Farmhouse 631

Chapter 631: Miss Du’s Approach

Xie Qinyun sighed and drank quite heavily, showing some signs of drunkenness as she spoke, "Now it seems, Second Sister-in-law... oh no, Miss Du is actually doing quite well. After leaving our family, she took her maids to Jinxiu City. Although the Du Family and the Yu Family have fallen into decay, a camel on its deathbed is still bigger than a horse, and in the end, they left her quite a fortune, enough for her to splurge for a lifetime. If she really can make the Embroidery Workshop successful, a life of wealth and honor will surely be hers."

Seemingly recalling something, she suddenly burst into laughter.

Then, realizing that the banquet was not the place for such laughter, she quickly covered her mouth with her hand and lowered her voice, "When Miss Du gets tough, she’s really something special. When she left, she took everything from the Du Family... including everything in the Concubine Du’s room that came from the Du Family, she took it all.

Imagine how many things belonged to the Du Family; these years, Concubine Du had been hoarding them. But once she moved them out, she completely emptied Concubine Du’s room. Isn’t that hilarious?"

Hilarious? They only felt it served them right.

Lin Qianqing clapped her hands and said, "That’s the way to do it, but didn’t your Second Brother try to stop her? He just let her bully Concubine Du like that?"

"He wouldn’t dare, with my father watching. Besides, Miss Du wasn’t wrong; she is the legitimate daughter, after her parents passed, everything in the household was hers. Concubine Du, being born out of wedlock, would have to get Miss Du’s approval for any dowry. With their relationship, why would Miss Du give her a share of the dowry?"

"That makes sense," Lin Qianqing said.

As they gossiped and sipped their wine, more than an hour passed by.

The Empress, wealthy and a shrewd merchant, spoke beautifully and did great business. Over the course of the banquet, she had all the distinguished Madams and Misses glowing with pleasure, and as the feast drew to an end...

She wiped her mouth and shifted her gaze toward Gu Youyou and her group.

She asked, "Madam Lin, that must be Lin Daoren's dear niece, the one who cured the epidemic in Lingnan and was even granted a memorial plaque by His Majesty, Miss Gu, right?"

Madam Lin nodded slightly and answered, "Exactly."

The Empress broke into a warm smile upon hearing this and beckoned Gu Youyou, "Come, let me have a look at you."

Gu Youyou quickly stood up and gracefully moved closer to the Empress, performing a respectful curtsy.

The Empress was very pleased and smiled as she told her to rise, then turned to Madam Lin and said, "I always felt you were literate, courteous, and intelligent, doing everything better than your sisters. Seeing Miss Gu so well-mannered, I know you've taken great care in mentoring the younger generation."

Madam Lin, flattered by the praise, expressed her thanks.

"The Empress flatters me unduly; it is Youyou who is clever and eager to learn, resembling her uncle!"

"Oh, everyone can see Lin Daoren's intelligence and wit. Being like her uncle is a fortunate thing for the niece," the Empress replied.

In the hall, some of the Madams had been treated by Gu Youyou, and they still vividly remembered the comforting sensation of her treatments, filling the room with varying praises for her.

This was the advantage of being a doctor, especially one with good medical skills and ethics - there was no greater favor than saving a life.

So far, the visit seemed profitable for her, and she understood their intentions even more clearly.

"Miss Gu, I've heard that there's a rule in your medical clinic, that you do not make house calls unless absolutely necessary?"

Gu Youyou knew what was coming and, maintaining a humble attitude, replied softly, "Responding to the Empress, there indeed is such a rule in my clinic."

Chapter 632: Meeting the Empress Dowager

The ladies behind her, anxious for Gu Youyou, began to frown, feeling that her words were inappropriate to say in front of the Empress. The rules of her medical hall were respected by these noblewomen, a token of respect for Doctor Gu's character, a courtesy to the Lin Family, a favor to the Princely Heir.

Does the Empress need to give those two face?

They truly feared that if the Empress were displeased, she might accuse Gu Youyou of grave disrespect.

Madam Lin, in particular, was so nervous she could almost wring water from her handkerchief.

This child, wasn't everything settled at home? She had agreed so readily, what was she doing now?

Everyone watched the Empress anxiously but discovered to their relief that she was not angry; in fact, a faint smile hung upon her face, and they gradually calmed down.

The Empress said, "It stands to reason, as your medical hall has its rules, we should follow them and not make things difficult for you. However, the Empress Dowager has trouble with her legs, and it would not be good to disturb the common people with too much fanfare by bringing her to your Jisheng Hall. Hence, I invite you today to have an audience and examine the Empress Dowager's leg ailment at Renshou Palace. What do you say?"

