Farmhouse 341

Chapter 341: When Did You Start to Care?

Yue Ruxue withdrew her gaze and turned it upon Gu Youyou, opening with a sarcastic tone, "In the Marquis Residence of Lingnan, there's only one person who dares to sleep like you do, and that's my elder brother. You really have some nerve; my brother got up early today, and yet you slept until the sun was high in the sky."

Gu Youyou arched an eyebrow, her tone neither servile nor overbearing, as she spoke gracefully, "That's precisely because I'm not a member of the Marquis Residence of Lingnan."

"You..." Yue Ruxue's beauty turned chilly, finding herself suddenly at a loss for words. Her pursed lips gave off a sense of feeling bullied.

Gu Youyou's face was the picture of innocence.

Yue Rushuang gently tugged at her second sister's sleeve and whispered, "Second sister, don't forget what we're here for."

The main event?

Gu Youyou arched an eyebrow, assuming a stance ready to tackle whatever might come her way.

Come at me then, you little scammers.

Yes, the main event.

Yue Ruxue recomposed herself and asked sternly, "Are you a village girl from the countryside? How did you get to know Brother Zijin?"

"Through marriage," Gu Youyou candidly replied.

"What?" Several young ladies widened their eyes in disbelief.

"I’m asking how he came to marry you?"

Gu Youyou shrugged and said, "How should I know? Don’t you know that marriage is subject to the orders of one’s parents and the words of the matchmaker? I can’t make decisions on my own. When he came to our house to propose, my family told me to marry him, so I married him!"

...Can it really be so simple?

This woman spoke as if Brother Zijin was so eager to have her.

Yue Rushuang felt something was off and leaned over to whisper in Yue Ruxue’s ear, "Let’s drop it for now and find out more about her. Brother Zijin has been missing for years; it might have something to do with what he’s been through during that time."

Yue Ruxue stomped her foot in frustration, but there was nothing she could do in the face of the unknown.

A familiar light laughter drifted from the garden, and Gu Youyou chuckled softly.

Jin Zijin had returned, along with his close buddy.

"Ah, I just remembered I have some matters to attend to, so I won’t be joining you young ladies for a garden stroll. Feel free to chat amongst yourselves," she said.

After saying so, she slipped away like greased lightning.

Yue Ruxue stomped her foot and shouted after her, "Who do you think you are? Just a country bumpkin, what right do you have to stroll in the garden with this young lady? You sure have a talent for aggrandizing yourself."

Jin Zijin and Yue Rujing had already approached, and with Yue Ruxue’s voice being loud, it reached their ears just right.

Yue Rujing frowned slightly and said, "Ajing, who are you scolding? As a legitimate daughter of the Marquis Residence, creating such a ruckus in the garden could get you reprimanded by grandmother if she hears you."

Startled, the three of them swiftly turned around.

"Big Brother!"

"Cousin!"

"Brother Zijin!"

Their expressions greatly changed as they saw the oncoming figures, and they bowed their heads, visibly uncomfortable.

This embarrassing moment had been witnessed by her big brother and Brother Zijin, all because of that wretched country girl who had made a quick escape, damn her.

Of course, Jin Zijin knew who they were cursing, and with an almost imperceptible frown, he whispered to Yue Rujing, "Ajing, I’m going to check on Youyou. My apologies to you young ladies, but I must excuse myself."

With that, he strode toward the courtyard at the back.

Their gazes followed his tall figure until he was out of sight, leaving them with sullen faces.

How had a country girl managed to get ahead of them?

"Stop staring, he’s gone!" Yue Rujing chuckled, patted her sister’s head, and said, "Little one, how old are you? It’s been six or seven years since our sworn brother last left our home, when did you start harboring feelings for him?"

Who else but her big brother could tease girls so brazenly? The three young ladies’ faces turned red in an instant, and the young girls accompanying them blushed as well.

Chapter 342: I’m a Fortune Teller

"Big brother, what are you blabbing about!"

If the person in question wasn’t Gu Youyou, Yue Rujing might have consoled her own sister, telling her to give up on such thoughts, because in his opinion, his sisters were simply not a good match for his elder fellow disciple.

But when it came to Gu Youyou... forget it.

Giving her a bit of bad luck seemed rather nice too.

...

"Zijin, it seems that Second Miss holds quite a grudge against me," Gu Youyou got straight to the point, "when are we moving out?"

Jin Zijin paused for a moment and then said, "Axue is the only legitimate daughter in the Marquis Residence; her temper is inevitably somewhat spoiled and it’s common for her to look down on others."

