Farmhouse 1011

Chapter 1011: Chaos Everywhere

"So three years from now, will she still have to die? Look at her, her legs aren't even good, right? I see her descendants always carrying her around. Living like this, she's only a burden to her offspring. It would be better for her to die sooner and leave the grain for her children and grandchildren. Only in this way can she secure more opportunities for her descendants to survive."

"You... Your Highness King Jin, how can you think like this? Filial piety is of utmost importance. You only see that she's now useless, burdening her descendants, but can't you see the hard work she put in when she was young to raise her descendants?"

Jie Huanzhi felt his worldview was being turned upside down, staring at King Jin in utter shock.

King Jin, however, seemed completely unconcerned, suddenly laughed, and said, "Advisor Jie, now I understand why both your sons have run away to join the army at a distance. You, you're stubborn and inflexible, too emotional! If your sons were to answer these problems, they would surely think the same as I do."

The corners of Jie Huanzhi's mouth twitched violently.

At that moment, King Jin stood up and looked toward the large tent in the distance.

The people inside that tent were those isolated because of tuberculosis, and they, too, were consuming food.

Moreover, these people couldn't be cured, and their number was growing.

King Jin sighed and said, "In my opinion, those people could be cut off from food. Advisor Jie, didn't you say there's a shortage of grain? Withholding their food should solve the grain shortage, shouldn't it?"

Jie Huanzhi really felt there was no point in continuing the conversation with King Jin; it simply couldn't go on. He was afraid if he listened to King Jin any longer, he would lose his temper and curse King Jin until he vomited blood, just like scolding his own sons.

"I urgently need to relieve myself, I ask to be excused."

This was the most embarrassing excuse Advisor Jie had used in his decades of life to escape.

...

King Jin was a man of action. Having said so, he took action the next day.

He began to question the disaster victims aggressively about the source of the rumors. One by one, those who did not talk were taken away and beaten, then starved. He was determined to find the root of the issue, following the vine to find the melon.

Furthermore, the quarantine zone established by Searcy also had its food supply cut off, declaring that healthy people were almost starving to death, let alone those who were ill.

Someone like Searcy, now instilled with some kindness by Gu Youyou, still had her pragmatic nature.

She felt King Jin’s words were reasonable. If Advisor Jie hadn’t asked her to cure them, she wouldn’t have bothered.

Those people didn’t spend a dime, and she couldn’t cure tuberculosis, so why waste futile time and effort.

So when King Jin told her to stop caring, she really stopped.

In addition, he only cared for the able-bodied young men and women, disregarding the elderly, weak, women, and children, thus saving a lot of grain.

He even rewarded those who honestly confessed, providing more for those who exposed more rumor spreaders. The disaster victims, starving to the extreme, began to accuse one another wildly to earn a few more lifesaving buns.

Advisor Jie trembled with rage. This time he didn’t submit a memorial to accuse King Jin but directly requested the Emperor to recall him.

He was done dealing with this mess.

However, before the memorial could be sent out, Gu Youyou and the others arrived.

Gui Yunxi led Gu Youyou and the rest to the disaster relief camp just when King Jin was in the middle of a fierce outburst.

Because his method had begun to take effect, many people had been caught by following the trail, but as the number of informants dwindled and the buns for exchange became fewer, everything descended into chaos.

To get more buns, they began accusing each other, leading to bizarre situations where two people claimed the other was the informant.

Chapter 1012: Courting Death

Tossing and turning, even after beating many people and expending much effort, there was no substantial result, only making the common people’s complaints more vocal.

"What are they trying to do? Wasn’t King Jin here to provide disaster relief? Why are they treating us like this?" The people were extremely disappointed in him.

Jin Zijin strode into the interrogation room set up solely for the disaster victims and said coldly, "What’s going on?"

Lord Jie followed behind, with much of the gloom in his heart dissipating.

He had thought that the Prince would not interfere since that was what had been said earlier, but to his surprise, as soon as they arrived, they started inquiring about the disaster victims—it seemed they were not completely uninvolved.

Lord Jie didn’t know much about Jin Zijin, only hoping that he wouldn’t be as indifferent to everyone’s life and death as King Jin, merely focusing on his splendid throne.

Gu Youyou glanced once, her expression darkened, and said only to Jin Zijin, "I’m going to check on the patients."

Then she left.

