

My System 431

Chapter 431 - Mrs. Xue, Going Home _6

Wu Yuemei's steps halted, and she stood frozen as if struck by lightning.

When she regained her composure, Wu Yuemei hurriedly turned to the noblewoman beside her and asked,

"Yuexin, Xuan Yao, do you know something? Is the Princely Heir mentioned by the storyteller my son?"

Wu Yuemei's hands were tightly clasped together, her knuckles turning slightly white.

Upon being questioned by Wu Yuemei, the several noblewomen's expressions turned even more troubled, unsure of how to respond.

On their way here, they had tried to avoid places with idle gossip as much as possible. Passing by the teahouse by chance, they thought it was uneventful. How could they have expected to encounter a storyteller mentioning the Princely Heir?

This made them feel helpless,

and they couldn't help but feel a spurt of anger towards the storyteller on stage.

But right now, dealing with that storyteller was secondary.

How should they respond to Wu Yuemei now?

The high-ranking noblewomen of the capital suddenly found themselves unable to speak.

Mrs. Xue, who was following closely beside Wu Yuemei, couldn't bear to watch and quickly tugged at Wu Yuemei's sleeve. "Madam, let's go back. These people are probably talking nonsense..."

Wu Yuemei shook off Mrs. Xue's arm with a jerk.

Mrs. Xue, caught off guard, fell to the ground.

Looking down at the fallen figure of Mrs. Xue, Wu Yuemei felt a stab of pity. Although she was technically a servant, they were as close as sisters. Wu Yuemei didn't hesitate to quickly help her up.

But her expression soon turned cold.

"What exactly are you all hiding from me?"

"What does that storyteller mean by his words?"

"Is the Princely Heir he's talking about my son Guanger?"

Wu Yuemei finished speaking.

The lips of the noblewomen present parted slightly, their resplendent faces exchanging glances, all hoping the other would speak, but none were willing to start.

Wu Yuemei took a deep breath, "Fine, if you won't talk, I'll find out for myself."

Saying so, she was about to lift her skirt and storm up to the stage to drag the storyteller down.

In this moment, Wu Yuemei's usually spoiled princess demeanor became partially visible.

The noblewomen couldn't react in time.

But Mrs. Xue quickly grabbed hold of Wu Yuemei, her voice pleading, "Madam, let's return home. I did not purposely conceal anything from you."

"It's just that, at the moment, there is no news of the Princely Heir. These storytellers are all spouting nonsense. If it were not for His Majesty's opposition to literary inquisition, those who dared to speculate about the Princely Heir would have had their heads chopped off countless times, they wouldn't dare speak like this."

Wu Yuemei's body tensed slightly as she slowly turned her head, her eyes trembling as she stared at Mrs. Xue.

She had understood Mrs. Xue's words.

Mrs. Xue had admitted it.

The Princely Heir mentioned by the storyteller was indeed her son Guanger.

In his story... had Guanger been assassinated... and was now deceased??

This thought sent Wu Yuemei's world spinning, her legs threatening to give way beneath her.

"Madam."

Mrs. Xue quickly stepped forward.

Wu Yuemei shook her head, signaling for Mrs. Xue to let go of her, then fixed her gaze on the noblewomen around her.

Before Wu Yuemei could speak, they hastened to console her:

"Yuemei, it must be alright. The Princely Heir has so many guards around him, how could outsiders assassinate him?"

"That's right, the Princely Heir is so capable. It was he who dealt with the crown prince's matters recently."

"We shouldn't worry. There's no confirmation yet. They haven't even found the Princely Heir's body, so maybe there's no trouble at all."

Wu Yuemei shook her head, took a deep breath, and remained composed rather than overtly grief-stricken.

"You don't have to comfort me. I'm fine."

Wu Yuemei glanced at the few noblewomen, her desire to continue shopping gone. She walked toward the distant street, ready to return to Duke Zhen's Mansion.

"Mrs. Xue, we're going home."

Mrs. Xue, taken aback for a moment, then bowed slightly to the noblewomen and hurried to keep pace with Wu Yuemei as they headed for Duke Zhen's Mansion.

Along the way,

Mrs. Xue closely observed her mistress's condition.

There was no news of the Princely Heir at the moment.

While it was still possible he was alive,

any perceptive person could see

that the Princely Heir might very well have encountered disaster.

Currently, the Family Head, with an excuse from His Majesty, was strictly prohibited from leaving the capital city, unable to go out and investigate whether the Princely Heir had met with trouble or to find the assassin.

Everyone was shrouded in a fog of uncertainty.

The Family Head didn't know why Your Majesty did this, but he could only obey.

At the same time, he did not want this information to be known by Wu Yuemei.

He reminded himself to be extra vigilant.

However, just after a day had passed, he failed to keep it a secret.

Mrs. Xue sighed, feeling just as bad when she learned the news, with a heavy heart.

But she also knew, her mistress would be a hundred times, a thousand times more upset than herself.

Mrs. Xue had thought that Wu Yuemei would be crying incessantly, wailing in sorrow at this time.

Yet, to her surprise, Wu Yuemei did not show any excessive grief, aside from the undeniable fatigue in her eyes.

Aside from that, she looked no different from usual.

It was abnormal.

Mrs. Xue knew this was not how her mistress would normally react to such a situation.

Could it be that the mistress knows the Princely Heir is still fine, which is why she's not at all sad?

Mrs. Xue pondered in her heart.

Both of them returned to Duke Zhen's Mansion in silence.

Upon entering the courtyard.

Wu Yuemei sat at the table, and Mrs. Xue hurriedly brewed tea for her, bringing a cup of fragrant clear tea to Wu Yuemei.

"Mistress, have some tea."

Wu Yuemei nodded slightly, took the tea, and then looked up at Mrs. Xue, asking, "Where is Cheng Zhihai?"

Mrs. Xue was taken aback by the question.

Wu Yuemei seldom addressed Cheng Zhihai in such a manner, even on the rare occasions she did, she never sounded as calm as she did now.

Mrs. Xue's heart tightened, and she hurriedly said, "The Family Head is currently at the Bureau of the Lamp, he cannot leave the Capital city, so he ordered Qian Siyuan and Li Zhengyang to lead people in search of the Princely Heir."

Upon hearing this, Wu Yuemei nodded again, slightly rubbing her forehead as if pained.

Mrs. Xue quickly stepped forward, gently pressing Wu Yuemei's forehead.

After a moment of silence,

Wu Yuemei suddenly spoke up.

"Mrs. Xue, do you think Guanger is really gone?"

"My Guanger, is he really, just, no more."

Wu Yuemei's tone remained even, unrippled.

Yet it made Mrs. Xue's heart flutter.

"Mistress, of course, the Princely Heir is blessed by the heavens, he won't meet with misfortune, he hasn't returned yet, maybe he's just delayed by some matter."

Wu Yuemei nodded slightly, "It might indeed be so."

"Guanger is a playful child by nature, it's normal for him to be distracted by something interesting and not return for a while."

"But this time he went to fetch his bride, he shouldn't be dawdling about. When he comes back, I'm going to give him a good scolding."

As Wu Yuemei spoke, one hand resting against her forehead, her eyelids drooping.

Her voice grew weaker and weaker.

Mrs. Xue, who was gently pressing Wu Yuemei's forehead, suddenly noticed, through the tips of her fingers, a cold wetness.

She looked down.

And discovered,

that tears had begun to glitter in the corners of Wu Yuemei's eyes, trickling down to her own fingers.

"Mistress..." Mrs. Xue's heart trembled.

Wu Yuemei seemed to realize something too, quickly wiping away the tears and smiling, "Ah, Mrs. Xue, why am I crying, it's nothing."

"That's right, Guanger will soon be back to get married, I need to tidy up the wedding chamber for him, and all the details of the wedding need to be arranged. I'll be very busy during this time."

