Farmhouse 1191

Chapter 1191: Making a Decision

"No, you cannot treat me this way, Emperor, we have been husband and wife for over twenty years... you cannot treat me this way..."

The Empress was still making a noise but was taken away, after this event, she probably aged by ten or eight years.

In the hall, only the Emperor and Jin Zijin were left.

They looked at each other for a moment, and Jin Zijin suddenly said: "It's rare for you to be so determined, over twenty years of marital affection!"

But he himself had lived with his mother for only just over two years.

And yet his mother paid with her entire life for it.

The Emperor was startled, looking at Jin Zijin's somewhat sarcastic face, he sighed deeply and said, "You have always had a deep prejudice against me."

"Ha!" Jin Zijin's face displayed even thicker sarcasm, he cupped his hands towards him and said, "Thanks a lot!"

They had already become so estranged that, in his eyes, he was not a father.

The Emperor increasingly felt that his return to acknowledge his ancestry was not because of him as a father, but rather to use him to achieve some purpose.

Like today when he punished the Empress, and he simply thanked him for it!

Thinking about it, it's really ironic.

This time, the Emperor would punish the Empress, and Jin Zijin was not surprised at all.

Because the Ducal Residence had a fallout with the Zhang Family, and the Zhang Family began to target the Ducal Residence overtly and covertly, and Prime Minister Zhang even thought of sending his young daughter to Jin Zijin or Prince Qin to seek the next cooperation partner.

At least for now, without the Zhang Family, the Ducal Residence was like losing an arm.

Therefore, the Emperor was able to make up his mind to deal with the Empress this time.

What a meek Emperor he was, always having to act according to his ministers' moods.

This made Jin Zijin despise him much.

...

The Empress was relegated to Yeting, which was no different from being sent to the Cold Palace.

Although she was still the Empress, the Phoenix Seal was taken from her, and it immediately went into the hands of Concubine Sheng, making the Empress infuriated to the point of spitting blood.

The Emperor's reason was that she attempted to murder the legitimate imperial grandson, with solid evidence, no one dared to say anything.

Wet Nurse Li followed her, the only palace servant who stayed by her side.

"My lady, don't be sad, Jin Zijin is no ordinary person, and the Emperor always has to consider the power of the Dao Family.

The State Preceptor and the Heavenly Master have both disappeared, one could say that now the entire Dao Family is in Jin Zijin's hands. Don't you understand our Emperor's temperament? I'm not saying it nicely, he bullies the weak and fears the strong, having enmity with the Zhang Family and with Prince Jin Residence still without an heir, it would be strange if they didn't seize this chance to step on us.

But don't worry, just as soon as the wife of Prince Jin is pregnant, it will reassure those who support Prince Jin, and we will soon be able to leave Yeting."

The actions of the Emperor, the words of Wet Nurse Li, all reinforced that decision for the Emperor.

Seeking a surrogate, indeed a disgraceful act down to the core.

But for Prince Jin, she had no choice but to do it.

Because having children later made Prince Qin and the eldest prince be trampled over first, and if it came out that Prince Jin truly couldn't have children, then they would be truly finished.

The Empress grabbed Wet Nurse Li's hand, her state of mind disordered as she said: "Find a way to pass a message to the old master, I must see him, I must meet him."

The matter of heirs for Prince Jin could wait no longer.

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Within the Ducal Residence

After the Empress married into the Imperial Family, she had returned to her parental home countless times, never being as disheveled as this time.

She didn't return to the Ducal Residence in great pomp and splendid attire, but instead dressed extremely plainly, like an ordinary old woman, stealthily entering through a small side door of the Ducal Residence with Wet Nurse Li.

Chapter 1192: Sneaking out of the Palace

I still remember the days of her childhood, when she sneaked out of her household to play, passing through this small corner gate.

Stripped of her splendid attire and the ceremonial armor of the Empress, coupled with her suddenly aged appearance and white hair, incredibly, no one recognized her.

Following a servant, she went to Duke Jin Shien’s residence, which was prepared and devoid of others, save for Jin Shien himself.

