

All Hail 831

Chapter 831 - 831: Overstepping

Her smile deepened. “In that case, the government office can mobilize a lot of people. The bailiffs have to be selected by the county office. Most of them are strong and know some martial arts. There’s also a martial arts office in the government office. There’s a chief instructor of the bailiffs inside who’s in charge of their daily training. Could it be that they’re inferior to a mob?”

Lord Li was stunned and speechless.

Although there were many bailiffs in the government office, there were only a few who were really skilled and could fight others. The others were in charge of patrolling and running errands. They looked impressive, but they were actually useless.

However, he couldn’t say this.

Seeing that he was silent, Yu Youyao continued, “Although it’s time to arrange for the refugees and the government is indeed a little busy, there’s still time. Manpower is not a big deal. The government can even put up a reward to suppress the bandits. There will definitely be brave men when they are offered large amounts of money. I think we can gather enough manpower to suppress the bandits.”

Many martial artists liked to accept rewards from the government office.

The rewards also involved a lot of money, but Liancheng was a large county. The nobles controlled the silkworm industry, so there were pros and cons. At the very least, the taxes were stable, and the government office did not lack money.

Now, Liancheng had opened up many more silkworm farms. The trade in forest land was higher than ordinary farmland. Seventy percent belonged to the treasury, and the government office would get 30%. They were even richer.

At this point, cold sweat broke out on Lord Li’s forehead. “The North is under King Yue Fei’s rule. In the future, the development of Liancheng will depend on you. If the silkworm business in Liancheng develops, it will be because Princess Shaoyi is kind and benevolent. It will also be because of the good governance by me. The Ministry of Official Personnel Affairs will definitely say the word ‘excellent’.”

Yu Youyao’s calm smile finally became a little more sincere. She felt that this was still reasonable.

Lord Li also said sincerely, “My future depends on the Princess and King Yue Fei. Just say it. What do you want me to do?”

Princess Shaoyi was such a smart person. How could she not understand what he meant?

She did not agree or refuse, but her words were sharp. With just a few words, he was forced to reveal his true colors.

He was not a fool.

Princess Shaoyi indeed wanted to manage the matter of the bandits, but this matter was a hot potato. She would not rashly accept it, in case it was exposed and she caused trouble for King Yue Fei.

She did not agree immediately to force him to express his stance.

After all, it was inappropriate for King Yue Fei to interfere in the suppression of the bandits. As a local official, Lord Li did not have the right to ask King Yue Fei to send troops. He had to have the cooperation of the government.

If anything went wrong, the government should be the one to take care of it and ensure that King Yue Fei would not be implicated.

However, in that case, he should bear all the risks.

It wasn't that Lord Li didn't understand this.

Everyone said that wealth came from danger. He had already gotten into a noble's carriage. The benefits were right in front of him, and his future was at hand. Wasn't it stupid to get out of the carriage?

The matter of suppressing the bandits concerned his political achievements, evaluation, and future. It also coincided with Princess Shaoyi's intention to develop the silkworm industry vigorously, and it was also in line with King Yue Fei's interests.

King Yue Fei was in charge of the manpower, and the person who contributed was still King Yue Fei. In other words, he was sitting back and reaping the benefits.

It was not a big deal to take some risks.

Princess Shaoyi and King Yue Fei were such powerful people. Their actions were watertight. There was probably no risk.

Lord Li added, "I'll listen to the Princess's instructions regarding the suppression of bandits."

Yu Youyao really treated Lord Li differently. Although Lord Li was not a good official, he was not a bad person who had lost his conscience. He was smooth in dealing with people and was sensible. What was rare was that he was not weak. He did everything he did to arrange for the refugees in an orderly manner and did not cause too much trouble.

He knew how to seek benefits for himself, but he did not just take the benefits and not work.

Such a person was very capable if used well.

If he wasn't used well, the situation would change.

From the looks of it, Lord Li's interests were the same as hers and Yin Huaixi's. As long as he did not leave Liancheng, Lord Li would always be in her hands.

Even if he had a bright future one day, he couldn't afford to offend her and Yin Huaixi.

However, the more anxious he was to eliminate the bandits, the more problematic this was.

After weighing the pros and cons, Yu Youyao had already made up her mind. "Although I'm Princess Shaoyi personally conferred by the Imperial Court, I'm only a woman. The government should be in charge of suppressing bandits. If I interfere, wouldn't I be interfering with the rules of

the court? Since I've received the emperor's grace and Empress Dowager Meng's kindness, I should set an example and follow the law. I shouldn't overstep my boundaries."

She did not believe in Lord Li's character. It was fine as long as he expressed his stance. She had a plan and would not tell Lord Li, in case she caused trouble.

At the moment, it seemed that Lord Li was a sensible person and had the same interests as them. However, there were no eternal interests in this world. The human heart was unpredictable, and she did not have the habit of being used against others.

There was a saying that a thousand-mile dike could collapse because of an ant's nest.

Sometimes, even an insignificant weakness could cause a monstrous disaster.

Lord Li was speechless. Which of the major events that had happened in the court recently did not have Princess Shaoyi's shadow behind them?

She did not personally interfere in the court, but she could still order the Yu Clan behind her to interfere.

However, at this point, if he continued to insist, it would seem that he did not know anything. He would seem insensible and annoying.

Princess Shaoyi looked like a gentle and magnanimous person, and she also gave others dignity when interacting with others. However, looking at what she had done since she came to Liancheng, could it be as simple as it seemed?

He was just a small figure, so he did not dare to gamble on the temperament of a superior. Lord Li quickly stood up from his chair and walked to the hall. He bowed to Princess Shaoyi. "I understand the Princess's difficulties. Today, I was worried about the development of Liancheng and did not think it through. I was rude and made things difficult for you. Please forgive me."

Yu Youyao sighed slightly. "Lord Li also has his difficulties. How about this? This matter is important after all. Let me think about it carefully."

She did not make herself clear, but she still left some leeway.

"Princess, you're kind." Although Lord Li had not achieved his goal, he was not far away from it. However, he did not feel happy. He only felt exhausted, both physically and mentally, as if his body had been emptied.

He wanted to use Princess Shaoyi's importance to the development of the silkworm industry to instigate her to order King Yue Fei to eliminate the bandits. He also expressed his stance on the spot and was willing to cooperate fully.

Even though this matter was in line with the interests of the three sides, Princess Shaoyi did not refuse explicitly, but she did not let him have his way. She took off his "clothes" and played with him.

He finally understood that in the eyes of those in power, his little schemes were just a joke.

"However." Yu Youyao smiled and changed the topic. "The suppression of bandits is ultimately the government's business. Helping Lord Li solve his problems can be considered doing our best for the local commoners."

Chapter 832 - 832: Exterminating Bandits

Lord Li took a deep breath and lowered his head. Princess Shaoyi meant that the government office could not stay out of it.

Yu Youyao looked up at Lord Li. "What do you think, Lord Li?"

Lord Li only felt that when Princess Shaoyi looked at him, there was a trace of coldness in her eyes, making his scalp tingle and his entire body break out in a cold sweat. He quickly lowered his head. "Yes, yes, yes. The Princess is right."

... .

After the Imperial Court issued the national policy, the Empress Dowager also issued another decree. The King of the North was ordered to ensure the safety of Princess Shaoyi. Princess Shaoyi would be treated according to the etiquette of the legitimate princess of the current dynasty. He couldn't be negligent and could not accept military orders outside. This concerned Princess Shaoyi, so King Yue Fei had to be careful and serious.

This decree seemed to be only targeted at Princess Shaoyi, but after prying it open and analyzing it, Yue Fei could use Princess Shaoyi's name and do more as the King of the North.

Princess Shaoyi provided her righteousness and benevolence. She had come to the North for the sake of the thousands of refugees of the Great Zhou Dynasty. It was only logical for him to use Princess Shaoyi's name to do things. It would not be exposed.

It was also because of this that Huang Wenxian had brought a deputy general of the army to escort Princess Shaoyi.

The highest commander in the army was the commander-in-chief. He was the commander or vassal lord who guarded various places.

Under the commander-in-chief, there was also the Great General of the Cavalry. He was responsible for resisting external enemies and invasion. He was a second-grade general and could be given the title of General Jinwu. His status was second only to the commander-in-chief.

Previously, when the Marquis of Changxing was captured and returned to the capital, the Great General of the Cavalry was in charge of guarding the North.

There was also a special title. Usually, the position was not occupied. If necessary, it would be appointed by the emperor. That was the expeditionary army, who conquered the east, south, west, and north. It was in charge of conquest. Previously, when Yin Huaixi went to Shandong to quell the rebellion, he was conferred the title of Great General of the East.

