Farmhouse 1361

Chapter 1361: Sin

He sat up with a start, only to realize he was drenched in sweat.

The cold wind hit him, and despite usually having a strong constitution, he sneezed.

He felt dampness beneath him and reached out to touch it, nearly fainting from embarrassment.

But recalling the scenes from the dream, he stared wide-eyed in shock.

A feeling of shame and guilt surged through his heart, spreading to his limbs, leaving him pale and ashen-faced.

...

At the breakfast table in the morning, Yue Rujing looked as if he had lost his soul. He quickly finished his meal and was about to leave.

"I still have to go to Moon Bend today, so I'll head out first."

Jin Zijin had been watching him and noticed his unusual behavior early on.

"It's still early. There's no need to be in such a hurry to go, besides..."

"No, no, no..." Yue Rujing interrupted with a forced smile and said, "I can't arrive later than the Commandery Princess, I must go."

Jin Zijin's face darkened, and he suddenly said, "Ajing, is there something going on with you?"

He could be considered having watched Yue Rujing grow up, and that evasive look in his eyes, his eagerness to avoid them, clearly meant something was up.

But he couldn’t fathom what could possibly cause Ajing to be in such a state.

"What could be going on with me?" Yue Rujing suddenly became agitated and said, "I’m already thirty without a wife. My father is worried our family line will end, so he sent a letter urging me to hurry. I finally found someone I’m satisfied with, so of course, I have to seize the chance."

He thought, perhaps it was because of his age and always being without a woman by his side that he had such a strange dream last night.

Whether it’s the Commandery Princess or Miss Duan, as long as he randomly picks one, surely he would forget that dream.

Jin Zijin looked at him coldly and asked, "Where’s the letter?"

"I... I tore it up." Yue Rujing perhaps would lie to others, but he had never lied to Jin Zijin. Speaking now, his face turned crimson.

Gu Youyou, having finished her breakfast, fiddled with the chopsticks while gleefully watching him.

Yue Rujing was taken aback, recalling the blood-boiling scene from last night. The guilt in his heart, mixed with the bitterness swallowed silently, surged to his mind, making him feel as if two great mountains were pressing on his back.

His face turned deathly white, and he gasped for air, avoiding their gazes, and said softly, "Perhaps the Commandery Princess and I wouldn’t be quite suitable. I... I shall go to General Duan’s barracks for a look."

Gu Youyou snickered and said, "You, a Princely Heir from another country, do you think they would let you into the barracks?"

"Then..." Yue Rujing was so anxious that his tongue got tied.

"Of course, if your goal is to invite Miss Duan out, that’s another story!" Gu Youyou leaned on the table, laughing.

Yue Rujing gritted his teeth and said in a huff, "Then I will go invite Miss Duan out."

Just as he was turning to leave, Jin Zijin added, "Don’t go today. Yu Jizi is returning."

He wanted to tell him this earlier, but was interrupted.

"Yu Jizi is returning today?" Upon hearing the name Yu Jizi, Yue Rujing immediately became serious.

It was as if all the awkward feelings in his heart were suppressed or cast aside.

Matters of love can’t compare to matters of life and death. Now, he and Yu Jizi were at a life-or-death stage. The reason Yu Jizi hasn’t acted against them is simply because he doesn’t want to sever ties until his plans are fully formed.

Chapter 1362: Hiding at Duan Family

The news of the Great Shaman’s return had already spread to the post station.

Everyone sat together, fully prepared, just waiting to see how he would make his move.

No one went out that day, all the way until nightfall, and there was not even the slightest bit of news from Yu Jizi’s side.

They were not ones to sit and wait for their doom, so waiting a day had already reached its limit.

One day later, they decided to ignore him. Since he didn’t make a move, they would act as if he hadn’t returned and continue as normal.

"Ajing, continue to the military camp. Youyou and Searcy, keep doing your rounds as witch doctors. I need to take a trip to Heishui Fort."

Yue Rujing glanced at Gu Youyou and said, "Yu Jizi has already returned. It’s not a good idea to have them go out alone again, is it?"

Jin Zijin said indifferently, "If he wants to make a move, us watching over them won’t help."

So they divided their tasks and went about their respective duties.

...

When Yue Rujing arrived at the Duan Family military camp, he first presented a formal visit post.

After receiving the post, General Duan unexpectedly had someone invite him directly into the camp.