The Empress gave a meaningful glance to Nanny Li, who consciously stood guard outside, leaving only the Empress to enter the study.

Duke Jin Shien, with his dimming eyesight, was straining to read a booklet, and only when he saw the Empress enter did he put it down.

"You’ve come."

"Grandfather!" The Empress’s eyes brimmed with tears as she knelt before Duke Jin Shien and said, "Your granddaughter has suffered so much this time..."

Duke Jin Shien calmly offered her a handkerchief to wipe her tears, "I know all about your situation, and it’s not your fault. Since the battle at Xining, our power has indeed waned significantly. Plus, the ensuing issues have had a great impact on us. It’s normal for the Emperor to seize any opportunity to deal with you.

That man... Sigh! I’ve told you before, you cannot reason with emotions when it comes to him. In the eyes of the Emperor, only interests matter. Whoever benefits him, he favors. Right now, the most important thing is to quickly find a few fertile concubines for King Jin, to bear a child. Even if it’s a daughter, it might silence Youyou’s many critics."

Today, the Empress had come precisely to discuss this matter with Duke Jin Shien. Upon hearing him say so, she couldn’t help but burst into tears on the spot.

Duke Jin Shien lived cunning as an old fox; he remained unmoved even if Mount Tai crumbled on top of him. Thus, he appeared very composed, sitting across from the Empress, motionless as he waited for her to stop crying.

After a long while, the Empress ceased her sobbing.

She was now somewhat afraid, fearing that revealing King Jin's inability to father children might infuriate the old man, possibly angering him to death - what then?

She sized up Duke Jin Shien, pondering over how to break the news to him.

Meanwhile, Duke Jin Shien was growing somewhat impatient.

"Speak your mind. If I hadn't lived through various trials and tribulations, would I have survived to this ripe old age?"

Upon reflection, that was true - if the old man's heart wasn't strong enough, he wouldn't have lived to this age, would he?

The Empress gradually calmed her heart and composed herself, starting to deliberate.

"Grandfather!" The Empress's voice was still laced with sobs: "What I want to discuss with you is about Xiaoran's issue with bearing children."

"Hmm, go on," Duke Jin Shien calmly placed another handkerchief in front of the Empress.

"Last time, Imperial Physician Cui examined Xiaoran, and he... he truly is infertile. Even if the daughter of the Zhang Family hadn't poisoned the women in the household, there still would be no offspring..."

The Empress finally spoke her truth, and Duke Jin Shien was stunned for a long, long time.

After a long time, Duke Jin Shien asked with a hoarse voice, "So you mean... the carriage accident of Imperial Physician Cui was not an accident?"

It must be said that experience comes with age; Duke Jin Shien immediately grasped the crux of the matter.

The Empress nodded, "The matter of Xiaoran's infertility must not be leaked. I promised him, as long as he dies, the Cui Family will not be implicated. That was an accident of his own orchestration."

Duke Jin Shien heaved a long sigh and said, "Well played, indeed. The fact that Xiaoran cannot bear children must not come to light. But what's your plan? To help him steal a child to silence Youyou's critics?"

The Empress spoke with difficulty, "Stealing is certainly out of the question; we can't raise an illegitimate child. Grandfather, I have thought it through; it's enough to retain some blood relations."

Chapter 1193: Too Absurd

"What do you mean?" It's rare that even an old fox could not understand it.

The Empress said, "There's no use talking about Xiaoran's brothers; there is nothing we can do. Currently... Right now, we can only borrow from the Ducal Residence's lineage, which thankfully shares some blood relation with Xiaoran, and that is why I am seeking help from Grandfather..."

"Absurd!" The Protector of the Nation angrily exclaimed after hearing this, "Borrow lineage? How can Xiaoran accept this? He is a man! You are his mother."

The Empress began to cry again, saying, "I also have no choice. If not born, then we can only borrow lineage, or perhaps steal a random child to bring back. Grandfather, do you want our entire family to fight over a random child?"

When all is said and done, borrowing lineage really seems to be the best option.

The Protector of the Nation sighed deeply and closed his eyes.

