

Protect OCL 71

Chapter 71: Old Ancestor's Injury Recovers Greatly_1

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Sixth Elder Wang Xiaohan was somewhat dubious, but ultimately respected Wang Shouzhe's decision.

He is now the clan leader, the master of a distinguished household. Naturally, if he strongly opposed selling the immature five-hundred-year-old Nine-Leaf Spirit Ginseng, no one would dare sell it.

Subsequently, Wang Shouzhe showed concern for the remaining middle-grade Spirit Fields that were still six or seven points from maturity.

Those fields were also planted with Nine-Leaf Spirit Ginsengs which ranged from low to high quality. The worst one was only ten years old, while the best had astonishingly reached seventy years.

"Nine-Leaf Spirit Ginseng is not for sale to outsiders, we use it to slowly accumulate wealth for the family." Wang Xiaohan explained, "Therefore, although these two mu of middle-grade Spirit Fields produce a lot of value, at least half of the profit is reinvested in increasing the cultivation of Nine-Leaf Spirit Ginseng."

"Correct," Wang Shouzhe nodded approvingly, "If a family wants to continue to prosper, it shouldn't rely on short-term gains but rather long-term investments and returns. This way, the family's foundation will gradually solidify. In good years, the family can take advantage of the opportunities to rise. In times of disaster or crisis, it can rely on its foundation to survive."

Theoretically, these two mu of middle-grade Spirit Fields, which are operating independently and in secret beyond the clan's property, violate the taboos of the Xuanwu family.

However, this isn't a case of an individual secretly managing private property for one's gain. Broadly speaking, it's still part of the clan's property. It contributes to accumulating the clan's wealth and occasionally infuses new blood into the family.

Operating private properties for personal gain is one of the biggest taboos in the Xuanwu family. Such behavior will lead to discord within the family, endless internal strife, and eventually, the dissolution of the family.

If a clan member truly wants to develop their own business, they can leave the family after negotiating and agreeing on the terms, and start their own family elsewhere.

This is what's called splitting the family.

At that point, it will be recorded as a branch of the Ping'an Wang family— a collateral bloodline.

For example, the Xu Clan of Jingsha is the collateral branch of the Changning Xu family. Although both are parts of the Xu family, they've been separate entities for more than a hundred years.

The Ping'an Wang family is also a collateral bloodline of the Longzuo Wang family. In the ancestral family records of the Longzuo Wang family, there will inevitably be records of the branch passed down by the old ancestor Zhou Xuan.

However, how many descendants there were, and who they were, these details wouldn't be recorded. At most, some records would note any influential individuals.

But I digress.

After visiting the family's secret wealth, Wang Shouzhe was buoyed. With these resources, he had much more confidence.

Wang Xiaohan then led Wang Shouzhe on a tour around Prosperous Farm. Their in-depth exploration significantly enhanced his understanding of the farm.

Having accomplished his goal, Wang Shouzhe dined and then set off back to his home with Seventh Elder Wang Shouye.

On the way, within the canopy boat,

Wang Shouzhe would pull out pen and paper from time to time, sometimes lost in thought, and sometimes jotting things down. Wang Shouye, on the other hand, was curious, "Fourth Brother, what are you writing?"

"System panel."

"Oh." Wang Shouye didn't understand what a system panel was, but he admired his Fourth Brother even more, his respect and admiration for him growing even deeper.

Indeed, Wang Shouzhe would never give up on gradually establishing and updating his system panel.

The canopy boat sailed all the way back to their residence.

Wang Shouzhe gave Wang Shouye a few encouraging words, then let the little servant Wang Gui take him back. Only then did he himself head towards Long Yan Habitat with a bag of fresh melons.

When he arrived outside Long Yan Habitat, Wang Shouzhe found his niece Wang Licui peeking around. He immediately put on a stern face, "Missy, what are you doing sneaking around?"

"Ah? Fourth Uncle..."

Wang Licui was so scared she could barely stand and confessed honestly, "I, I am looking for Old Ancestor."

"Nonsense." Wang Shouzhe frowned and scolded, "Long Yan Habitat is a forbidden place. Without the Old Ancestor's summons, how dare you randomly disturb Her meditation."

"I, I..." Wang Licui was so scared she turned pale, her eyes watering, "Fourth, Fourth Uncle. I just wanted, wanted to ask the Old Ancestor for guidance, guidance on movement technique and fighting skills."

"Movement technique and fighting skills?" Wang Shouzhe looked at her suspiciously, "Are you sure you're not here to beg for food from the Old Ancestor?"

"Fourth, Fourth Uncle. How, how could you say such a thing about me." Wang Licui was so offended her face was full of grievance. She weakly retorted, "You, you're allowed to have ambitions? I, I also want to get stronger."

Upon hearing this,

Wang Shouzhe softened his stern look somewhat, apologizing as he ruffled her hair, "So, my Lici does have ambitions. I misunderstood, sorry."

Humph, I'm angry, I'm not talking to you.

Wang Licui turned her head away, pouting her lips, her eyes welling up with tears. She looked so pitiful, it goes without saying.

"By the way, I just made a trip to Prosperous Farm." Wang Shouzhe said with a smile, "Here are some freshly picked sweet melons. The weather has been good this year, and the melons are crisp and sweet. Do you want one?"

As he said this, he pulled out a bright green melon from the bag.

"Yes, yes, yes." Wang Licui's eyes lit up at once. She took the melon, wiped it, and started eating it with big bites. She was so satisfied that her eyes narrowed into slits, and she sang praises as she ate, "This melon is so sweet and delicious, thank you, Fourth Uncle."

"Lici, it's a good thing to be ambitious. However, the Old Ancestor isn't in good health, so we should avoid bothering her as much as possible." Wang Shouzhe said gratifyingly, "At your current level, my guidance is already enough. From tomorrow onwards, wait for me at my training ground at dawn. I will train with you. Eat it slowly, here, have another melon."

Wang Licui found the first half of his speech acceptable, but the second half made her shudder. She was so frightened that she couldn't eat her melon. While she instinctively took the next one, she said weakly: "Fourth, Fourth Uncle. Isn't, isn't dawn a little early?"

"It's not early. Now that it's summer, dawn breaks early." Wang Shouzhe said, slightly frowning, "It's the perfect time to practice fighting techniques and movement techniques. Are you finding it difficult?"

"I, I mean, is there a Profound Martial technique that does not require practice, one that allows me to become very powerful by just eating and drinking every day?" Wang Licui blinked curiously and asked, "Or, could Fourth Uncle ask Old Ancestor for me?"

Hehe!

Wang Shouzhe's face began to twitch uncontrollably. So this was her ambition all along! He had been fooled!

Wang Shouzhe, Wang Shouzhe, you were too naïve in the end.

Immediately, he silently snatched her melon and stuffed it back into the bag, then made his way toward Long Yan Habitat without looking back.

"Hey, Fourth Uncle, that's my melon. How can you just steal it?" Wang Licui chased after him, "Fourth Uncle, Fourth Uncle, the world is vast and everything's possible, maybe the Profound Martial fighting technique does exist?"

Wang Shouzhe snorted coldly. Was she insinuating that he was narrow-minded?

"Everyone come inside, stop making a ruckus outside."

Just then, from within the Long Yan Habitat echoed a voice of the Old Ancestor.

Wang Shouzhe responded to the call and walked through the entrance. Wang Licui followed behind joyfully. Upon seeing the sour look on her Fourth Uncle's face, she contracted slightly and said, "The Old Ancestor asked everyone to come inside." She emphasized the word 'everyone' heavily.

"Hehe~" Wang Shouzhe gave her a stern look and walked in to pay his respects to the Old Ancestor.

At this time, the Old Ancestor had already moved to the pavilion, waiting for them.

"Shouzhe pays his respects to the Old Ancestor." As Wang Shouzhe made his salutations, he noticed that the Old Ancestor's vitality seemed exceptionally strong. Even the specks of white in her hair

were shining, hinting at some invisible luster. Elated, he immediately said, "Congratulations on your excellent health, Old Ancestor."

A sense of excitement filled his heart. The healthier the Old Ancestor was, the safer the Wang family would be, which meant that some of his worries could be put to rest.

"Licui pays her respects to the Old Ancestor, congratulations on your superb well-being." Wang Licui also rushed up to pay her respects, repeating Wang Shouzhe's congratulatory words verbatim. This caused Wang Shouzhe's expressions to twitch uncontrollably.

However, the Old Ancestor seemed to enjoy her company. Being in good physical health must have put her in a fantastic mood as she gestured for Wang Licui to come closer, "You child, how come you haven't come to see the Old Ancestor for some time?"

This scene startled Wang Shouzhe slightly. What spell did this girl cast on the Old Ancestor during the visit from the Hundred Islands Guard? It seemed as if the Old Ancestor was quite fond of her.

Then, Wang Licui began to hover around the Old Ancestor attentively, giving her neck and arm massages as she chatted, "Fourth Uncle said that Long Yan Habitat is a family forbidden zone and told Licui not to disturb the Old Ancestor's cultivation without reason. Wu~ Old Ancestor, Licui really missed you and couldn't even eat properly. Look, I've even become thinner."

Hehe.

Wang Shouzhe glared at her, this unruly girl, was she actually trying to drive a wedge between him and the Old Ancestor right in front of his eyes?

"It seems like you've indeed grown thinner." The Old Ancestor glanced at her and spoke to Wang Shouzhe, "Shouzhe, if she wants to visit in the future, just let her come."

Upon hearing these words, Wang Licui, hiding behind the Old Ancestor, revealed a smug expression towards Wang Shouzhe.

"Old Ancestor", Wang Shouzhe said, "I was afraid she would be too noisy and disrupt your cultivation."

"It doesn't matter." The Old Ancestor seemed to be in an expansive mood due to her improved health, "Licui is gentle and thoughtful. Her company might even contribute to my speedy recovery."

Alright then.

Wang Shouzhe admitted that Wang Licui was pretty good at currying favor. He then said, "As long as the Old Ancestor approves. These fruits have been freshly picked from the farm, please give them a try."

"You've worked hard, Fourth Uncle, but I can handle this." Wang Licui rushed forward and took over the bag. After fervently washing two melons, she naturally took one for herself and offered the other to the Old Ancestor, "Dear Old Ancestor, please enjoy this melon. I've tasted it, and it's incredibly crispy and sweet."

Then she proceeded to munch on her melon happily.

Wang Shouzhe was truly impressed by his great-niece's bare-faced audacity.

Seeing her enjoy the melon so much, the Old Ancestor turned slightly and took a few bites of her own, commenting, "This summer has seen less rainfall, so the melons are sweeter this year than in the past."

Seeing the Old Ancestor in such high spirits, Wang Shouzhe felt reassured. The Old Ancestor, who had lately been healing herself, had been nourished well with Spirit Food, which had even caused her gaunt frame to fill out, and her vitality seemed to have finally returned, driving away her usual cold air.

Obviously, as her condition improved, she had started to feel hopeful about her own and the family's future.

In essence, this symbolized the end of the Wang family's fifty-year stint of bad luck. Now, it was time for some much-needed rise to power.

Wang Shouzhe instantly felt elated.

However, before moving forward, he had to take care of his great-niece Wang Licui's future.

This child was ambitious, loved food, was full of enthusiasm and had a vivid imagination about life. Moreover, she knew how to win over elders' hearts.

Such an excellent child.

It could not be more appropriate to assign her the task of accompanying the sixth elder to plant the Spirit Field.

Also, this child was fond of reading and was clever; they must not deny her new texts and classics just because of family's poverty. Even though the Wang family was poor, they could not let their children's education suffer.

Thinking about Wang Licui laboriously working in the fields during the day and studying diligently at night under lantern light, Wang Shouzhe couldn't help but wear a satisfied smile.

In the end, the hope of the family's uprising rested on these excelling younger generations.

As elders, they must guide and foster these youngsters at this crucial point of their growth.

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Halfway through her third melon slice, Wang Licui felt something was not quite right, a chill running down her spine.

Chapter 72 Brother-in-law and Younger Uncle_1

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Afterward.

He made an excuse to send Wang Licui away for a while, pointing out the recent plans that needed to be implemented and the parts that required the old ancestor's cooperation one by one.

Inside the pavilion.

Longyan's ancestral hair lightly danced in the wind as her eyes sparkled like stars, radiating a captivating brilliance. She spoke calmly, but her words were filled with fierceness: "Shouzhe's plan is excellent, but why am I only arranged to be the backhand? I've already digested most of the Yin Sha poison in my body. There's no need to worry about backlash when I take action."

"Even if this scheme attracts an old ghost, I, Wang Longyan, am willing to pay the price to eliminate them. Even if two ghosts come, I'm not afraid."

Wang Shouzhe massaged his forehead. The ancestor Longyan was excellent in all aspects, except for her impetuous temperament.

Fighting in a war was like playing a game of cards,—who would throw their trump card right at the beginning?

He set up Longyan's ancestor in the plan as a just-in-case measure. Since her injuries were healing rapidly, how could he allow her to pay unnecessary prices flippantly?

Such a mindset was unacceptable.

