Farmhouse 641

Chapter 641: Becoming a Disciple

Upon entering, the Empress Dowager had been sitting calmly, not scolding Lady Xu nor speaking in favor of Gu Youyou. Now, upon hearing Gu Youyou mention how she almost died, the Empress Dowager uttered an "oh" and asked further, "Doctor Gu, is there such great risk to you when treating yourself?"

Gu Youyou replied to the Empress Dowager, "My illness was life-threatening, and thus the medicine was naturally extremely dangerous. If successful, I would survive; if not, death was all that awaited me. However, Your Highness need not worry, your ailment is in the leg and not life-threatening. If the treatment works well, you may be able to stand up and even walk a few steps after one month; if not, at least the pain will be lessened. But complete recovery is impossible. Whether to treat or not is ultimately up to Your Highness."

"Hmm, Doctor Gu speaks the truth," the Empress Dowager nodded and said, "Indeed, you are a bit braver than those Imperial Physicians in the Imperial Medical Bureau. They simply dared not treat me, claiming that my leg was incurable. You've put it well; I have come to terms with this leg issue a long time ago. Proceed with your methods. Whether it can be cured or not, I won't blame you. You don't have to take Lady Xu's words to heart."

Lady Xu had not expected the Empress and Empress Dowager to highly regard a civilian doctor, which made her tremble with fury.

It was bad enough she couldn't compete with these women for favor, but now she had been reprimanded by an insignificant medical maid today.

The Empress laughed, "Youyou really does resemble Minister Lin in temperament—bold enough to speak the truth without fear of offending others. I remember the Emperor once said that he admires Minister Lin for such traits, daring to say what others wouldn't, daring to do what others couldn't."

Upon mentioning the Emperor, the Empress Dowager's face beamed with a smile, and she looked upon Gu Youyou even more favorably, "Exactly, Lin Xingyi is quite good, no wonder the Emperor favors him. He even praised him for being outspoken and a true gentleman."

Feeling snubbed, Lady Xu couldn't say anything more about the medical maid given the curiosity of others, as it might displease the Empress and Empress Dowager.

As the Empress Dowager was seeking treatment, they all excused themselves.

Just as discussed the day before, Gu Youyou started by giving the Empress Dowager a leg massage.

The palace’s medical maidens were called over to learn from Gu Youyou.

The massage was not difficult; it was simply to smooth out the meridians in the legs, which had not walked for two years—one could learn it after just being taught.

Watching Gu Youyou perform acupuncture on the Empress Dowager, the medical maid bravely made an audacious request during the break.

"Doctor Gu, I find your set of acupuncture techniques truly exquisite. Cui Xilan takes the liberty of making a presumptuous request."

Gu Youyou put away the needles and said, "Could it be that Miss Cui wishes to learn this set of acupuncture from me?"

Cui Xilan showed a look of surprise and hurriedly said, "Xilan knows that this request is overstepping bounds. If it’s inconvenient, Doctor Gu, please pretend I never asked."

Gu Youyou smiled and responded, "There’s nothing inconvenient about it. Since you wish to learn, I shall do my best to teach you. Miss Cui’s aunt is a doctor in my medical hall; I hold a great deal of respect for Doctor Cui’s character."

Cui Xilan was beside herself with joy, having never expected Gu Youyou would agree to teach her these techniques.

One must understand that medical skills are among the most difficult to master within the techniques of various families. Each doctor has their own methods, typically passed down from master to disciple, from father to son, and they are not casually shared.

"Master! Please accept your disciple’s bow," Cui Xilan then bowed on the spot to Gu Youyou.

Seeing that Cui Xilan was more than ten years her senior, Gu Youyou was reluctant to take her on as a disciple. She hurriedly helped her up, saying, "Miss Cui, what are you doing? It’s merely a set of acupuncture techniques; I cannot accept you as my disciple."

"You won’t accept me as your disciple? Yet you’ll pass on the acupuncture techniques to me?"

Chapter 642: One Day Apart Feels Like Three Years

Gu Youyou laughed and said, "If you were about ten years younger than me, I would have taken you on, but you... don’t be like this, I really feel embarrassed."

Feeling rejected by Gu Youyou because of her age, the female doctor Cui felt somewhat regretful. After a moment, she said, "It is said that Doctor Gu’s medical skills are excellent; how can it be without passing them on to a disciple? I have an eight-year-old niece at home, clever as can be, chosen to be the next imperial female physician. Since Doctor Gu is unwilling to accept me, could you take on my niece instead?"

Turns out they were a family of imperial female physicians?

