## Farmhouse 491

Chapter 491: The Exceptionally Talented Madam Lu

It was indeed shocking. Madam Lu actually looked so...exceptionally gifted. She was tall with a frame that seemed to measure between one meter ninety and two meters, easily half a head taller than the not-so-short, peach-eyed Master Lu.

Her features were also unlike the soft beauty of women, with a large nose and mouth, and even sporting a light beard, it was truly a man's face.

She looked as if she had a severe excess of male hormones.

But it wasn't just her ugliness; she also wore heavy makeup. The blush on her cheeks was as red as a monkey's bottom, quite glaring to look at, and indeed, she resembled a man dressed in women's makeup.

Madam Lu, with a pleasing smile on her face, handed a delicate basket to the handsome Master Lu, who received it with great disgust, shooing her off toward the women's side as if swatting away a fly.

Madam Lu, however, was not perturbed, saying, "Oh my son, won't you see if what mom prepared pleases you?"

When she spoke, it turned out she had a voice like a drake's.

This led to a burst of laughter from the men around Master Lu.

"Master Lu, is that your mother or your father, haha..."

Master Lu, with his face turning bright red with restraint, quickly urged Madam Lu to leave.

"I'm satisfied, satisfied!" He spoke hurriedly without even looking: "Alright, go over there. You could have had a maid bring this. What's the meaning of this? It's beneath your dignity; you'll be the laughingstock of others."

Madam Lu, in a loud voice, retorted: "Who dares to laugh at me? I'll tear them to pieces."

No sooner had she spoken than a middle-aged man approached with a cold face, snorting, "Who are you going to tear to pieces? Me?"

This middle-aged man bore a strong resemblance to Master Lu – it was General Lu himself.

Seeing the angry look on General Lu's face, Madam Lu sheepishly returned to the women's side.

Lin Qianqing was already laughing uncontrollably, yet she desperately tried to hide behind Gu Youyou.

The other madams and misses, as well as the men opposite, were pointing and whispering behind covered hands, occasionally laughing out loud.

Gu Youyou thought that the Lu Family had probably become quite the joke in Beijing.

In ancient times, women had little entertainment, and they loved to chat about the scandals of others. No wonder Lin Qianqing knew so much about the Lu Residence.

Qianqing said with a laugh: "Cousin, see, this is Madam Lu. It's said that when General Lu lifted her veil on their wedding night and saw her for the first time, he was sobered from fright and vomited out all the wine he had drunk during the day. The next day, he clamored to divorce her.

But it was the elder Madam Lu who strongly persuaded him otherwise, saying that this marriage was arranged by the late Elder General Lu, and that there was no noble family in the current era that would divorce a bride the day after the wedding. She told him to take another look, and if the wife had a good temperament, it wouldn't hurt to keep her.

The elder Madam Lu was also extremely surprised, as she had seen Madam Lu when she was a child and she was pretty back then; no one knows how she ended up growing into her current appearance."

Seeing that the ceremony couldn’t start for a while and the madams and misses were all gathered in groups chatting, Gu Youyou also became interested in the gossip about the Lu Residence.

"And how did she end up as a concubine afterwards?"

"General Lu simply couldn’t bring himself to be intimate with her, and since the Lu Family couldn’t be without an heir, the elder Madam Lu had no choice but to let him take several concubines. Although Madam Lu had the appearance of a man, her jealousy was not trivial. Using her status as the principal wife, she harmed two pregnant concubines of the house in a row; in a fit of rage, General Lu demoted her to a concubine.

But after all, she was the legitimate daughter of the Minister of Personnel. A legitimate daughter becoming a concubine did not look good for the Minister. With his higher rank, he found a fault with General Lu and wouldn’t let it go, using it to threaten and eventually restore her status as the primary wife."

Chapter 492: Just These Little Pleasures of the Boudoir

"So how was she demoted afterward?"

"Madam Lu, driven by strong jealousy, took advantage of General Lu’s absence and secretly sold his favorite concubine to a brothel. And when General Lu came home to find out, he flew into a rage. She became a concubine once again.

"This time, without waiting for the Minister of Personnel to act, the general himself went to the minister’s home and declared he would not easily restore her status as his wife. He wouldn’t casually establish another concubine as the official wife either, unless one could bear him a firstborn son.

"At that time, General Lu was already in his twenties and, although he had several daughters, he had not a single son. The minister sympathized with the general’s difficulties and had to agree with his conditions."

"But Madam Lu did indeed bear General Lu a son."