As she spoke,

Wu Yuemei's emotions began to fray.

"So busy..."

Her red lips quivered, struggling to speak.

Mrs. Xue was moved.

She wanted to say something, that the Princely Heir would be fine, but she herself could scarcely bear to deceive her mistress further.

How could this be...

What to do.

The Princely Heir was doing well, how could something have happened to him?

Who would attempt to assassinate the Princely Heir?

Mrs. Xue couldn't understand.

Chapter 432 - Is it Your Majesty? Zhao Jin!!

When Wu Yuemei learned that Cheng Guang might have encountered trouble,

Cheng Zhihai, too, was anxiously waiting inside the Bureau of the Lamp, pacing back and forth in the hall with his hands behind his back.

Frustration and self-reproach were written all over Cheng Zhihai's face.

"That day, when I saw the man ascend within the Imperial Palace, nothing was done to Guanger, and I assumed all was well afterward."

"How could such an unexpected incident have occurred?"

"Perhaps not long after I left, someone boarded the Flying Boat, attempting to assassinate Guanger. That person's strength must have reached Sky-Man or they used some special means; otherwise, I would have noticed something."

"Who exactly is it, who could have seized the opportunity so precisely to strike against Guanger?"

Cheng Zhihai's face turned rather unsightly as a figure suddenly emerged in his mind.

It was the visage of Emperor Zhou.

"Was it Your Majesty...?"

Cheng Zhihai muttered to himself.

At a time when Cheng Guang might already be dead, Emperor Zhou had burdened him with many trivial matters, preventing him from leaving the capital city to investigate Cheng Guang's whereabouts.

It's hard to say what Emperor Zhou's intentions really were.

Despite Cheng Zhihai's reluctance to admit it, the possibility that Emperor Zhou had acted against Cheng Guang could not be ignored given the current signs.

Yet Emperor Zhou had made no attempt to explain any of this to Cheng Zhihai.

After all, Emperor Zhou was the Emperor; even if he had a good relationship with him, a distance between him and a subject like Cheng Zhihai was almost inevitable.

Upon realizing this, Cheng Zhihai slowly clenched his fists. He suddenly wanted to rise up and go to the Imperial Palace to confront Emperor Zhou about whether the Emperor had a hand behind this incident.

But...

Several moments passed.

Cheng Zhihai's expression grew somber as he took a deep breath. The notion of confronting Emperor Zhou had risen sharply in his mind, only to be set aside again after a brief moment.

Just as he was preparing to try a more tactful approach to probe Emperor Zhou's intentions, a series of footsteps suddenly echoed from outside the hall.

Thinking it was Qian Siyuan and Li Zhengyang returning, Cheng Zhihai immediately looked up toward the hall entrance.

Seeing the figure hurrying toward the hall, Cheng Zhihai's normally stoic face faltered.

"Yuemei? How come you're here?"

Cheng Zhihai, first taken aback upon seeing Yuemei approach, then noticed Wu Yuemei's somewhat haggard expression, and his heart suddenly clenched.

He knew that Wu Yuemei must have learned of the incident.

Wu Yuemei stared intensely at Cheng Zhihai, her voice slightly hoarse as she asked, "Cheng Zhihai, why did you keep me in the dark? How is Guanger now?"

"Haven't you already sent Qian Siyuan and the others to investigate? Is there any news yet?"

Wu Yuemei spoke very slowly, yet the rage in her tone was palpable, like a volcano on the verge of eruption.

Wu Yuemei was not only angry at Cheng Zhihai for concealing the troublesome experience Cheng Guang was going through from her,

but also at herself for her anger.

At this moment, Wu Yuemei was frustrated that she was unable to help in any way.

Unable to exert even a bit of strength.

Cheng Zhihai, watching Wu Yuemei, instinctively felt a wave of chaos in his heart.

In front of Wu Yuemei, his image as the authoritative and impartial Director of the Bureau of the Lamp seemed difficult to maintain.

He immediately blurted out:

"Yuemei, don't panic. There's no confirmed news about Guanger just yet. The rumors outside claiming that Guanger is... Those are all nonsense, no one knows where they came from!"

While speaking, Cheng Zhihai took Wu Yuemei's hand and gently patted it, "Right now, although I have been ordered by His Majesty to stay in the capital city, I've also sent Qian Siyuan and the others to investigate."

"They haven't returned yet. Perhaps they'll update us soon."

As his words fell, Cheng Zhihai hurriedly pulled Wu Yuemei aside to a seat, poured her a cup of clear tea, and brought it to her lips, hoping to get her to drink and relax.

Even as Cheng Zhihai brought the teacup to Wu Yuemei's lips, she did not open her mouth to drink.

Her gaze remained coldly fixed on Cheng Zhihai.

"Cheng Zhihai, I ask you, why did you have someone conceal this from me?"

"Let's not talk about Guanger's condition right now. If he truly has... passed away... do you plan to hide it from me forever?"

Cheng Zhihai, struck by Wu Yuemei's words, was a bit flustered and opened his mouth slightly, wanting to offer some excuse – to say that he hadn't had a chance to tell her, perhaps the news wasn't accurate –

But the words died on his lips and he found himself unable to say anything.

Cheng Zhihai knew that his intentions had probably been seen through by Wu Yuemei long ago.

He sighed softly and whispered, "I didn't want to worry you too much. With things as they are, it's better that I bear the burden alone."

At his words, Wu Yuemei's eyebrows rose slightly, "Such a big matter, and have you even told father yet?"

Cheng Zhihai's lips moved, then he sighed again and nodded slightly.

Wu Yuemei's eyes remained intently fixed on Cheng Zhihai for a while, then she suddenly smiled.

"Alright, Cheng Zhihai. You intend to take this on alone, to worry in silence. Apart from you, it seems nobody else in our family, other than you, cares about Guanger."

"You're the greatest, Cheng Zhihai."

At her words, Cheng Zhihai felt another tightening in his chest and quickly stepped forward, about to offer some comfort.

Chapter 433 - Is it Your Majesty? Zhao Jin!! _2

Wu Yuemei fiercely shook off Cheng Zhihai's hand, "Have you discovered anything now? There are not many in the entire Great Zhou who could assassinate Guanger."

"Apart from Qian Siyuan and his people, what have you found out yourself?"

Cheng Zhihai's lips quivered, struggling to speak, and finally said ambiguously, "I have some suspicions about who might have done it, but at the moment I'm not certain. I plan to look into it further later."

Wu Yuemei asked, "Who is it?"

Cheng Zhihai fell silent for a few breaths, then sighed and slowly began,

"Yuemei, I suspect it might be something His Majesty has done."

As Cheng Zhihai's words fell, Wu Yuemei's beautiful eyes narrowed slightly, and her jade fingers clenched tightly together.

After a pause, Cheng Zhihai continued, "His Majesty has always harbored misgivings about our Duke Zhen's Mansion. He had intended to move against my Bureau of the Lamp some time ago but wasn't successful."

"I originally thought His Majesty would no longer harbor any designs against us, but now I don't know why he would lay hands on Guanger."

"When Guanger left the Capital city to go to the Taihao Sword Sect, a trace of Qi rose from within the Imperial Palace. After following it, I discovered it was the newly appointed Minister of Rites, acting on His Majesty's orders to bring gifts to Guanger."

"Seeing that the man harbored no malice, I left it at that."

"But who could have imagined that not long after I left, such an incident would occur."

"Now I have been ordered by His Majesty not to leave the Capital city, so even if I wanted to go investigate, I'm powerless."

"All these signs make it hard to say that His Majesty's shadow isn't behind this."

After Cheng Zhihai finished speaking, Wu Yuemei's expression grew increasingly grim, filled with many other complex emotions.

There was silence again for a few breaths.

