Farmhouse 1401

Chapter 1401: The Emperor of Nanzhao Got into Trouble

The three of them remained silent for a moment. After a while, the Fifteenth Prince suddenly said, “Royal brother, is it possible that the other party didn’t rescue them but captured them instead?”

“Captured them?” The Nanzhao Emperor was taken aback, pondering.

“Report, Your Majesty, Chen the steward from the post house requests an audience!”

At this moment, the elongated voice of a eunuch sounded outside the palace.

The three people in the room exchanged glances. The Empress Dowager gave a slight nod to the Nanzhao Emperor, who then said, “Let him in!”

Shortly afterward, the steward from the post house came in and reported to the Nanzhao Emperor, “Someone was here last night and dug up the crabapple tree in the backyard, seemingly taking something away. Also, the things that Doctor Gu had packed to take with her were all taken, including their carriage.”

Everything became mysterious again.

All the belongings were taken; it doesn’t seem like they were captured. It truly looks like they escaped on their own.

The Nanzhao Emperor dismissed Chen the steward from the post house, and the Empress Dowager suddenly whispered, “Now it seems they’ve mostly likely run away. But they were people the Great Shaman wanted, and now that they’re gone, how do we explain this to him?”

The Fifteenth Prince said, “News from the border should arrive soon, right? If they were intercepted, Zhuzhao Country will demand an explanation. Royal brother, now…”

The Nanzhao Emperor sank weakly into his chair, opening his mouth for a long time without being able to speak.

At this point, it's feared that his dream of immortality has finally awakened into reality.

A single decision of his has placed himself and Nanzhao into an inescapable predicament.

"Find… find the Great Shaman…"

…

The carriage rolled steadily westward as Gu Youyou gazed blankly at the distant rays of the sunset.

"It's yet another day!"

Day after day of journeying, though traveling was truly tiring, she suddenly felt time was passing quickly.

"Yes!" Searcy, sitting beside her, rested her chin on her hands, looking at the endless sunset with a quiet sigh, "Hasn't this been the fifth day? Where is that old rogue sending us this time?"

"Westward…" Gu Youyou murmured softly, "Could it be to Xining?"

"What's in Xining?"

Gu Youyou's gaze deepened as she muttered to herself, "Could it be they've found Jin Ziyuan?"

She still remembered Jin Ziyuan rescuing Lin Qianqing back then by sending her to Xining. It's possible he might also be in Xining.

Because the Fifth Prince had occupied Xining for many years, although he was later defeated, undoubtedly, to them, Xining was the most familiar place.

Furthermore, Xining was vast and sparsely populated, making it ideal for hiding.

It's best not to be found by the old pervert, or it would indeed be troublesome.

Up ahead, the carriage came to a stop. From outside, Zhiqiu's voice could be heard.

"Master, the coachman and the maid have followed us."

Gu Youyou and Searcy's faces suddenly darkened.

Searcy clenched her fist in anger, "That fool, does he want to rush towards his doom?"

Gu Youyou said helplessly, "Forget it, aren't we all in the same boat?"

When Gu Youyou boarded Yu Jizi's carriage, Searcy definitely would have found a way to follow.

Originally thinking that a simple coachman and a little maid might flee unnoticed, unexpectedly, they had indeed followed along.

After a moment, Yu Jizi's voice could be heard.

"Since they're here, let them be, ignore them, and continue our journey."

Yu Jizi executed this move brilliantly; he secretly took Gu Youyou and the others and fled, leaving the Nanzhao Emperor to take the blame. No one knew they had long left Nanzhao Country and were now heading westward.

…

Chapter 1402: Evasion

Yue Tingfang sent people to Nanzhao Country to demand the return of people, but was told that Gu Youyou and others were no longer in Nanzhao.

They had fled long ago.

Yue Rujing didn't believe it at all.

"Fled? If Gu Youyou was capable of escaping on her own, then pigs must be able to climb trees. The dog Emperor of Nanzhao must have handed her over to Yu Jizi, pretending not to know her."

Jin Liuying was anxious and hurriedly said, "Yes, that dungeon has many guards. How could they have escaped? And to flee directly from Taihe City out of Nanzhao's borders, it's impossible. Big brother, could something unexpected have happened to Master?"

