Farmhouse 1751

Chapter 1751: Expanding the Scope

"Isn't it? Mentioned his son's marriage with Luoyin in front of so many people. I've been busy lately and haven't even asked Luoyin's opinion yet, and he says this in front of everyone, claiming it ruined Luoyin's reputation. Is he trying to force the marriage?"

Searcy murmured to himself, "The owner of this Tianhai Mountain Villa is quite bold, daring to force the Ningwang Residence into a marriage!"

"Humph, isn't it so? His son is not bad, I've observed him these days, and he seems to have a good relationship with Luoyin. If Luoyin likes him, he might be a good choice. But his father... dealing with such a person and becoming relatives by marriage, won't he go around causing trouble under the Ningwang Residence's name in the future?"

Searcy nodded, saying, "Listening to you, he really sounds like a troublemaker!"

Jin Zijin hurriedly came in. Searcy, upon seeing this, stood up on his own and left, saying, "I'm hungry too. Let me see if there's anything good to eat. You two take your time discussing."

Gu Youyou hesitated but then said, "Zijin, what do you think about this matter?"

Jin Zijin replied, "Zhu Yiping is indeed a nice young man; I see you quite like him. But about his father... we don't understand him. From today's view, he seems a bit reckless. Let's wait and see, and you should find time to ask Luoyin for her opinion!"

"Hmm, alright!" Gu Youyou said.

After seeing off the guests, Yue Rujing finally got the chance to speak alone with Jin Zijin and the others.

"Senior brother, your words earlier had a strange implication, and now there's no outsiders. Tell me, what exactly do you mean?"

Gu Youyou gave him a faint glance and slowly said, "What else could it mean? A person was found, but he is not Xuyao!"

"Not Xuyao?" Yue Rujing was greatly shocked, "Then, why did you stage all this?"

Jin Zijin said, "To lure the snake out of the cave!"

Yue Rujing said, "... Does senior brother have a direction now?"

Jin Zijin nodded and said, "Start by investigating Jin Xiang's true identity."

Yue Rujing's expression turned peculiar. Jin Xiang? Senior brother, have you really accepted this fake goods and even earned him a proper name!

Gu Youyou sighed helplessly, "He was also taken away at a young age to set up this scheme; his fate is so similar to Xuyao's, but none of it is his fault. Let's accept him first; we are using him just like those who took him. Treat him well, and finding his parents would be a form of compensation!"

Gu Youyou's personality was usually very kind, especially after Jin Xuyao went missing; she showed considerable kindness to children of that age, which everyone had become accustomed to.

Yue Rujing said, "Alright, as long as you're happy."

Turning his head, he asked Jin Zijin, "Senior brother, is there anything I can help with?"

Jin Zijin lowered his gaze, saying, "I suspect he is hidden among the people we know, Fu Jian. No one has seen his true face, and everyone could potentially be him, including those whose identities were clear fifteen years ago. This time, we need to expand the scope of our search!"

Yue Rujing was silent for a while, then heavily nodded.

...

Lun Yu and Yi Yan went to find the legendary Master of Disguise recently because the Young Prince of Ningwang Residence had returned, and they came back.

Seeing the purported Master of Disguise mentioned by Jin Luoyin, they couldn't help but want to pinch his face to see whether the skin was real or fake.

"Of course mine is real, have you met my father?" Zhu Yiping pushed away Lun Yu's hand, smiling as he spoke.

Chapter 1752: Asking Jin Luoyin

Lun Yu said, "Then we won't pinch your face anymore, just tell us where your master is."

Zhu Yiping smiled helplessly, "I really don't know where my master is. Not only is he elusive, but every time he comes to see me, he looks different. I've no idea what he truly looks like to this day."

"Then why did he choose you as his disciple?" Yi Yan actually envied Zhu Yiping a bit. That master's methods are far superior to those of her own master and grandma's, Lun Tong, and also much harder to find. Both have similar temperaments, quirky, roaming the world with different faces; she's really curious about who that master is.

"I don't know either!" Zhu Yiping shrugged and said, "He probably thought I have good comprehension!"

Zhu Yiping raised an eyebrow, glancing at Lun Yu and Yi Yan with a look full of pride.

Lun Yu blushed, feeling a bit disdained by his junior fellow disciple.

Lun Yu hurried to build rapport with him, urgently saying, "Junior fellow, I saw the mask you made for the Commandery Princess last time, that technique is beyond our reach. Do you have any... skills you could share?"