The level of the rank depended on the size of the army. The army received orders from the emperor and was not under the jurisdiction of local generals.

Under the Great General of the Cavalry were generals of the Duke's Residence, usually served by the descendants of the imperial family.

Below them were Zhao Wu and An Yuan...

They were all generals who had led troops and were called deputy generals.

All the generals in the army who could be promoted to deputy generals had been through hundreds of battles and had outstanding military achievements. The person who had followed Huang Wenxian over was General An Yuan. He was a third-grade official and an elder in the army.

General An Yuan was in his early forties and was also tall and strong. He was wearing cotton armor and had two knives at his waist, one long and one short. One was a Tang knife, and the other was a saber. Their lengths complemented each other. He walked in a majestic manner, and every step he took was imposing. Just his aura of having been through hundreds of battles was enough to suffocate people.

General An Yuan said, “The mountain bandits entrenched in the area of Anshan are indeed vicious people. Not only do they plunder property and harm lives, but they also don’t let off the old, young, and women. They even snatch good-looking women. In just four to three months, they’ve already committed more than a hundred crimes and more than 200 murders.”

Yesterday, when the Little Princess Consort had looked for him and mentioned the suppression of bandits, he had sent someone out to find out more.

“In addition, I’ve also heard that during this period of time, children between the ages of five and ten have often been lost in the adjacent areas of Anshan. I’ve reported a case and it’s verified by the government office. There are 11 cases that are not recorded. There must be cases that aren’t recorded. If there are no accidents, they should be the ones who did it.”

Yu Youyao did not look too good. It was as if there was a stone in her chest. The mountain bandits were vicious. Why did they capture children? Was it fun to kill them or raise them?

In the year of famine, the starving people ate each other’s food, and tragedies happened from time to time.

If it was really as she had guessed, then...

She suddenly pursed her lips.

Bandits had their own ways, and there were also righteous bandits. There was banditry to varying degrees in all areas. Without reaching a certain scale, the Imperial Court would not send troops. The government’s ability was limited, and not everyone had the ability to suppress bandits. As long as the bandits did not commit crimes often and only plundered property without harming lives, the government would basically turn a blind eye.

As for the fiercer bandits, the governments would personally negotiate with them.

Mountain bandits were all looking for money. They might not be afraid of the government, but if they caused too much trouble, the government would have no choice but to interfere, and it would be very troublesome for them.

There were even local officials who simply cooperated with the mountain bandits.

If they specially targeted the rich and benefited from it, the mountain bandits could squander for a long time. The local area could also be peaceful for a long time without causing too bad an impact.

Lord Li was in a hurry to eliminate the bandits not only because there were many of them, but also because they were very troublesome.

After all, the mountain bandits had already lost their morals.

The government could not step in to negotiate, nor could they cooperate with the bandits. If they did not resolve it as soon as possible, the bandits would only become more and more rampant. If this matter blew up too much, Lord Li's future would almost be over.

Huang Wenhua laid out a map of the area around Anshan and analyzed, "The spies infiltrated the government office and flipped through the case files related to the mountain bandits. According to the information they obtained, as well as the modus operandi of the mountain bandits, time, place, range, and so on, we can basically infer that they will probably be at..." His gaze turned slightly sharp as he pointed at a certain spot on the map. "This location."

The Little Princess Consort did not explicitly agree to interfere in the matter of the bandits. The case files were important items of the government and could not be easily checked, but it could not avoid spies from the army.

The mountain bandits, who were very troublesome to the government, simply had nowhere to hide to the experienced Huang Wenxian.

General An Yuan looked at the map. "It's not far from the position that I calculated."

After fighting for so many years, what terrain had he not fought in? As long as he looked at the map, it was obvious which place was suitable for hiding, ambush, and rest.

Yu Youyao looked at it for a while and could tell what was going on. "Send someone to investigate first. We'll discuss the details later."

General An Yuan and Huang Wenxian nodded.

The next day, the scout who had gone to investigate, sent back a message. "There's indeed a bandit stronghold in the mountain. There are about 400 people and they're armed with good weapons. The sentries inside are strict and the terrain is complicated. It's easy to defend and difficult to attack. If we attack, we can take it down in half a day."

However, another scout said, "I discovered a village in a remote mountain in Anshan, but there were only old people and children in the village. I went to the government office to investigate. There were a total of more than 30 families in that village. They've lived there for generations."

Therefore, it was impossible for the bandits to come from the village.

Then where had all the young and strong people in the village gone?

General An Yuan and Huang Wenxian's gazes moved slightly as they looked at Yu Youyao. Should they eliminate these bandits? How should they do it? Would it implicate His Highness? It all depended on Yu Youyao.

Therefore, they would not make a decision easily.

Yu Youyao frowned and said thoughtfully, "Has everyone in the village become hostages of the bandits?"

Usually, the mountain bandits captured the villagers. If the government wanted to suppress the bandits, the bandits would pull out the hostages. The government did not dare to attack rashly. Many vicious bandits used this method to restrain the government.

Chapter 833 - 833: Taking a Risk

She remembered that she had heard from her grandmother earlier that not long after the previous emperor ascended the throne, her relative had been sent to Shanxi to suppress bandits.

There were hundreds of thousands of mountain bandits in the 100,000-mile mountain area of Shanxi. At that time, the relative who had been ordered to eliminate the bandits had returned to the capital. Then, a court official had reported that he had risked killing the commoners.

Later on, it was confirmed that he had not killed those commoners. Instead, it was done by the sharp weapons used by mountain bandits to restrain the government.

The relative was unmoved, disregarding the lives of innocent people. Although he had successfully eliminated the bandits, he had also been exposed, giving the previous emperor an excuse to suppress the imperial clan.

Huang Wenxian nodded. "I'm afraid so."

This was difficult. Yu Youyao took a deep breath. "The mountain bandits must have taken many hostages. Once they attack forcefully, those hostages will first be pulled out to be sacrificed. In that case, we can only use our wits. We can't attack head-on."

General An Yuan also nodded.

Yu Youyao pondered for a moment. "I originally planned to let Lord Li cooperate with the You army to send out troops and attack forcefully to end the battle quickly. After that, I'll announce to the public that the government has borrowed dozens or hundreds of people from King Yue Fei because they don't have enough manpower to arrange the refugees. The You army will fight ten alone, and no one will suspect anything. If Lord Li is implicated, Lord Li will naturally deal with the Imperial Court and won't implicate King Yue Fei."

Huang Wenxian and General An Yuan felt that this plan was very safe if there were no hostages.

Yu Youyao sighed slightly. "However, the plan is about to change now. There are hostages in the stronghold, and the situation has become very complicated. We can't end it quickly. If we rashly send troops with the government, it's easy to complicate matters. It's best if we can enter the stronghold to investigate and cooperate from the inside."

If the situation was unknown, it would be very disadvantageous to the You army. If the news that King Yue Fei had sent troops to suppress the bandits was accidentally spread, good things would become bad.

The best way was not to get involved.

Of course, Yu Youyao did not have to get involved. In the future, when Lord Li could no longer stand the rampant bandits, he would borrow troops from the state government office to suppress them.

The Yue Fei King's Residence only needed to exert pressure on the state government office and get them to send people over. It would probably be resolved.

But!

However, she knew that mountain bandits had lost their morals and had already lost their humanity. As time passed, who knew how many innocent people would be harmed?

Just thinking about it made her feel like a fishbone was stuck in her throat.

Thinking about it carefully, if this matter was planned, there was still a way to resolve it. Having the ability but looking on without lifting a finger was different from wanting to do it but not having the resources.

At the very least, she couldn't stand by and watch coldly now.

Huang Wenxian's eyelids twitched. He had a bad feeling.

Indeed!

Yu Youyao continued, "I'll pretend to be a young miss from a wealthy family who went to Xiuyan to seek refuge with her relatives. Yin Shi and Chun Xiao will pretend to be maidservants. Pick ten to twenty people to pretend to be servants or escorts to escort me past the foot of the mountain. Then, the bandits will kidnap me."

"Yin Shi is skilled in disguise and scouting. At that time, she can announce to the public that I was attacked by bandits on the way back to Xiangping. The You army can legitimately suppress the bandits."

Huang Wenxian's expression changed drastically as he objected, "No, this is too risky. Before we came to Liancheng, His Highness had written to us that we had to protect your safety."

General An Yuan also objected. "The plan is feasible, but we can change the candidate for the young miss of a wealthy family. There's no need for the Princess to take the risk personally. Otherwise, we won't be able to answer to His Highness."

Yu Youyao shook her head. "After the Imperial Court issued the national policy, King Yue Fei wasn't restricted like before. However, at the same time, the Imperial Court monitored him more strictly."

