Farmhouse 1511

Chapter 1511: Have a Proper Talk

"Hmm?" Jin Zijin finally understood why she was acting so unusually last night.

"Do you still want to have a child?"

"Of course!" Gu Youyou said with a smile: "I've calculated the days; these days are good for pregnancy!"

Jin Zijin laughed bitterly and said, "Looks like we'll have to put in some extra effort these days. Come on, let's go out and eat something; I fear you won't have the stamina!"

"Nonsense, why don't you say you lack stamina?"

"Who was the one begging for mercy last night?"

Gu Youyou: "..."

Xiang Chun had been guarding outside the courtyard gate, and upon hearing the commotion inside, she couldn't bother with anything else, quickly pushing the gate open to enter.

Gu Youyou frowned and said, "Xiang Chun, what makes you so flustered? Have you forgotten the rules?"

In both her lives, Gu Youyou shared the same quirk: she didn't like anyone entering her bedroom or private space without her permission. Given the poor soundproofing in ancient times and the spaciousness of private spaces, this habit gradually extended to the entire courtyard.

Xiang Chun, thinking of how the Emperor was still waiting for them, couldn't care less about anything other than saying, "The Emperor has come; he arrived early this morning and has been waiting for a long time."

"Ah...?" Gu Youyou was stunned, "Why didn't you wake me earlier?"

"I..." Xiang Chun said: "This maid thought it was important since the Emperor’s visit is a major event, certainly warranting your presence. However, the Emperor stopped me, saying not to disturb you, only asking me to wait outside."

With this... Gu Youyou looked awkwardly at Jin Zijin, giving him a little nudge.

Jin Zijin didn’t look too good, maintaining a composed face as he walked out of the courtyard.

"Well, since he’s here, we can’t very well not meet him, can we?" Gu Youyou held her forehead, pondering the coincidence. Normally, she didn’t sleep in, and yet today, she slept late only to be caught in the act.

With that, she hurriedly followed.

Having overslept, they finally left the courtyard to meet the Emperor, creating a truly awkward atmosphere in the flower hall.

Gu Youyou earnestly greeted the Emperor, and after receiving permission to sit, she somewhat bashfully took a seat on the stool beside.

Wise individuals don’t beat around the bush; the Emperor straightforwardly said, "You know what I mean!"

"Yes, I do!" Jin Zijin said, "I also understand what I mean."

The atmosphere was somewhat tense, prompting Gu Youyou to call Jin Xuyao over, leading him away.

Such matters are best left for them to negotiate personally.

Xiang Chun, frightened and sweating early in the morning upon seeing Gu Youyou emerge, hurriedly asked, "Why did the Emperor come so early?"

Gu Youyou, usually kind to them, sometimes emboldened them.

Gu Youyou had no choice but to say with a stern face, "Send some tea inside, and don’t pry into things you shouldn’t!"

"Oh, this maid will do it right away!"

In the flower hall, the Emperor waved his hand, dismissing everyone around him, leaving only himself and Jin Zijin in the room.

Looking at his eldest son, sitting upright like a pine, the Emperor felt a sense of helplessness.

He could control anyone in the world; if someone didn’t obey, he found ways to get rid of them. But with Jin Zijin, he felt powerless.

"Do you still hold resentment towards me?"

Jin Zijin replied lightly, "Life is short, mere decades. I don’t have the energy to harbor grudges against someone. You’re overthinking it."

"Then tell me, why are you unwilling to be the Crown Prince, the Emperor?"

"Everyone has their ambitions. Your desire to be the Emperor doesn’t mean I share it!"

"But there’s no one in the world who wouldn’t want to be Emperor!" The Emperor’s voice rose slightly, appearing somewhat agitated.

Jin Zijin still spoke lightly, "Then find someone willing to take that role; that person isn’t me!"

Chapter 1512: Disappointed King

“Why?” Facing Jin Zijin, who was even calmer than himself, the Emperor felt even more exhausted and powerless.

Jin Zijin looked at him calmly and said, “Everyone has their own ambitions. After years of seclusion on Qi Mountain, my mindset is different from yours. I won’t be driven by power or profit, so don’t waste your efforts on me.”

“You…” The Emperor was somewhat choked and said, “You’re still blaming me. It was I who schemed to send you to Qi Mountain. So you’re saying this just to tell me that I must reap what I sow, aren’t you?”

“Think whatever you like!” Jin Zijin said.

The Emperor rested his hand on his forehead, massaging his temples repeatedly.