Immediately, Wang Shouzhe sternly bowed his hand and said: "Ancestor, the confrontation between the Profound Martial prominent families is unlike personal bravado or warfare. All involved are our kin, members of the household, or close friends. Any mistake could result in irreversible losses."

Longyan's ancestor's body shook slightly, and she calmed down, apologized, saying, "Shouzhe, you're right, I've been spoilt and willful for half of my life, I've made many mistakes, many of which caused irreparable past. It is necessary to calm down and think about my shortcomings."

"Ancestor," Wang Shouzhe hurriedly said, "the immense contributions and sacrifices you have made for the family are beyond question; we younger generations remember it. But times have changed. The Wang clan is hidden while the Liu and Zhao clans are out in the open. What we need to do is protect ourselves, while taking a large bite out of our opponents."

Consider it as gaining some interest before collecting the debt."

"In terms of strategy, I'm inferior to you, Shouzhe," Longyan's ancestor's eyes flickered, "I'll follow your arrangement."

Having obtained Longyan's ancestral approval, Wang Shouzhe also felt a burden lifted from his heart. This plan didn't actually need her to get involved. As mentioned earlier, the most alarming possibility was facing unexpected circumstances.

Ancestor Longyan was his last resort,—a last resort not to be used unless necessary, as her health was just beginning to improve.

"If this is the case," Wang Shouzhe bowed and excused himself, "we beseech our ancestor to take care of her health, I will notify you when it's time to act."

After saying farewell, Wang Shouzhe left.

Before leaving, he also took Wang Licui, who had been eating on the side, to avoid disturbing the ancestor's rest.

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Over an hour later.

On the back dock, a dark boat slowly sailed out. Wang Licui was holding a bundle that fluttered in the wind. Besides her change of clothes, the package also contained a stack of selected ancient books chosen meticulously by Fourth Uncle.

She's been assigned this task?

"My dear," Wang Shouzhe bid her a tearful farewell from the shore, "while making contributions to the family on Prosperous Farm, you have to listen to Sixth Grand Elder. All your brothers, sisters, and younger generation at home, Fourth Uncle loves and respects you the most. Even your brother Wang Zongwei won't get this kind of good job in his next life."

"Th-thank you so much for your consideration, Fourth Uncle," Wang Licui's tears were flowing like a spring, "I'm really grateful to you."

"No need for thanks, it's all in the details," Wang Shouzhe was also full of emotions, as if he was bidding his daughter farewell. He was on the verge of tears. "Ju and Zhu, you two must take good care of Miss Lici along the way, there must not be any negligence."

"Yes, Family Head."

The two female heads of the household responded solemnly in unison. Then, they both fixed their gaze on Wang Licui. Clearly, their real task wasn't to take care of Licui, but to "escort" her.

The boat slowly receded into the distance.

Only then did Wang Shouzhe cease his farewell wave, returning home with joyous strides.

However, despite delegating this task, Wang Shouzhe only aimed to mold her temperament. To make sure this lazy girl stopped dreaming about some Profound Martial battle technique that doesn't require practice but allows for indulgence in food and drink, and could make one significantly stronger?

Was there such a Profound Martial technique or cultivation method? If there was, he, Wang Shouzhe, would take a dozen of them!

Your imagination is bigger than mine as a transmigrator.

It's not practical!

How long does he have to mold her? Three months is too long, half a month too short. Then let it be one month. That should be enough time to shape her up before taking her back by his side for strict guidance.

Lici, Lici, don't blame your Fourth Uncle for being ruthless.

As the saying goes, 'the blade achieves its sharpness from the grindstone, beauty comes from weathering the frost.' How can there be gains without effort?

Wang Gui, who was following them, was even more cautious. He was genuinely afraid of accidentally upsetting the Family Head and being assigned to mine.

Originally, Wang Shouzhe wanted to bring Wang Licui to Guard City for a stroll and pick up some spirit stones for use. But now, Guard City was too chaotic, so he would rather not take the risk for now.

Wang Shouzhe had just gotten back to his yard.

He had just heard that the doorman ran over to report that Gongsun Zhong of the Gongsun clan and Wang Liuyu of the Liu generation had returned home for a visit. They had come over after receiving a letter from the Family Head.

When he heard they had come.

Wang Shouzhe's mood lifted. This meant that the matter he had asked Gongsun Zhong to investigate was settled. He immediately asked the doorman to lead the way to the guest quarters.

It was now dusk, and many were enjoying the cool evening.

"Third Aunt, Third Uncle." Wang Shouzhe greeted as soon as he entered.

Gongsun Zhong and Wang Liuyu also hurriedly returned the greeting. Although they were more senior in terms of generation, Wang Shouzhe was the leader of the Wang family.

"Luotong and Luo Jing are also here." Wang Shouzhe smiled and greeted his two younger sisters, then turned to his fourth aunt, Xu Zhirou, and performed a formal salute, "Shouzhe pays his respects to Fourth Aunt."

Fourth Aunt Xu Zhirou had cared for him and Wang Luoyi for some time, a kindness he would always remember.

"Shouzhe, you are too polite." Xu Zhirou also hastily returned the formal salute.

Their appearance here was completely normal. Wang Liuyu and Luo Jing's deceased father, Wang Dingbang, were direct siblings, so the relationship between the two sides was naturally extraordinary.

Next came hospitality and dinner.

Later in the evening.

Wang Shouzhe had a private meeting with Gongsun Zhong, who sent a house servant to deliver some items to his courtyard.

Baskets of stones, some iron ore powder, several white gypsum, and a miscellany of other things.

"Shouzhe, when you wrote to me, I brought all the things you described. I brought a lot of different things because I wasn't sure if they were right." The dark-skinned Gongsun Zhong was a very honest fellow.

Since the age of eighteen, he had worked in the Gongsun Clan's mines and was very familiar with various ores and stones. If Wang Shouzhe was going to work on cement, he indeed could not bypass the Gongsun Clan.

Honestly speaking, there was no need to bypass them. The Ping'an Wang Family's strength was too risky to monopolize the benefits of cement. In his plan, if they were to successfully develop the cement industry, they would at least need to bring in the Gongsun Clan and the Chen Clan of Donggang.

Naturally, the premise was successful research and development.

"Thank you, Third Uncle. How much did it all cost?" Wang Shouzhe gratefully asked, "So that I can settle the account with you."

"It's all worthless scrap. It's not more than ten carriage loads of stuff," Gongsun Zhong hurriedly waved his hand and said, "My second uncle also instructed not to accept any money."

"Then thank you, Third Uncle. Thank you, maternal grandfather." Wang Shouzhe thanked them, not making a fuss about it.

After a short conversation, the taciturn Gongsun Zhong took his leave.

For the development of cement, Wang Shouzhe had basically formed a thought process. Recently, he had tried to remember and roughly determined some directions. This substance was not much different from oyster cement. It was produced by calcining limestone with various other things, then mixed with gypsum and ground into powder.

Most of the raw materials for this are very cheap, with the only slightly valuable item being iron powder, but its content should be very low.

Wang Shouzhe would naturally not develop cement himself. He had previously picked out a family who were brick kiln workers from a subsidiary line of the Wang family, who had been making bricks for generations.

It was said that their old ancestors were also brick kiln workers, and because of this skill, they followed Old Ancestor Zhou Xuan to the south. The bricks used for their own main residence were made by that family.

"Wang Gui." Wang Shouzhe handed the written "Cement Development Guide" to Wang Gui for handling, "These were all collated from ancient books. They provide clues about 'iron mud', which has similar properties to oyster cement. I don't understand the extra details. Tomorrow morning, give this information, along with the ten cartloads of research materials, to Wang...yes, Wang Jingyuan."

"Yes, Family Head." Wang Gui complied and collected the materials.

Wang Shouzhe naturally attached great importance to the development of cement and hoped for its success, but he was after all a layman in this field. It was better to provide the professionals with a thought process. The kiln workers, having dealt with bricks and tiles all their lives, were familiar with oyster cement, and even some homemade adhesives.

These professionals had extensive experience and plenty of clever individuals. Often, all they lacked was a flash of inspiration to point the way.

If the research did not bear fruit in the short term, that was also fine. There was no rush. One day, it would be figured out.

Similarly, for paper making, Wang Shouzhe simply wrote up a "Paper Development Guide" and picked out some intelligent, reliable side-line family members with broad thought processes from the woodworkers. After giving them research funds, he let them handle things on their own.

One benefit of having a large group of side-line family members is that you can always find talents from various professions.

At present, Wang Shouzhe needed to focus more energy on the grand plan of attacking the Liu and Zhao clans.

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Night.

It was late.

Outside the Dingpu Ferry at Peace River, a grand and luxurious medium-sized building ship was bobbing on the roaring river. This ship was clearly not a transport ship, but one used for the travels of someone of high status.

The ship's tower was delicately crafted, made entirely from expensive wood and painted with vibrant colors, emitting an air of grandeur and luxury.

The decor inside the main hall of the tower was even more extravagant, as if a son from a prominent clan had moved his expensive living room and bedroom onto the ship. The exquisite and expensive antique vases didn't seem to fear being shattered by a sudden wave, which said a lot about the extent of the luxury.

However, at this time, two young, heroic-looking men were facing each other in the hall. A beautiful woman, who appeared otherworldly and as pure as a fair maiden, was standing nervously nearby.

Her enchanting eyes stole glances at one, then peeked at the other.

The family head appeared more handsome. She silently came to this pleasing conclusion in her heart.

Chapter 73 Shou Zhe! Don't Mess Around_1

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Two handsome young men, both bearing the demeanor of aristocrats, were staring at each other in disbelief, neither had expected to encounter the other here.

"Shouzhe, didn't you say you wouldn't be involved in the planning stage of this mission?" Asked the slightly older handsome man, none other than the Young Clan Leader of the Chen Clan, Chen Fangjie, with a touch of embarrassment.

"I couldn't set my worries aside, so I came to see for myself. What about you, Brother Chen?" Wang Shouzhe touched his nose, restraining his impulse to punch him, "Why are you here? Could it be..."

"It's a misunderstanding, a real misunderstanding." Chen Fangjie, breaking out in a cold sweat, hurriedly explained, "Firstly, in your plan, we needed someone who could impersonate the heir of a strong prominent family, I had a difficult time finding the right person, I found the task challenging, so I took it on personally.

Secondly, to be honest, Brother Fanghua told me that Ms Luoxian was as beautiful as a celestial being, almost as if an exiled immortal had descended from heaven. Out of curiosity, I decided to participate personally in the mission to see for myself."

"Hmm~ after I ask around, I will then decide if you are telling the truth or not." Wang Shouzhe looked at him and mostly believed what he heard, then turned to Wang Mei, "Wang Mei, be honest, did this young master act disrespectfully towards you?"

"To the Family Head," Wang Mei quickly responded earnestly, "When this young master first met me, he was surprised for about three breaths, and afterwards, he turned his head away and dared not look at me anymore. Apart from that, there was no offensive behavior."

Upon hearing this, Chen Fangjie finally breathed a sigh of relief, proving his innocence. Otherwise, he really did not know what his future brother-in-law, Wang Shouzhe, would do.

Soon after, he was surprised and asked, "Wang Mei? Could this be the real name of Lady Luoxian? She is actually Shouzhe's subordinate, part of the Wang family soldiers?"

"What's the matter? Is it because my family's soldiers are not good enough?" Wang Shouzhe was seemingly half joking, "What about it? Do you, the 'brother-in-law', want my Wang family to offer a head of household in a dowry?"

"Absolutely not, absolutely not." Chen Fangjie, scared into a cold sweat, hurriedly continuously said, "Shouzhe, do not misunderstand, I, Chen Fangjie can swear to heaven that my heart belongs only to Luoyi. I would never be fickle and heaven can bear witness to it."

A Young Clan Leader swearing an oath is not a trivial thing; from this, one could see how anxious he was.

Wang Shouzhe felt that he had harassed Chen Fangjie enough so he stopped and with a smile, folded his hands and said: "I naturally trust Brother Chen's character. Please sit, Brother Chen. Wang Mei, serve the tea."

Wang Shouzhe took his seat first, fully embodying the demeanor of a host.

Chen Fangjie wiped off the cold sweat from his forehead, thanked Shouzhe and then took his seat across him. It was then that something felt off, as if he was actually the owner of the boat. Suddenly, the roles seem to have reversed.

Wang Mei, who was pretending to be as refined as a woman of noble birth, was obediently brewing tea at the side. Her movements were elegant and her demeanor, calm. She indeed had a unique charm.

"Family Head, please have tea." "Young Master Chen, please have tea."

The conversation between the two men had made it clear to her that this slightly older man was the Young Clan Leader of the Chen Clan, and he was the future husband of Miss Luoyi.

Granted, he was quite handsome and held an impressive demeanor, but he was not as exceptional as the Family Head. As she poured her tea, she came to this conclusion.

"Shouzhe, when did you get such a household member?" After Chen Fangjie took a sip of tea and managed to calm himself down, he was still unable to suppress his curiosity, "Not only does she

look breathtakingly beautiful and carry herself in an extraordinary manner, I can't even see through her cultivation base. I don't mean to imply anything, it's just that I find it unbelievable."

His inability to see through her cultivation base was correct, otherwise, wouldn't the jade pendant— Restrain Breath Jade— that Wang Shouzhe had purchased for a thousand Qian gold, be a waste?

