

# E23 - Balsam and Woodsorrel

Source: [Crunchyroll](#)

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(Please feel free to edit the speaker names if incomplete or inaccurate. Names are handled on a best-effort basis depending on the info on the source file. Dialogue is left as is.)

**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.

**[01:37] Fengxian**

Sleep, my baby, sleep.

**[01:45] Fengxian**

Where is she? She cries.

**SIGN** Advisor

**SIGN** Bishop

**SIGN** Episode 23: Balsam and Woodsorrel

**[02:06] Maomao**

Would you join me for a few games?

**[02:10] Lakan**

How could I possibly decline  
a request from my lovely daughter?

**[02:17] Maomao**

A best-of-five match, no special rules.

**[02:20] Maomao**

In other words, the first to win  
three rounds is the victor.

**[02:24] Lakan**

How about handicaps?  
Which pieces should I drop?

**[02:28] Maomao**

There's no need for that.

**[02:30] Jinshi**

*She could've just accepted.*

**[02:32] Maomao**

More importantly, let's place a bet. A reward.

**[02:36] Lakan**

Great, right down to business!

**[02:38] Lakan**

If I win, will you come live with me?

**[02:45] Gaoshun**

You promised not to interfere.

**[02:47] Jinshi**

But—

**[02:51] Maomao**

I don't mind.

**[02:52] Maomao**

However, I'm under hire right now.

**[02:55] Maomao**

You'll have to wait until my contract expires.

**[02:57] Lakan**

Hired? You're actually employed right now?

**[03:01] Maomao**

Yes.

**[03:02] Lakan**

Huh...

**[03:06] Maomao**

In exchange, if I win,

**[03:09] Maomao**

could you buy out a courtesan  
at the Verdigris House?

**[03:15] Lakan**

Of all the things you could ask...

**[03:17] Maomao**

I won't say who, but the old lady  
wants to get rid of an aging courtesan.

**[03:23] Lakan**

So that's your first move.

**[03:26] Lakan**

If that's what it takes, I suppose I must accept.

**[03:31] Lakan**

Is that all, then?

**[03:33] Maomao**

I'd like to add two more rules.

**[03:42] Jinshi**

*From the smell of it,  
that's a distilled hard liquor?*

**[03:51] Jinshi**

*I have such a bad feeling about this.*

**[03:53] Lakan**

What is that?

**[03:55] Maomao**

A medicine, in small amounts.

**[03:57] Maomao**

Three sips turn it into  
a deadly poison, though.

**[04:01] Maomao**

I'll pour it into three of these cups,

**[04:05] Maomao**

then make it so that  
we can't tell which is which.

**[04:09] Maomao**

After every match, the winner picks one cup,  
and the loser drinks from it in one breath.

**[04:15] Maomao**

That's the first rule.

**[04:17] Jinshi**

*What a brutal rule...*

**[04:20] Maomao**

The second rule is that no matter the reason,

**[04:24] Maomao**

if a player abandons a match, they lose.

**[04:29] Maomao**

Do you accept?

**[04:35] Lakan**

That's fine.

**[04:37] Jinshi**

*Is she trying to shake him?*

**[04:39] Jinshi**

*I guess a regular person  
would be scared by that.*

**[04:42] Jinshi**

*But...*

**[04:44] Jinshi**

*This is the famous weirdo strategist  
we're talking about.*

**[04:47] Jinshi**

*I doubt he'd lose his composure  
from being pressured this way.*

**[04:53] Jinshi**

*What is she thinking?*

**[05:42] Jinshi**

*She lost again!*

**[05:44] Jinshi**

*That's two games in a row.*

**[05:46] Jinshi**

*Since she chose to challenge  
the invincible chess master in chess,*

**[05:50] Jinshi**

*I thought she had some skill in the game.*

**[05:53] Jinshi**

*It seems like she just knows the rules  
and has never played a real game before.*

**[05:58] Jinshi**

*Two cups...*

**[06:00] Jinshi**

*She drinks it so eagerly,  
I can't tell if it's poisoned or not.*

**[06:05] Maomao**

May I play first in the third game as well?

**[06:08] Lakan**

Sure, fine by me.

**[06:12] Jinshi**

*What in the world is she thinking?*

**[06:14] Jinshi**

*She's not going to win the  
third match, either.*

**[06:17] Jinshi**

*If the two cups she already had were poisoned,*

**[06:21] Jinshi**

*drinking a third would be too risky.*

**[06:24] Jinshi**

*Did Lakan predict this situation already?*

**[06:31] Maomao**

That's checkmate.

