

My System 201

Chapter 201: Discussing the Extent of Harm a Forced Situation Can Cause

Cheng Guang left the Queen of South Ming and headed straight back to Duke Zhen's Mansion.

As soon as he entered the Million Specie Garden, he saw the eaves of the black tile and azure stone house, pure and unblemished.

Perhaps it was because it was still early morning, the air was still cold and crisp, but impeccably clean, and the only scent one could smell was the faint fragrance of the red plum blossoms scattered throughout the courtyard.

Qing Luan had already risen, standing beside the courtyard pavilion, one hand coiling her black hair, her face as delicate as jade turned to the side, facing the pavilion, washing up listlessly.

The moment Cheng Guang stepped into the courtyard, Qing Luan seemed to sense something and turned her head to look at Cheng Guang.

"Princely Heir, you're back."

Cheng Guang nodded slightly.

Qing Luan hurriedly put down the brocade handkerchief in her hand, flicked off the water droplets on her jade-like hands, and hurried to prepare breakfast for Cheng Guang.

Confusion still lingered in her beautiful eyes.

"Princely Heir, what were you doing at the Queen of South Ming's place so early in the morning? The Princess should not have awakened yet, should she?"

Cheng Guang sat down at the stone table, poured himself a cup of clear tea, and watched the hot tea water churn in the cup, the aroma of the tea leaves stirred a sense of tranquility in his heart.

"It's not that she hasn't woken up, she simply didn't sleep at all last night."

When Cheng Guang's words fell, Qing Luan became even more puzzled.

She wondered how their Princely Heir knew the Princess hadn't slept at all last night.

A guess?

Qing Luan's lips puffed up, somewhat annoyed that her Princely Heir always liked to speak enigmatically.

Her slightly valiant and pretty face now carried a touch of sprightliness, making her seem rather endearingly naive.

Cheng Guang chuckled but did not explain. After simply drinking some tea and eating some precious pastries, he did not go through his usual morning practice. Instead, he went straight to his bedroom.

When one was about to receive a system reward, the usual cultivation could wait.

Receiving a system task reward, in Cheng Guang's view, oddly felt like receiving a delivery from his previous life—a moment of unwrapping that was always thrilling.

Cheng Guang entered the bedroom, tightly closed the doors and windows, and instructed Qing Luan not to let anyone come in to disturb him. Then he sat on the bed and spoke to the system in his mind.

"Claim reward!"

As the sound of Cheng Guang's words fell, the air around seemed to grow heavy and oppressive.

The desolate aura seemed to spread from the void, and dense, dark light drilled out of nowhere, entwining around the entire room.

Suddenly, a flash of lightning-like luster pierced the darkness, illuminating the room filled with desolate breath and cloaked in utter blackness.

The blinding light made Cheng Guang close his eyes involuntarily; after a while, when he felt the light in front of him gradually weakening, Cheng Guang slowly opened his eyes.

Upon opening his eyes, what he first saw was a simple and honest-looking black dog that seemed doltish.

The black dog's face bore an almost human-like expression of confusion and bewilderment, seemingly at a loss as to why it suddenly appeared here.

Cheng Guang eyed the black dog in front of him and noticed that the moment the dog appeared in the room, an inexplicable connection had formed between him and it.

It was as if he could control the black dog's life and every move.

Cheng Guang stroked his chin, looking at the foolish black dog in front of him, somewhat puzzled by what exactly the system reward had given him.

A hellish Chinese Pastoral Dog?

From hell?

Or is it a breed of hellish Chinese Pastoral Dog?

Cheng Guang didn't understand.

"Lie down."

With a thought, Cheng Guang spoke to the black dog.

The moment the black dog heard Cheng Guang's words, without needing any further instructions, it promptly lay down on the ground, and Cheng Guang was amazed to find that with his current level of cultivation, he couldn't even see the black dog's movements clearly.

Looking at the black dog again, though it appeared doltish and seemingly still not fully awake, the muscles on its body were incredibly strong, its teeth sharp and pointed, no less remarkable than some swords; its fur was like black leather, smooth, and hard.

"Hiss, this silly dog is quite interesting," Cheng Guang mused, approaching the black dog and rubbing its head, smiling, "Since you're with me now, I at least have to give you a name."

"How about this, let's name you Black Cub."

In both his past and present lives, Cheng Guang liked to name pets based on their fur color, for it was straightforward and clear.

Black Cub wasn't very large, slightly resembling a Chinese Pastoral Dog and even standing up, it reached only up to Cheng Guang's waist.

Because of its compact size and muscles, the overall appearance of the dog seemed somewhat doltish.

"Black Cub, let's go, bro is going to take you out for some sunlight."

Cheng Guang stood up. After all, Black Cub was a reward from the system, and even if it looked endearingly naive like a silly dog, its strength was not to be underestimated.

Such a dog seemed to have an extraordinary lineage as well.

Cheng Guang, pondering, picked up Black Cub and walked outside.

The moment Cheng Guang lifted Black Cub's body, it tensed up, its whole body as if it got startled, stretching its legs straight.

Its eyes were wide open as if it hardly dared to breathe.

He pushed open the bedroom door.

Qing Luan's gaze shifted to Cheng Guang, about to ask something, but then her eyes moved down to the bewildered black dog in Cheng Guang's arms.

Surprise registered on her face.

"Princely Heir, where did this dog come from?"

Cheng Guang lifted the Black Cub in his hand and said with a smile, "Don't worry about that. From now on, have the mansion prepare some food for this silly dog occasionally, so it doesn't starve to death."

Chapter 202: Discussing the Extent of Harm a Forced Situation Can Cause _2

Qing Luan pursed her red lips slightly and nodded gently, her beautiful eyes, however, remained fixed on Black Cub, seemingly finding the silly little dog quite adorable.

Seeing Qing Luan showing interest in Black Cub, Cheng Guang handed Black Cub over to her to play with the silly dog that had seemed zoned out since the beginning.

The silly dog might have some strength, but apparently wasn't too bright.

Indeed, there were no good rewards for siding with the King of South Ming.

Even though Black Cub didn't seem simple, he was just too silly.

As a toy to relieve boredom, he was quite good.

After watching Qing Luan play with Black Cub for a while, Cheng Guang turned his attention back to the system tasks.

After completing the task of siding with the King of South Ming, the task to slay the King of South Ming should have automatically disappeared, so he hadn't paid it much mind.

At first, he felt a bit regretful.

He thought, if he could complete both tasks, he would be able to fleece the system twice.

Cheng Guang quickly shifted his thoughts and soon there was a new task anyway. Not fleecing the system didn't matter, so he didn't dwell on it.

But just now, he looked at the system's tasks again and suddenly realized that the task to slay the King of South Ming had not disappeared.

Instead, it had merely become much dimmer.

This made Cheng Guang feel somewhat amused.

Was it another system bug that completed half the task?

If the task was completed halfway, would a new task be issued?

Or would he have to wait a while longer for this task to be canceled automatically?

Stroking his chin, Cheng Guang thought there was no hurry since he would know the answer by midnight tonight, so he walked into the courtyard.

