

## The 80s 741

### Chapter 741 Sharing Weal and Woe

Cheng Su couldn't stop Qi Taiguo, nor did she have the heart to, even if she could. She had witnessed the utter despair of this calamity, the sheer horror of its occurrence.

Thus, she could only offer her support.

"Always remember, you have to stay alive, otherwise, I won't forgive you," Cheng Su said, wiping away her tears.

"Don't worry, there probably won't be any aftershocks, but even if there are, I'll make sure to stay safe. Don't you trust your husband's abilities?" Qi Taiguo said with a smile.

Cheng Su nodded vaguely.

"Now, since you've reunited with your co-workers, let me go ahead and say hello, so you can get on the vehicle and head back first, how about that?" Qi Taiguo stood up, intending to make arrangements.

Cheng Su quickly grabbed his hand, "I'm not leaving."

Qi Taiguo frowned, then knelt down in front of her again, "Susu, now's not the time to be stubborn. We don't know if it's still dangerous here, you can't stay."

Cheng Su shook her head, "No, don't say any more, I'm not leaving. Wherever you are, that's where I want to be. I don't want to be apart from you."

Qi Taiguo's expression turned solemn, "If you're here, I'll be distracted."

Cheng Su covered his mouth, "You don't need to say anything, it won't make a difference, you should know my temper by now, anyway, I'm not leaving. I want to be by your side."

"Susu..."

"Taiguo, after such a long time of turmoil, I've been wrestling with the question of whether to divorce or not. But coming here, I realized I don't want to, because I still love you. Last night, when that bed was about to crash down, all I could think of was that I might never see you again, and at that moment, I truly felt desperate. See, even death was looming, and all I could think of was you. Not being able to see you again hurt me deeply," Cheng Su said with teary eyes, "At the brink of life, all I thought about was you, and the thought of never seeing you again was incredibly painful."

Qi Taiguo was shocked, reached out with the pad of his thumb, gently wiping away the tears sliding down her cheeks, "Silly girl, aren't I right here?"

"Yes, thank goodness you are, thank heaven you're here. What would I do if you weren't? I can't leave, if Heaven really won't grant us this favor, insisting on separating us, then even if we die, let's die together!" Cheng Su said defiantly.

"You..." Qi Taiguo's body shook, and he held her tight, "What am I supposed to do with you, woman?"

Cheng Su rested her chin on his shoulder, "Don't send me away, okay? Let me stay close to you. As long as I can see you and know you're here, that's enough for me. I won't get in your way, nor will I put myself in danger."

Qi Taiguo sighed, looking at her with a feigned annoyance, "After what you've just said, what more can I say?"

Cheng Su breathed a sigh of relief, smiling through her tears.

Qi Taiguo teased her face, "Crying and laughing, you look terrible!"

Cheng Su playfully punched him.

The two embraced each other once more.

Not far away, Zhu Lifan wiped away tears, "So this is what President Cheng and her husband are like, truly sharing weal and woe. It's just so touching!"

Technician Zhu stood beside her, glanced at her, and stammered, "We, having gone through this ordeal, have also shared hardships!"

Zhu Lifan was startled, looked over, saw him blushing with an earnest look in his eyes, felt her own face heat up, and stamped her foot, "What nonsense are you saying? Hurry over, and greet President Cheng."

Saying this, she went ahead, with Technician Zhu quickly following, a slight smile at the corner of his mouth.

#### Chapter 742: Fourth Young Master Ning's Wrath

Cheng Su told Zhu Lifan and the others to leave first and head back to Qing City, while she stayed behind with Qi Taiguo. Qi Taiguo was participating in the rescue efforts, and seeing the crying children, she felt she should do something too.

Zhu Lifan and the others couldn't persuade her, so they could only remind her to stay safe before they left.

The earthquake was a magnitude six, and since it occurred in the evening when everyone was still awake and able to flee, the number of casualties was less than expected. However, there were still people buried in the rubble.

And the news was broadcasted immediately everywhere.

When Joy Soon Loy and Xiao Pinshan saw the news, their faces turned pale.

"This, isn't this the county town that Susu and the others went to?" Ying Xiaoya asked with a pale face.

Xiao Pinshan nodded, his face as white as paper.

Ying Xiaoya burst into tears with a loud wail, "Susu, what do we do now? Susu, ah..."

She rushed to the phone, tremblingly trying to dial, but nobody answered Cheng Su's home phone.

The army, she didn't know Qi Taiguo's office number, didn't know it.

