

The Doctor 161

Chapter 161: Sorry

Elder Sun spoke his words with much determination and sounded as if thunder had sounded beside one's ears.

It wasn't only Yue Zhenling who was shocked beyond words; the surrounding crowd was also dumbfounded.

This means...

"Elder Sun, what are you saying?" Yue Zhenling instinctively retorted, "The person alive now is Chu Liuyue, and the one dead is my Mingzhu! How can it be—"

"Back then, both Chu Liuyue and Gu Mingzhu were stuck on the mountain. The black flying python had led many fiends to surround the mountain completely. At the start, the flying python wanted to kill Liuyue, but it was trapped for some unknown reason. Liuyue then took the chance to escape."

"However, when Chu Liuyue was about to escape, Gu Mingzhu suddenly stopped her. Not only did Gu Mingzhu attack Liuyue, but she also hugged Chu Liuyue's leg, not allowing her to leave. Even though I was some distance away, I clearly saw her holding Liuyue back and talking to the python. In spite of this, the python didn't seem to care about her, and it directly swallowed her into the black hole. Since Liuyue was held back by Gu Mingzhu, she could not withstand the black hole's suction force for long and was sucked in as well."

Every word Elder Sun said made Yue Zhenling's face turn a shade paler. In the end, she was as pale as a ghost. It was as if the strength in her body had been sucked away at that moment.

Yue Zhenling abruptly collapsed to the ground.

The people beside her hurriedly went forward and held her up.

"... Impossible... This is impossible! Mingzhu isn't like that! She definitely wouldn't do such a thing!" Yue Zhenling looked fierce as if she was holding up strongly on the surface, but she already felt guilty.

Gu Mingzhu was her daughter, and she knew her personality best. When Gu Mingzhu was home, she repeatedly expressed her displeasure for Chu Liuyue. Also, due to the bet—where Gu Mingzhu lost two fifth-level Xuan formation drawings to Chu Liuyue—she hated Chu Liuyue even more.

If the two of them were trapped together, Gu Mingzhu really would've...

Elder Sun coldly asked, "Madam Gu, do you mean that I'm lying?"

Yue Zhenling could not say a word, and her forehead had broken out into a cold sweat.

How could she possibly dare say that Elder Sun was lying? Besides, even if Yue Zhenling did not believe him, Elder Sun was highly respected. Thus, others would think that he was speaking the truth.

When she received Lu Yao's letter the day before, anger got the better of her, and she wanted to take Chu Liuyue's life.

However, even Elder Sun had stepped up to speak for Chu Liuyue at this point. The verdict was out, so it would be of no use if Yue Zhenling continued to make a commotion.

“I-I...”

When the crowd saw Yue Zhenling’s behavior, they recovered their senses as well.

Yue Zhenling wanted to cause trouble for Chu Liuyue, but she could not continue with her actions since Elder Sun had spoken.

When some people realized that the situation was not right, they silently left.

Chu Liuyue watched them leave but did not stop them. Since she had already guessed the mastermind, there was no point in caring about those minor characters.

Just when Yue Zhenling did not know what to do, hurried footsteps could be heard from afar.

The crowd quickly made way, and a middle-aged man rushed over, looking very anxious.

When he saw Yue Zhenling, his face darkened. “What are you doing here?”

Upon hearing this holler, Yue Zhenling trembled as she turned around to look. “... Master?”

The person had a normal build and a square face—which looked authoritative but not angry. It was the Gu family head—Gu Yunfei.

He harshly glared at Yue Zhenling. “Did you forget everything I told you yesterday?”

Yue Zhenling’s entire body trembled as she lowered her head, not daring to look at him. “I-I... was just thinking of Mingzhu...”

Gu Yunfei was about to explode from anger.

Everything was going well yesterday when Yue Zhenling suddenly ran up to him and told him that Chu Liuyue had definitely done something to Mingzhu, which allowed her to come back alive. Thus, Yue Zhenling demanded that he capture and interrogate Chu Liuyue.

Gu Yunfei only half-believed her words. He had always doted on Gu Mingzhu, and he was devastated when she died. However, he did not lose his mind.

On the one hand, this was just their conjecture; they had no evidence to prove that Chu Liuyue did something to Gu Mingzhu. On the other hand, Chu Ning had a different status from before, and Chu Liuyue was respected in Tian Lu Academy. Therefore, it wouldn’t be easy to teach Chu Liuyue a lesson.

Hence, he told Yue Zhenling not to act rashly and to think about it when they found solid evidence.

Yue Zhenling agreed then. However, Gu Yunfei did not expect that she would still cause a scene. She had even brought people along to storm Tian Lu Academy.

When Gu Yunfei saw Yue Zhenling’s unkempt look, he knew that their Gu family and his reputation were all tarnished. “Shut up!”

Yue Zhenling was frightened and did not say a word as she knew that she was in the wrong.

Gu Yunfei took a deep breath in and hurriedly walked to Elder Sun. His face was very apologetic. "I'm really sorry, Elder Sun. I didn't discipline her properly, which resulted in such a commotion. You've always been very magnanimous, so could you please let this incident pass, in consideration of us just losing our daughter?"

Elder Sun waved his hands. "You don't need to say this; you don't have to apologize to me. This matter tarnished Liuyue's reputation, so you should ask her."

Gu Yunfei was taken aback and surprised by how Elder Sun seemed to take extra care of Chu Liuyue.

At the end of the day, Chu Liuyue was a student at the academy, and this commotion had also ruined Tian Lu Academy's reputation. However, Chu Liuyue was the first thing Elder Sun was concerned about.

Gu Yunfei suppressed his shock and grunted at Yue Zhenling, "Did you hear what Elder Sun said? Come over here and apologize to Liuyue."

"Master, you want me to apologize to her?" Yue Zhenling widened her eyes. I'm the Gu family's Mistress! How can Chu Liuyue compare to me?

Gu Yunfei sneered. "Do you want me to apologize for you?"

Yue Zhenling was shocked and immediately calmed down. Without Mingzhu, I'm about to lose my current position in the Gu family. If I offend the family head...

Yue Zhenling clenched her teeth and walked towards Chu Liuyue as if her feet were packed with iron. She squeezed out a tiny voice from her throat and said, "... Sorry."

Chu Liuyue blinked. "Madam Gu, what did you say? I couldn't hear you properly."

Yue Zhenling was so furious that her body trembled. How can she not hear me? She's purposely making it difficult for me!

Gu Yunfei looked at her warningly.

Yue Zhenling had no choice but to do it. She shut her eyes resentfully and shouted, "Sorry!"

Chapter 162: Punishment

Chu Liuyue revealed a look of pity. "I wouldn't dare. Madam Gu, you're of distinguished status, and I simply can't accept your apology. However, Madam Gu, I think you cried too hard earlier on. Listen, even your voice is hoarse."

Yue Zhenling was so angry that she could not say anything. Is she purposely being sarcastic?

"You..."

"That's enough!" boomed Gu Yunfei as he looked at the subordinates behind him. "Hurry up and send Madam back to rest."

"Yes!" The few of them hurriedly went forward and half-dragged, half-helped Yue Zhenling away.

Since Gu Yunfei was here, Yue Zhenling did not dare to cause a commotion any longer, no matter how angry she was. Hence, she could only leave with the rest.

Gu Yunfei only heaved a sigh of relief when their figures completely disappeared. "Elder Sun, Liuyue, about this..."

"Master Gu, Elder Sun clearly explained it previously that Gu Mingzhu was the one who harmed me and caused her own death in the end. In actual fact, that was not the only time since she did so previously as well. She failed in stealing the golden mane bear cub and was chased by a golden mane bear, yet she purposely dragged my team down with her and caused all of us to be threatened by the bear. If it weren't because we were lucky enough, not only me, even Mu Hongyu and the rest would've died."

Chu Liuyue looked nonchalant, but her words shocked the crowd once again. "I'm of ordinary status, so it doesn't matter if I die. However, Mu Hongyu... is Princess Yong Ping. If she died because of Gu Mingzhu's actions, I'm afraid you'd be in trouble, Master Gu."