He began to cultivate!

Over the past few days, Cheng Guang never slackened in his efforts to enhance his cultivation. Although he was somewhat preoccupied with the matter of the King of South Ming, his cultivation progress was not slow at all.

Not only had his Spirit Dao cultivation broken through to the third-grade Yang God Realm, but Cheng Guang also had a premonition that he might be able to break through to the third-grade Purple Mansion Realm today.

He was just one step away.

Beyond that.

He had mastered the entire Divine Python Coiling Skill recently, achieving perfection.

Most martial artists only needed to practice the first twenty-seven forms of the Thirty-Eight-Form Divine Python Coiling Skill. With regular practice, they could strengthen their bones and generate Qi and Blood, ensuring sufficient Qi and Blood until they reached the Divine Power Realm.

However, Cheng Guang managed to proficiently master all thirty-eight forms of the Divine Python Coiling Skill in a short period, quickening the pace of bone casting and sinew refining, as well as Qi generation and blood invigoration, achieving twice the result with half the effort.

In the Million Specie Garden, Cheng Guang moved with expansive gestures, each action extremely complicated and difficult, yet they seemed effortless when performed by him.

Every muscle, every sinew, every bone in his body was being refined continuously in the process of practicing martial arts, generating pure strength.

As his muscles and bones trembled, his body seemed to have turned into steel, enduring a relentless tempering.

At the same time, the God Emperor Cultivation Method was operating with every breath he took, and the visualizations of Divine Powers in his mind were also enhancing the cultivation of his Primordial Spirit.

Heavenly and Earthly Qi swept into his body and Primordial Spirit like floods.

During his martial practice, any slight internal injuries he accrued were gradually healed by the Bloodline Divine Powers he had obtained from the real Princely Heir, under the effect of the Everlasting Divine Power.

It was equivalent to pain-free cultivation.

Dark injuries, which ordinary martial artists dreaded, simply did not exist for Cheng Guang.

He had access to excellent Spirit Food and restoratives to nourish his Qi and strengthen his vigor, and with the Everlasting Divine Power, not even a trace of internal injury could persist.

The benefits Everlasting Divine Power brought to Cheng Guang were not limited to this.

"Usually when I practice the Divine Python Coiling Skill, after a few cycles, I would feel my physique has strengthened to its limit. But under the effect of Everlasting, even if I break past my limits, I won't feel fatigued!"

"Ordinarily, I could only train for two hours at a time, but now, I can practice for several hours. Indeed, it is a Bloodline Divine Power inherited from the God Emperor of Great Zhou."

Cheng Guang was quite pleased in his heart; with so many enhancements, how could his progress not be swift?

While he was contemplating, he suddenly felt a movement in his heart.

His body shook slightly, exuding a powerful aura.

At that moment, Qi flowed through Cheng Guang's body, traveling along the meridians, and gradually gathered at the location of his Dantian. Drops of condensed Qi liquid were merging into his Dantian, causing it to transition from its initial whiteness toward purple.

The Purple Mansion began to form.

For ordinary martial cultivators, the more Qi they condensed during practice, the larger and more expansive their Purple Mansion would be, and the deeper and firmer their foundation.

For Cheng Guang, even if he hadn't practiced martial arts earnestly, the God Emperor Cultivation Method alone could condense a decent Purple Mansion for him.

This was one of the benefits of simultaneously cultivating Spirit Dao and Martial Cultivation.

Cheng Guang immediately stopped his movements and sat down cross-legged on the ground. The God Emperor Cultivation Method began to operate, drawing in copious amounts of Heavenly and Earthly Qi, which surged towards his Dantian.

At the same time, the Qi flowing through his bodily meridians also started to rush toward the Dantian.

With the influx from both sources, Cheng Guang's Dantian visibly changed color, became more solid, and expanded.

A vast expanse of purple like a newly conceived universe, immense and unstoppable.

One zhang, two zhang, three zhang...

The Purple Mansion, seemingly in a different dimension from his body, expanded boundlessly.

Chapter 203: Discussing the Extent of Harm a Forced Situation Can Cause _3

The Heavenly and Earthly Qi had now turned into fuel, boosting the ascendancy of the Purple Mansion.

As the Purple Mansion began to unfold within Cheng Guang's body, the aura on him gradually became more substantial and imposing.

Qing Luan, who was beside him, noticed the activity on Cheng Guang's end. Her beautiful eyes slightly opened in disbelief, and then widened.

"The Princely Heir's aura..."

"Is this still the Purple Mansion Realm? It feels almost indistinguishable from a Martial Artist of the Divine Power Realm..."

Qing Luan muttered incredulously to herself.

The Black Cub, which had been toyed with in her hands like a plaything, also opened its eyes, sizing up Cheng Guang.

As it looked toward Cheng Guang, a sense of closeness and submission involuntarily arose in its heart.

Its inner resistance had little power to defy the inexplicable and immense binding force.

"What in the world is going on, woof."

"I was in the Imperial Palace, wasn't I, woof."

"How did I suddenly end up here, isn't this the Four Directions Mortal World, woof."

"Why would I, the Devil Emperor, appear in this Four Directions Mortal World, and at the time when I am reincarnating and at my weakest!"

"Could someone have plotted against me?"

Black Cub pondered with a foolish expression, as if on the verge of a breakdown, resembling a human frowning and occasionally letting slip a dignified aura from its black eyes that did not seem to belong to it.

Black Cub couldn't figure it out – who in the world had the ability to pluck it from the deepest hell of the Ten-Layered Demon Sea and randomly drop it into the Four Directions Mortal World without any warning.

Even during its Cycle Period, when its body was transforming and it was at its most vulnerable, there were many strong beings within its Imperial Palace. Even over a dozen Devil Sovereigns and Sky-Men would not be able to breach the palace's defenses and locate its true body.

Why.

Why had it become like this.

Black Cub looked as if it wanted to cry but had no tears; it raised its paws and clenched them helplessly.

When it looked at Cheng Guang again,

a feeling of submission uncontrollably spread in the bottom of its heart.

Damn the humiliation, humiliation!

It, the great Devil Emperor of its realm, a being greatly feared throughout the Four Directions Mortal World, was now recognizing a weak human as its master.

And now, it was being played with by an incredibly weak human woman.

Black Cub's feelings were a mix of sorrow and anger, and it decided it had to resist!

But just as it had this thought and its body began to fidget restlessly, it was picked up.

Qing Luan's gaze shifted from Cheng Guang to Black Cub. She swung its body about, giving its underside a thoughtful look.

"It's a male, hmm, looks like I'll need to get it neutered."

The moment Black Cub heard this, its body tensed instantly, and it tightened its tail significantly.

Whining softly,

it dared not resist any longer.

This woman, it couldn't afford to provoke.

If it resisted, the concubines of its harem would be left unmanaged.

Qing Luan just mentioned this off-handedly and tossed Black Cub onto the ground. Her beautiful eyes sparkled as she observed Cheng Guang.

As the aura on Cheng Guang's body gradually calmed down and returned to normal,

Qing Luan came over just in time, wiping sweat off Cheng Guang.

