Farmhouse 1341

Chapter 1341: His Taste

After facing setbacks on the first day, Yue Rujing felt quite repulsed by these girls. Whenever others stared at him, he always thought they were judging his less-than-robust physique, which made him somewhat self-conscious.

Gu Youyou teased him, saying, “People’s perceptions differ from place to place. If they don’t fancy you, it doesn’t mean you’re lacking. Don’t overthink it, just let them take a good look with confidence.”

“Ah, the girls in Zhuzhao Country are much better,” Yue Rujing sighed softly. “The girls in Zhuzhao glance demurely, unlike the women here who stare unchecked.”

Gu Youyou suggested, “I once went to Nanzhao Country with Zijin and saw how people there matched through singing mountain songs. If they sang correctly, they’d row together to the Marriage Fate Platform. Why don’t you give it a try?”

Yue Rujing snorted, “You mentioned those are just ordinary people. Even the marriages within the Nanzhao Imperial Family are merely interest exchanges. You’re overthinking it.”

Gu Youyou pursed her lips, choosing not to further discuss the topic.

Seeing that Searcy had prepared everything and was waiting outside, Gu Youyou stood up, dusted off her skirt, and with a touch of schadenfreude said, “Well, fret slowly. I heard the Commandery Princess from the family of the Eighth Prince will be coming soon. She’s quite intellectual; maybe she’ll fancy your type?”

Gu Youyou left with Searcy after speaking. Today, her senior brother had also gone out early, leaving Yue Rujing alone in the posthouse, feeling extremely annoyed. He had no choice but to deal with it since he was on others’ turf.

He was determined to handle Yu Jizi.

After Gu Youyou and the others left, soon a doorman reported that the Commandery Princess from the family of the Eighth Prince had arrived.

An elegant young lady gracefully stepped in, and upon seeing her poise and gentle brows, Yue Rujing suddenly felt a lot happier.

That's how a girl should be — taking small steps, smiling without showing her teeth. He found this Commandery Princess quite appealing.

"Prince Yue," the young lady nodded slightly at him.

Yue Rujing smiled, raised his hand to salute, and said, "Commandery Princess, please come inside…"

This was probably the only perfect start for Yue Rujing in these many days of matchmaking.

The Commandery Princess, seeing such a jade-like man, also had affectionate eyes, her every frown and smile full of shyness.

Yue Rujing felt women should be like this. After seeing off Princess Zhao Yuezhi, he thought he would have much to say when his senior and Gu Youyou returned, at least no longer being mocked by them.

Meanwhile, for Gu Youyou, it was her last time treating the Empress Dowager; the Empress Dowager's illness was completely under control, though to prevent her pneumonia from relapsing, she needed another two courses of medication.

Gu Youyou handed the prescription to the accompanying Fifteenth Prince, saying, "The necessary medicines and usage are listed here. You can send someone to fetch them from me, though my current supply is limited, so it might not be complete. You can also gather herbs from the mountains, but if you're unsure, it could be troublesome. My advice is to buy them from Jisheng Hall in Lingnan, where the medicine is comprehensive. For the sake of the Empress Dowager's health, I hope you can set aside any prejudices."

The Empress Dowager, being treated by Gu Youyou, had been brainwashed by her various methods and could now accept the medicines from Zhuzhao Country, though she hiddenly maintained her pride.

When Gu Youyou suggested they buy medicine from Zhuzhao Country, the Empress Dowager pretended not to hear, turning her face to look elsewhere.

Chapter 1342: The Emperor of Beijing

The Fifteenth Prince glanced at the Empress Dowager, suddenly smiled, and then turned to Gu Youyou, feeling that this woman truly was remarkable.

Unbeknownst to him, she managed to change the deeply ingrained stubbornness of his mother.

No matter what, his mother now no longer rejects using medicine from Zhuzhao Country.

“Alright, I will send someone to Lingnan to buy medicine.”

He noticed the Empress Dowager’s reaction, but she still pretended not to see.

The Fifteenth Prince was completely at ease now, thinking that perhaps Jin Zijin and the others might actually succeed.

…

In Beijing of Zhuzhao Country

The Ducal Residence was raided, but that was not the end of it. On one hand, the Emperor was dismantling their peripheral forces within the Imperial Court, whilst on the other hand, doing everything possible to weaken their control over the Beiping Army Camp.