Ying Xiaoya panicked, not knowing what to do.

"What should we do?" Ying Xiaoya looked helplessly at Xiao Pinshan, "We have to tell Qi Taiguo!"

"Don't panic, I'll think of something." Xiao Pinshan took a few steps, saying, "Is there a phone book? Is it written down there? Or, I'll go to the military base personally."

"Go to what military base? What happened?" Ning Ge walked in from outside, carrying a backpack on his shoulders.

Just as he was about to take off his backpack, Ying Xiaoya rushed over like a whirlwind and grabbed his sleeve, "Susu, she went on a business trip to the Shu region. But there, an earthquake happened last evening."

Ning Ge's face turned drastically pale as he snatched the newspaper Xiao Pinshan handed over and skimmed through it rapidly, his expression stern.

"Why did she go on a business trip at this time?" Ning Ge's cold gaze swept towards Xiao Pinshan.

Xiao Pinshan, intimidated by that glare, sweat breaking out on his forehead, explained the reason for the business trip.

Ning Ge's face darkened as he picked up the phone and dialed without taking off his backpack.

Xiao Pinshan finally caught his breath, feeling a stabbing pain in his chest, and only then realized that he had been shaken by Ning Ge's cold gaze earlier, so much so that he hadn't caught his breath.

It was too fierce, too intimidating!

He couldn't believe that such an aura was coming from the usually easy-going boss.

Xiao Pinshan wiped the sweat from his forehead.

Ning Ge hung up the phone with a grim face, and Ying Xiaoya urgently asked, "Who did you call? Was it Qi Taiguo?"

Ning Ge nodded, "No one answered at the office!"

Upon hearing this, Ying Xiaoya suddenly cried, "Then what do we do, Susu, we don't know if they are dead or alive!"

"With her constitution, going on a business trip, who the fuck had that bad idea?" Ning Ge exploded in anger.

Ying Xiaoya was scared speechless by his fury.

"It was me, I suggested it." Xiao Pinshan stood in front of Ying Xiaoya, facing Ning Ge's anger as he spoke.

"We all told her not to go, but Susu, she said she wanted to clear her mind," Ying Xiaoya pitched in to defend him, and Xiao Pinshan gratefully glanced at her.

Ning Ge gritted his teeth with anger, having known she was restless, but didn't expect her to be so willful!

Damn it!

"I'm going to the military base to find Qi Taiguo, and then I'll head to the disaster area," Ning Ge turned and was about to leave.

The phone rang, Ying Xiaoya went to answer it and exclaimed, "Susu? You're okay? That's good, you're all safe, really..."

Before she could finish, the handset was snatched away, by Ning Ge.

He gripped the handset and yelled into the phone, "Cheng Su, have you lost your damn mind!"

Chapter 743: Did You Eat Dynamite?

"Are you fucking insane?"

Cheng Su's eardrums ached from the sudden roar, prompting her to hold the receiver a bit further away. Was this brat on explosives, this irate?

On the other end of the line, Ning Ge tightened with worry when he didn't hear Cheng Su's response: "Hello? Cheng Su, Cheng Su, reply!"

"I'm not dead yet, what are you yelling for?" Cheng Su asked irritably: "Did you eat gunpowder today?"

Ning Ge's heart settled down a bit, and he said teasingly: "Of course, I know a calamity like you won't die. Are you hurt?"

A calamity, calling her a calamity!

Cheng Su clenched her teeth, resolved to make this boy pay later!

"I'm fine. Have you come back?" Cheng Su put her grudge aside for a moment and inquired.

"Yeah. If you're alright, then hurry back. The disaster zone isn't safe; there could still be aftershocks. Hurry back!" Ning Ge's voice was urgent and frantic.

"I'm not coming back for now!"

Ning Ge was stunned: "What did you say?"

The voice that emerged was almost squeezed through clenched teeth, sinister enough to send shivers down anyone's spine: "Do you know what you're saying? Do you realize where that is? It's a disaster zone, an earthquake disaster zone, a place where aftershocks might happen at any moment. If you don't come back, what are you staying there for? To wait for death?"

Initially, Ning Ge was annoyed and worried, but upon hearing that she wouldn't return, he was genuinely furious.

This woman was being way too willful!

"I'm asking you, what are you doing there? What can you do, huh? Don't fucking tell me you're there to clear your mind; that place is a death zone right now!" Ning Ge roared.

Cheng Su dug at her ear and moved the receiver a bit further, saying: "I know. But Qi Taiguo is here. He's participating in the rescue efforts, so I have to stay here with him."

