Farmhouse 751

Chapter 751: Writing a Story for Tian Jizi

Unbeknownst to Gu Youyou, she had already been on Qi Mountain for ten days, and Tian Jizi hadn't been cooperating with the treatment, not even allowing his pulse to be taken.

Gu Youyou thought that considering his advanced age, happiness would be the best medicine. Therefore, she brought him some interesting and thought-provoking books filled with stories every day, hoping they would keep him calmer and prevent him from confusing his disciples in his muddled state.

The disciples took turns playing various roles to cater to Tian Jizi, which appeared to be kindness on the surface but, in fact, only served to further muddle his mind.

Instead of letting him fail to recognize people, it was better to occupy his time with reading stories and contemplating the matters within them, constantly exercising his mind to delay the progression of his illness.

This approach, however, made things difficult for Gu Youyou, as all these short stories were written by her through painstaking effort.

She had almost finished writing the stories of Conan.

Xiang Chun came in with the lunch, just as Gu Youyou finished another short story.

Gu Youyou put away her pen and gently blew the ink dry, saying, "How is Searcy doing?"

Xiang Chun still wasn't used to the strange name that Miss Gu had given to the woman in the next courtyard.

But since Miss Gu was the master, Xiang Chun had no place to comment and simply replied, "Her wounds have all healed, but I'm afraid her leg still can't move. Just now, she asked me to inquire with Miss Gu when that splint can be removed."

Searcy was adept at using poison, but far from skilled in treating ailments.

Gu Youyou wondered how her mother had taught her, or perhaps Searcy herself was just not very good at treating illnesses.

Gu Youyou smiled lightly and said, "Tell her, ’Injuries of the muscles and bones take a hundred days to heal; don’t even think about recovery before three months.’"

Xiang Chun secretly stuck out her tongue and left the room after setting down the meal.

In no time, Qingyang ran in, looking cheerful.

Gu Youyou was having her meal and looked up at him,

He scratched his head and said, "Is Doctor Gu still eating?"

"Yes, have you come for another storybook?"

Qingyang smiled sheepishly and replied, "Yes, Doctor Gu, have you finished today’s story?"

Gu Youyou pointed to the table and said, "It’s done. It’s right there, you can take it."

"Ah! Thank you, Doctor Gu!" Qingyang jumped for joy, grabbed the Conan story written by Gu Youyou, and ran out.

Gu Youyou had to raise her voice to remind him, "Don’t forget to show it to the Heavenly Master first."

"Got it, Doctor Gu."

His stories were said to be very popular.

Gu Youyou thought about the essence of a merchant, wondering whether she should charge them a fee for her hard work?

Soon enough, Xiang Chun came back, just as Gu Youyou finished her meal.

She said to Gu Youyou, "Someone from Jinxiu City has arrived, a person from Miss Du's Manxiu Building."

"Please invite them in quickly."

This was the first time someone from Jinxiu City had come since she had arrived at Qi Mountain.

The visitor was Cuiya, who, after leaving the Jie Family, had experienced a world of change just like Miss Du, radiating the sharp authority of a formidable woman; gone was the cautious timidity she had when they first met.

She looked nothing like her former self.

"Doctor Gu, the clothing designs you sent us last time have all been produced, and sales were excellent. Here's the ledger, my miss said to bring it for you to review," Cuiya said.

Gu Youyou took the ledger, glanced at it, and placed it aside, then asked Cuiya, "Is your miss doing well lately?"

Cuiya's face lit up with joy as she answered, "Everything is well, and we owe a lot to Doctor Gu. If it wasn't for you, we might still be in the Jie Family's back courtyard."

Gu Youyou sighed and said, "Those things are in the past, let's not mention them anymore. Miss Du is a capable person; she was never meant to be confined for a man for her whole life. By the way, since you've brought Concubine Du back with you, her wounds must have mostly healed by now, right?"

Chapter 752: Visiting Miss Du again

When Cuiya mentioned Concubine Du, her expression soured. She said, "Of course, she's living well with people taking care of her, able to eat and sleep comfortably. I really don't get what Miss Youyou was thinking. If I were her, I would've chased her out onto the streets long ago. But Miss turned out to be a good person, taking her back and even getting a doctor to see to her illness, and hired two additional servants just for her."

Gu Youyou smiled faintly without speaking, well aware that this little maid couldn't possibly comprehend the true intent behind those actions.

After traveling for several days, Gu Youyou let Xiang Chun take Cuiya down to rest while she herself picked up the ledger to review it once again.

