Farmhouse 1781

Chapter 1781: Jumping into the River

Jian Shiqing fled all the way to the river dividing north and south, where he had to abandon his horse.

Behind him, Yue Rujing had just caught up and cursed angrily, "Jump then, if you have the guts, jump down and see whether you swim faster or I do!"

This crafty little brat had eluded him for almost ten days before he finally caught up.

Jian Shiqing, who had been running blindly with a hot head, now felt a sense of relief upon seeing the broad river before him.

Seeing the people arriving from behind, he laughed loudly and said, "Alright then, I know Marquess Yue's skills are impressive, but I wonder how Marquess Yue is at swimming."

Yue Rujing was furious, his face turned ashen, as he watched Jian Shiqing leap into the rapid river.

He turned pale with fright, cursing, "You brat actually jumped! Aren't you afraid of drowning..."

Yue Rujing quickly used Qinggong to follow him in. He didn't know how well Jian Shiqing could swim, and if like his senior brother, he was actually a stubborn landlubber, it would be frustrating.

If he couldn't bring back a live person, how could he face his senior brother?

The South had lots of water, and Yue Rujing was a good swimmer. After jumping into the river, he quickly grabbed the barely conscious Jian Shiqing and brought him ashore.

Yue Rujing threw him onto the ground and sat down, breathing heavily, angrily saying, "Are you actually a landlubber? In such rapid water, did you really dare to jump? Do you have a death wish?"

A death wish? Jian Shiqing froze for a moment, then smiled bitterly.

He truly didn’t want to live anymore.

What use was there in living? Did he still have a future?

His father, through death, forced him to fulfill a lie, to fulfill that cruel plan.

He had spent half his life fulfilling it, even risking his life. As a son, could he disregard expectations and speak the truth?

Yet he was also just a normal person. Although he had complaints about Zhu Yiping, he held no animosity towards Jin Luoyin or the people of Ningwang Residence.

Knowing that they were the reason for his father’s death, he still felt no bit of hatred.

How was he supposed to help him plot against such a family?

He couldn’t bear to see such a tragic scene occur, so he chose to escape, even if it meant using death to flee.

Yue Rujing wiped the water from his face, turning his head slightly to ask, "Do you really not want to live? Tell me, what do you know?"

Jian Shiqing only looked up at the sky, gazing at the blue sky and white clouds above, while one arm pressed against his heart.

"Don’t know what you should do?" Yue Rujing sneered and said, "You won’t speak? How about I say a few things, and see if you’ve been deceived or not? Or perhaps compare what you know with what we know, and see how much aligns."

Yue Rujing moved a few steps closer to Jian Shiqing, sat down, and lay on the grass beside him, also looking at the blue sky and white clouds.

He laughed, "Look at this, the sky is so blue, such a vast world, yet it can’t accommodate a single person like you. If I were you, I wouldn’t want to live either. But there’s no choice, I have to live. If I’m not even afraid of dying, what is there to fear?"

Yue Rujing provoked him, "I admire your courage. If I were a landlubber, I wouldn’t dare to jump! Luckily your luck is good, you encountered me. If it had been someone else, they might not have been able to pull you from such rapid waters.

Your death wouldn’t matter, but if you die, Tianhai Mountain Villa would have no future, and you’d never have the chance to learn the truth."

Chapter 1782: No One Can Fathom the Human Heart

Jian Shiqing’s pupils contracted, finally sparking his interest, or perhaps, an indistinct sense of fear crept upon him unknowingly.

He turned his head to look at Yue Rujing.

"What did you say? What truth?"

Yue Rujing, however, wasn’t in a hurry to speak. He smiled and said, "Don’t think we don’t know, but aren’t you actually the Young Master of Tianhai Mountain Villa, Zhu Yiping?"

Jian Shiqing was suddenly shocked, pursed his lips, and remained silent, which was considered an acknowledgment.

Yue Rujing smiled slightly again, then said, "Fu Jian’s suicide was merely to instigate a conflict between my senior brother and his son. But don’t forget, no matter how calculating one is, they can’t outwit the human heart. Isn’t that right?"