Zhu Yiping shook his head and said, "Can't share!"

"Don’t be so stingy! We’re all from the same school."

"Hehe, you’d better continue trying to find my master for that. Perhaps if you switch under his name and become his disciple, he might agree? But as for me, I’m not ready to take on apprentices yet."

Lun Yu: "..."

"The problem is we can’t find your master..."

"Then I can’t help."

Meanwhile, Gu Youyou was in Jin Luoyin’s room.

This kind of thing was actually a bit awkward for her to ask, but she was the most suitable person to do so.

"You probably heard about the matter during the day, what do you think about the marriage proposal from the owner Zhu?"

Jin Luoyin blushed, saying, "Isn’t it a bit too soon? I haven’t thought about it yet."

Gu Youyou nodded, she was only fifteen, after all, which is indeed quite young.

But what seems young to her, is just the right age to others; aren’t the girls here all starting to talk about marriage at fifteen, with only the pickier families switching back and forth, delaying two or three years?

But discussing marriage usually starts after reaching adulthood.

So Gu Youyou said, "You don’t have to rush into marrying, but you should begin to consider proposals. Even if it’s not Zhu Yiping, it will be someone else. While you were away, the Emperor even sent a message, asking if I want to select a suitable candidate in Beijing to start grooming."

"Ah...?" Jin Luoyin was quite surprised, looking rather embarrassed as well, "Isn’t it too early? I was thinking of waiting a couple of years."

Gu Youyou sighed, "We might not be in a hurry, but that doesn’t mean others aren’t! Even if you’re unwilling, you can’t prevent matchmakers from coming to your door. If you want a bit of peace, the best way is to settle the marriage first.

Your father favors Qiulin, your father was quite close with Yue Rujing back then, intending wholeheartedly to match you with Qiulin. Of course, he won’t force you if you’re unwilling.

His second and third choices are family’s Jie in Beijing and your father’s uncle’s family, the Xiao family’s son; what’s your plan?"

Jin Luoyin blinked and said, "Didn’t you say that if close, it’s better not to marry?"

Gu Youyou nodded, "Right, I don’t want to consider the Xiao family, mainly the Yue and Jie families. But that’s all under the premise that it’s your own will; if you like Zhu Yiping, even if his father is a bit inferior, I can endure that, as long as you’re happy."

Chapter 1753: Open-Minded Parents

Jin Luoyin felt that her parents were truly open-minded. Although she clearly didn’t want to marry into the Zhu family, they were still willing to prioritize their daughter’s happiness and reluctantly accept.

But... the key point was that she also didn’t know what kind of feelings she had for Zhu Yiping?

She was willing to get close to Zhu Yiping, but when it came to marriage, such intimacy felt a bit lacking to her.

Since her mother had already asked, she seriously considered it for a moment. After a while, she said, "Let’s wait and see. Our interaction hasn’t been long enough to understand each other well. I think I need more time to observe before deciding."

Of course, it might also be that she felt too young, lacking experience in matters of love, and didn’t really understand.

Time teaches everyone everything. Let’s wait and see; perhaps it will become clear.

Gu Youyou always respected her children’s thoughts. She said, "Alright, take your time. I will ask your father to find an excuse to keep Zhu Yiping here."

"Mm, thank you, Mom!" Jin Luoyin said sweetly.

"Oh, by the way, why did you suddenly change your brother’s name?"

Gu Youyou’s gentle gaze gradually turned cold and somewhat sad.

She said, "Because he’s not your brother!"

"What?" Jin Luoyin was completely shocked.

Gu Youyou continued, "Because he’s not your brother, we need to use this to draw out the person manipulating things behind the scenes. Luoyin, just know this, but don’t say anything or let anyone see through it; just act as if he’s your brother."

Jin Luoyin was stunned on the spot, nodding woodenly.

Not a brother, but all the effort spent to find him turned out to be for someone who wasn’t her brother.

She didn’t know what kind of hardship her real brother was enduring.

...

Zhu Yiping stayed behind, and Jian Shiqing, always tagging along like a shadow, stayed as well.

It was said to be for protecting the Young Master, as their owner was worried.

He claimed to Zhu Haisheng that it would enhance the relationship between the Commandery Princess and the Young Master and that he could update them on the situation always.