"Yushu, our family has exhausted all its resources to support you. As long as it’s a request from you, the whole family puts forth all their efforts to accomplish it. And for those we can’t fulfill, the whole family racks their brains and whether crying or bleeding, pushes to accomplish it for you. Your brothers and sisters, your nephews and nieces, their marriages are all for you. How to treat you well, how they arrange their lives – the whole family has given so much for you, do you understand?"

The Empress continuously sobbed softly, and upon hearing this, she just covered her mouth with a handkerchief, crying and nodding.

The Protector of the Nation opened his eyes to look at her for a moment, then closed them again and said, "It’s good that you understand. Our entire family is relying on you. This time, although it is difficult for the family, as long as this old body of mine is still here, no matter how much pressure it faces, I will accomplish it for you."

Having said that, he got up and walked out of the courtyard, with the Empress hearing his orders in the house.

"Go call Jin Wei."

The orders of the family’s elder were always swiftly executed by the servants, and soon a tall and handsome young man arrived. His stature and facial features bore some resemblance to King Jin. The dissimilarity was only in the eyes.

His eyes were charming, and when he smiled, there was an unusual allure.

Seeing that the elderly woman in the room was the Empress, he was clearly taken aback, quickly changing his mocking expression to a serious one.

"Greetings to Empress Dowager."

The Empress wiped her tears and sat up, but however dignified she sat, it still appeared somewhat disheveled.

The Protector of the Nation waved his hand and said, "Get up quickly. The Empress is in plain clothes today, you can just call her Aunt."

Jin Wei wore a look of astonishment, everyone knew that the Empress was confined in Yeting!

It looked like she must have sneaked out.

So she came home to pour out her grievance?

He couldn’t help but complain incessantly, since he was called upon, this trouble most likely had fallen onto himself.

"Great-Grandfather, Aunt, you called Jin Wei here... for what matter?"

Jin Wei felt increasingly anxious, the more solemn they were, the more he felt an urge to flee.

This matter generally looked unsightly; seeing the Empress in distress, the Protector of the Nation sighed and said, "You go out first, I will talk to him."

The Empress nodded, her steps staggering a bit as she walked out of the study.

Seeing this scene, Jin Wei became even more panicked.

What unimaginable matter had befallen him?

The Empress stood in the courtyard, equally anxious.

Sometime later, the voice of the young man yelling in anger came from inside the house.

"Impossible, absurd, too absurd!"

Yes, this matter is too absurd.

Chapter 1194: They’re All Tools

"How so? Do you still feel wronged? The most aggrieved is your cousin King Jin, who could have told the Emperor the complete truth. Failing to become the Emperor, he could still live a life as a leisurely Prince, and the Emperor would surely adopt a son for him from one of his other brothers’ families.

And what about your aunt? What price did she pay to persuade him? She has been locked up in Yeting, and her only son won’t even spare her a glance; he has come to hate your aunt. But what can be done? For so many years, our family... what has it all been for? We have no way back now."

"But you can’t..." Jin Wei was beside himself, "Why me?"

With so many brothers at home, why was it his misfortune?

Duke Huguo said indifferently: "Among the brothers and sisters in the family, you are the one who resembles King Jin the most."

"I..." Jin Wei felt an overwhelming sense of powerlessness, at a loss for words.

He really wanted to tear his own face apart.

After a long silence, he finally lifted his head dejectedly and asked, "Then what do you plan to do?"

"You don’t need to worry about this, you just need to follow the arrangements."

Jin Wei opened the door and walked out with a crestfallen face.

The Empress stood not far from the door, having heard every word inside clearly.

Out of her many nephews, not many caught her attention, this one was amongst those who did.

He was considered young and promising among the younger generation.

"Jin Wei, your aunt thanks you."

Jin Wei waved his hand and said with a bitter, sarcastic smile, "No, no, in this family, everyone is a tool. A tool should do what it’s supposed to do; there’s no need for thanks!"

...

Finally out of her confinement, Gu Youyou was not restricted in her movements, and the first thing she did was to visit Xiguang Residence.

The few households that had early on agreed now had glazed tiles and glass windows installed.

Once those transparent, shining tiles were in place, the house immediately became brighter. The see-through windows would let no wind or rain in while still allowing sunlight to pour through; naturally, they were as beautiful as they were practical.

