Farmhouse 381

Chapter 381: Portrait of a Beauty

"Elder sister, you must win the painting competition. We can’t let her be smug again,"

Honestly, Gu Youyou’s performance left her feeling unsure, so Yue Rushuang didn’t agree directly and only said, "I will do my best."

The young ladies were painting together, and they all placed their hopes on the eldest sister, so the others were merely painting casually.

As long as the eldest sister won, it didn’t matter if they lost.

The youngest of the sisters, just a child, was the happiest; she didn’t understand what her elder sisters were competing for and was content to just spread her little hands and smear away, wishing she could cover the whole paper with her favorite colors.

Gu Youyou frowned because she wasn’t very skilled with the brush, so she asked a servant for some charcoal instead.

The servant was slightly surprised, not knowing what Gu Youyou wanted charcoal for.

But upon seeing the Marquess nod to him, he promptly went to fetch it.

"What mischief is she up to now?" the Marchioness said discontentedly.

The elder Madam said, "Just watch. They’ve all started, and she hasn’t even begun."

As that was said, Gu Youyou started to move.

She had already decided what she was going to paint. She had previously studied fashion design. She might not be good at painting landscapes, but she could paint portraits.

Gu Youyou squeezed out the paints from the small tub with a brush, mixing different colors on the table.

The others looked over in surprise. Seeing her mix so many colors, they were curious about what she intended to paint.

When they painted, it was nothing but flowers, grass, or landscapes, which required only a few colors. There wasn't enough time for a grand work with so many colors, really.

The only one using a lot of colors was the youngest sister with her finger painting.

Before long, the servant returned with the charcoal.

Gu Youyou thanked him and looked at the burning incense before quickly taking the charcoal.

Her actions were swift, her hands moving in tandem. From a distance, it appeared she was alternating between drawing with one hand and smudging with the other. What kind of painting was she working on that she would use charcoal?

Yue Rujing couldn't suppress her curiosity and ran over to see what Gu Youyou was doing.

She saw that on the white paper before Gu Youyou, an outline of a figure had appeared and although the costume was brought to life with just a few strokes, it already exuded a breathtaking beauty.

Gu Youyou glanced at Yue Rujing, appearing to smirk at her challenge.

Then, she saw Gu Youyou dip her brush into the colors she had mixed on the table.

With both hands working simultaneously, one brush was barely dampened with water and had no color.

She first added a dab of color to the drawing with the colored brush, then gently blended it with the other, creating a unique effect in the painting.

It was unexpectedly beautiful – who knew coloring could be done like this?

As Gu Youyou's brush danced on the paper, a stunning beauty emerged, breathtakingly alive.

The beauty had her eyes lowered, her long lashes partially veiling her gaze, giving her a melancholic look that tugged at the heartstrings.

Why did the beauty look so melancholic? Because Gu Youyou had given her white hair.

A beauty with white hair before aging, no wonder she looked distressed.

Of course, Yue Rujing had these thoughts, but Gu Youyou wouldn't know, and even if she knew, she would probably dismiss him as an ignorant country bumpkin.

As the last bit of the incense ash fell, Gu Youyou made her final stroke.

The maids held up the paintings for those seated on the high platform to see. From a distance, Gu Youyou's portrait of the beauty shocked the seated audience into a collective gasp.

How could someone paint a person so beautifully?

Those eyes, those softly shaded lips, and that dress of hers.

Chapter 382: Won Four Games

The clothes were so flowing that they seemed like celestial garments; mortal clothes could never achieve such an effect.

Gu Youyou stood calmly to the side, fully understanding the shock in their eyes.

Why the shock? One only needed to look at the wall paintings to understand.

Ancient people did not paint beauties the way she did.

They looked realistic, yet so beautiful they did not seem real.

As for the clothes, well, there was no need to mention that her education in fashion design was not for naught.

"This... Doctor Gu, which immortal are you painting here?" asked the elderly madam, now thoroughly convinced of Gu Youyou's talent. She had shifted from addressing her informally to respectfully, a true sign of her admiration.

Gu Youyou responded with a smile, "The Nine Heavens Mysterious Lady."

Of course, she was making it up.

However, the marchioness furrowed her brow, asking, "Why does the Nine Heavens Mysterious Lady have such long ears?"

Uh... Gu Youyou had given the beauty elf-like ears; silver hair naturally complemented elf ears better, of course.

Gu Youyou kept her composure and said, "The Nine Heavens Mysterious Lady resides above the ninth heaven, and she needs long ears to hear the suffering of the world below, hence she was born with a pair of long ears." She was becoming more and more impressed with her own ability to bluff.

