

Protect OCL VI4 51

Chapter 51: The Wang Family Dominates Longzuo! Battling with the Great Emperor

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Subsequently, Wang Shouzhe fed the creature twice more, each time over a thousand catties of various Spirit Fish.

After consuming all these, the Kunfish cub finally seemed somewhat sated. It lowered its head and affectionately nuzzled both Wang Shouzhe and Liu Ruolan with its forehead before it started playing in Zhuwei Lake.

Over the years, the Wang family had consistently dredged and deepened Zhuwei Lake in order to increase its water storage capacity. This served not only to facilitate freshwater aquaculture and irrigate farmlands but also to enhance Ping'an Town's flood storage capacity during the rainy season.

Decades had passed, and Zhuwei Lake was no longer the shallow lake with thin water layers it once was; its deepest central area had even reached thirty zhang, qualifying it as a large reservoir now. The lake was teeming with fish, some weighing a hundred catties and even several hundred catties.

Even so, the thirty-zhang long Kunfish cub in Zhuwei Lake could still be considered a massive creature. Wherever it went, its movement created waves and ripples on the water surface, causing various schools of fish to frantically scatter.

However, the scattering of the fish only sparked the Kunfish cub's predatory desire.

With a roar at the schools of fish, it stunned or killed them, then, like a whale, it sucked and swallowed them up. Water streamed out through its gills while the delicious fish remained in its mouth.

"This devouring ability..." Wang Shouzhe and Liu Ruolan floated above the surface of Zhuwei Lake, somewhat speechless.

Legend has it that Kun possess divine devouring powers and an appetite as vast as the sea. Seeing it firsthand today, its reputation is indeed well deserved.

Apart from that, Kun also possess the ability to shuttle through space. However, it had just been born and its strength was still shallow, only able to exhibit space abilities akin to a Small Divine Power level.

As it continuously consumed massive amounts of Spirit Fish, its strength swiftly grew, and its space-time shuttle ability gradually awakened.

Gradually, a faint layer of space fluctuation began to appear on its body. Each flick of its tail seemed as if it was swimming through gaps in space, as if the space was invisibly shortened, making its movement in the water look exceptionally smooth and agile.

"Truly worthy of being an Immortal Beast cub," Wang Shouzhe exclaimed admiringly, "Even just hatched, it already exhibits many miraculous traits and can already slightly exercise its Innate Divine Abilities. With such talent and potential, it's no wonder it was given as the first-pass reward for the eighth level."

According to Wang Shouzhe's understanding, the growth potential of an Immortal Beast is roughly equivalent to a human's Innate Taoist Body.

In his household, Liu Ruolan, Wang Liyao, and Old Ancestor Longyan have already advanced to the Innate Spiritual Body level; in layman's terms, they are at the level of Unparalleled Heavenly Children. Yet, compared to a Kunfish that could grow into an Immortal Beast, their bloodline potential still falls a entire major rank beneath it.

One could imagine how terrifying the talent within a human's Innate Taoist Body must be.

Subsequently.

Wang Shouzhe then brought Wang Anye over and had him play with the Kunfish cub to begin establishing a companionship. The Kun species is well-known for its mild temperament, especially when bonds formed at birth are the purest.

In just a few days, Wang Anye and the Kunfish cub had become "good brothers." The Kunfish was already willing to carry Anye as they swam through the water, and knowing that Anye was relatively weak, it knew to activate a stream of energy to protect him while swimming.

At this point.

The hatching plan for Wang Zongkun was complete, and the subsequent tasks of feeding, educating, and accompanying it could then be confidently entrusted to Anye.

After all, his Boundless Ring was large enough to store a lot of Spirit Fish and Spirit Meat.

Although, when placing lower-tier items inside, the Boundless Miss might complain, but it's believed that with Anye's affinity, he would easily be able to appease the Boundless Miss.

After delegating the responsibility of nurturing Wang Zongkun to Wang Anye.

Wang Shouzhe then resumed his leisurely and relaxed lifestyle.

On this sunny day.

Wang Shouzhe set up a tea banquet in his courtyard and invited Wang Shi Feng and several other younger family members to join him for tea and chat.

During the gathering, although Wang Shouzhe was very gentle and amiable, the six young men and women present all felt immense pressure, as though sitting on pins and needles, even being extremely cautious when drinking tea.

Everyone knew that their grandfather/great-uncle was always a rigorous teacher, the Great Demon King. One moment he might be laughingly praising you, but in the next instant, he might eagerly start testing you on your schooling, work, or even poetry and songs, or Profound Martial Fighting Techniques...

If he was satisfied, you might well receive some red envelopes as rewards.

But if he was unsatisfied, well then, haha! He would keep an eye on you, frequently pulling you aside for a heart-to-heart talk and drilling you continually until he was satisfied.

"JingLei," Wang Shouzhe said cheerfully to Wang JingLei, "how have you been adjusting to work at the Refining Artifact Headquarters? Shi Chuan is quite capable overall; you should learn well from him."

"Great-uncle, Shi Chuan treats me just like a little sister and only gives me bits and pieces of work," Wang JingLei slightly complained, making a crafty face, "I'm now following Brother Fifteen's advice, preparing to transfer to the sales department to hone my skills, and then return to the Refining Artifact Headquarters after achieving some results."

"Well thought out; indeed a child of our family, quite assertive," Wang Shouzhe praised, then added, "But you can't neglect your cultivation, as strength is the foundation, and the Profound Martial Fighting Techniques must not lag behind."

Nowadays, the Wang family, through [Number 37 Conscription Point], [Divine Martial Dynasty's Fifth New Recruit Training Camp], has seen the younger generation's opportunities rise. Not to say everyone is a Sky Pride or Great Heavenly Proud, but given decent talents and good character, aiming for the level of Heavenly Chosen is still essential.

Chapter 51: The Wang Family Dominates Longzuo! A Magical Duel with the Great Emperor

Although, as of now, the "Junior Bloodline Aptitude Improvement Liquid" is in short supply, if really necessary, the Bone Marrow Cleansing Pill and the Wujibao Pill can be used as substitutes. The effect of the Wujibao Pill is even better, but the only problem is that they are too few and too expensive.

Nowadays, not to mention that the Family Alchemist Wang Shouye has no ability to refine them, even his master, Alchemist Danding, has yet to manage the art.

Wang Shouzhe had already found out that part of the Wujibao Pills on sale in auction houses comes from Lingyun Holy Ground and another part is imported from Frost Moon Immortal Dynasty. Moreover, it is said that the Wujibao Pills from the Immortal Dynasty are sold for much less than those in Da Qian.

Fortunately, Li Yao's master, the Enlightened One Tianhe, plans to take Li Yao to the Immortal Dynasty for exposure. Should they manage to find a supplier for the Wujibao Pills on this occasion, that would be ideal.

As for things like the Bridal Clothes Blood Gu, although the Great Qian dynasty had indeed produced a few Blood Nests in the past, firstly, the total number of Blood Nests is still very small, and secondly, most of the past Blood Gu were collected by the Sacred Land. Apart from a few samples and those used for research, the rest were taken to battlefields beyond their domain.

There were always some criminals willing to redeem themselves by trying to upgrade their Bloodline with Blood Gu. Those who failed, just failed; if they succeeded, they could use it to strengthen their capacities and later earn redemption through meritorious warfare.

Thus, the Bridal Clothes Blood Gu was something one could only hope to come upon by chance, not as a regular channel for Bloodline enhancement.

In fact, what Wang Shouzhe wanted the most was the formula for the "Junior Bloodline Aptitude Improvement Liquid." Although its effects were not as profound as those of the Wujibao Pill, it was most suitable for children who were not yet adults.

"Yes, great uncle,"

In the outside world, Wang JingLei was considered a minor goddess, but in front of Wang Shouzhe, she was as obedient as a little quail.

Wang Shouzhe carefully took care of each person in turn before diving into the main topic.

"Shi Jing, Shi Lian," Wang Shouzhe smiled and asked, "I've heard these past few days you've been quite close to those two girls from the Yan Family? How do they seem to you?"

Upon hearing this, Wang Shijing and Wang Shilian both blushed, looking somewhat awkward and bashful.

Among them, Shijing had a younger brother named "Shiluan," which means "full of literary grace," a name given by Wang Shou Yong, who hoped his grandson would be full of wisdom and stand out from the crowd.

As for Shi Lian, that was the name passed on to his grandson by Wang Shouliao, also with high hopes attached.

Such naming practices were common among prominent families; the surname represented the same lineage and clan, the generational name indicated the hierarchical lineage, and the last character often carried a hopeful meaning, which is why positive characters like 'Xing,' 'Ping,' 'An,' and 'Rui' were frequently used.

Some of the younger generation's names also originated from their ancestors, representing another form of inheritance.

After all, there are only so many good names, and families that have lasted thousands of years often have enormous numbers of members, making duplicate names quite normal.

But, I digress.

Seeing them act shy, Wang Shouzhe couldn't help but laugh and scold, "A man should marry when he comes of age, as should a woman. You are both boys; what is there to be shy about?"

For someone like Wang Shouzhe, who had the right to inherit the family name, marriage was often of significant importance, and in most cases, he would have no say in the matter. However, for the direct line descendants within the family, there were a lot more options. Young people would often organize spring outings and social gatherings, and sometimes a boy and girl would take a liking to each other and inform their parents, with the boy's family then proceeding with a marriage proposal.

This was also a tradition among the prominent families.

This time, letting Shi Feng lead the outing with them and the Yan Family's youth was also done with this intention.

"What do you think, Feng'er?" Wang Shouzhe turned to his grandson Wang Shifeng.

He was quite satisfied with this grandson. The children from his second son, Zongrui's line, though not as talented in Cultivation and Bloodline as Zong'an's line, were more grounded and capable of doing solid work.

Of course, Yuxuan, that crazy girl, was the exception.

Not only did she give Zongrui and Xunfeng a headache, but she was also a big problem for Wang Shouzhe.

The so-called Beautiful Girls Alliance, although turned by her into a study group, leading to improved grades for everyone, her primary motivation never changed. She always saw herself as the future "Military Goddess," starting military drills on a whim and rallying some boys for a fight, causing chaos at home with endless complaints.

Now that her academic performance had improved and she showed "respect" to the clan school teachers, leading her followers in diligent study and effort to improve scholastic achievement, there was, for the time being, no appropriate reason to deal with her.

He wished she would grow up fast, so he could send her to Lingyun Sacred Land to let her cause a stir there instead, granting at least some peace to himself, Wang Shouzhe.

Chapter 51: The Wang Family Dominates Longzuo! A Magical Duel with the Great Emperor

"Grandfather." Wang Shi Feng replied with a bow, "This time, the Yan Family has scraped together all their resources to nurture a Military Goddess, indeed it seems they have done it for the purpose of asking a high price. But then again, which family would sell their sons and daughters unless they are truly desperate?"

At this point, he sighed, his tone filled with reluctance, "That girl, Shuang Er, is pure and good-natured, smart and polite. If she were to join the Clan School and catch up on her studies, she would have great potential. If it were to end like this... it truly would be..."

In the end, he found it difficult to continue.

He was well aware that within the Prominent Families, the treatment of women in the Wang family was absolutely the best, even those who married into the family were treated equally. If Yan Shuang Shuang was to marry into the Wang family, she would not be held back; she could continue her cultivation and her studies. However, if she were to marry into another Purple Abode Prominent Family, not only would she lack the backing of a powerful maternal family, but she might also have to support her own maternal family, which could make her future difficult.

"Alright, since Feng'er speaks for the Yan Family, then I will grant your request this one time," Wang Shouzhe said with a smile, "You go meet Old Ancestor Yu Fei and Family Head Fei Hong. Tell them that I have been entangled with minor matters recently and have not had the time to entertain them. I will hold a banquet as an apology."

This matter had been put off for over ten days, and he believed that the mood of the Yan Family should have stabilized by now. At least, they wouldn't presume the Wang family to be easy to trick.

In Wang Shouzhe's grand plans for his future assets, the northwestern part of Longzuo also played an important role. If the Yan family did not have significant issues, Wang Shouzhe was still willing to give them a hand.

"Thank you, Grandfather. I will see to it immediately," Wang Shi Feng suddenly felt deeply favored and immediately stood up to leave.

Clearly, he also had a fairly good impression of Yan Shuang Shuang.

As for Yinglei and the other girls, Wang Shouzhe did not inquire about the Yan family's males. Before bringing them in for a talk, he had already thoroughly investigated the situation. The three of them simply looked down upon the young males of the Yan family. Asking them was pointless.

Afterwards, Wang Shouzhe casually talked with the children for a good while. Apart from being somewhat dissatisfied with Shi Lian's studies, the others were acceptable, and he reluctantly let them go.

It was only after those children had left Wang Shouzhe's courtyard by a few dozen yards that they each heaved a deep sigh, revealing relieved expressions. The tests of Old Fourth were truly unexpected and could come at any moment!

Fortunately, this time, apart from the miserable-faced Wang Shilian, the others had safely passed.

Poor Wang Shilian, it seemed he would not have a peaceful year ahead. His father, Wang Zongtai, upon receiving the news, would definitely not let him off the hook.

The evening's residual light spread over Zhuwei Lake, the breeze stirring the water's surface into ripples that caught the splintered light of the sunset, creating a scene as beautiful as a painting, serene and tranquil from a distance.

Wang Shouzhe hosted the Yan family's Old Ancestor and Family Head by the shores of Zhuwei Lake.

During the meeting, it was unclear what transpired or what was discussed, but when Old Ancestor Yu Fei emerged, the sombre look on his face had been replaced by a flush of red and his brows were filled with joy. And Family Head Fei Hong was so excited he seemed to float as he walked.

The next day.

The Yan family's Old Ancestor Yu Fei and Family Head Fei Hong took a flying carriage straight back to the Yan family.

Meanwhile, the younger members of the Yan family were arranged to study in the Wang Family School, together with some less advanced juniors. This included those like Wang Ying Xuan and Wang Yingqi who, despite some progress, still lacked much. Among them was also the person claimed to be the most challenging student in the Clan School—the ultimate poor student—Wang Lilong.

Along with a future Military Goddess of the Wang family, her fervent deputy, and a young Azure Dragon in a floral dress, they attended remedial classes. The younger members of the Yan family had to be wary of "being eaten by the dragon" while also resisting the fervent recruitment efforts of the lineage of the Military Goddess, making their days rather eventful.

Among them, the young males from the Yan family had to contend occasionally with challenges from some loud young girls, essentially getting a once-in-a-lifetime "eventful life" experience.

Luckily, Li Xian and Zongkun were still too young to attend the Clan School, otherwise their level of distress would have been even higher.

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Time flowed like water, and in the blink of an eye, a month or two had passed.

On the Wang family's side, the parents of Wang Shi Feng and Yan Shuang Shuang had already met and started the process of engagement, while in Return to Dragon City, storms began to brew.

In the Imperial Palace of Return to Dragon City.

Inside Zhuozheng Pavilion, the curtains hung low and incense wafted gently.

Emperor Longchang hummed a tune, admiring some renowned artworks, his demeanor radiantly happy, clearly in a good mood.

Old Yao stood bowed behind him, whispering a reminder, "Your Majesty, the Secretariat has presented a few more petitions, some from military Prominent Families and some from idle Commandery Princes."

"Hehe~" Emperor Longchang did not even lift his eyelids, his demeanor full of satisfaction, he responded, "Is it Taishi Ankang again, going everywhere begging for mercy? Just set those petitions aside for now. I am old and don't have as much energy to deal with minor matters. Surely no one can make idle comments about that, right?"

"Yes, Your Majesty." After Old Yao responded, he whispered again, "However, Your Majesty, some Prominent Families and officials are still whispering privately about this matter. Longzuo County is a newly established county with shallow foundations, yet it has shown some progress over the past few years. Now that Your Majesty has suddenly imposed a fifty percent tax increase, they say... "

Chapter 51: The Wang Family Dominates Longzuo! A Magical Duel with the Great Emperor

"They say I'm purposely suppressing An Commandery Prince's 'claws,' suspecting that I'm taking sides, right?" Emperor Longchang said indifferently, "Let them say whatever they want. In Wang Shouzhe's eyes, nothing I do is ever right. Sometimes being a muddle-headed ruler can be quite interesting—no mental burden at all~"

"Wang Shouzhe thinks he's so capable, doesn't he? Likes to secretly trash talk my policies? Claims he can 'turn stone into gold'? Well, if he's so talented, let him show me something big. Hahaha~ Watching that young fellow and his entourage hopping around in a panic, my heart is just one word, thrilled! Hahaha~~~"

"Old Yao, don't think I don't know, haven't you taken benefits from An Commandery Prince's side, agreeing to speak for him? It's fine, take your benefits and keep talking nicely. I'm not listening anyway, and no one can do anything about me, hahahaha~"

Old Yao was speechless.

Your Majesty, you are becoming more and more...

With no option left, Old Yao changed the subject, "Your Majesty, there's another piece of good news. The Frost Moon Immortal Dynasty's Cloud Ray Flying Boat will soon arrive at Return to

Dragon City, and the Painting of the Divine Dynasty Twilight, the masterpiece by Master Ji which you instructed someone to bid for at a high price, will be in your hands soon."

