Farmhouse 311

Chapter 311 These Bastards

She hadn’t made it to the base of the mountain, but had instead ended up at the edge of a cliff. The bottom of the cliff wasn’t very deep, yet Gu Youyou no longer had the courage to jump again.

She stopped, panting heavily.

"Come on, what do you want?" Gu Youyou stood at the edge of the cliff, her demeanor that of someone preferring to break rather than bend.

She dared not jump, but bluffing was still an option.

Loose rocks tumbled down the cliff behind her, and those chasing her immediately halted.

The leader fixed his gaze on Gu Youyou, then lifted his hand slightly; two men immediately stepped out from behind him, one on each side, keeping their distance from Gu Youyou but edging closer to the cliff.

Gu Youyou didn’t understand what they were planning to do, and shouted, "Don’t move, or I’ll jump down."

The leader sneered contemptuously, as if he were watching a clown, which infuriated Gu Youyou immensely.

The two men, one on each side, paid no attention to Gu Youyou and jumped off the cliff.

In fact, this place couldn’t really be considered a cliff, but rather a sizable gully. The two men descended and quickly vanished into the dense forest within the gully.

The leader laughed and said, "Go ahead and jump if you wish. They’re quite skilled; even if they fail to catch you, they won’t let you die. At worst, you’ll break an arm or a leg. Considering you’re going to live a life worse than death, having arms and legs is pointless."

Those bastards!

Gu Youyou was so angry she almost bit her tongue.

...

On the other side of the mountain, Gu Laosan awoke.

He patted his somewhat heavy head and, recalling the events before he passed out, broke out in a cold sweat.

He had been discovered, and Gu Youyou had fled.

Upon realizing this fact, he couldn't care less about the dirt on his body or the throbbing in his head and struggled to his feet.

As he stood, he felt as if his body was falling apart with pain, and he discovered several severe bruises on his legs.

He had been beaten up, and the blows had been harsh—it had to have been Gu Youyou's doing. Gu Laosan's nose was out of joint.

Gu Youyou's escape completely disrupted his original plan.

His initial arrangement had been to hand over Gu Youyou to those people and then inflict a few cuts on himself—as long as he didn't die, it would be fine.

He would then tell his family that he had discovered the human trafficker taking Youyou away, and when he went to argue with them, he hadn't expected them all to be desperate crooks. They not only refused to free her but had almost killed him. He had barely managed to escape with his life.

Liu Dazhuang had pulled off similar stunts in the past, so nobody would suspect his word.

But now that she had run off, the plan had to change.

Looking at the injuries on his body, he had a sudden change of heart and came up with another idea.

Lucky you, Gu Youyou, there's plenty of time ahead. The old man won't be getting any better anytime soon; let's see how long you can stay on guard.

"Oh, my back!" Gu Laosan cursed as he picked up a thick stick from the mountain to support himself and headed down to return home.

When he reached the Gu Family household, it was already late. Gu Feng sat in the main room of the Gu Family home, surrounded by people, both from their own and the neighbors' families. The local official sat beside him, and two people were kneeling in the room, Gu Laosan's second brother and Huang Xiangwen.

Gu Laosan immediately understood the situation upon seeing this, his thoughts quickly shifted, and he came up with a new plan.

"Gu Laosi, I'll beat you to death. How can you live with the deaths of our eldest brother and sister-in-law..."

The first thing he did upon entering was to raise the thick stick he had picked up on the mountain and swung it at Gu Laosi. His cries, deeply mournful, were enough to move one to tears. When everyone saw him, a man in his thirties was already weeping profusely.

The neighbors, fearing that a serious incident might occur, were quietly moved by Gu Laosan's entrance and hurried to hold him back.

Chapter 312 Admit Guilt

"Gu Laotie, don't get excited just yet, let's clarify things first. Tell me, what exactly happened?" the village chief hurriedly said.

Gu Laotie, tears and snot mingling, said, "This morning, I saw that human trafficker Liu Dazhuang loitering near our house, which I found quite strange. Everyone knows that Liu Dazhuang is not only involved in human trafficking, but also steals, and fearing he would bring trouble to our village, I kept a close eye on him.

Sure enough, not long after, I saw Liu Dazhuang hurrying away with a horse cart from our village, looking guilty as if he'd stolen someone's child! This couldn't be tolerated. Even if it wasn't one of ours, it had to be someone from our village, right?"

Everyone nodded their heads in agreement, finding Gu Laotie's account plausible.

