

Es. Benefits 661

Chapter 661 Xiao Wenyao and Yelv Nanyan are Pregnant_2

Xiao Wenyao, though fond of amusement and entirely unprepared to be a mother, had always been anxious that she would not have children and thus suffer from Lu Chen's disdain.

After coming to the North Prince Mansion, she had accepted many of Great Sum's concepts, so she was very clear about how important children were to a woman of Great Sum.

In order to avoid being abandoned by Lu Chen, she had tried every means to conceive his child, but no matter how hard she tried, her belly still showed no sign of response.

Hearing Xiao Wenyao's words, Yelv Nanyan, who was in the bath, sighed. She also understood this principle clearly.

She had long prepared clothes for the child, yet there was still no movement in her belly. Lu Chen had been visiting her every night to dote on her, but her belly remained unresponsive, and later Lu Chen stopped coming to Spring Sound Court as often.

Yelv Nanyan even doubted whether Lu Chen had given up on the idea of her bearing his offspring.

Just as Yelv Nanyan was lost in thought, she suddenly heard a scream from outside the bathroom. At this sound, Yelv Nanyan immediately snapped back to attention and hurriedly asked, "What's happened?"

No sooner had she spoken than there came no reply from Xiao Wenyao outside, making Yelv Nanyan immediately sense that something was amiss. She swiftly instructed the maidservant inside the bathroom, "Ping'er, go out and see what's the matter."

"Yes, madam."

The maidservant promptly left the bathroom and headed to the bedroom, but after the maidservant went out, there was no sound to be heard.

Yelv Nanyan frowned slightly, hurriedly got out of the bathing pool, wrapped herself in her clothes, and then asked tentatively, "Ping'er, what's happened outside?"

Just as Yelv Nanyan had suspected, the maidservant did not answer her, a sure sign that something had happened!

Yelv Nanyan immediately rushed out and was about to take action when she discovered that the maidservant Ping'er was standing in the middle of the bedroom, her face flushed as she looked in the direction of the bed.

Yelv Nanyan's gaze also immediately turned that way, only to see an assassin crouched behind Xiao Wenyao, attempting to stab her. Xiao Wenyao's mouth was covered by the assassin, preventing her from speaking, leaving her only able to make muffled "mmmph" noises.

Just then, with a few assassinating moves executed by the assassin, Xiao Wenyao's body suddenly grew rigid.

Yelv Nanyan cast a resentful glance at the sneaky assassin, then turned and walked back to the bathroom, saying as she went, "Prince comes to visit this concubine, why not have the maidservant announce it? I thought Yaoyao had encountered an assassin."

Although Lu Chen was also an assassin and after a life, the assassin outside was killing people, whereas the assassin Lu Chen was after a life in spirit, and those were two different matters.

Upon seeing Yelv Nanyan come out, Lu Chen no longer covered Xiao Wenyao's mouth. At this point, Xiao Wenyao, still catching her breath, said, "Prince... Prince... You scared me to death..."

Just as she was lying on the bed, a man suddenly appeared, pinned her down, and even gagged and stabbed at her, making her think she had been attacked by a villain...

But on second thought, the man behind her was a great villain indeed; otherwise, how could he bully her like this?

As he busied himself, Lu Chen said with a smile, "I'm just testing your alertness. Although this is the Prince's Mansion, you must not let your guard down. What would you do if an assassin came one day?"

Continuing, he looked down at Xiao Wenyao, "I'm right, aren't I, Yaoyao?"

Xiao Wenyao replied weakly, "Prince... Prince... You're right, I will remain vigilant in the future."

Meanwhile, Yelv Nanyan had returned to the bathroom to continue washing herself. She had planned on soaking in the bath for a bit longer, but since the master of the house had arrived, she had to finish quickly and then tend to that little rascal.

Soon, Yelv Nanyan came out from the bathroom, now wearing only a white undershirt and panties.

Having just bathed, Yelv Nanyan was fragrant with the scent of flowers, and with some droplets still in her hair, her whole being appeared both pure and desirable.

Lu Chen put Xiao Wenyao aside and pulled Yelv Nanyan directly in front of him, embracing her soft and tender body.

With a face slightly flushed, Yelv Nanyan whispered, "Prince, perhaps we should turn off these Colored Glaze Lamps first?"

Lu Chen asked in puzzlement, "Why so?"

With a touch of shyness, Yelv Nanyan replied, "It's a little too bright."

Previously, they would light candles at night, and the dim light of the candles made it hard to see people, allowing Yelv Nanyan to feel more unrestrained.

Now that the Colored Glaze Lamps illuminated the room as if it were daylight, Yelv Nanyan felt as if she were doing those things in broad daylight, making it difficult for her to let go.

Hearing Yelv Nanyan's words, Lu Chen snorted with laughter, then said, "I had guessed you might say something like that, so I had them install low-wattage bulbs."

He then instructed the maidservant, "Turn off the main lamp and switch on the small one."

As he finished speaking, the maidservant beside the lamp immediately turned off the room's main lamp and then switched on the small one.

The light from the small lamp was dim, just like when they used to light candles, and instantly, the room filled with the warm, yellow glow of the dim light. The atmosphere between Lu Chen and Yelv Nanyan grew increasingly intimate.

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Yelv Nanyan spoke softly, "Prince, tonight... thank you for your hard work..."

Seeing Yelv Nanyan's bashful appearance, Lu Chen could no longer hold himself back, and immediately bent down to kiss Yelv Nanyan's red lips.

...

Early morning.

The waking Lu Chen, with one woman on each side of him, glanced at Xiao Wenyao on his left, then at Yelv Nanyan on his right, revealing a slight smile on his face.

This kind of life is truly decadent.

Yelv Nanyan also woke up at this time. Seeing Lu Chen's eyes fixed on her, Yelv Nanyan's cheeks gradually turned even more flushed.

Just as Lu Chen was about to say something to Yelv Nanyan, he suddenly noticed that several new system prompts had appeared on his system interface.

He had been too engrossed the previous night to notice the system notifications.

Lu Chen immediately checked, and was instantly shocked by the prompts before him.

[Host has cultivated affections with his wife and concubine once, Qi Refinement Mantra experience added...]

[Congratulations to the Host for assisting Xiao Wenyao in becoming pregnant, reward blueprint of the telegraph machine and its instruction manual, and lead-acid battery manufacturing manual.]

[Host has cultivated affections with his wife and concubine once, Qi Refinement Mantra experience added 1000, Rejuvenating Skill experience added...]

[Congratulations to the Host for assisting Yelv Nanyan in becoming pregnant, reward ten thousand tons of high-yield rice seeds, ten thousand tons of high-yield soybean seeds, three jin of Spirit Rice seeds.]

[Pregnancy rewards are given as encouragement, and we hope the Host will protect his wife and concubine, ensuring the safe birth of their children.]

Seeing the system prompts before him, Lu Chen could hardly believe it.

Could this be...

Double happiness?

He had been trying day after day with no success at Yelv Nanyan's place, but unexpectedly, he had succeeded last night.

That's great!

At this moment, seeing a look of astonishment on Lu Chen's face, and him seeming distracted, Yelv Nanyan asked with confusion, "Prince, what's the matter?"

Lu Chen came back to his senses, wrapped his arms tightly around both Yelv Nanyan and Xiao Wenyao, smiling as he said, "I have some good news to tell you."

Xiao Wenyao, still bleary-eyed, asked, "What good news?"

Lu Chen smiled and replied, "Yaoyao, you're pregnant."

