Farmhouse 1791

Chapter 1791: Jia Ren Has Been Found

But those people are all dead, and this person is likely the same. Even knowing the outcome, they still couldn't help but ask.

An old man in charge at the villa squinted his eyes in recollection and said, "After Teacher Chen arrived, he even taught my grandson to read. Our whole family was quite pleased, and we were even discussing wedding my youngest daughter to him. But unexpectedly, he stayed for less than two months before leaving, saying someone invited him elsewhere to teach."

Wasn't he mysteriously killed?

The three were astonished, having searched through so many villas, they finally heard some good news.

"Where did he go to teach?" Jin Luoyin asked urgently.

The old man shook his head and said, "I don't know, Teacher Chen left very hurriedly and suddenly, before dawn."

The three exchanged a glance, arriving at a conclusion.

It must be that Teacher Chen discovered something, so he fled overnight.

Yet, there's also a possibility that he was deceived to leave, and then met with foul play.

In any case, if Teacher Chen was clever enough, there could be a possibility that he's alive.

The three agreed to go back first, focusing on investigating Teacher Chen's whereabouts.

Jian Shiqing instructed the butler, “You go investigate where he’s originally from and the reason he came to Tianhai Mountain Villa!”

“Yes, Young Master Jian!”

…

In a treehouse deep in the mountains that resembled a bird’s nest, stood an elderly man whose face could not be clearly seen.

Jin Xuyao stood under the tree, staring at the old man above, and said in a low voice, “So you’ve run up to the tree. Don’t tell me all these years when you were gone, you lived in a tree.”

The old man glanced at the forest and pointed to his treehouse saying, “How could I? Have you ever seen a bird’s nest used for years? I’m a migratory bird, planning to migrate south after a few days.”

Having imagined countless times what kind of person this quirky master was, Jin Xuyao never expected to see him in this form.

He was silent for a moment and said, “You usually migrate like a bird continuously through the mountains and forests?”

“What else?” the old man smiled back with a question, then raised his arm and added, “Look at my clothing, doesn’t it look like wings?”

Jin Xuyao’s mouth twitched, “You’re named Jia Ren, why not simply name yourself Birdman?”

“Oh, my dad’s surname is Jia, not Bird!”

“…”

The old man jumped down from the tree, nimble and agile.

Standing in front of Jin Xuyao, he looked him up and down, then suddenly asked with a smile, “I didn’t expect anyone in the world could find me. How did you find me?”

Jin Xuyao pointed to the opposite cliff where there was a cluster of fiery red flowers, and he said, “The things over there are about to ripen, and this spot is ideal for observation! Aside from you, no medicine gatherer would live in the deep forest for a single herb. I remember you said before, to get a single herb, you could set up a tent next to that herb and live for a year.”

Jia Ren paused for a moment, then burst into laughter.

He said, “Since you’ve found me, does it mean your senior brother is already dead?”

Jin Xuyao’s face turned somber, his voice carrying some hoarseness, “You knew? You’ve known all along?”

Jia Ren did not deny, softly nodding.

“Yes, I know.”

Looking at Jin Xuyao, he used his dirty sleeve to wipe the moss-covered stone beside him, sat down, and spoke in a low voice, “Fu Jian was my eldest disciple. He initially found me because an accident had ruined his face. He heard that advanced disguise techniques could make the fake seem real, so he sought me out, hoping for a way to restore his appearance.

Later, when I saw his talent was good, I accepted him as a disciple. After he learned the Disguise Technique, he became less obsessed with his disfigured appearance, because I allowed him to choose between showing his true face to the world or wearing a mask since his face was ruined.

As Fu Jian, sometimes he wore a mask, and other times he revealed his disfigured true face. After becoming Zhu Haisheng, Fu Jian wore Zhu Haisheng’s face. I always knew about his plan for revenge!”

Jia Ren looked at Jin Xuyao, spread his hands, and said, “I am a man of the martial world, the grievances of the Imperial Court have nothing to do with me, so don’t glare at me like that. You are also my disciple. If you had asked for my help, I would have helped you too.”