"Good! This is indeed a double celebration," Emperor Longchang brightened up even more at the news, "Old Yao, help me ponder, where is the best spot to hang Master Ji's masterpiece? Right there, I'll be able to see it every time I look up from my desk."

"No no, that place is too eye-catching, good things should be savor slowly... hang it behind me?"

"No no, still..."

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Meanwhile, as Emperor Longchang was "troubled" by such matters, a Cloud Ray Flying Boat bearing the flag of Yao's Air Transport was speeding through the layers of the Sea of Clouds towards Da Qian.

It was an immense flying "beast."

Though named a "Flying Boat," its overall shape resembled a ray from the ocean, with a pair of huge light-blue ray wings spread on either side of the boat's hull, slowly flapping as it moved forward, as if gliding through the air.

The torrential energy layer currents roared above and below the ray wings, stirring up a ten-thousand-foot surge. The surging energy created a lifting force in a special way that allowed the Cloud Ray Flying Boat to travel tens of thousands of miles through the Tempest Layer with minimal consumption, shuttling between the Frost Moon Immortal Dynasty and Da Qian.

The construction of a Cloud Ray Flying Boat was extremely complex, involving much advanced Artifact Refining knowledge. Currently, Da Qian simply lacked the capability to produce Cloud Ray Flying Boats.

Therefore, to some extent, it was also a testament to the Frost Moon Immortal Dynasty's advanced Artifact Refining strength and a symbolic product of human civilization's achievements.

However, compared to usual, it was somewhat ungraceful as it navigated the clouds, occasionally trembling and shaking as if something was wrong.

On closer inspection, the boat's ray wings were covered in tatters and patches, and parts of the dragonbones were exposed, twisted and contorted as if they had been hastily repaired with special techniques.

Inside the cabin of the Cloud Ray Flying Boat, the conditions were a complete mess, with scratch marks and repair signs all over the floor and walls. In one corner, there was even a huge pile of unrecognizable, shattered junk.

In the beast cage.

Five little wolf cubs sat in a neat line, their eyes pure and innocent, as if the secret acts of destruction along the way had nothing to do with them at all.

They were still young, and as little wolf cubs, what was so bad about being playful?

Who asked you humans to be so careless, first forgetting to lock it, then using a flimsy lock, and providing substandard cages... How was that related to them?

The captain of this Cloud Ray Flying Boat, Yao Chengchao, was a robust middle-aged man who usually steered at the front, but now he sat in front of the cubs' cage, staring at them as if facing a formidable enemy.

He looked ragged and exhausted, with bloodshot eyes, his face worn as if he hadn't slept for months. He was holding a wine jug in his hand, frequently taking sips directly from it, and as he drank, tears started flowing.

"Dammit, dammit, what kind of gods raised these wolf cubs? Why does every single one seem as cunning as a sprite, can't you look away for even a moment."

"Wuu wuu~~ my tribute wines, and all those rare goods... most importantly, the Painting of the Divine Dynasty Twilight intended for Emperor Longchang."

As soon as he mentioned the Painting of the Divine Dynasty Twilight, Yao Chengchao couldn't help but look despairingly at the pile of rubbish, things that were beyond any hope of repair.

This loss was too great, a severe blow to Yao's finances!

"Which damned shopkeeper took on the task of transporting wolf cubs? When I get back, I'll make sure you pay for this!!!" Yao Chengchao, born into the Yao family, roared incessantly.

At the same time.

In a certain place of the Immortal Dynasty, a chubby shopkeeper was sneezing continuously, "Achoo, achoo~~"

After pondering for a moment, he recalled the task of transporting the little wolf cubs, it should be nearing Dongqian Country by now, right?

Thinking about how fat that deal was, how much pure profit it promised, he felt waves of excitement wash over him.

Once this deal was settled, headquarters would surely recognize his contributions and talents, right?

Promotion and raise were just around the corner, then he could afford two concubines. His nagging wife at home, hehe~~

The fat shopkeeper smiled, his face rippling with pleasure, those easy marks looking so dear—it would be fantastic if there were more like them, then his life would take off!

Chapter 52: Wang Shouzhe! You and I are irreconcilable!

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Heading northwest from Longzuo County Town, the terrain gradually rises.

A broad river originates from the plateau of the great mountain range—the Tianlong Mountain Range—and traverses Longzuo from west to east, surging into the sea from the Jinzhou Peninsula.

In the middle and upper reaches of the river lies the Red Gold Plateau, where the elevation drops significantly to the east. Mixed with abundant red sand, the river waters run red and majestically, giving rise to its name—the Chijin River!

Compared to Peace River's "winding embrace" and "magnificent stretches," the Chijin River is wildly torrential, exuding an overwhelming presence and a unique brand of boldness.

The Chijin Guard.

This Guard City, too, once had its glorious era.

In the early days of pioneering in Longzuo County, this place was densely populated, with various clan forces asserting dominance. It was the undisputed heart of the north of Longzuo, a territory coveted by all Prominent Families.

In the end, with the ascension of the Yan Family Old Ancestor to the Purple Abode Realm, their dominance over the region was declared and has continued to this day.

The current Yan Yufei Old Ancestor is the Yan Family's third-generation Purple Abode Old Ancestor. Over a hundred years ago, the Sky Pride of the Yan Family, Yan Jingchi, would have been their fourth-generation Purple Abode Old Ancestor had he successfully broken through to the Purple Abode Realm.

Alas, things do not always go as one wishes in this world. Yan Jingchi ultimately failed to break through to the Purple Abode Realm, plunging the Yan Family into a crisis of succession.

Nowadays, within a thousand miles of the seven guards in the north of Longzuo County, the situation seems calm, but in reality, countless Prominent Families are silently sharpening their blades, waiting for the fall of the Yan Family to seize their share.

Even within the Yan Family, there is a pervasive anxiety, with hopes pinned on Old Ancestor Yufei and Family Head Feihong to resolve the family crisis and survive the most difficult times.

On this day.

Outside the eastern city gate of Red Gold City, the core Guard City of the northern seven guards, the main official road had been under traffic control for three days.

All Independent Cultivators, Prominent Families, commoners, and merchant caravans were strictly forbidden from passing through "Red East Avenue"; those wishing to leave the city had to detour through the west and south gates.

In the majority of cities, eastward is deemed honorific, as epitomized by the belief of "Eastward Purple Energy, Honorable Guest arriving." Therefore, high-profile guests are usually received at the eastern city gate. For instance, when Longzuo County faced a flood, Changning Defender Xiahou Hongde welcomed Fang Youan at the city's eastern gate.

And now, outside the eastern city gate of Red Gold City, preparations were laid out to welcome a prestigious guest.

Outside the eastern city gate, Welcome to Immortal Plaza.

Bathed in sunlight, the plaza paved with local specialty Chijin bricks sparkled with radiance.

In the vast center of the plaza stood a towering "Welcome to Immortal Platform," grandiose and graceful in design, showcasing the Chijin Guard's hospitality.

Indeed, this platform was built in yesteryears exclusively for Emperor Longchang's visit. During the time of the great clout in the northern regions of Longzuo, there were plans for Emperor Longchang to inspect Longzuo and hold court in Red Gold City.

However, after the platform was completed, Emperor Longchang toured Longzuo County City and proceeded directly to Tianjin Guard, then to the Qingluo Sea for inspection. Overwhelmed with sorrow for the Eldest Princess Qingluo, he left in low spirits, returning directly to Return to Dragon City.

As a result, the substantial resources Red Gold City invested in building the Welcome to Immortal Platform turned out to be for naught, never to be used. But what can you do with an emperor's whims? Obviously, you can't scold him in a memorial to the throne.

This also leads to the conclusion that Emperor Longchang was quite capricious in his prime. It's only that now, as his life nears its end, his actions have become even less conservative, exhibiting his unpredictable mood swings and pettiness all the more freely.

Therefore, the Welcome to Immortal Platform became a facility used to receive other prestigious guests. However, with the decline of the Yan Family, the platform had not been used for nearly a hundred years.

But this time, after nearly a hundred years of silence, the Welcome to Immortal Platform was being used once again.

Beginning three days prior, the platform was gradually cleaned and decorated, and now, the whole structure gleamed anew, with fresh flowers and colored silk ribbons adorning the sides, presenting a grand spectacle.

At this moment, there were already quite a number of people standing on the Welcome to Immortal Platform.

In Red Gold Guard, only a few were qualified to stand on the platform.

Among them were Red Gold City's Lord Duan Yangxia, Tianlong Old Ancestor Liu Wenzhi of the Chijin 7th Rank Liu Clan, Yan Yufei, the Purple Abode Old Ancestor of Yan Family in Longzuo, Yan Family Head Yan Feihong, the current Purple Abode Seed of the Yan Family Yan Yujing, along with some officials from the City Guard Mansion.

Around the Welcome Plaza, fully armed patrolling soldiers kept the onlookers at bay. Atop the city walls, the City Defense Army also appeared particularly spirited.

As everyone waited, the time slowly ticked by.

Suddenly.

"Myau!"

From within the clouds in the sky, came the clear and piercing cries of spirit birds.

Immediately after, several flying carriages broke through the clouds, appearing in the sight of all the people of Red Gold Guard. Guided by the people on the ground, the carriages circled and descended onto the Welcome to Immortal Platform.

These flying carriages all bore the emblem of the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm.

Once they landed, a woman with graceful looks and a mature, elegant bearing was the first to step out of the carriage, followed by numerous young men and women staff officers, as well as guards from the other carriages.

The leading woman, dressed in a modified brocade attire of dark purple, exuded grace and nobility, reminiscent of a blooming peony, dignified yet without a trace of vulgarity.

Surrounded by a host of young men and women, she appeared composed, her gaze steady and assertive. One couldn't help but sense her authority, clearly someone used to holding power and accustomed to grand occasions.

Chapter 52 Wang Shouzhe! I am Irreconcilable with You_2

Less than two steps behind her, there followed a puppet from the Heavenly Human Realm exuding a powerful aura; it was clearly there to ensure her safety.

This woman was none other than Gongsun Hui, Gongsun Clan's Family Head's father's first wife.

Gongsun Hui, born into the direct bloodline of the Gongsun Clan of Shanyang, had not led an easy life after becoming the stepmother in the Wang family. Fortunately, her son, Wang Shouzhe, proved himself by not only turning the tide during critical times, overturning the declining situation of the Wang family but also leading the in-law families to prosperity and growth.

Over the decades, today's Gongsun Clan of Shanyang had transformed into the Changning Gongsun Clan, having reached the 7th Rank among Prominent Families and unswervingly aiming for the 6th Rank—perhaps even the Fifth Grade Purple Abode in the future.

Thus, the Gongsun Clan had long decided to firmly cling to the Wang family. The current Clan Leader, Gongsun Yan, admired his cousin Wang Shouzhe immensely and always looked to him for direction.

The Keep Achieving Commercial Firm, a joint venture between the Wang family's In-laws Alliance and the Qian Family, was the most solid bond of interest among the Prominent Families beyond bloodline alliances.

Starting from high-end transportation, the cash flow generated by the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm each year was a terrifying figure.

Aside from the annual dividends, a significant amount of cash was retained by the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm for expansion. Apart from its own business, the firm also invested in and acquired other high-quality industries.

Moreover, the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm also purchased commercial properties, land, and built massive turnaround warehouses and accommodation businesses such as hotels in various City Lord jurisdictions.

This made the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm grow like a little monster, continuously devouring and expanding rapidly; in just a few decades, it had developed into a colossal entity.

Of course, during this period there were various minor issues.

After all, human nature is prone to selfishness, and with the size of the organization increasing, as does the number of birds in a huge forest, the administrative defects became magnified and small problems followed one another.

Therefore, Wang Shouzhe personally took action and called upon Qian Xuehan to carry out massive reforms in the internal structure of the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm.

The primary direction of the reforms was to implement a modern management system by establishing various departments, gradually building workflow standardizations and strict related policies through repeated trials.

One of these crucial departments was the Finance Department.

The person in charge of the Finance Department, known as the Chief Financial Officer, oversaw all cash flow within the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm. In addition, the Finance Department also had the right to audit and evaluate the financial conditions of any external investments or merger projects.

It could be said that the Chief Financial Officer of the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm held an extraordinary position.

If any serious or murky financial discrepancies were found during the review of some projects, the Chief Financial Officer had the authority to reject or halt such projects and, if necessary, even call a shareholders' meeting.

Such a key role naturally should be occupied by someone from the Wang family, which held the highest stakes.

Previously, Gongsun Hui had been one of the accountants at the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm, proficient in finance and particularly keen on economics and numbers. Thus, quite naturally, she was appointed by Wang Shouzhe as the Chief Financial Officer.

In the beginning, Gongsun Hui focused on safeguarding the interests of the Wang family, keeping a close watch on the accounts of the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm. To her surprise, she became more adept at her work over time and often discussed any uncertain issues with Wang Shouzhe upon returning home.

Though Wang Shouzhe was not a finance professional in his previous life, he lived in an era of information explosion. Absorbing knowledge through osmosis, his expertise wasn't deep, but he had a wide breadth of understanding. His ideas and suggestions were regarded as standards by Gongsun Hui and progressively integrated into her work.

This enabled Gongsun Hui to become even more proficient in financial matters, gradually formulating a unique set of financial methods and systems.

But let's put that aside for the moment.

At the current gathering at the Welcoming Immortals Platform, the Yan Family and the Chijin Guard warmly welcomed Gongsun Hui's party, expressing they had prepared a grand banquet to entertain them with the highest courtesy.

Regarding the Yan family, Wang Shouzhe was naturally not inclined to offer help gratuitously but proposed a comprehensive solution involving the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm as the

economic mainstay, injecting capital into the Yan family's industries, and incorporating those industries into his greater plan for the industries of Longzuo County.

If successful, the Yan Family would not only extricate itself from difficulties but could potentially rise to higher heights.

Should it fail, having already latched onto the Wang family's ship, would the Wang family just watch the Yan Family fall into decline and be besieged?

Gongsun Hui was not only the Chief Financial Officer of the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm but also Wang Shouzhe's father's first wife. In the entire Longzuo County, she was absolutely a prominent figure—how could the Yan family dare to treat her with anything less than full respect?

"Ancestor Yu Fei, Family Head Feihong, Lord City Lord Duan," Gongsun Hui's eyes swept across the crowd, her steady and powerful gaze passing over the people, she said indifferently, "This trip is not a personal visit. Although Shouzhe has proposed that the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm fund the asset restructuring of the Yan family's industries and establish a subsidiary company, as the Chief Financial Officer of the firm, I need to be responsible for every shareholder."

"We've already notified your family in advance by letter about the matter, so I presume your accountant has prepared the past years' ledgers. Let's start the work sooner, so we can quickly complete the account verification and asset audit, allowing the subsidiary to enter into a formal operating phase."

Chapter 52: Wang Shouzhe! You and I are irreconcilable_3

The Yan clan members once again extended invitations, but Gongsun Hui insisted on handling matters impartially and would not be swayed. With no alternative, the Yan family had no choice but to let her do as she wished.

Soon, the financial department led by Gongsun Hui took up residence in the Yan family's main residence and began auditing a series of assets prepared for the capital injection and restructuring plan.

Initially, the Yan family thought Gongsun Hui was merely going through the motions since they had never heard of the financial terminology she used. However, they quickly realized how formidable Gongsun Hui was.

The team she brought with her consisted of elite financiers she had spent decades gradually cultivating, all of them experts in asset auditing and project auditing.

"Chief Accountant of Yan Clan," Gongsun Hui said to an elder, "there are discrepancies in the accounts for the twenty thousand saltmarsh sheep in your salt pan ranch. Please explain."

"Chief Accountant of Yan Clan, there are obviously a large number of workers collecting unearned pay in your pottery industry, and the productivity there is extremely low. First, all these people must be completely removed from the asset restructuring. Second, I will reduce our valuation of your pottery industry's output. It's not worth the substantial funds Keep Achieving Commercial Firm is investing."

"Chief Accountant of Yan Clan, as far as I know, your No. 5 cinnabar mine, No. 16 aluminum mine, as well as the No. 29 spirit stone mine have all been emptied long ago. Why are they still listed in the assets?"

She did not overlook any doubts, scrutinizing every detail and every item.

This was not her first time involved in mergers and acquisitions or asset restructuring. She understood all too well the intricacies within the industries of prominent families. With a millennium-old family like this, internal corruption was inevitable. Without caution, one could be easily deceived, and the padding in their accounts was substantial.

While cooperation was important, Keep Achieving Commercial Firm was investing, not engaging in charity, and would not indulge the bad practices of certain individuals within the Yan clan.

The operations of Keep Achieving Commercial Firm were always transparent and clear.

Following that, all the parasites, embezzlers, and bribe-takers in the Yan family who had been collecting unearned pay were uncovered by Gongsun Hui's team in a very short amount of time.

These people were almost everywhere, with no industry under the Yan family's name spared.

The accounting team of the Yan family was nearly driven mad, and the Family Head, Hong, was so angry he almost jumped with rage, while even Old Ancestor Yan Yufei was somewhat stunned.

It was inconceivable that the Yan family, already in such a state, had so many corrupt individuals at the bottom. It was as if they wouldn't rest until the Yan family was entirely hollowed out!

"Investigate! No matter who it is, thoroughly investigate to the end!" Old Ancestor Yan Yufei roared angrily, "Anyone who dares to resist secretly, or intervenes, I, Yan Yufei, will personally enforce family law."

