

My System Is Three Thousand Years Early

Chapter 2 - Chapter 2 Entering the Imperial Palace **Chapter 2: Chapter 2 Entering the Imperial Palace**

"Sister Qing Luan, have you ever heard of Wu Ling?"

Cheng Guang asked again.

Qing Luan was surprised that Cheng Guang could ask so much all at once, and didn't know where he had heard this name from. After thinking carefully, she said,

"Wu Ling, it seems to be the name of The Thirteenth Princess. She had been wandering outside for years and was only brought back to the palace by the Emperor Zhou a year ago. She holds a much weaker position than the other princes and princesses and isn't given much attention."

2

After finishing, Qing Luan looked at Cheng Guang, "Compared to the princess of Great Zhou whom you can't meet for now, it'd be better for you to remember some friends of the Princely Heir first."

Cheng Guang absentmindedly nodded in agreement.

However, his mind was preoccupied with thoughts about his mission. The Thirteenth Princess Wu Ling, the future Empress of Great Zhou, didn't seem to be in a good situation right now...

Not given much attention and yet able to become the Empress of Great Zhou in the future, Wu Ling must be extraordinary. Both her methods and strength are probably far superior to my own.

Now that he knew Wu Ling's status and situation weren't that good, Cheng Guang felt his mission seemed to have a direction.

But after careful thought, he realized there were still many difficulties.

Putting the other things aside for a moment,

Wu Ling, after all, is a royal princess, who has been living deep within Great Zhou's imperial harem. Even though he was currently impersonating the noble Princely Heir from Duke Zhen's Mansion, he had no way to enter the imperial harem privately and make contact with Wu Ling.

2

What should he do?

Cheng Guang frowned in worry, feeling like he had no initiative in the progress of his mission.

At this moment, the steward's voice suddenly came from outside the courtyard.

"Princely Heir, the lady has returned and wants to see you."

Hearing Steward Wang's voice, Qing Luan grew tense and quickly turned to look outside the courtyard, "The lady has returned?"

The lady of Duke Zhen's Mansion was the sister of Emperor Zhou Wu Shang, who had just recently left the capital city with the Princely Heir's father, Director Cheng Zhihai of the Bureau of the Lamp, to deal with some business.

The Bureau of the Lamp is a department in Great Zhou, similar to the Jinyiwei, that supervises officials and handles various spy and intelligence work.

2

They have to deal with dangers not only from within Great Zhou but also from external threats.

It is said that members of the Bureau of the Lamp are spread not only throughout the Four Directions Mortal World but also throughout the Eight-layered Devil Realm and the Ten-Layered Demon Sea.

Cheng Zhihai's status in Great Zhou is also exceedingly high.

Occasional work trips where Cheng Zhihai would take Mrs. Wu with him served both work and as a honeymoon.

And during this period was exactly when the Princely Heir secretly went out, leaving all matters for Cheng Guang, the stand-in, to handle.

Qing Luan's facial expression slightly stiffened, her face becoming a few shades paler.

"Why has the lady returned so early? She could discover you're not the Princely Heir."

2

Cheng Guang turned to look at Qing Luan, "What should we do, Sister Qing Luan? Should I just hide away?"

Qing Luan shook her head, immediately rejecting this suggestion, "No, no, Steward Wang doesn't know about you being a stand-in. If you hide away now, it would make things irreparable."

1

Having said that, Qing Luan grabbed Cheng Guang and pushed him toward the exit.

"We'll just have to take it one step at a time. You look extremely similar to the Princely Heir; even I can hardly tell the difference at times. As long as the lady doesn't probe your body with her thoughts, you should be able to fool her."

"If this gets exposed and the Princely Heir is brought back prematurely, he will definitely fly into a rage. The outcome for both you and me won't be pretty."

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Cheng Guang, who weighed around 130 or 140 pounds, was like a chick in Qing Luan's hands, light and easy to manipulate.

2

And so, Cheng Guang was pushed out by Qing Luan through the courtyard gate.

The steward waited outside and draped a brocade robe over Cheng Guang's shoulders.

"Princely Heir, the weather is cooler today, and the wind is a bit strong. Take good care of your health."

Steward Wang spoke, alerting Cheng Guang of the change in weather.

"The weather has changed?"

