Farmhouse 271

Chapter 271 She Came to Deal with It

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Neighbors who were helping whispered amongst themselves, "Ai! Life is so unpredictable. Who would have thought that the Gu Family matriarch would pass away before the Gu Family patriarch?"

"Indeed, the Gu Family matriarch was always so robust, with more strength and volume in her voice than the average young man. Had it not been for this accident, she could have easily lived another ten or eight years without any issues."

"Alas, everyone has their own fate! Come, Youyou, come inside with auntie."

Youyou was led into a side room by an older woman, who handed her two sets of white mourning clothes. Youyou put on one of them and gave the other to Zijin.

Zijin nodded and without another word, put it on as well.

The neighbors looked on with surprise at Youyou, and also... at the distinguished stranger behind her.

Youyou understood what they were surprised about and explained, "He is Jin Zijin, the hunter from the north end of the village. He’s given up hunting and shaved his beard, so he looks like this now."

"What?"

Can shaving a beard and giving up hunting lead to such a big change? If they weren’t similar in build, you might think they were two different people.

His face is completely different, isn’t it?

It makes you wonder what your own husband would look like without a beard.

Youyou didn’t elaborate any further and pulled Zijin into the main hall.

Zijin didn’t need to stay until evening; he just had to wear the mourning clothes and bow a few times before he could leave.

But he ended up kneeling and paying respects with Youyou for nearly an hour, until Youyou grew impatient and urged him with her eyes to leave.

They wouldn’t be able to return to town today, they would have to sleep in the old house that hadn’t been lived in for a long time. He would have to tidy it up.

The whole day was very quiet, no one spoke, everyone just did as the funeral master instructed, carrying out their respective duties. Speaking would have been disrespectful to the deceased. Those kneeling in the room were the departed’s closest kin, who of course wouldn’t show disrespect to her.

By evening, the day’s funeral rites were complete, and the burial could take place the following morning.

Young people could hardly bear such toil for one day, let alone Grandfather, who was of advanced years.

After standing up, Youyou quickly went to support him.

"Grandfather, please have a seat!"

Whenever Youyou visited in the past, Gu Feng was always delighted, but today, as it was the funeral for the old lady, he couldn’t muster any joy.

He just sighed deeply and nodded to Youyou.

Despite the usual bickering between Grandfather and Grandmother, Youyou knew that their decades of marriage bore deep affection—for instance, the sky-is-falling expression on Grandmother’s face when Grandfather was ill couldn’t be faked.

She comforted him, "Grandmother has passed on, but Grandfather, you mustn’t harm your health with sorrow. Grandmother would be worried, and so would we."

Gu Feng nodded and said to Youyou, "Youyou, your health isn’t good either, and you’ve tired yourself out today. You should rest too."

"Grandfather, my health has improved a lot, I’m not tired," said Youyou.

Gu Lao San and Gu Lao Er exchanged glances, Gu Lao San picked up on the cue and nodded, moving forward to support Gu Feng.

"Father, better you go back to bed and rest a bit. Tomorrow morning before dawn we have to lay Mother to rest," he said.

Gu Feng was indeed exhausted, both physically and emotionally, so he did not decline; he cast a worried glance at Youyou and then went to rest in the inner room with the support of Gu Lao San.

Once Gu Feng left, the atmosphere in the room changed; those harboring animosity towards Youyou no longer hid their feelings.

Youyou sneered, thinking that it was finally happening.

It was for the best. The most inscrutable and sullen uncle had taken Grandfather away to ensure his stability, leaving the rest behind to confront her.

Or rather, for her to confront.

Chapter 272: Taking Turns to Fight

First, Uncle Gu Number Two exploded in rage.

"Gu Youyou, how dare you show your face here?"

Gu Youyou had no idea what was going on, thinking to herself, Even if you all despise me, is it necessary to ostracize me at a time like this?

With his wife following his lead, Huang Xiangwen chimed in next.

"If it weren't for you, our mother would still be alive and well."

After her initial confusion, Gu Youyou's expression darkened.

What do you mean, 'if it weren't for me, grandma would still be alive and well'?

"What are you talking about? Make yourself clear!" Gu Youyou was never one to be trifled with. Since you're not afraid of disturbing the departed spirit, what do I have to be afraid of?

"Humph, still playing dumb!" Uncle Gu barked, unable to contain his fury, "Didn't mother go to Jisheng Hall to find you a few days ago?"

Gu Youyou didn't deny it and nodded.

