

Three Realms 221

Chapter 221: The True Culprit

After Ye Rong became Crown Prince, his control over the Dragonteeth Guard immediately greatly increased. Those who were on his side were given important positions.

For example, Tian Shao was continuously promoted from his original commander position to being a general in charge of a troop.

As both Xin Wudao and Lu Wuji, who had been close to Ye Dai, they kept a noticeably lower profile than before even though their positions hadn't changed. Their limelight had been completely overtaken by the newly promoted Tian Shao.

Even General Director Shangguan Yi had to take this situation seriously. He had always favored Tian Shao to a certain extent when it came to affairs of the Dragonteeth Guard.

"Young master Chen, here are thirty flight tokens. Once the Goldwing Swordbirds you've brought are equipped with these flight tokens, you'll be able to fly through the capital as you will. Apart from approaching the royal palace, all other areas are unrestricted."

Tian Shao gave a bundle of flight tokens to Jiang Chen.

"Old Tian, you've gone to great trouble this time."

Tian Shao waved his hands, "Young master Chen, we've contacted all the various underground powers, gangs, and organizations within the capital in the past couple of days. However, we can confirm that this matter has nothing to do with them."

All sorts of underground powers, gangs, rogues, and assorted organizations existed within a kingdom.

There was a certain amount of rationale to the existence of these powers.

However, these powers were also quite smart and they normally wouldn't fight against the authorities and wouldn't move against a strong power like the Dragonteeth Guard.

"We can basically exclude all the underground forces within the capital." Tian Shao analyzed. "To be honest, these underground forces wouldn't dare provoke young master Chen. Their intelligence networks are all very strong, so they would definitely know the price of provoking young master Chen."

Jiang Chen nodded slightly, but his expression had a unfathomable depth to it.

'Young master Chen, the capital is already under martial law and there's no way for them to get out. Our Dragonteeth Guard has already started a carpet style search. I believe that we'll have news before long.'

Tian Shao could only comfort Jiang Chen when he saw the latter's face darken.

Tian Shao had tried his best in this matter, but all sorts of strangeness suffused it, making it difficult for him to get a handle on things immediately.

Besides, Tian Shao was only the general of one troop. There were ten troops in the entire Dragonteeth Guard. He wasn't at the level of a general director after all, there were many things he wouldn't be able to handle fully.

Take the Dragonteeth Guard's search for instance. Gaps would appear if the Guards of the other troops slacked off the tiniest bit in their search.

The Dragonteeth Guard wasn't a place in which Tian Shao's word was law. He could control his own troops, but couldn't interfere with the others.

Whether the other troops were strict or lax, he would be hard pressed to command them.

"Old Tian, it's not appropriate to maintain martial law for too long. You should maintain it for a day at most. Search normally after a day."

"Young master Chen, don't worry. The Crown Prince can handle the pressure." Tian Shao thought that Jiang Chen was worried that Ye Rong wouldn't be able to hold up beneath the pressure.

"Do as I say. One day!"

"Young master Chen, you..."

Jiang Chen waved his hand, "Old Tian, if this matter involves those inside the Dragonteeth Guard again, I won't just laugh it off like I did last time. I'll make the blood of those who touch my people run like rivers, even if they have a god as their backer!"

A cold killing intent shot out from Jiang Chen's eyes, making even Tian Shao shudder with fright.

Jiang Chen had always rarely lost his temper, but this didn't mean that he didn't have one. Truthfully speaking, Tian Shao was well aware that once Jiang Chen truly grew angry, there were few within the kingdom that could bear up beneath his anger.

Ye Dai was arrogant huh? He was powerful, hmm?

And what had been his downfall? He died a ludicrous death without barely a fight.

Of course, there were those who were stronger than Ye Dai within the capital. It was possible that someone really was moving in the shadows this time and that there were turncoats within the Dragonteeth Guard.

If this matter had been done soundlessly and without a trace, it would be difficult to accuse anyone without any evidence.

Although Ye Rong had already been made Crown Prince, he was just a Crown Prince. His power wasn't enough to influence the decisions of the highest executives of the Dragonteeth Guard.

The Dragonteeth Guard answered to only one person in the end, and that was the current king, not the next king.

However, even though this was the case, there was no way Tian Shao would sit idly by.

“Young master Chen, don’t worry. Even the Dragonteeth Guard wouldn’t protect a bad egg in themselves if there’s concrete evidence.”

...

A secret place within the kingdom.

A black robed figure was idly playing with the wine cup in his hand.

“Xue San, you can certainly hold yourself back. The entire capital is under martial law now and it’s being searched. Aren’t you worried at all?”

The person speaking was Lu Wuji of the Dragonteeth Guard.

“Worry? What is there for me to worry about? If we are found out, large numbers of heads will roll on your side as well. Therefore, I believe that even if we have no ways to escape, you’d protect us well.” The black robed Xue San laughed coldly.

“Huh. You better keep your head about you.” Lu Wuji snorted coldly.

“Don’t worry Vice General Lu,” Xue San laughed faintly. “Jiang Chen killed one of my Hidden Hands, strutting around with the weapon he stole. Shouldn’t he die? We’ve only come to collect on an old debt. When it comes down to it, you should be rejoicing in that we’re not asking you for payment.”

“Payment? The conveniences that we’ve given you allow you to come and go as you will within the capital. You also have so many hiding places. How much gold would it have cost to buy all this?” Lu Wuji was a bit displeased.

“Haha, so this is why our partnership is either a win-win situation or a lose-lose. Vice General Lu is such a smart person, you understand this, don’t you?” Xue San laughed leisurely.

“What do you plan to do next?” Lu Wuji asked. “Your Hidden Hand has sent assassins to the capital of the Skylaurel Kingdom. You don’t plan on just kidnapping one of Jiang Chen’s personal guards, do you?”

“You think too much. We don’t plan on leaving empty handed since we’ve come. A personal guard is only a bit of interest to make the hearts of the Jiang family tremble in fear. It’s only when the situation within the capital is in turmoil that the best opportunity arises for us to make our move, wouldn’t you say so?”

Lu Wuji had a darkened expression as boundless hate surged to the fore. “Jiang Chen, I can’t wait to collect your corpse. Did you think that because Ye Dai died, the Skylaurel Kingdom would become yours?”

Xue San wore a faint smile on his lips, “Lu Wuji, you can go if there’s nothing else. Remember, don’t let the Dragonteeth Guard find us. Otherwise, I can’t promise that my men won’t say something they shouldn’t.”

“Xue San, are you threatening me?” Lu Wuji spoke with barely suppressed anger.

“You think too much, I’m only describing a truth. We’re on the same boat now, we share in the same glory and all of us go down if one does.”

"You speak too much bullshit." Lu Wuji cursed and stood up. "Where's Xue Tong? I want to have a go at him and see if I can get anything out of him. If I can prove that the first prince met his death at their hands, then I can turn the situation around."

Xue San's eyes looked inside and a smile played around his lips, but he didn't object.

Lu Wuji grimaced as he walked inside with large strides.

At this moment, Xue Tong's true qi had been completely sealed. Although he'd regained consciousness, he wasn't able to move at all.

However, although his true qi had been sealed, he could still use part of his Ear of the Zephyr to listen clearly to the conversations outside.

"Lu Wuji and the Hidden Hand!"

Xue Tong was deeply anxious. The Hidden Hand was without a doubt the boss of the assassin organizations within the sixteen kingdoms.

He knew that the Hidden Hand had once been employed by the Long family to kill young master Jiang Chen in the Boundless Catacombs, but had ended up being killed by Jiang Chen instead.

The bow that had been given to him had also come from the Hidden Hand assassins.

He'd thought that this matter was over and done with, but to think that this Hidden Hand organization had come knocking and sent assassins that were much stronger than last time.

The most important thing was, they'd bribed the Dragonteeth Guard this time.

With the Dragonteeth Guard in cahoots with them, the light was working with the shadows and placed Jiang Chen in further danger.

The Hidden Hand was the assassin organization most adept at assassination and ambush within the sixteen kingdoms. They were very frightening to begin with. The number of experts within were as numerous as the clouds as they came and left without a trace. They were so mysterious that no one knew where their headquarters were.

There were almost none who didn't die after being targeted by this organization.

Xue Tong was anxious. He hadn't thought that the young master had been once again targeted by the Hidden Hand. He also knew that his capture was just a show of force to the young master. He was an appetizer at best, and not the main course.

The most frightening thing was that the Hidden Hand was working in conjunction with the Dragonteeth Guard.

Lu Wuji in particular was an old enemy of the young master's. There was possibly even a vice director Yang Zhou behind him.

"This won't do, I need to notify the young master. The Dragonteeth Guard and Hidden Hand are colluding in the shadows while the young master is in the light. I must bring this intelligence to him as this is greatly disadvantageous to the young master."

Xue Tong was deeply loyal to Jiang Chen ever since he started following him. Although he knew that he was in dire straits at the moment, his first thought was for Jiang Chen's safety and not his.

Xue Tong heard Lu Wuji's footsteps sound at this moment.

"Did you think this would happen, brat?" Lu Wuji laughed in an ugly fashion as he walked him, and stomped directly on Xue Tong's hand. He exerted force and cracking sounds rang out as the bones of Xue Tong's hand broke.

The ten digits were tied to the heart. The pain of breaking fingers pierced the heart directly.

Although he was in pain, Xue Tong grit his teeth and didn't make a sound. Sweat poured off his forehead as it dripped down like rain.

"Brat, you're a stubborn one hey?" Lu Wuji loved torturing prisoners, processing them, listening to their pleading, and the howls of his prey.

However, Xue Tong's stubbornness made him feel very pissed off.

He exerted more force and shouted as he stomped, "Brat, let's see how long you can go without making a sound or begging for mercy!"

Chapter 222: The Goldbiter Rat King's Accomplishment

One had to say, Xue Tong was tough. No matter what techniques Lu Wuji used on him, Xue Tong never made a sound. It was as if all of Lu Wuji's various tortures weren't being employed on him.

Lu Wuji persevered until his forehead was dripping with sweat, but never heard any words from Xue Tong that expressed any weakness.

"Brat, do you think I'll be unable to do anything to you just because you didn't make a sound? You're just one of Jiang Chen's dogs. I can consider sparing your life if you behave nicely."

Xue Tong laughed heartily, "Lu Wuji, you coward, are you at the end of your rope now? Don't you Dragonteeth Guards have a lot of methods? Come on! Like I'd be afraid of you!"

"Lu Wuji, do you think just because you've taken me, that you can do anything to my house's young master at all? Do you think you're so brave just because you've captured me? You're wrong. If you're not a coward, then you should use blades and spears to fight my young master, and not play these little tricks behind our backs. To think that you're opening the door for a killer organization as a member of the Dragonteeth Guard. Lu Wuji, you're adding face to the Dragonteeth Guard alright!"

Xue Tong wasn't afraid at all as he cursed loudly at Lu Wuji.

Lu Wuji was greatly incensed as he stomped his foot on Xue Tong's chest and placed the other on his neck, "Brat, are you looking for death?"

Although Xue Tong was underfoot, his face was full of disdain. "Go ahead and kill me. My young master will have your heads on the ground sooner or later."

Lu Wuji had tragically discovered that the methods he had learned in the Dragonteeth Guard seemed to be completely useless against Xue Tong.

"Xue Tong, just what did Jiang Chen offer you? You're just one of his personal guards. No matter how well he treats you, you're still just a personal guard in the end. Countless wealth and prosperity will await you instead if you cooperate nicely!"

"Oh?" Xue Tong smiled coldly. He was slightly curious about the tricks Lu Wuji had up his sleeve.

Seeing that Xue Tong's attitude seemed to be softening, Lu Wuji managed to squeeze out a smile on his face and pulled over a chair, continuing his persuasion, "As long as you tell me the truth about what happened in the Autumn Hunt, the reason for first prince Ye Dai's death, and take a stand to accuse Jiang Chen and Ye Rong, I promise that you'll have your share of wealth and prosperity."

"Wealth and prosperity? How much are we talking about?" Xue Tong winked and asked.

"If you accomplish such a great achievement, you'll have at least Jiang Chen's rank of second rank noble."

Xue Tong chuckled, "Vice General Lu, I wonder what rank noble are you now?"

Lu Wuji said arrogantly, "I'm not even thirty and have used my own abilities to get to the position of third rank noble. How can a jumped up upstart like Jiang Chen compare to me?"

"Tsk ts, you're only a third rank noble and you say would be able to grant me second rank? Lu Wuji, how brainlessly idiotic can you get? Do you think I'm as dumb as you?"

Lu Wuji's face froze. He could tell that this wasn't Xue Tong's attitude softening at all. Rather, this was making a fool out of him, Lu Wuji!

"Brat, it looks like your hopes won't die unless you're staring at despair in the face. Alright, alright, I really won't kill you now then. Just wait until you see Jiang Chen's corpse lying in front of you. When that happens, let's see if you'll still be tough then!"

Lu Wuji turned huffily away and spoke to Xue San, "Xue San, we'll continue to exert pressure on our side so that martial law will be lifted and create opportunities for you. Do you feel certain that you can kill Jiang Chen or not?!"

Xue San said faintly, "Vice General Lu, you just do your part properly and we'll naturally do ours. The rest that remains is up to the will of the gods."

