Farmhouse 591

Chapter 591: Yue Rujing to the Rescue

"What medicine?" Master Li raised an eyebrow, his expression becoming grave.

Gu Youyou took out a bottle of medicine, and immediately someone took it from her hand and handed it to Master Li on the high platform.

Master Li did not understand medical skills, he simply glanced at it briefly, then set it aside.

"What illness does he have? Why must he use the medicine you use?"

"Replying to Master, since I was young, my health has been poor, and I have always relied on medicine to sustain my life. This medicine was developed by me over many years, specifically to treat my illness. And that person you mentioned, by a stroke of luck, has the same illness as I do, so he only buys medicine from me."

Master Li immediately seized the key point, asking somewhat excitedly, "Do you mean to say that he will have to buy medicine from you again?"

Gu Youyou candidly said, "There's no need for that, I gave him the prescription."

These words infuriated Master Li so much he almost fell off his stool, exclaiming, "How could you give him the prescription? You're really generous."

Gu Youyou spoke indifferently, "He paid silver for his treatment, isn't it normal for me to give him medicine and the prescription?"

Master Li: "...Indeed, what you say is logical, but..." But what? He was at a loss for words.

Who decreed that doctors cannot give patients their prescriptions? If they don't give out the prescriptions, how can the patients get their medicine prepared?

Master Li, frustrated and in pain, said to someone standing by, "Forget it, give this medicine to the Imperial Medical Bureau, and let’s find out what it actually is."

Having said this, he then addressed Gu Youyou, "Doctor Gu, I must trouble you to wait here a while longer. Regarding the illness he has contracted, I do not understand, and you still need to explain it to the Imperial Physician."

Gu Youyou did not refuse, nor could she refuse, and was led to the neighboring room to wait.

"Next!"

This time, quite a few people had been caught, more than twenty.

Anyone with evidence of having seen Jin Ziyuan had been captured and interrogated one by one.

Others weren’t as fortunate as Gu Youyou and Shopkeeper Hu; even a slight inconsistency in their accounts led to a good beating and a toss into jail.

Shopkeeper Hu was of a considerable age and had never been to jail before; he was quite frightened.

"Doctor Gu, we won’t have any trouble, will we?"

Gu Youyou gave him a comforting smile and said, "Don’t worry, reinforcement will arrive soon."

"But that illness... what exactly does he have, that he insists on seeking treatment only from Doctor Gu?"

That illness... Gu Youyou smiled bitterly; it was an unmentionable disease, and it would be terrible once the Imperial Physician arrived. She only hoped that Yue Rujing and her uncle could come and save the situation sooner.

Her rescuers arrived as if on cue; just as Gu Youyou was thinking this, the door was opened.

"Princely Heir!" Shopkeeper Hu, who was brought from Lingnan by Yue Rujing, saw Yue Rujing and burst into tears.

Yue Rujing nodded at him, then asked Gu Youyou, "Did they make things difficult for you?"

Gu Youyou chuckled dryly and shook her head, saying, "They took my medicine."

Lin Xingyi came in from behind and inquired, "What medicine?"

Gu Youyou knelt on one knee as a sign of respect and replied, "Uncle, it’s the medicine Youyou usually takes."

"Why would they take the medicine you usually use?" Lin Xingyi did not know the reason.

On the other side, Yue Rujing had already understood.

"Is it him?"

Gu Youyou nodded gently.

Yue Rujing closed her eyes and only said, "You’ve been foolish."

On Lin Xingyi’s end, he was even more confused by their enigmatic conversation.

After pondering for a moment, Yue Rujing said, "Don’t talk later, I’ll do the talking."

After finishing, she led Gu Youyou and Shopkeeper Hu out.

Facing Master Li, Yue Rujing said playfully, "Master Li, may I take them away now?"

Chapter 592: Is Jin Yi also a Medicine Person?

Yue Rujing stood, and clearly, Official Li did not dare to sit, immediately standing up and paying his respects to Yue Rujing and Lin Xingyi.

"Young Master, Master Lin. This matter is of great importance, so I hope you both will not make things difficult for this subordinate." He looked at Shopkeeper Hu and said, "Shopkeeper Hu may leave now, but as for this young miss... she will have to wait a little longer."

Yue Rujing smiled and said, "Then Shopkeeper Hu can go back first? Today, Official Li's men went to my Jisheng Hall to arrest someone, frightening the patients terribly and causing me no small loss. You'd better go back quickly and figure out what all has been lost."