Lord Jie didn’t trust Jin Zijin, but he did trust Gu Youyou.

Since Gu Youyou had gone to the quarantine zone, there was hope for them.

Thinking this, the gloom in Lord Jie’s heart faded even more.

"Check the prisoners," said King Jin to Jin Zijin, obviously with no pleasant expression.

He was surprised to see him there; wasn’t Jin Zijin supposed to be uninvolved in this natural disaster? Hearing of the flood, he had hurried off, not to provide disaster relief but to follow Gu Youyou to Lotus Village to fetch the Gu Family.

But why was he here now?

And that Gu Youyou, who nearly crippled him, why was she here too?

"What have you found?" Jin Zijin asked, emotionless as he looked at two ordinary people who had been beaten until their flesh split open.

King Jin pointed at the two men and said, "Out of these two, one must be the rumor monger. Of course, it’s possible that both are."

"Oh?" Jin Zijin turned his head, looking at him in surprise, and said, "How are you so sure that these two are spreading rumors? Have they confessed?"

The two weary individuals hurriedly said, "No, it wasn't me; I didn't spread it."

"It wasn't me either, I heard it from him."

"No, I heard it from him; there were many others, not just him—many people were talking..."

King Jin sneered, "Listen, they can't even clearly say who told them. That's because it was these two who spread it. Of course, there are many more plotting rebellion, not just these two. But no worries, since the Emperor has sent me to handle this, I will arrest them all, no one less."

"Alas!" Lord Jie shook his head and sighed, his gaze turning toward Jin Zijin.

Jin Zijin still showed little emotion, just glanced once and then turned to leave.

Lord Jie hesitated for a moment, then followed him out.

He was still holding the written memorial to the throne; should he submit it or not?

Now that Jin Zijin had come, better not to submit it until he knows his mind.

Lord Jie then tucked the memorial away.

King Jin's face was clouded with gloom, unleashing his anger onto the two disaster victims.

He commanded harshly, "Beat them, beat them to death."

Then he walked out of the temporary tent with a dark face.

The pitiful screams of the two disaster victims emanated from inside the tent, traveling far.

The crowd huddled together in fear, shivering.

Gu Youyou frowned and said in a low voice, "Can’t you control that King Jin? I don’t like hearing such sounds."

Jin Zijin replied, "He’s courting death."

Chapter 1013: Remove the Tumor

"I know," she sighed, "but hearing such cries of agony every day will wear down everyone’s will. You, being strong-willed, might not think much of it, but look at them—the elderly, the weak, the women, and the children. Their homes are gone; they’ve experienced such disaster, their mental defenses are already fragile. Although the whips haven’t landed on their bodies, the cries they hear are as if the whips are falling on them."

At that moment, Erya, holding Yue Ya in her arms, started to cry. Children are most sensitive to danger, and the disaster relief area, with its mournful atmosphere, made even the sky seem gloomy.

"See, even the child is frightened to tears."

Jin Zijin tugged at the corner of his mouth and spoke softly, "Are you about to cry too?"

Her kindness was genuine, emanating from deep within her. Her outward calmness couldn’t mask this, and it revealed her true self.

Gu Youyou glanced at him and said, "I can’t talk now; I have work to do."

Regarding the disaster relief, Gu Youyou already knew what to do.

But Jin Zijin could see further than she could.

The rumors hinted at actions they must take.

Having lain dormant for so many years, the Third and Fifth Princes were undoubtedly a ticking time bomb within Zhuzhao Country, ready to explode. If they weren't eradicated completely, they would one day destroy Zhuzhao Country.

Pacify?

If they could be pacified, they wouldn't have rebelled in the past, and today such rumors—that the Emperor was not the true Son of Heaven—wouldn't have spread.

His master was nowhere to be found, but Jin Zijin knew his master's greatest wish was to withdraw from the Dao Sect, keep the Dao Family away from the Imperial Court, and hope for peace and prosperity for the nation.

His master was old, and this was his lifelong wish. Since he had the opportunity, why not pursue it?

"Go ahead and do it; he wouldn't dare to harm you. I will be away for a few days; don't overwork yourself," Jin Zijin said.

"Where are you going?" Gu Youyou had thought he would be here with her to help with the disaster relief.

Moreover, the Emperor was being particularly despicable by starting to say whoever succeeded in relief efforts would succeed the throne—outrageous indeed.