Jin Xuyao glared at him and gritted his teeth, saying, “So, did you accept me as a disciple because of what he said? Is that why you betrayed me like this?”

“Of course not!” Jia Ren replied, “I accepted you as my disciple because I saw we had a teacher-student connection. I’m getting old, and my school has a rule that each master must accept two craftsmen in their lifetime. I got used to being a loner, and after taking Fu Jian as a disciple early on, I hadn’t had the chance to take another.

When I saw you, I felt it was an opportunity, that my second disciple had arrived, so I accepted you as my disciple.”

“Then why did you harm me?”

Jia Ren sighed and said, “This matter starts with Fu Jian. In truth, his skills were not refined. The first time he made a false face for you, the second time it was completely wrong, unnatural, and obviously fake. Later, he had to come to me for help.

I agreed to help, but I had one condition. As I mentioned before, when I first saw you, I felt a teacher-student connection. My condition was that you must also become my disciple. The tradition we live by is that each person must take on two disciples, understand?”

Ha, understand?

In fact, you were just filling a quota. This strange man was like a migrating bird who lived alone in the mountains and forests.

Yet everyone had always thought he changed faces frequently, hiding among the crowd.

“You were young then, you would grow up, and I had to change your face once a year, otherwise others would notice. However, altering the appearance through face-changing is noticeably different from the natural change from growing up. To avoid being recognized, Fu Jian would not let you interact much with others, or leave the villa for this reason, for fear of exposure.”

Jin Xuyao’s face turned pale, he had been moved for so many years, always thinking that it was because he escaped the villa that year to play, was caught by bad people, and that his father was frightened to the point of falling ill for a long time.

He wasn’t let outside the villa because of concern that the only son would come out.

He thought it was a morbid love for his only relative, but it was merely a trap.

Of course, it was a fake, his own face was fake, so where would real affection come from?

Jin Xuyao gave a bitter laugh, nodded with a hint of despair, and said, “So you all conspired to calculate against me like this?”

Jia Ren perhaps knew he was in the wrong and did not argue.

Jin Xuyao asked again, “You didn’t teach me how to take off this face, was that also because of Fu Jian?”

Jia Ren lightly nodded and said, “Yes, I promised him I would keep this secret. But I only gave him twenty years. If within twenty years he hasn’t accomplished what he set out to do, I will teach you. After all, these skills cannot be lost, right?”

Ha ha…

What else could he say?

Chapter 1793: Take Off the False Face

“Twenty years, you came when I was five, right?”

Jia Ren did not deny it, he nodded gently.

“Then there are still five years left, but now Fu Jian is already dead!” Jin Xuyao said slowly.

Jia Ren hesitated for a moment, sighed, and said, “I knew when you came that he was already dead. I know what he was doing. Though he wasn’t a good person, he was loyal and grateful to the family that saved him.”

Jin Xuyao pursed his lips without saying a word, as he no longer wished to judge Fu Jian’s character. After a while, he finally said, “I want to go home, but I can’t go back with this face. You need to take it off.”

Jia Ren was silent for a moment, neither agreeing nor refusing.

A moment later, he looked at the cliff opposite and said, “Wait until it’s ready.”

Jin Xuyao said nothing either, he flew to the tree house on the tree.

Only then did he realize that although the tree house appeared shabby from the outside, it was tidied up quite clean inside.

On one of the walls hung various masks.

Some human, surprisingly some animal ones too.

Monkey, porcupine?

He twitched the corner of his mouth and thought to himself, “What kind of pervert is this? Creating all these fake faces.”

…

Jian Shiqing and Jin Luoyin returned to the Tianhai Mountain Villa, where she shared what she had discovered over these days with Gu Youyou and Jin Zijin, hoping they could step in to help.

After searching for her brother for so many years, her father's subordinates' tracking skills were already quite strong.

The brother was hard to find, but others weren't as difficult.

Everyone mobilized with full force, plus after the butler questioned the servants for additional evidence, within half a month, they found the bookboy from back then.

Due to Zhu Haisheng's weak childhood body, he started studying relatively late, and his bookboy was a few years younger than him. Now, he's still relatively young.

