Farmhouse 981

Chapter 981: The Consequences of Faking Illness

King Jin thought this way and felt it wouldn’t be a problem to let her touch his stomach since he wasn’t actually sick.

With a look of unbearable pain, he said, "Hurry up and treat me."

Gu Youyou breathed a sigh of relief and gently pressed down from top to bottom, asking, "Does it hurt here?"

"No... it doesn’t."

Gu Youyou pressed down harder and asked, "How about now?"

"That’s not it either."

Then let’s try a different spot.

"What about here?"

"It doesn’t hurt."

She moved a bit lower, to the lower abdomen, where Lin Qianqing felt somewhat embarrassed and averted her head, thinking that her cousin’s role as a doctor was indeed a bit improper.

It was fine when she treated women, but with men, it became very awkward.

"What about here?" Gu Youyou pressed and asked.

Remembering how Gu Youyou had been moving downwards, King Jin’s face had turned as black as the bottom of a pot.

He was afraid that if he denied it again, she might reach into his pants, so he had no choice but to stiffly admit it was painful.

Throughout the examination, Gu Youyou had been watching King Jin’s facial expressions and had more or less guessed the nature of his illness.

It wasn’t something on his stomach; looking at him, it seemed the problem was in his head.

However, his forehead was throbbing with veins and he was sweating profusely – his act was indeed very convincing.

He was born in the wrong era; if he became an actor, he could win prizes at any moment.

Why exactly was King Jin pretending to be ill? Gu Youyou didn’t want to guess. In any case, it couldn’t be anything good!

Gu Youyou thought to herself: Since he’s putting in so much effort to pretend, wouldn’t it ruin the mood if I didn’t play along well?

The heavens might forgive wrought disasters, but one who brings it upon themselves will not live through it.

Very well, then let him taste the consequences of lifting a rock only to drop it on his own feet.

"Does the mansion have any silver needles?" Gu Youyou looked up and asked Lin Qianqing.

Lin Qianqing replied, "Yes!" and promptly had a servant bring over a set of silver needles.

Looking at these long needles, Gu Youyou thought to herself: You're getting off easy. If this were in my clinic, I'd have to take the thickest needle and pierce you to death with it.

Gu Youyou inserted a silver needle into King Jin's belly, and he cried out in pain.

This time it wasn't fake, it truly hurt.

He yelled, "Villain, what are you doing? Are you trying to kill me? Are you trying to assassinate me?"

Lin Qianqing, with tears in her eyes, said to King Jin, "My lord, please don't speak, and don't move around. My cousin's medical skills are excellent; she's even better than the Imperial Physician. You'll feel better soon."

After speaking, she signaled with her eyes to the servants behind her to hold King Jin down on the bed. If he moved around and caused Gu Youyou to miss, it would be terrible.

"Ah, it's killing me, villain, stop right now."

"Ah..."

Gu Youyou inserted another needle.

"Quick, hold the Prince down."

After being poked by Gu Youyou's needles, King Jin felt weak and numb all over. Held firmly by several strong servants, he was unable to move at all.

"Let me go, you scoundrels, I will skin you alive..."

Seeing King Jin cursing away, Gu Youyou spoke to Lin Qianqing indifferently, "Find a cloth to gag his mouth. The last needle will hurt a lot, and it would be terrible if he accidentally bit his own tongue."

"Go get a cloth for his highness to bite on," Lin Qianqing instructed the maid.

King Jin glared at the cloth, clenching his teeth tightly, determined not to let Lin Qianqing have the chance to gag him.

As Gu Youyou struck with the needle directly on the head, King Jin howled in pain, and his mouth opened wide immediately.

Chapter 982: Stab Him

Lin Qianqing took this opportunity to stuff a piece of white cloth into Prince Jin’s mouth.

Gu Youyou withdrew the needle, wiping the sweat beads from her forehead, and said to the dying Prince Jin, "Your Highness Prince Jin, your illness comes quickly and leaves just as quickly. Rest assured, as long as you let this commoner administer acupuncture thrice, you will be cured. Tomorrow and the day after, if it is convenient for you, come to Jisheng Hall to seek treatment from this commoner. You know that Jisheng Hall does not easily make house calls. Today is an exception; this commoner cannot break the rules because of you."

Prince Jin was staring at Gu Youyou with dead fish eyes.

Gu Youyou didn’t pay him any attention but instead said to Lin Qianqing, "Young lady, your Prince’s illness cannot be delayed. Acupuncture will cause some pain, but it must be used. Otherwise, the lineage of Prince Jin Residence might end."

