

My System 251

Chapter 251: Something's Not Right, Even Small Gestures Don't Work _6

But this Cheng Zhihai clearly expects me to attend Cheng Guang's wedding in my capacity as the Emperor.

The accompanying gift cannot be merely perfunctory.

Even a token gesture won't suffice.

It has to be a grand gesture at the very least.

This is bad.

Emperor Zhou fell silent, watching the stiff expression on Cheng Zhihai's face break into a bright smile, feeling rather headache.

He had intended to get away with something cursory, but now it seemed that was no longer possible.

Those who can have the Emperor attend their wedding, under the heavens, are none other than princes and princesses.

If Cheng Zhihai hadn't mentioned it, Emperor Zhou might have sent some gifts as a simple gesture, but he would definitely not have attended in person.

But now, not only does he have to personally attend Cheng Guang's wedding, but he also has to bring along a generous gift.

Emperor Zhou now felt that his private treasury was about to suffer significantly.

.....

Cheng Guang was completely unaware of what was happening at the court.

He had already returned to Duke Zhen's Mansion with the Queen of the South Ming and went straight to the Million Specie Garden.

As for the Queen of the South Ming, Cheng Guang had yet to decide what to do with her.

Keeping her by his side, he felt uneasy.

But if he harbored thoughts of killing her, he feared that before he could even lay hands on the Queen of the South Ming, a Demon Emperor might be provoked. Cheng Guang, a minor player, could handle someone like Wu Ling, a small rabbit, but facing a Demon Emperor would be suicidal.

Even if he killed the Queen of the South Ming, he would attract the attention of a Demon Emperor.

Having just managed to rid himself of the back-stabber Crown Prince, who liked to stab people in the back, Cheng Guang did not want to provoke a Demon Emperor and experience assassination attempts once again.

However, having said that.

Even if he didn't kill the Queen of the South Ming now, when that Abyss Demon Emperor notices something off about this incarnation of the Queen, would he let Cheng Guang go?

The answer is clear, he would not.

So, Cheng Guang not acting against the Queen of the South Ming was merely a delay, accomplishing nothing critical.

Cheng Guang sighed. If there was time to be delayed, he would delay it.

He would keep it quiet for as long as possible.

Even a brief period of peace was good.

He didn't know what kind of chaos being targeted by the Abyss Demon Emperor in the future would bring.

Cheng Guang had Black Cub cast a Qi suppression on the Queen of the South Ming, preventing her from using much of her power, and then he hid in his bedroom.

The moment the King of South Ming died, the voices of the system prompts had already sounded in his mind.

The task of killing the King of South Ming, which had taken so much time, was finally settled.

In the midst of the royal ceremony with numerous watchers and listeners, it wasn't appropriate for him to claim his system reward.

Now that he was back at the mansion, Cheng Guang couldn't wait, and immediately upon returning to his bedroom, began to relish the joy of opening a parcel.

"System, claim the task reward!"

Cheng Guang's words fell.

In front of him, strands of golden light unexpectedly emerged from the void, one after another, flowing forth.

Slowly coalescing.

They formed the shape of a sword.

The reward for this task of killing the King of South Ming was a famous sword called Tongyu.

Cheng Guang was not entirely clear about the level of a famous sword.

As the sword blade slowly took shape in front of him, he had not yet approached to feel the ancient and dignified aura emanating from the Tongyu Sword.

The blade seemed to be made from the purest mithril, adorned with a complex and intricate cloud pattern. These cloud patterns seemed to be flowing spiritual energy, trailing over the surface of the blade.

The hilt had the fierce appearance of a formidable beast, with a somewhat ferocious visage.

Cheng Guang slowly reached out and grasped the Tongyu Sword.

The moment Cheng Guang's fingertips touched the Tongyu Sword, it shifted from illusion to reality, becoming tangible.

At the same time, Cheng Guang felt an affinity with the sword.

He was about to draw the Tongyu Sword to test its sharpness.

A surge of information suddenly flowed from the sword into his mind.

[Tongyu Sword Decision]

The Tongyu Sword Decision, named after the Tongyu Sword.

Using Qi to control the sword, fusing sword energy with Qi to unleash the strongest combat power.

Cheng Guang merely glanced at the Tongyu Sword Decision and found it incredibly complex and abstruse.

It was no less difficult to comprehend than the Heavenly Gang Star Fight.

To master the Tongyu Sword Decision, it seemed he would need to spend additional time.

However, once he learned the Tongyu Sword Decision and combined it with the Tongyu Sword, he could foresee his strength climbing several more levels.

Having more techniques was always beneficial.

Cheng Guang contemplated thoughtfully, etching the Tongyu Sword Decision deep in his memory, and then examined the Tongyu Sword in his hand.

As he held the Tongyu Sword, Cheng Guang could distinctly feel as if his soul had merged into one entity with the sword, establishing an inexplicable connection.

At the same time, the Tongyu Sword was enveloped in strands of Qi.

It was as if the sword could breathe like a living being, inhaling and exhaling Qi. The sharp aura all over it was gradually growing stronger.

Cheng Guang himself also seemed to benefit from some feedback.

Noticing this, Cheng Guang exclaimed, "This sword can actually aid in my cultivation."

Normal swords, ordinary weapons, even if imbued with many precious resources and materials, couldn't achieve what the Tongyu Sword accomplished.

It was no different from rare Different Treasures.

Examining the Tongyu Sword, Cheng Guang realized that perhaps the Tongyu Sword was a sort of Different Treasure in itself?

Cheng Guang clicked his tongue in wonder and fastened the Tongyu Sword at his waist.

Chapter 252: Something's Not Right, Even Small Gestures Don't Work _7

Bits of Qi surged into his body, enhancing his cultivation.

Paired with the Heavenly Silk Clothing, even if he remained motionless all day, his cultivation progress was still several times faster than that of an ordinary person.

Cheng Guang walked to the bedchamber mirror and sized himself up.

With a sword and now paired with a fan, he indeed had the appearance of a graceful young master.

Cheng Guang was quite pleased.

"Princely Heir, the meal is ready. It's time to eat."

Outside the room, Qing Luan's voice called out.

Hearing the voice, Cheng Guang pushed the door open and walked out; in the nearby pavilion, Qing Luan, dressed in a green robe with a light white sash around her waist, was bending over to place freshly stir-fried dishes onto the table.

Black Cub circled around Qing Luan, smelling the scent of the food, staring with eager dog eyes, but unable to eat, frantically jumping up and down in frustration.

Cheng Guang sat down at the table, and Qing Luan carefully handed him his bowl and chopsticks.

Cheng Guang ate only a little.

He wasn't particularly hungry.

The day had been mainly mentally exhausting, rather than physically.

Qing Luan asked curiously about what had happened that day.

Cheng Guang, with nothing better to do, talked to Qing Luan about the events; as she listened, she sometimes covered her red lips and chuckled, sometimes frowned in worry, and sometimes exclaimed in surprise.

It was an interesting and peaceful time.

Once the conversation came to an end and the meal was nearly finished, Qing Luan fed the remaining food to Black Cub and sat with Cheng Guang in the pavilion, sipping tea, resting a while.