Upon hearing this, Xiao Wenyao and Yelv Nanyan froze in shock.

Xiao Wenyao instantly became alert. After a pause, she asked incredulously, "Prince... Prince, are you serious? Am I really carrying your child?"

Lu Chen said, "Of course it's true. Don't you trust my perception?"

Xiao Wenyao immediately felt overjoyed. She thought to herself that if she had Lu Chen's child, she could stay in the North Prince Mansion for the rest of her life, enjoying a life of luxury as long as she did nothing out of line.

Some feel joy, others feel worry.

Suddenly, Yelv Nanyan felt a tinge of something unpleasant in her heart. It wasn't jealousy towards Xiao Wenyao, she was just worried that Xiao Wenyao, who was younger than her, was pregnant while she herself was still not showing any signs. If she were to get any older, perhaps she wouldn't be able to have children at all in the future.

For a moment, Yelv Nanyan became anxious inside.

Yelv Nanyan's disheartened expression did not escape Lu Chen's eyes. He smiled and said to them, "There's another piece of good news."

Xiao Wenyao asked, "What good news?"

Lu Chen turned his head toward Yelv Nanyan and said, "Nanyan, you're also pregnant with my child."

This...

Yelv Nanyan's eyes widened, staring into Lu Chen's eyes, hardly daring to believe it.

After a long moment, Yelv Nanyan finally asked, "Is what the Prince said true?"

"Naturally."

"It seems that those clothes you prepared will soon come in handy."

At this time, Yelv Nanyan expressed her gratitude, "Thank you, Prince, for gracing me with a child."

Lu Chen smiled faintly, then stood up and said, "Rest well today, I have matters to attend to, so I'll get up first."

Chapter 663 Moon Appreciation_1

Lu Chen quickly took a bath and rushed to the study, so eager that he even skipped breakfast.

The rewards from the system this time were much more substantial than before, which used to offer primarily single rewards.

Lu Chen arrived at the study, closed the door, and once again opened the system.

Now that he had a generator and lead-acid batteries, with the lead-acid batteries, the telegraph could be used in distant places in the future. It would be easier for the Brocade Guard to transmit intelligence, and if anything happened in faraway places, the North Prince Mansion could learn about it immediately.

Sometimes, wars are fought on information disparity. Whoever has more information and receives it more timely might achieve victory first.

After glancing at the telegraph and the lead-acid batteries, Lu Chen's gaze settled on the pregnancy reward for Yelv Nanyan.

Rice is Great Sum's staple food and is mainly grown in the south; it seems that only after conquering the entire Great Sum could these rice seeds come into play.

As for soybeans, the North is also suited for soybean cultivation. Once soybeans and corn are widely adopted, and the North starts planting these two crops on a large scale, there will be fodder to feed livestock, and the common people will be able to eat meat.

Thinking of this, the corners of Lu Chen's mouth lifted slightly. It seemed it was time to urge people to reclaim more land; there was so much fertile land up north, mostly black soil, which barely needed any fertiliser and was very productive.

Once the wastelands in the North are reclaimed and cultivated with crops, not just North Country but even Great Sum won't have to face famine anymore, barring years of natural disasters, of course.

Lu Chen's eyes finally rested on the three pounds of Spirit Rice.

Curious, Lu Chen asked the system, "What is Spirit Rice? Is it a kind of rice too?"

"Spirit Rice is a type of spiritual plant. It looks similar to regular rice, and consuming it can greatly increase a cultivator's cultivation speed. However, Spirit Rice needs to be planted in places rich with Spiritual Energy, or the yield will be greatly reduced," the system responded.

After hearing the system's prompt, Lu Chen looked at the Spirit Rice seeds on the system interface and wondered what use the Spirit Rice seeds were in a world where Spiritual Energy was so scarce.

Even if he could plant them, when it came to harvest, he probably wouldn't get much; he might not even get a single grain of Spirit Rice from a seed.

Moreover, compared to the system-rewarded rice and soybean seeds, three pounds of Spirit Rice seeds just seemed far too little.

The most important issue was, where would he find a place rich with Spiritual Energy to plant Spirit Rice?

Forget it, Spirit Rice wasn't particularly important to him right now. He'd just try planting some to see how it went; after all, it was only three pounds, which wouldn't yield much Spirit Rice anyway.

At this moment, Lu Chen called out to the maid at the door, "Xiao Huan, go fetch Mo Xing. I have matters to discuss with him."

Lu Chen planned to give the blueprints for making the telegraph and lead-acid batteries to Mo Xing, having him try to make them first. As for how to use the telegraph, they would learn that after they managed to construct it. Since the system included a manual when it sent the telegraph, Lu Chen believed the Brocade Guard wouldn't need much time to learn.

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Around ten in the morning, the front of the Eastern Newspaper Agency was packed with people. The newspapers had just been delivered and sold out immediately.

People who bought the papers began discussing fervently.

"Are the things written in the paper true or false? Can our Prince really tame lightning and use it for lighting?"

"It's probably true; last night, the entire North Prince Mansion was as bright as day. And since the Prince's Mansion has already come up with trains that don't need horses to pull them, is there anything they can't do?"

"Isn't controlling lightning an Immortal's ability? Does that mean our Prince has become an Immortal?"

"Our Prince is the Son of Destiny; what's so surprising about controlling lightning? If one day the Prince could move mountains and reclaim land, I wouldn't find it strange at all!"

...

After Mo Xing arrived at the North Prince Mansion, Lu Chen went through the functions of the telegraph and the lead-acid batteries with him. This explanation took several hours, and it wasn't until one in the afternoon that Mo Xing left the study.

It couldn't be helped; the people of ancient times had not encountered these things before and were not very clear on the basic principles, making explanations quite difficult.

Lu Chen felt like he, who was normally not studious, was fast becoming a scholarly expert. To explain the principles of the generator and what electricity was, as well as how the telegraph functioned, he had to first consult the system's principles and manuals.

That is, he needed to learn it first before he could explain it to people like Mo Xing from ancient times. In his previous life, Lu Chen had never encountered these things, especially the telegraph; by the time he was born, people were already using smartphones. Who would still be using a telegraph?

After Mo Xing left, Lu Chen stretched and walked out of the study, feeling quite exhausted.

Teaching was truly tiring, especially mentally.

Just as Lu Chen was about to head to the Wind Cloud Court for lunch, a maid came running and said, "Prince, Princess Junwan sends a message asking if you have time tonight. She wishes to invite you to enjoy the moon."

Upon hearing this, Lu Chen chuckled.

Enjoy the moon?

What moon to appreciate?

He was a straightforward man, ignorant of moon appreciation. And Wu Junwan knew very well what kind of person he was; if he went to Wu Junwan's residence, it probably wouldn't be to enjoy the moon, but rather the company.

In truth, Lu Chen suspected Wu Junwan wanted to see him for another reason—it was likely that last night's electric lights had made quite the impression on her, so she wanted to probe him about electricity.

Chapter 664 Moon Appreciation_2

Lu Chen didn't care much about leaking some things; after all, even if she told Wu Junwan, Wu Junwan couldn't learn them.

Lu Chen then said, "Alright, go and tell her that I will attend the banquet on time tonight."

"Yes, Prince, this servant will take her leave."

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In the evening.

Wu Junwan and Murong Xue'er sat in the pavilion, the setting sun's red glow casting upon them, making them appear even more beautiful and charming, filled with the allure of mature women.

Murong Xue'er asked, "Your Highness, if you wished to invite the Prince to admire the moon, there was no need to drag this servant along."