Gu Yunfei's remaining words were stuck in his throat. He did not know if Chu Liuyue was speaking the truth. But even her lies would become the truth since Elder Sun was standing on her side.

"Since Gu Mingzhu isn't around anymore, I thought there would be no need to pursue this matter as the victims are prioritized. However, I didn't expect my tolerance to be rewarded with countless scoldings and accusations. Master Gu, even if I'm not an important character, I will definitely not admit what I've not done. If other people want to smear my name, I won't sit by and quietly watch on. Luckily, Elder Sun was here today; if not, my name would have forever been tarnished. Don't you agree?"

Gu Yunfei's back was drenched by cold sweat. "Then, what do you want?"

Chu Liuyue paused and smiled. "Since Madam Gu has already apologized to me in front of everyone, I won't hold this against her. We can just let this matter slide."

The rock in Gu Yunfei's heart was finally lifted. "That's great; that's great..."

"However..." Chu Liuyue went forward and lowered her voice to say, "Master Gu, Madam Gu is devastated from the loss of her beloved daughter, so she was easily manipulated by people. Perhaps someone has fed her some ideas and taken advantage of her. You should... be more alert of such happenings."

Gu Yunfei's heart skipped a beat.

...

The commotion finally ended.

Chu Liuyue then returned to the academy and briefly explained the past two days' happenings to Elder Sun and Bai Chen. However, she used one sentence to summarize how she escaped from the black hole. She merely said that she was unconscious and that she found herself lying in the woods when she woke up, not knowing what had happened.

Elder Sun did not really believe her in his heart, but he did not pursue the matter and just reminded her to recover properly when he saw that Chu Liuyue did not want to say much about it. He then let her go.

Before Chu Liuyue reached her lodgings, she met Mu Hongyu and Cen Hu—who were looking for her. The two of them were extremely elated when they saw Chu Liuyue standing right before their eyes.

“Liuyue, it really is you! It’s you!” Mu Hongyu hugged her as she cried and smiled.

Cen Hu stood at the side and scratched his head; his smile was about to extend to the back of his head.

“Haha! I told you Liuyue wouldn’t go back on her words! We agreed to meet outside the mountains, and it did come true!”

When she saw the duo’s frail appearances, Chu Liuyue knew that they had a difficult time the past few days. Her heart felt sour, and she patted Mu Hongyu’s shoulders. “I always make good on my words, but you guys look so sickly.”

“Do we?” Mu Hongyu wiped her tears. As she spoke, Mu Hongyu could not help but burst into laughter. “I heard Madam Gu came to cause trouble for you. How dare they have the cheek to do that?”

Chu Liuyue shook her head. “The matter has been settled. I think Madam Gu won’t be having an easy time in the future.”

Cen Hu curiously asked, “How do you know? After all, she’s the Gu family’s Mistress!”

Chu Liuyue curled her lips. “It’s precisely because she’s the Gu family’s Mistress that the incident’s consequences are even more severe.”

...

The Chu family residence.

When they heard the news their subordinates brought back, Lu Yao could not recover her senses for a long time. She dazedly sat on her chair and muttered in disbelief, “How can this be? Why can’t this affect her?”

Not only did the incident not affect Chu Liuyue, but it had even helped prove Chu Liuyue’s innocence.

With Elder Sun’s vouching for her, nobody would dare to spread such rumors in the entire Imperial City.

Chu Liuyue cleanly cleared her name up without spending much effort! What kind of backing does she have, which allows her to survive such ordeals time and time again?

“Look at the good deed you’ve done! Everyone now knows that Elder Sun is backing up Chu Liuyue.” Chu Yan was suffering from serious injuries and temporarily could not get off the bed, so his temper became even worse, and he easily scolded people.

Lu Yao was very frustrated. “I didn’t know this would happen!”

“It’s all because you don’t have a brain!”

As the two of them quarreled, hurried footsteps could be heard from outside.

Lu Yao looked up and saw a bunch of people rushing into the yard with ill intentions. “What are you doing? Is this a place that you can randomly barge into? Get out!”

The person at the front sneered and weirdly said, “Third Madam, we came here on First Elder’s orders to bring you to the living room.”

Lu Yao’s heart skipped a beat. “Why is First Elder looking for me?”

“Heh, don’t you know what you did? Now, even the Gu family’s members are waiting for you. Kindly make your way there.”

Lu Yao’s heart thoroughly sank when she heard the two words ‘Gu family.’

Chapter 163: Poisoned

Mu Hongyu was worried that Chu Liuyue had been bullied by the Gu family’s Mistress, but when she saw how calm Chu Liuyue looked, Mu Hongyu’s mind was at ease.

Then again, since Chu Liuyue had survived the black flying python, was there anything that she could not do? A mere Gu family was nothing.

“It’s fine! Enough of that! We have to celebrate your return this time,” said Mu Hongyu with bright eyes.

“Liuyue, you previously said that we could go to Phoenix Restaurant! I haven’t been there in a long time!”

Chu Liuyue knocked on her forehead gently. “We can go with everyone when you’re feeling better. However, you’d better stay here obediently for now!”

Mu Hongyu’s smile collapsed, and she raised two fingers. “I swear I won’t drink! Okay? We’ll just eat!”

Chu Liuyue raised her brows. “Is that so?”

Mu Hongyu nodded. “Really! Come on, Liuyue! Agree to it, please!”

Chu Liuyue pretended to think for a while before she agreed. “Okay!”

Since they have been worried sick about me for the last couple of days, they deserve to relax.

“What about tonight? Cen Hu, call Liao Zhongshu and Gu Mingfeng as well.”

Cen Hu scratched his head awkwardly. “This... Liao Zhongshu is still not well. He’s been sick in bed. I’m afraid he won’t be able to make it.”

Chu Liuyue was a little surprised. “Why are Liao Zhongshu’s injuries so severe? I remember that his injuries were rather superficial. He should be feeling better, so why can’t he leave his bed?”

Both Mu Hongyu and Cen Hu’s expressions were stiff as they spoke of the matter. “Yeah. The teachers of the academy have checked on him. They’ve used medication as well, but his condition has been relapsing for some reason. He has not shown any signs of recovery.”

Cen Hu continued, “Also, Gu Mingfeng has not returned to the academy in the last couple of days. I heard... I heard that he was chased out of the Gu family...”

Chu Liuyue froze. “Why would the Gu family do this out of the blue?”

Mu Hongyu pouted. “Isn’t it because of Gu Mingzhu? Gu Mingfeng has been looked down upon in the Gu family, and they pushed all the blame for her death to him this time!”

Cen Hu clenched his fists. “He hardly returned there before anyway. It hardly counts as his home. It’s better that he left!”

Chu Liuyue shook her head. "That's different."

Gu Mingfeng being looked down on is one thing, but being chased out is another. No matter what things were like before, he carried the Gu family name. Hence, people were a little more careful, but now...

Chu Liuyue pondered for a moment. "I think we can't have dinner today then. Cen Hu, go and look for Gu Mingfeng now. Let us know if you have any news. Hongyu and I will go over to see Liao Zhongshu."

The two agreed when they heard Chu Liuyue's words. After all, they had been through life and death together; they could not just leave him in the lurch.

Mu Hongyu's expression became more serious. "I know where Liao Zhongshu lives. Come with me."

...

When Chu Liuyue arrived at the warrior student residence area with Mu Hongyu, they attracted a lot of attention.

The news of Chu Liuyue's safe return had spread like wildfire the day before. Hearing that she had returned, many were rather curious.

Chu Liuyue's presence in the warrior residence area naturally drew quite a bit of attention.

Chu Liuyue ignored all of that and followed Mu Hongyu to a particular building.

Mu Hongyu walked to the door and knocked on it. "Ji Yurong, are you there?"

The door was opened by a slender and tall young man. He recognized Mu Hongyu and gave her a warm smile. "Mu Hongyu, are you here to see Zhongshu?"

She nodded. "Yeah! Liuyue and I are here to visit him!"

