**Farmhouse 1591**

Chapter 1591: Buying Liquor

"Brother Gu, heh heh Brother Gu, that twenty-year-old Daughter's Red is even better than the emperor's tribute wine. People like us don't have the face; we'll never have the chance to taste it in this lifetime. But Brother Gu, you're clearly different from us. Just a glance at your demeanor, and it's evident you have the aura of a supreme being. If you step in, that boss will definitely sell us that bottle."

Gu Wu laughed heartily and rubbed the fat man's head, saying, "You have quite the eye, kid. How did you tell that I am a supreme being?"

The fat man was taken aback, sensing an opportunity, and quickly said, "Brother Gu, if you're not an ordinary person, then Zhang the Chancellor wouldn't be buttering you up, right?"

Gu Wu paused and then burst into laughter, "Hahaha... Right, you're exactly correct. That Zhang the Chancellor gives me loads of money just to curry favor with me." Gu Wu made a shushing gesture and whispered, "He's got business with me. The Zhang Family has something to ask of me, you understand? This task can only be accomplished by me, Gu Wu. Do you think they wouldn't want to butter me up?"

The fat man was slightly stunned, thinking: Zhang the Chancellor has something to ask of Gu Wu? Him? There's something Gu Wu can accomplish that Zhang the Chancellor can't, so he's wining and dining Gu Wu just to ask him to do the job?

That's too unbelievable.

The fat man quietly asked with an arm around Gu Wu's shoulder, "Brother Gu, exactly what is it that you can do that Zhang the Chancellor can't? Give the brothers an inside look; let us see what remarkable talent Brother Gu has!"

Gu Wu enjoyed being complimented like this. He felt happy inside, and with the stimulation from the alcohol, his interest was piqued. He forgot Zhang the Chancellor's advice and said, "I'll tell you, don't look at me as though I have nothing right now. It just appears as if I'm being kept as a freeloader by Zhang the Chancellor, but actually, I..."

Before he could finish, the door opened from the outside, cutting off Gu Wu’s words as he stretched his head toward the door.

The person who came in was the long-robed man who had gone out just now, and also the boss of this tavern.

The fat man was very frustrated, seeing he was just about to get an answer, but then they were interrupted by coincidence.

The long-robed man was also very awkward; how was he supposed to know?

If he had known earlier, he wouldn’t have drawn Gu Wu into buying Daughter’s Red.

Now the boss was already here, the play had to go on.

"Brother Gu, this is the owner of the tavern. See?"

"Oh, it’s you?" Gu Wu belched, leaning his head in one hand, and asked, "I heard from my two brothers that you have a bottle of twenty-year Daughter’s Red, right?"

The boss nodded repeatedly, saying, "Yes, yes, sir, but I’m not selling that wine."

"Not selling?" Gu Wu slapped the table angrily, "Why are you running a tavern if you don’t sell wine? You might as well not call it a tavern and just shut it down."

The boss smiled wryly, "Oh, sir, you can’t put it that way. We sell other wines, just not that twenty-year Daughter’s Red to you. Daughter’s Red, that’s the dowry I’m keeping for my daughter, can’t sell it!"

The boss insisted on not selling that bottle.

Gu Wu chuckled, turning to the fat man, "Brother, he says it’s his daughter’s dowry?"

The fat man replied in a difficult tone, "Oh, that's troublesome. We can't force someone into difficulties for good wine, can we? Besides, the boss made it very clear it's the dowry for his daughter."

"What if I, this master, insist on drinking that bottle of Daughter's Red today? Boss, name your price, if you can name it, I can pay it."

With that, he picked up the silver note on the table and gave it a pat.

Chapter 1592: Overbearing

"With this Silver, what kind of fine dowry can't you prepare for your daughter? Isn't it more dignified than just a bottle of wine?"

The boss's eyes lit up, yet he still restrained himself and said: "This… sir, it's not about the money, no matter how much money there is, how can it compare to the daughter wine I personally brewed for my daughter?"

Seeing the boss was unmoved by either hard or soft approaches, and even so many silver notes couldn't sway him, Gu Wu felt even more determined to drink that wine.

The less he sold it, the more Gu Wu felt belittled.