Feeling gusts of cold wind, there was indeed a chill. It was February, and contrary to what should be, the capital city shouldn't be this cold; it was quite odd, but Cheng Guang didn't think much of it.

1

Looking up at the sky, it was a bit gray and the clouds hung very low, which seemed to confirm one thing.

There would be rain today.

Qing Luan released her hand from Cheng Guang's back and, as usual, followed the steward toward the great hall where the lady resided.

The closer they got to where the lady was, the more Qing Luan felt her heart rise.

The matter of the stand-in had always been unknown to the lady; please, let it not be exposed...

3

Qing Luan grew increasingly nervous, while Cheng Guang, on the other hand, began to relax more and more.

Cheng Guang felt carefree, or one could say he just didn't care and felt no pressure at all.

2

As he and Steward Wang walked for a while without yet reaching the great hall, a Jade Carriage drawn by an exotic beast walking on currents of air slowly approached.

Soon, a familiar voice was heard.

"Princely Heir, please get in."

The voice was pleasant to the ear, and Cheng Guang's memory told him that this was the personal maiden of the Princely Heir's mother.

"Mrs. Xue, what is this about?"

Qing Luan's voice rang out, filled with confusion.

"The lady is in the carriage; she will take the Princely Heir to the Imperial Palace."

3

The voice sounded again, leaving Qing Luan without any option but to look at Cheng Guang with an expression conveying helplessness and "each person for themselves."

Cheng Guang hesitated no further and stepped forward.

"Guanger, come here."

Just then, the Jade Carriage was pulled open, revealing the countenance of a beautiful matron looking at Cheng Guang with a warm smile. She beckoned for Cheng Guang to come over.

This was Mrs. Wu, the mother of the Princely Heir.

"Alright."

Cheng Guang promptly got into the Jade Carriage.

The memories of his former life told him that Mrs. Wu was arguably the person in Duke Zhen's Mansion who doted on the Princely Heir the most. Although his previous self rarely interacted with the Princely Heir's mother, it was not difficult to see from the various details provided by the Princely Heir that Mrs. Wu was an affectionate mother.

2

"My role as the Princely Heir is nothing more than a job forced upon me, I suppose that even if Mrs. Wu discovers I'm an imposter, she will love me all the same and not blame me," Cheng Guang thought to himself without reason.

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As he stepped into the Jade Carriage, a faint and elegant fragrance assailed his senses. Inside the carriage, two maidens knelt to the left and right, and Mrs. Wu, the Princely Heir's mother, sat in the seat of honor with numerous pastries and fruits arrayed before her, looking at Cheng Guang with eyes full of concern.

"Guanger, I haven't seen you for a few days, how have you grown thinner? Did your father force you to practice martial arts before he left?"

5

Cheng Guang knew that the Princely Heir had suffered an assassination attempt in his youth, which damaged his vitality, making it difficult for him to achieve much in this life. Hence, no matter how hard he trained, he could not break through to the third realm of martial cultivation, the Purple Mansion.

5

Disheartened, the Princely Heir ceased his practice, but Director Cheng Zhihai of the Bureau of the Lamp, the Princely Heir's father, didn't think so. Even if his body was temporarily ruined, the future still held possibilities for recovery.

5

He insisted that Cheng Guang should not slacken his efforts and should practice every day.

"Ah, don't overthink it. Your father seems to have found some leads on the medicine to repair the body's vitality. It's not too late to resume training when he finds it. For now, just focus on maintaining your health, no need to rush."

Mrs. Wu adjusted Cheng Guang's forehead with her hand, then proceeded to reveal the purpose of her visit today.

4

"Today the emperor is hosting a family banquet. We'll go there to pay our respects and meet your aunt and great-grandmother. After we've eaten, we'll return."

Cheng Guang realized that it was because the emperor was hosting a family banquet that the Princely Heir's mother had returned earlier.

2

At the same time, Cheng Guang also let out a sigh of relief. Perhaps due to how strikingly similar he looked, Mrs. Wu had not used her Primordial Spirit to probe Cheng Guang's body, and hadn't discovered that he was a fake at the moment.

6

At the end, Mrs. Wu glanced at the maiden beside her, who promptly set the carriage in motion, not daring to delay.

