Farmhouse 201

Chapter 201: Deliberate Difficulties

"Ah...?" Yue Rujing's expression stiffened as he raised his folding fan to shield half of his face, offering a somewhat bizarre defense, "That's... not exactly true. I'm a lay Taoist, not like those Taoists who spend all day in the Taoist Temple."

Gu Youyou gave him a dismissive look and said, "A lay Taoist is still a Taoist, right?"

Yue Rujing forced a laugh, though his expression was rather unnatural.

"Hmm, what's the difference between a lay Taoist and one who spends all day in the Taoist Temple?" Gu Youyou asked again.

Yue Rujing hurried to explain, "It's different, very different. Those temple-dwelling Taoists have many taboos: they wear Taoist robes, they abstain from four kinds of food, avoid five pungent plants, and maintain a celibate life in service to the Sanqing to preserve their purity. Lay Taoists aren't so strict. We simply cultivate at the Taoist Temple, hold the title of a Taoist, but have no taboos, living like ordinary people. So you really don't need to treat me as a Taoist. Someone like me... can't be considered a Taoist!"

Gu Youyou was non-committal; she already regarded him as a Taoist, one way or another.

That Tianzong or whatever, she should find time to inquire about it; it must have something to do with Jin Zijin.

Having lived as a village girl for so long, Gu Youyou had long since mastered the skills necessary for village life, cooking with firewood was nothing to her, and it wasn't long before she had prepared a meal with two side dishes!

The steaming dishes were laid out on the table, and Abao unceremoniously hopped onto the stool opposite Gu Youyou.

Gu Youyou didn’t mind Abao being on the table; she even placed its special bowl and plate in front of it on the stool it sat upon, filled it with food, and signaled for it to eat.

She made no gesture inviting Yue Rujing to join the meal. With the dog seated at the edge of the table already, even if she had invited him, Yue Rujing wouldn’t have been able to sit down anyway.

The usually composed Yue Rujing couldn’t keep his composure at this scene. A dog and a human eating together? He had never encountered such a thing in all his years!

Yue Rujing’s eyes widened as he pointed at Abao, who was crouched on the stool, and said, "You... You aren’t disgusted? Goodness, you can still stomach it! Eugh..."

Abao’s eating manners indeed left much to be desired, gulping down food noisily. Gu Youyou frowned and said, "Abao, eat slowly. If you can’t learn to eat elegantly, I won’t let you up here again, you hear?"

Hearing this, Yue Rujing’s worldview was once again challenged.

Teach a dog to eat politely? What in the world kind of wife had Jin Zijin married?

Every action of Gu Youyou’s highlighted how she was different. To say she was normal—he wouldn’t believe it if he was beaten to death. Yet the mystery of her background posed a frustrating enigma.

There was a knock at the door, and Yue Rujing raised his eyebrows before quickly making his way to the courtyard to open the door.

Outside the courtyard stood a neatly dressed waiter carrying a food container. Upon seeing the astonishingly impressive visitor, he was evidently taken aback. He had lived in Qingshui Town for many years but had never seen such a person of grace.

Yue Rujing was used to such expressions of astonishment from ordinary folks and displayed an air of nonchalance, tinged with a hint of pride.

He cleared his throat with a cough, a gesture that seemed to snap the waiter back to reality.

"You're delivering food from Fulai Restaurant, right?"

The waiter recovered, hastily responded, "Yes, yes, sir, I'm here with your food from Fulai Restaurant!" He lifted the food container and said, "This is the meal you ordered!"

Yue Rujing took it, then handed a yellow envelope to the waiter, saying, "Hmm, for the next few days, have the meals sent according to the list in here. Make them cleanly, and you won't miss a reward."

The waiter took the envelope and peeked inside. He couldn't read much, but the string of dish names made him unable to contain his joy.

Chapter 202: Worse Than a Dog

Such a large amount, this truly constitutes a big business deal!

The eager smiling face welcomed her with continuous affirmatives, "Yes, dear guest, rest assured, our Fulai Restaurant is famous in Qingshui Town for its cleanliness, and our dishes are all exceptionally tasty!"

Yue Rujing nodded and said, "That's good, go ahead then!"

Gu Youyou, inside the room, understood the conversation outside and realized why there had been no movement when she was eating; it seemed Yue Rujing had anticipated that she wouldn't offer him food, so he had made arrangements beforehand.

After closing the courtyard door, Yue Rujing entered the house with his food box, beaming with joy.

Upon seeing Abao carelessly sitting in his own spot (or so he believed), his mood instantly soured.

