

My System 421

Chapter 421 - Princely Heir, This is Impossible _3

...

After all, he was a strong Ninth-order Martial Emperor!

Even a casual strike was not something that martial artists below the Ninth Grade could withstand!

And now, Cheng Guang, the esteemed Town-Nation Duke's Heir, had summoned soldiers out of thin air who, working together, had managed to shatter his Divine Power attack!

How was this possible!

Zhao Jin's mind was shocked, so much that he was somewhat at a loss for words.

What astounded him even more was that the hundred soldiers summoned by Cheng Guang still showed little signs of their fighting spirit diminishing after shattering his Divine Power attack, despite having sustained numerous injuries!

From the very beginning, there was not the slightest change.

They continued to stare at him coldly and mercilessly.

It seemed as if they were about to launch an attack on him at any moment.

Zhao Jin had to admit that even he felt a chill rise from within upon facing these hundred soldiers.

He felt.

The hundred soldiers in front of him were as cold as icebergs.

It was as if they had no hint of surplus emotion, existing solely for the sake of war!

Don't be absurd!

Ordinary martial artists, when facing a stronger opponent of a higher realm, would inevitably feel fear, something he could understand.

But for him, a strong Ninth-order Martial Emperor, to feel a trace of fear towards a group of soldiers barely at the Eighth Rank?

If there were a thousand, or even ten thousand people, he might be afraid.

After all, with enough numbers, even if their cultivation realms were lower, they could exhaust him to death.

But there were only a hundred people.

Zhao Jin didn't understand!

His gaze lifted slightly, looking past the hundred soldiers to Cheng Guang at the side of the deck.

"Princely Heir, is this the extent of your tactics?"

"If you think that these people alone can stop me, then you are far too naive,"

"It's nothing more but a futile struggle," Zhao Jin said slowly.

But Cheng Guang did not respond.

Zhao Jin felt somewhat bored, a flare of anger rising in his heart. After taking a deep breath and feeling more cautious, he stepped forward, his body flickering with the light of his Divine Power.

He launched an attack at the hundred soldiers summoned by Cheng Guang.

As Zhao Jin attacked the hundred soldiers,

The guards standing in front of Cheng Guang couldn't help but say to him:

"Princely Heir, if you can escape now, you should leave as soon as possible,"

"We stand no chance against Zhao Jin,"

"Zhao Jin is one of Your Majesty's men, with profound cultivation, and has been at the Ninth-order Martial Emperor Realm for many years, not comparable to the ordinary Martial Emperor of the same realm."

In response to his guards, Cheng Guang shook his head, "There's no escape, nor is there any need to flee."

He glanced at the guards who just started to violently cough up blood due to the pressure brought on by Zhao Jin, and said:

"Stand back from me, and don't get in the way."

Cheng Guang's words left the guards slightly stunned.

They didn't have time to ponder why Cheng Guang would say there was no escape needed,

Instead, they focused on how Cheng Guang had told them to stand back and not interfere.

They looked at the hundred soldiers who fearlessly attacked Zhao Jin again and bowed their heads in shame.

These guards were indeed stronger than their own Princely Heir but their tactics were too weak.

They couldn't even compare to the soldiers summoned by the Princely Heir.

Initially, they thought about staying, thick-faced, to protect the Princely Heir,

But then they saw Cheng Guang's serious expression, with no hint of joking or disdain for them.

It occurred to them that perhaps staying by the Princely Heir's side truly was an interference.

And the Princely Heir's words were likely out of concern for their safety.

Realizing this, many guards felt a warm feeling in their hearts, and several were moved to the verge of tears.

Cheng Guang didn't give them the time to get emotional and gestured for them to go farther away.

Once the guards retreated, the deck of the Flying Boat became much emptier.

Cheng Guang's gaze fell on Zhao Jin again.

Although the soldiers summoned by the General's Seal were not as powerful as Zhao Jin, their fearless courage still put immense pressure on him.

Even if they couldn't kill Zhao Jin, they could still buy some time.

They would not allow Zhao Jin to escape so easily.

Cheng Guang just stood there, watching Zhao Jin.

Zhao Jin was distressed facing the relentless onslaught of the hundred soldiers.

His cultivation realm was high, and his strength was greater than the hundred soldiers Cheng Guang had summoned,

But to quickly defeat them wasn't easy.

At the fastest, it would take two hours.

Zhao Jin was initially not in a hurry, because in his view, it would take only a few breaths to deal with Cheng Guang.

But now.

He became anxious.

In Zhao Jin's view, if he was delayed by these hundred soldiers for two hours, and if Cheng Guang had other tactics afterward, and if this was dragged out hour by hour,

Not to mention killing Cheng Guang,

It was even questionable whether he himself could leave safely.

The sooner Cheng Guang, the Duke of the State's Heir, was dealt with, the more time he would have to erase traces left behind, reducing the possibility of exposure later on.

Otherwise, if too much time is wasted without cleaning up the battlefield,

Even if he killed Cheng Guang, the Town-Nation Duke's Heir, he would certainly be exposed.

By then, Zhao Jin didn't believe that His Majesty would protect him; His Majesty would only use him as a scapegoat to save himself.

That was his mission as a servant.

Chapter 422 - Princely Heir, This is Impossible _4

Unable to resist.

Thinking this, Zhao Jin glanced at Cheng Guang nearby, and seeing that he was unguarded, a plan formed in his heart.

A hand swung out.

As his thoughts shifted slightly, Qi surged around him, Divine Power shimmered incessantly, and silver serpents danced among the dark clouds in the sky. Following his guidance, they wound towards the hundred generals.

He stepped out of the void in one stride, plunging into the battle formation of the hundred generals. With swings of his fists and feet, the soldiers he struck were sent flying, smashing through the railings of the Flying Boat and tumbling into the sea of clouds.

With a raise of his hand, Zhao Jin had broken the battle formation of the hundred generals and vanquished three soldiers.

At the same time, the remaining ninety-seven soldiers quickly reacted, once again taking a stance to surround and attack Zhao Jin.

But because of the Divine Power Zhao Jin had just used, the silver serpents agilely wove through the battle formation, touching the soldiers and rendering their bodies slightly stiff and their movements sluggish.

Zhao Jin seemed to have anticipated this. With another step, he seemed to directly traverse the void, his figure instantly appearing not far from Cheng Guang.

Stepping on Qi, his body swept forward, leaving behind the hundred generals in a breath, charging towards Cheng Guang with boundless oppressive force.

Zhao Jin looked at Cheng Guang not far away with a smile on his lips.

He knew that with such swift movement, the Princely Heir could not possibly react in time.

The Princely Heir must still believe that he would be entangled with the hundred generals for a while.

As he swept towards Cheng Guang, Zhao Jin observed his expression.

He noticed.

As he charged at Cheng Guang, Cheng Guang's gaze also fell upon him.

His expression did not change.

There was an indifference as though Mount Tai were crumbling before him, but his face remained unchanged.