Upon hearing these words, a look of knives almost flew from Prince Jin’s eyes.

Lin Qianqing nodded earnestly and said, "Tomorrow I will definitely persuade Prince Jin to go to Jisheng Hall to see my cousin. If he refuses, I will tell the Empress."

The Empress was very anxious about issues of progeny.

After Gu Youyou left, Prince Jin, feeling something was wrong with his body, immediately summoned the Imperial Physician, and had everyone informed of the matter sworn to secrecy.

After the Imperial Physician examined his pulse, he was so shocked that he dared not speak.

"What is wrong with my body?" Prince Jin asked, glaring at the Imperial Physician with a displeased expression.

The old Imperial Physician knelt on the ground, sweating profusely, and said, "Your Highness Prince Jin, do you... do you feel weak?"

...Prince Jin stumbled and nearly fell to the ground.

He hadn’t tried since being needled by Gu Youyou, so how could he know?

But he did feel that something was off, like...?

The Imperial Physician, drenched in sweat, said, "This humble servant is limited in knowledge and has never seen a condition like that of Your Highness Prince Jin. I am truly at a loss. Perhaps Your Highness Prince Jin could allow this humble servant to return to the Imperial Medical Bureau to consult with Imperial Physician Xu and the others, and then..."

"No need." Prince Jin interrupted angrily, saying, "Go back, and remember, not a word of this matter may be leaked."

How could he let such a humiliating matter become common knowledge?

The Imperial Physician hastened to say, "Yes, of course, this humble servant dares not."

Prince Jin knew he had been played by Gu Youyou; she must have seen that he was not sick at all, yet made him sick with her needles.

And it was precisely this kind of disease... one that he found difficult to speak of.

In that case, even if he went to trouble her over this, by bringing up this disease, he would lose all face.

And Prince Jin was a man who valued his face; he could not afford to lose it.

So he had to suffer in silence?

So he would still have to go to Jisheng Hall tomorrow and the day after to let her needle him again, or remain like this for life?

What a formidable woman Gu Youyou was, truly remarkable.

...

The wedding was set for a date not far off, causing the Ministry of Rites endless headaches.

It wasn't that the national treasury lacked the silver to afford the dowry; rather, with princes and princesses getting married, everything used had to be approved by the Empress.

Before the eldest prince had returned to court, Prince Jin was treated as the eldest son, and also of legitimate birth.

As the only son of the Empress, his marriage would use the finest, and the Empress was pleased. Although he was not the Crown Prince, because he was the eldest son born in wedlock, the bride's status was suitably noble. Thus, the items used in Prince Jin's wedding were all up to the standards of the Crown Prince marrying his chief wife.

Prince Qin was born of a concubine and was naturally considered inferior; no one would have any objections.

But now that Jin Zijin had returned to court, he was the legitimate eldest prince. What should be given as his dowry, then?

Chapter 983: The Trouble with Bridal Gifts

Given his status, he surely couldn’t be outdone by King Jin, could he?

So if he didn’t let King Jin outshine him, did that mean he had to outshine King Jin?

Logically speaking, the legitimate eldest brother should indeed outshine his younger brothers, but after the list of gifts was prepared, who would send it to the Empress for her review?

No one dared to.

"Mr. Ji, it has been several days, have you completed the list of gifts?"

Mr. Ji, his hair having turned white from worry, said, "It’s done, I even made two copies. Mr. Xu, could you take a look and see which one should be sent to the Empress for approval?"

Mr. Xu hesitated for a moment, but seeing the bitter and deep-seated expression of his colleague, who had worked with him for many years, some pity arose within him.

With no other choice, Mr. Xu took the two lists of gifts; a simple glance was enough to understand the situation, and he bitterly smiled, "I really can’t help you with this. Whether you stick your neck out or not, it’s a loss either way; you’d better make a decision quickly."

"This... How has it come to this? Why didn’t the Crown Prince return to court earlier? I heard he has always known about his own identity, so why choose now to return?"

"Hehe!" Mr. Xu stacked the two lists neatly on the table, saying, "The Dao Family and the imperial court appear unrelated, yet in reality, they are inseparable. These intricacies, we from the Ministry of Rites are better off not meddling too much anyway; no matter how it ends up, it has nothing to do with us."

