

My System 231

Chapter 231: A Sudden Enlightenment, the Supreme in the World of Men! _6

"At this moment, the Great Zhou Dynasty is likely to be overthrown by the True Sun Martial God alone, and Emperor Zhou has not allowed the Duke of the State to retreat from the Border Area battlefield. Once the Duke leaves, should the Border Area fall and a large number of the Devil Clan invade, it will no longer be merely a war between the citizens of the dynasty."

"In order to protect the people of the Great Zhou Dynasty, even with the possibility of the dynasty's collapse, Emperor Zhou is unwilling to let the Duke lead a million-strong army southward."

"It seems that the True Sun Martial God has also realized this point, and did not continue to occupy the remaining lands of the Great Zhou Dynasty. He intended to rest and recuperate; however, in his small kingdom, he did not establish the sort of world he had imagined—one without noble families and the oppression of the powerful."

"In the end, it all came to nothing. The True Sun Martial God did not realize that even if he slaughtered all the original noble families, he and his meritorious followers had already become the new generation of the noble class. The cycle of the world goes on; it is merely the noble class being replaced over and over. For the people at the very bottom, there was not the slightest change."

"At the same time, the True Sun Martial God also discovered that in his kingdom, the lives of the citizens were not as good as during the era of Great Zhou. He had ambitions but lacked the talent to govern a nation. Even with his unparalleled martial arts, renowned as the strongest in the world, he could not ensure a good life for his people."

"Disheartened, the True Sun Martial God executed all his subordinates who were more oppressive to the people than some of the Great Zhou's tyrants. He returned all the territory to Emperor Zhou and went into hiding, his whereabouts unknown."

"Recalling this scene, you feel that if you could befriend the True Sun Martial God, who had an epiphany and became the world's strongest Sky-Man overnight, then starting your own dynasty in the future might not be impossible!"

"With your emotions stirred, you make a silent vow to find an opportunity to meet this True Sun Martial God!"

"Four-Star Quest: Befriend the True Sun Martial God (Zhang Shunlong)"

"Quest Reward: Prosperity of Martial Arts (Awakening effect lasts for three hours)"

Cheng Guang listened to the system's voice resonating in his mind, his eyes slightly narrowed.

'The True Sun Martial God is no simple figure, eh? An epiphany, and in just a decade, he ascended to become the strongest Sky-Man in the world?'

'With his own power alone, he managed to wrest most of the Great Zhou Dynasty's lands from Emperor Zhou's hands.'

'Wanting to establish a kingdom without the powerful positions an ideal, yet in the end, the True Sun Martial God found that all his efforts ultimately turned into smoke and mirrors.'

'Of no use at all.'

'Even if he established a dynasty and slew all the parasitic noble families, there was still no change.'

'Imperial seats and officials remained.'

'The nobility remained, just with different faces.'

'The True Sun Martial God, disenchanted, personally ended his own dynasty and returned the land to Emperor Zhou.'

'He truly was free-spirited.'

'If the True Sun Martial God had actually become an emperor, even if the people lived poorly, his life would still be prosperous, but it's clear that he didn't want to live that life.'

'His desire to create a dynasty didn't seem to be about fulfilling his own selfish desires.'

'But rather, for the great harmony of the world.'

'Equality for everyone.'

'Cheng Guang looked on, his emotions complex.'

'He thought back to the previously encountered chief of Xiaobai Village, whose people suffered severely under the attack of the Devil Clan. Despite this, they refused to abandon their land and risked their lives to come back and farm.'

'For ordinary people, especially average mortals without any cultivation ability, just surviving in this world is already extremely difficult.'

'The path of cultivation is not something everyone can undertake.'

'Spirit Food, medicinal supplements, even the most common items could deplete an ordinary family's entire savings.'

'In a dynasty like Great Zhou, things are relatively good; Emperor Zhou has, after all, established the Martial Academy, offering an opportunity to the poor from all over the world.'

'In other dynasties, unless there is a change of dynasty, the class system is impossible to change, constrained entirely.'

'If someone is born a coachman, they might remain a coachman for generations.'

'If someone is born a slave, they could be slaves for generations as well.'

'There's nowhere for them to turn around.'

'Cheng Guang can imagine the True Sun Martial God realizing that even if he were to kill countless nobles in his dynasty, new ones would emerge, and soon the world would return to its former state.'

'His personal fate had changed, and he became the ruler of a nation.'

'But he did not forget his initial aspirations.'

'Cheng Guang sighed; it seems that even in this world, there are those whose thoughts differ from this era.'

'Cheng Guang can see that the True Sun Martial God must be very lonely.'

'No one understands his thoughts or why he did what he did.'

'But Cheng Guang understands.'

'If there were such a thing as a child of destiny in this world, the True Sun Martial God would certainly be one.'

His ideas were ahead of their time.

His cultivation had attained sudden enlightenment, reaching the supreme level among humanity in a single moment.

This was even more protagonist-like than the main character in a novel.

It was just a pity that in the end, he could not escape a touch of tragedy.

His ambitions were not fulfilled, nor were his wishes.

Eventually, he retired to the mountains in disillusionment.

Yet, even so, Cheng Guang deeply admired the True Sun Martial God, who had tried to find a path forward for the ordinary people of the Human Race.

At least it was an attempt, though a failed one.

But this did not mean that what the True Sun Martial God had done was meaningless.

Cheng Guang slowly reviewed the system task notification, recalling his previous life, and then considering his current situation, only to feel an inexplicable complexity in his heart.

After a long while, he silently sighed.

Not wanting to disturb the sleeping Qing Luan, he slowly stood up.

The moonlight shone through the distant window.

The moon remained the same, but the people and the world did not.

Cheng Guang felt an inexplicable homesickness.

Cheng Guang took a deep breath, trying to calm his stirred emotions.

Some time passed.

Cheng Guang sat at his desk, examining the system task.

Make the acquaintance of the True Sun Martial God.

He only knew now that the True Sun Martial God's name was Zhang Shunlong.

His status was that of a slave.

However,

He didn't know any more detailed identity information about him.

Even if he had the constables of the Bureau of the Lamp investigate, finding a slave named Zhang Shunlong was not going to be easy.

Cheng Guang estimated that it would take some more effort on his part.

But, there was no need to rush this matter.

With the concerns regarding the King of South Ming still looming, he could wait until that matter was resolved. Then he could leave the Capital City in peace, no longer needing to worry about the King of South Ming, the back-stabber, attempting to assassinate him at every turn.

By then, he would also be able to personally search for the True Sun Martial God.

Cheng Guang pondered for a moment, then took out a sheet of Xuan paper and began to slowly write down line after line of text.

Once he started, he continued throughout the night.

Cheng Guang lost track of time, immersed in the scholarly atmosphere, conversing with his predecessors through his writing, his brushwork shining as he penned down one beautiful Chinese character after another.

As night gave way to dawn, the moonlight gradually faded away, replaced by the faint glow of early morning.

Cheng Guang's eyes still sparkled with vitality as he focused on his writing, as if he were the only person existing in this world.

As time went on, sunlight streamed through the window onto Cheng Guang. He put down his brush, leaning back in his chair, exhausted but content.

