Farmhouse 1461

Chapter 1461: It Begins

"You..." Minister Cheng was furious but suddenly laughed and said, "Minister Jie makes a good point. It's just that the current situation doesn't seem to be as you imagined, Minister Jie. Haha, Minister Jie, thirty years east and thirty years west, let's hope your Jie Family can always stay loyal to the 'Emperor'!"

He emphasized the word "Emperor," implying that the emperor he referred to was not Jin Moning.

Oh, Minister Cheng, it seems someone must have emboldened you.

Minister Cheng laughed heartily and turned around, pretending to perform a play with a few ministers he had previously discussed this with.

"Gentlemen, I have obtained some evidence from the case of the Ducal Residence back then, which proves that the death of Huguo Gong was suspicious. He was most likely murdered by the plan of the First Prince, and those charges were false accusations by the First Prince.

Huguo Gong was a minister for three dynasties, and he died inexplicably, along with the wrongful deaths of hundreds in the Ducal Residence. Even as an outsider, I cannot stand it. I am willing to use my useful body to clear Huguo Gong's name and seek justice for the wrongful souls of the Ducal Residence's people. Is anyone willing to join me in petitioning the Emperor?"

Someone immediately said, "That's right, Huguo Gong cannot just die so inexplicably. The Emperor has been deceived by the First Prince, and we must reveal the truth to the world."

"Count me in."

"Minister Cheng, count this old man in."

"And me, Minister Cheng, and me..."

A dozen ministers stood up, as they had agreed beforehand. Seeing so many people stepping forward and speaking with righteousness, numerous fence-sitters began to waver.

Minister Cheng laughed loudly and said, "Good, I did not expect that there would still be so many righteous people willing to stand up against tyranny. I thank all the ministers here for Huguo Gong. Who else would like to follow me?"

Minister Cheng looked at Prime Minister Zhang, who had been silent, and said, "Prime Minister Zhang, you always had a good relationship with Huguo Gong when he was alive, but now..."

Prime Minister Zhang waved his hand repeatedly to stop him from continuing, saying, "No, no, I am old, and my family is in chaos. I am powerless to help. Minister Cheng, gentlemen, this Prime Minister wishes you all great success."

Minister Cheng did not seem disappointed, raised his hand to salute Prime Minister Zhang, and said, "Thank you, Prime Minister Zhang."

Prime Minister Zhang smirked and stepped aside, acting as if he were invisible.

Thinking to himself: This court is about to be overturned. It seems I need to feign a serious illness to escape this disaster. Yes, I'll call for the Imperial Physician tomorrow and have a serious illness.

Both sides cursed the old fox.

Minister Cheng proudly glanced over at Minister Jie, Minister Lin, and others who were loyal only to the Emperor, and led those willing to clear Huguo Gong's name proudly past them, heading to Renshou Palace to kneel before the Emperor.

Minister Jie narrowed his eyes coldly, watching them leave.

Jie Zhonglin whispered, "Father, what should we do now?"

Lin Xingyi sighed and said, "As ministers, they are going to see the Emperor. Apart from the Emperor himself, who can stop them?"

"But the Emperor..." He lowered his voice and said, "Isn't it said that the sick one is the Emperor? If the Emperor could suppress them, he would have come to court long ago."

"Yes!" Minister Jie also sighed deeply, "But what can we do? Minister Lin is right; they are asking to see the Emperor, and we cannot prevent them from meeting the Emperor. And it's such a significant matter of clearing Huguo Gong's name!"

Chapter 1462: Take the Lead

"Let's go, we can't stop them, but we can watch the excitement!" Lin Xingyi said.

"That's true!" Jie Huanzhi agreed, "Alright, let's go see the fun."

...

Jin Zijin and the others hastened their journey, and it had been ten days.

Gu Youyou was about to reach her limit. Ten days were already her extreme, and if they continued, it wouldn't just be the horse that dropped dead but also herself.

As a doctor, she was well aware of her physical limits. If the Emperor couldn't be saved, she might end up sacrificing herself. How could she let Jin Zijin decide which one to tend to?

Taking care of both would make one neither fish nor fowl.

She absolutely couldn't be a burden to him.

During their break, she stopped, panting heavily and rubbing her numb backside, shaken from the journey.

"Water, give me some water!" Gu Youyou leaned against a large rock, waving her hand.

She didn’t see who brought her the water, but after drinking a few sips, her mind cleared a bit, and she saw the person standing not far from her was Yue Rujing.