The vassal lords had a large number of troops in their hands. The Imperial Court had to prevent them from leading their troops and shocking their masters.

Huang Wenxian did not look too good. Everyone said that one should not tolerate others snoring by one's side. A group of mountain bandits were brazenly running wild under the nose of the You army. Wasn't it because the vassal lords were controlled by the Imperial Court that the bandits had nothing to fear?

"The matter of national policy has already seriously threatened the interests of the nobles. The power of the nobles is very huge, so it's impossible for them to sit back and do nothing. They must be keeping an eye on King Yue Fei and have something on him."

“The national policy is a double-edged knife, a sharp weapon to deal with the nobles. However, if this double-edged knife is even a little biased, it will become the sharp blade of the nobles to attack King Yue Fei. I’ve never liked to be used against others. I have to put on a show. I’m the one who wants to suppress the bandits. I can’t let King Yue Fei take the risk.”

Huang Wenxian did not look too good. “If His Highness finds out...” He might go crazy.

General An Yuan also looked pale. He thought of the fear of being supported by all kinds of “additional training.” “Then, then why don’t we think about it at length and think of other ways?”

Yu Youyao said, “Even if he was here, I would say the same.”

At this moment, the nobles had something on Yin Huaixi and were waiting. Even a small mistake could cause a huge disaster. If it were someone else pretending to be a young miss of a wealthy family, they might not be discovered.

But what if?

She couldn’t take any chances in anything. She would do what she had to do. King Yue Fei wanted to use her name to eliminate the bandits. This “name” had to be real. Only then could it be legitimate.

Huang Wenxian and General An Yuan tried their best to persuade her.

Yu Youyao had made up her mind and did not waver.

General An Yuan was still making a “death struggle”. He braced himself and said, “I’ve thought about it carefully. This plan isn’t a complete failure. However, what if the bandits don’t fall for it?”

This plan could only succeed if the bandits wanted to rob Princess Shaoyi.

If they didn’t rob her, wouldn’t it be for nothing?

However, Yu Youyao said, “Money moves people’s hearts. In that case, prepare more supplies!”

Huang Wenxian did not give up. “If word gets out that you were kidnapped by mountain bandits, it will damage your reputation.”

Yu Youyao smiled. “The person who was kidnapped was a young miss from a wealthy family. What has that got to do with me? We were the ones who set the plan, and the people who participated were all our own people. Why will there be such rumors?”

Huang Wenxian was suffocated. In that case, why did the Little Princess Consort have to take the risk herself?

It was actually very simple!

She knew that she was taking a risk. Yu Youyao couldn’t push others into danger, while she hid behind others and enjoyed the results of them taking a risk.

She was the one who insisted on suppressing the bandits.

No matter who she pushed, she couldn’t feel at ease.

Of course, the main reason was still to put on a show to avoid being used against.

Yu Youyao continued, “If someone wants to use this matter to cause trouble, so what if they find out that I’ve been kidnapped by bandits? Shouldn’t King Yue Fei eliminate the bandits?”

No one would say that King Yue Fei was inappropriate.

General An Yuan was also speechless. The nobles of the North were too powerful and had powerful methods. Previously, when the nobles persecuted King Li of Zhou, the Little Princess Consort was very vigilant against them and did not dare to leave any evidence behind.

On the surface, this plan was because she had been attacked by bandits, so it was only logical for the You army to suppress the bandits.

If someone refused to give up and wanted to investigate this matter, finding out that she had been kidnapped by mountain bandits, it would be even more natural to suppress the bandits.

Chapter 834 - 834: Fluffy

Yu Youyao smiled meaningfully and said, “The person who will escort me to Xiangping City is General An Yuan. He’s a dignified third-grade elder of the army. The people escorting me are the You army that was guarding the city previously. There are more than a thousand of them. Who in the world would believe that such an elite division, who can even beat the Di people to a pulp, would be so incompetent as to let a motley crew hijack a dignified princess? It’s simply the biggest joke in the world.”

Even if she was discovered to have been kidnapped by mountain bandits, no one else could use this matter to cause trouble.

This was because no one would believe it.

From the looks of it, it was indeed foolproof to let the Little Princess Consort take the risk personally. There was no need to worry.

But!

One of them sighed, while the other sighed sadly. Even their heads hurt.

“Don’t worry. It’s not like I don’t have the ability to protect myself at all.” Seeing their dejected expressions, Yu Youyao felt a little embarrassed. After all, she was the one who had insisted on suppressing the bandits and caused trouble for them.

However, the suppression of bandits was also closely related to Yin Huaixi. After all, the development of the silkworm industry was the foundation for dividing the interests of the nobles and weakening their power.

If she didn’t have a certain level of confidence, she wouldn’t have risked herself.

At this moment, Yin Shi, who had been silent all this while, said, “The Princess’s status is precious, so it’s already very inappropriate for her to take risks. Therefore, I suggest that I disguise myself as a young miss of a wealthy family, and the Princess will disguise as a maidservant. I’m not bad at

fighting and am good at disguising myself. It'll be safer for me to pretend to be a young miss of a wealthy family to gather information."

She had been by Yu Youyao's side for a while. Usually, she was only in charge of Yu Youyao's safety, so her presence was almost negligible.

When the identities of Young Miss and the maidservant were compared, the Young Miss was naturally more eye-catching and in a more dangerous situation. Yu Youyao subconsciously wanted to refuse.

Yin Shi insisted, "Your Highness sent me to the princess's side to protect her. It's my duty. If I disobey, please forgive me."

Huang Wenxian quickly agreed. "The goal of being kidnapped is to put on a full show to ensure that everything goes well. It's also to investigate the situation in the village. As long as the Princess is in the midst of being kidnapped, it doesn't matter if she's a maidservant or a young miss."

General An Yuan also said, "Old Huang is right. The Empress Dowager has issued an imperial decree to protect the Princess's safety. It's also His Highness's duty. Whether it's for the Princess's safety or to investigate the news in the stronghold, Yin Shi is more suitable to pretend to be a young miss of a wealthy family."

At this point, even if Yu Youyao wanted to refuse, Huang Wenhua and General An Yuan probably wouldn't agree.

The three of them discussed the details carefully and finally came to a decision.

General An Yuan would choose 500 of the best elites from the 1,000 You soldiers guarding outside the city to ambush near the stronghold in advance.

In addition, Yin San arranged for another team to specially receive Yu Youyao and the hostages.

Huang Wenxian disguised himself as the father of the "rich young miss" and would be "kidnapped" up the mountain with Yu Youyao. It was to take a step forward. This was to ensure Yu Youyao's safety, as well as to coordinate from the inside.

In addition, he chose 17 to 18 people to disguise themselves as servants and hired escorts. When the mountain bandits came to kidnap them, this group of "disorganized people" quickly disregarded the morals of the martial world and left their family to "run for their lives" to avoid unnecessary casualties.

According to the bandits' usual style of doing things, they basically did not kill women.

Meanwhile, if the mountain bandits wanted to take hostages, it was impossible for them to only take ordinary commoners. They also had to take some people with status, which would make it easier for the government to be wary.

Huang Wenxian, who was disguised as the "father", had brought so many supplies. His status was probably not bad, so he would definitely be arrested.

With the bone whistle as the signal, as soon as the signal sounded, General An Yuan immediately attacked the stronghold with the 500 elites lying in ambush.

Further discussion was needed on how to implement the specific plan.

The next day, Yu Youyao informed Lord Li, "In five days, I'll be leaving Liancheng for Xiangping City. I heard that there are bandits entrenched in Anshan. It's better to travel in simple clothes on this trip. It's not appropriate to make a big fuss, let alone make this matter public."

Lord Li was also a smart person. Princess Shaoyi was deliberately luring the bandits to attack. At that time, the You army that was escorting her could legitimately suppress the bandits.

The government's ability was limited, so it was not easy to investigate the situation in the mountains. They did not know that there were hostages in the mountain stronghold, let alone Yu Youyao's plan to be "kidnapped."

At that time, Lord Li would only think that the mountain bandits had really attacked Princess Shaoyi.

At that time, when he received the news, he only needed to bring the government's bailiffs over with great fanfare to receive her. On the way to Xiangping City, the news of Princess Shaoyi being attacked by mountain bandits would spread in Liancheng and everyone would know.

After that, the Imperial Court would definitely ask about it.

He needed to report this matter to the Imperial Court and deal with the Imperial Court's doubts about this matter. He needed to dispel the Imperial Court's suspicion of King Yue Fei suppressing the bandits so that he could rest easy in the future.

Lord Li had an idea. He said solemnly, "Praying that everything will go smoothly for you on this trip, Princess."