The smile at the corner of Zhao Jin's lips suddenly froze.

Had the Princely Heir noticed him?

How could the Princely Heir have such a quick reaction?

Doubt clouded Zhao Jin's mind, but he quickly suppressed his thoughts. Even if the Princely Heir reacted this quickly, it did not matter.

He was confident that Cheng Guang, the Town-Nation Duke's Heir, even if he had noticed, had no means to stop him.

Even summoning those hundred generals as before was impossible.

At such close range, not even gods could save Cheng Guang, the Duke of the State's Heir!

Zhao Jin, with the momentum of a thunderclap, charged at Cheng Guang with infinite aura, his form turning into a rainbow streak.

He slightly raised his hand, and a terrifying force undulated within it like breath.

When he reached the front of Cheng Guang.

Zhao Jin lowered his eyes, looking at Cheng Guang's handsome face close at hand, and sighed.

"Princely Heir, may you rest in peace," said Zhao Jin.

As Zhao Jin's words fell, his hand descended towards Cheng Guang's head.

The air beneath his palm issued bursts of roaring, indicating the horrific power contained within his palm.

At that moment.

Cheng Guang's expression remained unchanged, his noble gaze fixed on Zhao Jin.

Under Zhao Jin's scrutiny.

A slight smile touched Cheng Guang's lips.

Was the Princely Heir smiling?

Zhao Jin was taken aback, at such a moment of life and death...

The Princely Heir was still smiling?

In an instant, thoughts flashed through Zhao Jin's mind, yet his hand held no hesitation, and he fiercely slapped down upon Cheng Guang's head.

At the same time, a strange light suddenly erupted from Cheng Guang's body!

Zhao Jin inwardly cursed, "Not good," and quickly shut his eyes, thinking that Cheng Guang, the Duke's Heir, had used some sort of technique.

Although he closed his eyes, Zhao Jin's hand did not pause.

Qi surged in his hand, pressing down heavily as if to completely crush Cheng Guang into powder!

Boom!!!

At the moment his palm touched Cheng Guang, a loud boom sounded.

Then, in no more than a single breath, the air exploded again, and the void itself seemed to tremble.

All around, those who had been watching could not even voice their anxious cries before everything came to an end.

After two strikes, Zhao Jin slowly exhaled, feeling a slight relaxation in his heart, assured that Cheng Guang, the esteemed Duke's Heir, could not possibly survive his two attacks.

But in the next moment, he felt a different sensation in his palm.

Cold, slightly hard, and seemingly smooth.

What was this?

Zhao Jin abruptly opened his eyes and looked at Cheng Guang beneath his hand.

He looked only once.

Facing him were a pair of green, slightly devilish beastly eyes.

What is this thing!?

Zhao Jin's heart shook violently, and his complexion changed.

The next moment.

Zhao Jin saw a hint of an amused smile in those beastly eyes.

"I've been waiting for this moment," a hoarse voice sounded.

Zhao Jin had a premonition, sensing danger, and he hastily tried to retreat.

However, a pair of thick, heavy, and rough giant claws quickly clutched his body tightly.

Zhao Jin's body stiffened, his eyes widened slightly, feeling pressure on every limb and bone.

At that moment, he felt as if his innards were being deformed by the tremendous force.

Zhao Jin strained to look at the playful beastly eyes in front of him, and for a moment, he couldn't comprehend the scene before him.

Once he clearly saw the full figure of the beast's eyes' owner.

Zhao Jin realized.

At this time, he was embraced by what seemed to be a real Devil Beast!

Not a trace of the original Cheng Guang could be seen!

How could Cheng Guang, the Duke's Heir, transform into such a Devil Beast!?

Even if his appearance changed into a Devil Beast, what was this immense strength?

Could it be that the Duke's Heir was originally a transformed Devil Beast??

One guess after another flickered through Zhao Jin's mind.

Chapter 423 - Princely Heir, This is Impossible _5

Looking at Cheng Guang, who had transformed into the Iron Shell Turtle, Zhao Jin felt a wave of helplessness wash over him.

His Qi burst forth from within him.

All of the attacks landed on Cheng Guang's body.

Yet they sank into the vast ocean, failing to stir even the slightest ripple!

Zhao Jin struggled for hardly a moment before he already wanted to beg for mercy.

Seeing the Devil Beast before him, Zhao Jin, with the intention to say something, had just parted his lips.

When Cheng Guang's arms gave a forceful squeeze.

The words leaping from Zhao Jin's throat all turned into meaningless "Ugh!!"

Cheng Guang looked down at Zhao Jin, whom he held in his embrace, his expression unchanging. When he saw Zhao Jin's resistance waning, he raised his eyes to the inverted green porcelain bowl suspended in the sky above.

"Zhao Jin."

A husky, raw voice emanated from Cheng Guang's throat.

Zhao Jin looked at Cheng Guang with effort, being held in his arms and pressed underneath him, he found even breathing to be extremely difficult.

"Zhao Jin, you might as well remove this magical restraint, you have no chance left now," Cheng Guang said, his gaze locked on the green porcelain bowl above the sky.

Zhao Jin's pale face turned even uglier upon hearing Cheng Guang's words.

"Princely Heir, that's impossible," Zhao Jin refused without a second thought, shaking his head directly.

As long as he didn't remove the magical restraints, he could live a bit longer.

But once he removed the magical restraints, and the people outside noticed what had happened here, his fate would be sealed with death.

Emperor Zhou could never tolerate his existence.

Cheng Guang looked down at Zhao Jin and, knowing what he was thinking, his lips curled slightly. A grim smile appeared on his stiff turtle face.

"Zhao Jin, I know what you're thinking. Rest assured, I won't kill you," Cheng Guang spoke.

"As long as you obey, I won't kill you. I might even help you obtain a reward from Emperor Zhou."

Cheng Guang set forth a condition.

Zhao Jin, on the other hand, was bewildered.

Not kill me?

I came here to assassinate you, Princely Heir.

And you, Princely Heir, would still spare me?

Zhao Jin's eyes fixed on Cheng Guang, his gaze flickering, lost in thought.

Seeing Zhao Jin's hesitation, Cheng Guang ran out of patience and said directly, "Even if you don't remove these restraints, they probably won't last much longer, right?"

"They will be shattered sooner rather than later."

"Whether you release the restraints or not, you're fated to die."

"But, if you decide to cooperate with me, I can spare your life for now."

Hearing such words from Cheng Guang, Zhao Jin's complexion fluctuated unpredictably.

Although he didn't know why Cheng Guang, the revered Town-Nation Duke's Heir, had suddenly turned into such a Devil Beast.

Yet.

Zhao Jin couldn't deny that, at the moment, he was completely powerless against Cheng Guang, the esteemed Town-Nation Duke's Heir.

It seemed that his only way out was to cooperate with Cheng Guang, to work together with him, the Town-Nation Duke's Heir.

Zhao Jin's cold eyes stared at Cheng Guang as he took a deep breath.

