**Farmhouse 211**

Chapter 211: It Feels So Good to Swear Outloud

"Big sister!" A delicate voice called out from behind her, and Gu Youyou recognized it as Gu Xiaolian's.

She turned around and saw that Gu Xiaolian had grown even thinner, cradling a baby in her arms, who appeared to be about two months old but was similarly skinny. However, Gu Youyou counted the days and realized the child should be close to four months old by now.

"Daya!"

Gu Xiaolian smiled and said, "Big sister, you've arrived early. I almost didn't make it in time."

The custom here was that guests must arrive before the ceremony starts, and Gu Dabao's ceremony was about to begin, so she indeed almost missed it.

Gu Youyou also smiled and said, "It's okay as long as you made it. I just got here myself. Ah, this must be Lanxin, right?"

Previously, Gu Youyou had heard that Gu Xiaolian had given birth to a daughter named Chen Lanxin, and this was her first time seeing her.

The child looked frail and weak, causing Gu Xiaolian's smile to stiffen slightly. She subconsciously pulled the cloth covering the child a bit higher and said, "Yes, Lanxin is a little timid."

Gu Youyou noticed the child's jaundiced, sallow complexion, resembling an unresolved jaundice, and just after a glance, Gu Xiaolian covered the child's head.

Knowing that Gu Xiaolian didn't want to worry the family, she didn't point it out directly. For the sake of the little child, she simply said, "If you have time, come to Jisheng Hall with the child. I'm currently an apprentice there."

Though Gu Xiaolian had a meek personality, she wasn't foolish. Gu Youyou believed she would understand the implication.

"Thank you, big sister!" Feeling Gu Youyou's concern, Gu Xiaolian's eyes moistened.

...

Now, Jin Zijin no longer hunted and spent all day cooped up at home with Yue Rujing, while Gu Youyou was very busy, helping out at Jisheng Hall during the day and only returning at night.

It was like she was the breadwinner, supporting a dog and two grown men.

Staring at the rice in her bowl and a plate of vegetables on the table, she got angry, "I rented this house, the grain you're eating is what I bought, and the vegetables are grown in my yard. Don't you two grown men feel ashamed?"

And you can't just eat vegetables meal after meal. Who could endure this compared to the days when there was always wild game to eat?

The vegetables in the yard were nearly uprooted; even the ones in the vegetable patch were left over from the previous tenant.

Jin Zijin swallowed his food calmly and said seriously, "Youyou, if you're craving something tasty, I'll go into the mountains tomorrow and bring back some game for you."

Having spent a long time with Gu Youyou, Jin Zijin understood her thoughts well; she was fed up with the vegetables and indirectly chided them as well.

Yue Rujing, however, thought that Gu Youyou was just impoverished and felt bad for mooching. Fumbling in his pocket, he took out a coin purse and tossed it on the table with an air of authority, "This silver should be enough to buy this courtyard. I'm not eating for free, am I?"

Gu Youyou glared fiercely at him and snatched up the coin purse.

"So what if you have a little money? It doesn't impress me. Get to work. Tomorrow, clear all the weeds in the yard, replant new seeds where the garden is bare, prune the pear tree in the courtyard, and build a bigger shelter for Abao. If you do a poor job, get out!"

It had been a long time since she had scolded someone like that, and it felt great!

Jin Zijin only glanced at Gu Youyou in mild surprise, then coolly picked up his hunting tools and went out to sharpen them in the yard.

Yue Rujing looked at Jin Zijin, wanting to say something, but seeing that he had already slipped away, he stayed quiet, simply swallowing hard and silently started to clear the table.

That was the little meaning behind her stern scolding.

The demeanor of a domineering CEO is innate, not something to be trifled with.

Chapter 212: Two Taoists

I don't know what's up, but Gu Youyou felt a lot more irritable these past couple of days—it seemed like nothing was right, and she constantly felt like there was a suffocating anger inside her, ready to explode.

Especially when she looked at these two shameless men.

Sitting at home, waiting to be fed without working? Was she the typical capitalist that exploited the working people, a person who harbored grudges? Clearly, she wasn't.

During the day, Yuancheng mistook one herb for another, and Gu Youyou scolded him. Thinking about it now, she might have been too harsh—after all, Yuancheng was just a ten-year-old child.

It was wrong to employ child labor in the first place, so how could she scold him as if he were an adult who'd done something wrong?

Therefore, while it was still not too late in the evening, she took out the lotus roots she had brought home a few days ago, intending to make sweet osmanthus sugar lotus roots for Yuancheng.

After washing the lotus roots clean, she saw Jin Zijin had just sharpened a knife, so she waved him over, saying, "Done with nothing? Come help me, watch the fire."

