Farmhouse 321

Chapter 321: Take Out Two Hundred Taels

Someone else remarked, "Yes, sending Liu Dazhuang to jail will rid the villagers of a scourge, otherwise my grandchildren would be too frightened to even leave the house."

Naturally, getting rid of the pest Liu Dazhuang would be more satisfying than sending Gu the Second and his wife to jail.

Listening to these heartening voices, Liu Dazhuang's head exploded with noise.

If he were to go back, his life would be ruined. He didn't want to return to jail and fight rats for stale bread. Life outside was so much better. How could he resign himself to spend his life in prison?

No, that was unacceptable!

No matter whether what that person said last night was true or false, he had to speak up. Flies don't sting a seamless egg; if Gu the Third really hadn't done it, there would be no reason to arbitrarily pin it on him. There must be something fishy, something tied to him, for it to be said like that.

Besides, if it weren't for that meddlesome Gu the Third, he wouldn't be in this mess—without the agreement, he was without defense. And later, it was possible that Gu the Second could turn on him in court.

Watching Gu the Third help Gu Feng across the courtyard to the house across, Liu Dazhuang couldn't sit still any longer. Suddenly, he broke free from the ropes binding him and rushed into the courtyard, shouting, "Elder Gu, I have something to say, I know where Gu Youyou is right now."

The usually quiet Liu Dazhuang's sudden outburst had caught everyone off guard, and they were momentarily stunned.

Gu the Third inwardly cursed their bad luck. With Liu Dazhuang causing unexpected problems, he quickly assisted Gu Feng toward the house, saying, "Father, don't bother with that human trafficker. Leave him to me, you should go and rest."

But Liu Dazhuang would not have it, hastily saying, "Elder Gu, if you don’t listen to me now, you may truly lose Youyou forever."

On hearing this, Gu Feng couldn’t possibly return to his room to sleep. Breaking free from Gu the Third, he asked, "What do you mean by that?"

Gu the Third’s face changed color with anger, retorting, "Liu Dazhuang, what nonsense are you spouting? Our Youyou is perfectly fine. She went on a medical visit, that’s all. Didn’t you hear Shunzi say so?"

The whole house had come out to see. The rain had stopped, but the courtyard was still very wet.

They stood under the eaves looking on, not stepping into the courtyard. With so many of them around, they were not afraid that Liu Dazhuang would run away—as the saying goes, "You can run away from the monk, but not from the temple."

Liu Dazhuang looked at Gu the Third and sneered, pulling out a purse and then two gleaming pieces of silver.

Gu the Third’s eyes narrowed sharply.

It seemed Liu Dazhuang was desperate, willing to come up with two hundred silver pieces.

Heh, he was curious to see who would believe that this silver was willingly given.

Everyone’s eyes were dazzled by the two hundred silver pieces, and the head of the village, seeing the silver, was furious, banging his staff.

"Liu Dazhuang, don’t think you can bribe us with silver. You’re a scourge that must be eliminated, and no amount of silver will save you," he declared.

Although everyone coveted the silver, they just coveted it. The whole village, including the neighboring village, knew about Liu Dazhuang’s arrest. Even if they accepted his two hundred silver pieces, there wouldn’t be much to go around.

Liu Dazhuang laughed and said, "You misunderstand me. I, Liu Dazhuang, am not using this silver to buy my life, and the silver isn’t mine. It was given to me by Gu the Third. He used these two hundred silver pieces to take away Gu Youyou and the agreement."

As soon as these words were said, the crowd was in an uproar.

"What? The two hundred silver pieces were given by Gu the Third to abduct Gu Youyou?" the crowd murmured among themselves.

"How could that be? How would Gu the Third have such a large sum of money, and all in one go?"

Chapter 322 The Truth of More Than a Decade Ago

"Yeah, this human trafficker, capable of any despicable deed, actually comes up with such lies—who would believe that!"

Gu Lao San watched and laughed from the sidelines.

He didn’t even need to say anything, and no one would believe it; that’s why he could be so fearless.

But what Liu Dazhuang said next... made everyone’s expression change dramatically.

"Of course, he can’t produce that much money, but it’s another story if the money was given to him by someone else."

Gu Lao San narrowed his eyes and scoffed, "You need evidence to talk like that, it’s 200 taels of silver we’re talking about."

Liu Dazhuang obviously had no evidence, otherwise he wouldn’t have waited until now to say it.

