Farmhouse 1351

Chapter 1351: Winning People's Hearts

Originally, they had already prepared for the possibility of being chased away by ten families, hoping at least one would take them in. However, if the Empress Dowager acknowledged them, they only needed to mention the case of treating her illness…

Uh, of course, there was still a chance of being chased away, but surely it wouldn't be as embarrassing as being swept out with a broom, right?

"Master, the Empress Dowager's illness is cured. The Emperor plans to announce to the world that he accepted the treatment from the Crown Princess of Zhuzhao Country. Although the purpose is to foster good relations between the two countries and give an account to the people, it also indirectly shows that doctors are not inferior to witch doctors."

"The Emperor wants to announce it to the world?"

One good news followed another, and Gu Youyou felt that happiness came too suddenly.

Last night, she felt that in Nanzhao, witch doctors were favored and that being a doctor was as difficult as ascending the heavens.

Who would have thought that after just one night, there would be such a dramatic twist?

No matter how the people might react, the Emperor of Nanzhao had essentially paved the way for them; the rest depended on their own performance.

"Yes, Master, I will go with you today. Where are you going?" Jin Liuying expressed with some excitement. She was at the age of loving fun and seeing Gu Youyou and Searcy each carrying a medicine box, she naturally assumed there was something fun.

Gu Youyou smiled, revealing her white teeth, showing how happy she was.

She said, “Alright, you come with us. Even if others don’t give us face, as the wife of the Fifteenth Prince, you must have some influence, right?”

Searcy stuffed a basket into Jin Liuying’s arms, saying, “Since the Princess wants to go, then help me carry this. I still need to carry the medicine box.”

Everyone was happy and didn’t mind much, so they each carried a basket and set off.

In Nanzhao Country, it was common to see women dressed in vibrant colors, carrying baskets on their backs, laughing and chatting, forming a unique scenery amid the green hills and clear waters.

Gu Youyou and her companions felt pretty much the same way as they laughed and joked along the way.

A village was located halfway up the mountain, and by the time they climbed up, they were already drenched in sweat.

Looking at the village not far ahead, they sat down to take a rest.

Gu Youyou took out a handkerchief and gently wiped the sweat off Jin Liuying’s forehead.

The young girl smiled happily, took the handkerchief shyly, and thanked Gu Youyou.

Gu Youyou also smiled and asked, “Tired?”

Jin Liuying nodded lightly, saying, “Tired, a bit. I’ve never sweated this much before. Even in the Imperial Garden catching butterflies, there was always someone watching me, and they would remind me to stop when I seemed tired.”

Searcy turned her head and said, “Life here is different. It’s not easy for a pampered princess like you to endure such hardships. Many young ladies from well-off families can’t even walk half a mile without needing a sedan chair.”

“What’s the difference from being a useless person? I like the life I have now,” Jin Liuying interjected.

Her attitude reassured Gu Youyou. After resting enough, the three picked up their baskets and headed towards the village.

Searcy took out a bell and shook it lightly. The bell produced a tinkling sound, and before long, curious people came out from the houses.

Seeing three unfamiliar women, they looked puzzled, not understanding why these strangers were ringing a bell.

Gu Youyou stepped forward and said to the nearest elderly man, “Sir, we are traveling doctors treating people. If anyone in your home is sick, we can treat them for free.”

Chapter 1352: Plot

“A traveling doctor?” They only knew that witch doctors could heal, but nobody knew what a traveling doctor was.

However, witch doctors charge for their services, and this traveling doctor claims to treat for free. I wonder if they’re the same as the witch doctors.

A slightly younger person poked their head out from the stilted building above and asked, “Is a traveling doctor the same as a witch doctor?”

Searcy and Jin Liuying both tensed up, afraid of saying different things and getting ostracized.

But Gu Youyou wasn’t that foolish. She was just playing word games. She sidestepped and said, “Not the same. If you want to see a witch doctor, you have to go to their house. A traveling doctor treats wherever they go. We don’t go out every day, so it’s good luck if a patient runs into us.

We don’t always offer free treatment as traveling doctors either. It’s also luck if the patient happens upon a free consultation.”

