Farmhouse 971

Chapter 971: Choose Yourself

"How dare you, vile commoner," she shrieked, "You wouldn't speak when you were asked to, claimed silence as your answer, and now you proffer such a heap of theories. Are you deliberately flaunting your intelligence before me?"

"Empress, Your Grace, I meant no such thing," Gu Youyou said calmly.

This time, her face indeed carried a hint of sarcasm.

Where was your grace and amiability? Only when your significant interests were threatened, you could not maintain them anymore?

It was time to tear off your hypocritical mask.

The Empress's face turned a livid shade of blue. Was this woman challenging her?

"Enough!" The Emperor intervened, breaking the tense atmosphere. He said to the Empress, "You are always virtuous and gentle. What has gotten into you today? Zijin is selecting a wife, yet you seem more agitated than him."

The Empress was momentarily dazed, only then realizing that Gu Youyou had provoked this inappropriate rage in her.

She had underestimated Gu Youyou from the beginning.

She suppressed her anger and whispered, "You are right, Your Majesty, but this Gu Youyou is being deliberately obscure, which is extremely rude."

However, Jin Zijin laughed at this moment, saying, "I think what she said was quite reasonable. She speaks the 'Dao' precisely."

The Empress felt as if she had been slapped in the face, her complexion turning livid instantly.

Had she but uttered the words "deliberately obscure," and you retort by agreeing with her? Was this not an outright affront to her in public?

"Ha ha..." Just then, the Empress Dowager, who had been silent for a long time, laughed heartily.

"Youyou always surprises me. Such profound and advanced understanding of the Dao's teachings. I had been worried that since Zijin grew up in the Dao Family and had been involved with Daoism all these years, he might find it hard to connect with his wife in conversation. Looking now, it seems I was overly concerned. Not only are Youyou's medical skills exceptional, but her literary talent and understanding of the Dao Family's teachings are extraordinary. I see no need for further selection; with her insights into the Dao alone, Youyou has already won. What do you think, Your Majesty?"

The Emperor wore a smile, which did not reach his eyes, as he looked toward Jin Zijin.

Did he really want to choose such a woman, destined to take a much more circuitous path?

Even if she were not General Che's daughter, he found the Miss Zhang of the Zhang Family to his liking. If he chose Miss Zhang, then he would have a way to make Minister Zhang sever ties with the Ducal Residence and fully support the crown prince.

But the determination in Jin Zijin's eyes did not lessen; in fact, it grew more pronounced.

To an outsider, his gaze towards Gu Youyou might seem indifferent, but he alone could discern what it truly meant.

Jin Zijin looked at the three girls. It seemed like he was looking at all of them, yet also as if he did not really see anyone. However, deep in his pupils, there was consistently the shadow of one person.

When he had looked at Xiao Qinqin back then, it had been the same.

A fervent desire to possess.

If today he did not say no... perhaps he would indeed lose him forever.

"Since Zijin personally came to choose, naturally he should have the final say."

Gu Youyou and Jin Zijin both breathed a sigh of relief, worried that the Emperor might ruin things at this moment.

"Hold on." The Emperor was not intending to spoil matters, but the Empress was still not reconciled.

Others might not know, but she understood very well.

If Jin Zijin was to choose, was there really any choice?

This play was from his own hand, self-directed.

"Does the Empress have any objections?" The Emperor's face already showing some displeasure.

The Empress said, "Though we agreed earlier that this selection for the crown prince would not consider origin, focusing on talent and appearance instead. In my view, the talents of these three ladies are not far apart. However, regarding appearance... Doctor Gu is indeed somewhat older, has always been frail, and is more delicate. Zijin is not that young either, Your Majesty, and considering offspring, I believe these two other ladies are far superior both in terms of appearance and constitution than Doctor Gu!"

Chapter 972: She is the Best

Gu Youyou really wanted to retort with: "This old lady is in perfect health."

But she held back, turning her gaze instead to Jin Zijin.

The decision still lay in his hands; the Empress was nothing but a mantis after autumn, unable to leap around for much longer.

Jin Zijin surely wouldn’t disappoint her, as he said, "The Empress speaks sensibly, but living life, one must make oneself comfortable. Just as the Empress Dowager mentioned earlier, I can’t marry a wife only to sit at home in silence. Therefore, I choose Gu Youyou, who shares my interests."

The Empress’s face again received an unsparing slap, turning a shade of angry green.

"You... You are just..." Before she could finish uttering the words ’putting on a play,’ she was interrupted by the Emperor’s thunderous scolding.