Being from Zhuzhao Country and having once frequently fought with the Duan Family army, Yue Rujing was quite surprised to be invited inside so unguardedly.

"General Duan." In this place, General Duan was the leader, so Yue Rujing still saluted him first.

"What brings the Princely Heir of Yue here?" General Duan, a man in his fifties with a strong physique, spoke with a touch of roughness but didn’t regard Yue Rujing with any odd glances.

Yue Rujing clasped his hands and said, "The last time, I was mocked by your younger sister. I’m somewhat unconvinced, so I came over to see what your fine men are like."

"Oh? My younger sister dared to mock you?" General Duan’s face fell, and he looked at a young man behind him.

The young man snorted with laughter, but seeing his father glare over, he quickly suppressed it and said, "My younger sister merely said the Princely Heir of Yue doesn't look...valiant and heroic enough."

General Duan was momentarily stunned, sizing up Yue Rujing, who indeed seemed somewhat delicate. However, he couldn't say that; it would be too hurtful. He said, "One cannot judge a book by its cover. How can you all be so shallow? Just because the Princely Heir of Yue looks...a bit effeminate, it doesn't mean he's incapable."

Yue Rujing's face was a picture of distress: "..." Why did it feel like the more they explained, the worse it sounded? How is he incapable?

"Well, not necessarily. I've heard he can't even beat my younger sister."

"Ah? Really?" General Duan again scrutinized Yue Rujing carefully, clicking his tongue in regret, "I think the Marquess of Yue looks quite effeminate as well, yet fights fiercely. They say a tiger father has no weak son; how could the Princely Heir of Yue not even beat my younger sister?"

Yue Rujing held his forehead. This was enough; he merely wanted to find a place to hide, not to be insulted.

This family was obviously doing it on purpose.

Do they think he's a sick cat just because the tiger doesn't roar? Unable to beat Yu Jizi? As a disciple of Tian Jizi, can't he beat these people?

His face flushed with anger, he shouted, "Enough!"

The Duan father and son were startled into silence by his sudden loud exclamation, both looking at him in surprise.

With a cold smile, Yue Rujing said, "Let's see who's really capable. Today, right here, I challenge all of you. Who'll be first?"

"Ha!" The young man of the Duan family looked at Yue Rujing with disdain, sneering, "The Princely Heir of Yue wants to compete with us?"

"Indeed."

"Alright, come on, let's have a practice match in the field. Why not let me be the first to seek guidance from the Princely Heir of Yue."

Chapter 1363: Can't Win

Duan Gongzi thought to himself: I must beat this pretty boy in front of everyone, how dare he look down on our little sister?

The martial arts field was set up, with two rows of weapons standing beside it. Duan Gongzi picked up a long spear and weighed it in his hand, satisfied, he returned to his position and smiled at Yue Rujing: "Yue Shizi, please choose a suitable weapon."

Yue Rujing smiled faintly and said, "No need, I brought my own weapon."

With that, he drew a Soft Sword from his waist.

People who carry weapons with them are generally not weak; seeing him skillfully draw a Soft Sword, Duan Gongzi's disdain for him decreased slightly.

Little Sister Duan was dragged out of her stilted building.

"What on earth is going on? Speak clearly first."

The maid said, "I heard that the Princely Heir of Zhuzhao Country has come."

"Oh, what's it got to do with me?" Miss Duan raised her eyebrows.

The maid hurriedly said, “Well, it does matter. He proposed marriage to the general, saying he wanted to marry you, Miss.”

“Ah…?” Little Sister Duan stumbled and said, “You must be mistaken, right? He’s not interested in me at all, luckily I don’t fancy him either. I heard he’s interested in the Commandery Princess and has been boating on Moonlight Lake with her every day.”

“Oh no, it’s impossible.” The maid was anxious and said, “Now Yue Shizi is fighting with Fifth Gongzi, it’s said that the general didn’t agree and told him to go to the martial arts field to compete. If he can defeat the Duan Family army, then he would agree to let you marry him.”

“Really?” Little Sister Duan asked, half-believing, half-doubting.

“Of course it’s true, if you don’t believe me, go to the martial arts field and have a look, they’re fighting right now.”

Little Sister Duan found this a bit absurd, but curiosity got the better of her, so she followed the maid to watch.

In the martial arts field, her fourth brother was competing with Yue Rujing, while the Fifth Brother mentioned by the maid was already off the stage, seemingly injured and gritting his teeth as he bandaged himself.

