

Nobel Ruler 441

Chapter 441: Ten Years to Mold a Sword

Chu Liuyue naturally didn't know what Rong Xiu was thinking.

His hot breath on her neck and behind her ears made her ticklish.

The gentle breeze blew over, and the leaves rustled.

Chu Liuyue instantly became alert. *It's no wonder Rong Xiu kept looking at the military distribution in the Imperial City. He was preparing for this day! Rong Jiu has stayed in the Imperial City for many months and didn't even go out of the city. Now that he suddenly decided to start a revolt, there was clearly someone instigating him in the dark. This person was Rong Xiu!*

Chu Liuyue could not help but ask, "Your Highness, since... When did you start planning all of this?"

Rong Xiu's low voice sounded beside her ear. "Um, pretty early on... When did Third Brother go to the Northwest Army?"

His tone was slow and nonchalant as if it was just a minor matter. However, Chu Liuyue was shocked as she suddenly pushed him.

She looked back, and her pair of black, gem-like eyes stared at Rong Xiu in disbelief. "You mean... He didn't voluntarily go there in the first place—"

Chu Liuyue's words suddenly cut off. A ridiculous thought surfaced in her mind.

A smile flashed across Rong Xiu's face when he saw her rarely seen shocked expression. *It's really not easy to see her have such an expression...*

Looking at his expression, Chu Liuyue widened her mouth, but nothing came out. *What else is there to say? This is a tacit acceptance! All these years, Rong Jiu's every move was all under Rong Xiu's control!*

No matter if it was when the Empress and the Crown Prince decided to bully him and force him to enlist, when he achieved so many accolades and shocked everyone, or to him being driven to the corner... All of this was clearly part of Rong Xiu's plan!

However... it is dangerous to raise a tiger!

Now, Rong Jiu had to deal with Emperor Jiawen, but it would be Rong Xiu in the end!

Chu Liuyue's heart was in turmoil as she couldn't help but ask, "You're the one who told His Majesty that the Third Prince wants to start a revolt...?"

Rong Xiu's expression changed. "You've underestimated Father. Since Third Brother did this, how can Father not know? I don't have too much of a relation to this."

Who will believe your words? Chu Liuyue silently cursed to herself. Perhaps Rong Xiu had even pushed for Rong Jiu to instigate his army.

“The Third Prince doesn’t know about this?”

Rong Xiu raised his saber-like eyebrows. “What do you think, Yue’er?”

Chu Liuyue made a ‘si’ sound and slapped her forehead. *My brain had a short-circuit. If Rong Jiu knew, how could it end up like this today?*

“The 5,000 elites from the Northwest Army are going to reach the Imperial City soon.” Rong Xiu gently touched Chu Liuyue’s soft waist and nonchalantly said, “As for when they’re going to fight... We’ll have to watch Father and Third Brother.”

According to Rong Jiu’s personality, it won’t take too long. Besides, Father will punish Rong Jiu within these few days.

Chu Liuyue put her hand down and looked at him with her eyes wide open. “Isn’t all of this according to your wishes?”

At this point in time, everything was controlled by Rong Xiu.

Rong Xiu softly laughed. “If I didn’t hear wrongly, you’re praising me?”

Chu Liuyue: “...”

Whether it's praise or not, how can it be more important than the matter itself? Country Yao Chen is about to change!

But looking at Rong Xiu, he actually didn't seem to care.

Looking at her face filled with confusion and shock, Rong Xiu smiled and finally said, "Don't worry. Lord Chu Ning will bring a group of people and leave the Imperial City to check on something. When the imperial guards and the Northwest Army fight, Lord Chu Ning will not be implicated."

Because of me, he purposely sent Father away? After hearing Rong Xiu's words that held too much pleasure, Chu Liuyue's thoughts flew everywhere, and she didn't know what to say.

She gave Rong Xiu a complicated look. *This man is very handsome and super outstanding, and he's terrifying in terms of tactics. But... toward me, he's so honest and sincere, to the point where I don't know how to face him. He has planned and executed this for so many years and laid such a big trap, yet he told me about this so easily.*

"Your Highness... Aren't you worried that I'll tell someone else about this?" asked Chu Liuyue as she knitted her brows.

Rong Xiu looked at her rather strangely as if she asked a very stupid question. "Which woman in this world would push the man she deeply loves to danger?"

Chu Liuyue was speechless. *There seems to be nothing wrong with his words, but why does it sound so weird?*

"You... I—" Chu Liuyue stuttered, and her usually sharp tongue seemed to be tangled.

After some time, she finally decided to give up and stop harping on the matter. However, she still had a question that was the weirdest and the most important. “Your Highness, why are you doing this?”

One was his father, and the other was his brother. They shared the same blood flowing through their bodies.

Rong Xiu’s actions were akin to stirring up a conflict between Emperor Jiawen and Rong Jiu.

A war was about to break out. No matter who won or lost, what did it mean to Rong Xiu?

Rong Xiu thought for a while and chuckled. “Oh, I just thought it was rather troublesome to fight, so I found someone to do it for me.”

Chu Liuyue’s eyes widened, and her mouth was agape. D-do it for him? He’s talking about fighting for the throne, right? How can someone do it for him? Besides, the most important thing is... If Rong Xiu really wants that throne, why does he need to pretend to be frail for so many years?

According to how highly Emperor Jiawen sees him and how much he dotes on him... As long as Rong Xiu showed off his true abilities or even a portion of them, Emperor Jiawen would definitely make him the Crown Prince.

Chu Liuyue actually wanted to ask about it, but for some reason, she had a strong instinct that told her not to.

Rong Xiu must have his reasons for doing so. After reacting for a while, Chu Liuyue finally found her own voice. "In this way, won't the position be the Third Prince's?"

An extremely light smile flashed across Rong Xiu's eyes, and they were filled with an indescribable suppression as he slowly said, "Yue'er, who do you think formed the connection between Third Brother and the Northwest Army and also gave him the final confidence to make his decision?"

"Naturally... It's my subordinate."

...

Emperor Jiawen gathered the officials as they discussed how to deal with Rong Jiu.

After some intense debate, they finally came to a conclusion: Third Prince Rong Jiu is unfilial and harmed the Empress when Emperor Jiawen entrusted him with taking care of her. He even tried to burn her body to get rid of the evidence. His actions are immoral and cannot be tolerated. Hence, he will be punished.

He will be executed in the afternoon!

Chapter 442: Retaliation

In the morning, the Imperial City's streets were crowded with people. No matter if it was out of curiosity, pity, or any other reasons, all of them rushed to the execution ground.

There were many imperial guards dressed in tight armor surrounding the execution ground.

Before Rong Jiu was even brought over, the surroundings were already filled with people and bustling noises.

“Pfft, didn’t this Third Prince earn many accolades a few years ago with the Northwest Army? His future was so bright! Who would’ve thought that he would suddenly become a criminal in the blink of an eye?”

“Accolades... He didn’t even leave the Imperial City in the past few months. Isn’t it obvious what the one above is thinking? I think the conviction is fake, but the execution is real!”

“But out of the remaining princes, the Third Prince is most suited to be the Crown Prince. Won’t it be too cruel to do this...?”

“What do we know about the things in the palace? Anyway, that person is still in his prime; he can afford to wait a few years. Also, the princes below will grow up, right?”

“It’s a pity that the Third Prince’s birth mother has already passed away and that he doesn’t have a good background. At this time, he doesn’t even have someone that can help him...”

The crowd was discussing eagerly, and they all held different views.