Jian Shiqing still did not speak. Yue Rujing watched him for a moment before standing up, clapping his hands, and saying: "Aren’t you planning to go back and see if the deceased person is your biological father? Let’s go. Now, it doesn’t matter if you’re unwilling, you’re in my hands anyway."

...

Yue Rujing did bring Jian Shiqing back, but only to find out that Zhu Yiping had escaped.

He felt like dying.

"What's wrong with young people today? None of them take responsibility. The incident has happened, and it needs to be resolved. What good is running away? Can running away solve the problem?"

Gu Youyou, who was extremely concerned with maintenance, grew a lot of white hair overnight. She sighed helplessly: "Zhu Yiping is quite skilled; relying on those few guards won't be enough to bring him back. Ajing, Zijin isn't here; I'll have to trouble you to make another trip."

Yue Rujing looked at Jian Shiqing standing nearby, so angry that his mustache flared, saying, "He's quite skilled too. Don't wait for me to capture that one just to have this one run away again."

Gu Youyou was indeed tired, waved her hand to Searcy, and said: "Give him an injection!"

Outsiders didn't know what "give an injection" meant, but Yue Rujing was very clear.

As soon as Gu Youyou said this, he felt relieved.

Give him an injection, and he definitely won't be able to climb out of the mountain gate.

"Alright, I've captured Jian Shiqing, leaving him to you. I'll go after Zhu Yiping."

They almost all guessed it, Zhu Yiping is his big nephew!

Really hope his big nephew doesn't have unyielding thoughts like this brat and jumps into a river or off a cliff, otherwise they'd really cry themselves to death.

Jin Luoyin originally had a pile of questions to interrogate Jian Shiqing with, but seeing him now in a dazed state, thinking about his situation even more pitiable than his brother's, some hurtful words never came out.

Searcy showed no mercy to anyone. After giving Jian Shiqing an injection without hesitation, he completely collapsed, much like ingesting Soft Muscle Powder.

Gu Youyou waved and said: "Take him away!"

Still lock him in his own courtyard and have someone watch over him.

Jin Luoyin hesitated for a long time and personally brought a food box over to see him around dinner time.

They still hadn't told him about Fu Jian's identity or the true tragic death of Zhu Haisheng.

They just felt that such truth was too cruel for a young man already so struck down, who didn't even want to live.

But if they don't tell him, how would they know what he was thinking?

Moreover, such matters couldn't be hidden from him forever. He's the last lifeline of Tianhai Mountain Villa; the real Zhu Haisheng was also a pitiful person; their conscience wouldn't allow it.

Jin Luoyin pushed open the door. It was already late; it was a bit dark inside, yet no lights were lit.

In the pitch-black room, Jin Luoyin saw the black figure sitting in the corner, who was Jian Shiqing.

Chapter 1783: Is It Him?

She placed the food box on the table, lit the lamps in the room with a tinder, then walked towards Jian Shiqing, sat opposite him and whispered, "No wonder during Brother Zhu's coming-of-age ceremony, you said it was also yours. Because you've always known that you are Zhu Yiping, and the coming-of-age

ceremony that belonged to Zhu Yiping, that birthday, should have been yours. Is this why you've never really liked Brother Zhu?"

Jian Shiqing raised his head and said with a bitter smile, "It seems you know everything now?"

"Yes!" Jin Luoyin nodded and said, "But many things are still speculations, we haven't been able to verify them because Fu Jian's mask hasn't been removed. Mother said, brother may also be wearing a mask, so my father is going to find Lun Yu's mentor, only he can remove the masks from their faces!"

Jian Shiqing was utterly shocked, dumbfounded as he looked at Jin Luoyin.

Jin Luoyin said, "You probably don't know what kind of mask they are using, do you? Then you must have heard there is a disguise technique in the martial world that can transform a person into another, which is to wear a human-skin mask."

"Human-skin mask?" Jian Shiqing, always more vigilant than others, upon hearing these words, almost guessed what Jin Luoyin was about to say, and what Yue Rujing's words meant.

His face turned pale, and if he hadn't been injected, climbing from the chair to the bed would have been very difficult, he would have probably gone berserk by now.

