Farmhouse 681

Chapter 681: Xiang Chun Takes Over

Madam Lin furrowed her brows and glanced at Gu Youyou as if nothing was amiss, but she asked Lin Qianqing, "Daya, what exactly happened? What do you mean the coachman was switched while you were sitting in the carriage?"

Lin Qianqing shrugged and said, "I don't know, I was in the carriage and didn't notice the coachman had been switched at all. It was my cousin who said that. We only realized the driver wasn't our servant after we got off the carriage."

Since Lin Qianqing brought herself into the conversation, Gu Youyou also had no choice but to pluck up her courage and say, "I knew the coachman was switched because his voice sounded wrong."

"And what about the person on top of the carriage?" Madam Lin asked urgently.

Gu Youyou glanced at Lin Qianqing and said, "I haven't had the chance to mention this yet, but I know who the person on top of the carriage was."

"Who?"

Everyone turned their attention to Gu Youyou.

"It was Yue Rujing. I saw him in Jinxiu City, and he told me," Gu Youyou replied honestly.

"Then..." Madam Lin wanted to ask something else but didn't know where to begin.

Gu Youyou said, "I really don't know anything else. Maybe Yue Rujing knows more. Aunt, why don't we invite him to the manor for questioning?"

...Madam Lin was left speechless.

Invite Yue Rujing for questioning at the manor? She had the nerve to come up with that.

Lin Qianqing suddenly said, "Cousin, you went to meet with Princely Heir Yue when you came downstairs?"

Gu Youyou nodded and said, "Yes, I just happened to see him from the window."

The whole affair was puzzling, yet their account of it was crystal clear.

Madam Lin the elder pondered thoughtfully.

Madam Lin had wanted to pursue the issue of Lin Qianqing following Gu Youyou to Jinxiu City, but with this bizarre incident, the trip to Jinxiu City seemed trivial in comparison.

After thinking for a moment, she said to Madam Lin the elder, "Mother, this matter is no simple affair, we must wait for Xingyi to return and discuss it properly."

Madam Lin the elder glanced at Gu Youyou and nodded slightly, saying, "Indeed, let’s wait for Xingyi to come back before we discuss it further."

...

Gu Youyou took Xiang Chun back and carefully applied medicine to her face, asking, "I was only inside for a short while and you were beaten up like this. They asked you questions, you should have just answered them. Why suffer in vain by being stubborn?"

Xiang Chun cried and said, "When the young ladies make a mistake, they cannot be beaten, it’s up to the maids close to them to take the punishment. Miss, the beating I received had nothing to do with what happened on the road. They grabbed me and without saying a word, gave me a few slaps; I understood right away."

This shocked Gu Youyou profoundly, witnessing the wounds Xiang Chun suffered for her, she truly felt the terrifying power of ancient rulers.

As a servant without status, being beaten or punished needed no justification; they would beat you whenever they wanted, and if you died, they could just find an excuse to dispose of you, the Governor's Office would not bother to investigate a maid of inconsequential status in a Minister's mansion.

"You've suffered, you don't have to do anything for the next few days, just rest well."

That was all Gu Youyou could do for her; doing anything more might reach her aunt's ears, who knows what would become of it then.

At night, without Xiang Chun to keep watch, there was one less bowl of soup to worry about.

Jin Zijin arrived very late, when the bustling Beijing had fallen into a deep silence.

Gu Youyou told him about the events of the day, and Jin Zijin frowned deeply, saying, "Since Ajing has already settled it, don't inquire further."

Chapter 682: Kill One Each Time We Find One

Gu Youyou: "...Those people are too bold, isn't the official road from Beijing to Jinxiu City supposed to be the safest? They dare to kill on the official road?"

Jin Zijin sneered, "There's no such thing as a safe place in this world, even the heavily guarded Imperial Palace is not safe."

Uh... Seeing Jin Zijin like this, she was afraid she wouldn't get much out of him.

Having spent a considerable amount of time with him, Gu Youyou had also developed some experience.

If she couldn't get an answer, she wasn't going to press the issue, wasting her expressions.

She turned over, her fingers twining through his silky hair, and changed the subject.

"When I left this morning, my aunt mentioned that she was looking for a suitable match for me. What do you think about that?"

She could clearly feel the person opposite tense up, his vast eyes gradually deepening. Then she heard him coldly spit out two words, "Reject it."

