Farmhouse 1151

Chapter 1151: Speaking Nonsense

However, the Empress isn't one to make baseless accusations. What's really going on here?

Meanwhile, Gu Youyou could hardly prevent herself from spouting blood upon hearing the Empress's words.

Accusing her of seizing a common woman and using her womb to bear a child.

How could she come up with such an idea? What kind of absurdity is this?

"You're not mistaken, are you?" The Emperor very much wanted to go inside the room to check, but he remembered his position as a Eunuch, which made it inappropriate to enter the room of his daughter-in-law who had just given birth.

The Empress spoke with absolute certainty: "It's completely true. How could your servant dare to fabricate such a thing? This news came from Miss Yue Family. It is said that when Miss Yue temporarily stayed in the Crown Prince Residence, she accidentally discovered this secret. She advised Zijin and Youyou not to do such a thing, but they not only refused to listen but also drove Miss Yue and her husband out."

The Emperor remembered that Yue Ruxue and Yi Qiuping had moved from the Crown Prince Residence to live in the inn, but he hadn't inquired further about the reason.

Because he knew that Jin Zijin did not like being watched over in all his affairs.

But could it be for this reason?

Gu Youyou could no longer bear it; she decided it was time to go out. If she allowed the Empress to continue slandering her, there would be no end to it.

It turns out that the news was indeed leaked by Yue Ruxue, who has a volatile temper; unfortunately, Yue Ruxue had returned to Lingnan, so finding her and settling the score was impossible.

Supported by Xiang Chun, Gu Youyou walked out from the room, her hair simply done up, and her attire plain.

Are there few in the palace who have been wronged and died because of false charges?

But she would not be one of those.

Due to her physical condition, she looked somewhat haggard, but angry, her face was tinged with red.

"Greetings to Father Emperor," she said with a slight bow.

The Emperor looked at her and said, "Dispense with the formalities, please sit."

Gu Youyou did not refuse and sat on a stool opposite the Emperor.

The Emperor asked her, "Is everything the Empress said true?"

Gu Youyou glanced at the Empress and thought how pitiful this woman was.

Jealous of others who could bear children when her own son had no heirs, she had lost her reason in jealousy. Perhaps her usual intelligence was clouded by this jealousy.

She is seizing every possible opportunity to suppress her own, probably dreaming that Zijin and she would be better off unable to have children. In that case, the struggle with King Jin would be back to the same starting line.

But her calculations were wrong.

Gu Youyou smiled at her and then turned back to the Emperor, saying, "Your Majesty, it’s not true. The child is mine, and there were others in the room who saw everything. And as for pregnancy, a huge matter like this, how could Zijin not know?"

The Empress scoffed, "I never said this was done by you alone. You’re right, you can hide a pregnancy from anyone, but not from the husband sharing your bed. So, this was something you and Jin Zijin did together."

Gu Youyou sighed and said, "You think too much. We’re not so depraved."

The Empress looked at Gu Youyou coldly and said, "Then explain who the woman in the room is?"

"A woman in the room?" The Emperor was incredibly shocked.

The Empress quickly explained to him, "Yes, there’s another woman in the room, the woman who just gave birth and is too exhausted to get up."

The Emperor signaled to his most trusted eunuch, Eunuch Wan, who immediately understood and headed into the room.

"Ah!" Gu Youyou thought to stop him but was helpless.

Chapter 1152: Conclusive Evidence

Forget it, Miss Du can’t be kept in the dark anymore, let’s delay for some time and talk after Searcy brings Jin Zijin back.

Additionally, Miss Du is currently asleep, and how to explain her identity would be best left to her.

After a while, Eunuch Wan came out.

He glanced at Gu Youyou with a look of difficulty.

Gu Youyou gave a bitter smile and said, "Eunuch Wan, at such a critical moment, just say what you see."

Eunuch Wan sighed and said to the Emperor, "There is indeed another woman in the room, lying in bed asleep, with two children beside her. The quilt is covered in much blood that hasn't been dealt with, indicating she must have just given birth."

This old eunuch, Gu Youyou said without words, "There are two children, and I also gave birth to one."

The Empress immediately retorted, "Hmph, do you look like someone who has just given birth? The girl in the room gave birth to twins, who doesn't know that you can discern whether a pregnant woman is carrying twins or a single child, you must have known that she was carrying twins and then brought her into the mansion. When she gave birth, you would claim one of them as your own."