Everyone knew that everything was final at this point.

Time trickled past as the sun gradually rose in the sky.

Suddenly, the bustling crowd was silenced. The crowd dispersed toward two sides, leaving a path in the middle.

Everyone predicted something and looked over in unison.

A group of people on horses came toward here. The person right in front was the Si family head, Si Ye; he was clearly in charge of the execution today.

Compared to the past, Si Ye looked much more frail than before as his cheeks were deeply sunken, and his eyes were bloodshot. It was obvious that the recent happenings had taken a huge toll on him. After all, the Empress—Si Huijing—was his biological sister...

Just as he finished the Empress's funeral, he had to come here. He didn't even have any time to rest.

Si Ye walked forward step by step. He could clearly feel all sorts of strange gazes landing on him.

In actual fact, his body was also numb. Originally, he didn't want to come, but His Majesty had given his orders. Thus, he had to obey.

A convict carriage slowly followed behind him.

Inside the metal cage was an unkempt man wearing convict clothes with his hands locked. That person was the Third Prince, Rong Jiu!

He was forced to kneel there as he hung his head low. His messy hair covered more than half of his face, but the crowd could still see his expression at this point.

Rong Jiu looked nonchalant and cold. There was even a strong aura around his body, which came from experiencing life and death on the battlefield.

In other words, they couldn't see any hint of panic or disappointment.

Imperial guards tightly followed the convict carriage, but even with all those people added up, they didn't have an aura that was comparable to Rong Jiu alone.

Probably influenced by some feelings, the places that the convict carriage passed by became quieter than ever.

The people standing in front had even instinctively taken a step back. *For some reason, this Third Prince is pretty scary...*

At the execution ground, Si Ye raised his hand, and the convict carriage stopped.

"Bring him over."

With his command, the neighboring imperial guards immediately went forward and brought Rong Jiu out of the metal cage.

Two sharp swords were placed beside Rong Jiu's neck as they forced him to walk toward the stage in the execution ground.

From start to end, Rong Jiu's expression did not change. But when he stood still in the execution ground, he suddenly looked up and glanced at the palace. Mockery flashed across his eyes.

It looks like Father won't change his mind. He's determined to kill me today! Rong Jiu retracted his gaze, looked down, and hid the murderous intent in his eyes.

Actually, he didn't want to do this, but he had no choice. However... he had experienced so many battles and life-and-death scenarios in exchange for such an outcome...

Anyone would be devastated at this point.

"Hurry up and kneel down!" yelled someone behind Rong Jiu in frustration as he kicked Rong Jiu's knees.

However, Rong Jiu did not kneel down. His physical body was like a metal board.

Seeing that Rong Jiu did not kneel down as he wished, the man who kicked him was shocked.

Rong Jiu slowly turned around and glanced at him.

That man suddenly felt guilty and afraid for some reason. Then, he knitted his brows and hollered, "What are you looking at? Do you think you're the high and mighty Third Prince?!"

You're just a convict that's on the deathbed! How dare you be so arrogant?

"Kneel down!" That man gave the person beside him a look as both of them used strength.

The two longswords instantly cut through Rong Jiu's skin and flesh, causing red blood to ooze out slowly.

The last bit of hesitation in Rong Jiu's heart disappeared. He bent his knees slightly and looked like he was really going to kneel.

But the next moment, he suddenly jumped out and kicked at the two people closest to him.

As he acted too quickly, the duo didn't even have time to react as they flew backward from Rong Jiu's kick.

Si Ye suddenly realized something and hollered, "Catch him!"

Rong Jiu actually wants to escape!

At this point, the surrounding crowd reacted and collectively rushed forward!

A large figure suddenly appeared above Rong Jiu's head.

Si Ye looked over and was stunned. *It's actually a fourth-grade fiend—white yam falcon!*

Clang!

The white yam falcon suddenly spread its wings.

Rong Jiu turned around and jumped on it. "Let's go!"

Following the clear command, the white yam falcon abruptly flapped its wings and flew to the sky.

At this point, the crowd finally recovered their senses and realized that it was Rong Jiu's fiend.

When he was locked in the jail, he had nothing else other than his convict clothes. However, they had actually forgotten that he had his own fiend.

Rong Jiu had been very low-key in the Imperial City these few months, so they forgot that he actually had such a trump card.

Even though this white yam falcon was a fourth-grade fiend, it was very ferocious and strong. It was almost one of the top few amongst the fourth-grade fiends.

The man and fiend's figures quickly disappeared.

Si Ye immediately yelled, "Prepare the arrows!"

The numerous imperial guards immediately took out their arrows and aimed at the midair Rong Jiu.

But at this point, countless figures suddenly rushed out from the crowd and went for the imperial guards.

Choo choo!

The sounds pierced through the air, and all the arrows had been deflected, not even being able to touch the edge of the white yam falcon's wings.

Si Ye looked at the few people that rushed over with shock and anger as he suddenly widened his eyes. *They stepped up and executed killer moves! They came prepared!*

Chapter 443: Soldiers Arrived in the City

Chaos erupted amidst the crowd.

Those few people were wearing very ordinary clothes, and they didn't look any different from the nosy civilians. This was why it was even more sudden when they took action.

Si Ye looked at them and roughly estimated that there were at least hundreds of people. *They clearly came for Rong Jiu! The key point is that judging from their vicious attacks, they were clearly trained on the battlefields.*

Si Ye suddenly realized something and gasped. *Rong Jiu actually mobilized the Northwest Army to come and save him? I thought he already handed over his military power after he came back to the Imperial City and that he didn't contact the Northwest Army anymore? What's with all these people suddenly appearing?!*

In no time, the screams, sounds of weapons clashing, and the sounds of sharp knives piercing into people's skins were all mashed together.

Numerous people screamed and ran away!

Si Ye was about to chase Rong Jiu, but two people suddenly rushed in from the side and blocked his way.

The next moment, they attacked Si Ye first.

Tsing!

Si Ye was forced to battle.

The two parties exchanged a few blows, and Si Ye felt very uneasy. *All these people killed their way out of the battlefield. Even if their cultivation level is lower than mine, they are the best at killing people! Once they attack, every move is lethal with no playing around!*

In the midst of the chaos, Si Ye looked at his surroundings and realized that the situation was exactly like he had predicted. *The many imperial guards that had the upper hand at first are gradually weakening.*

He flung something out of his sleeves without hesitation.

Bang!

A signal shot to the sky.

...

At the same time, Emperor Jiawen was reading something alone in his Imperial Study. However, he only took two glances before stopping and rubbing his brows. *Thinking of the time, it should be...*

Suddenly, Eunuch Min's anxious and nervous voice could be heard from outside. "Your Majesty! Your Majesty, something happened!"

Emperor Jiawen's heart skipped a beat as he walked over and personally opened the door. With knitted brows, he asked, "What the hell is wrong?"

Eunuch Min was taken aback as he hurriedly moved a step back and knelt down. "Your Highness, T-Third prince ran away!"

Emperor Jiawen's face turned cold. "What do you mean he ran away? What are Si Ye and all those imperial guards doing?"

Eunuch Min wiped the cold sweat that kept covering his forehead as he rapidly spoke with a shaky voice. "Your Highness, some people mixed in with the crowd and fought with the imperial guards. They protected Third Prince as he left."

Emperor Jiawen's uneasy feeling became increasingly intense. "This is the Imperial City! Who is willing to help him?!"

"I-I think it's the Northwest Army—"

Bang!

