

Nobel Ruler 381

Chapter 381: Can't Retract

Si Ye was confused when he heard their words. *Rong Zhen didn't go missing? She was hidden by the Empress? But judging from her previous appearance, it completely didn't seem like it! Besides, if she really wanted to do it, why would Si Meng mysteriously die?*

He suppressed his pain and didn't bother to wipe the blood on his face as he miserably begged. "Your Majesty, even though I don't know who told you this, it must be fake! Previously, the Fourth Princess went missing with Si Meng, and he quickly passed away after a while. The Empress was very worried about the Fourth Princess's safety, so she looked for me. I... I secretly sent someone to check the entire Imperial City, but I still couldn't find her whereabouts..."

"Rong Zhen said all of this personally. Could it be that she was lying?"

Emperor Jiawen's cold sentence immediately made Si Ye swallow his remaining words.

Si Ye widened his eyes in shock and couldn't recover his senses for a long time. *Rong Zhen... said it personally?! Did they find Rong Zhen already?*

Looking at Si Ye's expression, Emperor Jiawen thought to himself: *It seems like he really didn't know any of this. If not, his acting skills are too good.*

Si Ye had followed him for many years, so Emperor Jiawen did understand him quite a bit. If Si Ye really was involved in this incident, he wouldn't give his current reaction.

Emperor Jiawen felt slightly better.

As the head of the four aristocratic families and the Si family head, Si Ye's status held some weight. Unless absolutely necessary, Emperor Jiawen was also reluctant to touch him. If not, the entire Imperial City would suffer in the aftermath.

This was also the reason why he still chose to deal with the incident discreetly, even after so many things had happened.

"Si Ye, the Empress has already admitted that she killed Si Meng and sent Rong Zhen to Heptagon Alley and that she had planned to set the Chu family up. What else do you have to say about this?"

Si Ye was dazed. The Empress killed Si Meng? How could that be? All these years, the Empress trusted and depended on Si Meng greatly. What's good for her if she killed him? Besides, why must she send Rong Zhen to Heptagon Alley? Hasn't that place been isolated for years?

Facing Emperor Jiawen's stern interrogation, Si Ye's heart was in turmoil. He couldn't help but look at the Empress by the side. "...Her Majesty, is what His Majesty said true?"

The Empress was expressionless as she stiffly nodded. Now, I just don't want to implicate the Si family. So even if I didn't do all of that, I have to admit to it! Besides, with that copper vat in Heptagon Alley, what does all this count for? Emperor Jiawen has most probably already killed me thousands of times in his heart.

Si Ye was stunned. He almost instinctively asked, "Why?"

The Empress looked down as if she didn't want to continue talking.

Emperor Jiawen scolded, "Why aren't you saying anything now? You did all of that, yet you're not willing to talk now? Tell Si Ye what good things you have done at Heptagon Alley!"

Si Ye had never seen Emperor Jiawen so furious, and he couldn't help but feel terrified. *Previously, Emperor Jiawen had been holding it in when he talked about Si Meng and Rong Zhen. Why did he suddenly have such a huge reaction when he talked about Heptagon Alley? It seems like... the Heptagon Alley incident is even more unbearable for Emperor Jiawen when compared to Si Meng's presence and the Empress hiding Rong Zhen.*

The Empress's white and cracked lips moved. "...Your Majesty, I did all of this on my own, and it has nothing to do with my brother and the entire Si family. If we continue blowing this matter up, it will be increasingly troublesome... I hope you can give me a quick ending, so we can stop all of this."

Emperor Jiawen chuckled. "You finally know that you're in trouble? When you did this earlier, did you think that today would come? It's not impossible if you want to end this now. You just have to clearly say if you prepared the copper vat for Rong Jin and what the reason for doing so was!"

Si Ye was confused when he heard their words. *What copper vat? How did Rong Jin get involved in this?*

The Empress bit her lips tightly.

Actually, Emperor Jiawen had already asked her this question countless times. However, she didn't admit to it the whole time.

She knew clearer than anyone how much Emperor Jiawen hated that copper vat. So, once she admitted to it, Rong Jin would never be able to make a comeback.

Thinking of this, her heart was finally drowned by the loss of hope. The next moment, she suddenly tried to smash against the wall beside her.

Emperor Jiawen stood up in anger. "Stop her!"

When the Empress rushed over, Si Ye had already stood up and blocked her.

The Empress crashed into Si Ye's arms.

Dong!

Si Ye moaned deeply as a sweet yet fishy taste enveloped his lips. *The Empress really wants to die! She used all her strength!*

"Jing'er! What are you doing?" Si Ye was frustrated and anxious as he directly called out the Empress's name.

"Brother, kill me! Kill me quick!" The Empress grabbed his hand and begged anxiously and bitterly. *Once I die, everything will end.*

However, how could Si Ye bear to do it? "What exactly happened to you?"

Emperor Jiawen watched on coldly from the side. "Empress, do you think that I can't do anything about you if you keep quiet?"

Then, he suddenly raised his voice and shouted, "Someone, serve her with ink and brush!"

Everything that was previously thrown onto the floor couldn't be used anymore. However, the thing the Imperial Study didn't lack the most was this.

Eunuch Min hurriedly entered from outside, silently went to the other side to take the new ink and brushes for Emperor Jiawen, and ground it, pretending as if he did not see the unkempt Si Ye and Empress on the floor.

Emperor Jiawen picked up the brush and nonchalantly glanced at the Empress. "I think you can't continue to be the Empress. As for Rong Jin... With such a mother, what kind of son can you bring up? He's incapable; I should've removed him a long time ago!"

The Empress suddenly realized that Emperor Jiawen wanted to remove the Crown Prince from his position in addition to removing her as the Empress.

Under her panic, she couldn't help but scream, "Your Majesty, you can't do this! Rong Jin has just gotten engaged to Situ Xingchen! If you remove him from his position as the Crown Prince now, how can you explain to Country Xing Luo?"

"No wonder... No wonder!" Emperor Jiawen paused in his actions and sneered. *It was no wonder they were so fearless. It was because they had already thought of how to escape from punishment since the start! Rong Jin smoothly fought for his marriage agreement with Situ Xingchen for this day!*

Emperor Jiawen hated himself for being so blind and letting this heartless mother-son duo lie to him for so long. "Okay! I want to see if Country Xing Luo will want to continue Situ Xingchen and Rong Jin's marriage agreement after they know about this!"

...

Country Xing Luo.

Situ Xingchen returned to the palace at top speed and spoke up about everything that had happened.

However, Country Xing Luo's Emperor Xiankang, Situ Yan, kept quiet for a long time before shaking his head. "Xingchen, you can't retract this marriage agreement."

Chapter 382: Probe

"Your Highness, you played really well this time." Chu Liuyue looked at the chessboard in front of her and didn't put down her black piece for a long time. "My black pieces are almost all blocked."

Rong Xiu quietly sat opposite her. Upon hearing this, his thin lips gently curved up. "You clearly have a way to go, right?"

Chu Liuyue could obviously see it, but...

"Even if I walk this step and forcefully escape the current situation, didn't you already prepare a trap for me? Since I'm going to lose anyway, it's meaningless to make the extra move."

Chu Liuyue threw the chess piece into its container and raised both her hands. "I concede."

Looking at her obedient appearance, Rong Xiu raised his brows and asked a question as he put away the chess pieces. "You weren't focused when playing. What are you thinking about?"

Seeing his slow actions, Chu Liuyue couldn't help but wrinkle her nose. *Even if I were focused, I would only forcefully draw to a tie when I play with Rong Xiu. If we really are to compare, Rong Xiu is the top player in chess.*

However, Rong Xiu slowly said, "Even though this step seems meaningless, someone will still walk it."

Chu Liuyue lightly grunted. "They're just wasting their efforts."