Hearing Yue Rujing's words, Official Li broke into a cold sweat, quickly saying, "The losses Jisheng Hall suffered today, I am willing to compensate in full."

"Hmm, that's good. It's not that I'm stingy, but you see, I sneaked out of home without half a silver note from my family. I rely on Jisheng Hall to earn some pocket money, so I'm broke!"

After sending Shopkeeper Hu on his way, Yue Rujing drew closer to Official Li and lowered her voice, saying, "I am aware of my martial sister's illness, but it is related to the secret of the Tianzong and the Xuanzong; please, Official Li, step aside to talk."

Upon hearing this, Official Li was startled again, feeling a bad omen.

In Beijing, there is a saying, "It's better to offend the Imperial Family rather than the Dao Family."

The current State Preceptor is ruthless and brutal; offending him would result in a miserably tragic death.

For example, if there's a great flood somewhere this year, he'd utter that the Dragon King is angry and demands offerings.

Without need for any reason, those he points out become the offerings.

As offerings, their deaths were always horribly tragic.

Fortunately, Young Master Yue is of the Tianzong; the Tianzong does not wield power, so they should not be too twisted.

"Young Master Yue, please!"

This matter was of great significance, and Official Li had no choice but to step aside and talk.

Yue Rujing and Official Li went to the inner hall, and in the main hall, only Gu Youyou and Lin Xingyi remained.

Gu Youyou had been in Beijing for quite some time, but her interactions with Lin Xingyi had been limited.

As her maternal uncle, he is a Grand Scholar of the First Rank, constantly in the company of the Emperor and a senior official who the Emperor summons at any time.

Now, Lin Xingyi had something to ask Gu Youyou but didn’t know how to start, merely saying, "Do you know that person?"

He spoke extremely softly, audible only to the two of them, ensuring no one could overhear them.

Such a question should not be asked here; it would be more appropriate to ask back home, but Lin Xingyi could not help himself.

Because in the earlier conversation between Gu Youyou and Yue Rujing, it seemed as if they both knew that convicted felon from the Imperial Court.

Others might not know who the felon was, but as a senior official in close service to the Emperor, he was very much aware.

"I do not know who he is, nor what crime he has committed," Gu Youyou replied softly as well.

"Then you..." Lin Xingyi slightly narrowed his eyes, clearly not quite believing Gu Youyou's words.

But Gu Youyou explained, "However, I know he's the same as me, so he would use the same medicine as I."

"The same type of person?" Lin Xingyi instantly understood what she meant by 'the same type of person.'

Related to the Xuanzong, these matters are ones we officials should not, and cannot, meddle in; meddling constitutes overstepping. But since it involves his only niece, Gu Youyou, he had secretly looked into matters concerning medicinal persons.

Lin Xingyi furrowed his brows tightly, his mind flooded with numerous thoughts, unsure how to sort them out smoothly.

Jin Yi was also a medicinal person, but how could it be such a coincidence?

How did he become a medicinal person?

Back then, both the Third Prince and his sole son escaped capture, and no one knew where they had gone.

Chapter 593: He's Not Alone

Everyone knows that to eliminate weeds one must pull them out by the roots; the existence of the Third Prince and the Young Prince has always been a thorn in the Emperor's side.

"Can you find him?" Lin Xingyi asked again.

Gu Youyou thought for a moment, her face showing difficulty, and shook her head, "I can’t. He appears and disappears like a ghost, and is not easy to find. Jin Zijin and his group have been searching for him for a long time, the State Preceptor has been searching as well, and now the Imperial Court is also searching for him, but no one has caught him."

Lin Xingyi didn’t make it difficult for Gu Youyou, merely nodding lightly.

Indeed, so many people were looking for him. Gu Youyou, a young girl, how could she possibly find him unless he came to her of his own accord?

"The next time he comes to see you, you must tell your uncle," he said.

Gu Youyou nodded, "Okay!"

Soon Yue Rujing came out, and Official Li’s face was as pale as death, not knowing what Yue Rujing said to frighten him so.

As soon as Official Li came out, he hurriedly paid his respects to Lin Xingyi, saying, "This official was unaware that Doctor Gu is the niece of Master Lin, please forgive me, Master Lin."

"It’s no trouble," Lin Xingyi said indifferently.

Yue Rujing stepped forward, threw the vial to Gu Youyou, and said, "Take care of this and go."

Gu Youyou gave a dry laugh, paid her respects to Official Li, and hurriedly chased after Yue Rujing.