He could easily treat Beiping as he did Xining, but after all, the Xining battle was costly and resulted in severe casualties; for the common people, warfare is always the last resort.

Even if a battle is ultimately unavoidable, as the Emperor, he has to try his best to minimize the losses from warfare.

“Cough, cough…” The night was already deep, and the Emperor, draped in a thin blanket, was still reviewing memorials at his desk.

He sought opinions from others, since many in the court were remnants of the Ducal Residence, making it inconvenient to speak openly on certain matters, thus court ministers resorted to conveying many issues to the Emperor via memorials.

His workload had greatly increased, and coupled with years of exertion and fatigue, his health was deteriorating.

“Cough, cough, cough…”

Throughout the night, he coughed countless times.

Eunuch Wan, standing nearby, was anxious as well, and softly advised, “Your Majesty, the night is deep. Wouldn’t it be better to review the memorials tomorrow? Please go back and rest first.”

The Emperor, covering his mouth with a handkerchief, coughed a few more times and said, “Just wait a little longer, I’m almost done.”

“Your Majesty, your health is poor, why exert yourself so…”

The Emperor raised his hand to stop him from continuing, and softly said, “I am already so old, how many more years do I have left to live?”

“Oh, Your Majesty, you are not old at all. Please do not say such things. You are destined for a hundred years of longevity. Ah…pooh, pooh, the old servant misspoke, you are destined for a thousand years; see, everyone calls you ‘Wansui’!”

The Emperor laughed heartily, saying, “Wan Decheng, you grow slyer with age; your age increases, and so does your eloquence. Ai, a hundred years and such, how do I dare to dream; I only hope I can hold on a few more years, to pass on this ravaged land whole. You should know, my greatest wish is to hand a clean kingdom to my successors.”

“Your Majesty, you…” Eunuch Wan sighed deeply, saying, “You work so hard, yet no one understands you. They all think you’re ruthless in your pursuit of power, favoring whoever holds it, but you are the one suffering the most!

Back then, the late Emperor handed over a fragmented realm to you; that kind of kingdom, if you don’t strive for it, it might fall to the Third Prince or the Fifth Prince, and this land might have long changed hands.

If I may speak irreverently, the other Princes are brave but lack wisdom. They don’t possess your meticulousness and have no way to maneuver among various factions, making them all cautious of each other. Your forbearance has earned a generation’s peace, yet they don’t understand your earnest intentions; the old servant truly feels it’s unjust for you!”

The Emperor couldn’t help but smile at these words from Eunuch Wan, casually saying, “Wan Decheng, don’t you understand?”

Chapter 1343: King Jin Farming

“Ah? Me?” Eunuch Wan hurriedly shook his head and said, “How can this old servant be counted? Being able to accompany the Emperor for a chat is already satisfying to this old servant.”

The Emperor placed a reviewed memorial to the side, which Eunuch Wan immediately picked up and carefully stored away before handing him a new one.

The Emperor looked at it for a moment, unsure of what to write, and suddenly asked Eunuch Wan, “How do you find Zijin’s way of handling affairs?”

“The Crown Prince?” Eunuch Wan was momentarily stunned and said, “The Crown Prince acts with thunderous speed. It may not have been suitable when you first ascended the throne, but after these

years of your reign, the political situation has become quite stable, so against those stubborn elements, such decisive action from the Crown Prince is needed.

Like the Ducal Residence, they no longer seek mere stability and prosperity and have long harbored thoughts of disloyalty. If they are allowed to continue growing stronger, it will ultimately be detrimental."

"Indeed." The Emperor cast an approving glance at Eunuch Wan and said, "It seems age has not only increased your eloquence but also deepened your insight."

"Hehe, with the Emperor speaking of this old servant in such a way, I am quite embarrassed." Eunuch Wan bent over and modestly stepped back two steps.

The Emperor sighed lightly, "The remnants of the Ducal Residence indeed cannot be tolerated; on one hand, we must continue appeasing them, but on the other, it is unacceptable for them to continue growing."

He tossed that memorial onto the table and said with a cold snort, "How many days has it been since the commotion subsided? They are already recruiting soldiers under various pretexts. Tell me, are they preparing to declare war on me?"

"This…" Eunuch Wan was quite startled, glanced at the memorial, and then quickly lowered his head, saying, "With such a serious matter, should the Emperor discuss it with General Xiao?"

