Farmhouse 821

Chapter 821: Preparing to Set Sail

The net-drying matron, upon seeing that they were two outsiders, immediately became wary and asked, "Who are you?"

Gu Youyou had long since prepared their story, and she smiled as she replied, "We are doctors from the inland, hoping to go to Fusang Island to gather some medicinal herbs. The problem is, we haven't found a suitable boat, and we dare not venture there alone, so we were thinking of joining your fishermen to go out to sea. Don't worry, though, we won't take your boat for free, we will pay with silver."

Doctors, wherever they went, were respected and welcomed.

Hearing that they were doctors, the net-drying matron's vigilance eased considerably as she said, "So you're going to collect medicine. The Immortal Mountain on the island indeed has many valuable herbs, but there are also many dangerous beasts. It's very risky to go there to gather herbs, so you two doctors should think it over carefully."

Gu Youyou smiled and responded, "Matron, the herbs for saving lives are very hard to find, I am aware of the dangers, but we still hope to have a look. We will be careful and only gather herbs at the base of the mountain, not daring to venture too deep. Could you see your way to accommodating us?"

Given that, the matron had nothing more to say.

She said, "Alright, but you must remember, do not attempt to climb the mountain, just stay at its base." Thinking about how strange the mountain was, she felt reassured that these seemingly frail doctors wouldn't likely manage to ascend it, and then added, "Come with me, and I will ask my family when the best time to go out to sea to fish would be."

This matron was quite clever; her husband's family also bore the surname Gu. Upon learning that Gu Youyou shared their surname, her fondness for them soared, and she warmly invited them into her house.

"Doctor Gu, Doctor Jin, please have a seat!" Mrs. Gu went to pour them tea and even brought out a plate of delicious dried fish to treat them.

Mrs. Gu’s husband was a sturdy middle-aged man in his forties, named Gu Chaosheng, a skilled fisherman in the village, and he was also very forthright.

After looking at Gu Youyou and Jin Zijin, he said, "You two are going to Fusang Island to collect medicine to save lives; that is a good deed. You can join us on our voyage, but the sea is dangerous, and once on board you must follow our commands."

This was not an issue.

Gu Youyou, taking Jin Ziyuan by the hand, quickly expressed their agreement.

"So, when would be suitable?"

The fishermen were very particular about setting sail.

Gu Chaosheng thought for a moment and said, "I just checked the weather yesterday; it’s not favorable for going far in the coming days, at most we’ll set a few nets nearby. Fusang Island is quite far; it’s likely we’ll have to wait a few more days. The weather changes every day, so it’s difficult to say exactly which day will be suitable. But I reckon we’ll have a chance to go there within ten days."

Everything was considered for safety’s sake, and Gu Youyou nodded slightly.

"How about this, do you want to stay at our place first, and when the right opportunity comes, you can go with us?"

Gu Youyou was disguised as a man, and living together might risk exposing her disguise.

Jin Ziyuan quickly said, "Thank you, Uncle Gu, but we have already paid silver to stay at an inn in the town and wouldn’t want to trouble you further."

Gu Youyou joked, "Exactly, we've left our luggage at the inn. Could you perhaps inform us when you've decided to go?"

Gu Chaosheng didn't insist, "Alright, I'll let you know when the time comes."

Mrs. Gu then said with a smile, "When the time comes, I'll personally inform you."

With the sea voyage settled, they now waited for the right opportunity to depart.

...

Chapter 822: The New Love Affair

Jin Zijin, by now, had guessed the whereabouts of Gu Youyou and Jin Ziyuan and was currently galloping towards the East Sea.

Another person, faster than him, had already arrived—that was Searcy.

She had completely enslaved Gui Yunxi, having endured him for so long; there was no reason not to endure a bit more to get the antidote.

He was so young and hadn't even taken a wife yet; he didn't want to die.

They had spent the night in the forest, and on the second day, Searcy robbed a carriage, with Gui Yunxi still acting as her coachman.

After several days of travel, they finally found the inn where Gu Youyou was staying.

Just as Gu Youyou was about to leave, she saw Searcy, which made her shiver with shock.

Shouldn't she be at the Lin Residence, taking care of those little treasures she had raised? What was she doing here?

Feeling her change, Jin Ziyuan, who was behind her, followed her gaze downstairs.

