

E7 - Homecoming

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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] (Flashback) Maomao

Dad!

[01:40] (Flashback) Maomao

Dad!

SIGN Episode 7: Homecoming

[01:53] Maomao

I wonder if Dad's doing okay.

[01:59] Maomao

Right. Yesterday, after the garden party...

[02:02] (Flashback) Yinghua

What are you talking about?!

[02:04] (Flashback) Ailan

The minister who ate the poison
is in terrible condition!

[02:07] (Flashback) Guiyuan

You're sick. Get lots of sleep!

[02:10] Maomao

Thanks to them, I got a good deal of sleep.

[02:13] Maomao

But sleeping until noon is too much.

[02:21] Maomao

I can't go without makeup now.

[02:28] Gyokuyou

Oh.

[02:29] Gyokuyou

You could have taken a day off.

[02:32] Maomao

I can't allow myself to do that.
Please put me to work.

[02:36] Gyokuyou

Oh? Your freckles.

[02:38] Maomao

I'm uncomfortable without them.

Can I keep them on?

[02:42] Gyokuyou

I understand.

[02:44] Gyokuyou

Everyone kept demanding to know
who that lady-in-waiting was.

[02:49] Maomao

My apologies.

[02:51] Gyokuyou

It's fine.

[02:52] Gyokuyou

Anyway, Gaoshun came by this morning
and hasn't left. What do you want to do?

[02:56] Gyokuyou

He seemed bored, so I asked him
to pull up some weeds.

[03:01] Maomao

Weeds...

[03:02] Maomao

*Back at the garden party, he was
in a pretty high-ranking seat.*

[03:06] Maomao

I guess he really is caring.

[03:09] Maomao

*He must win the hearts of
the ladies-in-waiting in his own way.*

[03:15] Maomao

May I use the parlor?

[03:19] Gyokuyou

Sure. Hongniang.

[03:22] Hongniang

Yes.

[03:22] Maomao

*Is it just me, or is Hongniang
being sparkly-eyed, too?*

[03:27] Gaoshun

Master Jinshi wanted me to bring you this.

[03:31] Maomao

This is the soup that Lady Gyokuyou
was supposed to drink, right?

[03:35] Gaoshun

Yes.

[03:36] Maomao

How kind of him.

[03:39] Gaoshun

Please don't eat it.

[03:40] Maomao

I won't.

[03:42] Maomao

Silver corrodes quickly.

This is oxidized and no longer tasty.

[03:48] Gaoshun

Tasty...

[03:50] Maomao

Did you pick this up with your hands?

[03:52] Gaoshun

No, I didn't touch the bowl.

[03:55] Gaoshun

I only picked up the contents
in a spoon to see if it was poison.

[03:58] Gaoshun

Shoop shoop shoop.

[03:58] Gaoshun

After that, I immediately
wrapped it in cloth.

[04:02] Maomao

One moment, please.

[04:04] Maomao

Clip clip clip.

[04:06] Maomao

Clunk clunk clunk.

[04:08] Gaoshun

Cotton, powder, and a brush.

[04:10] Maomao

Yes.

[04:11] Gaoshun

What will you do with these?

[04:13] Maomao

In the apothecary I used to work at,

[04:15] Maomao

we used to put dyes on containers
that weren't supposed to be touched.

[04:20] Maomao

This is a similar technique.

[04:22] Maomao

It's simple. I put some powder
on this cotton ball.

[04:27] Maomao

I dust the bowl with it...

[04:29] Maomao

Finally, I brush off the excess.

[04:36] Maomao

And there.

[04:36] Gaoshun

There's some white marks.

[04:39] Maomao

That's where a human hand made contact.

[04:42] Maomao

When you touch this with
your fingers, it leaves a mark.

[04:46] Maomao

It's especially visible on silver,
which is easily corroded.

[04:50] Maomao

That's why you thoroughly
wipe silver items before use.

[04:54] Gaoshun

In other words, the finger
marks remaining here

[04:57] Gaoshun

were from people who touched
the bowl after it was wiped clean?

[05:01] Maomao

Indeed.

[05:03] Maomao

The size and placement of the finger marks
allows us to guess how they held it.

[05:09] Maomao

The bowl was held...

[05:12] Gaoshun

What is it?

[05:17] Maomao

Nothing.

[05:19] Maomao

The bowl was held by four people, I think.

[05:23] Gaoshun

Four people.

