

East Palace 31

Chapter 31

Firm Will

The Nanman Kingdom was a small country. The territory of the entire country was equivalent to a state of the Great Xia Empire. Although it was a state, its territory was still vast. Moreover, its geographical location was special. It was located between the Great Xia Empire and the Grand Shang Empire, equivalent to the west gate.

They had always had a good relationship with Great Xia. The two countries had close relations, frequent trade, and some military cooperation.

Therefore, Great Xia attached great importance to the fact that the Nanman Kingdom had sent an envoy this time.

Zhang Ronghua asked, "What are they doing here at this time?"

"Marriage!"

Seeing his frown, the Crown Prince explained, "The Nanman Kingdom sent their Crown Princess Fenghe and Princess Fenghe this time with a very clear purpose. They have already stated in the national letter that they want Crown Prince Fengyi to marry a princess of the side family and Princess Fenghe to be my concubine. If not, she can marry a prince. If it's a prince, she has to be the main wife."

"They've got a good plan."

They knew that with the strength of their country, they could not marry the main family's princess. Instead of being rejected and losing all their face, they directly stated his intentions of marrying the side family's princess.

The Crown Prince had already arranged a marriage with Ji Xueyan. She had to be the Crown Princess Consort. The Nanman Kingdom knew the power of the Grand Tutor and did not dare to offend him.

Therefore, they had designs on a concubine and even left a way out for themselves. The Crown Prince was out of their league and they could marry the Prince. The main wife had already been named.

"Everyone has desires. The Nanman King is the same."

"What are you going to do?"

"The Imperial Court has already decided that I will be in charge of receiving them and ensuring their safety. With the personality of the mastermind, he won't let go of this opportunity and think of a way to get rid of them. Once they die, I can't shirk the responsibility. Although it's not to the extent of losing my position, my impression of Father is greatly reduced. It's not good for me in the long run."

"What do you want me to do?"

"I've already made arrangements. You'll act according to the situation."

Zhang Ronghua knew that the Crown Prince treated him as a confidant, so he informed him in advance. Otherwise, back then, he would have told him about Dou Jianwu later.

"I understand."

They left the East Palace.

Zheng Fugui was waiting at the door and pulled him aside. "What did His Highness say?"

"To the Ministry of Justice."

He told Ma Ping'an to wait for them at the Heavenly Fragrance Tower.

He explained the situation on the way.

After hearing this, Zheng Fugui felt comfortable and smiled proudly. He extended his palm and squeezed roughly, making a fierce move. "I'm going to do it myself later!"

There were a total of two prisons in the capital.

One was the prison of the Ministry of Justice, and the other was the Nether Prison.

The former targeted officials of the Imperial Court, but there were also exceptions. Some martial artists were imprisoned here, and most of them were related to officials. The latter targeted demons, ghosts, and serious criminals. For example, the Sixth Prince's grandfather's house was imprisoned in the Nether Prison last time.

The guards of the Nether Prison were very strong and notorious. As long as they were imprisoned, it was rare for them to come out alive.

When they arrived at the prison of the Ministry of Justice, the guards at the door stopped them.

Zhang Ronghua took out his identity token. The guard cupped his fists and bowed. "Greetings, sir!"

"Take us to Qian Shoucai's cell!"

The guard hesitated. Qian Shoucai was the governor of the Capital.

Zheng Fugui's expression darkened as he shouted, "This is His Highness's order!"

The guard was shocked. They had heard about what had happened recently. Not daring to ask a word, they hurriedly led the way.

They entered the dungeon and stopped at the innermost cell.

The guardrail here was different from the outside. It was hard and thick. Qian Shoucai's hands and feet were bound with chains. He was dressed in a white prison uniform and was sitting on the ground with disheveled hair. He looked like a lunatic. He no longer had the aura of a high-ranking official.

He opened the cell door and the guard tactfully retreated.

Qian Shoucai looked up, his pupils constricting as he probed, "Did the Crown Prince ask you to come?"

Zhang Ronghua walked into the cell and stopped in front of him, looking down at him. The latter met his gaze and kicked him in the face without warning, knocking him to the ground.

"Cousin, let me do it!"

Zheng Fugui rushed forward and punched and kicked him to vent the anger in his heart. He was as ruthless as he had been holding it in these days.

After a while, he stopped. He clapped his hands and stood up.

Qian Shoucai had lost half his life and was covered in blood.

Enduring the intense pain in his body, Qian Shoucai said, "You're Zhang Ronghua and Zheng Fugui!"

"Have you guessed?"

"I can't think of anyone else who would be so ruthless."

Bang!

Zhang Ronghua kicked him to the ground again. "How dare a prisoner act so arrogantly?"

“Who asked you to let the rumors spread in the capital?”

As the governor of the capital, he managed the people of the capital. If he reacted in time and ordered the people to shut up, the rumors would be extinguished as soon as they appeared.

No matter how curious the commoners were, this concerned their lives. Once the government got serious, they would be very honest. At most, they would close the door at home and discuss secretly.

Inaction and letting the rumors ferment were the best help.

If it were any ordinary official, they would have been able to suppress it in time. They were afraid that the rumors would threaten their positions under their butts, but he did not care. No one would believe him unless there was something fishy.

“No one ordered it. I was negligent and let the rumors spread throughout the capital!”

“You don’t know how to appreciate favors!”

Zhang Ronghua stepped forward and used the Seven Soul Extinguishing Hands. He grabbed the bones all over his body and pinched them roughly.

When he was done, he stood at the side and watched with his hands behind his back.

Qian Shoucai’s perseverance was very strong. Even the old ghost could not withstand it, but he tried his best to endure it. Like a lobster, he curled up his body and rolled on the ground. Cold sweat drenched his prison uniform and he did not cry out.

Seven or eight minutes later.

Qian Shoucai’s eyes rolled back and he foamed at the mouth. He died.

Zheng Fugui was dumbfounded. “He... he died just like that?”

“Stand back!”

The latter was puzzled and looked at him in confusion, but he moved aside.

Zhang Ronghua mocked, “Do you think you can keep the secret just because you’re dead?”

He twisted his hand and used a secret technique. “Last Breath!”

A golden light entered his glabella, stimulating his potential.

A long moment passed. His corpse did not react.

“His perseverance is so strong?”

This secret technique was not omnipotent and had flaws! The other party could not die for more than two hours. In addition, it was useless on strong-willed people.

“What do we do now, Cousin?”

“Get out.”

They reached the hall.

He instructed them that Qian Shoucai was already dead. The prison head did not dare to ask. When they left, he would report the news.

Under the night sky.

Zheng Fugui was unprecedentedly happy. There was a hint of anticipation in the corners of his eyes. He secretly thought that he could see Xiao Mi again.

“What are you giggling about?”

“I was thinking about how handsome you were when you attacked just now, Cousin. Especially when you kicked him in the face. It was clean.”

Zhang Ronghua did not expose him. He guessed that he wanted to go to Heaven on Earth again. He had to pay attention.

Chapter 32

Earth-Grade Soul Master

Heavenly Fragrance Tower.

Ma Ping'an changed into a green robe and waited here after work. It had been a while since night fell, but they had yet to come.

He wandered on the spot, craning his neck to look.

Two figures walked over in the night.

His eyes lit up as he hurried forward. “I thought you weren’t coming!”

Zhang Ronghua shook his head. “It took a little time to interrogate him.”

“Any results?”

“Qian Shoucai was very stubborn. He didn’t speak until he died.”

"I heard His Highness mention it before. When he was taken down, he was interrogated severely and refused to speak."

Ma Ping'an comforted him.

"You don't have to be discouraged. This time, they provoked the Grand Tutor. This matter seems to be over, but the Grand Tutor won't let it go. He'll secretly send someone to investigate."

"Go in!"

They entered the Heavenly Fragrance Tower.

Led by the maid, they went up to the third floor and sat in a private room near the window.

Zhang Ronghua said, "Order whatever you want."

"How refreshing!"

Ma Ping'an ordered six specialty dishes. The ingredients were all demonic beasts. The meat smelled delicious and contained spiritual energy, but it was a little expensive.

Next was Zheng Fugui. They ordered and Zhang Ronghua casually ordered two dishes.

The maid took the list and left.

Zheng Fugui got up from his chair. "I'll go relieve myself."

The door closed.

“As expected of the Heavenly Fragrance Tower. The maidservants are all so beautiful and fresh.”

Drinking tea, the two of them chatted.

They reached the first-floor lobby.

Zheng Fugui was about to find a maid to ask where Xiao Mi was when his eyes lit up. He looked at her from the backyard and ran over honestly. “We meet again.”

“Just you?”