Gu Youyou, born into a noble family, felt she could perhaps understand; it was about a sense of superiority, she had felt it herself in the past.

"When are we moving out?"

This was what she cared about; after all, she couldn’t keep wracking her brain every day to match wits with them. In their territory, any battle was surely her loss.

Jin Zijin smiled and said, "The house isn’t in bad condition, I’ve already had a look this morning and had some repairs done. Let’s move there in three days."

He took a cloak and draped it over her, saying, "Let’s go, I’ll take you out to see. The wind is strong outside and it’s somewhat chilly; wearing this will warm you a bit."

So he had risen early in the morning to look at the house; Gu Youyou followed him out of the Marquis Residence, contented.

In September, it would have already been quite cold in the north, but this was the south, so there was only a hint of chill in the air.

Perhaps it was because a cold spell follows each autumn rain; although it had rained last night and the ground was no longer slippery, the chilly breeze felt notably cold against the skin.

Gu Youyou hadn’t expected Jin Zijin’s house to be a two-story building facing the street with a small courtyard at the back.

It couldn’t compare with the splendor of the Lingnan Marquis Residence, but it held its own charm.

It was like the difference between a modern villa and a well-furnished apartment in a commercial area.

A few people were busy inside, appearing to be renovating.

Looking at the house... Gu Youyou grew curious and asked, "Didn’t you say that you were orphaned and grew up in a Taoist Temple? How come you have a house here in Lingnan?"

Jin Zijin felt panic inside but silently cursed the never-ending chain of lies. He had said this was his hometown and she asked where the family was located.

Well, great, having dragged Yue Rujing early in the morning to get a house ready, now she was questioning how the house came about?

Really... an unending hassle!

He caught a glimpse of a blind man holding a "Fortune Telling" sign at the street corner and suddenly came up with a plan, a faint smile curving his lips.

Jin Zijin maintained his composure, and said indifferently to Gu Youyou, "Not all Dao Family disciples stay on the mountain living off handouts; when the time comes, they travel the world to make a living.

The place I came to back then was Lingnan. For a living, well, I knew nothing else, so I could only tell fortunes and read horoscopes, which was quite passable. So I bought this house and set up a fortune telling stall as my business."

"You, you, you..." Gu Youyou was dumbfounded for a long while.

Oh my!

As an atheist, the thing she scorned the most was so-called fortune tellers and guides, and after all this, it turned out she had married a charlatan.

You might as well have been a poor hunter.

Gu Youyou made an instant decision regarding the use of this house.

"How much can fortune telling swindle? Let’s do this; no more telling fortunes from now on. Open a clinic for me on the first floor, I can’t waste my medical skills."

He broke out in sweat, truly fearing that Gu Youyou would have him continue running a fortune telling stall.

"Alright, as you wish."

Chapter 343: Discussing matters in the middle of the night

If you want to open a clinic, then the house can’t be renovated like it was before.

Once the consultation table and the medicine cabinet are set up.

Gu Youyou was on-site directing the bustling renovation, realizing that the work wouldn’t be completed in three days.

She looked at the sizable house, located at a prime street corner, thinking that such a property in Lingnan City must be expensive, and even with money, one might not be able to buy it.

So she looked at Jin Zijin curiously and asked, "Does the Taoist Temple have a good income?"

Jin Zijin was taken aback for a moment, then nodded and said, "Yes, the Dao Family Tianzong has always had a generous patronage."

No wonder.

"Then why were you so poor in Lotus Village that you lived in a drafty straw hut that hardly kept out the wind?"

"I was just avoiding trouble!" Jin Zijin declared righteously, "I went to Lotus Village on official business. If I’d flaunted my wealth, every household within ten miles would be competing to marry their daughter to me."

Gu Youyou: "..." She remembered how poor it had seemed when she first married over; there was no need to exaggerate that much.

Besides renovating the house, there was another matter—that was to make a signboard.

She felt that since she had acknowledged Dr. Zhou as her teacher and was under the care of Jisheng Hall, there was no need to establish her own practice. So, she immediately had someone make a plaque that read "Jisheng Hall."

At night, Gu Youyou worked by candlelight, not doing anything other than painting a signboard.

Jisheng Hall, with the subtitle in small characters: Lingnan Branch.

After the ink dried, she was very satisfied with the signboard she had painted; all that was left was to find a signboard master to make it the following day.

After putting the paper away, she thought for a moment, then sketched some other things.

Regarding the clinic’s decor, she had some more scientifically minded suggestions.

If they couldn’t be easily explained, they could be drawn.

There were scattered footsteps from outside the courtyard, and Gu Youyou paused her writing.