Gu Youyou smiled and said, "Then bring her to me tomorrow so I can take a look. If the child is not too troublesome, I might consider it."

To Gu Youyou, an eight-year-old was still a child, and she was not interested in looking after children.

But since they had come forward with the request, she could only agree to take a look.

The moment Doctor Cui saw that Gu Youyou had agreed, she hastily said, "She’s not troublesome at all, very obedient. And we don’t have to wait until tomorrow; she’s right here in the palace playing with Princess Nine. I’ll go fetch her now."

Perhaps because the Imperial Palace was too large and people were hard to find, Gu Youyou had finished administering the entire set of acupuncture on Doctor Cui by the time she returned with the child.

Two of them?

After bidding farewell to the Empress Dowager, Gu Youyou sat in a pavilion in the courtyard with Doctor Cui and two children.

"Doctor Cui, is this... both nieces?"

Doctor Cui looked a bit embarrassed as she said, "This is Princess Nine. When I went to fetch Yingying, Her Highness insisted on coming along, saying she also wanted to become a disciple of Doctor Gu."

Gu Youyou let out a dry laugh and said, "If Princess Nine wants to become a disciple, that matter would need to involve the Empress and the Empress Dowager. I wouldn't dare make that decision."

Upon hearing this, Princess Nine said, "Then you should come with me now to see the Empress Dowager."

"Ah, that wouldn't be good!" Gu Youyou quickly held back Princess Nine, saying, "Just now, I had administered an acupuncture session to the Empress Dowager, and she has gone to sleep. It's best not to disturb her."

After thinking for a moment, she said, "How about we do it tomorrow? I've been out for so long today, I should go back and rest." She held her forehead and said a bit deflatedly, "I'm a patient too..."

Anyway, after the commotion that morning, everyone already knew that Doctor Gu, famous for her medical expertise, was herself suffering from a serious illness.

Seeing this, Doctor Cui hurriedly said, "Yes, yes, it's my oversight, I forgot that Doctor Gu is also in poor health. Yingying, why don't you become a disciple tomorrow instead?"

That settles it then.

After bidding goodbye to Doctor Cui, she met Lin Qianqing, who was looking around anxiously in front of the palace gate.

She didn’t return yesterday, and my aunt said she would be staying in the palace for a few days. What was she doing at the palace gate now?

"Hey, cousin, you’re finally out." Lin Qianqing rushed over to her on seeing her, like someone greeting a family member not seen for years.

It truly felt like an absence of a day felt like three seasons had passed.

"What’s wrong; you look so aggrieved?"

She looked as though she was about to cry.

"I want to go back home. You talk to my mother."

Gu Youyou turned and walked away: "Don’t come to me with this; I’m powerless to help."

She couldn’t be blamed for lacking loyalty as just last night Jin Zijin had given her a talking-to.

The intentions of my aunt and the Empress couldn’t have been clearer. If she went to intercede, she would be obstructing their grand plans for life.

An ordinary female doctor from the countryside would have to be foolish to offend these two women.

"Hey, how can you just stand by and do nothing to help?" Lin Qianqing caught her sleeve, looking pitiful.

Gu Youyou stopped, looked at her seriously, and said, "Do you think if I go and talk to your mother, she would agree?"

Lin Qianqing looked down, her face losing a shade of color.

Chapter 643: An Uninvited Guest at the Sanqing Temple

This pitiful appearance, however, Gu Youyou couldn't pity her, and said again, "Even if your aunt agrees, do you think the Empress would agree?"

At these words, her complexion whitened even further.

Gu Youyou really couldn't bear it and was about to say something when the maid sighed as if her heart had died, "You don't need to say anymore, I understand."

Gu Youyou's heart tightened, she patted her shoulder and lowered her voice, "If you can't find your mother, I'll go see my grandmother, perhaps she has a way."

Lin Qianqing's eyes brightened, suddenly coming to life.

"Really? I knew my cousin was the best, thank you, cousin."

"Okay, come here early tomorrow to wait for me."

.....

Today, a most unwelcome guest arrived at Sanqing Temple.

The arrival of this unwelcome guest took everyone by complete surprise.

"Master, why have you come?" Yue Rujing jumped up in fright when she saw the old man with the black wig.

"Shush, why so loud? Want to die?" Tian Jizi immediately hit Yue Rujing's head without hesitation.

Jin Zijin said, "Master sneaking down the mountain, let's not have the martial uncles and brothers worried sick."

"If it weren't for you two little rabbits, would I risk coming here?" With that, he sat down directly on the table.