Murong Xue'er understood Lu Chen all too well; she didn't believe Lu Chen had such leisurely and refined tastes.

No matter what beautiful scene was before Lu Chen, it was as if nonexistent; Lu Chen's eyes were forever only on beauties.

Inviting Lu Chen to their courtyard was like letting the wolf into the house. Tonight, Wu Junwan was very likely not going to get any sleep. Murong Xue'er did not want to get involved in their matters.

Though Murong Xue'er also couldn't do without Lu Chen's affection, she was a normal person, not thinking of men every day.

Ever since moving into North Prince Mansion, after being intimate with Lu Chen once, she could maintain her purity and desirelessness for quite a long period.

Wu Junwan picked up the teacup from the table and gently sipped her tea, "Since you and I reside in the same courtyard, naturally you should advance and retreat together with this palace."

After being continuously taught by Lu Chen for half a month last time, Wu Junwan had already developed some psychological shadow. This time she learned to be smart; since Murong Xue'er was also in her courtyard, why not have Murong Xue'er join her in meeting Lu Chen.

Hearing Wu Junwan's words, Murong Xue'er was stunned for a moment.

What did Wu Junwan mean by that?

Could it be that she also wanted to involve herself with North Prince in that sort of thing?

What a joke...

She was not that kind of woman!

At that time, the maids in the courtyard began to get busy, preparing for the moon viewing.

Soon, the pavilion was decorated, the maids prepared tea and pastries, and a guqin was also placed in the pavilion.

As the setting sun dipped below the horizon and night fell, a full moon hung in the sky.

At this moment, Wu Junwan's fingers gently caressed the guqin, then started to play.

Lu Chen soon appeared at the entrance of the courtyard; seeing the pavilion prepared with so many things, Lu Chen smiled faintly, thinking to himself that Wu Junwan had grown increasingly adept at playing, setting such a refined prelude.

Although Wu Junwan had already noticed Lu Chen entering the courtyard, she didn't stop the pleasing movement of her fingers; the sound of the guqin continued to echo through the courtyard.

Lu Chen quietly sat down in the pavilion, and Murong Xue'er immediately poured him a cup of tea. Neither of them spoke, only quietly listening to Wu Junwan's playing.

The piece came to an end.

Wu Junwan looked towards Lu Chen, "Prince, what do you think of my playing?"

Lu Chen said indifferently, "Pleasant to hear, it reminds me of an old acquaintance."

Wu Junwan asked, "The acquaintance the Prince speaks of, could it be a lady?"

Lu Chen said with a smile, "Princess Junwan is truly clever."

Wu Junwan said, "I wonder which of the Prince's cherished female friends could leave such an unforgettable impression on the Prince."

Lu Chen picked up his teacup, took a sip of tea, and said with a smile, "You will meet her in some time."

Wu Junwan said, "Oh? Is that so? This palace really wants to see for herself, what kind of great beauty could leave such an indelible memory on the Prince."

Lu Chen just smiled and said nothing.

At this time, Wu Junwan turned to Murong Xue'er and said, "Xue'er, I have heard that you are proficient in zither, chess, calligraphy, and painting. How about playing a piece for us to hear?"

Murong Xue'er was somewhat reluctant inwardly; Wu Junwan was the one longing for a man, having enticed Lu Chen here, and now she wanted her to perform in front of Lu Chen.

Though she was reluctant, Murong Xue'er still said, "Then this servant shall humbly exhibit her skills."

Thereafter, Junwan rose to switch places with Murong Xue'er, who sat before the ancient zither. Lifting her delicate hands, she began to pluck the strings, and the melodious sound of the zither filled the courtyard.

At that moment, Junwan said, "The moon is lovely tonight, a perfect time for admiring its beauty and reciting poetry. What do you think, Prince?"

Lu Chen chuckled, then responded, "Princess Junwan, I am but a simple man, so spare me the poetry and moon gazing."

"You've summoned me here, there must be something you wish to discuss, right? Why not just speak plainly?"

Junwan remarked, "You truly are impatient, Prince."

Junwan didn't expect Lu Chen, whose mind was full of breeding thoughts, to possess any whimsical elegance. So she asked directly, "This palace simply wishes to know, how does the Prince control the power of lightning? To my knowledge, only an Immortal has such means,"

Lu Chen, smiling, retorted, "You invited me to admire the moon just to ask this question?"

Junwan replied, "I genuinely wanted to enjoy the moonlight with the Prince and have a conversation, but alas, you fail to appreciate its beauty."

Thereupon, Lu Chen moved a spot closer, sitting beside Junwan, their sleeves brushing together.

Seeing Lu Chen suddenly draw near, Junwan's body instinctively shifted to the side, trying to distance herself from him. Unexpectedly, Lu Chen grabbed her wrist, pulled her towards him, and encircled her waist with his arm.

Even Murong Xue'er, who was playing the zither, was speechless. Junwan truly was something else—wanting a man, she could have simply asked Lu Chen to her room. Instead, she contrived the pretext of moon admiring.

Admire what moon? The moment this beast Lu Chen arrived, wasn't he already all hands and feet on her?

Junwan, neither panicked nor struggling, asked, "Prince, what are you doing?"

Lu Chen whispered in her ear, "I prefer admiring people over admiring the moon."

As the words fell, Lu Chen made no immediate move but continued, "Every world has its own set of rules and patterns. As long as you discover the principles that govern all things, you can achieve seemingly impossible feats or create things unheard of in this world, like the trains and cannons of North Country."

"The same goes for controlling lightning."

Junwan queried, "Are you implying that you have discovered some sort of principle, which is how you control the power of lightning?"

Lu Chen replied with a smile, "You could say that."

Junwan fell silent.

Now, the moonlight bathed the world like water, its chilly beams casting a holy radiance over Junwan, her dignified and elegant demeanor stirring Lu Chen's desires.

Just as Junwan was about to speak, Lu Chen suddenly lifted her, pinning her arms against a pillar in the pavilion.

Junwan froze, and as she turned her head to object, she heard a tearing sound. In the next moment, Lu Chen leaned down, sealing her lips with his.

Beneath the moonlight, in the courtyard, the strains of the zither continued uninterrupted...

Murong Xue'er, witnessing the scene unfold, felt an urge to flee. Yet she sensed that if she stopped playing now, she too might become a target.

Murong Xue'er cursed inwardly, "What a pair of shameless dogs."

Who knows how much time passed when the moon slowly drifted overhead, and the air grew mistier. Dewdrops gathered on tree leaves and fell to the ground, wetting the earth.

Lu Chen then spoke into Junwan's ear, "I have good news for you."

Junwan, groggy, inquired, "What good news?"

Lu Chen answered with a smile, "Last night, Yaoyao and Nanyan both conceived my children. One is a Half-step Grandmaster, and the other has already reached Grandmaster status."

Junwan, puzzled, remarked, "What does that have to do with... "

Before she could finish, Junwan suddenly came to her senses and understood Lu Chen's implication.

He was reminding her that he could impregnate a warrior, causing Junwan to struggle immediately.

But her efforts to resist were futile.

The darkness deepened, the music of the zither wafted through the air, blending with the cries of creatures to form a perfect symphony.

...

In the following month, the news that North Prince Mansion harnessed electricity spread swiftly throughout North Country and even reached other kingdoms.

When the great kingdoms heard that North Prince Mansion could not only conjure lightning but also bind it for illumination and heating, they were astounded.

Various powers dispatched spies to find out exactly how the North Prince managed to master lightning, causing the Brocade Guards of Yan County to become busy once again.