"Not only did Situ Yan not cancel the marriage agreement for Rong Jin and Situ Xingchen, but he even willingly put in a good word for Rong Jin. Even if His Majesty is enraged and wants to punish the Empress and the Crown Prince immediately, he must do Situ Yan a favor."

Chu Liuyue had long expected that Situ Yan wouldn't cancel the marriage agreement so easily, but she did not expect him to render help so swiftly.

This proved that Situ Yan thought more than highly of Rong Jin...

Rong Xiu smiled nonchalantly. "If the problem could be solved so easily, we wouldn't have to drag until today."

Chu Liuyue suddenly leaned forward, and her hands held the chessboard. Staring at Rong Xiu, she asked, "Your Highness, did you know long ago that Situ Yan would help?"

Rong Xiu looked up, and his deep gaze swept past Chu Liuyue's face in a seemingly smiling manner. "Yue'er, didn't you know about this too?"

There seemed to be an ambiguous aura between the two of them.

Chu Liuyue looked at Rong Xiu in deep thought. *Of course, I knew, but the only reason why I would guess that is that I knew something. However... What about Rong Xiu? Does he know too?*

Chu Liuyue paused and said, "As Situ Yan has helped Rong Jin, His Majesty won't officially remove the Crown Prince—and even the Empress—from their positions for now, but many people have already noticed that something is amiss. Everyone is now making guesses and conjectures, and people are faltering. On the other hand, His Majesty commanded people to investigate Heptagon Alley thoroughly, but there hasn't been much progress... Your Highness, what's your plan?"

Rong Xiu put away the chess pieces and couldn't help but look down and kiss Chu Liuyue's forehead when he saw her look of curiosity. "Even though you won't win by making an extra step, it could still be more exciting. Besides... I can then win more heartily."

...

At Crown Prince mansion...

As Rong Jin was grounded once again, the entire Crown Prince Mansion's atmosphere became very solemn.

Everyone was defeated and grave, which replaced their arrogant looks when the Crown Prince was in favor.

Who would've imagined that the enviable Crown Prince would end up like this?

Even though His Majesty hadn't given his order, rumors had spread everywhere in the Imperial City. They said that even the Empress had been grounded this time, so removing the Crown Prince from his position was just a matter of time.

Chu Xianmin sat in her own room.

It was already late autumn, so the weather was gradually turning cold.

Her residence was very cold and quiet, and it was more like a wintry hell.

Her hand slowly caressed the face veil she was wearing. Even though she was the only one here, she didn't dare to show her face. This was because even she herself was afraid of her own face.

At the start, she never thought that she would end up in this state. After some deep thoughts, she finally stood up.

Chu Xianmin heard that Situ Xingchen was going to visit Crown Prince Mansion today, so she had to go out and greet her.

When she walked to the outside, the road was eerily quiet and wasn't much better than her place.

She walked all the way to the living room.

After walking quite a far distance, she finally saw some figures on the road. Most of them were subordinates, but they didn't even messily bow to her when they saw her. Instead, they left in a hurry.

Chu Xianmin couldn't help but give a self-deprecating smile.

In the past, these people would think of ways to make her smile when they saw her. Now, they were too lazy to even do that.

She could vaguely hear those people whispering.

"I really don't know what that Eldest Princess Situ wants! The Crown Prince and Her Majesty have now been grounded, and they will be removed from their position sooner or later. This person still hasn't dissolved her marriage agreement with the Crown Prince? Isn't this causing trouble for herself?"

"Who knows? Perhaps she's devoted and is willing to accompany him through life and death?"

"I think not! You didn't see how that eldest princess treated the Crown Prince! When I went in to serve tea, I didn't even see half a smile on her face. She said she came to visit the Crown Prince, but everyone can tell that she was forced to come."

"Who can force her? She's the apple of Country Xing Luo's Emperor Xiankang's eye!"

“Anyway, with her around, His Majesty won’t do anything to the Crown Prince for now. However, I still think we should find another way out! Everything in this Crown Prince Mansion will thoroughly change at some point!”

“I heard that His Majesty thinks quite highly of the Third Prince and that he even wants to confer him—”

Chu Xianmin clenched her teeth and walked in.

...

Inside the living room, Rong Jin and Situ Xingchen sat opposite each other.

After what happened these few days, Rong Jin’s entire person slimmed down by quite a bit, and he looked very frail. Even his last bit of energy was about to be used up.

He was worried about the Empress and anxious about himself. He also couldn’t sleep properly for a few nights, which naturally caused him to end up in this state. Luckily, he still managed to save his position as the Crown Prince!

“Xingchen, I really don’t know how to thank you...” Rong Jin looked at Situ Xingchen in front of him and was filled with gratitude. “I knew you wouldn’t stand still and not do anything!”

To Rong Jin, the reason why Situ Yan was willing to help was definitely due to Situ Xingchen begging him. Thus, he treasured Situ Xingchen even more in his heart.

However, Situ Xingchen did not think so. She felt all her hair stand on end, and her entire person was very restless as Rong Jin stared at her with that gaze. *If it weren't for Father's command, I would never come!*

"Your Highness, you don't have to be so polite. It's what I have to do." Situ Xingchen literally clenched on her teeth and spat that sentence out.

But Rong Jin didn't even realize her intentions as he sighed emotionally and deeply. "Sigh, it's a pity that Father has already convicted Mother of her crime, and he refuses to let me see her. I'm also not sure what her situation is like now..."

Situ Xingchen was frustrated to hear this. Thinking of what her father told her, she asked in a seemingly casual manner, "Your Highness, the reason why His Majesty is acting this way is due to Heptagon Alley. Do you know what exactly is going on inside...?"

Chapter 383: Gift

Rong Jin frowned. "Erm... I'm not sure either. I've never heard Mother mention anything about Heptagon Alley. It was also my first time there that day."

He had also never heard of that bronze vat with the hundreds of corpses before.

Situ Xingchen was curious. Unrelenting, she asked, "If this is Her Majesty's doing, she must've done it for you, Your Highness."

"I said I don't know!" Rong Jin retorted. "Besides, Mother is just another high-born woman in the palace. There's no way she's capable of doing something like this."

He could tell that those bones belonged to cultivators. Some of them even came from highly skilled cultivators.

His mother had stayed in the palace all these years. With her skills alone, it was impossible for her to do anything on her own.

In Rong Jin's opinion, Rong Jiu and the others must've framed her.

Putting other matters aside, she had met with him several times to discuss Rong Zhen's disappearance. She had been truly worried about the princess's safety.

If Mother knew Rong Zhen was in Heptagon Alley all this while, why would she bother to put up an act for so long? Wouldn't it be a waste of her time and effort? Without a doubt, Rong Jin knew his mother trusted him. Since he was a young prince, his mother had placed all her hopes on him.

He shouldered all her burdens, so she would naturally do anything for him.

Mother can hide the truth from everyone, but she is always honest with me. Rong Jin wholeheartedly believed that his mother was innocent.

"Father is blinded to the truth at the moment. I will prove her innocence once I find out what really happened," Rong Jin said through gritted teeth.

Situ Xingchen was smirking inwardly. *Blinded for a moment? Who is Rong Jin trying to fool? The Empress's reaction that day was proof of her guilt. Other than Rong Zhen's sudden appearance, everything else was clearly related to the Empress!*

Situ Xingchen held the teacup, but she didn't take a sip. Instead, she watched her own reflection from within. Her eyes were cold, but her voice was as gentle as ever. "You're right, Your Highness. I also don't believe what they said; otherwise, my father wouldn't have lent us a helping hand. You must do something to help Her Majesty, or else I'm afraid she's going to have a tough time in the palace in the future."

Rong Jin's brows were knitted tightly together. "What do you think I should do? Father refuses to see me."

"Your Highness, do you know that Lord Chu Ning and the Third Prince are investigating what happened in Heptagon Alley? If they find any leads, they can use it to their advantage. In other words, Her Majesty's future and yours are in their hands now."

"Of course, I'm aware of this!" Rong Jin ran his hand over his face impatiently.