Cheng Guang smiled and said, "No trouble at all."

He took the Brocade Handkerchief from Qing Luan's hand, wiped off his sweat, and then sunk his mind inward, examining the changes within his body.

Seeing the state of his Dantian at the moment, his mood became very relaxed, almost joyful.

The Purple Mansion he had developed was vast, so much so that its edges could not be seen at a glance, seemingly reaching a certain limit.

No matter how much Heavenly and Earthly Qi Cheng Guang attracted from his surroundings, the Purple Mansion could not expand even a fraction more.

Cheng Guang did not know whether his Purple Mansion could be considered the largest in history, but it certainly was not something ordinary Martial Artists could compare with.

Maybe not even Zhihai's Purple Mansion was as big as his.

Cheng Guang pondered in his mind.

By noon, Qing Luan had planned to cook herself, preparing some delicious food for Cheng Guang to celebrate the Princely Heir's breakthrough to the Purple Mansion Realm.

Donning an embroidered apron, she bustled about in the side house, lighting fires, cooking, and boiling rice, bringing a touch of life to the peaceful Million Specie Garden.

Technically, a close attendant like Qing Luan need not cook herself, yet she found joy among the grease and smoke.

Perhaps for Qing Luan, the process of cooking was enjoyable, but what made her happier was the prospect of Cheng Guang liking the meals she prepared.

Qing Luan was busy beside the stove, inadvertently getting some ash on her beautiful face, which made her look endearing.

The dispirited Black Cub, idling in the courtyard with a look of resignation, seemed to catch the scent wafting from the side room and scuttled over to Qing Luan, raising its paws, perched beside the pot, staring eagerly at the stir-fried dishes and drooling with desire.

What do these humans of the Four Directions Mortal World usually eat to make it so fragrant?

Black Cub looked on curiously.

Absorbed in its gaze.

Suddenly there was a bang, and a cooking spatula struck its head.

Black Cub winced in pain, gritting its teeth and recoiling.

"Don't lounge around here, go play over there."

Qing Luan shooed Black Cub away.

Black Cub was unwilling to leave. Even if it couldn't eat, merely getting to smell was good enough, and it loitered around Qing Luan.

Cheng Guang sat in a nearby pavilion, sipping tea. As he rested, he watched this scene, occasionally smiling knowingly.

It was indeed quite harmonious.

After the meal, Cheng Guang had nothing much to do. The task of killing the King of South Ming was still somewhat beyond his reach, and he needed to find another opportunity.

Chapter 204: Discussing the Extent of Harm a Forced Situation Can Cause _4

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This was a time of urgency.

As for the Bureau of the Lamp, even though he was now employed there, his identity did not require him to clock in daily.

Even without showing up, his salary from the Bureau of the Lamp would still be paid as usual.

Not that he particularly cared about the meager salary, anyway.

With nothing better to do, Cheng Guang simply amused himself by teasing Black Cub.

Oddly enough, Cheng Guang found it strange that Black Cub, who appeared rather silly, wasn't entirely so. When facing him, it would occasionally display almost human-like expressions.

When given a Da Bi Dou, it would even show a timely sense of being humiliated.

Such antics invigorated Cheng Guang; whenever he saw Black Cub bouncing around and tearing apart the house, he'd feel an itch in his hand and give it a Da Bi Dou.

Seeing Black Cub's heartless antics, he figured the psychological trauma inflicted by his teasing wasn't too substantial.

Thus, Cheng Guang felt justified, and he was not stingy in handing out Da Bi Dou.

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The night deepened, and all was silent.

Not a cloud was in the sky; the stars twinkled feebly in the dark, while the moonlight blanketed the world in a mysterious silver hue.

At midnight, Cheng Guang slowly opened his eyes.

Qing Luan had not stayed in his room that night—not because he was incapable, but because he had to see if the system would issue a new task and could not be distracted.

At that moment, a cold, emotionless voice began to echo in Cheng Guang's mind.

"In the thirty-fourth year of Zhensheng, on August 17th, your forty-first day in the Heavenly Human Realm, you aligned yourself with the King of South Ming. After serving the King of South Ming, your identity and cultivation earned you significant regard there."

"However, you also knew that your allegiance to the King of South Ming didn't secure his complete trust. Living under another's roof, you were uncertain when the King might discard or betray you."

"Having stayed with the King of South Ming for a while, you felt increasingly weary. Meanwhile, you heard that Empress Wu Ling of Great Zhou was in a fierce battle with the King of South Ming.

If Empress Wu Ling couldn't withstand the King's and the crown prince's assault, the last of Great Zhou's territory would be lost, and the Great Zhou Dynasty would vanish from history in the Four Directions Mortal World."

"You didn't know what that final battlefield looked like. The King of South Ming commanded you to the field to confront Empress Wu Ling of Great Zhou, but ultimately, you didn't have the heart to act against the Empress and refused the King's order. As expected, the King punished you by hanging and beating you publicly."

"The dignity of a Heavenly Human Realm cultivator was utterly lost."

"When you received news about the front lines again, you learned that Empress Wu Ling had broken through to the third tier of the Heavenly Human Realm, defeating all invaders, putting the King of South Ming at a disadvantage."

"Even the King of South Ming and the Devil Emperor behind him were no match for the strength of the third tier of the Heavenly Human Realm."

"With Wu Ling's breakthrough to the third tier of the Heavenly Human Realm, reaching the pinnacle of humans on earth, could it be that Great Zhou actually had a chance to reclaim its lost territories, that it wasn't so easily doomed?"

"Life under the King of South Ming wasn't pleasant for you, and now hearing that there might be hope once more with Empress Wu Ling, you somewhat wished to return to her side. But you knew that you had once betrayed Empress Wu Ling, and now to go back to her would hardly be easy."

"You planned to simply live out your days in complacent mediocrity under the King of South Ming. After all, with the Devil Clan's power behind him and the Devil Emperor backing the King, he wouldn't be so easily defeated by Empress Wu Ling."

"As days passed, your life became dull and tedious, and inadvertently, you saw the legendary Queen of the South Ming, reviving a beat in your hollow heart, and you sighed as you gazed at this mythical Queen."

"The identity of this Queen of South Ming was not as simple as it seemed on the surface. You learned recently that the Queen was from the Demonic Race of the Ten-Layered Demon Sea, one of the avatars of a certain supreme Demon Emperor of the Abyss."

"It seemed the Queen had brokered some sort of deal with the King of South Ming, extracting the royal bloodline from within him to cultivate the Spirit Dao, accessible only to the royal families of the Four Directions Mortal World."

"And she, in turn, would support the King from behind, preventing him from being completely dominated by the Devil Clan."

"A King of South Ming flanked by the Devil Clan and the Demonic Race had become merely a piece played by two great powers in the Four Directions Mortal World. You felt that the King had truly gone mad. Even if he were to succeed in overthrowing Empress Wu Ling and ascend to the throne, what of it? He would still be nothing but a puppet."

"Controlled by both the Devil Clan and the Demonic Race, the King of South Ming's predicament was hardly better than yours."

"Thinking of this, you wanted to laugh."