It wasn’t the delicate steps of the maid Xiaotao, but a man’s, Yue Rujing.

She glanced at Jin Zijin, who had taken off his coat and was leaning against the bedhead reading a book, and wondered why Yue Rujing would come visiting at such a late hour.

The door was not shut, and the lamp was on; Yue Rujing directly entered the room.

Jin Zijin turned his head to look at him, his brow slightly furrowed.

"Good, you haven’t gone to bed!" Yue Rujing cut to the chase and said, "Brother, my father wants to discuss some matters with you."

"Hmm!" Jin Zijin nodded, not asking further, and immediately got up to dress.

"I'll be out for a while, if I return late you should go to sleep first," Jin Zijin told Gu Youyou.

Gu Youyou smiled slightly and said, "Go ahead, I'll sleep after I finish drawing."

After they had gone far, Gu Youyou got up and closed the door.

She stood next to the table, pondering for a while, then muttered to herself as if talking to herself, "Nothing during the day, but something needing discussion in the dead of night, really..."

Shaking her head, she hung the wet writing brush on the rack.

...

"Brother, do you know what my father wants to discuss with you?"

"I know," Jin Zijin said.

"Ah, since you know, then I won't talk about that. I'll just tell you about this Gu Youyou, this woman can't be trusted. Besides looking like a country girl, in what ways does she resemble one?

She can ride a horse, and she rides no worse than I do. Ordinary families don't let their daughters learn horseback riding. The embroidery she should know, she doesn't. The guqin, chess, calligraphy, and painting favored by ladies of fine families, she doesn't know either, but she's remarkably good at handling a knife fiercely.

I think she's been specially trained by someone since she was little, and keeping her around is bound to lead to trouble sooner or later. Yes, I know you're reluctant to kill her. Why not just go along with my father's wishes this time, and find an excuse to send her away?"

Chapter 344: His Name is Jin Yan

Jin Zijin stopped and looked at Yue Rujing, saying, "Have you decided not to speak, or can’t you finish what you’re saying?"

"Ah...?"

"If you have a lot to say, how about I go with you to your place first and listen to you finish before I meet your father?"

"I..." Yue Rujing choked, "I just wanted to say that she can’t be trusted."

"You always say that, my ears could almost grow calluses," Jin Zijin said.

"Isn’t it because you won’t take advice?" Yue Rujing stuttered.

Jin Zijin said, "The one who won’t take advice is you."

"Me?"

"I remember I’ve told you many times as well, it doesn’t matter who she used to belong to. What’s important is now, and now we need to win her over to our side," he stated.

Yue Rujing scoffed and without thinking retorted, "Dream on, it has nothing to do with me; you’re just infatuated and want to make her yours."

"..." The garden was engulfed in an unrivaled silence, so quiet one could hear a pin drop.

Two grown men stood awkwardly, their faces flushed with embarrassment.

"Brother," Yue Rujing called out awkwardly, smacking his lips, "I'll not speak anymore. You go to my father's place."

The looming tower ahead was bright with lights, looking both majestic and serene.

This was Yue Tingfang's study.

"Ajing, you go down, I have something to discuss privately with your brother," he said.

Yue Rujing glanced at his father, Yue Tingfang, and then looked towards Jin Zijin.

Only after Jin Zijin nodded at him did he cup his hands in salute and excused himself.

Yue Tingfang watched the interaction between the two men without finding anything amiss.

After closing the door, only Yue Tingfang and Jin Zijin were left in the spacious and brightly lit study. Yue Tingfang watched Jin Zijin for a long time before he began to speak.

"Ayan, I hear from Ajing that the girl is Xuanzong's medicine-person, and she's just an ordinary village girl?"

(The male lead's name is Jin Yan, styled Zijin! It seems I've written hundreds of thousands of words, and this is the first time I've said it.)

"Yes!" Jin Zijin did not deny, saying, "She ceased to be Xuanzong's medicine person a while ago."

"Nonsense!" Yue Tingfang suddenly grew angry, his expression stern and his eyes inscrutable. He spoke calmly, "You could marry any other woman and it would be better than her. Helping her break free from the status of a medicine person will bring you a lot of trouble. Moreover, that girl is just a village girl, how is she worthy of you?"

"And what kind of woman would be worthy of me?" Jin Zijin looked steadily at Yue Tingfang with an unchanged expression, his voice calm and indifferent. The challenging words that should have been aggressive somehow felt as warm and comforting as the morning sun coming from his mouth.

"The woman who is worthy of you is naturally..." He stopped abruptly mid-sentence, as if his throat was suddenly choked off, ending the sentence in an unsettlingly abrupt manner.

