Farmhouse 1471

Chapter 1471: Perilous Situation

Success or failure hinges on this, he hastily picked up the box, grabbed the key to unlock it, and cursed, "It’s fine as it is, but if anything goes wrong, Ya Song, humph, not even ten heads would be enough for you."

The authority of the eunuchs before the Emperor was fully displayed in front of Eunuch Wan. He opened the box without hesitation, and only then did Ya Song gradually relax.

It seems that I was overthinking it.

The box was full of books, somewhat disordered. Eunuch Wan tidied them up in front of Ya Song before reclosing the lid.

Eunuch Wan grumbled, "You can even stumble while walking. General Ya, I see your body is very weak. Shouldn’t you get the Imperial Physician to check on you? How can you serve the Emperor like this?"

General Ya narrowed his eyes slightly and cupped his hands, "Eunuch Wan is right. I also ask Eunuch Wan to speak favorably of me before the Emperor."

"First do your job well, then we’ll talk."

Eunuch Wan snorted coldly and carried the box into Renshou Palace.

It wasn’t until he entered the palace gate that Eunuch Wan broke out in a cold sweat, feeling almost exhausted, and threw the box on the ground, gasping for breath.

Li Gugu hurried forward and asked, "Eunuch Wan, what’s wrong?"

Eunuch Wan replied, "I’m getting old, carrying a box makes me pant. Come, I need you to give me a hand, Li Gugu."

Eunuch Wan had weathered many storms, but that cunning move from Ya Song still startled him.

He was sure that if he hadn’t smartly opened the box to inspect the items, Ya Song would never have let him go.

Eunuch Wan and Li Gugu together carried the box into the inner chamber. He reopened the box and took out a small casket from the innermost side.

"Your Majesty, see if this is what you wanted?"

The Emperor, lying on the bed, glanced over and said, "Yes, that’s it."

Eunuch Wan quickly picked it up and handed the small casket to the Emperor.

The Emperor gave the casket to the Empress Dowager and said, "Mother, in a moment of crisis, find a spacious place to open this casket. Be sure to keep it safe, do not... cough cough... do not let anyone take it."

The Empress Dowager didn’t know what it was but seeing the Emperor’s solemn demeanor, she became serious as well, took the casket, nodded earnestly, and said, "I will surely keep it safe for you. Your Majesty, don’t worry about these things now, just take care of your health."

The Emperor turned his head again and asked Eunuch Wan, "Wan Decheng, what about the other two matters?"

Eunuch Wan’s face turned pale, his old face wrinkled all over.

By rights, this matter shouldn’t be told to the Emperor; he couldn’t bear any more shock.

But with such a big matter, he dared not hide it from the Emperor.

Don’t see that the Emperor is sick now, but everyone in this room is relying on him.

He is their backbone. If he doesn’t tell him, what then?

"Wan Decheng, speak!" The Emperor, somewhat angry, said loudly, causing himself another bout of coughing.

Eunuch Wan fell to his knees with a thud, trying to lower his voice as much as possible, sobbing, "Your Majesty, Your Majesty, please don’t get angry. The Imperial Physician said you shouldn’t worry or get upset..."

"Speak!" The Emperor, somewhat weakly, said, "In my life, what blows have I not suffered? What can bring me down? Just say it!"

Eunuch Wan felt that the Emperor was truly pitiful in this moment. He was the exalted Emperor, when in good health, everyone flattered him in all possible ways; who would dare do anything to him? But once he fell ill, those around him turned out to be merely these servants.

And those people, they probably long for the news of the Emperor’s demise to spread!

Chapter 1472: Meeting Madam Lin

Eunuch Wan sighed softly and said, "Jin Tianzhong has secretly returned to Beijing. I saw Ya Song laughing and talking with Jin Tianzhong; their relationship seems deep. Your Majesty, it seems that the Imperial Palace is no longer... no longer under your control. Ya Song has already sided with Jin Tianzhong..."

The Empress Dowager felt weak upon hearing this, finally realizing that the world might be changing.

She hurriedly asked, "Isn’t Ya Song the head of the Imperial Army? If he has sided with Jin Tianzhong, what will happen to the palace’s safety?"

Eunuch Wan bowed his head and sobbed softly.

The Emperor lay on the bed, staring at the top of the canopy with a blank expression, which scared both Eunuch Wan and the Empress Dowager greatly.