Chapter 665 The Great Xia Martial Artist Disappearance Case_1

North Prince Mansion.

Wind Cloud Court.

The Wind Cloud Court, where Lu Chen resided, was the largest courtyard in the North Prince Mansion. In the past few days, Lu Chen had ordered a section of the courtyard to be transformed into a small paddy field.

Then he planted some Spirit Rice in there.

Seeing Lu Chen pacing back and forth by the edge of the small paddy field, Mu Zixuan approached him with curiosity and asked, "Prince, what are you growing here?"

Lu Chen answered, "A kind of rice."

Hearing Lu Chen say it was rice, Mu Zixuan was puzzled as to why Lu Chen would pay such close attention to the small paddy field, to the point of checking it several times each day.

"Could it be that this rice is something special?" Mu Zixuan asked.

Lu Chen turned to look at Mu Zixuan and replied with a smile, "Of course, if it were ordinary rice, I wouldn't bother to plant it and care for it myself."

Hearing this, Mu Zixuan grew even more curious about what was special about this rice, but then she suddenly thought of the Dragon Phoenix Tree.

Since Lu Chen said this rice was special and he needed to personally tend to it, it likely was, like the Dragon Phoenix Tree, given by an Immortal,

If it was given by an Immortal, then it was better not to ask too much to avoid leaking any secrets.

With that in mind, Mu Zixuan did not continue to pry. Seeing that she did not inquire further, Lu Chen said with a smile, "Does my consort not wonder what is so special about this rice?"

Mu Zixuan gave a light smile and then responded, "If this rice is worthy of the Prince's personal attention, then it must certainly be very precious. Your concubine better not ask too much to avoid divulging any of Your Highness's secrets."

Hearing Mu Zixuan's words, Lu Chen said with a smile, "Whether it's precious or not, we will only know once it has grown."

The system had already advised him that Spirit Rice needed to be planted in a place with relatively abundant Spiritual Energy. Due to the presence of the Dragon Phoenix Tree, the Spiritual Energy in the North Prince Mansion was somewhat richer than outside, but Lu Chen did not believe that this level of Spiritual Energy concentration would suffice for the growth needs of mystical plants.

However, it was still worth trying, as this world did not have many places rich with Spiritual Energy. It wasn't practical to just let those three pounds of Spirit Rice seeds sit unused; there was no point in holding onto them. It was better to attempt planting them – perhaps they might just grow successfully.

Just then, a maid entered the courtyard and announced, "Prince, Commander Liang seeks an audience!"

Hearing this, Lu Chen immediately headed straight for the study without a second word.

Upon entering the study, Liang Zong first bowed respectfully, then immediately handed over the intelligence reports he was carrying to Lu Chen, and simultaneously reported, "The situation in the capital city has been quite unsettled recently, with several Princes having faced assassination attempts, even the Crown Prince encountered an attempt on his life.

Furthermore, numerous Martial Artists have gone missing across the counties of Great Xia, and their whereabouts are unknown."

As Lu Chen listened to Liang Zong's briefing and read through the intelligence in his hands, his eyebrows knit slightly together.

If it was just an escalation in the capital's power struggles, he could understand it. After all, with his Emperor father feigning a near-death state, the Princes could not restrain themselves any longer and wanted to vie for the throne.

What really puzzled Lu Chen was the case of Martial Artist disappearances across the counties of Great Xia.

According to the intelligence, almost all of the missing Martial Artists from the counties were Fifth Grade or higher.

Although Fifth Grade Martial Artists were now common in the North Country, in the vast expanse of Great Xia, they were not so numerous among the population.

Moreover, among the missing were not only Fifth Grade Martial Artists but also those of Ninth Grade. Those who had reached Ninth Grade typically had major forces behind them, such as certain organizations, Aristocratic Families, or powerful landlords.

If someone was targeting Ninth Grade Martial Artists, the powers behind them would surely not sit idly by. But instead of targeting individuals, an entity was targeting all powers indiscriminately.

According to the reports from the Brocade Guard, the disappearances followed only one pattern: they were all Fifth Grade or higher. Regardless of martial affiliation, almost every power had suffered losses.

The disappearances had now caused panic among the major forces within the boundaries of Great Xia. Normally, those powers would not fear a rebelling Seignior since they could always switch allegiance to the victor at any time.

But now a force had emerged that indiscriminately targeted everyone, a force about which they had absolutely no understanding.

They couldn't even negotiate with this hidden power and could only watch as their own people vanished one by one. How could this not instill fear in them?

At this moment, Lu Chen asked, "Have you found out who is doing this?"

Liang Zong answered, "No, the Brocade Guard has not found a single clue. It's as if those Martial Artists have vanished into thin air."

Lu Chen fell into contemplation. Who could it be, to elude even the Brocade Guard's investigation?

Liang Zong continued, "Furthermore, several of our own have also disappeared without a trace."

Within the Brocade Guard, there were many Fifth Grade Martial Artists. Since the targeting was directed at those of Fifth Grade and above, naturally, the Brocade Guard was included in the attacks.

Lu Chen's brows rose again, forming a deep "川" on his forehead.

Even members of the Brocade Guard had disappeared.

Who could be responsible?

Lu Chen said, "Continue the investigation. For the time being, all Brocade Guard members of Fifth Grade and above are to remain quiet and not take any action. Let those below Fifth Grade investigate the situation."

Liang Zong replied, "Understood!"

Lu Chen continued, "Now, take this intelligence report to the Great Scholar."

Chapter 666 The Great Xia Martial Artist Disappearance Case_2

Liang Zong took the intelligence report from Lu Chen's hand, clasped his fist in salute, and said, "Your subordinate takes his leave!"

After Liang Zong left, Lu Chen sat down at his own desk where he fell into deep thought once again.

Who exactly is targeting martial artists above the fifth rank?

He wondered if other dynasties were experiencing similar incidents.

Thinking this, Lu Chen immediately said to his maid, "Xiao Huan, go and ask Lady Wang to come to the study. Tell her this Prince has important matters to discuss with her."

"Yes, Your Highness."

Before long, Wang Qingci appeared in the study. Upon entering, she did not fawn over Lu Chen, who sat with a solemn face staring at the map on the desk. It was obvious that Lu Chen had something serious to discuss with her.

Wang Qingci immediately asked, "My Prince, do you have a task for me?"

Lu Chen got straight to the point, "Have the people from Rain-listening Pavilion investigate whether other dynasties have had any large-scale disappearances of martial artists recently."

Upon hearing this, Wang Qingci paused, slightly taken aback. She couldn't understand why Lu Chen would assign Rain-listening Pavilion to investigate this matter.

After all, the Brocade Guards had already taken over most of the intelligence work, even the Rain-listening Pavilion had Brocade Guards stationed there, and it had been a long time since Lu Chen had given Rain-listening Pavilion any investigative tasks.

Usually, Rain-listening Pavilion would collect intelligence and then report it to Lu Chen.

Seeing how grave Lu Chen's expression was, Wang Qingci knew the matter must be of great importance, so she immediately responded, "I understand, I will have the people of Rain-listening Pavilion take action right away."

Wang Qingci was about to leave when the voice of a maid came from the door, "Your Highness, the Great Scholar seeks an audience."

Lu Chen responded directly, "Let him in."

The next moment, Zhuge Zhongguang pushed open the door and entered. Sensing that there might be significant matters to discuss, Wang Qingci said to Lu Chen, "My Prince, I will take my leave now."

