

# E21 - How to Buy Out a Contract

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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.

**[01:35] Military Officer A**

Come on, Lihaku. Focus!

**[01:38] Lihaku**

Oh, yeah. Sorry.

**SIGN** Episode 21: How to Buy Out a Contract

**[01:42] Guen**

Cleaning?!

**[01:44] Guen**

You don't have to do that,  
you can ask someone else to—

**[01:48] Maomao**

If we asked someone else to do it, and they  
swapped out the medicine, what would we do?

**[01:54] Maomao**

There was a doctor at the court pharmacy

**[01:58] Maomao**

that got a pay cut as punishment  
for not managing the drugs properly.

**[02:05] Maomao**

We have to clean this up. It'll be  
too late once the humidity goes up.

**[02:10] Guen**

Yes...

**[02:21] Guen**

Finally, a good time for a break.

**[02:23] Guen**

Sweets are always great when you're tired!

**[02:26] Maomao**

*This guy must be from a rich family.*

**[02:30] Maomao**

*Sweet potatoes aren't in season,*

**[02:34] Maomao**

*and he uses paper like a plate,  
like that's completely normal...*

**[02:36] Maomao**

Hmm?

**[02:38] Maomao**

That's some good paper.

**[02:40] Guen**

Oh, can you tell?

**[02:42] Guen**

My family back home  
leads our village in making it.

**[02:46] Guen**

We're the palace purveyor.

**[02:49] Guen**

Impressive, huh?

**[02:50] Maomao**

It is indeed impressive.

**[02:52] Maomao**

*I wonder if I can get  
an acquaintance discount.*

**[02:56] Guen**

We used to make limitless profits  
as we produced more.

**[03:03] Guen**

We exported it to other countries, too.

**[03:05] Guen**

My family bought me  
any snacks I wanted as a child.

**[03:11] Guen**

But when the previous emperor's  
mother banned the cutting of trees,

**[03:16] Guen**

things started to go downhill for us.

**[03:18] Guen**

We started using alternate  
materials, which ruined trade.

**[03:23] Guen**

Our family took the blame for that.

**[03:26] Guen**

Since we had no money left,  
my older sister went to the rear palace.

**[03:30] Guen**

When my younger sister said she'd go too,  
I volunteered to come instead.

**[03:36] Guen**

Becoming a eunuch was less popular

and was worth more money.

**[03:40] Guen**

I never got to see my older sister, though.

**[03:44] Maomao**

*Hmm. He's been through more than I imagined.*

**[03:58] Maomao**

Excuse me. I'm here to continue cleaning.

**[04:01] Guen**

Oh, hey, little lady.

**[04:06] Guen**

My little sister sent me a letter.

**[04:07] Guen**

Our family might not be  
the palace purveyor anymore.

**[04:11] Maomao**

*True, this isn't palace quality.*

**[04:16] Maomao**

*Losing purveyor status would be  
a big deal in terms of sales.*

**[04:21] Guen**

I wonder why?

**[04:23] Guen**

They just told me they came up  
with a way to produce more paper.

**[04:27] Maomao**

Produce more? Did they cut some corners?

**[04:32] Guen**

Of course not! They started  
using oxen for hard labor.

**[04:38] Guen**

They didn't change  
the ingredients nor the process...

**[04:42] Maomao**

*Not the time for cleaning, I guess.*

**[04:45] Maomao**

*Compared to the shoddy  
stuff sold everywhere,*

**[04:48] Maomao**

*this has no impurities, the fibers are evenly  
crushed, and it's got consistent thickness.*

**[04:54] Maomao**

*The only issues are scuffing  
on the surface, and...*

**[04:59] Maomao**

*Its strength!*

**[05:01] Maomao**

What exactly is this unchanged process?

**[05:03] Guen**

It's the same as normal papermaking.

**[05:06] Guen**

However, our family has a special way of crushing the ingredients and creating glue...

**[05:11] Guen**

Oh, but that's a secret.

**[05:13] Maomao**

*So, he doesn't blab about that.*

**[05:17] Maomao**

Is there special attention paid to the water?