Xiang Chun brought fresh tea, but Eunuch Wan stopped him at the door and didn’t let him in.

He took the tea tray himself and knocked on the door of the flower hall.

“Come in!” the Emperor’s voice came from the flower hall.

Eunuch Wan hurriedly served the tea and swiftly exited again.

Seeing his expression seemed displeased, Eunuch Wan was also puzzled. Since the eldest Prince had chosen to return to court, why was he insistent on refusing the throne?

In his view, among the Emperors’ sons, the eldest Prince was the best choice for Emperor.

If he were willing to take over the court, the Emperor could spend more years in peace and leisure!

Seeing he couldn't persuade Jin Zijin, the Emperor threw a small tantrum.

"Then what do you want me to do? You don't even come to court. What do you expect me to do? I'm old now, my health isn't what it used to be, as you can see. If you don't take over, do you really want to watch me work myself to death?"

Jin Zijin said indifferently, "You've been handling state affairs for decades, and you're already adept. Why complain here?"

Emperor: "…"

"The court has already been purged, and there are no rebellious officials opposing you. What's so difficult to handle?"

Emperor: "…Even if not for me, won't you care for the common people? What does your Dao Family's doctrine preach? When I'm gone, will you only be content if you see the flames of war rise again?"

Jin Zijin scrutinized the Emperor. Though he was older, didn't he still have the energy to speak loudly here? He said, "If you truly feel incapable, then appoint a Crown Prince as regent. Prince Qin has been by your side since childhood and certainly knows more about governance than I do. I'm just a rustic country man; I can help you get rid of rebels, but governing a country, I'm no match for Prince Qin."

"You… You are determined to treat me this way?" The Emperor said angrily, "This is a promise I made to your mother. Do you want me to break my word?"

Jin Zijin's face suddenly darkened, letting out a cold snort: "If you don't trust Prince Qin, find King Jin back. As for my mother, do you not feel you've already broken your word?"

With that, the atmosphere dropped a few degrees again.

Both of their expressions were unpleasant; besides anger, the Emperor also felt some guilt.

Who can be blamed for this mess? Perhaps this is the retribution he deserves!

This conversation ended unhappily, and the Emperor returned to the palace. The next day, he issued another royal decree.

This decree was announced to the entire nation.

Everyone thought the eldest Prince would be named Crown Prince, but unexpectedly, the Emperor granted him the title of King Ning with a decree.

A prince bestowed as a king, with King Jin, Prince Qin, King Qi, and King Chu being the most prestigious. As the legitimate eldest son, even if he couldn't be Emperor, he should at least be one of the four great princes. But Jin Zijin was only given the title of King Ning.

This set of titles is typically given to relatively outstanding sons of concubines, so does this mean that in the Emperor's eyes, the eldest Prince only measures up to a fairly talented concubine's son?

Chapter 1513: What is My Surname?

Of course, for Jin Zijin himself, a royal title to him was just like the Taoist name given by his master, just a form of address, whatever it may be.

It's just that all the ministers clearly knew, the emperor favored the eldest prince the most, and it was well-known that he intended to pass the throne to him.

But now, this kind of outcome has aroused everyone's curiosity, leading them to exert all efforts to find out what was really going on.

Thus, the incident where the emperor visited the Ningwang Residence early in the morning, only to find Prince Ning and Princess Ning still sleeping till late, thus angering the emperor, was found out.

Gu Youyou felt deeply troubled upon hearing this; she really couldn't deny the responsibility of this mess.

…

Xiang Chun hurriedly reported that Madam Lu had sent a post requesting an audience!

Gu Youyou glanced sideways at the fleeting figure, but nodded to let Xiang Chun admit Madam Lu.

She herself then went after Searcy.

After turning through several doors, she saw her at a Shuixie.

Gu Youyou took a deep breath and casually walked toward the Shuixie.

“What’s the matter? If you don’t like it, I’ll send them away for you!”

Searcy suddenly turned her head and asked Gu Youyou, “What’s my last name?”

“Uh…?” Gu Youyou was puzzled by the question.

She said, “I’ve never asked you before, but why did you give me this name. Searcy, what is my last name?”

“Ah? Well… Just Searcy, it seems like there’s no last name?”

How could Gu Youyou tell her that at first she somewhat disliked her, thinking that in certain ways she was like that vicious witch Searcy!

After so many years of calling it, everyone got used to it, and she didn’t feel anything wrong with the name Searcy.

With Searcy suddenly curious about the origin today, she really didn't know what to say.