Little Sister Duan glanced briefly and hurried over to Duan Fifth Gongzi’s side.

“Fifth Brother, how did you get injured?”

Duan Fifth Gongzi no longer looked at Yue Rujing with contempt. Instead, his gaze flickered with a kind of appreciation.

He said, “This guy is not just a pretty face, he’s quite skillful.”

“He injured you?” Little Sister Duan pointed at Duan Fifth Gongzi’s wound.

“Yes, got injured accidentally by him.”

“And you still say he’s got skills? If he can injure Fifth Brother, he must be really good,” Little Sister Duan remarked nonchalantly.

“You little brat.” Duan Fifth Gongzi snorted coldly, “Weren’t you the one who said he couldn’t even beat you? Why are you now belittling your Fifth Brother and siding with an outsider?”

Little Sister Duan stuck out her tongue and said, “I said he couldn’t beat me in a war of words, I never fought him, and he didn’t even look that impressive.”

Duan Fifth Gongzi’s mouth twitched helplessly and said, “Yes, he doesn’t look impressive, like some pampered kid. But it’s not that Fifth Brother’s kung fu is inferior to his, it’s just his Soft Sword… I haven’t encountered anyone using a Soft Sword on the battlefield for so many years, it’s a tough weapon to handle, I think I just lost to the weapon.”

“Enough with the excuses.” Little Sister Duan mockingly laughed at him: “Father said, only those without skills always make excuses.”

“See, you’ve really got your elbows turned out.” Duan Fifth Gongzi shook his head disappointedly.

On the stage, Duan Fourth Gongzi chose a broadsword as his weapon, because in the previous round, his Fifth Brother, who used a long spear, had suffered when the opponent’s Soft Sword easily overpowered it.

Chapter 1364: Gaining Fame and Establishing Authority

So he thought it might be better to use a saber, and if he got the chance, maybe he could chop that Soft Sword in half.

But unexpectedly, the saber was still useless. That Soft Sword, who knows what material it was made of, looked soft but couldn’t possibly be chopped in half by the saber.

Finally, when someone got close, it wrapped around his waist, twirled an entire circle, and cut open his waistband.

Duan Fourth Young Master was both furious and angry, holding his pants with one hand and the saber with the other, storming off the stage.

A burst of laughter erupted below the arena, making his face turn blue with anger.

General Duan laughed heartily, walked up to the stage, and said, "This is Yue Rujing from Zhuzhao Country, previously our enemy, but now the two countries are on good terms, so he's here in our military camp today to spar with everyone. If anyone wishes to challenge him, you can step up to the stage."

Yue Rujing won two rounds in a row, feeling much better.

He stood in the martial arena with the Soft Sword, watching the eager people below.

"Since I'm in a good mood today, I'll spar a few moves with you."

When he began to show off, his true nature was exposed.

Duan Little Sister snorted coldly, took the whip handed to her by her maid, and stepped onto the martial arena.

She stood opposite Yue Rujing, scoffing at his arrogant demeanor.

"Let me try and see if your Soft Sword is mighty or if my whip is mightier."

Her whip was made of tough crocodile skin, and she was confident it could counter the Soft Sword that seemed so slippery.

She believed that her brothers lost the previous two rounds because they suffered from the Soft Sword.

Yue Rujing frowned; he had no desire to fight with a woman. He looked down on these women, just as Duan Little Sister looked down on him.

He said blandly, "I think it’s better to change a person. A woman is more suited to go home and focus on family life."

Women from Nanzhao Country have never been confined solely to family roles, and such words were an insult, especially to a woman like Duan Little Sister who grew up in the military camp.

She laughed coldly, "I heard Yue Princely Heir’s two sisters are both going to battle, showing how open-minded your parents are, and don’t look down on women. So why are you so backwards?"

"I’m backwards?" Yue Rujing’s mouth twitched, smirking, "Fine, fine, you want to fight, huh? It seems you won’t give up unless we spar. But let me remind you, I don’t understand the concept of pitying beauty; if I accidentally hurt you, don’t blame me for being ruthless."

Duan Little Sister clenched her teeth and swung her long whip, saying, "Then why waste time talking? Come on..."

No one expected a Nanzhao woman to be so fiery, and when she said come, she meant it.

Before the words fell, the long whip already whirled, aiming straight for Yue Rujing’s handsome face.

Yue Rujing easily tilted his body aside, dodging with ease.