The old man looked surprised, unable to contain his excitement.

He didn’t understand what a traveling doctor was. To him, they were just free witch doctors. Does this mean he was lucky to find a free witch doctor? The more he thought about it, the more excited he got.

But… he wasn’t sick? That was baffling.

Gu Youyou noticed the old man’s dilemma and quickly said, “Old man, even if you’re not sick, we can give you a peace pulse reading.”

Not sick?

Why get checked if you’re not sick?

Gu Youyou was too eager and overdid it, making the old man look at her strangely, probably thinking she was more of a scammer than a witch doctor.

He snorted and avoided them as if avoiding a lunatic.

“Hey, old man, don’t go just yet. My master can treat you.”

“Go away, you’re bad luck. I’m as healthy as can be; who needs your treatment?”

“How do you know you’re not sick without a checkup? Just get it done…”

Gu Youyou pulled her back, saying, “Forget it, let’s try another place.”

Being too forceful isn't a good thing. They're genuinely treating people, not swindlers.

Searcy kept shaking the bell to attract curious people, and when Gu Youyou saw someone approach, she quickly explained things.

"We're traveling doctors, treating wherever we go. If we encounter someone sick, we provide free treatment."

"Free treatment? No silver?"

"Are you scammers?"

Jin Liuying couldn't help but shout to the person, "What could we be scamming you for? We provide free treatment, so what could we be cheating you out of? If you think it's worth trying, just try it. It's free, and if not, don't call us scammers.

We just want to do what we can for the ordinary people who can't afford treatment. Look at these medicines in our kit; we spent our own silver on them. Medicines can cost more than food, so why would we waste our own silver to scam you?"

But they weren't convinced.

"Hmph, can you really say you have no ulterior motive? Just solely to help the poor? Who believes you?"

"Exactly, it's because we don't know what you want that we don't dare let you treat us."

Upon hearing this, Searcy and Jin Liuying were furious and wanted to argue with the civilians, but Gu Youyou held them back.

Gu Youyou gently shook her head at them and then stepped forward to the two middle-aged women who were questioning them with arrogance and said, “Ladies, no one can do something completely meaningless. You’re right; we can’t claim to have no ulterior motive.”

Chapter 1353: Free Treatment

“Look, isn’t this the truth?” The middle-aged woman laughed scornfully, “If you have an ulterior motive, you should be honest about it. Don’t pretend to be a living Buddha under the guise of helping the world.”

“Exactly, when it comes to people with no intentions, we only recognize the Shamaness.”

Jin Liuying and Searcy were very anxious. Searcy whispered angrily, “Aren’t you just ruining our reputation like this? How can you talk like that? We actually have no ulterior motives towards them, so why wrongly admit it?” Gu Youyou gave her an ‘Understanding nothing’ look, then turned back to the onlooking crowd.

She always wore a professional smile, one that looked pleasant and agreeable.

“Sister, what we aim for isn’t gold or silver, it’s just that we’re new here, and what we’re lacking is reputation. If we treat you well, we would really appreciate it if you could tell your neighbors. In the future, if anyone has a headache or fever, they can come directly to us for treatment, and it won’t be costly. If we fail, it’ll ruin our reputation, and we won’t be able to survive in Taihe City; we’ll go back home, how does that sound?”

The crowd was stunned for a moment, then they understood what their motive for free treatment was.

It turns out it’s not about not making money at all—it’s about first earning a good reputation.

An elderly lady asked, “Aren’t you three girls from Taihe City? Are you from outside?”

Gu Youyou nodded and said, “Yes, so nobody knows us. We went to the Witch Doctor Village, but they wouldn’t accept us. We can treat illnesses, but the folks don’t believe in us. So we had no choice but to resort to free treatment. If we treat well, please help spread the word and say good things about us.”

With this, everyone understood.

It's like buying after trying.

"Well…" someone said, "then could you come home with me and have a look at my old lady's leg? It used to be nimble when she was young, but in recent years it's getting worse, and it's really painful during windy or rainy days."

Gu Youyou was stunned for a moment; upon hearing these symptoms, it was typical rheumatism.

Old people often suffer from such ailments.