“No! There’s still Cousin and Ma Ping’an. Cousin’s treating tonight.”

“I’ll make a toast later.”

“Don’t!”

Seeing her frown, he explained frantically, “I—I—”

Puchi!

Xiao Mi was amused. “Alright! Then I won’t go.”

“You like Sky Jade Brew?”

“Your cousin has it?”

“No!”

"It's very famous. The last time I tasted it, it did live up to its name. If I have the chance, I naturally want to try it."

"I'll think of something and see if I can get it."

"Don't do anything stupid!"

When they went upstairs, Zheng Fugui was smiling as if he had eaten honey.

They entered the private room.

The food and wine had been served and were waiting for him.

Zhang Ronghua glanced at him and thought for a moment, but he could not guess the reason. "Did you find money?"

"No."

"Then why are you stupidly happy?"

"Isn't this a feast? I'm happy."

Zhang Ronghua did not doubt him and believed his words.

The three of them clinked glasses. As soon as the wine entered his mouth, Zhang Ronghua's expression changed. He put down the glass and spat out the wine in his mouth. "It's poisoned!"

The two of them reacted quickly and put down their glasses before they could drink.

Ma Ping'an took out the silver needle from his pocket and placed it in the wine. When he took it out again, it had already turned black. The poison was strong. He wiped it clean and tried it again in the wine.

Putting away the silver needles, his face darkened and his fists cracked. His eyes were murderous. "Someone wants to kill us!"

Zheng Fugui suddenly stood up from his chair with a murderous aura. He was about to rush out and ask for an explanation when Zhang Ronghua pressed his shoulder. "Sit down!"

"It's her?"

"She wouldn't dare!"

From their previous contact, Xiao Mi, as a woman, had managed the Heavenly Fragrance Tower as one of the top restaurants in the capital. Those who entered and left this place were either rich or noble. He was a smart person and would not be so stupid as to poison their food and wine.

Taking a step back, even if she was lucky enough to succeed, unless she fled through the night and stayed away from Great Xia, the Crown Prince would not let her off!

From this, they could infer that the murderer was not her.

"Calm down."

Seeing Zheng Fugui's angry expression, he glared at him. The latter put away his anger, but his fists were still clenched under his sleeve.

Zhang Ronghua said, "Bring another pot of wine."

The door opened.

The maid came in from outside and glanced at them subtly. The atmosphere was normal. The two had not discovered that they had been poisoned. She closed the door and walked towards Zhang Ronghua. She did not know that they were observing her too. Zhang Ronghua secretly used the Clear Spirit Eyes. He did not feel any internal energy fluctuations from her, but her soul power was very strong. She had reached the early stage of the Earth-grade and was a Soul Master.

If they really fought, unless he exposed his cultivation, they could not take her down alone.

An Earth-grade soul master was comparable to a Great Grandmaster.

The moment he saw her stop beside him and put down the wine pot, he attacked. A terrifying force hit her chest and sent her flying, knocking the wall down and causing her to fall to the ground below.

“Go!”

She rushed out first and stopped in the alley.

After she took a punch and broke a few ribs in her chest, she could not take it any longer and fainted.

When Ma Ping’an lifted her from the ground, the two of them rushed over.

He asked, “Is that her?”

“Most likely.”

The huge commotion here alarmed the Heavenly Fragrance Tower. When Xiao Mi received the news, she quickly rushed over with her men and lowered his stance. “What are the three lords doing?”

Zhang Ronghua’s face was cold. “Is she yours?”

Xiao Mi looked at her seriously. She didn’t recognize her. “No!”

She called the shopkeeper over. He was in charge of the daily management of the restaurant. After sizing her up, he remembered. "Lord Ma, she just came not long ago. Zhu'er brought her to me and said that her period is here. Her stomach hurts very badly and asked her sister to replace her."

"Arrest her!"

The shopkeeper rushed towards Zhu'er's house with Zheng Fugui.

"The food was poisoned."

Xiao Mi's expression changed. She knew the seriousness of this matter. "I'm willing to bear all the losses of the three lords!"

"Find a quiet room."

She led them into a room in the backyard and tactfully retreated.

In the room.

Zhang Ronghua crippled her limbs to prevent her from using her soul power to injure others. He slapped her face and broke her disguise, revealing a middle-aged face.

"Shen Hongniang!"

"You know her?"

"Yes."

Ma Ping'an nodded and told him what he knew.

She was Prince Gong's adopted sister and the disciple of Daoist Nun Qinglian. She was usually not in Prince Gong's residence and cultivated with her master. She had only escaped last time because of that.

He voiced his guess. "She must have returned to the capital recently and learned that Prince Gong had committed suicide. You were the one who brought people into the Prince's Manor so she blamed you for his death."

"We'll know if we wake her up and interrogate her."

He stepped roughly on her palm.

Crack!

Her fingers were broken, and it hurt so much that she woke up from her coma. She did not hide her murderous gaze as she stared at Zhang Ronghua. "How did you see through me?"

He directly used the Seven-section Soul Extinguishing Hand to interrogate her. Just as Ma Ping'an had guessed, she blamed Prince Gong's death on him.

As for Zhu'er, it was simple. Money cleared the way and someone replaced her at work. Naturally, she agreed happily and took the money home.

Chapter 33

So Ugly

Zheng Fugui returned quickly and threw Zhu'er to the ground. The latter was already terrified. If she had known this would happen, she would not have coveted the ten taels of silver.

There was no need to interrogate him.

Zhu'er told him everything that had happened.

The patrolling soldiers of the Five City Defense Divisions happened to pass by. Seeing the fight here, they came in to check. Zhang Ronghua ordered them to take Zhu'er away and deal with Shen Hongniang's corpse.

They were the only ones left in the room.

Ma Ping'an asked, "What do you plan to do with the Heavenly Fragrance Tower?"

"What's the word?"

"Do you still remember Eunuch Xiao, who came to the East Palace to deliver the message last time?"

"His descendant outside the palace?"

"Granddaughter!"

Seeing that he was deep in thought, Ma Ping'an continued, "The Heavenly Fragrance Tower also suffered an undeserved calamity. With her intelligence, she will compensate us when we get out. It's better to sell Eunuch Xiao a favor and forget about it! Of course, you have to decide what to do. If you want to touch him, I'll support you!"

Zhang Ronghua smiled and patted his shoulder. "One more friend means one more path. Since it's none of her business, forget it."

Zheng Fugui, who had been listening intently, heaved a sigh of relief when he saw his cousin let go of Xiao Mi. If his cousin really wanted to touch her, he would extinguish the only good impression he had and stand firmly on his side. To him, no matter how big the world was, it was not as important as his cousin. If anyone dared to harm his cousin, he would destroy their entire family!

"Go!"

They left the room.

Xiao Mi had been waiting in the courtyard with two maidservants for a long time. The moment the door opened, he quickly welcomed them with a smile. "I've frightened the three lords. This is a gift I carefully prepared. Please accept it!"

Two maidservants stepped forward, holding three exquisite purple jade boxes.

Zhang Ronghua said, "The Heavenly Fragrance Restaurant is a famous restaurant in the capital. It's very high-class and receives guests from the upper echelons. Such a thing shouldn't have happened to you. You should reflect on yourselves."

"You're right!"

He accepted the jade box and left.

While her cousin was not paying attention, Zheng Fugui winked at her as if to say that he had played a huge role in this matter. She shot him a grateful look.

They parted at the door.

When they returned to Vermilion Bird Workshop, Shi Wen was still awake. He was waiting for them and closed the courtyard door. "Two young masters, I've made a pot of chicken soup. Drink it before sleeping!"

"Sorry to trouble you."

After drinking the chicken soup, they entered the room.

Zhang Ronghua sat on the bed and took out the purple jade box that Xiao Mi had given him.

After opening it, there was a crescent moon embroidered with the words 'Heavenly Fragrance'. It was purple, and there was a hundred-year-old Vermilion Fruit beside it that contained majestic and rich spiritual energy.

"How generous!"

Just a Hundred-Year Red Fruit was priceless. He wondered what was in their jade box.

He put away the crescent moon token and ate the Hundred-Year Red Fruit. A huge amount of spiritual energy circulated in his body and circulated the Black Yellow Heaven Splitting Technique to refine it, making the Black Yellow True Essence improve a little. He would be able to break through in a few days.

In the morning.

As soon as he came out, Zheng Fugui finished practicing the Mountain River World Suppressing Fist and couldn't wait to come over. "Cousin, what's in your box?"

"A crescent token and a hundred-year-old Vermilion Fruit."

"Why is mine a Profound-grade high-grade pill?"

"Ask her."

Shi Wen had already bought breakfast. After eating, they went to the East Palace.