Mr. Ji nodded, responding, "That’s true. Speaking of which, acting as the State Preceptor seems no different from being the emperor; the Crown Prince has been in the Dao Family for many years, with a solid foundation, and really didn’t need to wade into these muddy court waters."

"Ha-ha, no no, there is a difference, Mr. Ji," Mr. Xu laughed.

"Oh? What difference?"

Mr. Xu laughed heartily, "A State Preceptor can't get married, but a Prince can." Mr. Xu suddenly burst into laughter and lowered his voice to Mr. Ji, "Mr. Ji, I've heard a rumor that previously, when Doctor Gu visited Sanqing Temple to treat the Heavenly Master and later traveled to Qi Mountain, spending almost half a year there. At that time, Tianzong's eldest disciple and Doctor Gu became very familiar, and they even exchanged teachings privately."

"Oh? Is that so?" Mr. Ji, profoundly shocked, said, "Private exchange between an unwed man and woman, that is a serious matter!"

Mr. Xu nodded and replied, "But there needs to be evidence for that, otherwise, what basis do you have to say they exchanged teachings privately? But, it is certainly true; think about it, isn't the standard for selecting the court maidens tailored specifically for Doctor Gu? The Crown Prince has painstakingly strategized to win the beauty's affection."

In that case, does it mean the Crown Prince values this Doctor Gu greatly? Mr. Ji was startled, staring at the two lists of gifts on the table, he felt overwhelmed.

"So, am I to understand that neither list is properly done, and I might have offended both the Empress and the Crown Prince?"

He felt like he had picked up a hot potato and wasn't sure if it was still possible to feign illness now.

Mr. Xu mysteriously smiled.

Mr. Ji, staring at him with a stern face, said, "Mr. Xu, is there anything you need to hold back with me? We've been friends since we were in open-crotch pants. Quickly, tell me, do you have any ideas?"

Mr. Xu laughed, "I actually thought of a solution just now; since one list would offend the Crown Prince and the other would offend the Empress, why not submit both for Her Majesty to decide? Whichever she picks, it wouldn't be connected to you anymore; whatever the Empress decides, right?"

Mr. Ji, suddenly enlightened, gave Mr. Xu a thumbs-up, "Good, that's the best solution. Whichever gift list the Empress picks, I'll just relay a message to the Emperor later."

"That's right, that makes sense."

...

Chapter 984: Heavy Rain in Lotus Village

The eldest prince returned to the court, ready to marry Gu Youyou from Zhuzhao Country who was known as both the Divine Doctor and the most talented lady. The news spread throughout Zhuzhao Country and naturally reached Qingshui Town and Lotus Village.

Qin Changlin held the account book that Gu Youyou had someone send back, pulled a piece of paper from it, and toasted it over the fire to reveal the hidden writing. This was the method Gu Youyou had shown Qin Changlin for reading the letter when she was last in Qingshui Town.

After reading the content of the letter, Qin Changlin squinted his eyes.

The rumors were indeed true. He hadn't expected that after all their circumventions, they would end up together. And Jin Zijin's identity was truly bizarre—first a poor hunter from nowhere, then a senior brother from Tianzong, and now he had turned out to be the missing eldest prince of Zhuzhao Country?

No matter how his identity had changed, his feelings for Sister Youyou had always remained the same.

They were soon to be together openly, which was a joyous matter.

Qin Changlin smiled, picked up a transparent crayon, reopened the account book, and began to reply to her in the same way.

There was a knock at the door. Qin Changlin stopped smiling and hid the crayon and the account book.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"It’s me, Jin Yi," replied the man outside.

The business at Jisheng Hall was booming. The people with the means from several nearby towns came to get medical treatment and medicine at Jisheng Hall. To lighten his load, Qin Changlin had hired a few doctors, and this Jin Yi, was a recent addition.

He was very skilled at treating cold symptoms.

"Doctor Jin, what’s the matter?" Qin Changlin opened the door.

Jin Yi hesitated then said, "Gu Wen from Lotus Village caught a chill a few days ago and delayed the treatment. Now he has started coughing up blood. The Gu Family has sent someone to ask you to make a house call. I came to ask if you would go?"

Jisheng Hall had a rule of not making house calls, but of course, rules were rigid, while people were flexible. They didn’t make house calls lightly.

As a doctor, he couldn’t just stand by and watch someone die, could he?

Recently, there had been continuous heavy rains, even damaging the mountain roads to Lotus Village. Gu Wen had been brought once by his son, suffering from a serious chill. He had prescribed some medicine and advised him to return for a follow-up after a few days.

