Farmhouse 181

Chapter 181: Why So?

Gu Feng and the elder Huang Family couple lived in the main house, while the second youngest Gu brother's family lived in the east wing of the backyard, and the third youngest Gu lived in the west wing, separated by only a wall. The noisy commotion had awakened everyone in the entire backyard.

The elder Mrs. Huang had been startled awake in the middle of the night, and when she got angry, her voice was not small. Without even leaving her room, she yelled toward the west wing.

"You there in the third brother's house, making a ruckus in the dead of night instead of sleeping. What are you lamenting for? Do you even want to harvest the rice in the fields tomorrow?"

The whole family went to the third brother Gu's courtyard to see what the fuss was about. Upon entering the backyard, they saw the third brother Gu's wife, Meng Qiuju, crying fiercely! That ghostly wailing turned out to be her howling.

It was rare to witness such a scene of mockery in the third brother's house, and Huang Xiangwen, unable to suppress her laughter, was trying hard to hold it in due to the need to maintain appearances.

"Third brother's wife, why are you crying in the middle of the night instead of sleeping? Your father and I are not dead yet."

Gu Feng, his face full of fury, glared at his wife, and Gu Feng, following behind and sensing that something was amiss, coughed loudly and asked, "What exactly is going on? Third brother's wife, you usually seem sensible. What's so urgent that you must cry about it in the courtyard now instead of waiting until tomorrow?"

Gu Feng was considered the most reasonable in the family. Meng Qiuju knelt before Gu Feng and began pouring her heart out in tears and snot.

"Father, it's not that I don't want to sleep, it's Gu Wu. He dragged me out to the courtyard and wouldn't let me enter the house..."

Everyone looked puzzled. What on earth was the third brother Gu doing, tormenting his wife in the middle of the night?

Huang Xiangwen, with her sharp eyes, immediately noticed the handprint on Meng Qiuju's face and exclaimed in shock, "My heavens, Qiuju, what happened to your face? There's a handprint."

Now that it was clear there was a handprint, what else could it be?

Meng Qiuju hurriedly covered her face with her hands.

"Indeed, there is! Third brother, did you hit your wife?" the elder Mrs. Huang also turned her head to look.

"Third brother, what's going on?" Gu Feng's expression darkened as he questioned the third youngest Gu.

This third brother was much more composed than the second; it would not have been surprising for the latter to do such a peculiar thing, but it was very strange for the always steady third brother to do such a thing.

"Ah!" Gu Feng sighed heavily and knelt before Gu Feng with a thud, exclaiming loudly, "Father, it's all my fault. I failed to manage my wife and daughter, and I have disgraced our Gu Family!"

The whole family's expression turned solemn, waiting for the third brother Gu to explain in detail.

As it turned out, it all had to do with the Bun Shop in town coming tomorrow to ask for a marriage proposal.

Gu Xiaoqing threw tantrums, claiming she already belonged to Shunzi, and that if she accepted the marriage proposal from the Bun Shop in town, she could only drown herself in the river.

After causing a scene in the evening, she was confined to the house and slapped by the third youngest Gu. Overwhelmed with anger and not mindful of his strength, he knocked her unconscious with a slap.

Meng Qiuju intervened and also suffered, getting hit as well; that wasn't the end of it, she was then chased out to the courtyard and wasn't allowed to reenter the house, and that's what aroused the whole family.

After hearing all this, Gu Feng had an extremely grim look on his face.

Such a scandal involving an unmarried young woman, and the entire family couldn't hold their heads up.

Moreover, they had already made arrangements with the Bun Shop in town, and tomorrow, the matchmaker would come with the proposal. Changing their minds now, what kind of behavior was that!

The family inwardly clicked their tongues, at a loss for words.

The courtyard fell silent enough to hear a pin drop; all eyes turned to Gu Feng, the family pillar. After a while, Gu Feng's aged voice finally broke the silence.

Chapter 182: Acting

"Old third, how long has this been going on?"

"Ah...?"

"What's with the 'ah'? I'm asking you how long you've known about Erya and Shunzi's affair," Gu Feng said angrily, slapping the door frame.

He had known about it for quite some time, but he did not dare to tell the truth. He hemmed and hawed, and finally whispered, "I... I only found out recently, the day Youyou went missing."

"It's been so many days, why didn't you speak up earlier?"

Before Gu Feng could say anything, Mrs. Huang couldn’t hold back and started wailing.