He continued, "I took a shortcut and caught up with them, blocking their path with a big rock from the mountain. They got out and argued with me, even producing a contract of indenture, claiming the person inside was my niece Youyou, and that he had signed the contract and paid silver, buying her from my second brother; he said even if we took this to the Governor's Office, he would still be in the right."

The crowd was shocked, and the village chief asked, "Is there really a contract?" He then looked at Gu's second brother and said, "Did you really take the silver?"

Gu's second brother, knowing he could not lie his way out, resigned himself to his fate and nodded grimly.

The village chief was furious. This incident happened in his village, a stain on his reputation. He said sternly, "Even if Gu Youyou bears the Gu family name and is your niece, it doesn't give an uncle the right to sell her. She is married to the hunter and is his wife; selling another man's wife could land you in jail."

Cornered, the human trafficker Liu Dazhuang shifted all blame onto Gu's second brother, whose story matched exactly with that of the third brother, leaving no room for argument. Now, Huang Xiangwen was trembling with fright, her words incoherent, and Gu's second brother was so scared that he dared not speak. When the village chief mentioned him, he kowtowed to the patriarch Gu Feng and cried out, "Father, just kill me. I was bewitched into selling Youyou, and I accept my guilt."

As long as Gu Feng didn't send him to the Governor's Office, he wouldn't have to go to jail. Appealing to the old man's soft heart was the wisest choice.

Even though everyone knew Gu's second brother was the culprit, they were still shocked to hear him confess so readily.

Gu Laotie was slightly taken aback; he didn't know Liu Dazhuang had already confessed everything, so he found Gu's second brother's quick confession strange, expecting him to argue in his defense.

With Gu's second brother confessing his guilt, Gu Laotie was at a loss for words and turned his gaze to Gu Feng, leaving the decision to his father.

No one knew how Gu Feng managed to sit there, filled with such restraint. Gu's second brother had committed an unforgivable act, and sure, the bastard deserved to die, but now wasn't the time to deal with him; the priority was ensuring Youyou's safety.

"Laotie, where is Youyou?" Gu Feng asked.

Everyone was expecting Gu Feng to deal with Gu's second brother, but instead, he immediately inquired about Gu Youyou.

According to what Erya from the Gu family had said earlier, hadn't Gu Laotie taken Youyou back to town?

At these words, Gu Laotie shuddered and fell to his knees with a thud.

The crowd was confused, Gu Feng felt a chill in his heart but still braced himself to listen.

"Father, I'm useless. I failed to protect Youyou..."

Gu Laotie explained that he hadn't gone far carrying Gu Youyou when another group of human traffickers, who were not just traffickers but also vicious kidnappers, caught up with them. They clashed, and he was beaten up. Later, he passed out and now had no idea how Youyou was.

Chapter 313: Where is Gu Youyou?

"But I'm afraid of angering your father," he finally said. "Before I was knocked out, I managed to hold back the human trafficker and let Youyou escape. Maybe she has already run back to the town."

When he woke up, he went straight home without checking if Youyou had returned to town.

After he finished speaking, he rolled up his trouser leg to show everyone. Indeed, he had been beaten, and his body was covered in bruises – not something easily faked, so everyone believed what he said.

Upon seeing his injuries, Meng Qiuju burst into tears and said, "How could you dare to mess with such vicious people? How many lives do you have? It's fortunate that you only fainted; otherwise, if they had killed you, no one would have known."

"I simply couldn't stand by and watch Youyou fall into their hands," said Gu Lao San.

Gu Erya cried, "Dad, you did your best. Big sister won't blame you." After that, she turned to Gu Feng and said, "Grandpa, you can't let Uncle and Auntie off this. They went too far selling Sister Youyou. Who knows, the next one might be me or Sanya. Grandpa, you might not know this, but they not only tricked big sister, they also drugged Sanya. Who knows how much knockout drug they made Sanya drink; she's still not awake yet."

Alas!

A sigh rose from the crowd.

"What kind of people are they? That's just too cruel, to harm their own flesh and blood."

"Children are not like adults; how can they be subjected to such potent drugs?"

"Of course they had to use potent drugs; otherwise, they wouldn't have been able to take down Gu Youyou, would they?"

"Exactly, exactly. Gu Lao Er, how could you and your wife do such a thing? We all know what kind of man Old Gu is, and I never thought his son could be like this."

