

E2 - Chilly Apothecary

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SIGN The Apothecary Diaries

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SIGN This story is a work of fiction. The names of all of the characters, organizations, and so on are imaginary. It also bears no connection to any specific real-life events.

SIGN Episode 2: Chilly Apothecary

[01:41] Soldier A

Hey!

[01:44] Soldier A

It's poison!

[01:47] Soldier B

Damn you! Who's behind this?!

[01:51] Officer

Wait.

[01:53] Officer

Tend to the soldiers first.

[02:04] Jinshi

Poison?

[02:05] Gaoshun

The food was cooked by the villagers.

[02:08] Gaoshun

The village leader has been put into custody for aiding the barbarians.

[02:12] Gaoshun

Please advise.

[02:14] Jinshi

Understood. Give me a moment.

[02:17] Gaoshun

As you wish.

[02:19] Gaoshun

By the way...

[02:20] Gaoshun

I heard you hired a new lady-in-waiting to serve Concubine Gyokuyou.

[02:25] Jinshi

Yes. Concubine Gyokuyou

has only four women serving her.

[02:29] Jinshi

It's too few compared to Concubine Lihua,

[02:31] Jinshi

who also high-ranking and has over ten.

[02:35] Jinshi

It hurts her dignity as
a high-ranking concubine.

[02:38] Gaoshun

Yes. However, Concubine Gyokuyou
is not just bright and gentle,

[02:43] Gaoshun

but also wise and cautious.

[02:46] Jinshi

She would never hire
someone of unknown origin.

[02:50] Jinshi

Being constantly wary of
everyone around them

[02:55] Jinshi

is the only way an emperor's
concubine can survive.

[02:57] Gaoshun

And who is this new lady-in-waiting?

[03:01] Jinshi

Gaoshun, I found just the right pawn.

[03:05] Jinshi

It's that freckled servant girl.

[03:10] Jinshi

Her knowledge of medicine
is too valuable to pass up.

[03:13] Gaoshun

I see. But if she were to abuse
that knowledge...

[03:18] Jinshi

I'll make sure she can't do that.

[03:21] Jinshi

It should be easy.

[03:23] Jinshi

*I suppose I should seduce
her a little, just in case.*

[03:29] Xiaolan

It's so cool that you get to serve
a high-ranking concubine.

[03:32] Maomao

Ugh, I really didn't want to.

[03:40] Jinshi

Apothecary. Are you ready to move?

[03:43] Maomao

Yes, I'm on my way to the Jade Pavilion soon.

[03:46] Maomao

Did you need something?

[03:48] Jinshi

No, nothing.

[03:50] Maomao

Huh?

[03:52] Maomao

Why's he here, then? Nothing better to do?

[03:58] Jinshi

Be sure to serve Concubine Gyokuyou well.

[04:06] Maomao

Excuse me.

[04:09] Xiaolan

Good luck, Maomao!

[04:14] Maomao

Ew, gross...

[04:20] Hongniang

Are you Maomao?

[04:22] Maomao

Oh, yes.

[04:24] Hongniang

I am Hongniang,
head lady-in-waiting for Lady Gyokuyou.

[04:28] Hongniang

For starters, I'll show you around
the Jade Pavilion. Follow me.

[04:32] Maomao

Yes.

[04:37] Gyokuyou

Welcome to the Jade Pavilion.
I've been waiting for you, Maomao.

[04:44] Gyokuyou

Looks like Xiaoling is happy to see you, too.

[04:47] Gyokuyou

We're glad to have you around.

[04:52] Maomao

Thank you.

[04:55] Hongniang

This is the parlor, where we bring guests.

[04:59] Maomao

So big...

[05:00] Hongniang

This is the kitchen. You should be able
to do some simple cooking here.

[05:04] Maomao

Wow.

[05:06] Hongniang

This is the living room.

[05:07] Hongniang

Here are the other ladies-in-waiting.

Let me introduce them to you.

[05:11] Hongniang

Everyone, gather up.

[05:12] Ladies-in-waiting

Yes!

[05:14] Yinghua

Nice to meet you, I'm Yinghua. Ask me anything!

[05:19] Guiyuan

I am Guiyuan. Nice to meet you.

[05:22] Ailan

I am Ailan. Very pleased to meet you.

[05:27] Maomao

I'm Maomao. Looking forward
to working with you.

[05:31] Hongniang

At the Jade Pavilion,
we don't hire any serving girls.

[05:35] Hongniang

So, we do all the work around here.

[05:38] Yinghua

It's the least we can do to make sure
Lady Gyokuyou lives comfortably.

[05:43] Maomao

Then I'll also—

[05:44] Yinghua

You go ahead and rest in your room.

[05:46] Maomao

Huh?

[05:47] Guiyuan

Take it easy.