Emperor Jiawen kicked Eunuch Min's heart. "Imbecile!"

Eunuch Min fell to the floor as excruciating pain rose in his chest, causing him to vomit blood out violently.

However, Emperor Jiawen had already walked outside in big strides. "Immediately supply more manpower and lock the city gates. Not only Rong Jiu but don't let anyone related to this incident today escape!"

Eunuch Min endured his pain and hurriedly went forward. "Y-yes!"

Emperor Jiawen's face turned dark. *As expected! Rong Jiu had secretly contacted the Northwest Army long ago. He even made such a preparation and directly escaped from the execution grounds! Previously, someone still said that he should be made the Crown Prince. What a joke! Rong Jiu is so ambitious; how can he be satisfied with being a prince with no power? Once he becomes the Crown Prince, I might not even be able to sit on my throne!*

Emperor Jiawen was just walking forward when someone hurriedly rushed over and directly knelt in front of Emperor Jiawen. “Your Majesty!”

Upon seeing this person, Emperor Jiawen’s face drastically changed. *If it’s not something urgent, this person will definitely not be here.*

As expected, the sentence that this person blurted out was akin to lightning striking beside him. “Wei Lin led the Northwest Army, and they’ve already arrived about 20 miles outside of the Imperial City. T-they said that... Third Prince had slogged for Country Yao Chen and had always been loyal to Your Majesty, yet you listened to some petty people’s words and wanted to execute him! This hurt the hearts of countless warriors that are stationed at the borders. Hence, t-they... came to ask Your Majesty to return Third Prince his innocence!”

Emperor Jiawen’s body shook. *Northwest Army... Wei Lin... Aren’t they all Rong Jiu’s people? How is this returning Rong Jin his innocence? They clearly want to revolt! This place is far away from the borders, and it takes at least three or four days for the news to come back and forth. However, the imperial edict to execute Rong Jiu only came yesterday. These people arrived so quickly, which means that they were long here! How dare they play the blame game?!*

Eunuch Min hurriedly helped Emperor Jiawen up, but Emperor Jiawen flung him away. The next moment, Emperor Jiawen gave the person kneeling in front of him a tight slap.

Pak!

That man was instantly beaten to one side as his cheeks rapidly swelled up. However, he still lowered his head and kowtowed. “Your Majesty, don’t be angry. It’s all my fault—”

“This is such an important thing, yet you only discovered it now! What do I need you for?!” Emperor Jiawen hit him until his hand became numb, but the fire in his chest kept boiling, and his face turned green.

“I... I... Your Majesty, those people seem to have come in batches. They only gathered together after they all arrived, so I couldn’t discover them in time...”

What kind of place was the Imperial City? How can they dare to slacken when they are in charge of the Imperial City’s gate? But those Northwest Army soldiers are too scheming, so they didn’t even notice them! When they realized something amiss, it was too late!

“How many people are there?!” asked Emperor Jiawen as he took a deep breath.

“Around... 5,000!”

Emperor Jiawen sighed. “Five thousand... Five thousand isn’t an issue... Imperial guards! Where’s Chu Ning? Get him to bring men there immediately!”

“...Your Majesty, did you forget that you just sent Lord Chu Ning out of the city yesterday...” reminded Eunuch Min carefully.

Emperor Jiawen was dazed; he then remembered that he did receive some news about the bronze vat previously in the Imperial City, so he sent Chu Ning to bring men over and investigate. Thus, he wasn’t in the Imperial City now.

“Get Zhao Ming to substitute! And you, immediately gather all the imperial guards! We must stop them outside the Imperial City’s gates!”

There were more than 10,000 people in the imperial guard, so it wouldn't pose much of a problem to handle these 5,000 people.

The man kneeling in front of Emperor Jiawen seemed to guess his thoughts as the man braced himself and said, "Your Majesty, the imperial guards are separated all over the Imperial City. It's already hard to gather them together immediately. The most important thing is: the people who came all seem to be elites from the Northwest Army. T-this..."

It's not that I'm afraid, but I know too well how sticky this situation is! How can the people who survived wars be compared to the imperial guards that led a comfortable life in the Imperial City? If there isn't any other way, the city gate will be broken in no time!

Chapter 444: Leaving

The early winter winds in Imperial City were strong and cutting.

Outside the city, the soldiers of both sides were at an impasse.

As time passed, the 5,000 elite soldiers stood under the evening sun, a heavy, lethal tension in the air.

If one stared any longer, one could practically smell the mixture of sand and blood in the air.

The imperial guards on the city walls were fully armored, and a tall man in black armor was standing right in the middle. He was the second in command of the imperial guards—Zhao Ming!

Since Chu Ning was not around, he was now in charge of the imperial guards.

He stared straight ahead as he called out, "Where is Lieutenant Wei Lin of the Northwest Army?!"

His low, powerful voice spread instantly!

A man in red armor stepped forward. "I'm here!"

This was an extremely muscular man. He looked about 30 years old, and he had a beard on him. He looked extremely intimidating.

Zhao Ming took a deep breath, his eyes cold. *Wei Lin is famous in the Northwest Army. He's temperamental, but he is strong! Furthermore, he is a stage-five warrior born on the battlefield. Just him alone can take on a hundred people, not to mention the thousands of intimidating soldiers behind him! Rong Jiu came completely prepared this time!*

"According to Country Yao Chen's laws, a lieutenant cannot leave their army without written orders from His Majesty! They're not to bring soldiers into the Imperial City! Wei Lin, are you rebelling?"

Wei Lin laughed out loud. "Zhao Ming, it's one thing that you're weak, but I didn't know that your brain wasn't working either! I've already said it: This is not a rebellion! It's just that His Majesty's treatment of the Third Prince is not reasonable! He has broken the heart of the Northwest Army! We're just here to get some justice for the Third Prince!"

Zhao Ming was about to refute when he saw a commotion occur in the crowd across from him.

The sea of soldiers suddenly split cleanly down the middle!

A man walked out from the back! Dressed in armor, his face was somber, and he looked authoritative!

It was Rong Jiu!

Zhao Ming's heart sank. *Rong Jiu managed to escape in the end!*

After the riot on the execution grounds, the imperial guards had searched the entire Imperial City for Rong Jiu's whereabouts, but they never found anything.

Rong Jiu had taken advantage of the chaos and left the Imperial City!

The shackles and his prison uniform were long gone and replaced by his armor, complete with an air of violence!

"Welcome back, Your Highness!" Wei Lin greeted him with cupped fists, and the soldiers behind him followed suit.

"Welcome back, Your Highness!" The shouts were deafening!

Rong Jiu raised his hand, and the crowd immediately quietened down.

Zhao Ming and the imperial guards were stunned by the scene before them.

The fact that Rong Jiu was able to control the army with the raise of his hand was clear evidence of his authority amongst the soldiers!

No wonder he had the guts to do this!

Rong Jiu looked at Zhao Ming expressionlessly. “Zhao Ming, I don’t want to hurt the innocent, so I’ll give you one chance. Open the city doors, or else... Don’t blame me for taking drastic measures!”

But how could Zhao Ming do that?! “Your Highness, such treasonous acts will be frowned upon for generations! I advise you to turn back now! Come ask for forgiveness with me!”

Rong Jiu laughed coldly. “Since I’ve already been accused of being treasonous, why don’t I just make that true!”

A sense of uneasiness welled up in Zhao Ming.