He sneered at Duan Little Sister as if her father and brothers had mocked him earlier.

And in the next moment, the Soft Sword in his hand had twisted into a spiral and intertwined with her long whip.

Everyone saw that Yue Rujing was trying to use the same technique to break Duan Little Sister's long whip.

Duan Little Sister was confident in her long whip and couldn't believe this Soft Sword could really snap it. Those familiar with Duan Family's Little Sister's whip prowess were equally doubtful.

But the actual situation was worse than they imagined; the long whip not only broke but shattered.

The Soft Sword tangled with it, and the supposedly indestructible crocodile skin whip was shattered into fragments.

Duan Little Sister was shocked beyond belief; the whip was gone, yet the sword's fierce offensive did not cease.

Chapter 1365: Group Challenge

She was forced to retreat repeatedly, and in her shock, she forgot that she had already backed up to the edge of the martial arts stage.

Amid everyone's cries of alarm, it seemed that Duan Xiaomei was about to fall off the stage.

Yet the person on the stage extended the Soft Sword forward, wrapped it around her waist, and gently pulled her back onto the stage.

Everyone had a moment of false alarm and looked at the two on the stage.

Duan Xiaomei let out a long sigh but was unfortunately obliged to bow her head and concede.

"You won," she said.

Yue Rujing nodded slightly and retreated to the center of the martial arts stage.

"Is there anyone else?" he said to the people below the stage.

This time, the Duan Family suffered a serious blow to their reputation; two young masters and one young lady all went up and all lost.

Naturally, others wanted to restore some dignity for the Duan Family in such a situation, after all, they were Duan Family troops.

"I'll go..."

"I'll go too."

"I'm here to seek guidance from Princely Heir Yue!"

Voices like these rose one after another, quickly drowning out the stage and the area below.

General Duan didn't seem angry about his sons and daughter losing; he still had a hearty demeanor and laughed loudly, "Great, every single one of my Duan Family troops is a good man!"

Seeing so many people, Yue Rujing was also put in a difficult position.

How long could this take if they went one by one? Even just doing self-introductions one after another could take several days, couldn't it?

It's really annoying, these insignificant soldiers came out to gain some fame, Yue Rujing said helplessly, "Then all come at once!"

More efficient.

However, as soon as he said this, it startled the people below the stage.

What? All at once? So many people all at once?

Does he want to single-handedly challenge the Duan Family army camp?

General Duan’s expression also changed, narrowing his eyes as he looked toward Yue Rujing.

"Princely Heir Yue, don’t make such big jokes, with your ability taking on ten might not be an issue, but with so many people at once... I think just... well then, start with fifty, if it’s too many, the stage won’t even hold them."

Yue Rujing smiled and said, "Alright, everything will be as General Duan says."

Fifty from the other side, while on Yue Rujing’s side there was only him, it looked somewhat lonely from behind.

A slogan was shouted, and those fifty people rushed toward Yue Rujing, each holding their weapon.

Yue Rujing, dressed in white as if snow, faced these fifty people without budging. Suddenly, his sword moved, he moved too, like a person controlling the sword, or more like the sword carrying the person.

Yue Rujing shuttled among the crowd at a speed unimaginable, knocking the weapons from their hands.

Everything happened in a flash of lightning, they didn’t even know what had happened by the time it was over.

How could there be such martial skills in this world? Truly extraordinary.

Only then did everyone realize that when Yue Rujing was fighting against the Duan Family siblings earlier, he hadn’t even used his full strength, and even this move might not be his strongest, considering earlier, he had boasted about challenging them collectively.

The crowd below the stage fell silent, those on the stage were shocked one by one.

Duan Xiaomei stared blankly at him and softly asked her father beside her.

"What technique is he using?" How can he be so powerful?

General Duan looked at him for a while, then heartily laughed at Yue Rujing, saying, "Years ago, I, Duan, heard that the Dao Family of Zhuzhao Country was mysterious and inscrutable, and that the Sect Leaders of both branches of the Dao Family were the individuals closest to the divine. Seeing today, it truly lives up to its reputation. Princely Heir Yue, was this the reason why Marquess Yue insisted on sending his only son to the Dao Family back then?"

Yue Rujing smiled lightly but did not reply.

General Duan was not annoyed, continuing to laugh, "They say heroes emerge from youth, seeing today, it truly lives up to its reputation. I, Duan, having witnessed the skills of a Dao Sect master with my own eyes in this lifetime, feel it’s worthwhile. Princely Heir Yue, please come!"