**[05:19] Guen**

Yes. We use stored spring water to make the glue harden properly.

**[05:25] Guen**

It's for managing the humidity, but...

**[05:28] Guen**

The rest is a secret.

**[05:30] Maomao**

*Oxen, stored spring water...*

**[05:40] Maomao**

Do you use boiled rice water for glue?

**[05:44] Guen**

No, it's wheat flour, the way it's supposed to be.

**[05:47] Guen**

Otherwise, the hardening is... Oh!

**[05:51] Guen**

Hey little lady, forget I said that, okay?!

**[05:54] Maomao**

Yes.

**[05:56] Maomao**

So, where do you keep the oxen?

**[05:59] Guen**

I don't know about that.

**[06:02] Maomao**

I see.

**[06:06] Maomao**

Here you go.

**[06:07] Guen**

Arrowroot gruel?

**[06:12] Guen**

Little lady, you got the ratio wrong.

**[06:15] Guen**

It's stuck on the cup and hard to drink.

**[06:18] Maomao**

Oh, sorry. I'll teach you how to

make it easier to drink.

**[06:23] Maomao**

Can you repeat after me?

**[06:29] Maomao**

Like this, you lick the spoon and mix.

**[06:32] Guen**

That seems like poor manners.

**[06:41] Guen**

Oh, it's no longer sticky.

**[06:45] Maomao**

Right?

**[06:46] Maomao**

Isn't arrowroot gruel kind of like glue?

**[06:50] Guen**

Hmm, I suppose so.

**[06:53] Guen**

Maybe mixing saliva into glue  
would make it less sticky as well.

**[06:58] Maomao**

Exactly.

**[07:01] Guen**

Exactly what?

**[07:03] Maomao**

*This quack really can't take a hint.*

**[07:05] Maomao**

Oxen have lots of saliva in their mouths.

**[07:11] Maomao**

Perhaps you should check *where*  
those oxen are getting their water.

**[07:18] Guen**

I must send a letter to my sister!

**[07:22] Maomao**

I'll take my leave for today.

**[07:29] Maomao**

I'm back.

**[07:31] Hongniang**

Oh, Maomao.

**[07:33] Hongniang**

Someone sent a message  
that you're needed urgently.

**[07:37] Maomao**

Where should I go?

**[07:40] Lihaku**

How much would it cost  
to buy out a courtesan?

**[07:45] Maomao**

*And here I thought it was about Suirei...*

**[07:48] Maomao**

*What a dumb dog.*

**[07:50] Lihaku**

Hear me out, missy!

**[07:52] Lihaku**

At the Verdigris House the other day,

**[07:53] Lihaku**

I heard rumors that one of the Three Princesses is getting bought out!

**[07:57] Maomao**

*And so he got worried about Pairin.*

**[08:01] Maomao**

The cost really depends.

**[08:03] Lihaku**

Give me the max.

**[08:04] Maomao**

Understood. Please understand that market prices fluctuate a lot,

**[08:09] Maomao**

so this is just a rough estimate.

**[08:10] Lihaku**

Give it to me straight.

**[08:13] Lihaku**

How much?

**[08:15] Maomao**

This is a tough one.

**[08:17] Maomao**

*The cost of buying out a courtesan is based on how much she could make at the brothel,*

**[08:24] Maomao**

*plus a little extra, then doubled. So...*

**[08:30] Lihaku**

Little missy...

**[08:34] Maomao**

If someone were to buy out Pairin, there are two candidates who are long-time favorites.

**[08:41] Lihaku**

T-Two...

**[08:43] Maomao**

One is a wealthy merchant,

**[08:46] Maomao**

a pleasant older man who continued to visit the Verdigris House while it was in trouble.

**[08:51] Maomao**

The other is a high-ranking official, still young, in his thirties.

**[08:56] Maomao**

She said he's a good partner  
for bedtime activities,

**[09:01] Maomao**

but it is a little concerning how  
exhausted he seems the next day.

**[09:05] Maomao**

*Thinking about life after being  
bought out, neither are... Hmm.*

**[09:10] Lihaku**

Exhausted? What do you mean?