Gu Youyou smiled slightly and said, "The Empress Dowager's situation is indeed a special case, and I shall do my utmost. However, I need to prepare some items and would ask your permission to make a trip to the Imperial Medical Bureau."

That seemed more like it, and everyone felt relieved.

The Empress said with a smile, "Very well, in that case... come, someone escort Doctor Gu to the Imperial Medical Bureau."

Gu Youyou followed the Palace Maiden out, and after the Empress exchanged a few more words, she too rose and said, "As Miss Gu is attending to the Empress Dowager, I, myself, shall also take a look. Madams, please enjoy yourselves here without restraint."

Everyone rose and bid the Empress farewell.

...

Gu Youyou did not truly need to go to the Imperial Medical Bureau but to retrieve her tools from the carriage and then, on the way, pick up some medicinal herbs from the Bureau.

The reason she mentioned the Imperial Medical Bureau was to make it seem as though everyone wasn't trying so hard to be considerate, for you see, she should not have known beforehand that she would be summoned to treat the Empress Dowager.

The Empress's Palace Maidens understood this principle well and thus led Gu Youyou to fetch her things from the carriage at the palace gate first.

When Gu Youyou arrived at Renshou Palace with the Palace Maiden, the Empress was already there waiting, conversing with an elegantly dressed elderly lady.

This was the Empress Dowager.

Gu Youyou paid her respects, and the Empress hastily had her rise, saying to the Empress Dowager with a smile, "This young lady is the Divine Doctor once personally honored by the Emperor. Mother, don’t you think she’s quite young?"

The Empress Dowager appears to have suffered hardships in her youth, and she wasn’t as well-cared-for as other noblewomen, appearing like an eighty-year-old woman, though in her sixties.

With a head full of white hair, her face was nonetheless kind and affable.

She looked at Gu Youyou and said, "Indeed, she’s young. To possess such remarkable medical skills at this age is no easy feat. The Lin Family’s members are each extraordinary in their own right, haha. Have I heard correctly that your cousin’s daughter is also quite a prodigy, reciting at three, writing at five, crafting beautiful paintings by eight, which she presented during your grandmother’s birthday banquet, earning great praise?"

The Empress was beaming, humbly laughing as she said, "Mother, you flatter her too much. That girl was clever as a child, but now I hear from my cousin that she is quite the lively one, causing no small amount of trouble."

Gu Youyou, however, could not help but be curious—could her seemingly unreliable older cousin actually possess such talents? This really aroused her curiosity.

The Empress Dowager nodded and said, "At the age of fourteen or fifteen, it’s normal to be lively. Back then, our young lady... Empress Dowager Xiaoci, was also a lively spirit in her youth..."

Chapter 633: Seeing a Doctor

Recalling her old master from days long past, the Empress Dowager couldn’t help but feel sorrowful once more.

In those days, she was just a servant girl attending to a young lady. When the young lady entered the palace, she followed suit, never expecting the unpredictable nature of life; the young lady passed away early, and she ended up protecting the master’s son as he grew up, eventually becoming the Empress Dowager herself.

It was precisely because of her loyalty that she exchanged it for a lifetime of glory and honor.

The Empress hurriedly said, "Mother, take care of yourself, and don't think about those heartbreaking matters anymore. The Emperor knows to be concerned about you."

The Empress Dowager said, "The Emperor has always been filial, but unfortunately, Empress Dowager Xiaoci couldn't enjoy such fortune. Enough, let's not talk about this anymore. Doctor Gu, come and examine me."

Gu Youyou acknowledged the order and then approached the Empress Dowager's couch to examine her legs.

As they brought out the Empress Dowager's leg, Gu Youyou couldn't help but frown.

Her leg was afflicted with a very severe case of chronic rheumatism, having already become deformed.

Just as she had anticipated earlier, a cure was impossible. The most she could do was try to alleviate her pain as much as possible.

An old maid by her side said to Gu Youyou, "Her Majesty the Empress Dowager has suffered from this condition for many years now. She couldn't stand for long even when she was young, and the pain intensifies with the wind and rain. As time went on, it got worse, and for the last two years, she hasn't been able to stand at all. Doctor Gu, do you think there's hope for the Empress Dowager's leg?"

Everyone watched Gu Youyou anxiously.

Gu Youyou, feeling the deformed leg bones, honestly told them, "The bones have deformed, and the condition has persisted for too long; it's impossible to cure completely. However, I can try to treat it and see if she might stand again."

Since they had thought the Empress Dowager would never be able to stand again, hearing Gu Youyou say there was a chance filled them with indescribable joy.

The Empress eagerly said, "If it can be treated, that would be a great achievement. Youyou, please take a look at the Empress Dowager."