However, rheumatism cannot be completely cured.

She could only nod bravely and follow the elderly woman back home.

Everyone else in the family had gone out to work, leaving only her and the old lady. Due to her poor leg, the old lady lived in a shed under the stilted building. Although the shed wasn't large, it was sturdy enough to shelter from the wind and rain.

"Mother, I found a traveling doctor to look at your leg ailment. How are you feeling?"

Soon, the old lady's voice was heard from inside.

"Oh dear, I'm so old already, what's the point of doing this? Save the money for Axiao and his wife for their daily living; if my leg is wasted, so be it. No need to see a doctor."

"Oh, Mother, this is a traveling doctor, it's free, they'll treat you at no charge."

“What? Free treatment? Oh, what’s a traveling doctor?”

“It’s like a witch doctor, treating people who can’t afford medical care, Mother. Don’t say no, come out first, and if you can’t, I’ll come in and help you out.”

“Oh dear, treating the poor? Isn’t that the Shamaness? Is the Shamaness here?” The old lady spoke while emerging from the shed, clutching a cane tightly. It seemed her leg ailment was quite severe.

The old lady stepped out of the dark, low shed, saw the sunshine outside, and then saw Gu Youyou.

Chapter 1354: Stubborn

The woman standing in the sunshine wore a faint smile, quietly exuding a gentle beauty like a wild azalea, so much so that the elderly woman momentarily thought a Shamaness had descended to the world, staring in awe.

The middle-aged woman supported the elderly woman emerging from the shed and said, “Mother, this is the traveling doctor. She can treat your leg without charging a penny.”

“Oh oh, this young lady, are you really offering free treatment to an old woman like me?”

Gu Youyou nodded with a smile and said, “Yes, I am providing free treatment for you.”

“Alright, alright, come to the stone table side, there’s a chair over there.”

The middle-aged woman, thrilled, supported the old lady and invited Gu Youyou and the others to sit on the bench by the stone table, while the curious onlookers also followed and gathered around.

Searcy nudged Gu Youyou’s back and asked quietly, “Can you really treat this? I recall the Empress Dowager of Zhuzhao Country had this condition, and wasn’t she not fully cured?”

Gu Youyou glanced at her and said nothing.

At this stage, it must be treated even if it cannot be cured.

The elderly woman sat on the long bench, her body leaning against the middle-aged woman, who raised her leg for her.

The dry skin was exposed to the air, and she seemed a little shy, saying, “Old age is like this, akin to old tree bark.”

Gu Youyou smiled faintly, saying, “It’s okay, everyone ages and becomes like this. Let me have a look at your leg first.”

Upon examination, Gu Youyou found her leg just as she suspected, a rheumatic condition.

It’s somewhat similar to the Empress Dowager’s condition in Zhuzhao Country, but not as severe.

Treating this is a very troublesome task and costly too.

Gu Youyou did not say much, opening the medicine box, she first prepared a dose of medicine, then took paper and pen to write the prescription on the stone table, saying to her, “If left untreated, your condition will worsen, eventually losing the ability to walk completely. Treating now won’t guarantee full recovery, as the delay is significant and your age is advanced.

However, I can prescribe some medicine to ensure you feel less pain and prevent further worsening. Normal walking is also possible, but it will take quite some time.”

Searcy grew anxious, furrowing her brows and said, “To treat her leg, it’ll take us at least two months. You better think about it, we have to continue our travels…”

Upon hearing this, the elderly woman became apprehensive, saying, “Would it really delay you for so long? Not charging anything, my conscience wouldn’t be at ease. Is there a simpler way, just to relieve the pain?”

But Gu Youyou stubbornly said, “Since I promised to treat you, I will definitely do so; merely relieving pain won’t do any good. Don’t worry, I will do my best to treat you.”

“How could it be alright? This… it’s too much trouble for you,” the elderly woman’s daughter-in-law added.

The onlookers began to whisper among themselves, thinking that if the traveling doctor truly insisted on treating her, then this woman was indeed a good Witch Doctor.

Gu Youyou indeed intended to persist. Her purpose was clear, as this was her first patient; if she gave up, the road ahead would be even more challenging.