Searcy lowered her head without speaking, looking at the still water surface somewhat in a daze.

After a while, she casually picked up a small stone and threw it into the pond, causing ripples to spread.

She snorted a laugh and suddenly said, "See how strange they are; they had no hesitation in wanting to kill me back then, and now they find me somewhat useful and want to bring me back."

Gu Youyou replied lightly, "People are like that!"

Searcy, however, said, "I can understand Madam Lu resenting me, after all, my mother and I did such things to her. But the one who abandoned my mother and my life wasn't Madam Lu, it was Lu Youchang. He's still my father, and he didn't even blink when he wanted to kill us."

"Well…" Gu Youyou didn't know what to say about that.

This kind of matter, after all, was something within the closed doors of the Lu Family. You'd have to see what your deceased mother had done to determine if it was worth killing.

Certainly, the mistakes of adults shouldn't affect children. Searcy was still young then; a child's disobedience is a father's fault. General Lu naturally also bears responsibility. How could it be blamed on the young daughter?

"Then how are you doing now?" Gu Youyou still asked.

"After all these years, haven't I lived well without relying on the Lu Family? I lack nothing now, and I don't need them. Why should I return to acknowledge my ancestors? Now it's they who need me, not I who need them!"

Gu Youyou awkwardly asked, "Then why did you save Lu Tianning?"

Searcy was momentarily stumped, even a bit angry, and explained, “Didn’t you say it before? Only a fool would not make money if there’s an opportunity. The Lu Family offered enough for the medical fee, so why wouldn’t I save him?”

“Then why did you just ask me what your last name is?”

Chapter 1514: Didn’t Recognize the Position

“I…” Searcy said angrily, “It was the coachman’s mother who asked me. She said that people don’t know how to address me.”

“Hmm…??”

“Look at you, people can call you Jin Gushi, what should they call me?”

That’s awkward!

It’s indeed a habit of ancient times. Not to mention commoners, even the Empress Dowager would have her husband’s surname added to her own, and no one called married women by their names.

“Why don’t… you still use the surname Lu?”

“Humph…” Searcy snorted coldly and said sharply, “Wouldn’t that be just what they want?”

“Then just ignore them?”

“Then what surname should I use?”

“Why not use mine?”

Searcy angrily threw a handful of stones into the pond and shouted, “Wishful thinking!”

Gu Youyou laughed and said, “Then you can be called Gai Seshi?”

“What kind of surname is that? Are you intentionally teasing me?”

Searcy stood up and strode towards the inner courtyard.

Gu Youyou also stood up and followed, saying, “That’s not right, I wasn’t intentionally teasing you. I just thought you wouldn’t like being harassed all the time. Things have to be addressed eventually, no matter what. You should go out and make things clear with them. Whether you scold them or burst into tears recognizing a relative, you must give them an explanation. Searcy, Madam Lu is waiting for you in the flower hall, are you really not going?”

“If you want to go, you go!” Searcy replied irritably.

However, after a few steps, she turned back, gave Gu Youyou a fierce glare, and walked decisively towards the flower hall.

“Stubborn!” Gu Youyou laughed and scolded.

…

To Gu Youyou’s surprise, it’s not just Madam Lu who came, but also General Lu and Young Master Lu.

The whole family is here.

General Lu looked somewhat haggard and appeared awkward seeing Searcy.

Young Master Lu, who was previously injured, came to meet Searcy despite his weakened state, naturally looking a bit sickly.

Madam Lu worried excessively, and her complexion wasn't well either.

Gu Youyou had heard that General Lu was injured earlier, causing the Lu Family army to nearly turn everything upside down. It seemed that the family's situation wasn't great.

"Greetings, Princess!" Upon seeing Gu Youyou enter, they first saluted her.

Originally, she wasn't planning to come. But hearing it wasn't just Madam Lu here, she worried Searcy might suffer, so she hurried over to have a look.

"General Lu, no need to stand on ceremony. Please sit!"

Gu Youyou looked at Searcy, who was somewhat angry, and seeing that she hadn't suffered any losses, she felt relieved, saying, "If you need anything, just speak up, don't be polite. You all can chat at your pace, I won't disturb you!"

Searcy said angrily, "Then why did you come here? Just to greet them?"

"Ah…? Hmm! Do you have anything else to say?"

"Xueying, you mustn't be disrespectful to the Princess!"

Seeing Searcy's vile attitude, General Lu couldn't help but scold her.

"What does it have to do with you? Don't forget Lu Xueying is long dead!" Searcy's mouth curled with a hint of mockery.