He was not worried that Princess Shaoyi would be in danger if she used herself as bait. No matter how powerful the mountain bandits were, could they be more powerful than the Di people who were good at fighting?

The You army guarding outside the city all had a shocking aura. Just by standing there, they would make people panic to the point that even their legs would tremble. Dealing with just a few hundred mountain bandits was like cutting melons and vegetables.

No one suspected that the You army would not be able to defeat a group of mountain bandits.

After Lord Li left, Yu Youyao looked for General An Yuan. "Are there specially trained hunting dogs in the army?"

General An Yuan quickly said, "Of course."

Not long after, a young soldier in cotton armor brought over a sleek German Shepherd. It was powerful in size, and its limbs were strong. Its ears were upright and its tail was drooping. It looked like a wolf

When it saw Yu Youyao, it subconsciously bowed and let out a low and threatening howl.

The little soldier patted its head gently. It immediately stood up straight and shook its head and tail. "General Black has the blood of a wild wolf. He looks fierce on the surface, but he's actually very obedient. If the Princess feeds him something, he'll be obedient."

Trained hounds did not eat anything from strangers. The young soldier was usually in charge of feeding and training the hounds. With him around, it was nothing.

Yu Youyao got someone to bring a roasted chicken to General Black.

General Black stared at the fragrant roasted chicken with a drooling expression, but it did not go up rashly.

The little soldier patted its head again. Only then did it happily rush forward and eat a large piece. As it ate, it even whimpered in satisfaction.

“It’s so obedient.” Yu Youyao stroked General Black’s ears, and her eyes lit up, unlocking the joy of stroking its fur.

General Black did not even eat the roasted chicken. He went to her side before shaking his head and wagging his tail. He rolled around and behaved in a spoiled manner, even acting cute.

Who could withstand this?

Yu Youyao couldn’t stay calm anymore. Her eyes lit up as she hugged the furry thing in her arms. Although this furry thing was a little big, it would seek favor and pretend to be obedient. It was nice to touch too!

Chapter 835 - 835: Impersonation

Not long after, Yu Youyao established a “friendship” with General Black.

Yu Youyao took a sachet and let General Black sniff it. “Big Black, let’s play a game.”

The German Shepherd’s sense of smell was very sharp. It could track based on the smell. The terrain in the stockade was complicated, and there were also hostages. If it could figure out the terrain inside in advance, it would be very beneficial when saving the hostages or attacking the stockade.

Dogs hated stimulating fragrances, but they were more sensitive to sweet fragrances.

She had made a rather sweet and long-lasting incense medicine that she carried with her. Every time she walked past General Black, she would leave behind a fragrance for it to familiarize with the smell. When the time came, it could follow the fragrance.

It was extremely common for women to wear sachets, so mountain bandits would not be suspicious.

General Black liked the smell of the sachet very much and sniffed hard.

Yu Youyao felt that it was about time, so she threw the sachet out.

General Black immediately ran to pick it up.

After going back and forth dozens of times, General Black was familiar with the smell of the sachet. Yu Youyao hid the sachet in a hidden place, and General Black could always find it as quickly as possible.

Yu Youyao got someone to wear a sachet and walked in circles in the courier station.

The courier station occupied a large area, and there were many small courtyards and pavilions inside. The layout was also complicated, but General Black could always follow the fragrance and successfully find the person wearing the sachet.

It was originally to train the dog and familiarize it with the smell of the sachet.

Later on, the man and dog played crazily.

When General An Yuan saw this, he couldn't help but sigh. "Princess, you have good methods. No wonder you dare to take the risk."

It wasn't that they hadn't thought of using a dog to track others, but the terrain of Anshan was complicated, and there were limited clues they could follow. The fragrance of the sachet was longer-lasting, and it could indeed have the effect of tracking.

The mountain bandits had arranged for an insider in the city to keep an eye on the movements in the city and the merchants coming and going so that it would be easier to rob them.

Since she had put on a show, Yu Youyao immediately ordered someone to prepare the supplies for the three large carriages. She disguised herself as a merchant and entered the city to stay in the inn.

Yin Shi was good at disguising herself. She had prepared a potion to change one's skin color and asked Yu Youyao to apply it on her body, causing her skin to turn brownish-yellow. The potion would not fade when it came into contact with water. She had to soak in water for half an hour before it could be completely washed away.

Yu Youyao had good facial features. She was bright, beautiful, and elegant. Changing her skin color only made her look less stunning than before. Upon closer look, one could still tell that she was outstandingly beautiful.

Hence, Yin Shi put on an ugly makeup for her and added a light green birthmark on the left side of her face.

Yu Youyao took a closer look at the bronze mirror. Her appearance was a little ugly, but not too ugly.

If she was too ugly, she would also be eye-catching.

After Yin Shi disguised herself as a young miss, her eyes were arrogant and revealed a hint of coquettishness.

As for Huang Wen, who was disguised as a wealthy businessman and the young miss's "father", Yu Youyao was even more shocked.

Huang Wenxian scraped the beard around his mouth and changed into a blue silk robe. He smiled like a sly old fox. He no longer looked rough.

Yu Youyao handed a few packets of medicinal powder to Yin Shi and Huang Wenxian respectively. "This is the Bewitching Incense. It tastes similar to dried ginger. After going up the mountain, wait for an opportunity to add it to the oil lamp or mix into food. The targets will be unconscious in 15 minutes."

When the oil lamp burned, there would be the smell of kerosene that could hide the smell of dried ginger very well. Even though the fishing industry in Liancheng was developed, most of the commoners had the habit of eating ginger. Even if they smelled it, it would not arouse suspicion.

In addition, under Yu Youyao hid all kinds of incense under her nails, in the silver hairpin on her head, and in her clothes. Every incense had its own use. This was also her confidence in taking the risk.

Of course, this confidence depended on the person.

If it weren't the You army who was suppressing the bandits but the government, she wouldn't be stupid enough to take the risk.

Yu Youyao said, "When the carriage passes by the foot of Anshan, I'll tear open the sachet I'm carrying. The spices inside will follow the route and spill along the way. The spices are specially made and won't disappear for at least twelve hours."

"After entering the stronghold, Yin Shi will find an opportunity to find out where the hostages are being held and sprinkle the spices from the incense nearby. Big Black is familiar with the smell of the sachet and can track the place where the hostages are being held."

"Think of a way to create chaos in the stronghold. Yin San will take advantage of the chaos to save the hostages. As soon as the hostages are safe, blow the bone whistle and start attacking the stronghold."

This was the detailed plan.

As for how to do it, it would depend on the person's reaction.

Yu Youyao was not worried that Huang Wenxian and the others would not be able to deal with the situation. A group of tigers and wolves on the battlefield had lowered their status to attack a group of snakes and rats. They would simply crush their enemies.

After staying in the inn for two days, Huang Wenxian checked out.

The shopkeeper smiled and said, "The guest has traveled all the way from Hebei to Liancheng. I think it must have been a difficult journey. Why don't you rest for a few more days?"

When Master Huang registered, he was originally a wealthy businessman from Ten Li County in Hebei. He also spoke in a northern accent.

Recently, many wealthy merchants of all statuses had surged into Liancheng. The shopkeeper had seen many of them and did not doubt them.

The three provinces of Liaodong were military towns, so the checks were even stricter. The You army was still guarding outside the city, so they had to interrogate the outsiders. Those who could enter the city were most likely people with clear identities and clean families.

Huang Wenxian smiled and said, "I've gathered a lot of information in Liancheng over the past two days. Princess Shaoyi is going to vigorously develop the silkworm industry in the three provinces of

Liaodong. It's very possible to raise silkworms. I heard that a new silkworm farm has opened at Xiuyan, so I plan to go over as soon as possible to take a look."

The shopkeeper understood. Recently, too many wealthy merchants had surged into Liaodong. Many people were asking about the silkworm farms. They were afraid that if they were late, they wouldn't be able to get anything.

However, due to his benevolence, the shopkeeper kindly reminded him, "Xiuyan is located in the area of Anshan. There have been mountain bandits appearing there recently and robbing passing merchants. Guests, you have to be careful. If you're not in a hurry to leave, why don't you wait a few days? A large number of refugees outside the city have moved away, and the matters of the refugee camp have also been taken over by the government. I think in a few days, the You army guarding the city will escort Princess Shaoyi to Xiangping City. At that time, it'll be more stable to follow behind."

Huang Wenxian smiled and said, "Everyone says that wealth comes from danger. I hired an escort on this trip. With the escort protecting me along the way, it's quite peaceful. I don't think anything will happen."