Looking at the courtyard, where the noble Queen of the South Ming was staying, Qing Luan couldn't help but ask, "Princely Heir, what will happen to the Queen of the South Ming in the future?"

"Will you just let her stay in the Duke's Mansion?"

Cheng Guang glanced at the Queen of the South Ming, sipped his tea slowly, and nodded.

"I plan to do so for the time being."

"After all, the Queen of the South Ming is an incarnation of the Demon Emperor. With the issue of the crown prince already resolved, there's no need to let her leave Duke Zhen's Mansion."

"Being able to watch over her closely, if any unexpected situation arises, we can suppress it immediately here in Duke Zhen's Mansion, preventing any chaos."

Qing Luan nodded slightly.

At that moment, Song Yunqi's figure suddenly emerged from the shadows.

"Princely Heir."

Song Yunqi called out.

Cheng Guang turned his head, glanced sideways at Song Yunqi, "What is it?"

With respect, Song Yunqi lowered his head to Cheng Guang's gaze and said, "Princely Heir, the slave named Zhang Shunlong you ordered to be found has indeed been located."

Hearing Song Yunqi's words, Cheng Guang's eyes brightened.

He had been searching on his own before because the entire Bureau of the Lamp was busy searching for the crown prince and couldn't spare time to help him look for Zhang Shunlong, the future True Sun Martial God.

After he informed Cheng Zhihai that the King of South Ming was the crown prince, the Bureau of the Lamp had some spare hands; he then asked Song Yunqi to help him search for Zhang Shunlong.

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Cheng Guang had already begun to lose hope and was considering organizing a search team himself after the South Ming king's issue was resolved.

But unexpectedly, just as the matter with the South Ming king concluded, Song Yunqi brought back good news.

"Well done. Where is he?"

Song Yunqi replied with respect, "Princely Heir, this Zhang Shunlong is in Ping'an County near the Capital city, as a slave, but..."

At this point, Song Yunqi's expression became somewhat strange.

"It's just that this Zhang Shunlong doesn't seem to be an ordinary slave."

Hearing this, Cheng Guang couldn't help but lift his gaze.

"Not an ordinary slave?"

"What do you mean?"

Before Song Yunqi could reply, Cheng Guang, recalling the information from the system task prompt, clicked his tongue.

Could it be that Zhang Shunlong had already had a sudden enlightenment?

Chapter 253: The Way of the Official is Not So Simple

Cheng Guang's heart began to harbor some doubts as his gaze settled on Song Yunqi, waiting for his answer.

Under Cheng Guang's scrutiny, Song Yunqi hesitated for a moment before he said with an odd expression, "Princely Heir, this Zhang Shunlong is different from the other slaves; he seems to have been demoted to slavery."

"Demoted to slavery?" Cheng Guang frowned slightly.

Song Yunqi nodded slightly, "Yes, Zhang Shunlong's family, his father, was a common yamen runner in Ping'an County who had committed a mistake. His father was thrown into the dungeon and was awaiting execution, and he himself was demoted to a slave."

"A mistake?" Cheng Guang wondered.

What kind of mistake would cause the yamen to send a runner directly to the dungeon and even demote his offspring to slavery? It was like trying to eradicate them root and branch.

Song Yunqi continued, "According to the intelligence, it seems that Zhang Shunlong's father, Zhang Heling, stole a large amount of silver from the county yamen's treasury. Under the laws of Great Zhou, those who commit theft in their office of guard are severely dealt with, hence the Ping'an County Magistrate incarcerated him in the dungeon and scheduled his execution soon."

"Afterward, the constables discovered that the silver Zhang Heling had stolen was mostly squandered by Zhang Shunlong, so they treated him as an accomplice and demoted him to slavery as well."

As Cheng Guang heard this, his brows knitted tighter, and for some reason, he felt that something was amiss.

According to the information in the mission prompts, Zhang Shunlong's character was rather decent.

The saying goes, 'Like father, like son.' If Zhang Shunlong's character was decent, it didn't make sense that his father would be such a rascal.

Moreover, it didn't seem likely that Zhang Heling, a yamen runner, would commit the crime of theft from the treasury.

A common man like him neither needed that much silver nor had the courage or capacity to steal huge amounts of silver from the county yamen's treasury.

With many doubts in his mind, Cheng Guang looked at Song Yunqi and asked, "How far is Ping'an County from here?"

Song Yunqi replied respectfully, "It's about a few hours away from the capital city."

Cheng Guang nodded slightly and turned to Qing Luan, "Qing Luan, prepare the horses. We shall go to Ping'an County together."

Qing Luan showed a trace of surprise upon hearing this, seemingly not expecting that the Princely Heir would take her along this time. She nodded happily, lifted her skirt hem, and quickly went out to fetch the horses.

At this moment, Song Yunqi, hearing that the Princely Heir was going on a long journey, couldn't help but feel his heart lift. The recent event concerning the mourning for the crown prince had just concluded, and many people from all over Great Zhou were watching the Princely Heir, who had emerged prominently from this event.

If the Princely Heir encountered any mishap on this trip, Song Yunqi would indeed have a hard time absolving himself from blame.

He immediately summoned the Bureau of the Lamp guards in secret, preparing to escort the Princely Heir along the way.

Cheng Guang did not notice Song Yunqi's actions, as his eyes fell on the Queen of the South Ming standing to the side, and then he lowered his gaze and reached out to rub Black Cub's dog head.

"Little Black, you take good care of my aunt here, and don't let her run around, understand?" Cheng Guang said to Black Cub.

It was clear that Black Cub understood Cheng Guang's words, as the dog's face showed a human-like look of resignation, and he lowered his head, whimpering softly.

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It seemed to indicate he understood.

The Queen of the South Ming, standing beside him, heard Cheng Guang's words and her exquisite and noble face showed an expression of helplessness.

"You little rascal, are you trying to confine your aunt to this house?" she said.

Cheng Guang did not appear embarrassed but smiled and replied, "Essentially."

"Every man dreams of secluding a beauty in a golden house."

The Queen of the South Ming's delicate eyebrows furrowed slightly at his words and she huffed, turning her head away.

She remained silent thereafter.

Even if Cheng Guang were to let her go, she couldn't leave for the time being.

Returning to the Ten-Layered Demon Sea would most likely mean death.

To stay here, before the true self's consciousness descends, life would go on for her, which wasn't so bad after all.

At most, her freedom would be somewhat limited.

The Queen of the South Ming actually didn't mind.

She had a vague feeling that her true self would soon realize that the King of South Ming had died and that her avatar was acting unusually, perhaps soon to descend consciousness upon this avatar.

By then, Black Cub would not be able to suppress the true self.

And Cheng Guang, the Princely Heir to Duke of the State, might not fare well either.

The Queen of the South Ming pondered this within her heart, but showed no sign of intending to caution Cheng Guang.

Her lips curled into a faint smile, her aura of dignity undiminished.

.....

Cheng Guang, accompanied by Qing Luan and a group of guards including Lin Cheng, rode horses and left the capital city.