The Empress Dowager wiped her tears and softly advised the Emperor, saying, "Your Majesty, do not worry. Focus on your health first. Once your body recovers, you can reclaim everything."

"Yes, Your Majesty, once you're healthy, you can resume control of the situation. I don't believe they would dare commit regicide then!"

Upon saying this, Eunuch Wan wished he could slap himself for his bold words.

Those people have already rebelled, and committing regicide is not impossible!

However, these words reminded the Emperor of something. With an unknown surge of energy, he suddenly sat up. He opened his mouth as if wanting to say something but remained silent in the end.

After a while, the Emperor suddenly asked, "Where is Noble Consort Sheng?"

Eunuch Wan said bitterly, "This old servant has yet to go to Noble Consort Sheng. I hastened to deliver this crucial information instead."

"Then go now, have her bring Xuyao to Renshou Palace."

The Imperial Palace may no longer belong to him, but at least Renshou Palace was, for now.

The Hidden Guard was still by his side; they hadn't moved against Renshou Palace yet.

However, once they do act against Renshou Palace, the few people by his side would be meaningless. When the time comes, it will only be essential to protect Xuyao.

After everyone left, the Emperor gave instructions to the Hidden Guard who had been by his side for many years.

"When they come, you are not to stop them. There’s no need for futile sacrifices."

At this juncture, force can no longer solve the problem. Keeping these Hidden Guards will still be of great use.

...

In Beijing, officials were gradually being controlled, and now attention had turned to the Lin Family.

The person visiting the Lin Family was Jin Tianzhong himself.

"Cousin, it’s been so long! How have you been lately?"

Madam Lin, who was watering the flowers, turned around in surprise that immediately shocked her.

Since the Ducal Residence incident, she had secluded herself completely, neither going out nor inquiring about the outside world. Everything she learned was detrimental to her and made her furious!

So, she was entirely unaware of the dramatic changes happening outside.

"Why have you come here?" Madam Lin asked, her face pale with fear, quickly pulling Jin Tianzhong inside, afraid he would be seen.

"Come on, cousin, there’s no need to worry. No one else is here; there’s nothing to fear!"

Madam Lin was frightened badly by him and whispered, "Do you think it’s like old times when there were no outsiders? Lin Xingyi’s concubines are eager for my downfall and haven’t found the opportunity yet. If they find you, we’ll both be finished. Ah, what’s going on with you? What’s happening with uncle? How did you end up in Beijing?"

Madam Lin checked the surroundings, forcefully dragged Jin Tianzhong into the house, and whispered, "Did you not decode the acrostic in the letter I sent you?"

"What acrostic?" Jin Tianzhong asked with a smile.

Madam Lin was incredibly anxious and snapped, "Are you silly? I told you not to come to Beijing!"

Jin Tianzhong shrugged indifferently and said, "Yet, here I am!"

Chapter 1473: They Are Too Crazy

Madam Lin: “…Then let’s hurry, getting caught by them means death! Alas! What on earth is Uncle thinking?”

Jin Tianzhong felt he couldn’t keep up the joke and burst into laughter, saying, “Cousin, how long have you not left the house? I feel like you’re still living in those days when our family was raided.”

Madam Lin was startled and stared at him in a daze.

Jin Tianzhong laughed heartily and said, “Oh, you! Alas! The outside world has changed, and you still don’t know. My father…”

Speaking of his father and the people of the Ducal Residence, Jin Tianzhong’s voice suddenly choked.

He looked up at the ceiling, forcing back a tear, and smiled, “Our family, hundreds of people, all died. Grandfather died unjustly, and shortly after hearing this news, my father also… he also went! Now the

Beiping Army is in my elder brother's hands. He vows to never live ignobly and will certainly avenge those hundreds of lives from the Ducal Residence."

Jin Tianzhong's father was already an old man in his sixties. Suddenly hearing the dreadful news of the Ducal Residence, he naturally couldn't endure it. He fainted on the spot, fell seriously ill, and never recovered.

Madam Lin also lowered her head and sighed deeply, her eyes welling with tears.

She whispered, "How did things turn out like this? Why did good days end up like this? Tianzhong, can't everyone just live well? Why did Grandfather have to have such thoughts?"

