Farmhouse 1521

Chapter 1521: Listening to Father Is Always Right

"Father..."

Prime Minister Zhang spoke endlessly in praise of Prince Qin, and Zhang Shiyu could no longer bear to listen.

She said, "Father, surely you don't intend for me to marry Prince Qin?"

Prime Minister Zhang replied, "Father has been speaking to you at length, and you still don't understand my meaning? Alas, the future of the realm will not belong to Prince Ning, it will surely be Prince Qin. If you don't marry Prince Qin, then who?"

Zhang Shiyu was stunned for a long while, then burst into tears again.

"Father, what do I care who becomes Emperor? I like Prince Ning, not Prince Qin!"

"Ah...?" Prime Minister Zhang was heartbroken, wearing an expression of intense disappointment, and said, "How can you think like this? As children born into a family like ours, how can we disregard personal feelings? I won't object to you becoming a concubine, but it must be a royal concubine. If Prince Ning remains Prince Ning for life, then his concubine won't match your status.

Today I see clearly that Prince Ning's kind, who doesn't know how to adapt, cannot win the Emperor's favor. If you marry Prince Qin, with me assisting you, I guarantee Prince Qin will become Emperor."

Zhang Shiyu pouted; she naturally understood these reasons.

But then again, Jin Zijin truly did not want her, so what could she do?

There was still Gu Youyou. During the major selection that year, she vaguely felt that the woman's appearance was not simple. So among so many candidates who seemed better than Gu Youyou, Zhang Shiyu specifically chose to target Gu Youyou.

In hindsight, her instincts were quite sharp.

It’s just a pity she didn’t get rid of her back then.

Given her status, the only way to trample Gu Youyou underfoot was to become an imperial consort.

If in the future Prince Qin becomes Emperor, she would be the imperial consort, and by then she would settle the score with Gu Youyou.

Thinking of this, she nodded to Prime Minister Zhang.

"Father, just make the arrangements, your daughter will listen to you."

"That’s more like it!" Prime Minister Zhang laughed and said, "Jin Zijin has been conferred the title of Prince Ning. At this time, if I use your marriage to support Prince Qin, he will have no reason to refuse. You just rest at home. In the next couple of days, I’ll choose a time to visit Prince Qin’s residence."

He looked at the lump on Zhang Shiyu’s head with concern, reached out a hand to touch it, and Zhang Shiyu screamed in pain.

"Father, what are you doing, it really hurts."

"You know it hurts and you still bumped into it? Ah, hurry and find a doctor to take a look at it."

...

Miss Du handled matters quickly and soon found a few suitable young women for Lin Shenxing. She thought they all seemed decent and came to discuss with Gu Youyou.

"Look at this young lady, the second daughter of the Minister of Personnel, sixteen years old, with a plump face, she seems to be a person of good fortune."

Gu Youyou took a look at the portrait and noticed that the girl was slightly plump.

It did fit the ancient aesthetic standards.

"And this one, the daughter of the Minister of Revenue, fourteen years old, just a few months away from reaching adulthood, so it won't delay the marriage. Although she's a concubine's daughter, she is the eldest daughter and raised by the main wife, so she's almost like a legitimate daughter."

"Fourteen is too young, I don't want to hasten her fate," said Gu Youyou.

This fourteen-year-old girl looked like a child who hadn't fully grown, which would be too unfortunate.

"And this one, the eldest legitimate daughter of the Vice Minister of Punishments, seventeen years old. Age is just right, and the Vice Minister's wife is eager to match her with someone of high status. Since she's the eldest legitimate daughter, her marriage prospects greatly impact those of her siblings, so the family is paying close attention."

Chapter 1522: Professional Matchmaker for Daughters in Trouble

"From what I see, this Miss is more beautiful than the previous two, and she's the legitimate eldest daughter. Though the rank of the Vice Minister of Punishments is somewhat low, what do you think?"

Gu Youyou softly said while holding the portrait, "A daughter from the Vice Minister of Punishments marrying into the household of a Great Scholar could be considered marrying up. However, you mentioned she is the legitimate eldest daughter, and her parents are quite particular. Might they look down upon Shenxing for being of concubine descent?"

Miss Du said, "That won't be the case. Shenxing is set to inherit the family estate. Comparing to a legitimate eldest son, he is not inferior. These young ladies are suitable matches for Young Master Lin. But, alas, the Ducal Residence has had such troubles, and Madam Lin remains the matriarchal grandmother. I'm afraid people may be concerned about Madam Lin's background."