Yes, on the table, not on a chair.

Tian Jizi has always been highly esteemed and very conventional. After his mind began to fail him in recent years, he changed. To quote the brothers that serve him, he's becoming more childlike the older he gets.

Yue Rujing and Jin Zijin exchanged glances, unsure whether their Master was in a state of confusion or lucidity at the moment.

The guess was that he was confused.

"Zijin, come here and kneel!" Tian Jizi shouted while sitting on the table.

Jin Zijin, with no choice, walked forward a few steps and knelt down in front of him.

Yet Tian Jizi clicked his tongue, poked him with a scroll from the table, and said, "I told Zijin to come kneel, Ajing, what are you kneeling for?"

The kneeling Jin Zijin: "..."

The innocent Yue Rujing standing aside: "..."

Indeed, he is confused.

"Aren’t you going to come kneel down too!" Tian Jizi roared at the innocent Yue Rujing.

Yue Rujing said, "Master, you’ve mistaken, that is..."

"Nonsense!" Before he could finish, Tian Jizi roared back at him and righteously said, "You think I’ve gone blind just because I’m old? Let me tell you, the most reliable part of my body is my eyes."

Yue Rujing swallowed the rest of his words, utterly innocent.

So, your eyes work fine, but your brain doesn’t.

Yue Rujing had no choice but to resignedly kneel down next to Jin Zijin.

He remembered Yixi’s words, the more muddled Master was, the less you could reason with him; the best approach was to just agree with whatever he said. When he’s lucid, he will be fine.

"Master, ah... Zijin doesn’t know what he did to make you so angry," Yue Rujing glanced at Jin Zijin and resignedly said.

"Hmph, you still don’t know what you did?" Tian Jizi snorted coldly and poked the side of Jin Zijin with the scroll, saying, "Ajing, you go out first and guard the door, don’t let anyone come near."

Yue Rujing: "..." He opened his mouth, wanting to speak, but looking at his raving mad Master, he ultimately said nothing.

Jin Zijin kowtowed to Tian Jizi, looked sympathetically at Yue Rujing, and acquiesced with a word.

"Hey, Senior Brother, you’re not going to be that dishonorable, are you? You’re really going?" Yue Rujing’s gaze followed Jin Zijin, until he disappeared outside the

Chapter 644: I Am Not a Thing

"This is so unfair," he grumbled to himself.

Without even turning his head back.

Tian Jizi gave Yue Rujing another thump on the head, which finally brought him back to his senses.

"Master, please just say what you want to say, and however you want to punish your disciple, go ahead. In any case, it's the disciple's fault."

Although he really didn't know what play his master was performing, he felt that admitting his mistake was undoubtedly the right thing to do, especially since he wasn't actually Jin Zijin.

The master was an old muddle-head, who probably didn't understand himself.

Tian Jizi harrumphed and said, "I heard you're planning to acknowledge your ancestors and leave the position of State Preceptor behind?"

"Ah...?" Yue Rujing was stunned for a moment before nodding honestly, "We... the disciple indeed has such plans."

"Foolish child!" Tian Jizi lamented, "I let you join Dao Sect so that with its power you could investigate your mother's affairs. Isn't that better than wading through the murky waters of a succession dispute? Is it easier to withdraw Dao Sect's influence from the court as a State Preceptor or as a Monarch? Don't you understand? What are you thinking in that head of yours?

When I received the letter saying you were planning to withdraw from the struggle for the position of State Preceptor, I didn't believe it. Now, look at you!" Tian Jizi, infuriated, poked Yue Rujing's forehead hard with the rolled-up scroll in his hand, saying, "I've raised you all these years, do I not know you? The way you're behaving, you've accepted defeat. I've raised you painstakingly for so many years, and now at the last moment, you decide to throw in the towel and give up. Are you trying to infuriate me to death?"

Yue Rujing looked resigned, as if he was crying out in his heart.

His hair got all messed up by the poking.

Is his master actually insane, or not?

If he’s insane, why does what he says make so much sense? And if he’s not insane, how could he have recognized the wrong person, even saying he raised me from a young age?

"Master, there is... a reason for this!"

Tian Jizi snorted, "Good, then you tell me, what’s the reason?"

"Actually..." Yue Rujing scratched his head, trying to come up with a plan. "This was Ajing’s idea, Master. Why don’t you listen to what Ajing has to say?"

"Ajing’s idea?" After hearing this, Tian Jizi was stunned for a moment. Then, several more thumps landed on Yue Rujing’s head.

