Farmhouse 791

Chapter 791: For You, I Can Defy the Whole World

Fang Cuizhen was very sympathetic to Xiao Qinqin's plight and would join her in cursing the faithless man. With Fang Cuizhen's company, Xiao Qinqin's health slowly improved.

Back in Beijing, people from the Crown Prince Residence were frantically searching for Xiao Qinqin's whereabouts, splitting their efforts into overt and covert operations. The covert operation was carried out by Consort Jin Family, who regarded Xiao Qinqin as a thorn in her side.

At that time, the power of the Ducal Residence was at its peak, and they quickly found out that Xiao Qinqin had fled to the south.

Since she had left the Crown Prince Residence, they would never let her return.

Additionally, the news of the Crown Princess Consort's disappearance spread through the streets and alleys of Zhuzhao Country. Fang Cuizhen, upon hearing this, told Xiao Qinqin about it as a joke to cheer her up. However, Xiao Qinqin's complexion changed drastically after hearing it, and she sought an audience with Yue Tingfang that very night.

When Xiao Qinqin came to bid Yue Tingfang farewell, he was unbelievably astonished, "You want to leave?" He looked at her prominently swollen belly and exclaimed, "In your condition, where can you go? I've already inquired; people from the Ducal Residence are also looking for you. They're not just after your child's life, but yours as well. Now that the Xiao Family is in decline, there's nowhere else for you to go except with me."

Xiao Qinqin's mind was made up as she said, "Thank you for your kindness these past few days, but I can no longer stay. You have only just ascended to your position, and your status is not yet secure. My staying will only bring trouble to you."

"I'm not afraid of trouble, Qinqin, don't go..."

Xiao Qinqin shook her head and said, "Sooner or later they will come here, and if they know that you've sheltered me, you will be in danger as well."

Yue Tingfang went pale, feeling an aching sourness in his nose. The acidic sensation he felt the moment he lost her years ago rushed back to him, and he pulled her into a tight embrace.

This action startled Xiao Qinqin, and she hurriedly pushed him away, but he only held her tighter.

"Tingfang, what are you doing, let me go."

"Qinqin, Qinqin, I beg you, don’t go..." He buried his head in her shoulder and pleaded.

Xiao Qinqin was shocked and stood rigid, not daring to move.

Yue Tingfang, why??

Yue Tingfang said, "Do you remember what I told you at the horse field, asking you to wait for me?"

Her thoughts drifted back many years, but Xiao Qinqin only remembered Jin Moning asking her to wait for him and couldn’t recall Yue Tingfang ever saying those words.

He said, "I went to the palace that day to seek an imperial decree of marriage from the Emperor, but never expected Jin Moning to beat me to it. Qinqin, I truly regret not having acted sooner... and letting Jin Moning get there first. If I had known you’d end up this miserable, I would have risked all the world’s taboos to prevent you from marrying him. Now that you’ve finally escaped, don’t leave. Here in Lingnan, the Emperor is far away, and I have plenty of soldiers. Even if it means rebellion, for your sake, I am not afraid of them."

Xiao Qinqin was both saddened and pained, and her tears soaked his pristine white garment.

Since ancient times, emperors have been the least sentimental, and she regretted not heeding her mother’s words!

But her Xiao Family had served the country loyally for generations, dying only after their duty was done. Born a daughter of the Xiao Family, how could she be a traitor? Besides, Fang Cuizhen had been good to her.

To her, Yue Tingfang could only be a benefactor who provided timely assistance.

That night, Fang Cuizhen returned to her courtyard with a pale face. In disbelief, she slapped her own face several times, unable to accept what she had just overheard.

He had said that she was only the daughter of an old friend, who had come to him after being betrayed by her husband and had nowhere else to turn.

Chapter 792: Lamenting the fleeting beauty with tears of yearning, unable to speak of the world's sorrows where many heroes fall.

She pitied her plight, treating her like an honored guest, yet to her surprise, she was the Crown Princess Consort who had recently caused such a stir in Beijing.

What terrified her even more was the thought that the Marquess would start a rebellion for her sake?

Fang Cuizhen's maid was shocked, watching her own madam repeatedly slap herself until her face turned red.

She took Fang Cuizhen's hand and pressed it down, crying, "Madam, what is this? If you are upset, take it out on me, don't hit yourself!"

Fang Cuizhen turned her head blankly and collapsed onto her maid's shoulder, crying her heart out.

Two days later, Fang Cuizhen found Xiao Qinqin and confessed the truth to her.