He looked solemnly at Gu Lao San and slowly said, "Twelve years ago, Gu Lao Da and his wife were returning home from the town, it was also a rainy day, though the rain wasn't as heavy as now. You offered to bring a straw coat and bamboo hat to pick up your elder brother and sister-in-law, but what you brought back were their corpses."

Everyone was puzzled by his sudden reference to an incident more than a decade ago; their expressions were odd, only Gu Feng and Gu Lao San's faces turned pale.

How did he know? And know so clearly?

Only he and Gu Lao San knew about bringing a straw coat to the elder brother and his wife.

Liu Dazhuang kept speaking, "Gu Lao Da was an excellent swimmer, he could catch fish in the Qingshui River and not drown, so how could he slip and drown in the small lotus pond? Don't you find that strange?"

Strange indeed, everyone found it strange. The water in that lotus pond was only waist-deep at most; it was possible for Gu Lao Da's wife to drown, but how could a good swimmer like Gu Lao Da drown?

But this was Gu Lao San's account, and Gu Lao San was his own younger brother—how could they suspect him?

Liu Dazhuang continued, "That's because he wasn't drowned, he was murdered. And the murderer was the brother he trusted. He 'accidentally' pushed Gu Lao Da's wife into the pond first, she couldn't swim and struggled in the water. Gu Lao Da, without a second thought, jumped in after her. Gu Lao San, also an excellent swimmer, followed and forcibly held Gu Lao Da underwater until he drowned. Gu Lao Da's wife, who couldn't swim and had just seen Gu Lao San drown her husband, soon drowned as well."

"You're talking nonsense!" Gu Lao San clenched his fists, veins popping on his neck.

Behind him, Gu Feng's face had turned deathly pale as he looked at Gu Lao San.

Over the years, he had not been completely oblivious; he knew something was amiss with someone in the Gu Family, but he didn’t know who exactly.

He had suspected Gu Lao Er, suspected Gu Lao San, but he didn’t know what they were planning to do.

"He was my own elder brother, and my sister-in-law came from a Magistrate’s family in Beijing. What benefit would I have in killing them?"

Liu Dazhuang paid no attention to the furious Gu Lao San, and went on as if narrating a story.

"Collaborating with outsiders, you had drugs given to the child left by Gu Lao Da, making her bedridden with sickness for many years, nearly costing her life. As for your question why, I don’t know." He looked up at Gu Lao San and said, "But you must be very clear, just like the origin of these 200 taels of silver." He raised his hand and shook it.

The room fell silent. Even if Liu Dazhuang was telling a story, it was a shocking one.

Gu Lao San killed Gu Lao Da? But why? Even if it was for the family property, wasn’t there still Gu Lao Er? And besides, Gu Lao Da and his wife were so competent; doing farm work and also making profitable deals in town, turning in all their earnings, could the Gu Family have had so many fields and built such a grand residence otherwise?

Chapter 323: It’s You

They relied on their elder brother and sister-in-law to get wealthy and enjoy life; that was certainly better than killing the goose that lays the golden eggs.

But when Liu Dazhuang spoke, he did seem to present a clear and organized argument; it didn’t sound like he was spouting nonsense.

Gu Erya got angry and shouted loudly, "You’re talking nonsense! How can we trust the words of a human trafficker?" How could her father have killed her uncle and aunt and harmed her older sister?

The village chief snorted coldly, lifting his walking stick and addressing Liu Dazhuang, "Don’t think you can get away with spouting lies, you’ll have to go to the Governor’s Office whether you like it or not."

"I’m telling the truth, believe it or not," Liu Dazhuang said.

The village chief pressed on, "Gu Feng did such a thing, and nobody in our village knew about it, yet you know so much? Tell us, where were you twelve years ago? How do you know all this in such detail?"

Liu Dazhuang was at a loss for words and, gritting his teeth, said, "Someone told me."

"Who told you?" the village chief demanded, pressing him further.

"I don’t know; someone told me last night. I didn’t see his face clearly."

Last night? Wasn’t Liu Dazhuang in the village chief’s firewood shed last night? Everyone turned their gaze to the village chief.

Seeing this, the village chief’s nose bent in anger as he cursed, "Damn human trafficker, spouting lies. You defamed Gu Feng and now you dare to slander me; I’ll beat you to death."

The village chief was also up in years, so upon getting angry, he started to tremble all over, and the others quickly restrained him, advising, "Don’t get mad, sir. Why bother with a human trafficker who bites anyone he can? Let’s just send him off to the county Governor’s Office and let the Magistrate’s paddle take care of him."

"Right, tie him up and send him to the Governor’s Office."