This is what affluent families are like; they cannot tolerate even a speck of blemish.

The troubles at the Zhang Family, with the eldest Miss Zhang and Madam tarnishing the family reputation, led Prime Minister Zhang to scheme against Jin Zijin with Miss Zhang.

Meanwhile, the Lin Family struggles since Madam Lin is from a traitorous family, troubling their children's prospects for marriage.

Luckily, these children are not her biological offspring. Otherwise, it wouldn't just be difficult to discuss marriage — it would be nearly impossible.

After reviewing the profiles of the three girls, Gu Youyou said, "Let's send someone to the home of the Vice Minister of Punishments to discuss first, and I'll accompany you tomorrow."

Gu Youyou wasn't necessarily impressed with the looks of the Vice Minister's daughter, but mainly because she was a bit older.

Talking marriage for that fourteen-year-old? She found it incomprehensible, too sinful.

By comparison, one who is seventeen could barely be acceptable.

...

"Prince, Princess, Prime Minister Zhang requests to see you!"

The maid reported as Prince Qin and Xie Qinyun were having breakfast with their twin sons.

Xie Qinyun swallowed a delicate piece of pastry and wondered, "This early, what is Prime Minister Zhang up to?"

Prince Qin stood up and said, "You continue eating at leisure, I'll go and see him!"

Xie Qinyun was, after all, a woman of ancient times; she knew to avoid involved in men’s affairs and didn’t think much of it.

Prime Minister Zhang was invited by Prince Qin into the reception hall; shortly thereafter, he himself went over, still dressed in his home attire.

"Prime Minister Zhang, what’s so urgent that you couldn’t restrain yourself from visiting the Prince Residence at dawn?"

Prime Minister Zhang laughed heartily, "Good news, naturally I must seize the early hours!"

"Oh, good news?" Prince Qin smiled, "Prime Minister Zhang, please be seated first."

Both took their seats, and then the maid brought tea and snacks, allowing Prime Minister Zhang to slowly begin.

"I’m here today to talk about something, and it embarrasses me to bring it up!"

With a look of distress, he said, "Perhaps you are unaware, but my second daughter, Shiyu, has long admired you, Prince Qin, and she refuses to marry anyone else, claiming she won’t marry anyone but you."

Prince Qin’s expression seemed somewhat odd.

Your daughter isn’t married simply because no one dares to marry her!

Their previous visit to Ningwang Residence, although that matter was kept under wraps, this world doesn’t have an impenetrable wall — he knew some of it.

Thinking to oneself, wasn’t your daughter said to be obsessed with my elder brother before? What do you mean by suddenly changing heart?

Prime Minister Zhang didn’t pay attention to Prince Qin’s expression and continued, "Seeing her crying day in and day out, tell me, what am I as a father supposed to do? Alas! Child are here to collect debts, I’m thriving in the officialdom, adept at handling all sorts of matters effortlessly, except when it comes to children, I’m utterly helpless. So I’m here to boldly ask Prince Qin for marriage."

As he spoke of the officialdom, he exhibited somewhat of a proud demeanor, implicitly conveying his point clearly.

Chapter 1523: No One Wants Her Now

In the political arena, Prime Minister Zhang is a master, able to handle anything effortlessly.

Prince Qin, no fool, naturally understood Prime Minister Zhang’s intentions.

Regarding the throne, before King Jin’s mishap, he was somewhat interested.

But after witnessing King Jin’s fate, he came to terms with it: everything should follow its natural course. What is yours will be yours, and what isn’t, there’s no use in fighting for it. It could end up costing him and his family dearly, making it not worth the loss.

He said to Prime Minister Zhang, "I’m not lacking in main consorts or side consorts. If it’s about a concubine... wouldn’t it be a bit too much to have your daughter as a mere concubine?"

Prime Minister Zhang suddenly froze, awkwardly saying, "Don’t you only have one side consort, Prince Qin?"

He clearly remembered that after the passing of Princess Qin, the side consort who bore two sons, Jie Huanzhi, was promoted to main consort, which opened up a position.

He thought that since Jie Huanzhi’s daughter bore a son and went from side consort to main consort, his daughter could do the same. Now hearing Prince Qin say there is no position for a side consort, his daughter marrying would mean becoming a concubine?

Prince Qin shook his head and said, "It's been more than just one side consort for quite some time now. My concubine gave birth to a daughter and a son consecutively, and I promoted her to side consort."

