

I. Dynasty 110

Chapter 110: Undercurrents

“Li San.”

Pang Yukun and Xiao Ming looked outside to see Li San entering.

During the previous incident, Wang Xuan had suffered greatly in prison. When the executions took place in the eastern market, Wang Xuan was replaced by a death row prisoner.

Since Wang Xuan had been disheveled and the focus of the execution was on Wang Chengchou, Wang Xuan hadn't drawn much attention. However, Wang Xuan's injuries were severe, and he was now recuperating at home.

For the time being, the secret guards were under Li San's command.

Li San approached and said, “Your Highness, I came precisely for this matter. You must not go to the Qin residence.”

“Why?” Li San's serious demeanor gave Xiao Ming an uneasy premonition.

“Following Your Highness’s orders, the secret guards have been monitoring the powerful families these past few days. We’ve discovered that many private soldiers from these families have entered Qingzhou City. Qin Chuanyun’s invitation to Your Highness was not his own idea but a request made by the visiting powerful families,” Li San explained.

Pang Yukun’s expression changed. “Aside from the four major families—Wang, Sun, Qin, and Wei—there are many smaller powerful families scattered across the six states. This decree affects their interests as well.”

“The sword has been drawn; it cannot be sheathed. Since they want to challenge me, I’ll show them what I’m capable of. Some people can be won over with virtue, while others can only be made to bleed with swords,” Xiao Ming said, slamming the table. “If they want to set a trap, we’ll turn the tables and wipe out these families in one fell swoop.”

Pang Yukun anxiously said, “Your Highness, you must not take such a risk. Any mishap now would only bring joy to our enemies and sorrow to our allies.”

“Your Highness, Minister Pang is right. You cannot take this risk,” Li San also urged.

“Nothing ventured, nothing gained. These powerful families are a cancer in my fiefdom. This is the perfect opportunity to eliminate those who refuse to obey. Otherwise, how can I justify removing them one by one in the future?”

Xiao Ming’s mind was made up. As long as these hidden threats remained, he would never sleep soundly.

“But how will Your Highness ensure your safety?” Pang Yukun, seeing Xiao Ming’s determination, could only strategize a way for him to escape unscathed.

Xiao Ming was no fool. These powerful families might threaten him during the banquet, demanding he revoke the decree or risk mutual destruction.

This was a game of chess between him and the powerful families. Whoever lost would be erased from Qingzhou's history.

"It's simple. Change the location of the banquet. Say that the Qin residence is too dull and suggest we all go outside the city for a spring outing, drinking, and enjoying the scenery," Xiao Ming said calmly.

Pang Yukun and Li San exchanged glances. "Your Highness truly thinks outside the box. This is a good idea. It will give us time to prepare."

"Exactly. We can also have secret guards blend in with the servants to protect Your Highness in secret," Li San added.

"In that case, let's proceed. These powerful families are so eager to coerce me that they won't pass up this opportunity. Outside the city, they'll think it's easier to act," Xiao Ming said.

With the plan set, Pang Yukun carefully considered the location for the outing and left the Governor's Office with Li San to make arrangements.

To be honest, Xiao Ming was also a bit worried. After all, he wasn't invincible like Nezha. But this was indeed the perfect opportunity to lure out the snakes.

After all, if he missed this chance, those with ulterior motives might go into hiding, making them even more dangerous in the future.

As Pang Yukun and Li San made their preparations, Xiao Ming thought about his own protection. He decided to wear a breastplate under his clothes.

The breastplate was custom-made for him by the Armaments Department and could be worn under his robes without being noticed. He would have preferred to wear full plate armor, but that would have been too obvious.

The news of the location change quickly reached the Qin residence. Qin Chuanyun smiled and said, "Gentlemen, His Highness seems to be in a good mood. He suggested we all go for a spring outing by the Xiaoqing River tomorrow. Since the banquet is off, why don't we enjoy the feast ourselves today?"

Over thirty representatives from various powerful families across the six states had gathered in the Qin residence, including the Sun and Wei families.

Hearing this news, many showed disappointment. Sun Yuanzhi then said, "Brother Qin, there's no need for that. Since His Highness isn't coming, we won't trouble you further. After all, you've suffered significant losses recently."

Qin Chuanyun's expression stiffened. He hadn't been dwelling on it, but Sun Yuanzhi's reminder brought back the pain of losing his land and fortress.

Sun Yuanzhi smiled faintly and added, "We'll take our leave now. Let's meet again another day."

"Another day," the group said, bowing to Qin Chuanyun before following Sun Yuanzhi out of the Qin residence.

Wei Hong approached Qin Chuanyun and said, "This Sun Yuanzhi is as arrogant as ever. Hmph, with the Wang family gone, I don't know what he has to be so proud of."

"Hmph, he's probably upset that we took the lead in complying with the decree. Hahaha..." Qin Chuanyun suddenly laughed.

Outside, Sun Yuanzhi and the group didn't go far before stopping in front of a residential house. After ensuring they weren't being followed, they entered the house.

"Master Sun, do you think the Prince of Qi suspects something? If so, we should flee. How can we stand against the Qingzhou army?" one person worried.

"Flee? Where would we go? Are you willing to abandon your mansions and lands?" another retorted.

"Then are we just waiting to die? What's more important, money or our lives?"

"..."

The room erupted into chaos.

“Enough!” Sun Yuanzhi suddenly shouted. “I, Sun Yuanzhi, have endured humiliation all this time to avenge Master Wang. When the Wang fortress was besieged, I didn’t send a single soldier or horse, all to lull the Prince of Qi into a false sense of security. Now you want to flee? Are you not ashamed before the spirit of the late Master Wang? Don’t forget, many of you are related to the Wang family by marriage.”

“You, Sun Yuanzhi, don’t use that to threaten us,” someone protested.

“Hmph, you can leave, but I, Sun Yuanzhi, will not stop. Let’s see if His Highness spares you then,” Sun Yuanzhi said, his eyes filled with madness.

The room fell silent. The plan to coerce or assassinate the Prince of Qi during the banquet had been Sun Yuanzhi’s idea. According to the plan, they would suddenly strike during the banquet, using the Prince of Qi’s life as leverage to force him to revoke the decree and become a puppet of the powerful families.