Jin Zijin had been watching him all along. Even though Yue Tingfang had only spoken half of what he intended, Jin Zijin didn't push for the rest, as if he already knew the answer or as if the answer didn't matter to him.

Yue Tingfang sighed and softened his tone, saying, "Ayan, you know what I mean. I don't demand that you find someone with equal social status, but at least the gap shouldn't be too wide."

Jin Zijin was silent for a moment, then let out a rueful laugh, murmuring, "With neither father nor mother, I'm like a rootless duckweed; what kind of woman would then be a suitable match for me?"

"Ayan!" Yue Tingfang was startled, his emotions rising as he said, "Why do you belittle yourself like this? You well know that you are not without parents, it's just that..."

"I know!" Jin Zijin interrupted with a raise of his hand, saying, "I think it's pretty good. She has no parents, and neither do I; that's what I'd call a suitable match. Uncle Yue, thank you for worrying about me over the years, but some things I must do myself. I don't want to implicate you all."

Chapter 345: Our Name, the Eternal Poem.

"What are you talking about? You haven't caused me any trouble at all!" Yue Tingfang said somewhat anxiously, "I just..."

"I know!" Jin Zijin interrupted him once again.

Two 'justs', two 'I knows'. Actually, he didn't need to say so much; he knew many things already.

"All right, you're grown up now. If you need anything from us, just say it. It's just that woman..."

"She’s quite well, thank you Uncle Yue for your concern. If there’s nothing else, I’ll be heading back first. Uncle Yue, Jin Yan takes his leave!"

Thinking of Gu Youyou, a smile involuntarily curved up Jin Zijin’s lips without him realizing it.

He walked alone in the Marquis Residence’s garden at night, like a shining star in the night sky.

Lately, he had thought a lot and felt that she truly was very good; her appearance was like a compensation from heaven, a blessing.

How well they matched, both being orphans, trapped by others since their childhood. "Green, green, the clothes edges, endlessly, my heart longs," it seemed heaven had arranged their names into that ageless poem long ago.

No matter whose person she was, what kind of person she was, actually none of it was important. Because she was just her. Even if she was someone arranged purposely by others, he would still fight to make her his person.

Just as Yue Rujing had said, he might really have been infatuated.

Moonlight filtered through the window, spilling onto the bed, and he saw that she had already fallen asleep. Getting closer, he could hear her light, delicate breathing.

He took off his clothes and slipped into her quilt, gently wrapping his arms around her waist from behind, just like countless nights before.

To balance the flaming poison within him, to balance the cold poison within her, they had to snuggle closely. Otherwise, they would rely on an antidote in the blood to suppress the toxicity.

But that night, because of the inexplicable feelings of pity surfacing in his mind, it seemed to ferment a different flavor, and even carried a blush tinted like peach blossoms.

...

Gu Youyou got up before dawn, still yawning as she dressed.

"If you want to sleep, sleep a bit longer. Why get up so early?" Jin Zijin said.

"You don’t understand," Gu Youyou replied to him.

In the end, they were guests, and Gu Youyou did not want to conflict with the young ladies of the Marquis Residence. Getting up at this hour to hurry to the shop and help out, returning later in the night, she could avoid those young ladies of the Marquis Residence.

"I really can’t do anything with you!" Jin Zijin said with a laugh.

Gu Youyou was extremely busy and very happy at the thought of opening a branch of Jisheng Hall in Lingnan.

Not just in Lingnan, in the future, other cities, and even Beijing, would have the words Jisheng Hall.

She wanted to carry on the legacy of Jisheng Hall, not failing Doctor Zhou who had provided her with such an opportunity.

Gu Youyou had already forgotten the troubles of the Marquis Residence, and the few young ladies of the Residence who looked for her several times all returned disappointed and were at their wits’ end.

"What does she mean? Not even Mother can call her out when she sends someone; does she really think she’s royalty?"

"Cousin, Xiaotao said she wasn’t there. Out early and back late every day, who knows what she’s up to."

This was the Marquis Residence’s cousin, the only daughter of the old lady’s youngest child. Her father was one of Yue Tingfang’s generals, who had died in battle, leaving behind wife and daughter. Being widows and orphans, the old lady felt extremely sorry for them, so she took them back to her maiden home to be cared for.

The cousin would eventually be married off, serving as a future caretaker for the old lady’s youngest daughter.

After all, the Marquis Residence was large, there was no shortage of food or clothing, two more did not matter, two less made no difference; therefore, the Marchioness had no objections.

