Farmhouse 221

Chapter 221: Preparing for Surgery

Yuancheng, to ensure you can marry, let her make a cut.

At night, Jisheng Hall was already closed, but Gu Youyou and Yue Rujing had not left.

Yuancheng felt something was off with both Gu Youyou and Qin Changlin today, why were they always stealing glances at him?

Moreover, it was already dark, dinner had been eaten, yet Sister Youyou and the newly arrived Brother Yue weren't leaving either?

"Come, Yuancheng, drink this soup and have a good night's sleep," Qin Changlin said, like a witch enticing Snow White to eat a poisoned apple.

Yuancheng said blankly, "Brother Qin, I've already eaten enough tonight."

Qin Changlin pushed the soup bowl closer, smiling, "It's okay, have another bowl of soup. You're at the age where your body is growing, you need to eat more to grow strong."

Moved by Qin Changlin's sincere gaze, Yuancheng received the soup bowl with moist eyes, saying, "Thank you, Brother Qin!"

After a bowl of soup, Yuancheng fell down straight away.

Qin Changlin caught him in his arms and shouted towards Gu Youyou in the courtyard, "He's down, he's down, hurry and prepare!"

Yue Rujing, looking at the strange pair, clicked his tongue, "My, my, you two are too wicked, the kid Yuancheng hasn't offended you, has he? Why have you knocked him out? Ouch, that's Knockout Drug, seems like a hefty dose too."

Gu Youyou ignored him and directly instructed Qin Changlin, "Bring up the prepared boiling water, the sterilized knives too, quickly change into clean clothes, and the distilled water I asked you to prepare earlier, needles and thread..."

Gu Youyou gave a slew of orders about knives and boiling water, frightening Yue Rujing considerably.

Gu Youyou had already alerted Qin Changlin a while ago, so he was slightly calmer.

Well, it was a case of trying to cure a dead horse as if it were still alive, what if it actually worked?

"What are you doing? Murder?"

Gu Youyou had already changed into the white clothes prepared earlier, put on a specially made white mask, secured her hair up into the white cap, and pointing to the door, said sternly to Yue Rujing, "Out, bystander!"

Yue Rujing felt utterly confused and was even more bewildered by Gu Youyou’s shouting.

"No, but what exactly are you rushing to do?"

When Qin Changlin got a moment, he hurriedly explained, "Brother Yue, it’s to treat Yuancheng’s illness, it’s all right, please go to the front hall for now!"

...Does treating an illness require knives and boiling water? He thought they were slaughtering a pig.

"What exactly is Yuancheng sick with? I have some knowledge of Huangqi Techniques, perhaps I could..."

Seeing that Yue Rujing didn’t look at all ready to leave, Gu Youyou, resting her elbow on her hand, pushed him, "Oh, can I possibly communicate with your outmoded feudal thinking? Hurry up and leave, don’t delay our surgery."

She had no desire to explain the matter of cutting Yuancheng’s ’little Ding Ding’ again, as it had already taken her ages to clarify to Qin Changlin.

Besides, Yue Rujing was in league with Jin Zijin, would he really tolerate his sworn brother’s wife doing such a scandalous thing?

Qin Changlin also joined in urging, "Brother Yue, we’re all in the back courtyard now, and there are only a few attendants in the front hall, that won’t do. You should go quickly, Miss Fu will be looking for you shortly."

Just as Gu Youyou had predicted earlier, Miss Fu had requested to move into the medical hall’s sick ward the very first day it opened.

The words "Miss Fu" proved effective indeed, when Yue Rujing heard them, his face instantly turned the ugly color of a liver, shooting Gu Youyou a look filled with hatred before reluctantly heading to the front hall.

After locking the door and sterilizing her hands in the special solution, Gu Youyou finally took the sterilized surgical knife.

Chapter 222: A Shockingly Unconventional Surgery

Qin Changlin, responsible for odd jobs.

Following Gu Youyou’s instructions, Qin Changlin first cleaned him up in a hurry, then disinfected. He had done a lot of work, but helping someone else to wash was new for him, and he felt extremely awkward about it.

But thinking that if he didn’t do it, Gu Youyou would have to, he endured the awkwardness no matter what.

Seeing him so visibly uncomfortable, Gu Youyou got annoyed and said, "You’re a doctor, and you’re this awkward just washing someone, how could you use a scalpel? You’d probably stab the patient to death. With your mental strength, how did you choose to practice medicine? Your master really had no eye for talent."