The elderly madam marveled, simply saying, "Ah, only such artistic skill is worthy of painting the celestial elegance of the Mysterious Lady. The Goddess pictures we have at home pale in comparison to this Nine Heavens Mysterious Lady Picture. Doctor Gu, might you bestow this picture upon me?"

Gu Youyou looked surprised; she had not expected the elderly madam to outright ask for the painting.

She said, "If the madam does not disdain it, it is my fortune, and the painting's fortune as well."

And so, the madam happily took the painting away, and the result of the final contest was sheerly predictable.

The taste of being slapped in the face by a country girl was unpleasant.

The faces of the young misses were surprisingly ugly. Losing to one of their own sisters would have been one thing, but they had all been defeated by an outsider, and one whom they had colluded to deal with, at that.

Yue Ruxue's face was filled with anger, her gaze towards Gu Youyou full of spite.

The victorious Gu Youyou, on the other hand, did not look happy, but rather stood on the side with a worried frown.

Madam, would you not just happily embrace the painting—have you not forgotten something?

Of course, it would be impolite for her to remind the lady.

As the bells for the New Year rang, another year passed.

It was too late, Jin Zijin and Gu Youyou did not return to Jisheng Hall, but were instead led by a maid to the same quarters they had stayed in before.

The maid was not the previous Xiaotao, but another girl much older than Xiaotao, named Xiaoying.

Being a long-time servant of the household, she even recognized Jin Zijin and mentioned that when he used to visit the Marquis Residence in the past, he would always stay in these rooms. Even when he

wasn’t there, the Marquess would have someone clean them regularly, and no one else had stayed in them.

So, it turned out that these rooms were not just any guest rooms—they were specially prepared for Jin Zijin.

After closing the door, Gu Youyou finally asked the question that she had been holding in all night.

"You have a pet name, Ayan?"

When she heard Marquess calling him Ayan, she felt quite annoyed; her husband, and she hadn’t even known his pet name.

Jin Zijin touched his nose, seeming somewhat embarrassed.

He said, "I forgot to tell you, my full name is Jin Yan, and Zijin is my courtesy name."

Gu Youyou: "..."

On the first day of the New Year, she didn’t hesitate to throw a punch at him.

So much for Jin Yan—after being married for over a year, she had just found out his name. How were outsiders supposed to think when he introduced her as his wife?

Jin Zijin laughed and caught her fist, saying, "Youyou, I didn’t intentionally keep it from you; it’s just that... not many people use it, and I somehow forgot to bring it up."

Chapter 383: The Big Red Envelope Has Arrived

"Disgusting!" Gu Youyou puffed her cheeks and said, "I think you’re deliberately not telling me, then using me up, just to discard me easily! Jin Yan, could it be that you look down on me for being a village girl?"

"How could that be?" Jin Zijin laughed, then said earnestly, "I never expected Youyou to be so talented. You're proficient in everything, from playing the guqin to painting. Youyou, I feel like I've found a treasure."

...

At sunrise, Gu Youyou rubbed her groggy eyes and sat up from the bed. It was empty beside her, the person already gone.

She sighed and said, "You really do get up at dawn every day, without fail!"

She had thought that since he went to bed late last night, he might sleep in a little.

After she was dressed, Xiaoying had already brought her breakfast over.

Porridge, side dishes, and pancake with side stuffing.

"Thank you so much, Miss Xiaoying!" Gu Youyou said sweetly.

Xiaoying stepped back and stood aside. Hearing this, she looked up, her voice filled with humility and fear, "Doctor Gu, this is what I should do."

"Hmm!"

Gu Youyou hummed in acknowledgment and started eating with her chopsticks, not arguing further.

She was a maid in the Marquis Residence, and she was a guest; she wasn't her own maid. Expressing thanks was just basic respect and courtesy.

"Where has Jin Zijin gone?" Gu Youyou asked after finishing her meal.

Xiaoying looked up and replied, "Young Master Jin went out early in the morning. He said he was going to the master's place and told you to wait for him in the yard before he takes you home. He also instructed me not to disturb Doctor Gu. Young Master Jin is really good to you."

Lately, he had indeed been treating her well, and Gu Youyou happily agreed.

"Oh right!" Xiaoying hurriedly took out a red envelope and handed it to Gu Youyou, saying, "This was something the old Madam had Sister Ashu bring over this morning, saying that it was your winnings from last night."

Gu Youyou's eyes lit up. Her big red envelope had arrived!

She glanced at Xiaoying, but maintained her composure and did not immediately open it, instead solemnly tucking it into her bosom.

"When the old Madam's head maid brought something over, why didn't you wake me?"

Xiaoying replied with a sense of grievance, "Young Master Jin instructed that..."