There stood two men, neither of whom he recognized.

"What’s wrong?" he asked.

"An acquaintance," Gu Youyou replied.

After saying this, she went downstairs.

Searcy turned her head and saw her; seeing Gu Youyou dressed as a man but in good shape, she finally relaxed.

She stepped forward and asked, "Weren’t you robbed by bandits? How did you end up here? You don’t look like you’ve been robbed."

Gui Yunxi, following behind her, then realized the person Searcy had been chasing after all this time. No wonder he was in such a hurry—it was because he thought his friend had been robbed by bandits.

Oh no, he thought his friend had been robbed by bandits.

"How did you get here?" Gu Youyou looked at the person behind her and asked, "And who is this?"

"My hired coachman," Searcy replied unabashedly.

Gui Yunxi’s mouth twitched as he desperately wanted to denounce his various crimes.

"Oh, you hire coachmen now?" Gu Youyou raised an eyebrow, seeing the coachman's subservient demeanor paired with secretive teeth-gritting, she guessed there was a great deal of exaggeration in the word 'hired.'

The inn's lobby was noisy and crowded, not a place for conversation, so Gu Youyou whispered to Searcy, "Let's go upstairs."

Jin Ziyuan said, "You two go ahead, I'll talk to the chef about preparing a few dishes, I'll be back soon."

"I...I'll go feed the horses!" Gui Yunxi also made his escape, his instincts telling him that neither of these two were easy to serve.

Once in Gu Youyou's room, Searcy immediately scorned, "You fickle woman, don't tell me the bandit robbery was a lie, and the truth is you're out gallivanting with that pretty boy you were with just now."

Gu Youyou nearly choked on her own spit.

She really dared to say anything, and Gu Youyou couldn't fathom how her mother educated her. She was supposed to be raised in the inner chambers but lacked all semblances of a sheltered lady.

Fortunately, she left the Lu Family; with such a temperament, wouldn't she be a curse to any family she married into?

Gu Youyou wiped her mouth and said, "The robbery was fake, but what I encountered was more terrifying than being robbed by bandits. As for not going back to Beijing and running to the East Sea, that was a last resort—I was fleeing for my life."

"Humph, fleeing for your life?" Searcy sneered coldly. "Is that pretty boy just now your new clandestine lover?"

Gu Youyou: "...Go to hell with 'clandestine lover'. I'm very loyal in love; I told you I was fleeing for my life."

In front of such a woman, even the best manners would crumble.

Searcy pursed her lips and snorted, "If that Taoist knew of your ’loyalty’, he’d probably explode with anger."

"It’s none of your business," Gu Youyou said indifferently. "How did you find me?"

Chapter 823: Threat

Searcy took a sip of water and proudly took out a bamboo tube. Then, from within the tube flew out a black bee, which proceeded to buzz around Gu Youyou.

Gu Youyou’s mouth twitched and she said, "How did you manage to raise a bee like this?"

Searcy replied, "This bee is a treasured heirloom in my family. The ointment I gave you contains its honey."

Heh... even bees can be family heirlooms? That’s one long-lived bee.

"What did you come to find me for?"

"I thought you really were kidnapped by bandits. Since you once saved my life, I figured I should at least make the trip to avenge you, right? With any luck, I might even collect your corpse!"

Gu Youyou: "..." My heart is so tired.

She opened her backpack and took out an assortment of bottles and jars of poison, saying, "These are the poisons I’ve prepared. I was thinking if you were dead, I would use these to poison the entire bandit stronghold at Yishan."

Gu Youyou couldn’t help but twitch the corner of her mouth again.

Remembering the real reason she came here, she quickly said to her, "I've found out where that meteorite came from."

"Meteorite?"

"Oh no, I mean the two creatures Zhuzhao and Youying. I heard they are on an island at sea. I've already made arrangements with the fishermen. They'll take me with them the next time they go out to sea. I have to see for myself. Maybe I'll find some clues."

Searcy finally understood and said, "So that's why you came to Dongzhou? I was wondering why you were here. But you should have at least let someone send a message home. I heard the Lin Family is worried sick."

Gu Youyou thought to herself: You actually care whether others worry?

It's just that it's probably not easy to send a message back to the Lin Family right now. No telling what's going on with Xuanzong.