Cheng Guang looked at the text he had written, a deep sense of emotion welling up within him.

"He said, we should not be oppressed."

"He said, every person is born equal."

"He said, our enemies are cowardly, but we are brave."

These words, neither too large nor too small, neither biased nor slanted, subtly sketched out a vision of a prosperous age.

Chapter 232: This girl has changed quite a bit for no apparent reason!

Days passed by, one after another.

Upon waking one night.

The atmosphere in the Capital city had changed considerably.

Many residents of the Capital city found as they rose from bed that the number of constables from the Bureau of the Lamp on the streets had noticeably increased; every few meters along the wide streets, one could spot several constables standing guard.

After some inquiries, people learned that the Imperial festivities were imminent, and at present, Court officials from various regions and some princes and nobles had arrived in the capital in recent days.

Many dignitaries, personages beyond the wildest dreams of ordinary people, had all gathered in the Capital city. One could imagine the great undercurrents that would be present when the time came.

No wonder then, that the Bureau of the Lamp was so cautious.

The closer the Imperial festivities drew, the livelier the Capital became.

Many people thought that if people had dared to cause trouble during the martial contest between Great Wei and Great Zhou, it was uncertain what mischief might occur during this Imperial festivity.

However, since the martial contest between the two great dynasties of Great Wei and Great Zhou had already been disrupted once, if any disorder were to occur again under anticipated circumstances during the Imperial festivities.

Then the Bureau of the Lamp would truly have no excuses left to salvage their reputation.

The actions of the Bureau of the Lamp merely drew the attention of some interested parties and had little impact on the lives of the citizens within the Capital city.

The streets were lined with shops, the hawking of traders and the laughter of customers mingling together, with a ceaseless stream of pedestrians.

In the midst of this bustling and lively scene, suddenly a clatter of horse hooves broke into the picture.

"Make way, make way!"

"Don't block the road!"

It was a group of soldiers clad in dark armor, riding atop Exotic Beasts and shouting at the pedestrians on the street, herding them to the sides to clear a wide path.

The pedestrians retreated in alarm, yielding their way, not daring to conflict with them.

Down this road, a luxurious carriage moved slowly.

The carriage was made entirely of precious Obsidian, shimmering and lustrous, emanating a faint, mysterious glow, with wheels carved with intricate cloud patterns.

Around it floated a faint aura of golden light, as if a mysterious force was protecting the carriage.

The horses pulling the carriage were no ordinary horses but bred from Cloud Flash Sculptures's bloodline.

They had pristine white feathers and golden eyes, their hooves kicking up streaks of spark-like radiance, inspiring awe in all who saw them.

The moment this carriage appeared, it became the most eye-catching focus on the street, drawing gasps of admiration.

"Isn't that the vehicle of the King of South Ming?"

"The King of South Ming has come to the Capital too, earlier than in previous years."

"After all, it's the Royal festivities. The once-every-few-years celebration of the Great Zhou Dynasty, other Court ministers might not take it seriously, but the King of South Ming couldn't possibly overlook it, coming early is better."

"This Nobleman is deeply favored by the current Emperor, coming to the Capital city and even bringing his private soldiers with him, truly blessed by heaven."

People looked at the vehicle of the King of South Ming, talking animatedly amongst themselves.

In the midst of the animated discussion, the constables from the Bureau of the Lamp standing on both sides of the street caught sight of the King of South Ming's carriage, giving each other a knowing look and, after a silent exchange of glances, became quietly vigilant.

The lower-ranking constables from the Bureau of the Lamp didn't know what had happened, nor did they know the real identity of the King of South Ming. They were merely following instructions from higher up, to be extremely alert and careful with any prince or noble entering the Capital city.

Their vigilance was not just aimed at the King of South Ming.

Speaking of which, inside the carriage.

Within the opulent carriage where fragrant smoke curled, a middle-aged man sat on a soft couch made from the fur of an Exotic Beast, toying with two Jade Beads in his hands.

He wore a deep purple Python Robe, his expression cold, his eyes surveyed the view outside the window, the Bureau of the Lamp constables standing guard every few yards along the streets, his lips pressed into a thin line, his stern face softened with a hint of a smile.

"Bureau of the Lamp, putting on such a grand show, seems quite worried that something might go wrong at the Royal festivities."

"If under such tight security, an unexpected incident still occurs at the Royal festivities..."

"I imagine the scene would be interesting, very interesting."

The middle-aged man fiddled with the Jade Beads in his hand, examining the constables from the Bureau of the Lamp outside the window for a while before leisurely shifting his gaze back inside the carriage, settling himself down and closing his eyes to rest.

The carriage moved along slowly and upon arriving at the Prince's residence in the Capital city, it came to a stop.

"Prince, we have arrived."

The King of South Ming slowly opened his eyes upon hearing the word, rose, and stepped down from the carriage.

Guards in armor stood on both sides, their faces solemn, their expressions icy, exuding a formidable presence.

As bodyguards of the King of South Ming, most of these men were not mediocre.

If they were in the Martial World's sects, most would qualify to be direct disciples.

But at the side of the King of South Ming, they were merely unknown guards.

The King of South Ming turned his head and asked the steward of his residence, "Where is the Princess?"

"The Princess is inside the residence, she has not gone out."

The King of South Ming nodded thoughtfully and glanced at the front of the residence.

"You all rest here, get the things that have been brought over settled, and then tell the Princess I'll be back later in the evening."

"After arriving in the Capital, I need to go to the Imperial Palace first thing to see my 'brother'."

When he spoke the word "brother," a subtle and meaningful expression crossed the King of South Ming's face.

The steward respectfully acknowledged the order.

The King of South Ming got back into the carriage, and the coachman drove off toward the Great Zhou Imperial Palace.

The residence of the King of South Ming was very close to the Great Zhou Imperial Palace, just a street away, and within a quarter of an hour, the King of South Ming had arrived at the Imperial Palace.

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At the entrance of the Imperial Palace, the King of South Ming dismounted from his carriage.

Even though he was deeply favored by the Emperor, he could not ride the carriage into the Imperial Palace.

The King of South Ming glanced at the imposing Qinghua Gate of the Great Zhou Imperial Palace and paced slowly into the palace.

The guards stationed by the palace gates, recognizing the visitor as the King of South Ming, most favored by the Emperor of Great Zhou, did not dare to step forward and inquire for the jade token, allowing him to pass directly.

The King of South Ming made his way into the Imperial Palace and arrived outside Taihe Hall.

At this time, during the royal assembly, the provincial officials and ministers were discussing state affairs with Emperor Zhou in the court above.

Voices echoed from within Taihe Hall.

Hearing the discussions of state affairs by the provincial officials and ministers within Taihe Hall, the King of South Ming's expression remained unchanged as he clenched his fists in secret, the Jade Bead in his hand making a faint noise.

Soon, his hand movements relaxed, and he stood outside the hall, waiting.

When the King of South Ming arrived at Taihe Hall, the eunuch standing outside caught sight of him, paused slightly in surprise, and without needing an instruction from the King himself, hurriedly went in to announce his arrival.

After the eunuch went in to announce.

Atop Taihe Hall.