He did not return to his hometown, but lived incognito not far from his hometown, married, and fathered children. His eldest son is already ten years old, and he is a local teacher.

"Chen Teacher?" Jian Shiqing asked in a low voice, "Do you still remember me?"

Chen Teacher left not long after the incident. In his impression, the Young Master was naturally someone like Jian Shiqing, not Jin Xuyao.

He looked and asked, "Are you the Young Master?"

Vaguely remembered some similar outlines.

Fu Jian and his son still resembled the original Zhu Haisheng somewhat, Fu Jian was afraid of being recognized as a fake, while Zhu Haisheng genuinely feared for his son's safety.

He himself almost lost his heritage, so naturally, he spoiled Zhu Yiping dearly during his childhood. Except for close servants, the servants in the outer yard never saw what the little Young Master looked like.

And it was precisely for this reason that people exploited the situation.

However, Chen Teacher was different; he was someone very close and trusted by Zhu Haisheng, naturally often seeing the young Zhu Yiping.

“Do you remember me?” Jian Shiqing finally managed to display a faint smile.

They say even the most meticulous plan has a flaw, who can ensure no oversight?

So many servants, yet finding one living person.

Chen Teacher nodded and said, “Of course I remember, you resemble Cui Niang greatly!”

The Cui Niang he mentioned was the tool for procreation arranged for Zhu Haisheng by the old owner.

Having a child wasn’t an overnight matter. Cui Niang lived at the Tianhai Mountain Villa for two years before giving birth, and only after the child was weaned was she sent away.

Jian Shiqing’s eyes trembled slightly. She opened her mouth and asked, “Then… may I ask Chen Teacher, do you know where my mother was sent?”

Chapter 1794: A Living Witness

Mr. Chen shook his head and said, “I don’t know, even the owner doesn’t know. It’s forbidden. You should be aware of the rules of Tianhai Mountain Villa. But don’t worry, since Cuiniang bore the Young Master, she will have no worries about food and clothing for the rest of her life.”

Even if there is no worry for food and clothing, one still has to endure the pain of family separation.

Jian Shiqing had known about this rule since childhood. Although he missed the mother he had never met, he didn't dwell too much on it.

He took a deep breath and asked, "Mr. Chen, could you tell me what exactly happened back then, why were you all sent away?"

Recalling the events of that year, there were still many things Mr. Chen couldn't figure out.

After thinking for a while, he said, "That year, the butler Qu suddenly said he wanted to leave, and the owner became restless and didn't want to let him go. But in the end, the butler Qu left, without saying goodbye.

After he left, I clearly noticed changes in the owner. That year, the owner, who rarely left the villa, went away alone for half a month. We searched everywhere, and he returned on his own after half a month. Less than ten days after his return, he sent away Granny Liu, whom he regarded as a mother. He said she was old and chose a quiet place for her to retire.

But before that, everyone thought Granny Liu would stay in the villa for her retirement. However, it was the owner's decision, and we couldn't say much. When Granny Liu left, she was actually quite uneasy. She knew the owner best and was the first to notice his changes."

Pausing for a moment, Mr. Chen continued, "I never expected the owner to be a fake, let alone that the real owner had long ago… been murdered."

On his way here, when he heard others telling him about the events at Tianhai Mountain Villa, he still couldn't accept it.

Jin Luoyin then asked, "So how did you come to think of secretly leaving the villa?"

This question made Mr. Chen blush, and he said, "We all knew something was wrong with the owner because during that time, he sent away everyone close to him. But I never suspected the owner had been replaced, only thinking he changed drastically because the trusted butler Qu left, causing him emotional distress.

My leaving had nothing to do with the owner; it was because the steward of the villa had a daughter they fancied for me, and I didn't want it. Living with such a family would have been inevitably awkward!"

Was this the reason? Everyone gasped. The girl who fancied Mr. Chen inadvertently saved his life.

"Back then, I was young and rash, acting on impulse. After everyone was sent to the villa, they didn't leave. They thought the same as me, believing the owner was just in a momentary lapse and would call everyone back once he regained his senses. Meanwhile, I had an advantage over them because I was literate and had read many books. I even considered myself knowledgeable!"