Gu Youyou smiled nonchalantly, "Ah, I also want to reject it, but do you think I have a say in this matter? I can only listen to my uncle and aunt. Why don't you speak to them?"

"Me go?" Jin Zijin scoffed, "Fine, I'll go!"

Ah...? He isn't really going, is he?

Startled, Gu Youyou hastily said, "Hey, hey, no need to go. If you mess with my aunt's list of candidates, preventing her from finding someone suitable for the next few years, that should settle it."

Jin Zijin's tense body relaxed, and he said with a faint smile, "If that's the case... Good, as you wish."

The long night stretched out before them, and they had grown accustomed to lying in bed and chatting. When the conversation moved to the other five medicine people, Jin Zijin seemed a bit off, as if he was hiding something from her.

She really couldn't stand this habit of his.

"Now that you've found one more in Jinxiu City, there are only four left. Have you got a lead?"

Jin Zijin said, "Finding medicine people isn't easy. Finding you was an accident. Jin Ziyuan had a special identity; that was due to his many slip-ups in the past, and it took several years to find the one in Jinxiu City. There might be some clues about the others, but avoiding Xuanzong's people and finding them isn't easy."

"What do you plan to do once you've found them?"

Jin Zijin sighed, "I don't know yet."

"Don't know?" Seeing him turn his head away, Gu Youyou grew even more uneasy.

"Why don't you know? Are you afraid I'll overthink it? Just tell me."

Gu Youyou wasn't the type to pry, but when it came to their dealings with the medicine people, she couldn't help but be less calm, especially since she was one of them.

Gently pulling her close, Jin Zijin brushed back the hair at her temples and whispered, "Do you really want to know?"

"Of course." Gu Youyou said earnestly.

Jin Zijin gave a bitter smile, "The safest method is to kill each one we find, turning his dream of eternal life into an empty promise."

"Kill... Kill them?" Huh, indeed a very safe method.

"So, did you... kill the one in Jinxiu City?"

Jin Zijin shook his head, "No."

"Oh..." Gu Youyou breathed a sigh of relief.

"Ajing only went this time to personally confirm whether that was a medicine person nurtured by Xuanzong. To protect the medicine people well, they often place them in the most inconspicuous

locations, where no one would monitor them closely. However, if a medicine person dies, it will certainly ’startle the grass and alert the snake,’ making it harder for us to find the others later. Besides, now that we have you, I’m afraid that if they’re cornered, they might become desperate."

"You’re afraid Yu Jizi might make a move on me?" Gu Youyou chuckled dryly.

"Yes!" Jin Zijin recalling the day’s events, said, "Tomorrow... be careful when you go to your grandmother’s place."

Chapter 683: Night Meeting with Lin Xingyi

"My grandmother?" Gu Youyou found his words perplexing and disjointed.

"Today your grandmother went to Sanqing Temple, and it seems Yu Jizi said something to her."

...In the afternoon in the flower hall, Gu Youyou was only concerned about the ambush on the road and didn’t notice any abnormalities in her grandmother.

"You didn’t put any medicine in Xiang Chun’s food today, did you?" Jin Zijin asked again.

Gu Youyou nodded and said, "Xiang Chun took a beating for me today, so I let her rest early. She’s not on night duty."

Jin Zijin breathed a sigh of relief and said, "That’s good, don’t give her any medicine for the time being."

"Alright!"

"It’s late, let’s sleep." Jin Zijin stood up and went to extinguish the lamp.

"Wait, I have something else." Gu Youyou suddenly remembered her encounter with the elder Princess at Manxiu Building.

"I saw the elder Princess in Jinxiu City."

Jin Zijin sighed, "She is accustomed to a luxurious life and often goes to Jinxiu City. It’s strange to encounter her anywhere else, but not in Jinxiu City."

"Ah...?"

"Xiao Jinfei’s residence is outside Jinxiu City, also because of her fondness for the place."

"Xiao Jinfei?"

"The eldest son of the Xiao Family, the elder brother of Xiao Jinyan, Xiao Jinfei. He is the elder Princess’s Prince Consort!"

Gu Youyou was stunned for a long while and couldn’t utter a word.

That’s not right...

"You all knew she was an impostor, right? The Xiao Family is helping you!"

Jin Zijin said, "We can’t expose her identity now. Since the Emperor decreed the marriage, we naturally had to proceed with it. Besides... she still has her uses for the moment."