[05:49] Ailan

You have a special task coming up.

[05:52] Maomao

Special task?

[05:54] Hongniang

Maomao, I'll show you to your room.

[05:57] Maomao

Um, sure.

[06:01] Yinghua

Did you see her left arm?

[06:04] Yinghua

She's hiding it with those bandages,
but there are scars under them, right?

[06:08] Guiyuan

She must have been abused
by her parents back home,

[06:10] Guiyuan

and sold off to the rear palace...

[06:13] Ailan

On top of that, there's that terrible job...

[06:17] Three Ladies-in-waiting

That poor, unfortunate girl!

[06:23] Hongniang

Wait here until you're summoned, all right?

[06:25] Maomao

Hey, um...

[06:32] Maomao

I've gotten quite the promotion.

[06:37] Maomao

The Jade Pavilion's always
been run by a select elite.

[06:40] Maomao

So of course a newcomer
wouldn't be totally welcome.

[06:44] Maomao

But they all looked so...

[06:48] Maomao

Sympathetic? Why?

[06:53] Jinshi

Tasting for poison.

[06:55] Jinshi

That's your job, apothecary.

[06:59] Maomao

Poison! Tasting for poison!

[07:04] Maomao

Oops.

[07:06] Jinshi

Food cooked for the concubine changes hands
a few times before being brought here.

[07:15] Jinshi

It's possible for it to be
poisoned during that process.

[07:20] Jinshi

In fact, when Concubine Gyokuyou
became pregnant,

[07:23] Jinshi

her food was poisoned at least twice.

[07:26] Jinshi

The taster back then received nerve damage and still can't move her hands or feet.

[07:33] Maomao

I see. That's why the others were sympathetic to me.

[07:38] Hongniang

So... Here you go.

[07:42] Maomao

These bowls...

[07:45] Maomao

No suspicious colors. Or scents.

[07:52] Maomao

No numbness.

[07:56] Maomao

I can't detect any poison here.

[08:00] Maomao

Back when I lived by the brothels, I ran a lot of experiments on my arm.

[08:07] (Flashback) Luomen

Mad scientist.

[08:10] Maomao

I've gradually trained my body against poisons, so many of them have no effect on me.

[08:15] Maomao

To be honest, detecting poison isn't suited for me.

[08:19] Maomao

But in a way, I'm lucky to get this job.

[08:25] Jinshi

She's laughing...

[08:27] Maomao

I think you should switch to silver plates. Those react to poisons.

[08:33] Hongniang

It's like Master Jinshi said. We used ceramics on purpose to test you.

[08:41] Maomao

That was his idea!

[08:45] Hongniang

Your knowledge applies to both poisons and medicines, then.

[08:48] Maomao

I used to work as an apothecary.

[08:51] Hongniang

If you'd mentioned that you're literate, you would have gotten paid more.

[08:56] Maomao

I was kidnapped and brought here,

[08:58] Maomao

and I'm incensed that part of my pay gets sent to the kidnappers.

[09:05] Hongniang

So, you'd rather take less pay than give your kidnappers drinking money, hmm?

[09:20] Hongniang

Goodness, this was quite expensive.

[09:24] Hongniang

You couldn't afford it with your lady-in-waiting salary.

[09:27] Hongniang

How will you send money to your family?

[09:30] Hongniang

In fact, we might need to charge them.

[09:34] Maomao

Ah, I'm so sorry.

[09:38] Maomao

Please take it out of the money to my family.

[09:40] Maomao

If that's not enough, from my savings, too.

[09:43] Hongniang

Yes, I'll arrange the paperwork.

[09:46] Hongniang

By the way, here's hazard pay for your food tasting services.

[09:52] Maomao

Almost equal to my regular salary...

[09:55] Maomao

Since the kidnappers don't get a cut of this, it all goes to me.

[10:00] Maomao

Thank you.

[10:03] Maomao

She knows how to motivate her workers.

[10:17] Yinghua

Don't worry about it!

[10:19] Guiyuan

Rest for now.

[10:20] Ailan

We've always been fully staffed.

[10:22] Maomao

I'm bored!

[10:25] Maomao

I only get called on as taster for

two meals and the mid-day tea time.

[10:30] Maomao

Now that I have my own room,

[10:33] Maomao

if there was a venomous snake or something, I could experiment...

[10:36] Hongniang

Maomao.

[10:39] Maomao

Did you need me, Lady Gyokuyou?

[10:41] Gyokuyou

He does, actually.

[10:45] Maomao

Ugh.

[10:47] Jinshi

Why won't this work on her?

[10:54] Maomao

How may I serve you today?

[10:56] Jinshi

I received these from a certain military officer. Can you taste them?

[11:01] Maomao

Baozi buns...

[11:07] Maomao

It has an aphrodisiac in it.