Jin Wei and King Jin are good kids; they deeply respected Grandfather, why treat them like that? And my daughter, you know, Qianqing is my only daughter in this life. I don't expect her to bring me riches, I just want her to live well, why did Grandfather treat them like that? I…"

Madam Lin clutched her heart, which ached with spasms, and said, "Every time I think of those things, I feel like I'm going to die of sadness, here… here it aches in waves…"

"Cousin!" Jin Tianzhong collected his thoughts, his expression also darkening, he said, "Cousin, from what you're saying, are you blaming Grandfather?"

Madam Lin: "…"

"Hmph, don't forget, without Grandfather, there would be none of us descendants. He gave us not just a life, but a lifetime of wealth and honor, how can you blame Grandfather?"

"But…" Madam Lin felt his words were right, yet somehow wrong, she said anxiously, "But you can't plot against the children like that!"

Jin Tianzhong retorted flatly, "Born into our family, one should be prepared to sacrifice for the family at any time. Otherwise, how do we maintain such a large family?"

Upon hearing these words, Madam Lin was almost faint with anger.

What does it mean to sacrifice for the family at any time? Why? Besides, her Qianqing is of the Lin Family, not Jin.

She exclaimed angrily, “I can’t agree with what you’re saying; the scheming involved my daughter. Of course, it’s not on your own head, why don’t you offer your daughter instead.”

“Cousin!” Jin Tianzhong was also fuming, saying, “My daughter and Jin Wei are cousins; if she could be Wang Jin’s consort, would it even be your daughter’s turn? Besides, how can you call it sacrifice? The only ones sacrificed are Jin Xiaoran and Jin Wei, no matter whose child she bears in her belly, they will be the future emperor, she will be the Empress Dowager, honored for life!”

“Absurd, how can you say such things!” Madam Lin’s worldview was thoroughly overturned. She had been dwelling on the extermination of the Ducal Residence, but now hearing Jin Tianzhong’s words, she suddenly felt they deserved their collective demise.

Chapter 1474: Not Planning to Leave

What is all this?

“I may have no etiquette, righteousness, integrity, or shame, but I still do! Get out, I have nothing to say to you, hurry back to Beiping, don’t let me see you!”

Unbearable!

“Hahaha… Cousin!” Jin Tianzhong laughed recklessly and said, “Since I have already returned, I have no intention of leaving.”

“Not leaving?” Madam Lin was stunned and said, “You’re not leaving? Do you want to die?”

“Die?” Jin Tianzhong snorted coldly and said, “Who knows who’s going to die! Humph, Cousin, let me be honest with you, this time I came back, not only will I not leave, but I will also restore the former glory of the Ducal Residence!”

“You’re crazy!” Madam Lin looked at him with shock.

“Crazy? Haha, I am crazy!” Jin Tianzhong suddenly glared angrily at Madam Lin and said, “I went crazy when my whole family of hundreds lay dead in the wilderness. Let me tell you, Jin Tianzhong lives to seek revenge in this life. If I die unfortunately, my son, grandson, will continue on this path of revenge until the Jin Royal Family is displaced.”

“You…” Madam Lin was extremely shocked and suddenly felt that what Lin Xingyi said made some sense.

They truly brought this upon themselves, they are a bunch of lunatics.

“Cousin…” Jin Tianzhong suddenly softened his attitude and said in a low voice, “We are relatives with the same bloodline, when the Ducal Residence was prosperous, you could crush your husband’s family with confidence, who dared to defy you?

But look now, the Ducal Residence has fallen, you can’t even suppress the concubines in the household, if any of them give birth to a son, in your old age without a son and without background, how will you maintain your position as the legitimate wife in this family? Aren’t you worried? Are you willing to accept this in your life?”

Unwilling!

Madam Lin’s heart raced, how could she be willing to let what she has cared for her whole life fall into others’ hands?

Falling from heaven to hell, who would be willing?

But she doesn’t want rivers of blood, doesn’t want them to repeat mistakes.

As long as the living relatives can continue to live, as long as they haven't been completely eradicated, she's willing to endure some hardships!

Why can't they just live in peace, the Emperor already said he wouldn't pursue it further, why do they still come to Beijing to make trouble?

Are they only willing if they sacrifice the whole family's lives?

Madam Lin loudly said, "Do you really want to wipe out your descendants? Grandfather committed a capital crime of exterminating the family, we haven't been implicated, this result is already very good, must you exhaust the last drop of blood of the family to be appeased?"

"Hmph, if you were still a Jin Family member, you wouldn't say such things." Jin Tianzhong snorted coldly and said, "Do you think the Emperor doesn't want to kill us? Humph, they just can't kill us, dare not kill us. If given a chance, he surely would eradicate us, just like us, since there's such a good chance now, why not fight for a way out for ourselves?"