"I..." Gu Youyou was left speechless by her wild accusation.

Is it my fault for being able to discern twins?

"Cough cough, Youyou, is the child really yours?" the Emperor asked Gu Youyou flatly.

Gu Youyou replied, "Of course, it's my child. She and I each gave birth to one."

"Still not giving up?" the Empress angrily said, "All of you come in."

Moments later, several maids entered the room, kneeling before the Emperor.

The Empress told them, "Tell the Emperor clearly, what anomalies are there in this mansion?"

Arguing nonsensically, Gu Youyou was no match for her.

But she wasn’t worried at all, now that the Emperor was here, the Empress wouldn’t dare to privately punish her, so whether the child was hers or not, did the Empress need to say?

After all, a clean hand wants no washing.

Gu Youyou indifferently watched those maids kneeling on the ground, the Empress’s spies, quietly observing the drama they would enact.

A maid bravely said, "Replying to the Emperor, to Your Highness the Empress, this servant, this servant feels something is wrong with this mansion. Because the Prince’s Consort has never allowed us to approach this courtyard, and after the Prince came back, the Prince’s Consort moved to another courtyard with the Prince, and this courtyard was sealed. Although everyone in this mansion knows a little, it’s known that someone lives here, but we don’t know who."

Another maid quickly followed, "This servant saw, last night, in a rush the Prince’s Consort brought Xiang Chun and Searcy with a medicine box into this courtyard, then we heard a woman’s screams from beyond the courtyard walls all night, it wasn’t the voice of the Prince’s Consort, and this morning we heard the cries of a child."

After speaking, that maid quickly glanced at Gu Youyou, then quickly lowered her head.

In Gu Youyou’s heart: damn, these sound insulation effects from the broken glass are too poor, everyone knows?

The Empress looked at Gu Youyou with a smirk, then respectfully said to the Emperor, "Your Majesty, all this evidence shows that Gu Youyou intentionally hid a woman in the mansion. Seeing how she cared for this woman and even generously let her stay in the main courtyard, it is clear that the child in this woman’s belly certainly has nothing to do with the Prince. Thus, this consort is willing to believe that this woman was brought here by her to act as a surrogate, intending to disrupt the Imperial Family’s bloodline.

Chapter 1153: Is She the Mother?

Your Majesty, Gu Youyou’s actions are deserving of death, you certainly cannot let her off lightly."

Gu Youyou greatly admires the Empress’s various logics; she has surpassed even Sherlock Holmes.

The way she talks about it, as if she saw it with her own eyes.

The Emperor looked at Gu Youyou and asked, "What do you have to say? Can you defend yourself?"

Gu Youyou bowed and said, "Father Emperor, I naturally need to defend myself. As you have seen, I indeed hid a pregnant woman at home, but she is not the person from whom I intended to have a child through surrogacy. She is a business friend of mine who, due to some difficulties, did not want others to know she was pregnant, so she asked for my help.

As for the cries last night, it was indeed her who suffered. To avoid suspicion, she always stayed in the room with little movement, so her labor was slow, taking an entire night. My child started being born after she finished, and I gave birth quickly, within less than half an hour. Both children were born on the same day, purely by coincidence."

The Empress scoffed and looked at the Emperor.

The Emperor said indifferently to Gu Youyou, "These are just your verbal statements, not enough to prove that you did not use a surrogate."

"Do we need to do a blood test then?" Gu Youyou replied with a light smile, "Such a small child, Father Emperor surely wouldn’t bear it, but I wonder what Mother thinks?"

"I..." The Empress glared fiercely at Gu Youyou. She was convinced Gu Youyou had used a surrogate and was about to suggest a blood test, but Gu Youyou had taken the initiative.

Having said that, how could she admit willingness now?

The Emperor, as the grandparent, wouldn’t bear it, oh, but I, as the grandmother, would?

How would that look to others?

The Empress felt as if she had swallowed a fly, stifling her discomfort; Gu Youyou was truly formidable.

The Emperor waved his hand and said, "No worries, let's wait a bit longer. I have sent someone to the Imperial Medical Bureau. When the Imperial Physicians arrive, we will discuss further."

The Empress sighed in relief, deviously looking at Gu Youyou, thinking: Once the Imperial Physician comes, whether you have given birth will be clear. Let's see how you explain yourself then.

