

## Es. Benefits 581

### Chapter 581: Wu Junwan Loses Power\_2

Now was the best opportunity to bring down Princess Junwan; the ministers of the other imperial prince factions could no longer restrain themselves, and they immediately reached an unspoken agreement.

No matter which prince's faction they belonged to, they agreed to first kick that woman out of the game. She was too domineering; with her presence, the princes they supported found it difficult to rise to prominence.

Following the voices calling for the revocation of her title, even more ministers stepped forward.

"We beseech the Emperor to revoke Princess Junwan's title!"

"We beseech the Emperor to revoke Princess Junwan's title..."

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Soon after, a large group kneeled in a rustling wave in the great hall.

Seeing this scene, Chai Jiliang realized the seriousness of the issue. He originally wanted to say something more, but at this moment, the Martial Emperor spoke up.

"Princess Junwan has abused her power, leading to the failure of the northern campaign. From this day forth, her title of Princess Junwan is revoked; she is to be confined to Green Cloud Palace and without my command, she shall not leave."

In Great Wu, "Princess Junwan" denotes the legitimate eldest daughter of a prince, who does not have the right to meddle in politics, whereas the title "Princess Junwan" requires an imperial decree, codifying substantial authority. Once titled, they could intervene in affairs of the court.

When the Martial Emperor pronounced these words, a thrill of excitement surged within the hearts of the court ministers of the imperial prince factions and those repulsed by the idea of women in politics; they had not expected this military defeat would eradicate the ominous cloud that loomed over their heads.

The ministers also realized that the Martial Emperor had completely lost faith in Princess Junwan, oh no, she was now just Princess Junwan.

It would no longer be so easy for this woman to meddle in the court's affairs.

Not long after.

Wu Junwan, who was in Green Cloud Palace, received the news from the court.

At first, she scarcely could believe it, but when the imperial edict arrived, she realized that her father had thoroughly abandoned her.

With Great Wu's three hundred thousand-strong army annihilated, and even the possibility that Great Wu's main forces could suffer a setback, someone had to be made the scapegoat.

Though the war was initiated by her father, the Emperor could not be held responsible; the Emperor could do no wrong, so the fault must lie with someone else.

Therefore, the Martial Emperor planned to make her bear the blame.

As the eunuch finished reading the imperial edict, Wu Junwan slumped powerlessly onto the ornate couch, her gaze listless and wandering.

After a while, Wu Junwan snapped back to reality and hastily exclaimed, "Fetch Prime Minister Chai for me immediately!"

No sooner had Wu Junwan spoken than the female guard at the door said, "Your Highness, the Emperor has already ordered the lockdown of Green Cloud Palace, and no outsiders are permitted to enter."

Upon hearing this, Wu Junwan was slightly stunned; she had been placed under house arrest.

She had never imagined there would come a day like this for her.

Some time passed before Wu Junwan collected herself and then said to the female guards inside the great hall, "Go and call Elder Pei!"

Pei Hong was her Protector, and if someone of the Grandmaster Realm like him spoke on her behalf, perhaps he could stabilize her father for the time being.

However, as Wu Junwan was thinking this, suddenly a female guard entered the great hall, knelt tremblingly on the ground, and said, "Your Highness, Elder Pei has sent me to give you a message. From today onwards, he will no longer be your Protector; he hopes that the princess will cultivate in peace within Green Cloud Palace and break through to the Grandmaster Realm as soon as possible."

Hearing this, Wu Junwan was struck as if by thunder; she had not expected Pei Hong, her Protector, to distance himself from her as well.

Thinking about it, it made sense; Pei Hong had been placed by her mother by her side since a young age, and so many years after her mother's death, it was likely that Pei Hong's loyalty to her had already waned. Plus, with everyone turning against her now that she had fallen, Pei Hong likely saw no future in following her and thus might have decided to switch allegiance to another prince.

Once the balance of power was broken, it was easy to tip completely. Back then, Pei Hong had been aligned with Wu Junwan's mother, which naturally put him on Wu Junwan's side as her Protector.

After the death of Wu Junwan's mother—the Empress—who had amassed a significant following, Pei Hong did not betray her immediately, since the governing influence of his former allegiance was considerable.

And Pei Hong, being of the Grandmaster Realm, also drew the Emperor's wariness. Considering the support from a Grandmaster behind Wu Junwan and the fact that the Emperor genuinely needed a formidable power backing him to strengthen his court presence, the Emperor then made Wu Junwan Princess Junwan.

Moreover, due to the Emperor designating Wu Junwan as Princess Junwan, Pei Hong, staying by her side, ended up acquiring more privileges, hence his continued presence.

The Emperor had long felt that his daughter's power was becoming too great, completely suppressing the development of the other princes, but there had been no way to deal with it; he dared not hastily depose her from her title as Princess Junwan because he was unsure of Pei Hong's loyal extent to her.

But this time was different. The failed campaign against the North Country, with the loss of hundreds of thousands due to a lack of intelligence, provided the Emperor a justifiable reason to temporarily strip Wu Junwan of her title, and those of the Princess Junwan faction had nothing to say about it.

With Wu Junwan stripped of power, Pei Hong, the Grandmaster, had no reason to stay by her side any longer; he could ally with anyone, as someone of the Grandmaster Realm would be welcomed by any party.

Wu Junwan losing her position caused a domino effect; with Pei Hong leaving Wu Junwan, those who had aligned with Junwan's faction for the sake of Pei Hong, the Grandmaster, would inevitably turn to others, leaving Wu Junwan's side quickly devoid of people.

Chapter 582: Wu Junwan Loses Power\_3

Wu Junwan was not a fool, she knew exactly what would happen once she lost the power in her hands. Before long, the court's power dynamics would be completely redrawn, and she had been thoroughly cast out of the game.

Deeply regretful, Wu Junwan lamented that she should not have underestimated her brothers in the past.

It was precisely because she had not taken her brothers seriously that she had failed to detect their movements early on, leading to her current loss of power.

Even now, Wu Junwan was still unaware of who was orchestrating everything behind the scenes.

As evening approached,

the Qian Family.

After returning to the Qian residence, Qian Xingchang immediately went to the backyard and jumped into the well.

Before the servants of the Qian Family could react, a great fire erupted and engulfed the entire estate.

Late into the night, the Martial Emperor was still in the Imperial Study Room, not yet retired, when a soldier entered and reported the situation at the Qian residence.

Although Qian Xingchang claimed to serve the Emperor, the Martial Emperor certainly did not acknowledge such a subordinate. Traitors like Qian Xingchang were destined to die.

Moreover, the Martial Emperor did not need to act himself; naturally, someone would take care of the Qian Family.

What the Martial Emperor didn't know, however, was that the Qian Family had not perished. As the sunset, the shadows of a merchant caravan stretched long in the red light.

Qian Xingchang, who had once jumped into the well, was now in a carriage, looking toward the North Country and said indifferently, "My mission is completed; at last, I can go to North Country and meet with the king."