"How could you listen to him? Do you not know that the kid has been up to no good since he was little, always looking for shortcuts and being slippery? Can you compare with him? You bear so many missions; what can he do? His father sent him to Qi Mountain, and he just needs to return to Lingnan and scrape by for his entire life to be done with it. Can you really compare yourself to him? Have I raised you all these years in vain?"

Yue Rujing was scolded until he was dumbfounded. He was not pleased with this and retorted, "Hey hey, Master, I... okay, I’m worthless and have let down your expectations, but what has Ajing done to you? He hasn’t done anything terrible, right? Yes, it was his idea, but you haven’t heard him explain it to you in person. How do you know it’s not a good idea? It might even be better."

"Hmph, better," Tian Jizi snorted, stroking his beard. In a deep voice he said, "Go bring that irresponsible young man here; I want to see what better idea he has."

"Alright, Master, just wait for a moment," Yue Rujing replied.

Relieved, Yue Rujing hurried outside to call Jin Zijin in.

"Senior Brother, Master wants to have a word with Ajing. Please!"

He made a very sincere inviting gesture, and Jin Zijin looked at him indifferently and said solemnly, "I'm worthless?"

Yue Rujing: "..."

"You sure admit your mistakes quickly, taking advantage of my name to admit guilt."

Chapter 645: The Confused Heavenly Master

"Uh..." Yue Rujing chuckled dryly, "Our master is just getting old and confused, perhaps he'll forget after a good sleep. When you go in there, just go with whatever he says to scold me, I don't mind. At worst, it just ruins my image."

"Huh? Do you even have an image left to ruin?"

Yue Rujing: "..." His elder brother's ability to insult him was indeed getting stronger.

Yue Rujing stood guard outside the door while Jin Zijin knelt before Tian Jizi, receiving a lecture.

"Tell me, how many bad things have you done since you were little? On your first day on Qi Mountain, you peed behind the Statues of the Three Pure Ones. Don't think I didn't know about it."

Jin Zijin frowned, unaware of this incident.

Outside the door, Yue Rujing clutched his head in agony, wishing he could rush in and shut Tian Jizi's mouth.

"In the year you turned ten, you coaxed your elder brother to steal chickens from a widow in the farms at the foot of the mountain. You were caught red-handed, making your elder brother take the blame for you."

Jin Zijin nodded. That did happen.

"Ten years ago, you dragged him to Beijing, resulting in him being poisoned with flames."

Jin Zijin was startled; actually, that wasn't entirely Yue Rujing's fault, as he had wanted to go himself.

"Two years ago, you visited Qingshui Town to find him without permission, revealing his whereabouts..."

Yue Rujing stood still like a statue!

Jin Zijin continued to nod and admit his faults.

Tian Jizi sighed and said, "It's rare to see you admit your faults so readily today, so I won't mention your past deeds. But tell me, what is this about you influencing him not to be the State Preceptor anymore?"

This time Yue Rujing was truly taking the blame for his elder brother; he shivered and pressed his ear against the door to listen intently.

"This time... There are complications I cannot speak of." Jin Zijin hadn't expected his master to suddenly arrive, nor had he anticipated that his forgetful master could still ask such sharp questions, leaving him at a loss for how to explain.

"What complications?"

Jin Zijin replied, "Just that it won't ruin the great plan. There have been some changes, and I cannot tell Master for now."

Tian Jizi narrowed his eyes at him and said bluntly, "Did you listen to the Xiao Family's advice?"

Jin Zijin froze there, did his question reveal that he recognized him again?

"Master, who am I?" he pointed to his own nose.

"Are you out of your mind, not even knowing who you are?" Tian Jizi tapped his head with a scroll and scolded, "Are you trying to fool me like Yue Rujing did?"

Jin Zijin felt as if the world had turned chaotic.

"Did you listen to the Xiao Family or not?" Tian Jizi asked angrily.

"No... It's not that." He found that talking to his mentally confused master was even more exhausting than before.

"Have you seen your father?"

"No!" replied Jin Zijin indifferently, "They are preparing the medicinal puppet, and it's ready. If the legend is true, then Yu Jizi might... not step down. We can't wait!"

Tian Jizi snorted coldly, clearly displeased, "So what if they are ready? That's just a pipe dream; it cannot succeed."

"Why is Master so sure it won't succeed? Those records..."

"Defying heaven to change fate, does he think he can truly become immortal? Hmph, let me tell you, becoming immortal is not what it's about. Even if it does succeed, it will likely turn him into something neither human nor ghost!"

