Farmhouse 481

Chapter 481: Chaos in the Matchmaking Records

But what about him now?

Is the present false, or was the past a pretense?

Lin Qianqing asked coldly, "Big Cousin, do you look down on my cousin?"

Xiao Jinyan’s tea-tasting motion paused, and he turned to look at Jin Wei.

Jin Wei stiffened for a moment, then awkwardly touched his nose again.

He said, "Qianqing, what are you talking about? The matter you’re discussing isn’t something I can decide on. There’s no question of looking down or not."

Lin Qianqing was stunned for a moment, then nodded in agreement, forcing a smile, and didn’t continue on this topic.

The attitude of Big Cousin was already very clear. He couldn’t decide, so that meant he looked down on her, right? Because the one who can decide certainly looks down on Gu Youyou’s background a hundred percent.

Big Cousin knew this too.

Originally, she planned to ask Big Cousin first. If he was willing, then she would go talk to her Grandmother. As long as Grandmother allowed her father to intervene, the Ducal Residence, however unwilling, would definitely not snub her father’s face, and then her cousin would be able to get married.

But since Big Cousin had this attitude, then forget it.

She had thought that if she couldn’t bring them together, she would feel some regret.

It would be a pity for someone as good as Big Cousin to be taken by someone else, but unexpectedly, she felt not a hint of regret in her heart, but rather a sigh of relief.

Lin Qianqing smiled and said, "You’re right, Big Cousin, I was too impulsive. I just felt that my cousin is such a good person that only Big Cousin is worthy of her. Since both parties are not interested, let’s leave it at that."

Her words were not polite. The word ’both’ clearly implied that you’re not interested in her, but she’s not interested in you either.

Jin Wei wasn’t stupid and understood the implication in her words, his face darkening.

Meanwhile, Xiao Jinyan, who was quietly drinking tea, suddenly laughed and asked, "Qianqing, tell me, in what ways is your cousin good?"

Because of Xiao Jinyan’s previous attitude, she now had a much lower opinion of him, and said indifferently, "Grandmother once said that everyone in our lineage is capable, like my father and my aunt. Had my aunt not been born female, our family would have produced two Top Scholars. My aunt passed away early, and it happens that my cousin inherited her talent, which is why she became a Divine Doctor at such a young age."

Jin Wei listened to Lin Qianqing speak, and again remembered Gu Youyou’s appearance.

She didn’t look like a village girl at all. The sharpness in her eyes was no less than that of the normally obedient legitimate young lady, her cousin.

And then there was her Uncle Lin Xingyi, who became a Top Scholar at the age of sixteen, the only one since the beginning of the dynasty. His talent was praised endlessly by everyone at court.

Maybe he really shouldn’t look down on a village girl, especially one with the Lin Family’s blood.

At that thought, Jin Wei felt a pang of surprise in his heart, realizing that in such a short time, he had changed his perspective on Gu Youyou.

...

"You want to open a medical clinic in Beijing?" Gu Youyou asked Yue Rujing in surprise.

If she opened a medical clinic in Beijing, that was exactly what she wanted to do, it should have been her to suggest it first. Unexpectedly, as soon as Yue Rujing arrived, she straightforwardly mentioned opening a clinic—what an uncanny coincidence.

"Most patients at Jisheng Hall in Lingnan are women, and Banxia is quite adept at treating women's diseases. I, however, am not, so after consideration, I think it's better to develop in Beijing. Hey, when is our Jisheng Hall going to open in Beijing? If you haven't started planning yet, I'll start arranging it, okay?"

"Don't bother." Gu Youyou said with a dark face, "You're not thinking of hanging a Jisheng Hall sign, are you?"

Chapter 482: Burn the Bridge after Crossing

Yue Rujing laughed carelessly and said, "Of course, with the renown of Jisheng Hall being so resounding, it would be foolish not to capitalize on it. Moreover, the profit in silver your pharmaceutical factory makes each month is truly tempting, and since I am in such need of money, why would I waste this opportunity, right?"

"You're in need of money?" Gu Youyou nearly spat out her tea.

She thought to herself: Who doesn't know that your family is the wealthiest in Lingnan! Are you really trying to play the country bumpkin with me?

Yue Rujing said with utter seriousness, "In need, indeed I am. Our Lingnan Marquis Residence bears a hereditary title that will be passed down to me. However, I am not like my father; he managed to save up quite a fortune when he was young, whereas I have wasted my years away at the Taoist Temple, sitting before the Three Pure Ones Statues for more than a decade. Before I bought shares in your

pharmaceutical factory, I didn’t have a penny to my name. Imagine me, a penniless Princely Heir succeeding as a Marquess, where would that leave my face?"