In an effort to build rapport, the Empress had already begun to address Gu Youyou affectionately.

Gu Youyou nodded, and ordered the palace maidens to prepare the necessary items. She began with a serious massage and then used acupuncture to dispel dampness, activate blood circulation, and stimulate the nerves.

After busying herself for a couple of hours, she prescribed a formula for pain relief.

"These medicines can be taken orally, and the Imperial Medical Bureau should have them. There are also medicines for external application, which the Bureau might not have, so it would trouble this sister to go out of the palace and fetch them from Jisheng Hall. There's also this medicine for pain relief; take it when in pain, and refrain from taking it when the pain subsides."

The palace maiden took note and left with the prescription.

Seeing Gu Youyou had finished, the Empress asked, "Is it possible with just this?"

Gu Youyou bowed formally and answered, "This isn't enough; acupuncture treatment must continue uninterrupted for a month. Massage therapy needs to be done daily, so I ask Her Majesty the Empress to assign a medical woman with some knowledge of medical skills to me, and I will teach her this massage technique. The Empress Dowager should rest for a while now; in half an hour, I'll need to come back and apply the needles again."

"And the acupuncture...?"

"The acupuncture will be personally performed by me. After a month, the Empress Dowager should be able to stand up again."

Seeing that the Empress Dowager's leg could possibly be treated, there was a wave of joy in Renshou Palace.

The Empress Dowager was so delighted that she praised the Empress again, acknowledging her filial piety.

"It is rare for the Empress to keep worrying about my leg, leading to the discovery of Doctor Gu. Doctor Gu, how did you come to acquire such skill at such a young age?"

Gu Youyou answered, "When I was young, I suffered from a severe illness and was under the care of Doctor Zhou from the town for many years. Later, I became his apprentice. My master is an unworldly master, and I received his teachings."

Chapter 634: The Strange Eunuch Who Ran Away?

The Empress Dowager wasn't really concerned about who taught Gu Youyou her skills over the years; she simply thought Youyou was intelligent and studious, which led to her achievements.

"How old is Doctor Gu this year? Has she been promised to someone?"

Women, no matter their age, get curious once they are in a good mood, and they love to gossip about such matters when they do.

Gu Youyou said helplessly, "I am twenty-one this year and have not yet been betrothed."

After calculating, it had been three winters since she came here—three years in all. By nominal age, she was already twenty-one.

In this place, a twenty-one-year-old unmarried woman was rare indeed, and it was inevitable that she would become the subject of gossip.

As expected, once her age was revealed, it stunned everyone in the room.

The Empress Dowager exclaimed in surprise, "Why has Doctor Gu not been betrothed at the age of twenty-one?" Then she turned to the Empress, saying, "Doesn't your cousin think about making arrangements for her?"

The Empress was quite embarrassed and hurriedly said, "Yes, yes, it's something I should indeed discuss. It's unheard of for a girl to be twenty-one and not yet married. With Youyou's qualities, she needn't worry about marrying late."

Gu Youyou performed a curtsey and replied, "Thank you for your concern, Empress Dowager, and Your Majesty the Empress. However, I choose not to marry because there is a reason."

"A reason?" The Empress Dowager and Empress asked, looking at her curiously.

Gu Youyou explained, "Not to dismay you, Your Majesty the Empress Dowager, but I actually suffer from an illness that has yet to be cured. I do not know when it might flare up and take my life. I am truly not suited for marriage."

The Empress had a realization and said, "Oh yes, Mother, I recall my cousin mentioning that Lin Xingyi's old home had only one sister, who had a daughter with a chronic illness since childhood. That would be Doctor Gu."

The Empress Dowager immediately looked at Gu Youyou with sympathy and sighed, "So young, yet afflicted with illness? Can't you treat it yourself since you are also a doctor?"

Gu Youyou admitted, "I have studied this illness with my master for many years, Your Majesty, and we have recently made some progress, but I'm not certain if it can be fully cured."

Everyone sighed in empathy, and the Empress remarked, "Then it truly is... inappropriate for you to marry. Youyou probably advanced your medical skills because of your own illness, having no choice but to work hard at it. You should indeed concentrate more on caring for your own health. Being alive is more important than anything. Whether to marry or not should be a secondary consideration."

"Indeed!" The Empress Dowager agreed, nodding softly.

Noting that only a little more than half an hour remained, and seeing that Gu Youyou looked somewhat tired, she instructed a palace maiden, "Take Doctor Gu to have some tea and rest for a while, there's still half an hour to go."

Gu Youyou expressed her gratitude and followed the palace maiden to an adjacent side hall.

The palace maiden served her tea and some exquisitely made pastries, saying, "Enjoy your meal, Doctor Gu!"