Just don't claim to be a doctor yourself and staunchly refuse the Imperial Physician's examination.

Earlier when Gu Youyou was pregnant, the Empress had summoned an Imperial Physician to the Crown Prince Residence to confirm, but Gu Youyou refused by claiming she was a doctor herself.

Now, the Empress thought more and more about the trickery involved here.

If you were really pregnant, why wouldn't you let the Imperial Physician check for a safe pulse?

To her surprise, Gu Youyou also breathed a sigh of relief upon hearing the Emperor's statement.

Thank goodness the Emperor is prudent, calling for the Imperial Physicians.

Let's wait then, and see what the Imperial Physician has to say, right?

A eunuch proclaimed the decree at the Emperor's side, and naturally, the Imperial Physicians did not dare to delay and soon arrived.

A great group of old men carrying medicine boxes crowded into the room, making Gu Youyou's room seem small.

The Emperor didn’t say anything to the Imperial Physicians but directly asked them to examine Gu Youyou.

"First examine the pulse of the wife of the Crown Prince,"

Gu Youyou sat in a chair, generously extending her hand.

The Imperial Physicians had no idea what had happened; wasn’t the wife of the Crown Prince a doctor herself? She did not lack qualified doctors around her, why call all the doctors from the Imperial Medical Bureau?

Could it be that the wife of the Crown Prince had some major issue? Had she contracted a terminal illness?

But looking at Gu Youyou, she did not seem like someone with a terminal disease.

"Give her a good examination, you must be thorough," the Empress said from the side.

Chapter 1154: She Gave Birth

Imperial Physician Li stepped forward first to take Gu Youyou’s pulse and asked, "Prince Consort, where do you feel discomfort?"

Gu Youyou replied, "Please examine first, I might be a bit weak."

After checking her pulse, Imperial Physician Li said, "Indeed, you are weak and lacking in vital energy." He then noticed Gu Youyou’s belly had shrunk and hurriedly said, "Prince Consort, have you given birth already?"

Gu Youyou answered with a light smile and a nod, "Yes, I gave birth this morning. Is my condition still normal?"

Imperial Physician Li hastily replied, "Normal, it’s normal. It’s common for a woman to be weak after childbirth. You just need to take good care of your health, I will prescribe some medicine for you..."

"Get out!"

Before Imperial Physician Li could finish, the Empress erupted in anger.

Imperial Physician Li, confused by the scolding but seeing the Empress's face darker than the bottom of a pot, ultimately said nothing. He quietly stepped aside and didn't mention prescribing any more.

Then, another doctor arrived, the uncle of Lady Doctor Cui, Imperial Physician Cui.

After he took Gu Youyou's pulse, he hesitated to speak.

He glanced at the Emperor, then at the Empress, and with a troubled expression, he looked at Gu Youyou.

What exactly is this riddle? What should I say to be correct?

The Emperor then asked, "Imperial Physician Cui, how is the Prince Consort's health?"

Imperial Physician Cui, with a pained expression, felt that the problem was not how the Prince Consort's health was but how to speak about it.

It largely depended on what exactly the Emperor and Empress wanted to hear.

Gu Youyou smiled gently at him and said, "Imperial Physician Cui, just speak directly, just tell me about my health condition."

But hadn't Imperial Physician Li been scolded for telling the truth just moments ago?

Imperial Physician Cui wiped his sweat, glanced at Imperial Physician Li, and then said to the Emperor, "The Prince Consort... just..." Seeing the Empress's unfriendly glare, Imperial Physician Cui quickly altered his words: "The Prince Consort's condition is nothing serious. It's common for women to be a bit weak in vital energy, especially after childbirth, just needs some recuperation."

The Empress, almost as if she could swallow his heart, harshly said, "Look clearly, has she just given birth?"

Imperial Physician Cui totally confused about what was wrong in what he said, and the other Imperial Physicians were equally puzzled, all craned their necks to look at Gu Youyou's belly.

The belly did indeed look shrunken, could it be less apparent because of the clothes?

Without being asked by the Emperor, another physician stepped forward to take Gu Youyou's pulse.

A moment later he released Gu Youyou's hand, and as he moved to check her belly, he didn't dare, he just had to bite the bullet and say, "Empress, the Prince Consort has given birth, and the belly... although still a bit big, it will slowly recover. The child is indeed no longer in her belly."