Actually, Liu Dazhuang also found the situation unbelievable. It was normal for others not to trust him, but at least he had said his piece and felt much better inside.

So when several of the village men picked up the rope to tie him again, he just sighed, cursed his bad luck internally, and did not struggle or offer any more excuses.

Compared to Huang Xiangwen and Gu Feng on the other side, who were incessantly quarreling, he appeared much calmer.

With a "plop," rain fell from the sky once again, and the person binding Liu Dazhuang instinctively wiped his hand, but before he had a chance to look, the crowd gasped in alarm.

On closer inspection, the man realized that it wasn’t rainwater on his hand, but blood.

Turning around sharply, he saw Gu Feng standing unsteadily, his mouth full of blood.

The blood that had just been spat out was his.

"Grandpa!"

"Father!"

"Oh dear, Elder Gu."

"Brother Gu!"

The crowd exploded into chaos, everyone rushing towards Gu Feng, even Gu Feng and Huang Xiangwen, who were bound, struggled to break free and ran to him.

"Elder Brother Gu, you must hold on, don’t listen to that human trafficker’s nonsense," urged an elderly man in the crowd.

"Brother Shunzi, Brother Shunzi, hurry and fetch the doctor!" Gu Erya called out to Shunzi.

"Right, I’m on it!" Shunzi responded and sprinted away swiftly.

Gu Feng steadied his breath and looked around at everyone, finally settling his gaze on Gu Feng.

Gu Feng knew that Liu Dazhuang hadn't spouted nonsense; he was telling the truth, which was why the pallor on his face, along with his repressed anger and fear, had not subsided. Seeing Gu Feng looking at him, he grew even more nervous.

The frail and weak voice of the elderly Gu Feng slowly emerged, "It's true, what Liu Dazhuang said isn't wrong, it was you, it was you!"

Gu Feng pointed fiercely at Gu Feng.

The entire place was in an uproar.

Chapter 324: Why Do It That Way

If no one believed what Liu Dazhuang said, being a lying human trafficker, even if his whole body was mouths, nobody would believe the words he spoke, how could they not believe when Gu Feng said the same thing?

He is the biological father of both Gu eldest and Gu third.

Upon hearing this, everyone was shocked to their core.

Liu Dazhuang's eyes began to tremble, equally shocked.

Gu second tried to tear off a few ropes from his body, failing to do so, and now he couldn't focus on that, just staring blankly at Gu Feng.

The village head looked towards Gu third in shock.

Quickly, everyone else's gaze followed towards Gu third.

Gu third hid the ferocity in his eyes and forced a couple of dry laughs, then anxiously said, "Father, you must be confused from the illness. You should go back to your room to rest, otherwise Youyou will worry again when she sees you like this."

Youyou, he still dared to mention Youyou; when exactly had his own son whom he had raised become so terrifying? Having done such things, yet he could still act as if nothing was amiss.

"Why? Why did you do it? Did I wrong you, or did your brother and sister-in-law wrong you?" Gu Feng asked loudly, his eyes rolling back, almost fainting, startling everyone once again.

Gu Erya supported Gu Feng, her eyes filled with shock and fear.

What was going on? What why? Could Grandfather believe what that human trafficker said?

How could it be possible? How could Father do such a thing?

"Father, what nonsense are you talking about? How can you believe what that human trafficker says?" Gu third's face had already turned somber, unable to maintain his feigned smile.

Gu Feng didn't look like he was joking; he actually believed Liu Dazhuang's words.

Gu Feng said, "It's not Liu Dazhuang asking you, it's me asking you, why did you do it?"

You ask? Everyone looked around, perplexed, but those with a clear understanding grasped Gu Feng's meaning.

His suspicion towards Gu third wasn't because of Liu Dazhuang; he himself must know something as well.

This was... too unexpected.

"Did you really do it?" the village head asked Gu third.

Gu third didn’t look at the village head but fixed his gaze on Gu Feng, his face growing incredibly dark.

"Father, why are you slandering me? When have I ever done anything to wrong you?"

"You..." Gu Feng, holding his breath, swung his palm towards Gu third with no small force, and immediately a palm print appeared on Gu third’s face.

"You beast, your harming your brother and sister-in-law has wronged me."

Gu third was seething with anger, his facial muscles twitching, "Do you only consider your eldest as your son, and the rest of us as foundlings?" he roared back at Gu Feng.

Gu Erya looked in surprise at the furious Gu third, "Father, what are you doing?"

With a face filled with grief, Gu Feng said, "You beast, why did you do it?"