Gu Youyou: "..." How could she have known all these intricate details?

"But how is that related to me? I plan to set up the Jisheng Hall in Beijing on my own—without pooling investments."

Back in Lingnan, asking Yue Rujing to invest was out of necessity: first, she had no capital; second, she lacked connections. If she had to handle it herself, it would involve more trouble, and she did not have the luxury of time to waste in Lingnan.

Upon hearing Gu Youyou’s words, Yue Rujing’s face turned red with anger, and, standing up excitedly, he shouted, "Gu Youyou, you’re incredibly disloyal, you’re burning bridges after crossing the river. When you were in Lingnan, you used me, and I never realized you were such a crafty, opportunistic businesswoman. In my territory, you needed me, so you asked me to invest, but now that you don’t need me, you kick me aside?"

Gu Youyou put down her teacup, looked at Yue Rujing with surprise, and said, "What are you talking about? When you invested, I didn’t shortchange you by a single silver piece. According to you, just because you invested in Jisheng Hall in Lingnan, I should let you get involved in every new pharmacy I open? If I don’t, does that make me disloyal, a bridge-burner, an opportunistic businesswoman?"

Yue Rujing, having never won an argument against Gu Youyou whether he had a point or not, found himself at a loss for words after just a few sentences, so he cast a pleading look at Jin Zijin, who was calmly sipping tea on the side.

Jin Zijin maintained his composure quite well; the two of them were quarreling so fiercely that it was as if he heard none of it, sitting by the window, savoring his tea slowly, occasionally glancing outside.

As for Yue Rujing, who was desperately hoping he would intervene with a few words, Jin Zijin didn’t even bother to look.

Yue Rujing, becoming anxious, rushed forward and snatched the teacup from Jin Zijin's hand, saying, "Senior Brother, Boss Gu is becoming more and more unreasonable—won't you step in? I'm doing this for her own good. Without me, how could she succeed? As a woman, there are many situations where it's not convenient for her to show up, right?"

While Yue Rujing was making faces at Jin Zijin, Gu Youyou, on the other side, glared at Jin Zijin, indignant.

Although she didn't speak, her expression said it all.

Are you going to help him, try it?

Nobody can influence Gu Youyou's decisions. She's a doctor and a businesswoman; when it comes to maximizing profits, she always conducts affairs impartially. She couldn't give preferential treatment just because she was related to someone—this was what her modern-era grandfather had taught her.

Gu Family had been a major clan for hundreds of years, with side branches and relatives as dense as a spider's web. If she had to consider every single one, she might as well not run her business at all.

So her firm decision, in Yue Rujing's view, equated to being a disloyal, bridge-burning businesswoman.

Chapter 483: Reconciling Relationships

Two burning gazes bore into Jin Zijin, and he had no choice but to turn his head around.

His eyes swept across both their faces as he spoke indifferently, "The main task of our coming to Beijing was not to open a medical hall. Youyou, Ajing, now is not the time to vie for benefits. If you want to compete, you can do so once the big event is accomplished. But for now..." He looked at the assertive Gu Youyou and said, "If we let Ajing participate in Jisheng Hall, we can associate openly and aboveboard."

Yue Rujing burst into proud laughter upon hearing this.

His senior brother indeed wasn't the type to favor love over friends, leaning towards his side after all.

With a beam in his eyes, he looked at Gu Youyou and said, "Exactly, Boss Gu, let's work together. By joining forces, we can make Jisheng Hall's reputation soar, even outshine all the other medical halls in Beijing. Eventually, Jisheng Hall will be the most prominent in Beijing, wouldn't that be great? I think that settles it. We'll stick to the old rules; you provide the expertise, and I'll arrange the personnel. As for the silver, we've earned quite a bit from Lingnan, so we can just transfer some from there. Regarding the profit sharing, we'll stick to the old rules as well, splitting it fifty-fifty, with no one at a loss."

Fifty-fifty split, with no one at a loss? Gu Youyou's eyes seemed to spit fire, feeling greatly wronged.

All you did was hire a human trafficker to buy a few laborers, and for that, you want half of the profits?

As if human traffickers only sold to me.

Gu Youyou glared at Jin Zijin with a look that could kill, thinking: This profligate would make a saint out of a devil, doing business like this will lead to nothing but destitution.

No matter how good the relationship is, one shouldn't just give away hard-earned silver for others to spend, right?

"Jin Zijin, is this what you mean?"