Uncle Gu said coldly, "If you had come back with her to see Qianqian, how would she have ended up taking Qianqian to see Doctor Sun yesterday? If it hadn't been for going to see Doctor Sun, she wouldn't have encountered the startled horse on her way home, and she wouldn't have died in the ravine with the carriage..."

Uncle Gu's face was filled with grief, yet Gu Youyou was left speechless by his words.

If she followed their irrational line of thinking, then yes, it did have something to do with her.

"Ridiculous!" Gu Youyou swore.

"What did you say?" Uncle Gu and his wife took turns attacking her relentlessly.

"You caused your grandmother's death, and you still have the nerve to say your Uncle Gu is sick? Gu Youyou, do you have any conscience at all? If it weren't for the Gu Family, you would have died long ago!"

Meng Qiuju also said, "Youyou, grandma has been feeling unwell ever since she returned from your place. She must have been angered by you. It's really not right of you."

"Big sister, if only you had come back with grandma, she wouldn't have needed to take Qianqian to see Doctor Sun," Gu Dabao, who was usually honest, also complained about her.

Gu Youyou felt a chill in her heart. These were the relatives of the Gu family.

She felt sorry for Gu Youyou, the one who had passed away. Look, these are your relatives. They'll pin baseless charges on your head whenever they please, and if it weren't for this reason, they would probably find another.

In this family, the only one you could feel thankful for was grandfather, only grandfather.

If it weren't for grandfather being in charge, you really wouldn't have lived long; you'd probably have been thrown into the mountains to feed the wolves by these so-called relatives.

Her eyes swept over everyone present, the resentful gazes from her uncle and aunt.

When Gu Erbao saw her looking, he made a face at her, clearly showing his dislike for her.

Gu Dabao averted his gaze and didn't look at her, while Erya looked at Gu Youyou with some sympathy. They planned to reprimand the eldest sister in front of their grandmother's spirit, saying that grandmother would be pleased; after all, as a girl, she couldn't do much about it.

Sanya grunted twice at her, seemingly not very fond of her, either.

The two twin aunts were usually quiet. At just twelve or thirteen years old, having lost their mother, all they knew was to cry.

The married eldest aunt and second aunt were also there. The eldest aunt's face resembled grandma's, and her resentful gaze at Gu Youyou made her feel as if the deceased grandmother was also looking at her with resentment.

Gu Xiaolian had to look after the children; she had come in the morning and then left, so she wasn't there at the moment.

Sanya, still young, looked naive and clueless. As it turned out, only Sanya had no ill intentions toward her.

Gu Youyou felt a desolate laughter stirring inside, yet couldn't muster a smile.

No, she could not even laugh if she wanted to!

After thinking for a moment, Gu Youyou lifted her head and said indifferently to them, "So what do you want to do with me?"

Since you say grandma died because of me, what do you want to do?

Chapter 273: Kowtow and Apologize

What do they want to do with her? They probably didn't expect Gu Youyou to speak such words directly, did they?

What exactly? They really don't know what to do, do they?

Even though there was some connection with her, it was ultimately their own accidental death. Even if someone had to be held accountable, it should be the person driving the carriage, not Gu Youyou.

But the carriage driver also died.

With just one question, "What do you want to do with me?" she completely baffled the group of people in the room.

"You have to kowtow to grandma and admit your mistake, only then will grandma forgive you!" The room, silent for a long while, suddenly filled with a childish voice.

Everyone turned to look, and surprisingly, it was Gu Erbao who had spoken.

In the past, when Gu Youyou was so thin she barely looked human, this brat even brought the neighbor's kids over to kick her door.

Gu Erbao's words made everyone come to their senses.

Yes, make Gu Youyou kowtow and admit her mistake.

Even though, in their eyes, having her kowtow and admit her mistake was still letting her off too easily, they really couldn't think of any other way to deal with her.

"Right, kowtow and admit your mistake!" Huang Xiangwen said loudly.

Gu Youyou sneered, laughing cold and chillingly. Her laughter and her forlorn appearance, especially in the dead of the night inside the memorial hall, seemed extraordinarily terrifying.

Ghost girl, a haunting ghost girl. Even after recovering from her illness, she's still the same.

"What do you want to do? If you don't kowtow and admit your mistake today, don't even think about leaving this place."

Gu Youyou looked over each of those disgusting faces one by one, then set her gaze on the black lacquered coffin at the center of the room.

Here lies the old lady of the Huang Family, grandma!

Having gained Gu Youyou's body, it should be more than ordinary for her to kowtow to her grandma. After all, there is an old saying: "The dead are supreme."