"Mm, summon Xiao Jinfei to the palace tomorrow."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

Seeing the Emperor's fatigued state, Eunuch Wan didn't know what else to say apart from sighing.

The Emperor continued to mutter, "The matters in Beiping haven't been handled well. Zijin has gone to Nanzhao Country; who knows when he will return? And the Heavenly Master, no news from the Heavenly Master either. Sometimes I'm utterly exhausted, but I dare not rest."

After speaking, he sat down on the chair, massaging his temples to alleviate fatigue, and asked, “How is King Jin doing in the Zongrenfu?”

Eunuch Wan organized the memorials, stood respectfully by the Emperor’s side, and replied, “The Princess Consort of King Jin is also in the Zongrenfu, and they’ve turned their little courtyard into a vegetable garden. The cabbages are growing splendidly.”

“Growing vegetables, huh?” The Emperor paused and continued, “Growing vegetables is good; it calms his temperament, and in the future…”

The Emperor, thinking about how his health was failing compared to before, became more worried about matters concerning King Jin.

After considering, he said, “Prepare some things for them, and arrange for them to leave the palace.”

“What?” Eunuch Wan was so startled that both his hands trembled, looking incredulously at the Emperor.

Arranging for King Jin and his Princess Consort to leave the palace?

King Jin agreed to the Ducal Residence’s proposal, committed the absurdity of disrupting the royal lineage, and although he later brought this matter to light and left the palace, it is still an unforgivable crime.

Such a crime warrants him to stay in the Zongrenfu forever; releasing him would bring shame to the Imperial Family, wouldn’t it?

But the Emperor said, “Tonight, just do it; this isn’t something honorable anyway, release them from the palace tonight. Do it secretly, and let no one know.”

Eunuch Wan opened his mouth, wanting to say something, but upon seeing the increasingly aged features of the Emperor’s face, he ultimately said nothing.

Chapter 1344: Going to Zongrenfu

It's also good to send them away, the Emperor is the Emperor of Zhuzhao Country, but he is also a father.

No matter what the mothers of the princes and princesses have done, the Emperor will do his utmost to protect those children, just like with Prince Qin. If he really can't keep them, he will still preserve their ranks. When people mention the Ninth Princess, they will know that there were also the Eighth Princess and the Seventh Princess before her.

After serving the Emperor to rest, Eunuch Wan quickly packed his things and secretly went to the Zongrenfu.

Silver notes sufficient for their lifetime needs, that's the Emperor's private money.

There was also a handwritten letter from the Emperor.

In the dead of night, the gatekeepers were shocked when they saw Eunuch Wan coming.

As they were about to greet him, Eunuch Wan gestured for them to be silent.

"Quickly open the door, go to King Jin's place."

The gatekeepers were taken aback, opening the door while quietly asking, "Eunuch Wan, has something happened?"

Eunuch Wan glared coldly at them and snorted, "Today's events must not be leaked in the slightest. The Emperor is merciful and doesn't want to use murder to silence to keep the secret, do you understand?"

The gatekeepers were almost scared to death by Eunuch Wan's words and dared not ask any more questions, silently following behind Eunuch Wan, accepting whatever he said.

“We will keep our mouths shut, Eunuch Wan, please rest assured. You have not come here tonight, nothing has happened tonight.”

“Hmm, not bad, you boys are quite sensible,” Eunuch Wan replied with satisfaction.

“Lead the way, to the yard where King Jin lives.”

Passing through several corridors, they arrived at a less dilapidated courtyard deep within the Zongrenfu, which was considered a higher-class courtyard in this place, and where King Jin was confined.

The gatekeepers took out the key and unlocked it, gesturing for Eunuch Wan to enter.

Eunuch Wan lifted his head, speaking in a low voice to the gatekeepers, “I will go in, you stand guard here, be alert, and do not let anyone discover.”

The gatekeepers nodded and said with servility, “Rest assured, we are vigilant and will ensure Eunuch Wan’s tasks are handled perfectly.”

Eunuch Wan flicked the speaker’s head and said, “Wrong, it’s not for me, it’s for the Emperor.”

“Ah, yes, I spoke wrongly, it’s for the Emperor, for the Emperor.”

Only then did Eunuch Wan nod in satisfaction and entered the desolate courtyard.