Dealing with Chu Ning was a piece of cake. However, Rong Jiu bore a huge grudge against his mother and him. Rong Jiu would definitely seize this opportunity to return the favor.

"Your Highness, the most important issue now is Heptagon Alley. I believe Her Majesty's innocence, but she must know something about it, right?"

Rong Jin was silent.

“If she tells you everything she knows, it would be easier for you to react and handle the situation. So... why don't you seek her out?”

Rong Jin pondered on her words. *It is a viable solution, yet...*

“I can't see her now. How am I supposed to do that?”

A smile appeared on Situ Xingchen's lips very slowly. “Have you forgotten that I can enter the palace?”

Chu Xianmin happened to arrive at this precise moment. She stopped outside the door; then, she heard the excitement in Rong Jin's voice.

“Xingchen, you are truly the best woman a man can have. Marrying you is my greatest blessing!”

Those words stabbed Chu Xianmin's heart like daggers; she was heartbroken.

Chu Xianmin tightly wrung her hands together as a million thoughts raced through her mind. A look of determination flashed in her eyes as she turned around and left.

...

Chu Liuyue came to Mu Qinghe's home again.

When she arrived at the doorstep, she heard a crisp chirping that got louder and louder.

She looked up and saw Hong Yao flying to her in exhilaration.

Although the last time they met was two weeks ago, Chu Liuyue had missed the bird. The hearty welcome was what she needed, and she couldn't resist smiling. "Hong Yao, have you been good lately?"

The fiend flew a circle around her, flapping its wings excitedly.

Chu Liuyue could see a layer of green flames engulfing Hong Yao's entire body. *This must be its reply!*

Her smile widened. "Don't worry. I didn't forget your gift."

Hong Yao chirped happily.

Chu Liuyue was about to retrieve something from her Cosmic Bag when she felt someone watching her.

She paused and looked up.

Jian Fengchi was leaning against the door frame with arms folded in front of his chest, watching her curiously. "That's weird. Hong Yao isn't your fiend; why do you care so much for it?"

The corners of Chu Liuyue's eyes twitched. *It's been weeks. Why is he still here?*

As though he was reading her mind, Jian Fengchi smiled flippantly. “It’s easy to get me here. The tricky part is getting rid of me.”

Chu Liuyue tried her best to remain calm and polite as she curtsied. “Greetings, Young Master Jian.”

Jian Fengchi suddenly said, “Do you know? Mu Qinghe only allows Hong Yao to accept gifts from one person.”

Chapter 384: Movement Technique

Chu Liuyue kept her Cosmic Bag calmly and smiled. “Oh? I didn’t know about this.”

With his eyes on her hand, Jian Fengchi smiled as he raised his chin haughtily. “Well, that’s not important; it was in the past anyway. Can you show me the gift you brought for Hong Yao?”

Chu Liuyue kept the gift hidden in the bag. “Young Master Jian, it’s just a small trinket. I’m sure it wouldn’t interest you. Since you said Hong Yao is only allowed to accept presents from one specific person, I prefer not to embarrass myself. Please forgive me if I have offended you.”

Hong Yao lowered its head in disappointment and swung around to glare at Jian Fengchi, clearly blaming him. *If he hadn’t shown himself, I would be playing with my gift now.*

Hong Yao had been looking forward to it for the past two weeks.

A sinister smile appeared on Jian Fengchi's lips, making him look especially foppish. "Ms. Chu, relax. I can see that Mu Qinghe likes you a lot. Perhaps he will make an exception for you."

This woman's eyes are so similar to that person's.

Chu Liuyue wasn't keen on continuing this discussion with Jian Fengchi, so she changed the topic subtly. "You're too kind, Young Master Jian. Actually, I came today to see if Lieutenant Mu is back. When I was here a few days ago, all of you were out."

She had guessed that something must've happened to Mu Qinghe because he was a man who always kept his word. If he said he would be away for ten days, he would come back unless something serious happened.

Jian Fengchi was deep in his thoughts as he stared at Chu Liuyue. *For some reason, I have the feeling that she doesn't want to speak to me. The feeling of being ignored is back; how strange. I'm a popular man among women, but I must've done something to offend Chu Liuyue for her to treat me like this.*

"I think women from Country Yao Chen must really hate me," he said with an exaggerated sigh.

Chu Liuyue narrowed her eyes with a polite smile. "Young Master Jian, please don't take this the wrong way. It's nothing personal; I'm just worried about Lieutenant Mu. Has anyone else made you unhappy?"

Jian Fengchi was behaving as though he had suffered a grievance elsewhere.

His behavior piqued Chu Liuyue's curiosity. Few people could tame Jian Fengchi.

His usual soulless eyes looked sad as he struggled to speak. Finally, he swallowed whatever he was going to say and headed into the house. "Nevermind. I am not one to bear a grudge on such things."

As he walked away from her, he drawled loudly, "Mu Qinghe, the girl is here for you."

Chu Liuyue shuddered.

G-girl? He must be out of his mind. How dare he call me 'girl?' Chu Liuyue ground her teeth while she made a mental note to teach him a lesson next time.

She suppressed her unhappiness and ran after him.

Jian Fengchi didn't slow down. Instead, he waved his hand casually. "He's in the backyard. Go look for him yourself."

He strode away in the opposite direction as though he couldn't be bothered with her.

Chu Liuyue muttered her gratitude and headed for the backyard.

After Jian Fengchi was gone, Hong Yao returned and flew around Chu Liuyue. It fluttered its wings and batted its eyes relentlessly.

The hateful man was gone, so it was time for her to give Hong Yao its gift.

Chu Liuyue looked at the fiend and shook her head. “No, Hong Yao.”

She knew who Jian Fengchi was talking about earlier. Hong Yao could only accept gifts from one person—Shangguan Yue.

In the past, she was unaware of this fact, so she gave Hong Yao presents without a thought. Naturally, she couldn’t do so anymore.

Mu Qinghe was suspicious of her. It was vital for her to be cautious.

Hong Yao looked at her determined expression. It flapped its wings in disappointment and flew away.

Chu Liuyue pursed her lips, willing herself not to give in.

Initially, bringing presents for Hong Yao was her way of cheering up the fiend. Soon after, it became her habit.

She didn’t expect Mu Qinghe to bar the fiend from accepting presents from others except her.

What is going through Mu Qinghe’s mind?

Suddenly, Hong Yao stopped.

Chu Liuyue looked up and saw Mu Qinghe practicing with his sword in the spacious backyard. To be more accurate, he was holding a three-inch-long wooden blade.

Even though it was a wooden blade, it was a weapon that could kill a man when Mu Qinghe was wielding it.

Chu Liuyue could feel the aggressiveness in each strike as she stood from a distance.

“Lieutenant Mu.” Chu Liuyue curtsied.

Mu Qinghe didn’t stop. His movements were smooth like a flowing river.

She could even see a flash of black every time the blade slashed in the air. This only proved that Mu Qinghe had gotten more powerful.

Shua!

His movements were so swift that she could only catch fragments of him in the yard.

Suddenly, he reached out to strike, and the wooden dagger flew out of his hand, slicing through his fragmented shadows.

Choo! Choo! Choo!

They vanished!

Chu Liuyue couldn't stop herself from frowning. *Mu Qinghe seems to be in a foul mood. To put it nicely, one can't tell if he is happy or upset. On the other hand, one wouldn't want to antagonize him.*

Chu Liuyue had never seen Mu Qinghe express his feelings like this before, but from the way he was behaving, something was obviously troubling him.

She stood at the side and patiently waited, without a word.

When the last fragmented shadow finally vanished, Mu Qinghe recalled the wooden dagger back to his hand. Then, he exhaled and turned his attention to Chu Liuyue.

His eyes regained their usual aloofness and had no sign of his agitation from earlier.

"Lieutenant Mu, you weren't home when I came the last time. So..."

"I know," interjected Mu Qinghe before she could finish.