"To think Youyou still doesn't know where she is now... Go find Wang Family's Shunzi. He knows where the hunter's house in town is. Send him to check if Youyou has returned. If she's back, at least Old Gu can rest easy. If not, let him leave a message for the hunter. It's quite possible the hunter doesn't even know his wife has been sold."

"It's truly pitiable. Gu Youyou has been sickly since childhood, and it hasn't been long since she got better. Now she's been sold by her unscrupulous uncle and aunt to a human trafficker. There's not a single good person among those traffickers. Youyou, with her looks, is likely to be sold to 'that kind of place.'"

Everyone knew what 'that kind of place' meant, and a chorus of sighs followed.

Regardless of whether Gu Youyou had returned or not, Gu Lao San would still say the same thing. The fact that he'd been beaten was true; he even had shoeprints on his body—such injuries he could not inflict on himself. And since Gu Lao Er and his wife had sold Gu Youyou, with Old Gu in failing health, all of the Gu Family's extensive land and property would become his.

Even without the silver that those people gave, he'd live quite well.

Thinking about this, a smile unwittingly crept onto Gu Lao San's face.

Just at this moment, Huang Xiangwen, who had been silent, caught sight of that smile. She suddenly widened her eyes and angrily pointed at Gu Lao San, scolding, "I don't believe for a second that he would kindheartedly save Gu Youyou. He must have taken Gu Youyou away himself and sold her for a higher price, then came back to claim that she had been stolen by another human trafficker, shifting the blame entirely onto us."

Gu Lao San was furious and felt a twinge of guilt, but before he could rebut, someone else was already banging on the table and said, "Gu Huangshi, a woman like you has no place to throw tantrums here. Whether Youyou was sold by Lao San is not for you to gossip about. The fact that you and your husband deceived Youyou into drinking spiked soy milk and then handed her over to a human trafficker is what's

true. As for what happened to Youyou and where she is now, we'll know when Shunzi returns. Let's wait for now."

Chapter 314: Zijin, It Really Wasn't Intentional

Gu Erya snorted coldly, "Exactly, wait until big sister arrives, see what you'll have to say then."

Gu Lao San had no idea that Gu Youyou had actually been in an accident, thinking she had simply vented her anger on him and then gone back, so when it was suggested that Gu Youyou come to confront him, he was still somewhat apprehensive.

However, it didn't matter, he had thought of a strategy and wasn't afraid of her confrontation.

...

At night, a torrential rain began to pour down again, and a carriage struggled forward against the wind and rain, its wheels caked in mud.

There is a saying, 'A fall rain brings the cold' which couldn't be more true.

Gu Youyou felt a bit cold, pulling her clothes tightly around her.

In the carriage, she sat opposite Jin Zijin, whose complexion wasn't good, and whose clothes were still spattered with bloodstains.

And by the side of the carriage, Abao sat, his eyes like two little lamps watching the two people inside.

Gu Youyou had no intention of jumping down that ravine, it was just that her foot slipped, and she accidentally fell down.

Just as the leading man had said, she hadn't fallen to her death, nor had she broken her legs or feet, just some scrapes on her legs, and then her head hit a tree, knocking her out.

She touched her head, finding a large bump that would probably not go down for quite some time.

She didn’t know why, clearly having fallen into those people’s hands, she woke up to find Jin Zijin looking at her with a cold face.

He stared at her for quite a while, he didn’t speak, and neither did she.

Because she still hadn’t remembered how she had managed to offend him.

Thinking it over, this staring wasn’t helping, so she had to say, "Thank you, for rescuing me once again."

The words sounded stiff, and even a bit distant, and indeed, she saw the man opposite her turning an even darker shade.

"Why did you jump down?"

This was the first sentence Jin Zijin spoke to her.

This was an injustice, she really hadn’t done it on purpose; it had started raining, the ground had become loose and slippery, so she had truly slipped and fallen down accidentally.

"Are you so indifferent to your own life?" Jin Zijin appeared very angry.

Gu Youyou said, "It wasn’t intentional." She spoke the truth, her fall had been an accident, she truly hadn’t done it on purpose.

"Not intentional?" Jin Zijin asked coldly, "Do you realize how many people died for you today? They were all fighting for you, yet you chose to leap off the cliff and commit suicide. I said I wouldn’t let them take you away, why didn’t you believe me?"

God knows what kind of feeling he had in his heart when he saw her jump again.

His mind went blank at that moment, he couldn't even see those rushing at him with drawn swords, all he knew was that she had jumped down, and so he had to jump as well.

Fortunately, it was just a large ravine, not too deep, with lush vegetation below, so jumping wasn't deadly.