As Mr. Chen spoke, he blushed unconsciously, "I thought since he drove me away, I would become the Top Scholar and return to make him regret it. But after leaving, I realized I wasn't destined to be a Top Scholar, at most just a teacher. I was stewing over this but too embarrassed to return, so I've been living under an alias all these years, becoming a son-in-law and inheriting my father-in-law's school, becoming a teacher."

He was indeed lucky, otherwise, his fate might have been like the others who were silenced.

Chapter 1795: Descending the Mountain

Jian Shiqing was silent for a long time, then said in a low voice, "Mr. Chen, you know the situation now. Besides proving that the person lying in the coffin is a fake, there is another thing you need to prove."

"What is it?" Mr. Chen asked in surprise.

Jian Shiqing said, "Not only was my father murdered and his identity swapped, but even I have been… The Young Master everyone speaks of is not actually me. After Fu Jian turned into my father, he brought back a child and had that child take my place. I am now Jian Shaoye of Tianhai Mountain Villa, the adopted son of Zhu Haisheng."

"Ah…?" Mr. Chen looked utterly shocked, and after a moment, he became furious, "Absurd, truly absurd. Who is the fake? Is it the one with the surname Qu from back then?"

“That’s not his real identity either!” Jin Luoyin sighed, “The person you met is not his true face. Everything will only be known once that Master of Disguise is found.”

…

Jia Ren had finally collected the herbs he had waited months for, feeling immensely happy.

Today, he changed into clean clothes, tidied up his hair, and changed his facial disguise.

He smiled at Jin Xuyao and said, “I can help you remove the fake face, but the condition is that you must graduate. Before you graduate, whether or not you wear the fake face is up to me. After you graduate, whether or not you wear it is none of my business.”

“Are you going back on your word?” Jin Xuyao was almost out of patience.

“Don’t forget, you forced it on me, and acknowledging you as my master was not my voluntary choice!”

“I don’t care!” Jia Ren shook his head, humming an off-key tune while packing his things, “Come down the mountain with me first. Learn as much as you can in these days. If you want to take it off soon, it depends on your ability!”

Jin Xuyao: “…”

For more than a month, the two had been in the mountains. When they came down, they finally saw the imperial notice in the market.

“Jia Ren? Who is Jia Ren?”

“Your junior sister Lun Tong left some belongings for you before her death. Upon seeing the imperial notice, please proceed quickly to Tianhai Mountain Villa to retrieve them?”

This was the most peculiar part of the imperial notice that everyone had seen.

Was it a search notice?

Upon seeing the notice, Jin Xuyao already knew who had written it.

They used this tactic to lure Jia Ren out.

Jin Xuyao looked at the old man beside him, only to find him staring at the imperial notice in a trance. The skin on his face was fake, but his gaze… startled Jin Xuyao.

“Master, what’s wrong with you?”

Words couldn’t describe the expression in his eyes—shocked, terrified, and in disbelief, he shook his head.

Then Jia Ren pushed through the crowd on the street and ran away.

Jin Xuyao had a hard time finding him, and if he let him escape again, it would be difficult to find him once more.

He hurriedly chased after him!

Jia Ren ran without direction, exiting the small town at the mountain’s base, and Jin Xuyao chased him out of the town.

From dawn till dusk, and then from dusk till dawn again!

The two of them were like madmen, one fleeing, the other chasing.

Jia Ren, being old, was one of the few old eccentrics left in the world.

With age, his body was not what it used to be.

By the riverbank, exhausted and out of strength, he plunged his head into the river, gulping down water.

Jin Xuyao, panting heavily, crouched by the stream, gently cupping water to take a sip, then quickly pulled up the old man who was gulping water.

“Why are you running? Are you afraid of the imperial notice, or are you afraid of your junior sister?”

Jia Ren kept choking on water, unable to speak.

