Chapter 21 - 21 21 There are Rabbits and Chickens at Night

21: Chapter 21 There are Rabbits and Chickens at Night 21: Chapter 21 There are Rabbits and Chickens at Night Wang Shun couldn't outtalk Huang Xiangwen, so he could only accept his bad luck and forced a smile, admitting it was all a misunderstanding.

Watching Huang Xiangwen grumble while wiggling her butt away, Wang Shun finally moved the firewood from the doorway into the house.

From behind the screen, Gu Youyou saw a slender figure carrying the firewood into the room, it was Wang Shun.

People who consistently don't get enough to eat and have to do heavy work can hardly ever get fat.

He set down the firewood and called out in the direction of Gu Youyou, "Sister-in-law, I've placed the firewood here, don't be scared, Brother Jin will be back soon."

Gu Youyou: "..." What else is there to be afraid of in my current state?

No matter how capable Huang Xiangwen was, she could only take some stuff, and once Youyou recovered from her illness, there would always be a chance to make her spit out what she shouldn't have taken.

"Thank you!" Gu Youyou said in a soft and delicate voice, her words like a oriole emerging from the valley, which stunned Wang Shun outside.

A moment later, Wang Shun's simple laughter was heard, "Sister-in-law may be thin, but she has such a pleasant voice."

Gu Youyou was taken aback for a moment but then thought that he made sense.

The greatest advantage of Gu Youyou, the dry stick, was her keen hearing, and her other asset was her nice voice.

…

By evening, Jin Zijin had returned, carrying two rabbits, a chicken, and a coarse cloth bag.

There were many bloodstains on his coarse clothes, and it was unclear how he got them.

But after setting down his prey, Jin Zijin explained.

“Today I caught a half-grown wild boar on the mountain and have already sold it to a restaurant worker in town for Silver Coin.

I saw we didn’t have much rice or grain at home, so I bought some!”

Gu Youyou hummed softly to show she heard.

The bloodstains on him must have been from that wild boar, and a half-grown boar couldn’t have been too small; he must have carried it down the mountain.

There was plenty of game on the mountains behind the house, and many in the vicinity hunted, so some town taverns would send their workers with carts just in time to collect the fresh game.

Getting their hands on the game a day ahead allowed them to prepare it early and hang the new wild game signs out.

Hearing clinking and clanking noises from outside, it was unclear what he was doing, but after a while, Jin Zijin asked, “What would you like for dinner?

We have rabbit and pheasant.”

Since her arrival half a year ago, Gu Youyou hadn’t eaten meat.

Each time the Huang Family and the Meng Family brought in dishes, they ate all the tasty parts themselves.

Hearing she could have rabbit or pheasant for dinner, she instinctively swallowed her saliva, feeling her throat go dry.

She wanted both!

“Water, I would like some water!” Her throat felt even drier as the words reached her lips, so she decided to moisten her throat first.

Jin Zijin outside didn’t say much and quickly brought her water, helped her up in bed, and gave her a drink.

Gu Youyou took a sip of the cool water and felt much better, even though it was chilly.

In a household like Jin Zijin's, it was impossible to have hot water often.

Not just him, but the whole village was the same.

Everyone normally drank cool water and didn't have immediate access to hot water, even during the depths of winter.

Seeing Gu Youyou frown slightly because of the cold water, Jin Zijin said, "I will start a fire first.

It gets cold in the evening, and even if it's not to let you drink some hot water, warming the house is still good."

Gu Youyou looked around the breezy room and thought that starting a fire might not do much good, but the fact that Jin Zijin was so considerate towards her warmed her heart.

Chapter 22 - 22 22 Someone Came by Day

22: Chapter 22 Someone Came by Day 22: Chapter 22 Someone Came by Day No matter what purpose he married her for, whether for her dowry or to satisfy physical needs, he still treated her fairly well in the end.

Having only been together for a day, from him letting her have rice in the morning to now offering her water, he was much better than the two aunts from the Gu Family.

It had been a long time since anyone had been so kind to her, and Gu Youyou was somewhat moved.

"Okay, thank you!" Gu Youyou's gratitude was genuine!

In the Gu Family, she couldn't even burn coal for warmth because of the cold, but Jin Zijin, as poor as he was, was still willing to build a fire for her, which was truly rare.

Jin Zijin was very efficient, and in no time, he brought over a stove made of clay and bamboo with several logs burning inside, and an iron teapot on top.

"Have you thought about what you want to eat?" After all the work, Jin Zijin didn't forget to ask.