Jin Luoyin sighed softly, "You should have guessed, Fu Jian, to replace the identity of the owner Zhu, took his face and made it into a human-skin mask. Lun Yu guessed Fu Jian was actually an apprentice taken by his mentor, skilled in making various masks. Using human-skin masks to make disguise is the most complex, cruelest, and also the most realistic type among disguise techniques. Jian Shiqing, no, you should be called Zhu Yiping, your father, the owner Zhu, should have been killed over a decade ago. And over a decade ago, Fu Jian's identity should have been your family's butler. Do you remember that very capable butler?"

She laid the bare truth in front of him, Jian Shiqing's mind buzzed, he couldn't utter a single word.

He tried to stand up from the chair, but after several attempts, apart from the veins popping up on his hands, nothing happened.

"Is... is it him?"

Since childhood, his identity was revoked, he thought it was due to his father's difficulties, he thought his father was a righteous and loyal man, so he always endured.

He remembered saying, no matter if the former protector of the state committed heinous crimes, no matter how many people hated him to the bone, to him, they were all benefactors.

When he stepped into hell with one foot, it was they who pulled him back. The grace of saving life is greater than heaven, letting his son become an adopted son, so that the only bloodline of the Ducal Residence could have a respectable identity.

Fine, without their life-saving grace, his father would have died long ago, and he wouldn't have come to this world.

So he accepted it!

Jian Shiqing sniffed, still remembering his words, a man's loyalty and righteousness do not fear their head touching the ground.

All of them died, because he was reluctant to give up this glamorous identity, sneaking back to his own home to live in disgrace, feeling guilty for half of his life, these are debts he owed, so he secretly set up memorial tablets for them, showing abundant love for Zhu Yiping, letting everyone know he was his only son.

Alright, he also accepted this!

Until he discovered his secret, discovered that the benefactor he wholeheartedly protected was actually the son of his enemy.

Chapter 1784: Trust Him

His kindness to Zhu Yiping, Zhu Yiping always remembered in his heart.

Then, with his own death, he created an unending enmity between Zhu Yiping and Ningwang Residence to achieve his revenge.

These cruel acts of his, even if viewed from his standpoint, he could somehow understand!

Despite a thousand mistakes, at least he always held onto his benefactor's kindness, prioritizing loyalty. Such a father was too cruel to his enemies and equally cruel to him, yet there was still something commendable about it.

Until now…

Someone told him that his father had actually died long ago. The father he revered was actually an enemy who would stop at nothing for his goals.

He treated a thief as his father for fifteen years, with fate playing a huge joke on him!

Once, he mocked Zhu Yiping for treating a thief as his father, laughing at Zhu Yiping for being a pathetic fool.

As it turns out, he was the one most deserving of mockery, and he was also the most pitiful of all.

Zhu Yiping was taken by enemies, treated a thief as his father, yet at least his biological parents never gave up searching for him—they were alive.

But what about him?

He doesn't even know where his father's, no, his father's remains are.

He has died, leaving him a legacy filled with scheming, without a single consideration for him, without a single clue leading him to the truth.

Jian Shiqing looked up at Jin Luoyin; if not for them, he would never have known about his father's tragic death or that he treated a thief as his father.

Perhaps, even until his death, he remained within his calculations.

Indeed, to Ningwang Residence, he was the child of an enemy. After Ningwang or Zhu Yiping's death, following this legacy to deliver that letter containing the truth, neither Zhu Yiping nor Ningwang would spare him—he was doomed.

A father, how could he treat his own son this way?

It turns out he wasn't!

Thank goodness…

Yue Rujing was right, flawless in calculations, yet unable to calculate human hearts!

He held no hatred for Ningwang Residence and couldn't treat them as mortal enemies the way he did!

Jian Shiqing burst into laughter, but after a few laughs, he began to sob; he didn't know whether he should laugh or cry.

Unsure how to vent those emotions fiercely colliding within him.

Standing outside the door with the antidote, Gu Youyou sighed softly, listening to the young man vent.

If there was an innocent victim in this game, it would be the Zhu family father and son.