Everyone seemed to nod in agreement.

The Empress, frustrated and furious, said, "She, Gu Youyou, has never been pregnant from the start, of course, the child isn't in her belly anymore. How are all of you examining her?"

"What...?"

With the Empress's words, a group of Imperial Physicians were greatly startled.

How could this be?

Is this something to joke about?

Moreover, Gu Youyou’s current weak pulse clearly indicated a great loss of vital energy, a symptom of having just given birth.

The Emperor indifferently asked, "Is what the Empress said true?"

The physicians looked left and right, seeming to guess something.

The Empress wanted to use this opportunity to take down the Prince Consort, but while other things could be falsified, could giving birth be faked?

Chapter 1155: Confounding Right and Wrong

Having understood the Empress’s intention, the Imperial Physicians were actually relieved.

Imperial Physician Cui boldly stepped forward and said: "Your Majesty, Empress, motherhood is not something that can be faked. This old subject dares not speak rashly. The pulse of the Crown Prince’s consort indeed shows she has just given birth and furthermore... If the Empress does not believe it, she may personally inspect her abdomen. An abdomen that has been stretched by pregnancy will not return to its original state without completing the postnatal recovery period, and there are also stretch marks, all of which cannot be feigned."

He found it very amusing; how could the Empress utter such absurd words?

The other Imperial Physicians all agreed with Imperial Physician Cui, nodding their heads in approval one after another.

The Empress’s complexion was not too good; observing the behavior of this group of Imperial Physicians, she began to doubt the veracity of the matter.

Could it really be as they have said?

No, she did not believe it. Gu Youyou was a doctor; she must have used some means to create the illusion of childbirth. How could such a coincidence occur?

Moreover, her friend, a pregnant woman, why hide her anywhere but her own home and leave behind so many clues?

The Emperor gave a grunt and looked at the Empress with a troubled complexion, asking: "Would you like to have a look?"

The Empress nodded lightly, and said to her most trusted Maid Li: "Maid Li, examine the Crown Prince's consort's body."

"Yes, Your Highness the Empress!"

Gu Youyou, supported by Xiang Chun, entered the inner chamber, leaving an odd atmosphere lingering in the outer chamber.

Those Imperial Physicians did not know what to say, each of them looking strangely at the Empress.

Soon, those inside the room came out, Gu Youyou still supported by Xiang Chun, while Maid Li's complexion was deathly pale.

She glanced at the Empress; the Empress had already seen the answer in her eyes.

"Maid Li, how is it?" the Emperor asked.

Maid Li knelt down and replied in a low voice: "The Crown Prince's consort... indeed shows signs of having given birth..."

The Empress's face turned deathly pale, and she stood frozen in place for a moment.

The Emperor smirked with a barely detectable hint of mockery, asking the Empress: "Empress, do you have anything else to say?"

"I..." The Empress shook her head and said: "No, it’s not possible. Gu Youyou must have used some method to create the false appearance of pregnancy and childbirth on her body."

Over there, Maid Li also loudly said: "Yes, Your Majesty, when the Crown Prince’s consort was still the Lin Family’s young mistress, I visited the Lin Residence once and caught Madam Lin punishing the Crown Prince’s consort. The reason was that she had painted herself a makeup, transforming into another person. Think about it, if she can change her own face into someone else’s, let alone fabricate a false illusion of pregnancy."

The Imperial Physicians looked sympathetically at Gu Youyou, thinking to themselves: It seems the Empress is determined this time, but they all know that changing one’s face is a superficial matter, whereas being pregnant or not is an internal affair - how could that be faked?

Even if they called for Doctor Cui, it probably wouldn’t matter much; it all depends on whom the Emperor believes.

"Youyou, what do you have to say?"

The Emperor appeared impartial, letting them each stick to their own arguments.

Gu Youyou looked at the Empress, who was already beginning to panic, and said: "It is admirable indeed, how such ludicrous reasons can be conjured up. The Empress can declare black as white and the dead as alive; what good would it do for this child to speak? I have nothing to say."

The Empress was so agitated she almost burst out laughing, pointing at Gu Youyou and saying: "Your Majesty, look, she has admitted it. Gu Youyou arranged for a surrogate to give birth, intending to disrupt the Imperial Family bloodline; she cannot be let off lightly. Guards, seize her!"