"Then who are you? Can changing your name deny your identity?" General Lu, accustomed to being Family Head, burst into emotion as he confronted his daughter's defiance.

Seeing a quarrel brewing, Gu Youyou quickly said, “It’s nothing, it’s nothing. She’s just that kind of person, we’re all used to it!”

“How… how could we get used to this?” Madam Lu said incredulously, “Her arrogance and disorderly conduct are unacceptable. Princess, you must not fend for her!”

Gu Youyou was slightly taken aback, and she understood why Searcy was unwilling to return.

This whole family had come to ask her to return, but she didn’t owe them anything. Acting like authoritative parents, who were they trying to impress?

Chapter 1515: Think it through before coming back

The young master of the Lu family understood the situation better and quickly stepped forward to mediate.

"Father, Mother, are you here to argue or to bring my sister home?"

At last, someone brought up the important issue.

Gu Youyou calmly said to them, "I am just an outsider. I don’t know whether it’s appropriate for me to say something?"

The Lu family was slightly taken aback and said, "Please, Princess, go ahead!"

They still held Gu Youyou in high esteem.

Gu Youyou said, "First, Searcy is not a servant in the Ningwang Residence, so there is no master and servant distinction. Second, as a friend, I can tolerate her temper tantrums and bad moods. Who doesn’t have a bit of a temper? Madam Lu, I’ve heard that your temper is quite fierce, that when provoked, you’re capable of doing anything."

Gu Youyou’s meaningful words made the Lu family even more embarrassed.

It was unclear whether it was intentional or accidental, but General Lu always felt that the people talking to him were looking at his most awkward spot with malicious intent, as if mocking his impotence.

Upon hearing Gu Youyou's words, he recalled the foolhardy actions of his own wife when her temper flared, which led to him becoming a useless old man.

Madam Lu, however, seemed somewhat smug, thinking to herself that it was good her husband's vital part was broken; ever since Lu Youchang became completely impotent, the alluring women in the back residence had also quieted down.

Gu Youyou continued slowly, "Third, Searcy owes you nothing. If there's owing, it's you who owe her. The failure of the child is the fault of the father. General Lu, you merely said that Searcy was unwilling to return home to acknowledge her ancestors but never considered how to teach her the meaning of family and kin!"

Hearing Gu Youyou's words, General Lu felt somewhat ashamed.

"A family is a place that can provide shelter in the most helpless times, yet you abandoned her when she needed it the most. Dealing with family requires more understanding and tolerance, yet you forced faults onto her that were not hers. Between a father and daughter, there should be a kind father and a filial daughter. A kind father comes first before a filial daughter. General Lu, have you done this?"

The Lu family felt increasingly ashamed.

Searcy sat quietly on one side, looking out the window.

Can she really remain indifferent towards her family? Probably no one can!

Gu Youyou stood up and suddenly said, "In my view, she is not yet suitable to go home and reunite with you because you haven't figured out why you want to bring her back. Ask yourselves, if she hadn't saved the young master, if she was still the way she was when she left the Lu family, would you still accept her?"

Searcy gave a mocking laugh and quietly left the flower hall.

Madam Lu looked somewhat at a loss.

The young master of the Lu family sighed softly.

It was General Lu who was deeply moved.

Ask yourself, if she hadn't saved Lu Tianning, if she was still the same as before, would they have come to take her home?

Upon introspection, naturally not.

Bringing back such a vicious poisoner's daughter would have made the whole family live in trepidation; surely they couldn't.

But such a daughter is still a daughter, and even in that state, she is still Lu Youchang's flesh and blood. She also bears the name Lu Xueying...

Gu Youyou had Xiang Chun send the Lu family back, while she caught up with Searcy and said, "Don't think that they're completely wrong, and you're completely right. They treated you like that back then out of fear for you. Think about your transgressions back then?"

"None of your damn business!" Searcy replied harshly.

Gu Youyou: "..."

Fortunately, she was truly accustomed to Searcy's vile temper, that detestable witch.

At the same time, Gu Youyou knew that despite Searcy's harsh words, she had actually taken those words to heart.

...

Chapter 1516: Do Me a Favor

The old Madam of the Lin Family asked Gu Youyou to help find potential partners for Lin Shenxing and Lin Zixin.

How could Gu Youyou possibly know how to matchmake? Besides, she was unfamiliar with the eligible men and women of Beijing, but having already promised the old Madam, she had no choice but to delegate this task to Miss Du.