"Hey, hey, cousin-in-law, can't you let the dog eat in its own place? What kind of practice is it to let a dog sit on a stool to eat?"

Gu Youyou, smiling, lifted her head to look at him and said, "But this is Abao’s spot!"

Yue Rujing: "..."

He was somewhat choked up with frustration, "Then where is my spot? Where do I sit to eat? He’s in my place."

Damn it, the dining table wasn’t small, yet there were only two stools. One for Gu Youyou, one for Abao, and he could only stand.

Gu Youyou, amusing herself internally, pointed with her chopsticks towards the outside and said, "The courtyard is quite spacious, please yourself!"

"Outside?" Yue Rujing incredulously glanced at the courtyard, his expression uglier than ever.

"You’re asking me to eat in the courtyard? That should be where your dog belongs, shouldn’t it?"

Gu Youyou snorted with laughter, gazing at him suggestively, without saying a word.

He seemed to realize he had made an unfortunate remark, trapping himself, his face changing from green to white, quite amusing to behold.

"Am I worse than a dog?"

He had lived for so many years and never once been treated like this; in Gu Youyou’s eyes, he was clearly less important than the dog named Abao.

Moreover, this dog wasn’t of a pure bloodline, a mongrel less than a dog itself.

Gu Youyou scoffed, "This is my house. I didn’t invite you here. If you insist on subjecting yourself to misery, who’s to blame?"

A moment later, Yue Rujing suddenly realized Gu Youyou's actions were simply her way of trying to get rid of him.

Upon this thought, he suddenly felt at ease.

Heh, she thinks these little tricks can drive him away? Not so easy.

Persistent harassment was always Yue Rujing's forte. He didn't believe Gu Youyou could be more difficult than the old Taoist in Sanqing Hall.

"Fine, I'll change places, make room for Abao. I can't be bickering with a dog, can I? Right, cousin-in-law?"

Having said that, he hummed a tune and nonchalantly carried the food box into the study.

Fortunately, the study table was not only large but also clean, and it even had a stool!

Gu Youyou swallowed the food in her mouth, gritting her teeth in irritation.

Not bicker with a dog? It seems he had used her own tactics against her and outmaneuvered her once again.

The innocent Abao, having finished his meal, looked at Gu Youyou with his amber-colored eyes.

Why drag me into your mutual sarcasm?

It appears the word 'dog' is often met with disdain.

...

Perhaps because a strange man was staying in the study opposite, Gu Youyou was restless at heart and couldn’t sleep well until she heard a series of urgent knocking at the courtyard gate late at night.

Gu Youyou rolled out of bed, quickly dressed, put on her shoes, and opened the door.

Yue Rujing from the study across hadn’t come out; of course, he was also vigilant, keeping an eye on the movement outside.

"Who is it?" Gu Youyou gripped the stick in her hand and stared warily at the door.

Chapter 203: Doctor Zhou Died

She had met with a visitor late at night for the third time, and although this one knocked on the door more urgently than before, at least there was a knock, making them the most polite visitor yet.

But it was the dead of night, after all, so she had to be cautious.

"It’s me, Sister Youyou, it’s Yuancheng."

Yuancheng? What was this child doing in the dead of night?

Gu Youyou quickly opened the door and, sure enough, saw a distressed Yuancheng, his pale face still streaked with tears.

Gu Youyou was startled and hurriedly asked, "Yuancheng, what’s wrong with you? Why are you crying?"

At the same time, she felt a sudden dread in her heart—could it be that his whatever illness... had taken a turn for the worse, making him come to find her in such a hurry?

Yuancheng quickly said, "It’s... it’s Master, something has happened to Master. Sister Youyou, please, come with me to see him. Qin Brother said that only you can save him now!"

"Doctor Zhou is in trouble?" Gu Youyou's bad feeling grew stronger, and she now understood that her restless heart all night had not been because of Yue Rujing, but because of Doctor Zhou.

Regarding Doctor Zhou, Gu Youyou had always harbored a feeling of reverence, and at the same time, she felt an indescribable emotion within her. He was just an ordinary doctor in the town, known by everyone, and she even wanted to take him as her teacher, yet for some unknown reason, it seemed as though they were not meant to meet; she had been to Jisheng Hall so many times but never once saw him, always missing him for one reason or another.

Gu Youyou followed Yuancheng on a hurried run to Jisheng Hall, thinking many things along the way, each thought making her feel more uneasy.

It seemed as if nothing about her was normal, and so too were people.

She smiled bitterly. Doctor Zhou, what role was he playing in this game?