"You didn’t have enough to eat tonight?" Jin Zijin asked with surprise.

Gu Youyou stuffed the sticky rice into the lotus roots and said, "This is for Yuancheng."

Probably having never seen lotus roots eaten this way, Jin Zijin took a couple of extra glances at her hands, and after wiping his own, obediently sat by the stove to tend the fire.

"Why did you think of making food for Yuancheng? Since Doctor Zhou passed away, is Yuancheng not getting enough to eat?"

Gu Youyou gave him a disdainful look and said curtly, "You thick-headed man wouldn’t understand! All you care about is whether the belly is full, how typical."

Jin Zijin: "..."

Yue Rujing was cleaning windows outside. Gu Youyou shouted at him, "Yue Rujing, it’s almost dark, what’s the point in cleaning windows now? You won’t get them clean, you might as well hurry to the riverbank and pick some fresh osmanthus flowers for me in Osmanthus Village."

"Ah? Are you making osmanthus hair oil?"

"If I tell you to pick them, just hurry up! Why all these questions?"

Sweet osmanthus sugar lotus roots were something Gu Youyou learned from the auntie who cooked traditional Chinese food at her house—the auntie, a rural widow raising her son alone, was skilled and could make many traditional dishes, sweet osmanthus sugar lotus roots just being one of them.

People from ancient times knew how to make sweet osmanthus sugar lotus roots, but it was unclear from what era this started. Seeing how Yue Rujing and Jin Zijin acted, it seemed people here probably didn’t know how to make it.

She packed the sticky rice into the lotus roots and secured them with bamboo sticks before placing them in the pot, steaming them with the prepared osmanthus sugar.

To make them soft and delicious, she needed to steam them slowly on a low flame, which would take a long time.

The night darkened, ushering in a chill. Gu Youyou sent Jin Zijin out and tended to the fire herself.

Cozy.

Yue Rujing headed off to the study to read. He had no intention of going to bed so early; he was waiting to taste the strange sugar lotus roots Gu Youyou made.

After taking a bath, Jin Zijin passed by the study and popped his head in before heading toward the kitchen.

Yue Rujing put down his book and, lowering his voice, hushed, "Brother, come here!"

The yard wasn’t all that big—how could Gu Youyou not know about any activity that took place?

She scoffed as she tended the fire, thinking about the two Taoists who tried to trick her into believing they were some sort of cousins.

She had initially planned to move directly to the back courtyard of Jisheng Hall, and that was why she stayed in the same yard as them.

Gu Youyou, with her sharp ears, inadvertently caught every whisper they meant to keep secret.

Curious about the mischief the two were cooking up in the study, Gu Youyou listened intently.

"Brother, I feel like Gu Youyou is off again today!"

Jin Zijin responded irritably, "When do you ever see her acting normal? Sweet osmanthus sugar lotus roots, have you ever heard of them?"

Chapter 213: Leaving for a Few Days

Yue Rujing said with a smile, "Indeed, we may not yet know the flavor of this dish, but just looking at its complex preparation and the substantial amount of sugar involved makes it clear that it’s not something ordinary families can afford to eat." His tone shifted as he continued, "But what I’m talking about isn’t the Sweet Osmanthus and Sugar Lotus Roots. It’s about her temper, which is as fiery as if she had eaten hot peppers. And the way she orders people around, that’s not something learned in a day or two, unless she grew up in such an environment and it came naturally to her."

Jin Zijin waved his hand dismissively and said, "I know all that. Stop talking about useless things. You’ve been following her for so many days; have you noticed her interactions with other people?"

Yue Rujing paused for a moment, then shook his head, saying, "No, besides you and me, there are only the people from Jisheng Hall."

"What about the people from Jisheng Hall?"

"Except for Doctor Zhou, who passed away, I haven’t noticed anything suspicious about the others for the time being."

"Hmm, continue!"

Gu Youyou clenched the weeds in her hand into a ball, pouting in frustration.

Damn it, it’s bad enough that they’re tailing and investigating me, but they even scrutinized everyone at Jisheng Hall.

What happened to privacy?

Suddenly, she remembered that no matter how capable they were, they couldn’t find out anything. She smirked coldly and thought to herself: Investigate all you want, and see if you can figure out my background.

Jin Zijin had his concerns, and that he couldn’t trust himself was something that even Gu Youyou had begun to understand recently.

Although she still didn’t know his full story, she guessed from what she had overheard around the corners recently that his situation seemed more dangerous than hers. Someone had poisoned him, so he had been hiding in Lotus Village looking for an antidote all this time.

She just didn’t know what poison it was.