From beginning to end, Gu Feng had never asked whether Gu third was the perpetrator, but why he did it. Because he knew it was him, some previously incomprehensible doubts now all made sense, he knew it was him.

’Sibling rivalry,’ ’who would keep the Gu Family in line,’ Jin Zijin had mentioned these terms to him, intentionally or not, and he now understood.

"Why did you want to kill your brother and sister-in-law?" Gu Feng asked in anguish.

"Are you convinced it was me?" Gu third’s expression was terrifyingly dark.

The village head spoke in a calm tone, "Gu brother, could there be some misunderstanding? How could the third possibly harm the eldest...?"

Chapter 325: I’ve been childhood friends with her since we were little, at the age of 5.

Gu Feng waved his hand to stop him from continuing and said, "I know it was him, just him. If not the second son, then the third; no one would bite him for no reason. The second son isn’t that clever, he couldn’t have hidden it for so long, it was him."

"This..." The head of the village didn’t know what to say.

He continued, "Third son, when the Lin Family came to take Youyou to Beijing for treatment, she met with trouble just after stepping out the door, and it was you who did it, wasn’t it? The previous day, you left the fields without finishing the work, claiming you had a headache, but when I asked your mother, she said you didn’t go home."

Gu Feng’s third son’s pupils constricted; he hadn’t expected his father to have started suspecting the death of his eldest brother and sister-in-law so early on.

"When I was considering a match with Youyou, I had liked Jin Zijin. We once talked and realized someone was eavesdropping; it was you, wasn’t it?"

Gu Feng’s third son was slightly surprised but did not answer.

"Zijin said someone sent a message, but he refused to tell me who. I think he knew it was you right then and there, and because you are my son, he didn’t have the heart to tell me such a cruel truth, is that right?"

Gu Feng grew increasingly angry, to the point where his outstretched hand began to shake uncontrollably.

Why had he birthed such a beast, worse than pigs and dogs?

"Was it you?" Gu Feng bellowed again, seemingly draining all his strength.

The others were so shocked they couldn’t speak; they just stared dumbfounded at the father and son, who harbored such deep hatred for each other.

Gu Feng’s third son staggered backward, unwilling to meet Gu Feng’s furious gaze.

Pressed too hard, a buzzing sound filled his mind, and many memories he thought he had forgotten surged forth, causing him pain as if his head was about to explode. He clenched his eyes shut and grabbed his head with both hands, yelling loudly, "Yes, it was me."

He took a few steps back and then pointed at Gu Feng, shouting angrily, "So what if it was me? He was four years older than the Lin Family sister, and I was the same age as her. I was her childhood sweetheart, I’m clearly smarter and more capable than him, so why could he marry the Lin Family sister, and I could only call her sister-in-law?"

"You... you shameless beast, your elder brother and his wife had their marriage arranged by your grandfather when he was alive."

Everyone looked at Gu Feng’s third son with increasingly bizarre expressions.

Gu Erya had already collapsed to the side, and his third son’s wife Meng Qiuju turned pale with shock. Recalling some private matters between husband and wife, she was even more astounded and speechless.

Gu’s second son suddenly realized what had happened and, with a couple of exclamations, said, "Right, that’s why when Lin Lian came, you were even happier than your elder brother, bustling around more eagerly than him—turns out you actually..."

Feeling it inappropriate to continue, Gu’s second son stopped himself mid-sentence.

Huang Xiangwen, who usually followed her husband’s lead, also seemed to have an epiphany and said, "You shameless person, I even saw you peeping at your sister-in-law taking a bath, and the second son said I had seen it wrong."

She didn’t have the same reservations as Gu’s second son; shameless was shameless, and what did it matter now? The Gu Family’s face had long been lost by the lot of them.

Everyone was stunned. Was this the reason Gu's third son killed Gu's eldest? The Gu Family's disgrace was now truly complete.

Gu's third son laughed maniacally, his face twisted, "I didn't want to kill Sister Lin. It was only after I killed my elder brother that I found out she had already drowned."

"You beast..." Gu Feng's eyes bulged as he shouted these two words, finally using up all his strength.

"Father!"

"Grandfather..."

There were shouts of alarm from Gu Feng.

His eyes rolled back, and he collapsed to the ground, limp.

Chapter 326: The Last Prescription

"Father!" Gu Youyou let out a loud cry that carried far beyond the Gu Family's courtyard as he rushed to Gu Feng's side, shaking him and pinching his philtrum.