Everyone was keen to follow suit, and the orders for Xiguang Residence surged like the noonday sun.

The several partners who were co-owners laughed with their mouths wide open as they made a fortune.

Today, having left her confinement, Gu Youyou visited them for a meeting, and everyone was exceedingly excited.

By making such a fuss at this meeting, Gu Youyou must have come up with another money-making idea.

Like the blackout curtain fabric she proposed last time, which, although still in the production phase, had already shown its business potential to everyone.

Attractive and practical, it was perfect when paired with their glass windows.

This time, Gu Youyou indeed had a profitable idea.

You must know that the wealthy in Beijing have an abundance of silver; what to do with all the inexhaustible silver? Naturally, they spare no effort to indulge in various extravagances.

This time, Gu Youyou was helping them in their indulgence. Her proposal was for Xiguang Residence to introduce a glass greenhouse product, entirely made of glass, to be built in the courtyards of large households. In these glass greenhouses, an underfloor heating system could be used to adjust the temperature, allowing people to enjoy blossoming flowers all year round and even summer fruits in winter.

Once this plan was revealed, not to speak of the wealthy clients, even the several owners present were tempted and entranced by it.

As is known, the wealthy love to splurge on their gardens, and due to the special geographical conditions of the north, their gardens can’t quite match the appeal of southern ones.

But if a glass greenhouse could bring perennial spring to their gardens, they would certainly be very willing.

After all, they have plenty of silver.

Chapter 1195: The Unique Green Hat

"Boss Gu, what would the glasshouse look like once it’s built? Glass is fragile, it won’t easily collapse, will it?"

Gu Youyou had Xiang Chun distribute several drawings of the glasshouse to the bosses, saying, "Even our wooden houses need regular maintenance, so do glasshouses. Don’t worry, as long as they are

regularly checked and maintained, they will be just fine. Please have a look first, these are the drawings of the glasshouses I designed."

The group excitedly took the drawings passed by Gu Youyou, and those beautiful houses immediately captivated their eyes.

Outside the house, the heavy snow was flying, and inside, flowers that bloom only in spring were in full bloom, while a woman in light clothing inside the house was bent over watering those flowers.

What an enjoyable and pleasing sight to behold.

"Right, I want one!" A boss immediately made his stance clear.

Gu Youyou clapped her hands with a smile and said, "Okay, then the first one will be built at Boss Qu's place. Remember to host a flower-viewing party then, inviting all the celebrities from Beijing, to give our glasshouse a live advertisement."

"Haha, certainly, certainly!"

Those who didn't get to be first were regretful, why hadn't they been just a bit quicker?

...

The first woman they arranged for Jin Wei was that low-profile Miss from the Zuo Family who had not been poisoned.

All the other women in the courtyard had been poisoned, she was the most suitable to be the first to get pregnant, to silence Youyou's many critics.

It was laughable that not long ago, he had sent a woman to King Jin, who was very young, and had been sold off by the Empress.

Luckily she was sold, or how awkward would it be to meet her?

Madam Zuo and four other honored concubines entered the Prince Residence together. As she didn't strive or compete, always finding reasons to avoid King Jin, she remained the only virgin Madam in Prince Jin Residence.

King Jin knew that this day would inevitably come, so he appeared very calm about it.

Having drunk a bit of wine, he then fell straight asleep in his study.

The servants had arranged everything, he only needed to wait to be cuckolded.

Oh no, he still had to slip into Madam Zuo's room before dawn secretly, to make people think that he was the man last night.

Thus, he wore this green hat in an exceptionally unique style.

Dressed in a night suit, Jin Wei followed the trusted aides of the Empress and King Jin into Prince Jin Residence and headed straight for Madam Zuo's courtyard.

Everything was arranged perfectly beforehand; there would be no mishaps on the way, and he arrived at that secluded courtyard in the corner without issue.

By this time, all the servants in the courtyard had already gone to bed, and the trusted aide who was a butler, after putting the points of a few night guards to sleep, led him smoothly into Madam Zuo's room.