[05:25] Maomao

First, three people who touched
the side of the bowl.

[05:28] Maomao

The one who poured the soup,

[05:31] Maomao

the one who carried it,

[05:33] Maomao

and Lady Lishu's taster.

[05:36] Maomao

But there was one more.

[05:38] Maomao

An "outsider" that touched
the rim of the bowl.

[05:41] Maomao

I believe this unknown
person poisoned the food.

[05:47] Gaoshun

If that's true, why is the taster's finger
mark on the high-rank concubine's bowl?

[05:53] Maomao

That's simple. Lady Lishu's taster swapped it
on purpose as a form of harassment,

[06:00] Maomao

not knowing it was poisoned.

[06:01] Gaoshun

Swapped it?

[06:04] Maomao

It's bullying.

[06:05] Gaoshun

A lady-in-waiting is bullying
a high-ranking concubine?

[06:08] Maomao

Sounds like you can't believe it.

[06:10] Gaoshun

Can you explain?

[06:13] Maomao

Let me first say that this is all
just conjecture on my part.

[06:18] Gaoshun

That's fine.

[06:19] Maomao

Do you remember Lady Lishu's
dress during the garden party?

[06:23] Gaoshun

Yes. I believe it was a flashy pink color.

[06:27] Maomao

Normally, you'd think that if a concubine

[06:29] Maomao

picked a color that would clash
with Lady Gyokuyou's dress,

[06:32] Maomao

her ladies-in-waiting would
recommend another one.

[06:35] Maomao

Or, at least, they'd wear something
that matches it themselves.

[06:40] Maomao

However, all of her servants

were wearing white.

[06:46] Maomao

That makes Lady Lishu appear like
a buffoon who can't read the room.

[06:52] Maomao

Ladies-in-waiting should
allow their mistress to shine.

[06:55] Maomao

Come to think of it, that day...

[06:57] (Flashback) Ah-Duo's Lady-in-Waiting 1

Have you no decency? A crimson dress?

[07:04] Maomao

Lady Ah-Duo's ladies-in-waiting

[07:07] Maomao

were scolding Lady Lishu's
servants for not doing their jobs.

[07:10] Maomao

The rear palace is full of enemies,

[07:12] Maomao

so the only people a concubine can
truly trust are her ladies-in-waiting.

[07:17] Maomao

I suspect the ladies-in-waiting recommended
that dress to their young Lady Lishu,

[07:23] Maomao

and she wore it without realizing
they'd done it to humiliate her.

[07:26] Maomao

She didn't suspect a thing.

[07:28] Gaoshun

Not only that, but she also tried to swap
the food to further harass Concubine Lishu?

[07:35] Maomao

Yes, though she was unaware it was poisoned.

[07:38] Maomao

It ended up saving her.

[07:42] Maomao

But it's still quite distasteful.

[07:46] Gaoshun

Why would they do such a thing?

[07:48] Maomao

Lady Lishu became the previous
emperor's concubine at a very young age.

[07:52] Maomao

Then she left the rear palace
soon after. Her situation is unique.

[07:55] Maomao

A wife must sacrifice everything
to devote to her husband.

[07:58] Maomao

We are all taught this from a very young age.

[08:01] Maomao

I guess, from that perspective,
to wed her deceased husband's son

[08:05] Maomao

is an indecency beyond words.

[08:09] Maomao

I think the mark near the bowl's edge

[08:12] Maomao

was left by the person who added the poison.

[08:15] Maomao

They must have held the edge
while stirring in the poison.

[08:18] Gaoshun

I see.

[08:20] Maomao

Your fingers must not touch the area
that noble lips are supposed to go.

[08:25] Maomao

That is the teaching of Hongniang.

[08:27] Maomao

That's all I came up with.

[08:31] Gaoshun

May I ask one more thing?

[08:34] Maomao

What is it?

[08:37] Gaoshun

Why did you try to protect that
taster yesterday?

[08:43] Gaoshun

I'm just curious. This isn't
an investigation or anything.

[08:50] Maomao

The life of a serving girl is worthless
compared to that of a concubine.

[08:58] Maomao

Especially if that life
belongs to a food taster...

[09:08] Gaoshun

I'll try to explain this to Master Jinshi.

[09:11] Maomao

Thank you.

[09:16] Maomao

Well, I should be thankful, since she

did go out of her way to make the swap.

[09:23] Maomao

I was able to taste that poison thanks to her.