Tonight, the moon was dark, and the wind was high. Eunuch Wan held only a small guiding lamp in his hand. He carried the small lamp to the eaves, gently knocking on the door, and soon King Jin’s voice came through.

“Who is it?”

Eunuch Wan did not respond but continued to knock on the door.

Lin Qianqing nudged King Jin and said, “Cousin, go and take a look. It’s so late, yet somebody is knocking on the door.”

Indeed, no one would come knocking at such an abandoned place at this hour, those who could enter must have used a key, who would come knocking late at night at a ‘discarded one’s’ door?

King Jin got out of bed impatiently and replied, “Stop knocking, I’m coming, I’m coming.”

He quickly put on his clothes, got out of bed, and opened the door, only to see Eunuch Wan wearing a black cloak.

He was utterly surprised, “Eunuch Wan, why have you come?”

Could it be Father… he didn’t want to think any further.

Things had reached this point, he was already quite resigned, they could do as they pleased, whether to kill or release him, he didn’t care anymore.

He said, “Eunuch Wan, please come in first, the room is simple, make yourself comfortable.”

Chapter 1345: Let Them Go

King Jin yawned, lazily finding a chair to sit on, crossing his legs with a drowsy look.

Eunuch Wan sighed helplessly, “Your Highness, King Jin, it’s the Emperor who sent this old servant.”

“Oh.” King Jin replied softly, continuing to drift between sleep and wakefulness.

Lin Qianqing, having dressed, came out. He glanced at the listless King Jin and asked Eunuch Wan, “Eunuch Wan, is there some urgent matter for the Emperor to have you come to the Zongrenfu so late?”

Eunuch Wan looked at King Jin helplessly and said to Lin Qianqing, “Indeed, there is an urgent matter. Princess Jin, the Emperor has sent this old servant to let you go.”

Upon hearing this, King Jin abruptly opened his eyes and stared at Eunuch Wan in surprise.

“Let us go? What do you mean?”

Eunuch Wan sighed, “The confinement of King Jin in Zongrenfu was the family clan’s decision; the Emperor never wanted it that way. The Emperor has always sought a suitable opportunity to let you leave. Luckily, tonight’s moonless, windy night is a perfect time; you should quickly pack up and leave.” He handed a package to King Jin, saying, “The Emperor asked this old servant to bring this.”

Of course, all these words were just made-up by Eunuch Wan; no one truly knew the Emperor’s thoughts. No one can fathom the Emperor’s deep intentions!

In short, you should leave.

Holding the package, King Jin was slow to react.

Lin Qianqing, somewhat excited, couldn’t suppress a smile and suddenly knelt before Eunuch Wan.

Eunuch Wan was startled and hurriedly knelt down as well.

Lin Qianqing kowtowed to him, and with a troubled face, he also quickly kowtowed to her.

“Princess Jin, what are you doing? Aren’t you overwhelming this old servant? Please stop kowtowing, just get up.”

Eunuch Wan, while kowtowing, helped Lin Qianqing up, and only then did she begin to cry softly, “Eunuch Wan, once we leave, we may never return to Beijing. I beg you to find an opportunity to inform my parents: I will repay their nurturing grace in the next life.”

As she kowtowed sharply, Eunuch Wan did not stop her but moved aside.

This kowtow was Lin Qianqing’s way of showing respect, as a daughter, to Master Lin and Madam Lin.

“Alright, alright, this old servant will definitely do it.” Eunuch Wan, moved by her, also shed tears.

This was Lin Qianqing’s second late-night escape. Compared to the confusion of the first time, she was more certain she would never return, making the departure more sorrowful.

Yet at the thought of a continued life of freedom, she cried tears of joy.

Supporting King Jin, who was still in a daze, unsure of what he was thinking, she said, “Cousin, we can leave now, from now on…”

Before she could finish, King Jin raised his head and asked her blankly, “Where can we go?”

“Anywhere is fine!” Lin Qianqing was momentarily stunned.

“But we’ve been served all our lives; we don’t know how to do anything.”

Lin Qianqing grinned and said, “It doesn’t matter; we can learn. Look how well the cabbages you’ve planted in the courtyard are growing?”

“Really?” King Jin took a deep breath.