Prince Qin hadn't shown his face yet, and King Jin was behaving so prominently. If King Jin took the credit, what chance would they stand?

Jin Zijin pulled her close and gently kissed her forehead, saying, "This is a good opportunity to remove a corruption."

"That throne..." Gu Youyou was genuinely worried about King Jin, the bastard, taking all the credit.

Jin Zijin chuckled and said, "If you take this credit, let's see what the Emperor will do."

Gu Youyou: "..."

He must be doing this on purpose, trying to kill the Emperor with anger, right?

There's a countermeasure for every official policy, and the Emperor had his rationale for coming up with such a tactic.

They truly were... a peculiar father and son pair.

Gu Youyou sighed, "Fine, since I'm here, I won't let King Jin take all the advantages. Go ahead with your plans; I'll be fine."

"I believe in you!" Jin Zijin said.

On the day Jin Zijin left, just as King Jin had heaved a sigh of relief, Prince Qin arrived.

It infuriated him immensely.

"Why are you here?" King Jin, facing Prince Qin, was visibly annoyed.

Moreover, since Prince Qin was his younger brother and born of a concubine, King Jin had always felt superior to him.

At Prince Qin's command, "By imperial command, I come to aid in the disaster relief."

"Ha, just you?" King Jin utterly despised Prince Qin.

Chapter 1014: Mockery

"What are you going to use for disaster relief? Do you have people or do you have food? You have nothing, can just your mouth alone provide relief? Haha, your mouth may amuse our father the emperor, but no skills to appease the starving disaster victims and make them feel full!"

Prince Qin looked at him indifferently, enduring his mockery, and after a moment, turned to seek out Minister Jie.

Minister Jie was the imperial envoy specially appointed for this disaster relief effort; the various princes were merely there to assist him.

And Minister Jie was extremely busy.

Overnight, Gu Youyou had prepared a disaster relief plan as well as a treatment scheme for tuberculosis.

After several years of operation, Jisheng Hall's pharmacies covered the entire Zhuzhao Country. They all held immense respect for Gu Youyou because her medical skills and certain medical concepts she provided enlightened them in many areas they did not understand. They admired Gu Youyou's professionalism and her character. In their hearts, Gu Youyou's words were even more effective than imperial decrees.

Through Jisheng Hall, Gu Youyou was able to gather the wealthy people of each region. Various charity events would be launched one after another; those with money donated funds, and those without money contributed their labor.

Whether it was silver, food, or even old and unused clothes,

any kind of supplies that could be of use were welcome for donation.

In this way, even those who were reluctant to donate silver could give away something and feel good about themselves, especially the more well-off misers. You might not persuade them to donate food or

money, but asking them to donate some old things they no longer used—not to mention the positive reputation they would receive—was met with great enthusiasm from them.

Moreover, Gu Youyou had a complete set of treatment philosophies for tuberculosis. The antibiotics that had been stored away and never used before played a significant role.

Treating tuberculosis in the current situation, the most reasonable approach appeared to be a combination of Chinese and Western medicine.

Certainly, traditional Chinese medicine alone could also treat it, but the effects were not as rapid as when antibiotics were used.

After many days, a smile finally appeared on Minister Jie's face.

"Doctor Gu is a highly skilled physician, now I truly believe after witnessing your succession of orders that you were the one who cured the typhoid epidemic in the military camps of Lingnan back then."

Gu Youyou smiled and said, "Minister Jie, Youyou can't stand too much praise, please don't flatter me anymore."

Minister Jie had already complimented Gu Youyou several times that day.

Minister Jie laughed heartily and said, "Very well, I shall do more and talk less."

This was a line Gu Youyou used to block Searcy's words.

The other members of the Gu Family did not stay in the disaster-stricken areas; Gu Youyou had someone send them to Miss Du's place, asking Miss Du to take care of them for the time being.

Qin Changlin, being a doctor himself, naturally stayed to assist Gu Youyou in treating the disease.

Not only Qin Changlin but also other doctors from Jisheng Hall and those from other medical institutions who wanted to gain a good reputation would dispatch one or two physicians to participate in the prevention and treatment of the epidemic.

"Minister Jie!" At this moment, a young man dressed in a dark robe walked into the temporarily constructed tent.

Gu Youyou had not seen him before and looked toward Minister Jie.

Minister Jie immediately bowed with great respect.