She hadn’t expected that her identity carried such weight within the bounds of Beijing; had he not come, it would probably have been difficult for just Lin Xingyi to handle things.

This was the Ministry of Punishment's Prison, wherein countless high-ranking officials of Beijing have been convicted; he would give Lin Xingyi some face, but would definitely not compromise with Lin Xingyi the way he did with Yue Rujing.

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After this incident, Gu Youyou was grounded once more.

This time it wasn't just her aunt's decision, but also her uncle's grandmother's, and even Lin Qianqing, who usually thought about going out, agreed.

The reason, well, Jin Ziyuan was wanted, his illness was the same as Gu Youyou's, and she had the medicine he needed. To prevent that guy from seeking her out again, she needed to live within a circle of protection.

Actually, Gu Youyou wanted to say that if Jin Ziyuan truly wanted to find her, the Lin Residence would probably be like an unguarded place to him.

Gu Youyou didn't believe Jin Ziyuan was alone; how could a single person evade pursuit by Jin Zijin and the State Preceptor? Every time he came to her, he arrived safely and departed safely. The Third Prince dared to rebel; he certainly wasn't a common man. Although he had fallen and died, it didn't mean all his former subordinates were gone.

When the Qing extinguished the Ming, remnants of the Ming dynasty lingered for quite a while.

To cause less trouble and set their minds at ease, this was fine too.

"Youyou, these are the snake poisons that were recently brought for you. What do you plan to do with them?"

Inside a small porcelain bottle, there was a little bit of snake venom, immensely precious.

This was a deadly poison, this little bit, enough for her to use for a long time.

Gu Youyou was confined within the Lin Residence, so her laboratory had been moved there as well.

"Wait here for me, I will be right back."

The weather had warmed up quite a bit, it was a time when orioles sang and grass grew, and flowers bloomed in profusion. The courtyard of the Lin Family was large, and her peculiar 'pet garden' was located within the flower garden.

A horse was subjected to her experiments; Lin Qianqing had been appalled for a long time, saying that Gu Youyou was too cruel, to actually feed such a cute little horse such a deadly poison.

Gu Youyou didn't want to either, but who made the effect on horses better than on mice?

Before long, she finished feeding the horse and went back, with Jin Zijin still sitting by the windowsill.

He said, "I heard that Miss Du has proposed a divorce to Official Jie, but Official Jie did not agree, and that Second Young Master Jie doesn't seem to be in a hurry either."

Chapter 594: Lord Jie Teaches the Rebellious Child

It had been a long time since Gu Youyou had inquired about the affairs of the Lin Family. "Miss Du has endured for so long," she said, "Once such a person has made up her mind, she won't change it easily. Mr. Jie is a man who values loyalty and affection; he wouldn't decide on a whim because of Miss Du's parents. Once he understands that allowing Miss Du to leave is for her own good, he will agree. Miss Du has just recovered from a serious illness, so there is no hurry."

Jin Zijin smiled and asked, "How did you persuade Miss Du to seek a divorce? I thought you would help her fight for favor."

Gu Youyou laughed and said, "Why would you think that?" and immediately realized that Jin Zijin, a man of ancient times, and others of this era, would rather die within the walls of the Jie family's big house than accept a divorce. The idea she proposed was truly unprecedented.

She spoke softly, "Someone like Second Young Master Jie isn't worth Miss Du's struggle. To be as blind as he is and to be considered a top choice, putting effort into fighting over such a person is more frightening than divorcing. That Concubine Du clearly cannot tolerate her, and if one were to lose their life, what would be the point of fighting for empty honors? Miss Du is a sensible person, just needing someone to break it down for her. It's not that she hasn't thought of it, but that she dares not think of it. Alas! These women, they'd rather suffer in silence just to save face."

After hearing this, Jin Zijin just silently stared at the oil lamp. Her temperament was unique and alluring, and she was fiercely independent, certainly not the type to rely on a man for her existence.

Yet, the women of this world, they all live in reliance on men.

"You make a good point, but that Concubine Du is not someone to be taken lightly; I'm afraid that even if Miss Du were to leave, it wouldn't be without trouble."

Gu Youyou smiled mysteriously and said, "I've had plans for that for a while now, so don't you worry about it."

"Oh? You have something on Concubine Du?"

"Pretty much!"

"Heh, very well, let's see how you manage to have Mr. Jie owe you this favor." Jin Zijin chuckled as he spoke, but he felt it wouldn't be that simple.