"At the same time, you realized that the King of South Ming was unreliable. If he himself was just a pawn, how could he offer you protection? Perhaps if you could curry favor with the Queen of South Ming, your circumstances might improve."

"Level 2 Task: Court favor with the Queen of the South Ming."

"Task Reward: The Princess's stockings."

The system's cold voice resounded in Cheng Guang's mind, and on the last sentence, Cheng Guang felt his face take on an exceedingly odd expression.

The Queen of South Ming, from the Demonic Race of the Ten-Layered Demon Sea?

Chapter 205: Discussing the Extent of Harm a Forced Situation Can Cause _5

Could it be an incarnation of a certain Demon Emperor?

Did she reach some kind of deal with the King of South Ming and extract the royal bloodline from his body, allowing her to cultivate the Spirit Dao?

Cheng Guang's mouth twitched slightly, completely unable to understand how the Queen of the South Ming could extract the royal bloodline from the King of South Ming's body, enabling her to cultivate the Spirit Dao.

Furthermore, he pondered.

Why would the Queen of the South Ming, a member of the Demonic Race, cultivate the Spirit Dao?

Don't they have their own exclusive cultivation paths?

Or perhaps, the identity of the Queen of South Ming belongs to a particularly special tribe within the Demonic Race?

A torrent of thoughts surged through Cheng Guang's mind, baffled by the situation unfolding before him.

The King of South Ming sought to reclaim his throne, cozying up to both the Devil Clan and the Demonic Race, even at the cost of his royal lineage.

Just for the sake of a throne, was it really worth it?

Cheng Guang failed to comprehend the King of South Ming's way of thinking.

As to whether the King of South Ming acted out of impulse, for revenge against Wu Shang, or because he was chosen by the Devil Clan and the Demonic Race, coerced into a difficult spot, Cheng Guang had no idea.

Cheng Guang sighed and pushed the bizarre situation with the King of South Ming to the back of his mind, his gaze landing on the system task.

"Cling to the legs of the Queen of South Ming?"

"This task is somewhat interesting."

Cheng Guang raised his eyebrows slightly, aware that with his silly system's nature, he just had to complete the task according to its literal meaning and needn't delve any deeper.

But...

Even if it was only about meeting the task in a literal sense, it was incredibly difficult for Cheng Guang.

The Queen of South Ming was of the Demonic Race; she surely wasn't only cultivating the Spirit Dao but definitely also had her race's unique cultivation system.

The extent of her terrifying power was much more than Cheng Guang had initially anticipated.

At the same time, Cheng Guang guessed that the Queen of South Ming's status within the Demonic Race was not low.

One could tell from her ability to quietly break through the Border Area, arrive in the Four Directions Mortal World, and even engage in games with several Devil Emperors.

Cheng Guang thought that if he were to forcefully cling to the Queen of South Ming's "legs" now, even if she wouldn't directly kill him on the spot, she wouldn't allow him to get close at all.

"Difficult indeed."

Cheng Guang sighed, not expecting that the system's task would eventually lead to the Queen of South Ming.

If it had been this morning, when his Charm Eyes could still exert their effects, forcibly clinging to the Queen of South Ming's "legs" might have been slightly possible.

But by this hour, the Queen of South Ming had likely already removed the Divine Power Marks of the Charm Eyes from her Primordial Spirit completely.

It meant there was no chance at all.

Cheng Guang walked over to a nearby desk, poured himself a cup of tea, and tapped his fingers lightly against the desktop, producing a crisp sound.

He pondered in his mind how exactly he could cling to the Queen of South Ming's "legs."

Based on the Queen of South Ming's current attitude towards him, not killing him with a single slap was already the respect due to his status from her.

The more Cheng Guang thought about it, the more he felt the task assigned by the system was incredibly arduous.

He really hadn't expected that the Queen of South Ming would be so difficult to deal with.

If the Queen of South Ming were just an ordinary woman, he could have relied on his status to enact a scene of forcefully abducting a civilian girl, and even if the Queen of South Ming was reluctant, she wouldn't dare to be too presumptuous in Duke Zhen's Mansion and would certainly not resist.

However, the Queen of South Ming's public identity was that of his aunt.

This identity meant that if he were to bring her to his abode and act inappropriately,

setting aside what outsiders would say about him, Cheng Zhihai and Wu Yuemei wouldn't let him off the hook.

Respect for elders was ingrained in the bones of this era, and if Cheng Guang truly committed the great taboo of making a move against his aunt, then regardless of their esteemed statuses, Cheng Zhihai and Wu Yuemei probably wouldn't be able to hold their heads high in public.

The emperor himself wouldn't look favorably upon him either.

It amounted to social death.

The more Cheng Guang thought about it, the more his head ached, so he decided not to think about it any longer. He looked over at Black Cub who was sleeping beside the bed like a dead pig, spread-eagled and snoring.

Cheng Guang felt his hand itching even more.

He picked up Black Cub by the neck and bestowed upon it a Da Bi Dou.

The crisp sound echoed in the quiet night.

Cheng Guang's mood immediately lightened up quite a bit.

Black Cub truly was a stress-reliever; the irritation in his heart calmed down instantly after a Da Bi Dou.

Originally drowsy, Black Cub instantly woke up from the Da Bi Dou. Its body jerked, looking dazedly at Cheng Guang as tears began to well up in its eyes.

Don't ask why its eyes were brimming with tears, for it loved this land deeply.

Usually, back in the Demon Realm, not to mention receiving a Da Bi Dou, there were hardly many who would dare to look it in the eye.

And now, it had been given a Da Bi Dou by a member of the Human Race, not once but several times.

Do you know how much damage a Da Bi Dou can do to a Demon Emperor?

Black Cub was furious and had half a mind to bite Cheng Guang to death.

However, no sooner had this thought risen than its whole body ached grievously; it could not muster a single rebellious thought or intention against Cheng Guang.

Black Cub fell into complete despair.

What kind of method was this?

To so manipulate a Demon Emperor at will?

Even though it was currently in its Cycle Period, with diminished cultivation and strength, not to mention its appearance and size, it was still a Demon Emperor.

Chapter 206: Discussing the Extent of Harm a Forced Situation Can Cause _6

Without it realizing, someone had instantaneously transported it from the distant Ten-Layered Demon Sea to this Four Directions Mortal World.

Black Cub couldn't even begin to imagine how powerful the person who used such a method on it must be.

At the very least, it wasn't something the seemingly weak Human Race before its eyes could manage.

After pondering for a long while, Black Cub just felt tired.

Because it realized that it simply couldn't guess who would have the ability to deal with it in such a manner.

Not only had someone toyed with it, but they also had a rather wicked sense of humor, delivering it to the side of an extremely weak human, for them to bully at will.

The more Black Cub thought about it, the more aggrieved it felt, lamenting the tragedy of a Demon Emperor being reduced to such a state.

Cheng Guang, however, paid no mind to Black Cub's rich inner life at the moment. After giving Black Cub a big hug, which somewhat cleared his head, he started to stroke the dog.

Stroking a dog wasn't as comfortable as stroking a fox.