"Young Master, you must not let Madam Zuo realize that you are not His Highness King Jin, be careful."

"Mm, I know," Jin Wei nodded slightly.

He had been with women before but never had his own wife, and never thought that such a thing would happen to him one day.

But from childhood, his family had taught him that everything should be for the good of the family; as long as it benefited the family, they could be sacrificed at any time.

Thinking this, he felt this wasn't such a grievance after all, compared to those siblings who had lost their lives, he was lucky.

His great-grandfather was right; in this matter, King Jin was the most aggrieved.

He was on good terms with King Jin, so good that they even exchanged women between them.

However, after tonight, his bond with King Jin would also come to an end.

He could even imagine what the first thing King Jin would do if he ascended to the throne one day.

Chapter 1196: Accept Arrangements

It must be that killing oneself is the solution.

He gave a bitter smile, took off his coat, shoes, and socks, and then climbed into bed.

The woman on the bed was sleeping soundly, but she woke up as soon as he got in.

Discovering a stranger in her bed, she exclaimed in surprise.

However, the sound was quickly stifled back into her throat.

Jin Wei kissed her lips, and soon, he made her collapse softly into his arms.

He was here on a mission, naturally, there was no room for tenderness.

How is it?

She was still a virgin?

Unable to continue harshly, he reached out and pressed her sleep acupoint.

It wasn’t long before he dressed and came out, with Prince Jin Residence’s confidant still guarding the door.

Jin Wei, full of doubts, asked, "She seems... not very favored?"

He didn’t dare to voice out the question about her still being a virgin.

The confidant said, "Madam Zuo is low-key in her actions, which is why she escaped this disaster. But indeed... she is not favored, Prince Jin doesn’t even remember her."

Jin Wei understood and spoke no further.

Half-asleep, Prince Jin was woken by a servant, he muttered groggily and continued to sleep.

The servant whispered in his ear: "Your Highness, Young Master Wei has already left, you..."

"Me?" Prince Jin hummed blankly, rubbed his head, and briskly walked towards Madam Zuo’s courtyard.

...

Since the Heavenly Master and State Preceptor went missing, the Dao Family fell into Jin Zijin’s hands.

But he himself hasn't been idle; from seizing the opportunity to remove the cancer of Xining and cutting off Yu Jizi's retreat, they've removed countless tendrils that Yu Jizi planted everywhere. Even if he returns one day, his actions will be greatly constrained.

Today, something major is also about to happen in the Sanqing Temple.

Huo Li, who is temporarily acting as the State Preceptor, is actually just a puppet, but today, he has called a denunciation meeting with both sects' disciples.

And the person being denounced is his own master, the legitimate State Preceptor Yu Jizi.

Yue Rujing, fearing he might lose courage under pressure, ceaselessly encourages him backstage.

"You must not be afraid, remember you are not alone, I'm with you. The evidence we hold is enough to pull down that old pervert from his pedestal.

Think about it yourself, not just for these disciples but also for you. What did you join the Dao Sect for? Surely it wasn't for supreme power, was it? I know it's because of your faith."

With such a tall hat of faith placed upon him, what else could he say?

Huo Li felt as if he was a duck being pushed onto a perch, and he was that duck.

He turned his head, looking towards Jin Zijin who had remained silent all this while.

Although everything appeared to be maneuvered by Yue Rujing on the surface, Huo Li was very aware that the person behind the dark maneuvers was actually Jin Zijin.

"Matters always need resolution, and now is the best opportunity. After all we've done, it cannot be wasted!" Jin Zijin said to him lightly.

Huo Li thought of all these years, how he deeply respected and revered his master who had always treated him as a chess piece, and also his own unspeakable goal.

Remembering all these years of experiences, he no longer hesitated, under everyone's watchful eyes, he boldly stepped up to the principal seat.

Huo Li proclaimed that Yu Jizi acted against human ethics, the original heart of Dao, and attempted to change fate against Heaven's will. He exploited people, harmed and set up a physician's family to produce various cultivation drugs for him.

Chapter 1197: Denouncing Yu Jizi

To achieve his unspeakable goal, he schemed and disturbed the court order, inciting the rebellion of the Three Princes and thus taking the father and sons of the Three Princes into his clutches.