"Greetings, Prince Qin."

So it was Prince Qin.

Gu Youyou gave a slight curtsy as a greeting.

Upon seeing Gu Youyou, the other party also hurriedly gave his respects.

"Elder sister-in-law."

He recognized Gu Youyou.

Gu Youyou had never seen Prince Qin before and had only heard of him from others.

It was said that both he and his mother, Consort Sheng, were arrogant from favoritism; his demeanor wasn’t precisely good nor bad—it was mediocre at best.

Chapter 1015: He’s Ungrateful

But hearing is deceptive, seeing is believing, so Gu Youyou would not jump to conclusions about others based on what she had heard.

"Prince Qin, have you also come to help with the disaster relief?" Officer Jie asked, bewildered.

Many days had passed since the imperial edict was issued, yet there had been no sign of Prince Qin reporting for duty. Officer Jie had thought that Prince Qin would not wade into this messy affair, but to his surprise, was Prince Qin making a belated appearance?

Prince Qin said, "My mother is gravely ill, and I was attending to her illness in the palace, which is why I have arrived somewhat late. Officer Jie, please be understanding."

Jie Huanzhi said, "Filial piety is of the utmost importance. Given that Noble Consort Sheng is ill, it is proper for Prince Qin to stay in the palace to attend to her. Your arrival, Prince Qin, is timely. Why not take a look at the arrangements Dr. Gu has made?"

Now in the refugee camp, Gu Youyou remained in her capacity as a doctor, which was more convenient than staying under the identity of the Crown Prince’s wife, and Officer Jie had grown accustomed to addressing Gu Youyou as Dr. Gu.

This was the status and respect she had earned for herself, independent of others.

Prince Qin looked at Gu Youyou with a hint of surprise, then lowered his head to examine the plans Jie Huanzhi had handed over.

...

Gu Youyou directed everyone to reorganize the aid camp; the main concern for isolating patients was their droplets. Their excretions were collected separately and buried, and their living quarters were thoroughly disinfected.

Those who came into contact with them had to wear masks.

The patients themselves also wore masks, and any masks they no longer used were completely incinerated.

Miss Du led the female workers from behind the Manxiu Building to mass-produce those simple masks, which were all put to good use.

There were also those antibiotics that Gu Youyou had stored and never used previously. Searcy had asked her several times, and she had always responded that these were for treating diseases, but should not be used unless absolutely necessary.

Here, there was an abundance of traditional medicine. As long as traditional medicine could cure the diseases, she preferred not to resort to Western medicine.

The antibiotics she had stored were naturally insufficient, and factories everywhere were working overtime to produce more.

Jie Huanzhi earnestly composed a memorial and sent it to Beijing. He was an honest man and did not exaggerate Gu Youyou’s achievements.

The Emperor, knowing Jie Huanzhi’s character, frowned upon receiving the memorial.

Eunuch Wan, sensitive to the atmosphere, asked tentatively, "Your Majesty, has Officer Jie brought another troubling matter to your attention?"

The Emperor placed the memorial on the desk and said indifferently, "See for yourself."

"Oh, this old servant wouldn’t dare," Eunuch Wan quickly knelt down.

"If I tell you to look, you look," the Emperor sighed, then leaned back in his chair, rubbing his temples gently.

Eunuch Wan rose to his feet, carefully picked up the memorial Officer Jie had sent, unfolded it, and read it thoroughly.

He was taken aback, his eyes widening.

Eunuch Wan looked up at the Emperor in surprise and said, "All done by the Crown Prince’s wife? Then what about the Crown Prince himself?"

The Emperor replied with a bitter smile, "He does not wish to claim this favor, does not want to compete."

"But... if this accomplishment is taken by the Crown Prince’s wife, would Your Majesty’s decision to appoint the Crown Prince still stand?

The Emperor closed his eyes and said nothing.

Eunuch Wan boldly continued, "In my opinion, Your Majesty, since they are husband and wife, what the Crown Prince’s wife has done should naturally be considered the Crown Prince’s accomplishment. Your Majesty’s well-intentioned plans..."

"No," the Emperor interrupted him, opening his eyes, "Though that may be true, if this matter were to be discussed in court, it would invite criticism. As it is, it’s already inappropriate. We can’t allow those old officials to seize upon this and claim that the Crown Prince’s position was earned through a woman’s effort."

