

Mythical 93

Chapter 93: Zhen Mi

Tomorrow at 2 PM, the voting on Sanjiang will start. Remember to vote, everyone!

As he read the intelligence report in his hands, Chen Xi's eyebrows twitched uncontrollably. Seeing Chen Xi's reaction, Liu Ye and the others knew that the news must be something very displeasing to him.

"Take a look at this," Chen Xi said, handing over the intelligence from Jizhou to Lu Su and the others. He was at a loss for words. How could such a good situation be ruined? Zhang Shiping and Su Shuang were utterly incompetent.

After reading it, Lu Su chuckled, "This was expected, wasn't it? What's so surprising about it? The Zhen family has been a prestigious family for a hundred years; they aren't easy to deal with."

"But it shouldn't have turned out this way. Those two fools even tarnished their own reputations," Chen Xi said, covering his forehead with one hand, looking utterly helpless. "I've finished my administrative work. I'll handle the situation in Jizhou personally. The Zhen family is really troublesome!"

Liu Ye didn't say much. As a member of the royal family, he was well-acquainted with the great families across the land, and the Zhen family was among the top tier. It was laughable to think that a couple of merchants could destabilize the Zhen family's foundation. Even if Chen Xi took action, Liu Ye wasn't optimistic, but he refrained from saying anything to dampen Chen Xi's spirits.

"Send a letter to Mi Zhu. Ask him if he's ready. If not, I'll replace him as the chairman!" Chen Xi said, clearly annoyed.

To elaborate, Zhang Shiping and Su Shuang had seized tens of thousands of stones of refined salt, almost a zero-cost venture. Ignoring Mi Zhu's advice, they went to Jizhou to compete directly with the Zhen family. Chen Xi had thought that simply playing the price-dumping game would be enough to significantly weaken the Zhen family, so he hadn't said much and sent the two off with their salt to Jizhou.

Initially, the Zhen family was caught off guard, allowing Zhang Shiping and Su Shuang to take over the salt market. Things should have settled at that point, especially when the Zhen family came to negotiate for the low-priced salt to sell themselves. But Zhang and Su directly mocked them, making it clear they weren't there in good faith.

Continuing their salt sales at low prices, they expanded rapidly, covering the entire Jizhou with their salt shops—all owned by them, with no intermediaries.

From supply to sales, it was a closed loop until the problem arose. When purchasing land, it was easy; there were no obstacles. But once the land was secured, they were suddenly sued.

The Zhen family presented loan documents, claiming Zhang and Su owed them money. Even the Taiyuan Wang family, who had originally lent to Zhang and Su, did not step in. The loan documents were genuine, with Zhang and Su's signatures.

The loan amounted to over a hundred million coins with a monthly interest of five percent. The Zhen family, needing to expand, demanded repayment after the three-month term had expired. Zhang and Su claimed they had extended the loan agreement with the Wang family for another six months.

The Zhen family sneered, "Do you have written proof or a contract?"

Of course, they had nothing. At the time, feeling triumphant, Zhang and Su had made a verbal agreement with the Wang family, trusting in mutual respect and honor among wealthy merchants.

It was clear they had been played by the Zhen family. With no choice but to pay their debts, their assets were liquidated at depreciated values, nearly reducing Zhang and Su to slavery. The Zhen family spared them the ultimate disgrace, only giving them thirty lashes and expelling them from Jizhou. What should have been a triumphant return turned into a disgrace, ruining their reputations.

When Mi Zhu heard the news, he was deeply troubled. His allies had failed him spectacularly. They could have asked him for a loan—one hundred million coins wasn't an issue for him. He had many associates, and even ten times that amount wouldn't be a problem.

Looking at Chen Xi's plan, Mi Zhu furrowed his brow. The plan was too ruthless. What had the Zhen family done to infuriate Chen Xi so much? This approach would reduce the entire Zhen family to slavery.

However, since Chen Xi had given the order, Mi Zhu complied and began mobilizing his commercial network as instructed.

"Mi'er," Zhen Mi's mother called to her daughter, who was sitting with a troubled expression. "Why do you look so unhappy?"

"Mother, I am thinking about the fate of Zhang and Su," Zhen Mi said, her delicate face clouded with worry.

"They challenged the Zhen family, and the Zhen family gave them what they deserved. Isn't that natural?" her mother replied with a proud air. The Zhen family was currently led by the matriarch due to a lack of male heirs.

"The Zhen family doesn't reflect on its own mistakes but instead crushes anyone who challenges it. This is a recipe for disaster!" Zhen Mi said, closing her eyes as if envisioning the scenario. "If we don't reflect on our own faults and continue to use our power to crush opponents, we will eventually fall because of our past mistakes. Is it worth it to ruin Zhang and Su for their wealth?"

"Hmph, Mi'er, you don't understand. If we don't show them our strength, other families will think we are weak and easy to bully. That would lead to our downfall," her mother said with a cold smile. At that moment, a servant came in with a bamboo slip, handing it to Zhen Mi's mother. "Go back to your studies. I need to manage the family's business. Remember, you are the hope for our Zhen family's rise. Be good."

Zhen Mi watched her mother leave, feeling lost. She couldn't understand why her mother, who usually listened to her, was so hurried today. She felt bored and pondered whether wealth was really that important.

Zhen Mi clearly remembered her father telling her when she was four that the Zhen family's wealth was enough to last several lifetimes. They had moved past the bloody phase of wealth accumulation and now needed to walk a righteous path, doing proper business. No one could defeat the Zhen family with its deep foundation.

Unfortunately, her father, Zhen Yi, passed away not long after, leaving the family in her mother's hands. Unlike her father, her mother was determined never to suffer losses. The prophecy by Liu Liang, saying Zhen Mi was destined for greatness and had the bearing of a phoenix, only boosted her mother's confidence.

As Zhen Mi grew up, she understood the impact of that prophecy and her mother's ambitions. She read extensively, including books on physiognomy, numerology, and the I Ching. Looking in the mirror, she could only sigh and acknowledge her extraordinary destiny.

But recently, while examining herself, she found everything seemed vague. The once-clear prophecy of greatness had blurred as if someone had casually wiped away the established fate, reshaping the world's order.