After taking on fifty, no one came forward to challenge him again. He was invited into the camp by General Duan.

...

Chapter 1366: Farewell

The Duan family’s perception of Yue Rujing was now worlds apart from before. Only General Duan seemed indifferent, but Yue Rujing knew he was the most formidable in the Duan family.

Calmly revealing his foundation, he knew full well that he was from the Dao Family, yet he deliberately mocked him earlier.

However, it didn’t matter to him; today he was just out for leisure. After a fight, some sweat worked up, he felt even being plotted against was worth it.

After rounds of drinks, everyone naturally pondered Yue Rujing's purpose of being here.

Wasn't it just for their little sister? This Yue Princely Heir was quite something; the little sister sought him first before, and he wasn't interested, then later he matched eyes with the Commandery Princess.

And now, with the Commandery Princess more or less out of the picture, he ran to the Duan family.

If someone like him had a different identity, they'd be scolded to death. But as the emperor decreed for him to choose, since he must choose, they had no words to say; they could only cooperate well.

"Little sister, quickly pour wine for Yue Princely Heir."

Yue Rujing today truly opened Little Sister Duan's eyes and wholly cleared the thorn in her heart.

Now the look she gave Yue Rujing had changed from disdain for a sissy to admiration for a hero.

No choice — her upbringing shaped her aesthetic view like this.

Now, looking at Yue Rujing, she found him pleasant in every way; his lanky form appeared as imposing as a bear in her eyes.

She poured a cup of wine, gently brought it in front of Yue Rujing, and shyly said, "Yue Princely Heir, please drink the wine."

Yue Rujing was momentarily stunned, almost spat out the drink.

He awkwardly accepted the wine cup Little Sister Duan handed over, whispering, "Miss Duan really doesn't need to act coy and delicate like this. Just be yourself; seeing you like this, I almost thought the Commandery Princess possessed you."

Little Sister Duan's face darkened slightly, then said, "Isn't she the way you like, though?"

"Who said that?" Yue Rujing blurted, but immediately realizing it wasn't right, he hastily clammed up.

This reaction sparked a little joy within Little Sister Duan.

Seeing it was about time, with dusk settling in, Yue Rujing chatted a few casual words with the Duan family before rising to leave.

He said, "To the final glass, I toast you all. Had a great time today, thanks to General Duan's gracious hospitality. It's getting late; I should head back."

"Alright!" General Duan raised his glass and led everyone in standing; they all drank in one go.

General Duan emptied his cup, flipped it downward, and further said to Yue Rujing, "Yue Princely Heir, the Duan family military camp always welcomes your guidance. It's too late today, Duan won't keep you—Little Sister, go see the Yue Princely Heir off."

"Sure!" Little Sister Duan promptly responded.

Yue Rujing awkwardly coughed several times, also choking on wine.

He said, "No need, right? With such a big moon, how could I let a lady escort me?"

Little Sister Duan smiled, tugging his arm, saying, "Come on, I'll see you off."

Yue Rujing: "…" Can he refuse?

Refusal seems useless; oh well, let's go.

Along the way, Little Sister Duan seemed in high spirits, kept singing joyously to the moon.

“Moon walks, I also walk, I see brother off to the bridgehead, brother is a good young man,

showing his skills on the border a thousand miles…”

“…What kind of stuff are you singing? I’m nearly there, you head back.”

Little Sister Duan shook her head, continued singing.

“Moon walks, I also walk, I see brother off to the village entrance, to the village entrance. Brother goes to be border defense military,

the ten-mile send-off is hard to part with, hard to part with…”

Chapter 1367: What’s so good about her?

Yue Rujing held his forehead; indeed, this kind of woman is not desirable...

Seeing that it was indeed almost time, the young Duan sister reluctantly left.

Yue Rujing felt a headache coming on, wondering if he had made a mistake, possibly causing a troublesome issue.

How should he explain things to the Commandery Princess over there?

On this side, the young Miss Duan seemed hard to deal with, just as he originally thought she didn’t fancy him. He was planning to use it as an excuse to visit the Duan Family’s military camp for leisure, but now it appears this young lady from the Duan Family may not be easier to handle than the Commandery Princess?

Thankfully, after a day of gloom yesterday, his mood has improved a lot today.

Walking alone on the quiet street, Yue Rujing unconsciously remembered the dream from the night before.