He suddenly started to scrutinize Chu Liuyue, who blinked and smiled in return. "Lieutenant, why are you looking at me like this?"

There was a moment of silence before Mu Qinghe said, "It looks like you haven't made a wasted trip this time."

His words shocked Chu Liuyue. *I haven't made any breakthroughs this time. What does he mean?*

Without waiting for her clarification, Mu Qinghe thrust the dagger at Chu Liuyue.

Zing!

It sped toward her at such amazing speed that it would stun anyone.

Chu Liuyue didn't have time to evade. *The only way is to deflect it head-on!*

Chu Liuyue slanted her body subconsciously and reached out with her right hand at the same time.

It suddenly hit Mu Qinghe. *This is...*

Chapter 385: Imperial Sword

Chu Liuyue suddenly paused in her actions.

Almost at the same time, one green figure and one red figure speedily appeared in front of Chu Liuyue—it was Hong Yao and Tuan Zi!

Tuan Zi quickly went forward and went straight for the wooden sword as its fluffy body lightly landed on it.

The next moment, Tuan Zi opened its mouth and harshly bit it.

Kacha!

Following this crisp sound, Tuan Zi directly bit off a large portion of the wooden sword's blade.

On the other hand, Hong Yao flapped its wings, and a green fire landed on the wooden sword.

Hong!

It started to burn.

Tuan Zi felt the commotion and turned around to see that the green fire was close to burning its tail. It bared its fangs toward Hong Yao as it delightedly gave the bird a teasing look.

The next moment, the two little ones respectively moved away as the wooden sword became a ball of dust an arm's length away from Chu Liuyue.

Tuan Zi jumped onto Chu Liuyue's shoulders first as it showed its tail to Chu Liuyue pitifully. "Wu-wu!"

That bird is too evil! It almost burned me to death!

Chu Liuyue looked at it coldly. "Mm, three strands of fur were burned off. If you discovered it any later, it would've grown back on its own already."

Tuan Zi was speechless.

Hong Yao chirped twice as it waved its feathers in delight. *It deserves it! Who asked it to move so slowly? It's been so long, but it didn't improve at all.*

Tuan Zi was furious, but it could only angrily turn away when it realized that it was taken advantage of because of its incapacities. Tuan Zi pointed its butt at Hong Yao to express its anger.

Chu Liuyue actually really wanted to scold Hong Yao for taking revenge for personal reasons during work, but she was still sensible as they were in front of Mu Qinghe.

Besides, Hong Yao only took action to help her.

She slowly put down her arm, and the tense muscles in her entire body relaxed.

Disappointment flashed across Mu Qinghe's eyes. When he saw Chu Liuyue's actions previously, he still thought...

"Lieutenant Mu, what are you planning to do?" Chu Liuyue didn't seem to notice that anything was wrong as she smiled and said, "I think you've overestimated me. I can't withstand your attack now. I really have to thank Tuan Zi and Hong Yao for their help just now."

Mu Qinghe's face was quite cold as he shot Hong Yao a warning look.

Hong Yao—who was still over the moon earlier—suddenly froze. *I was too anxious just now and actually just rushed out!*

Chu Liuyue was also pretty nervous in her heart. Just when she was about to take action, she suddenly realized that there was a very high chance that Mu Qinghe did that to test her.

Humans would be very easily exposed when they were acting according to their instincts.

She had already executed half of her move. If she executed it fully, Mu Qinghe would definitely find something amiss!

Luckily, Tuan Zi and Hong Yao took action in time...

Chu Liuyue gently patted Tuan Zi and felt more assured when she touched the soft and furry body.

"Accompany me out," said Mu Qinghe coldly.

Chu Liuyue was dazed. "Now?"

Mu Qinghe glanced at her. "Why? Do you still have other things to do?"

“Nope.” Chu Liuyue shook her head. *Even if I did, I’m afraid Mu Qinghe wouldn’t care. After all, nobody dares to offend him here. Even Emperor Jiawen has to make way for him, let alone the rest.*

Mu Qinghe nodded and raised his legs to walk outside.

Chu Liuyue hesitated for a while, but she still followed him. “Lieutenant Mu, can I ask you a question? Where are we going?”

“You will find out when you get there.” Mu Qinghe’s reply was very cold, and it was very decisive. He clearly didn’t want to argue with Chu Liuyue.

Chu Liuyue knitted her brows slightly. *Mu Qinghe always did things like this, and I’m not surprised, but... I still feel uncomfortable since I don’t even know where I am going. However, Mu Qinghe clearly doesn’t plan to explain to me.*

Jian Fengchi suddenly walked out into the front yard.

“Oh, where are you bringing this girl to?” He laughed and teased.

Mu Qinghe glanced at him coldly. “This isn’t something you should interfere in.”

Jian Fengchi raised his hands. “Pfft, this isn’t you inviting me over already. Mu Qinghe, you’re really smooth at kicking someone to the curb when they’ve outlived their usefulness.”

He was clearly teasing him, but Mu Qinghe's expression suddenly froze.

Jian Fengchi seemed to notice something as he coughed and looked at Chu Liuyue instead. "Ms. Chu, there's something I want to ask you about."

"Young Master Jian, please go ahead."

"It's..." Jian Fengchi touched his chin with one hand and looked rather conflicted. "Am I... very ugly?"

"Hm?" Chu Liuyue thought that she had heard him wrongly and widened her eyes. But when she saw Jian Fengchi's deep-in-thought appearance, she confirmed what she had heard earlier was true.

What is this man high on? Who doesn't know that Jian Fengchi's second specialty is refining medicine, while his first is narcissism.

He had naturally flirtatious eyes and a frivolous attitude. Even Chu Liuyue—who couldn't stand him usually—had to admit that Jian Fengchi's looks were one of the best. If not, how could he go around freely in the sea of flowers?

"Young Master Jian, you're handsome and very charismatic. You don't have anything to do with the word 'ugly.'"

Jian Fengchi knitted his brows even tighter. "I think so too... But someone said that I was ugly."

Chu Liuyue asked curiously, "I wonder who..." *Has such wise taste?*

Jian Fengchi's eyes became mysterious as he spat out a name. "Mu Hongyu."

Chu Liuyue was speechless. *Mm... It seems like quite a number of interesting things happened when I wasn't around...*

Jian Fengchi was a very confident person, especially when it came to his looks and behavior. He had lived for so many years, but it was the first time someone called him 'ugly.' It was no wonder that he bore a grudge.

It was a pity that Mu Hongyu's personality didn't care about such types of people.

Mu Hongyu should've said it when she couldn't bear it any longer, taking into consideration that Jian Fengchi had helped treat her mother's disease. One can just imagine how much Mu Hongyu hates Jian Fengchi. Chu Liuyue suddenly understood something and advised while smiling, "Hongyu has always been straightforward. Don't take it to heart."

Jian Fengchi was speechless. *This doesn't seem like she's comforting me, right?!*

"I heard her say that this Rong Xiu or something is way better looking than me?"

Chu Liuyue's lips twitched. *If I didn't hear wrongly... Jian Fengchi is referring to... Rong Xiu?*

Jian Fengchi stared at Chu Liuyue and said, "Oh, yes. She even said that that person was your fiancé?"

Chu Liuyue then realized that Jian Fengchi didn't see Rong Xiu at all after coming here.

She coughed. "Yes, Prince Li is indeed my fiancé."

Jian Fengchi thought for a while and suddenly walked outside. "I want to see what kind of person this Rong Xiu is."

Chu Liuyue was just about to say something when she felt some movements beside her.

She turned around and saw a longsword suddenly floating in the air.

Mu Qinghe was standing on it, and he looked very solemn and cold. "Come on up."

Chapter 386: Imposter

At the royal palace, Imperial Study.

Emperor Jiawen looked at the booklet in his hands and increasingly knitted his brows tighter as he read it.

Piak!