But since the heavy rains, the roads had become difficult to navigate, which caused the delay.

Qin Changlin’s expression darkened as he thought of the half-finished letter and of Gu Youyou.

He had always particularly looked after the people of the Gu Family except for Gu Wen.

Everyone in the Gu Family had started to see Gu Youyou differently, only Gu Wen harbored resentment still—resentment for the year he'd spent in prison because of Gu Youyou. But Gu Wen was, after all, Gu Youyou's only blood-related elder in the Gu Family. Now the man was gravely ill. Could he really just ignore that?

Yuancheng stuck his head out from the front hall where he was studying and said to Qin Changlin, "Brother Qin, you should go. Sister Youyou has a sharp tongue but a soft heart. If she were here, she would definitely help Gu Wen."

Qin Changlin looked at the young man and suddenly laughed. His master had passed away, and Yuancheng had then been entrusted to his care.

Fortunately, with Gu Youyou's help, the boy hadn't been ruined.

Now, not yet fifteen, he had already passed the Scholar examination.

Qin Changlin said with a laugh, "Alright, alright, I'll listen to you. Sister Youyou insisted on you attending private school, you really did her proud and even became a Scholar. Now you're giving me advice too."

Chapter 985: Are You Preparing the Next Two Gifts?

Qin Changlin packed his medicine box and went out with an umbrella.

He had only walked a few steps when he ran back.

Yuancheng said, "Brother Qin, the rain is too heavy, and the wind is strong, the umbrella won't do."

Qin Changlin dropped the umbrella, nodding and saying, "Yes, it seems I need to wear a straw raincoat and a bamboo hat."

Taking out the straw raincoat and bamboo hat, Qin Changlin cursed, "This damn weather tortures people, no idea when it will end."

"It’s the rainy season now," Yuancheng reminded him.

"Still, it shouldn’t be pouring down like this!" Qin Changlin said.

Yuancheng nodded, glanced at the sky, and continued reading his book.

Indeed, at this time of year, it usually rained frequently, but those were the kind of silent, nourishing drizzles, not this torrential downpour.

Qin Changlin walked far away, Yuancheng was absorbed in his book, and Jin Ziyuan walked into the workshop that belonged solely to Qin Changlin.

Under the desk, in a drawer, he found that account book.

Opening the account book, a particular piece of paper fell out.

The wax on the paper had melted off, revealing very clear handwriting.

Long, graceful small script, exactly like the prescription Gu Youyou had given him years ago, written by her own hand.

He gave a bitter laugh, replaced the paper in the account book, and put it back in the drawer.

So she really was going to marry him.

He remembered that night when he had gathered the courage to see Youyou, and bravely invited her to leave with him once again.

How had she refused him?

It hadn’t been that long, yet he’d almost forgotten.

Yes, he didn’t want to hear those words, so he had to forget them.

But then again, what difference did it make, remembering or forgetting?

Could he rush back to Beijing at this time to stop her from marrying him?

Just like last time, intercepting halfway?

No, let’s forget that. His loyal people, one less if one died, couldn’t withstand the turmoil.

And she loved him so much, having the opportunity to marry him, she must be overjoyed.

They were once the same, knowing all too well how difficult it was to live in the sunlight.

...

Lord Ji presented two proposal lists, sweating profusely, waiting for the Empress to announce.

The Empress’s face had turned as dark as the bottom of a pot, thinking, "Good for you, Lord Ji, passing this mess onto this palace?"

"Hmph..." the Empress angrily smashed the two proposal lists onto Lord Ji’s face.

Lord Ji’s face flushed to the color of a pig’s liver, not daring to utter a word.

Such misfortune fell on whoever it fell on; one could only deem it his bad luck.

"Are you planning on proposing twice?" the Empress demanded sternly.

"No, no!" Lord Ji wiped his sweat and hurriedly explained, "This humble official indeed couldn't make up his mind, so he came to seek advice from Her Majesty. The Empress has been holding the Phoenix Seal for long, and this official has always respected your guidance."

The flattery was just right, and to the Empress, it seemed like Lord Ji was showing his resolution?

Lord Ji was indeed a clever man.

The Empress's face softened a bit, commanding Lord Ji to pick up the two proposal lists.

"Present them to this palace."

As irritating as it was, the issue needed to be resolved.

"Madam Li, what do you think?" the Empress turned her head to ask her most trusted Madam Li.

Madam Li took the two proposal lists and looked at them, then at Lord Ji.