Qi Taiguo was also there?

Ning Ge paused, stunned.

"Big Brother Qi is there with you?" Ning Ge asked, still in shock.

Cheng Su's voice was cheerful: "Mhm, he quietly followed me here. Thank goodness he did. If not for him, I might have been buried last night." Ning Ge felt the peril in her words, and also the sweetness, suddenly causing a chill to settle in his chest.

"Hello, are you listening?"

Regaining his composure, Ning Ge said: "Even if Old Qi is rescuing others, you shouldn't stay there. Listen to me, come back first!"

"No, I won't! Ning Ge, after last night's brush with death, I've realized something. I won't divorce him. Now, even if it means dying, I will die with him. So, I won't come back. If I do, he must come back with me," Cheng Su declared.

Ning Ge laughed coldly: "Suit yourself then!"

He hung up the phone in frustration, sitting with a gloomy expression.

"Ning Ge, what did Susu say?" Ying Xiaoya asked cautiously, looking at him.

The Ning Ge before her was a bit too intimidating, too somber, unlike what she had ever seen before, making her feel somewhat uneasy.

Xiao Pinshan, however, seemed lost in thought, as if he had gleaned a hint of the young boss's mindset.

"Nothing. She's fine over there, and Qi Taiguo is with her," Ning Ge said wearily.

"Ah?" Ying Xiaoya and Xiao Pinshan exchanged glances.

Just as they were about to probe further, Xiao Pinshan pulled her aside: "President Ning is tired too, let him rest a while. Come with me, I'll talk to you about some financial matters."



Ying Xiaoya was led away.

Ning Ge sat in the chair, rubbing his temples, as the anger within him gradually subsided.

He was annoyed, he was angry, but even he didn't know why.

Was it because of Cheng Su's willfulness, traveling so far on a business trip?

Or was it because she said she would rather die than be separated from Qi Taiguo?

Ning Ge stared blankly at a photo of Cheng Su on the desk, lost in thought.

#### Chapter 744: Being Alive is the Most Important

Cheng Su ended the baffling call and Qi Taiguo came over with a bottle of water and a piece of bread for her, asking, "What's up?"

"Nothing, just made a call back home to check in, didn't want them to worry. Ning Ge has come back, blowing up at me for no reason. Who knows what's gotten into him." Cheng Su shrugged.

Qi Taiguo let out an "Oh," pushed the water and bread into her hands, and said, "It's only bread, but eat up. I've got to go out and help now."

Cheng Su took them, cautioning, "Be careful out there."

"Okay!" Qi Taiguo kissed her quickly and strode off.

Cheng Su sat down, devoured the bread and water, saw how chaotic everything around her was, and stood up to help too. She might not have been able to assist with digging people out, but comforting and distracting children were things she could do.

The earthquake news spread far and wide since two or three counties were in the quake zone, and some other counties also suffered damage to different degrees. Thus, help from all quarters arrived, whether in the form of donations, supplies, or makeshift shelters.

Once the roads were cleared, trucks loaded with supplies quickly arrived, army tents were set up as temporary shelters, and many disaster victims were moved there.

Cheng Su also headed over, helping to distribute supplies, guide the way, and take care of the injured and displaced.

In the face of the disaster, there are always casualties. Wives lost husbands, children lost parents, and the elderly lost their children. Cries of grief rose up intermittently.

Qi Taiguo, with his helmet on, followed the firefighters and others, time and again, digging out injured people or bodies of the deceased. With each moment of silence, his hands swelled, his eyes stung, and his heart grew numb.

Being alive was what mattered!

Cheng Su felt the same. In the face of such a disaster, everything else seemed so trivial. Watching those despairing, wailing for lost loved ones, she felt a warmth in her eyes.

Compared to them, were her prior thoughts too insignificant, too naive?

How important it is to be alive!

As dusk faded, Cheng Su cradled a three-year-old boy, humming lullabies to soothe him. His parents had died in the rubble, and he, protected, was the only survivor. Overnight, the child had become an orphan, cried all day, and was finally asleep.

When Qi Taiguo entered the tent, Cheng Su gestured to him with an index finger to her lips. She laid the child down, covered another with a blanket, and pointed outside the tent.

This tent served as a shelter for orphans. If they had relatives, they would be picked up. If not, their future might very well lead to an orphanage.

Seeing Qi Taiguo's face covered in dust, Cheng Su brought him a basin of water and wrung out a towel for him to wash his face.