Suddenly, Wu Yuemei looked up, got to her feet, her long skirt fluttering, and with swift steps headed toward the hall's exit.

Cheng Zhihai noticed Wu Yuemei's actions and for a moment didn't understand which act she was putting on. He stood there dazed but then hurried to his feet and followed behind Wu Yuemei, intending to see what she was up to.

Cheng Zhihai knew that Wu Yuemei was not in the right state of mind at this point.

He inexplicably feared that Wu Yuemei might do something foolish.

Following Wu Yuemei out of the main hall of the Bureau of the Lamp, Cheng Zhihai saw Wu Yuemei boarding a Jade Carriage.

Just before boarding the Jade Carriage, Cheng Zhihai heard Wu Yuemei speak to the carriage driver,

"To the Imperial Palace."

As the words fell,

The Jade Carriage rose and streaked directly toward the Imperial Palace.

At that moment, seeing Wu Yuemei heading to the Imperial Palace, Cheng Zhihai widened his eyes, instinctively wanting to stop her.

He could imagine that Wu Yuemei's visit to the Imperial Palace was most likely to seek His Majesty and inquire if he was involved in the matter with Guanger.

But then Cheng Zhihai thought that Princess Yuemei, being a princess of Great Zhou, didn't need to engage in any conspiracy with Emperor Zhou; she was likely aiming to confront the issue directly.

His relationship with Emperor Zhou was that of a sovereign and subject.

But not so with Wu Yuemei.

Perhaps letting Wu Yuemei directly question Emperor Zhou to see his intentions at this moment was the best option.

Thinking this, Cheng Zhai's expression turned complicated.

Perhaps it would have been much better to have told Wu Yuemei from the start and think of strategies together rather than him busying himself alone.

Wu Yuemei was not as fragile as he had imagined.

Cheng Zhihai sighed, stepped on the Qi, and his body turned into a streak of light, closely following behind Wu Yuemei's Jade Carriage toward the Imperial Palace.

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Emperor Zhou's bedchamber was connected to the outside world, and under the light of the moon, the pine needles on the ancient trees still showed a hint of green.

Just as Emperor Zhou was preparing to have a noblewoman beside him help him undress for bed, a burst of noisy voices suddenly arose from outside the chamber.

Emperor Zhou listened to the commotion outside the chamber, his brow slightly furrowed. He really hadn't expected that at this hour, someone would come to disturb him in his chamber.

Emperor Zhou instructed the noblewoman clad in a thin silk gown beside him to go and wash up first, and he would join her after, then he pushed the door open and stepped out to look.

"Princess Yuemei, Princess Yuemei, His Majesty has already retired for the night, and you must not disturb him," pleaded Zhao Jin, standing in the way of Princess Yuemei and Cheng Zhihai with a pained expression.

Princess Yuemei's eyebrows raised slightly, "Step aside."

Zhao Jin looked troubled, his gaze seeking help from Cheng Zhihai.

But Cheng Zhihai had no response and remained silent.

Seeing Cheng Zhihai act this way, Zhao Jin knew he wouldn't be able to hold back Princess Yuemei and it was possible he didn't even want to try.

Zhao Jin could understand the feelings of Princess Yuemei and Cheng Zhihai at this time. After all, the Princely Heir might have already died, and it would be difficult for them as parents not to care.

Cheng Zhihai was not a fool, he must have realized to some extent that Emperor Zhou was involved in this matter.

However, Cheng Zhihai still had some regard for propriety; he himself would not likely break into the Imperial Palace at this hour.

This time, he might just be taking advantage of Princess Yuemei's status.

With these thoughts, Zhao Jin's gaze fell on Wu Yuemei, and just as he was about to say something,

A commanding voice came from behind.

"Zhao Jin, step aside," said the voice.

Upon hearing the authoritative voice behind him, Zhao Jin's body stiffened slightly, then he quickly stepped aside and respectfully saluted Emperor Zhou.

Chapter 434 - Is it Your Majesty? Zhao Jin!! _3

"Your Majesty."

Emperor Zhou didn't respond to Zhao Jin but instead focused all his attention on Wu Yuemei.

"Yuemei has come to see Us. What is the matter?"

As Emperor Zhou spoke, he didn't glance at Cheng Zhihai.

And Cheng Zhihai had no intent to speak either, silently following behind Wu Yuemei.

At this moment, he seemed to have become invisible.

Wu Yuemei, graceful and dignified, donned a cyan long skirt with a blue base and a Flowing Bead Hairpin in her hair. A touch of rouge made her appear luxurious yet solemn.

However, the depths of Wu Yuemei's eyes hid intense fatigue and sorrow.

"Your Majesty, Guanger has had an accident."

Wu Yuemei slowly started speaking.

Upon hearing this, Emperor Zhou was taken aback at first, then his authoritative countenance showed a hint of sadness, and he sighed softly.

"Yuemei, you know of this as well."

"Did Zhihai tell you about it?"

Emperor Zhou said this while glancing at Cheng Zhihai who wasn't far aside.

Wu Yuemei didn't wait for Cheng Zhihai to answer, shaking her head straight away, her eyes fixed intently on Emperor Zhou.

"Your Majesty, why didn't you allow Cheng Zhihai to leave the Capital city to look for Guanger."

Although Wu Yuemei heard from Cheng Zhihai that the incident involving Cheng Guang might involve Emperor Zhou's shadow, she didn't come forth and directly accuse Emperor Zhou of laying hands on Cheng Guang.

Asking in such a manner, whether or not this affair was Emperor Zhou's doing, it would undoubtedly be akin to tearing off the face.

Wu Yuemei still harbored a sliver of fantasy towards Emperor Zhou, thinking he wouldn't be so heartlessly ruthless.

To even kill her own nephew.

Listening to Wu Yuemei's questioning, Emperor Zhou's face froze slightly, his eyes fixed on Wu Yuemei, "Yuemei, these words, did Zhihai ask you to say them?"

His tone was not very severe.

Yet it exerted immense pressure on both Wu Yuemei and Cheng Zhihai.

The unique aura of the Heavenly Human Realm, even just a hint leaking out, weighed upon the two of them as if a great mountain was pressing down, making it difficult for them to breathe.

Cheng Zhihai was still alright.

But Wu Yuemei's face turned pale, yet she still propped herself up, her eyes stubbornly looking at Emperor Zhou, "It was my question!"

"Such a big incident has occurred to Guanger, and yet Your Majesty, you did not personally inquire about it and even prevented Cheng Zhihai from leaving the Capital city. Are you afraid Cheng Zhihai might discover something?"

"How audacious!"

Emperor Zhou watched Wu Yuemei, his tone faltering slightly as his mood surged, his face growing darker.

Cheng Zhihai, without any hesitation, stepped forward to shield Wu Yuemei behind him, and with bowed head, admitted fault, "Your Majesty, the words Yuemei spoke were without thought, we beg for Your Majesty's forgiveness."

As soon as Cheng Zhihai finished speaking.

Wu Yuemei pushed Cheng Zhihai away from in front of her with one hand, confronting Emperor Zhou's aura on her own.

Even faced with the looming presence exuded by Emperor Zhou, like a high mountain impossible to look up to, there was still no fear apparent on Wu Yuemei's face.

She spoke plainly:

"Your Majesty, just tell me, did you do this or not?"

At that moment.

Silence reigned, and the surrounding palace maids and eunuchs held their breath, not daring to breathe heavily. They knew, Princess Yuemei had crossed the line!

Emperor Zhou had long established his reign, his authority deep and unwavering, no one dared challenge his command!

Even though Emperor Zhou granted freedom of speech, allowing officials to speak freely, anyone who truly disobeyed his orders did not live past the second day.

If Emperor Zhou became angry now, even Wu Yuemei would likely suffer greatly.

In this peculiar silence.

Wu Yuemei remained unafraid, her gaze steady and direct at Emperor Zhou.