The Empress understood Madam Li's implication and told Lord Ji to go back first.

"Go back for now, and wait for this palace to decide. The palace will send someone to deliver the proposal lists to you after."

"Yes, Your Majesty," Lord Ji left as if pardoned.

Chapter 986: Gu Wen is Dying

After Mr. Ji had left, Madame Li bowed to the Empress and said, "Empress, using the larger portion may make you uncomfortable, but using the smaller one... might be deemed inappropriate by outsiders at

court. The Crown Prince has just returned to the palace, and if his treatment is not as good as that of our King Jin, I fear the courtiers might speak unfavorably. Your image has always been one of magnanimity, and these external possessions, in the eyes of your old servant, need not be overly concerned with. We aim for greater achievements, so why bother with such meticulousness?"

Madame Li was brought from the Empress's maternal home, prepared early by the Ducal Residence because they knew Jin Yushu would eventually enter the palace, so they had singled out an intelligent woman to groom and accompany her into the Crown Prince Residence.

However, the nature of Jin Yushu could not tolerate the prospect of her personal maids becoming her husband's concubines in the future, so she specifically chose an older woman with ordinary looks, that is Madame Li.

She trusted this loyal servant who had grown up with her from a young age and felt her advice was very sensible, so she agreed.

"Have someone send this gift list to the Ministry of Rites, let's consider it a bargain for them."

After the Empress stamped the Phoenix Seal on the gift list, the Ministry of Rites then dared to prepare the corresponding items as listed.

Preparing so many items would take a fair amount of time.

At this time, a major event was happening in Lotus Village.

...

It had been raining heavily near Qingshui Town for several days. Qin Changlin, wearing a raincoat and carrying a bamboo hat and medicine box, went to the Gu Family in Lotus Village, now making his second visit.

Gu Wen’s condition was quite dire; Qin Changlin had already diagnosed him during his previous visit with tuberculosis. Tuberculosis was incurable, and after returning, he wrote back to Gu Youyou, mentioning this matter, uncertain if Gu Youyou could treat it.

Because of the prolonged heavy rain, it was not possible to ride a horse or drive a carriage along the mountain roads, so Qin Changlin walked to Lotus Village and was completely drenched.

"Aunt Gu, how is Uncle Gu’s condition today?"

"Alas, it’s the same as before, he coughed up blood again last night."

Huang Xiangwen, with a distressed expression, hurriedly invited the completely soaked Qin Changlin inside and then told Gu Dabao, "Dabao, quickly take Dr. Qin to change into dry clothes."

Gu Dabao took Qin Changlin’s bamboo hat and medicine box and said, "Dr. Qin, change into clean clothes before we see him."

Gu Wen lived alone in a room, and even before entering, one could hear his coughing, which was harsh to the ears.

Qin Changlin put on a mask and said to Huang Xiangwen, "Aunt Gu, such diseases can be infectious. You all are being cautious, aren’t you?"

Huang Xiangwen, eyes red, nodded and sighed, "The kids wanted to go in to see him, but I’ve always been afraid to let them. I always wear a mask when I go in, as you advised, and his eating utensils are also kept separate."

"That’s good."

Qin Changlin entered the room and saw Gu Wen lying on the bed, his cheeks so emaciated that only his skull seemed left.

Seeing Qin Changlin, he tried to get up but was met instead with severe coughing.

Huang Xiangwen quickly stepped forward to support him, patting his back to ease his breathing.

The coughing fit ceased, leaving another large pool of blood.

Additionally, chest pain and difficulty breathing were present.

These were late-stage symptoms of tuberculosis.

Qin Changlin immediately took his pulse.

Huang Xiangwen began to cry, saying, "You're not well; don't get up, please lie down quickly."

Gu Wen caught his breath before he could utter a few words.

"Dr. Qin, thank you so much. Despite such heavy rain, you still made the effort to come."

Hearing this from Gu Wen, Qin Changlin was rather surprised.

It is often said, "Upon impending death, one's words are kind."

Chapter 987: Disaster

Qin Changlin motioned for Gu Wen to lie down before speaking to him in a low voice, "Uncle Gu Wen, you need to rest in bed to get better. Don't worry about anything. If there is anything you feel like eating or drinking, just tell Auntie Gu. Eating and drinking well will help you recover faster."

Gu Wen wore a distressed look and said, "Who knows who has offended the gods, with this endless rain? How can I rest at ease?"