Oh, right. Jin Zijin had said not to wake her up.

Gu Youyou sneaked back into her room and saw that the old Madam's gift was indeed generous: five silver notes, each worth a thousand taels of silver.

According to the rate at which silver is exchanged for rice, does that mean these five thousand taels of silver are worth five million?

Yes, that's how a real wealthy person would do it.

Wondering about the real estate prices in the center of Lingnan City, she pondered if they were similar to those in the big northern cities. With this five million, she could only buy a small apartment at best.

The courtyard of the Bun Shop next door wasn't small at all, and if the permanent property rights and the land were sold together, that five million was far from enough.

...

The garden in the Marquis Residence was clad in silver-white, offering a unique sight. Gu Youyou heard laughing and shouting in the yard outside and thought it might be some young ladies and maids playing with snowmen or having snowball fights. However, upon closer listening, it was not just that; there were also men's voices.

In this yard, the men who could play merrily with the young girls were only two or three at most. Gu Youyou hurriedly moved closer to join in the excitement.

Wow, it's Yue Rujing. Curious indeed, how could he also be up this early? She had thought he'd sleep until at least lunchtime after staying up late last night.

Carried by curiosity, Gu Youyou followed the direction of the sounds to see for herself.

It didn't sound far, but she still had to wind her way around the long corridors and Shuixie, taking quite a while to get there.

In an Octagonal Pavilion ahead, Yue Rujing was sitting in the center, dressed in white. His attire, covered in Yin Shuang, starkly contrasted with his colorful sisters and maids, drawing the eye to him despite oneself.

Chapter 384: Repelling Evil with the Five Poisons

"Big brother, big brother, I want a scorpion too!"

"What's so great about scorpions? Centipedes are much prettier."

Gu Youyou shivered in disgust. What's this about scorpions and centipedes?

"Big brother, I want a scorpion too." The fourth young mistress pleaded, tugging on Yue Rujing’s sleeve with her large, watery eyes.

Yue Rujing gently tousled the fourth young mistress’s bun, speaking softly, "Didn’t Fourth Sister say she liked snakes? Why do you want a scorpion now?"

"Because Second Sister said scorpions are pretty."

"Young master, young master, this maid also wants a scorpion."

"We want scorpions too..."

"Young master, this maid doesn’t want a scorpion, this maid wants a toad."

Gu Youyou: "..." What on earth is happening?

She had intended to just take a look from afar and then leave, but this chilling conversation also piqued her curiosity.

Snakes, centipedes, scorpions, toads—where do these come from in the dead of winter?

Gu Youyou had just lifted her foot when a sharp-eyed maid spotted her.

"Eh, that’s Doctor Gu."

Once she shouted out, a group of ladies at the Octagonal Pavilion all turned to look at her.

Nowhere to hide, well, she was actually curious to see what was odd, so she might as well go over.

Gu Youyou smiled and raised her hand to greet them, "Ladies and young masters, what are you all playing with?"

"Of course, we're welcoming the Five Poisons to ward off evil. Doctor Gu, you're a foreigner, so you probably don't understand, right?" Yue Ruxue said sarcastically.

Seeing her always made Gu Youyou want to laugh, especially since she won yesterday. She didn't hold grudges with the little girl.

As she got closer, Gu Youyou realized that what they had been talking about all this time was painting.

Moreover, these paintings weren't on paper, but on the fair arms of the young ladies and maids, and the one holding the brush and painting was the radiant Yue Rujing, the only male presence there.

I'm going, the guy is so lucky. Apart from him, only Jia Baoyu would be treated this way.

Go on, Yue Rujing's days were indeed like those of Jia Baoyu.

The eldest young mistress signaled the maid to bring over a stool and said to Gu Youyou, "Doctor Gu, have you had your painting done this year? If not..."

She was interrupted by the second young mistress before she could finish, "Eldest sister, why do you care if she has had her painting done? Her painting skills last night were top-notch; she doesn't need your needless worry."

Gu Youyou was slightly startled. From the sound of it, was painting the Five Poisons on their arms a local custom for the New Year?

It was a bit odd, though. Aren't the Five Poisons typically used as charms against evil around the Dragon Boat Festival, not now?

Well, different places have different customs.

Gu Youyou nonchalantly sat down and said, "I’m a foreigner, I won’t paint. I’ll watch you paint."

"Doctor Gu, do you think the snake Big Brother painted for me looks nice?" The fourth young mistress raised her arm to show Gu Youyou.

This fourth young mistress was about the same age as Sanya, and Gu Youyou felt an inexplicable affection for her. Holding the little arm extended to her, she praised, "It looks good, the fourth young mistress’s snake..." She glanced at the scorpion being painted on the second young mistress and said, "Is prettier than that scorpion."