Gu Youyou’s sharp tongue wasn’t new, and Qin Changlin’s face flushed with her contempt, he retorted, "You think I’m like you, with a face thicker than a city wall!"

"Hey! You dare to talk back when you’re doing a poor job, you apprentice with no medical ethics and no professionalism!"

Being called an apprentice was a sore spot for Qin Changlin; until his death, the doctor never gave him the little gourd that symbolized he could heal the world, which meant he had never officially become a physician.

Sure, he wasn’t given the gourd, but what really got to him was that his master, just before passing away, made sure to leave one for the never before seen Gu Youyou.

His face red, he countered, "That’s because the master, bless his soul, was sick and confused at the end, he forgot."

Gu Youyou just pursed her lips, too lazy to argue with him, and said only, "Just do your job well. I’m only teaching this technique once. Whether you can learn it or not is up to you."

Gu Youyou elbowed Qin Changlin out of the way and made a clean cut with her knife.

"Needle, thread!" Gu Youyou stretched out her hand.

Qin Changlin watched from the side, both horrified and amazed.

Hearing Gu Youyou call out, he froze for a moment before hurriedly passing the needle and thread to her.

The medical conditions here were poor; this was all she could do.

Gu Youyou’s stitching was as smooth as flowing water, quick and precise. After she finished the suture, it looked seamless, leaving Qin Changlin gaping in astonishment.

"All done! The nursing work is up to you now," Gu Youyou said as she washed her hands, instructing Qin Changlin, "Pay extra attention these next few days, keep it disinfected and clean, and don’t let it get infected."

"That’s it? What about the thread...?"

Gu Youyou said, "The thread can be removed in a few days. Don’t worry, it’s all good."

It was miraculous.

Another one marveling in amazement was Yue Rujing, who was hiding on the roof.

Yue Rujing had no intention of really going to the front hall; he just took a roundabout and came back, quietly climbing onto the roof to sneak a peek.

Gu Youyou, completely focused, didn’t notice him at all.

Seeing a woman treating Yuancheng, he was truly shocked.

He didn’t even know how he managed to get down from the roof, though the knife never touched him.

And his mind was filled with envy.

Big brother, your wife.

But that wasn’t the most important thing. The important question was, if he got her angry, would she also give him a dose of Knockout Drug, followed by a knife?

After tucking Yuancheng in, Gu Youyou and Qin Changlin took their tools and left the room.

"Sister Youyou, did you often do this kind of... surgery before?"

Gu Youyou’s adept movements forced him to question.

Gu Youyou said indifferently, "How could I often perform this type of surgery? This is just a simple minor surgery; any small medical clinic could do it."

"Then you..."

"Oh, I’ve done it once before. The patient had a special status and sought me out. I couldn’t really refuse."

Qin Changlin: "..."

...

Chapter 223: Heart Disease

When Yuancheng woke up and learned about his situation, he was nowhere to be seen, hiding in his room all day and refusing to come out for meals, driving Qin Changlin to desperation.

"Sister Youyou, what should we do? His physical injuries have healed, but this heart..." In agony, he patted his chest and said, "It’s hard to treat a heartache! He’s even ignoring me now. He can’t just keep moping around like this. Think of something fast!"

Gu Youyou replied irritably, "There’s no use coming to me; I’m not a psychologist."

"..."

"What are you so anxious about? It’s only been two days. He just had his surgery, and he shouldn’t be moving around too much these days anyway. It’s good for him to stay in his room. Just don’t forget to give him his meals and medicine."

Gu Youyou sighed and, propping her chin, said, "For a man, especially someone whose spirit has been damaged, this kind of thing is hard to accept. Oh, well, Yuancheng is still young, not quite a man yet."

Waving her hand dismissively, Gu Youyou continued, "Anyway, his reaction is normal for now, so just stop worrying. Accepting what happened takes time. Once he figures it out, he'll come out naturally."

Qin Changlin shook his head and sighed helplessly, "I hope so."

"Big sister!"

Gu Youyou looked up to see a frail woman holding a child—it was Daya Gu Xiaolian.

She hurriedly got up and brought her into the house.

"Why have you come now? The sun is so strong, be careful not to let it shine directly into the child's eyes!"

Gu Youyou noticed that Xiaolian was holding the child with no cloth to shield the little one's face from the sun, grateful that the child was sleeping.