"Empress, you have overstepped today."

The Empress’s chest heaved, unwillingly pressing down the discomfort in her heart.

As the Empress, it should have been her duty to personally attend to the marriage affairs of the Princes and Princesses.

Jin Zijin had only just returned, and yet she couldn’t exert any influence over his marriage, which made her feel like a total failure.

The women who fought with her for favor in the past, except for the immovable Sheng Qiaoyue, had all been defeated by her. And now, all the concubines were obedient to her every word. She would not allow such a person to appear on the Imperial Family’s genealogy.

The Empress sent signaling glances to the stunned Zhang Shiyu at her side, prompting her to say a few words.

But in the current situation, it was not only the Empress who was slapped in the face; these two innocent women were too.

Yet to admit defeat to Gu Youyou was something they were unwilling to accept.

In terms of talent and family background, they were not inferior to Gu Youyou, and to lose just because of the matter of the Dao was something they could not resign themselves to.

Miss Zhang took a step forward, bowed respectfully to Jin Zijin, and said, "Your Highness, Crown Prince, Shiyu also has her confusions."

"Oh?"

Everyone looked with surprise at this bold young woman.

She was the daughter of Prime Minister Zhang, and the Zhang Family's children were always outstanding in talent. Unfortunately, they couldn't compare to Gu Youyou.

"Speak," Jin Zijin said indifferently.

Miss Zhang said, "If the Dao is the origin of all things, and all things are of the Dao, then what Shiyu spoke of regarding the Dao Sect being of the Dao, how could that be wrong? Could the Dao Sect not be of the Dao?"

At this, everyone felt she made a good point.

Miss Zhang's words seemed faultless—who would dare say the Dao Sect is not of the Dao?

The Empress revealed a smile. The Zhang Family sure had sharp tongues; otherwise, how could Prime Minister Zhang argue so powerfully in the court against everyone, except for Jie Huanzhi?

Yet Gu Youyou simply gave a cold smile.

Zhang Shiyu's question might have been very good, but unfortunately, she was dealing with Jin Zijin.

Jin Zijin said, "Precisely because all things are of the Dao, to speak of anything is to err, and to speak of anything is also correct. Only through silence can one find the best answer."

Gu Youyou had thought she would hear Jin Zijin eloquently discuss a grand theory of the Dao Family, yet to her surprise, he made the decision with a single brief phrase, lessening her amusement.

But for Jin Zijin, he simply didn't wish to waste words on those irrelevant to him.

The Empress Dowager nodded slightly and said, "Zijin speaks justly. Although Miss Zhang also makes a fair point, if we speak of the very best, it is still Youyou."

Both the Empress Dowager and Empress Sheng were of lowly birth, former servants themselves, which placed them in an entirely different social status from Gu Youyou. Thus, they saw no issue with Jin Zijin marrying Gu Youyou.

Miss Zhang bit her lip, her face turning deathly pale. Had she just boldly inquired, only to be mercilessly told that she was inferior to that woman doctor?

Chapter 973: Great Joy

She, the legitimate daughter of the Chancellor Residence, was actually inferior to a female doctor?

"Since that's the case, let it be settled. My son, Jin Yan, has personally chosen his queen, and it is Gu Youyou!"

Some rejoice while others grieve. The grand selection of the Crown Prince's consort finally comes to an end.

Apart from the Lin Family's good and bad fortunes being rather extraordinary, Gu Youyou didn't matter to the other people in court.

She didn't belong to any faction, and the opposing factions couldn't manage to get their daughters into the Crown Prince's palace, so as far as they were concerned, it was either flattery or waiting, and they could still adopt a wait-and-see attitude.

At this juncture, the Crown Prince’s sudden return to the capital took everyone by surprise, so continued observation was good for everyone.

...

"Cousin, Cousin, did you hear you are to become the Crown Prince’s consort?" Lin Qianqing returned to the Lin Residence today; her voice arrived before she did.

Xiang Chun was even happier than Gu Youyou because the old lady said that she, Xiang Chun, would follow Gu Youyou from now on and marry into the Crown Prince’s palace with her.

Her monthly silver would increase from four taels to ten taels a month, her happiness practically bursting at the seams.

"Yes, yes, Miss, our cousin won the competition, the Crown Prince’s consort personally chosen by the Crown Prince. The wedding date has even been set for next month..."

Gu Youyou came out from the house, and Xiang Chun had already blurted out everything that should and shouldn’t have been said.

Lin Qianqing was utterly astonished, nodding lightly, she said, "So that’s how it is."