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At this very moment, in the Great Xia Dynasty.

In the Sum Emperor's sleeping palace, the Sum Emperor was meditating in cultivation when suddenly, a shadow appeared in the room.

The Sum Emperor immediately opened his eyes.

"What is it?"

The shadow reported, "Great Wu's army of three hundred thousand has been defeated. Ying Feiyu intended to lead his soldiers back to defend Lingyun City, but by nightfall, the city was besieged and conquered by the North Country's army. The North Country wiped out Great Wu's three hundred thousand troops in just one day."

Upon hearing this, the Sum Emperor's entire being stiffened in shock.

In one day!!!

The Sum Emperor knew of Ying Feiyu; when Great Wu and Great Xia had clashed, it was Ying Feiyu who led the troops against Great Xia. Great Xia's forces were driven back defeat after defeat, eventually losing two counties, and later on suffered a major defeat against Great Wu's main force.

And now, such an experienced veteran had been utterly defeated by North Country's forces within a day?

How could this be possible?

Had North Country's military strength grown so formidable?

Wait...

The Sum Emperor suddenly thought of something, and then asked, "Did the North Country dispatch a Grandmaster?"

To defeat an experienced army so swiftly could only mean that they had sent a Grandmaster.

But then the shadow spoke, "According to the scouts, North Country did not dispatch a Grandmaster to Yongan County."

"Great Wu's forces were so swiftly defeated because North Country used a mysterious weapon. This weapon, resembling an iron ball, explodes with power akin to a Grandmaster's self-detonation of their Dantian. It's said that Great Wu's formations couldn't withstand this mysterious weapon for even a quarter of an hour."

At these words, the Sum Emperor frowned, his face turning dark in an instant.



What kind of weapon was so terrifying?

The force of an iron ball was comparable to a Grandmaster's self-destruction of their Dantian?

The Sum Emperor continued, "How many of these mysterious weapons does the North Country possess?"

The shadow replied, "It's unclear. It's rumored that North Country used at least a thousand of these iron balls on the battlefield in Yongan County. Even the walls of Lingyun City were blasted apart by them. Grandmasters and Martial Artists below their rank are no match at all. A direct hit from one of these would tear a body into several pieces."

After the shadow finished speaking, the Sum Emperor fell silent.

If the news was true, then North Country's military power might far surpass that of the other great dynasties.

How did North Country come to possess such a terrifying weapon?

With this kind of weapon, how could the other dynasties stand a chance against North Country? How would he deal with the turmoil in North Country then?

After coming to his senses, the Sum Emperor immediately commanded, "Investigate! Find out where this mysterious weapon came from, and whether North Country can manufacture more of them!"

At this juncture, the Sum Emperor was greatly concerned. If North Country was to march south with such weapons and attack Great Xia, could Great Xia's troops withstand even a single day like Great Wu did?

The very thought filled the Sum Emperor with dread.

No, this wouldn't do! He had to breakthrough to the Heavenly Human Realm as quickly as possible!

Yet to make that breakthrough, his wayward son must die!

Finally, the Sum Emperor entertained the idea of directly sending someone to kill Lu Chen; whereas before, he had left Lu Chen to his own fate, secretly hoping he would soon perish, but never actively sending someone to assassinate him.

But things were different now; Lu Chen's arrival in North Country had suddenly bolstered such a tremendous military force, posing a serious threat to his reign. Moreover, without Lu Chen's death, he might never breakthrough to the Heavenly Human Realm.

Realizing this, the Sum Emperor called to the shadow, "Fetch the Eternally Mysterious Taoist and the Master of Divine Communication."

"Yes, Your Majesty!"

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The next day.

Da Yue Dynasty.

In the court, ministers were discussing the war between North Country and Great Wu. Naturally, the ministers hoped that Great Wu would eliminate the threat of North Country, but they all felt that their Emperor did not seem to share this sentiment,

The Yue Emperor, clad in a red Phoenix Robe, sat upon the Phoenix Chair, surveying the court ministers, before saying faintly, "Do My subjects truly believe that Great Wu can exterminate North Country?"

Hearing the Yue Emperor's words, the ministers were stunned. Just then, a Military General stood up and said, "Your Majesty, Great Wu has a formidable army. For this campaign against North Country, they dispatched six hundred thousand elite troops, including two Grandmasters..."

The Military General had not yet finished when the Yue Emperor interrupted, but the Emperor understood the implication: in the eyes of the ministers, despite North Country's ambition and threat, it was, after all, just a feudal state—how could it possibly stand against a dynasty like Great Wu.

"My ministers, you still do not understand North Country."

As the Yue Emperor uttered these words, an armored female guard entered the hall from outside, walked up to the Phoenix Platform, and presented a report to the Yue Emperor.

Chapter 583: Disturbance in Black Dragon Country\_1

The Yue Emperor took the intelligence report from the hands of her female guard, opened it and glanced briefly, her expression becoming quite serious.

Seeing the grave look on the Yue Emperor's face, the courtiers in the great hall surmised that perhaps Great Wu's army genuinely couldn't stand up to the North Country.

At this point, the Yue Emperor handed the intelligence report to the female guard beside her, then said with an icy tone, "Read."

After receiving the intelligence from the Yue Emperor, the female guard immediately read, "On the ninth day of the tenth lunar month, Great Wu dispatched three hundred thousand troops to Yongan County, but was defeated by a mysterious weapon of the North Country.

This weapon is shaped like a sphere that, when it explodes, yields the power comparable to a Martial Artist at the Master Realm self-detonating their Dantian. The North Country hurled thousands of such weapons at Great Wu's forces, instantly breaking their formation. Ying Feiyu led the soldiers in a retreat to Lingyun City.

By the evening, Lingyun City had fallen and Ying Feiyu fled with a hundred cavalry."

Upon hearing the intelligence read by the guard, all the ministers were stunned in an instant.

Had Great Wu actually been defeated?

And in just one day!

That was an army of three hundred thousand!

How could this be possible?

How did North Country have such formidable military power?

And what was the mysterious weapon mentioned in the report?

That upon explosion, it possesses the power of a Grandmaster blowing up their Dantian!

If it truly is as the report says, then not to mention Great Wu's army, even an army with Grandmasters wouldn't be able to withstand the force of this weapon, right?

Where on earth did North Country get such terrifying weapons?

No weapon of such destructive power had ever appeared in this world before, had it?

If North Country could mass-produce such weapons, would Martial Artists still have a place in this world in the future?

The previous order based on Martial Artists would be utterly overturned, and the age of the Martial Artist would be no more!

After a long moment, the ministers in the great hall regained their composure. At that time, a minister said, "Your Majesty, if the report is true, given the current situation, Great Wu's main forces will likely also fall to North Country. We must make preparations, lest North Country uses the pursuit of the remnants of Great Wu's forces as an excuse to enter Da Yue's territory."

Though according to the intelligence, most of North Country's soldiers are in Yongan County, the sudden appearance of such a powerful mysterious weapon in not insignificant numbers makes it hard to predict who will win and who will lose.

