**Farmhouse 1761**

Chapter 1761:

Yue Rujing was momentarily speechless, and said, "Then what do you suggest we do?"

Jin Zijin’s eyes were devoid of any color, terrifyingly dark, and he said, "The problem still lies within Tianhai Mountain Villa. Tomorrow morning, we’ll make a trip there to find Zhu Haisheng!"

...

Early the next morning, the two rode fast horses towards Tianhai Mountain Villa. As they were nearing the place, Jin Zijin stopped and said to Yue Rujing, "One in the open, one in the shadows. I’ll go visit; you... sneak in secretly!"

"Ah...?" Having not done such deeds for many years, Yue Rujing was so scared he almost fell off his horse.

"Senior brother, this... isn’t this a bad idea? We could just go openly and above board. What can an owner of Tianhai Mountain Villa do to us?"

"No, this person has been hiding under my nose for so many years. He started plotting even when we were still in Beijing. What he has arranged must be a great play and certainly not easy to deal with. At the very least, he is a good actor."

Yue Rujing pursed his lips but obediently went to climb over the wall.

Jin Zijin formally visited Tianhai Mountain Villa. Everyone there was in fear and reverence, and Zhu Haisheng personally came out, nodding and bowing in greeting.

"Owner Zhu, my sudden visit must not be too abrupt, right?"

Zhu Haisheng hastily said, "Not abrupt, not abrupt at all. If the Prince can visit my humble abode, it will surely bring glory to it!"

After exchanging a few pleasantries, Zhu Haisheng invited Jin Zijin to the hall for receiving distinguished guests.

Jin Zijin glanced at the lush bamboo around the garden and suddenly smiled, "The environment is quite nice. Bamboo is one of the Four Gentlemen, comparable to the Plum Garden in my residence!"

Zhu Haisheng replied with a smile, "The Prince must be joking. How can a few pieces of bamboo from my humble abode compare to the plum blossoms of the Prince's residence? It's not worth mentioning!"

Jin Zijin raised his hand and said, "No, no, Owner Zhu is too modest. In Yangguan City, who doesn't know to come to your Bamboo Sea for bamboo and visit my Plum Valley for plum blossoms?"

Jin Zijin's jet-black eyes showed no trace of emotion, only tasting this flavor, which always had a peculiar taste, making Zhu Haisheng very uneasy.

But Jin Zijin smiled and said, "Owner Zhu need not be so modest. I don't care about family status but about taste. I find the taste of your Bamboo Sea complements my Plum Valley quite well. Last time, you mentioned the marriage alliance between our families, and we have seriously considered it. The Commandery Princess also agrees. However, I only have one daughter, and finding her a husband must naturally be done with caution. Especially regarding character, would you not agree?"

Zhu Haisheng, unable to contain his excitement, quickly stood up and bowed deeply, "Prince, being kin with you is a fortune gained through several lifetimes for me, Zhu Haisheng, and my son, Yiping. Rest assured, when the Commandery Princess arrives at Tianhai Mountain Villa, everyone here will hold her in utmost esteem, and no one will let her suffer any grievances!"

Jin Zijin's eyes gradually turned cold, yet his face showed a smile with a trace of mockery, and he slowly said, "With Owner Zhu's words, I am at ease, but I still have some doubts, hoping Owner Zhu can enlighten me!"

"Please, Prince!" Zhu Haisheng was too excited to contain himself. When pouring tea, his hand holding the teacup trembled slightly.

Just as he said, being able to form a family alliance with Ningwang Residence is a blessing for him and his son.

Is he that eager?

He truly is quite... the actor!

"Since we are to form an alliance with Tianhai Mountain Villa, I have sent people to investigate its past. I hope Owner Zhu won't mind!"

Chapter 1762: Coercion

Zhu Haisheng was momentarily stunned, then quickly laughed and said, "No offense taken, as a commoner, I dare not mind. I can understand the Prince's actions; it's understandable. But I'm curious, what has the Prince discovered that requires a commoner like me to clarify?"

Jin Zijin didn't beat around the bush and directly said, "Fifteen years ago, your household had a very capable butler. He likely helped you solve many problems; one could even say that the current glory of Tianhai Mountain Villa is inseparable from his contributions. What I want to ask is, where did this talented person go?"