"Exactly, haha..." Lin Qianqing laughed, "Madam Lu went back to her parental home crying, saying she’d been married for several years and was still a virgin. General Lu wouldn’t touch her; no need to mention

bearing a son, she couldn’t even have a daughter. Later, her mother gave her an idea—to drug General Lu, and that’s how they had the young master of the Lu family."

Gu Youyou looked at General Lu, a man of outstanding appearance, yet married to such a wife. It really was... unsuitable.

Anyone else would also feel sick at heart.

Yet her cousin... Gu Youyou inspected her closely.

This lady of a great family, why did she seem like a wild girl from the village, chattering about such gossip? Shouldn’t she blush and feel her heart race?

Seeing the change in Gu Youyou’s expression, Lin Qianqing finally struggled to maintain her composure, and with a dry laugh said, "Grandmother says we birds in a cage have little else for amusement. Cousin, I thought you were like me, not one to fuss over trivialities, which is why I chatted such things with you. You don’t find me too..."

Gu Youyou quickly shook her head, saying, "Not at all, not at all, your disposition is quite good. I am just surprised that cousin, you are such a broad-minded girl. It’s really rare for a sheltered young lady to be like you—maternal grandmother is indeed... extraordinary!"

Gu Youyou was not very familiar with that maternal grandmother; she’d only been here less than half a month. She simply went every day to take the old lady’s pulse, eat the morning meal, and didn’t talk much.

Because the old lady was of considerable age, yet her eyes were very sharp, and the questions she asked always made Gu Youyou feel awkward, uncertain of how to respond properly.

She was afraid of letting something slip in front of the old lady and tried to avoid her as much as possible.

Full of excitement, Lin Qianqing said, "The grandmother is sick, and you being a doctor spend a lot of time with her. Have you discovered how much the grandmother knows, and that what she knows is very interesting?"

Gu Youyou was only being cautious around the old lady, so she hadn't paid much attention to that aspect and had to reply, "Maternal grandmother is sick, and spends most of her time sleeping. I haven't had many conversations with her."

"Oh, is that so!" Lin Qianqing sounded somewhat disappointed, "Never mind, you'll find out later."

From Lin Qianqing's remarks, it was clear that she was very close to her maternal grandmother. The unrestrained and unruly nature she showed was likely influenced by her grandmother.

Gu Youyou became genuinely curious about what was so extraordinary about this old lady.

...

The ceremony was about to start, and everyone stood in line, watching the front.

Gu Youyou glanced over, and on the table in front of the Dragon King and Dragon Mother were incense and candles, with several men orderly placing sacrificial offerings on the table.

Mountain delicacies, rice wine, beef, pork head... along with various pastries, the table was brimming with offerings.

Soon, a familiar figure appeared next to the table; it was Jin Zijin.

Yue Rujing was also there.

Chapter 493: We Are Fated to Meet

Groups of people clad in black and white emerged from either side of the Dragon King Temple, converging at the front. Jin Zijin and Yue Rujing were dressed in white garments, and so were the people behind them; those clothes must be the uniform of the Dao Family's Tianzong.

On the other side, an elderly man with white hair and beard led the group. He wore a black Taoist robe embroidered with a huge Dao Family's Yin-Yang symbol in the middle, a traditional eight-trigram Taoist robe, finally allowing Gu Youyou to identify them as Taoists.

The rest dressed much more casually in black, not resembling what she recalled Taoist robes to be.

Without guessing, it was clear to her that the legendary State Preceptor was none other than the white-haired man in the black Taoist robe.

What was his name again? She heard Yue Rujing mention it before, something like Yu Jizi. Heh, to think she would encounter her nemesis under such circumstances.

Gu Youyou had blended in among the ladies and young misses of various families, her eyes poisoned as she glared at him.

The disgusting old creep.

The people from Dao Family's Tianzong and Xuanzong factions orderly came forth, positioning themselves at the very front of everyone else. Gu Youyou had thought that Beijing's Sanqing Temple was Xuanzong's territory, but to her surprise, Tianzong's disciples were no fewer than Xuanzong's. Looking closely, she noticed their formation resembled a Tai Chi diagram of intertwined black and white.

That meant the numbers on both sides were equal.

Yu Jizi was loudly chanting the lengthy sacrificial words. Standing amidst the crowd, Gu Youyou imitated the others, kneeling and bowing occasionally, sometimes lifting out rice wine from the basket, holding it high, and uttering prayers for good weather and plentiful harvests. Then, holding up a Dou of rice, she followed along with the chant: "Fragrant flowers placed on fragrant rice, gold and silver treasures laid on four sides; A house full of gold and silver treasure, never worrying about what to wear or what to eat ..."