Although Great Wu's main forces include two Grandmasters, North Country has its own Grandmasters, and this mysterious weapon has the power of a Grandmaster's exploding Dantian. Such a weapon would be effective even against Grandmasters.

Facing Great Wu's main forces, North Country could just bombard Great Wu's three hundred thousand-strong army in a relentless barrage, leaving no chance for Great Wu to resist.

At such a time, Da Yue must take action. We must send troops to the border to deter North Country and prevent their soldiers from entering Da Yue.

Just then, suddenly a voice from outside the great hall shouted, "Urgent news from the northwest!!!"

The ministers' hearts jolted again. Urgent news from the northwest?

What could have happened in the northwest at this time?

Could it be that the Barbarian Tribes have once more assembled their armies, prepared to march south and attack Da Yue?

Hadn't they learned their lesson last time?

As the ministers pondered what could have transpired in the northwest, a Messenger Soldier entered the center of the great hall, immediately knelt on the ground, and with both hands raised a message tube, saying, "Black Dragon Country has dispatched an army of a hundred thousand, approaching Da Yue with unclear intentions!"

Hearing this, the ministers in the great hall were stunned momentarily.

Black Dragon Country?

Why would Black Dragon Country send a large force to Da Yue's borders at this time?

Black Dragon Country is merely a small state. If you consider overall national strength, the Da Yue Dynasty doesn't fear Black Dragon Country one bit. The main thing is that the King of Black Dragon Country is a bit unique.

People speculated that the King of Black Dragon Country might be a Celestial from the Heavenly Human Realm, though of course, there is no evidence for this; it's merely conjecture.

For Black Dragon Country to establish a nation in the barren northwest—completely undaunted by Barbarian Tribe attacks—already proves it's no ordinary small country.

In theory, there shouldn't be any conflict between Da Yue and Black Dragon Country, as Black Dragon Country rarely seeks expansion or creates trouble. Most significantly, it seems the King of Black Dragon Country had established his power in the present territory of Black Dragon Country long ago.

Even before the Da Yue Dynasty was founded, the influence of what would become the Black Dragon Country already existed. It just wasn't called Black Dragon Country at that time. But at the time, their King had not sought outward expansion, nor had he seized the land that now belongs to the Da Yue Dynasty, which indicates that the King of Black Dragon Country didn't harbor grand ambitions.

But now, why suddenly consider sending troops to Da Yue's borders? Is this looking for trouble with Da Yue?

At that moment, the Yue Emperor's eyebrows knitted slightly, then she spoke to a military general in the hall, "General Qin, you must immediately proceed to the northwest border to ascertain why Black Dragon Country is sending troops near Da Yue."

Hearing the Yue Emperor's command, a tall and burly man immediately stood and said, "Yes, Your Majesty!"

Then the military general turned and left the great hall. The sudden movement of troops from Black Dragon Country towards Da Yue felt off to the Yue Emperor. Recently, Black Dragon Country had been too active.

Not too long ago, a large number of merchant caravans from Black Dragon Country appeared in Da Yue. Although they seemed merely engaged in trade and did nothing else to threaten Da Yue.

Chapter 584: Disturbance in Black Dragon Country\_2

But the more it seemed like that, the more the Yue Emperor distrusted the Black Dragon Country.



If the Black Dragon Country were to deploy troops against Great Jue at this time, Great Jue would send forces to the northwest border. By then, if North Country's remnant forces from the defeat of Great Wu were to flee into Great Jue's territory, and a conflict erupted between Great Jue and North Country, it would be extremely disadvantageous for Great Jue.

The Yue Emperor was still not certain if his plan had succeeded. If Murong Xue'er had already taken down the North Prince, already controlling the North Prince, then the North Prince would be an excellent pawn for her.

If the loss implied that the North Prince was not under control, and North Country deployed troops against Great Jue at this time, it was highly likely that Great Jue's army would not be a match for that of North Country. Great Jue would have no way to cope with those mysterious weapons of North Country.

What followed would depend on whether the main force of Great Wu could attack into Yan County and whether Murong Xue'er could control the North Prince.

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Meanwhile.

Zhan Hong and Xu Xingwen were still completely oblivious to the events that had transpired in Yong'an County; they had entered North Country proper through Great Jue and had arrived at Yingyang County near Great Jue.

There were not many cities in Yingyang County, only one key city, Cloud City. Once Cloud City fell, the main force of Great Wu could drive straight in, attacking directly into the core territory of North Country.

For North Country, the fall of Cloud City would practically leave Yan County exposed to the main force of Great Wu.

Arriving outside Cloud City, Zhan Hong and Xu Xingwen were still entirely unaware of what was about to happen. Looking at the tightly shut gates of Cloud City, Zhan Hong laughed and said to Xu Xingwen, "General Xu, how long do you think it will take us to capture Cloud City?"

Xu Xingwen glanced at the crumbling earthen walls of Cloud City and then replied, "Three days!"

Zhan Hong chuckled and said, "Three days? You're giving the North Country's garrison too much credit. In my opinion, it will only take one day to take Cloud City!"

Having said this, Zhan Hong then ordered the troops behind him, "Set up camp immediately; we attack at dawn tomorrow!"

As Zhan Hong's words fell, the soldiers of Great Wu began to set up camp.

At this moment, on the watchtower of Cloud City, Song Xuelin and Dongmen Feiyue looked emotionlessly at the distant army of Great Wu. They harbored no fear in their hearts for the army of Great Wu. Although they had only two hundred thousand troops, twenty thousand fewer than Great Wu, they possessed cannons and howitzers prepared for them by North Country.

Before the army of Great Wu had arrived at Cloud City, Dongmen Feiyue and Song Xuelin had soldiers familiarize themselves with the use of firearms. Although they had yet to develop specific tactics, bombarding the enemy with cannon fire would surely throw the enemy forces into disarray, negating the need for any tactics.

At this moment, Dongmen Feiyue remarked, "I wonder where our king got such terrifying weapons. These don't seem like they belong to this world."

Both came from the polar regions, and they were not particularly familiar with firearms. After witnessing the terrifying power of firearms, they were both awed by their might.

As Grandmasters, they were actually somewhat resentful inside because the appearance of such firearms significantly impacted their status as martial artists.

Therefore, the two simply let themselves be targets during the cannon testing to see how they fared. After their tests, they discovered that although the cannons could not directly kill a Grandmaster, they could suppress their attacks. In the face of the cannons, they had to exert all their strength just to withstand the bombardments, making it difficult to counterattack.

After their assessments, they eventually came to accept the facts. They thought to themselves that cannons were, for the time being, only possessed by North Country. They would be the ones bombarding others with cannons, not others bombarding them. Therefore, they had no need to be too concerned.

Moreover, with the use of such weapons as cannons, their king could unify the world much faster. From this point of view, as his subjects, they should not harbor negative opinions about cannons.