“I won’t be coming daily; once I stop traveling, I will set up a practice in Taihe City. Therefore, the elderly lady’s sons and daughters-in-law need to bring you to Taihe City every day; I just need half an hour daily to treat your leg.”

Chapter 1355: Running Out to Cause Trouble

The old lady let out a sigh of relief, and her daughter-in-law also breathed a sigh of relief, saying, “If that’s the case, then it’s good, it won’t delay things too much.”

Searcy and Jin Liuying also relaxed; they were really afraid that Gu Youyou had gone mad, traveling such a long way every day without accepting a penny, to treat the old lady’s rheumatic leg.

After writing the prescription, Gu Youyou instructed the middle-aged woman to brew the medicine in a pot, and then began to give the old lady acupuncture.

Seeing the long needles, the villagers were startled, someone said, “Why are you even sticking needles in people? I’ve heard this is a method used by doctors from Zhuzhao Country, it can kill people.”

Searcy sneered, “The old lady’s meridians in her legs are blocked, acupuncture is necessary to help stimulate blood flow. According to proper methods, we would directly use a knife that has been burned

over fire to cut and let the blood out. We saw that the old lady was advanced in age and couldn't withstand the ordeal, so we're using acupuncture instead."

Everyone suddenly understood, but didn't know what to say.

Anyway, Searcy was right, the Witch Doctors here regularly use bloodletting in their treatments.

They were mentally accustomed to it, so they didn't think much of it.

But because they didn't have acupuncture, they found it particularly terrifying.

However, thinking about it, a small needle prick is indeed far less harmful than a cut with a knife, so they decided not to comment further.

By the time Gu Youyou finished the acupuncture, half an hour had passed.

The old lady's daughter-in-law also returned, carrying a large basin.

She looked troubled, saying, "Miss, I followed your instructions and brewed such a large basin, how can my mother finish drinking it all?"

Gu Youyou smiled and said, "This is all for soaking her feet, not for drinking."

"Ah…?" Their jaws dropped in astonishment.

All these precious herbs aren't for drinking, but for soaking feet?

The old lady waved her hands repeatedly, saying, "No, no, I can't waste such good things, I'll drink it all, as long as it can cure me."

She was unwilling to use such good stuff just for soaking feet.

But Gu Youyou took the basin and placed it by the old lady's feet, saying, "This medicine is for foot soaking; soaking is what makes it effective. Old lady, don't be stubborn, quickly soak them, or it'll cool down soon."

Without giving any explanation, Gu Youyou pressed the old lady's feet into the basin, leaving everyone astonished.

Not charging a single penny, truly a generous young lady.

With the old lady taking the lead, more and more people dared to try.

They had specially chosen a large village, home to one or two hundred families, which was quite large for Nanzhao Country.

She didn't tell them she was a doctor, but said she was a doctor.

Most people didn't know that an apothecary is a doctor, but some did.

When Gu Youyou had seen about twenty people, someone stepped forward and said, "Isn't an apothecary just a doctor? Aren't you from Zhuzhao Country?"

Gu Youyou and the other two's expressions changed drastically, looking at the middle-aged man.

The middle-aged man looked at the three of them with suspicion, saying, "You are doctors from Zhuzhao Country, what are you doing trying to make a name here in Nanzhao? What is your real purpose? Why are you deceiving us?"

Those who had just praised Gu Youyou, saying she was the reincarnation of the Shamaness, instantly turned hostile, watching her with caution.

Meanwhile, those who had received herbs held them in their hands hesitantly.

Just now, they were delighted, but now they looked at the medicine as if it were poison.

Chapter 1356: Don't Trust Them

Searcy wanted to say something, but Gu Youyou pulled her down and took her place.

With Searcy's fiery temper, she would start arguing with them in just a few words, and wouldn't they end up getting hit?

Gu Youyou slightly curtsied to everyone with a smile, looked around, and then slowly began to speak.

"I have never deceived you. I've always said we are traveling doctors. When did I lie to you?"

"But you're not witch doctors."

"We never said we were witch doctors either."

Everyone was in an uproar, looking bewildered at the previously amiable person.