And Emperor Zhou, under Wu Yuemei's gaze, whether out of soft-heartedness or guilt, first averted his eyes as the tumultuous aura around him began to subside.

He glanced briefly at Cheng Zhihai not far away, his expression turning colder in an instant.

"Zhihai, take Yuemei back."

There was a warning in his tone.

Cheng Zhihai's heart sank a bit more, and he quickly bowed his head, no longer daring to look at Emperor Zhou's face.

"Yuemei..."

Cheng Zhihai tugged at Wu Yuemei, urging her to leave.

The current attitude of Emperor Zhou had already proved a lot.

To insist on Emperor Zhou's personal admission to the affair was of little significance.

What if he admitted it?

And what if he didn't?

Cheng Zhihai suddenly felt utterly powerless.

Yet Wu Yuemei didn't care about all that and waved Cheng Zhihai off, not letting him touch her.

Her gaze stayed on Emperor Zhou.

It seemed she would not leave without an answer.

But Emperor Zhou didn't bother with Wu Yuemei anymore and slowly got up to leave.

At the very moment the doors of Emperor Zhou's bed chamber closed tight.

Wu Yuemei's body weakened considerably.

The defiant look on her face could no longer be maintained.

Her beautiful eyes trembled, tears starting to flow.

Emperor Zhou neither confirmed nor denied the allegations.

But all the signs already indicated that he was involved in this affair.

Why would he do such a thing?

Wu Yuemei truly did not understand.

"Wu Shang!"

After a moment of silence, Wu Yuemei called out hoarsely.

"In the past, in order to secure your throne, you eliminated the crown prince and all other princes who posed a threat to your rule!"

"Wasn't that enough?"

"Has Duke Zhen's Mansion now become a thorn in your side as well?"

"Do you truly wish to kill everyone in Duke Zhen's Mansion except for Duke Zhen himself before you are satisfied!?"

Chapter 435 - Is it Your Majesty? Zhao Jin!! _4

Wu Yuemei spoke with extreme haste.

Cheng Zhihai wanted to interject, but he simply couldn't stop her.

After Wu Yuemei finished speaking, a chilling and furious aura began to spread within the bedchamber of the Emperor of Great Zhou.

The winds outside stirred, blowing cold and sharp.

Wu Yuemei's words were clearly a grave affront to the Emperor of Great Zhou.

The Emperor of Great Zhou stood behind the bedchamber door, his expression slightly darkened, his breathing becoming noticeably heavier.

"Cheng Zhihai, take Yuemei back!"

The Emperor of Great Zhou's voice was very soft, yet his tone was extremely stern.

Cheng Zhihai indeed wanted to take Wu Yuemei away immediately, for if she continued talking, who knew what she might reveal.

His Majesty has not yet pierced that paper window, and it was equivalent to giving Duke Zhen's Mansion a small respite.

If it was truly pierced through,

the Emperor of Great Zhou, no matter how reluctant he might be to proceed further, would have no choice but to execute everyone from Duke Zhen's Mansion, top to bottom.

If at that time the Duke decided to rebel,

the whole of Great Zhou would erupt into chaos.

Cheng Zhihai left with Wu Yuemei, regardless of how she beat his back or bit his shoulder, Cheng Zhihai showed little reaction.

Silently, he took Wu Yuemei away.

His concern for Cheng Guang was no less than Wu Yuemei's.

But right now,

even if it was painful, what could be done?

The attitude of the Emperor of Great Zhou was tantamount to tacit approval.

Even without any evidence, it could be assumed that, although the Emperor of Great Zhou might not have been directly involved, his shadow could very well be behind it.

But,

even with evidence proving the direct involvement of the Emperor of Great Zhou, what could be done?

The Emperor of Great Zhou was a Sky-Man.

And his own strength was only at the Ninth-order Martial Emperor Realm.

Should the Emperor of Great Zhou be pressed too hard, a single palm strike would leave them with no room for resistance.

Cheng Zhihai sighed and murmured, "Should I send word to father?"

Upon hearing Cheng Zhihai's words,

Wu Yuemei, who had been biting Cheng Zhihai's shoulder, fell silent.

If a message was sent to the Duke, once he learned of Cheng Guang's death and knew that the Emperor of Great Zhou might be involved,

he might immediately lead his army southward, directly targeting the Capital city.

The recently restored peace of Great Zhou would soon be overwhelmed by war again.

Though Duke Zhen's Mansion was powerful, facing the entire Great Zhou Dynasty, its foundation was still somewhat weaker.

Once the Duke marched southward, it would be an inescapable death trap.

Perhaps this was exactly what the Emperor of Great Zhou aimed for—to provoke the Duke into rebellion and use the situation to rightfully take control of the Northern Expedition Army.

Wu Yuemei was in turmoil, her brow furrowed in pain, leaning helplessly on Cheng Zhihai's back, she shook her head.

"Wu Shang has changed, ever since he became emperor, he's turned into someone I don't recognize anymore."

"Whether to notify father, that's up to you to decide."

Upon hearing this, Cheng Zhihai stayed silent for a few moments.

Hovering in mid-air, carrying Wu Yuemei, he looked down at the majestic Great Zhou Imperial Palace under the moonlight, his expression complex.

After a moment,

Cheng Zhihai sighed and began to walk towards Duke Zhen's Mansion with Wu Yuemei on his back.

.....

As Cheng Zhihai carried Wu Yuemei away, the Emperor of Great Zhou stood with his back to the bedchamber door, his hands trembling beneath the sleeves of the bright yellow dragon robe.

His demeanor was stern and cold, devoid of much emotion.

Yet from the movement of his hands, it could be seen that his heart was not as calm as it seemed.

"Your Majesty, what happened outside? Why did Princess Yuemei come?" The Noble Consort, freshly bathed, walked over with a graceful figure. Then, she reached out her hands, intending to help the Emperor of Great Zhou undress.

The Emperor of Great Zhou barely moved, only slightly lifting his hands to facilitate the Noble Consort in helping him undress.

After undressing,

The Emperor of Great Zhou lay on the bed, silent and morose. Facing the ravishing Noble Consort, he showed little interest.

He stared out at the moon through the window and suddenly murmured to himself,

"Did I do something wrong..."

The Emperor of Great Zhou rubbed his forehead. As he lowered his hand, he ran his fingers through his hair at the forehead.

Suddenly realizing,

his white hair at the front had evidently grown noticeably more abundant recently.

"My time is not much longer."

"Under my reign, Duke Zhen's Mansion might remain stable, but once I pass the throne to Wu Ling, how could she suppress the Duke, how could she reign over Duke Zhen's Mansion, over the world's ministers?"

"The scepter she is about to grasp is full of thorns and barbs. If she cannot hold it, I shall pluck all these thorns and barbs clean."

The Emperor of Great Zhou muttered to himself.

The Noble Consort came closer again.

The Emperor of Great Zhou took a deep breath and suddenly supported the Noble Consort with one hand, flipping her over with a surprised and delighted cry.

.....

The night was far from peaceful.

A piece of news reached the borders of Great Zhou; Duke Zhen, infuriated, was preparing to lead his army southward.

The Northern Expedition Army stirred.

The Emperor of Great Zhou seemed to have anticipated this, having stationed not only the Northern Expedition Army but also the four Armies of the Four Symbols and the Imperial Guard near the Capital city, ready to confront Duke Zhen.

In the Great Zhou Capital, and indeed throughout Great Zhou, the citizens, not understanding what was happening, thought it seemed like Duke Zhen was poised to rebel.

And the Emperor of Great Zhou had long anticipated the Duke's potential rebellion, preemptively deploying troops around the Capital.

As the four corners of the world were astir, and the very skies seemed to shift,

upon careful inquiry, powers discovered that the Duke's Heir had died, and the Emperor of Great Zhou was very likely responsible.