They went through all this trouble for four hours, and only when the sun began to lean towards the west did the ritual finally conclude.

The cold northern weather left no warmth even under the blazing sun, and despite wearing plenty, she still felt her entire body stiffen with cold.

Next, they were to hold a stick of incense to worship before the Dragon Mother, then place it into the large incense burner before her, and that would conclude the ceremony.

Moving was better than standing still; thankfully, they could finally move. Otherwise, she really might have frozen into an illness.

Lin Qianqing noticed Gu Youyou’s discomfort and quickly asked, "Cousin, are you alright?"

Gu Youyou turned stiffly, smiling at her, and said, "It’s alright, just a bit too cold."

Lin Qianqing touched her hand and exclaimed in shock, "My goodness, cousin, why are your hands so cold?"

Gu Youyou simply replied, "It’s an old condition, it’s nothing serious."

Lin Qianqing fell silent, then said, "That’s right, cousin, you’ve always been frail. It was our oversight; we shouldn’t have let you come out in the cold. Let’s hurry up then, after the worship, we can return to the carriage."

"Mm!" Gu Youyou nodded and followed the queue ahead.

After the emperor and his family had finished their worship, it was time for the ministers and their families to begin theirs.

Coincidentally, the man beside Gu Youyou happened to be Xiao Jinyan.

This man was one of Jin Zijin’s, but whenever he looked at Gu Youyou, there was always a chill in his gaze.

Jin Zijin’s people were all oddly peculiar. When she was by Jin Zijin’s side, Yue Rujing was displeased and almost underhandedly bled her dry.

This man had a secretive relationship with Jin Zijin and likewise regarded her with animosity. Given the chance, he would probably not hesitate to strike her down.

His dagger-like stares seemed ready to cut her to pieces.

Cursing her bad luck internally, Gu Youyou still managed to laugh softly, "Young Master Xiao, what a coincidence. The more you detest me, the more fate seems to bring us together."

Chapter 494: Sudden Illness

Xiao Jinyan chuckled and lowered his voice as well, "Fate can be divided into many types, like the cursed fate between you two... As for the fate between you and me, I also feel quite fated."

Gu Youyou stopped smiling and replied coldly, "Even a cursed fate is still fate. Our business is none of your concern as an outsider. You’re meddling too much; I think you’d best look after your own fate."

Indeed, it seemed she needed to find out exactly who Xiao Jinyan was.

When it was her turn to offer incense, Jin Zijin stood by the Dragon Mother’s side and watched her.

Gu Youyou bowed deeply before the huge stone statue with respect, and once she stood up, Jin Zijin took the incense stick from her hand.

In the moment he touched her icy hand, he almost imperceptibly furrowed his brow.

Gu Youyou offered a slight smile with a twist of her lips and gave him a reassuring look.

She had taken her medicine that morning and could still hold on.

On the other side, a strange man in his thirties with dark, determined brows and strong features took the incense stick. Although he took the stick from Xiao Jinyan, his gaze remained fixed on Gu Youyou, making her very uncomfortable.

Not too far away stood an elderly man with white hair, none other than Yu Jizi. He, too, was watching Gu Youyou. Gu Youyou's heart skipped a beat, as she realized the truth.

They all recognized her. Perhaps from the moment she had set foot in Beijing in the Lin Residence's butler's carriage, they had been watching her from somewhere.

Ah, indeed...

This might actually be for the best!

After offering the incense, Gu Youyou returned to her carriage.

Soon, Lin Qianqing also climbed aboard and, seeing Gu Youyou's face turned blue from the cold, hurriedly ordered the maids to start a fire.

She helped Gu Youyou rub her hands and paced around anxiously. "Cousin, how can you be so sensitive to the cold? The weather isn't that cold now. Oh right, I forgot—Qingshui Town is located to the southwest, where it's not as cold as in the north. Sigh! And you've been frail since childhood; we've been so careless. We should have wrapped you in a fur coat."

Gu Youyou gave a bitter smile. With the poison of coldness inside her reacting with the coldness from the outside, even ten layers of fur would be useless.

"I'm fine. Once we get back, I'll go straight to the pharmacy."

Gu Youyou's pharmacy, which was kept warm with firepots all day, was the warmest place.

Seeing the maids busily moving firepots into Gu Youyou’s carriage, Madam Lin also came over to check on her.

"What’s wrong with Youyou?"

Gu Youyou’s face was purplish, and she shivered even while nestled in Lin Qianqing’s arms.

Madam Lin lifted the curtain and was startled at the sight.

Lin Qianqing said, "Mother, cousin might have a relapse of her old ailment; she’s really cold."