Jin Zijin didn’t trust her, and wouldn’t let her take his pulse. He deserved it.

Footsteps approached the kitchen, prompting Gu Youyou to quickly collect her thoughts and focus on tending the fire seriously.

"Youyou, I’ll have to leave for a while in a few days. If you need anything, go to Rujing. He is a trustworthy person," he said.

"Hmm...?" Gu Youyou looked up at him.

She thought to herself, you don’t trust me, and you two have been investigating me. How can that Yue Rujing be considered trustworthy unless hell has frozen over.

Jin Zijin pondered for a moment, then said, "I have been in Lotus Village for six years, and there are some things I must do myself."

She had nothing to say and didn’t want to speak, so she simply hummed affirmatively.

For some reason, she felt a pain in her stomach. Gu Youyou reached down to her lower abdomen and pressed against it, furrowing her brow.

Jin Zijin noticed her slight movement and asked, "What’s wrong?"

She tossed the firewood aside and took her own pulse.

As soon as her hand touched her wrist, the pain intensified. Her complexion turned as pale as paper, and cold sweat broke out.

Standing by, Jin Zijin was shocked. He scooped her up at once. Touching her body, he found it icy cold. Though the weather did get cooler at night, it shouldn’t have been to this extent. Could it be that her cold poison was acting up again?

"Youyou, do you feel very cold?" he asked.

Gu Youyou felt the pain in her lower abdomen spreading throughout her body, as if robbing her of all her strength, accompanied by a sense of dizziness and confusion. She sensed she was on the verge of fainting, so while still lucid, she quickly bit her tongue to stay conscious a while longer.

As the salty copper taste of blood spread through her, an epiphany struck her like enlightenment!

A warmth surged from her lower abdomen, and the blood flowed out like a tide, quickly soaking her skirt.

This long-lost feeling was all too familiar to her from a past life.

Damn it!

Gu Youyou felt that she shouldn’t have bitten her tongue. She might as well have let herself faint.

This body was experiencing its first menstrual period!

Chapter 214: Sinned in a Past Life

Gu Youyou didn’t know whether it was because the stench of blood was too evident, or if Jin Zijin was too sensitive to the smell of blood, but by the time she realized her period had come, he had already lifted her skirt.

Looking at him, he seemed frantic, quickly carrying Gu Youyou to the bed and anxiously said, "Youyou, what’s the matter, you’ve lost a lot of blood."

Thinking about how Gu Youyou had just been touching her stomach, he thought she had hurt her abdomen, and hurriedly flipped up her clothes to check.

"No... not... nothing, this is just my normal period!"

Gu Youyou was in so much pain that she broke out in a cold sweat, it took her great effort to utter a few words, she was extremely embarrassed, and she tried her best to hold down her clothes.

What a mess.

Jin Zijin frowned and said, "Let me see, your condition doesn’t look good!"

Gu Youyou’s pain was so intense she rolled her eyes. Yes, it didn’t look good, but it wasn’t this damn dysmenorrhea, it was that you, a man in his twenties, still didn’t know what a period was, you Taoist.

"You don’t need to worry about it, just go and check the fire."

Here it came again, another wave that was sure to ruin her sheets.

"Don’t be stubborn, who cares about the fire now. I see the scent of blood is getting stronger, you must have lost a lot of blood."

Gu Youyou felt overwhelmed, how was she supposed to explain this to him?

Seeing him about to lift her skirt again, she hurriedly grabbed the quilt from the bed to cover herself, and simply said, "I am the doctor, I call the shots. You go out, don’t get in the way of my treatment."

"But you’re the one who’s sick now, Youyou, don’t be stubborn at a time like this."

"I..."

Gu Youyou wanted to say more, but as she uttered a word, she felt a pain in the back of her neck, and then she lost consciousness.

What a guy, Jin Zijin, to knock me out at a time like this?

Yue Rujing heard the commotion and quickly ran over.

"Senior brother, what happened?"

Gu Youyou lay slanted across the bed, unconscious.

Jin Zijin looked helpless, his hands covered in bright red blood.

Yue Rujing was stunned by the scene in front of him, and it took him a while to react.

"Senior brother, what happened to you? You... you didn’t kill her, did you? We haven’t found the Youying Pearl yet, what will you do about the poison in your body if you killed her?"

While speaking, he had already strode in, grabbed Gu Youyou’s wrist to check her pulse.

"She is severely weak in both qi and blood, having a deficiency and coldness in her Ren and Chong channels. She is..."

Before he could finish, Jin Zijin shouted at him with a cold face, "Get out, who let you in?"