"Alright, let's not worry about that for now. Since you're here, come out to sea with me."

...

The day after Searcy arrived, the Gu Family's matriarch sent word that there was going to be a good weather that night, which would get them to Fusang Island by dawn, so they should prepare.

Gu Youyou told her she would bring an extra person, and she did not object.

Before departure, Searcy threw Gui Yunxi an antidote and said, "This medicine will keep you alive for fifteen days. You stay here, understand? Keep an eye on our horses and luggage."

Gui Yunxi hurriedly replied, "Yes, yes, sir, please be assured, I will take care of everything."

Gu Youyou: "..."

Jin Ziyuan: "..."

"Alright, as long as you obey, once we return to the capital successfully, I'll give you the antidote."

Their group headed to the seaside, where a sizable fishing boat was already moored at the coast.

Searcy seemed quite excited; she had never been on a boat before.

"Is this what we're taking to go out to sea?"

Gu Youyou lowered her voice and said to her, "Yes, remember to restrain your temper and listen to me. And be sure not to reveal that you're a woman, they're superstitious about that."

Searcy scoffed and said, "What will happen if I'm found out?"

"They won't hesitate to throw you overboard to feed the Sea Dragon King."

"Who dares? I'll poison them to death."

Gu Youyou rolled her eyes, feeling that bringing Searcy along might have been a mistake.

"If you poison them, are you going to sail the boat?"

Searcy: "..."

Down a long wooden plank from the ship came a man, none other than Gu Chaosheng.

He greeted Gu Youyou and the others with a smile and said, "Doctors, please follow me."

Soon, about a dozen muscular men followed, all rolling up their pants and baring their arms, quite different from the ordinary citizens of the inland cities.

Chapter 824: Seasickness

On the seashore stood an altar with various offerings and incense candles. According to local customs, if the ship was to travel far, it was necessary to worship the Sea Dragon King.

Gu Chaosheng was the leader of these men, and he led everyone to worship the Sea Dragon King before they all followed him aboard the large ship.

Initially, Searcy was quite excited about boarding the ship but about an hour into the sea, she started feeling unwell, her face turning pale; she seemed to have seasickness.

Gu Youyou gloated over her misfortune and said, "Look at you now; how do you feel?"

Meanwhile, Jin Ziyuan also seemed to be seasick, but since his complexion was already very pale, a bit more pallor wasn't noticeable.

He had been holding in silence for quite a while without moving, and so Gu Youyou realized he might be feeling seasick too.

It was normal for them being northerners.

Gu Chaosheng came over from the front, saw their state, and understanding the situation, chuckled, "It seems you young fellows are experiencing your first voyage? It's normal to feel a bit uncomfortable the first time on a ship."

He pulled out a piece of ginger from his chest and told them, "Try chewing on some of this. It's getting late; you should get a good night's sleep in the cabin. By dawn, we should be nearly there."

Gu Youyou took the piece of ginger and thanked him, "Thank you, Uncle Gu. My two friends are seasick; I'm sorry for the trouble."

"Haha, no trouble at all. It's fortunate that you, Doctor Gu, are feeling fine and not seasick at all."

Gu Youyou said with a smile, "I'm used to it; this isn't my first time at sea."

"Oh, I see!" Gu Chaosheng glanced at the pitch-black sea and said, "Well then, take a good rest inside the cabin, I'm going to see if we can cast a net nearby."

"Please do, Uncle Gu!"

Gu Youyou sliced the ginger into small pieces with a dagger, handed a few pieces to each of them, and said, "Uncle Gu is a very experienced captain. We are lucky he remembered there were a few among us who haven't sailed before. This ginger was specially prepared for us. Chew on it quickly, and it will make you feel better soon."

Jin Ziyuan chewed a slice of the ginger, wincing at the spiciness, and looking at Gu Youyou, he asked again, "This isn't your first time at sea?"

Gu Youyou said sheepishly, "That's my business, and I don't wish to tell you."

Jin Ziyuan: "..."

On the other side, Searcy, chewing, said, "It's really spicy; this is old ginger."

Oh, old ginger.

The two of them soon went to sleep, and Gu Youyou came out of the cabin to find that Gu Chaosheng and the others had just cast the net.

"Let’s hope our first catch brings a good omen."