Gu Youyou chuckled and said, "Xiang Chun, go fetch some fruits."

"Yes, Miss Cousin!"

After sending Xiang Chun away, Gu Youyou pulled Lin Qianqing into the house.

She had already guessed as much.

Lin Qianqing said, "I thought it was strange at the time; it turns out you and he are a match. But back then, the Crown Prince was still Tianzong's senior brother. How could you have fallen for him?"

In Lin Qianqing's view, the young ladies of Beijing all knew that Tianzong's senior brother was unattainable.

They were not like Yue Tingfang, who knew Jin Zijin's background.

Gu Youyou sighed and said, "I met him quite early; at that time, I didn't know his status. This matter is a long story. Come, sit down, and I'll explain slowly."

So, Gu Youyou told her all about her encounter with Jin Zijin and the whole story.

After listening, Lin Qianqing finally understood, saying, "Your story really is convoluted, with such a big twist – it mustn't have been easy."

"It's fine, it's circled back to the beginning," Gu Youyou said with a smile.

"Yes, but didn't you ever consider that he might remain a Taoist for his whole life?"

Gu Youyou replied, "I used to worry, but he told me that the Heavenly Master Tian Jizi had always thought he was meant for the secular world, and neither he nor Yue Rujing were cut out to be a Heavenly Master or State Preceptor. That's why he had been secretly training the next successor.

He kept this very secret, only revealing it to the Marquess of Lingnan, who had always insisted that Jin Zijin mustn't end the lineage, and no one else knew."

"The internal affairs of the Dao Family are indeed complex," Lin Qianqing remarked.

"Yes, the Heavenly Master Tian Jizi planned far ahead, he had predicted such a day would come. He put Jin Zijin and Yue Rujing out front, so Yu Jizi focused all his attention on them, while the real pillar of the Dao Family could safely grow."

After chatting for a while, Madam Lin suddenly arrived.

Madam Lin rarely visited Gu Youyou’s courtyard; in all the time Gu Youyou had been at the Lin Residence, the number of times Madam Lin had visited could be counted on one hand.

Chapter 974: Making Things Difficult

"Aunt,"

"Mother!"

Gu Youyou and Lin Qianqing rose to their feet and paid their respects to her.

Madam Lin nodded lightly and then signaled for them to sit down.

"You’re both here; I’ll speak plainly then."

Madam Lin looked solemn and serious.

Gu Youyou couldn’t help but exchange a look with Lin Qianqing before becoming serious herself.

"Qianqing, do you know why you were chosen to become King Jin’s wife?"

Lin Qianqing looked at Madam Lin and said, "Isn’t this what you’ve always hoped for? Mother, just speak your mind."

Madam Lin’s eyes were filled with sadness and reddened as she spoke excitedly, "No, Daya, you’ve been targeted by them for a long time. Since they wanted to bring your father into their fold, your marriage was set. Even if it was not as the principal wife, you’d still be a consort. But a consort is not as good as a principal wife, so mother did everything I could to ensure you’d be the principal wife. All things considered, it’s still your parents’ fault, as we had no choice."

Lin Qianqing silently lowered her head and said, "I understand, mother; I've come to terms with it, and you don't need to blame yourself."

"It's good that you understand," Madam Lin said. "Women like us are envied by others, but only we ourselves know the difficulties we face. Initially, I looked down on your father, considering him just a country bumpkin with a vulgar mother. I cried, I made a scene, I fasted at home, I did everything, but eventually, I obediently married him. Ah! Fortunately, I married him. Thankfully, your father is a kind man. If it had been someone else, my life might have been even harder. Daya, do you understand what I'm telling you?"

"I understand," Lin Qianqing said. "Mother means to say that to lead a good life, satisfaction isn't important, what matters is how one lives."

"Right, that's what I mean," Madam Lin nodded lightly and said. "But if it were just any ordinary family, it would be fine, but it's the Ducal Residence with King Jin. The Empress has been ambitious since her youth, and she has been so her entire life. She won't rest until she has fought for the throne for King Jin, and she will inevitably pull in your father. Before, our family had no concerns; if we had to choose a faction, it didn't matter who. But now that your cousin is to marry the Prince, the Empress doesn't trust us like before. Even though we're still on King Jin's side, given her cunning, she won't treat us the same as before. I'm worried she'll implicate you and make your life difficult."

After saying this, she turned her gaze toward Gu Youyou.

Gu Youyou forced a smile and said, "Aunt, aren't you afraid I might say something to the Prince after hearing all this?"