It was then that Gu Youyou remembered she had forgotten to choose between rabbit and pheasant.

After considering it, rabbit meat was delicious but not as nourishing as pheasant.

Her body was very weak now, so it obviously made more sense to eat pheasant.

“Let’s have pheasant...

oh, a simmered dish, mushrooms would be best, if there’s also a little...

oh, never mind, you decide how to stew it!”

Gu Youyou almost let slip the idea of asking him to stew some tonic herbs for her.

Thinking of Jin Zijin’s poverty, where would he get money for herbs?

It was already good enough to have pheasant to eat.

Jin Zijin hummed in acknowledgment and said, “I collected some mushrooms in the mountains earlier, which are now dried and hanging outside.

I’ll get some to stew with the pheasant...” As Jin Zijin stepped to the door, he turned back and asked, “Do you want to sit up for a while?”

The sun had already set by this time, and while it wasn’t completely dark yet, the temperature had dropped much from the daytime.

Gu Youyou thought for a moment and then nodded her head.

This body was really in bad shape; mostly ailments developed from too much sleep.

Even if not sunning herself, sitting up was better than lying down.

Jin Zijin moved a bamboo recliner over for her, placing it next to the stove, so she wouldn’t be too cold while warming up by the fire.

Gu Youyou noticed that this big recliner was new, and apparently, it was acquired on account of her.

Jin Zijin was busy on his feet all day; he had no spare time to sit on such a chair.

Soon, Jin Zijin returned from the river, carrying a thoroughly cleaned pheasant and two rabbits.

He asked suddenly, “Did anyone come by during the day?”

Gu Youyou nodded and said, “Wang Shun came once to deliver some firewood for you.

And...

my second aunt also came by, she said the family's cloth got damp, so she took it out to dry."

Jin Zijin glanced at the few pieces of cloth drying on the poles outside with an unreadable expression.

His eyes flickered, but he didn't say anything, putting down what he was carrying and then going to fetch the cloth, folding it neatly into the chest.

Gu Youyou sat by the stove watching Jin Zijin busy himself at the cooking platform.

He first prepared the pheasant, then started a fire, adding the soaked mushrooms and pheasant into the pot to stew.

The wood burning in the cookstove was delivered by Wang Shun that afternoon.

Jin Zijin picked a few thick logs to put in the stove; thick logs burned longer, meaning he didn't have to keep watch over it constantly.

After tending to the pot, he seasoned the two rabbits with some salt and set them aside.

Now that the weather wasn't hot, salting them meant they could be kept for several days.

The cooking platform was designed with a big and small section: the bigger one for stewing chicken, and the smaller one perfect for cooking rice.

First, he cooked the rice until it was half-done, then removed the divider between the two stove sections, allowing the fire to pass through to the rice.

Chapter 23 - 23 23 Is it uncomfortable in your hand

23: Chapter 23: Is it uncomfortable in your hand?

23: Chapter 23: Is it uncomfortable in your hand?

Jin Zijin finished up efficiently, and the water in the iron kettle on Gu Youyou's stove had also come to a boil.

He took out a clay bowl to pour the water and placed it beside Gu Youyou, then continued to busy himself.

Watching Jin Zijin's busy back, Gu Youyou felt that his rough image grew bigger, exuding an unusual sense of security!

Gu Youyou watched the whole process.

It wasn't that she couldn't cook, but she didn't know how to use such primitive tools, so she watched very carefully.

If her illness were to get better, no matter where she went in the future, she would have to cook for herself!

Although Lotus Village was surrounded by mountains on three sides, it primarily relied on rice as a staple food.

Beyond the lotus trees, the terrain consisted of hills, and the villagers in this region all ate rice, so they still consumed rice meals!

Wild chickens, even at their largest, were not bigger than domesticated ones and much leaner.

With feathers and innards included, they barely weighed two to three pounds, and after plucking and cleaning, there wasn't much meat left.

For a meal, without any other side dishes, they finished the rice, and the wild chicken was eaten completely clean.

Although Gu Youyou was so ill that she hardly had the strength to walk, she ate with gusto.

Exactly how fervently could be understood only by someone as hungry as she was.

She ate no less than Jin Zijin did, both of them like starving ghosts, they engulfed everything, even the soup didn't stand a chance.

As Jin Zijin was tidying up the bowls and chopsticks he said, "You're sick, you can't overeat.

Tomorrow, I'll get some vegetables for us to eat!"

Uh...

Gu Youyou's eyes were still fixed on those two rabbits, it looked like they wouldn't be on tomorrow's menu.