The recent income had exceeded Gu Youyou's expectations, perhaps due to the upcoming elections. Many of Beijing's nobles had placed orders at Manxiu Building. Although there were only a few of Gu Youyou's designs, with Miss Du's intelligence and wit, creating a few new styles that varied but did not stray from the original designs was certainly not a problem.

Gu Youyou had originally planned to release eight new designs each season, but with the current election trend, she decided to produce two more designs.

The climate was warmer in Qi Mountain, and at this time of year, wearing autumn attire was just right. Qingyang had said that the winters in Qi Mountain weren't too cold and seldom rainy.

Gu Youyou thought to herself that spending a winter here might not be too bad.

The weather in the north, however, was different; it got cold quickly, with each gust of wind and rain bringing in colder air. When Gu Youyou had traveled here, she was still in autumn clothes, but according to Cuiya, both Beijing and Jinxiu City had already switched to thick winter attire by now.

So naturally, what she sketched were designs for winter clothing.

Cuiya needed to return promptly to report back, so she could only stay in Qi Mountain for a day. Gu Youyou worked through the night to draft two winter designs and, after finishing the ledger, handed it back to Cuiya, saying, "You're in a hurry to return, and I'm also short on time, so I've drawn these two

designs. Take these back with you first. In a few days, send someone over again, and I will have all the winter designs ready for you."

Cuiya received them joyfully, her eyes skimming over the figures on the paper dressed in those unique and beautiful clothes, a flash of amazement crossing her gaze.

She thought: Miss always said Doctor Gu is a talented and exceptional woman, and indeed it's true.

...

In Jinxiu City, the regretful Jie Family's Second Young Master, who had already turned green with remorse, once again took the opportunity of a rest day to visit Miss Du.

Accustomed to the pointing and whispering around him, he didn't mind as long as he could soon see the one he yearned for; he pretended all those who laughed at him didn't exist.

To him, those people merely added to the ambiance of love and romance.

"Did you see? The Jie Family's Second Son from Beijing is here to see Miss Du again."

"Yeah, do you think he's out of his mind? I heard that when Miss Du was their daughter-in-law, he wouldn't even give her a second glance, his eyes only for that cunning Concubine Du. Now that Miss Du has divorced him and started a new life, he suddenly can't stay away."

"Exactly. If I may say so, Miss Du probably sees him more often now after leaving the Jie Family than she did while she was living there."

"But what of it? Miss Du doesn't want to see him at all now."

The affairs of the Jie Family's inner house had long been a source of gossip over tea and meals. Given Miss Du's growing reputation in Jinxiu City, the rumors about her also traveled from Beijing to Jinxiu City.

Of course, there were quite a few who spoke behind her back, calling her the Jie Family's cast-off wife. But there were also many who praised her for daring to divorce, for taking the first breath for women too meek to speak out.

Chapter 753: Seeing Du Wanqing

Mostly, they were criticizing Second Master Jie for being blind, for not recognizing true gold and jade and instead cherishing a worthless stone in a dung heap. Now, realizing what he had lost, he finally appreciated its value, but sadly it was already too late.

When Second Master Jie's servant heard those remarks, he became displeased and couldn't help wanting to argue with those outspoken people.

For his part, Second Master Jie didn't care in the slightest. Leaving behind the servant who was in the midst of the dispute with everyone else, he entered the great doors of Manxiu Building by himself.

The clerks and embroiderers at Manxiu Building had all come to recognize Second Master Jie. From the moment he stepped through the doors, they quickly sent someone to notify Miss Du.

Today, Miss Du was busy studying Gu Youyou's new designs, so she responded with a hum to the messenger and said no more.

The woman who went to notify Miss Du didn't know if that hum meant to meet or not to meet, so she had no choice but to brace herself and go out, leading Second Master Jie to a private reception room, where she said, "Our miss is currently busy examining Miss Gu's drawings. It's not convenient for her to see you now. Would you like to come back another day?"

On ordinary days, Miss Du wasn't like other ruthless lovers who would avoid seeing him. Whenever he came and wanted to see her, she treated him as a regular visiting guest, meeting him if it were appropriate, being properly polite, but with a sense of distance.

In the eyes of ordinary people, it appeared that Miss Du had truly let go, not avoiding him, not hating him, just treating him like anyone else. The courtesy and distance in her eyes were the best testament to that.

But Second Master Jie didn’t see it that way. As long as she was willing to see him, he would come.