Tears welling in her eyes, Huang Xiangwen retorted, "If you can’t rest and recover, what else can you do? If the heavens want to rain, can you block it with something?"

"You this wife!" Gu Wen said anxiously, "Our crops are all flooded and gone, and you’re not worried?"

"I worry in vain. The gods will rain regardless of my concern."

"Ah, you... How did I marry such a family-ruining woman? Back when I was in prison, you were the one who parceled out the land. Otherwise, would our family be poor?"

As the discussion heated up, Gu Wen began to cough violently.

"Our family isn’t poor, are we missing food or clothes?" Huang Xiangwen was upset by his words, but seeing his severe cough, she held back and ended the conversation with only a few more words.

Could she have acted differently given the circumstances of that year?

Over the years, she had come to understand; what is yours will be yours, and fighting for what isn’t won’t change that. Yet Gu Wen... Even after all these years, he was still bitter about it.

After packing up his medicine chest, Qin Changlin said to Huang Xiangwen, "Auntie Gu, Uncle Gu needs tranquility. I think you had better leave for now. You can’t argue anymore."

"Alright, alright, I won’t argue with you while you’re sick. Anyway, don’t worry about the crops. We still have some surplus grain. We won’t starve."

It wasn’t until he was outside the house that Qin Changlin dared to speak the truth.

"Auntie Gu, I didn’t dare to speak the truth in front of Uncle Gu, but his illness... It’s terminal, I’m afraid it’s only a matter of days."

"What?" Huang Xiangwen’s hands trembled, and the bowl of water in her grip clattered to the ground.

"How could this happen? Didn’t you say that resting more would help him recover?" She suddenly grabbed onto Qin Changlin’s clothes.

Gu Dabao and Gu Erbao hurried forward to pull their mother back, their faces a picture of shock, waiting for Qin Changlin to continue.

Qin Changlin said, "Uncle Gu has tuberculosis, a disease you know to be incurable. That’s why I asked you to keep your distance from him! I wrote to Sister Youyou yesterday, for her medical skills are exceptional. I meant to wait for her reply before telling you, but with the continuing heavy rain and Uncle Gu’s constant worry, his condition has worsened faster than I had anticipated. If this continues, by the time we get a reply from Sister Youyou, I fear... Uncle Gu won’t be able to wait."

The members of the Gu Family stood stunned, and Huang Xiangwen nearly collapsed, nearly fainting.

Incurable, tuberculosis? Although they didn’t understand medical skills, they all knew tuberculosis was a deadly disease with no cure.

How did he contract tuberculosis?

Suddenly, a thunderous crash jolted everyone back to reality.

The rain grew heavier, and upon hearing the noise, everyone rushed out of their houses.

To their surprise, many families from the village had also emerged from their homes, all looking in the direction of the sound.

It came from the hills behind Lotus Village, a place rumored to be inhabited by fairies.

It seemed like a landslide had occurred, as rain carried torrents of mud washing down the valley, following the path of Qingshui River, heading straight for the village below.

Seeing this, everyone was stricken with overwhelming fear.

Shocked by the scene, Qin Changlin urgently warned the villagers, "Everyone run! The continuous rain has caused a landslide. I fear a great disaster is about to befall Lotus Village."

Chapter 988: Mountain Collapse

His voice was buried by the heavy rain, but it did not affect the speed at which everyone attempted to flee for their lives.

Seeing this scene, anyone with a bit of sense knew that it was no longer safe to stay in the village.

"We've lived here for generations, where can we flee to?"

"Anywhere is fine, as long as we're alive and the family is safe, we will always find a way to get by."

"Yes, everyone should quickly pack up and hurry to save their lives."

Soon, Qin Changlin saw Wang Shun and Gu Erya each holding a child, running over from the north end of the village, while Gu Sanbao carried a bundle on his back.

It seemed they were already prepared to flee at a moment's notice, ready to bolt as soon as they sensed danger.

"Doctor Qin, what are you doing here?" Wang Shun asked in surprise.

Qin Changlin replied, "I came to the Gu Family today for a medical visit; your uncle is ill."

In the midst of conversation, another thunderous rumble echoed, and more mud poured down the mountainside.

For the moment, the mud could still flow along with the Qingshui River, not leaving the riverbed to bury the village, but if the rain continued like this, more and more mud would surely eventually bury the village.

At this rate, by tonight at the latest, no one would be able to escape along the Qingshui River.

The village chief, using a crutch to walk, emerged from his house with a large bamboo hat on his head.