"Princely Heir, how do you want me to obey?" asked Zhao Jin.

Cheng Guang smiled and said, "Zhao Jin, we both just want to survive, that's all."

"You came here to assassinate me, and failing that, your death is certain."

"Even if you had killed me, if this matter were to come to light, you would still be cast out by His Majesty, to be the scapegoat, sentenced to death immediately."

"But if you collaborate with me, you don't have to die, and maybe you'll even gain His Majesty's reward afterward."

Zhao Jin's eyes focused intently, he took a deep breath but did not immediately respond to Cheng Guang.

Though Zhao Jin couldn't guess what Cheng Guang wanted him to do,

He understood clearly.

Once he agreed to Cheng Guang's terms, to work with him,

He would be bound to Cheng Guang's fate.

If Cheng Guang wanted him to live, he would live.

If he wished him dead, he would die.

Without any room for resistance.

If His Majesty ever discovered this later on, he would still face death.

It was a risk of great magnitude.

And yet...

If he didn't cooperate with Cheng Guang, the Town-Nation Duke's Heir, he feared he wouldn't last much longer.

As Zhao Jin pondered this, a bitter smile appeared on his lips, his hands fell limply, and he closed his eyes in despair.

"Princely Heir, please let me go," Zhao Jin said, which was essentially an acceptance.

Cheng Guang smiled for a moment and then released Zhao Jin.

Zhao Jin stepped back several paces from Cheng Guang's body, eyeing Cheng Guang warily.

Cheng Guang's smile remained.

A wave of eerie light flashed across his body.

Where the immense Iron Shell Turtle stood, now vanished, replaced by an incomparably handsome and elegant noble young master.

He made no move but continued to watch Zhao Jin unhurriedly,

Seemingly unafraid that Zhao would pull any more tricks.

Zhao Jin shook his head with a wry smile, not saying much more. His gaze fell on the green porcelain bowl in the sky, he extended one hand, and a rainbow light shot from his palm.

After the green porcelain bowl flickered a few beams of light, it shrank slowly, coming to rest in the palm of Zhao Jin.

As the green porcelain bowl diminished in size, the magical restraints around them also began to dissipate.

The sounds of clouds, the wind, all the noises flooded his ears.

The birds that had been crouching on the eaves of the Flying Boat perked up upon sensing something, gave a joyous cry, shaking their wings as they flew away.

Zhao Jin held the green porcelain bowl in his hand, his expression complex, his heart ashen. He looked at Cheng Guang not far away, feeling the urge to just die.

In the beginning,

He thought dealing with Cheng Guang, the respected Town-Nation Duke's Heir, was a sure bet.

Who would have imagined that it would backfire this badly?

Not only did he fail to kill the Princely Heir Cheng Guang, but he was also now at the mercy of Cheng Guang, the Town-Nation Duke's Heir.

Chapter 424 - Princely Heir, This is Impossible _6

"Princely Heir, what would you have me do next?"

"Your Majesty wants me to kill you. Going back without any explanation, I would eventually be destined to die. The words the Princely Heir just shared with me—I presume you didn't just want to give me a different place to die in, did you?"

Zhao Jin watched Cheng Guang and asked.

"Of course not," Cheng Guang smiled, glancing at the Tianshan Sect approaching in the distance. He straightened his attire and admired the scenery of Tianmen Mountain, saying with a smile,

"You go back and tell them that you have killed me."

"And see how His Majesty reacts."

"See how His Majesty reacts?" Zhao Jin was confused.

Cheng Guang smiled and explained, "Yes, once I'm 'dead,' His Majesty will either need to appease Duke Zhen's Mansion by acting as though he will investigate my murderer, or he will oppress Duke Zhen's Mansion and be locked in a do-or-die struggle with them."

"I am curious about which option His Majesty will choose."

Zhao Jin remained silent again for a moment. He couldn't quite understand—even if he could predict how His Majesty would choose, what significance did it hold?

His Majesty is the sovereign.

No matter how powerful Duke Zhen's Mansion is, in the end, it is still subordinate.

If the sovereign wishes the subordinate dead, the subordinate has no choice but to die.

His Majesty is currently playing a covert game, and even if it becomes overt in the future, intending to obliterate Duke Zhen's Mansion, people of the world wouldn't say much.

Cheng Guang's gaze briefly swept over Zhao Jin, and he could see what Zhao Jin was thinking.

He didn't elaborate further.

First, see how His Majesty reacts upon hearing of his death.

Also, he wanted to see if Duke Zhen was truly loyal to Great Zhou or if he had other motives.

As for Cheng Zhihai, there was no need to consider him; he certainly wouldn't rebel.

His wife was a princess of Great Zhou.

And Cheng Zhihai himself was an extremely conservative person, a man for whom the principles of sovereign and subject, father and son, were etched deep into his very marrow.

To expect Cheng Zhihai to rebel against Great Zhou would be harder than ascending to the heavens.

Even if the world fell into chaos in the future.

Cheng Zhihai would likely not actively betray Great Zhou.

But Duke Zhen might not feel the same.

He wanted to see if, after his own 'death,' and upon revealing a bit of information to Duke Zhen, he would turn against the Emperor of Great Zhou.

If Duke Zhen could be swayed, in the event of chaos across the land, he might still be able to convince Duke Zhen to contend for power in the world.

Being Duke of the State in Great Zhou might be gratifying, but no matter how good that may be, one is still a subject.

Ultimately under control of another.

While Emperor Zhou might be an enlightened ruler, ranking well among all emperors throughout the dynasties, an emperor is still an emperor, and there is a clear distinction between emperor and subject.

Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang of a former era was also an enlightened ruler.

Yet he was still unyieldingly ruthless, ensuring a smooth transition of power so that the Zhu family could prosper for generations. Regardless of the many loyal subjects under him, anyone who could potentially hinder the succession was put to death.

There's simply no equality between sovereign and subject in itself.

Cheng Guang pondered as he did.

The Flying Boat had passed over Tianmen Mountain.

A hearty laugh echoed from the distance, quickly reaching nearby.

"We welcome the arrival of the Princely Heir at the Taihao Sword Sect and apologize for not receiving you from farther away."

As the voice faded,

A large man approached rapidly from the distance. In the blink of an eye, he landed next to Cheng Guang.

Cheng Guang turned his head and saw a burly man with a full beard, wearing black martial attire, with a huge sword taller than a man strapped to his back.

The man was clearly a member of the Taihao Sword Sect.

Cheng Guang gave a respectful bow and asked, "And you are?"

The large man slapped his forehead and laughed heartily, saying, "I forgot the Princely Heir does not recognize me."

Pausing, the man introduced himself,

"Master of the Taihao Sword Sect, Ning Liang."

Cheng Guang looked slightly taken aback, obviously not anticipating the visitor to be the Master of the Taihao Sword Sect.

The master of a sect personally coming to greet him spoke volumes of his importance.