"Who?" Prime Minister Zhang raised an eyebrow. If she came from a poor background, he would have something to say.

"The illegitimate daughter of General Lu's household!"

"Lu Youchang?"

Prime Minister Zhang pursed his lips and said, "Everyone knows that Lu Youchang's household has a fierce wife. Their illegitimate daughter is raised worse than an ordinary maid, her small-mindedness comparable to a peasant woman. Your Highness, Prince Qin, how can you let such a person become a side consort?"

Prince Qin's face chilled, his eyebrow raised, and said, "Prime Minister Zhang, I respect you as an elder and have spoken things I shouldn't. However, deciding whom to appoint as side consort seems like my family's matter, doesn't it? Surely, it's not something Prime Minister Zhang needs to worry about?"

Prime Minister Zhang reddened and shut his mouth.

He was indeed overly anxious and admittedly somewhat overstepped.

But surely Lu Youchang's illegitimate daughter can't be made a side consort while his legitimate daughter becomes a concubine?

That he couldn't tolerate.

Prime Minister Zhang said, "I've overstepped somewhat, but Prince Qin should not appoint a side consort so capriciously. My daughter is a famous talent in Beijing and a legitimate daughter, deserving to be a main consort, not a mere concubine like Shiyu."

Prince Qin raised his eyebrows sharply, his expression even stranger.

"Since when did I say I wanted your daughter to be a concubine?"

Upon hearing this from Prince Qin, Prime Minister Zhang's face finally eased.

Then, Prince Qin sneered and said, "Don't think you can easily deceive me. Why hasn't your daughter married yet? Do I really have to spell it out? Ha, saying she admires me for a long time; it's merely because no one dares to take her from the Zhang Family. What? Prime Minister Zhang, do you think I'm a fool? Even with many sons, I can't be worn out by your family's wicked woman, let's forget about this!"

This statement was merciless, much more assertive than Jin Zijin, and Prime Minister Zhang's old face had already turned a deep shade of purple.

"You... you all don't be too overbearing!"

After saying this, Prince Qin felt much less anger and replied calmly, "Stop thinking your family's daughter is wanted, I'm still in a mourning period; can't accept concubines, Prime Minister Zhang, please leave!"

Prime Minister Zhang finally remembered that Prince Qin was still in a mourning period, not able to accept concubines within three years after Noble Consort Sheng's death.

No matter Prince Qin's reason for rejecting him, to console himself, he was prepared to use this as an excuse.

Yes, that's it, it's not that no one wants his family's daughter.

...

Chapter 1524: Questioning Life

Chancellor Zhang went to Prince Qin's mansion today, and returned in a huff.

"Father, how did it go?" Zhang Shiyu hurriedly asked.

In fact, just looking at Chancellor Zhang's angry face, it was clear what the outcome was.

Chancellor Zhang looked at his daughter, not knowing how to put it into words.

After thinking it over, he finally relayed Prince Qin's last words.

"Shiyu, you see, the Imperial Concubine Sheng has only recently passed away, and Prince Qin is in mourning. He won't take a concubine for three years. The emperor adored Concubine Sheng; if Prince Qin were to take a concubine so soon, it would only invite the emperor's resentment. How could he then compete with Ning Wang, right?"

Zhang Shiyu's eyes gradually darkened as she said, "So Father, are you saying that Prince Qin doesn't want me either?"

Chancellor Zhang hurriedly explained, "No, how could it be said that way? Prince Qin is willing, but he wants you to wait three years. You've waited so long already, how can you wait another three years? My suggestion is, don't wait for Prince Qin, let's find another family."

Zhang Shiyu lowered her head, saying, "Does that mean I really can't get married? Father, I know. The people in Beijing are afraid of our family, and no one is willing to marry me. I… I might as well die!"

Seeing that his daughter was once again thinking of suicide, Chancellor Zhang felt his head was about to explode.

Such an outstanding daughter is contemplating death because she can't marry, what about those other daughters from concubines, and the sons?

He stopped Zhang Shiyu and loudly shouted for help, “Someone come, quickly take the young lady away!”

“Father, let me go, I don’t want to live…”

Soon, several old women came in from outside, and Chancellor Zhang quickly ordered, “Take the young lady away, watch her carefully. If she dies, you won’t live either.”

The old women, frightened, hurriedly grabbed the suicidal Zhang Shiyu and took her back to her room to watch over her.