This little spiritual treasure was initially intended for Wang Shouzhe to hide his own cultivation base. But now, giving it to Wang Mei would maximize its use. Everything can be impersonated but the cultivation base was definitely not something that can be faked easily.

Just imagine, how could a girl from a noble family have a merely Level Three Vital Energy Refining Realm?

"Brother Chen," Wang Shouzhe said with a smile, "Have you ever heard of the saying 'curiosity killed the cat'?"

"Don't dare to, absolutely do not dare." At this point, even though Chen Fangjie was curious, he had to suppress his doubts. Even if he had the guts of a thousand, he would not have the audacity to ask Wang Luoyi.

"On the contrary, this ship of yours isn't too shabby." Wang Shouzhe looked around and said with a smile, "This ship is luxurious, huh, there's even a bedroom over there. Tsk, tsk. Brother Chen, you're living a good life."

"Shouzhe, please stop joking. If I dared to build such a luxurious ship for my own enjoyment, my father would have broken my legs long ago." Chen Fangjie, for the first time, felt the sharp tongue of his future brother-in-law, whose words were full of hidden threats, and could not help but smile bitterly. "This ship was borrowed from the young master of the Dantai Family of the East Sea King."

"The Dantai family, the one that is hailed as the Eastern Sea King?" Wang Shouzhe was somewhat intrigued, "Brother Chen, you have a wide range of friends, you even managed to befriend the young master of the Dantai family."

Compared to the remote Hundred Islands Guard, the Eastern Sea Guard, the close neighbor of Changning Guard, had more interactions. The most famous among the prominent families of the Eastern Sea Guard was the Dantai Family of the Eastern Sea King. They were said to possess an unrivaled fleet that ruled the Eastern Sea.

Although the Chen Clan of Donggang was growing rapidly, when it comes to size and strength, it was far from comparable to the Eastern Sea King.

Chen Fangjie, sitting upright, carefully thought for a moment before saying, "I met the young master during a joint operation to eliminate a group of sea bandits."

"The young master of the Dantai family is extraordinarily talented and is very much loved by the old ancestors of the Dantai family. However, he's the second son of the direct line of the family. Shouzhe, you know that according to the traditions of large families with Profound Martial arts like the Dantai Family, they always favor the eldest son over the youngest."

"But the young master is full of spirit and does not want to live his life looking after certain clan properties just because he was born later than his siblings. Therefore, he is generous to people and has many close relationships. He is most likely to break away from the family in the future."

This ship is just one of his personal vessels for inland waterways, which he lent to me since he didn't use it often."

As Chen Fangjie explained, the ins and outs became clearer.

The Chen Clan of Donggang, in terms of overall scale, was far behind the Dantai Family of the Eastern Sea. However, the future structure of having three spiritual platforms was already on the horizon. As the young clan leader of the Chen Clan, Chen Fangjie's character, aptitude, and abilities were all first-rate, and his future prospects were limitless.

With a shared experience of fighting together, in addition to mutual needs. It was natural for a collusion - no, interaction - no, it could be considered a close relationship to form.

"So Brother Chen, your plan this time is to impersonate the young master Dantai?" Wang Shouzhe raised an eyebrow and laughed, "Is it necessary to play such a big game? I merely sent a letter to Brother Chen earlier, seeking a clansman to pretend to be a seller from a power in the Eastern Sea. It's only about selling a wave of grain, why such fanfare?"

"Shouzhe, when you entrust such an important task to me, how could I dare to slack off?" Chen Fangjie smiled, "Since you've entrusted this stage of the plan to me, how to make it work better is

my own concern. You don't have to thank me too much, just speak highly of me in front of Luoyi after the task is completed. Also, show a little extra kindness when pouring drinks at my wedding.

Furthermore, the role Luoxian is playing is Miss Zhong of the Bai Dao Guard, isn't it? Those who have the right to conduct large-scale trade with the Zhong Family are likely powerful prominent families. Also, posing as the Eastern Sea King will make the plan more smooth."

Wang Shouzhe stroked his chin, pondering for a moment, "Isn't there any risk in your impersonating a prince of the Eastern Sea?"

"I am merely conducting a trade that complies with Daqian Law with two nouveau riche bottom-feeder families, how could there be any risk?" Chen Fangjie said confidently, "Even if Dantai and jade become aware of it, they will just laugh it off. Would the Liu Clan and Zhao Clan really dare to verify it with the celestial families?"

What's more impressive is how you, Shouzhe, could take advantage of the situation, elaborately setting up such a trap to bury both the Zhao and Liu Clans, I deeply admire your ingenuity."

This was also one of the reasons why Chen Fangjie took Wang Shouzhe's letter so seriously and put in such great efforts. Moreover, he was puzzled as to where Wang Shouzhe managed to get so much grain?

All signs indicated that this future brother-in-law was not a common lot, and the Ping'an Wang Family would likely flourish under his leadership.

As for the flourishing of the Wang Family, Chen Fangjie was naturally pleased to see it. Given the depth of the marital ties between them, they were naturally allies.

"That was only because the Liu Clan and the Zhao Clan were not upright, giving me the opportunity. In this regard, I must thank Brother Chen for his personal support," Wang Shouzhe raised his tea as though it were wine in tribute.

"Mutual support, mutual support," Fang Jie returned the gesture, laughing, "By this time next year, you'll have to address me differently. We're all one family, no need to be so formal, Shouzhe."

"I will accept your generosity then. Brother Chen, could you excuse us for a while? The head of my household, Wang Mei, and I have some secrets to discuss," Wang Shouzhe raised his tea, indicating he would like to dismiss his guest.

What?

So unkind of him, this is the ship I borrowed.

Still, as the young clan leader carefully cultivated by the Chen Clan, he was ultimately a patient and composed man. Helplessly, he bowed, "I was feeling a bit stifled anyway, I'll go enjoy some fresh air. Please, take your time, Shouzhe."

With that, Chen Fangjie left the loft and went to the bow of the ship.

Even in the summer, the night breeze in Peace River was somewhat cold.

From time to time, Chen Fangjie would glance at the loft, and couldn't help but wonder what Shouzhe was discussing with Wang Mei in the middle of the night, even going so far as to send him away.

Could it be?

Chen Fangjie's heart jumped, could it be possible?

A little voice in his head said, why not? That Wang Mei, with her extraordinary temperament, seemed like an exiled immortal. The peculiarity of her origins was inadvertently given away by her every word and frown.

Such a splendid and unparalleled woman, who kept her deep talents hidden, could not possibly be from an ordinary household, let alone a soldier from the Wang Family?

And that Wang Shouzhe,

Had deliberately fabricated an ordinary soldier's name—Wang Mei! Wasn't that an obvious attempt to conceal?

Then their private meeting in the middle of the night?

Alright then.

I understand now.

The night wind mussed up Chen Fangjie's hair.

Oh, Shouzhe, don't mess around.

If Miss Liu finds out, it would be a huge problem indeed.

Chapter 74: Eastern Sea King Dantai Family_1

...

Every descendant of an ancient Profound Martial family must know the importance of discretion in their actions.

Especially before marriage, it is crucial to maintain a good reputation and decorum. Otherwise, it could significantly tarnish their marriage prospects—in the worst cases, the betrothal can be downgraded.

No Profound Martial family would betroth their daughter to a notorious scion. Especially for legitimate sons and daughters, attention to these details is paramount as it deals with the honor and reputation of two noble families.

Therefore, from childhood onwards, legitimate sons are tended to by servants rather than a coterie of maidservants.

An incident like taking a concubine before marriage is almost impossible. Every noble family has its pride, how can they allow their legitimate daughter to marry a man who already has a concubine?

Moreover, a family like the Spiritual Platform Clan, often limited by resources, is always aspiring to elevate the family to the next level.

It's rare for the Clan Leader to take a concubine. A distinguished, high-bloodline woman would not become a concubine. Having a child with a low-bloodline concubine would be a disgrace to future generations, wouldn't it?

Also, a child born to a concubine is a child of secondary status, putting them in an awkward position. How could a noble house such as the Spiritual Platform Clan, with abundant resources, waste efforts on the upbringing of such a child?

However, in the Tianren Family, owing to an abundance of resources and substantial clan assets that require a large number of talents, the practice of taking multiple wives has gradually become acceptable.

Chen Fangjie, standing at the prow of the ship, his hair disarray from the cold wind.

He feels a mixed admiration and worry for Wang Shouzhe's good fortune. Could this Zhong Luoxian be the real legitimate daughter of the Zhong Family?

Indeed, this is not entirely impossible.

Some time ago, Shouzhe secretly visited the Hundred Islands Guard. To his surprise, someone from the Zhong Family came to deliver gifts, and he even invited the Zhong Family to the Spiritual Platform Realm for dinner.

Could it be, does Shouzhe have some intricate connection with the Tianren Family—the Zhong Family?

Considering Shouzhe's status, it seems difficult for him to marry into the elite Zhong Family. Could it be that he's aiming to...win her over by fait accompli?

What about Miss Liu?

Such an insult to the Liu Family's honor can never be tolerated.

Could it be that, with Shouzhe's wit, he has secretly won Miss Liu's favor?

Oh, Shouzhe, you're biting off more than you can chew with this move.

I'm a weakling and the Chen Family has little influence. I won't be able to help you this time. Godspeed.

With Chen Fangjie standing at the prow, contemplating the secret rendezvous between Miss Zhong and Wang Shouzhe as he endures the cold wind, he can't help but feel miserable.

Sigh!

This future brother-in-law of mine seems to be quite a handful.

Fortunately, Wang Shouzhe doesn't know that his future brother-in-law, now weathering the cold wind, has envisioned an entirely imaginary love triangle drama for him. Otherwise, he would most likely have thrown this unsuspecting future brother-in-law into the river to cool his mind.

...

"Wang Mei, do you understand the plans for the upcoming operation?" Wang Shouzhe, sipping hot tea, calmly asked, "If anything is unclear, ask. However, this time, you'll need to take some risks."

Whether to take risks depends on the potential gains. Considering the huge benefits and the opportunity to strike at the enemy, risk-taking is inevitable.

"Master,"

Wang Mei looked up, her starry eyes sparkling in anticipation as she softly said, "For you, Master, I would even risk my life."

Her melodic and ethereal voice was incredibly mesmerizing, making one's heart melt.

"Pfft!"

Wang Shouzhe almost spit out his tea, glaring at her, "Speak properly."

"Oh... forgive me, Master. I've gotten used to this tone recently. What I mean is, I am ready to sacrifice my life to fight the Liu and Zhao clans." Wang Mei awkwardly smiled, quickly reverting to her usual rather mediocre tone, emitting a hint of vengefulness.

She comes from a lineage of family guards. Her grandfather died brutally in the earlier battles. How could she not hold a grudge?

When he heard her real voice, Wang Shouzhe found it disappointingly bland. He frowned and said, "Use the other tone."

"Yes, Master. I will do as you say." Wang Mei obediently switched back to a coquettishly sweet voice that stirred one's heart and gave a coy glance.

"Hiss!"

Wang Shouzhe clutched his forehead. He couldn't stand this flirtatious voice of hers. He waved away helplessly, "Nevermind, just use your normal voice."

"...." Wang Mei blinked her innocent eyes, a little confused by the master's changing wishes.

His preferences were indeed hard to read.

...

Early morning.

The sky was still dark.

A ship sailed from Dingpu Ferry. Onboard were the Liu Clan head Liu Shengye, the up-and-coming young pillar of the clan, Liu Yongzhou, along with several core clan members.

"Family Head." A middle-aged clan member exclaimed excitedly, "It's amazing, we would never have known without investigating. The many Guard Cities surrounding us, there are three households surnamed Zhong, of these, the one that most aligns with Miss Zhong Luoxian's identity is probably of the Distinct Family Zhong Clan in the Hundred Islands Guard City."

Liu Shengye's expression was also extremely serious, yet with a faint sense of irrepressible delight, "Miss Zhong's identity is very noble. It's understandable that she wouldn't want to reveal her identity when in distress. I ask everyone to remain calm and composed, so as not to lose face for the Liu Clan."

"Yes, Family Head." The crowd responded one after another.

Only Liu Yongzhou stood straight like a javelin at the bow, with a hint of zeal in his eyes from time to time.

He was a descendant of a Tianren family.

Luoxian was, no, she was indeed the descendant of a Tianren family.

No wonder she often avoided questions about her family background. Indeed, only a Tianren Family could cultivate such a distinguished young fairy lady whose every word and expression revealed an unapproachable aura.

The most exciting part for him was that Luoxian seemed to have a somewhat different attitude towards him, as if wanting to get closer, but also seeming to have deep-seated reservations.

Every time he saw her furrowed brows, as if in distress, Liu Yongzhou's heart shattered.

Indeed, the great disparity between their two families was a formidable obstacle.

With this thought, Liu Yongzhou's fiery heart cooled a bit.

However, he had another thought. His eldest uncle, Liu Shenghao, was about to ascend to the status of the Old Ancestor in the Spiritual Platform Realm, and their family was bound to enter a period of expansion with a significant increase in resources and income. And Liu Yongzhou himself was the designated next successor to the Spiritual Platform Realm.