But why should she? Why admit any wrongdoing?

By admitting a mistake, wouldn't that be confirming her grandma's death was because of me, Gu Youyou?

Given the character of these uncles and aunts, it wouldn't take long for gossip to spread throughout several villages. Gu Family's granddaughter, Gu Youyou, gained the favor of Jisheng Hall's esteemed doctor and soared to great heights. She began living a life of luxury.

But after she started her good life, she completely broke off relations with the Gu Family that had raised her for many years. When the Gu Family matriarch went to Jisheng Hall for a consultation, she was driven out by her heartless granddaughter. Left with no choice, she had to seek out a doctor from the neighboring village.

It's just unfortunate that heaven turned a blind eye, letting her meet with an accident on her way home and die a sorry death in the wilderness!

Heh, this bit of gossip would probably follow her for a lifetime, eventually even forcing her out of Jisheng Hall.

This is what relatives are like, yet she merely did not agree to her grandmother's unreasonable demands.

Standing beside the coffin, Gu Youyou said word for word, "Kowtow, I can. Admit wrongdoing, forget it!"

Everyone was stunned.

"You dare!" Gu Laodi rolled up his sleeves, his eyes flashing with a vicious glint, looking ready to start a fight.

Gu Youyou looked fearlessly at Gu Laodi and scanned the other people in the room.

Wait, something’s not right. Someone is missing.

Gu Youyou, alarmed, asked softly, "Where’s Lei Qianqian?"

It was heard that Lei Qianqian had the accident together with grandma, who died while she survived, suffering only some superficial skin injuries.

If it was only some superficial injuries, why isn’t she coming out?

"You still have the face to mention Qianqian!" Huang Xiangwen shouted angrily: "If anything happens to my daughter-in-law and grandson, I’ll fight you with my life."

"Grandson?" Gu Youyou’s eyebrows twitched, asking, "Is Lei Qianqian really pregnant?"

Huang Xiangwen grew furious: "Whether she’s pregnant or not is none of your business! You’re just a heartless

Chapter 274: The Dead Have Long Been So

Gu Xiaoqing softly explained with sympathy for Gu Youyou, "Eldest sister, the carriage knocked grandmother and elder sister-in-law down the mountain together. Grandmother protected elder sister-in-law and died, and elder sister-in-law was traumatized and has been out of her wits, constantly crying and causing a commotion. We are also holding a funeral here and were afraid of an accident, so we sent her back to the Lei Family."

Could it really be so?

Gu Youyou gave a bitter smile.

Grandmother could protect a granddaughter-in-law who had just been married into the family, yet she never showed such concern for her own granddaughter. The grandmother who was so selfish and greedy that she wouldn’t even spare a piece of candy for her grandchildren... Was she really that great?

"Aren’t you going to kneel and admit your fault quickly!"

As Gu Youyou was contemplating, Huang Xiangwen’s disgusting voice interrupted her thoughts.

Gu Youyou’s cold gaze swept over Huang Xiangwen, and finally rested on the coffin. She slipped her hand into her sleeve, felt an object, then smiled serenely and said in a calm tone, "I’ve made myself very clear, I will kneel, but I refuse to admit any wrongdoing."

Gu Youyou’s gaze inadvertently swept outside the door and saw a familiar silhouette in the dark; she then took her hand out of her sleeve again.

The person who came to pick her up had arrived, so she no longer needed to be afraid of her coarse aunts and uncles getting rough with her; the object she had hidden in her sleeve for defense was no longer necessary.

"Gu Youyou, I see that you won’t shed tears until you see the coffin! Let’s see if I dare to teach you a lesson on behalf of brother and sister-in-law!" Gu Wen rolled up his sleeves and approached her once again.

They were indeed planning to get rough with her, ha...

Gu Youyou showed no hint of fear on her face, but instead, she lowered her hand, gently tapped the coffin, and said, "Uncle, you really are the type who doesn’t cry until you see the coffin, aren’t you? Aren’t you afraid that grandmother will get so angry that she’ll jump out of the coffin and slap you to death?"

"What did you say?"

She infuriated him, this sharp-tongued wretch.

Gu Youyou sneered and said, "Haven’t you heard the saying ’the dead are long gone; the living must strive on’? Haven’t you heard ’if a family is not at peace, it will not thrive’? And what about ’once buried, let them rest in peace’?"

All those fancy words, he could not read a single character and did not understand them, but he vaguely grasped the meaning. Was she saying it was his fault that their mother could not rest in peace?

