

# **My System Is Three Thousand Years Early Chapter 3 - Chapter 3 Empress Dowager Li Chapter 3: Chapter 3 Empress Dowager Li**

The Great Zhou Imperial Palace has four gates: Zhengyang Gate faces south, Shenwu Gate faces north, and on the left and right sides are Qinghua Gate and Ziwo Gate, respectively.

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Officials enter the court from the front of Zhengyang Gate and depart through Ziwo Gate.

The changing of the Imperial Guard takes place at Zhengyang Gate for entry and Shenwu Gate for exit.

Qinghua Gate is generally used by members of the royal family and nobility, or ministers summoned in haste, as well as scholars of civil and military examinations who have been admitted to the palace examination.

Upon arrival at Qinghua Gate, even a princess must leave the Jade Carriage and walk in, and must also submit a Summon Order and an entry declaration booklet to gain entrance to the Imperial Palace.

The process is cumbersome; missing any detail would lead to being barred outside, and even Cheng Guang, as the Town-Nation Duke's Heir, could not have entered the Imperial Palace today without the lead of Mrs. Wu.

From this moment on, a solemn aura circulated like the air around them.

Cheng Guang stepped out of the Jade Carriage, looking around at the high red-tiled walls, which bore an inexplicable similarity to the Imperial Palace seen in movies and TV series from his past life.

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However, the Great Zhou Imperial Palace was much more magnificent than any palace Cheng Guang had seen in his previous life, with walls standing no less than thirty feet tall.

Thanks to the existence of many powerful martial artists in this world, the city wall and the pavilions were cut from whole blocks of hard White Jade Stone, a masterwork of craftsmanship.

While it conveyed a strong sense of refinement, it also emanated a visible luxury and nobility.

Outside Qinghua Gate, the Imperial Guards stood watch. Each and every guard was clad in heavy chainmail, fully armed, exuding a chilling seriousness, each a top-notch martial cultivation expert.

After a careful examination of the Summon Order and the declaration booklet by the guards to the side, they allowed passage. Yet, the number of attendants permitted to follow was restricted; aside from two personal maidens, no one else was allowed inside, and had to wait outside.

"Guanger, let's go," said Mrs. Wu.

She was very familiar with the Imperial Palace, having grown up there since childhood, but Cheng Guang had not been there many times, so she intentionally held his hand and led him toward the palace interior.

The Imperial Palace was enormous, its vastness visible to the naked eye. At a glance, one could not see its end; lofty pavilions and high walls concealed a luxurious and majestic view, resembling a small city.

If he were the real Princely Heir, Cheng Guang wouldn't be so nervous about visiting the palace; but he was just a mere substitute. If he were careless and mistook himself for the real princely heir, being exposed within the palace would most likely lead to a miserable death.

2

Cheng Guang was well aware of his limits. He avoided things he shouldn't touch and remained silent whenever possible because how one could die without ever knowing was a real danger here.

1

While Cheng Guang was deep in thought, the procession paused briefly before continuing to a smaller palace gate.

Here, there were noticeably fewer Imperial Guards compared to Qinghua Gate, but the quality of these guards was several levels higher.

These guards wore silver armor and stood motionless with serious expressions, but at the next moment, one could feel as if they were watching, their mere presence instilling an involuntary chill in the hearts of those with lower cultivation levels.

It was not intentional on the part of the guards but the result of their temperament naturally developed from long periods of combat. It was almost like their aura formed a domain; anyone less powerful coming within a certain range would find their combat abilities reduced by thirty percent.

2

Most of these men were officers on the battlefield who were now merely tasked with guarding this palace gate.

Deep inside, Cheng Guang couldn't help but lament the ruthlessness of the royal family.

As he entered the palace, the sight of exotic flowers and rare sceneries made Cheng Guang marvel in secret. After a brief tour, he arrived at the main hall of the palace.

Upon entering the main hall, he saw an elderly woman with a kind face holding a Buddhist scripture, wearing a lens device similar to reading glasses, squinting as she scrutinized the text closely.

The old woman's hair was a silvery gray, and she was dressed in a purple dragon robe with a nine-dragon jade hairpin in her hair and a string of white jade pearls around her neck, exuding utmost luxury.

She was Empress Dowager Li of the Great Zhou Dynasty. She had served the Ancestor, and the current emperor had been brought up by her hand. She had deposed the Crown Prince chosen by the Ancestor, and the rise of Wu Shang to the throne was also orchestrated solely by her.

1

The elderly lady may have seemed kindly, but she was not as simple as she appeared on the surface.

At this moment, Cheng Guang also tensed up considerably; although the Empress Dowager had not seen the Princely Heir much, who knew whether she would spot that he was just an imposter.

"Mother, Yuemei pays her respects," said Mrs. Wu, pulling Cheng Guang to kneel before the old lady.

"Oh, Yuemei is here," said Empress Dowager Li, who had been reading her book. Hearing Mrs. Wu's voice, she looked down, her face immediately brightening with a smile.

Cheng Guang noticed the old woman's piercing gaze on himself and Mrs. Wu, and quickly, imitating Mrs. Wu, he said respectfully,

"Greetings to Great Ancestral Mother, may your happiness be as vast as the Eastern Sea and your life as long as the Southern Mountains, always smiling and in good health."

Cheng Guang involuntarily blurted out the blessing phrases known from his previous life, and immediately after speaking, he wanted to slap himself with a few big Da Bi Dou.