Chapter 1796: Appearance

Jin Xuyao said again, "Posting the royal proclamation is to find you. If you don’t appear, they can’t do anything about you. Who in this world can find you, right? As for fearing your junior sister, you have no reason to fear her. I know her; she was Lun Yu’s mother and has been dead for several years."

"Dead for several years?" Jia Ren suddenly sobered up and urgently asked, "Who is Lun Yu?"

Seeing Jia Ren regain his clarity, Jin Xuyao breathed a sigh of relief and slowly said, "Lun Yu is Lun Tong’s son, and he’s also one of Lun Tong’s disciples. They have always been looking for you and are greatly impressed by your disguise technique."

Jin Xuyao also took the opportunity to compliment Jia Ren a bit.

But the more Jia Ren listened, the more alarmed he became, his eyes almost popping out.

"My junior sister’s son?" he muttered softly, then asked, "And her other disciple?"

"The other disciple is Lun Yu's wife. Although their family is mysterious, they're very familiar with the Ningwang Residence! The reason they are using the royal proclamation to find you this time is something you should have guessed."

The old man fell silent as if he were dumbfounded, and after a long time, he finally said in a low voice, "Fate truly plays tricks, let's go, I will accompany you to Tianhai Mountain Villa!"

...

When Lun Yu and Yi Yan were young, they liked to disguise themselves as the opposite gender. Lun Yu preferred dressing up as a woman, while Yi Yan truly seemed like a man.

Now they are no longer young and have left behind those peculiar hobbies of their youth. It seems their obsession with the disguise technique has waned as well, as they mostly show their real faces. To those who aren't particularly close or familiar, they're regarded merely as people from the Ningwang Residence rather than having any other identities in the martial arts world.

This is Jia Ren's first time seeing Lun Tong's son and daughter-in-law, her two disciples.

There are some similarities to the silhouette he remembered, especially those slightly upturned eyes.

With just one glance, he realized... he truly is Lun Tong's son.

That aged hand unconsciously lifted, reaching toward that face.

"Uncle... Master?" Lun Yu was startled, awkwardly shifting his position, causing Jia Ren's hand to grasp nothing but air, his outstretched hand hovering in midair.

"Yes!" Jia Ren softly acknowledged, saying, "I hear you are... my junior sister's son and also her disciple!"

"Yes, Master!" Lun Yu's smile was slightly stiff.

Jia Ren nodded lightly and continued, "Did she leave any relics for me?" At the same time, he extended his hand.

In truth, this was simply an excuse they used to lure Jia Ren out; there were no actual relics.

But they urgently needed his help with something, yet dared not reveal everything directly. Lun Yu, with no other choice, said, "Master, retrieving my mother's relics requires time. But we didn't expect you to arrive so quickly, so the relics were not brought along. How about... how about we do this? You can rest for a few days here at Tianhai Mountain Villa, and we will immediately go fetch my mother's relics. What do you think?"

Having lived for several decades, Jia Ren had seen countless real and false faces, how could he not perceive the subtle expressions on Lun Yu's face?

He paused for an instant, then sighed softly, "You look exactly like your mother did back then when telling lies!"

Uh...

"Ah...?"

Everyone in the room was taken aback.

Jia Ren waved his hand and said, "Forget it, on my way here, my disciple had already told me. Seems she didn't leave any relics for me; you just wanted to lure me out."

Everyone: "..."

"Let's go, to see Fu Jian!"

Chapter 1797: Meeting Without Recognition

Seeing the uncorrupted corpse, Jia Ren's eyes lit up, as if something had opened the door to a new era for him.

He circled the corpse a few times, clicking his tongue, "Good, good stuff, being able to preserve real skin from decay and keep it so lifelike, there's no other method than Fu Jian's. But his method does a lot of damage to himself. Disguise is not meant to ruin one's looks; I don't approve of his approach, but with something like yours... it keeps those real skin masks well preserved!"

Jia Ren's words made everyone feel queasy, and Gu Youyou hurriedly explained, "Sir, although this can be used to preserve corpses, it cannot be used on the living!"

"Why not?"

Gu Youyou said, "This liquid is actually a highly toxic poison, the living cannot use it."