The second young mistress trembled with anger. A shudder of her arm caused Yue Rujing’s brushstroke to mess up, drawing a long line across.

Gu Youyou quickly shifted her gaze away, adopting a ’none of my business’ demeanor.

Yue Rujing complained, "Ah,, Second Sister, didn’t I tell you not to move around?"

"Big brother, she said my scorpion was ugly."

Gu Youyou immediately said, "I never said your scorpion was ugly; I just said that scorpions aren’t as pretty as snakes."

"Why aren’t they as pretty as snakes? If you’re so capable, paint a snake to compare with my scorpion."

Gu Youyou: "..." Childish.

Chapter 385: The Devilish Little Snake

"What’s so good looking about scorpions, I’ve always thought centipedes were the best looking."

Gu Youyou looked at Yue Rujing and thought to herself: What a bunch of weirdos.

"Geckos are the best, they also have a good meaning, protection!" Miss Biao stretched out her arm.

"My toad is really the best!"

That's it, we've got a full house.

The Fourth Miss pulled Gu Youyou's sleeve, saying with aggrievement, "They're not drawing snakes, does that mean my snake is the ugliest?"

This little girl.

Gu Youyou glanced at Yue Rujing and said, "Who said that? If snakes aren't beautiful, it's the painter's poor skill. Come on, I'll draw one for you to see."

The Fourth Miss suddenly brightened her eyes, excitedly saying, "So Doctor Gu will draw a snake too? That means we both have snakes, that's great."

A shiver ran through her, "We both have snakes."

Heh, she had no resistance to little lolitas and said, "Alright, I'll also draw a snake."

The tools used for arm painting weren't the anciently used brushes, but something that looked like a carving knife, which was actually a bit like an eyeliner pen with a fine, soft tip.

Not sure what material it was made from.

If it weren't for the fact that you had to apply the pigment after each stroke, Gu Youyou thought it would be quite nice to write prescriptions with this thing.

She rolled up her sleeve, hiss, it's really cold.

Ancient people who lacked adequate warming equipment were more resistant to cold than modern people, and the ladies of the Yue Family were not delicate flowers raised in seclusion; each rolled up their sleeves and let the chill seep in without any reaction.

Last night, everyone saw the Nine Heavens Mysterious Lady Picture drawn by Gu Youyou, so when she rolled up her sleeves to paint on herself, the young ladies and maids all crowded around to watch.

It wasn’t easy to see Gu Youyou painting in person.

Gu Youyou thought for a moment, knowing she was painting to please a child, naturally she had to consider a child’s taste in art.

So... the best would be to draw a cartoon version, an ultra-adorable snake.

With an idea in mind, her brushwork was always fast, and in no time, a cartoonish, cute little snake coiled around her arm appeared.

Even though it wasn’t completely finished yet, the Fourth Miss was already slapping her hands cheerfully, clamoring for Gu Youyou to draw one on her as well, and she extended her other arm.

The older girls just didn’t get it, as they had never seen a snake with such a plump body and such a large head.

"What breed of snake is this? It looks so oddly shaped."

Gu Youyou playfully said, "It’s the abstract version, you wouldn’t understand!"

She was just short of finishing the eyes; she needed to be precise and draw big, watery eyes to make it even cuter.

As she was about to paint, her arm was suddenly gripped by a calloused large hand. Startled, she looked up to see the owner of the hand, Yue Rujing, who gave her a fearlessly cheeky glance before dotting the eyes of her adorable little snake with lightning speed.

Damn it!

Gu Youyou cried out in alarm, fervently wishing she could draw a pig's head on Yue Rujing's face.

Her cute and adorable little snake, with a pair of seductive red eyes.

Just like an innocent child suddenly possessed.

The other young ladies looked at Yue Rujing in surprise, not understanding what he was getting at.

Gu Youyou was infuriated and thought to herself that this was the Marquis Residence, and Yue Rujing was its prized jewel; she didn't dare to do anything to him and just glared at him bitterly, grinding her teeth and saying, "Young Master, your taste... is quite unique, isn't it? I thought blue eyes would have been cuter!"

Yue Rujing proudly said, "Red is auspicious!"

Is it related to being auspicious? It clearly looks more demonic.

Gu Youyou, fuming, grabbed a handkerchief planning to wipe off the little snake from her arm, only to hear Yue Rujing add, "Hey, don't move. It's made with special solution; it won't come off for three days."

Gu Youyou: "..."

Chapter 386: Tricked

Miss Fourth tugged at Gu Youyou's sleeve and said, "Doctor Gu, then you draw me a snake with blue eyes."