**[09:13] Maomao**

*Pairin is not only a great dancer,*

**[09:16] Maomao**

*but is also famous as  
an invincible warlord in bed.*

**[09:19] Maomao**

*When her "hunger" grows,  
she'll pounce on anyone...*

**[09:23] Maomao**

*In other words, she's extremely lustful.*

**[09:25] Pairin**

*No!*

**[09:27] Maomao**

*But...*

**[09:30] Lihaku**

But?

**[09:32] Maomao**

*Until my dad took me in, the ones who  
took care of me at the Verdigris House were*

**[09:37] Maomao**

*the old lady and the Three Princesses.*

**[09:41] Maomao**

*Pairin, who was able to lactate  
despite never having given birth,*

**[09:48] Maomao**

*is almost like a mother to me.*

**[09:52] Maomao**

*I don't know what her thoughts  
on the matter are, but...*

**[09:55] Maomao**

*Thinking back on those days,  
I do think it's a bit of a waste.*

**[10:00] Maomao**

*She's definitely lustful,  
but she's at least equally maternal.*

**[10:07] Lihaku**

But, what?

**[10:13] Maomao**

*Master Lihaku understands what Pairin does for work, and is still in love with her.*

**[10:18] Maomao**

*He can be a dumb dog, but seems like an honest, hard worker.*

**[10:21] Maomao**

*Trying to get a promotion for his girl is adorable, if stupid.*

**[10:26] Maomao**

*Most of all, he has astonishing stamina.*

**[10:30] Maomao**

Hmm.

**[10:33] Maomao**

*He wouldn't be a bad choice, all considered.*

**[10:37] Maomao**

Master Lihaku, may I ask how much you're paid?

**[10:41] Lihaku**

What's with that question all of a sudden?

**[10:43] Maomao**

Perhaps 800 silver a year?

**[10:45] Lihaku**

Come on, now.

**[10:47] Maomao**

More like 1,200 then?

**[10:49] Maomao**

*So, roughly 1,000 silver or so a year.*

**[10:52] Lihaku**

Is that not enough?

**[10:53] Maomao**

Afraid not.

**[10:54] Maomao**

They'd ask at least 10,000 in cash.

**[10:58] Lihaku**

T-Ten thousand?!

**[11:00] Maomao**

A cheap courtesan would cost around 400.

**[11:02] Maomao**

One of the Three Princesses of the Verdigris House? 10,000 silver, at the very least.

**[11:09] Lihaku**

Ten thousand...

**[11:12] Lihaku**

Hey, so... let's say I find that much somewhere.

**[11:15] Lihaku**

You think I'll be able

to buy her out with that?

**[11:18] Maomao**

How likely do I think it is that she'd dramatically turn you down, you mean?

**[11:26] Maomao**

Fine, fine.

**[11:29] Maomao**

Master Lihaku, could you take off your clothes?

**[11:34] Lihaku**

If I do, am I less likely to get dumped?

**[11:36] Maomao**

One thing I know for sure is the body type she likes.

**[11:42] Lihaku**

I'll strip!

**[11:47] Maomao**

Your pants too, please.

**[11:49] Lihaku**

Pants, too?

**[11:50] Maomao**

Yes.

**[11:52] Maomao**

Then, can you raise your arms up to your shoulders and flex your muscles?

**[11:59] Lihaku**

Like this?

**[12:00] Maomao**

*Pairin's not a picky eater, but she does have preferences.*

**[12:06] Maomao**

*Hmm, not bad...*

**[12:09] Maomao**

Next, lower your arms, then flex again.

**[12:13] Lihaku**

Like this?

**[12:16] Maomao**

*As a good military man, he trains often.*

**[12:20] Maomao**

*Good musculature.*

**[12:23] Maomao**

*He might stand a chance.*

**[12:25] Maomao**

Now...

**[12:27] Maomao**

Now, please remove your final garment!

**[12:30] Lihaku**

Got it!

**[12:34] Jinshi**

What in the world are you two doing?

**[12:38] Maomao**

Greetings, Master Jinshi.

