

My System 511

Chapter 511 - I Didn't, Don't Frame Me _2

A moment later.

Qin Yanqiu slowly nodded.

"So, I'm leaving now?"

Qin Yanqiu looked at Cheng Guang.

Cheng Guang waved his hand, "Go ahead, I won't see you out. I will come to find you after a while."

Qin Yanqiu nodded slightly and was about to turn around and leave when suddenly, she turned back around, her somewhat cold hands reached up and clasped the back of Cheng Guang's neck.

Gently pulling down.

She rested her forehead against his for a moment.

Then she hastened her steps.

She walked away briskly.

Cheng Guang stood there, chuckling and touching his forehead.

"This little ice block, when did she learn to do this too."

"If you had taken even one step slower, I wouldn't have let you go."

At that moment.

Qing Luan and Ning Qianxue seemed to have finished cooking, bringing the food to the stone table.

Qing Luan, watching the fading figure of Qin Yanqiu, asked, "Did Miss Qin just leave like that?"

Cheng Guang sat down, glanced at the food on the table, carelessly picked up his chopsticks, and started to savor a piece of meat.

"Yes."

Qing Luan hadn't heard the conversation between Cheng Guang and Qin Yanqiu, so when she heard Cheng Guang's affirmative reply, her mouth curved in a smile, her eyes twinkling with laughter.

"In that case, congratulations are in order for Miss Qin's pregnancy, Princely Heir."

Cheng Guang laughed, "What's there to congratulate? I, the heir, am strong and healthy, isn't having a child normal?"

Qing Luan shook her head slightly.

Sighed softly.

Gently caressing her waist and abdomen, she felt a sense of dim sorrow.

Cheng Guang just glanced at Qing Luan's gesture before he shook his head in amusement and then teased her with a wink.

"What, do you want a child too?"

Upon hearing Cheng Guang's words, Qing Luan first paused in surprise, then hurriedly asked with delight:

"Princely Heir, is it possible?"

Cheng Guang's hand lifted slightly, mimicking a knock, and gently tapped Qing Luan's head.

"Of course not."

Qing Luan's brow furrowed, holding her head as though in pain, then huffily dropped her hand and turned her head away silently.

She appeared to be upset.

Seeing her reaction, Cheng Guang couldn't hold back a smile and explained, laughing, "I am still too young and haven't thought of having children yet."

"It's different for Qin Yanqiu; her purpose is to have children."

"If she gets pregnant sooner, I can be relieved sooner. Otherwise, with this daily business, even an immortal wouldn't be able to withstand it."

Qing Luan, hearing Cheng Guang's words, seemed to understand something. She lightly bit her red lip, wanting to say something, but when the words reached her lips, she fell silent.

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At this time, Ning Qianxue also picked up her bowl and chopsticks, starting to eat together with Cheng Guang, offhandedly saying, "Qing Luan, why are you thinking about having babies? It's so boring to have children."

"I think, being happy yourself is the most important thing. My mother-in-law told me before, once you have children, a woman is no longer a woman, but a mother, and being a mother is tough, not just anyone can handle it. Moreover, I've heard that childbirth is very painful, which scares me."

"If possible, I'd rather not have children at all."

Ning Qianxue seemed heartlessly cheerful.

Qing Luan looked at Ning Qianxue with envy.

Ning Qianxue chatted with Qing Luan casually as they ate.

Cheng Guang, on the other hand, enjoyed his meal and listened to them with contentment.

Cheng Guang had only been listening for a short time when he put down his chopsticks.

He suddenly looked toward the courtyard entrance, as if he saw something.

After a few breaths, from around the corner of the shaded path outside the courtyard, a middle-aged man in dark clothes with a jade-like countenance approached.

The newcomer was a surprise to Cheng Guang.

Yet not unfamiliar.

Cheng Guang's eyebrows lifted slightly, a hint of surprise on his face.

"Why has Zhao Jin come here?"

"The sudden appearance of the Secret Realm on Five Daos Mountain seems to have saved Zhao Jin's life; otherwise, after what happened last time, Zhao Jin would have been executed by Emperor Zhou or silenced by now."

Cheng Guang pondered in his mind.

Zhao Jin stopped at the entrance to the courtyard, not coming inside, and bowed from a distance to Cheng Guang.

"Princely Heir, the Crown Prince sent me to summon you."

Before Cheng Guang could speak.

Ning Qianxue expressed surprise, "The Crown Prince? Who's that?"

Having heard Zhao Jin speak the words "Crown Prince," Cheng Guang's eyes flickered, and he soon realized.

Zhao Jin's reference to the Crown Prince.

It must be Wu Ling, the Crown Prince of the Eastern Palace.

Zhao Jin replied to Ning Qianxue's puzzled expression with a smiling face.

"Wife of Crown Prince, the Crown Prince is naturally His Royalty, the Crown Prince."

Cheng Guang's guess was confirmed.

But Cheng Guang still did not understand.

Why Wu Ling sought him out at this time.

Shouldn't she be busy searching for Emperor Zhou's whereabouts?

Why would she spare the time to concern herself with him?

She had also deliberately come to see him during the previous wedding.

Yet she had left without a word after merely glancing at him.

Cheng Guang frowned, puzzled, "The Crown Prince sent for me? What's the matter?"

Zhao Jin smiled without speaking, silent for a moment, before replying:

"The Princely Heir will understand once he meets with the Crown Prince."

Ning Qianxue frowned slightly, "Why are you still playing coy? If you're going to be like this, just don't go."

Zhao Jin's face showed a flicker of confusion, uncertain of what to say.

He could only look helplessly towards Cheng Guang.

Cheng Guang finished his post-meal tea, tidied up his clothing briefly, and said to Ning Qianxue, "I'll go and see."

Having said that.

Cheng Guang stepped out of the courtyard, with Zhao Jin following behind him.

Watching Cheng Guang depart, Ning Qianxue pouted, "Isn't that Crown Prince the same woman who suddenly blocked the doorway during the wedding day?"

Chapter 512 - I Didn't, Don't Frame Me _3

"I can feel it,"

"The Crown Prince doesn't like me."

Qing Luan listened to Ning Qianxue's words, and a woman's intuition is always sharp. A few strands of surprise flashed through her eyes, but she quickly suppressed it and did not take up the topic.

Instead, she responded with a smile and then steered the conversation in another direction.

Ning Qianxue, with her innocent nature, did not give it another thought and soon shifted her mind away from Wu Ling.

She enjoyed chatting with Qing Luan about this and that.

.....

Cheng Guang followed Zhao Jin, making their way together.

They entered the Great Zhou Imperial Palace directly.

The Great Zhou Imperial Palace now bore significant changes compared to Cheng Guang's first visit.

Since Emperor Zhou's sudden disappearance, the entire Great Zhou Imperial Palace had become somewhat tense.

It wasn't just about the instability of imperial power.

It also meant that the current state of all of Great Zhou, including Sky-Man, was in constant turmoil.

Similarly,

Wu Ling, the Crown Prince of the Eastern Palace, also found his position to be unstable during the Emperor's absence.

Several of age Princes, even though they didn't state their intentions openly, were coveting the throne deeply in the shadows.

Cheng Guang entered the Great Zhou Imperial Palace and headed straight for the Crown Prince East Palace.