Upon hearing Lin Qianqing’s words, Madam Lin became terribly frightened and stretched out her hand to touch Gu Youyou’s forehead.

Upon contact, the bone-chilling cold seeped from the palm of her hand throughout her body, giving her a huge scare.

Gu Youyou had been brought out by her, and it would be terrible if something happened on the road.

Her demanding mother-in-law was not someone easy to provoke.

"Why is it so cold? Youyou, you’re a doctor yourself. Can you endure until we get back to the residence?"

Gu Youyou’s teeth chattered with cold, so extreme that she felt two sensations alternately within her body. One was the discomfort from the extreme cold, desperately seeking a warm place for relief.

The other sensation was not unfamiliar either—it was that of the despairing coldness spreading from the depths of her heart when she found herself to be bait for Jin Zijin in the deep mountains. She didn’t find it uncomfortable, rather, she found it very soothing.

She favored that sensation of her whole body being chill as if soaked in water and freezing cold, isolating herself in ice, allowing the cold to envelop her into a thick cocoon of ice, so comfortable that she almost wanted to cry out loud.

Chapter 495: What If He Has Changed?

She was immersed in her own world, laughing strangely, completely oblivious to the frantic cries of Lin Qianqing by her side, and to how Madam Lin was urging the maids to stoke the brazier to flare up more vigorously, and to fetch the fox fur from her carriage.

Elsewhere, behind the statues of the Dragon King and Dragon Mother, was a spacious hall where an elderly man with white hair, clad in a Daoist robe, was burning a piece of yellow paper with a whisk. The material of that yellow paper was unknown, for the flame it produced was not of a normal color, but a translucent blue that was strikingly beautiful.

The flame licked the delicate yellow paper, ready to reduce it all to ashes, when suddenly the hall doors burst open, a gust of cold wind swept through, and snuffed out the half-burned fire outright.

The elder’s brows furrowed, and he looked up at the person who had opened the door.

The newcomer paused, as if seeing the elder’s astonishment, then respectfully said, "It appears Uncle-Master is here, has Zijin disturbed you?"

The elder watched him for a long moment, then his eyebrows relaxed, and he smiled, "Just in time, I have some questions to ask you."

"Oh?" Jin Zijin raised an eyebrow, stepping leisurely into the hall, "What would Uncle-Master like to ask?"

Yu Jizi said, "I heard from Zhuo Qing that he chanced upon you in Qingshui Town, leading a leisurely life in the countryside. Moreover, you’ve taken a wife. Unfortunately, that woman is one of the medicinal people I’ve carefully raised?"

Jin Zijin’s smile faded, and he snorted coldly, "Summon that Zhuo Qing, I will confront him."

"Confrontation?" Yu Jizi murmured as he stroked his beard.

"Indeed, I must have a good confrontation with Zhuo Qing. Which of his eyes saw me taking a wife, and moreover, one of your medicinal people. Others might not know, but how could you, Uncle-Master, be unaware? My master is set on having me inherit his mantle. I am destined to achieve the Way someday; how could I indulge in such worldly affairs? If this gets out, how would I command respect in the Dao Family's Tianzong in the future?"

Yu Jizi watched Jin Zijin, then suddenly laughed out loud, nodding in agreement, "Indeed, that Zhuo Qing is always negligent in his duties and fond of spouting nonsense. Naturally, his words can't be trusted. What's taking a wife and having children in the mundane world compared to becoming the Sect Leader of Tianzong? Outsiders do not understand; only those of us who are dedicated to the Dao realize the wonder of seeking truth. Zijin, I hope your Dao heart remains stable and consistent, that you do not disappoint your master's efforts in nurturing and teaching you."

Jin Zijin clasped his hands in salute, "Uncle-Master's teachings are correct."

"Hmm," Yu Jizi nodded, "That woman from Lotus Village..."

Jin Zijin quickly composed himself, "Quite by misfortune, she is the disciple of Doctor Zhou. It just so happened that during that time, Ajing was also in Lotus Village and took Doctor Zhou as her master. They are now Daoist siblings and have together opened a medical hall in Lingnan..."

Listening to Jin Zijin's wild tales, Yu Jizi's face darkened bit by bit.

There were many who could spin tales, with Yue Rujing being among the best. Yet even she paled in comparison to Jin Zijin's deadpan nonsense.

Having not seen him for years, Jin Zijin had undoubtedly changed.

Yu Jizi still remembered the first time he saw that always indifferent-looking little boy beside Tian Jizi, righteous and upright, full of integrity, just like Tian Jizi.