Gu Xiaolian frowned and showed the child to Gu Youyou, saying, "The baby's little face has been yellow since birth, still yellow now. People in the village say the child might be sick."

"Let me see!"

Gu Youyou took the little Lanxin in her arms, her face not even as big as a palm, which made her feel incredibly heartbroken.

The unnatural yellow color on the child's face was indeed jaundice, which was not the normal kind found in newborns, given the child's age.

The child was still deeply asleep, seemingly peaceful, which made it hard to tell if there were any other issues.

Gu Youyou asked, "How is her feeding? Does she often spit up milk?"

Gu Xiaolian shook her head and answered, "No, she feeds well. It’s just that... my milk isn’t plentiful; I always feel she’s not full."

"Any other troubling symptoms?"

"Normally, I’m out doing farm work, so I leave her at home with her grandmother," Gu Xiaolian sighed, "Her grandmother probably just lays her on the bed and cares no further; every time I return home, her diaper is wet."

Gu Youyou thought to herself: With a mother-in-law like yours who abused you during your pregnancy, it would be surprising if she took good care of this little girl.

After carefully examining the child, Gu Youyou finally said, "Since there’s no other major issue, it shouldn’t be serious. Here’s what you do: don’t breastfeed her for now. If her symptoms lessen after three days without milk, it might be an issue with the milk."

"Ah... no, how can not breastfeeding be okay? Not having milk for three days is not viable; she’s so small and can’t eat anything else. She can’t go that long without food!" Gu Xiaolian shook her head vigorously in disagreement.

Gu Youyou patiently explained, "She doesn’t have to drink your milk; she can have someone else’s."

Gu Xiaolian looked distressed, almost to the point of tears, "A wet nurse, that’s something only the wealthy families in town can afford. I... I don’t have the money."

Chapter 224: Yue Rujing’s Troubles

For ordinary people, hiring a wet nurse is highly unlikely.

After thinking for a while, Gu Youyou said, "How about I have Qin Changlin find some cow’s milk to feed the child? Don’t worry, at four months old, it’s okay to wean off breast milk. From now on, just feed cow’s milk."

There wasn’t a precedent here for children being raised on cow’s milk, and Gu Xiaolian was shocked upon hearing this. She anxiously exclaimed, "How could this be possible? What if the child grows up looking like a cow..."

Gu Youyou was speechless. It was the same logic as believing that a child would be born with a split lip if a pregnant woman ate rabbit meat.

It must be said, Gu Xiaolian’s imagination was indeed vast.

She said, "Don’t worry, the child won’t turn out looking like a cow!"

"But..."

"Oh, my! Looking like a cow at least means healthy and strong, which is definitely better than being skinny and scrawny from drinking your milk!"

Perhaps it was the last remark that persuaded her, and Gu Xiaolian finally agreed with a mix of sorrowful cries and sighs.

Gu Youyou told her to go back, pack some stuff, and bring a few changes of clothes over.

She arranged a bed for her.

Without the need to breastfeed, who knows if the child left in her grandmother’s care would starve to death.

...

Gu Youyou's concept of hospital treatment was not so easily accepted by everyone. If someone in their house was too sick to rise, they still preferred to invite the doctor over to their homes.

Yet, when the doctor visited the home, all he did was take a look and then prescribe some medicine, and that was it. How could this compare to the benefits of being a hospitalized patient with a doctor on hand to rescue at any moment?

Helpless against such backwardness, Gu Youyou could only watch in distress.

There were now two patients in her hospital ward, one was Gu Xiaolian with her daughter, and the other was the young lady from the Fo Family.

She didn't have anything serious; her primary reason for being there was to indulge in her fanciful infatuation.

Anyway, since there were enough beds and she had plenty of silver, Gu Youyou let it be.

She might have been indifferent, but Yue Rujing, who was seriously harassed by Fo Youmeng, could not afford such nonchalance.

"Gu Youyou, I'm asking you if you plan to manage this at all. You actually let in a woman with a mental illness, thinking Jisheng Hall isn't chaotic enough, huh?"

Gu Youyou, looking unhurried, gazed at the ledger and said indifferently, "Having a mental illness is still an illness. What's wrong with her paying for her treatment? Besides, as a medicine assistant, what does it matter to you what kind of patients I admit? Can you control it?"