"The second young lady’s maid said, ’Probably that country bumpkin hasn’t seen the world, rushing off to the streets to watch the excitement before dawn. Our Lingnan City is so big, it’ll take her many days to see it

Chapter 346: Farewell

The young girl’s words resonated deeply with Yue Ruxue, who raised her chin smugly.

"Fine, let her witness the prosperity of Lingnan. You, go instruct Xiaotao to block that woman tomorrow morning. Let her be for the past few days, but she can’t be allowed to slip away again tomorrow. I must humiliate her publicly."

Gu Youyou, who was to be humiliated, knew nothing about it. After being busy for so many days, everything was finally in order.

"Zijin, let’s move in tomorrow. The downstairs can be arranged slowly; we still need to acquire some herbs. The upstairs is ready to be lived in."

Jin Zijin smiled faintly, nodding in silence.

He was aware of the troubles the Misses of the Yue Family sought to bring upon her, yet every day they came up with nothing.

Their patience was lost, and she could not wait to make her escape.

Planning to leave the next day, Gu Youyou spent the night packing her luggage.

"Madam Jin, our Madam would like to see you. You mustn't leave before dawn tomorrow."

Xiaotao was nearly scared to death; the Second Miss was so vicious when she cursed. She almost begged Gu Youyou as she relayed the message.

Before Gu Youyou could respond, Jin Zijin, who had just walked in, said, "Oh, tomorrow happens to be the day we are going to bid farewell to the Madam. Thank you for delivering the message, Miss Xiaotao."

Ah...?

Xiaotao looked up at Jin Zijin in confusion.

The Misses intended to humiliate Gu Youyou; it had nothing to do with Young Master Jin. If he also went, wouldn't they sell her outright?

Xiaotao's face turned pale with fright, her body trembling.

"No, they, the Madam said she only wants to see Madam Jin."

Jin Zijin replied, "No matter, I shall explain to the Madam myself. There's nothing here for you; you can go now."

"Ah... No!"

"You're not leaving yet?" Jin Zijin's voice was still calm and undisturbed, showing no trace of anger, but his expression had grown cold.

"I... Okay, yes!" Xiaotao left with a pale face and then ran out of the courtyard to relay the information to the Second Miss’s room.

Gu Youyou laughed softly, "You did that on purpose, didn’t you? Why are you scaring the poor girl?"

Jin Zijin spoke righteously, "I didn’t scare her; she’s just guilt-conscience."

"But you knew she had a guilty conscience..."

"That’s not my affair!"

Gu Youyou: "..." Since when did you start being so sly?

...

Jin Zijin and Gu Youyou went together to see the Madam. Her room was packed with women, which, admittedly, was somewhat frightening.

They say three women make a drama; how many dramas could a room full of women make? No wonder it was scary.

"Zijin, I hear you’re here to take your leave today?"

The night before, Xiaotao had conveyed the message to the Second Miss, who had risen early to pay her respects to the Madam, and naturally, she shared the news.

Speaking of which, she was very unwilling to let them go. If she had known earlier that they would leave, she should have gotten up sooner to watch over Gu Youyou and bully her to death while she was still at the Marquis Residence, to take her pride down a notch, for stealing her brother Zijin.

Jin Zijin, accompanying Gu Youyou, performed a courtesy towards the Madam, "Yes, we especially came today to bid farewell to the Madam."

"Oh, weren't you living well here at the Marquis Residence? Why go out and live elsewhere?"

Jin Zijin explained, "Youyou has started a medical clinic in Lingnan. Our house is all set; the clinic on the first floor, and living quarters on the second floor. We will be open for business in a few days. We have already imposed upon the Madam for several days, we dare not cause any more inconvenience."

Hearing this, the faces of the women in the room changed, looking around at each other.

Wasn't this woman just a village girl who only knew how to farm and raise pigs? How was she skilled in medicine?

Chapter 347: We Are Going to Open a Clinic

Few women are skilled in medical arts, and she even has the audacity to want to open a medical hall in Lingnan? Hmph, as if anyone would seek her out for treatment.

The young woman was clearly filled with disdain, and had it not been for Jin Zijin's presence, she likely would have already buried Gu Youyou under a pile of scathing remarks.

However, the elder matriarch showed not the slightest hint of sarcasm, reassessing Gu Youyou with fresh eyes.

There is truth in saying that one should not judge a book by its cover, that there are always experts hidden among the mountains; some words are not without reason.

If she didn't possess some unique talents, how could Zijin have taken a liking to her?

Moreover... the one who had gone to dig up her background hadn't returned yet, and the information gleaned from Yue Rujing's words was not entirely trustworthy.