**[06:34] Lakan**

I yield.

**[06:36] Maomao**

A win is a win, even if  
you let me win, correct?

**[06:39] Lakan**

Yes. I can't risk feeding my daughter poison.

**[06:46] Lakan**

Can you choose a cup?

**[06:48] Maomao**

Please take whichever one you like.

**[06:50] Lakan**

Does this medicine have a special taste?

**[06:54] Maomao**

One sip and you'd notice that it tastes bad.

**[06:58] Jinshi**

*Lakan can lose up to twice.*

**[07:01] Jinshi**

*If even one of those cups  
has a different taste,*

**[07:03] Jinshi**

*he'd know that his daughter  
can avoid the poison.*

**[07:07] Jinshi**

*He really does know what he's doing,  
losing on purpose to do that.*

**[07:12] Lakan**

This one, then.

**[07:29] Lakan**

What an awful taste.

**[07:32] Jinshi**

*It's poisoned! Now there's no risk of the apothecary drinking the third poison.*

**[07:38] Jinshi**

*That means Lakan no longer needs to lose on purpose.*

**[07:44] Jinshi**

*The apothecary has no chance of winning now.*

**[07:47] (Flashback) Lakan**

If I win, will you come live with me?

**[07:51] Lakan**

Also, it's quite warm out.

**[08:09] Jinshi**

What's going on?

**[08:11] Jinshi**

I thought one cup of it was safe!

**[08:13] Jinshi**

Did you actually poison him?!  
Do you really hate him that much—

**[08:16] Maomao**

It *is* medicine. Alcohol is the king of all medicines, isn't it?

**[08:21] Jinshi**

Alcohol? What do you mean?

**[08:23] Gaoshun**

Master Jinshi, it seems like he's just drunk.

**[08:28] Jinshi**

Huh?

**[08:34] Maomao**

He completely abstains from alcohol.

**[08:38] Jinshi**

Come to think of it...

**[08:40] Jinshi**

He always just drinks fruit juice,  
I've never seen him drink alcohol.

**[08:45] Jinshi**

So, what was that liquid earlier?

**[08:47] Maomao**

Spirits.

**[08:49] Maomao**

Anyway...

**[08:52] Maomao**

Let's drag this guy out of here and have him pick a flower from the brothel.

**[09:04] Lakan**

*From the day I was born, I couldn't  
differentiate between humans.*

**[09:09] Lakan**

*Not only did I mistake  
my nanny for my mother,*

**[09:12] Lakan**

*I couldn't even tell men and women apart.*

**[09:15] Lakan**

*My father believed me to be useless,  
and ran off to his mistress in disgust.*

**[09:23] Lakan**

*My mother was desperate to get him back.*

**[09:28] Lakan**

*Because of that, despite being  
the eldest son of an important family,*

**[09:31] Lakan**

*I was able to live freely,  
devoting myself to go and chess,*

**[09:35] Lakan**

*which I learned in my spare time.*

**[09:38] (Flashback) Luomen**

Differentiate people based on their voices,  
behavior, and build, instead of their faces.

**[09:45] (Flashback) Luomen**

In your case, you can use chess pieces.

**SIGN** Pawn

**SIGN** Pawn

**SIGN** Pawn

**SIGN** Pawn

**SIGN** Pawn

**SIGN** Pawn

**[09:48] Lakan**

*My uncle was the only one who understood me.*

**[09:52] Lakan**

*Thanks to my uncle, who  
is clumsy but very intelligent,*

**[09:56] Lakan**

*I gradually learned to see  
people's faces as chess pieces.*

**SIGN** Pawn

**SIGN** Pawn

**SIGN** Chariot

**[10:02] Lakan**

*When I started to see  
my uncle as a Chariot piece,*

**[10:04] Lakan**

*I reaffirmed that he is indeed a great man.*

**[10:09] Lakan**

*After I grew up, thanks to my family name,*

**[10:13] Lakan**

*I was suddenly assigned to lead a squadron,  
despite having no talent in combat.*

**[10:17] Lakan**

*Even if I was weak,*

**[10:18] Lakan**

*I could more than make up for it  
by using the men under me effectively.*

**[10:23] Lakan**

*Most of all, playing chess with human pieces  
was the most fun game I had ever played.*