Being a native of Beijing, she was well-acquainted with the prominent families, especially during her time in embroidery, she possessed various information on the distinguished young ladies from each family in Beijing.

Not only their age and looks, but she was also well aware of their measurements.

"So, we're choosing a wife for Young Master Lin first, right?"

"Yes, yes, my little cousin is still young. It's not too late to find a husband for her after her sister-in-law joins the family. But since we are choosing anyway, you should look for both!"

Miss Du pondered for a moment and said, "The Lin Family only has one son, Lin Shenxing. Although he is from a concubine, he is no different from a legitimate son. He is the one to inherit the Lin Residence in the future, right?"

"Yes, he will inherit!" Gu Youyou said.

Miss Du smiled and said, "That's easier then; we just need to choose according to the standards of a legitimate first son. But it's a bit more troublesome for Miss Lin since she is of concubine birth."

"What's the matter?" Gu Youyou raised her eyebrows and asked.

Miss Du replied with difficulty, "She has two choices. Being a concubine-born daughter, she can only be a concubine if she marries into a high-ranking family, which fits her status. Alternatively, she could marry a family slightly below Minister Lin's status and be a principal wife."

In Gu Youyou's opinion, marrying a carriage driver is better than being someone's concubine. To put it bluntly, being a concubine only places her slightly above the status of a servant. The children born to her will also be of concubine birth; the son cannot inherit, and the daughter also has the fate of becoming a concubine, which is naturally unacceptable.

However, they might think differently from her.

Gu Youyou said, "Let's find a wife for Shenxing first. As for Zixin, I still need to ask my grandmother's opinion."

"Alright, after all, for a girl, marriage is a lifelong matter, and there's no room for carelessness!"

...

Gu Youyou, citing business expansion as the reason, announced at the shareholders' meeting that the focus of glass production and sales would move southward, according to Jin Zijin, the best move would be to Yangguan City.

Due to the relatively underdeveloped transportation in ancient times, Yangguan City, as a link between the north and south, was indeed a good location.

Upon hearing Gu Youyou's intentions, the shareholders all thought it was feasible.

Because of the geographical relationship, the households in the northern cities that could afford glass had mostly already acquired it, and business was gradually saturating with less demand compared to before.

Meanwhile, in the southern cities, due to inconvenient transportation, only a very few families had expended a substantial amount of manpower and resources to use glass. There were plenty of potential customers for them, and moving the glass production south was undoubtedly a win-win idea.

"Boss Gu, whatever you decide, we will follow. Count me, Old Hu, in with you!"

"Then many thanks to Boss Hu for the support!"

"We agree too!"

"Agreed!"

"However, relocation might be difficult, as the workers may not be willing to go."

"Indeed, most are locals, with generations of their family living in Beijing; they might not be willing to go. Does Boss Gu have a better plan?"

Gu Youyou calmly replied, "It's not relocation; rather, we'll set up a larger glass factory in Yangguan. As for manpower, we'll mostly hire local workers, but initially, we'll have to transfer some core technical staff from Beijing. A year later, they can decide whether to stay in Yangguan City or return to Beijing. During this year, they won't be leaving home for nothing; for everyone willing to go, their wages will be increased by twenty percent!"

Chapter 1517: Bring Something Ruthless

With that said, everyone had no more concerns.

Just one year, and with a twenty percent increase in salary compared to Beijing, everyone would probably fight to go!

Boss Hu laughed heartily and said, "If there's a twenty percent increase in income, I'd be willing too. Just treat it as a chance to experience the local customs of Yangguan City for a year!"

Gu Youyou laughed and said, "I wouldn’t dare bring up Boss Hu’s twenty percent income increase lightly. If your income increases by twenty percent, everyone here, including myself, would be left drinking the northwest wind!"

"Hahaha... Boss Gu is right, Boss Hu, please don’t add to the trouble!"

Everyone burst into laughter again, and thus the matter of relocating the factory to the south was happily decided.

...

Gu Youyou returned to the Prince Residence satisfied but was mysteriously pulled aside by Xiang Chun.

"What’s wrong?" she asked.

Xiang Chun said gravely, "Zhang Chancellor is here!"

"Hmm? What is Zhang Chancellor here for?" Gu Youyou still remembered the last time Zhang Chancellor came to the residence, he was humiliated by Jin Zijin, and since then Zhang Chancellor held a grudge against the couple. Why is he here again now?

Xiang Chun hesitated, struggling with his words, before saying, "It’s not just Zhang Chancellor who’s here, Miss Zhang is here too."