The elder matriarch beamed a warm and kindly smile, saying, "Opening a medical hall is a noble act of dedication to public welfare. For Youyou, a woman, to do so is even more remarkable than a man. Given that, I shall not impose any longer. When you have decided on the opening date, do not forget to let Ajing inform me, so that we can prepare a modest gift to express our good wishes."

Gu Youyou and Jin Zijin bowed in thanks: "We thank the elder matriarch."

Yue Ruxue had initially prepared herself to thoroughly humiliate Gu Youyou, but under the elder matriarch's warning, she managed to hold her tongue, and by the time they had left, her little face was scrunched up with frustration.

"Grandmother, why didn't you let me speak just now? And you, why were you pulling on me?" she demanded, pointing at her eldest sister, Yue Rushuang.

Yue Rushuang, a daughter born to a concubine without a mother and less favored by the elders than Yue Ruxue, naturally deferred to her and dared not argue. The elder matriarch saw this and felt that this legitimate daughter was spoiled, snorting in displeasure: "Your sister is a year older than you, yet she is several years more sensible than you. I know you're unwilling to accept that Zijin married someone else, but have you considered that you didn't even ascertain the situation before rashly making your move? How could you gauge the situation appropriately?"

"I... What do I need to gauge? Anyway, she is wrong."

The elder matriarch scoffed: "Yes, anyone who marries Zijin is wrong, unless it is you. Alas, I blame your father, who got your hopes up when it was all so uncertain. When he mentioned it, I felt it was inappropriate. Although Zijin is a good lad, he is much older than you are, and had he married earlier, his children would have nearly caught up with you in age. All these years without a word from him, I guessed that he had started his own family, and you never stood a chance."

"Wah... Grandmother!"

"Enough, regardless of what Gu Youyou's past status was, she is now Zijin's wife. You... well, looks like I, an old lady, still need to worry about you. Cuizhen, investigate all the eligible bachelors in Lingnan and pick a suitable one for her, so she stops clinging to what she shouldn't."

The Marchioness replied, "Ah, mother!"

...

The weather became increasingly cool, but the workers renovating the house still sweated profusely.

Gu Youyou made a cooling mung bean soup for them to relieve the heat, and the workers were extremely grateful.

"Doctor Gu, you've already paid us our wages, how can we have the cheek to accept your food too?"

Gu Youyou said, "You've all worked heartily and tirelessly these past few days; it's the least I can do."

"Since Doctor Gu says so, we won't stand on ceremony."

"Doctor Gu is truly kind. To be a doctor, one must have a good heart."

"Exactly, this Jisheng Hall is bound to do booming business, making a fortune every day..."

"This is a medical hall, so please don't wish for booming business!"

The crowd had an epiphany and burst into laughter: "Ha ha, yes, yes, a medical hall shouldn't wish for booming business. We misspoke."

Chapter 348: Recruiting an Attendant

They were all locals from Lingnan, familiar with the area, and upon seeing that they had engaged in conversation with her, Gu Youyou asked, "In a few days, my Jisheng Hall will open, and I need to recruit an apprentice and an attendant. I wonder if any of the masters here have suitable candidates to recommend?"

Although it would have been more reliable to ask Yue Rujing for help, Gu Youyou did not get along well with him; she would rather work alone than seek his assistance.

As soon as Gu Youyou made her request, one of the craftsmen spoke up, "I do have a niece who's from next door who might try working as an attendant. She's from the countryside. Both her grandfather and father know some Medical Skills, and the villagers always turn to them for any headaches or fevers. But there's a rule in their family; they only pass on the knowledge to males, not females, so she doesn't know how to treat illnesses.

However, growing up in such a family, she surely knows more than the average person. She can read a few characters and recognize the medicinal herbs on the mountain. Their family also often goes up the mountain to gather medicinal plants to sell, it's just..."

At this point, the craftsman seemed to hesitate.

Gu Youyou was listening with interest; she thought such a person would be very suitable. She needed someone to help care for patients and dispense medicines, and girls tended to be more meticulous than boys in their work. Given the society's preference for boys over girls, finding a girl who could read a bit and recognize medicinal herbs was not easy at all.

"But what? Master Lu, I am earnestly looking for two people. If you have anything to say, please speak frankly. Don't hold back!"

"Ah! What Doctor Gu said is true." The craftsman continued, "This child has a hard life. She's eighteen this year and still living with her parents."

In those days, it was rare to see a village girl who was still unmarried at eighteen. Could it be that there was some secret?