Jin Zijin furrowed his brows and asked, "If it’s not becoming immortal, then what is it?"

"It’s..." Tian Jizi suddenly seemed confused, as if unable to recall something, "What was it again? I need to go back and check a few books."

With the master in a muddled state, Jin Zijin exhaled deeply, deciding not to press him further.

Chapter 646: Abao Delivered

"No matter what happens, we should be prepared for anything, shouldn’t we, unless Master you order us to take action against him."

"Take action against him?" Tian Jizi’s eyebrows twitched as he said, "Do you mean you want to kill him? That would be breaking the rules. Besides, he’s not a fool; do you think he’s that easy to kill?"

"Rules are inflexible, but people are adaptable."

"But..." Tian Jizi pondered for a moment, stroking his long beard, and said, "The situation is of great importance; I need to give this some thought. Ajing, you have made considerable progress this time, speaking with much more steadiness. You’ve truly grown up; your master is very comforted. Hmph, on the contrary, your senior brother is becoming more and more improper."

Jin Zijin: "..." Why is it back to this again?

"You are right in your instruction, Master. I will speak to him later," Jin Zijin replied, looking agreeable.

"Yes, he does need a talking to," Tian Jizi yawned and said, "I’m old and have been traveling all night. I’m going to take a nap first; you all go on out."

Jin Zijin breathed a sigh of relief, watched Tian Jizi enter the inner chamber, and then withdrew.

"Master praised me!" Yue Rujing said gleefully.

Jin Zijin glanced at him sideways and said in a deep voice, "He was praising me."

Yue Rujing: "..."

"Let’s go; Abao has arrived, send it to Youyou."

...

The grown-up Abao was as big as a small calf; it’s hard to imagine what they fed it in Lingnan to make it so robust.

When Gu Youyou saw it, she truly started to worry.

"Wait a moment, I’ll ask my aunt if we can keep it."

Yue Rujing sat in the flower hall with Abao crawling at his feet; when he saw Gu Youyou getting up, its eyes looked at her pitifully.

"Sigh..." Gu Youyou let out a sigh, beckoned Abao over to her, and while stroking its head, said, "How did you get so big like this? If you were a cute little thing, it would be better, but being so large... I’m afraid they might reject you."

On hearing this, the look in Abao’s eyes became even more pitiable.

Yue Rujing said irritably, "Do you live with such little dignity in the Lin Family? You have to ask your aunt before keeping a dog?"

Gu Youyou lamented, "Under someone else’s roof, one has to bow their head. Besides, this is called respecting roommates. I’m not the only one living in this courtyard; naturally, I have to consult the other occupants. After all, Abao is so big, can you imagine if it frightens the delicate young ladies into losing their looks? Will you be responsible for comforting them then?"

Yue Rujing: "..." Why should I be the one to comfort them? It’s ridiculous to not take care of your own pet and still be justified.

"You stay here with Abao for a moment; I’ll be right back," Gu Youyou said.

Without another word to him, Gu Youyou stood up and made her way to Madam Lin’s courtyard.

Madam Lin had already received a report from the gatekeeper that the Princely Heir had come with a dog to see the young miss and was now in the courtyard.

Having heard about the relationship between Gu Youyou and Yue Rujing from Lin Qianqing, she didn’t pay much attention to it.

On seeing Gu Youyou, she was surprised, "Does the Princely Heir have something he needs?"

Since no one had reported Yue Rujing’s departure to her and Gu Youyou had appeared in her courtyard, she naturally assumed Yue Rujing had a matter to discuss.

Gu Youyou said, "Aunt, here’s the thing. I used to keep a dog back when I was in Lingnan, and because I arrived in haste, I’ve been keeping it there without bringing it along. Now Yue Rujing has brought it for me, so... I wanted to ask if we can keep a dog in this courtyard?"

Madam Lin thought keeping a dog was no big deal; it could just be considered a guard pet, so what was there to ask about?

Chapter 647: Bewitching Beauty Brings Disaster

"You like having a dog, so just keep it. Can’t our big Lin Residence afford to keep one dog? The Princely Heir brought it to you, we can’t just let him take it back, can we? Youyou, you can make your own decision about such a small matter, just tell your aunt if you need anything."

This... "Ah, okay!" Gu Youyou replied, though her expression was a bit strange.

Back in the flower hall, Yue Rujing was leisurely playing with Abao.

Abao hadn’t seen them for a long time and wasn’t the least bit aloof, especially when he saw Gu Youyou. Although he had grown, his eyes still looked the same as they did back in the tomb chamber behind the hills of Lotus Village.

