Farmhouse 1101

Chapter 1101: Forcefully Taken Away

Searcy sneered and gave her another injection, saying, "Such a person cannot be restrained by ropes alone. The Soft Muscle Powder in my syringe will ensure she can't muster any strength for half a month."

Song Lianjun's face changed drastically, glaring fiercely at Searcy, then turned to Gu Youyou and said, "Aren't you afraid of the Empress' blame descending upon us?"

Gu Youyou, covering her heart, laughed and responded, "Afraid? Of course, hence this has nothing to do with me. You're asking the wrong person; you should be asking if he's afraid."

Gu Youyou pointed towards Yue Rujing.

Yue Rujing mimicked Gu Youyou's tone and said, "I'm afraid too, so I've decided to hide in Sanqing Temple indefinitely, not going anywhere."

Sanqing Temple is a sacred place. Not even the Empress, much less the Emperor, can arbitrarily take people from there – and regarding the current Yue Rujing in Sanqing Temple,

Yue Rujing, now holds the reins in Sanqing Temple and can mobilize all followers of the Dao Sect.

Searcy, with a confused expression, asked Gu Youyou, "What do you mean? How should we deal with this woman? Don't tell me you intend to send her to Sanqing Temple?"

Gu Youyou nodded and said, "Yes, that's the plan."

Searcy, discontented, retorted, "I was planning to keep her and torment her leisurely; I've already used the medicine on her."

Gu Youyou said, "It's alright; Cheng Yaojin still has his three-pronged approach. The Empress certainly has more than just this single tactic up her sleeve. Save your methods for later use."

Searcy was very dissatisfied with Gu Youyou's actions; she had devised N number of half-schemes, excited to the point of losing sleep.

She had intended to test each one on her, one by one, but before she could start, Gu Youyou had already taken her away.

Somehow, Gu Youyou felt as if she had saved this woman.

But now, she could not afford to gamble; with two pregnant women at home, it was safer to have her taken far away.

...

Most of the disaster victims had returned to their native homes, with only a few whose homes were destroyed going elsewhere to settle down. Many like the Gu Family who sought refuge with relatives simply stayed on.

As for Qin Changlin, ever since he arrived in Beijing, he had been staying in Jisheng Hall working as a doctor, with Yuancheng studying by his side.

Having heard that Qingshui Town had returned to its former state, and that the neighbors had all gone back to their normal lives, he too began to entertain the thought of returning to Qingshui Town.

After making up his mind, he came to the Crown Prince Residence to bid farewell to Gu Youyou.

"You want to go back to Qingshui Town?" Gu Youyou was somewhat surprised and said, "Didn't I hear just recently you were planning to bring your wife over and stay in Beijing for good?"

Qin Changlin sighed and said, "I did think so initially, but... sigh, as you know, in Qingshui Town, Jisheng Hall is the only pharmacy. If I don't go back, the folks there will have to rely on quack doctors.

These doctors don’t know much medical skill, mostly employing traditional remedies, and it’s pure fluke if they cure a disease once in a while. More often than not, they just delay the treatment of the patients.

Moreover, that place represents my master’s lifelong dedication, and my relatives and friends are all there. After all, that is my homeland, so I have decided to return."

Since Qin Changlin had made his decision, Gu Youyou found it inappropriate to keep him.

She asked, "What about Yuancheng then?"

Gu Youyou guessed that Yuancheng, who now considered Qin Changlin as family, would most likely follow him back.

Qin Changlin smiled and said, "I’ve asked him, and he said he wants to go back as well. His mentors and colleagues are all waiting for him."

Gu Youyou said, "If that’s the case, then I’ll arrange for some people to escort you back. If there’s anything, just write to me. If you ever decide you want to come to Beijing, you’re always welcome."

Chapter 1102: Searcy Buys Lun Yu Again

"Sure, no problem," Qin Changlin laughed.

Gu Youyou said, "And when you worship at master’s grave, give a few more bows on my behalf."