"I know you are the Crown Princess Consort whom everyone in Beijing has been searching for, but you can't hide in our house forever. Sooner or later, you will be found. The Marquess has just ascended the throne and his own position is still unstable, I..."

Xiao Qinqin cut her off, smiling, "I know, Cuizhen, thank you for taking care of me these past few days, I will leave."

Fang Cuizhen showed a hint of joy, yet also concern, as she said, "But... where can you go in your current condition after leaving Lingnan? Why don't you... go back to the Crown Prince Residence?"

Xiao Qinqin shook her head, saying, "No, I can't go back. The world is so vast, I believe there is a place for me somewhere."

The daughter of the Xiao Family, once a Crown Princess Consort, had fallen to the point where she had nowhere to hide. Fang Cuizhen sighed with regret and said, "If you haven't thought of a place to go, I might have a suggestion. You could see if it's feasible."

Xiao Qinqin looked up at her.

She said, "They say the whole world is under the emperor's domain, but there is one exception: the sacred land of Qi Mountain of the Dao Family. Qinqin, if you hide in Qi Mountain and receive protection from the Heavenly Master, you may be safe and sound. Unless the Heavenly Master agrees, no one dares to search the mountain."

Xiao Qinqin, upon hearing Fang Cuizhen's words, escaped to Qi Mountain with her help and, unexpectedly, made it there quite smoothly.

Tian Jizi took her in, on the condition that if the child in her belly were a boy, he must become Tian Jizi's disciple.

By then, Xiao Qinqin had completely lost trust in Jin Moning, and was willing to agree to anything to protect her child.

So she gained the protection of Tian Jizi.

Tian Jizi allowed her to build a house behind the Taoist Temple. Pregnant and with limited strength, she could only erect a simple, crude hut barely enough to shield her from the elements.

From conception to childbirth, through the hardships of escape, lack of food and clothing had taken a toll on her vitality, coupled with her perennial depression, by the third year after giving birth to her son, she finally reached the end of her rope.

Looking at the toddler playing with mud at the doorway, she lamented endlessly within her heart.

This life had finally come to an end, sooner than she had imagined. If she felt any reluctance, it was there, because she had not yet seen Ayan grow up.

In the end, the woman sitting at her bedside asked if she had any regrets.

Regrets?

She said, "What does it matter if I regret it or not, the consequences of the decisions I made are mine to bear."

Her vision blurring, she then remembered something she had yet to do in this life.

With her last ounce of strength, she said to the woman, "If you get the chance, could you ask for me whether he always treated me as a pawn in the struggle for power? When I was no longer of any use, did he hesitate at all to discard me?"

"Who is he?" the woman asked.

Xiao Qinqin slowly closed her eyes and never opened them again.

Endless are the tears of lost love and the fleeting beauty of youth; countless are the heroes who perish in a world full of hardship.

This was her brief life. She regretted not being there to see her child grow up, she had not received his answer, and she no longer had the chance to repay his kindness.

...

Chapter 793: Two Stories Exchange

Gu Youyou finally understood why Jin Zijin hated her father and also discovered who the beauty in the painting that Marquess had her draw was.

Closing the book, a crystal-clear tear hung at the corner of Gu Youyou's eye, while Lun Tong sitting beside her had already burst into tears.

"Miss Gu, you see, I didn't lie to you, did I? Isn't this story particularly touching?"

"Indeed, it's very touching." Gu Youyou sighed, "Who was the woman who stayed by her side at the end? Don't tell me it was you."

"Yes, yes." Lun Tong nodded incessantly, saying, "It was me. In the last half-year of her life, when she was on her deathbed, I came to Qi Mountain and found her by chance, so I kept her company for half a year.

She knew I loved collecting all sorts of stories. To thank me for my companionship over the past half-year, she told me her story when she was on the brink of death."

Gu Youyou eyed Lun Tong from top to bottom, shivering involuntarily.

This fellow is said to be an old friend of Tian Jizi, and he also has such a story with Jin Zijin's mother; what kind of face is really hidden beneath his shameless demeanor?

Could it be that his real identity is an old man very much like Tian Jizi?

Spine-chilling!!

If that were the case, his skill in disguise would be astoundingly powerful, making any plastic surgery or facelift seem trivial.

Gu Youyou gave him a thumbs-up, saying, "You have the guts to write about the Imperial Family's secrets. Impressive."

Lun Tong snatched the book back in an instant, saying, "I have the courage to write this, but you can't let it get out."

"Oh? Getting scared now, are you?"