The young man paused when he heard Chu Liuyue's name. It was only then that he noticed that another person was next to Mu Hongyu. A strange expression flashed across his face, but it was fleeting. "I see that you all are here! Hurry on in! Zhongshu just woke up, so you're just in time to see him!"

Chu Liuyue narrowed her eyes.

Mu Hongyu did not sense that anything was amiss. She pulled Chu Liuyue towards the second floor. "We'll head up first then; it's been hard on you for the last couple of days!"

Ji Yurong smiled. "We're all classmates, so it's what I should do. You guys chat; I have something to attend to, so I'll head out first."

With that, he tidied things up and left, closing the door behind him.

Chu Liuyue turned and glanced at him. She wondered if she was imagining things, but Ji Yurong seemed like he was running away...

"Does Ji Yurong live here too?" Chu Liuyue asked as they ascended the stairs.

"Yeah! He lives here with Zhongshu! This is the warrior residence area. Everyone here shares lodgings. Our amenities are not as nice as the Xuan Masters' lodgings, which allows individual courtyards."

Zhongshu talks about Ji Yurong often, but Ji Yurong doesn't really talk to us because he's a little introverted."

Mu Hongyu spoke as she walked. "But he's quite nice. He has been the one taking care of Zhongshu for the last few days."

Chu Liuyue nodded but did not ask any further.

As they spoke, the pair arrived at the second-floor bedroom.

Chu Liuyue was stunned when she entered the room and saw Liao Zhongshu, who was lying in bed.

Over the past few days, he had lost a significant amount of weight. His cheeks were sunken in, and his eyes were dark and lifeless. He looked rather haggard.

Liao Zhongshu broke out into a wan smile when he saw the pair and barely managed to raise his hand. "You're here? Have a seat."

Mu Hongyu frowned. "Why do you look worse than before? Have you been taking your medicine?"

His voice weak, Liao Zhongshu said, "My body has failed me, but it's okay. Liuyue... it's great that you are back."

Even though he was sick, he had heard about Chu Liuyue's matter. He was really happy to see her standing before his eyes well and alive.

Chu Liuyue stepped forward and took his wrist. "What did the teachers say about your body?"

Liao Zhongshu moved his lips and coughed. "Cough cough... There's not much of a problem... It's just that my body is too weak, and I can't absorb the medicine well. Hence, I have not been recovering... The teachers said that they'd observe me for another two days... Cough..."

Chu Liuyue knitted her brows slightly.

Mu Hongyu asked curiously. "Liuyue, is something wrong?"

Liuyue suddenly pulled Liao Zhongshu's blanket away!

"Hey... Liuyue!" Mu Hongyu was stunned and tried to stop her, but Chu Liuyue was too fast.

Liao Zhongshu did not expect this either. He was embarrassed and tried to pull up the blanket.

However, Chu Liuyue was not bothered as she intently stared at his left leg.

Liao Zhongshu's injured leg was swollen beyond recognition. It was double the size of the other and stretched his pants to its seams.

Mu Hongyu cried out in surprise. "Wh-what happened?!"

Liao Zhongshu's face was grim. "... It's been like this since I returned. The teachers don't know why either..."

Chu Liuyue pondered for a moment before saying, "You've been poisoned!"

Chapter 164: Heavenly Pharmacy

“Poisoned?!” Mu Hongyu was stunned. She tossed her embarrassment aside and stepped forward. “Are you sure? Do you know what poison it is?”

Chu Liuyue covered Liao Zhongshu up with the blanket again. She did not answer Mu Hongyu’s question. Instead, she looked towards Liao Zhongshu. “Has your leg been itchy? Also, does it bleed when you scratch it?”

“Indeed... How did you know?” Liao Zhongshu nodded dazedly. Chu Liuyue just took a glance at my leg when covered by my pants, yet her guesses are spot on!

“It doesn’t matter how I know. More importantly, the poison had spread across your body. It will enter your organs within three days. By then, there really would be nothing I can do.”

Liao Zhongshu became anxious immediately. “S-so serious? But I haven’t even left the room since I got back! How did this happen? Besides, the teachers didn’t say anything either...”

“This type of poison is called ‘Red Blood Gu.’ It’s a rare poison. Once you are poisoned by it, the wounds on your body will fester and be unable to heal. What’s worse is that blood will gather around the wound. It will be itchy and hard to bear. It will rip open, even if you touch it gently. In the end, you will die from chapped skin and blood loss!”

Liao Zhongshu and Mu Hongyu’s faces paled more and more as Chu Liuyue spoke. By the time she was done, the two were pale as ghosts. Especially Liao Zhongshu—who was already pale to begin with; he could barely breathe at the end of her explanation.

“Th-this... I don’t know how... Could it be I...”

He did not finish his sentence, but Chu Liuyue and Mu Hongyu knew what he was worried about. The academy’s teachers did not even recognize such a formidable poison, not to mention treating it!

He probably only had a few days left to live his life!

Mu Hongyu looked at Chu Liuyue worriedly. “Liuyue, is it really that bad? D-do you have a solution? Since you can recognize it, you must have a solution, right?”

Liao Zhongshu looked at her hopefully.

Chu Liuyue pondered for a moment. “I know this poison, but it requires hundreds of herbs to create the antidote. Most of them are rather precious, so it would be tough to find them on such short notice...”

If this were her last life, treating such a poison would not be a problem. However, with her current conditions, it was rather tough! Some things could not even be found in Country Yao Chen.

The light in Liao Zhongshu’s eyes dimmed. He stayed silent for a while before finally saying, “I guess... I can only await my doom...” He laughed bitterly.

Mu Hongyu looked at Chu Liuyue and Liao Zhongshu, her heart aching. She had always been close to Liao Zhongshu, and he did a lot to ensure their survival this time around.

Their relationship was much stronger than that of regular classmates. But she had to watch him die now?

The room sank into silence.

Chu Liuyue asked, "How did you contract the poison?"

Confusion was plastered all over Liao Zhongshu's face. "I-I don't know either. I was fine before I went to Wan Ling Mountain. The wound just didn't seem to heal ever since I returned..."

"So, you contracted it in the academy?"

"I think so... I haven't even left the room since I returned." Liao Zhongshu frowned as he spoke, thinking hard. "However, I don't know where things went wrong. Since I returned, I've listened to the teachers' advice, rested well, and took my medicine. I haven't touched anything else."

Chu Liuyue folded her arms across her chest and suddenly asked, "How does Ji Yurong usually treat you?"

"Him? He's really nice to me. He has been taking care of me for the last few days... You suspect that it's him?" Liao Zhongshu finally understood what Chu Liuyue meant, but he immediately denied the possibility. "That can't be! We've been staying here together since we both got into the academy. We've also gotten along well. Even though we're not like family, we're really close! He doesn't have a reason to target me."

Mu Hongyu could not help but cut in. "Yeah! Liuyue, I know Ji Yurong too. He's quite nice, so I don't think he's capable of doing something this malicious."

"You'll never really know what a person is thinking. If it isn't him, did you poison yourself?" Chu Liuyue was unaffected by the pair's words. If he were innocent, why did he seem so nervous when he saw me?

Liao Zhongshu and Mu Hongyu did not have an answer since Chu Liuyue's words made sense...

"Then, what do we know? We can't just interrogate him, right? Even if he did do it, he'd never admit to it!" Mu Hongyu rubbed her temples. She could feel her head throbbing.

Chu Liuyue looked around and saw an empty bowl next to Liao Zhongshu. She could still smell the faint herbal scent. "Is this your bowl for medicine? Why is it so clean?"

Liao Zhongshu nodded. "Every time I finish drinking my medicine, Yurong will wash the bowl clean immediately. He said that he was worried the strong herbal scent would prevent me from getting proper rest. Hence, he'll always wash the bowl once I'm done..."

Liao Zhongshu's voice faded away as he began to look at the bowl strangely. "Could it really be him?"

Initially, he had been really grateful toward Ji Yurong for taking care of him. However, things seemed a little odd now.

I am patient and tolerant, so what is wrong with the smell of medicinal herbs? I'm not even bothered by it, so why was Ji Yurong so particular about it? I even told Ji Yurong that it did not matter several times, but the latter insisted on washing it.