"Hey, it’s you. Where’s your senior brother?"

Yue Rujing pointed to the chaotic pile of rocks and said, "He’s answering nature’s call. Are you looking for him?"

Gu Youyou: "..."

"Ah, I’m exhausted, dying of thirst. I need water too..."

Having left her horse by the side, Dan Xiaomei leaned against another large rock not far from Gu Youyou and called out to Yue Rujing.

Yue Rujing tossed a water bag at her with some annoyance and said, "I told you not to follow, yet you insisted. Serves you right."

"If Doctor Gu can follow, why can’t I? Hmph..." Dan Xiaomei angrily took a sip of water and choked herself.

Yue Rujing looked helpless and then shouted, "Yixi, where’s Yixi?"

"Hey hey, I’m here, Senior Brother Yue."

"Quickly, get someone to send this person, who can choke just by drinking water, back to Nanzhao."

After coughing, Dan Xiaomei’s face turned ashen. She shouted, "Why? I... I didn’t follow you; I’m following Doctor Gu!"

Without hesitation, she declared her allegiance and ran over to cling to Gu Youyou’s arm for help.

Yue Rujing snorted coldly, "She’s rushing to save the Emperor’s life. And you? What are you rushing for? What can you do?"

"I..." Those words stung, but they were indeed true, leaving Dan Xiaomei speechless for a while.

After a moment, her mind caught up, and she said, "Then what about you? What are you hurrying to Beijing for?"

"I’m naturally going to deal with those who don’t have eyes!"

At this time, Jin Zijin had returned from answering nature’s call.

Just as Gu Youyou had something important to discuss with him.

Gu Youyou said, "Zijing, I’m afraid I can’t run anymore."

Throughout the journey, Jin Zijin had slowed down to accommodate her. However, he knew Gu Youyou’s stubborn nature, and if she didn’t admit her limits herself, no amount of persuasion would work.

Now that she brought it up on her own, Jin Zijin finally felt a sense of relief.

"So, what’s your plan? Do you want us to wait for you, or should we go ahead and you catch up?"

Gu Youyou smiled knowingly, realizing how well they understood each other now, saving a lot of words.

She said, "I won’t go with you anymore, to avoid slowing you down. You guys go ahead, and I’ll catch up later."

Although the Emperor’s illness was a big issue, a bigger one was those who were eager to make trouble.

If the Emperor wasn’t sick to death but was infuriated to death by those people, it would be frustrating.

Therefore, Jin Zijin had to get back quickly to stabilize the situation.

Jin Zijin nodded gently and said, "Alright, but don’t rush too much. Take care of your body. I see Xiaomei is also quite exhausted; she should stay behind too."

Chapter 1463: The Palace Intruders Have Arrived

“Huh…? I have to stay too?” Duan Xiaomei looked at Yue Rujing with a troubled expression.

Yue Rujing snorted coldly and turned his head, saying, “I won’t be staying, Senior Brother can’t do without me!”

What did he mean Senior Brother can’t do without him?

Gu Youyou really wanted to laugh at his face, sometimes Yue Rujing genuinely looked like a gay man, giving her goose pimples.

But whatever the case, Gu Youyou was still rational.

She said, “Didn’t Xiaomei just say she would follow me? I can’t keep up now, so let’s stay here. They have official business to get back to, and we would only delay them.”

Gu Youyou's words left her with no comeback, so Duan Xiaomei could only reluctantly stay behind.

Gu Youyou stood under the big tree and watched them leave, the horses going further and further away!

The situation in Beijing was uncertain, and she was quite worried in truth.

But some words seemed inappropriate to say at this moment.

Gu Youyou's eyes were a bit moist; maybe it was Xining's strong sandstorm, blurring her vision. Or perhaps it was the realization that reunions are always too short, and hardships too many.

She used a not-so-clean sleeve to wipe her eyes, and Duan Xiaomei handed her a handkerchief.

"Thank you!" Gu Youyou took the handkerchief and gently wiped her eyes, pulling out a smile, "There's too much sand here."

Duan Xiaomei said, "I know you can't bear to part with Senior Brother Jin, can you? I won't laugh at you; I haven't even caught Ajing yet, and I can't bear it either."

The two of them laughed.

Duan Xiaomei then asked, "Is something happening in Beijing of Zhuzhao Country? Everyone seems so anxious."