The Crown Prince was not around. As soon as the sky lit up, he brought Qing'er into the palace. Only Shuang'er was present. The Empress had ordered someone to send a batch of spiritual items that contained the spiritual energy of heaven and earth that was not visible on the market.

"Come and help."

Zhang Ronghua went over and took these things into the storeroom with her and placed them on the shelf.

Looking at the Sky Jade Jade Brew, there were a total of 30 pots. Could so many Crown Princes finish it?

Noticing his gaze, Shuang'er teased, "Are you addicted to alcohol?"

"It tastes good."

"Want it?"

"Can you make the decision?"

"I can't say anything else. I'm in charge of the logistics. I can still make the decisions for two pots of Sky Jade Jade Brew."

Zhang Ronghua did not stand on ceremony. He took the Sky Jade Brew from her and put it into his Five Dragon Spirit Control Belt. "Has Your Highness gone to receive the envoys of the Nanman Kingdom?"

Only the two of them were present. Shuang'er did not hide it. She raised her chin proudly and sneered. "They're not worthy!"

"The morning court is going to discuss their reception today. His Highness naturally has to be present."

They left the storeroom.

Ma Ping'an found him and handed over a list of names and cultivation introductions. "These are the people I chose from the Golden Scale Mystic Heaven Army. Take a look. If you have no objections, transfer them to the Flood Dragon Guard."

The Golden Scale Mystic Heaven Army was the Imperial Guard and was in charge of the Imperial Guard Palace. They were all elites and their individual strength was comparable to the Flood Dragon Guard.

“Have you informed the higher-ups?”

“His Highness has suffered such a loss. They have to compensate.”

“You’re in charge of this.”

When they reached their usual spot and stayed in the shade, Zhang Ronghua continued to slack off. Occasionally, he would take out a purple grape and throw it into his mouth.

In the afternoon.

As the Crown Prince returned, he was forced to end his slacking and call him to the Xuanhe Hall.

“The envoy of the Nanman Kingdom has been arranged to be in the Qinghua Hall. The True Dragon Hall is in charge of protecting him. He’ll rest for a day today. Tomorrow, I’ll bring them around the capital.”

The Qinghua Hall was a high-level posthouse. The imperial family was specially used to receive dignified foreign guests.

“What about the marriage?”

“The candidates have been chosen. There are a total of three of them. They’re all from the side branches of the imperial family. They have empty reputations and no power at all. The painter will arrange their appearance and birth characters and hand them to him in the afternoon. On the other hand, Princess Fenghe is more difficult to deal with. Ever since she saw me in the hall, she insisted on being my concubine. I’ve already rejected her righteously. She hasn’t relented and is in a temporary stalemate.”

“What do you want me to do?”

“Wait for the mastermind to attack!”

The next day.

Zhang Ronghua led the Flood Dragon Guard and guarded the Crown Prince. He saw the envoy of the Nanman Kingdom in the Qinghua Hall.

In addition to Crown Prince Fengyi and Princess Fenghe, there was also a Prime Minister called Feng Zhengyi.

The Feng surname was the national surname of the Nanman Kingdom. He was a member of the imperial family.

Unlike the people of Great Xia, their eyes were dark gold, and their hair was mainly golden. The men were rough, the women beautiful, and their figures were fiery like a foreigner.

After staying for an hour, according to the agreed agenda, they strolled around the capital. The soldiers of the Five City Defense Divisions cleared the area in advance and stayed for a while at every famous place.

The next day, Crown Prince Fengyi found an excuse to leave with the side family's Princess Anhe to increase their relationship. Only the Crown Prince was left with Princess Fenghe. She was not tired at all. She walked many places in a day and seemed to not stop until she had seen all of the capital.

Meditation Lake.

The periphery was surrounded by soldiers from the Five City Defense Divisions. There were Flood Dragon Guards protecting it, as well as the personal guards she had brought—the Qiong Qi Guards. They surrounded this place like an iron bucket.

In the pavilion, they were playing chess.

Zhang Ronghua was standing relatively far away and only Zheng Fugui was beside him. Seeing his lips curl in disdain, he asked curiously, "What are you doing?"

"She's so ugly!"

Chapter 34

Probe

"Indeed."

Zhang Ronghua agreed with this. The men of the Nanman Kingdom were ugly, even Prince Fengyi. A seven-foot-tall man was covered in fur, and so was his face. He had a bearded face. It was a pity for Princess Anhe. She was small, light, and soft. The image could not be imagined again.

"Cousin, you also think Princess Fenghe is very ugly?"

"Are you talking about her?"

"Is there anyone else besides her?"

Bang!

Zhang Ronghua rewarded him with a knock on the head. The latter shrank back aggrievedly, his eyes resentful.

He corrected the statement, "She's geographically beautiful!"

Zheng Fugui was unconvinced. This was clearly another way of calling her ugly, but he was not allowed to say it!

The game of chess ended.

Princess Fenghe stood up and walked to the guardrail. She looked at the calm lake. In the reflection of the sunlight, the waves sparkled and she could clearly see the fish swimming below. "Fish food."

The maid handed over the fish food.

Holding the small bowl, he sprinkled fish food in the water. Smelling the fragrance of fish food, a school of fish swam over and snatched it.

Soon.

After finishing the fish food that was thrown down, some bold fish jumped out of the water, made a drift, and fell into the lake.

"Cluck."

She poured all the fish food into the bowl and smiled like a silver bell as she looked at the fish fighting.

The Crown Prince walked over too and stopped beside her.

"Ah..."

Princess Fenghe was too close to the guardrail, which was low to her waist. She suddenly lost her balance and leaned forward with her upper body, falling into the lake. In their panic, she grabbed the Crown Prince's hand, wanting to bring him down with her.

Slash!

Her clothes tore and she fell into the water. The Crown Prince was still standing on the wooden bridge, but he was missing a sleeve.

In the lake.

Princess Fenghe struggled. She could not swim. Just as she was about to sink, Qing'er quickly moved. She bent down and grabbed her arm, lifting her from the lake.

"Boohoo..."

With a sob, Princess Fenghe rushed into the Crown Prince's arms and hugged him tightly.

Zhang Ronghua's expression changed. "Let's go!"

By the time they got here, they had separated and stopped in front of the Crown Prince. "Are you okay?"

The Crown Prince winked and said nothing.

After this happened, it was no longer suitable to play. He sent her to the Qinghua Hall and returned to the East Palace.

The Crown Prince voiced his guess. "She's testing me!"

"Does she suspect you're a woman?"

"When she hugged me in the chaos just now, her hands were very dishonest. She touched me all over."

The subtext was where she touched.

Zhang Ronghua could also tell that this was not simple. Why would she fall into the water if not on purpose? "Do you suspect that they've joined forces with the mastermind?"

The Crown Prince nodded and voiced his guess. The murderer behind the scenes should have found her when they arrived in the capital and made a promise. That was why this was happening.

“If what I expected is right, she’ll attack next.”

“You want me to go and see it tonight?”

“There’s no point in going.”

For the next two days, Princess Fenghe seemed to have become a different person. She stayed in Qinghua Hall and did not go anywhere. When the Crown Prince came, she chased others out and closed the door to play chess.

It was the same today.

As soon as he arrived, she pulled the Crown Prince into the palace.

Looking at the sky,

Zhang Ronghua frowned. He felt that something was wrong. Her current performance was completely different from a few days ago. He was worried and looked in the direction of the palace again, confirming his guess.

There was another doubt.

No matter what the outcome was, if the Crown Prince did not fall, the Nanman Kingdom would suffer.

If Great Xia was angry, a small country like the Nanman Kingdom could not withstand it at all.

It was as if a line had strung all of this together, but it hadn't grasped this point! If he could find where the point was, it would resolve all his doubts.

"Cousin, look!"

Zheng Fugui pointed in a direction and followed his finger. Princess Anhe leaned into Crown Prince Fengyi's arms and went to the garden at the side.

"It's already like this in broad daylight. To think she's a member of the imperial family. Isn't that too indecent?"

"Be careful of accidents."

"I didn't say anything!"

Just like the previous two days, as the sun was about to set, the hall door opened and the Crown Prince walked out. Princess Fenghe stood at the door, tears in her eyes. She was heartbroken. Just as the Crown Prince was about to disappear, she suddenly rushed out and pointed at his back. "You're a big liar. I won't agree with you!"

The Crown Prince left without looking back.

They left the Qinghua Hall.

Although Zhang Ronghua was curious, he did not ask. The Crown Prince's voice came from the carriage. "Get up."

He got into the car, lifted the curtain, and went in.