Aiyo, that really puts that cousin in a tough spot.

...

This night was equally restless for both the elderly Madam Lin and Lin Xingyi.

In the afternoon, Madam Lin told Lin Xingyi about the ambush that Lin Qianqing and Gu Youyou encountered on their way to Jinxiu City, and Lin Xingyi said it should be reported to the Governor’s

Office normally, insisting that not a single word about Yue Rujing should be leaked, as he would handle it.

Madam Lin, a woman deeply influenced by the decrepit notion that women should be submissive to their husbands and stay inside while men govern outside, naturally had no complaints since Lin Xingyi said as much.

However, at night, the elderly Madam Lin secretly called Lin Xingyi to her quarters.

In the elderly Madam Lin's room, all the maids had been dismissed, and a bright lamp was lit. It was just the two of them, mother and son.

"Mother, what matters so much that you had to call Xingyi here in the middle of the night?"

The elderly Madam Lin had been uneasy since returning from Sanqing Temple and felt a little better seeing Lin Xingyi, so she told him about the strange things Yu Jizi had said to her that day.

After hearing it, Lin Xingyi frowned deeply and remained silent for a long time.

The elderly Madam Lin anxiously asked, "What does he mean by that? Isn't he a Taoist? Why is he so concerned about our family? What is he trying to do?

And what about Youyou? What did he mean by talking about Youyou like that? Is he trying to remind me of something?"

Lin Xingyi sighed, "Mother, don't overthink it. Your son knows what he's doing."

"How can I not overthink? Do you still remember your sister? If it weren't for her, where would you be today, a Great Scholar in the imperial academy, instead of still digging soil in the village? Youyou is her only daughter. If this one's... fake, and we've been treating her like a treasure, how can I ever face your sister?"

Lin Xingyi said helplessly, "Mother, how could it be fake? Don’t think such chaotic thoughts."

"I don’t want to think it either, but what does Yu Jizi mean by that? Or are you saying that you’ve secretly arranged for someone to teach her over these years?"

Lin Xingyi’s expression grew grave as he shook his head lightly, "No."

Chapter 684: Have you ever heard of a Child Prodigy?

"No?" the old lady grew agitated, "Then... could it really be a fake? Is the State Preceptor reminding me that the Gu Youyou we brought back home is an impostor?"

"How could it be fake?" Lin Xingyi couldn’t be completely sure either. He had doubted the unusual aspects of Gu Youyou, but he just trusted Jin Zijin and Yue Rujing’s integrity. For such a big matter, since they declared it real, he believed them.

"Mother, let’s not think about it anymore. It’s late tonight; you should sleep early. If you really worry it’s fake, then tomorrow, why don’t you call Youyou to your room alone and test her yourself?"

"Right, test her, of course, I have to test her. If she turns out to be an impostor who has hidden my real granddaughter, I won’t let her get away with it. And Xiaoqiu, I used to think he was quite reliable in handling matters, but this..."

Lin Xingyi sighed, "Mother, we aren’t certain she’s fake yet, you’re thinking too much."

"Right, still not certain. We’ll talk about it tomorrow then."

...

The next day, Gu Youyou was truly brought to the old lady’s place... to have breakfast together.

Of course, she was very clear about what would happen, as Jin Zijin had already informed her the night before.

This gossiper, Yu Jizi, seems to be everywhere.

"Grandmother!" Gu Youyou greeted Madam Lin with respect.

Seeing Gu Youyou's obedient demeanor and her impeccable manners, Madam Lin grew even more uneasy and said, "You have learned your etiquette well, much better than Daya and the rest. Sit!"

Gu Youyou sat down and said, "The teachings of the old Madam from the Marquis Residence of Lingnan are commendable."

"Oh?" Madam Lin was a bit surprised but then remembered that she had spent some time in Lingnan and felt reassured.

While eating breakfast, Madam Lin sent all the servants away and casually asked Gu Youyou, "I heard there's a legend in Lotus Village about a Child Prodigy said to be exceptionally intelligent, who could learn many things overnight, including medical skills beyond those of ordinary people."

Gu Youyou calmly took another spoonful of porridge and said, "How could such a thing be a legend? Grandmother, you must have seen it with your own eyes."

"I saw with my own eyes?" Madam Lin felt that Gu Youyou was muddling through, and her tone grew displeased.