Lu Wuji really wanted to beat the crap out of Xue San. What the hell was he strutting around about? Would it kill him to tell me his plan? Does he have to keep things so close to his heart?

However, he also knew that with his little bit of strength, it was a daydream to think of sending Xue San packing. He'd be lucky to not be beaten into the ground.

Lu Wuji left for home after throwing some dark looks around. He sat for a while, and still decided that he should report this matter to his uncle Yang Zhao.

"Wuji, although the rewards are great in this matter, so are the risks. Ye Dai is already dead. Clearing his name only means putting Ye Rong and Jiang Chen down. Even if this step succeeds, you need to prop up Prince Ye Hao. Although Ye Hao is a bit young, this also means he's easier to mold. If you can

successfully prop him up to the throne, the position of general director of the Dragonteeth Guard in the future will definitely be in your hands.”

These words made Lu Wuji’s blood boil, but he still said, “Uncle, that Xue Tong is keeping a tight seal on his lips. He’s not wavering at all no matter how I torture him.”

“If he doesn’t crack, there are still others. Xue Tong wasn’t the only one who entered the maze realm with Ye Rong. And, so what if all of Ye Rong’s men are staunchly loyal? As long as we take down Jiang Chen and do away with Ye Rong’s most useful assistant, his inadequacies will be revealed. The various powers that exist will naturally make their move then. How hard will it be to find a couple of ‘eyewitnesses’ then? Wuji, remember that in the struggles for power, it’s all about gaining the upper hand. Whoever is stronger can turn black to white. Whoever is on the losing side will find that even white can be turned to black. There’s no so-called innocence, the key point is whether or not one can gain power!”

Yang Zhao spoke with sincere words and earnest wishes as he tried to talk sense into Lu Wuji.

Lu Wuji nodded, “Uncle’s words have spontaneously enlightened me. Don’t worry, the assassins that the Hidden Hand has sent this time are all of the spirit realm. They won’t rest unless they kill Jiang Chen. Add our cover to that, we’ll have a strong chance to kill Jiang Chen.”

Yang Zhou sighed, “We should’ve destroyed Jiang Chen when we had the upper hand. It’s a bit late to make a move now. I hope nothing goes wrong this time.”

Come to think of it, although Jiang Chen had stirred up the winds and rain within the capital, Yang Zhao felt that he was a bit different from the usual nobles after a bit of observation.

Jiang Chen had no background within the capital at all, and there were no powerful experts within his personal guards. The numbers of his personal guards were also much less than the large noble families.

Of the nobles within the capital, each had more than hundreds, or even thousands of personal guards.

And for Jiang Chen’s men, he only had so many no matter how he looked at them. There wasn’t a single idle layabout amongst them.

Therefore, Yang Zhou felt that although Jiang Chen had a lot of methods, there was a great gap between them when it came to absolute strength.

This was why he felt that those from the Hidden Hand had a great chance of success.

“Wuji, Tian Shao is hopping up and down and being quite proactive this time. He’s your main competition now and you need to take heed. If Tian Shao gains the upper hand, you’ll have no chance to compete with him in the future. If Ye Rong ascends to the throne in the future, Tian Shao will very likely become the candidate for general director.”

“Tian Shao!” Killing intent exploded out of Lu Wuji’s eyes. “I underestimated him previously.”

Yang Zhao nodded. “Alright, you go back first. Things are a bit sensitive right now, so you should keep to yourself more. Don’t come to me unless things have reached a critical point.”

“Understood.”

“Be as surreptitious as you can when helping the Hidden Hand, and don’t let anything slip. If even a single move is made wrongly, all will be lost.”

“Uncle, don’t worry, I’ve learned my lesson. I won’t go about it with brute force and won’t stick my neck out. I’ve learned that sneaky tactics are the best when it comes to Jiang Chen.”

Yang Zhou smiled with great satisfaction. It looked like his nephew had greatly wisened up from last time’s downfall and he had changed quite a bit.

Lu Wuji left in great spirits and returned home.

What he and Yang Zhou would have never thought of was that a golden colored shadow was also departing the Yang family living room after their conversation, drilling through the earth at an astonishing speed and heading for the Jiang family manor.

Jiang Chen’s ears twitched within the secret room as he felt the tremors beneath the ground. The Goldbiter Rat King’s head poked out of the ground in the next second.

“Old Gold, you’re back.”

“Young master Chen, you were absolutely right in telling me to keep an eye on that human.” The Rat King was quite excited. “Something was wrong about that human called Lu Wuji!”

The Rat King fully relayed the information that it had heard beneath the Yang family living room.

“The Hidden Hand?” Jiang Chen immediately remembered the time that he’d ran for his life beneath the Boundless Catacombs. It had been that chase that had caused Jiang Chen to flee into the forbidden zone of the fourth level. That was where he’d met Mang Qi, formed the master and servant relationship with Mang Qi, gained his Swordbird Army, and turned around the situation with the Long family.

“The Hidden Hand!” Jiang Chen repeated the phrase. “I’d thought that things were over when I didn’t seek revenge for last time’s matter. And now you’re directly provoking me. Good, very good! It looks like I, Jiang Chen, am too easy to talk to. To think you came knocking when I didn’t pursue things after killing those three!”

Killing intent surged through Jiang Chen’s tone.

“Old Gold, you’ve gone to great trouble this time. I may have to ask you to do more later.”

The Rat King smiled wryly, “Young master Chen, don’t say words like that. I only have one request in that you don’t forget your previous promise.”

Jiang Chen spoke seriously, “Old Gold, you’ve helped me time and time again. If I don’t go to this bit of effort for your tribe’s behalf, then I’d truly be less than the swine and dogs. Don’t worry, if I don’t strive my hardest with regards to helping your race evolve, then may the heavens and earth annihilate me.”

When the Goldbiter Rat King saw that Jiang Chen was speaking so seriously, he too expressed his opinions. “Don’t worry young master Chen. Things will be easy since we know who the opponents are and their plans. I’ll send my children to take care of this if you’re still worried. I can definitely save your man. These assassins can also die in whatever way you want them to die.”

Jiang Chen sneered, "Let them die? That will be going too easy on them. Since Lu Wuji and Yang Zhou have yet to let go of hope, then let's make a big play this time!"

"Old Gold, keep an eye on Lu Wuji and see if he'll make contact with those assassins next. I'll summon you when the next mission comes around."

Jiang Chen had still sent out the Rat King a bit too late, he'd missed the moment in which Lu Wuji had met with the assassins.

Otherwise, he would've located Xue Tong by now.

Jiang Chen's first consideration was still Xue Tong's safety. From current intelligence, it would appear that Xue Tong was still alive. These people were going to try to get the events of the maze realm out of him, and wanted Xue Tong to accuse Jiang Chen and Ye Rong in order to take down the new Crown Prince.

"The struggle to be Crown Prince... to think that although it seemed that the matter of this struggle was settled, there'd be so many who are still struggling feebly. Prince Ye Hao? That snivelling whelp?"

Jiang Chen wasn't much interested in the struggle for Crown Prince. But Yang Zhao and Lu Wuji had thoroughly crossed over his bottom line this time!

"Yang Zhao, since you have no respect for your status as an elder, I'll let you have a taste of the consequences of offending me!"

Jiang Chen was furious this time, completely and utterly furious!

The last time Lu Wuji had provoked him, he'd let Lu Wuji off the hook because he wanted to swindle a large amount of spirit ingredients out of Lu Wuji.

It wasn't that Jiang Chen had been merciful that time either, it was because he knew that what he had wasn't quite enough to take Lu Wuji's head yet.

Also, Jiang Chen had just arrived to the capital and his foundations had yet to solidify, so he didn't want to really make a mess of things. The situation was different this time however.

This time, Lu Wuji had dared collude with the Hidden Hand and lay a hand on his people. This was truly his bottom line.

Just like when the Long family had crossed over Jiang Chen's bottom line, his revenge would not show the slightest bit of mercy and would not rest until he'd beaten his enemies down to the depths of despair.

Chapter 223: Plan of Counterattack

When Tian Shao received a secret message from his men that Jiang Chen was looking for him, he rushed with the utmost haste to the Jiang household.

He was under a great deal of pressure for this matter as well. The glory and humiliation of the Jiang family was actually those of his as well. If the Jiang family collapsed, then the next to fall down would likely be him, Tian Shao, and the next person after he falls could very well be Crown Prince Ye Rong.

Therefore, the pressure on him felt as heavy as a mountain's after this matter had occurred.

"Young master Chen, you summoned me?"

Jiang Chen was slightly moved to see that there were large eyebags beneath Tian Shao's eyes and the weariness was written all over his face. He knew that Tian Shao was trying his best.

After all, this matter was a bit difficult to investigate. There were internal members of the Dragonteeth Guard colluding with an enemy on the outside. It'd be difficult to find evidence even if they had their suspicions.

"Old Tian, you've gone to great trouble. I now need a complete set of information on Lu Wuji. For example, who are his confidantes and his most trustworthy men? Can you give me a list of names? This list needs to have not only their names, but also their addresses, the timing of their shifts and others."

A shrewd light sparkled faintly in Tian Shao's eyes, and he nodded his head resolutely. "No problem, I promise that I can pull this off flawlessly."

Tian Shao was a man of his word and did things quite efficiently. He produced a list within the hour after leaving the Jiang manor.

Jiang Chen was even more guaranteed of success with this list in hand.

"Young master Chen, the Crown Prince has been under a lot of pressure because of this matter. Parties on all sides are now objecting to the martial law. When it all comes down to it, this is all because the fourth prince has just been made Crown Prince recently and because of this he doesn't have a firm enough of a foundation yet." Tian Shao sighed.

"Tian Shao, go tell His Highness to lift the martial law."

"What?" Tian Shao displayed a surprised expression.

"Young master Chen, the enemies' movements will become even more brazen without the martial law. It will be very disadvantageous for you."

Jiang Chen nodded, "Brother Tian, the higher the level of security, the less likely the enemy will be to emerge from hiding. Lifting the martial law is merely to draw the snake out of the hole."

"Oh? Young master Chen, do you have a plan in mind already?"

Tian Shao was curious too when he saw Jiang Chen's coolly composed demeanor.

A trace of a cold and ruthless smile appeared on Jiang Chen's lips. This smile made even Tian Shao, someone quite familiar with Jiang Chen, shudder slightly not from the cold.

He knew that once Jiang Chen revealed such a smile, it meant that unbounded killing intent had been triggered within him.

"Brother Tian, hasn't the Crown Prince always felt that his foundations are shaky? If he can manage to bring out his courage and resolution this time, he'll be able to thoroughly clear away all the rebellious remnants and truly be as solid as Mt. Tai."

“What do you mean by this?” As Ye Rong’s loyal follower, Tian Shao was greatly interested in these words.

“You just need to cooperate with my actions and do thus...”

Jiang Chen went over his secret instructions with Tian Shao.

Tian Shao nodded as he listened, and then displayed a gravely contemplative expression afterwards, “Young master Chen, how much confidence do you have with this?”

Jiang Chen said faintly, “I am one hundred percent sure, but I can’t guarantee anything if something goes wrong with your manipulations.”

Tian Shao nodded and carefully simulated things in his heart many times. He took a deep breath in and nodded, “Young master Chen, I’ll go report to His Highness immediately and ask him to come to a decision.”

“Be quick about it.”

Jiang Chen actually knew Ye Rong quite well and knew that Ye Rong would never pass up this opportunity. Although he was the Crown Prince, there were all sorts of opposing powers still looking at his position covetously. All was not proceeding as smoothly as he’d imagined.

With such an opportunity to thoroughly consolidate his grasp, Ye Rong would never pass it up. Although there was risks involved in this matter and that great problems could occur if he didn’t do it well, but the struggle for and seizing power had always been accompanied with great risk since ancient times. He’d never be able to sit firmly on his seat of Crown Prince without a spirit of taking risks.

Therefore, Jiang Chen wasn’t worried at all that Ye Rong wouldn’t cooperate.

Indeed, when Ye Rong received Tian Shao’s secret missive, he immediately traveled to the Jiang manor.

“Jiang Chen, I am quite troubled by this time’s matter as well. The enemy is just too slippery this time round and my men haven’t been able to find anything. Sigh.” Ye Rong also comforted Jiang Chen politely when he arrived.

Ye Rong was a smart man. Although he was Crown Prince now, he didn’t put on any airs with Jiang Chen and didn’t call himself “this prince” or “this royal one”.

This was undoubtedly a signal that he, Ye Rong, still very much valued his relationship with Jiang Chen. Even though Ye Rong was the Crown Prince, he was still as close to Jiang Chen as brothers.

“Your Highness, you’ve already gone to great effort for this matter and have done all you can or cannot do. I, Jiang Chen, do acknowledge that.”

Jiang Chen also knew the truth of his words. Ye Rong had held up beneath the pressure from all sides and enacted martial law — this required a certain amount of charisma.

Ye Rong possessed sufficient charisma and responsibility in times of need. Jiang Chen rather admired this point and felt that he hadn’t placed his trust in the wrong man.

“I heard Tian Shao say that you have new found clues here?” Ye Rong didn’t beat around the bush.