He finally threw the item aside. “Chu Ning, I told you to do your best to investigate Heptagon Alley, but you only found out about these useless things?”

Chu Ning—who was standing respectfully—immediately knelt down and said, “Your Majesty, I’ve already used all the connections and methods that I could, but I could only find out so much up till now. Even though there are more than hundreds of skeletons at Heptagon Alley, we can’t find any other information other than the fact that they were all cultivators.”

“Anything that could reveal their identity had been specifically taken care of, and we can’t find anything. Even... Except for the corpse that was hung, all the other skeletons didn’t have any clothing at all.”

The person who did all of this was clearly very meticulous.

Chu Ning literally didn’t sleep and rest during the past few days. He had even dug three feet under the entire Heptagon Alley, but he really couldn’t find anything other than piles of skeletons.

Emperor Jiawen rubbed his brows in frustration. He knew that this incident couldn’t be investigated so easily and that there wasn’t much use to just sit there. However, he was filled with worry whenever he thought of the copper vat stained with dried blood.

Chu Ning looked at Emperor Jiawen and continued, “According to our investigations, Her Majesty would head to Heptagon Alley once every two months, and she would do it very discreetly. Every time, she would only stay there for a short while, so she hadn’t been discovered after so long.”

Emperor Jiawen’s face darkened. In actual fact, he had already personally asked the Empress a few times, but her lips were very tight. From start to end, she kept insisting that she did everything alone. She didn’t mention whether she prepared it for Rong Jin and why she wanted to do so.

In the middle, Emperor Jiawen's subordinates had even tortured the Empress with his consent, but they still couldn't discover any useful clues.

Once he thought about how the Empress cheated him for so many years and how he had no clue at all, he felt coldness spread from his legs. It then attacked his brain, causing his entire person to be chilled.

Knock, knock...

"Your Majesty, the Third Prince wants to see you," said Eunuch Min outside carefully.

"Let him in." Emperor Jiawen took a deep breath in and looked at Rong Jiu—who opened the door to enter.

Emperor Jiawen asked, "Do you have any clues on your side?"

Once Rong Jiu came in and saw Chu Ning kneeling on the floor, he realized that Chu Ning didn't find out much.

First, he respectfully bowed before slowly saying, "I've already personally interrogated all of Her Majesty's subordinates in the palace and found some news that might be of use."

Emperor Jiawen finally perked up. "Quickly, speak!"

Rong Jiu said, "According to the Empress's personal palace maid, she said that the Empress had a small box that she kept on her own and didn't allow anyone else to touch it. From time to time, the Empress

would lock herself in the palace. At first, the palace maids didn't care about it, but there was one time when a eunuch accidentally barged in and finally seemed to see what was hidden in Her Majesty's box."

Emperor Jiawen thought for a moment. "What kind of box is it? Why does she think so highly of it? Why did I never know about this?"

Rong Jiu laughed to himself. *Emperor Jiawen and the Empress have no feelings for each other whatsoever, especially Emperor Jiawen. He probably doesn't even care about the Empress at all. If he had once cared more about the Empress, he wouldn't have let her do so many horrendous things under his eyes.*

The Empress went in and out of Heptagon Alley many times, and she has even hunted and killed so many cultivators to increase the copper vat's strength. Yet, Emperor Jiawen didn't know anything about it, let alone a small box. It's too easy to lie to Emperor Jiawen.

Thinking of this, Rong Jiu couldn't mock himself. *This is also the reason why the Empress didn't get any of the punishments she deserved when she silently killed my mother. Emperor Jiawen wasn't any good to my mother as well.*

Rong Jiu suppressed his feelings and looked calm. "I couldn't find out much. After all, the palace maids don't dare to ask much about Her Majesty's items. However... the eunuch who accidentally found out about this fell and drowned in the lake not long after. After that, everyone in Her Majesty's palace avoided this topic."

This time, he had to use some methods to finally find out about this.

"I think that many problems can be solved if we can find that box."

Emperor Jiawen looked stern. "You're saying that the box has something to do with Heptagon Alley?"

"It's just my conjecture, but this is the only possible direction as we don't have any other clues."

Emperor Jiawen thought for a while and felt that Rong Jiu's words made sense. "Since this is so, Rong Jiu, go find the Empress and make her hand the item over."

Rong Jiu hesitated for a while. "Father, since Her Majesty treasures the box so much, she won't hand it over so easily..."

"Tell her that I might give Rong Jin a chance if she honestly hands the box over. If she continues being stubborn... She will know what happens next."

An undetectable cold gaze flashed across Rong Jiu's eyes. "I understand." Then, he hurriedly dismissed himself.

Emperor Jiawen glanced at Chu Ning helplessly. "Chu Ning, you should work harder on your side too. If it really can't be done, you should try working on it from other areas. Thoroughly check all those that had close relations to the Empress and Rong Jin before."

"Yes!"

When Chu Ning was dismissed, Emperor Jiawen relaxed his body and leaned against the chair.

Chu Ning is good at everything, but... he doesn't have enough methods. In comparison, Rong Jiu is much more efficient. After all, he had been trained by the Northwest Army... Thinking of this, Emperor Jiawen vaguely felt uncomfortable in his heart.

He had never thought of leaving the position for Rong Jiu as he really couldn't like this son of his. Also, Rong Jiu exuded a very strong murderous aura, which made even Emperor Jiawen scared sometimes.

But it now seemed like Rong Jin really couldn't make it. Amongst the remaining sons, Rong Jiu actually became the most suitable one. Even if he was cold-blooded and harsh, it was better than being frail and weak.

What a pity... Emperor Jiawen sighed deeply as if he had aged by a few years at that moment. *If only Rong Xiu's body was better...*

...

In the Empress's bedroom.

The once crowded and glamorous place had now turned cold and miserable, leaving behind a few solemn guards that trapped the Empress within.

When Situ Xingchen came here, her heart skipped a beat. *How much does Emperor Jiawen hate the Empress for him to treat her like this...?*

A guard saw Situ Xingchen, and he immediately went up. "Eldest Princess Situ, please stop here. His Majesty has commanded that nobody is allowed to go near here."

Situ Xingchen took out a plaque from her sleeves and showed off her authority as the eldest princess. “I came here by his command.”

The guard glanced at it and recognized that it was indeed His Majesty’s plaque, so he hurriedly made way. “Eldest Princess Situ, go ahead!”

Situ Xingchen put away the plaque and walked into the Empress’s residence calmly.

Chapter 387: Heaven’s Chosen Son

The large palace was empty and quiet.

Situ Xingchen walked in slowly, and her footsteps reverberated throughout the empty room, sounding extra sinister.

All sorts of smashed items were strewn all over the floor, looking very messy.

Situ Xingchen avoided them expressionlessly and walked straight inside, finally seeing the Empress in the innermost part of the room.

Si Huijing was wearing a messy and dirty palace attire that looked like it hadn’t been changed in a few days. One could even vaguely see some dark-red stains.

Her face was very pale, her lips were cracked, and her eyes were unfocused. Motionless, her entire person was huddled into a ball as she lay in a corner of the bed.

One look at her, and one would think that she had stopped breathing.

It was obvious that the Empress had experienced countless tortures in these short few days.

Situ Xingchen walked in step by step and finally stood still in front of the Empress, revealing her usual warm smile. “Her Majesty, I’m here to see you.”

The Empress seemed not to hear it as she didn’t give a reaction.

Situ Xingchen didn’t care as she bent down slightly and leaned in. “Actually—” But at the next moment, she smelled a pungent and nearly suffocating scent coming from the Empress.

Disgust flashed across her eyes as she took out a letter from her sleeves and passed it over. “Her Majesty, the Crown Prince told me to visit you today. This is the letter he wrote for you; take a look at it.”

Then, she silently straightened her body.

If she could, she really wanted to leave this dirty place immediately, but she hadn’t forgotten her purpose for the day.

It wasn’t easy to make this trip, so she had to grab the opportunity.