Qi Taiguo washed his face and then pressed his hand on her forehead, saying, "You still have a bit of a fever. Don't overwork yourself!"

"It's okay, I can handle it. But these children are so pitiful, and those who have lost their loved ones are suffering so much." Cheng Su's expression darkened.

Qi Taiguo, reminded of the day's sorrows, felt a shared distress and sighed, "Yes, indeed!"

Cheng Su rested her head on his shoulder, her arm wrapped around his, and said, "Taiguo, let's make up and stop fighting. Whether or not we're together in the future, promise me you'll stay alive. That's what's most important, okay?"

"Okay!"

The two gazed as the setting sun slowly descended on the horizon, leaning on each other for support.

Only in the presence of death, having witnessed it, does one truly awaken to its reality. And since they were both by each other's side, they should cherish that all the more.

Loved ones, don't speak lightly of giving up!

#### Chapter 745: The Bad Idea from My Sister-in-Law

Qi Taiguo and Cheng Su were in the disaster area, and in order not to let their family worry about not being able to find them, Cheng Su still made a phone call to Elder Sister, saying they were out and would not return for a few days, but she did not mention that they were in the earthquake-stricken area.

Qi Fenglian didn't overthink it. Hearing that the couple was together and that Cheng Su had even called, she couldn't help but be overjoyed, intuitively feeling they had reconciled. She happily told them to enjoy themselves and relax a bit.

Enjoy?

Cheng Su showed a bitter smile. They were certainly not out enjoying themselves, but she didn't explain, not wanting to cause her worry. She just moved on to call her own family back home.

Just as she was about to hang up, Qi Fenglian called her again, hesitating to complete her sentence.

"That is, Su, Mom knows she was too anxious, and she knows she was wrong. She's currently staying in the old house, which hasn't been lived in for years. I don't even know if it would collapse. You see..." Qi Fenglian hesitated with her words.

Cheng Su was silent for a moment, then said, "I understand." And then she hung up the phone.

She was quiet, lost in thought. When she returned to the tent, Qi Taiguo was gnawing on some bread and a packet of dry noodles. Seeing her come back, he asked, "Did you call Elder Sister?"

Cheng Su nodded and sat down.

"What's wrong? What did Elder Sister say?" Qi Taiguo asked, noticing her complexion wasn't too good.

"Nothing much, she just mentioned Mother-in-law is still living in the old house," Cheng Su replied.

Qi Taiguo's bread-eating motion paused, he swallowed it down, took a sip of water, and said, "Don't worry about that. Mom needs to be dealt with, Dad will handle it appropriately. Don't intervene!"

Cheng Su pursed her lips.

Qi Taiguo grabbed her hand and said, "I've told you before, you can go back if you want to, and if you don't want to, then don't. Don't think too much about it. As for Mom, you shouldn't bother."

"Okay!" Cheng Su smiled faintly and inwardly sighed.

Mother Qi had no idea that her eldest son had once again blocked her path. She spent each day hopefully looking at the old house's doorway to see if anyone would come to fetch her, but after several days, there was still no sign of Father Qi and the others.

Mother Qi was starting to feel hopeless, especially after taking a detour to the family home, where that old man had even changed the lock on the yard's gate.

She was furious!

That damn old man!

Mother Qi, wiping her tears, felt an overwhelming sense of desolation.

"Mom," Qi Fengping had arrived.

Mother Qi quickly stood up and said, "You finally show up, you heartless girl. Your mother could have died, and you only now appear!"

"Mom, Dad wouldn't let us come, what could we do?" Qi Fengping said, clearly impatient.

Mother Qi harrumphed and gave her daughter a once-over, furrowing her brows, "What sort of mess are you wearing? And your lips are painted so red, you look like a ghost."

Qi Fengping's face darkened, and she turned around, saying, "Mom, don't you have a clue? This is fashionable. That's how people in the city dress."

Her wide dress would twirl into a large circle with a simple turn, and in her blouse, even Brother Qiang said she looked pretty, so very beautiful indeed.

Mother Qi ignored her, grasping her and saying, "Enough about that. You're always full of clever ideas, come up with something quick, make your father take me back home!"

Qi Fengping replied, "Mom, Dad said that when my sister-in-law calms down, you can move back. Why don't you just apologize to her?"

"No way, I will not apologize to her," Mother Qi declared, her face darkening. "You're my flesh and blood, don't you also turn against me!"

Qi Fengping pursed her mouth, her eyes gleaming as she spotted the big water jar by the door. A spark lit in her mind as she said, "I've got it."