Gu Youyou gave Miss Fourth a smile, shot Yue Rujing a fierce glare, but still finished the foolish-looking snake and presented it to Miss Fourth.

The girls exclaimed, "Indeed, the blue eyes look lovely, so cute."

"Doctor Gu, I want one too..."

...

After returning, Gu Youyou rubbed and washed her hands, but the markings indeed wouldn’t come off.

Could it be that she really had to let this crazed little thing stay on her arm for three days?

Jin Zijin noticed she had been washing her hands for quite a while and came over to see, asking, "What are you washing?"

Gu Youyou raised her arm, lamenting, "Is this thing really going to take three days to wash off?"

Upon seeing the oddly-shaped snake on her arm, Jin Zijin slightly furrowed his brows.

"What’s wrong? You think it looks bad too?" Gu Youyou asked.

"No!" Jin Zijin said, "How come you’ve also drawn this?"

"Can’t I draw it?" Gu Youyou felt puzzled; she did not understand the local customs and rules.

Jin Zijin said, "This is something that only the girls in the boudoir would draw." He then laughed a little and added, "Well, now that it’s been drawn, it’s okay. The pigment used for the painting has a special solution added to it, which indeed takes three days to wash off."

Hearing his explanation, Gu Youyou felt that something was amiss.

If it's something only boudoir girls would draw, aside from the young Miss Third and Miss Fourth, the others should have known, but they didn't stop her when she was painting.

Yue Rujing, a grown man, didn't say anything either and even contributed a stroke.

Three days later, Gu Youyou managed to wash the markings off her arm, but she couldn't remove the snake's eye, no matter what.

Only then did she realize she might have been tricked; that stroke was definitely not done with any ordinary solution.

Damn it, Yue Rujing, what are you implying?

This little spot, lying quietly on her arm like a red mole, wouldn't be seen by others when she was dressed; it did not affect her appearance.

But Gu Youyou felt that this red mole was definitely not as simple as it seemed. After such elaborate scheming to trick her, Yue Rujing couldn't have just wanted to give her a red mole, could he?

The doctor's clinic wasn't open during the seven-day annual leave, but there was no such holiday in the military camp. Jin Zijin went to the camp early as usual, and it was said that Yue Rujing also went every day.

No, she had to go.

Gu Youyou always felt it was not right to have this thing on her body.

It was a good opportunity to visit the military camp. She could ask Jin Zijin to support her and demand an explanation from Yue Rujing.

Er, one can’t just walk into a military camp; she needed a reason!

Gu Youyou’s mind worked quickly, and soon she had a plan.

She ground the ink, laid out paper, wrote a letter, sealed it in an envelope, and secured it with a wax seal before heading to the city gate to ask for the location of the military camp.

The Commander guarding the city was Kang Shouyi, whom Jin Zijin had mentioned to her when they entered the city.

"Miss, it’s not yet time for leaving the city, please wait over there," he said.

Gu Youyou said, "I’m not in a hurry to leave the city now, I’m looking for your commander, Kang Shouyi."

A young woman calling the commander by his name so directly?

The city guard was slightly taken aback.

"Please wait here; I need to ask if the commander wishes to see you."

"Okay, thank you!" Gu Youyou expressed her gratitude.

Soon after, a man in his late twenties appeared. He recognized Gu Youyou at first glance.

Any woman who could enter the city with Yue Rujing and Jin Zijin was not to be underestimated, and at that time, he had taken a few extra glances. Moreover, with Gu Youyou’s notoriety in the city, Kang Shouyi also recognized her.

Chapter 387: Going to the Military Camp

He cupped his hands towards Gu Youyou and said, "So it’s Doctor Gu, may I ask what business Doctor Gu has with me?"

Gu Youyou said with a smile, "It’s like this, my husband went out of the city to the army camp today and forgot to bring something important, so I’m planning to deliver it to him. However, I have never been to the army camp and do not know its exact location, could General Kang help me out?"

In her hand, she was holding an envelope sealed with wax. Envelopes sealed with wax were usually confidential, which made it likely to be something important.

Kang Shouyi pondered for a moment and said, "Does Doctor Gu mean that you want us to deliver the letter for you?"

Gu Youyou stumbled, which eye of yours saw that I wanted you to help deliver it?

She hurriedly replied, "No, this is something important to my husband, and I dare not entrust it to others. I plan to deliver it myself, General Kang just needs to tell me the location of the army camp."

"This..." Kang Shouyi started to feel troubled, rubbing his chin.

Gu Youyou understood and quickly handed a piece of silver to him with tact, "General Kang, this is a small token of my appreciation, please use it to enjoy some tea."