Old Ancestor Yan Yufei highly valued the cooperation with the Wang family and saw it as the hope for the Yan clan's resurgence. Now, the rottenness within the Yan family was fully exposed before Wang Shouzhe's father's first wife, causing him utter embarrassment.

This also strengthened his resolve to thoroughly reform the Yan clan from within.

While chaos reigned within the Longzuo Yan clan, as they struggled with their deep-rooted internal issues and a glimmer of revival began to emerge, the Wang family was gradually dominating Longzuo, stirring up the world's situation.

Almost at the same time.

On the battlefield beyond the borders.

Unlike the lush and prosperous Great Qian Land, the sky above the battlefield beyond the borders was perennially shrouded in a fog of evil Qi generated by war, grim and desolate.

The Demonic Qi that seeped from beyond the borders also tainted this land, where practically nothing grew. Even the few resilient plants that managed to survive, once infected by the Demonic Qi, mutated, becoming twisted and dangerous.

This place was barren and perilous, wholly unsuitable for human habitation.

Yet it was here that humanity stood as the front line against the invasion of demons from beyond the borders. Thanks to the existence of this battlefield, and countless people bravely fighting to the death, demons were unable to invade this world, allowing humanity to thrive peacefully within their domains.

Among the mist of evil Qi, numerous military camps were sparsely scattered.

Occupying these camps were armies from different countries and forces, among which there were even some individuals who joined the war under personal banners, nominally affiliated with different factions, accumulating military merits by slaying enemies.

Above one of the larger camps fluttered the Azure Dragon banner, symbolizing the Great Qian Land.

This camp was the main base of the Great Qian Land on the battlefield beyond the borders. Besides this camp, the Great Qian Land had several other strongholds on the battlefield, from which support could be provided from various directions in the event of a battle.

Inside the camp.

On the square near the camp gate stood a huge bronze pillar, on which the bloody corpse of a large demon, impaled by a blood-stained spear, was affixed to the bronze pillar.

This was a high-level demon with an exoskeleton covering its body.

It had long been dead, the large spines on its back losing their luster, the metallic gleam of the exoskeleton covering its body was badly damaged, and even the robust tail was left in half. Yet even so, its corpse still carried a chilling and majestic aura, and despite being long deceased, it still exuded a terrifying presence, striking fear into the hearts of many.

High-level demons were formidable, with cultivation reaching the pinnacle equivalent to human Divine Realm Powerhouses, making them exceedingly difficult to deal with.

The high-level demon on the bronze pillar was a trophy of the Great Qian military, a martial plaque. Displaying it served both to boost morale and to deter demons from beyond the borders.

On the watchtowers at the four corners of the camp, a pale yellow halo spread out, dispelling the evil Qi fog within the camp and also illuminating the surroundings.

Chapter 52 Wang Shouzhe! I am Irreconcilable with You_4

In the military camp, soldiers clad in black armor patrolled back and forth, maintaining orderly, their eyes sharp, and their aura chillingly malevolent.

Their black-colored armor was thick and spotted with age, and the joints were adorned with fierce barbs, clearly forged for life-or-death battle. Carved with profound inscriptions, the armor emanated an aura of mystical fluctuations.

The strength of these soldiers was at the very least at the seventh or eighth level of the Qi Refinement Realm, and the captains almost all possessed cultivation bases above the Spiritual Platform Realm. Their presence was forbidding and ice-cold, marked by intense murderous intent, signaling that they were seasoned soldiers, the elite among the elite who had been battle-hardened over many years.

Besides them, there were also many scattered Profound Martial cultivators moving around the camp.

Unlike the patrolling soldiers in standard black armor, these individuals wore their own unique clothing, gathered in groups of three or five, lacking uniformity. However, their auras were very powerful, with those at the Spiritual Platform Realm being considered on the lower end, and sightings of cultivators at the Heavenly Human Realm were not rare.

Even the Purple Abode Realm powerhouses, who held exalted statuses within the Dagan Realm and were seldom seen, could occasionally be spotted here.

Some of them were gathered at the entrance of the camp, retrieving demon heads from their Storage Rings to exchange for Merit Points, while others were at the storeroom's entrance, exchanging their Merit Points for rewards. Some, bearing wounds, were heading toward the camp's Pill Room.

They were not part of the Da Qian Official, but Profound Martial cultivators who had voluntarily come to the battlefield, able to exchange the demons they had slain for Merit Points. The largest group among them hailed from Lingyun Holy Ground.

Over the years, Lingyun Holy Ground had managed to maintain a balance of power with the Imperial Household of Da Qian and coexist with it. And it was not merely the suppression of a mighty Void Realm adept that enabled this, but the supreme Merit Points earned through the strength and blood of countless disciples from Lingyun Holy Ground.

On the battlefield against the extraterritorial demons, the ones who had shed the most blood and paid the highest price, apart from the Da Qian Military, were the forces of Lingyun Holy Ground.

No matter which faction they originally belonged to or which country they came from, on the extraterritorial battlefield, they became comrades-in-arms, brethren, and united guardians of human civilization.

Of course, where there are people, there are private interests.

Despite being part of different factions, while jointly resisting the external enemy, there were unavoidable undercurrents of scheming and deceptions. This was inevitable anywhere.

Previously, Zhou Yuhang, the Direct Disciple of Master Yuan Shui from the Academic Palace of Purple Abode in Longzuo, was ambushed by a disciple of the Yinsha Sect during combat and nearly fell on the battlefield. Even to this day, his injuries have not fully healed, and he is still convalescing in seclusion at the Heavenly Lake of Yuan Water.

Later, both Master Binglan and Master Changchun personally went to the battlefield and avenged him, making the other side pay a heavy price.

For countless years, similar incidents have occurred on this extraterritorial battlefield. However, with formidable enemies at hand and the top echelons of human strength stationed on the battlefield, even the most calculating of people had to restrain themselves somewhat and not go too far.

After all, when the Alliance was established, an agreement was made from the outset that anyone who dared to disrupt the unity and stability of the human Alliance would be killed without mercy!

In this fiercely contested battlefield, Da Qian, although not the strongest, was nevertheless one of the critical pillars, maintaining stability in its own region and propping up a piece of the sky for the entire human civilization.

Outside a military tent adorned with a command flag within the Da Qian camp.

Four soldiers in black armor stood guard at the entrance of the tent, their eyes sharp and their aura powerful and chilling, ready to be alert at all times, even in the confines of the camp.

Suddenly, a troop approached swiftly from afar.

The members of this group all wore thick black armor with a menacing presence, their armor stained with blood, and an aura of fresh carnage lingering around them. Many of them bore grievous wounds.

Clearly, they had just returned from the battlefield.

Compared to ordinary soldiers, their aura was more formidable, their armor was thicker and of higher quality, and the vibes they emitted were more profound and majestic—obviously not just any average troops.

The young leader's armor was even adorned with dark golden patterns of an Azure Dragon, clearly indicating noble birth and prestigious status within the imperial family.

This youth was none other than one of the rising Quasi Emperor's Sons of Da Qian, Kang Commandery Prince Wu Chengsi.

By his side was another young man not wearing armor; it was Gong Yang Ce, who had set off for the campaign alongside Kang Commandery Prince.

His complexion was somewhat pale, his white clothes smeared with blood, almost becoming dark red in color, yet it was not his own blood, but that of a demon.

As they walked along, the two were excitedly discussing something.

Although this battle had many twists and consumed a lot, the end result was an extremely beautiful victory. Due to their accomplishments in this campaign, both would earn a great deal of benefits.

You should know, the treasures that can be exchanged with human Merit Points are not all provided by Da Qian—many also come from the Frost Moon Immortal Dynasty and the Red Moon Demon Dynasty.

In the Immortal Dynasty camp, one could even exchange for rarities like the Ten Thousand Year Purple Ganoderma and Divine Spiritual Treasures—items that even powerhouses at the Purple Abode Realm greatly coveted.

"Greetings to the Commandery Prince. Greetings to Master XuanMiao."

The guards at the entrance of the tent stiffened, quickly bowing to show their military salute, their demeanor reverent.

"At ease."

Kang Commandery Prince waved his hand, casually dismissing his personal guards, advising those who needed rest to do so and those who needed to treat their wounds to proceed, then bade Gong Yang Ce goodbye, telling him to rest as well before lifting the curtain and walking into the tent.

Chapter 52: Wang Shouzhe! You and I are Irreconcilable_5

...

This was his own tent.

Having fought and won a great victory, it was only here that he truly relaxed.

In the tent, a young scholar dressed in a long robe was sitting behind a narrow desk, head lowered, writing something.

Seeing the Kang Commandery Prince enter, he stood up and saluted him, saying with a smile, "Your Highness, congratulations on your triumphant return. This time, you have really enhanced Da Qian's prestige. I've heard that even in the Immortal Dynasty, many are paying attention to you."

"Fourteenth Uncle, you're teasing me again."

The Kang Commandery Prince took off his helmet and straightened his appearance before sitting down opposite the young scholar, laughing, "The little credit I gained is considered outstanding in Da Qian, but it pales in comparison to the most formidable elites of the Immortal Dynasty."

This young scholar was named Zhao Zhikun, a direct descendant of the Second Class Zhao Clan, and one of the divine ability species of his generation. Despite appearing young, he was actually over three hundred years old. In terms of seniority, he was two generations above the Kang Commandery Prince.

The Kang Commandery Prince's consort, Zhao Jingyi, was Zhao Zhikun's direct niece's granddaughter.

This time, the Kang Commandery Prince had won a significant victory, and even before he returned, news had already spread from the front lines. As a staff officer for the Kang Commandery Prince, Zhao Zhikun was naturally privy to the information.

"I am currently drafting a memorial to submit to the court to commend you," Zhao Zhikun, resuming his seat, picked up the memorial he was writing and said with a smile, "With this victory, Your Highness's military record is now quite admirable. I think, from now on, no one should be able to question Your Highness's capabilities in this regard. The princes from the Imperial Household who rose through military merit will recognize you more, and it will be easier to gain their support in the future."

The Kang Commandery Prince nodded, "Indeed. This battle was won beautifully. It was worthwhile specifically asking Brother GongYang to make a trip to the Frost Moon Immortal Dynasty to find someone to refine the Soul-shaking Bell for me."

In fact, it was largely thanks to the Soul-shaking Bell that such an impressive victory was achieved. Otherwise, relying solely on his own abilities, while he might not have lost, winning so handsomely would have been difficult.

While they were speaking, Zhao Zhikun pulled out an animal skin-sealed letter from the stack of documents on the narrow desk and handed it to the Kang Commandery Prince, "By the way, here is a family letter sent by Jingyi. According to the servant who delivered it, this letter seems quite important, though I'm not sure what it's about."

The Kang Commandery Prince took the letter, opened it and after one glance, his expression suddenly changed.

"Your Highness, what's the matter?" Zhao Zhikun asked with some confusion.

The Kang Commandery Prince's brows furrowed, and he did not speak, continuing to read. Only after finishing the entire letter, he turned back and stared at parts of the content several times, savoring the details carefully.

Watching the Kang Commandery Prince's reaction, Zhao Zhikun felt increasingly puzzled but dared not interrupt, quietly waiting instead.

After a while, the Kang Commandery Prince let out a long breath and handed the letter to Zhao Zhikun. He himself grabbed a jug of wine nearby, poured himself a cup, and gulped it down.

Zhao Zhikun's curiosity grew, but his hands moved quickly, opening the letter to read.

Suddenly.

His face also changed.

"This Wu Yingji... Your Highness has been tolerant in order to gain his support, enduring several occasions when he disrespected you without taking offense, and yet he remains so ignorant!" Zhao Zhikun's face darkened, and a hint of coldness flashed in his eyes, "This matter cannot be left as it is."

"The Royal Uncle is, after all, the eldest son of the Sixth Grandfather, and even I can't do anything to him. He probably counted on this, which is why he dares to be so presumptuous," the Kang Commandery Prince said, putting down his wine cup, his face also looking grim, "Fortunately, the Old Ancestor in the end is still biased towards us. An edict was issued immediately to pacify the situation and also conferred the title of Second Class Commandery Prince Consort upon Jingyi, which kind of salvaged some face for us. Moreover, the Royal Uncle is of the Direct Line; even if he stops supporting me, he would not overtly support Wu Mingyuan. Otherwise, leaving De Xin, the Old Ancestor aside, he wouldn't be able to get past the Sixth Grandfather."

"Your Highness, do you plan just to let this go?" Zhao Zhikun looked at the Kang Commandery Prince.

"Of course not," The Kang Commandery Prince's eyes dropped, a trace of coldness flickering through his profound depths, "I may not be able to do anything to the Royal Uncle, but that doesn't mean I can't settle scores with others."

"Do you mean the Wang family?" Zhao Zhikun caught on, picking up the letter again to scan it, his brows slowly furrowing, "This Wang family is indeed no simple matter, to have repeatedly acted in such a short time, creating such an uproar, and catching us unprepared. Judging from their actions, this series of moves must not be an impromptu idea but a long-premeditated plan; it seems we have been used as a stepping stone."

"Indeed, the Wang family must not be underestimated. No wonder Brother GongYang valued them so highly and repeatedly tried to woo or suppress them. It seems I was mistaken in not taking them seriously," the Kang Commandery Prince stroked his wine cup, "But however formidable the Wang family might be, they are merely a Grade Six Prominent Family, mere ants in the eyes of the Imperial Household. Now, the most crucial thing is to somehow mitigate the adverse effects caused by the Royal Uncle's betrayal. Fourteenth Uncle, do you have any strategy for this?"

Zhao Zhikun pondered for a moment, then said, "Regarding this, I do have a plan."

"Oh? Please speak, Fourteenth Uncle."

"Originally, Grand Aunt Xiqing married into the Imperial Household, and although things eventually took an unexpected turn, she was still the princely consort of Prince Yong'an, a daughter-in-law of the Imperial Family. Thus, the Imperial Household owes the Zhao Clan a Great Heavenly Proud," Zhao Zhikun tapped on the table, pondering, "Now, Little Princess Xue Ning is also fourteen."

Chapter 52 Wang Shouzhe! I am Irreconcilable with You_6

"You mean... Yuan Qing?" Kang Commandery Prince's eyes lit up, and he instantly reacted.

The prominent Zhao Clan would naturally not only have Zhao Zhikun as their Sky Pride. Besides him, the Zhao Clan was nurturing another great talent named "Zhao Yuanqing," who had just turned fifty this year and had just broken through to the Heavenly Human Realm last year.

It was also because he was too young that he was not included in the previous "Top Ten Outstanding Youths" in Shangjing. But in another three to four decades, he would certainly become a prominent figure in Shangjing City, just like Wu Zhixing and others.

If one wishes to seek marriage with Wu Xuening, then within the Zhao Clan, the only suitable match would be Zhao Yuanqing.

As for the age difference between the two, it is actually a minor issue.

After all, there is a very high possibility that a great talent like him will break through to the Divine Power Territory and live nearly two thousand years, so an age difference of thirty some years is trivial.

"Exactly," Zhao Zhikun nodded and analyzed, "The mother of Little Princess Xue Ning is the eldest daughter of the direct line of Third Grade Chen Clan, holding a significant status within the Chen Clan. As far as I know, the Chen Clan has made quite an investment in Little Princess Xue Ning, presumably intending to use this to strengthen the bonds between the Chen Clan and the Imperial Household."

"Previously, when we tried to win over the Chen Clan, their attitude was somewhat ambiguous. This time, if we could help Yuan Qing marry Little Princess Xue Ning, it would be akin to indirectly establishing a connection with the Chen Clan. Then, with just a little manipulation, even if the Chen Clan is reluctant to take sides, they will have to join us."

"Moreover, as I know, Little Princess Xue Ning and Little Commandery Prince Zhixing have a very good relationship. Using her as a tie, we might even be able to pull in Prince An, who has been quietly supporting him, onto our battle ship."

Within the Imperial Household, the network of relationships is complex and intertwined.

Behind every great talent stands one or even several top Prominent Families. Even a talent like Wu Zhixing, who comes from a distant branch of his family, has support and even a Prince behind him.

These relationships, if well utilized, can often produce astonishing effects.

"Furthermore, regarding the Wang family, I also have a plan that can doom them," Zhao Zhikun added.

"Please speak, Fourteenth Uncle."

"Although the Wang family has made a grand spectacle this time, they have a fatal flaw. We only need to do this and that..." Zhao Zhikun lowered his voice and whispered a few words into the ear of Kang Commandery Prince.

Kang Commandery Prince's eyes brightened as he listened, nodding frequently.

Soon, the two called Gong Yang Ce over, and the three of them quietly discussed some details, quickly finalizing them.

At last, Kang Commandery Prince looked at Zhao Zhikun and Gong Yang Ce, saying solemnly, "For this expedition to the outer battlefield, I am here by imperial command, and without the Emperor's decree, I must not return at will. This matter, I'm afraid, will require the effort of Fourteenth Uncle and Brother Gong Yang."

Zhao Zhikun and Gong Yang Ce, hearing this, stood up together, cupped their hands and said, "Your Highness, rest assured, this matter is on both of us."

...

Almost at the same time.

Imperial Palace, Zhuozheng Pavilion.