But at present, Cheng Guang had no choice. That fox had probably already returned to the Eight-layered Devil Realm and wouldn't be accessible for a while.

Being able to stroke a dog was considered quite alright for now.

Cheng Guang rubbed Black Cub's head with one hand, occasionally pinching its nose and prying open its mouth, while at the same time, he pondered over matters in his mind, contemplating how he should deal with the Queen of South Ming.

Although he had sought refuge with the King of South Ming, his situation wasn't particularly good.

The King of South Ming wasn't likely to easily let him off because that he seemed to have pledged loyalty as a joke.

Cheng Guang only needed to recall the system's task prompt about the unfortunate demise of the true Princely Heir to know that the King of South Ming was not an easy person to deal with.

He had contested Emperor Zhou of Great Zhou for nearly a hundred years and had managed to survive maneuvering between the Demonic Race and Demon Beasts.

Not a simple character by any means.

In the future, Cheng Guang wasn't sure what kind of methods the King of South Ming and this Queen would use against him.

Now it seemed the immediate challenge of the Queen of South Ming had to be dealt with.

If he could subjugate the Queen, it would be highly beneficial when the time came to expose that the King of South Ming was actually the Crown Prince.

The only difficulty was still the initial problem.

How could he grab a hold of the Queen's "big thigh"?

How could he subdue her?

At this moment, Cheng Guang felt he had hit a dead end.

No matter which way he turned, facing the Queen of South Ming on his own seemed like an unsolvable issue.

While Cheng Guang pondered, time slipped away second by second, and soon the sky began to brighten. The eastern horizon gave rise to a pale white glow, which slowly turned the faintly azure sky a shade of pink.

With Cheng Guang's current Cultivation Realm, even if he didn't sleep for several days, he wouldn't feel overly fatigued.

Therefore, he didn't plan to catch up on any more sleep. Setting aside the seemingly wrecked Black Cub, he pushed open the door and walked into the courtyard.

Qing Luan had not yet awakened, so Cheng Guang did not disturb her to help himself wash.

After a simple wash, Cheng Guang began his routine practice for the day.

He planned to consolidate his Martial Cultivation Realm.

Martial Cultivation had already reached the Purple Mansion Realm, and the next stage was the Divine Power Realm.

He needed to refine his Martial Arts into Divine Power Marks, imprinting them into the Purple Mansion.

This was entirely a matter of comprehension and time investment.

There was no hurry anymore.

Meanwhile, his Spirit Dao had reached the Yang God Realm, with the next stage being the Ascension Realm.

Once he reached the Ascension Realm, his Primordial Spirit could leave his body even during the daytime.

The powers he could employ from the Proving Dao Map would also increase.

Cheng Guang still found it somewhat difficult to visualize the Proving Dao Map of True Lord of Pure Origin.

Though it could hone his Primordial Spirit, making it more solid, his Cultivation Realm was still insufficient to harness the power of the Proving Dao Map.

Cheng Guang thought to himself that things might improve greatly once he reached the Ascension Realm.

The Proving Dao Map of True Lord of Pure Origin would only unleash its true efficacy at that moment.

As he pondered this, Cheng Guang suddenly recalled that the legitimate Princely Heir, who had even managed to awaken the Bloodline Divine Powers inherited from Emperor Zhou of Great Zhou, raised a doubt. Why was there not even the slightest sign from the ancient royal bloodline of the Great Xia within himself?

Where were his Bloodline Divine Powers?

Cheng Guang was somewhat puzzled. After thinking for a while and coming to no conclusion, he could only comfort himself that the time had not yet come. When the right moment arrived, he presumed he would awaken his Bloodline Divine Powers.

The ancient royal bloodline of Great Xia was extraordinary enough on its own.

Cheng Guang found it hard to imagine how powerful the awakened Bloodline Divine Powers of the ancient royal bloodline of Great Xia might be.

After cultivating for a short while and feeling exhausted, Cheng Guang stopped.

Qing Luan had already risen, her hair tied up neatly. After freshening up, she was preparing breakfast for Cheng Guang.

She had rolled up her sleeves to her fair wrists, and with her profile facing Cheng Guang, the rising wisps of steam when she boiled water fell on her jade-like face, inexplicably giving off a sense of a virtuous wife and loving mother.

It must be said, Qing Luan's culinary skills were indeed quite remarkable.

Although lacking in variety compared to the mansion's head chef, her meticulous dedication more than made up for it.

Qing Luan happily busied herself, and Cheng Guang had no complaints—an entirely satisfying arrangement.

It was at this time that Cheng Guang seemed to hear something and looked towards the door.

"Nephew."

A noble and pleasant voice came through, and the Queen of the South Ming appeared at the gate of Million Specie Garden with several maidens following her, gazing inside.

The maidens behind the Queen of the South Ming also carried an abundance of pastries and Spirit Food for breakfast.

The Queen of the South Ming looked at Cheng Guang with a smile brimming with happiness. Dressed in an exquisite silk dress and pearl earrings, she still maintained the same dignity, her eyes showing fatigue, but she seemed much better than the day before.

Cheng Guang was slightly surprised.

He truly had not expected the Queen of the South Ming to come so early to Duke Zhen's Mansion to find him.

It seemed that after his visit to the Queen of the South Ming the previous day, she had come to visit him today.

A case of courtesy begets courtesy?

Cheng Guang's lips curled slightly; he did not have much of an appreciation for the Queen of the South Ming's beautiful smile, only a premonition that her early visit probably did not bode well.

For some reason, Cheng Guang suddenly empathized with the Queen of the South Ming's feelings from the previous day, when she heard of his visit to her mansion at the crack of dawn.

It was a bit uncomfortable.

Cheng Guang grew slightly wary of the Queen of the South Ming in his heart, yet his expression remained as calm as a light breeze and clear skies, with a faint smile on his face.

"Aunt, why have you come so early today?"

"Is there something urgent that you need to see me for?"

The Queen of the South Ming appeared somewhat helpless, and with a coquettish sigh, she glanced at Cheng Guang and said in a clear voice, "What, without something urgent, I can't come to see you?"

Cheng Guang shook his head and laughed softly, "Not at all. If aunt misses me, you can come to see me anytime."

Hearing Cheng Guang's words, the Queen of the South Ming's dignified façade faltered, and she involuntarily clenched her teeth secretly.

Miss you?

I feel like crushing you to death right now.

The Queen of the South Ming felt that the mere sight of Cheng Guang's face was irksome to her.

But at that moment, there was little she could do about Cheng Guang.

For the sake of her own schemes, as well as those of King of South Ming, she had no choice but to continue this farce, feigning smiles and playing her part with Cheng Guang.

Just as the Queen of the South Ming moved her enchanting lips, about to say something,

her gaze unexpectedly caught sight of a small, pitiable black dog at Cheng Guang's feet.

Her beautiful eyes were momentarily stunned.

As if she had seen something frightening, her pupils uncontrollably contracted momentarily.

Chapter 207: Really Not Caring About Face at All!

The Queen of the South Ming looked at the black dog at Cheng Guang's feet, her face showing unusual colors.