Lu Chen said, "Don't rush off. You might as well listen to what the matter is."

Wang Qingci replied, "Understood."

After Zhuge Zhongguang entered the study, he greeted with a bow, "Your humble servant pays respect to the Prince."

Lu Chen nodded and asked, "Has the Great Scholar finished reading that report?"

Zhuge Zhongguang answered, "Yes, I have."

Hearing their conversation and seeing their expressions, Wang Qingci grew curious. Perhaps something significant was about to happen; otherwise, the expressions of both Lu Chen and Zhuge Zhongguang wouldn't be so serious.

Lu Chen inquired, "Does the Great Scholar have any conjectures?"

Zhuge Zhongguang responded, "Your humble servant has no clues at all. Logically, there should be no force daring enough to offend so many powers at once."

"Moreover, not even the bodies of those martial artists have been left behind. It is unknown whether they are dead or alive."

At this moment, Lu Chen's gaze fell on Wang Qingci, "We have just received intelligence that a considerable number of martial artists above the fifth rank have disappeared in Great Sum recently. These martial artists seem to have vanished into thin air. No one knows where they have gone, and even many of the Jinyiwei Guards have disappeared."

Upon hearing this, Wang Qingci instantly understood why Lu Chen wanted Rain-listening Pavilion to check if other dynasties had any missing martial artists cases.

Rain-listening Pavilion, ostensibly a commercial organization with not many strong members unlike the Brocade Guards—which had many above the fifth rank—the fact that Lu Chen wanted Rain-listening Pavilion to investigate other dynasties clearly showed his concern about the potential risk to Brocade Guard members.

Wang Qingci said, "I understand Your Highness's intent. I will try to involve those below the fifth rank in investigating this matter."

Lu Chen's gaze then returned to Zhuge Zhongguang, "Great Scholar, do you think this matter could be related to the Demon Sect?"

Upon hearing this, Zhuge Zhongguang thought for a moment, then replied, "It is highly unlikely to be their doing. The people of Demon Sect might seem fearless, but they would not dare to offend so many powers at the same time."

Lu Chen said, "There is one aspect of this matter that is quite peculiar. Martial artists are disappearing in large numbers from various counties and prefectures of Great Sum, but the North Country has not had a single case."

Hearing this, Zhuge Zhongguang asked, "Is the Prince suggesting that the force behind this dare not extend their reach into the North Country?"

Lu Chen said, "No, I suspect that the influence of that power only extends within the Great Sum's borders to the south of the North Country, which is why they manage to abduct people without anyone noticing. If they were to capture people outside their sphere of influence, it's very likely they would be discovered by others."

Zhuge Zhongguang fell into thought once again. After pondering for a moment, he suddenly thought of someone and said, "Prince, I fear this matter may have something to do with the royal family."

Hearing this, a trace of a smile appeared on Lu Chen's stern face, "It seems the Great Scholar and I have come to the same conclusion. I also suspect this is the doing of my father, the Sum Emperor."

The first thing that came to Lu Chen's mind about the sudden and stealthy disappearances was the methods of the Shadow Guards. Thus, he believed it was very likely the work of his own father, the Sum Emperor.

"However, what puzzles me is why he would capture so many martial artists. Even if he gathered them all, they would not likely pledge allegiance to him."

Zhuge Zhongguang speculated, "Could it be to practice some kind of evil cultivation?"

Lu Chen's heart skipped a beat; it was indeed a possibility. If those martial artists were truly captured by the Sum Emperor, they might well be used for some dark practice.

With the North Country's power already so strong, especially with the enhancement of firearms, Great Sum's traditional troops had no capacity to resist. The Sum Emperor likely felt that he couldn't ascend to a Celestial through normal means, and so might have resorted to unorthodox and forbidden methods.

Lu Chen said, "If it indeed was my father who captured those martial artists, then it is quite possible that he did it to practice some evil cultivation. I just don't know what evil practice would require so many martial artists."

As the words fell, Lu Chen and Zhuge Zhongguang once again lapsed into silence. Wang Qingci glanced at them and felt that there was no longer a need for her presence. She spoke again, "Prince, I am now aware of the situation. There seems nothing more here for me, shall I take my leave?"

Lu Chen said, "Very well, attend to your duties."

No sooner had Wang Qingci left the study than the voice of a maid came from the door, "Prince, Commander Liang seeks an audience!"

Hmm?

Lu Chen was momentarily taken aback.

Hadn't Liang Zong just left a short while ago? Why had he returned so soon?

Lu Chen then said, "Let him in."

Liang Zong immediately entered the study, "Greetings, Prince!"

As soon as he finished speaking, Liang Zong handed a letter to Lu Chen, "Prince, this is an urgent report just arrived from the South. The Jinyiwei Guard who delivered the letter said it was very important. I haven't had the chance to read it yet."

Hearing this, Lu Chen quickly took the letter from Liang Zong's hand and began to read it intently.

Frowning again at the contents of the letter, Lu Chen looked troubled.

Seeing the Prince's expression darken, Zhuge Zhongguang asked, "Prince, what has happened?"

Lu Chen handed the letter to Zhuge Zhongguang and then said, "Recently, a detachment of Heavy Cavalry have been deployed in the region of the South, directly under my father, the Sum Emperor. They seem to be escorting something to the Capital City, and even the royal Grandmaster has been sent out."

Since the defeat of Great Wu by the North Country, the Sum Emperor had been quiet for a long time. This sudden deployment of Heavy Cavalry to the South, and the fact that the royal Grandmaster had been sent there too, gave the impression that he was brewing a new conspiracy.

Moreover, the recent disappearances of so many martial artists within Great Sum's territory indicated that another grave event was about to unfold.

After reading the letter, Zhuge Zhongguang fell into thought once more. Even he could not determine what the Sum Emperor was planning at this time.

After a long while, Lu Chen spoke to Liang Zong, "Have the Brocade Guards investigate why the Heavy Cavalry have gone to the South."

"As you command, Prince!"

...

Within a month of receiving the report about the widespread disappearances of Great Sum martial artists, more martial artists, ranked fifth grade and above, continued to vanish within Great Sum's borders. Their disappearances were complete, as if they had simply vanished into thin air, leaving no trace whether alive or dead.

This matter was now being investigated not only by the North Country's Brocade Guards but also by all major powers within Great Sum's borders. The turmoil of the Seignior's rebellion had already left the common people anxious, and now the inexplicable disappearances of powerful martial artists from these forces were causing even greater chaos.

Before long, the investigation results from the Rain-listening Pavilion reached Lu Chen. According to their findings, such a large number of martial artist disappearances did not occur in other kingdoms; one or two cases were already many, unlike in Great Sum where seven or eight fifth grade martial artists vanished from just one county.

The most peculiar aspect of these disappearances was the thoroughness with which these martial artists vanished. The only thing they had in common, other than their rank of fifth grade or higher, was that they did not know each other.

Chapter 667 Crown Prince Rebels_1

...

North Prince Mansion.

Study.

Lu Chen sat in front of his desk and meticulously organized the intelligence regarding the disappearance of Great Sum's martial artists over the past month.

According to the Brocade Guard's statistics, the number of missing persons had already exceeded twenty thousand.

These were all martial artists above the fifth rank.

The incident had shaken various dynasties, and now some forces within the Great Sum's territory had been frightened into relocating to the North Country or other dynasties.

As regent, the Crown Prince Lu Yi had long since dispatched quite a number of people to investigate the matter without turning up any leads; the missing people seemed to have vanished into thin air.

