

I. Dynasty 77

Chapter 77: The Secret Letter

“Your Highness is a wise man.”

Zhou Ziyu glared at Lu Fei with resentment.

Xiao Ming nodded and said to Lu Fei, “Let’s go. There’s no need to continue this trial.”

Zhou Ziyu sneered at Xiao Ming, “Farewell, Your Highness.” Then he turned to Lu Fei and said, “Captain Lu, the mountains and rivers remain unchanged. We will meet again someday.”

“Perhaps you won’t have that chance,” Xiao Ming suddenly turned to Lu Fei and declared, “The criminal Zhou Ziyu is guilty of smuggling warhorses and colluding with barbarians. His crimes are heinous and unforgivable. He is sentenced to immediate execution!”

“Prince Qi, how dare you!” Zhou Ziyu panicked.

Xiao Ming slowly turned around, “Do you think I am more important to Prince Wei, or are you?”

“You...” The cell door was opened by Lu Fei, and Zhou Ziyu’s eyes filled with terror.

He had assumed that Prince Qi would not dare to offend Prince Wei, which is why he had been so confident.

After all, Prince Wei's fief was only three hundred miles away from Qingzhou. If Prince Wei were to become enraged and send troops, Prince Qi would surely suffer.

Skirmishes between the borders of feudal lords' territories were not uncommon.

But he never expected that Xiao Ming would act so unpredictably.

No matter what he thought now, it was too late. A flash of the blade, and the last thing he saw was the ground rolling away.

Lu Fei sheathed his sword and clasped his hands, "Thank you, Your Highness."

"No need. You are my subordinate. If I allow others to humiliate you in front of me, where would my dignity be? However, my father is becoming more and more confused. Everyone knows that Prince Wei is the wealthiest in the land. Now, with the emperor allowing him to recruit soldiers and buy horses, if he remains loyal, all is well. But if he becomes a wolf, I will be the one to suffer."

"Your Highness speaks wisely, but perhaps the emperor is using Prince Wei to keep the other feudal lords in check," Lu Fei said.

Mentioning this made Xiao Ming even more furious. In Xiao Wenxuan's eyes, it seemed that as long as someone from the Xiao family was on the throne, it didn't matter who it was, as long as it wasn't a king of a different surname.

“Forget it. I don’t expect much support from my father. In his eyes, it would take me over twenty years to surpass Prince Wei,” Xiao Ming said as he walked out of the prison.

Lu Fei followed and asked, “But now that Zhou Ziyu has been killed, how will Your Highness explain this to Prince Wei?”

The disdain in Zhou Ziyu’s eyes had touched a nerve in Xiao Ming. Since arriving here, he, the Prince of Qi, had never been respected by the nobles of the Great Yu Empire.

He couldn’t control how others viewed him, but he refused to bow to Prince Wei as Zhou Ziyu had expected. That’s why he had killed Zhou Ziyu.

He wanted Prince Wei to understand that he was not a lump of clay to be molded as he pleased.

“Explain? I have nothing to explain. I merely executed a smuggler who was trafficking warhorses in Cangzhou,” Xiao Ming said.

Lu Fei understood that Xiao Ming was planning to play dumb.

Before they could walk far, the prison warden ran up to Xiao Ming and said, “Your Highness, we found this in Zhou Ziyu’s undergarments.”

“Undergarments?” Xiao Ming frowned. Undergarments were equivalent to modern-day underwear. It was disgusting that Zhou Ziyu had hidden a letter there.

Disgusted, he tore open the envelope and read it. After a quick glance, his expression changed.

“What is it, Your Highness?” Lu Fei asked.

Xiao Ming handed him the letter. After reading it, Lu Fei’s face also turned pale...

Five days later, a massive fleet docked at the Tuo River port.

The warships were connected by chains, their banners fluttering endlessly. The word “Wei” was prominently displayed on the flags.

As the fleet stopped, five thousand soldiers in shining scale armor disembarked, escorting a luxurious purple and gold-edged sedan chair toward Qingzhou City.

Inside the sedan chair lay the obese and bulky Prince Wei, dressed in a green brocade robe.

As the third brother of Emperor Xiao Wenxuan of the Great Yu Empire, he had sided with Xiao Wenxuan during the struggle for the throne. As a reward, after ascending the throne, Xiao Wenxuan had generously compensated him.

In just twenty years, Prince Wei's fief had become one of the wealthiest in the Great Yu Empire.

Lying in the sedan chair, Prince Wei gazed at Qingzhou City through the curtain's gap.

The purpose of his visit was naturally to address the matter of his merchant, Zhou Ziyu. Since Emperor Xiao Wenxuan had tacitly approved his smuggling of warhorses, Zhou Ziyu had been in charge of the operation.

In his secret discussions with Xiao Wenxuan, this matter had been strictly confidential to avoid alerting the other feudal lords.

But he never expected that Zhou Ziyu would be captured by his nephew, Xiao Ming, at this time.

Originally, he didn't need to come to Qingzhou in person; a letter would have sufficed. However, Zhou Ziyu had been carrying an important letter. If Xiao Ming had seen it, there would be real trouble.

Thinking of this, he lost all interest in the scenery and became deeply worried.

“By order of Prince Qi, only Prince Wei and his personal guards are allowed to enter the city. All others are forbidden!”

At the city gate, the Qingzhou guards were on high alert. Facing Prince Wei and his five thousand soldiers, they remained stern. On the city wall, Lu Fei’s sharp eyes were fixed on the fierce generals beside the sedan chair.

“How dare you! This is Prince Wei’s carriage. Who dares to stop us?” From Prince Wei’s entourage, a burly general with a red cape and dual hammers rode forward.

Lu Fei shouted, “By Prince Qi’s military order, who dares to disobey!”

The general was furious and was about to charge toward the gate when Prince Wei’s voice came from the sedan chair, “Cao Yu, do not be rude. When visiting another feudal lord’s territory, it is customary not to bring troops into the city. Bring four personal guards and follow me into the city.”

“Yes!” Cao Yu glared at Lu Fei on the city wall, selected four guards, and followed the sedan chair into Qingzhou City.

Once inside the city, Cao Yu said to Prince Wei, “Your Highness, Prince Qi is truly disrespectful. Not only are you his elder, but even as a guest, he should have come out to greet you.”

Prince Wei smiled bitterly. It seemed that Xiao Ming had seen the secret letter, which was why he was giving him this cold reception. Xiao Ming now held leverage over him.

Arriving at the Prince Qi's residence, Prince Wei, assisted by maids, stepped out of the sedan chair and walked heavily toward the mansion.

There, he saw Xiao Ming and the old steward of the Prince Qi's residence, Qian Dafu, standing at the entrance.

"Uncle, you've come a long way. My apologies for not greeting you sooner," Xiao Ming said with a smile as he stepped forward.

Prince Wei had brought five thousand soldiers with him, clearly intending to show off his strength.

If Xiao Ming had rushed to the city gate to welcome him, it would have been too humiliating. How would the people of his fief view him? He didn't want to tarnish the glorious image he had built.

Moreover, now that he had leverage over Prince Wei, he was confident that Prince Wei would not make a fuss over such trivial matters.