But people always have to blink; how could anyone watch a person for twelve hours straight?

Zhang Shiyu cried until her eyes were swollen, becoming angrier and more unwilling with each thought.

From childhood to now, except for losing to her sister in talent, she has never lost to anyone.

Why should she be punished because of her malicious sister’s wrongdoings? Why can a lowly merchant girl like Gu Youyou marry into the Imperial Family as a princess, while she becomes a notorious leftover woman in Beijing, a topic of scorn at every meal? A daughter of the Zhang Family is a venomous woman, a daughter of the Zhang Family can’t marry.

After crying her fill, she resolved to pull herself together as night descended.

Zhang Shiyu sent two old women away to prepare dinner for her, and two more to prepare after-dinner fruits and bathwater, leaving only one old woman.

She took the opportunity while the woman was unaware and knocked her unconscious with a candlestick.

Zhang Shiyu covered her mouth, watching the blood flow from the back of the woman’s head, then with trembling hands opened a drawer and took out a white porcelain bottle.

She gazed at the bottle with a complicated look, but seeing that time was short and the people she had sent away were about to return, she ignored everything else, hid the bottle, and quickly exited the room.

Night had fallen, and the northern weather was somewhat cold.

Zhang Shiyu pulled her clothes closer, avoiding everyone, and slipped out of the mansion through an inconspicuous side entrance.

Looking at the sky, a fierce and desperate determination flashed in her eyes as she resolutely walked towards Ningwang Residence.

At this hour, lights were all lit, even at Ningwang Residence.

Chapter 1525: Two Beggars

From afar, she heard commotion outside the Ningwang Residence on the silent street. As she got closer, she saw two men dressed in rags blocking the gate of the Ningwang Residence, arguing with the guards about something.

“I truly am your princess’s third uncle. Please, sirs, be so kind as to go in and notify her that her third uncle Gu Wu is here. She will surely invite me inside.”

The guard at the gate covered his nose, showing distaste, and said, “I only know that our princess’s relatives have been settled inside Jinxiu City. Although they aren’t extremely wealthy, they dress cleanly and appropriately like ordinary citizens. I didn’t know there were beggar-like relatives.”

Another guard said, “Exactly, if a beggar comes and claims to be related to our princess, does that mean our residence has become a charity? Go on, old chap, I’m not passing on your message. Beggars should go wherever they belong.”

Saying this, the guard casually grabbed a broom by the door to push them away.

The two so dirty beggars were too filthy for them to even bother drawing their swords, fearing their blades would get dirty.

“Hey, don’t push us! Is this how you guard the door? What do you amount to, just two guard dogs serving my niece’s household!”

This remark infuriated the two guards considerably. They were door guards, but to guard the Ningwang Residence was an honor. How dare these beggars look down on them?

“Beggar, I’ll chop you down!”

One guard had already drawn his sword and swung it towards Gu Wu.

The other beggar hurriedly hugged the guard’s leg, shouting, “Dad, run!”

This disgusted the guard immensely.

With just this hug, it would take ten buckets of water to clean himself once home.

He disdainfully kicked the beggar away, while Gu Wu had already run a few paces ahead.

This beggar had provoked him even more, having insulted them as guard dogs.

The two guards couldn’t bear it, and one had already caught up, drawing his sword to strike Gu Wu.

But just then, a figure suddenly darted out from the dark corner, a woman, stopping the guard.

“Stop!” Zhang Shiyu said coldly.

Zhang Shiyu was well-known, and not long ago had been thrown out by their princess, so the guards recognized her.

However, it was peculiar for the Zhang family's lady to not be at home late at night but instead come here.

Nonetheless, in the spirit of the residence's guard etiquette, the guard still asked politely, "Miss Zhang, what are you doing running around so late? It wouldn't be good if you ran into trouble."

The other guard hesitated, then hurriedly added, "That's right, Miss Zhang. Your reputation isn't great to begin with. If you run into something unfortunate, wouldn't it be worse…"

Seeing Zhang Shiyu's increasingly unpleasant expression, about to cry out of anger, the guard stopped talking.

Can't blame him though, mainly because the topic of Zhang Shiyu being unable to marry had spread intensely these days after she was thrown out of the residence by Gu Youyou. He thought of it and blurted it out.

"I came to find your Prince, please pass the message."

"Well…" The two guards found themselves in a bind.

It's already late, and she's here to see the Prince? Isn't this asking for trouble on our part? Although the princess seems gentle normally, if they did such a double-crossing deed, who knows how much trouble they'd be in.