The Crown Prince East Palace was located in the southwest of the Imperial Palace, close to the Court Meeting Hall. This arrangement was made to facilitate the learning of state affairs by the Crown Prince and to allow some interaction with the officials.

The Crown Prince East Palace was vast; it was bordered by tall palace walls, with the Imperial Guard standing guard around it. Inside were many courtyards, with roads paved with white marble stone—clean and tidy—with various artificial mountains and watersides, as well as plants and trees, all arranged in a well-ordered fashion within a corner of the Eastern Palace.

Summer had arrived, and petals fluttered in the air, a beauty beyond words.

Cheng Guang entered the Eastern Palace and soon made his way to a courtyard.

From a distance, Cheng Guang could see a young girl seated in a pavilion in the courtyard.

The girl radiated youthful grace, her soft hands as delicate as fresh sprogs, her skin like cream, her neck like a geckos, her teeth like gourd seeds, her delicate head topped with crescent brows, her charming smile, her beautiful eyes playful and lively.

Her beauty was incomparable, and in her eyes, there was an air of strength and authority that was not there before.

One could now begin to see what the future Empress of Great Zhou would look like.

As Cheng Guang approached,

Wu Ling lifted her head, her bright eyes briefly glanced at Cheng Guang.

At this moment, Cheng Guang was still clad in white, with handsome features that did not overly suggest effeminacy, his build tall and straight, his manner confident and presumptuous, yet he possessed a warm and gentle demeanor as if basked in the warmth of spring.

Wu Ling watched Cheng Guang.

No matter how many times she saw him,

Wu Ling always thought that the Princely Heir was the most handsome man she had ever seen.

But...

"Your Highness, what do you want with me?"

Cheng Guang said to Wu Ling with a smile, his voice moist, not lacking in politeness.

Given Wu Ling's status as the Crown Prince of the Eastern Palace, even though Cheng Guang had previously harbored thoughts of seizing power due to Emperor Zhou's actions, it seemed now that Emperor Zhou might have already perished.

Cheng Guang didn't hold much animosity towards Wu Ling.

Even if power was to be sought, it required a more subtle approach.

Therefore, when facing Wu Ling, Cheng Guang still maintained a superficial respect.

Wu Ling looked Cheng Guang up and down before lightly pointing with her hand towards a stone stool nearby.

"Princely Heir, please sit down."

Cheng Guang was startled upon hearing this and looked at the stone stool.

What surprised him wasn't that Wu Ling offered him a seat on the stone stool,

but rather Wu Ling's tone at that moment,

It had a commanding overtone.

Although Cheng Guang himself held much greater power than the Crown Prince of the Eastern Palace, Wu Ling, on the surface, was still his superior in status.

To use such a commanding tone was theoretically acceptable, but in practice, it was not.

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Perhaps it was because Cheng Guang had spent the most time with Wu Ling; she was the first real friend he made in this world.

Knowing that Wu Ling meant no harm, Cheng Guang nodded slightly and sat down.

After Cheng Guang had taken a seat, Wu Ling's penetrating gaze turned towards Zhao Jin, and she slowly said:

"Zhao Jin, speak of what you have learned from Empress Wei in Great Wei, about all that you know."

Cheng Guang listened to Wu Ling's words.

When he heard "Great Wei" and "Empress Wei" from Wu Ling's lips, Cheng Guang's eyes could not help but twitch.

Empress Wei of Great Wei...

Although Cheng Guang had previously used a great oath to temporarily control and exploit her, this did not mean that Empress Wei was someone who could be entirely manipulated by him.

Would Empress Wei complicate matters for him?

A premonition of unease crept into Cheng Guang's mind.

His eyes fell on Zhao Jin.

Under Cheng Guang's gaze, Zhao Jin's jade-like face did not reveal much fear, just a hint of hesitation.

The hesitation didn't last long.

Zhao Jin then spoke in a soft voice:

"Empress Wei told me that a few days ago, in the Secret Realm, Emperor Zhou and several other Sky-Men were attacked by mysterious Worms. Because of these peculiar Worms, they were all unable to escape and were trapped to death in the Secret Realm."

"And those peculiar Worms were lured out by you alone, kept in a storage ring, deliberately setting a trap for His Majesty..."

After Zhao Jin finished speaking,

Wu Ling waved her hand, "No need to say more, you may leave now."

Zhao Jin promptly shut his mouth and hurriedly left.

Shortly after,

Zhao Jin's figure disappeared from the courtyard.

Once Zhao Jin had left, Wu Ling's gaze was fixed intently on Cheng Guang.

Then, word by word, she asked:

"That's what Empress Wei told Zhao Jin, how much of it do you think is true?"

Upon hearing Wu Ling's question, Cheng Guang did not rush to answer.

Chapter 513 - I Didn't, Don't Frame Me _4

He actually felt like laughing.

After all, Empress Wei was the reigning ruler of Great Wei.

How could she still be so petty?

He hadn't done anything to her, and yet at a time like this, she chose to trip him up.

Alright, this is how it's going to be, huh.

A hint of discontent rose in Cheng Guang's heart towards Empress Wei.

Cheng Guang knew that because Empress Wei was bound by a great oath, she couldn't act against him personally.

That's why Empress Wei thought of using Wu Ling's methods to deal with Cheng Guang.

Perhaps she knew that Wu Ling was essentially harmless to Cheng Guang.

But she just thought that if she could disgust him somewhat, it would be good enough.

The proud Empress Wei was probably still holding a grudge about what happened in the Secret Realm.

Cheng Guang's eyelids drooped, he remained silent for a while, then raised his eyes to look at Wu Ling, "What do you think is true?"

Wu Ling shook her head, "I don't know."

"That's why I'm asking you."

Cheng Guang sat by the stone table, his finger gently tapping on the surface, making a crisp sound. After pondering for a moment, he said, "Much of it is true."

"Only the details have been distorted."

Cheng Guang spoke.

Wu Ling listened.

When Wu Ling heard Cheng Guang say that much of it was true, her eyes trembled slightly, her hand hidden under her skirt involuntarily tightened, but then slowly relaxed again.

When Cheng Guang said this, his tone paused slightly, "You should know that His Majesty wants to kill me."

"And even sent Zhao Jin to do it."

"If it weren't for some tricks up my sleeve, I might well have been a ghost by now."

"In the Secret Realm, His Majesty seized my gains within. He just didn't expect that the things in my storage ring were not all desirable."

When Wu Ling heard this, her bright eyes lifted slightly and she asked, "So, you're saying it was all my father's fault. Even if you framed my father, Princely Heir, it would be what he deserves?"

Cheng Guang shook his head.

Then he fell silent again.

He turned to look at the distant pavilion.

"I was only acting in self-defense. If His Majesty doesn't die, my Duke Zhen's Mansion will never have peace, and neither will I."

"He has made an assassination attempt on me once, which has already set things into motion. No matter how much we try to mend our relationship, it can't be restored."

"I didn't kill him with my own hands. The Sky-Man troubled by those strange Worms wasn't only him."

At this point, Wu Ling had begun to understand, slowly exhaling a breath.

"So you had the capability to save him, but you chose not to."