"Alright, alright, I know, you’ve become more naggy."

Gu Youyou: "..."

Today, Searcy bought another maid home and presented her to Gu Youyou, who looked displeased.

"What’s wrong?"

"Just bought her." Searcy pushed the maid towards Gu Youyou.

Gu Youyou’s gaze moved to the maid, sizing her up.

After a moment, the maid giggled and said, "How about it? How’s this disguise?"

Gu Youyou, surprised, said, "Lun Yu?"

Lun Yu, smiling, said, "Yes, it’s me."

Gu Youyou looked at her new style, unable to help but laugh and cry, "Do you even have any friends dressed like that?"

The key is that she looks different every time, who could stand being her friend?

Lun Yu pouted and said, "I’m only here because Yue Rujing asked me to help, otherwise do you think I’d willingly be your maid?"

"Oh? Yue Rujing sent you?" Gu Youyou said with a surprised look on her face, "What can you do besides disguise and tell stories?"

Gu Youyou remembered that the last time Lun Yu was a maid at Lin Residence, she was more like a mistress than a maid, completely pampered.

Lun Yu said, "Hey, don’t look down on people. I’m not just worried about you encountering skilled women, I’m also skilled now. I’ll be your personal bodyguard."

That’s not too bad, sounds reliable.

Gu Youyou hadn’t seen Lun Yu in action and didn’t know how good her skills were.

She thought: Since Yue Rujing sent her, she should be quite good.

During her spare time, Gu Youyou began writing to Jin Zijin to update him about home and her ever-expanding business.

Apart from not mentioning Song Lianjun, she only wrote about Lun Yu pretending to be a maid again bought by Searcy, currently freeloading at home, and asked him how he would deal with it.

There were also battle reports coming back from Xining, saying the fifth Prince had learned to be smart, not shielding various cities at once, but gathering all his troops in one spot, focusing on one place to attack.

Initially, they planned to break through Beiping, but unfortunately, they were unsuccessful.

The Ducal Residence had managed to stand formidable for so many years not unjustly; the home was filled with capable people who staunchly defended Beiping.

With tough enemies in the front and pursuers in the rear, such tactics could no longer be used, so now they focused on one place, and you might not necessarily know which place.

Recently they were at Liangcheng, which was newly conquered by General Jie leading fifty thousand troops.

However, overnight, this city was suddenly attacked by the fifth Prince, causing heavy losses to our troops, countless dead and wounded, nearly ten thousand captured. This was the first major setback for the Imperial Court since they began their campaign against Xining.

The Imperial Court’s army was divided into four groups, each acting independently, which was their greatest disadvantage.

It seems that the fifth Prince’s party has started to take advantage of their weaknesses.

Thus, the battle will prove to be very difficult.

At the Imperial Court, it was urgent for the court officials to select a commander-in-chief; since the eldest Prince was in the army, it was only logical for him to take up the role.

But there was also much opposition.

The reason was that Jin Zijin was born into the Dao Family; he was good at martial arts and thoroughly knowledgeable in Daoist numerology, but these skills were not helpful in war.

Stabilizing the rebellion of the King of Xining was crucial, how could they take such matters lightly?

This argument also made sense, hence after much deliberation, they still couldn’t find a suitable candidate.

Chapter 1103: No One is Allowed to Eat Meat

The Emperor watched the ministers below arguing in a tumult and felt a headache coming on. He massaged his temples and said, "Now it’s not only the issue of who will be the chief commander; we’ve been unable to conquer the territory for so long, and the lack of food and fodder has also become a major issue. My beloved subjects, do any of you have a solution for the food and fodder problem?"

As soon as this issue was mentioned, everyone fell silent.

Everyone knew that the South had suffered a disaster this year, and the shortage of food was no small matter. To fight this war, the common people had already tightened their belts and were scrimping on. To extort anything more from them wouldn’t yield much food.

Just as everyone was at their wits’ end, the Protectorate Prince sneered and stepped forward, cupping his hands in salute, "Your Majesty, Consort of the Crown Prince handled the flood matter very skillfully; why not entrust this matter to her as well?"