They were just unrelated passers-by, caught up because their Young Master was the same age as Xuyao, making them convenient identities to replace!

“That butler? That butler, huh…” The person inside vented enough and spoke softly to Jin Luoyin.

Searcy stood behind Gu Youyou, whispering: “Why are you still not going in?”

Gu Youyou looked down at the medicine in her hand.

Searcy said: “I think you shouldn’t go in. Listen to that crazy demeanor; you might as well swap the antidote for a sedative. If he goes mad, with neither the Prince nor Marquess here, the two of us can only stand and stare!”

“I trust him!” Gu Youyou tightly held the medicine and said: “That young man is not foolish. His mind is very clear; it’s just these truths are hard for him to accept right now.”

Searcy paused, then said: “You also trusted your son, and he still ran away, didn’t he?”

Gu Youyou glanced sideways at Searcy; after so many years, she still couldn’t help but want to strangle her.

She tossed the antidote in her hand to Searcy and said, “You take it!”

With that, she departed flamboyantly, while Searcy stared at the antidote in her hand, hesitating whether or not to add something extra?

Chapter 1785: Finding Someone

Jin Xuyao left with the first goal of seeking his master’s help to remove the disguise mask. Only then could he live as himself again, for everyone knew that Zhu Yiping was once engaged to Jin Luoyin, and they were siblings. Such an identity couldn’t be reconciled with Jin Xuyao, as it would tarnish his sister’s reputation.

Secondly, he needed time to digest the recent events. By leaving, he afforded everyone some time to think things over, which was also a means of evasion.

Jin Xuyao didn't know Zhu Haisheng was also his master's disciple, but he knew that his master's disciples had to wear the disguise mask for life; it was a rule.

Even if that mask was exactly the same as one's true appearance.

After wearing the disguise, he looked almost identical to Zhu Haisheng, and only then did he believe it.

Now guessing, he was after all also a disciple of his master, a craftsman of disguise. To prevent the end of his teachings, his master would take two disciples, and he was the second one.

No one could find a disguise master who always wore a mask, unless you let him know you were looking for him and he was willing to reveal himself willingly.

But Jin Xuyao was well aware that this was impossible, so... perhaps his only option was to walk the same path and seek that chance encounter, however unlikely.

Looking at the towering mountain ahead, he untied the harness from his horse, gave it a gentle pat, and let it go.

The mountain road ahead was rugged, and the horse was of no use.

He knew that a certain plant grew on this mountain, its sap could bond the mask seamlessly with the real skin.

That eccentric master, though he forcefully made him wear the mask, still diligently taught him some unknown disguise techniques.

But he only taught him how to disguise, not how to remove the object from his face.

Perhaps it was a deal between him and Fu Jian.

Jin Xuyao composed himself, donned his gloves, and climbed into the dense forest.

...

Lun Yu analyzed the possibility of finding that senior uncle.

"Prince, my senior uncle is even more mysterious than my mother. His Disguise Technique has long reached the point of being indistinguishable from reality; just look at Xuyao and Fu Jian."

"Hmm!" Zijin was worn down by the so-called disguise techniques and wished nothing more than to kill everyone who knew the Disguise Technique.

"Just tell me how we might find him!" Zijin said.

"This, finding him is difficult!" Lun Yu said with a troubled look. "As I've said before, even if he were standing in front of us, we wouldn't recognize him!"

In the tea shed, the small servant who served the tea was scrutinized by the three peculiar eyes, causing him to run off.

Really, business at a roadside tea shed was already hard, having to constantly face people of all kinds.

Just a few days ago, a rough fellow had mistaken him for a young lady and teased him, frightening him into taking three days of sick leave.

Yi Yan took a sip of tea and said, "Prince, there is only one way to find him, and that's to let him know we're looking for him. If he's willing to appear, then it's fine!"

Zijin turned to Yi Yan and asked, "So should we have the emperor issue an edict or something?"

"No, no, no!" Lun Yu hurriedly interjected, "The crucial point is that he must be willing to come out; I need to think about this carefully!"

Zijin: "...We've been searching for several days now, and you're only thinking about this now?"