"Who are you, really? I'm tired of beating around the bush; you might as well just tell me. I've even been treated by you before. Just confess honestly, as long as my real granddaughter is safe and sound, I won't make things difficult for you."

Gu Youyou looked bewildered and said, "What are you talking about, Grandmother? I am naturally your granddaughter, Gu Youyou."

"Hmph..." Madam Lin let out a cold snort.

Gu Youyou said, "I might seem a bit strange, but I take after my mother. Think carefully, wasn't my mother also... exceptionally intelligent?"

"Your mother?" Madam Lin frowned, recalling her eldest daughter.

Speaking of her eldest daughter, she had always been very proud.

Smart and capable, she led the whole family to better days. It could be said that the Lin Family's prosperity today was all thanks to her.

Her own daughter being clever and capable was of course a joy for her, but she never thought there was anything unusual about her.

After all, she had watched her being born and raised her herself, never leaving her side before she got married.

Besides her innate intelligence, what could be wrong?

But this granddaughter was different; she hadn't been raised by herself but came into her life when she was already grown, and when she was little, there had been no signs of her being so intelligent.

Chapter 685: Minister of Public Works

Gu Youyou took another sip of porridge and said indifferently, "My mother was exceptionally intelligent, so I suppose I take after her."

"But I watched your mother grow up, and she had no such issue," the Lin Family Madam said.

Gu Youyou said, "But she also learned to read without being taught, and knew many unfathomable things without instruction."

Madam Lin felt a pang in her heart and upon reflection, she realized that her eldest daughter was indeed like that.

Yet, over the years, she had grown accustomed to her daughter’s differences and had seen nothing wrong with them.

What did it matter if she had given birth to a pair of unparalleled children?

"Grandmother, if you believe my mother was born with exceptional intelligence, why can’t you believe in Youyou for once? If you truly don’t believe, you can ask around. Youyou entered that room when she was seven and has never left for ten years. Everyone in the Gu Family knows this; a simple inquiry will reveal the truth!"

Madam Lin’s head buzzed with noise.

Thinking about it, all the extraordinary intelligent traits her daughter displayed came rushing back to her. Once she started thinking, she couldn’t stop.

No one taught her, yet she could read, and she even taught Xingyi to read from a young age. When speaking to others, she claimed that she learned by watching Xingyi practice writing.

She could do accounts, conduct business, and make strange pastries unseen by the world. Since her death, Madam Lin had never again tasted those pastries. Desperately wanting them, Xingyi had people search throughout Jiangnan but never found a chef who could make them.

So...

Madam Lin looked up at Gu Youyou, her voice trembling as she asked, "What exactly are you... why?"

She couldn’t even voice what they were.

Gu Youyou said, "Grandmother, since my mother never told you, she must have had her reasons. Today, Youyou cannot tell you either. Can you trust me, trust my mother?"

"Trust..." Of course, she trusted.

They were no ordinary mother and daughter.

Tears streamed from Madam Lin’s aged eyes, and she couldn’t hold them back. She wept alone at the side of the table for a long, long time!

Her eldest daughter had toiled her whole life for that family. It was she who took the family from poverty to riches, and that’s how the Lin Family had achieved its current splendor.

It was a pity that Heaven was blind and took her away at such a young age.

Gu Youyou sat across from her, unmoving, knowing that the old lady needed time to accept all this.

...

After returning from Jinxiu City, the second young master Xie found himself uneasy and returned to Jinxiu City within a couple of days, where he had now stayed for five days. He held a nominal position at the Ministry of Works—a job although nominal, required daily attendance. Absent for five days, the Ministry began to express its dissatisfaction, and the Minister of Public Works asked Master Xie upon leaving the court, "Master Xie, your son has not been seen for many days. Is there an issue at home?"

Every mention of his son annoyed Master Xie, and he retorted gruffly, "Didn’t I say he was on leave?"

Rank and position dominate in bureaucracy, and Master Xie was two whole ranks higher than the Minister of Public Works. Thus, the minister had no choice but to respond with an apologetic smile, "What has happened to the second young master? May I ask how long he plans to take off?"

A leave, he had assumed, meant a day or two at most. It was normal for a young man to want to play for a couple of days occasionally.

But with the second young master Xie absent from the Ministry for five days, the Minister of Public Works, naturally, had to inquire.

Master Xie snorted coldly, "He’s ill. Who knows how long he will need? You might as well consider him dead out there for all I care."