One guard said, "Miss Zhang, you must be joking. As an unmarried lady, how can you come to see our Prince so late? I suggest you come tomorrow during daylight and send a proper message."

Chapter 1526: Brought Home

Zhang Shiyu angrily said, "I have an important matter concerning Gu Youyou. Just tell him, he will definitely come."

The two guards naturally didn’t believe her, so they sheathed their swords, ignored the two beggars, and returned to their posts to stand guard.

Anyway, no one should even think about going in at this time.

Zhang Shiyu angrily stepped forward, but was stopped by Gu Wu.

"Hey hey, Miss, do you know my niece Gu Youyou?"

Zhang Shiyu stopped, looked at Gu Wu, and asked in surprise, "Are you really Gu Youyou’s poor relative?"

She regarded Gu Youyou as an enemy, and she naturally was clear about Gu Youyou’s situation.

After the flood in Gu Youyou’s hometown, Lotus Village, all surviving relatives were relocated to Jinxiu City, given easy jobs, and paid generous wages.

It must be said, Gu Youyou is quite dependable; she didn’t forget her poor relatives even after she became successful. Yet she didn’t know she still had a Third Uncle begging on the streets.

Gu Wu pouted, having received scorn ever since he survived the dungeon; he had grown accustomed to it.

Quickly, he replaced it with a subservient grin and said fawningly, "Yes, I am Gu Youyou’s Third Uncle. The family incident led to this state, but I didn’t expect these snobbish people to treat me like this. Once my niece comes out, I will definitely file a complaint against them."

Zhang Shiyu quickly shifted her perspective on these two beggars.

Gu Youyou was originally a farmer’s daughter who became a doctor and then a businesswoman; such a complex identity. Yet, her conduct became increasingly low-class.

Now, a Third Uncle fallen to a beggar’s state is blocked outside...

Perhaps she could start with Gu Youyou’s Third Uncle and do something.

Zhang Shiyu reached into her sleeve to grip the white porcelain bottle, gently biting her lip.

After pondering for a while, she made up her mind, "Looking like that, they wouldn’t let you in. Come with me!"

Gu Wu knew he now appeared even shabbier than a beggar. If he hadn’t been reduced to this, he wouldn’t have been desperate enough to seek out Gu Youyou.

Since someone who knew Gu Youyou was willing to help, they were naturally willing.

Gu Wu took the arm of the other beggar and followed Zhang Shiyu back to the Zhang Family.

...

When the Zhang Family heard Zhang Shiyu was missing, it was pandemonium. Just when Chancellor Zhang was fuming and sending people to search, Zhang Shiyu returned with two beggars.

The dirty and smelly sight made Chancellor Zhang cover his nose.

"Shiyu, it’s one thing to sneak out, but why bring two beggars home? What are you trying to do?"

"Father, they’re not beggars!" Zhang Shiyu’s eyes carried a hint of scheming as she said, "Let everyone leave, I have something serious to discuss with you."

Zhang Shiyu, who was always frowning, was rarely so lively, her eyes filled with wisdom.

This couldn’t help but make Chancellor Zhang take notice.

He quickly dismissed the servants and said to Zhang Shiyu, "What important matter do you have, daughter?"

Zhang Shiyu helped Chancellor Zhang sit in a chair, looked at Gu Wu and the other young beggar, and said, "Father, these two are relatives of Gu Youyou. The older one claims to be Gu Youyou’s Third Uncle. I met them at the Ningwang Residence, where the guards wouldn’t let them in, so I brought them back."

Chancellor Zhang looked at these two filthy beggars with frustration and said, "Do you believe them just because they say so? These days beggars will say anything for a meal, really!"

Chapter 1527: Memories of Lotus Village

Gu Wu hurriedly said: “No, no, sir, I really am Gu Youyou’s third uncle, from Lotus Village. The year of the flood in Lotus Village, I got separated from them and have been drifting for many years, which is how I ended up like this. I not only know Gu Youyou, but I also know Prince Ning, he’s called Jin Zijin, right? Back then, he worked as a hunter in our village and was favored by my father, who arranged for Youyou to marry him. When they got married, I even carried the bridal sedan chair.”

“What?”

Both Prime Minister Zhang and Zhang Shiyu were so shocked that their faces turned pale.

The two exchanged a glance, and Prime Minister Zhang tried to calm the pale-faced Zhang Shiyu, attempting to remain composed before turning to face Gu Wu.