"Hold it!" At this time, a weak voice rang out from the inner chamber.

Chapter 1156: Watching the Child

Moments later, upon seeing Miss Du disheveled and leaning against the wall at the doorway,

Cuiya had been slapped by Nanny Li and her face swelled, claiming that she was afraid of tainting the holy visage, they took her away and locked her up, so Miss Du had to get out of bed on her own, slowly moving to the door with the support of the walls.

Neither the Emperor nor the Empress recognized Miss Du, but someone among the Imperial Physicians did. Imperial Physician Li exclaimed in surprise, "Miss Du, how come you're here?"

Miss Du?

That name was well-known in Beijing, the affairs of Lord Jie's household were notorious, and even if no one had seen Miss Du herself, her name was known to all.

"What Miss Du? Which Miss Du? Is it..."

"Ah, it's that lady from the Manxiu Building, Lord Jie's household."

The physicians conversed among themselves, and everyone quickly realized who she was.

Gu Youyou remained silent, just looking at Miss Du,

Her appearance made her choices very clear now.

Gu Youyou had been protecting her for so long, but in the end, she couldn't keep her safe, and she felt extremely guilty.

Gu Youyou said, "I'm so sorry, I failed to help you in the end."

Miss Du smiled at Gu Youyou, saying, "No, you've already been a great help to me. Without you, my child might not have been born safely. Youyou, thank you! For helping me deliver the baby through such an exhausting night, you must have been so tired that you went into labor early yourself. The royal grandchild wasn't full-term, right? I remember you said there were still a few days left before the due date?"

Gu Youyou smiled and responded, "It's still considered full-term, it was just a matter of a few days."

The situation couldn’t be clearer, Gu Youyou and Miss Du gave birth on the same day because Gu Youyou was exhausted from helping Miss Du with her delivery. A pregnant woman about to give birth herself, having toiled all through the night, leading to an early delivery of her child.

The focus was on the royal grandchild.

The Emperor couldn’t sit still anymore, he stood up excitedly.

"Go, bring my grandchild for me to see."

The Empress turned pale, barely able to stand.

Nanny Li supported her, gently shaking her head.

They’d look at the child first, it was not the time to speak any further.

Besides, Miss Du had given birth to her child hidden here with Gu Youyou, they shouldn’t rush, there were plenty of their weaknesses to exploit.

Xiang Chun brought out one of the infants, distinguishing between the two newborns was quite easy.

Miss Du’s child was born full-term, plump and fair-skinned.

The one born to Gu Youyou was wrinkled and hadn’t opened its eyes yet.

Xiang Chun held the baby with hesitation, knowing that most newborns looked like this, but still afraid the Emperor might find it displeasing.

"Quickly, let me have a look!"

The Emperor couldn’t wait any longer and approached the inner chamber doorway to take the child.

The infant, who had been sleeping, was unsettled by being passed around. When handed to the Emperor, the baby puckered its lips a few times and then fell back asleep.

The Emperor, with tears streaming down his face, looked at the wrinkled child, so tiny that it barely felt like it had any weight in his hands.

He wondered if Crown Prince Zijin had looked like this at birth, knowing the hardships Qinqin had faced when she fled alone.

She had hidden in the mountains to give birth, with no one to help her.

No one knew how she had managed to escape.

In those days, he was suppressed by the third and fifth princes, with the former Empress whispering in the late Emperor’s ear, nearly causing him to lose his position as the Crown Prince.

Chapter 1157: Miss Du Comes Out

He is the legitimate eldest son, the rightfully designated Crown Prince who has been seated for many years.

But because he lost his mother’s protection at a young age, and with the favored concubine dominating the court, the influence of his mother’s family was eliminated, leaving him weak and isolated at that time. Including the catastrophe that befell the Grand Master Residence, it was all related to that struggle for the heirship.

He couldn’t protect her; if she stayed, there was only a dead end, and their child would be even less safe.

So he set up the play himself, forcing her to escape Beijing for the sake of their child and find Yue Tingfang in the south.

He exhausted all his resources to protect her from several waves of assassination attempts until she finally met Yue Tingfang successfully.

Including arranging for her to escape to Qi Mountain and persuading Tian Jizi to take them in—all these were the results of a huge sacrifice and a deal he made with Tian Jizi...

"Your Majesty..." Seeing that the Emperor seemed to be somewhat off, Eunuch Wan hurried forward to support him.