[09:26] Maomao

I really should have swallowed that soup.

[09:35] Gaoshun

That is all.

[09:36] Jinshi

I see. You always impress me
with how you word things.

[09:41] Gaoshun

Is that so?

[09:43] Jinshi

This is clearly an inside job, right?

[09:46] Gaoshun

The situation indicates as much, yes.

[09:50] Jinshi

You make it sound so simple.

[09:53] Jinshi

I haven't had time to sleep
at all because of this.

[09:55] Jinshi

I haven't even been able to change clothes.

[09:57] Jinshi

I want to stop thinking.

[09:59] Gaoshun

Your natural self is showing.

[10:01] Jinshi

Who cares? There's nobody here.

[10:04] Gaoshun

I am here.

[10:05] Jinshi

Can you cut me some slack?

[10:07] Gaoshun

No.

[10:09] Jinshi

Nothing I say will move you, huh?

[10:11] Gaoshun

We've had a long relationship.

[10:13] Jinshi

It's not easy having someone
look after you since you were born.

[10:18] Gaoshun

Master Jinshi, you forgot
to remove your hairpin.

[10:21] Jinshi

Oh, oops. Totally forgot.

[10:24] Gaoshun

It was hidden in your hair.

[10:26] Gaoshun

I don't think anyone noticed your true status.

[10:29] Jinshi

Take care of it for me.

[10:32] Gaoshun

You're treating it roughly again.

[10:36] Gaoshun

It's something only special individuals
can wear, so please take care of it.

[10:41] Jinshi

I know.

[10:43] Gaoshun

You don't.

[10:46] Gaoshun

Excuse me.

[10:53] Jinshi

Let's do this...

[10:58] Xiaolan

Oh right, did you get any hairpins?

[11:01] Maomao

A few.

[11:04] Xiaolan

I see!

[11:06] Xiaolan

So, now...

[11:08] Xiaolan

You can get out of the rear palace!

[11:12] Maomao

Huh? What did you say?

[11:14] Xiaolan

You can get out of the rear palace?

[11:17] Maomao

More details please!

[11:20] Xiaolan

Yes...

[11:24] Xiaolan

You can't meet men from the outside
while at the rear palace,

[11:27] Xiaolan

but if you get special permission,
a man can escort a female worker outside.

[11:32] Maomao

I see, so that's what the hairpins
they hand out at the garden party means.

[11:36] Xiaolan

Exactly! You can also use the hairpin to ask someone to take you out of the rear palace.

[11:43] Maomao

I see. Thanks, Xiaolan. I'll give it a try.

[11:49] Xiaolan

No problem.

[11:51] Xiaolan

Maomao, thanks for the hawthorn!

[11:54] Xiaolan

It was yummy!

[12:00] Maomao

I received a total of four hairpins.

[12:03] Maomao

Two are from men.

[12:06] Maomao

Or rather, since one of the two
lost his important parts,

[12:08] Maomao

maybe I shouldn't call him a "man"?

[12:11] Jinshi

Apothecary!

[12:14] Maomao

Right!

[12:20] Eunuch 1

Master Lihaku, a lady from
the rear palace sent you this.

[12:23] Lihaku

Oh, understood.

[12:26] Lihaku

*Yikes, did she take that
consolation hairpin seriously?*

[12:31] Lihaku

*But if it's a pretty lady,
it would be a waste...*

SIGN Jade Pavilion

Maomao

[12:36] Lihaku

I only gave out one hairpin
at the Jade Pavilion...

[12:39] Lihaku

Which means...

[12:43] Lihaku

That one?

[12:45] Lihaku

Wonder how I should turn her down...

[12:51] Maomao

Excuse me.

[12:55] Maomao

Thank you for waiting.

[12:57] Lihaku

Huh? Who are you?

[12:59] Maomao

I get that a lot.

[13:01] Lihaku

Do people ever tell you that
makeup changes you drastically?

[13:04] Maomao

I get that a lot, too.

[13:08] Lihaku

But anyway, you called me up...

[13:11] Maomao

I'd like to go back to my family.

[13:14] Lihaku

Your family?

[13:15] Lihaku

Do you know what this means?

[13:18] Maomao

I was told that I could go home temporarily,
as long as you can vouch for me.

[13:23] Lihaku

You're quite bold.

[13:25] Lihaku

You, a mere lady-in-waiting, are demanding
that I, a military officer, vouch for you?