She had a loud voice, so when she bellowed, it startled Sanya in the house, making her cry.

Gu Feng frowned deeply and said, "What are you blabbering about? Do you think this is something to be proud of? You want to shout it so the whole village knows?"

Mrs. Huang glanced outside towards the wall, shrank her neck, and in an unconvinced and quiet voice said, "I’m just seeing where that shameless wretch of a girl has gone! You, from the second family, aren’t you going to comfort Sanya? Do you want to wake up the whole neighborhood with crying?"

Huang Xiangwen wanted to stay and enjoy the show; this was being shot while lying down. As she walked into the house to comfort Sanya, she grumbled, "It’s all because of your loud voice that you woke up the young miss."

Now that the incident had happened, Gu Feng sent all the onlookers back to their rooms to sleep before turning to look at his third son and daughter-in-law with a helpless, dark face.

The two, whom he thought would be the least trouble, had created this situation.

"Old third, tell me, what were you thinking?"

"Dad, I, I... I’m clueless, it’s all up to dad to handle," Gu third gritted his teeth and said.

"Hmph..." Gu Feng let out a cold snort and sighed, "You two were the ones acting out tonight’s drama, weren’t you? Old third, oh old third!"

Gu Feng sighed deeply, bent down to pat Gu third’s shoulder, and then said, "Among your three brothers, you are the smartest and the most scheming one. Don’t think no one knows about the things you do. You better be careful, or your cleverness may backfire on you. Take care of yourself."

Having said that, Gu Feng turned and walked towards the main house, while Gu third gazed at his back with an indecipherable expression. As soon as he could no longer see the figure, he stared into a darkness in the courtyard, his eyes ominously dark.

Meng Qiuju carefully stood up, nudged Gu third, and asked, "What do we do now? Dad didn't say anything."

Gu third pulled a crooked smile, sinister as he said, "We don't need to do anything, we'll know by tomorrow."

...

The date for Gu Dabao's marriage was set in a rush, from the proposal to the wedding day, it was a total of just eight days.

The other side had made things clear through matchmaker Zhang, the Lei Family's daughter couldn't wait any longer due to observing mourning for her father; she was getting on in age.

An 18-year-old girl still unmarried was a rare sight in this era, especially in the countryside, so everyone was understanding.

But with just these few days, they had to hurry to prepare everything, so Gu third had the matchmaker he employed go to the Bun Shop in the town to talk, asking to delay for a few days more.

As for Gu third's stalling tactics, Gu Feng scoffed at them.

With everyone in the family busy, Gu Feng shouted towards the west room, "You just think my old face hasn't been thrown away enough."

After speaking, he walked out angrily, only to return in the afternoon.

It was later that everyone learned, he had gone to the Bun Shop in the town, without any beating around the bush, he directly said that the marriage Gu third had arranged for Erya wasn't valid, as long as he was alive; he had the final say in the Gu Family, and he had already found a suitable match for Erya right in their own village, so they should take it or leave

Chapter 183: The House is Rented

When the commotion from the Bun Shop reached the Gu Family, the third son of the family, Gu Lao San, claimed he had to go hunting in the mountains and slipped away. Gu Lao Er was cursed roundly, providing quite the spectacle for the whole village.

Gu Youyou was unaware of these village dramas; she was preoccupied with moving house.

Within three days, Qin Changlin found Gu Youyou a house, a small three-bedroom with a courtyard.

When Gu Youyou was looking at the house, Qin Changlin talked incessantly about the various advantages of the property.

"Sister Youyou, although the house is small, the courtyard isn't, look at this, there's even a pear tree. And these doors, windows, furniture, all in good condition, and the price is cheap too, only eight taels of silver for a year. You give me ten taels, and you'll save two taels," he said.

Gu Youyou nodded and said, "It's quite nice. I don't need a big place since I'm living alone. Hmm, no well?" Gu Youyou frowned slightly.

Qin Changlin also noticed that there was no well in the courtyard and hurriedly said, "Oh, this is my mistake, I didn't notice there's no well of its own in the courtyard. It will be a bit inconvenient for getting water, as one would have to fetch it from the river."

He sized up Gu Youyou and added, "Sister Youyou, if you can't handle carrying the water, I'll help you fetch it. Luckily, we're not far from the Qingshui River."

The riverbank was just a few hundred meters from the courtyard, which was also convenient for washing clothes. The key was that the courtyard was quiet, backed onto the main street, and wasn't too remote.