This was the first time he had sat. There was a lot of space. Rich and dignified, there were soft couches and desks.

Qing'er poured a cup of tea and placed it in front of him.

He took a sip from his teacup. When he put it down, the Crown Prince said, "This time, she should give up!"

"What did you say?"

"At the last game of chess, she revealed her intentions and wanted to marry me as a concubine. I rejected her. Seeing that I was determined, there was no possibility of parting on bad terms. You saw what happened later."

"Who's the most likely to marry her?"

"Sixth Prince!"

He explained the reason. The Sixth Prince had already been crippled. The officials of the imperial court wanted to make use of trash and let him marry Princess Fenghe. Although this matter was not settled, they were discussing it in secret.

As for after the marriage, there was no need to consider if the Sixth Prince would use the power of the Nanman Kingdom to rise. The Nanman Kingdom was equivalent to a state of Great Xia. The territory of Great Xia was so vast, and the Nanman Kingdom was far outside the pass. Not to mention that the Nanman King was not a fool, even if he risked the survival of the country to help a useless prince fight for the throne, if he dared to move, Great Xia would kill him in seconds.

"Have the Sixth Prince's forces really been wiped out?"

"You suspect he's still hiding power in the dark?"

Zhang Ronghua did not deny it. He felt that it was impossible for a prince to not have any trump cards before he was crippled.

The Crown Prince was silent for a long time. His eyes flickered coldly as he looked at Qing'er and instructed, "Send a message to Aunt and ask her to send someone to find out about the Sixth Prince."

"What about Princess Anhe?"

"Their relationship developed quickly."

As if ashamed or resentful, he shook his head. "She's disgraced the imperial family."

Zhang Ronghua guessed that even if her chastity sand was still there, it would probably not be clean.

He didn't ask.

It was better to ask less about the imperial family.

They got out of the carriage at the East Palace. Zhang Ronghua changed his clothes and left with his cousin.

On the way.

"Go to the Heavenly Fragrance Restaurant and buy some side dishes."

Zheng Fugui was puzzled. "Isn't Uncle Shi done cooking?"

"Shuang'er gave me two pots of Sky Jade Jade Brew a few days ago. I've been so busy that I forgot."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"I'll go now!"

Chapter 35

Princess Fenghe's Blood Letter

Heavenly Fragrance Tower.

After what had happened last time, Xiao Mi had given a death order that it was strictly forbidden to let strangers take over shifts. If she found one, they would be expelled immediately. Before serving the food, she would test the poison with silver needles to ensure the safety of the food. Two people had to travel together. Although it increased the cost a little, it was safer.

She had just finished instructing the shopkeeper and was about to go back and rest.

Zheng Fugui rushed over from outside. When he saw her at the counter, he did not think too much about it, let alone think that there was a difference between men and women. Perhaps he subconsciously treated her as one of them.

Before she could speak, he grabbed her small hand and pulled her to the side.

When Xiao Mi came back to her senses and wanted him to let go, he had already let go of her.

"I have good news for you!"

"Do you have the Sky Jade Brew?"

"Not yet! I'll have one after tonight."

He told her about the two pots of Sky Jade Jade Brew in his cousin's hand. He patted his chest and promised to leave some for her until they arrived tomorrow.

Interrupted by him, she forgot that they had been holding hands.

“Thank you for telling me the news.”

Zheng Fugui rubbed his head honestly and realized that he could not speak anymore. He stared at her with a silly smile.

“Have you eaten? If not, I’ll get someone to make you something.”

“Ah! Cousin asked me to pack some food and go back.”

In a while.

He left with the food box. Not long after he left, he remembered something and looked down at his right hand. He seemed to have held her hand just now. He instinctively put his hand to his nose and sniffed hard. There was a lingering fragrance of orchids. “It smells so good!”

In the lobby.

Zhang Ronghua and Shi Wen sat across the table and waited for a long time. He still had not returned. He frowned. “Why are you waiting so long to buy some vegetables?”

Speak of the devil.

“I’m back!”

A shadow rushed in from outside. When he saw his cousin staring at him, he looked puzzled. “Do I have flowers on my face?”

“Did you go to see Ning Xue again?”

“No! There were many people in the Heavenly Fragrance Tower. I waited for a while.”

He placed the food box on the table and took out the dishes inside. There were a total of six dishes. He asked, “Where’s the Sky Jade Jade Brew?”

Zhang Ronghua glared at him. Could he not change his rash personality? He took out two pots of Sky Jade Jade Brew and placed them on the table. He poured a glass for Shi Wen first, then filled it for him. Finally, it was his turn.

“We’re both working in the East Palace. Why didn’t Shuang’er give it to me?”

“We’re both humans. Can’t you improve a little?”

Zheng Fugui did not dare to talk back.

They ate and chatted.

Seeing that the dishes were about to be finished, there was still a little Sky Jade Brew left. He coaxed and pestered Zhang Ronghua to take the rest.

“Drunkard!”

After entering the room, he continued to cultivate the Black Yellow Heaven Splitting Technique.

During this period of polishing, the Black Yellow True Essence had already reached a critical point. After a night of bitter cultivation, he was about to break through again and reach the sixth level of the Celestial Realm.

He got out of bed.

After leaving the room, he practiced the Mountain River World Suppressing Fist in the courtyard. The grand momentum carried the majesty of mountains and rivers. Every punch and move contained great power.

After one round, he retracted his fist and stood up.

Just as he was about to eat breakfast, a Flood Dragon Guard stopped quickly at the door. He looked flustered and knocked on the courtyard door. "Something happened to the Lord!"

Zhang Ronghua put down his chopsticks. "I'll go take a look."

"I'll go with you."

He reached the courtyard door and opened it.

Without bothering to bow, the Flood Dragon Guard hurriedly said, "Princess Fenghe committed suicide. His Highness wants you to go over immediately!"

"Go!"

Zhang Ronghua's expression changed. He circulated his movement technique and rushed towards the East Palace. His thoughts raced. Had the mastermind attacked?

They arrived at the East Palace.

The Crown Prince was waiting for him. Seeing that he was here, he ordered him to bring people with him and rush towards the Qinghua Hall in a carriage.

On the way.

Zhang Ronghua found out the whole story from Ma Ping'an. This morning, when the maid knocked on the door and was about to wash her up, there was no movement in the bedroom. After waiting for a long time, there was no reaction, so she pushed the door open and went in to check. She saw that Princess Fenghe had died from having her pulse cut and her blood was on the ground. There was also a blood letter written in her blood on the table.

The content was very shocking. In the past few days of playing chess, the Crown Prince had pretended not to be interested in her in front of outsiders. He only had Ji Xueyan in his heart. Other than her, no one else could enter his heart. However, when there were only two of them present, he took the opportunity to touch her body. Other than the last step, he had done everything else.

Just yesterday, an accidental contact made her discover a huge secret. The Crown Prince was actually a woman!

Although the Nanman Kingdom was small and only a small country, she was also a princess. She was high and mighty, clean, holy, and untainted. Even if she was blasphemed by a woman, she had to die!

She was also afraid that she would die an unknown death which was why she had written this blood letter.

Zhang Ronghua was expressionless. With his understanding of the Crown Prince, he would not do this. Although Princess Fenghe was beautiful and had a regional charm, she was far inferior to Ji Xueyan. There was no comparison.

He had no reason to do so!

Even if he really liked her, he could make her a concubine openly. Even the Grand Tutor would not say anything. As the future Human Emperor, what was wrong with the Crown Prince marrying a concubine?

At most, Ji Xueyan was unhappy and had something to say. This concerned the struggle for power. No matter how unhappy she was, she would not flare up. In her position, when she enjoyed countless top resources, there were some responsibilities that she had to bear. It was useless to escape.

As for being a woman, it was even more of a joke!

Although the Clear Spirit Eyes was blocked by the Dynasty Fate Dragon Qi of the Great Xia Kingdom, the Grand Tutor tested it with the Five Elements Array. If he was a woman, could he hide it from the Grand Tutor?

There were too many inconsistencies. It made no sense.

If the mastermind was behind it, how could he convince Princess Fenghe to commit suicide and write a blood letter to slander the Crown Prince? Wasn't she afraid that once the lie was exposed, the Nanman Kingdom would be destroyed?

All the members of the imperial family would become slaves. The Empress Dowager, Empress, Concubine, Princess, and so on would be thrown into the Prostitution Bureau of Great Xia until they died!

The men's outcome would be even worse. There were many tortures in the world that were worse than death, making them regret coming to this world.

No matter how many benefits the mastermind promised, it could not move her!

Zhang Ronghua could not figure it out!

He racked his brains but still had no clue.