"Miss Zhang?" Gu Youyou’s eyebrow twitched, she said, "Zhang Shiyu?"

"Yes, she is now a well-known old maid who can’t get married in Beijing. What do you think Zhang Chancellor is bringing her here to see our Prince for?"

Gu Youyou sneered, what else could he want? Ever since his eldest daughter and madam caused that disgraceful incident, the Zhang Chancellor’s daughter couldn’t get married, and his son couldn’t find a wife either. He’s in a panic!

If he’s willing to swallow his pride and cozy up to Jin Zijin again, he must be really desperate.

"Come on, let’s go see!" Gu Youyou said.

Inside the main hall

"Prince Ning, you can’t ignore our Shiyu, back then when you were choosing a concubine, she was quite the popular candidate. Now, just because she participated in your selection contest, people mistakenly think she still has feelings for you, and this has led to our Shiyu not being able to get married. What do you think we should do about this?"

Before Gu Youyou even entered the room, she heard Zhang Chancellor shamelessly uttering such words, making her so angry her nose almost twisted out of shape.

Gu Youyou marched into the reception hall immediately and said, "Zhang Chancellor, should we go out together and ask people exactly why they are unwilling to marry your daughter?"

The crowd turned their heads and saw Gu Youyou entering with a displeased look on her face.

Miss Zhang looked at her with eyes full of hostility.

Gu Youyou looked back at Miss Zhang. Not seen for several years, the once immature face had become much rounder and more alluring. Carefully dressed up, she was more beautiful than before.

It must be said that the Zhang family’s reputation for having two beautiful and talented daughters was not for nothing, but their hearts were a bit twisted.

Zhang Chancellor, on the other hand, looked somewhat embarrassed and said, "This is a lifelong matter; an old man like me won’t argue with a woman. Prince Ning, what do you think should be done?"

Jin Zijin looked at Gu Youyou and smiled softly, "The matter of taking a concubine should be handled by my wife, so naturally, I will listen to the Princess's opinion. Youyou, come over!"

Jin Zijin beckoned Gu Youyou over, and Gu Youyou walked over with a smile and sat down beside him.

He looked down at her and asked seriously.

"What do you think of Miss Zhang?"

Last time, it was Jin Zijin alone who humiliated the thick-skinned Zhang Chancellor, and this time when they came back, Jin Zijin gave the opportunity to Gu Youyou.

He believed that with Gu Youyou's abilities, she would certainly not let them take advantage of the situation.

Chapter 1518: Find a Sucker

Gu Youyou glanced at Miss Zhang, whose eyes were red with jealousy, and said, "Our residence is not a place for collecting trash. If others don't want it, why should we? Even if the Prince wants a concubine, it wouldn't be Miss Zhang, right?"

Miss Zhang's eyes immediately reddened, and she suppressed her anger.

Chancellor Zhang, however, couldn't hold back and angrily reprimanded, "Who are you calling trash? How dare you, a merchant girl, look down on my daughter?"

"Ha, it's because the Ningwang Residence listens to me now. If I don't allow your daughter to enter the door, she can only stare helplessly!" Gu Youyou retorted loudly.

Chancellor Zhang's face turned blue with anger, and he was helpless.

Daughter unable to marry, son unable to take a wife; this was the current situation of the Zhang family.

So he could only shamelessly approach Jin Zijin again.

To break his family's situation, either Zhang Shiyu marries into the family of Prince Qin, or into that of the Prince of Ning. Only if the Imperial Family accepts his daughter will others let go of their prejudices against his children.

Back in the day, when his wife and eldest daughter were still around, the daughters of the Zhang family were so outstanding. Many sought them but couldn't succeed. Now, they've come to the point of needing others to want them, and even being humiliated by a merchant girl like Gu Youyou. The more he thought about it, the angrier he became.

Chancellor Zhang decided to be shameless and said, "I don't care. The Prince of Ning must take responsibility for my young daughter. Back then, she reached the final stages of selection through her own merits, unlike those merchant-style tricks!"

Oh, he means that Gu Youyou's Flower Fairy dress is a merchant's trick, and only his daughter's embroidery is proper needlework?

Gu Youyou sneered, "According to you, many women participated in the selection. Does that mean our Prince has to take responsibility for all of them?"

"That's different!" Chancellor Zhang angrily retorted, "Other women didn't have the qualifications to make it to the end. In terms of family background and talent, my Shiyu is not inferior to anyone. She was the best candidate to become the Grand Prince's consort back then!"