On the broad desk made of Spirit Wood Material, the renowned "Painting of the Divine Dynasty Twilight" lay in shambles across the desk.

They were scattered here and there, some crumpled and some turned into fragments, nearly impossible to piece together into a whole.

Most outrageously, at the spot of the setting sun's twilight, where the light is brilliantly scattered, a strong urine stench was unabashedly permeating.

Emperor Longchang's nose twitched, his face growing so dark it seemed as though water might drip from it.

His gaze sharp as a knife, he sternly looked at Yao Chengchao and scoffed, "Chengchao, is this my 'Painting of the Divine Dynasty Twilight'?"

Yao Chengchao, with sweat soaking his back and his face pale, could only toughen up and answer, "Reporting to Your Majesty, this, this is the 'Painting of the Divine Dynasty Twilight'."

"However, Your Majesty, please hear my explanation. This, this is all because of those little wolf cubs. Not only has Your Majesty's 'Painting of the Divine Dynasty Twilight' suffered, many rare items have been destroyed, and even our Yao's Air Transport Flying Boat almost crashed into the Hurricane Ocean due to a malfunction, causing heavy losses for our Yao family."

As they spoke, Yao Chengchao was still indignantly pointing at those five "culprits"—the little wolf cubs.

The five little wolf cubs sat obediently, tongues lolling, eyes filled with innocence, unable to understand the human's accusations.

"Haha~" Emperor Longchang scoffed, "Is your 'Yao's Air Transport' planning to deny responsibility? It was clearly a lapse on your part, yet you blame these little wolf cubs. With your capabilities, are you saying you can't even keeping an eye on these cubs?"

The five little wolf cubs nodded repeatedly. This kind old gentleman was absolutely right; they were just a bunch of innocent and naive little wolf cubs, what could they possibly do wrong?

"No, no, no." Yao Chengchao hurriedly shook his head, "The younger generation is merely explaining the situation to your majesty. Our 'Yao's Air Transport' has always upheld a principle of supreme credibility. This time, it was indeed our oversight, and we will not only compensate every penny due to your majesty but also offer twice the highest standard of compensation."

Although the Yao family is also a First Grade Prominent Family with the Void Realm Old Ancestor sitting in power, when it comes to overall strength, they are still a notch below the Wu Family, who reigns over an entire nation.

Moreover, the Wu Family has an ancient heritage and profound background, so the Yao family could hardly afford to offend them.

Twice the compensation?

Emperor Longchang raised an eyebrow: "Am I, the Great Emperor, in such need of your money? What I desire is Master Ji's family heirloom, the 'Painting of the Divine Dynasty Twilight.'"

"Your majesty, this breaches the rules and contract," Yao Chengchao said, wiping sweat from his brow, "Accidents can happen during cargo transport for various reasons. Our Yao family can, at most, offer up to three times the price in compensation."

After all, the Yao family is also a First Grade Prominent Family, and though they cannot afford to offend the Wu family, they have their own heritage and principles to maintain, and won't succumb to whatever Emperor Longchang demands.

Emperor Longchang did not respond to him but seemed more interested in the five little wolf cubs, "You five are so mischievous, showing such incredible destructive power at such a young age. It seems your talents and potential are quite impressive. Which one of you is the alpha?"

The five looked at each other, then simultaneously shook their heads.

"Your majesty, according to the shipping documents, a young lady commissioned the transport. It's probably that young lady who raised these five little wolf cubs, and they likely recognize her as their alpha," Yao Chengchao explained in a low voice.

"Oh, and which family's young lady has the talent to bring together five Silver Moon Grey Wolves? And looking at them, their bloodlines are quite pure. Such wolf cubs would even be selected for leadership training within the Silver Moon Grey Wolf population; gathering five is not easy," Emperor Longchang casually remarked.

"To answer his majesty," Yao Chengchao explained, "based on the registration information in the commission documents, it's a young lady surnamed Wang, who has sent them to a small place in Longzuo County called Ping'an Town, to a minor family called the Wang family."

Wang family? Longzuo County?

These keywords instantly heightened Emperor Longchang's sensitivity.

"The Changning Wang family?" he blurted out.

"Yes, yes, yes, it's exactly the Changning Commandery's Wang family in Ping'an Town, and the recipient is someone named Wang Shouzhe," Yao Chengchao organized his thoughts as he spoke, "This name sounds like a mere Rank 9 minor Prominent Family. Who knew they had such luck to have a relative send them combat pets of this level? Just selling one of these five little wolf cubs would fetch a heavenly price."

"Such narrow-minded adversaries!" Emperor Longchang's face turned as dark as coal, "Wang Shouzhe, Wang Shouzhe, you truly are my nemesis. After much difficulty, I acquired an item of my desire, just for it to be utterly ruined by your family's little wolf cubs."

Well, now there's no need to worry about where to hang it anymore...

Wait, that's not the point!

"Hmph, Wang Shouzhe, I declare my undying enmity towards you!" Emperor Longchang's mind flashed, and he suddenly scoffed, "Chengchao, I'll be keeping these five little wolf cubs. Let the recipient come to me personally to collect them."

"Your majesty, this goes against the rules..."

"My word is the rule!"

"If you disagree, call forth your Old Ancestor to fight me~~~ Guards, throw this Yao Chengchao out for me!"

Chapter 53: Li Xian, the Formation Eye Gathering Spirits! Wolf Pups Cause Chaos in the Imperial Palace

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In Longzuo County's Changning Guard of Ping'an Town, there lies Zhuwei Lake.

This little pearl, Zhuwei Lake, had become even more dazzling under the careful management of the Wang family. It had also become the memory imprint for generations of Wang family members, accompanying each generation as they grew.

Today, the sun was shining brightly, flowers bloomed brilliantly, and the gentle light on the surface of Zhuwei Lake was incredibly beautiful.

On the flood dykes on both banks, there were many tourists and passersby, most of whom were residents and children from Ping'an Town.

One could see a "Little Whale Dragon" over five zhang long swimming leisurely in Zhuwei Lake. Every so often, it would perform tricks like leaping out of the water or spouting jets, eliciting cheers from the spectators on both banks. The children were especially overjoyed, shouting for the whale dragon.

When the "Little Whale Dragon" grew tired and hungry from playing, it casually herded a school of fish and stunned them with its resonant, long chant before swallowing them whole.

This Little Whale Dragon was naturally Wang Zongkun, the newly appointed direct descendant of the "Zong" generation of the Wang family.

Such carefree days and environment allowed Wang Zongkun to grow up without a worry in the world.

To prevent others from catching on, the Wang family declared that this was a Little Whale Dragon Wang Anye found at the shore of the Eastern Sea.

The Whale Dragon was one of the overlords of the ocean.

In the deep sea, Level Seven Whale Dragons were often seen, and occasionally, a Level Nine Whale Dragon King would appear. Moreover, it was rumored that in the deepest parts of the ocean, there even existed a Level Eleven Emperor Whale Dragon.

It's evident that the bloodline of the Whale Dragons isn't of a low ranking.

However, not every Whale Dragon has the same bloodline concentration even among different ranks, and not all are eligible to become a Whale Dragon King or an Emperor Whale Dragon.

Moreover, there are many subspecies of Whale Dragons. There are often discoveries of strange new Dragon Whale Subspecies. The differences in appearance among the different subspecies are significant.

It's said that Whale Dragons' bloodlines contain, to some degree, the blood of the Kunfish, hence their somewhat similar appearances.

Therefore, there was little issue with Wang Zongkun impersonating a whale dragon in his younger years, as no one had ever seen a real Kunfish.

"Still just a kid—such a childish act. What an ugly big-headed fish," Wang Lilong commented coldly while riding on the back of Old Turtle, hugging his claws and looking disdainfully at Wang Zongkun frolicking in the water, his words tinged with discontent.

The reason was simple.

Suddenly, the Wang family's "Zong" and "Li" generations were joined by a new tree, a new fish, which greatly increased the pressure on Wang Lilong.

Initially, she was the favorite cub of her father and mother, living a "happy" and "carefree" life. But now, out of the blue, she had a sister and a brother, which naturally divided their parents' attention.

What exerted the most pressure on Wang Lilong was the fact that both Wang Lixian and Wang Zongkun were of Immortal Seed, with growth potentials far surpassing her own.

For now, she could still outpace them, but as time passed, she would eventually be suppressed by her younger siblings. Wouldn't that be utterly embarrassing?

Although she had transformed into an Azure Dragon of the Primal Water and her bloodline had undergone a metamorphosis, bringing her close to the Innate Spirit Body Level of humans—above the Great Heavenly Proud but below the Innate Spiritual Body!

However, considering the cultivation speed of the Azure Dragon clan and her current bloodline concentration, ascending to Level Eleven proved to be challenging unless...

Wang Lilong's eyes brightened, but then they dimmed again.

No, no, that object was personally guarded by the Old Ancestor Dragon Master.

The Human World was so intriguing, and it was so delightful to be with her family. If she went back now, she would be walking right into a trap and might find it difficult to come out again.

"Grand Aunt Lilong, what's wrong with you?" Wang Anye asked with concern, noticing that Wang Lilong seemed a bit upset. "Is there some homework you didn't do well? If it's too difficult, I could sneakily do it for you later, just to get by with the teacher for now."

"Anye, you're so kind," Wang Lilong said with tearful eyes, moved by Anye's offer. Then she took out a large stack of homework from her school bag and stuffed it all into Wang Anye's hands, "I really appreciate it."

Wang Anye nearly fell off the back of Old Turtle, staring blankly at Wang Lilong and said, "Grand Aunt Lilong, what have you been doing during your monthly break? You haven't done any homework at all."

"It's all because of that annoying girl Yuxuan, leading the Beautiful Girls Alliance to challenge boys over sixteen. In the end, they were defeated so badly, they looked like defeated curs. As her aunt, I couldn't just ignore them, could I?" Wang Lilong said righteously.

"You spent your entire monthly break getting into fights..." Wang Anye massaged his forehead with a look of utter exasperation.

If Grand Aunt Lilong wasn't watched every minute, she would end up causing a slew of problems, and then it would be up to him, Wang Anye, to clean up the mess.

At least she was using idioms now, which was somewhat consoling.

Yet, his thoughts had barely drifted when Wang Anye sharply sensed something was amiss.

"It can't be that simple, can it?" he looked at her suspiciously. "To my knowledge, Grand Aunt, you're not exactly a dragon who enjoys helping others."

"Well, about that..." Wang Lilong said with a sheepish grin, "It was mainly because the Beautiful Girls Alliance paid me. They gave me so much money, I felt bad refusing."

Money was a wonderful thing; it could buy lots of delicious food without having to steal. Stealing didn't matter, but now that she was an official daughter of the Wang family, stealing all the time would get her punished.

Chapter 53: Li Xian Formation Eye Gathers Spirits! Wolf Pups Cause Havoc in the Imperial Palace_2

"But rest assured, the boy I beat up badly also paid me afterward, and then I helped them sweep through the Beautiful Girls Alliance, achieving the fairness and justice that Daddy spoke of."

"Anye, I think this is a good way out, I can take money from both sides, then help neither."

My peace of mind, peace of mind my soul.

Wang Anye's eyes suddenly became solemn and profound.

With his hands clasped behind his back, he let out a long sigh. The task great grandfather entrusted to him was truly daunting and arduous.

As Wang Anye was sighing deeply.

Above Zhuwei Lake, a Spirit Bird Flying Carriage was circling at a low altitude.

On the flying carriage, at a table and chairs crafted from Spirit Wood Material, Wang Shouzhe was sitting opposite an elder.

This elder had a tall stature and an elegant demeanor, dressed in white with white hair, resembling an Immortal being. At first glance, he looked like a Divine Skills expert with considerable cultivation.

However, his figure appeared translucent and illusory, obviously not in a normal state. And not far behind him, an ancient sword was levitating, emitting an aura of the ages.

He was no other than Wang Anye's Master, the Artifact Spirit Old Master, Ji Wuchen.

"Thank you, Master Shouzhe, for the Resurrection Treasure Pill," Ji Wuchen said with great gratitude, "With the help of the treasure pill, my spirit has solidified quite a bit, finally no longer like a 'gust of wind' could scatter it like a Spirit Remnant."

Both the Resurrection Treasure Pill and the Limitless Treasure Pill are Level Six treasure pills, typically valued at several million Qian Gold and require special auction channels to obtain.

Given Ji Wuchen's previously weak soul and body, which could disintegrate at any moment, it would have been very difficult to acquire such treasures.

Wang Shouzhe, sipping Spiritual Tea, said with a light chuckle, "Elder Ji, you are too polite. As Anye's Master, you are akin to half a Tribute to the Wang family, and it is only right that the Wang family should make every effort on your behalf. Given the chance, I could acquire more Resurrection Treasure Pills and, in the future, even the possibility of a Soul Molding Saint Elixir."

Soul Molding Saint Elixir?!

Ji Wuchen's heart trembled.

Even with his temperament, hearing these four words, he couldn't help but feel his spirit quiver and his heart race with excitement.

Such a Sacred Pill could significantly strengthen his Spirit Remnant and even rebuild the missing parts. However, even in the Frost Moon Immortal Dynasty, such pills were extremely rare and precious.

"Master Shouzhe is considerate," Ji Wuchen suppressed the excitement in his heart and said, "Currently, it is more appropriate for the Wang family to use resources where they are most needed. Even without any treasure pills, this mere spirit form of mine can last a long time."

Having said that, he changed the subject and continued, "I have already observed the entire terrain of Ping'an Town, and theoretically, it is possible to construct the 'Five Elements Spirit Gathering Array' that Master Shouzhe envisioned."

He was a top expert in the Sword Formation Dual Absolutes, and the concept of the Five Elements Spirit Gathering Array was something he mentioned casually to Anye, who then relayed the message to Master Shouzhe.

Wang Shouzhe was quite tempted, leading to this very meeting.

"But the Family Head should be prepared, the construction of the Spirit Gathering Array is a long-term project. It will require a significant financial investment to purchase various formation materials, and Spirit Veins will need to be extracted to serve as the Formation Eye, with extremely cumbersome steps. Among these, the adjustment and arrangement of the Spirit Veins will need the assistance of Divine Skills Enlightened Ones."

Everyone knows a Spirit Gathering Array is a great thing; it can serve as the foundation for a family clan, enhancing the cultivation speed of the clan's youths, and increasing the growth and breeding rate of Spirit seeds and Spirit Beasts within the array's range. Over the years, it can even gradually improve the Bloodline Talent of newborns.

But the cost of such an array is indeed substantial, and not just any Prominent Family can afford to set it up.

Even within the Frost Moon Immortal Dynasty, only the deep-rooted Third-Class Aristocratic Families would consider building a Spirit Gathering Array to protect their clan.

Note, it's a consideration...

Because not every Third-Class Family has the finances to construct it.

"There's no need to worry too much about financial resources," Wang Shouzhe said calmly, "The long construction period is exactly why we need to start preparing early; the Wang family can slowly raise funds and build gradually."

"As for hiring a Divine Skills Enlightened One, that won't be difficult either. Currently, Enlightened One Tianhe is in financial straits, owing a considerable debt, making this an opportune time to request his services."

"Great ambition, great ambition," Ji Wuchen praised, "The Shouzhe family clan, using Immortal Plants as the core of the Five Elements Spirit Gathering Array, once successful, the entire Ping'an Town will gradually become like an Immortal Mansion Cave Residence, transforming into a Sacred Land on earth. In the future, anyone cultivating here will certainly advance rapidly."

As he spoke, Ji Wuchen used the power of his spirit to write, "Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh," listing a long array of Heaven and Earth Treasures, along with the quantities needed.

This writing filled several large sheets of paper.

The variety of materials required, their prices, and the quantities listed, even someone like Wang Shouzhe, who was accustomed to seeing large sums, couldn't help but gasp.

Fortunately, these materials did not need to be purchased all at once.

The setup of the Spirit Gathering Array doesn't happen overnight because countless details and connections are involved in the process. One wrong step is unacceptable, so it must be methodically built in stages, step by step.

From beginning to end, the construction is expected to take about a hundred years. The Wang family has plenty of time to gradually gather the necessary resources.

The most pressing matter now, however, is the relocation of the ordinary residents of Ping'an Town.

Chapter 53: Li Xian Formation Eye Gathers Spirits! Wolf Pups Cause Havoc in the Imperial Palace_3

In Wang Shouzhe's planning, as time passed, the family members would become increasingly numerous. The current main residence would hardly support them for a few decades before it would be overwhelmed by the full population and gradually become insufficient.

Yet, Ping'an Town was the ancestral homeland of resurgence, and Wang Shouzhe along with the family elders did not wish to relocate the main residence elsewhere.

Given this, the relocation effort for the original residents of Ping'an Town needed to be promptly initiated.

Now, the Wang family had absolute authority in the area and held high prestige. As long as compensation was sufficient and exchanges were ample, without deliberately oppressing the civilians, demolitions were not too difficult a task. There certainly would be none of those stubborn holdouts like in Wang Shouzhe's previous life.

Even more so, an extreme viewpoint held that, even if Wang Shouzhe decided to oppress the civilians for a moment of madness, the civilians would only tremble and obey. On Wang family's turf, it was nearly impossible for anyone to defy Wang Shouzhe.

Of course, Wang Shouzhe would not actually do so.