"You… You're clearly twisting words. You didn't say you were witch doctors, but you didn't deny it either. Isn't that silent consent?"

Searcy still pushed Gu Youyou aside, saying indignantly, "It's your assumption of silent consent. We never said so. Besides, whether witch doctors or traveling doctors, the purpose is to treat your illnesses. It's just a name, is it that important?"

"We don't trust doctors or traveling doctors. You're frauds."

Now Jin Liuying was unsettled, snorting coldly and saying, “What have we cheated you of? We gave you so much medicine. Don’t be ungrateful.”

“Who knows what you’re up to? You people of Zhuzhao want to annex our Nanzhao at heart. Maybe this is just a scheme of yours.”

Jin Liuying sneered, coldly saying, “A scheme? Should these words reach His Majesty’s ears, who knows whether you’d still be alive. Don’t you know His Majesty is working hard for good relations between our countries and you are dragging us back here.”

The middle-aged man was instantly speechless and somewhat at a loss.

Indeed, now is a time of good relations between the two countries, and their side even married off a princess.

But his brother died in that war with Zhuzhao Country a few years ago. It’s impossible for him to have no prejudice against Zhuzhao Country.

His life has always been at odds with Zhuzhao Country.

“Hmph, it seems necessary to report this matter to His Majesty. How could there be a person like you in Nanzhao Country?” Jin Liuying continued.

Everyone looked at the middle-aged man, and someone said, “Wuyong, we know your brother died at the hands of the Zhuzhao people, so you have prejudice against them. But now is a time when the countries are on good terms; you should refrain from saying such things.”

“Yes, I think this young lady is genuinely here to treat us. Since she dares to treat people in Taihe City, His Majesty must be aware, and this might even be His Majesty’s decision. We are just ordinary people, whether she’s a witch doctor or not, let’s see if she can heal us first.”

“My master can naturally heal everyone as long as you take the medicine as she instructed. Recently, the Empress Dowager had a severe illness, and many witch doctors couldn’t cure her. Wasn’t it my master who was invited to finally heal her?”

The crowd was shocked.

Everyone knew that the Empress Dowager was ill, and witch doctors were sought from all over to treat her. That commotion was not small. But recently, the Empress Dowager suddenly got well, which everyone knew about.

Everyone thought it was a powerful witch doctor who cured her. So it was this young lady?

Gu Youyou suitably smiled at everyone, acknowledging the fact.

Letting Jin Liuying and Searcy play the villains was fine; she only needed to maintain a good image. This was indeed a powerful tool in Nanzhao.

Jin Liuying was very pleased with everyone’s reaction, seizing the opportunity to continue: “A few years ago, the typhoid fever in the Lingnan Barracks was also cured by my master. When she left, she let the Marquess of Lingnan hand over the prescription to the Nanzhao army. Without my master, who knows how many would have died? And what did she get in return? She never charged you a penny for consultation, did she?”

Chapter 1357: Yu Jizi Is Coming Back Soon

The crowd was once again surprised.

The epidemic back then was very severe, everyone knew that.

The witch doctors of Nanzhao Country were at a loss, and finally, Zhuzhao Country sent a prescription. Initially, everyone was against using it, thinking that the people of Zhuzhao Country couldn’t be so kind-hearted and were probably hoping that their soldiers would all die.

But seeing the soldiers dying in large numbers, their Emperor insisted on using that treatment plan against all opposition.

In this way, the epidemic was finally brought under control.

During that time, people started to question the domestic witch doctors, but soon the Great Shaman, who was like a Fairy, returned, and his actions restored the status of the witch doctors.

Now that the person who could cure typhoid was right in front of them, everyone couldn't help but be shaken again.

Gu Youyou, seeing that it was about time, understood the importance of knowing when to stop. To avoid being besieged by the witch doctors' group tomorrow, she smiled at everyone and said, "Witch doctors and doctors each have their strengths. I just happen to be able to cure that kind of disease. There are many diseases cured by witch doctors that I can't cure. Your Great Shaman invited me here to learn from each other's strengths to make up for their shortcomings."

They dragged Yu Jizi into this again, who knows if he'd be furious when he returns.