"Thank you for your hospitality, sister," she replied.

The palace maiden responded with a sound and then withdrew.

As Gu Youyou sipped her tea and ate the pastries, she looked out the window at the garden.

The bushes in the garden were lush, pruned into an attractive disarray by the gardener.

Soon, she noticed an eunuch acting somewhat... sneaky as he approached, eventually entering the side hall where she was resting.

Gu Youyou quickly swallowed the half piece of pastry in her mouth and stood up.

Just as she was about to show respect, the eunuch hastily gestured for her to dispense with formalities and said, "Miss Gu, I have come only to remind you with a word of advice. ’Know your limits!’"

Having said only that, the eunuch left as quickly as he had come.

Gu Youyou stood there, stunned for a long moment, coming to her senses only when she saw the eunuch disappear from view by the window.

Where did this eunuch come from, and why did he feel the need to warn her?

’Know your limits,’ he had said, likely referring to the treatment she was providing for the Empress Dowager’s leg ailment.

Chapter 635: Uncle’s Women

Gu Youyou, on her first foray into the palace, seemingly knew no one; who would dispatch a eunuch to remind her of anything?

The Empress? Clearly not possible. If the Empress had wanted to remind her of something, she would have done so before Youyou entered the Renshou Palace, not halfway through the treatment to send a eunuch.

Half an hour passed quickly, and Gu Youyou dismissed the irrelevant eunuch from her mind, once again entering the Empress Dowager’s chambers.

The acupuncture session was much quicker this time, completed in the short span of brewing a pot of tea.

The day was getting on, and a curfew would soon be in place within the palace walls; the Empress did not keep her, instead ordering her to be escorted out of the palace as soon as possible.

...

Her visit to the palace went smoothly today, and upon leaving, she even received a gift from the Empress.

Youyou understood this was because she was a relative of the Lin Family. In the Empress’s line of thought, the Lin Family was kin to her mother’s family, making Youyou effectively one of her own people.

To have "her people" gain face in front of the Empress Dowager was to gain face herself; naturally, she was inclined to bestow some benefits on Gu Youyou.

Fingering the decidedly nouveau riche pearl necklace around her neck, Youyou really couldn’t see what was so beautiful about it.

Once outside the palace gates, she hastened to remove it and place it inside a brocade box.

She most certainly did not want to wear something so tacky on her way home.

Madam Lin had already returned to the Lin Residence. Seeing Youyou back, she hurriedly asked, "How did it go today treating the Empress Dowager's leg ailment in her chambers?"

Youyou replied, "Aunt, the Empress Dowager's ailment is a chronic condition; her legs have even become deformed. A complete cure is impossible, but I can alleviate the pain and perhaps enable her to stand and walk a few steps. Maybe she can return to how she was two years ago."

Madam Lin knew that the Empress Dowager could still walk a few steps two years ago.

But hearing that there would be no complete cure, she still felt some disappointment.

"Being able to stand up is good, but it would be even better if she could recover completely."

As she was not a medical practitioner and did not understand these matters, Youyou didn't argue with her, merely stating, "The Empress has gifted me a string of pearls."

With that, she took out the pearls to show Madam Lin.

Madam Lin opened the brocade box and her expression showed a hint of surprise. She nodded and said, "Each of these pearls is a plump southern pearl. The Empress values you highly. You must not disappoint her."

Youyou gave a slight knee bend and said, "Yes, Aunt."

On her return, she did not see Lin Qianqing. Qianqing generally liked to linger around her, and her absence was somewhat strange to Youyou, so she asked, "Aunt, where is my older cousin?"

Madam Lin’s face lit up with joy as she replied, "The Empress has kept Daya there in the Imperial Palace to keep her company. I’m afraid she won’t be back for a few days."

With Aunt showing such delight, her older cousin must surely be heartbroken.

Poor older cousin.

...

Gradually, the north was also nearing summer.

Youyou had people prepare a large bath for her; she needed to soak and unwind.

Yue Rujing mentioned that someone was bringing Abao over and he was already on the way, estimating that he should arrive in a few days.

Youyou wanted to keep him in her courtyard, but feared that his large size might frighten the women of the Lin Residence.

Speaking of the women of the Lin Residence, one could not ignore Aunt’s adroit methods; she had managed to make her husband choose to sleep in the study rather than visit the back courtyard.

The Lin Residence, a grand estate in Beijing, is where Aunt consolidated all Uncle’s concubines, except for the mother of the second young Miss, into one large courtyard; without her permission, they were not allowed to leave. Each had her own room and a maid to attend to her; they took their meals together in a large dining hall and sat in the courtyard chatting and eating seeds when idle, which bore a striking resemblance to living in captivity.

