

I. Dynasty 391

Chapter 391: Pressuring Prince Wei

“Dear nephew!”

Outside the royal mansion, Prince Wei seemed to have been waiting for a while. As soon as he saw Xiao Ming approaching, he rushed forward to greet him.

At that moment, Ziyuan and Lu Luo also came out from the mansion.

They both ran to Xiao Ming and checked him from head to toe. Only after seeing that he was safe did they finally let out a heavy sigh of relief. Last night, they had also heard about the assassination attempt and had been worried ever since.

“I’m fine. Don’t worry,” Xiao Ming said to them.

Then, he turned to Prince Wei. “What brings you here, Third Uncle?”

Prince Wei smiled with a flattering face, his big belly sticking out. He said, “Dear nephew, it’s not convenient to talk here. Why don’t you come with me to the Red Sleeve Pavilion in Chang’an for some tea?”

“That’s unnecessary. My wedding is coming up soon. I don’t want to cause any rumors,” Xiao Ming frowned. He couldn’t tell if Prince Wei was truly foolish or just pretending. At a time like this, he was still trying to invite him to such a notorious place?

Prince Wei suddenly seemed to realize something. He said, “Ah! Look at me forgetting. Right, right. In that case, nephew, please choose the place.”

“Let’s just talk inside the mansion,” Xiao Ming said as he walked into the courtyard.

Because of the recent assassination, he no longer trusted anyone — especially Prince Wei.

Back during the Jizhou war, Prince Wei had already sent weak troops like the Mountain Camp at such a crucial time. What else couldn’t he do?

Xiao Ming was still young and lived far away in Qingzhou. Compared to these power-hungry old players, he was still inexperienced. Whether it was the Third Prince, Prince Wei, or others — all of them set traps for him with every step he took.

‘I don’t want to die before I even start my journey.’ So now, he had to stay extra alert and avoid going to unfamiliar places. After his wedding, he planned to return to Qingzhou and ignore the mess in Chang’an.

If anyone dared come after him again, he would simply use guns and cannons to teach them a lesson.

Inside the mansion, Xiao Ming brought Prince Wei to the main hall. In the Great Yu Empire, every royal mansion had a similar layout, so this included a hall for political discussions.

“Dear nephew, I only came to ask you for a small favor,” Prince Wei said with a flattering smile.

Xiao Ming sneered. “You’re here because of the Mountain Camp, aren’t you? I really should talk to the Emperor about this, let him see your true face, and how you ‘cooperated’ with me during the battle.”

As he spoke, Xiao Ming suddenly slammed the teacup down on the table, causing tea to splash everywhere.

With such a forceful presence, Xiao Ming made Prince Wei’s face turn ugly. Prince Wei held a high position — in the entire Great Yu Empire, who didn’t treat him with respect? Yet here he was, being humiliated by a junior.

He felt furious inside, but he knew that if Xiao Ming brought this up to the Emperor, it could truly cause trouble.

Over the years, he had come to understand his older brother the Emperor very well. Though he seemed like a careless and useless ruler, he actually kept a clear mind on everything.

Prince Wei knew the Emperor no longer trusted him. He was only pretending to favor him because there were still threats from the northern tribes and other powerful regional princes.

In the past, Prince Wei was critical for the Empire.

But now, everything had changed. Xiao Ming had risen quickly, even defeating the northern tribes and taking back Shanhai Pass. His importance in the Emperor’s eyes far exceeded that of Prince Wei now.

After all, Xiao Ming now held the safety of the northern border.

That's exactly why Prince Wei had sent a useless troop during the Jizhou battle — to drag Xiao Ming down and hopefully weaken him. If Xiao Ming lost power, Prince Wei could remain safe.

But once again, his plan had failed.

"Dear nephew, I admit I made a mistake this time. I truly didn't expect the Mountain Camp to be so useless. After all, they were once my elite force," Prince Wei said with a look of regret.

"Elite force?" Xiao Ming got angrier. 'Does he think I'm a fool?' "That Mountain Camp is the worst in your whole region. Do you really think I know nothing?"

Prince Wei kept defending himself. "Dear nephew, they are my troops. I know their strength best. Maybe you just misunderstood."

Seeing his shameless attitude, Xiao Ming said coldly, "You'd better leave, Third Uncle. Let's just talk about this in court. I trust the Emperor and ministers will see things clearly."

Instead of being angry, Prince Wei kept smiling and said, "Dear nephew, as long as you don't mention it, who would ever know the Mountain Camp is full of old and weak soldiers? Don't be angry. I'm here to negotiate."

“Then let’s get to the point. I don’t have time to waste arguing with you.”

Xiao Ming was already furious with Prince Wei’s past behavior. Since this was a negotiation, there was no need to be polite. If he didn’t embarrass Prince Wei, he wouldn’t get any real benefits.

Prince Wei sighed. “Why don’t you just say what you want? I admit defeat. We’re both royal lords. We all fight for our own land and power. The Great Yu Empire belongs to your father now, and will belong to the Crown Prince in the future. Right now, I’m you in the future — why should we fight to the death?”

“Finally, some honesty.” Xiao Ming smiled. “In the end, we’re all just protecting our own turf. Since that’s the case, I won’t be polite. I can make this whole Mountain Camp thing as big or as small as I want. If I make the Emperor dislike you, it doesn’t bring me much benefit. Even though your actions were hateful, if we start stabbing each other, it only makes others laugh at us.”

Prince Wei gave him a thumbs-up. “Nephew, you see things clearly. I was foolish last time. I’m willing to offer compensation.”

Originally, Xiao Ming had planned to expose Prince Wei in court, but the recent assassination changed his mind.

Even if the Crown Prince wasn’t behind it, other royal princes surely were. There were also signs of involvement from other powerful regional lords. To Xiao Ming, Prince Wei was now just a fat pig under his watch.

He could take advantage of him, but there was no need to slaughter him. It was better to let Prince Wei support his cause for now.

So Xiao Ming smiled and said, "It's very simple. If you want to make up for it, just agree that the Qingzhou Chamber of Commerce can sell goods in your region without paying any taxes. Also, local officials must not interfere in their trade or arrest any Qingzhou merchants for any reason."