"I am of course not afraid." He lifted his chin, pointing to his face, and said, "With this face of mine, even the Heavenly King himself couldn't catch me. But you're different. If this information gets out, you don't have the skills that I do."

Gu Youyou remembered that this fellow was a master of disguise. Today he would have one face, tomorrow another, freely changing between men and women, young and old; indeed, capturing him would not be easy.

However, Gu Youyou had been planning to show this book to Jin Zijin. He was only three years old when his mother died, surely unaware of the truths of those days; perhaps this could be useful to him.

She snatched the book back again and stuffed it into her bosom, saying, "I'll keep it as a souvenir, I promise not to spread it around."

Lun Tong's face showed great alarm, and he tried to snatch it back, but Gu Youyou swiftly dodged him.

He said anxiously, "Girl, this isn't a joke; I can't let you have this. I'm doing this for your own good."

"Rest assured, I'll burn it in a few days."

"Why? Give it back to me."

"I need it, a trade for two stories."

"Two?" Lun Tong showed a struggle on his face, and said, "Can you guarantee that your two stories are more touching than mine? They must make me weep!"

The corner of Gu Youyou's mouth twitched as she thought of the melodramatic plots from the eight o'clock soap operas on TV; just by picking a few she could make him cry his eyes out in no time.

She nodded confidently, saying, "I guarantee it."

Lun Tong gritted his teeth and said, "Fine, it's a deal." Still somewhat uneasy while looking at the book in her arms, he added, "But remember, you can't keep this thing. You must burn it in a few days."

"Don't worry, I understand. Come get your stories from me in a few days; give me some time to write them out."

After showing it to Jin Zijin, she could burn it. He visited once a month, staying at most half a month; she wasn't leaving Qi Mountain, so naturally, no trouble could arise.

But considering she intended to show it to Jin Zijin, she became even more careful and asked Lun Tong, "Is this story real, or is it an exaggerated fiction of your own making?"

Chapter 794: Jin Zijin Has Come to Kill

If he exaggerated the story, she'd have to consider whether or not to show it to Jin Zijin.

Lun Tong immediately raised his paw to promise, "Absolutely true, this is not only as Xiao Qinqin described, but also... what I compiled after extensive verification. The utmost essence of a vow-return story, it's our professional ethic in this line of work. You can completely trust it."

"Professional ethic?" Gu Youyou's mouth twitched, what kind of profession was this?

Lun Tong said, "You must not underestimate me, I am known in the jianghu as the all-knowing, my collections are all genuine; how could I sell fake news to others?"

All-knowing?

He chuckled, lowered his voice and said, "Of course, I wouldn’t sell this kind of news, you’ve made a big score."

...

When Jin Zijin heard that someone was poaching his corner, he arrived without delay.

It was deep into the night when he got there, and Youyou, who was in a drowsy sleep, found someone pressing down on her and kicked out instinctively.

Her pale, delicate foot was caught in his hand, and his eyes were so cold they seemed to form ice.

"Have you decided to kick me away after just a few days apart?"

Youyou rubbed her eyes, and then rubbed them again, finally realizing she was indeed not dreaming.

She exclaimed, "You came so soon?"

"Spurring the horse onward, a day and a half."

Gu Youyou: "..." It had taken her five days to arrive.

"What’s the rush?"

She might have been too groggy from sleep, forgetting the letter she had asked Qingyang to send previously.

Jin Zijin frowned, "What about the man dressed as a woman, lying outside the courtyard? Is he still on Qi Mountain?"

Gu Youyou nodded dumbly, "Yes, but I've already dealt with it; he should be leaving in a few days. Hey, but I have something important to show you."

To Jin Zijin, nothing was currently more important than dealing with the one who dared to poach his corner.

He held her hand, stopping her from getting up to fetch the booklet, "Youyou, you did well this time. In the future, anyone who tries to get close to you with ill intentions must tell me."

Uh...

How embarrassing for Gu Youyou.

She vaguely replied, "Actually, there's been some misunderstanding. But don't worry, I've really taken care of it."

Jin Zijin finally sensed something was amiss and asked with a steady gaze, "What exactly happened?"

Youyou said, "That cross-dressing weirdo wasn't really trying to poach your corner, he just insisted on hearing a story told by me. He was posted outside my courtyard all day, and I couldn't drive him away, so I wrote that letter seeking help."

Jin Zijin was utterly confused, but it was certain that whatever the motive, the weirdo blocking Youyou's door deserved a lesson!

"Alright, I understand."

Unable to bear the longing, Jin Zijin held her tightly and sought her warm and soft lips.

"The dew is heavy and the night long; let me hold you properly."