Of course, he had made up his mind. Even if she refused to see him, he would still come.

Today, when he heard that Miss Du was busy, he was unconcerned, simply saying, "Then I shall wait here, and when your miss is no longer occupied, please do inform me."

The embroiderer looked at him strangely, nodded, curtsied, and then left the reception room.

After suffering from burns, Du Wanqing, having spent a long time in her chamber, left her room for the first time. She had seized the opportunity while the two maids tasked with caring for her were absent. She had secretly wrapped her head in a scarf and, leaning on a cane, ventured out.

The scars on her body had healed, and the burned areas had recovered quite well. However, her right hand and left leg were left with permanent disabilities that would never heal.

She understood very well that this place belonged to Du Xintong, who took her away from the Jie Family while she was gravely injured.

She was unwilling to live under Du Xintong’s watchful eye, to live at her mercy. She wanted to return to the Jie Family; if she were to die, she wished to die in the Jie household.

Therefore, she had to leave this place.

Carrying a simply packed bundle, Du Wanqing struggled out of the room that had confined her, making her way through the back courtyard to the main hall. But, just as she entered the main hall, she saw one of the maids who watched over her coming out of a room, heading in her direction. Deeply startled, Du Wanqing clutched her bundle and pushed open a nearby door, hurrying inside.

The man seated by the window in the room, leisurely sipping tea with a smile on his lips, was clearly taken by surprise at the sudden entry of a woman in disarray.

Under Miss Du’s management, Manxiu Building maintained strict rules, and the female attendants and embroiderers would never act so rashly. This person...

When the panicked woman closed the door and turned to look at him, Second Master Jie was so shocked that the cup in his hand nearly slipped from his grasp, dropping to the floor with a clatter and shattering into pieces.

"You... Ah... Du Wanqing?"

The frazzled woman, her back against the door and her head wrapped in a scarf, revealing only her eyes, was immediately recognized by Second Master Jie.

Chapter 754: Suffering the Consequences

This pair of eyes that he had seen countless times, this woman who he had protected for many years but who had harmed him so much, how could he not recognize her?

Concubine Du was equally stunned, and it took her a while to come to her senses. She dropped the crutch in her hand and stumbled towards Young Master Jie.

"My lord, Aqing knew that you could not bear to part with her. You came here to pick me up, didn’t you? Du Xintong is so cruel, throwing me into the back yard and having two rough maids watch me, not allowing me to go anywhere. It was with great difficulty that I escaped. Let’s go, my lord, take me home; I want to go back to the Jie Family with you... Ah..."

Regaining his composure after the shock, Young Master Jie of the Jie Family pushed the pained woman clinging to him away as if she were a viper, causing Concubine Du to fall to the ground.

"My lord, why are you..." Concubine Du looked up at Young Master Jie with disbelief written all over her face.

That push from Young Master Jie had also knocked the scarf from her head, revealing her severely burned face.

"Your... your face..." Young Master Jie was taken aback by the drastically changed face, and staggered back two steps.

She knew she was burned; on the day of the fire, everyone else who was burned died, only she, with her strong fate, managed to survive.

Gu Youyou had said that even if she survived, her life would be worse than death.

He didn't know what kinds of pain plagued her body, but seeing her face, he understood what 'living was worse than dying' meant.

Young Master Jie knew well how much Du Wanqing cared about her appearance. She once felt that her looks did not compare to Du Xintong's and would frequently pile on heavy makeup. He had told her more than once that he did not mind her looks, but she never listened.

Now, her appearance... it seemed to confirm the saying 'karma'.

By now, he had made everything clear to her, only she never wanted to believe it.

Young Master Jie avoided her burning gaze, saying, "You have long ceased being a member of the Jie Family. Xintong forgave your past wrongs and took you in; you should be thanking her instead of blaming her."

His words pierced Du Wanqing's heart like a spike. The facts she was unwilling to admit, the things she had automatically blocked out in her mind, were now drawn out by him, causing her head to throb unbearably.

Clutching her head, she cried out loud, "Why do you say such things? You have wronged me..."

"It was you who deceived first; how then can you speak of my having wronged you? You planned to kill Xintong and me, set fire to kill several servants; these crimes are enough to sentence you to death. If I hadn't fought to protect you, do you think you would still be here? You would have been sent to the

Ministry of Punishment’s Prison long ago. Don’t think yourself innocent and pitiable; you have brought this upon yourself," Young Master Jie sneered, and he moved to open that door.