“I joined the army when I was 14, and I’ve killed countless enemies. I have 23 scars on me, all fatal! I’ve put in blood, sweat, and tears for Country Yao Chen, and all I’ve gotten in exchange is prison and crimes pinned to my name!”

How could I be satisfied with that?! Ask for forgiveness? The person sitting on the throne no longer has the right to give orders from there!

Zhao Ming said somberly, “Your Highness! You...”

Before he could finish, Rong Jiu raised his hand up high!

He then waved! “The first person to break through the city gates today will move up three ranks and receive 1,000 taels of gold!”

His low and powerful voice echoed!

The Northwest Army behind him was excited and cried out in excitement! “Kill! Kill! Kill!”

Wei Lin looked up and laughed. “Hahahaha! Didn’t you fools hear His Highness? I’m not giving you all the chance! I’ll take the city gates!”

With that, Wei Lin rushed forward!

Thousands followed suit!

Seeing that Wei Lin headed straight for the city gates, the people behind him followed right after!

Rong Jiu suddenly pulled out the knife he carried on him, and the knife reverberated in the air!

The winds were blowing!

The next instant, he stood on his toes and rushed forward himself!

He was giving back all the insults and torture that he had received during his time in the Imperial City!

Zhao Ming immediately spoke up. "Release the arrows!"

The imperial guards hidden behind the walls drew their bows!

Chu! Chu! Chu!

Countless black arrows flew across the sky!

Rong Jiu was agile and fast as he avoided the arrows without a single scratch!

He had been on the battlefield since young, and he had been on the brink of death countless times. This was nothing to him!

Before Zhao Ming and the others could see how Rong Jiu was moving, he had arrived at the city gates!

He leaped up, intending to go head to head with Zhao Ming!

Zhao Ming cried out, "Activate the city gates' defensive Xuan formation!"

He refused to believe that Rong Jiu could make his way inside!

But after waiting, there was no response from the city gates.

“Assistant commander, bad news! The Xuan formation is damaged and cannot be activated!” said a soldier panickedly as he ran up.

Zhao Ming was stunned and grabbed the soldier by the collar and picked him up. “What did you say?”

The Xuan formation is a major formation. Inspections and restorations have always been done on it, so how could it suddenly be damaged? Zhao Ming froze. It was Rong Jiu; they had come prepared!

Both sides broke out into battle!

...

While the city gates were caught in a battle, it was chaos within the city gates as well.

Even though part of the imperial guards was in charge of security, the people were worried.

The streets were a mess, and everyone was hidden in their homes.

After Rong Jin was deposed, everyone thought Rong Jiu would naturally become the new Crown Prince. Little did they expect him to start a rebellion instead!

But anyone who knew anything could tell that Rong Jiu had come prepared. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to summon the Northwest Army on such short notice.

In an instant, the people couldn't tell if Emperor Jiawen had wronged Rong Jiu first, or if Rong Jiu had planned the rebellion first.

But Chu Liuyue didn't have time to pay attention to these things because Mu Qinghe had arrived at her residence!

Inside the room, Chu Liuyue widened her eyes. "What? Leave now?"

Chapter 445: Search

"Problem?" Mu Qinghe asked coldly with a frown. *The other side has been pressing me to return, and I can't drag it on any longer. Also, the injuries that I sustained in the imperial mausoleum are recovering. Now is the best time to return.*

"Not really, but..." Chu Liuyue pondered for a moment. "But the situation in Imperial City is a little unique now... Won't it seem a little strange if we leave now?"

Rong Jiu and the Northwest Army are battling the imperial guards! It would be hard to explain if we left at this moment! Besides... I already know that all of this is part of Rong Xiu's plan. How can I leave without seeing the outcome?

Mu Qinghe replied calmly, "What does their conflict have to do with us leaving? It's just child's play."

Country Yao Chen isn't even as big as a state under my control.

Chu Liuyue suddenly felt her head throb. *Child's play... The life and death of thousands of people and the political control of a country are child's play in Mu Qinghe's eyes... However, that seems fairly reasonable for someone his status? Mu Qinghe has been through tougher and more precarious situations.*

"No... Lieutenant Mu, I think you've misunderstood my intention." Chu Liuyue said calculatedly, "I'm the fiancée of Prince Li, and I'm considered half a member of the royal family. How can I leave after something like this has happened?"

At the very least, I should wait until everything is settled!

Mu Qinghe's eyes grew colder. "We have limited time. Leave with me or stay behind; your choice."

Chu Liuyue was stuck. *I'm definitely going to the Tianling Dynasty! This is a one-in-a-million chance! Not only does returning with Mu Qinghe give me a legitimate reason for being there, but it also provides me with a good cover! I will also have high chances of coming into contact with Jiang Yucheng and the others!*

Without that tie to Mu Qinghe, my situation might not be better even if I broke through the seventh stage and entered Heaven's Canopy to return to the Tianling Dynasty. But if I leave now... What about Rong Xiu? What about my father?

I'm not worried about their ability to protect themselves, but I haven't tied all the loose ends. If I leave with Mu Qinghe just like this, a lot of troubles will be left behind. Who knows when I will be able to return after I leave? Or... perhaps I will never come back!

Chu Liuyue pursed her lips, not speaking for a while.

"Mu Qinghe, how are you so cold-hearted after so many years?" A teasing voice cut in.

Chu Liuyue looked up.

Jian Fengchi had walked in at some point.

He smiled as he walked over. "Prince Li and Ms. Chu have just gotten engaged. They haven't even had their wedding yet! Aren't you breaking the couple up if you ask her to leave with you now? It's thousands of miles away; it'll be really difficult for them to meet in the future!"

Mu Qinghe turned and looked at him expressionlessly.

Jian Fengchi shrugged. Not only did he not stop, but he even walked over to Mu Qinghe's side and rested his arm on the latter's shoulder as he smiled. "The final deadline has passed anyway. The others who should've returned have gone back already! Even if you leave now, you're still going to be late. What's another day or two? I think you should just do her a favor. Hey, we're just talking! Why are you using force!"

Jian Fengchi broke away from Mu Qinghe's grip and rubbed his wrists as he backed away. "Fine fine fine! It's all your problem anyway! Nobody else can do anything about it, can they? I'll stop talking."

Chu Liuyue: "..."

Jian Fengchi is a whole head taller than Mu Qinghe, and he looks stronger, but... Why is he so afraid... As a bystander, this is a little strange...

But her thoughts quickly shifted toward certain keywords. *Final deadline? Did Mu Qinghe's trip out here have a time limit? Also... Why are there others? It sounds like a lot of people left at the same time for a mission... Is it all for cultivators who have a Dijing Yuan meridian?*

Chu Liuyue felt that something was off, but given Mu Qinghe's reaction, he would never give her any information.

Mu Qinghe's gaze was cold. "I must return today."

Jian Fengchi's eyes changed, but his back was facing Chu Liuyue, so she didn't see the shift in his emotions.

However, Jian Fengchi quickly calmed himself down and hugged his arms as he rubbed his chin and asked testingly, "Why don't you... go back first? I'll send her back when things have settled down here."

Mu Qinghe immediately responded. "No!"

"Why not? Isn't this a good suggestion?" Jian Fengchi paused and looked at Mu Qinghe with a knowing look. "You have matters to attend to, and staying here is purely a waste of time. I have time! What's wrong with helping you watch over things for a few days? With me around, she'll never be late."

Chu Liuyue paused again. *Late? Is Mu Qinghe rushing back with me to attend to something?*

“Since Ms. Chu doesn’t want to leave yet, isn’t it a little heartless of you to take her with you forcefully?” Jian Fengchi returned to his usual relaxed tone. He was clearly serious about this suggestion.