But no one knew the dual deception he was struggling with inside.

With many topics to discuss among young people, they enjoyed themselves a lot every day, even planning a hunting trip to the mountains behind Lotus Village.

The hunters in these mountains were numerous, making it a good activity for the youngsters.

Everyone gradually discovered that Jin Xiang was not Jin Xuyao. Slowly, with some intentional consolation, Jin Xiang also became bolder, occasionally joking with them and willing to learn hunting with them.

On this day, several young people went up the mountain again, while Xiao Jinyan came to Plum Blossom Valley.

With a hint of excitement on his face, he said to Jin Zijin, "Cousin, I've found out about Jin Xiang's background."

"Oh? You worked quickly."

Xiao Jinyan didn't beat around the bush and quickly said, "From the Lai Family in Luancheng City. Sixteen years ago, they lost a son, and at that time, Young Master Lai's nanny was killed. This story coincidentally matches what Jin Xiang said."

"The Lai Family in Luancheng City?" Jin Zijin murmured softly. Over the years, while looking for his son, he had heard of the Lai Family and knew about their lost son.

It’s just that many families lost children during that time, so it wasn’t uncommon.

Xiao Jinyan said, "Yes, the Lai Family reported the case to the Governor’s Office, but it hasn’t been closed yet. Every year, a large amount of silver is donated to the Governor’s Office. Unfortunately, in such places, money alone isn’t enough. The Lai Family lacks influential connections, so the Governor’s Office just takes their silver and pretends to search without really looking for Young Master Lai!"

Chapter 1754: There’s Something Strange About Tianhai Mountain Villa

Jin Zijin was silent for a while, then turned to Xiao Jinyan and said seriously, “Did they target the Lai Family because Mr. Lai bears some resemblance to Xuyao?”

Xiao Jinyan was momentarily stunned, then nodded lightly, “That’s right. I have seen Mr. Lai’s twin brother, and they look alike. The two brothers bear some resemblance to you, cousin. There are so many people in the world who look alike; if you really intend to look, it’s not hard to find them.”

And it was because of this reason that the Lai Family suffered an unexpected disaster.

“Cousin, should we send him to the Lai Family?”

Jin Zijin waved his hand and said, “Not for the time being; we haven’t found that person yet!”

Xiao Jinyan nodded and said, “My elder brother’s men are already investigating the matter of the Lai Family’s lost child from back then. I believe we will have news soon!”

Yue Rujing rushed in and nodded lightly to Xiao Jinyan as a greeting.

He said anxiously to Jin Zijin, “Senior brother, I have recently investigated Tianhai Mountain Villa and found something odd!”

“Tianhai Mountain Villa?”

The reason Yue Rujing first investigated Tianhai Mountain Villa was because Zhu Haisheng’s son competed with his son over a bride.

Though he understood very well that Gu Youyou wasn’t too keen on Jin Luoyin marrying far away—he had only one son and couldn’t become a son-in-law—but he was just angry that with his son’s excellent conditions, he was still preempted by someone who popped up out of nowhere.

Therefore, he was determined to thoroughly investigate Tianhai Mountain Villa, tracing back eighteen generations of ancestors.

“What’s the problem?” Jin Zijin asked.

Tianhai Mountain Villa, even without the need to find a son, it was necessary to thoroughly investigate. Who made the owner of that villa want to become in-laws with him?

Yue Rujing said, “The rules of Tianhai Mountain Villa are very strange. They place great importance on offspring but never marry high-status women as wives. In fact, their successive owners, at most, have a few concubines who cannot bear children for their amusement, but do not have wives.”

It’s no secret that Tianhai Mountain Villa has no Madam. Jin Zijin nodded and said, “By doing this, they can firmly keep the villa within the hands of the head of the family. This rule has been passed down for hundreds of years.”

“Yes!” Yue Rujing replied, “But what does Zhu Haisheng mean by proposing marriage for his son? Does he intend to break this rule?”

Xiao Jinyan laughed, “Previously, they didn’t marry because they couldn’t find a strong wife beneficial to the family. Now that Zhu Yiping and Luoyin have a good relationship, his thinking naturally changed. With Luoyin’s family background bringing benefits to Tianhai Mountain Villa, no one can resist such temptation. Frankly, whether having a wife or not is all about profit. Don’t forget, Tianhai Mountain Villa is also a business.”