And his goal was merely to obtain the son of the Three Princes.

Because Jin Ziyuan was exactly the pure yin male body he had sought for many years and yet could not acquire...

The charges, of course, did not stop there; they included pushing his advantage, setting up traps for the entire family of the Imperial Physician, resulting in the physician's tragic death in a foreign land, and so on.

A thick stack of charges were read out by Huo Li, taking over an hour to complete.

Those gathered below were already stunned.

Because the assembly was attended not only by people from the Dao Family but also by officials, representatives sent by the emperor, and even the common folk.

No checkpoints were set for anyone; all those who wished to see and hear were permitted to come.

However, what Huo Li read out wasn't just an issue internal to the Dao Family.

It implicated a broad range, from the common people to the imperial court, to the massacre of a family—many were involved.

Of course, the audience wouldn't just take Huo Li's word for it.

Would they accept everything he said as truth?

A dissatisfied disciple of Xuanzong stood up on the spot to refute: "Huo Li, you were raised by our master since you were young, and now with the master's life and death unknown, are you so eager to replace him? To pin so many crimes on our master, how can you be at peace with yourself?"

Huo Li looked indifferently at the angry junior and said, "I am only speaking based on facts. I, Huo Li, will forever remember the kindness of my master's upbringing. However, I am also a student of the Dao Family, and I must honor my master and the Sanqing, as well as my own faith.

Blindly worshipping and repaying kindness, can we really forget the vows we made under the statues of the Sanqing gods when joining the Dao Sect?

Those victims enter my dreams every night, preventing me from resting in peace, seeking justice—they cannot rest in peace.

And their families, it's not like they can just move on from their tears after the victims are gone.

They need justice.

If Huo Li does not do this today, I believe countless fellow disciples will stand up to do it, because we have faith in our hearts, and we must honor the vows made under the statues of the Sanqing gods.

I know that by standing up today, I will be accused of being ungrateful, and even worse things, but I have no regrets. If I have the courage to be the first to stand up, I am not afraid of your curses..."

Huo Li’s words resonated powerfully, leaving Yue Rujing wide-eyed and speechless below the stage.

Not only did he speak out, but he also had witnesses and physical evidence, which left those who opposed him with no way to refute.

Yue Rujing whispered to Jin Zijin, "Ah, Huo Li has such eloquence. I couldn’t have said it myself."

"Appearances are deceiving!" Jin Zijin said: "He prepared thoroughly for today; he must have memorized these words long ago."

"He memorized it beforehand?" Yue Rujing was surprised.

Jin Zijin smiled and said, "Look how he deals with those questioning voices so smoothly, his responses are watertight. If Huo Li really had this ability, Yu Jizi wouldn’t have chosen him."

"Eh, I thought so, it feels like he is reciting a memorized script, so slick!"

Dao Family has dismissed Yu Jizi from the position of State Preceptor and announced to the entire Zhuzhao Country that effective immediately, the Dao Sect will no longer have the position of State Preceptor, and both Xuanzong and Tianzong will not fight over this position to the point of breaking heads and spilling blood.

Chapter 1198: Digging Up Old Cases

While Xuanzong allows Huo Li to rule temporarily, he himself feels a heavy burden of sins, only wishing to stay by Sanqing, ending his life in serenity.

Once everyone chooses a suitable person to rule Xuanzong, he will immediately relinquish his power.

Also, those forces that have been stealthily withdrawn are successively retreating back to the Dao Family’s root, Qi Mountain.

As for Tianzong, under the management of Yue Rujing, he said that the Heavenly Master had previously intended to cultivate a successor for Tianzong, besides the eldest disciple Jin Zijin, there is another, but it is inconvenient to disclose at the moment.

The internal arrangements of the Dao Family had already been made by them, only lacking an opportunity to announce it to the world. Now that everything that needed to be said has been clarified and all arrangements made, at least in the eyes of outsiders, the Dao Family seems to be at peace.

However, it's a different story for the common folk and the royal court, for the Dao Family's denouncement of Yu Jizi sparked a huge uproar.