Lin Qianqing said, “We can go anywhere. From now on, we can be like the stars in Cousin’s paintings, belonging to the entire world…”

Eunuch Wan wiped his tears and smiled, saying, “The Emperor has prepared enough silver for King Jin and Princess Jin. Just consider it a trip. When you’re tired, find a picturesque spot to settle down; that’s a kind of life too. What’s most important is being alive and free.”

Chapter 1346: Going to the Imperial Mausoleum

King Jin slightly relaxed his furrowed brows, looking at Lin Qianqing’s hopeful eyes, smiled and nodded: "Good, wherever we go is fine. If cousin likes to look everywhere, we shall look everywhere."

...

Under Eunuch Wan’s arrangements, they left the city smoothly.

The carriage headed south; as dawn approached, King Jin suddenly called the carriage driver to a halt.

"Your Highness, King Jin, what’s the matter?" The carriage driver stopped the carriage by the roadside and turned to ask those inside.

King Jin poked his head out from inside the carriage and asked, "How far is it from here to the Imperial Mausoleum?"

The carriage driver looked at the sky and said, "Not far, we should be there before dawn."

"Good, we’ll go to the Imperial Mausoleum first," said King Jin.

The carriage driver nodded, turned the carriage in the direction of the Imperial Mausoleum, and sped away.

Lin Qianqing tugged on King Jin’s sleeve and said, "Why are we going to the mausoleum? Eunuch Wan conveyed that father wants us to head south."

King Jin curled his lips slightly, lightly sighed, and said, "No, we are not going south. We'll go to the mausoleum first, then..." Thinking of those outside, he said, "Let's go to the mausoleum first and talk about it there."

He opened the bundle brought by Eunuch Wan, filled with treasures, silver notes, and some gold and silver items.

He carefully checked each item inside, took everything he could, packed it into another bundle, then flattened the bundle and tucked it inside the clothes at his waist.

But the large silver notes remained untouched.

Lin Qianqing stared blankly, puzzled, and asked, "What is this for?"

King Jin lowered his voice and told her, "These are from father; they cannot be kept. As soon as we use these silver notes, his people can trace our whereabouts."

He patted the other bundle and said, "These items can be kept; they are given out of sudden kindness from Eunuch Wan, who does not know the Emperor's deeper intentions."

Lin Qianqing felt a chill in her heart, glanced outside the carriage, and then quietly asked King Jin, "Do you mean perhaps father let us go because..."

King Jin shook his head and said, "I don't know, but the Ducal Residence, or father, they have always regarded Mother and me as tools for their use, which is certainly true from the start. I don't know if father letting us go has another meaning, but while Mother was still alive, she told me, in this world, never to easily trust anyone again; she lost her entire life because of it. I don't know what father is thinking, but I have to be cautious."

Seeing King Jin speaking so earnestly, Lin Qianqing said no more.

"Alright, I'll follow cousin; wherever you say we go, we shall go," she replied.

King Jin gently embraced Lin Qianqing, pressed against her head, and whispered, "I never thought, in the end, the person I can trust most would be you. Cousin, you mustn't deceive me!"

The carriage soon reached the vicinity of the Imperial Mausoleum, the driver stopped, and respectfully told King Jin and Lin Qianqing inside, "Your Highness, King Jin, dear Princess, please wait a moment; I'll make the necessary arrangements."

Not just anyone can approach the mausoleum; this man is the Emperor's person and knows how to allow King Jin and Lin Qianqing to approach the mausoleum.

Soon the driver returned, stood outside the carriage, and respectfully said, "Your Highness, King Jin, Princess, you may go quickly and return soon; I'll wait here for you."

"Thank you," Lin Qianqing said.

Together with King Jin, she went to the altar of the mausoleum, where King Jin searched one row after another, finding Empress Jin Yushu's memorial tablet in an inconspicuous corner.

Chapter 1347: From Now On, Across the World

King Jin's eyes flashed with a hint of surprise. He rubbed his eyes and looked a few more times to confirm that he was not mistaken.

He collapsed to the ground, utterly exhausted, murmuring, "Consort rank? How could it be a consort rank? From the day my mother became Empress to father's ascension, she wore the phoenix crown. Why is she only a consort?"

Lin Qianqing softly sighed, "Mother was demoted to consort before she was allowed to enter the Imperial Mausoleum. I've heard it was a special privilege granted by father's grace, otherwise, she wouldn't have been allowed in."

King Jin staggered back, tears streaming down his face.