Chapter 1016: Someone is Anxious

Eunuch Wan only felt that the Emperor truly had a tough life. He had done so much for him, only to be met with ingratitude.

Considerate of every detail inside and out, first it was about establishing his identity, then his reputation.

He wanted him to rightfully become the Crown Prince and also silence those opposing voices in the court, earning everyone’s wholehearted approval.

From their perspective, Gu Youyou's actions seemed to be progressing smoothly, but who knew about the things the Emperor was silently doing behind the scenes? Without him blocking those troublemakers, how could they proceed smoothly?

...

The Empress was extremely anxious. The secretly relayed messages were unfavorable to them, and she was in a bind, unable to send messages back.

Having no choice, she sent a message back to the Ducal Residence.

The old Duke at the Ducal Residence, already in his eighties yet still sharp-minded, immediately thought of a plan.

He called for the Imperial Physician, then lay in bed pretending to be ill.

As the news reached the Imperial Palace, the Empress tearfully told the Emperor that she wanted to visit her grandfather.

The Emperor looked at her with meaningful eyes and nodded gently.

"Go, as the Duke is old, his illness seems more severe than that of ordinary people."

"Yes, your concubine thanks the Emperor for your understanding."

A hint of a mocking smile appeared on the Emperor's face, distress was good.

With the Emperor personally overseeing the situation, this time, he was determined to foil their plans.

In the Ducal Residence, the arrival of the Empress made the place as lively as if it were a festival.

The Empress had important matters to discuss with the Duke, naturally, she had no time to mingle with everyone. After quickly comforting everyone with a few words, she hurried into Jin Shien's quarters.

"Grandfather, how are you feeling?"

Jin Shien waved his hand to send the irrelevant people out, then sat up.

His expression was solemn as he said, "This won't be easy this time. The agents I secretly dispatched have been ineffective. It seems the Emperor is serious this time. Now, we can do nothing but leave it to fate."

Hearing Jin Shien say this, the Empress felt her heart sink.

She said, "Xiaoran is still young and lacks careful thought. How can he handle such matters? Jin Zijin has grown up under Tian Jizi, and his ability to suppress the current Xuanzong to the extent that he hardly dares to breathe, proves that he is not easy to deal with. If we can't help, how can Xiaoran compete against him?"

"But we can't help now," Jin Shien appeared quite relaxed, seemingly not feeling that the matter was too grave, considering it was just the Empress who was anxious.

He said, "The reason I pretended to be sick to draw you out of the palace was because I feared you'd worry too much and lose your footing. The Emperor does not wish for anyone to interfere in this matter. You must not do anything foolish. Since he forbids interference, just dutifully perform your duties as the Empress within the palace. Whether we win or lose is not important anymore, let Gu Youyou take the credit."

The Empress was puzzled and said, "If she takes the credit, how is it any different from if Jin Zijin took it? They..."

"Ah, you can't say that," Jin Shien interrupted her. "The Emperor said that the abilities of the three princes are being considered. If Gu Youyou succeeds, it doesn't count as Jin Zijin's ability. With this point alone, I can prevent him from becoming the Crown Prince in court."

Hearing Jin Shien say this, the Empress felt it made sense.

As long as it wasn’t Jin Zijin himself who succeeded, and they had enough leverage along with the Ducal Residence’s eloquent officials, he truly couldn’t become Crown Prince.

The Empress felt much reassured, then asked, "Where did Jin Zijin go? Weren’t they supposed to leave the city together?"

Jin Shien frowned and did not respond.

...

Chapter 1017: Saving Food

Under Gu Youyou’s vigorous control, the epidemic did not spread but was gradually brought under control.

King Jin now looked at her as if she were an enemy, yet he refrained from lashing out because Prince Qin and Searcy were always by Gu Youyou’s side.

"Hmph, I see you’ve saved these people, but where do you get the grain to sustain them until the autumn harvest?"

Not causing trouble didn’t mean he wouldn’t occasionally hurl a few words at Gu Youyou to put her at a disadvantage.

Gu Youyou gave him a bland glance and said, "Your Highness King Jin, if we don’t save them? Then, by your method of killing all the ’useless’ ones, wouldn’t we save on food, right?"

Gu Youyou never lost in a verbal spar.

King Jin snorted, "Naturally, those who are about to die should just die; it saves both food and medicine, wouldn't that be better? What we really need now are all sorts of materials, how can we waste them on them?"