Cheng Guang had underestimated his own status.

Even if the Taihao Sword Sect was one of the Four Great Hidden Sword Sects with perhaps a deeper foundation than Duke Zhen's Mansion, its overall strength was still slightly weaker.

After Ning Liang's introduction, several more figures appeared behind him, all different in appearance but dressed in martial attire with a Taihao emblem on their chests, indicating their high status within the sect.

Upon landing on the Flying Boat, they each paid their respects to Cheng Guang in turn.

After everyone had finished their greetings, Ning Liang surveyed the Flying Boat and, noticing the remnants of the battle, looked surprised.

"Princely Heir, what is this...?"

Cheng Guang waved his hand dismissively and smiled, "It's nothing, just a small mishap."

Upon hearing Cheng Guang's explanation, Ning Liang's eyes narrowed and he showed a flash of anger. Someone dared to attack the Town-Nation Duke's Heir?

And near their territory?

If outsiders found out, it wouldn't only reflect poorly on Duke Zhen's Mansion but also make the Taihao Sword Sect seem like an easy target.

Ning Liang inspected the remnants of the battle's energy and suddenly seemed to realize something. His gaze settled on Zhao Jin who was standing not far from Cheng Guang.

For a moment,

He was more shocked.

"Was it him?"

"How is he still standing here...?"

Ning Liang considered himself to be astute, but faced with the odd scene before him, he found himself at a loss for a moment.

Cheng Guang smiled, gave no further explanation, and simply said to Ning Liang, "Uncle Ning, I expect I'll be staying at the Taihao Sword Sect for a while. The matter of the marriage arrangement will have to be postponed."

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"I hope Uncle Ning will agree."

Ning Liang shifted his gaze from Zhao Jin and, upon hearing Cheng Guang's words, scratched his head and laughed heartily, "Princely Heir, of course, there is no problem."

"It is our good fortune at the Taihao Sword Sect to have the Princely Heir stay with us for a while, please, stay as long as you like! Even getting married here at the Taihao Sword Sect wouldn't be an issue!"

As he spoke, excitement took over Ning Liang — he clapped his hands and said:

"This is great! This is great! I will take the Princely Heir to meet my daughter Qianxue in a bit! The wedding chamber tonight!"

Cheng Guang was startled by Ning Liang's enthusiasm but did not find it unpleasant.

This father-in-law seemed to be quite agreeable.

Cheng Guang briefly dealt with Ning Liang, then turned to Zhao Jin and said, "Zhao Jin, you go back first; just say that I have been executed by your hand."

"No matter what happens afterward, don't concern yourself with it."

Zhao Jin nodded slightly, hesitated for a moment as if he wanted to say something, but upon reaching the tip of his tongue, he swallowed his words and hastily left.

Cheng Guang watched as Zhao Jin departed.

He could guess what Zhao Jin had wanted to say upon leaving.

Zhao Jin, returning to Emperor Zhou, would say that Cheng Guang had already been executed by him.

But if Cheng Guang were to reappear later, Zhao Jin's words would turn out to be a lie.

He would then be guilty of deceiving the emperor.

Unavoidably facing death.

However, Cheng Guang could not be bothered with this.

If Zhao Jin did not do this, Cheng Guang would have him die right now.

Zhao Jin was a eunuch, without family or descendants, and his selfish nature was much stronger than that of ordinary people.

Given the chance to live longer, he would certainly not choose an early death.

Cheng Guang was confident that Zhao Jin would make the right choice.

Even if Zhao Jin ultimately didn't listen to him and reported the truth to Emperor Zhou, it wouldn't matter.

Cheng Guang himself was indifferent.

At that time, it would be Zhao Jin who would suffer.

Not only would Emperor Zhou not move against Cheng Guang again, but he would also go so far as to present Zhao Jin's head to Cheng Guang as an explanation.

All this would have occurred solely because of Zhao Jin's unilateral actions, with no connection to Cheng Guang whatsoever.

With such thoughts in mind, Cheng Guang chuckled, watched Zhao Jin leave, and then shifted his gaze back to Ning Liang.

The two of them chatted while laughing and smiling.

Meanwhile, Cheng Guang navigated the Flying Boat into the territory of the Taihao Sword Sect.

The Taihao Sword Sect was situated behind Tianmen Mountain, surrounded by a ring of mountains, with rugged terrain and verdant peaks.

The grand entrance of the Sword Sect was Heavenly Gate Mountain itself — ancient and majestic, with the history and lineage of the Taihao Sword Sect carved into the stone cliffs, emanating a profound sense of history.

Upon entering the Taihao Sword Sect, the view opened up marvelously.

A vast square unfolded before them with a gigantic sword monument in the center of the square,

deepest within the Taihao Sword Sect there was a mysterious lake. It was a lake of ink-black water, as though connected to an endless abyss.

However, when moonlight shone upon it, the surface of the lake would ripple with golden waves — those ripples seeming like traces of sword energy, wafting through the air.

Even from a great distance, Cheng Guang could almost feel the mystique and terror of swordsmanship.

Every disciple here was practicing swordsmanship, each emitting a powerful aura, sharp and full of menace. Simply standing there, each person resembled a drawn sword.

As Cheng Guang steered the Flying Boat into the Taihao Sword Sect,

countless disciples looked up.

Upon seeing Cheng Guang standing on the deck of the Flying Boat, as well as Ning Liang beside him,

their faces showed shock.

"That must be the Town-Nation Duke's Heir, right?"

"Even more handsome than the rumors, really dashing."

"Handsome can't fill your stomach though. He could just be a pretty face. By the way, it's surprising that the Sect Master personally went to welcome the Princely Heir."

Many people talked among themselves, their hearts unavoidably sour.

Ning Qianxue of the Taihao Sword Sect, viewed by countless disciples as the goddess of their hearts, was now to marry the Town-Nation Duke's Heir.

The marriage was indeed a match of equal social status,

but for many disciples, it was still difficult to accept immediately.

They didn't resent the Sect for the arranged union with Ning Qianxue,

only resenting that the person marrying Ning Qianxue,

was not them.

Watching the Flying Boat sail over their heads, moving deeper into the Sect,

many Sword Sect disciples began beating their chests and sighing in frustration.

Chapter 426 - Mrs. Xue, Going Home

Sword Pond Ancient Courtyard was located in the southern part of the Taihao Sword Sect, and it was the most luxurious and solemn of all the gardens and pavilions within the Sect.

Closest to the Taihao Sword Sect, practitioners who cultivated the sword path felt the various sword auras of Sword Pond here and could train with twice the result for half the effort.

The Taihao Sword Sect had spared no expense in manpower, material, and financial resources to bring in countless heavenly materials and treasured earth to nurture Sword Pond to its current state.

Therefore, the Sword Pond Ancient Courtyard, being the closest to Sword Pond, was the epitome of luxury.

Within the entire Taihao Sword Sect, only a handful of people could reside in the Sword Pond Ancient Courtyard.