“Not only new clues, but I’ve also found a way in for you.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

“Mm?” A light dawned in Ye Rong’s eyes. “You and I are brothers, and I go where you go in the capital. Younger brother Jiang, I will unequivocally support whatever plan you think feasible with the clues you have. We’ve weathered so many life and death situations together. I have nothing to fear now that I’m Crown Prince. Brother, speak frankly.”

What Jiang Chen wanted was this kind of decisive attitude from Ye Rong.

He slapped his thigh and complimented, “Alright, it’s a rare thing that Your Highness hasn’t lost your drive and spirit of adventure after becoming Crown Prince. I already have clues pertaining to this matter. Lu Wuji is colluding with an assassin organization, maintaining the facade of living with us while secretly helping others. The person supporting them behind the scenes is Yang Zhao, and it could involve prince Ye Hao.”

“Ye Hao?” Ye Rong slightly started. This Ye Hao was a snivelling whelp who was only thirteen or fourteen years old. It had always been the four eldest princes competing for the position of Crown Prince. Ye Hao had never been in the running because he was too young and had no foundations to speak of.

“Ye Hao’s not important, he’s likely just a pawn being used by those fools. The crux of the problem are still the remnants from Ye Dai’s faction like Lu Wuji and Yang Zhao!”

“Yang Zhao!” Killing intent also danced in Ye Rong’s eyes when he heard this name.

Yang Zhao was one of Ye Dai’s diehard supporters. His position and power in the Dragonteeth Guard had been too high for Ye Rong to do away with him when they were cleaning house.

Although Ye Rong made an internal note of it, he could find no excuse to take down Yang Zhao. The latter controlled the Dragonteeth Guard and had a wide array of networks. He grasped great power and it was difficult for even the Crown Prince to knock him down a peg.

However, this thorn in the side had always been firmly planted, making all food a bit tasteless in Ye Rong’s mouth as he went about his days.

After all, with Yang Zhao’s influence as a vice director, it’d be easy for him to send out a call to a group of people and engage in covert shenanigans, making things disadvantageous for Ye Rong.

If Yang Zhao had three to five years to plan and form his own party, and secretly support Ye Hao, it wasn’t inconceivable that he’d transform into a new challenge to Ye Rong.

Given that Ye Hao didn’t possess the advantages that first prince Ye Dai had, as his foundations within the capital weren’t as solid, there weren’t that many deathsworn to him.

This had been a long standing situation, as firm as solid ice. It’d take some time to shake things up and wouldn’t be accomplished in a day and a night.

Currently, Ye Rong was still gathering his influence and fortifying his foundations. If Yang Zhao secretly moved against him, it was apparent to see the level of threat he would form against Ye Rong.

Therefore, in terms of hatred, the depth of Ye Rong’s emotions towards Yang Zhao weren’t in the slightest bit less than Jiang Chen, and was even somewhat stronger than Jiang Chen’s.

How would he not be interested when he heard Jiang Chen say that this matter could take down Yang Zhao?

“Younger brother Jiang, do you have any evidence?” Ye Rong asked.

“I don’t have any direct evidence at hand, but I am absolutely sure that it’s Yang Zhao and Lu Wuji conspiring with the enemy in this matter.”

“Conspiring with the enemy, bringing disaster to the capital, and shaking the kingdom’s foundations, these are all punishable by death. We’d be able to take down Yang Zhao if we obtained tangible evidence. He’d be hard pressed to escape death even if he is the vice director of the Dragonteeth Guard.”

Ye Rong was very aware that whether it was him or his royal father, they deeply abhorred and had zero tolerance for actions that colluded with other foreign powers.

And as great as Yang Zhao’s power was, he wasn’t the general director of the Dragonteeth Guard after all. There was still a Shangguan Yi above him.

Yang Zhao’s relations with the other vice director was akin to fire and ice. If he was accused of anything, he would also have a rival who would jump out to bite him, consigning him to the death heap.

“Your Highness, prepare a group of elites to stand by for orders. Don’t alert our enemy, just wait for my signal. Yang Zhao won’t be able to talk his way out of this one, if we can catch Lu Wuji and those assassins in the act.”

“Catch them in the act?”

“Yes.” Jiang Chen nodded his head firmly. “Lu Wuji has already gone to see those assassins. With his temperament, he wouldn’t just go once. Your men can move in as soon as he visits a second time and surround them, exposing him in the act.”

“Yang Zhao won’t be able to squirm out of this one as long as we are able to catch Lu Wuji.” Tian Shao nodded.

Ye Rong thought for a moment and said, “What I’m afraid of is that Yang Zhao may sacrifice even Lu Wuji if he really hardens his heart.”

Jiang Chen smiled, “Sacrifice Lu Wuji? That’s a given. Except, once Lu Wuji is exposed, will Yang Zhao’s influence still be as before even if he get absolve himself of the matter? Who would even follow someone who could sacrifice his nephew? Yang Zhao won’t be a concern anymore if Lu Wuji dies. It will be easy for him to die!”

Ye Rong was slightly surprised to see Jiang Chen so confident.

Yang Zhao was still a vice director of the Dragonteeth Guard at the heart of it. He had countless experts at his beck and call and their numbers were as numerous as the wind. To kill Yang Zhao would be almost impossible unless they were able to pin a crime on him.

But, when he saw Jiang Chen’s assured smile, Ye Rong felt an unknown sense of confidence.

This type of confidence resulted from Jiang Chen's mind boggling performance in the past as he created miracles over and over again.

Therefore, there was no reason for Ye Rong to doubt this time.

Chapter 224: Lu Wuji in Fine Fettle

With Jiang Chen's assurance, Ye Rong naturally didn't insist on maintaining martial law. He had truly been under a tremendous pressure from all around in the past couple of days.

Countless petitions and censures had flown before His Majesty like snowflakes. Fortunately, His Majesty didn't express much at this moment, he displayed no leanings and gave it all the cold treatment.

He neither pressured Ye Rong, nor read any of the petitions.

It was only when Ye Rong lifted martial law that the surrounding pressure slowly died down.

Lu Wuji was a bit surprised when he received the news that Ye Rong had lifted the martial law. Although Yang Zhao had warned him to stay put, Lu Wuji still couldn't help but make a trip.

"Uncle, it looks like that Ye Rong couldn't hold up beneath all the pressure. Martial law has been lifted and our chance has arrived." Lu Wuji's expression was as vicious as a viper's.

"Huh. I'd rather hoped that he'd hold out a bit longer. The more stubborn he had remained, the worse everyone's impression of him would've been. This Ye Rong knows well when to advance and when to retreat." Yang Zhao was quite regretful. He'd rather have used this opportunity to censure Ye Rong and perhaps even drag him down from his position.

Who would've thought that Ye Rong would give up after just a few days, robbing them of their best excuse in an instant.

Lu Wuji however, spoke "Uncle, what need we fear Ye Rong for if we remove Jiang Chen? Ye Rong is a tiger without claws when deprived of Jiang Chen's support, just an enfeebled cat. Would it not be easy to drag him down when we move against him afterwards?"

Yang Zhao sighed, "Although Jiang Chen is important to Ye Rong and even ninety percent of the reason why Ye Rong could make it to his current position, Ye Rong is the Crown Prince right now and some preparations are needed in order to bring him down even if Jiang Chen is removed from the picture. That won't be easy. Wuji, you really need to change your nasty habit of being rash."

Yang Zhao delivered timely criticism for Lu Wuji's reckless and unbridled behavior.

Lu Wuji chuckled. "Yes, Uncle! However, the main task at hand is to take down Jiang Chen and beat him into the ground!"

Yang Zhao didn't deny this and nodded slightly. "Wuji, now that the greater picture has formed, you'll need to guide the Hidden Hand well. Remember, don't allow yourself be entrapped as well."

"Hehe, don't worry Uncle. A fall in the pit brings a gain in the wit. I suffered greatly when I stuck my neck out for Ye Dai, how could I make the same mistake this time? Now that the Hidden Hand is here and I can murder someone with a borrowed knife, what greater joy is there?"

Yang Zhao nodded. "Murdering someone with a borrowed knife. Well said. The Hidden Hand exacts revenge for all their grudges, let's observe as they and Jiang Chen go at each other's throats this time. Wuji, now that the martial law has been lifted, this is a superb opportunity for the Hidden Hand. However, Jiang Chen is no simple character, warn them not to make a move unless they have absolute confidence. They should either kill him in a single strike or lie in wait, gathering their strength. They need to find a chance to kill him with one shot. Should they fail, killing Jian Chen later will be much harder."

"Speaking of killing, the Hidden Hand should be much better at it than us?" A sinister smile appeared on Lu Wuji's lips. "They're hailed as the strongest assassin organization within the sixteen kingdoms. With us feeding them intelligence and giving them conveniences, they should close up shop if they still can't take care of a mere Jiang Chen!"

Lu Wuji had no doubts regarding the assassination abilities of Hidden Hand at all.

Although Jiang Chen was abstruse and currently had the limelight, he was still just a young man with shitastically wonderful luck at the end of the day. His little tricks and good luck were useless in the face of absolute power. Lu Wuji didn't think that Jiang Chen would be able to escape disaster in the face of the Hidden Hand's pursuit.

"Uncle, since the martial law has been lifted, I'm going to notify them and make some preparations." Lu Wuji responded.

Yang Zhao thought for a moment and said, "Be careful on your way, don't let anyone trail you. Otherwise, the opportunity will be gone if this matter is exposed and furthermore, we'll be the ones doomed."

Lu Wuji smiled, "Uncle, what do us Dragonteeth Guard do? It's always us trailing others. Someone trailing us? We needn't worry about that!"

"Caution is the parent of safety. We need to be careful with each step we take at the moment. We could lose everything in just one moment of carelessness." In the end, Yang Zhao was still the experienced and steady one in the end.

Those within the Dragonteeth Guard all knew each other's tricks, as such it was very unlikely that they'd be able to trail one another.

In addition, Jiang Chen didn't have enough men to follow Lu Wuji. As for Ye Rong, although he was Crown Prince now, his network and connections still weren't as wide as those of Yang Zhao's, a vice director of the Dragonteeth Guard.

This was to say that Yang Zhao didn't fear Ye Rong when it came to the eliteness of their troops. He was completely unafraid in this moment at least.

Otherwise, he would've never allowed Lu Wuji to act as he did. He didn't oppose Lu Wuji meeting up with the Hidden Hand at this crucial moment obviously because he was fully confident that he had an overwhelming power in the information network compared to Ye Rong.

Lu Wuji wasn't a fool. He was in no rush to go out after leaving Yang Zhao's residence and only set out after half a day.

He didn't make straight for his goal when he set out either, but instead took a walk through the streets of the capital and only headed for the Hidden Hand's hideout after he had made certain that no one was tailing him.

Lu Wuji had indeed been quite cautious this time. He had men openly and covertly covering him, exercising utmost prudence to prevent being followed.

Xue San was a bit surprised to see Lu Wuji. "You again? Can you really do as you will within the capital of the Skylaurel Kingdom?"

Xue San didn't want to maintain such a high profile like Lu Wuji.

"Is every assassin as cautious as you?" Lu Wuji smiled. "I naturally wouldn't have come without a reason. I've brought good news."

"What good news?" Xue San's forehead creased.

"Crown Prince Ye Rong finally crumbled beneath the pressure and lifted martial law. Wouldn't you say that this is good news? Without martial law and with our cover, I trust there will be no difficulties in your assassination plan?"

The Hidden Hand's desire to kill Jiang Chen was quite ardent, but Lu Wuji's desire to see Jiang Chen die was just as strong, or perhaps even stronger.

"Lifted martial law?" Xue San was a bit taken aback. "Isn't that a trap?"

Assassins were naturally cautious. Where Lu Wuji and Yang Zhao saw opportunity, Xue San's first thought was that it was a trap.

"Trap?" Lu Wuji guffawed. "Have you not heard of the censures and petitions flurrying down like snowflakes in court? Ye Rong has just been made into a Crown Prince and yet he has gone against the grain to order martial law. How much foundation would a newly vested Crown Prince have? Do you know how much inconvenience martial law brings to the lives of those dukes, nobles, and officials? The longer he laid down martial law, the thicker the stack of censures grew. Do you think he can bear up underneath all that?"

Xue San had no interest in the internal politics of the Skylaurel Kingdom. He was different from Lu Wuji. He was an assassin, and his first priority was to rule out all risk.

Although various reasons could lurk behind the sudden lifting of martial law, Xue San's first thoughts were, whether there was a trap behind this martial law?

"Don't you be paranoid Xue San. Although Ye Rong is the Crown Prince, my uncle still holds great influence within the capital. To be blunt, whatever ploy Ye Rong might be thinking of, he won't have the power to execute it. His influence and his power's foundation aren't solid enough to set up a large scheme. Plus, you've brought your elites this time. How much of a ripple can a small scheme cause in the face of absolute power? Xue San, don't tell me you actually fear Jiang Chen deep down?"

Lu Wuji wasn't a fool as he even tried to goad Xue San into action through sarcasm.

However, such tactics were rendered useless in the face of an assassin.

Xue San snorted coldly and looked Lu Wuji like he was looking at an idiot.

"I really wouldn't be afraid if Jiang Chen was as much of a buffoon as you are." Xue San jeered mercilessly. "It's a pity that he's not. According to our intelligence, Jiang Chen isn't that easy to handle. My Hidden Hand must kill Jiang Chen, but you're not on the level to be in the know of how to kill him and what preparations we'll be setting up. What you are to do is cooperate with us. You have no right to mouth off about other things, do you understand me?"