But she had succeeded. Her death forced the Crown Prince to the tip of the iceberg, bringing up the storm that had stopped previously again.

The Nanman Kingdom was nothing to worry about. It was just a small country. If he was happy, he would give them an explanation. If he was unhappy, they would have to scram! Otherwise, he would destroy them, but the mastermind would not stop. The other princes would not miss this opportunity. They would pounce on him like mad dogs until they brought the Crown Prince down.

No wonder his face was very dark. In the past, he did not show his emotions, but this time, he made an exception.

Chapter 36

The Crown Prince's Toughness

Qinghua Hall.

The people from the Five City Defense Divisions and the True Dragon Hall had already surrounded this place. There were people everywhere. Not a fly could fly in or leave.

In the back hall.

The two waves of people faced each other, swords drawn. A murderous atmosphere spread. Their palms were on their sword hilts, ready to attack at any time.

The leader from Great Xia was called Pei Caihua, the Minister of Rites.

The news of Princess Fenghe's accident reached the Emperor immediately. The officials were shocked. Strangely, no one spoke this time, let alone the censor who jumped out to accuse the Crown Prince of being a woman.

With such a huge thing happening, the Imperial Court naturally had to appear.

After a round of games, this chore finally fell to him.

Although unwilling, he had no choice but to obey the Xia Emperor's orders.

Beside him stood an Azure Dragon Envoy called Lu Zhantang. He was in charge of protecting Princess Fenghe. Now that she had committed suicide, no matter what the reason was, it was irresponsible! He was very flustered and felt cold from head to toe.

This matter could not be resolved perfectly. He would definitely be punished. Regardless of whether the Crown Prince suffered, he would definitely be finished. Even his family would be implicated.

He was furious, but there was nothing he could do.

On the Nanman Kingdom's side.

With Crown Prince Fengyi and Feng Zhengyi in the lead, the anger in the former's eyes was not concealed at all, as if his nostrils were emitting air. An invisible exuberant flame burned as he glared at Pei Caihua, his teeth grinding.

The latter was the Prime Minister who had trained his mental fortitude for a long time. Although Princess Fenghe had committed suicide, anger did not show on his face. He stared with a dark expression.

Behind them stood the Qiong Qi Guards and the experts of the Nanman Kingdom.

"You have to give us an explanation for this!"

Pei Caihua had been in the bureaucracy for so many years and had seen all kinds of storms. He was tactful and ruthless. Seeing him pressurize, he felt disdain. How dare a prime minister of a small country question him? Under normal circumstances, even if he handed over a visiting card, it would depend on his mood if he wanted to see him.

The powerful national strength gave him great confidence. No matter what he faced, he could fight back.

Although they were the only ones here, there were countless spies hidden in the dark. If he did not deal with them properly and embarrassed Great Xia, who knew how those political enemies would participate in the court meeting the next day? They took the opportunity to take him down with a cold expression. "Her hands are on her body. Can you stop her if she wants to die?"

“This matter started because of the Crown Prince. My princess discovered that he was a woman. In order to protect her dignity, she died!”

Pei Caihua flicked his sleeve and berated sternly, “How dare you! My Crown Prince is an upright man. How can he be a woman? If you want to die, I’ll fulfill your wish now!”

Swords were drawn and pointed at each other. A battle was about to break out.

Crown Prince Fengyi stepped forward and was not afraid of the sword of the True Dragon Hall at all. His expression was ferocious, like a crazy beast. He said fiercely, “Xia Shimin must verify his innocence and prove that he’s a man. Give us an explanation! Before you came, I had already secretly sent the news back. Even if you send people to kill us now, it’s too late! Even if we die here today, we have to seek an explanation for Fenghe. You can order us all to die, but I guarantee that my Nanman Kingdom will join the Shang Dynasty and become their province. With the Nanman Kingdom as a springboard, we will attack you and make Great Xia unable to live in peace forever!”

The atmosphere was stiff.

This time, Pei Caihua did not act rashly. This matter had already exceeded his authority. Just as he had said, if the Nanman King’s head was damaged and he abandoned his authority to become a subject, it would definitely be bad news for Great Xia.

Although the possibility of this happening was very low and almost impossible, he did not dare take the risk!

His words were so intimidating that he did not dare to speak. Crown Prince Fengyi did not let him off. He pressed forward step by step. “You only have two choices. The first is to let Xia Shimin prove his innocence, and the second is to kill us. Then, my Nanman Kingdom will join the Shang Dynasty.”

“I’ll give you two choices. The first is to apologize to Minister Pei and beg his forgiveness. The second is that today is the day you die. I guarantee that before the army of the Shang Dynasty enters the Nanman Kingdom, no one in the Nanman Kingdom will be alive!”

The Crown Prince walked in from outside. Zhang Ronghua led the Flood Dragon Guards and guarded his left and right.

“Greetings, Your Highness!” Everyone bowed.

The Crown Prince nodded and stopped in front of Crown Prince Fengyi. He berated coldly, “Apologize!”

“You—”

“I’ll count to three. If you haven’t apologized...” The tone changed, murderous. “Everyone, listen up. Kill them all! I’ll bear all the consequences.”

Their eyes met.

Crown Prince Fengyi suppressed his anger in humiliation and clenched his fists tightly. Facing the Crown Prince’s coercion, he did not dare to take the gamble! At least on the surface.

No matter how talented Pei Caihua was, he was only the Minister of Rites. He was different. What the former could not do did not mean that the Crown Prince could not do it.

Once Great Xia attacked, as long as an imperial edict reached the border, a province alone could destroy them.

“One!”

“Two!”

The Flood Dragon Guards had already drawn their swords. Zheng Fugui and Ma Ping’an were prepared to charge forward. Lu Zhantang gritted his teeth and went all out. With a gesture, all the people from the True Dragon Hall drew their swords.

As long as the word 'three' fell, they would all die!

Something strange happened. Other than being angry, Crown Prince Fengyi glared at the Crown Prince fiercely. His mouth was still pressed tightly together, but he did not open it.

Seeing that something was wrong, the Crown Prince had already opened his mouth. He could say the word 'three' at any time. Once that happened, they would all die and the Nanman Kingdom would be finished. Feng Zhengyi hurriedly said, "Your Highness, wait!"

"Speak!"

"His Highness is young and insensible. Coupled with the princess's death, he was so angry that he offended you. Please don't hold it against him. I'm willing to apologize to Lord Pei on behalf of His Highness. What do you think?"

"Yes!"

The tension disappeared as the swords returned to their sheaths.

Disappointment flashed across the Crown Prince's eyes and he thought to himself that it was a pity!

Feng Zhengyi lowered his stance and apologized sincerely. "I'm sorry! Please forgive me."

Pei Caihua was very satisfied with the Crown Prince's performance. As the future Human Emperor, other than having extraordinary power and strategy, he also had to be responsible and have his own opinions. Only by withstanding the pressure could he lead Great Xia to the peak and destroy the Shang Dynasty, making Great Xia the supreme overlord, but he did not show it on his face.

The old fox was watertight!

“No one wants to see the death of Princess Fenghe. I can understand your feelings, but you have to remember to take your place at all times. Don’t lose your rationality in anger, and don’t take your lives lightly.”

“You’re right!”

The Crown Prince ordered, “Bring me to see Princess Fenghe.”

Chapter 37

The Vanished Soul

In the bedroom.

Princess Fenghe’s corpse had been dealt with. The blood on her body had been cleaned and placed on the bed.

The ground, the table, and the blood book remained the same. The scene was well protected.

The Crown Prince stood at the side and looked at the dead Princess Fenghe expressionlessly. He was very angry. Although he had easily suppressed Feng Zhengyi and the others outside just now, he was actually under great pressure.

He could not solve this case and investigate this matter.

It was calm now. There was no storm in the court. The censors were wilting like frosted eggplants. When the time came, their combat strength would break through the horizon. The storm that erupted would be even stronger than before.

If that was the case, there was only one way left. A body check! Only then could he get out of this storm and turn passive into active.

Clothes were not that easy to take off. He was the Crown Prince of the Great Xia Kingdom, and the heir to the throne. When the storm had just risen, it had been verified by a secret technique in the palace.

The Grand Tutor verified it again. If there was a third time, it would be a fatal blow to his prestige and ability!

This path could not be taken no matter what.

“You have a lead?”

Zhang Ronghua stepped forward and sized her up. She did not look poisoned. The wound on her right wrist did not look like it had been cut by someone else. His thoughts raced. Was it really suicide?

He didn't believe it!

It had been confirmed that the Crown Prince was a man. This matter was clearly a trap. The mastermind was making a move.

Thinking of this, he secretly used his Clear Spirit Eyes to seriously check her corpse again.