Gu Youyou didn't want to talk to someone like him; such people didn't pique her interest in debating. She turned and went into the pharmacy.

Seeing that Gu Youyou had left, Searcy immediately followed her.

Prince Qin spoke indifferently, "If you were to do that, the food would indeed be saved, but you would lose the people's hearts."

He pointed at the people outside and said, "Look, take that family, for instance, if you let their elderly father die without a care, or even actively abandon them, what do you expect the young ones to think? They will consider you a patricide. And you, as a distinguished Prince of the Imperial Family, would then make the Imperial Family and the Imperial Court appear as patricides in their eyes. Should there be a rebellion someday, these people will be the first to respond."

King Jin was furious, "You, a mere illegitimate, dare to lecture me?"

"I dare not," said Prince Qin as he cupped his hands together, letting his sleeves fall as he left the room.

King Jin's face was twisted with anger. He believed his ideas were not wrong, but what kind of people were his associates? Doctors? Civil officials? And Prince Qin, spoiled by Empress Dowager Sheng? These people were all too merciful; how could they understand his heart?

He was resolute and decisive; his way was the simplest and easiest.

As for rebels? He didn't believe there would be any. After all, how could people who couldn't even fill their bellies have the strength to rebel?

Yet, their methods weren't wrong either, because he saw that those who were sick were gradually recovering, and there was a constant flow of materials coming in, even more than what the Imperial Court provided.

How could Gu Youyou have such capability?

He, as King Jin of Zhuzhao Country, couldn't even accomplish that.

Quite the Gu Youyou, a woman with neither status nor position, how could she become Jin Zijin's virtuous partner?

The supplies from the Lingnan branch arrived, a big convoy of carts, loaded with various materials and medicines, and among those who came was a person very familiar to Gu Youyou.

Lu Banxia.

It had been years since they had seen each other. Banxia had matured much since then and burst into tears upon seeing Gu Youyou.

"Sister Youyou!"

Banxia was now the chief doctor at Jisheng Hall in Lingnan. She was naturally intelligent, resilient, and studious; her medical skills were among the best in Lingnan.

"How did you come?" Gu Youyou was very surprised since Banxia had been hard to leave.

Banxia said with tearful eyes, "Banxia has always wanted to come to Beijing to see Sister Youyou, but she couldn't get away; as soon as she found a chance, she naturally had to come."

Gu Youyou had saved many people in Lingnan and was therefore immensely popular there; as a result, the donations from Lingnan were the most substantial.

A long line of wagons made King Jin’s eyes turn red with envy.

What gave this woman the right?

Chapter 1018: Solution to Rumors

Searcy stood grimly to one side, watching them. Upon seeing this, Searcy stepped forward and positioned herself between them, snorting coldly at King Jin.

King Jin’s expression immediately softened, and he stared at Searcy with a smile.

"Searcy, let’s go see what they’ve brought us."

Searcy replied irritably, "If you want to look, look yourself. I’m busy."

King Jin: "..."

Everyone then invited the people who had come to deliver supplies from Lingnan into the tent. On the way, Lord Jie was all smiles, overflowing with gratitude.

Thankfully, Gu Youyou had arrived. Without her, they wouldn’t have known how to handle this disaster.

Not only were the supplies taken care of, but also the psychological aspect.

By evening, a bonfire was lit on the grass. Gu Youyou sat in front of the fire, joining everyone, and discussed various normal weather conditions with a smile, aiming to ease their fears about the flood.

"So you’re saying the flood isn’t a punishment sent by heaven?"

Gu Youyou nodded and said with a light laugh, "Thunder and rain are normal phenomena, unrelated to anyone. Even if someone did something wrong and heaven wanted to punish them, they would only punish the wrongdoer. Why would they punish the innocent? Heaven is just and not blind, right?"

Gu Youyou spoke easily. Perhaps it was her charming smile that made everyone feel that her words weren’t disrespectful to heaven; instead, it made everyone laugh.

Qin Changlin was invigorated and stood up to speak loudly, "Doctor Gu is right. We shouldn’t blame others just because we’ve experienced disaster. Peace throughout the land is the greatest grace for us common folk. If there were chaos and war everywhere, that would truly be unfortunate for everyone."