Chapter 436 - Is it Your Majesty? Zhao Jin!! _5

Emperor Zhou of Great Zhou wanted to uproot Duke Zhen's Mansion.

That's why the Duke of the State flew into a rage, leading his army south, pointing directly at the Capital city.

At this juncture, all sides believed that perhaps a bloody showdown between Emperor Zhou and the Duke of the State was about to occur.

The next day.

Another piece of news suddenly came out.

Qian Siyuan and Li Zhengyang, who had gone out to investigate on behalf of Duke Zhen's Mansion, sent a message that the Princely Heir had not met with any mishap and had safely reached the Taihao Sword Sect.

The reason he had not shown himself was that he was staying in the Taihao Sword Sect for some time.

After this news was released, all sides were suddenly dumbfounded, the very people who were prepared to watch a good show and pick up the benefits in its wake suddenly felt that the drama unfolding before them might just be a play staged in cooperation between Emperor Zhou and the Duke of the State.

Whether the Town-Nation Duke's Heir was dead or not.

It actually took so long to verify?

Emperor Zhou couldn't be that foolish, could he?

If he truly was the one behind it, whether the Princely Heir was killed or not, wouldn't he know?

The Duke couldn't be that foolish, could he?

His own son's life or death, would he not know of it?

And yet, he only released the news that his son was alive now??

Could it be that someone is deliberately hiding something???

For a moment, speculation was rife among all forces, and discussions were non-stop.

...

A round of autumn light turns to golden waves; the flying mirror is polished yet again.

The gathered moonlight faintly falls like cold dew, painting the autumn sky in a wash of chilly serenity.

But Cheng Guang's small courtyard was not cold.

Cheng Guang and Ning Qianxue were sitting in front of a stone table, looking up at the moon.

Ning Qianxue rested her cheek on her hand, gazing at the round moon in the sky.

The firmament was cloudless, the breeze was still; it was the perfect time for moon-gazing.

"Princely Heir, as you watch the sky, it's truly dark, but the stars around it are so bright and dazzling. My mother used to say that when people die, they might turn into stars in the sky. Who knows which one might be my mother..."

"I've always liked to look at the sky since I was a child, often gazing all day long..."

Ning Qianxue admired the bright moon in the heavens, muttering to herself, but Cheng Guang did not respond.

Only Qing Luan, standing behind Cheng Guang, would occasionally nod and chime in with a laugh.

After speaking a few words with Qing Luan, Ning Qianxue turned her attention to Cheng Guang beside her.

She saw Cheng Guang flipping through some correspondence on the stone table, occasionally nodding or shaking his head with a chuckle.

This left Ning Qianxue puzzled, not knowing what the Town-Nation Duke's Heir was reading to elicit such expressions.

Qing Luan beside her was also at a loss, but since the Princely Heir did not speak of it, she did not press the matter further.

Cheng Guang put away the letter and slightly lifted his gaze, noticing Ning Qianxue and Qing Luan's watchful eyes. He smiled and shook his head without explanation, merely saying one thing.

"We'll return now, Qing Luan. Pack the luggage briefly."

On hearing Cheng Guang's words, Qing Luan asked with confusion, "Princely Heir, is there such a hurry?"

Cheng Guang replied with a smile, "If we don't return now, we'll miss the good show that's about to begin."

Qing Luan was confused by Cheng Guang's words; what good show was he talking about?

Qing Luan wanted to hear a detailed explanation from Cheng Guang, but Cheng Guang showed no intention of continuing, which made her feel slightly aggrieved.

The Princely Heir had become the Mysterious Oracle again.

Although Qing Luan felt a bit aggrieved, she was sensible and did not ask further, promptly getting up to pack the luggage.

Ning Qianxue heard Cheng Guang's words and knew that he was planning to leave tonight, which meant she would likely follow him back. Once they left, it was uncertain how long it would take before they could return to the Taihao Sword Sect.

She couldn't help feeling a bit dejected at the thought.

A wave of sentimental emotion rose in Ning Qianxue's heart, making her seem like a literary girl, filled with a touch of sorrow.

As Cheng Guang watched Ning Qianxue in her current state, he shook his head with a smile, about to say something to her when.

Several figures rushed over from a distance.

The leader among them was Ning Liang.

Seeing Cheng Guang by the stone table in the courtyard, Ning Liang immediately let out a sigh of relief, swiftly descended, and came near to Cheng Guang, greeting, "Princely Heir, do you know about the events outside?"

Cheng Guang nodded slightly.

As expected, Ning Liang was not surprised.

He gave a wry smile, "Princely Heir, I knew there was a reason you wanted to stay in the Taihao Sword Sect for a few more days. The outside world is now in chaos, the Duke of the State and Emperor Zhou almost came to blows over you."

"They're saying you were assassinated by Emperor Zhou and have died in the Underworld."

"Princely Heir, you are unharmed, how can such preposterous rumors spread?"

Saying this, Ning Liang looked puzzled.

The Princely Heir had only stayed in his own Taihao Sword Sect for a while, and such absurd talk had emerged outside.

If he had stayed any longer, who knows what consequences it would have brewed.

Listening to Ning Liang's words, Cheng Guang nodded, smiling in agreement.

Ning Liang knew not much.

He also didn't know that Emperor Zhou had indeed sent someone to assassinate Cheng Guang.

Although Ning Liang had seen Zhao Jin on the Flying Boat, he had not linked Zhao Jin with Emperor Zhou or any assassination.

Indeed, the scene at that time was truly peculiar.

If Zhao Jin had come to assassinate, how could he be unharmed, even able to chat and laugh with the Princely Heir?

Contemplating, Ning Liang looked at Cheng Guang and said, "Princely Heir, if we leave tonight, isn't the timing too rushed?"

Chapter 437 - Is it Your Majesty? Zhao Jin!! _6

"Shall we wait for daylight tomorrow before setting out?"

Cheng Guang shook his head, "No need, Uncle Ning, we've already stayed for quite a few days."

Seeing Cheng Guang speak in this manner, Ning Liang did not try to persuade him further but instead actively ordered someone to pack Cheng Guang's luggage.

During his time at the Taihao Sword Sect, Cheng Guang mostly stayed in Ning Qianxue's courtyard and rarely interacted with outsiders. No melodramatic showing off or face-slapping incidents occurred.

The journey was quite effortless.

An hour later.

Ning Qianxue changed into a bright red wedding dress, boarded the Flying Boat with Cheng Guang, and set off towards the Great Zhou Capital.

The main purpose of this trip was, after all, to welcome the bride.

This was something that could not be forgotten.

As Cheng Guang operated the Flying Boat, hastily making for the Capital city,

atop the city walls of the Capital, Emperor Zhou stood with his hands clasped behind his back.

His dignified and icy gaze pierced through the dense night, observing the Imperial Guard encamped within several miles of the Capital. The corners of his mouth twitched involuntarily.

"Zhao Jin."

"Have you heard what's being spread throughout the land now?"

Zhao Jin, who was by Emperor Zhou's side, quickly stepped forward, bowed, and with sweat beading on his forehead, replied apprehensively:

"Your Majesty, your servant is unaware."

Emperor Zhou's gaze shifted from the distant Imperial Guard to Zhao Jin, his voice chilling.

"All over the land, people are saying that the Duke of the State's Heir didn't die at all, that it was all a misunderstanding."

"The Duke of the State, who had originally planned to head south, returned with the Northern Expedition Army. Just a moment ago, he sent me a memorial, stating that all was well on the frontier, and I needn't worry."

"Tell me, if the Duke's Heir were truly dead, would the Duke act in such a manner?"

Zhao Jin's face tightened, his heart growing even more anxious, "Your Majesty, these are merely rumors and should not be taken for truth."

"The Duke may have been frightened by Your Majesty, knowing that his descent to the south would spell certain death."