"Because of you, mother had this accident, and yet you dare push the blame onto me in front of her?"

Gu Youyou ignored him and continued on with her previous words, "Now that grandmother’s bones are still warm, you are stirring up trouble in front of her coffin, attempting to create strife within the household. As an elder, how can you encourage mutual support and lead the Gu Family to prosperity and development, and how can you let grandmother rest in peace so that the family can be at ease?"

If Gu Youyou’s initial words only half made sense to him, he clearly understood this tirade.

Good for you, Gu Youyou, truly pinning the nonsense on his head.

Gu Wen’s nose was crooked with rage.

"You’re blaming me? You actually dare blame me? Everyone knows that you, Gu Youyou, are an ungrateful wretch. Everyone saw our mother meet a tragic end in the valley, and it was I, Gu Wen, who carried her back. You, this unfilial daughter of the Gu Family, actually have the nerve to lie shamelessly, saying it’s my fault that mother cannot rest in peace?

Do you believe I will beat you to death right here in front of mother, and when she reaches the underworld and meets your parents, she will herself explain your unfilial behavior to elder brother and sister-in-law. After hearing it, they will only applaud!"

Good for an applause!

"Right, hit her!"

"Right, beat her to death!"

"Beat her to death, brother and sister-in-law won't blame you."

Gu Youyou let out a cold laugh and no longer wished to look at the people shouting to beat her. She simply felt a thorough chill settle in her heart.

Chapter 275: Looks like you can't hit me

She looked at these people and suddenly said in a harsh voice, "Come on then, I want to see if you dare to beat me to death in front of Grandma's coffin today. Let me tell you, if you're going to hit me, make sure to kill me, because the moment I came out of that dark room, I won't keep silent anymore. If I don't die, I will definitely tell Grandpa about your actions tonight, and I will report to the Governor's Office to have them judge this matter."

"Grandma died unexpectedly, yet my uncles and aunts humiliate me, a lone girl, and force me to take responsibility for her death. I refuse to believe that there is no justice in this world."

Huang Xiangwen, however, laughed proudly, "It is indeed that foolish girl from the haunted house. Do you not know that the Governor's Office never intervenes in other people's family affairs? Ha, go ahead and complain, see if the Magistrate will throw you out. Gu Wen, if you won't make a move, then I will."

She rubbed her fists and palms together, having wanted to teach this arrogant wench a lesson for a long time.

Gu Wen, being about to hit his niece, was somewhat hesitant. But Huang Xiangwen, who didn't even shy away from poisoning Gu Youyou, why would she hold back?

As soon as she finished speaking, her hand rose and descended with a gloating smile, excitement gleaming in her eyes, slapping down hard toward Gu Youyou's face.

Gu Youyou did not dodge, only looking at her coldly.

Just as the hand was about to hit her face, a hand suddenly appeared before her eyes, firmly catching the descending hand.

The man’s face was calm but his eyes carried a stormy look, like the warm sun had suddenly hidden behind dark clouds.

"Who?" Huang Xiangwen turned around in anger, coming face to face with Jin Zijin.

"You..." She found his face somewhat familiar but couldn’t recall who he was at that moment.

Everyone in the room turned to look, but most could only see his tall figure and his handsome profile.

Where did this man come from? How did he suddenly appear in the room?

Gu Youyou, however, spread her hands with a smile and shrugged, saying, "Sorry, you were too slow. Seems like you won’t be able to hit me!"

This damn girl!

"Who are you?"

The man who had come in to spoil everything was detestable. Gu Wen shouted angrily with inexhaustible rage.

"This is the Gu Family’s business," someone indignantly said.

Jin Zijin then let go of Huang Xiangwen’s hand, using a bit of force as he did so. All that could be heard was Huang Xiangwen crying out in pain, trembling as she held the hand he had squeezed.

Such great strength.

"Mother!" Gu Dabao hurried to check on Huang Xiangwen’s hand.

Jin Zijin turned to look at the crowd. Similarly, everyone felt he looked familiar, but they couldn’t recall who he was.

Gu Wen narrowed his eyes, and it took a while before he remembered. His eyes suddenly widened in surprise, and he exclaimed, "You are... Jin the hunter?"

Jin Zijin smiled frankly, "Uncle!"

The crowd was astonished. They knew Jin the hunter, but how had he changed so much without his beard? They had seen him years ago when he first came to Lotus Village. He was very handsome even then, somewhat similar to how he looked now, but not as magnificent as he was at present, almost too imposing to look at directly. In just over a month of not seeing him, he had changed so much.