As the modern heir to a family of traditional Chinese medicine, Gu Youyou understood these principles, but no matter how much she understood, it couldn't curb her hunger!

Her mouth overcame her reasoning, so when there was food, she couldn't care about anything else and indulged herself completely.

“Okay!” Gu Youyou felt a bit embarrassed thinking about the way she had just eaten.

They say a full belly gives you strength, and this was true for Gu Youyou as well.

She felt like her whole body was filled with energy.

Uh…

Of course, that was in comparison to her weak condition.

The firewood in the stove had died out, and it had grown completely dark.

Jin Zijin’s home didn’t have an oil lamp, so they lit the half-burnt red candle from last night, and only then was there a bit of light in the room.

Jin Zijin helped Gu Youyou back into bed, then got up and extinguished the red candle!

But Gu Youyou’s eyes had remained on that red candle the whole time, understanding that even though her body housed a modern soul, she knew that on a wedding night, you shouldn’t blow out the red candles—it was unlucky.

Looking at the half-burnt red candle, Gu Youyou guessed that Jin Zijin probably extinguished it when they went to sleep last night.

Is that all it is to him, a mere lighting device?

Weren’t ancient people supposed to be superstitious?

Considering Jin Zijin was just a simple guy and had not been taught these things by his parents, she didn’t dwell on it, assuming he just didn’t know.

Jin Zijin’s bed was very narrow, probably only around 1.2 to 1.3 meters wide—fine for a single bed.

Even if Gu Youyou took up little space, Jin Zijin’s stature was undeniable, so when he lay down, the bed still seemed very crowded.

Gu Youyou couldn’t help but admire Jin Zijin’s mental resilience.

She hadn’t seen herself before the day and that was saying something, but since she saw her appearance, she was incredibly impressed with him.

She found her own appearance frightening, and yet, he could actually bring himself to touch her.

And now, here he was, coming closer—good grief, wasn’t it uncomfortable to hug her?

Chapter 24 - 24 24 Going Out by Myself

24: Chapter 24 Going Out by Myself 24: Chapter 24 Going Out by Myself Hmm?

Gu Youyou felt that Jin Zijin's body was very hot, unusually hot!

With her years of medical experience, Gu Youyou could guess his temperature quite accurately without a thermometer, estimating it to be between 37.5 and 38 degrees Celsius, a low-grade fever?

"You...

you're sick?

So hot!"

"Shh, don't move, I'm fine, go to sleep!"

Gu Youyou: "..."

She knew that a person's body temperature could rise slightly when aroused, but not to such an extreme, right?

And besides...

could he really be aroused by someone like her?

She didn't believe it at all.

That night, Jin Zijin didn't do anything; he just held her and slept.

Gu Youyou felt cold, and if the person next to her wasn't a man but a big heater, she would be quite happy.

Well, let's just pretend he's a big heater, she thought.

She no longer had to worry about freezing to death this winter.

...

Jin Zijin was very busy.

In the morning, he stayed with her to sunbathe, fed her breakfast, and then took up his tools and left.

Jin Zijin was already struggling to make ends meet on his own, now adding her to his burdens, he would surely be busier.

Lying on the bed and looking at the translucent paper lantern, Gu Youyou felt infinitely desolate.

She had been in this world for half a year now.

Upon her arrival, she felt that her body in this ancient time, lacking medical care, was beyond hope.

Yet, to her surprise, she had stubbornly survived.

Even eating and drinking just water every day hadn't starved her to death.

Later, when she stopped taking medicine, her body began to recover slowly.

Since she wasn't going to die, she figured out all sorts of ways to survive.

She had intended to dig a hole behind the bed and escape once she was a bit healthier, but unexpectedly, before she could take any actual steps, she found a way out of this haunted house.

You could say Jin Zijin was not too bad.

For a sickly person, meeting such a husband when deathly ill was surely a blessing from her ancestors or a reward for good deeds in a past life.

But still...

Gu Youyou sighed.

How could there be such a good person in the world?

How could Jin Zijin be a good husband!

After much thought, the conclusion Gu Youyou reached was that unless there was something wrong with his brain, why else would he bring someone like her home?

Alright, time will reveal true character, let's see what he's really up to!

If he could serve her so wholeheartedly for a year and a half, then it wouldn't matter if she gave him her dowry, right?

After resting for a while, it was noon.

Gu Youyou's stomach started growling from hunger, but she knew that no matter how hungry she was, there would be no lunch.