Hearing Dongmen Feiyue's words, Song Xuelin said indifferently, "Who cares? For now, only North Country has such weapons. By the time other kingdoms or powers acquire these cannons, our king may have already unified the entire continent."

Dongmen Feiyue sighed at that moment, "With such powerful weapons, we won't be as important to our king in the future."

Hearing this, Song Xuelin laughed and then said, "General Dongmen, why worry about such things? Weapons are just weapons, no matter how powerful — they still need people to operate them. Our king needs to expand his territory, to unify the entire continent, and he will still need us. How can you think that we will become less important?"

Dongmen Feiyue answered, "That's true."

After Song Xuelin's reassurance, Dongmen Feiyue felt somewhat better. A few days earlier, during the cannon tests, Dongmen Feiyue was so shellshocked by the cannons that he lost all temper, and it greatly impacted his morale.

During the tests, the cannons were operated by ordinary people, not even martial artists. Yet there he was, a Grandmaster, struggling to even defend himself in front of ordinary folks, which led to some negative thoughts, such as whether the North Prince might no longer need Grandmasters.

Song Xuelin, looking at the distant soldiers of Great Wu, said, "Those must be Great Wu's main forces. Let's launch a preemptive strike tonight and strive to end this battle soon."

Chapter 585: Disturbance in Black Dragon Country\_3

The main forces of Great Wu had come from afar and were already exhausted. Now, with two hundred thousand troops inside Cloud City and the support of cannons, if a surprise attack were launched at night, the three hundred thousand forces of Great Wu simply had no way to cope.

This was the first battle that Song Xuelin and Dongmen Feiyue participated in since arriving in North Country from the polar regions, so they paid extra attention to this fight.

Now that North Country had the terrifying weapon of the cannon, the status of Grandmasters had become less important than in the past. Therefore, in their view, if they wanted to gain the King's attention, they had to achieve more military exploits.

In this battle, they not only had to win but also had to achieve a more perfect victory.

Night fell.

In the camp of Great Wu, fires still burned, and generals like Zhan Hong and Xu Xingwen did not relax just because they had reached Cloud City. They were in their tents, looking at the map of North Country and making plans for what to do next.

The plan they were formulating now was how to act after taking Cloud City. In their eyes, Cloud City was already in the bag, the broken-down city hardly a challenge at all.

At this moment, Xu Xingwen spoke up, "Although Zhuge Zhongguang is known for his scholarly pursuits, few have seen him in action. His actual strength is likely much stronger than our estimates."

Hearing this, Zhan Hong laughed heartily and then said, "General Xu, this isn't like you, to be afraid of a feeble scholar."

Xu Xingwen continued, "According to the intelligence gathered by Princess Junwan in Great Sum, above the Grandmaster is the Grandmaster in the Zenith Realm. When a Grandmaster enters the Zenith Realm and triggers an extraordinary phenomenon, he can enter the Pseudo-Celestial Realm. Though it's not being a True Celestial, their strength could likely increase dramatically."

"North Country once witnessed such a phenomenon, indicating that Zhuge Zhongguang has also entered the Pseudo-Celestial Realm. We have never crossed hands with an enemy from the Pseudo-Celestial Realm before."

"General Zhan, it's better to be careful."

Hearing this, Zhan Hong smiled and still did not take Xu Xingwen's words seriously, "Even if Zhuge Zhongguang is a Pseudo Celestial, even if he's a True Celestial, I'm not afraid of him!"

"General Xu, when have you ever..."

Zhan Hong had not finished speaking when a loud "boom" erupted outside the tent, causing the generals inside to hear a ringing in their ears.

Realizing that something might have happened, Xu Xingwen immediately went to the tent entrance and asked the soldiers outside, "What happened?"

No sooner had Xu Xingwen finished speaking than another boom sounded nearby, and Xu Xingwen saw some soldiers' bodies being blown away.

The next moment, the voices of the soldiers rose up in the camp.

"Enemy attack!!!"

The sounds of horns converged into a single torrent.

Soldiers poured out of their tents, weapons in hand, ready to fight.

Zhan Hong led the true elite of Great Wu, whose soldiers responded incredibly quickly. They were ready for battle just shortly after the horns began to sound.

At this moment, Zhan Hong emerged from his tent, looking somewhat incredulously at the scene before him.

They had only just arrived at Cloud City, not yet launched an attack, and the enemy had taken the lead in mounting a sneak attack on them.

The soldiers of North Country must have underestimated them, perhaps thinking that after a long and exhausting trek, they would quickly fall into disarray faced with a surprise attack?

Hah, ridiculous!

This army of three hundred thousand was the best of the elite from Great Wu. Even in the face of a sneak attack, they could quickly react and organize a counterattack.

They had initially planned to let the defenders of Cloud City live one more night, but since they didn't know any better, they couldn't blame them for what came next!

Chapter 586: Lu Chen, Driven by the Times\_1

Just as Zhan Hong inwardly mocked the Cloud City defenders for not recognizing a good situation, he soon discovered that the truly naïve one was himself.

At that moment, he was about to issue instructions to a messenger soldier, when suddenly, an iron ball flew down from the sky. Zhan Hong, unimpressed, drew his sword and slashed at it, sending a burst of Sword Qi directly towards the iron ball in the air.

However, just as the Sword Qi was about to make contact with the iron ball, it exploded instantaneously.

Zhan Hong and Xu Xingwen realized something was wrong in a flash.

Xu Xingwen shouted loudly, "Not good!"

At that moment, both grandmasters simultaneously used Protective Gang Qi.

After the iron ball exploded, countless pieces of iron flew out, and nearly all the soldiers around them, except for Xu Xingwen and Zhan Hong, were either wounded or killed by the blast.

Seeing this bloody scene, Zhan Hong was completely stunned.

What kind of weapon was this?

How could it be so powerful?



There were several Ninth Grade martial artists by his side, and they were all killed by the explosion. Just a moment ago, if they hadn't used their Protective Gang Qi, they probably would have been seriously injured as well.

Even as a grandmaster, Zhan Hong was shaken by the sight of the explosion.

After regaining his composure, his face darkened and his brows furrowed.

What exactly was that iron ball! How could its power be so tremendous!

They had never seen such a weapon before.

At this point, Xu Xingwen said to Zhan Hong, "General Zhan, something doesn't seem right!"

No sooner had Xu Xingwen finished speaking when several more shells dropped from the sky. Zhan Hong quickly swung his sword, attempting to cut down the shells, but as soon as his Sword Qi made contact with the shells, they exploded on impact.

Even though the shells were quite far from the camp this time, the fragments from the explosions still killed and wounded many soldiers on the ground.

Seeing this, the expressions on Zhan Hong and Xu Xingwen's faces turned even uglier. They hadn't expected that after being destroyed, these iron balls could still unleash such terrifying power.

No, they could not just sit around waiting to die. If the North Country had a vast number of such iron balls, then perhaps before they had a chance to retaliate, their army of three hundred thousand would have been almost entirely obliterated by the blasts.