**SIGN** Verdigris House

**[10:29] Lakan**

*As I continued my lossless  
streak in both work and games,*

**[10:33] Lakan**

*I followed my colleagues to a brothel  
to take on a famous courtesan.*

**[10:39] Lakan**

*In a world full of black and white,  
that was the only bright color I saw.*

**[10:46] Lakan**

*Her name was Fengxian.*

**[10:49] Lakan**

*The undefeated courtesan of the brothel,*

**[10:52] Lakan**

*versus me, undefeated in the military.*

**[10:54] Lakan**

*The audience would have had  
a good time no matter who lost.*

**[10:58] Lakan**

*She's strong, but she only fights  
in her own small world...*

**[11:06] Lakan**

*I lost.*

**[11:08] Lakan**

*I was absolutely thrashed.*

**[11:10] Lakan**

*When was the last time I lost so badly?*

**[11:22] Lakan**

*Ah, so that's what a human face looks like.*

**[11:30] Lakan**

*Her defiant eyes, like a balsam flower  
that would burst if touched...*

**[11:46] Lakan**

*Next time, I won't lose.*

**[11:49] Lakan**

*For several years after that,  
we continued to meet to play go and chess.*

**[12:01] Lakan**

*Fengxian, who was born at the brothel,*

**[12:03] Lakan**

*had a personality that was  
almost purely made of pride.*

**[12:07] (Flashback) Fengxian**

*I have no mother. A woman did give birth to me,*

**[12:12] (Flashback) Fengxian**

*but in the pleasure district,  
a courtesan can never become a mother.*

**[12:18] Lakan**

*Once a talented courtesan gains popularity,  
the brothel becomes reluctant to sell them.*

**[12:25] Lakan**

*Fengxian fit that profile exactly.*

**[12:29] Lakan**

*Her harsh attitude wasn't for everyone,*

**[12:33] Lakan**

*but she became the favorite  
of several dilettantes.*

**[12:37] Lakan**

*Her prices gradually rose,*

**[12:40] Lakan**

*and I could only afford to see her  
once every three months.*

**[12:50] (Flashback) Lakan**

*Balsam flower, and... What's that?*

**[12:54] (Flashback) Fengxian**

*Woodsorrel, also known as cat's foot.*

**[12:58] (Flashback) Fengxian**

*I hear it's a medicine that helps  
treat poisons and insect bites.*

**[13:03] (Flashback) Fengxian**

*Like the balsam, touching a ripe fruit  
causes the seeds to burst.*

**[13:10] (Flashback) Lakan**

*Interesting.*

**[13:13] (Flashback) Fengxian**

*When can you come next?*

**[13:20] (Flashback) Lakan**

*Three months from now, as always.*

**[13:23] (Flashback) Fengxian**

Understood.

**[13:27] Lakan**

*That was when I heard about  
Fengxian being bought out.*

**[13:32] Lakan**

*Fengxian's price was being hiked up by  
the dilettantes competing against each other.*

**[13:38] Lakan**

*I was on a good career  
path as a military officer,*

**[13:41] Lakan**

*but since I'd lost the title  
of heir to my half-brothers,*

**[13:45] Lakan**

*her price was well outside my reach.*

**[13:50] (Flashback) Fengxian**

Would you like to place a bet, for a change?

**[13:53] (Flashback) Fengxian**

If you win, I will give you anything you want.

**[13:57] (Flashback) Fengxian**

If I win, I will take anything that I want.

**[14:02] (Flashback) Fengxian**

Please choose a board.

**[14:06] Lakan**

*A terrible thought crossed my mind.*

**[14:11] (Flashback) Fengxian**

Go, is it?

**[14:13] (Flashback) Lakan**

Yes.

**[14:15] (Flashback) Fengxian**

Meimei, I want to concentrate on this game.

**[14:19] (Flashback) Meimei**

Yes.

**[14:58] Lakan**

*Before I knew it, our hands touched.*

**[15:03] Lakan**

*There were no sweet words from Fengxian.*

**[15:08] Lakan**

*I wasn't the type to offer any, either.*

**[15:10] Lakan**

*In that way, we were quite similar.*

**[15:15] (Flashback) Fengxian**

I want to play go.

**[15:17] Lakan**

*I'd been thinking about how  
I wanted to play chess, myself.*

**[15:22] (Flashback) Fengxian**

Sleep, my baby, sleep.

**[15:30] (Flashback) Fengxian**

Where is she? She cries.

**[15:38] (Flashback) Fengxian**

Little birds are so innocent.

**[15:45] (Flashback) Fengxian**

Off they fly to somewhere far.

**[15:54] Lakan**

*Three months later, my supposedly intelligent uncle was ousted from his position.*

**[15:59] (Flashback) Father**

First you became a doctor in the rear palace, and now you're exiled?!