The faction of the three kings has almost completely perished, and those few who escaped won't have any significant impact. Although this event was of the greatest magnitude, there is not much to talk about now.

It's all in the past.

At worst, they would scour for descendants of the former rebels, to see if any are still alive, in order to properly appease them.

They are all family after all, stirred up by others to reach a point of mutual destruction.

Compared to the rebellion of the rebel kings, another matter seems even greater.

That is the past massacre of the entire family of Doctor Zhou from the Imperial Medical Bureau.

He was originally accused of conspiring against the imperial heirs, and his entire family along with the former Empress Yu were all executed. However, from this grand meeting of the Dao Family, irrefutable evidence proved that he was wrongly accused, and so was Empress Yu. It was merely a scheme set up in the Harem competition.

What’s more despicable is that the Dao Family’s evidence can prove that Empress Yu was wronged and so was Doctor Zhou, but it does not clearly identify who the real culprit is, making ambiguous statements and leaving the Ministers to wildly speculate.

No, they dare to speculate wildly, but they also don’t dare to speak recklessly.

Because there seems to be a hint that it implies that the instigator behind everything is the Empress, with the Empress orchestrating everything from behind.

Don’t look at the Empress still being confined to the Yeting by the emperor, but the Duke of Protecting the State is still standing in the court attending the assembly.

It’s easy to speak out, but without concrete evidence that the Empress committed the act, you’d better wait for the Duke of Protecting the State to bite back at you.

When you bite him, it might not hit the mark, but if he bites you, it’s guaranteed to be accurate.

That old fox, most people don’t want to provoke him.

Especially after so many years of a cold case, where would you find that evidence?

Everyone looks at each other, unable to say a word of use.

The emperor asked lightly, "Do none of the ministers have anything to say? Are we to let Empress Yu and Doctor Zhou’s family continue to bear this wrongful accusation?"

No one dared to speak, but the Duke of Protecting the State stepped forward and said, "Since the involvement of Empress Yu with Doctor Zhou in scheming against Consort Jiang Shu is false, then I believe there is a significant issue with Consort Jiang Shu. With all due respect, I request the emperor to summon the old Jiang back to Beijing to assist in investigating this matter."

As soon as he finished speaking, Zhang Cheng, who had not been on good terms with him lately, spoke up.

"Duke of Protecting the State, one shouldn't be too harsh, leave some leeway for people. Consort Jiang Shu died in childbirth years ago, and her father, Old Jiang, grieved deeply and resigned to return home.

After losing his daughter, all he wanted was to retire peacefully at home. You claim he framed Empress Yu and Doctor Zhou, what motive would he have? Would he orchestrate his own daughter's death and live in unrest till old age?

Humph, I think it's a case of the mantis stalking the cicada, unaware of the oriole behind; someone used a plan to kill two birds with one stone."

Chapter 1199: If There's Milk, She's the Mother

"You..." The Protector-General pointed at Zhang Cheng furiously and said, "What are you talking about? Everything should be based on evidence. If you continue to spout nonsense, I will report you for slander."

"Oh, I'm so scared of being slandered by you. Back then, the evidence was conclusive, proving that Noble Consort Yu was jealous and deliberately conspired with Imperial Physician Zhou to kill Consort Jiang who was pregnant with child. But what about now? Are the proofs from the Dao Family fake?"

"You... Still, we cannot conclude that Consort Jiang was innocent." The Protector-General said indignantly: "I would boldly petition to the Emperor to thoroughly investigate this matter."

Ministers who supported the Protector-General immediately said in unison: "We implore the Emperor to thoroughly investigate this matter."

But investigate? It sounds so easy to say, but after so many years, where would one begin to investigate?

Jie Huanzhi stood up and said, "Your Majesty, I believe that it is meaningless to continue the investigation after so many years. What's most important now is to restore the reputation of Noble Consort Yu and the family of Imperial Physician Zhou, to clear their names so that the living can be at peace and the deceased can rest in peace."

"Yes, indeed, Your Majesty. The family of Noble Consort Yu has been demoted because of this affair. The Emperor should issue a decree to recall them and restore their former positions!"