"I’ll keep Abao myself," Gu Youyou said.

"Oh, keep him then!" Yue Rujing said, noting that Gu Youyou didn’t seem very happy.

"Your aunt has already agreed to let you keep him, why do you still look unhappy?"

Gu Youyou sighed, "Auntie has never even seen Abao. Well, never mind, she said to keep him. Alright, you’ve given Abao to me, thanks for bringing him over."

"Mm." Yue Rujing nodded, with a look of wanting to say something more.

"What is it? If you have something to say, just say it."

"Today, my master came," Yue Rujing said. "He snuck in and gave my senior brother and me a good scolding."

"Oh, why?"

Gu Youyou recalled, Jin Zijin had said their master, Tian Jizi, was getting senile, hadn’t he?

"Your master isn’t losing his mind, is he?"

"How is he not? He mistook me for my senior brother and scolded us interchangeably."

"Mistook you?" Gu Youyou pictured the hilarious scene and laughed, saying, "Didn't you explain things to him clearly?"

Yue Rujing pointed to his head and said, "He would need to listen for that to work, his brain!"

Right, he was getting senile.

"So why did he come all this way to scold you?"

"All because of you," Yue Rujing said grumpily. "The senior brother was afraid you'd end up waiting for him and become an old maid, so that's why he's not becoming a Taoist."

Gu Youyou: "..."

"Ah! Do you know how troublesome it is to switch paths? If he had simply become the State Preceptor as expected and used the Dao Sect's influence to handle that matter, he could have spent a few more years withdrawing the sect's power from Beijing, then he could have retired successfully. But you just had to get involved, and now, he also has to go acknowledge his relations."

"Oh, so it's my fault?" Gu Youyou shrank her neck a little.

Yue Rujing humphed and said, "If not you, then who? A beauty brings trouble. You know how much the senior brother hates his father, right? Originally, he planned not to acknowledge him for his whole life, because there was a stand-in, and no one was suspicious. Now look, sigh, never mind, you won't understand even if I explain it..."

And so, Gu Youyou was disdained by Yue Rujing.

"You haven't been to Jisheng Hall recently, let me tell you about the factory at Yangguan City."

"Mm, is it operating normally now?"

Yue Rujing nodded and said, "Yes, we followed your advice and cooperated with Doctor Cao from Fujitang. We opened the largest factory in Yangguan City. The location is convenient, and the herbs from Zhuzhao Country are all brought there for processing before being sold to other cities—extremely convenient.

We've just started there, so we couldn't staff it entirely with new hires, which is why I've transferred quite a few people from Lingnan. In less than two months, we'll have a steady flow of silver coming in. Manager Gu, do you have any further instructions? Like opening another branch factory or something?"

Having heard this, Gu Youyou simply nodded and said, "The factory in Yangguan City is big enough, no need to add more for now. Just hurry and get all the production lines up and running. Besides... we need to open some Jisheng Hall chain pharmacies."

"Pharmacies?"

Chapter 648: Really a Fellow Time-traveler

Gu Youyou said, "Yes, a medicine shop. It doesn't make sense for other pharmacies to go all the way to Yangguan City just to restock their medicines. If we have our own pharmacy there, they could directly purchase from us. As long as we control the market prices well, it could be a substantial income, and it would be convenient for other pharmacies and medical establishments too."

Yue Rujing thought for a moment, then clapped her hands and said, "That's a good idea, and we should hang the sign of Jisheng Hall too. In the future, this brand will become more and more renowned."

"Of course," Gu Youyou said with pride.

"Let's start with one in Jinxiu City, it's close and easier to manage."

"Okay, I'll have someone take care of it right away."

...

After a busy day without a moment's rest, Gu Youyou realized it was getting late, and she still had to fulfill Lin Qianqing's requests.

"Grandma, Youyou is here to see you." She brought some pastries she had made, a mix of hawthorn and yam, sweet but not cloying.

She had been meaning to try making cream cakes when she had the time, but Gu Youyou seemed too busy to get around to it.

"Youyou, bringing this old lady something to eat again?"

Gu Youyou smiled as she set down the food box and said, "It's a pastry made from yam and hawthorn. Please try it."

The old lady, smiling, picked up a piece, took a bite, and couldn't stop praising it, "Not bad, it's almost the same as the pastries your mother made when she was little."

"My mother could make these pastries?" Gu Youyou was utterly surprised. People of that time weren't supposed to know how to make pastries from hawthorn and yam like this.

The old lady narrowed her eyes, her thoughts drifting off to the distant past.