"Yes, the weather tonight is good, a rare calm on the sea."

Seeing Gu Youyou approach, Gu Chaosheng turned to her and smiled, "Aren’t you going to sleep for a bit, Doctor Gu?"

Gu Youyou replied, "I’m not sleepy yet; I want to watch you guys cast the nets!"

...

Just as Gu Youyou and her companions had set out to sea, Jin Zijin and Xiao Jinyan had reached the inn where they had previously stayed.

"Shopkeeper, is there a particularly fair-skinned gentleman staying at your inn?"

It was already dark, and the shopkeeper was tallying accounts. Hearing the question, he stopped and pointed upstairs, "The four southernmost rooms on the second floor, you’ll have to ask which specific one yourself, they are all together."

Four rooms?

Xiao Jinyan looked at Jin Zijin in surprise and said, "They have at least four people?"

Jin Zijin didn’t respond; all he wanted was to see Gu Youyou as soon as possible and ensure her safety.

He went upstairs with a stern face.

Pushing open the first room, it was empty, with blankets neatly folded.

Chapter 825: They Set Sail

Xiao Jinyan pushed open a door, finding no one inside, all was well.

He pushed the third door, but it was locked from the inside.

He said to Jin Zijin, "Cousin, over here."

Jin Zijin quickly came over and knocked on the door.

Inside, Gui Yunxi was sleeping; he had been weary from the journey, and could finally sleep as he wished.

He was in dire need of catching up on sleep.

When the knocking startled him awake, he was very displeased.

"Who is it?"

Naturally, his tone wasn't very pleasant. Xiao Jinyan heard an unfamiliar male voice, stealthily glanced at his cousin, and seeing that he showed no reaction, knocked again.

Inside, Gui Yunxi rose from bed with great reluctance, threw on some clothes haphazardly, and came out.

Upon seeing two strangers with an extraordinary bearing, he obviously froze, and asked, "Who are you looking for?"

Xiao Jinyan said, "Where have the people you're with gone?"

Gui Yunxi, now fully awake, said, "Are you asking about Searcy? Or the two doctors?"

Jin Zijin and Xiao Jinyan quickly understood and pushed Gui Yunxi back into the room, locking the door behind them.

Gui Yunxi got a shiver down his spine, feeling chilled to the core.

Judging by the two men’s demeanor, they were up to no good. What did they want to do?

He immediately covered his head, saying, "I... I don’t know anything, kind sirs, please spare my life, it was that Searcy who captured me, I was just driving the carriage for them."

"Who is Searcy?" Xiao Jinyan’s voice pressed down on Gui Yunxi’s throat.

Jin Zijin coughed and said, "That’s someone Youyou keeps around as a partner, they work together studying those poisons and antidotes."

Xiao Jinyan: "..."

He asked Gui Yunxi again, "Where have they gone?"

"I don’t know!"

"Oh, you don’t know?" A dagger was suddenly held against his throat.

Gui Yunxi broke into a cold sweat, cursing his own misfortune. He was just a carriage driver; who had he offended to deserve this?

"I... I know, they have gone out to sea, just tonight, said something about heading to Fusang Island!"

Jin Zijin and Xiao Jinyan’s expression darkened, they exchanged a glance, and then both headed to the General Residence by the East Sea.

Late at night, two visitors from Beijing arrived, surprising Che Xiangyuan greatly.

He dressed and came to the front hall, where he saw Jin Zijin and Xiao Jinyan sitting calmly.

He recognized Xiao Jinyan of the Xiao Family, but he had never seen Jin Zijin before.

However, seeing his demeanor... he seemed very much like a member of the Jin Royal Family.

Not daring to be negligent, thinking he might be Prince Qin, he bowed with his hands folded and asked, "General Xiao, may I inquire who this is?"

Knowing that his rank was lower than Che Xiangyuan's and seeing that Che had misunderstood, Xiao Jinyan played along with the error.

He hurriedly gave a formal bow and said to Che Xiangyuan, "General Che, my visit with Mr. Jin late at night is indeed out of urgent necessity."

Xiao Jinyan kept it simple when explaining their purpose to Che Xiangyuan and borrowed a boat.

Che Xiangyuan was a straightforward man; he immediately arranged for a boat capable of reaching Fusang Island, and even supplied several experienced sailors just in case.