Lun Yu's mouth twitched, and he smiled, "Prince, we did search before, and surely the senior uncle knows that too. Look, he didn't come out of his own accord, showing he doesn't want to see us. I need to think of a reliable way to lure him out!"

Chapter 1786: Uncle Master Jia Ren

"What is his name and style?" Jin Zijin said, "I think it's better to post a royal decree. Like your mother, those years she ran to Qiuci, if I stupidly searched only in Zhuzhao Country, how would he know you were looking for him?"

Lun Yu: "Ah…? This… this might not be a good idea?"

Yi Yan, however, laughed and said, "I see nothing wrong. Just say… just say we found something related to him among mother's belongings and ask if he still wants it."

"Can we write such things on a royal decree?"

"Why not? Our goal is to find someone!" Yi Yan said.

"Alright, this could work!" But about the name… Lun Yu turned red and said, "Years ago, I heard mother mention it, the master's name is… Jia Ren!"

"Jia Ren?"

Lun Yu used his hand to dip in the tea and wrote on the table: "Jia Ren, look clearly, it's this Jia Ren!"

This name, as it turns out, seems to have no fundamental difference.

…

After a few days, they simply went directly to Beijing, sought the emperor to issue the decree, just as Yi Yan suggested.

Every city, big or small, had to have it posted, especially some border towns, and they even asked merchants to help spread the news to different countries.

Next, all they could do was wait.

“Xuyao left, Ajing went after him, but no news came back!” Gu Youyou was actually very worried, but now everyone knew that the Ningwang Residence was involved in the murder case of Tianhai Mountain Villa, and Gu Youyou and Jin Zijin were pushed to the forefront.

They did not dare to speak openly, fearing the long-standing authority of the Ningwang Residence.

But such is the nature of rumors, if left without explanation, they will only grow more intense and vile.

Jin Zijin said softly, “Let Ajing come back, he is good at disguise, and it’s hard to find him!”

“Then… shall we first announce Fu Jian’s death? Ah, if only we could retrieve Zhu Haisheng’s body!”

“Since he did it, naturally, he destroyed all the evidence, and now the only evidence left is a face! But it doesn’t matter; we stand upright and fearless of rumors!”

Gu Youyou shook her head and said, “We have children, and they will have descendants. I won’t leave them with any undue burden. I will go down the mountain tomorrow to discuss it with Yuancheng and the others!”

As for Jian Shiqing, Gu Youyou decided to release him.

He did not run away again. After learning his true identity, he began investigating the events from fifteen years ago.

This investigation revealed that the old servants of Tianhai Mountain Villa, those who could contact the owner and served in the inner courtyard, were all replaced within two years after the owner was swapped.

The only one not replaced was him, who was four or five years old at the time.

Back then, he was just a child, unable to notice that the father had been replaced.

“The Granny Liu who managed the inner courtyard in those days, I heard she was sent to a villa by the owner to enjoy her retirement, do you know which villa it was?”

Jian Shiqing was asking the current butler of Tianhai Mountain Villa.

The butler, flipping through records, said, “After the former butler left, I came half a year later. When I first arrived, there was no butler in the villa, but the owner saw that I was smart and promoted me to butler. Young Master Jian, sending Granny Liu to one of the estate’s villas for retirement was the owner’s decision, and we don’t know which villa she went to, but I’ll do my best to check if there’s any record of it.”

Chapter 1787: The Elders of Tianhai Mountain Villa

Jian Shiqing watched the butler rummaging through the cabinets searching, he couldn’t sit still either.

He stood up and said, “Let me help you search!”

Granny Liu was Zhu Haisheng’s wet nurse. Because Zhu Haisheng had been frail and sickly since childhood and didn’t have his biological mother around to care for him, Granny Liu was even closer to him than a real mother.

It was a strange matter that she couldn't stay in the villa to retire, but rather was sent off to live out her days like an ordinary servant.

If such an important record existed, it must have been there, but what's even stranger is that they couldn't find it.

Not a trace of Granny Liu leaving the residence was found, nor any records of people leaving Tianhai Mountain Villa.