Zhu Haisheng, smiling, listened to this, and gradually retracted his smile with some regret, saying, "He was indeed very capable and helped us a lot. But while outsiders know him as the butler of Tianhai Mountain Villa, they don't know he was never in a master-servant relationship with this commoner. He agreed to help us for three years and would leave afterward. Fifteen years ago, the agreed three-year term ended, and he left a letter and departed. This commoner doesn't know where he went."

Jin Zijin's gaze gradually became colder.

Zhu Haisheng's words were watertight, but who in this world can truly account for everything? Even Yu Jizi of that year could have so many loopholes found in him.

A person too perfect is more suspicious.

His words seemed flawless, but often, the less problematic something seems, the more problems it may have.

Jin Zijin curled his lips and said, "What a pity, I heard he's a talented person and had hoped to meet him!"

After sipping some tea, he stood up and said, "In that case, I'll take my leave now. If there's any news about that gentleman, I hope the owner Zhu will inform me."

Realizing Jin Zijin intended to leave, Zhu Haisheng hurriedly asked, "What about the marriage between my son and the Commandery Princess...? Didn't the Prince come to discuss the union of our two families?"

"Oh... Yeah!" Jin Zijin smiled and said, "They're still young. There's no hurry for now; let's discuss it in a couple of years."

Zhu Haisheng was extremely anxious and said, "They're not that young! The Commandery Princess is already of age, and my son has come of age!"

"He's come of age?" Jin Zijin feigned surprise, saying, "Your son looks only seventeen or eighteen, I had no idea he's so old already."

Zhu Haisheng: "..."

"Since that's the case, we should be even more cautious, Owner Zhu. Let's discuss this matter later!"

Zhu Haisheng broke into a cold sweat and said urgently, "Prince, I'm afraid everyone knows about this affair. The two children are deeply in love, and the Commandery Princess's reputation..."

Jin Zijin flicked his sleeve and coldly snorted, "Owner Zhu, are you threatening me?"

Zhu Haisheng immediately knelt down, bowing his head as he said, "I wouldn’t dare, as a commoner, I wouldn’t dare. I only have deep love for my son. Now Yiping is staying at the Prince Residence and hasn’t returned for a long time, showing his true heart for the Commandery Princess. If he cannot marry the Commandery Princess in this lifetime, he may regret it forever."

"You’re overthinking it. Your son doesn’t have such thoughts."

Zhu Haisheng thickened his skin and awkwardly said, "Young people are shy; he’s just too embarrassed to say it."

Jin Zijin replied indifferently, "I admire Owner Zhu’s courage. Most wouldn’t dare propose to the Commandery Princess, yet you dare to press repeatedly."

"I wouldn’t dare, I wouldn’t dare, as a commoner, I wouldn’t dare!"

Zhu Haisheng knelt on the ground, with his head lowered.

Jin Zijin stood before him, coldly observing him for a moment, then flung his sleeve and strode off.

...

Chapter 1763: Zhu Haisheng at Night

Yue Rujing had been hiding in Tianhai Mountain Villa since he snuck into Zhu Haisheng’s courtyard, and hadn’t come out until night fell.

Zhu Haisheng always liked having dinner in his small courtyard. Under the bamboo grove, the breeze stirred the Bamboo Sea making a rustling sound. Zhu Haisheng appeared to be in a very good mood, leisurely savoring a few small dishes, accompanied by some alcohol.

His senior brother had refused him, yet he still had such leisure, hmph...

Yue Rujing quietly slipped back into the house, hiding on the tall beam of Zhu Haisheng’s room.

He wanted to see what secrets Tianhai Mountain Villa really concealed.

Zhu Haisheng’s behavior was clearly unreasonable.

The servants noticed the owner’s good mood and sycophantically asked, "Master, did Prince Ning visit today to discuss the Young Master and Commandery Princess’s marriage?"

"Hmm, that’s right!" Zhu Haisheng took a sip of the alcohol!

The sycophantic servant chuckled, hurriedly saying, "Then it must be because Master settled it, is the Young Master and Commandery Princess’s marriage underway?"

"Haha..." Zhu Haisheng suddenly laughed, extending a finger and gently swaying it, "No, not only is it not settled, but Prince Ning also got angry!"

That servant instantly broke out in cold sweat, feeling like he had flattered in the wrong way.

Not settled, the Prince Ning even got angry? But then, why is the master still so happy?

Could it be that the master was actually drowning his sorrows in alcohol, turning grief into appetite?

Indeed, tonight he noticed the master had eaten quite a lot more than usual.