Those who followed his lead, the sycophants, suddenly saw the light and clapped their hands, "Exactly, Your Majesty, now that the national treasury is depleted, there's nothing we can do about the food and fodder. But the Consort of the Crown Prince surely has silver. She has always been expanding her businesses, and I've heard they've even spread to neighboring countries, each one doing very well."

The Emperor looked at them indifferently and asked, "So what you're implying is that a bunch of grown men can't find a solution, and we must rely on a woman to gather food and fodder?"

Upon hearing the Emperor's words, those who had spoken hung their heads in shame.

However, some had thicker skins, like the Protectorate Prince, for instance.

He said, "Your Majesty, in times of national crisis, everyone has a duty to solve the problem with the supply of food and fodder. How can we say we are relying on a woman? The Consort of the Crown Prince is a daughter-in-law of the Imperial Family; naturally, she should also be concerned about the country's difficulties."

The Emperor was silent for a moment and then said, "The Protectorate Prince's words are also true. Therefore, all of you will forfeit one year of salary, to be deducted over two years. Starting from now, all expenses of the Imperial Palace will be reduced. From the Harem to the households of all ministers, everyone must refrain from eating meat and stick to vegetarian dishes until our army returns in triumph. Wan Decheng, draft the decree!"

The faces of the ministers turned the color of pig liver, an amusing variety of expressions indeed.

The Harem, caught in the crossfire, will probably become quite lively.

...

When the Imperial Decree arrived at the Crown Prince Residence, Xiang Chun's face was as colorful as those of the ministers, like a painter's palette.

Gu Youyou said with a smile, "Put away the Imperial Decree. Don’t be so indignant. I guessed this would happen if we couldn’t take Xining within three months."

Xiang Chun indignantly said, "That’s too much, why should you be the one to solve the food and fodder problem? Are all those ministers just drawing their salaries for nothing?"

Gu Youyou helplessly responded, "If those words get out, even ten of your heads won’t be enough to save you. Enough, let’s not talk about this anymore. At least we were not ordered to eat only vegetarian, to give up meat. I have it all planned out; I’ve been prepared for the food and fodder issue."

"What?" Xiang Chun couldn’t believe it, her eyes widened.

Her mistress was too incredible, almost seemingly clairvoyant. It felt as if she knew everything and as though nothing was impossible for her.

Gu Youyou sat in front of the desk and signaled Xiang Chun to grind the ink for her.

Before the army even set out, she had anticipated the shortage of food and fodder.

The South had experienced flooding this year. So many people were displaced; food and fodder were bound to be a problem.

The supply of food and fodder provided by the Imperial Court had lasted for three months, which was already the limit.

That’s why she had expanded her businesses to neighboring countries; she used the money earned from these businesses to buy food, which had already been shipped back.

In three months, she had amassed quite a large stock of food.

With just one order from her, this food would be sent to the frontline army.

Chapter 1104: Taking the Blame

Gu Youyou personally wrote a letter and visited the Imperial Palace herself to deliver it directly to the Emperor.

She found the transportation of food supplies inconvenient, and felt that such tasks should be handled by the Emperor.

The Emperor was clearly shocked when he saw the letter presented by Gu Youyou.

He was astonished that this woman had prepared so much food, and that she had delivered it personally in the afternoon after he had only issued the decree in the morning. It was all too quick.

It seemed she had been prepared all along, just waiting for that imperial decree.

The Emperor couldn’t help but take a few more glances at Gu Youyou.

To hide her already bulging belly, Gu Youyou wore thick coats, making her appear much heavier than usual.

Feeling uneasy under the Emperor’s scrutiny, she felt as if he could see right through her.

Gu Youyou hurriedly said: "Your son had anticipated early on that the battle in Xining would face a shortage of food and supplies, hence I ventured to set up shops overseas. Engaging in trade was just a façade, the real aim was to exchange for food. Considering the timing, the potatoes we planted last time should be ready to harvest. Potatoes have high yields, and we will not lack food."