Mu Hongyu jumped up, ran toward the bowl, and examined it carefully. "Liuyue, are you saying that there's something wrong with the medicine? It's a pity that the bowl has been scrubbed clean, and there's no evidence left. How about we examine it the next time Zhongshu takes his medicine?"

Chu Liuyue pulled her lips into a faint smile and shook her head. "He won't take action any longer. Zhongshu has also consumed sufficient poison. Ji Yurong just has to wait a few days. Besides..." Besides, Ji Yurong should have sensed my wariness. He won't give me a chance to get to the bottom of it.

Mu Hongyu was in despair. "What should we do then?"

Liao Zhongshu forced a smile onto his face. "Hongyu, don't think about this. Even if we find something, I think it'll be too late. My body..."

Chu Liuyue shook her head disapprovingly with a small smile. "The more it's like this, the more we have to investigate. There is only hope of getting the antidote if we can find the person who poisoned you. Zhongshu, you should rest well. Hongyu and I will investigate."

...

After reminding Liao Zhongshu to rest well, Chu Liuyue left with Mu Hongyu.

After they left, Mu Hongyu turned back to take another glance and worriedly said, "Liuyue, how are we going to investigate? Without the antidote, Zhongshu won't be able to hang on for much longer. Will we be in time?"

Chu Liuyue glanced in a certain direction. "The most important thing now is to stop the spread of the poison in his body."

Mu Hongyu paused. "Didn't you say that the antidote is tough to..."

"It's tough to remove the poison entirely, but it's not very difficult to suppress it." As Chu Liuyue spoke, she began walking away.

"Hey... where are you going?"

"Heavenly Pharmacy," replied Chu Liuyue without looking back.

Chapter 165: Making Things Difficult

Mu Hongyu was stunned, and she ran to catch up to Chu Liuyue. "Heavenly Pharmacy? Isn't that where the academy stores all sorts of herbs? You're going to... get herbs?"

Chu Liuyue nodded. As the top academy in Country Yao Chen, Tian Lu Academy should have a number of treasures in its storage. I'm going to go take a look there first.

"I'll go there myself. You should go check and see if Ji Yurong has been acting strangely recently or if he has been meeting someone more often. He's of ordinary birth, so the poison has to come from somewhere."

Mu Hongyu was a little hesitant. "Of course, I can do that. However, the Heavenly Pharmacy is heavenly doctor territory. I don't think it's going to be that easy for you to go get herbs..."

Mu Hongyu was being as subtle as she could.

In reality, most people could not set foot in the Heavenly Pharmacy apart from the heavenly doctors. It was not that they were not allowed, but the rules around it were too strict. Students who wanted to take herbs from the Heavenly Pharmacy had to apply for it. Also, their request would only be approved if they had a good enough reason.

But heavenly doctors were easily able to get anything they wanted because they could say it was for refining. Unfortunately, it was not that simple for warriors and Xuan masters.

Chu Liuyue raised her brows. "Are warriors and Xuan Masters not qualified to go there?"

"That's not it... We only go there when we're hurt occasionally..." Mu Hongyu wrinkled her nose. "You don't know it, but the heavenly doctors are all really arrogant! They're all so hard to get along with!"

Chu Liuyue laughed. The talent requirement for heavenly doctors was rather high, so they usually were like that. "Even though I'm not cultivating there, I did pass the heavenly doctor examination. Hence, I don't think they'll make things difficult for me."

Mu Hongyu pouted. "That might not be the case."

Chu Liuyue patted Mu Hongyu's shoulders. "Don't worry."

...

The two split up, and Chu Liuyue headed for the back mountain.

The Heavenly Pharmacy was built on one of the academy's steepest mountains. The other students did not go there if they did not have any business there.

The further she went up the mountain, the quieter it was.

After about ten minutes, Chu Liuyue finally saw the Heavenly Pharmacy's signboard.

The building was five stories tall. It did not seem that much different from other buildings, but she felt an invisible ripple when she got closer.

There was a strong barrier erected outside of the Heavenly Pharmacy.

Young men stood outside the bronze doors as if standing guard.

"Who are you? What are you here for?" asked one of them coldly when they saw Chu Liuyue.

Chu Liuyue said, "I'm Chu Liuyue, here to collect herbs."

Surprise flashed across their faces when they heard her name. They knew her name very well. After all, she was the prodigy who placed first and second in the warrior assessment and Xuan Master assessment, respectively. Not to mention the fact that Chu Liuyue had made these accomplishments on the same day she passed all three of the academy's entrance examinations.

Even though they did not pay much attention to the affairs of warriors and Xuan Masters, this was not the first time they had heard her name. However, they did not expect her to show up there.

“You’re Chu Liuyue?” The young man scrutinized her.

Chu Liuyue nodded.

“You must send an application to collect herbs from the Heavenly Pharmacy. Fill in the form first!” The young man flung his sleeve as he spoke, and something flew towards Chu Liuyue.

She caught it and raised her eyebrows.

It was a plank of wood and a brush. The wood was blackish and palm-sized. It was rather rough to the touch.

“Write down whatever you want, and we’ll send the application in for review. If it’s approved, we’ll hand you the items.” The young man spoke nonchalantly in a strictly business-like manner.

Chu Liuyue looked at the object in her hand and laughed. It seems like Mu Hongyu was right about them. The heavenly doctors really are arrogant and like to make things difficult for others.

The plank was not ordinary; it was made of a Black Sage Vine’s trunk. The material was strong and hard. A knife might not even be able to leave marks on it.

As for writing...

The brush was dry, without a drop of ink. How was she to write?

She shook the items in her hand. “Write it on here?”

The two young men nodded in unison as they prepared to see Chu Liuyue embarrass herself.

Chu Liuyue did not say anything. She picked up the brush and began to write on the plank.

The brush did not leave a single mark on the plank.

Chu Liuyue paused and frowned, a little surprised.

The two young men looked at each other, mocking expressions on their faces. What genius? How is she a prodigy that passed all three assessments? Is this all she is capable of?

Chu Liuyue looked up and smiled apologetically. “I’m sorry, but there seems to be a problem with this. Could you give me another one?”

“Another one? Each person only gets one, why...”

One of them immediately rejected her, but his friend immediately cut him off. “On account of this being your first time, you can have another one.”

With that, he flung another plank at Chu Liuyue.

“Hey, Mo Liang, according to the rules, we cannot...” said Cui Yao disapprovingly, but he saw Mo Liang make a face at him.

Cui Yao paused for a moment before he understood that Mo Liang was playing a prank on her! If the replacement still does not work, won’t it be extra embarrassing?

Since Chu Liuyue had entered the academy, she had received countless praises. She had also been in the limelight the entire time. Now was the perfect time to take her down a notch!

So many people have praised her as a genius, but she does not seem so intelligent now!

The two exchanged glances and kept quiet as they watched Chu Liuyue, waiting for her to embarrass herself.

As expected, Chu Liuyue did not manage to leave a trace on the plank. She paused as if a little embarrassed and confused.

Cui Yao and Mo Liang could barely contain their smiles.

“Chu Liuyue, it seems like this one doesn’t work either. Would you like another one?” Mo Liang asked teasingly.

Chu Liuyue glanced at him before hesitantly saying, “Thank you for the trouble.”

“It’s no trouble! We’re all schoolmates, so it’s only natural that we help one another out.” Mo Liang suppressed his smile and threw another plank at Chu Liuyue.

Chu Liuyue now had three planks.

“Hey Chu Liuyue, if it still doesn’t work, how about a few more? When you’re done trying, a good one is bound to appear, right? Hahaha!” Cui Yao burst out laughing.

Even a fool would be able to tell that something was off now. However, to their surprise, Chu Liuyue was not embarrassed. Instead, she shook her head with a smile.

“It’s fine. These planks are more than enough.” With that, she walked over to the side and picked up an amygdalin leaf.

Cui Yao’s laughter was cut short when he saw this. A sense of uneasiness also rose in Mo Liang’s heart.

Chu Liuyue used the amygdalin leaf to wipe the plank before picking up the brush again.

As the brush flowed across the plank, white words appeared clearly.