Even with this status, though there was still a significant gap between himself and Luoxian, it wasn't impossible to bridge. If the entire clan could support him in his pursuit of the Spiritual Platform Realm, and if Luoxian had feelings for him, they might succeed.

His heart was burning again, filled with hope for the future.

Not long after, their boat was on its way again.

The Liu Family saw a lavish medium-sized ship coming into view.

"That is..." Everyone in the Liu Clan was surprised. Today's meeting with the grain seller was arranged by Miss Zhong and they didn't expect it to be on such a luxurious ship.

"Huh?" Liu Shengye had good eyesight and squinted, "Although this ship doesn't have a family flag, from the emblem on the bow, it should be a ship from the Dantai family of the Eastern Sea King."

The Dantai family?

Unlike the remote Hundred Islands Guard City, the Eastern Sea was adjacent to Changning Guard City. And the Eastern Sea King was a renowned Tianren Family, well-known to all surrounding Guard Cities.

"The ship is extraordinarily luxurious, its owner must be an important figure from the Dantai family." Liu Shengye's tone was serious and wary, "Let's steer clear of it, so as not to inadvertently invite disaster."

However, Liu Yongzhou had an idea. Could it be that...

Sure enough, a graceful figure in a fairy dress floated out from the ship.

"It's Miss Zhong Luoxian." Liu Yongzhou was exhilarated, "So the seller she sought out was from the Dantai family of the Eastern Sea King. Truly worthy of being the direct descendant of the Zhong Family."

Everyone from the Liu Clan was reported. To have the opportunity to connect with the family of the Eastern Sea King was beyond their wildest dreams.

The ships drew near each other.

The members of the Liu Clan, under the guidance of the other ship's crew, boarded the ship one by one. The opulence they encountered made them tread very carefully. The cost of this ship was probably not less than three to four thousand Qian Gold.

The income of the vast Liu Clan could reach this figure. However, with their family size and businesses, their expenses were substantial. They could only accumulate five to six hundred Qian Gold at the end of the year.

"Young Master Liu." Zhong Luoxian's gaze first fell on Liu Yongzhou. Seeing him, her face lit up with joy, but she immediately restrained herself. She bowed slightly to the members of the Liu Clan and said in a soft voice, "Luoxian pays her respects to the elders of the Liu Clan."

The Head of the Household, Liu Shengye, hastily reciprocated their salutations. Even though Miss Zhong was paying her respects as a junior, they could not afford to be complacent. This was truly befitting of a daughter raised and educated by a Celestial's Family, such a personable young lady.

Liu Shengye was increasingly confident about the ultimate goal of this journey.

After exchanging pleasantries, Zhong Luoxian led them inside the ship to meet with the grain sellers.

Upon entering, they were astounded by the lavish decoration and layout. They realized they had underestimated the cost of this ship. Just the decor alone was worth more than a thousand Qian Gold.

Inside the chamber, a handsome young man in a silk robe with a jade crown was lazily lounging. His whole being exemplified the essence of noble identity.

The brocade robe was made of Ice Spirit Silk, slightly icy white in color, casting an exceptional aura. Ice Spirit Silk was always a luxurious and costly item.

Wearing it gives you a refreshing and cool sensation on a hot summer's day without a drop of sweat. Wearing it for a long time also nourishes the skin and has beautifying effects.

Most importantly, Ice Spirit Silk is incredibly fine and strong, ordinary swords and knives are hard to cut through it, and it has a certain defensive effect and fire-proof function.

Descendants of ordinary families consider Ice Spirit Silk as the aspired luxury item. It's said that the Insect Master of the Changning Xu Family secretly bred some Ice Spirit Silkworms and made a lot of money from them, but even so, few people in the Xu Family can afford Ice Spirit Silkworm clothing.

The price is just too high.

The young man's garment alone probably cost hundreds of Qian Gold. The jade crown he was wearing was also dazzling, obviously a very valuable Spiritual Treasure.

Even the household guard standing behind him seemed refined and extraordinary.

"Zhong Luoxian." The noble young man gave the Liu clan members a lazy glance, his eyebrows slightly wrinkled and spoke with laziness and contempt, "You write to our Dantai Family, to trade with this obscure family?"

"?"

A surge of anger erupted in Liu Yongzhou's heart. Who the hell was this guy? How dare he speak to Miss Luoxian in such a manner.

Chapter 75 "Premium For a Child"

This seemingly high and mighty young master was none other than Chen Fangjie, Wang Shouzhe's future brother-in-law. And the 'unimpressive' head of household standing behind him was played by Wang Shouzhe himself.

Of course, both of them were already disguised, with Wang Mei personally doing their makeup. It wasn't an utterly transformative disguise, but unless you were very familiar with them, you definitely wouldn't recognize them.

When Chen Fangjie heard about this plan, he found it quite interesting.

Amusing activities that also allowed him to curry favor with his future bride's kin were rare. More than that, when Wang Shouzhe involved the Chen Clan in the scheme, he wouldn't let their effort go unnoticed.

Hence, to convincingly play the role of a haughty, arrogant scion, he even brought out his custom-made family robes, designed to lend him an air of respectability before and after his wedding.

Wang Shouzhe, playing the role of the head of the household, was rather speechless about this. His future brother-in-law appeared very serious on the surface, and possessed the demeanor of a proper young clan leader, yet deep down, he was a bit... stolid.

His half-reclining lazy pose, his half-closed eyes, his disdainful and scornful expression - they all seemed remarkably authentic.

The faces of those from the Liu Clan had turned white.

Liu Yongzhou, the shining star of the Liu Clan's young generation, was even reddening in the face, appearing ready to erupt at any moment.

"Ahem." Liu Shengye, as the family head of the Liu Clan, was the only old fox who could keep his calm. He cupped his hands with a forced smile, "This gentleman must be the renowned prince of the Eastern Sea King Dantai Family, right? Indeed, you are as majestic and remarkable as a dragon among men."

While speaking, he also gave Liu Yongzhou a look, signifying that one should bear small losses for the sake of the overall situation.

"Dantai and jade, this transaction was not intended for you, you've insisted on intervening." Zhong Luoxian spoke coldly, with a hint of dissatisfaction, "The Liu Clan has done me a life-saving favor, I would ask you to show a little more respect."

"Indeed, indeed. Since you're a benefactor of Luoxian, this prince will oblige with a modicum of courtesy." Chen Fangjie straightened his body slightly, glancing out of the corner of his eye, "Go on, how much grain do you want to borrow?"

Liu Shengye felt a flash of joy in his heart and immediately cupped his hands to say, "Our Liu Clan needs to borrow ten thousand dan of grain to alleviate the disaster in our jurisdiction; we are willing to repay two sacks of grain to your honorable family after the next harvest."

"Ten thousand dan?" A smirk appeared on Chen Fangjie's face. Unresponsive to Liu Shengye, he turned to Zhong Luoxian and said, "Luoxian, I'm not looking down on anyone. But for such a trivial matter, you'd use your connections with the Dantai Family?"

"Zhong Luoxian" seemed to harbor some resentment towards Dantai and jade. However, he only replied coldly, "This transaction indeed involves a paltry sum for you. Yet it is the Liu Clan's efforts to help the disaster-stricken people. I hope the jade will come through."

Liu Yongzhou felt a jolt in his heart. Luoxian was actually begging that detestable Dantai and jade for him. Enraged and humiliated, he thought, "That kid thinks the business is too small, huh?" He immediately retorted, "Two million dan, the Liu Clan wants two million dan."

As soon as these words came out, Liu Shengye almost lost his footing and fell. This time, by estimates, the Liu Clan had a shortfall of about fifteen thousand dan. But if they steeled their hearts and substituted some sand for rice, a little over ten thousand dan would tide them over this ordeal.

But who would've thought, Liu Yongzhou, just for the sake of face, demanded two million dan right off the bat.

"This is incredibly tedious." Chen Fangjie barely moved an eyelid, seemingly quite reluctant, "However, for the sake of Luoxian. I suppose we'll make this small trade of two million dan of grain."

"Being part of the Eastern Sea King Dantai Family, you are indeed magnanimous. Let's proceed with the loan of two million dan then." At this moment, Liu Shengye had no choice but to accept this number. Otherwise, he really feared this ill-tempered young prince Dantai would storm off in a huff.

"Two million dan of grain, at the rate of five copper coins per dan, amounting to 1000 Qian Gold." Chen Fangjie said indifferently, "Our Dantai family is a prominent family that firmly supports the Daqian Law and won't manipulate grain prices. Therefore, the contract between us must stipulate that this transaction is a Qian Gold loan transaction."

Our side will lend your side 2000 Qian Gold, which should be repaid within five months with an additional 1000 Qian Gold interest. Additionally, your family needs to mortgage a property worth more than 3000 Qian Gold. If repayment is not made past the deadline, the mortgaged property will belong to our side."

What?

The entire Liu Clan's faces changed drastically. Those conditions were incredibly harsh! Even compared to the terms of the Sun Clan, the conditions were just marginally better, but only by a minuscule amount.

Moreover, the need to mortgage property added to their worries. Everyone's gaze was now on Liu Shengye.

Liu Shengye's expression became stern and serious. After considering carefully, he spoke, "Prince Dantai, can we do away with the mortgaging of clan property? The Liu Clan of Ping'an is willing to mortgage its reputation instead."

"Reputation?" Chen Fangjie scoffed, "In the eyes of this prince, the reputation of such minor noble families is worthless. Do you plan on defaulting, hence refusing to mortgage clan property? Hmph, this prince doesn't have time to play these pointless games with you."

Seeing the Liu Clan's distress, Zhong Luoxian glanced at Liu Yongzhou, gritted her teeth, and said with a pleading tone, "Dantai and jade, I understand that grain is in short supply right now. But can you consider giving a discount, out of respect for the Liu Clan's efforts to help the disaster-stricken people?"

In an instant, Liu Yongzhou's heart skipped a beat.

Luoxian, Luoxian was actually begging that arrogant Dantai and jade for him.

Chen Fangjie laughed heartily, "Since Luoxian has personally requested, I, as young master, will waive 500 Qian Gold of the interest. However, the transfer of Liu Clan's property must go forward. Once the principal and interest are repaid, it will be returned."

The exemption of 500 Qian Gold brought a smile to the faces of the Liu Clan members. This was indeed a substantial discount. Yet, when they heard that the property needed to be transferred... their hearts dropped once again.

"The property you transfer should preferably be a type of manor." Chen Fangjie squinted his eyes, his gaze falling on Zhong Luoxian, "Luoxian has been in low spirits recently. Since she wants to stay outside for a change, she should at least have somewhere to stay. Let's temporarily put it under Luoxian's name."

"If Prince Dantai is so straightforward, Liu Shengye won't be pretentious." Liu Shengye's eyes lit up, and he bowed with a smile, "Since we are here to do business, we will hand over the grain and the property transfer documents together. Before that, Miss Luoxian can move in."

Under the name of the Liu Clan, a manor has been under development for over ten years, offering a charming landscape. The manor comprises comfortable courtyard houses, eight hundred acres of fertile farmland, and a lotus pond spreading over two hundred acres. There's also potential for further development.

The total value of this manor, even if not quite three thousand Qian Gold, is not far off.

Liu Shengye's only concern was that after the manor's transfer, he might not get the grain. Furthermore, he lacked the power to trouble the East Sea King.

"The money and goods are clear, it is only fair," said Chen Fangjie. After agreeing, he dismissed them with a somewhat impatient wave of his hand, saying, "All right, all of you retreat. Handle this transaction completely to Luoxian's discretion."

His attitude was so casual, as if this transaction involving two to three thousand Qian Gold, was a trifle not worth mentioning.

Retreat?

The Liu clan was experiencing such a contemptuous attitude for the first time. But with arrogance came the justification for it. If it wasn't for Mrs. Zhong's mediation, how could they be dealing with such individuals?

The older members of the Liu clan were indifferent, only Liu Yongzhou's face grew slightly flushed, as if harboring a fire within.

Just as Liu Shengye and his clan were leaving the loft, the scoffing laughter of "Dantai and jade" wafted out from within, "Luoxian, I know you don't like me, that's why you ran away to protest. Unfortunately for you, after you return, I am going to invite the old ancestors to propose a marriage, who could refuse that?"

"You!" Zhong Luoxian's voice was suppressed and angry, "Luoxian is but a gentle reed, why must you keep pestering her?"

"My temperament is such that the more unattainable the object, the more I desire to have it. Zhong Luoxian, you will ultimately not be able to escape my grasp." His voice steadily grew more arrogant, "Given that I care about you, I will let you enjoy this last moment of freedom."

The Liu Clan didn't react much to this. What relation do they have to the love affairs, grudges, and resentments of high-born members of the celestial families?

However, nobody noticed that Liu Yongzhou's eyes were welling up with tears, and his body was trembling. He had never felt such humiliation and heartache in his life.

He realized why Luoxian would want to be close to him, yet seemed to have such great unease. He initially thought it was just the gap in status, only to discover there were other obstacles as well.

But he was just the end of a Rank 9 prominent family, what power did he have to change anything?

Even his greatest anger was nothing more than a joke in the eyes of that high-born young master.