The shopkeeper couldn't say anything else. Humans died for wealth, and birds died for food. It was the nature of merchants to pursue profits. The spring silkworms had already spawned. It would be released to the forest at the beginning of March. There were only two days left until March, so it was indeed not good to delay.

In addition, the commoners only knew that there were bandits in Anshan. The government had also released a notice to warn the commoners, but they did not know much about the exact situation.

Huang Wenxian's words seemed to reveal a lot of information.

However, after thinking about it for a moment, the shopkeeper understood that he had not said a word about his family background and wealth. It suited the image of a shrewd and good businessman.

Chapter 836 - 836: Hijacking

Huang Wenxian naturally checked out of the room. He left the inn with his "daughter", three carriages of supplies, and a group of servants and escorts. They left the city and traveled towards Anshan.

The carriage traveled and stopped. On the second day, they finally arrived at the foot of the mountain.

Yu Youyao followed the plan and broke a small hole in the sachet tied to her waist. As the carriage jolted, some spices were released.

The carriage drove for another two hours. Yu Youyao frowned. "According to my deduction, we've already entered the range of the bandits. Why haven't the bandits appeared yet?"

Yin Shi said coldly, "After we left the inn, there were two suspicious people around the inn. One of them was a beggar with a dirty face, and the other was a waiter at the inn. The waiter brought over a basin of dirty water and splashed it on the beggar, cursing at him to leave. The beggar ran away

dejectedly and followed our carriage for a while. He should be an informant arranged by the mountain bandits in the city. We've already been noticed by the mountain bandits. The mountain bandits will appear sooner or later."

As the two of them spoke, the carriage suddenly stopped. Immediately, the neighing of horses came from outside.

The bandits were here!

"Whether they're men or women, capture them all and bring them back to the village. The men will be sent to do manual labor, and the women will reward us brothers. Have fun. If they resist, kill them all..."

With this loud and cruel order, the bandits rushed forward.

Outside, there were sounds of killing and shouting. Yu Youyao's heart tightened. Even thieves had their own principles.

When they encountered a robber on the way, the other party might shout some jargon, such as, "I'm the one who opened this mountain and planted this tree. If you want to pass by, leave some money to buy this road."

This meant that the other party only wanted to receive a small sum of money and would not harm anyone's life. As long as the person in charge of the convoy negotiated with the leader of the bandits and offered a suitable amount of money, they could pass through safely. Furthermore, as long as they were within the other party's territory, the other bandits would not continue to rob them.

This was a more moral approach.

There was also a more ferocious type that would change their words to, "Leave some money to save your lives."

This meant that the other party had a huge appetite. It was good to give up money to save their lives. It was best if there was an escort accompanying them. In that case, they could use the escort flag to negotiate with the other party.

Escorts traveled extensively and had a wider network. Mountain bandits were usually not easily offended, so the other party might still show mercy.

However, they could not anger the other party, or someone would die.

For example, these mountain bandits had no morals. People who didn't use the robbing jargon and didn't care about the rules of robbing were basically outlaws. They wanted money, people, and lives.

Ordinary escorts did not dare to fight head-on.

A powerful escort who believed in righteousness would definitely attack the mountain bandits to protect his employer. If one encountered an untrustworthy escort and immediately fled, the employer could only blame himself for being unlucky.

Just like this moment, the mountain bandits rushed up, and the “escorts” retreated in fear. The two sides fought for a short time. When the escorts realized that they were no match for the bandits, they threw down their weapons and turned to escape.

The servants, who had originally wanted to resist a little, were stunned by their escape. They also scattered and fled.

The bandits were used to it and only treated it as if it was normal. Seeing that all of them were running faster than rabbits and even laughing smugly, they did not plan to chase after them. Stealing money was the most important thing.

The convoy was surrounded by bandits. “All of you, get down. If anyone dares to disobey, I’ll kill you one by one.”

Yu Youyao looked horrified. She quickly did not forget to help her “young miss” out of the carriage. Chun Xiao followed behind. The three of them were close together, their heads lowered and trembling. They did not even dare to breathe loudly.

The man in the lead was tall and strong. He was wearing a tiger leather jacket with a slanted lapel, revealing half of his arm and bulging chest. It was obvious that he was a martial artist.

He stared at Yin Shi lecherously. “Oh, you look really lively. It seems that I’m going to be a groom again today. Let’s go. Bring everyone up the mountain.”

Yu Youyao’s hands and feet were tied and she was pushed up the mountain.

They had also captured five “servants” who couldn’t escape in time.

Yu Youyao was deep in thought. According to the records in the government office, almost every time this group of mountain bandits committed a crime, their methods were very cruel. The men were killed, and the women were kept.

This time, the men were captured and sent to do manual labor.

There were hundreds of mountain bandits in the stronghold, and not everyone went down the mountain to rob. For example, this time, they had only brought a few dozen people. Could it be that those who didn’t come out to rob didn’t have to work and were taken care of?

If there was work to be done, how much work was there in a stronghold? Could it be that hundreds of bandits couldn’t finish it, so they still needed to capture strong men?

This was very problematic.

The You army, who were probably disguised as escorts and servants, might have also sensed that there was a problem, so they were deliberately captured.

Yu Youyao was thinking about something and was a step slower. A mountain bandit walking beside her immediately pushed her hard and said fiercely, “What are you waiting for? Walk faster. If it weren’t for the fact that you’re a woman, I would have cut you down.”

Yu Youyao staggered from the push, and there was a sharp pain in her ankle. She staggered and almost fell to the ground, instantly breaking out in a cold sweat.

Yin Shi, who was beside her, subconsciously wanted to pull her back. Only then did she realize that her hands were tied behind her back, so it was not appropriate for her to act rashly. She suddenly clenched her fists, and a murderous intent flashed in her eyes.

Meanwhile, Chun Xiao opened her mouth and almost couldn't help but cry out, "Young Miss." Fortunately, she was pushed by the mountain bandit beside her and swallowed the words that were about to come out of her mouth.

However, she couldn't help but worry.

As she had sprained her ankle, the rest of the journey was especially difficult for Yu Youyao. It was originally just a slight sprain. After applying medicine and a few good massages, she would be fine after recuperating for a day or two.

However, at this moment, she could only grit her teeth and force herself to walk. The mountain path was rugged and difficult to walk. Soon, her face turned pale. She felt as if every step she took was on the tip of a knife. Her ankle bones were swollen and in unbearable pain. She endured it and felt numbness. Her legs felt like they were filled with sand, and they became heavier and heavier.

From time to time, she could hear the bandits scolding her.

After an unknown period of time, Yu Youyao heard someone shout, "We're here!"

She subconsciously looked up. Yu Youyao was standing on a cliff. There was a wooden suspension bridge in front of her, and there was also a mountain opposite it. There should be people proficient in fortification construction among the mountain bandits. They had built sentries and arrow towers on the cliff, and there were people guarding inside. Once someone attacked, the people opposite would first cut off the suspension bridge to stop them from crossing the cliff. Then, the mountain bandits in the arrow tower would shoot arrows at the enemy.

It was easy to defend but difficult to attack.

Yu Youyao was pushed onto the suspension bridge. She had already sprained her ankle. As soon as the suspension bridge shook, she felt a little dizzy. Fortunately, the bridge was only about 150 feet (50 meters), so she quickly reached the other side.

Then, Yu Youyao realized how special this mountain was.

Chapter 837 - 837: Chaos

After passing through a hidden mountain path, everything suddenly opened up.

This was actually a bowl-shaped valley surrounded by walls on all four sides. Just like the cliff outside, fortifications, sentry posts, arrow towers, residences, and so on were built on all four sides.

Once someone broke through the suspension bridge outside and entered the valley, the bandits could use the fortifications built on the mountain wall to occupy the high ground and attack.

They had the advantage.

From this alone, it could be seen that these mountain bandits were not simple.

The mountain bandits did not have any scruples and brought them up the mountain without hiding at all. They were not afraid of revealing their true location at all. It seemed that they had no intention of letting them leave alive from the beginning.

After entering the valley, Yu Youyao noticed that many straw huts and wooden houses had been built in the valley.

There were more than ten middle-aged women washing. A few mountain bandits were shouting at them with whips, and from time to time, they would whip them. Immediately, their skin and flesh were lacerated, and the women who had been beaten screamed in pain. However, they still had to get up and work, afraid that they would attract even more terrifying beatings.

Suddenly, a shrill cry came from the valley.

“Please, let my daughter go. She— She’s only eleven years old...” A woman in ragged clothes lay on the ground and hugged the legs of a mountain bandit tightly, begging and crying bitterly.