Having understood the situation, and knowing Jin Zijin hadn’t killed Gu Youyou, he snickered and ran out, laughing, "Alright, I’ll get out, you take your time resolving this, hahaha..."

Ah, senior brother, you must have committed sins in your past life!

...

Gu Youyou didn’t know how long she had slept before she gradually woke up.

Since she had been knocked out by Jin Zijin, her head felt dizzy and sore when she woke up, which was extremely uncomfortable.

Pale moonlight shone through the window, and below the windowsill was a flickering candle. The man in front of the window was threading a needle, seriously sewing something.

Memories flooded back like a tide, and Gu Youyou recalled the events before she fainted, feeling both angry and embarrassed.

"You..."

"You’re awake, sorry, I didn’t know you... had started your Kuishui."

Well, since he apologized on his own.

Gu Youyou breathed a sigh of relief and felt a bit better, asking, "What time is it now?"

Jin Zijin thought for a moment and said, "It must be near 11 PM to 1 AM."

Right in the dead of night!

"It’s so late and you’re not sleeping, what are you doing?"

Chapter 215: Not Really a Taoist

Jin Zijin finished sewing, tied a knot, snapped the thread, and picked up a pile of white items. He placed them by Gu Youyou’s bed and said, "If I’m not mistaken, this is your first time dealing with your ’Friend’, right?"

Gu Youyou: "..." She really didn’t want to discuss menstruation with a man.

"So?"

"These things might be useful to you."

Gu Youyou picked one up to look. A long strip of cotton cloth. Ancient sanitary pads?

Oh goodness! This man made her a whole bunch of sanitary pads. There goes his decency.

Suppressing the tumult in her heart, Gu Youyou said in a hoarse voice, "Thank you!"

The atmosphere froze to a standstill, and Gu Youyou realized that she was dressed in clean clothes inside the quilt, with one of the homemade sanitary pads she was holding against her body. Good heavens, did this man actually change her sanitary pad?

Hold it in, she must hold it in!

Gu Youyou took a few deep breaths.

"How... do you know... how to sew?"

She intended to ask how he knew how to make sanitary pads, but considering it, she couldn’t bring herself to say it and had to ask differently.

Jin Zijin showed no sign of embarrassment, sitting by the bed, seriously answering her question, "I grew up in the Dao Family Tianzong since I was a child. My master is an old man who couldn’t do such tasks. So whenever my clothes were torn, I had to sew them myself. At first, I didn’t do it well, often pricking my hand, but over time, I learned."

He looked at the things he made for Gu Youyou and continued, "I guessed this shape might be more practical; I have no idea what others use or their shape."

Gu Youyou’s face turned red.

Only Jin Zijin could talk about these things so matter-of-factly!

She was, however, surprised that he brought up some childhood memories. Before, he would not have said half a word about them.

"So, you and Yue Rujing are from the same sect, both Taoists?"

Jin Zijin was slightly startled, a strange luster flickered in his eyes, but soon it faded, and he smiled, "Being a Taoist isn’t that easy. But my master is a Taoist, and he also hoped that I would continue his legacy."

Gu Youyou felt that Jin Zijin's explanation was different from what Yue Rujing said. According to him, becoming a Taoist sounded like a rather challenging career to achieve in this world. It wasn't something you could do just because you want to.

"Come on, the ginger soup is ready. Your body is so cold, drinking some ginger soup will help you feel better!" The cheerful voice of Yue Rujing from outside the door broke the awkward silence, only to make Gu Youyou feel even more embarrassed.

So, Yue Rujing knew too, and even made ginger soup in the middle of the night?

It was one thing for Jin Zijin to know, after all, he was someone who had been honest with her, but what about Yue Rujing?

What happened to the traditional conservativeness of ancient people?

Jin Zijin explained, "He's a doctor too, and late at night like this, you'll have to make do with the soup. Tomorrow, we will go to Jisheng Hall for some proper medicine."

Jin Zijin took the bowl of soup from Yue Rujing, who then tactfully left the room.

Reaching the doorway, he popped his head back in, "By the way, sister-in-law, that sweet osmanthus sugar lotus root was delicious. Your cousin and I finished it. You're not well, and it's not good for you after it cools. I'll make it fresh for you tomorrow."

Gu Youyou's face darkened instantly: "...Who let you eat it? I made that for Yuancheng."

"That sugar lotus root was a bit hard today, not quite done. I'll make it again tomorrow, heh heh!"

Yue Rujing was like a shameless face. Gu Youyou angrily replied, "Can it be the same if you make it tomorrow? Then why did I go to all that trouble to make it tonight?"

"What's the difference? Just get up early tomorrow!"

"Get up early? It’s 11 PM to 1 AM now."