Although his suggestion wasn't wrong—before the big event was achieved, letting Yue Rujing participate in Jisheng Hall could facilitate their open communication—it wasn't a must.

She had plenty of ways to send messages, and weren't you aware of them? Pretending to be unrelated by day, but at night, who was the one scaling the walls to visit?

The most crucial factor was the silver. Even Yue Rujing, the wealthy man, knew the value of silver, cutting away half her profits in just a few sentences. Gu Youyou was a businesswoman, wasn't this like gouging her heart out?

Jin Zijin simply chuckled at Gu Youyou’s desperate look and said, "I only said to let Ajing partake in the management of Jisheng Hall, I never intended to share half of the silver with him."

Hearing this, Gu Youyou finally relaxed and sat back down, asking softly, "Oh, then according to your opinion, how should we proceed?"

Gu Youyou had made up her mind; after all, she didn’t do business at a loss.

Yue Rujing was somewhat dissatisfied, but he trusted his senior brother would never let him suffer a loss, so he looked at Jin Zijin expectantly.

Jin Zijin’s gaze shifted to Yue Rujing, feeling somewhat guilty. He glanced at him, then quickly turned his gaze back.

Clearing his throat, he slowly said, "Ajing’s ability to handle affairs is plainly apparent to all of us, and Beijing is a place crowded with nobility and high officials. A single misdiagnosis could lead to fatal consequences. As far as I know, those who can open a medical hall in Beijing invariably have some connections.

Therefore, Ajing’s role becomes evident. His status facilitates interactions with those officials, avoiding unnecessary trouble, so Ajing’s role is irreplaceable. Youyou, what do you think?"

Gu Youyou raised an eyebrow and glanced at Yue Rujing, who was wearing a smug expression.

Jin Zijin had crowned him with a high hat that fit him perfectly.

Chapter 484: Jinxiu City

But when Gu Youyou saw Jin Zijin’s smile-filled eyes, she couldn’t help but feel there was something mischievous about them.

After all, they were pillow companions; Gu Youyou also trusted him not to let her suffer too much of a loss.

Wearing a hat too high isn’t necessarily a good thing; it could just end up breaking your neck.

With a laugh, she sat upright and hummed, "Hmm, there’s some sense in that, keep going."

"So..." Jin Zijin glanced once more at Yue Rujing, who looked trustingly pleased, and feeling increasingly uneasy, hurriedly said, "So Youyou definitely can’t shortchange Ajing; we must at least arrange a Store Manager position for him."

Yue Rujing was stunned, already sensing something fishy.

Jin Zijin continued, "Ajing’s wages cannot be low; they must be at least three times that of a normal worker, and he needs to be given a share of the dividends at the end of the year."

Yue Rujing was dumbfounded, and Gu Youyou, momentarily startled, then burst into laughter, eagerly agreeing, "Right, right, Zijin is correct. It’s only fitting for someone of Ajing’s talents to be a Store Manager. The wage issue is easy to settle; three times that of a normal worker is just the base salary. If you do well, I’ll give you a bonus, and during festivals, I’ll prepare a generous gift for you, ensuring your satisfaction..."

"You... you two..." Yue Rujing was so exasperated he was lost for words, exclaiming, "Big Brother, you’ve changed..."

Jin Zijin didn’t care about his lamenting, pushing him out and saying, "Find a suitable reason to step out for a while."

After sending him out, they closed the door again.

Gu Youyou’s face was full of smiles, not because she had thwarted Yue Rujing, that walking bandit, from reaping any benefits and even putting him in an awkward spot, but because Jin Zijin’s way of teasing was something she had to admire.

Yue Rujing had two identities: as a disciple of Tianzong, given that he was Jin Zijin's junior brother, his status was evidently not low. Secondly, he was the Princely Heir of the Marquis Residence from Lingnan, the future master of Lingnan. It made sense for him to come to Beijing and become a shareholder in Jisheng Hall.

First, because Jisheng Hall was a medical clinic with a renowned name, extending to Lingnan, and occasionally undertaking some free medicine distribution activities, which were all good deeds.

Second, it was commonplace for high officials and nobles to own their commercial properties; nobody could support a large family on their official salary alone.

However, if Yue Rujing was not to become a shareholder in Jisheng Hall, but to be a mere foreman earning wages, it would be a disgrace, especially knowing that even the Store Manager was an employee.

Seeing she had enjoyed herself enough, Jin Zijin also said with a light smile, "Money-grubber!"

"I'm a merchant!" Gu Youyou seriously said to Jin Zijin, "Do you think I'm too mercantile?"