Immediately, Zhan Hong and Xu Xingwen, risking the bombardment, began to assemble soldiers for a retreat.

With the North Country wielding such terrifying weapons, it was absolutely impossible to confront them head-on at this time.

Under the artillery barrage, Great Wu's soldiers quickly assembled and retreated in several groups. Since heavy artillery has a limited range, the soldiers of Great Wu retreated quickly. Before Song Xuelin and his troops could attack, Great Wu's soldiers had abandoned the camp and had run far off into the distance.

Dongmen Feiyue immediately led his soldiers forward to attack, but Zhan Hong left tens of thousands of men in position for a counter-ambush. Fortunately, Dongmen Feiyue's troops brought some light cannons, which quickly routed the tens of thousands of Zhan Hong's soldiers left behind. However, those tens of thousands had bought significant time for the main forces of Great Wu to retreat.

In the darkness of night, looking at the scattered torches nearby, Song Xuelin approached Dongmen Feiyue and said, "It's no wonder Great Wu's main force is formidable; such quick responsiveness is not simple. I didn't expect their soldiers to be able to react even at this late hour."

Dongmen Feiyue frowned and then asked, "Are we pursuing them?"

Song Xuelin replied, "There's no need to chase. The heavy artillery can't keep up, and Great Wu's three hundred thousand are elite. Even if we caught up, we would suffer heavy losses. The Prince only told us to hold them off, not to take the initiative to attack."

Although they also wanted to annihilate Great Wu's main force and earn military merits, their mission was not to launch a counterattack. Moreover, their two hundred thousand-strong army had just been brought over from the polar regions. If they incurred heavy losses in this battle, it would instead leave a bad impression with the North Prince.

After hearing Song Xuelin's words, Dongmen Feiyue did not order his soldiers to continue the pursuit. He promptly led his troops to retreat and begin clearing the scattered Great Wu soldiers.

By dawn, when the sky was gloomily bright, the soldiers of North Country were still clearing up the spoils of war in the campsite of Great Wu's army from last night.

The so-called spoils of war comprised food supplies and weapons of Great Wu. If this were one or two years ago, these items would be somewhat useful to North Country, but now that North Country had obtained firearms as a significant weapon, Great Wu's armaments were basically of little use to them.

At this time, a soldier approached Dongmen Feiyue and Song Xuelin and reported, "General Song, General Dongmen, last night we eliminated about eighty thousand of the enemy forces and captured more than twenty thousand prisoners!"

Upon hearing this, Dongmen Feiyue's expression turned somewhat unsightly, and he said with furrowed brows, "Unexpectedly, even with the help of firearms, we let nearly two hundred thousand Great Wu soldiers escape. I'm afraid that won't be easy to explain to the great king."

After all, this was their first battle since arriving in North Country, and they had let the enemy escape. This made Dongmen Feiyue feel somewhat uneasy, fearing that their king would think them incompetent.

Just then, from a distance, a soldier with a small flag on his back riding a horse galloped towards them. Arriving in front of them, the soldier dismounted and handed a message container to Song Xuelin.

"The king's military order!"

Hearing this, Song Xuelin quickly took the message container from the Red Ribbon Messenger, opened it, and took out the military order for a quick glance.

Impatiently, Dongmen Feiyue asked, "What are the king's orders? Are we launching a counterattack?"

Chapter 587: Lu Chen Pushed by the Times\_2

Last night we failed to annihilate Great Wu's army of three hundred thousand, which left Dongmen Feiyue feeling somewhat uneasy. He thought that if their King allowed a counterattack, they would seize the opportunity to pursue Great Wu's soldiers directly.

After glancing at the military order in his hand, Song Xuelin handed it over to Dongmen Feiyue and said, "The King has no intention of taking action against Great Jue for the time being. He has instructed us not to enter Great Jue's territory. If Great Wu's soldiers flee into Great Jue, let them escape."

Upon receiving the military order from Song Xuelin's hand and glancing over it, Dongmen Feiyue felt immensely frustrated.

Seeing Dongmen Feiyue furrowing his brows and looking very displeased, Song Xuelin said, "General Dongmen need not worry. The King must have his reasons for such arrangements. There will be opportunities for us to distinguish ourselves in the future."

Dongmen Feiyue sighed and said nothing more.

Indeed, as Song Xuelin said, Lu Chen's decision not to pursue Great Wu's remnants or enter Great Jue was indeed based on his own considerations.

A few days later.

Yan County.

In his study, Lu Chen was discussing the battle with Zhuge Zhongguang. He was already aware of what happened in Cloud City; Dongmen Feiyue and his men had not been able to annihilate Great Wu's three hundred thousand-strong army. To Lu Chen, this was to be expected—the three hundred thousand soldiers were the elite of Great Wu and would not be easily conquered.

Zhuge Zhongguang, gazing at the map hanging on the wall of the study, said, "Prince, the two hundred thousand-strong army of Great Wu has retreated to Great Jue. It's highly unlikely they will launch another offensive but will instead withdraw to Great Wu. However, if they do withdraw, they would inevitably pass through Youping County, which could lead to a conflict with our soldiers.

Although we possess firearms, the army is led by two Grandmasters. It would be best to immediately dispatch a Grandmaster to Youping County."

Firearms could indeed suppress a Grandmaster and continuously wear down their strength, but killing a Grandmaster wouldn't be so easy.

Zhuge Zhongguang was worried that if the two hundred thousand-strong army made it to Youping County, and if Zhan Hong and Xu Xingwen, the two Grandmasters, decided to strike Mu Changtian and Wenren Lie directly, Mu Changtian and the others would definitely be no match for the two Grandmasters. If Mu Changtian and Wenren Lie were killed, the North Country's army might very well become leaderless.

In such a situation, even with firearms, the North Country's army might face defeat.

If Zhan Hong and his men were to seize the firearms of the North Country and use them against the North Country in the future, that would be disastrous.

The reason they had managed a crushing victory over Great Wu's large army was mainly due to Great Wu's ignorance of firearms—the thunderous boom of the cannons had terrified the soldiers of Great Wu.

If Great Wu's soldiers obtained the firearms of the North Country and managed to disassemble and study them, they would gain a certain understanding of the weapons, which would make it difficult to replicate the element of surprise in future wars.

Thus, at this stage, Great Wu must not be allowed to get their hands on firearms.

Hearing Zhuge Zhongguang's words, Lu Chen smiled faintly and then said, "Upon receiving the battle report from Cloud City, I immediately sent people to Youping County. Should Great Wu's soldiers retreat there, they will surely be crushed. Great Scholar need not worry."

Seeing Lu Chen's confidence, Zhuge Zhongguang immediately thought of someone.

When it came to dealing with Grandmasters most easily, the natural choice was to send a Celestial. It seemed that Xuanyuan Chaoge had already left Yan County.

Since Lu Chen had already made advance arrangements in Youping County, Zhuge Zhongguang did not elaborate further.

At that moment, Lu Chen stood before the map, his gaze sweeping back and forth over it. After a long while, he posed an important question to Zhuge Zhongguang.