Emperor Zhou, watching over the officials, heard a voice from Zhao Jin at his ear.

"Your Majesty, the King of South Ming has arrived."

Upon hearing this, Emperor Zhou, who had just possessed an imposing demeanor, relaxed slightly, a hint of a smile appearing on his face.

The somewhat oppressive atmosphere of the court instantly brightened considerably.

Emperor Zhou gently raised a hand, signaling the minister who was speaking below to pause his speech and turned his head towards Zhao Jin, saying,

"Let him come in quickly."

Emperor Zhou, who had experienced fratricide within the royal family, placed exceptional importance on fraternal bonds and kinship.

His special favoritism wasn't limited to the King of South Ming; he showed extraordinary fondness for his own children and even for his nephew, Cheng Guang.

But favoritism differed from one individual to another; for his princes, it was more about encouragement through a mix of treats and reprimands, whereas towards Cheng Guang, it was complete indulgence.

Just like Empress Dowager Li.

Only, not as plainly visible.

Upon the fall of Emperor Zhou's voice, Zhao Jin, beside him, took the cue and promptly announced loudly,

"Announce, the King of South Ming's entry into the hall!"

Once Zhao Jin spoke, the officials below could not help but turn their heads back in surprise.

"The King of South Ming has come to the capital?"

"When did this happen?"

"It must be today, for if it were yesterday, I would have received some news."

"He has arrived quite a bit earlier than expected."

"Not really, quite a few prefectural and ministerial officials have already arrived in the capital; the King of South Ming is actually one of the later ones."

The officials looked back, occasionally murmuring among themselves.

At the top of the court, Cheng Zhihai, standing silently to the side and resting with his eyes closed, had yet to inform Emperor Zhou that the King of South Ming was in fact the beloved crown prince.

If he had informed Emperor Zhou in advance, aside from whether the Emperor would believe it, even if he did, given Emperor Zhou's deep emphasis on affection within his iron yet tender-hearted imperial nature, he would not have the heart to harm the existence of his sole brother, the King of South Ming.

Cheng Zhihai knew it would be better to capture the King of South Ming on the spot, forcing him to reveal his true form.

A swift action before reporting might indeed be better.

Cheng Zhihai suddenly wondered if making a move on the court floor was a good idea.

The thought that sprang to mind was somewhat crazy.

To catch the King of South Ming directly on the court floor was, admittedly, a straightforward idea.

First of all, with many powerful figures on the court floor, the King of South Ming, without the support of the Demonic Race and the Devil Clan behind him, could be considered isolated and without help.

The only trouble would be making a move on the court floor, which would likely bring some infamy onto Cheng Zhihai himself.

At the same time, taking action on the court floor could be seen as disregarding Emperor Zhou, and even if the King of South Ming turned out to be the beloved crown prince, it would diminish the royal dignity.

Even after capturing the King of South Ming and proving he was indeed the beloved crown prince, it would not look good for the Emperor either.

Besides, once Emperor Zhou learned of the matter regarding the King of South Ming and the beloved crown prince, the double blow to him was unpredictable.

One didn't know what sort of rage Emperor Zhou could summon;

Although Cheng Zhihai was by nature rigid and meticulous, always abiding by the rules, his mind was extremely keen.

If he still chose to abide by the rules at this point and captured the King of South Ming in court, he would utterly fail to comprehend imperial thoughts.

Having thought this through, Cheng Zhihai's authoritative gaze shifted towards the outside of the hall.

He intended to see what sort of person this King of South Ming was and then decide when to take action against him.

In Cheng Zhihai's opinion, compared to taking initiative himself, it might be better to wait for the King of South Ming to reveal himself during the royal ceremony.

At that time, many loyalists among the officials who secretly supported the King of South Ming would expose themselves, leading to a sweeping capture.

At the royal ceremony, Cheng Zhihai planned to prepare everything in advance and then grant the credit to Guanger.

In doing so, he could also showcase Guanger's saintliness before the public.

So that not only could he succeed Cheng as the Director of the Bureau of the Lamp, but he might also be rewarded by the Emperor.

With these thoughts, the corners of Cheng Zhihai's mouth inadvertently revealed a hint of a smile.

The officials beside Cheng Zhihai saw the smile suddenly appearing on his face and couldn't help but wonder; they didn't understand why this iron-faced, bloodstained Director of the Bureau of the Lamp suddenly smiled so brightly.

Smiled so eerily...

Some officials merely glanced at Cheng Zhihai before shivering involuntarily and quickly turned their heads away, not daring to look at him again.

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At this moment, the sound of footsteps slowly came from outside the hall.

Step by step by step.

A middle-aged man wearing a deep purple python robe walked slowly into Taihe Hall under the watchful eyes of the officials.

He wore a smile on his face and looked around the circle, his gaze lingered on Cheng Zhihai for a moment upon seeing that Cheng Zhihai's face also bore a smile. He was slightly startled, paused on Cheng Zhihai's face for a while longer, then turned his attention to Emperor Zhou who was on the high platform.

Looking up at Emperor Zhou, the King of South Ming straightened his robe slightly and greeted with a respectful bow, "I have seen Your Majesty."

Emperor Zhou looked at the King of South Ming with a rarely seen warmth in his expression, simply raising his hand slowly and examining the King of South Ming with interest. He smiled and said:

"There's no need for such formality."

"This year, you've arrived a bit earlier than in past years for the imperial family ceremony. I thought you would come after some time."

Keeping his composure, the King of South Ming respectfully replied, "In the past, I would return to my fief immediately after attending the imperial family ceremony. By coming a bit earlier this time, I could also find some time to pay my respects to the Empress Dowager and spend more time with Your Majesty."

Upon hearing the words of the King of South Ming, Emperor Zhou's majestic eyes softened with a hint of contentment and satisfaction.

Despite their limited interactions, Emperor Zhou couldn't help but feel fondness for his brother through the filter of kinship, pleased with the words of the King of South Ming.

Cheng Zhihai, who was below the dais, heard the words of the King of South Ming and couldn't help but pass a peculiar glance.

This King of South Ming, or rather the crown prince, really dared to say such things.

After so many years, it was unclear if his abilities had improved, but the thickness of his skin certainly had.

At the very least, when it came to speaking such insincere words, he could now do it without his face blushing or his heart skipping a beat.

Even Cheng Zhihai had to admit that if Cheng Guang had not told him in advance that this King of South Ming was none other than the crown prince, he would not have been able to guess, nor could he see any resemblance to the crown prince in the King of South Ming.

Emperor Zhou nodded slowly and said to the King of South Ming in a soft voice: "After the court assembly, come with me to see the Empress Dowager."

Having said that, Emperor Zhou's authoritative gaze shifted from the King of South Ming and landed on the official who had been interrupted mid-sentence.

"Continue."

The official hastily nodded his response. Under Emperor Zhou's watchful eye, he felt oddly nervous and repeated the words he had started to say earlier.

After finishing, he quickly retreated back into the ranks.

The court assembly proceeded as usual.

After the assembly was dismissed, the officials dispersed and left.

The King of South Ming followed Emperor Zhou into the inner palace.