Gu Youyou felt that such matters should have been discussed privately with Lin Qianqing.

Madam Lin looked at Gu Youyou in silence and after a moment sighed, "All the things you've been hiding from me, are just hidden from me. I know all about them. Without your uncle's tacit consent, the Prince wouldn't dare to climb over our walls. I don't want to know about the affairs between you two, especially now that they're in such disarray.

"Lin Xingyi has been keeping secrets, which ultimately shows he doesn't trust me. In my heart, I'm oriented towards Qianqing and the Ducal Residence, but I'm also a woman of the Lin Family, and I

understand the principles I should follow. I don’t avoid you because I trust you, and I believe that no matter what, you won’t harm the Lin Family."

As a woman of the Lin Family, no matter what she did, she wouldn’t harm the Lin Family either.

Gu Youyou remained silent, looking toward Lin Qianqing.

Lin Qianqing forced a smile with difficulty and said, "Mother, cousin, don’t you know me? Regardless, I don’t care. It’s useless for them to make things difficult for me."

Chapter 975: The Flower Gathering at Prince Jin Residence

What happens next is uncertain, and Gu Youyou did not console her. Instead, when she left, she told her to treat it as a day all on her own, visiting relatives.

Who doesn’t have a strange relative in their family?

Thinking this, Lin Qianqing felt quite happy.

...

Taking advantage of the fine day, Lin Qianqing held a flower banquet at the Prince Jin Residence.

The mansion of Prince Jin was inherited from a princess from generations ago. This young princess had become a widow early and never remarried. She had no daughters to inherit her estate, so when she passed away, the residence was reclaimed.

The princess had loved various flowers and plants during her lifetime, so even now, Prince Jin’s residence still maintained many precious flowers and plants for people to admire.

Gu Youyou received the invitation and arrived at the Prince Jin Residence early in the morning.

Madam Lin was also invited, but to avoid any suspicion that she might be bringing Gu Youyou to Prince Jin’s mansion, she decided not to go.

Long Luo, having been waiting at the doorway since early morning, immediately handed Gu Youyou over to a reliable maid, saying, "Miss Youyou, our princess is in the floral hall right now, along with several ladies and madams. Please go ahead."

Long Luo, as the head maid brought from Lin Qianqing’s maternal home, held a much higher status than ordinary maids.

It was still early, and only a few ladies were present in the floral hall, including Consort Qinyun from Prince Qin.

Qinyun had not seen Gu Youyou for a long time and was even more enthusiastic about her visit than Lin Qianqing was.

"Doctor Gu, oh my, have you nearly forgotten me? I haven’t seen you in such a long time."

Qinyun seemed the same as before, albeit a bit heavier, which suggested she had been leading a good life.

However, Gu Youyou noticed her slightly protruding belly, indicating that she was pregnant.

Gu Youyou looked intentionally at her belly and said with a light smile, "How could I forget you? It’s been a long time, Qinyun. Have you been well?"

As soon as she spoke, Gu Youyou corrected herself, "I misspoke, how could I ask if you’ve been well? You, surely, have been having a good time."

Qinyun laughingly looked down at her belly and said, "Of course, it’s been good. I am now pregnant, and Prince Qin cherishes me even more."

Gu Youyou heard that the prince’s wife at Prince Qin’s residence had just given birth to a daughter, and no woman had yet borne him a son. And the woman most favored by Prince Qin was none other than Consort Qinyun from the Jie Family.

Compared to Prince Qin, Prince Jin’s situation was quite awkward as a year and a half had passed since his grand wedding, but there had been no news of either a child or even a pregnancy.

"Since you have a child now, why are you still running around?" Gu Youyou asked.

Lin Qianqing came over, pulled them to sit down, and said, "Cousin, Qinyun, stop talking for a moment and sit down."

"Yes, yes, let’s sit and talk." Qinyun pulled Gu Youyou to sit next to her.

She said, "How could I miss the flower banquet hosted by Qianqing? And since you were coming, I naturally had to seize this opportunity to have you check on me."

She extended her hand, indicating for Gu Youyou to take her pulse.

Madam Lin regarded Gu Youyou highly, and seeing her wasn’t easy.

Gu Youyou laughed and said, "Are you saying that the Prince Qin Residence is too poor to afford a doctor? You’re pregnant, isn’t the Imperial Physician at your beck and call?"

Though she said this, Gu Youyou still reached out and touched her wrist.

Qinyun laughed and said, "I don’t trust those Imperial Physicians’ medical skills, they really aren’t up to the mark."