Chapter 166: Approved

Amygdalin leaves and Black Sage Vine did not go together. Hence, it would leave a layer on the plank after wiping.

Even though the brush did not have any ink, it was made of snow wolf fur. Thus, it could easily leave marks on the plank. It was a rather simple method, but it would stump anyone who did not have an understanding of it.

The pair wanted to make things difficult for Chu Liuyue so that she would embarrass herself.

They were gloating when Chu Liuyue said that the item was not working, thinking that they had successfully played a trick on her. However, they could no longer laugh when they saw the words on the plank.

The smile on Cui Yao's face stiffened as his eyes filled with surprise, making him look rather odd.

Mo Liang was not any better. He realized what had happened almost instantly. Chu Liuyue did it on purpose! She knew exactly what to do but pretended not to know.

Both of us thought we were pranking Chu Liuyue, but she had everything under her control all along! She probably mocked us inwardly when we were mocking her!

Chu Liuyue finished writing a line of text before she looked up at the pair with a smile. "It seems like it's not broken. See, it writes pretty well."

Cui Yao's expression was stiff as if he had just swallowed a fly!

Mo Liang suppressed his anger as he pointed at Chu Liuyue. "You knew how the plank worked all along! Were you playing with us?!"

Chu Liuyue blinked. "Yeah."

She said it so plainly and nonchalantly that the pair did not know how to respond. This Chu Liuyue is too arrogant!

"You! Nonsense! Chu Liuyue, do you know where this is? How dare you lie to us!" said Mo Liang during his fit of anger and shame.

Chu Liuyue curled her lips into a half-smile. "Weren't the two of you making this difficult for me first? I'm just here to get some herbs, yet you're making things so difficult for me. I'm just giving the both of you a taste of your own medicine. Is that too much?"

Chu Liuyue's reply silenced the two.

Yes! We were the ones who started it first, but this is the custom! Other than heavenly doctors, we do this to everyone else who comes here. Chu Liuyue is not an exception!

However... they did not expect things to turn out this way with Chu Liuyue. Not only did their prank fail, but they even embarrassed themselves!

Chu Liuyue looked down and continued writing. "Senior Brothers, please hold on. I still have quite a number of things to write."

The pair immediately looked over when they heard her, only to see that her brush strokes were smooth and continuous. It was like she did not need to think at all.

In a short time, the plank was already half-full of words!

Chu Liuyue also did not seem like she was going to stop writing anytime soon!

It was only then that the pair realized that things had spiraled out of their control.

Chu Liuyue clearly came prepared! The most important thing is that she has three planks in her hand!

Mo Liang swallowed stiffly. "Chu Liuyue, each person can only fill one application. Return the remaining Black Sage Vine planks to us now!"

Chu Liuyue did not even look up. "But Senior Brother, you gave them to me. It doesn't make sense if I can't write on them, no?"

"I said stop writing!" Cold sweat dripped down from Mo Liang's forehead. If the teachers know that I gave Chu Liuyue three planks in one go, I will get into big trouble!

Chu Liuyue had already filled up the first plank. She beamed at the pair as she held up the remaining two planks.

"Thank you for your generosity, Senior Brothers." With that, she continued writing on the two planks!

What a joke! She needed numerous herbs to suppress the poison in Liao Zhongshu's body in the first place. Plus, the two of them were asking for it, so how could she not teach them a lesson?

As they watched Chu Liuyue, Mo Liang's heart sank.

Finally, when all three planks were filled up, Chu Liuyue handed them over. "Senior Brothers, these are the herbs that I'd like to pick up this time. Please send in my applications for the teachers to review."

Mo Liang's entire body was stiff.

Cui Yao was frustrated by the smile on Chu Liuyue's face, and he grabbed the planks from her. "You're biting off more than you can chew! We shall see if the teacher approves of your applications!"

With that, he opened the door and headed inside.

Bang!

The door was closed shut.

Chu Liuyue shrugged, took a few steps back, and waited patiently.

Mo Liang only returned to his senses when he heard the door slam shut. That's right! Cui Yao is right! It doesn't matter how much she wrote. If the teacher doesn't approve of her applications, there's no use!

Chu Liuyue is a heavenly doctor, and this is her first time here. Hence, the teacher might approve of her application if she were just asking for one or two common herbs. However, she is too greedy! The application definitely will not be approved!

At this thought, his heart fell back into place.

...

Time seemed to pass incredibly slowly as they waited.

Mo Liang looked towards the door from time to time, but Cui Yao did not come out. He got more anxious as time passed. That's not right... The teacher should have immediately rejected the applications the instant he saw them. Cui Yao should also be out by now. Why is it still so quiet?

He turned to glance at Chu Liuyue, only to find that she was standing there casually as if she was not worried at all.

This frustrated him, and he knitted his brows tightly together.

The door finally opened after another 15 minutes, and Cui Yao walked out.

There was nothing in his hands other than the cleaned Black Sage Vine planks! He did not have any herbs in his hands!

It must not have gone through! Mo Liang was elated and hurried forward! "What took you so long? Was Teacher too busy, so he took a while to reject it?"

Cui Yao's expression was a little strange. He handed the planks to Mo Liang and walked over to his side without saying anything.

Mo Liang felt that something was amiss. "What's wrong?"

Cui Yao looked at Chu Liuyue with a complex gaze and spat out the words stiffly. "... Her application was approved."

"How could this be possible?" Mo Liang jumped up instantly, his face full of disbelief.

Cui Yao rubbed his face. "Mr. Zuo Rong said that they were too many things and that some are in rather obscure places. Hence, it will take some time. He told us to wait for a while and that he would personally bring the things out later."

Chapter 167: There are Better People Out There

Mo Liang thought he was hallucinating, but Cui Yao did not look like he was kidding. Mo Liang was dazed for a while before he muttered. "How can that be... how can this be?"

Cui Yao did not want to say anything because he was also very shocked! He wanted to know why as well!

When he handed the application over, Mr. Zuo Rong looked at it with a frown for a while. However, his frown turned into an excited smile as time passed! After that, he set everything he was working on aside and started to prepare the herbs Chu Liuyue wanted himself.

Cui Yao felt uncomfortable when he recalled the smile on Mr. Zuo Rong's face when he left.

Mr. Zuo Rong has always been strict. Sometimes, he doesn't even approve of heavenly doctor students' applications. However, Chu Liuyue requested three planks' worth of herbs! On what basis?!

"Thank you, Senior Brother. I'll wait here then," said Chu Liuyue with a smile.

Cui Yao looked away. Out of sight, out of mind.

Mo Liang had many questions, but he chose to keep quiet when he saw how Cui Yao's expression did not look right.

The place sank into an awkward silence.

...

The door finally opened again after a few minutes.

A plump man walked out briskly. His eyes lit up when he saw Chu Liuyue at the door. "You're Chu Liuyue?"

Chu Liuyue nodded. "Greetings, Mr. Zuo Rong."

Zuo Rong laughed and waved the gold bag in his hands.

"Don't stand on ceremony! Everything you want is here!"

Chu Liuyue was a little surprised. "Cosmic Bag?"

"You know about this thing?" Zuo Rong did not expect Chu Liuyue to know about Cosmic Bags. However, then again, she was the Chu family's Big Missy previously. Hence, it was not surprising either.

"Yes, this is a Cosmic Bag! You requested too many things, so I placed all of them in here for convenience! You can just return it to me after you head back and take everything out!"

Zuo Rong's magnanimous words surprised the pair standing next to him.

Mr. Zuo Rong is actually this generous towards Chu Liuyue? Cosmic Bags are invaluable treasures. Not even the academy's teachers can afford one. Mr. Zuo Rong only received the Cosmic Bag when he saved a person of great importance a few years ago. He drew a lot of envy because of it!

We usually can't even catch a glimpse of the Cosmic Bag, but now Mr. Zuo Rong is loaning it to Chu Liuyue?!

Chu Liuyue was surprised too. It wasn't considered a rare item when she was the Tianling Dynasty's Crown Princess in her previous life. However, this was Country Yao Chen, and this item was probably rather rare here.