Such people were the easiest to deal with, for they were stubborn and fanatical with their own principles, disdaining to engage in any underhanded schemes. Black was black, white was white, single-minded and inflexible. Thus, he had never considered this top disciple of Tianzong significant. But... what if he had changed?

Chapter 496: Recovery

He looked deeply at Jin Zijin, his expression growing solemn.

Jin Zijin continued speaking self-absorbedly, "Uncle, do you know who the Doctor Zhou from Qingshui Town is?"

Doctor Zhou, he certainly knew who that person was. Yu Jizi frowned, yet he said, "I do not."

"Alas!" Jin Zijin sighed, "His identity is no simple matter. It is said that he was once an Imperial Physician in the palace. It is just not known why such an Imperial Physician would fall to becoming a mere doctor in a small town. Doctor Zhou's medical skills are unparalleled; Ajing has always loved studying medicine and pestered Doctor Zhou to take him as a disciple."

Yu Jizi sneered, "Anyway, the man is dead. Whatever you say he was, then he was."

The entire Lotus Village knows you married Gu Youyou. If you want to deny it, you can find a thousand reasons to do so.

"Uncle, this human medicine may be difficult to control, she's now living in the Lin Residence. I remember our Dao Family has an agreement with the Imperial Court— not to interfere with each other. Using a relative of an official appointed by the Imperial Court as human medicine, might this displease the Emperor?"

Yu Jizi glared at him and said indifferently, "You needn't trouble yourself over matters concerning Xuanzong."

...

Gu Youyou did not know how long it took her to regain consciousness, but seeing that the carriage had not moved far from the Dragon King Temple, it seemed she had been out of it for only a short while.

She hadn’t paid much attention the last time she entered that special state, but this time she deeply remembered that feeling.

A chill spread throughout her body, yet she felt light and agile, as if she had undergone a transformation.

That time, she demonstrated potential far beyond that of an ordinary person, running through the woods with that wild man. If not for her quick recovery this time, she felt she could run just as swiftly as she had before.

These things were all beyond the scope of her knowledge, beyond the limits of the human body, and it was only now that she truly felt that this world was different from the world she had known before.

There were many things beyond the realm of science that she needed to slowly adapt to and quickly explore.

"Cousin, are you feeling better?"

Gu Youyou was wrapped in thick blankets, with several braziers placed so close there was hardly any room to set feet in the carriage.

She and Lin Qianqing huddled together on the seat.

Gu Youyou nodded at her, "Much better, the carriage is really warm."

Lin Qianqing laughed, "Of course it’s warm. We used all the braziers we brought for you. My mother has none to use."

"That won’t do!" Gu Youyou quickly got up and called out to the maid outside the carriage, "Xiang Chun, quickly move a brazier into my Aunt’s carriage."

Lin Qianqing pressed her down, saying, "No need, my mother is a native of the north, she can withstand the cold."

They returned to the Lin Residence with the braziers lit all the way, as night had already fallen.

Because of the ritual, everyone had skipped lunch, so dinner was exceptionally lavish.

Gu Youyou did not join everyone for dinner upon returning to the Lin Residence because she had fallen ill, which terrified her uncle and aunt. After arriving, she directly entered the warm medicinal shed, had something simple to eat there, and then went to bed.

The northern climate was cold, and as a first-rank official of the Imperial Court, the Great Scholar Lin Xingyi naturally could not be cold. The master’s rooms all had heated floors, and because Gu Youyou had become ill from the cold during the day, the heated floors in her room were burning very strongly tonight, as warm as spring.

The thick cotton clothes were too much to bear. Not long after she entered the room, she took off the thick layers and wore only a light garment.

This illness was somewhat strange; she had to wait for Jin Zijin to come and ask him properly about it, otherwise, she wouldn’t even know how she died.

Footsteps and low voices came from outside the courtyard, not just one person.

Chapter 497: Don’t be Superstitious

Before long, Gu Youyou saw Lin Qianqing helping the elderly Madam Lin into her room.

A wave of heat rushed at them, and the old lady nodded in approval, "Indeed, it’s very warm."

"Grandmother, cousin, why have you come so late?"

Gu Youyou hurried out from the bedroom.

Lin Qianqing said, "Grandmother heard that you fell ill during the day and was worried about you, insisting on coming to see you."

"Yes, Youyou, are you feeling any better?" the old lady asked.

Gu Youyou smiled and twirled around, saying, "All better now, I've worried grandmother."

"That's good to hear," the old lady said. "Your illness lasts for ten years once it strikes. It hasn't been that long since you've recovered. We were negligent, we shouldn't have let you go worship the Dragon Mother. In such cold weather, kneeling and bowing for four hours, even a healthy person might not withstand it, let alone you with your frail health."