Mother struggled her entire life, only to end up with the title of consort.

“While others may not know, how could father not? No matter what mother did, it was all with his tacit consent. She was merely a weapon in their hands. What wrong did she commit?

He knew exactly what she cared about the most, and yet even after her death, he stripped it away. How can mother rest in peace like this?”

King Jin was already sobbing uncontrollably, covering his face with his hands.

Lin Qianqing also felt an overwhelming bitterness in his heart. They say the Imperial Family is heartless, yet the once magnificent Empress ended up like this?

They looked through row by row, and on Jin Moning’s Empress placard was only one name, Xiao Qinqin.

In truth, throughout history, each Emperor had more than one Empress. Those who lived long often appointed five or six Empresses in their lifetime. Most weren’t remarkable during their lives, but the living generally respected the deceased. In life, they might not have been cherished, but posthumous honor was granted.

Jin Yushu, who spent her whole life as an Empress and ended up as a consort, stands alone in this fate.

King Jin dried his tears, sitting beneath Jin Yushu’s placard, speaking softly.

“We are leaving. We came to see you, mother. Xiaoran was ignorant and gullible during your life, suffered losses, and was deceived. Now, all has been thought through. Wealth and splendor aren’t important; what matters is living peacefully and comfortably.

If only you were still alive, if only I could take you with me, but… Today, as we part, I do not know when we’ll be able to offer our respects again—perhaps never. But Xiaoran will never forget, in this world, mother always treated Xiaoran with sincerity. Whenever there’s a festival, Xiaoran will honor you from afar.”

After speaking, King Jin kowtowed thrice before Jin Yushu's placard, then left furiously with Lin Qianqing.

He didn't leave through the main gate but circumvented the mausoleum complex, bypassing the grand imperial mound under construction, and entered a small path, thus separating from the coachman waiting outside.

He and Lin Qianqing ran wildly westward.

As Lin Qianqing gasped for breath, he lifted her onto his back and kept running.

The sky gradually brightened, and they saw a caravan heading west.

King Jin's face broke into a smile, waving his hand, he shouted loudly to the caravan, "Hey, can you give us a ride? We'll pay in Silver."

The leader of the caravan saw it was a man and a woman dressed simply and plainly, and asked, "Where are you headed?"

King Jin replied, "We're going to Qiuci to do some small business—is it along the way?"

"It is, it is. We are bound for Qiuci too. You two can join us, doing small business is tough. There's no need to talk about paying in Silver, we're just traveling companions."

"Then I thank you, kind sir." He looked at Lin Qianqing and added, "This is my wife, she's a bit tired from the journey. Could she ride in your carriage?"

Chapter 1348: Striving for Fame

The boss was generous and nodded, saying, "Sure, but the carriage is used for transporting goods, so it might not be very comfortable to sit in."

"No problem, no problem, as long as we can sit!"

King Jin, with a beaming smile, lifted Lin Qianqing onto the goods-loaded carriage, then took the reins from the coachman's hands, leading the horse and following the caravan westward.

The morning sunlight gradually rose, casting long shadows behind the caravan.

A gentle breeze blew across their faces, making even breathing feel much easier.

The long-held repression gradually transformed them into different people, people reborn anew, as they journeyed westward through the wind and rain.

…

It's been more than a month since Yu Jizi left, and Gu Youyou also successfully healed the Empress Dowager's wounds, yet her status in Nanzhao had not progressed at all, which worried her.

She took a deep breath and said to Jin Zijin, "Why don't I go around visiting various villages with Searcy tomorrow as a traveling doctor?"

Jin Zijin pondered for a moment, then said, "It's possible, but just imagine the scene: a witch doctor going to Zhuzhao Country as a traveling doctor?"

Gu Youyou: "…"

"Of course, there will still be people willing to accept it, like those who are critically ill and the witch doctors have already pronounced them dead. However, if you treat such people and they end up dying, it will only further damage your reputation."

Gu Youyou fell silent, this was considering the situation with patients willing to give it a try, but in Nanzhao more people were unwilling to believe in doctors from Zhuzhao Country. Encountering a doctor like her visiting, it would probably be like an ordinary Zhuzhao household suddenly being told their fortune by an old man with a celestial guide marking, only to be told their luck was running out, and they'd be driven away.

But what other options were there if they didn't do this?