No, no, he mustn’t think about it.

That familiar sense of guilt welled up within him, and he couldn’t help but smile ruefully.

It turns out that after a day of turmoil, it only momentarily made him forget.

Now he wishes Yu Jizi would be a bit more active, causing some troubles every now and then, so that he’d have things to do and wouldn’t indulge in wild thoughts.

"How could I fall for someone like that? What’s good about her? Apart from causing trouble, is there anything good?" Surely the heavens are playing a big joke on him.

...

The fatigue of travel feels like a river of time that can make one forget everything. Jin Xiaoran and Lin Qianqing have been away from Beijing for quite a while now, traveling west with the trade caravan, occasionally trading small items for silver coin along the way, surprisingly safely reaching Qiuci.

Lin Qianqing cheerfully weaves through various exotic small vendors waiting for barter, checking this and touching that.

These past two months, this is the most lively he has seen her, truly her.

Such a her is like the tiny starlights in that strange painting, small yet striving to emit her unique brilliance.

"After such a long journey, aren’t you tired? Let’s find a place to settle down first."

Lin Qianqing happily holding an object that jingles, says: "I've inquired about it earlier, there's an inn under the tower ahead; the rooms are good and the price is cheap."

It turns out she wasn't just having fun; she had also found a place to stay.

"Let's go then, settle down first and put down our stuff."

He is, after all, leading two horses by himself.

The biggest gain was that Lin Qianqing surprisingly learned to ride a horse on a previous outing; otherwise, with him bringing her along on one horse, there wouldn't be room for their luggage.

The two arrived at the inn Lin Qianqing mentioned and were indeed amazed by the unique Qiuci culture.

Paid a little silver and got a nice room.

After traveling for over two months, everyone was tired.

Putting aside the excitement of being newcomers, Lin Qianqing then realized how exhausting it actually was.

She half-lay in the chair, not wanting to get up.

Jin Xiaoran called for hot water and said to her: "Don't sleep yet, taking a bath before sleeping will feel more comfortable."

"Hmm, I'm so tired."

"Even if tired, a bath helps relieve fatigue," he said.

Lin Qianqing stretched out a hand and cheekily smiled: "Then you help me up."

Jin Xiaoran fondly stroked her hair, saying: "Alright, I'll help you up."

He pulled her up in one motion, saying: "Do you want me to carry you to the bathtub?"

"Ah? No, I'll go myself."

Jin Xiaoran chuckled and said, "Alright, you bathe here; I'll go downstairs. I just noticed there's a bathing area for men downstairs."

It's a public bath where everyone bathes together; in the past, he wouldn't have done it.

But now, he has come to terms with everything. He is just an ordinary person wanting to act like an ordinary person; if others can bathe, why can't he? Anything others can do, he can do too.

Chapter 1368: Want a Child

He still needs to live well with his wife.

After soaking in the bath, most of her fatigue was wiped away. The weather in Qiuci was hot, and even though the water had cooled down, Lin Qianqing still didn't want to get up.

Unexpectedly, as she soaked, she unknowingly fell asleep.

The public bath outside required waiting in line, and by the time Jin Xiaoran returned, quite some time had already passed.

"Qianqing!"

"Cousin?"

He searched all around but couldn’t find her, and when he approached the bath behind the screen, he saw her asleep in the large tub. The water in the tub had long since gone cold, and he was slightly startled, fearing she might catch a cold from the cold bath water. He quickly lifted her out and wrapped her in a clean blanket.

"How could you be so careless? You even fell asleep while bathing?"

Lin Qianqing replied groggily, "Oh, I fell asleep? You’re back?"

"Yes, go ahead and sleep. I’ve ordered some food. You can eat when you wake up."

Lin Qianqing hooked her arms around his neck and suddenly said, "Why don’t we go find Cousin?"

Jin Xiaoran was stunned for a moment and said, "Why did you suddenly think of finding her? She’s in the south, far from here."

Lin Qianqing said, "She treated your illness. Let’s have her take a look again."

"Hmm?"

"I want a child," Lin Qianqing said earnestly.

Upon hearing these words, Jin Xiaoran suddenly stiffened, unable to move. It was a topic he had always avoided.

He took a deep breath, gently pried her hands away, stood up straight, and began to walk outside.

He thought that by leaving Beijing, with the vast sky and distant Emperor, his future would become blissful. But he forgot that between them, there was always a chasm as significant as a child.