Lu Wuji's face sank. "Xue San, are you looking down on me?"

Xue San laughed faintly. "I hope you prove worthy of my respect after this time's partnership."

Lu Wuji was greatly incensed. Although they were partners, the thing he abhorred the most was the feeling of being looked down on by others.

However, he still remained someone with a shrewd mind. Although he was infuriated, he knew better than to affect his partnership with the Hidden Hand over a mere verbal dispute.

In addition, he also knew that he couldn't afford to get on the bad side of the Hidden Hand. It wasn't that the Hidden Hand was a war machine, but assassins who lived in the underworld were like maggots latching onto a foot. There would be complications to one's very death if they were to set their sights on you.

...

Just as Lu Wuji set foot outside his door, the Rat King keeping watch immediately commanded forth the elite of his children and locked onto Lu Wuji's route from beneath the ground.

The Rat King then brought this intelligence back to Jiang Chen as soon as possible.

When he heard that Lu Wuji had made his move, Jiang Chen too was overjoyed. He immediately notified Ye Rong to covertly deploy his elite troops and set up a net according to the path that the Rat King had reported.

All of this was done with utmost secrecy.

Jiang Chen and Ye Rong both knew that Yang Zhao's influence within the capital was like an intricate web laced with many informants. If they went about this with great fanfare, they would surely alert the enemy.

Jiang Chen wasn't afraid of Yang Zhao, but he still decided to do things secretly as he cared for Xue Tong's safety.

As for Lu Wuji and Xue San, they had no idea regarding any of this.

"Lu Wuji, get rid of Xue Tong as soon as possible. Leaving him alive means an additional risk factor." Xue San said again.

However, Lu Wuji's plans were to thoroughly torture Xue Tong and have him accuse Jiang Chen and Ye Rong of their wrongdoings in the maze realm after Jiang Chen was destroyed, using him to drag Ye Rong down.

Killing Jiang Chen, deposing of Ye Rong, and raising up Ye Hao so that he, Lu Wuji would become the best candidate to be the general director of the Dragonteeth Guard after Ye Hao took the throne. That was Lu Wuji's ultimate ambition.

And that was why he still allowed Xue Tong to live.

Chapter 225: Xue Tong Goes Missing!

Xue Tong happened to play a very important role in Lu Wuji's plans.

When he heard Xue San say so, Lu Wuji hastened to say, "Xue Tong is just a minor character, why does it matter if he dies or not? Besides, I still have some use for keeping this fellow alive."

Xue San and Lu Wuji were just in a working partnership. However, the former was wholly uninterested in Lu Wuji's ambitions. He felt that leaving Xue Tong alive would become a security concern for their operation.

Since he was a latent threat, he must be dealt with.

"Lu Wuji, you seem to have gotten something wrong. This Xue Tong is someone that my Hidden Hand has captured. It's our business as to how we take care of him. On what grounds do you have to keep this Xue Tong alive?" Xue San smiled coldly.

Lu Wuji said frantically, "Isn't it a matter of wealth whether you capture or kill someone? I'm willing to pay if you give Xue Tong to me."

Lu Wuji knew that he would make no headway if he approached this head-on in a tough manner with Xue San. All would be well if he spent some money.

"Payment?" Xue San's expression softened as expected. "How much are you willing to pay?"

Lu Wuji gritted his teeth, "This Xue Tong is just a true qi master. How about I pay as much as it would take for your organization to kill a true qi master?"

"Do you think that Xue Tong is only worth the price of a true qi master?" Xue San laughed leisurely.

"Then how much do you want?" Lu Wuji was depressed.

"One price, the level of payment for killing a practitioner in the first level of the spirit realm. We either have a deal or I'll kill Xue Tong immediately!"

Even though Lu Wuji knew that that was a clear ripoff, he had no other choice but to grit his teeth and say, "Alright, it'll be as you say then."

Xue San smiled with satisfaction, "You're a smart man alright. However, since you've bought Xue Tong's life, you must take him with you. It would be too risky if he stays here. I'd have to charge you for the heightened risk."

The Hidden Hand was indeed an organization that revolved around money.

“Don’t worry about it. I’ll take Xue Tong away with me!” Although Lu Wuji knew that there was certain risk in taking Xue Tong away with him, he was even more aware that Xue San was a vampire with insatiable greed. Who knew how much the price would be with the heightened risk?

Xue San laughed heartily, “Since this is the case, you can take him with you now. However, don’t come here if you don’t have a reason to in the future. We’ll let you know when your cooperation is needed. What you need to do is just provide everything we need.”

Lu Wuji was quite ticked off by Xue San’s attitude, but as irritated as he was, he could only pinch his nose and bear it. “There’s no problem in coordinating with you, but I hope that your Hidden Hand won’t so scared of Jiang Chen that you’re unable to come out of your turtle shells.”

A trace of killing intent suddenly flashed across Xue San’s face.

If anyone else had said these words, he’d likely be a dead man by now.

However, Xue San also knew that the Hidden Hand truly needed Lu Wuji’s cooperation in order to move about the Skylaurel Kingdom.

“Take Xue Tong and get the hell out of here.” Xue San was expressionless.

Lu Wuji chuckled as he walked towards where Xue Tong was behind held. The moment he entered the room, his footsteps slowed down and an expression of disbelief appeared on his face.

“Where is he?”

The place that had held Xue Tong was empty, with not even a trace of a ghost, much less a person.

Xue San had thought that Lu Wuji was purposefully making things difficult and was about to explode when his ears twitched. He really didn’t hear sounds of Xue Tong’s breathing.

He hadn’t paid attention to the movements within the house when he was talking with Lu Wuji just now. He hadn’t thought at all that Xue Tong would vanish without a trace!

The internal chamber had no windows and had been strongly fortified. There were guards in the hidden posts located outside, and Xue Tong had been injured and chained. Even if he’d been in full health, he couldn’t possibly have walked through the walls.

The walls within the house were in pristine condition, so it was obvious that he hadn’t left through the walls.

Lu Wuji looked at Xue San with suspicion written all over his face.

He was obviously suspecting that Xue San was up to some tricks by trying to swindle money out of him.

Xue San snorted coldly and completely ignored Lu Wuji’s suspicions as he walked inside and surveyed the surroundings, walking over to a pile of grass.

The dry grass had been spread there for Xue Tong to lie on.

Xue San’s sleeves flourished as he swept the dry grass aside, revealing a large hole beneath them.

It was a hole that a person could fit in!

Even a trained and experienced killer like Xue San was completely flabbergasted, not to mention Lu Wuji's eyes bugging out in disbelief. Where the hell had this hole come from?

When had this hole been dug? To think that such a hole had appeared without forewarning or any clues on Xue San's territory!

At that moment, Xue San had the feeling that he had just fell into an icy cavern

Sweat also popped out all over Lu Wuji's body as a sense of danger suddenly surged to the fore.

"Xue San, you... you allowed Xue Tong to escape?" Lu Wuji's face was ashen. He was well too aware that the meaning of Xue Tong's escape for him and his uncle Yang Zhou!

Xue San's face darkened as he observed things in front of the hole, his facial muscles twitching uncontrollably. "Escape? Xue Tong is injured and I laid restrictions down on his body, how could he have escaped? Someone on the outside must have dug a passage for him and taken him away!"

"What? Someone on the outside?" Lu Wuji sprang up, "This place is so highly concealed, how it is possible that anyone would know that Xue Tong was being held here, unless.... Unless?"

Lu Wuji felt the hairs stand on his body and he didn't dare speak any further. A frightening premonition floated to the surface, accompanied by Jiang Chen's faintly confident smile.

Xue San's viper-like eyes locked fixedly onto Lu Wuji, "Lu Wuji, this is all your fault!"

Lu Wuji was also extremely frightened when he saw Xue San's vicious glare. Although this was the capital, he was facing off against Xue San alone and didn't have large numbers of troops about him at the moment. If Xue San wanted to kill him, it'd be as easy as squashing an ant out of existence.

"Xue San, what do you want to do?" Lu Wuji's face was the color of dirt.

"You worthless thing, you don't have the ability to accomplish anything but you've plenty of ability to mess things up! I should've known that a dog who's suffered defeat at Jiang Chen's hands multiple times like you would be unreliable!"

"Xue San, don't you blame it all on me!" Lu Wuji was also in a panic. "Then why don't you say that it's your own fault? There's no way that anyone could've followed me here! I've still got this bit of competence after so many years of being a general in the Dragonteeth Guard."

Xue San smiled coldly, "Then are you implying that my Hidden Hand is inferior to your Dragonteeth Guard?"

Lu Wuji really wanted to say so, but he was afraid of Xue San slapping him to death with one palm. He could only soften his standing and say dejectedly, "What's the use in determining who's at fault now? The task at hand is to decide how to clean up this mess. Once Xue Tong leaves, he'll rat all of us out. I don't think you want to die in the capital before killing even Jiang Chen?"

Xue San snorted coldly and felt over the ground for a little bit, then turned over the dry grass.

"The dry grass still feels warm. Furthermore, the dust made from the hole is new as well. It looks like they haven't gone far!"

“Then why aren’t you going after him?” Lu Wuji cried anxiously.

Xue San knew that this wasn’t the time to hold a grudge now. If Lu Wuji, that worthless thing, attempted to pursue them, he’d never catch up to them.

That meant he’d have to personally make the pursuit.

Xue San was of the fourth level spirit realm, and an assassin in the earth spirit realm. He was confident that even if this matter came to light, there were few people within the Skylaurel Kingdom who could do anything to him.

According to his intelligence, apart from spirit king protector Ye Chonglou who had overwhelming superiority, there were almost none who could be a threat to him in the Skylaurel Kingdom.

As for the Precious Tree Sect, Xue San didn’t think that a mere Jiang Chen would be able to command aid from the Precious Tree Sect. Not to mention that his intelligence further indicated that Jiang Chen had just offended a senior elder from the Sect not too long ago. It was already good enough that the Sect wasn’t oppressing Jiang Chen, why would they step out and help him?

Therefore, he wasn’t worried at all that the matter might come to light.

Xue San had just been about to jump into the hole when his footsteps halted, and a trace of a smile appeared on his lips. A thought suddenly struck him in this moment that since Xue Tong had already been rescued, this meant that he and the Hidden Hand had already been exposed.

Since they were exposed, there was no salvaging the situation even if he caught up to Xue Tong.

What was the point in killing Xue Tong then? He had laid down restrictions on Xue Tong’s body anyways, he didn’t think that Jiang Chen would have the ability to lift them.

When he saw that Xue Tong had halted his footsteps, Lu Wuji started, “What?”

Xue San smiled casually, “Since things have escalated to this point, what’s the point in catching up to Xue Tong? Given that Jiang Chen has been able to find this place, this means our operations have been exposed. If I caught up to Xue Tong, at most I would kill him but what’s the point of that?”

Lu Wuji was highly anxious. Although Xue Tong was of no use to the Hidden Hand, he was of great use to Lu Wuji.

Setting aside the fact that he wanted to use Xue Tong to materialize his plans, he wouldn’t even have a resting place once Xue Tong spilled everything. Even his uncle Yang Zhou would be done for.

“Xue San, you absolutely can’t let Xue Tong get away!” Lu Wuji was frantic as he almost wanted to jump into the hole himself and give chase.

However, Lu Wuji was well aware that his strength was meager, and there was no difference from rushing to his death if he squirmed into the hole.

Xue San flicked a cold glance at Lu Wuji, “What did I say? Not enough ability to accomplish anything, but plenty to mess things up. I really regret cooperating with a worthless idiot like you. Lu Wuji, you’re on your own now.”

Xue San stuck two fingers into his mouth after speaking and whistled lowly, summoning his men from their various places of concealment.

“This place has been compromised, we must immediately retreat and find another hiding place!”

His four men nodded, obviously looking to Xue San for orders.

When Lu Wuji saw Xue San’s demeanor, he knew that he’d become Xue San’s discarded pawn. His face changed greatly, “Xue San, is this how your Hidden Hand conduct business?! You’re leaving me out in the cold by ditching like this!”

“Ditching?” Xue San’s tone was cold. “Why don’t you say that you’re the one who’s messed this up? Why were others able to find this place? Do you dare say that you weren’t followed?”

Lu Wuji protested his innocence, “That’s impossible! I don’t know how they found this place, but I can promise that I absolutely wasn’t being followed!”

Why would Xue San want to listen to Lu Wuji’s excuses? He spoke, “I’ve got no time to blather on with you. We go!”

Lu Wuji was both angry and anxious. He knew that if Xue San and his group left, he would utterly become a discarded pawn. He was more aware than anyone else of what would happen next.

Once Xue Tong made his escape, he was sure to accuse Lu Wuji, and the latter had left many traces of torture methods that were unique to the Dragonteeth Guard on Xue Tong’s body. This would put him in an extremely disadvantageous situation.

Lu Wuji hadn’t thought that Xue Tong would be able to escape from this place at all and so hadn’t bothered with concealing his methods. He’d never thought that this torture would most likely end up becoming the most damning evidence against him!