Upon hearing this, Emperor Zhou took a fleeting glance at Zhao Jin and then slowly withdrew his gaze.

He did not believe Zhao Jin's words.

The Duke was not a man who feared death; he was a being who had fought his way out of mountains of corpses and seas of blood. How could he be concerned about his own life and death?

The supposed death of Cheng Guang would have been a fatal blow to the Duke.

Emperor Zhou himself did not believe that the Duke could restrain himself if his son, the Duke's Heir, was truly dead.

Why then, did he retreat?

Was it merely a delaying tactic, planning to wait until I lowered my guard before striking at me?

In just a short moment, Emperor Zhou had thought of many possibilities.

Looking towards the distant sky, a sudden thought crossed his mind, and he turned to Zhao Jin, "How are Cheng Zhihai and Wu Yuemei doing at this moment?"

Zhao Jin hurriedly answered, "They are still in Duke Zhen's Mansion without any actions."

"Due to Qian Siyuan and Li Zhengyang returning to the mansion recently, their moods have quite improved."

"It seems they also believe... the Princely Heir has not perished in the Underworld."

As Zhao Jin said this, the corners of his mouth secretly twitched.

He truly felt uncomfortable now.

He knew that Emperor Zhou trusted him deeply.

Zhao Jin himself claimed he killed Cheng Guang, and in the eyes of Emperor Zhou, that meant the Duke's Heir was certainly dead.

The Duke's Heir, Cheng Guang, even with his many tricks, could not possibly have survived at the hands of Zhao Jin, a Ninth-order Martial Emperor Realm expert.

Moreover,

Zhao Jin was skilled in utilizing prohibitions.

With prohibition techniques at his disposal, Zhao Jin was not without the power to battle even those of the Heavenly Human Realm.

Currently, Zhao Jin was in great discomfort. Deceiving Emperor Zhou was a crime of deceiving the sovereign. There was a real possibility that his life was in danger, which was one reason for his discomfort.

Another, more critical reason was this:

Qian Siyuan and Li Zhengyang returned and brought back news that the Princely Heir was unharmed.

Regardless of what Cheng Zhihai and Wu Yuemei in the Duke's Mansion thought deep down, at least outwardly, they seemed to believe it.

The Duke believed it as well.

Emperor Zhou's objective was only halfway fulfilled.

It might not be long before the Princely Heir would return to the Capital.

By then, no lies would remain hidden.

Emperor Zhou still did not know how he would treat Zhao Jin.

Thinking of this, Zhao Jin felt like he almost wanted to die.

Silently standing behind Emperor Zhou, he dared not say anything else.

Emperor Zhou did not leave the city walls of the Capital immediately, he was waiting.

Waiting for the Duke to appear, or perhaps the Northern Expedition Army.

Seconds and minutes passed by.

The darkness of night gradually faded, and the earth was tenderly embraced by the faint light of dawn.

The contours of the distant mountains became clear, and the color of the sky started to change from deep black to a gentle blue.

With his profound Cultivation Realm, Emperor Zhou could go for days without sleep and not feel a trace of weariness.

His gaze was fixed on the distance.

Under his dignified and stern gaze, he suddenly saw a small black dot slowly appear at the junction of the sky.

Emperor Zhou's eyes narrowed slightly, before he could make out the shape of the distant black dot.

Two presences were rushing over from the distance.

Emperor Zhou felt the aura of the arrivals, his brows furrowing slightly, he intended to say something, but he said nothing and his gaze fell upon those who approached.

The arrivals were none other than Cheng Zhihai and Qian Siyuan.

Cheng Zhihai greeted Emperor Zhou with respect, "Your Majesty."

Emperor Zhou nodded slightly, his majestic gaze rested on Cheng Zhihai, after a profound moment, he spoke slowly:

"Zhihai, you don't blame me?"

The meaning behind Emperor Zhou's words was clear.

Your son was killed by me.

You don't blame me?

Emperor Zhou had not intended to completely eradicate Duke Zhen's Mansion.

What he wanted to do,

was simply to uproot Duke Zhen's Mansion and take back its power.

If he truly went to extremes, one person from Duke Zhen's Mansion would be enough to give him trouble.

Emperor Zhou could hold a grudge, but he was not foolish.

Upon hearing this, Cheng Zhihai acted as if he did not understand what Emperor Zhou was saying and replied, "Your Majesty has done nothing wrong, why say such a thing?"

Emperor Zhou's gaze stayed on Cheng Zhihai for a while.

He suddenly felt.

Cheng Zhihai at this moment, seemed very different from the figure who had come to his chambers days before.

Not hasty or impatient.

And there was even a touch of joy on his face.

Though the joy was not evident, the fact that it appeared on Cheng Zhihai at this time, wasn't it too abrupt?

Could it be that the Town-Nation Duke's Heir was not really dead??

A bad premonition suddenly surfaced in Emperor Zhou's heart.

His gaze glanced again at Zhao Jin standing by.

Zhao Jin, noticing Emperor Zhou's watchful eyes, hurriedly returned a respectful smile.

Daring not to offend in the slightest.

Seeing Zhao Jin's pitiful demeanor in his presence, Emperor Zhou felt somewhat reassured, knowing it was unlikely for Zhao Jin to deceive him, and a bit of calm returned to his heart.

After a pause, he asked Cheng Zhihai:

"Zhihai, have you encountered some happy event recently?"

Cheng Zhihai replied with a smile, "Your Majesty, have you forgotten? During this time, there is the matter of my son's marriage."

Upon hearing this, Emperor Zhou's brows raised slightly, then he nodded, remembering the occasion.

However.

The Town-Nation Duke's Heir, Cheng Guang, was already dead.

Could it be you truly believe he can come back to life?

Emperor Zhou's dignified face did not change in the slightest.

At this point, Cheng Zhihai continued:

"He has gone to the Taihao Sword Sect to fetch his bride, and he will be back soon."

As he said this, Cheng Zhihai looked towards the distant horizon and said with a smile, "Your Majesty, I have come this time to receive Guanger, look, he's coming back."

Cheng Zhihai pointed to the distance.

In the distance, where the clouds met the rising sun, the small black dot that had appeared was gradually growing larger.

Eventually,

it took on the appearance of a flying boat.

And on the deck of the flying boat, there stood a stunningly handsome noble young master.

Zhao Jin, standing by Emperor Zhou, took in a sharp breath at the sight of the figure appearing in the distance, involuntarily lifting his sleeve to cover his face.

Although he didn't look at Emperor Zhou,

he could guess how unsightly Emperor Zhou's face must be at this moment.

At first, Emperor Zhou hadn't noticed who the figure on the distant flying boat was.

But when he saw the figure that appeared on the deck of the distant flying boat, his eyes involuntarily widened.

His usually dignified and cold expression slightly moved.

His breathing, at the same time, grew heavier!

This!!

How is this possible!!

"Zhao Jin!!!"

Emperor Zhou's voice was heavy as he abruptly turned to look at Zhao Jin.

Chapter 438 - What the hell does this brat want to do!?

Emperor Zhou of Great Zhou suddenly turned his head to look at Zhao Jin by his side.

Feeling the Emperor's gaze upon him, Zhao Jin instinctively shivered, but his respectful demeanor did not change. He also timely displayed an air of confusion and astonishment.

It seemed as though Zhao Jin himself was completely taken aback by Cheng Guang's appearance.

Emperor Zhou gazed deeply at Zhao Jin and, after taking a slight breath, did not immediately become angry. Instead, he turned to look at Cheng Zhihai beside him and spoke with a smile:

"So, Guanger has returned."

Cheng Zhihai slightly bowed with respect and did not say much.

Under the watchful eyes of both Emperor Zhou and Cheng Zhihai, Cheng Guang rapidly approached on his Flying Boat.