Wan Decheng's voice brought the Emperor back to reality. Observing that everyone's gaze in the room was on him, he quickly suppressed his outward emotions and said in a low voice, "It's nothing. I was just lamenting my own age and indeed envying this newborn baby, whose life has just begun."

Who as Emperor doesn't wish to live on forever, without putting things like long life and good health to heart. They think about eternal life, ten thousand years, every day, so everyone quickly put aside the Emperor's odd behavior.

"Take him back, he wants to sleep." The Emperor handed the child back to Xiang Chun.

Actually, he wanted to name the child, but under the current circumstances, it wasn't the right time.

Back then, Jin Zijin's name was given by him, his style name too; he secretly had someone tell Tian Jizi, so everyone thought it was Tian Jizi who named him.

Though he couldn't witness his birth, at least the name was given by him, thinking of this, the Emperor's mood lifted again.

The Emperor sat back down, his gaze falling on Miss Du who knelt on the ground, with her clothes disheveled.

He said, "Miss Du, since you've just given birth to a child, there is no need to kneel. Get up and speak, I grant you a seat."

"Your humble daughter thanks Your Majesty."

The Empress was by the Emperor’s side, looking coldly at Gu Youyou and Miss Du.

These two women, got together and even started an embroidery shop?

She really wanted to see how they would explain this premarital pregnancy.

"Miss Du, I remember that you divorced the second son of the Jie Family years ago, and you have not remarried since. Where then did this child come from?"

"I..."

"Hmph, you have committed the crime of adultery, do you know the consequences of this?"

Gu Youyou looked at Miss Du with concern; the only person who could save her was Jie Zhonglin, but Gu Youyou didn’t know he was dead.

Yet even so, Gu Youyou had to save her today no matter what; she couldn’t let Miss Du die in such obscurity.

If Miss Du insisted she was forced, she might still be saved, but from now on, her reputation was destroyed.

All this trouble was stirred up by the Empress; originally, their arrangements were flawless, but the Empress just had to step in and make a mess.

"No... not true, this child is my own, I..."

Miss Du was at a loss for words, and Gu Youyou was anxious for her, wishing she could speak for her.

To buy time, she had no choice but to change the subject.

"May I ask why the Empress has suddenly come to our residence today? Could it be with some purpose?"

The Empress's eyes flickered, looking at Gu Youyou with a hint of irony in her expression, she said indifferently, "Someone reported that you have been hiding filth in your residence and even arranging for others to bear children for you."

Chapter 1158: Clinging On

Gu Youyou smiled slightly and, looking at those so-called witnesses, said, "So you planted so many spies in our residence to surveil us, is that it?"

The maids, upon hearing this, were scared out of their wits; being disloyal to their master was a taboo.

Similarly, the Empress arranging people to spy on the Crown Prince Residence was also a taboo.

The Empress's expression changed slightly, and she said sternly, "Don't spout nonsense. The one who reported to me that you used surrogacy to have a child was Miss Yue from the Yue Family. You know very well how you drove her out."

Grinding her back teeth, Gu Youyou cursed Yue Ruxue thoroughly and continued, "Yue Ruxue has been away from Beijing for many days now. Why didn't my royal mother come earlier, but waited until now?"

Because today, they had just deceived Jin Zijin to go out; naturally, she couldn't say that, so she said, "The matter of surrogacy is serious. Naturally, I could not just believe it blindly; hence, I conducted covert investigations. These maids were all the objects of my secret investigation, and only last night when a woman giving birth was reported in your residence did I feel the evidence was irrefutable!"

Gu Youyou smiled and said, "It indeed was a worry for my royal mother, but fortunately, the truth is now revealed, proving that your son did not use surrogacy."

"Hmph..." The Empress sneered, "Whether it’s true or not remains to be seen. What about Miss Du, you bearing a child out of wedlock, how do you explain that? If there isn’t a reasonable explanation, both your newborn child and you yourself may not survive."

Back to it again, Miss Du’s face turned pale, and she instinctively glanced inside the room.

Her newborn son, so adorable—she would not let him die unjustly no matter what.

"Whose bastard child? Miss Du, if you confess honestly now, you might still keep your whole body."

Gu Youyou stood up, stood in front of Miss Du, and said to the Empress, "My royal mother, you being the mother of the nation, questioning a common woman about such private matters, might be inappropriate?"