He was well aware of the crisis Lotus Village faced and loudly said to everyone, "Fellow villagers, we can no longer stay in the village. Grab whatever you can and quickly flee for our lives."

Some cried out, "No, I won't leave! This is my home; I'm not going anywhere."

"Old auntie, let's go. If we don't leave now, it will be too late."

"Fellow villagers, please pack your things and hurry to save your lives. We can't hold out much longer. After this disaster passes, we can come back."

In the village, the cries of women and children were mixed with the pounding rain, as every family began to hastily pack up and flee for their lives.

Qin Changlin looked back at the Gu Family house and wanted to tell them that since Gu Wen was beyond help, they should just take care of themselves, but ultimately he could not say it.

If it were his own family members, even if they had only a breath left in them, how could he abandon them?

In the end, he only told them to take good care and to be cautious, to make sure not to be overwhelmed by the worsening condition.

"Quick, you two lift this stretcher and put your father on it."

"Oh my, Dabao’s dad, please let go. We need to flee!"

"I’m not leaving. Cough, cough, cough... I’d rather die here. I’m not going anywhere." Gu Wen barely had any strength left, but at this moment, he mustered a surprising amount of force, clinging to the bed frame, stubbornly refusing to leave.

"How can you not leave? The village chief already said the mountain behind us is going to collapse. The village will be buried."

"Then let me be buried with this house. I’m not leaving," Gu Wen said weakly.

With a loud boom, Huang Xiangwen’s face changed color, and she cried out in panic.

"Ah, we’re really out of time! Quick, pull your father up and carry him away, or we’ll all die!"

"Dabao’s dad, I’m begging you, please go. If you keep being this stubborn, none of us will survive."

"I won’t leave. You go quickly, hey, let go of me, cough, cough, cough..."

Dabao and Sanbao, disregarding everything else, lifted Gu Wen onto the stretcher.

Huang Xiangwen carried a bundle on her back, leading Sanya behind her.

Outside, the villagers were all fleeing for their lives. Many homes had elderly who were unwilling to leave, adamantly staying inside while the younger generation dragged them out, crying and shouting.

Their voices, mixed with the sound of the heavy rain, made the village seem like a hell on earth.

Chapter 989: Doing Her Own Bridal Makeup

"Oh my, isn’t that mountain home to the Immortal Mountain of the fairies? Wasn’t it said to bless our Lotus Village? Why has it turned out like this now?"

"Last year when Shunzi and the others went hunting on the mountain, they saw fairies, one in black and one in white, young faced with white hair. After the Emperor found out, he sent troops from Yangguan City to search the mountain. It must have been then that they offended the fairies, and now the fairies want to punish us. What a sin! If this mountain collapses, it's not just our Lotus Village, but the whole path down to Qingshui would be destroyed, damn this foolish Emperor."

The villagers discussed fervently, ultimately attributing this natural disaster to the wrath of the fairies.

Qin Changlin followed Shunzi and the others.

Unable to separate from the Wang Family, Shunzi's parents could only take their children and Shunzi's younger brother to flee for their lives.

When they reached a higher part of the valley, thunderous sounds emanated from behind the mountain of Lotus Village, roaring like thunder.

Turning back, they saw the heavy rain intensifying, and a torrential mudslide rushed down from the mountain, quickly burying the low houses of Lotus Village.

Those who couldn't bear to leave, those who were slow, their fate seemed grim.

Amidst the Earth and heavens, cries of despair echoed, tears mixed with the rain, and they could no longer care for anything else as they desperately fled for their lives.

...

In the north, the weather was scorching as if afire. The heavy snows of winter had long past, and this year's warmth seemed to hasten much sooner than before. By May, everyone had already switched to summer silks.

While wiping their sweat, the servants of the Lin Residence complained, "The belongings are even more than when the young lady was married off, this prominence has even surpassed King Jin’s marriage to the young lady. With so many dowries, it’s tough on us laborers."

A maid quietly counting the dowry spoke in a low voice, "Keep it down and focus on your work. These items are invaluable. If you accidentally damage one, even your sale wouldn’t cover the costs."

Another persuaded, "Yes, don’t be jealous. I heard that the Lin Residence prepared items for Miss but she didn’t take any. All the dowry was prepared by Miss herself. Jisheng Hall, and even the master behind Manxiu Building, are all Miss’s doings."

"Really? Miss is truly capable. Isn’t she born a farmer’s daughter? How is she so impressive?"