Qin Changlin was eloquent, and as long as Gu Youyou spoke up first, he could then persuade everyone wholeheartedly.

His words seemed to have a strong call to action, and the disaster victims were stirred.

"Resist rumors, for peace throughout the land!" he shouted loudly.

"Resist rumors, for peace throughout the land..."

Soon, everyone echoed in response.

King Jin hid in the tent, watching the scene outside, his expression uncertain whether it was of sorrow or joy.

He hadn’t handled this incident well. Jin Zijin had only stayed for a day before leaving, and Jin Tingyu was merely there to help.

All things considered, they hadn’t done well.

In the end, it was Gu Youyou, a woman, who had succeeded, and she hadn’t asked the Imperial Court for additional resources. She had relied on her influence and the goodwill of the ordinary people.

As such, two months had passed. The early-harvest crops were being gathered, and the disaster victims from less severely damaged homes were already packing up, having received subsidies, preparing to return home.

Those from severely damaged areas, like those from Lotus Village which had been mostly buried by debris flows, were relocated to nearby villages. Land was allocated to them based on population, and the local Governor's Office also advocated that they cultivate the land, registering the cultivated lands in their own names.

An increasing number of people were arranged to leave the relief camp, and Gu Youyou also had her belongings packed, preparing to leave.

The two princes and Lord Jie were waiting for everything to be properly settled before they could leave, so Gu Youyou only took the people she had brought with her.

Banxia was also returning to Lingnan. She looked at Gu Youyou with reluctance and a hesitative demeanor.

Gu Youyou smiled and said, "It's getting late, and you're about to head off. If you have something to say, say it quickly."

"Time flies so fast," she sighed.

Chapter 1019: Attacked on the Way Back to Beijing

Gu Youyou smiled and said, "After you return to Lingnan, I will write you letters."

Banxia hung her head low, suddenly blushing as she said, "This time when I go back, I might get married."

"You're getting married?" Gu Youyou was slightly surprised.

She had asked Banxia a similar question before, and Banxia had said that with her status, she wouldn't be able to marry, and that she didn't plan to marry in her lifetime. After that, Gu Youyou never brought it up again.

After all, it was a sorrowful matter for her.

Now, she was taking the initiative to talk about marriage?

After her surprise, Gu Youyou smiled and said, "Really? Congratulations then. Who is the family of the other party? Do his family members not care?"

Banxia, now the main treating doctor at Jisheng Hall of Lingnan, was a person of status. Gu Youyou didn't want her to marry beneath herself because of some so-called unlucky fate for husbands.

Banxia shook her head, "No, he has no family."

Oh, an orphan?

"You know this person too. It's the manager of Lingnan's Jisheng Hall, Fang Xi."

Fang Xi?

Gu Youyou raised an eyebrow.

Fang Xi was a manager who had come into the picture when Gu Youyou was about to leave Lingnan.

He was someone Yue Rujing had decided to buy. Gu Youyou remembered that he was a scholar student, who had been sold after his master died. He was literate, and that was the reason he had been bought in the first place.

Gu Youyou didn't have much influence over Fang Xi now, only knowing that he was clear in his accountancy and had a decent handwriting.

Judging a person by his handwriting, since Banxia fancied him and wasn't too superstitious, he seemed like a good person.

Gu Youyou smiled and said, "Good. After I return to Beijing, I'll have someone send you a wedding gift."

With some regret, she wouldn't be able to attend their wedding.

Beijing was indeed too far from Lingnan, and she had no opportunity to go there.

...

A simple carriage took Gu Youyou and her companions on their way. This place wasn't very far from Beijing; at their pace in the carriage without rushing, it would take about seven or eight days.

Jin Zijin had sent word asking her to hurry back to Beijing after she was done with her business, so she had planned to visit Jinxiu City first, but now she had skipped it.

The carriage suddenly jerked violently, shaking all of the passengers inside from side to side.

Gu Youyou grabbed a window of the carriage and asked loudly, "What's happening?"

The answer to her question was the clashing sound of swords.

Gu Youyou was startled, and before she could say anything more, the carriage suddenly overturned, throwing both her and Searcy out.

They were traveling on the official road, which the Emperor placed great importance on. It was supposed to be safe with various Prefecture Governments ensuring safe passage. Who would dare to act so boldly?

"Sister Youyou, hide quickly!" Qin Changlin, who had fallen out with them, grabbed a wooden stick in hand.