“What’s going on exactly? Oh no, start from when you first met Jin Zijin, and tell me everything about their marriage in Lotus Village. If you dare tell a single lie, don’t blame me for being merciless!”

Prime Minister Zhang, who could intimidate ministers in the court, was truly formidable when he became angry, immediately intimidating Gu Wu.

Gu Wu hurriedly said: “Jin Zijin was just a common hunter when he arrived, and he seemed to be injured. My father was a kind man in Lotus Village and helped him initially, so he stayed and built a house on the back mountain, becoming a famous hunter in the village.”

Seeing Prime Minister Zhang glancing coldly at him, Gu Wu quickly lowered his head again and said: “He worked as a hunter in the village for six years. My father was the one who helped him settle down initially. Later, well, everyone knew in our village that Youyou had been sickly since she was young, and my father originally planned to take care of her for her entire life. But then, somehow he listened to others and decided to marry her off to brighten her prospects.

At that time, she was so ill she was about to die, and no one dared to marry her. My father turned to Jin Zijin, offered a generous dowry, essentially repaid a favor, so Jin Zijin married our Youyou. As for what happened afterward…”

He dared not say more about what happened afterward, only saying: “Later, they left, left Lotus Village, and moved around until reaching Beijing, which you all know.”

Gu Wu cautiously looked up at Prime Minister Zhang and the bewildered Zhang Shiyu.

The young beggar beside him also looked at him bewilderedly, thinking the story he told was too incredible.

The flood that year submerged countless villages, and the prison guard, usually a ruthless character, was moved by compassion at the time, wishing to earn some merit. So, when he escaped himself, he opened the prison doors and let everyone inside go.

Gu Wu escaped with the prisoners at that time, and the young beggar was an orphan Gu Wu saved after escaping the prison. The boy has grown up to be fifteen or sixteen and has been following him ever since, even claiming Gu Wu as his father.

Due to Gu Wu’s status as an escapee, they did not receive disaster relief they should have, and after Lotus Village was rebuilt, he could not return. Thus, for years, they lived as identity-less wanderers, becoming beggars.

Now, with nowhere else to turn, he thought of seeking out Gu Youyou.

Of course, Gu Youyou must hate him to death, but he's already devised a plan to deal with her!

Upon hearing Gu Wu's words, Zhang Shiyu felt that Ning Wang Jin Zijin, whom she held in great esteem, was insulted by this dirty and foul-smelling old beggar. Angrily, she said: "Ning Wang is the emperor's eldest legitimate son, how could he have been reduced to marrying a village girl close to death as a means to brighten her prospects? What audacity, father, we should turn this person over to the Ministry of Justice to have him skinned and gutted."

Chapter 1528: Gu Wu Has Arrived

Gu Wu hurriedly knelt down, feeling that these powerful people in Beijing were truly terrifying, and quickly said: "I dare not speak recklessly, I swear every word is true!"

Zhang, the Prime Minister, remained composed and calmly glanced at his furious daughter, saying: "Prince Ning only returned to his ancestry a few years ago; before that, he was not a prince!"

Zhang Shiyu replied coldly: "Yet before that, his status was no less than that of a prince; he was the senior disciple of Tianzong!"

Although Zhang Shiyu might not know, Chancellor Zhang was very well aware.

The events that transpired on the hillside behind Lotus Village were secrets the Dao Family could not touch. Tianzong's senior disciple being a hunter in Lotus Village was merely a cover; the real reason was related to those secrets.

Now that the Dao Sect has ceased to hold power and has truly become Taoists living deep in the mountains, he felt there was nothing wrong with speaking about these matters.

He sighed: "Shiyu, Jin Zijin couldn't possibly be a hunter marrying a village girl; however, what do you truly know about the Dao Family? There's a grand secret behind the hills of Lotus Village. He didn't go to Lotus Village without purpose. Just look at how Yu Jizi isn't even a match for him, and you will understand. You're still too young, which is why you couldn't compete against Gu Youyou!"

“Father, do you believe he married Gu Youyou in Lotus Village?”

The Prime Minister laughed heartily: “I do believe it, yes. Not only to conceal his identity, but also because Gu Youyou was involved too. Back then, your father didn’t understand many things. Now, after hearing this brother Gu speak, I understand everything. Alas! Daughter, that bridal selection wasn’t your defeat, but rather a scheme set by them. So pitiful how knowingly we’ve been deceived all these years. Hmph! Dare to deceive everyone, I will ensure they lose their reputation!”