Why did this black dog give her a feeling of both extreme familiarity and extreme fear?

Could this black dog actually be an Exotic Beast with a Demonic Race bloodline?

That shouldn't be the case. Even if it were an Exotic Beast with a Demonic Race bloodline, it couldn't possibly make her feel afraid. Merely by glancing at the black dog, the Queen of the South Ming felt her soul tremble.

It was as if she saw a supremely majestic Demon Emperor from within the Ten-Layered Demon Sea.

Don't be ridiculous.

Let alone the Demon Emperor, even the offspring of the Demon Emperor were unlikely to appear by Cheng Guang's side.

Then what is the deal with this black dog?

The Queen of the South Ming kept staring intently at the black dog.

Cheng Guang noticed that the Queen of the South Ming was sizing up his black dog and couldn't help but speak with a smile, "Auntie, why are you continuously staring at my dog? Are you interested in this black dog of mine?"

As Cheng Guang spoke, thoughts inevitably stirred in his heart.

The system had named his black cub "Haba Dog," adding the word "Hell" after it.

The Haba Dog might just be the system's sense of humor, but the key was in the word "Hell."

Hell was one of the layers in the Ten-Layered Demon Sea, which indirectly proved that his black cub seemed to come from the Ten-Layered Demon Sea.

And the Queen of the South Ming before him also came from the Ten-Layered Demon Sea.

Could it be that the Queen of the South Ming recognized the identity or race of the black cub?

Cheng Guang thought about it with interest and observed the Queen of the South Ming's expression.

Upon hearing Cheng Guang's query, the Queen of the South Ming's smile became slightly stiff, but she quickly regained her composure, "Not interested. Your dog just looks quite peculiar, so I couldn't help but take a few more glances."

As the Queen of the South Ming's words fell, the black cub, hearing her comment on its appearance, couldn't help but raise its head and size up the Queen of the South Ming.

Within its pitch-black eyes, the Queen of the South Ming's visage was reflected, and its eyebrows faintly raised.

Oh?

The aura of the Abyss Demon Emperor...

Is this woman before me an avatar of the Abyss Demon Emperor?

Since when did the Abyss Demon Emperor secretly extend his reach into the Four Directions Mortal World?

The black cub cast a glance, and confusion flickered within its dark eyes.

Logically, although they from the Ten-Layered Demon Sea were somewhat interested in the Four Directions Mortal World, their interest wasn't as intense as that of the Devil Clan's, after all, the distance was quite far, and breaking through the Border Area of the Four Directions Mortal World was somewhat difficult; it was less of a hassle to find trouble with those angelic beings of the Three-part God Realm.

Why had the Abyss Demon Emperor suddenly run a long way to make trouble in the Four Directions Mortal World, even secretly sending over an avatar?

As the black cub sized up the Queen of the South Ming, the queen seemed to notice something, took another glance at the black cub, and felt a shiver run through her as she noticed the curiosity in its eyes.

She inexplicably felt as if she was being seen through.

By a dog, no less.

It was utterly absurd.

Although the Queen of the South Ming was inwardly shocked, her dignified countenance maintained its regal composure, and she quickly diverted her gaze from the black dog, no longer letting herself look at the black dog.

For some reason, the more she saw, the more the Queen of the South Ming felt that the black dog beside Cheng Guang resembled a certain Demon Emperor from her memory.

Even without laying her eyes on the black dog, the Queen of the South Ming felt uncomfortable being stared at by it.

This discomfort was not like the indignation she felt when being stared at by Cheng Guang.

It was a feeling of restlessness and unease.

Cheng Guang didn't notice the Queen of the South Ming's current peculiarity and asked Qing Luan to bring over some tea. Shortly after, Qing Luan hurried over with a teapot and cups in hand.

Cheng Guang looked at the Queen of the South Ming and invited, "Auntie, why not sit and chat for a while?"

Hearing this, the Queen of the South Ming walked gracefully, keeping a certain distance as she passed by the black dog, seemingly wishing to avoid being too close to it.

The black cub, too, didn't spend too much time staring at the Queen of the South Ming, only looking for a while before its interest waned.

For now, it was under the control of others.

While the avatar of the Abyss Demon Emperor might have noticed something, there was a high probability she wouldn't recognize it.

Even if she did recognize it, she shouldn't expect her to save the life of a mere dog.

The relations between Demon Emperors were very much like those between the emperors of the various dynasties in the Four Directions Mortal World, neither good nor bad. If everyone was at peace, then there was nothing to worry about, but if given the chance, they would kill each other at the first opportunity.

Although it didn't think much of this avatar of the Abyss Demon Emperor.

The black cub coiled up on the ground, feeling a sense of sorrow.

Alas, my dog life is truly pitiful.

How did I suddenly end up in the Four Directions Mortal World?

And inexplicably acknowledged a weak Human Race as master.

What am I to do in the future?

Even if my power gradually recovers, I won't have the face to meet anyone; if the Abyss Demon Emperor recognizes me, it will be even more humiliating to the dog.

The black cub was directly emoting at this moment.

And at this time.

Around the tea table.

The Queen of the South Ming also shifted her attention away from the black dog.

She sat at the stone table in the pavilion, her stunning and dignified face exuded an air of high-class nobility, her eyes clear and deep like autumn water.

Qing Luan poured tea.

The steaming hot tea water still bubbling with white mist, swirled in the cups with some leaves floating and sinking, spreading a fragrance of crisp tea aroma.

The Queen of the South Ming wasn't in the mood for tasting tea, she simply set her autumn-water-like eyes on Cheng Guang and spoke softly, "Nephew, I've come here today for two matters."

Chapter 208: Really Not Caring About Face at All! _2

Cheng Guang nodded slightly, his mind elsewhere as he lifted his teacup and took a sip. "Go ahead," he said.

The Queen of the South Ming glanced at Qing Luan beside her, but before she could speak, Qing Luan attentively arranged the fruit pastries and tactfully left the room.

No one else was around.

Only then did the Queen of the South Ming continue, "Firstly, about the matter you mentioned yesterday, although we have agreed, we still cannot fully trust you. We need you to do something for us."

Upon hearing this, Cheng Guang's expression became somewhat strange.

The matter the Queen of the South Ming spoke of was obviously about his visit to her residence the day before, claiming his desire to defect to the King of South Ming.

He had said so only to complete a system task and claim the reward, and no sooner had he professed his loyalty to the King of South Ming than he was already pondering how to kill him.

And now you're coming to me, asking for a favor?

A tinge of amusement stirred in Cheng Guang.

Neither the Queen of the South Ming nor the Crown Prince knew of Cheng Guang's system, so they couldn't fathom his reasoning and genuinely believed he intended to defect to them.

Otherwise, why would Cheng Guang, as the Town-Nation Duke's Heir, take the risk to visit the Queen of the South Ming alone, professing admiration for the Crown Prince and a wish to defect to their side?

Suppressing a smile, Cheng Guang kept his lips from curling upward, maintaining a calm and serene demeanor as his gaze rested on the Queen of the South Ming's beautiful and noble features. He asked with a light chuckle, "What would my aunt like me to do?"