Cheng Zhihai stood in place, thoughtfully watching the retreating figure of the King of South Ming.

"Mr. Cheng, what's wrong?"

A voice came.

Cheng Zhihai turned to look and saw it was Shenyong Duke Qiao Zhongqin.

This Duke Tongbob was quite famous among the warriors, with extraordinary influence.

He was a warrior from his own lineage.

Their relationship was good.

Cheng Zhihai smiled in reply, "It's nothing."

Having said that, Cheng Zhihai got up slowly and walked towards the exit of the hall.

Shenyong Duke Qiao Zhongqin nodded slightly, then, as if something occurred to him, he hurriedly followed behind Cheng Zhihai.

"Mr. Cheng, wait, wait," he called.

His appearance and physique were inexplicably similar to Qiao Songshan's, as if they were molded from the same cast, clearly cut from the same cloth.

Cheng Zhihai stopped, looking puzzled at Shenyong Duke Qiao Zhongqin, "What's the matter?"

Shenyong Duke Qiao Zhongqin's face, blackened and filled with tiny scars, showed a bit of embarrassment. After hesitating, he couldn't help but ask: Read the latest fiction on M-VL-em|p,yr

"Mr. Cheng, may I ask how you usually train the Princely Heir?"

"That brat of mine, during the recent martial competition between Great Wei and Great Zhou, utterly disgraced me. These past days I've confined him at home to properly cultivate, but the more I try to discipline him, the less he listens to me."

"I may be good at warfare, but when it comes to teaching a child, I am at a loss. His mother doesn't care or ask; she is too doting. What do you think I should do?"

Shenyong Duke Qiao Zhongqin looked utterly in need of advice.

Initially, Cheng Zhihai's interactions with Shenyong Duke Qiao Zhongqin were merely polite exchanges. He didn't have much interest in further conversations until Shenyong Duke Qiao Zhongqin inquired on how he trained his Princely Heir, which implied that he had done an excellent job with Cheng Guang.

Suddenly, his interest was piqued.

"Well, let me tell you..." Cheng Zhihai's face broke into a smile, his tone brimming with the pride of an accomplished father.

"When it comes to raising a child, a firm hand is necessary!"

"If the child doesn't listen to you, it simply means he hasn't been beaten enough."

"Without discipline, he will end up causing mayhem; without correction, his misbehavior will only escalate."

"Look at my Guanger, he recently made quite a show at the martial competition between the two nations. Just before that, you see, he even uncovered a clue about the Devil Clan smuggling. Lately, he helped me out a great deal."

"It really is..."

Cheng Zhihai wore an expression of nostalgia.

Shenyong Duke Qiao Zhongqin nodded thoughtfully all the while.

He closely followed Cheng Zhihai, listening intently to his words and nodding occasionally, almost ready to take out a notebook and jot down Cheng Zhihai's "teach son secret recipe" for later study at home.

When it was time to part, Cheng Zhihai seemed a bit reluctant to leave.

"Overall, you see, raising a child requires strict discipline. The more you discipline him, the more obedient he becomes, the more he grows. You understand, don't you?"

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Shenyong Duke Qiao Zhongqin nodded and took a deep breath, "I have learned my lesson, Mr. Cheng is indeed formidable, with a proper method to raising his son."

Cheng Zhihai slightly nodded his head, and as he passed by a shop, he saw some pastries for sale that Cheng Guang usually enjoyed eating. After contemplating for a moment, he said,

"Zhongqin, you go back first. I will buy something."

Shenyong Duke Qiao Zhongqin looked puzzled, "Are you buying pastries? The ones Princess Yuemei usually likes aren't from this shop, though."

Cheng Zhihai smiled, "These are the ones Guanger likes."

Upon hearing this, Shenyong Duke Qiao Zhongqin was momentarily dumbfounded. "Mr. Cheng, didn't you say that only through discipline can one succeed? Why are you still buying pastries?"

Cheng Zhihai looked helpless, "That's what I'm saying. Your son, Qiao Songshan, doesn't listen to you, does he? There must be rewards as well as punishments. Go back and think it over."

With that, Cheng Zhihai, carrying the pastries, leisurely walked toward Duke Zhen's Mansion.

Shenyong Duke Qiao Zhongqin stayed where he was, his dark face contorting slightly before he entered the shop and came out with a pile of pastries.

His complexion revealed a thoughtful look as he pondered,

"That damn son of mine usually likes to follow the Princely Heir around. If the Princely Heir likes these pastries, he probably does too."

"Having him eat while crying is surely going to be effective."

Thinking this, Shenyong Duke Qiao Zhongqin got excited and quickly returned to his mansion.

Shortly after,

a voice filled with joy rang out,

"Dad, you are so nice, buying me pastries. These must be expensive, I see my older brother eating them often."

Then, suddenly, the sound of a whip cracking echoed.

Inside, there was silence for a moment.

It seemed as though the person had become stupefied.

"You little brat! Your cultivation has been in vain! You didn't stand out in the martial competition, and your mind isn't any better! You embarrassed me, making your Uncle Wang Chang laugh at me!"

"You better practice diligently, either improve your cultivation or fix your brain!"

"But Dad, how the hell do I 'fix' my brain? I'm not stupid!"

"I don't care! If you don't breakthrough to the Prime God Realm, then don't even think about leaving home!"

In the meantime, there was another round of chaos.

At this time, Cheng Zhihai had no idea that his casual remarks had plunged a father and son into a scene of tender affection and fierce scolding.

Cheng Zhihai walked at a leisurely pace into Duke Zhen's Mansion and went directly to the Million Specie Garden.

Recently in the Million Specie Garden, Cheng Guang asked Song Yunqi to gather some intelligence on the surrounding slaves, planning to search on his own for Zhang Shunlong, the True Sun Martial God.

According to the information provided by the task, the True Sun Martial God Zhang Shunlong was still just a slave at this time.

But timelines were uncertain, and it was possible that he had an epiphany, quickly advanced his cultivation, and left his life of slavery.

Or perhaps he had not yet had his epiphany.

Regardless, attempting to find Zhang Shunlong right now was like searching for a needle in a haystack for Cheng Guang.

But he was not in a hurry.

After all, Zhang Shunlong was still in Great Zhou, and unlike his future reclusive life, it was undoubtedly much simpler for him now to complete the task compared to the moment the system had issued it.

Sooner or later, he would be able to find Zhang Shunlong. It was just a matter of time being sooner or later.

As Cheng Guang was flipping through the documents, Cheng Zhihai appeared quietly in the courtyard.

Looking into the bedroom where Cheng Guang was reading a book, a sense of pride and tenderness flashed through Cheng Zhihai's authoritative eyes.

He thought, perhaps it was due to such diligent efforts that Guanger had found the whereabouts of the crown prince.

If it hadn't been for Guanger, he might have had to expend much more effort to connect the crown prince with the King of South Ming.

Cheng Guang hadn't noticed Cheng Zhihai's presence and continued to flip through his book, while Qing Luan standing behind him did notice.

Just as Qing Luan was about to greet Cheng Zhihai with a bow, Cheng Zhihai raised a finger to his lips and affectionately stood beside Cheng Guang, looking at the intelligence materials he was examining.

