

I. Dynasty 389

Chapter 389: Trouble at the Eastern Palace

“Get through it safely?”

In the main hall, only Xiao Zhen and Xiao Ming were present. Hearing Xiao Zhen’s words, Xiao Ming furrowed his brow.

“That’s right. While you are in Chang’an, I will voluntarily confess the Dutch matter to Father. Father will surely be furious, and I hope you can say a good word for me then.”

Xiao Ming couldn’t help but laugh. “Third brother, true to yourself, you don’t wait for me to act—you want to confess first. Looks like you already guessed I would reveal this in court.”

At that moment, Xiao Ming finally understood Xiao Zhen’s purpose.

Since the Cao family moved part of their business to Qingzhou, Prince Chu probably knew the Cao’s had told Xiao Ming about the Dutch. So he discussed it with Xiao Zhen.

Now Xiao Zhen also learned someone wanted to assassinate Xiao Ming, so he staged the scene at the palace gate.

If Xiao Ming died, he would not worry about anything. If Xiao Ming survived, he could use this matter to bargain with him—to keep him from reporting it.

Otherwise, once Xiao Wenxuan knew, he would be very displeased with Prince Chu, even suspecting rebellion, and Chu's chance at the throne would be lost, along with his favor.

Xiao Zhen smiled bitterly. "Isn't it so? The Cao family has visited you many times and even supported your northern campaign. I don't believe Cao Zhengyang didn't tell you about the Dutch."

"No need for the Cao's. I know well. My fleet has met not only the Dutch but also the British," Xiao Ming said lightly.

Xiao Zhen looked at him in surprise again. He could not figure out Xiao Ming's real depth.

After a pause, Xiao Ming said, "Tell me what clues you know. I will speak for you before Father."

Receiving Xiao Ming's promise, Xiao Zhen sighed. "So far, only the Eastern Palace remains unsearched."

"The Crown Prince?" Xiao Ming's heart sank.

"I didn't say that. I only know the Crown Prince has a habit of pretending to be barbarian in the Eastern Palace for fun. So he likes to collect mixed-blood barbarians," Xiao Zhen said with a slight smile. "I only learned this secret recently."

Xiao Ming's eyes shifted. He stood up. There was no more clue from Xiao Zhen. Now he could only start with the Eastern Palace.

But the Crown Prince was heir apparent. This time Du Heng didn't dare lead a search there—no one dared without Xiao Wenxuan's order.

"In that case, I will go see Father now and ask to search the Eastern Palace," Xiao Ming said loudly.

Xiao Zhen also stood hurriedly. "I don't know about this. I hope you don't mention me to Father."

Xiao Ming nodded and ignored Xiao Zhen, leaving his mansion.

Watching Xiao Ming leave, Xiao Zhen smirked coldly. From the corner, Minister of Revenue Li Zhong appeared.

"Your Highness, this two-birds-one-stone trick is really clever," Li Zhong laughed.

"Uncle praises me too much. This is just a small trick. Now that Xiao Ming is favored by Father, if Father learns this was the Crown Prince's doing, he will definitely decide to remove the heir. Without removing the Crown Prince, it's hard to calm Xiao Ming."

Li Zhong laughed. "What's better is Xiao Ming can cover up the Dutch matter for us."

Xiao Zhen chuckled but then his expression changed. Suddenly he said, "But is this really the Crown Prince's doing? I feel this is not so simple."

"Whether the Crown Prince did it is no longer important. If assassins are found in the Eastern Palace, the Crown Prince's position will be lost," Li Zhong said.

Xiao Zhen slowly nodded.

Outside, Xiao Ming returned to the palace with his guards.

He wouldn't fully trust Xiao Zhen's words but believed he wouldn't joke about the Dutch matter. Now Xiao Zhen's words were the only clue.

At the palace, Xiao Ming went straight to the Imperial Study, where he met Du Heng.

"Ming'er, the Left and Right Guards searched all of Chang'an but found no trace of the assassins," Xiao Wenxuan said to Xiao Ming, troubled.

Du Heng glanced cautiously at Xiao Ming and carefully said, "Your Majesty, there is still one place not searched."

"What place?" Xiao Wenxuan rubbed his temples in pain. Because of the assassins, all his plans were disrupted.

"The Eastern Palace," Du Heng said cautiously.

Xiao Wenxuan suddenly opened his eyes wide. He looked at Du Heng and then Xiao Ming. After a long moment, he said slowly, "I will go with you to the Eastern Palace."

"Father, the Crown Prince is the future heir. This is very sensitive. Let it go. I believe Crown Prince brother wouldn't do such a thing," Xiao Ming said.

He did not expect Du Heng to bring up the matter first. This saved him from having to say it.

But on the surface, he still declined a little, since this was sensitive. He did not want to appear to covet the Crown Prince's position.

"The Crown Prince is my son. You are my son. Since you believe the Crown Prince is innocent, what harm in searching? Let's go," Xiao Wenxuan stood and led the way.

The Eastern Palace was next to the Imperial Palace. Once a prince was promoted to heir, he would move into the Eastern Palace.

From then on, the Eastern Palace was like a small court.

From a side hall of the palace, the group entered the Eastern Palace. Hearing Xiao Wenxuan arrived, the Crown Prince immediately came out.

But when he saw Xiao Ming, his face changed immediately.

News of the assassination attempt had already reached the Eastern Palace. He was a bit glad secretly.

But now Xiao Wenxuan, Du Heng, and Xiao Ming all came—this meant something different.

“Search!”

Xiao Wenxuan’s expression was cold. Even if it was not an assassination on the Emperor, attempting to kill a prince was enough to enrage him. This was a challenge to his royal power.

Du Heng responded and began searching the Eastern Palace in the Crown Prince’s shocked eyes.

“Father, this has nothing to do with me! Xiao Ming, are you framing me?” the Crown Prince shouted angrily.

Before Xiao Ming could speak, Xiao Wenxuan said, “This is my decision. The whole city of Chang’an was searched. Why not your Eastern Palace?”

The Crown Prince's mouth opened in surprise. Cold sweat appeared on his forehead. His eyes followed Du Heng searching around.

A father knows his son best. Xiao Wenxuan saw the Crown Prince's strange behavior and felt a chill in his heart.

At that moment, a soldier suddenly shouted, "He is a barbarian hybrid! Seize him!"

Following the shout, the sound of clashing weapons broke out.

Xiao Wenxuan's face changed greatly. He kicked the Crown Prince to the ground and cursed, "Scoundrel! So it really was you. You disappoint me greatly!"

The Crown Prince looked confused and said urgently, "Father, it's not what you think!"