Of course, the personnel Lu Yi sent out for the investigation were not from his own faction. With the situation in the Capital city becoming ever more perilous, he needed to keep his own men in or near the Capital city. If he were to send his own people out on other tasks, what would happen if something went wrong?

The royal court was indifferent to the matter, allowing the force behind these incidents to act without restraint. They had become increasingly bold, even to the point where martial artists were beginning to disappear within the Capital city itself.

Lu Chen pondered over the reports laid out on his desk, speculating whether his father, the Sum Emperor, had learned a skill similar to the Absorption Technique, which was why he was capturing so many martial artists to absorb their skill.

However, even if the Sum Emperor had indeed learned the Absorption Technique, he couldn't become a Celestial by using it.

To become a Celestial, one must pass the trials of this world; that is an absolute condition, one that even Lu Chen, with his system "cheat," cannot bypass. Lu Chen didn't believe the Sum Emperor could circumvent the world's trial.

Of course, temporarily elevating someone's strength to the Heavenly Human Realm through some means was still possible.

Lu Chen thought, perhaps his father was worried that the North Country might march south to vie for the throne one day, hence finding a way to counter a Celestial from the North Country in advance?

At this moment, Lu Chen's gaze fell upon a piece of intelligence, mainly concerning the Heavy Cavalry of the South.

Following the investigations by the Brocade Guard, it had been substantially confirmed that the Heavy Cavalry's move to the South was indeed to transport something, but because the investigators were all ranked below the fifth tier, it was difficult to ascertain what exactly the Heavy Cavalry was transporting.

Not to mention the Brocade Guard, even the members of the royal court were unaware of why the Heavy Cavalry was sent south. People only knew it was an order from the Sum Emperor, as for why such an order was issued, that was likely known only to the Sum Emperor himself.

Yet, there had been numerous rumors circulating within the Great Sum recently. Some said the Sum Emperor had discovered an island at sea inhabited by an Immortal, and that the Heavy Cavalry was actually transporting Immortal Pills.

If the Sum Emperor consumed the Immortal Pill, there was a possibility his health could recover.

This rumor caused the Princes to grow more restless. If the Sum Emperor were to regain his health, their chances of seizing the throne would become even slimmer.

They had been eagerly awaiting the Sum Emperor's demise, and now to hear there might be hope for him, how could they not be anxious?

Putting down the intelligence in his hands, Lu Chen lifted his hands and massaged his temples.

The martial artists above the fifth rank within Great Sum's territory were in grave danger, severely limiting the actions of the Brocade Guard. Investigating whether their disappearances were related to the Sum Emperor was not an easy task.

However, Lu Chen vaguely felt that the large-scale disappearance of martial artists might be connected to whatever the Heavy Cavalry was transporting back to the Capital city from the South.

These two incidents coinciding made it hard not to be suspicious, but without concrete evidence, everything remained conjecture.

He murmured to himself, "Forget it, no matter what he's up to, as soon as Yaoyao and Nanyan's child is born, I'll immediately lead an army south."

Lu Chen figured that once Yelv Nanyan and Xiao Wenyao's child was born, the system would most likely reward him with some troops and strong warriors. With more soldiers and powerful allies, his confidence in marching south would be greater.

"Prince, Commander Liang requests an audience!"

Hearing the voice of the maid, Lu Chen snapped back to reality. "Enter."

Liang Zong immediately entered the study, and before he could offer his respects, Lu Chen asked, "Any news from the Capital city?"

Liang Zong replied, "Reporting to the Prince, our people still haven't found out what exactly the Heavy Cavalry is escorting. I've brought other news today."

Lu Chen asked, "What news?"

Liang Zong placed the piece of paper on Lu Chen's desk. Seeing it was a piece of paper, Lu Chen knew it was a Pigeon Letter, likely conveying extremely urgent intelligence. He immediately picked up the paper and glanced over it.

Upon reading the content, Lu Chen's brow furrowed.

Two nights ago, the Sum Emperor was the target of a poison assassination attempt, but the assassin failed. After the investigation, more than a hundred people were found to be directly involved, with all of the evidence pointing toward the deed being perpetrated by the Lin Family.

Now, the entire Lin Family, from top to bottom, had been placed under house arrest, forbidden to leave. Lin Gaoyuan and Lin Xiuming had been captured and taken to Heaven Prison, awaiting interrogation.

It had happened only two nights before, yet in less than a day, all those involved in the affair had been identified. This seemed too quick.

And to suggest the mastermind behind it all was Lin Gaoyuan?

It was clearly a frame-up.

Lin Gaoyuan had long pledged allegiance to the North Country. Since the Crown Prince took over government, he had been quite low-key in the imperial court. How could he possibly get involved in such a matter?

Chapter 668 Crown Prince Rebels_2

It was quite apparent that someone felt the Lin Family was an impediment, and thus wanted to eliminate the entire Lin Family.

Lu Chen pondered for a moment, wondering who was most likely behind this incident—was it the Crown Prince, or another Prince?

However, the likelihood was that it was indeed the Crown Prince.

As of now, Lin Gaoyuan had not made his stance clear. To the Crown Prince, Lin Gaoyuan was still one of Sum Emperor's men. Ever since the Sum Emperor fell ill, aside from the State Preceptor and those closest to the Sum Emperor, only Lin Gaoyuan and Zhao Wenhan, the two Prime Ministers, had been granted audience with the Sum Emperor.

Zhao Wenhan had already overtly sided with the Crown Prince. So for the Crown Prince, Lin Gaoyuan posed the greatest threat in the royal court. Therefore, he took this opportunity to get rid of Lin Gaoyuan as well.

This way, aside from the State Preceptor, only Zhao Wenhan would have access to the Sum Emperor, laying the groundwork for actions they might take later on.

Actions such as forging imperial edicts, or altering the will, and the like.

At this time, Liang Zong asked, "Prince, do we need to save the Lin Family?"

Liang Zong was the Commander of the Brocade Guard. As a person with access to core intelligence, he was well aware that Lin Gaoyuan was North Prince's man. Now that Lin Gaoyuan was imprisoned, the Brocade Guard was likely to take action.

Lu Chen thought for a moment and then said, "Not for the moment. My father, the Emperor, will not stand by as Lin Gaoyuan is taken down. However, if their lives are in danger, then the Brocade Guard should find a way to escort the Lin Family out of the capital city."

The Sum Emperor was no fool. Being a minister without a stance, as long as Lin Gaoyuan did not align himself with any Prince, he belonged to the Sum Emperor.

Now that the Crown Prince sought to remove his man, how could the Sum Emperor agree? It's highly likely he would step in to protect the Lin Family. After all, the Emperor was only feigning illness, not actually dead.

Liang Zong replied, "Your subordinate understands."

"If there's nothing else, your subordinate will take his leave."

"Very well, go attend to your duties."

...

Several days later.

Great Xia Dynasty, Capital City, Heaven Prison.

Lin Gaoyuan and Lin Xiuming were locked in adjacent cells. Although they were imprisoned, the jailers treated them with great courtesy and did not dare to mistreat them.

Lin Xiuming, sitting cross-legged on the ground, asked, "Father, what should we do now?"

Resting on the bed with his eyes closed, Lin Gaoyuan spoke indifferently, "We continue to wait."

Seeing his father's calm demeanor, Lin Xiuming said in confusion, "Father, even at this juncture, how can you be so unfazed? Being accused of attempting to assassinate the Emperor is a crime that condemns the entire family to death."

With a chuckle, Lin Gaoyuan responded, "What use is your worry now? Are you considering escaping from prison? If you were to actually escape, our Lin Family's guilt would most certainly be affirmed."