Gu Feng's vision blurred as he pointed at Gu Youyou and managed to croak out with difficulty, "Marry off ... your two sisters ..."

With that, he breathed his last.

Droplets of rain were still falling from the eaves, landing on Gu Feng's pale face like strings of tears.

He had finally driven his father to his death; in the midst of the chaos surrounding Gu Feng, Gu Youyou's younger brother ran out like a madman.

Just give him some silver, how could that have led him to commit the atrocity of killing his brother and coveting his brother's wife? He loved money, but he wasn't foolish. If it weren't for the unbearable sight of them together day and night, if it weren't for every secret glance he stole seeing them so lovingly entwined, he would never have done something so absurd.

...

"We should stay in Tongguan for a couple of days before we hit the road again. Many of our brothers are injured; they need some rest. I've already shown my waist token to the commander in charge of Tongguan. As long as we stay inside the city, no one will dare to touch us."

Jin Zijin glanced at Yue Rujing and said indifferently, "Whatever!"

Whether to rest or not didn't really matter to them. He knew Zhuo Qing wouldn't pursue them.

Gu Youyou paced anxiously, not knowing why she felt so terribly unsettled.

Yue Rujing smiled and said, "Boss Gu, we're not panicking, so why are you? Even if someone came to kill us, we wouldn't let you pick up a knife and fight to the death."

He clearly remembered how Gu Youyou had fought Zhuo Qing with a small knife, probably leaving a scar on Zhuo Qing's waist.

God knows what she was panicking about. Gu Youyou stopped, opened the door, and called out, "Waiter, over here."

The inn's waiter, who had just finished delivering tea to the next room, hurried over when he heard Gu Youyou call.

"What can I do for you, sir?"

Gu Youyou asked, "Do you have paper and a pen? I need to borrow it."

The waiter, seeing they were staying in a superior room, thought that though paper and pen were expensive, it was alright to lend them to guests in superior rooms. For others, there would be an extra charge. He smiled and said, "Please wait a moment, sir."

Of course, Gu Youyou didn’t know that borrowing paper and pen was actually chargeable, so she didn’t think much of it.

The waiter was quick, and shortly he came up with a tray carrying the Four Treasures of the Study.

"Here you go, sir. Please use them."

"Thank you!" Gu Youyou thanked the waiter and took the Four Treasures of the Study back into her room.

After grinding some ink, she started to write fervently.

Yue Rujing, curious, stood by the table and watched.

"Vitex, Angelica, Astragalus ..." These are for treating patients with physical weakness, typically the elderly. Yue Rujing was slightly startled and said, "You’re prescribing medicine for Grandfather Gu, aren’t you?"

Gu Youyou nodded and replied, "That’s right. Grandfather’s condition is no longer serious, but he is still very weak. Once I finish writing the prescription, I’ll entrust someone to send it to Jisheng Hall, Qin Changlin will know what to do."

Gu Youyou thought to herself that her unease was probably due to concern for her grandfather’s health. Country folks always dread spending money. These medicines might be nothing to her, but for country folks, they are reluctant to spend on them. Now that she was gone, not to mention whether her uncle and auntie would be willing to spend on Grandfather’s medicine, Grandfather himself would probably be reluctant to do so.

In addition to the prescription, Gu Youyou also wrote a letter to Qin Changlin, explaining the purpose of her trip and asking him to look after her grandfather.

After finishing the writing, she dried the ink, then asked the shopkeeper for an envelope to put the letter in.

Yue Rujing generously took the letter, saying he would find someone to send it out.

Chapter 327: Do You Also Feel Compassion for Others?

Yesterday, Jin Zijin and Yue Rujing were both injured. Gu Youyou heard them say that the Yangguan City garrison was exterminating bandits, and they were the group of bandits being targeted.

The garrison wasn't just a garrison; it was mixed with many experts from Xuanzong. One could imagine how fierce the fighting between the officials and bandits was.

Yue Rujing fared somewhat better, clutching his chest and saying he suffered internal injuries, at least he was clean on the outside. But Jin Zijin's injuries were a bit odd, some internal ones weren't severe, yet there were many wounds on the outside, which didn't quite match Gu Youyou's image of how heroes would get hurt.

Yue Rujing, with no visible wounds but coughing up blood, seemed rather convincing. But what was with all the injuries on Jin Zijin's body caused by cold weapons?

"How did you get hurt like this?" Gu Youyou couldn't help but ask.

It was too dark last night for her to see, but now that they were in Tongguan City, she realized how frightening his wounds were.