Jin Zijin was angry, very angry, and Gu Youyou could see that clearly.

She had initially wanted to explain, but after hearing his words about how many people had died for her, she found herself at a loss for what to say.

What difference does it make if it wasn't intentional? The fact remains you fell, the process isn't important, what matters is the outcome, isn't it?

Gu Youyou, who always thinks more than the average person, would have instantly retorted if someone else or in another situation made these comments to her.

What do the deaths of so many have to do with me? Your reasons for approaching me are clear, to put it bluntly, saving me was also about saving yourselves.

But the person in front of her was Jin Zijin, and she was a survivor of a catastrophe, so those words that could hurt both others and herself just couldn't leave her mouth.

Chapter 315: You Know Fear Too?

In the recent days, her interactions with Jin Zijin had gradually made her feel that his kindness towards her wasn't solely because she was his antidote. The hint of anger in his eyes indicated that he was genuinely concerned for her.

He was truly afraid that she would jump and kill herself.

The person inside the carriage did not respond for a long time, creating a stark contrast between the silence inside the carriage and the heavy rain pouring down outside. The carriage driver, Yue Rujing,

curled his lips into a sneer and said coldly, "Gu Youyou has never trusted us, Brother, you know this isn’t the first time."

"Yue Rujing, shut up!" Jin Zijin almost roared, startling Abao, who was sitting at the carriage door, into standing up.

It wasn’t clear if the shout had scared Yue Rujing, but the sudden outburst certainly startled Gu Youyou.

He was always a warm man who never raised his voice so loudly, almost lifting the carriage roof and drowning out the fierce wind and rain of the night.

The only one who could shout like that was old Mr. Huang.

Thinking of old Mr. Huang, Gu Youyou suddenly felt alarmed and rose to look outside the carriage.

Jin Zijin thought he had been too harsh on her, and that she was about to run off in a fit of anger, so her action infuriated him even more, and he pulled her back in a swift motion.

"With rain this heavy, where do you think you’re going?"

One can neither hit, scold, nor argue with her, and she still gets angry even when she is the one at fault—it’s truly headache-inducing.

"I’m not trying to go out; I just wanted to take a look," Gu Youyou said.

She just wanted to check where they were; her grandfather would be worried.

Her grandfather couldn’t take another blow with his health; if he learned something had happened to her, he wouldn’t be able to bear it.

"It’s dark outside; you won’t be able to see anything," Jin Zijin said.

"Then where are we now?"

Jin Zijin gauged and said, "We should reach Tongguan before dawn."

Tongguan? What kind of place was Tongguan?

She wasn't unfamiliar with the name, having seen it in history textbooks and on TV shows, but she had no idea what kind of place it was, certainly not Qingshui Town or Lotus Village.

Gu Youyou felt both shock and fear and asked, "Where are you taking me?"

She seemed somewhat restless and uneasy. Really, the destination wasn't that important, but not now. She needed to see her grandfather; he would be worried. And there were her dreadful uncle and aunt; how could she rest without dealing with them?

"You know how to be afraid?" Jin Zijin seemed to breathe a sigh of relief, slowly calming down, and said, "Where has your courage to commit suicide by jumping off a cliff gone? You're not afraid of death, yet you fear I might sell you?"

Sell her my ass! Gu Youyou was furious and didn't want to bring up the cliff-jumping incident again, but he would harp on it relentlessly.

This just proved that he did care a lot about her jumping off the cliff.

"I told you it wasn't intentional. It rained last night, and the ground was loose; I fell by accident," she felt compelled to explain.

"Fell by accident?" Jin Zijin repeated, scoffing.

For someone with a history of attempting suicide by jumping off a cliff and having more than once contemplated death, her words were hard to believe.

Gu Youyou was at a loss for words, too, thinking that this is the consequence of crying wolf—the result being that now he wouldn’t believe her. It wasn’t worth explaining anymore.

"Before you sell me, could you let me return to Lotus Village to see my grandfather one last time?" Gu Youyou continued along his line of thought.

Jin Zijin’s expression darkened, seeming to be in a dilemma.

She pressed on, "At least to let him know I’m safe. I was drugged by Huang Xiangwen and sold to a human trafficker. If my grandfather finds out, he won’t be able to handle it. He can’t take much more stress."

Chapter 316: Brow Unfurrowed

Jin Zijin still had some difficulty, facing Gu Youyou’s hopeful eyes, he let out a long sigh and said, "We are fleeing for our lives, heading south."