The Liu Clan's ship gradually drifted away, and Liu Yongzhou's heart seemed to sink along with it. The helpless look of pain that Luoxian accidentally revealed lingered in his mind, and couldn't be dispelled.

...

Meanwhile, within the loft on the ship.

Chen Fangjie was in good spirits. He sipped his tea, his face slightly excited: "Shouzhe, how did I perform just now? Do I look like a spoil brat from a celestial family?"

Wang Shouzhe looked him up and down: "Is this your true nature? As the clan leader, I have the right to annul my sister's marriage on her behalf."

"Pfft!" Chen Fangjie spat out his tea in surprise, hurriedly saying, "No, it's a huge misunderstanding. I just acted as you advised, please don't take it seriously. I, Chen Fangjie, am a handsome unpolished gem."

"OK, save this rough gemstone for my sister to polish," said Master Shouzhe, "Get ready quickly. We need to meet another group of guests in the afternoon."

Guests?

The corners of Chen Fangjie's lips twitched. He found this word very disheartening.

But this future brother-in-law is not a simple person, the more he got to know him, the more he found him unfathomable.

Similarly, Wang Mei's satisfaction with the family head continued to grow.

Previously, her loyalty had been steadfastly towards the Wang Family for generations. Yet, this loyalty was only to the family. No matter who served as the family head, she would faithfully fulfil her duties.

But Master Shouzhe was different — calm, strategic, an observer of human nature, sympathetic and most importantly, so handsome and heroic.

Having such a perfect family head was great luck for Wang Mei herself.

If the family head asked for her company in his bed... what should she do?

What role should Mei Mei play? Hehehe~~ She was growing happier by the thought.

...

After witnessing two almost identical dramas in a row, Chen Fangjie felt drained and bored.

On the other hand, Wang Mei seemed to revel in this, becoming even more exuberant. She apparently loved these times, marking her as someone quite capable.

Wang Shouzhe would never have expected this unassuming housemaid Wang Mei to be lusting after him.

That's it for this situation.

In general, Wang Shouzhe was satisfied with the completion of the second stage of the task. Not only had he sold forty thousand loads of grain at a high price, but he'd successfully planted a damaging seed in the hearts of Liu Yongzhou and Zhao Dingtian to serve the next phase of the plan.

Then, as per the original plan, the Chen Clan of Donggang dispatched two large merchant ships, symbols of identification removed. The Wang family, in anticipation, transported the grains to Fenggu Farm first. They devoted a large workforce and worked through the night to load the grain onto the large merchant ships.

Though moving the grain back and forth seems like a waste of manpower and resources, in these special times, a bit more caution equates to a bit more safety.

For a Profound Martial family that can be passed down through generations, what's crucial is not about explosive profit, but a single word.

Stability!

Attaining stability is no easy task, but two primary approaches can be laid out: avoiding risks, and resisting risks.

Had it not been for the internal and external troubles faced by the Wang family, Wang Shouzhe would rather not confront the Liu Clan and the Zhao Clan prematurely. He would prefer to manage

the overall situation, establish long-term plans, and eventually crush the opponents with sheer momentum.

Given the present circumstances, however, he can only strive for the best possible outcome.

Time ticks by day by day.

On this day.

Just like usual, Wang Shouzhe was cultivating. When he went to the martial arts field, a gleam of suppressed light was dashed in his eyes as his aura started to rise sharply.

"Family Head, have you broken through?" Wang Gui, the little servant, sensed that powerful aura and asked with joy and surprise.

"I've just broken through to the seventh level of the Qi Refining Realm," said Wang Shouzhe serenely, though there was a hint of joy in his words. A while ago, he'd reached the peak of level six. After some days of solidifying and refining, he'd made a monumental breakthrough tonight, swallowing a Cultivation Pill and clenching a Spirit Stone for an aggressive push.

Thanks to a solid accumulation, as well as proper resources and luck, he managed to break through on the first try.

From today onwards, Wang Shouzhe commands the power of the Advanced Stage of the Qi Refining Realm.

At eighteen, he's at the Qi Refining Realm level seven!

Among everyone in Changning Defense, this is quite a remarkable achievement. Thinking back, the Old Ancestor Longyan had also reached this level of achievement at eighteen, only slightly earlier by a few months.

Just after the breakthrough, his Mysterious Energy's quality and quantity, as well as his physical condition, took a significant leap upward.

What followed was a period to be spent on diligent cultivation to stabilize and familiarize with this new level of power as soon as possible. However, ascending to the Qi Refining Realm Level Eight would not be as easy, nor would it be achievable in a short period of time.

At the training field, Wang Shouzhe practiced Profound Martial fighting techniques, movement techniques, swordsmanship, and bowstring control. It was clear that he was much stronger than before. Not to mention fighting two of his old selves, he felt he could probably handle two average sixth-level Qi Refiners. That is, average ones...

After a round of cultivation, when the sun became somewhat scorching, and his whole body was sore and achy, Wang Shouzhe decided to head back for a bath.

He then brewed a small pot of Yangshan Petite Spirit Variety in the side hall to refresh and focus his mind, and began dealing with some miscellaneous matters.

"Family Head, these are the recent intelligence reports about the Liu Clan and the Zhao Clan," offered Wang Gui, presenting some letters and reports.

As Wang Shouzhe flipped through the reports, his brows gradually furrowed. After he'd read the last one, he slammed his hand on the table with his cold eyes brimming with rage. "Wolves are always wolves. Even when they wear a human skin, they cannot hide the greed and cruelty in their bones."

Although he had expected the Liu Clan and the Zhao Clan to resort to all means necessary once they began their strategy of annexation and their methods wouldn't be soft, Wang Shouzhe hadn't imagined their methods could be so despicably greedy.

Take the Liu Clan as an example, they rule over around two thousand households, owning roughly forty thousand acres of fertile land. Affected dramatically by this recent pestilence, these freeholding farmers have suffered significantly. Many poorly managed families don't even have any grain left after paying the grain tax.

However, among these farmers, there were also a good many middle and even wealthy ones.

These richer families had deeper pockets and the habit of hoarding some grain. Therefore, as a whole, although these freeholding farmers were still short of grain, they could borrow from one another and manage to survive, albeit with difficulty, through this famine year.

But once the Liu Clan got involved, they began by arresting a group of middle-class farmers who had hoarded a bit of grain. These farmers had dared to privately loan grain to others and even had contracts to get the grain back two-fold after the autumn harvest.

Eventually, these middle-class farmers had to forfeit part of their land to secure the "forgiveness" of the Liu Clan.

That was not even the worst part. Some wealthy families, seeing how their fellow villagers were suffering, came forward to give loans to the desperate ones without charging any interest.

This undoubtedly violated the core interests of the Liu Clan. They secretly recruited some thugs among independent cultivators to make daily ruckuses in the residences of philanthropic rich families, demanding "relief." This led to these rich families closing themselves off as a means of self-protection.

One rich family, more tenacious, continued to surreptitiously provide relief to others. As a result, they suffered a night raid by a group of independent cultivators, resulting in the demise of all ten members of their family, from the elderly to young children.

The Liu Clan had only one goal: to force impoverished families to mortgage their land in exchange for their stored grain. According to intelligence, not many self-sufficient farmers have done so yet.

However, as time went on and the "famine" made worse by human factors grew more severe, people were bound to be unable to withstand the circumstances. Eventually, they would have to exchange their lands for those overpriced grains.

In response to the locust infestation, to avoid the consequences of a large influx of homeless people, the different regions are usually sealed off; civilians find it rather hard to move about. This has brought a lot of convenience to Liu Clan's plan.

The Liu Clan's demand isn't much. They only wanted to annex one-tenth of the land in their territory. If they use ruthless methods, they will undoubtedly achieve their goal in two months.

Of course, as a prominent family, the Liu Clan would not violate the Da Qian Law on the surface.

They would adopt the same method as used in the trade between Dantai and the Liu Clan, known as Qian gold mortgage loans. This ensured that they would not incur legal liability on record.

This is the so-called 'countermeasures in response to policies.' In rural areas, prominent families are like local emperors to the common people. When they disregard their reputation, they can do whatever they please.

At this moment, Wang Shouzhe somewhat regretted "selling" the stored grain to the Liu Clan and the Zhao Clan.

But this thought was brief, as even if he did not take action, the Liu and Zhao clans would still get grains from somewhere else and implement the same plan. This would only end up aiding their cronies, and the situation would get out of control.

The resentment of the people has risen. Notify Wang Zhong to reel it in and initiate the assassination plan. At the same time, find out the whereabouts of that group of independent cultivators that exterminated an entire family." With a solemn expression, Wang Shouzhe wrote a secret order and had a member of the household deliver it.

While delay would accumulate more public resentment, and moving in for the kill when resentment is at its peak would be more advantageous for the Wang Family's future plans. However, this could also lead to more tragedies for ordinary families.

After handling this issue, a few drinks of Yangshan Petite Spirit variety helped calm his emotions.

"Family Head, don't forget that the second young master of the Liu Clan is visiting today." Wang Gui cautiously reminded, discerning Wang Shouzhe's mood.

The second young master of the Liu Clan?

With the reminder, Wang Shouzhe remembered the letter received from the Liu Clan a few days ago. The Clan Leader's second son of the Liu Clan, Liu Yuanrui, was expected to arrive at Dingpu Ferry around noon today to visit the Wang family.

Wang Shouzhe and Miss Liu, Liu Ruolan, have already been betrothed. According to the protocol, the Wang family had to send a suitable representative to welcome Liu Yuanrui. Such reception tasks are usually assigned to the heir apparent.

However, since Wang Shouzhe isn't married yet and Liu Yuanrui would be his future brother-in-law, he had no choice but to welcome him personally.

A carriage was prepared, along with some fruits. Two house guards were summoned as well.

The party set off for Dingpu Ferry and the carriage passed along the outer edge of Zhuwei Lake.

The shore of Zhuwei Lake had already changed. Over a hundred strong men from among the Wang family's tenant farmers had been assigned here to clear the reeds surrounding Zhuwei Lake, level the land, and construct sheds.

The work was overseen by the third in the line of the Shou generation of the Wang family—Wang Shounuo. The burly, tanned young man was initially busy organizing the strong men to unload some timber and stones. On seeing Wang Shouzhe's carriage, he greeted him from afar and continued working.

The construction of these sheds was meant to serve the next stage of the plan. Since his younger cousin was busy, he didn't interrupt his work.

The carriage continued swaying and shaking on the road, finally reaching Dingpu Ferry.

This ferry point also housed some of the Wang family's businesses, such as stalls and ferries. However, most of the tasks, including heavy lifting, were assigned to the collateral branches of the Wang family, yielding only small profits.

Wang Shouzhe went straight to the Deep Water Pier. Not even a quarter of an hour had passed before he saw a ferry arriving. Upon docking, Liu Yuanrui and his entourage were the first to disembark.

From a distance, Wang Shouzhe went forward to greet him with a smile, "Master Yuanrui, your visit is an honor. I do apologize for not coming to receive you earlier."

Liu Yuanrui was not yet sixteen. Although he looked somewhat juvenile, his robust attire made him appear somewhat like a valiant young man.

He too was smiling broadly as he quickly advanced, returning the gesture, "Brother Shouzhe, I am sorry for the abrupt visit. Please forgive me." His elegant demeanor and refined air put people at ease.

Being the descendants of a prominent martial family, especially those from the main line, they receive elite education from a young age. Their manners, behavior, and protocols are greatly emphasized. There do exist instances of rowdy scions hailing from such families, but they are rarely seen. Especially in public, they always portray themselves as gentlemen with impeccable manners.

While the two were exchanging pleasantries,

A young girl's voice rang out from behind Liu Yuanrui, "Brother-in-law, you're even more handsome than I imagined."

Brother-in-law?

Chapter 77: Has the Little Aunt also come? _1

...

It was then that Wang Shouzhe noticed a thirteen or fourteen-year-old girl not far away.

She was at the age when a girl first blossoms into a woman, and her hair was neatly braided into two small plaits. She had an oval face, was pretty, and looked very clean and refreshing. She was blinking her clear, big eyes, taking a keen interest in Wang Shouzhe.

"You must be sister Ruolei?" Wang Shouzhe greeted with a respectful bow.

He was aware that the Liu Family's direct line was thriving in this generation, with Clan Leader Liu Gaowang having two sons and two daughters. His fiancée, Liu Ruolan, was the eldest daughter, and she had a younger direct sister, Liu Ruolei.

What he hadn't anticipated, though, was that Liu Ruolei would also make the trip this time.

Well, he had recently indulged himself as a junior brother-in-law in front of Chen Fangjie, making Chen Fangjie experience what it feels like to tread on thin ice.

Now, his future brother-in-law and future sister-in-law had both come, it was his turn to tremble in fear.

"Ruolei pays her respects to brother Shouzhe," Liu Ruolei also promptly responded with an appropriate salute. Her composure was graceful, hinting at the bearing of a lady from a prestigious family she might become in the future.

For now, 'brother-in-law' was merely an affectionate term. Wang Shouzhe couldn't officially be addressed as such by Liu Ruolan until they were married.

As the greetings and small talk went on, the housekeeper of the Liu Family led the horses and carriages off the ferry.