"Great Scholar, do you think the North Country can continue to remain peaceful in the future?"

Hearing this question, Zhuge Zhongguang seemed to understand what Lu Chen was getting at, and then he replied, "No, from the moment firearms were introduced, it became impossible for North Country to maintain long-term peace unless the Prince can eliminate all dynasties and unify the entire continent."

The power of firearms was too great. With the advent of firearms, Lu Chen had essentially made enemies of all martial artists and threatened all dynasties.

Although the war between North Country and Great Wu was able to deter the various dynasties in the short term, in the long run, the dynasties would inevitably form alliances to jointly confront the North Country.

And every major dynasty would try to find a way to manufacture firearms. Once all the great dynasties had firearms, the situation for North Country would be even more difficult.

Lu Chen actually understood this concept as well.

Recently, he had been considering that he actually didn't like the endless waging of war. He wasn't a war fanatic before, he wasn't one now, and it's unlikely he would ever be one.

But even if he didn't want to initiate wars, he couldn't stop anymore. Firearms had been exposed, and in the future, many would want his life. Furthermore, his emergence posed a great threat to the world's major dynasties, so even if he did nothing, those dynasties would try by all means to eliminate him as a threat.

Therefore, he was being pushed forward by the era. If he wanted to live a peaceful life, he would need to annihilate the other dynasties, and only then could long-lasting peace be maintained.

At this moment, Lu Chen gazed at the map on the wall and zoned out for a while. After some time passed, Lu Chen spoke up again and asked, "If we're to achieve unification, which dynasty should we start with?"

With North Country's small population, it was impossible to wipe out all the major dynasties at once. There had to be a starting point, in other words, someone to cut down first.

Zhuge Zhongguang answered, "This servant believes we should start with Great Sum."

Before Lu Chen could ask why, Zhuge Zhongguang began to explain, "Prince is the child of the Sum Emperor and inherently has the right to inherit the Great Sum's throne. If Prince could succeed



to the throne, he could use Great Sum as a base to continue increasing strength. Then, when the time is ripe, eradicate the rest of the great dynasties."

"Prince is a Prince. Even if Prince controls the entire Great Sum, it would not lead to much resistance from the Sum people."

"If we do not destroy Great Sum first but rather the other dynasties, Prince would face significant ruling pressure. The people of other dynasties might not submit to your rule. With North Country's population still too small, if those dynasties were to rise in chaos, it would be difficult for North Country to suppress the unrest on their lands."

Lu Chen instantly understood Zhuge Zhongguang's point, which was to use Great Sum as a base, first secure the support of the people of Great Sum, then leverage Great Sum's resources to strengthen himself, and when strong enough to wipe out the other dynasties, use the people of Great Sum to rule over their lands.

With North Country's current population, even if they took down all the great dynasties, they wouldn't be able to govern them well and would end up with a big mess.

This was actually the order of proceeding from the easy to the difficult, Great Sum being the easiest to control; therefore, they should start with Great Sum.

Lu Chen fell silent for a moment, then continued to ask, "In Great Scholar's opinion, when would it be best to move south?"

What Lu Chen referred to as moving south was, in fact, seizing power and the throne.

Zhug Zhongguang said, "According to this servant, the time has already matured."

"Great Sum is already in constant civil war, and the common folk wish to see someone appear who can quickly bring an end to Great Sum's internal strife."

"Additionally, there is a rumor among the common people that the Sum Emperor hasn't much longer to live, and the court ministers as well as the princes also believe the Sum Emperor will not last much longer. Although Prince is aware of what the Sum Emperor is planning, we can completely act as if he is truly on his deathbed."

Lu Chen pondered for a moment. Zhuge Zhongguang meant that they could use the rumors of the Sum Emperor's impending death as a pretext to provide an excuse for them to move south.

As to whether the Sum Emperor was truly ill, that didn't matter. Even if the Sum Emperor was not ill, once the army moved south, the Sum Emperor would certainly become ill. Not only ill—there was even the possibility that he might directly pass away.

Seeing Lu Chen frown, Zhuge Zhongguang realized he might have misspoken and quickly said, "Prince, please forgive this servant for speaking out of turn."

After all, Lu Chen was the Sum Emperor's son, and Zhuge Zhongguang was but a servant. For a servant to speak in front of Lu Chen about the "Sum Emperor not having long to live" indeed sounded quite treasonous.

Lu Chen then snapped out of it, and with an air of indifference, he said, "No matter, I do not care about these matters."

"I have given it some thought and find Great Scholar's words to be very reasonable. Once the conflict between Great Wu and North Country concludes, I shall prepare for the move south."

Chapter 588: Lu Chen's Trial to Become a Celestial\_1

Lu Chen chatted with Zhuge Zhongguang a lot in the study, and Zhuge Zhongguang's words made Lu Chen realize that many things couldn't simply be as he wished.

When he appeared in this world, he had already become part of its historical process, and he would inevitably be propelled forward by the wheels of history.

The moment he took out the firearms and started producing various modern industrial products, even if he didn't want to initiate war, he would still have to face it.

This world would force him to make choices.

Lu Chen quickly came to a realization; after all, he had the system.

Since he had come to this world and acquired the system, that decided he could not lead an ordinary life, he was destined to embark on a great enterprise.

Wanting to live a peaceful life was simple, he thought. Once he eliminated all his enemies and broke through to the Heavenly Human Realm, he would pass the throne to his son, and then he could live peacefully every day.

Lu Chen stopped pondering; he returned to his desk and continued dealing with military affairs.

This time, he did not go to the front lines for the battle. Although he was still somewhat worried, he was, after all, a Prince, and could not possibly do everything personally as before, not just this time, but he reckoned he wouldn't be too involved in future wars either.

Just then, Lu Chen suddenly found his body emitting a golden light, and before he could react, a beam of golden light shot out from his body and pierced into the sky.

The next moment, thick clouds gathered in the sky above Yan County, and when the common people saw this, they instantly remembered the portent they had witnessed over the old city.

Initially, they thought the portent was because Zhuge Zhongguang had broken through to the Heavenly Human Realm. Of course, now people knew this was not a sign of breaking through to the Heavenly Human Realm, but no matter what, it meant that North Country had gained another individual even more powerful than a Grandmaster.

At this time, the women in the inner courtyard of the Prince's Mansion saw that the golden light was coming from the study, so they all went there, wanting to see who had made a breakthrough.

At this moment, Lu Chen entered a mysterious state, feeling as if he had merged with the entire world.

After a while, Lu Chen seemed to hear a voice telling him that once he unified the major dynasties, he would become a Celestial.

A thought struck Lu Chen's heart. Was this the enlightenment that Zhuge Zhongguang had spoken of?

That is to say, was the test for him to become a Celestial the unification of the major dynasties?

Lu Chen pondered for a long time and then asked the system, "System, can I not break through to become a Celestial through cultivation?"

[No, unifying the major dynasties is also a system task. The host must complete this task to continue advancing the Realm through cultivation.]