This truly was...

While they were still astonished, seemingly forgetting that they were supposed to punish Gu Youyou, Jin Zijin had to remind them, "What my aunt just said was incorrect. If you beat Youyou, the Governor’s Office will indeed intervene, because she isn’t a part of the Gu Family anymore, she belongs to me."

He emphasized the words ’belongs to me’ very heavily, reminding them that Gu Youyou was not an orphan with only a grandfather to protect her. She was married now, and she had her husband to protect her.

Chapter 276 Alone

This man, although speaking with the calmness of still waters, had an air of authority that was impressive without anger.

The members of the Gu Family swallowed their words back.

They didn’t dare to continue making Gu Youyou apologize, and no one dared to stop Jin Zijin from swaggeringly taking Gu Youyou away.

A long while after the people had left, the Gu Family finally breathed a sigh of relief and said, "This Jin hunter seems different somehow, quite frightening."

...

The evening breeze was gentle, carrying with it the calls of nocturnal insects that sounded particularly desolate.

He held her hand, and it felt as if it warmed her entire being like the gentle sun.

"Why did you come!" After being quiet for a long time, Gu Youyou couldn't help but ask.

"It got dark, so I came to pick you up!"

A very legitimate reason.

Gu Youyou smiled secretly to herself, quite pleased.

"If you hadn't come, I would have been beaten up by them, thanks," she said.

Jin Zijin tightened his grip on her hand, as if deliberately reminding her of something, and then said, "Your needle-sticking skills are not bad, I'm sure you must be very precise."

Gu Youyou's body stiffened, and she stopped walking, staring blankly at him.

The needles she had hidden that were soaked with anesthetic... he knew about them?

After thinking it through, she felt relieved.

How could he not know? Other than not having uncovered that she was a spirit possessing a body, they had probably dug up everything about her ancestors for eight generations.

She said, "I am different from you all. If something happens to you, Yue Rujing can save you, and if something happens to Yue Rujing, you can save him. If both of you are in trouble, there are still people who care about you and will show up. But what about me? All alone, nobody cares about me, and with a frail body, my only skill is this."

Gu Youyou said it calmly, even with a faint smile, actually not implying anything else. But Jin Zijin heard much more in her words.

For example, when she said she was all alone, had she forgotten about Gu Feng? Or did she subconsciously think of herself as alone, different from others? Or was she saying that because they belonged to a group, they had bullied her, a lone woman? Or was it a warning not to target her anymore since she was sent to the small mountain village on her own and wouldn't have any comrades to help her if something happened?

In reality, Gu Youyou was openly frank; only the guilty would overthink her words.

After pondering for a moment, Jin Zijin said, "How can you be alone? You have me. If something happens to you, I will definitely come to save you. Look, you were under siege by the Gu Family, and didn't I come to rescue you?"

In the dim moonlight, Gu Youyou saw Jin Zijin raising his face in a self-congratulatory manner.

Shameless!

That was the only thought in her mind.

If he hadn't come, she wouldn't have been afraid of them, but the fact was that he did come, and he did indeed save her from the siege.

But was she talking about something so trivial? He clearly knew what she was really referring to.

Gu Youyou bowed her head again and thought for a moment. After a moment, she raised her head again and asked a very serious question.

"If both Yue Rujing and I were captured by Xuanzong's people, and you could only save one of us, who would you save?"

Alright, this was a question that often elicited bizarre answers, as cliché as 'if your mom and I fell into the water at the same time, who would you save?', but ancient people surely had never heard it before.

Jin Zijin was silent for a long while, as if seriously contemplating the question.

Gu Youyou thought to herself, alright, it's a question to think about seriously. Are you debating whether to lie to me against your conscience, or to openly express your love for your buddy Yue Rujing?

Chapter 277 He Will Definitely Save Me

"Why would you ask such a question?" Jin Zijin suddenly asked in surprise.

Gu Youyou sneered and said, "Now it's my turn to ask you, isn't it hard for you to answer?"

"No!" Jin Zijin shook his head crisply.

Gu Youyou was astonished!

"The people from Xuanzong are after you, not Ajing!" Jin Zijin answered with certainty and seriousness.

Gu Youyou rolled her eyes and said, "I mean hypothetically, what if both of us were captured together?"

Jin Zijin replied directly, "There are no hypotheticals for things that won't happen. The people from Xuanzong would never touch Ajing!"

Gu Youyou: "..." My heart feels so tired!

Then let’s put it another way.

"If Yue Rujing and I were both falling into the water at the same time, whom would you save first?"