Only then did Wang Shouzhe lead them out of Dingpu Ferry.

"Brother, let's ride in brother Shouzhe's carriage. This will give us the chance to listen as he introduces us to the local customs and characteristics of Ping'an Town," Liu Ruolei, tugging at Liu Yuanrui's sleeve, proposed.

It was quite apparent that Liu Ruolei had a great interest in Wang Shouzhe, her future brother-in-law, and wanted to get to know him better.

Although Liu Yuanrui was not yet sixteen, and still somewhat boyish-looking, he acted maturely for his age. He shook his head and smiled wryly, apologizing to Wang Shouzhe, "Brother Shouzhe, please don't blame us. My sister, Ruolei, has been spoiled since she was a child."

"It's alright. Sister Ruolei's vivacity is very endearing. Yuanrui, if you don't mind, why not ride in my carriage along with sister Ruolei?" Wang Shouzhe proposed with a smile. "It'd be good for us to catch up, it's been a while since we last met."

"That would be great, I'm also interested in learning some things from brother Shouzhe."

Afterward, the three of them rode back to the Wang Family's main residence. The housekeepers from the Liu and Wang families rode their horses, guarding them along the way.

Throughout the journey, the three of them casually chatted while enjoying the scenery outside the carriage, as they snacked on fruits.

Liu Yuanrui was also quite talkative, beginning with the recent pest epidemic and then switching to the relief efforts, and finally, the possible long-term effects it may cause in the future. From the conversation, it was evident that his knowledge and understanding in many areas were quite solid.

There were a few ideas Wang Shouzhe disagreed with, but that didn't prevent him from forming a good impression of his future brother-in-law. He thought the Liu Family had brought him up well, something that couldn't be compared with families like the Liu Clan and the Zhao Clan.

Meanwhile, Liu Yuanrui was astounded. He had interacted with Wang Shouzhe before, and back then, Wang Shouzhe was a reserved character, not very talkative, and his only respectable quality was his cultivation.

This was also why Liu Yuanrui was initially somewhat dissatisfied with this arranged marriage. He always felt that, considering Wang Shouzhe's abilities and academic performance, even if he, Liu Yuanrui, couldn't match Wang Shouzhe, how could Wang Shouzhe be worthy of his sister Liu Ruolan?

But this arranged marriage was set by their Old Ancestor, and as a junior of their family, Liu Yuanrui had no say whatsoever, no matter how dissatisfied he was.

To his surprise, Wang Shouzhe, his future brother-in-law, had undergone an earth-shaking transformation after just one or two years. His behaviors and speeches showed maturity and steadiness, and his demeanor exuded an immense sense of self-confidence.

During discussions around some of the current political issues, he was always insightful, with a clear and quick logic, and he could often pinpoint the essence of the issue and hit the nail on the head. Liu Yuanrui found it enlightening and refreshing just to listen to him.

"I admire brother Shouzhe's insights," Liu Yuanrui said during the conversation. "But I disagree with your viewpoint that we should not liberalize grain prices. It is evident from the current pestilence that the drawbacks of this policy are significant. How can merchants be motivated to transport grain from afar for sale if there is no profit?"

As I see it, half of this disaster seems to be a natural one, but the Purple Abode should take responsibility for it, and the other half is due to the wrong policy. I believe that the policy on grain prices may change soon."

"It's possible that the policy on grain prices might change, but it would only adjust slightly," Wang Shouzhe responded, shaking his head. "Yuanrui, you only see the advantages of liberalizing grain prices. For instance, quickly mobilizing grain supplies to settle the disaster during the famine years, but overlook the greed of human nature."

Once grain prices are fully liberalized, big sharks will surely enter the game, monopolizing grain production, and manipulating the prices of grains. By then, our small prominent family, countless farmers, and millions of commoners will be played at their mercy, and we will have no control over our own fate."

"Natural disasters may not happen every year, but man-made disasters can happen all the time," said Wang Shouzhe, his face showing extreme seriousness. "When handling state affairs and national policies, we can't just look at some of the drawbacks. Besides, even during the famine years, liberalizing grain prices is also a great disaster."

Greedy merchants would ruthlessly strip the last shilling from the commoners' pockets, and might even force them into selling their property and children."

"This..." Liu Yuanrui appeared skeptical, but he did not want to continue this debate. So, he shifted the topic. "Brother Shouzhe, is the body of water up ahead Zhuwei Lake? It's my first time in Ping'an Town. You must take me for a tour of the lake."

Liu Ruolei had been quiet all along, but as she observed the conversation between her brother and Wang Shouzhe, she could feel the latter's increased confidence, calmness, and maturity. Most likely, he was right about everything he said.

It seemed that Brother Shouzhe was even more impressive than the rumors portrayed him to be.

However, Ruolei also had an interest in Zhuwei Lake: "I want to go to Zhuwei Lake as well."

Hearing that both siblings wanted to visit Zhuwei Lake, it dawned upon Wang Shouzhe that the Liu direct line had a unique sentiment towards it.

The second-generation successor daughter of the Wang family - Wang Zhuwei, was married into the direct line of the Liu family, and had two sons and a daughter. Currently, the direct line all descended from her bloodline.

The reason for her elevated status in the Liu family was mainly due to her connections with the three living Spirit Platform Realm Ancestors. One being her son, another her grandson.

Notably, her daughter was even more impressive.

That was - Liu Xuanfu, one of Changning's renowned beauties, and someone who was said to rival Elder Longyan herself.

According to everyone's speculation, Liu Xuanfu had progressed smoothly in the Purple Abode Academic Palace and had likely reached the advanced stage of the Spirit Platform Realm. The development of the Liu Clan over these years was profoundly linked to her discreet guidance and support.

Consequently, Grand Aunt Zhuwei had lived a life of luxury and glory in the Liu family. Regrettably, in 3095 Changlong Year, upon hearing the news of Elder Zhou Xuan's death, Zhuwei was stricken with grief and eventually followed Elder Zhou Xuan in death at the age of 87.

Setting the idle talk aside for a moment.

The carriage proceeded, and they could see the bustling construction site on the shores of Zhuwei Lake.

Liu Yuanrui was getting enthusiastic again: "Brother Shouzhe, you have built so many work sheds, are you planning to construct a fancy villa by the lake?"

Wang Shouzhe chuckled. It was far from possible to build a villa. Although the financial situation of the Wang family had improved recently, spending money on a villa for no reason was simply absurd.

"Our Wang family is preparing for dredging and landfill," Wang Shouzhe roughly explained the plan. A project of such magnitude couldn't be concealed, and there was no need to hide it either.

Upon hearing this, Liu Yuanrui was stunned. He quickly calculated the costs involved and was taken aback, "Brother Shouzhe, are you joking? This grand project would demand no less than thirty thousand Qian Gold, not to mention the vast amount of labor and resources required, you, you, you..."

It was no surprise. Such a colossal project could be compared to the remarkable achievements of their ancestors when they were developing new territories. Some Profound Martial families would organize tenant farmers to dredge rivers and fill land in their spare time, expanding the farmstead's territory.

But all these were minor efforts with limited scales. If a farmstead could extend by dozens or hundreds of acres in a year, that was already considered pretty good.

"For such matters, do you think I would joke? " Wang Shouzhe's expression was solemn.

Liu Yuanrui felt a shiver running through his body and his expression turned complex. Even though he maintained a humble demeanor, deep down, he harbored some sense of superiority. He had always thought his sister, Liu Ruolan, was sure to marry down to Wang Shouzhe.

However, to his surprise, Wang Shouzhe unintentionally shattered his sense of pride bit by bit. Whether it was in personal talent and vision, behavior and conduct, or thinking ability, he felt somewhat inferior.

On the other hand, the power of Liu family was a source of his superiority.

Unexpectedly, the Wang family had embarked on such a large-scale development plan. Such a massive project, involving thousands of people and costing tens of thousands of Qian Gold, was not something even the Liu family could undertake easily.

"Brother Shouzhe is only two or three years older than me," Liu Yuanrui felt a mixed sense of admiration and bitterness. Having taken control of the family business at such a young age, initiated such a massive project, and laying a solid foundation for the family, he was on a whole different level compared to Liu Yuanrui.

Not to mention Yuanrui, even if it were his brother, Liu Yuanhui, the current Young Clan Leader, it would be hard to measure up to him.

"Brother Shouzhe is so impressive," Liu Ruolei was all bright eyes and admiration, "You are indeed much stronger than my little brother who only knows armchair strategizing."

Liu Yuanrui's face darkened. Although Brother Shouzhe was indeed extraordinary, Ruolei, you didn't need to belittle your own brother, did you?

Chapter 78 Don't Disturb This Young Lady's Efforts for the Rise of the Family_1

...

"That said, this development project tends to cost tens of thousands of Qian Gold pieces." Liu Yuanrui settled down, but still had some doubts, "I heard that the Wang family in recent years"

Over these years, the Wang family has been declining. Where would they get so much money?

"Yuanrui, don't worry." Wang Shouzhe said calmly, "I have made arrangements for this."

Liu Yuanrui froze slightly, was the issue whether to worry? But he was just curious... However, he certainly knew the rules and manners, therefore, he stopped bothering with it.

Wang Shouzhe quite clearly understood, his engagement to Miss Liu for the Wang family members was encouraging, after all, the Liu Clan was quite powerful and could provide support to the Wang family.

Even the family elders held the same thought.

But for the Liu Clan, the eldest daughter of the main family, marrying into a declining family, it was somewhat disconcerting and emotional. But the marriage was set by the old ancestors, so the younger generation didn't object.

Because of this, Wang Shouzhe showed nothing but calmness toward this marriage, there was no joy or rejection. The Wang family would not become strong just through marrying a more prosperous family.

Even though he knew that the younger generations of the Liu Clan, would certainly have complaints, he also showed understanding. After all, on the surface, the difference in status between

the Wang and Liu Clan appeared to be very great. If the positions were reversed, he naturally also wouldn't be happy about such a marriage.

"Huh? Brother Shouzhe, a lot of people are coming over there." Liu Ruolei had sharp eyes, she saw from the carriage window that there was a group of people coming from a distance.

Not only that, behind that group, there was still a burst of people coming over from afar.

"Those people are the civilians of our Ping'an Town." Wang Shouzhe said with a smile, "I assume, they are coming to respond to our Wang family's worker recruitment."

"So many people came to apply?" Liu Yuanrui was astonished, "Brother Shouzhe, how much is your Wang family paying? Stop the carriage, I want to see."

His curiosity suddenly aroused, the dredge and land-fill project was originally a huge project, if wages were raised, then the consumption would be too great. How could the Wang family afford it?

Since Liu Yuanrui wanted to see, Wang Shouzhe would not stop him and ordered the driver to stop the carriage. The guards also stopped one after another, forming a protective circle around the carriage.

The formidable momentum of the guards naturally made the civilians dare not come close, they could only bypass them and go to gather at the workers' barracks.

"Everyone, don't push, come and sign up one by one." Two fourteen or fifteen-year-old boys, who still looked a bit immature, were maintaining order, "Our Wang family is providing work in exchange for food, the pay is generous, as long as you are willing to work, we guarantee that your entire family can eat."

"Come here and sign up. Our Wang family's employment includes food and housing." Two little girls, each carrying tables and chairs, began to register the applicants, "Male workers aged from sixteen to forty will be paid half a load of Chen Rice per month. Healthy women will receive 20 catties of Chen Rice per month, and boys from twelve to sixteen will also receive 20 catties per month."

Both little girls were articulate and dexterously registering people. Rather than explaining everything over and over again it seemed more efficient to have one quick-witted young man stand beside and repeat the speech a hundred times over.

Regarding putting up an advertisement or something like that, the two girls weren't stupid. The majority of tenant farmers and independent farmers couldn't read.

These young people were naturally Wang Shouzhe's siblings. Wang Shouzhe did not want them to sit idly during such an important event in the family. Their participation would help them grow.

Whether it's launching a major project or providing work for relief, both will help to shape their sense of honor for the family and a correct worldview.

"You, what's your name, where are you from, did you bring your household registration document?" Even Wang Luoqiu, the future "God Slayer," was seriously registering each applicant.

However, her gaze was sharp and serious, as if she were judging the applicants, appearing as if she would not let even half a suspicious person slip through.

"My name is Ouyang Gousheng, I am a villager from Liu Zigu Village in Ping'an Town." A slender young man handed over his household registration document nervously.

"You're only fifteen? You can only count as a half worker, your monthly salary will be calculated as 20 catties of Chen Rice." Wang Luoqiu said.

"Ah, Miss." Ouyang Gousheng was disappointed and pleaded, "Look at me, I'm very strong, I'm used to hard work. Can I be made half a load eligible? My mother at home has not eaten for two days."

"No, rules are rules." Wang Luoqiu's principle stood strong, "However, we provide food and shelter here. And I can give you an advance of 20 catties of Chen Rice. I can assure you, your mother will not starve."

"Thank you, thank you, Miss." Ouyang Gousheng thanked her over and over, and the tears of joy were already running down his face.

"Take these two bamboo plates, so you can get 20 catties of Chen Rice." Wang Luoqiu handed him two plates, "Remember, starting from today you should work. You get your food when you finish your work. Besides, do your job well for me. If you perform well, I will remember and count you as a full worker."