Gu Youyou's lips curled with sarcasm and was about to retort when Zhang Shiyu suddenly knelt down.

She knelt on the ground, calling to the Prince of Ning as she kneeled step by step towards Jin Zijin, tearfully saying, "Shiyu has remained unmarried and truly loves the Prince. After not being selected back then, I was deeply saddened, but I later came to terms with it. As long as the Prince does not mind, I am willing to be a servant, as long as I can have the opportunity to serve by the Prince's side."

“Indeed!” Chancellor Zhang hurriedly added, “Once the Prince of Ning becomes part of my family, I will definitely spare no effort to plan for him!”

“I can’t afford that!” Jin Zijin said indifferently to Chancellor Zhang, “Chancellor Zhang, I thought I made it clear back then. It seems I must repeat it. I am old, it’s difficult for me to have a son. Whoever marries your daughter will end up childless. I dare not marry. Chancellor Zhang, my final advice to you is to know when to stop. Do not anger me, or it won’t be good for anyone!”

These blunt words left even the thick-skinned Chancellor Zhang a bit embarrassed, and Zhang Shiyu’s face turned pale as she began to cry.

“Wah… What does this have to do with me? This is the mistake my mother and sister left behind; why must I bear this blame? Father, I can’t live anymore. If the Prince of Ning doesn’t want me, I’ll just die…”

With that, she actually tried to bang her head against the pillar.

Jin Zijin calmly watched, Gu Youyou half-smilingly watched, and Chancellor Zhang was already paralyzed with fear.

Chapter 1519: How to Deal with Them

With a “thud” sound, a large bump the size of an egg appeared on Miss Zhang’s forehead. She let out a “wuh” and fainted, scaring her father, Chancellor Zhang, half to death.

Chancellor Zhang anxiously shouted, “Oh my, you silly child really hit it! Shiyu, Shiyu, wake up…”

This time Chancellor Zhang was truly nervous, quickly holding Zhang Shiyu, and turned to Gu Youyou and Jin Zijin for help.

“Prince Ning, Princess Ning, Shiyu really smashed herself to death on the pillar, please hurry and save her…”

“It was she who hit it herself, what’s it got to do with us? My consultation fees are quite high. Chancellor Zhang, pay the Silver first before treating her!”

Chancellor Zhang's nose twisted in anger, he furiously said, "The incident happened in your place, if anything happens, it's your responsibility. Gu Youyou, I'm telling you, if my daughter dies, it will be you who drove her to death."

Jin Zijin exchanged a glance with Gu Youyou, stood up, and said to Chancellor Zhang unhappily, "Chancellor Zhang, I must ask you, what exactly is going on with you and your daughter? Did you come here to falsely accuse and extort me? Hmph, I am not easy to extort. Let's go, argue this in the royal court!"

Jin Zijin strode towards Chancellor Zhang, grabbing his collar and dragging him out.

Chancellor Zhang, a civil officer, was no match for Jin Zijin; even though he was extremely unwilling, he was easily dragged out by him.

Zhang Shiyu on the ground felt breathless, but her forehead hurt intensely, and she had fainted and naturally couldn't open her eyes, only able to hear her father being dragged away by Jin Zijin.

Gu Youyou chuckled as she approached, bent down and said to her, "In the past, I just thought you were young and ignorant, playing little clever tricks, yet you had some talent. Now it seems, you are truly foolish! Have you lived backwards these years?"

Lying on the ground, Zhang Shiyu's heart was bleeding.

Seeing she still wouldn't wake up, Gu Youyou loudly called people in.

Two guards stood in front of Gu Youyou and bowed respectfully.

Gu Youyou said, "It seems Miss Zhang has fainted, and Chancellor Zhang intends to hold our Prince Residence accountable for it. You are all old hands in the residence, you know how to handle this, right?"

The two guards exchanged a glance, quickly said, “Rest assured, Princess, we have our ways to deal with these kinds of people.”

“Hmm, go ahead!”

The two lifted the fainted Zhang Shiyu from the ground and dragged her out.

Zhang Shiyu couldn’t pretend any longer, she woke up shouting, “Let go of me, what are you trying to do? I am not leaving, I want to wait here for my father’s return…”

“Miss Zhang, if you want to falsely accuse someone, haven’t you checked where you are? Is the Ningwang Residence a place you can accuse? Let’s go, if you want to wait, do it outside!”