"Well, then..."

"Haha, although Prince Ning disagrees, he got angry, yet it turns out to be good news!"

"Good news?" The servant wore a face full of surprise.

Zhu Haisheng said, "He got angry because he doesn’t look favorably upon commoners like us, but the Commandery Princess fancies Yiping. The princess consort has said before that the Commandery Princess should decide for herself who her husband will be, and the Commandery Princess naturally wants to marry into Tianhai Mountain Villa. But the Prince disagrees! Today, the Prince came to ask me to persuade Yiping to give up the Commandery Princess."

"Ah? Then, what should we do?" The servant had a strange expression, even so, he didn’t think there was anything to be happy about.

As the saying goes, an arm can’t twist a thigh; traditionally, marriage is arranged by parents, and it’s always the men who decide at home.

In his view, as long as the prince disagrees, it won’t matter how willing the princess consort or the Commandery Princess are, this marriage is likely to be called off.

Tianhai Mountain Villa might even offend Prince Ning because of this matter, which would be a loss outweighing the gain. He, anyway, didn’t see anything worth being happy about.

Zhu Haisheng laughed and said, "What to do? Ah, that’s not something I need to worry about. Let Prince Ning discuss this with the Commandery Princess himself! Quickly tidy up, I’m going to rest now."

Zhu Haisheng drank a bit too much, making his steps light and floating.

A 15 or 16-year-old maid supported him as they walked into the house, tending to him as he went to bed before exiting to the outside.

Meanwhile, on the other side, Yue Rujing was exhausted from lying on the beam. Just as he confirmed that Zhu Haisheng had fallen asleep and was about to flip down from the ceiling, Zhu Haisheng suddenly sat up in bed.

Yue Rujing quickly retracted and silently continued observing him.

The person below began pacing to and fro in the room, sometimes hurriedly, sometimes slowly, leaving one baffled.

He paced for about the time taken for an incense to burn, then suddenly walked to the wall and lit a candle.

Under the candlelight, Yue Rujing saw Zhu Haisheng's expression transformed into a hideous and grim visage. The man who appeared kind during the day unexpectedly bore such a terrifying expression at night, as if he were a different person.

Chapter 1764: He Is Fu Jian

Yue Rujing hid himself well, staring intently at him.

But he didn't notice; he was smiling mysteriously, lighting all the candles in the room. As the flickering light cast a strange shadow, he laughed eerily.

Zhu Haisheng then walked to a wall adorned with famous paintings, and removing one, revealed an opportunity.

Yue Rujing widened his eyes, thinking to himself that this guy's secret was finally revealed.

Zhu Haisheng twisted a mechanism, and a secret chamber slowly opened up.

It wasn't exactly a secret chamber, just a hollow wall specially designed with a large opening, and in that opening were the ancestral tablets of an important figure from the Ducal Residence years ago...

Zhu Haisheng carried the lit candle to those tablets, and Yue Rujing saw the names carved on them clearly, almost falling off the beam in shock.

It was them! It was actually them.

Then who is he? Could he be Fu Jian?

Zhu Haisheng placed the candle on the sconce beside the wall, and then took two more from the desk near the window.

Lighting them, he placed them on the wall sconces, and also lit the offering candle sconces beside the tablets.

Instantly, the room was brightly lit, allowing Yue Rujing to see those tablets even more clearly.

He lit incense and respectfully bowed before the tablets, beginning to speak in a low voice.

"Protector of the nation, adopted fathers, brave heroes, Fu Jian comes to see you again."

Yue Rujing clenched his fist tightly, wishing he could jump down and strike Fu Jian dead.

But he was no longer the impulsive youth of years past; he needed to hear what else he had to say, so he swallowed his anger and continued to listen.

"The second round of revenge against them has already begun. Last time, it was the son who was lost; this time, I want their daughter to be dead with no body left. No, I will keep clues of her still being alive, make her disappear, force them to keep searching endlessly, wishing they were dead... Haha, you all can watch carefully up there; you'll surely enjoy this form of revenge."

After slowly finishing his words, he blew out the candles, extinguished the incense, and closed the hidden compartment again.

He blew out the room's candles one by one, until only the last one remained, when Yue Rujing jumped down from the beam, standing behind the flickering candle flame, facing him, with cold eyes staring at him.

Zhu Haisheng was not as panicked as he imagined, only stunned for a moment before laughing, "So it was Marquess Yue, Marquess Yue, why are you acting like a thief? I'm not sure what in a commoner's house could lure Marquess Yue."