Upon hearing these words from Lin Gaoyuan, Lin Xiuming was stunned for a moment, then hesitated to speak.

At that moment, he clenched his fist and smashed it onto the ground, creating an instant pit.

Lin Xiuming felt extremely aggrieved in his heart. The Lin Family had done nothing, yet they were branded with the crime of regicide.

Could it really be that they could only wait for death in Heaven Prison?

Watching his son become so agitated, Lin Gaoyuan firmly said, "Xiuming, do you truly believe that those trivial pieces of evidence are enough to doom our Lin family?"

At his father's words, Lin Xiuming paused, and then said, "Father, it's the crime of regicide, and all that evidence was found in our house. Aren't those proofs substantial enough to convict us?"

Lin Gaoyuan sneered and said, "They wouldn't believe their framing and false accusations."

Lin Xiuming said, "But His Majesty now..."

Lin Xiuming didn't finish his sentence. He wanted to say that the Sun Emperor was nearly dead and couldn't look after the Lin Family any longer. It was highly likely that the Crown Prince would be judging them, and he probably didn't plan on sparing the Lin Family.

Lin Gaoyuan interrupted, "Father knows what you want to say. However, things are probably not as simple as you think. Haven't you noticed that Great Xia's Heavy Cavalry has moved to the South?"

"Why don't you think about who controls the Heavy Cavalry now?"

At first, Lin Gaoyuan also thought that the Sum Emperor might have been driven insane, but he didn't believe that the Sum Emperor was going to die so soon.

Once he learned that the Sum Emperor had deployed the Heavy Cavalry, he was even more certain of his guess: the Sum Emperor was likely fine and plotting something.

So even if the Lin Family was framed, Lin Gaoyuan wasn't worried at all. He was one of the few ministers who hadn't taken sides yet; he didn't belong to any Prince's camp—he was the Sum Emperor's man. The Sum Emperor would not stand by and watch the Lin Family be eliminated by the Crown Prince.

On the contrary, it was the faction of the Crown Prince that was about to face trouble. Poisoning the Sum Emperor, harboring delusions of seizing power and usurping the throne—Lu Yi's days as the Crown Prince were numbered.

Just then, the sound of chains clinking echoed from not far away.

Realizing that someone else was coming in, Lin Gaoyuan stopped talking.

The next moment, a series of familiar figures appeared in front of Lin Gaoyuan and his son.

Zhao Wenhan, dressed in prisoner's garb, was shackled and chained at his feet and wrists.

Seeing this, Lin Gaoyuan burst out laughing, then said, "Zhao, how come you've come to keep me company?"

Hearing this, Zhao Wenhan glared at Lin Gaoyuan with venomous eyes and sneered, "Mr. Lin, don't get too pleased with yourself. The North Prince has already sided with the Crown Prince. Even if you get out now, you will end up back here sooner or later!"

At that moment, the jailer came to the door of the cell where Lin Gaoyuan was held, opened the door, and with a nod and a bow said to Lin Gaoyuan, "Prime Minister Lin, the matter has been investigated thoroughly. You are free to go."

Lin Gaoyuan got up from the bed without hesitation and walked straight out. Once he reached the corridor, he said to Zhao Wenhan, "Zhao, a dragon has scales that must not be touched. Touch them and you die. After decades of serving the Emperor, do you still not understand this principle?"

"Once you're in here this time, coming out will probably mean heading to the execution ground."

After these words, Lin Gaoyuan headed straight out, ignoring Zhao Wenhan's cursing.

In the following days, the Lin Family was exonerated, and Lin Gaoyuan returned to the royal court. Meanwhile, those of the Crown Prince's faction either died or were captured.

Although Lu Yi's position as Crown Prince had not been revoked and he was still regent, he was feeling an intense sense of crisis.

If the rumors were true, if there really was an Immortal Pill, then waiting any longer would mean his father the Emperor would surely return to court, and his position as the Crown Prince would inevitably be revoked!

No! He could no longer sit idly by!

No matter what, he had to ascend to that position!

Over the next month, Lu Yi sought to win over Situ Ce, went to great lengths to get close to the royal Grandmaster, and also rallied some Military Generals.

To avoid the same fate as Prince Lu Shuyun, Lu Yi also made early contact with Lu Chen, planning to escape to the North Country if he failed.

Finally, feeling that everything was ready, Lu Yi led his troops straight into the Imperial Palace one night.

Chapter 669 There is no way back for Solitude_1

In the deep of the night, when all was quiet.

The light in Wu Junwan's room was still on, and the sounds inside ebbed and flowed into the courtyard, where the maids at the door were now yawning.

These days, they had gradually become accustomed to it, no longer feeling the bashfulness of the past. Even if they heard the noises coming from the room, they would not blush or have their hearts race any longer.

Just then, a maid rushed into the courtyard and hurriedly said to the maids at the door, "Commander Liang requests to see the Prince, quickly inform the Prince!"

The maid at the door responded immediately, "I'm afraid that won't be possible right now, the Prince is still in high spirits."

The maids all knew of Lu Chen's abilities. Lu Chen had only been there for two hours; it couldn't possibly be over so quickly.

However, at that moment, Lu Chen's voice came from the room, "Let Commander Liang wait in the study for a little while, I will be there shortly!"

As a Pseudo Celestial, Lu Chen's perceptive abilities were strong, and he immediately sensed the maids looking for him at the door.

However, he planned to bring the matter at hand to a close first.

The maid who had come to inform him heard Lu Chen's voice and immediately said, "Yes, Your Highness, the Prince."

After the maid left, Lu Chen quickly hastened the pace.

Once things had concluded, Lu Chen got up and began to dress. He glanced at Wu Junwan, who was lying on the bed and said with a smile, "I apologize for the sudden affair; I won't be able to continue to serve Your Majesty tonight."

Hearing this, Wu Junwan turned her head towards Lu Chen, her eyes still cloudy with daze, evidently not quite recovered, "Huff, huff... Your Highness is indeed a very busy man, at this late hour... still having matters to attend to..."

"I have no choice, it's a troubled autumn," Lu Chen said helplessly.

Wu Junwan said weakly, "Your Highness, you should go attend to your business... It so happens that this palace also plans to sleep... "

"Alright then, you have a good rest tonight."

Lu Chen then turned and walked outside.

Soon Lu Chen arrived at the study, and Liang Zong immediately greeted Lu Chen at the entrance, "Your Highness, the Prince, I pay my respects!"

"I apologize for the disturbance at such a late hour, it is my fault."

Lu Chen walked straight into the study and said, "It's fine, come in."

Under normal circumstances, if it were just regular intelligence, Liang Zong would have waited until the next day to deliver it to the study. It had to be urgent intelligence that had just arrived from the Capital City to have someone notify Lu Chen so directly.

Not long ago, Lu Chen had instructed Liang Zong that if anything major happened in the Capital City, he should be notified immediately, day or night.

Clearly, Liang Zong seeking him out tonight meant something had happened in the Capital City.

Once inside the study, Liang Zong immediately handed a slip of paper to Lu Chen, then said, "The Crown Prince's rebellion has failed, but he has disappeared."

Lu Chen took the slip of paper from Liang Zong, glanced over it, and thought to himself that it was no wonder Lu Yi had been hinting at him so frequently lately. It turned out that Lu Yi had intended to stage an outright rebellion.

After reading the contents of the paper, Lu Chen chuckled. His brothers were quite foolish indeed; with so few Grandmasters behind them, they dared to rebel. Wasn't this seeking death?