Yue Rujing slammed the table, cursing in anger, "They've already said it like this, what are we hesitating for? Father, just send soldiers. I'll take people to capture the Emperor of Nanzhao and interrogate him slowly."

After saying this, he directly went to fetch Yue Tingfang's Tiger Talisman for mobilizing troops.

Yue Tingfang looked at Jin Zijin without speaking, pushed Yue Rujing back, and said, "What's the rush? We haven't even figured out clearly what's going on, why are we mobilizing troops?"

"Oh, how can this matter be clarified? It's clear that the Emperor of Nanzhao just wants to cover things up, pushing everything away with a simple 'don't know where they've gone.'"

Yue Tingfang thought that what Yue Rujing said made some sense; they captured people without any proper explanation, and now they sent people to negotiate, only to be told that the people weren't in their hands?

Yue Rujing was furious and said, "Hmph, just because he says they're not in his hands doesn't mean they're not. I don't care; if they don't release them, I'll fight until they do. Father, hand over the Tiger Talisman."

Yue Tingfang looked troubled and cast his gaze toward Jin Zijin, who hadn't said anything yet.

Jin Zijin nodded gently at him, and Yue Rujing beamed with joy, quickly locating Yue Tingfang's Tiger Talisman and walked out with a wide smile.

Jin Zijin said to Jin Liuying, "You should go rest too."

"Big brother, what about Master and the others?"

"Go, I know what to do."

Jin Liuying nodded gently before leaving the study.

The study was left with only Yue Tingfang and Jin Zijin. Yue Tingfang asked, "Has Ayan already guessed something?"

"Perhaps." Jin Zijin said softly, "Letting Ajing take the Tiger Talisman to fight a couple of battles is also good. This time, the Emperor of Nanzhao has gone too far; he should be taught a lesson."

Yue Tingfang was stunned and did not speak further.

Jin Zijin took out a small parchment and said in a low voice, "This is a letter I received, sent urgently by the Fifteenth Prince."

“From the Fifteenth Prince of Nanzhao Country?” Yue Tingfang took the letter.

Jin Zijin nodded and said, “There are two letters in total. The first one said the Emperor of Nanzhao was acting strangely, specifically since he secretly met with Yu Jizi. That day happened to be the first day the Emperor of Nanzhao ordered our arrest.”

Yue Tingfang was shocked and said, “So, it seems the Emperor of Nanzhao’s sudden betrayal is related to Yu Jizi? What exactly did Yu Jizi offer him that made him risk the contempt of the world and betray his people?”

“What else could it be?” Jin Zijin said with a wry smile, “For an emperor, the greatest temptation is nothing other than longevity and possibly immortality. What could tempt the Emperor of Nanzhao likely has to do with these things.”

“He believes in that?” Yue Tingfang scoffed.

“Of course, the essence of the Dao Family’s practice is longevity, and Yu Jizi believes in the theory of the body dying but the heart living on. Convincing someone already strongly desiring the way of immortality is not difficult.”

Chapter 1403: How Did She Time Travel Here?

Yue Tingfang laughed helplessly, "This is truly ridiculous. Just because of this, everything has been thrown into chaos. Now that they’ve broken with us, let’s see how he handles this."

How to handle it? If he can manage it, that’s his talent, but it seems they’re determined not to let him succeed.

Jin Zijin didn’t continue on this topic and instead mentioned the first misbelief of the Fifteenth Prince.

"In the second letter, he told me the details of their disappearance. All the important items in the inn were taken, their carriage was also gone, making it seem like they escaped on their own. However... at the same time, the elusive Yu Jizi also vanished.

For them, Yu Jizi disappearing every other day is nothing unusual. But this time is different, he disappeared too. I guess Yu Jizi took them away."

For a few defenseless people to escape on their own and with luggage, it’s truly hard to believe. But if Yu Jizi was involved, it’s not difficult!

Yue Tingfang nodded slightly and said, "Then do you know where they would go?"

"To find Jin Ziyuan. Yu Jizi’s sudden move should mean he got definite news about Jin Ziyuan."

Yue Tingfang said, "I’ve had people searching for news of Jin Ziyuan all along. He should be in the west."

"Xining?"

"No, further west, following the Silk Road..."

...

Jin Zijin planned to go after Xining, and on the night before leaving, he found Tian Jizi who was recovering.

"Master, this time I plan to go find Youyou on my own. You rest well here, I’ll be back soon."