**[16:02] (Flashback) Father**

You bring shame to our family!

**[16:05] Lakan**

*For all his intelligence, he really is clumsy.*

**[16:09] (Flashback) Father**

You used to be close to him.

**[16:12] (Flashback) Father**

Leave the house for a while, go study abroad!

**[16:15] (Flashback) Lakan**

Study abroad...?

**[16:16] (Flashback) Father**

Just in case.

**[16:18] (Flashback) Lakan**

But...

**[16:19] (Flashback) Father**

What?

**[16:21] (Flashback) Lakan**

No, it's nothing.

**[16:24] Lakan**

*There was no way I could speak up against my father, who was also my boss.*

**[16:30] Lakan**

*Around the same time,*

**[16:32] Lakan**

*Fengxian wrote to me that her buyout agreement fell through.*

**[16:36] Lakan**

*I assumed I would be back in six months or so.*

**[16:43] Lakan**

*But, back then...*

**[16:50] Lakan**

*I had no idea it would take three whole years for me to return.*

**[16:59] (Flashback) Lakan**

So many letters from Fengxian...

**[17:16] (Flashback) Lakan**

Mud? No, a branch?

**[17:20] (Flashback) Lakan**

And there's two of them?

**[17:25] (Flashback) Lakan**

No, this is...

**[17:30] Lakan**

*Finger severing...*

**[17:31] Lakan**

*I knew that was a popular  
way to curse someone.*

**[17:35] Lakan**

*The reason why her deal fell through...*

**[17:38] Lakan**

*The other small finger in the bag...*

**[17:42] Lakan**

*Why didn't I notice?!*

**[17:45] Lakan**

*All I had in my head was go and chess.*

**[17:49] Lakan**

*I couldn't even reach that simple conclusion!*

**[17:57] (Flashback) Lakan**

Where's Fengxian?!

**[17:59] (Flashback) Old Lady**

You!

**[18:00] (Flashback) Old Lady**

Fengxian is gone now!

**[18:02] (Flashback) Old Lady**

Where have you been all this time?!

**[18:04] (Flashback) Old Lady**

You left her for *three whole years!*

**[18:06] (Flashback) Old Lady**

You don't care one bit what happens  
to a worthless courtesan, do you?!

**[18:13] Lakan**

*If only I'd put even a little thought into it!*

**[18:16] Lakan**

*The reason why she wouldn't get bought out...*

**[18:20] Lakan**

*The reason was in her belly...*

**[18:23] Lakan**

*By soiling the name of her brothel,  
her trust and reputation fell to nothing!*

**[18:30] Lakan**

*All she could do was to take*

*customers like a streetwalker,*

**[18:34] Lakan**

*and...*

**[18:44] Lakan**

*No matter how much I lamented,  
there was no way to turn back time.*

**[18:49] Lakan**

*It was all my fault,  
for being so short-sighted.*

**[19:06] Lakan**

This is... The Verdigris House?

**[19:12] Meimei**

Are you awake?

**[19:16] Lakan**

Meimei.

**[19:18] Meimei**

Some noble's servant brought you here.

**[19:22] Meimei**

Your face looks terrible. I don't  
know if it's more red or blue.

**[19:27] Lakan**

I didn't think I'd end up like this, either.

**[19:30] Lakan**

I wasn't expecting it to  
be such a strong liquor.

**[19:35] Lakan**

*Meimei used to be Fengxian's servant girl.*

**[19:41] Lakan**

*I used to play with her a lot.*

**[19:44] Lakan**

*When I complemented her talents,  
she seemed abashed.*

**[19:48] Lakan**

Come to think of it...

**[19:50] Meimei**

What is it?

**[19:53] Lakan**

No, nothing.

**[19:58] Meimei**

Here you are.

**[19:59] Lakan**

Yes.

**[20:04] Lakan**

So bitter!

**[20:05] Lakan**

What is this?!

**[20:07] Meimei**

Something Maomao made.

**[20:10] Maomao**

*Mix mix, mix mix, mix mix.*

**[20:11] Lakan**

I see, it was Maomao...

**[20:15] Maomao**

Also, Maomao left this box for you.

**[20:28] Lakan**

A withered rose?

**[20:30] Meimei**

Even when withered, it can retain its shape.

**[20:41] Servant Girl**

Big Sis Meimei.

**[20:43] Meimei**

Excuse me.

**SIGN** Next Time

**[22:46] Narrator**

*Next time: "Jinshi and Maomao."*

**SIGN** Episode 24: Jinshi and Maomao

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Revision #1

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