"I don't know!" Gu Youyou shook her head, then nodded, and said, "Maybe, perhaps it's the consequence of our lack of foresight earlier, but of course, there's nothing we can do about it; Yu Jizi's matter must be resolved, and comparatively, we can only solve Yu Jizi's issue first."

"Then… will it be dangerous?"

Gu Youyou smiled bitterly, “They may face thousands of troops when they get back; of course, it’s dangerous.”

“Huh…? Then we…” Duan Xiaomei was exceedingly nervous.

Gu Youyou chuckled, “So what? If you rush back, how many people can you help kill? Forget it; I believe in him.”

“Oh!” Duan Xiaomei was momentarily stunned, then gently nodded.

Gu Youyou said, “Let’s go. I remember there’s a town not far ahead. Let’s find a place to rest for a day before continuing our journey.”

…

Outside Renshou Palace, a crowd was kneeling, requesting to see the Emperor.

Aunt Li hurriedly came before the Empress Dowager and said, “Empress Dowager, what should we do now? Many officials are kneeling outside the palace, saying they have urgent matters to see the Emperor about, but the Emperor…”

The Emperor inside the inner hall still didn’t know the situation outside; his condition had not improved, and it seemed even more severe.

No one dared to inform him of these matters, fearing he would get anxious and agitated, worsening his illness.

With the help of palace maidens, the Empress Dowager rose and lamented, “What can we do? Let Wan Decheng go out and deal with them.”

Outside Renshou Palace, over twenty officials led by Minister Cheng were kneeling, and their numbers were still growing as more joined, expanding their group.

Wan Decheng was sent out by the Empress Dowager to handle the situation, saying, “Dear Magistrates, I, a humble servant, am begging you, please go back. The Emperor is already furious over the Empress Dowager’s illness, and now you’re causing this commotion; you’re not trying to push him to death, are you!”

Minister Cheng spoke with resolute determination, “Please, Eunuch Wan, convey to the Emperor that we have urgent matters to discuss with him.”

Chapter 1464: Who’s Really Sick?

Eunuch Wan said, “No matter how great your affairs are, they cannot outweigh the Empress Dowager’s life. These days, the Empress Dowager is at the brink of life and death, and she could pass away at any moment. If by chance the Emperor comes out to see you and the Empress Dowager breathes her last during that time, wouldn’t the Emperor be unable to bid her farewell? This is a charge that I cannot bear. I advise all of you to return.”

“Is the Empress Dowager actually that seriously ill?” someone quietly murmured.

“Ill? It’s the Emperor who is ill,” another person quietly murmured in response.

“I think the Emperor can’t hold on much longer,” someone sneered.

Everyone whispered among themselves, but they refused to leave.

In the blazing sun, Eunuch Wan suffered too.

He was truly helpless, so he had to ask, “Official Cheng, why don’t you speak up and tell me what great matter it is? I will convey a message to the Emperor to see if he is willing to come out to see you.”

The crowd was moved, hearing what Eunuch Wan said, and someone felt the Emperor’s illness was dubious.

Could it be that the Emperor will really come out to reprimand them?

It had been so long without the Emperor showing up; they all doubted the Emperor was critically ill and couldn't get out of bed.

Official Cheng declared gravely, "Eunuch Wan, we are here because of the case of the former Ducal Residence. The death of National Duke was suspicious, and we have found several prison guards from back then, feeling the matter is not that simple.

Moreover, given the character of National Duke, he couldn't have committed suicide out of fear of guilt. Therefore, we earnestly request the Emperor to re-investigate this matter. If it is proven that National Duke was wrongfully accused, we ask the Emperor to restore the reputation for the Ducal Residence and the lives of three hundred and twenty-eight people."

Upon hearing this, Eunuch Wan's face darkened, and he snorted coldly, "Official Cheng, I think the sun has overheated you into confusion. The Ducal Residence case has long been concluded, so what are you trying to stir now? Are you deliberately trying to anger the Emperor?"

"Oh, I dare not, but as a subject, I cannot watch the Emperor be deceived and let a loyal and virtuous person suffer an unjust accusation. Please let the Emperor see clearly!"

Eunuch Wan was amused by his anger; the intentions of National Duke's actions were known by all.

True, at first, the Crown Prince's actions were somewhat rash and not quite right, but wasn't that because he was forced by that old scoundrel National Duke?

Who has the energy to quarrel recklessly with him?

Now he's dead, and there are still so many people stirring up trouble, proving the Crown Prince's decisive actions back then were correct. Otherwise, that old scoundrel living till now would be even more troublesome.