"Hmph!" He snorted coldly, throwing all the silver notes at the face of the tavern owner, saying, "Just these silver notes for your daughter wine. If you don't sell… heh, a dowry, is it? Tomorrow, I'll have a word with Minister Zhang and ask him to send a matchmaker to your house and see. Though I'm no spring chicken, marrying your daughter and having this bottle of daughter wine as part of the dowry won't be a loss!"

Gu Wu's words nearly drove the tavern owner mad with anger, pointing at him speechlessly for half a day.

Gu Wu's two drinking buddies picked up the silver notes and repeatedly persuaded, "Boss, Gu Brother esteems you, that's your fortune. I think you should obediently hand over the wine. Otherwise, your daughter might have to marry Gu Brother, would you be willing?"

Willing? Hell, a shameless old beggar, he'd be out of his mind to be willing.

But who knows what kind of brain spasm Minister Zhang had to take in a beggar and keep him at home?

In case this old beggar really mentions this to Minister Zhang, and if Zhang has another brain spasm and steps in to mediate, his daughter might really have to marry this shameless old beggar.

In the end, he had no choice, the owner angrily sold the twenty-year-old daughter wine to Gu Wu. Holding a thick stack of silver notes, he still showed a face of disdain, grumbling as he left the box.

Gu Wu got the twenty-year-old daughter wine and was naturally overjoyed, shouting, "Come on, brothers, let's drink up!"

The fat man and the long-robed fellow exchanged a glance, hurriedly cooperating to grab glasses, uncorked the bottle, filling a cup for Gu Wu, and half a cup for themselves.

"Gu Brother, you drink, you drink!"

"Alright, let's drink together. I've farmed for half my life and never seen such a good thing, drink, let me see what this twenty-year-old daughter wine tastes like!"

But what would a coarse man like Gu Wu know about the quality of wine? No matter how good it was, it all tasted the same to him, at most he could tell what was wine and what was water!

After smacking his lips, perhaps it was psychological, he felt it tasted a bit different.

His heart was delighted, and he drank another cup.

The fat man and the long-robed fellow kept urging him to drink, making him drink cup after cup until the bottle of daughter wine was emptied.

He was already tipsy, unable to distinguish who was who.

The two seized the moment and hurriedly asked, “Gu Brother, earlier you were telling us something unfinished, now’s a good time, why not tell your brothers more?”

Gu Wu asked in a daze, “What did I not finish saying?”

“Hey! How could you forget after just a few drinks, you were saying, wasn’t Minister Zhang asking for your help, what help?”

Gu Wu mumbled, “Oh, this matter? What’s there to help with, isn’t it just that Miss Zhang’s marriage?”

“Ah?” The fat man and the long-robed fellow were puzzled; if Minister Zhang couldn’t sort out Miss Zhang’s marriage, how could Gu Wu? What was going on?

## Chapter 1593: Revealing the Secret

The two continued to ask, “The Zhang Family’s eldest daughter caused a scandal a few years ago, making the marriages of all the Zhang Family’s young women and men very difficult, especially the second young lady. She is already over twenty and still hasn’t married. This help seems hard to provide, doesn’t it? Brother Gu, who have you found for the Zhang family’s second lady?”

They all knew about the Zhang Family’s situation. Can’t say the second lady can’t get married; it’s just that she can’t marry into a good family. If it’s those families of lower official status, wanting to be promoted by Chancellor Zhang by letting their sons marry Miss Zhang is quite normal.

It’s just that Miss Zhang is proud and ambitious; she just won’t settle for a lowly marriage.

So what kind of match could Gu Wu find for Miss Zhang?

Gu Wu hiccuped and mumbled, “She, uh, too proud to look at anyone!”

Well, everyone agreed on that.

“Haha, but she only has eyes for my son-in-law and wants to enter my daughter’s household as a concubine. Unfortunately, my daughter won’t agree, so they came to me, hoping I’d persuade my daughter to let her in as a concubine!”

What?

Gu Wu’s words shocked the two greatly. They were already quite familiar with him, knowing he has a son and daughter at Fish Manor, who don’t even acknowledge him. Everyone knows this.

But his son-in-law…is only good at making fish taste delicious. That’s about it. How could the proud second lady of the Zhang Family possibly take a liking to such a man? And even wants to be his concubine.

They found this absolutely unbelievable.

No way, they refuse to believe it.

But if they don’t believe it, which brain cell of Chancellor Zhang’s didn’t connect, that he’d take a fancy to Gu Wu?