"Empress Wei is also a Sky-Man, the only one who came out of the Secret Realm alive, right? You saved her, didn't you?"

Cheng Guang nodded slightly.

Wu Ling pursed her red lips, her bright eyes filled with complex emotions.

"Princely Heir really is quite the charmer, leaving room for sentiment everywhere. I just didn't expect you to even involve Empress Wei, though it seems she doesn't like you much."

Cheng Guang shook his head, "I did not. Don't falsely accuse me."

Speaking of this.

Cheng Guang's gaze lifted slightly, meeting Wu Ling's bright eyes, and he directly asked, "So, what do you plan to do with me in the future, Your Highness? Will you seek vengeance for your father, or will you make this matter public, causing the world to curse and revile me?"

Wu Ling took a deep breath, then looked at Cheng Guang.

"Why do you think I would do that?" Explore more stories with NovelBin.Côm

Cheng Guang frowned, clearly impatient, "Then Your Highness, calling me over here wasn't just to have tea, was it?"

Wu Ling was fine up until then, but upon hearing Cheng Guang's impatient tone, she exploded.

Sprung to her feet.

One hand slapped down on the tabletop.

"What if I did call you over here for tea?"

"Are you insisting I must do something to you?"

"Do you not realize that even if my father is the worst, he is still my only family in this world!"

"You! You are just...!"

As Wu Ling spoke, her voice suddenly faltered, and she found herself at a loss for words. Tears began to well up in her eyes, and her nose felt sour.

All at once, she flung out a hand.

Powerful Primordial Spirit energy converged in front of her, forming a Longsword.

Wu Ling grasped the Longsword and thrust it towards Cheng Guang.

As she stabbed at him,

Wu Ling spoke with a slightly hoarse voice, "Are you satisfied now??"

Cheng Guang's eyes widened slightly, seeing the tears in Wu Ling's eyes and her agitated emotions.

For a moment, he was at a loss for words.

His mind seemingly hit a snag.

And halted.

Cheng Guang didn't understand why Wu Ling was crying.

He hadn't said anything strange, had he?

Their relationship was not that close, was it?

Was Wu Ling crying for Emperor Zhou?

No, that can't be right.

When Zhao Jin was talking about Emperor Zhou, Wu Ling showed no change in emotion, and there was not much sadness in her expression.

If she had to cry over Emperor Zhou, she probably wouldn't have been able to hold back until now.

She didn't cry over Emperor Zhou, but she lost her composure over something he said.

Could it be that Wu Ling has feelings for him...

Cheng Guang considered an absurd possibility.

Looking at Wu Ling.

He found the whole situation absurd.

That couldn't be possible.

Cheng Guang didn't remember having any particularly deep interactions with Wu Ling.

Thinking back to their first meeting, the first chess game, everything that had happened.

And recalling how Wu Ling had purposefully looked for him in the crowd during the royal ceremony.

Not to mention recently, how Wu Ling suddenly stood in the doorway at his grand wedding, disregarding etiquette.

All these things, overt and otherwise, expressed her feelings.

Chapter 514 - I Didn't, Don't Frame Me _5

Cheng Guang gently patted his own head with a hint of distress.

It was only now that he came to a realization.

Could it be that Wu Ling had developed some inappropriate feelings towards him?

Wu Ling belonged to the Great Zhou Imperial Family.

And he was the Princely Heir of Duke Zhen's Mansion.

No matter how their relationship developed, they were doomed to never be together.

Cheng Guang had never expected that after only a few encounters with Wu Ling, she would harbor different feelings towards him.

In the blink of an eye.

Cheng Guang thought of many things.

Seeing Wu Ling's tearful approach, thrusting her sword at him, he could imagine how much pain she was in.

Clearly, Wu Ling had no such thoughts.

Instead, it was he who had misunderstood Wu Ling, pushing her to the opposite side.

For a moment.

Cheng Guang felt a trace of guilt in his heart, sighed, and stood still without intending to resist.

His current level of cultivation was much higher than Wu Ling's.

Only if Wu Ling exerted all her strength might she be able to injure him.

Moreover, with the Divine Power of Everlasting in him, even if he suffered severe injuries, Cheng Guang believed he would quickly recover.

Letting Wu Ling stab him with her sword now seemed like a good idea.

Cheng Guang stood still.

Without moving an inch.

As Wu Ling approached Cheng Guang, the Primordial Spirit she had transformed into a golden black Longsword, aimed directly at Cheng Guang's chest.

When the blade touched Cheng Guang's chest.

Wu Ling suddenly stopped again.

She held back the tears in her clear eyes.

She looked at Cheng Guang stubbornly and incredulously.

"Why didn't you dodge?"

Cheng Guang shook his head and after a moment of silence,

he then spoke.

"Wu Ling, you don't happen to have feelings for me, do you?"

After Cheng Guang asked the question,

Wu Ling's eyes trembled, then her arm shook, and she placed the Longsword on Cheng Guang's neck.

"I don't like you at all."

"You're a big liar. You clearly had no cultivation back then, and I beat you countless times, yet you lied to me, saying you let me win."

"How could I possibly like someone like you?"

Cheng Guang looked at Wu Ling, then pushed the blade away with one hand and glanced around.

He then slowly stood up.

Walked to the edge of the lake, and picked up some black and white stones.

They were of different sizes and not symmetrical.

Cheng Guang drew a chessboard on the stone table, pushed all the black pieces to the other side after the board was set,

and then sat down with a flourish.

Lifting a hand, he gestured to the stone stool opposite.

"Come sit, let's play a game of chess."

"If I win this time, we'll call the whole thing off. If you win, I can agree to any one of your requests. Whatever your form of revenge may be, I'll accept it, as long as it's not excessive."

Wu Ling heard Cheng Guang's words.

She stood still.

Dumbfounded for a long while.

Then she took a deep breath.

"Fine!"

Wu Ling said this, tossed aside the Longsword in her hand,

sat down in front of Cheng Guang, picked up a black piece, and placed it firmly in the center of the board.

Cheng Guang also picked up a white piece and slowly placed it down.

The two silently played chess at the stone table.

Just like in the past.

As always.

Except that the atmosphere was different this time.

After a while,

Cheng Guang was about to win.

Perhaps it was because Wu Ling's mind was unsettled, or perhaps because at that moment, her thoughts were not on the game at all.

Cheng Guang won easily.

And just as Wu Ling thought Cheng Guang was going to pick up a white piece and place it on the board,

Cheng Guang suddenly dropped the stone.

He smiled and said,

"I've won, but I can still grant you one request."

Wu Ling frowned slightly, her eyes fixed on Cheng Guang.

"Are you mocking me?"

Cheng Guang shook his head, "No."

After speaking, Cheng Guang added another sentence.

"Whatever you want me to do, just tell me."

Wu Ling replied coldly, "What if I want you to die?"

Cheng Guang thought for a moment, "Do you think that might be a bit excessive?"

Wu Ling snorted with laughter, "Excessive? I think it's quite reasonable."

Cheng Guang shook his head, "That request is not possible for the time being. Everyone must die someday, but when I'm close to death, perhaps I could satisfy your wish. Choose another."

"Great Zhou may soon be in chaos. Why not let me lend a hand?"

"Great Zhou will be in chaos?"