Yue Rujing was taken aback by his calmness, hesitating for a moment before saying, "Since things have come to this point, stop pretending. Zhu owner, oh no, Fu Jian, I must say I admire your acting skills; you deceived us all!"

The smile on Zhu Haisheng's face froze bit by bit, then he revealed a vicious expression and spoke in a deep voice, "Since Marquess Yue already knows, there's no need to keep pretending. Marquess Yue, everyone who knows I'm Fu Jian is already dead, and you too..."

Before he could finish, he drew a Soft Sword from his waist and unexpectedly stabbed at Yue Rujing.

Yue Rujing swiftly leapt back, dodging the sword.

As he looked at the Soft Sword, Yue Rujing's face was filled with surprise; he realized Fu Jian also used a Soft Sword.

Wow, Yue Rujing had lived for decades and fought against people using all sorts of weapons, but this was the first time he encountered someone wielding a Soft Sword.

Chapter 1765: Jin Zijin Arrives

It was unknown how skilled the legendary Soft Sword of Jin Tianyuan, the most formidable adoptive son of Beiping Palace, truly was.

The Soft Sword of Yue Rujing, unused for many years, was drawn, its cold gleam flickering under the swaying candlelight.

The sound of weapons clashing echoed from inside the room. The bedroom of the owner of Tianhai Mountain Villa was quite spacious, but for those engaged in the fight, it seemed rather small.

A perfectly good room quickly became riddled with holes everywhere.

The servants, upon hearing the commotion, hurriedly got up and ran into the owner's courtyard.

They suddenly saw the owner fly out from the window, crashing into the fine sandalwood window frame, and as soon as the owner climbed up, he was immediately knocked down by a mysterious man who flew out of the house.

The servants, after a brief moment of astonishment, realized that their master had been beaten by a stranger.

Is this situation… a home invasion by a fierce robber?

Someone shouted loudly, “Catch the thief!”, and afterward, such cries erupted throughout Tianhai Mountain Villa, with countless guards raised by Zhu Haisheng dashing into the courtyard to support Zhu Haisheng.

…

Jin Zijin was waiting for Yue Rujing at the foot of the mountain. The sky had been dark for a long time. He held onto the horse, listening to the sound of cicadas at the end of summer, standing motionlessly in the open field, gazing at Tianhai Mountain Villa, which was illuminated with layers of scattered lights in the ravine ahead.

However, it seemed somewhat unusual at this moment; the light was much brighter than that of the peaceful Tianhai Mountain Villa, and it was growing even brighter.

From time to time, indistinct sounds were heard, clearly indicating that something significant had happened at the Tianhai Mountain Villa. His first thought was that there was news about Yue Rujing.

His eyes darkened, and he immediately mounted his horse and rushed towards Tianhai Mountain Villa.

The gatekeepers were the same ones he saw during the day. They were unaware of the specific events inside and were peering through the door crack, craning their necks to look into the villa.

Jin Zijin’s swift horse stopped at the door, and he shouted, “Open the gate.”

The two guards saw that the visitor was Ning Wang, who had left that morning, and dared not delay, promptly opening the gate.

“Ning Wang, may I ask…”

Before the guard could finish asking, Jin Zijin had already rushed inside on his horse.

“Hey, Ning Wang!”

In no time, Jin Zijin disappeared into the night.

The two guards were puzzled and said, “What on earth is going on inside?”

“Seems like there’s a robbery; didn’t you hear everyone shouting to catch the thief?”

“Why did Ning Wang return at this late hour? Is he here to help us catch the thief?”

“Who knows! We’re responsible for guarding the gate, let’s just watch carefully; be cautious that the thief doesn’t escape through here!”

The two guards dared not take it lightly and hurriedly said, “Yes, right, let’s close this gate. Close it tightly, no matter where the thief runs, he won’t be able to use this gate to escape!”

Inside the villa, Zhu Haisheng was naturally unable to resist. He sat on the ground clutching his bleeding arm, with several servants shielding him.

The villa’s guards almost all rushed over, surrounding Yue Rujing tightly.

These people had been deceived by Zhu Haisheng, this treacherous scoundrel, but Yue Rujing could not kill all the guards, thus he fought cautiously.

On the other hand, he was quite surprised that these house guards were no less proficient than elite troops. They appeared to swarm forward, but weren't fighting independently; rather, they coordinated their advances and retreats with precision.