"Don't use your ambition as an excuse!" Madam Lin sneered angrily, "Do you dare say you don't want to take over this world?"

Jin Tianzhong froze for a moment, faced with Madam Lin's relentless questioning, he could not speak.

To take over this world? Yes, that is indeed their ultimate goal.

But before achieving it, who would admit it?

At most, they would say it's to help King Jin seize the throne.

Even if someday they're forced to sit on that position, they have to humbly claim it's reluctantly accepting the burden.

Chapter 1475: Lin Residence Under Control

These are the many concerns about the change of power in the world.

But now that Madam Lin has asked about it, then...

Jin Tianzhong sat down, half-smiling, picked up the teapot on the table, leisurely poured himself a cup of tea, took a sip, clicked his tongue and said, "Good tea," before raising an eyebrow to Madam Lin and saying, "You're right, our ultimate goal is to achieve ownership of this world."

"You... you are treacherous!"

"No, we are merely reclaiming our ancestors' territory," Jin Tianzhong said blandly, "Our ancestors also bore the name Jin, and belonged to the Jin Royal Family. This world should rightfully belong to our ancestors. It was Jin Moning's ancestors who swapped things behind the scenes and took what didn't belong to them. Our generations' efforts have merely been about retrieving what was originally ours."

Madam Lin listened quietly, only feeling that these people simply must be mad, yet she was helpless.

"Then... what exactly are you looking to do by coming to me this time?"

Jin Tianzhong smiled and said, "Finally, my cousin has asked the key question. Today, I am here because I want my cousin to help with something."

"Heh..." Madam Lin laughed amusingly, "What help can I, an abandoned woman, possibly offer?"

"Lin Xingyi is sentimental and faithful. Just the fact that you're still alive is enough to show that you still serve a purpose to him."

"What do you want to do?" Madam Lin suddenly exclaimed, "Come at me, if you have anything, but don't involve the Lin Family."

"Look at what you said. We are the true family. Our blood flows with the same lineage. Cousin, how can you speak for outsiders? Unless it's true what people say, that a married daughter is like spilled water, and in your heart, we are no longer comparable to the Lin Family?"

"Haha..." Madam Lin laughed coldly, "What do you think?"

Jin Tianzhong shifted awkwardly, refrained from continuing the topic, and instead spoke of the main issue.

"Cousin, to be honest with you, the Emperor is dying, Jin Zijin is not in Beijing, Jin Tingyu is barely alive, and the Imperial Palace is under my control. Having reached this point, we have no way back.

Today, I'm not here to trouble you but to give you two choices. Firstly, contribute as much as you can. I can see that you still hold some weight in Lin Xingyi's heart. Help us convince him to work for us, and once successful, benefits for you and your family will be indispensable.

Secondly, if you are unwilling... of course, not many of our family members are still alive. Naturally, we won't trouble you either, but it means you'll have to endure some days of grievance. From this day forth, not even a fly from the Lin Family can expect to leave."

Madam Lin shivered with her heart, liver, and lungs, and said, "What have you done to Lin Xingyi?"

"Oh, nothing, he's in the study, just unable to come and go freely for the time being."

"You..."

"Certainly. If my sister can persuade him to work for us, I can immediately have him released!"

...

The palace has already been taken under control, and all the palace ladies have started to feel anxious.

"Why aren't we allowed to leave? Who gave this order? Is it His Majesty? Where's Ya Song? Call out Ya Song!"

"Lady Chen, I advise you to calm down. This is the decision from above; shouting will do you no good."

"Above? Who is it?"

The guard stopped speaking, adopting a demeanor of indifference.

"Hey, hey, who is it exactly? I haven't done anything wrong; why won't you let me out? Why, exactly..."

Chapter 1476: Controlling Each Palace

The guard was irritable with her pestering and explained, "All the concubines have been confined. Noble Lady Chen, it's best not to ask too much about this. If I were you, I'd just go back and eat and drink, lest you die and become a starving ghost."

"What? What starving ghost? Hey, hey, speak clearly." Noble Lady Chen said anxiously.

The patrolling guard saw this scene and shouted at the guard, "Why are you blabbering with her? Send her back, lock the door, and if she keeps making noise, cut her tongue out. Lady Li in Changchun Palace was noisy and boastful, so General Yan personally cut her tongue out, and she's been quiet ever since."