"Hey! You—you—you..." Yue Rujing was indignant, his heart filled with bitterness. Had he known he'd be stuck with such a job coming here to see his junior fellow, he wouldn't have come even if killed.

"You're simply unreasonable. Could it be that you deliberately brought in Fo Youmeng just to annoy me?"

Gu Youyou looked at him with disdain and said, "To deal with someone as incompetent as you, do I need to find someone to help me?"

Yue Rujing: "...What does ’incompetent’ mean?"

Gu Youyou appeared impatient. It was the end of the month, and there were a pile of ledgers and prescriptions to sort out. She looked at Yue Rujing, her face clearly expressing her unwillingness to explain, and said, "Alright, stop complaining about the patients when you’ve not done your work properly. If you don’t do a good job for me, I’ll fire you!"

Yue Rujing: "I..."

"Out immediately, and without my permission, do not enter my consultation room."

In his heart, Yue Rujing was crying. He didn’t even have to wait for Xuanzong’s people to come; he now particularly wished he could knock Gu Youyou unconscious with a chop of his hand and take her away.

Attending to her was more demanding than serving a demanding master.

The key point was, she was just a village girl; how could she act so high and mighty?

Seeing Yue Rujing leave with his head drooping, Qin Changlin patted his shoulder and consoled him, "Sister Youyou dislikes it the most when someone talks to her about trivial matters while she’s busy. Yue Brother, you just happened to catch her at a bad time."

Chapter 225: An Unsettled Night

Yue Rujing had an innocent look on his face, offering a bitter smile, "I’m being harassed by her patient, is this a trivial matter?"

Qin Changlin nodded affirmatively and said, "Yes!"

With fire in her eyes, Yue Rujing realized that she couldn’t continue with this work.

Fine, in order not to create additional problems, she decided to endure it for now. Once her senior brother returned, she would have someone marry off that clingy piece of candy.

...

In the blink of an eye, Jin Zijin had been gone for over half a month. In the last few days, Gu Youyou had been sleeping restlessly, always feeling that in the middle of the night, someone was moving around the house like a ghost.

In the darkness, Gu Youyou widened her eyes, listening carefully to the noises outside.

This night she was determined to make sense of it.

The whooshing sound wasn't the wind; it seemed like someone was flying around the house, closing in.

Oh no, the area around her house had definitely been disturbed these past few days. Listening to the noises, it seemed different from the previous days. Her heart raced with the feeling that something big was going to happen tonight!

Gu Youyou couldn't help feeling nervous, instinctively wrapping herself tighter in her blanket.

But then she thought, if she encountered people with knives and sticks, what use would a cotton blanket be? It would only hinder her if she needed to run. Therefore, she threw off the blanket, cautiously got up, dressed herself in clothes and shoes, and took the scalpel from under her pillow.

At that moment, she heard the hurried footsteps of Yue Rujing from the study across the way heading in her direction. Gu Youyou was startled—had he noticed something too?

Yue Rujing didn't knock on the door, but instead, with a bang, kicked it open, grabbed Gu Youyou, and said, "Come with me quickly, it's not safe here."

Although Gu Youyou didn’t consider Yue Rujing to be any good, and equally untrustworthy, she remembered Jin Zijin’s instructions before he left and was willing to trust him. She hesitated only for an instant before following him.

Though Gu Youyou now appeared to be a normal person, she was still quite thin. Yue Rujing scooped her up easily and in a few leaps had bounded out of the house.

The moment they left the house, the roof of Gu Youyou’s bedroom caved in with a massive hole, and two men in black leapt down, ripping the blankets aside without a second thought.

The blanket was empty, yet it retained the faint warmth of Gu Youyou’s body.

"They’re outside, chase them!"

One of the men in black looked through the window and spotted Yue Rujing and Gu Youyou outside.

The assailants moved quickly and dashed out in pursuit without delay.

Yue Rujing glanced back at the pursuers and, with a faint smile flickering on his lips, whispered to Gu Youyou, "Hold on tight!"

"Ah...?" Before Gu Youyou could react, she felt her body lift off the ground as Yue Rujing took to the air.

Flying was not a new experience for her, but it was still an unpleasant one, as if her stomach was churning a sea.

Seeing the opportunity to get back at her, Yue Rujing reveled in glee, running faster as Gu Youyou grew more uncomfortable and scared. He intentionally hopped and skipped intermittently, even performing a 360-degree flip in the air.