...

While Wang Shouzhe was building a millennia-strong foundation for his family,

In the Da Qiyang Palace, Imperial Garden,

As the residence of the Great Emperor and the center of power for Great Qian Land, the Imperial Palace naturally was fortified with magical formations. The entire palace was enveloped in a vast formation that was both offensive and defensive. If anyone foolishly dared to sneak into the palace, they would naturally be taught a lesson.

In the Imperial Garden too, formations were laid out, but these were not for offense or defense but rather a Small Gathering Spirit Array.

Under the influence of the Small Gathering Spirit Array, the spiritual energy throughout the Imperial Garden was far denser than the outside world. Various exotic flowers and herbs bathed in this energy, thriving with vigorous life and lush vibrant leaves that made for a particularly pleasing sight.

Moreover, there were exotic Spirit Flowers rare elsewhere, perpetually blooming under the nourishment of this spiritual energy. The flowers' colors were multifarious and their demeanors varied - some regal, some ethereally drifting, some dazzlingly gorgeous, and some uniquely novel, truly competing in splendor and bewildering to the eye.

Combined with meticulous arrangement and regular pruning, the scenery of the entire Imperial Garden was exceptionally delightful to behold.

Every day, after "finishing state affairs," Emperor Longchang would also come for a stroll in this Imperial Garden, admire the flowers, and fish for various Spirit Fish in the Spirit Fish Pond, relaxing his body and mind.

In the past, only Old Yao would accompany him.

After all, the Great Emperor was just that, having lived over three thousand years with all his relatives and friends from before having long since passed away, he had long grown accustomed to a solitary life.

As for the younger generations, in truth they were his descendants many generations removed. The vast majority dare not even breathe heavily in his presence, making it rather dull; he naturally had little interest in summoning them either.

However, on this day, there were five little wolf cubs frolicking around his feet.

They joyously ran around Emperor Longchang as their center, occasionally tumbling and play-fighting, then pausing now and then to sniff at the various exotic flowers and shrubs, indeed lively and adorable, and very well-behaved too.

Up to now, they hadn't damaged a single flower or plant, not to speak of a tree or any wood.

"Come, come, I have a ball here, whoever grabs it first will get a piece of Spirit Meat," Emperor Longchang, in high spirits, tossed out a small ball for the five little wolves to scramble over.

Unexpectedly, only one little wolf dashed over, quickly grabbing the ball and returning with it, while the other wolf cubs obediently squatted by Emperor Longchang's feet.

"Oh, are you not hungry, then?" Emperor Longchang said with a laugh, "My word is my bond, I said I'd reward, and so I shall."

As he spoke, he had Old Yao hand over a small piece of Spirit Meat, which he threw to the deserving little wolf.

Unexpectedly, the deserving little wolf cub was very well-behaved and didn't eat alone but shared the Spirit Meat with its siblings.

"Aw-oo~ Aw-oo~"

The five little wolf cubs, each taking turns, orderly finished the piece of Spirit Meat, and then each turned to Emperor Longchang with a dazed and adorable expression, gazing pleadingly.

Not in a hurry, not begging, just gazing at you with those watery eyes, unable to bear making them sad.

"Oh, I truly didn't expect these little wolf cubs to be so well-behaved and orderly," Emperor Longchang remarked with a laugh, "It seems that the Wang maiden really took great effort in training."

"Old Yao, give a reward."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

With a responsive call, Old Yao then pulled out a whole piece of large Spirit Meat from his Storage Ring and tossed it to the little wolf cubs.

The little wolf cubs, still extremely well-behaved, courteously shared, each taking a turn, and orderly consumed the piece of Spirit Meat.

Clearly, having lived with humans for a long time, the five little wolf cubs were quite understanding of human nature, knowing that their actual feeder was that kind old grandfather.

Thus, after eating, the five little wolf cubs surged forward, some rubbing against his legs, some tumbling and being cute and even one jumped onto Emperor Longchang's shoulder, curling up its paws and proficiently begun to knead his back.

"How bold!" Old Yao was startled, quickly chiding in a low tone, "You little wolf cubs, how dare you touch His Majesty's sacred body? Retreat at once!"

Instead, Emperor Longchang cheerfully waved his hand, "They're still young~ It's alright. And don't mention it, it's actually quite comfortable."

"This behavior must have been trained," Old Yao also couldn't help but laugh and cry, "That Wang family girl is truly peculiar, is she training war beasts or cute pets?"

Fine Silver Moon Grey Wolves, yet trained to be such, where is their combat power then?

Chapter 53: Li Xian Formation Eye Gathers Spirits! Wolf Pups Cause Havoc in the Imperial Palace_4

Old Yao couldn't help but sigh in pity.

"What's so good about battle pets? I've seen many in my lifetime." Emperor Longchang was exceptionally enjoying the few little wolf cubs, rolling around and competing to please, and couldn't help boasting, "That girl surnamed Wang is truly talented, much more interesting than our Imperial Household's beast tamers."

"Wait a moment." As he was speaking, Emperor Longchang suddenly thought of something amiss, his brow furrowing with authority, "These little wolf cubs are very well-behaved and obedient, nothing like what Yao Chengchao described as unbearable?"

"Could it be that Yao Chengchao accidentally damaged my Painting of the Divine Dynasty Twilight, along with some other treasures? Out of fear of his family's punishment, could he have shifted the blame onto these poor and innocent little wolf cubs?"

"How despicable! Yao Chengchao has gone too far! He clearly is bullying them because they can't speak, to frame them so shamelessly!"

Emperor Longchang, who always liked to judge others by himself, became more convinced the more he thought about it, his facial expression growing increasingly dark.

Exactly, exactly!

The five little wolf cubs nodded obediently, their innocent and pure eyes gratefully looking at Emperor Longchang.

Kind and amiable old man, you are so right, we're just a group of well-behaved little wolf cubs, how could we harbor any ill intentions? It must have been that bad guy framing us.

"Hmph~"

Emperor Longchang snorted coldly, his gaze somewhat unfriendly: "Old Yao, check into this, whether it was Yao Chengchao who accidentally broke something and deliberately used the little

wolf cubs as a scapegoat, or... if the Yao family intentionally or unintentionally, wanted to get involved in the conflict over the Emperor's son in our Great Qian Land."

"Trying to stir up discord through this matter, causing me to develop a hatred for the Changning Wang Clan, and thus influencing the progress of the conflict over the Emperor's Son."

At these words, Old Yao's expression also turned serious.

He immediately bowed deeply and said solemnly, "Yes, Your Majesty. I will send people to investigate immediately."

As Old Yao left, the five little wolf cubs, sensing that the kind and amiable old man was in a poor mood, immediately employed their clever tricks to amuse him, including standing upside down, lying on the ground with eyes open and tongue out pretending to be dead, and even sitting up, singing "ah woo ah woo".

Emperor Longchang couldn't help but laugh and cry, "You little wolf cubs are really quite understanding of human nature, training you Wang family girls must be a talent indeed."

With the company of these well-behaved and obedient little wolf cubs, Emperor Longchang's bitter mood improved a lot. He even took out a Luya Rod and started fishing in the Spirit Fish Pond.

The Spirit Fish that came along naturally became the beneficiary of this group of little wolf cubs.

These well-behaved and obedient little wolf cubs gave Emperor Longchang an extremely rare leisure experience, feeling mentally relaxed.

He had started to ponder how he would make Wang Shouzhe give up one willingly when he came to pay his respects.

The third is good, the second also, and the fifth, most obedient and responsive...

Which one should he choose?

For a while, Emperor Longchang found himself caught in a difficult situation again, his choice paralysis acting up. Look at this one—quite good, see that one—also very well-behaved.

Forget it, forget it, might as well negotiate with Wang Shouzhe and just give him all five little wolf cubs.

As for the compensation, well, that will be on the tax reduction in Longzuo County, reducing the increase from fifty percent to thirty percent.

Wang Shouzhe, Wang Shouzhe~

See how good I, Longchang, am to you; you better remember my kindness.

"Hahahaha~~~"

Thinking about all these scenarios, Emperor Longchang couldn't help but burst into a series of hearty laughs.

Nighttime.

Emperor Longchang had the Eunuch set up a luxurious wolf den, which was now built in the Imperial Garden. The wolf cubs, under the arrangements of the Eunuch, also crawled into the wolf den, each appearing very happy and satisfied.

"Your Highness, should we lock up the fence?" a certain Eunuch asked softly.

Just as Emperor Longchang was about to say "lock" them up, he caught the pitiful gaze of the five little ones and immediately softened his heart.

"If My five little ones are so well-behaved, why should I lock them up?" Emperor Longchang waved his hand, and immediately made a decision, "Arrange for two eunuchs to stand guard tonight."

That night, Emperor Longchang slept soundly for the first time in a long while.

The five little wolf cubs gave him healing energy, also allowing his mood to relax like it hadn't in quite some time.

The next morning.

Right after Emperor Longchang rose and washed up, while still at breakfast, he was already eager to check on the five little ones again.

Such excitement and concern, when had it last surfaced within him?

A hundred years, or two hundred years? Or perhaps even longer...

Because of the presence of the five little wolf cubs, even the typically bland breakfast seemed tastier than usual.

Soon, Emperor Longchang finished his breakfast and walked into his Imperial Garden with a cheerful step.

He was thinking about whether to take the five little ones out for a hunt today.

Just then, two eunuchs came tumbling out, screaming, "Your Majesty, Your Majesty, something terrible has happened!"

"What matter could be so urgent?" Emperor Longchang frowned and scolded with authority.

"Your Majesty, Your Majesty, the five, the five little ones they..."

As the eunuchs explained in a panic, Old Yao miraculously appeared beside Emperor Longchang, reporting, "Your Majesty, about the matter you had me investigate yesterday, I have the results."

"It turns out it's not the Cold Moon Yao Clan causing trouble covertly. Indeed, the five little ones are quite mischievous. According to the crew of the cloud manta flying boat, the five possess remarkable hiding and sneaking abilities and have awoken some space abilities. Ordinary cages can't hold them. If you keep an eye on them, it's somewhat manageable, but the moment you blink, they'll 'swoosh' disappear."

"Yes, yes, yes! Just like 'swoosh' and then they're gone, and then there was trouble," the two eunuchs nodded frantically in agreement, shouting loudly.

Emperor Longchang's eyelids twitched.

What does "swoosh" and then gone mean? What sort of trouble?

A bad premonition enveloped Emperor Longchang's heart.

He hurriedly rushed into the Imperial Garden.

A few moments later, a pained and trembling voice came from the garden.

"My Rank 9 Immortal Spirit Flowers, how did they become ruined? My Gold Floral Phoenixes, how did the stems break? My, my top-quality Exquisite Life Spring Fish~~~"

The Spirit Flowers, exotic plants, and Spirit Fish in the Imperial Garden were all precious species, usually cared for meticulously by professionals. Damaging a single leaf or scraping off one scale was enough to cause heartache, but now, the garden was a complete mess.

"You five little ones, you..." Emperor Longchang trembled with anger, preparing to punish them, but then he saw their five pairs of innocent and pitiable eyes blinking at him.

Kind and benevolent Old Master, we're just a few little wolf cubs. Just a bit playful, what's wrong with that?

Pfft~

Emperor Longchang nearly coughed up blood and couldn't help but roar, "Wang Shouzhe, you rascal! You're really trying to ruin me. I, I won't let you off easily!"

How is it that after that Wang Shouzhe appeared, the life of Emperor Longchang started to be filled with surprises at every turn?

Could it be that Wang Shouzhe truly is the bane of Emperor Longchang?

Chapter 54: Shou Zhe Enters the Capital! A New Surge of Power

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Facing those few little wolf pups with their pure and innocent eyes, appearing as if they were so pitiable that you could strike them if you wanted to, Emperor Longchang raised his hand several times, yet he could never bring himself to strike down.

"Enough, enough, this time it was my misjudgment," Emperor Longchang sighed, the anger on his face receding, "Since you five little ones are so mischievous, I have decided to give you a small punishment as a lesson."

"Come, lock them in cages, set up a small Isolation Array Method, and find two, no, ten eunuchs to take turns guarding them. They must not be out of sight for even a moment," Emperor Longchang ordered, "Starve them for five days, no, three days will do."

"Yes, Your Majesty," the eunuchs immediately bowed and took their leave, beginning to search for suitable cages to carry out Emperor Longchang's orders.

"The cages must not lack water, and they must be lined with soft silk," Emperor Longchang added another instruction, then left with a dark face to head to Zhuozheng Pavilion.

He could no longer bear to stay in the devastated Imperial Garden.

It pained his heart, it was frustrating, just looking at it was uncomfortable.

It wasn't until two full days later that Emperor Longchang's depressed mood had somewhat recovered, and the anger towards the little wolf pups had subsided quite a bit; he began to miss them again.

Having starved for two days, they should be much more well-behaved now, right?

Early that day, Emperor Longchang once again went to the Imperial Garden to visit the little wolf pups.

"We greet Your Majesty."

Upon seeing Emperor Longchang, the eunuchs on duty rushed to pay their respects.

"Are the five little ones behaving?" Emperor Longchang asked with his hands clasped behind his back.

In the midst of speaking, his gaze swept over the specially constructed wolf den. Seeing that the railings were intact and the Isolation Array Method in good condition, his heart instantly felt more at ease.

The five little ones obediently stayed inside the wolf den, their butts seated on the cushion, their backs straightened, their eyes looking forward without distractions, their movements neat and uniform.

Upon seeing Emperor Longchang, a look of longing and excitement appeared in their eyes as they stuck out their tongues and "panted woefully," even their silvery-gray fur seemed to flutter joyfully.

"Reporting to Your Majesty," the eunuchs quickly answered, "We have followed Your Majesty's decree without shifting our gaze for a moment, and the five little wolf pups have all been good, never leaving the den."

Upon hearing this, Emperor Longchang immediately became overjoyed and, with a bit of showiness, said to Old Yao, "What did I say, Old Yao? These little ones are naturally well-behaved; they just have a bit of mischief and need careful guidance."

"Somebody, release them. They are still young, at their most active age; having been confined for two days, they must be feeling stifled," Emperor Longchang said, his heart aching a little as he couldn't bear it. "I will take them out for a stroll, to relax a bit."

The imperial craftsmen worked quickly, and in just two days they had repaired most of the damaged Imperial Garden. At least on the surface, it looked almost the same as before. However, those precious exotic plants appeared "slimmer" and wouldn't regrow to their original state any time soon.

Emperor Longchang walked around the Imperial Garden with the five little ones, occasionally teaching them to recognize some of the expensive varieties, while continuously lecturing them, "You can play anywhere you like in the garden, but if you randomly cause destruction, you will suffer again."

He appeared so patient, truly resembling a kind old master.

The five little ones were also obedient, listening attentively and nodding repeatedly. They even occasionally urinated, irrigating the exotic flowers, as if apologizing for their past misdeeds.

"Very good, very good, indeed you haven't let me down with my instructions," Emperor Longchang was greatly comforted and very satisfied.

After strolling with the five little ones, he simply took them to Zhuozheng Pavilion. There were still some governmental affairs to handle today, and having the company of the five little ones would make his mood lighter.

In the evening, Emperor Longchang handled some tricky state affairs and looked up to see the five little ones sitting obediently within Zhuozheng Pavilion.

They lay or sat, or simply leaned against the emperor's leg to sleep, not one of them causing any trouble.

At that moment, Emperor Longchang's heart was warm, feeling that his training of the five little ones was quite effective.

If he'd known earlier how fun and healing Silver Moon Grey Wolves were, he would have ordered the Desert North Barbarian Tribe to contribute a few to him sooner.

In this cozy atmosphere, time quickly passed by. Before they knew it, it was time for the evening meal.

The eunuchs went to the imperial kitchen to bring Emperor Longchang's dinner.

As the Transcendent Emperor, Emperor Longchang's physical functions were naturally extremely robust. With a single step, he could stabilize mountains, and with one punch, shatter peaks. To maintain such a strong physical body, his daily consumption was naturally not small.

Even though he was older and had long stopped pursuing breakthroughs in strength, the demand for replenishment of blood and spiritual energy remained very high. Besides needing to eat advanced Spirit Meat and Spirit Food to replenish blood and moisten the flesh, he also needed to regularly consume and refine the Rank Six Spirit Yuan Treasure Pills made from Heaven and Earth Treasures.

Otherwise, simply meditating and absorbing the surrounding spiritual energy was hardly enough to maintain his formidable strength.

After all, the stronger the body, the faster the metabolism, and the greater the daily consumption of blood and spiritual energy. Without adequate replenishment, there might not be an issue in the short term, and the stored energy in his body could last a long time. But if denied sufficient long-term replenishment, the Profound Martial cultivator's body would gradually decline and eventually exhaust.

Take Emperor Longchang's dinner today, for example, which required the leg and spine meat from a Level Five Snow Pattern Spirit Meat Cow.

Chapter 54: Arrives in Beijing! Turbulence Resurfaces_2

In the vast Imperial Royal Large Ranch, where Spirit Cows were bred using a special method over a long period of domestication and improvement, their diet consisted daily of Spirit Valley, Spirit Grass, and other formula feeds, resulting in meat that was tender and rich in nutrients.