The mountain bandit was fat and strong. His face was fierce as he pulled a skinny girl. “Damn it, it’s her blessing that I’ve taken a fancy to your girl. If she serves me well, I can even reward her with an additional bowl of rice. You ungrateful b*tch.”

The mountain bandit kicked the woman away.

The woman was kicked in the heart and vomited blood. She fell to the ground and cried and begged, “Sanya, I beg you, let go of my Sanya...”

Anger rose in the bandit’s heart. He untied the whip at his waist and whipped the woman.

The sharp sound of flesh being lacerated and the woman’s miserable scream resounded throughout the entire valley. However, the others in the valley seemed to be used to it. They patrolled and kept watch. The others who had been captured like the woman also had wooden expressions. They did not even look at her and only buried their heads in their own matters.

Yin Shi, who was beside Yu Youyao, bumped her with her shoulder. Yu Youyao quickly lowered her head, not daring to look anymore, but she felt suffocated.

After a while, the woman’s screams gradually weakened and became inaudible.

“Chief, she’s dead.”

“Throw her up the mountain to feed the wild beasts.” The mountain bandit who had killed someone looked like he did not care at all. He carried the thin girl and strode away. Behind him, the mountain bandits laughed wretchedly and spoke dirty words.

Yu Youyao suddenly clenched her fists and was escorted to a row of houses.

The mountain bandit who was escorting them instructed the mountain bandit guarding outside, “The young miss from the wealthy family inside is someone that the leader has taken a fancy to. The three of them will be locked up alone first.”

Yu Youyao and the other two were pushed by the mountain bandits and locked up in a room. The room was a little dark, and the sound of locks being locked came from outside.

Chun Xiao immediately said worriedly, “Young Miss, you...”

“Shh!” Yu Youyao stopped Chun Xiao. She glanced at the door, indicating that the walls had ears. They had to be careful.

Chun Xiao quickly fell silent and looked at the Young Miss’s feet. In order to make it easier to travel, Young Miss was wearing a pair of sheepskin boots. The soles of the boots were made of thick cow tendon soles, making it easier to walk.

However, after spraining her ankle, it was not suitable for her to wear such airtight shoes.

The three of them stayed in the house and said some sad and afraid words. In the end, there was a sobbing sound from the house. The mountain bandits who were listening from the corner did not notice anything amiss, so they did not pay much attention to it.

Even when the room was completely dark, no one brought food over.

Yu Youyao was tired and hungry. She leaned against the mountain wall. The numbness in her sprained ankle had subsided, and the pain was even worse than before. Her forehead and the tip of her nose were covered in sweat, and her face was a little pale.

Yin Shi listened to the commotion outside and lowered his voice. “If nothing goes wrong, someone will come over soon and bring me to the Chief’s house. I’ll try my best to knock him out and pretend to be a mountain bandit. Under the cover of the night, I’ll go out and investigate the situation in the stronghold. According to your plan, we’ll find the place where the hostages are locked up first and place the sachet there.”

“After that, when we meet up with Military Advisor Huang, he naturally has a way to send the news from the stronghold to General An Yuan. You and Chun Xiao can stay in the house first. If the stronghold is in chaos, no one will care about this place. Just wait for me to come and receive you.”

Yu Youyao nodded and quickly explained the problem she had noticed. “Don’t be in a hurry to attack the stronghold. I think this stronghold isn’t simple. Why are they catching manual laborers to go up the mountain? The mountain bandits rely on snatching supplies. They often commit crimes, so food should be a little tight. If there aren’t greater benefits, it’s impossible for them to consume food and raise manual labor for nothing.”

Working hard required a lot of stamina. Even if they ate sparingly, the more people there were, the more food they would consume.

“Besides, have you noticed that other than the mountain bandits patrolling and keeping watch, almost all the people in the valley are women and children? There are no young men. However, according to the information we’ve previously obtained, there’s an entire village with more than 30 young men who have been captured and taken into the stronghold as hostages. There are almost 60 to 70 strong laborers. Since the valley lacks manual labor, it’s impossible to lock them up and raise them for nothing.”

Yin Shi also noticed this. “Don’t worry, I’ll definitely investigate carefully.”

Yu Youyao instructed solemnly, “You have to be careful too. Don’t get injured.”

The house fell silent again.

After a while, a wretched voice came from outside. “Go and bring out the little girl who was caught up the mountain today. Time is precious. Chief is still waiting to be the groom.”

Accompanied by a burst of dirty laughter, the door was pushed open from the outside. Two mountain bandits on guard walked into the house. One held a torch, while the other rudely pulled Yin Shi up.

Yu Youyao looked horrified. “You, what are you doing? Let go of my young miss... Young miss...”

She wanted to rush forward to stop him, but she was pushed down by another mountain bandit.

Yin Shi was taken away by the bandits.

All Yu Youyao could do was wait.

After a long day, she leaned against Chun Xiao tiredly. She had originally only wanted to close her eyes and rest for a while, but her consciousness couldn’t help but sink.

She did not sleep well. Yu Youyao frowned and did not let go.

After an unknown period of time, there was a commotion outside.

“There’s a fire. There’s a fire in the Chief’s house...”

“There’s a fire. Hurry up and put it out...”

“Quick, put out the fire...”

“...”

Yu Youyao suddenly woke up with a start, her mind still in a mess. “What’s going on outside?”

Chun Xiao practiced martial arts, so her hearing was a little more sensitive than ordinary people. “There seems to be a fire, and it’s causing quite a commotion. Yin Shi’s plan should have succeeded. They’re creating chaos in the stronghold.”

Chapter 838 - 838: Anger

Yu Youyao listened to the commotion and could only hear some noise. She calmed down. “It won’t be long before General An Yuan gives the order to attack the stronghold. The bandits are busy dealing with the enemy and don’t have time to worry about the stronghold. Yin San will bring General Black along with him and follow the incense powder that has been sprinkled all the way into the stronghold to receive the hostages. Our plan is half successful.”

Chun Xiao clenched her fists. She exerted force and broke free of the ropes around her wrists.

Yu Youyao was stunned for a moment. “You’re already so powerful?”

Chun Xiao was born with strength. In Yin Huaixi’s words, it meant that her foundation was good and she was suitable for practicing martial arts. It was just that she had started late. Thus, she had

passed the best age to practice martial arts and had only practiced for a short time. It was not a problem for her to deal with ordinary people. However, if she faced those from the You army, who were experienced, she would only be beaten.

Chun Xiao explained, "I've only practiced and developed some hidden strength, but I haven't developed internal strength yet. This rope is specially made and is tenacious. It's not easy to stretch it. Yin Shi cut a hole in the rope as she was also concerned. If there's a change in the plan, I can deal with it."

She quickly went to help Yu Youyao untie the rope.

Yu Youyao asked curiously, "Then can you deal with the bandits outside?"

"Most of the bandits outside are ordinary people, but they're strong. They've learned all kinds of martial arts. I can deal with three of them alone, but the group of people who kidnapped us into the mountain previously seem to have some moves." Chun Xiao paused and looked at the bruises on Young Miss's wrist. Her eyes turned red. "Young Miss, you've suffered."

Yu Youyao moved her numb wrist and shook her head. "I'll apply some medicine later. I'll be fine in a few days. Don't worry."

However, Chun Xiao's heart ached for Young Miss. All these years, Young Miss had experienced many things. It was almost impossible to see it on her face. When she was young, because it was too difficult to learn etiquette and practice calligraphy, she had learned needlework and became spoiled.

Even though she had sprained her ankle, she could still grit her teeth and walk on the mountain path for an hour without saying a word. She did not even cry out in pain.

Chun Xiao's eyes welled up with tears. She quickly tilted her head to wipe her tears and lowered her head. "I'll help you take a look at your sprained ankle."

It would have been fine if she hadn't mentioned it. At the mention of it, Yu Youyao felt a piercing pain in her ankle bone. Her swollen feet were squeezed into her narrow and hard boots. The feeling of constant pressure and swelling applied pressure on the various acupuncture points in her legs. The acupuncture points connected to the meridians in her body, and the pain would multiply.

Yu Youyao subconsciously shrank her feet and listened to the commotion outside. "Business is more important. We'll talk about the rest after we deal with the bandits."

Seeing that Young Miss did not look too good, Chun Xiao was worried. "But..."

At this moment, the commotion outside became louder.

"Not good, someone is attacking the stronghold outside..."

"Where's the Chief? Hurry up and report it to him..."

“The Second-in-Charge has brought a group of people to meet the enemy outside the valley. Hurry up and pull out the people who were captured and brought into the stronghold to be hostages...”

“...”

Chun Xiao’s expression changed drastically. She quickly stood in front of Yu Youyao. “Young Miss, if the bandits rush in...”