"What?"

"It depends on whether you are determined enough, Mom," said Qi Fengping, raising her finely drawn eyebrows.

Mother Qi looked puzzled, following her daughter's gaze.

Chapter 746: The Ruse of Inflicting Injury on Oneself

Mother Qi felt she must have been insane to listen to her youngest daughter's bad advice and go along with her ploy, to use such a self-harming strategy.

A bucket of ice-cold water was poured over her head, and Mother Qi shivered uncontrollably.

Oh, what a sin, it was the time for the late spring chill. Bathing in cold water, wouldn't it be strange if it didn't make her sick?

But Fengping had said that being sick was exactly the point, so she could rightfully move back home. Without this extreme measure, it just wouldn't work, otherwise, she might as well just apologize to Cheng Su.

Apologize? This was about determining the pecking order at home in the future, the authority behind her words; she would rather endure the cold water than do that!

Another bucket of water was poured, and Mother Qi nearly screamed aloud, her teeth chattering with a click-click sound, as she looked at Qi Fengping and said, "Pingping, enough, okay? That's two or three buckets now, it's really cold."

"Mom, you need to think this through. You've always been healthy, rarely even catching a cold. Now, just two buckets of cold water, what's that? If you can't break out in fever now, how can it be called a sickness? Wouldn't we have to do it all over again? Would you want that?" said Qi Fengping.

Do it all over again? Undergo another cold water dousing? It would be better to endure enough at once!

Mother Qi hugged herself, gritted her teeth, and said, "Fine, pour a few more buckets then!" Truly sinful, she had never suffered like this in her life.

Qi Fengping picked up another bucket of water and threw it over.

Mother Qi yelled, jumping up and down, "I'm freezing to death, freezing to death! That damned Cheng Su, it's all her fault. If not for her, why would I have to endure such torment? Pity me at my old age, still suffering like this."

In her eyes, it was all Cheng Su's fault, a wife who was a poor match!

She then cursed Father Qi and Qi Taiguo, accusing them of being bewitched, favoring outsiders over her wellbeing.

After several buckets of water, Mother Qi couldn't take it anymore. She really wanted to rush inside and change clothes immediately; the suffering was just too much.

"Mom, for the sake of going home, you must endure," seeing through her intentions, Qi Fengping said.

Mother Qi was in extreme agony, hugging herself, shivering violently.

"Take a look, am I getting hot?" asked Mother Qi, unable to wait any longer.

Qi Fengping checked and said, "Not yet!"

"Not yet?" Mother Qi's face darkened, "Why do I feel unwell then!"

"It's true, you're not hot yet, it doesn't happen that quickly. Mom, go inside and wait. Fan yourself a bit, it'll help you heat up faster!" With things still to do, Qi Fengping said, "I have something to deal with, I'll come back to check on you in a while."

"Hey, where are you going? What if I start getting a fever and you're not here? What should I do?" Mother Qi grabbed her, not letting her go, fearful for her life. If this girl went crazy and forgot about her, what would happen if she got seriously ill and no one knew? Would she not be left to die?

Although Mother Qi had resorted to a self-suffering ruse, she certainly didn't intend to risk her own life.

Qi Fengping shook off her hand and said, "Mom, stop bothering, I'll be back soon, very soon," and then she ran off in a flash.

Mother Qi was furious, yet helpless, and had to go inside the house.

She wanted to change clothes but remembered her daughter's words. Not wanting all the previous effort to go to waste, she endured until her lips turned purple from the cold and she lost all feeling in her body, then she finally, trembling, changed her clothes.

Still, she was very cold, extremely cold.



Mother Qi could no longer care. She lay down on the bed, covered herself with blankets, shivered in the cocoon of her bedding, cursed Cheng Su a thousand times in her heart, until gradually her consciousness blurred and she fell into a faint sleep.

#### Chapter 747: The Pitfall of a Little Sister-in-law

Although Qi Taiguo had told Cheng Su not to worry about his mother staying in the old house, Cheng Su still secretly made a phone call to Father Qi back in her hometown.

Father Qi was relieved to hear that the couple was together. As long as the two of them were doing fine, the family hadn't fallen apart.

"Taiguo's wife, your mother-in-law is a bit confused. Marrying into our Qi family has been tough on you, but rest assured, Dad will take care of it," Father Qi promised confidently. "Just focus on living a good life with Taiguo and don't worry about the family. I won't let her bother you two."