...

At that moment, on the boat where Gu Youyou was, the fishermen had pulled in their nets, and the catch was a full load.

It was a good omen.

The fishermen began to busy themselves, gathering the fish they caught and discarding unnecessary items back into the sea.

When they threw away the crabs, Youyou felt an ache in her heart.

Chapter 826: A False Alarm

He asked anxiously, "Uncle Gu, the crab looks quite plump, why throw it away?"

"That plump?" Gu Chaosheng’s face showed surprise.

Gu Youyou suddenly realized that they might not eat this kind of thing.

It was still remembered in some book that in ancient times, things like crabs and shrimps were not eaten by the common people, as they were considered lowly, and were instead given to prisoners.

Gu Youyou laughed, took a crab that he was about to throw away from his hand, and said, "Uncle Gu, you may not know, although these crabs may not look appetizing, they are actually very good for one’s health. As a doctor, I sometimes use them to treat illnesses. If you trust me, maybe you could keep them for our breakfast tomorrow morning?"

Gu Chaosheng looked at the crab in his hand with disgust and said, "This strange-looking thing can be hung on the door to ward off evil spirits and scare away ghosts when it’s dried, but eat it?"

Gu Youyou replied, "How will you know if you don’t try?"

She remembered that, at certain times, people used such things as charms to expel evil.

"Alright, then let’s leave some of the bigger crabs for Doctor Gu to eat."

They couldn’t accept it, and firmly refused to eat it.

Gu Youyou: "..." Alright, she’d eat them herself in the morning.

After collecting the nets, the large boat sailed on, heading straight for Fusang Island.

Some fishermen were sorting the fish they had caught on the ship when suddenly one of them yelled, drawing everyone’s attention.

His finger was bleeding, and Gu Youyou saw that a blue fish’s sharp mouth had pierced his finger, which soon started turning black.

She recognized the fish, the sharp part was poisonous.

Gu Youyou’s expression changed instantly, and she hurried to the fisherman’s side, saying, "This fish is poisonous; you need to squeeze the blood out of your finger."

Upon hearing this, people hurriedly killed the lively fish by slapping it dead with an object.

Gu Chaosheng asked Gu Youyou, "Doctor Gu, is Acheng alright?"

Acheng, who was terrified at the moment, had pale skin and his eyes were fixed on Gu Youyou, placing all his hopes on her.

Gu Youyou said, "Bring some water, and also, wake up that short doctor and tell her to bring some antidote."

"Okay, quickly!"

Soon, someone brought the prepared water on board, and Searcy was woken from her sleep.

"What’s happened?" she asked.

By then, Gu Youyou was repeatedly washing the fisherman named Acheng’s wound with the water, making everyone watch anxiously as the water was used up.

Gu Youyou said, "He’s been poisoned, and I’m cleaning his wound. You, bring some antidote for him to take."

Searcy took out several pills, gave them to Acheng, then pushed Gu Youyou aside, saying, "Water washing is too slow, let me do it."

With that, she bent down and started sucking the blood from Acheng’s finger.

She spat out the black blood mouthful by mouthful, which made Gu Youyou worry.

"Are you alright? This is poisonous."

Searcy replied, "This bit of poison is nothing compared to what my mother used to make me test."

Oh, dear.

"Then go on, keep sucking!"

The rescue was timely; Acheng only felt dizzy and vomited a bit but was fine after resting for a night.

It was just a false alarm.

Early in the morning, Gu Youyou cooked the crabs into a delicious meal.

As the fragrant scent filled the ship, Gu Chaosheng finally felt regret.

Could this thing really be edible, and even delicious?

Chapter 827: Fusang Island

Gu Youyou offered Jin Ziyuan and Searcy sea crabs to eat. Searcy, who likely dares to eat any strange thing, did not refuse.

Jin Ziyuan hesitated for a moment but, seeing Gu Youyou and Searcy savoring their food, he dared to try it.

Upon trying a bite, he realized that the yellow stuff, which looked quite unappetizing, was actually very delicious, and he continued to eat.

However, his movements were elegant, unlike Searcy who wolfed down her food.

Searcy finished three crabs in one go and still wanted more, but Gu Youyou told her, "You can’t eat anymore; too much will make you seasick."