[11:10] Jinshi

You can tell without eating it?

[11:11] Maomao

It's not harmful. Please feel free to enjoy them.

[11:15] Jinshi

Given who I received these from, I can't do that.

[11:19] Maomao

Perhaps that person might visit you tonight.

[11:24] Jinshi

Hmm. So you can tell by the smell alone?

[11:27] Maomao

Did this guy try to make me eat one knowing they have an aphrodisiac in them?!

[11:38] Jinshi

I had one more question for you.

[11:42] Maomao

Yes, what is it?

[11:44] Jinshi

A squad of soldiers on a mission to attack

some barbarians was poisoned the other day.

[11:49] Maomao

Poisoned?

[11:50] Jinshi

Yes. Several fell ill after a meal.

[11:53] Jinshi

They reported nausea, difficulty breathing, and other ailments.

[11:57] Maomao

Nausea and difficulty breathing...

[12:01] Jinshi

The meal was prepared in a nearby village.

[12:04] Jinshi

They arrested the village leader for assisting the barbarians,

[12:07] Jinshi

but an officer diffused the situation,

[12:09] Jinshi

and has put the decision on hold.

[12:12] Maomao

It would be natural to assume the villagers poisoned the soldiers, but...

[12:20] Maomao

Master Jinshi, where were they eating?

[12:23] Jinshi

They were at camp, so they likely ate outside.

[12:25] Maomao

Did the villagers provide the plates and chopsticks?

[12:28] Jinshi

No, the soldiers should have provided their own.

[12:33] Jinshi

Did you notice something?

[12:36] Maomao

This is just my opinion. Let me share something.

[12:40] Maomao

This flower is a rhododendron.

[12:44] Gyokuyou

Does it taste good?

[12:45] Maomao

No, eating it causes nausea and difficulty breathing.

[12:49] Jinshi

Hey!

[12:51] Maomao

As you see, even the rear palace
has plants with poison in them.

[12:55] Maomao

This one has poison in the leaves, but some
have poison in the branches or roots.

[12:59] Maomao

Some wood can even emit poison when burned.

[13:04] Gyokuyou

When burned...?

[13:09] Jinshi

I see.

[13:11] Maomao

It's fortunate the bright
officer was there.

[13:14] Maomao

We could have lost a whole village.

[13:17] Jinshi

Yes.

[13:19] Maomao

If that's all, I'll take my leave.

[13:21] Jinshi

No, wait.

[13:23] Maomao

Is there more?

[13:27] Jinshi

Can you make an aphrodisiac?

[13:31] Maomao

Make? You mean...

[13:34] Maomao

Making drugs?!

[13:42] Maomao

Given time, the proper ingredients,
and the right tools,

[13:45] Maomao

I could make something like that.

[13:49] Mid-Rank Concubine

Master Jinshi, where are you headed?

[13:54] Jinshi

I'm returning to my office. May I help you?

[13:58] Mid-Rank Concubine

I was wondering if you'd have
tea with me in my room...

[14:01] Jinshi

Unfortunately, I have much work
to attend to. Please excuse me.

[14:10] Gaoshun

The servants must not be aware

[14:13] Gaoshun

that Master Jinshi serves as a test
of their loyalty to the emperor.

[14:18] Jinshi

Just because the emperor does not visit her,

[14:20] Jinshi

she shouldn't try and lure
other men to her room.

[14:22] Jinshi

What an indiscretion.

[14:24] Gaoshun

Indeed.

[14:25] Jinshi

A concubine cannot simply be
beautiful or well-educated.

[14:30] Jinshi

They must be loyal to
the emperor, and be chaste.

[14:34] Gaoshun

But to place you in the rear palace
and use your beauty as a test...

[14:41] Gaoshun

Our emperor can be quite severe at times.

[14:43] Jinshi

We all use whatever is available to us. But...

[14:46] Jinshi

Not only does she feel no lust
for me, but that look...

[14:50] Maomao

Glare...

[14:53] Jinshi

*I've never been so harshly
looked down on in my life.*

[14:57] Gaoshun

Well then, I will take my leave.

[15:05] (Flashback) Maomao

Perhaps that person
might visit you tonight.

[15:07] Maomao

Tonight... Tonight...

[15:13] Maomao

I'm leaving now.

[15:15] Hongniang

Good luck.

[15:17] Maomao

Yes!

[15:24] Maomao

Pardon me.

[15:26] Maomao

The quack doctor, and...

[15:29] Gaoshun

Miss Maomao. Let me reintroduce myself.

[15:32] Gaoshun

I am Gaoshun.

[15:34] Gaoshun

I'm Master Jinshi's assistant.

[15:37] Gaoshun

Pleased to make your acquaintance.

[15:39] Maomao

Hello.