Chapter 226: Death Struggles

A scant moment ago, Lu Wuji had been strutting around with pride, going over his wonderful plan. He would kill Jiang Chen, destroy Ye Rong, raise up Prince Ye Hao, and then become the general director of the Dragonteeth Guard in the future.

However, he hadn’t even had the time to savor this daydream when reality gave him a harsh slap to the face, and said slap had sent him plummeting down from the heavens in his imagination straight to hell.

As he watched Xue San about to exit, Lu Wuji’s first thought was to wrap himself around the other and prevent him from leaving. However, a voice deep within his heart told him that he couldn’t do this.

If he did this, a cold hearted assassin like Xue San would absolutely kill him immediately without even a crease to his forehead.

“This won’t do, this won’t do. I am not going to sit here and wait for my death. I can’t stay here. I need to leave too! Even if Xue Tong accuses me, I’ll just deny it all to the end. They won’t be able to do anything to me with just Xue Tong’s one-sided testimony!”

Lu Wuji hastily rushed outside the door when his thoughts travelled down this path.

He had just rushed to the door when he ran into Xue San and the others doubling back with black faces.

Rage exploded out of Xue San when he saw Lu Wuji and he flung a slap at him, sending the latter's body flying viciously and crashing into the wall.

This slap almost took Lu Wuji's life with it.

He was unable to retaliate in the slightest at all as he crashed into the wall, with great mouthfuls of fresh blood spewing forth after a dull grunt.

"Lu Wuji, you worthless trash! You said you weren't being followed, right? Then was I the one who's brought the three layers of men surrounding us?!" Xue San's face was completely black in his anger. He really wanted to just smite Lu Wuji to death.

Lu Wuji had been filled with shock and rage when he was sent flying, but his flames of anger were immediately quenched with the frosty coldness of an icy cavern when he heard Xue San say that there were people surrounding them outside.

"We're surrounded? How is that possible?" Lu Wuji struggled to his feet.

Xue San paid no heed to Lu Wuji and spoke in a low voice to his four men. "We'll split into three groups later. I'll be one group, and two of you each will form a group. Remember, don't linger to fight. Although there are many enemies from the Dragonteeth Guard, they don't have the overwhelming strength to keep you here."

"Master San, we'll cover your retreat!" The four men said.

Xue San said proudly, "No need, I won't have a problem as long as you all get out. Does a mere Dragonteeth Guard have what it takes to keep me here?"

Those whose strength were on par to Xue San within the Skylaurel Kingdom were few and far in between.

Not to mention that as a natural born assassin, he had methods of concealment and an unending stream of escape tactics. Xue San didn't think that these Dragonteeth Guards would be able to keep him even if they'd surrounded him on all sides!

His four men were also all of the spirit realm level. Their level of training was greatly different from his as they were of the first and second levels.

Under the encirclement of a thousand troops and ten thousand horses, a spirit realm practitioner such as Xue San would stand out as if a crane amongst chickens, and would possess overwhelming advantage with a great likelihood of breaking through the siege.

But first level through third level spirit realm practitioners all belonged under the small spirit realm. They were frankly, novices, and wouldn't have the same overwhelming advantage in the face of such an army.

"Master San, we can die, but nothing can happen to you!"

"We are willing to pave the way for Master San and cover your retreat!"

“Master San, we are willing to die for you!”

His men were all quite resolute. Although they knew that Xue San was strong, even he wasn't one hundred percent sure of being able to break through.

After all, once the tactic of a human sea was initiated, even one in the earth spirit realm would possibly be unable to have enough stamina to bear.

Xue San said coldly, “Listen to me! Unless Ye Chonglou himself makes an appearance, it won't be that easy to keep me within the Skylareland Kingdom!”

Although the Skylareland Kingdom was one of the four great kingdoms within the sixteen kingdoms and thus much stronger than the ordinary kingdoms, apart from Ye Chonglou who could dominate over him, the other experts within the kingdom weren't strong enough to the point in which Xue San feared them.

Only a spirit king protector who had lived an indeterminate lifespan like Ye Chonglou gave Xue San a feeling of looking upon a lofty mountain. As proud as he was, Xue San knew that it was a level of existence that he couldn't hope to measure up to at all.

A spirit king was the peak of the spirit realm. He was only in the earth spirit realm and there was no way he could contend against a spirit king.

There were nine levels within the spirit realm. First to third level were called the small spirit realm.

Fourth to sixth levels were the earth spirit realm.

Seventh to ninth levels were sky spirit realm.

Spirit king was above the sky spirit realm and therefore the apex of the spirit realm. Once a practitioner received the title of spirit king protector, their existence would be unparalleled within the spirit realm.

Although Lu Wuji had been ignored, he firmly maintained a thick face, “Then, then what about me? Xue San, you can't leave me behind!”

Xue San smiled coldly, “You? I haven't killed you yet because you can more or less restrain the enemies a little bit. Are you so naive to think that I would take you with me?”

Lu Wuji's face was ghastly, “Do you think you can escape out of the capital without me?”

“Would I be able to escape for sure if I took you?” Xue San's tone was full of disdain. “You worthless thing, even if you want to become my burden, you first need to see if you have the right to do so.”

Lu Wuji likely had never received so much humiliation in his life as he had today.

But, he couldn't quibble over the loss of his face at the moment and cried out, “If you take me with you, I can use my power to cover your withdrawal from the capital. Otherwise, if I die, all your connections within the capital will be broken!”

“Lu Wuji, I can't believe you're still so naive when the situation has escalated to this extent. If you really had so much power within the capital, we wouldn't be surrounded right now. I, Xue San, ended up in such dire straits because I wrongly believed in trash like you.”

Xue San's gaze shot down towards his men after he finished speaking, "Are you all ready?"

"Master San..."

"Say no more, act according to my orders and split into three groups!" Xue San commanded.

"Understood." The four men could only nod and agree when they saw Xue San was so resolute.

"Make your preparations and charge out separately. Remember, don't stay and fight!"

Xue San took off running after he finished speaking. He was an earth realm spirit practitioner, whereas the main fighting power of the Dragonteeth Guard were all of the true qi realm. With the aura of his spirit realm, he'd be able to create an opening as long as he dashed out and flared his aura.

A low and sinister laugh came from the empty secret room at this moment.

"Xue San is it? The Hidden Hand is it? Why are you in such a rush to leave when you've already come?"

There were a few traces of cruel mockery within this low life, like a hunter toying with his prey.

"Who is it?" Xue San's face changed slightly.

"Xue San, didn't you plot and scheme to kill me? You ask me who I am now that I've come? Don't you think you're comical and pathetic?"

After these words had been spoken, the secret room started trembling violently. It was as if the earth of moving and mountains were trembling in that moment, like the entire secret room would flip on its head.

Bam!

A great rumbling noise came from within the secret room.

Xue San didn't know what was going on, but his face changed greatly.

Lu Wuji leapt up as if he'd seen a ghost, "Jiang Chen!"

The voice that had leisurely traveled out of the secret room belonged to Jiang Chen!

Xue San and Lu Wuji had never thought that they would run into Jiang Chen under these circumstances. When Lu Wuji saw Jiang Chen, his eyes were like those of a viper. He wanted to leap onto Jiang Chen and shred him into pieces.

Xue San also watched Jiang Chen with some surprise in his eyes. This Jiang Chen had some guts to come out of the hole and face off against him all by himself!

"Jiang Chen, you're Jiang Chen!" Xue San didn't dare let down his guard as he stared at Jiang Chen. He wasn't a fool. Jiang Chen was sure to have his own backup given that he'd dared come alone.

However, Xue San had looked all around and couldn't identify what his backup was.

Although Jiang Chen was also a spirit realm practitioner, his level of training was only of a small spirit realm. He was on a completely different level from Xue San.

"You're right, I'm the Jiang Chen that your Hidden Hand wishes to assassinate. Xue San, I have to say that your Hidden Hand has successfully enraged me this time."

"So what?" Xue San snorted coldly as his mind raced.

"So what? What do you think I'm going to do here?"

Xue San smiled coldly, "Do you think you can capture all of us just by yourself?"

A faint smile appeared on Jiang Chen's lips as his face darkened. "Wrong, I'm not here to capture you, but to send you on your way to the underworld!"

Lu Wuji cried out, "Xue San, this is an opportunity! We have a chance to turn this around if we can take down Jiang Chen."

One had to say, Lu Wuji had kept some of his wits about him. His thoughts were the same as Xue San's in a rare moment of accord.

Xue San's face chilled and he made a subtle gesture. His four men spread out with silent communication and surrounded Jiang Chen in a fan-shaped formation.

"Xue San, do you know what kind of mistake you have done?" Jiang Chen seemed to be completely unmoved as he viewed the people surrounding him as mere blocks of wood.

"Jiang Chen, you couldn't be bothered to take the open road to heaven, and barged right into hell. It doesn't matter what mistake I had made, but you've made the wrong choice in coming here and making an offering of yourself!"

Xue San had surrounded Jiang Chen and made up his mind.

Regardless of whatever conspiracy Jiang Chen had in mind, they were all empty as the floating clouds in front of an absolute power. Xue San didn't feel that Jiang Chen would be able to get up to any tricks in such a narrow, confined space of the secret room.

Even a large army wouldn't be able to charge in!

"Haha, Xue san, it looks like I still overestimated you. You went wrong in knowing that Lu Wuji is trash, but still decided to listen to him at this crucial moment. How did I find this place? Why has the army surrounded this place?"

"Why?" Xue San laughed heartily. "None of that is important anymore. The most important thing is that you've fallen into my hands. All of your schemes are futile endeavors!"

Jiang Chen sighed, "One isn't afraid of an opponent as strong as a god, but rather afraid of a teammate as dumb as a pig. Lu Wuji is your pig of a teammate. Xue San, you should remember to cooperate with smart people when you reincarnate!"

Upon speaking those words, the floor beneath Xue San trembled as a golden figure rushed out from beneath the ground, pouncing onto Xue San's neck and going in for a big bite.

Chapter 227: Executing Lu Wuji

This unexpected change didn't even give Xue San time to react.

Snap!

A crisp crack rang out from his neck as it broke, with blood gushing out like a geyser as it splattered everywhere. His eyes rolled up into their sockets like dead fish going belly up.

His hands clawed wildly in the empty air, trying to shake off the golden shadow on his body, but to no avail.

This abrupt development completely flabbergasted his four men. When they came to their senses, they leapt forward, wanting to save Xue San.

Xue San used all the strength in his body in order to maintain a death grip on the golden shadow while screaming out raspily, "Run, run!"

Xue San saw death grin madly in his face as he knew that he'd been bitten in a vital part. He also knew that the spirit creature who'd bit him was much stronger than him. Even if they had met in face to face combat, he still wouldn't have beaten it, not to mention being ambushed by it.

Therefore, he only had one thought left in his mind — to hold onto this spirit creature at all costs and protect his companions as they made their escape!

"Run! Don't let me die in regret!" Xue San's face contorted as he thrashed around like a madman.

His four men looked at each other and knew that Xue San was using his death to cover their retreat. They didn't hesitate as they about faced and charged outside.

Even if there was an army surrounding them outside, at this moment, the inside of this secret room was patently more horrifying than the outside.

Lu Wuji shivered and trembled all over as a depthless fear was revealed in his eyes. He looked over at Jiang Chen and wanted to quietly slip away.

A smile played around Jiang Chen's lips as he ignored Lu Wuji's small movements.

Lu Wuji was delighted to see that Jiang Chen was ignoring him and took off running. However, his face changed drastically upon his first step outside.

There were at least tens of thousands of Dragonteeth Guard surrounding the premises.

The person he hated the most, Tian Shao, was watching Lu Wuji with a mocking smile on his face.

"Lu Wuji, you won't die if you don't commit actions that condemn you to death. You colluded with external enemies and jeopardized the safety of the Skylareel Kingdom. What else do you have to say for yourself?" Tian Shao asked coldly.

Lu Wuji's face was ashen colored as he tried to defend himself, "Don't you slander me Tian Shao! I just happened to be patrolling this area and was about to investigate these suspicious people. You..."

“Hahaha, Lu Wuji, you still want to sprout excuses even when things are already at this point. I hope you can convince the king and honored tutor Ye Chonglou with these words.” Tian Shao’s gaze was full of contempt. He looked at Lu Wuji as if he was looking at a dead man.

Lu Wuji knew that if he lost his footing here, then it would all be over. He had to stubbornly fight to the end, even if he’d been caught in the act.

As long as he firmly denied anything until his uncle appeared, there would still be a hope of being able to turn this around!

“Tian Shao, you’re framing me! I’m going to complain to the general director about you!”

Tian Shao laughed easily, “You’ve always harmed others greatly by framing them. Lu Wuji, I know you’re in your death struggles, so I can clearly tell you, this is all pointless! I’m framing you? Did I invite those people from the Hidden Hand? Did I trick you into coming here? Did I cause all those injuries on Xue Tong’s body? Lu Wuji, this kind of living on while helping others secretly will not be tolerated by the country. This time, you won’t be able to slip one past this time even if you have an all powerful backer!”

Lu Wuji yelled, “Tian Shao, you’re just a general in the Dragonteeth Guard, as am I! You have no right to point and yell at my face. Get out of my way, I’m going to see the general director. I have grievances to report!”

Lu Wuji also knew that there was no point in flapping his lips with Tian Shao at the moment. His only hope was to find his uncle to discuss a responding strategy.