Wu Ling's brow furrowed, looking at Cheng Guang with confusion.

Instinctively, she assumed that when Cheng Guang said this, it probably meant that the Duke of the State, or more precisely, the Duke's Mansion, was going to cause trouble.

After all, within the entire Great Zhou, the Duke was the only Sky-Man.

Not a single person in the Great Zhou Imperial Palace could suppress the Duke.

As for her, a minor Crown Prince, it was even less possible.

Cheng Guang smiled and nodded, then added, "Great Yuan might make a move against Great Zhou. If you want to be in power, this is an opportunity you could utilise."

"Why don't you make a request, and let me help you ascend to the position of Emperor Zhou?"

"Great Yuan will make a move against Great Zhou? That's impossible. There's never been a war between Great Yuan and Great Zhou, and the two nations have had many marital alliances."

"Father even told me before that the two countries are old friends."

Wu Ling simply did not believe it.

Cheng Guang did not insist, and with a smile said, "Then do you want to change it?"

"I don't want to change it. Seeing you just annoys me, go away, go away."

Wu Ling waved her hand.

She stood up and walked towards the bedroom in the courtyard.

Cheng Guang watched Wu Ling's retreating figure, stunned for a moment, not expecting her to react this way. Read new adventures at NovelBin.Côm

He shook his head with a chuckle.

At the same time,

Cheng Guang's mood also grew much heavier.

He probably knew what was on Wu Ling's mind.

But,

this kind of love was too much of a luxury for him.

If only Wu Ling were not a member of the royal family, if only Emperor Zhou had not thought of moving against him from the beginning.

Chapter 515 - I Didn't, Don't Frame Me _6

Everything had a turning point.

But at the moment,

because of Emperor Zhou,

Cheng Guang and Wu Ling were both driven to a cliff.

Whether it was sentiment or morality, or the power of their respective sides, none would allow them to be together.

Cheng Guang's mind was filled with myriad thoughts, his face showing several more strands of weariness.

"Princely Heir, His Highness has gone to rest; you may take your leave now."

A palace maid approached cautiously and said to Cheng Guang.

Upon hearing this, Cheng Guang did not respond and turned to walk towards the palace exit.

Just as he was about to step out of the Crown Prince East Palace, Cheng Guang couldn't help but look back.

He could see,

a tall pavilion where a fleeting figure dashed past.

Cheng Guang's expression faltered slightly, then weighed down by a heavy heart, he walked slowly out of the palace gate.

As Cheng Guang left the Great Zhou Imperial Palace with a heavy heart,

he suddenly heard a series of incredibly urgent horse hooves.

The sound of the horse hooves, like a fierce wind and hurried rain, suddenly came.

"Urgent report, urgent report! Make way, quickly!"

Cheng Guang looked up towards the distance, only to see a heavily armored soldier with blood on his face and a slightly frightened look, rushing towards the Great Zhou Imperial Palace.

The Imperial Guards stationed near the palace walls quickly opened the gates of the Imperial City.

Cheng Guang also stepped aside slightly.

To let the soldier enter the palace.

As the man passed by Cheng Guang, it was like a gust of wind blowing through.

Cheng Guang watched the man's retreating figure, his eyes slightly widened, thoughts churning in his mind.

"An urgent report?"

"And it's from a soldier."

"Could it be that there has been some sort of military incident? But that man just now, he did not seem to be from North City."

As Cheng Guang pondered, after pausing for a few moments, he suddenly remembered something.

"That's right, the system task notification only mentioned that Great Yuan would invade Great Zhou, causing severe harm to Great Zhou's Qi, but it did not specify where the invasion would happen or what exactly Great Yuan would do to Great Zhou."

"Could it be..."

"The invasion of Great Zhou by Great Yuan is not from the nearest point of contact, North City, but has instead taken a roundabout way and broken through from somewhere else?"

As Cheng Guang thought this, he suddenly felt that the strategists of Great Yuan were rather clever.

After all, Duke Zhen was at North City.

Having a Sky-Man like Duke Zhen might not matter,

but key to this was that the Northern Expedition Army stationed there was the most elite force in all of Great Zhou, incomparable to ordinary Imperial Guards or the Army of the Four Symbols.

If they could avoid battle, they would.

In doing so, although Duke Zhen would eventually find out and lead the Northern Expedition Army to act, Great Yuan only needed to use demon beasts to entangle Duke Zhen.

Then they could take over Great Zhou with a swift strike afterwards.

Even if Duke Zhen, that Sky-Man powerhouse, and his mighty Northern Expedition Army were involved, they would be powerless to turn the tide.

"Judging by the soldier's appearance just now, it seems that Great Yuan has sent quite a number of people, and Great Zhou might have suffered heavy losses; it's also possible that the border has already been breached."

"Now, with the absence of Emperor Zhou to preside over the court, I am unsure how these courtiers will decide."

"If they do not take this matter seriously, I fear that the land of Great Zhou will lose much of its territory in the days to come."

Cheng Guang murmured to himself,

walking leisurely towards Duke Zhen's Mansion.

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Before long,

Cheng Guang had returned to Million Specie Garden and entered the courtyard.

Inside the courtyard,

Qing Luan and Ning Qianxue were already lying down, looking at the clouds in the sky.

The sunlight shone on their faces, making their already fair complexions look even more radiant.

Cheng Guang walked with little sound.

Yet, as soon as Cheng Guang entered the courtyard,

Ning Qianxue and Qing Luan both sensed his presence at the same time.

Their gazes fell upon Cheng Guang.

"Princely Heir, what did His Highness want with you?"

Ning Qianxue asked curiously.

Upon hearing this, Cheng Guang looked a bit awkward and did not know how to respond, so he simply brushed it off.

"It was nothing important, just casual talk. I'll go in first to help with something."

"Qing Luan, keep watch and don't let anyone disturb me."

As he spoke, Cheng Guang entered the room.

Ning Qianxue, still puzzled by Cheng Guang's words, frowned slightly.

"Nothing important, just casual talk?"

Ning Qianxue looked at Qing Luan, expressing her confusion, "Is the Crown Prince close with the Princely Heir; do they chat often?"

Qing Luan shook her head.

"I haven't seen it much."

"But they should be familiar with each other."

Ning Qianxue let out a light "Oh" and continued, "The Princely Heir can really talk to us about both the minor and major issues. Looking at his demeanor now, he obviously just doesn't want us to know. Qing Luan, you agree, right?"

Ning Qianxue rambled on, yet her face was filled with concern.

Because she could sense that the Crown Prince East Palace seemed to dislike her, she was somewhat worried that the Crown Prince might harm Cheng Guang.

When Qing Luan heard Ning Qianxue speak like this, she simply smiled without a word,

Occasionally nodding while looking here and there with a smile.

Her beautiful eyes from time to time glanced toward Cheng Guang's bedroom.

Her brows slightly curved.

"The Princely Heir probably encountered some difficulty he doesn't want us to know about. If he wanted us to know, we wouldn't need to say a word; he would tell us himself," Qing Luan said, then she shifted the topic.

"What shall we cook for dinner tonight?"

As soon as Ning Qianxue heard Qing Luan bring up this topic, her eyes lit up, and her entire demeanor became cheerful. She was about to say something when a hint of worry caused her to lower her head,

Gently pinching her little belly.