Ordinary disciples didn't even have the qualifications to get close to Sword Pond; they could only gaze at it from a distance.

Upon entering Sword Pond Ancient Courtyard and passing through each pear-blossom stone arch, one would experience different scenic views, with the courtyard's landscape adorned with a myriad of flowers, plants, and trees all exquisitely and lavishly carved.

Here was a rocky hill with rugged edges, there a clear bubbling stream; in this area, colorful flowers bloomed, while over there, ancient pines stood strong against the wind.

"Princely Heir, this Sword Pond Ancient Courtyard is the best residence our Sect has to offer. If you wish to stay a few more days within the Sect, please rest here," said Ning Liang as he led Cheng Guang, carving a path for him and smiling as he spoke: "Qianxue also resides in the Sword Pond Ancient Courtyard.

This girl seldom interacts with the outside world and her temperament is unlike that of ladies from noble families in the Capital city; when you meet her later, if there is any lack of etiquette, I hope for your understanding."

Cheng Guang smiled, shook his head slightly at Ning Liang's words, and said softly, "It's no trouble."

He said so, and continued to admire the beauty of Sword Pond Ancient Courtyard as they walked.

In the courtyard, aside from Cheng Guang and his entourage, there were hardly any other people. The occasional passersby were mostly maids or followers.

They usually looked straight ahead, walking quickly with their heads down, not daring to look around.

After passing through several stone arches finely engraved with intricate patterns, they finally arrived in front of a building.

This building was a Bamboo Cottage in the ancient courtyard, situated next to a verdant bamboo grove. Next to the cottage, one could clearly hear the sound of flowing water from Sword Pond.

It could be considered the core area of the Sword Pond Ancient Courtyard.

"Princely Heir, please come in," said Ning Liang as he pushed open the door of the Bamboo Cottage and gestured for Cheng Guang to enter.

Cheng Guang, followed by Qing Luan alone, walked slowly into the Bamboo Cottage.

Inside, there were no superfluous decorations. On wooden racks along the walls, several precious blue-green swords were displayed; on the teak table, a few tea sets were placed.

The host of this cottage seemed to know they would have guests today and had already prepared tea.

It was unclear whether the tea had been brewed by the host personally or by a servant.

Cheng Guang's gaze fell upon the teapot.

The freshly brewed tea produced a wispy white steam from the spout of the teapot.

In the Bamboo Cottage, under the glow of the evening sun, it added an extra touch of beauty.

"Princely Heir, please take a seat," Ning Liang said with a smile, inviting Cheng Guang to sit before adding, "If the Princely Heir is to leave after the bridal procession today, then it would require following the proper etiquette. But now that the Princely Heir is staying in the Sect for a while, such etiquette is not necessary."

"I will go and ask her to come out and meet you."

Having said that, Ning Liang quickly walked towards the inner chamber.

Clearly.

The 'her' in Ning Liang's heart was none other than Ning Qianxue, the divine maiden of the current generation of Taihao Sword Sect, the one in a marriage arrangement with Cheng Guang himself.

Cheng Guang smiled and nodded, saying nothing further.

"Princely Heir, the foundations of the Taihao Sword Sect are not to be underestimated. Just now, along the way, we came across many people who, despite their young age, had already reached the fifth or sixth rank of cultivation," Qing Luan mentioned softly as she poured tea for Cheng Guang, her tone containing a touch of surprise.

Cheng Guang nodded slightly, picked up the teacup, and sipped gently.

Qing Luan was right, the Taihao Sword Sect indeed had profound foundations. If they were to recruit disciples from the entire Great Zhou Dynasty, it would be an event that would create a sensation throughout the land.

But.

The Taihao Sword Sect had chosen not to do so.

In strict terms, rather than calling it a Sect, it was better said to be a noble clan linked by familial bloodlines.

Every person in the Taihao Sword Sect was more or less bound by kinship.

Because of this, the Taihao Sword Sect was the most unified among The Four Great Sword Sects.

And fundamentally different from the other three Great Sword Sects.

As Cheng Guang contemplated these thoughts.

There was a commotion from inside the room.

Then, Ning Liang emerged, leading a white-robed woman into the room. He appeared very happy, smiling broadly.

The woman in white had a pure demeanor, a graceful figure, snow-like complexion, waist slender as if girdled, teeth like shells, and something playfully unique in her brows and eyes.

As soon as she entered the room, she instinctively turned her gaze upon Cheng Guang.

Her bright eyes flickered with what seemed like the discovery of something interesting, sizing him up continuously.

Noticing the white-robed girl's attentive eyes, Cheng Guang offered her a faint smile and a subtle nod.

"Princely Heir, this is my daughter, Ning Qianxue," Ning Liang introduced, knowing that it was Cheng Guang and Ning Qianxue's first meeting. He smiled as he introduced her to Cheng Guang.

After that, Ning Liang looked at Ning Qianxue and said, "This is the Town-Nation Duke's Heir."

Once the introductions were done, Ning Liang said with a smile, "Princely Heir, Qianxue, you two young people can get to know each other; I will not be in the way here. When the Princely Heir is ready to leave later, just let someone inform me. I will come to send the Princely Heir off properly."

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After Ning Liang finished speaking, he left the room with his entourage.

Qing Luan hesitated for a moment and then followed Ning Liang out of the Bamboo Cottage.

Soon, the room was left with only Ning Qianxue and Cheng Guang.

Ning Qianxue stood with her hands behind her back as she quietly sized up Cheng Guang.

Suddenly, her red lips slightly parted, her eyebrows and eyes curved like crescent moons, her clear eyes brimming with charm.

"Grandma wasn't lying to me, Princely Heir, you really are quite handsome."

In Ning Qianxue's speech and demeanor,

there was none of the natural fear and respect that others showed when facing Cheng Guang.

There was also no trace of arrogance or contempt, which might stem from respecting someone due to their status.

Moreover, Ning Qianxue seemed to be an easy-going person; interacting with her was rather free from awkwardness and distance.

However, her immediate focus on one's appearance seemed a bit off.

Could it be that Ning Qianxue was a bit of a lookist?

Cheng Guang couldn't help but smile wryly.

"You're not too bad yourself."

Cheng Guang politely responded and then picked up a cup of tea, took a sip, and shifted his gaze from Ning Qianxue to look outside the window.

At that moment, Ning Qianxue tilted her head to look at Cheng Guang and suddenly as if remembering something, asked, "Right, weren't you supposed to come today to take me back to Duke Zhen's Mansion to get married?"

"Why did I hear from my dad that you aren't leaving anymore?"

Cheng Guang shook his head.

"Something came up, I need to delay for a bit."

Cheng Guang didn't elaborate further.

Ning Qianxue seemed to half-understand and muttered an "Oh," then she fell silent, unable to find a topic, sat beside Cheng Guang, propped her chin in her hands, and looked around bored.