[15:41] Maomao

It can't be easy assisting that guy.

[15:44] Guen

What is this servant girl
doing in my territory?

[15:50] Gaoshun

This way, please.

[15:54] Gaoshun

I have been told you may use
anything in this room.

[16:09] Jinshi

Is that some sort of cursed dance?

[16:15] Maomao

*What a luxury, being able
to use paper so freely.*

[16:19] Maomao

And also, I need...

[16:22] Gaoshun

Over there?

[16:25] Maomao

*He's really quick to notice things.
Compared to his master...*

[16:30] Maomao

*If you're not going to do
anything, just go away.*

[16:33] Gaoshun

Here you are.

[16:35] Maomao

Thank you.

[16:38] Maomao

That's not enough...

[16:41] Jinshi

What is this?

[16:42] Maomao

It's cacao.

[16:43] Jinshi

If you need more, we'll simply find more.

[16:46] Maomao

But it's from the West,
and the far southern region, too.

[16:50] Jinshi

I'm sure there's more in
the trading goods storage.

[17:01] Maomao

Milk, butter, sugar, honey,
and powdered cacao.

[17:07] Maomao

That should be enough.

[17:09] Yinghua

All expensive ingredients.

[17:11] Ailan

I wonder what she's making?

[17:13] Guiyuan

A snack, maybe?

[17:15] Hongniang

What are you all doing?

[17:17] Hongniang

Get back to work!

[17:19] Three Ladies-in-waiting

We're sorry!

[17:22] Hongniang

Goodness.

[17:24] Maomao

Now to actually make the aphrodisiac!

[17:31] Maomao

I had a taste of cacao just once in the past.

[17:33] (Flashback) Meimei

This is called "chocolate." Say "ah," Maomao.

[17:39] (Flashback) Meimei

Maomao?!

[17:43] Maomao

*Perhaps a malicious customer wanted to get
a popular courtesan's attention.*

[17:47] Maomao

*Unfortunately for him, he got
banned by the shrewd old lady.*

[17:52] Maomao

Looks good.

[17:53] Maomao

There.

[17:57] Maomao

Now I just cool it and wait for it to harden.

[18:00] Maomao

I have a bit left over. Oh, I know.

[18:05] Maomao

This probably doesn't need to be cooled.

[18:10] Maomao

I guess I should clean up now.

[18:17] Maomao

Wait, medicinal herbs?!

[18:19] Maomao

There too?! And over there!

[18:24] Maomao

Oops, I got a little carried away.

[18:27] Maomao

Sorry for the delay!

[18:41] Jinshi

At least we know it works.

[18:44] Hongniang

So, what's going on?!

[18:46] Maomao

Well, it is what it is...

[18:49] Maomao

It's fine, they didn't go all the way—Ow!

[18:54] Gyokuyou

So, this is the aphrodisiac?

[18:56] Maomao

No, this is.

[19:00] Jinshi

Then what are the other ones?

[19:02] Maomao

A midnight snack for myself.

[19:05] Maomao

If you're used to alcohol
and other stimulants,

[19:07] Maomao

it won't have that much of an effect.

[19:10] Jinshi

Oh, so it won't be a problem if I ate it?

[19:14] Gaoshun & Hongniang

Please don't do that!

[19:17] Jinshi

Haha, just joking.

[19:19] Maomao

*What a reprehensible joke to make
in front of the emperor's concubine.*

[19:23] Maomao

*But if he approached someone with
an impassioned blush on that face...*

[19:30] Maomao

*It'd immediately captivate
any person, male or female.*

[19:33] Maomao

He does have a great face, after all.

[19:36] Maomao

It's quite strong, so please
limit it to one piece at a time.

[19:40] Maomao

Too many could excessively increase
blood flow and cause nosebleeds.

[19:44] Gyokuyou

Maybe you can make some for the emperor,
to avoid things getting too dull.

[19:48] Maomao

It should be around three times
more potent than the usual tonic.

[19:53] Gyokuyou

Three times? Does she mean duration...?

[19:56] Maomao

Let's pretend I didn't hear that.

[19:59] Maomao

Also, please only use it when you are
alone with the person in mind.

[19:59] Gyokuyou

Three times... Three times...

[20:04] Jinshi

I see.

[20:06] Gyokuyou

Well, I'll take my leave now.

[20:12] Hongniang

So she can make drugs?

[20:16] Gyokuyou

How reliable.

[20:22] Maomao

It's finally over.

[20:29] Jinshi

Good work.

[20:39] Jinshi

Thank you.

[20:46] Maomao

I see.

[20:48] Maomao

I hope there aren't any victims.

SIGN Next Time

[22:45] Narrator

Next time: "The Unsettling

Matter of the Spirit."

SIGN Episode 3: The Unsettling Matter of the Spirit

Revision #1

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