"Haha... now you know fear! How does it feel? Unpleasant, isn’t it?"

"Yue Rujing, you bastard!" Taking advantage of the situation to exact revenge.

If it weren't for the two men in black chasing them like specters, she would have clawed him to death.

In no time at all, they had left Qingshui Town far behind, reaching the open outskirts.

Yue Rujing stopped and dumped Gu Youyou behind a large tree, saying, "Hide well here on your own, and be nimble."

Gu Youyou, clutching the tree trunk, retched a great deal, her complexion ashen, having vomited everything she ate that night.

Chapter 226: Has the Person Behind Appeared?

God knows how much she hated roller coasters—those things messed up her hair and ruined her image. This was sure as hell more thrilling than a roller coaster.

"Alright, you just wait."

Gu Youyou glared fiercely at Yue Rujing.

The pursuers were already upon them. Yue Rujing drew from his waist a belt. Oh no, not a belt, but a Soft Sword worn like a belt at the waist. While Gu Youyou was busy throwing up, the three had already become entangled in battle.

"You sure move fast, didn't anyone tell you that I, Yue Rujing, am here?"

Yue Rujing laughed indifferently, his swordplay as casual and beautifully flawless as his demeanor. Under the moonlight, he resembled an immortal dancing to the moon.

On the contrary, the two men in black struck quickly and fiercely. The tip of their swords carried a chilling force that made the surrounding flora pale in comparison. Even the bright stars in the night sky seemed to hide behind the clouds.

After throwing up, Gu Youyou felt much better, but she still lacked the strength to do anything but lean against a tree trunk.

She barely opened her eyes to witness the real-life martial arts action unfolding not far away, feeling an indescribable emotion inside.

If she was destined to be transported to such a world, she wished for an early warning so she could have trained to become a master of poisonous medicine.

Wielding swords and staffs wasn't her thing, but playing with throwing needles would be cool!

Life is full of dramas. Well, there was nothing she could do to help; best to just hide away!

"Yo, you're quite resilient, aren't you?" Yue Rujing mocked with a laugh. In the blink of an eye, his swordplay changed.

It was no longer as graceful as the wind but whipped up a whirlwind on the spot, kicking up sand and stones to create a huge vortex.

The two men in black could not maintain their footing within the vortex, their bodies involuntarily spinning with the swirling pebbles.

Gu Youyou watched from a distance, utterly dumbfounded!

One of the men in black, in a moment of desperation, yelled angrily, and drove his sword deep into the ground, gripping the hilt tightly to anchor his stance.

The other seemed weaker and, after struggling briefly, could no longer hold on. With a scream, he was swiftly tossed into the air and smashed heavily onto a pile of stones by the riverside.

The moonlight peeked out from the clouds once more, like a mischievous child stealing a glance.

The man in black clutching the sword hilt sneered, not feeling unsettled by his defeat.

"If I can't beat you, do you think I can't deal with her? Let's see if your fists can stand up against our six hands."

Six hands?

Before the echo of his words faded, Gu Youyou felt a chill behind her as someone closed in on her at great speed.

Yue Rujing felt it too. He kicked away the man in black in front of him and sent his sword flying towards the spot behind Gu Youyou.

But he was too late to save her. The person behind Gu Youyou swiftly dodged to the side, holding a short sword to Gu Youyou's throat.

"It's time to return what you've hogged for so long. This night's game ends here. Let's go!"

The person grabbing Gu Youyou dragged her away, and the two disheveled men in black followed suit, leaving Yue Rujing glaring at them with a furious look as they retreated into the dense forest.

Gu Youyou's hand in her sleeve gripped the surgical knife she had brought with her. She guessed these people wouldn't kill her, otherwise, why would they have fed her that precious medicine for ten long years?

Her hand clutched the surgical knife, but her mind was uncertain.

Perhaps by following these people, she could find the one behind it all and understand why she was so deeply entwined in this obscure game. She might also learn what role she was meant to play in this intricate scheme.

Chapter 227: Stab Your Kidneys

But what kind of dangers could be lurking within?

And what about Jin Zijin? Would it be safer to follow him, or should she take a gamble on her own?

As they were threatening Gu Youyou, Yue Rujing could only reluctantly follow, not daring to get too close. Gu Youyou's mind was in chaos, as she went over everything from the first day she arrived to the present.

Both she and Jin Ziyuan were raised by others, so-called 'medicinal slaves.' She didn't want to admit it, yet she had to: these people never saw her as a human being.