Kang Shouyi was so frightened that his whole body shook, and he hastily said, "No no, not at all. Doctor Gu, I wouldn’t dare to accept your silver. The problem is that the army camp has very strict military rules, and women...women are not allowed to enter!"

Gu Youyou paused, surprised. Were the ladies of the Yue Family not women?

Well, this was a world where officials could start fires but common folk couldn’t light a lantern.

Gu Youyou became troubled as well, rubbing her sleeves and looking anxious.

"Then this...my husband said last night that it was very important, and we cannot afford any delay."

"Then..." Kang Shouyi eyed the envelope in Gu Youyou's hands.

Gu Youyou hurriedly hugged the envelope to her chest protectively like a chicken guarding its chicks and said, "This is so important that I can't trust anyone else with it, I must personally hand it to my husband to be at ease."

Kang Shouyi: "..."

"Sigh, let's do this!" Gu Youyou said helplessly, "How about you send someone to follow me? I will not go in, but just stand far away. Your man can go inform my husband, and he will surely come out to meet me."

...That actually wasn't a bad idea.

Kang Shouyi said, "Agreed, let's do that. Doctor Gu, it's not that I intend to make things difficult for you, it's really just that..."

"General Kang, please don't say such things, I understand."

A soldier followed behind Gu Youyou on horseback. The soldier's horse was a military horse, which as a civilian woman, Gu Youyou was not allowed to use, so Kang Shouyi lent his own personal horse to Gu Youyou.

Even though the personal horse was not as fierce as a military horse, the soldier simply couldn't outrun Gu Youyou.

Gu Youyou stopped to wait for him, and when the soldier caught up, wiping sweat from his forehead, he said awkwardly, "Doctor Gu truly is a hero among women!"

Gu Youyou hummed, saying, "You go ahead, I don't know the way anymore."

Up ahead was a three-way junction.

The soldier’s face stiffened and looked rather uncomfortable.

It turned out that Doctor Gu wasn’t waiting for him; she just didn’t know the way.

Army camps generally weren’t located too far from the city, just about ten miles out, so they quickly arrived.

The soldier bowed to Gu Youyou and said, "Doctor Gu, please wait here for a moment."

Gu Youyou nodded and replied, "Alright, hurry on then."

It wasn’t long before someone came, but it wasn’t Jin Zijin; it was Yue Rujing.

Gu Youyou gritted her teeth.

Well well, Yue Rujing, the very person I was looking for.

He seemed to know what Gu Youyou was there for, and didn’t ask about the important letter. Instead, he said to the soldier behind him, "You can go down now; it’s all the same if Doctor Gu hands that important letter to me."

Chapter 388: Leave Something Behind

The little soldier glanced at Gu Youyou guiltily, not daring to defy Yue Rujing’s words, and hastily retreated.

"It really wasn’t my fault, Doctor Gu. I just reached the doorway when I ran into the Young Master."

Behind the snow-covered haystacks, only Gu Youyou and Yue Rujing remained. Before Gu Youyou could speak, Yue Rujing chuckled and said, "It’s unfortunate, Chief Gu, that my senior brother is not in the camp today, he has another task and has gone out."

Gu Youyou glared at him furiously, her teeth clenched as she spat out a few words, "No matter, it’s you I’m looking for."

Yue Rujing’s eyes lit up, and he stared at Gu Youyou’s arm, saying, "Is it that... it won’t wash off?"

Damn you, Yue Rujing, doing this on purpose for sure.

Gu Youyou rolled up her sleeve in one swift motion and demanded, "What do you mean by that?"

When Yue Rujing saw the mark on Gu Youyou’s arm, resembling a red birthmark, he suddenly became so excited he didn’t know where to put his hands.

The expression on Gu Youyou’s face became increasingly grim. It was cold, and she quickly pulled her sleeve back down.

"Oh my, it really won’t wash off!" he exclaimed with excitement.

Then he immediately felt that something was off with Gu Youyou. Didn’t she know what this was?

Upon closer observation, Gu Youyou’s behavior didn’t seem feigned at all. She really didn’t know what this was?

This strange woman, the things she should know, she doesn’t; the things she shouldn’t know, she knows them all.

Yue Rujing’s lunatic-like demeanor was hard to fathom. Gu Youyou stared at him as if looking at a madman, wondering what he was actually up to.

"This... this is quite good, isn’t it? Look how pretty it is."

Gu Youyou: "..."

Is this a question of whether it looks good or not? Even if a mosquito bite swells up on the body, knowing it will subside in a few days, it still causes discomfort. And this was intentionally done by Yue Rujing.