Chapter 636: Jin Ziyuan’s Late Night Visit

They say that those women were almost burning holes through the walls with their longing glances; if uncle ever went to that courtyard, the women inside would explode before he even set foot in the doorway, each of them looking like they wanted to tear him to pieces.

So terrifying, no wonder uncle dares not go. Even the most favored concubine in the legends is summoned by sending a servant to call her out to serve.

After soaking for a while, the bathwater began to cool, and Gu Youyou called out, "Xiang Chun, add some hot water."

There was no response from outside, nor any sound at all.

Gu Youyou found it a bit strange and listened carefully.

Just now, she heard Xiang Chun talking with a few maids outside; now there was no sound.

Gu Youyou frowned and called out loudly again.

"Xiang Chun!"

Still, no movement.

Could she have gone outside the courtyard?

But that wasn’t likely; knowing that Youyou was bathing and might call for her at any moment, Xiang Chun would have stayed outside.

In the end, she had no choice but to get up herself.

The water was already cooling, and she feared she might catch a chill if she soaked any longer.

As she was about to get out of the water, a figure flashed into view, startling her into retreating back into the barrel subconsciously.

Gu Youyou peeked out with just her head, looking at the person standing by the barrel.

Clad in black attire, which contrasted against his porcelain-white skin that faintly glowed in the light.

Who else could it be but Jin Ziyuan?

Gu Youyou, shocked, lowered her voice and scolded angrily, "Why are you still in Beijing? There are notices all over the city for your arrest. If you don’t want to live, fine, but please don’t drag me down with you!"

Jin Ziyuan stared at Gu Youyou for a long while, his face turning slightly red, and only averted his gaze after hearing her angry rebuke.

"What do I care about those good-for-nothings? Whether I stay or go is not their business to control."

Gu Youyou was left speechless by his retort.

Fine, you look down on those good-for-nothings, but please don’t come looking for me. Besides, it’s not only the Emperor’s power here, but also the Dao Family’s, right? Truly recklessly courting death.

"This is the Lin Family’s place. If someone sees you here, I won’t be able to explain it no matter what I say, and neither would my uncle. Your actions amount to rebellion; are you trying to get me killed?"

"You knew?" Ziyuan raised an eyebrow.

Youyou snorted, "Even though the Emperor ordered your family’s affair to be covered up, as you well know, you can’t hide fire with paper. If I wanted to find out, naturally, I could."

Giving him a once over, Gu Youyou noticed his clean appearance, not at all like someone who had been on the run with no fixed abode, and she asked out of curiosity, "Where have you been hiding these days?"

"Me?" Jin Ziyuan paused, looked at Gu Youyou, glanced and then looked away, his face turning red to his ears, and said in a low voice, "I have my places to hide. But the reason I came to you is for a serious matter... Are you... available right now?"

Gu Youyou was speechless. Do you think I look available in my current state?

"Why don't you step out and wait a while? Or is there something else?"

"No need, I'll just tell you what it is." He seemed somewhat nervous, looking uncomfortable, "I'll have to leave Beijing in a few days and... that medicine of yours worked well. Give me some more."

Gu Youyou: "..."

Fine, if he wants to leave Beijing, that's good. I'll just consider the medicine a way to dispatch him.

"Inside the house, the third drawer. Everything is there; take it all. I'll make more."

"Oh, okay!" Jin Ziyuan briskly agreed and swiftly moved to the outer bedroom.

Gu Youyou heard the sound of the drawers being rifled through. In a little while, however, she saw him come back in.

Chapter 637: The Lin Family Arrives

Jin Ziyuan stood at the door, whispering, "I'm leaving now, take care of yourself."

Gu Youyou thought to herself: I'm safer now that you're gone.

"Go quickly, and be careful yourself. It's better to be caught by the emperor than by the State Preceptor. If you fall into his hands again, you'll probably turn stupid again."

Jin Ziyuan, recalling those years when he had been a fool, suddenly grew somber.

Just as he was making a gesture of farewell, both Jin Ziyuan and Gu Youyou frowned at the same time.

Oh no, Jin Ziyuan had dawdled too long, and Jin Zijin had arrived.

Gu Youyou hid in the water barrel, trapped and unable to move. If the two of them started fighting, she couldn't even break it up, which spelled trouble.

Jin Ziyuan's face turned stern, and with an outstretched hand, he grasped a short sword.

As he parried another blow, Gu Youyou heard the jarring clash of weapons.

Jin Zijin had really come, and without a word, drew his weapon.

Jin Ziyuan had stepped back outside the door. Gu Youyou couldn't see them, but she could hear the sound of clashing weapons in the outer bedroom, sensing that a major incident was unfolding.