**[12:45] Jinshi**

Now, what exactly were you up to?

**[12:48] Maomao**

*Pretty people are so scary  
when they're angry.*

**[12:52] Maomao**

What, you ask?

**[12:55] Maomao**

Well, I was summoned to give  
my opinion about a matter.

**[12:58] Jinshi**

Why was that man undressed like that?

**[13:01] Maomao**

Nothing improper was going on.

**[13:03] Maomao**

I was just taking a good look.

**[13:07] Jinshi**

A good look? You?

**[13:10] Maomao**

Yes, just looking.

**[13:13] Jinshi**

What for?

**[13:14] Maomao**

What for, you ask?

**[13:16] Maomao**

To see if his body is good enough.

**[13:18] Maomao**

What better way to know  
than to inspect him myself?

**[13:21] Jinshi**

If his body is "good enough," you said?!

**[13:23] Maomao**

Yes. Appearances are only a part  
of what defines a person,

**[13:28] Maomao**

but being suited to one's  
taste is always a plus.

**[13:30] Maomao**

*I wanted to get a final look  
at his important parts*

**[13:34] Maomao**

*to determine how to appeal to Pairin, but...*

**[13:41] Jinshi**

So, what did you think about  
that man's appearance?

**[13:46] Maomao**

It was a very well-balanced body.

**[13:49] Maomao**

He seems like a hard worker  
who trains diligently.

**[13:54] Maomao**

I'd guess he's quite a skilled fighter,  
even compared to other military men.

**[13:58] Jinshi**

You can read a person's personality  
just by their build?

**[14:03] Maomao**

A person's appearance reflects  
their daily routines quite accurately.

**[14:07] Maomao**

As an apothecary, it's not rare to get  
customers who won't tell us about themselves.

**[14:12] Maomao**

So you learn this naturally on the job.

**[14:15] Jinshi**

Can you tell from looking at my body, too?

**[14:18] Maomao**

Huh?

**[14:19] Maomao**

*Wait, is he jealous of Master Lihaku?*

**[14:23] Maomao**

*Oh, wow. I can't believe this guy.*

**[14:26] Maomao**

*He just wants to brag that he's prettier!*

**[14:30] Maomao**

*I do know he has a beautiful body.*

**[14:33] Maomao**

*I was quite surprised  
by how well-toned it was.*

**[14:36] Maomao**

*But...*

**[14:38] Maomao**

There'd be no point in  
learning about your body.

**[14:43] Maomao**

I don't think you would  
get along with my sister.

**[14:49] Jinshi**

Huh?!

**[14:53] Lihaku**

*As I waste time like this,  
Pairin could get bought out.*

**[14:58] Lihaku**

*But I'm not yet capable of  
doing anything about it...*

**[15:06] Lihaku**

Pairin...

**[15:10] Lihaku**

Hmm?

**[15:14] Lihaku**

*What in the world is going on?*

**[15:16] Lihaku**

*Jinshi, I think his name was?*

**[15:19] Lihaku**

*He's rumored to be the emperor's favorite...*

**[15:23] Jinshi**

Thank you for your hospitality  
with my attendant the other day.

**[15:26] Lihaku**

Oh, you're quite welcome...

**[15:29] Jinshi**

I hear you're romantically  
pursuing someone.

**[15:34] Lihaku**

*Did that girl talk?*

**[15:38] Lihaku**

*Is that why he's smiling so much?*

**[15:42] Lihaku**

*At his young age, high status, and being called  
the most beautiful person in the nation,*

**[15:49] Lihaku**

*the matter of buying out a courtesan  
must be a joke to him.*

**[15:53] Lihaku**

*I don't mind being made fun of.*

**[15:55] Lihaku**

*But if he insults Pairin,  
that's a different story.*

**[16:00] Lihaku**

*If he insults her...*

**[16:02] Jinshi**

20,000.

**[16:04] Jinshi**

What would you say if I offered you  
the money to buy out your girl?

**[16:12] Lihaku**

What do you mean?

**[16:14] Jinshi**

Precisely what I said.