They had already cleaned his wounds in the morning and treated them simply, but they would need to be redressed in the afternoon.

"You made me mad," he said.

Of course, it was seeing her jump off the cliff that had infuriated him, to the point where he forgot to dodge, and those few lackeys on the edge had no idea how many times they took the opportunity to slash at him; under normal circumstances, how could they have even come close to him?

Gu Youyou hadn’t seen the scene and thought he was just speaking out of anger. As she was untying his clothes, she said, "You get mad at me, so you run into their knives? Idiot."

Well, he really was an idiot.

As she undid his clothes, his sturdy upper body was revealed. Even though it wasn’t the first time she had seen his bare body, it still made Gu Youyou’s face heat up.

"The smaller wounds are healing, the larger ones..." Gu Youyou frowned when she saw the gaping, flesh-revealed wound on his shoulder, "this one should have been stitched up to heal faster, but it’s been too long. These next few days, you need to be careful, and if you feel any discomfort, you must tell me."

If a wound wasn’t stitched within six hours, it couldn’t be stitched up anymore; otherwise, the risk of infection would be high. But the risk of infection was also high for Jin Zijin’s wound if it wasn’t stitched. He didn’t say anything earlier and delayed it for a whole night.

Jin Zijin didn’t speak, only nodded slightly.

Gu Youyou changed the dressing on his wound, the medicine powder she applied would be painful, so she stole a glance at him. Seeing that he kept silent, not even a frown on his brow, she felt like she was rubbing salt into pork.

Seeing him like that, it wasn’t even stoicism, she felt somewhat angry and said, "Can’t you dodge a knife? Can’t you scream if it hurts? I’m a doctor, I’ve seen a lot, it’s not shameful."

Gu Youyou quickly and neatly re-bandaged him and helped him get dressed.

Jin Zijin curved the corners of his mouth into a knowing smile, "So you can be worried about people, getting slashed a few times is worth it."

"I don’t feel sorry for you, if you die from those cuts, you had it coming," Gu Youyou blurted out without a second thought.

Jin Zijin wasn’t annoyed, simply stating, "The mouth says no, but the heart says yes."

Gu Youyou was taken aback for a moment, then finished packing up the dressing materials and huffed, "I can’t be bothered with you."

A "thud, thud..." of knocking came, followed by Yue Rujing’s voice from outside the door, "Senior brother, is it inconvenient for me to come in?"

Just as Gu Youyou was planning to go out and throw away the used bandages, she opened the door and said, "If you want to come in, just come in, the door isn’t locked."

After saying that, she walked straight out.

Yue Rujing, not understanding, asked Jin Zijin, "What’s with her? What princess temper is she throwing now?"

Jin Zijin very seriously concluded, "She’s not throwing a temper, she’s just embarrassed."

Chapter 328: We Are Bandits

"Shy? How could that be?" Gu Youyou, who wasn’t even shy when it came to snipping ding-dongs, had seen it with his own eyes.

Jin Zijin nodded seriously and said, "Didn’t you see her face turn red?"

Telling bald-faced lies, her face didn’t turn red at all.

Yue Rujing pulled up a stool to sit down, his demeanour solemn, "Brother, if we're in a rush to hit the road, then let General Ji pick some skilled soldiers to escort us to Lingnan with great fanfare. If we're not in a hurry, we can wait until our wounds heal before setting out. What do you think?"

Jin Zijin pondered for a moment, his fingers tapping on the table intermittently, and said, "Not in a hurry, let's wait till we've recovered before leaving."

"Then in that case..." Yue Rujing started to say something else but paused midway, then said, "Alright, let's do as Brother says."

Jin Zijin said, "It's true that General Ji would lend us men out of respect for your father, but by doing so... your father would owe him a favor. Moreover, secretly mobilizing troops is not easy, and if someone with ulterior motives catches wind of it, it could backfire horribly. You've already caused enough trouble for your father; it's best to be cautious."

Yue Rujing felt indignant at his words, his mouth twitching as he said, "Weren't those troubles all for your sake, Brother? How can you say that I am the one who caused them?"

Jin Zijin looked at him calmly and spoke with righteous indignation, "I've been in Lotus Village for nearly six years without a hitch, but as soon as you came, you attracted the attention of Xuanzong's men. If it weren't for your conspicuousness attracting attention, how could they have found me so quickly?"

Yue Rujing: "..."

"You coming by yourself would have been fine, but you brought a whole nest of bandits with you, giving them a legitimate reason to wipe us out. Tell me, aren't you here to set me up?"