They rarely had the opportunity to be alone during the day, and Jin Zijin pulled her onto his lap, saying with a light laugh, "As long as you're happy. If you love money, in the future..."

At that point, Jin Zijin suddenly stopped.

In fact, he wanted to say that if she loved money, in the future he would shower her with the finest things in Jinxiu City, making her one of the wealthiest in the land.

But that would have to wait until he succeeded; it was his property, and he would reclaim it one piece at a time.

"In the future what?"

Hearing only half, Gu Youyou looked at him, refusing to let the matter go.

Jin Zijin slightly narrowed his eyes as if reminiscing about the past, his thoughts drifting far, making his pupils dilate, and he merely sighed softly, "Two hundred li east of Beijing, lies a city called Jinxiu, the wealthiest city in Zhuzhao Country. There reside the finest embroiderers of Zhuzhao, and all the high-end brocades and silk products from various countries originate from Jinxiu City."

Gu Youyou gazed at him, momentarily perplexed, and unintentionally her right hand slipped into her sleeve, where a pocket was sewn, hiding something.

Chapter 485: The Emperor Summons

She tugged at the corners of her mouth and said softly, "Zhuzhao Country treasures its silk. Among the many nations, it is renowned for its silk brocades, so Jinxiu City must be a remarkable place."

"Indeed, a remarkable place!" Jin Zijin exclaimed.

...

In the first month of the year, the northern sky was bitterly cold. For the Princely Heir who came from Lingnan, the emperor was truly troubled, his heart a jumble of thoughts.

He didn’t want to see them, the Yue Family didn’t want to see them either, but since Yue Rujing had already arrived, he still summoned him to the palace. Yue Rujing knelt down properly below the dragon desk.

The emperor, although seated, sat at ease, his eyes half-closed like vast stars, his fingers tapping on the edge of the table in an intermittent rhythm. Seeing Yue Rujing’s stunning visage, he was reminded of Yue Tingfang’s appearance in his youth.

He must have beguiled all the young ladies in Beijing with this similar face, he thought, and his expression darkened unconsciously.

But then he considered that those old events had passed many years ago, they were all no longer young. The girls of those days were either married or had turned to dust; Yue Tingfang himself had kept his

promise, swearing he would never return to Beijing unless personally summoned by the emperor, so there really wasn't much to fuss about those bygone matters.

They were all grown-up now, weren't they?

With this thought, he chuckled softly and said, "I hear that right after the New Year, you rushed to Beijing on horseback. Was it to open a medical clinic?"

Yue Rujing had been kneeling so long his knees ached, but when he finally heard the emperor speak, he cracked a lopsided grin and laughed, saying, "Not entirely, Your Majesty. I had urgent matters to attend to."

"Oh? Urgent matters?" The emperor looked at him dubiously, raising an eyebrow, then asked, "What urgent matters could you possibly have that you didn't stay home to celebrate the New Year?"

"Oh, I came to Beijing to expand my business and earn some personal savings," said Yue Rujing with righteous vigor, much to the emperor's bemusement.

"Earn some personal savings? So the Marquis Residence back in Lingnan is so poor that you need to come to Beijing to earn silver?"

Blinking innocently, Yue Rujing said with a face full of naivety, "How would I know that? It's my old man who calls the shots at home. If he doesn't give me silver to spend, I have to find ways to earn it myself. As for not staying in Lingnan and instead running off to Beijing, I actually had my compelling difficulties. Alas! I spent many years studying in Qi Mountain, my knowledge of Daoist arts is mediocre, but I have a pretty good grasp of the Qihuang Technique, so I opened a medical clinic back in Lingnan. It didn't earn much to begin with, and my father forcefully requisitioned my medicines. He took large quantities of them without paying a single copper coin, so I really had no choice but to open up shop here in Beijing. I figured with Your Majesty here, if he wanted to rob me, he would have to think twice about the fact that this is right under the Son of Heaven's nose."

Portraying his own father as some sort of bandit, the emperor couldn't help but be amused throughout the conversation.

They look so much alike; how can their personalities be so different? Why wasn't Yue Tingfang a prodigal son like him back then?

"So you've opened a medical clinic in Beijing seeking my protection?" the emperor asked.

Yue Rujing's eyes sparkled, and he declared loudly, "Exactly! In this world, what place could be safer than under Your Majesty's roof?" He said somewhat sheepishly, "It's not easy for someone my size to earn a bit of pocket money, is it? But my old man is practically abusing me..."