Gu Youyou: "...?"

"Their arrangements are even more thorough than we imagined. I didn’t expect your importance as a medicine woman to rival that of the person in the mountains."

The driver outside, Yue Rujing, joined in and said, "It’s true, they really went all out. I think they’re not just after someone, it’s clear they can’t stand us and want to take the chance to wipe us out in one fell swoop."

Gu Youyou: "..."

Jin Zijin turned his head and said lightly to Yue Rujing, "Mind your own business, and keep driving properly."

Turning back, he continued to Gu Youyou, "Don’t worry for now, I’ve already had someone tell Qin Changlin that if the Gu Family comes looking for you, to say that you had an urgent medical call and had

to leave in the middle of the night. Once we are safe in the south, I will take you back to Lotus Village to explain to Grandpa in person."

Even while fleeing for his life, he could be so thoughtful, and Gu Youyou slightly curved her lips into a faint smile.

"Thank you," she said after a moment's thought, then added, "I really didn't mean for any of this to happen."

Gu Youyou rarely took such pains to explain herself to anyone; she had never needed to justify her actions to anyone before, and even if she made a mistake, nobody dared to criticize her. But tonight, she found herself explaining repeatedly to Jin Zijin.

Those who understand me say I worry too much; those who don't, what can they know of my pursuits?

She believed that Jin Zijin understood her intentions, whether or not he trusted her was out of her control.

Perhaps because of Gu Youyou's repeated explanations, even a skeptic might be moved. Finally, Jin Zijin relaxed his brows.

"Fortunately, we are both unharmed. It's also my fault, knowing well that there was something off about the Gu Family, yet I still let you go."

For Gu Youyou, the risk she took wasn't for nothing. It lured out two uncles with wolfish ambitions and unexpectedly revealed that her parents' deaths ten years ago were related to the Gu Family's third son, and possibly directly caused by him.

Grandpa had said if she ever got the chance, she should take her revenge. The thought that this person might be the Gu Family's third son weighed on her mind.

How was she supposed to take revenge? If she revealed the ugly truth, it might just anger Grandpa to death. And if she caused misfortune to befall the Gu Family's third son in secret, seeing his son suffer, Grandpa would surely be worried too.

With worries clouding her mind and furrowing her brow, Jin Zijin brushed back the hair from her forehead, gently smoothed out her furrowed brow, and said softly, "What else is there that's worrying you so?"

In truth, he wanted to scoff, 'You know what it's like to be worried?' but in the end, he couldn't bring himself to mock her.

Family scandals should not be publicized. With such a shameful incident in the Gu Family, Gu Youyou was embarrassed to talk about it.

The point was, even telling him wouldn't help.

Deciding how to take revenge was indeed a tricky matter.

As she glanced to the side and saw Abao sitting upright, Gu Youyou suddenly asked, "How did you find it?"

Having been knocked out, she thought something had happened to Abao as well.

Jin Zijin replied with a light smile, "It was it that led us to you."

That was the reason Jin Zijin had asked Gu Youyou to bring Abao along. He knew Abao had this ability.

Of course, without Abao, he would also have found Gu Youyou, it just would have taken longer.

...

"They still managed to escape. Once they cross Tongguan, we won’t have a chance. Should we pursue them?"

The heavy rain blurred vision, and the tracks left by the carriage were quickly washed away; to find them again and guess that their next stop would be Tongguan was no easy task.

But Zhuo Qing raised his hand and said, "No need to pursue."

Not going to chase them? With so many people dead, how could they give up so easily?

Chapter 317: Sentencing

"Brother Zhuo, think twice!" someone next to him said anxiously.

Zhuo Qing snorted coldly, "You think Jin Zijin and Yue Rujing are easy to provoke? What difference does it make whether we catch up with them or not?"

Catching up would certainly be a great achievement, the person next to him didn’t understand.

Zhuo Qing said, "After catching up, if we kill them and take the woman away, would the people behind them just let it go?"

The person next to him still seemed confused.

Showcasing his eerily white teeth, he sneered, "Such merit is not something you and I can claim. Would our eldest brother be so generous to provide us convenience otherwise?"

Isn’t he coming to claim it himself?

Hmph, Zhuo Qing was no fool.

The person next to him seemed to half understand and asked further, "What about the girl our master wanted..."

"No rush, she won't be needed for a while, and she can't fly away. Let them take care of her for now," Zhuo Qing replied.

"..." What kind of talk was that?