Tian Jizi raised his eyes and said, "No, I’m going too."

"But your health..."

"No matter, if I don’t go, he’ll surely know that my time is running out, and he’ll be even more reckless. Zijin, if I die and he’s still alive, how could I be at peace? These years, your efforts shouldn’t be wasted, let’s go, there must be a conclusion."

Jin Zijin sighed and nodded lightly.

"Things may be more complex than we thought, he might have discovered Youyou's secret."

"Hmm?" Tian Jizi raised an eyebrow and asked, "What secret does your wife have?"

Jin Zijin said, "I've never told anyone, Youyou is not Lotus Village's Gu Youyou."

Tian Jizi paused, then suddenly said, "I always felt that this girl was different, thinking the one you like would always be special."

"Yes, she's different because she might be a soul changer. She wasn't originally Lotus Village's Gu Youyou, she was someone else."

"Someone else?" Even the well-informed Tian Jizi was utterly shocked.

He opened his mouth and said, "No wonder you were searching for information about soul swapping everywhere those years, you've never been so proactive before. You never believed in these things before, wouldn't care, but later, you did, because of Gu Youyou, right?"

"Yes!" Jin Zijin nodded and said, "If not for witnessing it with my own eyes, I wouldn't believe in those things either."

Tian Jizi was stunned for a moment, then slowly said, "So what do you think happened to her?"

Jin Zijin said, "She told me she was harmed by her own family, the other body should have died, and only after death did she enter Gu Youyou's body. If there is anything special about Gu Youyou's body, would being the Daughter of Four Shadows and carrying the Youying Pearl count?"

Tian Jizi's expression darkened as if he thought of something, suddenly startled.

Chapter 1404: Stirred Up a Hornet's Nest

"Yes, it's related to the Youying Pearl." He was incredibly surprised, suddenly stood up, and said, "Fortunately, back then at Tianmen Mountain, I disrupted Yu Jizi's spell. Otherwise, it might have actually succeeded. Zijin, we can't delay any longer. Quickly pack up your things. We set off tomorrow morning. Yu Jizi too is nearing the end of his lifespan, and his abilities, like mine, will gradually diminish. If we don't kill him now, once he switches to a young and healthy body, it will be at least sixty years before anyone can deal with him."

"Alright, Master, you take a rest first. I'll go prepare things. We'll depart in the morning."

…

The troops of Zhuzhao Country have already declared war on Nanzhao Country. Nanzhao Country now faces internal and external troubles, and the Nanzhao Emperor feels a bitter pain in his heart!

"Have you found the Great Shaman?"

"No, Your Majesty, the Great Shaman is always so elusive. Unless he appears himself, no one knows where he has gone!"

The Nanzhao Emperor collapsed weakly into his chair, his eyes fixed and staring.

"Where have the Zhuzhao Country forces reached?"

"They've crossed Mount Yufeng."

"Mount Yufeng? So quickly? What about General Duan? He's been battling Yue Tingfang for years. He shouldn't have been defeated so swiftly."

The person below lowered his head and mumbled, “This time their main commander isn’t Yue Tingfang, it’s Yue Rujing. He said we broke our promise and intends to personally lead the troops to flatten Taihe City.”

“Is it him?” The Nanzhao Emperor remembers a somewhat effeminate, incredibly handsome young man. Back then, he heard that in General Duan’s camp, he was undefeated. Finally gaining General Duan’s approval to marry his daughter, he only smiled it off, not expecting he truly was that formidable.

The Nanzhao Emperor was stunned for a moment and suddenly said, “Didn’t he like General Duan’s daughter? Where’s Miss Duan? Let Miss Duan go…”

Everyone thought the Emperor was close to madness. Why didn’t he do this earlier?

Suddenly, he ordered the capture of Jin Zijin and his group, catching the entire nation off guard.

“Report…”

A guard rushed in anxiously, knelt on the ground, and said, “Your Majesty, citizens have gathered outside the palace gates.”

The Nanzhao Emperor felt overwhelmed, stood up, and asked, “What’s wrong with them this time? Why are they gathering outside the palace?”

The guard said, “Someone spread a rumor that the doctor Gu has been secretly executed by you, thus provoking the anger of the Zhuzhao Country’s massive army. Now… now the citizens demand Your Majesty to come out and give an explanation.”