Yu Youyao looked calm. “We’re locked up alone. If the mountain bandits want to pull people over, they have to first pull people who are locked up together. We’re still safe for the time being. Moreover, every step is in our plan now. Yin San should be here soon...”

As expected, before she could finish speaking.

There was the sound of fighting outside. As screams sounded one after another, the door of the room was kicked open with a bang.

Yu Youyao was shocked. She quickly looked at the door and her eyes suddenly paused.

There was the sound of a torch burning in the air. Under the dim yellow light, Yin Huaixi was dressed in a golden dragon and purple python robe. He was wearing a half-length green python cloak behind him. In his hand was a snow-white curved knife. The tip of the knife was facing down, and bright red blood flowed out of the blade. At the tip of the knife, beads of blood gathered and fell to the ground.

Generals had the habit of wearing cloaks and capes outside. This was because when generals were on the move, they often slept in the wind. When the military situation was urgent, they couldn’t set up camp. The cloaks and capes could lighten their travel clothes, allowing them to resist the wind and sand.

Therefore, Yu Youyao could tell at a glance that he was travel-worn. She opened her mouth, wanting to ask, “Why are you here?”

However, before she could ask, Yin Huaixi strode forward and pulled Yu Youyao into his arms. His arms wrapped tightly around her shoulders. He was so strong that he almost crushed her bones in his arms.

Yu Youyao opened her mouth, wanting to call him.

Suddenly, she heard a relieved cry. Yin Huaixi let out a long breath, and his voice was stuck in his throat. She slowly raised her hand and wrapped it around his waist. She said softly, “I’m fine.”

It would have been fine if she hadn’t spoken, but the moment she did, there was a sense of warmth, as if someone had torn a hole in her. There was a sense of ruthlessness.

Yin Huaixi retreated and held her round shoulders with both hands. His dark eyes were bloodshot as he stared at Yu Youyao and looked at her deeply.

His face was so calm that it was almost demonic. His red lips seemed to have been licked by the blood-red red spider lily in hell, revealing a burning and demonic smile.

That smile was clearly from anger.

“Very good. Yu Youyao, you’re very good. Very good.” He held her shoulder hard, almost crushing the bones in her shoulder. “Your wings have hardened, huh?!”

His voice was very soft, like the charming words of love between lovers. It was lingering and sentimental, and his expression was almost demonic. There was no hint of anger.

However, Yu Youyao knew him very well. From the red blood vessels in his eyes that extended to the corners of his red eyes, she could tell that he was anxious.

“I didn’t.” Yu Youyao tried to explain.

Yin Huaixi gritted his teeth and squeezed out the words from between his teeth. “How dare you take the risk, huh?!”

Yu Youyao’s scalp went numb and she shrank back, but she had no choice but to bite the bullet and explain, “I just...”

She had been afraid of him since she was young.

Although Yin Huaixi rarely spoke to her loudly or even scolded her, every time he narrowed his eyes and pursed his lips, he would have a dignified aura.

Yin Buxi stared at her with bloodshot eyes. His red lips were about to smile as he asked, “But what? Why don’t you continue, huh?”

Yu Youyao saw that there was a hint of red at the corner of his eyes, as if he had been licked by anger. It was so red that it was demonic. She quickly shut her mouth and lowered her head, looking obedient.

Yin Huaixi remained graceful, noble, and calm, as if he knew everything in the world and was confident.

She had only seen Uncle Sun help Yin Huaixi clear his internal acupuncture points. Also, when Yin Huaixi was practicing walking, she saw that the corners of his long and narrow eyes were red, as if someone had applied powder on him.

Chapter 839 - 839: Indulgent

He was both demonic and fragile.

He was weak, but also revealed a powerful and forbearing side.

Was Yin Huaixi like this because he was angry?

“Who gave you the guts?” Yin Huaixi narrowed his eyes and interrupted her. The corners of his eyes turned red and became even more aggressive.

The repeated interrogation made Yu Yao panic. She simply closed her eyes and said softly, “Didn’t you give it to me?!”

As soon as she finished speaking, the room fell into a dead silence. Even her breathing fell into a strange silence.

The air immediately froze.

It was over, it was over! Yu Youyao was completely done for!

Even if that was what she was thinking, she shouldn't have said it out loud!

Was she stupid?!

Yin Huaixi was in a fit of anger. Wasn't this adding fuel to the fire?

Yu Youyao felt suffocated and shrank her neck. She stared at the tips of her toes and her lowered eyes. Her eyelashes kept trembling, revealing her broken mood.

Yin Huaixi's efforts were wasted. The anger in his heart seemed to have been splashed with a basin of water and was completely extinguished. Sparks flew everywhere. He suddenly felt that it was funny and wanted to laugh, so he laughed.

However, that laugh was a little helpless. "So was I the one who asked you to risk your safety?"

Yu Youyao secretly raised her eyes and glanced at him quickly. Realizing that he was still staring at her, she quickly fled as if her eyes had been stung.

She lowered her head and took a deep breath. She gathered some courage and retorted softly, "How can this be a risk? It's clearly just a formality. At most, it's just a physical... experience."

This time, Yin Huaixi was really so angry that he laughed. "You don't know the background of this group of mountain bandits, but you dare to say that it's a physical experience?"

Yu Youyao said righteously, "Aren't they just a group of strong and capable refugees? In the eyes of the government, they're indeed quite troublesome, but isn't it easy for the You army? The only problem that needs to be resolved is whether the You army will be exposed and become a point of weakness to be attacked if they rashly send out troops!"

Everything that had happened since she had been kidnapped was going according to plan.

Seeing her nonchalant and smug expression, as if everything was within her control, Yin Huaixi's anger rose again.

He kept telling himself, "Don't be angry, don't be angry. Don't be angry with her!"

She had personally planned the suppression of the bandits. Every step was very meticulous. From the current development, she indeed had the right to be proud.

But!

"Is risking your own life your way of resolving your worries?!" Yin Huaixi asked in a low voice. The plan was quite good, but the premise was not to put herself in danger.

Yu Youyao glanced around guiltily, and the little bit of self-righteousness that was brewing in her heart instantly dissipated. "I'm fine, right? Besides, you're here too!"

As soon as she felt guilty, she couldn't help but tilt her head and reach out to pinch her earlobe, pretending to be innocent and soft.

Her invincible moves in the past did not work this time.

Yin Huaixi's pupils were constricted. He held her arm and stared at her wrist. It was bruised and almost hurt his eyes.

His heart stopped and his throat rolled. "Is that what you meant when you said you were fine?"

Yu Youyao wanted to hide her hand behind her back, but she struggled and did not break free. She quickly looked around and said, "It's— It's just some superficial injuries. It just looks scary..."

Yin Huaixi looked at her and said nothing.

She had ugly makeup on her face, and her eyebrows were slightly furrowed. Her long eyebrows had been wiped off, and her delicate eyebrows were clearly defined. Her clothes were pressed against her brow bones and flowed into her temples, revealing the beauty of mountains and rivers.

Every eyebrow exuded tenacity, but they were like the moon. They were bright, but also seemed to emit a scorching light that shone brightly.

There were thousands of charms in the world, but they were all in her eyes.

No wonder the ancients said that the mountains and rivers were so delicate, attracting countless heroes to bow down.

The delicate and lazy little girl back then had unknowingly grown into a determined woman who was calm in the face of danger.

Yu Youyao's heart was beating wildly under his gaze. Seeing that he had not said anything, she quickly looked up at him. Yin Huaixi's fair face was hazy under the dim yellow firelight, making him look loving and gentle.

It was just like when she was young. She tugged at Yin Huaixi's hand ingratiatingly and shook it twice. "Don't be angry. The next time I encounter such a thing, I'll definitely discuss it with you..."

There was a next time!! Yin Huaixi didn't know if he should be angry or laugh. "Does it hurt?"

He was the one who had personally sent Yin San, Yin Shi, Huang Wenxian, and General An Yuan to her, giving her the guts of a bear and a leopard. She had always been smart and changeable. Now that she had huge power in her hands, she would learn to make good use of it.

Instead of blaming her, he might as well blame himself for being too indulgent towards her.

Yu Youyao immediately blinked and looked at Yin Huaixi pitifully, looking innocent and obedient. "Yes, a little."

Yin Huaixi's heart softened. He took off the cloak behind him and placed it on the ground. He pulled Yu Youyao to sit down and quickly took out the ointment he carried with him from his pouch. He squatted beside her and gently applied the ointment for her.

The skin on her wrist was broken by the rope. As soon as the ointment was applied, it hurt a little. Yu Youyao hissed and subconsciously wanted to retract her hand, but Yin Huaixi held it tightly.