“Brother Gu, Brother Gu, you’re not lying to us, are you? How could Miss Zhang fancy your son-in-law and even become his concubine? She’s the legitimate young lady of the Zhang Family; if she becomes someone’s concubine, where would she put her face?”

“Exactly, even if Miss Zhang agreed, Chancellor Zhang certainly wouldn’t, right? Maybe you got it wrong.”

Gu Wu was already nodding off, already dozing but was jolted awake by the fat man.

He just struggled to open his eyes and said, “What’s unbelievable about it? Miss Zhang is determined to be a concubine, but my daughter’s fierce and won’t let her in. Hmph, don’t be fooled by my son-in-law’s airs. Let me tell you, my daughter runs the house. Without my daughter’s consent, Miss Zhang can dream on about coming in.”

As for that Shunzi at Fish Manor being afraid of Gu Xiaoqing, they could believe that.

But Miss Zhang rushing to become Shunzi’s concubine? They refuse to believe it at all costs.

“Brother Gu, hey, Brother Gu?”

As they wanted to ask more, they saw Gu Wu had already fallen asleep.

The sound of snoring made the two of them speechless.

The fat man shrugged helplessly, “Forget it, let’s just head out!”

“But just this information…?”

“Alright, let’s talk another day, for now, let’s get him sent back.”

The two called the inn attendant and had Gu Wu carried back to the Zhang Family.

Then, they found the innkeeper to split the silver.

“Boss, where’s the silver note?”

“What silver note?”

“Turning your back so quickly after getting what you wanted isn’t decent. We agreed you’d act with us in this play and we’d split the silver three ways.”

“Exactly, Gu Wu just now, don’t think you can deny and swallow all that money yourself, right?”

The boss reluctantly took out the silver notes, counted a few, and handed them to the fat man and the man in the long robe.

The fat man glanced at the silver notes, snorted with a cold sneer, “That’s not quite right, boss, just a few bucks to dismiss us? I guess you don’t want to do business anymore, huh?”

Chapter 1594: Major Misunderstanding

The boss looked a bit startled at the fierce appearance of the fat man, but pretended to be calm and said, "Gu Wu gave only this much in silver notes. You all said it would be split three ways."

The man in the long shirt grabbed the boss’s neck and said harshly, "I counted it carefully when I picked it up. I advise you to take out the silver and divide it honestly, or else, hmph, we two brothers will go to Zhang Prime Minister’s house right now and say that you’re selling fake wine and deceiving Gu Wu.

Deceiving Gu Wu doesn’t matter much, but the key is that the silver you took is from the Prime Minister Residence. I wonder if Prime Minister Zhang would just let you go?"

Under this threat, the boss unwillingly took out the silver notes and divided them among them.

The two looked at the amount in their hands, found it substantial, and only then left satisfied.

"Big brother, the information we got today is somewhat useful. Should we tell Zao Tou?"

"Tell, of course, it must be told."

"What if Gu Wu was lying, and we..."

"Oh, brother, we'll just tell her exactly what we heard. Whether she believes it or not, how she arranges it is her business."

The man in the long shirt found this reasonable and said, "Alright, let's go tell her now."

...

Miss Du openly didn't involve herself in Gu Youyou's affairs, but she was a bit worried inside. So she took silver to bribe these two people, wanting them to pry words out of Gu Wu, to see what he really intended to do.

Using a two-year-old Daughter's Red Wine to pose as twenty-year-old Daughter's Red Wine and coax information from Gu Wu was astonishing to Miss Du.

Zhang Shiyu fancying the chef Shunzi from Erya Fish Manor, who are you fooling with such talk?

Who would believe it?

Miss Du said, "Did you hear it wrong? He said niece, not daughter."

If it was Jin Zijin he fancied, she could believe it.

The matters between the Zhang Family and Gu Youyou's couple, though done in private, Gu Youyou didn't shout it everywhere ruining Zhang Shiyu's reputation. But Miss Du knew what needed to be known—Zhang Shiyu was sticking her head out wanting to enter the Ningwang Residence as a concubine.

It would be strange if Gu Youyou's nature agreed to it, since the Prince of Ning still only had a wife until now, with no concubine.

The two exchanged glances; they also felt this was impossible. Weren't they just passing on what Gu Wu said to Miss Du as it was?