Some left because of old age, some due to mistakes, and some for other reasons were transferred outside to do business.

In any case, none of the servants who had contact with Zhu Haisheng's inner court could be found; not a single one.

"Stop looking!"

There was only so much in the Accountant's Office, yet after two or three hours of searching they found nothing, suggesting there probably was no record.

The butler was baffled, talking to himself: "That can't be right, how could there not be any? Most prominent families would keep such records."

Jian Shiqing said, "We don't have any."

"How could there be none? Could it be somewhere else?" The butler still refused to give up.

Jian Shiqing gave a bitter smile and said, "No need, we truly don't have any."

The butler was shocked, although Jian Shiqing wasn't the biological child of the owner, everyone called him Young Master Jian, treating him the same as the other two masters of the villa.

Jian Shiqing said mildly, “We don’t have them, because those elders who were reassigned, he simply didn’t want anyone to know their whereabouts. If the matter was light, perhaps they could still be found, if severe, they were most likely silenced.”

The butler turned pale with fright, expressing that Jian Shiqing’s sudden remarks were confusing to him.

He urgently asked, “Young Master Jian, what are you talking about? Who are you referring to? What do you mean by silenced?”

Jian Shiqing looked at the butler calmly, knowing that sooner or later he had to tell them these things. They were merely waiting for that master of disguise to emerge, to find a coordinated time to inform everyone under the sun.

Whether told sooner or later made no difference.

He said, “Sit down, I’ll explain to you slowly.”

“Young Master Jian?”

The butler was naturally aware that something had happened at Tianhai Mountain Villa. Since the owner’s death, the villa had been sealed by imperial guards; they could enter but not leave. Even their daily food provisions were delivered by people from the Prince Residence.

Everyone privately speculated about the Prince causing the owner’s death and was deeply fearful that he might simply wipe out everyone at Tianhai Mountain Villa, silencing them forever.

After all, their Young Master Jian had tried to escape and had been captured and brought back.

The Young Master’s escape, and no one knew when he would be recaptured.

They spent their days in constant fear and worry!

God knows how these innocent servants have been living these past days.

“Young Master Jian!” The butler was on the verge of tears, saying, “Please, give us some assurance, what is the situation now, can we still live? If we can’t, I… I have a wife, children, and elderly parents, could you send a message to them?”

Jian Shiqing didn’t expect that by asking a few questions, he could trigger such a response.

Just as well, he planned to clarify things, to prevent everyone from being too afraid.

“I sought you out because I want to find the elders of Tianhai Mountain Villa, one being Granny Liu, the second being the maids and wet nurses who served the Young Master back then, all of whom have disappeared.”

Chapter 1788: Looking for Someone

The butler said, "They were all sent away by the villa owner. Actually... I also found it a bit strange."

"Indeed!" Jian Shiqing nodded, "It’s right to find it strange because he is not the owner of Tianhai Mountain Villa Zhu Haisheng at all. If I’m not mistaken, he is that butler from back then."

"What?" The butler was momentarily stunned, his face full of disbelief.

Jian Shiqing said, "He took advantage of the owner’s trust, slowly took control of Tianhai Mountain Villa, and replaced him as the owner. The real Zhu Haisheng probably died at his hands long ago.

His true identity is the traitor of the Beiping Army from the rebellion back then and the nemesis that Ningwang Residence had been searching for many years, Fu Jian. His death was even a setup to frame Ningwang. Now, the people in Ningwang Residence staying in the villa are not to prevent everyone from running out but to get to the bottom of everything.

They want to prove Fu Jian’s identity, and I need to prove mine."

The butler was dumbfounded. This convoluted story left him in a daze for quite a while.

After a long time, he said dazedly, "Young Master Jian, what about your identity?"

Jian Shiqing sighed lightly and said, "I've always remembered that I am Young Master Zhu Yiping of Tianhai Mountain Villa, and Fu Jian never denied it. But apart from Fu Jian, no one can prove my identity because those who could prove it back then are no longer around.

Butler, after you arrived at Tianhai Mountain Villa, it was more than a year before they were gradually sent away. Think carefully—can you think of anyone who could still prove my identity?"