Gu Youyou had intended to retrieve the booklet for him, but seeing that it was quite late, decided to wait until the next day.

"You must be tired from the journey, better sleep now. Come find me early tomorrow; I have something to show you."

...

At sunrise, Jin Zijin indeed came very early.

Youyou holding the booklet said to him, "Let’s go to the thatched cottage on the back mountain, it’s concerning your mother."

Jin Zijin’s expression turned solemn. He nodded lightly and took her to the back mountain.

Xiang Chun, witnessing this scene in surprise, waited until they had left before asking Searcy in a lowered voice, "I find this True Person very odd. Every time he returns to Qi Mountain, he seeks out my cousin. They are always so secretive, and when they have matters to discuss, they either send us away or discuss it outside."

Chapter 795: Show Him the Booklet

She was suddenly startled and said, "Oh my, it couldn’t be that the Heavenly Master’s illness is incurable."

Searcy glanced at Xiang Chun with the look one gives an idiot, having no intention of wasting a single word on her.

According to Gu Youyou, Searcy considered herself to have an off-the-charts IQ, and absolutely wouldn’t bother conversing with ordinary, foolish mortals.

In front of the dilapidated hut on the back mountain, Jin Zijin finished reading the booklet given to him by Gu Youyou, his entire body trembling.

He knew his mother had lived a hard life, but he didn't know that she had died under those circumstances.

He was too young at the time, his memories of his mother were vague, he couldn't even remember what she looked like.

Gu Youyou gently placed her hand over his and said, "The things written in here need to be verified, you shouldn't believe them completely. It's good enough that you know about this!"

Jin Zijin was unable to speak for a long time, silently taking out flint to ignite the booklet.

The booklet was meant to be burned and not kept, so Gu Youyou did not stop him.

Seeing the booklet turn to a pile of ash, Jin Zijin asked in a hoarse voice, "Who gave this to you?"

Gu Youyou said, "It's that pervert blocking the door. His name is Lun Tong. I heard he's an old acquaintance of your master."

"So it's him?" Jin Zijin murmured with a bitter smile, "He's not called Lun Tong; he's called Lun Yu. Lun Tong was his mother, who indeed accompanied my mother through the final part of her life. He probably disguised himself as his mother to deceive my father."

Oh...?

This damned pervert, actually disguised himself as his own mother.

"Unfortunately, my father was confused and might not have recognized him in his moments of lucidity."

Gu Youyou thought to herself: That’s true.

"Then what about Bai Xiaosheng? His mother, huh?"

Jin Zijin said, "Apart from liking to collect all sorts of information, Lun Tong had another skill, which was disguise. Her disguises were so convincing it made it easy for her to obtain secrets. But I haven’t seen her for over ten years, I believe she went abroad.

She had a son, who was flesh and blood, and he inherited her techniques. The disguise I wore in Lotus Village was crafted by Lun Yu. Besides this son, she also took a female apprentice, and that was Yi Yan."

Gu Youyou realized, no wonder both he and Yi Yan liked to cross-dress.

However, she was quite surprised that Jin Zijin was so familiar with this Lun Yu.

The mountain wind scattered the ashes of the burnt booklet. Jin Zijin sighed deeply, stood up, and said, "Marquess gave his child to the mountains to accompany me and has helped me in many ways, all because of my mother..."

At that time, the concept of loyalty among women was indeed perverted; even if the man was scum, his wife was expected to remain loyal.

Gu Youyou, afraid that Jin Zijin might misunderstand something, said, "Your mother only regarded Marquess as a benefactor. After so many years, Marquess must have moved on."

"Yes, I know," he said.

Good, he hadn’t misunderstood.

Gu Youyou asked, "So what do you plan to do now? Your mother had Lun Tong promise to ask the emperor a question on her behalf, but as a commoner, Lun Tong surely couldn’t ask a question of the emperor in the palace. Shall I help you ask?"

Jin Zijin was silent for a moment before saying, "Let’s talk about it later!"

Gu Youyou had arrived at Qi Mountain in autumn, had already gone through the winter, and spring was nearly over, with summer approaching. She couldn’t help asking, "When can I go back?"

As Jin Zijin led her down the mountain, he said, "If you want to come back, start packing in the next few days. You’ll return with me in two days."

Gu Youyou wore a surprised expression, as she thought he would again say to wait. She hadn’t expected to be able to leave in just a few days.

Chapter 796: Sending a Thoughtful Little Gift

She asked, "Have the matters in Beijing been arranged properly?"