[13:29] Maomao

Yes.

[13:32] Lihaku

And you summoned me just for that?

[13:36] Maomao

Yes.

[13:37] Lihaku

I don't know if you're dauntless or clueless.

[13:42] Lihaku

So, little girl, you're trying to
exploit me for your homecoming?

[13:48] Maomao

No, I believe I can offer you
something valuable in exchange.

[13:53] Lihaku

Huh?

SIGN Verdigris House - Introduction Letter - Pairin Verdigris House - Introduction Letter - Joka
Verdigris House - Introduction Letter - Meimei

[13:57] Maomao

Could I interest you in a flower-viewing

session at the Verdigris House?

[14:02] Lihaku

Th-The Verdigris House?!

You've gotta be kidding!

[14:05] Lihaku

A night at that super high-class brothel
could cost a year of my salary!

[14:08] Maomao

If you're worried, you can show them
one of these introduction letters.

[14:12] Maomao

Pairin. Joka. Meimei.

[14:17] Lihaku

Th-That's even less believable!

[14:19] Lihaku

Those are the Three Princesses that not even
the highest-rank officials can afford!

[14:22] Maomao

If you can't believe it, that's just too bad.

[14:25] Lihaku

Huh?!

[14:26] Maomao

My deepest apologies for
having wasted your time.

[14:29] Lihaku

W-Wait...

[14:30] Maomao

It's very unfortunate, but I'll just
have to ask someone else.

[14:33] Maomao

Please forget I mentioned this.

[14:37] Lihaku

She has other contacts?!

[14:40] Lihaku

Hairpins with rose quartz and silver?!

[14:43] Lihaku

*They're obviously from
people who far outrank me.*

[14:46] Lihaku

Just who is this girl?!

[14:48] Lihaku

In that case, what she said might be...

[14:50] Lihaku

No, it's too suspicious!

[14:53] Lihaku

*But if it is true, I'll never get another
chance to meet the Three Princesses again...*

[14:59] Lihaku

What should I do?!

[15:03] Maomao

So, what will it be?

[15:13] Lihaku

I lose.

[15:15] Yinghua

Congratulations, Maomao!

[15:17] Yinghua

Who would have thought
you'd go before any of us...

[15:20] Ailan

I'm so glad!

[15:22] Guiyuan

You must've met someone nice!

[15:24] Maomao

Uh, thank you?

[15:26] Yinghua

Why are you so casual about this?!

[15:28] Maomao

Don't worry, I'll bring back souvenirs.

[15:31] Yinghua

How'd you meet this guy?

[15:33] Maomao

Um, coincidence?

[15:35] Hongniang

I'm pretty sure she has no idea
what the hairpin means.

[15:39] Gyokuyou

Yes, I'm sure of it. I feel so
sorry for a certain someone.

[15:46] Gyokuyou

This is so amusing.

[15:50] Gyokuyou

I wonder what kind of face he'll make...

[15:52] Hongniang

I suspect some turmoil in the future...

[15:56] Narrator

*Jinshi was finally able to finish up
his work and find time to visit*

[16:01] Narrator

the day after Maomao had already left.

[16:04] Gyokuyou

Maomao took off with someone.

[16:15] Gyokuyou

On a three-day homecoming.

[16:18] Maomao

*The pleasure district where
I grew up isn't far away.*

[16:23] Maomao

*It's walking distance from the rear palace,
just beyond the walls and moats.*

[16:30] Maomao

A carriage? How extravagant.

[16:32] Maomao

*Well, the Three Princesses
of the Verdigris House are*

[16:35] Maomao

idolized by the population. Worshiped, even.

[16:40] Maomao

*Just being able to meet
them would be an honor.*

[16:43] Lihaku

Oh, there it is...

[16:47] Lihaku

The pleasure district!

[16:51] Maomao

*There are girls who enter the brothels,
wanting to become like them.*

[16:56] Maomao

But it's not easy.

[16:59] Maomao

*Even if they become a serving girl,
a courtesan-in-training,*

[17:01] Maomao

there's no guarantee that they'll make it.

[17:06] Lihaku

So, this is the Verdigris House...

[17:08] Maomao

Yes.

SIGN Verdigris House

[17:09] Lihaku

It's very dignified.

[17:12] Maomao

It's a long-standing, reputable brothel,

[17:14] Maomao

*providing everything from middle-
to super-high-rank courtesans.*

[17:19] Maomao

Hey, long time no see, Grams.