This is Mr. Zuo Rong's first time meeting me, yet he is being so kind. The smile on Chu Liuyue's face deepened as she stepped forward and took the Cosmic Bag from Zuo Rong with both hands.

"Thank you, Mr. Zuo Rong! I'll return it as soon as I can!"

There was no reason not to take Zuo Rong up on his offer!

"No rush! But I have a few questions that I would like to ask you. You have to answer me honestly!"

When she saw his expression, Chu Liuyue knew what he wanted to ask. Hence, she nodded and said, "Please ask. I'll tell you everything I know."

Zuo Rong chuckled. "Okay! Tell me, did you write that prescription yourself?"

"Yes."

Zuo Rong's eyes lit up. "Why did you write this prescription? Is this medicine for someone?"

Chu Liuyue did not keep it from him. "Yes, this is for a friend."

"Is that person Liao Zhongshu?" Zuo Rong asked urgently.

Chu Liuyue smiled slightly. "Yes, it's him."

"I knew it!" Zuo Rong slapped his thighs. He had checked on Liao Zhongshu's condition before. He had an inkling that Liao Zhongshu was poisoned, but he did not know what type of poison it was. Even discussing Liao Zhongshu's situation with other teachers did not yield much result.

However, when Zuo Rong saw Chu Liuyue's prescription, he suddenly realized that a few herbs seemed able to treat Liao Zhongshu's condition.

This was also why he wanted to prepare the herbs himself. He wanted to meet Chu Liuyue and get to the bottom of things!

"You... You know about his condition?" Zuo Rong asked subtly.

Chu Liuyue's eyes flickered a little. "I've seen a similar case before."

Zuo Rong took a deep breath. "So... this prescription..."

"I learned of it by chance, and I also don't remember it very clearly. However, I thought of trying it since we don't have any other way now."

Disappointment appeared on Zuo Rong's face the instant Chu Liuyue spoke. "I see. I thought..."

He had thought that Chu Liuyue had come up with the prescription herself. However, he knew that it was a ludicrous thought after thinking deeply.

Even the academy's teachers did not know what to do. Chu Liuyue was just a student, so how could she have come up with something like this? Even the director might not be capable of this!

His excitement slowly faded, but he was still heartened by the fact that Chu Liuyue had a solution to Liao Zhongshu's problem. "You should head back first. I'll head over with the other teachers later."

Chu Liuyue nodded. "I'll take my leave first then."

With that, she left with the Cosmic Bag.

Zuo Rong turned and looked at the pair in front of him. "If she wants to take any herbs in the future, give her whatever she wants. Don't let there be a repeat of today, understand?"

Cui Yao and Mo Liang were still a little confused, but they had a feeling that Chu Liuyue had talent as a heavenly doctor. Zuo Rong also seemed to value Chu Liuyue, so they dared not say anything and could only agree.

"Yes, of course! We'll keep this in mind!"

When Zuo Rong saw the indignance on the pair's faces, he shook his head to himself. "Don't think that you're better than the others just because you're heavenly doctors. There are people out there who are better than you!"

Mo Liang could not hold it in any longer. "Mr. Zuo Rong, do you mean that... she's more talented than us?"

Zuo Rong looked at the two of them pitifully. "She's keeping a low profile, yet you think she's incapable. Don't say such childish things in the future. People will only laugh at you, understand?"

Chapter 168: Form a Family

Chu Liuyue brought the herbs back to her lodgings.

After taking out the herbs from the Cosmic Bag and packing them nicely, Chu Liuyue planned to return to Heavenly Pharmacy and return the bag to Mr. Zuo Rong. However, she suddenly felt movements outside.

She walked to the door and saw Mr. Zuo Rong bringing the other teachers to her house once she opened it.

When Mr. Zuo Rong saw her, he immediately smiled and said, "Liuyue, these are the teachers who have previously diagnosed Liao Zhongshu. I brought them over to see you."

The other teachers quietly sized Chu Liuyue up.

Zuo Rong had said that Chu Liuyue knew what poison Liao Zhongshu was affected by and that she even had a way to control the poison in his body temporarily. All of them were shocked and curious about it, so they followed Zuo Rong over.

Actually, they had more suspicions in their hearts. After all, Chu Liuyue did not even cultivate at the heavenly doctor's side.

Someone said that Chu Liuyue had limited abilities as a heavenly doctor when she entered the academy. So why does Zuo Rong make it sound like she's very capable?

Chu Liuyue was well aware that they did not come to see her, but how she prepared those herbs. She did not expose them. She greeted the teachers and invited them in instead.

"Mr. Zuo Rong, you came at the right time. I was planning to return the Cosmic Bag to you after taking out the herbs," said Chu Liuyue as she returned the Cosmic Bag to Zuo Rong.

Zuo Rong happily accepted it. "You act really fast. If you ever need more herbs, feel free to make a request."

Chu Liuyue pressed her lips against each other and smiled. "Thank you, Mr. Zuo Rong."

The duo's conversation surprised the other teachers.

Zuo Rong usually treasures this Cosmic Bag very much and never even lends it to us for a while. Yet, he is very generous to Chu Liuyue.

"Is all of this the herbs you took from the Heavenly Pharmacy?" asked another teacher as he pointed towards the stacks of jade boxes.

"Isn't this too much?"

Chu Liuyue calmly said, "Mr. Xuan Cang, don't worry. I know that these herbs are very hard to find, so I'll use them wisely. I also won't waste a single bit."

Xuan Cang still looked at her suspiciously. "Use them wisely? How are you going to handle all of those herbs alone? Aren't your words too much of an exaggeration?"

Chu Liuyue did not explain herself.

“That’s enough. Xuan Cang, you don’t even know what poison Liao Zhongshu is affected by, yet you’re talking so much here.” Zuo Rong’s single statement made Xuan Cang swallow his remaining words.

Xuan Cang grunted and said, “Fine! I’ll see what you have to say.”

The others immediately listened intently.

Chu Liuyue’s heart tingled slightly. “Actually, I’m not too familiar with this type of poison and only coincidentally saw it before...”

She obviously couldn’t expose her true abilities. Hence, she briefly explained the poison using vague words.

Zuo Rong and the other teachers wanted to ask her about the poison in detail, but they found out that Chu Liuyue seemed like she didn’t have much understanding of it. Thus, they gave up on their ideas.

Xuan Cang kept quiet for a while before knitting his brows and saying, “According to what you say, you seem like you don’t have confidence in this formula, right? Aren’t you treating Liao Zhongshu’s life as a joke then? What if something happens...”

“What else can happen? Others might not know, but don’t you clearly know Liao Zhongshu’s current situation? If his treatment is delayed for another day or two, he will die. What do you mean by ‘treating his life as a joke’?” interrupted Zuo Rong in frustration as he waved at Chu Liuyue. “This fellow is very stubborn! Liuyue, just ignore him and do whatever you want.”

Xuan Cang unhappily kept quiet.

Chu Liuyue sighed in her heart. She originally wanted to make the medicine for Liao Zhongshu quietly, but she did not expect Zuo Rong to care about this matter so much.

They clearly wanted to watch how she was going to make the medicine.

Chu Liuyue quickly decided to ignore them and started to prepare the herbs one by one.

...

At the Imperial Study in the Royal Palace.

Rong Xiu stood outside the door and quietly waited in his black cloak. His muscular and fit body looked just like a sturdy tree. Though he simply stood there, he made it seem like his surroundings had lost its color.

Quite a few palace maids stared at him with eyes filled with envy from afar.

“Prince Li is really handsome! I think nobody in the Imperial City can hold a candle to his charismatic attitude.”

“Right? Once Prince Li showed up at the Crown Prince’s banquet, many girls became attracted to him. It’s a pity that Prince Li has a weak body and doesn’t walk around the palace much. It’s so hard for us to meet him even once!”

"I wonder which elegant lady will have the honor of marrying Prince Li..."

"Sigh, it's a pity that Prince Li is weak, and he doesn't hold much actual power. He's just a leisure prince in name, so it might not be that good either."