Lu Chen thought for a moment and then said, "So, is my Realm's stagnation only temporary, and as soon as I overcome this Realm, can I resume cultivation in the original manner?"

[Yes.]

Lu Chen thought to himself, he truly was being pushed along by this world. Now he had no choice but to wage war even if he didn't want to.

Shortly afterwards, the golden light on Lu Chen's body disappeared, and the portent in the sky above Yan County quickly dissipated as well.

Just then, the voice of a maid rang out from outside the door, "Prince, Commander Qin requests an audience."

Lu Chen said indifferently, "Come in."

Right away, Qin Yushan pushed the door open and entered the study, "Greetings to the Prince!"

After completing the formalities, Qin Yushan glanced at Lu Chen, having seen the golden light himself. With concern, Qin Yushan asked, "Prince, are you alright?"

Lu Chen said indifferently, "This prince is fine, I had a realization just now and have made a breakthrough."

Having said that, Lu Chen looked at Qin Yushan and asked,

"Any recent movements in the Capital?"

Qin Yushan was currently responsible for the intelligence gathering within Great Sum. His seeking Lu Chen meant that something new had happened within the borders of Great Sum.

Qin Yushan immediately handed an envelope to Lu Chen, and at the same time began to report, "Recently, several Seigniors in Great Sum have been assassinated. As soon as those Seigniors died, the Zhao King immediately sent troops to take over their territories with almost no resistance."

Hearing this, Lu Chen said indifferently, "It seems the Great Scholar had guessed correctly; the Zhao King is indeed a pawn of my Imperial Father."

With that, Lu Chen seriously examined the intelligence he held.

Seeing that the report mentioned the old ancestors of Four Directions Mountain and Fixed Wind Mountain entering the Imperial Palace multiple times, Lu Chen thought that those assassinated Seigniors were probably killed by these two forces.

He didn't know what benefits his Imperial Father had offered these two factions to agree to cooperate with the royal family. Those faction heads were truly ruthless, not afraid that later, his Imperial Father would dispose of them once their usefulness ended.

Lu Chen then indifferently told Qin Yushan, "Continue to keep an eye on things."

This intelligence was not very valuable to Lu Chen; he had already roughly guessed what his Imperial Father intended to do through Zhuge Zhongguang's previous analyses—nothing more than to get rid of all the Seigniors in Great Sum and then accomplish a substantial unification.

As for whether his Imperial Father could break through to become a Celestial after the unification of Great Sum, that was something that only the future would tell.

Seeing that Lu Chen seemed not to care much about this news, Qin Yushan said, "I shall take my leave."

With that, Qin Yushan turned to leave the study when Lu Chen suddenly remembered something, "Right, pay close attention to the movements of the two old ancestors of Four Directions Mountain and Fixed Wind Mountain. It would be best if you could find out where they have been and where they are planning to go."

Chapter 589: Lu Chen's Trial to Become a Celestial\_2

"Especially pay attention to whether there have been any suspicious Great Sum merchant caravans going to Qi Country recently, and then entering North Country from there."

Now that Fixed Wind Mountain and Four Directions Mountain had joined hands with the Sum Emperor, they had begun to target and eliminate the Seigniors of Great Sum. Lu Chen suddenly realized he was also a Seignior of Great Sum. Although he was the Sum Emperor's son, given the current situation, among all the Seigniors, he posed the greatest threat.

Additionally, with Great Wu's bitter defeat, North Country's threat had become even more evident, so Lu Chen suspected that his father might very well send someone to assassinate him.

The relationship between him and his father was devoid of any familial affection. Although the Sum Emperor had not sent anyone to kill him in the past, the Sum Emperor had always wished someone would kill him sooner rather than later. Whether the Sum Emperor would send someone to assassinate him was merely a matter of the Emperor's impulse.

Qin Yushan instantly understood Lu Chen's meaning and said immediately, "Yes, your subordinate will ensure that the Brocade Guard keeps a close watch on their movements."

Lu Chen said, "Don't watch them too closely, after all, they are Pseudo Celestials. If we watch them too closely, it's easy for them to notice they're being monitored, which might spook them instead."

"All right, you may go now."

Qin Yushan bowed again and said, "Your subordinate will take his leave!"

After Qin Yushan left the study, Lu Chen thought to himself, hoping his father wouldn't really send someone to kill him, for he had been born at least with the use of the Sum Emperor's essence.



Although he didn't want to admit it, the Sum Emperor was his biological father in this world.

If the Sum Emperor indeed sent someone to assassinate him, then he would only be able to fight back.

Father and son turning against each other was a scene Lu Chen did not want to witness, as it might be a bad influence on his own child.

Now that Lu Chen was a father himself, he had begun to focus on the upbringing of his children, understanding the importance of leading by example.

As Lu Chen was lost in thought, the voice of a maid rang at the door again, "Prince, the Princess and the others have arrived."

Lu Chen snapped back to reality. The commotion just now had been somewhat loud, and now his wives and concubines were probably very worried. He got up immediately and walked toward the door of the study.

As soon as Lu Chen came out, Chu Yuqin approached him with concern and asked, "Chen'er, are you all right?"

Lu Chen glanced at his wives and concubines with a smile and replied, "I'm fine. I just had a breakthrough."

Upon hearing this, the women were startled. They instinctively thought Lu Chen had broken through to the Celestial Realm, but they quickly realized their mistake, remembering the incident with the phenomenon triggered by Zhuge Zhongguang last time.

At that moment, Xiao Wenyao tentatively whispered, "Prince, have you become a Celestial?"

Xiao Wenyao was rather naive; she was thinking that when Lu Chen was a Grandmaster, he already tormented her to no end. If he had become a Celestial, she could not imagine how terrifying Lu Chen's strength might have become.

Spending her days within the Prince's Mansion, Xiao Wenyao, this pure white mare from the prairies, had been tainted by Lu Chen. She always thought of matters between men and women first.

Lu Chen chuckled and glanced at the women again, as they all looked at him expectantly.

He then said, "I've let you down. I haven't become a Celestial yet. It's not easy to become a Celestial; one has to pass the trials of this world. For now, I can only be considered a Pseudo Celestial."

Hearing Lu Chen's response, the women felt a bit disappointed, having thought he had already become a Celestial.

At that moment, Wang Qingci asked with a charming smile, "Prince, what's the difference between a Pseudo Celestial and a Grandmaster?"

Lu Chen replied seriously, "Besides a slight increase in strength, there doesn't seem to be much of a difference."

Chu Yuqin said in confusion, "You've advanced a Realm, how can there be no difference? Even if you haven't officially entered the Celestial Realm, you should have some abilities that only a Celestial would possess, right?"

Then Wang Qingci spoke flirtatiously, "Why don't you come to my room tonight, my Lord. I could help you see what the differences between a Pseudo Celestial and a Grandmaster truly are."

Hearing this, Chu Yuqin snorted coldly, "Bitch!"