Everyone suddenly realized, so that's why the doctors from Zhuzhao Country came to Nanzhao, they were invited by the Great Shaman.

"Since you were invited by the Great Shaman, you must be a very capable person, otherwise, you wouldn't have caught the eye of the Great Shaman."

"That's right, the Great Shaman has high requirements for accepting disciples."

Gu Youyou: "…"

Uh… stop trying to flatter your Great Shaman; we are not his disciples.

The first day ended like this, with results better than expected.

In the following days, they continued to carry the bell and hold the prescription as roaming doctors.

They soon visited half of the villages and towns near Taihe City. Rumors spread among the people that there was a roaming doctor from Zhuzhao with remarkable medical skills, someone even admired by the Great Shaman, and the key point was, she was a young woman.

Some people even said that perhaps she was the reincarnation of the Shamaness, who in her past life descended to Nanzhao and blessed the people, but this life, though she descended to another country, her love for Nanzhao was still the strongest, so she returned.

In short, various rumors already elevated her status to be on par with the Great Shaman.

Jin Zijin and the others also returned, having gained a lot this time.

Upon hearing that Yue Rujing had returned, Zhao Yuezhi, the only person he fancied after numerous matchmaking, came looking for him, and the two of them sweetly went on a date to Moon Bay.

Everyone did well, but Jin Zijin wasn't happy, he said, "Yu Jizi is about to return."

Gu Youyou's smile stiffened instantly.

Jin Zijin added, "Given your current status and the esteem you hold among the people, he wouldn't dare imprison you again. If things get serious, and if he can't find a suitable reason, he might incite public resentment. He can no longer control the influence of Zhuzhao Country. If he loses the trust of the Nanzhao people, he will find it difficult to proceed."

"Sigh!" Gu Youyou sighed, "If only we had a little more time, I could make everyone trust doctors more than witch doctors. There will be more and more diseases that witch doctors can't cure but that doctors can."

Jin Zijin, however, said, "Jin Ziyuan's move was quite good; it has already granted us a lot of time, enough. Anymore, and it would be greedy."

…

Chapter 1358: Yue Rujing Went on a Date

Indeed, Yu Jizi returned. He wasn't angry about being fooled by Jin Ziyuan. He regained the Youying Pearl and discovered the secret of the cave, which was quite a good harvest.

When he returned to the Witch Doctor Village in Nanzhao Country, Yue Rujing was in a sweet date with the Commandery Princess from the house of the eighth Prince.

"Princely Heir Yue, I heard that people from your Zhuzhao Country are quite good at chess. Yuezhi also loves playing chess, but unfortunately, few people here like it, making it hard for Yuezhi to find someone to play against. Why don't we have someone bring a chessboard and play a round?"

Yue Rujing's expression stiffened slightly, feeling a bit awkward, he said, "Are you referring to Go? The black and white stones?"

"Yes, is there any other chess?" Zhao Yuezhi asked curiously.

"Haha, well..." Yue Rujing fanned himself and said, "That's unfortunate. I don't know how to play Go. I come from a military family and learned Xiangqi (Chinese chess)."

"Ah? Like this?" Zhao Yuezhi felt extremely awkward.

"Then we..." Zhao Yuezhi, tangled up in her handkerchief, looked at Yue Rujing who seemed somewhat uninterested. "From a young age, I loved the culture of Zhuzhao Country, and I can also play your Ancient Stringed Zither."

Yue Rujing felt that dating such a proper lady was simply torture. The two were speechless, the things she liked, he simply did not.

Finally, they made it to noon. Yue Rujing patted his clothes and stood up, saying, "Let's go have some food first."

Zhao Yuezhi laughed, saying, "Right, right, look at me, I was so focused on playing that I forgot about the time."

Yue Rujing: "..." One morning wasted like this, it would have been better to go con and deceive with my senior brother.

Zhao Yuezhi instructed the servant to arrange lunch, and after eating, Yue Rujing stood up before Zhao Yuezhi finished. He said, "I have things to do in the afternoon, my senior brother asked me to come back early. I won't be accompanying you this afternoon, let's meet again when we have time."