Mu Qinghe pondered for a moment.

After hesitating for a while, he finally spoke. “Three days maximum.”

“No problem!” Jian Fengchi agreed straight away before he recalled something. Then, he turned and glanced at Chu Liuyue. “Three days should be enough, right?”

Chu Liuyue nodded. “Thank you, Lieutenant Mu, Young Master Jian.”

She had a feeling that the battle would have a winner within three days. She also had to make use of these three days to make arrangements for everything.

Mu Qinghe looked at Chu Liuyue before he waved his wrist, and something flew out from his sleeve.

Chu Liuyue immediately caught it and looked at it.

“This is my token. With this, someone will bring you to me then.” With that, Mu Qinghe focused himself.

A longsword flew out and floated before him!

Mu Qinghe leaped up and onto the sword! His speed was extremely fast, and he disappeared from sight in the blink of an eye!

Chu Liuyue frowned. “Young Master Jian, Lieutenant Mu... has left?”

Jian Fengchi retracted his gaze as emotions disappeared from his eyes, to be replaced by his usual nonchalant smile. “He has things to attend to, don’t worry. As for you, just let me know after you have everything prepared.”

Chu Liuyue curved her lips slightly. “Thank you, Young Master Jian.”

Jian Fengchi’s smile deepened. “Oh right, I heard that Emperor Jiawen was looking for some... bronze cauldron?”

Chapter 446: Still in Imperial City

Chu Liuyue’s brows twitched. *It seems like Jian Fengchi kept himself busy while he was in the Imperial City. He even knows about something like this. However, he is strong. If he truly wants to look into something, nobody can stop him.*

Chu Liuyue calculated her options in her head before she nodded truthfully. “You’ve got your ear on the ground, Young Master Jian.”

Jian Fengchi raised his eyebrows before he smiled cryptically. “It’s a coincidence, but I found out about this by accident. It was... On the day it was taken.”

Chu Liuyue froze! “Young Master Jian knows who stole the bronze cauldron?”

Light rippled in Jian Fengchi’s eyes. “Earlier, I said that I saw it coincidentally... Of course, that person’s face was covered, so I didn’t get a clear look.”

That means that he did see it and that... it really was one person! To be able to kill all the guards at Heptagon Alley without giving them the chance or time to call for help... This person has to be a top-tier warrior! There were a number of stage-four warriors among the guards! A regular stage-five warrior would never be able to do that! Chu Liuyue looked around her warily as she asked in hushed tones, “Can you tell me what that person looked like, Young Master Jian?”

“I can only confirm that it’s a man and that he’s a stage-six warrior. As for the rest... I’m not sure.”

“Did you see where that person headed with the bronze cauldron?”

“That...” Jian Fengchi paused, then shrugged. “I only took another look because I was surprised to find a stage-six warrior here. Who cares about that bronze cauldron?”

He didn’t know that thing was that important then. By the time he realized something was amiss, the other party had disappeared.

Chu Liuyue sighed when she confirmed that he was telling the truth. “No matter what, thank you.”

This matter had nothing to do with Jian Fengchi, so it was normal for him not to pay attention.

“But if you really want to find that person... It’s not like I can’t help.”

Chu Liuyue was dazed. “Didn’t you say that you didn’t get a good look...”

Jian Fengchi gave her a wry smile. “It seems like Ms. Chu has forgotten what I do?”

Heavenly doctor... Heavenly doctor!

“You left something on that person?”

Jian Fengchi flicked her on the forehead. “Smart!”

Chu Liuyue was speechless. *If it were before, Jian Fengchi would never dare to behave so insolently before me, but now is not the time for all this.*

“So, do you want my help? You have three days anyway, and I don’t have anything to do.”

Looking at Jian Fengchi’s expression, Chu Liuyue narrowed her eyes. *He still likes to stir up trouble! This isn’t for me; it’s clearly because he wants a piece of the action and to watch others make a fool of themselves!*

Chu Liuyue pulled her lips into a sincere smile. “Of course! Thank you, Young Master Jian! When all this is over, I’ll offer you my proper thanks!”

Jian Fengchi shuddered.

This Chu Liuyue looks just like that person when she smiles! I'm always in deep trouble whenever I see that smile. She's dead now, but I'm still scared whenever I see a similar expression.

Tsk! I'm really traumatized!

"Fine fine fine! I'll help you!" Jian Fengchi turned his face aside as he backed away and sized up Chu Liuyue. In terms of features and size, they aren't that similar. But for some reason, I always think of that person when I'm facing Chu Liuyue. I refuse to believe that Mu Qinghe didn't have this illusion too!

"If you really go..." Jian Fengchi muttered.

"Go where?" Chu Liuyue asked gently as if she didn't understand his expression.

Jian Fengchi pointed in the direction that Mu Qinghe left. "Remember when I told you that you resembled an old friend?"

Chu Liuyue nodded.

"They would be shocked to see you." Jian Fengchi smiled. I'm not the only person with the same trauma, so there's nothing to be ashamed of! But Jiang Yucheng and company... I wonder what their reactions will be when they see Chu Liuyue! It would be exhilarating!

Jian Fengchi felt much better when he imagined that scene in his head.

“It’s fine! Enough of that! Since you’re so anxious, I’ll help you find it!” With that, he pulled out a small bell.

The bell was the size of a thumb and was carved out of malachite.

Through the gaps of the carving, Chu Liuyue could see that something was gently hitting the bell and clanging.

Jian Fengchi concentrated on the sound, and an excited expression appeared on his face as he looked toward Chu Liuyue. “That person is still in the Imperial City.”

...

In the palace, the atmosphere was a lot more tense.

Situ Xingchen was once again locked up in a dark and damp dungeon.

Blessing Palace had been burned down, so she was locked up in another place. However, Emperor Jiawen had added more manpower.

There were guards keeping watch of Situ Xingchen within a ten-step radius all day.

Situ Xingchen had lost an arm and a leg, so she could only lie on the floor pathetically, sleeping and waking.

Every time she opened her eyes, she hoped that she would be in a different place. However, it never happened.

Her heart was filled with despair. *Even Elder Zong Ye hadn't managed to rescue me, not to mention others. I haven't heard from Father either.*

"I didn't expect the Third Prince to really start an armed rebellion! I wonder if the conflict will reach the palace..." A worried voice echoed.

Situ Xingchen paused. She realized that the guards watching her were discussing something in hushed voices.

"Yeah! No wonder His Majesty was so wary of him and even sentenced him to death by execution... His Majesty had seen this coming?"

"So what? Didn't he escape from the Northwest Army? I heard that they were fighting outside the city gates! The Northwest Army is battle-tested and not scared to die! They also came prepared! I think they have a good chance of winning!"

"Not necessarily! Besides the imperial guards, there are also the strong warriors from the big families! How can they be beaten so easily?"

“I heard that some people have escaped.. It’s a pity that we have to stand guard here, or we could also find a chance—Ugh!” Before the person could finish, he made a short, sharp cry!

“You are...” Before the remaining person could finish his sentence, they were dead.

Situ Xingchen looked up immediately!

Chapter 447: Break!

A man in a black robe appeared before her.

The person was wearing a red and black ghost mask that covered nearly his entire face. All that could be seen was a pair of cold, brown eyes.

As he stood there, he was shrouded in an extremely overbearing aura.

The few people still talking earlier were now all on the ground, dead.