“Official Cheng, this humble eunuch dares not help you convey the message, so I advise you to return. Once the Empress Dowager is out of danger, the Emperor will naturally come out to meet you.”

They were determined to force an audience and wouldn’t leave so easily.

Official Cheng showed a sly smile in his eyes, lowered his head, and said slowly, “Then we can only kneel here until the Emperor comes out.”

“We are willing to kneel indefinitely…”

The loyalists echoed in unison.

“You…you’re forcing the Emperor?” Eunuch Wan angrily said.

Official Cheng boldly said, “The Emperor has not attended court for many days. If he is truly unable to manage, please appoint the Crown Prince to act as Crown Prince Regent and handle the state affairs. The southern floods, northern droughts, and bandits rising in Xining all require the Emperor’s personal intervention. We can wait, but the people living through these disasters cannot; a nation cannot be without a ruler for a day. I urge the Emperor to think thrice…”

Chapter 1465: What Do We Do Now?

Wan Eunuch was so angry when he heard these words that he nearly fainted. What was this? Letting the Emperor establish a Crown Prince, and then having the Crown Prince Regent govern—did they intend to usurp the Emperor’s authority?

Wan Eunuch looked up, gazing distantly at Huanzhi and his entourage.

They were also helpless. Without any news from the Emperor, they were equally anxious. Seeing the situation, they felt powerless.

Wan Eunuch angrily swung his dust whisk as he returned to Renshou Palace.

The Empress Dowager hurriedly asked, “How is it? What exactly do they want to do?”

Wan Eunuch lamented, “Empress Dowager, they are… they are here to force the coup! They claim to want to overturn the verdict on the Duke Protecting the Nation! If the Emperor doesn’t come out, they will kneel indefinitely. What should we do?”

“Overturn the Duke Protecting the Nation’s verdict?” The Empress Dowager exclaimed in anger, “What’s so good about overturning that case? Wasn’t it already settled long ago? I think they are trying to rebel!”

“It’s not just that, Empress Dowager. Sir Cheng even said that since the Emperor is unable to manage affairs, he should establish a Crown Prince and let the Crown Prince Regent handle the state affairs on his behalf. They clearly assume the Emperor is gravely ill, wanting to outmaneuver him.”

“This… what should we do?” The Empress Dowager, a woman born as a maid, didn’t understand much about state affairs. Hearing this, she felt as if the sky was falling.

“But the eldest Prince is not here, then… Prince Qin, quickly summon Prince Qin.”

“Yes, yes, this old servant will go at once!” Wan Eunuch was about to exit from the front, but thinking about the troublesome elders kneeling outside, he turned back and left through the rear.

“Cough, cough, cough…” Came the sound of the Emperor’s coughing from inside, and the Empress Dowager quickly had someone assist her to the inner chamber.

Seeing the aged and emaciated person lying on the bed, the Empress Dowager felt waves of heartache.

Although the Emperor was not her biological son, she raised him with her own hands. Coupled with her loyalty to her former master, the Emperor was more important to her than her own life.

The Empress Dowager wept with sorrow, lamenting, “Emperor, you’re almost recovered. Just hold on a little longer and focus on healing; don’t think about anything else. You’ll be well soon!”

The Emperor extended his hand, and the serving palace maiden quickly helped him sit up halfway.

He said, “I know everything, Mother. There’s no need to say comforting words to convince me. I know it all.”

“You…” The Empress Dowager was suddenly shocked, asking, “What do you know?”

“The matters outside, I heard and also guessed. They are just waiting, waiting for me to fall! Hmph… I refuse to let them have their way!”

He looked around and suddenly asked, “Where is Wan Decheng?”

The Empress Dowager replied, “Wan Decheng is not here. I sent him out of the palace to find Prince Qin. You are so gravely ill and won’t let anyone know. But now they have forced their way to the palace gate. Someone must help you, right? I think Prince Qin is old enough. You usually favor him. Why not call him over and tell him everything, would that be alright?”

The Emperor was momentarily stunned, then nodded slightly and said, “Very well, summoning Prince Qin is a good idea.” He struggled to get up, saying, “Dress me!”

The Empress Dowager was startled and exclaimed, “Emperor, why are you dressing? Are you going to get up?”

The Emperor sighed, “Since they have already blocked the palace gates, I will go out to see them.”

“But… what about your health?”

“Don’t worry, just a few steps, I will speak a few words and return, causing no concern for Mother.”