Chapter 976: Pregnant with Twins

"Just checking a safe pulse, it shouldn’t be a problem. Don’t underestimate the Imperial Physicians." Gu Youyou had already taken her pulse, and her body was in top shape, quite well indeed.

Xie Qinyun stretched her neck and asked in a low voice, "So? Is the baby in my belly a boy or a girl?"

Gu Youyou: "..."

No wonder she said the doctors' medical skills weren't good. But you can't blame the Imperial Physicians for that, she's just too demanding.

Gu Youyou said irritably, "It's not that their medical skills are lacking, it's you who's asking the impossible. Give me your hand."

Xie Qinyun's eyes sparkled, "I knew you'd have a way."

As she spoke, she stretched out her other hand to Gu Youyou.

With both hands, Gu Youyou took her pulse, and after a while, she slightly furrowed her brow.

"What's wrong?" Xie Qinyun, sensing something was off, hurriedly asked with concern.

"You might be having twins," Gu Youyou said. "But it's not certain, my pulse-taking skills are pretty good, but they're not as accurate as machine testing, I can't guarantee it's 100% correct."

"Ah? You mean I'm having twins?" Xie Qinyun shouted with joy, only focusing on the first part of Gu Youyou's statement and completely ignoring the rest.

"Hey, keep it down, you megaphone," Gu Youyou regretted taking her pulse. The diagnosis wasn't certain, and if it turned out to be false, wouldn't that ruin her reputation?

Lin Qianqing was entertaining the other Madams and young ladies when she heard the news and hurried over.

"Qinyun is expecting twins?" She exclaimed in surprise.

Before Gu Youyou could speak, Xie Qinyun had already happily pulled her aside and shared the news.

"Yes, Doctor Gu said so, I'm having twins. That's great, it doubles my chances of having a son."

Gu Youyou helplessly held her forehead, feeling like her lifetime of wisdom might be undone by her hand.

"Cousin, you're amazing," Lin Qianqing looked at her with admiration.

"It's not certain!" Gu Youyou sighed helplessly.

But it seemed they all chose to ignore Gu Youyou's caution about the uncertainty.

In their eyes, Doctor Gu's medical skills were the best, Doctor Gu was omnipotent, her diagnosis had to be accurate.

The Madams and young ladies in attendance all rose and congratulated Xie Qinyun.

"Consort Xie is so fortunate, to be expecting two at once. If both are boys, that would make the eldest son for the Prince Residence."

"Yes, it's so enviable!"

Only a middle-aged woman had a very displeased look on her face.

Xie Qinyun noticed her as well and provocatively lifted her chin and puffed out her belly in her direction.

Gu Youyou saw the Madam's face, dark and gloomy, as if harboring deep resentment towards Xie Qinyun.

She whispered to Lin Qianqing, "Who is that lady? She seems to have an issue with Qinyun."

Lin Qianqing said, "That’s Prince Qin’s mother-in-law, Qinyun’s pregnancy can hardly make her happy."

"Hmm..." Xie Qinyun was provoking her, wasn’t this just inviting enmity in public?

Of course, even if not done publicly, their hatred was probably immense.

While everyone else was chatting with Xie Qinyun, Lin Qianqing quietly said to Gu Youyou: "After Prince Qin’s wife gave birth to the imperial grandson’s daughter, her health has been poor. She has been bedridden for months. The Imperial Physician says it’s due to a deficit caused by childbirth, requiring slow recuperation, and it might be difficult for her to conceive again. Madam Huang blames Qinyun for this, saying that it’s Prince Qin’s favoritism towards her that made the Prince’s wife sick."

Chapter 977: A Different Identity Now

Gu Youyou was startled, thinking to herself, "Cousin, why are you so gossipy everywhere? You know all these things so clearly."

Meanwhile, the ladies were asking Xie Qinyun about whether the baby in her womb was a boy or a girl.

"Consort Xie, have you asked Doctor Gu whether it’s a boy or a girl in your belly?"

Someone said, "How can that be seen? You only find out after the baby is born."

"It’s said that skilled doctors can tell. Doctor Gu’s medical skills are excellent; surely, he can tell."

Xie Qinyun said delightedly, "I was just about to ask Doctor Gu whether it’s a boy or a girl, but you all interrupted me. Oh, Doctor Gu, what exactly is in my belly? Or are they both boys?"

Gu Youyou dared not speak recklessly anymore and said annoyed, "This can’t be diagnosed by feeling the pulse; let’s wait until the child is born."

It was really a matter of life and death. The more high-profile she was, the worse Madam Huang's expression became. Now, she had already taken her maid and left, hoping out of sight, out of mind.