If he used this thing to keep a fake face fresh, mostly consisting of human skin masks, wouldn't that be creepy?

"It's poisonous?" Jia Ren was curious to touch the water but withdrew his hand.

He regrettably said, "If that's the case, then forget it. Like I said earlier, disguise is not to ruin one's face. If the face changes but the person dies, it naturally loses meaning. Forget it, you first recover him, I'll go prepare something, and tomorrow I'll begin to remove his disguise."

...

"Xuyao?" Looking at that familiar yet strange face, when no one else was around, Gu Youyou couldn't help but call out.

Jin Xuyao turned his face, behind him, there was a Bamboo Sea with waves undulating under the gentle breeze.

Jin Xuyao swallowed and called out, "Princess!"

Gu Youyou held back tears about to fall, stepped forward excitedly, extending her hand to touch that unreal face.

He turned his head again, facing the Bamboo Sea.

"This is fake!" he said with a slightly trembling voice.

"I know!" Gu Youyou covered her mouth, suppressing her sobs.

Countless times in her dreams, she imagined what her son would look like when he grew up, but she never thought, their reunion would be strangers facing each other, not just to her, even he had never seen what he looked like.

"Wearing this face, I'm ashamed to meet you!" Jin Xuyao spoke softly to the Bamboo Sea, his voice so low only he could hear it, easily blown away by a gust of wind.

He was just talking to himself, not intending for Gu Youyou to hear.

But what he didn't know was, Gu Youyou's hearing was sharper than most, just because others couldn't hear, didn't mean she couldn't.

Hearing these words, she couldn't hold it anymore, tears burst from her eyes.

So his avoidance was because of this face?

Jin Zijin said he went to find Jia Ren, all because of this face.

A face, dividing them into people from two worlds.

Gu Youyou quickly wiped away her tears, took a breath, and hid all her sorrowful emotions, softly saying, "I'm leaving, you take a walk around this mountainside, it's good to catch some wind, the scenery here is nice."

She didn't know what else to say, reality always differed from imagined scenarios. The numerous ways she anticipated their meeting, none were as awkward and heart-wrenching as this reality.

Clearly, he was standing right there, clearly everyone knew each other's identities, yet he couldn't call her mother, she just wanted to touch him like when he was little, but couldn't extend her hand.

Chapter 1798: I Was Just Catching a Bamboo Rat

When descending from the back mountain, she happened to run into Jin Zijin, who was looking for her.

Seeing her red eyes, he knew what she had been doing.

Earlier, they had stayed behind to exhume Fu Jian's body, and saw Gu Youyou turn around and follow Jin Xuyao out.

He glanced at the back mountain and asked in a low voice, "Did you see him?"

"Yes!" Gu Youyou nodded gently and said, "He didn't want me to see him; he said his face is fake."

"I know, after all, we've been searching for so many years, there's no rush. Let's give him some time to adapt. Let's go back for now."

Gu Youyou thought the same, but seeing the sky was getting late, she worried about him alone on the back mountain, in the cold wind.

She remembered when he was still Zhu Yiping, Jin Luoyin once said, the Young Master of Tianhai Mountain Villa, Zhu Yiping, was particularly lonely, and he was also afraid of loneliness.

He would sit alone in a tree, counting the leaves, watching the ants relocate at the corner of the wall, or from dusk, watch the sunset until the sky in the west turned completely dark.

So is he at this moment, alone on the back mountain, watching the sunset until no color is visible in the sky?

The thought made her heart ache.

Gu Youyou followed Jin Zijin down the mountain but suddenly stopped. She turned and said, “Why don’t you go back first? I’ll go call him… call him back to have dinner first!”

The only thing that could make a shrewd mother panic, become clumsy, hesitant and uneasy, so changeable, was her own children.

Even though she planned to give him some time, she suddenly regretted it the next second.

Jin Zijin was taken aback for a moment, but Gu Youyou just smiled bitterly.

“Forget it, let’s go back and let Luoyin go.”

…

The sky gradually darkened, and Jin Luoyin went to the back mountain to find Jin Xuyao.