The Emperor remained silent for a long time before finally saying softly, "No wonder Zijin insisted on choosing you, you truly are a talented individual. Even though you come from humble origins, your capabilities exceed thousands of troops."

"Father, you flatter me! I only did what I could."

"Very well, well said. I...thank you sincerely!"

Gu Youyou looked at him in utter surprise, never having dreamed that she would hear words of ’thanks’ from the lips of the supreme ruler, the Emperor.

...

The Emperor appointed Xiao Jinfei from the Xiao Family to take charge of delivering the food supplies, holding an imperial decree as the commander.

The court officials were in an uproar; none of them had gained any advantage, and it was Xiao Jinfei, who only attended court once every ten days or so, who ended up with the role?

It was utterly infuriating.

The Emperor was showing favoritism; having Xiao Jinfei as the commander was no different from appointing the Prince as commander.

And yet, the Emperor was being favoritist and even used Gu Youyou as a shield.

"The Prince’s wife, with her own resources, generously provided the materials and food needed by the army. Her only request was to personally appoint the commander to escort the food supplies. If you have objections, you can also propose your own candidates for commander."

Everyone was eager to propose someone who would benefit them.

However, before the Emperor could finish, he added: "But you will need to supply the food."

Everyone: "..."

That settled the matter firmly; no one dared to object anymore.

Jokingly, there was so much food needed, even the national treasury couldn’t provide it, who else could?

Thus, the issue was smoothly resolved. The necessary food for the army and the commanders, all became the unwarranted blame on Gu Youyou.

After court dismissal, the Emperor retained Jie Huanzhi alone. Along with the classified military letter sent back by the army, there was another letter specifically addressed to Jie Huanzhi.

Holding the letter, Jie Huanzhi appeared lost.

It was a personal letter from his eldest son, Jie Zhongsen, who had been away from home for so long and never written to him because he couldn’t get over the death of his daughter-in-law at the Jie Residence.

The Emperor watching Jie Huanzhi sighed lightly and said, "My dear official, do not worry, it may just be a simple family letter. They suffered some losses in the last battle in Liangcheng, probably he wrote to reassure you, so he sent a letter to inform you of their safety."

Jie Huanzhi offered a stiff smile and expressed his thanks to the Emperor!

...

Chapter 1105: A Rare Moment of Relaxation

In the midwinter season, snow had already started to fall in the north. At the Battle of Xining, with the appointment of a chief commander, the various armies were no longer disorganized. After a major defeat at Liangcheng, one piece of good news after another began to arrive.

Everyone was just hoping that the conflict in Xining could be settled quickly, so they could return home as soon as possible to spend a reunited New Year’s together with their families.

The gate of the Crown Prince Residence was tightly closed, with Gu Youyou and Miss Du hiding in the yard, roasting meat over a fire pit.

As a foodie, abstaining from certain foods was simply inconceivable. Aside from those truly harmful to the fetus, Gu Youyou wasn’t very particular about her diet. Of course, since she didn’t restrain herself, she wouldn’t make Miss Du restrain herself either.

However, the lamb leg seasoned with chili powder being eaten bite by bite made Xiang Chun incredibly anxious.

These two pregnant women, eating like this, is it really okay?

Miss Du smiled and said, "Don’t worry, I’m eating just a little."

Xiang Chun: "..." She had been watching closely; they were clearly not eating "just a little."

Gu Youyou said: "Pregnant women have bigger appetites, so for us, this little amount really is small."

Lun Yu was extremely attentive, constantly bringing over various ingredients for Gu Youyou to help grill.

Aside from being a lover of stories, he was also a foodie.

Knowing that Gu Youyou could whip up something delicious, he would run faster than anyone. Usually, he was quite lazy, the most unique maid in the residence. Seeing him suddenly making trip after trip to the kitchen, the aunties there were all shocked.

The lazy maid has changed her ways?