After applying the medicine, the burning pain in her wrist eased a little.

Yin Huaixi took out a handkerchief and tore it in half. He bandaged her wrist properly. "Let's bandage it briefly first. When we go down the mountain, we'll find a doctor to take a closer look."

Yu Youyao nodded and quickly asked, "By the way, didn't you go to Dandong? Why are you suddenly here?"

Yin Huaixi took a deep breath. "How could Old Huang not inform me about such a big matter like suppressing bandits?" At this point, the anger in his heart seemed to have recovered. "When I received the news, I happened to turn around and go to Xiuyan. It wasn't far from you, so I rushed over."

Yu Youyao felt a little guilty again and became a timid little quail. "Liancheng has a thousand You army elites and Military Strategist Huang. This strategist, General An Yuan, is an old general who has been through hundreds of battles. How can it be your turn to take action against a few mountain bandits? You're..." He was making a big fuss over a minor issue!

However, she did not dare to say the last sentence. Yin Huaixi naturally did not take a group of bandits seriously. What made him "make a fuss" was her taking a risk.

Yin Huaixi looked helpless. "This group of bandits fled from the west of Shanxi. There are 50,000 kilometers of mountains in the west of Shanxi, and bandits are rampant. In the past few years, they've suffered a drought, and many small bandit strongholds can't make a living. They can only escape down the mountain and find other places to occupy the mountain as bandits. They're all used to being bandits. As soon as they arrived in the north, they gathered a large number of refugees. Their methods are not something ordinary bandits can compare to. What if..."

Chapter 840 - 840: It Hurts, It Hurts Too Much

Yu Youyao was a little surprised. "No wonder the defenses inside and outside the stockade are so tight."

Be it the location of the mountain, the drawbridge, or the construction of the internal and external fortifications, they were not ordinary mountain bandits. "Unfortunately, they encountered the You army."

Hearing her casual words, Yin Huaixi almost flared up again.

Seeing that his expression was amiss, Yu Youyao quickly changed the topic. "By the way, how's the situation outside? Are Military Advisor Huang and Yin Shi alright? Have the hostages been saved? Have you investigated the situation in the stronghold?"

Yin Huaixi could only say, "The plan went very smoothly. Most of the bandits went to the drawbridge to deal with the enemy. Old Huang and Yin Shi were fine too. They joined forces with a few subordinates who had been captured into the mountains and were clearing out the bandits left behind in the stronghold. Yin San brought General Black to the place where the hostages were locked up to save them. However..." He frowned. "The situation in the stronghold is a little complicated."

Yu Youyao's heart skipped a beat. She quickly asked, "What's wrong?"

Yin Huaixi said, "There's a gold mine at the back of the mountain. It was accidentally dug out by mountain bandits when they were building fortifications at the back of the mountain. It was only discovered not long ago."

Yu Youyao's eyes widened. "There's a gold mine hidden in the mountain? No wonder the mountain bandits want to capture men to go up the mountain to do manual labor."

All the minerals in the Great Zhou Dynasty were in the hands of the Imperial Court. Opening mines privately was a capital crime. Gold and silver mines were rare minerals. Even Yin Huaixi only had a few iron mines under his name.

Yin Huaixi said, "According to the information Yin Shi obtained, this gold mine is very big. The gold ore produced is very pure and can be refined into pure gold."

Yu Youyao was pleasantly surprised. "This is really a windfall!"

Yin Huaixi smiled. "However, the news of the bandits attacking you has already been sent to Liancheng. Tomorrow morning, the government will come over to take over the subsequent matters. We still have to arrange that gold mine carefully to avoid being discovered by the government."

The suppression of the bandits was also the government's business. After the government took over, they would arrange for someone to investigate the entire stockade and take over the mountain bandits and hostages who were still alive.

Yu Youyao was a little vexed. "If I had known earlier, I would have gotten someone to send the news later."

She did not have much time to deal with the matter of the gold mine now. There were too many people among the mountain bandits. Previously, they had even captured many hostages and sent them into the mine to work. If there were too many people, the government might notice something amiss.

Yin Huaixi comforted her. "Old Huang will handle it well."

Yu Youyao heaved a sigh of relief, and her stomach growled.

Yin Huaixi's expression changed again. He took out an oil paper bag and handed it to her. "Fill your stomach first."

"Why did you bring food?" Yu Youyao took the oil paper bag in surprise and quickly opened it. She saw three golden round cakes and two white pastries inside.

Yin Huaixi said, "The golden cake is a more unique pie in the Xiuyan area. The filling is made with a local nameko. It tastes crispy, tender, and refreshing with a unique flavor. The other type is the small white skin pastry. On the outside, it's oily, and it's soft in the mouth. Inside, the filling is made of peaches, peanuts, and so on. They're also considered pie snacks. There are many cows and sheep in Liaodong. In terms of pies, the meat filling is more delicious. When you're past the mourning period, I'll bring you to taste it carefully."

Yu Youyao liked all kinds of delicacies. When she arrived at a new place, she first had to ask around about the local delicacies that were more special. They were often brought to her.

Yu Youyao was overjoyed. "Thank you, Nineteenth Brother."

Yin Huaixi couldn't help but laugh.

After eating, Yin Huaixi stood up and reached out to pull Yu Youyao back.

As soon as Yu Youyao stood up, she felt a piercing pain in her ankle. Her face instantly turned pale and she staggered. She threw herself into Yin Huaixi's arms and took a deep breath.

“What's wrong?” Yin Huaixi immediately asked. He immediately noticed that her standing posture was amiss. “Did you sprain your ankle?”

Yu Youyao was in so much pain that she couldn't speak. Perhaps it was because she had been standing for too long just now, and her ankle bone had numbed the pain, but she didn't feel much pain. Later, after sitting for a while, the numbing pain returned. When she suddenly stood up, she felt a piercing pain.

Yin Huaixi quickly helped her sit down and half-knelt in front of her. With just a glance, he raised her left foot. “How long has it been since you sprained it?”

Yu Youyao bit her lip lightly. “I sprained it on the way up the mountain.” Noticing that Yin Huaixi's expression had instantly darkened, she quickly added, “At that time, I only sprained it slightly. It didn't hurt my bones, and it didn't hurt much...”

Yin Huaixi took out a dagger and cut open her sheepskin boots, revealing her small feet that were wrapped in socks. Her feet were very swollen, making the loose socks seem tight.

Her swollen and painful feet were finally released from her shoes. She was clearly in great pain, but Yu Youyao strangely felt a sense of relief.

Seeing Yin Huaixi holding her leg, she felt that it was inappropriate and tried to retract her leg.

However, Yin Huaixi held a dagger and cut off the socks on her feet.

Her entire foot was already swollen like a radish. As her feet had been squeezed in her shoes for a long time, her skin was greenish-white. The veins hidden under her skin also surfaced on her skin, looking a little shocking.

Yin Huaixi's expression darkened as he held Yu Youyao's ankle and pressed it hard.

“It hurts...” Yu Youyao screamed, and her throat couldn't help but gasp.

“You said that you sprained your ankle but didn't hurt your bones.” Yin Huaixi heaved a sigh of relief. It was obvious that her feet were badly swollen. He was angry and heartbroken. “Why didn't you tell me?”

She was delicate and afraid of pain since she was young. Even if she was slapped a few times by Ms. Ye, she would still cry out in pain.

Yu Youyao whispered, “I forgot.”

Yin Huaixi couldn't even be angry anymore. He quickly took out the ointment and applied it on his entire foot. “I'll help you treat it first. It'll hurt. Bear with it.”

Before Yu Youyao could answer.

He pinched her swollen ankle. A feeling of oppression and pain made Yu Youyao's mind go blank. She no longer had the time to think about whether she followed etiquette or not.

It hurt. It hurt too much.

“You, do you know how to massage? How can it hurt so much?” Yu Youyao was trembling in pain. She suspected that Yin Huaixi was deliberately punishing her for “taking a risk”. “Chun Xiao, let Chun Xiao come...”

“It takes a hundred days to recover from a serious injury. There’s a bruise on your ankle bone. There’s a tear in the tendons. If you want to recover as soon as possible, you need to use a special method to clear your tendons and meridians, dissolve the blood, and reset it. Chun Xiao can’t do it.”

Yin Huaixi used the smooth ointment. He rubbed it along her ankle bone all the way to her toes. Then, he repeated his previous actions over and over again.

The horizontal push method could relieve the fascia and reset its position.

Yu Youyao did not believe it. She gritted her teeth and endured the pain.

Yin Huaixi explained patiently, “The training in the army is intense, and there are often all kinds of injuries. The medical resources in the army are limited, and I’m best at dealing with such injuries.”