Yue Rujing argued, “Then what does it mean for him to place importance on a foster son? Tianhai Mountain Villa’s business didn’t have a single piece in Zhu Yiping’s hands, but over the years, it’s all been gradually handed over to Jian Shiqing.”

With that said, Xiao Jinyan fell silent.

For such a succession-focused Tianhai Mountain Villa, where each generation has only one successor, Zhu Haisheng is somewhat peculiar.

“Perhaps that Jian Shiqing is his illegitimate son? But since Tianhai Mountain Villa only allows one successor, to hide this from the previous owner, he publicly claims him as a foster son?” Xiao Jinyan suggested.

Jin Zijin said, “Of course, Jin Yan’s speculation is possible, but to completely sideline the nominal heir, even the dumbest person wouldn’t do that. Besides, I don’t think Zhu Haisheng is stupid. Then why would he act like this?”

Chapter 1755: Who Left the Note?

Yue Rujing nodded and said, "Even if it’s not for finding Xuyao, for the sake of our Commandery Princess Luoyin, we must thoroughly investigate this Tianhai Mountain Villa. Senior brother, don’t be hasty in agreeing to this marriage! I rushed over to tell you about this matter, be cautious in the marriage arrangement!"

Jin Zijin rolled his eyes at him; is he such an indiscreet person? Besides, his daughter never worried about getting married.

After Yue Rujing and Xiao Jinyan left, Jin Zijin returned to his desk and habitually picked up a book to read.

But after reading for a while, he glanced to the side and stopped.

The paper he used was always from the same source, slightly whiter than ordinary paper.

However, this piece was special, tucked within a stack of Xuan paper, only a corner exposed, and noticeably more yellow than the others.

He recognized at once that this paper did not belong to his study.

Jin Zijin took out the paper, on which several large black characters were written boldly.

’Do not marry into Tianhai Mountain Villa!’

Do not marry into Tianhai Mountain Villa? Who could this be?

Jin Zijin suddenly stood up and shouted to the servants outside, "Did you see any strangers enter this study?"

The sky was already darkening, and the servants were lighting the hanging lanterns.

Seeing their Prince suddenly utter such words left them quite stunned.

Strangers? What stranger could possibly enter the Ningwang Residence?

The crowd quickly shook their heads.

Jin Zijin continued, "Apart from myself and the Princess, who else entered this study today?"

He was certain that the paper appeared only today.

A servant replied, "Your Highness, the only people who came to the study today were the Princely Heir Yue, General Xiao, and Shui Li, who is responsible for cleaning this study!"

These three, however, were equally unlikely to have written such words.

Yue Rujing clearly expressed his wish against marrying into Tianhai Mountain Villa.

Who else would oppose the alliance between the Ningwang Residence and Tianhai Mountain Villa?

The Prince Residence is heavily guarded, outsiders cannot enter, and those who can come into this room are only those from within the Prince Residence.

The servants are all carefully chosen, and they have no need to write such a message either.

So it could be one of the young people.

Jin Xiang wouldn't, Yue Rujing wouldn't, and naturally, Yue Qiulin wouldn't either.

Then maybe it was that young man named Jian Shiqing, and Jie Yi?

If Jie Yi has feelings for Luoyin, it might be possible.

But both he and Gu Youyou trust Miss Du's integrity, her well-taught son, even if he had such intentions, would compete openly and would not leave such a mysterious note.

Then who could it be? Jian Shiqing?

What motive would he have?

The alliance between Tianhai Mountain Villa and Ningwang Residence would be a great benefit for the villa.

After returning, Jin Zijin showed the note to Gu Youyou and shared his suspicions.

Gu Youyou said, "They went to the back mountain early today and just returned; he had no time to place this note."

Jin Zijin disagreed, "What if he possesses Zhu Yiping's skills? Youyou, Luoyin told me, Jian Shiqing has good skills, but he always hides them from Zhu Haisheng and his son. This person is quite peculiar, which is also why Luoyin is unwilling to get close to Jian Shiqing."

Of course, when Jin Luoyin told Jin Zijin, she omitted the incident of being taken advantage of by him, her aversion carrying a bit of personal bias.

Gu Youyou was silent for a moment, then slowly said, "So it seems, this Tianhai Mountain Villa is truly filled with mystery everywhere."