Du Wanqing, paying no heed to her splitting headache, hurriedly got up to hug his legs and prevent him from opening that door.

Here and now, she wanted to make things clear with him. She wanted to hear from his lips whether the vows he once made still held true.

"It’s not like that. You definitely wouldn’t treat me this way. You must have some unspeakable difficulty, right?"

Young Master Jie took a deep breath and one by one pried her hands off, looking down at her coldly from above, "Stop feigning madness and playing the fool. I am a normal person, and after knowing about your treacherous deception, do you think I could still treat you the way I did before? Even the good things I did for you in the past were obtained by your scheming, they don’t count for anything."

Tears fell like rain from Du Wanqing’s eyes as she continuously shook her head.

He no longer wanted her, had driven her out of the Jie Family; where could she go now?

Chapter 755: Teach Her a Lesson

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Jie Family’s second young master stretched out his hand, where the little finger, though the small iron splint had long been removed, still bore a shocking wound. He pointed to that finger with a look of grief and fury in his eyes.

"I’ve never wronged you, yet you were so ruthless, even wanting to kill me. You haven’t forgotten how you wielded that knife at me, have you? This finger is a token of your ’benevolence’."

Du Wanqing stared blankly at the wound, her lips parted and dry, unable to utter a single word for a long while.

"Your current state is also your own doing, you can blame nobody else."

Du Wanqing reached out and touched her face, which resembled the rough skin of a toad.

She hadn’t set the fire intending suicide but rather sought an escape, madly longing to get out, so she ignited the firewood storeroom.

Having never dealt with fire before, Du Wanqing never expected it to be so terrifying. Although the window was burned open, her face was disfigured beyond recognition.

"I... I didn’t mean to do it."

She held her face in her hands, her expression one of agony.

The second young master of the Jie Family no longer looked at her, but turned and pulled open the door.

In the hall, a maid was anxiously speaking to Du Xintong, who had come down from upstairs. The steps of the Jie Family’s second young master were somewhat vacuous, but he still mustered the courage to take a few steps forward and said to the young Miss Du, "Xintong, she’s in that room," pointing to the room he had just come from.

Miss Du said nothing, stepping past the second young master of the Jie Family and striding directly to the parlor.

Cuiya, following close behind Miss Du, gave the second young master of the Jie Family a meaningful glance and sneered, "The young master really has unique tastes, to still feel attached to someone in such a state. You’ve been waiting around Manxiu Building for so long, I assume it’s for Concubine Du, isn’t it? Why don’t you take her home with you? That way, my young mistress won’t have to worry about taking care of her."

The second young master of the Jie Family reeled. He never would have thought that the timid maid who used to follow Miss Du could one day speak to him with such sharp words?

Cuiya snorted coldly, gave a disdainful glance at the somewhat pale-faced second young master of the Jie Family, and then followed her own young mistress.

Upon Miss Du’s arrival, Du Wanqing was taken back to the inner courtyard. Along the way, Du Wanqing made a scene, drawing sidelong glances from many customers who had come to buy clothes.

Miss Du had kept the fact that Du Wanqing was hiding in the backyard with burns a secret from outsiders. Curious customers asked, "Who is that lady, and how... severely injured is she?"

Her face was frightening, and even though it was only exposed for an instant, those who saw it were deeply startled.

A servant girl explained, "She is a relative of our Miss Du, who was burned in a fire. With no one to care for her, our Miss Du took her in. She is not yet able to accept her disfigurement and has lost her mind."

The crowd murmured sympathetically, "That’s truly pitiful, a lady burned like that, it’s no wonder she has gone mad."

"Indeed, Miss Du is truly kind-hearted."

The second young master of the Jie Family stumbled a few steps, lips tightly pursed, and followed into the inner courtyard.

From within a room, Miss Du’s stern voice could be heard admonishing, "What delusions do you still harbor at this point? Haven’t I told you before, the Jie Family has disowned you, and you are no longer a wife of the Jie Family. With your present ghastly appearance, do you even have the shame to return to the Jie Family? You may be willing to lose face, but the Du Family cannot afford to lose face. Since you managed to leave the courtyard on your own, then pack your things. Tomorrow, you will go with me to our parents’ graves to seek forgiveness. You unfilial daughter, how many years has it been since you last offered even a stick of incense to our parents?"

Chapter 756: Which family are you from, cousin?

"Nonsense!" Du Wanqing loudly retorted, "I don’t believe it. My husband would never do such a thing. It must have been you, you vile woman, who brought this upon me. That’s right, my husband even came. He has come to take me home."