The Queen of the South Ming's expression remained unchanged, her dignified autumn eyes fixed on Cheng Guang. "I need you to help us integrate several people into the Bureau of the Lamp," she said.

"I am aware that you currently hold a position in the Bureau of the Lamp and that Cheng Zhihai has recently promoted you. Even though I do not know what rank of constable you are now, with your

identity and status, it should be a simple matter for you to have several people enter the Bureau of the Lamp."

Cheng Guang raised an eyebrow upon hearing her words.

"She wants me to help them infiltrate the Bureau of the Lamp?"

The Queen of the South Ming nodded.

Holding his teacup in one hand and sipping the tea, Cheng Guang pondered what the Queen of the South Ming—or rather, the Crown Prince—really intended by asking him to place their people in the Bureau of the Lamp.

The Bureau was no idle department; it wielded great power and was exceedingly busy. Few indeed had the ability to meddle within the Bureau.

Cheng Guang continued his contemplation, his expression still like still water. Lifting his gaze to the Queen of the South Ming, he inquired again, "How many people? Are there any specific requirements for their positions?"

The Queen of the South Ming shifted slightly and said, "That brings us to the second matter."

"Plant as many as possible. Naturally, the higher their ranks the better, but if there are no official positions available, even a Black Lantern Catcher in the Bureau, or an external consultant, would be fine."

"All that matters is their involvement in the royal ceremony one month from now."

A sense of surprise flickered in Cheng Guang's heart upon hearing this.

Well now, so the Queen of the South Ming, or rather the Crown Prince, had this in mind.

The royal ceremony was one of the few events directly connected to the royal family of the Great Zhou Dynasty.

It would be attended not only by all members of royalty, court officials, noble families, and foreign envoys but also by monarchs of closely related dynasties and kings of smaller countries under Great Zhou's influence.

For such an important occasion, security would not only consist of various protections, but also supervision by the Bureau of the Lamp and the Imperial Guard.

Having me place members inside the Bureau of the Lamp was only their first step.

The second, far more crucial step was yet to come.

Allowing the Crown Prince's men to be in charge of the security would undoubtedly provide the Crown Prince the opportunity to use those inserted within the Bureau to cause some trouble during the ceremony.

It could be described as the plot fully revealed.

"Well, can you do it?"

The Queen of the South Ming's eyes were tightly fixed on Cheng Guang's expression, searching for any sign of hesitation or doubt that might suggest he wasn't sincerely wishing to join them; she would leave immediately upon noticing any.

After all, it would be suspicious if, after committing to defect to them, he started to delay or refuse to help, casting doubt on the sincerity of his initial offer.

Facing the Queen's scrutinizing gaze, Cheng Guang's expression barely changed as he simply smiled faintly and nodded in agreement.

Rather than rejecting her proposal outright, it seemed better to lead her into a trap.

Cheng Guang knew that the Queen of the South Ming was still unaware that he had long since seen through their plans.

The Queen of the South Ming, or rather the Crown Prince, believed that even if Cheng Guang were to act, he would not deduce their true intentions.

After all, the royal ceremony was an event that Emperor Zhou himself would attend, and the entire Great Zhou Dynasty placed great importance on it. No one would dare to target such an event.

The Queen of the South Ming was confident that even if Cheng Guang refused them, it would have no impact on their plans.

That's why she boldly entrusted Cheng Guang with these matters.

Moreover, they did not believe that Cheng Guang, with his current style of conduct, would harm the loyal agents they dispatched.

Chapter 209: Really Not Caring About Face at All! _3

Only if a complete falling out with them had truly occurred.

Yet this contradicted what Cheng Guang previously declared about admiring the Crown Prince and wanting to join their ranks.

After Cheng Guang nodded in agreement to handle the matter, the Queen of the South Ming nodded back with considerable satisfaction. "All you need to do is take care of this matter; you don't need to involve yourself in the rest."

Sipping his tea absently, Cheng Guang nodded indifferently, glanced at the Queen of the South Ming, and began to change the subject, intentionally and unintentionally probing and gathering information.

"Auntie, what kind of strength do the people you want me to place in the Bureau of the Lamp have? The Bureau does have its strength requirements, and it would be rather difficult for me to insert too many people who are too weak," he said.

The Queen of the South Ming did not hide the information from Cheng Guang, perhaps because he had agreed to her initial request. She said with a smile:

"Their strength is not weak; they are all devoted retainers recently cultivated by the Crown Prince, so you don't need to worry about that."

Cheng Guang's eyes slightly lifted, and he asked, "How does their strength compare to yours, Auntie?"

The Queen of the South Ming looked at Cheng Guang in annoyance. "There aren't many who can compare to me; it's not feasible to cultivate retainers to my level of cultivation," she replied coolly.

Hearing this, Cheng Guang had a clear understanding.

The individuals that the Queen of the South Ming wanted him to place within the Bureau of the Lamp most likely had a Cultivation Realm below the sixth rank, equivalent to the middle level of strength within the Bureau.

Such people, ranking in the middle echelons of the Bureau, would probably also be core forces for the Crown Prince.

Cultivating a devoted retainer must have cost a significant amount of resources—even though the Crown Prince had taken on the identity of the King of South Ming and could exploit the wealth and resources of Great Zhou—it seemed that resources were still limited.

If he could round up a great number of the Crown Prince's devoted retainers, the countenance of the Crown Prince at that time would certainly be amusing.

Amid his contemplation, the Queen of the South Ming also slowly rose, preparing to leave.

Before leaving, she gave Cheng Guang another look and said with a smile:

"Nephew, the people I want you to place in the Bureau of the Lamp will come to your Mansion to find you later."

"Moreover, don't blame your Auntie for being nosy. For such matters, it's better to act sooner than later; the sooner you can place them, the less likely it is to arouse suspicion."

"If arranged close to the royal sacrifice, even if these individuals are placed among the guards participating in the ceremony, they will not be stationed too close to the central area."

"This would actually be disadvantageous," she advised.

"Pay extra attention to this yourself."

Having said that, the Queen of the South Ming gracefully departed with a sway of her lotus step.

As Cheng Guang watched the enchanting and graceful figure of the Queen of the South Ming, he carelessly observed the more prominent parts of her figure.

"Auntie's figure is really impeccable, she might even look better in black silk," he murmured with a smile at the corner of his mouth.

The Queen of the South Ming, whether she heard him or not, stumbled slightly, nearly falling over on the spot.

What was normally a dignified and noble gait became abruptly hurried.

The Queen of the South Ming clenched her teeth, and with her attendants, hastened her departure.

Although she couldn't quite grasp what black silk was, she knew instinctively that it wasn't something decent.

It could very well be something vile.

She had originally thought that after yesterday's incident, Cheng Guang had changed quite a bit since he admired the Crown Prince and she herself was his official wife, the Princess, on the surface.

In her estimation, he would treat her with a bit more respect.

Yet what was the outcome?

No change whatsoever.

If Cheng Guang had not agreed to her initial request, she wouldn't have given him a friendly face while he was sizing her up.