The minister was sweating profusely!

It was rumored that Master Xie and his second son were at such odds that they were on the verge of severing their father-son relationship, and it seemed to be true.

Chapter 686: Bring the Rebellious Child Back Bound

After much questioning, not only did I fail to find anything out, but I even managed to anger Lord Jie.

Having received a cold reception from Lord Jie, I had no choice but to leave dejectedly.

Once back home, Lord Jie summoned Xie Qinyun and said, "Go to Jinxiu City and see if that ungrateful son is dead or not. If he’s not, bind him and bring him back; if he is, buy a coffin there and carry it back here."

Xie Qinyun: "..."

"What’s gotten into Father? With so much happening at home, my older brother has been in a bad mood these past few days; just let him be."

Lord Jie glared at her with a cold look and snapped angrily, "You’ve grown up and got tough wings now, too? Even you won’t listen to me?"

Xie Qinyun felt so wronged that she trembled at her father’s scolding, hurriedly responding, "Alright, alright, Father, don’t be angry. Your daughter will go now."

Xie Qinyun called for a few skilled house servants to escort her, and they quickly set off for Jinxiu City by carriage.

There, she saw her older brother standing by the window, continuously sighing as he stared at the building opposite, the Manxiu Building.

"Older brother, what's the point of this? You two are already divorced, and Father has filed the documents. It's better if you come back with me," she said.

The second son of the Jie family remained unmoved, feeling an icy chill in his heart.

The woman he had always wanted to get rid of had finally left.

He should have been happy, but why did it feel like a piece of his heart was missing, leaving him with an emptiness and discomfort?

Xie Qinyun approached the window and followed her older brother's gaze downwards. There, opposite, was the front door to Miss Du's Manxiu Building.

Every now and then, one could see Miss Du bustling about inside the building.

She was born a daughter of an official and could have lived her life without ever having to show her face and do such things. Amongst the circle of official's daughters, someone like her would be looked down upon. From the scholarly class she fell, becoming the most despised merchant.

But looking at her now, she didn't seem unhappy in the slightest, much happier compared to her days in the Jie Residence with the empty title of the second young mistress.

The current Du Xintong was like a living, breathing person with flesh and blood.

Xie Qinyun sighed, "Older brother, look how happy she is now. Isn't this quite good? Although she shows her face and is busy, it's still better than when she was in our house, right? Back then, she didn't dare to light the lamps too brightly for fear of running out of oil, which she had to ask the Concubine for. That Concubine would make things difficult for her, and she might not even get what she needed."

The second son of the Jie family took a step back, his heart suddenly trembling, "She couldn’t afford lamp oil?"

Thinking carefully, it seemed that on the night he visited her, her room indeed had only a dim lamplight.

Xie Qinyun said, "You already know what kind of person your favorite concubine is, right? With such a malicious woman in charge of the household, what couldn’t she do? Older brother, you didn’t know it, but Sister Du suffered a lot behind your back. Since you feel sorry for her now, staying far away from her is the kindness she needs."

The second son of the Jie family felt his heart grow colder and colder, like a pool of lifeless, temperatureless water.

This was all caused by him; he made her suffer so much.

But what had he done back then? He had never trusted her, always thought it was merely her schemes, and he detested her.

His eyes welled up with a mist he didn’t know where from, clouding his vision, preventing him from seeing the figure on the opposite side clearly.

"Ayun!" The second son of the Jie family opened his mouth, his voice hoarse and choked.

"Ayun, do you think I deserve to die?"

Xie Qinyun was startled by his words and said, "Older brother, what are you saying? Don’t scare me."

Chapter 687: Gu Youyou’s Blueprint

Jie’s Second Young Master shook his head and said, "Don’t worry, I won’t do anything foolish. What are you thinking about, silly girl? I just... want to clear things up with her, and I should at least apologize to her. But I don’t dare to face her, I’m too ashamed! I never expected to push her to that state one day. If back then... it wasn’t for my misinterpretation of that sachet, and coincidentally that both Du Wanqing and I had lost our mothers..."

"Enough, enough, stop talking about it," Xie Qinyun interrupted irritably. "I don't want to hear these words, and I'm sure Du Sister would feel the same. If you're going to see her just to say these things, then I think it's better not to. I asked Sister Du last time, now that you know your mistakes and the misunderstanding has been cleared, is there still a possibility for you two? Do you know what she said?"