Chapter 1756: Testing the Waters

Jin Zijin nodded and said, "When you observe Zhu Yiping, pay more attention to Jian Shiqing as well. This young man's eyes are always shifting, as if he has a lot of secrets hidden inside. I've been busy lately and have neglected him."

Gu Youyou laughed and said, "That's easy. If he wrote it, I'll know for sure with one test."

"Oh?" Jin Zijin looked at her in surprise.

Gu Youyou said, "The person who wrote the note doesn't want us to ally with Tianhai Mountain Villa, so I insist on doing just that. They went to the back mountain today and came back with a bounty, so tomorrow we'll have a feast, gather everyone together, and I'll test him in front of everyone to see if it's really him!"

Of course, she knew Jin Luoyin's personality well enough that before doing this, she had to visit Jin Luoyin to discuss it first.

...

Lotus Village’s back mountain is rich with wild game, and when the young folks heard they’d be having a wild game banquet with the prey they caught, not a royal barbecue, those who’ve tasted her marinated barbecue couldn’t help but drool.

Zhu Yiping ate the delicious mountain chicken and suddenly said, "This... spicy flavor, I feel like I’ve tasted it somewhere before."

In these times, people don’t eat chili; only some specialty restaurants have spicy dishes, like the well-known Erya Fish Manor in Beijing.

Jie Yi laughed and said, "It’s a pity you only ’feel like’ you’ve tasted this delicious food!"

"Oh? Really?" Zhu Yiping shook his head and continued eating.

Gu Youyou observed carefully and indeed noticed that Jian Shiqing’s focus was different from the others.

They were all engrossed in the food, real food lovers.

Although he was eating slowly and methodically, his eyes would occasionally glance intentionally or unintentionally around.

Gu Youyou’s expression cooled, thinking to herself that this person indeed had issues. He likely placed the note, but she didn’t know why he’d done so.

Gu Youyou stood up, smiling, and clapped her hands to catch everyone’s attention, then called Jin Luoyin to her side and said, "I hear you have a good relationship with the Young Master of Tianhai Mountain Villa?"

Last night, Gu Youyou had already informed Jin Luoyin about the note, asking her to cooperate in today’s act. Naturally, she cooperatively nodded.

"Not bad!" Her eyes showed coquettishness, self-evident.

Meanwhile, Jian Shiqing clenched his fist hidden in his sleeve.

"You understand owner Zhu's intention, right?"

"Well, it's all up to mom!" Jin Luoyin said softly.

Zhu Yiping was clueless about their secretive exchange and looked tense.

Gu Youyou laughed and said, "My idea is, since you're all getting older, why don't we settle this matter? How about it?"

"No way!" Jian Shiqing dropped the mountain chicken he was grilling and immediately stood out in opposition before anyone else could react.

Everyone turned to look at Jian Shiqing; some hadn't even understood what Gu Youyou was suggesting before he opposed it.

Gu Youyou looked at Jian Shiqing with an amused expression and said, "No way? Then tell us, why not?"

"I...?" Why not? How was he supposed to say why it couldn't happen?

Jian Shiqing was so anxious that sweat started to bead on his forehead, while Gu Youyou patiently awaited his answer.

Jin Luoyin glowered at Jian Shiqing with a sullen face.

It seems that the person who placed the note really was him. What is he trying to do?

Chapter 1757: Argument

Zhu Yiping looked displeased at Jian Shiqing. Why does this man seem to meddle in everything and cling on annoyingly? Now it's come to this. He too thinks the marriage was decided too hastily, but who are you to oppose it? Who do you think you are?

Thinking it over, Jian Shiqing could only muster up the courage to say to Gu Youyou, "Tianhai Mountain Villa has never had a Madam!"

"Hmm?" Gu Youyou nodded and said, "There will be in the future. Could it be that our Commandery Princess cannot become the Madam of Tianhai Mountain Villa?"

"No, Tianhai Mountain Villa has never had a Madam because it's considered unlucky, it's bad for the Commandery Princess!"

"How is it unlucky?" Gu Youyou's face darkened and she said, "This was proposed by the owner Zhu. If it were unlucky, would he dare propose to the Prince Residence? Do you expect me to believe such a flimsy excuse?"

Jian Shiqing's face turned a bit pale, as Gu Youyou did not believe him, and there was nothing he could do.

Raising his eyes to the side, he saw Jin Luoyin standing next to Gu Youyou. Suddenly, he took a large step forward, respectfully bowed, and said, "Commandery Princess, I have something I wish to say to you in private."