Jin Zijin nodded and said, "Yu Jizi, for some reason, has been in seclusion for nearly half a year now, reportedly working on some kind of formation. His chief disciple, Huo Li, seemed to have lost his backbone after Yu Jizi closed his doors, and over the past six months, we’ve eliminated many of their clandestine forces. Moreover, we’ve found the other medicine people and sent them all to Lingnan. If you come back with me now, I can guarantee your safety."

This indeed was good news. Gu Youyou smiled and said, "Great, then I can repay the debt I owe to Lun Yu in these next few days."

"The debt you owe to Lun Yu?" Jin Zijin looked at her with surprise.

"Yes, to get this story, I have to write two stories for Lun Yu, and they have to be even more tragic than this one, tragic enough to make him cry..." Gu Youyou complained nonstop.

...

Gu Youyou worked overtime to pay off her debt to Lun Yu; it was almost time for her to pack up and return to Beijing.

She sent a message ahead to Beijing, letting them know that she would be bringing some small animals home with her.

Searcy was going to follow Gu Youyou. She was fascinated by Gu Youyou’s unique medical theory and insisted on sticking by her side.

But her identity was somewhat special.

She was the illegitimate daughter of General Lu’s family, but as far as the Lu Family was concerned, she had already died along with her mother, so she wasn’t someone who could easily appear in public.

Gu Youyou then said to her, "How about letting Lun Yu change your appearance? That way you won’t be recognized."

Unexpectedly, Searcy took it lightly, spreading her hands and saying, "What if I’m recognized? There’s no shortage of people who look alike in this world. Just deny it to death, it’s not like they can force me to admit I’m the former Lu Xueying."

Gu Youyou sighed and said, "That’s true, it’s just that I’m afraid... Well, it doesn’t matter, you never care about anything anyway."

Searcy seemed a bit strange today, as if she had something she wanted to say.

This wasn’t like her usual self; that kind of person would say hurtful things without thinking and would never consider anyone else’s feelings. But her demeanor today...?

Gu Youyou said, "Speak if you have something to say, fart if you have to. I know you’re straightforward, and it makes me uncomfortable to see you holding back."

Searcy glared fiercely at Gu Youyou, then took out a bottle from her bosom and handed it to Gu Youyou, saying, "I know you are chill-prone. When the weather is cool in the mornings and evenings, apply this on your exposed skin, and you won’t feel cold."

Gu Youyou looked at the small bottle in her hands and then at Searcy with a shocked expression.

My goodness, could this venomous woman actually be so considerate? Giving her a gift?

Gu Youyou opened the bottle and sniffed. The fragrance was fresh and elegant, very pleasant; she said, "At least you have some conscience. It wasn't for nothing that I saved you that time."

Searcy snorted and turned her head away, ignoring her.

What Searcy's mother had taught her was all about harming others and making poison. Her mother had died, and she hadn't seen much grief from her, probably because she'd never known how to care for others. This ointment was likely the only gift she'd ever given that wasn't a poison.

She had truly gone to great lengths.

Gu Youyou arrived back in Beijing just in time for the Dragon Boat Festival.

Madam Lin was directing the servants in preparing and decorating the mansion, saying that the eldest prince's household had lifted its restrictions. The eldest daughter, Lin Qianqing, who had already returned once after getting married, was going to take advantage of the festival to come home. As the only legitimate daughter of the Lin Family and married to the eldest prince, they naturally didn't dare to be negligent.

"Youyou?" Madam Lin, who was directing the cleaning of the courtyard, was very surprised to see the person alighting from the carriage that stopped in front of her house.

Chapter 797: Return to the Lin Residence

It was only the day before yesterday that we received the letter, thinking she wouldn't make it back for the festival. To our surprise, she arrived so soon.

Gu Youyou performed a curtsey and said, "Aunt, how have things been at home recently?"

The aunt, presumably anxious to see her daughter after such a long absence, had noticeably more wrinkles at the corners of her eyes.

Madam Lin watched Gu Youyou with tears of joy and said, "Everything is good, good. The festival might be celebrated properly now. With you back, and Daya returning too, the house hasn't been this lively in a long while."

Gu Youyou, arm in arm with Madam Lin, spoke affectionately, "I'm just afraid Aunt might find us too noisy."

Madam Lin hurriedly said, "Not noisy at all, alas! When all of you were at home, I always thought you were restless, always causing me trouble. Now that you've all been gone for half a year, at first, I thought it was peaceful, but as time passed, I've come to miss the noise, the liveliness!"

To hear Madam Lin speak so sincerely and earnestly about this, Gu Youyou was deeply moved.