The things Xiao Jinyan had been talking about when he was climbing over the wall these past few days seemed a bit off.

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In the April weather, the north had already warmed up. The divorce between Miss Du and Second Young Master Jie had become a highly discussed scandal, infuriating Mr. Jie greatly. As soon as he returned

home, he pulled Second Young Master Jie aside to scold him fiercely, but still, he did not relent and agree to the divorce.

"All my life, I have acted openly and smoothly, and everything has gone my way. Yet your marriage has caused me nothing but trouble every single day.

You unfilial son, do you realize you've thrown away all my face? Go listen to what they're talking about in the court these days. It's not national affairs; it's the laughingstock of Mr. Jie's household. If I knew this is what you were going to turn out to be, I should have strangled you the moment you were born."

Since the troubles with his wives and concubines had come out, Second Young Master Jie had grown used to being scolded by Mr. Jie over the years, especially over these last few weeks; therefore, he didn't take it to heart.

While Mr. Jie sat on the chair scolding, he simply knelt on the ground and listened. Once Mr. Jie had tired of scolding for the day, it would be over.

Second Young Master Jie bowed his head and said nothing, while Mr. Jie continued.

"If it wasn't for your mistreatment of Xintong, why would she be so desperate as to suggest a divorce? Look at what you've done to her over the years. Her father entrusted his precious daughter to me before he died, and what has she become now? You are unfilial, and you've also implicated me in being unjust. You ungrateful wretch, what do you have to say for yourself now?"

Second Young Master Jie spoke in a low voice, "Aqing is also Master Du's daughter. Why do all of you only care about Du Xintong and never look after Aqing? Is it just because she is born out of wedlock?"

Chapter 595: Biased

"Aqing, Aqing, you rebellious child, all you ever think about is Aqing!" Not to mention Du Wanqing, the very mention of her made Officer Jie lose his temper completely, and he impulsively smashed a teacup.

With a dull thud, the teacup struck the forehead of Jie's second son, and blood immediately began to flow.

Seeing the bright red blood, Officer Jie was stunned for a moment. But as he recalled his son's troubles over the years, he couldn't suppress his anger.

"Everyone says you resemble me the most, but apart from your looks, in what way do you resemble me? Not one man in the Jie Family ancestors was like you. It's not that I dislike Du Wanqing because she is an illegitimate daughter, but because that woman has ill intentions. Can't you see that?"

Although the pain in his forehead made the second son of Jie feel a chill, he still insisted, "That's because you all are prejudiced against Aqing. You don't like her just because I like her, because she goes against your wishes. Once someone dislikes another, everything that person does is deemed purposeful and wrong. Isn't that how you all view Aqing?"

At these words, Officer Jie was momentarily stunned, and it took him a while to regain his composure, after which he laughed mockingly instead of getting angry.

"Hahaha...right, right, you've actually come to understand these principles. I thought you were so blind and ignorant that you knew nothing. Heh heh, so you have a problem with Xintong, you find her disagreeable, and anything she does irks you, doesn't it?"

Jie's second son felt a sudden pang of anxiety but didn't expect his own words to be so quickly countered by his father.

"Father, we're talking about Aqing right now. Every time you side with Du Xintong, allowing Aqing to suffer so much injustice—don't you realize that?"

Officer Jie retorted, "Yes, I do favor Xintong. So, tell me, how many times have I done so? Have I favored her more than you've favored Du Wanqing?"

"I..." Jie's second son found himself at a loss for words.

The father admitted he was partial to Du Xintong; how could he argue that he hadn't favored Aqing?

"Forget it, forget it. You are blind and ignorant. After all these years, I have been unable to change you, and I no longer expect you to understand. Get out, I don't want to see you."

Seeing that Jie's second son was bleeding quite a bit from his forehead, Officer Jie had no choice but to send him away.

Jie's second son stumbled out of Officer Jie's room in a daze, his mind a complete blank, as if he had grasped something critical yet at the same time not grasped anything at all.

When the servants saw the second son with blood all over his face coming out of the master's room, they were all shocked and rushed to support him.

"Second Young Master, what happened to you?"

"Someone come quickly, fetch a doctor, the Second Young Master is injured..."

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Concubine Du had nowhere to vent her frustration, having shattered who knows how many teacups and vases.

It had been said that once Du Xintong recovered from her illness, her marriage with the second son would be annulled, yet so much time had passed, she had recovered, but there was no telling when the annulment would actually happen.

They had brought it up, but their weak efforts were futile; the old man didn't give it a second thought.