In order to retain Abao’s wild nature, Yue Rujing fed it raw meat.

Now that it was back with Gu Youyou, she started feeding it cooked food. After tasting roasted lamb leg, it probably wouldn’t care for raw meat again.

Even though it had just finished one, now it was again eyeing the fire pit in front of Gu Youyou.

It looked fierce and imposing, yet had a pair of big watery eyes. Faced with such pitiful eyes, Gu Youyou stood no chance and ended up giving all the remaining lamb leg to it.

Lun Yu, who had just put down some ingredients, was so frantic that he jumped to his feet and said, "Hey hey, I've been busy for so long and haven't had a taste yet. How can you give it all to the dog?"

Uh...

Gu Youyou gave an embarrassed look, indeed she'd forgotten.

She said to Abao: "How about leaving some for your Sister Lun?"

Lun Yu: "..."

That's just outrageous.

Seeing his constipated expression, Gu Youyou hurriedly put away her smile and said, "There's plenty more, don't worry. The best part of the lamb isn't the leg, just look at these lamb skewers here."

Hearing Gu Youyou say that, Lun Yu's expression improved a bit, and then he started eating lamb skewers from the plate.

Searcy rushed into the yard, grabbed the remaining skewers and put them in a food box, saying, "These are nice, I'll take them outside to eat."

Gu Youyou and Miss Du had almost finished eating, while Xiang Chun preferred vegetables and didn't object.

But Lun Yu was furious, saying, "I've been running back and forth getting things for you, and just as I've tasted one skewer, you want to take them all. You really have some nerve."

"Oh." Searcy moved the food box behind him and said, "Thanks a lot, grill some more."

Lun Yu: "..."

At this moment, someone at the gatehouse requested entry. Abao, who was eating a lamb leg, was the first to know and lifted its head to look outside the yard.

Xiang Chun put down the skewer she was grilling and went out to the gatehouse. It was someone from the gatehouse.

Gu Youyou had once ordered that her yard could not be entered casually—it required her permission, so the gatehouse people could not come to the inner yard.

Chapter 1106: Jie Huanzhi is Sick

Maid servants usually guarded the courtyard, but since they were called away to help with a feast today, there was no one around at the moment.

"What's the matter?" Xiang Chun asked.

The gatekeeper servant said, "Someone is requesting to see our Great Prince's Consort, claiming to be from the Jie Family's residence."

Xiang Chun didn't dare delay the matter concerning the Jie Residence, so she quickly went to report to Gu Youyou.

Gu Youyou put down the half-roasted skewer she was holding and stood up, saying to Miss Du, "I should go take a look. Now in the Jie Residence, only Elder Jie is there; perhaps there is some emergency."

Even though Miss Du had already left the Jie Family, she still had great respect for Elder Jie. After all, he was a friend of her deceased parents, and he had taken care of her when her father passed away.

She nodded and said, "Alright, go quickly. Dress warmly; it's really cold outside."

Xiang Chun had already taken out Gu Youyou’s outdoor garments, a very large cloak that could shield her belly.

Gu Youyou hesitated for a moment, then asked her to fetch the medicine box.

Generally, those who sought Gu Youyou did so for medical care.

This time, Gu Youyou took Xiang Chun with her, while Searcy took the food container and left, no need to ask where she had gone; she wouldn’t be called back.

Alas! A grown daughter cannot be kept at home.

Indeed, the one waiting outside was a house servant from Elder Jie’s household, anxious beyond measure, saying, "Greetings to the Great Prince’s Consort."

Gu Youyou raised her hand to signal him to stand up and asked, "What is the emergency? Don’t panic, speak slowly."

The house servant said, "Our master is ill; he’s been sick for many days now. The young masters are not home, and the young mistress is married off. Only the master is at home by himself. He fell ill and adamantly refused to let us call for a doctor, insisting on enduring alone. Now he cannot bear it anymore, he coughed up blood and even passed out. I ran out here risking punishment to plead for the Great Prince’s Consort’s assistance."