“Who spread this?” The Nanzhao Emperor, furious, descended from the high platform, grabbed the guard by the collar, and said, “Go, investigate for me and find out who spread it. Once found, punish them severely without delay.”

“Yes, I will go at once.”

The Nanzhao Emperor kicked the guard away.

Ministers of Nanzhao Country looked at each other, deeply worried as they watched the Nanzhao Emperor in such a state.

The Nanzhao Emperor himself was filled with regret. How could he have been so muddle-headed, believing in the Great Shaman's words?

No, it wasn't that the Great Shaman's method of immortality was flawed. He realized that he, indeed, hadn't handled the situation well.

As for Gu Youyou, from the very beginning, he should never have allowed her to gain a foothold in Nanzhao Country.

How could he have forgotten how important the will of the Nanzhao people was, letting a woman from another country become the reincarnation of the Shamaness? That was already a grave mistake.

The Nanzhao army suffered repeated defeats, partly because everyone believed their Emperor had committed an act of betrayal, killing the doctor Gu, disturbing their hearts.

Chapter 1405: Deposed Emperor

The Nanzhao Emperor wished to sit on the mountain and watch the tigers fight, yet didn't expect that a few words from the Great Shaman would pull him into this war, making him its biggest sacrificial victim.

Indeed, the Great Shaman was originally from Zhuzhao Country.

Thinking of this, the Nanzhao Emperor slumped dejectedly into his chair.

The internal warfare of their Zhuzhao people, due to his momentary greed, turned the entire Nanzhao Country into the sacrificial prey caught in the storm.

The Nanzhao Emperor took a deep breath and said powerlessly: “Dear ministers, given the current situation, what should be done?”

“This…”

“This…”

Everyone was passing the buck until finally, an elder with relatively senior qualifications and a higher official rank stood up to speak.

“Your Majesty, the only plan now is for Your Majesty to abdicate and establish a new sovereign, so that we may calm the hearts of our people and address the Zhuzhao Country’s concerns.”

The Nanzhao Emperor suddenly sprang from his chair, angrily yelling: “Fu Yi, what are you saying? How dare you…”

Fu Yi knelt down with a thud, his body flat on the ground, yet still adamantly said: “Please, Your Majesty, abdicate and establish a new sovereign.”

“You…”

Countless subjects behind him also knelt down together, loudly saying: “Please, Your Majesty, abdicate and establish a new sovereign.”

The Nanzhao Emperor had made such a grave mistake, he was no longer qualified to be Emperor.

Thus, after a few more days passed, Yue Rujing’s army had already penetrated deep into Nanzhao territory, and after General Duan suffered defeats, his little daughter Duan Xiaomei became a captive of the enemy forces.

In addition to a rising tide of public discontent, the Nanzhao Emperor could no longer endure, and in Taihe City, he announced his abdication and passed the throne to his eldest son Zhao Tianyun.

…

Upon receiving news of the Nanzhao Emperor's abdication, Yue Rujing withdrew his forces. This deployment was only meant as a lesson to the Nanzhao Emperor, since their true enemy was Yu Jizi, not the Nanzhao Emperor.

The Nanzhao Emperor was nothing but a foolish casualty.

The Fifteenth Prince personally went on a diplomatic mission to Zhuzhao Country, traveling to Beijing to present their tribute. Upon returning, he carried the Zhuzhao Emperor's official decree, allowing him to recover Nanzhao's captives and bring back his princess.

Yet among these captives, one was missing, General Duan's young daughter, Duan Xiaomei.

Yue Tingfang said: "Since the retreat, we haven't restricted Miss Duan's freedom. If she hasn't returned, she must have gone with my son to Xining."

"Xining?" The Fifteenth Prince appeared somewhat distressed.

Jin Liuying explained: "My master and they are all gone, everyone suspects they were taken by Yu Jizi, they must have gone to Xining. My brother and the Heavenly Master went on a chase long ago, after Yue Princely Heir retreated, he also went, and it was then that Miss Duan disappeared, presumably going with Yue Princely Heir."

"Oh, if that's the case, we'll go and report truthfully to General Duan."

"Hmm!" Jin Liuying said happily.

She still seemed like a clingy child, the Fifteenth Prince protected her, and helped her into the carriage.

"Goodbye, Marquess Yue."

“Please! And please take good care of the princess.”