“Where's the soul?”

This Eye Technique had already been cultivated to the Technique Close to the Dao Realm. It was powerful and had never failed. The Crown Prince's time did not count. He had the protection of the Great Xia Kingdom's Dynasty Fate.

No matter how strong the secret technique was, it could not compare to the Dynasty Fate Dragon Qi.

She was only the princess of a small country, not in the Nanman Kingdom. Taking a step back, even in the Nanman Kingdom, the fate of a small country could not stop it. Moreover, she was dead, like a naked beauty.

The mysteries of the soul were invisible to the naked eye.

For those with weak physiques, their souls would quickly dissipate after death. For those with powerful physiques or fates, their souls would exist for a period of time after death.

If she was a Soul Master, she could still reincarnate.

Although she was a woman, she was still the princess of a country. From the time of her death, it was no more than four hours. She should not dissipate in such a short period of time.

Even if it dissipated, there would be a trace of soul aura left on her body.

But now it was clean. The corpse was a corpse. There was no aura of a soul. It was as if her soul had been sucked out or there was none at all.

If he had wondered just now if the mastermind had attacked, he was now completely confident that they had already attacked.

He inadvertently glanced at Crown Prince Fengyi and Feng Zhengyi.

His heart shrank.

The former actually did not have a soul, but he was still alive. Where had his soul gone? There was only one explanation. The real Crown Prince Fengyi was already dead! The person in front of him was an impostor or a corpse with someone else's soul hidden in his body. No wonder he had refused to speak when facing the Crown Prince's threat just now. He would rather risk the Nanman Kingdom than apologize. Everything made sense.

Only an outsider wouldn't care if they died, let alone if the country was destroyed.

The latter's soul was with him and he had not been swapped. His identity was innocent.

With an answer, he retracted his Clear Spirit Eyes and shook his head. "No!"

Without batting an eyelid, he signaled to the Crown Prince. After interacting with him for so long, the Crown Prince knew him very well and knew what he meant. There were too many people to talk about.

He looked at Lu Zhantang and ordered, "Lock down this place. Without my orders, no one is allowed to leave!"

Crown Prince Fengyi pointed at him angrily. "You want to imprison us here?"

Bang!

The Crown Prince kicked him to the ground and said coldly, "Watch your status. If you dare to treat me like this again, it won't be as simple as a kick!"

He left with his men.

They left the Qinghua Hall.

Pei Caihua bade farewell and left. He still had to return to the palace to report. The Crown Prince asked him to tell his father that he would arrive later.

He desperately wanted to know what clues Zhang Ronghua had found, but he was still on the way. If someone heard him and alerted them, it would complicate things and make it even harder to solve the case.

He suppressed this thought and returned to the East Palace.

Xuanhe Hall.

Qing'er and Shuang'er guarded the hall door. Zheng Fugui and the others were around. Even if someone wanted to approach, they could not.

“What did you find?”

“Princess Fenghe was a living dead!”

The Crown Prince frowned in confusion. Zhang Ronghua did not ask him to wait long. He continued, “Crown Prince Fengyi was also dead. Their souls were long gone.”

He explained his guess.

After hearing this, the Crown Prince looked shocked. He was really shocked. He did not expect the mastermind to set up such a huge trap and kill them without a word.

No wonder Crown Prince Fengyi’s performance was abnormal. He ignored the safety of the Nanman Kingdom and provoked him one after another. Before this, he thought that Crown Prince Fengyi’s heart ached for his sister and that was why he was like this.

Now that he looked at it, including the deaths of Princess Fenghe and what he had just done, it looked like the mastermind’s method of forcing him to do a physical examination and prove himself.

At this moment, the hall door opened. Qing’er entered and closed the hall door. She walked over quickly and muttered a few words in the Crown Prince’s ear before waiting at the side.

“The people I arranged previously also found some clues. When they first checked into Qinghua Hall, they smelled like special elk. It was faint and almost undetectable, but I still found it from something else.”

“What are you going to do?”

“Split up. Bring Zheng Fugui in disguise and hide in the Qinghua Hall. I have a feeling that since they chose to attack, they won’t stop! Today’s matter was suppressed by me. If there are no follow-up methods, Princess Fenghe will have put on this show for nothing. Keep an eye on the Crown Prince. He should make a move in the near future. I’ll continue to order people to investigate and track the fragrance of the elk.”

Zhang Ronghua agreed. Just as he turned to leave, the Crown Prince's voice sounded again. "Be careful!"

He turned around.

"Thank you for your concern, Your Highness!"

When the hall door closed, Qing'er couldn't wait to ask, "Does Your Highness have any clues?"

"Yes."

A cold light flickered in his eyes, containing terrifying killing intent. "I want to completely eliminate him this time!"

He gave the order.

"Follow me into the palace!"

...

They changed into plain clothes.

Although Zheng Fugui was simple-minded, he knew the seriousness of the matter. He only brought his eyes and not his mouth. If his cousin did not speak, he would not ask a word.

Zheng Ronghua bought some disguise materials. They were very common and could be obtained with some money.

He led his cousin to a dead end and met his puzzled gaze. He mixed the things and disguised him. Then he disguised himself with an ordinary face.

“Cousin, you have such skills?”

Chapter 38

Evil Spirit

Zhang Ronghua glared at his cousin. “It doesn’t matter if you have more skills.”

They arrived at Qinghua Hall.

When they split up, Zhang Ronghua told him to guard the outside. Hide well and not be discovered.

As for him, he sneaked in and stopped in the back hall.

He mobilized his soul power and enveloped the hall.

After being tempered by the Great Dao Righteous Song, the quality of his soul power was very strong. Coupled with the fact that he had cultivated the Black Tortoise Spirit Technique to the point of Technique Close to the Dao, no one would notice unless he took the initiative to reveal it, or if the enemy’s soul power exceeded by too much.

The Black Tortoise Spirit Technique was a soul technique. Other than restraining aura, it could also simulate aura and have many wonderful uses.

In the palace.

Feng Zhengyi sat on the chair with a cold expression, his eyes as dark as water. What had happened today was a great humiliation to him. Princess Fenghe was dead and he wanted an explanation. He was actually humiliated like this and they even threatened to destroy the Nanman Kingdom.

At the same time, she was angry and helpless.

The strength of the Nanman Kingdom was too weak. Even a province of Great Xia was no match for them. No matter how unwilling they were, they had to endure it. This was reality!

Crown Prince Fengyi's eyes were spitting fire as he walked around the hall, making loud noises. The more he walked, the more aggrieved he became. From time to time, he would stop and roar, pointing outside and cursing.

Suddenly, he stopped, his face ferocious. The veins on his forehead were twisted together. He could not suppress his anger. "I have to demand an explanation!"

He strode out.

Feng Zhengyi's expression changed. He hurriedly rushed over and hugged him tightly from behind. He persuaded, "Your Highness, don't do anything stupid! We're living under someone else's roof now. If we really anger them, everyone will die! Even the Nanman Kingdom will be finished."

"Did Fenghe die for nothing?"

"With so many people watching, Great Xia will definitely give us an explanation! Otherwise, if their reputation is ruined, who will dare to believe them in the future?"

"No! Even if I have to risk my life, I have to see the Xia Emperor!"

He pried his hand away and threw him to the ground.

He walked out of the hall fiercely and shouted angrily, "Everyone, listen up! Follow me and attack."

"Your Highness..."

Feng Zhengyi had just rushed up when Crown Prince Fengyi kicked him to the ground. This time, he fainted.

In the dark.

Zhang Ronghua's eyes flickered. "Is it about to begin?"

The commotion here alarmed Lu Zhantang. He hurriedly rushed over with the people from the True Dragon Hall and the City Defense Division and blocked them at the courtyard gate.

Crown Prince Fengyi roared, "Get lost!"

Lu Zhantang did not take a step back. At this point, the only person who could save him was the Crown Prince. It was impossible to count on the higher-ups of the True Dragon Hall at all. They might even abandon him and let him fend for himself. He wanted to live, to have his family safe and sound, and to see his son grow up. He could only listen to the Crown Prince's orders and carry them out to the end. "His Highness has ordered that no one is allowed to leave! Those who disobey will be killed!"

He was the first to draw the Azure Dragon Sword. The others also drew their weapons.

"You're courting death!"

Crown Prince Fengyi drew his sword and roared crazily, "Kill!"

He was the first to charge forward. The Qiong Qi Guards and the experts of the Nanman Kingdom followed.

Lu Zhantang took a deep breath. At this point, there was no way out. Whether he lived or died depended on the Crown Prince. "Kill!"

The two sides fought fiercely, and people fell one after another.

A few minutes later.