"Aunt Jie, that Gu Wu drank a lot. Maybe he was confused and spoke nonsense."

"Exactly, if he said Miss Zhang wanted to enter the Ningwang Residence as a concubine, we might believe it."

Miss Du nodded lightly and suddenly laughed, saying, "Never mind if he said it wrong due to drinking too much. Just spread the word like this. Say that Gu Wu spilled the truth after drinking, and the reason Prime Minister Zhang took in Gu Wu is that Miss Zhang from the Zhang Family fancied the chef from Erya Fish Manor and wanted to be a concubine. Prime Minister Zhang had no choice but to find the beggar Gu Wu to help with this matter!"

The two were flabbergasted, thinking: you're really daring. If this rumor spreads, wouldn't Prime Minister Zhang come after them?

The fat man said tearfully, "No, Aunt Jie, we can't talk nonsense like this, or Prime Minister Zhang won't spare us."

Miss Du's face grew serious, and she said calmly, "After the deed is done, each of you will receive a thousand taels of silver, and I will be responsible for getting you out of Beijing."

The two: "..."

"Xiguang Residence is migrating south. This is an opportunity. Working for me is like working for Boss Gu. You seek wealth, but you must understand one thing: fortune comes with risk. The dangers we in business deal with are much greater than yours. Back in the day, when I went to Xining, I almost fell into the hands of local bandits. Without such courage, I wouldn't have my current wealth and prosperity. What? With such little courage, you want to get rich?"

Chapter 1595: Innocently Caught in the Crossfire

Miss Du managed to convince two people. If a woman like Miss Du dared to seek wealth and take risks, what was there for them to be afraid of?

After completing this business and getting a large sum of silver, where couldn't they go? By then, they'd escape far away and wouldn't have to work for the rest of their lives. Moreover, they even had the chance to work at Xiguang Residence.

Anyone who worked at Xiguang Residence could stop working after the age of fifty and still receive a salary, being cared for until death. This was a benefit unavailable elsewhere.

"Alright, we're on board!"

For the long-term happiness of their families, they decided to do it.

The next day, a rumor spread in the marketplace that it wasn't just that Prime Minister Zhang was foolishly keeping a beggar but that his most beloved daughter had disgracefully fallen for Gu Wu's son-in-law, Shunzi.

This Shunzi was quite famous in Beijing, especially among those who loved fish and the spicy and numbing flavor, and they all highly praised Shunzi from Erya's Fish Manor.

Shunzi and his wife, along with his brother-in-law, had been running the Fish Manor in Beijing for several years and had amassed considerable savings. If a poor family's daughter sought to become his concubine, people would believe it.

But she was the legitimate daughter of the Zhang Family, Prime Minister Zhang's daughter.

Previously, she was a famous talented woman in Beijing.

Such a person wanting to become Shunzi's concubine... Could it be that Miss Zhang had a peculiar taste and was attracted by Shunzi's fishy smell?

So, after much pondering, people still thought Prime Minister Zhang had lost his marbles.

"Hey, have you heard? Prime Minister Zhang's daughter, Miss Zhang, has fallen for Shunzi and insists on becoming his concubine. Shunzi's wife won't let her in, and Prime Minister Zhang had no choice but to approach Shunzi's wife's father, offering him lavish food and drink just to get his daughter in."

"Really? How could Miss Zhang possibly be interested in Shunzi?"

"Why not? I heard that Miss Zhang loves eating fish and can't sleep without it. She loves his fish so much that she finds Shunzi pleasing."

"Exactly, otherwise why would Shunzi's sister and brother-in-law deny their father? Gu Wu, vain and eager to cozy up to Prime Minister Zhang, advised his daughter to agree to the concubinage, but the daughter and her brother jointly resisted, leading to a fallout with Gu Wu, who still hasn't been allowed into his daughter's home."

"Oh, that makes some sense. So that's what it was about!"

Everyone suddenly understood and quickly crafted a complete story.

The storytellers in the teahouses were tempted, ready to turn it into a story to make money.

This was a story of a wealthy young lady whose heart was captured by a chef after her stomach was, because of his specialty, braised fish. She willingly gave up everything just to be his concubine and to eat the fish he personally cooked every day.

But the chef's wife was fierce, and she wouldn't let her husband take a concubine. As a result, the young lady suffered from lovesickness.