"Tell me, what is the second son thinking nowadays? If he had the courage he did when he married me and pressured the old man every day, how could the annulment not be successful?"

She asked the maid beside her while gripping her, her fierce and threatening manner frightening the maid considerably.

The maid, who knew her temper well, dared not say anything upsetting and instead soothed her by saying, "Back then, the second son was young and acted without the careful thought he has now. The second son must have a more foolproof method!"

Chapter 596: Crisis of Concubine Du

"A foolproof method? What exactly does he want to do?" These past few days, Concubine Du has been off, even more difficult to deal with than usual.

She had been consuming bitter medicine for nearly a month, thinking about how her own body was harmed and she couldn't have children, that it would take a year or two to recover, and she couldn't even share a bed with her husband, the bitterness in her heart was overwhelming.

Both fearful and sorrowful!

All day she was like someone with a deranged mind, babbling nonsense, and lashing out at the maids: "I think that wretched woman doesn't really want to divorce at all; she must be using some scheme to gain my husband's affection. Have you seen how he used to treat her before? If she died, it would have been even better, he wouldn't care about her life or death at all. But now, he's buying her medicine, and he has even asked several times if she has recovered. Saying it's for the sake of the divorce, I think he's just been bewitched by that wretched woman."

"Madam, how could that be? It's said that the men of the Jie Family are all romantics, and the young master is deeply in love with you, Madam; he would never fall for someone else."

"What do you know? You understand nothing, get out, all of you get out..." Concubine Du felt she was on the verge of collapsing; there was something wrong with her body, and she hadn't let her husband touch her for nearly a month. Young Master Jie was at an age of vigorous vitality, and he surely must be turning to that despicable woman because he couldn't touch her...

At this thought, she couldn't even cry. She couldn't let others know about this, otherwise who knows how many vixens would emerge in this residence, so she could only swallow her teeth and move on.

Concubine Du has been emotionally unstable in recent days, leaving the servants attending to her walking on eggshells.

Hearing they were being driven away was music to their ears.

It was better this way; let her be alone in the room and throw her tantrums.

Concubine Du locked herself in her room, shutting all the doors and windows, making it dark inside even during the day.

She touched her stomach and started crying again.

If she managed to drive Du Xintong away, yet couldn't gain all of her husband's love, she felt that she had suffered a great loss.

And the current situation was even worse; she didn't know what that contemptible woman was thinking. What if she didn't really want to divorce and this was just a strategy to compete for favor?

Back at home, she was the legitimate daughter, and now she was the young master's official wife; if she, a concubine born out of wedlock, lost her husband's affection, then everything would be over for her.

Thinking about all she had done to Miss Du over the years, if that woman gained favor, it would be more terrible than if anyone else did.

After struggling so hard for so many years, how could she just give up?

"No, I can't keep dragging this out with her," Concubine Du said hoarsely.

She must get rid of her before the young master finds out that this illness of hers is hard to cure, otherwise, there may be unexpected complications.

But how could she get rid of her?

The old master was obstinately refusing to budge on the matter, and the young master was becoming increasingly indifferent to this affair. If it had been before, she wouldn’t have had to mention it; he would have been proactive enough, wishing he could immediately cast that woman out.

But recently, his attitude had been different; if not for her pushing him, he wouldn’t have brought it up once or twice.

Concubine Du stopped her crying and stared blankly at the feng shui fish in the room.

"The fish?" She suddenly had an idea and abruptly stood up, walking quickly over to the feng shui fish, her eyes filled with venom as she glared at the fish.

"Yes, yes, that’s it, haha..." Concubine Du suddenly burst into a fit of mad laughter, reached out a hand, and caught a fish from the basin. Staring at the fish, she squeezed as if she were exacting vengeance on a sworn enemy.

The fish struggled, shaking its tail, but its strength was too feeble; it was but a futile effort, and soon it lost all its strength.

Chapter 597: Candid Conversation

Concubine Du strangled the fish to death with a bloodthirsty smile at the corner of her mouth, then threw the dead fish back into the tank.

"It’s just the same old trick," she mused, "except last time, I was the one who fell into the water. Now it’s your turn."

"I have suffered from illness for five years. It’s time to switch and have you endure it."

...

Young Master Jie was hit on the head with a teacup by Master Jie until he bled profusely, and while he clung tightly to his beloved, not wanting her to worry, he left the residence to find a doctor outside to dress his wounds.

He had no idea that a major incident would occur in the residence today.