Cheng Zhihai and Wu Yuemei were still in the Imperial Palace and had not returned to Duke Zhen's Mansion when he left the capital city. Upon their return to the mansion and finding Cheng Guang absent, they would likely send people to look for him.

They might even have some needless concern over his whereabouts.

At the moment, Cheng Guang couldn't worry about that much. Having found out Zhang Shunlong's whereabouts, he couldn't afford to wait for Cheng Zhihai and Wu Yuemei to return from the Imperial Palace, as that might cause further inexplicable delays.

Having left the capital city, they traveled along the official road for several hours and soon approached an ancient, bustling county town.

When Cheng Guang and his party arrived in Ping'an County, passersby who saw Cheng Guang's attire and his entourage of guards hastily stepped aside, frightened.

"Is that someone from Duke Zhen's Mansion?"

"Why has the Princely Heir to Duke Zhen come to Ping'an County today?"

"Quickly make way, be sure not to obstruct the path of the nobleman."

As people hurriedly cleared the way amidst their alarm, they were careful not to impede Cheng Guang, for to them, the Princely Heir of Duke Zhen was a personage of enormous importance.

Chapter 254: The Way of Being an Official is Not That Simple 2

Cheng Guang paid no mind to the whispers of the surrounding people and casually grabbed someone to ask for the location of the Ping'an County Office.

The man hurriedly pointed Cheng Guang in the right direction.

Cheng Guang nodded slightly, expressing his thanks with civil courtesy and led his entourage towards the Ping'an County Office.

The person Cheng Guang had asked for directions now felt as if he were dreaming.

The Princely Heir had thanked him?

Ordinarily, the powerful elites hardly took commoners into account, yet the Princely Heir, a top-ranking noble of Great Zhou, was quite polite to them, the common folks.

For a moment, the man felt as if he were floating on air.

If he spoke of this encounter in the future, he could say he had spoken with the Princely Heir, and that would certainly bring him prestige.

Cheng Guang was unaware of the man's reaction behind him; he did not realize that a casual word of thanks could astonish a commoner so greatly.

Before long, following the man's directions, Cheng Guang arrived at the Ping'an County Office.

In front of the Ping'an County Office stood vermilion gates guarded by a pair of majestic stone lions, each several meters tall, with several constables stationed at the front door.

The constables of the County Office were vastly different from those of the Bureau of the Lamp.

One might even say they were as different as heaven and earth, not to be compared.

When the constables at the County Office saw Cheng Guang and his group, they were momentarily taken aback. Realizing Cheng Guang's appearance, they rubbed their eyes in disbelief.

The Princely Heir, Cheng Guang, though the constables had not met him, were amazed by the nobleman's handsome features and the dignified aura he exuded.

Qing Luan stepped forward, her red lips parting slightly, "My Princely Heir wishes to see the County Magistrate. Is he within the Office?"

Upon hearing Qing Luan's words, a constable took a moment to respond, not because of the request, but because he was taken aback by the beauty of this lady. He quickly collected himself, bowed his head, and dared not gaze upon her any longer.

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He was aware that the group before him might be of no small standing, certainly not ones he, a mere patrol officer, could afford to offend.

"The County Order is inside. I will go and announce you now; please wait here for a moment," he said.

Qing Luan frowned slightly at these words, giving the constable an irritated glance.

Did this insignificant constable just dare make her Princely Heir wait here?

Not to mention meeting a mere County Magistrate, even if the Princely Heir were to meet with the current Prime Minister, he would not be expected to wait outside the door.

She was about to reprimand the man when Cheng Guang stopped her, shaking his head nonchalantly.

Although Ping'an County was located at the feet of the Capital city, it was worlds apart from the Capital; it was natural that few in a minor county like Ping'an would recognize him, almost none.

He did not expect everyone to recognize him; waiting outside for a while was not an issue.

Cheng Guang did not have to wait long before a middle-aged man accompanied by several officials, hurried out carrying a cyan official robe.

The middle-aged man was imposing, with neatly trimmed whiskers on his upper lip trembling slightly as he ran.

When the middle-aged man saw the group standing outside the County Office,

even before he approached, he could sense the formidable presence emanating from the group.

His gaze fell upon Cheng Guang at the head of the party, and his face paled a shade, recognizing the Princely Heir's identity.

He rushed forward, bending at the waist before he even reached Cheng Guang, his face the very picture of humility.

"Ping'an County Order Li Mingtang has met the Princely Heir. For not having the honor to welcome you from a distance, I hope the Princely Heir will not take offence," he said.

Cheng Guang was unconcerned, instead curious how this County Order knew him.

Seeing Cheng Guang's confusion, Li Mingtang bowed slightly and said, "I had the fortune to see the Princely Heir once in the Capital city, though the Princely Heir may not remember this minor official."

After speaking, Li Mingtang quickly stepped aside, respectfully ushering Cheng Guang into the County Office.

Although Li Mingtang was not entirely sure of Cheng Guang's purpose in coming to the Ping'an County Office, he dared not show the slightest negligence.

This Nobleman could crush him with a mere spit; to have such a person wait outside the door—while even the current Prime Minister would not have the audacity—was done by him, a mere County Magistrate.

Even though he had not given the order and that the men below did not recognize Cheng Guang, any reason was irrelevant; it was a slight against the Princely Heir.

Li Mingtang raised his hand to wipe the fine beads of sweat on his forehead with his sleeve. Fortunately, the Princely Heir was an amiable character and had not taken offence; otherwise, this incident could have caused him substantial grief.

He hurriedly led Cheng Guang into the Office. Passing by a few constables at the entrance, he bit his lip in frustration and said:

"You few, be more observant next time. When such a noble visits the Office, even if you do not recognize him, you should invite him inside!"

"If there is a next time, take your stipend and leave on your own accord!"

Upon hearing these words from the County Magistrate, Li Mingtang, the officers' faces turned several shades paler. They were only temporary workers, having paid a not insubstantial sum of Silver Taels and pulled numerous strings to secure their positions. If they were to lose their jobs as constables, their entire family's livelihood would be at risk.

They shuddered uncontrollably.

Observing Li Mingtang's cautious manner as he followed behind Cheng Guang, the Princely Heir, they exchanged glances, minds filled with woes they could not voice.

Though they had guessed this party to be of extraordinary status, they never imagined standing before them was an individual whose presence reduced the County Magistrate to such humiliation.

Inside the County Office.

Li Mingtang carefully offered Cheng Guang the seat of honor and ordered the officials to serve him and his party a cup of clear tea. He, along with the assistant county magistrate and the chief clerk, did not dare to sit; instead, they stood beside them, stiff as if being punished.

Chapter 255: The Path to Becoming an Official is Not So Simple_3

Cheng Guang couldn't help shaking his head with a chuckle as he saw the situation, "Please, have a seat. I haven't come over for anything serious this time."

Upon hearing these words from Cheng Guang, Li Mingtang exchanged a quick glance with the county magistrate sitting beside him and slowly took his seat.

Even after sitting down, his body remained somewhat tense, excessively nervous, to the point where sweat involuntarily broke out on his forehead.

He couldn't help being nervous.