“Rest assured, Yanzhong will never let such a thing happen again.”

“Good, just remember your words.”

…

Yu Jizi led Gu Youyou and her party along the Silk Road all the way west, and had been traveling for more than two months.

The farther west they went, the hotter the weather became.

They got off the carriage and saw beautiful exotic clothes for sale by the roadside, unable to resist wanting to buy a few sets, but alas, having no Silver, they could only stare blankly.

Searcy snorted coldly and strode towards the carriage behind.

Chapter 1406: Arriving at Qiuci

“Knock, knock, knock…” She knocked on the carriage and shouted, “Give us the silver, we need to change clothes.”

The people inside didn’t respond, so she knocked on the carriage again and shouted, “Do you think we’re like you? It’s boiling hot, and we have no clothes to change into. You might as well kill us with one stroke.”

After a while, a money pouch flew out from the window.

Searcy quickly caught it, weighed it in her hand, and then satisfied, she left.

She threw the money pouch in front of Gu Youyou, saying, “The old man gave it to us; if we don’t spend it, it’s a waste. Come on, let’s go buy clothes.”

Since they weren’t going to let it go to waste, naturally, they bought everything they fancied.

Gu Youyou and Searcy pulled Xiaomei, the maid beside the Fifteenth Prince who followed them, along, and the three women swept through the goods on the street, filling half a carriage before they were done.

The old man’s money pouch was not filled with silver but with gold, and it wasn’t easy to spend it all. If they weren’t worried about running out of space to sit, they would have bought even more.

“Let’s hit the road!” As the sky was getting dark, Yu Jizi’s voice came from the carriage behind.

Zhiqiu snapped his whip and drove the three of them back into the carriage.

These women were clearly captives but were eating better, dressing better, and spending money more extravagantly than them. Master gave them such a big pouch of gold, and they almost spent it all.

Zhiqiu and Gui Yunxi each drove a carriage, with Yu Jizi and most of their luggage in the one Gui Yunxi was driving.

The front carriage was bigger, carrying the three women driven by Zhiqiu, just to prevent them from causing any trouble.

As they were about to reach Qiuci, Yu Jizi came out of the carriage.

“Zhiqiu, take the road on the left.”

Zhiqiu looked at an ancient city in the distance and asked, “Master, aren’t we going to Qiuci? Why…”

“Take the road on the left,” Yu Jizi repeated.

Zhiqiu didn’t ask further and drove the carriage to the left road.

So they traveled another twenty li and saw a dilapidated village.

The houses in this village were dug into rocks, and from a distance, it looked quite impressive.

They stopped in front of one of the rock caves, and Yu Jizi got off the carriage and lightly knocked on the door. Soon, someone came out.

This person looked just like them, a Zhongyuan person, not a local.

He was dressed in ethnic attire, and upon seeing Yu Jizi, he quickly saluted in a Dao Family manner and called him Master.

Only then did they realize this person was also from Xuanzong.

Yu Jizi said indifferently, “Come in, Yiqing, go help Zhiqiu move the luggage.”

Gu Youyou and Searcy followed Yu Jizi into the rock-carved house, feeling a bit curious.

Gui Yunxi and Xiaomei helped Yu Jizi’s two disciples move the luggage. Searcy looked and then retreated, grabbing Gui Yunxi by the ear, saying, “Did I tell you to move? Do you need to act as a servant for him? Come on, let’s make the bed.”

Everyone: “…”

Yiqing quietly asked Zhiqiu, “Senior Brother, who are all these people?”

Zhiqiu looked at Searcy and snorted coldly, “Uncultured women.”

Only uncultured women would act like her, and that man too, utterly embarrassing to men.

Zhiqiu looked at Gui Yunxi with even more disdain.

Searcy, on the other hand, looked sympathetically at the two Xuanzong disciples, thinking to herself: Yu Jizi sure has a knack for picking disciples; they’re all fools.

Chapter 1407: You Guys Go Ahead

If he weren’t an idiot, could he have been fooled so easily?

Just like that, their group temporarily settled here, not far from the most bustling area, the capital of Qiuci Country.

Gu Youyou really wanted to go take a look, but since they were captives, they weren’t allowed to go. Even if they wanted to buy some daily necessities, they had to send Xiaomei.