An older woman said, "Hey, you don’t know because I followed from the countryside. Before the Lin family moved to the capital, they were already well-known in Qingshui Town. All those substantial family assets were earned by Miss’s mother, who was good at doing business. It seems Miss takes after her mother."

"Oh, that explains it!"

That said, their respect for Miss rose yet another notch.

The Lin family’s favor towards Miss was not without reason. Since Lin senior owed his success to his sister, it was only right to reward it through his niece.

But Miss was indeed remarkable. All the dowry, all earned by herself, not a single penny taken from the Lin family.

Yes, naturally remarkable, or why else would Miss be marrying the Prince?

The dowry was all packed, just waiting for the day to be moved.

With the help of several maids, Gu Youyou was getting her bridal makeup done. She only let them handle the complex hairdo, preferring to apply the cosmetics herself.

Having been the Gu Family's young lady for over two decades, she was adept at creating all kinds of delicate makeups.

Soon, a vivid yet elegant makeup was complete, enhancing her naturally fairer complexion than the average person, making her look stunning and enticing.

Chapter 990: Getting onto the Sedan Chair

Xiang Chun exclaimed in surprise, "Cousin Miss, your makeup looks truly beautiful, quite different from your usual appearance, much more vibrant."

Gu Youyou usually wore light makeup, and if conditions didn't allow, she couldn't be bothered to apply any. The fragile body she acquired grew up in such an environment that it always seemed to convey the air of a delicate and graceful young lady, timid in appearance. However, Gu Youyou had managed to transform herself with a vivid charm, leaving Xiang Chun utterly astonished.

Gu Youyou put down the lip paper and clapped her hands, "Makeup can change a person's aura, and for a day like today, I think this is just right."

Xiang Chun nodded vigorously and said, "Cousin Miss, you should always wear your makeup like this, it's so spirited."

Well, that's still a no, slathering these things on one's face all the time is not good.

"Come, Cousin Miss, let me put the red bridal veil on you," Xiang Chun said joyfully as she held the veil in her hands.

Gu Youyou smiled and turned around, letting her adjust the red bridal veil perfectly on her head.

Beneath the bright red veil, Gu Youyou suddenly remembered the first time she put on a bridal veil.

What she looked forward to at that time was not the hunter who, according to legend, could not find a wife and took her to satisfy his physical needs, but the opportunity to leave that room through marriage.

Thus, any expectations for the bridegroom could be disregarded.

Now, as she sat beneath the red fabric again, her mindset had undergone a tremendous change.

What she longed for was a person, just one person.

It didn't matter who he was or where he would take her, just having him was enough.

She guessed that in this era, most brides probably harbored such thoughts, hiding beneath the red veil, entrusting themselves to the person upon whom they could rely for life, letting him take her by the hand and lead her into another life, whether with unease or anticipation.

At this moment, Gu Youyou felt that mix of unease and anticipation, her heartbeat quickening without her realizing it.

The sound of gongs and drums approached from afar; she sat quietly in her bridal chamber, knowing he was coming.

The local custom prohibited the groom from entering the bride's boudoir; the bride had to be carried out by the matchmaker.

The Lin Family's courtyard was large; it took three matchmakers taking turns to carry her to the entrance of the Lin Residence.

Gu Youyou couldn't help but laugh. She had put on quite a bit of weight over the years. If it had been when she first arrived, the matchmaker would have complained of how heavy she was.

Outside the doors of the Lin Residence, her aunt took on the role of her mother and fed her a spoonful of 'set-off rice,' and in keeping with local tradition, she repeatedly reminded her not to forget the favor

of being raised, to serve her in-laws and husband wholeheartedly after marriage, then had her uncle personally hand over her hand to the bridegroom who came to fetch her.

These hands, once calloused from shucking, were now much smoother than when she first saw them; back then, he would hunt and work himself, his hands covered in thick calluses.

He was someone who could secure the country in officialdom and just as competently hunt or plant rice in the fields.

Light as a feather, he picked her up with ease.

He placed her carefully into the bridal sedan and whispered in her ear,

"Don’t fidget, okay?"

Concealed under the bright red veil, Gu Youyou smiled. He must have carefully learned about wedding customs; he remembered even these little things.

The local tradition held that once the bride sat down in the bridal sedan, she should not shift her buttocks to symbolize a smooth and stable life.

He must have been afraid she didn’t know, thus took the opportunity to remind her.

The drums and flutes played uproariously, and the bridal sedan lifted.

Ten miles of bridal makeup painted half the sky red over Beijing.