Looking at the slave records Cheng Guang was perusing, Cheng Zhihai became curious.

What was Guanger looking at?

These were mere slave records; what was there to see?

Not giving it much thought, Cheng Zhihai watched for a while and, seeing that Cheng Guang had not yet noticed him, he deliberately coughed to get his son's attention.

Cheng Guang, hearing the noise, turned to find Cheng Zhihai standing behind him unexpectedly and chuckled, "Dad, when did you get here?"

Cheng Zhihai produced the pastries from his hand and smiled, "I brought you something to eat."

Upon hearing this, Cheng Guang looked up at the sky.

The corners of his mouth twitched slightly.

"I just finished eating."

Hearing this, Cheng Zhihai became somewhat flustered, standing still, holding the box of pastries, at a loss for what to do.

To elicit such an expression from Cheng Zhihai, the stern and impartial Director of the Bureau of the Lamp, revered by countless court officials, was something perhaps only Cheng Guang in all of Sky-Man could manage.

Seeing this, Cheng Guang didn't let his father feel awkward; he took the box of pastries from Cheng Zhihai and laughed, "Alright, Dad, put it down. If I get hungry, I'll have some more."

Cheng Zhihai quickly nodded, "If you're hungry, have some. Don't worry about what your mother says about you gaining weight. It's fine for a man to be a bit stout."

"But don't overeat, though."

Cheng Guang nodded.

Cheng Zhihai, somewhat embarrassed, scratched his head, unsure of what to say to his son next.

There is often an awkward silence between father and son.

After a moment of silence, Cheng Zhihai, at a loss for words, left as though he had cloistered himself.

Chapter 236: This girl has changed quite a bit for no apparent reason! _5

Cheng Guang looked at the retreating figure of Cheng Zhihai, then glanced at the delicate pastry box nearby, the faint fragrance wafting out was exactly what he had been fond of eating these past few days.

Although Cheng Zhihai was hardly ever home, busy with work, it seemed that his care for him hadn't diminished at all.

A warm feeling welled up in Cheng Guang's heart; then he turned to Qing Luan beside him, "Qing Luan, you eat some first."

"I'm not hungry yet."

After hearing this, Qing Luan pursed her red lips and hurriedly waved her hand, "Princely Heir, this is from the Family Head for you, it wouldn't be right for me to eat it..."

Cheng Guang picked up a piece of red bean cake from the pastry box and brought it to Qing Luan's lips with a smile, "What are you afraid of, you eat first."

Qing Luan could not resist Cheng Guang and took a small bite reluctantly.

The taste was sweet.

It must have been bought from the famous Nanxiang House in the Capital city.

"The Family Head is indeed very good to the Princely Heir."

Qing Luan thought to herself in silence.

Cheng Guang shifted his gaze from Qing Luan and began flipping through the slave documents on the desk, suddenly realizing something.

Oh no, he had forgotten to ask Cheng Zhihai about that matter concerning the King of South Ming, and how he was going to deal with it.

Just now, the Queen of the South Ming had even told her that the King of South Ming had already returned.

Cheng Guang was somewhat curious about this King of South Ming, or rather Crown Prince, whom he had never met before.

The Crown Prince had been in his position for hundreds of years, only to miss out on the throne in the end; the thought was indeed tragic.

Now his plan had been pierced through at a single point by Cheng Guang himself before it could be executed, and at this moment, he was yet unaware, adding misery to his tragedy.

Cheng Guang thought that if Cheng Zhihai did not make a move in these days, perhaps he was waiting for the royal ritual to catch the King of South Ming in one fell swoop.

The royal ritual indeed presented a good opportunity—if preparations were made in advance, not only could they capture the King of South Ming, but they could also strike a blow to the Devil Clan behind him and the Court officials who silently remained loyal to the King of South Ming.

To exhibit the authority of the Great Zhou.

To reinvigorate the iron blood of the Bureau of the Lamp.

The only trouble was that in this period, the Queen of the South Ming shouldn't make any mistakes.

Cheng Guang narrowed his eyes; his Charm Eyes didn't have much effect on the Queen of the South Ming, her Spirit Dao cultivation was extremely high, and the Charm Eyes could at best exert some influence on her. It was nearly impossible to completely control the Queen of the South Ming.

Even with Black Cub by his side, capable of suppressing the Queen of the South Ming's body, it could not suppress her thoughts.

If the Queen of the South Ming were to secretly inform the King of South Ming, he really had no solution.

Not startling the snake with the swish of the grass now was also a gamble on the Queen of South Ming not doing so.

Because it would be pointless for the Queen of South Ming to do so.

She couldn't possibly escape; should she die, the effect of the Different Treasures of Si Tong would wear off, naturally revealing the King of South Ming's identity, and he wouldn't be able to escape either.

If she behaved now, Cheng Guang might even spare her life in the future.

After all, the Queen was an incarnation of the Demon Emperor, she should be clear about such calculations.

Having made his plans, Cheng Guang shook his head with a wry smile.

He looked out at the hazy sky in the distance, a pale aqua hue.

He wondered if he could locate the whereabouts of the future True Sun Martial God, Zhang Shunlong, before the royal ritual.

He hoped he could find out before the royal ritual.

Otherwise, after the royal ritual, he would have to marry Wu Yuemei, the Female Martial God from the Northern Expedition Army.

Marriage was a troublesome affair indeed.

By then, he might not be able to spare the time to deal with this True Sun Martial God.

Cheng Guang's mind was filled with swirling thoughts as his gaze returned to the books and papers on the desk.

...

Time flew since the King of South Ming arrived in the Capital city.

In the Capital city, various powers had gathered, and conflicts erupted frequently, requiring the constables of the Bureau of the Lamp to intervene.

In just this one month, the jails of the Capital city's Bureau of the Lamp were already feeling overcrowded.

Heroes create chaos with martial prowess; cultivators are much more difficult to manage than ordinary people who cannot cultivate.

On the day of the royal ritual, the streets of the Capital city were filled with a solemn and reverent atmosphere, as if even the air had become heavy.

The whole city was under strict control; everyone had to stay indoors, leaving the usually bustling streets of the Capital city eerily empty.

Many people peeked through their windows, observing the scenery of Shenyue Mountain in the distance.

The royal ritual was not held within the Capital city, but rather on the outskirts, in a place forbidden by royalty, known as Shenyue Mountain.

Shenyue Mountain, located to the east of the Capital city, was majestic, towering into the clouds, imposing and spectacular.

Only during the royal ritual could officials and common people alike catch a glimpse of Shenyue Mountain's grandeur; at other times, it was entirely enveloped by prohibitions, shrouded in a thin mist, obscuring its full view, making it indistinct to onlookers.

Early in the morning, Cheng Guang, together with Cheng Zhihai and Wu Yuemei, was dragged from his bed to ascend Shenyue Mountain in good time for the royal ritual.

The first thing that caught his eye was a continuous range of mountains.

The mountain peaks were lush and mist intertwined among them as if it were the Immortal Realm.

Ancient trees reached for the sky in the forest, vast and endless, and the fresh air was refreshing, with a Qi content that seemed much richer than elsewhere.