But when she got to the place Gu Youyou mentioned, there was no sign of him.

Anxious, she wandered around the back mountain for a while, calling his name loudly.

“Zhu Yiping, Brother Zhu, Brother… Brother…”

There's only one path from the back mountain to the foot of the mountain, and she was sure Jin Xuyao hadn't returned.

Yet, without seeing Jin Xuyao anywhere in the back mountain, considering his previous escape, she was terrified, her face turning pale.

"Brother, Brother, where are you? Don't scare me, we finally found you!"

No one answered, and Jin Luoyin grew increasingly frightened.

After a while, the rustling in the Bamboo Sea seemed a bit unusual, as if it was moving by itself, not the soft breeze stirring the green bamboo waves.

As she looked closer, she couldn't care about anything else and quickly ran into the forest.

"Brother, is that you? If it is, come out, don't hide and make us unable to find you…"

Jin Xuyao held a fat bamboo rat in his hand.

He paused, looking at his pale-faced sister.

"I'm here!" he said calmly.

"Why didn't you go down the mountain? What are you doing here?" Jin Luoyin complained.

Jin Xuyao said, "My face mustn't be seen by them. Although Jin Xuyao hasn't returned, the former Zhu Yiping is already dead."

Looking down at his sister, he lifted the bamboo rat to show her, and with a smile said, "I was just hungry and caught a bamboo rat."

Jin Luoyin, with tears at the corners of her eyes, was relieved to see him still able to smile.

She patted her chest and said, “Look, I was so worried I cried.”

Jin Xuyao laughed and said, “I see that!”

“If you’re hungry, you can come down the mountain for dinner. Mom told me to call you down for dinner!”

Chapter 1799

Jin Xuyao shook his head and smiled, saying, “I won’t have a meal. It’s been a long time since I had bamboo rat. I’m having bamboo rat tonight, would you like to join me?”

Jin Luoyin had never eaten such a thing before, and pointed at it curiously, “This… can really be eaten?”

“Of course, when it’s roasted, it’s quite delicious,” Jin Xuyao said.

Jin Luoyin beamed with joy. Little girls are easy to cheer up; they cry hard, and they laugh just as quickly.

Jin Xuyao saw that the bamboo rat was cleaned and started roasting it over the fire.

As he turned it over, he laughed, “I can’t go down the mountain, so I go up the mountain. Every year at this season, the bamboo rats in this Bamboo Sea are the fattest. I catch one or two, roast them up and eat them. At first, what I roasted wasn’t good, some were charred, some were undercooked. After a few tries, my skills improved. Try it!”

He sprinkled some seasoning on the bamboo rat before giving it to Jin Luoyin.

Jin Luoyin watched him pull out bottles and jars as if performing a magic trick, and laughed, “Did you already plan on eating bamboo rat tonight?”

“Yes, that’s why I prepared all these things in advance,” Jin Xuyao responded cheerfully.

Jin Luoyin happily accepted it. This was the first time in her life she was eating something made by her brother.

She chewed carefully, offering a fair critique, “The taste is not bad, but compared to what mother makes, it falls short. Brother, you still have to work hard.”

Jin Xuyao smiled warmly, softly sighing, “If only we had grown up together… the game in the hills behind Plum Blossom Valley is so plentiful!”

There was no need to say more; both understood.

They missed the most beautiful time of growing up together, a deep regret in their lives.

If they could have grown together, Jin Xuyao’s lonely childhood wouldn’t be so empty.

In Jin Luoyin’s childhood memories, she wouldn’t have been so often apart from her father.

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She recalled how, as a child, the thing she did most was stand at the entrance of Plum Blossom Valley, watching her father leave, then waiting for him to return.

How she wished that, on one of those returns, there could be someone else with him.

But until now…

She looked at Jin Xuyao, who was lowering his head to eat meat, and smiled softly, also beginning to eat seriously.

No matter how the past was, at least now they were sitting together.

The prey her brother didn't bring her in childhood, he now made up for, fulfilling that childhood regret.

…

Jia Ren spent a whole night preparing the potion and getting the tools ready.