The courtyard was swept clean, the furniture in the house was tidy, and the windows shone brightly. Next to the bedroom window, there was an empty bookshelf, and the desk underneath was also well-preserved. It was clear that the previous inhabitant had been someone who enjoyed life and was a scholar.

Gu Youyou smiled and said, "Okay, let’s settle here; water isn’t a big problem, I can manage. Thank you, Changlin."

Qin Changlin was overjoyed and quickly replied, "Good, good, since you’re satisfied with this place, I’ll arrange for the silver to be delivered."

"Delivered?" Gu Youyou asked, "What happened to the people who used to live here?"

Qin Changlin explained, "The house was previously inhabited by a family of three. The man of the house was a scholar. Sadly, he was almost thirty and had only achieved the status of Scholar, without making any further progress. Later on, the man passed away, leaving only the widow and her orphaned son. The mistress originally came from Yangguan City, where her family had some foundation, rumored to be owners of a dye workshop.

Once her husband died, her stay here became problematic regarding her livelihood. Just at that time, her brother from her mother’s side asked her to help out at the family’s dye shop, and so she went back home with her son. Her son is quite studious as well, more capable than his deceased father. At thirteen, he became a Scholar and has greatly impressed his teacher, seeming quite promising. I believe her brother took them in because he saw potential in her son..."

"Fine, this will do!" Gu Youyou wasn’t interested in hearing gossip about the previous inhabitants.

"Oh, right, there’s something else!"

As Gu Youyou prepared to leave, he started to speak with a trace of difficulty.

Gu Youyou thought there might be another issue with the house and slightly furrowed her brow.

She thought to herself: This young man doesn’t seem as reliable as I expected!

To her surprise, he said, "Didn’t I mention it to you last time? You’re registered under my master’s name as an apprentice for now. In a little while, once my master recommends that you can start seeing patients, you will be able to work openly as a doctor in Jisheng Hall. However... although my master has agreed, he has been incredibly busy with endless consultations and hasn’t had the time. His idea is for you to come over for now, and not to see patients yet. When he has a free day, he’ll find an appropriate reason."

Chapter 184: The Letter of Retirement

So, it was about that matter. Gu Youyou had no objections and nodded with a smile, "Alright, I’ll follow Doctor Zhou’s arrangements."

"Ah! Agreed, then let’s settle on that!"

...

Gu Youyou thus secured the house for herself, and left the matter of paying the silver to Qin Changlin. She went home and began to pack her belongings.

Her possessions were indeed few: aside from the vegetables and herbs she planted in the yard, there were only a few garments.

Hmm, she couldn’t take the vegetables and herbs with her, so they would be a gift for Jin Zijin.

Looking at the small bundle she had packed, she truly felt a sense of sorrow.

This was all she had in the world.

Gu Youyou took out a piece of coarse cloth and, similarly, picked up a piece of burned charcoal, and wrote in large, bold characters on the cloth.

A self-divorce letter.

"Presently, the daughter of the Gu Family of Lotus Village, having been gravely ill, was wed into the hunter's family of the same village. Her husband had not abandoned her, attentively caring for her until her recovery. However, Gu Youyou was constantly anxious.

Due to long-term illness, she believed she would remain barren for life. As the ancients say, 'There are three forms of filial impiety, and to have no descendants is the most serious.' Gu Youyou does not wish to burden her husband's family by leaving them without progeny, and thus, with tears, she hereby divorces herself.

With this, she concludes her writing, wishing her husband long-lasting peace and urging him to find a better partner!"

Wife: Gu Youyou."

Although there were few words, she filled the entire piece of coarse cloth with her bold and vigorous handwriting, especially the characters for her name, Gu Youyou, which seemed to possess the power of dragons and tigers.

When Jin Zijin came back in the evening and finished reading this self-divorce letter, he was once again shocked.

Perhaps because her health was much improved, these words contained much more vigor than the prescription she had written last time.

A woman capable of such writing, how could she be ordinary?

Ha, she even claimed to have learned these things in a dream—a ridiculous excuse!

Jin Zijin looked up at the sky, realizing it was getting late.

He curled the corners of his mouth and murmured softly, "I'll let you off for now."

You think the game is over, but in reality, it hasn't even truly begun.

In August, the nights were much cooler, and most people would cover themselves with a thin blanket to prevent catching a chill. But Jin Zijin, in his simple thatched hut, was so hot that he couldn't sleep.