Gu Youyou felt her heart sink. Given tonight's situation, if both men were discovered by the house servants of the residence, she would really be at a loss for words.

Without further consideration, she hurried out of the water barrel, not caring whether she was dry, and immediately began pulling on her clothes.

Disaster was imminent!

She had only pulled her clothes on halfway when a flash of cold light came towards her, and something struck her back. Her foot slipped, and she fell back into the water barrel, water splashing everywhere.

Gu Youyou was spluttering a mouthful of water as she emerged from it, only to see that Jin Zijin and Jin Ziyuan's battlefield had moved from her bedroom to the bathroom.

She quickly hid herself well in the water again, wiped the water off her face, and looked towards the two men.

Gu Youyou grew angry and said, "Hey hey, can you two find another place to fight? Can you consider my feelings, please?"

Both men looked at Gu Youyou and stopped.

Jin Zijin held a bright red dagger in his hand and said gravely, "What are you doing here?"

Jin Ziyuan was actually no less stern, clutching his short sword and coldly retorted, "What about you? What are you doing here?"

Footsteps sounded from outside the door, and all three of them heard it.

Gu Youyou, sensing trouble, said to the two squinting men, "Stop bickering. Someone’s coming. You both hurry up and leave, both of you!"

The two continued to glare at each other for a moment before reluctantly leaving.

Gu Youyou breathed a sigh of relief, and a moment later, a maid rushed in.

"Miss, what happened?"

Gu Youyou, lying in the water, let out a breath and said, "Help me up first."

With the maid’s assistance, she dressed, only to find Uncle Xingyi sitting in her room.

"Youyou, what’s the matter?"

Gu Youyou followed his gaze and saw Xiang Chun collapsed in a corner of the wall.

"What happened to Xiang Chun?" Gu Youyou exclaimed in shock.

The maid replied, "I don’t know why Sister Xiang Chun fainted here."

Oh, she fainted.

It must have been that Jin Ziyuan’s doing.

Gu Youyou relaxed, then addressed Lin Xingyi, "Uncle, Youyou is fine, just that earlier... She glanced at the others!"

Lin Xingyi got the hint and waved his hand, "All of you leave us."

Everyone left, taking the faint Xiang Chun with them.

Lin Xingyi stared at Gu Youyou, speaking in a deep voice, "Now tell me, and I hope you won’t hide anything from me."

Gu Youyou wasn’t sure how much Jin Zijin had told Lin Xingyi, or what precisely was going on between them.

She lowered her head, pondering for a moment, then said, "Youyou was bathing in the bathroom. I’m not sure of the details. How about... Uncle asks Zijin? He was just here."

Chapter 638: Proactively Admitting Fault

"He has been here?" Lin Xingyi raised an eyebrow.

Gu Youyou didn’t speak, and after a moment, Lin Xingyi got up and sighed, "I don’t know how you deal with him... Well, all right, I understand now. You should rest, it’s getting late."

Lin Xingyi didn’t ask any more questions and left Gu Youyou’s courtyard.

Gu Youyou breathed a sigh of relief, slumped onto the soft couch, and lay down in a perfect slouch.

Luckily, my uncle came with me, otherwise it would have been troublesome if only those ignorant house servants had come.

Before long, Jin Zijin returned, with beads of blood dripping from his wrist.

Gu Youyou was so frightened that she quickly jumped up from the couch and lifted his hand.

"How were you injured? Was it that bastard Jin Ziyuan’s doing?"

Damn, he comes to me for medicine and then injures my man right afterward?

"He brought a good number of people with him, all of them desperate fighters," Jin Zijin said, then fell silent.

Feeling guilty and uneasy, Gu Youyou didn’t ask any more questions but simply took the medicine box and bent down to bandage him.

The wound wasn’t big, just on the forearm. It would be fine after applying the medicine and wrapping it with a bandage.

Jin Zijin’s face was dark throughout, and Gu Youyou understood he was angry, so she whispered an explanation: "He came... just to inform me that he will be leaving Beijing in the next couple of days and then... he asked me for some medicine."

Jin Zijin’s face remained stern.

Gu Youyou continued, "I thought, since we’re both in a kind of exile, he’s quite pitiful, so I just gave him the medicine. He... last time he gave me a good amount of silver, so consider it paid for."

Gu Youyou felt that not only was Jin Zijin’s face still stern, but it was also getting darker and darker.

Gu Youyou racked her brain, wondering what she hadn’t explained clearly when she suddenly remembered something and hastily added, "Also, that scoundrel was outrageously indecent, he even knocked out my maid."