"Nonsense!" As Yue Rujing grew more preposterous, the emperor's retort was stern, "I've heard you're ignorant and always stirring up trouble, and I think your father's methods are quite excellent. By controlling your allowances, you're less likely to cause trouble."

Chapter 486: Testing

Yue Rujing was reprimanded and didn't dare to reply, but still muttered with his head lowered, "How am I ignorant? I am Master's proudest disciple. Alas, isn't it because I've always stayed in the Taoist Temple serving Sanqing that my prime years have slipped by."

Although his voice was soft, the emperor heard it clearly and scoffed, "You're still not convinced? You deserve to be under your father's control. You say you have studied at Qi Mountain for many years, now tell me, how many skills from Qi Mountain have you learned? The State Preceptor is getting on in years, and the selection for the next State Preceptor might not be far off. As Master Tianjizi's proudest disciple from Tianzong, do you have the confidence to compete with Huo Li?"

Yue Rujing chuckled, "Do I even need to take action myself? My master's disciples are many and talented, we have..."

Speaking to this point, he realized he had mentioned something he shouldn't have and suddenly stopped, adding only, "Master is not young anymore. He knows the Yue Family has only me as the sole successor, so he has never thought of making me a Taoist. He has always been laissez-faire with me. To use his words, it would be better even for the little junior brother to take over than me."

The emperor raised his eyebrows, deep in thought. Seeing Yue Rujing glance his way, he suddenly said with profound meaning, "Your master is a wise man."

Yue Rujing, looking at the emperor with unclear intentions, laughed in a ruffian-like manner, "Your Majesty, my master hasn't come down the mountain for many years. You don't know—he's not wise at all. His mind has been muddled these last few years. Otherwise, would my father let me come down from the mountain? He's just afraid that in his confusion, he might hand down his mantle to me, risking the Yue Family's lineage coming to an end."

"Your master has become muddled?" the emperor asked, surprised, looking at Yue Rujing.

Yue Rujing replied, "Isn't that so? He's the senior brother to the State Preceptor, even older than him by quite a bit."

It had been more than a decade since the emperor had seen Tian Jizi. Thinking of Yu Jizi's aged appearance with his crane-like hair, the emperor nodded somberly.

"He's aged indeed!" the emperor muttered reflectively and then waved Yue Rujing away, signaling he could retreat.

Yue Rujing took his leave, leaving only the emperor in the vast hall.

"How could he be confused with a grand plan yet unfinished?"

He touched his own temples as if something had come to mind and suddenly yelled out, "Someone, bring me a mirror."

Soon, an eunuch about his age brought a mirror to him.

The emperor took it from him and looked at his reflection in the mirror.

At nearly fifty, he was no longer young. His slightly visible white hairs were mixed with the black, both tied up, and in the blink of an eye, half of his life had already slipped away.

The emperor gave a wry smile, recognizing his own aging appearance. As an elder who although lived longer than ordinary people, was fast approaching the end of his life.

...

Once Yue Rujing had left the palace, he went directly to find Jin Zijin.

Jin Zijin had openly taken up residence in the Dao Sect's Sanqing Temple, as a prominent disciple of Tianzong. Yue Rujing was also a disciple of Tianzong, so he stayed there as well.

This place was called a Taoist Temple, but since the Taoists held a very high status in Zhuzhao Country, this temple was built to the same standards as the prince residences.

Understated luxury.

"Brother, I saw the emperor today," Yue Rujing said, bursting into the room and gulping down a cup of tea.

"Hmm, I know," Jin Zijin nodded nonchalantly.

"He was trying to catch me out in conversation. I feel like he's still guarding against my father."

Jin Zijin replied, "Of course. The military forces stationed around the border cities make up seventy percent, and your father exclusively controls another twenty percent. The Imperial City has just thirty percent, with ten percent of it not even in the emperor's hands. In this whole world, only the forces under your father can contend with him. Who else would he guard against if not your father?"

Chapter 487: Praise

Yue Rujing chuckled with a hint of pride, feeling that it was a matter of honor.

In Beijing, the Yue Family might not be much to speak of, but in the south, they were absolutely a force no one dared to provoke, their power rivaled that of the Emperor's own troops.

He failed to notice, however, the ironic expression on Jin Zijin's face.

For an Emperor to behave thus, no wonder he was walking on thin ice. He spent his entire life balancing various powers, and even as an Emperor, he was constantly on edge, still having to dance to other people's tunes.

"Oh right, I let him in on the old man's senility," Yue Rujing said.

Looking up, Jin Zijin wore a look of mild surprise and sincerely praised, "It's rare for you to be so astute."