Suddenly, an idea struck Zhuo Qing, and his expression darkened ominously amidst the pouring rain.

"It's time to deal with the useless trash from the Gu Family."

"Kill him?" the person next to him asked, raising an eyebrow.

Zhuo Qing's chilling smile spread across his face. "No, they are just ordinary people. Master has said we must not directly deal with ordinary people."

"...?" So what are we supposed to do?

"Ordinary people should be dealt with by ordinary people. I heard the human trafficker who bought Gu Youyou is being held in the Li Zheng's family home. Let him handle this matter," Zhuo Qing said.

...

Liu Dazhuang, captured by the villagers of Lotus Village, was locked up alone in the Li Zheng's woodshed.

The villagers intended to find Gu Youyou and then confront him before sending him to the Governor's Office.

Last night, someone had braved the rain to give him a task, something that could exonerate him.

Although being exonerated was supposed to be good, the words spoken by that person were too shocking, almost inconceivable, like a wild fable. He wondered if they would beat him up before taking him to the Governor’s Office if he dared repeat those words.

That night, a heavy rain fell, initially meant to stop Shunzi from heading into town to search for Gu Youyou. Seeing the intensity of the rain and fearing the slippery mountain roads might cause an accident, they decided against sending him.

The rain felt like it was specially meant to wash away this vile transaction, pouring down all night without any sign of stopping.

It was falling just as heavily now as it had been last night.

Someone comforted, "Old Father Gu, you should get some sleep. Who knows when the rain will stop. With your frail health, you can’t keep waiting like this."

Gu Feng had been up all night, unable to sleep without seeing Gu Youyou with his own eyes.

Gu Second and his wife Huang Xiangwen had been punished to kneel all night, waiting for Gu Feng to pass judgment without any complaints.

Erya had already woken up, probably suffering from the aftereffects of the Knockout Drug, crying for a long time before finally falling asleep as dawn approached.

"Is it still raining outside?" Gu Feng asked.

The third son of the Gu family hurriedly replied, "Yes, it’s still coming down heavily. Otherwise, Youyou would have brought the medicine by now."

Gu Feng nodded and then asked, "Has Shunzi gone to the town?"

The third son answered, "Not yet, the rain is too heavy, and the mountain roads are slippery. We dare not let him go at this moment, it would be terrible if something happened. But he said he'll go as soon as the rain lets up a bit."

Wang Shun intended to marry Erya, and the third son of the Gu family had come to accept him, treating him like his own kin.

Gu Feng nodded again and continued, "Go and tell him, if he sees Youyou, that's enough. Tell her not to come. With the heavy rain and slippery roads, a young girl like her shouldn't be walking such paths."

Chapter 318 Emergency Visit

"Ah, I'll go right away," replied the third son of the Gu family energetically.

The rain didn't let up until noon, when Wang Shun put on a straw raincoat and bamboo hat to run errands for his father-in-law's house.

The actions of the Gu family's second uncle and his wife angered the entire village, daring to sell a married niece, especially at a time when she was helping her father seek medical treatment. It was utterly inhumane.

If they dared to sell one girl, they'd dare to sell a second, and Erya, Wang Shun's fiancée, was also their niece. He had to hurry, to ensure that the heartless aunt and uncle received their retribution soon, to prevent his own future wife from being sold one day.

Yesterday, Xiaoqing cried for a long time when she told him about it.

"Shunzi, be careful and go slower," Wang Shun's aunt, his mother, shouted from behind.

"Ah, I know, Mom." Although he said this, Shunzi's feet didn't slow down; he ran quickly through the muddy road.

The front door of Big Brother Jin and Sister Youyou's house was tightly shut—no one was there. He guessed they must have gone to Jisheng Hall, so he hurried there instead.

"Doctor Qin, is Sister Youyou here?"

Qin Changlin had received a letter sent by a stranger earlier, but the handwriting was familiar—it was written by Yue Rujing.

The letter stated that there was an emergency at Jin Zijin's home and that he needed to take his wife and return home as quickly as possible, so they left that very night despite the torrential rain. If anyone from the Gu Family came looking for Gu Youyou, they should be told that she was out on an emergency call and not to worry.

The rain last night had been witnessed by everyone; it must have been a real emergency for them to leave in such a downpour. Qin Changlin didn't think much of it and recounted to Shunzi what was said in the letter, "Sister Youyou is out on an emergency call. Do you need her for something?"

An emergency call, just like that?