But now, since Cheng Guang had agreed, she still needed to use him to handle some matters, and she couldn't continue with her earlier disposition—violent and murderous at the drop of a hat.

Even though the Queen of the South Ming sorely wished to slap Cheng Guang to death at that moment, she temporarily had to refrain from acting.

It would be best to wait until Cheng Guang had helped them complete the matter before taking action.

The Queen of the South Ming returned to her carriage, the same Jade Carriage she had arrived in, and headed back to her mansion.

She lifted the curtain of the Jade Carriage, taking another look at Duke Zhen's Mansion, then let the curtain fall, her expression becoming noble and indifferent.

"Even if I don't kill you, once you help us insert people into the Bureau of the Lamp on the day of the royal sacrifice, your end will not be a pretty sight."

"If Emperor Zhou of Great Zhou dies that day, we will overthrow Great Zhou overnight. Even the Duke of the State, who is of Heavenly Human Realm, won't be much help in reversing such a situation. It is foreseeable that your power will vanish in an instant, and at that point, how I wish to play with you will be of no issue."

"If Emperor Zhou does not die that day and the matter is exposed, even if you are not killed by him, you can expect a severe reprimand from the enraged Emperor Zhou."

"The outcome will equally be unpleasant."

As the Queen of the South Ming pondered this, the affair became a test to gauge Cheng Guang's loyalties.

If Cheng Guang helped them, he could prove he was still of use, and she would spare his life for the time being, but his fate afterwards would no doubt be grim.

If he did not assist them, it would give her time to ponder how to eliminate this rather peculiar Princely Heir of Duke Zhen.

No matter the perspective, the Queen of the South Ming herself stood to gain.

Relieved by her resolution of the matter, the Queen of the South Ming felt much more at ease.

Next, a more important task awaited her attention.

Chapter 210: Really Not Caring About Face at All! _4

Simply planting a few dead soldiers into the Bureau of the Lamp, allowing them to serve as guards for the royal ceremony, wasn't enough. She also needed to place some top Devil Clan warriors, or even the Devil Emperor himself, in place of certain Court ministers to take on new identities and attend the royal ceremony.

It was convenient for them to stab Emperor Zhou in the back.

This time, dealing with Emperor Zhou, a Sky-Man, the Devil Emperor was key.

However, the last time, the Devil Emperor from the Green Hill fox tribe was discovered early by Emperor Zhou and sent back to the Eight-layered Devil Realm; coming back would require more effort.

But that was no longer something for the Queen of the South Ming to worry about herself.

All she needed to do was complete the replacement.

Even though she was merely an avatar of the Abyss Demon Emperor and could exert limited strength, she was confident in this essential skill of hers.

She was able to perfectly transform the former prince into the King of South Ming without Emperor Zhou noticing anything amiss, so replacing some Devil Clan warriors with Court ministers to attend the royal ceremony was naturally not much of a challenge.

This ability was also key to her cooperation with the Devil Clan and her control over the former prince, allowing her, a mere avatar of the Abyss Demon Emperor, to carve out her share of the benefits.

"Ha~ So exhausting..."

"Indeed, I am not adept at the cunning schemes of the Human Race. If the original could come, it would not require such an effort..."

The Queen of the South Ming yawned, stretching her enchanting body provocatively, her curves becoming even more striking and captivating with her movements.

The smoothness and softness of her delicate body were evident just from the sight of it.

...

The Queen of the South Ming left.

Cheng Guang sat listlessly by the stone table, sipping tea and pondering.

The recently departed Qing Luan had now returned.

As she approached Cheng Guang, she occasionally looked back, as if searching for the Queen of the South Ming.

Coming closer, Qing Luan asked with curiosity, "Princely Heir, why did the Princess come to visit today, seeking you out alone without even notifying the lady of the house?"

Cheng Guang held his teacup with a grin, swishing the tea around lightly, and replied nonchalantly, "Ah, she probably has taken a fancy to me."

Hearing this, Qing Luan pursed her red lips slightly, half-coquettishly, half-reproachfully, and rubbed Cheng Guang's shoulder.

"Princely Heir, you jest again. The Princess is a senior in status, you can't use words like 'taken a fancy' to describe..."

As Qing Luan spoke, her pretty face reddened unintentionally again.

It seemed she was reminded of something impure.

Cheng Guang chuckled and shook his head, not really caring.

No point in explaining why the Queen of the South Ming came looking for him; he might as well just brush it off this way.

With that diversion from Cheng Guang, Qing Luan's thoughts shifted from the Queen of the South Ming.

Just as she was about to speak further, she seemed to notice something, turned her head, and looked outside the gate.

A few moments passed, and Steward Wang's figure appeared from around the corner of the shaded path outside the Million Specie Garden.

"Princely Heir."

Steward Wang stood outside the courtyard, bowing respectfully to Cheng Guang, then said, "Princely Heir, there are visitors, and... quite a few..."

"I wasn't sure if the Princely Heir knew them, so I didn't send them away, I came to ask for your decision."

"Visitors? And quite a few?"

Qing Luan was puzzled upon hearing Steward Wang's words.

On a normal day, it was already quite significant for Duke Zhen's Mansion to have a couple of guests visit.

But from what Steward Wang implied, it seemed there was a crowd of visitors.

Steward Wang nodded in affirmation and looked at Cheng Guang, asking respectfully, "Princely Heir, those people claim to be friends and wish to see you. Seeing their number is considerable and they don't appear to be fabricating, I came to ask if you want to meet with them."

"If the Princely Heir doesn't wish to see them, I will send them all away."

Qing Luan frowned, slightly confused, "How many people are there?"

Steward Wang answered, "About fifty..."

"Fifty?" Qing Luan exclaimed, covering her mouth in surprise, and turned to look at her Princely Heir.

She thought to herself that all of the Princely Heir's friends put together probably didn't add up to fifty.

How come suddenly fifty people show up, asking specifically to meet with the Princely Heir himself?

Perhaps they were swindlers from the Martial World?

Qing Luan was a bit angry. She couldn't believe that scammers like them dared to come to Duke Zhen's Mansion.

Just as she was about to speak up and help Cheng Guang decline them,

Cheng Guang stopped her with a smile and said to Steward Wang, "Let's go, take me to meet them."

Cheng Guang truly hadn't expected the Queen of the South Ming to act so efficiently; she said she would send someone right away, and not long after, they had arrived.

Even in time for lunch.

She must really be in a hurry.

Cheng Guang couldn't help but sigh to himself.

Steward Wang quickly nodded and led Cheng Guang out of the residence.

Qing Luan, surprised to hear Cheng Guang's words, wondered why the Princely Heir seemed to have anticipated these visitors' arrival.

She didn't understand and followed Cheng Guang somewhat dazedly.

Cheng Guang slowly finished the tea in his arms, lightly kicked the emo Black Cub at his feet, stood up, and followed Steward Wang out of the courtyard.

After about fifteen minutes, they reached the outside of the mansion.

Outside Duke Zhen's Mansion, on the broad alley paved with white Chinese marble, stood more than fifty men dressed in black, martial attire, all with a stern demeanor.