"Her family had arranged a marriage for her a few years ago. The groom was a reliable man from a neighboring village, about her age. But on the day of the wedding, there was a heavy rain, the road was slippery, and he fell into a river and drowned. Out of all the people attending the wedding, it happened to be the bridegroom... Sigh, she was sent straight back to her family afterward and has been 'watching the gate' as a widow ever since. Everyone says her fate is harsh, that she's a jinx, even those looking for a second wife are afraid to marry her."

Gu Youyou was speechless for a moment; while the young woman truly had dreadful luck, to say she was a harsh fate and a jinx was too much. In the end, it was the ignorance of ancient people that ruined the young woman's entire life.

"Doctor Gu, with her being a 'jinx'... I'm worried she might bring misfortune to your medical hall!"

Gu Youyou was taken aback, then smiled again, saying, "No, I want her. Please, Master Lu, talk to her and see if she would be willing to join me."

"Ah...?" The craftsman was both shocked and pleased. He had mentioned it just to try his luck and didn't expect Doctor Gu to agree to take her in right away.

"Really? Doctor Gu, are you sure you don't need to think it over?" He was still somewhat uneasy, as a woman who had caused the death of her husband on their wedding day was no ordinary jinx.

Gu Youyou laughed, "There's no need to think it over. Our establishment is a medical hall, so hard fate is actually good. Many patients have an excess of yin energy, and it takes someone with a strong fate to drive away the filth and evil spirits!"

Ah...? There was such a theory? The craftsman looked quite bemused.

"Alright, since Doctor Gu has said so, I'll go ask her after finishing work this afternoon."

In the afternoon, Jin Zijin brought back the completed signboard. Gu Youyou looked at it; it was a black lacquer signboard with blue inlay and gold lettering embossed in relief, surrounded by lifelike carvings of flowers. Weighing her finances, Gu Youyou had chosen an ordinary Manchurian ash wood for the sign.

Chapter 349: Banxia

Manchurian ash is actually considered a high-quality wood, but because the local area abounds with this type of lumber, its price is not too expensive.

Gu Youyou looked on with satisfaction, as Jin Zijin hung it up and then covered the plaque with red cloth.

According to custom, one had to wait until the grand opening day to pull off the red cloth from the plaque.

The craftsman master Gu Youyou had hired mentioned to the niece who lived next door yesterday, and today the young girl came along with him.

Her family was worried because such a daughter with a tarnished reputation was unable to marry off, and keeping her at home also led to gossip; naturally, they were eager to send her away if there was work she could do.

Gu Youyou looked at the girl; because she was shy, she appeared somewhat uncomfortable, with a sallow complexion and thin. Her hands, from long-term farm work, were rough, like those of a woman in her thirties.

In farming households, most girls' hands are like this, and she did not find it strange.

"Doctor Gu, this is my niece, what do you think?"

The girl looked reliable and honest at first glance, and Gu Youyou thought she was acceptable, but some harsh words still had to be said upfront.

She said, "Whether you know medical skills or recognize a lot of medicinal herbs is not too important, I can teach you slowly. I value character in the people I hire, and also that they work diligently, and are honest and upright. Master Lu, I think this girl is not bad."

Her words both praised and cautioned the girl, hitting just the right note.

Master Lu hurriedly laughed and said, "People from the countryside may not boast much, but they are sincere, and my niece has always been a reliable worker at home."

It was apparent she was a reliable worker; otherwise, her hands would not have looked that way.

Gu Youyou smiled and said, "Then thank you, Master Lu." She then turned to the uneasy girl and asked, "Miss, what is your name?"

The girl timidly replied, "My name is Banxia, Lu Banxia."

Master Lu laughed again and said, "Their family names their children after medicinal herbs. She is called Banxia, and she has a younger sister named Bai Zhi too!"

Gu Youyou thought it was quite amusing, no wonder they were a family of physicians.

"Alright, Miss Banxia, come with me!"

Opposite the kitchen in the back courtyard was a storage room, which Gu Youyou cleaned up and converted into two small cabins. She planned to hire two people to come in, so they would just live in these cabins.

Leading Banxia to one of the cabins, she told her to live there for now, and handed her a piece of paper with writing on it, saying, "Master Lu mentioned you can recognize some characters. This paper lists your daily tasks and your pay. Take a look, and if there's anything you don't understand, ask me."

Banxia took it and looked over it, then furrowed her brows. After a moment, she relaxed and said, "Okay, thank you, Doctor Gu."

"You don't have to call me Doctor Gu, my name is Gu Youyou. In Jisheng Hall at Qingshui Town, everyone calls me Sister Youyou."