Xiaomei was a proper maid who had never left Nanzhao Country in her life. The environment of Nanzhao and Qiuci differed greatly, and recently she’s been suffering from acclimatization issues, staying listlessly inside the house. It’s rare to see her go out even once.

Taking advantage of Yu Jizi’s absence, Searcy discussed with Gu Youyou on how to escape.

“The old man is away. His two foolish disciples are easy to handle. A packet of poison will make sure they’re as good as dead, then we run.”

Gu Youyou sipped her tea and said flatly, “Being able to drink a cup of tea here is truly not easy.”

“Oh come on, be serious. I’m telling you the truth here.”

“I’m listening.” Gu Youyou put down her teacup but said, “Searcy, people say women become dull for three years after having a child. You’ve been married for so long, and yet there’s been no movement in your belly. How come I feel like you’re getting dull too? What’s going on?”

“What are you doing?” Searcy looked at Gu Youyou defensively.

The gaze on Searcy’s face wandered before Gu Youyou suddenly asked, “Can you ride a horse?”

She shook her head and said, “I can’t, but my coachman can.”

Gu Youyou sneered, “Forget it; I’m going to wait for my husband to rescue us, instead of wasting energy running.”

“Oh, you!”

Gu Youyou suddenly grasped her hand seriously, saying, “I’m serious, this time you really have to listen to me.”

Searcy: “…”

She laughed a little and said, “I know what you want to say, but what I’m saying is impossible.”

But Gu Youyou replied, “No, this time you must listen to me.”

“You…”

With a hint of pleading, Gu Youyou looked deeply at her across the table and said, “There aren’t many people I can trust, and you’re one of them. Go back and take good care of my son. I don’t trust letting Jiang Xuyao be cared for by his stepmother!”

“You’re crazy, let me go.” Searcy tried to pull her hand away from Gu Youyou’s grip, but couldn’t understand why Gu Youyou’s strength was so strong; she couldn’t pull it free.

Gu Youyou said, “I know you’ve been itching to poison them, but you can’t. If they die, I’ll end up as a servant for the old geezer. How about this: just poison those two Xuanzong disciples enough to knock them out. Then, run as far as you can. He wants me; you all are irrelevant and can definitely get away.”

“What about you?”

“Me?” Gu Youyou suddenly smiled, “With two Xuanzong disciples serving me, I’ll keep eating and drinking as usual.”

“You… are you saying you’re not planning to live?”

“Of course I plan to live. Having all of you here just makes me worry. What if he uses your lives to threaten me into doing things I don’t want to do or can’t do? If you all escape, I won’t be afraid of him.”

Searcy was stunned for a while, having to admit that facing someone like Yu Jizi, they indeed had no way out.

And Gu Youyou’s rare stubborn look also caused Searcy great concern.

Will Jin Zijin come? Even if he does, can he really save her?

But as Gu Youyou said, staying here wouldn’t help and might even become a burden.

Chapter 1408: Saw an Acquaintance

Fortunately, they did not walk this path in vain, at least they found out where she was taken and what the situation is now.

Searcy pondered for a long time, then gently nodded.

She stuffed all the life-saving items to Gu Youyou, and said, “Alright, soon I’ll knock out the guards. Keep these items close; if necessary, use them all on that old bastard.”

“No, take them all away.” Gu Youyou refused them, as these things might work on ordinary people but they were useless against Yu Jizi, a waste.

She said, “Take everything away, especially what you’ve developed to counter various poisonous insects. If you encounter Zijin and the others, give all those items to Zijin.”

Searcy pouted but didn’t move.

“Alright, that’s settled, let’s go. Remember, as long as the green mountains last, there will always be wood to burn. Surviving is what’s important. If I really die, I’ll rely on you for revenge!”

As she said this, Gu Youyou started laughing.

Searcy pushed her and laughed too, even shedding tears.

There was once a time when someone like her, carefree and never knowing how tears flowed, would still shed tears.

Outside, people heard eerie laughter from two madwomen emanating from the mountain cavern, and couldn’t resist coming in to check.

Laughing enchantingly behind the door, as they pushed the door open, a tray loaded with powdered medicine suddenly fell.

They dodged deftly, avoiding being hit by the tray.

But the medicine powder in the tray got inhaled through their nostrils, and soon both of them fainted on the ground.

Gu Youyou and Searcy covered their mouths and noses, immediately sprinting out of the cave.