This had been the case since last year, and it was only out of desperation that he had finally set his sights on the Gu Family's pawn.

But now, she had run away.

Heh heh...

Jin Zijin could not help but give a bitter laugh before finally getting up and heading to the source of the Qingshui River, that very coldest spring.

The moon shone brightly, and beneath the night sky, the earth was cloaked in a hazy, silvery glow.

Shedding all pretense, within the cool stream, Jin Zijin's deep and expansive eyes held a clarity and gentleness like the moonlight.

He was originally a man of hearty and carefree nature.

Trees long for peace but the wind does not cease; he desired an ordinary life, yet others insisted on pulling him into the whirlpool of power.

Rustling sounds came from behind the cliff, disturbing Jin Zijin who was relaxing in the icy spring water. He slightly furrowed his brow, and after a moment, gazed in a direction with displeasure and muttered quietly, "Ever persistent, you manage to find me everywhere. Do you truly have nothing better to do?"

From behind the tree, a man dressed in white emerged. In the moonlight, his white garment glowed with a soft radiance, and the handsome man appeared as if he were an immortal who had descended from the moon.

He walked at a leisurely pace, a faint smile on his lips, his ivory-colored fan swaying with each step.

"It seems you're the one with the leisure, to bathe in the ice-cold spring and bask in the moonlight in the dead of night. Aren't you afraid of freezing yourself to death?"

"Sharp-tongued as ever, no wonder your father was so angered by you that he fell ill," Jin Zijin replied irritably.

Chapter 185: What's Wrong?

The man in white on the other side seemed not to care about his words and simply asked with a smile, "Are you soaking in the ice spring alone at midnight because your village girl won't let you in bed?"

Jin Zijin raised an eyebrow and said, "So... you've come to laugh at me?"

The man in white opposite him was taken aback by these words, especially by the mocking smile on Jin Zijin's face.

He paused in surprise, folding his fan, but there was a slight worry in his tone as he said, "I know you married that village girl out of necessity, but judging by your behavior... could it be that you have really taken a liking to her?"

Jin Zijin abruptly stopped smiling, his dark eyes narrowed as if he too realized his behavior was somewhat odd.

Gazing at the night scenery of lake and mountains for a moment, he suddenly stood up, picked up a piece of clothing from a stone not far away, rummaged through it haphazardly, and pulled out a piece of coarse cloth, tossing it to the man in white.

The man in white caught the throwing object with surprise, and under the moonlight, he strained to read the words on it, then slowly and intermittently, he started reading aloud.

"A resignation letter." The man in white was startled, he looked at Jin Zijin, his voice rising in disbelief as he repeated, "A resignation letter?"

Jin Zijin nodded slightly, then gestured for him to continue reading.

The moon was bright, but not as bright as during the day. If it were not for the man in white's good eyesight, and the fact that Gu Youyou wrote in large characters, he wouldn't have been able to read it clearly.

"Today, the daughter of the Gu family from Lotus Village, who had been severely ill... married into the Jin Family of hunters in the same village while sick. Grateful... that her husband did not abandon her, and took great care of her until her recovery. However, Gu Youyou... was always anxious... Fearing that because she had been bedridden for years, she would... she would never bear children?"

At this point, the man in white looked at Jin Zijin with surprise, a hint of intrigue in his smile as he continued reading, "It is said, among unfilial acts, not producing an offspring is the greatest. Gu Youyou does not wish to be a burden to her husband's family... and thus with tears, she resigns. Now... I cease my brush here, hoping my husband lives long and in good health and finds another mate!"

"If you're going to look, then look, why read it out loud?" Jin Zijin's face had already turned sour from being mocked.

After reading just a few sentences, the man in white was laughing so hard he couldn't catch his breath, and his celestial demeanor was completely gone.

"You... hahaha, I have finished reading." Seeing Jin Zijin looking frustrated, his mood grew even better.

"This village girl of yours... I mean, how can you bear it, why else would you be soaking in an ice spring in the middle of the night instead of sleeping, is it that you really can't have children, or did she find an excuse not to want you?"

Jin Zijin, with a dark face, watched as the man leaning on a nearby tree trunk struggled to breathe from laughing too much.

"Haha... you, you've had your day too, to be disdained by a village girl... no, I must keep this resignation letter for you, take it back and show it to them all..." he said, reaching to stuff it into his own chest.