Clearly, they had undergone specialized training.

Chapter 1766: Suicide

Fu Jian was born a soldier, and it was understood later that he was highly capable, far more formidable than Jin Tianyuan's biological sons.

Hehe, Fu Jian!

What Jin Zijin saw upon arrival was this very scene.

His gaze darkened, and he drew out the long-unused Chixiao, which shot swiftly into the crowd, trailing a tail as red as the blazing sun.

Chixiao sliced through layer upon layer of the crowd, severing all the weapons held by the dozens of guards surrounding Yue Rujing, and the remaining sections on the handles showed signs of melting.

The crowd was terrified, their hands stinging from the burns, and they hurriedly dropped their weapons.

Turning their heads, they saw that the newcomer was none other than the Prince of Ning, who had visited during the day.

What was the Prince of Ning doing here in the dead of night?

"Everyone, stop!" shouted Zhu Haisheng from the back.

Yue Rujing, filled with hostility, sheathed the Soft Sword, walked out of the crowd's encirclement, and spat at Zhu Haisheng.

Pointing at Zhu Haisheng, he said to Jin Zijin, "Senior Brother, he is the one we have been searching for all these years!"

Jin Zijin’s pupils constricted, and he withdrew the crimson dagger and said coldly, "It’s you? You’ve hidden well!"

Over there, Zhu Haisheng loudly declared, "Prince of Ning, my son and the Commandery Princess are in love, yet you disapprove and want my son to be the live-in son-in-law at Ningwang Residence?

I know that even as a live-in son-in-law at Ningwang Residence, my son would still be marrying above his station with the Commandery Princess; however, I, Zhu Haisheng, have only one son. Tianhai Mountain Villa cannot lose its heir, so I cannot agree."

Yue Rujing was utterly bewildered and exclaimed, "What nonsense are you spouting? Senior Brother, what is he talking about?"

Jin Zijin’s gaze deepened further as he looked at Zhu Haisheng, whose face bore a faint bloodthirsty smile that gave him a sense of foreboding.

Zhu Haisheng continued, "Prince of Ning, my son Yiping cannot afford to marry the Commandery Princess; I beg you to spare him. I accept that you want my life, but there’s no need for the Marquess of Lingnan to come personally in the dead of night."

With that, his gaze darkened, and suddenly, he drew a Soft Sword and slashed it across his throat.

His act of suicide was so sudden and his movement so swift, that no one at that distance and speed could stop him.

The next second, blood gushed from his neck, and his head slumped to one side.

"Ah..."

The screams came from the servants of Tianhai Mountain Villa, mostly from the timid maids.

"The owner, the owner is dead..."

That night at Tianhai Mountain Villa was destined to be an unsettling night; bright lights were everywhere, and most people couldn’t accept that their owner had just died like this.

Jin Zijin and Yue Rujing’s faces were ashen; after searching for Fu Jian for so long, he was now dead, Xuyao’s clues were cut off, and his suicide was evidently the beginning of another conspiracy.

...

The news of Zhu Haisheng’s death quickly reached the Ningwang Residence in Plum Blossom Valley, and Jian Shiqing, Zhu Yiping, and Jin Luoyin rode fast horses and hurriedly returned to Tianhai Mountain Villa.

Gu Youyou also wished to go, but had to remain in the Ningwang Residence to host, so she had to send Searcy and the Lun Yu couple to run the errand.

"Examine the body carefully and find out how he died, will you?"

Gu Youyou still didn’t know what clash occurred that night between Jin Zijin, Yue Rujing, and Tianhai Mountain Villa; at the same time, Zhu Yiping and the others were unaware as well. This sudden death was baffling, leaving people unable to understand it.

"Hyah... hyah..." Three horses galloped down the official road, Zhu Yiping drenched in sweat, Jian Shiqing pale-faced, and Jin Luoyin somewhat at a loss.

Chapter 1767: Run the Horse to Death

Not long ago, I saw Zhu Haisheng, he seemed healthy back then, how could he suddenly die?

She had heard that Zhu Haisheng had poor health as a child, often sick, and it was only after reaching adulthood that he barely nursed himself back to health.

The pace was too fast, after running all day, the horse couldn’t take it and collapsed to the ground foaming at the mouth, Zhu Yiping also fell from the horse.

He rolled over and avoided it, yet ended up scraping his knee.