When Noble Lady Chen heard this, her face turned pale with fright, and she quickly shut her mouth.

The palace maiden assisted her back, and she was unable to speak for quite a while.

"This… What's happening? Just yesterday everything was fine, how did it suddenly turn out like this?"

"Noble Lady, you had better not speak. Surely there's been trouble in the palace."

“Trouble? What kind of trouble?”

“Well! Everyone’s guessing that the one who’s sick in Renshou Palace is actually the Emperor, not the Empress Dowager. Could it be that the Emperor is already…”

Noble Lady Chen was so frightened she plopped down onto the ground.

If the Emperor has died and the concubines are confined to their own palaces, could it be… could it be they are to be buried with him?

But she’s so young, she doesn’t want to die…

…

Even Noble Concubine Sheng’s sleeping quarters were sealed. She locked Jin Xuyao together with her most trusted palace maiden Long Yi into that secret chamber known only to her and the Emperor, with enough food inside.

“Madam, what are you doing?”

Noble Concubine Sheng said, “Something must have happened to the Emperor. In this Imperial Palace, the only one who can threaten the Emperor is the little imperial grandson. Hide him here, don’t come out no matter what happens.

The food and water inside are enough for you to live for more than half a month. You’re the one I trust the most, you must protect the little imperial grandson!”

“Grandmother Empress!” Jin Xuyao clung to her clothes tightly, his eyes looking at her pitifully, saying, “Come inside!”

Noble Concubine Sheng gently touched his face, saying, “Grandmother Empress can’t come in. This is a game of hide-and-seek. Little imperial grandson, be good, hide quietly with Aunt Long Yi inside and only come out…only when your parents arrive.”

“Parents?” Jin Xuyao scratched his head, unable to summon the image of his parents in his mind.

Noble Concubine Sheng pushed them inside and closed the hidden mechanism.

Long Yi was no ordinary palace maiden; she trusted her to keep Jin Xuyao safe.

Soon, Yan Song arrived, bowing to Noble Concubine Sheng: “Noble Concubine, some things have occurred in the palace causing you inconvenience. I ask for your forgiveness.”

“Hmm!” Noble Concubine Sheng said indifferently: “Why have you come to my palace today?”

Yan Song smiled and said: “By the Emperor’s order, I’ve come to take the little imperial grandson over, as the Empress Dowager wishes to see him. I ask for your cooperation, Noble Concubine!”

“It’s unfortunate, the little imperial grandson is not here with me!” Noble Concubine Sheng said flatly.

“Not here?” The guards outside Noble Concubine Sheng’s quarters were all in place; it was impossible for him not to be there.

Yan Song’s face darkened, with a forced smile.

“Noble Concubine, you’re joking. The little imperial grandson has always been with you. He’s only two or three years old; he can’t run off by himself, can he?”

“Why can’t he run off by himself?” Noble Concubine Sheng snorted coldly: “He has legs, why can’t he run off by himself?”

Chapter 1477: Killed Her Own Palace Maiden

Ya Song suddenly froze, seemingly losing his patience as well, and said coldly, “I would advise the Noble Consort not to make things difficult for me. Hand over the young imperial grandson to avoid physical pain!”

The Noble Consort Sheng sat on the high seat, casting a cold glance as she spoke, “So, according to General Yan, if I can’t hand over the young imperial grandson, you’ll make me suffer some physical pain?”

Ya Song suddenly became rigid.

The Noble Consort Sheng stood up gently and said blandly, “Well, ever since I entered this Harem, I haven’t suffered any physical pain. Even the arrogant Empress back then couldn’t harm a hair on my head. I see you, the head of the Imperial Guards, might be a bit more arrogant than the Empress. Perhaps you can really make me suffer, come on!”

Everyone knew that the Noble Consort Sheng was wayward, proud of being favored, and never regarded the Empress seriously.

It seems true now.

Ya Song’s face darkened, and with a wave, a trembling palace maiden was dragged out.

He said, “Unless absolutely necessary, I dare not make the Noble Consort Sheng suffer, but these palace maidens, since they serve the noble consort, it’s only right for them to endure some suffering for their mistress. Bring someone here, if the noble consort doesn’t speak, chop off her hand.”

Two men pinned the palace maiden down on the table, grabbing one of her hands. Another man stepped forward, drew the sword from his waist, raised it, and dropped it. Immediately followed by the palace maiden’s heart-rending screams.