The strong smell of blood spread across the air.

Situ Xingchen held her breath as her hair stood on end. *This man is extremely dangerous!*

“Wh-who are you?!” She instinctively reached toward her wrist, but there was nothing there. It was only then that she recalled that Ye Zhiting had destroyed her bracelet.

Now there was absolutely nothing useful on her that could be used to attack or defend!

The man suddenly laughed; his voice was hoarse. “You don’t have to know who I am. You just need to know that I’m here to help you.”

“Help me?” Situ Xingchen frowned. “Who exactly are you? Why are you helping me?”

She was not trusting by nature, and her experiences in the last few days were driving her crazy. Therefore, she wasn’t at all happy when she heard the man’s words. Instead, she felt unsettled.

The man didn’t say anything. He waved his hand, and there was a green light!

A bronze cauldron appeared before Situ Xingchen’s eyes—there was even dried blood on the edges of it!

Situ Xingchen stared at it as her eyes widened. *This is the bronze cauldron from Heptagon Alley! Didn’t they lose it? Why is it with the strange man?! And... he actually brought it here!*

“Wh-what exactly do you want to do?” Situ Xingchen finally found her voice.

The man finally spoke after a brief silence. “Don’t you know what to do?”

Situ Xingchen clenched her fists in her sleeves! "You..."

"Don't say you don't know. I know exactly what you're trying to do. This was prepared for Rong Jin, but even today, that fool doesn't know what this is. So, this is yours now."

"You... You're really giving this to me? Now?"

"It seems like you're not very willing." As the man spoke, he moved as if intending to take the bronze cauldron back.

Situ Xingchen immediately cried out. "Hold on!"

She bore with the pain as she limped over and stared at the bronze cauldron. "What are your conditions?"

She refused to believe that this man was helping her without expecting anything in return.

"You'll know when the time comes." The man answered impatiently as if he couldn't be bothered with her.

Situ Xingchen dared not pry any further. She slowly reached for the bronze cauldron, but just as she was about to touch it, she paused and looked at her hand with hatred.

It was dry and purple and looked terrifying.

Other superficial wounds and internal injuries could be cured, but toxins that had entered the body weren't as easy to deal with. As time passed, they would accumulate.

What will I do if I can't recover after I get out?

"I... I have a request." Situ Xingchen decided to take her chances. "I'm badly injured, and I've been poisoned... Can you help me?"

The man's gaze landed on her hands.

Situ Xingchen looked at him nervously.

However, the man replied to her coldly, "No."

With that, he turned and left.

Situ Xingchen opened her mouth. But before she could speak, the man had disappeared.

She gritted her teeth. That person is extremely strong, and he isn't a simpleton. How could it be possible that he can't help me? He just simply didn't feel like helping me!

She repressed her disdain and looked toward the bronze cauldron.

Her surroundings were dark, and the longer she stared at the bloodstains, the more she felt an eeriness from it.

She took a deep breath and placed both hands on the bronze cauldron!

The instant she touched it, the remaining traces of blood on her hand were absorbed by the bronze cauldron!

An eerie, blood-red light burst out from it and enveloped Situ Xingchen!

...

Chu Liuyue followed behind Jian Fengchi the entire time. When she realized that he was heading straight for the palace, she frowned and stopped.

Jian Fengchi looked at her confusedly. "What's the matter?"

Chu Liuyue looked at the bell in his hands. *This is Jian Fengchi's treasure, and it has never been wrong.*

"Young Master Jian, the palace is over there. Would the person remain in the palace after stealing it?"

Jian Fengchi narrowed his eyes. "You don't trust me?"

“That’s not it.” Chu Liuyue paused.

“Just follow me then! Don’t worry. Since I’ve agreed to help you, I’ll see it to the end!”

Chu Liuyue was reassured by Jian Fengchi’s words and continued following after him.

But as the two of them arrived outside the palace walls and were trying to figure out a way to get in, Jian Fengchi suddenly raised his eyebrows. He then placed the bell next to his ears and listened carefully.

His expression changed. “He doesn’t seem to be here anymore.”

“What?” Chu Liuyue surveyed the surroundings.

At this time and position, nobody had passed by.

“Wasn’t he just there? How did he...”

“Over there!” Jian Fengchi quickly changed directions!

Chu Liuyue followed after him without hesitation! But after taking a few steps, she couldn’t help but look back.

Jian Fengchi only realized that Chu Liuyue was standing still after walking a distance.

“You don’t want to find that person anymore?” Jian Fengchi teased.

Chu Liuyue shook her head; then, she said slowly, “That person came to the palace before he left... Why?”

Jian Fengchi paused. He seemed to have understood something. “You’re saying that he purposely took a trip to the palace?”

Chu Liuyue looked up and stared at the tall palace walls as if she wanted to pass right through it and see everything.

“I’m entering the palace!” After a moment, she decided on this. *I have a strong feeling that this man had an objective for this trip! In the palace, the only people connected to the bronze cauldron are Emperor Jiawen and Situ Xingchen!*

Just as Chu Liuyue was about to find a way in, Jian Fengchi stopped her. “You’re going in like this in broad daylight?!”

Chu Liuyue frowned and was about to say something when she saw a firework in the distant sky!

The next instant, it burst open!

Peng!

A fluttering military flag!

Chu Liuyue's heart sank. *The city gates have been broken through!*

Chapter 448: Traitors

This speed was even faster than what Chu Liuyue had expected.

Without long, Rong Jiu would lead his people and rush to the palace.

An idea popped up in Chu Liuyue's head as she looked at Jian Fengchi and asked, "Where did that person go?"

Jian Fengchi pointed in a direction.

Suddenly, the bell in his hands made a cracking sound.

Jian Fengchi reflectively threw the bell out, and that item quickly broke into a million pieces in midair before landing on the ground.

It actually broke on its own!

Jian Fengchi slowly curled his fingers as he could still feel a faint numbing feeling on his fingertips. However, his mind was completely blank at this moment. "T-This... It's..."

Chu Liuyue looked at him in understanding. "Young Master Jian, it seems like your tracking skills are so-so?"

He was clearly long discovered by the other party!

Jian Fengchi's usual smile had long disappeared, and he looked especially cold and solemn. He was clearly taken aback.

Chu Liuyue rarely saw such an expression on Jian Fengchi's face. If this was a leisurely time, she would definitely admire it in detail, but she didn't have such a mood now.

It seemed like the other party was targeting Jian Fengchi, but she knew that that person's real goal was to attract her over.

Every single one of his previous movements was all done on purpose.

Jian Fengchi harshly shut his eyes. *This is a humongous insult toward me! I've lived for so many years, but I've never been cheated like this!*

"He does run fast. If I know who he is, I definitely won't let him off!"

Chu Liuyue was also very curious about that person's identity, but the other party was better in terms of skills, so she couldn't do anything about it.

Since the other party has spent so much effort to attract me over... Won't it be a pity if I don't go in and take a look? Thinking of this, she turned around and left.

Jian Fengchi was shocked. "Hey? Hey, you're going back?! Didn't you want to go in just now?"

Chu Liuyue nodded. "I do want to go in."

"Then—"

"It'll be easy to attract trouble if I go in now, so I'll wait for the chance." Then, Chu Liuyue's figure disappeared in front of him.

Jian Fengchi felt that she made sense as he looked at the blue bell shards on the floor with heartache and hatred before following Chu Liuyue.

...

At the same time, everyone in the Imperial City had seen the military flag in the sky and noticed that the city gates had been broken through.