Cheng Su said, "Dad, it's really not so bad. Taiguo treats me well and so do you. Dad, now that the punishment is done, let Mother come back. The old house is so remote and it's been unoccupied for quite a while. It would be bad if something happened and no one was there to help."

Father Qi sighed. "Don't worry about her. Let her reflect on her mistakes first before we talk about it."

Cheng Su urged, "Dad, that's enough. We can't leave you folks without anyone to look after you."

"Alright, alright, I know you are filial. Dad has his own judgment. Ah, you two just live your lives peacefully!" Father Qi felt reassured in his heart.

Cheng Su gave a few more words of advice before hanging up the phone.

Father Qi put down the phone, thanked the village secretary, and walked away in a pleasant mood.

Now it was good. His daughter-in-law had cooled down, and for sure she and Taiguo could live a happy life together!

As for the wife at home, she still hasn't admitted her wrongs. Hmph, truly unrepentant.

Father Qi shook his head. He had been wronged before too. How could he not empathize?

Mother Qi had no idea that Father Qi was scolding her; she was delirious with a fevered brow!

As for Qi Fengping, after breaking up with Brother Qiang, she returned home with a face full of sweetness, her mind filled with his flattering sweet nothings.

These college students are different. Everything they say sounds so nice.

"Where have you been?" Upon arriving at the doorstep, Qi Fengping ran into her father. Father Qi glared at her disapprovingly, looking like a glamorous mess, not at all proper.

Qi Fengping uttered an "Ah" and dodged the question, "I went to play with my younger sister."

Father Qi huffed, pointing at her mouth, "What is that ghoulish stuff on your lips? Looks like you've eaten blood. It's hideous. Take it off already! What kind of appearance is this?"

Qi Fengping pursed her lips. Such an old fogey, just like what mom says.

Mom... Oh no!

Qi Fengping's face drained of color, and she turned and ran.

"Where are you off to now? Aren't you going to cook dinner?" Father Qi shouted.

"Dad, I need to ask mom about something. I'm heading over to her place," hollered Qi Fengping.

Father Qi's face darkened.

Qi Fengping, breathless from running, reached the old house. It was deathly silent. She let out a breath and called, "Mom, I'm here!"

Silence. No response.

Qi Fengping panicked and hurriedly strode forward, pushing open the decrepit door while calling for Mother Qi as she made her way to her room.

"Mom, where are you?" Qi Fengping entered and immediately saw Mother Qi lying on the bed under a blanket, life and death unknown.

Qi Fengping turned pale, let out a piercing scream, and trembling, went to check on her.

Mother Qi's face was flushed, her brow deeply furrowed, breathing rapid. Qi Fengping put her hand to her forehead; it was so hot it could fry an egg. She couldn't help but cry out.

She hadn't meant to forget on purpose; this wasn't her fault.

What to do, what to do? Right, find Dad. This ploy should work now!

Qi Fengping ran out again, not even thinking to provide a cold compress for her mother's fever, truly failing her mother.

Chapter 748: Burned to Confusion

Qi Fengping rushed back home and said her mother was sick, asking Father Qi to go over.

"Your mom can get sick?" Father Qi was somewhat incredulous, and with a stern face, he said, "She must be faking it!"

The old lady was usually in good health; she rarely got sick. Given her scheming nature, it was hard to tell whether she was pretending, perhaps just looking for an excuse to return home.

Qi Fengping was in a great hurry and said, "No, Dad, Mom really is sick, her forehead is burning hot!" Of course, she didn't say it was a feigned illness.

Qi Jianguo urgently said, "Dad, please go and have a look. What if the fever damages her brain?"

Father Qi, his face darkened, still stepped out the door.

The three family members arrived at the old house and indeed, Mother Qi's consciousness was blurred, and she had begun to babble incoherently.

She really was sick!

Father Qi furrowed his brows and said, "Jianguo, carry your mom on your back and go to the clinic."

Qi Jianguo hurriedly stepped forward, and with Qi Fengping's help, they lifted her up and ran with Mother Qi on their back.

Upon reaching the clinic, they measured her temperature—it had reached over forty degrees.

"How can the fever be so high? Get her on an IV!" the doctor inquired.

Qi Jianguo, his eyes red, watched Mother Qi's delirious muttering and said to Father Qi, "Dad, look at mom like this, let her come back home. It's fortunate that Fengping went to see her and found out. If she hadn't, couldn't it have damaged her brain?"

Qi Fengping stood by without daring to utter a word, feeling very guilty.