When Gu Youyou arrived at Jisheng Hall with an anxious Yuancheng, she finally met the legendary Doctor Zhou.

An elderly man with half-white hair, he lay tranquilly on a bed prepared for patients, with Qin Changlin kneeling by his side, sobbing softly!

"Master has just died," he said.

The anticipated outcome. Gu Youyou had seen too much life and death; medicine was not omnipotent—many of her patients had incurable diseases and ultimately parted from their loved ones forever.

So the people weeping beside Doctor Zhou's bed should not have caused much of a stir in her heart, yet unexpectedly, with Doctor Zhou... it brought an inexplicable solemnity to her soul.

And so, Doctor Zhou passed away.

She felt it shouldn’t have been this way!

A sense of intangible fear overwhelmed her, and Gu Youyou unconsciously took a step back, her legs gave way, and she fell to the floor.

...

Qin Changlin was busy before and after dealing with Doctor Zhou’s aftermath. The weather being hot, the body couldn’t be kept long; he died the evening before, and the neighbors paid their respects the next day, and by the third day, he was buried.

Doctor Zhou, having lived a solitary life, departed this world with nothing left behind, save for the gratitude of neighbors and fellow townspeople, none of whom were relatives.

Jisheng Hall was shrouded in white cloth, and even though Doctor Zhou was buried, according to local customs, his close ones had to wear mourning clothes for seven days to show respect.

Qin Changlin prepared a set for Gu Youyou too. Gu Youyou hesitated, thinking that there was no need to wear them since she had not officially become his student. But when she saw some of the residents of Qingshui Town who had been greatly helped by Doctor Zhou wearing them, she acquiesced.

No matter what issues he had or why he met with such sudden misfortune, the man was already dead, and the ties that bound him were now severed.

Unlike other establishments that could close down, the medical hall remained open, so after Doctor Zhou’s burial, Qin Changlin, dressed in mourning clothes, continued to see patients.

Chapter 204: Doctor Zhou’s Letter

He couldn’t see them himself, so he invited the visitors into the house, where Gu Youyou provided consultation from behind a curtain.

After a busy day, she could finally rest in the evening.

Gu Youyou changed into her own clothes, gently wiped away the beads of sweat, and prepared to return to her own small courtyard.

"Sister Youyou!"

Qin Changlin called out to her from the backyard.

Gu Youyou turned around and saw Qin Changlin holding a box in his hands, his face haggard!

"Sister Youyou, this is what Master left for you," he said.

Gu Youyou was taken aback, not expecting Doctor Zhou to leave anything for her, and quickly took the box to examine it.

The box was made of high-quality zitan wood, a rare and valuable material that seemed excessive for a doctor from a small clinic like Xiaoqingshui Town to possess.

She suspected that some of the answers to her questions might lie within this box.

Holding the box, she went back inside the house and used the key hanging on the side to unlock the delicate copper lock.

Inside, several medical texts lay quietly; the first was the Inner Canon of Huangdi, the second was Treatise on Febrile and Miscellaneous Diseases, and the third was Notes by the Zhou family. It seemed that the third book was his own writing, containing some of his unique insights into medicine.

The fourth... there was no fourth book. The fourth book’s yellowed cover bore no title, and inside were the words Doctor Zhou had left in a letter.

At first glance, the writing was chaotic, and an ordinary person would likely have difficulty deciphering it. Only someone like Gu Youyou, who was professionally trained in medicine, could understand it. It was written in the same way modern doctors write prescriptions.

Gu Youyou smiled wryly. Was it coincidence, or coincidence? She just happened to be able to read it; otherwise, she would have had to find a professional to interpret it.

However, the content within was somewhat puzzling.

(I knew you were coming. I didn't expect that you would come, alive!)

The first page contained just these few disjointed sentences which confused Gu Youyou. She turned to the second page.

(From the moment I agreed to do this task, my conscience has constantly tormented me. As a healer, I have treated every one of my patients with the intention of healing the world, using my life's knowledge to save countless people. I do not seek fame for eternity, but only to live a life worthy of my master and the noble name of healer. Yet I did not anticipate, in my later years and after I had already submitted my resignation to the Imperial Medical Bureau, that I would encounter something that would destroy my reputation and lead to the death of my whole family!)

Perhaps some will say I fear death, others may say I seek fame and fortune. However, I refuse to die without a cause, and that's why I have survived. But the price... made me truly betray what it means to be a healer.

A simple peasant girl unknown to me, I don't understand why they wanted me to stay here, providing her family with a special medicine each month. While the herbs were exceedingly precious, they only cost a trivial amount of silver tael. Through my years of research, I understood what that medicine was and eventually concocted a prescription that could suppress the cold poison.