The Noble Consort Sheng watched, her heart bleeding, yet her expression remained indifferent.

Ya Song said coldly, “If the noble consort refuses to speak, we’ll chop off her other hand after a stick of incense.”

Someone took out an incense burner and lit an incense stick.

Ya Song gave a signal to the two holding the palace maiden, and they released her.

The palace maiden, once freed, crawled toward the Noble Consort Sheng, grabbing her hem with her remaining hand, and cried, “Noble Consort, Noble Consort, save this servant, this servant cannot live without hands!”

The Noble Consort Sheng lowered her head, her eyes filled with intense, helpless sorrow.

In the eyes of outsiders, she was the favored Noble Consort, yet she knew herself that she was, like them, nothing more than a servant.

She didn’t know how the masters viewed the servants, but to her, that bloody hand felt like her own.

Yet she would rather die than betray her master.

So, she hardened her heart, pulled out the hairpin from her head, and plunged it into the palace maiden’s heart.

For she knew these people wouldn’t let her go and would torture the palace maiden to death in front of her.

Living together for many years, she killed her to spare her from suffering!

The world in front of the palace maiden’s eyes grew increasingly blurred, her cries abruptly stopped!

Ya Song's face suddenly darkened as he dragged the palace maiden's body away and tossed it aside.

He stared at the Noble Consort Sheng and shouted fiercely, "You can kill one, but I don't believe you can kill everyone in the palace!"

With a gesture behind him, all the palace maidens and eunuchs of Chengqian Palace were brought over.

Each one knelt trembling, the timid ones already screaming at the sight of the previous palace maiden's corpse.

Ya Song sneered coldly, "What now? Noble Consort Sheng, do you want to kill them one by one? Would you like me to prepare a knife for you, so you can warm up by killing them all? If that's not enough, there are plenty of palace maidens and eunuchs in the palace, and the concubines of each palace. You won't run out of people to kill until your hands grow tired."

Seeing the knife that Ya Song handed over, Noble Consort Sheng's face went pale, and her breathing became rapid.

Chapter 1478: Sent Away

Ya Song laughed heartily, and said, "Haha, you shy away after just one kill? If you do, we might have to cut off your hand!"

Seeing that there was little incense left in the burner, Ya Song signaled to the guards.

A eunuch, about seventeen or eighteen years old, was dragged out and pressed onto the long plank. Next to him lay the severed hand of the previous palace maiden.

The eunuch was so frightened that he let out piercing screams, which stabbed into Concubine Sheng's heart.

Concubine Sheng took a deep breath and coldly laughed, "No harm in telling you; I've already sent him out of the palace. Do you think you can catch him if you chase now?"

Ya Song’s face changed, and he sneered, "I didn’t know Concubine Sheng had such skills, sent out of the palace? Do you think my men just eat vegetables? Men, search!"

Concubine Sheng’s expression remained composed, with even a hint of mockery, as she allowed the guards to enter the hall for a search.

As they came out one by one, they shook their heads lightly.

"General, no one!"

"General, no one!"

"General, the palace maiden Long Yi beside Concubine Sheng is also missing!"

"General, I’m afraid she really sent them out of the palace!"

As the searchers came out one by one, Ya Song’s face grew darker and darker.

Concubine Sheng laughed mockingly, "Back then, the Empress had control over everything, no matter how many concubines once favored by His Majesty died by her hands. Why has this palace been favored for over twenty years and still stands tall? Hmph, even the Empress couldn’t pluck out this thorn in her eye; does General Yan still think this palace lacks the ability to send someone out?"

Though Ya Song found it hard to believe—after all, the Imperial Palace had been under his control for years, always as strong as a fortress—Concubine Sheng’s words were not without reason.

A maid from an insignificant Xiao Family background like Concubine Sheng, what could possibly allow her to live so long? There could be only one possibility: she has a master by her side.

"Long Yi!" Ya Song vaguely felt that the woman was not an ordinary palace maiden; could her abilities be that great?

"Where did she escape to?" Ya Song asked coolly.

Concubine Sheng laughed heartily, "What do you think?"

Thinking for a moment, Ya Song suddenly realized.

"Xining?"

Concubine Sheng did not speak.

Ya Song immediately gave orders, "Quickly send people to chase toward Xining!"

He himself also left resolutely, intending to personally inform Jin Tianzhong of the matter.

...