"Hmph... you dare!" Jin Zijin frowned and let out a cold snort, then said, "Enough, I'm not showing you this so you can make fun of me. Look carefully, don't you see anything inappropriate?"

Seeing Jin Zijin's expression turn serious, the man in white also stopped laughing, his demeanor becoming solemn.

He spread out the coarse white cloth again, and as he read the entire passage, his expression became increasingly grave.

There was not a single thing appropriate about it.

After a while, he spoke with astonishment, "Did that village girl of yours really write this?"

Jin Zijin nodded faintly, causing the man in white to change color even more dramatically.

Chapter 186: Wonderful Method

"I remember the last time you wrote to me asking to check on her, the daughter of an ordinary farming family from Lotus Village of the Gu Family, chosen by the people of Xuanzong because she was a girl of the Four Pillars Pure Yin. The people Xuanzong picks don't care about the other person's background; it should have nothing to do with her real identity.

As for the Gu Family... the Gu Family has been farmers in this village for generations, nothing special about them. The only thing special is that her maternal Lin Family produced a Top Scholar more than ten years ago, just when the new emperor ascended the throne and was cultivating his power everywhere. This Lin Qinghe was indeed fortunate, just happened to be chosen. He is now a First Rank Great Scholar in the imperial court; it's not impossible that someone might be targeting him because of this.

It's just that... this village girl was chosen by Xuanzong eleven years ago to start cultivating Yin, and eleven years ago, Lin Qinghe was of no use to anyone, so why would..."

Both immortals had serious expressions, and Jin Zijin didn’t speak. After a while, the man in white spoke again, "A Pure Yin Body girl is not so easy to find, and to find one of the right age is even harder. Moreover... looking at her handwriting, she could not have achieved this without over ten years of practice—such a woman used in place of an ordinary village girl would be too great a loss both emotionally and rationally. If you suspect she has been switched, I find it unlikely!"

Jin Zijin didn’t deny it, which was precisely what he couldn’t figure out.

From inside the clothing on the rock by the shore, Jin Zijin pulled out another piece of coarse cloth, a prescription that Gu Youyou had written last time.

The man in white took the cloth and after looking at the prescription, his eyes were wide with shock.

His pupils dilated, his face incredulous.

"This... This handwriting is the same, all from her hand?"

"Correct! She used it for herself," Jin Zijin said in a low voice.

By the moonlight, the man in white rubbed his eyes, then looked intently again.

After a long while, sounds of admiration came from the man in white within the empty mountain forest.

"Brilliant, truly brilliant! This prescription is exactly what’s needed to counteract the extreme yin poison of Xuanzong. Our Tianzong sect has thought of many methods to no avail. I would never have thought, this prescription could be used in such a way. Zijin, has the poison in her body been resolved?"

Jin Zijin spoke indifferently, "If it were an ordinary person afflicted with this cold poison, this prescription might’ve already cured them. But she has a Pure Yin Body; how could such poison be so easily resolved? She’s only used this prescription to suppress the poison inside her body."

"Then who exactly is she? A person with such skills cannot possibly be that daughter of the Gu Family," the man in white said, suddenly agitated.

Jin Zijin didn’t answer; he couldn’t answer.

The silent night sky fell back into a lull, the man in white holding the two pieces of ordinary coarse cloth, his fists getting tighter.

Time passed, and Jin Zijin started to feel a chill; only then did he move in the cold spring water, getting up to put on dry clothes.

"Leave this matter to you, investigate!"

He gently dropped these words and began to meander toward the thatched cottage halfway up the mountain.

The man in white gave a wry smile and said in a low voice to Jin Zijin’s departing figure, "Investigate? Easy for you to say; you’re with her all day, why don’t you go investigate?"

This night was destined not to be an ordinary one.

Gu Youyou ran off in a huff, someone who hadn’t been seen for years also showed up, and...

Jin Zijin sat up from the bed, his gaze falling on the window.

In the moonlight, the cloaked man cast a long shadow, imprinted on the paper-covered window.

"Come in, I’m alone," Jin Zijin said calmly.

Chapter 187: Another One Comes as One Leaves

Upon hearing this, the shadow on the window flashed, and the next moment, he had already arrived in front of Jin Zijin’s bed.

Jin Zijin, dressed in a simple undergarment, was sitting calmly on the edge of the bed, looking at him and said, "Why have you come?"

The man opposite, dressed in black with a cloak, concealed his face, only revealing faint red lips and a smooth chin.