Zhang Shiyu was roughly tossed to the street by the two guards. After all, she was a legitimate daughter of the Chancellor Residence; on the street, she couldn’t afford to lose face, so she immediately transformed, covered the bump on her forehead with a handkerchief, and hurriedly called for her carriage waiting outside the Prince Residence to go home.

Meanwhile, Chancellor Zhang, dragged towards the royal palace, admitted defeat before even reaching the palace gates.

After all, he was a first-ranked official; how could he escalate a matter of romance to the emperor? Wasn’t the Zhang Family already embarrassed enough?

Moreover, bringing his daughter to Ningwang Residence to discuss marriage was something he shamelessly did himself, he was even feeling guilty.

So halfway there, he used the excuse of needing to relieve himself to escape.

This time, they were truly shamed to their ancestors’ home.

Father and daughter both returned home in low spirits, and upon seeing each other, burst into tears.

Chapter 1520: It’s fine, there’s still Prince Qin

"Father, what am I supposed to do with my life? It’s all because of my elder sister and mother that my reputation is ruined! What did I ever do to deserve this?"

Prime Minister Zhang also wept bitterly.

When the eldest daughter fell into trouble back then, he shifted all the blame onto her and his own wife, so Zhang Shiyu never knew that her father was also one of the culprits behind the poisoning incident.

This matter, Prime Minister Zhang planned to keep buried in his stomach, naturally, he didn’t intend to disclose it.

Therefore, seeing his daughter like this, he felt very guilty.

Twice he shamelessly sought marriage proposals for his daughter, all due to this guilt.

And this time? He was betting on Jin Zijin not becoming the Crown Prince, but becoming King Ning instead.

He speculated that Jin Zijin must have done something to upset the Emperor and lost favor. The rumor was that the merchant girl Gu Youyou dragged him into bed until the sun was high, angering the Emperor.

When they heard this rumor, father and daughter were quite pleased, feeling that Gu Youyou was, after all, an ill-mannered merchant girl, without etiquette, deservedly disliked by the Emperor.

Zhang Shiyu, on the other hand, was different; a proper, well-bred young lady, well-read, understanding, and empathetic. The key factor was Prime Minister Zhang’s capability; after the Ducal Residence’s downfall, he was the one who extricated himself cleanly, not only unaffected but even promoted in rank.

He had the ability to restore King Ning to the Emperor’s favor and elevate him to the position of Crown Prince; Jin Zijin certainly wouldn’t have any reason to reject him.

So he brought his daughter, as lovely as a blossom, to show Jin Zijin; in his view, his daughter's appearance and family background were superior to that of the merchant girl in every way. As long as one was not blind, surely anyone would choose his daughter over that merchant girl.

Moreover, with his daughter's determination to marry King Ning or die, it should be foolproof, yet she was humiliated due to her elder sister's affair.

"Father, look around; who else in Beijing is my age and still unmarried? I can't take it anymore..."

Zhang Shiyu was truly heartbroken, with a bump on her forehead, she seemed ready to crash into the wall again.

Prime Minister Zhang was shocked and hurriedly became a human cushion to block her, almost causing himself internal injuries.

Zhang Shiyu exerted such force to hit the pillar that she truly didn't want to live.

Prime Minister Zhang's face turned pale with fear; he quickly said, "King Ning doesn't appreciate good fortune, my daughter is so wonderful, there is no need for her to die for him."

Zhang Shiyu cried and shouted, "What else can I do than die? Go outside and listen, they're all saying I'll become an old spinster unable to marry, boohoo..."

Prime Minister Zhang, furious, said, "Who dares to gossip recklessly? I'll have them arrested and thrown in a deep dungeon!"

"Who's saying it? Everyone outside is saying it now. Father, tell me how I'm supposed to live..."

"Alas, if not King Ning, there's still Prince Qin. Your old father has sharp eyes; listen, although King Ning is the legitimate eldest son now, who the future Emperor will be is still uncertain. Ah, your father sees it clearly; the Emperor initially favored King Ning just to use him against King Jin and the Ducal Residence. Look, now the Ducal Residence is completely finished, and King Jin is nowhere to be found, the Emperor

has used King Ning to the fullest, and just casually bestowed upon him the title of King Ning to dismiss him."

"Ah, ah, listen to me. The Emperor is paving the way for Prince Qin. Prince Qin is the son of the favored Consort Sheng; everyone knows the Emperor’s most beloved is Consort Sheng. From a young age, Prince Qin was cherished like a heart’s treasure by the Emperor. In future, this realm must belong to Prince Qin. I’m telling you, daughter..."