

I. Dynasty 325

Chapter 325: The Pig-Teammate, Prince Yong

Birdsong echoed from the woods outside the plantation.

For a full hour, Xiao Ming explained the seed cultivation process to Kui Si and the others.

“Kui Si, did you understand everything His Highness said? You’ll be in charge of the seed cultivation. If anything goes wrong, you’ll be held responsible,” Pang Yukun warned him.

In Pang Yukun’s eyes, this was a matter of great importance—it was directly tied to whether the people would have food to eat in the future.

“Y-Yes, Chief S-Secretary... Kui... Kui Si understands,” Kui Si stuttered. He always stammered when he got nervous.

Xiao Ming smiled and turned to Pang Yukun. “You can’t just scare him. Failures must be punished, yes—but successes should be rewarded too. Kui Si, if you manage this seedling base properly, I’ll not only grant you freedom, I’ll even find you a wife.”

Kui Si’s eyes lit up immediately. He was already middle-aged and had never even touched a woman before. He stammered again, “T-Thank you, Y-Your Highness. Kui... Kui Si bows to you!”

Xiao Ming quickly stopped him. “No need for that now. Save your bow for your wedding.”

Kui Si grinned like a fool, while Pang Yukun shook his head and chuckled helplessly.

With the orders for seed cultivation delivered, Xiao Ming and Pang Yukun made their way back to Qingzhou.

Potatoes meant food. Food meant population. And population meant national strength. Pang Yukun now truly understood this and had become very focused on agriculture.

“Your Highness, the disaster in Jizhou will probably create a huge number of refugees. I was thinking of secretly guiding them into Qingzhou, but I worry our food won’t be enough. According to what you said, potatoes can be planted in the fall and harvested in just two months. Do you think we’ll be able to feed the refugees by then?” Pang Yukun asked.

“There’s no need to do it in secret. We can guide the refugees into Qingzhou openly. I’m offering disaster relief, helping to resolve the crisis in Jizhou—why sneak around?”

Pang Yukun nodded. “That’s a bold and clever move, Your Highness. I’ll send people to Jizhou to guide the refugees here. At the same time, I’ll write a memorial to the court to request merit on your behalf.”

“Now that’s more like it.” Xiao Ming smiled. He was starting to feel more and more like a cunning politician.

He had no choice. In this world, even farming required a few tricks up your sleeve.

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As the two chatted, they returned to the government office. Just as they arrived, someone came walking up to them. It was Wang Xuan.

“Your Highness, Chief Secretary Pang, I was just looking for you. We’ve received word from the grasslands—Beishan has learned of the unrest in Jizhou. He’s organizing troops and may launch an attack while Jizhou is in chaos.”

“That fast?” Pang Yukun was stunned. Both he and Xiao Ming had expected the barbarians to seize the opportunity, but they didn’t think Beishan would move this quickly.

He was clearly a dangerous opponent.

“Beishan is a skilled commander. Of course he wouldn’t let this opportunity slip. If he attacks Cangzhou, we at least have natural defenses. But if he strikes Jizhou, especially now with the power of artillery, Jizhou may not be able to hold,” Xiao Ming said, frowning deeply.

After a moment of thought, he said to Wang Xuan, “Keep watching the barbarians. The unrest in Jizhou isn’t too serious yet. But if it spreads and Prince Yong can’t contain it, that might be when the barbarians invade. Pang Yukun, we can’t wait—send people to Jizhou right away to guide the refugees here. Prevent them from joining the rebels. Also, submit a memorial to the court about it.”

Pang Yukun nodded and went into the office to begin drafting the report.

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Wang Xuan continued, “Your Highness, our covert agents have already entered Jizhou and are gathering intel. This uprising is different—it’s not led by common bandits, but by a scholar. The people of Jizhou now call him the Azure Dragon King. His real name is Qi Zhengyuan. He was a failed scholar. After the drought, his entire family starved to death. In a moment of fury, he led the villagers to attack the government office and open the grain stores. People rallied to his cause, and now he commands over a hundred thousand followers.”

“A man of courage,” Xiao Ming said quietly.

He didn’t feel a shred of sympathy for Prince Yong—he had brought this on himself. In fact, Xiao Ming didn’t like his fourth uncle at all.

To him, Prince Yong had always seemed like a brute. But according to stories, he was good at fighting. Back when Emperor Xiao Wenxuan suppressed the rebellion in Jizhou, it was Prince Yong who led the charge.

That’s why the emperor had later given Jizhou to him—both to keep the unrest under control and to guard against the barbarians.

Wang Xuan was briefly stunned. If this had been any other prince, Qi Zhengyuan would’ve been labeled a traitor immediately. But Xiao Ming’s response was completely different.

“Keep watching him. Report to me immediately if anything changes,” Xiao Ming ordered.

Wang Xuan nodded and quickly disappeared into the streets outside the office.

Xiao Ming hesitated for a moment. Maybe it was time to get in touch with his fourth uncle. After all, even a pig-teammate was still a teammate. If Prince Yong could handle disaster relief properly and pardon the Azure Dragon King, maybe the situation could still be salvaged.

So, back at the prince's manor, Xiao Ming wrote a letter to Prince Yong—half persuasion, half probe—to test his current thinking.

He sent someone to deliver the letter to Jizhou. Then, Xiao Ming got back to work writing the Soldier Training Manual—a complete guide for military training, from traditional forces to musket troops.

In the manual, he laid out clear training methods, including physical drills, loyalty exercises, hand-to-hand combat, bayonet practice, and other essential modern skills.

While he had covered some of this in the academy, many officers hadn't had a chance to study them directly. That's why he compiled it into a handbook—one copy for each officer—so they could train their units with scientific methods.

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Just as he was busy writing, Luluo came in hesitantly, handing him a leather case.

“Your Highness, this is the waterproof flintlock cover made by the textile workshop. What do you think?”

Xiao Ming paused. On the desk was a cylindrical leather sleeve, with small openings at certain points.

This was the waterproof leather case he had asked Luluo to make—for covering the firing mechanism of the flintlocks. That way, even in the rain, the guns could stay operational.

Of course, it would only work in light to moderate rain. In heavy downpours or storms, it wouldn’t be much help.

“Looks great. Nicely made. Have the textile workshop produce more of them for the Qingzhou army.”

Luluo smiled but didn’t leave. She added, “Your Highness, something amusing happened today. A student from Bowen Academy came to the textile workshop. He said he wanted us to sew a big cloth sack so he could fly into the sky. The guards kicked him out. But before he left, he said he was going to find you.”

“A big sack? Fly into the sky? What’s his name?”

“Lin Wentao.”