In the palace, Emperor Jiawen and the few family heads of aristocratic families—including a few people who held high positions in court—were all gathered in Cheng Long Hall.

Originally, they were discussing how to handle the Northwest Army's attack, but the loud noise outside finally disturbed the hall's peace.

Everyone seemed to predict something as their expressions froze.

As expected, someone came to report. "Your Highness, the city gates have been broken through! The Third Prince has already brought countless traitors and entered the Imperial City."

The Imperial City was surrounded by mountains, and it was hard to attack but easy to defend since only the city gates could be broken through.

But now, Rong Jiu actually spent such a short amount of time to bring the others in.

Firstly, he broke through the city gates. Next, he was going to break through the palace gates real soon.

Everyone in the palace looked at Emperor Jiawen, and the surroundings fell silent.

Emperor Jiawen was enraged. "Useless! The number of imperial guards is nearly twice that of the traitors. How can things end up this way?!"

The person who came to report could only say in a shaky voice, "Your Majesty, they seem to be very familiar with the military deployment in the Imperial City, so Officer Zhao and the rest could not—"

The crowd exchanged looks among themselves. *The military deployment in the Imperial City is highly confidential, and very few people know about it. How did Rong Jiu get that information?!*

Chapter 449: Bronze Cauldron

“A-and... A few aristocratic families in the Imperial City... seem to have... given in to the Third Prince...” continued the person while stammering.

It was as if lightning struck Emperor Jiawen, and his entire person was rooted to the ground. “What do you mean?”

The man braved himself and surveyed the surroundings before quickly looking down. “Um... Those few family heads... have... They seem to have discussed it with the Third Prince, so the traitors didn’t encounter much obstruction after they entered the Imperial City.”

Actually, Emperor Jiawen already understood what it meant when he heard the words for the first time. However, he felt that it was too ridiculous, so he subconsciously didn’t believe it.

There was dead silence in the palace.

Emperor Jiawen’s eyes turned black. “How can that be?! All those aristocratic families have supported me all the way! They definitely won’t—”

When he talked halfway, he suddenly thought of something and turned toward the crowd standing in the palace. “You! There’s also someone amongst you who betrayed me?!”

One had to know that the majority of the aristocratic families' heads were standing here.

If Rong Jiu brought the troops over and had no obstructions along the way, it meant that someone was helping him earlier on.

Terrifying dead silence replied him.

"Is it you? Or you?! Or all of you?" Emperor Jiawen never expected that such an enormous change would happen. It's no wonder why Rong Jiu is so arrogant. It turns out that he had long prepared in advance. I didn't know about all of these people secretly betraying me.

"Who exactly is it?" Emperor Jiawen suddenly felt chills being sent down his spine.

"Your Majesty, calm down! With my life, I can assure you that the Si family did not betray you! boomed Si Ye when he stepped forward.

When Rong Jiu previously left the execution grounds, Si Ye couldn't find him after a long time. Thus, he could only return to the palace and ask for forgiveness after he heard that Rong Jiu had successfully arrived outside the city gates.

It actually became like this in no time!

"Your Majesty, it is the same for the Chu family." Chu Xiao hurriedly spoke up and expressed his loyalty.

Ever since he was harshly scolded in the Imperial Study, Chu Xiao had never come again. Now that he had the rare chance, he definitely had to please the Emperor.

Then, a few people gradually spoke up.

But the Gu family and the Lu family of the four aristocratic family clans did not make a sound.

Emperor Jiawen was so angry that his entire body shook. “The remaining ones who haven’t spoken... Have all of you given in to that traitor?!”

Suddenly, a familiar voice sounded outside the palace. “Father, can’t you clearly see what’s going on? Why must you get to the bottom of this? You’ll only humiliate yourself further.”

Emperor Jiawen suddenly looked up and saw a team of soldiers nearing the hall before they split into two sides.

A solemn figure walked out from the middle—it was Rong Jiu!

Not long ago, he was still wearing his convict clothes and looked despaired as he waited for the knife to land on him. But at this moment, he was wearing armor, and his general aura was ferocious.

Finally, he stood still outside the hall and looked at Emperor Jiawen calmly. “Father, how have you been?”

Emperor Jiawen finally felt fear in his heart.

“Someone! Protect the Emperor!” Chu Xiao immediately rushed forward with the rest.

Before they could stand still, they heard Rong Jiu lightly say, “I won’t implicate the innocent. If you give in now, I assure you that I won’t touch your family.”

Chu Xiao immediately hollered, “You guys are revolting! It’s a capital crime! His Majesty is the only worthy one! Rong Jiu, you’re just digging your own grave by doing this.”

“Oh... Is that so...?” Rong Jiu raised his longsword and gradually wiped off some bloodstains on it. “First Elder Chu, you probably don’t know that the entire Imperial City is already under my control, right?”

Chu Xiao’s heart skipped a beat. He felt uneasy for some reason as he looked at Rong Jiu. *C-could it be that Rong Jiu will win this time?*

At the side, Si Ye sneered, “Rong Jiu, you killed the Empress, and you’re planning a revolt now! You’re a traitor!”

As he spoke, he circulated his force and planned to attack.

Rong Jiu chuckled. “I do hate the Empress, but someone else killed her.”

“You’re lying!” Si Ye was dazed. His Majesty had said it himself, and I have also investigated it privately. That day, all those people in charge of the Empress’s palace pointed out Rong Jiu as the one who killed the Empress. How can it be someone else?!

“I’ve already brought soldiers and barged into this place. What else is there to lie about?” Rong Jiu glanced at Emperor Jiawen mockingly. “If you want to find out the truth, you should ask Father!”

Si Ye was dazed. Rong Jiu’s words make sense. Since he has already revolted, why wouldn’t he admit to killing the Empress? Unless—he really didn’t do it!

Si Ye’s neck tensed up as he turned around to look at Emperor Jiawen.

“Elder Ye! Where’s Elder Ye?” Emperor Jiawen asked harshly. *Such a major thing has happened in the palace, yet Elder Ye still did not appear?*

At this point, Emperor Jiawen didn’t know that Elder Ye—who was in charge of guarding Elder Zong Ye—had also met with some trouble.

Seeing that Elder Ye couldn’t save him, Emperor Jiawen thought of something else. “Xuan formation?!”

The Deep Xuan formation is the defensive formation of Country Yao Chen’s palace, but I now remember that the formation wasn’t activated when Rong Jiu and the rest barged in.

Rong Jiu said, “Oh, yes. Father, I forgot to tell you that the Deep Xuan formation is also under my control. If you want to look at it, I’ll personally bring you over. What do you think?”

Emperor Jiawen felt as though he had dropped into a hole filled with ice, and he was so angry that he vomited blood.

Chu Xiao—who was standing by the side—was stained with some blood. He was about to help him out when he remembered what Rong Jiu said earlier. Then, he suddenly felt scared and moved backward.

What did the others not understand at this point? Of course, they gradually avoided them!

Emperor Jiawen shook his hand and pointed at Rong Jiu. “Y-you...”

Rong Jiu raised his chin, and his expression was as cold as ice. “It seems like you’re not feeling too well, Father. You should rest properly.”

Then, he raised his hands. “Someone, send Father to rest in Qinghe Hall.”

Emperor Jiawen immediately said, “How dare you!”

Rong Jiu clearly wants to ground me! He clenched his teeth. “Rong Jiu, don’t think I can’t do anything to you! I—”

Before he could finish his sentence, he heard a gigantic commotion from outside.