After observing for a while and hearing everything, Gu Wu finally understood that this Prime Minister and his daughter Zhang Shiyu were enemies of Gu Youyou and Jin Zijin. So now…

The young beggar beside him gently tugged at Gu Wu’s clothes and whispered: “Father, did you say something you shouldn’t have, causing trouble for elder sister?”

“Seems like it!” Gu Wu felt a chill run down his spine.

However, thinking again, he already had enmity with Gu Youyou. A foe’s enemy is a friend, right? Receiving care from the Prime Minister and dealing with Gu Youyou and Jin Zijin would certainly be better than seeking a living with Gu Youyou, wouldn’t it?

The Prime Minister smiled, his attitude toward Gu Wu having turned a complete 180 degrees.

He smiled, saying to Gu Wu: “It’s getting late; how about… Brother Gu and your son wash up and have a good night’s rest?” The situation was too suffocating.

That night, the servants at the Prime Minister Residence bemoaned their misfortune for eight generations, having to clean the two beggars and being kept up till late.

…

The next day, Gu Youyou heard from the gatekeeper.

“My lady, last night Miss Zhang came and said she needed to see our Prince on urgent business concerning you. I refused her entry.”

Gu Youyou, while reviewing accounts from various places, replied: “Hmm, well done. Our residence doesn’t fear her; we just don’t want too much interaction with such people!”

“Ah, we servants understand!”

“Also, two beggars came, one claiming to be your third uncle. We thought how could you have beggar relatives? Definitely impostors, so we chased them away!”

Gu Youyou’s hand shook slightly, allowing a drop of ink to spread upon the rice paper.

Chapter 1529: No One’s Home

She looked up, wearing an expression like she’d seen a ghost.

"Who came?"

The guard was taken aback for a moment, then said, "Just two beggars. I’ve already sent them away."

"No, who did they say they were?"

"The older one claimed he was your Third Uncle. The younger one called the older one ’dad!’"

Gu Youyou was puzzled, she figured no one would impersonate Gu Wu. If they were to impersonate someone, it would have to be Gu Wen. But Gu Wu only has one son, Sanbao, who is a chef at Shunzi Fish Restaurant. Where did this beggar son come from?

"They’re gone then?" Gu Youyou said calmly.

That Gu Wu was still alive, and even dared to come looking for her, that was quite a surprise.

The guard could also tell something was off with Gu Youyou, and thought: might it really be her Third Uncle?

But weren't her poor relatives all in Beijing and Jinxiu City?

Also, the owner and proprietress of Erya Fish Manor, reportedly the Prince's Third Uncle's children, they're now quite wealthy. Their father should be visiting his own children, not coming to see the Princess.

The guard continued, "I saw Miss Zhang take them away, they should be at the Zhang Family's place now!"

"Zhang Family?" Gu Youyou's brow furrowed, an ominous feeling welled up inside her.

If Gu Wu was with the Zhang Family, trouble was surely brewing.

Well, since Gu Wu is alive, she would have to deal with him sooner or later. If the Zhang Family got involved, might as well resolve it all at once so there wouldn't be a heap of trouble left in Beijing after she leaves.

Gu Youyou tidied up the accounts and went to find Jin Zijin to discuss the matter, but learned Jin Zijin wasn't home.

"Where did he go?" Gu Youyou asked.

Xiang Chun looked around to make sure no one was nearby, then whispered to Gu Youyou, "Princess, I think our Prince has been acting strangely lately, always going out mysteriously. You need to be careful not to let some vixen steal his heart!"

Xiang Chun was truly concerned for Gu Youyou, as Gu Youyou wasn't like Zhang Shiyu, a bureaucratic lady relying on her father. She held her position as the Princess entirely based on the Prince's favor. If the Prince's heart was really swayed by someone, she would be in danger.

Gu Youyou merely replied with an "oh" and said nothing further.

In Gu Youyou's view, Jin Zijin would never be swayed, she trusted him deeply.

"Since the Prince is busy, keep an eye on Xuyao. The pool's water is deep, don't let him near it!"

Xiang Chun's expression changed and she began avoiding eye contact.

"What's wrong?" Gu Youyou saw this girl had another matter.

"The Little Prince went to the palace!" Xiang Chun whispered.

"Hmm? Why didn't anyone tell me?" Gu Youyou was very vexed.