Tian Shao’s face grew frosty and he smiled coldly, “Get out of the way? Lu Wuji, you’re too naive! I’m here on behalf of the Crown Prince to arrest serial criminals. You aided and abetted them, and thus are the same as them. Men, arrest Lu Wuji! Kill him if he resists!”

Lu Wuji was slightly panicked to see Tian Shao taking such a hard line, but he also knew that he couldn’t back down at this time. Only death awaited him if he backed down.

His face sank as he shouted, “Who dares make a move? I’m the nephew of vice director Yang Zhou and am as if his own son. Whoever makes a move against me is making a move against him!”

One had to say, vice director Yang still had great influence within the Dragonteeth Guard. The Guards’ momentum was actually somewhat arrested by Lu Wuji’s words after his shout.

Suddenly —

A remote voice traveled in from behind Lu Wuji, “Vice director Yang? Is he that incredible? I’m precisely going to make a move against you, what are you gonna do about it?”

A figure shot out from inside and kicked out at Lu Wuji’s butt when the words finished sounding.

Bam!

Lu Wuji was stomped downwards into the ground and flew out more than ten meters, bouncing off the ground. At least half the bones in his body were broken as fresh blood spewed out of his mouth and his dantian was destroyed.

This kick had taken half of Lu Wuji's life with it.

Jiang Chen!

The person who'd kicked out was of course, Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen's body was like a kite's as it rolled and landed in front of Lu Wuji, his foot firmly planted on the latter's face.

"Take a good look Lu Wuji, the person hitting you is me, Jiang Chen!"

Fresh blood spewed out of Lu Wuji's mouth as the violent light of viper shot out of his eyes. "Jiang Chen, you dumb animal, who the hell do you think you are to dare and hit me? Just you wait, my uncle's not going to let you get away with this! He'll kill you, your entire family, and your entire family clan, just you wait!"

These groundless threats were like a light breeze by Jiang Chen's ears, completely without any power at all.

Revealing a coldly detached smile, Jiang Chen's tone was remote, "Lu Wuji, I don't need your reminder to know that your uncle participated in this matter. Don't you worry, I won't let a single one of those who participated in this matter off the hook. I'll send your uncle to you to keep you company on the way to hell!"

Lu Wuji had thrown all caution to the wind at this time as he started laughing uproariously. "Madness, madness! You're just a country bumpkin, and you want you fight against my uncle? Why don't you look at yourself in the mirror, are you worthy of fighting against my uncle?"

Tian Shao also walked over and said coldly, "Lu Wuji, you're the one who should look in the mirror. How can you bear to retain a straight face at a moment like this?"

Lu Wuji grinded out through gritted teeth, "Tian Shao, you pathetic lackey, don't you be too proud! I'll settle my debts with you one day as well!"

Jiang Chen barked out in laughter upon hearing this, "Do you hear that brother Tian? We'll be the ones suffering if we don't pull up evil by its roots. Give Lu Wuji over to me!"

Tian Shao was a bit taken aback, but immediately nodded. "Alright."

According to the rules, Lu Wuji was a general of the Dragonteeth Guard. In order to kill him, one had to go through a trial in the Guard.

However, Tian Shao naturally wouldn't go against Jiang Chen's wishes with how things currently stood.

"Young master Chen, do things cleanly." Tian Shao said lowly.

Jiang Chen chuckled, "Where is Guo Jin?"

Guo Jin was one of Jiang Chen's personal guards and thus had participated in this time's operations. He walked out from within the crowd.

Jiang Chen said lightly, “Lu Wuji colluded with killers from the Hidden Hand, kidnapped Xue Tong, and conspired to assassinate me. As my follower, and Xue Tong’s comrade, what say you?”

Guo Jin chuckled and took out his sword, “He should be executed of course!”

“Do it.” Jiang Chen said faintly.

Jiang Chen had no hesitation at all in killing Lu Wuji. The latter had thoroughly stepped over his bottom line this time, and was a person who had to die in Jiang Chen’s eyes.

“Understood!”

Guo Jin’s blade drew back and was about to come crashing down.

A loud roar exploded at this moment, “Hold!”

A group of men rushed in from outside the encirclement. The person in question was Lu Wuji’s supervisor, Xin Wudao. This person had been one of Prince Ye Dao’s followers during Tutor Ye’s birthday banquet, and was the same culprit who’d captured the Qiao brothers.

This person was also an actual general within the Dragonteeth Guard and one of Yang Zhao’s confidantes. He held quite a bit of power within the Dragonteeth Guard and was even more powerful than newcomer Tian Shao.

“Jiang Chen!” Xin Wudao’s gaze was cold and harsh. “Who the hell are you to use illegal punishment to execute one of the vice generals of my Dragonteeth Guard?”

It was as if Lu Wuji had seen his salvation when he saw Xin Wudao. “Brother Xin, save me, save me! This group of traitors want to rebel! Has my uncle arrived?”

Xin Wudao’s face was like frozen water as he didn’t have time to respond to Lu Wuji, turning his head to speak to Tian Shao instead, “Tian Shao, as a vice general of the Dragonteeth Guard, how can you sit idly by while a band of thugs uses illegal punishment on one of your comrades? Is this your integrity as a general of the Dragonteeth Guard?”

However, Tian Shao wasn’t the same person as of old. How would he be frightened with just a few words from Xin Wudao?

“General Xin, I’m under orders to carry out the law. As for how I carry it out, that seems to be my business and you have no right to interfere? This Lu Wuji colluded with external enemies and brought danger to our Skylareel Kingdom. As a result, he has forfeited his status as a Dragonteeth Guard comrade a long time ago. Not to mention, it’s not your shift today, what’s your intentions in bringing so many people here to interfere with me applying the law?”

Tian Shao wasn’t a pushover either. He had the Crown Prince at his back and naturally spoke out with a loud voice. Not to mention that the current situation was very disadvantageous towards Yang Zhou, how could he be frightened by Yang Zhao’s confidante then?

“I’ve brought people here to stop you from committing a perverse act. We haven’t decided on whether or not Lu Wuji is guilty. He’s my underling and I’m taking him back to see the general director. If the

general director says he's guilty, then he's guilty. If the general director says he's innocent, then it's you who's setting him up!"

Xin Wudao was laying down the law with quite some authority as he wasn't cowed by Tian Shao at all.

With the way things had developed, it was obviously that everyone was prepared for a fight. Xin Wudao has also received Yang Zhao's order that he was to snatch Lu Wuji back at no matter the cost.

Tian Shao had brought a lot of people, but so had Xin Wudao. The two generals of the Dragonteeth Guard glared at each other, face to face.

Jiang Chen however, laughed at this moment and said to Guo Jin, "Guo Jin, you're my man and I'm telling you to do it. What are you waiting for?"

Guo Jin chuckled as his blade waved and snapped downwards cleanly.

Blood geysered as Lu Wuji's head flew into the sky, borne aloft by a column of blood.

This scene came exceedingly fast as even Xin Wudao didn't have time to react.

By the time he reacted, Lu Wuji's head was already in midair. His eyes hadn't even had time to close, and a look of shock and incredulity was still written all over his face.

Xin Wudao was shocked senseless. He hadn't thought that Jiang Chen would be so bold as to execute Lu Wuji in front of so many Dragonteeth Guards!

Chapter 228: The Situation Oscillates

Even Tian Shao hadn't expected Jiang Chen to act so decisively, never mind Xin Wudao. By virtue of the latter's very presence, he represented Yang Zhao's wishes.

As for Yang Zhao, one of the vice directors of the Dragonteeth Guard, he was someone with an inordinate amount of power within the capital.

However, Jiang Chen had gone through with his execution with just a word, and hadn't left any grounds to negotiate at all.

In the span of a second, tens of thousands of Dragonteeth Guards, tens of thousands of pairs of eyes all stared dumbfounded at Lu Wuji's headless body. Petrified, they were unable to voice a single word.

Bam!

It was only when Lu Wuji's head dropped down to earth that Xin Wudao reacted. He felt his scalp grow numb as he looked at Lu Wuji's expression of everlasting fury and regret.

It was like the sky had caved in at that moment.

He knew very well what kind of place Lu Wuji occupied in vice director Yang's heart.

Lu Wuji's death was the equivalent of digging out Yang Zhao's heart. Xin Wudao didn't need to speculate at all to think of the depths of Yang Zhao's wrath!

“Jiang Chen, you... you dared kill Lu Wuji?” His arm couldn’t help but tremble, and his voice couldn’t help but shake as Xin Wudao pointed at Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen was expressionless. “Xin Wudao, go back and tell Yang Zhao that this is only the beginning. You tell him that he wouldn’t be dying if he didn’t give me cause to bring about his death. Since he committed acts that begged for death, this matter isn’t quite over yet!”

Xin Wudao’s body shivered. Judging from Jiang Chen’s words, killing Lu Wuji wasn’t enough? He was pointing the blade at vice director Yang Zhao as well?

Xin Wudao laughed ghastly, “Good, very good! Jiang Chen, I don’t know where you’re getting your courage from, but I’m just going to tell you that there’s no one who can save you in the entire kingdom now that you’ve killed Lu Wuji. You’re a dead man!”

Tian Shao’s brow furrowed. “Xin Wudao, I’ll warn you again, I’m carrying out the law according to my orders. If you interfere one more time, I’ll raise a complaint to the general director!”

Xin Wudao cursed loudly, “Tian Shao, don’t you throw your weight around in front of me! You’re responsible for Lu Wuji’s death as well. Let’s see how cocky you’ll be when vice director Yang’s anger comes down on you!”

Xin Wudao was well aware that he had lost everything in this current situation. There was also no point in him staying now that Lu Wuji had been executed.

After throwing down a few threats and glaring at Jiang Chen a few times, Xin Wudao left huffily with this men.

After Tian Shao saw that Xin Wudao had left, he walked towards Jiang Chen and said in a low voice, “Young master Chen, vice director Yang is sure to fly into a rage with Lu Wuji’s death. You should be mentally prepared. It may be best for you to leave the Jiang manor and lay low for a while.”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “Lay low? Why should I lay low? Brother Tian, you’re following the plan. So, you also know that since Lu Wuji colluded with outside enemies, Yang Zhao will be hard pressed to deny his involvement as well. If this isn’t enough to bring down Yang Zhou, then I can only say that Skylaurel Kingdom is truly disappointing.”

Tian Shao was speechless. He also knew that logically speaking, all the evidence was present and accounted for in this case. Lu Wuji was Yang Zhao’s nephew and must have been acting according to the latter’s instructions. Add to that the Crown Prince exerting force on this matter, it should be enough to take down Yang Zhao.

However, Tian Shao had also heard of some rumors that Yang Zhao had his position and power not only because of his status as the vice director of the Dragonteeth Guard, but also because he had a powerful patron within the Precious Tree Sect.

Otherwise, he was just a vice director in the Dragonteeth Guard. There was a general director who ranked higher than him as well as His Majesty the king himself. There were also many more esteemed nobles and officials, how would they let him act as he has?

“Young master Chen, the Crown Prince will do his best from his side. There’s no avenue of retreat for any of us now. However, vice director Yang has never acted according to expectations, so you should be on your guard against his retaliation.”

Jiang Chen also knew that Tian Shao meant well and smiled faintly, asking, “What about the killers from the Hidden Hand?”

Tian Shao smiled, “We’ve caught all of them except one, according to young master Chen’s instructions.”

Jiang Chen nodded, “Well done. Brother Tian, you’ve gone to great trouble this time.”

He also knew that Tian Shao was taking a great risk in acting this way. It was a given that he’d be offending Yang Zhao. From Tian Shao’s perspective, if they didn’t take down Yang Zhao this time, he’d be sure to receive all sorts of oppression from Yang Zhao in the future.

But of course, Jiang Chen would never let such a thing happen.

Eradicate evil at its roots. Jiang Chen would absolutely not permit Yang Zhao to get off scot free this time, and by the same token, wouldn’t give him the slightest chance to counter attack at all.

If the royal family of Skylareland Kingdom wasn’t able to handle Yang Zhao, Jiang Chen wouldn’t mind doing things himself.

.....

Lu Wuji’s death and the arrest of the Hidden Hand assassins instantly created tidal waves within the capital.

All the parties who were at odds with Yang Zhao made use of this opportunity to send in petitions censuring Yang Zhao, requesting His Majesty to condemn Yang Zhao for his crimes.

The reasons were more than sufficient. He had conspired with external enemies, broken the peace of the capital, and jeopardized the security of the Skylareland Kingdom.

Those who were close with Yang Zhao all spoke up in his defense, saying that since Lu Wuji was dead, he was unable to speak to veracity of the evidence and it was impossible to determine whether Yang Zhao actually had something to do with this matter or not.

The number of petitions in front of the king quickly reached three meters high.

His Majesty nursed a huge headache as it was apparent from all sorts of evidence that Yang Zhao had colluded with the Hidden Hand. However, evidence aside, if he really charged Yang Zhao with his crimes, the consequences would be a successive string of events that gave even the king pause.

“Shangguan, you tell me, how should I handle Yang Zhao’s matter?”

The king had summoned general director Shangguan Yi in the middle of the night. Yang Zhao was part of the Dragonteeth Guard after all, thus his opinion had to be sought.