He raised his hand and took the cloak off his head, and his eagle-like sharp eyes turned to Jin Zijin sitting on the edge of the bed.

Perhaps it was because he had never seen him so disheveled before, he slightly furrowed his brows and said, "Do you intend to talk to me like this?"

Jin Zijin looked down at his clothes, having been a hunter for years, he no longer cared about such things, and simply stated, "If not like this, then how? Like last time?"

Last time, they had talked in the courtyard during a thunderstorm, which seemed even more of a mess.

The man in black twitched the corner of his mouth and then suddenly laughed out loud, saying, "Last time, I risked being struck by lightning to accompany you in the yard, getting drenched without letting me into the house. I specially chose a day with good weather without rain to visit you, and now you actually invited me inside. Where is that village girl bride of yours?"

Everyone kept asking about Gu Youyou, and when he remembered the letter of self-dismissal he received in the afternoon, Jin Zijin felt he lost face.

Even if it was all an act, he felt deeply embarrassed, and his face suddenly darkened, yet he maintained a calm tone and said, "Let’s stick to the matter at hand, why ask about her?"

He was clearly a bit angry, which slightly surprised the man in black.

He chuckled softly and said, "Alright, you don’t want to talk about her, I won’t ask. I’m just curious, you had proper business to attend to and yet you ran off to this godforsaken place to marry a village girl.

What in the world were you thinking? Or should I say, what’s so special about that village girl that made you abandon your principles?"

Jin Zijin tilted his chin up, eyes half-closed.

"Is this your version of not asking?"

The man in black: "..."

"Haha... fine, I won’t ask. That girl is quite pretty, I understand men, but when you leave here, you had better cut ties cleanly. She’s of no use to you, make sure not to leave yourself vulnerable."

The man in black took a few steps forward, intending to sit down beside Jin Zijin on the bed. But even a clean and tidy farmers’ bed was hardly suitable for someone like him. After thinking for a moment, he retreated, pulled over a bamboo chair, and sat down.

He touched the armrest of the bamboo chair and even gave a laugh of praise, "Your craftsmanship is really quite good!"

"Get to the point," Jin Zijin obviously lost patience with his delay in starting the real discussion.

"What’s the rush? It’s not often I get to sit in a chair while visiting you."

Jin Zijin: "..."—his expression darkened further.

"Alright, alright, I’ll talk!" The man in black restrained the smile on his face, grew solemn, and said, "He’s gone, not in these mountains behind. You don’t have to pretend to be a hunter here anymore."

Jin Zijin’s expression became grave, and he raised an eyebrow, asking, "Where did he go?"

The man shook his head, troubled, "Without that medicine, considering his temperament, he'll quickly regain his clarity. It won't be easy to find him in this vast sea of people. How much longer can you hold on?"

After a moment of silence, Jin Zijin let out a low sigh, "I'm not sure!"

The man in black was startled, then also sighed softly, "Then... I will find him as quickly as I can. If it really doesn't work out, you'll have to go back to the Taoist Temple and seek help from that old Taoist Tianzong!"

"Didn't you say he couldn't be trusted?" Jin Zijin asked in surprise.

Chapter 188: Moving to a New Home

The man in black huffed with a hint of anger and said, "That old Taoist is not to be trusted; he wants to turn you into someone like him. But if you really can't hold on anymore, you can only go to him."

Jin Zijin remained silent for a while before he said with a faint smile, "I would rather live a plain life in the Taoist temple like him."

The man in black seemed to hear the biggest joke of his life, sizing Jin Zijin up and down. After a while, he incredulously snorted and said, "But your birthright means you cannot be ordinary. If you don't strive for it, others will force you into the fray."

"Hmm? That's what I think too."

...

Gu Youyou moved to a new home and spent lavishly on furniture and bedding during the day. She stayed busy the next day too, and finally, she got the house into a state that was somewhat to her satisfaction.

Looking at the small courtyard she had put together with thirty taels of silver, Qin Changlin secretly clicked his tongue, gulping down his saliva.

Thirty taels of silver, enough to pay for nearly four years' rent of this courtyard, was a fortune to an ordinary farmer's family.

Gu Youyou's concept of spending completely overturned his previous notions of a village girl.

Are all the village girls nowadays so lavish, or is it just his naive and adorable Sister Youyou who is so extravagant?