The people of the Nanman Kingdom finally could not hold on against the encirclement of the True Dragon Hall and the others. They were forced to retreat step by step. Even Crown Prince Fengyi was covered in blood.

However, his eyes were bright and he was smug. No matter how smart they were and what status they had, they were still played by 'them'.

'That's not enough!'

Although the Crown Prince could deal with Princess Fenghe's incident, coupled with him, he wanted to see how he could suppress this matter.

He pointed at Lu Zhantang angrily. "Die!"

A sword light slashed down with a loud sword hum, aiming at his head.

"Hmph!"

Lu Zhantang looked disdainful and kicked him away.

Pffft!

Crown Prince Fengyi spat out a blood arrow and struggled to get up from the ground. His palms were weak, and he fell again. With unwillingness, he closed his eyes and died.

"Your Highness!"

Feng Zhengyi happened to wake up. He shouted sorrowfully and rushed up from behind. He hugged his corpse and gritted his teeth. "I'll definitely ask the Xia Emperor for an explanation for this!"

His remaining rationality prevented him from rushing forward.

Lu Zhintang was also stunned. The power of this kick was controlled very well. It could not even injure him. It had only sent him flying. How did it kill him?

This was bad!

He was also flustered, but he could not panic yet. He had to save himself. He called his trusted aide over and said with unprecedented seriousness, "Go to the East Palace immediately and tell Your Highness that Crown Prince Fengyi is dead. Please be prepared, Your Highness!"

"Yes!"

His trusted aide also knew the seriousness of the matter. He did not dare to delay and rushed towards the East Palace without hesitation.

No one noticed.

The moment Crown Prince Fengyi fell to the ground, a soul rushed out of his body and went underground. Even Lu Zhintang did not notice. Without the control of this soul, his body would naturally die.

Zhang Ronghua had been watching and even recorded this scene with the voice-recording stone. Seeing this soul escape, he narrowed his eyes. "An evil spirit?"

The evil spirits were not ferocious spirits, but the souls of dire beasts.

Dire beasts were as famous as true spirits. Every adult dire beast had the ability to overturn rivers and stir seas, overturn the sun, moon, and universe. They also had innate divine powers. With their methods, it was very simple to hide it from others.

This evil spirit was very weak and was far from adulthood. It only had the cultivation of the middle-stage Earth-grade. He left a soul mark on its body and sent a voice transmission to Zheng Fugui, asking him to

release a signal flare and call for help. He also had to control this place and don't let anyone go, while keeping watch of Crown Prince Fengyi's corpse.

"Cousin, where are you?"

He looked around. He was alone.

"This is a thousand-mile voice transmission. When His Highness comes, ask him to wait for news from me."

He followed the soul mark left behind and chased after the evil spirit.

Zheng Fugui came out from the dark and took out a flare to release. It bloomed with beautiful fireworks in the sky and condensed into a black flood dragon. Anyone from the Flood Dragon Guard who saw the flare rushed over unconditionally.

He spat and wiped his face, removing the disguise.

Then, he entered the Qinghua Hall.

He stopped beside Lu Zhantang. "Surround them! Wait for the order."

The latter knew this fool. He was the Crown Prince's man. Seeing that he had arrived so quickly, he thought about it and guessed that this was a backup plan arranged by His Highness. He relaxed and did as he was ordered.

Night fell, and darkness enveloped the ground. Tonight was destined not to stop, making some people unable to sleep.

In the prison of the Ministry of Justice.

Wu Lizhi was expressionless as he stood at the door with his hands behind his back. He was the right assistant minister of the Ministry of Justice. He was in a high position and looked at the night as he waited for someone. Behind him stood a black-robed man, only his eyes showing. He emitted a cold aura.

Chapter 39

Contingency Plan

A black shadow turned out from the ground without warning and stopped in front of him. When the black light on its body dissipated, it revealed the appearance of the evil spirit.

It looked at the guards at the door unruly. There were silver needles in each of their chests. They were empty and lifeless. They looked like they had just died. As long as they pulled out the silver needles, their corpses immediately fell to the ground.

“How ruthless! You even killed your own people.”

“If I don’t do this, how dare you stand here openly?”

“Hmph!” The evil spirit was very unhappy.

“The Snake Girl is inside?”

The Snake Girl was the soul that controlled Princess Fenghe.

“If you don’t come over soon, she’ll eat the souls of the criminals.”

“Take me there!”

Wu Lizhi led the black-robed man inside.

The evil spirit had taken two steps when it stopped again. Seeing his confusion, it pointed at the guards at the door. "No matter how small a mosquito is, it's still meat. We can't waste it like this."

It opened its mouth and swallowed. A terrifying suction force came and domineeringly swallowed the guard's soul.

It licked its mouth, looking as if it hadn't had enough. "It tastes a little bad!"

Wu Lizhi's face was cold. "You only have fifteen minutes!"

He ignored it and went in.

The evil spirit followed.

In the dungeon, the head of the prison and the jailer remained as if they were mechanical. They stood and sat with silver needles in their chests. They had all been killed.

"To think you're the right vice minister of the Ministry of Justice. You're inhumane and killed everyone!"

Sensing its aura, the Snake Girl rushed out of the depths of the cell and devoured so many souls, including many with powerful souls. Its cultivation increased and it broke through to the late-stage Earth-grade.

"Why are you only here now?"

"Something happened to the plan. Xia Shimin is more difficult to deal with than I imagined."

"I'll leave half for you. Swallow their souls. It's enough to take a step forward. Go over quickly! I'll guard here."

The evil spirit was about to rush deeper into the cell.

Wu Lizhi took a step back and gave up his spot. Seeing this, the evil spirit stopped and remained vigilant. They were only cooperating and using each other. Now that the cooperation was completed, they could fall out at any time.

The black-robed man stepped forward and raised his head, which had been bowed. His eyes were bright, like dazzling gems blooming with a blue luster, but his words were cold. "The mission is completed. You deserve to die!"

The evil spirit flashed and stood side by side with the Snake Girl. Boundless soul power bloomed from their bodies, shooting out a huge aura. "We dare to work with you. Aren't we afraid that you'll burn the bridge after crossing it?"

The aura of a tenth-level Great Grandmaster emitted from the black-robed man. A supreme aura blocked their soul pressure and suppressed it, occupying an absolute advantage.

"We dire beasts all have innate divine powers, and my Flying Serpent Race is the king of dire beasts. We're as famous as True Dragons, Phoenixes, and so on. Our innate divine powers are even stronger. The talent that the two of us awakened is called—Heavenly Constellation Escape. If we use it together, even if you set up a large array here, you won't be able to stop us! In addition, I've recorded our previous transaction with the voice-recording stone. As long as you dare to attack, when we escape from here, we'll hand the voice-recording stone to Xia Shimin or copy hundreds of copies and throw them all over the capital. What do you think the outcome will be?"

Wu Lizhi's expression was ruthless. He took a deep breath and looked at them coldly.

If looks could kill, he would definitely light a sky lantern and torture them to death!

"You still want her to do it now?"

Looking at the black-robed man, he sensed his gaze and pondered for a moment. Then, he shook his head. He did not expect them to be members of the Flying Serpent Race.

He did not have full confidence in blocking the innate divine power of such a race.

Once they escaped, all their previous efforts would be wasted, and countless resources would be wasted.

The Crown Prince would not let this go. He would definitely investigate thoroughly. Although he was very careful, he was still afraid of leaving clues.

The evil spirit mocked, "Stop wasting time. Half of the fifteen minutes have passed. If you delay any longer, the people changing the defense will come. You'll be the ones in trouble."

The black-robed man looked at Wu Lizhi. The latter's palms were clenched tightly as he glared at them, but there was nothing he could do. He lost. "You won!"

"What a waste of time."

Proud, the evil spirit rushed deeper into the cell.

Bang!

With a golden flash, Zhang Ronghua appeared in front of it. The golden light emitted condensed into a substance, and it collided with it. There was a metallic clang that forced it back. Before it could react,

he grabbed domineeringly. It could clearly see him, but it could not react. Under its terrified gaze, he grabbed it. A powerful soul power emitted from his palm. It was not something it could resist at all. Under this soul power, its body quickly shrank and in the blink of an eye, it was sealed into an egg-sized soul bead and lost consciousness.

He put away the soul bead and glanced at them. "Your turn."

Wu Lizhi's expression changed drastically. He did not expect the evil spirit to be incompetent and attract the Crown Prince's people. He knew this person in front of him. His name was Zhang Ronghua, a Colonel who had been expanded by the Flood Dragon Guard. He was at the fourth level of the Grandmaster realm.