"So what if that is the case? It'll be one's lifetime of blessings to be able to see that face every day. How can they expect so much? The Crown Prince used to be pretty authoritative, but now..."

"Sh! How dare you say that? Do you not want your life anymore?"

Bang!

The sound of something shattering came from the study.

The palace maids in the dark were frightened, and they immediately dispersed like birds in the sky.

Rong Xiu looked up slightly, but his deep eyes were not affected at all.

A person staggered out of the study with a pale look. "Your Majesty, calm down! Your Majesty, calm down! I'll take my leave!"

This unkempt person was the Chu family's First Elder—Chu Xiao. He wiped away the cold sweat on his head, looking very weary. Originally, he came to meet the Emperor to speak in the Crown Prince's favor. However, he did not expect to anger the Emperor once he mentioned the Crown Prince; he was even directly kicked out of the palace.

He then realized that the Crown Prince had thoroughly offended His Majesty.

I'm really stupid for coming here so suddenly! Chu Xiao heavily sighed. Too many things have happened lately, and even my brain is clouded now.

Desperate times called for desperate measures. However, this made Chu Xiao's and the Crown Prince's situations even more perilous.

Eunuch Min followed Chu Xiao out and glanced at him. "Officer Chu Xiao, you shouldn't come to the palace for this period of time."

Chu Xiao was hesitant with his words but could only agree in the end. "Thank you, Eunuch Min."

Eunuch Min despised Chu Xiao in his heart. Chu Xiao is old and foolish. Chu Ning is highly favored at this point, and he is very unhappy with the Chu family. However, Chu Xiao just had to choose to come to the palace and speak in the Crown Prince's favor at this time. This is akin to dragging the entire Chu family down.

Eunuch Min was too lazy to care about Chu Xiao. Instead, he looked up at Rong Xiu, who was standing nearby.

Eunuch Min immediately put on an enthusiastic smile on his face as he walked towards Rong Xiu. "Prince Li, you're finally here! His Majesty keeps talking about you these days."

Rong Xiu leisurely smiled and lightly said, "My body hasn't been feeling very well the past few days. But, I came to see Father once I felt better."

“Hurry up and...”

The Emperor was fuming at this moment. If it were anyone else, Eunuch Min would not dare to invite the person into the Imperial Study, but Prince Li was different.

When Chu Xiao heard this, he could not help but look up and stare at Prince Li, who rarely showed his face.

Rong Xiu calmly looked at Chu Xiao and nodded. Then, he extended his long legs and walked towards the Imperial Study.

Chu Xiao could not help but follow him, yet he was quickly chased away by Eunuch Min.

Once Rong Xiu entered the Imperial Study, he saw the shattered cup pieces all over the floor.

Emperor Jiawen looked furious.

Rong Xiu smiled slightly and asked, “Father, what made you so angry?”

“It’s not worth mentioning!” When Emperor Jiawen saw Rong Xiu, his facial expression warmed up. “Are you feeling better these days?”

“Thank you for your concern, Father. I’ve been feeling much better, and I can walk around outside now.”

Emperor Jiawen heaved a sigh of relief but still knitted his brows. “This can’t continue... When I have the chance, I’ll definitely find a capable heavenly doctor to check on you.”

Rong Xiu laughed, looking nonchalant as he said, “My body has always been like this, and I’m already used to it. Father, you don’t have to worry about me too much.”

“How can I not worry? You’re my... You lost your mother at a young age, and you have lived in Mingyue Tianshan—which is far away from the Imperial City—since you were a small kid. It’s been so many years, and I really owe you a lot.”

Rong Xiu looked down slightly. “Father, you’re being too hard on yourself. I understand your kind intentions.”

Emperor Jiawen looked at Rong Xiu for quite some time before shaking his head and sighing. “You have always been the most mature one, unlike that useless... Forget it; you don’t like these things, so I shall not talk to you about them. I asked you to come here to ask you something. You’ve been back in the Imperial City for quite some time already; have you seen any girls that you like?”

Rong Xiu was taken aback. “Father, you’re...”

Emperor Jiawen burst into laughter. “You’re already a prince, yet you don’t have anyone to serve you. Building a family and having a successful career naturally starts with having a family. After that, you can work hard on your career. I have already prepared the portraits of many suitable elegant women. Come and choose one of them, and we’ll settle on a date for your marriage.”

Chapter 169: Willing

I did not expect Father to call me over because of this. Rong Xiu kept quiet for a moment before saying, "Father, my other brothers haven't married yet, so it seems a little early for me to think about this..."

Emperor Jiawen coldly grunted. "All those brothers of yours cause trouble for me! It's not worth mentioning them. I haven't been able to take care of you properly all these years, so I have to arrange a suitable marriage for you."

Emperor Jiawen raised his chin. "I know that you haven't been back for long, and you don't really go out of the house. Hence, you're unfamiliar with these women. The portraits are there, and you can go and choose from them. If you fancy anyone, you can just tell me about it."

Emperor Jiawen waved his hand and looked like he would immediately grant Rong Xiu the marriage, no matter which woman he picked.

This arrangement caused Rong Xiu to be caught between laughter and tears. Without even looking at the portraits, he honestly said, "Father, my body has been plagued with illnesses since I was young. Marrying someone will just be causing trouble for them. Let's talk about this matter another day."

"What are you talking about? Whoever can marry you is very blessed! Who will dare say that you're trouble? Just pick whoever you like!" When Emperor Jiawen heard what Rong Xiu said, his face darkened.

Coming to think about it, Rong Xiu stayed beside the Emperor the shortest. Hence, logically speaking, both of them should not have a deep relationship. However, nobody knew that he doted on this child the most in his heart.

"The Si family's Fourth Missy has decent character and talent, but she's born from a concubine and doesn't really fit your status. However, if you like her, you can marry her as your second consort. The Lu family is a family of merchants, and the girls in their family all have some power. Hence, I don't like them. Even though the Yang family's Big Missy has average talent, her appearance and elegance are one of the best. You can consider her. Oh yeah, Zhenbei Duke's daughter..."

Emperor Jiawen mentioned almost all the girls from outstanding families in the Imperial City.

To an average person, all of these women were of distinguished status, and all of them were excellent. However, to Emperor Jiawen, all of the girls had their own flaws.

This was not his fault. Just based on Rong Xiu's appearance alone, he would make most of the women lose their color. Rong Xiu was also the only other son that had a prince title. Once he got married, honor would come their way.

Hence, it was understandable that Emperor Jiawen was picky.

As for Rong Xiu's body... It did not pose too much of a problem to Emperor Jiawen.

Upon seeing Emperor Jiawen's excited expression, Rong Xiu's brows rose slightly. Then, he clenched his fists and placed them over his mouth as he coughed twice.

Emperor Jiawen paused and looked at him in worry. "Why did you start coughing again? Have you not recovered?"

Rong Xiu shook his head, and his lips were slightly pale. He smiled and said, "I'm fine, Father. You don't have to worry—cough cough—"

Upon seeing Rong Xiu's current condition, Emperor Jiawen was no longer in the mood to continue with the previous topic. "Forget it. Since you're reluctant, we'll stop talking about this for now. However, you must take this matter to heart. When you have the time, go out and walk around more and see if there's anyone you like. I can't make the decision for you, so you need to choose for yourself."

Rong Xiu slightly bent his body. "Thank you, Father, for your kind understanding."

Emperor Jiawen shook his head and sighed. "I wonder what kind of woman you like..."

What kind of woman do I like? A beautiful face flashed across Rong Xiu's mind. Even though she looks childish, she is very experienced. Her eyes are especially dazzling, just like the stars in the night sky.

His gaze moved, and he quickly masked his emotions. "I still have a request to make."

"Oh? After you returned to the Imperial City, you've been recuperating in your residence. This is the first time you've made a request. How rare! Tell me about it."

Rong Xiu paused for a while before saying, "I have been living outside for many years, and I didn't have the chance to pay my respects to my mother properly. This time, I would like to execute my duties as her son."

Emperor Jiawen was taken aback when he heard Rong Xiu talking about his mother. Then, he rested against his chair, sighed deeply, and closed his eyes. "... She has indeed left for many years..."