It seemed that way.

Yue Rujing with a drooping face, said, "Wasn't that to give you face?"

Jin Zijin was left speechless, his smile ambiguous, "Sure, give face. Wouldn't it be even more prestigious if Ji Yuanzhong himself escorted us?"

How could that be okay?

Yue Rujing quickly shook his head and said, "No, no, Brother, stop making fun of me. Let's recover from our injuries and slip away stealthily, humbly."

...

While they were recuperating in Tongguan City, Gu Youyou was indeed busy.

Exactly how many men Yue Rujing had wasn't known, but Gu Youyou had treated more than thirty of them. Aside from five who were seriously injured, the rest were lightly wounded.

Attending to so many wounded at the same time was a first even if she added up her lifetimes.

The kicker was that back in modern times, not many people could command her services for such injuries; there was no need for her to get involved. Yet, here she was, overwhelmingly busy over these minor injuries.

She missed Qin Changlin dearly; although his medical skills weren't great, he was a good assistant.

"Youyou, take a break if you're tired."

Gu Youyou was still busy at night, running out of medicinal materials. She had to write them down to have someone buy them from the nearby medicine shop the next day.

Gu Youyou said, "I've made it through the past few days; today's much better already."

Indeed, she was telling the truth. The past few days had been hectic, but these two days, the lightly wounded didn't need her attention anymore.

Jin Zijin said, "Tongguan has military doctors. You should talk to Yue Rujing about this; he could just let the military doctors treat everyone. There’s no need for you to see each one in person."

Gu Youyou was startled, her mouth agape, almost biting her tongue, "That scoundrel Yue Rujing said that among our group, only he and I have medical skills but since he’s also wounded... "

Er... okay, that’s not wrong, but...

"He said our identity was that of bandits and we shouldn’t alarm the nearby garrison."

Chapter 329: The Concealed Matter

"Is that what was said?" Jin Zijin’s face darkened and turned blacker as he looked at Gu Youyou’s dark eye circles from being busy and sleepless for days. He felt heartache.

You dare to get bolder, Yue Rujing, bullying my people.

He beckoned Gu Youyou over and said, "Come here, don’t worry about those people, just take good care of me."

With Jin Zijin’s reminder, what was there that he didn’t understand?

Gu Youyou felt that she had been played by Yue Rujing, and that Jin Zijin was in cahoots with her.

She threw down her pen and paper, huffing, "Who do you think you are, my lord? Me, take care of you? I, miss, have always been taken care of."

Gu Youyou slammed the door and went downstairs for a late-night snack.

Jin Zijin pondered her words. After a long time, he suddenly burst into laughter, murmuring softly, "Oh, miss, you do have quite the temper." But how did the Gu family of farmers raise her with such a nobility’s temper?

...

"Brother, something's happened!"

Yue Rujing closed the door, holding a sealed letter, and hastily said to Jin Zijin.

He had waited for Gu Youyou to leave before daring to come over; his brothers had said that Doctor Gu was making inquiries everywhere, wanting to deal with him.

"Where have you been these past couple of days?" Jin Zijin ignored his panic and calmly took the letter from his hand to ask.

"Where I'd gone isn't important. What's important is..." Yue Rujing pointed at the letter, "if Gu Youyou finds out about this, she's going to make trouble, refusing to go with us to Lingnan. Plus, if we turn back to Lotus Village now, it would be like walking into a tiger's mouth."

Yue Rujing was rarely this serious. Seeing his expression, Jin Zijin couldn't help but frown and opened the letter.

After a moment, his eyes grew deeper and his fingers clutching the letter turned progressively white.

He dropped the letter and said coldly, "Burn it."

He spat out the two words coldly, then suddenly grabbed the oil lamp from the table as if the thin paper were some ferocious beast that needed to be annihilated immediately.

"Youyou mustn't find out," he said coldly. "They did this on purpose, revealing the truth about that incident from years ago, making grandfather so angry that he died, to lure Youyou back."

Yue Rujing nodded and took over an ash bowl.

"Huo Li might have arrived as well," he sneered. "They are really willing to spend money."

Yue Rujing said indignantly, "It’s not just because of Gu Youyou that they’re stirring up such a big commotion; they must be after you and me."

Jin Zijin didn’t agree or deny, saying, "Let’s leave Tongguan as soon as possible and head to Lingnan. If we stay any longer, I’m afraid the news will reach Youyou’s ears."

Suddenly recalling something, he asked again, "Was Gu Wu captured?"