Jin Tianzhong strode toward Renshou Palace, while Ya Song followed behind, reporting on the situation over the past two days regarding the control of the various mansions in Beijing and the Imperial Palace.

"Among the officials who could speak out, they either surrendered to the general or ’reported illness at home,’ so there won’t be any resistance to King Jin’s ascent. The concubines in the palace are under control, and there’s no trouble expected from within. The only place still not under our control is Renshou Palace."

"Hmm, not bad. How are the Jinxiu City Xiao Family and Lu Family doing?"

"Old General Lu fell ill at just the right time; I hear he’s already bedridden."

"Oh? Is that so?" Jin Tianzhong laughed, "That is a delightful surprise. What happened?"

Ya Song said, "It’s said to be related to the tigress of his house. Apparently, General Lu favored a concubine, which angered Madam Lu!"

Jin Tianzhong laughed heartily and said, "That is truly heaven’s assistance; Madam Lu is indeed a remarkable woman in Beijing!"

"Indeed!" Ya Song said, "Young Master Lu is still young and doesn’t have the same military prestige as General Lu. A friend of mine in the military took the opportunity to stir up trouble, and now the Lu Family army has split into two factions. Young Master Lu is helpless!"

"Haha... well done!" Jin Tianzhong laughed.

Chapter 1479: Confronting the Empress Dowager

Ya Song continued, "The beggars in Jinxiu City rioted, robbing countless merchants. The merchants have approached Xiao Jinfei, and he now finds it difficult to manage. However..."

"However what?" Jin Tianzhong’s gaze darkened.

Ya Song quickly said, "Xiao Jinfei has taken some thunderous measures, immediately ordering the massacre of the rioting beggars in Jinxiu City. Now, he is likely gathering troops ready to enter the capital at any moment to protect the throne!"

"That is nothing to fear!" Jin Tianzhong said, "Without an imperial edict, if he dares to bring troops into the capital, you can fully treat him as a rebel and suppress him!"

"But it won’t be without a bloody storm!" Ya Song frowned.

Jin Tianzhong raised his brow and said, "This general knows that General Ya has a merciful heart, unable to bear seeing the soldiers bleed and die, but when push comes to shove, we must do so."

Ya Song nodded lightly and said, "I understand."

"Hmm!" Jin Tianzhong nodded in satisfaction and asked, "And what about Jin Xuyao?"

"The little crown prince..." Ya Song found himself at a loss, bowing, "We didn't expect Sheng Guifei to be so formidable. Despite being heavily surrounded, she managed to have the little crown prince sent away. He is likely on his way to Xining, and I have already sent people to pursue."

"Sheng Guifei, a maid by birth, possesses such capabilities?" Jin Tianzhong was astonished and stopped in his tracks.

Ya Song bowed and said, "Sheng Guifei rose from the status of a maid in the harem, securing the Emperor's favor for over twenty years without falling out of grace. Even the Empress has suffered losses before her; she is not like ordinary maids. General, what do you think..."

Jin Tianzhong squinted, recalling how Jin Yushu, at her peak, defeated all the competitors qualified to contend with her, yet gained no advantage over Sheng Guifei. It appears that this woman indeed possesses exceptional talents.

It seems he must go and meet this woman himself.

"Never mind, let's see the Emperor first!"

Who exactly is ill is a matter understood without being said.

So when Jin Tianzhong and his party arrived, they saw the person lying in bed was the Emperor, while the Empress Dowager, rumored to be critically ill, sat beside him without surprise.

One after another, the bad news came, and the Emperor's condition worsened considerably. Now, even to sit up, he needed assistance, let alone stand and walk.

He opened his eyes to glance at the newcomers, then closed them again.

Jin Tianzhong laughed softly, "Your Majesty, this humble servant has come to pay respects to Your Majesty."

Madam Li supported the Empress Dowager, whose anger made her grip Madam Li's hand tightly.

The Emperor made no response to Jin Tianzhong, who chuckled and turned to the Empress Dowager.

"Empress Dowager, it's said that you were ill, but now it seems you are much better. Instead, it's His Majesty who has been tirelessly attending to you day and night, and now he's fallen ill, hahaha..."

"You have committed treasonous acts, defied the heavens and principles! Heaven will surely punish you!" The Empress Dowager cursed angrily.

Jin Tianzhong was full of smugness, laughing wildly, "I don't know whether heaven will take me, but I do know heaven is close to taking the Emperor, haha!"