Walking along the mountain path, one would occasionally encounter some ancient houses, weathered by time but still standing firm, seemingly narrating the grand and enduring history of the Great Zhou Dynasty.

At the peak, there was a vast temple, solemn and magnificent.

That was the place where the royal family conducted sacrificial ceremonies.

Chapter 237: This girl has changed quite a bit for no apparent reason! _6

Cheng Guang was merely an in-law of the dynasty, only able to watch from outside, as, except for the Emperor and a few princes and princesses, no one else could enter.

Moreover, Cheng Guang belonged to the first batch, having arrived at Shenyue Mountain early.

Along with a host of constables from the Bureau of the Lamp responsible for security work, they could be considered the vanguard.

The majority of the rest, including Emperor Zhou, Empress Wang, Empress Dowager Li, Wu Ling, along with hundreds of officials, would all come one after another later on.

Wu Yuemei was also with them while only Cheng Zhihai took Cheng Guang ahead to Shenyue Mountain.

After taking Cheng Guang to a certain location, Cheng Zhihai said with a solemn face, "Guanger, no matter what happens later, you must stay here and not move around carelessly. There will likely be quite a disturbance, but everything is under control."

"Do not panic. I have arranged for some Silver Lantern Catchers to guard you, all of them are powerful sixth or seventh rank experts. Moreover, this is an opportunity to reveal virtue in front of others—if you can kill a few rebellious officials, do so; if not, hide here, understand?"

Cheng Guang nodded slightly, looking very sensible.

Cheng Zhihai was also worried about Cheng Guang, so he came to give a reminder.

Based on his understanding of Cheng Guang, Cheng Guang would not take such risks.

Therefore, he left quickly.

Above and below Shenyue Mountain, a magnificent aura spread out, with the Silver Lantern Catchers from the Bureau of the Lamp lined up from the mountain peak all the way down to its base.

Apart from the constables of the Bureau of the Lamp, the Imperial Guards from the Great Zhou Imperial Palace and some strong individuals from the Martial Academy were temporarily summoned for security duties.

All of this was not a special arrangement made by Emperor Zhou upon learning that the King of South Ming was actually the crown prince—for this royal ceremony, it had always been so.

This shows how much Great Zhou Imperial Family valued this annual royal ceremony.

The royal ceremony was not only a way to comfort the spirits of the ancestors, but also a good opportunity to showcase the majesty of the royal family to the world.

Cheng Guang stood next to a pavilion on the mid-mountain slope, with several respectful Silver Lantern Catchers standing by his side, gazing at the Great Zhou Imperial Palace in the distance.

At this moment—

Clang—

Clang—

Clang—

Three bell sounds emanated from the Divine Palace at the summit of Shenyue Mountain. A magnificent radiance slowly blossomed, illuminating the sky and the countless households of the Capital city.

For a moment, everyone felt the overwhelming imperial might.

Cheng Guang's eyes lifted slightly, looking up at the splendid light above, feeling a faint pressure weighing on his heart.

"The royal ceremony has begun."

Cheng Guang murmured to himself and then shifted his gaze toward the Great Zhou Imperial Palace.

Under the gaze of the Capital city's citizens—

The gates of the Imperial City swung open.

In the solemn and melodious sound of bells—

Emperor Zhou, dressed in a dragon robe and holding a scepter, led the officials out of the resplendent Imperial Palace.

The Emperor's face was serious and sacred, his hair fluttering in the breeze. The half-white hair on his forehead added to his already immense dignity.

As he walked on air, it seemed as if he resonated with the Qi between heaven and earth.

Behind him were a host of Imperial Family members, including Empress Dowager Li, Empress Wang, Wu Yuemei, the King of South Ming, a multitude of princes and princesses. Among them, Cheng Guang also spotted the figure of Wu Ling.

Not having seen her for days, Wu Ling seemed to have grown even more confident.

She wore a light blue symmetrical waist-cinched long skirt, adorned with water-colored jasmine flowers on her sleeves. Her three thousand strands of black hair were tied gently into a loose bun, casually adorned with painted silver ribbons.

A dark sash loosely tied around her waist, with a simple silver butterfly brooch pinned askew, its light tassels falling casually and creating ripples in the breeze. A dot of cinnabar remained between her brows, her graceful figure poised and elegant.

Her breathtaking face bore confidence with a touch of nobility, hardly reminiscent of the timid rabbit from before.

Hiss—

This girl seems to have changed quite a bit.

Is Emperor Zhou so good at nurturing people?

Or is it the nurturing power of authority?

Cheng Guang's eyes narrowed slightly as Emperor Zhou and his entourage drew closer. He looked at Wu Ling and could not discern her current level of cultivation.

Cheng Guang was inwardly shocked.

This was outrageous.

After all, he had the bug-level existence of the ancient Great Xia royal bloodline, and yet, this girl's cultivation has grown to the point of matching his?

Is she in the Ascension Realm?

Or even higher?

As Cheng Guang watched Wu Ling, he began to doubt her strength, feeling a sense of powerlessness.

Indeed, the future Empress of Great Zhou was not such a simple character after all.

If he wanted to take revenge for the arm wrestling humiliation from before, it seemed that now was still not the time.

Meanwhile, as Cheng Guang was looking at Wu Ling, she appeared to notice him as well.

The moment her gaze fell on Cheng Guang, joy surged in her bright eyes, and the majestic nobility on her face immediately crumbled; she seemed eager to run over and greet Cheng Guang, but the situation at her side didn't allow for it.

So, she simply winked at Cheng Guang and cheekily stuck out her tongue.

Cheng Guang: "..."

What is this girl doing?

It's a royal ceremony.

In such a solemn occasion, you playfully stick out your tongue at the Crown Prince?

Cheng Guang felt the desire to clutch his aged heart, unable to withstand such a shock.

Emperor Zhou noticed Wu Ling's action and glanced at Cheng Guang before his gaze straightened and he walked towards the temple at the mountain's peak.

Cheng Guang's eyes also shifted from Wu Ling to the other Imperial Family members beside him.

Wu Yuemei was among them, looking at Cheng Guang with a tender smile as if her eyes had not left him since the beginning.

Chapter 238: This girl has changed quite a bit for no apparent reason! _7

It was only when Wu Yuemei's figure passed by Cheng Guang that she reluctantly moved her gaze away from him.

Cheng Guang felt his old heart could hardly take it anymore.

It was one thing for Wu Ling, but why Wu Yuemei as well? It wasn't as if they had never met before.

He inexplicably felt the same sense of déjà vu as when, in his previous life, a parent watched their child enter the sports field during a school athletic meet.

In the end, Cheng Guang took one last look at the King of South Ming within the crowd.

Due to the presence of the Queen of South Ming by his side, Cheng Guang recognized him at a glance.

The King of South Ming was not bad-looking – he was quite a handsome older man.

In his previous life, he certainly would have been the kind of uncle to make countless young girls swoon.

It was just a pity that he was a back-stabber.

At that moment, the Queen of South Ming maintained her dignity; she had eventually realized the issue with her silk stockings. After taking them off, although the issue could not be immediately undone, she still managed to uphold her air of icy elegance.