If he could please this Nobleman who had arrived in Ping'an County unexpectedly, it would be no exaggeration to say it was like stepping onto the heavens.

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But if he were to offend him, he feared his life would be over.

Cheng Guang, seeing the reserved expressions of Li Mingtang and the others, didn't mind and lifted his teacup, took a sip of the clear tea, and then said:

"This time, I mainly wanted to find a man named Zhang Shunlong."

"Zhang Shunlong?" County Magistrate Li Mingtang was momentarily stunned upon hearing Cheng Guang's words.

It was certainly unexpected that Cheng Guang's reason for coming to Ping'an County was merely to find someone like Zhang Shunlong.

As soon as Li Mingtang heard this name, he felt it was quite familiar.

Li Mingtang turned his head to look towards the county magistrate beside him.

"Lord Yang, have you ever heard of this man?"

The county magistrate was an old man with white hair and a thin frame, sporting a goatee.

Upon hearing Li Mingtang's question, he too began to furrow his brows in thought, then seemed to realize something, and hastily said, "This Zhang Shunlong, seems to be the son of Zhang Heling."

"The son of Zhang Heling?" Li Mingtang inwardly clicked his tongue, realizing who Zhang Shunlong might be after hearing what Yang, the County Magistrate, had said.

Li Mingtang turned his gaze back to Cheng Guang and promptly said, "Princely Heir, I am also aware of this Zhang Shunlong."

"His father, Zhang Heling, stole from the treasury, and because he spent a great deal of the Silver, he was demoted to a slave."

Song Yunqi had previously informed Cheng Guang about this, so Cheng Guang was naturally aware of the situation and nodded in non-surprise before asking, "Where is he now?"

Li Mingtang quickly gestured for Yang, the County Magistrate, to check.

Yang, the County Magistrate, stood up, summoned several officials to sift through the records, and after interrogating a few constables in detail, came back swiftly with the results and respectfully reported.

"Princely Heir, Lord County Magistrate, Zhang Heling, after stealing the treasury Silver Tael, was imprisoned in the dungeon, and his son Zhang Shunlong, having spent a large amount of the treasury Silver, was punished with the same crime and demoted to a slave. Later on, he was bought by the Liu Family within the county."

"He should now be working at the Liu Family."

After Yang, the County Magistrate, finished speaking, Li Mingtang looked towards Cheng Guang and asked, "Princely Heir, do you need us to summon Zhang Shunlong for you?"

Cheng Guang shook his head, "We'll go and see for ourselves."

"What sort of background does this Liu Family have?" Cheng Guang glanced sideways, looking at Yang, the County Magistrate.

Yang, the County Magistrate, quickly responded, "This Liu Family is just an ordinary gentry within Ping'an County. It is said that their third daughter has recently caught the eye of a Nobleman, and they've been somewhat prestigious in the county these days."

Cheng Guang nodded slightly upon hearing this.

Zhang Heling stole from the treasury, and then Zhang Shunlong spent a large amount of the Silver and was demoted to a slave before being bought by the Liu Family.

All these events seemed so abrupt.

Even Cheng Guang himself felt something was off at first glance, and as the County Magistrate, Li Mingtang couldn't possibly fail to see any problems.

So before leaving, Cheng Guang asked, "Lord Li, is there not an issue with Zhang Heling's theft from the treasury?"

Li Mingtang obviously did not expect Cheng Guang to inquire about Zhang Heling's theft of the treasury Silver. He was taken aback at first but then hurriedly spoke up.

"Princely Heir, we too were shocked by Zhang Heling's theft from the treasury. We never expected such an ordinarily honest-looking man to commit such a deed."

"But the evidence later was conclusive, not only were Zhang Heling's own footprints found in the treasury, but some remaining official Silver was also found in his house."

"So he was directly convicted."

Cheng Guang then asked, "Did he ever claim that he was wronged?"

Li Mingtang replied with a wry smile, "Princely Heir, it's quite normal that almost every criminal claims to be wronged after being caught. We speak with evidence here."

Cheng Guang nodded noncommittally and stepped out of the door.

Li Mingtang quickly followed Cheng Guang with a retinue of officials, keeping just half a step behind Cheng Guang, and led him towards the Liu Family residence.

Yang, the County Magistrate, and the chief clerk stayed at the county office and did not leave.

Yang, the County Magistrate, watched Li Mingtang follow the Princely Heir away and slightly furrowed his pale eyebrows, stroking his white goatee, and muttered to himself.

"This honorable Princely Heir has come to seek Zhang Shunlong and inquired about his father Zhang Heling's case; could it be that there is something fishy about this Silver theft case?"

"Lord Sun, perhaps we should re-examine this case," he said to the chief clerk beside him."

The chief clerk, a rather plump man dressed in a thin green official robe, which ballooned out due to his girth, had a strange look on his face upon hearing Yang, the County Magistrate's words, and seemed uncertain about the distinguished Princely Heir coming to the county office to find Zhang Shunlong. However, he still said:

"Forget it, the evidence is conclusive, and the dust has already settled. Zhang Heling is going to be executed soon."

"The Princely Heir didn't say anything, nor did he tell us to re-examine the case, so let's leave it be."

Yang, the County Magistrate, stroking his goatee, still felt something was off, pondering for a moment before reluctantly nodding.

"If the Princely Heir asks us to review it, we will. If not, let it be as it is."

"Without conclusive evidence, I would never have believed that Zhang Heling would commit theft from the treasury."

Chapter 256: The Path to Being an Official is Not So Simple 4

Liu Family's mansion was located not far from the Ping'an County Office, and it seemed to have been recently renovated. With blue tiles, red doors, and green stones, the mansion looked quite imposing.

They had arrived at the Liu Family's mansion.

This time, there was no need for Qing Luan to knock on the door.

Seeing the figure of Li Mingtang, the servants standing in front of the mansion did not need to make a sound before one went in to report, and an old man who looked like the steward of the Liu Family hurried out to greet Li Mingtang with a bow.

"County Magistrate, may I ask what brings you to the Liu Family's mansion so suddenly today?"

Li Mingtang saw the steward of the Liu Family come out to greet him, completely ignoring the Princely Heir by his side, who was handsome, extraordinary in status, and with a very approachable demeanor, and cursed in his heart, wondering if these people were all blind.

They couldn't tell who the true dignitary was!

Li Mingtang immediately spoke up, "It's not I who have business with the Liu Family; it's this Princely Heir who has matters to attend to here."

"Summon your Family Head."

After Li Mingtang spoke, it seemed that the Liu Family's steward finally noticed Cheng Guang standing beside him.

At the sight of Cheng Guang's splendid garments and the gentle smile on his handsome face which made him look very approachable, one could feel an astonishing noble aura without even approaching him.

The old eyes of the Liu Family's steward contracted, wondering what sort of nobleman this was to make Li Mingtang, the County Magistrate, treat him so carefully.

Princely Heir...

There were indeed not many who could be called a Princely Heir.

The steward, merely a minor character, had limited horizons and could not ascertain Cheng Guang's identity, but he dared not neglect his duties. He hurriedly greeted Cheng Guang and invited everyone into the mansion.