"I can't eat more."

"I've already been eating too well these past few days."

"If this nourishment continues, I'll get fat."

Upon hearing Ning Qianxue's words, Qing Luan's beautiful eyes paused briefly in astonishment. She then gave Ning Qianxue a thorough once-over and thought that her figure was exceptionally graceful, perfect in every sense—one more ounce would be too fat, one less would be too thin.

She was indeed the embodiment of the figure most appealing to men.

Where has she gained weight?

At that moment, Qing Luan expressed her profound incomprehension.

But she did not say much more, only murmuring suggestively,

"Let's make roasted goose today, and then go out to buy some pastries. The Princely Heir particularly likes mung bean cakes. Wife of the Princely Heir, do you know what you want to eat?"

When Ning Qianxue heard Qing Luan mention those dishes, she couldn't help but have her eyes shine and involuntarily swallow, saying happily, "I want to eat crystal cakes, nine-layer cakes, rose cakes..."

Ning Qianxue listed a whole lot.

Qing Luan looked at Ning Qianxue with a smile and nodded in agreement.

After Ning Qianxue finished naming all the treats she wanted to eat,

Seeing the smile on Qing Luan's face,

She suddenly realized something.

Her cheeks turned instantly red.

Ning Qianxue was at a loss.

Then she lowered her head and said softly,

"I'll just eat a little bit."

Chapter 516 - Whatever, I'll Take Action!

Great Zhou Imperial Palace.

Inside the resplendent Council Hall.

Opulent and solemn.

The court officials had just received news: Great Yuan was attacking, had breached the border, and was sweeping towards the direction of the Great Zhou Capital.

At this moment, the air inside the Council Hall felt so heavy it seemed to have solidified.

The atmosphere was tense.

Court ministers gathered to discuss strategies, but the veteran court officials, sitting in their chairs with furrowed brows, felt utterly powerless.

"Great Yuan dares to kick us when we're down. At this critical junction, they employ their troops against our Great Zhou."

"With His Majesty absent, and possibly... With no new sovereign on the throne, what should we do to stop Great Yuan?"

"It's a difficult situation, I propose we let the Crown Prince temporarily take charge and decide on his enthronement at a later date."

The court officials discussed among themselves.

When one old minister suggested letting the Crown Prince temporarily take charge, the air once again fell into silence.

Empress Wang, sitting at the highest seat, heard the old minister's suggestion. Her usually noble beauty took on a gloomy shade as she let out a light laugh, then said,

"Sir Liu jests."

"That child Wu Ling has not received a proper royal education, how could she possibly grow into the role in such a short time? If we let her take charge, I fear it would be greatly disadvantageous for our Great Zhou."

"For now, we can let my son Wu Ming take power to repel the aggressive advance of Great Yuan and discuss the matter further afterward."

Once Empress Wang had spoken, the court officials exchanged glances.

All of them were seasoned veterans of the court, cunning and shrewd. How could they not perceive the hidden intentions of Empress Wang at this moment?

Considering that the court's discussion of the attack by Great Yuan didn't include Wu Ling, nor was she even notified...

The conclusion was evident.

If Wu Ming were indeed allowed to take power, the title of Crown Prince for Wu Ling would likely become nominal, with both name and authority lost. After Wu Ming repelled Great Yuan, with his reputation, influence, and power secured, he could easily ignore Wu Ling and ascend to the throne himself.

Empress Wang observed the ministers' expressions, uncaring of their thoughts, and simply waited a while, but their responses were slow in coming.

No minister wished to be the first to make a stand.

Silence.

Impatient, Empress Wang parted her lips again and said, "Honored ministers, do you have any opinions?"

"Now that Great Yuan is attacking and His Majesty's whereabouts are unknown, our court's safety is at stake. If you still wish to adhere to ancient practices, I'm afraid it will push our Great Zhou into an abyss."

The crowd fell into silence once more.

Just as Empress Wang was about to decide the matter outright,

An old minister stepped forward.

This minister was the court's Left Chancellor, Zhuge Wansheng, a senior official with a dignified appearance, a commanding presence, and silver hair that did not betray any semblance of frailty.

First, he bowed slightly to Empress Wang, then spoke out, "Your Majesty, I believe that instead of allowing Prince Wu Ming to wield power alone, it would be better to let a few other capable princes manage it together."

The words of Zhuge Wansheng attracted the attention of the surrounding court officials.

In their eyes, surprise was evident as they looked at Zhuge Wansheng.

No one had expected him to say such a thing.

However, after pondering for a moment, they soon understood.

The old fox Zhuge Wansheng clearly wanted to carve out an opportunity for his own grandson.

Zhugé Wansheng's daughter was also married to Emperor Zhou, and her son Wu Xing was the Third Prince.

Whether according to ancient tradition or the succession of the Crown Prince, Wu Xing had no chance whatsoever.

Only by displaying his capabilities and gaining the recognition of the court's ministers could he have a chance at succession.

The court officials grasped this point.

Empress Wang listened to Zhuge Wansheng's words and immediately understood his intentions.

She let out a cold laugh.

She had known all along that without the Emperor present, the competition for the throne would undoubtedly spark a struggle among various factions.

What she hadn't expected,

Was for Zhuge Wansheng to dare rebuke her in front of so many ministers.

Empress Wang fixed her gaze on Zhuge Wansheng, eyes challenging.

Under Empress Wang's scrutiny, Zhuge Wansheng maintained a smile, completely composed, without a hint of nervousness.

Empress Wang was the first to look away, turning her gaze towards the Noble Consorts seated nearby, feeling the onset of a headache.

If it hadn't been for Zhuge Wansheng's intervention, things would have remained quiet.

Even if these Noble Consorts wanted to promote their own children to vie for the throne, they would be powerless and dare not say anything against her.

But now Zhuge Wansheng had broached the topic.

The Noble Consorts likely wouldn't remain as quiet as before. Find exclusive stories on NovelBin.CôM

As Empress Wang had anticipated,

The Noble Consorts, who had not yet spoken up, promptly began to say,

"I think what the Chancellor has said is reasonable."

"Merely letting Wu Ming take charge alone is indeed inappropriate. After all, Wu Ming isn't that old and doesn't have much life experience. It's better for our other princes to work together, consulting one another."

After a burst of chattering,

Empress Wang, quite bothered, massaged her forehead, then uttered softly,

"Quiet down, all of you."

Following Empress Wang's command,

All the Noble Consorts timely fell silent.

Empress Wang was still the Empress, after all; even if Emperor Zhou had truly perished,

Her authority remained substantial.

Empress Wang looked at Zhuge Wansheng and the throng of senior officials behind him, her brow furrowed slightly. Then, she turned to the Palace Maid Xue'e at her side.

Chapter 517 - It Doesn't Matter, I Will Take Action! 2

"Go fetch the Crown Prince."

The palace maid Xue'e heard Empress Wang's words, hesitated at first, then quickly nodded and respectfully retreated toward the outside of the hall.

After leaving the Council Hall, Xue'e lightly gathered her skirt and hurried toward the Crown Prince East Palace.