This unique breed of Spirit Cow exclusive to the Imperial Household could grow to a maximum of levels five or six quickly, and since their Spiritual Intelligence was low, the Spirit Cow meat produced was tender and delicious, highly popular outside the palace.

From time to time, the Imperial Royal Ranch also sold some Spirit Cows at high prices to cover the ranch's losses.

For each dinner, the Great Emperor usually consumed six to seven hundred catties of Spirit Cow meat, which, based on market prices, would exceed ten thousand Qian Gold.

Beyond Spirit Cows, the Great Emperor also enjoyed eating some advanced Spirit Fish, some Spirit Melons, Spirit Fruits, and would occasionally drink some Spiritual Wine if he was in a good mood.

This dinner often cost more than thirteen thousand Qian Gold.

For food alone, Emperor Longchang's expenditure for a whole year reached around seven million Qian Gold. Coupled with the twelve Spirit Yuan Treasure Pills he consumed annually at a million Qian Gold each, his yearly consumption totaled nineteen million Qian Gold.

This was, however, after Emperor Longchang had already given up leveling up, significantly reducing his supply standards to just the basics.

Otherwise, if the provisions matched those of his prime years or times he led battles personally, his consumption would double.

From this, one can see just how staggering the yearly cost to maintain an emperor with Transcendent Void Realm strength was.

"You five little ones, join me in eating this," Emperor Longchang said with a laugh. "If you like Spirit Cow meat, I will have the royal kitchen prepare more bone-in Spirit Meat for you later."

The five little ones lit up, immediately nodding in unison.

Old Master, you are truly a good man! The words made their mouths water.

During their conversation, the serving Eunuch had already opened the large lid of the food box, revealing a stack of roasted Spirit Cow meat.

It was apparent that the meat was skillfully roasted, each piece caramelized on the outside and tender within, emitting a rich aroma that was immediately appetizing.

However, Emperor Longchang had only taken one bite when his expression darkened. He complained, "Why wasn't this Spirit Cow meat marinated beforehand? It tastes completely flavorless. Did the royal chefs get their heads stuck in a door?"

Having lived thousands of years, mostly in luxury, he naturally became more critical as he aged, with extremely high demands for the taste of his food.

The Eunuchs trembled with fear.

Still, Old Yao stepped forward with courage, explaining in a low voice, "Your Majesty, when the chefs in the royal kitchen opened up this morning, they found that the Spirit Cow meat slated for early marinade had all disappeared."

"As a result, the hastily prepared Spirit Cow meat indeed lacks the flavor of usual preparations. I have already ordered an investigation into this case. Please make do for today, Your Majesty."

"Hmm," Emperor Longchang said unhappily, "These chefs are becoming less careful, even managing to lose ingredients. Let it go this time, but if it happens again, I'll have their heads moved."

Such events dulled Emperor Longchang's usual pickiness, reducing his appetite for Spirit Cow meat; after eating merely half he lost interest and ended up only having some Spirit Melon and seventy to eighty catties of Spirit Rice before stopping.

This turn of events ended up benefiting the five little ones who joyously devoured the leftovers.

Indeed, the pet reflects its owner. Though still not fully grown, their appetite and stomach capacities were already astonishing.

Soon, the five little ones had polished off the remaining food, rendering their little bellies round and full.

After eating, they did not forget to snuggle up to Emperor Longchang, performing their ingratiating antics expertly.

This indeed improved Emperor Longchang's mood considerably.

The next day.

Emperor Longchang, like yesterday, took them for a walk, handled some state affairs, and then it was time for the evening meal again.

This time, the served food was even more unsatisfactory to Emperor Longchang, clearly rushed in preparation and not only less refined than usual but also lower in quality.

"Old Yao," Emperor Longchang said angrily, "what's going on? Can't you even catch a simple kitchen thief?"

"Responding to Your Majesty," Old Yao replied, sweating, "There were no signs of tampering with the Formation in the royal kitchen, and the guards I assigned to watch overnight saw no one entering or leaving. Strangely, this morning, the ingredients that had been freshly processed and marinated last night had all disappeared."

"Interesting, interesting," Emperor Longchang sneered, "It's been a long time since thieves have appeared in my Imperial Palace, and yet they specifically steal my food. Old Yao, after you find out, bring him to me. I want to see who has such audacity."

This naturally further spoiled his appetite, resulting again in an unexpected feast for the five little ones, who nearly ate themselves to immobility.

The five little ones, with their big blue eyes, were incredibly excited.

Wuu wuu, kind and gentle old Grandpa is truly a good person!

The third day.

Because of the incidents over the previous two days, Emperor Longchang had no mood for a morning walk and went straight to Zhuozheng Pavilion.

Having guarded it himself last night, Old Yao likely had a result by today.

True enough, just as he arrived at Zhuozheng Pavilion, Old Yao approached to seek an audience, reporting: "Your Majesty, to avoid alerting the thief, I secretly watched the royal kitchen from a distance. But last night, there were still no disturbances to the kitchen's Formation. When I entered this morning, however, the ingredients had indeed been stolen again."

Chapter 54: Arrives in Beijing! Turbulence Resurfaces_3

"Afterwards, this old servant carefully checked every corner of the imperial kitchen, and finally, in an extremely hidden spot, he found a hole that wasn't very large. And next to the hole, he found this clump of fur."

At this point, Old Yao took out the small tuft of fur, his old face filled with a bitter smile, "The texture and color of this fur, Your Majesty, does it look familiar to you?"

"This..." Emperor Longchang's eyes widened in disbelief, "That's impossible, my five little ones have all been staying obediently in their wolf den. There are people on duty watching over them at night, it couldn't possibly be theft..."

Speaking up to this point, even Emperor Longchang lacked the confidence to continue. He took the clump of fur and headed straight for the back garden.

In the Imperial Garden, the exquisitely crafted wolf den, the diligent eunuchs, and the well-behaved five little ones, everything was as it had always been.

When the eunuchs opened the gates of the wolf den, the five little ones immediately dashed out, circling around Emperor Longchang. Such a warm, affectionate, and well-behaved display warmed the emperor's heart, and he couldn't help but begin to doubt his own suspicions.

The five little ones are so well-behaved, how could they possibly steal food ingredients? Was it possible that he had wronged them once again? Maybe it was another Spirit Beast with similar fur that did it...

"Were you all well-behaved last night?" Emperor Longchang crouched down and gently touched each of their heads, his voice sounding somewhat tender.

"Ah woo ah woo~~" The five little ones howled in unison, nodding repeatedly.

"Then whose fur is this clump?" Emperor Longchang took out the clump of fur and started his interrogation, "Second Child, you're usually the most lively, was it you who did this mischief? Fifth Child, you're sneaking behind there, was it you?"

The five little ones crouched on the ground, looking at each other, then turning their pure and innocent gazes toward the emperor.

Our kind and adorable Old Master, what are you talking about? We can't understand a word you're saying?

"Your Majesty, as per your orders, whenever the five little ones are inside the wolf den, we are always watching over them," the eunuch responsible for the guard joined in, "We always have two people on duty, and we can confirm that the five little ones never left."

"Search the wolf den." At this point, Emperor Longchang was already half-doubtful, "Mainly check for any holes."

The eunuchs immediately obeyed the command and went to inspect the wolf den.

At first, they found nothing unusual, until one of the eunuchs lifted the specially laid soft carpet inside the wolf den.

In the corner, there was a small hole, just big enough to allow the passage of a little wolf cub.

"How is this possible?" The eunuchs were all shocked.

The five little ones were always under their watchful eyes, when did they dig the hole?

Emperor Longchang took one look and immediately felt a wave of dizziness as he supported his head.

That expression was like that of a parent who absolutely trusted their child, and then all of a sudden, the child turned out to be a lawbreaker, filled with disbelief as well as complex emotions of being deceived and betrayed.

His face dark as water, his gaze fixed intently on the five little ones: "Confess honestly, how did you do it?"

"Woo woo woo~"

Seeing their deeds exposed, the five little ones knew they couldn't escape and immediately hung their heads, their ears pressing against their heads, showing total remorse, a look of "I was wrong, and I will definitely change my ways."

At the same time, they nudged each other, pushing the Fifth Child out.

The dispirited Fifth Child reluctantly moved forward, pitifully beginning his performance in front of the emperor.

He sat down in place and gave a shake of his fur, then backed up.

Something magical happened.

One Fifth Child suddenly became two, and the newly appeared one could also blink and stick out its tongue, looking very realistic. Even a less skillful Profound Martial Cultivator couldn't see any flaw. If it were under moonlight, it would be even harder to distinguish the illusion from reality.

Then, Fifth Child stepped back again and created a second illusion, a third illusion...

"Moonlight Illusion Technique? You five little ones, how many more secrets are you hiding?" Emperor Longchang's mouth twitched.

He could never have imagined that this pack of little wolf cubs each had vast divine abilities. Not only did they have the ability to turn invisible and hide their presence, possess space abilities, but also they held illusion powers? And were smart enough to use illusion abilities to fool the eunuchs and secretly dig a hole!

Though trivial to the might of Emperor Longchang, those abilities wouldn't last a minute if they dared use them in front of him – he would see right through them.

But these little wolf cubs were still young, not even reaching Level Five~~ where on Earth did they learn this from?

Although Emperor Longchang was well-experienced and knowledgeable, he was momentarily stunned by them.

It was not strange for Silver Moon Grey Wolves to awaken abilities related to the moonlight illusions, but what was unusual was that they had awakened and could proficiently utilize them at such a level. And they had even deceived the watchful eunuchs.

You should know that the bloodline of the Silver Moon Grey Wolf is very ancient and prestigious. Before Level Five, they are considered cubs. Within their kind, the most resourceful Wolf King could even advance to Level Nine.

Ordinarily, Silver Moon Grey Wolf cubs only begin their adolescent period once they reach Level Five, when they can properly join in hunting, and afterwards, taming them is not easy.

This was also why Wang Licui wanted to send them back quickly. The strength of these five little cubs had already reached Mid Level Four, and within at most ten years they would advance to Level Five.

Chapter 54: Arrives in Beijing! Turbulence Resurfaces_4

"You five little ones are so naughty, daring to deceive the Great Emperor." Emperor Longchang scolded with a dark face, "Hmph, I don't believe that even you five little ones can't be disciplined."

"Summon someone to seal the cave for me, cover the entire wolf den floor with Red Essence Iron."

"Replace the fences with Red Essence Iron bars as thick as an arm, and change the locks to Celestial Mechanism Locks for me!"

Emperor Longchang seemed to have taken issue with the five little ones, staring and grinding his teeth, "I really must see what kind of tricks you stinky kids still have up your sleeves. Oh right, since the Red Essence Iron is too hard and cold, and they are still growing, we must prepare the finest spirit goose down cushions for them."

Old Yao, standing by, twitched at the corners of his mouth, stopping short of speaking out.

Your Majesty, Your Majesty, you're getting in deeper... Do you still remember that these are someone else's wolf cubs?

...

While Emperor Longchang was at odds with the five little ones,

Taishi Ankang, who was staying at the Government Post Station and pretending to be pitiful, found himself in a predicament.

Inside the simple post station room, he drank the bitter Spiritual Tea and pondered deeply.

Something's not right, something's not right. According to the plans Wang Shouzhe had laid out beforehand, by now the Emperor should have been delighted to see me looking miserable and taken the chance to mock me a bit.

"Could it be that something unexpected has happened?"

The reason was nothing else. According to the original plan, after Taishi Ankang "unsuccessfully sought mercy" everywhere, he was supposed to carry out the second step of the plan, "Meet with Emperor Longchang."

After raising the other party's pleasure again and pleading in vain, he would be able to carry out the third step of the plan.

But now, he had been turned away twice when he tried to see the Emperor.

He couldn't understand why. Only after secretly giving some Qian Gold to the eunuch who delivered messages did he receive a strange piece of news, that the Emperor had been very busy recently and had no intention of dealing with state affairs for the time being.

"No intention of dealing with state affairs?" Taishi Ankang brooded over this and felt that something was amiss. Suddenly, he slapped his thigh and had an epiphany, "That's it, that's it. The Emperor must have found a new love and become so infatuated that he neglects state affairs."

This wasn't the first time the Emperor had done this; there was a precedent.

According to unofficial histories circulated among the common people, in the more than three thousand years since the Emperor ascended to the throne, there have been no less than five instances where he neglected governance for years due to infatuation with a certain concubine. Yet the last time had been eight hundred years ago!

"Your Majesty, Your Majesty." Taishi Ankang felt bitter in his heart and inwardly lamented, "You're already of advanced age, how can you still be into this? Could it be... that the Kang Commandery Prince and his group are plotting in the shadows?"

"This is troublesome~ It seems that this matter can only be settled by Wang Shouzhe stepping in."

Upon this thought, Taishi Ankang immediately spread out some stationery and began writing a letter to summon someone.

...

A while later,

A special flying carriage cut through the sky and entered into the airspace above Return to Dragon City.

Return to Dragon City, though named a city, actually encompasses a vast area, surrounded by thirty-six military settlements that protect it.

Looking through the flying carriage's glass windows, one could see vast stretches of farmland and pastures. Their scale was immense, covering an astonishing amount of land, and the most fertile lands, with the richest spirit veins, belonged to what is known as the Imperial Manor.

"Imperial Manor," as the name suggests, refers to the manor of the Imperial Household.

They are one of the main properties of the Imperial Family, where they grow crops, raise livestock, manage certain industries, or even own a precious large-scale Spirit Stone mine.

It was precisely from these imperial manors that a vast and continuous wealth was born, supporting the hefty expenses of the imperial household.

The imperial manors were not limited to the vicinity of Return to Dragon City, but were spread across various counties. Essentially, a portion of the most fertile land in each county was the private property of the royal family.

"Speaking of which, the royal family is quite wealthy after all," Wang Shouzhe couldn't help but remark on the flying carriage, "But with such a large household and business, the expenses are also very vast. Just sustaining a Transcendent Emperor each year costs an astronomical amount, not to mention all those Divine Power Territory princes and Purple Abode Realm commandery princes."

"Great grandfather, I heard His Majesty intends to increase our Longzuo County's taxes," Wang Anye, who had already grown a little taller, said with a blink, "Is it because Emperor Longchang eats too much, and the royal family is running out of money?"

"Silly child," Wang Shouzhe fondly patted his head, "The national tax doesn't go directly into the royal private vaults, and it's even prohibited from entering. The main purpose of national tax is to maintain the operation of the entire court, to reasonably adjust the imbalance between counties, and for disaster relief, military pay, pioneering lands, and the like. A part of His Majesty's expenses indeed comes from the nation's support, but a considerable part also comes from the subsidies provided by the royal family itself."

"After all, His Majesty is the Great Emperor, the pillar of a country, and the annual tribute he enjoys is not insignificant. The rest of the princes, commandery princes, as well as marquises and other nobles, all receive a portion of the national tribute."

"The expenditure of this portion of money, part comes from the national taxes, part comes from the state-owned industries. Thus, although Da Qian Country is ruled by the royal family, it does not mean that Da Qian is the private property of the royal family."

Wang Shouzhe explained all this to Wang Anye, while secretly reflecting to himself.

This was where the Great Qian Land differed from the feudal system of ancient Huaxia. Many emperors in ancient China advocated for "family under heaven," stating that "all land under heaven belongs to the emperor," and those court officials and nobles were merely "employees," their lives and deaths at the emperor's whim.

But Da Qian was made up of many prominent families, with the royal family being just the one with the highest status and power in Da Qian.

Strictly speaking, Da Qian was jointly owned by all the prominent families, a bit like a shareholding responsibility system.

The more powerful a prominent family developed, the more shares it held in this "national" enterprise, meaning it had to shoulder more responsibilities and also had a greater voice.

The Daqian Zhao Clan and the Great Qian Wang Clan were, after all, two of Wu's Family's partners during the initial venture, not mere vassal families.

In terms of the popular words from Wang Shouzhe's previous life, they were "co-founders."

It was for this reason that the Zhao and Wang families possessed such high status and enjoyed considerable power in the court.

As Wang Shouzhe traveled by flying carriage, taking in the sights along the way, the carriage had already arrived at the boundary region on the outskirts of Return to Dragon City.

Further inside, flying at will was not permitted.

The flying carriage needed to dock at the flying carriage station.

Under the coachman's control, the flying carriage spiraled down slowly onto the plaza in front of the flying carriage station.

Shortly after, when the flying carriage landed steadily, Wang Shouzhe stepped out with his great-grandson Wang Anye, his granddaughter Wang Ying Xuan, and his daughter Wang Lilong and others.

In the distance, Return to Dragon City could be seen from afar.

The sky was high and clouds vast, a clear azure blue.

Beneath the expanse of Gao Tian, the magnificent and sprawling Return to Dragon City had no walls. Through its grand silhouette, one seemed to glimpse the profound history beneath the giant city, as well as the authority and vast power it represented.

Gazing at all this, Wang Shouzhe's heart couldn't help but swell with emotion.

He, Wang Shouzhe, was finally about to step into the Imperial Capital.

The center of power of Da Qian.

The winds of change were, perhaps, about to rise again.

Chapter 55: Family Head Meets the Main Vein! Great Emperor Flies in Jealousy_2

This time, it was Wang Shida's turn to greet Wang Shouzhe first: "Shida pays respects to Great Uncle Shouzhe."