Concubine Du, with her maid in tow, went to find Miss Du. Since Miss Du had clearly expressed her wish to divorce Young Master Jie, Concubine Du's attitude towards her had softened somewhat.

She thought to herself, there's no need to harbor so much hatred at this critical juncture. If she was pressed too hard and changed her mind about the divorce, wouldn't it be a loss for me? As long as she's not a wife of the Jie Family, she is nothing but a lowly cast-off woman. Once I become the principal wife, wouldn't it be easy to deal with her then?

"Big sister, I've come to visit you," said Concubine Du earnestly, even bringing with her the pastries Miss Du loved.

Miss Du understood what she meant. The divorce hadn't been finalized for so long, and now she was getting antsy.

She said indifferently, "There's no need for such gestures. It's a matter of time before Young Master Jie and I divorce. Master Jie will come around."

Miss Du didn't like Concubine Du to begin with, so there was no need to deal with her on a daily basis when she was about to leave. These years had been exhausting for her.

Concubine Du ordered her attendants to put down the food box and then dismissed her maids.

Miss Du looked at her maid Cuiya and also dismissed her.

Now only Miss Du and Concubine Du remained in the room. Miss Du's expression was indifferent as she asked, "What do you want to say? Let's drop the pretenses between us, shall we? You're not tired of playing the role, but I'm tired of watching it."

Concubine Du let her smile fade, paused in surprise, but then forced a smile again.

"Why bother, big sister. I admit I've wronged you over the years, but I had no choice. You and I are different. Although father has passed away, he left you a way out and found you such a good marriage. As for me? Who ever cared about me? My mother died when I was young, and my husband also lost his mother that year. We found solace in each other, and he said he'd marry me when we grew up.

But when we grew up, Master Jie said he wanted to marry you instead. You've had everything since childhood, and the only thing I had was my husband. Without him, I had nothing. Though we loved each other, you insisted on interjecting. What was I supposed to do? Big sister, I never wanted to harm you, but please tell me... what should I have done?"

Miss Du closed her eyes and swallowed down the sourness rising in her stomach.

If not for this man, they, as sisters, could have depended on each other and wouldn't have ended up in such a state.

After a moment, Miss Du opened her eyes and looked at Concubine Du, saying, "It's true, you two loved each other, and I was the one who forcibly inserted myself into the middle. Thus, I couldn't gain his love, and I don't blame you. No matter how he treats me, I don't blame you. But you're my sister, and you've tried to murder me countless times. Have you kept count?

Our parents are gone, we are the only family each other has in this world. If it were me, I wouldn't take your life over a man, and I certainly wouldn't involve others. Wanqing, how did Hen Ying die? Do I need to remind you?"

"Hen Ying?" Concubine Du took a step back, remembering the death of that maid, which had left her drenched in sweat with terror.

Two years ago, she had wanted Miss Du's life, and that loyal maid died trying to save her. She had died with her eyes wide open, and that image had been a nightmare for Concubine Du.

Chapter 598: Taking Father's Letter

Miss Du covered her chest in pain, recalling the maid who grew up with her, just like Cuiya, and her heart ached unbearably.

Before she closed her eyes, she said she would take revenge for her.

But, just as she had said earlier, Du Wanqing was her only family. How could she bring herself to harm her?

"Cuiya and Hen Ying were both sold to the Du Residence since childhood, growing up with us. How could you bring yourself to harm them? Ah, right..." Miss Du gave a self-deprecating laugh and said, "Right, you could even harm your own sister, let alone a mere maid. Anyone who stands in the way of you becoming the principal wife, you would be able to kill them, wouldn't you?"

"No, it's not..." Concubine Du's face turned deathly pale as she shook her head and stepped back, "It's not that, it was an accident, I didn't want to kill her."

"Yes, an accident," Miss Du said, "because your target was me."

"You... Big sister!" The fear and shock on Concubine Du's face mixed as she reflected on the past decade, slowly regaining her composure.

So what if it is? So what if you are right?

You are right; whoever stands in my way must die, no matter who she is.

Her mother was a concubine, she was an illegitimate child, she was also a concubine. If in this life she couldn't become the principal wife of the man she loved, her existence would be in vain, as would the affection of her husband.

Concubine Du gathered her thoughts, putting all past displeasures behind her, and mustered a faint smile.

"Big sister, all that is in the past now. Now that you've finally decided to end your marriage with our husband, we're still sisters, the only family. Big sister, I was wrong before. You won't be staying in the Jie Residence much longer, so... Ah, when I came here today, I saw that the lotus in the pond had started to bud. They haven't bloomed yet but they look very beautiful. Let's go for a walk by the pond," she said.