Recently, she and Yue Rujing have been wandering around deceiving and inquiring about Magic Poisonous Insect Techniques from Nanzhao Country.

In this world, what task is not difficult? For many people, simply wanting to live is hard.

After pondering for a while, Gu Youyou raised her head, gritted her teeth and said, "I need to go, we have to at least try. Getting started is always the hardest part; saying a thousand words is not as good as taking a single step. Once you take the first step, it's not difficult. Even the hardest paths are made by people walking them."

Jin Zijin paused for a moment, then smiled, "Alright, tomorrow we will split up and act. You all be careful and avoid any conflicts with others."

Gu Youyou had never been one to sit idly and await disaster, everyone was well aware of this.

…

A new batch of medicine had arrived, and rather than climbing the mountains to gather herbs themselves, it was better to have them delivered from Jisheng Hall. Gu Youyou and Searcy also packed their medicine boxes, preparing to visit each village.

Jin Zijin and Yue Rujing had already left, this time heading to a slightly more distant village; they wouldn't be back for several days, leaving Gui Yunxi at the post house to watch the door.

Gui Yunxi's coachman was rendered useless in Nanzhao Country. Here, the many mountain roads meant transporting items was done by people using backpacks, and only a few official roads were passable for carriages.

And the village Gu Youyou and the others were headed to had no need for carriage drivers.

After lamenting, he could only stay.

However, just as Gu Youyou and Searcy were heading out with their medicine boxes, they unexpectedly received good news.

This actually started yesterday.

Prince Fifteen, whose actions were unpredictable, unexpectedly had a change of heart and decided to help them.

Chapter 1349: Helping Them Speak

The Empress Dowager’s illness has greatly improved, and the Emperor of Nanzhao held a family banquet in the harem to celebrate. The Empress Dowager was in good spirits today and praised her youngest son for his filial piety, saying he found a good witch doctor for her. But at this moment, the fifteenth Prince jumped out to challenge this notion.

"Mother, it’s not your son’s fault, there is something your son has kept from you."

The Empress Dowager was pleased and didn’t pay much attention, smiling as she said, "Yanzhong, what is it? Even if you have kept something from me, I know it’s for my own good, isn’t it?"

The fifteenth Prince nodded repeatedly, saying, "Indeed, I was afraid it might affect your treatment, so I did not dare tell the truth. Now that your illness has improved, I feel uneasy keeping it from you any longer. I plan to reveal what I’ve been hiding."

The Empress Dowager laughed heartily and said to Jin Liuying, "Look at this silly child, sincere at heart. He kept it from me out of consideration, and now he decides to speak out, also for me."

The Emperor of Nanzhao squinted towards the fifteenth Prince, as he probably guessed what he wanted to say, but showed no intention to stop him.

As the saying goes, when fairies fight, mortals suffer.

Much like what he said before, between Jin Zijin and Yu Jizi’s confrontation, he was merely an innocent bystander, content to watch without getting involved.

But the sudden intention of his fifteenth brother to help them left him puzzled.

It seemed out of character as he wasn’t one to meddle, but it appeared to be related to the Princess of Zhuzhao Country.

The Empress Dowager beckoned the fifteenth Prince to her side and said gently, "Little Fifteen, tell me, what have you kept from me?"

The fifteenth Prince wore a gentle smile and said, "This matter isn’t too big nor too small. Actually, the person treating your illness was not a witch doctor from Nanzhao, but a doctor from Zhuzhao Country. She also has another identity as the eldest daughter-in-law of Zhuzhao Country and Liuying’s sister-in-law."

The smile on the Empress Dowager’s face froze instantly, leaving her speechless.

Everyone was stunned, and they began whispering among themselves.

"How could the fifteenth Prince find a doctor from Zhuzhao Country to treat the Empress Dowager? She despises doctors and only trusts witch doctors."

"Indeed, the fifteenth Prince is too bold, this is the Empress Dowager’s treatment, what if something goes wrong?"

Jin Liuying was annoyed by this talk and said, "My sister-in-law happened to be here, invited by the Prince, to treat the Empress Dowager. It’s because your witch doctors couldn’t cure her that she willingly took the risk to save lives.

You say she wants to harm the Empress Dowager? If she pretended not to know how to treat, wouldn't it be easier not to intervene at all? Why make such a fuss? And the Empress Dowager's illness is now cured, isn't it? Everything is before your eyes, how can you still talk nonsense here?"