"What did she say?" His eyes lit up with a glimmer of hope.

"She said that you and the Concubine both lost your mothers that year, and the comfort you found in each other was real. The hurt you've caused her because of the Concubine over these years was also real. Perhaps she really loved you once, but that love was ground away bit by bit by the repeated injuries you inflicted upon her. There is no fate between you and her, and if there was, it was a calamitous one, and now even that calamitous fate has ended."

Jie's Second Young Master felt his legs go weak, almost unable to stand, as the last string of hope in his heart snapped suddenly. He had thought that as long as the misunderstanding between them was resolved, there would still be a possibility.

But she was right. The harm he had done to her was real, driving her to such a state, how could it be undone by simply resolving a "misunderstanding"?

Finally, the still waters in his heart froze into ice.

"Fine, I'll come back with you!"

Miss Du put down the ledger in her hand, with neither sadness nor joy, as she watched a familiar carriage drive away from the inn across the street.

There was no fate between them. If only that year, when she had handed him the small tiger sachet, he had been willing to look up, or if she could have run a little slower... perhaps things between them might have been different.

A moment later, Miss Du picked up a drawing from her hand and called for Cuiya.

The drawing was a congratulatory gift from Gu Youyou, and the clothing it depicted was the most beautiful she had ever seen.

"Did the fabric ordered from the Jin Family come back?"

Cuiya set aside her work, clapped her hands, and ran over joyfully to look. "Are you talking about Doctor Gu's drawing? I've ordered the lotus-pink fabric already; the Jin Family's clerk delivered it yesterday. Do you need it now, Miss?"

"Yes, bring it here," said Miss Du.

Soon Cuiya brought the fabric Miss Du had requested. Miss Du smiled and said, "I want to make the first set of clothes myself and send it to Doctor Gu. Cuiya, do you remember Doctor Gu's measurements?"

Cuiya confidently smiled and said, "Don't worry. As long as Cuiya has seen them once, she can recall the measurements to near perfection even without a ruler. The clothes you make will surely fit Doctor Gu perfectly."

...

Finally seeing the true face of that woman, Jie Zhonglin still couldn't believe it after so long.

He had trusted her so much, defended her in every way, yet he was unaware of how venomous she was behind his back.

His sister once said he was blind in both eyes and heart, and indeed, she was right.

Looking at the disheveled woman kneeling and weeping before him, he hated himself for being so foolish, deceived for so many years by such a hypocritical face.

Jie's Second Young Master closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "Not sending you to the Governor's Office is already merciful enough. I'm allowing you to leave the Jie Residence because I feel that not all

of your arrogant and malicious deeds over the years are entirely your fault; I'm also to blame. If it weren't for my inability to distinguish right from wrong, if I hadn't placed my trust in you in everything, you wouldn't have become what you are today."

Chapter 688: Driving Du Wanqing Out

Concubine Du had already cried until her eyes were red; this time it wasn't fake tears, but genuine crying that had lasted several days.

Jie Zhonglin had completely stopped believing in her. She recognized the look in his eyes all too well—it was the same contemptuous gaze he once had for Du Xintong, perhaps even more intense.

She had nothing left but Jie Zhonglin's love, and without him, how was she to live?

"Husband," Concubine Du crawled forward a few steps and suddenly grasped the hem of Jie Zhonlin's robe, crying out, "You can't do this to me. You once promised that you regarded me as your wife, your only wife. Husband and wife are one; if I have made a mistake, you would bear it with me. I admit I've done wrong, but you can't go back on your word and cast me out."

Jie Zhonglin, struck as by lightning, stared at her, dumbfounded. These were indeed his own words from years past, but how could he have been so foolish? His disgust with himself deepened.

He angrily pushed Concubine Du away, shouting, "Enough, we were both wrong, don't you understand? You will be punished, and I will be punished. At this point, even if I wanted to protect you, it would be impossible. My father will not let you stay in the Jie Family any longer—don't you see that?"

Concubine Du pleaded through her tears, "I'm not like Du Xintong; she is the legitimate daughter. Both the Du Family and the Yu Family have left their estate to her. I have nothing. She took everything away from my room when she left. I am left with nothing. If you ask me to leave the Jie Family, how will I survive? I don't want to go... Master has always doted on you the most. If you talk to him, tell him I'm the woman you love the most, your wife. He surely won't make things difficult for me. Husband, I can't be without you, you've always known that, haven't you?"