Noticing Cheng Guang's glance, she discreetly turned her head and gave Cheng Guang a white-eyed glance.

She found him so annoying.

Cheng Guang smiled but did not engage with the Queen of South Ming.

He was now simply a guard.

Following the Great Zhou Imperial Family, the officials all bowed their heads and followed humbly, not daring to slack in the slightest.

Their procession was majestic, led by the Guard of Honour dressed in brocade and embroidered robes, carrying long spears and halberds, their steps uniform and synchronized. Then came the Emperor's personal guards, clad in black mysterious armor, their eyes emitting a sharp glint, and an aura of terror enveloping them.

When the procession reached the Divine Palace, a magical rainbow, intertwined with celestial qi, burst from the dazzling lights above the palace, suddenly arching across the sky as if the deities between heaven and earth were bestowing their blessings on the royal ceremony.

The officials all looked up in awe, a mix of surprise and reverence in their eyes.

Emperor Zhou also halted his steps, looked up at the rainbow, took a deep breath, and then continued to move forward.

As Emperor Zhou reached the Divine Palace,

the air around was filled with a mysterious and sacred aura.

The buildings lining the road were adorned with cranes holding immortal grass, circling and dancing in the air.

The officials, not qualified to enter the Divine Palace, stopped in front of it.

They all knelt on both sides of the road.

Down the hill, numerous constables from the Bureau of the Lamp and the Imperial Guard knelt down en masse.

Cheng Guang also quietly knelt; this was not the time to stand out.

Emperor Zhou entered the middle of the Divine Palace.

His figure blurred, towering like a deity, too majestic to look upon directly.

All could only see the somewhat hazy silhouette of Emperor Zhou.

Suddenly, a majestic voice rose slowly, the qi vast and shaking the heavens.

"Vast is the heaven and earth."

"The ceremony, divine and august."

"The ancestral spirits are present."

"Bless our imperial house."

"Grant Great Zhou prosperity and the people peace and safety."

The voice of Emperor Zhou, deep and powerful, was laden with authority. His tone was steady and profound. Word by word, unhurried and rhythmic, yet it revealed sincerity.

He longed for Great Zhou to get better.

He longed for Great Zhou to prosper.

He longed for...

The people of Great Zhou to live peacefully and securely.

He longed even more for...

The Great Zhou of the Wu family to forever flourish and prosper.

Listening from halfway up the hill, Cheng Guang could not clearly see Emperor Zhou's face, but he could foresee that Emperor Zhou must be especially earnest, praying for the ancestors to bless Great Zhou and to acknowledge him as Emperor Zhou, even though he was not the eldest legitimate son.

Since ascending the throne, Emperor Zhou's constant dedication might also be due to his anticipation of facing the ancestors in hell one day, not wanting to do so without anything to show for his reign.

While Cheng Guang was contemplating, a sense of alertness arose within him suddenly.

"Boom!!!!"

A qi column, containing a terrifying presence, erupted from above the Divine Palace.

"It's here!"

Cheng Guang's eyes slightly squinted, a hint of a smile on his lips.

"Good, good, good, it really is the Devil Emperor!"

Chapter 239: The World Refuses!

Beneath the vault of heaven, within the Divine Palace.

Blood-colored pillars of light soared into the sky, illuminating the sea of clouds around Shenyue Mountain and forming a thousand miles of blood clouds!

Thousands of lightning bolts twisted and exploded, with many ashen ghostly shadows flickering like smoke!

The void fractured like glass breaking, with the sound of cracking unceasing to the ear.

Suddenly, a tiger's claw emerged from the void, aiming directly for Emperor Zhou in the midst of the Divine Palace.

Mighty winds crossed ten thousand miles as the tiger's roar shook heaven and earth!

The majestic might of the Peerless Devil Emperor breached the Border Area, traversing the boundaries of this world. With overwhelming vigor, even Emperor Zhou was a bit startled for a moment. Although he quickly recovered, the surprise attack from the Devil Emperor was so abrupt that even he was a bit slow to react.

The only weakness of Spirit Dao was the frailty of the physical body. Should it be successfully ambushed by the Devil Emperor, even if Emperor Zhou could severely injure the Devil Emperor, his own body would suffer serious injuries, which could possibly leave lingering ailments!

For a moment, Emperor Zhou's majestic expression turned cold and stern.

He had no time to ponder why this Devil Emperor could breach the Border Area and target the Divine Palace so precisely during the Great Zhou Imperial Family's ceremony.

He also had no time to consider what his fate would be after being ambushed by the Devil Emperor; right now, he could only fight back.

The Emperor Zhou within the Divine Palace, his eyes slightly focusing, waved his hand. Specks of golden starlight emerged from his fingertips, while at the same time, a vast and mighty Divine General's likeness was slowly traced out behind him by his Primordial Spirit.

The Divine General, clad in golden armor with a face both holy and solemn, aimed a furious shout at the Devil Emperor who had broken through the Border Area and soared into the sky.

Outside the Void Rift of the Border Area, a pair of gleaming tiger eyes with a hint of amusement peered through the void, scrutinizing Emperor Zhou.

"If you were prepared, you naturally could have blocked this move of mine," said a voice.

"But now, you are utterly unprepared, and I have been gathering strength for a long time. The difference in our strengths is clear."

A playful laugh echoed into the ears of Emperor Zhou.

Emperor Zhou, however, was not panicked. On his majestic and stern face, there was even a slight smile as he looked up at the rift in the Border Area above his head.

"The Great Zhou is indeed teeming with maggots. One Devil Emperor after another. Last time, that Green Hill Devil Emperor escaped, but you shouldn't be able to. Since you've come, don't bother leaving."

Emperor Zhou's body surged with the Power of the Primordial Spirit, Divine Power Marks flickering on his forehead, and thousands of golden glows scattered around his body. The Divine General that had already burst forth stopped abruptly and, with a roar, exuded an even mightier aura, charging towards the ferocious tiger's claw that had broken through the Border Area.

Seeing this, the luminous tiger eyes behind the rift in the Border Area slightly shifted, hinting at surprise.

It seemed that he hadn't expected Emperor Zhou to not defend at all but instead to launch a full-on attack against him, as if determined to slay him there and then.

A touch of emotion flashed through the radiant tiger eyes. The Devil Emperor knew that if he forcefully clashed with Emperor Zhou, he might be able to severely injure or even kill Emperor Zhou, but he himself would not come out unscathed either.

He would need at least a hundred years to recover from his injuries.

Even with the Devil Clan's long lifespan, they couldn't afford such a waste.

A glimmer of hesitation passed through the radiant tiger eyes, but Emperor Zhou's attack was already within striking distance, leaving no time for second thoughts, and the Devil Emperor could only grit his teeth and clash with Emperor Zhou.

At least, he had the advantage being the one launching the surprise attack.

The tiger's claw, covered in blood-colored fur and possessing a fierce wildness honed over a thousand years, obscured the sky and sun, broke through the Border Area, and hung overhead in the void!

Sharp as a blade, it tore through the air, colliding with the Divine Powers unleashed by Emperor Zhou!

In an instant, the clouds churned. The terrifying aura, like a violent storm, spread from Shenyue Mountain to the surrounding area.