It was her idea to feign a severe ailment, and in doing so, they ended up allowing the fever to get so high; she certainly didn't dare admit it.

"Yes, Dad, let mom come back home!" Qi Fengping also spoke up. Without mom at home, she had to do all the housework, and it was exhausting her.

"We'll talk about it once the fever goes down," Father Qi grunted, his gaze turning toward the flushed-faced old woman on the bed, a flicker of concern crossing his eyes.

After all, they were a couple who had lived together for decades; if something were to happen to her, what would he do?

Mother Qi felt as if she was being roasted on a frying pan, burning hot, as if she was about to melt away.

The worst part was that she saw people with ghostly faces, holding white sticks, pointing at her and scolding her for not respecting her old age, for being overbearing and unkind, threatening to throw her into a boiling oil pot.

Mother Qi screamed in terror, "It's not my fault, it's none of my business, help, help!"

No one heeded her cries, and they moved to lift her.

Looking down, she saw a large, bubbling cauldron of oil below her, terrifying her to the point of mental collapse.

"Don't fry me, don't roast me, help me!" Mother Qi struggled frantically, crying out loud, "I realize my mistakes, I was wrong, don't fry me, I'll change, I'll change everything, sob sob..."

"Mom, mom, wake up!" someone was slapping her face.

Mother Qi immediately latched onto the voice, opening her eyes with effort, and beside her stood her two children, tears welling up uncontrollably.

"Jianguo, Pingping, save mom, I don't want to die, I don't want to be fried!" Mother Qi's voice was as rough as sandpaper, very hoarse.

"Mom, it's okay now, you're just delirious from the fever, having a nightmare. Once the fever breaks, you'll be alright, and we can go back home," Qi Jianguo said.

In an attempt to rectify her mistake, Qi Fengping said, "Yes, mom, dad said you can move back home!" she blinked.

Can move back home?

A spark of light flashed in Mother Qi's eyes—could she finally go back home? No longer living in that frightful place?

But she felt so uncomfortable, so heavy.

Taiguo, Taiguo, where was he? That was her eldest son!

"Taiguo, call Taiguo back, I am dying, I need to see him!" Mother Qi did not forget to use her illness as leverage to bring Qi Taiguo back around.

Father Qi, upon hearing this, his expression slightly darkened: "Focus on your recovery. Your son is in the military, how could he come back."

Once Father Qi spoke, Mother Qi immediately fell silent, timidly looking at him.

#### Chapter 749: Powerless

Qi Taiguo had no idea what his mother had done to move back home, and every day he joined the soldiers in the ruins to rescue people, witnessing many deaths and miracles, which overturned his entire mindset. The rescue operation was gradually drawing to a close.

Because of the timing of the earthquake, the casualties were fewer than expected, and most of the missing had been found. Sadly, some people had met with misfortune, and in this era, if the rescue effort lacked physical strength, timely rescue was impossible, leaving nothing but regret.

As days passed, Qi Taiguo's leave had also come to an end; he had to report back to his military unit.

This time, he had already taken his furlough for visiting relatives; it would be difficult to take leave again if something else came up.

Qi Taiguo returned to the temporary shelter tents with a face full of exhaustion.

In front of the tent, Cheng Su was playing with some children, playing the game of "Eagle catching chicks." She was the mother hen with her arms outstretched, and a line of children followed her, clucking in laughter.

Qi Taiguo simply sat down and watched them laugh and play.

Cheng Su's smile was genuine and warm. Right then, the sun was shining just right, and a gentle halo lit up her face.

Suddenly, a child fell over, and she quickly went to pick them up, soothed them with a few words, took the child's hand to blow on it, and kissed their cheek before the child started laughing again.

The game began anew.

Watching their joyous emotions, Qi Taiguo's mood also lifted.

If they had a child, she would surely be a good mother, wouldn't she?

It's a pity for that child.

Qi Taiguo pursed his lips as Cheng Su spotted him, waved at him, and then told the children something. All the kids ran over to him, clambering on him like a troop of monkeys.

Qi Taiguo let them climb on his back and picked up two of the smaller ones.

"Back so soon?" Cheng Su walked over, smiling as she asked.

"Yeah, I'm back!" Qi Taiguo smiled as well.

"Alright, kids, it's time to go wash your hands; we're going to eat soon," Cheng Su clapped her hands.

The children cheered and followed her back.

Qi Taiguo followed suit, but his heart was filled with regret. Once they left, what would become of these children? He had just started to become familiar with them.

After dinner, Qi Taiguo told Cheng Su that it was time for him to go back.