She recalled her eldest daughter with both pride and heartache.

A child so bright, who passed away so young due to a tragic fate.

"She, from a young age, could do many unique things, especially making excellent pastries. And then there was one made with milk, called what... cake? The taste of that still makes my mouth water to this day. It's just a pity that ever since she passed, I've never met anyone else who can make cakes. Sigh! But of course, she invented it herself and never taught anyone else, so naturally no one else knew how."

Gu Youyou was so shocked at this point that she was speechless.

Based on what she was saying, Gu Youyou's unseen mother was also a time-traveler?

No wonder she, a mere village woman, could lead her family to prosper, the secret was all here.

Alas! What a pity that she was killed by that scoundrel, Gu Lao San.

"Apart from making pastries, could my mother do anything else?"

The old lady became animated as she spoke of her daughter, "She was smart from a young age, even smarter than your uncle, and could learn anything at first try. My children, they are truly capable. She took charge of our household at a young age, insisted on sending your uncle to private school. Without her, we would have never thought about getting your uncle educated, and our family wouldn't have the wealth we have today; we'd still be digging clay in the village.

Everyone profited from it, but she, she insisted on staying in Lotus Village to marry your father. She had her own mind since she was little, and nobody could force her otherwise; we just let her be. But who would have thought, she would end up in such a..."

Gu Youyou talked with the old lady a little bit more, and confirmed that her deceased stepmother was indeed a time-traveler, and she had traveled back in time while in the womb.

Being born different from ordinary people, the Lin family, the old lady, and the uncle were all influenced by her, with thoughts different from the people of ancient times.

Seeing that it was getting late, Gu Youyou began to speak of more urgent matters.

Chapter 649: Simple and Crude

"My cousin was sent to the palace by her mother, and the Empress said she wanted to keep her for a few days, but she doesn't like to stay in the palace," he said. "She wanted me to ask if Grandmother could come up with a way to get her back early?"

The old lady slapped her thigh upon hearing this and said, "That's easy, just tell them I'm sick, and as the eldest granddaughter, she must come back to see me."

Gu Youyou: "..." Silently, she gave the old lady a thumbs up, simple, crude, and effective.

"Fine, I'll immediately write you a critical illness notice."

...

About to go to the palace to administer acupuncture to the Empress Dowager, Gu Youyou was very uneasy as she entrusted Abao to Xiang Chun, who took on the task with trepidation.

"Miss Cousin, please make sure to come back soon."

Anyone would feel intimidated by such a large dog, especially Xiang Chun, who was just an ordinary maid.

Gu Youyou said, "After I leave, you just shut the courtyard gate, everyone who's scared of dogs leave, and don't let anyone who isn't from my courtyard in before I return."

"Yes, Miss Cousin."

"Also, remember to feed Abao."

"No problem, Miss Cousin."

"And, it eats raw meat, so it would be best if you could get a few live chickens from Grandmother's courtyard and toss them into the yard."

Yue Rujing had told her that this was how he had instructed people to feed Abao in Lingnan to maintain its wildness.

"Yes, Miss Cousin..." Xiang Chun was close to tears.

Gu Youyou patted her shoulder and sighed, "If it gets too much for you, just find a sturdy house servant to take care of it and say that I ordered it."

Tears welling up, Xiang Chun nodded and, holding the dog's leash, watched Gu Youyou leave the Lin Residence.

She had never felt so reluctant to let go.

Lin Qianqing had been waiting at the palace gate from early on and approached Gu Youyou as soon as she entered.

"How about it, Cousin, is it possible?"

Gu Youyou replied, "Come to the Empress Dowager Palace later, and I'll say that Grandmother is sick. The Empress Dowager herself is an old lady and will most understand the feeling of wanting to see relatives when ill. As long as she nods, the Empress won't say anything."

"OK, OK, I will definitely go later."

The process was the same as the day before, Cui Xilan assisted the Empress Dowager with the massage, and Gu Youyou observed her completing a set before starting to apply the needles.

With each needle inserted, Gu Youyou shared all sorts of key points with Doctor Cui, who diligently took note of them.

After the set of acupuncture was done, the Empress Dowager asked with a smile, "Doctor Gu, you're so generous with your knowledge, have you taken Doctor Cui as your disciple?"

Gu Youyou answered, "The Cui Family has its own distinguishable medical skills, and Doctor Cui is an outstanding figure among the Cui Family. How could I dare to presume to be her master? We're merely exchanging knowledge. However, Doctor Cui's niece does want me to take her as my disciple."