Jian Shiqing stopped to take a look and then said, "I’ll go back and check first, hurry and catch up!"

Zhu Yiping said nothing and rode the horse forward.

Jin Luoyin stopped, did a simple bandage, and said to him, "Brother Zhu, please don’t rush, maybe the news is wrong, perhaps the owner is just sick? I heard the owner has been frail since childhood, maybe it’s just an old illness flaring up, and they got the message wrong!"

Zhu Yiping looked at the wound on his knee and said gravely, "I grew up without a mother, in my memory, there was only my father. Sometimes, his actions were quite excessive and I wanted to rebel, but I knew it was all because I was the person he cared about the most.

He wouldn’t let me leave the villa easily, because when I was young I left privately and encountered human traffickers, which scared him to death. He feared I would get into trouble, as that would mean the Tianhai Mountain Villa’s legacy would end. When the wet nurse was alive, she often said my father had been in poor health since he was young and it was quite difficult for him to have a successor.

His own health was poor, so he worried mine would be too. So when I was very young, he spent a lot to hire martial arts teachers to teach me various martial arts, not only because martial skills would allow me to protect myself, but also because he knew practicing martial arts could strengthen the body.

When I was young and rebellious, I didn’t want to learn, preferring to read more like Jian Shiqing. To ensure I learned well, he practiced martial arts with me. His body was weak, often covered in sweat and struggling to breathe after only a short time of practice. But whenever I asked if he was tired, he always said he wasn’t.

Commandery Princess, I always knew his health was bad, yet when he was ill, I wasn’t by his side to care for him and send him off properly. Just yesterday, we were up in the mountains hunting, having so much fun, but at that time, perhaps he was battling illness. Do you think I’m very unfilial?"

Jin Luoyin’s eyes brimmed with tears, shook his head forcefully, and said, "Brother Zhu, no, you are not. I know you are very filial, this is just an accident. It must be the messenger who got it wrong, the owner is only sick. Oh, right, my mother said she called Searcy to follow, Searcy has excellent medical skills, especially in treating difficult diseases, there’s none she can’t cure. Don’t worry, let’s go first, Searcy will catch up soon."

Zhu Yiping opened his mouth but said nothing.

Wrong message? How could it be wrong, he knew he usually wasn’t well, maybe it really is an old illness flaring up, but perhaps he truly has died.

His horse was already failing, Zhu Yiping mounted Jin Luoyin’s horse.

Fortunately, Jin Luoyin’s horse was a rare thousand-mile horse, carrying two people, as long as they don’t gallop recklessly, it’s likely to withstand them both.

...

Jian Shiqing returned to the Tianhai Mountain Villa for the first time, only to feel an extraordinarily strange atmosphere.

The servants stammered without saying a complete sentence, amidst grief, there was also some peculiar presence.

Chapter 1768: Explanation

"What exactly happened inside? Is it true that the owner...?" He left his beloved horse aside and grabbed a maid to ask.

The maid was so frightened that tears welled up in her eyes, sometimes nodding, sometimes shaking her head, her face pale and unable to utter a single word.

Jian Shiqing angrily tossed the maid aside and attempted to grab a servant to ask.

But the servant, upon seeing him, started running immediately.

Whoever got caught by him was unlucky. Apart from not daring to pack up and leave immediately due to Jin Zijin and Yue Rujing's presence, everyone was like hedgehogs, raising sharp spikes to protect themselves.

The owner was dead, but he was forced to death by the powerful Prince Ning.

Everyone saw it, forced to death under the watchful eyes of the public.

What should be done?

Though there's a saying that even princes are subjected to the same laws as commoners, is that truly the case?

But if they were to lie against their conscience, and say the owner committed suicide out of distress, could they really live with themselves?

After all, they are all servants of the Tianhai Mountain Villa!

But if they were to speak the truth, who among them would dare offend Prince Ning?

The servants felt helpless too!

Everyone who saw him felt like facing a formidable enemy. Jian Shiqing finally gave up on finding a servant to question first and instead ran directly towards the main courtyard.

Jian Shiqing pushed open the door and saw Zhu Haisheng's corpse lying on a wooden board in the main hall, with no one around, not even someone burning paper money or offering incense for him.

He just lay there lonely on the not-so-glamorous wooden board, like a corpse casually disposed of.

Jian Shiqing stepped forward to inspect the wounds on his body and was suddenly shocked when he saw the one on the neck, his pupils dilating to the maximum.