In terms of actual age, Wang Shida was indeed thirty to forty years older than Shouzhe and his cultivation base had reached the Mid Stage of the Heavenly Human Realm. However, Shouzhe held a higher generational rank.

Nobody in the "Shi" generational rank, regardless of actual age, should call those in the "Shou" rank anything other than 'grandfather'.

Typically, one would address the other clearly by which 'Grandfather' they are, but in cases of being of the same clan but different families, and when it's not clear what the exact seniority is, terms like "Grandfather Shouzhe" are also correct.

"Shida, don't be so courteous; you're much older than Shouzhe. Just call me Shouzhe," Wang Shouzhe hurriedly helped him up, saying.

"Great Uncle, please do not humble Shida so," Wang Shida, startled, paled considerably, quickly standing straight to decline politely.

Behind him stood a host of old ancestors; if he dared to act too familiarly with Great Uncle, he was sure to get beaten to death.

He swiftly changed the subject, "Great Uncle, allow me to introduce. This is my son Annan. You little rascal, what are you zoning out for? Hurry over and greet the Grand Elder."

To divert attention, he even kicked Wang An Nan in the rear.

Wang An Nan, kicked off balance, hurriedly bowed deeply to Wang Shouzhe: "Annan pays his respects to Grand Elder."

Meanwhile, his heart was filled with sorrow.

Since Grand Aunt Li Yao appeared, his, Wang An Nan's, status within the family had plummeted—from the 'Future Hope' of Ding Duke's Mansion, the Qilin Kid in the ancestors' eyes, the proud son often boasted about by his father.

Suddenly, he became a scourge, a little rascal...

"Annan, please rise. I have indeed heard of your exploits; you are quite a famed young expert in Return to Dragon City." After helping him up, Wang Shouzhe pulled out a red envelope and handed it over, "Keep cultivating diligently and strive to enter the Purple Abode Realm soon."

Red envelopes were not to be given lightly, usually reserved for unmarried younger family members—children. Wang An Nan, known for his playfulness, wasn't thinking of marrying yet, which made it appropriate for Shouzhe to give one. It would have been inappropriate if he was married.

"Thank you, Grand Elder, for your encouragement."

With a red envelope to take, Wang An Nan's mood improved considerably.

However, before his red envelope even warmed up, Wang Shida had pulled him aside and confiscated it.

He sneakily opened a corner and quickly glanced inside. His face immediately turned grave, and he promptly communicated a few messages to Master Yuchang.

The reason being that Shouzhe's red envelope contained a stack of Purple Gold Notes, roughly ten in number...

Not surprisingly, a Purple Gold Note-filled envelope was considered abundant for someone in the Spiritual Platform Realm, but for a young genius of the Sky People Realm, it appeared rather modest.

Even Master Yuchang's expression became a bit awkward. Previously, Big Heavenlies Proud from both the Changning Wang Clan and Zong'an had visited the Ding Duke's Mansion.

Zong'an, although young, had married very early and already had many descendants, naturally ineligible for a red envelope, which would rather be for his issue. But for Li Yao, Master Yuchang had resolutely given a red envelope supplemented by ten Purple Gold Notes.

At that time, it seemed a generous gesture, but compared to what Shouzhe offered... it felt somewhat insufficient.

Wang An Nan, that little rascal, how could he compare to Li Yao?

"Elder members of the family, allow me to introduce as well," Wang Shouzhe, pulling along Anye, said, "This is my great-grandson, Wang Anye. Anye, come and greet the old ancestors quickly."

Wang Anye immediately greeted everyone respectfully: "Anye pays his respects to Old Ancestor Yuchang, Old Ancestor Chenping, Old Ancestor Lingzhu... Uncle Shida, brother Annan."

"Oh, this must be Anye, he's grown quite handsome," Master Yuchang said, all smiles while he praised. At the same time, he stealthily took control of the red envelope mentioned by Shida.

He then swapped the shell, adding the five Purple Gold Notes originally meant for Anye, and jovially handed over the red envelope: "What a talented young man Anye is, so young yet already possessing Grandfather Shouzhe's gentlemanly demeanor..."

He was praised unabatedly.

It was unavoidable, Wang Anye's status was special.

He was the fiancé of the Little Princess Yiluo. Once the An Commandery Prince assumed his position, Anye would be the proper prince consort.

Moreover, Little Princess Yiluo carried the Azure Dragon bloodline, deeply cherished by the emperor, destined to be groomed as a Great Heavenly Proud. Even if the An Commandery Prince

ultimately did not succeed in his rise, Little Princess Yiluo, with her bloodline, would eventually be titled a princess. By then, as long as Anye was willing to relinquish his title as heir of the Wang family, he would naturally become another prince consort.

"Thank you, Old Ancestor Yuchang," Wang Anye politely accepted the red envelope after getting a nod from his great grandfather.

However, Wang An Nan was dumbfounded nearby.

His ten Purple Gold Notes red envelope, without even a chance to glance at it, was gone like that! At least let him touch it a couple of times~~!!

"Elder members of the family, this is my granddaughter Wang Ying Xuan," Wang Shouzhe continued to introduce, "Ying Xuan, don't just stand there."

Although Wang Ying Xuan was young, she was daring by nature and naturally would not be intimidated by the occasion.

She immediately stepped forward, aptly performing the greetings: "Ying Xuan pays her respects to Old Ancestor Yuchang... brother Shida, nephew Annan."

Her voice was crisp and clear, resounding with the vigor of a young female general.

She naturally drew praises from all the old ancestors and elders, except for Wang An Nan who was perplexed and speechless. Having a ten-year-old brother Anye was already enough, and now there was even a young aunt?

Chapter 55: Family Head Meets the Main Vein! Great Emperor Flies in Jealousy_3

"Annan, my dear nephew, I'm ranked twenty-first in the family, so you can call me Aunt Twenty-One." Wang Ying Xuan, cunning despite her young age, patronizingly patted the shoulder of the bowing Wang An Nan and said, "I heard that you were disgraced in Shangjing City after being beaten by Aunt Liyao? Don't worry, from now on, your Auntie Twenty-One will take care of you. Once I grow up a bit more, I'll take you with me to sweep through the Imperial Capital."

Wang An Nan and all the elders were stunned.

This pretty little girl is only ten or eleven years old, right? Isn't she getting a bit carried away with her talk?

"Wang Ying Xuan!" Wang Shouzhe said with a dark face, "What did I tell you? Don't bring your bad habits to the Imperial Capital. Annan, although he is your junior, is still much older than you."

"Yes, Grandfather."

Wang Ying Xuan pouted, appearing aggrieved on the surface and complying readily, but she muttered under her breath. Aren't I just looking out for him because he seems quite agreeable, wanting to support him a bit?

Having said that, Wang Shouzhe helplessly apologized and explained, "Esteemed elders, our Ying Xuan is a bit... it's hard to describe in a few words... Anyway, after taking her to Shangjing City to broaden her horizons, we're planning to send her to the Sacred Land."

"To the Sacred Land?" Master Yuchang suddenly saw Wang Ying Xuan with new respect, scrutinizing her and saying, "The child has a decent foundation. She's already at the Qi Refinement Realm Level Four. Shouzhe, which vein of the Nine Veins in the Sacred Land are you planning to send her to?"

"Why don't the child come with me to the vein of LuLi Ming Wang's Hall?" Elder Lingzhu said happily, "With Shouzhe's child here, her talent should be at least Innate Secondary Quality. If we could invite Master Changchun, who specializes in healing, as her protector, one Marrow-cleansing Spirit Pill along with one Treasure Pill would easily break through her bloodline to Top Grade Class B."

The Treasure Pill had a fierce effect on improving bloodlines. It was best used when one's bloodline had reached a double layer and was at the Spiritual Platform Realm, otherwise, it was very likely to backfire.

However, if it were used later on, the effect would be greatly diminished, so if there was an elder to support, it was possible to digest it reluctantly even with a single-layer bloodline.

"This..." Wang Shouzhe laughed helplessly, "I'm afraid Lingzhu will be disappointed; Ying Xuan has already been reserved in advance."

"Pre-booked?" Wang Lingzhu's expression became faintly distressed, "Which vein of the Sacred Land exactly? Are there any members of our Wang family there to look after her? Shouzhe, you're too hasty. If this matter had been discussed beforehand, we would have many options."

After all, the Great Qian Wang Clan was a Third-Class Aristocratic Family. Even though it was no longer as glorious as in the past, the number of Purple Abode Realm and Tiaren Realm Cultivators in the clan was not small. Just within the various veins of the Sacred Land, there were a total of five Purple Abode Realm cultivators, one of whom served as the vice dean within the Tianfu County Purple Abode Academic Palace.

If it were not for the Sacred Land's restrictions on the quotas for the top-class families and their unwillingness to cultivate the Great Heavenly Proud together, the Wang family might have sent several more in, and would even try to co-cultivate the Great Heavenly Proud with the Sacred Land.

The Academic Palace Sacred Land preferred to select promising scions with excellent bloodlines from middle and low-ranking families and then cultivate them with care. Thus, the Sacred Land could maintain its superlative status without being gradually controlled by powerful families.

For example, "Jiang Zhencang," the current master of the Sacred Land, came from the Tianfu Jiang Family.

The Jiang family was once Rank Six but rose to prominence because Jiang Zhencang had a strong bloodline, exceptional talent, admirable character, and outstanding opportunities. He emerged victoriously from among several Quasi Sacred Sons to obtain the position of the Sacred Son and eventually succeeded as the master of the Sacred Land.

However, even as the master of the Sacred Land, Jiang Zhencang could not wantonly bestow benefits upon the Jiang family. At most, during his tenure, the Jiang family's status would be extremely aloof, and no one would dare to provoke them.

Furthermore, their business dealings would also become smoother, as no one dared to cheat them.

Therefore, the Jiang family gradually rose from Rank Six to a Rank Four Prominent Family, but that's where their progress halted. Over time, the Jiang family became increasingly complacent and unpopular locally. They were merely maintaining appearances based on the reputation of their ancestor "Jiang Zhencang."

In fact, the current Tianfu Jiang Family was already too many generations removed from Jiang Zhencang, and due to their own lack of ambition, they haven't produced any remarkable talents in recent generations. They also haven't left a good impression on the Sacred Master, leading to a very distant relationship.

Additionally, one of the highly favored candidates for the next Quasi Sacred Son is Gong Yang Ce, from a minor family.

Wang Liyao of the Wang family also comes from a minor family.

However, if Wang Liyao managed to secure the position of the Sacred Master, the Wang family wouldn't need her to break rules to bring benefits to the Wang clan. What the Wang family needed more was for her to be a stable support. As long as their business could be conducted properly, without attracting envy or harassment from others, that would be enough.

Thus, the Wang family could calmly develop and grow stronger.

With Wang Shouzhe's ability to make money, why bother desperately trying to poach talents from the Sacred Land?

While the Wang family elders were feeling regretful, Wang Shouzhe coughed twice and said helplessly, "Actually, Ying Xuan has already been reserved by 'Sacred Master' Jiang..."

"What?"

Everyone from the Wang family was collectively shocked, looking utterly disheveled.

The Sacred Master wasn't just the guardian of the Sacred Land but also the protector of Great Qian; extending further out, he was also one of the protectors of the Human race!

Chapter 55: Family Head Meets the Main Vein! Great Emperor Flies in Jealousy_4

You might look down on the increasingly degenerate Tianfu Jiang Family, but you can't help but admire and respect Master Jiang.

After all, Master Jiang, as one of only two Transcendent Void Realm experts in Great Qian Land, holds power second only to Emperor Longchang. Such a prominent figure taking on a disciple is indeed a big deal!

Flipping through the history books, one would know that although Master Jiang has not taken on many disciples, except for those who died young, almost all of them have reached the Divine Power Territory. Later, they either became the head of a lineage or defended on foreign battlefields, or even moved to the Immortal Court.

"Could this child be..." The elders of the Wang family stared dumbfounded at Wang Ying Xuan, each of their hearts twitching. What is this Changning Wang Clan? Are Great Heavenly Proud wholesale entities?

"Alas, Ying Xuan's talent has always been extraordinary, plus the Fang Family has spared no effort in their robust support, having prepared Bone Marrow Cleansing Pills and Infinite Treasure Pills early on," Wang Shouzhe also sighed and said, "It must be said that Senior Brother Youan is quite capable. He took the opportunity while visiting the Sacred Master with the Master to praise Ying Xuan extravagantly... And just like that, the Sacred Master took an interest and asked Li Yao more about her."

In fact, Ying Xuan's inherent Mid-Rank 'A' Level formidable talent alone would not have been enough for her to become a Great Heavenly Proud. However, Fang Youan went out of his way to procure for her a Blood Gu King!

With this, becoming a Great Heavenly Proud was like a nailed deal.

Moreover, the luck of this girl, Wang Ying Xuan, was also extremely good. This time, the Wang family had just broken through the new recruit training camp. Led by Wang Shouzhe, the elders, by performing routine cleaning and other miscellaneous tasks in the camp, earned a portion of military merits.

Although not substantial in quantity, eventually everyone pooled together 300 points of new recruit camp military merits and exchanged them for Junior Bloodline Aptitude Improvement Liquid.

But that wasn't all.

Mainly, Wang Anye, through studying and doing homework, gradually obtained quite a few great items from Miss Artifact Spirit... Constantly emphasizing that his family couldn't afford Initial Change Liquid... He eventually managed to get six bottles of Initial Change Liquid and two bottles of Medium Improvement Solution, literally emptying Miss Artifact Spirit's private storeroom!

Under Wang Shouzhe's "suggestion," Ying Xuan picked up some bargains, grabbing one bottle of Initial Change Liquid and one bottle of Medium Improvement Solution.

Additionally, Shouzhe still had one ordinary High-modified Liquid in stock.

Originally, this was left for Anye by Liu Ruolan, but both Wang Shouzhe and Liu Ruolan speculated that Anye would most likely procure his own in the future, thus this bottle of High-modified Liquid was likely for "the second in line heir," Wang Ying Xuan.

Blood Refining Pill, Bone Marrow Cleansing Pill, Initial Change Liquid, Medium Improvement Solution, Infinite Treasure Pill, plus a Blood Gu King! After Wang Shouzhe and Wang Lixian joined forces to protect her, she smoothly elevated her bloodline talent to a high Grade B!

This girl is indeed lucky, starting off with such high conditions.

No wonder Wang Liyao, after introducing Ying Xuan's bloodline talent to the Sacred Master, even captivated his interest.

This, however, caused the faces of the Wang family to turn very grim.

Especially Master Yuchang, who was somewhat awkward.

Originally, he had prepared a red envelope containing three hundred thousand Qian Gold for Wang Ying Xuan—a sum sufficient for a younger relative with outstanding talent but an ordinary one. But for a future disciple of the Sacred Master...

How could he possibly present that?

What made them speechless was that Wang Shouzhe had also brought along a dragon...

Rumor had it her name was "Wang Lilong." From the way she eyed Wang Anye's red envelope with a predatory gaze, it was clear that this one was no simple character.

The red envelope they had prepared was just too small.

"Master Yuchang, let's discuss this matter back at the residence," Wang Shouzhe suggested.

"Yes, yes, let's return to the main residence first," Wang Yuchang immediately responded, hurriedly agreeing, yet his heart trembled subtly.

Shouzhe, you rascal, did you come today just to trick the main branch into giving out big red envelopes and shear our fleece?

The current Great Qian Wang Clan's funds are not that abundant. Besides having just invested a large sum of money into the "Dala Desolate Desert Development Plan," they also need to reserve tens of millions of Qian Gold for Wang Zhuohui, a Divine ability species of this generation on the brink of breaking through, to purchase the Heaven Reaching Holy Pill necessary for advancing to the Divine Power Territory.

This is the most pressing matter at hand.

These red envelopes of one or two hundred million Qian Gold have to be given many times, and honestly, we're really scraping the bottom of the barrel here.

As Wang Shouzhe and Master Yuchang headed back to the Wang family's main residence, the news of Wang Shouzhe entering the Imperial Capital spread quietly like dandelion seeds among various powers, secretly beginning to boil.

After all, huge upheavals had followed the arrivals of Liyao the Great Heavenly Proud and Zong'an the Great Heavenly Proud in the capital previously.

Now, the Family Head of Changning Wang Clan, who had always remained behind the scenes, Wang Shouzhe, had also arrived...

It gave people a feeling as if a storm was brewing, an oppressive sensation filling the air.

Even Emperor Longchang in the Zhuozheng Pavilion was paying close attention to this news.

At this moment, Emperor Longchang was lying in Zhuozheng Pavilion, looking rather fatigued, as if he hadn't rested well for many days, and seemed tormented and struck by something.

"Wang Shouzhe has entered the Imperial Capital?" Emperor Longchang asked in a hoarse voice while half-lying down.

Old Yao, who was gently massaging his temples to invigorate his spirit, immediately replied, "Yes, Your Majesty, he has entered the capital. It is said that three young people from the Transcendent Void Realm of the Ding Duke's Mansion went to greet him."

"Hmph! They are all birds of a feather, just stirring together in mutual flattery and aid," Emperor Longchang muttered discontentedly, "That Wang Shouzhe really lacks discernment. The Great Emperor is right here, and he doesn't even know to come and pay his respects first, then quickly take those five mischievous ghosts off my hands."