"Yes, I will definitely not be lazy." Ouyang Gousheng, holding the two bamboo plates as if they were his life, was indeed precious.

"Take this worker's card, there is a porridge shed over there. You can get free porridge with this card." Wang Luoqiu, after registering the worker's card, ushered him away with a serious face, "Go now, don't delay Miss's work. Next, name, place of origin, age!"

Ouyang Gousheng took the worker's card and two rice plates and left full of gratitude.

Wang Luoqiu confidently handled each person, never procrastinating, and often getting finished in just a few steps.

"Wang Luo Jing, what are you wasting time with? Can you be a bit more efficient while working?" Upon turning to look back, Wang Luoqiu practically dropped dead from the sight, she had already handled five people, yet Wang Luo Jing was still dealing with her second applicant.

She couldn't stand it and directly walked over, glanced at a fair-skinned young man and looked at his registration document: "A scholar?"

"That's correct." The young man nodded slightly, showing a slight hint of arrogance.

"Can you do this kind of manual labour?" Wang Luoqiu asked sceptically.

"I'm a scholar and can't do such heavy work," the young man replied. "I'm well-read in literature and classics and can act as a supervisor. I'd only require ten bushels of grain as payment per month."

During this era, the literacy rate among the common people was very low.

Therefore, being educated provided quite a few opportunities. Government institutions and prominent families needed educated people to act as their backbone.

"Our family doesn't need a supervisor," Wang Luoqiu replied coldly, "You may leave now."

"You, you, you dare underestimate scholars, young lady, let me tell you, reading is the only way to understand... such a young age... Ah~"

Before the scholar could finish speaking, he was sent flying, landing with a mouthful of mud.

"Even more long-winded than Wang Shouzhe." Wang Luoqiu huffed, "Someone come."

"Sister, I'm here," Wang Shouliao ran over obediently like a dog wagging its tail.

"Get this man away, put him on our Wang family's blacklist, never to be employed. " Wang Luoqiu ordered in a commanding manner, then resumed her task of registering applicants.

Some of the applicants who were planning to feign incompetence quietly left the line upon seeing her stern and serious face.

Not far away, Wang Shouzhe and the others were approaching.

Seeing this scene, Wang Shouzhe's mouth twitched slightly. Luoqiu, this brat, really knew how to put on a grand show. If one didn't know the situation, they might think this little lady was the head of the family.

Liu Yuanrui, who arrived with them, was staring wide-eyed at all this: "Brother Shouzhe, each sturdy laborer only receives half a bushel of rice each month. Isn't this wage a bit too low?"

Furthermore, the attitude of that young girl towards scholars seemed quite harsh, and as Liu Yuanrui, who considered himself a scholar, this seemed rather dangerous.

"Yuanrui, whether it's too little or not, you can ask those lining up in queue," Wang Shouzhe advised.

Liu Yuanrui took his advice without objection and asked several people, all of whom said it was enough. Many gave thanks to the Wang family for coming forward in these crucial times and providing food. Quite a few of them quietly complained about the Liu and Zhao Clans.

Upon returning, Liu Yuanrui's face had a rather unpleasant look: "Both the Liu and Zhao Clans, who rose to power through usurpation, are incorrigible. It's fortunate that Brother Shouzhe stepped in with the plan to provide work for food."

"Brother, you weren't this supportive of Brother Shouzhe's idea before," Liu Ruolei, his younger aunt, goaded from one side.

"Now, with the current national policies, and the prominent families manipulating the food shortage for their land-grabbing agenda, if the price of grain were completely deregulated, the lives of millions of commoners would be in the hands of these top families who can manipulate the grain prices.

"And besides, don't complain about Brother Shouzhe's wage, considering everyone is running short of food, it is commendable that Brother Shouzhe is providing work for food."

Liu Yuanrui's face turned red, and he glared at Liu Ruolei. This pesky sister, always undermining her brother for no reason. Before you came, weren't you saying you would train your future brother-in-law on behalf of your sister?

Before he could admonish his sister, he saw Liu Ruolei had already gone over to Wang Luoqiu.

She arrived silently at Wang Luoqiu's side and curiously asked, "Little sister, what's your name?"

"Li-little sis-..." Wang Luoqiu was about to explode but upon seeing it was a classy-looking pretty young lady, she immediately calmed down a bit. Annoyed, she replied, "I am Wang Luoqiu. Which family's child are you? Go away, play somewhere else, don't disturb me while I work hard for the rise of my family."

"My name is Liu Ruolei. Ah, your handwriting is really ugly." Liu Ruolei covered her mouth and giggled softly, "How about you ask the questions and I record the answers? It will be quicker that way." She then took the initiative to go up and help.

Wang Luoqiu nearly fainted from anger. How dare she say her handwriting was ugly?

Hum, the massive Wang Family of Ping'an, even Wang Shouzhe wouldn't dare...

Then, she saw the girl's calligraphy... uh... it indeed looked quite nice and promptly swallowed her words.

Then she remembered that the name Liu Ruolei sounded familiar. Instantly, her eyes widened in surprise. "Are you the Miss from the Liu Family I've heard of?"

"That's right." Liu Ruolei replied with a smile. She didn't expect to be so famous, and she started to register the applicants even more quickly.

"But you look so young, how will you bear children with Wang Shou... No, my fourth brother?"

"What?" Liu Ruolei blushed deeply, stamping her foot, "Where do I look young?"

No, no, that's not the point...

The point was, where did she look too young?

No, that's not the point either...

What was the point again?

Chapter 79: A Return Gift from the Fiancée

...

Just as Liu Ruolei was flustered, Wang Shouzhe, with a sullen face, walked over and grabbed Wang Luoqiu by the ears: "Wang Luoqiu, did your ears grow on your forehead? This is Sister Liu Ruolei, not Sister Liu Ruolan!"

"Ouch, ouch, Fourth Brother, let go. This is too embarrassing. I, Wang Luoqiu, am the future dignified Empress... Humph, don't blame me for turning... "Before Wang Luoqiu could finish her

bravado, she was already in so much pain that tears were about to fall off; all she could do was beg for mercy, "I was wrong, Fourth Brother."

Hearing her cry in soft pleading, Wang Shouzhe finally let her go and began to tease: "The grand future Luo Qiu Empress... so easily suppressed?"

"Hmph." Wang Luoqiu rubbed her reddened ear and huffed, "Every path of growth for a genius is always full of hardships and thorns, along with some nasty little... "

Seeing the change in Wang Shouzhe's face, Wang Luoqiu quickly amended her words, with a sincere face, "Of course, it couldn't be without someone like fourth brother, who cares so much, is attentive, and acts as a spiritual mentor on the lonely road of being an Emperor."

Wang Shouzhe felt a headache coming on. This little girl had read too many heroic fairy tales. Does she really think she's the main character?

"I am sorry, Sister. I shouldn't have called you small." Wang Luoqiu sincerely apologized, and then energetically dove back into the work of helping their family rise to prominence. "Wang Shou Yong, what are you doing? You can't even maintain order? If you can't handle this, let me do it."

"Wang Shou... Third Brother, you need to build your workshop faster. Many recruiters will have nowhere to sleep tonight."

"Wang Luotong, can you make the porridge any slower? If you continue like this, we can only send you off for a matrimonial alliance."

"Fourth Brother, could you please make way? Go about your business and don't get in the way."

Wang Shouzhe was quite speechless. This bratty girl had a knack for honesty, addressing by name anyone she could beat while those she couldn't, she would affectionately call Third Brother, Fourth Brother, and so on.

"Ruolei," Wang Shouzhe apologized, "Let me apologize on behalf of Luoqiu. She's just like this, loud and boisterous, but she doesn't mean any harm."

"Shouzhe Brother, it's okay, it's okay, um, Sister Luoqiu is quite cute." Liu Ruolei had recovered from the embarrassment.

"Brother Shouzhe, your sister is too..." Liu Yuanrui was filled with emotions.

"Not at all." Wang Shouzhe hurriedly interrupted, denying it and smiling, "Luoqiu is the lively one in our family, she's an exception. My younger sister Luoqing is understanding, obedient, gentle and pleasant. Luo Jing, come and greet us..."

As the words fell,

A scream sounded from the crowd.

A burly man covered in poisonous ants, was rolling on the ground screaming with pain: "It hurts, I'm in agony, please, young lady, spare me, I was wrong, I shouldn't have instigated...Wa!"

"Fourth Brother, I caught a spy." Wang Luoqing casually threw out two fist-sized spiders and three centipedes which quickly crawled onto the burly man. "This guy is a Profound Martial practitioner, and by his looks, I'd say he's probably an independent cultivator. He dared to incite the refugees and was planning to go and loot our family's food.

Hmph, you're a bad guy, I'll let the bugs sting you to death."

The man's screams were so painful that it silenced the crowd.

The smile on Wang Shouzhe's face froze. Should these sisters behave like this? This is sabotage...

What should he do if they regret the proposal, prevent him from getting married?

Liu Yuanrui was breaking out in a cold sweat, and his gaze towards Wang Shouzhe began to waver. Was this a gentle, obedient sister?

Are you sure these sisters are cute, not like a pack of ferocious wolves?

He instinctively backed away a little. Coming to the Ping'an Wang Family filled him with a sense of superiority.

Now it seems, Ping'an Town appears to be very dangerous. He had come here too haphazardly!

This isn't a place to stay.

"Brother Shouzhe." Liu Yuanrui went pale, "Now that the project tour is over, it's indeed very magnificent. But it's getting late, and it's time to visit Uncle Gongsun and Old Ancestor Longyan."

"Little brother, you go and pay respects to Uncle and Old Ancestor for me. I'm not on the mission list anyway, so I'll stay here and help out." Liu Ruolei, quite interested in Luoqiu and Luoqing, volunteered to stay and help, "Also, Brother Shouzhe. I can see many people are very hungry, can we give them some porridge before they register?"

She was, after all, a lady used to luxurious living and unfamiliar with the suffering of the world.

"What Sister Ruolei said is correct." Wang Shouzhe said with a bow, "It was my lack of consideration. I'll have Luotong arrange it right away. Also, you can stay here and help, I'll ask the house guards to take extra care of you."

"Brother Shouzhe, I'm not a defenseless little girl." Liu Ruolei gave a light smile, and then ran off to meet up with Wang Luoqiu to continue working.

After giving orders to Wang Luotong, Wang Shouzhe returned to the carriage with Liu Yuanrui and headed towards the main residence.

In the carriage.

"Brother Shouzhe, your sister is certainly quite lively," Liu Yuanrui still had some qualms. He was the legitimate second son, not particularly fond of cultivation, nor was he in line to tread the path of the Spirit Platform Realm.

Therefore, he usually considered himself a scholar and valued elegance. Much to his surprise, each of Wang Shouzhe's sisters was fiercer than the last.

"Ha ha, Yuanrui, does it seem like Sister Ruolei has concealed her aura?" Wang Shouzhe changed the subject. "I can't see through her cultivation level."

There are two reasons why one can't see through a cultivation level. The first is that the person's cultivation level is much higher, and the second is that the person has found a way to hide their aura.

"Well..." Liu Yuanrui hesitated for a moment before finally saying, "Brother Shouzhe, you can be considered one of our own. Yes, our family's Ruolei has good cultivation talent and has been favored by the Old Ancestor Xuan Fu since she was young. She didn't want to reveal her cultivation progress, so the ancestor gave her a treasure that could conceal her aura.

In two more years, the Old Ancestor will take her to the Academic Palace."

Although Wang Shouzhe had some speculations, he was still somewhat surprised and envious when he heard it, "Congratulations, Yuanrui. The Liu family's luck is really good."

Being so favored by the Old Ancestor Xuan Fu, Liu Ruolei must surely possess qualifications and potential that are not inferior to her own. With resources from the academic palace and subsidies from the family, as long as there are no accidents, she will definitely become a practitioner of the Spirit Platform Realm in the future.

Attending the academic palace is something that the lower-class prominent families dream of. The Academic Palace, unlike family cultivation, offers a broader stage and more resources. The future development of family heirs will also become infinite.

However, the Academic Palace is very strict about its elite disciples. They can contribute to the family to some extent and give back to the family. But ultimately, they are people of the Academic Palace. The large amount of resources and teacher strength that the Academic Palace devotes to teaching is not intended to cultivate talent for the prominent family.

This is why the Old Ancestor Long Yan had to give up her elite disciple status and return to guard the family for a long time.

And for the Old Ancestor Long Yan to do this, it was almost tantamount to betraying the Academic Palace. That the Academic Palace ultimately turned a blind eye and did not hold her accountable, can be considered very generous. It must have been her master who interceded for her.

Despite the strict rules of the Purple Abode's Academic Palace, most prominent families try to send their prodigies to the Purple Academy whenever one appears in the family. This allows the family to establish influences inside the academic palace, consciously or unconsciously, and for other prominent families, they would also pay more respect and caution.

Because no one can imagine how far that family descendant can go in the future. If they achieve the Heavenly Human Realm, it would bring glory to the entire family, at least guaranteeing the family for hundreds of years.

Besides, during this process, it is not impossible for the family to gradually ascend to a Heavenly Human Prominent Family.