Laughter laced with mockery came from the room, with Cuiya sneering, "Take you home? Why don't you look in the mirror and see what a fright you've become? If you step out of this house looking like that, you could scare someone to death. Our Miss is keeping you here for your own good; if you frightened innocent people, the sin would be great."

"You're talking nonsense, my... my beauty..." Du Wanqing frantically touched her face with both hands, as if she had gone mad.

"Mirror, I want a mirror. Bring me my bronze mirror; I want to see my face."

Cuiya laughed and said, "Alright, wait here; I'll go get your bronze mirror."

"Cuiya, that's enough," Miss Du interrupted her, stopping her.

Du Wanqing didn't have a mirror here; with her current appearance, she wouldn't dare to look in a mirror.

Always concerned about her looks, she might scare herself to death if she saw her own face.

Cuiya never went against Miss Du's wishes and thus remained silent, standing to the side.

Miss Du told the two maids serving Du Wanqing, "Stay by her side and do not leave her for a second. She is not allowed to go to the front courtyard."

"Yes, Miss!" the two maids responded.

Miss Du left the room with Cuiya, as Du Wanqing continued to shout inside the room, "My husband has come to fetch me; you can't keep me locked up. Du Xintong, you vile woman, you will not die a good death."

Hearing these words, Young Master Jie, who was in the courtyard, felt both anger and heartache.

Miss Du seemed to be accustomed to it and turned a deaf ear.

Young Master Jie stepped forward and said, "I'm not here for her, you know I'm here for..."

Miss Du stopped him and said indifferently, "No need to say more. The relationship among the three of us has finally become clear; let's not make it unclear again. I don't care whom you've come for!"

With that, she left with Cuiya without giving him another look.

Young Master Jie stood there, frozen stiff and unable to move for a long time.

Across the courtyard, in the room facing it, Du Wanqing's curses continued non-stop.

...

With the two Princes set to take their official wives, the security in Beijing had tightened considerably. The night curfew system was put into effect. When the late night came, Beijing was already under curfew.

But this rule was relevant only for ordinary people; it had little effect on those unconcerned with the Emperor's orders.

Holding a short sword, Jin Ziyuan stood in front of a group of people dressed in dark clothes, coldly watching a man in white before him.

"Did you send her to Qi Mountain?"

Jin Zijin responded indifferently, "That is our business, and it has nothing to do with you. I would advise you to leave soon. Once caught, no one will be able to save you."

"Heh..." Jin Ziyuan scoffed coldly, "From your tone, it sounds like you care about me." He looked at Jin Zijin impassively, then suddenly, as if an idea struck him, he laughed again, "It seems like you would be one of the people trying to catch me, wouldn't you? Changed your mind?"

"I have no need to make a move to catch you; I just pity you."

"Pity me?" Jin Ziyuan laughed as if he had heard the joke of the century, his suppressed laughter especially grating in the dead silence of the night.

"Don't think you are much better off than I am. That year, during the family uprising, it wasn't only the three King's families that had been cast down from heaven to earth. I wonder which family you belong to, my dear cousin!"

Jin Zijin responded coolly, "Which family I belong to is none of your concern. As for Youyou... you needn't look for her anymore. She won't provide you with any more pills."

Chapter 757: Talking Nonsense

Jin Ziyuan spat fiercely and said, "Hmph, only a worthless person like you would hide her on Qi Mountain. Do you really think Qi Mountain is as solid as a rock? You do not know how terrifying Yu Jizi can be."

A glint of ruthlessness flashed through Jin Zijin's eyes as he looked at him with contempt and said coldly, "Don't think you know everything, there's too much you don't know. Be careful or you might die from your own arrogance."

Having said that, he ignored him and turned to walk towards the back wall of the Lin Family compound.

Jin Zijin's contemptuous gaze made Jin Ziyuan feel deeply humiliated.

What gave him the right to look down on him? He was no different from him, and even with the support of numerous former subordinates of the three Princes, they had never regained their positions like he had.

No, did he even accuse him of being arrogant?

"Stop, don’t you walk away."

Seeing Jin Zijin walk away, Jin Ziyuan quickly followed him.

"Who exactly are you? Are you from the Fourth Prince’s residence or the Sixth Prince’s?"

Jin Zijin did not pay any attention to him but said softly, "I would advise you not to make a move on the day of the eldest Prince’s grand wedding. Why seek temporary satisfaction?"