Looking at the corpse, which was starting to change color after being exposed overnight, he showed little emotion, only sighed lightly, saying, "Why did you even bother?"

After speaking, he looked up at Jin Xuyao and said, "You stay, everyone else, leave!"

No one said much, understanding this was a personal craft.

Outside this house, many people stood waiting, all the servants of Tianhai Mountain Villa.

Everyone had been living in anxiety for months, all waiting for a result.

This morning, the butler had gathered everyone, saying that today, the result would be announced to all.

The butler whispered to Jian Shiqing, "Everything is ready, Young Master. Once Fu Jian's identity is confirmed, you can rightfully reclaim your place."

Jian Shiqing pressed his lips together without speaking, simply nodding lightly.

Master Chen sighed, “Who would’ve thought, so much happened at the villa while we were away? The owner’s remains… we have no idea where they are. Ah, had we known it would come to this, we…”

Chapter 1800: Taught Only Once

Facing Mr. Chen’s face filled with guilt, Jian Shiqing hurriedly said, "Fu Jian has been plotting for years; how could ordinary people know what he wanted to do? My father’s remains... Forget it, it’s been so many years. Now that Fu Jian is dead, there’s no need to dwell on those remains."

The butler said, "Yes, the great revenge has been taken. Once the Young Master’s identity is restored, we can build a cenotaph for the owner so his soul can have a place to rest!"

After a while, Jin Luoyin came out of the house and softly said to Jian Shiqing, "Jia Ren said he could have it done in an hour; he said you can start here."

Jian Shiqing nodded gently at him and then led the butler and Mr. Chen towards the center of the crowd.

Inside the house, though Jia Ren was elderly, he was extremely skilled, his movements flowing like water.

"Watch carefully; Master will only teach you this once."

Jin Xuyao touched his own face and said, "Mine is different from his; his is real human skin, mine is fake."

Jia Ren said, "So his will be more complex to remove. You only need to learn the first three steps."

Preparing the medicine, the quantity for each type is fixed.

No more, no less; otherwise, it would harm the original skin, or even cause poisoning.

The second step is to warm the medicine; the prepared medicine is heated, and similarly, it can’t be more or less.

Less wouldn’t melt the adhesive on the fake face, making it impossible to remove.

More would burn the original skin.

"Master? Why don’t you just prepare more and help me take it off?" Jin Xuyao suggested nervously, watching Jia Ren’s actions.

Jia Ren, however, chuckled and said, "I said before, I won’t help you take it off. If you have the ability, do it yourself."

"But you were the one who put it on me, I didn’t agree to this."

Jia Ren shrugged, then burst into laughter, leaving the other fuming with anger.

"Instead of arguing with me about choice or consent, you better watch closely. I’ve also said, I’ll only teach once."

Jin Xuyao: "..."

Jia Ren placed the medicine into an iron-like container, wrapped in a regular gauze, and lightly pressed it onto Fu Jian’s face.

As the solution cooled, he removed it, reheated it, and continued pressing until he saw the skin on Fu Jian’s face turning pale, then he stopped.

Jia Ren said to Jin Xuyao, "Yours is simpler. At this point, just gently peel off the fake face. His is more complicated; this human skin has fused with his face, and since he’s been dead for so long, this face is likely ruined as well."

As he spoke, he smiled bitterly and said, "That face of his was ruined to begin with, otherwise he wouldn’t have become my apprentice."

He shook his head and sighed, "Fu Jian was quite a smart child in his youth, but unfortunately, his ambitions were not in this craft. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have needed me to help change his face."

Jin Xuyao listened silently to the old man’s rambling, but his eyes were fixed on the movements of his hands.

This craft is actually very rare. He’s grown old and, according to the rules, wouldn’t take on another apprentice.

His other apprentice is already dead; Jin Xuyao is his only disciple. Teaching him well also ensures the craft isn’t lost.

Jin Xuyao said, "I will pass it on; you don’t have to worry."

Jia Ren was stunned for a moment, then laughed heartily, tears streaming from his eyes as he laughed.

"Good, it won’t be lost, it won’t be lost!!"