They were discussing serious matters, yet this bitch had only one thing in mind—to seduce Lu Chen. What a shameless woman.

Hearing Wang Qingci's words, Lu Chen smiled and then replied, "Alright, tonight I'll go to your room and test how much my physical condition has improved."

Chu Yuqin gave Lu Chen a sidelong glance and then said, "Since you're all right, Chen'er, we won't disturb you with your official duties."

With that, Chu Yuqin turned around and said to Mu Zixuan and the others, "Zixuan, let's go back."

Mu Zixuan looked at Lu Chen and then said, "Prince, since you're all right, we'll return to the inner court first."

Lu Chen nodded and said, "Yes, that's fine."

Then the women turned and left for the inner courtyard. Wang Qingci gave Lu Chen a coquettish glance before leaving. Watching her sway as she walked, Lu Chen chuckled, still so seductive after having a child.

But since Wang Qingci wanted to test his strength as a Pseudo Celestial, he would indulge her. Tonight, he would go to Wang Qingci's room and let her thoroughly test him.

After Chu Yuqin and the others had left, Lu Chen returned to his room and sat down to continue managing military affairs.

About an hour later, the maid's voice was heard at the door again.

"Prince, Miss Murong requests an audience!"

Chapter 590: Lu Chen's Trial to Become a Celestial\_3

Hearing this, Lu Chen did not feel surprised. The appearance of that great golden light from the North Prince Mansion just now meant that Murong Xue'er, sent by the Yue Emperor as an undercover agent to the North Country, would naturally come to inquire about the situation and see who had made a breakthrough.

Lu Chen then said, "Come in."

The next moment, Murong Xue'er, dressed in plain white clothes, entered the room. Her hair was tied with a black-and-white hair band, and the color of her clothes also alternated between black and white, which instead of appearing monotonous, actually highlighted the icy temperament of Murong Xue'er.

Lu Chen only glanced at Murong Xue'er before continuing to bury himself in governmental affairs. Because of the previous golden light, a large hole had appeared in the roof of the study, and at this moment, the sunlight was shining through that hole right onto the desk.

Seeing that hole, Murong Xue'er thought to herself that it seemed the golden light had indeed shone forth from the study.

At this time, without lifting his head, Lu Chen asked, "Miss Murong, what brings you here?"

Seeing Lu Chen's cold tone, Murong Xue'er was stunned for a moment. Lu Chen had not been like this before; whenever she came, he would always be all over her as if he hadn't seen a woman in a long time. How had he become so serious all of a sudden today?

Could it be...

He had grown tired of her?

This thought caused Murong Xue'er to feel an immense sense of crisis. Now that she could not go back, she did not control Lu Chen, and the Empress might not trust her in the future. If she wanted to regain the Yue Emperor's trust, she would need the cooperation of the Prince.

But if the Prince had grown tired of her body, it was certain that he would not help her, and she would end up being discarded by both sides; not only abandoned by the Great Jue, but she would also have no place to stand in the North Country.

As Murong Xue'er was feeling anxious, Lu Chen, seeing that she had not spoken, looked up at her and then asked with a smile, "Why aren't you speaking?"

At that moment, Murong Xue'er snapped out of it and said expressionlessly, "I just saw a golden light over the Prince's Mansion, so I came to check out what happened here."

Lu Chen said, "You want to see who has made another breakthrough, don't you?"

Although Lu Chen had guessed her intention, Murong Xue'er did not mind; she knew she could not hide anything from this man.

At that moment, Murong Xue'er looked up at the hole in the roof and then said, "It seems that the North Country has gained another powerful individual approaching the strength of a Celestial."

Lu Chen, with a smile, said, "You speak as if you are an outsider, 'you guys in the North Country.' You are my woman now, you should be saying 'our North Country.'"

Murong Xue'er said coldly, "There is only a transaction between you and me, I will never become your woman."

Despite what she said, Murong Xue'er felt the uncomfortable feeling in her heart vanish instantly upon hearing Lu Chen's words just now.

She had thought that Lu Chen was tired of her, but it seemed she had been overthinking. It was probably because of the war between the North Country and Great Wu recently, so Lu Chen had not been interested in affairs of men and women, which explained his coldness towards her.

Lu Chen did not dwell on Murong Xue'er's words. He asked with a smile, "Do you want to know who has just made a breakthrough?"

Upon hearing this, Murong Xue'er grew tense. She looked at Lu Chen's handsome face. Of course, she wanted to know who had made the breakthrough; after all, she was there to gather intelligence.

But then Murong Xue'er said, "You surely won't tell me."

Anyone approaching the strength of a Celestial would, of course, be a trump card for the North Country. As the North Prince, how could he possibly reveal his ace so easily?

As Murong Xue'er was thinking this, Lu Chen got up from his chair and walked towards her.

Seeing Lu Chen approaching, Murong Xue'er's body could not help but tremble slightly.

She had a complex array of feelings towards this man. If not for him, she would probably still be serving the Yue Emperor in the Great Jue, not in this place, nor in her current predicament.

At the same time, she was fearful; on one hand, she was afraid of the man before her taking liberties with her, and on the other, she feared that he had tired of her and would soon cast her aside.

Murong Xue'er's body trembled slightly, but Lu Chen did not notice her discomfort. After approaching her, he said, "The one who has just broken through, is me."

"This piece of information should please your Emperor, shouldn't it?"

At these words, Murong Xue'er's mind was slightly shocked.

Lu Chen had made another breakthrough?

If he was already a Grandmaster, and his strength had now approached that of a Celestial, didn't that mean... he had become even stronger?

For some reason, Murong Xue'er's mind was suddenly filled with scenes of Lu Chen bullying her.

Murong Xue'er quickly stopped herself from letting her thoughts run wild.

Then she congratulated him with an emotionless tone, "Congratulations to you, Prince, on your breakthrough."

Seeing Murong Xue'er's cold demeanor, Lu Chen lifted his hand and, caressing her icy cheek, said while stroking her, "Miss Murong, I have given you such important information, what do you intend to offer in return?"

Without answering, Murong Xue'er basically had an idea of what Lu Chen wanted to do.

Lu Chen continued, "By the way, the Yue Emperor has asked you to try to get your hands on some firearms, hasn't he?"



Hearing this question, Murong Xue'er was taken aback; indeed, nothing could be hidden from Lu Chen.

The Yue Emperor had indeed given her a command to try and get firearms from the North Country, preferably the method of making them as well.

But Murong Xue'er did not believe that Lu Chen would hand over something so important to her. Thus, she never really believed this mission could be completed.

And indeed, things were as Murong Xue'er thought; Lu Chen would never give Murong Xue'er the firearms and their manufacturing methods.

At that moment, Murong Xue'er said, "If the Prince isn't practicing calligraphy today, then I will leave."

Although Lu Chen had guessed her recent task, Murong Xue'er did not intend to admit it. Firearms were a core secret of the North Country. If she truly approached Lu Chen with inquiries, it might provoke his displeasure. Therefore, she simply brushed aside Lu Chen's question.