Lu Chen then said to Liang Zong, "Have the Brocade Guard investigate whether the Crown Prince might have fled northward."

Lu Yi had been sending so many letters to the North Country lately and had given them so many benefits. It was highly likely he feared having nowhere to go should the mutiny fail, so he considered the North Country his fallback.

At that moment, Liang Zong cautiously asked, "If we confirm that the Crown Prince has gone north, should we... "

Liang Zong didn't continue, but Lu Chen instantly understood what Liang Zong wanted to ask.

Now that Lu Yi's mutiny had failed, he was no longer the Crown Prince of Great Sum and no longer had the authority of a Crown Prince. To the North Country, he was no longer of much use.

On the contrary, if the rebellious former Crown Prince were to run to the North Country, it would instead tarnish the North Country with the stigma of harboring a rebel, which wouldn't be good for its reputation.

After thinking it over, Lu Chen finally said, "Don't rush. If the Crown Prince is found, secretly escort him to the North Country first. He has been overseeing the Capital City for so long; he surely knows some things that others don't."

For Lu Chen, although Lu Yi was no longer a Crown Prince, the intelligence he held about the Capital City was still very valuable.

Lu Chen also wanted to know how exactly Lu Yi's mutiny had failed, so he could learn from it.

Liang Zong said, "I understand."

"I will dispatch people to look for the Crown Prince's whereabouts right away."

"Mm, proceed," Lu Chen affirmed.

"I shall take my leave," Liang Zong spoke, then left the study.

After Liang Zong departed, Lu Chen picked up the paper slip in his hand and looked at it a few more times.

He speculated that with the Crown Prince gone, the Sun Emperor would probably have to return to the court; although the strife among the Seigniors continued, the Zhao King had already gained a clear advantage. In no more than a year, all southern feudal states would likely be quelled by the Zhao King.

By that time, it would be an appropriate occasion for the North Country's soldiers to march south to support the throne.

Lu Chen didn't dwell further; he used his Spiritual Power to crush the paper slip in his hand into crumbs, then returned to Wu Junwan's room.

By now, Wu Junwan had just finished her bath and returned to her bed. She had thought that with Lu Chen gone for such important matters at this late hour, he probably wouldn't come back.

Imagine Wu Junwan's surprise when she had just lain down to sleep, and a figure appeared in the room. Seeing Lu Chen suddenly return, Wu Junwan asked in confusion, "Why have you come again? Didn't you say you had something to do?"

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Lu Chen said with a smile, "It's nothing serious."

As he spoke, Lu Chen climbed onto the bed, and Wu Junwan hurriedly moved aside, but as soon as she shifted, Lu Chen flipped her over and pressed her down.

Wu Junwan glared at Lu Chen and then said, "It's so late, you can't possibly still want to—"

Lu Chen didn't say a word and simply tore off Wu Junwan's inner garment, then bent down to kiss her red lips, and soon they regained their former state.

However, at this moment, Lu Chen didn't continue; he turned Wu Junwan over and pressed against her back, wrapping his arms around her slender waist and said, "What's so good about the throne that people are scrambling for it."

"Rising earlier than chickens and sleeping later than dogs, and so many issues to deal with."

Hearing this, Wu Junwan, pressed underneath him, scoffed coldly, "Prince, you joke well, seeing as you are a tyrant with power in his hands, yet you question what's so good about the throne."

Lu Chen smiled faintly and then said, "Honestly, I really don't think being Emperor is comfortable, especially now, where the emperors of the major dynasties are constrained by aristocratic families or nobility—it's stifling."

Upon hearing Lu Chen's words, Wu Junwan said, "If you, Prince, find ruling to be too troublesome, you might as well hand over your seigniorship to me, and let me help you manage the entire North Country."

Lu Chen chuckled and then whispered in her ear, "Why, are you thinking of usurping power now?"

"I could give you that opportunity. Just defeat me now, and I'll hand over my princehood to you."

Wu Junwan snorted coldly.

Then, the two of them maintained this position and fell silent.

This gave Lu Chen the feeling of constantly possessing Wu Junwan, so he quite liked holding her like this.

Having spent some time together, Wu Junwan had grown accustomed to it; after all, nearly every night, they ended up sleeping in each other's embrace like this.

After a while, Wu Junwan finally asked, "Something must have happened in the Great Sum Capital, right?"

"How did you know?"

Wu Junwan said indifferently, "It's so late, and you are still going out; it must be something important. The Great Sum Capital has been uneasy of late, combined with the numerous cases of Martial Artists disappearing, it really looks like a storm is brewing. And just now, you also mentioned the throne to me—so I presume it's likely that a Prince in the Capital has rebelled."

Lu Chen said, "Indeed, a Prince has rebelled, but it's not an ordinary Prince, it's the Crown Prince."

Upon hearing this, Wu Junwan chuckled, "Your father, the Sum Emperor, is really something. He just pushed Prince Lu Shuyun to rebel not long ago, and now he's driven his eldest son to do the same; is he planning on eliminating all Princes and becoming a solitary figure?"

Lu Chen said, "Has there ever been an Emperor who isn't a solitary figure?"

Wu Junwan continued to probe, "What was the outcome? Did the Crown Prince fail?"

Lu Chen confirmed, "He indeed failed."

Wu Junwan said, "So, the Sum Emperor's supposed dire illness was all a pretense?"

"If he really were gravely ill, he wouldn't be able to maintain such strong control over the military and the royal experts. If he were nearing death, I reckon many Grandmasters in the royal family would have already chosen to side with Lu Yi, and Lu Yi wouldn't have been defeated so quickly."

Lu Chen said, "I also suspect he's feigning illness and scheming something."

Wu Junwan said, "No wonder the various Seigniors within Great Sum have been fighting fiercely, yet you have remained inactive in the North Country. It turns out you had long guessed your father was fine."

Lu Chen responded with a smile, "I haven't taken action for the moment, not because of that. Mainly, I want to wait until my two children are born before I make any moves."

Hearing Lu Chen's answer, Wu Junwan didn't believe it for a second. Waiting for the kids to be born? What kind of reason was that?

Could the birth of his children bring him any good fortune?

At this time, Lu Chen slightly shifted his body and then said, "How about you give me one too?"

After a soft moan, Wu Junwan coldly responded, "You wish."

"To have me bear you a child, you'd better see if you are capable enough."

Lu Chen said with a smile, "Do you still doubt whether I am capable? I'm not just capable—I've got major skills."

Wu Junwan ignored Lu Chen's words and remained silent.

After a bit, Wu Junwan asked, "When do you plan to attack Great Jue?"

Lu Chen paused, "Why do you ask this question?"

Wu Junwan bluntly said, "I need to let my dear sister know in advance so she can prepare herself."

Lu Chen, with his head on her shoulder, said, "You are now my woman. Shouldn't you be on North Country's side? Why are you still thinking of sending word to the Yue Emperor?"

Wu Junwan said lightly, "I'm afraid that if Great Jue falls to you one day, Qingrou would end up in the same predicament as me."

Lu Chen said, "Wouldn't that be good? That way, you two sisters could reunite, and from then on, spend your lives together with no need to live in separate dynasties, only meeting once every few years."

Wu Junwan said coldly, "I knew you had this in mind!"

"But even if you really defeat the Da Yue Dynasty, she would never become your woman."

Lu Chen asked, "Why not?"

Wu Junwan said, "She's not like me; she follows the Unfeeling Tao and cannot develop feelings for men."