This girl had been taking the medicine for years with no cure in sight, only hoping that my prescription could extend her life, at least to avoid the bone-chilling agony when the poison took effect.

One day, when I saw a recipe for an excellent detoxifying remedy, I knew that the young girl had finally come forth. I don't know where she got her prescription from, but it was much better than what I had developed over many years. I knew then that perhaps there was hope for her.

I intentionally inquired about the girl from Lotus Village who was always locked in the house, knowing she had come to Jisheng Hall, whether by intention or accident. No matter what her purpose was, I dared not meet her, could not meet her—that was the agreement I had with that person. To avoid her as much as possible, I began making constant house calls. I didn't know how long I could delay, just taking it one day at a time. Perhaps when the day comes that I can no longer delay, it will be the day I die...)

Chapter 205: Burning Down

After writing several pages, Gu Youyou finally finished reading them.

She closed her eyes, pondering over these things, and couldn't speak for a long time.

The person behind this, it was that person again! Who on earth was he? How had the Gu Family and Gu Youyou angered such a person?

No wonder the Gu Family could afford such medicine for her; it turned out that someone had everything calculated perfectly.

Those medicines were secretly delivered to Doctor Zhou's place, then the Gu Family would buy them back from him with a small amount of silver.

Gu Youyou didn't blame Doctor Zhou; if it weren't for him, it would have been someone else. He was just the unlucky one who happened to be chosen. Even Doctor Zhou was implicated by Gu Youyou inadvertently and was drawn into this mess.

After reading these words over and over again, memorizing them, Gu Youyou resolutely lit the letters written by Doctor Zhou in the candle stand, burning them to ashes. The rest, she put back into the box and re-locked it.

Qin Changlin had been standing opposite Gu Youyou the whole time. Seeing her burn the letters, his brow furrowed slightly, he opened his mouth to stop her, but in the end, he didn't.

Gu Youyou noticed his actions and sighed softly, "These things cannot be kept. Pretend as if Doctor Zhou never left any of these behind."

Perhaps it was because Doctor Zhou had died, Qin Changlin was in a period of mourning. He had been unusually quiet these days, always wearing a face full of sorrow.

Gu Youyou stood up, handed the box back to Qin Changlin, and said, "These are a few medical books. You are his disciple; better you keep them."

Qin Changlin's eyes flickered with hesitation and said, "But these were left for you by the master!"

Gu Youyou tugged at the corner of her mouth, speaking in a low voice, "Then let's read them together. You keep them!"

Qin Changlin hesitated for a moment but eventually took the box, saying, "Alright then."

The two left the room together and headed to the front hall. Doctor Zhou's spirit tablet was still enshrined there, with a fire basin below it. Yuancheng was kneeling beside the basin, burning paper.

Doctor Zhou's sudden death had hit Yuancheng the hardest, his eyes were swollen like two walnuts. He had been raised by Doctor Zhou since he was a child, and he probably didn't have much memory of his blood relatives; to him, Doctor Zhou was his closest kin.

Gu Youyou crouched down and consoled him gently, "Yuancheng, you need to be strong, so that Doctor Zhou can leave with peace of mind. You have cried enough these past few days. If you keep crying, he will be sad, and won't be able to leave at ease."

Yuancheng looked up in surprise and asked, "Can master really see us?"

Gu Youyou nodded, "Of course. Doctor Zhou worries about you all. Only when he sees that you are no longer sad about his departure can he leave with peace of mind."

Yuancheng quickly stood up, looking around the room frantically, and called out loudly, "Master, Master, are you really there? If you are, could you let Yuancheng see you, please?"

"Ah, Yuancheng!" Gu Youyou hurriedly pulled him back, saying, "You mustn’t be so selfish. You have to let Doctor Zhou leave peacefully."

Yuancheng pulled away from Gu Youyou’s grasp, shaking his head and crying out, "No, I don’t want master to leave. I don’t want him to leave, he hasn’t seen Yuancheng grow up yet, he can’t leave!"

Such a headache.

Qin Changlin held Yuancheng tightly, "Yuancheng, calm down a bit!"

Perhaps it was too much excitement, Yuancheng’s whole body was trembling.

"I’m deeply saddened by master’s death, but... but..."

At that moment, he was at a loss for words, choking up and unable to continue.