As the Flying Boat drew near to the walls of Great Zhou, Cheng Guang controlled it to slowly come to a halt and jumped off, smiling as he bowed to Emperor Zhou, "I greet my uncle."

Cheng Guang observed Emperor Zhou's calm and majestic expression. Although the Emperor appeared tranquil on the surface, one could imagine his inner feelings were anything but calm.

Cheng Guang didn't look at Emperor Zhou for too long; after a brief glance, he turned to greet Cheng Zhihai at his side.

He was rather shocked by Cheng Zhihai's behavior.

In Cheng Guang's view, given his own uncertain fate between life and death, even if Cheng Zhihai were to suspect Emperor Zhou, he wouldn't entertain any thoughts against him.

Let alone having any ideas of rebellion.

The fact that he had taken the initiative to inform the Duke of the State was already quite remarkable.

Although within this, the extent of Wu Yuemei's contribution was unknown.

But one thing was certain: Cheng Zhihai was not utterly and blindly loyal.

With these thoughts in mind, Cheng Guang had already made some plans. Perhaps in the future, in the midst of chaos, he could hint to Cheng Zhihai to abandon his staunch loyalty to Emperor Zhou and vie for a share of the world's fortune for himself.

While Cheng Guang was contemplating, Emperor Zhou looked at him with a stern and forbidding countenance, showing faint concern at the right moment.

"Guanger, where have you been these past few days? Why didn't any message come back?"

"Lately, quite a few rumors have spread throughout the Capital City, claiming you were assassinated..."

With these words, Emperor Zhou's tone became more severe and he addressed Cheng Guang,
"Guanger, tell me who dares to assassinate you, just speak up, and your uncle will decide for you."

As Emperor Zhou spoke, his gaze briefly swept over Zhao Jin next to him, with a hint of increased frostiness.

Zhao Jin's body trembled almost imperceptibly, and he bowed his head deeply.

He was well aware that at this time, he might not live much longer.

Just as he thought that Cheng Guang, the Princely Heir of the Town-Nation Duke, would soon point the finger at him, he heard Cheng Guang laugh and say:

"My uncle jokes, who would dare to assassinate me?"

"I was just fond of playing and spent a few more days outside. I don't know who spread this rumor in the Capital City, even deceiving my uncle."

Upon hearing this, Zhao Jin couldn't help but slightly lift his gaze towards Cheng Guang.

His expression was one of astonishment.

At this moment, Emperor Zhou's countenance stiffened as well, the corners of his mouth twitching covertly before he let out a hearty chuckle.

"Your uncle is not so foolish, Guanger. Fortunate people have their own heavenly protection; how could it be so easy for someone to assassinate you?"

"You are right, Guanger. Who in all of Great Zhou would dare to assassinate you?"

As he spoke, Emperor Zhou patted Cheng Guang's shoulder with a laugh and then cast his gaze upon Ning Qianxue standing on the Flying Boat behind him. His eyes narrowed slightly before he spoke:

"Guanger, I must attend your wedding this time; don't you dare not welcome your uncle."

Cheng Guang replied with a smile, "Of course, you are welcome."

Emperor Zhou nodded with his hands behind his back and then said to Cheng Zhihai, "Zhihai, Guanger's wedding must be well arranged. Whatever you need from me, just speak up; I will agree to it."

Listening to Emperor Zhou, Cheng Zhihai respectfully cupped his fists in compliance.

After exchanging a few pleasantries with Cheng Zhihai, Emperor Zhou was about to step down from the city wall when he suddenly seemed to sense something, pausing mid-step and looking toward the southeast of the Capital City.

In the southeast of the Capital City,

a mysterious and tremendous aura suddenly emerged, growing overwhelmingly powerful within a breath's moment.

In the vault of the sky, the clouds parted, and beams of golden light pierced through like swords, striking the earth. Midair, they seemed to be blocked by an invisible, transparent entity.

Within the golden light's cover, the shape of a circular opening became visible in the transparent object.

As this round-shaped outline became clearer under the illumination of the golden light,

a thunderous sound like that of a resonant drum suddenly filled the heavens and the earth.

Boom!!!

The sound echoed.

It was as if celestial music began to play, and omens rose. Immortals sat upon lotuses, cranes rode the clouds, and divine radiance shone in all directions, bright as the resplendent sun.

In that instant, an enormous aura emanated from the opening.

Feeling this aura, Emperor Zhou suddenly felt as if the cultivation he had not advanced since ascending to the Heavenly Human Realm was stirring slightly.

Emperor Zhou's eyes widened sharply looking at the place where the golden light scattered, visibly shaken.

"What exactly is this aura? Just a trace of it can make my cultivation grow slightly!?"

Chapter 439 - What the Hell Does This Brat Want to Do?! _2

Emperor Zhou's heart was seized with shock as he gazed at the anomaly arising in the distance, his eyes downturned as if a thought had struck him.

Muttering to himself.

"Is this the Secret Realm?"

Having thought this far, Emperor Zhou immediately cast aside the matter of Cheng Guang.

The reason he had chosen to move against Cheng Guang before was precisely because the power of Duke Zhen's Mansion was simply too formidable, wasn't it?

Wasn't it because the Duke's strength was so overwhelming that even he, a Sky-Man, felt little sense of security?

Wasn't he worried that if something were to happen to him, and when it came time to transition the throne to Wu Ling, Wu Ling wouldn't be able to suppress the Duke of the State?

But now,

The appearance of the Secret Realm allowed Emperor Zhou to consider an alternative approach to his worries; even without erasing Cheng Guang, the problem could still be solved.

If his own power could be further enhanced, to overwhelmingly surpass the Duke of the State, then perhaps the old wounds within him could be healed, and all the difficulties he was currently facing would solve themselves.

As for dealing with the aftermath of this incident,

Cheng Guang had taken no harm at this time.

Even if Duke Zhen's Mansion could discern some of his thoughts, due to various reasons, they would not be able to retaliate.

Cheng Guang was playing the fool right now.

Cheng Zhihai was playing the fool as well.

Thus, he could act as if this matter had never happened.

Emperor Zhou contemplated for a moment, then his gaze suddenly fell on Zhao Jin. "Zhao Jin."

Zhao Jin, upon hearing the Emperor Zhou's voice, trembled slightly and hurried forward. Bowing his head, he respectfully awaited Emperor Zhou's command.

Emperor Zhou watched Zhao Jin coldly, thinking that perhaps Zhao Jin's failure to kill Cheng Guang might actually be a good thing.

Otherwise, this Secret Realm, which could enhance a Sky-Man's cultivation just by leaking a whisper of its aura, might attract countless troublemakers to Great Zhou if the Duke's deterrence were lost.

Now, the Duke of the State can block many people for him.

At the same time, since Cheng Guang is unscathed, the Duke of the State will still obey his commands.

The Duke of the State guards the frontier.

Emperor Zhou could go alone into the Secret Realm and seek the secret to cultivation enhancement.

With these thoughts, Emperor Zhou relaxed significantly, his entire being captivated by the sudden appearance of the Secret Realm.

"Zhao Jin, go and set up restrictions around the perimeter of the Secret Realm."

Emperor Zhou instructed Zhao Jin.

Zhao Jin was most adept at the way of restrictions, and the restrictions he set could greatly isolate the aura emanating from the Secret Realm.

This very Secret Realm, from which just a whisper of aura could enhance a Sky-Man's cultivation—if its existence were to be announced to the world, it would attract countless Sky-Men.

Some old fogeys might even be lured by this Secret Realm, climbing straight out of their coffins.

Zhao Jin, although problematic at this time, still had a value to be exploited.

Emperor Zhou would not immediately punish him.

Upon hearing Emperor Zhou's words and seeing that he did not press for an explanation as to why Cheng Guang, the esteemed Town-Nation Duke's Heir, believed to have been killed by him, was still alive, Zhao Jin breathed a sigh of relief.