“But…”

Before the Empress Dowager could finish, the Emperor interrupted sternly, “Hurry and dress me!”

The palace maidens quickly fetched the clothes and dressed the Emperor, and the Empress Dowager was helpless.

…

Chapter 1466: How to Win?

The Emperor changed his clothes, washed his face, and appeared energized after being dressed up by the palace maidens as he left Renshou Palace.

When he was assisted to the palace gates, he pushed everyone aside and walked by himself towards the dark mass of people kneeling together.

Against the sunlight, the crowd couldn’t see his face clearly, only felt a familiar figure standing there, making the ones who believed the Emperor was finished slightly change their expressions.

The Emperor stood before the gates of Renshou Palace and calmly said, "Dear ministers, I’ve heard you have urgent matters regarding the Empress Dowager to report to me?"

The Emperor had always been calm, speaking clearly and steadily, without haste or agitation; such composure is beyond ordinary people’s learning. With just this one sentence, everyone knew it was truly the Emperor who had come out.

But wasn’t he so ill he couldn’t get out of bed? Wasn’t he about to die? How did he manage to come out?

Everyone looked up to find the Emperor standing against the light, facing them.

Though his expression was unclear, they could see he stood firmly, without anyone supporting him.

This...

The crowd looked towards Minister Cheng, who pulled this matter forward.

Minister Cheng was not afraid because the Emperor hadn’t been managing affairs lately, and they had already made all necessary preparations, only waiting for the right moment.

Minister Cheng raised his hand and bowed, saying, "Your Majesty, there’s drought in the north and floods in the south..."

The Emperor interrupted him, saying, "I know all about it, the documents have already been approved."

Minister Cheng paused for a moment and continued, "Then what about the bandits in Xining?"

"Those bandits are remnants of the defeated soldiers from Xining, these matters have been handed over to the Grand Tutor, there’s no need for you all to worry."

Cold sweat appeared on Minister Cheng’s forehead as he gritted his teeth, saying, "We... We ministers have recently heard about the strange death of the Protector of the State in prison. It is said that the deaths of hundreds from the Ducal Residence were wrongly accused, because the Emperor feared the Protector of the State overshadowing him and now public resentment is rising, everyone is waiting for the Emperor to offer an explanation."

The people before him were silent for a moment, then suddenly burst into laughter.

"An explanation? Do you intend to bring out the complaint document for everyone to see again? That is a matter for the Ministry of Justice. Well then, Lord Cheng will be responsible for suppressing these widespread rumors. Someone, pass on my edict to have the Vice Minister of Punishments fully collaborate... Minister Cheng!"

The Emperor’s actions left Minister Cheng speechless, and once he gathered his thoughts, the Emperor had already left, leaving behind a mysterious and unfathomable silhouette.

Is the Emperor ill or not? Or was he ill before and is now well?

Minister Cheng fell to the ground, the official nearby urgently said, "Minister Cheng, what do you think is actually going on with the Emperor?"

Minister Cheng turned his face towards the official, sighing softly, "Perhaps we were too hasty, maybe we should wait a little longer?"

Someone disagreed, saying, "Wait? What if we wait until the Emperor is well?"

"Exactly, I've received news that the Crown Prince is also about to return."

"Now is the perfect opportunity, I think the Emperor is just holding on, we should inform the Great General now, and seize the chance..." He made an inconceivable gesture.

Regicide?

It startled everyone.

The official eagerly slapped his thigh, saying, "Oh my, how should we act, everyone ought to give a conclusion. This dragging things out doesn't seem right, don't forget how the Crown Prince won his victory initially, was he indecisive like us?"

The Crown Prince swiftly and decisively killed, exiled the family, catching everyone off guard, winning that battle purely on speed.

The official's words led everyone to make up their minds.

Chapter 1467: Prince Qin Is in Trouble

“Indeed, as the saying goes, ‘a swift sword cuts through tangled threads.’ In these chaotic times, if we wait to straighten things out one by one, we will miss the best opportunity. Better to act decisively and swiftly.”

“Then… should we continue to kneel here, or…”

Minister Cheng patted the dust off his clothes and said in a low voice, “Since everyone has thought it over, I shall return home first to rest and prepare for the impending challenges. Gentlemen, do as you see fit, haha…”

With the leader gone, why were they still kneeling here?

Before long, the area in front of Renshou Palace was cleared out.

Lin Xingyi watched from a distance and said, “Minister Jie, what exactly is the Emperor orchestrating this time?”