"No, you... you really are..."

He murmured inexplicably a few words and then dashed out the door,

The wall in Zhu Haisheng's bedroom was burnt black, with many wooden plaques that crumbled when touched.

Jin Zijin and Yue Rujing were crouching on the ground, carefully trying to piece together those wooden plaques or identify the characters on them.

But as Jian Shiqing pushed the door open forcefully, the wind blew in, scattering the painstakingly pieced plaques, and with another touch, they turned to ash.

"I ##￥￥..." Yue Rujing was furious to see his hard work destroyed in an instant, but as he turned and saw Jian Shiqing's pale face, his voice abruptly ceased.

If Jin Xuyao were still alive, he would seriously suspect that the so-called adopted son Jian Shiqing was actually Xuyao.

He had already investigated thoroughly, the identity of the young master of the Jian Family had been tampered with long ago, and he had been dead for a while!

Gazing at this young man whose eyes always seemed to carry a story, Jin Zijin pursed his lips and said nothing.

These evidences were destroyed, and the mechanism of the secret compartment was a sophisticated switch, anyone opening it without knowledge would face such consequences.

The whole wall was ruined, some special powders hidden in the secret compartment suddenly ignited and burned to ashes.

These things were originally evidence to prove his identity, and now they're gone just like that.

Seeing Jin Zijin, who said nothing, and Jian Shiqing, who was also silent, Yue Rujing felt troubled.

After hesitating for some time, he explained, "This... Jian Gongzi, truth is your adoptive father has another identity, he is the treacherous villain we've been searching for, Fu Jian, who took away our Young Prince. Also, he didn't know we killed... we haven't found Xuyao yet, how could we have killed him, right? He committed suicide by himself, it has nothing to do with us. We merely wanted to find him and ask where Xuyao really was, but unexpectedly he... he just committed suicide. You... you won't misunderstand, right?"

Chapter 1769: The Last Will Left Behind

After saying those words, Yue Rujing cursed Zhu Haisheng's ancestors for eighteen generations in his heart; he was truly devious.

This tactic was ruthless, claiming in front of so many people that the marriage between the two families had soured, leading to suicide as the solution.

The things hidden within the walls were now destroyed, and he and his senior brother couldn't explain it all even if their bodies were covered in mouths.

Not knowing how to even begin.

Years ago, when he fought against Yu Jizi, it was a straightforward battle; he had never played such a dirty trick and naturally hadn't suffered from this kind of hidden loss.

Fu Jian, that sinister villain, set them up even after death.

Jian Shiqing still hadn’t spoken, neither confirming nor denying.

Yue Rujing looked at his expression at this moment, and the more he looked, the more he felt it was exactly like his senior brother’s.

It made people feel unclear, not knowing what he was thinking, but he seemed to have many things in his mind unknown to others.

Could he really be Xuyao?

As he was lost in thought, the long-motionless Jin Zijin moved and said in a low voice, "Ajing, let’s go!"

These things no longer held any value; what’s been said, has been said. Belief is not theirs to decide.

Jin Zijin strode out of the room; Yue Rujing felt a bit unwilling, wanted to say something to Jian Shiqing, but restrained himself and left alongside Jin Zijin.

He needed time to accept the fact that his adoptive father had just died.

After Jin Zijin and Yue Rujing left one after another, Jian Shiqing’s stiff body trembled suddenly, his pupils contracted, then he quickly turned back and shut the door.

He leaned against the door for a long time, took a deep breath.

He was very clear about what was hidden within that black wall.

He knew very well how Zhu Haisheng died, and he had even guessed what he wished to accomplish.

Originally, he thought Zhu Haisheng wanted Jin Luoyin and Zhu Yiping to marry, causing a tragic incident, and he tried hard to stop them, only to find out he was wrong.

From the beginning, Zhu Haisheng's plan was not like that; what he had plotted was even more vicious than making siblings become spouses.

Jian Shiqing's face was deathly pale, and only after a while did he regain his composure and begin rummaging through the room.

Cabinets, drawers, bed — he searched everywhere he could think of.

He searched every corner of this room, inch by inch, and finally, he meticulously discovered an inconspicuous gap inside the carved peony flower on the middle of the room's canopy bed.

He chuckled, yet the laughter sounded like sobbing.

He then drew a dagger, inserted it into the gap, gently pried it open, and an envelope was lifted out.