Immediately, he rose and transformed into a streak of rainbow light, speeding towards the Secret Realm.

Similarly, Cheng Zhihai also noticed the golden glow suddenly emerging at a distant place in the heavens and earth, his face showing emotion, his eyes narrowing in astonishment.

Within Great Zhou, Secret Realms appeared from time to time, but such a great commotion as seen today was unprecedented.

Cheng Zhihai, at the same time, could feel the aura leaking from the entrance enveloped by the golden light.

But his reaction was not as exaggerated as Emperor Zhou's.

Perhaps it was because Cheng Zhihai's cultivation had not reached the Heavenly Human Realm.

Cheng Zhihai merely felt that the aura, though weak, emanating from the entrance contained an extremely terrifying power.

Just as Cheng Zhihai was thinking of saying something to Emperor Zhou, he suddenly saw Emperor Zhou take a step forward, his body moving swiftly toward the distant Secret Realm.

At that moment, Emperor Zhou seemed very urgent.

As Emperor Zhou stepped out, his figure appeared at the entrance of the Secret Realm, currents of breath swept from all directions through the surrounding heavens and earth.

Investigating within Great Zhou.

Most of these breaths came from Sky-Men; most were from strong individuals among the Sects within Great Zhou.

Emperor Zhou, standing above the Secret Realm, observed the entrance, unfazed by the breaths sweeping around him and constantly probing the area.

He did not address them, but silently directed his attention towards the interior of the Secret Realm.

In Emperor Zhou's majestic eyes, there appeared a divine glint of golden light, as if he could see through the layers of spatial films at the Secret Realm's entrance and glimpse the scenery within.

After only a moment's watch, Emperor Zhou's eyes widened in astonishment, and he took a deep breath.

"There are actually living people inside...?"

Emperor Zhou muttered in amazement.

The presence within the Secret Realm was unfathomable, and its dangers unpredictable.

Although Emperor Zhou was greatly interested in this Secret Realm, he did not rashly enter it because if an accident occurred, there would be no one in the Secret Realm to rescue him.

Though Emperor Zhou desired to enhance his strength further and heal the old wounds in his body, he was not overly impatient.

He decided to first observe what was inside the Secret Realm, understand the general situation, and then enter. If he encountered any dangers once inside, at least with the cultivation of the Heavenly Human Realm, he could ensure his escape.

Chapter 440 - What the Hell Does This Brat Want to Do?! _3

After clearly seeing the landscape within the Secret Realm, Emperor Zhou of Great Zhou was very shocked.

There were actually living people inside.

Secret Realms have appeared sporadically and intermittently throughout the world since who knows how many years ago.

The Secret Realm that emerged this time may have appeared once in a certain location in this world tens of thousands of years ago.

But so much time has passed that even the Sky-Men, let alone others, couldn't possibly live for ten thousand years.

Even a millennium would be difficult for Sky-Men to endure within a Secret Realm.

Emperor Zhou of Great Zhou watched the scenes inside the Secret Realm, scarcely daring to imagine that there were still living people inside.

And judging by their appearance, there seemed to be quite a few of them.

Just on the periphery alone, there were already so many people; how many more could there be in the depths of the Secret Realm?

Emperor Zhou of Great Zhou's lips parted slightly in astonishment, the majesty of his usually cold and stern face seemed somewhat unable to hold.

Just then, Zhao Jin at Emperor Zhou's side had set up the magic barrier. A green porcelain bowl was inverted in the firmament above, covering both the Secret Realm and Emperor Zhou entirely, isolating them from the inner and outer worlds.

"Your Majesty, the barrier has been set up,"

Zhao Jin said respectfully to Emperor Zhou of Great Zhou.

Emperor Zhou glanced up at the firmament and nodded slightly. Before he could say anything,

Suddenly, a rumbling sound came from the clouds, and an old face appeared there.

"Wu Shang, don't you think you are going too far by doing this? For such a Secret Realm, could it be that you want to keep it all to yourself?"

The voice of the newcomer was not unfamiliar to Emperor Zhou of Great Zhou.

It was Li Longhu, a Sky-Man from Great Yan.

Li Longhu's reaction was quite fast.

Apart from being a little surprised at Li Longhu's quick response, Emperor Zhou had not expected that the aura seeping from inside the Secret Realm could have such a far-reaching impact in such a short moment.

Emperor Zhou looked up at the firmament and then sensed several auras sweeping in from afar.

The actual bodies of these Sky-Men had not arrived here yet, only parts of their will had descended using Divine Power.

Emperor Zhou silently sensed the auras of the Sky-Men around him, and before he could speak, several voices rang out from around him.

"Emperor Zhou of Great Zhou, it's no use hiding this Secret Realm. The very instant it appeared in the world, revealing such extraordinary phenomena that shook our very Cultivation Realms as Sky-Men, it's something you can't hide."

"If you don't remove the barrier yourself, we can help you."

As the voices fell,

The stern and imposing expression on Emperor Zhou's face did not change in the slightest.

He had underestimated the reaction speed of the Sky-Men around him.

He had also underestimated the extent of the Secret Realm's aura.

Emperor Zhou had initially planned to monopolize the Secret Realm for himself, but given the current situation, it seemed an unlikely possibility.

Emperor Zhou pondered in his heart, glanced at the several blurred figures in the firmament and then looked at the many living people within the Secret Realm. After a flicker in his eye, the corner of his mouth curled up, and a smile appeared on his stern and cold face.

However, the covetous eyes of other Sky-Men on this Secret Realm might not be such a bad thing.

Emperor Zhou said to Zhao Jin, "Remove the barrier."

Zhao Jin was momentarily startled upon hearing this, as he had just finished setting it up. Was he now to remove it as His Majesty commanded?

Wouldn't that be a wasted effort?

Though Zhao Jin was puzzled inside, he did not dare show any dissatisfaction and nodded respectfully toward Emperor Zhou. He then retracted the green porcelain bowl.

The barrier was lifted.

The aura of the Secret Realm was fully exposed.

A slightly eerie fragrance spread out like a tangible substance in all directions.

Feeling the aura emanating from the Secret Realm, the Sky-Men observing from the firmament trembled slightly, then one by one their faces lit up with ecstasy.

Because they could feel that merely by sensing the aura from the Secret Realm, their Cultivation Realms were subtly growing.

If they could obtain something from within the Secret Realm, might their Cultivation Realms advance even further?

The Sky-Men who had ascended and gotten no further became excited.

As time passed, more and more people gathered around the Secret Realm.

Apart from the Sky-Men of various great empires who were publicly known, some reclusive and unknown Sky-Men also quietly appeared, observing everything from the shadows.

Countless noble families and Sects were drawn by the aura of the Secret Realm and converged on this place.

Previously, in order to deal with the Duke of the State, Emperor Zhou had stationed the armies near the Capital city. At such a time, they played a role in maintaining order.

Under the watchful eyes of the Imperial Guard, only the Sky-Men could remain indifferent, while all the other noble families and Sects that had come due to rumors kept quiet and stayed inconspicuous.

For them, the Secret Realm was the most important at the moment.

Although the Secret Realm was very dangerous, it was also full of opportunities.

This Secret Realm held great allure for those in the Heavenly Human Realm, for them, wasn't this place a treasure trove?

For some cultivators whose Cultivation Realms had been stuck for decades or even a century without advancing an inch, this suddenly emerged Secret Realm was an opportunity not to be missed.

After Emperor Zhou ordered Zhao Jin to remove the barrier, the aura of the Secret Realm spread out unimpeded in all directions.

As time went by, the crowd around it grew larger and larger.

Standing high in the firmament, looking down at the Secret Realm and observing the crowd below, the expressions of the Sky-Men were not looking good.

Especially Li Longhu's.