It’s said the Emperor was seriously ill, yet he appeared perfectly fine again.

Minister Jie replied mysteriously, “Sometimes what you see isn’t necessarily true. These people are too impatient, Minister Lin, we should also quickly return to prepare.”

“What is there for us to prepare? Haven’t you noticed that even leaving the city now requires thorough inspections?” Minister Lin said helplessly.

Minister Jie quickly turned to look at his son.

Jie Zhonglin said, “Father, please rest assured, didn’t you foresee this situation earlier? I have already sent Xintong and the others away; they should almost be with my eldest brother by now.”

Lin Xingyi regretted, saying, “I should have sent my wife and children away earlier too. Alas, it was a miscalculation.”

Jie Huanzhi remarked, “What do you have to send away? Madam Lin is a lady married from the Ducal Residence. Whoever they target, it won’t be your family. I am more worried about those neutral ministers, afraid that someone might take their families as hostages to force them to pick a side.”

…

Wan Decheng hurriedly arrived at the Prince Qin Residence. He didn’t see Prince Qin but encountered the anxious new Princess Qin, who was previously Prince Qin’s consort.

The official Princess Qin had already passed away due to illness. After her death, this consort, who had borne two sons, naturally became the rightful Princess Qin.

“Princess Qin, why are you so anxious?”

“Eunuch Wan, what brings you here in such haste?”

“I…”

“I…”

“Please, you speak first!” Eunuch Wan said, eager to know.

“Very well, then please come inside for tea. I have to attend to Prince Qin.”

“Ah…?” Hearing this, Eunuch Wan could no longer drink tea and hurriedly asked, “What happened to Prince Qin?”

Xie Qinyun said anxiously, “Just now, a servant from home brought news that His Highness Prince Qin fell from his horse and is seriously injured.”

“His Highness Prince Qin fell from his horse?” The buzzing in Eunuch Wan’s head grew louder, feeling the coincidence was too strange, and he quickly asked, “How could His Highness Prince Qin fall from his horse?”

“Oh, I don’t know how it happened, the Prince has been extremely busy, going outside the city several times a day. I’ve heard he visited Great General Xiao and General Lu. When asked what it was about, he wouldn’t say. Now what should be done? If something happens to him, how am I and the two children supposed to live?”

Xie Qinyun clutched her handkerchief, weeping bitterly.

After hearing these words, Eunuch Wan also understood.

Lately, Beijing, which seemed calm on the surface, was brimming with an undercurrent of unrest that even the secluded women were aware of. How could Prince Qin not know?

Though the Emperor was ill, it didn’t mean he was unaware of everything.

Prince Qin’s visits to the various military camps must be part of covert maneuvers for the Emperor, orchestrating the troops. So why would he coincidentally fall? The answer was all too clear.

Chapter 1468: The Emperor’s Command

Xie Qinyun anxiously said, “Ah, I won’t talk to you anymore, I must quickly go to see the Prince.”

Having said that, Xie Qinyun had a carriage hitched up and hurriedly went to find Prince Qin.

Even Eunuch Wan eventually had to return in disappointment. In this situation, relying on Prince Qin was unreliable, and he only hoped that he wouldn’t fall too hard.

The Emperor insisted on going out to meet with the ministers, and after returning, he coughed up blood, showing signs of worsening illness.

The two Imperial Physicians kept complaining, “Oh dear, how could the Emperor act strong at such a critical time? His Majesty’s health really can’t endure any more strain. If it continues like this, we won’t be able to reverse the situation!”

The Empress Dowager coldly snorted, “You speak lightly. If the Emperor doesn’t go out, would you hold up the sky if it falls? Blaming your poor medical skills with excuses? Hurry up and see to the Emperor properly! If something happens to the Emperor, you two will certainly accompany him in the grave.”

The most arduous duty in the world is serving the Imperial Family. If you treat them well, it’s fine, but if not, it could cost you your head.

But who makes them Imperial Physicians? Facing their masters’ unreasonable demands, they can only endure.

The Emperor coughed a few times and said lightly, “I’m afraid my body won’t last. I know it in my heart, and Mother, you can’t blame them. I don’t ask you to heal me completely, just let me live until the Crown Prince returns, and I will consider it an accomplishment.”

The Imperial Physicians felt for the Emperor, and their eyes instantly became wet, only assuring that they would do their utmost.

The Empress Dowager wept silently, holding a handkerchief to her mouth.