Jin Zijin said seriously, "You should be asking if Ajing and you both fell into the water together, whom would he save first?"

"He would definitely save me first."

Gu Youyou: "..."

"Ajing is from the south, where there’s a lot of water. He’s a good swimmer and can save us both at the same time, so you really don’t need to worry about drowning!"

Damn it, my heart feels so tired!

Gu Youyou was left speechless with anger!

Storming off, the sooner to bed the better.

Watching the woman stomping off toward their thatched cottage, Jin Zijin shook his head with a smile and hurried to catch up.

"Actually, I know what you want to ask!" he said.

Gu Youyou didn’t want to listen to him.

"Ajing and I grew up together since we were young," he added.

Childhood friends, thought Gu Youyou to herself.

"To me, you are as important as Ajing," he continued.

Gu Youyou paused, stopped, and turned to look at him.

In the hazy moonlight, his expression remained calm and serious, yet it seemed tainted with a hint of indiscernible melancholy!

Jin Zijin was also looking at her. There weren't many people important to him, and now there was one more. He didn't regret saying that.

He could be decisive in everything he did, but only when it came to Gu Youyou, he always wavered. Just as he had said before, Youyou, you made me lose many principles.

He used to be a principled man, but for Gu Youyou, he had become someone without principles.

For instance, he would do some silly things, with a very clear purpose—to make her happy. However, just as Yue Rujing said, he still stubbornly refused to admit it.

Gu Youyou wasn't a greedy person. Upon hearing Jin Zijin's words, she did not feel lost because in his heart she figured she was more or less the same as his best friend.

She didn't think so, only that she was now as important to him as Yue Rujing was.

Just as he said, he and Yue Rujing had grown up together since childhood and had a deep relationship, which is why when he was poisoned, only he and Yue Rujing knew about it.

This showed his trust in Yue Rujing.

The progress was getting bigger, wasn’t it? From not trusting her at all, to all sorts of suspicions, to gradually trusting her, and now to this point.

After spending time with him, Gu Youyou understood what kind of person Jin Zijin was. He seemed to be carrying some heavy burden that made it hard for him to breathe, and it also made him cautious in everything.

It was hard for him to sincerely open up to someone, because there were few people he could trust.

"Do you trust me now, trust that I’m not a trap set by anyone for you, that I have no intention of harming you?" Gu Youyou asked with hopeful eyes.

"I trust that you won’t harm me, you won’t, right?"

He said this, asked this, but he seemed not to want to know the answer, or perhaps he was afraid to know it, and he walked away right after asking.

Chapter 278: Midnight Suspicions

Gu Youyou’s expression gradually darkened, her heart truly steadfast as a rock.

"Of course not!" Gu Youyou said in a low voice, "I hold no grudge against you."

Jin Zijin hadn’t gone far, and she believed he had heard.

I’m willing to trust you, but why don’t you explain that you possess superb medical skills, understand strange methods of healing, and also write beautifully?

You must have other unknown skills that you have yet to show, and all of these aren’t things that the Gu Family’s yin-nurturing young maid could do. So why won’t you explain?

What he didn’t know was that Gu Youyou simply could not explain.

...

Hungry for a whole day, having not eaten a single grain of rice, hunger kept Gu Youyou from sleeping.

This bizarre custom claimed that family members could only eat after the burial.

Turning over, she saw Jin Zijin sleeping soundly.

He must have sneakily eaten something, how annoying, he didn't leave any for her.

Gu Youyou turned over and got out of bed, putting on her clothes.

The pots and pans at home were clean, plainly just washed. He had indeed eaten, and hadn't left a crumb for her.

In the dead of night, there was no way to find anything to eat, unless it was the offering biscuits from the Gu Family's ancestral hall.

To go there, a chill ran through her, she wasn't that desperate yet.

In the quiet little mountain village, the sounds of insects occasionally broke the silence, along with voices speaking in the distance, from the ridge of a mountain.

Someone talking?

Gu Youyou was startled.

In the dead of night, in these desolate mountains, who would be talking at this hour?

If her ears weren’t sharp, if she didn’t live near the mountainside, on a silent night like this, she wouldn’t have been able to hear it.

But even so, she could only faintly make out the sound of someone talking, not clearly enough to discern the words.

Since she couldn’t fall asleep anyway, Gu Youyou decided to carefully get a bit closer, perhaps she would be able to hear more clearly.

"The job isn’t done, and you dare ask me for silver!" Perhaps due to anger, the voice was a bit loud, so Gu Youyou heard it clearly.