At the same time that palace maid Xue'e left the Council Hall,

Inside the Council Hall, the group of ministers heard Empress Wang's words, their expressions slightly stunned, some incredulously looking at Empress Wang.

No one could quite understand.

Why would Empress Wang want to bring Wu Ling into the picture at this time?

Everyone was earnestly supporting their own Princes in the struggle for the throne, would not bringing Wu Ling, the rightful Crown Prince, be a slap in their faces?

Zhuge Wansheng's brow also furrowed slightly as he looked toward Empress Wang, but seemed to pick up on something and slightly nodded, stroking his beard.

Without saying much more.

He probably knew what Empress Wang was aiming for.

Now with Great Yuan's invasion, preserving the foundation of Great Zhou was of utmost importance.

If they could not preserve the foundation of Great Zhou, what would be the use of securing the throne?

If they really let a bunch of Princes take charge, dissenting opinions and even sabotage among them could lead to untold troubles.

Bringing Wu Ling out now.

Could also to some extent prevent such things from happening.

Thinking of this, Zhuge Wansheng, while stroking his gray beard, nodded slightly.

His gaze turned toward the direction outside the hall.

Waiting for Wu Ling's arrival. Enjoy new stories from NovelBin.Côm

After asking palace maid Xue'e to fetch Wu Ling, Empress Wang did not say much else, sitting in the main seat, closing her eyes to rest her spirit.

The chattering voices of the Noble Consort by her side were automatically filtered out by her brain.

Not wanting to listen.

There was no need to.

It was just blaming her, why involve Wu Ling?

Now with Emperor Zhou absent, and Wu Ling, a princess of unknown origin brought by Emperor Zhou, without any family power or influence,

If nothing unexpected happened, she could not compete with their children at all.

No matter what, the throne seemed unlikely to fall into Wu Ling's hands.

Involved in the affairs, wasn't that just giving Wu Ling a chance?

"I did give her a chance, but can she seize it?"

Empress Wang murmured in her heart, looking in the direction of the Crown Prince East Palace, shaking her head with a smile, "Probably not."

"Wu Ling, the child, doesn't have what it takes to be an emperor, even if we allowed her to wield imperial power, she wouldn't achieve any remarkable deed."

"If she can play a role in maintaining the current situation, that would be enough."

Indeed.

At this time, Wu Ling,

To Empress Wang, was just a piece used to maintain the current situation, disposable after her purpose was served.

Empress Wang believed she had seen through this point.

But the other Noble Consorts had not caught on, still fixated on whether Wu Ling would take power and ascend to the throne directly.

Such an event was utterly impossible.

...

Xue'e arrived at the Crown Prince East Palace, entered the courtyard, and soon found Wu Ling.

Wu Ling was sitting in a pavilion, one hand propping up her chin, the other idly flicking black and white stones on the stone table.

Her hair, tidily tied at the back of her head, fell on her back, tracing a graceful curve that accentuated her stunningly beautiful face against her snow-white skin.

It was as though she did not need much adornment to be considered a beauty.

Xue'e looked at Wu Ling, the Eastern Palace's Crown Prince, and inwardly praised her.

Even in the Imperial Palace, a place teeming with beauties, Wu Ling's appearance could be ranked at the top.

Xue'e approached Wu Ling.

Just as she came by Wu Ling's side, before she could speak up, she heard Wu Ling say,

"You are Mrs. Xue from my mother's side, aren't you?"

"What brings you to me so suddenly today?"

While speaking, Wu Ling turned slightly, concealing the sorrow in her clear eyes, and asked Xue'e aloud.

Xue'e was instinctively startled upon hearing Wu Ling's words, not expecting Wu Ling to detect her presence so quickly.

After all, Xue'e's own Martial Cultivation was not weak.

Sixth grade of the Rebirth Realm.

She could move without sound, leave no trace with her steps.

Wu Ling had just started practicing not long ago; what realm had she reached by now?

To actually be able to sense her presence already.

Moreover, Xue'e noticed that Wu Ling seemed to have been aware of her from the very beginning.

She had simply chosen not to make it known at first.

Xue'e's eyes flickered as she examined Wu Ling, then noticed the coldness in Wu Ling's gaze and quickly bowed respectfully again.

"Crown Prince, the Empress has sent me to request your presence at the Council Hall to discuss an urgent matter," Xue'e said.

"Go to the Council Hall?" Wu Ling's pretty brows knitted slightly, then she asked, "Has something happened?"

Xue'e nodded slightly, "Great Yuan has launched an attack. Just now, a soldier came on a fast horse to report that Great Yuan has broken through one of Great Zhou's borders, and all the cities there have been lost."

"The Empress has convened the ministers to discuss countermeasures."

"That's why she has sent me to invite you to the Council Hall."

After Xue'e finished speaking, the air fell silent for a moment.

She heard no response from Wu Ling.

After a pause, Xue'e couldn't help but lift her gaze slightly again to look at Wu Ling.

Under Xue'e's watchful eyes, Wu Ling's eyes widened slightly, her expression moved, and her stunning face revealed an expression of disbelief.

"How can this be? Is it really Great Yuan?"

"Was he right??"

Chapter 518 - It Doesn't Matter, I Will Take Action!)_3

Wu Ling was shocked for a while.

As soon as Xue'e mentioned the word "Great Yuan," Wu Ling had already thought of something.

It brought to mind what Cheng Guang had previously said to her.

Her heart once again couldn't help but tremble.

It took a long while for Wu Ling to come back to her senses, and the first thing she did upon regaining her composure

was to tightly grip Xue'e's arm and ask,

"The invasion by Great Yuan, the loss of the border, when did it happen?"

Xue'e was startled by Wu Ling's action and then felt a throbbing pain in her arm; she truly hadn't expected Wu Ling to be so strong.

Xue'e frowned slightly, enduring the pain, and respectfully replied to Wu Ling,

"Just a quarter of an hour ago."

After hearing Xue'e's words,

"A quarter of an hour..."

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"The Princely Heir seemed to have left just a quarter of an hour ago, which means he knew in advance that Great Yuan would come. He knew it before Jiang Shicong reported it."

"Why would he know that?"

Wu Ling murmured to herself, barely audibly.

Even though Xue'e was close to Wu Ling, near her lips, she couldn't make out what Wu Ling was saying.

Seeing the change in Wu Ling's expression and that her grip seemed to be getting even tighter, Xue'e could no longer sit still and hurriedly said,

"Your Highness, we should go to the Council Hall now."

"Empress Wang and all the ministers at court are waiting for Your Highness to take charge."

Wu Ling snapped out of it, gave Xue'e a glance with her shining eyes, and then slowly released Xue'e's arm, only to say, "To take charge?"

"Not to just show face? To balance the situation?"

Upon hearing these words from Wu Ling, Xue'e's complexion changed, revealing extraordinary alarm, but she quickly suppressed it and smiled awkwardly.

"What is Your Highness talking about..."

Xue'e was about to say more.

But Wu Ling was not in the mood to listen any longer.

She waved her hand, cutting off Xue'e's words, and signaled that there was no need for further talk.

Then she stood up and headed towards the Council Hall.

When Wu Ling was not far from the Council Hall, the noise and discussions inside subdued significantly.

As Wu Ling entered the Council Hall, not a single person spoke.