"Your Majesty, it's Master Shouzhe's first visit to the Imperial Capital, he probably has to pay respects to his ancestors first. After all, Changning Wang Clan was spun off from the Great Qian Wang Clan," Old Yao interjected, "But if you are really eager to meet him, just issue a decree to summon him, and he will surely come right away."

"Issue a decree to summon him? Pish!"

"What is my status? What is his? Would I really stoop to summon him myself?"

"As for Wang Shouzhe, that opportunist speculator, it won't take three days before he'll come dashing over to pay his respects and curry favor with me. Just wait and watch, Old Yao, and see how I handle him when the time comes."

"..."

Old Yao's eyelids twitched. Was this planning to be a confrontation to the end?

Your Majesty, aren't you afraid of another mishap?

Chapter 56: The Wang Family's "Bad Practices" Sweep Through Shangjing

...

While Emperor Longchang pondered over Wang Shouzhe, Wang Shouzhe and his entourage, led by Master Yuchang and his party, finally arrived at the Main Residence of the Great Qian Wang Clan.

As one of the three most ancient Prominent Families of the Great Qian Land, the Main Residence of the Great Qian Wang Clan also had a history of over seven thousand years.

From the vast area of the Main Residence alone, as well as the majestic aura seeping through the brickwork and tile gaps, one could glimpse the once glorious past of the Great Qian Wang Clan.

Placed on Earth, this would truly be considered a historical relic.

Of course, the materials used for the Wang family's Main Residence were not ordinary; otherwise, it would have decayed and collapsed over the millennia.

But even so, it still required regular maintenance; otherwise, even the best timber would not withstand the erosion of time, and the Wang family spent a fortune on upkeep every year.

At the very forefront of this magnificent complex was a huge archway.

The archway, over twenty-one meters high, was carved entirely from white jade, and a plaque made of ironwood inlaid with gold hung at the top, inscribed with the powerful characters "Merit Points Pass Down Through Generations."

It was said that this plaque was personally inscribed by Emperor Ziwei Xuandu, the founding monarch. It represented the former emperor's appreciation for the Great Qian Wang Clan and was an acknowledgment of the merits the clan had established.

Similar archways and plaques existed only for the Daqian Zhao Clan besides the Great Qian Wang Clan.

This single plaque alone was enough to make other Prominent Families green with envy, especially the rising Gongye Clan and Chen Clan.

After passing through the archway and entering the Main Residence area of the Great Qian Wang Clan, Wang Shouzhe noticeably felt the concentration of Spiritual Energy in the air increase significantly.

Clearly, a Spirit Gathering Array must have been set up within the Main Residence of the Great Qian Wang Clan.

This was most likely left by the Old Ancestor of the Great Qian Wang Clan. In such an environment, not to mention cultivation, even mere survival could strengthen the body, improve health, and prolong life.

"Shouzhe, over there is the council hall where the Elder Council is regularly convened to discuss and decide on matters big and small concerning the family."

"That space is the main martial training ground, where the clan soldiers and The head of household train, or where some major events are held."

"Do you see that magnificent hundred-meter tall tower? That is our Wang Clan's Nine-level Mysterious Origin Tower, built by master builders and Array Masters from the Immortal Court, commissioned by our Old Ancestor at great cost. It serves as the foundation of our family's legacy, as well as the core Formation Eye of our internal Spirit Gathering Array."

Master Yuchang led Wang Shouzhe and the others on a tour inside the Wang family's Main Residence, carefully introducing them to some of the more important buildings and the history associated with those buildings.

Listening to all this, Wang Shouzhe couldn't help feeling deeply moved.

It was truly deserving of a Prominent Family with over seven thousand years of history; its foundations were incredibly deep. Even some ordinary spirit seed saplings, after being nurtured through the long passage of time, had grown into towering trees brimming with Spiritual Energy.

Every brick underfoot, casually trodden upon, could well have been laid by the ancestors thousands of years ago, imbued with a rich sense of historical vicissitudes.

Compared to this, the foundations of the Changning Wang Clan seemed much more superficial.

However, the current Changning Wang Clan also had its own advantages, that being young and full of vitality. Unlike the Great Qian Wang Clan, which was bloated and cumbersome, with countless

clan members tangled and complex in their relationships, and very few truly promising individuals; most were merely mediocre, only aspiring to live a comfortable life.

The Ding Duke's Mansion was very large, its size almost comparable to a Guard City in the provinces. Just the direct kin in the Main Residence numbered over ten thousand, not to mention the tens of thousands of servants, house servants, and heads of household combined.

That was only those who resided in the Main Residence. The scattered clan members and clan soldiers outside were equally numerous. The Duke's Mansion had many Branch Families in Return to Dragon City and its surrounding suburbs, as well as a very large population of collateral relatives.

Throughout history, there were not a few branches that separated from the Ding Duke's Mansion, but in the long course of history, the vast majority either perished or lost contact with the main lineage.

Among them, the Wang Clans of Southern Desert, Longzuo, and one from Tianfu were originally branched out from the direct line Purple Abode Elders of the Great Qian Wang Clan; therefore, they were generally more powerful.

Even so, the Longzuo Wang Clan nearly fell into dust.

As Wang Shouzhe and the others looked at everything inside the Wang family's Main Residence, despite being prepared, they were still filled with emotions and overwhelmed.

However, the Main Residence of the Wang family was too vast; it was impossible for Wang Shouzhe and the others to see it all at once. So after a brief tour, Master Yuchang then took Wang Shouzhe and his party to the banquet hall prepared for guests, where they held a welcoming feast for Wang Shouzhe and the others.

The liveliness of the event and the enthusiasm of the main lineage need not be mentioned in detail.

In the end, Master Yuchang stealthily gave Wang Ying Xuan and Wang Lilong a red envelope each. Needless to say, the contents were fifteen Purple Gold Notes for each of them.

Clearly, Master Yuchang had a high opinion of Wang Ying Xuan and Wang Lilong, believing that both the person and the dragon had huge potential for the future. It was a customary way for a Prominent Family to express care, hope, and support for the younger generation.

Wang Shouzhe was quite aware of the current state of the Great Qian Wang Clan and knew that due to Emperor Longchang's explicit or implicit oppression over the years, the Great Qian Wang Clan had not truly declined, but the family's early accumulated foundations were gradually being eroded. Many of their external industries were disappearing or being sold off without anyone realizing it.

Chapter 56 Wang Family's "Bad Practices" Sweep Through Shangjing_2

Currently, the economic situation of the Great Qian Wang Clan wasn't actually that good, the funds for training clan members were incredibly scarce, only those deemed particularly important like members of the Heavenly Human Realm, Purple Abode Realm, or Divine Power Territory received better development opportunities. Mid to lower-tier members often didn't receive the best training and struggled to compete against the increasingly domineering An Duke's Mansion.

This naturally led to a vicious cycle.

After the welcoming banquet.

Wang Shouzhe and others were arranged to stay in a guest residence called Four Seasons Garden.

This estate, located within the west side of the Main Residence and covering tens of acres, was filled with numerous exotic flowers and plants, along with tastefully crafted rockeries, bamboo groves, and fishponds.

Most uniquely, the courtyard was equipped with four small formations used to control different temperatures in the area, allowing the exotic flowers that normally bloomed in different seasons to bloom at the same time and within the same garden.

In the residence, from the kitchen staff to the gardeners, down to the servants cleaning, the number of servants reached a hundred.

Such lavishness was unheard of within the Changning Wang Clan. The small courtyard where Wang Shouzhe and Liu Ruolan lived was attended only by a few servants who cleaned it regularly, plus two cooks.

Cleaning the garden and planting flowers were tasks that Wang Shouzhe and his wife undertook themselves.

Nevertheless, the Great Qian Wang Clan was still the main branch, and it wasn't Wang Shouzhe's place to criticize. Since he was there, he might as well adapt to the local customs.

Within Four Seasons Garden, there were rooms specifically for the stay of subordinate household heads and others. After arrangements were made for the accompanying subordinates, Wang Shouzhe himself took the Three Little Ones to live in the inner courtyard.

By this time, Wang Shouzhe and his companions finally had some private time to rest.

Wang Anye graciously handed a red envelope containing fifteen Qian Gold Notes to Wang Shouzhe, saying, "Great Grandfather, please keep this. I noticed that Ji Wuchen's family seems not so well-off, you'll probably want to pay them back, and it can't always come out of your own pocket."

Hearing this, Wang Shouzhe couldn't help but smile.

He remembered in his past life when he was a child, any red envelopes he received were barely in his hands before they were spoken for—his parents either claimed it as savings for his future wife or outright said it was for repaying relatives' children.

Unexpectedly, Anye was so perceptive, able to infer from mere bits and pieces that the Great Qian Wang Clan was somewhat like a giant with clay feet.

However, by acting so boldly, the lad was bound to offend people.

Sure enough, both Wang Yingxuan and Wang Liling glared at him angrily.

You, Wang Anye, a small financial master not short of money, but they definitely are~! They had just gotten a bunch of red envelopes thinking they could save up some money, and now they hadn't even warmed the money yet and had to hand it over to the heads of the family. How could they not be furious?

Of course, they could choose not to give it, but doing so would make them appear unfilial.

"Little Seven, I just remembered a math problem I can't solve. Let's go chat in the small woods nearby," Wang Yingxuan, with a shift of her eyes, suddenly wrapped her arms around Anye's neck and said in a friendly tone.

"Yes, yes, I have several questions I can't solve as well," Wang Liling also said with a mischievous grin, rubbing her hands together in eagerness.

"Um... we can just teach here, why do we need to go to the small woods to do math problems?" Wang Anye asked naively, clueless about their motives.

"Just come when you're told, why so much fuss!" Wang Yingxuan said, slightly impatiently.

Alright...

Wang Anye was indeed easy-going.

Then, a mischievous girl along with a mischievous dragon girl whisked Wang Anye into the nearby woods.

Shortly after.

Screams of Wang Yingxuan came from the forest, "Goodness, Wang Anye! I am your grand aunt! Just a fight, and you even summoned Grandfather using Divine Treasure Summoning, are you just bullying me because I'm poor? Boo hoo hoo~~"

"Ji Wuchen, you dare intervene in my matters?! Ouch, ouch~~~ Go easy~~ You old thing, if you keep hitting without holding back, I might just reveal my true form! Wang Anye, you are too despicable and shameless, using a stomachache curse in a fight. Ow, ow, ow~ I was wrong... Please stop hitting, it was just a joke with Anye."

For a time, the small woods were chaotic with energy bursts, truly a scenario of utter pandemonium.

A quarter hour later.

A girl and a dragon girl supported each other back to Wang Shouzhe's room, both having been beaten black and blue, sobbing and begging for treatment.

It wasn't that their injuries were particularly serious; rather, they had initially planned to go shopping and enjoy the beautiful scenery of the Imperial Capital.

Now in such a state, how could they possibly face anyone?

"Aunt Yingxuan, Grand Aunt Liling," Wang Anye followed behind the girl and the dragon, saying expressionlessly, "Please remember to inform me before joking in the future. My master reacts too severely to surprises and needs a heads-up."

Courtesy notice, pfft~

The corners of Wang Yingxuan and Wang Liling's mouths twitched.

Wang Shouzhe, however, watched the whole scene with amusement, never once intervening.

Ling Yingxuan and Liling couldn't have expected that the senior Ji Wuchen had a very condensed Divine Soul now, making it not so easy to bully Anye.

This was also a good lesson for these two troublesome girls, to keep them from being too unruly.

Seizing the opportunity, Wang Shouzhe naturally took the red packets from the three of them and said with a smile, "I'll keep these for now and buy you some Dan medicine later."

Chapter: 56 Wang Family's "Bad Practices" Sweep Through Shangjing_3

Especially Yuxuan and Liling, these two grand aunts are far from being anything nice.

In a lavish sinkhole like the Imperial Capital, clutching a massive sum of money, they could soar to the heavens, and I reckon it would all be squandered within days, utterly wasting such hard-earned cash.

The faces of Wang Ying Xuan and Wang Lilong both drooped, tears almost bursting forth.

Fortunately, Wang Shouzhe casually handed each of them a small stack of gold notes, totaling over ten thousand Qian Gold, which immediately turned their sobs into laughter.

As for Anye, there was no need to give him any. The amount of money stored in his Infinite Treasure Ring was so vast that even Wang Shouzhe couldn't fathom its depths. To offer him ten or twenty thousand Qian Gold would be an outright insult.

The teenage years are indeed when one is least willing to settle down.

And sure enough, on the second day, the Three Little Ones couldn't withstand the boredom and went out to roam the Imperial Capital.

For this, the Great Qian Wang Clan naturally attached great importance. In addition to having Wang An Nan accompany them, they also arranged for an Elder from the Purple Abode Realm to covertly look after them.

As for Wang Shouzhe, he hadn't come to the Imperial Capital for leisure this time.

This trip was for him to attend to several major matters, the first of which was to find a True Method for his clan to practice.

The so-called "True Method" refers to a cultivation technique that directly advances to the Divine Power Territory. For example, the "Glazed Bright King True Method" practiced by Luo Qiu and Lici is a True Method inheritance.

The Wang Clan's wealth has grown significantly in various aspects, and the number of Great Heavenly Prouds within the clan is surging like a geyser. The bloodline talent of Elder Longyan and Ruolan has even reached the level of the Innate Spiritual Body.

With such powerful talent and their current cultivation base, ascending to the Purple Abode Realm would take merely thirty to forty years.

Top Grade cultivation techniques can only be practiced until one breaks through to the Purple Abode Realm, and without a suitable True Method, they won't be able to continue cultivating after they ascend.

Even if they were to continue practicing with the original technique, the speed of cultivation would become exceedingly slow.

Therefore, he must obtain an inheritance True Law as soon as possible.

However, a True Method inheritance is considered extremely important within any family or power, and it's not something that's commonly passed on to outsiders.

Wang Shouzhe, merely an external direct disciple of the Purple Abode Academic Palace, was already at the limit being authorized to cultivate the "Longevity Youth True Verses," a Top Grade technique. To practice a complete True Method, he would need to formally join a Sacred Land.

But even the Lingyun Holy Ground has only nine complete True Methods, which is exactly why there are the Nine Veins of the Sacred Land.

Aside from Lingyun Holy Ground, the Great Qian Imperial Household is the one Prominent Family with the most True Method inheritances, possessing only eight True Methods.

Luckily, the Great Qian Wang Clan is an old family with a long history, and it is said to possess two True Method inheritances.

After pondering over it, Wang Shouzhe thought the most efficient way was to obtain a True Method inheritance from the Great Qian Wang Clan. Therefore, he decided to try this route first.

...

Two hours later.

In a vibrant bamboo grove teeming with life, Wang Shouzhe and Master Yuchang sat opposite each other, sipping Spiritual Tea.

Master Yuchang had a serious expression and seemed somewhat troubled, "Shouzhe, do you realize that for any Third-Class Aristocratic Family, the inheritance of a True Method is of paramount importance?"

"Although it doesn't compare to the power struggles involving the Emperor's sons of the Imperial Household or the Saints of the Immortal Dynasty, it is not something that every family member can practice as they wish."

"Master Yuchang," Wang Shouzhe calmly smiled and asked, "Although my Changning Wang Clan is merely a branch of the Wang Family, the blood of our founding ancestor 'The Determined Profound Ancestor' does flow through our veins. Surely you wouldn't let the descendants of such an exceptional bloodline go without a True Method to practice?"

Although the Sacred Land was also an option, surely not every clan member should follow the path of the Sacred Land, right?

"Naturally, that can't be allowed," Master Yuchang hastily shook his head, "In the past, there was no precedent, so I dare not decide on my own. How about this, let's wait a few days, and discuss it again after the Old Ancestor comes out of seclusion?"

"When Shouzhe sent the letter earlier, I had already tried to notify the Old Ancestor. According to the timing, he should be coming out of seclusion in these next few days. Then, the Old Ancestor will take you and a few others to pay homage to the ancestors of the Wang Clan."

"By the way~" Speaking of which, Wang Yuchang remembered something else, "Shouzhe, you mentioned in your last letter that during the Divine Martial Dynasty Era, the Seventh Army Commander was named 'Wang Chuanwu'? Was he a significant figure from the Peak Void Realm? But upon combing through the family archives, it seems that the recorded history of the Wang Clan can at most be traced back about fifteen thousand years, no further. The discovery of this historical material by Shouzhe is a great service indeed, as it has unearthed the true lineage and heritage of our clan."

"Once I refine the inheritance records, I will personally visit the Immortal Dynasty and meet with a few related clans to discuss matters such as building a temple for Ancestor Chuanwu."

"This is a matter of great significance. If the spirit of Ancestor Chuanwu still watches over us, he would surely be pleased by the prosperity of his descendants," said Wang Shouzhe, with a solemn expression, earnestly addressing, "all efforts are appreciated, Master Yuchang."

Master Yuchang laughed, "It's all for our own Ancestor's affairs, what's there to be troubled or not troubled about?"

With that said, the two men looked at each other, and all was understood without words.

...

Adults travel for business, but for children who venture far from home, naturally, their main activity is to play.

With Wang An Nan, a well-acquainted local snake, the likes of Wang Anye had a blast and didn't even fear being bullied. After all, aside from a few exceptions, there was hardly anyone of their age that Wang An Nan would fear.