This scene occurred in the blink of an eye, in just a few breaths. The once peaceful and auspicious scene had turned into such a hellish landscape.

The court officials, nobility, regional ministers, and many royal descendants!

Everyone had yet to react!

Then came another series of cracking sounds!

The hastily deployed Divine General's likeness by Emperor Zhou had already been grasped by the blood-colored tiger's claw.

Subsequently, the terrifyingly powerful Divine General's likeness stiffened as the sharp assault left deep scars on the blood-colored tiger's claw.

At the same time, the force of the attack traveled along the tiger's claw, directly through the rift in the Border Area, targeting the master of the radiant tiger eyes.

There was a sound of a painful cry and a roar.

Drops of richly demonic blood from the Devil Clan spilled from the heavens above.

It was as if blood rain had started to fall from the ninth heaven!

The next moment!

The blood-colored tiger's claw suddenly clenched.

The Divine General's likeness instantly shattered!

At the same time, Emperor Zhou's majestic and stern face paled slightly, and his tall figure staggered.

The radiant tiger eyes peering through the rift in the Border Area saw this scene, gleamed with malicious intent, and swung down again, attacking Emperor Zhou directly.

This was, after all, a surprise assault. The attack was so swift and fierce that even Emperor Zhou, for a moment, seemed almost unable to parry it.

Above Shenyue Mountain.

When the court officials saw this scene, they were stunned at the Devil Emperor's ambush of Emperor Zhou. They widened their eyes and could hardly believe everything unfolding before them.

Some stood there dumbfounded, as if turned to stone, frozen in place.

Chapter 240: The People of this World, Won't Agree! 2

Someone almost yanked off their beard in alarm when they stroked it.

Many people felt the battle aura between the Devil Emperor and Emperor Zhou in the sky above, and their faces turned pale with fright.

Under the tremendous pressure as if a mountain of a hundred thousand miles was pressing down on them, their bodies involuntarily became heavy.

"What's going on?"

"Why would the Devil Emperor appear here? To actually attempt to assassinate Your Majesty?"

"It's no good, the Devil Emperor's offensive is too swift; we simply can't stop him! And His Majesty is the only Sky-Man present at the scene!"

The whole Shenyue Mountain ceremony site was full of shock and panic.

The officials discussed among each other, their voices interweaving into a chaotic noise.

After a brief discussion, a crowd of officials and the Imperial Guard rushed up to the Mountain Top Temple to lend a hand to Emperor Zhou.

No matter how little effect they could have, the situation no longer allowed them to retreat.

At the same time, they also felt somewhat relieved.

Fortunately, it was only the Devil Emperor who had taken action.

If it had been a while ago, when the Devil Clan hidden in the canals hadn't been eradicated by the Bureau of the Lamp, who knows how many devils would have surged out by now.

At the same time, they also believed that not even the Bureau of the Lamp could have anticipated this surprise attack on Emperor Zhou in the Divine Palace by the Devil Emperor.

After all, who would have thought that the Divine Palace, considered sacred to the royal family, could have been tampered with!

Everyone's eyes were tightly fixed on the Divine Palace. The figure of Emperor Zhou had already disappeared in the blood mist in the temple.

Even before they reached the temple, people felt that Emperor Zhou was more likely to be in grave danger at this point.

They simply had no way to deal with the Devil Emperor, let alone help Emperor Zhou.

However, in the midst of the chaotic crowd, standing at the forefront of the queue and closest to the Divine Palace, the royal family members, Empress Dowager Li managed to maintain a calm demeanor.

Her aged face was still regal and dignified, her pale purple dragon robe fluttering in the fierce wind, she was the epitome of calmness.

Seeing the sneak attack inside the Divine Palace, her heart was greatly shaken, but beyond the shock, there was little panic.

Instead, she began to ponder.

Who could it be that conspired with the Devil Emperor, set up a trap inside this Divine Palace, and allowed the Devil Emperor to break through the border area barrier and attack Emperor Zhou?

Normally, it was impossible for ordinary people to enter the Divine Palace.

Even if the royal ritual required early preparation, only direct royal family members could enter.

Who could it be?

Empress Dowager Li did not focus on the fate of Emperor Zhou inside the Divine Palace. In her view, although the Emperor might be wounded in a sneak attack by the Devil Clan, he would not die.

This was the confidence Empress Dowager Li had in Emperor Zhou, in Wu Shang, and in this son who had emerged victorious from a sea of corpses and bloodshed.

Empress Dowager Li believed that the prime task at this critical juncture was to identify the traitor within the royal family.

Empress Dowager Li's gaze swept over the royal descendants.

Aside from some royal relatives who clearly had no access, only those close to her were possible suspects.

Wu Yuemei, the newly appointed Crown Prince Wu Ling, the first-born son Wu Ming, Wu Ming of South Ming...

Wu Yuemei was slightly flustered at the moment, endlessly muttering "Guanger", and if not for the current situation not allowing it, Empress Dowager Li suspected Wu Yuemei would have run down the mountain to find Cheng Guang, the Town-Nation Duke's Heir, to keep him safe.

The gaze of Empress Dowager Li directly passed over Wu Yuemei.

It was not very likely to be the newly appointed Crown Prince Wu Ling either. Although his origin was uncertain, he had been practicing in seclusion this whole time. And as Crown Prince, even if he came to the Divine Palace, she would have been informed; his moves could not have been concealed from her.

And the first-born son Wu Ming.

Empress Dowager Li frowned slightly and noticed that the still astute-looking Wu Ming had already turned wooden, his legs trembling uncontrollably after Emperor Zhou had been ambushed.

Forget it, this unfortunate child couldn't be possible.

After all, I still have some discernment.

Empress Dowager Li saw that some princes and princesses were even less composed than Wu Ming, with many young princes and princesses directly crying in the arms of their Noble Consorts.

And King of South Ming...

Empress Dowager Li glanced at King of South Ming and saw him looking at the Divine Palace in tight tension, constantly twirling the Jade Bead in his hand.

He seemed anxiously concerned about the fate of Emperor Zhou.

It made Empress Dowager Li frown slightly.

She knew her own son well,

Even though he wasn't her biological child, she was extremely familiar with each Prince, and the relationship between King of South Ming and Emperor Zhou was not good.

Prior to Emperor Zhou's ascension, King of South Ming had even worried that Emperor Zhou, Wu Shang, would feel threatened by his interest in the throne and choose to kill him as a precaution.

He even ran to her, crying, begging her to spare his life.

The always timid King of South Ming facing the battle between the Devil Emperor and the Sky-Man, showing only tension and concern but no fear or panic?

In all this, Empress Dowager Li sensed something amiss and could hardly believe it, for despite many years of fear and dread, Emperor Zhou had never treated King of South Ming poorly.

Why would he collude with the Devil Clan to assassinate Wu Shang?

And it didn't end there.

For a moment, Empress Dowager Li's breathing became hurried, and deep sorrow permeated her heart.

"Nan'er, did you do this?"

Ultimately, Empress Dowager Li could not remain composed. A slight motion rippled across her elegant aged face, as she did not look towards King of South Ming, but towards the Divine Palace.