Her father was heartbroken and tried every possible means for his daughter's happiness, unconcerned about others' strange looks. He sent people to find the fierce wife's father, tirelessly looking until he found Gu Wu, who had been a beggar for years.

Ah, the heart of every parent is to be pitied. The young lady's father managed to fatten up the beggar with good food and drink, spending a fortune treating him like an honored guest, hoping this beggar

could persuade his daughter to accept the concubine arrangement. Unfortunately, the fierce wife was formidable, and now the father wouldn't acknowledge him either.

Chapter 1596: A Huge Misunderstanding

Let's see who wins the battle between the wealthy heiress and the fierce chef's wife.

A few curious people decided to go to Erya Fish Manor to investigate and hear what those involved had to say.

The group made a plan and ordered a big pot of pickled fish fillets.

The waiter served the dish quickly, and soon a large pot of pickled fish was on the table.

Just smelling it made everyone salivate, and one of them asked the waiter, "Hey, is the rumor about your shopkeeper and Miss Zhang true?"

The waiter suddenly covered his mouth and shook his head like a rattle.

This action only piqued their curiosity further, and they wouldn't let him leave.

One of them, feeling generous, took out an ounce of silver and handed it to the waiter, saying, "Come on, tell us what's going on, and this silver is yours."

The waiter, who only earned a few ounces of silver a month, naturally wanted the shiny silver badly. Yet he had taken the money to solve their curiosity by answering a few questions, so he started speaking.

The waiter glanced around to make sure the boss's wife wasn't nearby, then lowered his voice and said, "Oh my, you're still asking about this? Let me tell you, because of this matter, our boss's wife hasn't given our boss a good look all day, making us as waiters work very carefully not to say anything we shouldn't or do things poorly and anger the boss's wife."

This made everyone even more intrigued, and they asked, “Is it true that the boss’s wife is the one in charge at home?”

“Of course, where do you think they got the property in this area? Don’t forget, they used to be ordinary farmers.”

“Hmm? Was it given by Princess Ning?” The diners exclaimed in surprise.

“Yes, Princess Ning is the boss’s wife’s cousin. Shunzi became the boss because his wife helped him, so imagine how scared he is of his wife.”

Everyone was dumbfounded.

A moment later, someone said, “No way, if Shunzi was that kind of person, he would have married Miss Zhang by now. Miss Zhang’s generous dowry certainly wouldn’t lose to your boss’s wife, plus she’s a concubine!”

“Exactly, what’s really going on?”

The waiter chuckled, “Well, it shows our boss is naturally afraid of his wife. Whatever she says goes; she told Miss Zhang she can’t enter their home, so she never will in her life.”

Everyone: “…”

“Sun Erniu, are you just making things up? Do you want the mistress to go upstairs and serve the dishes herself?” Erya faintly heard the waiter gossiping about her and was so furious she lost her composure and shouted.

Sun Erniu paled, quickly pocketed the silver, and said with an apologetic smile, “I’m sorry, dear guests, the boss’s wife is calling me.”

“Alright, go!”

The waiter quickly replied, “Okay, I’m coming!”

The diners exchanged glances; although the rumors were hard to believe, seeing the boss’s wife’s reaction at Erya Fish Manor made them believe a bit more.

“What’s happening in this world? The more unexpected things are, the more they come true.”

“Oh my, if I’d known Miss Zhang loves fish, I would have thought of making fish too?”

“Oh, come on, you all only know part of the story. Do you really think Shunzi is unwilling to take Miss Zhang as a concubine just because he’s afraid of his wife? Ha, it’s because Miss Zhang is venomous! Remember King Jin’s lesson? Ruined descendants!”

Everyone shivered and nodded repeatedly.

“Hmph, what good is earning so much silver? If there aren’t any descendants, all that silver ends up belonging to someone else.”

…

Chapter 1597: I’ve Been Wronged!

All day long, Fish Manor buzzed with such rumors, and poor Shunzi, caught in the crossfire, was on the verge of tears.

After closing time, Erya erupted in anger, "What do you have to say for yourself? Everyone out there is saying that Chancellor Zhang took in my father because Miss Zhang has her eye on you. So tell me, what’s really going on between you and Miss Zhang?"

Shunzi, with a tearful face, said, "I’m innocent! You see me in the shop every day, I’ve never been out of your sight. When would I even have had a chance to do anything with Miss Zhang?"