Since the Gu Family's affairs were quite disgraceful, Shunzi didn't plan to tell Qin Changlin. As long as Sister Youyou was safe, that was all that mattered.

Shunzi said, "It's not really an emergency, as long as I know she's safe. Grandpa Gu asked me to tell her not to deliver medicine in the next few days, the rain has made the mountain roads slippery."

Safe?

Qin Changlin felt Shunzi's words were somewhat strange, but he didn't think too much of it and nodded, saying, "Alright, I'll let her know once she's back."

...

The news brought by Shunzi was that Gu Youyou had an emergency and couldn't make it, which made confronting the human trafficker out of the question.

The Gu family's second uncle, Huang Xiangwen, and his wife were adamant that Gu Lao San was also up to no good, claiming that because Shunzi was his son-in-law, his words couldn't be trusted. This accusation started a major quarrel among the crowd.

Shunzi was an honest man; he couldn't bear such slander. He turned red in anger and insisted, "If you don't believe me, I'll go to town myself and ask Doctor Qin."

Huang Xiangwen scoffed, "You're just saying that because you know we can't go. An emergency call in the middle of the night, who would believe that? Everyone knows how much Youyou loves her grandfather. Wouldn't she be anxious to come back and report her safety if she were on a call? Who are you trying to fool? I suspect Youyou has been sold by you and Lao San."

"You—you... Auntie, how can you slander someone like this?" Shunzi was not good at arguing and was simply overwhelmed.

A villager spoke up, "Shunzi's not that kind of person; you shouldn't make unfounded accusations. I think Shunzi makes sense. Youyou is now a doctor, and if a patient's family is really in distress, they don't care if it's raining or not. Naturally, saving lives takes precedence."

"Exactly, we trust Jisheng Hall. Doctor Qin would have no reason to lie," others agreed.

Huang Xiangwen countered, "Of course, I'm not saying Doctor Qin is lying; I'm saying Shunzi is in cahoots with Gu Lao San in telling lies. Humph, you all may not know, but Gu Youyou couldn't possibly be on a call. Severely ill patients are brought into Jisheng Hall for inpatient treatment; their doctors don't make house calls. That's a rule set by Youyou herself. My granddaughter was sick not long ago and was treated in Jisheng Hall—that's a rule my Daya told me."

Chapter 319: Sending to the Governor's Office

Jisheng Hall not making house calls was no secret, some people in Lotus Village didn't know, but some did.

Those who knew had ugly expressions, whispering, "There is such a rule."

Upon hearing this, everyone’s faces turned sour again, but then someone added, "Last night was an emergency, with such heavy rain, how could a patient near death endure being moved? Every rule has its exception, and perhaps last night was indeed an exceptional case."

Thinking it made sense, they all nodded in agreement.

However, there was still something puzzling. Gu Feng said, "Since Youyou made an emergency house call, how comes the hunter wasn’t at home either? Don’t tell me he was out on an emergency call too, he’s not a doctor."

Gu Erya hurriedly said, "How could that be impossible? The rain was torrential last night; my brother-in-law might have been worried about my sister’s safety and followed her. It makes sense."

Someone retorted, "Exactly, they almost got sold by their wicked aunt and uncle during the day, naturally, they’d be more cautious."

The arguing didn’t lead to any clear conclusion, and Gu Sanya said with a stern face, "Second brother, regardless of where Youyou is now, the fact that you sold her is true. Bringing Youyou back to confront you is just meant to make you give up hope and prove my innocence, but it doesn’t absolve you of your guilt.

Youyou can prove it today or tomorrow. I am confident in my integrity and ready for her to return anytime. But what about you few, secretly selling someone else’s wife, shouldn’t you be sent to the Governor’s Office and let the honorable lord judge?

Upon Gu Sanya’s grave revelation, they suddenly understood. Why bother quarreling with them? The fact they trafficked people was true, and it was time to act on it instead of letting these parasites loose.

"Right, the rain has stopped; let’s take them to the Governor’s Office," they shouted in unison.

Gu Feng remained silent throughout, seated at the head of the table.

He remembered Youyou telling him not to get angry. Fine, he would listen to Youyou. No matter how fiercely they argued, he kept his composure; he wanted to live, to see Youyou return safely.

Some already started dragging Gu Second and Third toward the door, while Liu Dazhuang's face was grim. He paid little mind to the half-day's row, preoccupied instead with the strange words of that man from yesterday.

Huang Xiangwen threw a tantrum, crying and screaming. The men were reluctant to lay hands on a woman, so it was the village women who were dragging her away.