Anticipating the unpleasant feeling of seasickness, she reluctantly gave up the urge to eat another one.

Gu Chaosheng had left Gu Youyou more than a dozen plump sea crabs, which were too many for just the three of them to finish.

Gu Youyou picked up one, walked over to Gu Chaosheng, and said, "Uncle Gu, why don’t you try one too?"

He had already wanted to try one, and seeing Gu Youyou personally offer it, he had no reason to refuse and quickly laughed, "Okay, I’ll try one too."

After tasting it, he immediately expressed his approval, "Mmm, Doctor Gu, this is delicious, really good. Come on, everyone, try it too."

Hearing this, the others also mustered the courage to try, and from then on, whenever they caught sea crabs, they never threw them away again.

Mo Yue had just passed 7-9 AM when the group arrived at Fusang Island.

The journey was very smooth, and everyone’s spirits were high.

After escorting Gu Youyou and the others to the island, Gu Chaosheng instructed, "This is as far as we bring you three. Be careful while gathering medicine on the island. We’ll return here to pick you up in three days."

They were going to venture even farther into the sea to fish for more valuable species.

Gu Youyou thanked him and gave him some ointment for external injuries.

The main mountain in the center of Fusang Island rose abruptly from the ground, and apart from a bit of beach at the foot of the mountain, it was covered in mounds of vegetation.

From a distance, it looked like a nail embedded in the deep blue sea.

The peak of the mountain was not pointed but had a large hole smashed into it, pushing the once summit inside the belly of the mountain.

Searcy said, "It is said that from the day of their birth, the two divine beasts got along extraordinarily well, never parting day or night. But then, for some unknown reason, they began to fight. From the heavens to the earth, and later at sea. That day, flames scorched the sky, rivers flowed backward, and the sea churned so violently it even surpassed the height of Fusang Island’s mountain. In the end, they crashed onto this island and perished together."

Gu Youyou felt her description of the two divine beasts fighting each other corresponded with the fall of a meteorite from beyond the sky.

Ancient people were ignorant; they would think it was the thunder god’s wrath if thunder struck, ignorant of what a meteorite was. Such a commotion being attributed to divine beasts clashing was quite possible.

She was somewhat eager to go up to the peak to see for herself.

Gu Youyou said, "Let’s head up first and see how big that pit is."

There were no paths leading up the mountain; it was all in its natural state. It was tremendously difficult for the three of them to climb!

To prevent any of them from falling, they tied themselves together with ropes. Jin Ziyuan, being skilled in these matters, was ready to rescue them in an emergency.

Gu Youyou fared somewhat better; she was not as good at climbing as Jin Ziyuan, but still better than Searcy.

Searcy was very strong-willed. Even though it was obviously tough, she still bit her lip and endured.

Chapter 828: There are Beasts

Gu Youyou couldn’t stand by any longer, so she said to her, "If it really doesn’t work out, why don’t you just wait for us at the base of the mountain?"

Searcy snorted, "If you can climb it, I can’t believe I can’t. I refuse to be outdone by a sickly person like you."

Gu Youyou: "..."

"I’m not your average sickly person; I grew up in the mountains, a mountain person. Why do you, who grew up in a large sheltered household, have to compete with me?"

Searcy snorted again, ignoring Gu Youyou.

Fortunately, she was quick to learn; she soon picked up the essentials of mountain climbing. Though she was slower, she wasn’t much slower than Gu Youyou.

Jin Ziyuan looked at Gu Youyou with surprise in his eyes; he was finding her more and more incomprehensible.

Before, she had said she had been out to sea, and now she was able to climb mountains. Fusang Mountain wasn't like the kind of mountain you find on flat land; it was a steep rise straight from the ground. And her hand movements, as well as the footholds she found each time, were all just right. If it weren't for his own decent skills, he really couldn't have climbed better than her.

Her movements were like those of someone professionally trained in mountain climbing.

But wasn't she a medicine person? A medicine person who had been locked up in the Gu Family's courtyard for ten years, how could she know all this?

"Hey, what are you thinking about? Focus a little, don't end up falling while we are fine," Gu Youyou said to Jin Ziyuan, seeing him distracted.

Jin Ziyuan then came back to his senses and climbed up seriously.