Gu Youyou had always been a big spender because the one thing she had never lacked since childhood was money; she had always bought whatever caught her eye. The things in this courtyard were the result of her careful calculations. If Qin Changlin knew this thought in her mind, he would probably die of shock.

She counted on her fingers and then turned to ask Qin Changlin, "Help me see what's missing?"

"Ah...?" Qin Changlin was not lightly frightened, wiping the cold sweat from his forehead and said with a dry chuckle, "No... nothing's missing, Sister Youyou. Thirty taels of silver is quite a lot, you know, we're still apprentices, we need to save up."

His reminder made Gu Youyou remember that she had already spent quite a bit, and that she was still a pauper.

"Alright, let's leave it at that for now. Changlin, come over and help me set up the doghouse," Gu Youyou said, tossing a bamboo basket to him.

"What? Dog... a doghouse?" Qin Changlin looked in surprise at Abao, who was staring at him with big eyes.

In those days when people could hardly make a living, why keep a dog? He wasn't one of those wealthy merchants from the town, flushed with silver.

And this dog called Abao looked a bit too unusual; if it weren't for Gu Youyou's insistence that it was a dog, he would have thought it was a wolf.

"Do dogs really... need a separate place for a lair? Just let it squat by the gate and guard the house for you," he said.

Gu Youyou gave him a disdainful glance and said, "My dog is precious."

Qin Changlin: "..."

Gu Youyou hadn't used modern standards for Abao's lair; she had simply prepared a bamboo basket and lined it with thick straw to make a simple nest. Otherwise, Qin Changlin would have again been shocked to the core.

...

It had been two days since she left home. The first day felt exceptionally liberating, as if she had been reborn, and she slept sweetly through the night.

But for some reason, on the second night, she thought of Jin Zijin.

Was it because they had been husband and wife... or roommates, for almost a year? She had left a letter and walked away, and he didn't have any reaction at all.

Alas! Indeed, human nature is indifferent; used and discarded.

Luckily she was sensible. Otherwise, how embarrassing would it have been if he had issued a divorce letter?

Tossing and turning, unable to sleep, Gu Youyou then heard someone entering the yard.

Chapter 189: Come with Me

The voice was extremely soft, unlike that of an ordinary person; it must belong to someone like Jin Zijin, who possesses skills akin to Qinggong.

Jin Zijin? Gu Youyou suddenly widened her eyes. Could it be him who had followed her?

Abao was sleeping outside, and since Abao didn't bark or react, she couldn't think of anyone other than Jin Zijin who it could be!

At this moment, Gu Youyou's heart was in turmoil. Clearly, she was restless tonight and felt somewhat reluctant to just walk away. Yet, she must force herself to clearly separate from Jin Zijin.

To her, Jin Zijin was too mysterious, and she knew nothing about him.

Now that he was here, she didn't know whether to throw him out or to pretend she didn't notice anything.

Alas! After thinking it over, she decided to go with the flow and pretend to be asleep.

Gu Youyou closed her eyes again, her breathing steady, as she feigned sleep.

The door was pushed open, and faint footsteps approached the bedchamber, stopping beside her bed.

"Heh..." That person chuckled, and only then did Gu Youyou realize it wasn't Jin Zijin who had come. It seemed to be... the man from the coffin?

How did he make his way here when Jin Zijin was looking for him everywhere?

Gu Youyou was filled with surprise, holding her breath, every pore on her body tensing up.

What was he here for? This man was no less dangerous than Jin Zijin!

"You are indeed still alive," the man said with a light laugh.

Gu Youyou gave no reaction, her eyes tightly shut as she continued to feign sleep.

"Still pretending?" The man coldly spat out two words.

Taken aback, Gu Youyou couldn’t keep up the act anymore. She took a deep breath, trying to calm herself.

She turned over, wrapping herself tightly in the thin quilt, and sat up again.

The weather was hot, and she was wearing only a light undergarment that was somewhat transparent. Knowing that this man had excellent night vision in the dark, and since people in ancient times were quite particular, she decided to follow the local customs.

The man appeared to be in good spirits, and normal. He looked clean and transparent like crystal, as if not belonging to this worldly existence.

"How did you end up here? My husband is searching for you everywhere. You should leave quickly."

"Your husband?" The man raised his eyebrows in surprise, thought for a moment, and then said with a raised eyebrow, "Are you talking about that man from Heavenly Mountain?"

Gu Youyou nodded and hastily said, "Yes, you know he won’t let you off. You better leave quickly; he will be back any minute."