Gu Youyou was startled and hurried onto the carriage.

"Then quickly, let’s go, without delay."

Elder Jie was advanced in years and had been sick for many days. Coughing up blood and fainting, it really sounded alarming as the servant described.

It was good that she had the foresight to bring the medicine box.

The Jie Residence was much more desolate now. Since the year Miss Du came back to take away Miss Du the Second, Gu Youyou had never visited again.

After Xie Qinyun was married off and Jie's Second Son left, only Elder Jie remained; presumably, he had even less desire to manage the household affairs, so the servants grew increasingly negligent, leaving the courtyard somewhat disordered.

Now, being winter, had it been spring or summer, the place would certainly be overgrown with weeds.

Elder Jie lived all alone, his days reduced to such a state.

Crossing the long corridor and pavilion, Gu Youyou arrived at the courtyard where Elder Jie resided.

He lay on the bed, his eyes tightly closed, with several servants kneeling and weeping in front of his bed.

Gu Youyou took a glance and then sat on the stool beside the bed to examine him.

He was critically ill and had fainted, but fortunately, there was no danger to his life.

She said to the servants, "Has someone been sent to inform your young mistress at the Prince Qin's Residence?"

One of the maids replied, "Someone went, but it may still take a while for her to arrive."

It was good that they had informed her, but his sons were all off at war, fearing they could not return to visit him.

In reality, Elder Jie was a man of tough exterior but soft heart. He wished for his children to be around him, but his sons and daughters were all grown-up, and how could he control them?

"Everyone, leave the room!"

The crowded room was too noisy for her to apply acupuncture.

Xiang Chun chased out all the unrelated people and personally guarded the door.

Chapter 1107: He Died

Gu Youyou administered an acupuncture treatment to Lord Jie and gave him some pills, and soon he awoke.

Lord Jie opened his eyes, glanced at Gu Youyou, then closed his eyes again. With a sigh and a self-mocking laugh, he said, "Ah, they ended up asking you to come after all. It seems I won't be dying anytime soon."

Gu Youyou was startled and asked, "Lord Jie, what insurmountable difficulty are you facing, that you would resort to such an extreme measure?"

He propped himself up to sit, his expression extremely weary. His eyes, hollow, gazed at the dark corner of the room and he said, "A few days ago, I received a letter from the eldest. He said the second one was dead. Caught by the Xining Army as a spy and killed by a disorderly sword, not even a complete corpse could be found."

Gu Youyou was suddenly shocked, staring blankly at Lord Jie, her acupuncture needle falling to the ground.

She had thought, since Miss Du was willing to bear Jie Zhonglin's child, perhaps she could bring them together?

After all, there's a saying, 'To err is human, to forgive, divine.'

He hadn't treated Miss Du well before, which was terrible, so she chose to leave him.

But his later actions towards Miss Du, those deep affections, were also genuine.

The reason Gu Youyou had never considered the possibility of their reconciliation was because she thought Miss Du had completely fallen out of love with him, and given up.

But from this pregnancy incident, it seems that might not be the case.

But now...

There was no chance anymore.

"How... how could this happen?" Gu Youyou asked blankly.

Lord Jie’s eyes never left the dark corner of the wall.

Perhaps he was looking at something, or perhaps he saw nothing at all.

He kept staring at that spot, as if he was seeing Jie Zhonglin.

His nose stung bitterly. Lord Jie took a deep breath and said, "If I hadn’t always been scolding him, knowing full well that he was blaming himself even to the point of wanting death, he wouldn’t have taken such a path."

Gu Youyou, head bowed, listened quietly.

She also recalled that during that time, Jie Zhonglin indeed was full of self-blame.

After what had happened, three people were hurt. And the first to accept the reality was actually the easiest to recover.

But Jie Zhonglin was precisely the one who couldn’t let go.

"He was the most like my son. His mother adored him the most when she was alive, and so did I. I thought he could become a just and upright scholar like me one day, continuing the Jie family’s tradition of serving as loyal subjects, but I never expected him to treat himself in such an extreme way."