As they were about to argue through the night, Jin Zijin spoke gently to Gu Youyou, "Yuancheng is losing his baby teeth; it’s not good for him to eat something so sweet!"

"..."

Chapter 216:

"No wonder I’ve been feeling so irritable and moody these past few days, turns out it’s that time of the month!" Gu Youyou murmured to herself, propping up her chin with one hand.

Her stomach didn’t hurt as much as last night, but she still felt uncomfortable all over.

It was all due to her poor constitution.

She had prescribed herself some herbal remedies to regulate her system.

"Sister Youyou, you’ve been out of sorts since this morning, and now you’re muttering to yourself, are you feeling unwell?" Qin Changlin brought over the new ink and brushes, making the brush hairs as small as Gu Youyou had requested. Seeing that she looked a bit off, he casually asked.

He replaced the large wolf-hair brush that Doctor Zhou had been using, planning to clean it and put it away.

Gu Youyou looked at the brush in her hand; it was the fine-tipped one she had wanted, which made it easier to write smaller characters and save paper.

She let out a soft sigh, "Yes, I’m not feeling very well." Picking up the prescription she had just written, she stood up and said, "I’ve made a prescription for myself. I’ll go and prepare the medicine now. Can you keep watch here for a while?"

"Oh, Sister Youyou, let me take care of that for you, you should sit down!" Qin Changlin insisted, pressing Gu Youyou back into her seat.

Gu Youyou waved her hand dismissively and stood up with the support of the table, saying, "No need, I can do it myself. After I've gotten the medicine, I'll head back first. You'll be okay here this afternoon, right?"

Qin Changlin replied hurriedly, "No problem, of course, no problem. Sister Youyou, if you're not feeling well, go back and rest. I'll have Yuancheng take you."

Recalling that she had planned to make sweet osmanthus sugar lotus roots for Yuancheng today, Gu Youyou nodded, "Alright, Yuancheng can come with me later."

Yuancheng was busy organizing the medicines in the cabinet. When he heard Gu Youyou mention him, he spoke from his seat by the shelves, "Sister Youyou, should I finish sorting these medicines first?"

Gu Youyou gestured to him to come down.

He remembered how just yesterday he messed up with the medicines and was scolded by Gu Youyou, so he was still a bit afraid of her.

He didn't dare to talk back and came down from the shelf, standing timidly in front of Gu Youyou like a little schoolboy who had done something wrong.

Gu Youyou did her best to keep her tone even, "Yuancheng, how about you don't sort the medicines anymore? Spend more time on your writing and reading medical texts."

"Ah...?" Yuancheng went pale in an instant. Ever since Doctor Zhou passed away, he had felt insecure, fearing he might be dismissed by Gu Youyou and Qin Changlin. He had always been diligent and cautious, yet he managed to make a mistake with the medicines just yesterday.

Hearing Gu Youyou speak that way now, his heart sank. He thought she must be dissatisfied with him and wanted to send him away.

"Sister Youyou, I... I know I’m not good enough, but I will..."

"It’s not that you haven’t done well." Yuancheng was particularly sensitive, which related to his physical condition and background. Gu Youyou didn’t want him to worry unnecessarily, so she quickly said, "Yuancheng, you’re still a child. Do you know what the most important thing for a child your age to do is?"

"What... what is it?" Yuancheng, with eyes widened, was clearly frightened.

"Don’t be nervous, I’m not blaming you. Sister Youyou was in a bad mood yesterday and said some unpleasant things, don’t take them to heart."

Gu Youyou called Yuancheng into the study and sat him down in a chair. She picked up a simple medical book and asked, "Can you understand this kind of medical text?"

Yuancheng nodded first, then shook his head, saying, "Master taught Yuancheng to read it when he was alive, but I don’t really understand it."

Chapter 217: Making the Best Use of Everything

Gu Youyou nodded and said, "So, Master’s intention is definitely not to make you an attendant, but a doctor, isn’t it?"

"Yes, but Yuancheng is too stupid, always failing to learn well." He hung his head in frustration.

Gu Youyou shook her head, her voice warm and smiling, "It’s not that Yuancheng is too stupid, but rather that Yuancheng learns too quickly."

"Learns too quickly?" Yuancheng jolted, suddenly lifting his head to look at Gu Youyou.

Gu Youyou explained, "Learning anything is like building a house, we need to lay a solid foundation first and then slowly build up from there, so that the house is sturdy. Yuancheng, medical texts are much more difficult than the books normal students read. Even if you can understand the words, it doesn’t mean you can apply them deftly. A house can be dismantled and rebuilt, but Medical Skills are different;

there is no second chance, it doesn’t tolerate even a slight mistake. Because one error from you could mean the death of a patient, do you understand?"