The man wore a look of disbelief, his expression dazed, and he seemed somewhat lost as he stared at Gu Youyou for a good while, not making any move.

Abao, who was sleeping outside, cautiously peered in from the doorway, his bright wolf eyes shining like little lamps, emitting a greenish glow.

The corner of Gu Youyou’s mouth twitched as she glanced at the man who was lost in thought and then glared at Abao.

Such an insensitive fellow. Although we spent several days in the ancient tomb, couldn’t you tell that your master and this gentleman are not from the same world?

Well, of course, neither was he on the same side as Jin Zijin.

The man seemed lost in thought, his face showing confusion.

"If he is your husband, why did you help me back in the mountain?" he suddenly asked.

Gu Youyou chuckled dryly, recalling her own situation with some resignation, and said, "Consider it empathy, pitying you as well as myself."

She shouldn’t have spoken like that, but as memories flooded back, she couldn’t help but speak her mind.

The man looked at her cynically, then mocked, "So, in reality, you’re just like me, nothing but a tool being used. And yet... Do you still acknowledge him as your husband?"

Gu Youyou’s mind was a bit muddled. What did he mean by this?

"Why don’t you come with me instead?" he proposed.

Chapter 190: Insomnia Night

You’d have to be out of your mind to go with you, thought Gu Youyou, though she didn’t dare say it aloud.

She had finally escaped these dangerous people, so why would she stupidly follow this most dangerous individual?

Gu Youyou shrank her neck, her face turning red as she said, "That won’t do, if we get caught together... we’ll be... we’ll be drowned in a pond."

"..." Where did that come from?

"Then why stay? Do you think someone like him would stay with a village girl like you in this remote little mountain village?"

With an innocent and scared look, Gu Youyou firmly shook her head and said, "Marrying him is known to the entire village, even if he doesn’t stay, wherever he goes, I will follow. Please don’t talk like that, in consideration of the time I saved you, it could ruin my reputation."

The man squinted, a look of surprise on his face. He observed her for a moment, then with some disappointment, he sighed, "I thought you were a special kind of village girl."

Gu Youyou: "..."

All right, she was a village girl. Did he have to keep reminding her?

There was another unusual noise outside, and the man sensed it immediately, pricking up his ears and looking out the window, his expression turning grave.

Likewise, Gu Youyou heard it too, and her face darkened.

The person outside, like this man, moved with steps too light to be ordinary, making it unclear whether it was Jin Zijin or not.

Heh, no wonder she couldn’t sleep tonight, it was indeed lively.

"Quick, let’s go, it might be him."

To say Gu Youyou was helping him was less accurate than saying she was helping herself.

She had no clue about the person behind all this, but this man might very well know who it was. Perhaps, he could be of great use at a crucial moment.

The man looked down at Gu Youyou in surprise, not expecting an ordinary farm girl to possess such sharp hearing.

Gu Youyou gave a bitter smile and whispered, "Like you, I was locked in a dark room without daylight since childhood, having to drink that kind of medicine every day. Whether this hearing is related to the medicine or is innate, I don’t remember."

Before her words ended, the man in front of the bed had already vanished, disappearing like a ghost before her eyes.

Gu Youyou quickly widened her eyes and looked around, only to see him atop the darkest part of the ceiling.

Their gazes met, she let out a sigh, quickly lay down, closed her eyes, and wrapped herself tightly in the thin quilt.

Outside, the person was cautious, but became careless upon entering the courtyard, displaying a casual gait that lacked Jin Zijin’s composure.

Not him?

Gu Youyou furrowed her brow.

Tonight really was a sleepless night.

The person outside casually pushed the door open, and this time Abao wasn't idle. It bared its teeth and snarled at the stranger, not being a dog or a wolf meant it couldn't bark like a dog nor howl like a wolf—it made a series of strange noises, mixed with the sound of it grinding its teeth angrily.

It was warning whoever dared to step into the house that if they took one more step forward, they shouldn't blame Abao for being rude.

But being so small, its attempt to look fierce came off more adorable than threatening, causing the person outside to burst into laughter.

"Have your teeth grown in yet, little one? Being so fierce isn't nice, you know."

It was a stranger's voice, one Gu Youyou had never heard before.

No matter who he was, intruding uninvited in the middle of the night made him no good person.

She quickly sat up, slipped on her outer garment, and walked out of the bedroom.

And on the way out, she picked up the stick used for doing laundry at the door.