Over there, Sanbao was still speaking up for his sister, "Brother-in-law, there's no smoke without fire. The rumors are spreading like wildfire. We're not exactly rich and powerful, so why is it that they're singling you out?"

"I...?" Shunzi was feeling utterly helpless, swallowing his grievances. He wanted to know what was going on too, because he didn't even know the Zhang family's second daughter.

"You don't believe me, right? Fine, fine. To prove my innocence, let's go to the Zhang residence together and get to the bottom of this."

Saying this, Shunzi was about to head to the Zhang Residence.

Sanbao grabbed him, saying, "It's so late, let's not bother! However, the whole thing is quite odd. Tomorrow, let's ask a few customers what they've heard. These kinds of rumors don't affect you much; haven't you noticed our business has improved? Everyone wants to try the fish that Miss Zhang supposedly can't forget, but it's devastating to Miss Zhang's reputation. She already had a hard time finding a match, and now it's even worse."

Shunzi cautiously looked at Erya, "What do you think? Should we follow Sanbao's advice?"

Erya snorted coldly, "This trouble you've stirred up, you handle it. Hmph, if you want to latch onto the Zhang family's high branch, I'll immediately go find my elder sister to write us a divorce paper."

"No, please, I'm really innocent. Sanbao, help me out here, do you think I'm that kind of person?"

Sanbao slowly said, "Before we figure out the truth, I'm standing by my sister!"

Shunzi: "..."

...

Over at Gu Youyou's place, she quickly heard about the thing with Shunzi and the Zhang Young Miss. She had some inside information; Miss Zhang had eyes on her own husband, and Chancellor Zhang was interested in power. There was no way they had their eyes on Shunzi, but with rumors spreading like this, could it be completely unfounded?

She called over a guard, planning to have someone investigate, but unexpectedly received a message from Miss Du.

"The rumor about Shunzi's family was spread by me, but it's mainly Miss Zhang's reputation that's being damaged. I just didn't want your sister to know and cause a family conflict. Maybe you'd like to explain it to him?"

Gu Youyou was speechless, "What made you think of spreading such a rumor?"

Gu Youyou looked down at Miss Du's belly and thought: Why is a pregnant woman creating so much drama?

Miss Du said, "I was worried about you, you're busy moving out of Xiguang Residence and don't have time to deal with Gu Wu. If I don't keep an eye out for you, who will?"

"You're pregnant, constantly thinking about these manipulative things is not good."

Miss Du laughed, "It's nothing, really. I just spent some Silver to bribe those who often drink with Gu Wu. The rumors actually came from what Gu Wu blurted out while drunk, and it sounded like nonsense. I didn't think much of it and just let the rumors spread. Oh, and Gu Wu hasn't stepped out of his house for days."

Chapter 1598: Clearing Things Up

Gu Youyou frowned, thinking: Gu Wu wouldn't make up such an unbelievable lie, would he? She was startled and quickly asked, "Is it possible you misheard? How could Zhang Shiyu, with her high ambitions, be interested in Shunzi? And become his concubine?"

Miss Du said, "Perhaps he was drunk and misspoke. He originally meant to say that the second Miss of the Zhang Family is interested in the Prince, and Zhang Prime Minister wanted him to help persuade

you. But he mistakenly referred to his niece as his daughter, leading people to mistakenly think the second Miss of the Zhang Family is interested in Shunzi."

That made sense, Gu Youyou understood.

Gu Youyou knew that the second Miss Zhang was interested in Jin Zijin. She sighed, saying, "This might be for the best; it's a good lesson for her. But we need to explain this to Erya, otherwise, with Erya's temper, Shunzi is bound to suffer."

Gu Youyou didn't wait and immediately sent Xiang Chun to Fish Manor to personally explain the whole situation to Erya and her husband.

It was just that only Erya was present when they arrived, as Shunzi couldn't stand it anymore and had gone to the Prime Minister Residence to find Gu Wu.

Xiang Chun could only explain the situation to Erya.

"This was devised by Madam Jie to help our Princess, deliberately releasing the news. It's tit for tat; last time the Zhang Family intentionally let rumors spread saying our Prince and Princess were lying."

Erya was a bit miffed and said, "Why didn't you say earlier? I almost lost it."