Although the Liu Family's mansion was not large, especially compared to the much larger Duke Zhen's Mansion, it was well-furnished with everything that should be there, despite its small size.

After entering the Liu Family's reception hall and taking their seats,

a middle-aged man, accompanied by several women and elders, walked in.

Their gaze first fell upon Li Mingtang.

They were surprised to see the County Magistrate visit the Liu Family's mansion so unexpectedly.

They hadn't expected that what the steward had said was true.

A little unsure why the County Magistrate had suddenly come to the Liu Family's mansion, they were mystified and were just about to greet Li Mingtang and say something.

But Li Mingtang was already feeling helpless.

In Ping'an County, he was considered someone of importance, but outside of it, he didn't amount to much.

In front of the Princely Heir, he was even less significant than a sesame seed.

One after another, these people were elevating his status too highly, greeting him first. If this offended the Princely Heir, he truly wanted to execute everyone in the Liu Family.

Just as the Family Head of the Liu Family was about to speak, Li Mingtang quickly stood up and introduced him:

"Liu Hao, this is the Town-Nation Duke's Heir. He has come to your mansion today in search of someone." Explore more adventures at [m,v1e-novelbin.net](http://m.v1e-novelbin.net)

When Liu Hao, the Family Head of the Liu Family, heard Li Mingtang's words, he was immediately stunned.

The Duke of the State's Heir?

Liu Hao initially did not react, but the elders and women beside him showed a slight change in expression, their legs growing weak with shock.

The Duke of the State's Heir had been the talk of the Capital city recently, an admired figure known by all.

Even if they were not well-informed, being in Ping'an County, which was relatively close to the Capital, they still heard stories about the Heir.

The thought of this prestigious figure, whom they usually wouldn't even dream of seeing, let alone listen to stories about and feel content, appearing today in their mansion, made them feel as though they were dreaming.

Though Liu Hao hesitated for a moment, he quickly regained his composure, filled with surprise and curiosity as to why the prestigious Heir had suddenly visited their Liu Family.

The Liu Family was just an ordinary household, though they had connections to a nobleman, they were far from being a family of great power and prestige.

They could not afford a major shock.

Liu Hao carefully turned his gaze to Cheng Guang, who was sitting at the head of the table, composed and indifferent.

Just one look at Cheng Guang made Liu Hao feel as if he were facing a mountain.

This kind of nobleman could claim his life with a single word.

An inexplicable pressure settled on his heart.

Liu Hao swallowed hard and cautiously inquired, "Princely Heir, may I ask whom you are seeking in the Liu Family?"

Cheng Guang looked up and glanced at Liu Hao.

"Do you know of Zhang Shunlong?"

Upon hearing Cheng Guang's words, Liu Hao's expression was one of astonishment; it was clear he had not expected to hear the name Zhang Shunlong from the mouth of such an esteemed Princely Heir.

Liu Hao quickly nodded, "Yes, Princely Heir, Zhang Shunlong is a servant in our household."

Cheng Guang felt somewhat relieved upon hearing this from Liu Hao.

Indeed, with Zhang Shunlong found, the matters following would be much easier to handle.

The task of making Zhang Shunlong's acquaintance seemed not to be difficult after all.

Cheng Guang casually inquired, "What is the character of this Zhang Shunlong like?"

Cheng Guang asked indifferently.

As Liu Hao observed Cheng Guang's expression, he could not be sure why the distinguished Princely Heir had come to his mansion in search of Zhang Shunlong, but he thought it unlikely that Zhang could possibly have connections with someone as noble as the Heir.

So, he firmly replied:

"Zhang Shunlong is lazy and often disobedient. He has made quite a few mistakes recently and has been frequently punished by the people in the mansion."

"Oh?" Cheng Guang's expression became odd.

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He glanced at Liu Hao and noticed that when mentioning Zhang Shunlong, there seemed to be a gritting of teeth.

Logically speaking, Liu Hao was at least a Family Head, and it would've been no issue for him to discipline or even kill a disobedient servant, yet Liu Hao showed such intense hatred for Zhang Shunlong but hadn't killed him straight away.

Instead, he was visibly grinding his teeth.

This was odd.

Cheng Guang remained silent on the surface, stood up, and said, "Lord Liu, take me to see this Zhang Shunlong."

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Upon hearing Cheng Guang's words, Liu Hao hesitated, seemingly reluctant to bring Cheng Guang to Zhang Shunlong, but he didn't dare to refuse. He quickly gave a secret signal to several women by his side and then respectfully said:

"Princely Heir, why don't you rest here for a while? I will have someone bring Zhang Shunlong over."

Cheng Guang shook his head, "No need, just take me there."

Once Cheng Guang had spoken, Liu Hao wanted to say something, but he caught Li Mingtang's glance and a slight frown.

"Lord Liu, just do as the Princely Heir says."

Li Mingtang couldn't understand why Liu Hao seemed so unwilling to bring Cheng Guang to Zhang Shunlong. Was there something disgraceful?

Liu Hao now felt immense pressure, with large beads of sweat incessantly forming on his forehead, unable to say anything further.

He hurriedly led Cheng Guang on their way.

After passing through several courtyards and corridors, they arrived at a neglected, damp wooden hut covered with moss.

As they reached the outside of the hut, without even approaching, a smell of blood was detectable.

Cheng Guang's eyebrows furrowed slightly.

Logically speaking, even if it were a servant's dwelling, it should not be as decrepit as this hut.

Was Zhang Shunlong so undesirable?

Thinking of the True Sun Martial God, who would later cause turmoil throughout Great Zhou, Cheng Guang couldn't help but sigh at his current plight.

At this moment, Liu Hao also felt a bit embarrassed, glared at one of the women beside him, and quickly stepped forward to push open the door to the hut.

The door swung wide open.

The somewhat cramped space came into view.

Cheng Guang's gaze swept through the room. Aside from some disordered belongings, there was only an old plank supported by several red bricks, serving as a bed.

A gaunt, tall young man lay on the bed, his body wrapped in several stained cloths that emitted a faint smell of blood.

As the door to the wooden hut opened, the young man had already taken notice.

He struggled to sit up and silently sized up everyone.

His gaze passed over Cheng Guang and the others with a bit of surprise, but he said nothing more.

Only when his eyes swept over Lord Liu of the Liu Family and others did he reveal a hint of deep-seated hatred and a helpless agony.

"Zhang Shunlong, this Nobleman is looking for you."

Liu Hao, fearing what Zhang Shunlong might say at this moment, quickly spoke out.

Zhang Shunlong, hearing Liu Hao's words, showed little change in his lean face, looked towards Cheng Guang, with no real respect in his eyes, and said blandly.

"Nobleman? Looks like another grand figure."

"Lord Liu really has good methods, clinging to one Nobleman after another."

Hearing the sarcasm in Zhang Shunlong's tone, Liu Hao clenched his teeth with anger.

"Scoundrel, what nonsense are you spouting!"

He swung out a hand, intending to slap Zhang Shunlong and prompt him to speak respectfully.

Cheng Guang's gaze fell on Lin Cheng at his side.