The flaws in his body had always made him feel inferior, filling him with resistance towards children. Whatever she wanted, he could try his best to give her, but children... he wanted them too, desperately, hoping that his wife could give birth to a child for him, but he truly had no way...

Jin Xiaoran leaned against the wall outside, raising his head slightly to look at the sign across from the inn.

Lin Qianqing sat slantwise at the bed's head, her arm still in a strange position.

She lowered her eyes slightly, her mind a blank.

She knew she shouldn't have brought up such a topic, but now it was just the two of them, with nothing left. Now, they could freely travel the world happily, but when they grew old, unable to run around anymore, seeing others surrounded by their children and grandchildren, what would they do then?

She was not despising him; she just felt that her cousin was so capable and could surely help them, so she simply wanted to tell him not to give up.

Because she knew that he also wanted a child very much.

Otherwise, he wouldn't have let Gu Youyou treat him in the first place.

Lin Qianqing got dressed and walked out of the room. Turning around, she saw Jin Xiaoran leaning against the wall by the door.

She went up to him and pulled on his arm, saying, "Let's talk about it when we go back. Cousin said it's best for a woman to consider having children after twenty-two. I'm only twenty, so we're not in a hurry."

Jin Xiaoran hesitated for a moment and then nodded lightly.

Lin Qianqing no longer brought up the topic and said, "I think this place is quite nice. Why don’t we buy a house in the city and start a small business, settling here first?"

Because of the previous unpleasant topic, Jin Xiaoran’s expression was listless, and he only replied softly, "Okay, as long as you like it."

Lin Qianqing sensed his indifference but didn’t say much, just smiled and said, "Then let’s just stay at this inn for now, have a good night’s rest, and look for a house tomorrow?"

Jin Xiaoran forced out a slight smile and said, "Sure, I’ll go downstairs to see if our food is ready."

Chapter 1369: Unexpected Neighbor

The next day, they went together to the streets of Qiuci to find a suitable house.

The houses here were completely different from those in Beijing; it was their first time seeing such a structure, and what was supposed to be house hunting turned into a sightseeing tour of wonders.

Laughter filled the way as they forgot about the unpleasantness of the previous night.

“Let’s choose this one, I find it good-looking. Look upstairs, you can see half the city directly.”

“Alright, I think this place is nice too. We can sell the things we got from Zhuzhao Country along the way.”

“Yes, yes, we can also purchase some goods from passing traders for resale.”

They cheerfully discussed their future plans, and barring any unexpected events, they didn’t plan to leave this city for at least three years.

After finalizing the house, Lin Qianqing turned her head and saw a familiar figure at the neighbor’s doorway.

That person flashed by, already stepping into the house, and soon after, the door was closed.

She was extremely surprised to see him here?

Why did he also come here?

The world is so vast, does this count as a coincidence?

Jin Xiaoran saw Lin Qianqing standing dazed at the door and hurriedly called out to her.

“Weren’t we going out to buy some things? What’s wrong?”

“I… I’ll go in the afternoon,” Lin Qianqing said lightly.

She retreated from the doorway and closed the door.

“What’s the matter?” Jin Xiaoran asked, seeing her looking so serious.

Lin Qianqing pulled him inside and said in a lowered voice, “I saw an acquaintance.”

“An acquaintance?” Seeing an acquaintance here is quite rare.

Moreover, meeting an acquaintance wasn’t a good thing for them now.

Jin Xiaoran also became serious.

“Who?”

Lin Qianqing smiled lightly and said, “No need to worry, he’s just like us, hiding from difficulties. He’s the son of the third Prince, Jin Ziyuan, who everyone couldn’t find. It turns out he’s here.”

“Him?” Jin Xiaoran was taken aback, then suddenly laughed, “Why does he need to hide? If he goes back openly, the emperor wouldn’t do anything to him; he might even make him a Prince as a gesture of pacifying the descendants of the third Prince. Jin Zijin and the others retaliated against Xuanzong, and by the way, revealed the mutiny of the third and fifth Princes when leading troops. Everyone was a victim.”

Lin Qianqing, with a calm gaze, remembered the strange words spoken by Jin Ziyuan and whispered, “It’s not that simple, he isn’t hiding from the emperor, perhaps it’s the State Preceptor.”

“Hmm?” Jin Xiaoran was surprised, “What do you know?”