Gu Youyou, behaving dutifully, supported the other arm of the old lady and led her to the inner room, saying, "Worshipping the Dragon Mother is also to pray for the removal of sickness and disasters. I've been ill for so long, perhaps after worshipping the Dragon Mother, it just happened to get better."

The old lady suddenly stopped and her expression fell.

Gu Youyou saw Lin Qianqing on the other side making faces at her.

She didn't understand what she had said wrong to upset the grandmother.

Only to hear the old lady speak sternly, "You are a doctor, you should know that seeking gods and worshipping Buddha to eliminate diseases is useless, superstitious."

She stretched out a finger and pointed at Gu Youyou's forehead, leaving Youyou staring at her, dumbfounded.

She thought to herself: Grandmother is indeed different. Aren't old ladies of this age supposed to be the most superstitious? Look at the Empress Dowager in the palace, she can't even walk, but she still has people carry her to worship the Dragon Mother. But grandmother, she doesn't believe these things at all, not... superstitious?

This is indeed rare.

Gu Youyou forced a chuckle, "Grandmother is right, it's Youyou who is too superstitious."

After helping the old lady sit down, she asked sternly, "Youyou, what exactly is wrong with your illness? Every time I try to inquire, your uncle always dissuades me, saying it's for your own good, and for the good of the Lin Family."

Gu Youyou paused for a moment, looking at the old lady.

At over fifty years old, women of this era were considered very old, as most people lived only to that age.

Her temples were gray, her face was lined with wrinkles, yet her eyes were astonishingly bright, not murky like those of most elderly people.

She figured that grandmother must have guessed something, but now she was no longer young and probably couldn't manage too much.

She understood her uncle's intentions, the implications were vast. Talking about it wouldn't help, and would only cause her to worry. Since her uncle didn't tell the old lady, Gu Youyou naturally had no intention of telling her either.

In her view, the elderly cannot withstand such shocks. If she knew what Youyou had gone through, any serious upset could lead to trouble, just like what happened with Gu Feng.

She smiled and said, "Grandmother, don't worry about it, I'm already better. It was just too cold today. I'll be more cautious in the future and won't fall ill again."

"Ah, every one of you is the same," the old lady sighed. "Alright, I won't ask, but if you need anything, you must tell me. As for your medicine shed... Ah, well, just keep it maintained for now."

Gu Youyou sat to the side, looking at the large fireplace in the room.

A stove about half a person tall, with a big fire burning inside. This stove was also smokeless by design, and with it, the room stayed warmer than others.

Chapter 498: Stay Up to Guard the Night

The grandmother looked at Lin Qianqing, then turned to Gu Youyou with concern and said, "You fell ill during the day, and I truly can't rest easy. Let Daya accompany you tonight."

How could this be? Gu Youyou's face registered alarm; she was waiting for Jin Zijin.

"Grandmother, there's no need, I'm used to sleeping alone."

Lin Qianqing pouted and said, "Didn't even consider it, huh? That's so hurtful. I volunteered to come and keep you company."

Gu Youyou looked distressed, Jin Zijin would come over at night; it was fine to hang out with her during the day, but not at night.

"I'll take you to see my new clinic tomorrow during the day, but really, there's no need for tonight. I won't be able to sleep."

Lin Qianqing's eyes lit up, she glanced at her grandmother and then her face fell.

She thought to herself: It's up to you to find a way, Grandmother is not easy to persuade.

The old lady looked at Gu Youyou and then sighed, saying, "I heard that you've been living in a dark room for ten years, unable to see the light?"

Gu Youyou was startled for a moment, not sure why she was bringing this up again.

"You have to get used to having people around you; you'll need to get married someday," she added.

Gu Youyou was exasperated, seeing that her grandmother's words were getting more and more outrageous, she quickly said, "Grandmother, my grandpa was deceived by a quack doctor he met on the road, I'm perfectly fine now."

"Ah, your grandpa was also a confused one," she sighed, then seemed somewhat indignant, "I told your mother from the start that your father was not the right man for her, but she wouldn't listen. Not that I'm saying your father was bad, but in that whole Gu Family, there's not a single person who brings peace of mind. Ah well, it's been so many years since they died, and the Gu Family has ended up in such a state; there's no point talking about it anymore."

Gu Youyou sat in silence, the affairs of the Gu Family might have been settled, but the deep wounds would not vanish just because everything was over.

The young Gu Youyou was gone long ago, and had she not come back to take her place, the wounds would have never healed.