"Not make a move? Like you, be a coward? Oh, haha, you’ve joined the Dao Family, and now you’re the eldest disciple of Tianzong. What you’re eyeing is the position of State Preceptor. So the one sitting on the throne, he’s now someone on a different path to you, isn’t he? You don’t care, do you? But I’m different. If I don’t act, I’ll never get to live with my own identity."

"You’ll be walking down a dead-end if you try, only end up making a bridal dress for someone else," Jin Zijin’s voice remained calm and indifferent, like a gentle breeze in the quiet night air.

Jin Ziyuan had concluded that Jin Zijin, like himself, was from one of the other Prince families that had been decimated after the rebellion. Therefore, he despised Jin Zijin, who carried the same hatred for the extermination of his family, yet seemed so indifferent about it.

Without realizing it, his expression became even more tyrannical as he said angrily, "Are you trying to say that everything I do is only helping the Fifth Prince? No, let me tell you, even if it costs me my life, I will not let Jin Moning have it easy."

Jin Zijin felt too lazy to even look at him and said, "Nonsensical, no wonder you’ll die of stupidity."

"You..." Jin Ziyuan gripped the short sword in his hand tightly but then heard the orderly sound of footsteps coming from down the street.

A servant whispered a reminder from behind him, "Young Prince, the Patrol Army is coming."

Jin Ziyuan, struggling to contain his impatient nature, reluctantly followed the person behind him and left the scene.

Jin Zijin glanced at the street corner ahead, then with a swift move, disappeared into the night.

In the courtyard where Gu Youyou once lived, servants had left after she departed, leaving only a few to clean.

The servants slept at night, and the courtyard was very quiet. No one expected that, with Gu Youyou gone, there would be the presence of Xiao Jinyan.

Seeing the newcomer, Xiao Jinyan smiled and said, "Cousin, choosing to meet here, you really surprise me."

Jin Zijin looked indifferently at the familiar house and said, "I'm not familiar with Beijing. The backyard of the Lin Family is about all I know well."

Xiao Jinyan's smile faded, and his expression turned grave, "Have you really taken a fancy to that peasant girl? I don't see what's so good about her. Cousin, when it comes to matters of great importance, don't let your desires cloud your judgment!"

"You don't need to meddle in this; I'm aware of what I'm doing."

"It's not that!" Xiao Jinyan sighed worriedly, and as he tried to pat Jin Zijin on the shoulder, Jin Zijin coldly dodged, leaving Xiao Jinyan's raised arm hanging awkwardly in the air.

Chapter 758: The Wedding Arrangements

Xiao Jinyan was stunned for a moment and said, "Cousin, take a look at Jin Xiaoran. If he is to marry, he marries the legitimate daughter of the Lin Family, true aristocracy. As for you, fancying a concubine's daughter wouldn't be too bad, but you just had to set your sights on their family's Miss Biao. Although she too is a miss, add the word 'biao,' and that means she's just a relative, with no real connection to the Miss.

Cousin, there’s a world of difference between the Miss and Miss Biao. Since the Lin Family’s elder miss has married the eldest prince, that means the Lin Family will support the empress’s party in the future. That is to say, the Miss Biao you fancy will be of no use whatsoever. Have you thought this through?"

Jin Zijin stared at him silently with a cold gaze, and he had to stop talking. With an awkward tone, he said, "I haven’t even mentioned this to my father or elder brother yet. I think there’s still room for a turnaround. See what you make of it. Alright, let’s not talk about this. Let’s talk business first. What did you call me here today for?"

Jin Zijin withdrew his gaze and said indifferently, "I came to tell you that Jin Ziyuan will make his move on the day of the eldest prince’s grand wedding. I hear that you’re in charge of security at the event?"

After hearing this, Xiao Jinyan was momentarily stunned, then nodded and said, "That’s me, yes. This brat, if he dares to cause trouble, I’ll deal with him on the spot."

Jin Zijin waved his hand and said, "Now is not the time to kill him. Let’s keep him around for now. I’m telling you so you can take precautions, and on the other hand... let him have a taste of success, just make sure nothing serious happens."

The corners of Xiao Jinyan’s mouth twitched. He had no idea what Jin Zijin intended with such arrangements.

"Why not just capture him and take the credit?"

Jin Zijin replied indifferently, "You won’t be able to catch him. Better think about how to protect the event so nothing goes wrong." Besides, they wouldn’t allow the officials to capture him.

"Ah...?" Xiao Jinyan was displeased and said, "Why do you look down on me like that? Then why did you come to tell me this alone?"