The butler pondered for a long time before saying, "Although they were all sent away, we can ask around at the farm."

Jian Shiqing frowned and said, "It's said they were sent to the farm for retirement, but I fear they are not actually there."

"Indeed!" The butler agreed, "Since it was to cover up an identity, those crucial people are likely silenced. But no matter how meticulously done, there's bound to be a mistake. Young Master Jian, if I could go out, I would go ask around at the farms."

Jian Shiqing thought for a moment and said, "Hmm, I'll go with you!"

He believed that since Gu Youyou was willing to give him the medicine, she naturally trusted him as well.

With Gu Youyou's approval, he left the villa with the butler.

Meanwhile, Jin Luoyin, not completely at ease, personally followed them.

"Commandery Princess, are you afraid I'll run away?"

"Ha, run away?" Jin Luoyin laughed, "It’s rare for you to speak so reasonably, but I’m not following you out of fear you’ll run. I just want to help you."

"Help me?" Jian Shiqing was full of surprise.

Jin Luoyin laughed, "Yes, just to thank you for helping me find my brother back then. Even if you accompanied me the whole way and didn’t actually help. But when I first arrived at Tianhai Mountain Villa, had you not captured me back, I wouldn’t have met my brother. So, I still have to thank you!"

"Ha!" Jian Shiqing merely chuckled and then turned and walked toward the farm ahead.

Jin Luoyin kept pace with him and said, "Also, thank you for leaving a note to remind us. Fu Jian’s aim is very clear. You must have known long ago, didn’t you? That’s why you stopped our engagement."

Jian Shiqing paused for a moment but did not deny it.

This was a tea farm, and in this season, it wasn’t the time for picking tea, so the people on the farm were quite leisurely.

The key sent a message first, and upon hearing that Young Master of the villa was coming, everyone was well prepared, bringing out the best items in the farm to welcome him.

Chapter 1789: Inquiring About Granny Liu

Jin Luoyin looked at the endless tea mountain and felt quite good. She smiled and said, "Anyway, no matter what you think, I think it’s thanks to you that we were able to find my brother so quickly. Coincidentally, I feel many things are predestined in a mysterious way, don’t you think?"

Jian Shiqing only felt that Jin Luoyin was particularly chatty today. All the way, she was chirping non-stop, as if her mood had greatly improved.

"When we arrive at the manor later, don’t speak carelessly."

Seeing that they could already see the people from the manor coming out to greet them, Jian Shiqing said to Jin Luoyin in a low voice.

Jin Luoyin asked, "Why?" After thinking, she added, "I won't speak carelessly; I'll just listen."

"That's good!" Jian Shiqing said, "Your identity might scare them. If they ask, just say you are my... personal maid!"

Jin Luoyin: "..."

"It's quite normal for young masters to bring their beloved personal maids to pass the dull journey. This time we are going to many manors, and the young master will be very tired, needing someone to serve him closely."

"..."

This is intolerable!

Jin Luoyin is not a maid.

Jin Luoyin coldly smiled and nodded.

"Young master, you have arrived?"

"Hello, young master!" The people from the villa were very simple and honest, and they seemed very happy to see Jian Shiqing.

"Mm, no need to stand around, let's all go back together!"

They had come out of the manor to welcome him.

"Who is this?" An old lady with a kind face looked at Jin Luoyin and asked.

"Oh, this is my..." Jian Shiqing hastily introduced Jin Luoyin, but Jin Luoyin interrupted, "I am Princess Mingyue from the Ningwang Residence, a friend of your Young Master Jian. I came to have some fun this time, but I came secretly. You know, just don't make it public!"

"Ah? Pri-Princess?" The simple villagers turned pale with fear, their legs going weak.

Jian Shiqing's face turned black, staring at Jin Luoyin who was smiling brightly.

In the end, he could only squeeze out a smile and respectfully said, "Yes, this is Princess Mingyue. Princess Mingyue came to our villa to play. Don't be too nervous, just treat her like an ordinary guest!"

Seeing the famous Princess Mingyue with that gentle smile on her face, everyone gradually calmed down and invited them in first.