Gu Youyou quickly pulled out a small dagger for self-defense, thinking, Qin Changlin with a stick isn't as good as her wielding a dagger.

Can your stick even kill a person?

"What are they all?" Searcy seemed calmer than both Gu Youyou and Qin Changlin, holding several silver needles in her hand.

Her silver needles were different from Gu Youyou's; they were the kind that would seal the throat upon drawing blood.

The day was nearly dark, the setting sun had fallen to the horizon, and the black-clothed figures approached against the light. The blood they splattered was terrifyingly grotesque, turning the official road into a battlefield.

The ferocity of these men was unlike any Gu Youyou had seen before. They fought as if their lives meant nothing, and Gu Youyou guessed that these were the same kind of dedicated fighters that Jin Zijin had mentioned.

The guards that Jin Zijin had arranged for Gu Youyou were also such dedicated fighters. When these two groups clashed, the men that the local Governor's Office had assigned to Gu Youyou were like tofu - easily cleaved apart by anyone.

Chapter 1020: Who Wants to Kill You?

Gui Yunxi, the carriage driver, was just an ordinary, timid commoner; where had he ever seen such a scene? Already shaking with fear, he hid behind Searcy.

Searcy cursed him for being pathetic, and though her words were harsh, she still shielded him.

Gu Youyou worriedly watched the two groups of men fighting while deeply concerned about the partnership of Searcy and Gui Yunxi.

The two of them together, wouldn’t Searcy bully him to death?

Of course, with Searcy’s temperament, only someone with Gui Yunxi’s disposition would suit her. If the other party were too macho, life would be impossible.

One firm, one soft—perfectly matched, just that the roles of man and woman were reversed.

"What kind of people are these?" Searcy asked Gu Youyou in a low voice.

"Deadly assassins."

"Who would send deadly assassins to kill us, oh no, to kill you?"

"I don’t know. Anyone who can afford to train deadly assassins is a possibility, like King Jin."

However, Gu Youyou immediately thought that King Jin wouldn’t be foolish enough to make a move against her at this time.

Then who could it be?

Not long after, more than half were dead or injured on both sides.

Jin Zijin’s men defended flawlessly, but they were also staking their lives in the fight.

The black-clothed adversaries were just as relentless, seeming determined not to stop until their mission was accomplished, with their lives on the line as well.

Gu Youyou and her companions could only hide beside the carriage and watch, unable to help at all.

In such a situation, the deadly assassins would fight to the last man.

As time slipped away, everyone’s expressions grew increasingly grave.

Before them flickered the shadows of swords and blood—commoners all, experiencing for the first time the fragility of life so directly.

Several times, Gu Youyou couldn’t help but want to step forward, knowing that these people were after her alone and thinking that maybe her stepping out could save some lives.

But then she remembered how Jin Zijin would scold her for being reckless with her life, so she restrained herself.

She had barely made it to this day, and she wasn’t ready to die; in fact, she feared death more than anyone.

Yet sometimes, there were so many inevitabilities.

"What a pity I didn’t bring my bag," Searcy said fiercely.

"In this chaos, your bag would be useless. These people are all professionally trained; your little tricks wouldn’t hurt them."

Perhaps belittling Searcy’s ability would distract her and alleviate her own fear.

But at that moment, many more black-clothed figures emerged from the dark woods, and the originally evenly matched groups found a swift victory and defeat with the new arrivals.

Gu Youyou felt a premonition of doom.

Gritting her teeth, she stood up behind the carriage, but Searcy grabbed her and pulled her back.

"What are you trying to do?" Searcy asked angrily.

"Can’t you see? Even if they all die fighting, they won’t win. If I go out now, maybe one less person will die."

"Bullshit." Searcy cursed, and then she stuck a needle into Gu Youyou’s arm.

The needle contained an anesthetic. Gu Youyou’s eyes widened in shock, and moments later, she lost consciousness.

Damn it, this is the needle I’m giving you.

"Make sure you watch her closely," Searcy said coldly, standing up.

"What are you doing?" the frightened Gui Yunxi came out, angrily saying, "You want to go? You can’t."

Searcy, holding a silver needle, waved it before his eyes and said, "Do you want one too? If you’re afraid of dying, roll away farther."

"No, that won’t do." Clearly terrified, Gui Yunxi stubbornly clung to her sleeve.