Jin Zijin sighed and said, "About placing you in charge of the eldest prince’s wedding security, while the second prince’s wedding security is taken care of by the Ducal Residence, do you understand the implication of this?"

Xiao Jinyan fell silent for a moment, then his eyes suddenly lit up, and he nodded vigorously.

"Got it! Cousin, those bastards really play rough."

"Good, as long as you understand."

Having been outside for quite some time, Jin Zijin guessed it was about time to go and said, "I should leave now, and you should head back earlier too. Try not to go out at night recently; after all, it's curfew time."

"Alright then, I'll leave first. Take care, cousin."

Xiao Jinyan quickly vanished into the night, but soon returned.

Seeing his inexplicable behavior, Jin Zijin frowned. How could someone with such a rash disposition handle major affairs?

"Cousin, I forgot to tell you something."

Look at that, all at sixes and sevens.

Xiao Jinyan sighed and said, "This isn't about me; it's about my elder brother. His household is controlled by the Princess, and to keep up appearances, he has endured her for ten years. She herself can't bear children and won't let my brother's other concubines have any either. Just the other day, she caused the death of my brother's fifth offspring.

My brother's in his twenties now, and to this day, he doesn't have a son, not even a daughter. He can't afford to wait anymore. So I'm asking, when exactly will you recognize our kinship? You may be willing to wait, but my father is getting on in years and can't wait forever. He's looking forward to holding a grandchild."

Jin Zijin’s brows were tightly knit. Regarding this issue, he had always chosen to evade, yet he knew all too well that it was inescapable!

"Alright, I won’t pressure you. Take your time to think about it. I’m really leaving this time."

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Chapter 759: Double Happiness Comes to the Lin Residence

After meeting Xiao Jinyan, Jin Zijin headed straight back to Sanqing Temple, but as he was about to enter, he saw a dark figure under a locust tree by the courtyard wall.

He stopped and looked indifferently towards it.

The shadow paused for a moment, then walked out from under the tree with a careless stride, and chuckled, "What are you doing wandering around in the middle of the night, Junior Brother, instead of sleeping?"

In a low voice, Jin Zijin replied, "Huo Li? Aren’t you also out wandering in the middle of the night instead of sleeping?"

He glanced at the house inside the courtyard wall and said, "Or rather, outside my courtyard wall."

Huo Li burst into laughter and said, "I thought you were sneaking off to see a fair maiden in the city in the middle of the night, but that maiden... wasn’t she sent by you to Qi Mountain?"

Sending Gu Youyou to Qi Mountain wasn’t a secret, so Jin Zijin admitted openly, "Yes, she’s on Qi Mountain. I remember you saying that no matter where I took her, you guys would be able to find her. So now she’s on Qi Mountain, do you have the ability to take her away?"

Huo Li’s face suddenly darkened, as this statement was a clear slap in the face.

Jin Zijin snorted coldly, turned around, and entered the courtyard from outside the wall.

Huo Li, still outside the courtyard wall, looked extremely sour and cursed vehemently a few times before flinging his sleeves and leaving.

The master, for some reason, seemed to no longer care about anything these days, always locking himself away in his room.

No outsiders were allowed to enter, so nobody knew what he was up to. Once when he personally delivered food inside, he vaguely saw that his master was drawing some strange patterns. Most of these drawings were incomplete, some had been discarded right after the beginning, some were halfway done, some nearly complete, but there wasn't a single finished drawing.

Seeing those drawings, the master got very angry, chased him out, and told him that from now on he would not meddle in any affairs concerning the successor of the State Preceptor, leaving him to handle everything himself. Whether he could beat Jin Zijin and seize the position of State Preceptor would all come down to his own ability.

He knew these were the rules of the competition for State Preceptor that had been in place for generations, but weren't there always biases under the rules?

He had never expected that when the master said he wouldn't interfere, he truly meant it, which was why he had been so anxious lately; he feared without his master's support, he would truly be no match for Jin Zijin.

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Time flew, and before long the examination in autumn had passed, with Lin Shenxing coming out on top, causing Lin Residence to be greatly renowned.

Also, it was nearly the grand day of the wedding between Prince Jin Xiaoran and Lin Qianqing, the eldest legitimate daughter of the Lin Family. The Lin Residence was indeed blessed with double happiness.

Gu Youyou counted the days and prepared a congratulatory gift for Lin Qianqing. Now that she was wealthy, it wasn't impossible for her to provide a valuable gift, but for the Imperial Family and the Lin Family, Lin Qianqing really lacked nothing of value.