She was somewhat hungry, but that was far better than being in the Gu haunted house; at least she had a full breakfast, right?

She propped herself up and got out of bed, planning to move around the room.

Getting down from the bed and walking along the bedside was something she could do more than a month ago, but she had to hold on to the edge of the bed and couldn't walk for too long.

These past two days, she felt a bit stronger; even coming out of the blankets, her hands and feet didn't seem as cold as before.

She wrapped herself up warmly, put on her hood to avoid catching a cold.

First, she walked a few steps along the bedside, then she tried to use the wall to help her walk outside.

There was a sturdy-looking stick for stoking the fire on the stove, just a bit short, but no matter, it was better than nothing.

Gu Youyou picked it up and used it as a cane, slowly shuffling to the door.

The midday sun was strong, especially warm on people's skin in these early days of October.

Ordinary people working in the fields might find it a bit hot, but for someone like Gu Youyou, it was very comfortable.

Having lain in bed for more than an hour, it was time for her to go out and walk, to bask in the sun!

Chapter 25 - 25 25 The Curious Bear Child

25: Chapter 25: The Curious Bear Child 25: Chapter 25: The Curious Bear Child Gu Youyou, who had lived in the dark room all year round and had never done any manual labor, had particularly delicate and fair skin.

Of course, if she could have a bit more flesh on her, she might even be considered a little beauty!

In the courtyard, she sized up Jin Zijin's home, a dilapidated straw hut.

The yard itself was quite spacious, with a small plot of green vegetables planted on one side, though most of the space was empty.

Dangling under the eaves were dried shiitake mushrooms, dried bamboo shoots, and some sun-dried vegetables that had lost their freshly-picked appearance, so Gu Youyou couldn't quite make out what they were for the moment.

Jin Zijin had built his house quite tall, allowing a view of the entire Lotus Village from his yard.

The height meant that water usage was not very convenient; the village river lay below, requiring a walk of more than ten minutes to reach it.

The other villagers had it easier, as their homes were mostly built close to the riverbank.

Gu Youyou looked down at the fields where many villagers were laboring—some working and arguing, others happily chatting as they worked, and children playing in the pastures.

Indeed, this rural vista was as beautiful as a pastoral landscape painting, only...

if her ears weren't so sharp, she might not have inadvertently overheard those two little scamps discussing her!

"Gu Erbao, look over there, isn't that your family's ghostly sister?"

Gu Erbao, the younger son of Uncle Gu Wen, was ten years old that year—a not-so-young age for a farming family, old enough to help his parents in the fields.

But since the Gu Family was fairly well-off and they had enough labor at home, he picked the lighter task of herding cattle.

He spent his days driving the cattle to the hillside and then scampering off to play with some kids from neighboring homes.

Gu Erbao looped the rope on the bull's nose around a tree stump and, shielding his eyes from the sun, stretched his neck to look toward Gu Youyou's direction.

He gasped and said, "Oh no, isn't that the hunter Jin's house?

That thin pole that could be knocked over by the wind, it really is my ghostly sister!

That's not right, didn't my parents say she was about to die?

How come she's out of the house by herself, even standing in the courtyard?"

He turned his head to ask a child beside him, "You see her standing on her own, right?"

The other child looked for a while and stammered, “Seems like she is leaning on a crutch; come on, let’s go have a look.”

“Let’s go, let’s go see the ghostly sister!”

It didn’t take long to run from the opposite hill to the one where Gu Youyou was—it was a quick run for the two lads, and they would soon be there.

Gu Youyou was extremely vexed; why was it so difficult just to enjoy a peaceful moment basking in the sun and catching a breeze?

Being sickly, she had no energy to deal with mischievous children!

Having no other choice, Gu Youyou could only return to the house, and she took the opportunity to close the door as well.

“Thump, thump, thump…” the door was knocked upon.

These rascals clearly weren’t planning to leave her alone.

She understood their psyche though.

Think about it: a ghostly sister confined all year long to a small dark room, known by name but unseen in person, surrounded by rumors that she couldn’t be exposed to certain people, especially men with ‘strong yang energy.’ Children are naturally curious and even more so about such mystical matters.

Now that an opportunity had finally come, how could they resist the temptation to witness something so peculiar!

And it wasn’t the first time this had happened; during the half year Gu Youyou spent in the small dark room, Gu Erbao had boasted to his little friends more than once about his family’s ghostly sister, and on more than one occasion, when his home was empty, he had led several kids to peer through the cracks in her door.

Only, the small dark room was tightly sealed, and they had never succeeded!