Huang Xiangwen and Gu Second's children, Dabao, Erbao, and Sanya, were taken to the village chief's house. It was their parents who had committed the deed; children who were otherwise fine couldn't be left heartbroken.

Gu Second knocked down one of the people pulling at him, cursed out Gu Sanya, and then knelt in front of Gu Feng, kowtowing profusely.

"Dad, I know I was wrong. Please don't let them send me to the Governor's Office. I'll surely be beaten and have to endure prison. Erbao and Sanya are still young; they can't be without their parents."

Gu Feng didn't speak, simply turned his head away, not wishing to look at him.

Gu Sanya stepped forward to pull him away, saying, "Second brother, do you want to kill dad? When you committed these atrocious acts, did you think of how young Erbao and Sanya still are? Hmph, your minds were probably clouded by greed, never considering Sanya's well-being. To lure Youyou into a trap, even Sanya was drugged by you all. Rest assured, if anything happens to you, I won't be so merciless. I'll take care of Erbao and Sanya, I won't let them suffer."

Chapter 320: Do You Know Why I Treat Youyou Well?

"You raise her? Ha, Gu Feng, you talk a good talk, but don't think I don't know what you're really thinking. I just haven't caught you red-handed yet. You think you're so clean?"

After yelling at Gu Feng, Gu's second son clutched Gu Feng's legs and begged with tears, "Dad, you have to say something. You can't just ignore this. Otherwise, our whole family will be ruined by him."

Gu Feng remained silent without showing any sympathy, his attitude was very clear.

He feared that if he spoke he would let out his anger and be angered to death by this unfilial son.

Seeing that begging was useless, Gu's second son wiped away his tears, and his face turned ugly.

He said coldly, "Dad, you're biased, way too biased. If Mom were still alive, she would never allow you to treat me like this. I admit my mistake, but Erbao and Sanya are innocent. You've protected Youyou for over ten years, but turned a blind eye to your other grandchildren. For the sake of Youyou, you're willing to let our family fall apart; Dad, your heart is truly cold!"

"It's all because of you and your wife's doing!" Gu Feng almost passed out from anger and started coughing violently. Gu Feng's youngest son quickly helped him by patting his back and soothing his breath, and Meng Qiuju brought water for him, which made him feel a bit better.

Suppressing his anger, Gu Feng sighed, "Second son, do you know why I favor Youyou so much?"

Gu's second son was stunned.

He scanned the faces of everyone else one by one, finally resting his gaze on Gu's youngest son and asked, "Youngest, do you know why I favor Youyou?"

The youngest son forced a smile and said, "Youyou's been orphaned since she was young. If Dad doesn't favor her, then she will have no way to survive."

Gu Feng nodded slightly and said, "That's right, Youyou is not like Erya or Sanya, not like Dabao or Erbao who all have parents to dote on them. She has no parents to love her, and if I also neglected her like you do, she would have no way to live.

You always say I'm biased, that I've given her everything good, but have you ever thought about where all our property and lands come from, how we got such a big courtyard? All those things were earned by your older brother and his wife while they were alive, so these were originally Youyou's. You've been enjoying the fruits of their labor—shouldn't you be kinder to her?"

Hearing Gu Feng's words, they all hung their heads in shame.

Gu Feng continued, "I didn't want to send you and your wife to the Governor's Office, but I had no other choice. If I let you off, that would be unjust and unfair to Youyou. How could I face your older brother and sister-in-law when I pass away? Off with you. As long as Youyou is safe, there's no big issue. At worst, you'll be beaten and locked up for a year or so. We'll take care of the children for you. Reflect well while you're in prison, truly repent, and come back to live a good life."

With that, he said no more; there was nothing more to say.

"Youngest, help me back to rest." He was exhausted after staying up all night and needed to rest in order to extend his life a bit longer. So he could live to see Youyou return, live to see the return of those two beasts, he had to rest now.

Gu's second son was pushed forward again; fearing he would escape, some villagers tied him up with ropes.

He had given up hope, knowing Gu Feng wouldn't spare them. He sat on the ground, letting the villagers discuss how to tie him so it wouldn't impede his walking yet still be secure.

Someone was also tying up Huang Xiangwen and Liu Dazhuang; the person binding them chuckled softly, "Liu Dazhuang, who would have thought you'd get into trouble again less than a year after getting out. It's not going to be as easy as last time. If you go in again, it won't be just a two-year stint—you're looking at at least ten years. When you get out after ten years, your life is pretty much over."