If she were taken back, the upside would be the chance to learn about the things she wanted to know. But... it had been a long time since she had drunk that medicine, and she finally managed to suppress the cold poison. She definitely didn't want to continue drinking those concoctions.

If these three men really were underlings of the person behind this, then if she were taken away, most likely she would have to continue drinking it.

She didn't want to become a monstrous creature, not quite human, not quite ghost. She ultimately decided she would do everything possible to stay, even though Jin Zijin and Yue Rujing might not be good people either, but at least they had never forced her to take the medicine.

Ha, not a single good person. Was she, Gu Youyou, someone to be manipulated by others?

"Yue Rujing!" Gu Youyou shouted loudly.

With a solemn face, Yue Rujing stopped in surprise, and the knife at her throat also halted.

"Cousin-in-law?"

Gu Youyou gave him a suggestive look, yet with a pitiful cry said, "I'd rather die than go with these men in black. Tell my husband, my biggest regret in this life is not bearing him a son or a daughter. Alas, the heavens envy a beautiful woman; all I hope for is to continue our marriage in the next life!"

Her clear, mournful voice in the night air moved people to tears. The three men in black were all shaken by Gu Youyou's words of despair, and the one holding Gu Youyou was startled for a moment, feeling a strong force grab his sword-wielding wrist. Gu Youyou then thrust her head forward with all her might, aiming her outstretched neck right towards the blade!

He was terribly frightened; if such an important person died under his blade, he couldn't imagine if he would be skinned or have his tendons extracted.

He quickly pushed Gu Youyou's hand away and moved the short sword in his hand aside.

This woman was truly courting death, yet she could not die.

Gu Youyou let out a piercing cold laugh, and even her beautiful voice became incredibly eerie.

The dark eyes on the black cloth suddenly faltered, reacting a beat too slow.

But it was exactly this half-beat of hesitation that gave Gu Youyou an inexplicable burst of strength and courage. Clenching the scalpel in her hand, she stabbed towards the abdomen of the man in black.

"See if I don't puncture your kidney!"

Gu Youyou had a thorough understanding of human anatomy; in modern times, one could live without a kidney, but in this medically backward ancient era, not even circumcision surgery was possible, let alone a nephrectomy. He was as good as dead.

The man in black seemed to have not anticipated that this seemingly frail woman intent on death would suddenly attack him, and he was stab squarely by her.

The scalpel may have looked small, but it was unexpectedly sharp. The small blade actually pierced through his specially-made clothes and into his flesh.

The man in black grunted but did not retreat. Instead, with a furious look, he grabbed Gu Youyou’s wrist that was holding the scalpel.

"I didn’t expect this... you’re quite courageous!" the man in black said through gritted teeth.

As Gu Youyou launched her surprise attack, Yue Rujing, who had been following, also moved swiftly like the wind.

The two men who had previously fought with him were not idle either and immediately stepped in front of him.

Chapter 228: Where Are You Taking My Person?

But they had never expected that their leader would be ambushed by Gu Youyou!

"Senior brother, are you all right?"

The man in black roared coldly, "You don’t need to worry about me, just do your own job."

Even though her wrist was still in pain, Gu Youyou did not let go; her hand remained tightly grasping the scalpel.

"You can endure so much? Let’s go!"

She started to panic, looking at the blade that had been pulled out, with only the very tip, about one centimeter, stained with blood. This depth didn’t even puncture his vital organs.

And she had lost her best chance.

Yue Rujing also began to panic, beating up these two failed subordinates wasn't difficult, but the challenge was to knock these two down while also rescuing Gu Youyou from the hands of the men in black across from them.

The man in black showed no intention of wasting further time; this time, he grabbed Gu Youyou and sprinted rapidly toward the dense forest behind him.

What Gu Youyou feared most was being carried off like a sack, creating a sensation that made her heart rise to her throat. In order not to fall and die from the drop, she could only grip the man in black tighter, that resolute determination from before nowhere to be found.

The man in black sneered with contempt, "I thought you were braver than this, but it turns out you're scared already. Hmph... wait until you meet Master, you'll have more to fear."

Indeed, a nest of snakes and rats, Gu Youyou suddenly felt that if she fell into the hands of those perverts, she might truly consider suicide.

Up ahead, a white figure flickered, causing the man in black who was holding Gu Youyou to suddenly halt and frown deeply.