**[16:22] Lihaku**

I appreciate your generosity,

**[16:24] Lihaku**

but is it alright for you to suddenly  
offer that to an officer you barely know?

**[16:29] Jinshi**

My cat can be quite cautious.

**[16:33] Jinshi**

And yet, she's willing to give you advice,

**[16:36] Jinshi**

and consider you as a candidate  
for her sister's life partner.

**[16:42] Lihaku**

In other words, if your cautious cat lets  
her guard down around me, I'm trustworthy.

**[16:52] Lihaku**

*Did I say something bad?*

**[16:55] Jinshi**

I've heard some stories about you.

**[17:00] Jinshi**

You do come from a good family,

**[17:02] Jinshi**

but it still must have been hard for you to  
become a military officer here at the capital.

**[17:06] Jinshi**

I hear you were discovered by our sharp-eyed  
strategist and assigned to lead a squad.

**[17:13] Lihaku**

Yes.

**[17:14] Lihaku**

The official story was that  
the prior squad leader retired

**[17:17] Lihaku**

and I was simply pushed up, but...

**[17:20] Jinshi**

Wouldn't anybody want to have a good  
relationship with a promising officer?

**[17:25] Lihaku**

*Still, 20,000 silver is way too much.*

**[17:29] Lihaku**

*I only really need half as much...  
no, even just a quarter would do it.*

**[17:40] Lihaku**

I'm very glad to hear

that you think so highly of me.

**[17:44] Lihaku**

I also find your offer quite hard to resist.

**[17:48] Lihaku**

But I can't accept that silver here.

**[17:53] Lihaku**

For you, she might just be a local courtesan,

**[17:56] Lihaku**

but for me, she's the only woman in my world.

**[18:00] Lihaku**

To welcome a wife with  
someone else's money...

**[18:07] Lihaku**

What kind of man would that make me?

**[18:14] Jinshi**

I see. Pardon me.

**[18:17] Lihaku**

Huh?

**[18:18] Jinshi**

I may need to speak with you soon.

**[18:22] Jinshi**

Is that alright with you?

**[18:25] Lihaku**

Yes, sir.

**[18:32] Gaoshun**

Master Jinshi.

**[18:33] Jinshi**

Yes.

**[18:35] Jinshi**

There was nothing to be  
worried about, yes.

**[18:40] Lihaku**

What was that all about?!

**[18:42] Lihaku**

Now, what to do?

**[18:46] Lihaku**

I guess I should show off  
at the next training...

**[18:52] Lihaku**

Or perhaps I should ask for more work...

**[18:57] Lihaku**

Or... Right.

**[19:05] Lihaku**

*I'll write to her, even if I don't  
know when I can see next.*

**[19:14] Lihaku**

*I can't force my will on her.*

*I should hear what she thinks.*

**[19:29] Lihaku**

*I don't care if her response  
is purely diplomatic.*

**[19:31] Lihaku**

*Believing in her words will  
help me get through my days.*

**[20:00] Lihaku**

I just have to pursue her in a way I believe in.

**[20:07] Pairin**

*"Despite what the old lady thinks,  
I'm still in the game.*

**[20:12] Pairin**

*Besides, I'm still waiting  
for my prince to come for me."*

**[20:18] Maomao**

Yeah, that's what I thought.

**[20:20] Maomao**

If Pairin likes him,  
he won't need 10,000 silver.

**[20:26] Maomao**

Beyond that, it's just luck.

**[20:30] Pairin**

*"When a certain someone came and  
talked about buying people out,*

**[20:33] Pairin**

*I think one of the servant girls  
got the wrong idea."*

**[20:44] Maomao**

*That man.*

**[20:48] Rikuson**

Master Lakan.

**[20:50] Rikuson**

I finally found you.

**[20:52] Rikuson**

Master Lakan, the meeting is starting.

**[20:56] Lakan**

Blue roses.

**[20:59] Rikuson**

What did you say?

**SIGN** Next Time

**SIGN** Episode 22: Blue Roses

**[22:46] Narrator**

*Next time: "Blue Roses."*

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