Probably feeling that Gu Youyou was quite approachable, Lu Banxia finally showed a smile, "Sister Youyou!"

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The news that Gu Youyou was opening Jisheng Hall in Lingnan had long since reached Qingshui Town. When she left in a hurry, she didn’t bring many things. Now, just before the opening, she received items sent by Qin Changlin through someone.

Her personal necessities, a complete set of surgical tools, and quite a few silver notes, which could directly be cashed in at the banks in Lingnan.

Just when Gu Youyou was short on cash, these silver notes were like a lifesaver. With a total of two thousand taels, she could purchase a lot more medicinal herbs.

As Gu Youyou was sorting her things, she said contentedly, "I didn’t expect Qin Changlin to be so generous, giving me two thousand taels."

Chapter 350: The Fate of Uncle Three’s Family

Jin Zijin didn’t know why he appeared preoccupied today, and when he heard Gu Youyou’s words, he didn’t respond but seemed lost in his own thoughts.

Gu Youyou gave him a look and asked curiously, "What’s wrong with you?"

Jin Zijin snapped out of it, turned his head, and said, "Nothing. It’s not that Qin Changlin is generous; you deserve all of this. You’ve forgotten that you worked as a doctor in Jisheng Hall in Qingshui Town for so long and never took any silver."

Uh...

Gu Youyou thought about it and it seemed to be the case.

She was used to being her own boss and never had the habit of counting her expenses, let alone paying herself a salary.

When she was at Jisheng Hall, she always had others do her shopping, and she just needed to say what she wanted. Reflecting on it, she really hadn’t taken any of the wages that were originally agreed upon.

"That’s quite generous of him, two thousand taels!"

Jin Zijin fell silent for a moment, then changed the subject, "They should be sending Abao over in these next couple of days, right?"

"Abao?" She had almost forgotten if he hadn’t mentioned it.

She truly was an irresponsible owner.

Lately, she had been busy trying to get Jisheng Hall up and running as soon as possible, and she was almost overwhelmed by the workload.

Gu Youyou nodded and said, "Once he arrives, you can take care of him. I need to take Banxia out tomorrow since it’s the season for harvesting herbs, and we’re going to the countryside."

The countryside had cheaper herbs to offer.

At night, once Gu Youyou had fallen deeply asleep, Jin Zijin suddenly sat up in bed.

He glanced at the peacefully sleeping Gu Youyou, got up, and in the blink of an eye, vanished from the room.

"You mean he’s come to Lingnan?"

The man in black said, "Yes, we tracked him all the way to the vicinity of Lingnan and then lost sight of him. I suspect he has entered Lingnan City. This is Yue Tingfang’s territory; we cannot conduct an overt search, and we also have to be cautious about how we act covertly. What do you think..."

Jin Zijin pondered for a moment then said, "I understand. Withdraw all our people from Lingnan City. Be careful not to let Yue Tingfang notice, and leave the rest to me."

The man in black nodded and said, "Sure, you be careful too. It's not suitable for me to show my face in Lingnan. I'll head back to the capital first, but I've left some men in Wangxian Town for you."

Watching the man in black disappear, Jin Zijin's expression remained serious.

Qin Changlin had sent not just those items, but also a letter.

Gu Feng had died, Gu Sanbao had been imprisoned, and the family of Gu's second brother had expelled Gu Sanbao's wife, daughter, and son from the Gu Family, only giving them a deep-water lotus pond unsuitable for rice cultivation, and a patch of dry, barren land barely good for growing sweet potatoes and vegetables.

The family of three was now in a dire situation. Everyone knew about Gu Erya's arranged marriage with Wang Shun, but after this incident, even the Wang Family wanted to call off the marriage.

Out of frustration, Meng Qiuju had jumped into the Qingshui River to commit suicide. Now, only Gu Erya and her little brother, Gu Sanbao, remained, living in their old thatched cottage, barely surviving.

Qin Changlin wrote to Gu Youyou, explaining that the vile acts were committed by Gu Sanbao, whose wife and children were totally unaware and merely suffered due to his wrongdoings.

Seeing the pitiful state of the two siblings, he inquired if Gu Youyou would be willing to help them. It just so happened that Jisheng Hall needed a female attendant.

Considering that Gu Sanbao had died from anger, and that even Gu Youyou's parents had been murdered by him, Qin Changlin didn't dare make the decision himself.

Whether to offer help was indeed a troublesome matter.

He couldn't show the letter to Gu Youyou, yet he also knew what sort of person she was and didn't feel right making the decision for her. To just leave the matter unresolved seemed inappropriate as well. Really, he'd never been so conflicted, not even over killing a person.

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