Chapter 206: Becoming a Disciple

Gu Youyou took over the conversation and said, "But the King of Hell isn’t one for rules. Newly deceased souls must report to the King of Hell within three days of their death to have a chance at reincarnation. Tonight is the last night, and if Doctor Zhou misses this window, he will lose his chance at reincarnation and become an unsupported wandering spirit, eventually disappearing. Yuancheng, you wouldn’t want Doctor Zhou to turn into a wandering spirit, would you?"

Gu Youyou was an atheist. In order to console the somewhat out-of-control Yuancheng, she had to make herself sound like a fortune-teller, seriously making up stories.

After all, Yuancheng was just a ten-year-old child, and he was dumbfounded by Gu Youyou’s theory, almost completely believing it.

"Really... really?" Hope shone in his eyes as he looked at Gu Youyou expectantly.

Gu Youyou signaled to Qin Changlin with her eyes, and he hurriedly said, "Yes, tonight, three days ago, was the day Master left us. If he doesn't depart today, he won't be able to reincarnate. Yuancheng, let Master leave in peace."

With the assurance of his revered senior brother, Yuancheng finally completely believed it.

He sniffed and wiped away his tears with his sleeve, a trembling smile appearing on his lips as he said, "Alright, Master, Yuancheng won't cry, Yuancheng won't be sad. In his next life, Master must be born into a good family, become a high official, and enjoy endless glory, wealth, and prestige, never again having to run around day and night, suffering such a tragic death as he did in this life."

Doctor Zhou had an accident while traveling by carriage at night; it hit a large rock and accidentally tumbled into a ravine.

Who knows if it's true or false!

But some things aren't suitable for Yuancheng or Qin Changlin to be involved with. As the dead have already passed on, why should the living be endangered? So let's just take it as truth, Gu Youyou didn't say anything.

It was getting late. After kowtowing to Doctor Zhou, Gu Youyou was ready to leave.

Qin Changlin held Gu Youyou's shoulder as she was about to rise and said, "Sister Youyou, kowtow two more times."

Kowtow two more times?

Gu Youyou didn't understand what he meant.

Guessing it was a local custom and without overthinking it, out of respect for the deceased, Gu Youyou solemnly kowtowed two more times.

Qin Changlin stood next to Doctor Zhou’s memorial tablet and took out a small gourd the size of a finger, respectfully offering it to Gu Youyou!

Gu Youyou’s eyes flashed with understanding upon seeing the small gourd and realized why he had asked her to kowtow three times.

Carrying the healer’s duty, this gourd...

Gu Youyou solemnly took the gourd handed to her by Qin Changlin and asked, "Is this... Master’s wish?"

Qin Changlin nodded and said, "Yes, it was Master’s wish before he passed away, to take you as his disciple. In terms of age, you are our Second Senior Sister. I’ve told you before, Master had another disciple, that is our Senior Brother. He went to Yangguan City to open a medical practice, as Master wished. Cutting off ties with Master and not coming to the funeral was also Master’s wish."

Qin Changlin felt puzzled by Doctor Zhou’s decision, but Gu Youyou knew very well.

For reasons unknown, perhaps Doctor Zhou had sensed something; he had done this to protect that Senior Brother he had never met.

Receiving the small gourd engraved with the words ’Carrying the healer’s duty,’ Gu Youyou knelt before Doctor Zhou’s memorial tablet and softly called out, "Master."

"Did Master leave any final instructions before he passed?"

Qin Changlin said, "Master told us not to dishonor the name of the healer."

He was a healer who valued his reputation. Even in death, he didn’t forget to admonish his disciples. Yet, in the end, he met with such a fate.

Gu Youyou let out a wry smile and nodded!

...

Chapter 207: Jin Zijin Arrives

Gu Youyou arrived home very late, and Yue Rujing was sitting in the study, reading by candlelight. The empty study now contained many more things, especially books.

"Cousin-in-law, you're back!" Yue Rujing greeted her with enthusiasm.

Exhausted from the day and overwhelmed by the death of Doctor Zhou, Gu Youyou had no energy to concern herself with him taking over her study, nor did she acknowledge him.

Thinking of the surprise he had planned for later, Yue Rujing didn't continue to pester her with chatter but merely gave a sly smile and returned to his book.

Gu Youyou washed up briefly and then went to sleep in her bedroom.

She didn't light a lamp, and by the moonlight, she saw the thin quilt on the bed was piled up high, her eyes instantly fixed in shock!

The enemy, it seemed, had still come!

If it had been anyone else, Gu Youyou would have surely grabbed a stick and chased him out, but with Jin Zijin... she simply couldn't bring herself to do it.

She deliberately made her footsteps louder as she walked, but the person on the bed didn't stir.