Gu Youyou looked intently and saw a figure in white robes alight in front of them, standing with hands behind his back, his voice rich and powerful.

"Where do you intend to take my person?" he asked coolly, his voice carrying an unparalleled authority.

Standing beside the man in black, Gu Youyou could clearly feel his body stiffen considerably. From the moment the white-robed man appeared, his former confidence and calm had dissipated.

Yue Rujing had also caught up from behind. Seeing the opposition, his expression relaxed, and he suddenly laughed, sheathing his Soft Sword and strolling leisurely forward.

"Ah, man proposes, God disposes, it seems like you won't be taking anyone away today."

The man in black snorted coldly, his visible eyes full of reluctance.

After a moment of contemplation, he reluctantly let go of Gu Youyou.

"Since Senior Brother Jin has arrived, I'll give you the face this time! Let's go..."

With that, he signaled the other two men in black to run quickly toward the depths of the dense forest and disappeared in the blink of an eye.

"Think you can leave just like that? Not so easy..." Yue Rujing's face darkened, and he chased after them.

"Ajing, don't chase!" It seemed a little late, as Yue Rujing had already run into the woods.

Gu Youyou gave them a cursory glance, then turned her gaze back to the man in white across from her.

Her heart was pounding uncontrollably, beating wildly.

The person was a stranger, yet the voice was incomparably familiar.

Gu Youyou's ears were sharper than most; she couldn't forget a voice after hearing it just once, let alone a voice that was etched into her memory.

"Zijin!" she called out tentatively, but the man opposite stood still, showing no intention of coming over.

After a moment, he reached out his hand to her and motioned gently.

As if under a spell, Gu Youyou stepped forward toward him.

In the moonlight, she could see his face clearly. Familiar eyes deep and bottomless like a pond or the vast, inscrutable universe. A high nose bridge, sword-like brows that slanted into his temples, full, rosy lips, and a resolute jaw.

Chapter 229: Coming Again

Everywhere possessed its own unique charm.

So this is what he looked like under the mask!

Even though they were standing in the cold moonlight, she felt as if she were in the warm sun.

It was because of this man, warm as the sun himself, that even in the pitch black of night, the radiance from deep within him could not be concealed.

Getting closer, he remained motionless.

Gu Youyou felt something was off and called out softly again, "Zijin?"

Before her words even faded away, she saw the tall figure collapsing towards her.

Gu Youyou was taken by surprise, knowing full well her small frame couldn't catch him, yet she didn't dodge and let him fall on top of her.

The two of them tumbled to the ground together, the fall leaving her feeling as if all her bones were softened.

"Zijin, what's wrong with you?"

In her pain, she didn't forget the man whose breath was now ragged on top of her. It took almost all her strength to push him off and lay him flat on the grass.

Jin Zijin's eyes were tightly closed, yet they trembled unrestfully.

On closer inspection, she found his lips were cracked and dry, and his face had an unnatural rosy hue, as he lay there in a semi-conscious state.

Gu Youyou had her pride and normally wouldn’t deign to diagnose him, but she couldn’t be bothered with that now.

Annoyed and in pain, she said, "This is what you get for overreaching yourself. You couldn’t withstand it, could you? I’m doing this to save you, not to pry into your secrets."

She took his hand to check his pulse.

But the moment she touched his hand, she felt the temperature in his body, far higher than that of an ordinary person.

"Why is it so hot?"

It was scalding to the touch.

Gu Youyou knew his body was always warmer than the average person, not a fever, but what about this time?

Gu Youyou, who usually remained calm in the face of illness, was suddenly panicking, shivering as she felt for his pulse.

The pulse was deep and strong yet overly erratic. Was he...

As Gu Youyou was trying not to rush to a conclusion, another burning hot hand grabbed hers.

Jin Zijin had opened his eyes at some point, but they were only weakly ajar.

He said, "You needn’t check; it’s the poison of the Flame Pond Fire Lotus, and you can’t cure it."

So, he too was poisoned.

"Flame Pond Fire Lotus? What’s that?" Gu Youyou looked at him in surprise, feeling a sense of relief in her heart at the same time.

He had made progress—he was willing to tell her about his physical condition proactively.

This time, however, Jin Zijin did not answer her question but closed his eyes, taking a deep breath as if he were gathering strength.