Jin Luoyin glanced at Gu Youyou. Gu Youyou looked at this young man, saw his face full of difficulty, and only then nodded lightly.

With his mother's approval, Jin Luoyin said, "Alright, please!"

They went to a quiet room in the courtyard, one after the other entered, and Jian Shiqing immediately shut the door and locked it.

Jin Luoyin hesitated for a moment, then said, "Just say what you need to. What do you want?"

"Do you really like him? Do you really want to marry him?" Jian Shiqing looked at Jin Luoyin with a slight hint of sarcasm.

This made Jin Luoyin very displeased, as she coolly said, "That seems to be my business, doesn't it have nothing to do with you?"

Jian Shiqing looked at Jin Luoyin and said slowly, "You can marry whoever, just not him!"

"Mind your own business. Who do you think you are?" Jin Luoyin snorted coldly. "Could it be that note in my father's study yesterday was left by you?"

Jian Shiqing was stunned, and after a moment, he smiled wryly, "So today's wild game banquet was just to test me?"

"Ha, was it really you?" Jin Luoyin looked at him disdainfully and asked, "Why did you do that? Don't tell me you've been clinging on just to watch over us?"

Jian Shiqing was silent for a moment, then suddenly heaved a sigh, "I'm doing this for your own good, for your family's good!"

Jin Luoyin, with a slightly ambiguous smile, snorted coldly, "Don't think I don't know what you're thinking. You're only doing this for yourself. You just want to be the Prince Residence's son-in-law, right?"

Whether she was right or because of her glaring expression, Jian Shiqing suddenly looked a bit pale.

After a long thought, he took a deep breath and said, "Yes, I do want to be. Would you be willing? I heard the Prince and Princess do not interfere in my marriage affairs, as long as you agree!" As long as he could stop her from marrying Zhu Yiping, he would agree to anything.

Besides... he really wanted to.

Jin Luoyin was stunned for a while, looking at him with a rare lowering of his posture, and then said, "You're truly despicable!"

The other's face turned even paler, of which she was unaware, and she said coldly, "What right do you have to marry me? Zhu Yiping has Tianhai Mountain Villa as the dowry. You're just an adopted son; what do you have?"

Jian Shiqing's face turned deathly pale.

What did he have? That Tianhai Mountain Villa was clearly his, as he is the Young Master of Tianhai Mountain Villa.

If they were merely enemies' offspring, if he hadn't stumbled upon that secret the night they were going to Beiyi, perhaps he wouldn't have stood up to stop it.

Chapter 1758: He Knows It's Fake

Because they will eventually be doomed, he's waiting for that.

But her relationship with Zhu Yiping is worse than that of enemies.

He hates Zhu Yiping, yet he can't bear to see such a tragedy happen to Jin Luoyin.

Once the secret is revealed, it will only push her to death.

After a long time, he coolly said, "What do you want? Whatever you want, if I have it, I'll give it to you immediately. If I don't have it, I'll do my utmost to get it for you!"

Jin Luoyin looked at him dismissively and slowly said, "All the treasures in this world, I have them. Even if I don't, as long as I say the word, my father can help me find them. Only the Sun Zhuzhao and Dark Moon Youying, one was given by my parents to the present emperor, and the other was given to the Dao Family of Qi Mountain. It's difficult to retrieve things once they've been sent away.

Yet who in the world doesn’t want these two things, right? I won’t make it hard for you, unless you can get Zhuzhao Pearl or Youying Pearl, I only need one of the two, and I’ll agree with you!"

No one can obtain these two things; she just wants him to see clearly his identity and situation, not to crave things that don’t belong to him.

He has a low status but is bolder than anyone else. Even Jie Yi doesn’t dare to think about such things, but he dares to think and even acts so boldly.

On what grounds does he stop her marriage with Zhu Yiping?

Jian Shiqing’s mouth twitched, and it took him a long time to find his voice, "This is called not being difficult? Why don’t you just say you want to use my head as a ball to kick?"

"Oh, can’t do it?" Jin Luoyin smiled and slowly said, "Then I’ll change the condition!"

"What condition?" Jian Shiqing’s eyes lit up.

"Help me find my brother. As long as you can find my brother, I’ll agree with you."

"You... you guys know that the person brought back is fake?" Jian Shiqing’s eyes were icy cold, yet incredibly shocked.