Wait a minute, this voice sounded somewhat familiar.

She wanted to get even closer, but she couldn’t.

She was on the opposite side of a mountain hollow; to get closer, she would have to go down into the valley and then to the hilltop where the speakers were.

It was too risky and would expose her easily.

Another person was speaking with the first, but the voice was too low for Gu Youyou to hear clearly.

"I have said that you will not lack reward upon completion of the task. But is it done now? She ran off with a man, such a big issue, and you didn’t even inform us."

Gu Youyou felt more and more confused as she listened: "..."

What is all this about, such a mess? But it seems somewhat interesting; which girl has the courage to run off with a man?

The other person was whispering something in explanation, which only made the first person even angrier.

"We approached you back then because you seemed clever. If the message got intercepted, don't you have any other way to pass the message? Hmph, in the end, it's your lack of competence. If you want silver, show some sincerity. You're after wealth, we're after the person."

The more she listened, the more mysterious it sounded; it seemed it wasn't about chasing after the girl.

As Gu Youyou pondered, a large hand gently patted her shoulder; at this late hour, she shivered with fright and let out a scream.

But the scream didn't come out, as another large hand swiftly covered her mouth.

Seeing the owner of the hands, Gu Youyou finally exhaled a sigh of relief.

They say scaring someone can scare them to death, and it's not a bit untrue.

Darn it, she was almost scared to death.

"Why did you come here?" Gu Youyou whispered.

"Why are you here in the middle of the night instead of sleeping?" Jin Zijin asked.

Chapter 279: Catching Cicadas

Gu Youyou looked in the direction the voice had come from; by now, there was no sound at all—perhaps the person had already left.

She took a breath and, without changing her expression, said, "Catching cicadas!"

"Catching cicadas at night?" Jin Zijin asked skeptically, raising an eyebrow.

Gu Youyou responded earnestly, "Yes, at night. I can’t climb trees, so I can’t catch them during the day."

"If you can’t climb trees, you’ll catch even fewer at night."

"Then I’ll collect cicada shells!"

"What do you want those for? They’re disgustingly creepy," Jin Zijin said with a grimace.

"It’s an ingredient for medicine, a good remedy for sickness," Gu Youyou explained.

Having been at Jisheng Hall for so long, she realized it was the season to collect cicada shells, yet she had not seen this ingredient in the medicine cabinet. This could only mean one thing: at this time, the use of cicada shells in medicine had not yet been conceptualized.

The idea of using cicada shells as medicine sent a chill through Jin Zijin, making him feel even more disgusted.

Of course, he would feel even more repulsed when Gu Youyou later fried cicadas in oil and chewed on them with a smile, saying, "Full of protein, good for the kidneys, nourishing and beneficial for vitality."

...

There was much to prepare for the burial, and they had to go before dawn to avoid missing the auspicious time for the funeral.

When Gu Youyou arrived, everyone was already there.

Gu Feng sat in a chair, so no one mentioned what had happened the night before, nor did they complain about Gu Youyou’s late arrival.

Gu Feng's eyes had become increasingly cloudy, and due to the tragic death of the old Madam Huang, he had secretly shed countless tears.

Seeing Jin Zijin, who had come in with Gu Youyou, Gu Feng could not see clearly, but recognizing the figure as Zijin, he chose not to ask further questions.

Gu Youyou, noticing Gu Feng's eyes, felt distressed too.

She said, "Grandfather, please do not be too sorrowful. Your eyes aren't good, and if you cry more, I'm afraid they'll get worse."

After Grandma's burial, she would prepare some medicine for him to use.

Huang Xiangwen spoke mockingly, "You better not just talk the talk. We'll believe you have good intentions when you bring the actual medicine."

Gu Youyou did not want to argue with them in front of Gu Feng at such a time. Those who understood her would know in their hearts, and it wasn't worth the effort to convince those who didn't—it wasn't worth it.

After all, it was a significant moment of grandparent-grandchild bond; properly conducting Grandma's burial was what truly mattered.

Gu Feng, too, had no intention of dealing with the unrest in the family at this moment. He simply patted Gu Youyou's hand to comfort her for the wrongs she suffered.

He might be old, but he knew all the people in the household well enough—none of them were worry-free.

"Father, mother's head... how can we deal with this?"

As they opened the coffin and started to stuff things inside, Gu Lao San lamented while looking at the old Madam Huang’s half-broken skull.

"Mother has suffered a great misfortune!"