Xiang Chun and Searcy disembarked from the carriage behind them, and Gu Youyou introduced them to Madam Lin, saying, "This young lady is called Searcy, she's also a doctor. Her medical skills are quite noteworthy, and she has returned with me."

Madam Lin scrutinized Searcy from head to toe and said, "Since she is Youyou's friend, then she is our guest at the Lin Residence. Xiang Chun, please take Miss... Searcy inside."

Madam Lin frowned; this name was indeed rather strange.

"Oh, how is the Heavenly Master's illness? Now that you're back, it must have improved, right?"

Gu Youyou paused for a moment, then said, "The Heavenly Master is getting on in years, and his illness is not easy to cure. But for now, his condition is under control. However, unpredictable relapses might occur, and I may have to go back."

She dared not speak in definitive terms; Gu Youyou felt that she might need to make a hasty retreat to Qi Mountain at any time for protection.

Madam Lin gave a single "Oh," and didn’t ask further, but rather urged Gu Youyou to quickly go see the elderly lady of the house.

The elderly lady was advanced in years and had enjoyed many years of liveliness. Suddenly, without the two troublemakers around these past few months, she too struggled to adjust.

After several days of exhausting travel, Gu Youyou felt wearied. Once she had calmed the elderly lady, and tidied up, night had fallen.

She needed a good night’s sleep; tomorrow was the Dragon Boat Festival.

Jin Zijin resumed his wall-climbing activities. In truth, thanks to the increasingly effective drugs that Gu Youyou had developed, they could control the toxins. But to still need medicine when he could hold her in his arms? That, he couldn’t tolerate.

As for Gu Youyou, she didn’t mind; she’d arrive after dark and leave before dawn. As long as he wasn’t tired, she was fine with anything.

But it was tough on Xiang Chun, who had to take sleeping pills again.

Clustered together under the covers, embracing and chatting had become a routine for them. That night, they casually broached the topic of the other drug people.

"With all the drug people gone, Huo Li must be livid. Isn’t Yu Jizi aware of the situation, and does he simply not care?"

Jin Zijin said, "That’s precisely the mystery we’re pondering. Perhaps Yu Jizi is preoccupied with matters more important than these drug people, or maybe he doesn’t regard our actions over the past six months as significant..."

Hearing him say that, she couldn’t help but become tense.

To say that Yu Jizi has something more important than the drug people, Gu Youyou thought the latter explanation more plausible. How could that old man not value the drug people? He must be excessively arrogant, not taking their deeds seriously at all.

"Isn't the safest place said to be Qi Mountain? Why not send them all to Qi Mountain?"

"Tianzong cannot openly antagonize him," Jin Zijin mused.

Ah! Truly complicated.

Chapter 798: Dragon Boat Festival

Full of concerns, she acted timidly and cautiously in her every move.

She really wanted to do as Searcy said, seeing someone displeasing, too lazy to waste words with them, a packet of poison as a gift would settle all scores.

A moment later, Jin Zijin added, "When you have time, make more antidote pills and send them to Lingnan. Even if they can't completely detoxify, at least they would help clear their minds a bit."

Gu Youyou had studied the medicine she was supposed to take and found traces of hallucinogens. She didn't know what her mind was like before she traveled to this time, but since she never took that medicine after arriving, she had never encountered any problems with her mind.

The only other drugged person she had met was Jin Ziyuan, but the medicine he took was slightly different from hers! He even had an additional prescription.

...

On the day of the Dragon Boat Festival, Gu Youyou naturally got up early.

Xiang Chun took a beautiful multicolored silk ribbon and tied it on her.

This silk ribbon was called Longevity Thread, another name was Life-Continuing Thread, another Soldier-Repelling Sash, also known as Five-Colored Thread, and Vermilion Cord, warding off soldiers and ghosts, to keep people free from sickness and plague.

These were some of the ancient customs of the festival, customs which continue to modern day, with many places still observing them.

In this era, the richer and more powerful families were, the more they adhered to these ancient rites.

Aside from wearing multicolored silk ribbons, it was also customary to hang wormwood and calamus over each door. It was said they had the effect of warding off illness and evil spirits!

Before long, Lin Qianqing came back. She arrived together with the Crown Prince Jin Xiaoran, and given such an entourage, everyone from the Lin Family had to go out to receive them. Gu Youyou, supporting Old Madam Lin, went early to the main gate to wait, and at the same time, she saw a large flock of ladies within the vast Lin Residence.

With their daughter and son-in-law visiting, Madam Lin was overjoyed and permitted the group of ladies in the back courtyard to come out for a bit of exposure to the world.