2

The image of the Princely Heir was certainly not one to utter such phrases; usually reserved and perhaps a touch haughty, with an air of being the only sober one in a world of drunkards.

Crushed.

His persona had crumbled.

Cheng Guang felt like he was falling into an abyss, not daring to meet the sharpened gaze of the old woman.

Yet, the progress of events did not turn out as terribly as Cheng Guang had imagined.

After hearing Cheng Guang's words, Empress Dowager Li was first taken aback, then her smile intensified tenfold.

"Oh my, it's been a long time, but little Guanger has learned to delight his great ancestral mother so much. Come closer, let me have a good look at you."

There is one thing that must be said: the reason the Princely Heir holds such a revered status, even daring to find a substitute to secretly deceive Cheng Zhihai and Wu Yuemei, to sneak out and play on his own.

The main reason for this is the particular fondness the reigning Empress Dowager harbors for Cheng Guang.

This is something nobody understands.

Logically, one's own grandson, the royal descendant, should be more favored.

Yet, the situation is quite the opposite, as everyone knows that although Empress Dowager Li also likes the royal descendant, she has a greater affection for her grandson-in-law, Cheng Guang.

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Everyone can't help but speculate whether this is influenced by Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan's presence behind the scenes.

Empress Dowager Li, at this moment, completely ignores her daughter and pulls Cheng Guang in front of her, full of concern as she says.

1

"Oh, Guanger, it hasn't been long since I last saw you, how have you become so thin? And your hands have gotten so rough, has your father been forcing you to practice martial arts again?"

"Your complexion doesn't seem that good either. Are you sick, or what? Later, your grandmother will take you to see the Imperial Physician to prescribe a few remedies for you."

"If there's anything else you need, just tell your grandmother, if your father forces you to practice martial arts again, your grandmother will speak up for you."

Cheng Guang was at a loss for a moment, not expecting the Princely Heir's grandmother to react this way, while he also heaved a sigh of relief, seeing that his disguise had not been exposed.

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As for being thin, he had been acting as a coachman before and couldn't eat his fill or wear warm clothes. It was already fortunate that he had not starved to death, and he had even gained some weight recently.

3

Cheng Guang inwardly cursed but, of course, dared not voice his complaints. After thinking for a moment, he cunningly began to express concern for his grandmother instead.

"Grandmother, I am fine. Instead, it is you who must take good care of your health and not overwork yourself. As long as grandmother is healthy, I will be completely content."

These words nearly penetrated the old woman's defenses, her eyes moistened a bit, and though her speech was simple, her emotions were sincere.

Her heart filled with warmth and affection.

"My dear grandson, you are the one who truly knows how to care for your grandmother; my body is still strong."

"Come, come, you must be hungry after your journey. There are many sweets here that you have liked since you were young, take some and eat."

"Huang Ying, go instruct the Imperial Kitchen to prepare some Spirit Food."

Empress Dowager Li was very compassionate, instructing the palace maid at her side to arrange for Spirit Food.

The palace maid nodded affirmatively with a smile and turned to leave and make arrangements.

"Mother, Guanger is not so young anymore. I plan to look for a suitable marriage for him soon. I do not know which family's girl would be suitable; I will need your help in deciding when the time comes."

Wu Yuemei spoke softly, revealing her intentions.

When Empress Dowager Li heard this topic, her spirits immediately lifted, and she sat up straighter.

"I, of course, must be involved in overseeing his marriage. Yuemei, do you have any favorable candidates in mind?"

Empress Dowager Li shifted her attention from Cheng Guang to Mrs. Wu and the two of them began discussing his marriage prospects.

To be precise, it was not Cheng Guang's marriage prospects, but the Princely Heir's.

Yuemei relaxed considerably in front of her mother, counting on her fingers like a young daughter as she listed her options.

"The Minister of Revenue's legitimate daughter, Song Wanyu, is unparalleled in both poetry and literature and is a renowned talent in the capital city. With a cultivation realm already at the third-grade Purple Mansion Realm at a young age, she is commendable in both letters and martial skills and seems quite suitable."

"The Minister of War's daughter, Wan Duoduo, is also excellent, with a physique that suggests she can bear children, and her cultivation realm is also high, reaching the fifth-grade Prime God Realm. She is considered a standout among the younger generation."

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"..."

Empress Dowager Li listened to each one, then gave her own opinions and assessments in a timely manner, unexpectedly giving off the impression of picking and

choosing as if making a purchase, seemingly as if once she took a liking, the girls' families would indeed marry them off just like that.

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And in truth, that was indeed the case.

He was the Town-Nation Duke's Heir, the Emperor's nephew, and the sole son of Princess Yuemei—with such titles, having his pick of girls was practically a matter of his saying the word.

2

Cheng Guang, seeing that Empress Dowager Li and Mrs. Wu were deep in conversation and no longer paying attention to him, sighed with relief. Go ahead and talk; I'm just listening.

After all, I'm just a stand-in, virtually invisible; these things don't have much to do with me.

However, it was at this moment.

The maiden's voice suddenly rose.

"Empress Dowager, the Empress and several Noble Consorts, accompanied by several princes and princesses, have arrived."

As the voice echoed, the smile on Empress Dowager Li's face noticeably diminished.

Yuemei's tone halted for a moment; she briefly composed herself and her attire, not continuing to discuss Cheng Guang's marriage prospects with Empress Dowager Li but respectfully turning her gaze toward the palace doors.

Obviously, with the arrival of others, it was no longer appropriate to carry on discussing Cheng Guang's marriage.

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