Shangguan Yi was also furiously in thought. To be honest, he was really ticked off by Yang Zhao’s conspiracy and didn’t doubt the veracity of the evidence at all.

However, he was also irritated that Jiang Chen was involved in this matter.

A foreign kid had raised the wind and summoned the rain in the Skylaurel Kingdom, making it so that even dogs and chickens couldn't find rest in his Dragonteeth Guard. Shangguan Yi also understood deep in his heart why Yang Zhao had resorted to such tactics. He'd been forced into doing so by Jiang Chen and the Crown Prince.

Of course, Shangguan Yi would never voice these words.

Although he naturally leaned towards his man Yang Zhao, this didn't mean that he would raise the banner to openly support Yang Zhao.

After all, from the viewpoint of a general director, his perspective and attitude would affect much.

If he stood out in support of Yang Zhao, that would mean he was openly placing himself at odds with the Crown Prince, to say nothing of anything else.

The Crown Prince was the king's son after all, and the king-in-waiting, the future ruler of the Skylaurel Kingdom.

Shangguan Yi could no longer completely ignore Ye Rong's existence at this point.

He sighed lightly. "Your Majesty, this is truly difficult to handle. Your subject's opinion is that we let bygones be bygones. Since Lu Wuji is dead, the matter ends with him. Even though vice director Yang was negligent in his supervision, that's only negligence. Looking at the law..."

Shangguan Yi paused as he reached the critical juncture and glanced at the king's expression.

The king nodded, "Continue."

Shangguan Yi took a deep breath, "Yang Zhao has a wide ranging network within the capital. I'm afraid it would impact the bigger picture if we really were to move against him. The senior ranks all know that Yang Zhao has a sister who married an elder in the Precious Tree Sect. He counts as one who has a great backer within the Sect. If we really touched Yang Zhao, we'd likely find it difficult to explain ourselves to the Precious Tree Sect!"

The king sighed lightly, "So this means that we really can't do anything to Yang Zhao?"

Shangguan hastened to bow and say, "Your subject is just offering some small insights, and needs Your Majesty to decide how to proceed. Your subject will carry out whatever the final judgment is as soon as Your Majesty gives the order."

The king was quite satisfied with Shangguan Yi's attitude. No matter whether or not he made a move against Yang Zhao, you, Shangguan Yi, are my person and so you had to listen to me.

"Shangguan, according to my understanding, Yang Zhao doesn't have much of a good reputation within the Guard. Have you given him too much power? Even if we don't do anything to him this time, we should appropriately take some of his power away."

A thought struck Shangguan Yi. As the second vice director of the Dragonteeth Guard, Yang Zhao's power was indeed a bit excessive. Zhou Kai, ranked first vice director, had always cared deeply about this.

It'd be a good thing to take advantage of this opportunity to strip away some of his power.

Shangguan Yi nodded and said, "Yang Zhao does indeed display some failings of rewarding the wrong people with power. Your subject has decided to take back some of his authority and have him reflect for a bit.

"Mm. Yang Zhao has the support of a Precious Tree Sect elder and thus we can't touch him. But to take away some of his power would be the best compromise."

"Yes, Your Majesty is wise with a wide breadth of vision."

The king rubbed his forehead after Shangguan Yi had left, and didn't read any of the petitions.

The petitions were either speaking on behalf of Yang Zhao or censuring him. Since he'd already come up with an idea of how to handle Yang Zhao, there was no need to read them at all.

"Your Majesty, honored Tutor Ye requests an audience." An eunuch came to report shortly after Shangguan Yi's departure that Ye Chonglou had come to visit.

"What? What is the honored tutor doing here? Have him come in, come in!"

Ye Chonglou's existence was that of the Skylaurel Kingdom's totem, and even the current king had to give way in front of him.

Ye Chonglou's hair was graying at the temples as he strode swiftly into the palace, his steps like the shooting stars. A simply dressed girl followed behind him — Dan Fei.

"Honored tutor, you haven't come into the palace in a very long time. This truly surprises us and we are quite overcome with the honor of your visit." The king was only half joking as he invited the old tutor to take a seat.

"Your Majesty, I would not have come to visit if it wasn't for an important matter. I'd just like to ask, what are you planning to do with regards to Yang Zhao's matter?" Tutor Ye cut straight to the point.

"Oh? The honored tutor has never been interested in mundane affairs, can it be that you're interested in this matter?"

Ye Chonglou smiled faintly, "I do indeed wish to know how His Majesty is planning to handle this situation."

The king chuckled and had a humble bent to his tone, "I will surely listen attentively to any instruction that the honored tutor has."

"Your Majesty, I haven't asked after political matters in a very long time. I've made an exception today to give some words of advice to Your Majesty."

"Oh?" The king's eyebrows flicked upwards as he smiled. "I await the honored tutor's words."

"In times of need, Your Majesty must act decisively and thoroughly. Since your successor has been identified, those powers that will become an obstacle to the Crown Prince taking his throne in the future should be eliminated. If the footing of a prospective ruler is uncertain, the kingdom's greater picture will

become equally uncertain. If the greater picture is uncertain, then the foundations of a kingdom will waver.”

Although Ye Chonglou hadn’t named anyone with his words, his attitude was exceptionally clear that he was supporting the king in eliminating Yang Zhao’s faction.

This sentiment surprised the king.

Logically speaking, the honored tutor had never been interested in politics. Why had he suddenly come today to give him these words of advice?

This advice happened to be the exact opposite of what he was thinking!

The king froze in that moment and was a bit uncertain as to how to proceed.

Chapter 229: Yang Zhao’s Backer

A faint smile constantly played across Ye Chonglou’s face. He could see the king’s pained expression very well.

“Your Majesty, I’m only giving you advice. As to how to actually handle the situation, that is up to you as the ruler of a nation.”

The king started to sweat. While he knew that the honored tutor wouldn’t interfere in politics, his advice also wasn’t something that the king could simply neglect.

“Honored tutor, this Yang Zhao has committed some absurd acts, but he happens to have a sister who’s connected to Elder Iron of the Precious Tree Sect. I know that leaving Yang Zhao in place is forming a latent threat, but if we were to move against Yang Zhao, his brother-in-law likely won’t let matters rest easily.”

At the end of the day, the Skylareland Kingdom was still backed by the Precious Tree Sect. Even the royal family could possibly be swapped out by the Sect if the former ran afoul of the Sect.

Therefore, when something had to do with a Precious Tree Sect elder, even the king couldn’t help but be cautious.

Ye Chonglou laughed faintly, “The Precious Tree Sect is the Precious Tree Sect. Yang Zhou is Yang Zhou. Elder Iron is but one of many senior executives within the Sect.”

Ye Chonglou chuckled and stood up after he finished speaking, speaking to Dan Fei, “Little Dan, it’s late, let’s not disturb His Majesty further. Let’s go.”

The king was slightly surprised to see that the honored tutor was going to leave just like this.

“Honored tutor, you...”

“Your Majesty, you hold Skylareland Kingdom in your hands. Your decisions and judgments are the law. I only offer my opinions.”

Ye Chonglou gave a grand flourish of his sleeves after speaking and departed the palace with Dan Fei.

The king’s brow was deeply furrowed. He really was in a tough spot now.

Although the honored tutor hadn't exerted any pressure and had been quite affable, given his status, even a suggestion was absolutely full of meaning.

The honored tutor was obviously in favor of destroying Yang Zhao and cutting out this tumor from the capital.

However, an elder stood in the shadows behind Yang Zhao. Although this elder was merely one of many, the king still didn't wish to offend a Precious Tree Sect elder if he could help it.

Although the elder wouldn't necessarily help him in the future, it would be easy for him to suppress the royal family in a variety of ways if the king gave offense.

"It's the spirit king protector of the kingdom on one side, the elder of the Precious Tree Sect on the other..." The king truly was in a difficult position.

He knew that in terms of strength and qualifications, Ye Chonglou would definitely outclass a Sect elder.

However, although the elder looked like only one person, an entire sect stood behind him!

Honored tutor Ye Chonglou had an unquestionable strength, but his relations with the Precious Tree Sect had always been vague and unclear. Even the king wasn't sure of their exact relationship.

"Wait a moment, the honored tutor has almost never inquired after matters of politics in all this years, why has he suddenly come to find me now? Something is always amiss when the unexpected occurs, can it be that the honored tutor has another reason for his actions?"

The king was still the king in the end; his broadmindedness enabled him to consider the multiple facets of a situation.

As he pondered, he went over all the particulars of this matter again.

"Yang Zhao is Ye Dai's good friend and Crown Prince Ye Rong's rival. In the end, this matter's crux always seems to point to the Crown Prince. The honored tutor has always had a high opinion of Ye Rong, can it be that he is paving the way for the Crown Prince? Or is there another reason at play?"

Deep in the king's heart, he too wished that no other changes would crop up in the matter of the Crown Prince. He was satisfied with Ye Rong in this role.

He also knew that Yang Zhao's existence was a potential threat to the Crown Prince.

"Ye Rong's rise to prominence has been swift and sudden. His largest aid is Jiang Chen. This matter seems to have come about due to Jiang Chen as well... it seems that Jiang Chen's shadow can be seen in this entire matter? Wait, it's rumored that the honored tutor greatly values Jiang Chen and even wanted to take him in as a personal disciple. Can it be that the honored tutor has come looking for me because of Jiang Chen?!"

The king almost couldn't bear to sit still.

He discovered that he always seemed to have somehow overlooked Jiang Chen. To think that this young man from the Eastern Kingdom had influenced so much in the short half year that he'd been present!

Even honored tutor Ye Chonglou was stepping out to personally speak on his behalf.

“Can it be that the honored tutor means that Jiang Chen is more important than Yang Zhou, and more important than an elder of the Precious Tree Sect?”

The king was deep in thought when another eunuch came in to report, “Your Majesty, Crown Prince Ye Rong requests an audience.”

“The Crown Prince? Have him come in.” The king’s bewilderment had risen to its peak at the moment and he wanted some answers.

Ye Rong walked in and bowed respectfully.

“Rong’er, the disturbances of the past couple of days have been rather big.” The king rubbed his forehead and displayed a look of weariness.

Ye Rong hastened to say, “Royal father, your child has been conscientious and has been doing my best in playing my part. It is with great resignation that I was forced to act due to those who have still not given up their schemes against me. This time, they’ve even colluded with the assassins of the Hidden Hand and invited disaster into the capital. If they dare to make a move against Jiang Chen today, that means that they may even make a move against your child tomorrow. Your child has been forced to protect myself and defend the stability of the greater picture of Skylareland Kingdom.”

The king also knew that the fault of the matter didn’t lie with Ye Rong.

“Rong’er, how do you plan on resolving this matter?”

Ye Rong looked at the king’s face and was silent for a bit as he gathered his courage. “Royal father, now that things have progressed to this point, your child is afraid that it’d be difficult to just let things go. If we don’t take care of Yang Zhao this time, that would be an unequivocal message to the entire kingdom that we cannot do anything to Yang Zhao. He will then become even more unbridled and royal prestige will be deeply affected.”

There was nothing that couldn’t be discussed between father and son at this moment. After all, they were father and son, and thinking on behalf of the gains and losses of the royal family.

Candor and frankness were even more imperative in times like these.

The king wasn’t unhappy with Ye Rong’s sentiments. He nodded and said, “Rong’er, it’s easy to take down Yang Zhao, but you know that there is a Sect elder behind him. The elder is sure to fly into a rage as soon as we do anything to Yang Zhao. The elder may even step forward to interfere when we haven’t even done anything to Yang Zhao either.”

Ye Rong knew that this would be a problem, but they had no other choices currently.

“Royal father, while it is true that the Precious Tree Sect protects the Skylareland Kingdom, they also have a rule that the senior executives may not easily interfere with kingdom matters. Particularly when we have done no wrong, even the elder of the Sect may not act against the royal family.”

“Granted that’s the case, but if the elder of the Sect really wishes to act irrationally, we’d still tremble from the fall out!”

“Royal father, this matter came about because of your son. Your son is willing to shoulder all the consequences. I will remove this malicious tumor from the royal family even if I end up in pieces!”

Ye Rong’s attitude was quite resolute. He knew that if he didn’t take out Yang Zhao this time, he would have no chance to do so in the future.

If all these crimes weren’t enough to fix his guilt, then how would they suppress Yang Zhao in the future?

Therefore, Ye Rong knew very well that although he wasn’t openly going head to head against Yang Zhao this time, their battle had already reached the point where one had to fall.

If Yang Zhao didn’t fall, he would be sure to use all his strength to bring down Ye Rong.

“Rong’er, it’s difficult. The general director of the Dragonteeth Guard has just departed, and his attitude was also one of being wary of Elder Iron. It will be difficult for you to handle Yang Zhao if Shangguan Yi’s attitude isn’t firm.”

This was true, unless the king himself gave an order, the men that Ye Rong could deploy wouldn’t be enough to contend against Yang Zhao.

Although Tian Shao was loyal to a fault, he was only the general of one troop. There were ten troops in the entire Dragonteeth Guard. Without Shangguan Yi’s Dragontooth Emblem, he wouldn’t be able to deploy any of the other Dragonteeth Guard troops.

Not to mention that Yang Zhao was a vice director of the Dragonteeth Guard; the accompanying status and influence made it so that it wouldn’t be easy to turn the Dragonteeth Guard against him.