Consort Xie, with her carefree nature, wasn't afraid of attracting malice.

Hearing Gu Youyou say the gender couldn't be told, Xie Qinyun wasn't upset. She took Gu Youyou's hand and said, "It's early in the pregnancy, so it's normal not to see. When my belly is bigger, I'll come to Doctor Gu for help with the pulse again."

Gu Youyou said, "No use, even if it's bigger, I can't tell. If you don't believe me, ask the Imperial Physician."

"Doctor Gu, don't be modest. If you can't do it, who can? You definitely can," a lady, unknown from which family, kept flattering Gu Youyou.

These words made Gu Youyou very frustrated.

Someone said, "Next month, Doctor Gu's status will be different; how can she casually help people feel their pulses?"

The crowd suddenly realized.

"Yeah, Doctor Gu is going to be the Crown Prince's consort. She's getting married next month."

In their eyes, Gu Youyou was Jisheng Hall's doctor, who didn't easily provide consultation; her reputation as a Divine Doctor was much louder than that of the suddenly emerged Crown Prince's consort, which momentarily made people overlook her other identity.

"Now we can still invite Doctor Gu to feel our pulses, but next month, when she becomes the Crown Prince's consort, it will be even harder."

"Oh dear, in that case... Doctor Gu, please check my pulse. Lately, I don't know why, but I've been unable to sleep well and often feel dizzy..."

"And me, my legs feel sour..."

Gu Youyou was surrounded by the ladies and misses, finding it difficult to refuse out of courtesy. She was also concerned that others might think she was putting on airs because she was going to be the Crown Prince's consort. Thus, Lin Qianqing arranged for someone to set up a separate consultation table for her, and she began providing free medical consultations.

These ladies and misses were wives and legitimate daughters from the families of high-ranking officials in the Imperial Court. In the future, they might be able to help her and Jin Zijin. Borrowing Lin Qianqing's venue to show off might mean King Jin and the Empress were about to encounter problems again.

Since Gu Youyou had sat down to give consultations, those who were and weren't sick naturally all wanted to consult with her. Even if not for illnesses, getting a peace of mind pulse from Doctor Gu was good too, it was not easy to have Doctor Gu feel one's pulse.

"Madam Lu has arrived..."

At the mention of Madam Lu, the lively atmosphere instantly froze.

Madam Lu hadn't appeared in public for a year or two; it was said that she had contracted a strange disease that made her robust and bulky, which was why she hadn't left her house for the last two years, staying in for treatment.

Unexpectedly, the wife of King Jin had invited her today.

Madam Lu's gaze swept over everyone, quickly settling on Gu Youyou.

Chapter 978: Uninvited Guest

The scandal of the concubine harming the Family Head and his wife was a family disgrace, and it was customary to keep such things within the family. The Lu Family had kept this matter tightly under wraps, so it hadn't leaked out.

"Doctor Gu, thanks to your medicine, I've finally been cured of this 'strange disease.'"

Everyone stared blankly at Madam Lu, blinking and rubbing their eyes, and then they dug at their ears.

The person before them was still the same, but how could she have changed so dramatically?

Apart from her tall stature, she had become much more graceful.

Without continuing to take those male hormones, no excess hair grew on her face, and living a life of comfort and ease, her skin had become much finer.

The main thing was her voice, it was unclear whether it was the effect of Gu Youyou's medicine or if she had practiced deliberately.

You couldn't hear the former harsh, duck-like tone anymore, rather it was now the voice of a normal woman.

The person before them... was this really the same Madam Lu of the past?

Gu Youyou stood up and smiled at Madam Lu, "Congratulations to Madam Lu on the recovery from your stubborn illness."

With Gu Youyou's endorsement, they had no choice but to believe that the woman before them was indeed the former Madam Lu, who used to look more masculine than men.

In those days, many people mocked Lu Gongzi, saying he had two fathers. Now, looking at Madam Lu, it's unlikely anyone would laugh at him anymore.

"Doctor Gu's medical skills are exceptional; even such a strange illness can be cured. I fear even the Imperial Physician would be at a loss."

The crowd once again showered Gu Youyou with praise, a truly capable person, especially a doctor who can save lives, is always respected wherever they go.

"Madam Zhang, the second young Miss Zhang have arrived..." It was only when this announcement sounded that the harmonious atmosphere in the flower hall was again interrupted.