The exotic beast trod on the breeze, surrounded by golden rays, and soon vanished into the sky.

Inside the Jade Carriage, Cheng Guang sat very properly on Mrs. Wu's left side, appearing particularly restrained.

"Guanger, have some fruit."

Mrs. Wu's voice was gentle, as she passed a Blood Vermilion Fruit to Cheng Guang, and with her handkerchief, thoughtfully wrapped it up and held it to Cheng Guang's mouth.

3

"I understand, mother. I can do it myself."

Cheng Guang responded, then began to eat it bite by bite.

The Blood Vermilion Fruit was incredibly precious; a single one of these fruits could enhance the strength of a low-level martial cultivator.

Even if Cheng Guang did not practice cultivation, eating the Blood Vermilion Fruit would improve his health and had the effect of prolonging life.

4

This privilege was something he only enjoyed as a substitute Princely Heir. In his ordinary status as a servant, under normal circumstances, he wouldn't even qualify to catch a whiff of the fruit's scent.

As Cheng Guang ate the fruit, he mulled over his thoughts.

Mrs. Wu seemed not to have noticed anything amiss and was feeding him fruit caringly, which seemed abnormal yet normal at the same time.

1

After all, although Mrs. Wu was the person who loved the Princely Heir the most, she did not spend every day with him and did not know him as well as Qing Luan did.

2

So, if there were one or two differences for a while, she would not think otherwise; she might instead worry that Cheng Guang had become thin from hunger or had caught a cold.

Mrs. Wu's barrier had passed.

Upon reaching the Imperial Palace, Cheng Guang planned to seize the opportunity to search for Empress Wu Ling, mentioned in the task prompt.

If he could find her, he could also assess whether the task set by the system was something he could accomplish.

1

If he could complete it, he would take advantage of the future Empress Wu Ling before she grew into her power.

2

If he could not complete it, then he would decisively abandon the task. What was the point in being obstinate with this sickly system?

1

"Guanger, once we arrive at the Imperial Palace, you must speak sweetly and behave well."

"If you can endear yourself to your great-grandmother, that would make things easier. And also pay more attention to your aunt; be sensible in your speech and remember not to behave rashly," Mrs. Wu advised patiently.

"Yes, mother," Cheng Guang obediently nodded, while his gaze involuntarily scanned the maidens in the Jade Carriage.

He couldn't help but take a few extra glances at the attractive ones, yet Cheng Guang knew his place and averted his eyes swiftly after a brief look.

Each of these maidens had exceptional looks and figures, although they were not quite on par with Qing Luan, they were definitely superb choices.

It was a pity that none of them truly belonged to him.

9

I am just a minor, utterly ordinary substitute.

Noticing Cheng Guang's gaze, Mrs. Wu seemed to think of something.

"Guanger, during this visit to the palace, if you run into Qinhua and Changyang, you really mustn't get too close to them. Those girls keep an eye on you every day, and it would be troublesome if they ended up liking you," Mrs. Wu said.

1

Cheng Guang was startled, unexpected Mrs. Wu to suddenly say this.

"Guanger, although Qinhua and Changyang are pretty, they are princesses after all. If you were to marry one of them, even though we belong to Duke Zhen's Mansion, you could only take one wife and wouldn't be able to take concubines later on, just like your father," Mrs. Wu continued.

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"Besides, who knows, relying on the favor of the new Emperor, they could suppress you. Life would be even harder than your father's."

"Moreover, I hope that you will marry several wives and produce many children for our family. Our Duke's Mansion, for three generations, has only a single line of descent—when I think about it, it really is..."

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Mrs. Wu affectionately and earnestly stroked Cheng Guang's head as she spoke to him.

However, Cheng Guang was utterly dumbfounded.

Goodness, what you are talking about now, isn't that exactly the predicament of Cheng Zhihai, the Princely Heir's father?

It seems people truly have double standards; one for their husband and another for their son.

You even hope that I will marry more women and extend the family line...

Is this something a substitute Princely Heir should be listening to?

1

Cheng Guang felt sincere envy for the real Princely Heir.

He wondered where the real Princely Heir was at this moment, possibly enjoying leisurely travels.

5

Cheng Guang had mixed feelings.

About a quarter of an hour later.

They arrived at the destination.

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