Most people here outranked Jin Liuying as they were the Emperor of Nanzhao's concubines.

Hearing Jin Liuying speak to them in such a tone made them indignant.

Someone remarked snidely, "Oh, Princess of a great country, looking down on our witch doctors, aren't you? If you didn't look down, why did you marry into our Nanzhao Country?"

"Exactly, since you're married, you're no longer a princess of a great country but the wife of the fifteenth Prince. Mind your identity, this is not the place for you to flaunt your power."

Jin Liuying, being impulsive with the mindset of a young girl, couldn't out-argue these women.

She looked at the fifteenth Prince with a bit of grievance.

Chapter 1350: Cultural Exchange

The Fifteenth Prince gave her a reassuring smile and then turned to the Empress Dowager seated high with a stern face, saying, "Mother, the Emperor of Zhuzhao's aim in the intermarriage between our countries is to blend the cultures of the two nations, to complement each other's strengths, and not remain rigidly unchanged. While our witch doctors are indeed good, we cannot deny the skills of Zhuzhao Country's doctors. Look, haven't the people of Zhuzhao Country been healing well with their doctors over so many years? Otherwise, Zhuzhao Country wouldn't have become a great nation."

A great nation, apart from its inherent strength, must also possess sufficient broad-mindedness. It is a fact that Doctor Gu cured you, and it is also a fact that our witch doctors have shortcomings. People are unwilling to believe it purely because they can't overcome their inner barriers.

Yet if we cannot accept these things, won't it just make us appear narrow-minded and become a laughingstock? How, then, can we make our nation prosperous?"

The Fifteenth Prince's speech left everyone at a loss for words.

Everyone looked towards the Empress Dowager, who remained silent and did not speak.

The Nanzhao Emperor smiled and said, "Then, according to Fifteenth Brother, what should we do?"

The Fifteenth Prince bowed to the Nanzhao Emperor and said, "Royal Brother, I heard that the Great Shaman took Doctor Gu to the Witch Doctor Village to research more ways to save lives. This shows that the Great Shaman has a far-sighted view and is accepting Zhuzhao Country's medical skills.

Since we neither understand medical skills nor witch doctor skills, we might as well approach this matter with an ordinary mindset. If one falls ill, one should first seek a witch doctor. If the witch doctor cannot cure the illness, then try a doctor. If truly nothing works, we cannot blame the doctor and think he is incompetent."

"Hmm, Fifteenth Brother's words do have some truth," the Nanzhao Emperor nodded and said.

However, those stubborn individuals below were not pleased and said, "Anyway, I will never seek a doctor for treatment. I'd rather die of illness than find a doctor. I've heard that Zhuzhao Country's doctors use needles to treat people, which is extremely frightening."

Jin Liuying retorted disdainfully, "My sister-in-law in Zhuzhao Country hardly ever makes house calls; ordinary people can't truly afford to have her treat them. As for using needles for treatment, it's certainly not as scary as using knives to bleed."

Jin Liuying rebutted again, leaving everyone speechless this time.

To be regarded as bumpkins by the princess of another country was undeniably a disgrace for the Nanzhao's concubines, true bumpkins themselves.

The Fifteenth Prince did not speak; neither did the Emperor nor the Empress Dowager. The concubines of the Nanzhao Emperor were even more at a loss for words.

Eventually, the Empress Dowager broke the awkward silence, saying, “Indeed, it was those two doctors who saved my life this time. Previously, so many witch doctors could not cure me, indicating that Zhuzhao Country’s doctors indeed have exceptional skills.

But that does not mean our witch doctors are inferior. There are illnesses our witch doctors can cure that their doctors cannot, isn’t that the case?”

“Yes, which is why I say the focus of the marriage alliance between the two countries should be on complementing each other’s strengths, and we should approach new things with an open mind,” said the Fifteenth Prince.

“Hmm, in that case…” So what then? The Empress Dowager paused halfway through her words.

She felt that she had spoken too much in favor of Zhuzhao Country’s doctors today, seeming to have overstepped.

She lightly coughed and said, “That’s settled then. I’m tired; you all continue enjoying yourselves, I’ll go back to rest.”

The Fifteenth Prince’s assistance was quite effective, and when Jin Liuying jubilantly told Gu Youyou about this matter, they were so delighted that they were speechless for a while.