At the same time, many ministers, the Noble Consort, and the princes and princesses standing in the corner all turned their gaze upon Wu Ling.

Wu Ling didn't pay attention to those watching her, and after scanning the Council Hall, she looked towards Empress Wang at the head seat.

First, she offered a bow.

Then she asked,

"Mother, did you summon me?"

Facing Wu Ling's bow, Empress Wang's expression showed little change, she just nodded slightly, and then casually pointed to a spot beside her.

"Come, sit down."

Wu Ling frowned slightly, hesitated for a moment, and then walked over to sit beside Empress Wang.

Once Wu Ling had sat down, Empress Wang began,

"Wu Ling, by the time you arrived, you must have roughly heard about what happened from Xue'e."

Wu Ling nodded slightly.

Empress Wang continued, "Then I won't explain much further."

"You are the Crown Prince, and currently, His Majesty's whereabouts are unknown. In times like these, it's up to you to bear the burden of Great Liang."

She then fixed her gaze upon the ministers gathered in the Council Hall.

"Regarding the invasion by Great Yuan, you're in command, assisted by the court ministers. If in doubt, seek the consensus of the ministers."

"Let's repel Great Yuan first."

As Wu Ling heard Empress Wang speak, she couldn't help but glance at Wu Ming standing behind the Empress.

Empress Wang had even brought Wu Ming to her side.

To say that Empress Wang had no designs on the throne was impossible.

Yet at this moment, she was still willing to entrust the opportunity to preside over the court to Wu Ling.

Was this an extraordinary trust, belief that Wu Ling was capable of leading Great Zhou to victory over Great Yuan?

Or did she think Wu Ling posed no threat whatsoever to Wu Ming or to any other prince for that matter?

Wu Ling's eyes dropped, and without speaking, she just softly voiced her assent.

Then, Empress Wang did not focus her gaze on Wu Ling any longer but started to truly discuss with the lords how to deal with Great Yuan.

Only when a decision needed to be made, would she occasionally ask for Wu Ling's opinion.

Although she was asking for Wu Ling's opinion,

Wu Ling knew that neither Empress Wang nor most of the ministers really considered her opinions meaningful.

Most of it was superficial flattery.

If Wu Ling herself really wanted to make a decision, she'd have to put in the effort.

"Crown Prince, Great Yuan's forces are strong and aggressive, and they seem to also have Sky-Man warriors among them. We should immediately call back Duke of the State to protect the Capital city," said a middle-aged minister, starting the conversation. He was Qiu Hao, the Minister of War, tall and handsome, with the calluses of a man accustomed to wielding a sword and a knife.

As Qiu Hao spoke, everyone else's gaze turned to Wu Ling.

At this point, all they needed was for Wu Ling to nod in agreement, and then a royal decree could be issued on behalf of the Crown Prince, summoning the Duke of the State back.

Upon hearing Qiu Hao's words, Wu Ling frowned.

She remembered what Cheng Guang had said.

If Great Yuan was invading Great Zhou, and the Town-Nation Duke's Heir Cheng Guang had foreknowledge, it was very likely that the Duke of the State knew as well.

If the Duke of the State could have returned to protect the Capital city, he would have already done so; there wouldn't be this silence at such a critical time.

It was highly probable that he simply couldn't come back.

Chapter 519 - It Doesn't Matter, I Will Take Action! _4

If Cheng Guang knew of Wu Ling's thoughts at this time, he would probably be filled with admiration.

It has to be said.

Although Wu Ling had guessed the wrong direction, she had guessed the outcome correctly.

"General Qiu, the Duke of the State at this time, I fear, even if he issues commands, won't be able to return. I suggest that you, in the Ministry of War, transfer all the border troops over to deal with Great Yuan," she said.

"At the same time, we can strengthen our connections with the surrounding dynasties, so that while the vassal states under our control contribute their efforts, they don't have the military power to take advantage of us in this moment."

When Wu Ling spoke these words, Qiu Hao was clearly taken aback, not expecting Wu Ling to put forth her own suggestions.

He thought of Wu Ling as a Crown Prince who knew nothing and instinctively wanted to object, but after listening carefully to Wu Ling's words, other than not knowing why Wu Ling would know that the Duke of the State couldn't return, the rest of her deployment had no major issues.

Qiu Hao pondered and had not yet opened his mouth to speak.

Empress Wang by Wu Ling's side spoke out slowly, her voice neither salty nor mild.

"Wu Ling, just listen to Sir Qiu's words. In matters of war, Sir Qiu is trustworthy," she said.

The meaning behind Empress Wang's words was obvious: she did not want to hear Wu Ling's suggestions.

She did not wish for Wu Ling to exert any effort in this matter.

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She herself felt that even if Wu Ling were to exert herself, Wu Ling wouldn't be able to contribute anything.

So, it was better to veto her at the decision-making phase outright.

This would save them from any unexpected incidents later on.

After Empress Wang spoke.

Several Noble Consorts by Empress Wang's side rather comforted Wu Ling with a few words, their faces smiling, a stark contrast to Empress Wang's indifferent demeanor.

When Wu Ling saw the attitudes of Empress Wang and the Noble Consorts, her eyelids drooped slightly.

Wu Ling knew that these Noble Consorts didn't like her much either, nor did they agree with her remarks; they simply didn't get along with Empress Wang.

When Emperor Zhou of Great Zhou was around, the harem could maintain stability, but with Emperor Zhou absent, various forces within the harem began to stir beneath the surface.

Wu Ling, alone and unsupported, did not get involved in these struggles.

Instead, she found herself in a period of respite.

Listening to the words of those around her, Wu Ling was already feeling a bit annoyed. Just when she was about to agree straightforwardly with Qiu Hao, she suddenly heard Qiu Hao's voice again.

"Crown Prince, what you've said largely makes sense. However, if the Duke of the State could join us, then even Great Yuan wouldn't merit a second glance," he said.

"How does Your Highness know the Duke of the State cannot make a move?"

Qiu Hao's gaze was fixed on Wu Ling's face; it was clear he wanted an answer from her.

Sir Qiu, promoted by Emperor Zhou himself from a humble background, was entangled neither by the interests of great families nor by having daughters, thus having little relation to the royal family.

Therefore, Sir Qiu was able to detach himself from the strife for royal power.

At this time, Sir Qiu was only concerned about how to repel the enemy.

Wu Ling met Sir Qiu's gaze without much panic or shifting her eyes away, her tone calm as she said:

"Must I explain to General Qiu how I know?"

"Sir Qiu only needs to know that if the Duke of the State could come to the capital, he would have already arrived. Since he cannot move at this time, it means he cannot come," she said.

When Qiu Hao heard Wu Ling's words, he pondered for a moment and did not say anything for a while, sinking into thought.

Afterward.

Just as Qiu Hao was about to speak.

Empress Wang waved her hand, interrupting their conversation.

"Enough, let's follow Sir Qiu's intentions. Wu Ling, you must immediately, in the name of the Crown Prince, draft an imperial edict to summon the Duke of the State to the capital to confront Great Yuan," she said.

After speaking, Empress Wang slowly stood up and walked towards the exit of the hall.

After Empress Wang left.

The Council Hall's assembly, even if they wanted to say something more, could no longer speak.