Uncle Lin Xingyi and cousin Lin Shenxing were just like what Gu Youyou had seen on her visit to the Yue Residence; amidst a sea of flowers, a touch of green. The Lin Residence, like the Yue Residence, was severely matriarchal.

The carriage arrived at the main gate of the Lin Residence. The Crown Prince and his wife got off the carriage, and Lin Xingyi led the Lin Family to pay their deep respects.

"Greetings to King Jin, King Jin’s wife."

Once a prince was married, he could be granted a kingly title. Apart from the Crown Prince, the title of King Jin was the most distinguished. The Emperor, however, gave it to the eldest prince who replaced Prince Qin after his punishment, which really was like giving a slap followed by a sweet date.

People said that no matter which of the two princes became the Crown Prince in the future, currently, the position of King Jin was somewhat higher than that of Prince Qin.

King Jin, Jin Xiaoran, seemed to be in a good mood and personally helped Lin Xingyi to his feet, saying, "Father-in-law, please dispense with the formality. Your son-in-law greets you..."

After, he also paid respects to the Old Madam Lin and Madam Lin as a junior, proving himself to be quite the people person, with no airs about him.

This was Gu Youyou's first encounter with Lin Qianqing and Jin Xiaoran in half a year.

The men of the Jin imperial family were all quite attractive. Although Jin Xiaoran couldn't compare to Jin Zijin or Jin Ziyuan, not even to Lin Qianqing's other cousin Jin Wei, his strong genes still made him far better than most.

As for Lin Qianqing, Gu Youyou looked at her and felt a pang of heartache.

The girl used to have a cute, slightly chubby baby face, but in just a few months, she had lost enough weight to sharpen her chin, and with her wistful poise, she had some of the grace of Miss Lin.

Gu Youyou observed Jin Xiaoran's attitude toward Lin Qianqing closely. He was always attentive and careful with her, thought Gu Youyou about Miss Lin. By the looks of it so far, the man did not seem to be bad!

Chapter 799: Have a Talk with Lin Qianqing

But Gu Youyou, this Miss Lin, showed frequent favors towards Jin Xiaoran, who appeared uninterested and aloof in response.

The sharp-eyed Madam Lin noticed that Jin Xiaoran was talking with Lin Xingyi and seized the opportunity to pull Lin Qianqing to the backyard.

She felt too embarrassed to ask directly, so she beat around the bush and said, "I see he treats you quite well, are you comfortable living in the Prince Jin Residence?"

Lin Qianqing managed a forced smile and politely answered, "Quite well, I’m provided with the very best for my clothing and living expenses."

A mother knows her daughter best, and tears instantly welled up in Madam Lin’s eyes.

Her outspoken and unruly daughter, no matter how much she was taught, when had she ever spoken so properly?

But what could she do about feeling upset? Who asked her to be born into the Lin Family? To have fought for a position as a principal wife for her, so she wouldn’t have to bow and scrape before her husband’s other women, was already the greatest effort she could make.

After all, King Jin used to call her ’Aunt’; as a child, she called him ’Cousin Jin’. Having just seen him, King Jin seemed to treat her well.

If she still couldn’t live well with such conditions, Madam Lin truly had nothing more to say.

"We have guests at home today, so I won’t keep you company. If you get bored, go find your cousin. I saw she wanted to talk to you earlier but couldn’t find the right moment due to her status."

Lin Qianqing acknowledged with a hum and said no more.

In the end, it wasn’t Lin Qianqing who sought out Gu Youyou; instead, Gu Youyou found her aunt had left and went to look for her in her former boudoir.

Gu Youyou pondered for a moment, adjusted her emotion, and then lifted her steps to enter through that door.

Her face bore a radiant smile, teasing her as before, "Have our little hawk been tamed into a canary after being caged for half a year?"

Having lived in a lifeless state for over half a year, Lin Qianqing was finally moved by Gu Youyou’s playful and cheerful voice.

"I was just thinking of coming to find you, but you have come by yourself."

Gu Youyou said, "Your status is different now. How dare I ask you to come to me? Of course, I should be the one to visit you."

Lin Qianqing didn’t argue and asked, "I heard you just returned from Qi Mountain yesterday. How have these days been for you?"

Gu Youyou’s eyes flickered slightly, and she flopped down onto the chair opposite Lin Qianqing, cocking up her legs and leaning back, saying, "I’m naturally doing well. Qi Mountain is the ancestral land of the Dao Sect, a place full of spiritual essence. I have been working on medicine to cure diseases there, and I have made some breakthroughs."