Xiang Chun explained, "Madam Jie said the bad reputation would actually harm Miss Zhang, not you, hence she didn't inform you earlier."

It was true, lately their Fish Manor was booming. The kitchen with over a dozen chefs couldn't keep up. Many came after hearing the rumors, wanting to taste the fish that supposedly left Miss Zhang longing for more.

Fish Manor indeed prospered due to these rumors.

Sanbao, seeing his sister calm down, whispered, "Well, it’s clear now. Do you want me to go bring your husband back?"

Xiang Chun was startled and asked, "Did Shunzi really leave home?"

"It’s not really leaving home, Sister lost her temper and kicked him out for a while," Sanbao explained.

...

Zhang Residence

Zhang Shiyu was causing a scene with tears and loud complaints, leaving Zhang Prime Minister with a headache.

"Come on, who would believe such rumors? Why are you so anxious? No one will believe it."

"I don’t care, dad. If you don’t kick those two beggars out this time, I’ll leave home!"

"What nonsense?" Zhang Prime Minister angrily said, "Gu Wu already explained it, he didn’t say that. It’s just others spreading rumors."

Zhang Shiyu persisted, "Just because he says he didn’t, doesn’t mean he didn’t! Dad, why do you believe him and not your daughter? That old beggar goes out drinking every day, has a bunch of shady friends, and is often carried back drunk. We owe him nothing, nor are we related to him. Why do we have to support him anyway? Dad, even if we keep the young beggar, we shouldn’t keep the old beggar around. Those words must be the drunken ramblings of that old beggar."

Zhang Prime Minister shook his head and sighed, looking helpless.

This attitude made Zhang Shiyu very dissatisfied, and she hurriedly said, "Dad, look at what people are saying about me out there now. They say I can’t get married and have sunk so low as to become a chef’s

concubine. I already have a hard time getting married, and now I'm involved in such a scandal. Are you planning to support me for life?"

Chapter 1599: This Is a Good Thing

"You, sigh, always think long-term. In Father's eyes, this is a good thing, not a bad one."

Zhang Shiyu was furious, exclaiming, "What good thing, bad thing? I can't see that far ahead. What I can see is that it's getting harder and harder for me to get married. Prince Ning already had issues with me because of my sister, and with this rumor, what if he believes it? Once Gu Youyou is gone, he won't even consider me. Father, it's all your fault."

Prime Minister Zhang understood everything clearly, but was helpless against Zhang Shiyu's unreasonable complaints.

Though Gu Wu claimed he was drunk at the time and remembered nothing, he had already investigated the whole story clearly and thought this was a good outcome.

Gu Wu didn't make things up; it was just those two people misheard.

This is the best; when the matter becomes widely known, he would find a way to reveal the truth naturally. That would be amusing.

Upon this thought, a smile unknowingly curled up at the corner of Prime Minister Zhang's mouth.

Zhang Shiyu cried and complained, "Father, you can still laugh? Am I even your real daughter? Father, those two beggars ruined me; if you don't do something, I'll find a way myself."

Saying this, Zhang Shiyu strode outside.

Realizing this, Prime Minister Zhang hurried to stop her, saying, "Hey, hey, don't rush. You can't ruin Father's plan. I promise you, once my month-long house arrest is over, I'll handle your matter immediately."

However, right now, Prince Ning wasn't in Beijing. Without him, he needed to reconsider how to play this drama.

Zhang Shiyu thought that her father's house arrest was at the emperor's orders, and he really had no way, so she could only hold back.

Yet deep in her heart, the resentment lingered, and she decided to confront those two beggars.

While walking to the garden, she saw Gu Wu sneaking away.

Prime Minister Zhang had told Gu Wu not to leave temporarily, and Zhang Shiyu knew this as well.

So what was Gu Wu, the old beggar, sneaking around for? Was he planning to sneak out?

Humph, isn't it embarrassing enough already?

Zhang Shiyu was furious and followed him.

…

Shunzi had been waiting for a long time outside the small corner gate of the Zhang Residence. He had bribed a servant of the Zhang Residence, who then agreed to pass on a message to Gu Wu for him.

Gu Wu was also under house arrest with Prime Minister Zhang, but he was excited to hear that Shunzi wanted to see him.

Though the Zhang Residence was nice, it was ultimately someone else's favor, nowhere near as good as what his own family offered.