Hearing the two words 'Crown Prince,' the Empress's eyeballs slowly turned as she finally found some of her senses back.

The Empress slowly looked up; her deep eyes were bloodshot and filled with despair and grievances. They even vaguely had some form of lunacy to them.

Situ Xingchen almost instinctively moved back. *The Empress... looks too scary...*

A faint chuckle escaped from the Empress's lips as if she were mocking Situ Xingchen. It also sounded like she was laughing at herself. Without looking at the mirror, Si Huijing also knew how she looked.

"How... did you come in?" asked the Empress with a hoarse voice. It was as though someone had dragged something across the sand floor, causing one's ears to hurt.

Situ Xingchen composed herself and explained softly, "His Highness lent me his plaque."

As the Crown Prince, Rong Jin had a plaque that looked quite similar to Emperor Jiawen's.

He changed the plaque slightly, and it looked quite similar to Emperor Jiawen's. Other than the people who regularly saw the two plaques, others wouldn't be able to tell the difference.

This was why Situ Xingchen could enter smoothly.

The Empress believed her and picked up the letter, but the moment she saw the first two lines, she suddenly scrunched the letter into a ball and harshly threw it at Situ Xingchen's face. "B*tch, you're indeed cunning!"

Situ Xingchen completely didn't expect the Empress to react like this, and she was dazed.

The paper ball didn't hurt her face, but it was an enormous insult to her.

Situ Xingchen picked up the paper ball, and the smile on her face faded. "Her Majesty, what are you doing? I'm being kind by helping you and the Crown Prince, yet you treat me like this?"

"B*tch! Do you think I don't know what you're thinking?" The Empress's face flushed red as she pointed at Situ Xingchen's nose and scolded her. "Rong Jin can't tell your intentions, but do you think I can't too? It's no wonder that you haven't dissolved the marriage agreement yet. You just want to find out some information from me! Let me tell you—dream on!"

Even though the Empress was dejected now and would be sentenced to death at any moment, it didn't mean that she was senile. When she previously saw Situ Xingchen, Si Huijing already felt that this woman had ill intentions and that she wasn't what she appeared to be.

Now, it was truly the case!

The smile on Situ Xingchen's face completely disappeared as she clutched the paper ball in her hands.

This was personally written by Rong Jin under her hints, so she obviously knew the letter's contents. The main gist was that Rong Jin couldn't leave his residence as he was grounded, so he told Situ Xingchen to

visit the Empress for him. Besides, he even asked the Empress to tell Situ Xingchen about Heptagon Alley's secret so that she could tell him.

Rong Jin thought that he could find a proper solution to the current problem once he knew what exactly was going on.

What else did the Empress not understand when she saw this?

Situ Xingchen originally had nothing to do with this matter, but she was bending her back to help them. How could she have no intentions at all?

"Her Majesty, you must be mistaken; I have no such intentions. The Crown Prince is your own son. If you don't even trust him, there won't be any way to solve the problem."

"Get lost!" yelled the Empress at the top of her lungs. If it weren't because she couldn't move the lower half of her body, she would've long hurled the b*tch out.

Situ Xingchen's gaze landed on the Empress's legs, and she vaguely guessed something. She looked very disappointed as she said, "Originally, I thought that you loved His Highness the most. I didn't expect that you could actually just watch as he lands himself in this perilous situation... Since you insist on your ways, I can't do anything either."

As Situ Xingchen talked, she actually turned around without a care.

She walked a few steps when the Empress said, "What did you say just now?"

Situ Xingchen's lips curved up slightly, and delight flashed across her eyes. But the moment she turned around, her expression returned to normal.

She sighed and said, "You probably don't know because you've been trapped in the palace these few days, but His Majesty has already decided to remove the Crown Prince and get the Third Prince to replace him."

The Empress was stunned. "Impossible!"

"I know you don't believe me, but there's no other way at this point. If you don't believe me, you can ask the people in the palace if they have been interrogated by the Third Prince. Can't you guess why His Majesty wants to let the Third Prince do this?"

Situ Xingchen's voice was as gentle as usual, but to the Empress, her voice sounded like a cold snake slowly crawling to her heart.

Si Huijing's lips trembled violently. Very quickly, her entire body shook. "Impossible... Impossible! Rong Jin is the Crown Prince! Rong Jin is the only Crown Prince!"

Seeing the Empress's reaction, Situ Xingchen was puzzled. *Why does she care so much about this...?*

"I want to find His Majesty! He can't make someone else the Crown Prince!" hollered the Empress as she directly fell off the bed. "Only Rong Jin... It must be Rong Jin!"

Situ Xingchen suddenly realized something and purposely said, "The Third Prince is outstanding, and he can be respected as the Crown Prince too..."

“What do you know?” The Empress looked contorted as she shouted sharply, “Who is Rong Jiu? Rong Jin is Heaven’s Chosen Son! Other than him, nobody else deserves to be the Crown Prince!”

Chapter 388: Golden Inheritance Peak

Situ Xingchen’s eyes suddenly brightened up! *Heaven’s Chosen Son! This is the biggest secret behind Rong Jin!*

The moment the Empress said it, she immediately reacted—*I still said it aloud, and I even did it in front of Situ Xingchen!*

Bang!

Ka!

The Empress was furious as she picked up the things around her and threw them at Situ Xingchen. “How cunning! You actually calculated against me!”

She had kept this secret for so many years and didn’t even tell anyone despite the torture she had suffered in the past few days.

Si Huijing didn’t expect Situ Xingchen to get the words out of her mouth in the end.

The Empress's hand was cut by the sharp shards, and she was bleeding everywhere. But at this point, she completely couldn't feel the pain as her heart and mind were just focused on killing Situ Xingchen in front of her.

However, the current her was just a good-for-nothing. She couldn't even walk herself, let alone handle Situ Xingchen.

Situ Xingchen easily avoided the Empress's attacks, but she didn't move backward. Instead, she moved forward and directly squatted in front of the Empress. "Her Majesty, what did you say just now...? Heaven's Chosen Son? What does that mean?"

The Empress lifted her hand to slap her.

With a smile on her face, Situ Xingchen clutched the Empress's wrist with one hand. However, her eyes and brows were filled with a cold threat. "Since you've already said it, why don't you tell me everything? Don't worry; I'll tell the Crown Prince everything word for word. I'm guessing this is also the reason why my father is determined for me to be engaged to the Crown Prince?"

Blood churned in the Empress's stomach, and she actually spat out blood. *I didn't guess wrongly! Situ Xingchen does have ill intentions! And that cunning father of hers!*

"Who? Who exactly told you?" The Empress tried very hard to push Situ Xingchen away, but it was to no avail. In the end, she just shouted at her at the top of her lungs.

She had never told anyone about this, and she even only revealed a little information to Rong Jin. Up till now, he didn't even know what it meant.

But how does that old fox Situ Yan know about this? The many things that happened in the past quickly flashed across Si Huijing's eyes like small pearls that were finally strung up.

It's no wonder that Situ Yan took the initiative to form a marriage alliance! It's no wonder that they liked Rong Jin from the start! It's no wonder that they haven't dissolved the marriage agreement up till now! This cunning father-daughter duo was coming for this!

Situ Xingchen's ears buzzed due to the Empress's racket, which completely used up the last ounce of her patience.

She flung the Empress away and looked down at her from above. "Her Majesty, there doesn't seem to be a point in saying all of this now. Why don't you just say what you should? This way, you can protect the Crown Prince, right? Without me and my father's help, you and the Crown Prince wouldn't even last to this day. We're now considered to be sitting on the same boat, so why must you persist bitterly? Do you really think that you can salvage the situation on your own—just based on your half-paralyzed body?"

Situ Xingchen's words were very harsh.

The Empress was enraged, But after thinking for a while, she realized that Situ Xingchen's words made sense.

It would be bad if this carried on. She suffered so much and spent so much effort to reach this stage. How could she let everything go to waste?