A moment later, he opened his eyes again and struggled to sit up, saying softly to Gu Youyou, "Let’s go back first!"

Some things can’t be rushed. Gu Youyou did not continue to ask and stood up, taking the initiative to help him up.

His tall frame leaned against her, and she found it rather heavy, especially as he seemed to sway on the verge of falling. Thinking of Yue Rujing made her angry—at the crucial moment, she had fled. With your hefty size, how am I, a frail woman, supposed to drag you back home?

They hadn’t gone far when Gu Youyou felt a chill behind her. A cold wind blew in, and with it, the black-clad people who had retreated were coming back.

Bad luck—it was a ruse all along, and Yue Rujing had been played like a fiddle.

"Jin Senior, so you were injured? If I hadn’t encountered one who escaped from you, I would have been completely fooled."

The man in black’s tone was filled with mockery and an irrepressible excitement.

He was about to achieve a great feat. How could he not be thrilled?

Chapter 230: Murderous Intent

Gu Youyou supported Jin Zijin while she furiously accused the man in black, "So what if he's injured? You, with your beady eyes and shifty gaze, still don't dare to show your true face?"

Touching on his sore spot, the man in black grew somewhat angry.

"Hmph..." The man in black snorted with a cold look in his eyes and reached toward his waist, saying, "You stabbed me just now; I remember that very well. When you fall into my hands, we'll see how long you can keep your sharp tongue."

After speaking, he shifted his gaze to Jin Zijin's face, his voice grew much softer as he said, "Brother Jin, although we are from different sects of the Dao Family, I have always admired you." He pointed at Gu Youyou and continued, "This woman belongs to my Xuanzong, so I ask Brother Jin to show some mercy and let her go."

Jin Zijin tugged at the corner of his mouth and replied calmly, "What if I don't?"

"You..." The man in black suppressed the anger in his heart, gripping the short sword at his waist, and said firmly, "I see Brother Jin is badly hurt; it won't be easy for you to fight again. But if you insist on stopping me, don't blame me, your junior, for being disrespectful."

As he finished talking, he took the short sword in his hand and approached Jin Zijin step by step, with a cold sneer.

His eyes full of chilling murderous intent made Gu Youyou's heart rise to her throat.

He didn't dare to kill her; Gu Youyou had always known that. Then whose life was he after with that murderous gaze...?

He called Jin Zijin 'brother', didn't he? Could it be that he truly dared to kill him?

Gu Youyou took several steps back while supporting Jin Zijin, her voice laced with panic, "What are you trying to do? Aren't you afraid your master will blame you for killing him?"

"Blame?" The man in black was slightly shocked, then burst into laughter as if he had heard the funniest joke in the world, shaking his head, "Brother, it seems you haven't told her anything! Haha... Don't you know? The Dao Family's Tianzong and Xuanzong have always been at odds. If I could kill the Great Elder Brother of Tianzong here, my master would be praising me before he even thought of blaming me."

Gu Youyou was momentarily stunned.

She tilted her head, her questioning eyes on Jin Zijin.

Is that really the case?

Jin Zijin chuckled lightly and nodded.

What does that mean?

Is it true or not? If it is true, you still manage to laugh about it.

Jin Zijin said, "Then try killing me; I'll just stand here and let you make a name for yourself."

The man in black glared fiercely, knowing that killing him would indeed be a great achievement. However, if Tianzong's people went to his master, Xuanzong would have to account for it.

Leaving behind a good name for himself and then handing him over to the people of Tianzong was definitely something his master could do.

Trading his own life for Jin Zijin's would surely be a gain for Xuanzong. But it was his own life at stake, and he wasn't noble enough to sacrifice himself for Jin Zijin.

Yet, facing a weakened Jin Zijin... such an opportunity might only come once in a lifetime. If he missed this chance, he feared he'd never have the opportunity to confront him again, let alone kill him.

Jin Zijin said with a faint smile, "What are you hesitating for? If you don't act now, I might just leave!"

"Stop! Leave her behind." Just as Gu Youyou and Jin Zijin turned to leave, a chilling air rushed towards them, whipping up their long hair.

Gu Youyou swiftly turned around, and through the gaps in her disheveled hair, she saw a flash of cold light. The cold moon-like short sword was thrusting towards Jin Zijin's broad back.

After all this, he still dared to kill!

Gu Youyou's mind went blank. For some reason, although she intended to dodge, she found herself lunging forward at the last moment.