"Since that's the case, let's leave it be. I'll take Daya back, and have Xiang Chun sleep outside to keep watch through the night."

Lin Qianqing was surprised at how easily the old lady gave in.

"Should I sleep outside?" she asked, eager to stay with Gu Youyou, finally having found a sister to talk to into the night.

"No way!" the old lady flatly refused, "You are a legitimate daughter of the Lin Family, how could you sleep in a place meant for maids to keep watch? If your mother finds out, she'll make a scene again. I want some peace and quiet for my ears, so you better follow me."

Lin Qianqing was still dragged away by the old lady, and Gu Youyou felt more and more that her grandmother was no ordinary person. If Lin Qianqing stayed there, why would her aunt be the one to fuss?

Hmm, alright then, her aunt came from a lineage of noble ladies, while she was born to a rural old lady, untroubled by trivial formalities.

After sending off her grandmother and Lin Qianqing, and before she could even extinguish the light, she saw Jin Zijin.

Gu Youyou hurriedly put out the light and said anxiously, "Why did you come so early today? I haven't turned off the light yet, aren't you afraid of being seen?"

Jin Zijin said, "I came earlier and didn't come in because I saw there were people here."

After putting out the oil lamp, the burning charcoal in the stove still illuminated the room brightly, and Gu Youyou then pulled him into the inner room.

"My cousin is such a gossip; if she saw you, it would be terrible. I'd need to plug my ears with cotton."

Jin Zijin chuckled and said, "It seems you're having quite a good time at the Lin Family."

"As long as no one gives me trouble, I can make the best of any place."

Jin Zijin nodded and then they began to talk about the daytime ancestral worship ceremony.

"During the day... were you alright?"

Chapter 499: Leading the Gu

The commotion caused by the Lin Family's carriage, he had seen it, not just her, many people had seen it.

Therefore, the arrival of a sickly cousin from the Lin Family must have spread throughout this circle by now.

What Jin Zijin asked was precisely the worry that was lingering in Gu Youyou's mind.

"Will a person be different after taking that kind of medicine?"

Gu Youyou didn't really know how to ask, either. These things that science couldn't explain, how was she, an atheist, supposed to express them? She was a highly educated member of the new generation, and to believe in those things would be to overturn her own beliefs.

"There might be some differences," Jin Zijin murmured thoughtfully.

How was he supposed to explain? Previously, no one had raised a medicinal person. As far as he knew, Xuanzong had always preserved some incomplete secret formulas for raising medicinal people, and many years ago, Yu Jizi found the tomb of a Dao Sect predecessor and finally completed those formulas. Only then did people like Gu Youyou come to exist.

So as for how a medicinal person would turn out, he actually wasn't very clear.

However, he did recognize the talisman paper for summoning the Poisonous Insect that Yu Jizi burned yesterday at the Dragon King Temple.

That was related to Youyou's sudden illness yesterday.

"Do you feel any different in your body?"

Seeing that Jin Zijin wasn't very clear either, Gu Youyou felt somewhat discouraged and sighed, "Something was off yesterday. I had just taken medicine yesterday morning, and I had taken my pulse. Normally, I should be a bit cold, but not to the point of triggering the poisonous cold inside my body. What's strange is... I didn't feel pain during the onset of the poison. On the contrary, it was quite exhilarating, as if something was stimulating all the muscles in my body to come alive. I felt like I had taken a strength pill, filled with power, except... my head was a bit dizzy."

After listening, Jin Zijin exhaled and said, "That’s it, then. Yesterday Yu Jizi was summoning the Poisonous Insect, but I interrupted him halfway through."

"Summoning the Poisonous Insect?" Gu Youyou looked astonished.

"Yes, summoning the Poisonous Insect. Haven’t I told you before? Youying Grass is actually a cold-natured plant grown by Poisonous Insects; it’s essentially a type of Gu. Those insects have been inside you for ten years, and have long since integrated with your flesh and blood. Now they’re suppressed by your medicine, but it hasn’t been able to eliminate them. Since Yu Jizi raised those insects, he naturally knows how to control them.

What happened yesterday was... well, you just be careful. His actions were only meant to warn me. Now that you are living with the Lin Family, and Ajing and I are restraining him here, he won’t act against you for the moment."

Gu Youyou touched her stomach, feeling disgusted at the thought of a bunch of insects inside her, as described by Jin Zijin.

She didn’t understand the concept of Poisonous Insects, but she quickly came to her own understanding of what Jin Zijin had said.