Perhaps at that time, Jie Zhonglin felt he could no longer stay at home, or even near Beijing. People around him showed no kindness, and he didn’t want to become like his father, so he chose to join the military, heading to the East Sea.

"I knew he had joined the military, I should have brought him back no matter what. His elder brother... Sigh! I’m old, I no longer want to, nor can I, manage them. Doctor Gu, thank you for coming. Our Jie family has received so many favors from you, yet we have never had the chance to repay any. But this is also good; it shows that Gu Youyou is a capable person, only those who truly have the ability like Gu Youyou do not need help from others."

"Lord Jie, you are too kind. You have helped a lot in unseen ways!"

"Consort Jie?" Xiang Chun’s voice arose outside, "Consort Jie, wait a moment, our great Prince’s consort is inside treating Lord Jie, you cannot enter now."

Chapter 1109: Not Letting Him Go

Because Jin Zijin spread rumors, telling the people of Xining that Prince Five is a rebel and listing his multitude of crimes, he wanted the citizens of Xining to know that the Imperial Court was focused on capturing the rebel and had no intention of causing harm to the innocent.

In other words, this war had nothing to do with the common folk.

No one wanted to go to war; by the end, the civilians even broke into the various Governor’s Offices, seized the officials within, and voluntarily delivered them to the Imperial Court’s army camps, welcoming the Court’s troops to enter the city.

After so much turmoil, the struggle over Xining was finally drawing to a close.

"Jin Mocong, lay down your weapons and go to the capital to admit your wrongdoings to the Emperor. This is your only way out."

Jin Mocong was cornered at the border with Beiping, with an army of hundreds of thousands from Beiping in front of him, and his retreat blocked by the pursuing forces at the back. He had nowhere left to flee.

Jin Mocong, covered in blood, was wearing a thick fur coat, holding a curved saber commonly seen in Xining in his hand.

Unbeknownst to when, the snowflakes had begun dancing with the wind before they fell, coloring the clothing and headwear of everyone white. It wouldn't be long before this sudden heavy snow would bury the bright red blood that stained the ground.

He turned around and shouted loudly at the pursuers behind him: "Is Jin Zijin there? This Prince wants to have a word with him alone."

In the crowd, Jin Zijin sat atop a black horse, holding a Long Halberd in his hand.

Upon hearing this, he patted his horse's belly and took a step forward.

Xiao Jinfei behind him held him back, saying, "Don't go over there, be wary of deceit."

Jin Zijin replied, "It's alright, he's expended all his strength. There must be some words he wants to address to me."

Jin Zijin was aware of what he wanted to tell him; those matters were precisely what he was interested in knowing as well.

Xiao Jinfei sighed and released him.

Jin Zijin rode his horse towards Jin Mocong, while Xiao Jinfei behind him raised his hand, and ordered the soldiers, "Archers, ready."

Even though Jin Zijin said nothing would happen, he still couldn't rest assured.

Jin Mocong walked out from the crowd. He wasn't riding a horse because his horse had already been killed by the chaos of slashing blades in the battle.

Jin Zijin also dismounted, walking forward slowly, leading his horse.

The two men kept a spear's length distance, now far away from their respective troops.

They stopped and stared at each other.

The war that had lasted for half a year, fought from the scorching summer days to the snow and icy rain, had taken its toll on everyone.

Both of their faces showed signs of fatigue.

Jin Mocong said, "From the moment you came to Xining with the imperial edict, I knew this day would come. I just can't understand why you insist on eradicating me completely. You're different from them; you grew up in the Dao Family."

Jin Zijin looked at him indifferently and said, "No, you understand. Do I really need to remind you?"

Jin Mocong was suddenly startled, and after a moment of stunned silence, he gave a bitter smile and said, "Is it because of the Dao Family's struggle?"