No matter how precious the items were, they would just be one more thing in her dowry warehouse.

To make her gift stand out, Gu Youyou had long before procured various pigments and high-quality silk to create a painting that people of this era could not have imagined.

A vast sea of stars in the pitch-black universe.

Around a fiery red sphere, magnificent in its brilliance, were nine smaller spheres of different colors.

Her painting was meticulous and grand. Ordinary people might not understand such a picture at first glance, but having told Lin Qianqing some stories about the universe beyond the sky, Gu Youyou was certain she would understand.

Having packed the completed painting into an exquisite box, Gu Youyou handed it over to Qingyang, saying, "This is it, my gift for the Prince and Miss Lin. Please deliver it for me. Remember, make the trip yourself."

Chapter 760: Not Walking, but Jumping

The Taoists on Qi Mountain were like a bunch of monkeys. According to Gu Youyou’s observation over this period, only Qingyang seemed reliable. If it were someone else, Gu Youyou would be worried. These young Taoist apprentices had not descended the mountain for many years; if they were attracted by the colorful world below and went to watch the excitement, missing the day of someone’s wedding, that would be terrible.

Calculating the time, there were three days left. She needed to ride a fast horse; there wasn’t much time to spare.

Qingyang took the painting from Gu Youyou’s hand and stared at the storybook on her desk, asking, "And what about this?"

This was a new story Gu Youyou had written today.

Gu Youyou pressed down on the book and said, "Wait till you come back, and I will show it to you. If my matter isn’t dealt with, then don’t expect to see it."

Qingyang made a bitter face and hurriedly said, "It will be taken care of, definitely. I’ll go now!"

"Go ahead, the sooner you leave, the sooner you’ll return."

She had wanted him to bring a letter to Jin Zijin, but fearing he might get the wrong idea, she dared not actually write anything. After thinking it over, she decided against it.

If only there were video calls!

After finishing the preparations for the congratulatory gift, Gu Youyou took out her recent research findings and meticulously made a record.

Strange noises came from outside the courtyard, and Gu Youyou frowned, put down her pen, and looked up.

There was Searcy, who should have been in great health, hopping towards her courtyard on one leg.

Gu Youyou could not help but smile wryly as she got up and stood at the door with a stern face.

"Are you hoping this leg won’t break? Why don’t you have a fall and test it out!"

Searcy stared at Gu Youyou, bewildered for a moment, then arrogantly said, "If I don’t start moving, I’ll get bedsores all over."

Gu Youyou looked at her leg, barely holding back her laughter.

"What you’re doing isn’t called moving; it’s hopping."

A flash of annoyance crossed Searcy’s face as she irritably pointed to her leg and asked, "When can this be taken off?"

Gu Youyou answered indifferently, "Injuries to tendons and bones take a hundred days to heal; I’ve made that very clear to you."

"But it doesn’t need to be bound for a hundred days."

"I’m worried you’ll do something foolish if I unbind it. This is Qi Mountain, not General Lin’s backyard."

"Hmph..."

Searcy was terribly proud, and Gu Youyou understood that taming such a person would not be easy.

But she had time to grind down her temperament, starting with that leg.

If Searcy could refrain from causing trouble for a few months because of her leg, she could likely smooth out some of her impulsive temperament.

"If you behave well, I’ll teach you some interesting things," said Gu Youyou, pointing towards a row of low buildings in the corner of the courtyard.

Searcy looked in the direction Gu Youyou was pointing and asked, "What’s there?"

Gu Youyou played coy and said, "It’s something that will interest you."

But Searcy snorted coldly, "Something of interest to me? You quacks can manage that?"

Gu Youyou was already accustomed to it; while treating her leg, she had often been called a quack by Searcy.

Because in her eyes, after her mother died, everyone but herself was a quack.

Gu Youyou did not bother to argue and simply called loudly for Xiang Chun to come in and hop her back to her own courtyard with that hopping leg.

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Today was the biggest day of celebration in Zhuzhao Country in many years: Prince Jin Xiaoran was taking a primary wife, the eldest legitimate daughter of Minister Lin Xingyi, a highly sought-after official in the imperial court.

Everyone was saying that Minister Lin's household was sure to become even wealthier.

Anyone who could claim a connection to him was eager to do so.

Having some relation to Minister Lin had seemingly become something to be proud of.

Others who looked on with envy had a different opinion.