"Ah...?" Zhao Yuezhi put down her chopsticks in shock and stood up as well.

"Weren't we supposed to go boating at Moon Bay this afternoon?"

"No, no, let's postpone that to another day, I'm leaving now."

Yue Rujing left almost in a hurry, which made Zhao Yuezhi extremely embarrassed.

As he was already gone, Zhao Yuezhi patted her beautiful cheeks and asked the maid behind her, "Does he not like me?"

The maid smiled and said, "Commandery Princess, how could that be? The Princely Heir Yue took out half a day from his busy schedule to keep you company. If he didn't like you, why would he waste that time?

I have found out that the Princely Heir Yue has never shown such patience towards a girl before. Like when it was General Duan's daughter, Duan Xiaomei, she was kicked out by the Princely Heir Yue, which shows his attitude towards women he does not like!"

Comparing this, Zhao Yuezhi felt that the maid's words made sense.

Perhaps she was just overthinking things out of worry.

Yue Rujing ran back to the inn, and Gu Youyou who was drying herbs with a sieve joked with him.

"I heard you went on a date with the Commandery Princess today. With a beauty to accompany you, why are you back so early? I wasn't even going to save dinner for you tonight."

"What kind of thoughts are in your mind?" Yue Rujing twitched the corner of his mouth and said, "No matter what, I can't stay overnight, really."

"Why not?" Gu Youyou said indifferently, placing the sieve under the sun and turning the herbs over. "The customs in Nanzhao Country are open; staying overnight shouldn't be unusual. I heard that among ordinary folk, just singing a mountain song could make them stay. Did you sing a mountain song to the Commandery Princess?"

Chapter 1359: Not in a Good Mood

Yue Rujing was taken aback and waved his hand irritably, saying, "You're overthinking it. She's not that kind of person; she's just like the genteel young ladies here in Beijing."

Gu Youyou was indifferent to his words and continued to tease, "Then undoubtedly, it's because you didn't sing, or you sang inappropriately, which failed to win the girl's affection. This matter, you might as well ask your senior brother about it. Back when we secretly ventured to Nanzhao to gather herbs, we encountered someone singing a mountain song, and he even sang one for me."

"Really?" Yue Rujing instantly revived, looking surprised.

Whether he sang or not is one thing, but if Senior Brother sang, haha, imagining that scene would be too beautiful.

However... is Senior Brother such a person? Would he sing a mountain song? Could it be that Gu Youyou was just pulling his leg?

Yue Rujing asked somewhat incredulously, "Did Senior Brother really sing? You're not just messing with me, are you?"

Gu Youyou kicked away a winnowing basket and said, "Do I seem like someone with nothing better to do than to mess with you? You? Are you worth my while?"

Yue Rujing gritted his teeth, rolled up his sleeves, and said, "What's with your tone? Listening to what you said, are you looking down on me?"

"You have such great resources, but can't even win a girl's affection. Do you think I need to look up to you?"

Yue Rujing's face flushed with embarrassment as he retorted, "It's not that I'm unwilling. Given my princely heir's credentials, if I so wished, wouldn't women line up from here to Zhuzhao Country?"

Gu Youyou rolled her eyes at him and said, "Yep, keep boasting, since bragging doesn't require a fee. However, the truth is some people just can't woo girls."

Yue Rujing was furious and blocked Gu Youyou's path, saying, "Who? Come on, tell me, who in this world would I, the princely heir, fail to pursue?"

Gu Youyou chuckled and said, "Do you know what Miss Duan said about you after she returned?"

Yue Rujing raised an eyebrow, recalling Miss Duan, and felt she wouldn't say anything flattering.

"What did she say?"

Gu Youyou chuckled and said, "Want to know? Go ask her yourself."

Yue Rujing: "..."

Gu Youyou bypassed him and headed towards the inner room.

Yue Rujing, anxious, blocked her again and said, "Explain it to me clearly, or else you're spreading rumors."

Gu Youyou looked at him disdainfully and said, "Someone like you? Miss Duan doesn't even fancy you. Do I need to fabricate anything? Get out of the way."

"Even you despise me? We're staying in Nanzhao because we risked our lives to save you."