"Go to the pond?" Miss Du looked at her warily.

Having suffered at her hands, she couldn't let her guard down.

"You go. I'm tired today and don't want to go." Before leaving the Jie Residence, she planned to stay in this abandoned courtyard, not going anywhere.

Seeing this, Concubine Du began to cry softly, saying, "Big sister, I... I just want to go with you to dig out the letter our father left behind."

"Father's letter?" Miss Du almost forgot about that.

"Yes, the letter father left. Big sister, have you forgotten? When we first arrived at the Jie Residence, we buried our father's letter under the willow by the pond together. Now that you are leaving, don't you want to take our father's letter with you?"

Miss Du's expression darkened as she remembered how they were back then.

Their father died, the Du Family was ruined. The two same-aged young ladies were still young, vulnerable to the malicious servants, and so Lord Jie, a good friend of their father, had them taken into the Jie Family.

At that time, Lord Jie's son's wife was still alive, managing the inner house of the Jie Family in perfect order.

At that time, they didn't know they would fight over the same man, not knowing that, as Miss Du's fiancé, he would fall for Miss Du's sister.

They depended on each other, burying their father's letter by the willow next to the pond in the Jie Residence.

"Alright!" The word was laden with endless sorrow, reminding Miss Du of the time when they were still sisters.

If fate could be redone, she would definitely not compete with her.

The man’s heart had never been with her, and the result of her struggle was only self-inflicted suffering, hurting both herself and others.

It wasn’t just Du Wanqing who caused the death of Hen Ying; was she, Du Xintong, without fault?

Chapter 599: Falling Into the Water Together

Thus, the outcome they had created, in truth, both were at fault.

Miss Du hadn’t left that desolate courtyard for a long time, and indeed, tender pink buds had begun to sprout from the lotuses in the pond, with a few early dragonflies perched on them, appearing exceptionally endearing.

Miss Du, holding a spade, walked quietly by the lotus pond with Concubine Du, heading straight to the willow tree beside Lotus Pond Waterside Pavilion.

The two of them didn’t speak a word along the way, Miss Du’s heart filled with boundless melancholy.

Before her father’s death, he had entrusted them to support each other, knowing the character of Officer Xie; he felt very reassured about Miss Du, which was why he implored her even more to take care of her younger sister. Back then, how could he have foreseen such an outcome.

Miss Du squatted down and began to use the spade to dig up the soil beneath the willow.

Concubine Du stood quietly behind Miss Du, gazing at the rippling blue waves, her eyes gradually turning insane.

If she were to die, it would be good, with her death, no one would block her way to becoming the legitimate wife.

What does it matter if Officer Xie disagrees, with her dead, all would be settled.

Her husband cherishes her so much; she will live a better and better life.

Miss Du uncovered the soil, and the small black box appeared in her view.

Seeing the familiar box, Miss Du was overjoyed, completely oblivious to the malevolent gaze of Concubine Du behind her.

Miss Du carefully dug up the soil and cautiously cradled the box out.

"All of father's letters are here, as well as the characters we wrote when we were children..."

She had just stood up, her legs still numb; before she could finish speaking, Miss Du felt herself teetering. She turned her head in horror and toppled into the lotus pond.

"You..." She uttered just one word before falling into the water.

The box slipped from her hands, her father's letters scattering in the air.

Behind those yellowed pages was the contorted face of Concubine Du.

She could be so vicious. She herself was leaving this world, yet she still wanted to take her life.

Seeing Miss Du struggle in the water, Concubine Du felt both excited and scared.

She signaled to someone on the opposite side of the lotus pond and then plunged into the pond herself.

In April, the lake water in the north was still chilling to the bone. Concubine Du was already fully prepared, someone would immediately dive in to rescue her the moment she hit the water.

The maids had prepared hot water, clean clothes, and a brazier in her quarters early on. Falling into water was not a new experience, and this time it was foolproof.

"Sister, elder sister, I'm coming to save you..." Seeing Miss Du no longer struggling, Concubine Du yelled out loud.

Concubine Du's voice was loud, and the servants around the lotus pond all heard her. Witnessing the scene, those who could swim promptly dove in to save them.

The fastest one, the one arranged by Concubine Du—responsible for household security—a house servant, saved only Concubine Du.

Once ashore, Concubine Du immediately had maids wrap her in a blanket.