Upon opening it, inside was a piece of paper with writing, along with a smaller envelope.

He first read the contents on the paper.

"My son Shiqing, by the time you see this letter, your father will be gone. You don't need to worry about me or take revenge for me. Find a place to hide, don't let anyone find you, until you hear that Jin Zijin or Zhu Yiping is dead. Then, give this letter to whichever one survives. This is the only thing your father asks of you, the last wish of your father. You must promise me..."

Jian Shiqing's heart went cold, his slender fingers touched the letter as if it were hot coal, recoiling in shock.

Even without opening it, he knew what the letter would contain.

Finally, he clutched the letter tightly and placed it in the innermost part of his clothing.

Chapter 1770: He Ran Away

“Your last words, for revenge, you sacrificed your entire life, also took mine, and ruined their whole family!” Jian Shiqing whispered painfully to himself, not understanding the depth of hatred in Zhu Haisheng’s heart, only feeling that making him do such a thing was as painful as gouging his heart.

He was someone who understood how to calculate people’s hearts. He truly did not know what he should do.

Jian Shiqing wiped the tears from the corner of his eyes, pushed open the door, and quickly ran back to the room where Zhu Haisheng’s body lay. Looking at the cold corpse, he heavily kowtowed twice, then got up and left indignantly.

A black fast horse galloped across the wilderness, and he didn’t know where he should go, or if he would ever return.

…

Yue Rujing was filled with regret, wishing he could slap himself twice.

“It’s all my fault for being too reckless. I thought the evidence was irrefutable, but I didn’t expect him to pull such a trick. Now that he’s dead and there’s no proof, the evidence is gone too. Brother, even if we had mouths all over our bodies, we couldn’t explain it. Unless we kill all the insiders in this villa. But you’re not that kind of person.”

Yue Rujing knew very well that Jin Zijin would never kill the innocent recklessly.

Jin Zijin pursed his lips, and after a long silence, he said, “He set up this trap over a decade ago, and he has been lurking here for over a decade, just for this day. Ajing, it’s not your fault.”

Hearing Jin Zijin say this, Yue Rujing felt much better, thinking: Brother is still so understanding.

“So what do we do now? The servants at Tianhai Mountain Villa may not dare to say anything openly, but in their hearts, they’ve accepted Zhu Haisheng’s last words, saying that you sent me to kill him at midnight to silence him. There’s even talk that the Commandery Princess stayed in the young master’s courtyard in Tianhai Mountain Villa for a long time, and the two of them went to Beiyi together. They say our Luoyin has lost her chastity long ago! Brother, I hate that I can’t cut off those who spread such rumors with one slash!”

Jin Zijin did not speak but instead turned his head and asked, “Have they all arrived?”

“Yeah, huh?”

Yue Rujing thought for a moment before he understood what he meant.

He said, “Only Jian Shiqing has returned so far, but the others should be arriving soon!”

As he was speaking, a Hidden Guard beside Yue Rujing hurriedly ran over and said urgently, “Prince, Marquess, Mr. Jian has escaped!”

Both were struck as if by a bolt from the blue.

“Escaped? Explain, what do you mean by escaped?” Yue Rujing grabbed the Hidden Guard’s collar and asked anxiously.

The Hidden Guard knelt on one knee and hurriedly said, “Mr. Jian is highly skilled in martial arts, he defeated several of our brothers, Marquess. It’s our incompetence, not Mr. Jian’s fault.”

Yue Rujing’s mouth twitched, and he looked at Jin Zijin, saying, “He’s highly skilled in martial arts?”

Jin Zijin nodded slightly, saying, “Though I’ve never seen him fight, according to Luoyin, his martial arts are indeed quite good, but he has always hidden his skills, no one knew.”

Yue Rujing: "…" What kind of people are these? Sure enough, there isn't a single normal person in this Tianhai Mountain Villa.

"Hurry up and chase him!" Yue Rujing angrily ordered the Hidden Guard, "Take more men with you!"

"Yes, Marquess!" The Hidden Guard quickly disappeared!

What Yue Rujing couldn't understand was… "Brother, why did he run?"

Jin Zijin pursed his lips and said nothing.

As if realizing something, he immediately turned to walk toward Zhu Haisheng's courtyard, but after only a few steps, he stopped again.

"Brother, what's going on?" Yue Rujing looked at his strange actions with a face full of surprise.

Jin Zijin sighed and said, "We might have overlooked something."