"Oh come on, everyone was dealing with Yu Jizi."

"And that was to save you."

Gu Youyou: "..."

"Shoo, shoo, quickly move aside; there are still two trays left to dry."

"No way, you're getting more annoying by the day."

"Not moving, huh?" Gu Youyou grinned mischievously.

But that grin seemed somewhat sinister.

"What are you up to?" Yue Rujing looked at her cautiously.

Gu Youyou suddenly put on a somber face and shouted into the house.

"Husband, help!"

Yue Rujing: "..."

In a moment, Jin Zijin, who heard the noise, came out, making Yue Rujing’s arm blocking Gu Youyou’s path feel awkward, unsure whether to release it or keep blocking. Seeing his senior brother’s darkened expression, he realized keeping his arm there wasn’t an option.

"What’s going on?" Jin Zijin looked at Yue Rujing and said, "Ajing, weren’t you accompanying the Commandery Princess? Why are you back so soon."

"I... can’t I come back early?" Yue Rujing, both angry and sulking, suddenly felt unloved by the world.

He stomped his feet and angrily returned to his own room.

Chapter 1360: Had a Dream

Jin Zijin had a displeased look on his face as he dragged Gu Youyou into the room and asked in a deep voice, "What’s going on? Ajing has always been open-minded and rarely gets angry. He seemed angry to me."

Gu Youyou said, "His mind is still muddled, and he hasn’t figured things out. I was just helping him sort it out."

"Hmm...?"

Gu Youyou said indifferently, "He clearly likes women who are as open-minded as he is, yet he mistakenly thinks he likes the demure and reserved type of noblewoman. If I don’t provoke him a bit, he can’t see it clearly."

Jin Zijin laughed and said, "So you noticed too? Haha, don’t worry, once he spends some more time with the Commandery Princess, he’ll find he can’t stand it."

Gu Youyou was taken aback; so Jin Zijin knew as well.

The deeply troubled Yue Rujing lay alone on a long bench, his hand under his head as he stared up at the ceiling.

He was only a few years younger than Jin Zijin and was nearing thirty. In Zhuzhao Country, men who hadn't married by thirty were as rare as phoenix feathers and qilin horns, mostly because they were too poor to afford marriage.

Had he not been born in the Dao Sect, he would have long been condemned by people.

His parents were anxious about his marriage prospects, which he could understand.

But after all, this was about spending a lifetime with someone; how could he just casually choose?

Lately, the weather had been stuffy and mosquito-infested.

A mosquito bit his leg, and he irritably slapped it dead.

He lifted his hand and found it covered in mosquito blood.

Love at its deepest requires the price of blood.

But what kind of person did he really like? He found it more bewildering than figuring out how to deal with Yu Jizi.

The stuffy weather made Yue Rujing loosen the collar of his shirt to let in some air. Seeing his bare chest, a strange feeling suddenly rose within him.

His mind, once full of clarity, turned into a jumble, and he absentmindedly placed his hand over his heart.

In his memory, this spot had once felt a warm and soft touch many years ago.

As he touched it, images of a woman's bright smile, then confusion, anger, mockery—all sorts of expressions began to surface in his mind, and gradually, he saw the woman's face clearly.

He was dumbfounded, tapping his face comically.

That face turned out to be Gu Youyou's.

The annoying woman.

Only a guy like his senior brother, with no taste, would be attracted to a woman like her.

He laughed at himself and rubbed his temples.

Why would he think of her? It was too ridiculous; he must have been bothered by her. So Yue Rujing thought.

He didn't go out for dinner that evening, having fallen asleep since mid-afternoon. Jin Zijin peeked into his room and, seeing he was sleeping soundly, didn't wake him.

That night, in the deepest dark, Yue Rujing had a dream.

A light boat on the rippling Moon Bay moved as delicately as a leaf, beneath a full moon, with a woman's skin white as the moon itself.

Time after time, he kissed her face, neck, and every part of her body.

Even if her voice had been wounded before, it was still more beautiful than the chirping of insects along the shores of Moon Bay.

The late-night breeze blew in from the window, bringing a slight chill that woke Yue Rujing from his dream.