After a while, Ning Qianxue asked, "Oh, right, Princely Heir, my grandmother said that after getting married, I will belong to Duke Zhen's Mansion. Does that mean I won't be able to return to the Sword Sect afterward?"

"No, you can return."

Ning Qianxue nodded slightly, still propping up her chin, and looked Cheng Guang up and down. "Princely Heir, is there anything interesting outside the window?"

"I've seen the scenery here for many years; I've grown tired of it a long time ago."

Ning Qianxue stood up and followed Cheng Guang's gaze toward the distance.

Cheng Guang laughed, "It's nothing, I was just thinking about something."

At this moment, Cheng Guang had become a conversation stopper, leaving Ning Qianxue wanting to talk, but unable to smoothly open a conversation with him.

She furrowed her brows in frustration.

She seemed like a bit of a chatterbox who hadn't fully matured yet.

Mature chatterboxes don't need others to join in; they can go on by themselves for hours without tiring.

Cheng Guang's eyes were fixed in the direction of the Capital city, waiting for news from there and didn't pay too much attention to Ning Qianxue.

Ning Qianxue sat by his side, tangled in her own thoughts for quite a while before realizing she didn't know what to talk about with the Princely Heir, and thus began to cultivate in place.

Cheng Guang noticed Ning Qianxue's movements beside him, withdrew his gaze from the window, and upon seeing Ning Qianxue already beginning to cultivate, he was momentarily taken aback.

The aura emitting from Ning Qianxue's body,

Was almost at the Eighth Rank.

The Sword Path and Martial Cultivation are essentially similar, being branches of Martial Cultivation, hence the stages and names are the same.

This meant that Ning Qianxue was already a powerhouse in the Rebirth Realm.

How old was Ning Qianxue now?

She's not even older than me, right?

Perhaps even a few years younger than me, and she's already a powerhouse in the Rebirth Realm?

Ordinary cultivators in Spirit Dao probably don't advance as fast as Ning Qianxue, right?

Cheng Guang was suddenly taken aback, as Ning Qianxue unwittingly showed off her skills in front of him, without even realizing it.

Cheng Guang watched Ning Qianxue and pondered for a moment. He suddenly felt that the reason why Ning Qianxue's cultivation was so high was likely because, aside from cultivating, she didn't do anything else in her daily life.

She had always lived reclusively in this Ancient Courtyard.

The vast Sword Pond Ancient Courtyard was seldom frequented by outsiders, except for some servants who were exceedingly respectful.

Ning Qianxue could be said to not have a single friend.

It was difficult for her to converse with others on a daily basis.

Perhaps that was why she wanted to talk and converse with him.

Considering this, Cheng Guang suddenly felt that he may have been a little too indifferent to Ning Qianxue.

Moreover, Cheng Guang also noticed that Ning Qianxue didn't seem to understand the true meaning of getting married.

The upper echelons of the Taihao Sword Sect arranged her marriage to him, and without thinking, she simply agreed.

She didn't worry about whether he was a good person.

Nor was she concerned about how the marriage might affect her.

Instead, she was concerned about whether he was handsome.

Cheng Guang smiled wryly at that thought.

Although it was his first meeting with Ning Qianxue, her actions made him laugh involuntarily.

After watching Ning Qianxue cultivate for a while, Cheng Guang took his gaze away from her.

Someone who worked so hard would naturally have higher cultivation; it wasn't surprising at all.

Not like himself, such a slacker.

Cheng Guang silently criticized himself and turned his attention back outside the window.

After pondering for a moment, he thought that by now, Zhao Jin must have arrived in the Capital city and disseminated the news.

He didn't plan on informing Cheng Zhihai in advance that he hadn't actually encountered any trouble.

First, telling him wouldn't make much difference; with Cheng Zhihai's rigid nature, there was no way he could put on a convincing act.

Anyone with a clear eye would be able to tell at a glance whether Cheng Zhihai was pretending or not.

He couldn't possibly deceive Emperor Zhou.

Second, as long as Cheng Zhihai heard the news and came to investigate near Tianmen Mountain, he would naturally discover that he hadn't encountered any trouble at all.

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Cheng Guang did not plan to hide.

His main gamble was that Emperor Zhou would believe Zhao Jin's words, and there was no need to waste effort trying to conceal everything meticulously.

As Cheng Guang considered this, he stroked his beard. In truth, now that he was within the confines of the Taihao Sword Sect, aside from Emperor Zhou himself, no one else had the strength to enter the Taihao Sword Sect.

He had entered the Taihao Sword Sect safely. Apart from Zhao Jin, who had just left, no one else knew of this.

And the people of the Taihao Sword Sect rarely left their premise, so it was unlikely that they would leak his whereabouts.

In a sense, it could be said that he was somewhat hidden.

Hidden, but not deeply so.

As if hidden.

.....

Great Zhou Capital.

At the rear of the Imperial Palace, on exquisite lofted palace buildings, golden glazed tiles were laid out, sparkling under the sunset.

Surrounding the Emperor's sleeping quarters was a splendid garden, planted with various exotic flowers and rare herbs fragrant throughout the seasons, filling the air with their scent.

The garden also featured artificial mountains, flowing water, pavilions, and other landscapes, as if it were a paradise on earth.

Emperor Zhou sat in a pavilion within the garden. The dignity and chill that usually marked his face softened as he looked at the woman in the pavilion, his eyes showing a hint of tenderness.

The woman in the pavilion was dressed in flowing chiffon, tightly wrapped in silk that accentuated her tantalizing, translucent figure.

A Blue Butterfly Outerwear corset covered her fair skin, while crystal-clear pendant earrings hung down, and the flowers of blood-red cape jasmine secured the cascading black hair over her shoulders.

Wu Ling sat in the pavilion, exhaling fragrant breaths as if she were practicing some sort of cultivation method, with Heavenly and Earthly Qi swirling around her.

With each breath, there was a special rhythm.

At Wu Ling's brow, a flickering light of the Primordial Spirit slowly twinkled. Upon closer inspection, one could see the figure of a tiny person within that light.

The figure was quite delicate, dressed in lavish clothing, with stunning features that mirrored Wu Ling's. Their brows and eyes even showed a trace of vivacity.

After a moment, Wu Ling slowly exhaled a clear breath and opened her bright eyes, a hint of surprise evident between her brows.

"Father, I've made another breakthrough."

"The Seventh Rank of the Spirit Dao, the Virtual Realm, truly feels different from the other realms."

As Wu Ling spoke, she extended one hand, and the tip of her white jade fingers lightly emitted a speck of golden light. As soon as the golden light appeared, it attracted the Heavenly and Earthly Qi.

A gust of wind arose.

The blossoms in the garden swayed ceaselessly, petals falling and dancing in the wind.

Emperor Zhou nodded slightly. His dignified and cool face couldn't help revealing a look of satisfaction, and deep within his eyes there was also a trace of astonishment.

How long had Wu Ling been cultivating, from the beginning to now?

It had been merely a few months.