Lin Qianqing shook her head, saying, “I don’t know, forget it, it’s none of our business. We’re all here hiding from trouble; let’s pretend we don’t recognize each other for everyone’s sake.”

The fleeting glimpse of the past was just a naive girl harboring a dream of freedom.

Lin Qianqing warmly linked arms with the man beside her.

….

Nanzhao Country

Yu Jizi seemed extremely busy after returning this time, as if he had no time to pay attention to them.

One day, he took Zhiqiu into Yunhe Mountain and then completely disappeared.

This left them puzzled.

“What’s that old guy up to?”

“He went into that cave.”

“Probably,” said Jin Zijin blandly.

“What should we do?” Yue Rujing asked.

Jin Zijin gave him a strange look and said, “He might have foreseen his end approaching and doesn’t have time to waste on us. The secret in that cave he probably has long understood, perhaps…”

He paused and said, “If you’re curious, why not take a look yourself.”

Chapter 1370: Some Clues

Yue Rujing shrank his neck, recalling those creepy things, and quickly shook his head.

"I’m not going. Of course, if senior brother wants to go, even if I’m unwilling, I’d be happy to accompany you."

Jin Zijin replied, "Though I don’t know what it’s about, I guess it must be related to those poisonous insects. Let’s not worry about it for now, first, let’s figure out what’s going on with those insects. The insect from that spiritual support is already tracked down a bit. I will go to the Black Box Valley again tomorrow. Ajing, if you are willing to go with me, then come with me. If not, you should go to General Duan then, since the old Emperor has already agreed to Nanzhao Country, you can’t make them lose face."

Yue Rujing complained, "That’s your father’s face, what’s it got to do with me?"

"Because this is your father’s will. If you don’t make the right choice yourself, when you go back, he’ll have that Ruhua from Lixia Street marry into your home."

"Who’s Ruhua?" Yue Rujing raised an eyebrow and asked.

Gu Youyou burst into laughter and said, "Oh dear, have you no conscience? That girl Ruhua has been secretly in love with you for years, and you've actually forgotten her..."

"You... Gu Youyou, don't go too far..." Yue Rujing's face turned pale and then red, unable to help but get angry.

They actually ganged up to bully him.

But upon hearing that a certain girl had been secretly in love with him for years, he suddenly remembered something he shouldn't think about.

Besides being in love, any type of affection was uncomfortable.

"R-really?" He suddenly felt sorry for the girls who secretly admired him.

Unexpectedly, Gu Youyou laughed even harder, and on the other side, Jin Zijin couldn't help but laugh too. He patted Yue Rujing's shoulder and said, "Ajing, you should come with me."

Yue Rujing was bewildered, and a moment later, he drooped his face like a frosted eggplant.

So much so that even Gu Youyou felt embarrassed to tease him any further, but luckily Searcy came in just in time to break the awkwardness.

She tossed a jar onto the table, saying, "If we get a few more of these bugs, these have all been used, it's not enough."

Gu Youyou looked down and saw that it was full of dead bugs.

When it came to dealing with these poisonous insects, Gu Youyou was not as good as Searcy.

Without the advanced research equipment of the modern world, the few traditional methods she knew were far less than what Searcy knew.

Moreover, Searcy was originally much better at researching toxins than Gu Youyou, so the task of researching the insects was handed over to her.

Jin Zijin took the jar, nodded slightly, and said, "Alright, I can get it for you tonight. Have you found a way to deal with them?"

Searcy said, "There is, but it’s not confirmed yet, so we still need some insects."

Jin Zijin and Yue Rujing left, and Searcy sighed helplessly, "Does researching these things really help?"

Gu Youyou lightly shook her head and said, "I’m not sure if it helps, but what else can we do? It’s better than sitting around waiting for death."

"True!" Searcy stood up, rubbing her head that was exhausted from working through the night and returned to her courtyard.

In fact, she sort of wanted a simpler, more violent approach, poisoning that old bastard with every toxin available. But unfortunately, her skills were limited, so she could only stick with Gu Youyou and them to plan together.

Gu Youyou, seeing her fatigued state, called out to her, "Searcy, just do your best; don’t exhaust yourself before the old bastard croaks first."

Searcy’s body halted, she turned back with a cold snort, and said, "Do you think I’m a sickly person? Humph, don’t worry, I won’t die."

The Ghost Doctor’s descendant was now just her, as long as Yu Jizi lived, how could she possibly die?

...