With the compliment, Yue Rujing scratched his head a bit embarrassed and said, "I always hear you talking about how the Emperor wants to be a peaceful ruler, navigating between different forces, and I thought the same applies to our Dao Family.

If Tianzong and Xuanzong are balanced, then he can sleep without worries. Now that the old man of Tianzong has become muddled and Xuanzong's old man is still sharp, this balance is broken. To maintain the balance between the two, he must protect us. That way, our actions in Beijing are also more secure, aren't they?"

"Not bad, you've made quite some progress."

Receiving his senior brother's praise once again, Yue Rujing started to feel a little elated. His mind raced, planning his next steps.

"So, should we extend our reach to the National Advisor Residence?"

Jin Zijin's face fell, and he gave him a rap on the head, saying, "You're being foolish again just after being praised. We've only been here a few days. Do you think the National Advisor Residence is somewhere you can just reach into? You should focus on getting Jisheng Hall up and running."

"I'm just a clerk, and the boss isn't in a hurry," Yue Rujing complained, shrinking his neck.

"Youyou, a sheltered young lady, can’t conveniently show her face often. She told you, she can’t be paying you for doing nothing, so you have to handle this matter."

Yue Rujing’s mouth twitched, almost about to erupt.

That shameless Gu Youyou, a profiteer who’s stingy with silver yet demands relentlessly, and to top it off, has the audacity to call herself a sheltered young lady?

...

As the old matriarch of the Lin Family hailed from a farmer’s background, their residence in Beijing had a more rustic air than other grand households.

While others grew flowers, they cultivated vegetables. Where others kept birds and mandarin ducks, they raised chickens and big white geese. In other estates, the ponds were filled with beautiful lotuses and koi, but in theirs, they grew edible lotus roots in addition to bighead carps.

Now there was a new sight, as the newly arrived cousin had planted some strange things in her yard, rumored to be medicinal herbs.

"It’s still snowing from time to time in January, what kind of medicine is the cousin growing?"

"Haven’t you seen the greenhouse the cousin set up? There’s also a brazier inside. Rumor has it some precious things need careful nurturing."

"Gee, she really doesn’t consider herself an outsider, using up so much charcoal like that. The old Madam must have given her a good amount of silver, right?"

Another maid scoffed, "Don’t underestimate her. Haven’t you heard? People with Lin Family blood are no ordinary folks. Though our cousin may have been born a farmer’s daughter, her abilities are indeed rare in this world."

"What kind of unparalleled abilities does she have?" The maid was brimming with gossip.

"Ever heard of the Divine Doctor from Lingnan?"

The maid shook her head.

The scoffing maid said with a laugh, "No wonder, you haven't even heard of the Divine Doctor from Lingnan. Let me tell you, our cousin is a Divine Doctor, granted a plaque by the Emperor himself, and is the only one who can curb the typhoid epidemic. You know, even Imperial Physicians are helpless against it."

Chapter 488: Burning Glass

Upon hearing these words, the maid no longer dared to look down on Gu Youyou, and cast a glance toward Youyou's courtyard as if looking at a strange creature.

Each member of the Lin Family a genius? How come she felt the young ladies were no different from other families' young ladies? It was the young master who seemed quite extraordinary.

Over at her shed, Gu Youyou planted the things she needed. In this era, the level of glassmaking was quite average, with limited products being extremely precious. She couldn't afford a glasshouse, so she used high-quality fabric as a substitute.

The fabric was not very good at retaining heat, so she had to add more braziers.

Seeing those several braziers burning day and night, Xiang Chun felt the pinch.

She had already spoken to the old Madam about it, saying that her cousin Miss was trying to conserve coal for cultivating plants. But the old Madam just glanced up lightly and said, "Let her be."

Then there was no further discussion.

Really, the old Madam was always thrifty, even growing vegetables and raising chickens herself. Why wasn't she insisting that her cousin Miss save a little now?

It wasn’t that the Lin Residence couldn’t afford it, it was just too wasteful. Plus, she was not a Miss of the Lin Residence, but a cousin Miss.

Outsiders didn’t understand what she was doing, and seeing Xiang Chun’s pained expression made Gu Youyou feel uncomfortable too.

After all, this wasn’t her own place. Although it was said that the grandmother of the Lin Residence had the final say, the one who really controlled the household was still her aunt by marriage. It wouldn’t be good to cause others to disdain her.

With no choice, Gu Youyou asked Jin Zijin for glass when he came by at night.

"Do you know any Glass Masters?"