And yet she had already advanced her Spirit Dao cultivation to the Seventh Rank, the Virtual Realm.

Perhaps in not too long, Wu Ling could even reach the Eighth Rank Great World Realm.

With some more effort, it might be possible for her to break through to the Sky-Man before thirty.

To become the youngest Sky-Man in the history of Great Zhou.

As Emperor Zhou thought of this, his breathing became slightly heavier, though his expression remained calm on the surface.

"You've done well, Wu Ling. Your speed in advancing your cultivation realm is even faster than mine was in my day."

"After some time, you should go and stay in the Blood Pool again for a while."

"Any increase in bloodline concentration is good."

Upon hearing Emperor Zhou's words, Wu Ling's pretty face immediately turned sour, and with a resigned tone, she said, "Father, I've been in the Blood Pool so many times these days, it's been almost like soaking in it every day. There really is no need for me to enter the Blood Pool again."

"Let someone else go."

Hearing Wu Ling's words, Emperor Zhou frowned slightly, an involuntary sense of helplessness rising in his heart.

The Blood Pool, that many princes and princesses of the Great Zhou Imperial Family longed for yet could not enter, was actually disdained by Wu Ling.

If others heard this, what would they think?

Emperor Zhou coughed softly and was about to speak when a sharp sound of piercing the air suddenly approached from the distance.

Emperor Zhou and Wu Ling both looked up simultaneously, gazing into the distance.

In the sky far away, a streak of rainbow light streaked toward them from the heavens.

In just a few breaths, it descended before Emperor Zhou and Wu Ling.

As the rainbow light settled, Zhao Jin's figure came into view.

Zhao Jin, panting, fell before Emperor Zhou and immediately bowed respectfully.

"Your Majesty."

After uttering that single word, Zhao Jin then greeted Wu Ling with a bow.

"Crown Prince."

Emperor Zhou waved his hand to indicate that Zhao Jin need not be so formal, then fixed his gaze on Zhao Jin and asked, "How did it go?"

Zhao Jin knew what Emperor Zhou was asking about. Just as he was about to speak, his eyes fell on Wu Ling by his side, and he hesitated for a moment.

Emperor Zhou smiled and said, "Don't worry."

Zhao Jin let out a sigh of relief, then nodded slightly to Emperor Zhou, "Your Majesty, the Princely Heir has been dealt with."

Upon hearing Zhao Jin's words, Emperor Zhou's brow furrowed and then relaxed, his tone becoming much lighter.

"Are you sure you haven't left any potential trouble behind?"

Emperor Zhou asked another question.

Zhao Jin felt slightly awkward inside; it wasn't a matter of leaving any potential trouble behind, but rather he had left quite a lot behind.

Although Zhao Jin was thinking indistinct content internally, his face remained respectfully composed, without much other emotion.

"Yes, Your Majesty."

Emperor Zhou chuckled, stood up, and patted Zhao Jin on the shoulder, saying:

"Well done. Going forward, Zhao Jin, act as if nothing has happened. If you weren't careful and have left any trouble behind, don't blame me for showing no mercy."

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Zhao Jin's body was taut as he listened to Emperor Zhou's words laced with a hint of a smile, but his heart did not feel any trace of relief; instead, it was full of heaviness.

Beads of sweat the size of soybeans inevitably appeared on his forehead, trickling down along his face.

Even though Zhao Jin felt considerable pressure, his expression remained respectful, and he quickly responded.

Emperor Zhou glanced at Zhao Jin, aware of the immense pressure he was under but without further thought, waved his hand, signaling Zhao Jin to leave.

Zhao Jin hastily complied, bowed once again, and with a flicker, vanished from the spot as if fleeing.

After Zhao Jin had disappeared,

Wu Ling, who was sitting in the pavilion, seemed to finally react, staring blankly at her father the Emperor.

"Father, what did you just say to Zhao Jin? What does it mean that 'the Princely Heir has already been dealt with'?"

Emperor Zhou picked up the iced tea from the ancient table, casually took a sip, and looked at Wu Ling with an unperturbed voice, "It means exactly what it sounds like."

"If someone becomes an obstacle, they are removed."

"Wu Ling, you must remember, an emperor cannot afford to have personal feelings. The interests of the dynasty come first, the royal family's interests come first. Only if you can achieve these two points can you dismiss all other concerns."

Hearing Emperor Zhou's words, Wu Ling furrowed her beautiful brows, as if she still couldn't quite believe it.

Her lips pursed slightly, then she posed her question again.

"Father, the Princely Heir you mentioned...it couldn't be...it couldn't be the Town-Nation Duke's Heir, could it...?"

Emperor Zhou watched Wu Ling, his face stern and even more serious as he observed her anxious appearance.

He knew that Wu Ling harbored special feelings for the Town-Nation Duke's Heir.

Although they had not spent much time together, Cheng Guang, the Town-Nation Duke's Heir, had left a profound impression on Wu Ling's heart.

There was a moment when he had considered allowing Wu Ling to marry the Town-Nation Duke's Heir.

But the Duke clearly did not wish to proceed in that manner.

For the sake of the Duke Zhen's Mansion's descendants, to avoid having their royal bloodline extracted and becoming unable to cultivate, they were unwilling to intermarry with the royal family anymore and be bound together.

At this thought, Emperor Zhou could not help but sigh. If the Duke and Cheng Zhihai had agreed to allow Wu Ling to marry Cheng Guang, the Town-Nation Duke's Heir, none of this would have happened.

The Duke Zhen's Mansion would no longer have an heir.

He could be completely at ease.

When Wu Ling became Empress, Cheng Guang, the Town-Nation Duke's Heir, and his descendants could still live peacefully in the Great Zhou.

But now things had turned out this way.

It was all the self-inflicted fault of the Duke Zhen's Mansion.

Emperor Zhou watched Wu Ling for a while but did not directly answer her question, instead saying,

"Don't let your thoughts run wild. These matters are not your concern for now. Your most important task at present is to concentrate on improving your cultivation. In the future, you will inherit my throne of the Great Zhou."

Having said this, Emperor Zhou stood up and slowly walked away.

Wu Ling, however, remained frozen in place, looking at her imposing and stern father, recalling the noble young man who had sat with her in the pavilion when she was most helpless.

For some reason,

Wu Ling suddenly felt a sour sensation at the tip of her nose.

Her vision blurred without her knowing when.

"Why would father do such a thing?"

The sky gradually darkened.

Her seventh rank cultivation seemed incapable of bringing Wu Ling much warmth.

In the pavilion, she curled up helplessly, her bright eyes lifeless.

She thought back to the times she had spent with Cheng Guang.

Wu Ling's heart ached.

"Wu Ling, have you ever practiced your cultivation regularly?"

"Wu Ling, would you like to spar with me?"

"Wu Ling, your strength is too weak. I'm afraid I'll hurt you if I use all my might."

"Wu Ling, let me teach you a new game. This is called Go. You need to line up five stones in a row..."