Standing in front of the bed, Gu Youyou had no choice but to reach out and poke the person on the bed.

Jin Zijin turned over, his sleepy eyes hazy as he murmured, "Youyou? Are you back?"

His nonchalant demeanor stunned Gu Youyou!

How could he act as if nothing had happened? As if that divorce letter didn’t exist?

Feeling down these past several days, Gu Youyou truly had no desire to argue with him and said only, "Why have you run over to my place? I thought I made myself very clear in the letter I left for you."

"What letter?" Jin Zijin appeared utterly clueless.

Gu Youyou’s mouth twitched as she said, "The letter I left on the bed, don’t tell me you didn’t see it."

Jin Zijin had apparently decided to deny seeing it and said unaffectedly, "I really didn’t see the letter you’re talking about. What did it say?"

The thickness of his skin.

Gu Youyou scoffed, "Whether you saw it or not, you once said you never lie, and I hope that’s still true."

In the moonlight, Gu Youyou couldn’t see Jin Zijin’s face clearly, but she distinctly felt his composure was gone.

Yue Rujing in the study across had been craning his neck to listen to the conversation. Hearing Gu Youyou’s righteous speech, he even felt nervous for Jin Zijin!

He had thought Jin Zijin would have some method to stay, but it turned out Jin Zijin was following his lead with just four words: shamelessly sticking around!

Having grown up together with Jin Zijin, Yue Rujing knew he had the same stubbornness as the old man and never told lies—definitely a truth. He never imagined Jin Zijin would start to talk nonsense just to stay!

It was all too novel.

"Youyou!" The room was quiet, and after a long while, a gentle voice broke the silence as if heaving a sigh, "Youyou."

"You've made me break many principles!"

After dropping that senseless remark, he said no more.

Gu Youyou was stunned and then asked, "So, do you want me to write another one?"

"No need!" Jin Zijin replied, "I saw the divorce letter, but I don't believe it's valid."

Gu Youyou: "..."

He smiled and said, "You can divorce for barrenness only after three years without childbirth. We haven't even been married a year, I can't divorce you for that reason."

"Then let's separate," Gu Youyou said angrily.

"It's not easy to take a wife; I don't agree!"

Gu Youyou sneered, "Even if three more years pass, I'll still bear no children. We're going to divorce sooner or later, so it's better we part amicably while we're both still young."

Gu Youyou laughed without reason, thinking that this body didn't even menstruate—a piece of barren land where not even the hardest work could grow crops.

Chapter 208: Let Me Cool Down

Jin Zijin squinted his eyes slightly and, after thinking for a moment, said, "So are you blaming me?"

However, he was unaware of Gu Youyou’s inner thoughts and only considered that he had never touched her before. Was this a complaint?

Each wrapped in their own thoughts, they had drifted miles apart.

"Maybe I should..."

Jin Zijin didn’t know how to talk to her about these things, nor could he.

How he wished she were just a simple farm girl, Gu Youyou, but she didn’t seem the part at all.

If even she was someone else’s pawn...

"Stop!" To his surprise, Gu Youyou cut him off mid-sentence.

Gu Youyou, afraid of uttering some shameless words, quickly spoke up to stop him and then said, "Don’t push your luck. I thought you knew everything. I just want a few days of peace."

Jin Zijin let out a sigh of relief, yet inexplicably, a sense of loss surfaced.

He said, "In a few days, your elder brother is getting married, and we both have to go. Do you want Grandfather to know that we’re not getting along?"

Gu Youyou suddenly froze, also feeling awkward.

If there was one person in this world who could make Gu Youyou feel uneasy, it would be none other than Gu Feng.

Not blood-related, yet closer than family!

Since she had survived in place of the young Gu Youyou and had received so much kindness from Gu Feng, she must honor him in the young girl's stead.

She didn't know what deal there was between Gu Feng and Jin Zijin, but every time, Gu Feng told her to trust Jin Zijin, insisting he wouldn't harm her.

She had to admit that Jin Zijin had been very kind to her since she left the Gu Family, taking care of her even better than a hired nurse would. If it hadn't been for the sachet incident, she might not have bothered about Jin Zijin's mysterious status and would have wholeheartedly stayed by his side.

But she was a person who knew her place very well. She understood that a village girl like herself couldn't possibly deserve Jin Zijin's constant vigilance.

He still wasn't willing to trust her, not about to reveal the slightest hint.

Taking advantage of Gu Youyou's hesitation, a large hand stretched out from under the blanket, pulling her onto the bed and into his quilt.

"Hey, what are you doing?" the now alert Gu Youyou asked as she pinched and kicked.

