by asking you to come to the Prince's Mansion, he wants to have more contact with you. Your father is also a man; how could I not understand the Prince's intentions?"

On hearing Dongfang Yi's words, Dongfang Longyue spoke with a cold face, "If you continue, your daughter will get angry."

At Dongfang Longyue's words, Dongfang Yi laughed and quickly said, "Alright, alright, your father will say no more."

Dongfang Longyue continued, "The Prince said that after the city relocation is over, the construction of the warship will begin. You should visit the Prince's Mansion in the next few days and inquire about the warship."

Dongfang Yi said, "Mhm, okay."

Dongfang Longyue then turned around, "If there's nothing else, I'll be leaving first."

As soon as Dongfang Longyue's words fell, she left the yard directly. Watching Dongfang Longyue's departing figure, Dongfang Yi sighed and said to himself, "She's grown up; it's time to get married. It seems I have to mention this to the Prince."

Afternoon.

Dongfang Yi went to the Prince's Mansion.

Although Lu Chen had said to wait until after the city relocation to build the warship, building a warship was still a big deal. Dongfang Yi wanted to understand what features Lu Chen's warship needed so that the craftsmen of the Dongfang Family could coordinate with those of Great Yu City.

When Dongfang Yi saw the warship blueprints that Lu Chen had brought out, he was deeply shocked by the blueprints of the steamship. Dongfang Yi then asked, "Prince, can a warship made entirely of metal float on the water?"

Although the Dongfang Family had experience building large ships, they had never used all metal to construct one, at best covering the bow, stern, or surface of merchant ships with some metal.

Putting aside whether Lu Chen's steam engine could power the warship, the first consideration for building a metal warship was whether it could float. If the warship couldn't float, no matter how powerful the steam engine, it would be pointless.

Lu Chen said with a smile, "You can rest assured that it can definitely float. I plan to first build a smaller experimental ship to let you all gain some experience and verify the various parameters of the steamship."

"As for any potential issues, we'll know once it's built."

Lu Chen estimated in his mind that, unlike a train, even the smallest steamship would take several years to build given the current conditions. Therefore, it was something to be approached gradually, and he wasn't in a hurry.

Chapter 499: Just Now the Prince Told Me Something_1

Upon hearing Lu Chen's words, Dongfang Yi looked once again at the steamship blueprint in his hands, still finding it somewhat unbelievable.

If, as Lu Chen said, this steamship could move without relying on human or wind power, and was made entirely of metal, wouldn't that make them invincible at sea in the future?

While Dongfang Yi was entranced by the steamship blueprint, Lu Chen said, "The North Country doesn't have much of an industrial foundation right now, so it's not easy to manufacture such a steamship. There's no need to rush; the Prince can afford to wait another three to five years."

At present, their navy could continue to use wooden ships. The large ships made by the Dongfang Family could still be armed with cannons and serve as warships, there was no necessity for steamships.

It was then that Dongfang Yi suddenly thought of something, and then he asked, "Prince, can this steam engine really provide power for large ships?"

Lu Chen replied, "Of course, the steam engines manufactured in Great Yu City have already succeeded in their trial use, and the railway from Yan County to Great Yu City is already being laid. It won't be long before you'll see vehicles that don't require horses."

"In the future, it will only take a few days to travel from Great Yu City to Yan County."

After hearing this, Dongfang Yi said, "Prince, how about this? I'll first offer a few merchant ships, put the steam engine on them, modify the merchant ships a bit, and test out the effects of the steam engine?"

After thinking for a moment, Lu Chen said, "That's feasible. In a few days, I'll have craftsmen from Great Yu City produce a few steam engines suitable for merchant ships to test the power effect first."

Lu Chen thought to himself that since he was not in a hurry, why not try modifying the existing wooden ships first? If the modification proved effective, his steam warships could be mass-produced before long.

Metal steamships required a lot of metal. Since the industry of the North Country was not well developed, manufacturing metal steamships would take a lot of time, but it was different for wooden ships.

If it were wooden ships, the craftsmen of the Dongfang Family could make them, and the North Country had plenty of forests, providing more lumber for shipbuilding.

However, on second thought, steam engines needed to burn coal and operated at particularly high temperatures. He wondered if it was even possible to place steam engines on wooden ships.