Jin Zijin replied, "Not entirely. You indeed posed a threat to Zhuzhao Country, as those rumors were not started by you, but without your instigation, they would not have spread so widely. And there's something else..." Jin Zijin paused, and Jin Mocong lifted his head to look at him.

He continued, "Moreover, I originally intended to hand you over to Zongrenfu. As a member of the Jin Imperial Clan, you could have lived out the rest of your life safely within those high walls, as long as you were willing to reform. However, you laid hands on her, and that— I cannot tolerate."

"Gu Youyou? That woman doctor?" Jin Mocong suddenly let out a scornful laugh.

"Yes," Jin Zijin said silently for a moment before asking, "Do you have any last words?"

Chapter 1110: The Transaction

In the cold wind, the snow fell heavier and heavier, gradually covering the ground in a layer of white.

Jin Mocong slowly said, "I'll tell you what you want to know, but you must promise me one thing."

Jin Zijin stood on the opposite side, his expression calm, and said, "That depends on the value of what you're going to say, and whether the thing you want me to promise will put me in a difficult position."

Jin Mocong said urgently, "What I have to say is definitely valuable, no matter if it's for your status as the senior disciple of Tianzong or your identity as part of the Jin Imperial Clan. What I'm going to tell you will be of great help to you. And the thing I'm asking you to promise, for you, is merely lifting a finger, you will surely not find it difficult."

"Oh? Then tell me what it is first."

Jin Mocong said, "After I die..." He glanced back at the rag-clad people behind him and continued, "If they are willing to surrender, spare them. For those who stubbornly resist, kill them. Let Madam go, and also Jin Ziyuan. Madam is but a mere woman; she poses no threat to you. Jin Ziyuan has no troops, he can't stir up any trouble either, and for him, the greatest enemy isn't you guys."

Jin Zijin nodded in agreement, saying, "Fine, I promise you."

With this, Jin Mocong felt relieved.

He looked at the snowflakes in the sky and smiled faintly; they had lost, in fact, they had long since lost. Beaten by underestimating Jin Moning far too much, beaten by trusting that person.

He sometimes thought, how wonderful it would have been if the person who drew 'death' back then had been himself instead of his third brother.

Sometimes, the person who dies is not the most miserable; the one who lives, especially the one like him who survives carrying the hopes of everyone, who survives bearing all the hatred, is truly the most wretched.

Fortunately, all was about to end. He was sorry to them; he had merely struggled to survive for a more than ten years.

In the distance, two groups of troops had been confronting each other for a long time.

The heavy snow had turned the nearby hills into a vast white expanse, the soldiers' boots were now covered by the snow, and many were shivering with cold.

After an unknown amount of time, Jin Mocong made his move, drawing the curved saber from his waist.

Xiao Jinfei's expression changed with shock, he raised his hand, ready to give the order at any moment.

Just then, Jin Zijin made his move as well, wielding a long halberd.

Amidst the swirling snow, the two moved with extreme speed, quickly clashing together.

If the fight were on horseback, the long halberd would undoubtedly be at an advantage. However, on the ground, the curved saber would be handier.

There's an old saying that an inch longer is an inch stronger, and an inch shorter is an inch riskier. It refers to how different weapons perform differently based on their environment.

Jin Zijin had a dagger, which was more suitable for close combat, but he did not use it.

Even so, his long halberd quickly knocked away Jin Mocong's curved saber.

Jin Mocong stepped back several times to steady himself; he was not surprised at how quickly he was defeated by Jin Zijin.

How could common folk compare with the martial techniques of the Dao Sect?

There were but two people in this world who could beat Jin Zijin, but the life-or-death situation of those two individuals was presently unknown.

Jin Zijin's long halberd rested in front of Jin Mocong's neck; with just a push forward, his neck would immediately have a gaping wound.

Jin Mocong closed his eyes, waiting for the long halberd to pierce through.

"Hold on!" At that moment, a man in armor, also bearing a long halberd, made his way over with difficulty.

His armor, from many days of battle, was somewhat damaged, and his face was also marred with a lot of bloodstains.