Emperor Jiawen seemed to have aged a lot at that moment, and his tone was filled with unconcealable regret and nostalgia. "It's good that you still think about your mother. However, you should know that... your mother's tomb isn't in the palace."

Rong Xiu looked calm. "I know. I remember that Mother once stayed in Tian Lu Academy for a long time, right?"

"That's right. Back then... she refused to stay in the palace, so she moved to Tian Lu Academy instead. Your mother had ties with Tian Lu Academy's director and was very capable. Hence, she was considered as half a teacher at the academy. She stayed there for two years and didn't even come back once until she passed on." Emperor Jiawen spoke slowly as if he was narrating a story that had nothing to do with himself.

But his helpless expression of nostalgia and trembling hands proved that his inner mind was not as peaceful.

Even though so many years had passed, that person and those things were still clearly etched in his heart, and he could not remove them.

Rong Xiu quietly looked at his father with a calm and composed gaze. It was as if he did not care about Emperor Jiawen's reminiscent look. However, he quickly hid his nonchalant expression.

"So, I was planning on going to Tian Lu Academy to take a look at the place Mother had stayed at before. May I know if I have the permission to do so?"

Emperor Jiawen opened his eyes. The young man in front of him had unknowingly grown up. He stood there with his back straight, and the sunlight shone on his jade-like face, making him look fresh.

Rong Xiu was very similar to his mother. That light, distant, and nonchalant aura especially made it look like both of them were made from the same mold. This was why Emperor Jiawen was especially patient and doting whenever he saw Rong Xiu's face.

"I won't disagree, but you need to ask the academy's director about this. Ordinary people can't enter Tian Lu Academy, but your mother had a different status. Perhaps the director will make an exception for you."

Rong Xiu's lips curved up slightly. "I've already written a letter to ask the director. He has agreed."

Emperor Jiawen was dazed and said, "Then... you can just go ahead!"

Chapter 170: Disguise

Tian Lu Academy.

Chu Liuyue started preparing the ingredients while Zuo Rong and the other teachers watched her. First, she took out a white palm-sized shell and started grinding it with the pestle. After some time, small white powder started to trickle down.

The shell was very thick and very troublesome to grind. Even after grinding for 15 minutes, Chu Liuyue still had more than half of the shell left to grind.

Xuan Cang kept tolerating and enduring it. However, when he saw Chu Liuyue's clumsy actions, he finally said, "Chu Liuyue, do you know what you're doing? You're not supposed to handle the White Xiang Bei like this!"

Chu Liuyue raised her head in shock. "Really? However, the books said that White Xiang Bei has to be ground to powder to maximize its effects."

Xuan Cang rubbed his glabella since he had a headache. "That's true, but how long are you going to take to grind this White Xiang Bei completely and thoroughly at your current pace? Besides, this is only the first piece! There's still another one in the box. Have you thought about how much time you're going to waste?"

Chu Liuyue seemed embarrassed as she humbly asked, "Then... what do you think I should do?"

Xuan Cang shook his head in disappointment and said to Zuo Rong, "Look at how clumsy she is! How does she look smart at all? She can't even handle White Xiang Bei, let alone the other herbs that come after it! I think there's no need for us to continue watching. I think there's an 80% chance that her formula won't even work! I'll think of a way to handle Liao Zhongshu's injury myself!"

Xuan Cang then stood up and left, disregarding Zuo Rong's intervention.

The remaining few teachers looked at each other awkwardly.

“Zuo Rong, um... Xuan Cang’s words make sense. Chu Liuyue herself said that she did not come up with the formula herself and that she accidentally got it from someone else. Besides, she can’t even remember the formula properly, so most of it is unclear. Nobody knows if this formula is effective!”

“I heard that she passed the heavenly doctor examination rather forcefully when she entered the academy, so I think she doesn’t have much talent. Zuo Rong, I think you’re thinking too much.”

“I had better go back and think of a plan with Xuan Cang. Everyone, I’ll take my leave first.”

“Wait for me! I still have something to do—”

Xuan Cang’s departure directly took away two teachers, leaving Zuo Rong and one other teacher.

The atmosphere was a little awkward.

Chu Liuyue apologetically asked, “Mr. Zuo Rong, did I do something wrong?”

Zuo Rong coughed. “Nothing much; they just have their own things to do. Ignore them and focus on refining your medicine!”

Chu Liuyue wanted to say something, but she stopped herself and continued to grind the White Xiang Bei. After a long time, she finally ground the first shell to powder.

She wiped her sweat and took out the second White Xiang Bei to grind.

Finally, the other teacher could not watch on and left after apologizing to Zuo Rong.

Zuo Rong looked at Chu Liuyue in confusion. Did I think wrongly of her? Chu Liuyue’s talent doesn’t seem to be as outstanding as I expected. However, if that really is the case... how did she directly solve the problem that Cui Yao and Mo Liang set for her?

Zuo Rong stared straight at Chu Liuyue, and a thought flashed across his mind after he pondered for some time. Could it be that Chu Liuyue is deliberately hiding her capabilities? Why is that so? Many people dream of having heavenly doctor talent. People with such potential always show off their skills desperately, yet Chu Liuyue... This is really weird.

Zuo Rong thought for a while, but he didn’t want to expose Chu Liuyue purposely. Hence, he found a reason to leave.

The room was finally empty apart from Chu Liuyue—who lightly exhaled. Chu Liuyue did not want those people to infer anything, so she purposely acted as if she was not good at it. It did not matter if they disliked her; the most important thing was for the medicine to be ready.

Zuo Rong seemed to notice something, but he did not pursue the matter. After closing the doors and windows, Chu Liuyue looked at the pile of herbs again. I don’t have much time left now...

...

After asking people in the academy and confirming that Gu Mingfeng did not come to school for the past two days, Cen Hu purposely asked the teacher for leave and went out to find Gu Mingfeng himself.

Of course, he wouldn't be able to find Gu Mingfeng in such a short time just by himself. However, Cen Hu luckily had a bunch of brothers in the Imperial City. Hence, he immediately gained many helping hands once he spoke up.

He finally found Gu Mingfeng in an old yard in the evening after running around for more than half a day. However, Cen Hu was greatly shocked when he saw Gu Mingfeng.

Gu Mingfeng's face and body were filled with injuries!

"What happened? Who beat you up?" Cen Hu's anger started to rise. "We'll take revenge for you!"

Gu Mingfeng avoided him as if he did not want anyone else to see his unkempt appearance. However, when he heard Cen Hu say that, Gu Mingfeng froze for a while before finally showing his injuries openly.

Gu Mingfeng's lips twitched. "Thank you, but you're not his match. Forget it."

Cen Hu widened his eyes. "What do you mean by 'forget it'? Even if he's not my match, there is still Liuyue and Hongyu! They told me to find you, and they definitely will not let this matter slide if they see you in this state!"

Gu Mingfeng's heart tingled. "... They told you to come?"

"Yeah! You know that Liuyue has come back safely, right? We originally wanted to celebrate at Phoenix Restaurant today, but both you and Zhongshu can't make it. Liuyue and Hongyu went to take care of Zhongshu, and they asked me to look for you as they did so.

Something seemed to be stuck in Gu Mingfeng's throat, and he took a long while to find his voice again. "It was the Gu family's members."

Cen Hu suddenly raised his voice and asked, "The Gu family? Why did they do this to you? Aren't you already—"

Gu Mingfeng did not say a word. It was precisely because he was chased out of the Gu family that quite a few people came to cause trouble for him.

Many people in the Gu family disliked him in recent years. If they could make Gu Mingfeng suffer, they could even get into Gu Yunfei's good books. Hence, who would not cause trouble for him?

Gu Mingfeng wanted to return to the academy after his injuries had healed, but he did not expect Cen Hu to look for him directly.

Cen Hu patted Gu Mingfeng's shoulders and seriously said, "Don't worry. We've been through life and death together, and we definitely will not ignore you. Let's go back first. Liuyue and Hongyu are still waiting for us!"

Gu Mingfeng could not explain what he felt. After much hesitation, he finally nodded. "Okay."