Yue Rujing smiled, "Of course, he was caught, where could he run off to? I heard he’s locked up in the Qingshui Governor’s Office jail. Just that... I don’t know why they didn’t kill him, but it looks like he won’t be coming out for the rest of his life."

"Oh?" Jin Zijin raised an eyebrow, not killed?

"It’s just sad for his wife and children. He committed such an act, got himself into jail, and his wife and children were driven out by Gu Wen. They have nowhere to stay and could only move into that thatched cottage you built before. Isn’t it funny?"

But Jin Zijin didn’t laugh, his gaze gradually sinking.

...

One had to admit that Jin Zijin’s ability to recover was impressive. The severe wound hadn’t become infected, and within a few days, the large and small injuries on his body had mostly healed, and some of the less severe ones had even stopped leaving scars.

It was just that the largest one still needed more medication. Gu Youyou estimated that it would require at least two more days.

Chapter 330: Nervous as You Approach Home?

However, when changing his dressing today, his expression seemed a bit off, his brow slightly furrowed.

Even when his wounds were gaping open a few days ago, his demeanor remained unchanged, not a single furrow in his brow, so the reason he frowned certainly couldn't have been pain from the wound.

"What's wrong?" Gu Youyou, like a diligent doctor concerned about her patient, said, "If there's any discomfort, you must tell me."

She wasn't about to actively inquire about any troubles he might have; she was just a doctor concerned about her patient.

"It is quite uncomfortable," Jin Zijin replied: "I've been away for so many years, I'm somewhat impatient, yet also somewhat timid as I near my hometown."

"What?" Jin Zijin felt timid about nearing his hometown?

Gu Youyou gave him a somewhat strange look and asked, "Are you saying that your home is also in Lingnan?"

Why had she heard all along the way that Yue Rujing's home was in Lingnan?

Jin Zijin shook his head, then nodded, saying, "I've told you before, I am orphaned. However, I spent a few years in Lingnan and came to consider it home."

Can the definition of home be like that?

Gu Youyou offhandedly remarked, "Then you also stayed in a thatched cottage in Lotus Village for a few years, do you consider that thatched cottage home?"

"Home?"

Jin Zijin's gaze dropped, his eyes gradually deepening.

He smiled bitterly to himself. Did he have a home?

Gu Youyou looked down at him and upon seeing his despondent expression, immediately regretted her previous words and wished she could sew her own mouth shut.

How could she say such a thing? It was fine to say to anyone else, but she should never have said it to someone without a home; Jin Zijin must be heartbroken.

Gu Youyou pursed her lips, sat down to face him, and sincerely apologized, "Zijin, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to bring up the subject of home."

Jin Zijin looked up at her.

"I don't have a home either, you say home is wherever it is. Since it's in Lingnan, let's hurry back," she said.

"Huh?"

"Feeling timid about nearing home, I understand, but eventually, one has to return home, right? Ah, how about we set out early tomorrow morning? Your wound is not a major issue, and with me here, traveling shouldn't be a problem..."

"Alright!" Jin Zijin immediately replied.

Gu Youyou was taken aback, dumbfounded.

Her intention was to console him, since the topic she brought up had saddened him, but she didn't expect him to respond so readily to her suggestion.

You clearly don't feel timid about nearing home; you're just eagerly longing to return.

Um... Well, after all, it was she who had suggested setting out early the next morning.

Jin Zijin, with his actions, demonstrated that he indeed longed to return. While Gu Youyou was washing up, he had swiftly packed the luggage and even called out to Yue Rujing at the doorway.

"Ajing, pack your things, we leave early tomorrow morning."

Soon after, Yue Rujing's voice, muffled with sleep, complained: "Packing in the middle of the night? Does anyone want to get some sleep?"

More complaining voices followed: "What's all the noise for? Why shout so loudly just for packing? It disturbs people's rest, is there no humanity left?"

Gu Youyou tugged at Jin Zijin, saying, "Why are you so loud? It won't be too late to pack tomorrow morning."

Jin Zijin defended himself righteously: "If I'm quiet, will Ajing hear me?"

Gu Youyou was left speechless.

Yue Rujing did have this quirk; he was a sound sleeper and loved to linger in bed.

... They left stealthily, departing before dawn. Traveling light, Abao was not convenient to bring along, and Jin Zijin said that after they arrived in Lingnan, he would have someone send Abao back.

Rising early and retiring late, it's no surprise that Yue Rujing couldn't stop yawning, and Gu Youyou was yawning incessantly as well, but Jin Zijin seemed very energetic.