The Emperor rubbed his somewhat tired temples and said, "Let the Governor’s Office handle Miss Du. Empress, you should not get involved in this matter. I am also tired today, let’s return to the palace!"

"Your Majesty, what about Gu Youyou?" The Empress, having instigated this affair, aimed at Gu Youyou, and seeing her well, was far from satisfied.

The Emperor quietly looked at the Empress and said, "Then what do you propose? The Imperial Physician can prove that the child was born by Gu Youyou. She took in Miss Du out of friendship. As for both children being born on the same day, they have explained the reasons. Whereas you claim that Youyou used unknown methods to fake the childbirth, what evidence do you have? Empress, I hope you understand the principle of stopping while you’re ahead."

Having been here so long and still not seeing Jin Zijin return, the Emperor couldn’t help but worry.

Thinking it over, he sat back down, deciding to let her continue making absurd accusations, delaying time, waiting for Zijin to return and personally hand over his wife and child to him.

It would also teach him a lesson not to react rashly at every rumor and fall for someone’s stratagem of luring the tiger away from the mountain.

Seeing that she could not take down Gu Youyou today, the Empress was infuriated to the point of turning ashen.

She simply could not believe that the child was birthed by Gu Youyou, especially seeing Miss Du, who looked fragile as if she'd just given birth, whereas Gu Youyou, despite acting as a midwife all night, appeared as if nothing had happened, even claiming she had given birth herself - it just seemed too easy.

Given that Gu Youyou originally had poor health, she simply refused to believe it.

Outside, guards rushed in, anxious and flustered.

Chapter 1159: Jie Zhonglin's Letter

"What's the matter, why all the panic?" The Empress was already in a bad mood, and seeing the guard in such a fluster only added fuel to the fire.

"Your Highness, it's..."

Before he could finish his speech, Jin Zijin strode into everyone's view.

"I have returned!" he stated indifferently.

Everyone's expression changed in surprise, and the Emperor breathed a sigh of relief.

Gu Youyou almost wanted to cry, thinking: You're finally back, I can hardly hold on anymore.

Jin Zijin looked at the Empress with an unfriendly expression, his pitch-black and lusterless eyes making her feel somewhat intimidated.

Jin Zijin was no longer the Jin Moning without a background; although he didn't seem to be dealing with Dao Sect affairs openly, he was still in control of it. Now that both the Heavenly Master and the State Preceptor were not around, his deterrence was no less than that of the State Preceptor.

Following that, Searcy entered with Mr. Jie. When Mr. Jie saw Miss Du, he was taken aback for an instant before quickly saluting the Emperor and the Empress.

"This subject pays respects to Your Majesty and Your Highness the Empress!"

The Emperor raised an eyebrow and asked, "Mr. Jie, why are you here?"

He glanced at Miss Du and felt today's drama was becoming even more entertaining.

It was also the perfect opportunity to teach the Empress a lesson.

Searcy gave Gu Youyou a victorious sign and winked, then stepped aside.

Gu Youyou understood; obviously, Searcy had done well in handling matters, and Mr. Jie must have been asked to come by her.

Since Searcy had asked Mr. Jie to come, Miss Du must also be safe.

There was nothing left for her to do here, and she turned her gaze to Jin Zijin.

Jin Zijin had hurried back, traveling rather quickly, which left a feverish flush on his face. Seeing that Gu Youyou was safe and sound, he finally felt a bit relieved.

"I have given birth!" Gu Youyou held onto his arm, struggling to hold back the tears welling up in her eyes as she spoke.

Jin Zijin looked at her belly, instantly filled with joy and excitement.

"I don’t want to stay here." She couldn’t hold it in any longer and whispered to him with a trembling voice, with tears swirling in her eyes.

She had not been as untroubled as she appeared; from getting up yesterday morning until now, over a day and a half had passed without her closing her eyes.

Childbirth was extremely draining for a woman, and an iron body couldn’t bear it, let alone her body, which wasn’t particularly strong to begin with.

"You’ve worked hard!" Jin Zijin said softly, wiping away the tears from the corner of her eyes, and escorted her into the inner chamber.

Now everyone’s attention was on Mr. Jie, who was shedding tears profusely while presenting a letter.

He handed the letter to the Emperor, so overcome with emotion that he couldn’t utter a single word.