That day, painting the Five Poisons, it must have been his meticulous planning, right? Otherwise, given the second young mistress's nature, would she have let Gu Youyou paint the Five Poisons with them?

"Stop spouting nonsense, what is your real intention?"

Yue Rujing fawningly replied, "No intention really, rest assured, it's a good thing, it won't harm you."

I'll believe that when hell freezes over.

"Yue Rujing, as far as I remember, I haven't harmed you, but you, when you took my blood, had the intention to silence me. I overlooked the past grievances for Jin Zijin's sake, yet you repeatedly cause me trouble. Don't think I don't know that you had a hand in the arrangements on the night of the vigil."

"You won that night, didn't you, and made quite a sum of silver."

"That was my own capability. You all intended to see me make a fool of myself."

Suddenly, Gu Youyou found all the young masters and mistresses of the Yue Family quite annoying. She saw so many patients in a day, and even on the rare holiday she gave herself, she had to spend effort dealing with their tricks.

With one careless move, even watching the excitement can get you into trouble.

You can guard against a thief for a while, but can you guard against a thief all your life?

Whether it’s the Gu Youyou of the past or the Gu Youyou of now, living carefully isn’t easy. Sometimes she even dreamt of being held down by a group of people in black, forcing her to swallow some dark, muddy poison.

Looking at this indelible red scar, God knows what she has imagined.

Enough is enough.

Behind the snowy haystacks, silence fell for a moment.

Perhaps sensing that Gu Youyou was genuinely angry, Yue Rujing finally dropped his playful grin. Then he whispered, "That really is nothing, you... just take it as a prank."

Laughing in extreme anger, Gu Youyou retorted, "Then would you like me to leave you with something too?"

"Ah?" Yue Rujing said in surprise, "I really didn’t harm you. Don’t be like this."

Chapter 389: Your Senior Brother Is Really No Good

Recalling those terrifying pickling incidents made Gu Youyou upset, and with a cold laugh she said, "Fine, I’ll treat it as a prank, but now you remove it for me."

She lifted her sleeves again, and the icy wind poured in, causing her to shiver violently.

Yue Rujing was startled, his face flushed once more, and he waved his hands as he backed away, saying, "No no, I can’t do anything about this."

"You..." Gu Youyou was furious, "Yue Rujing, don’t push me too far."

With a pained expression, Yue Rujing said, "I really can’t do anything, you... you should go back and ask your elder martial brother, maybe he knows how to remove it."

Having said this, he did not look at Gu Youyou’s eyes and started running away.

"Yue Rujing, you bastard!"

Gu Youyou chased after him in anger and urgency.

But how could she outrun Yue Rujing? And Yue Rujing was running as if he was being chased by ghosts.

He ran into the military camp, and Gu Youyou couldn’t even enter.

She could only stomp her feet and curse a storm outside.

...

"There’s a fierce woman outside cursing the Young Master, do you guys know who she is?"

The men who were always in the military camp shook their heads, having no idea.

"And the Princely Heir? He just lets her curse him?" someone curiously asked. Realizing the question might be inappropriate, they shrank their neck.

One of the braver men lowered his voice and said, "Exactly, the Young Master has become a shrinking turtle, too scared to go out."

"Shh, keep it down." After saying that, the group of gossiping men laughed.

A shrinking turtle, huh? Yue Rujing, inside his own tent, was delighted beyond measure, rubbing his hands and almost bursting into laughter.

There was a woman outside cursing him, yet he was still happy. His guard, Ji Dongcheng, didn’t understand it and asked, "Young Master, what are you so happy about?"

Could it be that the Young Master actually liked being scolded?

"Of course I’m happy," Yue Rujing suddenly put his hand on Ji Dongcheng’s shoulder and said, "I always knew my elder martial brother was something else, a real man indeed. Ah, every day surrounded by beauty and fragrance and yet he remains unmoved. Tell me, how many in this world could achieve that?"

It seemed his elder martial brother knew what he was doing after all. The detoxification was just that, and what shouldn’t be touched was untouched. Indeed, his elder martial brother was impressive, even he was almost deceived. Worried that Gu Youyou wouldn’t behave?

Ji Dongcheng looked at the excited Yue Rujing, completely puzzled, much like how it feels when... one’s little pig didn’t go making a mess in the cabbages.

"You’re talking about General Jin?" Ji Dongcheng asked.

"Do I have another elder martial brother?" Yue Rujing replied with irritation.

Then... Ji Dongcheng stiffened all over, incredulously staring at Yue Rujing.

Every day surrounded by beauty and fragrance, yet unmoved...

"How long has it been?" Ji Dongcheng couldn’t help but ask.