[17:22] Maomao

How has everyone—

[17:28] Old Lady

What do you mean,

"long time no see?!" Stupid girl.

[17:31] Lihaku

Are you okay?! What's with this old woman?!

[17:35] Maomao

This is the old madam,
proprietor of the Verdigris House.

[17:39] Maomao

I remember this used to help me
spit out all the poison I tried.

[17:43] Old Lady

So, is this the good customer?

[17:46] Old Lady

He's got a handsome face and a good build.

[17:50] Old Lady

I heard you're a rising star, too.

[17:52] Maomao

Hey, why say that out loud to his face?

[17:56] Old Lady

Hey, get Pairin.

[17:59] Old Lady

She should be making tea today.

[18:00] Serving Girl

Yes, ma'am!

[18:01] Lihaku

Pairin...

[18:02] Maomao

Master Lihaku, how strong are your arm muscles?

[18:06] Lihaku

I do train pretty regularly.

[18:09] Maomao

This could be...

[18:11] Serving Girl

This way, please.

[18:14] Lihaku

I'm getting nervous...

[18:16] Maomao

Make a good impression, okay?

[18:18] Lihaku

Yeah.

[18:21] Old Lady

So, why'd you vanish for ten
whole months without a word?

[18:27] Maomao

I had no say in the matter.

Didn't you read the letter I sent?

[18:31] Old Lady

Of course I read it! That's why

I'm taking care of that guy for you,

[18:33] Old Lady

even though we're introduction only!

[18:35] Maomao

I know, I know. I got half of my pay at
the rear palace early, as a special deal.

[18:43] Old Lady

This isn't enough for Pairin.

[18:47] Maomao

Can we say it's enough for just some tea?

[18:49] Old Lady

Idiot! Pairin won't leave
those muscles alone.

[18:54] Maomao

I knew it. But that's not
something I can control...

[18:57] Old Lady

That won't fly! I'll add it to the tab.

[19:00] Maomao

I could never afford that...

[19:02] Old Lady

In that case, bring more good customers.

[19:05] Old Lady

Similar to that guy. Young, so that we can
drain him over a long period of time.

[19:09] Maomao

Would a eunuch be an acceptable customer?

[19:12] Maomao

*No way. The courtesans
would pull out all the stops*

[19:15] Maomao

and put the brothel out of business.

[19:17] Maomao

*But I'd feel bad for Gaoshun
or the quack doctor...*

[19:22] Old Lady

Maomao, your old man should be
at home. Go visit him already.

[19:30] Maomao

*Cross just one street, and the face of
the town changes dramatically.*

[19:35] Maomao

*Rough shacks, beggars,
and syphilitic streetwalkers.*

[19:41] Maomao

Things haven't changed.

[19:57] Maomao

I'm home, Dad.

[19:59] Luomen

Welcome home. You were out for a while.

[20:05] Maomao

I'm finally home.

[20:08] Maomao

Yeah, on that day, I was out
getting dyes for my freckles, when...

[20:25] Maomao

I still have time left on my term, so I'll
go back to the rear palace in two days.

[20:29] Luomen

I see.

[20:30] Maomao

I'm sleepy, but I also want a bath.

[20:33] Luomen

You should borrow a bath at
the Verdigris House tomorrow.

[20:38] Maomao

Yeah, I'll do that.

[20:58] Luomen

The rear palace? What a twist of fate.

[21:06] ED Lyrics

Not just some superficial sweetness

[21:12] ED Lyrics

I want more warmth than I can even use, oh

[21:18] ED Lyrics

Having these selfish idealistic thoughts

[21:23] ED Lyrics

*I swallowed them again today
before putting them into words*

[21:28] ED Lyrics

*Still in my memories,
the scent of fragrant olive*

[21:33] ED Lyrics

The color of twilight in the city

[21:36] ED Lyrics

We were laughing...

[21:41] ED Lyrics

*Filled with sadness,
the tears welled up in my eyes*

[21:53] ED Lyrics

I found a glow during those days

[22:01] ED Lyrics

I guess I took everything for granted

[22:06] ED Lyrics

The wind was so loud I covered my ears

[22:18] ED Lyrics

I gotta stop being like that

[22:26] ED Lyrics

Even if I stumble over the words of love

SIGN Next Time

[22:46] Narrator

Next time: "Wheat Stalks."

SIGN Episode 8: Wheat Stalks

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