What followed would depend on the modification experiments by Great Yu City and the Dongfang Family. He hoped they would be successful.

At this moment, Lu Chen said, "Dongfang Family Master, if there's nothing else, you may return first. The city is going to be relocated in a few days; your family should prepare as well."

Hearing this, Dongfang Yi was about to take his leave with a "retiring," but then he suddenly thought of something and continued, "Prince, I've just remembered something, may I speak?"

Lu Chen curiously asked, "What is it? Speak."

Dongfang Yi inquired, "What do you think of my daughter?"

Upon hearing the question, Lu Chen was stunned for a moment, as he had not expected Dongfang Yi to ask him this.

Why would Dongfang Yi ask this question? Surely this fellow wasn't planning to sell off his daughter?

With that thought, Lu Chen said, "Longyue is diligent, intelligent, and capable, an excellent woman."

At this point, Dongfang Yi said, "When I was in the South, I had always been looking for a suitable husband for my daughter, but she never took a liking to those poets and scholars. Not until she met the Prince did I notice that she often drew pictures in her room, and the portraits were of the Prince.

To paint these pictures, she would often lose interest in food and drink, which clearly shows her deep admiration for the Prince."

"I wonder if the Prince can give my daughter a chance? Allow her to attend to the Prince at his side?"

Hearing this, Lu Chen smiled; it was as he had thought, Dongfang Yi intended to marry Dongfang Longyue to him.

However, this was not surprising. Dongfang Yi was not the only one trying to push his daughter into the Prince's Mansion. Lu Chen was well aware of their intentions; they were trying to bind their families more firmly to the Prince's Mansion.

At this moment, Lu Chen said, "The Prince does not have a habit of forcing others. It will depend on Longyue's wishes. If she agrees, she can marry into the North Prince Mansion at any time. If she doesn't agree, don't force her."

Hearing this, Dongfang Yi hastened to say, "Not forcing, not forcing. I have always respected my daughter's choices."

"I believe she will be delighted to hear this news."

Lu Chen said with a smile, "She might not necessarily be happy. She is a woman who prefers independence. Currently, she manages the Eastern Newspaper Agency, which is nominally owned by the Dongfang Family. If she were to marry into the Prince's Mansion, it would mean that she would have to give up the Eastern Newspaper Agency and let others from the Dongfang Family manage it.

Do you think she would want to give it up?"

Hearing this, Dongfang Yi was taken aback, having almost forgotten about this matter.

The main reason Lu Chen had the Dongfang Family establish the newspaper agency was to create a platform for public opinion in the name of the "people". If Dongfang Longyue married the North Prince, she would become part of the North Prince Mansion. At that point, it would be inappropriate for Dongfang Longyue to continue serving as the chief editor of the Eastern Newspaper Agency.

She would have to step down and let other members of the Dongfang Family take over.

If Dongfang Longyue, after becoming a consort of the North Prince Mansion, still controlled the Eastern Newspaper Agency, wouldn't it be telling others that the agency belonged to the North Prince Mansion?

Chapter 500: Just Now the Prince Told Me Something_2

Dongfang Yi couldn't help thinking that, given his daughter's personality, if she were to do nothing and just attend to the North Prince in the North Prince Mansion every day, she probably wouldn't stand for it.

At this thought, Dongfang Yi suddenly felt unsure about what to do. At this moment, Lu Chen continued, "Master Dongfang, rest assured, if Longyue is willing to marry this Prince, I can let her continue serving as the Editor-in-chief of the Eastern Newspaper Agency.

However, I might delay giving her a proper status for a few years, and once I give her that status, she will have to resign from her position as the Editor-in-chief of the newspaper."

Hearing Lu Chen's words, Dongfang Yi instantly understood Lu Chen's meaning, which was that Dongfang Longyue could move into North Prince Mansion now and tend to Lu Chen, and when Dongfang Longyue was ready to give up her position as the Editor-in-chief, that's when she would receive her formal status.

Dongfang Yi felt that this solution wasn't bad. Cook the raw rice first, and when they had children later on, it would also be acceptable for them to undergo the formal marriage rites.

The Dongfang Family was a vassal family of the North Prince Mansion, and Dongfang Yi trusted Lu Chen very much. If it were someone else, as a father, Dongfang Yi would certainly not agree to his daughter living with a man and having the reality of husband and wife before an official marriage, but the North Prince was different – he was ordained by heaven itself.

