

Mythical 94

Chapter 94: Winter is Here, Spring Brings Kidnapping Opportunities

Seeing the situation, Zhen Mi extinguished all her previous fantasies. Everything she saw was merely an uncertain future. If someone could erase the established trajectory, could the Zhen family avoid it?

With this thought, Zhen Mi sighed helplessly. As her mother, Lady Zhang, held control of the Zhen family longer, the traditions left by her father, Zhen Yi, were increasingly discarded. Although the Zhen family seemed to grow richer and more prosperous, since noticing the change in her reflection, Zhen Mi had felt as if the family's current state was like cooking oil over a fierce fire, or flowers in full bloom—beautiful, but the last moment before decline.

Zhen Mi strongly hoped her mother would change course and restore the old ways. Unfortunately, she was just a caged canary in the Zhen family, with no real power. Though intelligent and full of potential, as an eight-year-old girl, she could only voice her opinions on inconsequential matters. Lady Zhang might listen to those, but she would never let Zhen Mi interfere in decisions that truly determined the family's direction.

"Cooking oil over a fierce fire, flowers in full bloom—the last beauty before destruction," Zhen Mi mused as she looked at the sky. Snowflakes drifted down gently, mirroring the gloom in her heart. Who would know that a little girl had such deep thoughts?

After handing the plan to Mi Zhu, Chen Xi stopped worrying about it. After all, the Zhen family had just swallowed up Zhang and Su's assets and were as smug as Zhang Shiping and Su Shuang had been when they first returned to Zhongshan, full of pride and satisfaction...

"It's snowing," Chen Xi remarked, standing by the window and watching the snowflakes drift down. He reached out to catch one. "I wonder how well Zijian has set things up. Winter has come, and when spring arrives, kidnapping will begin. I hope he doesn't target the Wei Wu camp. Greed can blind people to danger."

"Still worried about Zijian?" Lu Su asked, wrapped in a fur coat and sipping ginger tea. The southern boy had never seen snow before and couldn't handle the cold.

"A bit worried he'll bring back some unexpected things. Oh well, let him be. With the four thousand infantry under his command, there aren't many who can defeat them head-on. Uh, correction, there are some in Chang'an who can," Chen Xi initially boasted before correcting himself. "Hmm, Gao Shun can't either. He doesn't have enough men. No matter what, Zijian has four thousand troops who follow orders strictly, face death without fear, and are elite soldiers."

"Zichuan, I've had some insights into military training, but after seeing Wenzhe's training methods, I felt far behind. And then seeing Zijian, I realized it's not just a gap—it's a chasm. Could you tell me the secret?" Lu Su hesitated before asking when he noticed Chen Xi looking at him.

"The method can be shared, but what Zijian has trained are soldiers born out of a unique opportunity," Chen Xi explained, recounting the whole process to Lu Su and his speculations. Lu Su listened with shining eyes, eager to try it himself.

"That's inhumane," Liu Ye commented, looking up.

"If you don't speak, no one will think you're mute. I've collected evidence of your crimes and handed it to Boni. I want to see Boni arrest you," Chen Xi threatened, turning to Liu Ye.

"Howl~" Liu Ye stretched lazily, having been corrupted by Chen Xi's influence. "Humph, you don't know the Han law of 'kinship concealment'—if a relative commits a crime, they can hide it without punishment. Boni will hide my crimes, so you understand."

Chen Xi nearly spat out his tea. Could it really work that way? Thinking about it, he realized it was indeed a law dating back to the Zhou dynasty.

"Zijing, what do you think of this law?" Chen Xi asked Lu Su, hinting at him.

Poor Lu Su, wrapped in a fur coat and sitting by Chen Xi's brazier, was still shivering. He couldn't read Chen Xi's expression and just nodded, saying, "This law is very appropriate. Laws should align with human emotions. A system without empathy doesn't suit human nature. Laws and systems are enforced by people, so it ultimately comes down to rule by humans."

"...Pass," Chen Xi said, turning back to Liu Ye.

"The days are short now. Why don't we go have some fun? I have some singing girls at home. Zichuan, Zijing, want to come?" Liu Ye suggested, changing the topic since he could see Chen Xi was bored.

"Crack~" The door of the government office opened, letting in a cold wind. Chen Xi shivered, and Lu Su curled up even more, glaring with fierce hostility at the person entering.

Liu Bei, who entered, saw Lu Su's strong resentment but just laughed. He closed the door behind him.

"Zijing, if you're too cold, we can move the government affairs to my sitting room. I've lit three braziers there. It's much better than this empty hall," Liu Bei offered with a smile. He didn't want his aides to suffer for the sake of a bit of administrative work.

"Thank you, Lord Xuande," Lu Su said, shivering.

Chen Xi glanced at Lu Su, knowing that with such a thick fur coat, it couldn't be that cold. It was just that Lu Su wasn't used to the northern climate. He'd be fine in a couple of years. It was more of a psychological effect than actual cold.

"Where are Fengxiao and Xiaozhi?" Liu Bei asked, noting the empty hall.

"Fengxiao said he took Xiaozhi to experience the sufferings of the common people," Chen Xi replied with a strange smile.

"You could just say they ran off. I wouldn't mind. I'm actually surprised Zichuan is still here," Liu Bei immediately understood. Experiencing the sufferings of the common people likely meant going off to drink and listen to music.

"I'm here because there's work to do. I need to calculate the timeline. Fengxiao's scheme is too grand. We might need to prepare early," Chen Xi sighed. "Combining plots and open strategies in Qingzhou, the Yellow Turbans will have no choice but to rise. Food remains a problem. The grain from the Lu family hasn't arrived yet. The Mi family is still suppressing the Zhen family and can't help. By late March, Fengxiao's bait will hook a group of fish. I'm just worried we'll be overwhelmed..."

"Crack~" The door opened again. "Oh, Zijing is still so afraid of the cold," came a voice. The newcomer didn't close the door. "Greetings, Lord Xuande!"

"Fengxiao, close the door!" Lu Su shivered even more, ignoring decorum entirely.

"It's said that to overcome your fears, you should face them more," Guo Jia muttered, pulling in Fazheng, who looked a bit dizzy.