Jin Zijin's strong arm imprisoned her in his embrace, his warm breath cascading over her head and into her ear, "It's getting late. We need to leave early for Lotus Village tomorrow."

"You... You're being shameless..."

"Stop moving. Let me cool down. I'm afraid of the heat." The coolness of an ordinary spring was no longer enough to suppress the heat within him, so he had to seek out Gu Youyou. This was the plain truth.

Gu Youyou, of course, didn't understand and thought he was just being shameless again. She retorted angrily, "...The river right outside the door is cooler! Let me go."

"Youyou!" Jin Zijin didn’t release her for a moment, whispering, "This is turning your back on someone once you no longer need their help!"

Gu Youyou: "..."

"During the winter when you were cold, I didn’t make you sit by the fire. Even when you were as cold as ice, I never complained about you."

Gu Youyou was instantly stunned.

Recalling those winter days, huddled against his warm body, she didn’t have the courage to argue any further.

His body also had its issues, so she might as well assume he still needed her to cool down.

Oh, how pathetic and laughable it was. There was a couple who, in the winter, she used him as a furnace; in the blazing summer, he used her as a popsicle. This was the sole reason they slept together as husband and wife.

...

The sky in August had started to cool. It was the season for Lotus Village to harvest lotus roots. Along the way, one could see many villagers busy at work.

Looking at the heaps of roots, Gu Youyou’s eyes brightened at the thought of the lotus root with sticky rice and honeyed lotus root slices that she liked in modern times.

Chapter 209: Explained for Her

She thought to herself that she must buy some to try making it when she returned.

There was a feast in the village today, and no one was happier than the children.

Gu Youyou followed Jin Zijin back to the Gu Family, and just as they arrived at the entrance of the village, they heard the sounds of gongs and drums mixed with the laughter of children.

"The new bride is here, the new bride is here!"

"Oh, let’s go see the bride!" shouted a clueless, shaggy-haired child.

"You imp, what business do you have looking at the bride?" his grandmother scolded from behind.

Gu Youyou saw a small, red bridal sedan being carried right in front of the Gu Family’s door, and she smiled, saying, "We haven’t come too late, we’ve arrived just in time."

In the morning, Gu Youyou had also visited Jisheng Hall and bought some things before returning to Lotus Village with Jin Zijin.

Since they encountered the bride entering the house, it was not convenient for them to get in the way, so they waited until the bride had entered the house and the sedan had been withdrawn before they followed in.

The grandfather presided over the household, with the second uncle and grandmother greeting guests at the door.

She must have had a feud with Gu Youyou in a previous life. Her face, which had been blooming like a chrysanthemum with smiles, suddenly fell at the sight of Gu Youyou’s arrival.

"You really timed it well. Weren’t you supposed to be at your husband’s home? How did you rush back here?"

Although she was displeased, her hands were busy; she unceremoniously grabbed the items Jin Zijin was carrying.

Yes, grabbed them.

Since the gifts were for Dabao, Gu Youyou took no notice of the manner in which they were received and instead focused on her husband's family.

"Back to my husband's home?" She paused, then turned her gaze toward Jin Zijin.

Jin Zijin was single, wasn't he? Where did he get a family from?

Jin Zijin explained unruffled, "Youyou was feeling unwell these past few days, so we went to Qingshui Town to find Doctor Zhou. During her treatment, Doctor Zhou found Youyou's talent for medicine astonishing, so he took her on as an apprentice, and that's why we didn't go."

Gu Youyou really felt like applauding him; that cleared everything up.

She had been fretting over how to explain that she, a village girl, had become a doctor.

Suddenly, Auntie Li from the village came over and upon hearing Jin Zijin's words, expressed in surprise, "I heard that Doctor Zhou died a few days ago. He was traveling at night when his carriage fell into a ravine. Youyou, you must not have had the chance to learn much, right?"

Doctor Zhou had a significant reputation in Qingshui Town, and Gu Youyou had guessed that the people from Lotus Village would know that Doctor Zhou was dead. She turned her head in sorrow and began to sob, "Yes, Auntie Li, my master... has passed away. They say that once someone becomes your teacher, they are your teacher for life. Although Master only taught me for a short day, I was still Doctor Zhou's apprentice. My master said I had an astonishing talent, so he left me a lot of medical knowledge, and assured me I could be a good doctor just by reading the medical books!"

Auntie Li frowned and her disdain was obvious.

