

## I. Dynasty 111

### Chapter 111: The Mole

“Since Master Sun has spoken, what should we do now that His Highness has changed the location? All our plans these past few days have been ruined.”

An elderly man wearing a square scarf asked.

“Master Hua is absolutely right. What should we do next? You need to explain,” someone else chimed in.

Sun Yuanzhi sneered, “The messenger from the Prince of Qi just said the outing will be by the Xiaoqing River, near the lotus pond. Every year, many people from Qingzhou City go there to enjoy the scenery. There’s also a small grove nearby. Tonight, we’ll hide our men there. When the Prince of Qi arrives tomorrow...”

“Hearing this, I think our chances are better outside the city. After all, we haven’t managed to sneak many of our private soldiers into the city these past few days,” another person said.

“Exactly. Outside the city, I can mobilize all of the Sun family’s private soldiers. Combined with the men you all send, we’ll have over a thousand men. By then, the Prince of Qi won’t be able to escape,” Sun Yuanzhi said with a cold laugh.

“But what if this is a trap set by the Prince of Qi?” someone else worried.

"I've already sent people to keep an eye on the Qingzhou military camp. If there's any unusual activity, we'll hold our ground. Are you all reassured now?" Sun Yuanzhi said.

The group nodded and dispersed. Outside the city, other powerful families were waiting for their news. With the change in plans, they needed to start over.

After Sun Yuanzhi and the others left, a shadowy figure emerged from behind the house. He glanced in the direction they had gone and then headed straight for the Governor's Office.

"Sun Yuanzhi!"

In the Prince of Qi's residence, Xiao Ming frowned deeply upon receiving this news.

"Your Highness, Sun Yuanzhi has always been good at biding his time. It seems he didn't act last time because he knew he wouldn't succeed. This time, he wants to catch Your Highness off guard," Pang Yukun said.

Both Pang Yukun and Li San had arrived at the Prince of Qi's residence.

"I thought he was scared. Now it seems old habits die hard," Xiao Ming sighed.

Pang Yukun said, "Your Highness, the Sun and Wang families have been allied through marriage for generations. This relationship makes the Sun family different from the other powerful families. Many of the families involved in this plot are also connected to the Wang family in some way."

“Minister Pang, Your Highness, let’s put these matters aside for now. We need to discuss how to handle tomorrow’s situation. The secret guards only have about thirty men. If the Sun family gets involved, things will get complicated,” Li San said worriedly.

Pang Yukun then looked at Xiao Ming. “But mobilizing the Qingzhou army will definitely alert them. I think these powerful families are keeping a close eye on the Qingzhou army right now.”

“Yes, this is indeed a problem,” Xiao Ming said, feeling a headache coming on.

Without the Qingzhou army, attending the banquet would be tantamount to walking into a death trap.

After pondering for a moment, Pang Yukun suddenly said, “Wait, I have an idea.”

“Please speak, Minister Pang,” Xiao Ming said.

Pang Yukun explained, “Your Highness, the Armaments Department is supposed to deliver a batch of newly forged equipment to the Qingzhou military camp today. Why don’t we use this as a diversion? We can have the slaves transporting the equipment enter the camp, and then have the Qingzhou soldiers disguise themselves as slaves and leave. This way, we can secretly move the soldiers out.”

Xiao Ming immediately understood. “You mean to have the equipment transported in by slaves, then have the Qingzhou soldiers disguised as slaves leave, thus covertly transferring the soldiers out?”

"Exactly. This way, we can bring out both the men and the equipment, since the equipment is all packed in crates," Pang Yukun said.

Li San clapped his hands. "Brilliant! But how many Qingzhou soldiers do we need to handle this?"

"We don't need too many. Five hundred should be enough," Xiao Ming said confidently.

The slaves transporting the equipment would make hundreds of trips back and forth, making this plan feasible.

After the three of them finalized the plan, Li San sent someone to the Armaments Department to make arrangements. That day, five hundred Qingzhou soldiers quietly entered the city from the military camp.

Lu Fei also arrived at the Prince of Qi's residence that evening.

"These scoundrels! This time, I'll definitely chop off their heads!" Lu Fei cursed loudly upon learning of the powerful families' plot.

Pang Yukun said, "Captain Lu, the safety of His Highness is in your hands. If anything happens to His Highness, we'll have to commit suicide to atone for our failure."

Lu Fei said solemnly, "I would give my life to protect His Highness. I've long despised these powerful families. If it weren't for their selfishness three years ago, delaying the deployment of troops, the Qingzhou army wouldn't have lost so many soldiers. Now that His Highness wants to cut off their heads, I won't hesitate."

Pang Yukun nodded.

The four of them discussed the steps for the next day before preparing to leave. Outside the hall, Li San paused and looked thoughtfully at a servant hurrying away.

However, he still followed Pang Yukun and the others out of the Prince of Qi's residence.

As night fell, the hustle and bustle of the day disappeared, replaced by silence. The vast city was quiet, with only the occasional bark of a dog or the call of the night watchman breaking the stillness.

The moon hung on the treetops, casting silvery light that left dappled patterns on the ground. Just as the entire city seemed to be asleep, a shadowy figure sneaked out of the small gate at the back of the Prince of Qi's residence.

Keeping close to the walls and hiding in the shadows, the figure quickly made his way toward the Sun family residence.

"Kui Zi, where are you going so late?"

Suddenly, a voice rang out in the dark night, and five men appeared, surrounding the shadowy figure.

The figure was startled but seemed to relax when he saw it was Li San. "Oh, it's you, Li San. I was just bored in the residence and came out for some fresh air. Where have you been all these days? The servants in the residence are all envious of you."

"Fresh air? Don't you know there's a curfew in Qingzhou City every night?" Li San said calmly.

"Come on, you're out too, aren't you?" Kui Zi's eyes darted around as the five men cornered him.

Li San sneered, "I came out to find the mole for His Highness. Heh, I didn't expect to beat Wang Xuan to it."

"What mole? Li San, you've got the wrong idea," Kui Zi explained.

"Hmph, no need to explain. Three hundred meters ahead is the Sun family residence. You've come quite a distance for some fresh air. Seize him!" Li San shouted.

The four men immediately pounced on Kui Zi, and Li San struck him with a club.

Kui Zi grunted and fell unconscious.

“Trying to report to Sun Yuanzhi? Not a chance,” Li San said. “Take this man to the secret guards’ prison. Luckily, I was alert, or His Highness’s plans for tomorrow would have been ruined.”

One of his subordinates said admiringly, “Commander Li, you’re amazing. How did you know he was the mole? We’ve been investigating for so long and found nothing.”

“To be honest, I never suspected him. He and I got along well in the residence, and I never considered him a suspect. It wasn’t until I noticed peach blossom petals stuck to his shoes that I became suspicious.”

“Ah, that’s right. The only peach blossoms in the residence are planted outside the main hall.”