Halfway up the mountain, the three of them found a somewhat flat spot and stopped.

Jin Ziyuan took out some dry food and water and gave it to Gu Youyou and Searcy, saying, "Eat something, we still have half the journey to go."

Gu Youyou nodded, saying, "Okay, let's replenish our strength first. At this rate, it'll take another hour to climb."

Searcy asked in surprise, "We've been climbing for an hour already?"

"Roughly."

"That long? It doesn't seem that high to me."

Gu Youyou smiled and said, "There's a saying 'A watched pot never boils,' and it's the same principle when climbing from the bottom of a mountain to the top."

After eating some high-calorie beef jerky, Gu Youyou also drank some water and chewed a slice of ginseng.

The food she prepared was all intended to quickly replenish energy, not to be eaten all at once to feel full.

At the time, Searcy had complained about not preparing a few big flatbreads, as she thought they would stave off hunger better.

But after they resumed climbing, she understood Gu Youyou's thoughtful intentions.

A few pieces of beef jerky and slices of ginseng, though not feeling very full, certainly felt as satisfying as those filling flatbreads.

In the woods above, something was stirring. On the silent island, Gu Youyou easily heard it.

She stopped and also called out to Jin Ziyuan who was scouting ahead.

Jin Ziyuan's hearing was no worse than Gu Youyou's; he heard it too.

His eyes darkened, "There must be some wild animal. Be careful, and hold on to the trees next to you."

While talking, he had already untied the rope bound around himself and took out a short sword.

Gu Youyou nodded at him, quickly tied the other end of her rope around a nearby tree, and hugged the tree like an octopus.

Seeing this, Searcy hurriedly did the same.

Facing the unknown, she seemed excited.

"What is it? You both heard it?" Searcy asked quietly.

Gu Youyou also whispered back, "Jin Ziyuan and I ate something that sharpens the hearing and sight, our hearing is a little more sensitive than others. From the noise, it's probably monkeys."

"Monkeys?" Searcy's eyes lit up, she had only seen monkeys in books; she had never seen one in real life.

Chapter 829: The Blood is Cold

"Be careful, here it comes," Jin Ziyuan shouted, and Gu Youyou looked up to see a monkey with blue and white fur and a terrifying grin showing its sharp fangs appear in her sight.

Gu Youyou had never seen such a monkey in her life.

What kind of creature is this? Could it be a unique species from Fusang Island?

Or as she had guessed, had this island been struck by a meteorite, causing the monkeys on the mountain to undergo some sort of radiation mutation?

Searcy tugged at the rope tied around Gu Youyou's waist and asked, "This seems different."

Gu Youyou replied, "Yes, it might be a mutant."

"A mutant? What will happen?"

"I don't know, look..."

Before she could finish, the white monkey had already charged towards them at a speed that exceeded their imagination.

"Awoo... ugh..."

This was not the ordinary squeaking or chirping noise of small monkeys, but the roar of a large primate.

Yet it was clearly small in size.

The white monkey instantly approached Jin Ziyuan at the front, who swiftly cleaved it with his sword, spraying blood all around and falling down beside Gu Youyou.

Luckily they had someone skilled with them; otherwise, being targeted by this beast on the cliff would not have been fun.

This monkey, aside from its strange appearance, was incredibly fast.

Jin Ziyuan sheathed his sword and retied the rope around his waist, then said to them, "Hurry up, we're almost there."

Gu Youyou nodded slightly and looked down at Searcy.

Searcy, still somewhat in shock, stared at the few drops of blood that had landed on her, lost in thought.

"What's wrong?" Gu Youyou noticed something was off.

Searcy said, "The blood is cold, very cold."

Gu Youyou hadn't been splashed with blood, and hearing this, she was slightly startled.

Shouldn’t freshly spilt blood be warm? Monkeys aren’t cold-blooded animals.

As she pondered, a rumbling noise came from afar, many sounds.

Jin Ziyuan, with a solemn expression, loudly said to them, "Not good, there are many."

Many what?

"Monkeys?"

The three paled as they saw many monkeys charging towards them.

A few larger ones directly pounced at Jin Ziyuan.

Jin Ziyuan, wielding his sword, managed to fend off each attack, preventing any monkey from getting close.