Since it was a day of celebration for the Gu Family, it wouldn't be appropriate to speak plainly, so Auntie Li squeezed past Gu Youyou and handed a cloth bundle to Old Lady Huang, saying, "Our family also wanted to contribute to the celebration. The gift isn't much, but you wouldn't look down on it, would you, Madame Gu?"

Old Lady Huang’s gaze had been wandering over Gu Youyou, who had suddenly become Doctor Zhou’s apprentice, and she barely responded to Auntie Li’s words before passing the received items to the second uncle.

Auntie Li was choked with displeasure, her complexion looking terrible as she murmured and grumbled her way into the house.

Old Lady Huang pulled Gu Youyou aside sneakily and whispered, "Youyou, Doctor Zhou took you as his apprentice, and now he’s dead. So, about Jisheng Hall..."

Chapter 210: Your Uncle

"Stop!" Without guessing, Gu Youyou knew exactly what the Huang Family was up to, "Jisheng Hall belongs to Qin Changlin, don’t you go getting any wild ideas."

"Hey, that can’t be right, we are all apprentices of Doctor Zhou, and naturally Jisheng Hall should be split between you and that Qin Changlin. How can you say it’s all his? You own half of it too, silly girl!" The old woman from the Huang Family said with a face full of frustration and heartfelt instruction, "You can’t be foolish, dear. Doctor Zhou had no children, and Jisheng Hall earns a hefty sum of silver each year. Surely it’s for both his disciples. You must not—"

Gu Youyou rolled her eyes and interrupted the old woman from the Huang Family yet again, "Even the common folks know the saying ’property goes to the son, not the daughter.’ The master certainly meant the same. Jisheng Hall belongs to Qin Changlin; these were master’s last words before he passed. What more do you want?"

Her voice was loud and the tone was not too pleasant, which caught the attention of the guests.

"Madam Gu, are you chatting with your eldest granddaughter?"

The old woman from the Huang Family’s face flushed with embarrassment as she awkwardly smiled at the speaker, "Yes, well, it’s rare for Youyou to come back home!"

"Ah, then you two take your time to chat. I’m heading inside!"

Youyou sidestepped the old woman from the Huang Family and walked into the crowd.

This dreadful grandmother, with the temptation of Jisheng Hall being so substantial, who knows what she might say.

Today, with so many people around, she was determined not to let her start gossiping.

"Hey, wait, I haven’t finished talking..."

Gu Youyou had already slipped into the yard where many people were seated. She felt too embarrassed to raise the matter again and could only curse to herself, calling the old lady a damned girl.

When the auspicious time arrived, Gu Dabao led a girl covered with a red bridal veil, ready to perform the wedding ceremony. Gu Youyou stood watching from a distance. It was her first time witnessing an ancient wedding ceremony. She reminisced about her own marriage to Jin Zijin last year, and because of her health, they hadn’t had a ceremony? The ancients said that a marriage isn’t complete without this ceremony. She wondered if their marriage even counted.

She looked up at Jin Zijin. He was still the same, tall and broad, with a face full of stubble and marked by the signs of a rugged life, looking every bit the robust hunter.

And yet, in his bones, he was not like that at all.

"What are you thinking about?" Jin Zijin suddenly asked, surprising Gu Youyou.

She smiled faintly and said, "I was wondering... if we haven’t had a ceremony, are we still husband and wife?"

Jin Zijin replied calmly, "Of course we are."

"Huh?"

"Because your registration is with me. Without me, you're a vagabond. Do you know the fate of vagabonds once they're caught?"

Gu Youyou was stunned, and after a long pause, three words popped into her head... Your own grandpa!

Jin Zijin had a smile on his lips, appearing nonchalant as he lowered his voice, "Men are conscripted into the military, the kind without military registry. As for women, they are also conscripted... as military prostitutes!"

Gu Youyou finally couldn't hold back and blurted out those few words, "Jin Zijin, your own grandpa!"

The evil feudal society, the evil household registration system, the evil Three Obediences and Four Virtues.

In those days, a woman was the private property of her father before marriage, and of her husband after. Thus, her registration was in Jin Zijin's hands.

She had never thought about this issue before. Now that she did, it truly was a major problem.

Perhaps her voice was too loud, for Gu Feng heard her. He asked in confusion, "Youyou, Zijin's grandpa?"

Gu Youyou, with a forced smile, said, "Yeah, next time Zijin takes me home, I'll meet his grandpa."

Gu Feng nodded, and seeing that the auspicious moment had arrived, he hurriedly called Gu Dabao to proceed, "Let's start!"

The trumpet sounds stopped, and the matchmaker, Zhang, drew out her voice for the official commencement of the wedding ceremony.