After rescuing Concubine Du, the house servant dove back into the water to retrieve Miss Du.

Miss Du, having just recovered from a serious illness and being inherently frail, coupled with the fact that she fell into the water before Concubine Du, was already ashen-faced and barely breathing when pulled ashore.

Cuiya rushed over, crying her heart out.

Finally at ease, Concubine Du left to take a bath, crying as if her heart would break, supported by maids as they left the lotus pond's edge, leaving others questioning how much was real and how much was fake.

Both Miss Du and Concubine Du falling into the water was a major incident. The ever-idle Miss Xie received the news and hurried over.

Concubine Du had already been taken back to her room for a hot bath.

Chapter 600: Rescue

Miss Du was also sent back to the desolate courtyard, her maid Cuiya sobbing uncontrollably. Upon seeing Xie Qinyun, Cuiya clutched her sleeve tightly, begging incessantly while kowtowing.

"Third Miss, please save my mistress, she has fallen into the water and now she remains unconscious."

It turned out that Miss Du, though she looked terrifying as if she were dead, was still alive.

"Did someone go to fetch the doctor?"

Cuiya cried, "Concubine Du sent someone, but my mistress's fall into the water has to do with her. She wishes nothing more than for my mistress to die. By the time her people fetch the doctor, I fear... I fear that it might already be too late for my mistress!"

Xie Qinyun frowned and said, "It's that vixen's doing again, becoming bolder by the day, daring to make a direct move to kill within the residence?"

"Third Miss, saving her is what's important now. My mistress is still unconscious." Cuiya was crying so hard she was on the verge of fainting.

"Right, saving her!" Xie Qinyun came to her senses, and hurriedly instructed the maid beside her, "Go to Jisheng Hall and ask Doctor Gu to come."

Then, as if it just occurred to her, she said, "No, that's not right. Doctor Gu has been confined to the Lin Residence these past few days, I'll go myself. All of you stay here and guard, and don't let that vile Concubine Du in again. Be extremely careful, and stay sharp."

"Miss, rest assured, this servant will guard the door. Not even a fly will get in before you return."

These maids and old women had been with Xie Qinyun since her childhood, and they were to follow her when she got married. Therefore, they were different from the other people in the Jie Residence; they were not afraid of Concubine Du.

...

Gu Youyou was feeding the mice when she was dragged out by Lin Qianqing.

The old women guarding the outside of her courtyard tried to stop them, but Lin Qianqing scolded them back.

"If you don't want to die, you'd better not try to stop me. My cousin is going to save a life; if someone dies because of your delay, will you take responsibility?"

Only then did Gu Youyou realize that she was being pulled away to save someone.

Lin Qianqing was usually amiable within the Lin Residence and had never spoken to the servants like this before. The old women were silenced by her scolding and just stood there dazed, not moving.

Thus, Lin Qianqing led her out of the Lin Residence in a commanding manner.

"Whom are we going to save? You haven't made it clear."

"Get on the carriage, then I'll tell you," Lin Qianqing said.

In the carriage sat Xie Qinyun; after calling for Lin Qianqing, she had been waiting inside.

"Hurry, hurry, it's a matter of life and death!" she said anxiously.

Gu Youyou had already guessed correctly; once she got on the carriage, she asked, "Is it Miss Du we're going to save?"

"Yes, Doctor Gu, you really are astute," Xie Qinyun said with admiration.

Gu Youyou knitted her brow and said, "According to my prescription, she should have already recovered, so what happened to her now?"

Xie Qinyun replied, "It's not the same illness as last time; she fell into the water."

"Fell into the water?" Gu Youyou and Lin Qianqing asked in surprise, both turning to look at Xie Qinyun.

"Yes, fell into the water! Alas, it's inseparably linked to that despicable Concubine Du. Most likely, it's her handiwork," Xie Qinyun said with resentment, cursing Concubine Du all the way.

"That heartless wretch, she'd stoop so low as to harm her own blood sister. How could we allow someone like her to stay by my second brother's side? Du Xintong even said she wants to divorce my second brother, but Concubine Du wouldn't even let her off, pushing Miss Du into the lotus pond. Tell me, with Miss Du's frail health, how could she survive after falling into a lotus pond?"

After hearing this, Gu Youyou was suddenly alarmed and asked urgently, "Did she expel the water?"

"What? Expel water?" Xie Qinyun didn't understand.

Gu Youyou rephrased her question, "Is she still alive?"

Xie Qinyun grew tense as well.