Monkey corpses fell from above, and Gu Youyou dodged left and right to avoid them, some fresh red blood splashing onto her, causing her to stiffen up.

It was cold, truly very cold.

What kind of mutation was this?

The monkeys seemed to realize that they were no match for Jin Ziyuan and quickly stopped attacking him. Instead, they began to pick fruit from the trees and pry stones from crevices, hurling them at them.

Gu Youyou felt overwhelmed, understanding the chaotic challenge of dozens of monkeys hurling objects at you, especially while hanging from a cliff.

Luckily they had not yet untied the rope tied to the tree; otherwise, dodging left and right in such a situation would have certainly led to a deadly fall.

Even so, many stones and fruits hit them, causing them to grimace in pain.

Searcy shouted from behind, "I'm going to poison those Little Beasts to death, when we get down the mountain I'll set fire to it..."

Gu Youyou countered, "You'd better just keep dodging, you'll need to make it down the mountain alive first. These beasts have lived on the cliff all their lives, we're at a big disadvantage fighting them."

Chapter 830: Monkey Army

Jin Ziyuan had blocked most of the firepower, but in doing so had suffered injuries himself to protect Gu Youyou and Searcy below, sporting two large bruises on his forehead, making his handsome face look odd.

And the back of his head had taken quite a harsh hit, bleeding.

"Hold tight," Jin Ziyuan shouted while dodging.

Having said that, he had already untied the rope on his body and securely tied it around a large tree next to him, then leapt into the air, reaching the group of monkeys in just a few bounds.

The swordlight flashed, and soon several slow-running monkeys were bloodied on the spot.

After swinging his sword and cutting down a few, it seemed to have frightened the monkeys, as they jumped far away, clutching the fruit in their hands, their round eyes fixed on Jin Ziyuan with the sword, baring their teeth in a fierce expression.

Gu Youyou was clutching a tree with one hand and holding a dagger in the other.

If a monkey charged at her, she couldn't very well use her Embroidered Fist to fend it off.

"Those who know better, retreat quickly!" Jin Ziyuan barked coldly, his face stern.

The monkeys, jumping far away, gradually relaxed from their fierce expressions to a puzzled, head-tilted gaze at Jin Ziyuan.

After a standoff for a while, their attention slowly turned to Gu Youyou and Searcy nearby.

Gu Youyou inwardly cursed. They probably knew Jin Ziyuan was tough to handle and now targeted them, the easier preys.

Searcy sneered, "My dagger is poisoned, one slice seals the throat. It seems these monkeys want a taste."

Gu Youyou admired how extraordinarily gifted this girl was.

Most girls would probably be trembling with fear by now, yet she seemed quite excited.

Gu Youyou sighed, "Be careful, tie yourself well. These monkeys are small but very fast, and they are... strange."

If possible, she wanted to capture one for study.

The monkeys gradually split into two groups, one still entangling with Jin Ziyuan.

They no longer attacked him aggressively but instead tried to prevent him from coming to Gu Youyou and Searcy’s rescue.

The other group of monkeys rushed directly at Gu Youyou and Searcy.

No longer throwing objects, but rapidly charging at them like lightning.

The monkeys, having lived on this mountain, moved through the precipitous cliffs as if walking on flat ground, having the full advantage.

Worse yet, as time passed, their numbers seemed to be increasing.

A bold monkey tentatively rushed to Gu Youyou's side, who swung her dagger at it, but it easily dodged, leaving her slashing the air.

Searcy seemed to face a similar situation, and now she could no longer muster a smile.

These monkeys were not so easy to injure. How could they, just two ordinary girls, compare with someone like Jin Ziyuan?

Successful in their test, two more made their charge.

From a nearby cliff, surrounded by a large band of monkeys, Jin Ziyuan, seeing the situation on Gu Youyou's side, was filled with worry and loudly said, "Hang in there, I'm coming right over."

Ignoring his wounds, he began to clear a path through the group of monkeys towards the cliff where they were.

Their situation was dire, the number of monkeys increasing, roughly estimated to be several hundred.

The mountain was vast; surely these few hundred monkeys weren't the only ones, possibly more were rushing their way.

If they didn't escape soon, he feared all three of them would die here.

While Jin Ziyuan could manage alone and possibly escape despite some injuries, being dragged down by the two of them, they were doomed.