With the current situation, in order to make a move against Yang Zhao, the king himself has to give an order and Shangguan Yi has to carry it out.

Otherwise, even though Ye Rong was the Crown Prince, he still wouldn’t be enough.

“Royal father, he who hesitates is lost. Once Yang Zhao weathers this current situation, his next step will surely be to move against your son. If the vice director of the Dragonteeth Guard can manipulate the position of Crown Prince, then wouldn’t it be a tragedy for the royal family?”

Ye Rong wasn’t concealing anything at this point.

“Rong’er, from my perspective, I’m still willing to support you. However, a slight move on one part could affect the entire situation as a whole. Consequently, it’s difficult for me to give the order. I’ll give you some advice. You can ask the honored tutor for his opinion. He’s just departed after giving me advice to clean out Yang Zhao. If you can obtain the honored tutor’s endorsement, I will certainly help you.”

It was also a tragic thing, being king. Even if he wanted to help his own son, even if the situation was critical, the king had to consider the delicate equilibrium formed of multiple parties.

“The honored tutor?” Ye Rong started.

The king nodded, “Rong’er, with the current situation, the honored tutor is the only way to break the stalemate. If you can obtain his proclamation, then hope remains yet.”

Ye Rong mused silently for a moment and nodded. He could understand his father's attitude.

As the ruler of a nation, any decision would have to take into account the balancing of all sides.

Ye Rong had wanted to call upon the honored tutor immediately when he left, but he felt that the night was already late and decided to go the next day.

At the same time, Jiang Chen was looking over Xue Tong's injuries within the manor. The personal guards on all sides were looking on anxiously.

"Huh. The Hidden Hand possesses some sophisticated methods, but these restrictions are child's play to me." Jiang Chen noted, looking over Xue Tong. "You'll be fine after a few days of rest."

Pills could cure the internal and external injuries. The restrictions that Xue San had laid down were rather clever, but they were still elementary in Jiang Chen's eyes.

The personal guards heaved a sigh of relief only after they heard that Xue Tong would be fine.

"Young master, we'll go and patrol for a little bit."

Jiang Chen waved his hand. "No need to patrol, go rest."

"But, Yang Zhao's nephew is dead, we're afraid..."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "I'd rather be afraid if they didn't come."

Jiang Chen's smile gave the personal guards a feeling of impenetrable mysteriousness.

However, Jiang Chen wasn't blustering. He had deployed millions of Goldbiter Rats in the ground around the Jiang family manor. With the merest hint of motion, they would come surging out like a newly released dam to gnaw on the enemies until there was nothing left!

Chapter 230: Yang Zhao Retaliates! The Situation Changes Again

What disappointed Jiang Chen was that Yang Zhao didn't actually send anyone that night!

He rose early the next day, knowing that things wouldn't be calm today.

Yang Zhao's victory or defeat would be a result of the battles between the two sides today.

Even if Ye Rong wasn't able to take down Yang Zhao, Jiang Chen would never be willing to sit idly by. Since he'd killed Lu Wuji, Yang Zhao wouldn't let him off the hook either.

By virtue of their past grudges alone, there was no way that Jiang Chen would allow Yang Zhao to continue to act how he would.

"Young master, General Tian is here."

Tian Shao had come early in the morning, surprising Jiang Chen, but the latter still said, "Have him come in."

Tian Shao was a bit depressed this morning, and his expression was graver than usual.

“Brother Tian, why so glum? All will sort itself in time.” Jiang Chen smiled in comfort. The immense risk Tian Shao was taking was putting him under a great deal of pressure.

After all, as a general within the Dragonteeth Guard, he was still technically one of Yang Zhao’s men. To go head to head with his superior meant taking an enormous gamble.

Losing meant he’d forfeit his life and those of his entire family.

“Young master Chen, there is a great obstruction in our current stage. The Crown Prince went to see the king last night and it turns out even the king was indecisive.”

“This means that it’ll be impossible to do anything to Yang Zhao?”

Tian Shao sighed, “Who knew that Yang Zhao would have a sister who’d managed to cozy up to Elder Iron? The royal family is still wary in front of the senior executives of the Precious Tree Sect. Although the Crown Prince is charismatic enough, it has only been a short while since his induction as Crown Prince. His foundations are not yet at the level where he can resolve the situation himself.”

Tian Shao was incredibly depressed. They had concrete evidence in hand but couldn’t get Yang Zhao. This was enough to make anyone gloomy.

Jiang Chen clapped Tian Shao’s shoulder when he saw that the other was so dejected. “Brother Tian, we’ve been through much together, and have seen true brotherhood bloom through hardship. I’ll just tell you this, no matter what the conclusion, I won’t let you get the short end of the stick. That simply won’t happen!”

Tian Shao actually hadn’t meant to pour his concerns out, it was just that he truly viewed Jiang Chen as a brother and wanted to come vent some of his dejection.

When he saw that Jiang Chen was so approachable and had spoken such warm words to him, Tian Shao felt a warmth flow throughout his body and fill his heart, uncaring if Jiang Chen actually meant those words or not.

Jiang Chen’s words even gave Tian Shao some confidence. Ever since meeting Jiang Chen, all sorts of incredible, unfathomable incidents had occurred to him again and again.

Whether they were miracles or if Jiang Chen had been hiding his strength well, regardless of what it was, Jiang Chen had almost never disappointed.

Therefore, Tian Shao’s first reaction was trust and comfort when he heard Jiang Chen’s promise.

“Oh right, Brother Tian, you mentioned Elder Iron just now? Was it the fellow who threatened me last time and said that he would have me blacklisted from the Precious Tree Sect?”

“Yes, I’ve heard the Crown Prince mention this matter as well. He was indeed Elder Iron.” Tian Shao nodded and sighed. “This elder is a newly promoted elder and isn’t that frightening by himself. The worse thing is that he has an old man who’s a senior elder in the Precious Tree Sect who is listed as one of the four esteemed elders of the sect. His old man’s power and status is on par with the head of the Precious Tree Sect!”

Jiang Chen started and then broke out in laughter. “No wonder that Elder Iron is so cocky and arrogant, he has an even stronger backer in the form of his old man! No wonder he dared throw his weight around in front of Tutor Ye! This means he actually had the right to act so wildly.”

Tian Shao couldn’t help but admire Jiang Chen’s composure when he saw that Jiang Chen was talking and laughing instead of being nervous.

For one who had no foundations in the Skylaurel Kingdom and Precious Tree Sect to be so coolly composed when he heard that his opponents were an elder and an even esteemed elder of the Precious Tree Sect, it was impressive even if it was a façade.

Anyone else would’ve likely be a gibbering mess by now.

“Young master Chen, the Crown Prince has likely already called upon the honored tutor. The honored tutor values you greatly and Miss Dan Fei also looks upon you with favor. I rather feel that if young master Chen really takes the honored tutor as a master, then even Elder Iron wouldn’t be able to do anything to young master Chen.”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. From the perspective of others, it seemed a logical choice to take Ye Chonglou as his master.

However, from Jiang Chen’s angle, although Ye Chonglou was quite strong, he still wasn’t enough to be Jiang Chen’s teacher.

Of course, Jiang Chen had no way of voicing these thoughts aloud.

“Brother Tian, it’s difficult for me to summarize the matters with regards to the honored tutor. I hope the Crown Prince can obtain the honored tutor’s support when he visits this time.”

At this moment, rushed footsteps sounded outside of the door.

Guo Jin walked in quickly with a Dragonteeth Guard. The Guard was frantic when he saw Tian Shao, “Honored general, several commanders of our sixth troop have been arrested by people at the Dragonteeth headquarters. The third and seventh troop of the Dragonteeth Guard have already received orders to surround the Jiang manor and arrest young master Jiang Chen!”

“What?!” Tian Shao was flabbergasted.

The change in this situation had come about in far too shocking a manner.

Given that Yang Zhao was unable to make any bold moves at the moment, it was time to tuck his tail in and keep his head down, not strike out in an counterattack!

The third and seventh troop were all firmly in the palm of Yang Zhao’s hand. The third troop in particular had Xin Wudao as the general, and Lu Wuji as the vice general.

The third troop’s hatred of Jiang Chen for the death of Lu Wuji was truly as deep as the seas.

Now that they had received such an order, they were surely gritting their teeth in determination and wouldn’t rest until they or Jiang Chen were dead.

“Honored general, you should lay low for a bit. Many within the Dragonteeth Guard have stood out to say that they want to censure you for your role in this, that you...”

“What are they saying?” Tian Shao’s face was dark.

“They’re saying that you’re pretending to live amongst us whilst helping outsiders to move against Dragonteeth comrades.” The man stammered. “They’re slandering you. We all know that Lu Wuji was courting death, but the third and seventh troop are all vice director Yang’s men. Many are kept ignorant of the truth due to their yelling and shouting.”

Tian Shao’s face turned green in anger, “Flipping the truth upside down, slandering my name! It’s a pathetic tragedy that the Dragonteeth Guard has fallen to the hands of these people!”

“Young master Chen, now that the situation has developed to this point, I won’t rest even if I die. Whether they want to fix a crime on my head or take off my head, I will never submit! I refuse to believe that justice no longer exists in the Skylaurel Kingdom! Lu Wuji colluded with foreign enemies and his death isn’t to be regretted! Even if you kill me or torture me to death, I still stand by my words, his crimes more than deserved death!”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, as if none of this was outside his expectations.

He clapped Tian Shao’s shoulder, “Brother Tian, hold your horses. The skies of Skylaurel Kingdom have yet to cave in.”

Tian Shao blanked and couldn’t help but say, “Young master Chen, the momentum of the Dragonteeth Guard is hard to defend against once they mobilize. Your people are unlikely to be able to protect you. In my opinion, lack of forbearance in small matters upsets great plans. You’ll have no fear of being unable to exact your revenge if you leave a way out for yourself. How about you take your people and go weather this storm over at the honored tutor’s residence?”

“Hide for a bit?”

“Yes, yes. The Crown Prince is also at the honored tutor’s residence. Even Yang Zhao wouldn’t dare act atrociously if you are able to convince the honored tutor.”

Tian Shao was also worried. He felt that the honored tutor was their only chance now.

“There’s nothing to hide from. I didn’t want to play my hand before because I wanted to leave some face for the royal family and let them take care of Yang Zhao, so that others wouldn’t say that I caused an uproar not long after arriving in the Skylaurel Kingdom. It looks like my considerations were misplaced.”

“Young master, you mean...” Judging from his tone, it looked like Jiang Chen was ready to really create a mess of things?

But, when faced with the entire Dragonteeth Guard, whether it was Jiang Chen or the Crown Prince, neither of the two would be able to withstand them!

“Brother Tian, say no more. Come, let’s make a trip to the Dragonteeth Guard headquarters.”

Jiang Chen stood up and whistled. A Goldwing Swordbird landed right in front of Jiang Chen.

“You’re not serious young master, are you? Aren’t you walking straight into a trap if you do so?”

“Walking straight into a trap?” Jiang Chen’s tone was indifferent. “Brother Tian, do you think I’m such an unreasonable person? And do you think we can really escape this if we avoid them?”

“But we don’t need to go head to head with them at this moment!” Tian Shao stomped his foot in anxiety.

“Head to head?” Jiang Chen smiled. “Brother Tian, at the end of the day, the boss of the Dragonteeth Guard is Shangguan Yi, not Yang Zhao. Do you think that it’s Shangguan Yi is the one who wants to fix these crimes on you? Do you think that he’s sent the third and seventh troops?”

“You mean... It’s Yang Zhao?”

“No shit. It’s definitely Yang Zhao using his personal power to make the first move. As long as the two of us are dead, then there’s no likelihood that the Crown Prince will be able to take him down. It seems we’ve underestimated the charisma and savageness of Yang Zhao. It looks like those with backers are even more unbridled. Anyone else would be keeping mum and their nose clean at this moment, but Yang Zhao has struck back instead. This rather does surprise me.”

Tian Shao had to admit that Jiang Chen made sense. There was truly a need to go find general director Shangguan Yi and ask him just what was going on.

However, he still felt that there was no difference to just walking into a trap if they went knocking like this.

“Brother Tian, what are you afraid of?” Jiang Chen saw that Tian Shao was hesitant. “The Tian Shao of my memories isn’t someone who hems and haws like this.”

These words stoked Tian Shao’s will to fight, igniting his hot blood. What was he to be afraid of if Jiang Chen wasn’t afraid?

What’s theirs would be theirs, what wouldn’t be would never be theirs no matter how hard they tried.

If they were men, they would charge straightforward into the face of difficulty. They would venture deep into the mountains knowing full well that tigers lay ahead.

“Alright young master Chen, it’s the honor of my life to know you. I may not be the strongest general, but I’m definitely one with guts!”

Tian Shao laughed heartily as his emotions abruptly lightened and his fighting spirit soared aloft.

“Good, this is the Tian Shao who I know!”

Jiang Chen smiled and told his people, “Everyone shut the doors and windows tightly and ignore any provocation. Wait for my return. Don’t engage the enemy. However, if they set foot into the manor, they die!”

Jiang Chen gave his orders and called out to a few Goldwing Swordbirds. Hopping onto them with Tian Shao, they headed straight for the Dragonteeth Guard.