The Zhang Family was now on bad terms with the Lin Family because the eldest daughter of the Lin Family, Lin Qianqing, had become King Jin's principal Consort, while the most noble legitimate eldest daughter of the Zhang Family had become a mere Consort, overshadowed by Miss Lin.

Then, when the eldest Prince commenced his consort selection, he personally chose Gu Youyou, who he deemed inferior in every respect to the second young Miss Zhang at least that's what the Zhang Family believed, causing them to feel tremendously humiliated. Now rumors had it that Prime Minister Zhang was picking on Senior Official Lin in court, confronting him head on.

So, what was the meaning of Madam Zhang and her second daughter's presence today at the Consort King Jin's flower-viewing banquet?

Not long after, the eldest daughter of the Zhang Family, Consort Zhang, arrived.

She first bowed to Lin Qianqing and said, "Consort sister, I too have come to join in the fun. You don't mind, do you?"

Lin Qianqing smiled and said, "With such a large garden, go wherever you please. I'm not about to tie you up, what's all this about joining in the fun or not?"

Although both women wore smiles on their faces, the tense atmosphere was palpable throughout the flower hall.

The crowd thought: Miss Lin of the Lin Family was no pushover; her words were anything but polite.

Of course, she had every right to speak her mind.

Because the guests invited by Lin Qianqing were, apart from her close friends Consort Jie and Doctor Gu, all either esteemed legitimate Madams or legitimate young misses. Although Consort Zhang was once a legitimate young miss, she was now a Consort. That is to say, without a formal invitation from Lin Qianqing, she really had no right to attend a flower-viewing banquet of this kind. In such a situation, she should have stayed in her own room and avoided the event.

Consort Zhang maintained a dignified smile, seemingly unaffected by Lin Qianqing's barbed words, and responded with a light chuckle, "I see the flowers in the courtyard every day; even the most beautiful scenery grows tiresome after a while. I've come because my mother and sister are also attending Consort sister's flower-viewing banquet today. Thanks to Consort sister's grace, I've been able to see my mother and sister."

Chapter 979: A Bargain for Gu Youyou

Lin Qianqing looked towards Madam Zhang and Miss Zhang, whose expressions were not too good, and said, "Since that is the case, let us move Madam Zhang and Miss Zhang to Consort Zhang's courtyard, where the flowers are a different shade of red."

Madam Zhang's face changed dramatically, and she hurriedly said, "Your Highness..."

Before she could finish her statement, Lin Qianqing had already spoken.

"Long Luo, escort Madam Zhang, Miss Zhang, and Consort Zhang over."

She had directly issued an order to dismiss the guests.

Madam Zhang clenched her teeth hard, as if she wanted to shatter them.

What a Lin Qianqing! Hadn't it been said before that the Lin Family's young lady had been spoiled? Spoiled to the point of having no schemes, but why were her words so sharp?

She had hoped that her own daughter could take the opportunity to showcase her talents in front of the ladies and madams, to let them know that her daughter becoming a consort was only due to bad luck, not because her status, beauty, or talents were inferior to Lin Qianqing.

Yet unexpectedly, Lin Qianqing had sent her daughter back with just a few words. And not only that, she had dismissed her as well.

What did she mean by this? Could it be that she, a legitimate wife of a prime minister, should not be seen by others?

"Prince Consort, what goes around comes around, please think carefully before you act, hmph!" With that, Madam Zhang, along with her two daughters, stormed out of the flower hall angrily.

She had legitimate business to discuss with her daughter; therefore, her visit was mainly to see Consort Zhang openly and directly.

Lin Qianqing's expression darkened, and she turned to look at Gu Youyou, who was visibly worried, and forced a smile, "Cousin, you mustn't look down on me. After all, I am the principal wife, am I really afraid of them?"

"As long as you're fine, that's enough," Gu Youyou sighed helplessly.

Everyone had arrived, and after having tea in the flower hall, they went together to the back garden of Prince Jin Residence to appreciate the flowers.

Someone secretly reported the incident in the flower hall to King Jin, and his face turned dark instantly.

He smashed a plate full of fruits on the table and said harshly, "So, this flower viewing event failed to win over those madams, and instead benefited that female doctor?"

The servant who had reported knelt on the ground and did not dare to speak further, even enduring a kick from King Jin.

"Useless thing, get out."

The servant scrambled out of King Jin’s study, and only when he was outside did he dare to rub his painfully kicked chest.

King Jin’s fury was unstoppable; his fists creaked, and he muttered harshly to himself, "It seems I have been too kind to you. Hmph, Gu Youyou, I shall meet you myself to see what abilities you possess."

With that, he shouted, "Someone come here."