"What? You know too?" Jin Luoyin was more astonished than Jian Shiqing.

Thinking back carefully, it seems that ever since Jian Shiqing found Jin Xiang, he’s been acting strangely. Now, thinking about it, he knew from the beginning that it was a fake.

But how did he determine it was fake?

Just as Jin Luoyin was lost in thought, Jian Shiqing, with a hint of a bitter smile, slowly said, "Then I guess I'll find a way to get the two pearls, Youying and Zhuzhao!"

Jin Luoyin: "..."

"Alright, you already know that I wrote the note, and you know why I wrote it. Can you let me go now?" he said.

"Let you go for what?" Jin Luoyin looked confused.

"Don't agree to the marriage with Zhu Yiping, give me a chance!" Jian Shiqing approached Jin Luoyin, saying, "After all, we have been intimate, and the Commandery Princess needs her reputation, right?"

Jin Luoyin was furious, pushed him away, and said, "Dead people won't speak nonsense. Do you want to be dead?"

"Would you? If you do, how come you let me follow you? You don't hate me as much as you say!"

Jin Luoyin knew she couldn't outtalk this rascal, angrily pushed open the door and left the room.

...

Jian Shiqing's reason, Jin Luoyin didn't know how to explain it to her parents.

No matter how she explains, there has to be a statement.

Moreover, when she went to see her mother, Searcy was still here.

"Did you provoke a romantic debt?"

Before Gu Youyou could say anything, Searcy had already asked.

Searcy raised an eyebrow, looking at Jin Luoyin’s embarrassed face, and had already guessed most of it.

Jin Luoyin was speechless, Gu Youyou raised her eyebrow, following Searcy’s words, "That kid Jian Shiqing has taken a liking to you?"

Chapter 1759: Suspecting Him

Gu Youyou placed great trust in Searcy; she knew Searcy was always accurate in judging people, especially with such a young girl, who wore her emotions on her face.

Looking at her embarrassed expression, it was most likely the truth.

Jin Luoyin pressed her lips together without speaking, but Gu Youyou sighed and said, "Jian Shiqing is about the same age as Jie Yi and Zhu Yiping, but he has a cunning mind beyond ordinary. Your mind can’t keep up with his; you must think clearly."

Gu Youyou did not directly say no, because in her view, this was her daughter’s own freedom. As long as it wasn’t a major offense, she was willing to let her child decide her lifelong matters.

However, Jin Luoyin snorted coldly, saying, "His mind is indeed full of schemes; otherwise, how could he have seized everything that belonged to Brother Zhu so firmly? Mother, he doesn’t have anything. He’s merely an adopted son of the owner of Tianhai Mountain Villa. I don’t value him."

Searcy and Gu Youyou were both stunned for a moment, then Gu Youyou burst into laughter.

She said, "What do you lack? I don’t mind the difference in family status, but you mind it. Jian Shiqing is quite clever; if you are inclined, we can give him a chance, elevate him. You can shape him into whatever kind of person you want."

"I..." Jin Luoyin’s heart was in turmoil, and she gritted her teeth saying, "I just don’t like people like him, so full of schemes, always feeling as if he’s holding something back in his heart, able to see through everything at a glance. Mother, you don’t know, long before we brought back Jin Xiang, he already knew

it was a fake, yet he said nothing and kept mocking us along the way. Do you think such a person is bad or not?"

"Is there such a thing?"

Gu Youyou and Searcy were both incredulous upon hearing this.

"Isn't it true? He knew!" Jin Luoyin said, fuming.

Gu Youyou and Searcy exchanged glances, their eyes filled with complex emotions.

Jin Luoyin was sent out by Gu Youyou, and Searcy half-squinted her eyes, saying slowly, "The fake son you took in, whether it's the Jade Pendant of the late emperor or his experiences, all can prove he is Xuyao. But how did that kid know it was a fake? According to Luoyin's words, he knew it was fake from the start."

Searcy gave Gu Youyou a meaningful look and said, "Think about it!"

Gu Youyou suddenly startled and said, "Unless he knows where the real one is?"

Searcy chuckled, giving her a knowing look.

...

Gu Youyou hurried back to her room, eager to share her and Searcy's suspicions with Jin Zijin, only to be told that Jin Zijin was receiving guests in the study.

In the study, Yue Rujing was just finishing a report on some peculiar matters concerning the Tianhai Mountain Villa to Jin Zijin.