In this era, glass was called liuli, and its crafting techniques were different from modern glassmaking.

Gu Youyou was planning to find a few masters skilled in making liuli, and together with her own knowledge of glassmaking, to conduct some experiments. She was confident she could produce cheap, yet quality glass.

But to Jin Zijin’s ears, she sounded incredibly bold.

"You wouldn’t be thinking of making a living out of liuli, would you? Are you really that short of silver?"

Gu Youyou had initially wanted to make glass for her convenience, but then she thought that glass was a rarity in this era, and if she could manufacture it for sale, it would indeed be a good way to earn money.

She smiled and said, "Why not? I know how glass... oh, I mean liuli, is made."

"Something you learned before?" Jin Zijin raised an eyebrow.

Gu Youyou replied with indifference, "I made simple ones in school before."

Jin Zijin did not understand the world Gu Youyou was talking about, so he was quite surprised that she had learned the skill of making liuli in school. After a moment of silence, he said, "I know masters who can make liuli, but they can't just make it for anyone. This craft is controlled by the Imperial Family, and those Glass Masters have been under the Imperial Family for generations. So, getting their help and spreading the craft might be impossible."

Was it really that serious?

Understanding the absurdity of feudal society, Gu Youyou regretfully bowed her head, then suddenly asked, "What if I manage to produce liuli on my own? Surely I wouldn't be restricted by the Imperial Family, and then have to produce liuli solely for them, right?"

Jin Zijin frowned and nodded, "So, you better not do it yourself. Such a thing would bring not wealth, but misfortune, unless..."

"Unless what?" Gu Youyou's face had already fallen, but upon hearing Jin Zijin, a glimmer of hope ignited.

"Unless you are a member of the Imperial Family yourself."

"Ah...?"

Jin Zijin, however, smiled and said, "If you were an Imperial son's wife, your ability to produce liuli would certainly be a great achievement. But if you are an outsider... then it would be a harbinger of disaster."

Chapter 489: Nurturing Medicine

Gu Youyou stuck out her tongue, her face full of disdain.

"This is an outright monopoly, where only officials are allowed to start fires while commoners can't even light a lantern."

Since the glass-making venture had become unfeasible, her Four Seasons Medicine Shed faced difficulties.

She complained, "The weather in the north is so cold, my cousin told me that out of the four seasons, two are considered winter. Under such climate conditions, herbs don't grow well. If they were transported from the south, it would be too far, and the cost of transportation is the least of concerns; the main issue is that some substances must be used fresh for their medicinal properties to be effective."

By the end of the first lunar month, the weather these past few days had been unusually cold. Gu Youyou whined as she drew herself further into her quilt. Since arriving in Beijing, she had resumed taking her medicine to suppress the winter poison. The northern winters were incomparably colder than those in the south.

Jin Zijin drew her icy body into his embrace, his handsome brows knitting together.

Without dispelling the cold poison in her body, she was unsuited for the northern climate. If it were not for him climbing over the wall every night to be by her side, who knew how much more medicine she would need to drink to keep the poison at bay.

He gently patted her back and said, "Great Scholar Lin received quite a few rewards before the New Year, surely he can afford a few baskets of coal fire?"

He noticed that her room was not warm and that there was no underfloor heating.

Gu Youyou said, "It's not that, I used the coal my aunt gave me to maintain the temperature for the herbs."

"What herb is so precious? You can't neglect your own health. If the cold poison flares up, it won't be a joke," Jin Zijin said with a mix of warmth and anger.

Gu Youyou said, "It's precisely because I value my own health that I'm nurturing those herbs. I have to find a way to cure this cold poison someday, and I'm seeing some progress now. Oh, and the heat toxin

in your body, it’s more manageable up north here, with many herbs able to be grown directly in the snow."

Jin Zijin was taken aback, watching her with some surprise.

It turned out that her diligent search for various herbs was all to find the antidote.

He knew the way to cure the poison; the Youying Pearl he needed was unattainable, but he had the antidote for her... he just...couldn’t give it to her yet.

He caressed her hair and whispered in a low voice, "You don’t have to work so hard. The antidote for you...I will get it for you one day."

Gu Youyou, however, was not moved because, in her view, if it was already so troublesome to find a cure for his poison, it would be even more difficult to find one for hers.

Hmm, perhaps it would be easier for her to save herself. After all, she couldn’t let her many years of medical study go to waste, could she?

"I understand, but I still have to do it. I’ve heard there are seven Medicine Men."

"You..." Jin Zijin looked at her in astonishment, saying, "With your own issues being so troublesome, you’re not going to meddle in others’ affairs, are you?"