Without Cheng Guang having to speak, Lin Cheng knew what he meant and immediately grasped Liu Hao's wrist.

He applied slight pressure.

Liu Hao, being only in the Physique Realm, was no match for Lin Cheng, a Divine Power Realm practitioner. Seized by Lin Cheng like this, Liu Hao bent over in pain, grimacing and begging for mercy.

"Sir, sir..."

Lin Cheng silently flung him aside, "The Princely Heir hasn't spoken yet; don't make a move."

Liu Hao cradled his wrist. Even though Lin Cheng hadn't used much strength, Liu Hao felt as if his wrist was about to break, the pain causing him to catch his breath and leaving him unable to speak further.

At the same time, Liu Hao was also paying attention to Cheng Guang and Zhang Shunlong not far away.

Liu Hao still didn't understand why Cheng Guang was looking for someone like Zhang Shunlong.

He didn't understand.

It wasn't just him.

Li Mingtang and the rest of the Liu Family household were equally puzzled.

Cheng Guang had no intention of explaining to them as his eyes examined Zhang Shunlong.

It seemed he was contemplating how to forge an acquaintance with Zhang Shunlong.

To make an acquaintance meant to gain the other's favor and become friends.

For some reason, Cheng Guang noticed that when Zhang Shunlong looked at him, there was hatred in his eyes.

It wasn't personal animosity but a disdain for the privileged.

Perhaps the seed for Zhang Shunlong's future aspiration to establish a dynasty without the privileged was sown at this moment.

Still, Cheng Guang didn't yet know what had caused Zhang Shunlong to harbor such deep resentment towards the powerful and privileged.

Even if the silver theft case involved framing of Zhang Shunlong and his father, Zhang Heling, it shouldn't warrant such intense hatred towards the privileged.

Cheng Guang thought to himself, deciding to first diminish Zhang Shunlong's resistance towards him.

"Zhang Shunlong, do you want to shed your servant's identity?"

At Cheng Guang's words, Zhang Shunlong was caught off guard.

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It was clear that Cheng Guang hadn't expected to hear such a phrase.

After a moment of stunned silence,

a dismal smile crossed his face.

"Escape bondservant status?"

"And what if I do?"

"Whether I live or die alone no longer matters, no longer matters."

Seeing Zhang Shunlong's ashen expression, Cheng Guang's brow furrowed slightly.

At that moment, Zhang Shunlong seemed to have resigned himself to death, hanging on to his last breath which prevented him from dying too easily.

Was it his father?

Cheng Guang continued, "I can help you get your father out."

For Cheng Guang, it was a simple matter to get Zhang Shunlong's father out.

Let alone that Zhang Heling had not stolen from the treasury, even if he actually had, clearing Zhang Heling's name would be but a word from Cheng Guang.

Hearing Cheng Guang's words, Zhang Shunlong looked up sharply, disbelieving, sizing up Cheng Guang a few times as if he were in a dream.

Seeing that Cheng Guang didn't seem to be joking, Zhang Shunlong's heart trembled again.

But he didn't immediately plead for Cheng Guang to help rescue his father.

In Zhang Shunlong's eyes, there was no such thing as a free lunch in this world. Someone of Cheng Guang's standing wouldn't want to help him without reason; there must be something they sought in return.

Yet after a moment's thought, Zhang Shunlong realized he had nothing to offer but his worthless life.

He couldn't understand why Cheng Guang would help him.

Therefore, he fell into deep confusion.

Moments later, Zhang Shunlong's gaze firmly fixed on Cheng Guang. His thin face showed a flicker of emotion, and his eyes trembled.

"You... you... are you serious?"

"If you can truly save my father, no matter... no matter what the Nobleman asks of me, I agree!"

Having said this, Zhang Shunlong struggled to rise from the wooden plank bed and knelt in front of Cheng Guang, his voice somewhat hoarse and eyes painfully red, full of sorrow.

"My father, he... he's been framed!"

"He has never stolen from the treasury, he wouldn't do that, he wouldn't."

Cheng Guang wasn't surprised by this; he also knew that the case of Zhang Heling stealing from the treasury was fishy.

He watched Zhang Shunlong silently.

After a while, his gaze fell on Li Mingtang, the County Magistrate.

"Prefect Li, you've heard it as well. I think there's something peculiar about Zhang Heling's case of stealing from the treasury. Go and investigate it further."

Li Mingtang wiped the sweat from his forehead and hurriedly agreed upon hearing Cheng Guang's words.

Although he knew the case was settled and Zhang Heling was meant to be executed, if the Princely Heir wanted to overturn the case, Li Mingtang would have to recolor black to white.

The path of an official is never simple.

Li Mingtang was aware that following the Princely Heir's order may not bring him much benefit, but defying the Princely Heir's order would certainly end badly for him.

"Princely Heir, I will go back immediately and have people look into Zhang Heling's case again."

Cheng Guang nodded, then turned to Zhang Shunlong, saying, "Do you have any other wishes?"

Cheng Guang had promised to resolve the matter for Zhang Shunlong, who clearly no longer harbored the initial resentment against Cheng Guang, but he still didn't understand why Cheng Guang was willing to help him.

Therefore, Zhang Shunlong dared not ask for more. However, it seemed as though he recalled something, his lips trembling slightly as if he wanted to speak. Yet, when the words reached the tip of his tongue, he swallowed them down with a sense of resignation.

"I... I have no other requests."

Upon hearing this, Liu Hao, who stood to the side, exhaled a sigh of relief.

Thankfully, Zhang Shunlong was sensible. If he had ruined the Liu Family's plans and angered the Nobleman again, there might be no Princely Heir to help him next time.

At this moment, Liu Hao was still unaware why Cheng Guang, the esteemed Princely Heir, would take such an interest in Zhang Shunlong. To avoid any accidents, he quickly added:

"Princely Heir, the sky is getting dark. Why don't you dine with us in the residence?"

Cheng Guang shook his head, looking at Zhang Shunlong, who still seemed troubled but was unwilling to speak.

He glanced at his own task.

It was still incomplete.

There wasn't the slightest progress.

Clearly,

by helping Zhang Shunlong save his father, he may have earned some gratitude, but he had not yet reached a friendship with Zhang Shunlong, becoming friends.

He needed to delve deeper.

Either help Zhang Shunlong solve all of his troubles, allowing him to develop gratitude towards Cheng Guang, so that further interaction will naturally lead to the completion of his task,

or directly use the Charm Eyes to forcefully complete the task.

Although the second method is simple and straightforward, once Zhang Shunlong eventually has a realization and his cultivation rapidly advances, Charm Eyes would lose much of their effect, and it might even plant hidden troubles for the future due to this matter.

This person is destined to be one of the mightiest Sky-Men in the world; such matters cannot be dealt with so hastily.

After pondering for a moment, Cheng Guang decided to resolve all the troubles surrounding Zhang Shunlong.

Even if his relationship with Zhang Shunlong was not very close, at the very least, with this act of kindness, he not only won the favor of a powerful future Sky-Man but also likely ensured the completion of his task.