Let’s say those insects are a kind of virus. That old pervert developed a new type of virus, the advantage of which is that it stimulates and strengthens the body, turning her momentarily into a superhuman. The downside is... well, apart from her mind not being very bright, for the time being, she didn’t know what other adverse effects being in a state of poisoning might bring.

But since this thing was meant to harm people, it was bound to be more harmful than beneficial.

Feeling the higher than normal body temperature coming from Jin Zijin, she began to worry about him again.

"What about you? What’s with the heat poison in you?"

In fact, Jin Zijin had never talked to her about these things. She knew he was someone with a strong sense of caution, so when it came to his matters, she never asked if he chose not to tell her.

Jin Zijin paused for a moment, hugged her chilly body a little tighter, and then slowly began to explain.

Chapter 500: Sun Zhuzhao

"My poison was an accident!" he said.

Tonight, snow began to drift down again; outside the window, a few cold plum branches sprouted flower buds. The tender red was quickly concealed by the fluttering snowflakes.

Within the curtained bed, Youyou nestled tightly in the man’s arms to escape the cold. Ancient mythological stories slowly flowed from his lips, which opened and closed rhythmically.

"Have you heard of the Sun Zhuzhao and the Dark Moon Youying?"

Gu Youyou shook her head, "The Dark Moon Youying must be the Youying Pearl, right? I don’t know about the Sun Zhuzhao. Zhuzhao... could it be related to Zhuzhao Country?"

Jin Zijin hummed in acknowledgment and then added, "The Sun Zhuzhao and Dark Moon Youying are Sacred Beasts formed after the chaos of creation, representing the duality of Yin and Yang. From their duality came the Four Symbols, shaping the essence of heaven and earth. The Zhuzhao Pearl and the Youying Pearl are the inner cores of these two Sacred Beasts.

"After the Sacred Beasts disappeared into the river of time, these two inner cores were passed down. Through endless transformations, the Dark Moon Youying ended up in the hands of the Dao Family, contested over by Tianzong and Xuanzong for years, while the Sun Zhuzhao Pearl has always been with the Imperial Family of Zhuzhao Country, a sacred treasure of the royal lineage. However... over twenty years ago, the Zhuzhao Pearl also went missing."

Gu Youyou felt a slight shock in her heart as she gazed into his eyes.

From what he was implying, the fiery poison needed the Youying Pearl for a cure, so did her own body's cold poison require that missing Zhuzhao Pearl?

Jin Zijin gave a wry smile and said, "I happen to know the whereabouts of that Zhuzhao Pearl, and it is indeed the key to the flame poison that I have accidentally contracted."

"Where?" asked Gu Youyou urgently, her grip tightening.

Jin Zijin grasped her hand and placed it over his heart, saying, "Here."

Here? Gu Youyou stared at her own hand, incredulous, and with a twisted smile she asked, "You're not saying you ate the Zhuzhao Pearl, right? And that's why you contracted the flame poison?"

He gave a bitter smile and nodded lightly, "Yes, I ate it."

"You..." Gu Youyou was at a loss for words; the missing sacred object of Zhuzhao Country had been ingested by him.

Gu Youyou had never seen the pearl, and she didn't know if it could be digested. If it couldn't be digested, one would assume it would have already been excreted. He had been poisoned for several years, and had been eating for just as many.

But since Jin Zijin had brought up the topic, it was certainly not going to be that simple.

"Stop beating around the bush and tell me what really happened," she said.

She had been counting on using the Zhuzhao Pearl to cure the poison. If he had digested it, she might as well go back to the shed and slowly cultivate her herbs.

Jin Zijin explained, "When exactly the pearl was ingested, I do not know, but it was likely shortly after I was born. Swallowing the Zhuzhao Pearl doesn't cause flame poison, but if it comes into contact with the Flame Pond Fire Lotus..."

He paused, his eyes turning cold, "The year I came to Beijing with Ajing, under the patronage of Marquess Dao, we also entered the palace. The Flame Pool was there, and it was after that my poisoning occurred—I realized then that the Zhuzhao Pearl was inside me."

Gu Youyou gave a slight start: "Then you started looking for the Youying Pearl and ended up in Lotus Village?"

"Yes," he sighed.

"Do you know who made you swallow the Zhuzhao Pearl?"

"I do, my mother."

Gu Youyou was extremely surprised. What was Jin Zijin’s true identity, for his mother to be able to obtain a sacred item from Zhuzhao Country?

How could his mother let him eat random things like that, truly.

"Then you..."

"Back then, I was just a suckling babe, unable to protect the Zhuzhao Pearl properly. The safest place for the pearl was inside my stomach—my mother must have thought as much," Jin Zijin clarified for her.