"Why would you call it meddling? I am a doctor."

Jin Zijin: "..."

"If they come to seek treatment, how could I possibly turn away patients? I am a doctor with professional integrity," Gu Youyou argued with righteous fervor.

Alright, there's no winning against her.

It seemed like she was being headstrong, but in truth, she was just using her willfulness to make things easier for him, a strange and stubborn girl indeed.

...

On the second day of the second lunar month, the Dragon Raises Its Head.

In modern times, this festival, almost forgotten amidst the hustle and bustle of the city, was highly regarded in the ancient Zhuzhao Country.

Because at this time, the yang energy would rise again, and the earth would begin to thaw, signaling the start of spring plowing.

Especially in areas in the north where rainfall was scarce, the agricultural yield was often affected by perennial drought. People depended on their worship of the Dragon King to avert disaster and attract good fortune, in hopes that the Dragon King would bless the world with the safety of people and livestock and an abundant harvest of grains.

Chapter 490: The Gossip of the Lu Family

The worship of the Dragon King and Dragon Mother is indispensable for all officials.

In the Lin Residence, the aunt had sent someone to inform Youyou the day before, saying that she would take Youyou and her sisters to worship the Dragon Mother.

Meanwhile, the uncle was going to take the boys of the family to worship the Dragon King under the leadership of the Emperor and the State Preceptor.

Gu Youyou put on the new clothes sent by her aunt and got up early in the morning.

The Dragon King Temple was twenty miles outside of the city; traveling there by carriage, when Youyou alighted, she found the temple already packed with people.

Both men and women were present, but stood separated on the left and right sides respectively.

The Dragon King and Dragon Mother sat at the front, on the left and right. It was said that men should worship the Dragon King and women the Dragon Mother, but in fact, people queued up in mixed groups to worship them together. This was also the day when young ladies from Beijing's boudoirs could openly and closely observe the young masters from other families.

If a man and a woman ended up worshipping the Dragon King and the Dragon Mother together, that was considered a rare affinity.

Youyou looked ahead and saw that apart from the Empress Dowager, who was elderly and had difficulty walking and thus was seated, everyone else stood.

Gu Youyou's maternal grandmother had not come, having heard that the State Preceptor would recite the ceremonial words for four hours; the elderly ladies without the privilege to sit would not attend. Hearing this, even the young Youyou felt daunted.

The aunt handed Youyou a basket and instructed her, "This is your first time coming to worship the Dragon Mother. If you don't know how, just follow what others do. Don't worry, just follow the crowd behind you, it's very simple."

Seeing that the young ladies and masters from other families had also received baskets, Youyou obediently nodded.

Her elder cousin Lin Qianjing excitedly pulled Youyou aside to introduce everyone: "That is the legitimate daughter of the family of the director from Zongrenfu, she used to sit behind me at school, three years older than me, and is now married to the family of the junior preceptor."

Ah, Zhuzhao Country is so enlightened that it even has schools dedicated for females.

"That one with the peach blossom eyes is the son of General Lu. General Lu's concubines bore him a bunch of daughters, and he treasures his only legitimate son deeply. Madam Lu and General Lu were childhood betrothed, and since she is somewhat coarse and not to General Lu's liking, she could only

secure her position as his main wife because she bore him a son; otherwise, he would have demoted her to a concubine long ago."

Youyou was surprised: "Can she be demoted just like that?" Shouldn't there be a reason to divorce her instead?

Lin Qianqing pursed her lips and laughed, "Oh, the stories of General Lu's house are the most and the most entertaining. Take Madam Lu, for example, she's been demoted to a concubine before, more than once."

"What?" Youyou was very surprised.

A main wife being demoted to a concubine for fun? And more than once.

"Come on over here, and I'll tell you all about it slowly."

Lin Qianqing pulled Youyou aside, suppressing her laughter, and whispered, "Madam Lu's father is a second-ranked official from the Ministry of Personnel, and General Lu was originally a third-ranked military official. In times of peace, civil officials generally have an easier time than military officials, so the childhood betrothal was actually General Lu marrying above his station. The thing is, General Lu had never met Madam Lu before their wedding, so he had no idea what she looked like..."

Just as she was saying this, a robust woman sent a basket to the peach-eyed son of General Lu, and Qianqing excitedly pulled Youyou, saying, "Did you see? That's Madam Lu. Cousin, how can a woman look like that? If I didn't know she was indeed a woman, I'd think she was a burly man in disguise."

Youyou followed the direction Qianqing was pointing and was startled at the sight.