However, from the way he attacked just now, even the black-robed man could not subdue the evil spirit in one move. He had definitely hidden his cultivation. He still had a bolder guess in his heart. Was everything they did under the Crown Prince's surveillance?

He made up his mind and acted according to the plan in advance, cutting off all clues.

"Kill him!"

The black-robed man put on the Sky Silkworm Golden Silk Gloves solemnly. He did not dare to hold back at all. His strong internal strength condensed in his hands. "Soul Extinguishing Myriad Poison Palm!"

Dozens of dark green palm prints, each one a foot and two inches long, contained terrifying destructive power and carried poison as they slapped over violently.

The Snake Girl was already scared silly. She could not care less about saving her companions and used her innate divine power to escape underground.

Wu Lizhi was a ruthless person. He took out his dagger and wiped it on his own neck.

The original plan was that after getting rid of the evil spirit and the others, he would also be exposed. At that time, he would commit suicide and cut off the clues, preventing the Crown Prince from investigating. With Zhang Ronghua interfering, he could only attack in advance.

"Anyone can die except you."

He took a step and appeared in front of him. The black-robed man wanted to stop him, but an afterimage flashed and he could not catch up.

Wu Lizhi had just raised the dagger when his arms were crippled. A big forceful bag slapped his face roughly, shattering all the teeth in his mouth and dropping to the ground. He could not even bite his tongue to commit suicide or crush his poisonous teeth.

His vision darkened and he fainted.

‘Finish him.’

Zhang Ronghua threw a punch from afar. The Black Yellow True Essence broke all the palm shadows of the black-robed man and killed him.

Looking at the Snake Girl whose half of her soul had burrowed into the ground, his soul power condensed into a large hand. He suddenly grabbed it and lifted it out, sealing it into a soul bead.

Chapter 40

The Truth

The smell of dampness in the cell was strong and musty. Coupled with the killing of the jailer and the others, the smell of blood almost covered the other smells.

However, Zhang Ronghua’s nose was very sharp. He smelled the elk fragrance that the Crown Prince had tracked down.

Looking at Wu Lizhi, a fragrance emitted from his body.

It was very faint and undetectably weak.

It wasn’t his. If he had used it himself, he wouldn’t have done this. The smell would have been stronger. It must have lingered on him after being with someone for too long.

“I didn’t expect to gain something unexpected.”

He stopped at the black-robed man’s corpse.

With a wave of his hand, a golden light rushed out of his palm and shattered the black robe, revealing the face of a middle-aged woman. It looked unfamiliar and he did not recognize this person.

He searched her corpse and obtained a token with the words 'Heavenly Sound' written on it. Could she be the Sect Master of the Heavenly Sound Sect?

Didn't the True Dragon Hall send someone to surround them? Why did they let her escape?

He took off the Heavenly Silkworm Golden Silk Gloves she was wearing. This was good stuff. It contained the essence of the Heavenly Silkworm's life. It was tenacious, light, and had a powerful defense. Every Heavenly Silkworm would only spit out silk at the end of its life. It was once per lifetime and was priceless.

After dealing with her corpse, he carried Wu Lizhi out.

As soon as he reached the door, the soldiers who had changed their guard rushed over. Seeing corpses everywhere on the ground, Zhang Ronghua came out with the right vice minister of Justice in his hand. They hurriedly drew their swords and surrounded him.

"The Flood Dragon Guard is handling a case. Move!"

Taking out his identity token, the leader of the soldiers took a serious look. The token was real, but the guards had been killed and he was also grabbing the Lord of the Ministry of Justice. He did not let him in immediately but asked in a low voice, "What's going on?"

Zhang Ronghua's expression darkened. "Don't ask about things you shouldn't know. Be careful not to lose your life!"

He walked outside.

The surrounding soldiers hurriedly looked over. Seeing him shake his head, they made way. After Zhang Ronghua left, this person ordered his subordinates to report the news here and rush into the prison to check on the situation.

Back at the East Palace.

The Crown Prince had been waiting for a long time. After dealing with the matters at the Qinghua Hall, he waited for him in the Xuanhe Hall. The rumors outside were suppressed by him.

He threw Wu Lizhi to the ground and took out the two soul pearls. "My previous guess was right. The souls of Princess Fenghe and Crown Prince Fengyi had been devoured by them before this. What they saw was only an empty shell. They established cooperation with him, so this operation happened. We still have to interrogate them for the exact details."

"There's no need to go to the side hall. We'll interrogate them here. I'll watch."

The hall was filled with his own people. Other than him, there was also Qing'er and Shuang'er. Zheng Fugui and Ma Ping'an were guarding outside.

He stepped on his palm and crushed it forcefully. Crack! It was a bloody mess. Under the stimulation of intense pain, Wu Lizhi immediately woke up. "Ah..."

"Shut up!"

Zhang Ronghua kicked him over and met his nervous gaze. He used the Seven-section Soul Extinguishing Hand, grabbed the bones in his body, and squeezed them roughly. He retracted his palm and stood at the side, watching.

It hurt!

It hurt like never before!

His soul felt like it was being pulled by a saw or boiled in a boiling pot of oil. In an instant, Wu Lizhi could not hold on anymore and fainted.

Zhang Ronghua woke him up and tortured him again.

This happened three times in a row. On the fourth time, he could not take it anymore and died of pain.

Zhang Ronghua said, "As expected."

He told them about how he had been preparing to commit suicide in the cell.

"You've done well."

"He smelled like an elk. Now that he's dead, I'm afraid this lead is gone."

"No!" The Crown Prince's gaze was cold.

"I've found clues. I've already ordered people to capture them. Soon, there will be news."

Looking at the two soul beads, Zhang Ronghua undid the seal and revealed the evil spirit and the Snake Girl.

Their wills were very weak, unlike Wu Lizhi, who was determined to die. As soon as they were released, they begged for mercy. "Your Highness, spare us! This has nothing to do with us. He ordered us to do this."

He obediently took out the voice-recording stone and explained this matter from beginning to end.

Before the envoys of the Nanman Kingdom arrived in the capital, they happened to meet them. They were happy to see them and had designs on them.

At first.

They wanted to devour them all, but the plan changed again. When they finished devouring the souls of Crown Prince Fengyi and Princess Fenghe, they were discovered by the Sect Master of the Heavenly Sound Sect, who was passing by. They wanted to silence her, but she was too strong and they did not have absolute confidence. They could only give up. The other party told them not to act rashly and wait until they reached the capital.

When they arrived in the capital, she came to him immediately and brought the evil spirit to a place where she saw Wu Lizhi and had this plan. They would frame the Crown Prince for the deaths of Crown Prince Fengyi and Princess Fenghe. After it was done, she promised to let them devour the souls of the criminals in the prison of the Ministry of Justice.

The Crown Princess gave him a look. Qing'er stepped forward and infused her internal strength into the voice-recording stone. The process of its cooperation with Wu Lizhi was displayed.

After reading it once, he put away the voice-recording stone.

Zhang Ronghua took out two more voice-recording stones and handed them over. One recorded the scene in the Qinghua Hall, and the other recorded the conversation between the prison guards.

At that time, he had hidden in the dark and recorded their conversation with the voice-recording stone before attacking.

"Send them on their way!"

"No..."

Under the terrified gazes of the evil spirit and Snake Girl, Qing'er attacked at lightning speed and killed them.

Zhang Ronghua asked, "How did Qinghua Hall deal with it?"

"I asked Feng Zhengyi to wait. Although he has objections, he can only endure it!"

He looked regretful.

“This opportunity is too good. The mastermind is too cautious to make things difficult in the court. Otherwise, the benefits will be greater.”

He pointed at the chair beside him and asked Zhang Ronghua to sit down.

Qing'er served tea and placed a steaming cup in front of him.

Holding a teacup with a lid over the tea, they waited together. As long as the people sent by the Crown Prince sent news, they could find the mastermind.

It was almost dawn.

A black-robed woman wearing a half-moon mask with a golden phoenix with its wings spread to the nine heavens embroidered on her chest walked in. “Greetings, Your Highness!”

“Any news?”

“The relevant personnel have been executed. This is a voice-recording stone. The lord asked me to tell you that her residence has been surrounded.”

After handing the thing to Qing'er, the woman retreated.

The Crown Prince introduced, “This is the Phoenix Guard. It’s not under my care. It belongs to my aunt.”

Qing'er input her internal strength into the voice-recording stone. The scene played. It was very short, only dozens of breaths. Finally, a name appeared—Madam Zhenlie!

Crack!

The Crown Prince crushed the teacup and stood up from his chair, looking shocked. He could not believe it. After a few breaths, his expression calmed, as if he was puzzled or asking himself, “Why is it her?”