As far as Wang Shouzhe knows, as long as a family becomes a Heavenly Human Prominent Family, it would not be possible not to have anyone in the Academic Palace, and in most cases, there are more than one.

But let's leave these sidetracks for now.

Wang Shouzhe and Liu Yuanrui arrived at the main residence together and, as per the traditional etiquette, went to pay respects to Gongsun Hui.

Although the Liu family of Shanyin and the Gongsun Clan of Shanyang had been at odds because of the minerals on the same mountain range, they were still obliged to maintain the etiquette. Moreover, Gongsun Hui is now the Mater familias of the Wang family.

Gongsun Hui, dressed in fine formal attire, received Liu Yuanrui in the main hall of the main residence.

After some pleasantries, Liu Yuanrui requested to pay a visit to the Old Ancestor Long Yan.

"Don't be in a hurry, Yuanrui," Gongsun Hui said with a smile, "We are still waiting for someone. Later we will go to Long Yan Habitat together."

Despite being perplexed, Liu Yuanrui gracefully held down his curiosity and started a conversation with Wang Shouzhe over tea. "Brother Shouzhe, I am here to visit you for two reasons. Firstly, I want to express our family's gratitude for your dispatch of the head of the household to warn us about the insect plague in advance.

Secondly, I have been entrusted by my sister to bring a return gift for you."

With that, Liu Yuanrui presented two lists of gifts.

When Wang Shouzhe discovered the signs of the insect plague, he immediately wrote to notify all the families with a marital alliance.

If the Liu family ignored this camaraderie, it would seem as though they were taking the Wang family lightly. The fact that they sent an envoy directly and brought gifts of gratitude means that they accepted this favor.

The private return gift from Liu Ruolan was because Wang Shouzhe, at the suggestion of Gongsun Hui, had sent her the best parts of the Eastern Sea Spearflag he had hunted, so she could taste the fresh catch.

Liu Ruolan's return gift was a type of spiritual tea known as the Cloud Mist Spirit Seed, weighing as much as three taels.

This return gift of the Cloud Mist Spirit Seed gave Wang Shouzhe a sense of gratification and also made him feel some affection for Liu Ruolan.

The gift she had chosen was not only the elegant spiritual tea but also one of the scarce resources needed by people like Wang Shouzhe who tread the path of Spirit Platform. Moreover, its value was almost equal to that of the spiritual fish Wang Shouzhe had sent. Not too much, not too little.

Such a return gift made one feel comfortable. It also revealed that she must have put a lot of thought into it.

Although she didn't leave a single word, he could feel her emphasis and her expectations for his future.

Chapter 80: Old Ancestor Mang Arrives_1

...

It has to be admitted that women tend to be more meticulous in such matters when compared to men.

Although Wang Shouzhe was not exactly a straight male archetype, his mind moved around less when it came to these things. If it weren't for his mother, Gongsun Hui, and his sister Luomei's reminders, he might not have thought to bring gifts at all.

Fortunately, this silent interaction with Liu Ruolan at least helped him understand the meaning expressed by Liu Ruolan.

"Yuanrui, go back and tell your sister that I understand her intention," said Wang Shouzhe solemnly.

Huh?

Liu Yuanrui was dumbfounded. His sister's intention? What did she mean? Could it be that she had hidden some secret code in this return gift?

Despite his significant talents, he was still young after all.

And boys often seem less tactful in this regard compared to girls.

Putting this topic aside for now, Wang Shouzhe started to chat with Liu Yuanrui.

But Gongsun Hui asked for a brief leave.

Around an hour later.

Outside the main hall, Gongsun Hui's voice came in: "Shouzhe, your great-grandfather is here, come out and greet him."

Great-grandfather?

Wang Shouzhe was taken aback, and then he realized and rushed out with joy. Liu Yuanrui also followed out of curiosity.

Outside the main residence and the main hall.

A tall man in grey robes stood there. He looked only middle-aged, but his demeanor was like that of a towering mountain, unfathomable.

As for Mother Gongsun Hui, she was standing next to him obediently, like a small girl.

"Shouzhe is honored to meet Ancestor Meng," Wang Shouzhe quickly stepped forward to pay his respects.

"Shouzhe, you need not be so formal."

The man in grey robes was naturally one of the two ancestors of the Gongsun Clan - Gongsun Meng, who was respectfully called Ancestor Meng by everyone in the family.

At this moment, Ancestor Meng was sizing up Wang Shouzhe and couldn't help but reveal a satisfied smile, "Good, good. Shouzhe, you've reached the seventh level of Qi Refinement Realm at such a young age, which is very hard to achieve."

Of course, what he was most satisfied with about Wang Shouzhe was not his cultivation progress, but the way he conducted himself, his style of doing things, and some of his means to control the situation.

"Ancestor Meng speaks highly of me," Wang Shouzhe humbly and respectfully said, "I've only achieved what I have today because of the resources of the family. It was impolite of our Wang Clan not to greet you when you arrived. Why didn't you give us a heads up, so we could've greeted you accordingly?"

"This visit was intended to be a secret, so of course we couldn't make a show of it. It's certainly not considered impolite," Ancestor Meng laughed heartily, "I heard from Hui'er about your plans and actions. You're doing well, the likes of wolves and other villains should be taught a lesson."

Wang Shouzhe bowed and said, "Thank you for your support, Ancestor Meng. Please come inside so that I can properly host you."

"Not for now," Ancestor Meng laughed and waved his hand, then turned his gaze to Liu Yuanrui, gave a faint smile and said, "This child reveals the aura of the Liu Family's cultivation technique, the 'Origin Water Heart Sutra'. Is he a child of the Liu Family?"

Wang Shouzhe said, "Ancestor, this is Liu Yuanrui, the little brother of my fiancée, Liu Ruolan."

Liu Yuanrui broke into a cold sweat and finally came out of his initial shock, quickly stepping forward to pay his respects, "Liu Yuanrui, greets Ancestor Meng."

The Liu Family and the Gongsun Clan were in disagreement, but it was merely a matter of disharmony, not a case of being mortal enemies. It didn't mean that younger generations could casually disregard an elder like Ancestor Meng from another clan.

"So you are one of the 'Yuan' generation of the Liu Family. A while ago, I met your older brother, Yuan Hui. He is quite promising and has the potential of reaching the Spiritual Platform. Given the resources of the Liu Family, he can be well-cultivated. However, you seem unstable and your physical conditions appear loose. In the future, you should focus more on cultivation.

Whether or not one can reach the Spiritual Platform is uncertain, so do not give up easily." Ancestor Meng, quite the senior, offered a few words of advice.

"Yes, I'll work hard." Liu Yuanrui was sweating from his forehead. You usually couldn't contradict what an elder said, even if they were from another clan.

After the formalities were done.

Grandmother Gongsun Hui bowed to Ancestor Meng and said, "Grandfather, I've finished communicating with Ancestor Longyan. She has been waiting for a long time, shall we go now?"

As soon as Ancestor Longyan was mentioned, even Ancestor Meng became solemn, and his eyes showed respect, "Hui'er, you lead the way. It's been a long time since I last saw my aunt."

Ancestor Meng's mother was Wang Lingdie, the legitimate daughter of the fourth generation of the Wang family, and Great Aunt to Ancestor Longyan. Therefore, she was his legitimate aunt.

Gongsun Hui led the way with Ancestor Meng following behind.

As for Wang Shouzhe and Liu Yuanrui, the younger ones naturally followed closely behind.

They informed Ancestor Longyan and then entered Long Yan Habitat.

Ancestor Longyan had already been waiting in the courtyard. With her white hair flowing over back, she wore a veil and was dressed in simple clothes. She gave the impression of being transcendent and beyond the mundane world, resembling a truly exiled fairy.

Compared to Wang Mei's impersonation of Zhong Luoxian, Ancestor Longyan seemed as different as heaven and earth.

Meng, the Old Ancestor, was the first to pay his respects, bowing and saying, "Gongsun Meng, pays respect to Granny Longyan."

"Meng'er." In the eyes of Old Ancestor Longyan, as deep as the starry sky, there was a trace of sigh, "Every time I see you, I can't help but think of the past. When your mother was young, she always looked forward to my return from the Academic Palace, because she knew she would get some rare and delicious snacks.

Time passes by as fast as a white horse crossing a gap, and before one realizes it, everything has changed."

Listening to Old Ancestor Longyan's reflection, Wang Shouzhe couldn't help but be amused. So, Meng's mother was a foodie when she was young.

No wonder Old Ancestor Longyan is so fond of the damsel Wang Licui. She sees the childlikeness of her younger niece in her.

"Granny, my mother has lived a peaceful life devoid of worries and troubles in this lifetime, please don't be sad." Meng, the Old Ancestor, comforted.

But only Meng himself knew that his mother, Lingdie, although she lived to the age of eighty, suffered from heartaches for the last twenty years, which no one could cure.

It was because of the devastation of her mother's clan, she pitied her Old Ancestor, but more so her Granny Longyan and her brother Qiong. Even the best dan medicine can cure the body but not mend a broken heart.

He remembered that twenty-five years ago, when his mother, Lingdie, was on her deathbed, she held his hand and instructed him, "Meng'er, if you ever get a chance in the future, be sure to lend a hand to help the Wang family."

He remembered these words.

Otherwise, why would Gongsun Hui have agreed to marry Wang Dingyue? If it wasn't for Gongsun Meng championing the cause, Gongsun Mo might not have agreed to the marriage, let alone the other elders.

"Old Ancestor Longyan, Elder Meng," Wang Shouzhe urged, "Let's all sit down and talk. Let bygones be bygones, we should look forward to a better future."

Both the elder-level figures were not ordinary people. They quickly composed themselves and took their seats on the stone benches in the pavilion.

Now, Liu Yuanrui finally had a chance to pay his respects, "Liu Yuanrui from the Liu family, pays respect to Old Ancestor Longyan."

Old Ancestor Longyan had personally gone to the Liu family to arrange the match for Wang Shouzhe, so naturally, she was familiar with the younger generation of the Liu family. Her voice softened a few points, "Yuanrui, you do have the demeanor of a scholar. It's not a bad choice to choose a career in government. However, you should not neglect your cultivation."

With the discernment of Old Ancestor Longyan, she could easily identify Liu Yuanrui's predicament.

"Yes, granny." Liu Yuanrui was sweating profusely. He had already been criticized by both Elders today.

Inwardly, he vowed that once he returned, he would diligently pursue his cultivation practices.

In addition, he hadn't expected that his brother Shouzhe had already achieved the seventh level of Qi Refinement, on par with his twenty-one-year-old older brother, Liu Yuanhui.

With this potential, it's no wonder that the family ultimately agreed to the marriage.

Think about it, given the situation the Wang family is facing, if Wang Shouzhe didn't have any potential, even if Granny Longyan had face, she wouldn't be able to convince the Liu Family.

Gongsun Hui began to serve tea to the two elders, using Shanyang's miniature spirit seeds. She had also laid out some fresh fruits and other items that she had gleaned from her maternal home.

However, Wang Shouzhe and Liu Yuanrui, the younger generation, just stood quietly on one side, attentively listening to their conversation.

After quite a while, they began to talk about Wang Shouzhe.

The locust plague was the first topic, followed by how he managed to secure a large quantity of grain from the Qian Merchant House. Subsequently, he sold this grain at a high price to the Liu and Zhao families.

And now, he has started to obstruct the merger plans of the Liu and Zhao families.

All these actions are brilliantly chained, ensnaring the Liu and Zhao families in an unescapable trap. They had hoped to exploit the situation for a massive profit by buying and selling grain at exorbitant prices.

But now, Wang Shouzhe counters their exploitation by using the funds earmarked for their clearance and infilling project for disaster relief. In doing so, he not only saves labor costs but also rescues farmers who were on the verge of falling victim to Liu and Zhao families' selfish interests, shattering their plans.

Having failed their scheme, their reputation is tarnished. Not only did they not gain any benefits, but they also have a massive amount of overpriced grain stuck on their hands. After all this, the prestige of the Wang family among the locals in Ping'an Town will undoubtedly eclipse that of the Liu and Zhao families.

Elder Meng had nothing but praise for Wang Shouzhe.

Whereas Liu Yuanrui, was astounded. His future brother-in-law, Shouzhe, is power-packed. His series of impressive maneuvers and strategies have not only dug holes for others but have also garnered large benefits for the Wang family.

Even the two elders are heeding his commands here, assisting him in handling the subsequent matters.

At this point, Old Ancestor Longyan cast a meaningful glance at Wang Shouzhe. Mentioning all these matters in front of Liu Yuanrui was naturally meant for him to relay back to his family.

This should quiet down any gossip within the Liu family.

However, Old Ancestor Longyan was also aware of the behind-the-scenes information. The "achievements" that Wang Shouzhe could announce to the public are only limited to these.

The rest of his daring plan, however, must remain hidden from the public eye since it pertains to the grand plan for the future rise of the Wang family!

Wang Longyan was very clear that there were still some families in Changning's Guard City who did not want to see the rise of the Wang family.

A moment later!

A cold light flickered in her eyes.

Now that her injury was gradually healing, it was time for her, Wang Longyan, to settle old scores bit by bit.