Gu Feng did not stand up; he had seen the gruesome sight when his second son brought his wife’s body back, and that one image was enough to last a lifetime. She had been his wife for decades; how could he bear to look again.

He simply said, "She came to us clean, and we should let her leave cleanly. Your mother, when she was young, loved to take care of herself. Bring a basin of water and wash her."

Who would dare? No one had the guts.

One by one, they all recoiled with ugly expressions.

Usually, such tasks would be for the daughters-in-law to handle. Huang Xiangwen quickly said, "Sanya might be waking up; I’ll go have a look!"

With that, she slipped away as if her feet were greased.

Everyone turned their gaze to Meng Qiuju, who was shivering with fear, "I, I... I..."

She couldn’t utter a complete sentence for a long while.

In truth, she just wanted to say I dare not!

Chapter 280 Doubt

In fact, Gu Youyou could understand, when Gu Feng mentioned washing, that it was indeed a difficult request for a common village woman, not to mention the superstitious women of ancient times; even in modern times, few people would dare to wash a dead person’s face.

Of course, Gu Youyou was brave enough, she was a doctor.

She stood up, walked over to Meng Qiuju, and said, "Third Aunt, you fetch the water, I'll do the washing!"

It wasn't to extricate her from an awkward situation, but rather she felt that it was appropriate for her to do it, and she wasn't afraid.

What kind of deceased hadn't she seen? Weren't there plenty in the hospital?

She's got guts!

Jin Zijin narrowed his eyes, watching her intently.

Gu Feng hesitated for a moment, as he didn't know Gu Youyou's situation and instinctively wanted to protect her.

Although he wished for his wife to depart cleanly, he was also afraid of frightening Youyou.

"Youyou, you..."

"Grandfather, it's okay, I'll do it!" Gu Youyou interjected.

"Ah," Gu Feng sighed, giving up.

Old lady, this is the granddaughter you've always disliked. In the end, when no one else would dare to wash your face, it was her who stood up. This must surprise you too.

Standing in front of the coffin with the basin in hand, Gu Youyou was not only shocked.

She had only heard that her grandmother died a tragic death. No wonder everyone added the word ’tragic’. There was a reason for it, this appearance was indeed pitiful!

"How could this have happened?" she asked. "Wasn’t it said that she fell off a cliff? Why are there so many injuries on her body?"

Especially the head, almost half of it was rotten.

The Gu Family, one by one, all wore expressions of sorrow and no one came forward to alleviate her confusion.

Jin Zijin also stepped over, equally surprised and shocked upon seeing this tragic state, pausing as he looked on.

Gu Youyou waited for their response, but other than Gu Feng’s sighs, no one spoke.

She appeared to be waiting for an explanation, seemingly unwilling to wash the old lady’s face unless things were made clear.

Gu Lao Er stood up, clearly impatient.

"When Dabao and I found them, they were already like this. The horse carriage had fallen into a gully; the driver was already dead, and there were several pieces of rolling stones on your grandmother, covered in blood. Next to her head was an especially large one, all soaked in blood."

"What about Lei Qianqian?" Gu Youyou asked subconsciously.

"Qianqian was not far from her, also covered in blood. We thought she was dead too, but it turned out there was still a breath left in her. Dabao and I carried one each on our backs and brought them back."

"Did all three of them fall together?" Gu Youyou asked again.

Something seemed off to her. If people and rocks rolled down together, how could it be possible for the rocks to smash someone’s head like this? The force wouldn’t be enough.

Gu Lao Er spoke with irritation, "Of course, they fell together. The runaway carriage couldn’t have picked someone to ram into, could it?"

Gu Youyou did not continue the conversation, but turned to look at Jin Zijin instead.

Jin Zijin’s eyebrows were furrowed, indicating that he too felt something was amiss.

Behind her, Meng Qiuju urged, "Youyou, it’s getting late, hurry up. If you have any doubts, we can discuss them after your grandmother is buried."

In the superstitious ancient times, the time chosen for burial was as important as the auspicious hour for a wedding, and could not be delayed.

Gu Youyou nodded, wrung out the cloth, and began to wash her grandmother’s face.

One side of the face was intact, while the other was a bloody blur; even after being cleaned, it remained grotesquely disfigured.

Gu Youyou frowned and said to Meng Qiuju, "Third Aunt, please bring me some needle and thread."

Better to stitch it up a bit than to leave the head half hanging.

Meng Qiuju didn’t understand what Gu Youyou intended to do, but considering that she had extricated her from an awkward situation, she didn’t say anything and did as she was told.