She lamented that Heaven was blind. She, an old woman, had long been ready to die, yet was still alive. The Emperor appeared old, but his age wasn’t actually great, though he was already like a candle flickering in the wind, nearing the end of his life.

Soon, Eunuch Wan returned, having run too hastily and under the hot weather, he was drenched in sweat.

“Bad news, Your Majesty, Empress Dowager, Prince Qin has also encountered trouble.”

He recounted everything he had learned at Prince Qin's Residence and his speculations, causing the Empress Dowager to almost collapse.

"Prince Qin? That child must have been harmed by them…"

One bad news after another reached the Emperor's ears, and he, who had remained silent, grew even paler.

First, General Lu had an accident, and the young general of the Lu Family now supported the army but was indeed younger and not as steady as General Lu.

Bandits were arising in Xining, especially at this time, occupying the Xining army.

Remote water cannot extinguish a nearby fire; how can they be faster than mobilizing troops in Beiping?

Now, the only pillar that could be relied upon was being schemed against, thrown from his horse?

Prince Qin learned to ride since childhood; how could he be thrown from his horse?

The Emperor tried his best not to get angry, controlling his breath, and spoke softly to Wan Decheng, "There are three things you need to do quickly now. One is to inform Concubine Sheng of Prince Qin's situation and have her leave the palace to care for Prince Qin. The second is to go to Qianqing Palace and bring me my little red box. The third thing is to summon the commander of the Imperial Army. Hurry, the faster, the better."

For fear that if delayed, even this Imperial Palace would be beyond his control.

The Emperor had Eunuch Wan carrying out various actions relentlessly while on the other side, Jin Tianzhong of the Jin Family, secretly returning to Beijing, was not idle.

As Jie Huanzhi had predicted, he brought his men into the capital and quickly began controlling the families of the ministers who held the third rank or above in the Imperial Court.

Everything went very smoothly, except for when they encountered obstruction at Jie Huanzhi's residence.

Chapter 1469: Controlling Officials

"Minister Jie certainly knows how to prepare ahead of time. I wonder when Minister Jie sent the second young mistress and the little master out of Beijing?"

When they planned to take action, they already controlled several main gates of Beijing. The people entering and exiting were either unstoppable or not needing to be stopped. They made strict records of these people's movements but never received any news of the Jie Family's second young mistress leaving the city.

It seems she didn't leave the city by ordinary means.

Or perhaps she left before they sealed the city.

However, the second young mistress of the Jie Family is no ordinary person. She has Manxiu Building under her command, with businesses all over the country. After Gu Youyou left Beijing, she managed all the businesses, and the operational status from various places was consistently sent to the Jie Family in an orderly manner. How does one explain that?

Is it all a show for them?

Minister Jie smiled faintly, "Minister Cheng, if I remember correctly, it seems my Jie Family doesn't have a great relationship with your Cheng Family, right? Why did you come to my Jie Family today without sending a post and without greeting me as the head, yet went straight to my daughter-in-law?

Your age should be similar to that of this lord. You aren't afraid of losing face, but I am. Get out..."

Jie Huanzhi, abandoning his usual grace, directly picked up a big broom to hit Minister Cheng.

Minister Cheng quickly retreated a few steps, hiding behind the Imperial Army.

Indeed, the men Minister Cheng brought were the Imperial Army, which the emperor still trusted wholeheartedly, yet they had already become Jin Tianzhong's men.

Jie Huanzhi was blocked by the Imperial Army. Furious, he gritted his teeth and said, "Just kill me if you dare, let's see if you dare, you bastards."

"Father!" Jie Zhonglin pulled him back, saying, "Forget it, let's see what they intend to do."

Minister Cheng laughed heartily, "Minister Jie, seeing your actions with your son, are you planning to fight to the death?"

"Hmm..." Jie Huanzhi snorted coldly.

Minister Cheng said, "It seems you're hitting a dead end, just based on you two?"

He looked at Jie Zhonglin, who was missing an arm, then looked at Jie Huanzhi, whose temples were graying, and laughed coldly.

"One disabled, one old man, if you know what's best, you can still save a life. No, given Minister Jie's skills, if you know what's best, you could achieve great merits, yet you choose to go against us. I'll see how long you can remain glorious."

"What can you do? My life is of no consequence, asking me to work for you? Dream on."

Minister Cheng turned coldly to the Imperial Army behind him, "This old fool is stubborn, persuading him is just a waste of time. Have someone keep an eye on these father and son, let's go to the next house."