Furthermore,

Cheng Guang knew there were more to the situation than met the eye.

Zhang Shunlong's enmity towards the nobility, and Cheng Guang was still unaware of what had sparked Zhang Shunlong's hatred.

It seemed to be related to the Liu Family Head, or possibly to someone else unknown.

Asking Zhang Shunlong directly might not yield an answer.

Considering the recent connections formed by the Liu Family with a certain nobleman, Cheng Guang became thoughtful.

Right now, it was essential to find a breakthrough from Liu Hao, the Liu Family Head.

With these thoughts in mind, Cheng Guang turned and walked out the door, heading outside.

Upon seeing Cheng Guang leave from Zhang Shunlong's place, a wave of relief washed over Liu Hao, the Liu Family Head.

Following Cheng Guang's footsteps for a while,

Cheng Guang paused slightly.

He stopped.

His gaze fell upon Liu Hao.

"Lord Liu,"

Under Cheng Guang's gaze and feeling an inexplicable pressure, Liu Hao awkwardly swallowed his saliva and quickly forced a chuckle, "Princely Heir, what's the matter?"

"Did Zhang Shunlong ever offend your Liu Family?" Cheng Guang asked.

Taken aback, Liu Hao hurriedly waved his hands, "No... No such thing..."

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"There's no such incident."

In front of Cheng Guang, Liu Hao was extremely nervous, and even his lying was stuttered.

Cheng Guang glanced at Liu Hao, feeling that his acting skills were truly poor, even worse than his own.

"Speak clearly," Cheng Guang repeated.

Seeing Cheng Guang's indifferent expression, Liu Hao's face stiffened, and he looked around helplessly, glancing at the women nearby as well as the elders of the Liu Family, but no one dared to speak out.

Ultimately, Liu Hao sighed. The pressure from Cheng Guang was too much; he couldn't keep hiding the truth.

"There... There is such an incident..."

"It's just, it wasn't quite an offense, not towards us..."

Liu Hao began to speak with difficulty.

"Oh?" Cheng Guang's gaze stayed on Liu Hao.

Li Mingtang, who was standing nearby, clearly was also unaware of this matter.

If Zhang Shunlong had offended the Liu Family, why would they still take in Zhang Shunlong after he was demoted to a slave? This situation seemed quite peculiar.

Could it be that Zhang Heling was really wronged?

Li Mingtang's eyebrows twitched slightly; he just felt a toothache coming on.

Damn it, truly damnable, who knows which bastard messed with things? Minor tampering was already enough trouble, but now they had brought the Princely Heir into this and even had him inquiring about the matter!

Li Mingtang, able to serve as the County Magistrate, was naturally no fool. He immediately surmised that the Liu Family had recently connected with a nobleman, and their third daughter was to marry that nobleman.

And as far as he knew,

the Liu Family's third daughter once seemed to have had quite a bit of interaction with Zhang Shunlong...

Thinking of this...

Li Mingtang instantly grasped the gist of the situation.

He found the whole affair absurd.

Although he understood everything, at this moment, he did not dare to speak further.

After all, there was the shadow of a nobleman behind this affair, and the nobleman's identity seemed to be no small matter.

Being only a minor County Magistrate, he dared not get involved in such matters.

Chapter 259: Why is this happening?

Liu Hao, under Cheng Guang's gaze, inexplicably felt extremely nervous, with large beads of sweat continuously streaming down his forehead.

Wiping the sweat from his forehead, Liu Hao's voice sounded a bit hoarse as he said,

"Princely Heir, my third daughter Yuting had quite a lot of contact with Zhang Shunlong before, and it seems she had the intention of making a lifelong commitment. Although we in the Liu Family did not think highly of the Zhang family, we had no objections at first. However, later on... when a nobleman passed by Ping'an County, he took a fancy to Yuting..."

"Given that, how could the Zhang family be a match for our Liu Family? We planned to make Zhang Shunlong give up on that idea. Instead of giving up, he planned to elope with Yuting, which infuriated the nobleman. He remarked that Zhang Shunlong needed to be dealt with by us."

"A word from the nobleman is like a mountain pressing down on ordinary folks like us,"

"How could we dare to disobey."

With those words from Liu Hao, Cheng Guang instantly imagined an outrageous drama in his mind.

That so-called nobleman, upon seeing the third daughter from the Liu Family, planned to force a common girl into marriage.

In fact, it couldn't really be called "forcing," since in this era of parental matchmaking and mediators' words, the Liu Family saw the nobleman's interest in their daughter as no different from a pie falling from the sky.

So they directly sent their daughter to the nobleman's residence.

As for Zhang Shunlong, he was completely a scapegoat.

That so-called nobleman might have never taken Zhang Shunlong seriously; otherwise, he wouldn't have survived to this day. It could have been just an offhand remark, but even so, people like Liu Hao dared not disobey and meticulously plotted to crush the Zhang family.

Thus, behind the silver theft case, it was certain that people like Liu Hao were involved.

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Besides, apart from the Liu Family, it seems other county officials were also involved.

At the same time, Ping'an County Magistrate Li Mingtang also understood the situation.

Turns out, Zhang Shunlong's family really was wrongly accused in the silver theft case.

The Liu Family, in their efforts to deal with Zhang Shunlong's family, really went through a lot of trouble.

Li Mingtang realized that, based solely on the Liu Family's power, it was obviously not possible to steal silver taels from the county treasury; there must be involvement from county officials.

Thinking of this, Li Mingtang couldn't help but frown in frustration.

He felt that the situation was incredibly messy.

The nobleman had not really been involved in this affair, and if the nobleman had wanted to kill Zhang Shunlong, he would have just crushed him directly, without so much trouble.

All of this seemed to be the Liu Family's doing.

They plotted carefully, all to satisfy the nobleman's casual remark and gain his favor.

It was all too real.

Li Mingtang felt a surge of emotion and understood Liu Hao's actions a bit more. At the same time, he did not dare to speak out openly and reveal his stance.

Dealing with Zhang Shunlong's family might have been fine, but if he were to directly move against Liu Hao, he still had his reservations.

His third daughter married that nobleman, and although it was unclear if she had any official status, it didn't matter since she was already a woman by the nobleman's side.

No matter how lowly her status was, it was not something he could comment on or compare with.

If the Princely Heir intended to help Zhang Shunlong, he would undoubtedly have to interact with that nobleman.

Such a battle between gods was not something a mere County Magistrate like him could get involved in.

Li Mingtang pondered over it and simply decided to look straight ahead, focusing inward, as his mind wandered off to realms beyond.

Cheng Guang's brows furrowed slightly as he asked, "Who is this nobleman you're speaking of?"

As Cheng Guang posed the question, Qing Luan also turned her gaze to Liu Hao, curious as to who this person was, someone with such influence to blatantly break up a couple and marry Miss Liu away.

Under Cheng Guang's gaze, Liu Hao wiped the sweat beads off his forehead once again and his lips quivered slightly, but he was unable to say anything.

He knew well that if he revealed the name of the nobleman, the Princely Heir in front of him would likely seek out this nobleman for trouble.