Jie Zhonglin looked at her and sneered coldly, "You are my wife? Are you really? Are you worthy? Haven't you caused me enough misery? That I agreed to see you today is already the full extent of my kindness; don't push your luck."

All of a sudden, Concubine Du laughed wildly, "If I'm not your wife, then who is? Don't tell me it's that bitch Du Xintong. You despised her, didn't you? You've already divorced her; there's no connection between you two anymore. Haha, I know you regret it, but what of it? Given her nature, since she agreed to the divorce, it means she's done with you for good. You'll never get her back in this lifetime..."

"Shut up!" Jie Zhonglin grabbed Concubine Du's jaw with such force that her eyeballs seemed about to bulge out. The grip was so tight that it almost dislocated her jaw.

"Yes, I can't have her—all because of you. You've deceived me for so many years and inflicted so much misery upon me. What more do you want?"

After bellowing these words, he threw Concubine Du aside and said indifferently, "Get out, I never want to see you again."

Concubine Du, frightened by his demeanor, lost her voice and forgot her pain.

It took her a good while to be able to close her jaw again, and seeing the bloodshot eyes of Jie Zhonglin, she knew she was completely ruined.

A sinister light flickered in Concubine Du's eyes as she casually reached towards her waist.

She wouldn't accept this. After so many years of hard work and careful planning, she was on the verge of grasping what she wanted, only to face such an end.

When Du Xintong left the Jie Family, it was said that she really did reopen Manxiu Building.

After leaving, apart from a tarnished reputation, her living standards in every other aspect would be better than when she was with the Jie Family. But it was different for her—she had nothing, only Jie Zhonglin.

Chapter 689: If We Can't Live Together, We'll Die Together

She cried softly, "You can't treat me like this, I have nothing but you, everything I did was to be with you forever. If you abandon me, I have no way to live on!"

Jie Zhonglin sat in the chair, his head turned to one side, not looking at her.

His own life was ruined by such a woman, how could she be discontent? And how could he?

Having lost a pearl and yet cherishing a fish eye as a treasure, that was exactly him.

While crying, Concubine Du slowly crawled toward Jie Zhonglin, her hand hidden under her robe tightly gripping a sharp dagger.

What she couldn’t have, she wouldn’t let others have either.

She bit her lip tightly, her eyes filled with madness, determined to perish together with Jie Zhonglin.

Don’t blame me—it’s all your fault, you forced me into this.

If we cannot live together, then let us die together. That would be better.

Young Master Jie was so engrossed in lamenting that he had been deceived by such a woman for so long, that he failed to notice the deadly dagger already thrusting towards his chest, emitting a chilling white light.

Startled by the sudden attack from Concubine Du, he instinctively reached out to block it.

Just before the dagger pierced his chest, he grabbed the sharp blade with his hand and blood poured out instantly.

He stared with shock-widened eyes, disbelievingly asking, "You want to kill me?"

How could this woman who once claimed to love him deeply now want to kill him?

Concubine Du trembled violently, but her grip on the dagger's handle was unyielding. Her face twisted with insanity, she said shakily, "Don't be afraid, if you die, I'll join you. I will never leave you."

"You're mad, you maniac!" Young Master Jie exclaimed in shock and anger.

Concubine Du felt that she indeed had gone mad, the thought of the miserable life she would have to endure after leaving the Jie Family was driving her insane, and she had lost it completely once she knew Jie Zhonglin no longer loved her.

So, she cried and laughed crazily, using all her strength to thrust the dagger toward Young Master Jie's heart.

Young Master Jie's heart tightened, and enduring the intense pain, he jerked his hand to the side.

The dagger and his hand were both pressed against the tea table beside them, followed by a piercing scream.

The people outside heard their Second Young Master's scream and hurriedly ran toward the room.

As they opened the door, they were stunned by the scene inside.

Blood filled the room. Concubine Du was maniacally laughing while chasing after their Second Young Master with a dagger in her hand.

The Second Young Master was using a stool to shield himself, his other hand bleeding profusely.

The servants were so startled that they froze, momentarily forgetting to intervene and stop Concubine Du's violent act.

Young Master Jie shouted angrily, "What are you standing there for? Seize this madwoman at once!"

His voice jolted the stunned servants into action.

A few house servants stepped forward, quickly wrested the dagger from Concubine Du's hand, and pinned her to the ground.