Doctor Cui looked at Gu Youyou with a smile and gently nodded as thanks.

Without a doubt, Gu Youyou had given her much respect with her words.

The Empress Dowager glanced at Doctor Cui and then smiled and nodded, saying, "It's rare for someone your age to have such skill and yet be so humble. I was told yesterday that Doctor Cui's niece wants you as a mentor, and Jiujiu does too, is that right?"

Quickly, Gu Youyou bowed respectfully and said, "Taking Princess as a disciple is something I approach with great trepidation, and I hope the Empress Dowager will think it over."

Truth be told, from the moment the Ninth Princess fussed about becoming Gu Youyou's disciple, it was no longer up to her to accept or not.

It all depended on the Empress Dowager's intentions.

The Empress Dowager paused for a moment, sighed, and said, "Since she wants to learn, go ahead and teach her."

Chapter 650: The Empress Strikes

Gu Youyou remained as calm as usual and was indeed not overly concerned about whether to accept or not.

For her, taking the Ninth Princess as a disciple had its pros and cons.

"Go and call the Ninth Princess here," the Empress Dowager said to a palace maiden by her side.

"Yes, Your Highness the Empress Dowager."

After the palace maiden had left, she turned her gaze to Gu Youyou with an increased hint of inquisitiveness in her eyes.

"Jiujiu, that child, enjoys playing with Yingying because she knows some medical skills," she remarked.

Gu Youyou raised her eyebrows, her eyes slightly startled.

"Her birth mother was always in poor health and passed away after a few years of illness. Her desire to learn medicine is not merely for fun; she may be serious about it. Doctor Gu, it's true that women from families other than ones like Doctor Cui's don't often study medicine. But since Jiujiu wishes to learn, I have allowed it. Whether you accept her or teach her is up to you. You needn't worry that this is coming from me or about her status as a princess," the Empress Dowager said with a sigh, her expression tinged with sadness.

Gu Youyou remained silent, yet she internally noted the Empress Dowager's approachability.

She understood that, as an ordinary female doctor, she couldn't refuse to teach the princess. However, she also realized that insisting on something doesn't necessarily mean it's a good thing!

Being inherently indecisive, Gu Youyou saw no reason to refuse, especially since the Empress Dowager herself had put it that way.

Soon after, the Ninth Princess and Cui Yingying were brought by the palace maid. While taking a master was a significant event, with the Empress Dowager presiding, they simply knelt three times before Gu Youyou and offered a cup of tea to complete the ceremony.

To them, Gu Youyou handed two small gourds she had prepared in advance. They were not engraved with any words. She said to them, "When you both complete your studies, your master will engrave words for you, alright?"

"Thank you, Master!"

The two young girls smiled sweetly, treasuring and carefully pocketing the gourds.

Giving these gourds was also because Gu Youyou had no better gifts on hand, for which she privately chastised herself.

So stingy!

"The Empress has arrived!" a eunuch's voice rang out sharply. Shortly after, the Empress appeared, accompanied by a group of palace maidens, with Lin Qianqing following at her side.

After paying their respects to the Empress Dowager, Gu Youyou and the others bowed to the Empress, and with much mutual kneeling, they finally got around to discussing important matters. It was truly troublesome.

"Mother, I heard that the Ninth Princess wishes to learn medical skills from Youyou, is this true?" the Empress inquired.

Having spoken, without waiting for the Empress Dowager's response, her gaze shifted to Gu Youyou, her expression less amiable than usual.

Gu Youyou lowered her head, remaining silent.

This was not her place to speak.

The Ninth Princess stepped forward, standing beside the Empress Dowager with a timid voice, "Yes, Jiujiu has already taken a master."

The Empress's brow furrowed, and her gaze returned to Gu Youyou.

"Alright, alright, it's not such a big deal. If Jiujiu wants to learn, let her. She is just a child after all," the Empress Dowager then declared.

The Empress paused for a moment before adding coolly, "Since the Empress Dowager has spoken, then it shall be settled."

Then turning to Gu Youyou, she continued, "The Ninth Princess wants to learn from you, but where do you plan to instruct her? And when will you teach her? Do you intend to come to the palace every day, or perhaps you plan to become a court physician and live here in the palace?"

Gu Youyou's heart skipped a beat; she quickly knelt down and said, "Your Highness the Empress, Your Highness the Empress Dowager, I am not robust enough to frequently come to the palace. If the princess finds it inconvenient to follow me out of the palace, perhaps I could... teach her every few days?"

This was exactly the part that Gu Youyou was hesitant about.