From afar, he could see Shunzi pacing anxiously outside the small corner gate, rubbing his hands together.

Thinking back many years ago, when they were still in Lotus Village, before everything happened.

Back then, he didn't think highly of Shunzi as a son-in-law and wanted to marry Erya into a wealthy town family.

Looking back, marrying Shunzi was indeed the right choice. Even Prime Minister Zhang said that Shunzi's fish-cooking skills surpassed those of the palace chefs.

"Shunzi!" As he got closer, Gu Wu exclaimed joyously.

Ah, finally out.

Shunzi strode forward to meet him, saying, "Father, you're finally out."

"Did you wait long?" Gu Wu asked with a smile.

"Of course, I've been waiting here for over an hour. Father, it's really not easy to see you."

Gu Wu's face fell, and he said coldly, "When you need me, I'm Father. How many times did I visit, only to be turned away by all of you? Now you have the nerve to say it's hard to see me? Boss Wang, it's not easy for me to see you either!"

Chapter 1600: Seeking an Explanation

The only thing Shunzi could do in response to Gu Wu's sarcasm was to accompany it with a forced smile, because after all, he was the one asking for help.

These past few days, he's been nearly driven crazy by Erya, and not just her, but also those diners.

They were running a business and couldn’t just ignore those people, but every customer who came to Fish Manor to eat fish always asked him a few questions about the second young lady of the Zhang Family, which frustrated him to no end.

What did he do to deserve this out-of-the-blue disaster?

It was only after he inquired carefully that he found out the story was spread by his own father-in-law, Gu Wu. Struggling to rebuild his days, he had no choice but to come to the Zhang Residence to seek out Gu Wu.

"Dad, please stop mocking me like this, I know I was wrong, is apologizing not enough for you?"

"Hmph..." Gu Wu snorted, turning his face away.

Shunzi was speechless, anxiously saying, "Dad, no matter what I’ve done wrong, you can’t set me up like this behind my back. Look at this story you made up, it’s so vivid that everyone’s talking about me, don’t you know it’s bad for my reputation?"

"Your reputation is bad? Hmph, did you think about whether I still needed my face when you guys kicked me out?" Gu Wu said angrily.

"Ah, well, that wasn’t my fault. You know, I don’t run the house; Erya is in charge, the two kids come second, Sanbao third, I don’t even know where I rank. It wasn’t my idea not to recognize you, it was Erya and Sanbao who didn’t recognize you, you can’t blame me!"

Gu Wu pursed his lips and said, "That was just my drunken nonsense, I wasn’t trying to set you up, just don’t believe it."

Shunzi had the urge to hit someone, excitedly saying, "I say, Dad, your drunken rambling really did me in. Look at the sky, I don’t even know where I’ll stay tonight, I’ve already been kicked out."

"You’ve been kicked out?" Gu Wu was extremely surprised.

Then he thought about Erya’s temper, which took after her grandmother; she had a big temper, so maybe this thing was really possible.

Thinking like that, he really felt sorry for Shunzi.

Gu Wu raised his hand in apology and said, "Oh, I’m really sorry about that, Shunzi. You’re not short on Silver, why not find an inn to make do for the night. It’s getting late, I won’t accompany you, goodbye!"

With that, Gu Wu was about to slip away, but Shunzi quickly grabbed his arm and said, "Dad, you can’t leave!"

After all, Gu Wu was old, and after years of being a beggar, his health was lacking, so his strength couldn’t match Shunzi’s.

Caught by Shunzi, he couldn’t run, urgently asking, "What are you trying to do, this is the Chancellor Residence."

Shunzi said, "I know this is the Chancellor Residence, but I still can’t let you go."

"Then what do you want to do?"

"Come with me, explain everything clearly to Erya, and only then will I let you go."

Gu Wu was surprised and said, "You mean you want me to go with you to Erya’s Fish Manor now?"

"Yes!" Shunzi said.

Gu Wu thought to himself, if he went with Shunzi to Erya’s Fish Manor and explained things clearly, then Shunzi would be fine, but knowing Erya’s temper, wouldn’t he be seeking a scolding?

Back when she was a girl at home, Erya was quite fierce; he couldn’t always handle her. Now that she’s independent and resents him for the family’s upheavals, going there would truly be foolhardy.

Gu Wu resolutely refused to go, suddenly crying out, "Oh, oh!"