The powder quickly dissipated in the air, and the two who were knocked out by the medicine wouldn't wake up until four hours later.

They swiftly found Xiaomei and Gui Yunxi, packed their luggage, and hitched two horses to a carriage, swiftly heading east, back to Zhuzhao Country.

…

In Qiuci Country, having accidentally become neighbors, Jin Ziyuan's family and Jin Xiaoran's couple are tacitly aware of each other's presence. In the past, they were nemeses who couldn't coexist, but after experiencing so much, what else couldn't be understood?

All the glory and wealth have become fleeting clouds, let alone hatred.

They are all the same now, just wanting to steer clear of some people and live peaceful lives.

"I saw some nice honeydew melons at the market today, bought two; give one to your mother to taste." Jin Xiaoran knocked on Jin Ziyuan's door and handed him a large honeydew melon.

He accepted it happily, saying, "I bought quite a few grapes. I heard your wife loves them, wait a moment, I'll get them for you."

Before the rebellion of the Third King and Fifth King, Jin Ziyuan and Jin Xiaoran were acquainted.

Back then, they were young and knew they were cousins.

But the memories are so distant, somewhat blurry.

Presumably, back when no one had torn faces, they had exchanged items like this.

Thinking they could continue living quietly for a long time, if only they hadn't seen that black-clad, white-haired figure upon turning around.

Jin Ziyuan abruptly pulled Jin Xiaoran into the house, shutting the door with a bang.

"What's wrong?" Jin Xiaoran was utterly surprised.

Jin Ziyuan leaned against the door, his chest rising and falling dramatically, his already paler-than-normal complexion turning even whiter.

Jin Xiaoran pushed aside his arm and stepped over to the window to look out.

Outside the window, everything appeared normal as always, with people coming and going, merchants dressed in various colors, nothing unusual.

Chapter 1409: Jin Ziyuan Was Taken Away Too?

Jin Ziyuan took a deep breath and suddenly said to Jin Xiaoran, "You'll go back later and take Lin Qianqing away immediately. Also, please take my mother with you."

"What's wrong? What happened? Who did you see?" Jin Xiaoran knew something was wrong. Who could he have seen?

Who would frighten him like this? Father isn't so scary, so… is it Yu Jizi? Did you see Yu Jizi himself?

Jin Ziyuan's eyes grew cold, and he said chillingly, "Yes, it's Yu Jizi. It's him in person."

Jin Xiaoran gasped, "How did he find his way here? Didn't you say before he was in Nanzhao, and you tricked him into going to the East Sea?"

"Yes, but he would eventually come here." Jin Ziyuan forced a grim smile and said flatly, "This way is better; I've had enough of hiding and running. There has to be an end — either he dies, or I do."

Jin Xiaoran was silent for a moment and then said, "Alright, be careful."

He returned to his room next door and began packing.

Persuading Madam to leave wasn't easy for Jin Ziyuan, so they weren't fast in their preparations. They carefully wrapped and packed everything.

Lin Qianqing sighed, "I didn't expect to move again so soon. Cousin, will Jin Ziyuan really die?"

"I don't know." Jin Xiaoran looked desolate, like he was resigned to a sad fate. He whispered, "A bad life is better than a good death; no one wants to die."

"Can we stay and help him?"

Jin Xiaoran was momentarily stunned and turned his head to ask, "How can we help?"

"I…" Lin Qianqing stammered, "I don't know, but a few people are better than one, right? Jin Ziyuan facing Yu Jizi alone, without someone to even consult."

"True enough." Jin Xiaoran suddenly said in a low voice.

Lin Qianqing angrily said, “That bastard ruined my cousin’s life. My cousin… wait, maybe my cousin is in his hands. Cousin, we can’t leave; I must make sure my cousin is safe. We are of no use to Yu Jizi, he won’t deal with us. Let’s stay.”

Jin Xiaoran looked at Lin Qianqing, his mind in a mess, suddenly not knowing what to say.

He twisted his mouth and said quietly, “Alright, first…”

Before he finished speaking, they heard a commotion next door.

Jin Xiaoran and Lin Qianqing froze, quickly put down their things, and rushed to the room next door.

They encountered Madam coming out, her face streaked with tears, crying, “Ziyuan is gone, he took Ziyuan away.”