In her mind, she remembered the words Cheng Guang had once said to her.

The last image that appeared in Wu Ling's mind was of Cheng Guang clothed in the attire of the Bureau of the Lamp during the royal ceremony, his figure tall and straight, dignified and spirited.

Maybe Cheng Guang was her only friend.

Maybe Cheng Guang was the first person with whom she could play.

Maybe Cheng Guang was the first to extend a friendly hand to her.

No matter the reason, at this moment, Wu Ling just felt like crying.

Why would her father have Zhao Jin kill the Princely Heir?

Why?

I was thinking that once my cultivation improved and father allowed me to leave the palace, I would go and find the Princely Heir to play again.

I was also worried that, once the Princely Heir got married and had a wife, he wouldn't pay attention to me anymore.

But why...?

Why would the Princely Heir be treated this way by father?

Wu Ling couldn't understand; she felt powerless. It was as if she had been abandoned by the whole world again.

She was back to the days outside the Imperial Palace, scrambling for food with a bunch of beggars, in endless darkness.

Wu Ling stayed in the pavilion all night long.

Dark circles had formed around her bright eyes.

As dawn approached,

Emperor Zhou's figure suddenly appeared beside Wu Ling. Looking at her, he felt a sense of frustration at her lack of spirit.

In his eyes, Wu Ling was already the Crown Prince, and in the future, she would be the Emperor of the entire Great Zhou Dynasty.

How could she be so emotional?

She hadn't had much of anything happen with Cheng Guang, the Princely Heir, nor had they had much contact.

What would happen if there had been more contact?

Thinking of scolding Wu Ling, Emperor Zhou reflected on his already strained relationship with her, which had only recently improved slightly. Now, with this unfortunate incident,

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If he scolded Wu Ling again, he was afraid that Wu Ling might not know how to treat himself later on.

After a moment of silence, Emperor Zhou of Great Zhou spoke, "Alright, go and cultivate. What follows at Duke Zhen's Mansion... Perhaps the entire Great Zhou will not be tranquil. I have no time to accompany your cultivation, go to the Blood Pool whenever you have nothing to do."

After Emperor Zhou finished speaking, his figure vanished once more.

After the figure of Emperor Zhou disappeared.

Not far from Wu Ling, a few palace maids with uneasy expressions cautiously approached and tested, "Your Highness, would you like to bathe and change your clothes first?"

After the palace maids finished speaking, Wu Ling did not react.

A moment later.

Just as the palace maids were looking at each other, thinking about stepping back.

Wu Ling suddenly stood up, fiercely wiped her eyes with her porcelain-patterned sleeve, and quickly walked towards the Blood Pool.

"No need for a bath, I'm going to practice."

Wu Ling's face was clear, and her tone had lost its previous weakness, now carrying more of an authority figure's presence.

Wu Ling quickly left.

Her figure disappeared swiftly.

The group of palace maids left behind exchanged glances, somewhat puzzled.

"Didn't His Highness always hate cultivating and didn't want to go to the Blood Pool anymore?"

"Why is he actually going on his own initiative today?"

"Could it be that he was forced by His Majesty?"

A few palace maids whispered among themselves, then not daring to discuss too much, quickly lowered their heads and hurried off following Wu Ling's footsteps.

.....

Inside the Capital City, these past two days have been restless.

The Town-Nation Duke's Heir went to the Taihao Sword Sect to fetch a bride, not returning for two days.

Normally, being absent for two days would not be a cause for concern.

Perhaps something happened on the way that delayed him.

But from somewhere, vague rumors began to spread, alleging that the Town-Nation Duke's Heir had encountered a powerful assassination attempt and was already dead.

Once this word was out, it instantly stirred up a massive wave in the Capital City.

But quickly, some interested parties suppressed it.

Even so, similar rumors and speculations still quietly circulated around the Capital City.

In a teahouse in the Capital City, a storyteller mysteriously spoke to the audience below:

"Ladies and gentlemen, do you know who assassinated the Town-Nation Duke's Heir?"

As the storyteller raised this, the listeners became intrigued, their eyes widened slightly, all asking who it was.

The storyteller smiled, took a sip of tea, and then said slowly:

"It's said that someone witnessed it."

"It seems to be someone from Great Yuan, riding a flying eagle, who boarded the Heir's boat. It appears to be a Sky-Man, with just a palm strike, instantly causing the heavens and earth to lose their color, the winds and the clouds to shift, and the Town-Nation Duke's Heir was crushed into powder!"

"You can only say, it was terrifying indeed!"

After he finished, the audience below exclaimed in shock.

"It was someone from Great Yuan?"

"Hiss, come to think of it, it really is possible. Within Great Zhou, who else would have the power to assassinate the Heir? Only people from other dynasties could."

"The Heir died so tragically, probably without any chance to fight back."

The crowd was abuzz with discussion.

Someone also offered a different opinion.

"Currently, the Heir's body hasn't been found. Perhaps the Heir had some life-saving measures and isn't dead at all?"

But someone quickly argued against it.

"The Heir has already been turned into powder, how could there be a body to find? Besides, there's been no movement from Duke's Mansion, and no news that the Heir is unharmed. It seems likely that something truly did happen!"

"Alas, such pity, the majestic Town-Nation Duke's Heir, someone we commoners could never reach in our lifetime, has been assassinated. Even noblemen have their hardships."

"Hey, you poor scholar, someone who even tries to run a tab for drinking flower wine, now you start to pity such a person as the Heir? It's like eating radishes without feeling thirsty and worrying over nothing."

The scholar's face turned slightly red as he covered the patches on his green robe, insisting, "How can a man of letters talk about running tabs? I intended to trade poetry for a spring night's delight, but they were unwilling, so I said I'd write them better poems next time."

His verbose excuses went unnoticed by the others.

The air was filled with mirth.

Before long, the news of the Town-Nation Duke's Heir's predicament was forgotten by everyone.

Nobody cared anymore.

It was merely a topic of conversation for the commoners over tea and meals.

Among the audience below.

Several noblewomen passing by came in to drink tea and listen to the storyteller with laughter, but when they heard what the storyteller announced, they suddenly paused.

"What is that storyteller talking about? Something about the Heir being assassinated?"

Wu Yuemei had originally made plans to meet with a few close friends for a leisurely stroll today, but after coming out, she found that something was off with her friends' expressions.

No matter what she asked them.

Instead, they kept subtly comforting her, telling her not to worry, to relax.

At first, Wu Yuemei didn't understand, repeatedly asking if something had happened, but the other noblewomen just laughed it off, unwilling to say more.

This made Wu Yuemei even more baffled.

She felt that her friends were hiding something from her.

But she didn't feel it appropriate to press further, so she tried to put it out of her mind.

Passing by a teahouse, and seeing that it was busy, she decided to reserve a private room to enjoy some tea and listen to the storytelling.

However.

Wu Yuemei had not expected that just as she arrived at the teahouse, she would hear the storyteller discuss the assassination of the Heir.