Yuancheng looked at Gu Youyou with a dazed half-understanding.

Gu Youyou smiled and said, "This is what we’ll do. I’ll have Qin Changlin enroll you in school. You should start by learning to read and write there. At the very least, you need to be able to recognize every character in the medical texts on your own."

Holding the medical book and pondering for a long while, Yuancheng seemed to grasp what Gu Youyou meant and muttered, "Does Sister Youyou mean to recognize all the characters first before studying the medical texts?"

It wasn’t the whole of it, but the gist was correct, so Gu Youyou smiled and nodded.

...

Jin Zijin went hunting in the hills behind Lotus Village today.

Having vegetables every day, all three of them couldn’t stand it anymore, nearly sick with it.

Yue Rujing rolled up his pristine white lower garment, bundled it, and rolled up his sleeves to weed the garden in the courtyard.

He saw that the pear tree had already been pruned neatly by him.

To Gu Youyou’s critical eye, the ’tree shape’ was pruned quite well, good enough for eight points at least, though it remained to be seen how it would bear fruit next year.

"Oh, you’re back so early today?"

Gu Youyou lifted the medicine in her hand and replied, "I'm back to prepare the medicine at home!"

"Do you need my help?" Yue Ruqing disdainfully slapped the mud off his hands, how he hoped for Gu Youyou to nod! Preparing medicine was much easier than weeding, and importantly, it was clean.

But Gu Youyou wouldn't acquiesce to his wish and smilingly said, "Someone's already helping me with the medicine, so you continue weeding!"

Yuancheng timidly followed inside and, seeing Yue Rujing's ethereal presence, felt even more awkward and ill at ease.

Gu Youyou whispered, "He's a relative from my sister's home; his family used to be wealthy, but unfortunately, they've fallen on hard times, now even worse off than us. See, he's weeding, isn't he?"

Once wealthy still meant wealth. For someone like Yuancheng, who had lived at the bottom all his life, the sense of self-pity was not easily shaken off.

"What if we let him do the weeding? He does look like someone cut out for weeding."

"You're the one who looks like someone cut out for weeding, get on with it!" Gu Youyou retorted, unamused.

Only when Yuancheng heard Gu Youyou so naturally giving orders to that person and accepting a scolding, did he feel less nervous and even managed a small laugh.

He straightened his back as he followed behind Gu Youyou.

This infuriated Yue Ruqing.

Yuancheng tended the small furnace to prepare the medicine, while Gu Youyou was in the kitchen making candied lotus root with osmanthus again.

To make it tasty, it required some time.

Outside, Yue Ruqing had already cleared out two patches of the vegetable garden and planted new vegetables.

Another task was to make a bigger bed for Abao, which he found quite disgusting.

Gu Youyou had made it clear to him that if he didn't work, he would be thrown out. For his senior brother, he endured it.

Chapter 218: Wives Sing, Husbands Follow

He smiled as he took the large cloth bag from Jin Zijin's hands, which contained the game he had caught today.

Qin Changlin looked at Gu Youyou with amazement and asked, "Is he also a relative of yours?"

"Ex-husband!" Gu Youyou said with no good humor.

Jin Zijin had a pair of small rabbits in the pouch of his lower garment, their gray and white fur so small, just about the size of Jin Zijin's fist.

After handing over the goods to Yue Rujing, he went straight to Gu Youyou's side, grabbed a rabbit in one hand, and said, "Today I found a rabbit nest. Seeing how this pair of rabbits is really small with not much meat, I didn't kill them. Do you think we should raise them a bit more before eating, or should we sell them alive?"

Irritated by the thought of eating such small creatures, Gu Youyou said, "Naturally, we'll raise them first." She took the two rabbits and then instructed Yue Rujing, who was checking the game, to make a nest for the rabbits, all without a hint of discord.

Qin Changlin was completely baffled by this.

Is he really an ex-husband? Why does it seem like their relationship isn’t bad? At least, it hasn’t fallen apart.

Jin Zijin washed his hands and said to Qin Changlin with a smile, "You must be the doctors from Jisheng Hall, right? I’ve heard about you from Youyou."

"Uh, yes...?"

"This must be your first time meeting me. I am Youyou’s husband. I used to live in Lotus Village as well. Following my wife’s lead, I moved to town after she did."

Following my wife’s lead?

"Ah, we’ve had a good haul today. Why don’t you stay for dinner?"

Qin Changlin shook his head like a rattle drum, saying, "No, no, we can’t. Jisheng Hall can’t do without us. We must go back now. We’ll bother you another day when we have time."