They arrived around noon, ate a delicious farm meal, and Jian Shiqing exchanged a glance with the butler, then spoke directly.

The butler took a sip of his drink and said with a faint smile, "It's like this, recently there have been some things happening in the villa, which you probably already know about."

Everyone looked deliberately or inadvertently at Jin Luoyin. There are no impenetrable walls in the world. Although the people of Tianhai Mountain Villa hadn't gone out, those who delivered food or did business with the villa had some contact with them, and the rumors that should and shouldn't have been spread had mostly been circulated.

Jin Luoyin pretended not to see, taking a light sip from her cup.

The butler hurriedly broke the awkwardness and said, "Actually, things might not be as you think. I and Young Master Jian are at the manor to understand some issues, trying to uncover some truths."

Everyone looked at each other, not understanding what he meant.

The butler said, "I heard that the owner's nurse, Granny Liu, was arranged to retire at your manor. Is that true?"

Chapter 1790: Dead

A middle-aged man in charge of the estate replied, "Granny Liu came to our estate fifteen years ago when my father was still alive. My father was the person responsible for this estate. But after Granny Liu came here, she died within a few years!"

"Died, how did she die?" the butler asked urgently. "I remember Granny Liu, though old, was in robust health!"

Jian Shiqing's expression gradually darkened.

Once a person is dead, what significance is there in finding the cause of death?

He stood up, walked to the door, and gazed at the tea hills outside.

The middle-aged man glanced at Jian Shiqing and said in a low voice, "Granny Liu was indeed in good health and could help us with the tea-picking. But in her third year at the estate, she accidentally fell from the mountain while picking tea. My father was there at the time and seemed to have tried to pull her up – both ended up tumbling down the mountain and died!"

"Your father and Granny Liu met with misfortune together?" The butler was quite astonished.

Meanwhile, Jian Shiqing turned his head slightly and said, "Let's go to the next one!"

Granny Liu had undoubtedly been murdered, so we must see if others met the same coincidental fate, all dead.

The butler wanted to say something more but saw Jian Shiqing's somber face and finally said nothing, merely bidding farewell to the people at the estate.

"Young Master Jian is still busy with other estates, so we'll be leaving first."

"Alright, alright, Young Master Jian is busy!" The people at the estate noticed that Jian Shiqing and the Commandery Princess were following it, realizing that things might not be as simple as they imagined.

But they were just servants living a simple life at the estate. These matters of the masters, they could only answer what was asked, couldn't say more, nor dared to.

They visited several estates, all places arranged for those who had served Tianhai Mountain Villa well to retire, yet found no one, as everyone who arrived at the estates mysteriously died within a few years.

Jin Luoyin said, "Obviously, they were all silenced. The secret of Tianhai Mountain Villa's owner being replaced was meant to be taken to the grave."

Veins throbbed on Jian Shiqing's forehead as he coldly said, "No matter how powerful a person is, how can they calculate what happens after death? I will make him suffer utter obliteration; he cannot dream of entering his grave in peace!"

Seeing this situation, the butler fully believed Jian Shiqing's words.

How could such coincidences happen in the world? Fifteen years ago, all Zhu Haisheng's most trusted people were dismissed under various reasons, and those deemed blameless were sent to retire at the estates, all dying inexplicably.

The causes of death were varied, making people secretly gasp!

"Let's go, to the next estate!" the butler sighed softly after a long moment.

The next estate, upon inquiry, revealed that the retirees placed there included a person of similar status to Granny Liu, Zhu Haisheng's former book boy, who grew up with him as if they were real brothers.

Even outsiders knew that the book boy was almost a master of Tianhai Mountain Villa and should not be neglected.

In the future, his prospects were promising.

With such a position in the villa, he could easily become an accountant at the Accountant's Office; doing well, he might become a tutor to the young masters or even be entrusted with some business, becoming a wealthy and influential gentleman.

Yet, after Zhu Haisheng was murdered, he too was sent to the estate for retirement.

"Where has Master Chen gone?" When they arrived at the estate, they still couldn't find Master Chen.

The butler felt uneasy, sensing that the situation was similar to the previous estates.