The crowd dispersed one after another.

Wu Ling also stood up. Just as she was leaving the Council Hall, a voice suddenly called out from behind her.

"Crown Prince, please wait," it said.

Wu Ling recognized the voice.

She slightly turned her head to look at the newcomer.

"Sir Qiu, what is the matter?" she asked.

Dressed in a black official's robe, Qiu Hao stood quietly behind Wu Ling, then said, "Crown Prince, I think there is merit in what you said. If the Duke of the State cannot come to the capital, the Crown Prince's plan could also serve as a contingency."

"However, I have one concern: by depleting the military forces from other borders, are you not afraid that the surrounding dynasties large and small may invade Great Zhou?"

"And, Your Highness, if you want the vassal dynasties of Great Zhou to exert their efforts, will they truly lend a hand?"

Wu Ling looked at Qiu Hao, observing his inquisitive face, pondered for a moment, then patiently explained:

"The dynasties around Great Zhou are mostly vassal states. By withdrawing troops from one border and mobilizing their armies, we can ensure a temporary peace on the frontier," she explained.

Qiu Hao watched Wu Ling, then slowly said, "Aren't you afraid that those dynasties will refuse to send troops to our Great Zhou and take advantage of the situation instead?"

Wu Ling calmly replied, "Afraid."

"But what use is fear? We can only choose the best method."

"We are gambling, and those in the other dynasties are gambling too."

"After all, once Great Zhou overcomes this difficulty, they will not even have the time to consider the consequences or their demise."

"Since we are all gambling, what is there to fear?"

Chapter 520 - It Doesn't Matter, I Will Take Action!)_5

Wu Ling finished speaking and, without further ado, turned around and proceeded toward the Crown Prince East Palace.

At the moment, Wu Ling also knew that she herself was merely a person under the title of the Crown Prince.

Yet, Empress Wang had forcefully pushed her to the forefront.

Without any real power,

nor any significant strength,

whether Qiu Hao listened to her or not was ultimately beyond Wu Ling's control.

She had already said her piece.

Whether or not Qiu Hao heeded her words, or accepted her advice, no longer mattered to her.

Wu Ling didn't dwell on it and left at a leisurely pace.

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Before long,

Wu Ling's figure had disappeared from Qiu Hao's line of sight.

It wasn't until Wu Ling's form was no longer visible that Qiu Hao came back to his senses, staring in the direction where Wu Ling vanished, his eyes flashing with contemplation.

"We are all wagering, so what is there to fear?"

"If Great Yuan finds a weak spot this time, the consequences are unthinkable."

Contemplating to this point, Qiu Hao stepped forward and walked into the distance.

Qiu Hao was undecided about whether others would adopt Wu Ling's advice or not.

But Qiu Hao believed in it.

Matters involving sovereign diplomacy with surrounding dynasties were beyond Qiu Hao's reach.

But redeploying all border troops to the front lines was within his capabilities.

As for the military forces of the vassal states, to Qiu Hao, they were expendable.

In this moment, Qiu Hao

was also gambling,

betting that after he redeployed his troops, other dynasties would not dare invade Great Zhou's borders even if they sensed something unusual.

After leaving quickly, Qiu Hao returned to the Ministry of War Office.

Sitting at the desk inside the hall, he began writing line after line of text.

He then summoned a Deputy Minister of War and handed him the orders he had written.

"Dispatch these to all the armies immediately, without error."

The Deputy Minister of War, taking the orders in hand, glanced at them only briefly before his face changed subtly.

"Sir, are you calling for a full mobilization against Great Yuan?"

"With Duke of the State at hand,"

"is it worth such a great effort?"

Upon hearing the Deputy Minister of War's words, Qiu Hao first paused, then laughed.

"Look, we are all counting on the Duke of the State to bring the Northern Expedition Army to confront Great Yuan."

"But who among us can guarantee that the Duke of the State will definitely come?"

"Go and carry it out; it's better to be safe than sorry."

With that, Qiu Hao waved his hand dismissively.

Seeing Qiu Hao's manner, the Deputy Minister of War no longer dared to voice his anxious objections and left.

After the Deputy Minister of War departed, Qiu Hao stood by the window, gazing at the clouds on the distant horizon, his eyes occasionally flickering, as if deep in thought.

After pondering for a moment,

Qiu Hao sat back down at the desk and began to write more lines of text.

This time, the text Qiu Hao was writing was not a military redeployment order for the border but rather instructions for the front-line commanders.

In facing Great Yuan, one must not take them lightly.

If Great Yuan was invading Great Zhou, it was certainly not a thoughtless gesture nor something they would just abandon halfway.

This time, it seemed as if Great Yuan came with the intent to push Great Zhou to its last gasp.

If the front lines could hold out for a bit longer, then, when the forces from all sides gather, it would be much easier to contend.

...

As Qiu Hao began taking action,

Wu Ling had also returned to the Eastern Palace.

Having sat in the courtyard for a while, she found her heart unable to settle.

For some reason, she suddenly recalled what Cheng Guang had said to her before.

The Town-Nation Duke's Heir, Cheng Guang, despite knowing Great Zhou could be in chaos, still claimed he could lend a hand.

Does the Princely Heir have some sort of technique to repel Great Yuan?

This invasion of Great Zhou by Great Yuan might very well include a Sky-Man among their ranks.

With the Duke of the State unable to act,

how would Cheng Guang, the Town-Nation Duke's Heir, manage?

Unless Cheng Guang could defeat a Sky-Man.

But...

Is that likely?

A hint of bewilderment flickered in Wu Ling's bright eyes.

When she first met Cheng Guang, she thought he might be capable of cultivation.

But only after she had begun cultivating did she realize

Cheng Guang's demeanor at that time did not seem like that of someone who had practiced cultivation.

Even if Cheng Guang had started to cultivate afterward, he would have had much less time to do so than she had.

Wu Ling believed that she was talented and cultivated quickly.

It was probable that the cultivation level of Cheng Guang, the Town-Nation Duke's Heir, was not even as high as her own.

From where did he draw the confidence to make such a statement to her?

With a slight frown, Wu Ling found it somewhat incomprehensible.

After standing there in distress for a while, she suddenly stamped her foot.

"Enough thinking, I'll go find him!"

"He said he would fulfill one of my requests, so let's see how he intends to do that."

As she spoke, Wu Ling marched quickly in the direction of Duke Zhen's Mansion.

Leaving the Imperial Palace, it didn't take long for Wu Ling to arrive at the gate of Duke Zhen's Mansion.

She ignored the four guards stationed in front of Duke Zhen's Mansion, who were keeping watch, and strode straight in.

The four guards watching Wu Ling's figure, looked at each other in bewilderment.

"Why has His Highness come here?"

"Should we report this visit?"

"There's no need, she's already gone inside..."

"Right, if we report now, won't we just get scolded by Steward Wang?"

"Why didn't you stop her just now?"

"I didn't dare, His Highness the Crown Prince seemed somewhat fierce."

The four guards quietly discussed among themselves, hesitant, and peeped towards the interior of Duke Zhen's Mansion, seeking Wu Ling's figure.

But they saw nothing.

Unaware of the thoughts of the four guards behind her, Wu Ling didn't care. She was someone without much pretense to begin with.