Zhang Cheng smiled meaningfully at the Protector-General and said, "Of course, we must not let the real culprits off the hook. It has been so many years; investigations will naturally be difficult. We can let it be investigated slowly. The most important thing is to recall those of the Yu Family who have been wronged back to Beijing."

"Alas, it's just a pity that no one from Doctor Zhou's family is alive anymore."

...

Gu Youyou sat on the wicker chair in front of the window, looking at the account books sent from Qingshui Town, which contained letters from Qin Changlin.

The wrongful case of Doctor Zhou's family had come to an end, and the Emperor had issued a decree to posthumously exonerate him. His disciples and the fact that he fled Beijing with the help of the State Preceptor and hid in Qingshui Town under an assumed name were also exposed.

Since Doctor Zhou had no sons who lived, Yuancheng, whom he had saved and raised from a young age, became Doctor Zhou's heir, taking the name Zhou Yuancheng.

He is now diligently studying to gain scholarly honors, and Doctor Zhou's glory will also fall upon him.

Gu Youyou teased Qin Changlin in her reply, asking if he was jealous. She suggested that he might as well change his name to Zhou Changlin, perhaps he could even take over Doctor Zhou's former duties and become an Imperial Physician in the palace.

After writing the letter, she sealed it inside the account book.

Jin Zijin was playing with Little Xuyao not far away. The infant, not understanding anything, lay in a wooden cradle looking at him, probably as if watching someone insane.

All of this was his achievement, otherwise, his master’s grievances might have never been redressed.

Gu Youyou watched him for a moment and then walked over, jokingly saying, "Why are you acting like a big kid? With this leisure time, you might as well make some small toys to hang over his cradle."

But Jin Zijin insisted, "He understands. Look, he likes me more than he likes you now. Come on, son, look at Daddy."

Jin Xuyao indeed seemed to understand and turned his little face slightly, staring intently at Jin Zijin.

Gu Youyou scoffed disdainfully and said, "For him, anyone with milk is mother, watch this."

Then she lifted her specially tailored dress, revealing her bosom to the child, whose gaze was immediately attracted to his sustenance. He stretched out his little hands and laughed for a hug, wanting to nurse.

Jin Zijin’s face turned dark in an instant. He pulled her over and put down her dress, staring seriously at Jin Xuyao, "This is my wife, rein in those lustful eyes. You, little guy, better be careful."

Chapter 1200: The Salted Fish Turns Over

...

The repeated blows to the Ducal Residence’s power had caused many of its supporters to waver in their conviction.

Out of the three princes, two had already begotten heirs, yet King Jin, who was the first to establish himself, remained childless—a persistent concern gnawing at everyone’s minds.

Lacking an heir simply would not do; when His Majesty proposes to appoint the Crown Prince, wouldn’t King Jin’s faction lose much of its clout?

But conversely, those ladies who were poisoned are still undergoing treatment; they aren't fools, naturally they wouldn't suggest King Jin take in more consorts while their own daughters are incapable of bearing children. Hence, everyone is quite torn—should they bear children or not?

There's only one woman in the residence capable of bearing children, saving much trouble.

"Madam, now that the Prince showers our Madam with his favor night after night, we have indeed turned misfortune into luck."

The maids of Left Madam now walk with their heads held high in the Prince Jin Residence.

Those who used to look down upon them dare not do so anymore.

Left Madam is the only woman in this courtyard who can bear children; King Jin's eldest son is likely in Left Madam's womb—how could they not curry favor?

"Long Liu, this bowl of ginseng soup has been simmered by this old maid all afternoon especially for nourishment; could you take it to Left Madam to taste?"

Long Liu unapologetically took the well-simmered ginseng soup and said with a smile, "Our Madam will remember your kindness; keep up the good work!"

The kitchen maid was flabbergasted by the favor, repeatedly assuring her gratitude and vowed to repay Left Madam's gracious patronage.

A kitchen maid speaking of gracious patronage—preposterous.

Long Liu, carrying the ginseng soup with pride, returned to Left Madam's courtyard, giving the other ladies a taste of envy along the way.