After keeping quiet for some time, she finally looked up and saw Situ Xingchen. "It's not impossible if you want me to tell you, but you must make a vicious oath. If you betray Rong Jin and me in the future, you'll be struck to death by lightning!"

Situ Xingchen was elated. *What's so scary about making a vicious oath? As long as I know what the so-called 'Heaven's Chosen Son' means, I have ways to solve this problem.*

"Okay! I, Situ Xingchen, solemnly swear—"

"Greetings, Third Prince!" Voices were suddenly heard from outside the palace.

Situ Xingchen was shocked, and she immediately looked out. *Why did Rong Jiu come at this time?*

"How is Her Majesty today?" This was clearly Rong Jiu's voice.

"Third Prince, the Empress is normal. She's stuck in her residence and refuses to come out."

"Mm, I'll go in to take a look," said Rong Jiu as he walked toward the residence.

The guards all knew that Rong Jiu was sent by His Majesty to investigate the Empress, so they directly let him in.

His footsteps became increasingly nearer.

Situ Xingchen panicked. *If Rong Jiu discovers me here, everything will be exposed!*

She rapidly leaned toward the Empress and softly whispered, "For the Crown Prince, you know what you should do."

Then, she immediately found a place to hide herself.

Creak!

The door was pushed open, and Rong Jiu's figure appeared at the entrance.

Rong Jiu could see the room's situation with one glance.

He squinted his eyes. "Her Majesty, what's... with you?"

...

Mu Qinghe brought Chu Liuyue along on the imperial sword and went north.

Since he had set up a barrier, the two of them didn't attract anyone's attention as they silently left the Imperial City.

Upon seeing that they were exiting the city gate, Chu Liuyue got increasingly curious. *Where exactly is Mu Qinghe bringing me? This direction... Normally, people won't even come here since there are many mountains with dangerous terrain here. The more important point is that if we continue forward, it will be Country Yao Chen's imperial mausoleum.*

However, Mu Qinghe was silent, and she couldn't ask anything.

The two of them continued progressing forward.

Chu Liuyue finally confirmed her guess when she saw the steep mountain. *Mu Qinghe has brought me to Country Yao Chen's imperial mausoleum!*

Looking down from mid-air, she could even clearly see the warriors in charge of guarding the peak.

A faint barrier enveloped the entire mountain peak.

Chu Liuyue was shocked. *This barrier's strength has exceeded my expectations! It's like... it was set up by a stage-six warrior!*

An idea popped up in Mu Qinghe's mind as he finally brought Chu Liuyue to the ground and landed at the foot of the mountain.

After Chu Liuyue stood still, she suppressed her curiosity and looked up.

Golden Inheritance Peak—this was the highest and most dangerous mountain peak within miles of the Imperial City.

Every Country Yao Chen's emperor would be buried in the imperial mausoleum under this peak.

One glance at it, and it felt like a sword that descended from heaven and harshly pierced through the floor.

Sharp! Solemn! Mighty!

Chu Liuyue had never come here before, so the reason why she understood this place was due to Golden Inheritance Peak looking like the symbolic sword statue outside of Tian Lu Academy.

At first, she had noticed this unwittingly and was even curious about it for some time.

“Lieutenant Mu, why did you bring me here?” Chu Liuyue turned around and looked at Mu Qinghe.

Mu Qinghe’s gaze was rather deep and mysterious. He stared at Golden Inheritance Peak for quite some time before booming, “We’re going into the imperial mausoleum.”

Chapter 389: Interrogation

Chu Liuyue thought she misheard. “What?”

Mu Qinghe raised his chin in response. “Nobody will notice when I open the barrier in a moment. Come with me.”

Chu Liuyue’s eyes widened, and her mouth was agape. *Mu Qinghe is going to enter the imperial mausoleum?*

“Lieutenant, I don’t think it’s appropriate for us to enter the imperial mausoleum. After all, we’re not part of Country Yao Chen’s royalty.”

The problem wasn’t about attracting attention—it was simply the wrong thing to do.

Mu Qinghe glanced at Chu Liuyue nonchalantly. “You don’t want to go?”

“It’s not that. I just... Lieutenant, you must have a reason for doing this, right?” Chu Liuyue racked her brain, but she couldn’t come up with a reason for why he wanted to do this suddenly.

First of all, nobody had offended Mu Qinghe in Country Yao Chen. He didn’t have to dig up anyone’s ancestral grave.

Secondly, even if there really were treasures in the mausoleum, they might not be of much value to him.

Mu Qinghe was a distinguished figure in the Tianling Dynasty, and he had seen his fair share of rare objects. Why would he break into Country Yao Chen’s imperial mausoleum?

The scar on Mu Qinghe’s face looked menacing as he narrowed his eyes.

Chu Liuyue immediately felt his hostility, so she changed her tone of voice. “Please, I’m right behind you.”

If I get on his bad side with my current status, he can easily make my life difficult. We’re here anyway. Why not go in with him and see what he wants?

Upon seeing that Chu Liuyue was obeying him, Mu Qinghe's attitude softened.

He raised his right hand, and several silver rays of light gathered in the middle of his palm, forming a strange pattern.

Chu Liuyue took a quick peek. She found the pattern familiar, but she couldn't remember where she saw it.

Soon, Mu Qinghe pushed his hand, and the silver pattern flew out of his palm instantly.

Buzz... buzz!

There was a soft buzzing sound.

Ripples suddenly swirled in the space in front of him—it was the barrier of Golden Inheritance Peak.

The second it came into contact with the pattern, the buzzing sound vanished, and the ripples froze as well. Then, the pattern dissolved and merged with the barrier.

A crack emerged in the middle and spread out in all directions.

Finally, a circular entrance with a faint silver glow appeared in front of the two of them!

Chu Liuyue was shocked.

The barrier of Golden Inheritance Peak was powerful; it was impossible to break through its vigorous defense using normal methods.

One could only open the barrier undetected and without it collapsing when one possessed a specific object—a key.

Mu Qinghe obviously couldn't have the key to Country Yao Chen's imperial mausoleum. However, Chu Liuyue suddenly recalled he wasn't home when she visited him a few days ago.

She thought little about it then, but now that she thought about it, his absence aroused her suspicion. *It isn't his first time here. He must've put in a lot of effort to come here.*

Her mind was spinning, but she kept her cool.

Mu Qinghe turned around. He seemed to scrutinize Chu Liuyue's expression for a moment; then, he beckoned to her. "Keep up."

Chu Liuyue took a deep breath and looked at the treacherous mountain peak, as well as the faintly visible boundary. *A few hundred guards are guarding Golden Inheritance Peak. There are definitely high-skilled warriors holding down the fort as well. It's only a matter of time before they find out about the intruders.*

Chu Liuyue pushed that thought aside and put a foot across the boundary.

...

Meanwhile, in the Empress's bedchamber at the palace.

With her head down, the Empress offered no response to Rong Jiu's interrogation.

Her reaction didn't surprise Rong Jiu. Although he hadn't personally questioned her in the past few days, he was well aware of the happenings.

The Empress has been like this since she came back from Heptagon Alley. By the looks of it, she must be acting up again. Rong Jiu cut to the chase, not wanting to waste any time. "Your Majesty, I hear you are in possession of a highly valuable box."

His words seemed to agitate Si Huijing because her head snapped up instantly. "What box? I don't have it; I don't know."

Rong Jiu simply replied, "You henchmen have confessed everything, yet you deny it?"

The Empress was taken aback. Suddenly, she knew who the whistleblower was.

She had been guarding that item and held its existence close to her heart. For years, nobody knew about it except for that little eunuch.

He saw her with it once. Even though he knew nothing, the Empress still silenced him as a precaution.

I thought it was foolproof, but I didn't expect this oversight. That eunuch must've told someone before he died. For the past few days, Rong Jiu has been interrogating every one of my servants, handmaidens, and guards. He must've tortured them to obtain this piece of information.