Gu Youyou is too complicated, and so are the people around her. Can’t make heads or tails of it, can’t make heads or tails of it!!

"Two rabbits, a roe deer, and a bird of an unknown species, as well as a rather large wild chicken," Gu Youyou muttered to herself while checking the game.

After inspecting them, she turned to Jin Zijin and said, "There’s so much here, we can’t finish it all by ourselves. Should we sell some? We can’t keep it in this weather."

However, Jin Zijin suggested, "Let’s not sell them. What we can’t eat, we can preserve with salt and it will last longer."

"Oh, whatever!"

...

After dinner, Yue Rujing suddenly invited Jin Zijin to take a stroll by the river to aid digestion, leaving a pile of bowls and dishes for Gu Youyou to deal with.

Which really irritated her.

Two grown men taking a stroll by the river under the moonlight, is that possible? They must be using it as an excuse to avoid her, up to no good, sneaking around as if nobody can tell.

"Abao, you've eaten quite a lot tonight too. Go on, join them for the stroll," she commanded.

"Hey! How can we take a dog with us? That would be dog-walking."

Jin Zijin patted his shoulder and said, "Let's go together. Abao indeed needs to aid his digestion."

Now that Jin Zijin had spoken, Yue Rujing could only nod reluctantly.

With the Qingshui River bank being desolate, Gu Youyou wanted to follow and eavesdrop, but lacking Jin Ziyuan's skill at moving unnoticed, she was discovered as soon as she approached the riverside.

Luckily, she was carrying a bucket, providing her with the perfect excuse that she was there to fetch water.

Under the willow tree on the other side of the river, Jin Zijin called out loudly, "Youyou, where are you putting the bucket? I'll bring the water back in a bit."

That was exactly her intent.

Gu Youyou left the bucket behind and returned home.

Once Gu Youyou was out of sight, Yue Rujing continued, "The news of Doctor Zhou's death has been leaked, and it was their doing. They killed Doctor Zhou and then led Xuanzong's people here, aiming to kill two birds with one stone. Xuanzong's people will think it was our doing, and I expect they will send someone soon. Brother, what's your plan?"

Chapter 219: Leaving

Jin Zijin stroked Abao's head and said, "A plan to kill two birds with one stone, huh, the people of Xuanzong aren't fools. Then I'll set off tomorrow."

Yue Rujing still had some worries and hesitated before asking, "What about that old man..."

Jin Zijin raised his hand to stop him from continuing, "You don't need to worry about that, I'll handle it. Take extra care of Youyou for me. If Xuanzong's people get there before I do, don't let them take Youyou away. If necessary... take her to the south, and if I come back and don't see you two, I will go south to find you."

Yue Rujing, frowning, couldn't think of any better solution and could only nod in agreement.

Suddenly recalling something, he asked, "Any news about the Youying Pearl?"

Jin Zijin shook his head with a bitter smile and said, "That thing moves about; it's not so easy to find. You don't need to worry about this; just ensure Youyou's safety."

Yue Rujing felt a mixture of amusement and helplessness and said, "Brother, you've mentioned Youyou three times now, you truly have changed."

Jin Zijin was taken aback for a moment, then looking sideways at Yue Rujing, he said, "Before the Youying Pearl is found, Youyou is the Youying Pearl, she must not be lost."

His face grew stern, showing a hint of displeasure. Having said that, he turned around and walked back.

Abao circled around and urinated under a willow tree, then immediately ran after Jin Zijin.

Yue Rujing shook his head and sighed, muttering to himself, "Oh dear, you're just a classic case of a stubborn old duck, let's see how long you can keep it up."

Jin Zijin was leaving tomorrow. In the evening, he packed a set of clothes, something Gu Youyou had never seen before, somewhat similar to the one worn by Yue Rujing.

It seemed that when he was with the Dao Family Tianzong, he must've worn clothes like these, markedly different from the coarse clothing he was now in. Taoists must be rich.

"Are you planning to leave tomorrow?" Gu Youyou asked.

The candlelight cast Jin Zijin's shadow enormously tall, his straight back made Gu Youyou remember the days when she was sick.

Although they were on guard against each other, it wasn't like it is now... She always felt that there were a lot of things between them.

"Yes, that's right, I'll make a quick trip and return early," Jin Zijin's voice was calm, without the slightest ripple.

Gu Youyou walked in front of him, looked at him in the faint candlelight, and reached out a hand, touching the inch-long beard on his face.

Jin Zijin instinctively turned his head to dodge.

Possibly feeling he had reacted too much, he said, "Don't touch, it's prickly."

Gu Youyou chuckled and asked, "Could you show me what you really look like?"

"Hmm?"