Jin Zijin grasped Gu Youyou’s hand tightly, looking even more furious.

Her wrist started to hurt from his grip, and seeing the dangerous look in Jin Zijin’s eyes, she quickly added, "And there’s more, he injured my man, so next time I will..."

"You’ll have a next time?" Jin Zijin’s face was covered with gloom, so angry that veins throbbed on his forehead.

"No, no next time, I’ll cut ties with him immediately!" No matter what, breaking off with Jin Ziyuan immediately was definitely the right choice.

Jin Zijin’s expression softened a bit, and he had her sit on his lap, saying, "That bastard is indeed too offensive, daring to come while you were bathing. Did he take any advantage of you?"

"Ah...?" Gu Youyou was startled for a moment, then immediately shook her head and said, "No, I was in the water the whole time."

Thinking of Jin Ziyuan’s earlier behavior, Jin Zijin couldn’t help but want to crush him.

He pinched Gu Youyou hard, then said fiercely, "Sooner or later, I’ll gouge out his eyes."

Gu Youyou: ...Isn’t that a bit too harsh?

"Oh, by the way, my uncle was here earlier. I didn’t know what to tell him, so I just said you were here and that he should ask you if he had any questions."

Jin Zijin nodded and replied, "You did well, he knows very little, and anything related to me should be deflected if possible. He’s sensible in his actions and probably won’t make things difficult for you."

The bathwater earlier was a bit cold, and now Gu Youyou still felt rather chilly.

They cuddled under the blankets before starting to discuss the day’s events in the palace again.

"The Empress Dowager’s leg isn’t easy to treat, I have already told them they can only try their best. But my aunt seems... seems quite unhappy when she heard that I might not be able to cure it," said Gu Youyou.

Jin Zijin said, "Your aunt is bent on having your cousin marry into the Crown Prince Residence as the official wife, of course she wants to ingratiate herself with the Empress."

Chapter 639: You Will Also Be Given in Marriage?

Gu Youyou felt it strange and said, "It looks like they have a good relationship; my cousin is one of the Empress’s own people. If she doesn’t become the principal wife, then who will?"

"The Emperor’s concubines, the Prince’s consorts, those are all entangled in complex relationships with the former dynasty. Deciding who becomes the principal wife requires careful consideration. Now your uncle, Lin Xingyi, is a favorite official by the Emperor’s side, but his foundation is rather shallow... to put it plainly, he’s still not as useful as Master Xie."

Gu Youyou gave a wry smile and said, "Does that mean, if Xie Qinyun and Lin Qianqing both enter the Crown Prince Residence, the Empress might choose Xie Qinyun to be the Crown Prince’s principal wife?"

"That’s not necessarily the case," Jin Zijin pondered for a moment before saying. "Unless she gets full support from Master Xie. Of course, given Master Xie’s nature, he probably won’t let his daughter

escape the fate of marrying into the Imperial Family, but he won't let her become the principal wife either."

"This..."

Jin Zijin laughed and said, "It's about avoiding suspicion and not being the one to stick one's head out."

Gu Youyou bit her lip, curled up in Jin Zijin's arms, and suddenly felt pity for these women.

Especially Lin Qianqing, whose heart wasn't set on wealth and honour at all.

"It would be great if I could help my oldest cousin lose the selection."

Jin Zijin looked at her with some surprise and said, "You mustn't do anything foolish. The implications behind the selection of consorts for the two Princes are very extensive. If you cause a mess, no one in this world will be able to protect you."

Gu Youyou gave a wry smile, "I'm just saying, who am I, anyway? How could I mess up such important matters? You're giving me too much credit."

"Mhm, that's good that you understand. Born into such a family, your cousin's life isn't something she can control. You may escape the monk, but not the temple. No matter what you do, she can't ignore the safety and wellbeing of the Lin Family."

Yes, that's why she never thought about rejecting the arrangement of fate; she only hoped to make herself more comfortable before accepting her destiny.

If Jin Zijin acknowledged his lineage, he'd also be a Prince, she wondered if he would marry a bunch of women as well.

Considering he grew up in the Taoist Temple, he should be different from the other Princes, she surmised.

Gu Youyou turned over and asked, "Once you become successful, you won’t forget about me, will you?"

"Successful in what?"

"Aren’t you going to fight for the position of Crown Prince and eventually become the Emperor with the ’Three Palaces and Six Courtyards’?"

Jin Zijin looked at her in surprise and said, "What are you thinking about? There’s no such thing. Go to sleep."

"How can there be no such thing?" Gu Youyou prodded him, unable to sleep once she started thinking about it.

"Aren’t you thinking about it?" He murmured softly, "In any case, the things you’re worried about won’t happen, you have to believe me."