"You... shut up!" The Empress Dowager raised her cane to strike at Jin Tianzhong.

Jin Tianzhong seized the cane and threw it out the window.

He snorted coldly, "To respect you as the Empress Dowager is considering your old age. You, an old servant, do you really think you're the Empress Dowager? Hmm, old and decrepit, don't forget your own status!"

The Empress Dowager was so furious that she nearly fainted.

Since the Emperor ascended the throne, who dared speak to her in such a manner? Who dared to mention her servant status? Though she had been the Empress Dowager for many years, it was the first time someone addressed her like this.

Chapter 1480: Forcing the Emperor to Abdicate

The Emperor over there opened his eyes, his voice weak and hoarse: "Jin Tianzhong, state your purpose, surely you are not here just to spite the Empress Dowager!"

"Yes, let's get to the main point!" Jin Tianzhong stepped forward a few paces, smiling faintly: "Your Majesty is already gravely ill and unable to manage state affairs. I boldly request that Your Majesty appoint a Crown Prince to manage the state and ease your worries. In this way, Your Majesty can recuperate peacefully in 'Renshou Palace'."

"Oh? In your opinion, who should be made Crown Prince?"

Jin Tianzhong's heart surged with joy, hurriedly replying: "King Jin, being the legitimate son of the late Empress, is virtuous and talented. I boldly request Your Majesty to establish His Highness King Jin as Crown Prince."

"Ha..." The Emperor let out a cold laugh: "His mother was demoted to a concubine, he is now a concubine's son!"

Jin Tianzhong's expression changed, showing a trace of coldness, he said: "Your Majesty, now is not the time for pretense. What's the point of these pretenses? Regardless of whether King Jin is a concubine's son, or he is infertile, or even if he is guilty and currently detained in Zongrenfu, none of these can stop King Jin from ascending to the position of Crown Prince. Your Majesty, I demand you immediately appoint King Jin as Crown Prince. If not, I cannot guarantee what my volatile temper might cause in your harem."

The palace maidens and eunuchs in the hall were so frightened they shrank into the corners, while Aunt Li and Eunuch Wan tried to soothe the Empress Dowager, whose face was streaked with tears of anger.

Only the gravely ill Emperor faced Jin Tianzhong and the others alone.

After a long pause, the Emperor finally said calmly: "Very well, then let King Jin be the Crown Prince. Ya Song, go to Zongrenfu and bring King Jin back!"

The Emperor surprisingly gave in so easily, causing Jin Tianzhong to cautiously study the Emperor.

Ya Song looked to Jin Tianzhong, and only after receiving Jin Tianzhong’s nod did he head towards Zongrenfu.

Among the people here, only the Emperor and Eunuch Wan knew that King Jin was long gone from Zongrenfu. After King Jin and his consort were arranged to be sent away, the guards of Zongrenfu had been secretly replaced, so...

Eunuch Wan suddenly realized, only to think that the Emperor truly was wise and resourceful.

Perhaps he had anticipated this day long ago, and had already countered it at its root.

Haha, without King Jin, how will they perfect this usurpation?

Hmph, daring to stand at Taihe Hall, then be prepared for the people’s denouncement!

Jin Tianzhong casually sat down, looking at the Emperor lying on the bed with a grin: "Since Your Majesty is so understanding, both for the nation and the people, why not abdicate after appointing the Crown Prince today and let virtue prevail tomorrow? Relieving this burden, isn’t it better to recuperate in peace?"

"Alright, I’ll do as you say!" The Emperor said flatly.

From the side, the Empress Dowager was overwhelmed with anxiety, saying: "Your Majesty, how could you let them have their way?"

Jin Tianzhong ignored the Empress Dowager, indulging in his joy.

"Haha, the Emperor is truly straightforward!" Things proceeded even smoother than Jin Tianzhong had imagined, which made him somewhat elated.

So easily, he took control of the Imperial City, claiming the head merit.

Gradually, he began to overstep further.

"Your Majesty, there is one more task you must fulfill. Oh, of course, Your Majesty is ill, I wouldn’t make it difficult for you. You just need to hand over the Jade Seal and affix a grand stamp on it."

"What matter?" The Emperor appeared very calm; of course, he was always like this, so everyone was accustomed to it.

Jin Tianzhong said: "The wrongful death case of hundreds from the Ducal Residence, I request Your Majesty to review it again and bring justice to the deceased!"

The Emperor was silent for a moment, as if gathering strength.