"You're leaving?" Cheng Su paused briefly before instinctively glancing toward the inside of the tent.

Knowing what she was thinking, Qi Taiguo said, "The welfare institution will eventually come to pick up these kids; don't worry."

The welfare institution.

Cheng Su suddenly felt melancholic, reminded of her previous life, growing up in an orphanage.

She wondered why she was left on that doorstep; was it because she was not good enough, or like these children, did she suffer from a disaster, left unrecognized, and thus had to be taken in by an orphanage?



Seeing her feeling down, Qi Taiguo hugged her and said, "Don't be sad. We can take their contact information, and if you ever miss them, you can visit them. If you want, you could also sponsor one or two of them."

Cheng Su sniffled and said, "I'm just upset."

"I know," Qi Taiguo gently patted her back. "I'm upset too, but we can't help it."

Cheng Su buried her head in his chest and nodded.

Sometimes, there are things beyond their control and power.

They could only hope that these children, if adopted, would find good families and loving adoptive parents.

Cheng Su looked at the innocent smiling faces inside the tent, with tears blurring her vision.

#### Chapter 750: Going Home

The next day, Cheng Su was leaving, and the children all cried, clinging to Cheng Su's legs, unwilling to let go.

"Aunt Su, don't go, don't abandon us, please," they pleaded.

Cheng Su cried too. Having lost a child herself, her heart had grown increasingly tender toward children, especially those orphaned by the disaster, so pitiable and alone.

If not for this catastrophe, they might have grown up pampered in their parents' arms.

But now, they had to rely on themselves.

The volunteers separated the children, coaxing them while urging Cheng Su to board the vehicle, knowing that if they didn't leave then, they might never be able to.

Cheng Su knew too. Once on board, it wasn't long before the vehicle started moving, the children's heartrending cries could be heard as they ran after them, only to be held back by the volunteers.

Cheng Su couldn't bear to look anymore and buried herself in Qi Taiguo's embrace, weeping uncontrollably.

Qi Taiguo held her, gently patting her back in comfort.

The soldier who took them to the train station saluted Qi Taiguo before leaving, "I represent the people of the disaster area in thanking you."

Qi Taiguo returned the salute, "You still have the hard job of staying behind until the end!"

The man smiled, nodded, and watched them leave.

Qi Taiguo took a seat next to Cheng Su, who rested her head on his shoulder, feeling the train slowly start to move, the cityscape outside becoming like a mirage, gradually vanishing from sight.

"It feels like these days have been like a dream, not quite real, yet too real," Cheng Su said softly.

"Yes," sighed Qi Taiguo, he could never have dreamt that such a disaster would occur.

Cheng Su lifted her head and asked, "Since the day I left home, have you been following me the whole time?"

"Hmm, as soon as you left the house, I followed," he confirmed, "aboard the same train."

"I didn't even notice. How did you manage to hide?" Cheng Su was surprised and asked, "So every place I went to, you followed?"

"Followed! And as for how to hide, don't forget, your husband is a soldier. Concealing one's presence is a part of the combat plan. If you discovered me so easily, all my years of training would have been for nothing," Qi Taiguo said somewhat proudly.

Cheng Su glared at him playfully and said, "You certainly hid well enough." After a pause, she added, "If I had never found out and there had been no disaster, would you never have shown yourself?"

"How could that be? I figured I would appear when the time was right to give you a pleasant surprise and coax you back," Qi Taiguo said deliberately.

Cheng Su snorted and buried her head in his chest again, "It was quite a surprise, indeed, and frightening too."

Qi Taiguo took her hand and explained, "That hotel had no rooms left on the same floor, so I stayed one floor above you. When the earthquake first shook, I felt something was off. Then, when it intensified, I realized it was an earthquake and immediately rushed to your room. But it happened so quickly that I was a little late getting there."

Recalling that moment, filled with intense fear and urgency, Cheng Su said, "Not late. You got there just in time, very promptly."

"Yes, thankfully, I arrived in time!" Qi Taiguo held her closer and sighed quietly.

The two of them whispered softly to each other, and the misunderstandings and conflicts of the past few days dissipated as the train moved forward, gradually vanished like smoke clearing, and previous grievances were washed away.

The train rumbled on for a day and a night until they arrived back in Qing City. Stepping off the platform, Cheng Su felt as though her heart had been cleansed.

Softer, yet stronger.

"Let's go home," Qi Taiguo said, taking her hand.

"Yes, let's go home," Cheng Su replied with a gentle smile.