Gu Youyou said, "Your beard has been this long since last year and it’s still the same length now. You’ve never seemed to trim it, must be fake, right?"

He didn’t speak, only quietly watching her. His eyes seemed to hold a limitless, vast world. She couldn’t guess what he was thinking, whether he would let her see or not.

Gu Youyou tugged at the corner of her mouth and said softly, "Nevermind if you don’t want to show it!" She turned around and went back to the bed to sleep.

Facing away from the edge of the bed, she could see Jin Zijin’s shadow projected onto the canopy, shifting occasionally.

He removed his outer clothing and lay down next to her, silent for a long time.

Gu Youyou felt disappointed; he was still not showing her.

Just when she thought he had fallen asleep, his voice sounded again.

"I’ll show you when I’m back, it’s kind of a hassle to change it just once!"

"Huh?" Gu Youyou turned over, an involuntary surge of joy lighting up inside her.

"You’re willing to show me?"

"Hmm!" Jin Zijin gave a low affirmation, and Gu Youyou felt he had made quite the progress.

Opening up to her, starting with his face.

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Chapter 220: Trouble

The next day, Yue Rujing indeed accompanied Gu Youyou to Jisheng Hall. His white clothing was too ostentatious, and in order to avoid unnecessary trouble, Gu Youyou insisted he change into the attire of an ordinary worker, which he looked down upon for quite a while.

Even dressed in plain clothes, his good looks still caused quite a lot of trouble.

The youngest daughter of the affluent Fo family turned fifteen this year, which was the right age to discuss marriage. Unfortunately, in Qingshui Town, since their Fo family was the wealthiest, it had been difficult to find a suitable match despite their efforts.

Today, she followed her maid to Jisheng Hall for a medical visit and was immediately attracted to the handsome medicine dispensing worker, then insisted none of the girls and women in her household knew how to decoct medicine. She demanded that Jisheng Hall take responsibility for preparing her medication.

Hadn't Gu Youyou seen such scenes before? She would have intervened if it were someone else, but with Yue Rujing, she was quite happy to watch him in trouble.

Gu Youyou said to Miss Fo with a smile, "Miss Fo, the medicine decocted by our workers is naturally a bit better than what ordinary people prepare. Leave the medicine here, and I'll have them take it in to prepare. You can sit here, have some tea, and wait. Once it's ready, I'll bring it to you!"

"That's good. Finally, someone who understands," Miss Fo signaled her maid to give some silver to Gu Youyou, and said, "This is a reward for you from this young miss. If the medicine is well-prepared, there will be extra benefits."

Qin Changlin had been trying in vain for quite some time to excuse himself from the task and was visibly annoyed when Gu Youyou straightforwardly took it on. He gave her meaningful looks and gestures.

Gu Youyou smiled, paid him no mind, and just took the medicine into the inner courtyard.

Following her in, Qin Changlin asked in confusion, "Sister Youyou, that Fo Youmeng is doing this on purpose. How could you agree to her demands?"

Gu Youyou replied with a light smile, "Isn’t serving our patients what we’re supposed to do running a medical hall? Besides, we’re getting paid in silver."

"But we’ve never had to prepare medicine for someone before!"

"One must be flexible. What we haven’t done before doesn’t mean we can’t start now. Some patients must remain under a doctor’s care to ensure their safety at all times. We can set up beds in the back courtyard for them and offer inpatient treatment. In this way, we can reduce our visits outside, yet earn a good amount of silver. Understand?"

Gu Youyou looked around the spacious back courtyard with its many vacant rooms, thinking it was time to consider setting up some wards.

Qin Changlin, already a shrewd businessman, immediately grasped her idea the moment she mentioned it.

"Ah, that makes sense! Sister Youyou, we can convert some rooms and rent them out to seriously ill patients, plus charge them rent, right?"

Gu Youyou praised, "Well taught. Not only should we charge rent, but also for nursing care. We must charge a consultation fee for each visit as well, and the amount shouldn’t be much less than what we charge for house calls."

Qin Changlin nodded silently, his gaze turning sympathetically towards Yue Rujing, who was being badgered by Miss Fo to the point of irritation.

This young miss would most certainly be our first inpatient customer!

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The special tools Gu Youyou needed had been completed, a total of two, with Qin Changlin keeping one for himself.

"Sister Youyou, is this the type of knife you were talking about?"

Gu Youyou took it and examined it, testing the sharpness of the knife and feeling quite satisfied.

She said, "A knife like this will do. Find some time to prepare a pack of Knockout Drug for Yuancheng too!"

Though aware it was for medical purposes, Qin Changlin still couldn’t help but feel a shiver down his spine.