The Empress stood firm with her denial.

“Father knows about this. He wants you to hand over the box without any further resistance. If you do as he says, he will show you mercy. If you don't, you will bear the consequences.”

The Empress was fuming. “I should've killed you when you were stationed at the Northwest Army!”

When she killed Rong Jiu's mother back then, she wanted to do the same to him. However, it coincided with Consort Wan's death. Emperor Jiawen was deep in sorrow, so she held herself back.

Who would've thought that Rong Jiu would rather volunteer at the Northwest Army himself?! Life at the border was tough, and she expected him to die in a battle quickly. Hence, she left him alone.

Nevertheless, Rong Jiu established himself in the army with impressive achievements, and he climbed through the ranks. By then, it was impossible for her to kill him.

Now, he was back to seek his revenge.

Rong Jiu remained unaffected by her accusation. “So, you won't hand me the box. I have no choice but to report to Father.”

With that, he left.

The Empress was flabbergasted. She thought Rong Jiu would interrogate her severely, but she never expected him to let her go so easily.

The prince, however, had other ideas in mind. *The Empress has shouldered her secret for so long without breathing a word to another. She is definitely prepared to die. I can interrogate and torture her for the whole day and still come up with nothing. Her only weakness is Rong Jin.*

“Oh, when I see Father, I will beg him to show you mercy and allow the Crown Prince to visit you. After all, he is your son. I think Father will relent.”

It would be wonderful to see the mother and son together in such a state.

Before the Empress could react, Rong Jiu heard a sound from behind the screen.

He paused to look in that direction. “Who’s there?”

Chapter 390: Seen Before

Nobody answered.

Rong Jiu furrowed his brows and stared at that area for quite a while before turning around to walk to the screen.

The Empress had been locked up here alone these few days, and there were many guards on duty to look after her. Thus, it was impossible for other people to enter.

Da.

Da.

The footsteps reverberated throughout the deadly quiet palace in a suffocating manner.

Just as Rong Jiu was about to walk over, a golden parrot suddenly flew out.

Rong Jiu immediately took action. He turned a wave of his force into a sharp sword, which directly pierced through the golden parrot's stomach.

Poof!

Blood splattered everywhere.

Just as the golden parrot was about to land on the ground, its body twitched twice before it became motionless.

Rong Jiu furrowed his brows. He recognized this golden parrot as the pet the Empress kept; he did not expect this thing to be left in the palace.

Suddenly, Rong Jiu's eyes focused on something that was hidden in the golden parrot's cut stomach.

He immediately glanced down and took a closer look before picking up the hidden item.

It was actually a round, black ball. This item was the size of a fingernail, and it looked very ordinary.

However, Rong Jiu's gaze turned increasingly stern. This was because he recognized the round, black ball.

This item was known as an 'ink pearl.' It looked like an ordinary round, black ball, but in actual fact, it could be used to send messages.

One just had to use some special methods to open it in order to obtain the information inside.

He had previously used such a method in the military, but as this item was very rare and could only be used once, he didn't use ink pearls many times.

Rong Jiu didn't expect such a thing to be hidden in the stomach of the Empress's golden parrot, but he immediately understood the reason for it.

He looked at the Empress and indeed saw her pale face. It looked as though her entire person was desolate and lost all forms of hope.

“I didn’t expect Her Majesty to have such methods. Don’t worry; I’ll definitely present the ink pearl to Father for a closer look.” Then, Rong Jiu didn’t stay any longer as he quickly left the palace.

After a long while, the Empress slowly covered her face. She had no more tears left, only the excruciating pain throughout her entire body.

After some time, a gentle voice sounded beside her ear. “Her Majesty, I’m willing to help you. If you have any requests, feel free to let me know.”

...

Prince Li Mansion.

Rong Xiu looked up at the sky and squinted his eyes. *Yue’er always comes to Prince Li Mansion around this time in the past few days, but for some reason, she didn’t appear today.*

Yu Mo—who was serving him by the side—guessed his thoughts and immediately said, “Master, Ms. Liuyue went over to Lieutenant Mu’s today. I think she must be delayed by something.”

“What can he—” Rong Xiu spoke lightly and suddenly paused. *That’s not right!*

“Is Mu Qinghe in the residence today?”

Yu Mo was dazed. “I... I don’t know either.”

Mu Qinghe wasn't an ordinary person, so it was originally very difficult to keep watch of him. Besides, he seemed to be more vigilant the past few days. Yu Mo was worried about alerting Mu Qinghe, so he took away half the people watching him secretly.

Rong Xiu's gaze darkened, and he suddenly stood up. "Quickly, go and check! Where is Mu Qinghe now?"

"Yes!" When Yu Mo heard this, he immediately reacted. *Does Master suspect that Mu Qinghe took Ms. Liuyue away?*

"Master, there are also our people at the Imperial City's gate. If anything happens, they should inform us—"

"If Mu Qinghe doesn't want to let them know, he naturally has his own ways." Rong Xiu's voice was cold, and frost filled his face.

Yu Mo's heart shuddered. "...I know my mistakes. I'll—"

Before he could finish his sentence, Rong Xiu—who took two steps—abruptly stopped in his tracks and looked up at the sky.

Yu Mo looked over curiously and saw a huge figure quickly approaching them.

This figure flew through the air, and their motion looked light and composed, but they were very fast.

In the blink of an eye, this figure had already approached the sky above Prince Li Mansion.

Yu Mo was about to go forward, but he saw Rong Xiu pressing his hands down. He then relaxed, but his eyes were glued to the incoming person.

Almost at the same time, the incoming person also stopped.

Jian Fengchi raised his brows slightly and looked below in surprise.

Originally, he thought that this Prince Li Mansion was just an ordinary residence. But after he came here, he realized that the inner and outer defenses were much stronger than he had imagined.

Ordinary people wouldn't be able to tell from the outside, but he had good eye power and detected something unusual the moment he went near.

Thus, he swiftly gave up approaching from the main entrance and chose an even more direct way of entering.

When he looked down while in mid-air, he finally confirmed his guess. Other than the tight security system in this large Prince Li Mansion, it also hid a very strong Xuan formation.

He knew very clearly that huge trouble would be waiting for him if he took another step forward.

Jian Fengchi always hated trouble, so he instinctively stopped. Anyway, he came here today to see what the rumored Rong Xiu looked like.

Hence, he stood in mid-air with his hands behind his back and said happily, "I'm Jian Fengchi, and I came here specifically to see you, Prince Li."

Yu Mo's entire body tensed up. Jian Fengchi? Isn't that the heavenly doctor Mu Qinghe invited over from the Tianling Dynasty? He cured Prince Ping Jiang's wife of her illness a while back, and the news spread all over the Imperial City. Many people tried all sorts of ways to meet him, but this Jian Fengchi was very arrogant and rejected all of them.

This is fine. After all, it's normal for a heavenly doctor with such a background to be arrogant. However, the more shocking thing is that people said they could only see his face but not his tail. Many people waited day and night, but they couldn't see his face. Why would such a character suddenly come to Prince Li Mansion today and even want to see Master?

The moment Jian Fengchi finished his sentence, his gaze focused on something.

A youngster decked in white stood in the yard. He looked to be around 17 or 18 years old, and his snow-white clothes looked even whiter than snow.

He was just standing there, but it was as if all the light in the universe had unwittingly congregated on him.

His looks were unparalleled, and his aura was outstanding.

Jian Fengchi admitted that his looks were considered top-notch, but he realized he was not good enough when he saw this pale young man's appearance.

He immediately understood what Mu Hongyu said. *Not to mention Country Yao Chen, but this young man's looks can't be compared with even in the Tianling Dynasty. Even that Jiang Yucheng loses out immediately...*

Rong Xiu cleared his throat and lightly inquired, "May I know why Young Master Jian is looking for me?"

Jian Fengchi squinted his eyes. "Prince Li, have we met each other before?"