"Seventeen years ago, the owner of Tianhai Mountain Villa was still very weak and trusted everything to a butler. But later, when Zhu Haisheng's health improved, his butler disappeared. Shortly afterwards, just fifteen years ago, soon after Xuyao disappeared, he returned with a child, claiming it was the son of a friend, Jian Shiqing!"

Jin Zijin nodded, saying, "As for Jian Shiqing, I have investigated, and Zhu Haisheng indeed had such a friend, whose entire family died, leaving only this child, entrusted to him for care."

Yet Yue Rujing said, "Senior brother, we didn't suspect him then, and the investigation wasn't thorough enough. You only know one part, not the other. The Jian family's death was bizarre; in one night, a fire engulfed the Jian Residence, burning it completely, leaving only a servant and Jian Shiqing who escaped."

Chapter 1760: He Is Xuyao

The servant of the Jian Family claimed to have received the dying words of the master and came to Tianhai Mountain Villa to find Zhu Haisheng. It was then that Zhu Haisheng adopted Jian Shiqing."

Yue Rujing often appeared carefree, rarely serious.

Jin Zijin did not interrupt him, and continued to listen: "Senior Brother, I think the death of the Jian Family members is strange. Is it possible that the one who escaped isn't the son of the Jian Family, but rather..."

Jin Zijin, struck by a sudden thought, said, "You mean that the adopted son is a fake Jian Family heir, and he's very likely Xuyao?"

Indeed, they found him a suitable identity.

Yue Rujing shook his head, saying, "This is all my conjecture, Senior Brother. I've made a bold guess. If you don't believe it, just take it as amusement; but if you do, think it over carefully.

I just feel that Zhu Haisheng is suspicious. Never mind the mysterious disappearance of his trusted butler, the mere adoption of this child, whether by age or the strange annihilation of the Jian Family, forces one to suspect that someone orchestrated this deliberately.

Fu Jian, long before the Beiping Army rebelled, no, maybe even before something happened in the Ducal Residence, had already, due to some reasons, gotten involved with Tianhai Mountain Villa. I suspect he is that mysteriously missing butler."

It’s rare for Yue Rujing to analyze something so seriously. Jin Zijin pursed his lips and after a while, said, "The plan began sixteen years ago. He went to the Lai Family to take their young master, killed the nursemaid who witnessed it, and sent him to Beiyi, to create an opportunity for me to find a false son. Meanwhile, he hid the real Xuyao and even found him an appropriate identity."

Yue Rujing nodded, saying, "Yes, very likely, it’s Jian Shiqing!"

"Impossible!" Just as Yue Rujing spoke, Gu Youyou entered with her dress held up.

Both turned to look at Gu Youyou, who sighed and said, "If not for what just happened, I might have believed it. But... it’s certainly not Jian Shiqing!"

Gu Youyou recounted the situation with Jian Shiqing and Jin Luoyin to Jin Zijin and Yue Rujing, and also mentioned her and Searcy’s suspicion that Jian Shiqing knew where the real Xuyao was.

Hearing this, Yue Rujing scratched his head and felt utterly confused.

"You two planned for Luoyin and Zhu Yiping to marry, and Jian Shiqing jumped out to stop it, claiming he was with Luoyin?"

Gu Youyou: "..."

Jin Zijin: "..."

"Heh! Just like her mother, no, even better than her mother at a young age, tangled up in a mess of romantic affairs, my son is going to have a tough time."

"Why did it come back to me, and involve your son? Stick to the topic!" Gu Youyou said coldly.

Yue Rujing sympathetically glanced at his Senior Brother, thinking to himself, thankfully he understood in time due to strong self-control.

Yue Rujing sighed helplessly, "Alright, alright. Since Jian Shiqing knows where Xuyao is, and yet he proposes wanting to be a son-in-law in your family, it seems he truly isn't Xuyao. Then where is the real Xuyao?"

Gu Youyou and Jin Zijin both pressed their lips tight without speaking.

The three of them stared at each other, Yue Rujing urgently said, "Shall we capture that brat Jian Shiqing and interrogate him harshly? He won't dare keep silent."

Jin Zijin glanced at him lightly and said slowly, "He'd rather find the Youying Pearl and Zhuzhao Pearl than agree to help Luoyin find her brother. Do you think he'd spill the beans under your harsh interrogation?"