After reading the letter, the Emperor raised his eyes to look at Mr. Jie and said, "Mr. Jie, please accept my condolences."

Miss Du was taken aback, and even though she was sitting down, her frail body seemed to be on the verge of collapse.

She had a premonition that something bad was about to happen, and a sudden pain gripped her heart.

Everyone was extremely curious—what could it be? And what was written in that letter?

Mr. Jie took a deep breath, his voice trembling.

"Zhonglin had written this letter to me before the battle of Xining began. He had wronged Xintong in the past and had been filled with remorse ever since. Over the years, he had been trying hard to make amends and finally won Xintong’s forgiveness.

He had planned to bring Xintong back home with him after winning the war, to announce this matter to everyone, but sadly he didn’t live to see the victory at Xining and died in a foreign land."

Upon hearing this, Miss Du finally understood why her heart ached so much—it turned out he was dead.

Chapter 1160: Minor Disagreements

"Mr. Jie, he died?" She suddenly stood up from the stool but lost her footing and fell to the ground again.

Miss Du struggled to her feet again, clutching desperately at Mr. Jie’s sleeve.

Mr. Jie helped Miss Du up, his heart a tumult of emotions.

Why must this child’s fate be so bitter? She had finally waited until he turned back, yet she couldn’t let go of the resentment in her heart, insisting on leaving him.

And when she finally let go of the resentment, the man was no longer there to be seen.

"Don’t be sad, you still have a child to raise. This was his destiny; his unfortunate fate doomed him to a lifetime of regrets."

"No..., he must have hidden himself, he hates me for not forgiving him..."

Miss Du cried her heart out, causing all the onlookers to be close to tears.

It turned out that Miss Du’s child belonged to the Jie Family.

Their relationship had not completely broken down; to put it lightly, it was just a spat between a young couple.

Indeed, a divorce? For years, it has been heard of but never seen; after all the fuss, it turns out Mr. Jie’s son and daughter-in-law’s divorce was a sham.

Everyone in Beijing knew the affairs of Mr. Jie’s family.

After the second son of the Jie Family, Jie Zhonglin, and Miss Du divorced, he kept running to Jinxiu City, foolishly waiting in the Manxiu Building day after day, while Miss Du never paid him the slightest attention.

Those women in the boudoirs, whenever this topic came up, would clap their hands in approval, saying it served the faithless man right to taste the feeling of being despised.

Now it seemed, according to Mr. Jie’s meaning, it was all a misunderstanding.

But... the problem is... didn’t Jie Zhonglin die a martyr in the battle at Xining?

"He..." For a moment, Mr. Jie also could not help but tears running down his face.

Jie Zhonglin was his favorite child; he had always favored him from childhood. When a son had to be sent to the East Sea, he had the heart to let his freshly married eldest son go, never speaking of letting his younger son go. Yet, unexpectedly, the latter still met his end in the midst of war.

"Xintong, your father didn’t lie to you, he really is gone. Don’t be sad. Whether you return home or continue to do business in Manxiu Building, I will respect your choice."

Having said this, he turned to the Emperor and bowed: "Regardless of what transpired between my son Zhonglin and Xintong, I’ve always regarded her as my own family. If it weren’t for the Crown Prince Consort sending someone today to inform me that Xintong was in the Crown Prince Residence and had given birth to a child, I would still not know she was in Beijing; I thought she went overseas to do business. As for the child, he belongs to the Jie Family, please Your Majesty, do not make things difficult for her."

...

Inside the inner chamber, Gu Youyou and Jin Zijin were holding their newly born son, talking softly as if the people and events outside had nothing to do with them.

"I received a message from Ajing this morning, saying that they found my master. Seeing that you were still busy delivering Miss Du's baby, I didn't want to disturb you, so I didn't tell you."

"Did they find your master?"

Jin Zijin shook his head, saying: "No."

"Did they fall into a trap?" Gu Youyou felt that the Empress's arrival was too coincidental, leading to suspicion.

"Yes!" said Jin Zijin.

Gu Youyou sighed and said, "Well, at least we are all safe."

"Mm." He gently kissed her on the forehead.

The matters outside were nearing conclusion. Miss Du's child was from the Jie Family, and in the end, the Emperor acknowledged it as an internal matter of the Jie Family. The Empress had no say in it.

Gu Youyou, listening to the nearly resolved issue of Miss Du, still felt helpless as she stood up.