Madam was so agitated she could barely stand, and Lin Qianqing had to hold her firmly.

Jin Xiaoran quickly looked at the street, but the street was still full of people coming and going without any sign of abnormality.

How did he manage to take someone away?

“Madam, please don’t worry, let’s talk inside.” Lin Qianqing led Madam into her room, poured her a glass of water, and quietly comforted her like gentle rain.

“Don’t worry, it’ll be alright, we’ll think of something when You Jiang returns tonight.”

Madam, overwhelmed by emotion, continued to cry endlessly.

“No, it’s useless. No matter how powerful You Jiang is, he’s still just a person. What can he do? We don’t even know where they took Ziyuan. By tonight, we won’t even know if he’s dead or alive…”

“I’ll go out and look around, Qianqing, stay here and take care of Madam.” Jin Xiaoran suddenly said.

Chapter 1410: Take Out the Youying Pearl

Madam lifted her head, placing all her hopes on Jin Xiaoran.

She hurriedly said, “Alright, alright, as long as we know where they are, that’s good enough. Even if we need to rescue them, we have to know where they are, right!”

Lin Qianqing stood up, grabbing Jin Xiaoran’s arm, her face full of worry.

“Cousin!”

Jin Xiaoran smiled faintly and said, “Don’t worry, I’m not competing with him for anyone, I’m just looking around.”

“Yes, be careful,”

…

Jin Ziyuan was taken to a hidden secret cavern, with complex turns that led to a suddenly open space. It was a very large cave!

Special oil lamps were lit inside the cave, illuminating it brightly.

Jin Ziyuan looked around, the stone walls of the cave were very rough, clearly naturally formed.

But the ground was covered with perfectly polished stone slabs, on which all sorts of strange patterns were drawn.

Who would imagine that such a place is hidden amidst the rolling yellow sands?

He snorted coldly, saying, “Still not giving up? How you failed at Tianmen Mountain, you will fail here as well!”

Yu Jizi turned around, saying lightly to him, “Zhuzhao Pearl?”

“Zhuzhao Pearl? Ha…” Jin Ziyuan spread his hands, saying, “Do you think I would carry such an important thing with me, knowing full well you’re looking for me everywhere?”

Yu Jizi was taken aback but then burst into laughter, “No problem if you don’t have it, the trip to East Sea wasn’t in vain, I got the Youying Pearl you left there.”

“You…” Jin Ziyuan’s body suddenly stiffened.

Thinking that buried in the sea, it would be safe, yet didn’t expect him to find it.

Yu Jizi smiled faintly, “It’s indeed hard to reach, an ordinary person truly can’t retrieve that pearl. But fortunately, among the fishermen of East Sea, many are good in water. As long as you pay the price, someone will risk their life to fetch it.”

Jin Ziyuan’s cold eyes condensed into a pool of ink, he asked coldly, “And now? What do you intend to do? Act?”

“No, no, still missing a person,” Yu Jizi laughed heartily and said, “You just wait here, the person you most want to see will be here soon.”

“Youyou?” Jin Ziyuan’s expression changed, and he shouted fiercely, “What have you done to her? If you have guts, just come at me.”

“As long as you behave, I won’t do anything to her.” With that, Yu Jizi laughed as he left the cave.

…

Jin Xiaoran rode his horse, pursuing for tens of miles out of Qiuci, from dawn till dusk, the direction in the wilderness becoming increasingly difficult to confirm, yet at this point, he had lost all traces of Yu Jizi.

Until a silhouette emerged from a hill.

He widened his eyes, quickly pulling his horse behind a large rock to hide.

The person wore a black cloak, under the moonlight, occasionally strands of white hair fluttered out.

Such an evident mark, without a doubt, it was Yu Jizi.

Yu Jizi suddenly paused, turning his head to look toward where Jin Xiaoran was.

Jin Xiaoran quickly retracted his head, concealing himself as well.

He clutched his wildly beating chest, taking a deep breath.

Yu Jizi in front only smiled meaningfully and then turned to continue walking.

When Jin Xiaoran again peeked out from the rock, he found Yu Jizi had walked very far.

He waited until he completely disappeared before coming out from behind the rock, striding toward the hill where Yu Jizi appeared.

The not-so-large hill, from a distance, seemed no different from those buried by yellow sand. Up close, only then it was found there was an entrance just large enough for one person to pass through.