A sinister aura rapidly spread out.

Emperor Jiawen suddenly raised his head. *That direction... That direction is where Situ Xingchen is locked in! The most important thing is this aura... Someone touched the bronze cauldron!*

Without thinking, he immediately rushed out.

But before he could take two steps, someone stopped him.

Emperor Jiawen's face turned as red as a beetroot. "Let me go over! Rong Jiu, do you know what that is? Immediately let me go over. If not, you'll regret it!"

The moment he finished his sentence—

Hong!

A greenish-red light pillar shot toward the sky.

Chapter 450: A Step Too Late

The clouds tumbled, and heaven and earth turned pitch black.

That light pillar directly shot into the sky and entered the clouds. From afar, it seemed like heaven and earth were connected.

Above it, the green and red lights intermingled, outlining a strange pattern that made one fearful.

Rong Jiu turned around and focused on it. "Wei Lin! Immediately send someone to check and see what's going on!"

"Yes!"

Everyone in the hall looked over and had strange expressions.

Taking advantage of this temporary opening, Emperor Jiawen suddenly rushed toward the back. *I must hurry up!*

But Rong Jiu quickly noticed this movement as he turned around and glanced at him coldly. "Why are you still standing around?"

The surrounding people immediately reacted, rushed up in unison, and stopped Emperor Jiawen.

This time, Emperor Jiawen's hands were directly tied up, and he couldn't move them at all.

"Rong Jiu! Rong Jiu? Emperor Jiawen looked despaired, and his face flushed red.

Rong Jiu waved his hands. "Quickly, bring Father in to rest."

A few soldiers immediately walked over from the side and brought Emperor Jiawen away.

Eunuch Min and the rest of his associates were also brought away.

At the start, Emperor Jiawen was still scolding Rong Jiu. But when his figure disappeared behind the side door, his voice suddenly disappeared, leaving behind faint struggling sounds as if his mouth was stuffed.

The crowd exchanged looks among themselves. At this point, it was clear who would win or lose.

The previously high and mighty Emperor Jiawen was locked up in the blink of an eye.

Even though Rong Jiu didn't directly kill Emperor Jiawen, he wouldn't have good days from now on.

The entire hall was so quiet that it was suffocating.

Rong Jiu's gaze swept across the crowd, and it landed on Si Ye.

Si Ye's entire body tensed up. Even though the Si family was the head of the four biggest family clans, it was clearly an unwise decision to go against Rong Jiu now.

"Si Family Head, sorry to trouble you to accompany my father during this time."

Rong Jiu is planning to ground me too?! Si Ye's heart sank. "Third Prince—"

Before Si Ye could finish his sentence, Rong Jiu's nonchalant gaze interrupted him. Then, he slowly said, "Don't worry. As long as you take care of Father, I'll naturally take care of the Si family."

This was a pure threat!

Crazy anger rose up in Si Ye's chest, but he finally suppressed it and gritted out every word. "Since this is so, sorry for troubling you, Third Prince!"

Then, he turned around and walked in the direction that Emperor Jiawen had left.

The few soldiers hurriedly followed him.

The crowd exchanged glances privately. *It seems like Rong Jiu still hates the Empress, and since Si Ye was the one who dragged him to the execution grounds... The Si family's situation will naturally not be any better.*

Seeing that Emperor Jiawen and Si Ye were already dealt with, Chu Xiao was very regretful. *If I knew this was going to happen, I wouldn't have stepped up first just now! Great, Rong Jiu will definitely remember this now!*

As expected, Rong Jiu's gaze landed on him. "First Elder Chu."

Chu Xiao shuddered as he looked at Rong Jiu gingerly. "T-third Prince—"

“You’re very loyal to Father. Why? Aren’t you going too?”

Chu Xiao’s legs went weak, and he immediately said, “Your Highness, you’ve misunderstood! A-actually, just now—”

Rong Jiu’s gaze was filled with unconcealable mockery.

Chu Xiao’s heart skipped a beat, and it seemed like something was stuck in his throat.

His face flushed white and red, and he wanted to defend himself. But under such a mocking gaze, everything would seem like a joke.

“First Elder Chu, please.” The soldier at the side already spoke up.

Noticing their terrifying murderous aura, Chu Xiao tightened his fist and let go again before leaving with them.

Then, the other people who were on Emperor Jiawen’s side earlier were also brought away.

After a temporary silence, someone braved himself and said, “Congratul—”

Hong long!

Before he could finish his flattering words, a loud sound was heard from above.

Rong Jiu took a deep breath, turned around, and focused on it.

Wei Lin had already come back.

Rong Jiu asked, "Where did the light pillar come from?"

Wei Lin looked solemn. "Your Highness, it seems to be coming from Tai Yuan Hall!"

Rong Jiu knitted his brows. "Hasn't it long been vacant? Have you found out who there is causing all of these movements?"

Wei Lin paused and said, "Your Highness, we're incapable! The exterior of Tai Yuan Hall has already been covered by a barrier, so outsiders can't enter at all. We also can't see the situation inside. We've tried to enter repeatedly, but we failed."

Rong Jiu was slightly shocked. *Wei Lin is a stage-five warrior and is very capable. If he can't even break open that barrier...*

"Bring me over!"

...

When the light pillar shot up into the sky, in a hidden jail on the other end of the palace.

Elder Zong Ye and Elder Ye—who were stuck in a stalemate—were also affected by this formidable ripple.

Hearing that loud boom, the duo was equally stunned. *Not many people in Country Yao Chen can cause such a commotion! Besides, it sounds like it came from nearby in the palace.*

The duo held their breaths in and felt the sinister ripple.

Suddenly, Elder Ye looked shocked. *That movement... It seems to be coming from where Situ Xingchen is locked up. The key is that this aura—*

A ridiculous guess formed in Elder Ye's heart. Then, he quickly turned around to leave.

Elder Zong Ye was stunned. *Ye Zhiting actually left? What emergency is it for him to give up on watching me?*

Thinking of this, Elder Zong Ye hurriedly got out of the cage and followed after him.

...

Once Elder Ye came out, he was taken aback by the light pillar that connected heaven and earth.

He stood rooted to the ground and couldn't recover his senses for some time. *As expected... As expected, someone touched the bronze cauldron!*

Elder Zong Ye—who had hurriedly rushed out and witnessed this scene—was also taken aback. However, he was more confused. *Ye Zhiting has seen quite a lot of scenes, so what kind of thing can make him reveal such an expression?*

But this question didn't linger in his heart for long.

This was because the most crucial thing to him now was to find Situ Xingchen and bring her away.

Even though the bangle had been destroyed, it was lucky that he was very familiar with Situ Xingchen's aura. As long as she was still in the palace, he could still find her quickly.

Thinking of this, Elder Zong Ye closed his eyes and searched carefully. After a while, he widened his eyes, and deep shock flashed across them. *Situ Xingchen... seems to be in the light pillar area!*

...

On the other side, when Rong Jiu brought the soldiers into the palace, Chu Liuyue and Jian Fengchi had also entered the palace.

It was lucky that everyone's attention was on Rong Jiu and the rest, and the duo was good at hiding their figures, so their entire journey was smooth.

Until they saw the terrifying light pillar!

Jian Fengchi knitted his brows. "What's that thing? Why is it so sinister?"

Chu Liuyue's face didn't show any expression at all. "I'm still too late..."

"What?" Jian Fengchi wanted to ask further when a figure suddenly rushed out of the light pillar.