The Imperial Army left a few men to confine the Jie father and son, before moving on to the next house.

...

Eunuch Wan first went to find the Imperial Army, only to see someone familiar talking and laughing with the Imperial Army leader.

And that person, isn't it Jin Tianzhong from the Ducal Residence?

This shocked him greatly, causing him to retreat back repeatedly to the Qianqing Palace.

Thus, of the three tasks the emperor entrusted him with, he actually completed only one, having secured the little box the emperor wanted.

But when he was leaving, upon seeing the patrolling Imperial Army, he halted.

If he guessed correctly, the Imperial Palace was no longer under the emperor's control; the item the emperor instructed him to fetch must be extremely important, and it would be disastrous if it fell into their hands.

Thus, Eunuch Wan quickly retreated back to the Qianqing Palace, placing the little box into a large chest, which he then covered with the books and memorials the emperor usually read.

Chapter 1470: Being Watched

After doing all this, he finally stepped out again with the box.

"Eunuch Wan! Eunuch Wan, please stay."

Indeed he was being watched, the commander of the Imperial Army called out to Eunuch Wan.

Eunuch Wan stopped and pretended as if nothing happened, saying, "General Yan, calling me eagerly, is there something you need?"

Ya Song smiled and glanced briefly, then shifted his gaze to the large box Eunuch Wan was carrying, saying, "What are you carrying, Eunuch Wan?"

Eunuch Wan laughed, "Items the Emperor wants. You know, the Empress Dowager is seriously ill, and the Emperor is now staying at Renshou Palace, caring for her tirelessly through the night. Caring for the sick is exhausting and dull. These are books the Emperor likes to read, along with some memorials received recently. I am taking them to the Emperor now."

"Oh? Is that so?" Ya Song looked at Eunuch Wan's box and said, "This box is so heavy, Eunuch Wan, it must be very tiring to carry. How about I help you carry it for a stretch?"

Eunuch Wan beamed and said, "Oh, then I must thank General Yan."

Eunuch Wan unceremoniously stuffed the box into Ya Song's hands. It was indeed heavy when lifted.

Ya Song half-squinted, seeing that Eunuch Wan's expression appeared normal and thus felt relieved.

"Please, Eunuch Wan!"

"General Yan, this way!"

The two walked together towards Renshou Palace, and Ya Song smiled faintly as he asked, "I've heard the Empress Dowager this time is gravely ill, unable to eat, and could perish at any moment?"

Eunuch Wan glanced lightly at Ya Song and smiled faintly, "That was earlier, she's much better now. But after all, the Empress Dowager is elderly. Illness strikes like a mountain yet leaves like silk drawn slowly, recovery is slow."

"Oh...?" Ya Song appeared thoughtful and said, "Then the Imperial Physician must keep a close watch. This single illness had the Emperor worried so severely, if she were to..."

"Ahem..." Eunuch Wan's face grew stern and he said coldly, "General Yan, what are you saying? If such words reach the Emperor's ears, it would lead to execution."

Ya Song realized his mistake and hurriedly smiled, apologizing, "Oh, look at my mouth! We are rough men trained in martial arts, our tongues are not as agile as those of scholars, it's easy to misstep with words. Please forgive me, Eunuch Wan, let this slip of the tongue be considered like a fart, disregard it!"

Eunuch Wan said coldly, "You martial people truly have unmannered mouths. Forget it, consider yourself lucky to run into me. I'm old now, my tongue isn't as sharp as in my youth. Rest assured, these words I indeed will dismiss like a fart."

"Oh, then I must thank Eunuch Wan for your generosity!"

As they neared Renshou Palace, Ya Song still showed no intention of returning the box, making Eunuch Wan anxious.

When Eunuch Wan was caught off guard, Ya Song deliberately kicked a step, stumbling forward, and the box fell out.

Eunuch Wan squawked with his falsetto voice, exclaiming repeatedly, "Oh dear, this is the Emperor's belongings, Ya Song, how dare you!"

The box was securely locked by Eunuch Wan, made of fine huanghuali wood, and after being knocked to the ground and rolling several times, it remained intact, which left Ya Song somewhat sullen.

How could he be at ease without seeing these things with his own eyes?

He hurriedly knelt down, saying, "I deserve to die, I... Oh, Eunuch Wan, you'd better pick up the Emperor's belongings, quickly open it to see if anything inside is damaged?"

Eunuch Wan naturally understood Ya Song's series of actions, all intending to inspect the contents.