Lin Qianqing beamed excitedly, "Then, Cousin, is there a chance for your illness to be cured?"

Gu Youyou blinked, hummed an affirmation, and said, "I’m confident." She should impart some positive energy to her.

She spread her hands and said, "Look at me. Someone who has been repeatedly on the brink of death is still clinging to life. Sis, I know you dislike this marriage and are incredibly unlucky, having also been imprisoned because of King Jin. But being alive beats everything else! As for living your life, if you wish to be happy, you will always find a way to be happy. If you don’t know how to adjust yourself and always expect life to accommodate your own ideas, I can only say... even if you were made Emperor, you won’t necessarily get everything your way."

Lin Qianqing nodded slightly, glanced outside, and whispered, "I know. Actually, I planned to get along with King Jin. It’s all the same, whether in the Lin Residence or in the Prince Jin Residence, just moving from one cage to another. But..."

Chapter 800: Tell a Scary Story

She looked at Gu Youyou and suddenly felt nervous, her face even turning red with tension.

Gu Youyou felt the girl was somewhat strange. She pulled a chair closer to her and said in a low voice, "Do you have a secret you want to tell your cousin? Feel free to speak. Whether it’s a personal issue or a problem between husband and wife, I can help."

Lin Qianqing: "...Where did your mind go? What I wanted to say was that something happened on the day of my marriage."

Gu Youyou looked at her sideways and then blinked.

She knew about the incident on Lin Qianqing’s wedding day. King Jin had thought it was Prince Qin’s doing, and if Prince Qin had done the first day of the lunar month, King Jin would return the favor on the fifteenth. It was precisely because of that incident that everyone from their courtyard was confined. However, in fact, Prince Qin was wronged; it was just Jin Ziyuan stirring up trouble.

And he had done so quite successfully.

"I’m all right, but you don’t know the horror of that day," Lin Qianqing said.

"I’ve heard about it, but fortunately, you were unscathed and those villains did not succeed. Moreover, the horrific attack was brief and did not delay the auspicious time for your wedding ceremony," Gu Youyou replied.

Lin Qianqing’s face was indifferent as she said, "Yes, in a brief moment, so many people died. Before my eyes, people were slashed, some had their arms or legs severed, others were stabbed in the stomach with their intestines spilling out.

Some even had half their heads hanging off their necks, staring at me with open eyes in death. All those who died were around me, and I was surrounded by them. My dowry was scattered all around, stained red with blood..."

"It’s over, don’t think about it anymore!"

Gu Youyou, seeing her becoming more and more frightening, hurriedly patted her shoulder to interrupt her.

But she had no idea that Lin Qianqing could tell such a horrific story so naturally.

Her indifferent and detailed descriptions of various gruesome deaths had even frightened Gu Youyou, who wouldn't as much as furrow her brow when picking up a scalpel.

Unexpectedly, Lin Qianqing said to Gu Youyou very earnestly, "I'm not afraid!"

Uh...

Gu Youyou's retracted hand hung stiffly in mid-air.

"You're not afraid of such a horrific scene? Who are you trying to fool?"

"I'm really not afraid; I'm actually looking forward to it," Lin Qianqing seemed a bit lost.

Gu Youyou's mouth twitched fiercely, not knowing what to say.

She said, "At that moment, I was thinking, if they really took me away, it would have been good. Being taken away by villains would allow me to leave openly, without implicating my family..."

"Wait a minute!" Gu Youyou interrupted her, saying, "Those guys were playing for keeps. Do you think once they took you away, they would just drop you outside the city and forget about you? If you really were kidnapped, your fate..." Gu Youyou didn't know how to properly describe it, she only said, "Anyway, it would be worse than death. If they decided to kill you with one stroke, count it as a mercy. If they didn't kill you, then it would be living a life worse than death. Girl, you're too naive."

Lin Qianqing appeared even more confused, looking at Gu Youyou with a somewhat vacant expression and murmured in a low voice, "He looked so pure, can he really be that sort of person?"

Her words were mumbled very softly, but to Gu Youyou’s keen ears, they were clearly audible.

Gu Youyou was taken aback and asked, "Who? Who did you see?"

Lin Qianqing hurriedly feigned ignorance, shaking her head and saying, "No, nobody."

Only a fool would believe that. Gu Youyou’s mental age was not that of a naive and easily deceived young girl. If she seriously considered someone’s little expressions, she could be very accurate.

Of course, this excluded people like Jin Zijin, who were especially good at concealing their emotions.