If that nobleman held a grudge against him, his third daughter, even if married over, would not gain any benefits.

Liu Hao did not want to respond, but the situation had left him with no way to avoid it.

He dared not offend that nobleman, but how could he afford to offend the venerable Duke of the State's Heir before him?

After a moment of silence, Liu Hao sighed, his face ashen, and spoke slowly, "It is, it is the current Prime Minister, Right Minister Lin Gongfu's son, Lin Yunzhen."

"Lin Yunzhen?" Cheng Guang's brow furrowed.

He found the name quite unfamiliar.

In the entire Capital city, the number of people he frequently interacted with was very limited, and ordinary people lacked even the qualifications to approach him.

So when he heard the name Lin Yunzhen, he couldn't associate it with anyone.

However, the current Prime Minister, Right Minister Lin Gongfu, he was aware of.

Lin Gongfu was a cunning fox, known for his uprightness, with considerable influence in the court, ruthless by nature, unfriendly in demeanor, relying on his status as a veteran minister of two dynasties, looking down on many younger officials.

At the court, most of the officials who opposed the Bureau of the Lamp having so much power were aligned with his Lin faction.

For a court minister who wielded so much influence, his offspring's status was by no means simple.

While the status could not compare with Cheng Guang's, it was still considered significant.

Chapter 260: Why Is This Happening? _2

It's no wonder the people of Liu Family, such as Liu Hao, are so deeply wary of Lin Yunzhen.

Cheng Guang stroked his chin and looked towards Qing Luan, asking, "Qing Luan, do you know this person, Lin Yunzhen?"

"What kind of person is he?"

Upon hearing the question, Qing Luan thought for a moment before responding with a lowered gaze, "Princely Heir, Lin Yunzhen has a rather good reputation in the Capital city. He is known for his philanthropy and is also a scholar of the Great Zhou Academy. He's a renowned talent in the Capital, excelling in both poetry and essays, and is admired by many noble daughters of Capital families."

Cheng Guang found this puzzling upon hearing her words, "That's strange though. If Lin Yunzhen really is such a person, he wouldn't lack for female company. Why would he come to Ping'an County and take a fancy to a woman he just happened to pass by?"

Cheng Guang's words, although a bit crude, were not without reason.

Qing Luan nodded slightly after hearing this, a hint of confusion in her beautiful eyes. She too did not understand.

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"Could it be... that this girl from the Liu family... is extraordinarily beautiful?"

Cheng Guang frowned slightly. It wasn't a question of whether or not she was beautiful. Even if she were stunning, for a powerful elite of such status, beauty was never in short supply.

Rather, they would place extreme importance on status and family background.

Out of all the noble daughters in the Capital, Lin Yunzhen had not chosen any of them but instead, upon passing through Ping'an County, took a liking to the third daughter of the Liu family and now sought to marry her.

Either something was off with Lin Yunzhen, or something was peculiar about the third daughter of the Liu family that attracted him.

Cheng Guang's gaze then settled on Li Mingtang and he said, "Prefect Li, you've heard what's been said just now. Take care of this silver theft case when you go back."

Li Mingtang, upon being addressed by Cheng Guang, could no longer feign ignorance and hurriedly nodded in acknowledgement.

Apart from the backing of Lin Yunzhen, the son of the current Prime Minister, which made the county officials hesitant to act against the Liu Family, those officials within the county government who had hidden their actions from him and sought to curry favor with the Liu Family could not be spared.

Cheng Guang then looked towards Liu Hao, "Lord Liu."

That's all Cheng Guang said.

Liu Hao, upon hearing Cheng Guang calling him by name, suddenly became tense, standing stiffly in place like a child caught in a misdeed, nervously fidgeting with the hem of his robe, unsure of what to say.

He could only respond obediently and listen to Cheng Guang's directives.

Cheng Guang said, "That Zhang Shunlong, arrange for someone to wash and dress him, treat his injuries, and change his clothes. Later, I'll take him to the Prime Minister's Mansion to see your daughter."

The moment Cheng Guang uttered these words, Liu Hao, who had been very reserved, immediately realized that the esteemed Town-Nation Duke's Heir was likely intending to help Zhang Shunlong.

He planned to snatch his daughter straight from Prime Minister's Mansion.

Liu Hao became conflicted, too afraid to speak out. After hesitating for a moment, he cautiously said, "Princely Heir, this... this doesn't seem proper..."

"My third daughter has gone to Prime Minister's Mansion, and she seems to be doing quite well there. Mr. Lin is a renowned extraordinary gentleman in the Capital. It's already a social climb for my daughter to be able to marry Mr. Lin."

Liu Hao still couldn't let go of the connection to the high branch that was Lin Yunzhen.

Having his daughter married to Lin Yunzhen, these past days in Ping'an County he had been basking in glory. Whenever he went out, regardless of whether others knew him, when they heard his daughter had married the son of the Prime Minister Lin Yunzhen, they all showed respect.

Compared to being the son of a lowly yamen runner like Zhang Shunlong, marrying into Lin's family was much better.

Hearing Liu Hao's words, Cheng Guang felt Liu Hao was naively optimistic and significantly said, "Do you really believe that your daughter is living well in Prime Minister's Mansion?"

As soon as Cheng Guang posed this question, both Liu Hao and his Liu Family entourage were momentarily taken aback.

In their eyes, marrying into Prime Minister's Mansion, even if not considered of high importance, was still entering the realm of the elite, ensuring luxurious living.

It couldn't be that bad, could it?

Cheng Guang shook his head helplessly, saying nothing.

From Cheng Guang's own understanding, an ordinary person could not possibly marry into a powerful and distinguished family.

Speaking nicely, the third daughter of the Liu Family had married into Prime Minister's Mansion.

Less charitably, perhaps she had been taken into the mansion by Lin Yunzhen, the son of the Prime Minister, to become a plaything.

There was a good chance she was a plaything without dignity.

Many days had passed, and what the third daughter, Liu Yuting, had become by now, Cheng Guang dared not contemplate, finding the situation extremely frustrating.

The elite of this world really didn't value human life.

A casual word could crush a commoner.

A simple gesture could determine the fate of an entire noble house.

With complex thoughts, Cheng Guang couldn't help but sigh and said, "Alright, I hope your third daughter is safe and sound. Go make the arrangements now, and bring Zhang Shunlong to me later."

Liu Hao, weighed down with heavy thoughts, agreed and quickly instructed a woman beside him to arrange things. They fetched Zhang Shunlong from the decrepit wooden house, and after cleaning him up and treating his injuries to some extent,

Liu Hao himself had originally thought that having Lin Yunzhen, the son of the Prime Minister, take a fancy to his daughter was like a pie falling from the sky – a stroke of incredible luck.

Yet after listening to this Princely Heir, it didn't seem like such good fortune after all.

Could it be that his third daughter truly wasn't faring well in Prime Minister's Mansion?

Liu Hao had a bad premonition in his heart.

A woman beside him seemed to realize something too, her eyes gleaming with unshed tears, as she tugged at Liu Hao's sleeve and said, "Master, come to think of it, Yuting has not written back since she was taken to the Capital by that nobleman."