"How long has what been?"

"You know... every day... being unmoved! How long has it been?"

Uh, that was an awkward question.

Yue Rujing seriously counted and said with pride, "Over a year now, I guess!"

Upon hearing this, Ji Dongcheng's face changed dramatically. "Oh no, this is bad."

"What's bad?" Yue Rujing was taken aback, displeased.

Ji Dongcheng had a mournful look on his face and nervously said, "Young Master, your elder martial brother General Jin isn't a real man. He's in his prime, and to remain unmoved for over a year... it's clear... it's clear he's just incapable!"

"Ah, what?" Yue Rujing's face changed drastically, and he glared at Ji Dongcheng as if he wanted to devour him.

Ji Dongcheng shrank his neck and braced himself, "Young Master, you're not yet married and don't understand. I'm a man with experience, I know all too well. To remain unmoved despite beauty by his side for over a year, there's only one possibility..." he suddenly leaned closer to Yue Rujing and whispered, "and that is... he's truly impotent."

Chapter 390: Complaining

Yue Rujing's face was horrified, "..."

"You'd better persuade General Jin to find a doctor sooner rather than later. This kind of matter is too embarrassing to ignore, and it's a lifelong issue!"

Yue Rujing had initially believed him somewhat, but upon hearing the word 'doctor', his mind cleared instantly as if doused with cold water.

With one kick, he pushed away Ji Dongcheng, anger in his voice, "You're the one who's inadequate! If you spout nonsense again, I'll cut off your tongue and feed it to the dogs. You're not to let a single word of today's events slip out."

Isn’t Gu Youyou a doctor? If Elder Brother really had a problem, wouldn’t Gu Youyou cure him? He remembered that Gu Youyou was particularly good at treating that kind of illness.

It must still be Elder Brother’s remarkable self-control. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have been Tianzong’s senior brother with such abandon.

Yes, that had to be it.

The next State Preceptor’s elder brother was the hottest candidate. If one wanted to accomplish that task, the best way would be to vie for the position of State Preceptor.

Elder Brother always acted with measure. It was him who had overthought.

...

Gu Youyou sat at home, uneasy, staring blankly at her arm, which was so numb from the cold that she felt nothing.

Why did she find this object so familiar?

Jin Zijin came back in the late afternoon, his body covered in snow and frost.

Gu Youyou was startled and turned her head to ask, "Why are you back early today? I went to the barracks to find you, but they said you were out on a mission. Huh, didn’t you bring Abao back with you?"

Jin Zijin stiffened completely, paused for a moment, and said, "Today, I was indeed out on an errand, and Abao has been in the barracks all along. Perhaps Ajing took him back to the Marquis Residence. What brought you to the barracks to look for me today?"

Gu Youyou, feeling aggrieved, stretched out her arm for him to see.

Moving closer and seeing the red mole on her arm, Jin Zijin froze in place, his face changing colors like a kaleidoscope.

He wondered, what did her showing the Maidenhair Spike with such a hurt look mean?

"You..." Thinking of the cold weather and her bare arm, he hastily stepped forward to pull down her sleeve, saying, "It's the dead of winter; why have you been keeping your sleeve rolled up?"

Touching her skin, it was indeed as cold as ice.

His eyes turned colder and he said, "You still haven't rid your body of the cold poison; you need to wear warmer clothes and be sure not to let yourself get cold."

Her whole arm had lost feeling from the cold, as Jin Zijin softly blew on it while rubbing it to warm her up.

His hands were so warm, even warmer than a hand warmer.

She, feeling aggrieved, sniffled, blinking her eyes, trying her best to squeeze out some tears.

Jin Zijin didn't dare to meet her gaze, his focus solely on rubbing her frozen hand.

At this moment, his mind was in complete turmoil. What if she made that kind of request? If it had been before, he would have sternly warned her, reminding her of her place. All they were doing was suppressing the poison, and they each had their own needs.

But what about now? If he still couldn't see the truth in their hearts, then he truly would have lived in vain.

In public, they were a legitimately married couple, and both had feelings for each other. Wasn't it proper for her to make that kind of request?

Gu Youyou, however, turned his face toward hers, forcing him to look into her tearful eyes. Then she said with a pitiful voice, "Husband, your junior brother has bullied me. I went to look for you today, but I ran into Yue Rujing instead."

"What?" Looking at her hand and then thinking of Yue Rujing... Jin Zijin shook his head fiercely. No, no, no, it couldn’t be possible.

Yet her aggrieved look... and her arm frozen from the cold; such a thing couldn’t have come from nowhere.

His brows knitted together, his voice deepened, "Tomorrow, I’ll ask Ajing about it."