Concubine Du looked like a madwoman that day, her clothes in disheveled chaos and stained with blood.

Her hair was a mess, sticking to her face, and the carefully applied makeup that usually adorned her face was now unrecognizable. In her current state, she resembled a mad beggar on the streets.

"My dear husband, don't hide, let's die together, die together..."

Concubine Du must have truly lost her mind, babbling mixed with crying and laughter.

Seeing Concubine Du in this state, everyone felt she was both cruel and pitiable.

Once doted on by the Second Young Master, she had come to such a tragic end.

"Go to the Lin Residence, fetch Doctor Gu..."

Chapter 690: Hurry and Save Lives

Everyone had just pitied and lamented for Concubine Du when they discovered that the second young master's hand, bleeding profusely, was missing a finger. The finger he had lost was lying quietly on the desk beside him.

No wonder he had screamed so loudly earlier; Concubine Du, having failed to kill the second young master, had instead severed one of his fingers.

With the second young master's finger being cut off by Concubine Du, this was a grave matter, and the servants couldn't afford to be negligent. They hastily left the residence in a carriage to request the help of Gu Youyou from the Lin Family.

In the absence of Minister Xie, with the second young master in such a state, the only person in the family who could make decisions was the third young lady, Xie Qinyun.

Xie Qinyun was so shocked upon arriving at the scene that she nearly fainted.

She had never imagined that Concubine Du, who had always professed her love for the second brother so fervently, could possess such a cruel heart.

She was after his life; although she didn't get his life, she cut off one of his fingers.

What a vile woman!

Concubine Du was bound hand and foot, gagged, and thrown into the firewood shed to await her punishment, while Xie Qinyun was pacing anxiously in her second brother's room, and the second young master of the Jie Family, enduring the pain, had the servants tend to his bleeding wound.

It wasn't just the finger that was injured; his palm also had a gash, and there were several other cuts on his body, all inflicted by the frenzied Concubine Du with a dagger.

"Quick, go and see if Doctor Gu has arrived!" Xie Qinyun sent another maid to check at the gate.

In just a short while, she had already sent five or six maids to check.

"This vile woman, second brother, you should have driven her out earlier; that would have spared you from this suffering."

The second young master's feelings were complicated at the moment, filled with both regret and hatred.

"A person like her, who could push her own sister into a lotus pond to drown, what more for a man who wanted to kick her out of the house. Second brother, now you see her true face, don't you? She doesn't

love you; she loves your status, herself. If someone else could give her what she wants, she could love another just as well."

The second young master let his sister scold him, remaining silently sullen, with large beads of sweat dripping from his forehead.

Lin Residence

A house servant from the Jie Family had ridden swiftly over. As soon as he dismounted, he urgently asked the gatekeeper to notify their young lady, saying that it was a matter of life and death.

Seeing the servant from the Jie Residence so anxious, the gatekeeper of the Lin Family did not dare delay. One inquired with Madam Lin, while another went directly to the courtyard of their young lady, Gu Youyou.

Today, Concubine Du of Manxiu Building had come to visit. She had just entered Gu Youyou's courtyard, had just exchanged pleasantries, and had not hurried to address the main issue when she saw the servant from the gate rushing over in an urgent manner.

This made Gu Youyou quite displeased as she said, "Is it so urgent as if your eyebrows are on fire? Didn't you see I have a guest here?"

The servant hastily replied, "It's more urgent than the eyebrows catching fire, young lady. A messenger from the Jie Residence has come, saying you need to go and save a life."

"Save what life?" Gu Youyou asked, glancing at Concubine Du, speaking in a calm and unhurried manner.

"Oh my, it's said that Concubine Du has gone mad. She grabbed a knife to kill the second young master, saying she wanted to die together with him."

Gu Youyou's brows twitched, "Is that so?"

Concubine Du was internally startled, but her expression was only somewhat surprised. Overall, she remained relatively calm and asked, "And now, is the second young master dead or alive?"

The gatekeeper’s servant replied anxiously, "Right now, we don’t even know if he’s dead or alive. Young lady, will you save him or not? If you’re not going, I should go out and relay the message; otherwise, if there is any delay, it could be troublesome, as our family and the Jie Residence have a rather good relationship."

"Save him, of course," Gu Youyou said after looking at Concubine Du. "Notify the young lady to make a quick trip to Jisheng Hall and bring my medicine chest over."