As long as Dongfang Longyue became the North Prince's woman, she would be touched by destiny, binding her and the North Prince together.

Moving into the North Prince Mansion first was also an acceptable option.

Thinking this, Dongfang Yi excitedly said, "Prince, I will discuss it with Longyue later. Once we move to the new city, I will arrange for Longyue to move into the North Prince Mansion and serve you."

Hearing this, Lu Chen smiled and said, "Master Dongfang, I will repeat myself, everything must be done willingly by Longyue, without any coercion."

Dongfang Yi responded, "Your Highness can rest assured, I definitely won't coerce my daughter, I'm merely conveying Your Highness's intentions."

At this point, Dongfang Yi was so eager to go to the Eastern Newspaper Agency to tell his daughter the news that he said, "Prince, if there are no other matters, then I shall take my leave."

Lu Chen replied, "Mm, alright."

Afterwards, Dongfang Yi turned and left the study. Watching Dongfang Yi's retreating figure, Lu Chen couldn't help but wonder whether Dongfang Longyue would agree to move into the North Prince Mansion in advance.

Although Dongfang Longyue's favorability towards him was already at ninety-five, favorability did not mean that she was necessarily willing to engage in certain matters with him. Take Chu Yuqin

from before; her favorability towards him was also in the nineties, almost reaching a hundred, but she always harbored reservations about their difference in status.

Dongfang Longyue was a strong-willed woman. She might worry that marrying into the Prince's Mansion would mean losing the opportunity to continue managing the newspaper agency.

Although Lu Chen had said that he would allow her to move into the Prince's Mansion first and then carry on with managing the Eastern Newspaper Agency, once Dongfang Longyue entered the Prince's Mansion, one day she would have to resign from her role as the Editor-in-chief.

Just then, an idea suddenly struck Lu Chen, and the corners of his mouth slightly lifted. If Dongfang Longyue worried about having to leave the Eastern Newspaper Agency after marrying him, then couldn't he simply create another "employment" opportunity for her?

He had been contemplating setting up a newspaper under the North Prince Mansion recently. The current official newspaper was ostensibly an organ of the Small court's public opinion.

Although the relationship between the Small court and the North Prince Mansion was still very close at present, as his children grew older, the affairs of the Small court and the North Prince Mansion would inevitably diverge sooner or later.

Lu Chen didn't want the politics of the Small court to enter his Prince's Mansion, and then have his children embroiled in all kinds of political intrigue; if that happened, his North Prince Mansion would likely be thrown into complete disarray.

The Small court of the North Country all had their official newspapers. How could the North Prince Mansion, a commercial leader with so many industries, not have its own newspaper agency?

If the North Prince Mansion were to establish a newspaper, it could not only publish timely news but also release messages related to the North Prince Mansion's industries.

Once Dongfang Longyue married into the North Prince Mansion, he could hand the management of the North Prince Mansion's newspaper agency over to her.

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Eastern Newspaper Agency.

In the room, Dongfang Longyue was holding a brush, swiftly writing a draft of the latest news report on paper.

While steel pens, convenient for writing, were already available in North Country, Dongfang Longyue still had not abandoned the habit of using brushes.

Of course, although Dongfang Longyue was using a brush, her writing speed was hardly slower than those using steel pens.

As Dongfang Longyue was engrossed in her writing, an employee entered her office, "Miss, the Family Head is here to see you."

On hearing this, Dongfang Longyue paused for a moment. She had just visited home, so why would her father come to see her at this time?

Then Dongfang Longyue said, "Let my father come to the office."

"Yes, Miss."

After the agency staff left the room, it wasn't long before Dongfang Yi appeared in Dongfang Longyue's study.

Seeing Dongfang Yi, Dongfang Longyue set down her brush and asked, "Father, what brings you here?"

Dongfang Yi said, "I just visited the North Prince Mansion."

Hearing this, Dongfang Longyue did not show much surprise. The North Prince had requested that the Dongfang Family Master assist the craftsmen of Great Yu City in building warships. As the head of the Dongfang Family, her father naturally had to inquire about the progress of the warships so that their family could coordinate with the craftsmen of Great Yu City.