"Believe you, my foot. You said my cousin can’t control her own life, what about you? What if you’re ordered to marry?"

Jin Zijin said, "That’s why I want to be someone who can control his own life."

After saying that, he stopped paying attention to her and simply turned over to sleep with his back to her.

Fine, believe it then.

She wasn’t scared either way. If that day really came, she would do like her aunt and isolate a separate courtyard, locking them all up as if she were keeping a flock of peacocks. After all, without the Youying Pearl, he couldn’t leave me.

In a drowsy haze, Gu Youyou seemed to hear him whisper something behind her.

"What they are fighting over, those were never the things I wanted. The years of cultivation on Qi Mountain made me appreciate the peaceful times even more. I've found a place..."

In a sleepy murmur, Gu Youyou said, "I'm so tired, I still have to go to the palace tomorrow, stop bothering me..."

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Chapter 640: Incurable, Punishable by Death

The next day, very early in the morning, Gu Youyou got out of bed.

She had to enter the palace today, and it could well be that she would have to do so for the entire month.

Before leaving the house, Gu Youyou first went to bid her aunt farewell, needing her permission for the household to provide her with a carriage to the palace.

In such a large Lin Residence, she had to check in with her for everything, but instead of finding it bothersome, she took pleasure in it. The thoughts of these women were truly difficult to understand.

Riding in the carriage of the Lin Residence, Gu Youyou entered the palace. A palace maiden from the Empress's side had been waiting at the palace gate early on. Upon seeing Gu Youyou arrive, she hurriedly took the medicine chest she was carrying and led her all the way to Empress Dowager's Renshou Palace.

She arrived early, and it just so happened that the concubines in the palace were paying their respects to the Empress Dowager. Seeing this, Gu Youyou felt somewhat awkward.

"Sister, should I step aside?"

While the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law were having a casual chat, this doctor had come at a really inappropriate time.

The palace maiden said, "No need, the Empress Dowager has ordered that if you arrive, you should come straight in to see her."

Looking at the large group of beautiful women, Gu Youyou almost had to force herself to enter.

Everyone stared at her as if she were some rare animal, which was something Gu Youyou had anticipated.

"So this is Doctor Gu. I've heard that you can cure the Empress Dowager's leg ailment?"

Gu Youyou did not recognize the woman, only knowing that she was one of the noble ladies of the palace. She bowed gracefully and answered earnestly, "Your servant will do her best."

The woman seemed displeased and snorted, "How can you, a healer, speak like this? What do you mean by 'do your best'? Since the Empress Dowager's leg has been entrusted to you for treatment, then you must cure it. Failing to do so would be a capital offense."

Gu Youyou was taken aback and looked up to meet the woman's gaze.

In the ancient imperial society where there were no human rights, she had never been scolded or threatened like this in her two lifetimes. Although she was suppressing her nature, she was starting to feel somewhat unable to restrain herself.

Consider her either bold due to her skills or fearless because of her ignorance.

Since the punishment was death anyway, why couldn't she defend herself or her fellow healers even a little?

Gu Youyou looked at the woman and said calmly, "Madam, treating an illness is not like other things. Before the results come out, no one dares to guarantee whether the illness will be cured or not.

Although Madam may not understand Medical Skills, you surely understand the principle that all medicines carry a risk. Whether taking medicine for minor or major illnesses, or using acupuncture, there are risks involved. Since your servant has agreed to take on the task, I will naturally give it my all. However, as for how effective the treatment will be, I have already reported to the Empress and the Empress Dowager yesterday. I dare not make guarantees, only to say I will do my best.

If Madam insists that since I have taken on the treatment, it must be cured, or else it is a capital offense, I think that there would be no doctor in the world willing to treat such a disease. Besides, isn't that why the Imperial Physicians all say it's incurable? So often, whether an illness can truly be cured is not up to the doctor, but rests with the patient..."

Gu Youyou, fearless, spoke these words in the hall, stunning all the noble ladies present.

Most likely they had never seen such a bold common woman, and for a moment, they were at a loss for words.

Lady Xu's face turned particularly unpleasant, as she was waiting for the Empress to chastise Gu Youyou.

But to her surprise, the Empress only broke the silence gently and interjected, "Doctor Gu, this is Lady Xu. Lady Xu is a little impetuous, but she genuinely cares for the Empress Dowager. She doesn't understand medical theory, so don't take her words to heart. Just do your best."

Catching onto the mood of the Family Head, Gu Youyou said with sincere trepidation to the Empress, "Your servant recalled how recently I almost died from poisoning while developing a life-saving medicine for myself, so I got a bit agitated just now. I beg forgiveness from all the noble ladies here."