Her husband went out and she didn't know, her son wasn't home and she wasn't aware either. Was she being too negligent as a wife and a mother?

Xiang Chun said, "You've been really busy recently, the Prince said not to bother you unless it's important!"

Gu Youyou raised her eyebrow and asked, "So, Xuyao went to the palace, does the Prince know?"

"He knows!" Xiang Chun nodded, "Eunuch Wan came to fetch him personally, said the Emperor missed the Little Prince."

"Oh, that's fine, go!"

Gu Youyou returned to her study, continuing to plot and examine the accounts.

She was also too lazy to deal with those troublesome Zhang Family or Gu Wu, these two would certainly come to her sooner or later.

Oh, right. Almost forgot something!

Gu Youyou shouted loudly, "Xiang Chun!"

Xiang Chun heard, quickly put down her chores and ran to the study.

"What does the Princess need?"

Chapter 1530: An Unexpected Blessing

“Go to Erya’s Fish Manor, tell their shopkeeper I have urgent business with them, and ask them to come at once!” He paused and added, “Forget it, don’t scare them. Just have them come when they have the time.”

Gu Youyou can temporarily ignore Gu Wu, but the fact that Gu Wu is fine and has come to Beijing must be communicated to Erya and the others, to prevent being used by others.

“Alright, this servant will go at once.”

…

Gu Wu and the young beggar were cleaned up spotless, and after wearing brocade clothes and adornments, they seemed to have certain appearances.

Especially the young beggar, who carried himself in a manner that seemed no less than the young masters in Zhang Residence, which indeed made Prime Minister Zhang see him in a new light.

“Is this your son?” Prime Minister Zhang was somewhat surprised. He felt Gu Wu looked like an honest toiler from a farming family, but his son didn’t quite match.

They didn’t look like father and son at all; Gu Wu was a typical person from the southwest, short in stature.

But this son looked like a typical scholar from a Southern Water Town.

Gu Wu hurriedly explained, “His name is Gu Shuisheng, a name I gave him. He is not my biological son, but during that year of the flood, I rescued him. When I found him, he was clutching a piece of board floating on the surface, drifting past me, so I pulled him up, and hence named him Shuisheng.”

“Oh, you picked him up?” Prime Minister Zhang looked at Gu Shuisheng and asked, “Where are you from?”

Gu Shuisheng lowered his head and softly said, “I am from the south. During the flood, I fled with my parents, but later my parents both died, and now I am left alone.”

Gu Shuisheng, keeping his head down, didn’t look at anyone. Prime Minister Zhang squinted slightly; it seems necessary to investigate this person.

Of course, the most important thing now is to properly utilize Gu Youyou’s third uncle.

That said, Gu Youyou is quite a sentimental person, having brought all the poor relatives from home to enjoy life near Beijing. How could she let her third uncle fall into being a beggar? Clearly, this third uncle isn’t telling the truth.

Or hasn’t fully told the truth.

Moreover, last night he had already sent people to investigate. Gu Youyou’s father is the eldest of the Gu Family, with two younger brothers. The second uncle already died the year of the great flood, and

the third uncle… the information on him hasn't been found yet. However, it is certain that the couple at Erya's Fish Manor are indeed Gu Youyou's third uncle's children.

Prime Minister Zhang narrowed his eyes and said, "Brother Gu, I've heard that your son and daughter opened a famous Fish Manor here in Beijing. Although it's not as grand as the Ningwang Residence, it's enough for you to enjoy your old age. Why aren't you seeking out your son and daughter, but instead looking for your niece?"

Gu Wu looked surprised and said, "My Erya and Sanbao opened a Fish Manor in Beijing?"

"Yes, didn't you know?" Prime Minister Zhang raised an eyebrow.

Gu Wu seemed somewhat agitated, thinking his children were living well, living a good life. His heart was filled with mixed emotions, not knowing what to say.

After a long while, he finally said, "Prime Minister Zhang, I, I have been wandering with Shuisheng all these years, begging around. I've only heard that my niece became a prince's concubine, but I didn't know the situation of my children."

Seeing the scrutinizing look from Prime Minister Zhang, he quickly added, "Lotus Village, I've gone back to see it in recent years. There's no one there. I don't know if they died or, like me, drifted to other places. I… I… didn't expect them to live so well, that's great…"

Seeing the old man nearly burst into tears, Prime Minister Zhang quickly waved his hand and said, "Alright, now I've told you."