A moment later, a maid quickly entered with her head bowed low.

King Jin said, "Go to the consort’s place, tell her that I am ill, suddenly suffering from unbearable abdominal pain."

The maid lifted her head, silently looking at the spirited King Jin, and left the study without a word.

If King Jin said he was ill, then he was ill, and their role as servants was simply to convey the message.

The ladies in the garden were laughing and chatting joyfully; being women of status and position, their walk through the garden was a refined scene in itself.

At that moment, a flustered maid disrupted this refined scene.

"Consort, it’s not good. Prince Jin, in his study, is suddenly suffering from unbearable abdominal pain and asks for you to come take a look."

Lin Qianqing was stunned. King Jin had strongly approved this flower viewing event, and if it were not a serious matter, he would not have sent someone to disrupt it.

"What happened?" she asked urgently.

"The servant doesn’t know," the maid said nervously.

Chapter 980: Don’t Touch the Belly

Beside her, a Madam hurriedly said, "Madam Princess, you should go and see. It would be best if nothing happened to King Jin."

Lin Qianqing nodded and took a few steps with the maid before turning back to address the other Madams: "Madams, I am truly sorry."

"No worries, there will be other chances to enjoy the flowers," the Madams replied in unison.

Lin Qianqing called Long Luo and said, "Please see the Madams out."

"Madam Princess, we take your leave."

"We take our leave!"

The flower viewing party ultimately could not conclude smoothly because King Jin fell ill suddenly. Everyone else was sent away, and naturally, Gu Youyou, being a doctor, was brought by Lin Qianqing to treat King Jin.

As it happened, a doctor with good medical skills was just at the residence, and it would have been unjustifiable not to treat the host.

Meanwhile, Gu Youyou was also curious about what ailment King Jin had contracted that had suddenly left him in unbearable abdominal pain.

Before entering the study, Gu Youyou heard a man crying out in pain.

Following Lin Qianqing swiftly inside, they saw a group of servants gathered around a soft couch in the study, where King Jin, lying and clutching his stomach, was screaming.

Lin Qianqing hurried forward, worryingly asked, "Prince, what has happened to you?"

"Cousin, Sister Lin, I... I am in unbearable abdominal pain, I fear I might not survive."

Lin Qianqing did not quite like it when King Jin addressed her as ’Princess’ or ’beloved wife,’ and gradually, King Jin had come to understand this. Thus, whenever he wanted to please her, he would address her as ’cousin’ or ’Sister Lin,’ as they had before their marriage.

"Don’t talk for now, my cousin happens to be here, let her take a look at you." Lin Qianqing saw King Jin sweating profusely from pain and quickly pulled out a handkerchief to wipe his sweat.

A perceptive maid brought a small stool for Lin Qianqing to sit on and also brought one for Gu Youyou.

Gu Youyou sat in front of the soft couch and first checked King Jin’s pulse.

From the pulse, King Jin’s pulse was strong, composed and moderate, neither floating nor sinking, neither slow nor rapid, neither fine nor overflowing, rhythmically even. This was a typical even pulse; he was very healthy.

But now, he was showing signs of constipation. His broad forehead bulged with veins, and sweat beads appeared; clearly, he was enduring great pain.

This made Gu Youyou doubt her pulse-reading skills for the first time.

Of course, not all ailments could be diagnosed through pulse-reading alone; Gu Youyou habitually started by taking pulses to have a preliminary understanding before she started asking the patient about their condition.

She withdrew her hand and asked King Jin, "Your Highness, may I ask where exactly it hurts?"

"My... my stomach," King Jin said with difficulty.

Stomach?

Gu Youyou extended her hand to press gently on King Jin’s abdomen.

"Ah, how dare you, scoundrel! What are you doing?" King Jin half propped himself up and burst out yelling at Gu Youyou.

Lin Qianqing hurriedly had King Jin lie back down on the soft couch, saying, "Cousin, she is a doctor, she is naturally treating the Prince. Your Highness, please calm down, your health is important."

"But you must not touch my body, men and women should not have physical contact."

Damn, who wants to touch your belly?

Gu Youyou complained inwardly but still maintained a professional smile on her face, saying, "Please be assured, Your Highness, in my eyes, a patient has no gender. However, if Your Highness really feels that I should not touch your belly, then Your Highness will have to seek another more capable doctor."

Find another capable doctor?

How could that be acceptable?

He wanted Gu Youyou not to cure his illness properly, to make her lose face.

Oh no, it would be best if she botched his treatment, warranting the death sentence for her.